



WAY OF THE THIEF



ORIENTAL ADVENTURES

"THIS IS A LAND OF UNDENIABLE HONOR, UNSHAKABLE DUTY, AND UNFLINCHING RESOLVE. IT IS A LAND OF HEROES, A LAND OF VIRTUE, A LAND OF NOBILITY. A MAN COULD MAKE QUITE A BIT OF PROFIT IN A LAND SUCH AS THIS."

— GAREN HAWTHORNE

Rokugan is a land of law and order, where samurai enforce the Emperor's will with strength of arms and by example. Paragons of bushido, samurai are expected to stand for all that is honorable and virtuous in the world. But not everyone can live up to this example, and not all who dwell within the Empire respect the Emperor's laws.

This book explores another side of Rokugan, the criminal underworld that lurks just beneath the surface of this civilized Empire. In the shadows, smugglers ply their trade, shadow conspiracies make plans, and criminal masterminds spin webs of power that ensnare mighty samurai. The tools needed to lure these criminal organizations to a campaign is presented here, all that a party needs to fight these shadow societies – or even join them.

Within *The Way of Thief* you will find the following:

- New background information for the Kolat as well as other criminal organizations, including smuggling, bandit, and pirate groups found throughout the Empire.
- New setting information and NPCs for centers of criminal activity such as the City of Lies and the City of the Rich Frog.
- Helpful ideas for beginning a new campaign for both magistrates who fight the criminals described in this book and parties who wish to begin a career as criminal masterminds.
- New rules for Doji, Kitsuki, and Shinjo magistrate characters.

This book is a dual-system supplement for the *Legend of the Five Rings Role-Playing Game™*, *Second Edition™*, and *Rokugan™*, the d20 Companion for *Legend of the Five Rings*. Players and GMs may also find it useful as a source of interesting new options for any d20 System campaign.

Game Masters running the *Second Edition L5R RPG* will need a copy of the *Legend of the Five Rings Game Master's Guide™* and the *Player's Guide™*. Players need only the *Player's Guide™*.

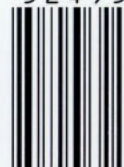
Dungeon Masters running d20 System games will need a copy of the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Handbook™*, *Oriental Adventures™*, and *Rokugan*. Players will need only a *Player's Handbook™*.



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WAY OF THIEVES

Bayushi Adachi strode purposefully through the streets of the City of Lies. Peasants and eta fell to their knees as she passed, recognizing her armor and swords as the symbols of a samurai. She ignored their fawning obeisance, continuing on her way with a grim expression. As she approached a particular house the two peasant guards snapped to attention at the sight of her. One quickly scurried inside while the other moved forth to bow deeply, blocking her path in a subtle effort to delay her momentarily.

"My humblest greetings, Bayushi-sama," the man said as she drew nearer. "I extend my master's warmest regards from the House of the Gilded Cricket."

Adachi fixed her eyes upon the man and removed her katana from its obi, still in its saya. She drew the blade one inch from the sheath. The peasant looked up in terror at the sound of withdrawing steel and darted out of her way. She returned the sword to its saya and threw open the door with a sneer.

The smell of smoke, rice wine, and sweat greeted her from within the darkened sake house. She nearly choked at the revolting combination but pushed her disgust aside, merely adding it to the many reasons she was displeased to be in such a place. She quickly strode through the main room, drawing many dazed and bewildered looks from the inebriated customers. A few of the more clear-minded ones waited until she passed, then carefully finished their drinks and departed. Adachi had not been in Ryoko Owari long, but already she was a recognized force within the city. They called her the White Mask, named so both for the white face paint she favored over a Scorpion's traditional mask and for her apparent unwillingness to indulge in the corruption and vice that consumed the rest of the city.

To be an honest magistrate in the City of Lies, especially an honest Scorpion magistrate while the city was under Unicorn Clan rule, was not an easy life. In most cases it was a short one, yet Adachi had prospered in her role. In the year since her arrival she had not only survived, but brought two different illegal smuggling cartels to their knees. The local crime syndicates had attempted to remove her on three occasions. Each time they had failed, and the assassins had been publicly executed over the Bay of Drowned Honor by Adachi herself. The criminal underworld of the city whispered that she could not be killed.

These events were well known to Ide Haranobu, master of the House of the Gilded Cricket. A chunk of fish fell from the fat merchant's chopsticks as she entered the room. The old man frowned and gently pushed aside the small tray containing his dinner.

"Magistrate Adachi-sama," he said with a forced smile. "How might I assist you?"

"Send your guards away," she said, not bothering to turn and look at the two budoka that had quietly filed into the room behind her.

Haranobu frowned, hesitating.

"I am a servant of the Emperor," Adachi pressed, seating herself primly on the floor opposite Haranobu's low table. "Do you not feel safe in the presence of one whom Toturi has chosen?" Her eyes narrowed, making it clear that a wrong answer would be taken as a dire insult.

Haranobu quickly waved his guards away. They closed the chamber door as they departed. The merchant smoothed his long white beard over his chest and watched Adachi nervously. "How can I assist you, Adachi-sama?" he said in careful tones.

"I came to inquire as to your recent business dealings," she replied. "Most specifically regarding the Moment's Edge fireman gang."

"I have no dealings with the Moment's Edge," Haranobu replied, straightening in his seat. "They are thugs, killers, smugglers. An Ide does not consort with such garbage."

"Now, now, Haranobu," Adachi said with a light chuckle. "I am no fool. I know that you are paying the Moment's Edge a share of the profits you make here. I know that you allow them to use the private rooms without charge, to conduct meetings with their clientele."

Haranobu shook his head quickly. "I have done nothing illegal," he said. "I am not the only one who pays tribute to those thugs. A businessman does what he must to survive in the City of Lies."

"And it seems you are doing very well here, all things considered," Adachi said, tracing one hand over the rich Mekhem carpet that covered the floor. "I suppose they must not be cutting into your profits so deeply."

"I do very well, all things considered," the man said.

"But how much more poorly would you do," Adachi replied, "if the Moment's Edge thought that you were supplying me with information about their business here?" She looked at him with a placid, innocent expression.

"What?" Haranobu replied, face paling. "But how could I help you if I know nothing?"

"Of course," Adachi replied, pursing her lips as she nodded thoughtfully. "The firemen gangs are generally known to be rational, reasonable people. If my magistrates visit your house regularly, I am certain they will understand and hold you in no suspicion."

Haranobu scowled. "They will kill me," he said.

"Oh?" Adachi said, feigning astonishment. "Then perhaps I could be encouraged to leave things as they are. Of course I would require some proof that your business is not unduly threatened by your... donations to the Moment's Edge gang. Perhaps my own share of your business here?"

Haranobu's mouth fell open in astonishment. "You would blackmail me, Adachi-sama?"

"You are a servant of the Emperor, thus all you own belongs to him," Adachi replied. "I simply choose to collect what is his on his behalf. Consider it your punishment for consorting with criminals."

"This is an outrage," Haranobu replied. "Why me? By all accounts you are a just and honest magistrate, Adachi-sama."

"And if you value your life, you will see to it that reputation endures," Adachi answered. "As the others do. Is that understood?"

Haranobu did not reply for a moment, too overwhelmed to comprehend what had occurred. "Yes, Adachi-sama," he said at last. "I understand."

"Very well," she replied, rising to her feet again. "Then I shall depart before my presence generates too much suspicion among your firemen friends. I shall send an agent to make arrangements. Do not worry, Haranobu-san, my demands are not strenuous. I am, however, very strict that payments be made on time. It is good to have the law on your side, no?"

"Of... of course," he replied.

Bayushi Adachi turned and left the House of the Gilded Cricket, an enigmatic smile on her white painted face. The City of Lies belonged to the Scorpion Clan once. One day, it would be theirs again. The funds Haranobu and so many other Unicorn merchants paid her were funneled toward outfitting Scorpion troops that would, if diplomatic avenues failed, take the city back by force. She found the irony greatly amusing. Her reputation was unchallenged; the city saw her as a pinnacle of duty and honor.

They were right. Sometimes they merely forgot that she was a Scorpion.

THE DARKER SIDE OF HONOR

Legend of the Five Rings is a game built around the concepts of honor and bushido. Player characters are generally expected to be samurai, servants of the Emperor for whom duty is their foremost concern. Where does a book such as *Way of the Thief* fit into such a setting? The answer is simple. For every light there is a shadow, and for every shining example a samurai sets there are those who cleave to the opposite path, those who twist the tenets of tradition to reap personal gain, those who turn their back on bushido for the sake of profit. *Way of the Thief* serves a dual purpose in this regard, a sourcebook on Rokugani criminal organizations and a guide to creating villainous player characters. Whereas books like *Way of the Shadowlands* and *Secrets of the Shadowlands* accurately depict those who have sworn fealty to supernatural evil, this book concentrates more on the mundane sort of villainy — bandit gangs, clandestine organizations, and criminal syndicates.

PLAYING THE BAD GUYS

Playing a group of criminal characters presents numerous problems, but can be quite interesting if approached carefully. Some players may be uncomfortable with the idea of playing an “evil” character, so such an undertaking should always be a unanimous decision on the part of the GM and all players involved. In addition, such a campaign should only be attempted with a group of mature and intelligent players, who realize that, obviously, the actions their characters undertake are not intended to be carried into their real life.

If the GM and players agree to attempt a party of criminals, the first problem a villainous party presents is a rather obvious question — if all of the player characters are underhanded, untrustworthy criminals, why are they working together? Fortunately, the answer to this question is simple in a setting such as Rokugan. Simply make certain that all player characters are members of the same criminal organization. The Empire is a place steeped in loyalty, duty, and tradition. Ironically, crime is no exception to this rule. Though many of the criminal organizations in Rokugan scoff at Imperial Law, they still hold strong ties of loyalty to one another and obey strict rules within their illegal practices.

Members of the same gang, while untrustworthy and dangerous in the extreme to those outside their order, will generally work together with the best interests of their masters in mind. This is especially true for well-organized groups such as the Kolat. This is not to say that a party of villains will be without infighting or competition; such practices are common. However, when the safety of the organization is threatened most criminal player characters can be expected to work together toward a common end. After all, if they fail, two possible fates await them — the Empire's justice and punishment at the hands of their masters. Both fates are likely to be final; Imperial Magistrates are not known for their mercy and one does not become a leader of the

criminal underworld in Rokugan without a certain propensity for brutality.

When beginning a villainous campaign, the activities the player characters will be expected to perform should be laid out well beforehand. Are the characters simply dishonorable samurai? Bandits? Kolat agents? Entrepreneurs seeking to establish a new gang and claim their share of the Empire's underworld? There are many sorts of criminals in Rokugan, and some players may be less comfortable playing some than others. One player, for example may have no problem what-so-ever playing a corrupt magistrate who uses his position for personal gain, but may shy away at playing a Kolat agent bent on the eventual downfall of the samurai caste system. In a normal *Legend of the Five Rings* party, even characters of vastly different backgrounds and conflicting goals can be encouraged to work together via their mutual duty to the Emperor. In a criminal party, even this is not a given. The GM must be extra careful to find some means by which to link the characters together so the players have a reason to participate in adventures together.

Ultimately the largest problem for a villainous party is the risk of punishment. Rokugani law is not particularly forgiving, and serious crimes are punished severely (specific punishments are described in detail later in this chapter). While the risk of death is always a concern in a land as violent in Rokugan, it is even more prevalent in a criminal campaign. Normally, the player characters are in service of their lord, and thus in turn receive the protection of their clan and the Emperor. A criminal has voluntarily denied himself such protection, and can rely only on his masters, his brethren, and himself.

Rokugani's strict attitude toward crime can create several problems. If the party is too blatant in their activity and swift punishment is not forthcoming, it may ruin the players' suspension of disbelief and make the setting seem less genuine. On the other hand, if the party's every exploit leads to a character's capture and execution the players may begin to feel useless and frustrated. This demands a delicate balance from the GM. The special considerations a criminal campaign demands can be extremely demanding, but the intrigue, danger, and sense of forbidden adventure such a campaign offers can be very rewarding if done well.

HONOR AND GOLD

Rokugan is a land steeped in the precepts of honor and nobility. Though many samurai can trace their bloodline to the divine Kami, even samurai are only human. Vice and corruption find their way into the heart of every clan, though some do a better job of concealing their less honorable kin than others.

While it is true that samurai, and to a lesser extent even peasants, are provided with whatever they require to fulfill their duties this does not prevent criminal activity from being commonplace. What an individual's lord feels he requires and what that same individual desires are not always the same. Greed and ambition can take root in the heart of even the noblest samurai. Peasants, even those who are well provided for, may tire of a life in the shadow of wealthy samurai and aspire to something greater. With no legitimate avenue to fulfill their desires, a life of crime is inevitable.

A desire for upward mobility is the most frequent motiva-



tion for criminal activity in Rokugan. Simply put, crime is a matter of power; wealth is merely a means to obtaining that power. In such a strict social system, promotions are very rare. A simple samurai might never become a daimyo through his own legitimate actions, especially during times of peace. Those whose talents lie in trades generally considered illegal or dishonorable might gather influence normally denied to them by amassing wealth. Though samurai are expected to spurn monetary wealth, money provides an advantage that cannot be denied. Koku can provide finer weapons, swifter steeds, and foreign luxuries. It is, in fact, the ease with which dishonorable men can use wealth to control the honorable that causes so many samurai to spurn koku — though its value is undeniable.

Lower ranking criminals may simply seek wealth for its own sake, stealing to feed themselves or their families, but any who survive long in Rokugan's criminal underworld soon realize that information is a far more valuable commodity. The Empire places a great deal of value on face, the way one is seen by others in society. Secrets become powerful tools, as threatening the way an individual is seen by his brethren effectively grants control over that person. With wealth, a dishonest man's loyalty might be bought, but what worth is a dishonest man's loyalty? All men have secrets — find out an honest man's weakness and he will do anything to conceal it from his enemies. It is for this reason that all criminal organizations of respectable size readily maintain a network of spies and informants who indulge in the exchange of information. All secrets are valuable, and all have their price.

As the samurai caste system represents ultimate power in the Empire, many criminal gangs emulate the

samurai in some manner. More than one criminal mastermind has noted the irony that a warrior, skilled at slaying dozens of enemies on the battlefield for a cause he might not understand is hailed as a hero while a common thug who kills a merchant to steal the money he needs to feed his family is branded a murderer. This rationalization falls apart quickly when one considers that the samurai's enemies were warriors, prepared for battle. To the darker half of the Empire's society this difference means little to the dead. Criminals view themselves as warriors of a sort, and Rokugan is a land that celebrates its warriors.

In areas where the law is not heavily enforced, such as Ryoko Owari, criminals might even be celebrated as heroes. Members of recognized criminal gangs flaunt their power and relish the fear and respect they generate. Much like a samurai, these gangs often become quite protective of those they prey upon. Should someone outside their organization begin committing crimes in the area, retribution will be swift and deadly. While this serves to ward off unwanted attention from the law that might be generated by incompetent competitors, it is also a twisted reflection of the samurai social contract. Those who pay the gangs for protection or offer tribute in the form of stolen goods are, in turn, protected by those gangs.

Many peasants, already conditioned to obey powerful samurai, have little difficulty transferring this unquestioning loyalty to local crimelords. In some areas this strange loyalty is not so surprising. A local crimelord might be no less brutal than the local samurai, and perhaps is a more visible member of the community than a distant daimyo. In many cases these crimelords do more to protect the populace from bandits and other threats. A peasant forced to pay protection money has no illusions what will happen to him should he miss a payment, but so long as he makes his payments he is actually protected.

Gangs that operate in such a manner place an honest magistrate in a peculiar position. Should a magistrate seek to topple a well-established crimelord he will face opposition not only from the criminals who serve him but from honest members of the local community as well. Even if a the crimelord is toppled and his organization punished, what happens now that his agents are no longer protecting the people from less organized, predictable crimes? The sudden explosion of criminal activity as lesser criminals seek to fill the power vacuum may make the magistrate appear incompetent.

Because of this, some seasoned magistrates might come to accept a well established gang as a lesser evil and do little to remove them so long as they keep their illegal activities discreet and do not bring excessive harm to innocent members of the community. These gangs might also provide useful information or offer their thugs as temporary deputies to remove a competitor, creating a strange sort of partnership between the local police and organized crime. Of course many magistrates would refuse to make such a dishonorable compromise, seeing it as the first step to inevitable corruption. In large cities, however, it is almost inevitable to find at least a handful of magistrates who have secretly allied themselves with a local crimelord. In the seedier cities of the Empire, this corruption might grow to the extent that the local police are nothing more than another gang feeding on the community.

OFFICERS OF THE LAW

Almost as long as there has been an Empire there have been those who stand to enforce the Emperor's laws. For those seeking to begin a criminal campaign, these individuals will likely be the party's main antagonists. For more a party of magistrate characters, this section should help illustrate the powers and responsibilities of such characters in greater detail.

PEASANT ENFORCERS

The lowest ranking law enforcement officials in Rokugan come from peasant backgrounds. The officers are known as doshin, while their deputies are referred to as budoka. These officers often have other professions as well, working as farmers or craftsmen when their services as lawmen are not required. In larger villages, doshin and budoka are sufficiently busy that they have no other profession but work full time maintaining the peace, usually in the service of a magistrate. The power these peasant lawmen have is very limited, usually extending only to their home village and perhaps a small surrounding area. Doshin are selected by the local governing samurai or magistrate. Some reliable peasant families have a tradition of serving their samurai lords as doshin, though the office is not necessarily inherited. Budoka are selected by the doshin, and while most have some martial training some are simply peasants pressed into service on demand.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Their authority extends only toward crimes committed by peasants and eta. It is their duty to resolve crimes committed by the lower classes so that samurai officials need not waste their time dealing with such trivial matters.

CIVIL DISTURBANCES

Peasant enforcers deal with minor crimes involving the peasant and eta classes. Drunken brawls, theft, assault, and other such minor concerns fall within their purview. More serious matters, including murder, riots, kidnapping, or extortion must be brought to the attention of samurai officials. Any crime that involves a samurai likewise falls within a magistrate's jurisdiction, including territory disputes (as all land belongs to the Emperor first) or theft of property a peasant has crafted to be used by samurai.

PATROLS

It is usually the duty of peasant officers to keep a lookout for crimes as they transpire, and bring them to swift resolution if possible. If a crime occurs that involves a samurai, it is the peasant officer's duty to fetch a magistrate to resolve the issue as swiftly as possible.

CLAN MAGISTRATES

Clan magistrates are the most common law enforcement official, and the sort that criminal organizations deal with the most frequently. Magistrates are always samurai, granted their office by a family daimyo or Clan Champion. The office of magistrate is often a legacy, granted to the sons and daughters of those who have proven themselves, though it is just frequently offered to other samurai who prove their talent and ability. Clan magistrates always have a clearly defined area under their jurisdiction, varying from the size of a village to a province. A clan magistrate technically has power to enforce the law anywhere within his clan's boundaries. A magistrate operating in the territory of another magistrate without informing the local officials of his presence will be considered rude as well as derelict in his duties protecting his own territory. Such an individual will be stripped of his position if such behavior continues.

RESPONSIBILITIES

A clan magistrate's responsibilities are greater in scope than a mere peasant enforcer. They are not only expected to arbitrate in legal disputes involving samurai, but also deal with more serious crimes than their peasant brethren.

ILLEGAL TRAVEL

Clan magistrates are empowered to police their area for anyone traveling without legitimate travel papers. In times of peace, such individuals will be escorted to the border or turned over to an Emerald Magistrate. In times of war, they might be questioned before being escorted to the border or even summarily executed if a member of an enemy clan.

LOCAL CRIMES

A clan magistrate investigates serious crimes such as murder or kidnapping, as well as minor crimes that involve samurai. If a clan magistrate suspects that a crime has been committed by a samurai from another clan, or has been perpetrated by against a member of another clan within his jurisdiction, it is his responsibility to bring the matter to the attention of an Emerald Magistrate.

PATROLS

Clan magistrates, much like their peasant counterparts, often patrol the area under their jurisdiction for any random crimes that may occur.

PROPERTY DISPUTES

While all property technically belongs to the Emperor, often disputes arise regarding whose responsibility it is to maintain that property. It is a clan magistrate's duty to arbitrate on such matters, whether they regard land, livestock, or personal possessions.

EMERALD MAGISTRATES

Emerald Magistrates are the supreme law enforcement officers of the land, and though they are celebrated in legend

JADE MAGISTRATES

Jade Magistrates are actually a special type of Emerald Magistrate, selected from within the ranks of Emerald Magistrates after proving themselves reliable and knowledgeable. All Jade Magistrates are either shugenja or (rarely) other individuals with a great deal of knowledge in the areas of magical lore and blood magic. Jade Magistrates deal specifically with crimes of a magical nature, including the practice of maho. While these crimes also fall under the purview of Emerald Magistrates, Jade Magistrates are highly specialized individuals trained and experienced in dealing with such matters.

Usually Jade Magistrates work alongside Emerald Magistrates, but when a conflict of jurisdiction arises, Emerald Magistrates are expected to step aside if the crime is clearly magical in nature. Jade Magistrates answer directly to the Jade Champion, a shugenja with rank equal to that of the Emerald Champion. Though Jade Magistrates can be bushi, the Jade Champion is always a shugenja.

IMPERIAL LEGIONNAIRES

While not technically concerned with trivial matters such as crime, all aspiring crimelords would do well to remain aware of the Imperial Legions. These career soldiers dedicate themselves to fending off invasions, arbitrating during inter-clan warfare, and generally protecting the Emperor's interests. When an area succumbs to civil unrest, Imperial Legions can (and frequently do) proclaim martial law and police the area. Where a local or Emerald Magistrate is confined by the strictures of often predictable Imperial Law, a Legion commander can do what he pleases during periods of martial law, leading criminals in such areas to either cease their activities or operate with extreme caution. In addition, Emerald Magistrates who feel that a particular situation (such as a gang war) has grown out of hand can request Imperial Legions as support and declare martial law over an area.

and histories they are relatively rare compared to clan magistrates. Technically these magistrates answer only to higher ranking Emerald Magistrates, the Emerald Champion, and the Emperor himself, though naturally a lone Emerald Magistrate might deem it practical to obey a powerful local daimyo's commands — at least until he can summon reinforcements.

It is outside an Emerald Magistrate's duty to investigate and punish minor offenses. While it is usually not difficult to rationalize any crime as being part of an Emerald Magistrate's greater duties, to act in such a manner is both beneath the stature of his position and an implication that the local magistrates are incompetent. It is only if an Emerald Magistrate personally witnesses one of the crimes listed beneath the duties of a lesser law enforcer that they are expected to act to stop the crime, and then turn over the criminals to the proper authorities at the first opportunity.

Unlike a local magistrate, an Emerald Magistrate has a number of demanding duties outside law enforcement. These individuals are expected to collect taxes, authorize travel papers, and protect traveling dignitaries who desire an official escort.

Emerald Magistrates are granted an enormous amount of power to execute their duties, but this power is balanced by the fact that the rank of Emerald Magistrate is never granted lightly. Emerald Magistrates have the right to travel across clan borders at will, merely presenting their charter or badge of office to avoid being detained by local patrols. They have the right to detain and question any individual of lesser rank, and may even detain and question individuals of higher rank than themselves if they obtain an Order of Appearance from the Emerald Champion, the local chief magistrate, or the local city or provincial governor. They may commandeer troops for important assignments assuming they have notified the local authorities previously, and in turn must receive advance notification of any major military or police actions that occur when they are present.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Emerald Magistrates concern themselves only with major crimes that threaten the safety of the Empire as a whole.

CRIMES AGAINST THE EMPEROR

Any threat or insult to the Emperor, a member of the Imperial Family, or one of the Emperor's personal servants is a serious crime. Emerald Magistrates are indeed considered direct servants of the Emperor.

NATIONAL CRIMES

Any crimes that surpass clan boundaries become the concern of an Emerald Magistrate. This includes smuggling between clan borders, illegal duels or feuds between members of different clans, and murder or theft perpetrated by a member of another clan. Should a clan magistrate begin to investigate a crime and learn that it is national in scope he is expected to turn the investigation over to an Emerald Magistrate immediately. A notable exception to an Emerald Magistrate's power is a blood feud. If a samurai has publicly insulted the honor of another samurai and a blood feud is declared, the Magistrate has no power to bar the insulted party from exacting his revenge. This assumes, of course, that the insulted party can provide reliable witnesses to testify to the existence of the feud.

SHADOWLANDS INCURSIONS

Though it is primarily the Crab Clan's duty to fight against the Shadowlands, an Emerald Magistrate is also expected to deal with Shadowlands invaders whenever they appear. Thus many experienced Emerald Magistrates take the time to learn the signs of the Taint as well as how to combat more common Shadowlands creatures. The use of maho is a separate concern, typically handled by the more specialized Jade Magistrates.

FUGITIVES

If a fugitive illegally flees across clan boundaries, it is an Emerald Magistrate's duty to find him and return him to his point of origin for local magistrates to deal with, regardless of his crime. Many Emerald Magistrates, not wishing to waste their time pursuing such minor criminals, grant local magistrates a temporary deputy status and travel papers so that they might pursue the criminal themselves. An Emerald Magistrate is responsible for anything his deputy does while in pursuit of such a criminal, so such an action is never performed thoughtlessly.

ORGANIZED BLASPHEMY

Though Rokugan does not technically outlaw the practice of foreign religions, any action that defames or insults the Fortunes, kami, Shinsei, or other theological figures is an illegal act that falls within an Emerald Magistrate's jurisdiction for punishment.

CIVIL DISORDER AND GENERAL LAWLESSNESS

Any time local magistrates are incapable of dealing with local crimes or rampant disorder, an Emerald Magistrate may temporarily declare martial law and proclaim jurisdiction. An Emerald Magistrate's decision is final in this regard, thus a magistrate might use this power to commandeer even the most trivial case. As stated earlier, such an act not only brings shame to the high rank of Emerald Magistrate but also insults local law enforcers, so such behavior is rare. In any case where an Emerald Magistrate's investigation intersects with a local magistrate's investigation, the Emerald Magistrate can command the local magistrate to cease his activities, or even commandeer the local magistrates to aid him. This power is abused by rare corrupt Emerald Magistrates to keep local magistrates away from their illegal activities.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Rokugan is not a land tolerant of aberrant activity. Any defiance from custom and tradition is met with stern disapproval, so it is natural that criminals should find themselves harshly punished for their actions. Robbery, forgery, murder, rape, and kidnapping are all punishable by execution. A samurai is usually offered the opportunity to salvage his honor if not his life via seppuku, though particularly vile criminals are denied this opportunity. Imperial Law grants a magistrate the right to punish a criminal's spouse and children as well in the case of serious crimes, and the practice is not uncommon.

Lesser crimes such as extortion, vandalism, minor derelictions of duty, trespassing, and the like are usually punished with a fine and either house arrest (for a samurai) or a savage public beating (for peasants). Minor crimes are also sometimes punished by the offender being cuffed in manacles for an extended period of time.

Since eta are technically not human they technically cannot be criminals and thus stand outside the normal Rokugani justice system. However, this also means that even the most innocent eta can be killed by a samurai with little or no repercussions, so eta that would use their status as an excuse to begin a life of crime should be wary.

Testimony is the strongest arbitrator of justice in Rokugani law. Though the evidence suggesting an individual's guilt may be insurmountable, it is nothing if a reliable witness testifies as a witness to their guilt. Likewise a reliable witness might single-handedly convict a person despite any lack of evidence. Naturally many enterprising criminals take advantage of this, using their influence to manipulate potential witnesses into ignoring their activities or shifting blame to their competitors. While this is not easy in a land of samurai, where personal

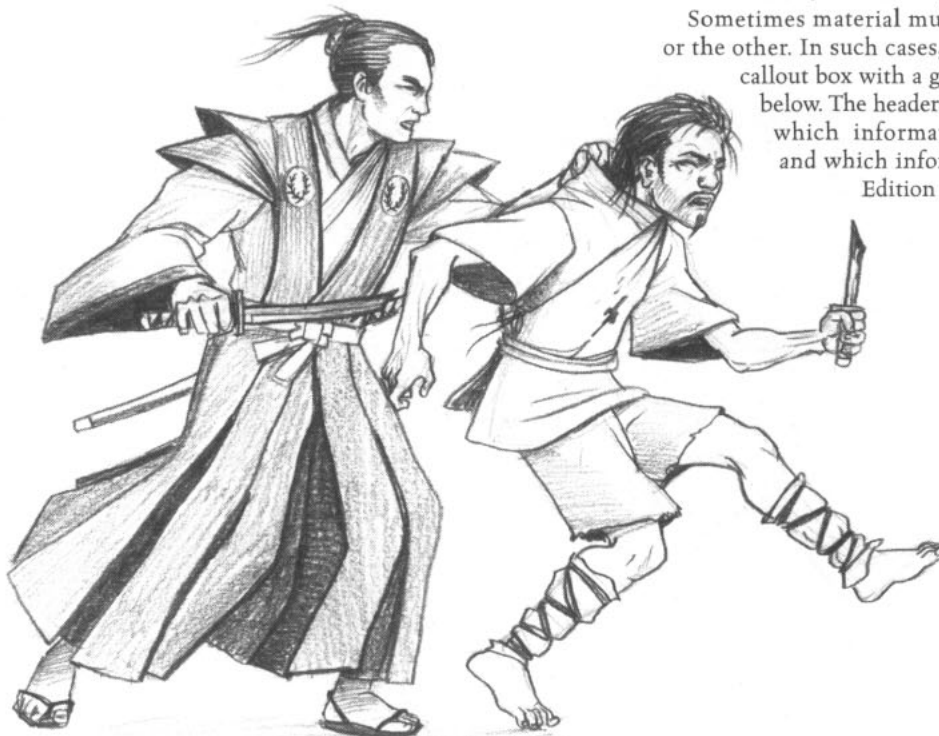
integrity is a highly praised virtue even for the humblest peasant, it is far from unknown.

In recent years, Emerald Magistrates (mostly hailing from or trained by the Kitsuki family) have begun to reverse this tradition somewhat, revealing that subtle evidence can paint a clearer picture of what has truly occurred in a crime scene. While this has not reversed Rokugan's preference of testimony over evidence, the testimony of a Kitsuki-trained magistrate who observes a crime scene has grown to bear as much weight in a criminal investigation as an eye witness.

Whatever evidence or testimony might be at hand, no crime can be punished without a confession from the suspect. In a case where guilt is clear and the testimony is above dispute, an era torturer is brought in to torture the suspect until he either confesses or perishes. High ranking samurai who are obviously guilty might be spared the torture, but placed under indefinite house arrest until their name can be fully cleared. Such a state causes such shame for the samurai and his family that the suspect will generally either confess or commit seppuku.

A samurai who is accused of a crime outside his clan's homelands can only be punished by an Emerald Magistrate or a magistrate of his own clan. For a clan magistrate to punish a foreign samurai (especially with execution) is an act of war, an action only a fool would take lightly. If a foreign samurai is believed to be guilty of a crime and an Emerald Magistrate is not available to arbitrate, it is within a clan magistrate's rights to declare the suspect exiled from the lands of the magistrate's clan and escort him to the border.

Ronin find themselves in a rather difficult place where the Rokugani legal system is concerned. While they are technically samurai, most ronin have no superiors or brethren to stand by them should they be falsely accused of a crime. Many magistrates automatically assume all ronin are guilty of some crime (after all, why else would they be ronin?) and seize upon the earliest opportunity to accuse, imprison, and execute any ronin who linger too long in their territory. While this attitude leads many ronin to be extremely cautious in their travels, it also ironically leads many others into a life of crime. If they must suffer punishment for a life of crime regardless of what they do, why not also enjoy the benefits?



NEW MECHANICS

The Legend of the Five Rings game setting has been officially presented in two separate game systems, the *Legend of the Five Rings RPG 2nd Edition System* (presented in the *Player's Guide* and *Game Master's Guide*) and Wizards of the Coast's d20 System™ (presented in *Rokugan*™, the official supplement to *Oriental Adventures*™). While these two systems are somewhat dissimilar, the setting presented in both versions of the game is the same, and thus it is our intent to present a sourcebook that is useful no matter which of these systems you choose to use when running your game.

Generally, when a new rule or mechanic is presented, whenever applicable we will present equivalent d20 System™ and L5R RPG 2E System versions in close proximity.

Rules and options for the d20 System™ look like this.

Rules and options for the L5R RPG 2E System look like this.

Occasionally, extensive new information may be exclusive to a specific system (such as New Paths for the L5R RPG 2E System or new feats for the d20 System™). In such a case, the information will follow the same convention as above. The d20 System™ material will appear in black and the L5R RPG 2E System material in blue.

In the case of characters, occasionally, a character's name will be followed by a short explanation of his character class in lieu of full statistical information. Such an example might look like this:

TORITAKA TATSUNE

[Samurai 6/Berserker 4/Shadowlands Veteran 10; Hida Bushi 5/Hida Avenger 3]

The information presented before the semicolon is the character's class and level in the d20 System™. The information presented after the semicolon is the character's rank and school in the L5R RPG 2E System.

Sometimes material must be presented for one system or the other. In such cases, this text will be contained in a callout box with a gray background, such as the one below. The headers for these boxes will clearly label which information is for the d20 System™ and which information is for the L5R RPG 2nd Edition ("L5R RPG 2E").

CHAPTER ONE:

THE KOLAT

Toki sat in the shadowy chamber, hands clasped nervously atop the small metal box as he waited. Small lanterns stood at intervals around the room, but seemed only to accentuate rather than dispel the shadow. Fine silken paintings hung from the walls — chrysanthemums, lotus, and one particularly striking image of a tiger. The exotic smell of incense filled the chamber, though he was not certain of its origin. The haunting sound of a biwa echoed through the ancient house, though again he could not tell whence it came. Every part of this place seemed cultivated to soothe and calm its visitors, while not ever granting them true peace of mind.

The door behind Toki opened with a whisper. A man in auburn robes slipped into the chamber, a practiced, fatherly smile painted upon his ancient features. Toki rose and bowed deeply to the old man, who extended one hand in a halting gesture.

"Please, there is no need to make such obeisance to me, Toki-san," he said. "We are equals here."

"It is only right that I show you such respect, Kyuwa-sama," he said to the old merchant. "If you can truly grant what you have promised... you have offered us life where we were resigned to death."

Kyuwa seated himself before Toki, who quickly knelt before him. "I never forget my promises, Toki-san," Kyuwa replied. "I hope that you have not forgotten yours."

"I have not," Toki said. He clutched the metal box in both hands, looking down at it with a faintly uneasy expression. He looked back at Kyuwa. For a moment, he hesitated.

"You have brought what I asked you for, haven't you?" Kyuwa asked, his smile never wavering. His eyes moved toward the box.

Toki swallowed uncomfortably. "Yes," he said, looking up at Kyuwa again. "It is just..."

"You fear that you will be punished for stealing such a valuable item from your lord?" Kyuwa asked.

"No," Toki answered. "It isn't that. It is merely that Lord Akodo-sama... he is my daimyo. My father served him loyally, and my grandfather served his father. To betray him so does not sit well with me."

"Yet did he not betray you first?" Kyuwa asked. "The taxes he demands are impossible, given the poor harvest this year. Your family will surely not survive the winter on what little you have left... he cares little for your well being. A peasant serves a samurai because the samurai, in turn, promises to protect his vassals. Is this not what we are taught? Yet Lord Akodo Seisi... he has failed to protect those who have loyally served him for generations. This is not betrayal, Toki. This is retribution. What do you think of that?"

"Lord Akodo-sama may be an unworthy lord, but that does not excuse my being an unworthy servant," Toki replied, bowing his head in shame. "Still, I cannot watch my family die. I have stolen my lord's magistrate seal, as you have asked." He placed the box on the floor before the merchant.

"You are a good man, Toki, and I feel sad for the shame that you suffer," Kyuwa replied, picking up the box and lifting the lid to examine its contents. "You are a loyal man; even now you only do what you must so that those who truly deserve your loyalty might survive... You have passed my test."

Toki looked up, surprised. "Test?"

"There are many like yourself, Toki-san," Kyuwa answered, "loyal and dutiful men and women who serve unworthy lords merely through accidents of birth. Intelligent and deserving individuals who are cast into a life of labor and drudgery so that the bloodline of forgotten Kami, Kami who conquered our ancestors, can flourish. Power is passed to those who have done nothing to earn it, while worthy souls have nothing."

"What are you saying, Kyuwa-sama?" Toki replied.

"That there are many paths to power, and not all of them will

deny a man merely because he was born a farmer. Here." Kyuwa reached into his obi, took out a small cylinder wrapped in black paper and handed it to Toki. For a brief instant he caught sight of a strange, swirling symbol tattooed on the inside of the old man's wrist.

The farmer accepted the package in his rough hands, peeling away the outer wrapping carefully, noting the beauty of the designs painted upon it — a tiger dashing through fields of tall grass. Twenty golden coins spilled into his hands, enough money to feed his family well for three years. He looked up at Kyuwa in astonishment.

"A favor for a favor and all business between us is settled," Kyuwa replied, "but if you wish to know more I have more work for you. All you must promise me is that you will transfer unto me the loyalty you once offered the undeserving Seisi."

"What must I do?" Toki asked. "What you say sounds treasonous... but after Akodo-sama would have left my family to die..."

"The choice is yours, Toki-san," Kyuwa said in mild, patiently measured tones. "Return to your family, feed them well, and forget this day ever happened. I promise you Seisi will never learn you were responsible for this theft. If you wish to know more... if you wish to share in the power, the freedom that I offer, all I ask is for your loyalty. The coins you hold now are but a fraction of what we can offer."

Toki looked at the floor, eyes wide as he pondered the possibilities. He looked up at Kyuwa again, running one hand through his shaggy hair as he faltered in indecision. "I hope this is nothing dangerous. If I die, no one will provide for my wife and children."

"Fear not, Toki-san," Kyuwa replied. "The risk is great, but the rewards are great and the Kolat look after their own."

"Kolat?" Toki asked, a shiver of fear passing through his body. The shadowy agents of the Kolat were often subjects of legend, villains who knew all secrets, assassins who could enter the most closely guarded castles, enemies of the Empire.

"The name makes you afraid, I see," Kyuwa said with a sigh. "You have been taught to fear it, taught by the same samurai who stripped your family of the food they needed to survive. I will not hide what we are from you. What say you, Toki? Will you join us? Answer without fear, but answer no and we shall not speak of this again."

"My answer is yes," Toki said. "Please tell me more, Kyuwa-sama." The old merchant's smile deepened.

HISTORY OF THE KOLAT

Of all the secret criminal organizations in Rokugan, none are as much a magnet for fear, mistrust, and legend as the sinister Kolat. They also have the longest history of any such organization, dating to a time before the Kami fell.

Fall of the Kami: established pre-calendar

The children of Lord Moon and Lady Sun fall from the Heavens. Discovering humanity to be a scattered lot of warring barbarian tribes, the Kami impose their rule upon Rokugan and create the Great Clans. Some do not accept the Kami's rule and openly oppose them; these rebels are swiftly slain by Akodo and Hida's followers. Others are allowed to flee the Empire, where they establish the Yobanjin lands or vanish into what will become the Shadowlands.

While this rooted out those who were openly rebellious or unwilling to live under the rule of strange gods, it did not eliminate those who were quietly dissatisfied with the Kami's rule. Ten of the more philosophical rebels, former sons and brothers of slain chieftains, questioned the legitimacy of these

gods and the right by which they commanded power over humanity. These intellectuals varied in their reason for wishing these Kami to be gone. Some were outraged at the violence they had wreaked upon their kin. Others simply questioned that the artificial clan distinctions they had imposed were truly more harmonious than the previously existing tribes. One only opposed them out of fear that these supernatural beings intended to destroy humanity. All agreed on one point: they had no right to usurp the Kami's role unless they could truly prove that these so-called gods had no right to rule them.

With no ethical grounds on which to stage a revolt and with no chance of succeeding regardless, these philosophers formed a secret society where they could discuss their beliefs safely. In time, they drew others into their order and shared their beliefs, but always with utmost discretion. This group names itself "Kolat" an ancient word from the barbarian languages that came before the Kami. The word means, simply, "to question."

The Hidden Temple Constructed: year 20

As the Kami's rule becomes more secure, the Kolat are forced to become more discreet with their meetings. They trade food and weapons to the tribes that fled to the north (now the Yobanjin) in return for the construction of a vast temple deep in the mountains. At first this temple is intended only as a place where the Kolat might meet to discuss their heretical philosophies without being overheard by the Kami or their loyal servants. Further, this temple allows the Kolat to keep ties with the other tribes who fled from the Kami's rule without drawing the Emperor's wrath.

The Oni's Eye Discovered: year 30

Hida Hisanobu and Haruki, heir to one of the original Ten Masters, discovers a large glowing stone in the Twilight Mountains. Looking into the stone, Hisanobu sees a vision of the future, of the Ten Masters rising to dominate the Empire. Seeing the benefit in an artifact of such great power, he has it transported to the Hidden Temple. He names this artifact the Oni's Eye for the strange trapped demon that raged in the cavern near where it was discovered.

Contact With the Ujik-Hai: year 35

Members of one of the many exiled human tribes meet the Ujik-Hai, a fierce tribe of desert nomads with a three thousand year tradition of bloodlust and slaughter. The Ujik-Hai demand that the exiles either bow down before their gods of death or perish. A Kolat philosopher among the tribesman cautions that perhaps it is best to feign obeisance, as the Kolat did before the Kami, so that these Ujik-Hai can be infiltrated and brought under control. And so it is done.

The Tao of Shinsei Written: year 42

With the completion of the Tao, the Kolat rationalize their campaign against the Kami. Shinsei's writings suggest that any mortal can be the equal of the gods if he seeks the path of enlightenment, and that all things are impermanent, part of an endless karmic cycle. By this philosophy, the Kolat reason, it is only natural that the imperfect Kami are eventually cast down. All that is required is to insure that something pure and perfect, a true order that cannot be denied, exists to take its place. This, they theorize, is the true purpose of the karmic cycle — to produce such a perfect society that the cycle itself becomes obsolete. Overnight, the philosophers become conspirators, intent on slowly manipulating this Empire the Kami have created so that one day they have established a

perfect rule — their rule — to control it. Their agents begin infiltrating mercantile organizations as well as the Imperial bureaucracy; though they are few, they are careful to place themselves where they can learn the most and be closest to those in power.

Shinjo's Exodus: year 45

The Ki-Rin clan journeys forth from the Empire, seeking new lands to explore. Soon after they encounter the Ujik-Hai, now thoroughly infiltrated and influenced by Kolat agents. The Kolat prompt the Ujik-Hai into what they know will be a hopeless battle. Afterward, Kolat agents assume the position of the perished chieftain and suggest that the Ujik-Hai might benefit by swearing fealty to Shinjo. They become the Moto family. In this manner, the Kolat's agents are swiftly adopted into the heart of a Great Clan without suspicion.

Death of Hida Osano-Wo: year 97

For generations the Kolat have been gathering information and making plans to insure their eventual domination of Rokugan. The descendants of the original Ten Masters passed the title on to their descendants, but during this century that practice goes horribly awry. A Kolat Master attempts to utilize blackmail for personal gain, threatening to shame Crab Champion Hida Osano-Wo by revealing the dishonorable actions of his most favored general. Osano-Wo laughs at the Kolat agent's feeble attempt at blackmail and openly attacks him. The Kolat defends himself, using a blade coated with a virulent poison, striking down the legendary Osano-Wo. Horrified by what he has done he flees to the north, hoping to find refuge, but his fellow Kolat bar him from the Hidden Temple for his foolish behavior. At Shiro Shiba, Osano-Wo's son finds the assassin and takes his vengeance, never realizing how close he has come to destroying the Kolat.

Ten Masters Reformed: Year 98

Following the near-debacle that was the death of Osano-Wo, the Ten Masters re-evaluate the hereditary system that governs their system of leadership. Clearly such a system is as corrupt and subject to abuse as the Imperial government they so despise. Instead a system of apprenticeship is instituted, whereby each of the Ten Masters selects a promising agent from outside his bloodline and grooms them to be his replacement.

Invention of koku: year 243

Yasuki Tanaka, Kolat Master, invents the koku. The system of exchanging items of worth for goods or services existed long before Tanaka, but it is he who designs the koku as it is recognized today. The koku's design features the kanji of the Fortunes on one side and the Kami on the other. Though they are simple and recognizable, Tanaka's coins manage to confound most attempts at forgery. When the Emperor inquires as to the nature of the strange little copper coin (which was, at that point, used exclusively by the Crane) Tanaka gladly provides the Emperor with his minting plates as a gift.

The Yasuki split and the Crab-Crane War: year 387

The Kolat continue to explore the potential inherent in manipulating wealth and economics to their advantage. The Ten Masters see potential in the greedy, ambitious Yasuki family but fear that the Crane Clan's overwhelming sense of honor as well as their existing wealth might prevent the Yasuki from developing as they should, increasing the Empire's reliance on the Koku. The Yasuki need to be moved

to a more pragmatic clan — a poorer clan. The Kolat instigate a violent break between the Yasuki family and the Crane Champion, insure that the Crab Champion is prepared to invite the renegade Yasuki into his ranks when the time is right, and cause the Miya diplomats sent to resolve the dispute to meet bitter failure. This marks the Kolat's first great victory as they seamlessly transplant an entire family from one Great Clan to another of their choosing without arousing suspicion. Some among the Masters are disturbed that their actions also incite the bloodiest civil war Rokugan has known to date, but dominant voices among the Kolat insist that only the victory is truly significant.

Rise and Fall of the Gozoku: years 391–435

The Gozoku conspiracy seizes control of the Imperial Government for two generations. The Kolat, surprisingly, have absolutely nothing to do with the Gozoku's rise other than the fact that they rise to power from the ashes of the Crab-Crane War. The Ten Masters watch the conspirators' progress with great interest, viewing the Gozoku's quest to usurp the throne as something of a grand experiment. The Kolat were the first to see the Gozoku's mistakes. Doji Raigu's arrogance and Shiba Gaijushiko's shifting loyalties were damning flaws. Mercifully allowing far too many enemies to live when death would have removed the threat they posed was another mistake. When the Gozoku attacked the Brotherhood of Shinsei for aiding the Hantei, the Kolat knew their days were numbered. A single Kolat agent was dispatched to visit Bayushi Atsuki, offering to help him secure his rule if he joined their ranks. Atsuki refused, and the Kolat withdrew to watch the Gozoku crumble.

Battle of Stolen Graves: year 510

Otomo Jama, brother of the Emperor, is exposed as Iuchiban, leader of the Bloodspeaker Cult, the madman responsible for a great deal of war, death, and destruction stemming from the accursed Bloodswords. Iuchiban animates an army of undead in Otsan Uchi and nearly slaughters the entire city before he is captured. For the Kolat, this is a rude awakening. Iuchiban was a mortal man, unafraid to grasp the reins of power, a man who conquered death and even bent the Shadowlands to his command. Yet rather than the perfect symbol of order the Kolat sought, he had become a creature of chaos and wanton destruction. The Ten Masters declare that any among their order henceforth found to be practicing maho will be tortured and executed.

The Unicorn Clan returns to Rokugan: year 815

After centuries of exploration, the Ki-Rin return to Rokugan. They are now known as the Unicorn, and are heavily infiltrated by Kolat Agents. These Kolat share what they have learned of the outside world with their Rokugani brethren, who eagerly dispatch agents to these foreign lands to establish contacts there. In the Burning Sands, these agents become known as the Qolat.

Presumed Death of Akodo Kage: year 1127

Akodo Kage, regarded as one of the wisest and most powerful Master the Kolat has known, is forced to fake his own death rather than capitulate to blackmail when Bayushi Kachiko learns his true affiliations. Realizing that slandering the name of such a respected warrior will only earn her enemies among the Lion, Kachiko can do nothing though she suspects Kage is not truly dead.

Coronation of Toturi I: year 1129

From the Hidden Temple, Kage uses the Oni's Eye to watch the coronation of his former student, Toturi, with great interest. Kage hopes that Toturi might be the perfect leader the Kolat have sought to groom for so long.

War Against the Darkness: years 1130–1132

Many dramatic events occur during this period that shake the Kolat to their foundations. Emperor Toturi is kidnapped and thereafter possessed by the Lying Darkness, an entity intent on unmaking all of creation. The Kolat, long aware of the Darkness' existence, begin subtly aiding the Empire to fight this new threat. The return of the Kami Shinjo complicates matters, as she discovers the Kolat infiltration of her clan and begins executing any Kolat agent she discovers. At a time when the Empire needs them most, the Kolat are forced to act with utmost caution. Many of the most powerful masters, including Akodo Kage, are believed to have perished during the war. Many Kolat agents are exposed and slain, either by Shinjo's magistrates or Darkness Spawn seeking to undermine their secret enemy. Plots woven over the course of centuries are shattered in days. The Kolat are left reeling in the direction of an uncertain future.

The New Masters: years 1132–1140

Kolat Master Doji Akae nearly exhausts his considerable personal fortune, arranging for surviving Kolat agents in danger of exposure to be relocated to less hostile areas. Following the near destruction of their order, the duties of the Ten Masters are re-evaluated. Now each Master of the Kolat rules a distinct sect of their order with clearly delineated responsibilities, allowing for the other nine sects to survive even if one should be exposed. Even the Ten Masters do not necessarily know the identity of the other Masters, but prove their identity through the possession of special nemuranai masks, attuned to their owner in the presence of the Oni's Eye. These masks glow in the presence of the Eye or one of its Tears, and scar any wearer who is not one of the true Ten Masters. (More information on the ten Kolat Sects and their responsibilities can be found in Way of the Ninja)

It is during this period that a new philosophy is expanding among the Kolat, pioneered by Morito, the new Master Steel. This new breed of Kolat believe that the order has accomplished its goals with the downfall of the Hantei and the institution of an Emperor with a dynasty further removed from the Kami, instituted by a man (unknowingly) trained by one of the Kolat's finest Masters. These Kolat hope to turn the organizations goals away from the rather intangible goals of



dragging down the Celestial Order, and instead use the resources they already have in place to accumulate the money and power they require to control this new regime. Some Masters vehemently disagree with these new philosophies, but the rivalry is a non-violent one as all sects are communally dedicated to rebuilding what was lost in the War Against the Darkness.

Death of Doji Akae: year 1149

Doji Akae, viewed by many to be the savior of the Kolat, dies of a sudden illness. His successor as Master Coin, Yasuki Oguri, slowly begins to place pressure upon the other sects, threatening to deny the Coin's resources to any who did not agree with his peculiar slant on Kolat policies (including naming his son, Kamoru, as his heir). The other Kolat are outraged, but it seems none can truly challenge Oguri's power.

Death of Yasuki Oguri: year 1157

Yasuki Oguri is murdered by a Lotus assassin. His son names himself the new Master Coin. Despite the other Masters' refusal to recognize his claim, many of Oguri's agents choose to follow Kamoru.

Death of Yasuki Kamoru and the Second Yasuki War: year 1158

The same Lotus assassin that murdered Yasuki Oguri kills Kamoru as well, poisoning his food so that he appears to die as the result of illness. Kolat agents encourage the chaotic search to find a new Yasuki heir that follows, quickly erupting into a war between Crab and Crane. The Kolat use this war as a cover as they methodically exterminate all of Oguri and Kamoru's remaining followers.

Master Coin's Exile: year 1160

With his true identity at risk of exposure, Master Coin flees Rokugan for the Ivory Kingdoms. Though he frequently communicates with his agents in the Empire through the use of Oni Tears, Master Coin has not since been seen in the Empire.

The Rain of Blood and Alliance with the Dark Lord: year 1165

With the return of Iuchiban, a cursed rain falls upon the Empire that corrupts those who cannot conquer the vice within their hearts, causing them to become willing followers of the returned Bloodspeaker, Iuchiban. Ikoma Tsai, also known as Master Chrysanthemum, is one of many who become corrupted during the storm. Kolat agents apprehend Tsai and bring him to the Hidden Temple, where Iuchiban's control of the Master is broken through extended torture and Kolat brainwashing techniques.

At the same time, the former Dark Lord, Daigotsu, approaches Master Roc with an offer of alliance. He proposes to destroy any Bloodspeaker cells the Kolat discovered, allowing the Kolat to retain their treasured anonymity. Ikoma Tsai, free of Iuchiban's control but still Tainted, is dispatched as an intermediary between Daigotsu's forces and the Kolat. The Chrysanthemum sect is temporarily reassigned the duty of overseeing the fragile alliance between the Kolat and the former Dark Lord. Though many Kolat chafe at the idea of allying themselves with Daigotsu, particularly members of the Jade Sect, the truth cannot be denied that having a stable, approachable leader in the Shadowlands is preferable to the unpredictable chaos that is Iuchiban.

THE TEN SECTS

The Kolat are divided into ten separate sects. The purposes and operations of these sects are described in detail in *Way of the Ninja*, but are abbreviated here for easy referencing.

Chrysanthemum Sect — Former purpose was to monitor the Imperial City. Current purpose is to serve as intermediaries in the Kolat's current alliance with the former Dark Lord, Daigotsu.

Cloud Sect — Preserve the knowledge of the Kolat and distribute it to all sects.

Coin Sect — Accumulate wealth.

Dream Sect — Hone the power of the mind as a weapon.

Jade Sect — Destroy the Shadowlands and the Lying Darkness.

Lotus Sect — Assassinate the Kolat's enemies.

Roc Sect — Protect the Kolat's interests in foreign lands. (Also known as the Qolat.)

Silken Sect — Gather information useful to the Kolat.

Steel Sect — Protect the Hidden Temple.

