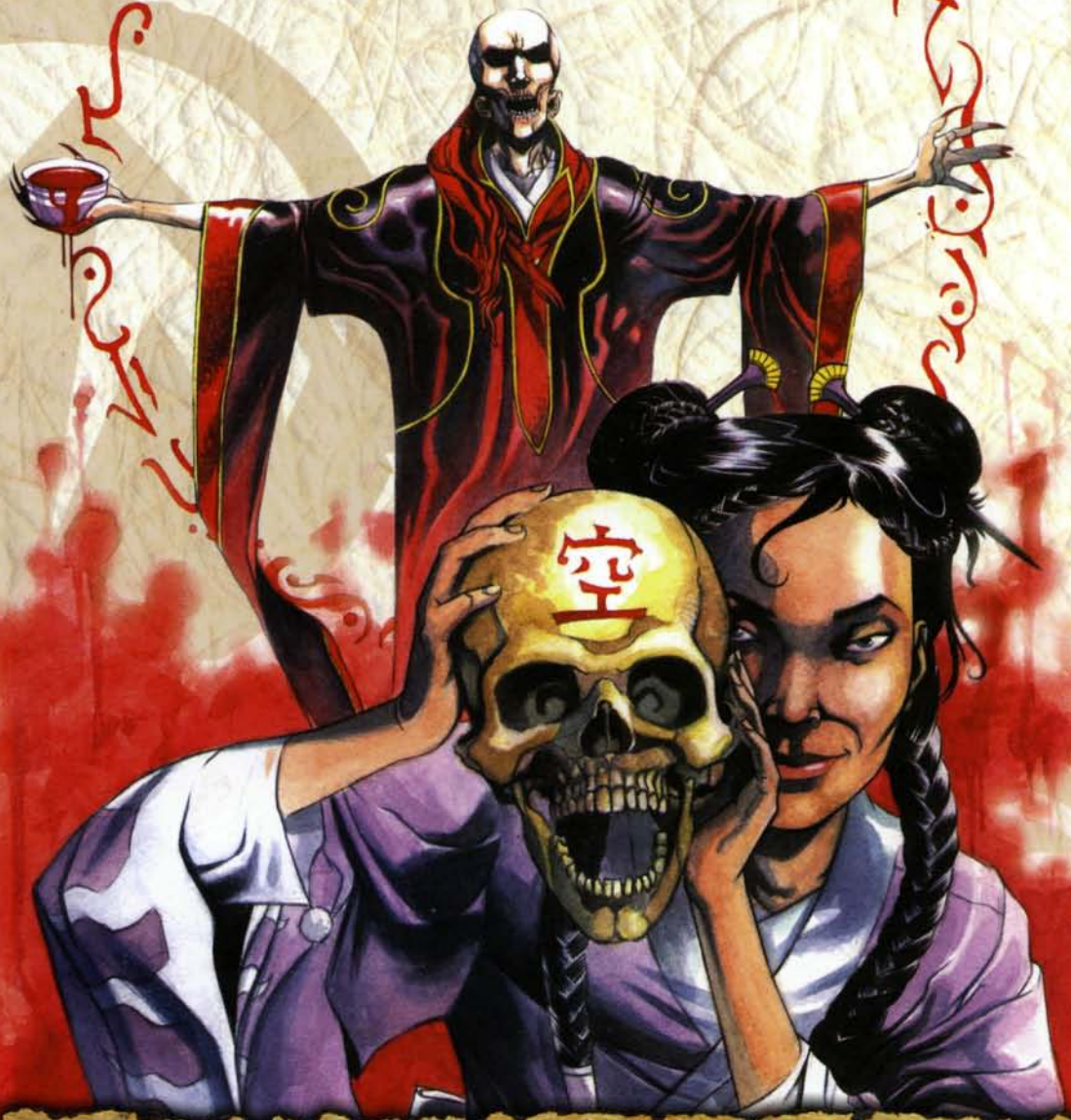




BLOODSPEAKERS



ORIENTAL ADVENTURES

by Wolfgang Baur



BLOODSPEAKERS

A GUIDE TO MAGIC AND CORRUPTION IN ROKUGAN
AN ADVENTURE AND SOURCEBOOK FOR THE DEADLY CULTISTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Blood Gifts	4	Yajinden the Ruler	52
Followers	4	The Porcelain Army	53
Philosophy	5	The Return of Iuchiban	53
The Founder and Fu Leng	5	The Battle of Sleeping River	53
Taint and Secrecy	6	Founding the Temple of Blood	53
Organization and Rituals	7	The Yogo Rebellion	54
Cells	7	The Circle is Broken	54
Gatherings	7	The Corruption of the Hare Clan	55
Initiation	8	Fall of the Temple of Blood	55
Leadership	8	Creation of Daigotsu	55
The Circle of Five	8	The Current Day	56
Shahai's Rule	9	The Shadowlands and the City of Tears	56
Location and Number of Bloodspeaker Cults	10	The Tomb's Guardians	57
Bloodspeakers Outside an Oriental Campaign	11	Chapter Four: Infamous Bloodspeakers	58
Bloodspeaker Prestige Classes	12	Asahina Yajinden	58
Maho and the Taint	12	Asako Kinuye	60
Prestige Class: Chuda Snake Charmer	13	Chuda Mishime	61
Prestige Class: Kansen's Host	14	Daigotsu	62
Prestige Class: Maho Bujin	18	Doji Adoka	64
Prestige Class: Maho-Tsukai	19	Iuchiban	65
Prestige Class: Tainted Shadow	22	Iuchi Shahai, the Dark Daughter	68
Chapter Two: Bloodspeaker Magic	25	Jama Suru	69
Items	25	Suru's Apprentice	70
Anvil of Despair	25	SIDEBAR: Cult of the Blood-Red Moon	71
Blood Arrows of Yajinden	26	Kitsu Norinaga	71
The Bloodswords	27	The Oracle of Blood	73
Hidden Heart of Iuchiban	29	Typical Bloodspeakers	73
Four Masks of Iuchiban	29	Chapter Five: Written in Blood	75
Porcelain Armor	30	Act 1: Discovery and Mayhem!	76
Porcelain Mask	31	Scene 1: Sign of the Wandering Monk	77
Ruby of Iuchiban	31	Scene 2: Visiting Grandmother	78
Scrolls of Asahina Yajinden	31	Scene 3: The Miller's House	79
Shahai's Fan	32	Act 2: The Courtly Investigation	80
Spells	32	Scene 1: Credentials	80
Maho and Honor	32	Scene 2: Possessions and Exorcisms	82
Variant Rule: Low-Level Maho	32	Scene 3: Clues and Suspects	84
Complete Maho Spell List	33	Act 3: Confronting the Boss	87
New Spells	35	Scene 1: The Daimyo's Request	87
Chapter Three: History	50	Scene 2: The Quiet Capture	88
The Discovery of Maho	50	Scene 3: Duel On the Roofline	89
The Chuda Blasphemies	50	Conclusion	89
The Founding of the Cult	51	Kyuden Asako (Morning Glory Castle)	89
Yajinden the Lieutenant	51	Key to Phoenix Lands Map	90
The Anvil and the Swords	51	History	90
Battle of Stolen Graves	51	Exterior	91
Iuchiban Entombed	52	Tenshu, the High Castle	93
The Four Masks	52	Tenshukaku	96

CHAPTER ONE:

BLOOD GIFTS



The Bloodspeakers are the followers of Iuchiban, dedicated to putting their master, or any sufficiently powerful member of their organization, on the Steel Throne. They meet in secret, they practice black magic, and they engage in all the unwholesome habits of an evil underground cult. Human sacrifice is not uncommon during their dark rituals, and the terrifying powers they wield are visible in every porcelain-masked zombie they have brought to supernatural life. Beyond that, however, lies a deep-set series of beliefs, which have endured over five hundred and fifty years of active persecution.

Rokugan is a society bound by tradition and rooted in the belief in karma and destiny. Not surprisingly, this society is not satisfying to all its members. A peasant may dream of becoming a great hero, only to be told to mind his fields. The younger son of a noble family might yearn for the daimyo's throne, only to be dismissed by an accident of birth. Such rejection often leads to questions: why must I remain where I am? How can destiny be so cruel? Who is to say what I am capable of? For most of these issues, Rokugan society has but one answer: honor to your ancestors, respect for the Celestial Pattern, and obedience to your betters. And that answer does not always settle a restless soul. Driven by feelings of injustice and a social system that binds most to a life of drudgery, they search for

other roads to fulfillment. Iuchiban's path of bloodshed and easy power can be very tempting to those who feel that life has treated them unfairly and who are on the lookout to exact their vengeance upon the world.

FOLLOWERS

Most of Iuchiban's followers come from the lower classes - poor merchants, disgruntled peasants, and Eta or other Hinin. The few members of the samurai caste who join the Bloodspeakers tend to be in rough straits, either by birth, political circumstances or bad luck. All of them, however, are motivated by a desire for power - to seize for themselves what fate would deny them.

To this wide variety of people, Iuchiban offers a way to escape from their suffocating existence. Unfettered by the Empire's laws or Fu Leng's overt corruption, they study their own form of power without regard for the consequences. Joining the Bloodspeakers expresses a twisted sort of rebellion against everything the Emerald Empire holds sacred: the majesty of destiny, the power of one's ancestors, and the supreme authority of the Son of Heaven.

This rebellion is particularly strong amongst the Eta, the

lowest of the low in Rokugani society. Some Eta see great value in what they do. After all, without them, the dead would rot in the streets, the condemned would receive no justice, and battlefields would be ritually impure for generations. In return for these vital services, the Eta are subjected to scorn, rejection, even arbitrary execution at the hands of their rulers. Iuchiban's teachings take root here more easily than anywhere else, for none store up resentment like social outcasts. Besides, the Eta are already comfortable with the handling of dead flesh - often a barrier for more cultured and educated converts to the Bloodspeaker cause.

PHILOSOPHY

At the heart of Bloodspeaker philosophy lie the teachings of its founder. Iuchiban's research contains a great deal of philosophy, as well as justification of his unholy rituals. To the cult, the human body contains the greatest resources of all, for no other medium, not even jade, so perfectly combines the five elements of nature into one cohesive unit. Unlike followers of bushido, the Fortunes, or Shinto, the Bloodspeakers believe that only drastic measures can bring out the body's true potential. By properly sacrificing a part of the body, through bloodletting, murder, or the raising of the dead, they can convert flesh and blood into tangible energy. Each display of maho, each abomination they commit in the name of their art, produces magical effects to rival the greatest shugenja. For those who have lived all their lives below the samurai caste, or worse, for those who do not wish to yield to the whim of spirits, such practices hold great allure. This promise of power has always been enough to keep the cult alive.

With power comes the ability to wield it and Bloodspeakers are dedicated to making the most of their dark magic. For now, they try to expand their membership by explain their philosophy to those who might sympathize and occasionally strike against the instruments of Imperial authority. In the long term, however, they seek nothing less than the destruction of the Imperial dynastic system of rule. The current world of competing claims to the throne is a good start, but they'd like to see the entire idea of hereditary rulership abolished. By overthrowing the current system and replacing it with one based on their own philosophies, they will gain revenge for centuries of persecution, while simultaneously proving the superiority of their beliefs. This overriding goal keeps the Bloodspeaker's individuality from overwhelming their effectiveness and allows them focus on something "more important" than self-aggrandizement.

THE FOUNDER AND FU LENG

The Bloodspeakers' relationship with their founder reflects their individualist views. They do not worship Iuchiban as a god or revere him as an ancestral spirit. Rather, Iuchiban represents the pinnacle of what their philosophy can achieve. He commanded the power to shake the very foundations of the Empire; the bravest samurai still shiver at mention of his name. Deep within their secret hearts, every Bloodspeaker aspires to such heights. Persistent rumors of his immortality, as well as the simple fact that the cult was formulated around his teachings, grant his name a certain awe among his followers. Certainly, if he were to appear again, as he did three hundred fifty years ago, the cult would fall under the sway his commands



with reverent devotion. Yet, the admiration of their founder is not the same as worship, for some Bloodspeakers seek to blaze their own trail in the world, as has Iuchi Shahai with her alliance with Daigotsu, Lord of the Shadowlands.

Overall, the Bloodspeakers do not serve Fu Leng - at least that's what they tell themselves. Iuchiban's teachings emphasize the power of the self and the need for the individual to determine his or her own fate. These teachings, however, do not include eternal servitude to a mad god. While their methods may resemble Fu Leng's and their rituals may reek with unholy implications, most Bloodspeakers are certain that their ways are not his ways and never will be.

Their belief is misplaced.

TAINT AND SECRECY

What most Bloodspeakers fail to realize is the inherent corruption present in the rituals they perform. The energy they unleash is a form of the Shadowlands Taint, the sixth element, which Fu Leng uses to corrupt those who visit his realm. As a result, Bloodspeakers who practice maho gain Shadowlands points as outlined in the *Rokugan* campaign setting (page 137).

TAINT VARIANT RULE

Note that the *Oriental Adventures* Taint system (using a Taint "score") is not compatible with the *Rokugan* system (using Taint "points" and a Taint "modifier"). The system will be used for the purposes of this text.

In addition, the *Oriental Adventures* rules for Taint declare that 'Taint is used as a negative modifier to all Charisma and Wisdom-based skill checks.' This is a bit of an exaggeration of the effects of Taint and is not recommended for game play in *Rokugan*. Ignoring the Charisma and Wisdom penalties of Taint is a variant rule for *Rokugan*.

Unlike corruption gaining from visiting the Shadowlands, the price of Bloodspeaker maho is rarely quantified in physical form. The caster suffers no sores, abnormal growths, or transformation into hideous and unspeakable shapes. Members of the cult can convince themselves that they do not serve the Dark Lord, because they do not show the outward signs of the Taint.

This lack of visible symptoms does not mean that they are

immune to the Taint, for the Bloodspeaker nefarious practices make them more susceptible to Fu Leng's influence than any other Rokugani. The Taint simply does not manifest itself in obvious ways. Mental instability is common among Bloodspeakers, ranging from bad dreams to paranoia, increased aggressiveness, and hysterical rants. The secretive nature of the cult permits many of its members to hide these instabilities from others, but they rage uncontrollably when in private or during Bloodspeaker gatherings. Reports sometimes circulate of cultists attacking each other in wild frenzies or throwing themselves onto sacrificial altars, in the midst of a ceremony. Their leaders explain such incidents as over-enthusiasm, the revelations of "newly-freed" minds, or (in the worst cases) the shattering of the weakest vessels by forces too great for them to master. Thus does Fu Leng disguise his influence within Rokugan; not even his tools realize whom they serve.

Insanity and mental instability are not the only signs of Shadowland's influence in the cult. While a member may appear normal on the surface, during the latter stages of the Taint, their muscles and other internal organs often become overrun with corruption. A pleasant demeanor without can hide a hideous monstrosity within. This gruesome tendency became apparent at the Battle of Sleeping River in 750, when the assembled Clan forces cut down cult members by the hundreds and thousands. The dying cultists revealed grotesque mutations just beneath the surface of their skin. One Bloodspeaker had a series of suckered tendrils wrapped around his heart and lungs. Another's internal organs had been replaced with black tumorous growths, which filled his body like a sack full of coal. Such abominations are not universal or even particularly common among low-ranking Bloodspeakers, but the higher one advances in their ranks - the more maho one practices - the greater the chances of succumbing to unwholesome degradation. (For game details, see page 12.)

So long as they remain hidden under the cults protection in Rokugan, these instabilities stay unseen. Should a Tainted Bloodspeaker ever enter the Shadowlands, however, the balance of purity and corruption changes drastically. Growths and tumors are said to sprout within minutes, limbs wither off or die, and an unprotected cultist is quickly reduced to hysterical shrieks, as the madness destroys whatever remains of his or her sanity. Few tainted Bloodspeakers have ever traveled to the Shadowlands (Iuchi Shahai is the most obvious exception. Perhaps she was protected by her superior knowledge or through her association with Daigotsu). Though the phenomenon is rarely seen, it offers conclusive proof that Fu Leng's power lies at the cult's black heart.

ORGANIZATION AND RITUALS

The Bloodspeakers presently number more than 500 members and at least 10,000 sympathizers, mostly scattered about the Lion, Crane, and Scorpion lands. They usually live in extremely isolated locations, where they are not likely to be bothered or in large cities where they can hide amid the multitudes. They have no set calendar and do not meet on any regular basis. Although tradition holds that Bloodspeakers may only meet during the new moon, few members adhere to this practice, for many believe it to be simply a peasant superstition. Meetings are held when necessity dictates.

CELLS

The cult is based on individual, self-sufficient, cells. Most Bloodspeakers know very little about cells other than their own; this both limits their power as a group and protects them from witch-hunts and executioners. A few senior members know the location of more than one cell and serve as intermediaries when the cell must act in unison. This ensures that the discovery of one cell will not lead to the destruction of the entire cult. This ensures that a relatively small cult of 400 members is surrounded by 33 million Rokugani who hate and fear their power. Their influence and reputation is entirely out of proportion to their modest numbers.



A given cell will have anywhere between five and twenty-five members, most of whom hold ordinary occupations in a nearby community. In rare instances, larger groups have been formed, where an entire monastery, village, or other community has been subverted by the cult. When these communities are uncovered, they are routinely burned to the ground, and every man, woman, and child in the village is executed. In ages past, children were spared, but this merciful policy had disastrous consequences when tainted children grew into murderous adults.

Every group of cultists has one acknowledged leader and two or more assistants. The leader is always both tainted and commanding, and usually is the most powerful mahotsukai or tainted samurai among the group. These assistants vary widely from region to region, for they are sometimes related to the leader by blood or profession. They may include anything: a cultist whose body harbors evil spirits, an Eta butcher a little too fond of his trade, a devotee of the Chuda mysteries of snake charming and transformation, or simply two of the strongest warriors, who pin down human sacrifices during cult activities.

GATHERINGS

Meetings consist mainly of readings from Iuchiban's text, maho rituals to increase the power of the participants, and planning. Typical plans considered include: strikes against enemies, eliminating threats from magistrates or witch-hunters, hiding the remains of victims, and finding new ones. The meetings are usually held under cover of night, in empty places such as abandoned farms, secret basements, woodland clearings far from any path, and desolate hilltops. Most meetings include at least one blood sacrifice, as members ask the advice of dark spirits or demonstrate the growth of their powers.

Occasionally a strong display of magic requires a greater sacrifice, usually an unwilling victim who will not be overly missed. Lone travelers, ronin, poor foreign merchants, local troublemakers, or fellow Eta make the best choices; few notice when they vanish and fewer still ask questions when they do. Such sacrifices are needed in order to creating zombies, summoning powerful creatures, or lay curses upon distant enemies; every member of the cell invariably attends them. Eta members dispose of any remains (or procure them, if zombies are the order of business) while others plant rumors suggesting that their unfortunate victim may have business elsewhere; visiting a girl in another province, perhaps, or attending the funeral of a distant relative. In the wilder border regions, remains are left in the lair of a nearby monster (an ogre or a pack of ghouls), which is then blamed for the death.

INITIATION

Cult initiation takes place only after careful observation of the prospective member. Since survival relies upon secrecy, and the Bloodspeakers do not readily trust outsiders, the group chooses its own recruits. Anyone showing up asking to be initiated is viewed with extreme suspicion and told nothing. If they persist, the pushy outsider often winds up invited to a meeting...as a sacrifice. Many join the cult through the recommendation of family members, and fathers often teach the ways of the organization to their children, in order to ensure its survival for another generation. (This may be another reason why the Bloodspeakers thrive amongst the Eta, whose duties are inherited from generation to generation.) Others are allowed to join only after careful study and the local cell leader gives approval.

During the initiation ceremony itself, a prospective member must cut his or her arm and drain blood into a ceremonial bowl. The lead Bloodspeaker will then work a minor maho spell with it, usually summoning a kansen or evil spirit to witness the proceedings. The initiate pledges his or her life to following the cult's creed and the new member invariably gains 1 Taint point for completing the ritual.

The Bloodspeakers are patient; like the mysterious Kolat, they have learned to wait and move only when circumstances permit it. They understand that their ultimate aim of dethroning the imperial bloodlines and seizing power for themselves cannot be achieved overnight. Only after Iuchiban's aborted coup attempts did cult leaders begin to truly understand this. The Bloodspeakers think of the long term and refuse to gamble on all-or-nothing ventures. Instead, they act quietly, moving in secrecy and directing attention away from the cult itself. Assassination always points toward a scapegoat, arson is blamed on bandits or local Nezumi. While they have not reached the Kolat's mastery of stealthy and control, they understand misdirection and cover their tracks well. They encourage new membership among the very young, ensuring that the cult will survive after the leaders pass on. Many Eta families have belonged to the Bloodspeakers for hundreds of years and they pass on its rites from father to son like any other tradition. Because they are Eta, no one notices.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership in the cult varies from cell to cell. As small as it is, it can afford certain flexibility and allow individual cells to decide this for themselves. Most cells gravitate

toward a charismatic or ruthless head; those who prove unworthy are generally overthrown by an ambitious underling. Leaders take care not to become too autocratic, for a cult of self-improvement does not respond well to overt authority. Those who stay in power learn to balance their personal clout with enough charm and subtle negotiation, to assuage those who serve them.

Conflict between cult cells is rare. Rokugan is too large and the cells are too spread out for such incidents. Internal cell struggles, while uncommon, occur more frequently. As long as they remain hidden, the cult's upper echelons tolerate them, for in their eyes, the conflicts remove the weak and encourage loyalty amongst the survivors. In the best cases, the conflict leads to a splintering of the cell, creating two new groups and expanding the cult's overall power base.

While the Bloodspeakers middle ranks fluctuate from time to time, the head of the cult is another matter. A creature of inhuman cunning and inexhaustible power has coordinated the various cells for well over three hundred years. For most of its history, the cult's true leader was Asahina Yajinden, the renegade Crane and not Iuchiban, for he was imprisoned in the Tomb. He first created the porcelain masks that provided the cult's troops and forged the Bloodswords that destroyed some of the cult's greatest enemies among the Great Clans. He rebuilt the membership of the cult time and again, after witch-hunters and inquisitors found them. Ultimately, he turned against Iuchiban and attempted to seize power for himself...he hasn't been heard from since.

Since Yajinden's disappearance, Iuchi Shahai, a powerful tsukai who ruled the Bloodspeakers for almost 30 years, has dominated the cult. She has since left the group to serve Daigotsu, generating yet another power struggle amongst the leaders known as the Circle of Five.

THE CIRCLE OF FIVE

Ever since Iuchiban's entombment, the Bloodspeakers have been led by a council of five beings, who unify the cult behind common goals. Originally created as a mockery of the Phoenix council of masters, these five maho-tsukai rule through agents and mouthpieces. They spread information between cells, issue orders, and shape Iuchiban's followers to match their own twisted schemes. Each of them fulfills a specific role within the group and all of them swear fealty to the Bloodspeaker's cause, even beyond the grave.

The original circle consisted of Iuchiban, Asahina Yajinden, the pennangallan Shinku Kamiko, the Oracle of Blood, and an Isawa Eta. After Iuchiban's capture and entombment, a position within the Circle was taken by Fushiki, a peasant boy who became a powerful and



intelligent zombie after Yajinden fused a porcelain mask to his face. Generations of Isawa shugenja and Eta succeeded one another in the fifth seat, providing a mortal voice to the deliberations. Until Iuchiban's second escape, Isawa Kakusu, the "Hiding Fish," served as the Phoenix voice in the Circle.

In fact, the circle has been modified to always serve one individual: Iuchiban. The Oracle of Blood is one of Iuchiban's constructs and for short a time; it gave the leader two voices on the council. The Oracle continues, to this day, to act as Iuchiban's proxy, for it is never physically present, but always communicates to the others through painful dreams and visions. Those who disagree with it often find it within their best interest to change their minds. Iuchiban's power on the Circle is hidden, but still ready for his return.

SHAHAI'S RULE

With Yajinden's disappearance and Shinku Kamiko's death in 1124, a fearless young tsukai named Iuchi Shahai foresaw an opportunity. Yajinden had led the council for many years and Kamiko had always echoed his voice, but without Yajinden's sustaining influence, the rot that afflicted Fushiki throughout his life quickly destroyed him and his seat was declared vacant. Shahai seized Fushiki's seat, thus making no claim on Yajinden's holdings and once she had spoken to the Oracle of Blood, no one dared oppose her. Her gamble paid off quickly; the appearance of power became actual power and her supporters were many and powerful.

Over time, Shahai gradually strengthened her connections to Daigotsu, who was raised among a wilderness cult of Bloodspeakers. Although no longer a member, Daigotsu remains in good standing with the cult. To this day it is still unclear whether Shahai was involved in the rituals that created him as a half-demonic Hantei, but she was certainly aware of them.

The other seats on the council, those that had once

belonged to Kamiko and Yajinden, remained empty for several years. The excuses varied: no good replacement could be found, there was no proof of Yajinden's death, and Shahai didn't need additional members on the council to advise her, but the truth was that no one quite wanted to admit that the pair were dead and perhaps be proved wrong. After the second Day of Thunder, in 1128, the council agreed to accept Kitsu Norinaga and Doji Adoka as new members of the Council. Norinaga is a bitter master of manipulating ancestral spirits and the undead, while Doji Adoka was the Guardian of the Temple, a position of respect in the cult.

When the Temple was uncovered and destroyed in 1142, Adoka fled and was soon removed from the council, though he remained a powerful Bloodspeaker within his own cell. In 1145, Yogo Hisahsi, an undead general who led and survived the Peasant's Rebellion of 1074, joined the Circle in Adoka's place. His almost 200 years of undeath has left him bony, and with only the Yogo's mask to hide a face reduced to skin stretched taught over a bony skull. The stench of him, however, is much more difficult to conceal.

The current council consists of the Oracle of Blood, the new Jama Suru, Kitsu Norinaga, and Yogo Hisahsi. The fifth seat was Shahai's post for more than twenty years. Since her departure to the Shadowlands in 1154, it has remained empty. Just as the seats of Yajinden and Kamiko were left vacant for several years, so no one quite dared to fill Shahai's seat either, though various cell leaders considered whether they might seize it or whether they were better off hidden in the hinterlands. In the end it stayed close to its previous owner. In 1159, Chuda Mishime, Daigotsu's hatamoto and a powerful Bloodspeaker in his own right, took it. Through Mishime, Shahai maintains a link to her old brotherhood, without leaving the Shadowlands to lead the cult directly and through Shahai, Daigotsu maintains an even more tenuous link with the cult that bred and raised him.

LOCATION AND NUMBER OF BLOODSPEAKER CULTS

The type and character of the cult varies among the eight major clans. Cells are created and destroyed fairly frequently, as new recruits are balanced against those lost to madness, corruption, age, and discovery by imperial magistrates, Phoenix inquisitors, and Kuni witch hunters. The overall status of the cult seems to be one of growth at the moment, as many of the resources of the Empire are distracted by the struggle over the succession and the threat posed by Daigotsu.

Crab Lands: Kuni witch hunters, greedy Yasuki, and members of the Damned are the most common targets of Bloodspeaker recruitment efforts, despite Crab knowledge that Bloodspeakers are ultimately servants of the Shadowlands. The cult is currently organized into three groups within the lands of the crab: the first consists of former witch hunters, the second, a rapidly-growing urban Yasuki group of merchants, and the last, a soldier's brotherhood who believe the Bloodspeaker's lie about their ability to remove the Taint. The turnover among the soldier's brotherhood is especially high, since they often venture in the Shadowlands and do not return.

Crane Lands: The wealthy and glorious of the Crane have fallen on hard times since the Spirit Wars. Many of the former nobles have grown to resent their newfound poverty and found themselves desperately attempting to recover their status in the courts. As a result, recruitment has been strong; the message of personal excellence resonates among the Crane. Several cells are currently scattered throughout the clan. The largest is an orgiastic group of courtiers, but others include a blood brotherhood of Kakita duelists seeking power, a group of Daidoji peasants who sacrifice Yasuki and Mantis visitors in a dark cavern, and an elderly Doji shugenja who has corrupted an entire school of apprentices with sodomy and blood rite orgies. Oddly enough, the only group not infected is the Asahina shugenja; with Iuchiban's return from the Tomb memory of the shame of Yajinden has made them very mindful of their obligation to hunt down corruption. Persistent rumors tell of a Temple of Blood in the northern Crane lands, but if this Bloodspeaker

stronghold exists, it is certainly well hidden.

Dragon Lands: The Ise Zumi are among the most successful in suppressing the cult. The Togashi Hoshi and the Kitsuki magistrates have destroyed almost every trace of it. A few cells exist among the scribes and monks of a remote monastery. They are investigating the value of tainted oni blood in tattoo magic. These Bloodspeakers have all lived much longer than normal, supported by Togashi and Hitomi's blood. If they ever unravel the link between blood tattoos and maho, they may become a critical threat to the Empire.

Until then, however, they continue to create monstrosities that are usually attributed to the corrupting effects of the Twilight Mountains.

Lion Lands: The Kitsu are the primary focus of Bloodspeaker activity among the Lion, but their Matsu warriors and even the Ikoma historians have seen a huge upsurge in Bloodspeaker activity recently, as Lion arrogance has led to a triumphal sense of destiny and invulnerability; a sense that cultists have fostered and exploited. Several cells of the cult are currently active in Lion territory, typically containing eight to eleven members, and are considered by many to be experts at summoning and binding both oni and ancestors. In particular, the Kitsu cells currently active have mastered the creation of kansen's hosts, to such a degree, that magistrates in Lion lands have become alarmed, especially due to the number of cases of insanity and possession produced through failed experiments. So far, the cult remains largely undetected here, as one of the cells consists exclusively of a dozen Lion magistrates.

Mantis Lands: The taint has come to the islands with Yoritomo Kumiko, the champion of the clan and with her have come others even more tainted. The cult seems to have spread almost exclusively among the women of the Mantis. One of her retainers, a shugenja who is among Kumiko's close advisors, is said to have learned the ways of the Bloodspeakers from Iuchi Shahai herself. The island versions of the cult's rituals incorporate menstrual connotations for blood magic that are not found elsewhere. The cult in Mantis Lands is actively hostile to accepting male recruits except as servants and sacrifices. The Bloodspeakers are still establishing themselves among the Mantis, therefore, recruiting is in its early phases. There are currently only a small number of bloodspeakers on the islands.

Phoenix Lands: Deeply bound to the Bloodspeakers by their shared understanding of magic, the Phoenix

were the first to discover blood magic and have always embraced it wholeheartedly. This is especially true among the Isawa, whose monks and shugenja are often corrupted, as well as among the Asako, whose love of hidden knowledge and deeper mysteries often lead them astray. At the same time, the Phoenix inquisitors are among the most zealous in seeking out and exterminating the cult. While the Bloodspeakers have always had a home in the north, they have never won over the thousands of converts one might expect. At the moment, the Phoenix lands are home to cells in the Isawa monasteries, among the various shugenja schools, heimin, and Eta, and one smaller cell among the Asako.

Scorpion Lands: The Scorpion craving for secret knowledge and manipulation has always made their lands fertile fields for the Bloodspeaker message. The Bloodspeakers take advantage of the secretive nature of some Scorpion businesses to hide their activities under the cover of other, more respectable Scorpion trades such as prostitution, drug dealing, and extortion. They have found many young Scorpion who have proven susceptible to the temptations of power, especially among the Yogo. The Scorpion members include more nobles than Eta, unlike most other clans. In addition, the Scorpion cells of the Bloodspeakers are said to involve a higher degree of openly Tainted and necrophilic rites than those of any other clan. The clan's use of masks is said to allow the undead Bloodspeakers to circulate more freely among the cult's gatherings.

Unicorn Lands: Bolstered by the corrupting work of Iuchi Shahai, the Unicorn Bloodspeakers have been torn apart by her defection to serve as Daigotsu's ally. The resulting fallout has taken its toll on what was a massive number of active members at the height of Shahai's influence. Half of the current Bloodspeakers and two of the remaining cells) support her bid for greater power. The other half are horrified by her open embrace of the Shadowlands and its taint. One cell remains cautiously neutral, while some of the other Unicorn cells left the region with Shahai herself. Most members from the horse clans are either Iuchi shugenja who idolize Shahai or Moto who embrace death a little too closely. Few come from the ranks of the battle maidens, but most Iuchi Bloodspeakers know how to summon an Onikage, or demon horse, and all hope to one-day ride one to victory. One cell is said to be entirely nomadic, living and moving by night and raiding small settlements for victims.

Wilderness Cults: On the fringes of the Empire, in

hidden valleys and the deepest forests, some small villages, monasteries, and even bandit strongholds are said to be entirely corrupted by the Bloodspeaker blasphemy. Some of these may be nothing more than legendary places, such as the Temple of Blood, rumored to be hidden in the north lands of the Crane. Others are certainly real, like the Monastery of Quiet Earth in the Phoenix lands, and the Cult of the Blood Moon, a group of ronin-turned-Bloodspeakers among the Lion. Others include the New Moon Temple in the Shinomen Forest near Scorpion lands, the Wind Dancer village on the western plains of the Unicorn, and the keep of the Five Scarlet Banners bandit gang among the Phoenix forests and hills. The wilderness cults are relatively rare, given the size of the empire, and survive mostly by pretending to be something innocuous. However, since they are entirely devoted to the cult, they are excellent places to store cult treasures and to train new generations without fear of discovery. These training grounds are also extremely lethal to anyone who discovers their secrets; many overly curious travelers to these villages, shrines, strongholds, and monasteries never continue on their travels.

BLOODSPEAKERS OUTSIDE AN ORIENTAL CAMPAIGN

The dark sorcery of the Bloodspeakers need not be limited to only Oriental campaigns. In many ways, they are even more threatening in a traditional Western fantasy setting, for they are the only ones who truly understand the taint. Without the persecution of Kuni Witch Hunters and the vigilance of the Elemental Masters, Bloodspeaker corruption may go undetected forever. Their rituals will still bring the wrath of any Inquisition, paladins, and church authorities they draw the attention of, yet they may not fully understand the nature of the dark forces that are arrayed against them. The main question to decide before introducing Bloodspeakers to an Occidental campaign is the nature of their source of their powers in Western cosmology. There are three possible options:

Prince of Darkness: The easiest juxtaposition in some ways is the substitution of a demon lord, arch devil, or evil

god of the campaign for Fu Leng. The powers of Hell are still the powers of Hell, but their master has a different name. This Prince of Darkness grants the powers and corruption of maho to his followers; in all other respects, the group is the same as the Bloodspeakers.

Distant Travelers: Ships or caravans from distant lands have brought The Taint, and the cult with it. The Bloodspeakers now seek to establish themselves in a new realm. Most people of the Eastern part of the campaign world know and understand the Dark Lord, the taint, and the weapons best used against it. For those who have never seen the taint in action, finding out what it is, where it comes from, and how to protect themselves from it can be the focus of a campaign.

The Discovery of Fu Leng: In some ways, it's just easiest to keep a dark god and a region like the Shadowlands. The PCs may be the first to discover a desert land of corruption far from civilization. There, the Bloodspeakers dwell around the perimeter, all too willing to teach the new arrivals the truth of gaining power for themselves. The god himself still lies in a Festering Pit deep within the desert kingdom, either a worthy foe for epic-level adventuring or a force to be contained and opposed without direct confrontation.

In addition, if your playgroup includes people familiar with the Legend of the Five Rings campaign settings, it's worthwhile to change names like Iuchiban to either more generic titles ("the Founder", the "First Enlightened") or to specific names that match the tone of the rest of your campaign.

BLOODSPEAKER PRESTIGE CLASSES

There's more than one road to hell. The Bloodspeakers have always operated in all levels of Rokugani society, from the lowest Eta to the highest courtiers and champions. Here, then, are five ways to increase personal power at the cost of your soul. The Bloodspeakers are founded on the leadership of the maho tsukai and their warriors, the maho bujin. Both are described below, as adapted from the

Oriental Adventures hardback, as well as four new prestige classes: the Chuda Snake Charmer, the Kansen's Host, and the Tainted Shadow.

The Taint is not just a source of corruption and madness, for it bears the power of the Shadowlands. Characters who are willing to use this power can achieve tremendous depths of corrupt might. These special prestige classes are open only to characters that bear the taint: the maho-bujin (a Tainted warrior), the Chuda snake charmer (a Tainted snakelike rogue), the kansen's host (a possessed body), the tainted shadow (a servant of the Lying Darkness), and the maho-tsukai (blood sorcerer).

Characters who progress far enough in one of these prestige classes become creatures of the Shadowlands themselves, transformed through the application of the akutsukai ("servant of evil") template (see *Oriental Adventures*).

MAHO AND THE TAINT

One of the most common means of acquiring the Shadowland's Taint is through the practice of maho or blood magic. Shugenjas, shamens, wu jen, and sorcerers are often drawn to the study of maho as a way of increasing their magical power, giving them access to destructive spells they would not otherwise know.

A shugenja, sorcerer, or other type of adept who researches maho can learn a spell from the maho-tsukai spell list instead of her normal spell list, if she succeeds at a Knowledge (Shadowlands) check, DC 15+ the spell's level. This spell counts against the character's maximum known spells. If the character is a shugenja, it counts as a spell outside the character's favored element.

Casting maho spells carries a terrible cost, however. Any character that casts a maho spell (a spell from the maho-tsukai spell list) must succeed at a Fortitude Save (DC 10 + spell's level) or gain 1 point of Shadowlands Taint. The character must make this saving throw every time she casts a maho spell.

If a character has acquired enough Taint points, she can qualify for the maho-tsukai prestige class, the maho-bujin prestige class, or one of the other new Bloodspeaker prestige classes offered. These prestige classes increase her magical power dramatically...at the ultimate cost of her soul.

PRESTIGE CLASS: CHUDA SNAKE CHARMER

To this day many believe that the magic of the Snake Clan has been forgotten, for their magic lies not in spells (the maho of the Chuda clan was much the same as other maho) but in the corrupt techniques of its samurai.

Chuda Snake Charmers are assassins whose weapons are not blades and darts, but snakes, spiders, and other vermin, trained to find and kill targets that cannot be reached any other way. They combine the skills of animal training with a ruthless understanding of just how and when to send their "pets" after a victim.

To be a successful Chuda snake charmer requires infinite patience, the fortitude to withstand stings and bites, as well as a deep appreciation of animal rhythms and abilities. The name itself is somewhat misleading; many snake charmers specialize in spiders, scorpions, or other venomous animals, snakes are simply the most common tools. This prestige class is popular among assassins, druids, rogues, and some barbarians. Humans are the most common snake charmers; nezumi seem to have an aversion to it.

As snake charmers advance in power, they frequently "shed their skin" and become increasingly snakelike. In time, they develop snakelike characteristics themselves, from scaly skin to a keen sense of smell and even a poisonous bite. Some believe that this is a byproduct of the rituals they use to gain empathy and control over their snakes and other vermin. These rituals are said to involve infusions of naga or yuan ti blood, but there is no proof of these claims.

Hit Dice: d6

REQUIREMENTS

Alignment: Any

Ability Score: Constitution 13+, Charisma 13+

Handle Animal: 8 ranks

Knowledge (Biology): 6 ranks

Wilderness Lore: 8 ranks

Sense Motive: 4 ranks

Sneak Attack: +2d6 or better

Taint Points: 11 or more

CLASS SKILLS

The snake charmer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Alchemy (Int), Animal Empathy (Cha), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Knowledge (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Pick Locks (Dex), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Search (Wis), Use Rope (Dex), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features:

Weapon and Armor Proficiency:

Snake charmers gain no additional proficiency in any weapon or armor.

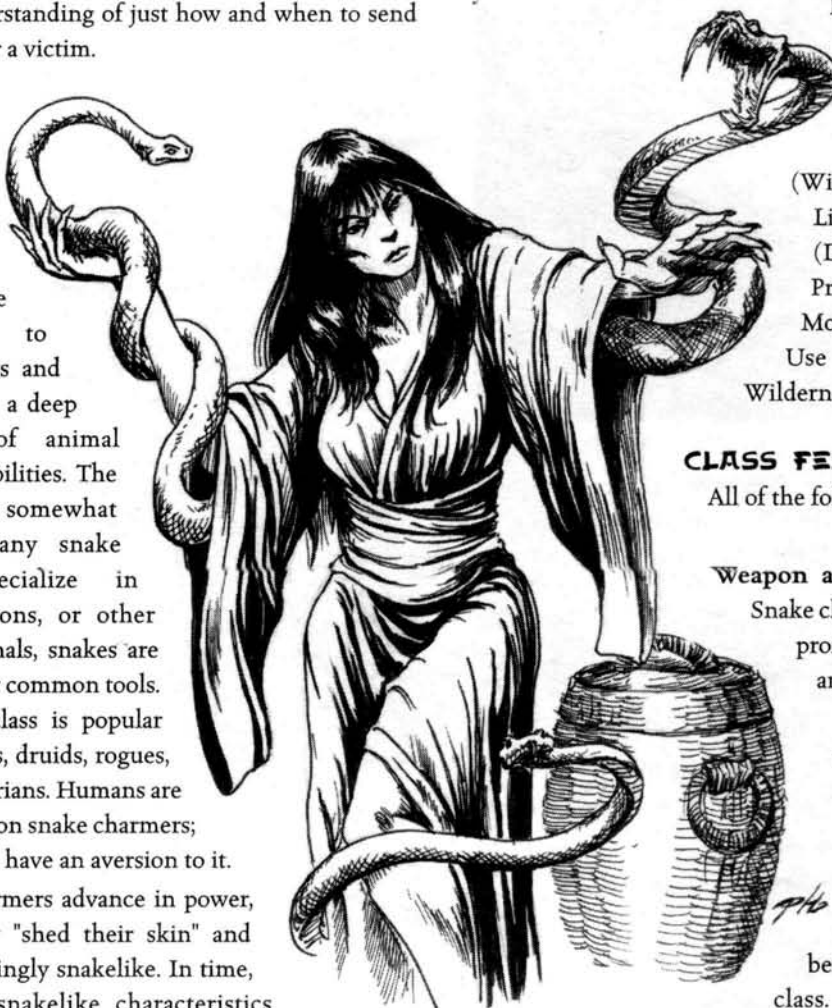
Spells per Day: When a snake charmer level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a spell casting class he belonged to before adding the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character

of that class would have gained.