Tiger Sect — Maintain the Kolat's secrecy at all costs.

KOLAT OPERATIONS

Though not as numerous as they once were, the Kolat are a widespread organization with interests in every major metropolitan area of Rokugan. During the War Against the Darkness many of their agents were killed or hastily withdrawn from high-ranking positions, meaning that Kolat influence is not what it once was. Kolat agents are more commonly found among the common ranks of peasants and middle-ranking samurai than the upper echelons of Rokugani government as they once were (with a few notable exceptions).

Due to the subtle nature of the Kolat, many kolat agents are not even aware that they work for the order. The Kolat frequently creates cover identities for itself, masking themselves as merchant guilds, criminal gangs, or even monastic orders, and never revealing their true nature to those who serve them. The Ox Clan is the most dramatic example of this, with the entire Minor Clan essentially serving as a front for Kolat Hidden Temple security. The Kolat have come to recognize that not all those who are useful can be trusted, and thus only the most trusted agents are indoctrinated to the true philosophies and purposes of the organization.

Due to the egalitarian nature of Kolat philosophy, there are only three true ranks among the Kolat — servant, oyabun, and Master. Most Kolat operations are performed entirely by servants, with oyabun serving as the planners and intermediaries

between servant and Master. The Ten Masters rarely take a personal hand in Kolat affairs — the possibility of exposure is too great. When they do act, however, it is always with swift and deadly intent, for each of the Ten is formidable in his or her own right.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Information is, and always has been, the commodity the Kolat value most. It is through the accumulation and leverage of secrets that the Kolat can control those not of their order. This practice goes beyond simple blackmail, as the Kolat approach even the most innocuous details with inexorable patience and guile. While other criminal organizations might seek blackmail information like a hunter in the forest, the Kolat approach the matter with the inexorable patience of a farmer tending his crops.

For example, upon learning that an influential samurai has a weakness for sake they might manipulate events so that the samurai is placed under a great deal of pressure and hardship, always with a copious source of sake somewhere conveniently available. When he eventually cracks under the pressure and indulges his vice in a dishonorable manner, the Kolat are prepared and then use the very shame they have engineered a blackmail information against him.

The collection of information is primarily the duty of the Silken sect. These spies maintain their secrecy by never personally acting on what they discover, instead reporting it to the Cloud Sect so that it might be catalogued and passed on to whatever sect would best make use of it. This places the Silken Sect in a curious position, as while they technically possess the greatest amount of power and leverage of all the sects, they are forbidden to co-opt it towards their own ends. More Silk agents have gone rogue than all other sects put together, some because they grow to sympathize with those they monitor, many more out of a selfish desire to use some potent piece of information they have found for their own purposes. To say that Master Silk disapproves of such behavior is an understatement. Since her ascension to the position of Master, no rogue Silk agent has survived longer than six months.

The Tiger sect also indulges in a great deal of espionage and information trade, for their own secret purpose. Ironically many Tiger Sect agents are magistrates who claim to be obsessed with hunting out all vestiges of the once-mighty Kolat. These claims are, from a certain point of view, true. If a Tiger agent can independently uncover a Kolat plot, it stands to reason that someone outside the order would have discovered it just as easily. Such plots threaten the nature of the order as a whole, and must be terminated.

SLEEPERS

The production and control of sleeper agents is a bizarre practice exclusive to the Kolat. Contrary to popular belief, the creation of sleepers rarely involves magic of any sort. Kolat brainwashing is performed through a completely mundane combination of torture, sensory deprivation, and psychological manipulation. Though many within the order find the idea of enslaving the minds of others contrary to the tenets of Kolat philosophy, none of the Masters will deny that sleepers are among their most powerful tools. Cloud Sect agents argue that their methods are perfectly in line with the Kolat's purposes. The Kolat are intended to guide humanity on the path of perfection; much like a swordsmith must use hammer and fire to shape a sword, so must they use pain and fear to shape the minds of the unworthy.

Cloud agents frequently kidnap those who will not be missed then expose them to a regimen of brainwashing and torture until they become willing accomplices. These sleepers are then returned to society with no memory of what has occurred. At a later date, a Kolat agent can activate a known sleeper through use of an encoded phrase or gesture, commanding them to fulfill a specific objective, typically an assassination. Once activated, a sleeper enters a fugue state and goes about his task with an eerie mechanical determination, attacking even friends and family if they interfere. Only once their deed is accomplished do they return to their former selves, with no memory of their actions. Such assassins are of extraordinary value, for they are not only inherently unpredictable but cannot harm the Kolat if captured — they truly know nothing. As a sleeper takes a great deal of time to properly condition and are generally not expected to survive their missions, they are used sparingly.

The Cloud Sect does a great deal more than create latent assassins, however. Other sleepers are willing agents who agree to have all memory of their Kolat affiliation temporarily wiped away. In this manner they can seamlessly blend into a role and observe without drawing any suspicion, for they themselves are unaware that they are not to be trusted. This sort of sleeper is even rarer than the standard type, as the shock of having one's memory and Kolat affiliation returned can be devastating. Some agents refuse to believe the truth and attempt to escape the Kolat, only to be hunted down. Others cannot resolve the truth and falsehood that litter their memories and either go mad or take their own lives. The Cloud find it ironic that only the most loyal and devoted Kolat survive the process with their sanity intact, but such agents are usually more valuable to the order in other ways.

ASSASSINATION

The dreaded Kolat assassins are among the most feared silent killers in the Empire, rivaled only by the Shosuro of the Scorpion clan and the minions of the Lying Darkness. A primary tenet of Kolat philosophy states that in death, all beings are equal, whether a lowly eta, noble samurai, or even a powerful Kami. When the War of Spirits caused so many long-dead samurai to return as mortals, the Kolat reconsidered whether death was as powerful a tool as they once thought. When the returned spirits proved just as easy to eliminate in their second lifetime as the first, the Kolat discarded this possibility — perhaps death was not as permanent as it once had been, but it was still good enough.

Most sects employ thugs and killers in some fashion, but only the Lotus are completely dedicated to the art of Death. The Lotus assassins are the most reclusive of all sects, remaining apart from the Empire at all times when not on a mission so they will develop no sympathies for those whom they must kill. Not all targets of the Lotus are the Kolat's enemies. Some Kolat, operating as crimelords or dishonest businessmen, offer the services of Lotus assassins for a substantial fee. Their clients never realize that they are hiring Lotus assassins, or that they are even dealing with the Kolat at all (which is quite fortunate for the client, really). The money obtained is always used to support the lavish lifestyle of the Lotus killers as well as the order as a whole.

SMUGGLING

The Kolat claim lofty ideals and grand philosophies, but the simple truth is they are a hunted, underground organization that does what it must to survive. A great deal of wealth is

required to support the Hidden Temple and the Ten Masters' various operations throughout the Empire. Imperial tax collectors monitor Rokugan's economics closely, thus even Kolat Agents with legitimate access to large quantities of wealth cannot dedicate their fortune to the Kolat without arousing suspicion. Instead, the Kolat is forced to make most of the money it needs to survive through illegal business. A small portion of this covered through assassination, as described previously, but the vast majority of Kolat wealth is obtained through smuggling.

Coin agents are the most deeply engaged in the smuggling trade, using their legitimate business concerns to conceal illegal shipments throughout the Empire. Coin agents deal heavily in stolen goods, shipped and resold to distant lands. They also indulge in trade of illegal substances such as opium, gaijin pepper, and exotic gaijin goods obtained from contacts in the Roc Sect. Many Coin agents have also found their way into positions as magistrates. Though they do little more for the Kolat than look the other way when an occasional shipment passes through their city, it is their presence that to a large degree makes the Kolat's existence possible.

SECRECY

The most important continuing operation of the Kolat is the preservation of its own secrecy. For centuries they operated in almost perfect secrecy, with only the occasional rumor of their existence surfacing to be discarded by a disbelieving public. Their exposure during the War Against the Darkness almost crippled their operations. Not only were existing agents either left isolated as their oyabun were arrested and killed, but new recruitment ground to a standstill as the Kolat were demonized in the courts (mostly by well-placed Shadow Spawn).

The Kolat have encouraged the belief that their organization has been destroyed. Tiger agents acting as magistrates have conducted extensive, well-publicized searches for any sign of the Kolat's existence (and of course found nothing). The Kolat have returned to the shadows, though it is impossible to remove the Empire's knowledge of their existence. Many Kolat would not wish to do so — the fear that the name "Kolats" generates is occasionally useful, if and when employed with discretion.

Oddly it is the two sects that most frequently find themselves in philosophical disagreement — Tiger and Steel — that work together the most closely to insure the order's secrecy. While the Steel protect the Kolat's interests in a direct and visible fashion, the Tiger are the subtle hand that guides agents throughout the Empire, turning aside those who come too close to the truth and keeping fellow agents shrouded in secrecy.

OTHER OPERATIONS

The Kolat have countless plots developing at any given time, mostly long-term plans that might span years or even centuries before reaching fruition. Beyond their criminal interests they have many ongoing rivalries throughout the Empire. As strange as it may sound, the Kolat are extremely intolerant of all forms of organized crime. The Kolat survive via their criminal interests and will tolerate no competitors. The Kolat rarely meet a rival on equal terms, or even at all if possible. More frequently they will gather information on a rival gang and see to it that this information is anonymously supplied to a sympathetic magistrate. If this is not sufficient,

the Kolat will eliminate competition swiftly and without mercy. Lotus assassins will be dispatched to eliminate not only the heads of a rival gang but also their spouses and family. In this manner the Kolat not only remove competitors but issue a warning that none should seek to replace them.

The Kolat have also long fought a secret war against the Shadowlands and the Lying Darkness. These supernatural threats are an obvious threat to the Empire, and must be destroyed. Master Roc's recent decision to ally with the fallen Dark Lord, Daigotsu, was met with controversy but for now none can argue that her decision was logical. Once Iuchiban has been dealt with, of course, the Kolat plan to destroy Daigotsu at the earliest convenience. They have no illusions whatsoever that Daigotsu plans a similar betrayal.

THE NEW CHRYSANTHEMUM

At one time, the duties of the Chrysanthemum Sect were to monitor events in Otsan Uchi. With the destruction of the original Imperial City and its subsequent relocation to Toshi Ranbo, the Chrysanthemum Sect was forced to move their operations. Unfortunately, many Chrysanthemum Sect agents perished during the move to the new city and despite his best efforts, Ikoma Tsai (Master Chrysanthemum) was only able to obtain a position of minor influence within the new Imperial Court. The future of the sect was in serious jeopardy, as Silk and Coin agents already based in the city soon proved more capable of fulfilling Kolat objectives than the struggling Chrysanthemum operatives. Some began to question why the Chrysanthemum had ever been needed at all.

This crisis stirred up bitterness and resentment in Master Chrysanthemum, which likely played some part in his succumbing to corruption during the Rain of Blood. Ironically, his downfall has presented the Chrysanthemum with a new goal — maintain the tenuous alliance with the fallen Dark Lord. Many other Kolat who, like Tsai, became corrupted in the Rain but were subsequently reconditioned to obey the Kolat, have found places among Daigotsu's ranks. Some of these serve without Daigotsu's knowledge, watching the Dark Lord for any sign of betrayal. Non-corrupt Chrysanthemum agents have either been transferred to the Silk and Coin sects or allowed to volunteer for more dangerous missions — aiding the Jade Sect in hunting out the locations of Iuchiban's hidden Bloodspeaker cells.

The Chrysanthemum Sect now works with the Jade Sect in a relationship that strongly resembles the relationship between the Silk and Coin Sects. The Chrysanthemum hunt out agents of darkness and gather information on them, then wait patiently for the Jade Kolat to destroy those that prove too great a threat. Whether this new destiny for the Chrysanthemum will outlast Iuchiban's rise and the alliance with Daigotsu is uncertain, but many among the Masters feel that the sect's new duties make it far more useful than its previous incarnation.

KOLAT STRONGHOLDS

SHIRO MORITO AND THE HIDDEN TEMPLE

HISTORY

Sequestered deep in the mountains of northern Rokugan stands Shiro Morito, home to the Empire's youngest Minor Clan. It is one of the Empire's newer fortresses, betraying a great deal of Unicorn influence in its architecture. The castle is named for the founder of the clan and its current lord, Morito, a celebrated hero of the War of Spirits. To the rest of the Empire, the Ox are a reclusive and sheltered breed of samurai, content to forge a life out of the harsh mountains and remain outside Imperial affairs. Outside of a friendly relationship with their Phoenix neighbors and occasionally diplomatic overtures to their Unicorn cousins, the Ox are content to maintain a friendly distance toward all Great and Minor Clans.

This solitude serves the Ox Clan's true purpose very well as a front for the Steel Sect, the final line of defense in the Kolat's web of secrecy. After the Clan War, a great deal of Phoenix territory was left unoccupied due to the heavy losses the clan suffered during the war. As the Phoenix began to rebuild and expand, their settlers began to wander into lands they had not occupied previously, approaching uncomfortably close to the Hidden Temple.

Shinjo Morito, well known throughout the Empire as a brash and ambitious samurai, set out into the mountains with a band of like-minded Unicorn and claimed these lands before the Phoenix drew too close. He argued that as the Phoenix could no longer tend these lands then by rights they belonged to the Emperor until a worthy samurai could protect them. Morito made absolutely no illusions about his intent to carve a Minor Clan out of the barren rocks. The Phoenix, having plenty of other unoccupied territory to resettle, were actually somewhat appreciative that Morito had helped shoulder the burden and left him to his devices. The Emperor likewise granted his tacit blessing to Morito's claim, though he was not given the Minor Clan status he desired. Though Morito was outwardly displeased that his petition had been denied, he was privately satisfied with his accomplishments. His goal had been to create a buffer zone around the Hidden Temple, and he had succeeded.

When the Kami Shinjo returned, Morito maintained a careful distance from his Unicorn brethren. Shinjo seemed to have a supernatural ability to root out Kolat agents, and Morito had been a willing Kolat agent since near the end of the Clan War. Quietly he contacted other Unicorn he knew to be Kolat operatives, offering to help smuggle them out of their own lands and into his territory where they would be safe from Shinjo's predations. When Doji Akai began arranging for undiscovered Kolat agents to be withdrawn from their duties, Shiro Morito was a natural destination for them. If any noticed

an unusual number of ambassadors being assigned to the tiny castle, Akae insured that none listened to their concerns.

As the surviving Kolat evolved into the ten modern sects, it seemed only natural that Morito become one of the new masters. With the Kolat's power at an all-time low, the security of the Hidden Temple was more important than it had ever been. Morito had already proven capable of protecting the Temple from outsiders, thus it was only natural that such a responsibility become his own. He became the first Master Steel, thus far the only Kolat Master to bear that title.

SHIRO MORITO

While it is true that the Ox Clan is heavily infiltrated by Kolat agents, not every Ox samurai is a Kolat. Perhaps one in three Ox serve the Steel Sect Kolat in some manner, and only one in five do so with full knowledge of whom it is they serve. Of these, only a select few know the exact location of the Hidden Temple itself. Most Ox Clan members are unaware of their daimyo's true affiliation, believing him the hero of the Empire he claims to be. Ironically the Kolat Ox also worship Morito as a great hero, though towards altogether different ends.

Morito's primary concern is secrecy. Unlike the other sects he need not involve himself directly in criminal affairs to support himself or his minions — as the leader of a Minor Clan, the Emperor has already provided him with all that he requires. To participate in excessive criminal activity would only run the risk of implicating him and drawing attention to Ox territory, an eventuality Morito would rather avoid. Strength and subtlety are the primary virtues of both the Ox Clan and the Steel Sect. To be strong is admirable, but to wield that strength with cunning denies your enemy the chance to bring his own strengths to bear.

Within Ox lands, Ox clan samurai are courteous, honorable, and gracious hosts. Their customs are difficult for many to grasp for many, drawing as they do from the more exotic traditions of the Unicorn Clan. Physical contact is not taboo among the Ox, and it is not unusual for close friends to shake hands or even embrace. Displays of emotion, while still restrained among strangers, are boisterous and unrestrained within the comforts of one's own home. Music is loud and raucous, and the Ox have a taste for strong liquor and red meat, particularly lamb, which would disgust most Rokugani.

Visitors in Ox lands are encouraged to explore the countryside, but Morito recommends that all travelers be accompanied by an Ox guide. The mountains are treacherous, after all, and an unseasoned wanderer could quickly become lost and die from exposure, starvation, or the predations of dangerous beasts. Those who inquire about the mountains directly to the north of Ox lands will be warned against traveling in that direction. The Ox tell countless tales of the wicked spirits that haunt those mountains and the horrible things that will happen to those who venture too far into them. The tales hold a grain of truth, as many have traveled that way and never returned. Of course this is less due to wicked spirits and more due to the Steel Sect Kolat, who insure that none who venture too far to the north survive to find the Hidden Temple. The danger of discovering it by accident is small, for the Temple is well concealed in a valley high in the peaks, several days to the north beyond inhospitable terrain. Nevertheless, Morito takes no chances with the duty he has been designated.

This is not to say that the Steel Sect is devoid of the intrigue and shady dealing so prevalent in the other sects; it is simply a different sort of intrigue. Morito is the foremost Champion of

the modern Kolat philosophy, suggesting that the Kolat step away from their doomed quest to drag down the Kami and use their network of spies, assassins, and informants to amass personal power. This has led to a long rivalry with the Tiger Sect, the most traditional of all sects, and a close alliance with the Coin and Chrysanthemum Sects. With the recent exile of Master Coin and corruption of Master Chrysanthemum, Morito is left with few allies. Master Steel rightfully fears that it is only a matter of time before Master Tiger arranges for more agreeable Masters to replace those who have fallen. Thus, Morito has taken it upon himself to find replacements.

To this end, Morito has dispatched Ox Kolat to various locations across the Empire. He has offered his aid to many Coin and Chrysanthemum operations, seeking to ingratiate the leading members of these sects to the Steel Kolat. He is in a silent race against Master Tiger, a race to accumulate power. While many Coin and Chrysanthemum Kolat already support Master Steel's philosophies, the simple fact is that Morito can only spare so many of his agents at a time this far from the Hidden Temple. He may have a head start, but time and numbers are on the Tiger's side. If Master Tiger can sway the two Sects, the balance between modern and traditional Kolat philosophies will be tipped. The Kolat will move back towards the rather arcane and esoteric goals they once favored over the quest for raw power that Morito favors.

Whichever side wins this silent race, Rokugan will suffer. A Kolat bent on bringing Rokugan's economy to its knees is arguably just as dangerous as a Kolat bent on the reconstruction of the karmic cycle — no matter which Master wins, innocents will suffer.

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

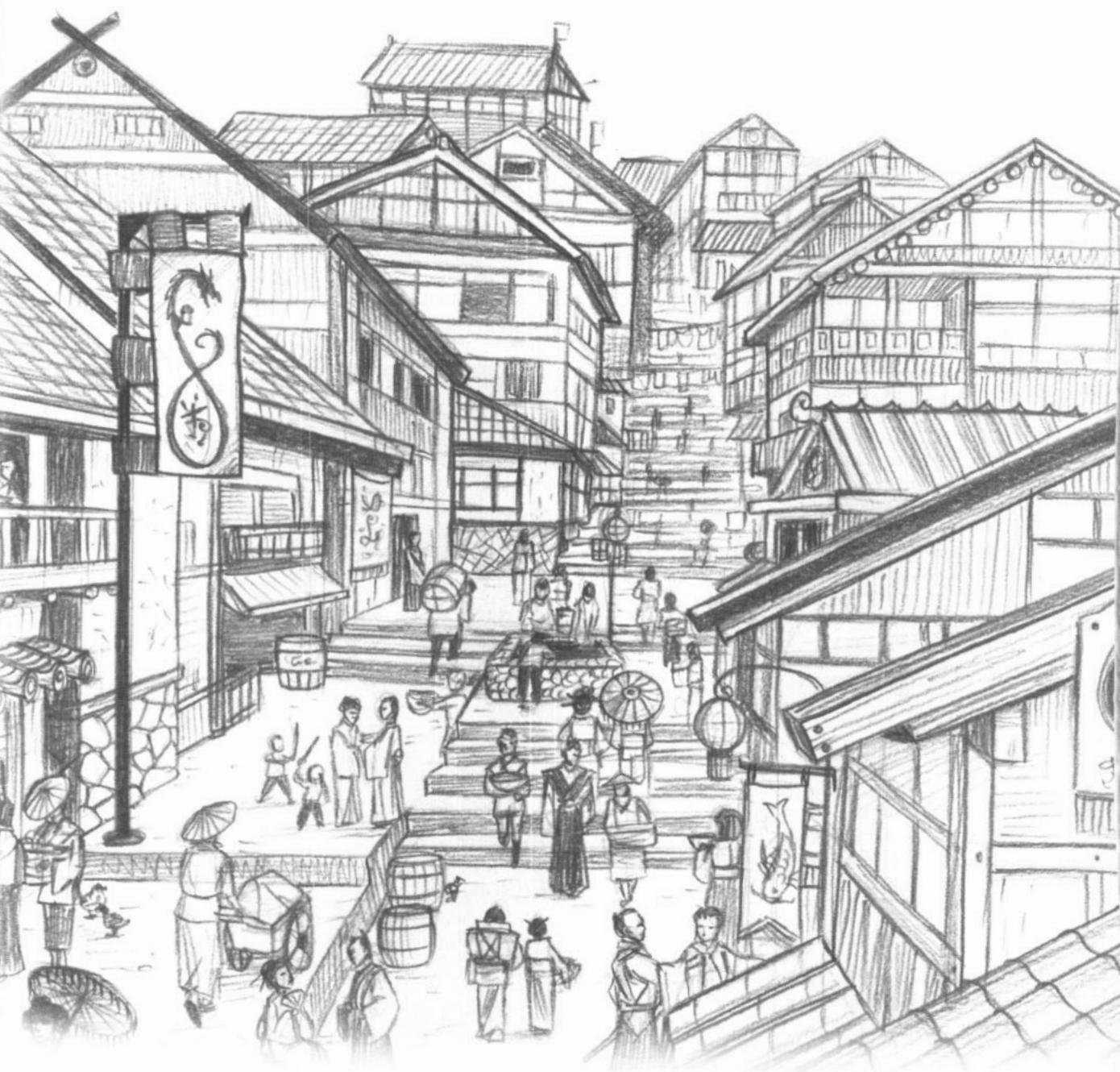
The party members are invited to Shiro Morito. Their lord (or commanding officer) owed the heroic Morito a personal favor and has offered him the chance to repay it with a minor service.

FOCUS

Morito entrusts the party with a locked lacquered chest, containing a large amount of koku. He wishes the chest to be delivered to a business associate in the Yasuki lands. He is a gracious host and realizes that what he asks will be both time-consuming and difficult, but winter will come soon and he cannot risk one of his own samurai being trapped beyond the borders of his homeland when the snows come. He showers the player characters with gifts and hospitality to mitigate their inconvenience.

STRIKE

The winter snows have little to do with Morito's reluctance. This is the latest move in his silent war with Master Tiger, an enormous gesture of support toward a Coin shipping interest in the south. Morito hopes that by using independent agents they might escape the Tiger's eye at least for a time, but Master Tiger is a canny opponent. When he realizes that not only Morito wishes to supply the Coin sect with such open support but he has used non-Kolat (and therefore expendable) pawns to do so, he will be utterly ruthless in his attempts to halt the player character's quest, withdrawing only if the risk of revealing Kolat involvement is too great. (Tiger may despise Steel, but he would never expose his fellow Master's identity to outsiders.)



HOUSE OF THE NEW DAWN

Toshi no Meiyō Gisei, the City of Honor's Sacrifice, is one of the proudest settlements in the Ikoma lands. Unlike many Lion cities, there are few fortifications, no large barracks, and a relatively small collection of soldiers make their home here. The City of Honor's Sacrifice is a place of rest and relaxation for the Lion Clan, a rare oasis of peace where a warrior might retreat to remember why he fights. The city features many tourist attractions including numerous well known tea houses, sake houses, theaters, and gardens.

One of the most prominent among these is the House of the New Dawn. This small, well appointed teahouse is owned by Ikoma Ukiyo, the wealthy widow of Ikoma Daishi, a famous Lion historian. As might be inferred from the presence of this teahouse's description here, Ukiyo is more complicated than she appears. She is an oyabun of the Silken

Sect, charged with gathering intelligence on the various samurai who pass through the city.

The House of the New Dawn is one of the most important information centers in the Silk network. Its reputation is such that it caters to the highest ranking officers in the Lion army, and all Lion soldiers pass through the City of Honor's Sacrifice sooner or later. All manner of crucial information, from strategic troop movements to personal flaws that might be exploited by other Kolat, are revealed and recorded here. Ukiyo believes that her simple teahouse produces far better results than a sake house or geisha house would in the same environment. The Lion are a self-conscious people, and in situations where the temptations of alcohol or the pleasures of the flesh might tempt them, they look to their honor to insure they do not speak foolishly. The same warrior who would guard his words closely in a geisha house may never think to do so in the relaxing atmosphere of a teahouse, discussing crucial battle strategies while ignoring the eager ears of the invisible servants.

Though Ukiyo performs her task dutifully and is skilled at collecting information without drawing suspicion, she is unhappy with her current lot. Before her husband's death in the War of Spirits she was granted full access to the Ikoma historical archives on the assumption that she merely wished to visit her husband. As Daishi was often quite busy during these visits, Ukiyo often spent her time reading the ancient scrolls interred there. The other historians dismissed her activities, believing that she truly was the foolish, harmless, devoted wife she wished them to see. All the while she memorized entire passages from the Lion histories, later transcribing them and delivering them to the Cloud Sect via personal couriers. When Daishi died, Ukiyo no longer had a legitimate reason to enter the Lion archives.

To put it simply, Ukiyo feels unfulfilled. Once, she gathered secret histories and compiled legends lost to the ages for the benefit of the Ten Masters. Her work was unique and notable. Now, while she may provide a greater volume of information, the utility of that information is questionable. She wonders what purpose knowing an Akodo warden's favorite brand of sake will serve compared to knowing the true reason why Bayushi Hosokawa never speaks of his great-grandfather. By feeding on legends, she imagined that she was also legendary. Now she feeds on gossip, and is no better than any other spy.

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

While passing through the City of Honor's Sacrifice, the player characters find themselves in the House of the New Dawn. They are surprised to find that they are greeted personally by the owner of the house, Ikoma Ukiyo, who requests the honor of dining with them. To refuse such a well known personage in her own house, of course, is unacceptable behavior for a courteous samurai.

FOCUS

Ukiyo eventually turns the course of the conversation toward marriage and the valuable political alliances that result from it. She reveals that her only daughter, the beautiful young Tsuchie, is yet unmarried and she is searching for a suitor. She proposes that a union be formed between her daughter and the player character's superior, or perhaps even a player character (so long as the husband in question is an individual with great political influence).

STRIKE

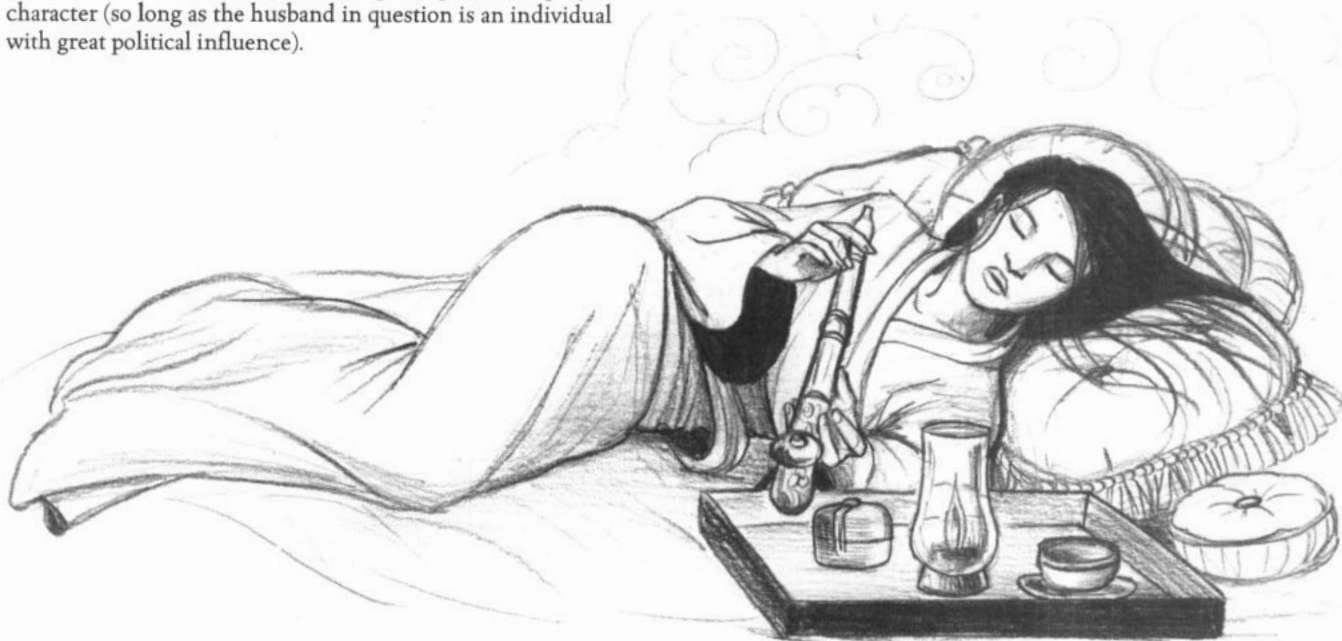
If the players take Ukiyo up on her offer, (and there really is no reason to deny a union with the house of a well known, respected individual) her true plot begins. Tsuchie is also a member of the Silken sect, and hopes to continue her mother's work, using her marriage to access critical information regarding her spouse's work. Can the player characters uncover this plot? If they do, will the personal feelings they might have developed for Tsuchie prevent them from taking action as they fail to realize the threat she poses?

THE NEW GOZOKU

During the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, many long-dead legends returned to mortal form and walked the lands of Rokugan once more. Among them was one man whose return has caused the Kolat a certain degree of consternation. This man is Bayushi Atsuki, the mastermind of the original Gozoku. Upon his return he masqueraded as Shosuro Furuyari, another legendary Scorpion, and went about gathering the resources he would require to rebuild the Gozoku. His efforts led to the Shadowed Tower schism within the Scorpion clan, which ended with Atsuki faking his own death and retreating into voluntary exile. The Kolat Masters, some of whom are also masters of faking their own deaths, saw through Atsuki's illusion and have been waiting for him to make his next move.

The Kolat have not forgotten Atsuki's refusal to accept their aid during the waning days of the Gozoku. That single action was all that it took to brand the Scorpion as an enemy for eternity. His eagerness to use maho (if not personally at least through willing pawns) to build the Shadowed Tower's power and influence likewise disgusts the Kolat. If nothing else, he is a competitor, intent on achieving goals that conflict with the Kolat's own.

For those who would compete with the Kolat, there is only one fate.



CHAPTER TWO:

SMUGGLING CARTELS

Morning at Shiro Doji was always a hectic time. The sunrise cast the grounds in a magnificent light, and there was always a crowd of artisans and visitors standing around to enjoy it. To Doji Shinji, it was a significant annoyance. In his home village, there had been no one about at daybreak. The farmers left for the fields, and the other members of his family were either tending to their own affairs or had not yet risen. Sunrise was the only time when Shinji could be alone with his thoughts. Ever since he had arrived at the dojo, he had been denied that simplest of pleasures. He had discovered, much to his chagrin, that it had a significant impact on his clarity of thought.

Today, Shinji struggled against his muddled thoughts in an effort to pay as close attention as possible. He and the other students had gathered together in one of the smaller, rarely used courtyards in accordance with their sensei's wishes. Today, they would receive unique instruction from one of their family's most revered magistrates. It was a class Shinji had been looking forward to eagerly since his arrival.

The group's sensei stood waiting, his expression as impatient as always. When the number of students was finally what he wanted, he nodded once. "You should feel honored," he assured them in his gruff tones. "Today, you will be the final group of students fortunate enough to receive instruction from one of our greatest magistrates. Doji Ryoma was a hero during the Clan War, despite that he was not much older than you at the time. Since then, he has worked tirelessly to keep the Crane lands free from criminal filth and to train more magistrates to do the same. Every sensei who teaches magistrates like yourselves owes Ryoma-sama a debt, including myself." The grizzled old man's expression softened somewhat. "I expect you to attend his lessons well and make me proud, as you do each day." With that, he drew a small chime from his obi and rang it once.

At the sound, a trio of samurai wearing unremarkable brown robes emerged from within the dojo. Each carried a small trunk. They each placed their trunk on a small metal stand so that they stood roughly waist high, bowed to the sensei, then retreated to stand in the background. A fourth man emerged from the dojo. He wore blue robes and moved slower than the other three, but was far from infirm. The newcomer bowed before their sensei, who returned the gesture with a bow so low Shinji felt certain he would fall over. Doji Ryoma reached into the first trunk and withdrew a small paper package. He unwrapped it carefully, then held it forth for the students to see.

In Ryoma's palm were two small, brown cubes. "We all know what this is," the old magistrate said, his voice like iron. "Who knows what it does?"

There was a moment of silence before one student stepped forward and bowed. Ryoma nodded, and the student answered. "It creates a sense of euphoria that some find pleasurable, sensei."

"That is not the answer I desire," Ryoma replied, "although it is not incorrect." He gestured to Shinji. "You."

Shinji stepped forward and bowed. He thought for a moment, then answered, "It fosters weakness, sensei."

"Yes," Ryoma nodded. "Those who are weak are seduced by it, and further corrupted. It destroys lives and dreams, and undoes the work of our Champions and Emperors. It is filth and weakness, and sadly, it is the single most common contraband that you will experience in your time as magistrates. Thousands of pounds of it move through our lands every day, hidden from sight by those willing to profit from weakness."

"Smugglers, sensei?" Shinji asked before thinking.

"Yes," Ryoma answered. "They move throughout the entire Empire. Some clans willingly participate to some small extent, but never the Crane. Kurohito-sama, as well as Hoturi and Kuwanan

before him, has made it clear: smuggling will never be tolerated in our lands." Ryoma wrapped the package once more and placed it back in the trunk. He moved to the second and sorted through its contents for a moment before extracting a small glass vial filled with dark powder. "Gaijin pepper," he said, holding before them. "Used in simple fireworks displays, such as those favored by our Daidoji cousins, but also used to terrible effect over a year ago, when nearly a quarter of Toshi Ranbo was consumed by explosions and fire. Like all things gaijin, it is dangerous because it is poorly understood."

"Sensei," one student asked, stepping forward. "Is there a great deal of gaijin pepper that passes through our lands?"

"Unfortunately yes," Ryoma answered. "There will always be a number of samurai who consider profit more important than honor. But there will always be more of us who stand against them. You will take our place among those samurai." Here Ryoma favored the sensei with another respectful nod. The old magistrate moved to the third trunk and withdrew something from it. He presented it to the group, a small glass vial filled with a strange, black liquid. "Who recognizes this?"

No one answered. Ryoma waited a moment, then nodded. "And thus you would find no issue with it being transported in a caravan, correct?" Seeing a few nods, he continued. "You would have no reason to be concerned, of course, as this appears harmless. But you would be mistaken. This is a Slayer's Vial, another gaijin artifact that periodically finds a way into Rokugan. The liquid within it is the most deadly compound known to exist, and will kill anything it touches within seconds." He looked at each student in turn. "You must never drop your guard. You must never grow complacent. If you do, you will fail. There is no greater sin for a Crane to commit. Today, I will teach you how to succeed."

A HISTORY OF SMUGGLING

Despite the opinion of many to the contrary, smuggling is a thriving enterprise throughout Rokugan. There are substances and items considered taboo in the Empire, and there are always those who wish to possess them at any cost, cultural or legal prohibitions aside. As crimes go, smuggling is relatively non-violent, as the average smuggler is far more preoccupied with profit and avoiding detection than anything else. If crime were that simple, however, smugglers might never be apprehended or even detected. Unfortunately, there is a never-ending struggle between smuggling cartels for control of the market, which can often turn violent. Beyond that, smugglers are notoriously reticent to submit to the authorities, and any intervention on the part of magistrates typically involves lengthy battles between law enforcement personnel and smugglers.

THE FIRST CARTELS

The first organized smuggling took place during the early days of the Empire. Contrary to most historical accounts, not everyone readily submitted to rule by Hantei and the Kami. There were pockets of organized resistance throughout the land, and sympathizers who wished to send them food, weapons, and other supplies would have to smuggle them past the Kami's

agents. Likewise, the early Kolat were forced to escape from the country through any means they could come by to avoid the Kami's wrath, and smuggling was a natural outgrowth of that practice. When the Kolat established their power base to the north, their continued contraband activities within the Empire made use of this network they had previously established for escape.

THE UNICORN CLAN'S RETURN

Through no fault of their own, the Unicorn Clan's return to Rokugan two and a half centuries ago resulted in a revitalization of a minor smuggling enterprise: that of gaijin artifacts. Before the children of Shinjo reappeared, the only parties interested in such things were the occasional collector or historian with a willingness to overlook minor details such as Imperial edicts prohibiting the materials, or the rare shugenja wishing to conduct experiments involving gunpowder. The Unicorn armies' victory over the Scorpion, however, suddenly inspired caution and concern in the minds of a thousand different military minds throughout the Empire. The less scrupulous among them desired these strange gaijin weapons for themselves, for study if for little else. Before long, criminals found contacts among the Unicorn who were desperate for new contacts and alliances in a strange land, and the smuggling trade in gaijin goods began anew.

Though few are aware of it, and even fewer willing to discuss the matter, there is an element among the Unicorn Clan that actively sponsors and profits from the smuggling trade, and has ever since the clan's return. Prior to Lady Shinjo's return decades ago, the heavily Kolat-influenced Shinjo family considered this participation a means of extending their influence throughout the underworld while simultaneously undermining the Great Clans' influence. Since the purge conducted by Lady Shinjo and the installation of a Moto Khan in power over the clan, the practice has lessened but not abated. The Khan regards the practice as another means of control over all that takes place in his lands. If there is to be crime, then it will be crime he controls.

THE CLAN WAR

The years immediately before and after the Clan War were perhaps the most profitable and rewarding for smugglers of all kinds, not to mention during the war itself. The Clan War is unquestionably the most significant conflict in Rokugan's history, and the length of the conflict, together in consideration with the plague that ravaged the Empire just before the war broke out, ensured that supplies were desperately needed in many regions. Nearly every clan was at odds with one another, with few alliances certain enough to take risks. Smuggling became the practice of even the most honorable men, sacrificing their own honor for the good of their families and clans.

The Clan War-era smuggling cartels were dominated by former Scorpion samurai. Once their clan had been dissolved, the Scorpion scattered to the four winds, many carrying out long-secret contingency plans in the event of just such an occurrence. Within a year after their dissolution, Scorpion "ronin" controlled the majority of major smuggling operations within the Empire. It was this easy access to significant resources that permitted the clan to reorganize so quickly when called upon to do so by Bayushi Kachiko, and it also allowed them to surreptitiously weaken their enemies by decreasing smuggled supplies to a given area. Although no historical record contains mention of it, the Scorpion were

pivotal in the eventual weakening of Shadowlands forces by constantly monitoring their movement and removing resources from their path that would otherwise have been pillaged and consumed.

THE WAR OF SPIRITS

If the Clan War was the most profitable period for smugglers, then the War of Spirits was undoubtedly the busiest. Virtually every clan had a contingent within it that supported the Steel Chrysanthemum in his attempt to retake the throne, and as a result the normal trade routes were in a constant state of chaos as samurai turned against one another in an attempt to procure much needed supplies to aid the armies of their Emperor, be it Hantei or Toturi. Without the ravenous Shadowlands beasts terrorizing the populace, it was easier to move cargo unseen across back roads and through hidden shipping lanes.

The most prominent smuggling ring during the War of Spirits was an extensive Mantis operation headed by the future Mantis Champion, Yoritomo Kitao. Kitao and the ships under her command seized, stole, or purchased large amounts of cargo of all different sorts and sold them to the highest bidder, regardless of what lord they followed. This practice, while treasonous, was also extremely profitable, bringing Kitao vast wealth and a considerable influence among the sizeable portion of the Mantis Clan that regarded moral values as inconvenient.

THE FOUR WINDS ERA

The so-called Era of Four Winds was a time of rebuilding for most criminal enterprises. The reign of Toturi I was a difficult one for criminals, as the Splendid Emperor was well-known for his lavish sponsorship of the Emerald Magistrates and other groups devoted to maintaining law and order. With nearly two decades passing without major conflicts between the clans, there was little else for the Emperor's forces to focus on, and smuggling became an extremely hazardous profession.

The Kolat dominated what meager smuggling took place during the aftermath following Toturi I's death. Their traditional rivals among the Scorpion were distracted by the burgeoning conflict within their own ranks, as were the Mantis by a brewing civil war between would-be Champions. This opportunity suited the Kolat, particularly in light of their reorganization into ten different sects. Several of these new sects, particularly the Coin Sect, devoted themselves to establishing a power base among criminal circles in order to gain the economic power base they desired. An upheaval among the Coin Sect's leadership halfway through the Four Winds Era diminished their activities, but only temporarily. Toward the era's end, Yasuki Jinn-Kuen took command as the new Master Coin, skyrocketing the sect's profits and the scope of their activities well beyond all previous levels.

MODERN DAY

The rule of Toturi III, the Righteous Emperor, is new. Unlike his sister and father before him, however, the new Emperor understands that a certain element of corruption is inherent in any society. Toturi Naseru makes every overt attempt to stem such activities, chiefly through his generous support of the Jade and Emerald Champions, but has no delusions about wiping out crime in his Empire. Instead, the Emperor chooses to remain aware of and informed of any extensive criminal activities taking place in Rokugan. He does so by keeping close contact not only with Yasuki Hachi and Asahina Sekawa, his two most active law enforcement personnel, but with the

Scorpion Champion and her many minions, as well as with a dozen other families, groups, or other entities with contacts among the underworld. There is little that Toturi Naseru allows to transpire in his Empire without his knowledge.

Smuggling remains profitable in the modern Empire. Narcotics are harvested, processed, and distributed from the Scorpion lands. Gaijin goods are transported from beyond Rokugan's borders to the Unicorn lands, and from there to many different cities. A similar trade is conducted in the Phoenix lands with Yobanjin goods, although on a smaller scale. Pirates, smugglers, and sailors paying at least token allegiance to the Mantis Clan are responsible for trading a variety of illicit goods in seedy ports and shadowy coves all along the coast and on dozens of unpopulated islands. As yet, no single individual or group has managed to claim dominance over the Empire as a whole, though there are groups that dominate more than their fair share of the market. The Black Lotus cartel, for instance, controls over half the market throughout the southern half of Rokugan.

SMUGGLING IN ROKUGAN

Smuggling is an ever-evolving enterprise with a long list of constant obstacles that has only escalated over the centuries. New techniques to avoid detection are constantly being developed, even as a smuggler's many enemies learn the secrets of older methods. Despite this, there are practices common throughout the smuggling element in Rokugan, and have been for centuries. Likewise, certain regions of the Empire have proven consistently profitable for such endeavors, just as others have proven too problematic despite profits gleaned from the area.

OPERATIONAL TECHNIQUES

Smuggling in Rokugan is a fairly simple affair, with the goal being transport of a cargo without being detected. In theory, this is a straightforward matter. There are countless square miles of empty wilderness in Rokugan, with only the major roads being patrolled regularly. Unfortunately for smugglers, this empty wilderness is filled with perils other than magistrates. Wild animals, bandits, ambitious competitors and any number of supernatural threats can rise up to threaten travelers, even smugglers. Traversing the wilderness is always a risk, one that individual criminals must weigh against the chance of being caught on more commonly traveled routes. And, of course, there is the added complication that magistrates will be inherently suspicious of anyone traveling with cargo through the wilderness, if for no other reason than that doing so is far more difficult and time-consuming than using the Emperor's roads.

Sea travel is easier in terms of obstacles to overcome. Patrols at sea are virtually unheard of save in wartime, when many clans patrol their shores for saboteurs or enemy vessels. The Mantis are the lone exception, as they consider the seas their personal domain and patrol the more frequently employed trade routes for criminal activity, or at least for criminal activity in which they are not directly involved. There are no roads at sea, and the commonly used routes along the coast are merely a convenience; traveling another route introduces only a marginal coefficient of hazard. Consequently,

many smugglers think nothing of using randomly selected routes along the coast, ever vigilant for Mantis patrols or dangerous reefs. Storms and a variety of sea creatures, including the dreaded trolls and the fearsome water serpents of legend, are always a concern, regardless of what route is used.

When avoidance is not an option, either for expediency's sake or simply because the cargo to be moved is too large to be carried through forest and hill, then subterfuge is employed. Masquerading as merchants, smugglers often carry forged documents that may be of assistance in helping them avoid the scrutiny of magistrates and wardens. A Crab magistrate, for instance, would be far more likely to freely admit a Crane merchant into Crab lands, given the close relationship between the two clans at the present time. A Scorpion merchant, however, could reasonably expect a careful inspection of his papers, and perhaps his cargo, as well as a lengthy delay while the Crab verify the merchant's claims. Bribery can overcome such suspicions, but that can be a dangerous enterprise in and of itself. Knowing which magistrates can be bribed and which cannot is a valued skill among smugglers, one that any true master of his craft guards jealously.

Some smugglers join in existing merchant caravans to further their disguise. If they have contraband on only one of ten carts, then the probability that their cart will be searched is substantially reduced. Smaller items of contraband, including bundles of illegally processed opium and certain small gaijin artifacts, can be concealed within a larger, more legitimate cargo. A packet of opium hidden at the bottom of a bushel of rice is unlikely to be detected except by the most vigilant and cunning magistrates, as it would prove both extremely time-consuming and dishonorable to root through bushels of rice that are marked for consumption by another samurai's followers.

Misdirection is an effective tactic that larger cartels can afford to employ. If an agent is suspected of criminal activity by the authorities, there are three options a cartel may take. The first is to kill or even sacrifice the agent to the authorities.

This is a ruthless action, and one especially fraught with risk, as any criminal may be tortured into

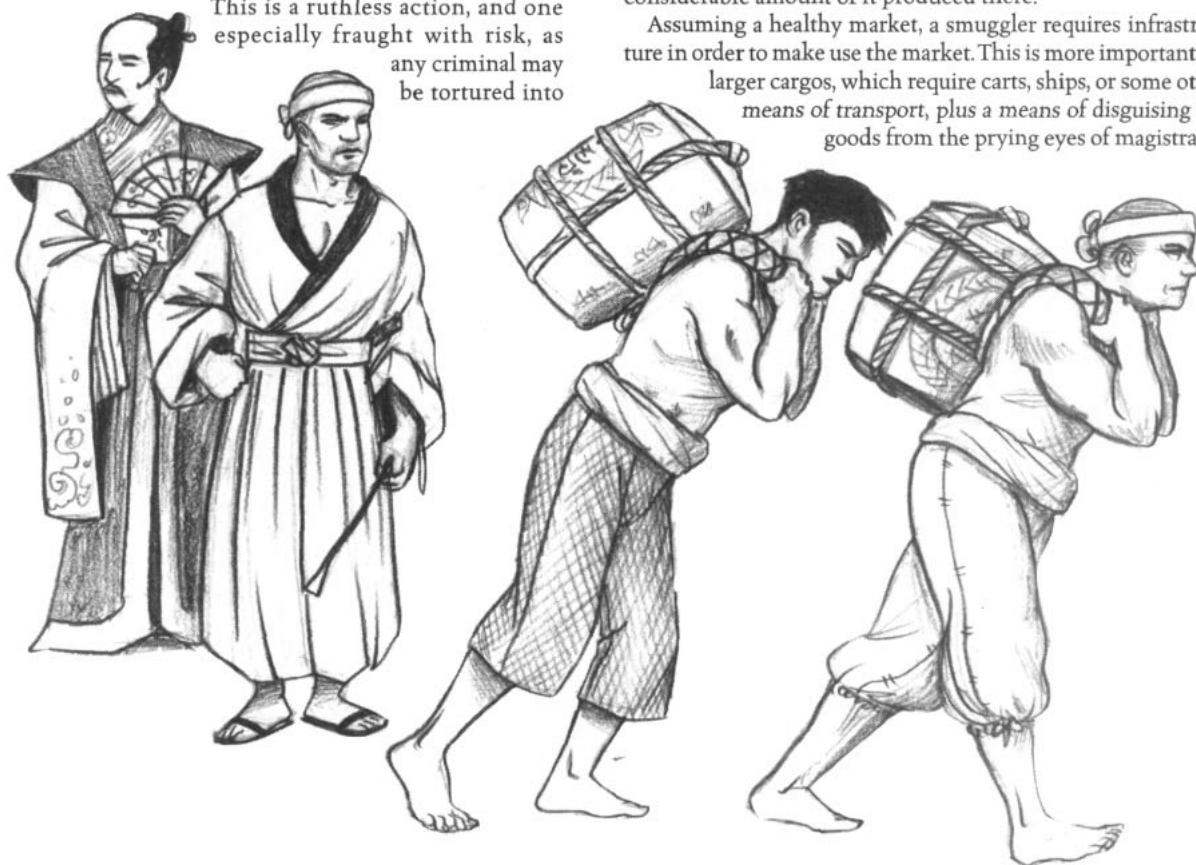
revealing all that they know. The second option is to send the agent underground, out of operation and away from the prying eyes of magistrates. Diverting the agent away from active operations can leave the authorities with no means to act upon their suspicions unless they can gain testimony against the agent. The third option, and one that is more difficult, is to place the agent in full view of the authorities. These agents are placed in situations that encourage any observing magistrates in the belief that they are criminals, but without any actual crimes being permitted. This often results in the search and seizure of perfectly legitimate cargos, something that can be extremely embarrassing for any magistrate. This type of misdirection can go on for months or even years at a time, drawing attention away from the cartel's actual operations.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESS

The first and foremost requirement for any smuggling operation to succeed is a target market. The expense of transporting items discreetly and undetected across the Empire is costly, and without a means of recouping the loss, no group could maintain such an expensive operation for a lengthy period of time. Thus, while there are some groups that smuggle simply for ideological reasons, such as certain Kolat sects or Scorpion groups attempting to weaken their enemies through decadence, the majority are only interested in profit. In the interests of profit, the first and foremost requirement for a successful smuggling organization is a healthy market.

Smuggling involves the covert transport of illegal goods for the purpose of material gain. To be profitable, a smuggler must locate an environment where these goods are desired. Although smuggling exists in the Unicorn lands, for instance, there would be little market for gaijin artifacts there, as there is already an ample supply. Likewise smuggling opium into the Ryoko Owari area would be fruitless, as there is a considerable amount of it produced there.

Assuming a healthy market, a smuggler requires infrastructure in order to make use the market. This is more important for larger cargos, which require carts, ships, or some other means of transport, plus a means of disguising the goods from the prying eyes of magistrates.



Smaller quantities can be carried far easier, perhaps even within the robes of a smuggler or his accomplices.

Finally, a smuggler requires someone to sell his goods upon successfully completing his journey. In many cases, this is taken care of by associates with whom the smuggler is working, and his only duty is the actual transport. Lone operatives or small time operators, however, may need to locate customers. A smuggler cannot simply stand in the merchant district of a city and hawk their goods to passers-by, after all. Instead, they must make discreet inquiries and hope for the best. The problems inherent in this practice are the primary reason that most smugglers operate as part of a larger group or cartel.

PROFITABLE AREAS

More profitable areas for smugglers tend to change over time, influenced as they are by both politics and economics. A region that is extremely profitable one decade may become highly dangerous in time as a new provincial governor is appointed, or if new magistrates are stationed there to combat the prevalent smuggling operation. The converse can also be true, as inflexible governors are replaced with less discriminating individuals. The irony of the situation is that any truly profitable region for smugglers must be utilized with moderation and discretion, else the cartel responsible will attract more attention than is desirable. Some cartels prefer to operate in like a brushfire, moving into a new area and rapidly exploiting all possible sources of revenue before moving on to a new region, one step ahead of law enforcement groups. This tactic is usually utilized by younger cartels with fewer resources and less influence, as they are desperate to establish a foothold. More seasoned groups prefer a slower approach.

Ryoko Owari Toshi has always been and remains a pivotal center for many land-based smuggling operations, particularly those that deal in opiates. The drug is produced in vast quantities in the regions around the city, and there are typically at least three cartels involved in harvesting, processing, and distributing it throughout the Empire. Because of their clan affiliation, these cartels make at least a passing attempt to work with one another and avoid violence, although there is always significant tension. Consumption is high within the city, which is an extremely profitable region in and of itself. From there, it is distributed all across Rokugan. Although a market of some size exists in virtually all the Great Clans' lands, some of the most profitable are found in Crane, Crab, and Phoenix lands.

The Crane, despite all assurances to the contrary, have a somewhat decadent element among their membership, and many hedonists have used opium at least in passing, leading some to become addicted. The Crab have a similar problem, albeit for different reasons. The persistent war with the Shadowlands leaves many Crab samurai with persistent wounds that do not heal properly and can be extremely painful. Likewise, many Crab have witnessed terrible things that they have great trouble forgetting. In both cases, opium is one means of alleviating the constant pain and suffering, though most prefer to use sake or shochu. The Phoenix market is considerably smaller than the other two, but is notable because a smaller crop of the drug is produced in the Phoenix provinces. The majority is used for medicinal purposes, but a small subculture of illicit drug use has arisen.