Resist Poison: Snake charmers gain a +2 class bonus to all saving throws against poison.

Snakeskin: At 2nd level, all snake charmers gain a +2 natural armor class bonus.

See Through Vermin: At 3rd level, the snake charmer can see through the eyes of any creature he has trained, up to "Long range." In addition, he can speak to the creature as long as contact is maintained. If the creature or the charmer is wounded, a Concentration check is required to



keep the link open (DC of 12 plus damage).

Scent: At 4th level, the snake charmer gains a forked tongue and the ability to track by scent. This matches the Scent feat in the *Monster Manual*.

Charm Serpents: At 5th level and higher, a snake charmer can cast the assassin spell *forget* as a bonus spells three times per day.

FORGET

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-affecting]

Level: Asa 1, Mah 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 Action

Range: Close (25 ft. plus 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One living creature

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You make the target creature lose all memory of the last minute. It does not remember what is has seen, heard, or discovered during the preceding minute.

Modify memory counters, and can undo the effects of, *forget*.

Swarm of Vermin: At 6th level, a snake charmer can summon a cloud of snakes, centipedes, bees, and spiders equal to an *insect swarm* spell, but affecting only a 15 x 15 foot square region. The snake charmer is immune to the effects of the swarm.

Spider Climb: At 7th level, a snake charmer can *spider climb* (as the spell) twice per day as a caster of the same level. This is a supernatural ability.

Master Monstrous: At 8th level, a snake charmer can master and train poisonous aberrations, animals, magical beasts, and vermin such as giant snakes, scorpions, spiders,

and wasps. This also includes snake-like abominations such as yuan ti or serpent people. The snake charmer's voice acts as a *mass charm* spell on all such creature that hear it; training the charmed creatures is a normal application of the Handle Animal skill.

Poisonous Bite: The snake charmer's bite becomes venomous at 9th level; the poison strength is 1d8 Dex, 1d6 Dex, with an onset time of 1d3 rounds and DC 19. This ability does not grant the Snake Charmer Weapon Finesse with his bite attack.

Vermin Form: The snake charmer may assume the form of a giant snake, spider, scorpion, or wasp once per day. These forms grant the charmer the 40-foot (20 foot climb, 40 fly) movement, bite and claw attacks, and +1 natural armor class benefits of the relevant monstrous vermin, but he retains his normal intelligence. In addition, he gains +4 race bonuses to Climb, Hide, and Spot checks while in vermin form.

PRESTIGE CLASS: KANSEN'S HOST

Some Bloodspeakers have recently discovered that a kansen will grant them a greater ability to channel spells, at the price of sharing a body with evil spirits. To many who seek ever-greater power, this trade seems worthwhile. In the end, of course, only the kansen owns the body and the host is destroyed. For this reason, kansen's hosts are sometimes referred to as spirit slaves.

A kansen's host is a maho-tsukai who specializes in using kansen to directly channel magic, especially touch spells, possession, and hauntings. They combine knowledge of maho and arcana with a willingness to open their bodies directly to the spirits of corruption. Their strength is only partly their own, but it is undeniably greater than merely human power. Though most hosts

TABLE 1-2: THE CHUDA SNAKE CHARMER

Class	Base	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Special	Spells Per Day
Level	Bonus	Save	Save	Save	Save		
1st	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0	Speak to vermin, resist poison	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+3	+1	+1	+1	Snakeskin	
3rd	+2	+4	+1	+1	+1	See through vermin	
4th	+3	+4	+1	+1	+1	Scent	+1 level of existing class
5th	+4	+4	+1	+1	+1	Charm serpents	
6th	+4	+5	+2	+2	+2	Immune to poison	
7th	+5	+5	+2	+2	+2	Swarm of vermin	+1 level of existing class
8th	+6/+1	+6	+2	+2	+2	Spider climb	
9th	+6/+1	+6	+3	+3	+3	Poisonous bite	
10th	+7/+2	+7	+3	+3	+3	Vermin form	+1 level of existing class

summon their own spirits, a few kansen's hosts are created through the services of a shaman who summons and binds the kansen to the its host.

In addition to his ability to manipulate corrupted spirits, the kansen's host slowly sees the world of spirits directly. Over time, their seductive speech becomes more real to a kansen's host than the words of those around him. He often seems distracted and dreamy, listening to voices no one else can hear. Stranger still are the times when the kansen control his body completely and his personality dramatically shifts to that of an evil spirit.

This prestige class is most popular among human groups that already traffic with spirits, clans that have shamans among them as healers, goblins, and half-orcs. The clans with the highest number of kansen's hosts are the Crab, Mantis, and Scorpion. The most common members are

shamans, shugenja, and maho-tsukai.

Hit Dice: d8

REQUIREMENTS

Alignment: Any chaotic

Ability Score: Constitution 14+

Knowledge (Shadowlands): 4 ranks

Taint Points: 15 or more

CLASS SKILLS

The kansen's host's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Knowledge (Int), Leadership (Cha), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Search (Wis), and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A kansen's host gains no additional proficiency in any weapon or armor.

Spells per Day: When a kansen's host level is gained, the character gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in a spell casting class she belonged to before adding the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained.

A kansen's host casts arcane spells, much like a sorcerer. Rather than using a key ability score for spell casting, kansen's hosts use their Taint scores. To cast a spell, a kansen's host must have a Taint modifier at least equal to the spell's level. Kansen's host bonus spells are based on the character's Taint modifier with a +2 bonus, and saving throws against maho spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + the kansen's host's Taint score. The complete spell maho list appears in Chapter Two.

A kansen's host is limited to casting a set number of spells of each level per day, but she need not prepare her spells in advance. The number of spells she can cast per day is improved by her bonus spells, based on her Taint score. Her Taint score does not affect the number of spells a kansen's host knows.

Taint Suppression: While a kansen's host is likely to accumulate a high Taint score over the course of her life, this form of the Taint is not immediately obvious to onlookers. A kansen's host's Taint manifests itself in mental effects, such



as insanity, rage, nightmares, and other internal physical effects. If a host is split open, the internal corruption is obvious: Her body is full of bloody pus and strange growths, even internal limbs. If a kansen's host enters the Shadowlands, her corruption immediately manifests itself in the complete possession of the host. Barring these two conditions, it is impossible to detect a kansen's host based on appearance.

A kansen's host no longer applies her Taint score as a penalty to her Wisdom, but still applies half of her Taint score as a penalty to her Constitution.

A kansen's host accumulates Taint for casting maho spells, just like a shugenja or sorcerer does. See "Maho and the Taint", page 12, in this chapter. All spells a kansen's host casts are maho spells.

Summon Kansen: All kansen's hosts may summon 1d4 kansen (see Rokugan Adventures for details) once per day. They will fight for the summoner for 1 round/prestige class level.

Spirit Sight: Beginning at 1st level, a kansen's host is always able to see incorporeal creatures such as yorei (ghosts), ancestor spirits, kansen, kami, and the like. This vision is equivalent to the effects of a *spirit sight* spell cast by a 16th level shugenja. (*Spirit sight* is detailed in *Magic of Rokugan*.)

Master of Spirits: At 3rd level, the kansen's host can dominate a lesser kansen through sheer force of will. This requires a contested Charisma check between the host and the kansen, yorei, or other spirit; the two sides roll a d20 plus level or Hit Dice plus Charisma modifier. The higher score dominates the lesser for 1d4 hours, after which the loser is entitled to a Will save to escape the more dominant side's influence. The master of spirits can impose his will this way a number of times per day equal to his class level.

Bind Kansen: At 4th level, the kansen's host can command kansen to bide in an object, as per the spell *gift of*

the kansen. This may be done with a number of summoned kansen up to the prestige class level of the summoner. Binding a kansen successfully for a kansen's host who does not have any levels in a spell casting class requires a successful Will check, DC 17.

Incorporeal: At 5th level and higher, a kansen's host can shed his body entirely as per the spell *incorporeal form* (detailed in *Secret College of Necromancy*). This is a supernatural ability and can only be performed once per day.

Kansen's Seduction: At 6th level, a kansen alters its host's words to make them more appealing to others. This acts as a *suggestion* spell with a level equal to the kansen's host level; however, the cost of bringing others under your sway crippling exhaustion. The kansen's host must make a Fort save with DC of 10 plus 2 per creature targeted by seduction; if the save fails, the kansen's host suffers a temporary loss of 1d6 points of Constitution.

Spirit Prison: At 7th level, a kansen's host can trap any incorporeal undead, spirit, or oni. The spirit is entitled to a Will save against the attempt, equal to a DC 10 plus the imprisoning character's Charisma bonus plus Taint modifier.

The prison used to trap a kansen must be either a living body (thus creating a level 1 member of the kansen's host prestige class) or a masterwork item (such as a mirror, sword, or lantern). Imprisoning a spirit requires coming in contact with the spirit through either summoning or traveling to it and then requires a full round action. Only creatures of the spirit subtype or incorporeal creatures are affected. A new spirit prison can be created only once per day.

Once trapped, a spirit may escape by successfully making a Will save against a DC of 10 plus the trapping kansen's hosts Taint plus 1 per 1,000 gp value of the masterwork item used. Only one save is allowed per day.

TABLE 1-3: THE KANSEN'S WILLING HOST

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Taint suppression, spirit sight	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Summon kansen	
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Master of spirits	+1 level of existing class
4th	+2	+4	+1	+4	Bind kansen	
5th	+3	+4	+2	+4	Incorporeal	+1 level of existing class
6th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Kansen's seduction	
7th	+4	+5	+3	+5	Spirit Prison	+1 level of existing class
8th	+4	+6	+3	+6	Spirit Guide	
9th	+5	+6	+4	+6	Ghost touch	+1 level of existing class
10th	+5	+7	+4	+7	Corrupt Spirit	

Spirit Guide: At 8th level, a kansen's host can hear the advice of its spirit clearly enough to divine future events. This is equivalent to a *dark divination* spell cast once per day.

Ghost Touch: At 9th level, the kansen's host gains the ability to cast *touch of death* as a touch attack at will. Each time this ability is used, there is a 5% cumulative chance that the character becomes a corrupt spirit, advancing to 10th level (see below), making a Will saving as described below, and perhaps becoming entirely possessed by the spirit sharing its body.

Corrupt Spirit: At 10th level, the kansen's host crumbles under the burden of corruption inflicted by the spirits within him, but also burns with raw power. The host gains +20 hit points, +1 to each ability score, and the ability to gain one new 1st or 2nd level maho spell as an innate ability every week. At the same time, the kansen's control becomes ever more difficult to resist. Every time the character casts a maho spell or commands spirits (using any of the prestige class abilities) he or she may lose control of their shared body. The character is entitled to a Will save with a DC of 10 plus his Taint modifier. If the save fails, he is overcome by the kansen's wiles and permanently possessed, effectively becoming an NPC.

While the kansen's host prestige class generally advances the spell casting ability of a character as if she continued with a former class, the kansen's host who begins without

any arcane spell access gains spells as shown in Table 1-5: Kansen's Host Spell Advancement. The kansen's host has access to the Maho spell list.

TABLE 1-5: KANSEN'S HOST SPELL ADVANCEMENT

Level	Cantrip	1	2	3	4	5
1	1	0*				
2	2	1				
3	2	2	0*			
4	3	2	1			
5	4	3	2	0*		
6	4	3	2	1		
7	5	4	3	2	0*	
8	6	4	3	2	1	
9	6	5	4	3	2	0*
10	7	5	4	3	2	1

* Taint bonus spells only. If there is no bonus, no spells are gained at this level. At least 1 taint point is required to gain 1st level bonus spells, 11 for 2nd level bonus spells, 21 for 3rd level bonus spells, and so forth. Since a kansen's host must have at least 15 Taint points to qualify for the prestige class, he or she always gains the 1st- and 2nd-level bonus spells. See Table 1-4.

Table 1-4: Taint Bonus

Tainted prestige classes gain spell bonuses for higher levels of Taint. This can be confusing because Taint is more commonly referred to as the "Taint bonus" rather than the "Taint points" (and the Taint score from Oriental Adventures is not related to either one). This is made clear in the Table below, which expands the Taint Table from Rokugan.

Taint Points	Taint Bonus	Symptoms	Bonus Spells Per Day								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0-5	0	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
6-10	0	Mild	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
11-15	+1	Mod	1	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
16-20	+1	Mild	1	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
21-25	+2	Sev	1	1	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
26-30	+2	Mod	1	1	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
31-35	+3	Mild	1	1	1	1	--	--	--	--	--
36-40	+3	Mod	1	1	1	1	--	--	--	--	--
41-45	+4	Mild	2	1	1	1	1	--	--	--	--
46-50	+4	Sev	2	1	1	1	1	--	--	--	--
51-55	+5	Mild	2	2	1	1	1	1	--	--	--
56-60	+5	Mod	2	2	1	1	1	1	--	--	--
61-65	+6	Mild	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	--	--
66-70	+6	Sev	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	--	--
71-75	+7	Mod	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	--
76-80	+7	Mild	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	--
81-85	+8	Mod	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
86-90	+8	Sev	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
91-95	+9	Mild	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
96-100	+9	Mod	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1
101+	+10	Sev	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1

PRESTIGE CLASS: MAHO BUJIN

When a character's Taint exceeds the capacity of his body and soul to contain it, he is possessed by the evil power of the Shadowlands and transformed into a creature of Taint. Such characters feel an irresistible urge to travel into the Shadowlands, often walking until their feet bleed, slaughtering anyone or anything in their way. Crab patrols or marauding Shadowlands creatures kill the lucky ones. The unlucky ones find their way to the Festering Pit of Fu Leng and are transformed into living servants of evil.

Most maho-bujin were Crab fighters, samurai, or rangers before their Taint overcame them, although a member of any race (except Nezumi), clan, or character class can adopt this prestige class. Shugenja and other spell casters are usually seduced into the maho-tsukai class before becoming maho-bujin. Rogues are usually tainted shadows before becoming maho-bujin, while other classes are

sometimes kansen's willing hosts before becoming maho-bujin. The conversion of powerful Bloodspeaker cult leaders into maho-bujin is largely hidden from the members of the cell: their sudden disappearance is attributed to "joining the Circle of Five," "ascending to a higher plane," or even simply "gone south."

Maho-bujin are found throughout the Shadowlands, often serving as commanders for small groups of Shadowlands creatures.

Hit Die: d12

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a maho-bujin, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Shadowlands Taint: The character must have 51 or more Taint points, for a Taint modifier of at least +5.

Special: The character must enter the Shadowlands and travel to the Festering Pit of Fu Leng.

CLASS SKILLS

The maho-bujin's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Climb (Str), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Ride (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Maho-bujin do not gain additional proficiency in any weapon or armor beyond what they possessed before their transformation.

Taint Suppression: By definition, a maho-bujin is overwhelmed with Taint, but this Taint is not immediately obvious to onlookers. After he becomes a maho-bujin, a character's Taint manifests itself in mental effects, insanity, rage, nightmares, and other internal physical effects. If a maho-bujin



is split open, the internal corruption is obvious: His body is full of bloody pus and strange growths, even internal limbs. Barring this condition, it is impossible to detect a maho-bujin based on appearance.

A maho-bujin no longer applies his Taint score as a penalty to his Constitution, but still applies half of his Taint score as a penalty to his Wisdom.

Crimson Road (Ex): Maho-bujins make additional melee attacks in a round like a monk's unarmed attacks. Each additional attack is made at a base attack bonus 3 points lower than the previous. Thus, a maho-bujin with a base attack bonus of +8 gets three attacks per round at +8, +5 and +2, instead of two attacks at +8 and +3.

Shadowlands Subtype: Like all creatures of the Shadowlands, maho-bujins are vulnerable to certain forms of attack. Even if they have damage reduction, they are harmed by jade and obsidian weapons, and cannot regenerate or naturally heal wounds dealt by such weapons. They are also affected by crystal weapons as described in *Oriental Adventures*, Chapter 8.

Death Knell (Su): When a maho-bujin of at least 4th level strikes the killing blow to dispatch any creatures, he gains 1d8 temporary hit points and +2 to Strength. If he is a spell caster who uses maho, his effective caster levels also increases by +1. This effect lasts for 10 minutes per HD of the slain creature.

Unbounded Corruption: A maho-bujin of 7th level or higher adds half his Taint score to all attack rolls.

Damage Reduction (Ex): A 10th-level maho-bujin gains damage reduction. He ignores 10 points of damage from each normal attack, unless a +1 or better magic weapon, or a jade, obsidian, or crystal weapon inflicts the damage.

PRESTIGE CLASS: MAHO-TSUKAI

Maho or blood magic, is perhaps the most seductive and effective tool of evil in Rokugan. Maho wielders or maho-tsukai, have served the will of the Shadowlands for centuries, both within the Empire and without. While the Kuni Witch Hunters, Phoenix Inquisitors, and Snake Clan Magistrates have dedicated themselves to purging maho from the empire, it is often those most dedicated to its eradication that are most likely to find themselves seduced by its power. Young shugenjas frustrated at the slow pace of their studies, old scholars chafing at the limitations of their elemental magic, peasant folk-magic practitioners, for all these spell casters, maho offers a way to overcome obstacles that the sanctioned magic of Rokugan cannot provide, at the mere cost of one's soul....

Maho-tsukai come from a variety of backgrounds. Many are shugenjas, some inexperienced, some quite advanced, who stumble across or seek out the forbidden secrets of maho in their school's libraries. Others are adepts from the peasant classes who learn maho from an older practitioner. Many Bloodspeakers fall into this category, for they pass the secrets of maho down from generation to generation. Characters who learn maho without prior magical training usually begin as sorcerers, advancing into the maho-tsukai class as soon as they meet the prerequisites.

NPC maho-tsukai are everywhere, though they are usually extremely well-hidden. Despite the recent crusade conducted by Kuni Utagu and other witch hunters, maho-tsukai remain within every clan of the Empire, both lurking in peasant villages and, especially, hidden away in the shugenja schools, where Utagu was less likely to turn his attention. Maho-tsukai also operate within the Shadowlands, most notably Iuchi Shahai, whose power has

TABLE 1-6: THE MAHO-BUJIN

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Taint suppression, Crimson road, Shadowlands subtype
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Death Knell
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Unbounded corruption
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Damage reduction 10/+1

earned her the title of Dark Daughter of Fu Leng.

Hit Die: d8.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a maho-tsukai, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Base Will Save: +4

Shadowlands Taint: The character must have 21 or more Taint points, for a Taint bonus of at least +2.

Skills: Concentration 8 ranks, Knowledge (Shadowlands) 4 ranks.

Spells: Ability to cast divine or arcane spells.

Special: Must either read maho writings to learn the practice, study maho under another maho-tsukai, or summon a Shadowlands spirit such as a kanssen or ubume.

CLASS SKILLS

The maho-tsukai's class skills (and the key ability for

each skill) are Alchemy (Int), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Hide (Dex), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (Shadowlands) (Int), Scry (Int), and Spellcraft (Int). See Chapter 4: Skills in the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the maho-tsukai.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Maho-tsukai are proficient with all simple weapons. They are not proficient with any type of armor or shields. Armor of any type interferes with a maho-tsukai's arcane gestures, which can cause her spells to fail (if those spells have somatic components. See the "Spell Failure" table in the *Player's Handbook*.

Taint Suppression: While a maho-tsukai is likely to accumulate a high Taint score over the course of her life, this Taint is not immediately obvious to onlookers. A maho-tsukai's Taint manifests itself in mental effects, insanity, rage, nightmares, and other internal physical effects. If a maho-tsukai is split open, the internal corruption is obvious: Her body is full of bloody pus and strange growths, even internal limbs. If a maho-tsukai enters the Shadowlands, her corruption immediately manifests itself externally as well. Barring these two conditions, it is impossible to detect a maho-tsukai based on appearance.

A maho-tsukai no longer applies her Taint score as a penalty to her Constitution, but still applies half of her Taint score as a penalty to her Wisdom.

A maho-tsukai accumulates Taint for casting maho spells, just like a shugenja or sorcerer does. See "Maho and the Taint", page 12, in this chapter. All spells a maho-tsukai casts are maho spells.

Spells: A maho-tsukai casts arcane spells, much like a sorcerer. Rather than using a key ability score for spell casting, maho-tsukai use their Taint scores. To cast a spell, a maho-tsukai must have a Taint score at least equal to the spell's level. Maho-tsukai bonus spells are based on a number equal to the character's Taint score +10, and saving throws against maho spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + the maho-tsukai's Taint score. The maho-tsukai's complete spell list appears in Chapter Two.

A maho-tsukai is limited to casting a set number of spells of each level per day, but she need not prepare her spells in advance. The number of spells she can cast per day is improved by her bonus spells, based on her Taint score. Her Taint score does not affect the number of spells a maho-tsukai knows.



Blood Component: A maho-tsukai must substitute a drop of blood for a spell's material component or focus, if any. She has two options: use her own blood or use someone else's.

If she uses her own blood, the minor knife cut to draw the requisite blood is a free action that becomes a normal part of casting the spell. The maho-tsukai does not need to make a Concentration check to complete the spell, despite the wound. Using this ability deals the maho-tsukai 1-point of damage.

If she uses someone else's blood and the victim is unwilling, this adds a full round to the casting time of the spell. Blood from a willing victim is treated slightly differently. Each case has different effects on casting.

If the victim is unwilling, the maho-tsukai must make a normal touch attack with a bladed weapon to draw the blood. The victim suffers normal damage for the weapon type if unwilling (see Table 1-7). If the touch attack fails to draw blood (because it misses or because of protective enchantments on the target), the spell is not completed and maho-tsukai must either "hold" the spell to try again next round or use her own blood in a rushed way, suffering 2 points of damage and requiring a Concentration check (DC 12) to maintain the spell.

If the victim is bound or otherwise helpless, this attack succeeds automatically as a free action, as cutting the victim becomes a normal part of the spell casting. The damage is treated as a confirmed critical or the doubled blood cost shown in Table 1-7 (whichever is lower). If the blood shed in the round is not enough to replace the component, a second cutting and additional time to drain blood from the victim is required before the spell is completed.

If the person giving blood to power the spell is willing, drawing blood inflicts just 2 points of damage for a normal spell (more as in Table 1-7 for a replaced expensive component). It requires no touch attack and otherwise occurs as if the caster were using one's own blood for the spell. It does not add an additional round to the casting, but does make casting a full-round action.

Substituting blood for a costly material component requires drawing a greater amount of blood. The maho-tsukai deals more damage to herself when doing so, according to the table below. When using her own blood to replace a costly component, the maho-tsukai must make a Concentration check (DC 10+ damage taken + spell level) to successfully cast the spell.

TABLE 1-7: BLOOD COMPONENTS

Component Cost (gp)	--Damage Dealt--	
	To Tsukai	To Other
Inexpensive	1	2
1-50	5	10
51-300	11	22
301-750	17	34
751+	23	46

Spell Conversion: A maho-tsukai can "trade in" levels in another spell casting class for additional levels of maho-tsukai spell casting ability. Each level of prior spell casting ability counts as one additional level as a maho-tsukai for purposes of determining spells known and spells per day only. Spells previously learned as a shugenja or sorcerer count against the character's total spells known, but the maho-tsukai casts them now as arcane maho spells, spilling blood during the casting as a blood component. Maho-tsukai do not learn more cantrips or gain more 0-level spells per day as they advance. When a maho-tsukai advances a level, she can learn her new spells from either her old spell list or the maho-tsukai spell list, but casts all her spells as maho spells regardless.

For example, a 5th-level sorcerer becomes a maho-tsukai when she reaches 6th level. As a sorcerer, she knew six 0-level spells, four 1st-level spells, and two 2nd-level spells. As a maho-tsukai, she converts her sorcerer levels to maho-tsukai spell-casting ability and can now cast spells as a 6th-level maho-tsukai. She learns one new 1st-level spell (a total of five), one new 2nd-level spell (a total of three), and two 3rd-level spells as well. She casts all her spells, whether she knew them before her "conversion" or not, as maho spells using blood components. She still knows her six cantrips and can cast six 0-level spells per day for the rest of her career.

Maho metamagic: A maho-tsukai who learns metamagic feats can apply them by paying an additional cost in blood. By draining blood, the maho-tsukai can enhance her spells without using a higher-level spell slot. The cost is a number of points of temporary Constitution damage equal to the level of the metamagic spell. Thus, to cast a *vampiric touch* spell with the Empower Spell feat applied costs the maho-tsukai 5 points of temporary Constitution damage (3rd level spell + 2 levels for Empower Spell). The maho-tsukai cannot enhance a spell to a level higher than he can cast by this means. For example, a maho-tsukai must be at least 9th level to cast an Empowered *vampiric touch*, even though the spell uses only a 3rd-level slot.

Level advancement: The power of maho is seductive. Once a character has tasted its attractions, it is hard to resist. If a maho-tsukai wishes to advance in level in another class, she must make a successful Will saving throw with a DC equal to 10 + her Taint score. If she fails the saving throw, she must advance her maho-tsukai level. If she succeeds at the saving throw, she can advance the level in another class, though she must still attempt the saving throw the next time she gains a level.

TABLE 1-8: THE MAHO-TSUKAI

Base Class	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Special	Spells per Day*								
Level	Bonus	Save	Save	Save		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1st	+0	+2	+0	+0	Taint suppression, blood components, spell conversion, maho metamagic	3	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+0		4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+1		5	3	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
4th	+3	+4	+1	+1		6	4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
5th	+3	+4	+1	+1		6	5	3	--	--	--	--	--	--
6th	+4	+5	+2	+2		6	6	4	--	--	--	--	--	--
7th	+5	+5	+2	+2		6	6	5	3	--	--	--	--	--
8th	+6	+6	+2	+2		6	6	6	4	--	--	--	--	--
9th	+6	+6	+3	+3		6	6	6	5	3	--	--	--	--
10th	+7	+7	+3	+3		6	6	6	6	4	--	--	--	--
11th	+8	+7	+3	+3		6	6	6	6	5	3	--	--	--
12th	+9	+8	+4	+4		6	6	6	6	6	4	--	--	--
13th	+9	+8	+4	+4		6	6	6	6	6	5	3	--	--
14th	+10	+9	+4	+4		6	6	6	6	6	6	4	--	--
15th	+11	+9	+5	+5		6	6	6	6	6	6	5	3	--
16th	--	--	--	--		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	--
17th	--	--	--	--		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	3
18th	--	--	--	--		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4
19th	--	--	--	--		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5
20th	--	--	--	--		6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

*No character can actually reach a level above 15th as a maho-tsukai, but through spell conversion a character may have the spell-casting ability of a higher-level maho-tsukai.

TABLE 1-9: MAHO-TSUKAI SPELLS KNOWN

Level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1st	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
2nd	3	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
3rd	3	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
4th	4	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
5th	4	2	1	--	--	--	--	--	--
6th	5	3	2	--	--	--	--	--	--
7th	5	3	2	1	--	--	--	--	--
8th	5	4	3	2	--	--	--	--	--
9th	5	4	3	2	1	--	--	--	--
10th	5	5	4	3	2	--	--	--	--
11th	5	5	4	3	2	1	--	--	--
12th	5	5	4	4	3	2	--	--	--
13th	5	5	4	4	3	2	1	--	--
14th	5	5	4	4	4	3	2	--	--
15th	5	5	4	4	4	3	2	1	--
16th	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	2	--
17th	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	2	1
18th	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	2
19th	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	3
20th	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	3

PRESTIGE CLASS: TAINTED SHADOW

Some people just don't know any better; they are easy prey for the Lying Darkness. Others, much more corrupt to begin with, know that they are servants of evil, but just don't care. The Tainted Shadow is a rogue or ninja-oriented prestige class for those who just can't help themselves when it comes to stealthy power.

Hit Dice: d6

REQUIREMENTS

Alignment: Any

Ability Score: Dexterity 14+

Hide: 10 ranks

Move Silently: 10 ranks

Shadowlands Taint: The character must have at least 21 Taint points, for a Taint modifier of +2 or greater.

CLASS SKILLS

The tainted shadow's class skills (and the key ability for

each skill) are: Appraise (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Knowledge (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Search (Wis), Spot (Int), and Swim (Str).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A tainted shadow gains no additional proficiency in any weapon or armor.

Shadow Lover: A tainted shadow gains a +4 corruption bonus to all attempts to Hide. This bonus does not apply when an area is protected by anything that wards off the Taint (such as jade or *protection from Taint*).

Aversion to Daylight: At 2nd level, the tainted shadow begins suffering a -1 penalty to attacks and saving throws when in full sunlight or within the boundaries of a daylight spell.

Shadow Touch: At 3rd level, the tainted shadow's touch chills living creatures. The tainted shadow's



unarmed damage increases to 1d4 cold damage and also inflicts a temporary 1 point Strength loss per successful touch attack.

Bonus Feat: At 4th level, and again at 8th, the tainted shadow gains an additional feat from the General list.

Whispering Darkness: At 6th level, a tainted shadow can learn what is happening in regions of shadow far away, as the kansen, undead shadows and other corrupt kami whisper the secrets of creatures and things hidden in shadow. To use this ability requires a successful Concentration check; the DC varies by distance, as shown in the table below.

TABLE 1-10: WHISPERING DARKNESS DC

Distance	DC Required
Less than 100 feet	10
101 to 300 feet	15
301 to 1000 feet	18
1001 feet to 1 mile	21
1 to 10 miles	25
Greater than 10 miles	30
Up to 100 miles	40

If the check is successful, the tainted shadow sees and hears through his or her shadow helpers as if he had cast *clairvoyance* and *clairaudience* (per the spell). Scrying through shadows can be detected and blocked by any method that hinders kami or divination spells.

Wraithform: At 7th level, a tainted shadow can literally become a wraith, as described in the *wraithform* spell. Unlike the spell, someone with enough physical stamina can maintain the effect almost indefinitely. The spell's base duration is one minute per class level of the tainted shadow. Once that duration increment ends, a Concentration check (DC 5 initially) is required. If the check succeeds, the tainted shadow retains its insubstantial form. If not, it is immediately returned to physical form.

Summon Shadows: At 9th level, a tainted shadow can summon the undead known as shadows once per night, by taking a full-round action to call to darkness. A swarm of 3d12 shadows answer the call, one round later and obey the tainted shadow for a number of rounds equal to his Taint score. The tainted shadow can also use this ability during daylight hours, but summons only 1d4 shadows on clear sunny days or 2d4 on cloudy days.

Liquid Darkness: At 10th level, the tainted shadow is almost entirely beholden to the darkness, but just barely able to maintain control. The tainted shadow can shapeshift at will into a shadow form. This is an incorporeal

shift that takes all worn and carried items with it.

At the same time, the call of darkness becomes more difficult to resist. Every time the character casts a maho spell or uses the shapeshifting ability, he may lose control of his increasingly tainted body. The character is entitled to a Will save with a DC equal to 10 + his Taint. If the check fails, he is overcome by the kansen's wiles and permanently possessed, effectively becoming an NPC.

TABLE 1-11: THE TAINTED SHADOW

Base					
Class	Attack	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
Level	Bonus	Save	Save	Save	
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Shadow lover
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Aversion to daylight
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Shadow touch
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Bonus feat
5th	+5	+4	+4	+2	Whispering darkness
6th	+6	+5	+5	+2	
7th	+7	+5	+5	+3	Wraithform
8th	+8	+6	+6	+3	Bonus feat
9th	+9	+6	+6	+4	Summon shadows
10th	+10	+7	+7	+4	Liquid darkness

The tainted shadow often becomes a maho-bujin when his or her Taint points exceed 50.

CHAPTER TWO:

BLOODSPEAKER MAGIC

Over the centuries, the cult of Bloodspeakers has developed maho from very meager beginnings to a wide-ranging set of spells and items. However, due to the compartmentalized nature of the cult, only a few of these spells are widely shared, others are in the sole possession of their inventor.

ITEMS

ANVIL OF DESPAIR

The Bloodspeaker Asahina Yajinden in collaboration with Iuchiban created this foul tool of twisted magic. It is



an enormous anvil crafted of black iron, gleaming with the barest hints of red. The Tainted iron was taken from the mines of the long-lost Boar Clan, stained with the blood of the First Oni. Storytellers speak of it as an "an altar of blood and fire, a stone made of an oni's skull covered in flesh, fire, and the molten steel of the Moon's own hatred." This foul stone is known as the Anvil of Despair and the cries of the souls it has devoured can still be heard on the darkest nights in the Twilight Mountains; its hunger has not yet been sated.

The tales may be slightly exaggerated, but the Anvil carries a nearly limitless capacity for evil. Phoenix legends claim that the Anvil was seized and destroyed years ago, but recent reports place the Anvil in the lands of the Unicorn, Crane, and Mantis. In fact, these Anvil sightings may all have been false rumors, for the renegade monk Kokujin has used the Anvil to forge a daisho with the blood of *ise zumi* and Dragon clan samurai. Even more surprising, it seems that the anvil is guarded by the corrupt remnants of the Boar clan, who have conjured up a legion of shakoki dogu in the Twilight Mountains to defend it.

Yajinden used the Anvil to forge the legendary Bloodswords (see page 27) and it can create more Tainted weapons, armor, and items whenever it is presented with the proper materials and a skilled smith. To create truly legendary weapons, metal stained with the blood of an Oni Lord is required. However, the Anvil can also craft items of impressive lethality using the blood of lesser creatures, such as humans.

Using the Anvil requires at least one craftsman with the Craft (Weaponsmith) skill, one with Craft Magic Arms and Armor, and one with the Knowledge (Maho) skill, (ideally these are one and the same,) and a victim for the anvil. The victim must be chained to the front of the Anvil, which slowly sweats a foul red alloy that can be folded into metal. Each week, the craftsmen who labor and enchant weapons on the Anvil gain 1-5 points of Shadowlands Taint (a single craftsman does not gain double Taint). If this Taint is negated by any means, the Anvil's magic does not function. Each week that the victim is chained to the Anvil, the Anvil inflicts 50 hit points damage that cannot be healed until the victim is unchained. If the victim is released alive before the work is done, the work is ruined. If the victim dies during forging, another must be chained to the Anvil to avoid ruining the work.

A Knowledge (Maho) check and a Craft (Weaponsmith) check must be made successfully against a DC set by the GM. If neither roll is successful, no further work is accomplished, though Taint and damage are inflicted normally.

The Anvil of Despair can be used to create any items the GM deems fit, but weapons are most common. The chart below can be used as an example of a few maho powers that can be forged into these weapons.

TABLE 2-1: ANVIL OF DESPAIR EFFECTS

Skill DC	Total HP Damage	Effect
15	15	Weapon gains +1 vs. up to five specific enemies. A sample of hair, fingernails, or blood of each enemy is required.
20	25	+1 to hit and damage, may be applied up to five times.
25	50	Once per hit, may reroll all damage dice that roll less than the wielder's Taint bonus.
30	100	Weapon inflicts one point of Taint per strike on target.
35	150	Wielder heals up to 4 times an enemy's level or HD when that enemy is slain by the weapon.

Weapons created by the Anvil of Despair always have a bizarre, macabre appearance (screaming faces worked into the metal, an unhealthy blue glow, etc) and radiate the Shadowlands Taint. Also, most of these weapons require their wielder to make a Will save (DC of 10 plus creator Taint bonus and maho-tsukai level) in times of stress. The results of failing the save vary, but always suited the weapon's name or purpose (see the Bloodswords for examples).

If the person using the anvil is a maho-tsukai with the Enchant Item feat, additional maho spells may be embedded into the item and activated by the wielder as innate abilities while holding the weapon or item. To embed a spell requires a Spellcraft check with a DC of 15 plus spell level plus for each use of the power beyond once per day and the sacrifice of 30 hit points to the Anvil per level of the spell.

BLOOD ARROWS OF YAJINDEN

These arrows are enchanted by the Bloodspeaker cult to honor one of their founders, Asahina Yajinden. He corrupted Asahina techniques to create the original blood arrows during the first uprising of Iuchiban's hordes. Initially they were used to devastating effect by the skeletal archers created by Iuchiban, but have since been used by the Bloodspeakers for a more subtle purpose. Many Bloodspeakers switch the arrows in an archer's quiver with blood arrows, since the blood arrows have a chance of Tainting the archer who unwittingly uses them. The members of the cult see this as a direct way spreading the glory of Iuchiban's power and creating new recruits.

The blood arrows of Yajinden are +2 tainted arrows with an additional enchantment. These arrows are fired as ranged touch attacks. Though the blood arrows themselves are imbued with the Shadowlands Taint, spells, and effects,

an attempt to detect Taint will not reveal the nature of the arrows until after they are fired.

Caster Level: 9th; Prerequisites: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Shadowlands Taint 3+; Market Price: 647 koku.

THE BLOODSWORDS

In his first bid for power over the Empire, the dark sorcerer Iuchiban enlisted the aid of Yajinden, the sinister Asahina craftsman. At Iuchiban's behest, the Crane forged four of the most powerful blades ever seen in Rokugan...the Bloodswords. Each harnessed the soul of a fallen hero, binding the darkest virtues of fallen samurai into weapons intended to strike at the heart of the Crab, Crane, Scorpion, and Lion. Three out of four Clan Champions given these swords were swiftly destroyed and only the cunning of a Scorpion offered any hope that Iuchiban's plan could be stopped in time...

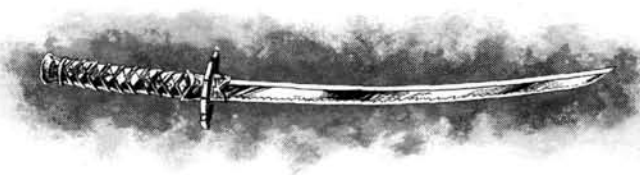
ABILITIES COMMON TO ALL BLOODSWORDS

All Bloodswords are intelligent katanas with the bloodthirsty ability (and several other customized abilities). All negative levels inflicted by the sword's bloodthirsty ability are permanent, though a victim may make a Fortitude save (DC 25) 24 hours after the effect to attempt to regain lost levels. Victims killed by a Bloodsword are irrevocably slain, their souls trapped forever within the blade. Only a wish, miracle, or other powerful magic can free trapped souls, therefore, they may be restored through karma or other restorative spells.

Bloodswords do not radiate evil or Shadowlands Taint. Their infernal power is so subtle that few realize their true danger. Each Bloodsword has a trigger (some innocuous action or event that draw the blade's interest). When this trigger occurs, the wielder must make a Will save (DC 5) or fall under the control of the blade. Each time the wielder makes a successful save the DC increases by 1. Each time the wielder uses the Bloodsword to kill an intelligent creature, not corrupted by the Shadowlands Taint or Lying Darkness, the DC increases by 5.

When the wielder finally fails his save, he falls under the Bloodsword's control. Each blade has different effects when this happens, but when the sword returns control to the wielder, they are left to deal with the shock and trauma of what they have done. (One infernal part of the enchantment is that the wielder always blames himself, never the sword. The Bloodswords always draw upon the weaknesses already present in their wielder's psyche.) After the sword has had its way with its wielder, the DC reverts to 5, plus 5 for every uncorrupted person the current wielder has killed using the sword.

Bloodswords communicate by telepathy and often seek out wielders who will make powerful pawns, encouraging them to take up the blade and experience its power.



REVENGE (FUKUSHU), THE FIRST BLOODSWORD

Yajinden gave this sword to the Lion Champion Matsu Meikuko, a woman with a reputation as a cool and levelheaded general. Only days after she received the gift, its curse began to warp her gentle good nature. She challenged a peaceful Dragon courtier to a duel, a challenge to which the startled Dragon replied by quietly leaving the city. Taking the act as an insult to the Emperor whom she served, Meikuko declared war upon the entire Dragon Clan, charging 20,000 Lion bushi into the mountains in the dead of winter. Only 2,000 survived the climb and Meikuko took her own life dishonorably among the Togashi peaks. Her name has become synonymous with "mistake." The sword has passed through several hands since, and is currently kept by Akodo daimyo Akodo Ginawa, who managed to overcome the Bloodsword's temptation after many years of struggle. It is now stored in a hidden Lion monastery where, it is hoped, it will bring harm no more.

Revenge is a +6 bloodthirsty keen katana of wounding. It grants its wielder 20 temporary hit points once per day and may cast haste as a free action up to three times per day. Once per week on a successful critical hit, Revenge casts *destruction* upon its target. All of these abilities occur at a time of Revenge's choosing, not the wielder's. (Unlike other Bloodswords, Revenge prefers not to destroy its master, but to keep him alive as an engine of pain and destruction.) Like all Bloodswords, it is intelligent (Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14, Ego 25), chaotic evil, and has no honor.

Trigger: If anyone slights Revenge's bearer in any way, Revenge forces a Will save.

Effect: The wielder enters a barbarian rage (see the *Player's Handbook*) that lasts until every visible enemy has been slain. This rage is even more savage and unrelenting than normal; the wielder of the Bloodsword cannot end his rage prematurely unless he is separated from the Bloodsword and even then has a 50% chance of perceiving whomever disarmed him as an enemy and continuing his rampage. Only when all enemies are dead or have departed does the rage end.



PASSION (JORETSU), THE SECOND BLOODSWORD

Passion nearly destroyed the Crane Clan when the Clan Champion butchered his entire family because of his love of a geisha. Fortunately, the man recovered his will long enough to hurl himself and the cursed blade into the sea, where they could harm no one. So far as the people of Rokugan are aware, Passion has never resurfaced.

Passion is a +6 keen bloodthirsty mighty cleaving katana of speed. Like all Bloodswords, it is intelligent (Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 16, Ego 25), chaotic evil, and has no honor. Passion casts *enervation* as a free action on any target it strikes in melee combat, up to three times per day (but only once per round). Once per day, the sword can cast *word of chaos* on a target of the blade's choosing.

Trigger: Someone comes between the bearer and something or someone they perceive as theirs.

Effect: The wielder perceives the person coming between him and that which he desires as a threat and acts accordingly. The wearer then takes his object of desire and moves to a place where he can be alone with it. Any critical



threat the wielder rolls while defending his desire in this fashion is automatically confirmed as a critical hit.

AMBITION (YASHIN), THE THIRD BLOODSWORD

Ambition was originally a gift to the Scorpion Clan Champion, designed to incite the Scorpion to act against the Emperor. Three Scorpion Champions have fallen to its power. The first was Bayushi Gonasu, who led a senseless attack on the Lion in order to steal land. The second was the first female Scorpion Champion, Bayushi Hajeko, who took Ambition from its hiding place in the bowels of Kyuden Bayushi and murdered her father with it. Claiming his throne and his clan, she lasted nearly seventeen hours before being dethroned as a usurper. The third time Ambition found a Scorpion Champion, Bayushi Shoji led his Coup against the Empire, setting off a chain

of events that led to the apocalyptic Day of Thunder.

Ambition is a +6 bloodthirsty katana of silent moves. The bearer also gains a +15 profane bonus to bluff checks. The bearer may cast *confusion* and *knock* three times per day each. Once per week, the bearer may cast both *greater dispelling* and *weird*. These abilities are cast as a 20th level caster.

Trigger: When the bearer sees a person of less worth than himself with higher social status.

Effect: If the initial Will save to resist the Bloodsword's influence fails, the bearer must make another Will save (DC 20). On a failed save, the wielder attacks the trigger character instantly. On a successful save, the bearer may choose to bide his time and plan an attack more carefully,



but is still forced to act in some manner against his perceived enemy.

JUDGMENT (HANDAN), THE FOURTH BLOODSWORD

The sword Judgment has made a quieter path across the Empire than the other three Yajinden Blades. The first bearer of this Bloodsword saw sin and folly in everyone around him and eventually was driven mad by the blade. After slaughtering his personal guard and family, the tragic Crab Champion committed seppuku. Since then, the sword has been carried around the Empire without much notice; the role of the samurai often calls for swift decisions and immediate action, an attitude that Judgment simply encourages. The current location of the blade is unknown.

Judgment is a +6 lawful bloodthirsty dueling vorpal katana. The bearer of the sword may cast *detect alignment* at will, though the character usually interprets the casting and resulting knowledge as his or her own intuition and keen judgment. The sword can also cast *holy word*, *unholy word*, and *plain of desperate evil* (from *Magic of Rokugan*) once per day. The curse of this sword is such that any *detect alignment* or *detect evil* spell used by the bearer may give a false result for any creature targeted. The bearer has a 50% chance of seeing any creature so targeted as chaotic evil. Also, the bearer's Sense Motive skill checks have a 25% chance (rolled secretly by the GM) of convincing the wielder that the creature in question is up to no good or hiding something, regardless of the creature's true intentions or alignment.

Trigger: When the bearer believes that someone has misled or offended him.

Effect: The wielder executes justice upon the offender, quickly, harshly, and mercilessly. Any that stand with the offender are punished beside him. The wielder gains a +10 deflection bonus to AC against the person who offended him directly and is immune to any mind-affecting spells or abilities until the sword returns control of his body.

HIDDEN HEART OF IUCHIBAN

Extremely powerful, more often rumored than understood, this item is at the center of the Iuchiban's power and long life, though its exact nature has always been a mystery, even among cultists. The reason for this is simple: it uses a type of magic unknown in Rokugan, the magic of the Kahdi sorcery of the Burning Sands. While it is not clear that Iuchiban performed the spell himself (he may somehow have forced a Kahdi to perform it upon him without being betrayed), it is clear that the spell literally removed the heart from his chest and granted him a form of immortality, as long as the heart is intact. Over the centuries, it has been spotted in Otsan Uchi, in the archives of the Miya, and even in a monastery deep in the Crane lands, near the Temple of Blood. Each time, the heart has disappeared as quickly as it is found. Clearly, Iuchiban has set some sort of watch or guardian to protect it and this guardian itself is likely to be sorcery unknown to the Empire.

The Heart itself has few magical powers other than providing Iuchiban his immortal, but if it could be found and destroyed, the lingering threat that Iuchiban represents to the Empire could be eliminated. In addition, it is said that Iuchiban's servants have sometimes granted the Heart to those who have especially pleased him, as a sign of trust and (perhaps) as a challenge to unlock its magical secrets for themselves. Anyone who studies the heart for at least a month and makes a successful Spellcraft check with a DC of 30 immediately gains the knowledge of the *immortality* spell (see "Secret College of Necromancy"

for details). However, the person acquiring this knowledge cannot write it down or share it. The only way to use it is to become a necromancer or maho-tsukai of at least 14th level and cast it.

The Hidden Heart was last seen in Jama Suru's hands, but not the current Jama Suru. Thus, the Heart has not been seen since the time of the Hidden Emperor, long before the Spirit Wars, more than 30 years ago.

FOUR MASKS OF IUCHIBAN

The four porcelain masks of Iuchiban were originally created by the Phoenix Inquisitors and Kuni Witch Hunters, to seal the entrances of Iuchiban's Tomb. Created with the power to unlock a powerful ward, they were made larger than human size and enchanted with power to maintain the ward. A few shugenja argued at the time that the masks should be broken immediately, to prevent access to the Tomb, but since this would weaken the wardings they were part of, and the masks were kept intact.

It's likely that the masks originally did nothing but open the tomb. However, the Bloodspeakers have been searching for them for centuries and occasionally find one and they gave these masks enchantments. As if that were not enough, the masks have benefited from the tendency in Rokugan for famous items to spontaneously become magical on their own.

The masks were then scattered across the Empire, with one going to the Wall with the Kuni, one north to the lands of the Isawa, one sent to the guardianship of the Yogo, and the last sent to the Imperial halls, where the Otomo kept it among their archives and treasures. At first, all four masks had only one magical power: to open specific wardings. Over time, though, all four masks were stolen or mislaid, and the Bloodspeakers often held the masks for weeks, months, or years before the masks were tracked down. During that time, the cults strengthened the masks through blood sacrifice, tainting them and protecting them from harm. No cult cell has yet managed to hold more than one mask at a time, though Asahina Yajinden is



said to have once gathered all four masks together. What he did with them is the source of much speculation, but it is clear that all four masks are again widely scattered.

The masks are now so powerful that attempts to destroy them only appear to work. While a particular incarnation of a mask may be destroyed relatively easily (hardness 5, 10 hp), the spirit of the mask always finds a new home, spontaneously generating a new physical form for itself within 2 to 5 days. This generally occurs in a pre-existing mask, since Scorpions, Noh and Kabuki actors are the people who wear masks most often, they have usually been the ones to find themselves the unexpected owner of a Mask of Iuchiban.

Note that the masks are too large to be worn; they are more often carried as shields, worked into a suit of armor, or (especially popular among maho-tsukai) attached to cloaks much like a mon.

All four masks are tainted items and share the *ominous dreams* power. Ominous dreams affects all sleeping creatures within 50 feet of the mask. These creatures must make a Will save (DC 15 + 1/previous night near the mask) or suffer one point of Taint and 1d10 hp damage. This is equivalent to the effects of the *nightmare* spell (see PHB). A successful Will save negates both the Taint and the *nightmare* effects.

THE FIRST MASK (THE ISAWA MASK)

Said to be the most heavily enchanted (and most heavily corrupted mask,) the First Mask of Iuchiban is that of a frowning man with heavy eyebrows and a wide nose.

The mask primarily aids maho-tsukai; any caster who carries the mask adds a +3 to the DC for all maho spells he casts and gains a +3 bonus to Fortitude saving throws against Taint from using maho. In addition, the holder may cast *hide taint* three times per day.

THE SECOND MASK (THE KUNI MASK)

The Kuni mask is the one least affected by the various groups and cultists who have held it over the years. It has been enchanted by a series of Kuni Witch Hunters with powers that allow the owner to find and destroy cultists and tainted creatures. The mask itself resembles a kabuki actor, with exaggerated features and a wild mane of ceramic hair.

The Second Mask gives its owner a +1 bonus to base attack and damage, and a +1 maho bonus to all saves. It also allows the holder to *detect Taint* at will, *expose Taint* once per day, and it grants ability to bind Taint (see Kuni Witch Hunter) to anyone who has held it for more than 24 hours.

THE THIRD MASK (THE OTOMO MASK)

The only clearly female mask (the Yogo is ambiguous),

the Otomo mask shows a woman's face with lips puckered up for a kiss or whistle. Like the others, it inflicts dreams, taint, and madness, but its powers are less combat-oriented and subtler than the first two masks. The user may cast *knock* (as the spell) at will, and may cast *dimension door* and *charm person* 1/day.

In addition, the Otomo mask grants the ability to speak to kami and kansen as if the owner had cast *comprehend languages*.

THE FOURTH MASK (THE YOGO MASK)

The Yogo mask shows a young man's face, with a dueling scar from the left cheek to the chin. The eyes are covered with a small mask like that of a Scorpion courtier. The mask grants the ability to cast *alter self* at will and *voice of lies* once per day. The Fourth Mask also provides a bonus to dueling, granting Quick Draw feat to anyone who holds the mask and increasing the holder's Iaijutsu Focus rank by +3.

At the same time, the Fourth Mask makes the wearer more prone to dueling and anger. When challenged, the owner of the mask must make a Will save (DC 16) to decline, even when hopelessly outmatched. However, every time the owner wins an Iaijutsu duel, he becomes immune to the mask's ominous dreams and Taint powers for 1 week.

PORCELAIN ARMOR

This magical armor is made entirely of porcelain plates magically strengthened and stitched together with lacings and linings made of oni hide, tsuno horn, and blood-red lacquer and silk. The armor grants the ability of a permanent *blood armor* spell, *protection from good*, and *blood of midnight* once per day. It includes all the pieces of the o-yori or great armor: helmet sculpted to resemble a demon's head with tsuno horns, lamellar chest and arm pieces, and greaves and interlocking joint protecting padding. Its construction grants a +6 bonus to armor class.

The porcelain armor's greatest power, however, comes when the wearer dies. The porcelain armor first grants a form of unnatural vigor to the wearer, refusing to let the wearer's spirit depart when the body dies and allowing the wearer to keep fighting long after he should have died. The negative hit points the wearer must be reduced to before dying increases to double his Constitution. Thus, a samurai with a 12 Constitution could continue to attack until reduced to -24 hit points (-28 for a 14 Constitution, -36 for 18 Constitution, etc.). The wearer's wounds may be obviously mortal (throat cut, disemboweled, etc.) but he continues to fight without penalty.

If the wearer survives the battle, he can even be cured back to health, but he gains 1 point of Shadowlands taint

for every 2 points he dropped below zero hit points. If the wearer ever reaches a total of more than 20 points of Shadowlands taint, he can no longer remove the armor; doing so kills him instantly, because he requires the taint to support old wounds. In this way, the porcelain armor always destroys its wearer in the end.

Rumors that anyone killed while wearing the porcelain armor immediately rises up as a zombie are apparently unfounded. These stories may be based on the presence of maho-tsukai who raises all samurai slain during a battle as undead.

PORCELAIN MASK

An item for novice bloodspeakers, this mask turns a corpse into a zombie or a living creature into a tainted undead that retains intelligence. The mask must be placed on the face of a humanoid corpse or a living creature to be effective. If the target resists, a touch attack with a -3 penalty (as most victims instinctively ward off attacks against the face), is required. The victim must have an unprotected face (no mask or helmet).

In the case of a living creature, the target is entitled to a Will save (DC 19). If the save is successful, the mask can be removed immediately without suffering any permanent harm. If the mask is not removed for some reason (usually, the victim is restrained), the victim loses 1d8 points of temporary Constitution and must make another save 1 hour later. If the save fails, the victim becomes a zombie, gaining 11 points of Taint immediately, as well as all the effects of the undead subtype. The zombie retains the victim's Strength and Dexterity. The victim's levels are reflected in the zombie's Hit Dice. However, further progression in any of the victim's classes is immediately halted, and the victim becomes an NPC. If the victim's Con drops to zero before he or she fails a Will save, he rises as a normal zombie rather than retaining levels and ability scores.

RUBY OF IUCHIBAN

The Ruby of Iuchiban is a ruddy stone as big as a pigeon's egg that shines brighter than most rubies. It was first discovered by Iuchiban's spirit form in 656 and is believed to use magical principles foreign to Rokugan; magic that traps spirits in the Burning Sands. It was originally lost at the Battle of Stolen Graves in 750, when Iuchiban was recaptured. Most cultists who know of it believe that a Bloodspeaker swallowed the stone and escaped with it, though exactly how it escaped is unclear. The stone next appears in memory during the Mantis invasion of Phoenix lands in 1132.

The ruby is a tainted gemstone that acts as a +5 tainted ring of protection to anyone wearing it, offering a deflection bonus to AC and the usual bonus to saves. In

addition, it can trap other souls indefinitely. While a body's soul is trapped, the body itself is vulnerable not only to physical attack but also to possession by kansen, ghosts, or other evil spirits.

To use the Ruby, the stone's owner must call on the power of the stone (this requires a Will save by the victim with a DC of 15 plus the owner's Taint bonus). If the save succeeds, the attack fails, and the stone's owner must wait 24 hours before attacking the same target again. If the save fails, the victim's soul is moved to within the gem (as per the magic jar spell), and the body is left in a coma, breathing, but functioning only on involuntary reactions. Any kami, kansen, or other spirit creature can possess the body with a simple opposed Constitution roll, applying a possession bonus for every point of Taint bonus that the body has. The kansen can control the body indefinitely, as long as it succeeds in making a Concentration check every hour with a DC 10 plus victim's Con bonus minus victim's Taint bonus.

The spirit held in the gem is trapped and must make a successful Will save to escape; the trapped soul can also be dislodged if the owner of the gem successfully traps another soul (this automatically removes the first soul). The spirit cannot cast spells to free itself, but creatures outside the gem can cast *dispel magic*, *exorcism*, or *dismissal* on the gem to restore the spirit to the body.

Nothing has ever been told about what this Ruby was, how it did what it did, or why it was so important. An item that could let you trap (or perhaps even better, control) the souls of others would be a commanding weapon in Rokugan.

SCROLLS OF ASAHINA YAJINDEN

The scrolls are the bloodspeaker's version of history, includes spells, diaries, and witness accounts. It begins in the earliest days of the cult, after Iuchiban was defeated and entombed, and Yajinden took the helm to continue Iuchiban's work. The story told is one of triumph over adversity until the days of the Battle of Sleeping River. After the second defeat, the tone shifts to contemplating the revenge of the cult against the Hantei. The scrolls include a mention of the Circle of Five and its original membership, but they give no clues to current cells, members, or leaders.

Anyone who studies the scrolls gains 2 points of Taint (Will save DC 15 negates) and immediately fulfills the "study maho" requirement of the maho-tsukai class. The scrolls also describe the spells *bleeding*, *blood rite*, *ghost light*, and *written in blood*; the reader may select one of these as a known spell. Those who study a copy of the scrolls gain the ability to cast maho spells and become a maho-tsukai,

without the risk of immediate taint, but do not gain the additional maho spell offered by the original.

SHAHAI'S FAN

Iuchi Shahai has gained a number of trappings from Daigotsu, some of them taken during the raid on Otosan Uchi, some empowered by the Dark Lord of the Tsuno himself. This fan is said to be from neither of these sources; it is a beautiful confection of black silk with gilded points on each rib of the fan. The ribs themselves are rumored to be quite literal, each carved from the bone of a child. Certainly what little can be seen of them resembles ivory more than wood. The silk is painted with black, silver, and red runes on the black background; the two sides of the fan are quite distinct. Shahai is rarely seen without these days.

The fan's powers are *ancient wisdom, cause fear, legacy of the dark one, and voice of lies* at will. It acts as a *tessen +4 defender*. More importantly, the fan also allows her to cast maho spells from a stored pool of blood; this blood is said to be "eaten" by the fan in a blood rite during a cult ritual. The fan can absorb up to 50 hp of blood. This fades at the rate of 2 hp per day, as time and spirits alike devour the stored essence.



SPELLS

Maho comes in a thousand different forms. This section offers new spells, new rules for maho and honor, and a complete list of all maho spells available to Bloodspeakers and maho-tsukai.

MAHO AND HONOR

Maho's interplay with honor would seem to be straightforward: anyone who practices maho or even silently allows others to practice maho violates the code of bushido's tenets of duty, honesty, honor, and compassion. However, many maho-tsukai also grow more confident and courageous as a result of maho, and even retain their courtesy, duties, and apparent sincerity.

An extremely honorable samurai who is seen to condone maho once (perhaps to achieve some greater goal) will be seen as suspect or diminished by this action, but not immediately honorless. This is reflected in the following

TABLE 2-2: HONOR GAINS AND LOSSES PER HONOR RANK

Action Witnessed	HR1	HR2	HR3	HR4	HR5
Destroying a maho-tsukai	4	3	2	1	0
Tolerating maho use	-1	-2	-3	-5 to -7	-8 to -9
Willing recipient of maho (e.g., blood of midnight)	-2	-3	-5	-6 to -7	-8 to -10
Openly practicing maho	-3	-5	-7	-9 to -14	-15 to -19

Note that maho-tsukai who are found to have deliberately deceived others always suffer that honor penalty as well as the maho penalty shown above.

new honor gains and losses per Honor rank, which is an extension of table 1-13 in *Rokugan*.

Note also that honor is in the eyes of the beholder. Maho-tsukai who practice in secret may have destroyed their honor in their own eyes, but not in the eyes of others, as long as they have the Perceived Honor feat (*Rokugan*, page 53).

VARIANT RULE: LOW-LEVEL MAHO

The logic of the maho-tsukai prestige class can be a little contradictory at low levels: since a +4 Will save and spell casting ability are required to enter the prestige class, most maho-tsukai become Shugenja of 4th level or better before joining the path of corruption. In some cases, they learn maho spells as "out of element" spells. However, because they know school spells and favored element spells occupy most of the slots at 1st level, and 2 of 2nd level, they cannot learn many low-level maho spells. The Low-Level Maho rule allows Bloodspeakers to "forget" their shugenja spells to learn more maho.

For every class level as a maho-tsukai, a character may choose to deliberately forget one spell taught by the kami in favor of one taught by the kansen. The old spell is immediately removed from the tsukai's list of spells known and cannot be recovered. Spells from outside the favored element must be forgotten before

avored element or school spells are. The new spell requires a learning period of 1 week, a human sacrifice, or a conversation with a more powerful maho-tsukai or kansen.

COMPLETE MAHO SPELL LIST

Maho is magic that draws on the power of the Shadowlands, appeals to the evil spirits known as kansen, and that trades blood and souls in exchange for arcane power. It is forbidden throughout the Empire, but still finds practitioners, especially among the poor, the outcast, and the power-hungry.

Most spells dishonor the caster, cause additional taint, or honor loss. All require blood as a component as spelled out in the *Oriental Adventures* hardback (page 238).

Spells marked with a ● on the following expanded maho spell list are from the *Rokugan* hardback. Spells marked with a ■ are new to this book.

TABLE 2-3: MAHO-TSUKAI SPELLS

1st-Level Maho-Tsukai (29)

- Ancient Wisdom.** ■ Return spirit to a skull.
- Bane.** Enemies suffer -1 attack, -1 on saves vs. fear.
- Bleeding the Elements.** ■ You transfer 1d8 points of Taint to the terrain around you.
- Blood and Darkness.** ● Creates supernatural darkness for 10 ft. around caster.
- Blood Armor.** ■ Shares a quarter of damage when hit in melee.
- Blood Rite.** ● Consumes blood to boost abilities by +1 or recover 1d4 hit points.
- Blood Sacrifice.** ■ Increases the power of another spell.
- Bleeding.** ● Causes the target's wounds to bleed freely, losing 1 hit point per round.
- Cause Fear.** One creature flees for 1d4 rounds.
- Cobra's Breath.** Spit poison in a 10 ft. cone for 1 point of Con damage.
- Curse Water.** Makes unholy water.
- Dark Divination.** ■ Ask GM questions.
- Deathwatch.** Sees how wounded subjects within 30 ft. are.
- Detect Undead.** Reveals undead within 60 ft.
- Dim Mak.** ■ A mystical attack on a creature's circulation for 1d12+level.
- Doom.** One subject suffers -2 on all attacks, damages, saves, and checks.
- Drain Soul.** ● Lowers the target's Con and Str by 1 temporarily.
- Ghost Light.** Ghostly green radiance causes fear.
- Heart of the Damned.** ● Drains energy from corpses to heal the caster.
- Inflict Light Wounds.** Touch attack, 1d8+1/level damage (max +5).

Invisibility to Undead. Undead can't perceive one subject/level.

Legacy of the Dark One. ● Destroys an opponent's Void points.

Pain. ● Inflicts severe pain on target, increasing all DC by +5.

Ray of Enfeeblement. Ray reduces Str by 2d6 points +1 point/two levels.

Summon Undead Champion.* Summons a single zombie.

Taint the Blood. ■ Target suffers sweat, chills, -2 to attack, damage, and saves.

Taint Food and Drink. ■ Corrupts food with Taint.

Voice of Lies. ■ You gain bonuses to social skills.

Written in Blood. ■ Secret message visible only to the Tainted.

2nd-Level Maho-Tsukai (25)

- Apparition.** Target's face looks terrifying; viewers may become shaken.
- Blood of Midnight.** ■ Target suffers bloodlust, gains +4 attack and damage.
- Blood Warding.** ■ Protects a portal or chamber from untainted intruders.
- Choking Death.** ● Infects the target with pneumonia.
- Clan Curse.** ■ Exaggerates traits of the victim's clan.
- Damnation.** ■ Increases the chance that a target will succumb to the Taint.
- Darkness.** 20 ft. radius of supernatural darkness.
- Death Knell.** Kills dying creature; you gain 1d8 temporary hp, +2 Str and +1 level.
- Desecrate.** Fills area with negative energy, making undead stronger.
- Drawing Out the Darkness.** ■ Taints caster and target.
- Feeding on Flesh.** ■ Cannibalistic ranged attack.
- Gentle Repose.** Preserves one corpse.
- Ghoul Touch.** Paralyzes one subject, who exudes stench (-2 penalty) nearby.
- Hide Taint.** ■ Hides symptoms of Shadowlands taint.
- Inflict Moderate Wounds.** Touch attack 2d8+1/level damage (max +10).
- Kiss of the Toad.** Poisonous touch deals 1d3 Con damage, repeats in 1 min.
- Limb Disruption.** ● Costs the target temporary use of one limb.
- Mists of Fear.** ● Causes fear in target for 1d4 rounds.
- Sacrifice of Masks.** ■ Creates a permanent zombie.
- Scare.** Panics creatures up to 5 HD (15 ft. radius).
- Spectral Hands.** Creates disembodied glowing hand to deliver touch attacks.
- Summon Monster II.** ● Calls outsider to fight for you.
- Summon Swarm.** Summons swarm of small crawling or

flying creatures.

Tasha's Hideous Laughter. Subject loses action 1 round after casting.

3rd-Level Maho-Tsukai (22)

Animate Dead. Creates undead skeletons or zombies.

Bestow Curse. -6 to one ability, -4 on attacks/saves/checks, or 50% chance of losing each action.

Bloodstrike. ■ Drains Constitution from caster and multiple victims.

Cannibalize. ■ Heal yourself with HP taken from undead.

The Caress of Fu Leng. ● Corrupts jade items of up to 20 pounds.

Choke the Soul. ■ Chokes victim and denies actions for 2d4 rounds.

Contagion. Infects subject with chosen disease.

Dark Wings. ● Grants the caster wings to fly (twice max. ground movement rate, attacks at -2, cause unarmed +d4 damage)

Eternal Darkness. ■ Protects undead, grants regeneration.

Fear. Subjects within cone flee for 1 round/level.

Greater Blood Rite. ■ Consumes blood to boost ability scores by +2 and restore 2d6 hit points.

Halt Undead. Immobilizes undead for 1 round/level.

Hate's Heart. ● Inspires hatred in one target.

Inflict Serious Wounds. Touch attack, 3d8+1/level damage (max +15).

Negative Energy Protection. Subject resists level and ability drains.

Poison. Touch deals 1d10 Con damage, repeats in 1 min.

Red Knife. ■ Turns edged weapon into wounding blade.

Speak with Dead. Corpse answers one question/two levels.

Summon Monster III. Calls outsider to fight for you.

Summon Swamp Spirits. ■ Calls 1d4 swamp spirits/2 caster levels.

Vampiric Touch. Touch deals 1d6/two caster levels; caster gains damage as hp.

Vermin Form. ■ You become a swarm of flies, rats, or other vermin.

4th-Level Maho-Tsukai (21)

Arcane Eye. Invisible floating eye moves 30 ft./round.

Cloud of Taint. Damages and sickens untainted creatures.

Creeping Darkness. Creates 5 ft. cloud of inky blackness that moves at your command.

Curse of Weakness. ■ Multiple rays of weakness.

Enervation. Subject gains 1d4 negative levels.

Entrap Ancestor. ■ Traps spirit in item; gain advice and +3 Save bonus

Evard's Black Tentacles. 1d4+1/level tentacles grapple randomly within 15 ft.

Expose Taint. ■ You reveal the corruption within a creature.

Fatigue. Creature touched becomes fatigued.

Giant Vermin. Turns insects into giant vermin.

Heart Ripper. Kills 1d4 living creatures with less than 2 HD.

Inflict Critical Wounds. Touch attack, 4d8+1/level damage (max +20).

Lesser Planar Binding. Traps outsider until it performs a task.

Phantasmal Killer. Fearsome illusion kills subject or deals 3d6 damage.

Polymorph Other. Gives one subject new form.

Polymorph Self. You assume a new form.

Rise Again. ● Allows the caster to return from the dead under certain conditions.

Solid Fog. Blocks vision and slows movement.

Stealing the Soul. ■ You drain all ability scores of a victim.

Summon Monster IV. Calls outsider to fight for you.

Wall of Bones. Creates a bone wall that can be shaped.

5th-Level Maho-Tsukai (19)

Blood of Fire. 4 blood missiles deal 2d8 damage each.

Circle of Doom. Deals 1d8+1/level damage in all directions.

Cloudkill. Kills 3 HD or less; 4-6 HD save or die.

Contact Other Plane. Ask question of extra-planar entity.

Corruption of the Earth. ■ Creating a sucking pit of mire.

Curse of Blood. ■ Victim's wounds bleed for additional damage.

Insect Plague. Insect horde limits vision and inflicts damage, and weak creatures flee.

Gift of the Kansen. ● Traps any one spell inside a gift box; spell targets creature who opens box.

Magic Jar. You possess another creature.

Mental Weakness. Target suffers -4 penalty to Will saves.

Nightmare. Sends vision dealing 1d10 damage, fatigue.

Obsidian Armor. ● Protects the caster from spells that target the taint.

Slay Living. Touch attack kills subject.

Stealing Breath. ● Collapses the lungs of target, incapacitates.

Summon Garegosu no Bakemono. ■ Calls Shadowlands beast to fight for you.

Summon Monster V. Calls outsider to fight for you.

Truth is a Scourge. ● Target must speak their exact

thoughts at all times.

Unhallow. Imbues location with unholy magic.

Wood Rot. Wood item or plant creature rots.

6th-Level Maho-Tsukai (15)

Blade Barrier. Blades encircling you deal 1d8 damage/level.

Circle of Death. Kills 1d4 HD/level.

Create Undead. Ghouls, shadows, wights, or wraiths.

Dancing with Demons. ■ Gain a bonus feat.

Eyebite. Charm, fear, sicken or sleep one subject.

Forbiddance. Denies area to creatures of another alignment.

Harm. Subject loses all but 1d4 hp.

I Give You My Name. ■ Summon an oni with HD; varying by sacrifice.

Planar Binding. As lesser planar binding, but up to 16 HD.

Quench the Ashes. ■ Learn a spell you see cast.

Repulsion. Creatures can't approach you.

Sinful Dreams. ● One subject dreams of caster; caster gains +10 to Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks against subject.

Summon Greater Kansen. ● Summons a powerful Shadowlands spirit.

Sword of Darkness. Blade of negative energy attacks your opponents.

Touch of Death. ■ Ages target creature.

7th-Level Maho-Tsukai (14)

Acid Fog. Fog deals acid damage.

Blasphemy. Kills, paralyzes, weakens, or dazes non-evil subjects.

Control Undead. Undead don't attack you while under your command.

Creeping Doom. Carpet of insects attacks at your command.

Destruction. Kills subject and destroys remains.

Finger of Death. Kills one subject.

Insanity. Subject suffers continuous confusion.

Iuchiban's Theft. ■ Steal spell from an arcane caster's memory.

Possession. ● Caster takes command of target's body.

Simulacrum. Creates partially real double of a creature.

Summon Oni. ● Summons an oni forth from Jigoku.

Tomb of Earth. ● Seizes a target's body and causes 1d4 Con damage/round.

Withering Pain. Touch attack deals 1d4 Str damage and 1d4 Con damage.

Yajinden's Soul Switch. ■ You switch bodies with a target creature.

8th-Level Maho-Tsukai (11)

Antipathy. Object or location affected by spell repels certain creatures.

Clone. Duplicate awakens when original dies.

Create Greater Undead. Mummies, specters, vampires, or ghosts.

Fierce Blood of the Earth. ● Halts all aging for one year.

Fu Leng's Champion. ● Transforms one living human into an undead creature.

Greater Planar Binding. As lesser planar binding, but up to 24 HD.

Polymorph Any Object. Changes any subject into anything else.

Summon Monster VIII. Calls outsider to fight for you.

Symbol. Triggered runes have array of effects.

Tainted Aura. +4 AC, +4 resistance, and 25 SR against good spells.

Trap the Soul. Imprisons subject within gem.

9th-Level Maho-Tsukai (8)

Energy Drain. Subject gains 2d4 negative levels.

Implosion. Kills one creature/round.

Power Word, Kill. Kills one tough subject or many weak ones.

Rise, Taint. ● Summons an elemental terror.

Soul Bind. Traps newly dead soul to prevent resurrection.

Wasting Disease. ■ Creates army of diseased zombies.

Wail of the Banshee. Kills one creature/level.

Weird. As phantasmal killer, but affects all within 30 ft.

NEW SPELLS

ANCIENT WISDOM

Necromancy

Level: Mah 1, Nec 1,Clr 1

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Touch

Effect: Target skull becomes inhabited by spirit

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

The target skull becomes home again to the spirit that once inhabited it. The skull does not gain mobility or any attacks, nor can it feel pain. It can see what is in front of it (darkvision to 60 feet) and can hear and speak normally. The skull is under no compulsion to answer questions, but can sometimes be convinced to cooperate with the caster



by use of successful Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate checks. It still speaks the languages it knew in life. Many necromancers use this spell on close relatives or departed loved ones, late masters, unlucky apprentices, or hated rivals. Skulls can be attacked as objects (Hardness 1, hp 2).

Ancient wisdom can be combined with animate dead to create talking undead, such skeletons or zombies. Note, however, that the skull has no control over the body it is attached to unless the caster allows it.

If the skull is destroyed, the spirit flees.

BLEEDING THE ELEMENTS

Transmutation [Ritual]

Level: Mah 1

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: Personal

Duration: Permanent until maho cast

Saving Throw: Yes (special)

Spell Resistance: No

You have mastered the art of turning the Taint away from yourself and into your surroundings. Each time you cast maho after casting this spell, you may make a Will save against your own magic. If this save is successful, then you reduce the amount of taint you gain by 1d8 points, though you always gain at least a number of Taint points equal to a quarter of what you would have gained without *bleeding the elements* (round down). If the spell can absorb more points

than were generated by the first spell you cast after *bleeding the elements*, the protection lasts for a second wave of maho.

Using this protective spell is not subtle. The area within 100 feet of the caster immediately shows signs of the Taint: plants wither and die, statuary darkens and takes on a fiendish look, wild animals leave the area, domesticated animals become diseased, and so forth.

BLOOD ARMOR

Necromancy

Level: Mah 1

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Personal

Target: Caster and up to four attackers

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: See description

Spell Resistance: Yes

You create a magical link between yourself and your enemies, making them suffer a part of any damage you suffer during melee combat. Whenever you are struck, the attacker must make a Fortitude saving throw or suffer a wound of the same type as the one he inflicts, though less forceful. If the saving throw fails, the attacker suffers / damage that he causes, with a minimum of 1 point. Creatures using natural weapons are more susceptible to the spell; their DC is 2 points higher than normal. Critical hits add 4 to the DC.

Arcane material component: An umbilical cord and a fine set of silver needles (15 gp).

BLOOD OF MIDNIGHT

Necromancy

Level: Mah 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 feet +1 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature + 1/4 levels

Duration: 8 rounds

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You imbue a target creature with bloodlust (plus 1 additional target per 4 levels), giving it a +4 rage bonus to attack and damage rolls. After killing a foe, the target must spend the following round butchering the body and tasting its blood; this means that the target of the *blood of midnight* draws attack of opportunity from creatures within reach, as the target crouches over its victim and lowers its defenses. Each creature slain increases the duration of the spell by 2 rounds.

While under the influence of this spell the target is fully aware of, but not in control of his actions. The spell's target(s) will attack friendly creatures if no enemies are available (Will save of DC 20 plus your Taint modifier to resist).

If the target of this spell is unwilling, it is entitled to a Will save to negate the effect. Creatures that do not resist the spell effect suffer Honor losses as shown in Table ##: Honor Gains and Losses.

BLOOD SACRIFICE

Necromancy

Level: Mah 1

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: One sentient creature

Duration: Until spell cast or 1 round/level

Saving Throw: See description

Spell Resistance: Yes

You use the blood of a sentient creature to power your spellcasting. This requires the death and drained lifeblood of the creature (see the maho-tsukai prestige class description for details), as well as the normal blood component from the caster. If the sacrifice fails for any reason, both this spell and the one it was meant to improve are wasted.

Blood sacrifice can have one of three effects, at the caster's option:

Extend duration: Doubles the normal duration of the spell it improves. An extended spell lasts twice as long as normal. Spells with a concentration, instantaneous, or permanent duration are not affected by this feat. Requires the sacrifice of a creature of at least 1 HD.

Heighten spell: A heightened spell has a higher spell level than normal (up to 9th level); that is, a heightened spell has an increase in the effective level of the modified spell. All effects dependent on spell level (such as saving throw DCs and ability to penetrate a *minor globe of invulnerability*) are calculated according to the heightened level. Requires a sacrifice of a creature of at least 2 HD.

Maximize effect: All variable, numeric effects of a maximized spell are maximized. A maximized spell deals maximum damage, cures the maximum number of hit points, affects the maximum number of targets, etc., as appropriate. Spells without random variables are not affected. A maximized spell requires the sacrifice of at least a 3 HD creature.

BLOOD WARDING

Abjuration

Level: Mah 2

Component: V, M

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One portal, up to 20 sq. ft./level or one room or hallway, up to 200 sq. ft./level

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: Varies, see description

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell magically bars either a room's entrances or exits, or wards the room itself against entry by creatures that lack the Shadowlands Taint.

By warding all of a room's doors, gates, windows, and shutters of wood, metal, or stone, the spell holds the entrances fast, just as if they were securely closed and normally locked. A *knock* spell or a successful *dispel magic* spell can negate the blood warded entrances. For an entrance affected by this spell, add 10 to the normal DC for forcing the entrance.

By warding a room or hallway, the spell inflicts damage on creatures without the Shadowlands Taint attempting to enter the warded area. Any untainted creature attempting to enter the protected area must immediately make a Fortitude save or suffer 1d4 hp damage per three caster levels; creatures that make a successful save suffer no damage. Creatures that fail the first save must make a following Will save; those that fail retreat from the warded area and cannot pass through on this attempt (future attempts again require either a successful Fort save or the following Will save). Each round spent in the warded area after the first continues to inflict damage on creatures that failed the initial saving throw and requires new saves from those that succeeded the first time.

Any creature with between 1 point of Taint but less than the Taint of the caster must make a similar saving throw, but with a DC of 10. Creatures with a Taint equal to or greater than the caster's are unaffected by this spell.

BLOODSTRIKE

Necromancy

Level: Nec 3, Mah 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: Ray creates Constitution loss for caster and targets

Duration: 1 round/ 2 levels

Saving Throw: Fort negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You target a number of creatures up to your level with bright yellow rays; each creature stuck by ones or more

rays must succeed at an immediate Fortitude save. Those who succeed suffer no ill effect, though multiple rays may target them. Those who fail suffer a loss of Constitution equal to the loss you yourself suffer, up to a maximum of 1 point per level.

The caster is not struck by a ray and thus is not entitled to a Fortitude Save to avoid the effect. Instead, the caster makes a Concentration check to suffer only half the loss; the DC is 10 plus 2 per ray. If the caster kills one or more creatures by reducing them to 0 Constitution the DC of the spell increases by 5.

CARNIBALIZE

Necromancy

Level: Nec 3, Mah 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: Hit point transfer from undead

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: See below

Spell Resistance: No

You steal hit points from low-level undead to heal your injuries. For each HD of undead destroyed by the spell, you gain 1d3 hit points. You cannot gain hit points beyond your maximum, merely replace those lost by injury or disease. The spell affects undead of up to 4 HD.

However, the process is dangerous, because it infuses negative energy into a living body. If you gain hit points equal to two-thirds of your total by this method, you must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 19). Failure results in immediate transformation into an undead state as a free-willed creature of darkness, typically an intelligent skeleton or zombie. Despite the danger, this spell can be immensely handy in a tight spot, buying a bloodspeaker or necromancer time to escape or regroup by sacrificing mindless minions.

CHOKER THE SOUL

Enchantment (Compulsion)

Level: Mah 3, Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One creature/level

Duration: 2d4 rounds

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You choke the life out of those who hear your voice, the victim's gasp and wheezes somewhere between choking and laughter. The victims are entitled to a Will save; those who fail collapse into gales of manic laughter that quickly become a wracking, choking wheeze, falling prone. The target creatures can take no actions while strangling and may have to make Constitution checks, per the drowning rules, if the duration exceeds 3 rounds. After the spell ends, the victims require 1 round to recover and then can act normally.

Creatures with Intelligence scores of 2 or lower and those that do not need to breathe are not affected.

Choke the soul fails if the caster or victims are within a *silence* spell. The spell is sometimes also referred to as *strangling laughter*.



CORRUPTION OF THE EARTH

Transmutation

Level: Mah 5

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: Creates a pit of sinking earth
Area: 3 foot radius plus 1 foot/2 levels
Duration: 4 rounds plus concentration
Saving Throw: Ref to evade
Spell Resistance: No

The earth around the target of the spell transforms into deep, sucking mire. Creatures within the area of the spell are swallowed up at a rate of 2 feet per round. To escape, creatures must make a series of successful Strength checks (DC = 10 plus caster's Taint); each such check moves the victim three feet toward safety. Each attempt (successful or not) causes the character to sink 1 foot deeper into the corrupted earth. Creatures within the mire gain no Dexterity or Dodge bonuses to Armor Class. Creatures thrown a rope, branch, or other support stabilize and sink no further.

Once a creature reaches the edge of the corruption, a simple Strength check allows it to pull itself free (other creatures may assist normally). The DC is 5 plus 3 per foot the creature has sunk into the earth (that is, a creature 4 feet deep would need a 17). Creatures sunk deeper than their height cannot move and begin to suffocate as per the *Player's Handbook*. They continue sinking at 2 feet per round.

Even after escaping, the effect is not entirely over. Creatures caught within the mire must make a Taint check or gain 1 point of Shadowlands Taint.

Corruption of the earth is a particularly risky spell. If it is dispelled or countered in any way (such as with *dispel magic*, *protection from Taint*, *magic circle against Taint*, or the like), the earth spirits it corrupts will retaliate against the caster by releasing the current targets of the spell and creating the spell affect around the caster.

Creatures caught in the area of the spell when the duration ends must be dug from the earth.

CLAN CURSE

Necromancy

Level: Mah 2

Components: V, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Special, see below

Effect: One creature

Duration: Permanent until broken

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This is a curse spell usable by any caster, not just mahotsukai. The curses invoked are simple, but require a

sympathetic component: a lock of hair, a fingernail clipping, an ounce of blood, or something similar from the target. A piece of clothing from the target is not enough; the caster must use something that contains some of the spiritual energy of the target.

If the curse is successful (see Table 2-4), the caster must keep the item in physical contact at all times. If the caster ever loses the focus item, the curse is lifted. This is the only way to break a maho curse, *remove curse* is ineffective.

TABLE 2-4: SAMPLE CURSES BY CLAN

Clan	Curse
Crab	Cannot lie Cannot retreat
Crane	Irresistibly handsome or beautiful, too many lovers Cannot be quiet; always talking, rustling, humming, etc
Dragon	Cannot dream Cannot speak above a whisper
Lion	Cannot whisper or walk silently Cannot decline even the smallest challenge
Mantis	Cannot make a promise Must loot every fallen foe
Phoenix	Elemental power increases target's ability scores, drains everyone else Draws too much power for every spell, always backlashes nearby
Ronin	Cannot accept a gift Always requires payment for a service, even among friends
Scorpion	Everyone trusts his word and promises completely Must share every secret with someone
Unicorn	Cannot sleep under the same roof twice Must speak to every horse or mule she meets

As shown by the table above, when considering a curse the GM must consider whether it will be entertaining for all the players. A curse should be a challenge, but a challenge that is fun for both the player involved and the group as a whole. The best way to do this is the "Too much of a good thing" rule. Every character should be cursed with too much of something that the character already has.

Consider curses very carefully. They can ruin a player's enjoyment of the game, and that's not something any GM wants.

CURSE OF BLOOD

Necromancy [Mortal Curse]

Level: Nec 5, Mah 5

Components: V or S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Special, see below

Effect: One creature

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You curse your killer with your dying breath. The target must be present, but distance or touch is not a factor. Like a *contingency*, this spell is cast ahead of time, but doesn't take full effect until later, specifically, when the caster dies in a violent manner. At that time, the person responsible suffers the full effect; if several are responsible, the *mortal curse* falls on the individual singled out by the dying spell caster by word, glare, or gesture.

The curse induces hemophilia, causing the recipient to bleed from any wound, beginning the round after the injury is received. The victim loses an extra hit point of damage each round for each wound he or she has suffered. Binding the wounds or applying any magical healing stops the bleeding for that injury. This curse is particularly devastating for fighters of all types and hence is usually aimed at characters that see a lot of hand-to-hand combat. Wearing a *ring of regeneration* places the curse in abeyance so long as the ring remains, but actual regeneration and healing do not take place until all wounds have been bound. If the victim ever receives more than 12 points of damage from a single blow, he or she must make a Fortitude save (DC 17) or bleed internally, a situation that can be resolved only through self-stabilization (10% chance; see PH p.129) or the speedy application of magical healing.