Smuggling operations trading in goods other than opium are less prevalent over land, but still conduct sufficient trade to prove troublesome for magistrates. Gaijin goods, gunpowder, and easily-identifiable stolen goods are the most commonly

transported items, as other goods can be disguised as more legitimate cargoes. Obviously, the Unicorn provinces are a hotbed of smuggling for gaijin paraphernalia, and several large cartels conduct operations throughout their provinces, at least one of which operates with the tacit approval of the Khan. These cartels tend to operate through the Ide caravans that traverse the Empire, using the methods described above to avoid detection at border inspections. The cartels enjoy a brisk trade in many regions, but particularly in Lion and Crane lands. Many Lion historians and tacticians enjoy obtaining samples of the gaijin paraphernalia used by the Unicorn armies, even if for casual study. The Crane, on the other hand, have a particular fondness for gunpowder, particularly the Daidoji family. They acquire some through legitimate means, most of which is used to create the fireworks the family is famous for at major celebrations. They acquire more through questionable sources, however, for various experimental purposes and military uses. If the full amount that the family imports was widely known, many would wonder exactly what sort of fireworks the family was creating.

Sea-going smugglers have more difficulty locating profitable ports of call than their land-based compatriots. They have no need to disguise or conceal their wares so long as they can avoid detection on the open sea. Given the scarcity of law enforcement personnel that frequent the sea, this is rarely problematic. The only significant hindrances to such smugglers are Mantis patrols, many of which can be bribed or are already involved in the process at some level anyway, and port authorities, who can also be bribed or included in the profits to avoid problems as often as not. Phoenix ports are often used by smugglers as distribution points due to the fact that most Phoenix families are so engrossed in their own studies that such tawdry matters as commerce are of no interest to them whatsoever. Mantis-Phoenix hostilities have impeded this process of late, but so long as the smugglers are cautious to distance themselves from their Mantis patrons, trouble can still be avoided. In fact, the Shiba are so focused on the possibility of Mantis infiltration in their cities that contraband is a secondary concern for them.

Crab port cities are also rife with smugglers and their supporting operations. The Crab family directly responsible for all commerce, the Yasuki, are as profit-minded and greedy a family as exists in the Empire, and many are perfectly willing to allow smuggling operations to continue so long as it benefits the Crab financially and does not result in harmful crime or corruption. The Yasuki have little interest in gaijin goods or gunpowder, but koku is another matter altogether. Many Yasuki are more than willing to look away from enterprises that do not harm the Crab, yet that enrich their coffers. Although this behavior might seem ironic coming from a family with a daimyo currently serving as the Emperor's Emerald Champion, not all Yasuki share Yasuki Hachi's love of law and order. A noticeable number maintain their belief that the Crab bear a burden that benefits unappreciative clans throughout the Empire. Crimes that do not harm the Crab, therefore, are of no consequence to the Crab. Thus the Yasuki overlook certain activities in exchange for a portion of whatever profits are to be made.

PROBLEM AREAS

Some regions of Rokugan are simply inhospitable for smugglers, either for geographical or political reasons. In most cases, such areas are avoided outright. There have

been cases throughout history, however, of such areas being carefully developed over time in order to create an appropriate atmosphere. In most cases, this has been done only because there exists a market that has been too tempting and too profitable to resist. The best example of this is Ootosan Uchi. The Empire's original capital was not a conducive environment for smuggling, but over the course of decades and centuries, smugglers in service to the Kolat and Tortoise Clan carved out a series of caverns from the natural caves beneath the city. Given how unstable the earth has always been around Ootosan Uchi, this was an extremely dangerous undertaking. Once the smugglers had a base for their operations within the city, however, the profit proved so overwhelming that the risk was justifiable.

Toshi Ranbo, the new capital city, has thus far proven almost impenetrable for most smuggling cartels. For the past few centuries, the city has been a constant battleground between the Lion and Crane. As a result, no smugglers would go near it, given that they had a reasonable chance of dying or at the least losing their merchandise in a pitched battle. The city's transformation into the new capital took place so quickly, however, that it almost literally went from a battlefield to a well-defended fortress overnight. The Lion and Crane, highly honorable clans for all their many differences, both defend the city from all criminals and enemies at all costs, not to mention the Seppun guardsmen who are stationed near each and every Imperially maintained building. The added presence of both Emerald and Jade magistrate dojo only finalizes the situation: Toshi Ranbo is simply inhospitable for smugglers. The city is growing by leaps and bounds, however, and many cartels are waiting for an inevitable conflict between the Lion and Crane to distract both clans long enough for the cartels to infiltrate the city.

The Dragon lands are likewise a difficult setting for smugglers to maintain operations in, and have been for centuries. The first impediment to their plans is the geography: the extensive mountains and limited number of passable roads make moving undetected through Dragon lands virtually impossible unless done in extremely small groups moving through the wilderness. Needless to say, this is not a profitable means of conducting business. In previous centuries, another genuine threat was the presence of the high omniscient Kami Togashi. Although it was not known among criminal circles that Togashi was still alive and masquerading as the Clan Champion through the ages, there were enough instances of a Dragon Clan Champion personally leading forces to eradicate the operations of any cartel maintaining significant resources in the mountains was enough to dissuade many such groups. Even when the Champion has not taken an interest in criminal matters, the Kitsuki and various ise zumi orders are meddlesome with regard to such interests. There have been instances of tattooed men not only disrupting operations in the Dragon lands, but then going on to seek out members of the same cartel elsewhere in the Empire and plaguing their operations there as well. Likewise, Kitsuki magistrates delight in following trails of information and evidence back to the source. In short, the Dragon lands are more trouble than they are worth for most smuggling cartels.

While not as troublesome as other regions, the Lion lands have proven more difficult than many clan holdings. The Lion are a notoriously honorable clan, and their natural hostility manifests as a furious hatred for those who would go against the laws of their Emperor, clan, and family. The Ikoma wardens are particularly stringent in their enforcement of

Imperial law, as are the rigid and inflexible magistrates who patrol the Matsu lands. Lion soldiers, while honorable, are far from perfect, and are as susceptible to temptation as any samurai, so a market does exist in Lion lands and has existed since the Empire's inception. It is merely an extremely difficult market for smugglers to exploit.

SMUGGLING CARTELS

THE BLACK LOTUS CARTEL

Easily the largest and most influential criminal smuggling organization currently operating in Rokugan, the Black Lotus cartel has risen from relative obscurity to dominate many older cartels through their seemingly endless supply of wealth and resources as well as through their utterly ruthless methods of operation. Those who dig too deeply into the secrets surrounding the cartels soon find numerous warnings issued to them, either through threats of violence toward the individual or their loved ones, or through the careful exercise of considerable political power that the cartel seems to wield among high-ranking members of different clans. While there are few in Rokugan who are familiar with the cartel's strange origins, the simple truth is that the tale of the Black Lotus cartel is the tale of a single man and his descent into dishonor.

HISTORY

The Black Lotus began with a magistrate. Kakita Hiroto was a young samurai identified early as having exceptional powers of perception and a clear, rational mind. Hiroto trained with the Doji family and received an appointment serving his family in a prominent post near Kyuden Kakita. Within three months of his appointment, Hiroto discovered, exposed, and convicted an illegal sake and gambling house that had been operating for years. He did not stop there, however, and further managed to gather sufficient testimony to prove that his superior had not been oblivious to the house's operations, but had been receiving a share of its profits in exchange for his silence and assistance in diverting his agents from the establishment. The scandal was somewhat explosive, but Hiroto's role in its exposure was quietly rewarded.

This was only the first of Hiroto's successes, which quickly mounted early in his career. By the time he reached the age of 30, he was a high-ranking Emerald Magistrate with dozens of samurai under his direct command. Countless bandit lords, smuggling rings, and even entire criminal cartels were crushed by his keen approach and attention to detail. His final crowning achievement took five years and no less than one hundred magistrates working together in a dozen cities across the Empire, all under Hiroto's expert guidance. The carefully coordinated effort resulted in the absolute destruction of a massive criminal organization that had grown out of the remnants of Hantei XVI's military organization following his defeat at Beiden Pass. With this masterful strike against the Empire's criminal underworld, Hiroto received a personal commendation from his ailing kinsman Kakita Toshiken, the

Emerald Champion. He then shaved his head and entered a monastery, as was the custom for a loyal and honorable samurai of his age.

As a monk in the Temple of Daikoku in Ryoko Owari, Hiroto soon began to see an entirely different side to the Empire he had devoted his life to protecting. From his new-found perspective outside the samurai class, he could see things from a new vantage point. The samurai he had served alongside were often decadent and arrogant, and the peasants that served them were shallow and often resentful because of the treatment they received. Thousands flocked to the temple to pray for wealth, but paid little attention to the strictures the Fortune's orders taught, nor to the Tao. Despite that the Empire had recovered from a terrible series of wars less than twenty years before, there was little spirit of solidarity among the nation's people. Desperate to recover his sense of self, Hiroto looked to the Celestial Order for guidance. Instead, he saw the man who destroyed the Kami Hantei's line sitting upon the throne. All Hiroto could find to guide him were the tenets of his faith, the tenets of Daikoku, Fortune of Wealth.

With his faith in everything he had once loved shattered, Hiroto came to a new realization: the Empire was not worth saving. If the Fortunes were the only true source of guidance, then he would fulfill Daikoku's will and gather as much wealth as possible. The monk carefully pondered all the wealth he had seen and passed by during his career as a magistrate. One day, while contemplating his options in the temple gardens, he found a single, perfect black lotus growing amid a bed of pristine white flowers. In his confusion and desperation, he took the flower's appearance as an omen, and immediately retired to his chambers to write a series of letters.

Less than one year later, the monk Hiroto controlled a small number of criminal operations throughout Ryoko Owari, with a handful of operatives in other major cities around the Empire. Koku began to flow in, in ever increasing amounts. Hiroto kept none of it, giving a portion to the temple and reinvesting the rest to expand his operations. The same eye for detail that had once been used to locate weaknesses in criminal operations was now used to execute the same operations less the same flaws, avoiding the authorities with little difficulty. Few magistrates had the same depth of experience that Hiroto had, of course, and there were only a handful of individuals throughout the entire Empire who were more familiar with the methods the Emerald Magistrate used to infiltrate and expose criminal organizations.

In the seventeen years since Hiroto retired, the Black Lotus cartel has experienced successes no less meteoric than those experienced by Hiroto during his career as a magistrate. The cartel has a stranglehold on all operations within many of Rokugan's largest cities, although Hiroto has ordered that other cartels be allowed to operate in Black Lotus territory, primarily to interfere with any troublesome magistrates that get too close.

THE CLEAR WATER TRADING HOUSE

The Clear Water Trading House has been a fixture in Sunda Mizu Mura, in the Crab lands, for nearly two decades. The house is popular among the peasants because the house merchants are willing to sell directly to individuals as well as in to bulk merchants. The Yasuki family enjoys the house's continued presence because it is not affiliated with the family, or indeed the Crab, in any way, and the Yasuki frequently use

the house to unload large quantities of lower quality goods. The house is well-regarded by almost everyone in the city, although most regard the house merchants as generally well-meaning but oblivious men and women.

The Clear Water Trading House was established by a ronin grown wealthy after several years in service to a Crane merchant patron. The ronin knew from experience that many fortunes were lost by constantly striving to maximize profit with every single deal. His trading house was founded on the premise of offering more attractive deals, and doing so in larger numbers. The practice proved successful, and the ronin died a wealthy man. He died without heirs, however, and the house quickly became available for sale.

Never one to pass on an opportunity for expansion, the Black Lotus's leadership purchased the trading house as soon as they became aware of it, already planning to branch out into the Yasuki lands. The house's purchase was completed just over a year ago, but the man placed in charge of the operation by the cartel leaders has waited a full six months to initiate any significant operations within the city. In that time, he has observed every facet of life in Sunda Mizu Mura, from the basest criminal element to the upper echelons of samurai society. The Yasuki have noted that the house's new patron is an observant, cautious man, but as he has not only continued the house's mercantile policies but changed them slightly so that they are even more profitable for the family, the Yasuki have welcomed him into their economic community with open arms and broad smiles.

The Clear Water Trading House is an extremely large warehouse with several smaller attached buildings in the southern reaches of Sunda Mizu Mura. It borders on the western shore of a small river that travels south to Earthquake Fish Bay, allowing for ships to reach the house from the coastline. The warehouse itself is usually between half and three-quarters full of various types of commonly traded merchandise. At any given point, one might find second-hand quality clothing, small shipments of ore not fit for weapons or armor, various metal trinkets favored by peasants, or any number of other completely unremarkable commodities. This merchandise sees heavy traffic, and is constantly being shifted around, moved, sold, or purchased, making the warehouse an exceptionally chaotic environment. This is both consistent with the Clear Water House's previous administration and completely in keeping with the cartel's interests in the city. By moving the merchandise around on a regular basis, the cartel's "merchants" make it virtually impossible for anyone outside the staff to locate something inside the warehouse. Obviously, this makes it a simple matter to conceal any number of illicit items within the warehouse. Magistrates periodically inspect the warehouse, but have long since become accustomed to the strange and chaotic nature of its contents. Furthermore, the Yasuki have subtly encouraged a lenient attitude toward the Clear Water House, as it has continually proven profitable for them.

CURRENT STATUS & OPERATIONS

At the present time, the Black Lotus operations out of Clear Water Trading House are relatively minor, comparatively speaking. Shosuro Nobuyo and his lieutenants have spent the past year carefully evaluating the breadth and depth of criminal activities in Sunda Mizu Mura. A few carefully conducted operations have created gaps in the current environment, either through outright assassination or

exposure to the proper authorities. The Black Lotus cartel is now rising to fill those gaps, expanding into gambling houses, sake production, extortion, and of course, smuggling.

The cartel controls two gambling houses at the present, both situated in the city's seediest district. Gambling houses are not illegal in the city, although they are somewhat monitored to prevent excessive corruption of otherwise honorable samurai. The houses are used to launder koku that has been acquired through illicit means elsewhere in the Empire, as well as a point from which the cartel's operatives can dispense opium to willing customers. They are likewise the base for most operatives participating in the city's limited extortion racket, so as to prevent any possible connection with the trading house.

The cartel's sake production operation, ironically, would be the least of their crimes in any other area of operation. The Yasuki, however, maintain many of Rokugan's finest sake distilleries, and would doubtless consider illicit sake production a high crime should it be discovered. Also ironically, the cartel considers the operation purely secondary to their pursuits. Moving illegal sake is more a means of integrating their efforts with existing criminal agencies in the area. This is done to gain a better understanding of how and to what extent the cartel's rivals maintain their presence in the area, a way to confirm Nobuyo's research into the criminal atmosphere. By ingratiating themselves into the existing environment, the Black Lotus make the eventual task of overthrowing all who might one day stand against them all the easier.

Smuggling is the true focus of the Clear Water Trading House operation, and the only facet of their activities that is actually based from the house, physically speaking. The tremendous amount of merchandise that moves through the house each month provides a perfect cover for a small number of extremely profitable smuggling runs to be made over time. Gunpowder is among the most profitable cargos in this region, as the Lotus can find willing customers both among the Daidoji to the north and several wealthy Crab samurai to the west and south. Even the Black Lotus have gunpowder in limited supply, however, and so it makes up only a fraction of their total smuggling enterprise. Unfortunately, another of their particularly profitable enterprises is in trading test subjects to a number of Kuni shugenja without strong ethical compunctions. These subjects are typically competitors or the occasional traitor, but sometimes the cartel disposes of troublesome law enforcement officials in this manner, or even kidnaps innocent bystanders to use as fodder for the Kuni's experiments.

LEADERS

The Black Lotus cartel is organized in a fashion surprisingly similar to the Emerald Magistrates, with more skilled and successful operatives being promoted to higher levels. The man in charge of all Clear Water activities was hand selected for the post by Hiroto based on his exceptional leadership during several operations in Ryoko Owari. Despite that it has been a year and profit only recently measurable on a limited scale, the cartel's leaders have great faith in their agent.

Shosuro Nobuyo, Black Lotus Regional Commander
[Samurai 6/Ninja 8; Shosuro Butei 4]

Shosuro Nobuyo found himself with few options shortly following his gempukku. His family lost everything when his father was exposed participating in dishonorable behavior that embarrassed their provincial governor. His mother, a butei like himself, was released from her commitment to her

acting troupe and encouraged to find work elsewhere. Their family was forced to move to Ryoko Owari, where his mother adopted another name and found a place in the governor's court, while his father lived almost as a ronin, selling his sword as a yojimbo or enforcer to whomever could pay his price. Nobuyo's father found work with the nascent Black Lotus cartel, and Nobuyo soon followed suit, more from desperation than anything else.

Nobuyo has proven an exceptional criminal. His abilities as a butei allow him to move among his enemies, even his allies, completely undetected. As a result, there is little that takes place in his house without his knowledge. He has spent his entire adult life mired in criminal activity, and has an exhaustive knowledge of both the methodology of such an enterprise, as well as the means by which magistrates use to combat them.

NOTABLE OPERATIVES

There are a dozen fully initiated Black Lotus members under Nobuyo's command in Sunda Mizu Mura, with that many again in operatives who know nothing of the cartel's greater interests beyond the city. While these agents are not necessarily the finest the cartel has to offer, they are still talented and intelligent individuals that Nobuyo selected personally to assist in the fostering of new operations.

Bayushi Akiaru, Charismatic Smuggler

[Courtier 9; Bayushi Courtier 3]

Although physically fit and athletic, Bayushi Akiaru's gifts lie squarely in the social domain. As a child he was always the leader in any game his comrades played, and he excelled in his studies. Unfortunately, Akiaru finds risk highly entertaining, so much so that the events of court have always been dull and boring to him. Risking dishonor is uneventful compared to the thrill of risking one's life. And so began Akiaru's descent into criminal behavior. In Sunda Mizu Mura, he takes on the role of a prominent merchant patron, one who enjoys working alongside his vassals. He is well liked by all who know him, and enjoys a healthy friendship with many of the city's magistrates. To Akiaru, life is a game, and he intends to win.

Mishime, Ronin Enforcer

[Fighter 8; True Ronin, Insight Rank 2]

A former Hiruma disenfranchised with the notion of living in the twisted, empty wastes his family calls home, Mishime deserted his post there years ago, taking a new name and finding employment elsewhere. He has recently taken up with Akiaru and other Lotus operatives, although he has no true understanding of how far the cartel's influence extends. He is a brutal, ruthless warrior, one that Nobuyo and Akiaru can use to complete the violent, unpleasant tasks without risk of exposure for their greater operation.

SUITENGU'S CHILDREN

The opposite of the Black Lotus cartel, Suitengu's Children is a small group of sea-based smugglers who operate primarily along the southern coastline of Rokugan. The term cartel would be inappropriate to describe the Children, however, as they are little more than a loose confederation of independent smuggling ships banded together to share resources, contacts, and their area of influence. Their mutual alliance has thus far

proven highly beneficial, as each vessel shares in the profits of others, but no single ship possesses knowledge of the entire group's operations. Thus, the capture of a single vessel does not threaten the group as a whole.

HISTORY

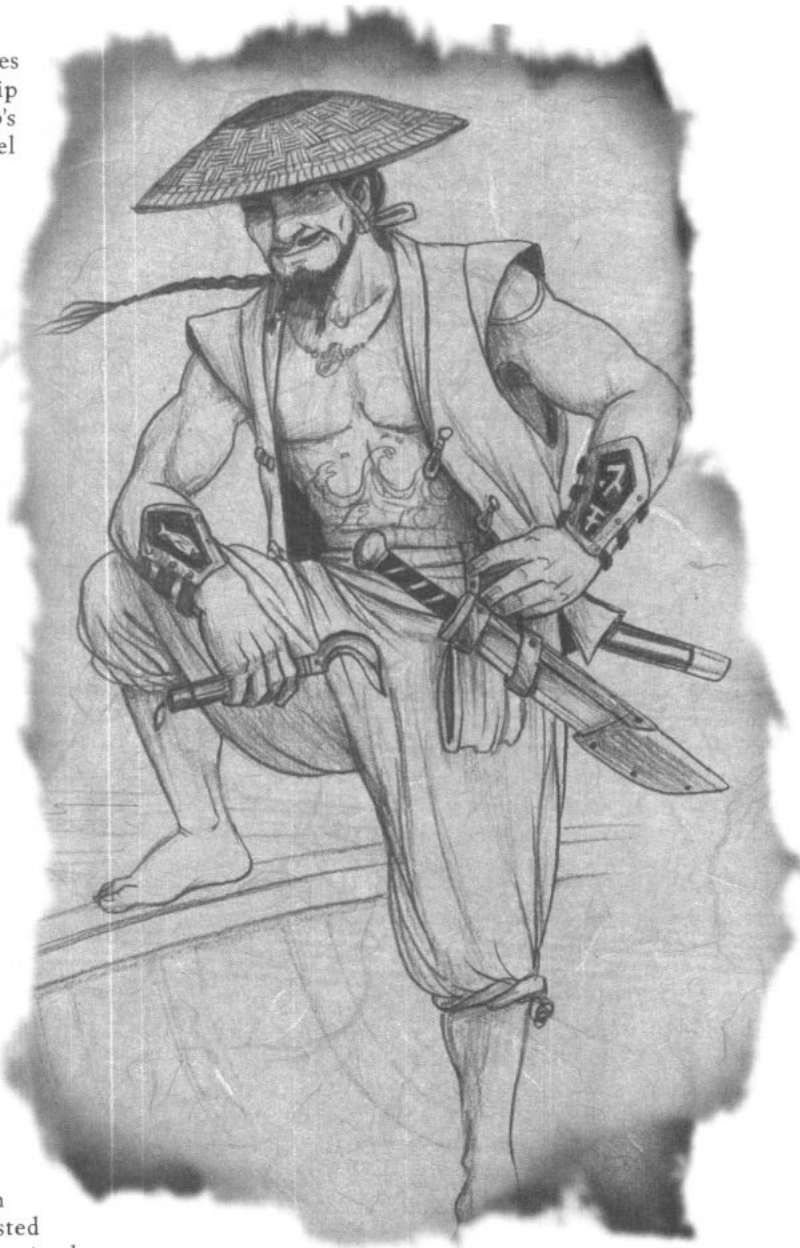
The tale of Suitengu's Children is one of coincidence or destiny, depending upon who is asked. The group was founded by five ambitious criminals who previously served together on an infamous pirate vessel, the Twisted Cricket. The Cricket had a flamboyant and charismatic captain who enjoyed flaunting his successes in the face of authorities, most notably his former clan, the Mantis. The captain often left survivors from his attacks, ensuring that others would hear of his brilliant tactics and the Mantis's inability to stop him. The Cricket eluded authorities for years until the Mantis civil war was concluded and Yoritomo Kumiko took control. With the sea firmly under her control, Kumiko hunted the Cricket relentlessly, finally destroying it in a pitched sea battle near an unoccupied island chain.

The battle was lengthy, and Kumiko's ships suffered substantial damage throughout the conflict. After the Cricket began to sink, the Daughter of Storms ordered her ships to retreat to port for repairs before any more of them could sink. The Cricket was already slipping beneath the waves, and sharks were flocking to feast on the many corpses floating in the water. There was little concern for survivors.

Yet there were survivors. Five men emerged from the water onto the shore of a nearby island. Despite that there were sufficient resources on the island to allow the men to survive, the sharp reefs and shark-infested waters had long ensured that the island remained uninhabited. The men were isolated, with little chance of a ship coming to their aid in such a remote area.

They spent eight months on the island, living off the land and discussing how their previous captain had been a flamboyant fool. One of the men had some experience as an apprentice to a shipwright, and worked to create a suitable vessel for their escape. There were a few attempts that did not succeed, primarily due to the reefs around the island, but finally a small, crude kobune was completed and succeeding in taking the men back in the direction of Rokugan.

In the time the men spent together on the island, they came to agree on many subjects beyond that their former employer was a fool. They likewise agreed that a more discreet approach would prove more profitable and safe, and that transporting goods rather than seizing them would be less likely to result in their demise. Serving as a merchant ship was not an appealing career choice, however, as it involved far too much honest work and far too little profit. Smuggling, they decided, was an enterprise that would provide the most profit with the least concern for regulation.



After the battle, the men had managed to salvage some small amount of the Cricket's cargo from the sea. It was not much, but enough for the men to joke with one another that Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea, had not only spared their lives but favored them with his blessings. Upon their return to the mainland, the men sold off all the salvaged cargo, managing to purchase a single kobune of sufficiently higher quality than the one they had cobbled together on the island. For the next year, they learned the smuggling trade through practice, using their combined contacts from five lifetimes of piracy. After a year, they used their combined profits to purchase four additional ships, one for each man to captain.

In the years since that time, the five captains have expanded their operation to over a dozen ships, each captained by a survivor or a hand-selected individual chosen by a vote of all existing captains. Beyond the original five, any given captain is only aware of one or two safe ports of call the group uses, minimizing the potential damage that can be done if a ship is captured. To date, no captain in Suitengu's Children has ever surrendered information upon capture.

SUITENGU'S THRONE

The island where the original five Suitengu's Children took refuge after their vessel was destroyed has remained solitary in the years since the Cricket sank. It is removed from all major trade routes, and the dangerous reefs and shark-infested waters are more than enough to keep most sailing vessels away. The closest settlement is a Kolat base once employed by the previous Master Coin, but the smugglers in Suitengu's Children remain blissfully unaware of that group's presence in the area. The smugglers have named their island Suitengu's Throne, and utilize it as a safe port for repairs and to avoid detection if the Mantis patrol fleets have been too close for comfort.

Suitengu's Throne is a relatively small island, three miles across at its widest point. The interior contains a small lake fed by a natural spring, which flows south and empties into the ocean near the small port maintained by the handful of smugglers who call the island home. There are only a half dozen permanent residents on the island, with twice that many more temporarily calling the island home at any given point. The permanent residents are former crewmen who have been wounded or are too old to serve effectively on a smuggling vessel.

The island's interior contains roughly one square mile of dense jungle growth. It was from the trees in this area that the original five Children harvested the wood used in their escape, and it is beneath this protective canopy that the organization maintains a number of small buildings that serve for storage, meetings, and occasionally for recuperation. Over the past few years they have developed a surprisingly complete workshop for carpentry and metalworking. Here, the island's residents have all the tools they require to repair damaged vessels. The small warehouse is usually partially full of various stolen goods waiting to be delivered to a customer or for whom the Children have not yet found a buyer. There are usually a number of legitimate cargos on hand as well, which can be switched with the cargo of any ship docking at the island quickly to deal with an expected inspection upon arriving at the destination.

There is some indigenous wildlife on the island, mostly in the form of tropical birds that hop from island to island, living off the large numbers of fish that populate the sea nearby. There are a small number of monkeys on the island as well, which the smugglers alternately view as either pets or nuisances.

CURRENT STATUS & OPERATIONS

Suitengu's Children are currently engaged in a number of smuggling operations that take place primarily around the southern edge of Rokugan's coast. Recently, they have been accepting assignments from a new criminal organization based in the Crane lands, and have been transporting numerous cargos from ports in the Daidoji lands all the way to the northern Isawa provinces. This has proven extremely profitable, but has an increased risk of capture by the many Mantis patrols near the Phoenix lands. At the moment, the Children's captains consider the profit worth the risk, but this may soon change if any ships are lost to the Mantis.

LEADERS

There are seventeen captains that can claim membership in Suitengu's Children. Thirteen have been hand-selected by the five survivors to pilot new ships as they are added to the group, but there is little extended contact between individual captains. The only man with extended contact with more than one ship is Hokitare, the only one of the original five to have retired thus far.

Hokitare, Shipwright [Fighter 4/Rogue 7; Suitengu's Children, Insight Rank 3]

While not a particularly charismatic man, Hokitare has always wielded considerable influence within the organization purely because of his role in their escape from the island years ago. The flimsy vessel he cobbled together held together just long enough for them to reach Rokugan again. Since then, he has added considerably to the knowledge he gained during his incomplete apprenticeship to a Kaiu shipwright. When he reached the age of forty, he chose to retire to the small warehouse the group maintained on the island, which he has expanded to a comfortable if incomplete port.

NOTABLE OPERATIVES

Members of Suitengu's Children are a strong-willed, independent sort, and are selected based exactly on those criteria. Those who cannot think quickly and adapt to new situations rarely last long in the organization, and never advance to the rank of captain.

Miyuko, Captain of the Poisoned Blossom [Fighter 6; Suitengu's Children Rank 2]

Miyuko joined the organization shortly after the five survivors purchased individual ships. She was a member of the crew on Hokitare's first ship, and was his first choice to replace him when he retired to the island headquarters one year ago. In the past year, she has generated a tremendous amount of koku for the organization, and is rapidly gaining influence among the other captains.

NEW MECHANICS

THE BLACK LOTUS CARTEL

The Black Lotus cartel is the largest, most prevalent smuggling cartel currently operating in the Empire. Based in and around Ryoko Owari Toshi, there are literally dozens of smaller bases and strongholds secreted throughout the land, many operating all but unseen in major cities. Deception and misdirection are vital concepts to the Black Lotus, and spend considerable resources playing smoke and mirror games with magistrates for no other reason than to confuse the law enforcement forces and direct them away from the cartel's actual assets.

NEW FEATS

BLACK LOTUS MASTER

(8 EXPERIENCE POINTS)

The number of additional rolled dice available to you from your previous Black Lotus advantages is now equal to double your Insight Rank. In addition to the initiate assigned to you, you have a number of staff equal to your Insight Rank. These subordinates are all considered to be Rank 1. This advantage may not be purchased unless you already possess the Black Lotus Brother advantage.

BLACK LOTUS SMUGGLER (PRESTIGE CLASS)

The individual smuggler makes up a large proportion of the Black Lotus cartel's ranks, and these trusted agents are given considerable autonomy in conducting operations as they see fit. The incompetent are generally weeded out early in the process, and so older and more experienced agents are given truly impressive resources to allocate as necessary, while beginners are given paltry sums with which to prove themselves.

Hit die: d8

REQUIREMENTS

To become a Black Lotus smuggler, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Skills: Bluff (10 ranks), Forgery (6 ranks), Sleight of Hand (8 ranks)

Feats: Black Lotus Initiate

CLASS SKILLS

The Black Lotus smuggler's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are: Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Forgery (Int), Hide (Dex), Knowledge (Geography), Knowledge (Law), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), and Spot (Wis).

Skill points per level: 4 + Int modifier

TABLE 2-1: THE BLACK LOTUS SMUGGLER

| Level | BAB | FS | RS | WS | Special |
|-------|-----|----|----|----|-------------------------------|
| 1 | +0 | +0 | +2 | +2 | The Lotus's Secret (1 skill) |
| 2 | +1 | +0 | +3 | +3 | Lotus Blade Strike |
| 3 | +2 | +1 | +3 | +3 | The Lotus's Secret (2 skills) |
| 4 | +3 | +1 | +4 | +4 | Lotus Blade Strike |
| 5 | +3 | +1 | +4 | +4 | The Lotus's Secret (3 skills) |

CLASS FEATURES

The Lotus's Secret: At 1st level, the smuggler selects one class skill. Whenever the smuggler must make a contested roll using this skill, or any time that another individual makes a check with a difficulty based on the skill or the result of a check made using that skill, the smuggler may choose to make a second roll and keep the better of the two results. For instance, a smuggler who selects Hide as their skill for this ability may immediately make a second Hide check if he feels the first result is unacceptable. A smuggler who chooses Forgery and uses the skill to create false travel papers, on the other hand, could force a magistrate inspecting them to make a second Spot check if the first check the magistrate made was sufficient to detect the forgery. The smuggler may declare a

BLACK LOTUS INITIATE

You have been inducted into the Black Lotus cartel, and have received the first steps of training in that sinister organization.

Prerequisites: Honor of 2 or less

Benefit: You gain a +2 competence bonus to all Charisma-based rolls made with any individual with an Honor of 2 or less. You also gain a +1 competence bonus to any Bluff or Diplomacy check made when interacting with an individual in a position of authority (magistrates, city guards, etc.).

BLACK LOTUS BROTHER

You are a fully accepted member of the Black Lotus cartel, with all the benefits that entails.

Prerequisites: Black Lotus Initiate, Honor of 2 or less

Benefit: The competence bonuses gained by the Black Lotus Initiate feat increase to +3 and +2, respectively. You also gain the benefits of the Leadership feat, although you only gain a cohort, not followers.

BLACK LOTUS MASTER

You have reached the innermost circle of the Black Lotus cartel, and have numerous resources available at your command.

Prerequisites: Black Lotus Brother, Honor of 2 or less

Benefit: The competence bonuses gained from the previous Black Lotus feats increase to +4 and +3, respectively. You gain a Leadership score as if you possessed the Leadership feat, and may add +2 to your score for the purpose of determining how many followers you may call upon.

NEW ADVANTAGES

BLACK LOTUS INITIATE

(6 POINTS)

You have been initiated in the Black Lotus criminal cartel, and are beginning to learn their methods. You gain a number of additional rolled dice equal to twice your Insight rank each day that may be used on any social roll with individuals who have Honor 2 or less. You may also use these dice on any Sincerity roll made when interacting with any figure of authority (magistrates, city guards, etc.).

BLACK LOTUS BROTHER

(7 EXPERIENCE POINTS)

Your increasing influence within the Black Lotus cartel allows you greater influence among the criminal underworld. The number of rolled dice available to you each day from the Black Lotus Initiate advantage is equal to one and a half times your Insight Rank (round up). You are assigned an initiate to assist you in your criminal endeavors. This initiate's clan and family are to be determined by you and the GM, but his rank is two less than yours. This advantage may not be purchased unless you already possess the Black Lotus Initiate advantage.



SUITENGU'S CHILDREN

The smuggling ring whose members refer to themselves as Suitengu's Children are a loose confederation of individual captains of ronin vessels who have allied to assist one another in avoiding detection by the Empire's authorities. The group is far less organized than the Black Lotus cartel, and maintains a much smaller scale of operations that is limited strictly to a handful of port cities along Rokugan's coast. With no single member able to expose the group's secrets if captured, and by avoiding competition with larger groups, Suitengu's Children have managed to carve out a niche in the smuggling market. A number of smaller land-based criminal groups occasionally hire Suitengu's Children to transport illicit cargo for them, as it is less expensive to hire them than to maintain their own smuggling vessels.

NEW FEAT

second skill for this ability at 3rd level, and a third skill at 5th level. This ability may be used a number of times per day equal to the smuggler's Wisdom modifier.

Lotus Blade Strike: You have been taught to strike quickly when your opponent does not expect it, just as the Black Lotus strikes at its enemies. Beginning at 2nd level, you gain a +1 competence bonus to all attacks made against a flat footed opponent who his flat-footed. This bonus increases to +2 at the 4th level.

BLACK LOTUS SMUGGLER (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 3

Requirements for Entry: Black Lotus Initiate Advantage

Path of Entry: Any at Rank 2, provided the above criteria have been met

Path of Egress: Reenter same school at Rank 3

Technique: The Lotus's Secret

You may select any Low skill. Whenever using this skill, whether as a standard skill roll or a contested roll, you may choose to re-roll the result once, keeping whichever of the two rolls you prefer. If another individual makes a roll with a difficulty based on a previous roll you have made, you may force them to re-roll their result once and keep whichever of the two you dictate. For example, if you have selected Forgery and use the skill to create false travel papers, and later a magistrate uses a Perception/Investigation roll to attempt to detect the forgery, you may force him to re-roll his result once if you choose, and decide which roll he keeps as his final result.

CHILD OF SUITENGU (TECHNIQUE)

You have been inducted into Suitengu's Children, a rag-tag confederation of smugglers and pirates, and have been taught their fighting methods.

Prerequisite: Honor of 2 or less, Profession (sailing) (4 ranks)

Benefit: You may select one ship equal to or larger than a kobune. This ship is considered your chosen ship. You gain a +2 competence bonus to all Profession (sailing) checks made on this vessel, and you gain a +1 morale bonus to attacks made when defending your chosen ship from attackers. If your chosen ship is destroyed or if you change ships, it will take one month spent sailing on a new vessel before this benefit takes effect for the new ship.

SUITENGU'S CHILDREN (RONIN OTOKODATE)

Type: Juzimai

Required Traits: Agility 3, Awareness 3

Required Skills: Lore (the sea) 2, Sailing 3

Other Requirements: Honor rank of 2 or less

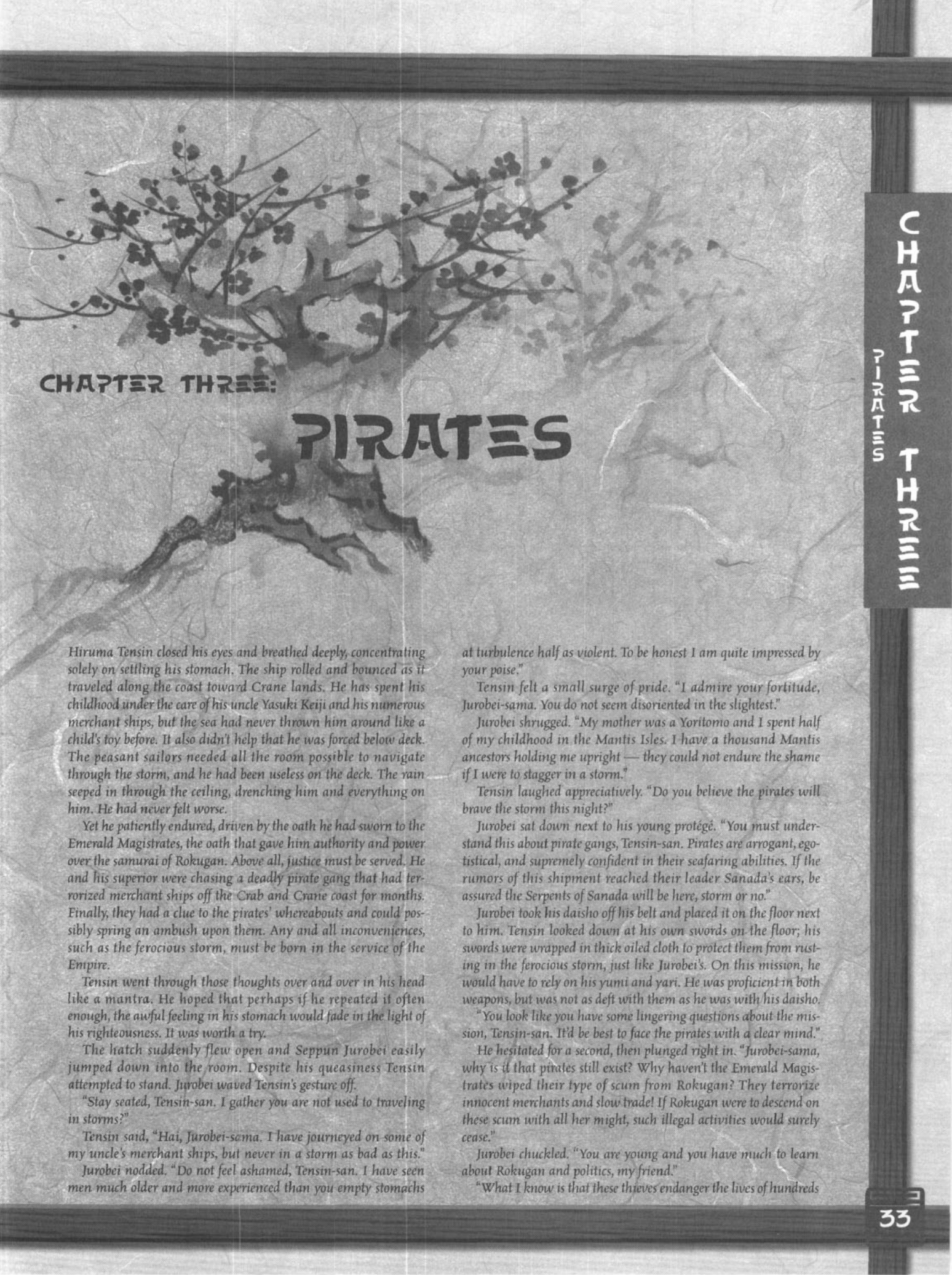
Location: Mobile

Technique: Child of Suitengu (8 points)

You may select any one ship of kobune size or larger to designate as your chosen ship. When sailing on your chosen ship, you gain a free Raise on all Sailing rolls. You also gain a free Raise on any attack rolls made in defending your chosen ship from attack. If your chosen ship is destroyed or if you are forced to select another ship, you must spend at least a full month working on board the new ship before you may designate it as your chosen ship.

CHAPTER THREE:

PIRATES



Hiruma Tensin closed his eyes and breathed deeply, concentrating solely on settling his stomach. The ship rolled and bounced as it traveled along the coast toward Crane lands. He has spent his childhood under the care of his uncle Yasuki Keiji and his numerous merchant ships, but the sea had never thrown him around like a child's toy before. It also didn't help that he was forced below deck. The peasant sailors needed all the room possible to navigate through the storm, and he had been useless on the deck. The rain seeped in through the ceiling, drenching him and everything on him. He had never felt worse.

Yet he patiently endured, driven by the oath he had sworn to the Emerald Magistrates, the oath that gave him authority and power over the samurai of Rokugan. Above all, justice must be served. He and his superior were chasing a deadly pirate gang that had terrorized merchant ships off the Crab and Crane coast for months. Finally, they had a clue to the pirates' whereabouts and could possibly spring an ambush upon them. Any and all inconveniences, such as the ferocious storm, must be born in the service of the Empire.

Tensin went through those thoughts over and over in his head like a mantra. He hoped that perhaps if he repeated it often enough, the awful feeling in his stomach would fade in the light of his righteousness. It was worth a try.

The hatch suddenly flew open and Seppun Jurobei easily jumped down into the room. Despite his queasiness Tensin attempted to stand. Jurobei waved Tensin's gesture off.

"Stay seated, Tensin-san. I gather you are not used to traveling in storms?"

Tensin said, "Hai, Jurobei-sama. I have journeyed on some of my uncle's merchant ships, but never in a storm as bad as this."

Jurobei nodded. "Do not feel ashamed, Tensin-san. I have seen men much older and more experienced than you empty stomachs

at turbulence half as violent. To be honest I am quite impressed by your poise."

Tensin felt a small surge of pride. "I admire your fortitude, Jurobei-sama. You do not seem disoriented in the slightest."

Jurobei shrugged. "My mother was a Yoritomo and I spent half of my childhood in the Mantis Isles. I have a thousand Mantis ancestors holding me upright — they could not endure the shame if I were to stagger in a storm."

Tensin laughed appreciatively. "Do you believe the pirates will brave the storm this night?"

Jurobei sat down next to his young protégé. "You must understand this about pirate gangs, Tensin-san. Pirates are arrogant, egotistical, and supremely confident in their seafaring abilities. If the rumors of this shipment reached their leader Sanada's ears, be assured the Serpents of Sanada will be here, storm or no."

Jurobei took his daisho off his belt and placed it on the floor next to him. Tensin looked down at his own swords on the floor; his swords were wrapped in thick oiled cloth to protect them from rusting in the ferocious storm, just like Jurobei's. On this mission, he would have to rely on his yumi and yari. He was proficient in both weapons, but was not as deft with them as he was with his daisho.

"You look like you have some lingering questions about the mission, Tensin-san. It'd be best to face the pirates with a clear mind."

He hesitated for a second, then plunged right in. "Jurobei-sama, why is it that pirates still exist? Why haven't the Emerald Magistrates wiped their type of scum from Rokugan? They terrorize innocent merchants and slow trade! If Rokugan were to descend on these scum with all her might, such illegal activities would surely cease."

Jurobei chuckled. "You are young and you have much to learn about Rokugan and politics, my friend."

"What I know is that these thieves endanger the lives of hundreds

of loyal subjects of the Empire. And aside from the work we have done in the past year, Jurobei-sama, no one else seems to notice their activities."

"Justice must be meted out throughout all of Rokugan, of course, but there are only so many magistrates, Tensin-san. Magistrates can easily take care of crimes that occur on the mainland. Banditry. Thievery. Murder. Petty warfare. We must stop those immediately because the safety of Rokugan is at stake. Though piracy is deplorable and men lose lives, the biggest targets are luxuries. The flow of money is undoubtedly important for everyone, but protecting sales is not a magistrate's chief concern — we must protect the people first. So long as such wealth floats across the seas and the eyes of the law are elsewhere, there will be those who seek such easy prey. Consider this. From whom have you most learned about these pirates?"

Tensin blinked. "From my uncle, Yasuki Keiji..." he trailed off as understanding struck. "A merchant of the Crab clan."

"Exactly," Jurobei said. "It was very... generous of your uncle to offer his ship to the Emerald Magistrates for this mission. No doubt he donated the ship's services out of the goodness of his heart, so that the entire Empire would be protected." Jurobei smirked. "Incidentally, doesn't your uncle's trade take him through these waters?"

Tensin nodded, finally understanding. The sea was an alien land to magistrates such as himself. His uncle had pulled strings to bring them here, to protect his own interests. He closed his eyes to ready his stomach when he realized that his nausea had already faded. With his mind on the issues brought forth by his superior, he had completely forgotten his unsettled stomach. If the pirates were to arrive now, he would face them with a ready heart and body.

As if on cue, a peasant sailor opened the hatch and shouted, "Ship sighted, samurai-sama! They bear no identifications!"

Seppun Jurobei stood up and gave a feral smile to his protégé. "Alert the others. Let us show Sanada what happens to those who break the Emperor's Law."

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PIRACY

Three types of pirates have sprung up throughout Rokugan's history. Pirate gangs are often simply ronin with seafaring experience who band together to raid merchant ships that travel to coastal cities and towns. These gangs, called "wako," can persist for many years, raiding ships then hiding on one of the many unoccupied islands just off the coast of Rokugan. The lack of naval armies has also encouraged these ronin pirate gangs; ronin are less likely to get captured and killed pillaging on the sea than on the mainland. These gangs are most frequently unorganized, violent, and self-destructive; their tales end with raids from magistrates or vicious infighting for leadership of the gang.

Many peasant legends speak favorably of pirates. These men with no ties to any Great Clans, masters of their own destiny, nobly stole from the greedy merchants and fed the poor heimin — or so the stories said. One of the wildest pirate legends is that of Yasuki Fumoki. He lived in the 600s, and was a Crab bushi who grew tired of living a dull, unenriching life. His legends push at a listener's sense of disbelief; according to tales, he sank over a hundred Crane merchant ships in his quest for glory and wealth, all with the secret approval of the Crab Champion. His ship, the Deathless, was faster than any other ship in existence. He accrued a huge fortune in treasure,

THE ROLLING WAVES

Nakano relied heavily on Mantis samurai and ronin he knew were trustworthy. Though he is remembered as a pirate, Nakano did not intend to be a bandit at all. He wanted his warriors to be strong and honest, so that his vengeance on the Yasuki merchant would not be tainted by thievery. After the Battle of the Rolling Waves, he led his fleet to the caves below the Islands of Silk, and pondered his next course of action. He could not return to the Mantis clan, for the Mantis would be politically forced to turn him in.

In the end, the Mantis Clan Champion took the decision out of his hands. He visited Nakano's hiding place, and ordered him to continue to operate independently from the Mantis clan. Nakano was to attack merchant convoys and give most of the profits back to the Mantis Clan. His fleet was also to protect Mantis ships from other wako. In return, the Mantis would divert official attention away from him, and would help him keep his equipment in finest condition. Nakano nodded, and the Rolling Waves wako were born. The current Rolling Waves wako bears no resemblance to Nakano's original fleet. The Rolling Waves wako is now a pirate gang led by a vicious man with a loose sense of morals. Kishimoto, the current leader, secretly supported Yoritomo Kitao in the Mantis Civil War, and is concerned for his life now that Kumiko has succeeded. Kishimoto is looking to cut all ties his wako has to the Mantis Clan and has begun to raid merchant vessels for personal profit. He still uses his forces for the Mantis Clan's benefit, to keep up the charade; his stronghold is under Mantis protection, and it would be a shame to lose such a valuable location. Still, it is only a matter of time before Kumiko finds out about his betrayal. With Kumiko's vengeance looming over its future, the Rolling Waves wako could soon come to a brutal end.

D20 SYSTEM:

Starting Honor: 1; other family information is the same as the Yoritomo.

15R RPG 2E:

Benefit: +1 Willpower

Schools: Yoritomo Bushi

and in typical legend-pirate style, hid it in an island stronghold. He died daringly jumping into the throat of the King of the Orochi, thrusting his sword deep into the beast. Surprisingly, Lion samurai Ikoma Otemi found out in 1158 that many of the legends surrounding Yasuki Fumoki were true.

The Battle of the Rolling Waves involved one of the most famous ronin pirates in history. Nakano, a former Mantis bushi, was arrested and scheduled to be executed after attempting to sell illegal gaijin artifacts. At night Nakano overwhelmed his guards, returned to his ship, and sailed off to sea. He laid low for a few years, building his pirate gang for vengeance on the Yasuki merchant who had fingered him to the magistrates. Seven years after his jailbreak, he and his pirate gang ambushed and destroyed a caravan of Yasuki sea vessels. He killed the merchants, eliminated his target, sank the vessels, then sailed off before the Crab could retaliate.

PIRATE OPERATIONS

That single battle was enough to convince the Crab clan to reinforce all of their ships. Though they had lost some shipments to piracy prior, this time the Yasuki lost over ten trade ships and one of their prized negotiators. The Yasuki promptly doubled the defenses of their caravans and placed a sizeable bounty on the head of Nakano. Despite their best efforts, he was never brought to justice. Some tales state that Nakano was a noble man simply in search of justice, and that he did not steal any goods from the vessels. The Crab scoff at the tale and remember Nakano as one of the most villainous pirates in history (though, ironically, Fumoki is still a well loved subject of legend in their lands).

Some pirates are not ronin at all, but are simply fronts for bigger, stronger organizations: The Great Clans themselves. The coastal Clans feel no qualms about attacking the ships of their competitors and bringing themselves greater treasure. This is not to say that the Great Clans are universally dishonorable; a few vigilant men debase themselves to commit crime for the greater good of the Clan. The Yasuki family of the Crab Clan, for instance, would attack Crane vessels with soldiers wearing the clothes of ronin. The Yasuki daimyo would give the profits to the Crab Clan Champion. He would offer no explanation of the unexpected profits, and the Champion would ask for none. The Daidoji family and the Shiba family perform the same duties for their clans.

The Mantis Clan reigns supreme over the waves. No other Clans have sailors as experienced, willing, and skilled as the Mantis Clan. Rich merchants who wish to move their shipments safely through the sea often hire a Mantis sailor, for no one knows the sea better. It is thus no surprise that the Mantis Clan produce the greatest pirates in Rokugan. Mantis pirates are strong, quick, bold and daring. They strike with little fear of getting caught; with their remote location on the Islands of Silk, the Mantis are able to easily hide any incriminating evidence from traveling magistrates. Even the Mantis Clan Champion Yoritomo Kumiko's personal ship occasionally attacks vessels and loots their cargo, but only when a foreign vessel invades Mantis territory without appropriate travel papers.

The Tortoise Clan is a Minor Clan that has often resorted to piracy to conduct their secret duties in the name of the Emperor. They formed after the Battle at White Stag, in the year 442, after founder Agasha Kasuga safely led the gaijin survivors out of Rokugan. The Tortoise Clan is entrusted with espionage, contact with the gaijin, and trade with the gaijin in the Emperor's name. The Tortoise Clan members grew skillful at being out of the spotlight, at disappearing into the crowd. The Tortoise Clan often utilized this skill on the waves, suddenly appearing to attack merchant ships and disappearing.

Finally, not all pirates are ronin and bushi. A great many *wako* are formed by disgruntled or desperate peasants forced into banditry to support their families. After all, most samurai consider sailing beneath them and peasants service most ships. These peasant *wako* operate out of their fishing boats. The peasant *wako* would set up their vessels near trade routes. One of the sailors acts as the lookout, watching the merchant ships for the least protected. The *wako* would swarm quickly and unexpectedly, overwhelming the defenses. They would then disappear back into the mainland with little preparation. Many rivers and bays break up the coastline, and dozens of fishing villages contain hidden ports to hide their activities from the local magistrates. At the sign of trouble, the heimin disperse into the countryside, and the pirate fleet would simply be more fishing boats in the sea once more.

The Doji trade beautiful works of art, wonderful paintings and intricately designed kimono. Phoenix ships carry a supply of silver mined from their vast mountain range. Mantis vessels appear in ports all over Rokugan, bringing loads of silk that are absolutely necessary to create both simple clothes and samurai armor. The Yasuki trade with steel, iron, and trinkets in their holds. Enterprising merchants transport excess fish and rice from the many peasant villages that line Rokugan's coast. These treasures are simply targets in pirates' eyes.

Many things about Rokugani geography and culture facilitate pirate activity. Rokugan's coastline is dotted with dozens of islands, the vast majority of which are not charted and are not inhabited. A quick and smart pirate leader could easily find a refuge to hide from the eyes of officials. Dozens of villages have ports for their fishing boats, which can host a pirate kobune as easily any fishing vessel.

Rokugan follows curious laws and customs that make it easier for pirates to function. Rokugani pilots follow the same courses through the sea than their successful predecessors. With the exception of some secret shipping lines designated by the Great Clans for military purposes these routes are familiar to all experienced sailors. As a result, the traffic of merchant convoys and ships can be found in predictable spots along the coast. A clever pirate is able to find the exact position of any merchant ship if he knows the ship's time of departure, the weather, and the course the navigator is likely to choose. This also makes ambushing random merchant vessels a simple affair.

Perhaps merchants could evade pirates more easily if they forged new trade routes, following more unpredictable patterns. However, navigators are loath to blaze new trails. Most Rokugani ships are fragile, and sailors have a deep seeded fear of the unknown sea. Many adventurous sailors strayed and disappeared, or reappeared with tales of monstrous orochi, spider oni, trolls, and other hazards. The sailors believe that the threat of pirates is lesser than the threat of destruction from monsters. After all, one can argue with and defend against pirates; there is little hope for survival against an orochi attack.

On the other hand, pirate ships are often forced to venture into unexplored seas. Pirates often cannot utilize the known paths to escape after a raid because of the need for secrecy. For this reason, the escape is as dangerous (if not more so) as the attack on the merchant ships. Many pirate crews have fled across the waves after a successful venture, only to sink to the bottom of the sea because their ship ran into a hungry kumo. This generally poses a danger only to ronin or peasant *wako*; Clan pirates often have established secret routes for their pirates years ago.

Wako led by ronin find crew in the tea houses and sake works of big cities, where they can find downtrodden men attempting to forget their troubles for the night. Clan *wako* fill their rosters with skilled heimin sailors and strong fighters from the Clan's naval forces. Crewmen are generally drawn from those who will not be missed for long periods, or who wish to leave their former lives behind forever. Peasant *wako* are very tight knit operations. Every pirate knows each other and generally is from the same village, often even the same family.

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

The party is in pursuit of a fleeing kobune. If the party is composed of magistrates this is a pirate kobune, a merchant kobune, if your party is composed of pirates. When capture seems inevitable, the other ship suddenly veers into uncharted seas.

FOCUS

The wind is blowing in the chased ship's favor, and it is quickly widening the gap between the two ships. The party's crew is wary of following the kobune into uncharted areas; one of the most superstitious men comes up to you and relays his fear that their ship would be destroyed if they continue on their path.

STRIKE

If the party follows, the other boat ventures into a Sea of Shadow and is attacked by a group of trolls. They have the choice of standing by, helping the attacked ship, or waiting for the trolls to finish their job before boarding the ship and taking the items you were hunting for.

LOCATION

Pirate gangs generally operate in one region of the sea. Though staying in one area increases the chances of being caught, pirates believe that the benefits granted by their familiarity of the region outweigh the risks. The group only moves when it grows too big and attracts more attention than it is worth to keep to the same area. When the *wako* moves its base of operations it must start anew; it must rebuild its sphere of influence, deal with antagonistic pirate groups already in the area, establish a stronghold, and figure out escape routes. Relocating is difficult, so most *wako* practice discretion to avoid attracting too much attention from the authorities.

The majority of piracy occurs in the waters off the Crane coastline. This is hardly surprising, as the Crane Clan controls most of the land next to Umi Amaterasu. The Crane coastline is long and there are many places a peasant *wako* could use for operations. The sea bordering the Crane lands contains the most charted courses, making ambushes hard to succeed. The increased sea space works to the pirates' benefit, as well; *wako* operating in the Crane seas can easily escape if anything goes wrong.

The most influential *wako* group in the Crane lands is the Serpents of Sanada, led by ronin Sanada. Sanada is a flamboyant man who believes himself a pirate directly out of legend. He has six kobune in his fleet, all led by experienced pirates. Sanada is arrogant and has no regard for his own safety, believing his devilish good luck will see him through — and he has been correct so far. His *wako*'s name is whispered in taverns all through the Crane lands. He taunts the local magistrates, and on two separate occasions stood his ground when magistrate ships interrupted his piracy, crippling the magistrate ships so they could not pursue while leaving the crews alive (so as not to attract the vengeance of more magistrates). Sanada has survived so far only because of his genuine genius for naval tactics and his incredible luck.

The pirates that operate around the Mantis Isles tend to be fronts for Mantis operations, functioning with or without the Mantis Champion's approval. Those pirates who operate under the Daughter of Storms' permission are less bloodthirsty than

THE SERPENTS OF SANADA

The Serpents of Sanada can be considered the model of a successful *wako*. Despite its notoriety, the Serpents of Sanada has hunted the Crane seas for over three years without interruption. Part of its success can be credited to Sanada's remarkable foresight. Sanada sailed through the uncharted waters of his hunting grounds for two years creating escape paths before he began raiding merchant ships. His preparations were even riskier and perilous than most of his pirate attacks, but Sanada charted the routes he desired.

His name is legendary in the Crane lands. Using his notoriety Sanada has pressured many fishermen into keeping the location of his stronghold secret, and even paid off a few village headmen with a small share of his vast wealth. If the heimin somehow manage to overcome their almost supernatural fear of Sanada's strength, the local magistrates could strike a severe blow into the heart of the Serpents of Sanada.

Their stronghold in the Village of Chibasu is detailed later in this chapter.

D20 SYSTEM:

Favored Class: Fighter

Starting Honor: 1

Class Skill: Swim

Starting Outfit: 1. 2× kama and 100 koku

LSR RPG 2E:

Benefit: +1 Stamina

Glory: -1 Infamy

Schools: Serpent's Coil

most, at least giving invading ships the chance to turn back or present travel papers before sending them to the bottom of the sea. Technically these individuals, operating under Mantis charter, are privateers rather than true pirates. Due to an agreement with the Emerald Champion, Mantis privateers have agreed not to attack and loot such ships for a period of two years, so long as their crews do not strike the first blow. Naturally some Mantis captains have taken advantage of the letter of the law, and do their best to threaten or provoke a target ship into making the first move so that they can legally loot the vessel.

Pirates operating with the support of Mantis samurai but against the orders of the Daughter of Storms are not unheard of but must be even more cautious than most pirates. While these individuals have the unparalleled training and resources of Mantis sailors to call upon, they also recognize that Kumiko takes her promise to the Emerald Champion very seriously. Should she discover that a Mantis is operating as a true pirate against her command, such an individual will find himself relentlessly hunted by the finest ships in Kumiko's navy. This very real threat leads most potential Mantis pirate to seek a safer, if less profitable, career as a privateer.

Ronin or peasants who attempt to base their activities out of the Islands of Silk find themselves in over their heads. Mantis bushi know most of the prime spots for hideouts and can sail better than any who ply the waves. Pirates not under Mantis

control are encouraged to leave, eradicated, or offered fealty if particularly talented. The Rolling Waves, led by Kishimoto, operates out of the caves under the Islands of Silk. The *wako* currently works for the Mantis Clan, but the leader is no longer comfortable with his role as Mantis lackey, especially since Kumiko's recent agreement with the Emerald Champion. He has yet to strike at his former employers, but he would no doubt take any chance to do so.

The waters outside of Ootosan Uchi used to be filled with traffic. Before the Imperial City's destruction, all merchant ships stopped in the Tortoise Clan's ports to unload their exotic supplies. Now the Tortoise ports are used infrequently and few merchants bother to trade with the Tortoise. The waters around Ootosan Uchi are now unpredictable and destructive. Seas of Shadow appear without warning and the Tortoise must always be ready to take care of those problems. No pirates operate near the former Imperial City.

Pirates operating in the Phoenix lands must be highly skilled, but those who survive are among the best pirates on the waves. The Phoenix coastline is lined with tall cliffs. A few safe harbors can be found in small bays hidden between the jagged cliffs. The waters in the Phoenix lands are highly perilous. Sharp rocks and reefs lurk under the turbulent seas, ready to cripple a ship with any wrong move. Here, more than any other place, following the established routes is necessary.

The most influential *wako* in the Phoenix lands is the Red Dawn, a group led by a vicious ronin named Ranmaru. The Red Dawn is a small *wako*, composed of only one kobune, but its name is known all throughout Rokugan's underground society. The Red Dawn is ruthless and known for giving no quarter to its targets. Their reputation works against them at times; their targets always fight to the last man, for they know no mercy awaits them.

The Crab coastline is the most dangerous sea near Rokugan. The Crab coastline contains the greatest military presence of all the seas. The Crab are pragmatic people, and use all resources available to them for their war against the Shadowlands. Kobune are always on standby to transport troops and supplies from the Yasuki lands to the Kaiu Wall. Yasuki vessels manned by strong Hida bushi and experienced Yasuki warriors patrol the seas, protecting the others from naval Shadowlands threats. A *wako* has to brave the Crab armies, magistrate patrols, and Shadowlands attacks to raid merchant ships. Most pirates do not believe it is worth the risk.

No pirate gang currently operates out of the Crab lands. Some pirate ships travel the waves, but those ships have made little impact on the merchant ships traveling in the area.

BEFORE THE RAID

There are a few things that *wako* can do before the mission begins to better their chances at successfully looting a vessel. Pirate gangs attempt to place spies into merchant families. A spy can completely wreck a merchant's business. A spy leaks as much information about transport movements to the pirate leader. The three most important snippets of information needed are the contents of the shipment, the defenses the merchant convoy will have, and the chosen trade route. Without a spy a pirate leader must simply make a guess which route would be used most, and hope that their defenses are weaker than his attack.

THE RED DAWN

The Red Dawn formed two years ago with two crew members: Ranmaru and his friend Okuni. They were both former Phoenix samurai who ran to avoid persecution for the murder of their arrogant and overbearing superior. The two continued to run until they arrived at Friendly Traveler Village. The night after they entered the town, the two murdered a Doji merchant and ran off with the supplies. With their newfound riches they hired a few heimin to sail the dead Doji's ship to one of the many uncharted islands off the coast. They terrorized the coast off the Crane lands for a year, then relocated to the Phoenix lands to avoid magistrate troubles.

Both Ranmaru and Okuni have trouble keeping their temper. Ranmaru knows that destroying every ship he raids is bad in the long run. It spreads his reputation, and more reputation means more magistrate attention. However he does not have the heart to rein in Okuni during raids because he is so effective at what he does. Okuni is Ranmaru's greatest strength and his greatest weakness; the former fire *tensai* burns all in his path but knows no moderation in his anger.

D20 SYSTEM:

Favored Class: Fighter

Starting Honor: 0

Class Skill: Profession (sailor)

Starting Outfit: 1. Naginata and ashigaru armor

L5R RPG 2E:

Benefit: +1 Strength

Glory: -1 Infamy

Schools: Facing the Abyss

Spies can prolong the life of a pirate gang for years. However, spies are hard to insert into merchant crews and must gain the confidence of the merchants before being trusted with the information pirates need. Most merchants are wise enough not to share their plans with unproven servants. Most pirate gangs are not that patient and cannot wait that long. Further, the spies themselves occasionally find a safer life in legitimate business and remain loyal to the merchants, betraying their pirate employers.

A *wako* can buy more protection for their actions through the traditional art of graft. There many corrupt men in seats of power in major ports, well aware of the traffic that passes through them. The pirates simply must know which one to approach with what sorts of incentive. The corrupt official can divert official attention from the area and even give out times when merchants leave the port.

These methods can be highly beneficial to a *wako*. However, these preparations are weak points in the *wako's* veil of secrecy. An official who would betray his duty to aid the *wako* might just as easily betray the *wako* to improve his own standing. Bribes and deals under the table leave traces, and a skilled magistrate can lay a trap for *wako* too reliant on outsiders to plan their trades. Many *wako* forego such risks and rely on their luck and skill to get them through each raid.

ADVENTURE HOOK

(This Adventure Hook is for pirate characters only.)

CHALLENGE

A spy in a prominent merchant organization sends an urgent message. It looks like his employers will be sending a ship loaded with expensive silks and precious metals to their contact across the Empire. The spy reports the ship will have minimal protection.

FOCUS

At first glance, the spy's information seems to be perfect. The ship is where it is said to be, the guards are minimal, and you have no problems stealing the cargo. When the party takes the cargo, they find only trash and useless metals.

STRIKE

The heads of the merchants were attempting to draw out any traitors from their organization, and by the party's actions have uncovered the spy. It is only a matter of time before your spy betrays the party's *wako* to save his own skin. Does the party attempt to relocate before they are discovered, or do they attempt to rescue and silence the spy before he talks?

THE RAID

The most popular way of raiding merchant vessels is the ambush. Pirates wait for the merchants to come to them, and when they are too close to escape spring the trap, bringing forth hidden ships hidden by reefs or some other nasty surprise. Once the surprise is set, the pirates must act quickly to overtake the merchants, overpower the crew, and loot the cargo. Another popular method is to pretend to be a merchant vessel in distress; if any ships come near to help, the pirates can attack without warning. More than one pirate vessel has used this technique only to be "rescued" by another pirate ship, also pretending to be a merchant vessel, leading to a surprisingly bloody confrontation for both parties involved.

Merchant vessels often have only nominal defenses, preferring to rely on skill of navigation and luck to pull them through. Most captains are sensible, and surrender their cargo once boarded. Pirates often leave the ship and crew intact because of their need to escape from the scene as fast as possible. It is rare for pirates to actually murder surrendering crew members or sink the ships they raid (though some vicious *wako* are known to do so). The last thing a pirate wants is for a crew to fight to the death rather than meekly hand over

their treasure, or for a merchant to go bankrupt due to losing his ships. Such behavior just makes a pirate's business more dangerous and difficult in the long run.

AFTER THE RAID

All three types of pirate gangs unload their stolen merchandise in markets that do not ask in depth about the origins of the items. Many such marketplaces exist, and pirates rarely have problems selling their supplies. The biggest of such markets is located in Shiro Kaotsuki no Higashi, the castle where the Crab Clan receives ambassadors from other clans. There are no curious magistrates at the Golden Carp Marketplace, no official eyes, and all the privacy in the world. A pirate captain can feel confident about unloading his expensive cargo at the Golden Carp Marketplace (that is, if he is not caught while en route to the castle). A pirate can expect to receive up to forty percent of market value for his goods. Those who bargain for more (especially when negotiating with the Yasuki) will find the local magistrates uncharacteristically alert and vigilant.

The only problem arises in moving the goods from the hidden strongholds to the marketplace. Often the boxes of stolen material must themselves be smuggled in under cloak of night to be sold. Often, *wako* have a sanctuary in their favorite marketplace's city where they can hide their stolen goods and ready it for sale.

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

While carelessly browsing through the marketplace at a major city, one of the items catches a party member's eye. After a moment, he realizes what the item is: it is a brooch belonging to a friend or relative, lost in a pirate attack a few weeks before.

FOCUS

When the party approaches the merchant about the ownership of the brooch, he is eager to help and penitent. He returns



the brooch at no cost. He begs forgiveness for dealing with stolen goods, but he himself had bought the brooch from a man in the dock at a very low price. He tells the group how to find the man who had sold it to him.

STRIKE

The merchant is a bald faced liar. He is the head of a local *wako* and had been responsible for the raids in this area. The man he fingered for the group was a contact for a rival *wako*. He sees this as a wonderful opportunity to expand his operations and his area of influence without moving a muscle.

PIRATE STRONGHOLDS

The following section explores two bases used by pirate cartels. This section examines in detail the village of Chibasu, the base for the Serpents of Sanada *wako*, and Jagged Teeth Cavern, the base for the Rolling Waves *wako*. The Serpents of Sanada found Chibasu three years ago and decided the location was perfect for their operation. The Rolling Waves set up the base at Jagged Teeth Cavern over four hundred years ago and has lived there ever since.

HOW TO USE THIS INFORMATION

Each of the major areas of both strongholds is presented here with all the information a GM needs to use it. Each section contains a heading entitled "At a Glance", which summarizes all the various components of that area. More specific portions of the strongholds are given their own descriptions, which may be read aloud to players if the GM so desires. Individual GMs are encouraged to expand upon the information presented here.

THE VILLAGE OF CHIBASU

Anyone who has heard of Sanada would be greatly surprised by his choice of headquarters. Given his flamboyant attitude and his disregard for safety, one would expect him to choose a secret island hideout to horde his treasures in typical story faction. Sanada believes the village of Chibasu suits his purposes. After all, Sanada has successfully led a *wako* for three years. One day perhaps he would have an island hideout, but not now.

Chibasu is one of many villages on the Crane coastline. From a casual glance, there is nothing that makes Chibasu any different from any other peasant village in the Crane lands. Chibasu is built on a hill next to large cliffs near its own bay. The villagers tend to a few acres of barley fields next to the river Chibakawa. The governor of the province, Doji Junburo, raised the taxes and takes the majority of crops from the village. The villagers survive by sending out fishing boats every day, and by accepting the donations Sanada occasionally makes to the town.

The villagers of Chibasu are stuck in a curious fix. The bounty for Sanada has grown significantly over the years. If

one of the villagers turned in the location of Sanada's secret base, the village would no longer be on the edge of starvation every winter. However, the reason they are currently not starving is due to the secret donations Sanada offers the village headman for their silence. Further, Sanada settled in three years ago; the governor would surely suspect the peasants knew of his presence and punish them for their negligence. The villagers must help hide the Serpents of Sanada's activities, or suffer along with the notorious *wako*.

VILLAGE FORCES

Chibasu has the same defenses as all other heimin villages — that is to say, Chibasu has no defenses at all. Inexperienced heimin patrol the village at night armed with kama, but that is no deterrence to any determined force. Those who threaten the village and arouse Sanada's ire will meet with much stronger resistance, as the Serpents protect their home fiercely. Sanada's pirates are indistinguishable from normal peasants, though better armed and much better fighters. No bandits have successfully threatened the village since Sanada's arrival; Governor Junburo attributes this to his own sterling reputation as a skilled ruler. Sanada's houses in the village are guarded by heavily armed and trained pirates waiting just inside the door, even on those nights where the pirate chief resides at the hidden port. The hidden port is guarded at all times by at least ten Serpents of Sanada.

HEIMIN GUARDS

Human War2: CR 2, Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d8 + 2; hp 6; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (touch 11, flat-footed 13); Attack kama +1 melee (1d –1 damage); AL N; Honor: 0.5; Glory: 0.5; Status 0.5; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 9, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 9; Height 5 ft. 3 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Handle Animal +2, Swim +4; Dodge, Void Use.

Possessions: ashigaru armor, kama.

SERPENTS OF SANADA PIRATES

Human Ftr6: CR 6, Medium-size humanoid; HD 6d10 + 6; hp 38; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (touch 12, flat-footed 14); Attack +7 kama 2x/+2 melee (1d6 + 3 damage each); AL NE; Honor: 0; Glory: –1; Status –1; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8; Height 5 ft. 8 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Climb +8, Move Silently +7, Profession (sailor) +8; Ambidexterity, Serpent's Coil, Two-Weapon Fighting, Versatile (Move Silently, Profession).

Possessions: 2x kama, +1 ashigaru armor.

HEIMIN GUARDS

Earth: 2

Water: 2

Fire: 2

Air: 2

Void: 2

School/Rank: None (Insight Rank 1)

Glory: 0.5

Status: 0.2

Honor: 0.5

Skills: Athletics 1, Defense 1, Nofujutsu 1, Sailing 1

Disadvantages: Heimin, Obligation (Serpents of Sanada)

Weapons & Armor: one peasant weapon (kama, sai or tonfa), light armor

SERPENTS OF SANADA PIRATES

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Perception: 4

Fire: 3

Agility: 4

Air: 2

Awareness: 3

Void: 2

School/Rank: Serpent's Coil (Insight Rank 2)

Glory: -1

Status: -1

Honor: 0.5

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 1, Commerce 1, Defense 3, Hisomu 3, Kenjutsu 2, Kuenai 2, Nofujutsu 4, Sailing 4, Stealth 2

Advantages: Large

Disadvantages: Greedy (3 points), Obligation (Serpents of Sanada), Social Disadvantage (ronin)

Weapons & Armor: katana, kama, light armor

THE VILLAGE

AT A GLANCE

Chibasu is a standard heimin village. The buildings line one unpaved street that runs through the town to the village headman's house. Each building is identical to the next. The village chief's house is slightly larger than the others, and functions as courthouse and jailhouse when needed. The road passes the village headman's house and eventually leads to Chibakawa and the villager's barley fields. The road passes the docks at the coast, follows the bridge, and heads deeper into Daidoji lands. The home of Doji Junburo is in the nearby hills, well distanced from the stench of the peasant village.

The Serpents of Sanada does not have a strong presence in the village itself. Every villager worries about the *wako's* presence every day, but the pirates do not interfere with daily business. Sanada has not forced the villagers to pay tribute, and except for the port, has not intruded into village property. This perplexes and worries the village headman; the pirate king must have a secret plan coming to fruition, and he worries that if Sanada is caught and his headquarters discovered, the entire village will suffer.

SANADA'S HOUSE

Nothing distinguishes Sanada's house from the other houses in the village. His is a small house, with wooden frames and rice walls, the third house down from the village chief's house. Nothing covers the floors of the houses and a couple futons are directly on the floor. There is no other furniture. A pile of weapons is pushed in a corner, where some Serpents of Sanada pirates placed them last. This house is the closest house to the port, and the Serpents of Sanada pirates believe that is why Sanada has kept the house. They are wrong.

The Sanada also owns the two houses that neighbor this house. When it is time for operations to begin, the pirates live in these houses until it is nighttime; then they sneak down into the ports. On those days, Sanada resides alone in his house, with no guards, no advisors, and no friends. Everyone wonders what their fearless leader does alone on those nights; there has been a lot of speculation, but none of them are correct.

On those days, Sanada sits down in the middle of the room, on the dirt, and remembers his own legend. He remembers the

man he once was, Ikoma Shinchiro. It was here that Ikoma Shinchiro died. He remembers the night the Kitsuki ambassador revealed how he had altered his family's histories to bring greater glory to his family's name. He remembers killing the Kitsuki in a fit of inexplicable anger. He remembers running from the magistrates, from the fallen Kitsuki's brother, and finally coming here. Here, in this village, he finally became tired of running. He sat down in the middle of the room, and pressed his wakizashi to his abdomen, preparing for the three cuts. He remembers hearing a village crone just outside; something in her voice gave him pause. She recited a tale of pirates to village children, a tale of glory and adventure. With nothing else left to him, he had nothing else to lose — perhaps he could be a legend too. He remembers, and smiles to know that he has changed his own destiny as surely as he once changed his ancestors'.

THE DOCKS

The port is small and unimpressive. They are built of strong, stable wooden planks. The docks are structured to be able to safely moor three kobune at once. One of these three ships belongs to the villagers of Chibasu, and the other two belong to the Serpents of Sanada. The pirate king allows the villagers to use one of the boats moored at the docks as thanks for housing his kobune. The villagers are allowed to use the ship on all days except those days when the Serpents start an operation. On such days, Sanada always leaves a white pennant at the edge of the docks. Seeing this pennant, the villagers give all the ships a wide berth.

THE SERPENTS SECRET BASE

AT A GLANCE

The Serpents' hidden base can be found on the other side of the cliff from Chibasu. Only a forest, a hill, and a slowly degrading cliff separate Chibasu from the Serpents of Sanada base. Powerful illusions trick the few hikers braving the hill that the base simply does not exist, and trick passing ships that the bay next to the base does not exist. The base is at the bottom of the hill, surrounded by the cliffs of neighboring mountains. The beach next to the base is sandy, with a simple grave marker near the docks. The base itself is composed of three major rooms: the throne room, the barracks, and the storage room.

THE HILL

Anyone could walk to the Serpents' hidden base by walking through the forest and braving the slippery hills. The cliff is slowly degrading, and so the paths have become increasingly dangerous to traverse. Many people died by slipping along the path and falling over the cliff before Sanada ever arrived in the area. Now, few people attempt to travel over the hill.

This is perfect for the Serpents' purposes. With the help of a ronin shugenja that joined Sanada two years ago, the Serpents of Sanada created their hidden stronghold. Mori, skilled at talking to the Earth kami, reinforced a part of the hill to create a stable path. The secret base of operations is lodged in against two cliffs and a hill, hidden by clever construction and carefully tended camouflage.

These solutions are temporary, at best. Mori has warned Sanada that the Earth kami grow weary of stopping the natural erosion of the cliff. Soon, they will move downward, toward, the sea, carrying his path and perhaps his base with them. Sanada has thus far placated the kami by offering a generous share of his tribute to Mori's small temple, but he knows this is a temporary solution at best.

THE DOCKS

These hidden docks are bigger and sturdier than Chibasu's small port. Up to six kobune can anchor at home at the same time, enough to fit the entire fleet of the Serpents of Sanada. The port is well protected by dangerous reefs that make it difficult to navigate and unsuitable for profitable fishing. At least three guards are on watch at all times, looking out for random ships that slip through the defenses. At a call, up to fifty pirates could come running to help chase down any that try to escape.

Though the port can fit the Serpents' entire fleet, Sanada has ordered two of his ships placed at the Chibasu port. It is a simple safety measure. In the unlikely case of an invasion or an attack on the base, there would be more than one way for the pirates to survive.

GRAVE OF THE FEARLESS HUNTER

The grave is a small, simple black stone with the kanji "Fearless Hunter" carved in the front in beautiful calligraphy. Kitsuki Ketto was the younger brother of Kitsuki Motoko, the woman Sanada murdered before running from the law. Ketto followed Sanada's trail for two years, and was the only one to realize that Sanada, pirate king, and Ikoma Shinichiro were the same person. Blinded by his desire for justice, Ketto was relentless in his pursuit of the pirate king. Sanada killed Ketto after the magistrate discovered his secret headquarters in Chibasu.

Sanada ordered his men to mix Ketto's ashes in to the beach and to commission a master sculptor to create the grave marker. Sanada respected the young magistrate; Ketto came closer to ending Sanada's career more than anyone else. Only Ketto's brash attempt to stop Sanada personally rather than summoning re-inforcements prevented Chibasu from being exposed. In a strange way, Sanada regrets the Kitsuki's death. Ketto had been Sanada's most formidable enemy. His hunt had, to a large degree, been responsible for the growth of Sanada's legend. Sanada only hopes he can find another enemy so worthy.

THE BARRACKS

The first of the three rooms in the hidden base is the barracks. It is a spacious room, where up to seventy pirates could reside at one time. The kitchen is placed at the end of the same room, and crates and crates of food line the walls. All this fits in the room comfortably. The barracks room, like the rest of

the hidden base, is made of wood and is kept well organized by the pirates.

THE STORAGE ROOM

The storage room is half the size of the barracks, and empty. The room is completely bare. Sanada believes that it is more prudent to unload stolen goods as quickly as possible, and that there is no point in hoarding it. The storage room is only full directly after any successful operation, before the items are shipped to Sanada's buyers. Sanada has connections in Mura Sabishii Toshi, the closest Crane port city, and the Golden Carp Marketplace in Shiro Kaotsuki no Higashi. With their help, Sanada sells the goods he raids at seventy-five percent of market value, an unusually high level of profit for a pirate operation.

SANADA'S THRONE ROOM

Sanada meets with his captains here, a large room where a huge dais allows him to sit higher than all, like the king the legends paint him to be. His quarters are connected to the throne room door hidden by a painting.

Sanada's throne room looks surprisingly cultured. The walls are lined with lovely works of art, most frequently depicting the activities of famous pirates and famous battles. Scrolls of well known and wonderfully written plays are displayed. Barrels of koku and jewelry line the walls, but they are tastefully closed. It is a symbol of the power Sanada has earned, the fruits of his labor and the strength of his legend. Sanada uses this room to greet new members to his *wako* and to oversee the deaths of traitors.



GM INFO

Sanada believes himself the greatest pirate who ever lived. He believes himself Yasuki Fumoki reborn, the spirit of Nakano, with the cleverness of the original Yasuki and the cunning of his greatest ancestor, Ikoma. He is vain, arrogant, selfish, insufferable, but not entirely without some twisted sense of honor. In the beginning, Sanada needed the money from the piracy to survive. Now, he leads the Serpents of Sanada to build his legacy and to feel the exhilarating rush of stepping onto a subjugated merchant vessel. He taunts magistrates because he wants good opponents for his raids (and an appreciative audience, of course). He also does what he does to support the village of Chibasu, a poor and overtaxed place that he knows would fall to poverty and hopelessness without the support he offers them.

Appealing to the pirate king's vanity is a good way to quickly get on Sanada's good side, though insincere flattery will only anger him. Other than his blinding vanity, Sanada is a reasonable and courteous man — he retains some sense of the bushido the Ikoma taught him and believes only a strong warrior can show courtesy to a foe or inferior. Insulting his *wako*, his past exploits, or threatening the villagers is the quickest way to raise Sanada's ire, and find that beneath his flamboyant and honorable façade beats the heart of a cold-blooded killer.

THE LEGENDARY SANADA, PIRATE KING

Male human Ftr10: CR10, Medium-size humanoid; HD 10d10 + 20; hp 70; Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC 21 (touch 12, flat-footed 16); Attack +1 katana +16/+11 melee (1d10 + 4 damage); AL NE; Honor: 1; Glory: -6; Status: -1; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 16; Height 5 ft. 7 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Bluff +6, Diplomacy +12, Jump +5, Profession (sailor) +12, Swim +14; Armor Focus (lamellar), Cleave, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Serpent's Coil, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Versatile (Diplomacy, Profession), Void Use, Weapon Focus (katana).

Possessions: +1 katana, +1 lamellar armor, Sanada's Triumph kobune (keel-boat), +1 amulet of natural armor.

THE LEGENDARY SANADA, PIRATE KING

Earth: 3

Water: 4

Fire: 3

Intelligence: 4

Air: 3

Void: 4

School/Rank: Serpent's Coil (Insight Rank 4)

Glory: -6

Status: -1

Honor: 1.5

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 4, Commerce 4, Defense 3, Hisomu 4, Kenjutsu 5, Kuenai 3, Lore (Pirate Legends) 4, Nofujutsu 2, Sailing 5, Stealth 3, Torture 2

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Benten's Blessing, Great Destiny, Luck (6 points), Tactician

Disadvantages: Bounty (Serious), Dark Fate, Overconfident, Social Disadvantage (ronin), Vanity

Weapons & Armor: katana, kama, Fine light armor

JAGGED TEETH CAVERN

Jagged Teeth Cavern is a cavern at the end of a long series of caverns under the Island of Silk furthest from Rokugan's coast. Dangerous natural rock formations line the entrance of the cavern and one must navigate a maze of underground caves before finding the cavern. Only Rolling Waves pirates and elite members of the Mantis Clan such as the Storm Legion are able to navigate into the Jagged Teeth Cavern. The Rolling Waves has resided in the Jagged Teeth Cavern for centuries, and are prepared for any invader.

CAVERN FORCES

The cavern is heavily defended despite its remote location and its small size. The cavern is guarded by a minimum of fifteen soldiers at any time. This number increases when more pirate ships are docked at the cavern, and reaches a high of twenty guards when the entire fleet of ten ships is present. The ships and the dock is patrolled by Rolling Waves pirates, and the chambers is guarded by elite Mantis bushi.

ROLLING WAVES PIRATES

Human Ftr7: CR 7, Medium-size humanoid; HD 7d10 + 14; hp 49; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (touch 12, flat-footed 14); Attack +8 kama ×2/+3 melee (1d6 + 2 damage each); AL NE; Honor: 1; Glory -1; Status -1; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8; Height 5 ft. 6 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Climb +6, Move Silently +7, Profession (sailor) +8; Ambidexterity, Two-Weapon Fighting, Versatile (Move Silently, Profession), Weapon Focus (kama).

Possessions: +1 kama ×2, ashigaru armor.

MANTIS BUSHI

Human Mantis Sam10: CR 10, Medium-size humanoid; HD 10d10+10; hp 72; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 21 (touch 13, flat-footed 16); +1 Attack keen katana +14/+9 melee or +1 kama ×2 +12/+7 (1d10 + 3 or 1d6 + 3 ×2 damage); AL N; Honor: 1; Glory 2; Status 2; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12; Height 5 ft. 10 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Bluff +6, Diplomacy +8, Jump +15, Intimidate +13, Sense Motive +12, Profession (Sailor) +14, Swim +10; Ambidexterity, Armor Focus (lamellar), Gusai's Technique, Hand of Osano-Wo, Improved Critical (katana), Improved Initiative, Quick Draw, Two Weapon Fighting, Void Use, Weapon Focus (katana); Dojo: Dojo Raiden; Kata: Striking as Water.

Possessions: +1 keen katana (ancestral Daisho), +2 wakizashi (ancestral daisho), +1 kama ×2, +1 lamellar armor.

ROLLING WAVES PIRATES

Earth: 3

Water: 4

Fire: 3

Agility: 4

Air: 3

Void: 3

School/Rank: Yoritomo Bushi 3 (Dojo Raiden)

Glory: -1

Status: -1

Honor: 1.5

Skills: Athletics 4, Commerce 2, Defense 3, Hisomu 4, Kenjutsu 3, Kuenai 2, Nofujutsu 5, Sailing 4, Stealth 2

Advantages: Patron (Mantis Clan)

Disadvantages: Obligation (Rolling Waves)

Weapons & Armor: katana, 2x kama, light armor

MANTIS BUSHI

Earth: 4

Water: 4

Fire: 4

Agility: 5

Air: 2

Reflexes: 4

Void: 4

School/Rank: Yoritomo Bushi 4 (Dojo Raiden)

Glory: 2

Status: 3

Honor: 1.5

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Commerce 2, Defense 3, Gambling 3, Hunting 3, Jiu-jutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Kuenai 2, Nofujutsu 5, Sailing 5

Advantages: Large

Disadvantages: Benten's Curse, Brash

Weapons & Armor: katana, kama, light armor

Past the perilous rocks is a small bay and most frequently a few ships docked at a port. The water is clear and calm, with no rocks or hidden hazards to run into. The beach is black volcanic rocks, and a pirate or two is always on the lookout for incoming ships.

THE JAGGED TEETH

It is virtually impossible to navigate the jagged teeth on the first try with no guidance. Mantis bushi toiled for months to create a nearly solid line of defense. Large natural stalagmites line the outer edges, with smaller (and sharper) rocks forming the maze of the teeth. It is impossible to fit anything bigger than a standard kobune through this pathway.

Sailing through the jagged teeth requires a Profession (sailor) check against a DC of 25. Characters who have been through the jagged teeth before in a vessel may make a Wisdom check (DC 15) to reduce the DC of the Profession (sailor) check by 5.

Sailing through the jagged teeth requires a Sailing check against a TN of 25. Characters who have been through the jagged teeth before in a vessel may make an Intelligence check at a TN of 15 to attempt to remember the correct path. If the roll is successful, lower the TN of the sailing check by 5.

THE BAY

The water is clear because of the unique structure of the jagged teeth. With its formation the sludge and pollutants that blacken the water do not enter the bay. The water is clear and deep; pieces of destroyed ships and fish can be seen littering the cavern floor. The beach is kept spotless by pirates; any sailor who misbehaves is given punishment duty and forced to clean the rocks of debris, sand, driftwood, and other such detritus.

The port is solid, big enough to dock up to twelve kobune at once and the wooden planks feel firm and solid beneath a sailor's feet and will not give when heavy weight is placed on it. The wooden planks lead away from the bay, across the rocky beach, and up toward torches and buildings built into the walls in the caves. The path has been cleared of all other things, and the beach has been neatly parted to allow the wooden path to continue.

THE CAVES

There are many caves that are connected to the bay and it appears all of them have been built up to support human life. Supports line entrances, torches line all the walls, and the floor is covered with wood. These caves are natural, though the Mantis clan has significantly reinforced its support. Directly from the caves is a fork in the road that branches out into three different paths.

Left Branch: The Barracks and Storage

There are two brightly lit chambers inside the left branch of the fork in the road. The two chambers' openings face each other. The chamber on the left is filled with rows and rows of beds, spartan in the dearth of details. It has the resources and room to house up to a hundred men. The chamber on the right is lined with items to furnish a pirate ship. Crates marked "food" line the far wall of the chamber, and weapons of all types line the neighboring wall. Supplies to repair ships,

THE SURROUNDING SEAS

AT A GLANCE

Few people find themselves in Jagged Teeth Cavern by accident. The Jagged Teeth Cavern is in the middle of a maze of interconnected caverns, all which look as if it could collapse without warning. There are dozens of dead ends, of turns that end at walls. The water is dark and murky and no natural light is available. The sound of dripping water echoes through the caverns, interfering with unwanted intruders' ability to think.

THE WALLS

Large stalactites jut ominously from the ceiling. The stalactites are huge and scrape the tops of ships' sails unless the navigator slowly guides the vessel. Many of the rocks along the walls look like fallen stalactites and broken pieces of the wall. The scene gives off an overall impression of a cave that is slowly falling apart. The illusion is the product of meticulous reconstruction and setting by determined Mantis samurai over many decades. The caverns are not in any danger of collapsing, but the illusion serves to discourage others from exploring the caverns.

THE BAY

AT A GLANCE

The bay can only be entered by navigating past rows of rocks that rise out of the water. There is only one correct — very convoluted — passage through the rocks. Other paths look open, but those paths are lined with very sharp rocks just below the surface.

spare sails, rope, and planks of wood all lay on the floor haphazardly. Unlike the rest of the cavern so far, this room looks as if a tornado hit and scattered everything onto the floor.

Middle Branch: The Goods

The middle branch of the fork in the road leads down fifty steps further into the cave. It leads to a wooden door, guarded at all times by two Mantis bushi. Through the door is the largest chamber in the entire caverns. Stone steps lead down into the rest of the chamber. The chamber is big enough to hold two kobune side by side. All are replete with treasure. This is the payoff of centuries of raiding Crane and Crab merchant convoys.

The chamber is filled with rows and rows of crates, big enough so it can only be moved by two or more people. Some of the crates are open, with bales of silk, lots of expensive jewelry, and all sorts of expensive stolen goods. Some of the crates are even filled with weapons formed with Kaiu steel. Half of the crates are empty; the Mantis Clan is slowly moving the treasures out of this lair and to the Mantis coffers. (Kishimoto is not pleased with this action at all, and is looking in vain for a way to keep the treasure in his control).

Right Branch: The Captain's Quarters

The entire right branch of the caves has been devoted to the captain of the Rolling Waves. Kishimoto's quarters are by themselves as big as the barracks for 100 men, and it is a room that sends many conflicting messages to the viewer. A huge wolf skin covers the floor, and just above it hangs an elegant kimono of the finest silk. A beautiful tapestry detailing the fall of the Gozoku hangs above his garish and opulent throne. Kishimoto spends all of his free time in his quarters, preparing for raids and scheming how to separate his *wako* from the Mantis clan.

GA INFO

Kishimoto is a very impulsive man. He does not restrain himself or his emotions in any manner of speaking. He is a short man but he commands a fearsome presence when he wishes. He desires only two things: money and respect. He is a sneaky person, with oily smiles, shifty eyes, and slick responses. However, if things do not go his way his anger rises and all civility disappears from his demeanor. His angry outbursts are legendary; once, he beat and kicked to death one of his sailors who let a quarry escape with his incompetence. The others in the organization follow him out of fear, not respect. A skillful person can manipulate those feelings to turn his underlings against him.

KISHIMOTO, VICIOUS PIRATE

Male human Ftr14: CR14, Medium-size humanoid; HD 14d10 + 20; hp 82; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 23 (touch 13, flat-footed 18); Attack +2 keen katana +22/+17/+12 melee or +2 kama ×2 +19/+14/+9 melee (1d10 + 6 or (1d6 + 6) ×2 damage); AL NE; Honor: 0; Glory: -5; Status: 3; SV Fort + 11, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14; Height 5 ft. 4 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Bluff +10, Diplomacy +12, Handle Animal +8, Jump +10, Profession (sailor) +15, Swim +15; Ambidexterity, Armor Focus (lamellar), Cleave, Dodge, Hand of Osano-Wo, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Quick Draw, Two Weapon Fighting, Versatile (Diplomacy, Profession), Void Use, Way of the Mantis,

Weapon Focus (kama, katana); *Dojo:* Dojo Raiden; *Kata:* Strike as Fire, Strike as Water, Prayer's End.

Possessions: +2 keen katana, +1 wakizashi, +3 lamellar armor, +2 kama ×2, Nakano's Legacy kobune (keel-boat), +2 amulet of natural armor.

KISHIMOTO, VICIOUS PIRATE

Earth: 4

Water: 4

Perception: 5

Fire: 4

Agility: 5

Air: 2

Reflexes: 4

Void: 4

School/Rank: Yoritomo Bushi 5 (Dojo Raiden)

Glory: -5

Status: 3

Honor: 1.5 (0.5)

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 2, Commerce 6, Defense 4, Hisomu 4, Jiu-jutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6, Kuenai 2, Nofujutsu 5, Sailing 7, Stealth 3, Torture 5

Advantages: Perceived Honor

Disadvantages: Brash, Cruel, Dark Secret (Betraying the Mantis Clan), Greedy (4 points), Overconfident

Weapons & Armor: katana, wakizashi, 2× kama, Excellent Light Armor

Kata: Strike as Fire, Strike as Water, Prayer's End

SECRET PATH

Unlike most of the cave, the wall next to Kishimoto's personal quarters is shrouded in shadow. If a torch is moved closer to the wall — the nearest torch is across the room — a strange sign is revealed. The more knowledgeable characters will know that it is an ancient Mantis way of marking escape routes. Pressing the marking activates a four hundred year old mechanism that uncovers a long stairway leading up. After a hundred steps, the passageway ends in a beautiful meadow next to a cliff. After some exploring one can find out the meadow is five minutes away from a fishing village with a port.

Recognizing the Mantis symbol requires a Knowledge (Mantis) check with a DC of 15. Finding the secret entrance on top of the cliff requires a Spot check with a DC of 25.

Recognizing the Mantis symbol requires either a Lore (Mantis) check at a TN of 15 or a History (Mantis) check at a TN of 20. Finding the secret entrance on top of the cliff requires an Investigation or Hunting check at a TN of 25.

FISHING VILLAGE

The village is small and well kept. The buildings are dwarfed by a huge barracks in the middle of the town; many skilled Mantis bushi populate the small village. Upon closer inspection the Mantis bushi seem to be doing nothing of importance in the village. Their demeanor fits someone waiting for action, as if the bushi are waiting for something to happen at the secret base. It cannot be determined if the bushi are there to aid the pirates in emergencies or held as a threat if the pirates misbehave.

NEW MECHANICS

ANCESTORS

Pirate characters may bypass the Clan prerequisite. These ancestors will bless the actions of those who they believe are following in their footsteps, even those who are not related to them by blood. Any pirate could one day find himself under the guidance of one of these spirits, and just as quickly lose the spirit's benefits if he strays from their path.

YAMASAKI

Yamasaki was a Daidoji until he was wrongfully accused of committing the crimes his slain lord had perpetrated in his life. His lord had been taking bribes, allowing pirate gangs to flourish, and even covering for some of the bandits' actions. The Crane clan officials ordered him ronin without seppuku. Yamasaki grew to hate the Crane clan hypocrites who did this to him, and began a movement of hate against the Crane clan merchants. Yamasaki was caught and hanged in the year 700.

VENGEFUL SPIRIT

ANCESTOR FEAT: YAMASAKI

Yamasaki awards those who, like him, concentrate their piracy in a campaign of vengeance.

Clan: Crane

Prerequisite: Void Use

Benefit: Yamasaki awards those who, like him, concentrate their piracy on in a campaign of vengeance. Choose a Great Clan or Minor Clan. While raiding a vessel belonging to that Clan, you gain a +3 bonus when spending Void points instead of +2. However, when raiding a vessel from any other Clan, you cannot use Void points.

ANCESTOR: YAMASAKI

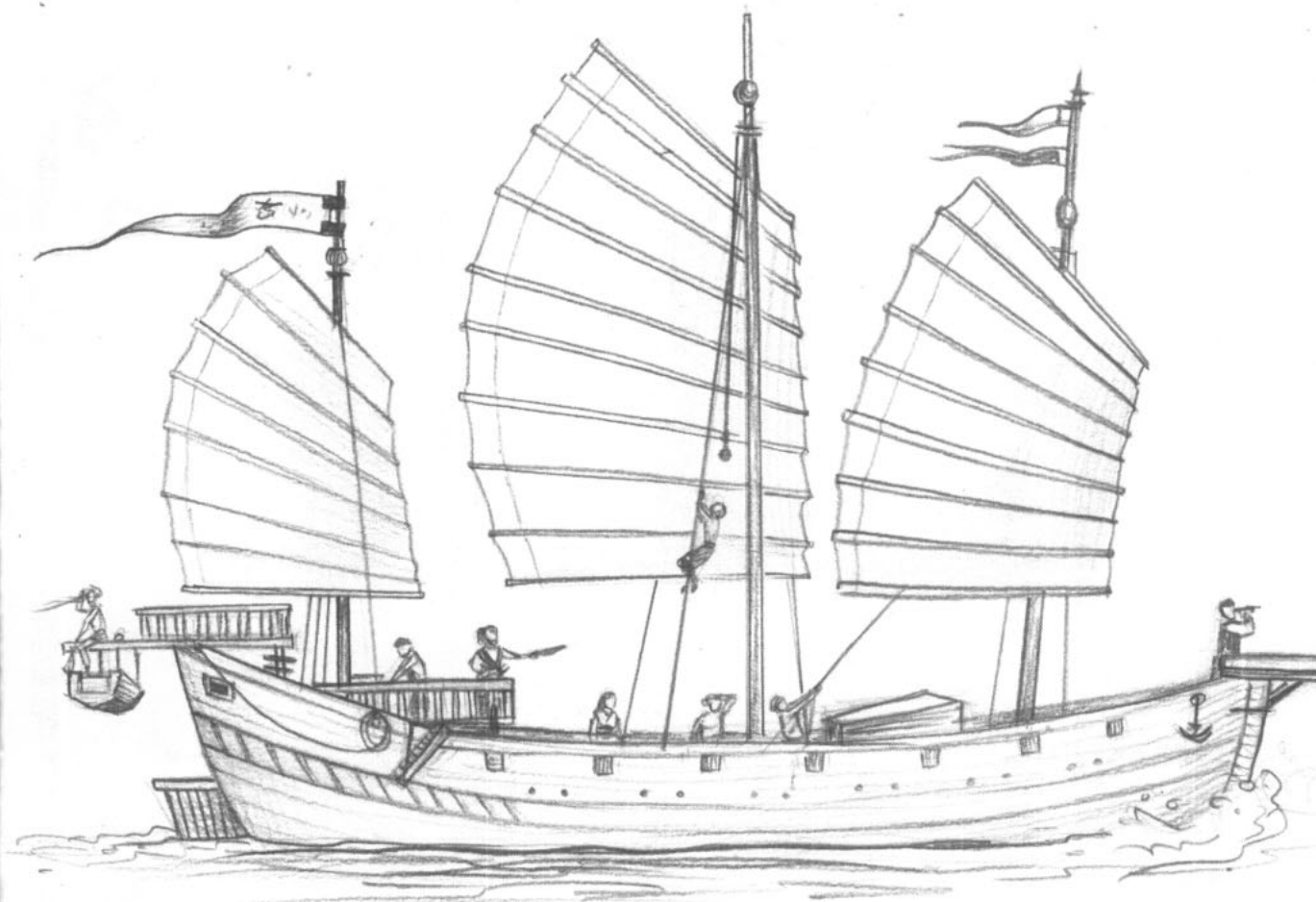
(2 POINTS)

Yamasaki awards those who, like him, concentrate their piracy within a campaign of vengeance. Choose a Great Clan or Minor Clan. While raiding a vessel belonging to that Clan, you receive one Free Raise to all your attacks and skill rolls. However, when raiding a vessel from any other Clan, you cannot use Void points.

NAKANO

Nakano is remembered as one of the worst villains in history, but his only goal was to regain his honor. He launched a devastating attack on the Yasuki, destroying one of their convoys and killing some of their best traders. After the Battle of the Rolling Waves, Nakano established the Rolling Waves *wako* with small ties to the Mantis Clan. He led the Rolling Waves on many attacks on enemy merchant ships, and protected the Mantis Clan shipments from other pirate gangs. Nakano died peacefully in his secret hideout, in a cave under the Islands of Silk.





NOBLE HEART

ANCESTOR FEAT: NAKANO

Clan: Mantis

Benefit: The spirit of Nakano aids those who acts to protect his Clan, family, or his honor. While performing an action to prevent the loss of honor from you or anyone that you know well, you gain a +2 bonus to all rolls. You lose the benefits of this ancestor if your honor goes below 1 until your honor rises above 1 again.

ANCESTOR: NAKANO

(3 POINTS)

The spirit of Nakano aids those who act to protect his Clan, family, or his honor. While performing an action to prevent honor loss from you or anyone that you know well, you gain a Free Raise to all rolls. You lose the benefits of this ancestor if your honor ever goes below 1 until your honor rises above 1 again.

NEW FEATS

FACING THE ABYSS (THE RED DAWN)

IRONIC TECHNIQUE FEAT

As a member of the Red Dawn *waka*, your reputation precedes you. You have learned to capitalize on the fear your reputation brings.

Prerequisites: Cha 12+

Benefit: A number of times per day equal to your charisma modifier, you may take an Intimidate check as a free action. If the roll is successful, the target is shaken for a number of rounds equal to your character level.

Normal: The target of an Intimidate check is shaken for one round.

METHODICAL

ALL CLANS TECHNIQUE

Your experience tells you to keep searching, even when nothing incriminating seems to exist.

Benefit: Gain a +3 bonus to search checks if you spend extra time to examine every part of pirate ships and headquarters.

SEA LEGS

You have a natural affinity to the sea.

Benefit: You gain a +3 bonus to all Balance checks while on ships.

SERPENT'S COIL (SERPENTS OF SANADA)

IRONIC TECHNIQUE FEAT

You have learned to fight in sync with your comrades in the Serpents of Sanada.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +4 or higher

Benefit: When flanking an enemy with an ally who also has this feat, the opponent loses his Dex bonus regardless of any feats that prevent the loss of Dex bonus (such as Uncanny Dodge).

NEW ADVANTAGES

METHODICAL

(4 POINTS, 3 POINTS FOR KITSUKI)

You have spent years fighting pirates and outsmarting them and know that the difference between failure and success lies in the details. Just because the ship has been searched once does not mean that the incriminating evidence does not exist. Roll (not keep) an extra die when spending extra care and time to find secret compartments in pirate headquarters and ships.

SEA LEGS

(3 POINTS, 2 FOR MARTIS)

You have a natural affinity for the sea and feel perfectly at home in or on the water. You gain a Free Raise to all Athletics checks to swim or keep balance on a ship.

NEW DISADVANTAGES

CAPTAIN'S ANGER

(4 POINTS)

The captain has never warmed up to your presence on his ship. Because of some slight, real or imagined, the captain has decided to test your mettle in the months to come. He is determined to see you fail and die for it. The captain continually tests you by placing you on consecutive midnight watches and other such chores. If anything dangerous must be done on the ship, the captain knows exactly who to volunteer for the job...

MUTINOUS CREW

(2 POINTS)

The crew of the ship have grown incredibly angry at you for some slight or another. No apologies seem to do the trick and it seems they cannot be persuaded out of their stance. The crew is determined to make sure you have an "accident" at the next naval battle. Unless you can change their feelings, you had best watch your back.

NEW TECHNIQUES

These techniques are ronin band Techniques (see the *L5R Second Edition Player's Handbook*, p. 147).

FACING THE ABYSS (THE RED DAWN)

Type: Juzimai

Required Traits: Willpower 4

Required Skills: Sincerity 3

Other Requirements: Insight Rank 2+

Location: Phoenix Lands

Technique: (8 points) — Members of the Red Dawn *wako* have a fearsome reputation of giving no quarter to enemies. Those with this technique have learned to capitalize on that fear. A character with this technique may spend a Void point in battle to receive a Fear rating equal to his Insight rank for one round. All of his opponents must immediately roll their Willpower save against the Fear. The Fear given by this technique may affect a person only once every 24 hours.

SERPENT'S COIL (SERPENTS OF SANADA)

Type: Juzimai

Required Traits: Agility 4, Awareness 3

Required Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 2

Other Requirements: Honor of 1 or lower

Location: Crane lands

Technique: (6 points) — The pirates of the Serpents of Sanada learn first to coordinate and fight together. They are prepared to do whatever dirty maneuver needed to put their opponent off guard. When two characters with this technique attack the same opponent, that opponent's TN to be hit cannot be raised by any means other than the Defense skill and the bonus from Reflexes.

NEW ITEMS

BELL OF DETECTION

This is a new *nemuranai* that has recently appeared in the hands of Crane merchant ships. Crane merchants suffer the most from piracy, for it is rampant in the sea routes just off the coast of their lands. The bell of detection allows the merchant vessel to avoid running into pirates, or at least giving them an early notice.

The bell is a small silver bell attached to the mast at about head level. When any ship, friendly or not, enters a radius of one mile around the mast, the bell gives off a loud noise reminiscent of a monastery gong. If any ship enters a radius of two hundred feet, the bell tolls even louder. The sound can be silenced only if the bell is detached from the mast. It is a small yet crucial thing to do; the first time a Crane merchant entered a port without detaching his Bell of Detection nearly deafened all the sailors on his ship.

Bells of Detection are not yet available to the general public, but are available to Crane merchants for a hefty price.

The Bell of Detection gives a +10 bonus to your Spot checks to see other ships while it is attached to the mast of your ship.

The Bell of Detection grants two unkept dice to all Perception and Awareness based skill checks to spot other ships while it is attached to the mast of your ship.

Market Price: 100 koku

Cost: 3 points.

Weight: 4 lbs.

PENDANT OF FARSEEING

This is a unique nemuranai in the possession of the self-proclaimed pirate king Sanada. It was a gift to him by an unnamed shugenja riding in one of the merchant vessels Sanada stopped and raided. He handed it to the pirate, smiled, and jumped over the rail before anyone could react. No trace of the man was ever found. With no instructions on what it did, or how to use it, Sanada shrugged and put it on.

The Pendant of Farseeing is a triangular piece of night crystal is threaded by soft leather. The powers of the Pendant of Farseeing activated only when Sanada wears it around his neck. While he wears the Pendant of Farseeing around his neck, the Pendant of Farseeing glows and points in the direction of the next nearest ship. The level of the glow corresponds with the distance between the pendant and the other ship. For a week, the Pendant only pointed at his other ships, but after a week it seemed to have learned and began to find merchant ships for Sanada's *wako*.