Once laid, a *mortal curse* is exceedingly difficult to lift. Typically, only a major quest or the intervention of a deity can free the victim from its effects. Other methods offer temporary relief, but the curse's insidious effects always reassert themselves.

The chief component of the spell is the caster's ebbing life-force; hence it can only take effect upon your demise. Note that this curse remains in effect even if the caster is later resurrected or raised from the dead.

CURSE OF WEAKNESS

Necromancy

Level: Mah 4, Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: Multiple rays

Duration: 1 minute/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

Multiple coruscating rays springs from your hand and strike your enemies. You generate one ray per two levels (round up), and you must succeed at a ranged touch attack to strike a target. The subject suffers a -1d6 enhancement penalty to Strength, with an additional, 1 per two caster levels (maximum additional penalty of -5). The subject's Strength score cannot drop below 1.

Two rays striking the same target require ranged touch attacks to succeed, and require multiple saving throws to avoid the effects.

DAMNATION

Necromancy

Level: Mah 2

Components: V, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: Plants seeds of damnation

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

With blasphemous words and a slash to release the power of blood, you invoke hellish spirits to curse an enemy's soul. The target creature feels call of Jigoku, the spirit world of the damned and must make an immediate Will saving throw. Evil characters suffer a +2 to the DC of the spell; chaotic characters suffer the same penalty. If the save succeeds, the spell has no effect.

If the Will save fails, the target carries a seed of evil in his heart. The next time he or she is faced with a moral dilemma or given a chance to do evil, he does so without hesitation. Possible actions might include slaughtering prisoners, a moment of disloyalty to one's sworn lord, torture of the innocent, or even a small treachery against the Empire, such as smuggling, ignoring a crime, or abandoning the worship of the Fortunes. It does not mean that a target creature either befriends the caster or turns against his friends and family. The target is likely to lose Honor or suffering an alignment shift in the process.

Each time the spell is cast on a target after the first, the Will save's DC increases by 2. If the spell succeeds often enough, the GM should enforce an alignment shift toward Evil.

NOTE: This spell must be used with extreme caution. While it does show exactly how the power of Bloodspeakers works to corrupt the Empire from within, from a game play perspective it takes away a player's ability to control their character. When the save fails, take time to discuss the details of the spell's effect with the player and decide on something that works on a character's weakness. A Lion might duel a weak enemy just to watch him die, a Scorpion might be tempted to use blackmail against a loyal courtier, and a Dragon might decide to do nothing, rather than report a vision of the Lying Darkness to the magistrates.

DANCING WITH DEMONS

Transmutation

Level: Mah 6

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: Personal

Duration: Permanent

You enter a complex dance with the kansen summoned by this spell, increasing the tempo until your body is re-forged by the fires of Jigoku. You must make a Spellcraft check at DC 20 and a Perform (Dance) roll at DC 20 to successfully cast this spell. Feats that with prerequisites add +5 to the DC for every prerequisite required for the feat that you do not possess.

If the dance is successful, you permanently gain any *personal, physical, or mental feat affecting you alone*. For example, you could gain Eagle Claw Attack or Zanji, but not an Ancestor, Kharmic Tie, or Wealth. Failure in either the summoning or dancing means you are horribly burnt and suffer 1d12 damage plus 1d12 for each prerequisite.

The spell can also grant feats to other willing, present targets. In this case, the Taint from the spellcasting is divided between caster and target. However, if the spell fails, the target suffers the backlash damage, not the caster.

DARK DIVINATION

Divination

Level: Mah 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 round

Range: Personal

Duration: Instantaneous

This spell allows the caster to ask questions to the GM. Each question gains the caster 8 Shadowlands Points. The GM must answer the question honestly, but is only required to answer with a "Yes" or "No". For every three levels, the caster may ask one additional question.

DARK PHOENIX FIRE

Evocation

Level: Mah 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: 20-foot diameter cloud

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Reflex half

Spell Resistance: Yes

You unleash a wave of corruption in a fiery black explosion. Creatures caught within the area of effect are entitled to a Reflex save; those that fail suffer 1d4 hit points damage per caster level and must make a second save, this time Fortitude. If the second save fails, the creature gains 1 point of Taint.

If the saving throw succeeds, the creature suffers half damage and need not make the second save.

Arcane material component: A scrap of oni flesh or bone.

DIM MAK

Evocation

Level: Mah 1

Components: S

Casting Time: 1 action



Range: Touch
Effect: 1 creature
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Fort halves
Spell Resistance: Yes

Dim mak means, "death touch." It is a powerful attack that takes advantage of the varying circulation of blood and chi during the day. Indeed, knowledge of which

vital areas of the body are vulnerable to attack, at which times of the day, is part of the knowledge this spell imparts to the caster. Then, a single strike at the blood closest to the surface results in injury or death. Bloodspeakers tend to strike at the groin with this magical attack to make the most effective hit.

You make a touch attack against a single target. If successful, the victim suffers 1d12 hp damage plus the level of the caster, but is entitled to a Fortitude save to halve the damage.

This spell's power can be radically increased by sacrificing a Tainted sentient creature using a *blood sacrifice* spell. If this is done, the HD of the sacrifice increases the *dim mak*'s DC and the spell allows two touch attacks plus one additional touch attack for every 4 full HD of the sacrifice. If the creature sacrificed has more than 10 HD, the attack can be transmitted through a weapon, like a *shocking grasp* spell; the damage from the *dim mak* is added to the normal weapon damage.

DRAWING OUT THE DARKNESS

Evocation

Level: Mah 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Effect: 1 creature
Duration: Permanent
Saving Throw: Fort negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

You and a target, with fewer levels or Hit Dice, both gain permanent Taint points equal to half the caster's level, rounded down. Targets without any existing Taint score are entitled to a +4 circumstance bonus against this spell.

ENTRAP ANCESTOR

Necromancy

Level: Mah 4, Nec 4
Components: V, S, M, F
Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: Imbues item with ancestor spirit
Duration: 10 rounds/level
Saving Throw: No
Spell Resistance: No

Binds the soul of an ancestor spirit within a masterwork item. As long as the item remains whole, unscarred, and complete, the ancestor is trapped within it, able to offer advice, magical protection, and information to whoever carries the item. The ancestor's advice may or may not prove useful, but its protective energies provide a +3 bonus to all saving throws made by any creature carrying the item. As soon as the item is scratched, lost, or broken, or when the spell duration expires, the spirit returns to its proper place in the afterlife. The ancestor can be seen normally by anyone using ghost sight.

Arcane Material Component: Dirt from the ancestor's gravesite.

Arcane Focus: A masterwork item appropriate to the type of ancestor summoned (a war fan for a general, a katana for a samurai, a painted scroll for a wu jen, etc, minimum 1000 gp).

ETERNAL DARKNESS

Abjuration

Level: Mah 3
Components: V, S, M, F
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: Grant undead regeneration
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: No
Spell Resistance: No

You choose an undead creature and protect it from destruction by giving it the ability to regenerate. The undead regains 4 hit points/round from all types of damage, including fire, holy water, sunlight, and magical weapons and spells. If the undead is brought below 0 hit points, it continues to fight normally, though the removal of limbs may slow its movement. During the duration of the spell, only the complete destruction of the target will prevent it from regenerating (as with clerical destruction, a *raise dead* spell or a *disintegration*).

EXPOSE TAIN

Transmutation

Level: Mah 4
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: 1 creature/4 caster levels
Effect: Reveals hidden taint
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates and special
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell amplifies and reveals the Taint already present in a creature with one or more points of Shadowlands Taint. Tainted creatures may choose to accept the effects of the spell rather than resisting them, thus forgoing their saving throw. Each affected creature gains a bonus to their base attack and melee damage equal to their own Taint modifier plus the Taint modifier of the caster (if the caster is a target, he doubles his modifier).

At the end of the spell's duration, the target suffers a mild physical Taint symptom if his bonus was +3 or less, a moderate symptom if the bonus gained was from +4 to +6 and a severe symptom if the bonus was +7 or better. The target must also make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) or gain points of Taint permanently equal to half the bonus gained by the spell (round down). If the caster is a target of the spell, this check takes the place of the usual Fortitude save against a single point of Taint.

In addition, this spell immediately negates the effects of tea of jade petals.

Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: One sentient creature
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: See description
Spell Resistance: Yes

Like the ordinary *blood rite*, but you gain 2 points to an ability score and also restore 2d6 hit points. As might be expected, this requires more blood as well, equivalent to 30 hit points.

HIDE TAIN

Illusion
Level: Mah 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: Hides taint under illusion of normality
Duration: 1 hour/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (disbelief)
Spell Resistance: No

You hide all traces of a single creature's taint (smell, sight, sounds, and even voice) from normal sight. Under the protection of a *hide Taint* spell, zombies look like normal (if quiet) heimen, an ogre looks like a sumo wrestler or burly samurai, and a goblin might resemble a child. You have no control over exactly what form the illusion takes; the kansen are sometimes whimsical in their choices, hiding an oni as an elephant or a maho-tsukai as a pilgrim. The target is always aware of what it looks like to others and can see its Tainted reflection normally in mirrors. Others can also see through the spell in a mirror, revealing the tainted creature.

Hide taint does not reduce the taint bonus or Shadowlands points of the target. It also does not hide magical traces of the Taint; a Kuni Witch Hunter could still use his *detect Taint* ability normally and Taint Binding still works normally against the affected creature. Suspicious creatures are entitled to a Will save to see through and disbelieve the illusion.

FEEDING ON FLESH

Evocation
Level: Mah 2
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: Generate touch attack
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Fort halves
Spell Resistance: Yes

You devour a portion of human flesh to inflict wounds on others at a distance. The wounds you inflict roughly resemble those made on the corpse; corrupt elemental spirits bite the target in response to your urging.

The victim is entitled to a Fortitude save for half damage. The damage each round is 2d6 plus the caster's Taint bonus. For every 6 rolled, reroll that die and add it to the total. If the attack inflicts more than 10 hit points of damage, the caster may roll a touch attack to confirm a critical; if it is confirmed, he rolls an additional d6 for damage.

GREATER BLOOD RITE

Necromancy
Level: Mah 3

UCHIBAN'S THEFT

Necromancy
Level: Mah 7
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: Steals a spell, skill or feat

Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

You reach inside a target creature's mind and remove spells, skills or feats, which you or third creature gains use of temporarily. Each use of this spell removes one level of 'spells per level' of the caster, one rank of Skill per level of the caster, or one feat per five levels of the caster (round down). Either arcane or divine spells can be taken. You cannot mix the part of a soul that is stolen; they must all be spells, skills, or feats.

The target must make a Will save; success means that the target misleads the caster and retains the desired part of itself. The process is painful; both target and the recipient must make Fortitude saves with a DC equal to the caster's level; failure means the creature screams and faints as the memory is removed or inserted.

The recipient is typically a henchman or simple-minded minion of the caster. The process requires concentration and deftness, so both target and recipient are typically restrained to avoid accidents.

Extracted skills and spells are only temporarily transferred; when the spell duration expires, the skills and spells are restored to their source, unless that source has died. In this case, the resulting spirit attempts to regain them, but a strong maho-tsukai may keep them all the same.

If the caster is a necromancer, the spell need not be cast on a living human; skills, spells, and feats can be retrieved from spirits, oni, and any humanoid creature dead for up to one day per level of the caster.

Material Component: An arm's length thread of pure obsidian (200 koku, as obsidian is extremely brittle.)

I GIVE YOU MY NAME

Summoning
Level: Mah 6
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: Summon an outsider oni
Duration: 10 rounds plus 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Fort halves
Spell Resistance: Yes

You sacrifice a powerful and tainted human soul to bring an oni from Jigoku under your command. Unlike the *summon oni* spell, *I give you my name* both requires a sacrifice and the strength of that sacrifice determines the power of the oni that appears (as shown on table 2-5). The Hit Dice of the oni

cannot exceed the level or Hit Dice of the creature sacrificed plus the caster's Taint bonus. Thus, a 10-HD sacrifice offered up by a maho-tsukai with a Taint modifier of +6 would allow the caster to call an oni of up to 16 HD oni. Creatures of less than 2 HD are not powerful enough sacrifices to permit the casting of *I give you my name*.

The summoned oni erupts from the body of the sacrifice, causing 6d12 damage (Fort save halves this) and often killing the sacrifice outright. In the case of more powerful sacrifices, the spell alone may not be enough to kill the victim and in those cases the caster typically uses a *red knife* (see page 2-5) or the like to dispatch the victim, ensuring the oni's stay for the full duration of the spell. If the sacrifice survives, the oni's power is diminished and it is banished after half the normal duration.

TABLE 2-5: ONI SUMMONING TABLE

Hit Dice	Oni Type
2	Podling (CR 1)
3-4	Megada no Oni (CR 2)
5-6	Haino no Oni (CR 3)
7-8	Ianwa no Oni (CR 5)
9-10	Doro no Oni (CR 6)
11-12	Common Oni (CR 7)
13-14	Pekkle no Oni (CR 8)
15-18	Go-Zu Oni or Ashi no Oni (CR 9)
19+	Me-Zu Oni (CR 10)

The single oni called always remains under the caster's control for the duration of the spell, unless the summoning Tsukai is wounded. In that case, the caster must make a Concentration roll to maintain control of the summoned creature.

QUENCH THE ASHES

Divination
Level: Mah 6
Components: V, S, M, XP
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Long (400 feet + 40 ft/level)
Target: Personal
Duration: 1 day/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

You observe another shugenja casting a maho or elemental spell and thus temporarily become able to cast that spell yourself. The spell you observe must be within range and must be of a type (maho, Air, etc) that you could learn normally and you must have at least 5 ranks in

Spellcraft to cast this spell successfully. The spell cannot be of a level you cannot cast yourself and it cannot be a spell higher than 5th level. Once you see the spell, you understand it for the duration of *quench the ashes*. At the end of this time, all memory of the spell disappears from your mind.

Material component: A kappa shell and a pair of twin snakes.

XP Cost: 1000 experience points per level of the spell learned, plus 2000 XP if the spell is not maho.

RED KNIFE

Evocation

Level: Mah 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: Weapon touched

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

This spell allows the maho-tsukai to channel unholy power into a weapon he holds. The weapon acts as a +3 magic weapon and deals double damage against good opponents. It emits a ward that protects creatures within 10 feet. This ward protects a creature from mental control and physical harm. The ward has three major effects:

First, the subjects get a +1 deflection bonus to AC and a

+1 resistance bonus on all saves. Both these bonuses apply against attacks made by good creatures.

Second, the barrier blocks any attempt to possess the warded creatures or to exercise mental control over the creature. The protection does not prevent good creatures from gaining mental control over a warded character, but it prevents anyone from mentally commanding the protected creature. The barrier keeps out a possessing life force, but does not expel one if it is in place before the spell is cast (e.g. a kansen within its host). This second effect works regardless of alignment.

Third, the ward eases the caster's ability to make a creature submit quietly to sacrifice. One creature must be chosen as the target of this effect at a time; when the first has been killed, another may be chosen, as long as the duration lasts. The affected creature is entitled to a Will save against the caster's suggestion; if the save fails, the creature acts as if a *suggestion* spell had been successfully placed upon it and walks willingly to the altar or other place of sacrifice. Spell resistance can allow a creature to overcome this mental control and struggle normally.

If the ward ends, the knife creates a new one on the character's turn as a free action. The spell is automatically canceled 1 round after the weapon leaves the character's hand for any reason. A maho-tsukai cannot have more than one red knife at a time.

If this spell is cast on a magic weapon, the powers of the spell supersede any that the weapon normally has, rendering the normal enhancement bonus and powers of the weapon inoperative for the duration of the spell. This spell is not cumulative with *bless weapon* or any other spell that might modify the weapon in any way.

This spell does not work on artifacts.

Note: A masterwork weapon's bonus to attack does not stack with an enhancement bonus to attack.

SACRIFICE OF MASKS

Necromancy

Level: Mah 1

Components: V, S, XP

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: Mask touched

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You create an enchanted porcelain zombie mask; this requires a masterwork porcelain mask of a humanoid or demonic face. The mask itself is usually worth 10 koku or more.



The *sacrifice of masks* can be improved by the use of human sacrifices in a *blood sacrifice* (see page 37) spell; this improvement is not required but is common among cults with an excess of victims. Each creature so sacrificed to a single mask improves the Armor Class, Hit Dice, plague attack, or turn resistance of the zombie. Only one category can be improved per mask. Different changes require different sacrifices as shown below:

Armor Class: The entire zombie gains a skin of supernatural pallor and hardness, all of it resembling porcelain. This adds a +1 natural armor bonus to the zombie's AC for every 2 HD sacrifice. The bonus cannot exceed +5.

Hit Dice: You can improve the strength of the zombie up to the Hit Dice of the creature sacrificed. That is, sacrificing a 4 HD ogre gains you a 4 HD zombie mask.

Plague Attack: The zombie adds 1d4 Constitution drain ability to its attack. This requires a sacrifice of up to three creatures totaling at least 10 HD.

Turn Resistance: Each HD of creature sacrificed increases the turn resistance by +2.

XP Cost: Each mask requires a 500 XP from the caster, plus 100 XP per HD sacrificed to improve the mask.

STEALING THE SOUL

Necromancy

Level: Mah 4

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Long (400 feet plus 40 ft./level)

Target: 1 creature

Duration: 8 rounds + 1 round/2 levels

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You destroy the life force of a target, sapping his power and making him easy prey for attack or for a sacrifice. The target is entitled to a Will save to negate the effect. If the save fails, the spell's target loses two from each ability score for each shugenja or maho-tsukai participating in the ritual until the duration expires. No ability score may drop below 1.

This terrible spell was used to incapacitate Hida Shonojo, the legendary Crab daimyo, immediately before his assassination. Its dread power is said to come directly from a boiling black pit in the Shadowlands.

SUMMON GAREGOSU NO BAKEMONO

Conjuration

Level: Mah 5

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Short (25 feet plus 5 ft./2 levels)

Duration: 5 rounds + 1 round/2 levels

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You summon the shadowlands creature called the garegosu no bakemono, an octopus-like creature with a scaly gray hide and a fearful gaze. See *Creatures of Rokugan* for details.

SUMMON SWAMP SPIRITS

Conjuration

Level: Mah 3

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Short (25 feet plus 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect: Summons 1d4 swamp spirits/2 levels

Duration: 5 rounds + 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You summon a swarm of malevolent nature kami or swamp spirits. They obey you in any order to attack and kill; they ignore all other orders. You summon 1d4 such creatures per two levels (thus 2d4 at 5th level, 3d4 at 6th, etc); on corrupted ground such as the Shadowlands or lands affected by *bleeding the elements*, you summon 1d4+1 swamp spirits/2 levels. See *Creatures of Rokugan* for details.

TAINT THE BLOOD

Necromancy

Level: Dkn 1, Nec 1, Mah 1

Components: S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Effect: Target touched suffers tainted blood

Duration: 3 rounds

Saving Throw: Fort negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You taint the blood and chill the bones of the target creature, causing sweat and shivers simultaneously. The victim suffers a -2 penalty to all attack, damage, and saving throw rolls for the duration of the spell. The victim also temporarily loses any Dexterity bonus to Armor Class.

Arcane Material Component: A bit of horse dung and an amanita mushroom.

TAINT FOOD AND DRINK

Transmutation

Level: Mah 1, Nec 1

Components: S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 feet + 1 foot/2 levels)

Effect: Rots food and soils water

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You corrupts food and water source. If the spell is cast on a supply of food, it is spoiled and obviously rotten, whereas, if it is cast on water, sake, or other beverages, the drink is corrupted to smell salty, stagnant, and befouled.

Should the spell be cast on a well, the effect lasts only for a while, until the water is replenished by natural cycling. Typically, this is 2d4 days, though some desert wells may require a month or more to recover.

TOUCH OF DEATH

Necromancy [Death]

Level: Mah 6, Sor/Wiz 6

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: One living creature

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Fortitude partial

Spell Resistance: Yes

The character can age any one living creature within range. The subject is entitled to a Fortitude saving throw to avoid most of the attack. Should the victim fail the save, he instantly ages 2d20 years plus + 1/level of the caster. If the save is successful, it instead ages only sustains 2d6 years and its hair instantly (and permanently) turns white.

VOICE OF LIES

Enchantment

Level: Mah 1

Components: V

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: Personal

Duration: 1 minute plus 1 min./level

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You temporarily remove the Taint penalties usually suffered by maho-tsukai to Charisma-based skills, thus glossing over all Taint penalties to Animal Empathy, Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, Games (Sadane), Gather Information, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Mimic, and Perform. In addition, you gain a bonus to any Intimidate check equal to your Taint modifier.

VERMIN FORM

Transmutation

Level: Mah 3, Nec 4

Components: S, M

Casting Time: 1 action



Range: Personal

Effect: You become a swarm of vermin

Duration: 8 rounds + Concentration

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: No

You become a hive creature wholly composed of a multitude of cockroaches, rats, spiders, or other vermin. If gravely threatened by an area attack, you can disincorporate as a free action, simply falling into a pile of individual vermin who slither quickly away in all directions.

Staying disincorporate is difficult and imposes immediate Concentration checks after the initial duration has expired and every third round thereafter. These checks have a DC equal to 10 plus the 1 per every 10 feet separating the caster from the location where he first disincorporated. For example, when the spell is first cast, the caster remains in combat near the site where he disincorporated: he must make a DC 11 Concentration check at the end of the eighth round. At that time, he begins moving 60 feet per round away from the battle. At the end of the eleventh round, he must make a Concentration check with DC 28 (10 base plus 1 for each 10 foot segment of 180 feet). When the spell duration expires, you reincorporate at the site of one of the members of the swarm.

In addition, you can travel through narrow cracks, spaces behind walls, and even up walls. Movement and other options are determined by which vermin form you select (see Table 2-6).

TABLE 2-6: VERMIN FORMS

Vermin Type	Benefit and Movement
Flies	Fly 50 feet (perfect)
Roaches	+4 to all saving throws, move 20 feet
Rats	Attack as swarm for 1d6 touch attack in 10 ft x 10 ft. area, move 15 feet, climb 15 feet
Scorpions	Poisonous swarm sting one creature with large monstrous scorpion vermin poison (DC 18, 1d6 Str), move 30 feet.
Spiders	Spider climb at will, swarm bite as injected medium-size monstrous spider vermin poison (DC 14, 1d4 Str), move 30 feet, climb 20 feet.

You suffer half damage from any attack unless all your component creatures are affected simultaneously.

WASTING DISEASE

Necromancy

Level: Mah 9

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Long (400 ft.+40 ft./level)

Target: One creature/level

Duration: 1 day/level (see below)

Saving Throw: Fort negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You create a powerful magical disease that infects its victims and turns them into undead after their death. The disease initially affects just a few creatures, but touch quickly spreads it to an almost unlimited number of victims.

When the first (and later) victims are targeted, they must make an immediate Fortitude saving throw; those who succeed are immune to all future exposures to the disease. Those who fail are infected and suffer an immediate 1d4 Constitution loss plus 1 Con per day. When they reach 0 Constitution they die, though the body remains infectious. Within two days of death, the body rises from the grave as a zombie under the control of the caster.

Every creature touched by an infected victim may also become a victim of the wasting disease; one day after exposure, the touched creature must make a save or be infected. Note that since the bodies of previous victims are still infectious, those who bury the dead often become the next wave of victims. In this fashion, a large city can quickly be emptied and converted into an undead army.

The wasting disease can be cured by magical means, but this is by no means a guaranteed cure. When a *cure disease* spell or similar effects (*heal* spell, paladin laying on hands, etc) is applied, the victim is entitled to a second saving throw similar to the first, with a bonus equal to the level of the spell effect (a +3 bonus for *cure disease* or paladin touch, +7 for *heal*). If this saving throw succeeds, the disease is cured. Otherwise, the spell proceeds normally. Since the rate of infection is usually much faster than the availability of curative magic, healers often must choose their targets carefully.

WRITTEN IN BLOOD

Necromancy

Level: Mah 1

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: Time used to write message

Range: Touch

Target: One parchment

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: No

Spell Resistance: No

You create a hidden message using human blood as ink and written on a parchment of human skin. Creatures with a Taint score of zero that handle the message cannot read it; those who have a Taint of 1 or higher have a chance to read the message normally if they make a Will save with a DC of 20 minus their Taint score. Those with a Taint score of 20 or greater automatically read the writing normally.

Read magic also allows a caster to read the message normally.

physical abilities, as with *polymorph other* (except that the character gets the creature's actual physical abilities, not average ones).

If the new host body is slain, the caster dies with it. However, nothing prevents the caster from again soul switching from the new body, most frequently, the switch is from an elderly body to a younger one, or from an imprisoned body to a free one.

Arcane component: A mirror worth at least 100 gp.

WARRIOR'S SOUL SWITCH

Necromancy

Level: Mah 7

Components: V, S, F

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Long (400 ft.+40 ft./level)

Target: One creature

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Will negates (see text)

Spell Resistance: Yes

By casting the soul switch, you switch bodies with a living target creature within range. The caster takes all skills, feats, and memorized spells with him as part of the switch; the target does likewise. The new body's Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma are those of the caster, but the Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity are those of the previous character or creature.

If the caster attempts to switch souls with a creature of a different subtype (dragon, elemental, or outsider, for example), the target's saving throw gains a +4 bonus.

To cast the spell, the two bodies must be within spell range and the caster must know where the second body is, though you do not need line of sight or effect to it. Attempting to switch souls is a full-round action. It is blocked by *protection from evil*, *protection from spirits*, or similar wards. The caster switches bodies and forces the creature's soul into his old body unless the subject succeeds at a Will save. Failure to take over the host leaves the caster and target's life forces exactly as they were, though stunned for 1 round, and the target automatically succeeds at further saving throws if the character attempts to possess its body again.

If successful, the character's life force occupies the host body and the host's life force occupies the caster's body. The character keeps most mental abilities and gains some

CHAPTER THREE:

HISTORY

The history contained herein is current to the date of the Ascension of Toturi III, the one-time Hantei Naseru.

The history of the Bloodspeakers is one of sporadic outbreaks of corruption, followed by long periods of apparent calm while the cult gathers its resources. In part, this is because the inquisitors and witch hunters have often kept the cult suppressed, weak, and paranoid enough to avoid taking overt action.

The more cynical explanation of some Ikoma historians who have studied the matter is that the number of rebellions and mighty battles is low because the bloodspeakers themselves are very small in numbers. Despite their individual potency and the strength they can summon from the Taint, gathering in larger numbers is risky, because exposure of the cult always results in quick, merciless death. Thus, the history of the bloodspeakers is a history of secrecy and deception, and a thousand tiny blows against the Empire.

THE DISCOVERY OF MAHO

Around the year 100, Kuni Nakanu of the Crab clan begins studying the signs and effects of the Shadowlands

Taint. This research saved many lives, but Nakanu was not content with what little he had learned, for he hoped for greater things. He studied how to raise the dead, hoping to turn Fu Leng's powers against himself, to protect Rokugan against the Shadowlands. He found that kansen, evil spirits, possess the bodies of the dead, giving them locomotion. In time, he applied this technique to large numbers of undead, but eventually he lost control over his subjects and they tore him apart.

In the aftermath of this disaster, the Crab renounced his researches and the Emperor ordered all traces of his experiments destroyed. Despite the Imperial order, many of Kuni Nakanu's writings survived, stolen away by an apprentice who disappeared soon after Nakanu's death along his master's most important scrolls.

THE CHUDA BLASPHEMIES

In 339, magistrate Isawa Chuda saved the Emperor's life from the threat of a maho cult, and was rewarded by being declared the Daimyo of the Snake Clan. His great-grandson, Chuda Tamihei, succumbed to the temptations of maho himself, and prayed to an evil spirit. In 401, Tamihei unleashed the Shuten Doji in the lands of the Snake Clan and within a month all its members are held in the Shuten Doji's thrall. In 402, the Phoenix clan, despite great losses, destroyed the Snake Clan.

A few of the Snake Clan cultists survive, passing on secret knowledge from father to son and mother to daughter. However, the clan never revealed itself for fear of being exterminated completely.

THE FOUNDING OF THE CULT

In the year 499, Otomo Jama, younger brother of the Imperial heir, found his destiny taking a sudden turn when he happened upon the resting place of Kuni Nakanu's maho texts. With the help of a Dragon and a Crane shugenja, Jama began to translate the texts and discover the secrets held within. A small cult formed, with Jama at its head.

As leader of this secret society, Otomo Jama took a new name, Iuchiban, and he found the perfect right hand to execute his schemes: a gifted young Crane named Asahina Yajinden.

YAJINDEN THE LIEUTENANT

As a young man, Yajinden was a promising student full of curiosity and gifted with a great talent in arithmetic,

crafting wondrous gifts for the Daimyos and Crane courtiers. Many of these fans, meishido, and bejeweled baubles are still kept as heirlooms in Kakita, Doji, and Asahina households to this day, but the curiosity that fueled his studies also gave Iuchiban the lever needed to corrupt him. When Yajinden visited Otsan Uchi, he crossed the threshold into madness.

Yajinden was fascinated by the Bloodspeaker's words of power and glory, and soon fell under their spell. After reading Kuni Nakanu's text, he saw how much his earlier studies had limited him and what he could accomplish if he freed himself from mere ethics. With Iuchiban whispering encouragement in his ear, his curiosity became an obsession and he soon joined his master in a desire to overthrow the established order. Knowledge could not hide behind the skirts of morality.

Yajinden's participation in the early Bloodspeaker cult has been well documented. He turned his skills toward constructing artifacts the cultists would need to destroy the Emperor: the four Bloodswords, the zombies' porcelain masks, tainted arrows, and many others. With his help, Iuchiban's schemes advanced rapidly and the theoretical possibility of usurping the Hantei grew much more concrete. Yajinden's potential bloomed under the guidance of his new master and as Iuchiban's chief lieutenant, he moved the cult to within striking distance of the Emperor.

THE ANVIL AND THE SWORDS

The sinister Agasha Ryuden, guest of the Boar Clan in the Twilight Mountains, forges a mighty anvil from ore created by the blood of the First Oni. In 501, Ryuden sacrifices the entire Boar Clan to the foul creation, resulting in one of the darkest and most powerful nemuranai in Rokugan's history. Their tortured spirits combine into the Shakoki Dogu, a vengeful and malicious spirit that haunts the mountains for centuries.

Seven years later, Asahina Yajinden uses the Anvil to forge the dreaded Bloodswords: Ambition, Passion, Judgment and Revenge, for his master Iuchiban. The swords are given to the Scorpion, Crane, Crab, and Lion Clan Daimyo respectively. The weapons destroy the Crane, Crab, and Lion daimyo within the next two years, though the blades themselves were never suspected as the instruments of their destruction.

BATTLE OF STOLEN GRAVES

The Scorpion Champion Bayushi Kikoji, who had not yet touched the blade given to him by Asahina Yajinden, suspected foul sorcery after the



deaths of the daimyos that wielded the other three blades. Rikoji dispatched Scorpion magistrate and shugenja Soshi Takasho to find the creator of the blade. Together with Legionnaire Akodo Minobe, he discovered the secret cult of the blood sorcerer Iuchiban, who plans to animate the bodies of the Imperial crypts as an army to be used against the Emperor himself. Rousing the armies of the clans, Iuchiban is eventually captured, tried, and executed in the year 510. He is quickly entombed within a great structure enchanted to contain his blackened soul. Scorpion assassins also entomb the architect, Kaiu Gineza, within his creation so that the secrets of the tomb will remain safe.

After Iuchiban's defeat, his lieutenant, Asahina Yajinden, has his mind erased. He becomes a gardener in the Emperor's gardens.

IUCHIBAN ENTOMBED

The Bloodspeakers were founded centuries ago after the first death of Iuchiban in the year 510. While his spirit wandered the Empire in secret, the sorcerer needed assistance to help him prepare for his return. Along with a few trusted lieutenants, the sorcerer's bodiless essence found angry and disaffected members of society who longed for the power that was eternally beyond their reach. Whispering the dark secrets of maho into their ears, Iuchiban bound these individuals to him with promises of far greater power when he sat upon the throne of the Empire.

THE FOUR MASKS

At the same time as Iuchiban's spirit roamed as a free recruiter, cult members sought the keys to his tomb, said to be four masks made of porcelain and enchanted for but a single function: to open Iuchiban's tomb. The creation of the multiple masks was suggested by a Scorpion shugenja, who pointed out that if Iuchiban were entombed without hope of escape, the remaining cultists would choose a successor, but if their leader was to be seen as almost within reach of rescue, the cult would expend its energies on attempting to free him, rather than gathering strength unto itself. Without the masks, the Bloodspeakers might have found a new way to threaten the Empire. Searching constantly for these masks, enchanted to be always on the move, the cult remained relatively weaker and more diffused.

The cult, of course, views this differently. The masks are a promise of salvation for their greatest and most honored founder. To ignore them is unthinkable.

YAJINDEN THE RULER

Soshi Takasho and Akodo Minobe discovered the Bloodspeaker's plot before it could reach fruition and Yajinden was captured along with his master in at the Battle of Stolen Graves. In light of the terrible crimes he had helped perpetrate, he expected a speedy execution. To his surprise, his captors had another idea; they would wipe his mind, erasing all aspects of his memories and personality. He was to spend the remainder of his days as a feeble gardener, unaware of the atrocities he had committed or of the terrible punishment he had received for it. For the rest of his lifetime, he was often pointed out to young shugenja as an example of the price of consorting with the forces of darkness and conspiring against the Hantei.

While he was imprisoned and awaiting the destruction of his mind, Yajinden was unable to admit defeat. He did not intend to spend the rest of his days as a shell. In the final days before the battle, he had begun experimenting with the body's spiritual harmonies and ways to imbue one's essence in the form of another. Artifacts, whether for good or evil, required spirits to be imbued or awakened within them. Theoretically, the same could be done with the essence of a human being. On the eve of his punishment, Yajinden put his theory to the test and swapped bodies with one of his jailers. He watched the unfortunate man receive the terrible sentence meant for him, then slipped away from Otosan Uchi as quickly as he could.

After his close escape, Yajinden worked to restore the Bloodspeaker Cult and free his master. With Iuchiban imprisoned, his foremost follower sought to ensure the cult's survival. Over the course of centuries, in the bodies of dozens of hapless hosts, he has guided the Bloodspeakers toward the future. After the debacle in Otosan Uchi, he took steps to re-establish and tighten their secrecy, and stressed the need for survival among its leaders. He has watched the Bloodspeaker tradition pass to new generations and encouraged the creation of maho-tsukai among its members. He cleaned up Iuchiban's failure and restored the cult to power, however hidden it might be.

Despite this crucial role, few in the cult know who he is exactly; most look at him and see more than five centuries of inner circle leadership. None, however, have questioned his position, for in the powers of black magic, he has no peer among them.

For two hundred years after the Battle of Stolen Graves, Yajinden plotted ways to free Iuchiban from his imprisonment. That changed after the Bloodspeaker's initial escape, however. Iuchiban was more powerful than ever and did not seem to care for his protégé the

same way that he used to. Yajinden was an errand boy for him now, a means to an end and nothing more. Iuchiban was mistaken in his arrogance, for Yajinden was now the heart of the cult and turning a loyal lieutenant against him was truly unwise.

THE PORCELAIN ARMY

At first, the renegade Crane dismissed Iuchiban's coldness; two hundred years in constant agony would doubtless degrade his social skills. As time passed and Yajinden was sent on one retrieval mission after another, it dawned on him that the first Bloodspeaker was not the man he once knew. It grew worse when Iuchiban ordered him to create more and more masks; to sit in a workshop and tinker with toys he had invented centuries ago, as if he were one of the cult's junior maho-tsukai. Iuchiban asked others to plot his revenge; Yajinden seethed. He passed the duty on to another underling, but the damage was done, and a new coldness dawned between teacher and student.

Despite this, the cult's army grew to a size never imagined in an earlier era. Armed with the secret of moving his spirit from body to body, Iuchiban spent the two centuries following his defeat creating a massive cult throughout the Empire. The Bloodspeakers, loyal as ever, amassed a great army of corpses on the plain near Sleeping River. They hoped to seize the city of Ryoko Owari and then expand their holdings by creating new armies from every casualty.

To this end, thousands and then tens of thousands of masks were created. Combining the efforts of cells all over the Empire, the Bloodspeakers gathered weapons and armor. Each day, their army gathered and the zombies were raised. At last, the cultists were almost ready to seize Ryoko Owari and the Empire.

THE RETURN OF IUCHIBAN

Though his spirit had been free for 200 years, the Empire had no idea that Iuchiban had returned until he visited the cold peaks of the Dragon Clan and attempted to possess the body of an ise zumi named Togashi Yamatsu. The attempt was one of Iuchiban's few defeats by magic; Yamatsu's magical tattoos protected him from Iuchiban's body-stealing magic and drove him from the Togashi halls in fear. Worse, from the cult's perspective, Yamatsu raised the alarm with every great clan that would listen and sent word to the Emperor himself that Iuchiban's spirit had been freed from the Tomb. The Empire's forces, suddenly alerted to the threat that had lain quiet, slowly gathering strength, were shocked into action.

Suddenly, the race to complete the Porcelain Army in its hidden river valley became a desperate scramble against time, as the Imperial armies began to march against the cult.

THE BATTLE OF SLEEPING RIVER

The fallout of Yamatsu's discovery drove a wedge between Yajinden and Iuchiban. Yajinden was furious; not only had Iuchiban acted with undue rashness, Yajinden would never enter the body of such a powerful enemy, but the alarm the Ise Zumi raised threatened to ruin all their plans. In the desperate scrambling after Iuchiban's blunder, the first Bloodspeaker tried to rally his forces and make a stand, but after driving the Bloodspeaker forces from Ryoko Owari, the united clans converged upon the plains of Sleeping River and destroyed the sorcerer's undead army in a battle that raged for three days. Togashi Yamatsu captured Iuchiban's spirit until a new suitable tomb could be erected, allowing the Bloodspeaker to finally be imprisoned for good.

Disgusted by the crude destruction of two hundred years of careful secrecy, Yajinden left his master, transferred his essence to a new body, and fled just before the Battle of Sleeping River. If Iuchiban noticed his absence, he sent no one after him.

Iuchiban's second defeat was a devastating blow to the Bloodspeaker cult. The vast majority of its members were killed in the battle that broke Iuchiban's power (the Battle of Sleeping River, in the year 750) or were hunted down shortly thereafter. The few who survived were driven into hiding, many abandoning their quest for power with the loss of their master. Others, however, immediately began preparing for their master's inevitable return. He had escaped imprisonment once before and would surely do so again. Unfortunately for them, the years rolled past and Iuchiban stayed trapped in his tomb. They could only pass down their dark secrets to a new generation of bloodspeakers.

FOUNDING THE TEMPLE OF BLOOD

Built in the year 989, the formal center of the Bloodspeakers has always been referred to as the Temple of Blood. For more than a hundred years it was hidden in the northern Crane provinces, in a hilly region protected by a number of peasant villages friendly to the Bloodspeaker cause. Maho-tsukai visited its library, sharing forbidden knowledge, studying blood's secrets and performing rituals to strengthen their bodies and minds. The prices in sacrifices were terrible and constant, and by 1023 the continual disappearances (sometimes of entire villages) could no longer be tolerated. The Emerald Magistrates



scoured the land, searching for bandit gangs, rousting hidden encampments of Yasuki merchants and smugglers, finding only small groups of cultists. The hunt was a failure, and the Temple was the training ground of generations of cultists.

The Temple of Blood remained hidden despite rumors of its existence and constant investigations for almost 70 years. In the end, many of the search parties themselves began to disappear and the quest was called off.

THE YOGO REBELLION

Gathering strength amongst the Eta and the heimin of the Scorpion clan, in 1074, the Bloodspeakers raised against their samurai overlords in the lands of the Yogo, striving to overthrow the Will of Heaven. The Yogo Towers were sacked and the daimyo sacrificed to the cult, in a ritual that some Eta still remember and retell to their children as a glorious victory. The number of cultists involved may have been initially small, but they quickly won the support of all the lower castes.

Despite the value of surprise, numbers, and maho, the rebellion was short-lived, and ends within six months. Ten thousand peasants were enlisted to put down the uprising and in the end, the rebellion's leader and best strategist, Yogo Hisahsi, was executed. However, Hisahsi's body was not well guarded and he was reborn as an undead Bloodspeaker who inspired legends of resurrection

through the good graces of the cult.

After the rebellion finally wound down, the Yogo became much more cautious, for their peasants had little left to hold onto, but a few weapons taken from dead samurai and memories of their triumphs. The greatest of these, the Battle of Twilight Bridge, is not recorded in the histories of the samurai class, for among the surviving cells, it takes on the aura of a dream delayed, but not destroyed.

Regardless of the effect on the peasantry, the bulk of Bloodspeaker strength moved elsewhere. Most of the survivors fled to the lands of the Crane and Lion, creating new cells in the heart of the Empire. Hisahsi was forced to flee with the rest, yet some stories claim he found refuge with the Hare Clan.

THE CIRCLE IS BROKEN

Fifty years later, a struggle within the cult broke up the council that has led it for more than 600 years. In 1120, after decades of careful questions and bold thefts, Asahina Yajinden had recovered all four Masks of Iuchiban. The Masks allowed him to enter the Tomb of Iuchiban. Obtaining the last of these Masks was a difficult task, for

the price paid was the death of Yajinden's ancient friend and ally, the pennagolan Shinku Kamiko. Yajinden entered the tomb successfully, but a small group of samurai closed on his heels. The tomb itself was resealed shortly thereafter and so far, neither Yajinden nor Iuchiban has been seen since.

Kamiko's death and Yajinden's disappearance in the hour of what should have been his triumph left a gaping hole in the Circle of Five.

anyone but a powerful shugenja from finding it. On the rare occasions when it was found, the dozens of mahotsukai, oni, and kansen who inhabited the Temple grounds quickly killed the shugenja and his search party. In the end, though, the need for daily, even hourly sacrifices, proved too much. The land around the Temple was depopulated; bringing new victims to the Temple grew virtually impossible. The Temple was habitually abandoned.

THE CORRUPTION OF THE HARE CLAN

In the year 1123, the Scorpion discovered that an agent of theirs had been detected and executed by Usagi Ozaki, a Hare Clan samurai. The blow to their pride as the Emperor's underhand was not to be tolerated and soon a Scorpion army was raised to teach the Hare a lesson. Indeed, the Scorpion soon found, some say, manufactured, evidence that the entire Hare clan was rife with maho and corruption. The Scorpion general, Bayushi Tomaru, destroyed the castle of Shiro Usagi and killed the daimyo, Usagi Oda.

The Emperor, hearing the evidence of maho obtained by the Scorpion, disbands the Hare clan. The Bloodspeakers themselves rarely speak of this incident, for the Hare clan was reborn in 1125 after the Hare's clan champion clears their name. Though many yet look upon the Hare with suspicion, the clan continues to rebuild their ancestral home.



FALL OF THE TEMPLE OF BLOOD

During the Spirit Wars from 1138 to 1150, the Bloodspeakers prospered, but also suffered a terrible setback during this time of rich sacrifices and an empire in chaos: the Temple of Blood was found and destroyed.

The secret of the Temple's hidden location was simple; blood sacrifices powered protective maho that prevented

The Guardian of the Temple throughout the reign of Toturi was Doji Adoka, a corrupt Crane shugenja who had learned ancestor manipulation from Kitsu Gongsun. He protected the Temple with false "visions" of ancestor spirits who warned away all by passers. When Adoka was forced to flee Crane lands after killing Kakita Ariteko at the

Imperial Court, he fled to the Temple. Though he was not followed immediately, witnesses saw him led the Crane magistrates near the location of the temple. Soon the area immediately surrounding the temple was under constant observation.

For years, the cultists and magistrates played cat and mouse, with interrogations, murders, and torture on both sides. Eventually, a young Bloodspeaker made a mistake, revealing the path into the Temple to a disguised magistrate. The magistrate escaped to report the secret, and the Temple was burnt to the ground and purified by Imperial agents in 1142.

Since then, rumors claim that a new Temple of Blood has been built, this one within Yogo lands near the borders of the

Shinomen forest. Cultists who have heard of it claim that Yogo Hisahsi laid its foundation stones during the Yogo Rebellion. However, so far no magistrate or inquisitor has been able to confirm or refute this claim.

CREATION OF DAIGOTSU

In 1111, the Empress Hochiahime, wife to Hantei XXXVII and the Imperial heir Sotorii, were captured by a group of Bloodspeakers. This was a critical opportunity, a chance to tamper with the Hantei bloodline directly. Expending every effort to keep this secret safe, the cultists

hoped to control and brainwash the imperial heir. She was captured in the Mountains of Regret, between the Lion and Phoenix lands, but something went wrong.

A mountain-dwelling ronin named Yotsu discovered that the Empress's caravan had been attacked by the cult. He found the Empress' infant children (all killed by the cult) and the corpses of all the Seppun guardsmen attached to the caravan. He followed the trail of the Empress Hochiahime and the young heir Sotorii. The Bloodspeakers were elated with their victory and intended to sacrifice the Empress to fulfill an ancient prophecy. Yotsu crept into the camp with the blade of a fallen Seppun guardsman. Though he knew he could not defeat the Bloodspeakers alone, he asked the Empress for permission to die in the Empress' name. The Empress forbade it and insisted that the ronin rescue the heir Sotorii. She gave Yotsu a message for the Hantei, 'mourn her and the child she would have borne.' Yotsu left his youngest son in Sotorii's place and departed to deliver the message. Weeks later, the heir was reunited with his father and the Yotsu family was created in recognition of the ronin's service and sacrifice. The Bloodspeaker cult was the target of an Imperial expedition, but evidence of the cult was never found.

Daigotsu himself was born far from the Mountains of Regret, in Unicorn lands. The Bloodspeakers had soon realized that the young Hantei heir had been stolen from them. Although initially dismayed, the cultists soon regained their confidence when they realized that the Empress was bearing yet another child. The Bloodspeakers kept a very close eye on her and showed her every kindness. She bore a son later that same year in the Unicorn territories. That son was raised to about the age of one by the cult and then in 1112 or so, Daigotsu and his companions Kyoden and Omoni were banished to Jigoku via a Bloodspeaker ritual. They remained there for two decades (without really aging in a conventional sense, mirroring Kaneka's years in Tengoku). He left the Bloodspeakers in 1127, after his gempukku. In 1149 a still-young and hotheaded Daigotsu followed his dream and headed off to find the City of the Lost, bringing Kyoden and Omoni along with him. In his adventures, he met Togashi Kokujin and formed a very unlikely friendship.

Shahai, having heard and dismissed the stories of a Bloodspeaker heir to the throne years ago, did not start looking for Daigotsu until 1150, yet the city of the Lost eluded her. She finally found him in 1158, shortly before Toturi's death and once she had, she joined him, and told her followers to come join her as well, splitting the Unicorn cells of the cult in half.

THE CURRENT DAY

Centuries later, the modern Bloodspeakers continue their preparations. Their dark maho rites have been passed down through the generations, each time changing and becoming more sinister and twisted. Although they feel that they serve their master Iuchiban, the blood magic they practice has only one true source of power: Jigoku. They pay no homage to the dark powers of the Shadowlands; their activities serve only to corrupt the innocent and increase the foothold of the Taint in Rokugan. The Bloodspeakers embrace a philosophy of personal power, believing that strength comes to those with the courage to grasp it and that one should not be shackled by the consequences of one's birth. Great or small, peasant or samurai, any man or woman can have great power through the use of maho. It is a tantalizing concept to a number of Rokugani, one that has consumed countless numbers of foolish souls since the time of Iuchiban.

Cells of the Bloodspeaker cult exist in the lands of all the great clans (see page 11). Of course, no clan believes that such corruption can exist in its presence without its knowledge, but their confidence is the perfect shield for the cult. A former Unicorn shugenja named Iuchi Shahai (see page 68) was one of the most influential Bloodspeakers in the Empire until recent years, when she changed her allegiance to the Shadowlands and ascended to the unholy position of the Dark Daughter of Fu Leng. This has prompted several cells to follow her lead, abandoning their centuries-long quest to free Iuchiban in order to support Shahai and her allies in their bid to overthrow the Empire.

Those Bloodspeakers who remain loyal to Iuchiban are currently doing exactly what they have spent the last few centuries doing: searching the Empire for the hidden tomb of their master. Once the tomb has been located, the cult must gather the keys: four large porcelain masks that they know will open the seals upon the tomb's gate. The cultists know that the tomb will be deadly. Two false tombs were constructed at the same time, and both have killed all Bloodspeakers who entered. Still, the master must be freed for the cult to take its rightful place at the head of the Empire, and no cost is too great.

THE SHADOWLANDS AND THE CITY OF TEARS

Currently, the three most important cells of the Bloodspeakers are: Shahai's and Mishime's cells in the Shadowlands, which are directly linked to Daigotsu's efforts against the Empire.

The Circle of Five reside at the opposite end of the

Empire, in the rebuilt Temple of Blood. The Temple stands in the Yobanjin region north of the Dragon territories, within the City of Tears, a city of powerful elemental spirits that have been thoroughly corrupted by kansen, during the time of the Battle for Oblivion's Gate, around 1133. When the old Temple of Blood in the Crane territories was finally discovered and destroyed, a new and better Temple was built in the north, with literally Thousands of servants and dozens of maho-tsukai that are raising a new generation of Bloodspeakers for the Empire's watchful eye, and with quick access to the northern border of the Empire itself. The Bloodspeakers are raising an army where people would least expect it.

Finally, the third crucial cell is that of Jama Suru, who claims to speak directly to Iuchiban's spirit, and just as importantly, commands the loyalty of many of the most experienced and committed Bloodspeakers. Jama Suru's Bloodspeakers are a mobile cell, a strike force composed of those who knew his father and those who served Yajinden during the dark times. From time to time, he issues an invitation to other experienced maho-tsukai to join his cell...the offer is usually accepted. As a result of choosing the best and most promising, Suru can accomplish feats of daring maho that few others dare. Suru mediates between the City of Tears and Shahai's minions in the distant south, and he attempts to keep the two factions from splitting entirely. Since the Oracle of Blood supports him and his various escapades, neither faction sees any benefit in removing him from the field.

THE TOMB'S GUARDIANS

The Tomb of Iuchiban is not just a single tomb, but a series of tombs and protective measures designed to ensure that no one approaches the Bloodspeaker's last resting place unobserved. Further, false tombs constructed in the 8th century (after the Battle of Sleeping River) have lured

many Bloodspeakers to their death. Attempts to subvert the Daidoji have failed; attempted to kill them by means of a forward assault (in the year 903, by a group of Bloodspeakers disguised as the garrison regular supply train) have only resulted in a strengthening of the garrison.

Today, the guardians are led by Daidoji Mochiko, a woman hardened by 40 years of a soldier's lifestyle and ready to retire. Her hair was never dyed white, as it was among other Crane, but the passing years have made her a gray Crane after all. Her daisho, Yari, and armor are in

pristine condition and her orders still ring out decisively. The maintenance of her duties are careful and vigilant. She has never quite forgiven herself for the single most critical failure under her command: when Asahina Yajinden breached the seals and entered the tomb, in 1120. Even though nothing has ever left the tomb, she will never forgive herself for her failure. Her request to be allowed to perform seppuku later that year was denied.

The tomb and the false tombs are along the western frontier, perched in the north of the Twilight Mountains, guarded by some small villages around a tea plantation. Her soldiers do not know that their true

purpose is to guard the tomb of the Bloodspeakers; most of those soldiers who served here in 1120 are long gone. Mochiko is primarily an honorary commander now; a young Imperial protégé named Akodo Chiyo, (She is a young female of great promise who has won Naseru's trust to guard the tomb,) has been sent to take over the command. In another year, Mochiko hopes to cut off her topknot and enter a life of monkish contemplation of the Tao of Shinsei. Until then, she is carefully instructing her replacement. The tomb has been quite for decades, yet the Empire's caution continues.

Some of the Bloodspeakers described here are historical



CHAPTER FOUR:

INFAMOUS BLOODSPEAKERS

figures. This does not mean that they can't be used in a campaign. If anything, Bloodspeakers and maho-tsukai in general are the perfect villains: kill them once and they hop to a new body. Kill them again; they come back from the grave. Kill them again and their followers bring them back. They can return as undead, as spirits, or as ancestors possessing their less powerful followers. In fact, many of the most powerful bloodspeakers go to their graves confident that they will soon return.

To the maho-tsukai, death is always a two-way street.

ASAHINA YAJINDEI

Male human Crane Shu6/Tsu10: CR 16; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 6d6+6 plus 10d8+10 (hp 82); Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (touch 12, flat-footed 10); Atk +12/+7 melee (1d6+2, +2 wounding wakizashi); SQ Class skill - Knowledge (Shintao) (family bonus), Sense Elements, Taint Suppression, Blood Component, Maho Metamagic; Honor 0 (1); AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 18; Taint +4; Height 5 ft. 6 in.



Skills and Feats: Bluff +19, Concentration +10, Craft (Weaponsmithing) +20, Forgery +10, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +20, Spellcraft +20; Versatile (Bluff, Forgery), Void Use, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (wakizashi), Maho Focus, Perceived Honor.

Spells Per Day: 6/5+2/5+1/4+1/4+1/4+1/4/3/2

Spells Known (s+4+3/7/6/5/5/5/4/3/2; base DC 14 + spell level): Inori - daze, detect magic, flare, ghost sound, guidance, know direction, purify food and drink, read magic; 1st - blood and darkness, bleeding, cause fear, deathwatch, drain soul, heart of the damned, legacy of the dark one; 2nd - blood warding*, choking death, death knell, desecrate, inflict moderate wounds, mists of fear; 3rd - choke the soul*, hate's heart, poison, speak with dead, vampiric touch; 4th - enervation, heart ripper, phantasmal killer, polymorph self, rise again; 5th - cloudkill, magic jar, nightmare, stealing breath, unhallow; 6th - circle of death, create undead, forbiddance, sword of darkness; 7th - blasphemy, finger of death, possession; 8th - clone, tainted aura.

Symptoms of the Taint (4/3/1): mild paranoia, fear of drowning, compulsive hoarding, obsessive about damage to tools; violence against valuables, pack rat, mood swings; hunger for gold.

Yajinden Qualities - Yajinden possesses a number of unique abilities:

Advanced Taint Suppression: Yajinden automatically suppresses any effect that detects or specifically targets Shadowlands creatures within 100 feet of himself. He may suppress this ability at will or alter it so that the effect applies only to himself.

Possession: Yajinden may attempt to possess any living humanoid creature within thirty feet by locking gazes with them. The target must make an opposed Will Save or become possessed by Yajinden. Yajinden's former host body immediately dies. The target's body becomes Yajinden's new host body and the former occupant's spirit immediately dies. Yajinden's physical Traits temporarily become those of the host body if they are greater than his own. The host body retains any natural abilities and ongoing magical effects, but otherwise all its previous abilities (including hit points) are lost and replaced with Yajinden's. There is no limit to the amount of time that Yajinden may remain in a host body. If the target's initial Willpower roll is successful, Yajinden remains in his previous body and the target is immune to this effect for ten minutes. Once Yajinden possesses a body, the body is considered his own and he cannot be removed by exorcism or the like.

Asahina Yajinden

Earth: 4

Willpower: 7

Water: 4

Fire: 5

Air: 6

Void: 3

Shadowlands Taint: 7.1

School/Rank: Asahina Shugenja 5

Honor: 1.9 (2.9)

Glory: 0.0 (7.6 when alive)

Advantages: Allies (Bloodspeakers), Cadence, Perceived Honor (1 rank), Way of the Land (Crane, Imperial)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Yajinden), Dark Fate, Jealousy (Iuchiban), Obligation (Iuchiban and the Bloodspeakers)

Spells: Yajinden knows all maho spells and possesses many as Innate Abilities. He also has access to many elemental spells, and while his Affinity is for Air, he has overcome his Deficiencies and can cast Earth spells with no penalty. The full limit of his magical knowledge is left to the GM's discretion.

Skills: Courtier 5, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 5, Lore (maho) 8, Lore (nemuranai) 8, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Meditation 6, Spellcraft 7, Tanto 6, Tsangusuri 7, Weaponsmithing 8.

Special Abilities: Yajinden possesses a number of unique abilities.

Advanced Taint Suppression: Yajinden automatically suppresses any effect that detects or specifically targets Shadowlands creatures within 100 feet of himself. He may suppress this ability at will, or alter it so that the effect applies only to himself.

Possession: Yajinden may attempt to possess any living humanoid creature within thirty feet by locking gazes with them. The target must make an opposed Willpower roll or become possessed by Yajinden. Yajinden's former host body immediately dies. The target's body becomes Yajinden's new host body and the former occupant's spirit is permanently forced into Yajinden's previous body. Yajinden's physical Traits temporarily become those of the host body if they are greater than his own. The host body retains any natural abilities and ongoing magical effects, but otherwise all its previous abilities (including hit points) are lost and replaced with Yajinden's. There is no limit to the amount of time that Yajinden may remain in a host body. If the target's initial Willpower roll is successful, Yajinden remains in his previous body and the target is immune to this effect for ten minutes. Once Yajinden possesses a body, the body is considered his own and he cannot be removed by exorcism or the like.

Asahina Yajinden's beginnings were very simple. He was born to the Crane and lived most of his early life with no signs that he was any different from the dozens of other young men and women who began schooling in the

Asahina arts alongside him. In short order, however, the elder Asahina noticed in Yajinden an incredible gift for artifice. The young man mastered the ancient art of Tsangusuri in mere weeks and was creating new and impressive fetishes long before his gempukku. Yajinden was heralded as one of the finest shugenja of his family and great things were expected from him.

Yajinden quickly grew bored, however. There was no challenge in the arts his family practiced and he grew weary of them looking to him for some grand new feat of magic. It was only a few short years after his gempukku that he began to yearn for excitement and experiences. Finally, he used his gifts to gain the favor of several important members of the Crane leadership and was able to arrange a position in the courts at Otsan Uchi. Surely the largest city in all the Empire would hold something of interest for an intelligent and engaging young man like himself.

Yajinden was in Otsan Uchi less than a month before he met a charismatic man named Otomo Jama. Jama's personality was quiet, but magnetic. Yajinden was strangely drawn to him. Over time, Jama began to share some of his studies and theories of magic with the young shugenja. Yajinden was intrigued and quickly became Jama's confidant. Even when their experiments turned to dark and sinister things, Yajinden did not break away. At last he had found something that interested him.

It was not until after Yajinden had forged the Bloodswords for his master that their machinations were exposed. The pair's plans for the capital might have gone undetected if not for the interference of a pair of magistrates. Unfortunately, the Scorpion magistrate Soshi Takasho was far more cunning than Jama, now called Iuchiban, anticipated, and managed to arrange for both Iuchiban and Yajinden to be captured by the Legions.

The Crane were furious at Yajinden's treason. They devised a most insidious punishment; one that they felt matched the enormity of Yajinden's crimes. Rather than allow his black knowledge to continue to be a threat, the pacifistic Asahina erased his memories, leaving him nothing more than a simpleton fit only for garden work. Satisfied, the Asahina left Yajinden's shattered husk to

serve the gardens in the Imperial City.

Yajinden had triumphed, however. He had mastered a new art: he could transfer his spirit into others' bodies. He switched his mind with that of an Imperial guard just seconds before his memory was erased, leaving the guard a simpleton and him dead to the Empire. In his new identity, he hid from his enemies for a while before leaving the body to explore others. He spent decades wandering the Empire in a variety of guises until, at long last, his master returned using the same technique. Together, they shook the foundations of Rokugan to its core at the Battle of Sleeping River. In the end, they were defeated, but Yajinden escaped the imprisonment his master suffered.

After centuries together, Yajinden had come to hate his master. Iuchiban had grand theories, but it was Yajinden who had forged the Bloodswords and it was Yajinden who mastered the art of spirit travel. He was the true master of the Bloodspeakers, not Iuchiban. Full of anger, he devised a plot to drain his master's imprisoned spirit of its power, making him the one, true master of the dark arts he had always dreamed of being.

Yajinden's plot nearly succeeded. Possessing a Kuni Witch-Hunter, he managed to open Iuchiban's tomb and make his way to the innermost chambers. There, he used an artifact of his own devising to summon

Iuchiban's captive spirit and began to absorb its power. The timely intervention of a

group of samurai halted his plan, however, and it was Yajinden who found himself absorbed by the ravenous spirit of Iuchiban. Since that time, he has known only darkness, drifting in an eternal void with no sight or sound, unable to collect his spirit enough to escape. He can only wait until his next chance for freedom, and pray that his master will forgive him.

ASAKO KIRUYE

Female human Phoenix Mnk10/Henshin 2/Tsu5: CR 17, Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 10d8+30 plus 2d8 +6 plus 5d8+15; hp 127; Init +5 [+1 Dex, +4 Imp. Init]; Spd 70 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +2 monk, +2 Wis), touch 15, flat-footed 14; Att +16/+13/+10 monk melee [+9/+4 mnk+4 tsu+3 Str]; Dmg 1d12+3 unarmed; SQ Class skill -



Concentration (Family bonus), suppress Taint, blood conversion, spell conversion, Unarmed Strike, Stunning Attack, Evasion, Still Mind, Slow Fall, Purity of Body, Wholeness of Body, Leap of the Clouds, Ki Strike, Riddle of Awareness, Diamond Body; Honor: 0; AL LE; SV Fort +17 [+7+3+4+3], Ref +12 [+7+3+1+1], Will +13 [+7+3+1+2]; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 14; Maximum Void: 5, Taint modifier +3; Height 5 ft. 6 in.

Skills= 6 x 4 at 1st level, 9 x 6 for monk + 6 x 2 for henshin + 4 x 5 for tuskai = 92 points

= 2+8+5+7+5+6+3+5+6+11+6+6+6+5+2+5+1+4 = 92

Feats = 2 at 1st plus 5 additional = 7 + the Monk feats of Blind Fight, Deflect Arrows, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike,

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Balance +3 [+2+1], Climb +11 [+8+3], Concentration +8 [+5+3], Escape Artist +8 [+7+1], Heal +7 [+5+2], Hide +7 [+6+1], Jump +6 [+3+3], Knowledge (Arcana) +7 [+5+2], Knowledge (Maho) +8 [+6+2], Knowledge (Religion) +13 [+11+2], Knowledge (Shadowlands) +8 [+6+2], Listen +10 [+6+2+2], Move Silently +7 [+6+1], Sense Motive +8 [+5+2+1 feat], Spellcraft +4 [+2+2], Spot +9 [+5+2+2], Swim +4 [+1+3], Tumble +5 [+4+1]; Alertness, Blind Fight, Deflect Arrows, Depths of the Void, Flying Kick, Immortal Spirit, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, Void Use, Way of the Phoenix.

Spells Per Day: 6+1/5+1/3+1

Spells Known (4/2/1); base DC 13 + spell level; 1st-blood armor, bleeding, dim mak, ghost light; 2nd-blood of midnight, limb disruption; 3rd-vampiric touch.

Possessions: potion of Wisdom, talisman of white sheaf of grain, eight diagram coins.

Symptoms of the Taint (3/3/1): fear of silence, compulsive need to speak first and last in every conversation, auditory hallucinations; babbling prophecies and visions, self-denial by starvation; delusions of identity.

Asako Kinuye was a henshin, one of the Enlightened of the Phoenix, beloved and wise, a child in the line of Asako Ingen, the legendary henshin who brushed close to godhood. In the footsteps of her ancestor, she studied the Tao and the wisdom of the kami; she mastered the arts of meditation and hand-to-hand combat. Then, like many before, she made one fatal error that led her down a False Path.

Kinuye felt that she could learn more by leaving Phoenix lands; she chose to pursue her studies in the Monastery of Quiet Earth. There, she was, unknowingly at first, among other Bloodspeakers and one of the former leaders of the Council of Five, Isawa Kakusu, the "Hidden Fish". Under his guidance, entire new realms of knowledge were opened for her.

Kinuye now suffers from a strange form of enlightened madness; she can see through Yume-Do, the Realm of Dreams, to a strange dreamland where 1000 years of darkness have descended upon Rokugan. At the same time, she sees how things are in the true Empire of Rokugan and the rising tide of shadow under Daigotsu. Believing her visions of darkness to be a future fate, she has despaired and her finely balanced mind has been driven into real madness. Daigotsu found her years later, after the Monastery was destroyed and took pity on her, bringing her to the City of the Lost to learn more blood magic, which seems to calm her visions.

Currently Kinuye serves Daigotsu and seeks revenge against the Dark Oracles, whom she sometimes refers to as the Dark Masters. No one else in Rokugan uses this name for the Dark Oracles, but she seems to see them as the same people. Sometimes she insists that Fu Leng rules the Empire or that the Oracles have replaced the Council of Elemental Masters. Most who know of her broken mind ignore these comments as products of a deluded mind, but a few always try to humor her. It's not clear whether feeding her insanity is helpful or not; Kinuye is so often removed from everyday concerns that her foibles amuse Daigotsu more than anything else.

CHUDA MISHIME

Male human Snake Shu6/Tsu8: CR 14, Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 6d6-6 plus 8d8 -8; hp 58; Init +2 (+2 init weapon); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+3 *obi* of protection,



amulet of natural armor +2, tessen) touch 15, flat-footed 15; Att +12 [+3shu+6tsu+1 str+2 weapon] melee (1d6+1d6+5 tainted initiative wakizashi +2) [damage bonus from weapon magic, tainted, strength, and daisho spec feat]; SQ Class skill - Knowledge (Maho) (Family bonus), sense elements, suppress Taint, blood conversion, spell conversion (has converted all spell levels to Maho), Maho Meta-magic; Honor: 0; AL NE; SV Fort +7 [+6+2-1] (+11 vs. poison), Ref +4 [+2+2], Will +11 [+2+5+4]; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 9, Int 17, Wis 19, Cha 16; Taint +7; Max. Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 10 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Oni, Yobanjin), Bluff +10 [+8+2], Concentration +15 [+16-1], Heal +10 [+6+4], Hide +8 [+16], Innuendo +5 [+6+2], Knowledge (Shadowlands) +14 [+11+3], Knowledge (Maho) +13 [+10+3], Knowledge (Arcana) +9 [+6+3], Spellcraft +19 [+16+3]; Daisho Specialization, Maho Focus, Resist Poison, Ritual Magic, Void Use, Weapon Focus (wakizashi).

Skills=7x4 at 1st plus 7x5 for Shu levels, plus 4x8 for Tsu = 105

= +8+16+6+16+6+11+10+6+16=105

Feats = 2 at 1st plus 4 = 6 total

Spells Per Day: 6/6+2/6+2/6+2/6+1/6+1/4+1

Spells Known (5+3/3+2/2+1/2+0 at 6th, then 5/5/4/4/4/3/2): base DC 19 + spell level; Yogo School; all spells are considered maho: 0-accounts of Shorihotsu (detect magic), commune with elements, moment of peace (cure minor wounds), resistance, stun the mind (daze), summon, whispers on the mind (ghost sound), wisdom of the Fortunes (read magic); 1st-blood rite*, castle of water, protection from Taint, quiescence of air, touch of thunder (shocking grasp); 2nd-blood of midnight, cure moderate wounds, greater quiescence (silence), obscure object; 3rd-essence of air (invisibility), magic circle against Taint, poison, speak with dead; 4th cloud of Taint, curse of weakness, giant vermin, stealing the soul; 5th-nightmare, slay living, truth is a scourge; 6th-circle of death, harm, sinful dreams; 7th -Iuchiban's theft, tomb of earth.

Possessions: talisman of the soaring crane (haste), tabi of spider climbing, tainted initiative wakizashi +2, celestial tessen, amulet of natural armor +2, obi of protection +3

Symptoms of the Taint (7/5/3): Pisses blood, violent when drunk, sadistic tendencies, fear of cats, sharply critical of all poets, preaches against sake, fear of girl children; tears of blood, eats all meat raw and bloody, drinks only pure water, obsessive hatred of magistrates, enjoys killing peasants at random; snakelike skin on back and around navel, cold body temperature, aversion to snow and ice.

Physically weak but very wise and clever, Chuda Mishime is both Daigotsu's hatamoto and his herald. He carried Daigotsu's message of Fu Leng's return to the City of the Lost and has recruited the Lost for Daigotsu's causes. Most recently, he has gone to the Shadowlands, where his inner corruption finally has taken an external form (his scaly skin and pissing blood). After leaving the Shadowlands to bring Daigotsu's words to the cult, he seized a place for himself on the Circle of Five. He is currently believed to be living in the City of Tears.

Chuda Mishime posed as a member of the Asako for many years, but took on his true family name after joining Shaha and Daigotsu in the Shadowlands. Daigotsu has given him a great deal of trust because of his honesty and his willingness to speak the truth even when it is uncomfortable. This Bloodspeaker hopes to restore the eradicated and forgotten Snake Clan and to that end has impregnated a number of willing female cultists. So far, all his children have been stillborn, but he expects to devote some magical attention to the matter soon.

Mishime enjoys hot and humid climates, so his time in the northerly City of Tears is a burden. As a member of the Circle, he is new and untested, but the other members assume that he speaks for Daigotsu. This is only partly true. While Mishime understands and can explain his master's point of view, he also has an agenda of his own, primarily the restoration of the Chuda clan to a place of prominence.

DAIGOTSU, LORD OF THE SHADOWLANDS

Male outsider Tsu20: CR 25; medium-size outsider (evil, Shadowlands); HD 20d6 + 100; hp 220; Init ; Spd 30ft.; Fly 30ft.; AC 36; (touch 32. flat-footed 31); Att +23/+18 melee (1d10 +17 +2d6 [against good], Daigotsu's Obsidian Blade); SQ Daigotsu Qualities, Akutenshi abilities - Alternate Form, Cloaked Taint (DC 36 to detect), Body of Damned Time (once/hour, assume corporeal form for one round; all viewers must make a Fort save vs. DC 25 or suffer 1d4 permanent Str, Dex, and Con damage and hair turns white), Breath of Taint (gain 6 Taint points, Reflex DC 25 for half) detect thoughts (at will), Disrupt Ki (Will DC 23 or use lowest ability modifier on all actions for 18 rounds), invisibility (at will), Soul Drinking; Honor 0; AL LE; SV Fort +15, Ref +14, Will +19; Str 26, Dex 19, Con 20, Int 21, Wis 17, Cha 20; Taint +16; Height 5 ft. 10 in.

Daigotsu Abilities: The Lord of the Shadowlands possesses a number of unique abilities, including the following:

Akutenshi - Daigotsu possesses all abilities of the

akutenshi template in *Oriental Adventures*, with the exception of shapechange. These are listed under Special Qualities.

Damage Reduction 30/+3 – applies only to his original body; increases to 50/+5 if Daigotsu's soul is not currently in his body.

Dark Knowledge – All skills are class skills.

Fu Leng's Blessing – Daigotsu gains a deflection bonus to AC equal to his Taint modifier while in his own body.

Improved Saves – If Daigotsu successfully saves against any effect with a "partial" result, the spell does not affect him.

Maho – Daigotsu may cast no spells that are not maho spells. His Spells Known have been adjusted accordingly.

Oni Possession – Daigotsu may possess any oni he can see, at will, as a standard action. This is the equivalent of a *magic jar* spell, except for the following: The oni is allowed no save and Daigotsu needs no receptacle (he may transfer his soul directly into the oni). The oni's soul is not suppressed, but aware of all actions performed while Daigotsu commands its body. Daigotsu may return to his own body at will, regardless of range, or may shift his soul to another oni within sight as a standard action. Daigotsu is aware of all abilities of his host and may use them, The caster level of any spell like abilities of the host become Daigotsu's caster level, but Daigotsu may not cast his own spells or use his own natural abilities (with the exception of one) while within a host. He may use the host's feats as well as his own. He may use the host's attack bonus as well as his own, if he wishes. If the host is killed Daigotsu's soul returns to its body regardless of range.

Oni Vision – Daigotsu may scry on any oni, at will, as a standard action. The scry attempt is always automatically successful within the boundaries of the Shadowlands.

Outsider – Daigotsu is a native outsider; he may be banished but not dismissed.

Spell Resistance – 25

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, Bakemono, High Rokugani, Nezumi, Ogre, Oni), Battle* +8, Concentration +22, Diplomacy +14, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (Arcana) +21, Knowledge (Elements) +10, Knowledge (Etiquette) +10, Knowledge (Fortunes) +8, Knowledge (Jingoku) +27, Knowledge (Maho) +22, Knowledge (Miedo) +8, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +11, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +28, Knowledge (Shintao) +6, Knowledge (Toshigoku) +8, Knowledge (Yume-do) +10, Knowledge (Gakido) +8, Listen +13, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +20, Spot +13, Blood Sorcerer (Ancestor)***, Empower Spell, Fly-By Attack,

Improved Initiative, Innate Ability (circle of death, dark wings, obsidian armor)*, Maho Focus*, Maximize Spell, Ritual Magic*.

Spells Known (0/10/10/10/10/9/9/9/8; base DC 31 + spell level, Iuchi School; all spells are considered maho): 0—None; 1st—blood and darkness*, blood rite*, cobra's breath**, pain*, rise again*; 2nd—choking death*, curse, desecrate, ghoul touch, mists of fear*; 3rd—animate dead, dark wings*, hate's heart, inflict serious wounds; 4th—clouf of taint**, enervation, polymorph self, wall of bones**, 5th—cloudkill, obsidian armor*, slay living, unhallow; 6th—circle of death, eyebite, harm, summon greater kansen*; 7th—acid fog, blasphemy, control undead, destruction; 8th—create greater undead, greater planar binding, symbol of tainted aura**; 9th—power word kill, summon monster IX, weird.

Possessions: Daigotsu's Obsidian Blade (unique item, functions as a +5 unholy katana that can produce the effects of the sword of darkness** spell at will; unlike the spell, the blade must be wielded and takes advantage of the user's feats, ect.), rod of thunder and lightning, amulet of natural armor +5, haori of vengeance +4.

Not much is currently known about the new Lord of the Shadowlands. Not much needs to be known. His power and leadership speak for themselves. He is the master of Onisu, leader of the Tainted armies lost at Volturnum, and the new driving force behind the Shadowlands Horde. Daigotsu is charismatic, intelligent, and at times even friendly to his enemies, but his every action is a calculated ploy to extend the domain of corruption even further. For example, Daigotsu may offer wealth, power, friendship, and acceptance to a ronin seeking a home, with every intent to fulfill his promises. Daigotsu's gifts have a price, however, and those who enter his service will inevitably twisted into a weapon to be used against the Empire. Behind the façade of charm, Daigotsu is as wholly evil as any other leader of the Shadowlands. He seeks to succeed where Yogo Junzo, Kuni Yori, the Maw, and Oni no Kyoso have failed. He has united the disparate groups of the Shadowlands like no other leader in memory, and those Tainted who defy his commands are hunted by the savage Onisu. Though he is willing to make compromises to build his power base, he will brook no challenges to his leadership.

Those who defy him are destroyed, no exceptions.

Feats, skills, and spells introduced in *Oriental Adventures* are marked with a **. Feats, skills, and spells introduced in *Rokugan* are marked with a *

DOJI ADOKA

Male human Crane Shu4/Tsu7: CR 11, Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 4d6+8 plus 7d8+14; hp 75; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (bracers, obi, +2 Dex), touch 17, flat-footed 15); Att melee +10 tanto [+2 shu+5 tsu+1 str]; Dmg 1d4+3, tanto; SQ Class skill - Knowledge (etiquette) (Family bonus), sense Elements, suppress Taint, blood conversion, spell conversion (has converted all spell levels to maho), maho meta-magic; Honor: 0 (2); AL LE; SV Fort +9 [+5+1+2], Ref +5 [+2+1+2], Will +7 [+2+4+1]; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 13; Taint +4; Height 5 ft. 7 inches.

SKILLS=7x4 at 1st level + 3x7 + 5x7 = 84 ranks total

=9+13+8+5+6+4+3+10+7+9+6+5=84

Feats = 2 at 1st plus 3 = 5

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Kansen, Oni), Bluff +10 [+9+1], Concentration +15 [+13+2], Disguise +9 [+8+1], Forgery +6 [+5+1], Heal +8 [+6+2 Wis], Innuendo +5 [+4+1], Knowledge (Arcana) +10 (+7+3 Int), Knowledge (Etiquette) +6 [+3+3], Knowledge (Maho) +13 [+10+3], Knowledge (Shadowlands) +12 [+9+3], Scry +9 [+6+3], Spellcraft +8 [+5+3]; Maho Focus*, Perceived Honor (X2), Ritual Magic, Versatile (Disguise, Forgery), Void Use.

Spells Per Day:
7/6+2/6+1/6+1/6+1/5+1/3

Spells Known (s+3+3/s+2+1/s+1+0 then -/5/5/4/3/2/1); base DC 16+spell level, from +2 for Maho Focus + 4 for Taint; Elemental Focus - Air, Asahina School; all spells are considered maho: Inori-daze, detect poison, ghost sound, guidance, know direction, light, read magic; 1st-ancient wisdom, blood rite*, detect snares and pits, expeditious retreat, sleep; 2nd-apparition, choking death, detect thoughts, entrap ancestor, kiss of the toad; 3rd-bestow curse, greater blood rite, hate's heart, vermin form; 4th cloud of Taint, entrap ancestor, heart ripper; 5th-circle of doom, corruption of the earth; 6th-sword of darkness.

Possessions: bracers of natural armor +3, obi of protection +2, +2 flying tanto

Symptoms of the Taint (4/3/1): fear of monkeys, mild xenophobia, mild arachnophobia, obsessive cleanliness;

extreme paranoia, sometimes speaks in language of oni, fits of extreme violence; aversion to sunlight.

Once, Doji Adoka was a political and arcane power to reckon with in the Circle of Five. After years as a minor, undistinguished shugenja, his introduction to maho led to a complete conversion. Suddenly cocky and brash where he had once been shy and self-effacing, the Doji was soon sought by women for his favors and sought by men for his advice. The Crane courtiers spoke of him. The Scorpion feared him. Even the Emperor knew of him, but none of them really knew what he was up to; Adoka's frequent retreats to his "country castle" were really visits to the

Temple of Blood, where he served as Guardian, a role combining elements of judge, archivist, and high priest. He paid others to plunder the tombs of the Asahina and the mausoleums of the Doji shugenja, and bound those spirits to his service.

In 1133, the year of the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, this Crane was revealed as a maho-tsukai following his brutal murder of Kakita Ariteko. He fled the Crane courts for the shelter of the Temple of Blood that winter, leaving a payment of Phoenix koku behind him. Even in his absence, chaos ensued. The traitorous Seppun Kossori, who sought Unicorn and Bloodspeaker support for her own causes, brought the koku to Iuchi Shahai. Iuchi Shahai used these golden coins to convince the Daidoji that the Mantis were not to be trusted and thus led to the

Crane attack on the Mantis armies on the mainland in 1132.

Ten years later, the Temple of Blood fell.

Doji Adoka is now an old man, nearing 80 years of age but showing no signs of his advancing years. Though his Taint is well hidden, he lived as a fugitive for many years after the fall of the temple. Eventually, he staged his own death by dressing a man of similar age and features in his robes and leaving his body near a known bandit lair during the Yasuki war with the Crab. This has led most magistrates and witch hunters to give up his trail.

However, years spent on the run from Kakita magistrates and Imperial authority, have taken a toll on his inner balance, leading him into suspicion and paranoia, constantly interrogating ancestor spirits. He is



now an ally of Kitsu Norinaga, sharing that rising star's interests and teaching him some tricks. Slowly he has returned to the upper ranks of the Bloodspeaker hierarchy, though more cautious now than in the past. Adoka is no longer the flashy Crane who seduces everyone he meets; with bitter experience, he has become more like the Asahina who taught him long ago: silent, with eyes full of harsh judgments.

To the Bloodspeakers who know him, Doji Adoka is to be both feared and pitied. He failed in his duties as a protector of the Temple of Blood. He redeemed himself when he led the effort to seize the City of Tears, and has since devoted himself to the construction and improvement of the new Temple of Blood. His ambitions are smaller now, but his skill and long years have made him even deadlier than he was in his youth.

IUCHIBAN

Male Human Imperial Sor 5/TSU 15: CR 30; Medium-size humanoid (Shadowlands); HD 20d12; hp 240 (spirit form); Init +2 (spirit form); Spd Fly 90 (perfect, spirit form only); AC 18 (spirit form) (touch 12, flat-footed 16); Atk claw +11/+6 melee, 1d6+2 damage (spirit form only); SQ Advanced Taint Suppression, Blood Component, Spell Conversion (has converted all spell levels to maho), Class Skill: Knowledge (maho) (Hantei family bonus), Iuchiban Qualities, Maho Metamagic, Undead Qualities; Honor: 0 (2); AL CE; SV Fort +10 (further augmented by host body), Ref +6 (further augmented by host body), Will +13; Str 15, Dex 15, Con -, Int 20, Wis 18, Cha 26; Taint +10; Maximum Void: 2; Height N/A.

Iuchiban Qualities - Iuchiban possesses a number of unique abilities, including the following:

Advanced Taint Suppression: Iuchiban automatically suppresses any effect that detects or specifically targets Shadowlands creatures within 100 feet of himself. He may suppress this ability at will, or alter it so that the effect applies only to himself.

Possession: As a standard action, Iuchiban may attempt a gaze attack that allows him to possess any living humanoid creature within thirty feet. The target must immediately make a Will save (DC 34) or become possessed by Iuchiban. Iuchiban's former host body immediately dies. The target's body becomes Iuchiban's new host body and the former occupant's spirit immediately dies. Iuchiban's physical ability scores become those of the host body (unless they are less than 15, in which case they increase to 15). The host body retains any natural abilities and ongoing magical effects, but otherwise all its previous abilities (except for hit points) are lost and replaced with Iuchiban's. There is no limit to the amount of time that Iuchiban may remain in a host body. If the initial Will save

is successful, Iuchiban remains in his previous body and the target is immune to this effect for ten minutes. This is a mind-affecting supernatural effect. Once Iuchiban possesses a body, the body is considered his own and he cannot be removed by *protection from evil*, exorcism, or the like. If the host body is killed with Iuchiban inside, Iuchiban's spirit is immediately expelled.

Blood Mastery: When using his own blood as a material component or focus for a spell, Iuchiban takes no damage and need make no Concentration check. If he wishes to use maho metamagic he must take damage normally.

Damage Reduction 30/+4 - applies to any host body Iuchiban occupies.

Dark Knowledge - All skills are class skills.

Immortality: Iuchiban cannot be killed by any means unless the Hidden Heart of Iuchiban is destroyed.

Improved Saves - If Iuchiban successfully saves against any affect with a "partial" result, the spell does not affect him.

Manifestation - If not possessing a host body, Iuchiban can force his spirit to take intangible form for one hour per day. In this form, he has the above listed stats for his "spirit form."

Regeneration 6 - Iuchiban takes subdual damage from all attacks. (Though undead are normally immune to subdual damage, regular damage inflicted as subdual damage is inflicted on Iuchiban normally.) This regeneration does not affect his host body.

Spell Resistance - 25, 35 vs. maho effects.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Mekhem, Oni), Concentration +23, Knowledge (khadi sorcery) +28, Knowledge (maho) +28, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +28, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +9, Spellcraft +28; Craft Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Perceived Honor (X2), Forge Ring, Leadership (26), Versatile (Knowledge (khadi sorcery), Knowledge (nobility and royalty)), Void Use.

Spells Per Day: (6/9/9/8/8/8/8/7/7/7) base DC 28 + spell level, all spells are considered maho; **Spells Known:** 0 - arcane mark, detect magic, detect poison, ghost sound, prestidigitation, read magic; 1st - blood rite, blood sacrifice*, comprehend language, Nystul's undetectable aura, obscuring mist; 2nd - alter self, darkness, desecrate, locate object, summon swarm; 3rd - animate dead, inflict serious wounds, speak with dead, vampiric touch; 4th - arcane eye, curse of weakness*, pain, rise again; 5th - cloudkill, contact other plane, gift of the kansen, nightmare; 6th - create undead, forbiddance, sinful dreams, summon greater kansen; 7th - acid fog, blasphemy, Iuchiban's theft*, teleport without error; 8th - create greater undead, greater planar binding, symbol, trap the soul; 9th - energy drain, rise Taint, wail of the banshee.