The Pendant makes no distinction between merchant ships, military ships, and even unoccupied ships.

The Pendant of Farseeing gives you a +10 circumstantial bonus to checks to look for other ships in the area.

The Pendant of Farseeing gives you three unkept dice to all checks to look for other ships in the area.

Market Price: priceless.

Weight: 2 lbs.

FUNE BO

This weapon was developed by an enterprising Yasuki merchant wanting to find a way to keep pirates away from his ship, for even a moment. The weapon would not stop a pirate attack, but it would delay them and give the fleeing ship enough time to get to safety. The weapon was popular, and found its way to almost every merchant vessel. After running into the weapon several times, a clever pirate figured out a variation of the weapon to counter it. Confusingly, both variations are called Fune Bo.

The original Fune Bo is a 30 ft. metal polearm with a square attached to the end. The Fune Bo requires at least three people to wield, but longer variations can employ up to ten people at the same time. When the pirate ship gets close enough to the ship, the Fune Bo is braced against the pirate ship. The Fune Bo stops the pirate vessel from approaching and boarding the merchant ship for a precious few seconds.

The second Fune Bo replaces the square with a vicious hook. Instead of bracing against the target ship, the alternate Fune Bo viciously claws into the fleeing target and hooks the two ships together. Just as the original Fune Bo, this method of slowing the prey lasts only seconds, but this increment can make all the difference in the world.

The original Fune Bo gives the fleeing ship a +2 circumstantial bonus to Profession (sailor) rolls to flee the situation for two rounds. The alternate Fune Bo gives the fleeing ship a -2 circumstantial penalty to Profession (sailor) rolls to flee the situation for two rounds.

The original Fune Bo gives the fleeing ship a Free Raise to Sailing checks to flee the situation for two rounds. The alternate Fune Bo raises the TN of Sailing checks to flee the Fune Bo user's ship for two rounds.

Market Price: 2 koku

Cost: -

Weight: 40 lbs.

CHAPTER FOUR:

BANDITS

FROM THE REPORTS OF
IDE NOMINARI, IMPERIAL
MAGISTRATE

WINTER OF 1162

I have found it! I, Ide Nominari, humble servant of the Emerald Champion, have located the legacy of my grandfather, Ide Ashijun. Yugoro's lair has been revealed!

Ashijun hunted this King of Bandits for years during the Clan Wars and even before. Yugoro was the worst type of ronin filth — nothing like the heroic Toturi, Ginawa, or Toku. The man was a beast who fed on the weakness and desire of others. His was a vast empire of greed. After long years of searching, I have finally found Yugoro's greatest lair and I can put Ashijun's soul to rest.

...rest. It will be good to have the spirit put to rest. I have been blessed with his guiding voice since I took up his blade on the day of my gempukku. Ashijun's soul speaks to me through the sword and tells me to find the remnants of this disgusting ronin. The headaches are becoming unbearable... the longer I go without locating an object of the former bandit-lord the more painful they become. I have blacked out occasionally, unable to recall the memories of hours, days, or even weeks at a time.

But all of that is over now. Ashijun has assured me that once I located the last bastion of Yugoro's power that I would receive the much-needed rest that is my due. His due. I must not forget that Ashijun has been in just as much — if not more — pain than have I these three years. His tortured spirit held back by the failures in his life and me, an unworthy host for his spirit, the only source for hope. I am proud of what I have accomplished.

We broke through the wooden barriers protecting the hideout last evening. Soon after, my yoriki informed me that much of Yugoro's hideout is still intact. When I heard the news I felt a wash of elation and happiness pour over me like the torrents of a waterfall. Ashijun was excited that I would be able to bring back this discovery to the Emerald Champion. Perhaps I could reveal some of the secrets of this filthy ronin dog's reign of terror in Rokugan.

But...even though I have served my ancestor well I cannot help but feel that something is not quite right. Something is not yet done. When I first entered this hidden stronghold buried deep in the caves of the Spine of the World Mountains the headaches came upon me full force. I could not see straight. I was forced to cry for help lest I fall into a cavern and shatter myself against the rocks. My yoriki aided me, but I felt a pang of disdain for his service and shoved him aside. It is not like me to act in this way and I fear that Ashijun's mission is not yet complete. There is more that I must do....

Two weeks, now, since the discovery of Yugoro's lair. I intended to journey back to the Palace of the Emerald Champion upon discovery, but the winter weather has forced a different course of action. My yoriki and a slew of peasant servants have bedded down in this disgusting place to wait out the worst of the weather. The headaches have been getting more painful and are lasting longer.

What is it grandfather? What would you have me do? I pray to you every day in hopes that some vision will come to me. There must be something in this place binding your soul to this world. Something that I can find and free you with.

Nothing I have found so far even resembles such an item...however, remnants of the bandit-lord's reign lies strewn

about this cesspool constantly reminding me of the dangers the man possessed during his time. Stolen goods from Yasuki trading caravans — mostly stores of rice and sake — are piled up in one corner. Unusual gaijin artifacts and tapestries depicting events in the Burning Sands are stored in another. Carpets and animal pelts make up what I presume to be Yugoro's bedroom. Filth! To sleep in such squalor!

The pain is near unbearable now. Every day that we wait here trapped in this forsaken snow I feel that I am somehow failing Ashijun.

Still I search...my ancestor would not have led me here without reason. Last night I had horrible visions in my dreams of a great beast rising up and slaughtering one of the ashigaru. It had terrible limbs and razor-sharp fangs and tore the flesh from the young ashigaru warrior as if it were so much paper. The visions were so...real. I awoke with a strange taste in my mouth and to unusual news. One of the peasants had indeed gone missing.

A strange coincidence to be sure. The snow is beginning to melt and I am having my yoriki make preparations to leave. I will be forced to come back to this place another time, perhaps with a clearer head.

It happened again last night. The dream. The nightmare... the horrid visions of cannibalism and blood. The snows started again not long after I sent the yoriki out and the rest of us could not make it. I hope that Ugure is quick in returning with supplies.

There is only one peasant left. The headaches are a constant fixture now. I can...barely write anymore. The ashigaru — I forget his name...it is not important — is afraid of me. He refuses to come near me and even tried to venture out on his own last night. What is wrong with me? Ashijun, what have I done to displease you so? I cannot seem to remember what has happened the past few days....

This place is doing something to me. I found a sword today that might be the key to ridding myself of this pain. The peasant located it first and I cut him down for touching it. I do not remember what happened to his body, but it's gone. The katana I found is...unusual. It looks remarkably like a Unicorn blade — very similar to the one carried by magistrates. If I didn't know better, I would swear that it was the true blade of Ashijun. But I will not be fooled by Yugoro's trickery. I had Luchi shugenja investigate the blade I found years ago — the blade I currently carry. They knew that a spirit was bound to in some fashion...waiting for release. Ashijun calls to me from this blade and tells me that the other is false.

I am all pain now. This will be the last time I write anything down. Each word, each syllable is a chore. There is no food left and I fear I must venture into the cold to find someone to eat. Damn this Yugoro! I will not rest until I find the remnants of his old network! I will hunt and kill every last one of them! Anyone that gets in my way, I will destroy! I must avenge my ancestor. Ashijun's soul must be put to rest.

I must trust no one.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BANDIT ACTIVITY IN ROKUGAN

In order to detail the vast history of bandit activity in Rokugan one must look first to the clans of the Empire. Merchant houses such as the Yasuki, Daidoji and the majority of the Unicorn clan have each encountered hundreds of bandit types throughout their years of service. Samurai from the bushi houses have spent lifetimes searching

for the powerful ronin "lords" such as Yugoro. Magistrates great and small must all eventually deal with some type of bandit activity in even a few short years on the job. Each of these groups has detailed a tiny fraction of the existence of this less-than-honorable profession in Rokugani society, albeit each in a slightly colored fashion.

From the dawn of the Empire professions that take little of the Code of Bushido into

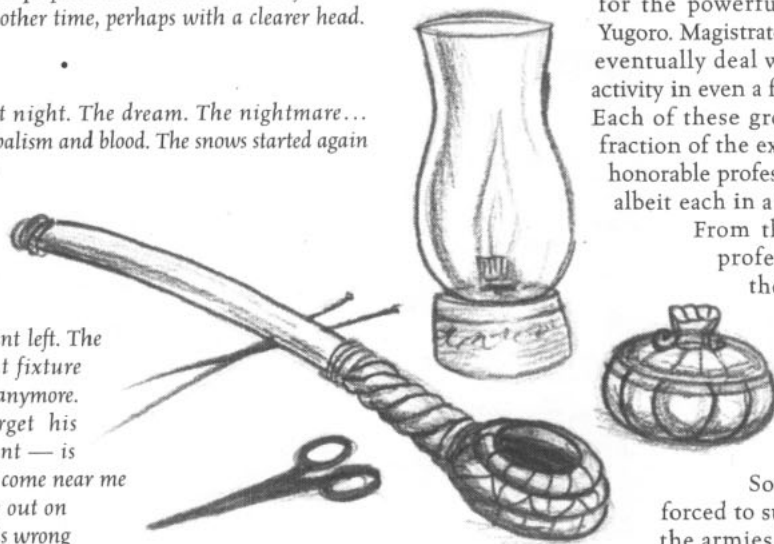
account have prospered.

Not all of the original human tribes chose to follow the Great Kami once they fell from the Heavens.

Some who did were later forced to survive on their own once the armies of the Dark slaughtered entire families. For whatever reason,

bandits and criminals have existed since before the dawn of the current Empire and show no sign of disappearing. The majority of bandit activity, however, has been blessedly minimized into a few areas of clan influence — the most of important of which being trade routes and merchant activity.

With the defeat of Fu Leng at the hands of the Seven Thunders the Great Clans of the new Empire began to settle into the semblance of real organization. One of the first tasks taken on by the new samurai armies was to create safe trade routes between the boundaries of clan families. Later, the forging of the Emperor's roads and inter-clan roadways all became vitally important to the spread of a powerful economy. These first roadways had little in the way of protection and caravans were subject to attacks from demons of the Shadowlands and starving human beings alike. Most early bandit assaults were entirely unorganized and were considered no threat to the true power of the clans. The first true mention of organized crime (outside the illicit activities of the Yasuki family, of course) came not long after the formation of the Badger clan in year 110.



Having witnessed the formation of two minor clans prior to the Badger, a minor noble of the Scorpion clan known now only as Echimei made it his ambition to found a clan of his own. Taking dozens of Scorpion samurai with him, he ventured south near the eastern tip of the Shinomen Mori and began gathering followers. Echimei's sense of honor was not strong and once the small "clan" became a cohesive group, they turned towards illegal activities in order to survive. At first, Echimei was satisfied that his budding clan would one day be forged into a mighty House, but after decades of nothing but assaulting merchants, stealing from peasant villages, and raiding encampments of other samurai, the aging lord began to doubt his actions. No great travesty is reported regarding the first bandit lord other than the fact that the group quickly disbanded and scattered to the four winds upon his death.

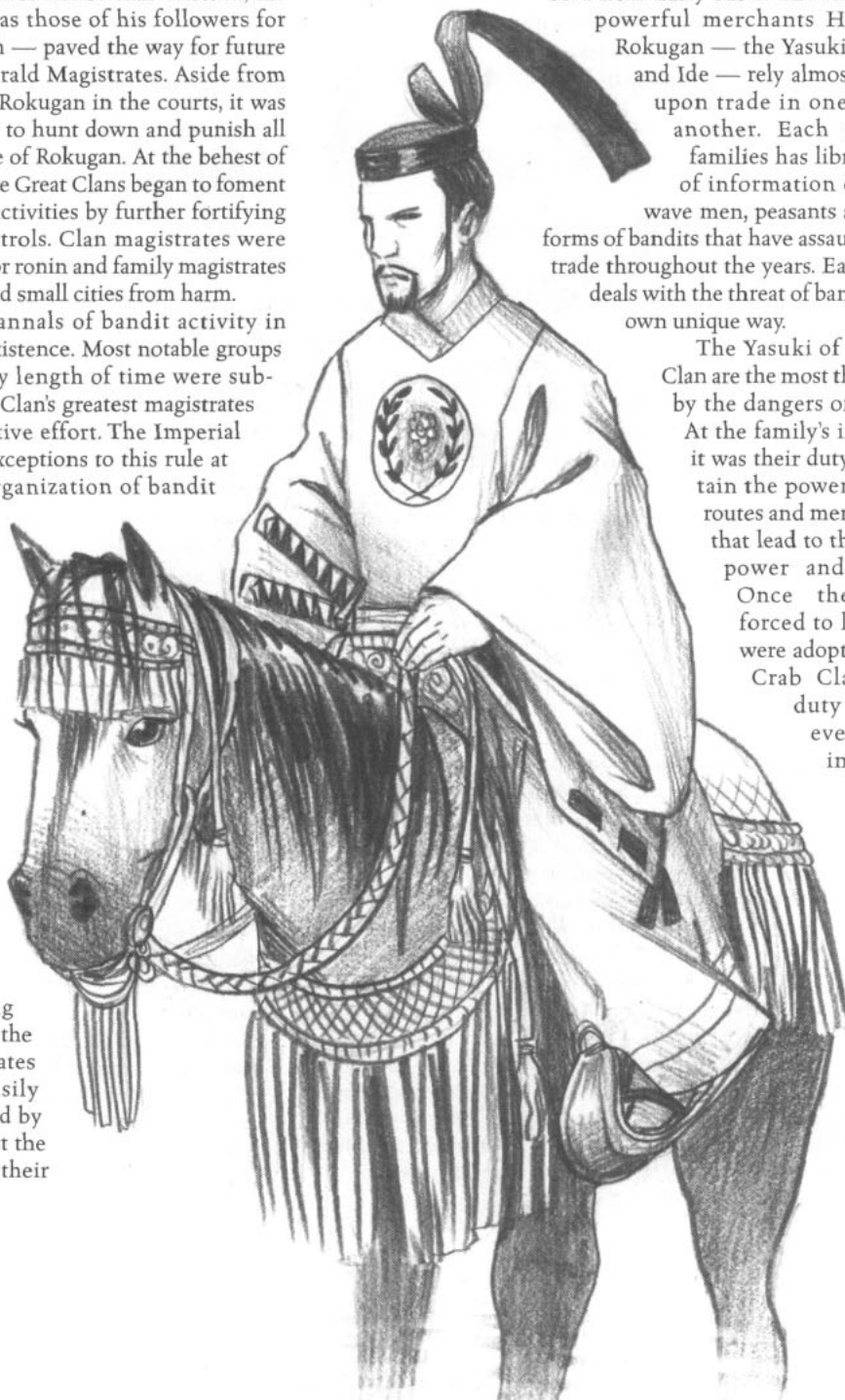
Echimei's great contribution to the Emerald Empire did not come in the formation of another minor clan. Instead, his deplorable actions — as well as those of his followers for decades to come after his death — paved the way for future organizations such as the Emerald Magistrates. Aside from simply maintaining the law of Rokugan in the courts, it was the Emperor's Magistrates duty to hunt down and punish all that preyed upon the commerce of Rokugan. At the behest of the first Emerald Magistrates, the Great Clans began to foment a solid defense against bandit activities by further fortifying their roadways with armed patrols. Clan magistrates were tasked with hunting down minor ronin and family magistrates protected villages of peasants and small cities from harm.

Little has changed in the annals of bandit activity in the centuries of the Empire's existence. Most notable groups of bandits that formed for any length of time were subsequently hunted down by the Clan's greatest magistrates and disbanded with little relative effort. The Imperial Magistrates record two great exceptions to this rule at this time. The first lasting organization of bandit activity actually comes in the form of pirates preying upon the vast trade routes of the sea. In the beginning, the majority of these pirates were actually the founders of the future minor clan, the Mantis. Later, however, when the Mantis became recognized for its status, assaults from members of the clan calmed quite a bit. Not all pirates joined the naval clan, however, and easy access to quick escape routes has allowed these organizations to thrive in the turbulent seas off the coast of Rokugan for a thousand years. With the Mantis Clan gaining confirmation as a Great Clan in the past century, attacks from pirates have become far more easily managed — only to be replaced by the "honorable" pirates amongst the Mantis who staunchly defend their territory as the entire sea.

The other major bandit organization was the great House of Yugoro. Yugoro's influence died with him not long after the Clan Wars ended on the Day of Thunder. However, the massive network of spies and assassins, smugglers and opium dealers Yugoro created made him the most powerful bandit lord of his, or anyone else's, time. Yugoro thrived on a philosophy of "Trust no one" for the duration of his reign as a "lord of crime." He did not maintain contact with the powerful Kolat, the devious criminals of the Scorpion clan, or even the Yasuki and Daidoji members of the black markets. Yugoro survived for decades behind a web of deceit personally overseeing every last niche of his criminal empire until his death at the hands of an Emerald Magistrate. True to his belief system, his organization dissolved not long afterwards and little of the group has been in evidence since.

Even more than the magistrates of the Emerald Empire, the merchant houses of the Great Clans deal with bandit activity on a near-daily basis. The three most powerful merchants Houses in Rokugan — the Yasuki, Daidoji, and Ide — rely almost entirely upon trade in one form or another. Each of these families has libraries full of information detailing wave men, peasants and other forms of bandits that have assaulted their trade throughout the years. Each family deals with the threat of bandits in its own unique way.

The Yasuki of the Crab Clan are the most threatened by the dangers of bandits. At the family's inception, it was their duty to maintain the powerful trade routes and mercantilism that lead to the Crane's power and wealth. Once they were forced to leave and were adopted by the Crab Clan, their duty became even more important.



Now, instead of being responsible for the formation of the economy of Rokugan, the Yasuki family was in charge of attaining food and supplies for the ongoing war against Fu Leng. Even with the recent change in the Yasuki family structure and their rejoining of the Crane, these merchants consider it their sacred duty to maintain the most powerful trade network in the Empire.

The majority of Rokugan would consider the Yasuki's method of dealing with the bandits that prey upon their valuable cargo dishonorable. Instead of wasting important bushi on patrols and protection, the daimyo and merchant lords of the Yasuki prefer personal contact to the bandits via bribes, kickbacks, and information. Instead of protecting against the bandits that would prey upon their trade, the Yasuki feed these organizations with koku and use them for protection against weaker bandits. The Yasuki would be the last family to publicly condone the use of such methods, however, and would staunchly stand against the claim that they turn these bandit connections onto the business of other merchant houses.

Like the Yasuki merchant family, the Daidoji of the Crane has been dealing with the effects of trade for centuries. Ever since the Yasuki were forced out of the clan, the Daidoji's job has been to maintain the black markets and underhanded trade without revealing to the rest of the clan their methods. Like the Yasuki, the Daidoji have a reputation for being sneaky and underhanded, but unlike their cousins, they are more easily able to hide their dishonorable actions behind a veneer of excellence and proficiency. Some Daidoji deal with the bandits of Rokugan in much the same way as the Yasuki — paying them off instead of fending them off with weapons. However, most Daidoji are too proud to stoop to the level of interacting with such rabble. It is just as likely that a Daidoji will hunt down and quietly kill off the leaders of bandit groups as work with them.

It is arguable that the Ide family of the Unicorn is the most influential and powerful merchant House within the Empire. Were it not for the fact that the Yasuki and Daidoji families have worked within Rokugan far longer than these Unicorn, the argument might not even exist. The Ide are bolstered entirely by the rest of their clan and do not have to rely always upon themselves to manage their massive network of trade both within and outside Rokugan's borders. Since the rise of the Moto Khan, the Ide family has expanded its influence outside of Rokugan and is secretly dealing with merchants from all across the Burning Sands. The typical Ide's idea of dealing with bandit activity is to either simply convince one of their powerful cousins such as the Moto or the Utaku to hunt down and destroy them, or more commonly talk their way out of being robbed. An Ide's sense of reason can be a difficult thing to penetrate once the merchant has convinced you that it is in your best interest not to anger the Khan.

BANDIT HIDEOUTS

YUGORO'S LAIR

This particular bandit hideout has existed for a number of years. Even before the bandit-lord Yugoro took it over other influential wave men used the cave network within the Spine of the World Mountains. It only became notable when Yugoro settled upon it as his primary home and the site of his most valued stolen goods. The location is hidden near the center of

Rokugan on the northern side of the mountains. Its closest major landmark is the Lake of Sorrows to the east. Dozens of tiny mountain passes lead up to the secret entrance of the hideout and all have been made easily defensible against attack. There is one secret route near the base

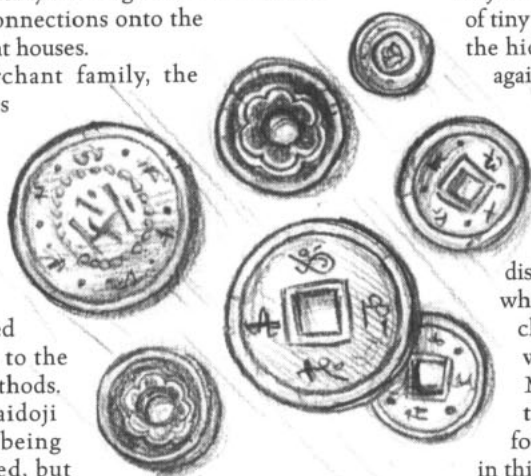
of the mountains that opens into a cave large enough to transport a small wagon. It is here that most of the bandit's loot is taken to be later deposited deeper in the mountainside.

After Yugoro's death, the network of spies and thieves he commanded across Rokugan disintegrated. The majority of them fell to infighting while some particularly charismatic wave men took charge and reorganized a few minor cadres. Yugoro was slain at the site of this lair by an Emerald Magistrate named Ide Ashijun after a long chase through the mountain passes. Ashijun's servants fought and killed all of the ronin that served Yugoro in this lair, but most of them were slain in the process.

When Yugoro and Ashijun finally faced within the central rooms of the hideout, Ashijun took the bandit-lord's head but came away with a mortal wound.

Something else occurred that day within the chambers of opulence and greed that Yugoro had created. As soon as the bandit-lord's soul tore free from his body, a powerful spirit from Gaki-do — the Realm of Hungry Ghosts — that had been observing the greedy ronin for years took advantage and opened a passage into Ningen-do. It lifted up Yugoro's body and feasted upon all but one of the remaining magistrates, including Ashijun himself. Once there was no more food within the bandit hideout, the spirit was forced back into its own realm, but it had created a permanent tie to Yugoro's departed soul that it would use in the future.

It had only to wait two generations. Three years ago, Ashijun's descendant, Ide Nominari, came across this former bandit lair. She was guided by the powerful spirit, which had merged with Yugoro to become a shozai-gaki. The shozai-gaki pretended to be the guiding voice of Ashijun and managed to convince the woman to bring it a feast of flesh. However, instead of simply devouring the descendant of Ashijun, Yugoro convinced the spirit to allow him to take her over and return to the mortal world. From here he would rebuild his vast network for a new purpose: to feed the insatiable appetite of Gaki-do.



After three years of rebuilding, Yugoro's Hordes have regained some semblance of their former glory and power. Nominari has taken to disguising her appearance as that of a man and with Yugoro's spirit inside her she has convinced dozens of lieutenants that she is the old bandit-lord reborn. Nominari does have bouts of consciousness in which she is able to fight off the need to feed on the flesh of humans, but Yugoro's spirit does not release her for long. So far, Nominari has been unable to get word out to anyone as to what has occurred and the New Bandit Lord operates in relative secrecy.

USING YUGORO'S LAIR IN AN ADVENTURE

Yugoro's Lair has been designed so that it can easily be converted into any number of bandit hideouts across Rokugan. If the GM simply does not wish to use the story presented here, she can take the information and replace Yugoro's Hordes with a different organization. In addition, should the GM wish to use Yugoro's story, this lair can be used to describe virtually all of the New Bandit Lord's hideouts. The major differences would be the amount and type of wealth contained, as this would depend on the type of wealth offered by the region.

That being said, Yugoro's Lair can be used in two major ways: either as a hideout for a group of ronin PC's or as a target for a group of Magistrates. The most common type of campaign is going to see Yugoro's Lair as a goal that Magistrates seek to locate and destroy. Keep in mind that while Nominari would like to reveal the presence of the returned shozai-gaki Yugoro is a secretive man. It is unlikely that a PC will simply be able to trace a spy back to this mountain hideout without having to first locate and interrogate dozens of others. Yugoro's Lair can keep a villain hidden for the length of a campaign, only to be revealed at the climax of a major story.

HOW TO USE THIS INFORMATION

Each major area of Yugoro's Lair is presented here with all the information a GM needs to use it. Each section contains a heading entitled "At a Glance", which summarizes the various components of that area. More specific sections have their own descriptions, which may be read aloud to players if the GM so desires. Individual GMs are encouraged to alter or expand the information presented here to suit their own games.

YUGORO'S HORDES

The majority of Nominari's followers hail from the original Forest-Killers juzimai (bandit gang). The New Bandit Lord takes most of her warrior stock from these warriors and places them in charge of the majority of her lairs. The current leader of the Forest-Killers is a quiet man named Kinyobi. His views on Nominari's virtual takeover of his band are hidden beneath a veneer of acceptance. Kinyobi is the closest thing that Nominari has to an advisor and he realizes that her unusual manner and erratic attitude are caused by a mind broken with grief. He is not aware that Yugoro's spirit currently resides within her body, but he suspects some form of spiritual activity is active there.

In addition to the Forest-Killers, the new Yugoro employs dozens of singular ronin as spies, assassins, and trackers. Peasants are used as menial laborers and guards in her compounds. Nominari has taken to traveling with at least one or two eta in her presence as well — not for any specific task, but to feed her aching desire to eat the flesh of a human being on short notice. (More information on the Forest-Killers can be found in the Way of the Wolf supplement.)

THE NEW FOREST-KILLERS

Human Ronin Fighters6: CR 6, Medium-sized humanoid (human); HD 6d10+6; hp 40; Init: +3; Spd 20ft.; AC 19 (touch 13, flat-footed 16); +1 Attack katana +10/+5 melee or +1 yumi (short bow) +10/+5 ranged (1d8, 1 damage); Honor 0; Glory: -1; Status: 0.0; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12; Height 5 ft. 5 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Bluff +10, Climb +11, Diplomacy +9, Jump +11, Iaijutsu Focus +9, Intimidate +9, Sense Motive +9; Improved Initiative, Void Use, Weapon Focus (katana), Weapon Focus (yumi), Stealthy Dojo: none; Kata: none.

Possessions: +1 katana, +1 yumi, +1 lamellar armor, 20 arrows.

THE NEW FOREST-KILLERS

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Fire: 3

Air: 2

Reflexes: 3

Void: 2

School/Rank: None (true ronin)

Technique: Fool's Harvest

Honor: 0.7

Glory: -1

Status: 0.0

Advantages: Way of the Land (Shinomen Forest)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (bandit)

Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 2, Hisomu 2, Hunting 3, Kenjutsu 3, Traps 2, Stealth 4

Weapons and Equipment: Katana, Wakizashi, Yumi, 20 arrows of any type, light armor, traveling pack, Aiguchi, kimono

IDE NOMINARI, THE NEW BANDIT LORD

Ide Nominari is a dour young woman with a dowdy appearance of that of a man her age. Nominari's skin is darkened by the sun and seemingly worn with age beyond her years. Her face is wrinkled from constant worry and her hair is short and wispy. Her most startling feature, however, are her wide, searching eyes — a remnant from her days as an Emerald Magistrate — now forever tinged with the taint of insanity.

Nominari spent the first half of her life working to follow in the family footsteps. Her father and grandfather before her had both been successful Emerald Magistrates. Nominari wished to follow in the footsteps of her grandfather, Ide Ashijun — famous in her family for having destroyed the bandit lord Yugoro. Her ambition led her to the court of Yasuki Hachi where she proved herself to be a capable and studious magistrate. She was appointed to hunting down her desired target: bandit gangs across Rokugan.



Roughly four years ago Nominari came across a small *juzimai*, a bandit gang that felt familiar to her. The sword she had been carrying from *gempukku* seemed to recognize the bandits as well and Nominari gained a flash of insight from the blade that identified them as descendants of Yugoro's Hordes. The young magistrate wasted no time in destroying the ronin warriors. Afterwards, she reported to the Emerald Champion and began a crusade against the remaining followers of Yugoro in the hopes that she would exterminate every last one from the face of Rokugan.

Such was not to be the case. When Nominari discovered the old bandit lord's favored haven in the side of the Spine of the World Mountains a strange thing occurred with her sword. For weeks, she had been experiencing horrible headaches and memory loss. When she was trapped in the mountain lair due to winter storms for over two weeks, Nominari finally discovered the cause of her aching desire to find Yugoro's descendants. The blade she carried was not her grandfather, Ashijun's, as she had thought. It was the receptacle for the tortured soul of Yugoro himself and its spirit had taken hold of her mind.

A month after the winter snows melted, Nominari came out of the bandit lair alone and bloody. The *shozai-gaki* had taken control of her mind near permanently and forced her to feed from the flesh of her peasant servants. She walked out of the cave with a strong desire to continue her search for the rest of Yugoro's Hordes, but instead of kill them she sought now to reunite them under the banner of a new Bandit Lord.

Nominari has spent the last three years consolidating the old forces of Yugoro's Hordes — specifically the remnants of the Forest-Killers. She has attained a small network of spies and assassins and reopened numerous bandit lairs. She has taken the name Yugoro and passes herself off as a man as often as not. She has no desired goal other than to continue the reign of terror that the former bandit lord had started. The new Yugoro will begin a new campaign against the merchants of Rokugan after the next thaw.

IDE NOMINARI, THE BANDIT LORD

Samurai 12/Shinjo Explorer 4: CR 16; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 12d10 +24 plus 4d10+8; hp 136; Init: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30; Atk Yugoro's Blade +19/+14/+9/+4 (1d10+4 19–20/x2) +4 keen ghost touch wakizashi +21/+16/+11/+6 (1d6+6 19–20/x2); AC 19(+1 Dex, +2 amulet, +6 armor); SQ ancestral daisho, Shared Stride, Animal Companion (steed), absolute direction, Way of the Land (Spine of the World Mountains), Way of the Land (Shinomen

Forest); Honor 0.7; Glory: -4; Status: 2.5; AL NE; SV Fort +14, Ref +9, Will +11; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 16; Maximum Void: 2; Height: 5 ft. 4 in.

Skills and Feats: Battle +17, Climb +10, Diplomacy +15, Handle Animal +16, Heal, Hide +10 +8, Iaijutsu Focus +5, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (nature) +16, Jump +10, Listen +14, Move Silently +10, Ride +17, Sense Motive +16, Survival +15, Swim +12, and Tea Ceremony +5; Void Use, Dancing with the Fortunes, Way of the Unicorn, Improved Initiative, Track, Weapon Focus (katana), Stealthy, Mounted Archery, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Trample, Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm.

Possessions of Note: Katana of the Bandit Lord, +4 keen ghost touch wakizashi (ancestral daisho), +2 amulet of protection, riding horse and saddle, +1 lamellar armor.

THE NOMINARI, THE NEW BANDIT LORD

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Perception: 6

Fire: 4

Intelligence: 5

Air: 5

Void: 4

School/Rank: Shinjo Scout School 5/Forest-Killers 1

Dojo: None

Honor: 0.7

Glory: -4

Status: 2.5

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Personal Mon (Yugoro's Mon), Silent, Tactician, Way of the Land (Spine of the World Mountains), Wealthy

Disadvantages: Cruel, Dark Fate, Greedy

Skills: Athletics 3, Commerce 3, Battle 4, Defense 4, Forgery 3, Gambling 3, Hisomu 5, Horsemanship 6, Hunting 5, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 5, Kuenai 3, Mimic 4, Poison 3, Traps 3, Stealth 4, Yomanri 2

Weapons and Equipment: Katana of the Bandit Lord, Wakizashi, Yumi, 20 arrows of any type, light armor, traveling pack, Unicorn steed, Aiguchi, kimono

THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL

The main passageway leads up the Spine for over 1,000 feet and is treacherous at best. Yugoro keeps this way riddled with loose rock, boulders, and no even landings for rest because his men do not use it to enter the Lair. There are roughly ten different ambush points up the trail where 6-12 of Yugoro's Hordes can strike at travelers and then fade back into the mountainside.

Travelers seeking to make their way up the mountainside must make a total of three consecutive Climb checks at DCs of 15, 20, and 25 respectively. To notice any of the well-hidden ambush sites a traveler must make a Search Check (DC 25) or Spot Check (DC 30).

Travelers seeking to make their way up the mountainside must make a total of three consecutive Climbing Checks at TNs 10, 15, and 20 respectively (characters may substitute Athletics for Climbing, but the TN is raised by 5). To notice any of the well-hidden ambush sites a traveler must make an Investigation/Perception Check at TN 25.

HIDDEN CAVERN

100 feet up the mountain trail, near an ambush point, is a small landing upon which a large amount of goods can be set. There is a large boulder in front of the opening into a hidden cavern that leads into the mountainside. Anyone finding this cavern is likely not to get far as the way through is layered with dozens of traps to catch the unwary.

Players must first locate the ambush site (detailed above) before being able to attempt to move the boulder. To do so a character must make a Strength Check at DC 30.

Players must first locate the ambush site (detailed above) before being able to attempt to move the boulder. To do so a character must make a Strength Check at TN 25.

OUTER LEVEL

THE SPINE OF THE WORLD MOUNTAINS

AT A GLANCE

The first portion of Yugoro's Lair that any visitor will see is the vast Spine of the World Mountains. This is usually as far as any searching magistrate or comatose traveler gets before being taken down by Yugoro's Hordes. The beginnings of a mountain pass start at the base of the Spine near the Lake of Sorrows — this is the only landmark that Yugoro's Hordes need to find their way up the mountainside. Dozens of small — and secret — passages riddle the obvious route up the mountain and make for easy ambush sites when needed. There is a single large cavern roughly one hundred feet up the mountain trail hidden behind a large boulder. Wagons and large quantities of goods are taken in here to be distributed farther into the network of caves and tunnels. Yugoro is paranoid and always has at least half a dozen men guarding the passages up the mountainside able to warn those within.

INNER LEVEL 1

DEEPER INTO THE CAVERNS

AT A GLANCE

This is the most active area in Yugoro's Lair. After the initial (trapped and guarded) entrance is passed, a visitor would see dozens of wave men bustling in a large meeting hall and many passages divided off to the sides. Kitchens and food storage reside to the left of the main entrance. A weapons locker and secret passage with hidden arrow slits lines the entire right wall. The meeting hall also serves as a basic mess hall when large amounts of Yugoro's Hordes are present at a single time. As soon as one leaves the meeting hall entrance there is a passage to the left leading into the sleeping quarters of the lower echelons of Yugoro's Hordes. Roughly twenty feet farther down is a forked passage. One direction leads up to the second level and deeper into Yugoro's own rooms. The other leads down into the Torture Chambers and cells.

Most of the tunnels in Yugoro's Lair are roughly 10 ft. high and about 4–6 ft. across. Tapestries cover the walls on all sides (stolen, of course) as do trophies from conquests and unusual gaijin weapons from the Burning Sands. Because of the dozens of smaller tunnels (roughly sized for one human to walk single-file) there is plenty of circulation in this area. The smoke from the kitchens (when there is smoke) is ventilated up a natural shaft and directed hundreds of feet out over the mountain itself.

MEETING AND MESS HALL

This chamber is roughly 100 feet in diameter and roughly circular in shape. There are openings (covered by strings of beads or curtains) to the other portions of this level on both the left and right hand sides of the walls. The entire right hand wall is actually Area #5 and is interspersed with tapestries disguising the arrow slits. This room is covered with trophies of the more interesting conquests the group has known. Barrels of water and crates of alcohol line the walls and dozens of small tables litter the floor. At any time, 15–20 men can be found in here counting money, gambling, smoking opium, or drinking.

KITCHENS AND FOOD STORAGE

This large area serves double duty as a kitchen and general food storage. Because of the sheer numbers of Yugoro's Hordes, this area is constantly in use. Members of Yugoro's Hordes divide the duties of the kitchens amongst the lower echelons of the group and there is rarely one single cook here for any length of time.

HIDDEN ARROW SLITS AND WEAPON STORAGE

The entire right hand side of the Meeting Hall is actually a secret chamber 3 ft. deep and 6 ft. tall. About 10 men can hide in this area at one time and comfortably fire arrows into the next room. There is also a small circular chamber about 25 ft. in diameter that holds the vast majority of the unused weapons housed in the Lair.

SLEEPING QUARTERS

This area is a series of tiny caves that break off a main passageway. Each small room holds between five and ten men at any given time. None of the rooms allow for much privacy unless a great number of the Hordes is away on a mission. Each room comes equipped with sleeping pallets and small chests for personal storage.

PASSAGES TO NEXT LEVEL

The passageway leading to the next two levels is trapped with a large, hidden spiked pit. Going left (and up) leads to Inner Level 2. Going right (and down) leads to the Torture Chambers.

Spiked Pit Trap: CR 4; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 60 ft. deep (6d6 fall); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+5 each); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20. Market Price: 4,000 gp.

To locate the spiked pit trap an Investigation/Perception (TN 20) or Awareness (TN 25) check must be made. Anyone caught on the trap falls may make a Reflexes roll

(TN 25) to jump off the pit. The fall is 60 ft. and 6k4 damage from the fall and another 2k2 damage from the spikes is suffered.

SUBLEVEL 1

THE TORTURE CHAMBERS AT A GLANCE

This level of Yugoro's Lair houses the prisoner cells and torture chambers as well as Ide Nominari's shrine to the shozai-gaki within her. This area is only lightly guarded (typically only one minor ronin) because of the security of the cells. There are no secret exits from this level.

PRISONER CELLS

A corridor roughly 75 ft. long winds its way down a sloping decline until it reaches the back of this room. At the end of the corridor is a heavy wooden door leading into the Torture Chamber. A dozen small cells line the winding passageway on either side and are shut tight with locked wooden doors. The prisoners inside are manacled to the wall with heavy iron cuffs and left stranded without much food or water. At any time, roughly half of these cells are occupied with merchants, peasants, or even eta.

TORTURE CHAMBER

This room serves less as a torture chamber and more as a preparation room for Nominari's hungry spirit. However, implements of torture line the walls and a large wooden table sits in the center of this room with leather straps used for tying prisoners down. There are no eta torturers within Yugoro's Lair, so Nominari performs the dishonorable act herself.

At the far side of the entrance to this room is another heavy wooden door leading into Yugoro's Shrine. The walls and floor leading into that area are covered with dried bloodstains. The floor and walls have nail marks and bits of flesh all over them.

YUGORO'S SHRINE

If Nominari cannot be found within her sleeping quarters in Inner Level 3 she will be here. Yugoro's hungry spirit feeds on the flesh of mortals and is perpetually voracious. Subsequently, he forces his men to bring back prisoners from their raids alive or dead. Sometimes, when they are particularly inactive, he will make them bring peasants or eta from nearby locations. Few within Yugoro's Hordes suspect the truth of Nominari's nature, but all realize that this area is best avoided.

This room is roughly 10 ft. square and is carved out to look like a small shrine. A stone pedestal sits in the middle of the room with half-burnt candles surrounding it. This is typically used as a table upon which Nominari sits the parts of a body she will eat. The walls are littered with scratch marks and tiny kanji whose origins are clearly from another realm. This room is slowly becoming a focus for Gaki-do, the Realm of Hungry Ghosts, and if Yugoro's spirit is allowed to continue for a few more years, it will become an opening into that realm.

INNER LEVEL 2

THE DOJO

AT A GLANCE

The upward sloping passageway from Inner Level 1 leads into the area known as "the Dojo" amongst the members of Yugoro's Hordes. These chambers house the sleeping quarters for the upper echelons of the group. A small circular room is also located here and is used both for fighting, weapons training, and settling disputes between the ronin. A weapons storage and a few extra sleeping rooms are also located in this area.

Sleeping quarters for the upper echelons of the group (mostly the Forest-Killers, but also higher level spies and assassins and any shugenja bandits, although there are few).

Small dojo for fighting and weapons training

Another Weapons storage room and secret passages lining the main corridor that arrows can be fired from.

SLEEPING QUARTERS

The sloping passageway into this area evens out into a long corridor roughly 150 ft. deep. Along both sides of this area are small, one-man sleeping rooms reserved for those who impress Yugoro or are too important to leave with the common rabble. Each area is carved out of existing caves and is roughly the same size as the lower sleeping quarters (however, without five or six men crowded inside, it seems much larger). At the end of this room lies the entrance to the small dojo.

SMALL DOJO

This room is about the same size as the Meeting Hall, but is nowhere near as cluttered. It is made entirely of natural rock. The floor is smoothed out to allow for even footing, but the walls are still jagged and dangerous for combatants who wind up being thrown. Yugoro does not teach any of his techniques, but he allows the Forest-Killers and other trained ronin to train here.

WEAPONS STORAGE

This storage room lies in the same corridor as the sleeping quarters and its door is disguised to look exactly like one of them. Only members of Yugoro's Hordes would know exactly where to locate the cache of weapons within.

INNER LEVEL 3

YUGORO'S ROOMS

AT A GLANCE

The passageway leading up into Inner Level 2 continues on past the sleeping quarters there and makes its way farther into the mountainside. At the end of the corridor is a series of storage rooms used for keeping the goods stolen by the Hordes. Beyond these is a large wooden door that leads into Yugoro's living space.

STORAGE

At all times, these storage rooms are filled with some form of material. Each room is roughly half the size of the meeting hall and there are five in all. Two Forest-Killers or equal guards are in this area at all times protecting the wares within. A dozen or more secret passages lead out of this room to connect with other parts of the mountainside as quick escapes. A large secret tunnel leads out of one of the storage rooms all the way down to the Hidden Cavern.

Usually some type of food resides in one of the rooms. The rest range from silk and spice, to koku, bu, zeni and diamonds; unusual weapons, scrolls, opium and virtually anything that can be stolen off a merchant caravan is stored in here as well.

YUGORO'S ROOMS

A trap directly in front of the door exactly like that of the Spike Trap in Inner Level 2 guards Yugoro's room. Only Yugoro and anyone foolish enough to have fallen in the trap know where the trigger is and how to bypass it. Yugoro keeps his entire room covered with animal pelts and unusual weaponry. The most valuable stolen goods (i.e. those that the Bandit Lord does not wish to sell) are kept here as decoration. The entire room looks something like a Mantis or Unicorn court hall lacking any organized décor.

THE FORGOTTEN LIBRARY

The location known as the Forgotten Library is less a place and more a collection of information and power. There is a single location (an actual library) located underneath the ruins of Otsan Uchi, but the scrolls and information there can be moved at a moment's notice if detection is impending. Mostly, the location serves as a meeting place for the brotherhood of ronin shugenja known as the Forgotten Sons. It is here that they hoard stolen magical lore from across Rokugan and gather to share in their former clan's secrets. Because of the secrecy of different clan techniques, what the shugenja here are doing would be considered a great blasphemy to be wiped out at a moment's notice.

As for physical location, the Library is hidden beneath an old stable in the center of a destroyed city. The shugenja keep hidden through judicious use of illusion spells and air magic. They store food and other supplies inside an array of tunnels they have crafted using earth magic and spend most of their time in study and contemplation.

Using The Forgotten Library In A Campaign

The Forgotten Library and its shugenja brotherhood, the Forgotten Sons, can be used in virtually any ruins. Hikosaboro has directed his men into former Otsan Uchi because of the ease with which he can hide vast amounts of knowledge, but any other location would have sufficed. Hikosaboro can serve as an excellent magical villain in a game. Once he has decided to acquire a certain item, he will use his network of shugenja brothers and the dozens of wave men yojimbo in his employ to attain it. If the PC group does not have particularly useful knowledge (or a shugenja) in their party, Hikosaboro can be the target of a search mission after having stolen something particularly valuable from one of the player's daimyo.

Hikosaboro (Shugenja 14; Isawa Shugenja 4)

The man formerly known as Isawa Hikosaboro is cold, calculating, and ruthless. He became ronin because of an

unfortunate set of circumstances, but is not willing to succumb to the weaknesses of being a wave man. Instead, Hikosaboro has embraced the freedom that serving no one affords and has already accumulated a vast amount of knowledge. Hikosaboro teaches the rest of the Forgotten Sons serving as an unconventional Master Sensei. Mostly, he hoards the knowledge that the group brings into the Forgotten Library and doles it out in tiny amounts so as to keep the other ronin shugenja loyal.

Hikosaboro uses the thirty-odd shugenja members of the Forgotten Sons and the yojimbo serving them as secretly as possible. He assaults only out of the way caravans, but cannot resist targeting one containing shugenja lore or old knowledge if the opportunity presents itself. Until recently, Hikosaboro has been content to hoard knowledge and use the power granted him by the kami to further his power. Now, however, he has become aware of the existence of one of the Black Scrolls located somewhere in Phoenix territory. This is an opportunity that Hikosaboro cannot pass up and one that he trusts to none but himself. He has dispatched servants to investigate the rumors without telling them what they are looking for. Once he gains more information, he will venture into his old clan's territory seeking power beyond imagination.

THE FORGOTTEN SONS

It is not uncommon practice for the shugenja of the Isawa family to treat particularly horrible students to a ritual known as the Forsaking. Upon completion of this ritual, the student is stripped of all abilities relating to the kami and the spirit world. In fact, most kami will have nothing to do with them after this point and some of his memory may be wiped away as well. Isawa Hikosaboro was once chosen to undergo such a ritual because of his "overzealous" attitude when dealing with those outside his clan.

Hikosaboro became aware that his superiors were going to expunge his "taint" from the clan and acted before they could do so. He slew five fellow students and two sensei in his efforts to flee from the Isawa provinces and even managed to escape with a large coefficient of secret lore. For three years, he hid out in the wilds of the Phoenix lands dodging magistrates and shugenja alike. All the while, he studied the forgotten lore and his power grew.

Not long after the destruction of Otosan Uchi at the hands of the Dark Lord, Daigotsu, Hikosaboro became aware of a number of other former Isawa that had formed into a band outside the ruined ground. He quickly met up with them and eventually took control of their organization. He dubbed his new band the Forgotten Sons to mock his former Isawa masters and began collecting ronin shugenja from other clans in order to expand on his knowledge.

Members of the Forgotten Sons seek to build up their hidden lore, called the Forgotten Library, underneath the ruins of Otosan Uchi. They will go to any lengths in order to attain new magical lore except in dealing with maho-tsukai and the Shadowlands Taint. Hikosaboro is smart enough to realize that his organization would not be long in becoming a Bloodspeaker cell if they were to even dabble in those dark arts.

THE FORGOTTEN SONS (PRESTIGE CLASS)

REQUIREMENTS

Base Attack Bonus: +2

Clan: Clan Ronin

Skills: Decipher Script 6 Ranks, Spellcraft 6 Ranks

Feats: Void Use

Honor/Alignment: Any

Hit Die: d6

CLASS SKILLS

A master sensei's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at 1st level: (4 + Int modifier) × 4

Skill Points at each additional level: 4 + Int modifier

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the Forgotten Sons.

Weapons and Armor Proficiency: Forgotten Sons gain no additional proficiencies.

Spells per Day: A Forgotten Son continues his general study of the elements even after attaining this prestige class. For each level he gains in this class, he gains new spells known and spells per day as if he has also gained a level as a shugenja. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a shugenja would have gained.

Eclectic Learning: Because the Forgotten Sons are comprised of members of so many different clans their learning techniques are diverse. Once per day per point of Wisdom modifier, a Forgotten Son may add his level in this prestige class to the difficulty of any save DC for a spell he casts.

Vast Lore: The Forgotten Library underneath Otosan Uchi is a repository for a huge quantity of information that members of this Brotherhood can call upon. At the 1st level of this class, the Forgotten Son may choose any one Knowledge skill he possesses. He gains a +5 bonus to any roll made with that skill from now on.

THE FORGOTTEN SONS

| Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special |
|-------|----------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| 1st | +0 | +0 | +0 | +2 | Eclectic Learning +1; Vast Lore |
| 2nd | +1 | +0 | +0 | +3 | Eclectic Learning +2 |
| 3rd | +1 | +1 | +1 | +3 | Eclectic Learning +3 |

THE FORGOTTEN SONS (NEW PATH)

Type: Brotherhood

Required Traits: Intelligence 3, Perception 3

Required Skills: Calligraphy 1, Cipher 3, Meditation 1, Research 2

Other Requirements: Clan Ronin, at least one Innate Ability (any)

Location: The Ruins of Otosan Uchi

Special: Eclectic Learning — (6 points) Because the Forgotten Sons are comprised of members of so many different

clans their learning techniques are quite diversified. Once per day per Insight Rank, a Forgotten Son may choose to gain a Free Raise on any spell he casts.

BANDIT ANCESTORS

HAMUKO

The ronin shugenja known as Hamuko died not long after the Day of Thunder, slain by her own clansmen in the Scorpion. Prior to the Scorpion Clan Coup, Hamuko served as a liaison to then Shosuro daimyo, Hametsu, and was the personal student of the Soshi daimyo, Bantaro. Hamuko was an exceptionally attractive and gifted student whose hand was sought by many outside the clan. Her duty was to gain the favors offered by suitors and keep them just out of reach of their goal. A role most enviable by those beneath her, but one that she did not overly covet.

When the allied clans defeated Shoji and the Scorpion scattered to the four winds, Hamuko found a new calling. As she persevered in her previous role as a desirable courtesan and no longer openly associated with the Scorpion many new doors for her as a result. Other clans' shugenja wished her to reveal the secrets of Soshi magic and courtiers in the Imperial Court wanted her for the blackmail and hidden lore she had attained. Hamuko was now in possession of all she desired without any restrictions from her clan or her family.

Then, the Day of Thunder occurred and the Scorpion was reinstated as a Great Clan once more. Hamuko could not stand the thought of a life trapped by the boundaries of clan and refused to rejoin her brethren. She was thus, not long for this world.

Hamuko's spirit journeys across Ningen-do seeking out that ronin who exemplify some semblance of the duties she performed in life. She targets shugenja preferably, but is willing to bestow her gifts on any that will share with her their joys.

KISS OF THE WIND

ANCESTOR:

HAMUKO

You are periodically gifted with some former aspect of Hamuko's prowess.

Benefit: Upon taking this feat you must choose one of the following skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Knowledge (choose one), or Sense Motive. If you are shugenja, you may instead choose one of your 1st level spells. If a skill is chosen, you may gain Hamuko's blessing once per day and add +10 to any one roll. If a spell is chosen, you may cast that spell once per day without losing the spell slot.

ANCESTOR: HAMUKO

(3 POINTS)

You are periodically gifted with some aspect of Hamuko's great talents. Upon taking this ancestry you must choose one of the following skills: Courtier, Lore (choose one), Seduction,



or Sincerity. If you are shugenja, you may instead choose one of your elements. If a skill is chosen, you may, once per day, gain two free raises on any one skill roll. If an element is chosen, you may, once per day, gain two free raises to the casting of any spell in that element.

NEMURANAI

THE KATANA OF THE BANDIT LORD

Also called Yugoro's Blade by those acquainted with the history of the dead bandit-king — and of those, there are all too few. The Katana of the Bandit Lord has not been awakened as nemuranai very long. In fact, the actual spirit of the blade is not what empowers the item. Yugoro was a legendary figure in his day, but rarely carried a single sword for a length of time. It is necessary for an item to remain in constant contact with a soul to take on any special properties and Yugoro was the type to keep little such equipment.

What makes the Katana of the Bandit Lord special is its history and tie to the sadistic Yugoro. The bandit-lord was slain at the hands of an Emerald Magistrate named Ide Ashijun while in the guise of one of his many "lieutenants." Ashijun had been hunting Yugoro for years with no success and had never actually laid eyes on the ronin warrior. He was not aware of whom he had killed when he put Yugoro to an early death.

Yugoro's spirit was one of corruption and greed and it did not last long in Meido before being sent to Gaki-do to atone for its crimes. Yugoro in nothing but a resourceful soul, however, and even death could not keep him from exercising his uncanny intellect. The spirit bided its time in Gaki-do feeding from the flesh of anything ignorant enough to come close. He followed Ashijun across Rokugan as the Magistrate hunted down and put to death nearly all of his followers. Once the Ide arrived at Yugoro's chief lair, the shozai-gaki — the type of spirit Yugoro had become — struck out and devoured him. Yugoro bound himself to one of the many swords that lay about in his stronghold and convinced Ashijun's yoriki to carry him from the area. The spirit has spent the remaining years attempting to find a soul weak enough to take over so that he might once more return to Ningen-do and terrorize the merchants of Rokugan.

Yugoro's blade is a normal katana in appearance. Nothing unusual marks it as a magical item of any sort. In fact, any attempts to detect magic on the sword gain nothing more than the minor sensation that some spirit inhabits it. Once wielded by a samurai, however, the shozai-gaki within the blade attempts to take control of the bearer. A Will save (DC 15) is required to prevent the sword from temporarily taking over the body of its wielder. If the bearer succeeds on the save he is immune to the effects of the blade for one week. Each subsequent Will save DC is raised by 1 even if the original save was successful. The wielder of the blade will experience constant headaches while carrying the blade and feel an overwhelming urge to find the lost remnants of Yugoro's ronin network.

Yugoro's blade does grant some benefit to the wielder while he or she carries the sword. The bearer is immune to all forms of magical compulsion, charm effects, and fear while he carries the sword. In addition, the bearer gains a temporary +2 bonus to all damage rolls and skill rolls to detect falsehoods.