Possessions: None. Iuchiban has occasionally been known to use the Ruby of Iuchiban or other powerful maho items that bear his name, but generally does not rely upon items. His own natural power is usually sufficient.

Symptoms of the Taint (8/7/5): memory lapses, mild xenophobia, obsessive vanity, long periods of silence, mild fear of jade and tattoos, obsessive love of porcelain, uncomfortable staring; obsessive hatred of Dragon clan, obsessive hatred of Scorpion clan, wild mood swings, often speaks in oni language, self-mutilation (hair pulling), severe claustrophobia, skin of host slowly turns to porcelain; megalomania, delusions of identity as god, clearly hears evil voices, hunger for human flesh, always wears Imperial yellow.

IUCHIBAN

Earth: 6

Water: 5

Fire: 4

Intelligence: 6

Air: 6

Void: 4

Shadowlands Taint: 8

School/Rank: Iuchiban's gaijin magic makes him the equivalent of a Rank 8 Isawa Shugenja with Earth Affinity.

Honor: 2.9

Glory: 0.0 (9.1 when alive)

Advantages: Cadence, Hantei Blood, Heart of Vengeance (Dragon Clan, Imperial Families, Scorpion Clan), Heartless, Leadership, Perceived Honor (2 ranks)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Iuchiban), Benten's Curse, Dark Fate, Jealousy (elder brother), Overconfident, Spoiled

Spells: Iuchiban has all known maho spells as Innate Abilities, plus a number of other non-maho gaijin spells that resemble the spells in the Player's Guide. The full limit of his magical knowledge is difficult to imagine, and is ultimately left to the GM's discretion.

Skills: Courtier 3, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 5, Lore (gaijin sorcery) 8, Lore (maho) 10, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Meditation 7, Spellcraft 9, Tanto 6, Torture 7.

Special Abilities: Iuchiban possesses a number of unique abilities.

Advanced Taint Suppression: Iuchiban automatically suppresses any effect that detects or specifically targets Shadowlands creatures within 100 feet of himself. He may suppress this ability at will, or alter it so that the effect applies only to himself.

Possession: Iuchiban may attempt to possess any living



humanoid creature within thirty feet by locking gazes with them. The target must make an opposed Willpower roll or become possessed by Iuchiban. Iuchiban's former host body immediately dies. The target's body becomes Iuchiban's new host body and the former occupant's spirit immediately dies. Iuchiban's physical Traits temporarily become those of the host body if they are greater than his own. The host body retains any natural abilities and ongoing magical effects, but otherwise all its previous abilities (including hit points) are lost and replaced with Iuchiban's. There is no limit to the amount of time that Iuchiban may remain in a host body. If the target's initial Willpower roll is successful, Iuchiban remains in his previous body and the target is immune to this effect for ten minutes. Once Iuchiban possesses a body, the body is considered his own and he cannot be removed by exorcism or the like.

Blood Mastery: When casting maho using his own blood, Iuchiban takes no Wounds unless he makes Raises (not including Free Raises). Iuchiban gains two Free Raises when casting maho (not counting Raises for Innate Abilities).

Carapace: 6.

Improved Magic Resistance: The TN's of all maho spells targeting Iuchiban are increased by 10 unless he is a willing target.

Immortality: Iuchiban cannot be killed by any means unless the Hidden Heart of Iuchiban is destroyed. Should his body be destroyed, he regenerates in an invisible, incorporeal state one to four months later. In this form, he

can neither attack nor use magic. The only ability he may use is his Possession ability.

Manifestation - If not possessing a host body, Iuchiban can force his spirit to take intangible form for one hour per day. In this form, he has the above listed stats.

Regeneration: Iuchiban heals a die of wounds every round, even if he is injured beyond the Dead level.

With the exception of Fu Leng, no name in Rokugani history is more feared and reviled than Iuchiban's. Born the second son of Hantei X, Hantei Jama had fully expected to one day become emperor. His father and elder brother, Hohiro, were both extremely sickly. Even at a young age others curried his favor and endeavored to be close to him so that they could befriend the future Emperor. The young Hantei enjoyed the attention until an Isawa shugenja unexpectedly cured Hohiro's ailments. Overnight, Jama's friends and allies vanished. He had become nothing, redundant, a minor footnote on the page of history.

Jama would not have it. At his brother's coronation he gave up the Hantei name and became Otomo Jama (as was expected of the Emperor's brother) but he never abandoned his lust for power. He retreated into the Imperial Libraries, seeking some way that he might take his brother's throne. Hantei XI, believing that his younger brother merely wished to sharpen his mind to better serve the Empire, gave Jama the run of the entire library. Even the most guarded and secret texts were placed at his disposal. Thus was it that Jama discovered the writings of Kuni Nakanu.

By chance or by fate, somehow the forbidden writings of the Empire's first maho-tsukai found their way to the Imperial City, and somehow Jama found them. Reading the books, Jama saw the true path to power laid out before him. Even yet, it was not enough. Jama realized early on that to use maho excessively would only lead to his becoming a slave to its power. This was unacceptable.

Using his new power in moderation, Otomo Jama set his spirit free to roam the Empire, seeking some power that would let him fight the corruption maho inevitably brought. Finding no such power within the Empire, he set out beyond its borders, eventually discovering the city of Medinaat-al-Salaam. There, he discovered gaijin sorcerers who used twisted magic to tear the beating hearts from their bodies. While their hearts lay intact, their bodies could not be harmed. Neither swords nor poison nor magic could kill them. Could this process protect him from the Taint's control as well?

Otomo Jama immediately decided to set out on a journey to the gaijin city. To leave Rokugan and return was forbidden, but Hantei XI could deny his brother nothing, and quietly made the arrangements. None would ever know that Jama had made his journey. The trip was long and arduous. In the end, only Jama, his Crane attendant, Asahina Yajinden, and a heimin servant named Suru survived. Jama sought out the heartless sorcerers and made

a dark pact with them, trading his knowledge of Nakanu's techniques for the secret of their heartless sorcery.

Cutting out his heart, Jama bound it within a mystical container and gave it to his servant, Suru. Using magic to bind Suru's loyalty to his own, he ordered the servant to hide his heart well and protect it from harm. So long as Suru protected the heart, he would have incredible power, but his first loyalty would always be to Jama. The simple servant immediately changed his name to Jama Suru, and later passed his name and duty to his heirs.

To his delight, Jama discovered that the heartless techniques did indeed protect his mind from being controlled by the Taint. By controlling gaijin sorcery and maho he gained incredible new powers. The journey back to Rokugan was easy for one of his power. Hantei XI welcomed his brother home, unaware of the new power that Jama possessed. Jama was kind and cordial to his brother, and secretly began building a cult of maho-tsukai to destroy the Hantei reign. Knowing that even his brother would never forgive such an act, Jama adopted a new name - the name the gaijin sorcerers had given him.

Iuchiban.

At the Battle of Stolen Graves, Iuchiban's grand plans to throw down his brother's reign were destroyed. Incompetent cultists led to premature discovery by magistrates Soshi Takasho and Akodo Minobe. Iuchiban's fledgling army was overwhelmed. When it was discovered that Iuchiban could not be slain, his body was bound deep within a tomb of Kaiu design.

Though bound in torturous chains of jade, Iuchiban was eventually able to master his pain and develop new magical techniques that allowed his spirit to escape his physical bonds. Learning from Yajinden's example, he mastered the art of possessing the living and was able to begin his reign of terror a second time.

At the Battle of Sleeping River he was again defeated by an ise zumi named Togashi Yamatsu, who used a unique tattoo to contain Iuchiban's spirit. This time Iuchiban's essence was bound within the walls of his tomb, in effect making the entire tomb his body.

For now, Iuchiban is unable to escape his tomb, but should he find a way to do so, his wrath will be great. He has long plotted his vengeance against the Empire, and his magical power has grown over the ages.

Iuchiban is an extremely charismatic individual, a natural leader who is adept at turning others to his cause. Though he is quite learned in the finer points of human nature, at heart he cares for no one and nothing but himself. The most obvious expression of this is his attitude toward maho. Though he knows of its corruptive effects and took measures to protect himself from them, he has done no such thing for any of his followers (save Yajinden, who was simply there at the time Iuchiban became immortal). He would readily sacrifice anyone and anything to preserve his own life.

Iuchiban's ultimate goals are difficult to guess, but wholesale slaughter and destruction seem to at least be part of the agenda. He has a great hatred for the Hantei Dynasty (a hatred that would likely extend to the current ruling house of the Toturi) and despises both the Scorpion and the Dragon for being instrumental in his past defeats. Those who cross Iuchiban had best beware. He is a being that never forgets a grudge. His capacity for cruelty is as boundless as his power, and he has nothing but time...

IUCHIBAN, YAJINDEN, AND THE LOST

It is important to note that while both Iuchiban and Yajinden are extremely Tainted, neither of them are technically Lost. While they wield maho regularly, they are not controlled by the dark powers of Jigoku. In fact, Iuchiban is quite disrespectful toward Fu Leng and considers himself in many ways superior to the Dark Kami. His will is his own.

Perhaps it is even more disturbing that despite the fact they are not slaves to darkness, both Iuchiban and Yajinden are among the most fearsome killers that the Empire has ever seen. Iuchiban cannot blame Jigoku for his crimes.

His evil is his own.

IUCHI SHAHAI, THE DARK DAUGHTER

Female human Unicorn Shu7/Tsu11: CR 18, Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 7d6+21 plus 8d8 +24; hp 123; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (touch 13, flat-footed 19); Att +9/+4 melee (1d4+1, +2 tanto of wounding); SQ Class skill - Spellcraft (Family bonus), Sense Elements, Suppress Taint, Blood Conversion, Spell Conversion (has converted all spell levels to Maho), Maho Meta-magic; Honor: 0; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +7, Will +11; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 15; Taint +6; Height 5 ft. 5 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Oni), Bluff +10, Concentration +18, Heal +13, Hide +9, Innuendo +5, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +12, Knowledge (Maho) +23, Knowledge (Arcana) +19, Spellcraft +23, Torture* +13; Blood Sorcerer (ancestor), Craft Wondrous Item, Extend Spell, Innate Ability (speak with dead, dispel magic, slay living)*, Maho Focus*, Maximize Spell, Meishodo*, Ritual Magic.

Spells Per Day: 6/6+2/6+2/6+2/6+1/6+1/6+1/6+1/6/4

Spells Known (6/8/13/7/7/7/6/6/4); base DC 21 + spell level; Elemental Focus - Water, Iuchi School; all spells are considered maho: 0-commune, create water, cure minor wounds, daze, detect magic, purify food and drink, read magic, summon; 1st-blood rite*, cure light wounds, detect taint, remove

fear, rise again!*, silent image; 2nd-cure moderate wounds, detect thoughts, protection from arrows, remove paralysis; 3rd-create food and water, dispel magic, speak with dead, wonderful origami furoshiki*; 4th arcane eye, cloud of Taint, heart ripper, polymorph other; 5th-magic jar, nightmare, slay living, unhallow; 6th-circle of death, create undead, forbiddance, harm; 7th-blasphemy, control undead, finger of death, insanity; 8th-create greater undead, greater planar binding, symbol; 9th-weird, summon monster IX.

Possessions: Shahai's fan, ring of wizardry II, bracelets of armor +6, +2 tanto of wounding, amulet of natural armor +2, ring of protection +2, meishodo: maximized cloud of taint, extended protection from arrows, maximized cure moderate wounds, extended daze.

Symptoms of the Taint (6/4/2): memory lapses, nosebleeds, fear of flowers, obsessive about clothes, fear of ocean, occasional muscle spasms; mood swings, speaking in tongues, hair thinning, long fingernails; hunger for human blood, clearly hears evil voices.

Once, she was Iuchi Shahai, daughter of Iuchi family daimyo Iuchi Daiyu. Early in the reign of Emperor Toturi, Shahai began to hear a spectral voice. The voice promised great power, and great freedom to do as she pleased with the world. The voice was terribly seductive to young Shahai, who chafed at the boring traditional lifestyle her father imposed upon her. Wandering into the forbidden



Forest of Dreamers south of Gatherer of Winds Castle, Shahai discovered a ruined house. Investigating further, she discovered a battered skeleton and a collection of scrolls. The scrolls contained maho, magic so black that it scarred Shahai's soul to look upon it.

The first spell she cast caused the skeleton's head to animate, the kanji "Void" painted upon its forehead in Shahai's own blood. Shahai did not even remember cutting herself, but she recognized the voice that rose from the skull. It introduced itself only as "Grandfather," and instructed her how to go about finding the infamous cult known as the Bloodspeakers.

Shahai followed Grandfather's advice. Shortly thereafter she slew her own father to seal her initiation into the cult, and quickly ascended through the ranks of the Bloodspeakers. Her name is a curse among the Kuni Witch Hunters, who have hunted the trail of corpses she has left behind for over two decades.

Recently, Shahai has offered her services to Daigotsu, Lord of the Shadowlands -not as a servant, but as an equal partner. She has earned the title of the Dark Daughter, and is more dangerous now than ever.

In person, Shahai is remarkably friendly and charming. She is a slender woman; hardly the sort one would suspect to be a mass murderer with nearly godlike power. When angered (or bored) she is a power to be feared. She is utterly merciless and fond of torturing enemies extensively before slaying them.

JAMA SURU

Male human Scorpion Shu6/Kan8: CR 14, Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 6d6+6 plus 8d8 +8; hp 74; Init +9 [+1 Dex, +4 Imp. Init, +4 Int.]; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 + miss chance (+1 Dex, ring of protection +3, displacement for 50% miss chance), touch 15, flat-footed 14; Att +9 melee [+3 shu+4 kan+2 str], +12 wakizashi [+3 weapon]; Dmg 1d6+5 wakizashi; SQ Class skill - Knowledge (Shadowlands) (Family bonus), Sense Elements, Suppress Taint, Blood Conversion, Spell Conversion (has converted all spell levels to Maho), Summon Kansen, See Spirits, Master of Spirits, Bind Kansen, Incorporeal, Spirit Prison, Spirit Guide; Honor: 0; AL NE; SV Fort +9 [+2+6+1], Ref +6 [+2+3+1], Will +13 [+5+6+2]; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 19, Wis 14, Cha 16; Taint +5; Height 5 ft. 8 in.

Skills= 8 x 4 at 1st level, plus 5 x 8 for shugenja and 6 x 6 for kansen = 108 points

= 7+14+5+9+5+10+5+5+6+9+6+5+5+17 = 108

Feats = 2 at 1st plus 4 additional = 6



Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Oni), Bluff +10 [+7+3], Concentration +15 [+14+1], Heal +6 [+5+1], Hide +10 [+9+1], Innuendo +7 [+5+2], Intimidate +13 [+10+3], Knowledge (Arcana) +9 [+5+4], Knowledge (History, Bloodspeakers) +9 [+5+4], Knowledge (Shadowlands) +10 [+6+4], Knowledge (Maho) +13 [+9+4], Leadership +8 [+6+2], Move Silently +6 [+5+1], Sense Motive +7 [+5+2], Spellcraft +21 [+17+4], Blood Sorcerer, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Maho Focus*, Ritual Magic, Way of the Scorpion.

Spells Per Day: 6/6+2/6+2/6+1/4+1

Spells Known (s+4+4/s+3+2/s+2+2/s+2+1/s+1+1); base DC 20 + spell level [+5 Taint, +2 Maho Focus +3 Blood Sorcerer]; Elemental Focus - Earth, Yogo School; all spells are considered maho: 0-accounts of Shorihotsu (detect magic), call earth, commune with elements, hands of clay (spider climb), Isawa's eye (flare), kami's hand (mage hand), resistance, virtue, wisdom of the fortunes (read magic); 1st-blood rite, drain soul, earth's stagnation, Iuchi's armor (shield of faith), protection from Taint, protection of Shinsei (sanctuary); 2nd-death knell, feeding on flesh, lion's might (bull's strength), obscure object, tetsubo of earth; 3rd-animate dead, magic circle against Taint, speak with dead, tremor; 4th dismissal, entrap ancestor, stealing the soul.

Possessions: ring of protection +3, talisman of blood armor, +3 displacement wakizashi.

Symptoms of the Taint (5/3/2): mild paranoia, fear of smoke and incense, chanting speech pattern, hearing voices, color blind; baldness, speaking in kansen language, compulsive self-mutilation; clawlike hands, hunger for feces

Jama Suru is the most powerful Bloodspeaker alive who is not a member of the Council of Five. His family has served Iuchiban as deadly servants, assassins, and "fixers" for generations. Everything Suru knows will be passed on to his successor; Suru's memory literally encompasses centuries of effort serving the cult.

In some ways, Jama Suru is the oldest of the current generation of Bloodspeakers. His father died in the Spirit Wars, in 1148, when he was just 17. Though physically he is no more than 29 years old, he wields the power of a fully trained maho-tsukai. Some of these powers are his own and some come from the reputation of those who took the name Jama Suru before him. Indeed, in 1132, his father killed Ryoshun, the tenth kami. He plans similar deeds of his own, to enhance the family reputation for ruthlessness and deadliness. Often, his name alone is enough to send enemies scurrying for shelter.

Suru's family name, Jama, is the name that Iuchiban held before he took on a new name when he was founded the cult, and the name of one of Iuchiban's oldest servants. The current incarnation of Suru knows much of the family history of that time. Some say that he has made it his business to know the history of past successes and failures; others, only slightly better informed, claim that the kansen he shares a body with is one of Iuchiban's siblings, a younger brother or sister that Iuchiban sacrificed to create some of his own power.

The truth is that Jama is one of a long line of elite and notably trusted servants of Iuchiban. The first Jama Suru followed Iuchiban out of Rokugan to learn gaijin sorcery; later generations became sorcerers themselves. Over time, Iuchiban found it useful to have the various Jama Surus remember more and more of the early history of the cult and so in 618 he forced one of the cult's sorcerers to provide a host body for a kansen. To Iuchiban's delight, this increased the power of Jama Suru and allowed them to remember (through the spirit) the important details from earlier generations.

Over the years, the spirit has possessed more than twenty generations of the male members of the family. When the elder Suru dies, his son, nephew, or chosen successor is granted the privilege of sharing his body with the "revered ancestor." From that point on, his name changes to Jama Suru and his duties become those of an agent, spy, assassin, and fixer for Iuchiban and the Oracle of Blood.

While his is quite powerful enough to serve on the Council of Five, Suru has never asked for the post. The Jama family has always seen itself as servants to Iuchiban, retainers with a long and honorable record of service. They have no interest in the politics and machinations of the Circle. They strive to become Iuchiban's Underhand and they lead the Cult of the Blood Moon to that end. The Cult (see sidebar) is one of the strongest cells of Bloodspeakers, though it is far from the largest.

Physically, Suru's head is shaven bald, and his fingernails are both long enough to resemble claws and usually painted in shining red (when not drenched in even brighter blood). He typically wears dark robes embroidered in gold and silver thread.

The initiation rituals for investing a body with the kansen that create the new Jama Suru are particularly foul, said to involve burying the new host in a coffin filled with intestines and blood for hours, then digging them out in a vile rebirth. A few cultists claim that Jama Suru has been female at least once in the past, but this may be no more than a legend.

SURU'S APPRENTICE

Tsi Shodu is a bitter, bitter 17-year-old young man with dreams of killing a god. When he was young, his father Tsi Xing Guo ignored him; he was too absorbed in his work and station in life to pay any attention to little Shodu. Shodu was sent to the Agasha for training, since he was gifted as a shugenja. The Tsi are wealthy enough to afford such training and Shodu grew up spoiled. Over the years, his indulgent parents have ignored him, as he grew bitter, hateful, and malicious. He blames his father's neglect for everything that went wrong with his life and was planning to kill him just before Xing Guo ascended into the heavens and became the smith who forged the Celestial Swords of the Clans.

Since then Shodu has turned to the Bloodspeaker cult to gain more power. His ultimate goal is still to kill his father, who at the present is a Fortune. His natural talents have blossomed into a real gift for maho. The first Bloodspeaker cell he found across was the legendary Cult of the Blood-Red Moon, the same cell that stole Daigotsu away from the Hantei as an infant. He's now a member of the cult and a student of Jama Suru.

For his part, Suru sees that Shodu has great potential and encourages his hunger for power, while carefully steering Shodu to stay focused entirely on his big (and foolish) plan. This way, the young rival doesn't pose a threat to him in the long run. Better still, it gives Suru a lieutenant to keep

the troops in line and it gives him someone worthy of carrying the Suru kansen for another generation.

CULT OF THE BLOOD-RED MOON

The reincarnated Jaina Suru is the leader of one of the largest and most individually successful Bloodspeaker cells. He has shared the results of his research with his followers, to great acclaim and success. Suru's Bloodspeakers are less vulnerable to madness and corruption than most tsukai, allowing them to cast more black magic and making it more difficult for tsukai-sugasu to hunt them. In particular, all members of the cult know the spell *bleeding the elements*, which allows them to turn the dark power of their magic away from themselves and tainting their surroundings instead.

The Cult of the Blood-Red Moon is composed of heimin and ronin seeking a quick avenue to power, power which Suru gladly bestows. However, part of the reason for its success is that Suru recruits the strongest candidates from other cells; his reincarnation allows him a wider range of contacts than might be expected for someone of his age and The Oracle of Blood seems to be helping him forge a "super-cell", able to strike with greater strength and to defend itself more forcefully. The requirements to join are Constitution 16, Knowledge (Maho) +3, Taint bonus +4 or higher, and the ability to cast maho spells.

The cult is the heart of the Five Scarlet Banners society in the Isawa forests. It currently numbers 23 cultists (including Suru himself) and more than 275 bandits, ronin, slaves, and hangers-on. It is one of the wilderness cults described on page 11.

KITSU NORINAGA

Male human Lion Shu8/Tsu2/Kan4: CR 14, Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 8d6+16 plus 2d8+4 plus 4d8+8; hp 91; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+4 amulet), touch 10, flat-footed 14; Att +9 melee [+4 shu +1 tsu +2 kan+2 str]; Dmg melee 1d4+3 tanto; SQ Class skill - Knowledge (Ancestors) (Family bonus), sense Elements, suppress Taint, blood conversion, spell conversion (has converted all spell levels to maho), maho meta-magic, see spirits, summon kansen, master of spirits, bind kansen, bind ancestor; Honor: 0 (1); AL LE; SV Fort +11 [+2 shu +3 tsu+4 kan+2], Ref +3 [+2 shu+0 tsu+1 kan], Will +13 [+6 shu+0 tsu+4 kan+3]; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 16; Taint +5; Max Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 9 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Oni), Bluff +7 [+4+3], Concentration +12 [+10+2], Diplomacy +8 [+6+2], Disguise +7 [+3+2+2 feat],

Gather Information +8 [+4+2+2 feat], Heal +5 [+2+3], Hide +6 [+6], Innuendo +5 [+2+3], Knowledge (Ancestors) +6 [+4+2], Knowledge (Arcana) +5 [+4+2], Knowledge (Maho) +11 [+9+2], Knowledge (Shadowlands) +10 [+8+2], Knowledge (Spirit Realms) +5 [+3+2], Leadership +8 [+6+2], Listen +7 [+5+2], Perform +4 [+2+2], Search +4 [+1+3], Sense Motive +12 [+7+3+2 feat], Spellcraft +7 [+5+2], Spot +5 [+3 wis+2 feat]; Attention to Detail (entrapped Ikoma ancestor), Blood Sorcerer (entrapped Yogo ancestor), Maho Focus*, Lion Spy (entrapped Akodo Shinju ancestor), Ki Shout (Will save DC 19), Perceived Honor, Quick Draw, Ritual Magic, Void Use.

Skills= 6x4 at 1st level + 6x7 for shu + 4x2 tsu + 4x4 kan = 90 points

=4+10+6+3+4+2+6+2+4+4+9+8+3+6+5+2+1+7+5= 90 points

Feats = 2 at 1st plus 4 plus 3 entrapped ancestor feats = 9

Spells Per Day: 6/6/6/6/6/4 (Tsukai 12 from Shu8+Tsu2+ 2 equiv kan)

Spells Known (s+4+4/s+3+2/s+2+1/s+1+1/s+1+0 for shugenja, then -/5/5/4/4/3/2 for tsukai and kansen); base DC 20 + spell level [+5 taint+2 maho focus+3 blood sorcerer]; Elemental Focus - Water, Kitsu School; all spells are considered maho: Inori-create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, detect poison, ghost sound, mage hand, purify food and drink, read magic, virtue; 1st-ancient wisdom, bless, blood rite*, cure light wounds, drain soul, endure elements; 2nd-bo of water, commune with lesser spirit, cure moderate wounds, locate object, sacrifice of masks; 3rd-animate dead, cure serious wounds, speak with dead, water walk; 4th cure critical wounds, enervation, entrap ancestor, rise again; 5th-blood of fire, contact other plane, gift of the kansen; 6th-forbiddance, summon greater kansen



Possessions: amulet of natural armor +4, fan of spirit command (+2 to all Bluff, Concentration, Diplomacy, and Sense Motive rolls against spirits), mirror of entrapped Ikoma ancestor, tanto of entrapped Yogo ancestor, mask of entrapped Akodo Shinju ancestor.

Symptoms of the Taint: White hair, compulsive prayer, self-starvation

Born in 1119 among the Kitsu tombs, Norinaga grew up with a deep respect for those who came before him. His schooling in the magical arts of the kami and the ancestors followed the traditional path until, in 1132, the corrupted Jade Champion Kitsu Okura and his creature, the Oni no Okura, ravaged the tombs. Norinaga never quite recovered from seeing the oni dance in the ruins, for his older brother was killed in the combined Lion and Unicorn effort to retake and cleanse the Tombs. Norinaga hardly grieved and outwardly, all was well. He continued his training. He went through the motions.

In 1141, he was accepted among the Kitsu as one of them, a member of the Shugenja School of the Kitsu Tombs. It was the happiest day of his life. He was sure that soon his blood would be recognized as being that of the sodan-senzo, the Lion ancestor shugenja descended from the magical species of kitsu, those who had given his family their name.

In time, Norinaga began hearing voices among the tombs, the voices of the blessed ancestors whose histories he learned by heart. He visited a few of the tombs so often, that he considered the spirits closer friends than his fellow pupils. He bound one of them, an Ikoma spirit, to a mirror, the better to take him out of the Tombs. Another fragment of a soul, the Lion spy Akodo Shinju, he bound to his tanto. He had doubts about such spirit binding, but the gift came quickly. A few spirits challenged him, saying that he was listening to dark voices and evil spirits. In the end, he asked the spirits how to travel to the Spirit Realms, to prove to everyone he was a great sodan-senzo. Most told him he was foolish to try to be something he was not, that he should be content with his own strong gifts and memory.

One spirit, who called herself Kitsu Sakura, shared the secret of leaving the mortal world behind. He performed the ceremony and opened his eyes on the terrors of Jigoku, the realm of evil. He immediately lost all semblance of sanity, but Sakura melded herself to his soul. When he returned, he was sure that he was marked as a great shugenja; he had, after all, brought a spirit back from beyond. His insanity was not obvious; it was so cunningly focused insanity that he operate very effectively, no longer bound by convention, squeamishness, or scruples. Jigoku had taken an intelligent, capable man and made him into dangerous weapons.

In most ways, Norinaga's mind has never recovered and Sakura soon became his secret advisor. She slowly became part of him. On the few occasions when others questioned his ability to speak to the spirits, she has possessed his body, speaking in a woman's voice with authority and conviction. The tales she tells of the origins of the Kitsu magic and the days when Kitsu himself roamed the earth fascinate the older shugenja and historians of the Tombs, but they find Norinaga's gift troubling as well. Why him? Can his mind stand the strain? Why are no other shugenja possessed by this spirit?

Sakura told Norinaga to forget his childhood dream; he was not one of the elect, the sodan-senzo. Norinaga struggled with his anger and hatred of those who had refused to accept him as a true sodan-senzo. In time, he believed the spirit that seemed to have become a part of him; he was not meant to be a sodan-senzo, but something better. Sakura haunted his dreams and soothed his fears when he performed deeper and darker rituals.

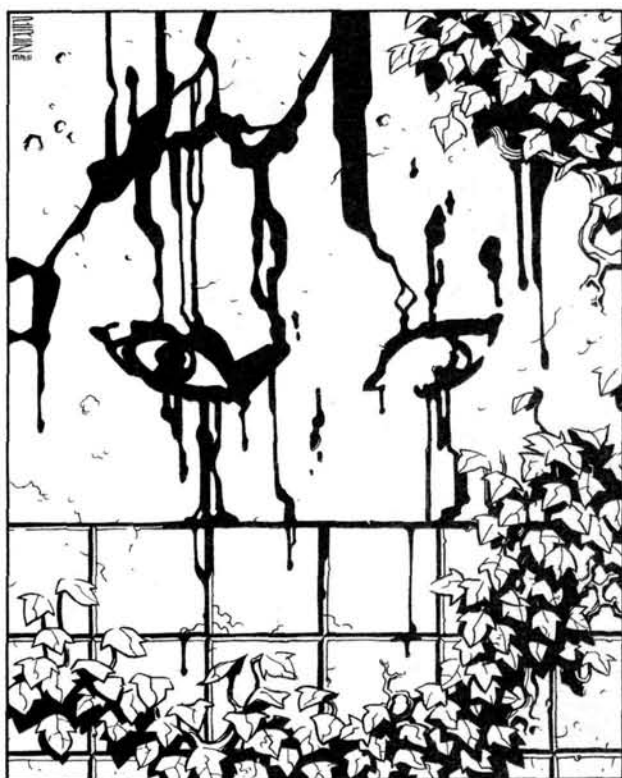
In the year 1159, the Kitsu Tombs were overrun by the arrival of the Tsuno, creatures out of nightmare, despite the best efforts of Toturi Tsudao and an army of Lion samurai. All his life Norinaga had defended the tombs, and he could not stand to see the Tsuno desecrate them. Once more he gave in to the temptation of maho, which drove the tsuno off from one of the tombs, though they laughed during their retreat. At first he hid among the bones and shrines, hoping for rescue by Matsu and Ikoma samurai. He knew he was a coward and he knew that having been tainted by contact with the tsuno, he could no longer hide his true nature from the other shugenja. He would never be accepted into ranks of the sodan senzo. When next he visits the Tombs, he expects to burn them to the grounds.

BIRD ANCESTOR

Kitsu Norinaga has learned to do more than entrap an ancestral spirit for advice and protection; he has learned to command the ancestors. Though this is an offense against Heaven, it grants him the full affects of any ancestor he binds in this way. Doing so requires a possession of that ancestor, plus ritual magic at 20th level.

Norinaga left the Tombs, vowing his vengeance against the Kitsu would be horrible. Most were not saddened to see him go.

A year later, Chuda Mishime came to Norinaga and recruited him for the inner circle of Bloodspeaker leadership. Norinaga's charm and forceful rhetoric have won him many admirers and his ability to ask the dead for advice has made him a voice of wisdom and good advice to the cult. Unfortunately, Norinaga grows increasingly



addicted to his greater kanssen, a creature he calls "blossom," "my blood sister," or just "sister." This and his need to pray before ancestral shrines for up to 4 hours a day has led many to believe that his success will soon consume him.

THE ORACLE OF BLOOD

CR 8, Medium-size Outsider (Shadowlands); HD 8d8+8; hp 44; Init +0; Spd 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 10 (touch 10, flat-footed 10); Att slam +9 melee (1d6+1); SA improved grab, drown; SQ damage resistance 20/+3 (jade), divination, dream visions, telepathy; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10; Taint 7.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Oni), Bluff +11, Diplomacy +11, Knowledge (Bloodspeakers) +12, Scry +14; Iron Will, Skill Focus (Scry).

While closely tied to the Bloodspeaker cult over the centuries, this powerful spirit seems to predate the cult itself. Appearing only in dreams and visions, it is clearly trapped below ground and possesses the ability to predict some future events. The Oracle has been a supporter of the Bloodspeakers since Iuchiban's execution and burial. After his burial, it became especially active in issuing orders to cells separately by great distances, allowing (for example) the coordination of uprisings throughout the Yogo provinces during the Yogo Rebellion.

Following his first defeat, Iuchiban's Bloodspeaker Cult

lay in ruins. Well aware that his time would come again, the dark sorcerer needed a way to galvanize his followers and begin the process that would one day allow him to strike again. Using a form of magic never before seen in Rokugan, Iuchiban summoned forth an entity from the spirit realms, bending it to his will and allowing it to draw upon his power, forcing it to his wishes.

For centuries now, the so-called Oracle of Blood has appeared in the minds and dreams of Iuchiban's followers, guiding them to the path their master set before them. None of them realize that it is a creation of Iuchiban, but instead they believe it is an independent entity that chooses to follow the sorcerer's path because it foresees their victory over the Empire of Rokugan. Because of its record of successful prophecies, its choice to ally itself with the cult is a great boost to Bloodspeaker morale whenever setbacks occur.

The Oracle of blood has the power of divination, although it often chooses to mislead others as to the extent and accuracy of this power. Creatures communicating with the oracle through its dream visions that succeed at a Will save (DC 15) may ask up to three questions of the oracle as if they had successfully cast the *divination* spell.

TYPICAL BLOODSPEAKERS

Members of the cult vary from place to place; most cultists are recruited from the lower classes, but the leaders themselves are often samurai or shugenja of some standing.

NEW INITIATE

Human Rog1/CR1: Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 1d6+1; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (touch 11, flat-footed 12); Att: +3 melee (1d4+1 tanto) or +3 ranged [1d4 sling]; Honor: 0; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2 [+0+2 feat]; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 8. Taint: 0.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Appraise +2 [+2], Bluff +3 [+4-1], Gather Information +3 [+4-1], Hide +5 [+4+1], Innuendo +2 [+3-1], Listen +6 [+4+2 feat], Move Silently +5 [+4+1], Knowledge (Maho) +3 [+3], Spot +6 [+4+2 feat], Alertness, Iron Will

32 points at 1st level = 2+1+4+4+4+3+4+6+4 = 32

Possessions: leather armor, tanto, sling.

TYPICAL BLOODSPEAKER

Human Rog3/CR3: Medium-size humanoid (human);

HD 3d6+3; hp 12; Init +5 [+4 Imp. Init]; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (touch 11, flat-footed 10); Att: +3 melee or ranged (1d4+1 poison, tanto); Honor: 0; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 8. Taint: +1.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Bluff +3 [+4-1], Forgery +4 [+4], Gather Information +3 [+4-1], Hide +7 [+6+1], Innuendo +4 [+5-1], Intimidate +5 [+6-1], Listen +8 [+6+2 feat], Move Silently +5 [+4+1], Knowledge (Maho) +4 [+4], Spot +6 [+4+2 feat], Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will

Skills = 32 points at 1st level + 2x8 = 48 at 3rd
= +1+4+4+4+6+5+6+4+6+8 (OOC)+4 = 48

Possessions: Masterwork aiguchi, tanto, ashigaru armor, two doses of spider venom (Injury DC 13, 1d2 Con/d4 Con), two doses of dripping poison (Ingested DC 18, 1d4 Str/1d4 Str and 1d4 Con).

Symptoms of the Taint (1/1): mild paranoia; wild mood swings.

TYPICAL MAHO-TSUKAI (PHOENIX ISAWA SCHOOL)

Human Shu5/Tsu2, CR7: Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 5d6+5+2d8+2; hp 37; Init +6 [+2 Dex, +4 Imp. Init]; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 ring), touch 13, flat-footed 11; Att: (shug) +3 melee or ranged (1d4+1 poison, tanto); SQ: Class Skill - Spellcraft, Elemental Focus - Fire, taint suppression, blood component, spell conversion, maho metamagic; Honor: 0 (1); AL LE; SV Fort +6 [+1+3+2], Ref +4 [+1+0+2], Will +5 [+4+0]; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 9, Taint modifier: +3

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami), Bluff +5 [+6-1], Concentration +10 [+8+2], Diplomacy +6 [+4+2], Heal +8 [+6+2], Hide +10 [+9+1], Intimidate +4 [+4 for 2+2], Knowledge (Arcana) +6 [+4+2], Knowledge (Maho) +7 [+5+2], Knowledge (Shadowlands) +7 [+5+2], Scry +6 [+4+2], Spellcraft +7 [+5+2]; Improved Initiative, Maho Focus, Perceived Honor (1), Superior Elemental Focus.

Skills = 24 at 1st plus 6 x 4 plus 4x2 = 56 points
= 6+8+4+6+9+4+4+5+5+4+5=56

Feats = 2 at 1st plus 2 = 4

Possessions: Masterwork aiguchi, ring of protection +1, tanto.

Spells Per Day: 6/6/6/5/3

Spells Known (4+3/3+2/2+1 and 5/3/2/1): Inori: Agasha's

touch, dancing lights, Isawa's eye (flare), light, commune with Elements, stun the mind (daze), wisdom of the Fortunes (read magic); 1st; blood armor, burn the mind (hypnotism), burning hands, cause fear, dim mak; 2nd damnation, feeding on flesh, the fires that cleanse, way of fire; 3rd bloodstrike, fury of Osano-wo (call lightning); 4th stealing the soul.

Symptoms of the Taint (3/2/1): Eats only meat and fat, memory lapses, fear of children; alcoholic, prone to violent outburst; clearly hears evil voices.

TYPICAL CULT CELL LEADER (CRANE ASAHINA SCHOOL)

Human Shu5/Tsu6, CR11: Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 5d6+15+6d8+18; hp 88; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 ring, tessen) touch 15, flat-footed 13; Att: +10 melee or +8 ranged (1d6+3 wakizashi); SQ class skill - Knowledge (Shintao), Elemental Focus - Air, taint suppression, blood component, spell conversion, maho metamagic; Honor: 0; AL LE; SV Fort +9 [+5+1+3], Ref +4 [+2+1+1], Will +8 [+2+4+2]; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 14. Taint Modifier: +5.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami), Bluff +11 [+9+2], Concentration +11 [+8+3], Diplomacy +6 [+4+2], Heal +8 [+6+2], Hide +10 [+9+1], Intimidate +4 [+4 for 2+2], Knowledge (Arcana) +12 [+9+3], Knowledge (Maho) +10 [+7+3], Knowledge (Shadowlands) +13 [+10+3], Knowledge (Shintao) +7 [4+3], Scry +12 [+9+3], Spellcraft +12 [+5+3]

Skills = 28 at 1st plus 7 x 4 plus 5 x 6 = 86 points
= 11+8+4+6+9+4+9+7+10+4+9+5=86

Possessions: +3 wakizashi, +3 ring of protection, ring of obsidian armor (3 charges, as the spell), tanto, tessen of blood missiles (14 charges, as the spell).

Symptoms of the Taint (5/3/2): impotence, obsessive caution about money, fear of snakes, obsessive collector of fans, strict vegetarian; believes he can speak to animals, visual hallucinations of shadows, self-mutilation (chews fingernails bloody); megalomania, sees visions of future.

Spells Per Day: 6/6/6/6/5/3

Spells Known (4+3/3+2/2+1 at 5th, then 5/5/4/3/2/1): Inori: dancing lights, guidance, light, commune with elements, stun the mind (daze), whispers on the wind (ghost sounds), wisdom of the Fortunes (read magic); 1st; blood armor, castle of water, cause fear, by the light of Lord Moon (detect snares and pits), dim mak, wind-borne slumbers (sleep); 2nd feeding on flesh, know the mind (detect thoughts), know the shadows, wisdom and clarity; 3rd bloodstrike, fury of Osano-wo (call lightning), red knife; 4th heart ripper, rise again, stealing the soul; 5th curse of blood, gift of the kansen; 6th touch of death.

CHAPTER FIVE:

WRITTEN IN BLOOD

AN ADVENTURE AMONG THE PHOENIX

This adventure in the Phoenix provinces is intended for 5th-level characters. It can be recast for characters of level 10 by substituting the main villain, as described in the "Bloodspeakers" section.

BACKGROUND

Five hundred years ago, Iuchiban created the Ruby. After the Bloodspeaker's defeat at the Battle of Sleeping River, the stone was seen at many places across the empire. Gradually, however, rumors of it grew quieter and the stone dropped out of sight.

In the year 1126, the necromancer Kuni Yori came to Kyuden Asako to foment strife between the Isawa and the Asako branches of the Phoenix clan and succeeded. He brought the mad henshin Asako Oyo with him and proved that Oyo was immortal, thus angering the Isawa, who believed they should know all the secrets of the clan. The resulting struggle between Asako and Isawa kept the Phoenix busy while Yori pursued his own dark designs. Oyo himself was left to mutter to himself in the

hidden chambers of the Asako Academy. In time, Yori's strife was settled.

In 1134, with the retreat of the Mantis from Phoenix lands, much plunder was recovered from Yoritomo's retreating armies. One item, a ruby the size of a child's fist, was especially fine and was granted to Asako Togama, the daimyo of the time, as a spoil of war. It was duly turned over to the clan treasurer, who added it to the inventory of the clan's wealth and then put it with the other rich stones in the vault. At the same time, Asako Oyo began mumbling a new chant, speaking of kansens and corruption and death within the walls. Since few could understand him, and Oyo's ravings have always had a morbid streak, the warnings were ignored. Eventually Oyo muttered about other things.

In 1151, Asako Toshi, a former monk who became the daimyo, replaced Asako Togama. He asked the treasurer, Nanasato, for a gift to give to Asako Akahito, the master of the henshin, on the gempukku of his son. The treasurer recommended the ruby as a glorious gift worthy of the greatest Asako retainer. And so it was that Asako Kjoyi, a Bloodspeaker, was given the Ruby of Iuchiban as a gift. In the years since, it has taught him maho, it has released a dark spirit into his castle and now, at last, it is ready to destroy the Asako from within.

Oyo's mutterings and ravings have grown louder and

louder for the past year. Danger lurks. Why can't Asako Toshi find the enemies within the borders that the madman babbles about daily? They are far too close to see.

GM PLOT SUMMARY

The Asako family of the Phoenix clan is threatened by a Bloodspeaker who has acquired the Ruby of Iuchiban and who will use it to subvert the entire Asako family. The PCs must find and stop him. This Bloodspeaker, Asako Kyoji, is the son of the Asako Academy's leader and the very close to the Daimyo himself. Trained by an evil spirit named Boutoku, released from the Ruby, and supported by a cult cell that includes the powerful courtier Asako Nichiren, the treasurer's scribe Kempai, and his own lover Asako Chisato, Kyoji has grown bolder and bolder as the disappearance of victims provided for his use by fellow cultists in a small village nearby have gone unsolved.

With a little luck, the heroes can destroy the Ruby's trail of victims and prevent further chaos within the enormous fortress that is Kyuden Asako, but if fortune turns against them, their own souls may feed the Tainted heart of the Ruby.

THREE MAIN ACTS

This adventure includes several NPCs, templates for cultists and guards, and area descriptions, but the plot itself boils down to just three main acts of a few scenes each. You can lead the players by the hand and hurry through the adventure in unjust a session or two, or you can draw it out, mixing this adventure with other material and additional distractions. To complete the adventure, though, the following events need to happen:

Act 1) Discovery and Mayhem! The PCs find a village corrupted by Bloodspeakers and fight a group of porcelain-masked zombies as well as villagers whose bodies are still living, though evil spirits inhabit them. If they return with reinforcements, the PCs fight a hannya and discover a mass grave, a Bloodspeaker altar, and many signs of maho. At this hidden shrine, they find a message that leads them to the henshin of Kyuden Asako.

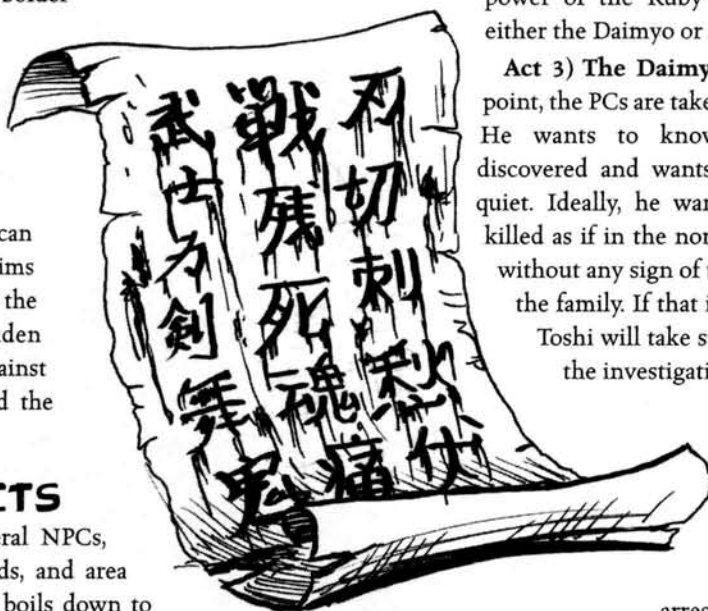
Act 2) The Courty Investigation: The PCs present their credentials and are allowed to wander around Kyuden Asako asking questions. They meet a couple of potential helpers, and may be outdone by the Phoenix Magistrate, Shiba Kare. Soon after their arrival, evil spirits

possesses various important people in the castle. The PCs and the monks of the castle can lift the possession with the help of a shrine's miraculous bells, and a number of witnesses, the PC's magic, or their insight eventually helps them discover enough evidence to suspect Asako Kyoji or one of the other Bloodspeakers. The *tea of jade petals* is one way to trap and weaken a suspect; the courtier Asako Takuya suggests its use to the PCs if they really aren't very good at the investigative role.

False trails like the blood red calligrapher's ink of the monk Red Hand or the madness of Asako Oyo lead nowhere, but can eat up a lot of game time. If the villain feels the PCs are getting too close, this section can be ended with a flourish using the power of the Ruby of Iuchiban against either the Daimyo or a PC.

Act 3) The Daimyo's Request: At this point, the PCs are taken to visit the Daimyo. He wants to know what they have discovered and wants the bad news kept quiet. Ideally, he wants the Bloodspeaker killed as if in the normal course of things, without any sign of the corruption within the family. If that isn't possible, Daimyo Toshi will take stern measures against the investigating PCs.

If all goes well, the PCs find the Bloodspeaker in his chambers and challenge him or arrest him there. If the PC attempt to keep it quiet fails, the Bloodspeaker takes the Ruby of Iuchiban and flies up to the top of the Daikentenshu tower. Anyone may challenge him there in a dramatic duel on the roofline.



ACT 1: DISCOVERY AND MAYHEM!

The first section is all about getting the PCs to realize that the real danger is higher up, while hitting them hard with cultists, zombies, and other physical threats to kick the adventure off with combat. Smart players will soon realize that someone in Kyuden Asako controls the cult.

The first act is divided into an early attack scene (to get some dice rolling) and then some investigation that leads quickly to Kyuden Asako. The village has three important locations: the inn, the home of the weaver widow, Grandmother Shinobu, and the home of the village miller,

where the Bloodspeakers have a cult site and a store of porcelain-mask zombies.

SCENE 1: SIGN OF THE WANDERING MONK

The PCs first become aware of the danger when they visit an inn popular with pilgrims and wayfarers called the Sign of the Wandering Monk and run by Hoshi Seishiro, a former monk who abandoned monastic life, and settled down in the Blue Lotus Village, a small settlement of roughly 90 peasants, tanners, and silk weavers in the province of Giryu. It was a village of 100.

If the PCs investigate, they find a pattern of disappearances, a Phoenix village terrified of shugenja, with an abandoned monastery, and that many villagers have disappeared over the last three years, always when they were either alone or when a household was sleeping. The list of the missing varies, but includes four boys (tanner's apprentice Atsumichi, miller's apprentice Gonkuro, farmer Honzo, farmer Robun), three teenage women (Chikuma, Kaneko, and Sayuri, all farmer's daughters), one old widow (Miliko the herbalist and farmer), and two old widowed men (Toshiyuki the weaver, Marihito the farmer). One individual has gone missing every three or four months. No bodies have been found.

What is not so clear is that people have also been disappearing from the Sign of the Wandering Monk, roughly one every six weeks, or 25 over the last three years. Most of these have not been remarked on, as they were travelers and some have been assumed to have just traveled early. One or two, however, left possessions behind in their rooms and did not settle their bills with the innkeeper.

Theories of the disappearances vary, but most villagers seem convinced a shugenja was involved. The PCs may also learn that Shiba Kare, the Phoenix magistrate, is investigating the case (and he doesn't appreciate the competition). A few believe an oni of death and destruction is haunting the village. A few more believe a kenku is the guilty party. The truth is that a Hannya is cooperating with the Asako bloodspeaker to kidnap peasant victims, primarily women, elderly widows and widowers, boys of ages ten to fourteen or so, and single travelers staying at the inn.

VILLAGERS

If the PCs care to question the villagers, most are willing to answer questions once again. Here are the most likely candidates for questions; assume all others are peasants who know nothing about the disappearances from the inn.

Headman Goro (Commoner 8): At 67 years, Goro has seen a lot come and go through the village. He is very worried that no one has figured out what is going on. He mentions that Grandmother Shinobu knows the

village history best, and Sadanobu and Emonji have both lost apprentices.

What's worse is that he may unintentionally lead the PCs down a false trail. He knows that at least one of the disappearances is a runaway, a young woman named Chikuma who confessed to him that she was terribly afraid after Gonkuro's disappearance. He has learned that she now lives with her grandparents along the coast. If others follow her lead, the village Emonji the tanner, Grandmother Shinobu, and Sadanobu the miller have all complained. He hopes to convince himself (and the PCs) that the disappearances are young people running away to the big city and that the older people just went on trips, or perhaps met with bandits while traveling between villages. So far, he hasn't really convinced himself.

If things don't improve, the village could decline quickly; it barely has enough people to grow, feed, and harvest silkworms for Grandmother as it is, much less enough to keep the rice fields and plum orchards going.

Hoshi Seishiro (Mnk 6): The owner of the Sign of the Wandering Monk has grown fat and happy since he left the monastic life and married his Phoenix bride, Jun-mi. She cooks, he brews sake, and they are both quite happy with their lot, if anything, they still dote on each other. They don't have a bad word to say about anyone, as long as they pay their bills.

However, Seishiro does say that there is very little violence at his inn (he uses his "White Crane" style to subdue belligerent or aggressive customers). As a result, he believes that the kidnappings occur on the road outside town or out in the fields. Seishiro and Jun-mi recommend prayer at the village shrine and they are found there each day at noon and sunset.

Yasuki Iremi, paper merchant (Expert 4/Yakuza 1): Currently staying at the inn, Iremi is a 24-year-old merchant with a long goatee and a smooth line of patter. He is currently quite pleased with himself, because he has sold a fair bit of paper here. No matter what the PCs ask, he offers to sell them paper ("For your official reports and correspondence" or "For your poetry" or even "To put your order to remove me from the village into official, written form.") While he has no manners, he is cheerful and tries to help.

Emonji the tanner (Expert 2): A thin, strong man of 32 who always smells of the tanning vats, Emonji has grown wealthy because of the quality of his work. However, he loves to complain and point fingers. In particular, he is still jealous that the miller bought out his pond and fine house a few years ago when Emonji had heavy gambling debts to pay. Since then, he has actively slandered Sadanobu and constantly accuses him of short weight at the scales, or cheating on his taxes or the like. Most people don't listen to his complaints anymore.

Grandmother Shinobu: See Scene 2.

Sadanobu the miller (Shu 4/Tsu 1): See Scene 3.

Takenao the Talisman Maker (Commoner 1):

Takenao is a gifted carver of wood (and stone, when he can find some worth working). He makes talismans that he asks Seishiro to bless, and sells them to passing travelers. He claims that they may "need protection", and knows the names of all those who have disappeared (and he includes Chikuma on that list).

Tsugiharu the Eta Witness (Commoner 1): A young boy named Tsugiharu claims that he has seen a terrible serpent-woman devouring a pilgrim in the woods just outside the village. However, he is the tanner's apprentice and ritually unclean, and most villagers choose not to believe him. They think he is just trying to make himself important.

CLUES

Which clues they find depend on whom the PCs speak to and who they are. Phoenix PCs will get more cooperation than a Mantis Shugenja or a Kuni Witch Hunter.

Magistrate's Interest: Several frightened villagers claim that a magistrate has come to solve previous disappearances, but so far has failed. After the first disappearances, a magistrate named Shiba Kare investigated for a day or two, but found nothing and eventually declared that the missing person had run off. After the second disappearance, the magistrate questioned more people, including the headman Goro, the miller Sadanobu, grandmother Shinobu, and a young Eta named Tsugiharu (see "Villagers"). Again, he decided that nothing had happened other than a runaway heimin. Most villagers now no longer trust the magistrate to protect them, but have no way of defending themselves against maho and the magic of the hannya.

Burnt Paper: One clue that may leads the PCs to the Asako Towers is a shred of paper with the Asako mon on its seal and a blank sheet of paper inside. This paper was sent to the headman's house by a Bloodspeaker at the court, but the text was protected by a *written in blood* spell.

Yasuki Emonji can determine that the paper has been written on, but strangely no ink shows. He can also tell the PCs that the paper is of very high quality. If the PCs have befriended him or succeed in a Bluff, Gather Information, or Intimidate check (DC 20), he admits that it is better paper than he sells.

Tainted Well: Every villager carries a point of Shadowlands taint (Taint modifier of +1, no symptoms). The reason is the presence of a tiny amount of taint in the village well that has been there for years. This clue doesn't exactly lead anywhere, but it should make the PCs

suspicious of everyone. PCs staying for more than week gain 1 point of Taint as well from eating food and drinking water taken from the well.

Ancestor Spirits: At the village's small shrine and graveyard, the village spirits are disturbed by what is happening to their descendants. With a successful spell to commune with the ancestors (*Speak with Dead* or *Ancient Wisdom* would work), the caster may attempt to learn what is going on. The spirits are bothered but not especially helpful. They do mention that "Grandmother is eating our children," a rather obvious pointer to the hannya in Scene 2.

SCENE 2: VISITING GRANDMOTHER

An elderly woman who is a silk weaver and (some say) the widow of a minor samurai lives just two doors down from the Sign of the Wandering Monk. She usually wears purple and gray kimono of her own designs, and she seems well-disposed to young children, sometimes feeding the boys rice cakes or giving the girls silk ribbons.

Grandmother Shinobu remembers all the village history, according to pretty much everyone. The worst anyone will say about her is that she does keep to herself (weaving, apparently) and she has become quite frightening once or twice, when she felt "that young magistrate" or "that impertinent merchant" was not perfectly respectful. She uses her age and station as weapons, and has become rude in her old age.

In fact, Grandmother isn't human at all, but has merely taken on human form the better to choose victims from among the villagers. She has lived here undetected for years, but will flee if she suspects that a samurai or magistrate has gotten wise. She leaves under cover of "selling silk in Mori Kage Toshi," the Phoenix city along the coast.

ASAKO SHINOBU (AKA "GRANDMOTHER SHINOBU")

Hannya: CR 4; Medium-size monstrous humanoid; HD 8d8+8; hp 45; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 natural); Atk 2 claws +9 melee, 1 bite +4 melee; SA improved grab, constrict, suggestion spell-like abilities; SQ aversion to violets, SR 14; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Hide +13, Listen +12, Spot +13; Alertness, Blind-Fight.

Special Qualities and Attacks: **Improved Grab (Ex):** If the hannya hits with both claw attacks, it gains a hold and can constrict. **Constrict (Ex):** Hannya deals 1d4+1 points of damage with a successful grapple check against Medium-size or smaller creatures. While constricting, her claws and bite can only target the constricted opponent. **Suggestion**

(Sp): A hannya's *suggestion* has a range of 100 feet, a DC 14, and is not language-dependent. She uses it at will, but it always fails against creatures that know her true nature or view her as a threat. **Spell-Like Abilities:** *Polymorph self*, *detect thoughts* at will.

The Hannya is the big opponent of the first few scenes, and clues from her weaver's house in the village lead to the Asako fortress. If the PCs keep Grandmother alive and question her, she attempts to use her *suggestion* ability to escape. If that fails and a PC succeeds in Intimidation (DC varies by her Sense Motive roll), she agrees to tell the party what they want in exchange for her life. She uses her *detect thoughts* ability to play along with whatever story she thinks the player characters will believe or want to believe, and uses *polymorph self* as soon as possible if they leave her alone, to escape and establish herself somewhere else.

SCENE 3: THE MILLER'S HOUSE

If the PCs investigate the miller's house and pond more carefully, they find that the pond is filled with bones of past victims and the millhouse itself is built atop a cellar containing a Bloodspeaker's altar.

The human leader of the cult here is a heimin, Sadanobu the village miller (Tsugiharu's uncle). Sadanobu is actually an Agasha-trained shugenja who maintains the Bloodspeaker altar for local sacrifices (in a secret section of the cellar) and he knows that victim's of the hannya's

suggestion are often to be taken to Kyuden Asako. There the sacrifices serve the cult within Kyuden Asako, without attracting attention as castle servants or visitors go missing.

The local altar is always protected by Sadanobu himself or by one of his four sons (all Bloodspeakers). The mother of the family died years ago, when Sadanobu could not save her with his magic, he turned to maho in his grief, urged on by the hannya and the taint of the village well.

The father and brothers defend the ceremonial chamber by putting masks on the corpses stored there. He can fit one mask per round, creating one zombie per round to defend him and attack the party. He has a number of masks equal to twice the number of characters in the party (maximum of eight) and can create 1d6+2 zombies before the PCs search the upper floor.

Sadanobu: CR 5; Shu 4/Tsu1; HD 5d8+5+1d8+1; hp 36; Init +1; Spd 30 ft. AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 bone armor); Atk +2 wakizashi (1d6-1); AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 8, Con 13; Dex 13, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 12; Taint +4.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +9 [+8+1], Knowledge (Shadowlands) +6 [+4+2]; Agasha School, Element Focus (Fire), Sense Elements, Spell Conversion, Suppress Taint

Spells Known (6/6/5/3): Inori: call fire, commune with elements, daze, detect magic, flare, light, read magic; 1st blood and darkness, blood armor, burning hands, dim mak, aura of flame (faerie fire), hypnotism, pass without trace, written in blood; 2nd desecrate, know the shadows, produce flame, sacrifice of masks, way of fire (cat's grace); 3rd choke the soul.

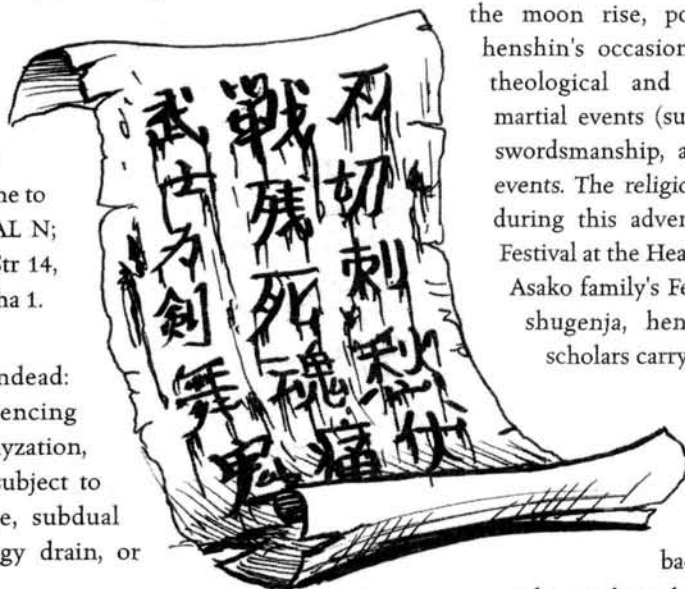


Joji, Fujimaro, Matsuta, Ryu (4 sons): CR 1; Samurai 1; HD 1d10+2; hp 12, 11, 10, 7; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (Dex, studded leather); Atk +4 katana (1d10+2); AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 16, Con 15, Dex 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Porcelain Mask Zombies (8): CR 1; Medium undead; HD 3d12+3; hp 23 (average); Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 natural); Atk +4 melee (1d6+2, slam); SQ Undead, partial actions only; 60-ft. dark-vision, immune to piercing weapons and cold, AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 10, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Toughness.

Special Qualities: Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralyzation, stunning, and disease; not subject to critical hits, ability damage, subdual damage, ability drain, energy drain, or death from massive damage.



turns up dead. Suddenly they are welcome to investigate at court, but they find they have new enemies (the magistrates feel threatened, the courtiers are confounded by the strangers, etc).

The areas that bear investigation can include eavesdropping at courtly events (such as viewing the moon rise, poetry readings, and the henshin's occasional debates on points of theological and philosophical interest), martial events (such as displays of archery, swordsmanship, and magic) and religious events. The religious events likely to occur during this adventure are the Full Moon Festival at the Heavenly Voice Temple, or the Asako family's Festival of Lights, when the shugenja, henshin, inkyo, and other scholars carry lanterns from the edge of the woodlands to the various cemeteries and resting places of the Asako family, to guide wayward spirits back to their rest.

The castle is home to more than 4,000 samurai and shugenja, most of them simple soldiers who defend the keep with sword, spell, and bow. A smaller number are likely suspects or potential helpers.

ACT 2: THE COURTLY INVESTIGATION

The investigation at the castle can be as easy or as difficult as you choose to make it. The obstacles are several:

- The castle servants and samurai provide thousands of possible suspects
- Male samurai PCs are not allowed into the women's quarters of the nobility,
- The armory and some barracks are off-limits to non-Phoenix samurai,
- The library and henshin's training grounds are off-limits to everyone but Phoenix shugenja.
- The quarters of Asako Oyo and other insane henshin are off limits to everyone.

Beyond those limits, they are free to question anyone they choose. Gather Information rolls with a DC of 20 will provide clues if the players are stumped for a lead.

Once in the castle, the PCs have less authority to investigate unless they convince the Daimyo first (the Daimyo Asako Toshi doesn't want a public investigation). They are first told that it is "under control" (meaning that Magistrate Shiba Kare has been assigned). Then Shiba Kare

SCENE 1: CREDENTIALS

The first thing that the PC must do is succeed in convincing the gate guards, courtiers, and magistrates that they are there for a legitimate investigation and not just some attempt to smear the family name with wild rumors. Diplomacy checks with a DC 18 (DC 15 for a Phoenix clan visitor) gets them past the gate guards even in if their story is a bit wild or missing important details. Getting to speak to anyone important is more difficult; they may Bluff or Intimidate their way into the presence of Asako Akahito, the leader of the Asako Libraries, an important leader of the henshin, and a trusted advisor to Daimyo Asako Toshi.

Akahito will meet them in the Asako Library, the lowest level, in his audience chamber (see scene 2). He is a stately figure, made taller by a long flowing robe of yellow brocade and an orange hat decorated with red tassels that hang down in back. His eyes are slate gray, his face is long and smooth, with a thin moustache and a wispy gray beard. He has little patience for fools and quickly sees through most bluffs.

If they convince Akahito (with Diplomacy DC 22 or Bluff 25), they may see the Daimyo. Otherwise, they'll need some hard evidence or four witnesses willing to swear to the crimes involved, or they'll need to surrender the

message written in blood to the henshin as a token of wrongdoing. Role-playing this out is a chance for the players to make a good impression, or to make them suspects for Shiba Kare.

Assuming that Akahito or Toshi gives them permission to pursue their investigation, they can begin by asking around for information that evening (and offer up a suspect from the "Weak and Accidental Suspects" list). The following morning, use Table 5-1: Castle Rumors to get them started.

FAILING AT THE AUDIENCE

If the PCs fail, they are asked to leave the castle. However, the next morning, when the possessions begin, they are summoned back and politely asked to investigate. No explanation is offered, but the castle is running wild with rumors. Ask the group to make a Gather Information roll and provide information according to the following table:

TABLE 5-1: CASTLE RUMORS

Check	Information
10	One of the henshin is very sick, possibly from a magical curse
15	The sick henshin is Asako Akahito, the great librarian and shugenja.
20	Akahito has been taken to the Morning Blessing Temple, in hopes of a cure. He recognizes no one.
25	The librarian led his students in a very strange class this morning, first remaining silent and not addressing the class for almost two hours, then sending a student to the latrines to fetch feces, and then spoke of the power of obsidian in void magic. The students have been commanded to be silent.
30	Akahito ate the feces while mixing it on the inkstone, and had to be physically subdued before being brought to the Shrine.

Failure to return when requested is a great insult to the Asako family, an insult that will be remembered. Attempts to extort gold, magical items, or other payment in return for their services is appropriate only for ronin; the Asako are willing to pay if the PCs accomplish the goal, but just note the consequences for any of the characters who care about Honor.

HELPERS

1. **Asako Takuya (Male Court 3)** is a snide courtier and troublemaker, but extremely well informed and asked to help the PCs by Asako Toshi. He should provide some of the information gained from successful Gather Information rolls.

2. **Asako Yoringa (Sam12)** is the castle's master of horse, and a great believer in torture and direct questioning. He scorns the PCs as weaklings unless they take him up on his own to use the castle's dungeons for "intensive questioning."

3. **Doji Kenbai (Female Cou4)**, concubine of Asako Yoringa, a friend to both the priestess Shiba Nozomi and the young groom Makiko (see "Victims").

4. **Shiba Kare (Male Sam5/Emerald2)**, a Phoenix magistrate who wishes to see the PC investigation fail to prove his superior methods. However, Kare is under great suspicion after the Dragon-Phoenix war (he studied with the Kitsuki magistrates for a time).

5. **Kitsune Kenjin (Male Shu4/Rogue2)**, a young and rash shugenja



WRITTEN IN BLOOD
CHAPTER FIVE

82

82

attentions, before leaving Makiko's body. Makiko's spirit returns to her body when the next victim is attacked.

After Makiko returns to her body, she immediately doubles over in pain. It's clear from her deep cuts, broken ribs, and facial bruises that this was a physical as well as a spiritual attack.

5. A Player Character (Varies): if the investigation goes nowhere (or you just want to speed up the game), choose the PC with the weakest Will save or the biggest mouth during the investigations and have Kyoji make an attempt to steal his soul. If the attempt succeeds, the PC falls down and is possessed by the greater kansen. The player character is effectively an unwilling member of the kansen's host prestige class and can only act normally if he or she makes a Will save (DC 17) after some helpful magic has been cast (such as the bell spirit's purifying sound, a *protection from Taint* spell, or the like). The victim will have one more reason to hate the perpetrator and may get some answers if the character is later released from the stone's imprisonment.

If the attempt to attack with the Ruby fails, the PC must make an immediate Spellcraft check or Knowledge (Arcane) check (DC 18). If the check succeeds, the character knows that a form of non-Rokugani magic has been attempted against him, seeking to break his will and leave his body powerless. The exact nature of the attack (maho of a Burning Sands type) is not discovered unless the check succeeds with a DC of 28 or higher. Any character with Knowledge (Maho) need not make a check, but immediately knows that blood magic has been used against him in an attempt to steal, weaken, or taint his soul.

SPIRITS

The Asako castle, as home of many shugenja and as a building with along history, is home to a number of friendly and neutral spirits, and its kami are generally well behaved. However, the wakening of the Ruby of Iuchiban has disturbed the balance of things and five kansen now roam the castle as well, possessing bodies emptied by the Ruby.

1. Boutoku, the Spirit of the Ruby. The Ruby of Iuchiban was inhabited by a greater kansen for many years, trapped within the stone by a powerful shugenja. Its name is Boutoku, or "blasphemy", and it delights in teaching human souls how to release dark power. It hopes to convince anyone who meets it to accept a gift of power (which also involves taint, though it neglects to mention this part).

Boutoku, Greater Kansen (1): CR 5; Large outsider (Incorporeal, Shadowlands, spirit); HD 7d8+21; hp 52; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Imp. Init.); Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (good); AC 13

(+1 Dexterity, +2 deflection); Atk +7/+2 incorporeal touch melee (1d6 Wisdom or Constitution drain); SA dark whispers, Taint's touch; SQ incorporeal, spirit qualities, AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +5; Str -, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 15, Taint 9.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +12, Diplomacy +13, Knowledge (Maho) +12, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +10, Spot +6; Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (incorporeal touch).

Special Qualities: **Dark Whispers (Su):** The kansen know many dark secrets and whisper promises to those they meet. If a kansen spends the round whispering to a living creature, the target must succeed at a Will save (DC 13) or suffer the effects of a *suggestion* spell.

Incorporeal: Can only be harmed by other incorporeal creatures, nemuranai of +1 or better, or magic. Corporeal weapons (even magical ones) have only a 50% chance of damaging a kansen. Spirits can pass through solid objects at will, ignore all armor with their own incorporeal touch, and always move silently.

Incorporeal Touch (Su): Living creatures touched by the kansen suffer 1d6 points temporary Wisdom or Constitution drain (kansen's choice). A kansen drains Wisdom from those it hopes to seduce with its suggestion abilities, and drains Constitution from those who offend it and must be destroyed.

Maho: A greater kansen can teach maho to any willing student. A person taught by the greater kansen who meets all other requirements of the maho-tsukai prestige class may immediately enter that class without fulfilling the requirement of 6 points of the Shadowlands taint.

Spirit Qualities (Ex): Greater kansen gain a +4 racial bonus against all enchantment effects except those of other spirits. Greater kansen can sense any passages to Jigoku within one mile.

Taint's Touch (Su): Any living creature damaged by the kansen's incorporeal touch must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or gain 1d6 points of Taint. Any creature killed by the kansen's Constitution drain rises as a skeleton or zombie within 2d20 hours after death unless the head is removed from the corpse.

2. Buyoka, Gomi, Mudabanashi, and Fukumen: These lesser kansen are mischievous or rude as often as they are truly malevolent. Any body they possess will act according to their name (their names are literally Dancer, Garbage, Gossip, and Mask):

- Buyoka dances along a high wall, on top of a well, or near a kitchen fire
- Gomi finds a mound of filth and eats garbage, attacking anyone who bothers him
- Mudabanashi chatters obsessively and insultingly and without etiquette

- Fukumen seems the most normal at first, but attempts to kill a randomly chosen victim while wearing a mask. The bodies it possesses are all obsessive about sharp things.

All the lesser kansen are cast out of their host body eventually (usually within 2d6 hours). None can resist the bell spirit in the Morning Blessing Temple.

Lesser Kansen (1-4): CR 2; Small outsider (Incorporeal, Shadowlands, spirit); HD 3d8+3; hp 24, 20, 16, 15; Init +2 (+2 Dex.); Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (good); AC 15 (+2 Dexterity, +2 deflection, +1 size); Atk +3 incorporeal touch melee (1d2 Wisdom or Constitution drain); SA dark whispers; SQ incorporeal, spirit qualities, AL CN or CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3; Str -, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 15, Taint 5.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +12, Diplomacy +13, Knowledge (Maho) +12, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +10, Spot +6; Weapon Finesse (incorporeal touch).

SCENE 3: CLUES AND SUSPECTS

The NPCs most likely to be possessed by the Ruby, or pointed out as potential suspects in the possessions, (and a number of dead ends) include the following list, but you can add suspects just by introducing a sullen teenager, a student with mysterious scratches and tattoos on her arms, or even a kitchen servant who has been seen drinking chicken blood.

You should probably choose no more than six suspects for a short adventure session (at least one from each of the five types listed below), and no more than a dozen of your favorites for a longer session. Use all the suspects only if the adventuring group includes a Magistrate, a Kitsuki investigator, or another character with strong skills in interrogation and the social clout to demand answers quickly.

WEAK OR ACCIDENTAL SUSPECTS

These suspects are just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Most magistrates can dismiss the accusations against them with a little detective work or questioning of witnesses and all will eventually have alibis for one of the possessions.

1. **Asako Sadao (Male Shu1)**, a runaway apprentice and poet, often steals bread from the kitchen and composes terrible poetry that he leaves as payment. The first of these poems refers to the "blood and bread of life".

2. **Moto Jiro (Male Sam6/Kishi2)** is a young violent Unicorn who has been sent to Asako to learn manners and patience. He hates being trapped indoors and often sneaks out to the open sky. He also seduced the young groom who is victim 4. May become a helper if cleared and placated,

and has Track +10 ability that might find Bairei.

3. **Shiba Katsumi (Female Courtier 5)** is a beautiful and promiscuous courtier who prowls the castle by night in dark robes, quietly slipping from chamber to chamber with only a single servant to accompany her. Some guards and servants say she merely visits her lovers late at night; others claim she plan revenge against the one noble who spurned her, Asako Takuya.

4. **Heishiro (Male Com 4)**, a nineteen-year-old burly castle butcher, is the fourth son of a family of Eta who enjoys his work just a little too much. On several occasions he has flung blood at those servants who mock him. Usually this earns him a beating unless he is holding a meat cleaver; with the castle concerned about sorcery, it might bring him to an investigator's attention.

SUSPICIOUS BUT INNOCENT

These characters all do have something to hide, but it isn't the Ruby and Bloodspeaker connections.

1. **Asako Goemon (Male Shu4)**, is a Tainted shugenja who seeks a cure for his condition and uses jade petal tea daily. Can turn from suspect to helper if the PCs trust him. He has enough jade petal tea to spare a little of it in attempts to discover who might be tainted, but can do this no more than three times before running low, and having to send a courier to fetch more from More Kage Toshi, a Phoenix city on the coast.

2. **Asako Kazunari (Male Shu 13)** is a secretive alchemist whose fears verge on paranoia. He lives in the outer Tenshu (area 12), and receives no visitors. Because so few in the castle know what he does, everyone is suspicious of him. He hates visitors, has book etiquette and social skills, and keeps his chambers magically locked at all times. He may agree to answer questions through a door or in written form. He was once a great friend of Asako Akahito.

3. **Isawa Sachiko (Female Cou2)**, a concubine of Asako Kyoji, she has twice woken up and found bloody garments in her chambers. She feels guilty about this (although she had nothing to do with them), and thus washes or hides them. She thinks that the garments are related to the haunting of the well.

POWERFUL AND UNCOOPERATIVE

These characters are powerful and unwilling to help the investigators. That alone may be reason enough for suspicion. They have no interest in clearing their name, as they do not consider non-Asako or non-magistrates worth their time to rebuke. In a court and before any Asako judge, their word will be more powerful than the word of a mixed group of samurai of other clans.

1. **Asako Nanasato (Female Courtier 8)**, courtier, master of the treasury, discoverer of the Ruby of Iuchiban. She released the greater kansen within the Ruby

accidentally when inventorying the possessions and has attempted to hide that fact ever since. Over time, she has convinced herself that she saw a "shadow", not an evil spirit. When Asako Akahito showed an interest in the stone, she happily loaned it to him.

2. **Asako Oyo (Mnk10/Henshin 5)** is an immortal, enlightened madman who is one of the dirty secrets of the henshin. Most of the time, he raves and drools. Once in a while, he spouts wisdom and prophecy. Telling the two apart is quite a trick. As the Asako are ashamed of him, he is kept hidden from the PCs for as long as possible, for he is believed dead by most of the outside world.

3. **Asako Unkei (Male Shu10/Elemental Guardsman5)**, bodyguard to Daimyo Asako Toshi, and a follower of the kami who is often seen speaking to himself, summoning minor spirits, and playing with fire (he's a bit of a pyromaniac, actually). As a member of the Firestorm Legion, he is not used to answering anyone's questions and refuses to cooperate with non-Phoenix investigators unless directly ordered to do so by Asako Toshi.

4. **Kakita Sanraku (Male Sam5/Kensei2)** is the sword instructor of Asako noble children. He both loves to intimidate others, takes offense easily, and he has fought and won half a dozen duels since arriving here three years ago. If the PCs are not careful, their questioning may lead to his next duel. If you would rather not play out the details, use a Diplomacy check (DC 18) to determine whether a questioner can successfully phrase his questions to avoid offending the kensei.

RED HERRINGS

Falsely accused or not yet guilty of a crime, these suspects are meant to throw the party off the trail. Gullible investigators could spend a lot of time and effort digging into their pasts and current actions. Note that the Bloodspeakers themselves may lie to the party to help make these suspects appear more plausible.

1. **Hoshi Tabito (Male Mnk4/Shintao Monk2)**, religious instructor of Asako noble children, loves to write with red ink, which has given rise to the false and vicious rumor that he writes his sutras with the blood of children. LG.

2. **Yogo Sakura (Female Shu 3)**, a drug-addicted Scorpion who seeks the secrets of the Ruby for herself. She may be caught trying to break into treasurer Asako Nansato's chambers.

3. **Yogo Ippei (Male Rogue 2/Yakuza 5)**, a thief whose only interest are the Ruby, along with his lover Sakura. If the PCs succeed in a Gather Information check (DC 22), they learn that he has attempted to bribe some castle servants to get information about the Ruby.

4. **Okiku (Ubume Ghost)**. See area 1 of the castle for details of this spirit.

BLOODSPEAKERS

These cultists are all guilty, and have been able to hide their true nature for years in the midst of many Phoenix shugenja and even occasional Inquisitors. Their secret is in discretion and misdirection. They will encourage the arrest and execution of other suspects in order to "resolve this matter" or "avoid stains on the family name." It's entirely possible that the party will accuse and capture or kill only the one Bloodspeaker Kjoyi, while the others congratulate them on their keen eyes and wait for them to leave.

1. **Asako Chisato (Female Shu 4, Tsu 1)**, Bloodspeaker and friend to Asako Kyoji, Chisato was Kyoji's lover when they were both sixteen, and she is still his friend. Both learned maho from the greater kansen, but she has recently drifted into her own concerns, primarily out of fear of the consequences of Kyoji's recklessness with the Ruby. She is currently pregnant with the child of her fiancé, Asako Nichiren.

Asako Chisato, Bloodspeaker: Female human Phoenix, Agasha School Shugenja 4/Maho-Tsukai 1; CR 5; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 4d6+1d8; hp 22; Init: +1; Spd 30 ft.; Atk tanto +4 (+5 with Taint), 1d4+4 damage; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 ring) touch 13, flat-footed 12; SQ Class Skills - Element Focus (Water), sense elements, Taint suppression, blood component, spell conversion; Honor 0; AL LE; SV Fort +4 [+3 Tsu+ 1 Shu], Ref +3 [+1+1+1], Will +9 [+1 Tsu+4 Shu +4 Wis]; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 17; Taint points 11, Taint modifier +1; Maximum Void: 5; Ht: 5'4".

Skills and Feats: Speak Language - Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Bluff +10 [+4+2], Concentration +4 [+4], Diplomacy +11 [+9+2], Hide +7 [+6+1] or +27 [+6+1+20], Knowledge (Maho) +13 [+9+4], Knowledge (Shadowlands) +11 [+7+4], Sense Motive +11 [+7+4], Spot +13 [+9+4]; Depths of the Void, Flee the Darkness, Void Use, Way of the Phoenix.

Skills = 24 at 1st level, plus 6 x3 for shugenja, plus 4 x 1 for tsukai = 46 points

= 4+4+9+12+9+7+7+9 = 71

Feats = 2 at 1st level, plus 2 bonus at 3rd and 6th = 4

Spells Per Day: 6/6+1/6+1/4+1/, including bonus maho spells for Taint

Spells Known (6/6/5/3): Inori: call fire, commune with elements, daze, detect magic, flare, light, read magic; 1st burning hands, dim mak, expeditious retreat, obscuring mist, sleep, written in blood; 2nd desecrate, know the shadows, produce flame,

sacrifice of masks, way of fire (cat's grace); 3rd bloodstrike, red knife; 4th curse of weakness. DC against Kyoji's spells is 12 plus spell level.

Possessions of Note: ring of protection +2, ruby of Iuchiban, +2 katana.

Symptoms of the Taint (1/1): Hearing voices; extreme possessiveness and greed

2. Asako Nichiren (Male Courtier4/Shu4/Tsu4), Bloodspeaker and scholar, Nichiren has warned Kyoji against this venture from the start, and has taken measures to prepare himself for its inevitable disastrous conclusion. He has acquired some tea of jade petals in case he needs to hide his taint and he has already laid plans to be summoned away" (by his own arrangement) to the Doji Palaces on a diplomatic mission if things get too hairy. In the meantime, he keeps close but indirect tabs on what the PCs are doing. If confronted directly, he calls on the Asako guardsmen to defend him; most are too terrified of Nichiren's influence to dare oppose him.

Within the cult, Nichiren is Kyoji's ears and often his closest advisor, but as Kyoji's Taint has increased, Nichiren prepared his getaway. In addition to the tea and the "diplomatic mission," he has prepared a speech accusing Kyoji in front of the Daimyo, thus putting himself above suspicion by helping to capture a "foul Bloodspeaker". Nichiren has ears all over the servant's quarters, the samurai barracks, and the noble's towers; only the Henshin Academy is difficult for him to work as a courtier.

Nichiren plans to survive this investigation and rebuild the Bloodspeaker cell when Kyoji (and perhaps Chisato) are gone. He is beyond reproach among the court and his opinion is highly valued. Audiences with him are as difficult to gain as those with the Daimyo, treasurer, or master of horses. In an ideal adventure, he is the splinter that remains behind when the thorn of maho in the Asako academy is destroyed, and can be the foundation of a future adventure. If the GM chooses to run this adventure for higher-level characters, Nichiren should be the ultimate villain.

Asako Nichiren, Courtier Bloodspeaker: Male human Phoenix, Courtier 4/Agasha School Shugenja 4/Maho-Tsukai 4; CR 12; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 4d6+4d6+4d8; hp 47; Init: +0; Spd 30 ft.; Atk tanto +7 (+8 with Taint), 1d4+1 damage or +8 (+9 with Taint) wakizashi, 1d6+3; AC 15 (+4 tessen) touch 11, flat-footed 11; SQ Class Skills - Element Focus (Earth), sense elements, Taint suppression, blood component, spell conversion, wealth, talent, style and grace, gossip, courtier: whisper from the soul; Honor 0; AL LE; SV Fort +5 [+1Cou+3Tsu+ 1Shu], Ref +5 [+1+1+1+2 feat], Will +13 [+4

Cou+1Tsu+4Shu+2Wis+2feat]; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 19; Taint points 16, Taint modifier +1; Maximum Void: 5; Ht: 5' 9".

Skills and Feats: Speak Language - Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Bluff +10 [+8+2], Concentration +10 [+7+3], Diplomacy +11 [+9+2], Games (Go) +6 [+4+2], Gather Information +10 [+6+4], Hide +2 [+2], Innuendo +5 [+1+4], Intimidate +15 [+11+4], Knowledge (Etiquette) +8 [+5+3], Knowledge (Maho) +10 [+6+4], Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +10 [+7+3], Knowledge (Shintao) +4 [+1+3], Knowledge (Shadowlands) +11 [+7+4], Listen +10 [+8+2], Sense Motive +15 [+12+3], Spot +13 [+9+4], Tea Ceremony +6 [+4+2]; Chosen By the Kami, Depths of the Void, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Shiba's Technique, Void Use, Way of the Phoenix.

Skills = 28 at 1st, plus 7x3 for shugenja, plus 10 x 4 for courtier, plus 4 x 4 for tsukai

= 105 points

= 8+7+9+4+6+4+1+11+5+6+7+1+7+8+12+9 = 105

Feats = 2 at 1st level, plus 4 bonus = 6, plus Courtier bonus feat (iron will)

Spells Per Day: 6/6+1/6+1/6/4, including bonus maho spells for Taint

Spells Known (6/5/4/3/2): DC 11 + spell level, Inori: daze, detect magic, flare, mage hand, read magic, resistance; 1st burning hands, cause fear, dim mak, magic weapon, sanctuary, written in blood; 2nd blood of midnight, blood warding, bull's strength, produce flame; 3rd greater blood rite, vampiric touch, vermin form; 4th arcane eye, curse of weakness.

Possessions of Note: wounding wakizashi +2, courtier's obi, fan of charm person, +4 tessen of defending, slippers of flying.

Symptoms of the Taint (2/1): Memory lapses, fear of snow; fits of sexual violence

3. Kampei (Female Exp3), a scribe and servant in the treasury, was the cultist who first told Bairei of the Ruby. Unfortunately, she is not as dedicated to the Bloodspeaker ideals as Nichiren, Chisato, or Kyoji, and so she also mentioned the ruby to her Yogo lover, Ippei, who told his love interest, Yogo Sakura. Kampei is eager to learn maho, but has no real skill with the kami, unlike her skill with accounts and brush, which have won her the (misplaced) trust and protection of the treasurer, Asako Nanasato.