Yugoro's blade is a normal katana in appearance. Nothing unusual marks it as a magical item of any sort. In fact, any attempts to detect magic on the sword gain nothing more than the minor sensation that some spirit inhabits it. Once wielded by a samurai, however, the shozai-gaki within the blade attempts to take control of the bearer. A Willpower Test (TN 5) is required to prevent the sword from temporarily taking over the body of its wielder. If the bearer succeeds on the save he is immune to the effects of the blade for one week. Each subsequent TN of the Willpower Test is raised by 2 even if the original save was successful. The wielder of the blade will experience constant headaches while carrying the blade and feel an overwhelming urge to find the lost remnants of Yugoro's ronin network.

Yugoro's blade does grant some benefit to the wielder while he or she carries the sword. The bearer is immune to all forms of magical compulsion, charming abilities, and fear while he carries the sword. In addition, the bearer gains a temporary +1k1 bonus to all damage rolls and a free raise on all attempts to detect falsehoods.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE CITY OF LIES

It was raining when Doji Satori arrived at the scene. It seemed as though it had been raining for the past three weeks, ever since he had arrived in this wretched city. Who among his superiors he had offended to such a degree to earn a post in Ryoko Owari Toshi, he had no idea. Once, perhaps not so long ago, he might have considered an appointment as chief magistrate in the Empire's largest city to be a prestigious post indeed. Now, of course, he knew better. For all the good that it did him at this point.

Satori brushed quickly past the bowing yoriki guarding the doorway from outside and stepped through the threshold of the so-called tea house. It was far too generous a description for such a seedy building. The interior was old and in desperate need of both extensive repairs and a vigorous cleaning, although the latter might prove impossible; it seemed to Satori that it was the sort of building that could only be truly cleaned out by a roaring fire. Two men awaited Satori, standing calmly in the room's center as if they were not concerned about the filth all around them. Satori grimaced inwardly at the notion of his fine kimono touching anything around him, then nodded to his men, who returned the gesture with a bow. "What has happened here?" he asked.

As usual, it was Turong who spoke first. "A serving girl discovered the body a short time ago, Satori-sama." The Shinjo magistrate's flat, emotionless expression perfectly matched the drab, uninspired patterns that decorated the unusually-tailored kimono he wore. "The owner closed the room and sent word to us immediately when he recognized the victim. This is not the sort of body he is accustomed to finding, it seems."

"I should hope not," Satori said darkly. "Have you confirmed the identity?"

"We have, Satori-sama," Chizaru replied. The Kitsuki's appearance was as immaculate as ever, and his eyes scanned the room constantly even as he spoke. "He was obviously attempting to

disguise himself, but it is Asako Yaro, chief adjunct to the Phoenix Clan ambassador. He appears to have died some time during the night."

"How?" the Crane asked.

"His throat was cut," Turong answered. "A single cut, most likely from behind. Very quick, very efficient. Rather messy."

"That's quite enough, thank you," Satori said, stifling the wave of nausea. The Shinjo always seemed very causal about describing terrible acts of violence. His detached manner disturbed Satori, although he seemed perfectly trustworthy otherwise.

"There is more, unfortunately," Chizaru replied. "The body's position, as well as the rigid and somewhat twisted state of its limbs, implies that Yaro was suffering from the rather painful effects of a lethal dose of poison when he was killed. Had his throat not been cut, he would not have survived for much longer regardless."

"Poisoned and stabbed?" Satori frowned. "Why go to such lengths? One or the other should have been more than enough. It makes no sense to be so vicious unless the murderer wished to send a message of some sort." He thought for a moment, his eyes narrowing. "Or unless..."

"Unless more than one party was attempting to kill Yaro," the Kitsuki finished. "Your conclusion is the same as our own, Satori-sama. I believe more than one party may have been involved in this incident."

"Wonderful," the Crane grumbled under his breath. "As if the murder of a high-ranking official in some seedy den of filth were not complicated enough as it is." He scratched his chin for a moment, considering the issue. "Has anyone spoken to the Phoenix ambassador yet?"

"No," Turong answered. "We only arrived to discover the body less than an hour ago, Satori-sama. It is possible that the ambassador may have heard by now regardless, however."

"Unacceptable," Satori said firmly. "Turong, go to the Phoenix estate immediately and deal with the ambassador. I do not want this matter to get out of hand."

"And how shall I answer his questions?" the Unicorn asked.

Satori considered the question for a moment. "Be as vague as possible, and tell him what he needs to hear to keep him relatively calm. We will deal with it as it comes." The Unicorn bowed sharply and left, leaving Satori with Chizaru. He turned to the Kitsuki with a wary expression. "There is something you haven't yet told me," he said quietly.

The Dragon bowed slightly. "You are correct, Satori-sama. I suspect Turong may have noticed, but I did not wish to point it out in his presence in case he had not, given his clan's distaste for such things. It could color his perceptions." Chizaru nodded to the eta standing quietly nearby. The young woman reached down and moved the dead man's hand to show palm up, then showed her own hands to the magistrates. There was a smear of color on her hand.

"What is that?" Satori asked.

"It appears to be a cosmetic compound of some sort," Chizaru answered. "If you noticed the brownish discoloration in Yaro's fingers, it becomes a bit clearer. It seems the Phoenix was using cosmetics to conceal the discoloration, which normally comes from prolonged exposure to..."

"I know what causes it," Satori said tersely. "Three weeks in this city, and already I am familiar with that particular distinction." He shook his head. "I've never known Yaro to take so much as a single sip of sake. I believed he was a pious man."

"Even pious men can have moments of weakness," Chizaru replied. "And with this particular vice, a single moment can become a lifetime of addiction. He was not strong enough to resist it."

"Weakness is no excuse," the Crane answered. "So we know why Yaro was here in this pit, but we do not know who is responsible for his death."

"I have compiled a list of suspects," Chizaru said. "It includes anyone bearing the Phoenix ill will and who seems to possess a temperament that lends itself to violence, as well as anyone we suspect may be involved in dealing with illicit substances."

"Excellent. How many names are on the list?"

"Twenty-three, Satori-sama."

Satori's face fell. "Do we have testimony from anyone here that may lead us to someone on that list?"

Chizaru almost smiled. "No, Satori-sama."

The Crane magistrate covered his face with his hand. "I hate this city."

THE CITY'S HISTORY

Ryoko Owari Toshi, known as Journey's End City, the City of Stories, the City of Green Walls, or the City of Lies, has ever been one of Rokugan's largest and most prosperous cities. With the destruction of Otosan Uchi by Daigotsu's forces during the Four Winds Era some years ago, it now has the distinction of being the Empire's largest city as well, although Toshi Ranbo's prodigious rate of growth may soon threaten that title. As a Scorpion center of power, the city has a high rate of illegal activity, only a fraction of which are obvious to those who live there. To understand how Ryoko Owari Toshi became such a den of iniquity, one must first understand the city's history.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Ryoko Owari was once a large village situated on the western border of Scorpion territory. The village's central location in the western provinces made it a natural choice for tax collection and trading, and soon the village became a popular meeting place for merchants of all sorts. The river that neatly bisected the village soon became an attraction for merchants from other clans, who saw the large number of Scorpion traders as a ripe market. Commerce has always been a natural stimulant for growth, and the village soon became a city. As with any Scorpion endeavor, the money and opportunity that the city presented did not go unappreciated for long. Soon, the fertile fields surrounding the city were home to vast crops of opium, harvested, processed, and distributed for medicinal purposes.

During the reign of Hantei XVII, the Crab invaded Scorpion territory and seized the city, holding it for more than a year. For that entire year, the Crab were plagued by the vice and depravity that Ryoko Owari had already become known for. The Crab commander charged with protecting the city found himself fighting corruption among his own forces, and eventually the city was abandoned outright simply because it was too expensive to maintain so far from the Crab lands. The Scorpion reassumed control with considerable fanfare, establishing a holiday in honor of the occasion. Liberation Day remains among the largest celebrations the city holds throughout the year.

THE CLAN WAR

The Imperial Edict dissolving the Scorpion Clan created considerable complications for the populace of Ryoko Owari. The Scorpion samurai throughout the city disappeared almost overnight, and the other clans with a presence there struggled to assume control in the ensuing vacuum. The Unicorn had maintained a sizeable presence for years, and were quick to assume control. Their enthusiasm for maintaining law and order created quite an uncomfortable environment for many enterprising businessmen, both legitimate and illegitimate, for quite some time. The city became a battleground between law and crime for months. Until the Crab returned.

The Clan War began with the march of a great Crab army northward, complete with considerably Shadowlands forces included among their ranks. Ryoko Owari was among the Crab's major targets. The army divided into two forces, one of which advanced upon the Crane and the other on Ryoko Owari. The city was all but razed, damaged extensively by fire and pillaged for supplies, stripping it of nearly every resource. Samurai who remained to defend the city were wiped out to a man. Only those who fled survived. The Shadowlands forces crushed every resistance, sparing Crab soldiers. The city remained largely in ruins until the Clan War ended, at which point the Scorpion were reinstated. The Unicorn contested the decision to return the city to them, but were unsuccessful in preventing it. The two clans began a quiet struggle for control that would last for years to come.

THE WAR AGAINST THE DARKNESS AND THE WAR OF SPIRITS

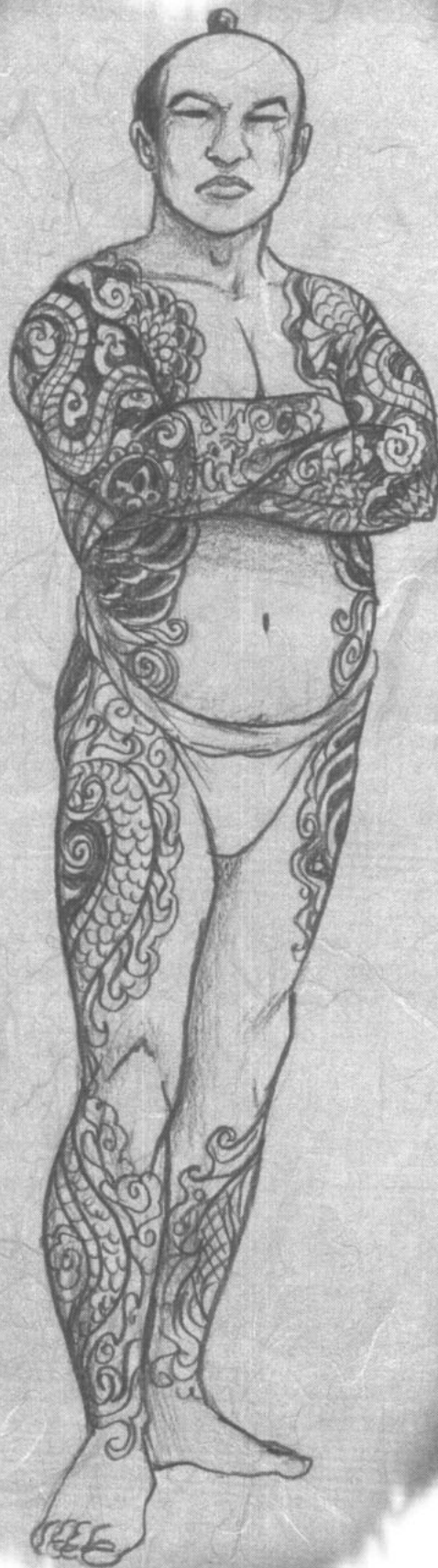
The years following Toturi's ascension to Emperor were as tumultuous as the Clan War. Ryoko Owari once again became a Unicorn holding after the Scorpion were banished to the Burning Sands for their perceived role in Toturi's disappearance. For a time, the Unicorn managed to crush most overt criminal activity within the region. It was a short lived victory, of course, for every time the samurai destroyed one group, another would rise to take its place. Once again, however, when the Scorpion were reinstated in an Imperial contest to grant governance over the Scorpion provinces, the Unicorn had little choice but to withdraw the majority of their influence from the city.

The War of Spirits was much different. Virtually every clan had a faction within it that sided with the Steel Chrysanthemum, and the Scorpion were no different. Smuggling within the city rose to an all time high, and the Bayushi found themselves in the unique position of attempting to curtail the practice at every opportunity, for they had no way of knowing how much of what left the city would go directly to their enemies. Near the conclusion of the war, the Scorpion paid lip service to the returned Hantei, marshalling their military elsewhere and offering substantial resources to his armies. Revitalized and confident, the Hantei's armies advanced to Beiden Pass, where the combined efforts of Phoenix shugenja and Scorpion saboteurs brought the mountain crashing down on the pass, destroying the Chrysanthemum's forces in one fell swoop. Many Scorpion lives were lost, but Ryoko Owari survived and the War of Spirits came to an abrupt halt.

THE FOUR WINDS ERA

Toturi's death in Scorpion lands created an uncomfortable stigma against the clan for some time. The conflict between the Scorpion and Unicorn persisted, with the Unicorn finally gaining control over the city through a victory in court. Unfortunately, the Scorpion were distracted from their battle with the Unicorn by a new threat: the Shadowed Tower. A radical subversive splinter group within the clan, the Tower, followed the philosophical leanings of Bayushi Atsuki, a returned spirit that survived the War of Spirits by masquerading as Shosuro Furuyari, a fictional playwright. Throughout the Four Winds Era, the Tower gained more and more influence until the Clan Champion secretly retired to allow his chosen heir to secretly take his place. With Bayushi Sunetra commanding the clan, the Tower was openly confronted and routed from their centers of power, including Ryoko Owari Toshi.

Despite the Tower's influence, few outside the clan recognized what was taking place. The Four Winds each chose a new power base following the destruction of Otsan Uchi, and Hantei Naseru chose Ryoko Owari as his seat of power. The city quickly became home to some of the Empire's most powerful and influential courtiers as Naseru established what would amount to the new Imperial Court in the city. This diminished when Toshi Ranbo was selected as the new capital city, but the Ryoko Owari remained a center of culture despite the relocation of many courtiers.



THE RULE OF TOTURI III

The rule of Toturi Naseru has thus far proven relatively stable for Ryoko Owari. The city is a Scorpion holding, but remains under the Unicorn's governance for the time being. This has made for an overtly tense situation. The Imperial Chancellor Bayushi Kaukatsu has made Ryoko Owari his home when not in Toshi Ranbo, and his obvious influence over the court scene has robbed the Shinjo governor of considerable power. The two serve as avatars for their clan, in a constant struggle for control that accelerates to a frantic pace during the periods when Kaukatsu is in residence at his estate.

Ryoko Owari has returned to its roots. The Shadowed Tower's shattered remnants created a vacuum that many different individuals and groups have exploited to reassume control of smuggling and distributing illicit substances. Entirely new cartels have risen to dominate the market, led by cunning and discreet individuals who realize they not only have to avoid detection by the ever watchful Unicorn, but also the protective forces of many influential courtiers who frequent the city during the off season.

Within the last year, an unprecedented alliance between the Scorpion and Unicorn clans has considerably lessened the long-standing tension within the city. The Scorpion have pledged to aid the Unicorn in gaining control of Kaeru Toshi, the City of the Rich Frog, from their Lion neighbors. In return, when this is accomplished, the Unicorn will cede all rights to Ryoko Owari to the Scorpion. This has proved more difficult than the Scorpion anticipated, however. Currently, the combined Scorpion and Unicorn armies are fighting a two front war against the heavily entrenched Lion and considerably more mobile Dragon forces. The Crane are expected to become involved before long, although no one can say for certain whether they will attack their longtime foes among the Lion or if the mutual respect between Doji Kurohito and Matsu Nimuro will result in another unprecedented alliance similar to that between the Scorpion and Unicorn. One thing is certain however: until the battle for Kaeru Toshi is finished, the fate of Ryoko Owari will remain as questionable as ever.

CURRENT STATUS

Ryoko Owari is an ever-changing political battleground, with combatants appearing and disappearing from the scene on an almost daily basis. Add to that the complex criminal activities being conducted within the city and the struggles of local and Imperial magistrates who are attempting to curtail these activities, and the city becomes a convoluted mire of alliances, enemies, and territory that can change hands many times during the course of a single season.

The following chapter is intended to update and replace the information contained within the Ryoko Owari Boxed Set published several years ago. One of the most popular produces in the Legend of the Five Rings Role-playing Game's history, the information presented within that set is now almost four decades out of synch with the Rokugan setting as presented in current produces. As such, almost none of the individuals presented in that work are still alive. Additionally, the city itself was devastated during the Clan War, and suffered

similarly during the War against the Darkness and innumerable skirmishes between the Unicorn and Scorpion clans.

CONFLICTS

Ryoko Owari is a perpetually tense environment that is always rife with conflict. At any given time, there are numerous groups competing with one another in an attempt to gain wealth or influence. Currently, there are at least a dozen minor conflicts between particular families or groups, but there are three major conflicts that impact every district in the city.

SCORPION VS. UNICORN

Despite the burgeoning alliance between Bayushi Sunetra and Moto Chagatai, there is no love lost between the two clans' contingents within the city. The governor Shinjo Osema and his loyalists resent the notion of turning the city over to the Scorpion after fending off their attempts to seize it from them nearly seven years. Osema is far too loyal to Shinjo Shono and Moto Chagatai to sabotage the alliance, but not all those who serve him are. There is a splinter group within his loyalists who are determined to undermine the Scorpion as much as possible in hopes of demonstrating to the Khan that they are weak. Chagatai has no tolerance for weakness, and they hope that he will renege on his part in the treaty if he sees how wretched and worthless the Scorpion truly are.

Likewise, there is a contingent of Scorpion samurai who feel that the Unicorn should be made to appreciate the enormity of their error in taking Ryoko Owari from them in the first place. They are intent on undermining the clan for so long as they remain in the area. Shosuro Jiroko is the architect of this movement, and she believes she is acting with Kaukatsu's tacit approval. The Scorpion currently are attempting to undermine the Unicorn both in court and economically, through a trade war between merchant vassals in the Merchant Quarter.

MAGISTRATES VS. CARTELS

There is a constant struggle between law and crime in Ryoko Owari, and has been almost since the day the city was founded. The balance of power has tipped back and forth over the decades, with the criminals largely in control due to corruption on the part of too many magistrates. The most that has been possible in the past is to keep crime to a reasonable level. The current situation, however, is proving to be quite different.

The current chief Imperial Magistrate, Doji Satori, how vowed to eliminate the cartels that dominate much of Ryoko Owari. Although the idealistic Crane is rapidly learning how difficult this task will truly be, he has the Unicorn Clan magistrates' full and unwavering support, as well as, surprisingly, that of a handful of Scorpion magistrates. This unprecedented unification of objectives has allowed the forces of law and order to make more progress than at any time in recent history.

Unfortunately for the magistrates, their current foe is more ruthless than any they have faced before. The current dominant criminal cartel, the Black Lotus cartel, is far more willing to take overt action against their enemies than most. While the Scorpion have some nominal involvement with the cartel, the criminal overlords do not regard the clan's well-being to be above their own. The Black Lotus currently dominates most criminal activity in the Fisherman's Quarter and Licensed Quarter, and has a surprising number of covert operations taking place in the Merchant Quarter as well.

THUNDER GUARD VS. FIREMEN GANGS

In theory, both the Thunder Guard and the various firemen gangs that operate throughout the city operate with the best interest of the city's citizens in mind. In practice, this is not necessarily the case. The Thunder Guard is an organization with a history of corruption among its membership, much the same as the firemen gangs. Currently, the two organizations are vying for influence within the city. The most powerful gangs have banded together in their realization that the Thunder Guard care little for the common people, but rather their own self-aggrandizement.

The citizens living within the Fisherman's Quarter and Temple District are currently more favorably inclined toward the firemen, greatly undermining the Thunder Guard's authority and influence within those sectors. The Merchant Quarter and Noble Quarter are firm supporters of the Thunder Guard, with the city's other districts neatly divided between the two. This is not an open conflict, but one of ideology and philosophy, two things the Thunder Guard are sadly ill-equipped to deal with.

THE NOBLE QUARTER

Although the Noble Quarter has not changed in size or layout since before the Clan War, it is nevertheless almost unrecognizable compared to decades ago. Along with the Temple District, the Noble Quarter suffered the most severe losses when the Crab razed the city during the war's initial days. Rebuilding was limited at the time, as the Unicorn were sorely taxed by their self-imposed duty to maintain order during the war. By the time any significant resources could be devoted to reconstructing the city, the war was at an end and the Scorpion had regained control of the city. Two years later, when the Scorpion were banished and the Unicorn resumed control, the Noble Quarter had been completely repaired.

THE GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE

The enormous estate that serves as the governor's residence was burned to the ground during the Crab attack decades ago, and was left untouched for years before that by the Unicorn, who regarded the building as a reminder of a weakness that destroyed the Scorpion Clan. Ironically, the secret chambers beneath the mansion served as a sort of way station for the Scorpion who went to ground during that dark period. The Unicorn magistrates stationed at the various entrances never saw these Scorpion, save for the bold few who allowed themselves to be seen in hopes of lulling the Unicorn into false assurances of security.

In the modern day, the governor's residence has been rebuilt and modified somewhat by Unicorn craftsmen to better reflect the clan that has controlled it for the past few years. The subtle changes in architecture and decoration are largely gaijin in nature, a fact that maddens the city's Scorpion citizens to no end. In their mind, it is inevitable that their clan will regain control (a fact that seems to be borne out with recent events), and the Unicorn's "desecration" of the estate's memory. If, as many suspect, Bayushi Kaukatsu's personal assistant Shosuro Jiroko is chosen to fulfill the role of governor when the transition occurs, she has publicly expressed her opinion that the residence should be destroyed and rebuilt exactly as it was before the Unicorn took control. Needless to say, this expression has done nothing to ease the

already tense situation between the Scorpion and Unicorn within the city.

The many secret chambers that once existed within the original mansion no longer exist, although the deeper subterranean chambers survived undiscovered by the Unicorn who rebuilt it. Despite this, many Scorpion agents have discovered that gaijin architecture creates a number of advantages that a stealthy infiltrator can exploit, if they are observant. Prior to his ascension to the throne, the Emperor was nearly assassinated in his chambers by a desperate Scorpion assassin in thrall to the onisu Fushin through just an oddity, although the Unicorn quickly corrected that particular flaw.

THE IDE RESIDENCE

Prior to the Clan War, the Ide held more influence than any other Unicorn family within the city. Due to an unspecified incident regarding the ranking Ide lord's involvement with an opium-related conflict prior to the Scorpion Clan's failed coup in Ootosan Uchi, the family was largely removed from power shortly before the Clan War began. The large estate the family controlled, however, was spared during the war, most likely because of the relations between the Crab and Unicorn. After the war, the Shinjo assumed control of their clan's interests in the city, but for whatever reason, the estate retained the family's name if little else.

Currently, the Ide Residence is a secondary power base for the Unicorn, as they are also in control of the Governor's Residence. Shinjo Osema and his personal staff reside in the governor's estate, while the many other courtiers and leading magistrates the clan maintains remain stationed here. The staff here have begun planning for Osema's removal from power, and anticipate his reassignment elsewhere.

THE EMERALD MAGISTRATES' STATION

Once little more than a lavishly appointed private residence, the Unicorn have considerably expanded this building to provide for a more extensive presence by Emerald Magistrates, whom the Unicorn hold in high regard. The compound, as the Unicorn refer to it, now contains a private residence, a small dojo, a stable, and a barracks capable of maintaining up to a dozen yoriki or legionnaires for long periods of time. Any chief magistrate who does not have a staff that large will be supplied with willing and able Unicorn troops to serve them, if that is their desire.

The Magistrates' Station is widely regarded as neutral ground by the different political groups within the city. Despite the fact that many magistrates in the past have proven unable to resist the various corrupting influences within the city, the current Emerald Champion and his staff have no tolerance for corruption. Magistrates stationed in the city over the past five years have proven immune to such activity.

THE SHINJO GARDENS

Although the gardens in Ryoko Owari's temple district are well known throughout the Empire for their beauty and tranquility, they cannot compare to the Shinjo Gardens in terms of rare, exotic beauty. The Shinjo Gardens contains the largest collection of gaijin plants and animals that exists anywhere beyond the Unicorn lands or Mantis islands, and is an extremely popular attraction among visitors, particularly younger samurai with little knowledge of the world that exists beyond Rokugan's borders.

Before the Crab attack, the Scorpion maintained a bathhouse in the center of their gardens, one constructed of green limestone that was popular as a secret meeting place for co-conspirators of all types. The Unicorn chose not to rebuild this particular structure, preferring to do away with anything that could revive memories of innumerable Scorpion plots that once plagued the city. The Scorpion have always intended to rebuild it, but it is low on their list of priorities and has yet to begin during the periods of Scorpion control. The clan of secrets simply has too much else on their agenda.

The gardens contain a menagerie of creatures rivaled only by the largest of such collections in Shinjo lands. Combined with the fact that the samurai responsible for overseeing the gardens has many allies among the Mantis Clan, and the result is that there is no single collection of exotic creatures with more diversity anywhere in Rokugan. Strange lizards from the Burning Sands, tiny screeching monkeys from the Mantis Islands, burrowing, insect-eating rodents from the Ebonite forests, gigantic aquatic reptiles from the Ivory Kingdoms' coast, and a myriad of other oddities that fascinate those who can accept such things with an open mind.

THE TEMPLE QUARTER

The Temple Quarter of Ryoko Owari has changed surprisingly little in the years since the Clan War, despite that the Crab Clan's allies among the Shadowlands reveled in destroying many smaller temples in the area during their siege. The Temple of Daikoku, the largest and tallest building in the entire city, suffered cosmetic and minor structural damage, but nothing extensive. The other temples were quickly rebuilt by the Brotherhood of Shinsei and their affiliated orders, who view the temple district as a necessary stabilizing influence in the city, a viewpoint that many samurai would find dubious.

Regardless of the state of affairs in Ryoko Owari, many peasants and samurai who call the city home are devoutly religious individuals that frequent the temple district. Many of these citizens donate generously to the temples, ensuring that the city's monks are never lacking for funds to maintain the temples. Daikoku is the most revered Fortune within the city, for even those who are not pious covet wealth and are willing to pay homage to any divine being that may bless them with what they desire.

THE TEMPLE OF DAIKOKU

Easily the largest and tallest building in the entire city, the Temple of Daikoku is among the grandest devoted to that Fortune in all the Empire, and serves as a center of power for the order that maintains all Daikoku's temples. Hundreds or even thousands of adherents attend the temple each day, most praying for wealth. Sadly, the monks of Daikoku recognize that the majority of such visitors do not truly understand their teachings or writings, but that they hope only for easy wealth to ease the burdens of their mortal lives.

The temple has flourished under Unicorn control. Ever a wealthy clan, the Unicorn are properly reverent to the Fortune of wealth for all their success. The monks who reside in this temple are well known for eccentric behavior, the type of acts that quickly become the subject of legends and folklore. One such story, considered by many to be apocryphal, involves several monks going to a gambling house on Teardrop Island and, after being presented with the choice to participate or leave, bankrupted the house with a flawless display of gambling prowess. While many believe this is just

another modern day myth, others note that the owners of every major gambling house make donations to the temple on a regular basis.

THE TEMPLE OF YAKAMO

Ryoko Owari was once home to perhaps the single greatest temple to Lady Sun in all the Empire. There was certainly no question as to the devout and holy nature of those who worked there. Reports from the Crab siege claim that the temple glowed with a holy light during the Shadowlands' attack, driving the oni away. It is impossible to corroborate this, however, as every monk, priest, and priestess who served in the temple at that time disappeared, although no bodies were ever recovered. The monks currently serving the temple claim that the entire staff ascended to Tengoku to serve Amaterasu directly, but most shugenja discount that claim.

Obviously, there have been substantial changes to the temple in the decades since the Clan War. Amaterasu's death shortly before the Battle at Oblivion's Gate devastated all who served her, including those who resided within the Temple of Amaterasu in Ryoko Owari. The subsequent ascension of Hida Yakamo to the position of Lord Sun was a second devastating blow, one that many in Amaterasu's order did not survive unscathed. Many left for other religious orders, while others left the clerical life altogether. In rare cases, a few monks who had once been samurai resumed their former lives, either until their death or simply to take their lives in the tradition of warriors who had lost their lords.

The monks and priests who serve Lord Sun are a hardy sort, with far more in common with the monks of Osano-wo than those who served Yakamo's predecessor. These men and women have pledged their life in service to an entity that provides life in the mortal realm and who abhors the forces of darkness. As such, the monks are ardent supports of magistrates, inquisitors, and of course the Crab Clan's efforts against the Shadowlands. Yakamo's monks were among the first to help the Unicorn restore order following the Rain of Blood almost a year ago.

THE SMALL HOLIES

A small neighborhood south of Daikoku's temple, the small holies is made up of a large number of modest shrines and temples devoted to virtually every minor divine being revered in the Rokugani cosmology. While the Seven Fortunes and various Kami have their temples near the other city quarters, this section is reserved for lesser Fortunes. Most larger mikkokami orders maintain at least a minor shrine within the city, given that it is the largest city in the Empire. Many are combined together into small, single temples to save space. For example, Isora, Fortune of the Seashore, and Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea, both share a temple with other marine-related Fortunes, none of whom have many adherents within the city.

The Small Holies neighborhood is quiet and serene, even more so than the other neighborhoods in the district. This is not only because of the lesser amount of traffic to these more obscure temples, but also due to the vigilance of the Temple Road Firemen, the group responsible for protecting this region. Unlike many other firemen groups, the Temple Road Firemen are not rife with corruption or criminals, but rather consist primarily of devout young men who consider their duty a sacred task that they must fulfill in order to fulfill their destiny in the mortal realm.

THE SHI-TIEN YEN-WANG TEMPLE

Perhaps the Unicorn's greatest victory over the Scorpion is their recent establishment of a temple to their gaijin lords, the so-called Lords of Death known as the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang, in the temple district. This temple is the only one of its kind that exists outside the Unicorn provinces, and its existence is offensive to both the Scorpion and the Brotherhood, both of whom would very much like to see it torn down. Unfortunately, however, the Moto who established the temple not only gained permission from the governor, but also from the Jade Champion, and thus the temple can not be destroyed without offering a direct insult both to the Unicorn Khan and to Asahina Sekawa, a move that even the Scorpion are unlikely to make.

The temple of death, as this structure is generally known, has few regular attendants. The monks who maintain the temple number less than a dozen, with perhaps another dozen individuals who come to offer prayers to the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang on a regular basis. Ironically, many of these adherents are from the city's eta population, who are generally unwelcome in all but the most devout temples. Many eta deal with death and its prognosis every day, and have tremendous respect for those who administrate such matters, including both the Lords of Death and their associate, Emma-O, Fortune of Death. The eta find the doctrine adopted by the Lords, favoring justice in the next life for those who commit crimes of pride and arrogance in this one, including many samurai.

THE MERCHANT QUARTER

Whenever tragedy has struck Ryoko Owari, whether from fire, an attack, war, or any other source, the Merchant Quarter is always the first section of town to be rebuilt. This is in part due to the city merchants' industrious nature, of course, but also because the governor and many samurai recognize where the city's lifeblood lies. Hundreds of merchants ply their trade in this section each day, often clogging the narrow roads with both the merchants and their patrons.

Ironically, there is little political or direct criminal activity in this quarter. There is too much money to be made in legitimate businesses here to risk exposure and loss of resources by investing heavily in criminal enterprises. Most criminal activity within the city is conducted within the Fisherman's Quarter or other districts. This is not to say, of course, that there are no unethical merchants or practices in this district. Far from it. If a magistrate is seeking an opium merchant, an illegal gambling house, or a merchant selling illegal goods, the Merchant Quarter is not the most likely place to find them. There are simply too many people there, and being caught is far too risky for most. The most illicit activity conducted in the Merchant Quarter is the storage of illegal substances in the many warehouses along the lakeshore and some smuggling on the wharves.

THE WHARVES

The Bay of Drowned Honor's eastern edge has numerous large wharves spaced across it. The water here is far deeper than on the western edge, allowing for large merchant barges to dock here and unload their wares for sale within the city or storage to be moved to another barge for transport. Of the three wharves, the Northeast Wharf is under the Black Lotus cartel's influence. The patrons who publicly oversee it maintain a large private guard to protect their shipments, meaning that

the Thunder Guard are not necessary and do not see the majority of cargoes that come into the city, although they do require a daily manifest to be turned in to the Thunder Guard captain.

The quarter's other two wharves, the Iron Wharf and the Grand Wharf, are more stringently patrolled. The Iron Wharf is so named because it is dominated by a concern of Yasuki merchants who moved excess Crab iron north to the city to be distributed among their different holdings in the northern Empire. The Grand Wharf is the largest and most secure, being very heavily patrolled by the Thunder Guard. The most trusted and valuable merchants are permitted to use this wharf, usually after their patrons make generous gifts to the governor or his allies.

THE FISHERMAN'S QUARTER

This aptly-named city section is a hotbed of activity. Vast numbers of fishing boats arrive at the extensive docks each day, unloading tons of fish to be sold at the open air market near the bay's shore. The smell permeates the entire district, making it unpleasant for most samurai to endure for more than a short period of time. This has worked to the advantage of many criminals, who set up shop within the large, crowded district.

The Fisherman's Quarter consists of a cramped miasma of peasant homes and merchants or businesses that are not of sufficient quality to be allowed in the Merchant Quarter. Rundown, low-quality tea houses, many of which are thinly veiled sake or geisha houses, appear on every corner. Hidden gambling dens are secreted in the reeking back rooms of dozens of buildings throughout the district.

THE DOCKS

The crowded, reeking, noisy docks that dominate the Bay of Drowned Honor's western border are in a constant state of chaotic activity that halts only in the final hours of night. The water there is rather shallow, meaning that only small ships can dock here. Most are fishing boats, but there are certain docks that only permit certain types of cargo, usually timber or other resources that are in constant demand throughout the city.

Because the docks are so clogged with cargoes that are of minor importance at best to samurai, there are few Thunder Guards on hand at any given point. What little security is available at the docks is usually provided by hired guards or by firemen gangs, who often run impromptu extortion rackets. The inherently corrupt atmosphere in the docks makes it simple for an occasional fishing boat carrying something other than fish to sneak in and unload its cargo in the Fisherman's Quarter without any real difficulty.

THE JUNIPER TEAHOUSE

This small, unassuming teahouse is less offensive to the eye than most in the district, and also less discreet. The Juniper Teahouse openly serves unlicensed sake to any willing to pay their admittedly reasonable prices. This might seem a dangerous prospect, except that the teahouse has little need for concern. In fact, the unspoken custom that has persisted for almost fifty years is that the first drink is always free for off-duty Thunder Guards. That the house has remained in operation even during the reign of the intensely lawful

Unicorn has many believing that the house's mysterious patron has some sort of connection among the samurai class that allows him or her leeway that no one else can enjoy.

THE LICENSED QUARTER

Ryoko Owari's Licensed Quarter, more commonly known as Teardrop Island, is infamous throughout the Empire for the exceptional quality of service provided. The geisha houses, gambling houses, and sake houses found there are among the best in Rokugan, and there is a substantial amount of traffic through the city purely because of Teardrop Island. Many honorable samurai persist in their belief that the island should be shut down, as it represents temptation, sin, and dereliction of duty. The many governors of Ryoko Owari, however, have chosen to maintain it as is for two reasons. First and foremost, the city is in desperate need of an outlet for the baser urges of its citizens, as the tension level in the city seems to run at a consistently high level. Secondly, the island generates a staggering income, enough to fund many of the city's operations throughout the year. Managing a city the size of Ryoko Owari is a difficult and expensive task, and sometimes financial concerns must take precedence over honor.

SWORDS POLISHED

The gateway to Teardrop Island is a small, heavily-patrolled dock maintained by the Thunder Guard. After disembarking and being cautioned against any display of excess or violence, arriving guests are shown to a large building with a simple sign reading "Swords Polished." Within, they are greeted by courteous, respectful staff who offer to accept any blade the samurai might be carrying for polishing. Those who accept the offer and surrender their weapons are allowed to exit the building's southern exit, which leads to the greater island beyond. Those who refuse are denied access to the island, but politely sent back to the docks. This simple system has allowed the island to remain relatively calm, while providing a valued, respectable service to samurai.

Of course, things are rarely so simple.

The primary function of Swords Polished is and always has been to prevent loss of life on Teardrop Island. The businesses there attract enough negative attention as is without drunken samurai hacking off limbs in a sake-induced rage. Once, that was the only purpose the establishment fulfilled. With the death of Gate, the ronin who oversaw the operation, during the Clan War, the Scorpion covertly assumed control of the operation. A Kaiu-trained Scorpion samurai, supposedly exiled from the clan of his own volition, oversees the ronin. Ironically, many non-Scorpion view Kaiju as an honorable man because he voluntarily left the Scorpion when asked to perform an unsavory task. In reality, he is very much a loyal Scorpion operative. His intimate knowledge of sword-smithing allows him to learn much about potential enemies of his clan simply by how they carry and wield their weapons, and from the details of the weapons themselves. On very rare occasion, Kaiju uses his expertise to make subtle changes to the weapons to throw off a samurai's skill. This is usually only done immediately prior to a duel or other important occurrence to give a Scorpion the edge.

THE HOUSE OF FOREIGN STORIES

This large structure is a geisha house, tea house, and gambling house combined into a single building. It is perhaps the most

well known of all the various establishments on Teardrop Island because of its unique approach to providing service: the House of Foreign Stories has a gaijin theme. The décor is decidedly alien to most Rokugani, as are many drinks, customs, and entertainments offered. The previous madam was actually a gaijin woman named Magda, one of only a handful of gaijin permitted to live within the Empire until the recent establishment of relations with the Ivory Coast. While the days of an actual gaijin storyteller have long since passed, the house's theme and operational style has not.

During their periods of control, the Unicorn have gradually managed to replace the entire staff of the House of Foreign Stories with agents loyal to their cause. Even though the Scorpion will soon regain control of the city, Shinjo Osema and his loyal agents have ensured that they will have some manner of representation in the city, even if it is a minor one. The Shinjo have placed several members of vassal families among the staff to serve as their agents in Ryoko Owari. The Scorpion, amazingly, have remained blissfully ignorant of this subterfuge, having diverted their attention away from such minor concerns as a gaijin geisha house for quite some time now.

Until recently, the House of Foreign Stories remained in a state of considerable disrepair. Shinjo Shono took a personal interest in the house, and preferred that it remain something of a shambles, as befitting the status of his family. The past years has seen an extensive renovation, however, and the house is beginning to reclaim a few patrons.

THE HOUSE OF THE MORNING STAR

In its heyday, the House of the Morning Star rivaled the House of Foreign Stories as the second most prestigious geisha house on Teardrop Island. It was very popular among the city's wealthier citizens, mostly those who had no taste for the exotic offerings of the House of Foreign stories. Through war and the Scorpion's various absences, however, the house's administrators and various sponsors disappeared, leaving the house without the income necessary to maintain its high standards and quality. The house soon became a pale shade of its former glory, and was remembered only by the city's oldest citizens and most prolific patrons.

The past few years have seen a resurgence on behalf of the House of the Morning Star. It has once again become a prominent attraction on the island, and sees heavy traffic both from city regulars and visitors from all across the Empire. This is a deliberate effort on behalf of the Black Lotus Cartel, the current dominant criminal cartel. The cartel is involved in various illicit activities throughout the Empire, larceny not least among them. The House of the Morning Star provides an outstanding means of scattering koku acquired during such enterprises. Every koku is stamped with the province and clan of its origin, making it relatively easy to trace for a magistrate with such keen attention to detail. So many samurai move through the House of the Morning Star, however, that distributing the coins throughout the profits and the patrons virtually eliminates the possibility of successfully tracking anyone in such a manner.

Perhaps ironically, the current chief Imperial Magistrate has a high-ranking yoriki who frequents the House of the Morning Star. Thus far, Shinjo Turong remains completely ignorant of the goings-on behind the scenes, but there is a growing concern among the Black Lotus leaders that he will discover the truth, and that he should be eliminated at the

earliest opportunity. Others argue that doing so would only bring more attention to the house, and that corruption should be considered, possibly exposing the young magistrate to addictive substances without his knowledge. As yet, there has been no decision made as to how to handle the situation, but the time is nearing when one will, and it could have dire consequences for the forces of law and order within the city.

THE HOUSE OF PLUM BLOSSOMS

Prior to the Clan War, the House of Plum Blossoms was a twisted, dark, sinister place where the basest, most depraved fantasies could be experienced... for a price. The woman who operated the house was not a woman at all, but a demon in human form. When the Shadowlands ran rampant across the city, the House of Plum Blossoms was finally emptied of evil as those corrupted by its obscenity gleefully joined in the chaos. Unfortunately, not all those familiar with the house were removed from the city, and it returned to business at the conclusion of the war. The horrors permitted within were no longer fueling blood magic, but were evil all the same.

The House of Plum Blossoms' legacy of evil finally came to an end, or at least changed form, after Bayushi Atsuki returned through Oblivion's Gate in Voltturnum. Atsuki quickly began to rebuild his former empire of conspirators through the Shadowed Tower, an extensive subversive movement within the Scorpion Clan. Atsuki's colleagues moved in and quickly assumed control of the house, then used the perverse patrons to absorb the corrupting influence of their dark rituals. The predators suddenly became the prey to a larger beast.

When the Shadowed Tower was purged from Scorpion lands seven years ago, the various ranking members responsible for administering the Tower's activities were killed at the Scorpion strike on the sect's primary stronghold. The House of Plum Blossoms was overlooked, and while the surviving staff members had little knowledge of the Tower's true intent or activities, they retained enough of the Tower's mindset and activities to pose an ongoing threat to a city unaware of their existence.



THE LEATHERWORKER'S QUARTER

Little has changed in the Leatherworker's Quarter over the past half century, due mostly to the fact that neither Unicorn nor Scorpion care one whit for what goes on in the dingy, ramshackle, suburban area where the city's eta live. Once, this squalid village (some samurai refuse to acknowledge that it is part of the city, as it lies outside the city wall) was divided into sections based on the occupants' occupations: leatherworkers,

dung haulers, and mortuary workers. This distinction was largely eliminated by the Shadowlands attack, which decimated most buildings and many inhabitants. Since that brutal reminder of their place, the eta population has been careful to disappear into the background, drawing as little attention to themselves as possible.

The Shadowed Tower took a brutal toll on the Leatherworker's Quarter. Once their initial batch of subjects was exhausted, the Tower began using eta as the receptacles for the Taint they drained away from their corrupted shugenja. When the forces of Bayushi Sunetra purged the Tower's agents, they executed a large number of corrupted peasants, ironically fostering bitterness in the hearts of many eta that were ostensibly being "rescued."

THE CREMATORIUM

The largest building in the quarter, the crematorium was rebuilt not for sentimental reasons, but out of a strict necessity. Ryoko Owari is the largest city in the Empire, and as such there are a number of deaths every day, from a variety of causes. Heimen messengers arrive at the city gate that leads to the Leatherworker Quarter every morning, alerting the families who maintain the mortuary houses to whatever deaths may have occurred during the night. The eta then retrieve the corpses as soon as a shugenja has performed the proper rituals, and bring them to the crematorium. A handful of eta families make their living creating small, crude, inexpensive containers to hold ashes. These are supplied for corpses whose living relatives cannot purchase a more elaborate receptacle.

ODDS & ENDS

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

Ryoko Owari has always been a city steeped in both politics and manipulation. Any encounters within the city will likely involve certain powerful individuals, whether in person or in tandem with their many agents. Some of the more influential and prevalent individuals are detailed here for use in your campaign.

Shosuro Jiroko, Mistress of Lies

[Courtier 14; Bayushi Courtier 4]

With the Imperial Court in Toshi Ranbo consuming more and more of Bayushi Kaukatsu's time, the Chancellor has had to leave his affairs in Ryoko Owari to one of his many subordinates. Fortunately for Kaukatsu, and unfortunately for his enemies, Shosuro Jiroko is perhaps his most gifted student and a ruthless manipulator. She dominates the city's courts with the sheer weight of her presence and the quiet threat she represents. Almost everyone fears her, yet no one can bear to bar her from their court gatherings.

Jiroko delights in her power and reputation even more so than her patron, a point that Kaukatsu has not failed to notice. The Chancellor is content to leave Jiroko in Ryoko Owari, however, as he recognizes its growing obsolescence as Toshi Ranbo expands. Jiroko is oblivious to this, however, and gleefully spins ever more involved webs that encompass the entire city. She has spies among the Emerald Magistrates, the monks in the Temple District, the farmers in the Fisherman's

Quarter, and even the eta in the Leatherworker's Quarter. Nothing takes place without her knowledge, and she enjoys manipulating events for little reason other than to enjoy the fact that she can. She has recently made some initial forays into infiltrating the city's criminal cartels, although only time will tell what will come of that endeavor.

Notes: Shosuro Jiroko can serve as an excellent foil for a group of magistrates, courtiers, or almost any type of character party. Perhaps more interestingly, she might approach newcomers as a potential patron, eager to induct them into her web of intrigue and gain valuable new agents in the process. She will almost certainly approach any new Scorpion who arrive in the city, especially if they are a part of a multi-clan group that can offer new information to the Mistress of Lies.

Shinjo Osema, Governor of Ryoko Owari Toshi
[Samurai 6/Emerald Magistrate 4; Shinjo Bushi 4]

The Khan did not consult Shinjo Osema when he made his arrangements with Bayushi Sunetra regarding the return of Ryoko Owari to Scorpion control, and the Unicorn governor is still smoldering over that decision. Over the past few years, he has devoted his entire life to restoring the city to order, ceaselessly combating the criminal cartels and foiling innumerable Scorpion plots to undermine his power. Osema has endured throughout the entire fiasco, only to emerge from each trial stronger. And now all that means nothing, because once the conflict at the City of the Rich Frog is concluded, he will be expected to merrily hand over all his hard work to the Scorpion that have tried to steal it from him for years.

Osema is honorable, but practical. Like his Khan, he knows that he must occasionally set aside his honor to achieve a greater victory for his family and clan, and he will gladly do so if it becomes necessary. Even more than to Moto Chagatai, Osema is fiercely loyal to his family daimyo, Shinjo Shono, and feels that the impending loss of his position in Ryoko Owari will only further shame a great man who has too long carried the burden of his father's actions. He is rapidly becoming desperate for a way to prevent the loss of the city, and it is possible that he may make a terrible if well-intended mistake to do what he thinks is right.

Notes: Osema can likewise serve as a patron for a group of newly arrived characters, though he may just as well prove a foil for them if their goals are in any way related to the transfer of power within the city. With his admittedly gaijin sensibilities, Osema may approach newcomers with a proposal for undercover work, a questionable tactic that many samurai find offensive, within Shosuro Jiroko's organization.

Doji Satori, Emerald Magistrate
[Samurai 8/Emerald Magistrate 4; Doji Magistrate 4]

A very recent appointment to Ryoko Owari, Doji Satori initially believed that being the chief magistrate in the Empire's largest city would be an extraordinary boon to his career. That was before he arrived, of course. Now, after only a month in the city, he longs to be returned to his previous, far less "prestigious" appointment. Ryoko Owari is a breeding ground for criminals. For every enterprise that Satori and his men put a stop to, two more appear within a week. As the Crane is fond of pointing out, he is attempting to put out a raging fire with only a sake cup. His spirit has not yet been broken, but the discouragement he feels is clear to anyone who spends more than a few minutes in his presence.

Satori is an honorable man. He initially believed that Ryoko Owari's reputation for lawlessness was a result of incompetence on the part of the magistrates stationed there. He has discovered, however, that his two chief yoriki, Kitsuki Chizaru and Shinjo Turong, are among the finest he has ever worked alongside. The city is not lawless because of the men who enforce the law; it is lawless because the criminals there far outnumber the magistrates. Satori has vowed to bring the city's criminal element to justice, but he is only now realizing how massive an undertaking that will prove to be.

Notes: Doji Satori can easily be replaced with another magistrate from an existing campaign, or with a player character. His yoriki are likewise replaceable, though they can serve as an excellent mouthpiece to introduce new player character magistrates to the city. At the GMs discretion, one or both of the yoriki could be agents of Shosuro Jiroko or any other antagonist groups within the city.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Ryoko Owari is a unique setting that allows for virtually any type of encounter that a GM may wish to employ as part of an ongoing campaign. Political intrigue and investigation are the most common, of course, but combat-based encounters are simple to include, and the wilderness surrounding the city can allow for a wide range of other types of encounters as well. The following adventure hooks may be used as one-shot deals to change the pace of an existing campaign, or they can be developed into ongoing plotlines to alter the course of a campaign for long periods of time.

DANGEROUS ALLIANCES

CHALLENGE

Whether visitors to the city or citizens, the characters receive an invitation to a banquet at the governor's mansion. This is an unusual request, as the party has had only limited contact with the governor during the busy harvest season. Whatever the motivation, the characters must prepare for an evening spent in the company of some of Rokugan's wealthiest and most powerful citizens.

FOCUS

Upon arrival at the governor's mansion, the characters find themselves the subject of a surprisingly warm and gregarious welcome from the governor himself, rather than one of his functionaries. The governor makes a few vague references to a mutual enterprise he has with the characters, and later takes them from the banquet for a private audience, in which he makes idle small talk for a short time and then returns to the party.

STRIKE

The governor has little time for nonsense during the harvest season, and so has concocted a simple plan: his antics with the characters at the banquet serve as a distraction for his enemies, who will spend the evening chatting up the characters in a vain attempt to determine what their involvement with the governor and his plans may be.

DESPERATE MEASURES

CHALLENGE

The characters are approached on the streets of Ryoko Owari by a wild-eyed samurai with blood on his clothing. He claims to be the yoriki of a Shinjo magistrate, and that his superior and several other yoriki have been killed in the line of duty.

FOCUS

The yoriki, a young man named Tsubei, claims that his superior took a half dozen yoriki to raid a suspected illegal gambling house in a warehouse. Their suspicions about the warehouse were correct, but unfortunately there were far more criminals on site than expected, and the fight went badly. After his superior was killed, Tsubei ran for help and now wants the characters to help him save his fellows before the criminals disappear into the night.

STRIKE

Tsubei's tale is true, save for one minor detail. Tsubei is a corrupt officer of the law, and assisted in the defeat of the magistrates. He was sent out to find unsuspecting samurai that could be killed and blamed for the magistrate's death while the other criminals prepare to escape. They are walking into an ambush.

GANG WAR

CHALLENGE

Tensions between two firemen gangs in the Merchant Quarter are running high, and there have been a few instances of violence between members at various drinking establishments. The Thunder Guard has moved in to quell tensions, but their presence has only made things worse.

FOCUS

The characters have interests in the affected region, perhaps as a result of merchant patronage or other financial investment. For whatever reason, it is not in the characters' best interests to allow this conflict to continue, even if for no other reason than that such conflict is not in the governor's best interests to permit such things to occur within his city.

STRIKE

The conflict is being exacerbated by a wealthy merchant tired of extortion and bullying from firemen gangs and corrupt Thunder Guards. The merchant is spreading disinformation and spending considerable amounts of money, which he considers an investment in an extortion-free future, and fostering animosity between the various groups. Discovering his role, exposing it, and repairing the damage will be a most difficult, if not outright impossible, task.

NEW MECHANICS

The following mechanics may be used to give more depth to characters originating from Ryoko Owari Toshi and the surrounding area. With the Game Master's approval, these feats may be taken by any character from the Jiroko province in Scorpion lands.

NEW FEATS

SOUL OF GREEN WALLS

You hail from Ryoko Owari Toshi, and are intimately familiar with the surrounding area.

Prerequisite: This feat may only be taken at first level.

Benefit: When making a Charisma check to determine an NPC's initial attitude toward you, you may alter the result by one category in either direction as you see fit.

SOUL OF JOURNEY'S END

Your family's journey ended in Ryoko Owari Toshi, and you have enjoyed prosperity as a result.

Prerequisite: This feat may only be taken at first level.

Benefit: You may add a single item to your starting equipment. This item must have a total koku value of 100 or less, and may not be magical unless it is a consumable item such as a scroll or potion.

SOUL OF LIES

The corruption and deceit in Ryoko Owari Toshi is familiar and comfortable to you.

Prerequisite: This feat may only be taken at first level.

Benefit: You gain +2 on any social check made when you are attempting to lie or otherwise convince someone of something that is not true.

SOUL OF STORIES

The rich culture and politics of Ryoko Owari fill your blood and makes you very personable with others.

Prerequisite: This feat may only be taken at first level.

Benefit: You may select any two Charisma-based skills. You receive a +1 bonus on all rolls made using these skills.

NEW ADVANTAGES

SOUL OF GREEN WALLS

(6 POINTS)

You are familiar with Ryoko Owari and the area all around it, having spent your youth in the area. You gain a free Raise on any Hunting or Etiquette roll made when in the area, and you are considered to have the advantages Way of the Land and

Absolute Direction, both applying to the Ryoko Owari area.

SOUL OF JOURNEY'S END

(8 POINTS)

Your family was once involved in mercantile concerns, but was prosperous enough to move into a more prestigious position. They settled in Ryoko Owari, and have enjoyed the fruits of their somewhat distasteful duties. You begin a campaign with 20 koku, rather than the normal amount allowed by your school's outfit.

SOUL OF LIES

(7 POINTS)

The deceit that fills every day in Ryoko Owari is a part of lifestyle that you accepted long ago, and you have become exceptionally gifted at it. You gain a free Raise on any Sincerity roll made when you are attempting to convince someone of something that is not true.

SOUL OF STORIES

(10 POINTS)

You were raised in the rich cultural and political environment that saturates Ryoko Owari's upper echelon, giving you a natural gift for engaging others. You receive a number of free Raises per day equal to your Insight Rank that may be used on any Awareness-based skill or trait roll.