To the rest of the cultists, Kampei is useful because of her toughness. Her back and upper arms are a mass of scars from blood sacrifices used to power the spells of others. Despite her physical courage, she is not a tough woman if questioned or pressured socially. She will

confess what she knows of the Ruby rather easily (Intimidate DC 15), but will not betray her fellow cultists out of fear (Intimidate DC 25).

Kampe: CR 3; Exp3; HD 3d6+9+3; hp 24; Init -1; Spd 30 ft. AC 9 (-1 Dex); Atk +2 wakizashi (1d6+1); AL LE; SV Fort +4 [+1+3], Ref +0 [+1-1], Will +3 [+3]; Str 13, Con 17; Dex 9, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 13; Taint +1.

Skills = 32 at 1st plus 2 X 8 = 48 points

= 8+6+2+4+6+6+5+4+6 = 47

Feats = 2 plus 1

Skills and Feats: Craft (Calligraphy) + [+8+1], Forgery +8 [+6+2], Knowledge (Arcane) +4 [+2+2], Knowledge (History) +6 [+4+2], Knowledge (Nobles and Royalty) +3 [+1+2], Listen +8 [+6+2 feat], Profession (Accounting) +10 [+6+2+2 feat], Ride +5 [+5], Sense Motive +4 [+4], Spot +8 [+6+2 feat]; Alertness, Skill Focus (Profession, Accounting), Toughness

4. **Asako Kyoji** (Male Shu4/Tsu3), the true culprit is the son of the current head of the Asako library, Asako Akihito. He attacks the monks next in an attempt to prolong the possessions once he learns of the effects of the bell spirit. After attacking Makiko, he flees on a fine horse, riding for the forest where he hopes to meet with the Five Scarlet Banners. Once in the forest itself he becomes very difficult to track, as he covers his trail extremely well with false leads and magical diversions (-7 penalty to all Track rolls). Once he is in their bandit fortress in the wilderness, he will be almost untouchable.

ASAKO KYOJI, ASAKO BLOODSPEAKER

Male human Phoenix, Agasha School Shugenja 4/Maho-Tsukai 3; CR 7; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 4d6+12+3d8+9; hp 54; Init: +1; Spd 30 ft.; Atk tanto +5 (+7 with Taint), 1d4+1 damage or +8 (+10 with Taint) katana, 1d10+3; AC 20 (+3 Dex, +2 ring, +5 ruby deflection) touch 20, flat-footed 17; SQ Class Skills - Element Focus (Air), sense elements, Taint suppression, blood component, spell conversion; Honor 0; AL LE; SV Fort +7 [+3 Tsu+ 1 Shu+3], Ref +3 [+1+1+1], Will +9 [+1 Tsu+4 Shu +4 Wis]; Str 12, Dex

12, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 14; Taint points 21, Taint modifier +2; Maximum Void: 5; Ht: 5'4".

Skills and Feats: Speak Language - Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Bluff +10 [+8+2], Concentration +13 [+10+3], Diplomacy +11 [+9+2], Hide +7 [+6+1] or +27 [+6+1+20], Knowledge (Maho) +13 [+9+4], Knowledge (Shadowlands) +11 [+7+4], Sense Motive +11 [+7+4], Spot +13 [+9+4]; Depths of the Void, Maho Focus, Void Use, Way of the Phoenix.

Skills = 32 at 1st level, plus 8 x3 for shugenja, plus 5 x 3 for tsukai = 71 points

= 8+10+9+12+9+7+7+9 = 71

Feats = 2 at 1st level, plus 2 bonus at 3rd and 6th = 4

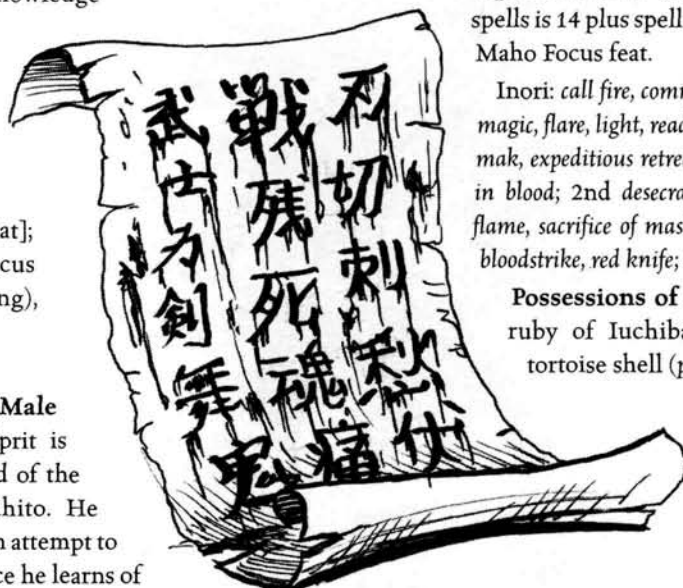
Spells Per Day: 6/6+1/6+1/4+1/, including bonus maho spells for Taint

Spells Known (6/6/5/3): DC against Kyoji's spells is 14 plus spell level, because of his taint and Maho Focus feat.

Inori: call fire, commune with elements, daze, detect magic, flare, light, read magic; 1st burning hands, dim mak, expeditious retreat, obscuring mist, sleep, written in blood; 2nd desecrate, know the shadows, produce flame, sacrifice of masks, way of fire (cat's grace); 3rd bloodstrike, red knife; 4th curse of weakness.

Possessions of Note: ring of protection +2, ruby of Iuchiban, +2 katana, talisman of tortoise shell (protection from arrows).

Symptoms of the Taint: Hearing voices, mood swings, boils, extreme possessiveness and greed



ACT 3: CONFRONTING THE BOSS

In the end, the party must confront their suspects, thus alerting everyone in the castle to the threat. Daimyo Asako Toshi wishes it to be done quietly, but there an option for a very dramatic and cinematic duel to be fought as well.

SCENE 1: THE DAIMYO'S REQUEST

Asako Toshi doesn't need the headache of a Bloodspeaker captured and executed in his own castle. He has plenty of other problems, such as the bandits in the Isawa woodlands, the Dragon raiders down from the mountains, and the infighting among his courtiers and concubines.

ASAKO TOSHI, ASAKO FAMILY DAIMYO

Male human Phoenix, Ink 12; CR 12; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 12d8+24; hp 105; Init: +3; Spd 30 ft.; Atk unarmed +11/+6, 1d8+2 damage; AC 18 (touch 15, flat-footed 15); SQ Class Skill - Concentration, Improved Void Use, Purity +4; Honor 4; AL LG; SV Fort +12, Ref +13, Will +15; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 21, Cha 17; Maximum Void: 12 (14); Ht: 5'5".

Skills and Feats: Speak Language - Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Yobanjin, Concentration +18, Diplomacy +20, Knowledge (Fortunes) +18, Knowledge (Shintao) +18, Search +18, Sense Motive +20, Spot +20, Tumble +18; Depths of the Void (X2), Eyes of the Phoenix, Flee the Darkness, Greater Depths of the Void, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, Self/No Self, Soul of the Four Winds, Spirit Strike (X2), Void Use, Way of the Phoenix.

Possessions of Note: amulet of the void, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +2.

The ronin monk Toshi was a relatively obscure hermit living in one of the many small caves near Kyuden Asako when the War of Spirits erupted. Though the chaos that consumed the Empire greatly disturbed him, he chose to remain in his seclusion and continue seeking enlightenment rather than step forward to join the Phoenix armies. As fortune would have it, his choice was quite fortuitous, for he happened to be in the forest gathering wood when he stumbled upon a large band of bakemono led by a free ogre, planning to attack the lightly defended Kyuden Asako while the Phoenix troops were otherwise occupied.

Toshi hurried to Kyuden Asako and warned Daimyo Asako Togama to shut the gates and prepare a defense. The remaining henshin at Kyuden Asako did so just in time to prevent the goblin forces from storming the castle's defenses. Toshi stepped forth to battle the free ogre, felling the beast with a single well-placed kick before the gates of Kyuden Asako. Their leader defeated, the goblin forces scattered. Breathless and exhausted from his encounter, Toshi was surprised to find himself facing Asako Togama, the aged family Daimyo.

Togama congratulated Toshi on his bravery, whispered the great secret of the Asako into his ear, and walked off into the forest. Togama was never seen again, and since that day, to Toshi's surprise, the Asako family has obeyed him as their daimyo without doubt or question. (Though a few Phoenix outside the Asako have questioned his position.)

Over the last decade the exhaustive task of serving as a daimyo of a Phoenix family, protecting his family's secrets from the jealous Isawa and proud Shiba, have visibly aged Toshi. Though most Asako agree that Togama disappeared to take his place among the enlightened henshin in

Tengoku, Toshi often wonders if his predecessor simply tired of the job and passed it off to escape.

Strangely, he thinks he finally understands why Togama did what he did. Togama had mastered the henshin's deepest secrets. The mortal world no longer had a place for him. Sadly, the rest of the Asako were a family divided by mortal concerns. They had become distracted from their quest for enlightenment by political games and warlike conflict. Toshi was chosen because he was strong enough to lead, but wise enough to know that to continue to follow the path of self-discovery was the Asako's most important duty.

To Toshi's chagrin, he finds that the opposite seems to be true, and the worldlier Asako is involuntarily influencing Toshi. He is becoming increasingly more absorbed in the demands of ruling a clan. With each passing year he spends less and less time contemplating the infinite. He wonders whether one can truly find enlightenment when entangled in the mysteries of politics.

Most days, he envies Togama.

SCENE 2: THE QUIET CAPTURE

Asako Toshi does not want his family's name stained with the taint of impurity, maho, and bloodspeakers. Under no circumstances should the henshin be blamed for these crimes. When you judge that the PCs are close to making an accusation or an arrest, have them summoned to see the Daimyo. A squad of Asako shugenja and fully armed samurai, if necessary, backs up the summons.

When the PCs have had a chance to worry a little, they are brought before the Daimyo, whose high-vaulted audience chamber has a glorious view over the treetops and the lower tiers of the castle. Six guards and Asako Akahito, the now-revived chief librarian of the Asako Library, are in the chamber with Asako Toshi, and six more guards, armed with long bows, are hidden on a balcony ten feet above the chamber floor.

Guards (12): Human Sam2, CR2, Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 2d10+2; hp 19; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+5 lamellar, +1 Dex, touch 15, flat-footed 15); Att +4 melee (2d8+2 katana) or +3 ranged (1d8 long bow); Honor: 2; AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10. Maximum Void: 2; Taint: 0.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Void Use, Way of the Phoenix

Possessions: katana, wakizashi, yumi (long bow), lamellar armor.

Toshi asks what progress the PCs have made. If they tell the truth, that they are ready to make an arrest, he demands to know what witnesses they have, and who they plan to accuse.

SCENE 2: DUEL ON THE ROOFLINE

If the characters realize that Kyoji is the Bloodspeaker using the Ruby within Morning Glory Palace, they may attempt to make an arrest. This is unlikely to succeed, for as soon as footsteps come up the North Tower, the kansens warns Asako Kyoji of the danger and he casts a *blood warding* on the door. If the door is broken open, he flees up a ladder onto the blue tile roof and awaits a chance to die gloriously. His tortoise shell talisman protects him from arrows and the tower's counterspells protect him against magical attack (treat this as having SR 16).

There's one more wrinkle to the final scene. Kyoji's yojimbo, Shiba Hogai, will protect his lord with his life, forcing an iajutsu duel on anyone who steps onto the roof. Though he knows that Kyoji is tainted and a traitor, bushido compels him to honor his vow of service. Only a truly skilled diplomacy check (penalty of -8 to the PC's check) can win him over, and that only if he is promised safety and has not yet been attacked.

In the final scene, the characters should face the Bloodspeaker with the Ruby of Iuchiban in hand, an obvious source of great magical energy. Use the iajutsu rules for the duels with the yojimbo.

Shiba Hogai, yojimbo: Human Sam3, CR3, Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 3d10+3; hp 25; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+5 lamellar, +2 Dex, touch 15, flat-footed 15); Att +4 melee (2d8+3 katana) or +3 ranged (1d8 long bow); Honor: 3; AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 12. Maximum Void: 2; Taint: 0.

Skills = 16 plus 8 = 24

=+6+2+3+4+4=24

Feats = 2 + 1 = 3

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Diplomacy +6 [+5+1], Iaijutsu Focus +7 [+6+1], Intimidate +3 [+2+1], Jump +5 [+3+2], Ride +4 [+4], Sense Motive +5 [+4+1]; Quick Draw, Void Use, Way of the Phoenix

Possessions: katana, wakizashi, yumi (long bow), lamellar armor.



CONCLUSION

The Ruby itself should survive the adventure, carried off by an accomplice who pretends to help the party. Either Asako Nichiren or the treasurer's assistant Kempai (if undiscovered) are ideal for this purpose.

KYUDEN ASAKO (MORNING GLORY CASTLE)

Also called the "Castle of the White Phoenix", Kyuden Asako stands atop an outcrop of black rock and its white walls are so high that the first rays of sunlight make it a shining beacon to the rest of the land. Once known as Shiron Asako, it was renamed in honor of hosting the Emperor's Winter Court nearly fifty years ago. Many more

Winter Courts have been held here since that time, but the castle's history goes back much further than that.

KEY TO PHOENIX LANDS MAP

Reihaido sano Ki-rin (Shrine of the Ki-rin): Marks the location where the mythical Ki-rin was last seen (83)

Kyodai na Taiyo (The Great Fall): A volcanic lava field used by the Dragon for training (84)

Mamoru Kyotai: A border city between the Phoenix and Lion lands (89)

Toshi no Omoidoso (City of Remembrance): A city north of Kiken no Roka (93)

Kyuden Isawa: The palace of the Phoenix daimyo (94)

Reihaido Uikku (Uikku Shrine): A shrine dedicated to the Phoenix shugenja who recorded the Tao of Shinsei; situated on Heigen Yogensha (96)

Heigen Yogensha (Plain of the Prophet): Grasslands and rice fields near the northeast coast (97)

Mori Kage Toshi (Forest Shadow City): A once-lost city situated on the coast in Phoenix lands (98)

Mori Isawa (Phoenix Woodlands): The forests enclosing the Phoenix lands to the north (99)

Shiro Shiba: Castle of the Shiba daimyo (Phoenix) (100)

Kyuden Asako (Morning Glory Castle): Also known as the "Castle of the White Phoenix". Setting of this adventure. (101)

Shinsei na Sumai (Holy Home): A pilgrimage spot for devotees of Shinsei. It is customary to bring a stone and leave it there. (102)

Aojiroi Oku Mura (Pale Oak Village): A village west of the Isawa Woodlands, on the plain of the same name (103)

Aojiroi Oku Heigen (Pale Oak Plain): A plain west of the Isawa Woodlands (104)

Hinode Mura (Sunrise Village): A village east of the Isawa Woodlands (106)

Doro Owari Mura (Road's End Village): The northmost village on the east coast (107)

Kanawa Taki (Iron Rings Cascade): Shinsei is said to have stopped at this waterfall; the water is used by weaponsmiths to quench their steel. Situated in the mountains between the Dragon and Phoenix lands. (108)

Akibin Mura (Empty Bottle Village): A small village in the northern mountains on the border between the Dragon and Phoenix lands (156)

ROADS

Michi no Taenai (Way of Perpetual Shade): A road cutting through the Isawa Woodlands [11]

Doro sano Kin Kaigan (Road of the Golden Coast): The imperial road between Kyuden Isawa and Omoidoso [15]

Hasu oyobi Kikyo Doro (Lotus and Balloon Flower Road): The merchant road between Kyuden Isawa and Doro Owari [26]

Kiken na Roka Doro (Treacherous Pass Road): The imperial road between Kiken na Roka Toshi and Omoidoso [29]

PHOENIX PROVINCES

• **Giryu:** governor: Asako daimyo; administrative center: Shiro Asako

• **Osu:** governor: Phoenix Champion; administrative center: Shiro Shiba

• **Tenza:** governor: Isawa daimyo; administrative center: Kyuden Isawa

• **Iyado:** governor: Shiba family; administrative center: Toshi no Omoidoso

• **Ryujō:** governor: Shiba family; administrative center: Mamoru Kyotai

• **Shijen:** governor: Asako family; administrative center: Aojiroi Oku Mura

HISTORY

The Shiba granted the castle lands to the Asako in the year 266, and the Asako Daimyo of the time immediately began fortifying it. The surrounding land was threatened by many bandits in the nearby woods as well as by the Crane to the south and the Dragon beyond the forest to the west. The castle began at the top of a hill commanding a spectacular view over the forest and to the Eastern shores. The main tower contains a shrine to the kami, built to replace a much older shrine that stood there before the construction of the castle proper; the land has always been considered sacred.

ORIGINS OF THE CASTLE

In the year 1160, Kyuden Asako dominates the little town of Sanji Mura, in Giryu province, near the eastern edge of the Isawa Woodlands. The Morning Glory Castle, sometimes called "White Phoenix Castle", is surrounded by the Isawa Woodlands and well placed to defend the Phoenix provinces against bandits, the Crane, and (most recently) the Dragon clan. But it wasn't always so.

Shiro Asako started as a set of fortified buildings on a flat hilltop during the late 6th century, during the reign of the Steel Chrysanthemum, Hantei XVI. The location allowed a clear view of territory all around, so if an enemy were to approach, he would come into view from some distance away. In 606, White Phoenix Castle first appeared as a small castle combining a mansion with a fort, and built by Isawa Akamatsu, a lord in charge of security for the province of Giryu.

In 839, Asako Hideyoshi was given command of this castle and worked out a basic layout for reconstruction, building a modern castle with a three-storied tower.

After the Battle of the Broken Daisho (827), Akaso Ieyasu set about giving lands to his loyal commanders, both to reward their loyalty and to guard against uprisings by any Crane or Lion who might seek to reignite their war and drag the Phoenix down with them. Ieyasu gave the area including Kyuden Asako to his son-in-law, Asako Goji. Goji was said to be a brave general, and he was given command of three provinces: Shiryu, Giryu, Osu, and the lost castle of Morikage Toshi. With more than 520,000 koku a year at his disposal and with the threat of banditry still high, Goji immediately set about building yet a third castle on the hilltop which had been so useful to the Asako ancestors.

CASTLE CONSTRUCTION

Castle construction in Phoenix lands is a practical matter that is often ignored until the hour of war is at hand. As a result, the Phoenix pride themselves on a system of speed construction called "waribushin", or the work-division system, which generates fortifications quickly. Teams of carpenters, laborers, supervisors, and shugenja work together, but the teams competed with each other. Some castles have been completed in as little as 45 days. In the case of the construction of Kyuden Asako, the work went quickly, though Goji was forced to commandeer stones from nearby temples and to extort donations from local citizens.

The daimyo wanted Kyuden Asako to stand as a bulwark against any invasion, a rallying point for the clan. The bulk of the castle was built very quickly, in just 10 years from 828 to 837, under the direction of Asako Igi, the magistrate appointed for castle construction. Asako Igi was a loyal retainer of the Daimyo, a battlefield veteran and well known for his talent in construction and recruitment. Stories tell that he marshaled an army to build the castle; in fact, few armies have ever been this big. His staff grew to be more than 450 people just organizing the effort, led by two Kaiu engineers, Kaiu Motsi and Kaiu Tamiko, as well as a Chief of Procurement, a Master of Recruits, and a Courtier for Legal and Spiritual Matters. In addition, tens of thousands of master carpenters, masons, accountants, and many more. Millions contributed to its construction; perhaps 50,000 as laborers, but 5,000,000 more provided food, lumber, tiles, plaster, precious art and carvings, gilded statuary, porcelains, straw mats, weavings, and so forth.

In practice, Kyuden Asako has very rarely been assaulted, has never burned down, and has served primarily as a gathering place for the Winter Court, as rulers of the Hantei line gathered here at least 30 times over the last 600 years. It is a place worthy of the

Emperor's attention: gleaming white walls, blue and green tile roofs curving as elegantly as a geisha's fleeting smile, turrets arranged against the sunset as carefully as ikebana. Despite its graceful appearance, it began its life as a purely military affair.

MILITARY ARCHITECTURE

Though Rokugan is studded with perhaps ten thousand "castles", most of these are really fortified manor houses with fences and moats, perhaps using natural features for defense but built as residences first, fortifications second; many lack stone walls entirely. Only a few dozen great castles aspire to the size and grandeur of Kyuden Asako.

During and after the Clan Wars, more of the great flat hill castles were built. However, the need to protect them from magical fire and to provide lines of sight for Phoenix shugenja to call down their power upon attackers meant that engineers had to consider more than just the ideal shape to support swords and bows. Most of the great castles constructed in the last 50 years (and there have only been a few) include protection against the magical elements, including wide moats, thick, fireproof walls and system that permits shugenja to move about freely to defend a castle from attackers on any side, while hampering and channeling an attacking army's movement. This is in stark contrast to the Crab method of defense, which relies on numbers, engineered static defenses, and defense in depth.

EXTERIOR

The castle's design and engineering are impressive, but so are the surrounding defensive works. These are laid out as a counterclockwise spiral design and outer walls are mazelike. Indeed during the day no one can enter the castle grounds without being watched at every turn and the grounds offer multiple layers of defense and are meant to confuse invaders. A hapless enemy, confused by the twisting and turning, is easy prey for marksmen in the towers and along the walls behind arrow-slits in the *yagura* (literally, "arrow-houses") and various small gates. At night, the odds favoring the thief or ninja improve, as the walls are illuminated by lantern-light, but this covers only a portion of the grounds.

The castle makes use of the surrounding terrain, by centering on a hill that rises about 180 feet above the surrounding forest; the castle's main tower stands another 100 feet above that. The core of the castle defenses is laid out in three counterclockwise *kuruwa* or spirals surrounding the main towers and hill. These spirals are created from the castle's arced stonewalls, tile-roofed towers, and deep moats.

If only the inside of *daitenshukaku* and three small towers are counted, the castle is almost 2,000 yards in circumference and covers more than 60 acres. However,

adding in the two outer rings shows that the entire castle complex is more than 45,000 yards in circumference and its total area is 540 acres, just slightly less than a square mile.

1. Uchi Kuruwa, or Central Spiral. The central keep's great tower is the *daitenshukaku*, and it includes everything required to mount a final defense. Surrounding it are the other elements of the high castle; the *honmaru* or central keep, the *ni-no-maru* or outworks of the castle and *san-no-maru*, or secondary outworks. The ruling officials have their offices here, and the daimyo's residence is here as well. This section is further described in the "Interior" section below.

2. Naka Kuruwa, or Second Round. This area is still somewhat elevated from the surrounding terrain, partially wooded and built with many fine small towers. These serve as fortifications during wartime, but are part of the residential quarters for high-ranking samurai and shugenja during peace. This is also the site of the Asako Library, with its associated dormitories, scriptoria, and classrooms.

3. The Soto Kuruwa, or Third Round. The outer works of the castle are many acres in size, and include barracks and row houses for the ordinary soldiers of the low and middle-class samurai, and novice shugenja. A few large temples, training grounds, and mess halls are also built in this ring. A threefold moat encircles this kuruwa.

4. Castle Walls. One of the keys to unravel the beauty of Morning Glory Castle is its deeply arced stonewalls. Indeed, the walls curve like a crescent moon; this makes them more resistant to both earthquakes and earth magic. The walls are built on a starting layer of *neishi* or footing stones, which were laid by the master masons to ensure the best foundation. The curves also prevent rainwater from collecting in the edges or drainage ducts.

The walls are 20 to 40 feet high and are of smoothly dressed stone. Since climbing movement is at half normal speed as a full-round action, climbing the 20-foot walls usually requires two successful Climb checks at DC 25 to get up (or down) and 40-foot walls can take three successful Climb checks. The climber is spotted by a guard with a Spot check and DC varying by the climber's Hide check; at night, the climber gains just a +2 circumstance bonus rather than the usual +5 or +10 for moonlight/starlight, as the castle is well-lit and many walls are plastered or whitewashed. Using a rope and grapple reduces the Climb DC to 5, but reduces the chance of Hiding successfully, giving any guard in the area a +10 circumstance bonus to spot the intrusion.

The walls curve were originally designed to prevent a swelling of the stonewalls by reducing the vertical pressure of *daitenshukaku* (main castle tower) with its gross weight of 5,700 tons standing on the stone walls, and at the same time, to survive a considerably heavy earthquake. Furthermore, such a curvature could prevent rainwater from remaining in the corners and nooks (vertical edges) and collecting in the drainage ducts.

Because of this foundation, the pillars of the various *tenshukaku* (castle towers) could be laid at regular distances and to the very limit of the stonewalls. The formation of this precise foundation conspicuously helped increase resistance against earthquakes. In construction of the *tenshukaku*, a master carpenter was assigned to each floor with each team. After the framing was completed, they commenced construction of the inner part all at once.

Also, the work proceeded with "Watari yagura" (passage turret) in parallel with construction of the *daitenshukaku*, and all were completed at almost the same time.

5. Moat. The castle has two moats, one enormous moat surrounding all three rings, fully 15 feet deep and 35 feet wide, fed by a small stream and stocked with carp, lotus, and water lilies. The inner moat is smaller and defends only a section; it is 10 feet deep and 20 feet wide, but does not circle the entire castle.

TYPICAL ASAKO SERVANT

Human Com1/CR1: Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 1d6+1+3; hp 7; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10 (touch 10, flat-footed 10); Att +0 melee (1d3 fist or 1d4 club); Honor: 1; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 7. Taint: 0.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Toughness

Possessions: simple clothes, sandals.

TYPICAL ASAKO SAMURAI

Human Sam1/CR1: Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 1d10+1; hp 7; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+5 lamellar, +1 Dex, touch 15, flat-footed 15); Att +3 melee (2d8+2 katana) or +2 ranged (1d8 long bow); Honor: 2; AL LN; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10. Taint: 0.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Void Use, Way of the Phoenix

Possessions: katana, wakizashi, yumi (long bow), lamellar armor.

TYPICAL ASAKO HENSHIN APPRENTICE

Human Mnk3/CR3: Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 3d8; hp 21; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 11 (touch 12, flat-footed 10); Att: +3 melee (1d6+1 unarmed) or 1d6 (quarterstaff); Honor: 2; AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12. Taint: 0.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Balance +1, Climb+1, Diplomacy +3, Knowledge (Shintao) +2, Knowledge (Elements/Arcane) +3, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Search +4, Sense Motive +3, Tea Ceremony +2, Deflect Arrows, Evasion, Immortal Spirit, Still Mind, Stunning Attack, Unarmed Strike, Void Use

Possessions: bo staff, orange robes, sandals, begging bowl, brush and inkstone.

TYPICAL ASAKO SHUGENJA

Human Shu4/CR4: Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 4d6; hp 17; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex, touch 11, flat-footed 10); SQ Class Skill - Concentration, Element Focus (Air), Sense Elements; Honor: 2; Att +3 melee or ranged (1d4+1 tanto); Honor: 0; AL LN; SV Fort +3 [+1+2], Ref +1, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 9. Taint: 0.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami), Alchemy +3 [+1+2], Concentration +8 [+6+2], Diplomacy +2 [+3-1], Heal +4 [+4], Knowledge (Arcana) +5 [+3+2], Knowledge (Etiquette) +4 [+2+2], Knowledge (Fortunes) +9 [+7+2], Knowledge (Shintao) +5 [+3+2], Knowledge (History) +3 [+1+2], Scry +9 [+7+2], Spellcraft +4 [+2+2]; Superior Elemental Focus, Void Use, Depths of the Void

Skills= 4x6 at 1st plus 6x3 for 3 levels = 42

+1+6+3+4+3+2+7+3+1+7+2=39

Feats = 2 + 1 = 3

Possessions: Silk robes, tanto.

Spells Per Day: 6/6/3

Spells Known (s+4+3/s+3+1/s+2+0): Inori: *call fire, commune with elements, daze, detect magic, flare, XX, light, read magic*; 1st *burning hands, expeditious retreat, XX, obscuring mist, sleep*; 2nd *know the shadow, XX, way of fire (cat's grace).*

castle includes the *tenshu* or central towers, the *honmaru* or central keep, the *ni-no-maru* or outworks, and *san-no-maru*, or secondary outworks.

Asako Toshi lives here, as does his younger sister, dozens of ruling officials, and the military staff that defend the castle.

1. Haunted Well. The castle's water supply comes from four deep wells. One of them well is haunted by an ubume or mourning spirit, named Okiku. Her story is told in the sidebar. It only attacks those who disturb it and laying the spirit to rest is a side trek away from the main course of the adventure.

Okiku, a Ubume (1): CR 4; Medium-size undead (incorporeal); HD 4d12; hp 27; Init +2 (Dex); Spd fly 30 ft.; AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 deflection); Atk incorporeal touch +4 melee (1d6 temporary Wisdom); SA fear, Wisdom drain; SQ undead, incorporeal, immortality; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4; Str -, Dex 15, Con -, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Hide +8, Intimidate +9, Listen +8, Search +6, Sense Motive +6, Spot +8; Alertness, Weapon Finesse (incorporeal touch).

Special Qualities and Attacks: **Fear (Su):** When angered, Okiku can terrify those who see her. Viewers must make a Will save (DC 18) or cower for 1d4 rounds. Cowering characters are frozen, cannot take actions, lose all Dexterity bonuses, and attacks gain a +2 bonus. Those who save are immune to the effect for 24 hours. **Immortality (Ex):** Okiku is restored to existence 1d6 weeks after being destroyed unless a new dish (of at least 5,000 gp value) is given to the Asako daimyo. **Incorporeal (Ex):** Can be harmed only by other corporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, or magic, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. Can pass through solid objects at will, and its own attacks ignore armor. Always moves silently. **Undead:** Immune to mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage. **Wisdom Damage (Su):** Okiku's touch deal s1d6 temporary Wisdom damage to a living foe. A creature reduced to 0 Wisdom is incapacitated by nightmares, which haunt that character's dreams even after he recovers. If a character takes more than 6 Wisdom damage in a single encounter, he gains a permanent white streak in his hair.

THE STORY OF THE HAUNTED WELL

A maidservant named Okiku once served the master of the Asako and for many years she was a loyal servant. One day as she made her rounds from kitchen to dining hall, she overheard a group of samurai, led by Aoyama, the rikugunshokan or general, plotting to kill the daimyo and lord of the castle.

TENSHU, THE HIGH CASTLE

The buildings of the central castle stand on the highest ground and command the best views of the surrounding outworks, forests, and roads. They are the final line of defense for Kyuden Asako and the home of the most important samurai, shugenja, and courtiers. The high

Okiku was terrified, but she hurried to inform her lover, a young samurai who was faithful to his lord. He informed the Daimyo of the plot and saved his life, but the plot was foiled without directly implicating Aoyama; there were not enough samurai witnesses to support a charge against the general. Grateful, the lord thanked Okiku, and the murderous coup was avoided. However, the chief retainer Aoyama was not killed merely demoted. For months he schemed, hoping for vengeance against Okiku. But to attack her directly was impossible, so in the end he found another way. Okiku was the servant responsible for storing and cleaning, and serving from the ten antique treasure dishes of the Asako daimyo, fine porcelain dishes painted by great Asahina artisans. General Aoyama had one of them stolen and Okiku fled when she discovered that one of them was gone. Her flight condemned her in the eyes of others, but much worse, she was caught by Aoyama's cronies, tortured to death, and her body was thrown into one of the castle wells, fouling it and making it unfit to drink from. His vengeance was achieved or so it seemed.

Okiku's spirit was strong. People walking near the well could hear her counting every night: "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine..." After counting, an echoing sob echoed from the well. No one ever heard her say "Ten," but her body was soon found, and Aoyama convicted of her murder. The general's death this time was assured, for he had created a vengeful spirit by his criminal acts.

Even now, the ghost sometimes can heard counting the plates and looking for the missing one. A small shrine has been built to honor Okiku near the well and she is considered a heroine of the Asako, especially among the servants and women, who still honor her memory. Most of the Asako think of her a brave woman who sacrificed her life for her lord, and for this reason her spirit has never been driven from the castle. Many of the servants throw an occasional offering into Okiku's well.

2. Kesho Tower. Located outside the very inner region, this tower has traditionally belonged to the wife of the Asako daimyo, and many happy honeymoons and weddings have also been celebrated here. Since Toshi is an unmarried monk, the tower belongs to his sister, Asako Megumi, her husband - the minister of ceremonies Asako Munoto, as well as their six children, and her ladies-in-waiting. A long corridor connects the many rooms of the women of the castle, and has been nicknamed the "cosmetic tower". The sound of biwas playing, giggling of the young girls, and even the quiet rustle of silk robes being tailored are all part of this tower's different style. All the rooms face the inner part of the complex, however.

3. Scholar's Gardens. These gardens are said to mimic those that Shiba once gave to Lady Asako, rebuilt from ancient drawings and tales. Certainly they are very beautiful, varying from lovingly tended bonsai along a steep slope and a grove of golden bamboo that arches more than 50 feet over a shaded path. A small stream meanders through the center of the garden, feeding two small pools.

4. Tower of the Henshin. This tower is the home of the mystical school of the Asako family. The upper floors are often left open for the students to gaze upon the surrounding lands, but the tower is also home to some dark secrets.

Racks of 10 spears and 8 bows cover the walls within the tower from floor to ceiling, with quivers of arrows near by hand but tied to ropes that allow them to be lowered down as needed.

The tower is divided into two wings, east and west, each of which has a ground floor, two upper floors, and an observatory wing. The lower floor is a maze of passages and small monks' cells. The connecting corridor between the two sides is also a spacious corridor, lined with high, red-lacquered pillars decorated with gilded carvings and supporting rows upon rows of scrolls and paper records. The ceiling is painted to resemble dragons frolicking among clouds, with rain clouds appearing in the West and the sun in the East end of the hall. The floor boards are a dark black, polished to a high gloss by generations of henshin and archivists. All visitors here must wear felt shoes, to polish the floor and reduce noise. The hall is heated by carefully-tended braziers.

The audience rooms of the upper stories are likewise heated, but also lined with ornate brocades to keep out the wind. Asako Akahito's chambers are furnished with a gilded couch and a thick patterned carpet with a feather pattern.

The tower's secret is in its foundation, in the chambers called the Well of Enlightenment. This well also connects to several secret chambers, such as the rooms of Asako Oyo. Oyo is a famous henshin, once the librarian responsible for the entire academy but now a victim of enlightened madness. After a mysterious disappearance from the castle, he was brought home to the Tower of the Henshin during the Winter Court of the year 1126, during the Clan Wars. His rescuer was none other than Kuni Yori, the Crab necromancer whose magics were later unmasked as full of maho and corruption.

Oyo has lived here ever since that Winter Court, cared for carefully for 34 years without aging a day. He is both loved and feared, spouting gibberish and prophecy in a mix that no one can untangle. He has not aged a day since his arrival.

5. Hakakiri Maru, or Execution Ground. This wide-open space features a small building to hold the condemned as well as a covered platform for the daimyo and his officials to view the administration of their justice. This platform is decorated with carvings of crouching dragons and leering devils; above the center is a Phoenix rising from the flames.

The castle priests use the courtyard's small well to ritually purify the grounds after each execution.

6. Stables. The Asako are not one of the great cavalry clans, but they keep horses for hunting, for messengers and couriers, and for the samurai cavalry that is the Asako Toshi's honor guard. The stables can hold 200 horses, though usually there are only half that many.

7. Archery Grounds. During daylight hours, fifty or more samurai are practicing either mounted or standing archery here. At night it is a deserted space.

8. Samurai Barracks. The barracks of the castle are enormous, and fill most of the third ring. They include almost 20 buildings, each home to a legion of 200 samurai.

The best-known samurai command the daimyo's garrison, including a number of famous shireiXXXX (see RANKS ON Rokugan PAGE 119) who have led expeditions against the Dragon Clan. The taisho include Master of Horse Asako Yoringa (see page 81), who commands 400 cavalry, the highest-ranking samurai. Master of Archers Asako Junko (Female Sam8) commands 600 archers and crossbowmen, and drills them constantly. Master of Spearmen Shiba Robun (Male Sam 5) commands 2,800 footmen, including spearmen, shield-bearers, and swordsmen.

The Master of Engineers Shiba Tahei (Male Sam 2/Expert 6), has a crew of 100 engineers and masons at his disposal here as well.

The *kenin* (or "housemen") are samurai who do not live the barracks. Most of them live in the Daitenshukaku.

9. Shugenja Quarters. More than 400 shugenja of the Earthquake Legion are quartered here. In theory, they are commanded by Asako Unkei, who is both the daimyo's champion and an Elemental Legionnaire. In practice the Legion gets most of their orders from Master of Shugenja Isawa Mio (Female Shu 10), a woman whose large body conceals an even larger talent for magic.

10. Armory. Hundreds of yumi, yari, and tens of thousands of arrows are stored here, along with suits of lamellar armor, leather armor, and simple iron helmets for

peasant levies. No suits of great armor or katana are stored here; those are always part of the richer samurai's personal chambers. The armory is always guarded by ten samurai (Sam1) and the gunso Asako Yoshitake (Male Sam 5).

11. Stables. Under blue tile roofs, these stables have room for more than 500 horses, plus sleeping quarters for 70 grooms, trainers, leatherworkers, and Eta (who clean the stables).

12. Heavenly Voice Temple and Morning Blessing Temple. The five-storied pagoda of Heavenly Voice Temple was built at the same time as the first circle of the castle itself, in the year 606. The three-storied pagoda of Morning Blessing Temple was built 100 years later, and is sometimes referred to as the "Feathered Temple" for the style of its roof tiles and eaves. Both are masterpieces of wooden building and radiant with sublime beauty.

The bells of Morning Blessing Temple are especially famous, and are home to a bell spirit named I-Chi. She is very shy and rarely shows herself to any but the gentlest and quietest monks or shugenja. However, with a successful Diplomacy roll I-Chi can be convinced to sound her pure sound to drive kansen out of possessed bodies. The more powerful and prominent the possessed person is, the less like that I-Chi can be convinced to help them; her extreme shyness often makes her flee from conversations or simply clam up.

I-Chi, bell spirit (1): CR 3; Small outsider (good, lawful); HD 2d10+4; hp 16; Init +6 (Dex, Imp. Init.); Spd 40 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +4 natural, +1 size), flat-footed 15, touch 13; Atk staff +4 melee (1d6+1); SA fireworks, spell-like abilities, pure sound; SQ damage reduction 15/+1, immune to sonic attacks, alternate form; AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Heal +6, Hide +8, Perform (bells, dance) +6, Sense Motive +6, Spot +6, Tumble +6; Improved Initiative.

Special Qualities and Attacks: **Celestial Qualities (Ex):** Aura of menace (DC 15), magic circle against evil, electricity and petrification immunity, teleport, tongues, +4 save against poison; **Sonic Immunity (Ex):** Bell spirits are immune to all forms of sonic attack. **Pure Sound (Ex):** The pure tones of a bell spirit drive away oni, spirits, and undead aligned against the spirit. The bell spirit acts as a cleric for this purpose, destroying or rebuking these creatures as a cleric of level equivalent to 8 HD (and with normal Charisma bonus). **Spell-Like Abilities:** *Aid, detect evil, continual flame, and improved invisibility* (self only), as cast by a 5th level sorcerer, at will. A bell spirit can summon fireworks, as a pyrotechnics spell, six times per day.

TENSHUKAKU

The *tenshukaku* or castle towers are both defensive positions and political statements of one's status within the castle. The PCs are unlikely to be housed in one of the *tenshukaku* unless they are magistrates or members of the Asako family, or otherwise notable (famous courtiers, for example, can get such a room as a Yellow favor).

The towers are typically three stories tall and made of wood slathered with heavy plaster or mortar on the outside walls, all built on top of a 20 foot stone foundation wall. Their tiles and interiors are decorated with the Asako colors (orange and Yellow) furnished with both weapons and arrow slits for defense (90% cover, +Yellow to Armor Class).

The *tenshukaku* is separated from the rest of the castle

12. Outer Tenshu, or Towers. Morning Glory Castle has more than 80 watchtowers. Most of them stand alone, without connections to *yagura* or passage turrets (like area 13). They are meant as rallying points independent of the surrounding fortifications; most command an overlook or courtyard, giving them a good field of fire and a role as observation points.

The *tenshu* are also clustered heavily near the gates, because castle gates are always the weakest points and vulnerable to enemy attack. Above all, three *Komon* (a kind of secret path to hide a passageway) were set up in three places.

13. Watari Yagura, or Passage Turret. This long, low passage turret links the *daitenshukaku* (area 14) with the three other small towers.

14. Daitenshukaku, Main Castle Tower. The castle interior consists of four castle towers, the *Daitenshukaku*, or main castle tower, and three *Shotenshukaku*, or small castle towers. The other *tenshukaku* or castle towers are the retreats or keeps of the fortification, and also include its tallest and largest chambers. When Winter Courts meet here, the infighting for favorable rooms in the *tenshukaku* among the courtiers is always fierce.

Daimyo Asako Toshi (see page 88), his sister, two younger sons, three daughters, and a few trusted courtiers all live in *Daitenshukaku*. In the time of the Mantis invasions around Yellow, the castle was both a command tower and the final line of defense.

The central tower has five levels plus a basement, built around two large pillars made of single blocks of wood. The rooms are only furnished with *tatami* and *fusuma* (sliding doors) in the living quarters on the 2nd and 5th floor; the rest have plain wooden floors. The top floor is an observatory as well as living quarters.

The bottom floor and 3rd floors are warehouses for arms and provisions. Hidden spaces on the 3rd floor are used for secret storage and for ambushing attackers), and a platform on the 4th floor runs along the outer perimeter under the windows to give defenders a firing platform. The 3rd floor is also an armory separate from the main castle armory, containing magical weapons, great armor, and other valuables of the daimyo and his closest retainers.

Three foot diameter pillars in the east and west are the center of the structure of the *daitenshukaku*. Each of these two pillars is 90 feet high and runs from the basement to under the top floor.

15. Shotenshukaku, Small Castle Towers. The smaller *tenshukaku* are home for the other officials of the province, such as the Master of Horse, the Chief Librarian of the Henshin, and the Master of Archers. These towers are also warehouses of arms, armor, and provisions. Each is three stories tall, and they have good arcs of fire on the *daitenshukaku*.

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