THE THUNDER GUARD

The Thunder Guard are a long-standing Scorpion tradition that has endured through the Unicorn Clan's control of the city. The Guard are responsible for enforcing the governor's law throughout the city, and frequently are commanded by a single samurai hand-selected for the task who reports solely to the governor. Ostensibly, the Thunder Guard also work with family, clan, and Imperial magistrates as well, but in reality the extent to which this occurs is dependent on whomever is serving as the guard captain at the time.

Thunder Guard membership is highly valued by local samurai, and most young Scorpion bushi from the city aggressively seek to join the guard when they come of age. Those from outside the city have a slightly less optimistic view of them, and they have a reputation as corrupt bullies. This has been the case on several occasions throughout history, but it is not always so. Occasionally a new captain is appointed who makes a sincere effort to eliminate corruption from the ranks, although these periods of purity rarely last more than ten or twenty years at most.

THUNDER GUARD (PRESTIGE CLASS)

Hit die: d8

REQUIREMENTS:

To become a Thunder Guard, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Skills: Intimidate (6 ranks), Knowledge (local) (8 ranks)

Feats: Power Attack

Other: The Thunder Guard do not accept members with an

Honor of greater than 3. Such individuals do not mesh well with the Guard's methods and philosophy.

CLASS SKILLS

The Thunder Guard's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are: Bluff (Wis), Diplomacy (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (Local) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Search (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spot (Wis).

Skill points per level: 2 + Int modifier

TABLE 5-1: THE THUNDER GUARD

| Level | BAB | FS | RS | WS | Special |
|-------|-----|----|----|----|---------------------|
| 1 | +1 | +2 | +0 | +0 | Strength of Will |
| 2 | +2 | +3 | +0 | +0 | Thunder's Strike |
| 3 | +3 | +3 | +1 | +1 | Brothers in Arms |
| 4 | +4 | +4 | +1 | +1 | Thunder's Strike |
| 5 | +5 | +4 | +1 | +1 | The Governor's Hand |

CLASS FEATURES:

Strength of Will: The Thunder Guard has a legacy of control and power in Ryoko Owari. The guard member gains a +4 competence bonus on all Intimidate checks made when interacting within the city or its inhabitants, and a +2 morale bonus on all Will saves to resist attempts to divert them from protecting the city or obtaining their objectives.

Thunder's Strike: Thunder Guard recruits are instructed in a number of unique urban fighting techniques that are designed to incapacitate an opponent by any means necessary. Once per combat, the guard may declare a melee attack against an opponent, wherein the opponent receives +2 AC. If successful, this attack deals double the normal damage, but the damage is considered sub-lethal. This attack may be made up to twice per combat beginning at 4th level.

Brothers in Arms: The Thunder Guard is an extended family as much as a true military unit, and they practice fighting together extensively. A guard may, at the beginning of a combat round, choose to lower their base attack bonus by a number up to the guard's level in this class. They may then select any one other Thunder Guard involved in the same combat and increase that Guard's AC by the same number. A Guard may not perform this effect and be targeted by it in the same round.

The Governor's Hand: Despite an individual's perception of the Thunder Guard, they are publicly known as the personal agents of the city's governor. While within the city, any individual with an Honor of 3 or greater that wishes to attack a Thunder Guard must first succeed at a Will save (DC 30) or be unable to do so. A samurai who is attacked by the guard may fight back without having to make this save.

THUNDER GUARD (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 2

Requirements for Entry: Way of the Land (Ryoko Owari province)

Path of Entry: Any bushi 1

Path of Egress: Reenter the same school at rank 2

Technique: Thunder's Strike — Thunder Guards are taught to fight to win by any means necessary, regardless of honor. Once per combat, a Thunder Guard may make a single Raise when attacking any opponent. If successful, the guard may double the rolled damage code for their weapon, but the damage is considered non-lethal and will be completely healed within an hour.

CHAPTER SIX:

THE CITY OF THE RICH FROG

Matsu Omane shouldered aside a too-slow heimin as she dashed after the fleeing riders. Details of the raid were sketchy — the attack had been executed far too quickly for a proper assessment of what had been stolen before Omane ordered pursuit through the city — but Omane knew what had been taken. Urban warfare was unpleasant enough, but it was a disgrace to her grandmother's blade to have to use it against these, these...petty thieves. Omane expected even the Unicorn to have higher standards than lowering themselves to stealing food.

Fortunately for her, the famed warhorses of the Unicorn were of little assistance in the streets of the City of the Rich Frog. Loaded down as they were with their stolen supplies, the riders had not yet been able to attain much distance from Omane and her fellow Lion. Omane brushed a sweat-soaked lock of hair out of her eyes, and smiled grimly. If her preparations proved adequate this evening, these Unicorns would very shortly have to prove if their battle prowess matched their horsemanship.

Omane pulled a tessen from her obi, held it aloft, and gestured sharply with it as she continued her pursuit. Ahead, several of her Kaeru allies — she shuddered at the thought of calling these ex-orin "Clansmates" — and their bushi, the Machi-Kanshisha, emerged from the shadows, pikes readied. Their retreat cut off, the Unicorns steered their horses into a side alley. Omane slowed her pace, and rallied together the Lion bushi coming up behind her along with the Kaeru levies from in front. Methodically, she and her troops advanced into the alley, one that, due to damage from previous skirmishes and a few peasant huts she had previously ordered destroyed, was now a corral ending at the city walls.

Omane led her troops at a methodical but unhurried pace. There was no good reason to make haste now — that would only lead to fatigued soldiers and an opportunity for the Unicorn to ambush them in the dark. Much better that her foes, now cornered,

have more time to reflect upon the righteous wrath she would unleash upon them. Omane spent the several moments she and her command were marching up the alley to good use, sending messengers back to base camp for reinforcements.

Towards the end of the path, she caught sight of the raiders once again. Her practiced eye noted that, although somewhat haggard and bedraggled from weeks of being in the field, the Unicorn still maintained discipline, having drawn their horses into formation behind their leader. This was unfortunate, in that the half-dozen Unicorn arrayed against her could largely neutralize the advantage of numbers she enjoyed if they held firm and fought side-by-side, but at least she would be facing worthy foes.

The leader of the Unicorn bowed to her. "Well played, daughter of Matsu."

Omane instinctively returned the bow, surprise overriding her annoyance at the Unicorn and his men. "It is good to know that even when reduced to skulking around and stealing rations, the Unicorn remember their manners."

The Unicorn laughed. "When we defeat the armies of our enemies, we will feed our men with our enemies' rations." He stated simply.

Omane smirked in spite of herself. "A bandit who has read *Leadership*?"

"Far more than a mere bandit, I assure you. I am Moto Izumi, warrior of the Khol."

"I am Matsu Omane, daughter of Matsu Satoko. Tonight, you shall face the steel of the Lion."

Izumi shrugged, and pointed at a spot above and behind Omane. "I suggest you reevaluate your situation."

Omane spun around and gazed upwards at the rooftops around her. On each roof stood an archer, arrow nocked, bows aimed in the "yeomanri" style the Unicorn favored. She removed her helmet and

swept aside her hair, searching for details. "I count only 6 archers in addition to your half dozen riders. I find it unlikely those are sufficient numbers to defeat 50 men, even with superior positioning."

"Perhaps not, but casualties will be severe on both sides. Surely the lives of your men are worth more than some rice and rations?"

Omane bit down the urge to roar in frustration. Curse the interference of the Dragon in this war! Both the Lion and Unicorn had arrived amply supplied for an extended siege — between two armies. Togashi Satsu, Champion of the Dragon, was widely rumored to possess the ability to see into the future. If such were truly the case, Satsu was as monstrous as the Bloodspeakers — he must have foreseen that the addition of a third party would turn an honorable conflict into a series of bloody, vicious, drawn out skirmishes.

Under other circumstances, she would have considered parlay — there was little honor to be had in a skirmish over rice — but her kinsmen needed these supplies. Better a few bushi die in battle to reclaim them now, than to have samurai die a lingering death from hunger. Omame turned to face Izumi, and shook her head sadly. "This rice is the life of my men, Izumi."

Izumi nodded knowingly. "I understand. May I ask a boon, one warrior to another, Omame-san?"

"Of course."

"If you should prevail this night, please see to it that my family receives my daisho. It has served my line well, and I would have my grandson wield it someday."

Omane replaced her helmet, and bowed deeply. "It will be an honor."

"Fight well, Omame." Izumi and Omame turned to their troops. "Attack."

THE CITY'S HISTORY

BACKGROUND

For most of its existence, Toshi Sano Kanemochi Kaeru, alternatively referred to as the City of the Rich Frog or Kaeru Toshi for short, has been peaceful as well as prosperous. The city, equidistant from the Dragon and Unicorn borders, was far enough from the major holdings of both that it escaped their notice. Conversely, as the only major settlement between the two, Kaeru Toshi was a frequent stopoff point for traders, diplomats, and magistrates heading between both realms.

The lack of a formal relationship between the Dragon and Unicorn has served the City of the Rich Frog well, ensuring that go-betweens and neutral meeting places were always in demand. The two Clans had little in common, and even less interest in antagonizing each other, so dealings between the two were always impromptu and hesitant. This has atmosphere has affected the trade dynamics between the two as well; very little direct commerce has taken place between the mountain-dwelling Dragon and the mobility-craving Unicorn, which has contributed to the growth of Kaeru Toshi as a commercial hub.

For many years, Kaeru Toshi was independent of the Great Clans, and ruled by a family of ronin known, like their city, as the Kaeru (Frog). The family made a conscious decision to keep the city clear of the machinations of the Clans, and to focus upon the city's economic health. In this, their success was admirable; even through the Clan Wars, War Against the

Darkness, and War of Spirits, Kaeru Toshi was never successfully invaded, nor was any major damage inflicted upon the city or its inhabitants.

However, this success was founded upon a draconian approach to order and an opportunistic treatment of honor. The City of the Rich Frog only ever had one official magistrate at any given time, and this magistrate was invariably painstakingly selected for being incompetent or easily subordinated. This arrangement gave the Kaeru family a great deal of leeway in setting their own rules, rules chosen to create a freewheeling environment in which to do business.

Although the city never approached the brazen corruption of Ryoko Owari, Kaeru Toshi quickly earned a well-founded reputation for being open to any business possibility. Smuggled goods, dishonorable services, gaijin artifacts "acquired" from the Unicorn, even drugs such as opium were purchased and sold with the knowledge and tacit approval of the Kaeru family. This was not to say that they were widely available, as the Kaeru had a vested interest in ensuring that the rest of the Empire did not meddle in Kaeru affairs, but so long as the transactions were performed quietly, the Kaeru for the most part did not interfere. In practice, the only activities that were forbidden in Kaeru Toshi were those that the Kaeru family felt would threaten their welfare or the future of the city.

When the Kaeru felt that their interests were threatened, they assigned their "volunteers", the Machi-Kanshisha, a band of ronin trained to serve the Kaeru family, to enforce their rule. Even though the Machi-Kanshisha had no official authority as magistrates, their training, presence throughout the city, and willingness to use force to put down offenders ensured that few would challenge their demands. Although the Machi-Kanshisha were mercenary ronin with no blood ties with the ruling Kaeru family, they were well paid, and thus loyal. For the most part, the Machi-Kanshisha and the Kaeru were more than up to the task of administering and protecting Kaeru Toshi.

THE KAERU JOIN THE LION

In spite of the Kaeru family's best efforts to remain distinct from the Great Clans, they were not able to maintain their independence indefinitely. The major conflicts of the last four decades took a great toll upon the Machi-Kanshisha, as they had to fill the dual roles of guard and magistrate for the city. What made the last few decades particularly challenging was the fact that the strife did not solely affect Kaeru Toshi, but was rather Empire-wide. The Kaeru traditionally refilled the ranks of the Machi-Kanshisha by aggressively recruiting competent ronin, many of whom were more than happy to settle down after a life of wandering. However, the major wars and conflicts of the recent past also served to deplete the pool of ronin, many of whom joined Toturi's Army, the Wolf Legion, the Shogun, or were offered fealty in a Great Clan. By the time the Four Winds were contesting for the throne, the Machi-Kanshisha were severely undermanned, and the Kaeru hold on the city was beginning to slip. More importantly, the situation had degraded to the point where it was obvious to those paying attention that the Kaeru could no longer adequately administer and protect the city.

Ikoma Sume, Daimyo of the Ikoma family of the Lion, was one of the first to realize the vulnerability of Kaeru Toshi, and acted quickly to parlay it into an asset for the Lion. Sume approached Kaeru Tomaru, head of the Kaeru, with a straightforward proposition: The Kaeru would join the Lion as vassals of the Ikoma family, and the Lion would extend their protec-

tion over Kaeru Toshi. The benefits to both sides were obvious; the Kaeru would enjoy the authority and backing of the dominant military force in the Empire, while the Lion would receive a portion of the substantial income the Kaeru took in running the city. What was less obvious, albeit no less important, was the consequence of refusal: Sume made a point of making the offer in the form of a gesture of friendship from the Lion, such that any refusal on Tomaru's part would be taken as an insult to the Clan. Tomaru, outmaneuvered and unwilling to offend the most powerful army in the Empire, accepted Sume's offer.

For the most part, the arrangement proved satisfactory to both sides. The Kaeru supplied significant additional funds to the Lion, and the Machi-Kanshisha, now freed from their more militaristic duties, were free to enforce the Kaeru family's dictates. Additionally, the Lion expanded their influence northwards, an important concern since Toshi Ranbo, a city whose ownership was contested between Lion and Crane, was selected as the new Imperial Capital, and the Lion wished to maintain control over the same amount of territory. For the first 5 years after the deal was struck, the City of Rich Frog was once again secure and prospering.

THE UNICORN INVADE

The deal struck by the Kaeru family to ensure the safety of their city is precisely what has drawn them into combat. Moto Chagatai, the Unicorn Khan, felt that the Lion expansion into Kaeru Toshi threatened the best interests of his Clan. However, a long-standing Imperial Edict existed, prohibiting the Clans from engaging in all-out war. The Khan ordered his most trusted diplomats and scholars to find a means to force the Lion out of the city, to show that the Unicorn were not ignorant of the customs of the Empire.

Ironically, the Edict itself proved to be all the justification necessary for the Unicorn to take action. Originally written when the Unicorn were exploring the lands beyond the Empire, the Edict prohibited open warfare between six Great Clans — the Crab, Crane, Dragon, Lion, Phoenix, and Scorpion — the six that existed as powers within the Empire at the time. The Unicorn, by omission, were exempt.

Chagatai seized the opportunity to simultaneously test his troops in battle against the renowned armies of the Lion. He ordered an attack upon Kaeru Toshi, sending several regiments, including units of the famed Khol Raiders and Utaku Battle Maidens. They were very successful, overrunning the Lion's defenses and establishing a foothold upon the City of the Rich Frog. Even the Rain of Blood did little to disrupt its rhythm. The Unicorn were in a strong position, even as the Lion prepared to launch a series of counteroffensives.

THE DRAGON INTERVENE

The conflict was neither unnoticed nor ignored by the rest of the Empire. Most Clans, although unwilling to become involved, were attentive to the flow of the conflict, as the Moto battle prowess and tactics were still very new to Rokugan. However, Togashi Satsu, Champion of the Dragon, saw the war as ill-timed with Iuchiban still at large, and assigned one of his generals, Mirumoto Kei, to put an end to the war.

Kei's army had a simple objective, to end the war by making it too costly in terms of men and materials for either Clan to continue fighting. Arriving at Kaeru Toshi, she turned aside the diplomatic overtures of both sides, and declared her army hostile to both. Unfortunately, rather than forcing Lion and Unicorn to negotiate, the arrival of a third army merely added

to the scale of the conflict. Over the next several months, the situation has steadily degenerated, as casualties mount and supplies diminish. The war is escalating as all three groups wish to end it on their terms. As the three Clans begin to look for allies and support, it is becoming apparent that the war for Kaeru Toshi is a long way from being over.

CURRENT STATUS

CONDITIONS IN RICH FROG

The war in Kaeru Toshi has brought with it chaos and hardship for the city and its inhabitants. Even as the Dragon, Lion, and Unicorn wage war over the city, they have damaged or even destroyed many of the various assets that they are fighting over. The City of the Rich Frog has long been a prosperous and profitable city within the Empire, which is what drew the Lion Clan to ally with the Kaeru family in the first place. Likewise, the fiscal importance of the city was one of the reasons the Unicorn have persisted in their campaign in spite of Lion resistance and Dragon interference. Currently, even though the war over the city is consuming far more resources than it produces, the possibilities Kaeru Toshi offers to its owners are still enticing enough to keep all three Clans determined to win the war.

The war has made it very difficult for any single body to enforce the laws of the city or the Empire. Previously, the Kaeru family ran and administered to the needs of Kaeru Toshi, enforcing order whenever necessary. However, since the onset of open hostilities between the Lion and Unicorn, the ability of the Kaeru to maintain order in the city has been crippled. The Kaeru are the only group with a long history and familiarity with the city, but their influence does not extend to the Unicorn-controlled sections of Kaeru Toshi. Even though the Kaeru have always been basically corrupt, the Lion have chosen thus far not to interfere due to the Kaeru's obvious managerial skill. The Shinjo Magistrates, although skilled at enforcing the laws of the Empire, have no jurisdiction over land as yet under Lion control. The Dragon, who had no intention to occupy the city for long and whose Kitsuki Magistrates are assigned to Sezaru in any case, simply lack the capacity to govern the portions of Kaeru Toshi they hold. With no authority recognized by all parties in place to administer the city, stability is weakening.

Making the situation worse is the fact that the war, ongoing now for several months, has imposed harsh conditions on the citizens of Kaeru Toshi. The majority of the business in the city has been trade, particularly inter-Clan trade, as the city is located between several borders. Since the war began, merchants and travelers have been taking alternative routes, completely cutting off this source of income. Many of the natives of the City of the Rich Frog face poverty, or at the very least having to expend their life's savings, merely to remain sheltered and clothed.

Compounding the problem is the fact that food is scarce. Kaeru Toshi, which is not located near fertile ground, is



self-sufficient during the best times. With the normal trading routes cut off, the city is producing barely enough to feed its citizens. However, even though Kaeru Toshi's production would possibly be sufficient to keep people nourished, albeit at subsistence levels, the food produced by the City of the Rich Frog is being confiscated by the armies fighting over the city. Seeking to bolster their own supplies, all three sides take the rice and other crops grown and stored for personal use. Kaeru Toshi is facing an artificially created famine, as desperate peasants struggle to keep their families fed. Regardless of which Clan prevails, the hinin and heimin of Kaeru Toshi are the ones who will bear the heaviest burden.

THE LION

CURRENT COMMANDER

Ikoma Hasaku (overall General)

From the Lion perspective, the conflict began when the Unicorn launched an unprovoked and illegal attack upon one of their vassal cities, an insult that demanded immediate response. Even though the Unicorn's initial strike was far fiercer and deeper than the Lion were prepared for, Lion reinforcements and tactics quelled the attack within the city. The Lion quickly took up positions in and around the city and fortified their positions, assisted by their Kaeru vassals.

Even though the Lion had developed tactics that were effective against the Shinjo family's style of leadership, Moto brought with them a new warfare mentality. In spite of their best efforts, the Lion defenders were forced out of the westernmost quarter of the city, as their troops were drawn apart and overrun. However, Lion discipline held, and they have since forced more engagements within the city, partially neutralizing the Unicorn cavalry. Since Kaeru Toshi had been affiliated with the Lion for several years, secured lines of supply from adjacent cities were quickly established, an advantage the Unicorn lacked. Lion morale remained high in spite of the stalemate; most bushi in the Clan believed that it was only a matter of time before Akodo strategies and Matsu ferocity broke the Unicorn will to fight.

The introduction of the Dragon into the war was a shock to the Lion, one that was followed by righteous anger.

Even as the Lion dismissed the Unicorn argument that the assimilation of the Kaeru into the Lion threatened Unicorn borders as a legal fiction, they respected the Unicorn for feeling strongly enough about the issue to use force of arms. Conversely, from the Lion perspective, the Dragon had no reason at all to become involved; Kaeru Toshi is neither a Dragon holding nor is the Clan allied with either

Lion or Unicorn. Since the Dragon Clan has no honorable reason for interfering in the war between the two Clans, the Lion reasoned, the Dragon involvement must be dishonorable by default.

Currently, the Lion forces are facing strategic challenges. Mirumoto Kei's army, in addition to being an entirely new

opponent, captured the northern districts of Kaeru Toshi, most of which were previously under Lion control. Additionally, a new foe and a new battlefield pushes the Lion to divide their forces in the city, which has given the Unicorn more opportunities to raid Lion supply caches. These problems are exacerbated by the fact that the regular flow of Lion reinforcements has been interrupted due to strife within the capital, and arson Toshi Ranbo under mysterious circumstances. Between lost ground and being shorthanded, the initiative now shifts away from the Lion.

Politically, the strife Toshi Ranbo has caused added problems for the troops in Kaeru Toshi. The Crane, tasked along with the Lion to protect Toshi Ranbo, have issued several public statements due to the Lion failing their duty. Dealing with this social slander has occupied many of the Lion's courtiers, which leaves few diplomats and even less political goodwill available for the Lion to acquire allies for Kaeru Toshi.

The Dragon Clan creates an additional political problem for the Lion. Togashi Satsu states that the Dragon are involved in Kaeru Toshi to maintain the peace of the Empire. This strikes the Lion as being not only nonsensical, but a direct insult to the Clan and its role as the Right Hand of the Emperor. As part of their function as the Right Hand, it is the domain of the Lion to keeping things peaceful. The Lion believe that when Satsu ordered Dragon troops into the war, he was implying that the Lion were incapable of maintaining the order. This has caused battles between the Lion and Dragon to be particularly bloody, as the Lion seek revenge for the slight. The overall position of the Lion is still strong, even with these challenges taken into account. Even though the Lion is suffering significant losses to Unicorn raids, they have well established supply lines and still control the majority of the city's resources. Although the unorthodox fighting tactics of the Unicorn are new to the Akodo, the famed generals of the family have begun to adapt and develop new ways of retaliating. Likewise, although Mirumoto Kei is a skilled general, her forces are no match for Akodo strategies and Matsu ferocity. Combined with the additional advantage of the Kaeru family and the Machi-Kanshisha, the Lion have intimate knowledge of the field of battle and the leadership to capitalize upon it.

Currently, the Lion hold the Eastern and Southern quarters of Kaeru Toshi, amounting to half the city. Akodo tactics have served them in good stead, allowing them to adapt to the unpredictability of the Unicorn and magical prowess of the Dragon, while the iron discipline of the Matsu has turned aside the most ferocious attacks. With the aid of their Kaeru vassals, the Lion are committed to expelling the interloping Clans.

THE KAERU VASSAL FAMILY

Even though the war has devastated Kaeru Toshi, the Kaeru family has found the current state of conflict eminently profitable. In spite of Ikoma Sume's assurances that the Lion would not interfere in the Kaeru's running of the city, the Kaeru had to refrain from several of their more questionable dealings once they became vassals of the Ikoma. The chaos accompanying the war has made it more difficult to trace actions back to their perpetrators, which has reopened opportunities the Lion closed. The desperation of many of the city's inhabitants has given the Kaeru opportunities to strengthen their hold on the city, inroads that are likely to persist regardless of who wins the war.

One of the chief services the Kaeru currently offer is "protection" for the various shopkeepers, merchants, and peasants of the city. This is by no means new, as the Kaeru have traditionally, in addition to normal taxation, charged particularly lucrative businesses a small "operating fee" for conducting commerce in Kaeru Toshi. However, the context of these payments has changed: Before, the Kaeru sent agents to harass people who could not or refuse to pay; now, the Kaeru simply refuse to protect homes and businesses that fail to comply.

The Kaeru troops were not integrated into the Lion frontline forces, instead they were assigned a variety of peacekeeping, enforcement, and sentry roles. This has been exemplified by the fact that the Lion have appointed Ikoma Hasaku, an experienced if somewhat undistinguished samurai, to lead the defense of Kaeru Toshi rather than Kaeru Tomaru, who as governor of the city and an experienced bushi would normally be in command. Although the Kaeru resent being treated as simple subordinates and the Machi-Kanshisha are angry at being treated as inferior warriors, both groups are glad to be spared the brunt of the fighting.

The Kaeru have taken to prioritizing requests for assistance from the citizens, giving preference to those who pay higher protection fees. Conversely, those who balk at payment find that the Lion troops are not alerted when Unicorn or Dragon raids begin, and that peasant firefighters are "unavoidably delayed" en route to their homes. If the Lion Clan as a whole became aware of this practice, serious repercussions would result. The Matsu find the very idea of having samurai stoop to extorting the lower classes to be dishonorable, and the Akodo would take a dim view towards the Kaeru shirking their responsibilities as sentries, thereby endangering Lion soldiers and the campaign as a whole. Conversely, although the Ikoma would understand and accept the reasoning behind such an action, they would expect the Kaeru to turn over a portion of the funds earned to the Lion Clan. For their part, the Kaeru have simply conducted their business in secret, partially to prevent the other families from having to deal with the dishonor and partially so that they keep the profits for themselves.

The Kaeru have taken advantage of their unique status within the city to begin other pursuits as well. The Machi-Kanshisha have been ordered by the family to act as forward spotters and scouts, to prove the value of the Kaeru to the Lion. As native city dwellers, the Machi-Kanshisha are able to blend in with the populace, giving them a much greater freedom of movement than conventional troops. This has proven to be extremely successful for both the family and the Lion clan in general, with the Kanshisha providing information as to troop movements, supply convoys, and morale to the rest of the Clan while simultaneously ensuring that "real Lion samurai" do not need to resort to using stealth and disguise. The marginalization of the Kanshisha has led to some ill-will, as the Akodo, Matsu, and to a lesser extent Kitsu still treat the Kaeru and the Kanshisha as subordinates, but the Kaeru are willing to overlook the insult so long as the majority of the Clan does not look too carefully at the Kanshisha's other activities.

One particular group of Kanshisha, the graduates of the House of the Golden Frog have been given additional responsibilities. Experts on infiltration and assassination, the masters of The Poisoned Frog technique were ordered to quietly eliminate Unicorn and Dragon patrols whenever the opportunity arises. These and other tactics have earned the Kaeru both the respect and disdain of their Lion patrons.

There is considerable friction among those who are aware of the Poisoned Frog Kanshisha, as many Lion samurai find the principle of ambushing and assassinating fellow samurai in the night distasteful. The only thing preventing this from becoming a major issue between Kaeru and Lion is the fact that most Lion are ignorant of the role of the Kaeru in the war.

The wide berth the Clan has given them also provides the Kanshisha a great deal of anonymity, allowing them to step well beyond the boundaries of bushido with few repercussions. The Kanshisha have not only ambushed enemy patrols, they have taken to looting the bodies. Even though the Kaeru retainers, like all samurai, refuse to touch dead bodies, they have no qualms against taking equipment from their fallen foes. Whenever they are the first or only party to reach a battle site, the Kaeru abscond with whatever they can conveniently carry away. In spite of their sacred status, katana are valuable commodities, able to fetch a significant price from desperate ronin. In a similar vein, yumis, arrows, yaris, and steeds are also valuable, and have the added bonus of not being as readily identifiable as katana. Many of these items are quietly sold to the ronin who have come to Kaeru Toshi seeking employment, while the choicest or most incriminating items are being hidden, to be ransomed back or put to use after the war is over.

While the Kanshisha are pursuing genuinely held objectives for the Kaeru, their second function is to serve as a smokescreen, while the Kaeru pursue their most sensitive project. Kaeru Tomaru, the head of the Kaeru family, was never pleased with the deal he struck with Ikoma Sume. Prior to becoming vassals of the Ikoma, the Kaeru hosted travelers and merchants from across the Empire, and the City of the Rich Frog was one of the few locations where goods from either the Dragon or Unicorn, let alone both, could be readily procured. Once Kaeru Toshi became Lion land, a significant portion of this business evaporated. With the Lion demanding a tax upon what income is still generated by the city, the Kaeru, although affluent, are not as prosperous as they once were. Tomaru is seeking opportunities to change the nature of his relationship with the Lion. He has sent agents to approach old contacts in both the Dragon and Unicorn regarding the resumption of trade with both Clans, no matter who wins the war. Tomaru hopes to be able to present Ikoma Sume with a finalized agreement between the Kaeru and the Dragon and Unicorn before the rest of the Lion discover his actions, as the hardliners within his Clan would surely interpret his initiative as treasonous. The Kaeru's position as the major power within the city can only be maintained through calculated risks, and Tomaru is certain that this one will be justified by its eventual reward.

THE UNICORN

CURRENT COMMANDER

Moto Chagatai

For Moto Chagatai and the Unicorn, the war has been a tremendous success. Their initial advance upon Kaeru Toshi met with very little resistance and few casualties, allowing them to reach the city mostly intact. Even though the Lion had a standing garrison within Kaeru Toshi and scrambled reinforcements, the Unicorn were able to establish a strong foothold over the western portions of the city.

Chagatai's original vision for the assault was for the Unicorn to reach the city, establish a foothold, and use the area as a staging ground for a series of raids and skirmishes

along the borders of the Lion holdings. To a large extent, the Khan's plans came to fruition against an unprepared Lion; the savagery and versatility of the Khol units scored several early successes on the battlefield. Even though the casualties inflicted by the Rain of Blood damaged the Unicorn force, an offensive army far from its lines of supply, more heavily than it did the Lion, the momentum of their early successes gave the Khan's army great confidence in their eventual victory.

At that point, the Unicorn were in a strong position; the uncharacteristic lack of response from Matsu Nimuro, both in terms of troops and strategic advice, more than made up for the effects of the Rain upon the offensive push. Once they established a foothold in Kaeru Toshi, the Unicorn were ready for the second stage of their overall plan. Both sides realized that the shift from overland to urban warfare favored the Lion, but it was also clear to both sides that the Unicorn position in the city was stable enough to support further attacks both around the city and into Lion territory. Given continued pressure and harassment from the Khol, the Unicorn believed that they could force diplomatic concessions out of the Lion, ending the war before the Unicorn sustained significant losses.

Togashi Satsu's involvement has greatly disrupted Chagatai's plan. With a third party involved, the Unicorn skirmishers can no longer focus their attention exclusively upon the Lion. The political leverage of the Unicorn is greatly decreased by the presence of Mirumoto Kei's army, simply due to the fact that the damage the Unicorn can threaten to inflict upon the Lion is now lower. The Khan planned to display an overwhelming show of force in the initial stages of the war to preclude the need for later fighting. Now that the Dragon are involved, the strategic picture has changed, and the war is likely to last longer than he intended.

As far as Chagatai is concerned, the Clan has made several concrete gains. In addition to the supplies and territory captured in the campaign, the power of the Unicorn armies has been verified for all of Rokugan to see. Since the Unicorn have suffered few casualties so far and the Lion have a pressing need for troops, he is also convinced that, if negotiations were to begin soon, he would be able to acquire several diplomatic concessions from the Lion, up to the removal of Lion troops from Kaeru Toshi or possibly even pressuring them to cede the city to the Unicorn.

Currently, Moto Chagatai's main goal is to find a way to end the Unicorn involvement in the war under the most favorable terms possible. The Khan realizes that any admissions of doubt on his part will serve to weaken the Unicorn's bargaining position, and thus render the sacrifices to date meaningless. He has stepped up the attacks and raids upon both Dragon and Lion, to maintain an impression of commitment and strength. Chagatai never wanted a long-term conflict, seeing it as a waste of men and resources, but until both of the other Clans are prepared to negotiate a mutual withdrawal, the Unicorn will have to remain and fight.

Chagatai realizes that ending the war needs to end soon not just so the Unicorn can maximize their gains; an extended war could prove disastrous for the Clan. The Khan's strategy was predicated upon maintaining an offensive footing, where Moto expertise at raiding and Unicorn mobility could be used to greatest advantage. With the context changed to a drawn out conflict, these advantages are less applicable, which has led to greater casualties during battles. Even though the total size of the Unicorn army in Rokugan is larger than that of the Dragon's, the field army assigned to Kaeru Toshi is the smallest of the three Clans. As a skirmishing and guerilla force, the

troops in Kaeru Toshi are less suited for the current conflict than those they are fighting against.

Likewise, the Unicorn supply situation is not looking strong over the long term. As the first Clan to commit to fighting in the area, the Unicorn have been in the field and thus consuming resources, for the longest period of time. Although they currently have the largest stores in the area, as they supplemented their own food and supplies by capturing key caches in and around Kaeru Toshi, they also need to expend more on the maintenance of their troops and steeds. They have continued to augment their stocks of rice, clothes, and so forth by continually raiding the other two armies and foraging in the city and wilderness, but they will not be able to do so indefinitely. If the war continues for another half year, their troops will be forced to bargain from a position of weakness.

Politically, the Khan is acutely aware that, since the Unicorn were not mentioned in the Imperial Edict precluding inter-Clan wars, other Clans could, while many of the Unicorn troops are occupied in Kaeru Toshi, attack the Unicorn lands. He was originally willing to accept this risk as the Dragon and Scorpion, the Clans bordering upon the Unicorn, were unlikely to declare open war, and because he anticipated the war ending quickly. Now that the war has begun to get bogged down, Chagatai is concerned that the Unicorn's holdings throughout the Empire could be in danger, as the longer the conflict continues, the more likely somebody somewhere in the Empire will decide to use the Unicorn's distraction against them.

Although Chagatai wants to pull the Unicorn out of the war quickly, there are other objectives he would like to see accomplished prior to a withdrawal. One ongoing goal of the Khan is establishing the Unicorn as a major player in Rokugani affairs, which was a factor in his choosing to react to the Lion assimilation of Kaeru Toshi. Another end that the Khan would like to see achieved is the restoration of the City of the Rich Frog as a market for gaijin artifacts. Prior to their joining the Lion, the Kaeru hosted the sale of, or even purchased for their own use, many items that the Unicorn procured from the Burning Sands. Most of these were trinkets or works of art. For both sides, this was a profitable arrangement, as the Kaeru were one of very few groups able to offer these items, and the Unicorn needed markets outside of their own holdings to distribute and sell their excess, much of which was acquired in spite of the prohibition against trading with gaijin. Chagatai would like to see this trade restored if it can be implemented without Lion knowledge, which could entail making an agreement with the Kaeru against the Lion, or to have all of the Kaeru and Kanshisha previously associated with the trade in gaijin artifacts eliminated.

Fortunately for the Khan, the Unicorn forces remain strong and morale is high. Thus far, the Unicorn have performed exceedingly well on the battlefield, inflicting far more damage upon the Lion and Dragon than they have received. This has left their army, albeit smaller than the other two to begin with, in excellent condition and fully confident in themselves and their leaders. Likewise, although the urban battlefield is not advantageous to the Unicorn, the context of the war, many guerrilla attacks, raids, and skirmishes, is ideally suited to current Unicorn tactics. In addition, the

Dragon, even as they complicate matters by joining the war, are fighting to end the war, an objective that ultimately supports the Khan's aims. If the Unicorn can maintain the same level of combat intensity over the next few months, Chagatai's plan may still come to fruition.

THE DRAGON

CURRENT COMMANDER

Mirumoto Kei

Togashi Satsu's decision to assign troops to Kaeru Toshi shocked the Empire, annoyed Moto Chagatai, and infuriated the Lion. Being involved in Kaeru Toshi has cost the Dragon Clan troops, funds, and diverted Mirumoto samurai from their other duty, hunting dangerous nemuranai. Satsu is convinced that his decision is justified, and the Dragon have the utmost faith in the Champion, but even the staunchest of his supporters are beginning to wonder what he sees that they do not.



ADVENTURE HOOK: DESPERATE TIMES

CHALLENGE:

The Badger are desperate for a way out of their current predicament. They lack the funds to build a new dojo elsewhere, and are unable to protect this one from the ravages of war for much longer. Without a central dojo to pass on the tenets of the Badger, they are unlikely to survive as a Clan for ensuing generations.

FOCUS:

It would be an expensive task even for a Great Clan to step in and offer the Badger sanctuary. Even should one do so, there are records and heirlooms of the Badger that need to be recovered and evacuated from the current dojo. Negotiating a truce, ceasefire, or exemption for the region would be similarly difficult, as it is a strategically important district within Kaeru Toshi.

STRIKE:

The Badger are a simple Clan with meager resources. Barring exceptional and prolonged diplomatic or military efforts on their behalf, it is highly unlikely that their dojo will survive. If the dojo falls, the Badger Clan will be essentially eliminated.

By the time the Dragon entered the fray, the Lion and Unicorn had already been battling for over a month. Under the command of Mirumoto Kei, the Dragon army arrived ready for battle, as opposed to the field armies of the former two Clans, both of whom had sustained some casualties, from both each other and the Rain of Blood. As a new, fresh force in the conflict, the Dragon had little problem capturing much of Kaeru Toshi from the warring factions. Kei swiftly consolidated her position, such that even now, much of the northern quarter of the city is under Dragon control.

In spite of their initial success, the Dragon have not expanded their holdings within the city since their first attack. This is partially due to the fact that unlike the Lion and Unicorn, the Dragon do not wish to take possession of the city, making expansion unnecessary. The other, more alarming for Kei, reason the Dragon have not extended their reach over more of the city is that they are being pressed hard by both their opponents, and are simply unable to sustain offensives.

Strategically, Mirumoto Kei has a difficult task ahead of her. The Dragon wish to make the war costly enough that the Lion and Unicorn will decide to cease conflict, which requires that the Dragon engage them both as often and as heavily as necessary. This has forced the Dragon against the strengths of both of its foes; the Lion's tactics and the Unicorn's mobility. Kei has been able to harry both sides, but often under unfavorable conditions, resulting in heavy losses. Even though the Dragon army arrived later and with a larger contingent, both the Unicorn and Lion have thus far remained committed to continuing the war, and both Clans have larger militaries overall than the Dragon. The Lion in particular are constantly streaming reinforcements into the

region, and Kei is very concerned that her current numerical advantage will be eroded away as the war ensues.

Politically, the relationships between the Dragon and the Lion and Unicorn Clans worsen by the day. Given that the prior war with the Phoenix has left the Dragon on poor terms with them as well, the Dragon Clan now shares its borders with three unfriendly powers. Further, the Dragon are poorly set up to oversee the areas of Kaeru Toshi under their control; when Sezaru began hunting the Bloodspeakers, he requisitioned the use of many of the Kitsuki Magistrates and Investigators. This has left the Dragon ill-equipped to manage both Kaeru Toshi and their own holdings.

However, Mirumoto Kei has several advantages in this conflict. Most importantly, her army was the last to take the field, and was the only one that was planned from the outset for an extended war. As a result, her army is currently the largest of the three Clans, and is by far the most thoroughly supplied of the three, at least for the moment. Further, unlike the Lion and Unicorn, Kei has no need to "win" the war, she merely needs to persuade both sides to back down. Given that Moto Chagatai has a similar objective, Kei has a powerful if reluctant ally in her quest. The Dragon army hopes to use its current superior size and status as a fresh force to pressure the other two into quickly conceding the field. If Kei can force several decisive engagements to occur quickly, before the Lion can bring in further reinforcements from across the Empire, then the Dragon's plan of a relatively amiable armistice may come to pass.

ODDS & ENDS

THE BADGER CLAN

Forgotten by most of the Empire, the Badger desperately strive to protect their memory, their ways, and their Clan. To this end, they have poured virtually all of their meager resources towards the creation and maintenance of a single dojo, to teach the way the Badger live and fight. With the war threatening to consume every building, house, and dojo in Kaeru Toshi, the Ichiro family strives to protect the last school teaching the Way of the Badger.

After the destruction of most of the Clan at the hands of Hideo no Oni years ago, the survivors founded and funded a dojo of the Badger style in Kaeru Toshi. Since that time, the Badger have been working as mercenaries, accumulating funds for the restoration of their Clan. Progress has been slow, but the Badger persist, meticulously planning every step of their reconstruction. Losing their only dojo during someone else's war is not part of that plan.

The Badger have explicitly refused to ally with any of the three warring factions, believing that their involvement would only provoke direct attacks. Located just inside the Lion side of the Lion-Unicorn border, they have taken to protecting and policing the boroughs around their dojo, forcibly apprehending and ejecting any combatants who enter the area. This has provoked the ire of the three sides, particularly the Kaeru family, who see the Badger's actions as a questioning of Kaeru authority.

The Badger are in a weak tactical position, and realize it. Given the increasing frequency and intensity of the battles between the Great Clans, it is only a matter of time before one or more Clans interpret the Badger interventions as a threat. Likewise, every time the Badger deny the Lion and Kaeru use of the area as a staging ground, they damage a long relationship with the current and future rulers of the city. However, the Badger have nothing left to lose, for if this dojo falls, the Clan will be scattered and broken, an end they refuse to surrender to.

IKOMA HASAKU

The commander of the Lion forces in Kaeru Toshi is under extreme pressure from all sides, as forces both within and outside of his Clan monitor him constantly for signs of weakness. Brought in after Akodo Ijiasu was slain by the Unicorn and Akodo Tadenori was Lost to the Rain of Blood, Hasaku is in the unenviable position of having to break in a new command during active war. Hasaku, a skilled general, nonetheless is daunted by the politically-charged nature of his new position.

Hasaku was selected for the role more as a result of his bloodline and circumstance than he was for his skills, a fact that irks him greatly. Even though Hasaku has mastered many of the stratagems outlined in the Sun Tao and Akodo, he has never previously had the opportunity to prove his worth in a major battle. He is painfully aware that he was selected primarily for his Ikoma heritage since the Kaeru and their lands, as Ikoma vassals, would normally fall under the jurisdiction of his family. The fact that he is replacing two Akodo is not lost upon him; although no army led by an Akodo general has ever lost a battle, he is no Akodo, and the lack of confidence that the Lion have in their ability to win this war pains Hasaku deeply.

Hasaku has led the Lion capably since he has taken command, balking the Unicorn advance and adapting to the new contingencies introduced by Mirumoto Kei. Still, both sides press him heavily, and he has been forced to develop new tactics and strategies on a daily basis, as the supply and troop situations change rapidly with every skirmish. Further, the Kaeru are far from reliable soldiers; Hasaku knows that they are pursuing several lines of activity that he disapproves of, but he simply does not have the time nor the resources to put an end to them. Victory may not be certain, but Hasaku has learned enough about leadership under duress to make a noteworthy contribution to the Lion's military journals. All he has to do is survive with his reputation and intact...

Ikoma Hasaku is of average height and stocky build. Thanks more to years of focused study than raw talent, he is a highly skilled military leader, able to adapt the lessons learned from generations of Lion generals to modern battle. Hasaku's approach to personal combat is much the same as his style as a leader, relying on planning and superior tactics to wear down and defeat otherwise more talented foe. Hasaku has earned his position and title through decades of steady work, and his bearing and style directly reflect it.

THE KAERU VASSAL FAMILY

The Kaeru family has long understood that prosperity and adaptability go hand-in-hand. Legend states that they are descended from a frog-spirit who founded the city with wealth taken from a greedy merchant it had tricked, but most scholars believe that the tale is apocryphal, and no independent confirmation or denial of their origins exists. In any case, based on their wealth and governing style, most people who

have visited the City of the Rich Frog believe that the Kaeru are simply descendents of a greedy merchant who decided to settle down, a family whose fortunes are intimately tied to their namesake city.

Extremely capable administrators, the Kaeru have long kept Kaeru Toshi under their control through a combination of effective governance coupled with ruthless enforcement. The Machi-Kanshisha, ronin bushi in service to the Kaeru, maintained order in Kaeru Toshi, ensuring that the laws of the city were followed and that nothing threatened the hold of the Kaeru. Kaeru Toshi was a freewheeling, unrestricted place in which to do business, and attracted traders and merchants from across the Empire as a result. In particular, situated as it was between Unicorn and Dragon holdings, the City of Rich Frog became the ideal place to acquire exotic goods. The Kaeru were wealthy and independent, the pinnacle of what most ronin strive for.

The Empire-wide unrest during the struggle between the Four Winds for the throne caused many powers from across Rokugan to question the ability of the Kaeru to protect their city. Knowing neutral cities seen as insufficiently protected ended up assimilated by Great Clans "for the good of the city's inhabitants", the Kaeru asked then-Hantei Naseru to intervene by assigning protectors to the city. Ikoma Sume, seeing a great opportunity for the Lion, answered Naseru's call, and met with Kaeru Tomaru, head of the Kaeru. Ikoma Sume offered the Kaeru vassalage to the Ikoma family in exchange for the Lion's protection. In reality, Sume offered Tomaru no real alternative, as refusing the offer would have been a very public insult to the Lion. Tomaru, pressed, accepted, and the Kaeru became vassals of the Ikoma.

Sume promised Tomaru that nothing would change in the City of the Rich Frog after the Kaeru became Lion vassals, and that the Kaeru were to continue using the same governing style that had brought them and the city so much prosperity in previous years. For the most part, this has been true, and the two groups have benefited considerably; the Kaeru find the threat of Lion retaliation to be more than sufficient to scare off brigands and bandits, while the Lion find their newfound share of Kaeru Toshi's income to be a significant boost to the Lion coffers. On the surface, the integration of the Kaeru into the most honorable Clan in the Empire has come along amiably.

There are several issues that as yet cause friction between the Kaeru and their new lords. On the Kaeru side of things, the profitability of the city has been in decline, as affiliation with a Great Clan has hurt the city's reputation as a neutral trading ground. Likewise, in spite of Sume's assurances, the Kaeru have had to cut back on their more dishonorable or questionable business practices periodically as Lion dignitaries began using the city as a waypoint while conducting other business. However, the greatest problem that has emerged between the Kaeru and the Lion concerns respect: The Lion Clan see the Kaeru as barely above common ronin, and treat them accordingly. This, above anything else, has infuriated the proud Kaeru, although they have admitted little of it in public, fearing the inevitable Lion response.

While the Kaeru have been given but a modicum of respect, their Machi-Kanshisha have been given none, and are treated by the Lion as no more than "glorified ashigaru", in the words of Matsu Omane, one of the gunso assigned to the region. This systematic lack of recognition for the Kaeru and their forces has caused Tomaru to reexamine the relationship he has with the Lion. In his mind, the treaty with the Lion is the precise reason Chagatai chose to attack Kaeru Toshi, and the effects of the war make him wary of potential future conflicts his city

will be dragged into as a result of his Champion's policies. Tomaru is certainly not contemplating openly abandoning or betraying the Lion as doing so would be tantamount to suicide, but he is open to the possibility that the Unicorn might prevail, or ideally, that the Dragon might drive both of the other two Clans out of the city. If the Lion are unable to hold up their promise to protect the city, he reasons, perhaps their claim on the wealth of the Kaeru is premature as well.

The integration of the Kaeru into the Lion Clan has opened up new possibilities for the family.

To create a member of the Machi-Kanshisha who is not a full-blooded Kaeru, and thus not a member of the Lion Clan, use the Kaeru entry as listed on page 24 of "Rokugan".

To create a member of the Kaeru Vassal Family of the Ikoma, use the following modifiers:

THE KAERU FAMILY

Favored Class: Courtier

Starting Honor: 1

Class Skill: Appraise

Starting Outfit:

1. 350 koku
2. Katana

Special: Members of the Kaeru family who take levels in the Samurai class may, in addition to the selection of Lion Clan Technique Feats, purchase the "Smoke and Mirrors" and "The Clouded Mind" Technique Feats (page 95, "Way of the Samurai") as though they were Ronin.

The integration of the Kaeru into the Lion Clan has opened up new possibilities for the family. The Kaeru, with specialized duties and access to Lion training, have evolved into skilled administrators and merchants.

THE KAERU FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Awareness

Glory: 0.5 (rather than 1)

Special: in addition to the normal Lion schools, a member of the Kaeru family may instead choose to enter the newly formed Machi-Kanshisha school (see below).

To create a member of the Machi-Kanshisha who is not a member of the Kaeru family, and thus not a member of the Lion Clan, create him as you would a True Ronin, and have him take the Machi-Kanshisha school.

THE MACHI-KANSHISHA SCHOOL

Although the Machi-Kanshisha who served the Kaeru have long had distinct Techniques of their own, the creation of a distinct school is a recent development. Working with Ikoma senseis, the masters of the Kaeru, led by Kaeru Kenko, have codified and formalized training methods to instruct new students in the fighting style of the Kaeru. Although the style has yet to match the level of development of the Great Clans' fighting styles, graduates of the school are ably equipped to defend themselves and the Kaeru.

Previously, the Techniques of the Kaeru were only available as Otokodate. This method of learning the Kaeru Techniques is still available to characters, representing someone who has added some of the Kaeru tricks to his own repertoire. Characters selecting this option must meet all the requirements and pay the appropriate costs of learning each Technique normally.

Characters may instead enter the Machi-Kanshisha school, which is treated as any other school. Although the same Techniques are taught as before, the character does not need to meet the requirements someone learning the skills as an Otokodate would — those fundamentals are instead covered in his general training.

THE MACHI-KANSHISHA SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Agility

Skills: Bojutsu 2, Commerce 1, Kuenai 1, Intimidation 1, any 2 Low or Bugei Skills

Starting Outfit (all are average quality save as noted): Katana, Wakizashi, Iron Smoking Pipe/bo staff (fine quality), Light Armor, 5 Koku

Special: the character must purchase the Patron (Karu family) Advantage for 2 pts. or take the Obligation (Karu family) Drawback for 2 pts.

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Smoke and Mirrors

The simplest weapons are never to be underestimated. The Machi-Kanshisha receives a free Raise when using a bo or pipe. If attempting to knock a foe prone or disarm him, the character may do so by making three Raises (one of which may be the free Raise from this Technique).

Rank 2: Clouded Mind

The enforcers of the Machi-Kanshisha are taught to end a violent encounter quickly and smoothly with a blow from their staffs. This technique teaches a precise and quick strike to an opponent's skull with the end of the staff, resulting in disorientation. The ronin spends a Void Point and makes a Raise with a bo staff (the free Raise granted by the Smoke and Mirrors technique qualifies). If he strikes his target, the target makes a simple Earth roll. The TN of the roll is equal to the total attack roll made, and if the roll is failed, the target is considered to be one Wound Level lower for two rounds. This cannot bring the target below the Down wound level. Multiple uses are cumulative.

Rank 3: Wear Them Down

Although a single blow may prove insufficient to defeat an opponent, few foes are capable of persisting against a barrage of attacks. The Machi-Kanshisha may now attack twice per round.

Additionally, those Machi-Kanshisha who have proven their effectiveness, discretion, and loyalty to the Kaeru family may be invited by the Kaeru for further training at the House of the Golden Frog, where they may learn the Poisoned Frog technique (page 61, "Way of the Ninja") as a Rank 4 technique.

APPENDICES

"Ah, Shinjo-sama," old man Takeda said in a sly voice. "I welcome you to my home. Please, have a seat among my other friends."

Shinjo Yushiro entered the low chamber, balking somewhat at the overwhelming infusion of smoke and sake. Several men and women sat around Takeda's table, enjoying the rich food and drink spread out before them. He recognized each one of them, all individuals suspected of involvement in Toshi Ranbo's criminal underworld, all high-ranking members of rival gangs. Takeda was the leader of the Gilded Knives, the most powerful of the smuggling cartels, but had avoided any criminal prosecution through a combination of wealth, influence, cunning, and sheer ruthlessness. Those who moved against Takeda usually vanished before they moved very far. In the months since his appointment in the Tsuido district of the Imperial City, Yushiro had pursued Takeda's cartel relentlessly but made little progress. He had come to hate the old man.

With that in mind, Yushiro was surprised to find himself here today. He was even more surprised to find the man relaxing at a dinner table surrounded by his deadliest enemies.

"I think I will stand," Yushiro said, tucking his fan into his obi and bowing stiffly to his host. "I am only here to discuss matters of the law, and do not intend to remain long."

"Matters of the law?" replied One-Eyed Ieyoshi, a hideously scarred old merchant. Yushiro had left the man cuffed in the city square for two days last week for shorting the Imperial tax collectors. "I certainly hope that none here are guilty of any crime." His mouth twisted into an uneven smile.

Yushiro did not bother to look at the wretched little man or even acknowledge him. His attention remained fixed on Takeda. "Someone is killing the crimelords of Toshi Ranbo," Yushiro said. "Hiroshige, Oni Jakuchu, and Atshushi were all murdered within the last week. Any of you might be next."

"By any of us, of course, you mean other prominent members of the city's economy," Takeda said dryly. "After all, none of us have been formally accused of any crime, though no doubt many who are envious of our success quietly attribute our business acumen to criminal behavior. You did not mean to make accusations you cannot support, I hope?"

"When I accuse you, Takeda," Yushiro replied, "there will be no doubt."

"Of course," the old man said, offering the magistrate a tight smile. "Now how can I assist you?"

"Information," Yushiro said. "It is in your own best interest to tell me anything that might help me find the culprit before he strikes again. He has killed three of your competitors, all well protected men. I can see by the way that you have gathered here that none of you truly believes you are beyond this killer's grasp. You have gathered here to exchange information. I want that information as well."

"If you seek a killer, is it not obvious who is responsible?" Ieyoshi asked with a sneer. "You magistrates despise us all so, yet you can never pin anything on us. Look within your own ranks for the killer, Shinjo."

"Ieyoshi," Takeda said in a low voice. "Yushiro-sama was kind enough not to make rude accusations toward you. While you are a guest within my home you shall do the same or I will become displeased. Is that clear?" The old man sipped from his teacup, his dead, black eyes fixed on Ieyoshi.

One-Eyed Ieyoshi quickly looked away, wiping his brow with the hem of his sleeve. "I-I-I meant no offense, Shinjo-sama," he stammered nervously. "I pray you will accept my most sincere apology."

Yushiro ignored the man again, still focused on Takeda. "What can you offer me, Takeda? We both know you see much in the city

that others miss. You must know something if you have arranged this meeting."

"You presume much, Shinjo-sama," Takeda said. "This is nothing more than a friendly gathering between myself and business associates. If you seek murderers then seek them on the streets, not here. We cannot help you."

Yushiro was silent a long moment, watching old man Takeda. The man returned his gaze placidly, his expression one of supreme control and confidence. Disgust boiling within him, Yushiro bowed as slightly as etiquette would allow, turned, and left the sake house. He stepped into the shadows of an alley, hugging his arms against his chest against the cold as he gathered his composure.

The nerve of the old man! It galled Yushiro enough that Takeda was one of the vilest criminals in the Imperial City. It seemed obvious that he had gathered his fellow crimelords because he knew something about the killings that had transpired of late. It was just like him — to offer protection, for a price. If the victims had been alone, Yushiro wondered if he would have abandoned the investigation and let them kill each other. They had not been alone. Guards, servants, family members, other innocents had found themselves in the killer's way and paid the price as well.

A flicker of movement on the rooftops drew Yushiro's eye. He glanced up and saw a trio of dark-clad figures on the roof of Takeda's sake house. They moved quickly, furtively, slipping the roof shingles aside then dropping into the building one by one. After all his investigation, all his searching, Yushiro had stumbled onto the killers he sought by pure, random chance.

For a moment, he hesitated.

Why should he help? What if they harmed a few innocents? Did not innocents suffer in Takeda's gang wars on a daily basis anyway? These victims, at least, associated with a known criminal. All he had to do was wait, and the most powerful gang leaders in the city would soon be punished as they so deserved. All Yushiro need do was nothing.

All he need do was ignore his duty. What then? What would come after? What new threat would replace Takeda and his ilk and what would these killers do once they had slaked their murderous lust on the blood of criminals? Killers rarely ceased once they acquired a taste for it. Yet could he bring himself to fight on behalf of those he so despised, for no other reasons but honor and justice?

He could not pretend there was a choice here, not and remain apart from the very men he despised.

Shinjo Yushiro drew his sword and charged toward the sake house.

THE MAGISTRATE CAMPAIGN

Traditionally, the most common sort of Legend of the Five Rings campaign has been an Emerald Magistrate campaign. In such a campaign, the player characters are all magistrates assigned to a single group and set to right wrongs and uphold the Emperor's justice. Such campaigns give player characters with diverse backgrounds a reason to coexist peacefully within a party, as even samurai of rival clans must set aside their differences when the Emperor demands their service. Working as magistrates also provides an ongoing hook for adventures. Each time a crime demands attention, the party has a reason to adventure.

Due to these factors, an Emerald Magistrate campaign might appear to be the "easy way out," a quick way to throw a party together and jumpstart a campaign without putting a great deal of thought behind it. These campaigns can be built with less effort than many Legend of the Five Rings campaigns, which usually must be customized to give a party of random characters reasons to peacefully adventure together. This can lead some players to shortchange their value. Experienced GM's may be tempted to shy away from a magistrate campaign, preferring an arrangement that implies more planning on their part. This sort of mentality drastically underestimates the potential in an Emerald Magistrate campaign — just because such campaigns are easy to put together does not mean that they cannot be rich, complex, and involving.

WHO'S IN THE PARTY?

Party composition is the first thing to consider in an Emerald Magistrate campaign. While samurai of different clans are expected to work together in service to the Emperor, that is no reason that personal feelings should be completely ignored or cast aside. A bit of inter-party conflict not only increases tension and intrigue, but also encourages character development. Developments that arise from the player characters interactions with one another inevitably make the campaign take a more personal tone. What happens when a Matsu berserker and a Kakita swordsman are assigned to the same group? A Tamori shugenja and a Shiba samurai? How does a lone Scorpion courtier go about gaining the party's trust — and if he gains it, does he truly befriend them or use them for his own purposes?

Further, the GM might wish to explore why obviously conflicting personalities have been assigned to the same magistrate group. Was it chance? Clerical error? The design of a mutual enemy hoping that the party will dishonor itself through inner conflict? Perhaps an emergency requires each of the party members' specific talents, forcing the Emerald Champion to team them together despite the possible conflict that might ensue. The possibilities are endless, and can extend far beyond "You work together because the Emperor says so."

In the rare cases that the entire party plays characters from a single clan or allied clans, consider playing a magistrate party where the characters are not Emerald Magistrates, but rather clan magistrates. Such a clan will have an entirely different campaign, with a more gritty, localized scope as the players are forced to deal with less epic (and more personal) sorts of crime. Clan magistrates do not have the same authority as Emerald Magistrates, so this presents a party with interesting new problems to deal with. What does a clan magistrate do when he discovers the son of his lord is responsible for murder? What does he do when an incompetent Emerald Magistrate storms into town and commandeers his investigation? What does he do when a turf war breaks out between two local farming families, both of whom must survive if the clan is to have the food it needs to last the winter? Smaller problems do not necessarily mean smaller adventures.

WHO IS IN CHARGE?

Emerald Magistrates are expected to report to the Emerald Champion, but the Emerald Champion is not always available. Magistrates such as the player characters will likely be expected to report to one of the Emerald Champion's lieutenants more frequently than not. From the very beginning such an NPC suggests a wealth of possibilities. Who is this person? How did they obtain their position? What do they

expect of the party? What clan are they from and will their personal biases affect how they treat the player characters? The party's commanding officer might be a wise veteran magistrate, a source of wisdom when the player characters' investigations grind to a halt. Alternately their superior might be a cunning manipulator, using his position to corner the characters into achieving his own political ends.

The party's commander should be created as a character (generally one of higher level than the party) and his abilities, advantages, and disadvantages should be taken into account. A commander with Driven or Higher Purpose will likely select missions that help him accomplish his own objectives, so long as they do not conflict overly with the duties of an Emerald Magistrate.

The party's superior should never become a generic vending machine for new missions and adventure hooks. This NPC should be a living, breathing part of the campaign that develops and changes as the player characters do. Depending on the sort of campaign this character might be the player characters' mentor or even the true villain of the campaign, subtly using his position and using the player characters to do his dirty work while they remain helpless to stop or accuse him.

When using an NPC commanding officer, it is recommended that he not actually accompany player characters on adventures. Such a character works better if portrayed as a more distant figure that commands several groups similar to the party and does not have the time to participate in adventures. This insures against the danger of an NPC stealing too much of the limelight during an adventure, a situation that may lead the players to feel like helpless, second-rate cheerleaders rather than samurai heroes. If used sparingly, the rare events when the party's commanding officer deigns to take an active hand will have far greater impact.

Beyond the party's superior officer, it is important to determine the party's chain of command. Emerald Magistrates are strictly ranked and regimented, and no group is allowed to operate without an appointed leader. Selecting which of the player characters will become leader can be an interesting way to begin the first adventure. As the party's superior interviews each character it not only gives each character a chance to become leader (or avoid the responsibility if they dread leading) but to immediately get a taste for who their character is and why they have become a magistrate.

In the end, who will lead? Will the party's superior choose based on clan biases, or will one of the player characters impress him so greatly that no other choice is possible? Will the choice be determined by other events in the campaign? (If the party is sent to arbitrate a Crab-Crane war and both clans are present in the party, it may be wise to have a member of an impartial clan lead.) Once chosen, how will the character adapt to his new responsibilities? Will the other party members follow his lead or act of their own accord in spite of his commands? The basic dose of political intrigue a simple detail like rank adds to a campaign can offer a great deal of subtlety.

WHAT WILL THE PARTY BE DOING?

Emerald Champions have much power and many responsibilities, and rarely will one group be expected to fulfill them all. Some Emerald Magistrates spend all of their time approving travel papers in large cities, some are merely tax collectors, and some are full time investigators dispatched to deal with crimes local magistrates cannot handle.

The GM should decide what sort of responsibilities the party will be asked to shoulder. Perhaps they are dispatched to a city with a history of crime, such as Ryoko Owari, that requires the constant presence of Emerald Magistrates. Perhaps they are part of a task force set to dismantle a particular criminal organization (such as the Kolat). Perhaps at the beginning of the campaign the players are nothing more than simple tax collectors or escorts guiding a Crane diplomat to Hare lands, but as the campaign develops unexpected events complicate the party's lives significantly.

When considering what direction to take an Emerald Magistrate, consider the talents and background of the player characters. The Emperor has many servants; it is rare that a talented one will be wasted in a role not suited for him. It is unlikely that a dedicated Kitsuki investigator will be assigned a simple escort mission for a minor diplomat, unless of course the escort is simply a cover for a more important investigation or the party's superior suspects someone has hatched a plot to assassinate the diplomat. In such a situation the presence of the Kitsuki will ultimately be a great boon, even if the reason for his assignment was not obvious at first. The Emerald Champion is renowned for his cunning, and those who serve him are likewise talented at sending their agents where they are needed most. If a party of fierce warriors and powerful shugenja find themselves given a simple mission to deliver a gift on behalf of the Emerald Champion, they may feel their talents are being wasted — until they learn the true reasons for their assignment.

WHO IS THE ANTAGONIST?

In any campaign it is important to determine the identity of the party's enemies, but in an Emerald Magistrate campaign this consideration can be a great deal murkier. Perhaps there is no single antagonist, but the party is expected to bring peace to a generally lawless region where a number of individuals are responsible for the growing crime rate. Perhaps they are dispatched to unseat a powerful criminal mastermind who has heretofore defied all attempts to convict him and who is rumored to be responsible for the disappearances of other magistrates. Perhaps the true antagonist of the party is their own superior officer, who due to a personal vendetta against one or more of the player characters now sends them on impossible missions, missions they are duty-bound to fulfill. Emerald Magistrates wield a great deal of political power, thus the best villains are those who defy that power.

Enemies of higher rank are often difficult to deal with, as a magistrate must obtain an order of appearance to question such individuals. The very act of obtaining such an order is risky, for during the time it takes to fulfill the request the suspect may act to conceal his crimes. If the request is denied, things become even worse as the magistrate's investigations will be publicly exposed, causing a great loss of face as the enemy pleads his innocence.

Enemies of low rank are also difficult for Emerald Magistrates to deal with. Ronin bandits, eta smugglers, or even a simple peasant killer can be difficult foes to contend with. Whereas an Emerald Magistrate can often use his political clout to bring a samurai criminal to justice, those with no sense of honor or any respect for the Empire's social mores ignore such pressures. Such enemies can be dealt with only one way — through sheer force. For magistrates accustomed to using their mastery of law and politics to bring about justice, a simple deranged madman can be a surprisingly difficult opponent.

While Emerald Magistrates are often excellent warriors, their true greatest power is their political influence. A well established crime lord with ties to the local community can be the deadliest foe that a magistrate party faces. How will the party obtain the testimony they need when the locals never report a crime happening? How will they obtain a confession if their suspects vanish without a trace or die mysteriously before they can be interrogated? How can the magistrates apprehend the villain behind it all when he only plans the crimes, never placing himself in a situation where he can be accused of misdeed? Such a villain can be the most persistent enemy for a magistrate party. These individuals face Emerald Magistrates on their own terms, forcing them not only to use the impressive political power they have been granted — but to use it wisely.

MAGISTRATES ON THE RUN

This option offers an interesting twist on the typical Emerald Magistrate campaign. It begins with a seemingly innocent adventure hook; the party is assigned to protect a specific village, protect an important official, or deliver a message. Along the way, they witness a high ranking samurai lord performing a heinous murder; as the deed is performed he realizes that he has been witnessed. Far from any other Emerald Magistrates, outnumbered by the murderer's armies, they must find a way to escape to safety so that they might summon reinforcements and bring this criminal to justice.

Alternately, perhaps they escape undetected only to find that their claims ignored by their superior. The suspect produces witnesses that offer testimony pointing to the player characters as the culprit. Does the party meekly accept being framed for this crime or do they escape into self-imposed exile as fugitives, seeking to expose the truth?

MAGISTRATES AS VILLAINS?

This book presents a number of criminal organizations, intended to be used as villains for a traditional campaign, or possible allies and business rivals in a criminal campaign. As an unorthodox idea, the GM may want to consider combining these two ideas on some level. The position of Emerald Champion demands a great deal of responsibility but also confers great influence and power. Sometimes that power corrupts. What if the party were corrupt magistrates? Such a campaign would be tricky and difficult to pull off, with many moral ambiguities and difficult decisions to be made by both GM and player alike. Such a group would still work to enforce the law when it suited them, or to maintain a façade of reliability, but their own objectives would be placed above honor and duty — quite an unusual party for a Legend of the Five Rings campaign to say the least.

The criminal groups described in this book may be wary allies, offering the party a share of their profits so long as their activities continue undisturbed. On the other hand, the party may be set on wiping out these organizations, unwilling to tolerate any competition as they master the criminal underworld. Such a campaign would inevitably lead to a brutal gang war as both sides gradually cast aside all illusions of honor and etiquette to remove the enemy from their territory. In the meantime the party must be cautious that their fellow samurai do not catch wind of their activities — Emerald Magistrates who fall to vice and corruption are rarely shown mercy by their honorable brethren.

The following is an example NPC that can be used as a potential superior officer or mentor for the party. If the party is higher level, this NPC's rank should be increased accordingly. Three different backgrounds are provided for him, depending what role the GM wishes Hiroji to portray in the campaign.

KAKITA HIROJI, EMERALD MAGISTRATE

Male human Crane Class Sam5, Crt1, Emerald Magistrate 4: CR 10; Medium-sized humanoid (human); HD 4d10 plus 1d6 plus 4d8; hp 42; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 21 (touch 15, flat-footed 18); Atk +11/+6 +2 *keen katana* melee (1d10+5 damage), +11 *yumi* ranged (1d8 damage); SQ Ancestral Daisho, Class skill — Perform (family bonus), Emperor's Seal, Saibankan's Method, Strength of Purpose +4, Style and Grace, Talent, Wealth; AL LN; Honor: 3; Glory: 6.0; Status 3.5; SV Fort +9, Ref +12, Will +15, Str 12, Dex 16, Con 10, Wis 18, Int 18, Cha 14; Height 5 ft. 4 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (High Rokugani, Rokugani), Battle +9, Bluff +19, Decipher Script +8, Diplomacy +35, Gather Information +21, Iaijutsu Focus +16, Innendo +8 (receive), +15 (transmit), Knowledge (etiquette) +8, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (law) +20, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +8, Listen +15, Perform +17, Ride +9, Search +13, Sense Motive +24, Spot +15; Alertness, Ichi Miru, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Skill Focus — Knowledge (law), Void Use, Way of the Crane.

Possessions: +2 *keen katana* (ancestral daisho), +2 *keen wakizashi* (ancestral daisho), +2 *amulet of natural armor*, +2 *partial armor*, *courtier's obi*, +2 *haori of charisma*, *kabuto of persuasion*, +4 *kimono of resistance*, +2 *ring of protection*.

KAKITA HIROJI, EMERALD MAGISTRATE

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Fire: 4

Air: 4

Void: 2

School/Rank: Doji Magistrate 4

Honor: 2.6

Glory: 6.0

Status: 3.5

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Driven (pursuit of justice), Irreproachable (2)

Disadvantages: Meddler, Proud

Skills: Battle 4, Diplomacy 7, Etiquette 6, Heraldry 4, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 6, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 3, Law 6, Sincerity 5,

KAKITA HIROJI, TEACHER

Kakita Hiroji is an elderly samurai, past his prime and nearing retirement. After a lifetime spent pursuing justice in the name of the Emperor he has been given a well deserved position as a captain in Toshi Ranbo, accepting the reports of roving magistrates on behalf of the Emerald Champion and assigning cases to those currently between missions. Hiroji misses his life as a magistrate, riding down criminals and seeking truth where there was only mystery.

Though he remembers those days fondly, he relishes his current duties even more. He is proud to be the Emerald Champion's representative and will always make time to offer advice to young magistrates in the middle of a tough case. Though he can rarely offer personal aid (he is expected to remain in the Imperial City) his keen insights and lifetime of

experience can be invaluable for those in the midst of a difficult case.

For those who meet with his favor, he can expedite tedious paperwork and pull strings to gain the party access to Imperial scholars or exclusive research libraries within the city. Hiroji's word carries a great deal of weight with the Emerald Champion, thus the player characters would do well to make an ally of him.

KAKITA HIROJI, DISTANT SUPERIOR

Kakita Hiroji is an old man, past his prime and counting the days until his retirement. After a dreary, thankless life in the role of an Emerald Magistrate he has finally been granted a peaceful desk job. Sadly his duties place him in Toshi Ranbo, the busiest center of activity for magistrates in the Empire. His duties include accepting and processing the reports of roving magistrates as well as assigning new cases. It seems his work is never done. Whenever he has a spare moment, Hiroji can be found in the gardens near the magistrate's office, praying quietly to the Fortune of Longevity and sipping from a flask of Kuni herbal medicine intended to settle his nervous stomach.

Though Hiroji takes his job personally and meets the Emerald Champion's expectations, he is not a particularly friendly person and prefers to be left alone — especially by annoying younger magistrates who seem to feel their problems are somehow new and important to him. Hiroji has seen it all, and has become quite a bitter, cynical old man. While he is unlikely to offer his aid to the player characters, he is equally unlikely to interfere so long as they produce results and are not openly dishonorable in their activities.

Those with a great deal of patience may eventually befriend Hiroji and discover that he was once an idealistic, courageous young bushi who hoped to bring justice to the Empire. That he has become such a bitter man is a great tragedy, though with effort a party of player characters might make him remember the hero he once was.

KAKITA HIROJI, MASTERMIND

Kakita Hiroji is an old man, powerful and self-assured after a lifetime cultivating influence and wealth to sate his own ambition. Soon he will retire and leave his earnings to his son, an equally morally bankrupt individual who instills nothing but pride in his wicked father. During his career as a roving magistrate, Hiroji subtly used his position to collect bribes, extort money from wealthy merchants, and turn investigations away from powerful crimelords in return for personal favors. Having escaped all notice for his corruption he now finds himself assigned to the heart of Toshi Ranbo, accepting reports on behalf of the Emerald Champion and assigning missions to new recruits.

Hiroji does his work dutifully and honorably for the most part. After all, it is only through discretion and subtlety that he has survived this long. When he uses his power for criminal purposes, it is always cautiously and through intermediaries. If the player character party seem honorable he will do what he always does with such magistrates — assign them important duties far from any of his own interests, usually setting them against operations engineered by his rivals in the criminal underworld. In this case he projects a personality similar to the first two descriptions presented here, never showing any sign

of the wicked criminal he truly is. If the party seems to be more amenable to dishonest activities, Hiroji reacts differently. He may seek to induct them into his operations, if they are subtle and discreet. If they seem clumsy and foolish as well as dishonorable he will assign them to suicide missions. In this matter he hopes to dispose of them before their actions are discovered and cast suspicion on all Emerald Magistrates.

If the party discovers Hiroji's true nature and attempts to oppose him, he is a deadly and implacable enemy. Not only does he have power and many allies to call upon, but most samurai will simply disbelieve any accusations leveled against Hiroji, who has always shown himself to be a pillar of the community. Only indisputable evidence, high-ranking testimony, and extraordinary determination have a chance of removing this cancer at the heart of the Imperial City.

DEFENDERS OF JUSTICE

NEW CHARACTER OPTIONS

THE DOJI

The Doji Magistrates are known for their ability to navigate high society. Combining keen insight into human behavior with the political network of the Crane, the Doji Magistrates are able to both determine the truth and present it in a politically expedient and effective light. Although the Doji Magistrates are often criticized for being "too distant" from the realities of the Empire, they are uniquely skilled at navigating the political side of investigations.

In addition to their regular duties as Clan Magistrates, the Doji Magistrates are known for their work in high-profile cases. Solving a mystery involving or at the behest of high-ranking or high-Glory individuals is an excellent means by which to accumulate favors, so the Crane are very willing to offer the services of their Magistrates to other Clans. As a whole, this policy has been extremely successful — the recipient of the aid has her problem solved, and the Crane receive a new friend — and depending on the nature and findings of the case, material for future blackmail.

Their mandate of being a political resource for the Crane has shaped the way the Magistrates operate. The organization is hierarchical, with each member reporting to a superior, who determines what his assignments are. As a result, the Doji Magistrates tend to have less individual flexibility than the magistrates of other Clans, as their movements and activities are tightly monitored and controlled by the Clan. Additionally, Doji Magistrates are micromanaged fairly heavily, and can expect their work and results to be scrutinized by their Clan and superiors.

Although assignments and duties are dispatched in a formal, traditional manner, Doji Magistrates actively network with each other. Part of this is the natural Crane gregariousness, but another, no less important, facet of their frequent interactions is the need for them to network. Because many of their assignments require them to work with and report to

nobility from all over the Empire, Doji Magistrates make a habit of introducing each other to shared contacts — the tasks are hazardous enough even with a few friends-of-friends helping out.

Conversely, even though the high-profile nature of their work means that failures will be viewed harshly, the same nature ensure that successes come with many opportunities to be publicly recognized and lavishly rewarded. Doji Magistrates are assigned the most sensitive cases, where alliances, agreements, and political careers are at stake. In such scenarios, their sensitivity to how people interact with each other often allows them to intuit who the important individuals and factors are in any given mystery, even if the details are proving elusive. Typically, the successful conclusion of many of their assignments hinges on the ability of the Magistrates to not only determine the truth, but to portray it “in the proper light”, preserving the Glory of as many individuals involved as possible and making sure the right people are informed as to their findings.

Particularly when a high-ranking or prominent individual has committed a crime, determining the truth of the matter is only the beginning of a case. Procuring the testimony of witnesses and other individuals is an essential part of proving a case — and often, people will be reluctant to provide their testimony due to potential repercussions. Likewise, even with sufficient testimony for the truth to be accepted, convincing the perpetrator's associates and superiors that this is the truth is a separate challenge entirely. In Rokugan, justice and politics are intimately linked, and the Doji Magistrates specialize in bringing the two concepts together.

As befits the distinctly political approach they have to justice, the Doji Magistrates have a great deal of factors to balance as they discharge their duties. Like all magistrates, the Doji Magistrates are expected to have a commitment to the truth, and to justice. At the same time, they are expected to actively promote the interests of the Crane, which usually involves de-emphasizing “unfortunate misbehaviors” by their Clansmen and allies, and shifting blame, when it is in doubt, to those hostile to the Crane. However, even as they do this, the Doji Magistrates must also maintain impeccable standards of Honor, or their credibility and effectiveness, as well as their value as political tools, will be lost. For many of their number, the job is exhausting and thankless, but the reward — bringing justice to the Empire and prosperity to the Crane — is a worthy goal.

WELL CONNECTED

Your network of allies, friends, and informants extends across the entire Empire.

Prerequisite: Cha 13+, 1 level of Courtier or Crane Clan

Benefit: Whenever you need assistance or information, there is a chance that someone you know, or an acquaintance through a shared friend, is available and in the area. After spending one day in a large city, you may make a DC 20 Charisma check to find a contact, modified by the size of the community as follows:

KAKITA SHIZEN, PROVINCIAL ADJUNCT

Kakita Shizen believes that honesty and honor are the most important qualities in a magistrate. As far as he is concerned, once the truth has been revealed, the proper follow-up is to arrest and punish those responsible, irrespective of their rank or station. While this quality has made him extremely effective at apprehending criminals, it has not endeared him to the upper echelons of Crane society.

Currently overseeing the assignment and disposition of magistrates for an entire province, Shizen was promoted to the position due to a combination of obvious talent and a desire from his superiors to remove him from working in the field. His ability to identify and capture perpetrators was admirable, but his unwillingness to make accommodations for political ends led to several alliances failing. Currently, his role as the adjunct for the entire province keeps him involved in the important cases, where his uncanny insight into human nature allows him to give valuable advice to the magistrates assigned to him, but prevents him from endangering Crane plans.

Kakita Shizen is a slightly chubby but very amiable man in his mid-thirties. His skills and training specialize in working with people, and understanding what drives their decisions. A straightforward man, he believes that honorable conduct is the highest virtue of the Crane, and refuses to acknowledge any action or statement that contradicts this belief.

TABLE A-1: COMMUNITY MODIFIERS (ADAPTED FROM PAGE 75, “ROKUGAN”):

| Community Size | Population | Modifier | Example |
|----------------|---------------|----------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Small Farm | 20–80 | –1 | Road's End Village |
| Hamlet | 81–400 | 0 | Nanashi Mura |
| Village | 401–900 | +1 | Friendly Traveler Village |
| Small town | 901–2,000 | +2 | City of Honor's Sacrifice |
| Large town | 2,001–5,000 | +3 | City of the Rich Frog |
| Small city | 5,001–12,000 | +4 | Violence Behind Courtliness City |
| Large city | 12,001–25,000 | +5 | Ryoko Owari Toshi |
| Metropolis | 25,000+ | +6 | Toshi Ranbo (after Naseru ascends to the throne) |

On a successful roll, someone you know is available to be contacted. The DM will determine who the contact is, as well as what information or assistance he can provide. All contacts made through the use of this Feat are initially friendly, but will expect favors in return for any help or advice they give to the PCs.

WELL CONNECTED

(6 POINTS)

You have built up a network of friends, associates, and connections across the Empire. Anytime you are in a well-populated area for at least one day, you may make an Awareness Roll against a TN of 20 to locate a contact. On a successful roll, you locate someone of minor importance who is well-disposed towards you. Raises may be declared to increase the influence of the contact found, or to improve his disposition towards you.

THE KITSUKI

The Kitsuki Magistrates are the greatest pure detectives within the Empire, at least in regards to the ability to solve a mystery by finding clues and logically deriving the causes of events. Consisting of graduates of both the Magistrate and Investigator schools, the Kitsuki Magistrates specialize in finding the truth at the heart of every matter, no matter the obstacles placed in their way or the backlash that may result. Although the official truth is a subjective matter in Rokugan, when the objective facts need to be determined, the Kitsuki are at the forefront of the investigation.

Kitsuki Magistrates tend to operate independently of each other, even though most do operate with assistants, friends, or even magistrates from other schools or Clans. Most Kitsuki Magistrates take on cases as they encounter them, and travel as they see fit. Although some records and administrative work is performed at Shiro Kitsuki, and the senior Magistrates have been known to assign particular individuals to cases where their particular skills are required, the Kitsuki Magistrates, as a group, can be identified by their comparative lack of formal organization — individual members tend to operate at their own discretion. Certainly, necessary posts in villages and cities are filled, but this is as often the result of an interested Magistrate volunteering as it is to be the result of a formal policy decision.

The comparative independence of the Kitsuki Magistrates is commonly attributed to the fact that the Dragon Clan and the Kitsuki family, unlike the Crane and the Doji, have no particular agenda (beyond “enforce the laws of the Empire”) for the Magistrates to pursue. This allows the Magistrates to pursue the investigations they choose and to use their preferred means to find the truth, providing them with a level of flexibility the magistrates of other Clans rarely enjoy. This has given the Kitsuki a reputation for success — it is particularly difficult for a criminal to prepare to face off against a group that varies so widely from member to member — but on a few tragic occasions, has led to failures because a lone Magistrate was simply unprepared for or overwhelmed by the forces arrayed against him, such as Kitsuki Kaagi was when he was investigating the Lying Darkness.

While Kaagi's fate — consumption at the hands of the Lying Darkness — was a far darker end than most Magistrates come to, the nature of his investigations was not particularly unusual. As a group, the Kitsuki Magistrates are drawn to mysteries, enigmas, and “unsolvable” cases, where their clear thoughts and relentless logic combine to find a solution. Kitsuki Magistrates often end up examining cases that have been dismissed or rejected by other groups, simply because the Kitsuki are less likely to close their minds to possibilities. This has given them reputations as being somewhat eccentric, since they often question or even ignore common wisdom, but their willingness to consider every scenario has enabled

them to solve cases the more close-minded could not.

In a sense, the Kitsuki Magistrates are very much still members of the Dragon Clan, in that their standard tactics and preferred cases reflect a different perspective upon justice than the rest of the Empire. Most of the Empire puts the testimony and first-hand accounts of high-ranking individuals as paramount in determining the truth, whereas the Kitsuki value physical evidence. Many Magistrates see the most important part of an investigation is persuading people of what actually happened in a given case, whereas the Kitsuki believe that once the objective facts are known, the truth will be self-evident. The rest of the Dragon approach riddles and the koans the same way they approach their lives as puzzles meant to be examined, the Kitsuki consider crimes puzzles with definite solutions — yet their approach, and the paradox of a group that deals in hard-and-fast facts within the enigmatic Dragon — reflects the very complexity of life that the Dragon Clan explores.

Riddles and criminal mysteries do not form the entirety of the Kitsuki Magistrates' duties. Like all magistrates, they enforce the laws of the Dragon and the Empire upon their charges. A great deal of their work is mundane law enforcement, keeping unruly samurai in check, and so forth. However, partially because they actively seek them out and partially because the Kitsuki Magistrates have a reputation for competence and success at solving them, the “odd” and unusual cases that other groups cannot solve are often brought before a Kitsuki to solve. In such situations, Dragon curiosity, Kitsuki inquisitiveness, and magisterial training combine in the individual Magistrate to form a powerful tool for exposing the truth.

KITSUKI SHOTOKO, WANDERING MAGISTRATE

Kitsuki Shotoko is an accomplished Kitsuki Investigator, with the ability to deduce the causes of events from even scraps of information. Combined with her obvious prowess in combat, she has been able to successfully capture various lawbreakers across the Empire, from smugglers to assassins. However, in spite of her numerous exploits, she is recognized as often for her pedigree as she is for her deeds.

Shotoko is the daughter of Kitsuki Jotomon, a Dragon sensei famous for developing Jotomon's Shinrai, a new school that focuses on applying Bushido not just to the battlefield, but to life as well. As the daughter of such a prestigious figure has greatly assisted Shotoko, who has found her rank very useful in persuading daimyo to listen to her theories, but her mother's fame has proven inconvenient when Shotoko wished to maintain a low profile. Even though Shotoko never shared her mother's need to actively teach the tenets of Bushido, their mutual commitment to justice kept the two close until her mother's passing.

Shotoko is a slim woman in her early 30s, with an alert mien and a ready smile. She is forthright and frank, and rarely dilutes the truth with “polite speech”. Her training is in finding and interpreting physical evidence, and she is very difficult to surprise. Shotoko has also inherited her mother's skill in combat, and is a dangerous foe in battle, both with blade and with fist.

AUTHORITY

ANCESTOR: SPECIAL

Clans: All

Your bloodline is famous for its expertise in a particular field, which leads credibility to your words.

Benefit: When choosing this Ancestor Feat, select a profession or duty, such as "magistrate", "general", or "poet". When your character is socially interacting with NPCs regarding this particular subject, such as when convincing a daimyo that a certain person is guilty of a crime or that your battle plan will ensure victory for your side, you receive a +2 circumstance bonus to any Reaction rolls or social skill rolls you are required to make.

Special: if you later acquire a Station in a field related to your Authority, you gain an additional Station Point (see "Way of the Daimyo" for more on Station Points and Stations).

AUTHORITY

(3 POINTS)

This special variation of the Social Position Advantage indicates that somewhere in the past, a member or members of your family became noteworthy for expertise in a particular field or profession, one that carries to this day. When you select this advantage, choose a field of study or profession, such as "magistrate", "general", or "poet". You receive a Free Raise whenever you need to make a social skill roll with another character about this subject, such as when you are trying to convince Winter Court that a particular person committed a crime. Further, if you later acquire a Station in a field related to your Authority, you gain an additional 1 Station Point (see "Way of the Daimyo" for more on Station Points and Stations).

THE SHINJO

The Shinjo Magistrates have found that even though their duties and responsibilities have not changed in the last 30 years, the context in which they operate has. The revelation that many within the family were agents of the Kolat, combined with Lady Shinjo's subsequent purge of the family and decision to instate the Moto as the leaders of the Unicorn, has greatly damaged the Shinjo family's standing within the Empire. However, although their reputation has suffered, the Shinjo Magistrates have adapted to their new social niche — and have turned their "diminished class" reputation to their best advantage.

The Unicorn have, over the years, fostered closer relationships with the heimin and hinin under them more than any other Clan, relationships based on a unique appreciation for the contribution the peasantry makes to the health of a Great Clan. Even after their return from the Burning Sands, the Unicorn remember how important it is for all members of a Clan to contribute fully for a Clan to prosper — and that the contributions of all members of the Clan should be respected and honored. This philosophy has guided the Unicorn and the Shinjo family in particular for hundreds of years, and has led to a very open, even friendly, relationship between the samurai of the Clan and the lower classes.

The esteem with which the lower classes view the Shinjo provides the Shinjo Magistrates with a powerful tool for gathering information and tracking people down. Merchants and farmers are close-knit, see things no samurai would expect them to, and are aware of changes or unusual happenings where they live and work — conditions that often apply when someone is breaking the law. Even though their testimony does not amount to much in the Rokugani system of justice, peasant testimony often can point the Magistrate in the right direction, and expose leads he might otherwise have missed.

Forging this relationship requires effort and lots of familiarity with the peasantry in question, and the Shinjo Magistrates are organized and operate in such a way as to develop a good working rapport with their charges. A major component of this is that Shinjo Magistrates, more than any other group of Clan magistrates in the Empire, watch over everyone in their territory, peasant and samurai alike. Complementing this is the fact that Shinjo Magistrates tend to be assigned territories to oversee for the long term, giving both the Magistrate and his charges time to get to know each other.

Given the additional duties most Shinjo Magistrates have to bear, few operate in isolation. Typically, Shinjo Magistrates operate in teams of 3 to 5, with the entire group responsible for the care of a city or cluster of villages. Although the group may split up regularly to attend to various matters, most tend to be fairly protective, and watch over each other even as they fulfill their duties.

Shinjo Magistrates tend to be very loyal each other partially as a result of the general distrust the Empire holds for the Shinjo and those associated with them. Much of Rokugan does not expect much from the Shinjo, seeing them as little better than disloyal thugs. Although exasperating, the Magistrates have found this notion very useful, causing them to be underestimated or even solicited by criminals, who think the Shinjo are weak-willed or corruptible. This frequently turns out doubly well for the Shinjo — on more than one occasion, a Shinjo Magistrate has "accepted" a bribe, only to turn around and publicly ridicule and arrest his associate.

Likewise, many Shinjo Magistrates exhibit an elevated degree of pragmatism, and are willing to use unorthodox strategies to capture their quarries. Sneaking, associating with heimin or even eta, and disguise are all tools the Shinjo Magistrates have added to their arsenals, to better infiltrate and eliminate groups that could potentially cause trouble. Although such tactics are not "officially" approved from above, higher ranking Magistrates in the organization understand the need to be effective, and many concur that since the Shinjo reputation is in shambles in any case, little additional damage can be done.

One area in which very little leeway is given, however, is that of solidarity. The Shinjo Magistrates, much like the rest of the Shinjo, were deeply affected by the amount of Kolat infiltration within the family, and the lasting effects of Shinjo's Purge. Shinjo Magistrates feel that they are in a protracted war against corruption, crime, and vice, a war which sometimes requires extreme measures. However, even more than most other Shinjo, the Magistrates are aware of how too much exposure to the darker sides of humanity can influence a person, and police themselves with no less vigilance than they do their wards.

SHINJO KANJURO, SENIOR MAGISTRATE

Shinjo Kanjuro is a free-spirited wanderer who enjoys visiting new places and meeting new people. Unfortunately for him, he is also a gifted leader of men, and the Unicorn require his services. Eight months ago, several provincial magistrates were pursuing an investigation into the loss of a pair of caravans en route to Scorpion lands, when they came down ill. Further investigation showed that, contrary to initial speculation, no foul play was involved, but rather that one of the villages on the caravans' route was in the initial stages of a plague. The early discovery of the plague enabled the Unicorn to contain the impact and treat most of the victims.

Tragically, the infected magistrates, including Kanjuro's father Shinjo Goheki, did not recover. As a gesture of respect to the family, and to replenish the magisterial garrison of the province, the Unicorn offered Kanjuro his father's position. Since Kanjuro's childhood village had been among Goheki's responsibilities and Kanjuro needed to tend to the family affairs anyways, he accepted the position. Kanjuro has since distinguished himself; childhood friends and acquaintances in the province have helped Kanjuro performed his duties efficiently.

However, Kanjuro has finished administering to his family's holdings and affairs, and wishes to move on. He is currently searching for suitable replacements to his position, but few candidates possess the mix of skill, desire, and familiarity with the region. Kanjuro would be deeply grateful to anyone who can offer him an honorable way back to his life as a wandering magistrate.

Kanjuro is an expert rider and tracker, with a quiet demeanor. Even though his training has primarily been in wilderness survival skills, his natural charm makes him an ideal, if soft-spoken, diplomat. Kanjuro is not a particularly proficient combatant, but as he rarely travels alone, he does not often need to be.

HONOR'S BLADE

ANCESTOR: SHINJO SURITOSHI

Clan: Unicorn

You are descended from Shinjo Suritoshi, a magistrate who served during the Clan Wars. He shares with you his fierce dedication to enforcing Imperial Law.

Benefit: You may add your Honor as a Righteous Bonus to your attack rolls whenever you are in combat to prevent someone from breaking the law, or if you are in the process of apprehending someone for committing a crime. This bonus also automatically applies when you are in combat against opponents who you know to be members of the Bloodspeakers, Kolat, or other secret society.

ANCESTOR: SHINJO SURITOSHI

(DIED: SECOND DAY OF THUNDER, 1128)

(6 POINTS)

Shinjo Suritoshi was a magistrate who served during the Clan Wars. A skilled samurai, Suritoshi was, for the most part, a quiet, unassuming man. He reserved his hatred for bandits, deserters, and looters, people who, in his mind, had betrayed the covenant between vassal and lord. Against them, he was fierce, relentless, and unyielding, never allowing his quarry to escape. Suritoshi died just outside Oshindoka Toshi, a Unicorn city that he and a skeleton crew of magistrates were charged with protecting while the majority of the Clan's forces fought for Oto san Uchi. On that day, he and his men faced off against a bandit horde, led by the infamous smuggler and warlord Yugoro. Although Suritoshi fell that day, neither Yugoro nor any of his men escaped.

Those who have Suritoshi as an ancestor share his drive to protect the Empire by exterminating those who would threaten it. When attempting to apprehend a known lawbreaker, or when trying to directly prevent the commission of a crime, you may roll an additional number of dice equal to your Honor.

APPENDIX TWO: UNDERWORLD HERITAGE TABLES

The Way of the Clans books introduced the idea of Heritage tables, random tables that could be utilized to determine the history of a character affiliated with one of the Great Clans. Of course, not all heritages are honorable. Many of the Empire's largest criminal organizations are well established, with a long history of sordid activities. Some families, such as the Kaeru and Kasuga, have a reputation for becoming involved in illegal activities despite their status as samurai.

The following tables may be used for any character who wishes to have a somewhat shady background. Their use should not be exclusive to dishonorable, criminal characters. An honorable samurai with such a history might be a challenge to play, as he struggles to maintain his honor and redeem his reputation despite the sordid reputation of his family. The benefits this table provides will offer constant temptation, while the penalties are an eternal reminder of how much the character must do to prove himself.

USING THESE TABLES

A character may roll on the following tables up to three times, but each roll after the first costs one Skill Point. Begin with Heritage Table 1 and proceed as instructed.

A character may roll on the following tables up to three times, but each roll costs one Character Point. Begin with Heritage Table 1 and proceed as instructed. No extra Character Points are gained for any Disadvantages given by this table.

Note: If you roll multiple times and receive more than one result that doubles your starting wealth, do not double it twice, but merely increase the multiplier. Double becomes triple, etc.

HERITAGE TABLE 1: A LEGACY OF SIN

| Roll (1d10) | Result |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 1-2 | Small-Time Criminals, <i>see Table 2</i> |
| 3-4 | Organized Crime, <i>see Table 3</i> |
| 5-6 | Corrupt Officials, <i>see Table 4</i> |
| 7-8 | Victims of Circumstance, <i>see Table 5</i> |
| 9-10 | The Kolat, <i>see Table 6</i> |

HERITAGE TABLE 2: SMALL-TIME CRIMINALS

Your ancestors were small time criminals, likely bandits, pirates, or thieves of some variety. It's unlikely any of them were particularly noteworthy, or allied to any individual persisting gang for an extended period of time. Such gangs tend to break apart and form anew at a whim. Criminals of this sort rarely get any sort of reputation, as such small time thugs who get caught in Rokugan generally do not survive. While this means that a character with this sort of background need not worry as much about being judged for his ancestors' illegal activities, neither will such a heritage earn him much respect in the eyes of fellow criminals. Thus there are no alterations to Glory or Status in this table. On the other hand, these tend to be the most dishonorable sort of thieves, and this reflects upon you appropriately.

Roll (1d10) Result

1-2 **Bandits:** Your ancestors were wandering thugs, robbing any hapless travelers they came across. While this is not the noblest of backgrounds even for a criminal, you are extremely familiar with the area your ancestors once terrorized. You lose one rank of Honor.

Pick a Great or Minor Clan. You gain a +2 bonus on all Survival skill checks in this clan's territory.

Pick a Great or Minor Clan. You gain the Way of the Land Advantage while in this clan's territory.

3-4 **Fallen Thieves Guild:** Your ancestors were members of a once powerful criminal organization. In recent times, this organization was wiped out, either by rival criminals or in a conflict with the law. In any case, you are apparently the only survivor. You have double the beginning wealth granted by your starting outfit, and you are aware of one secure safehouse that was once a headquarters of your family's organization. It is your choice whether your character sees it as his duty to rebuild the family business or simply use the resources he has remaining to avoid his family's enemies. You lose five points of Honor.

5-6 **Graverobbers:** Looting the tombs of the dead is a thriving, if dangerous, industry among Rokugan's criminal underworld. Powerful samurai often have their ashes interred along with a wealth of fine weapons and tributes to their legendary lives. Those who would steal such riches not only risk the wrath of living descendants, but the very real danger of a vengeful ghost seeking what is rightfully theirs. The risks are often worth the reward, but a clever graverobber always knows a thing or two about spirits so that he might avoid disturbing the more dangerous varieties. You lose one and one half ranks of Honor.

You gain Knowledge (arcana) as a class skill. Add a shovel to your starting outfit.

You gain one rank in Lore (ghosts). Add a shovel to your starting outfit.

7-8 **Pickpockets:** Whereas the "Bandits" result on this table indicates a wandering gang of thugs, this result indicates a more urban sort of criminal. Your family were cutpurses, street urchins, city rats, small time thieves who generally robbed unsuspecting travelers without their knowledge within a large city. A criminal of this sort does not survive long without being somewhat clever and streetwise. You lose one rank of Honor.

You gain a +1 bonus on all Sleight of Hand and Knowledge (local) skill checks.

You gain the Crafty Advantage.

9-10 **Scavengers:** With battle being such a frequent occurrence in a land ruled by samurai, it is only natural that there would be individuals who profit from the remains of battle. Gangs of scavengers are not an uncommon sight after a large conflict, waiting until the samurai have gone to quickly strip the dead of any valuable possessions. Such a lifestyle is extremely dangerous, as not only must scavengers follow in the wake of brutal warfare, but a samurai who catches a scavenger looting the dead will swiftly cut him down, even if they are looting a body of an enemy. On the plus side, you gain an item of the GM's choice, found on the body of a dead samurai by one of your descendants. While it is undoubtedly valuable, you must be cautious in selling it, as it bears the personal mon of the dead samurai from whom it was stolen. You lose one and one half ranks of Honor.

HERITAGE TABLE 3: ORGANIZED CRIME

Organized crime bears a long if not honored tradition in Rokugani society. Criminal gangs that endure long enough to escape detection by the law for any prolonged length of time tend to develop strong bonds of loyalty toward one another. Your family descended from one of these criminal organizations. While this means that your character is likely to have powerful connections within the organization, it also means he is likely to owe them a number of obligations as well. For a character who welcomes the aid of such allies, this is generally not much of a problem. For a character who intends to take a more honorable path, life can be quite difficult when such favors are owed.

Roll (1d10) Result

- 1–2 **Informants:** Your family are information brokers, dabbling in the exchange of rumor and secrets. Through your contact with fellow agents you have obtained a piece of blackmail on an important individual (Status 5 or lower) of the GM's choice. This information could be very damage if exposed, but you must be cautious to do so without putting yourself at risk. You lose five points of Honor.
- 3–4 **Kolat Front:** Your family were members of a Kolat front posing as some other criminal gang. Roll again on Table 1. Ignore this result if rolled again, and ignore any rolls of 9–10 on Table 1. Whatever result you obtain is the "cover," but the group was, in truth, a Kolat organization. While you know that you are a Kolat and have allies within the order, they also expect absolute loyalty and secrecy from you.

You gain a Major Ally within the Kolat, but also gain a 4 Point Obligation to the same individual. At the GM's option you do not know this individual's actual identity, but merely have a reliable way of contacting him when you require aid or instructions.

- 5–6 **Mercenaries:** Your family are members of a renowned mercenary organization, supplying the services of peasant and samurai mercenaries for a reasonable price. Unlike more reputable merchant organizations, your family asks few questions so long as the job at hand does not conflict with your clan's interests. It is not uncommon for such a band to operate as hired thieves, thugs, or even killers if the price is right. Your Glory automatically starts as Infamy.
- 7–8 **Protection Racket:** Your family belongs to any of a number of extortion cartels operating throughout the Empire. Such gangs are not uncommon in large cities, and usually grow naturally out of more legitimate organizations such as fireman gangs, dock working crews, or even magistrate bands. Your starting Honor is decreased by three points

Intimidate is a class skill for you.

You gain one Rank in Intimidation.

- 9–10 **Smuggling Cartel:** These tend to be the most highly organized and versatile criminal organizations. Trade and travel are difficult enough for legitimate businessmen in Rokugan. Complicate things with the added danger of smuggling a variety of goods past Rokugan's finest magistrates and the need for skilled, loyal, experienced agents becomes obvious. Most of these cartels do not specialize in a single type of illegal goods, but will transport whatever is currently fetching a fine price, from stolen goods to illegal gaijin artifacts, to simple foodstuffs. You gain five points of Glory, as being so widely traveled inevitably leads to being more readily recognized, even if your illegal exploits continue to remain well-hidden.

You gain a +2 bonus on all Knowledge (local) skill checks.

You gain one Rank in Kuenai.

HERITAGE TABLE 4: CORRUPT OFFICIALS

Honor is a powerful force in Rokugan, but there are always exceptions to the rule. You come from a family of highly placed and influential samurai, but they are not hesitant to abuse that power.

Roll (1d10) Result

- 1–2 **Corrupt Magistrates:** Corrupt magistrates might indulge in a variety of criminal activities, from providing forged travel papers to accepting bribes to engaging in open extortion. Be warned should you choose to walk this path as well – Rokugan has very little tolerance for officers of the law who abuse their power. You gain one Rank of Status.
- 3–4 **Corrupt Warlord:** The Emperor grants his samurai absolute power and authority over the land in his stead, and in remote regions it is not entirely unheard of for the samurai to abuse his authority, dominating the populace under his cruel reign. So long as your family keeps their misdeeds confined to their area of authority, none can truly question them. You begin with double the usual wealth for your starting outfit, but lose three Status due to your family's backwater origins.
- 5–6 **Exposed:** Roll again on this table, ignoring this result. Your family engaged in the activities indicated by the second roll, but their deeds have been exposed. Your starting Glory becomes Infamy and you lose one Rank of Honor. Your family's organization has been brought down by magistrates, but you somehow escaped punishment (perhaps due to innocence, perhaps merely by being in the right place at the right time).

- 7-8 Samurai Oyabun: Your family does not engage in criminal activity directly, but are the true power behind some other criminal organization. Roll again on Heritage Table 3: Organized Crime. You gain all of the benefits of the result but are automatically considered a high ranking member of the organization.
- 9-0 **Tax Collectors:** Your family are corrupt tax collectors, doctoring the results of collected taxes or accepting bribes to overlook the true wealth obtained by dishonest individuals. You lose one rank of Honor, gain one two points of Status, and begin with double the normal wealth for your starting outfit.

HERITAGE TABLE 5: VICTIMS OF CIRCUMSTANCE

Not all everyone enters a life of crime by choice. Your family were forced into a difficult situation by forces beyond their control, and now you must deal with the outcome. All of these results require a second roll on Heritage Table 1 to determine what sort of crime your family is associated with. Reroll any results that direct you to this table again.

| Roll (1d10) | Result |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-2 | Blackmail: Due to some past shame or dark secret your family was coerced into criminal activity. The details of this blackmail are left to the GM, but it must be considerable for a samurai to even consider a life of crime a viable alternative to the shame of such exposure. |
| 3-4 | Framed: Your family has been punished for a crime they did not commit. The results of the second roll on Heritage Table 1 will reveal the nature of this crime. You escaped punishment, for whatever reason. Now it falls to you to clear your family's name, if possible. You gain no benefits or penalties from the second roll (other than the fact that you are the only remaining member of your immediate family). |
| 5-6 | Guilt by Association: Your immediate family are not criminals, but are closely related to another branch of the family who are. It is an accepted family secret, and while you refuse to participate in their crimes, thus far you have also refused to expose them. In return, they share the fruits of their rather dubious labor. You gain all the benefits and penalties of the second roll, though you can choose to give up any results that bestow additional wealth upon you. If you do so, you do not suffer any Honor losses for this Heritage Table result. |
| 7-8 | Kolat Sleeper: Do not roll a second time on the table as instructed. You are not aware of any criminal activity in your family due to this roll. Instead, you happen to be a Kolat Sleeper, an agent who is not even aware of his affiliation with the Kolat. At a time of the GM's choosing another Kolat agent will activate your programming with a code word or gesture, restoring your memory of your purpose and true mission for as long as need be to accomplish your intended task. |
| 9-10 | Ronin: Your family were once proud samurai, but your superiors were slain and for whatever reason you found no place in the clan. You have begun a life of crime to support yourself, but continue to retain whatever samurai pride you can. As ronin, you have no Status whatsoever. |

TABLE 6: THE KOLAT

The Kolat are as ancient and sinister a criminal organization as you will ever find in Rokugan. The Kolat are divided into ten Sects, and the nature of your duties will be determined by which Sect your character is associated with. It is important to remember that while rank is never inherited along family lines among the Kolat, it is not uncommon for entire families to be involved with the Kolat over successive generations. You are a willing, aware agent of the Kolat (rather than a sleeper or a pawn pressed into service). As such you will have contacts within the order that will expect you to obey without question. A Kolat will swiftly find that the only people less forgiving than magistrates are fellow Kolat – failure is not tolerated, and failure to maintain secrecy, above all, is punished with extreme severity.

The benefits of the sects presented here are reprinted from Way of the Ninja. Thus, these benefits count as dojo bonuses. However, a character may be a member of a Kolat sect and still have the benefits of an additional dojo, so long as it is not an additional Kolat dojo.

| Roll (1d10) | Result |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Chrysanthemum Sect: Former custodians of the Imperial City, their current purpose is to maintain the Kolat's secret alliance with the Dark Lord, Daigotsu. |

You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on all Charisma and Wisdom related skill checks.

You gain a free Raise on all social skill rolls.

- 2 **Cloud Sect:** The Cloud Sect are the Kolat's scholars and historians. Of all the sects they are the least likely to engage directly in criminal activity, though the knowledge they bear is frequently turned toward sinister ends by other Kolat.

You may make an Intelligence check (DC 15) to recall in perfect detail any information to which you have been exposed.

You may purchase the Precise Memory Advantage for one Character Point or Experience Point..

- 3 **Coin Sect:** It is a Coin Kolat's duty to obtain wealth, generally by any means necessary. As such, it is not unusual for such a Kolat to indulge in mundane criminal activity such as smuggling or robbery.

You may make a Gather Information check (DC 15) to find a henchman. (These henchmen are usually members of NPC classes such as warriors or experts.)

You may make an Intelligence / Kuenai roll (vs. TN 10) to find a henchman. (These henchmen are usually untrained in any school.)

- 4 *Dream Sect:* The most bizarre of the Kolat sects, the Dream Kolat find, train, and control the dreaded Sleepers. You might not be one of those who selects and trains sleepers personally, but possibly a thug dispatched to collect potential subjects, or merely a silent agent placed among the populace who keeps an eye out for worthy candidates.

If you are a member of the kolat agent prestige class, you may attempt to program a sleeper (as if you had the prestige class' Program Sleeper ability) even if you are not yet 10th level. You must have the aid of other kolat agents, and your total levels in the prestige class must be ten or more. If the total levels of participating agents is greater than ten, the DC of the Will save to resist the effects is increased by one for each additional level. No more than six agents can work on a single subject at a time.

You gain Free Raises equal to your Rank on all Torture skill rolls, so long as your ends are to reprogram someone to become an agent of the Kolat.

- 5 *Jade Sect:* Arguably the noblest of the Kolat sects, Jade Kolat battle corruption in all its forms. Perhaps you are a hunter sent to root out Bloodspeaker sects or a spy placed among other enemies of the Shadowlands (Kuni Witch Hunters, Inquisitors, etc) to conveniently drop clues when the Kolat cannot act openly on what they have learned.

You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on all saving throws vs. maho or shinobi magic.

The TN of any maho or Shinobi magic effect targeting you increased by five.

- 6 *Lotus Sect:* The Lotus Kolat are the assassins of the order. Lotus rarely interact with others or emerge from their hidden monasteries, preferring not to dull their edge by interacting with those they might be dispatched to kill. As a Lotus player character you may wish to consult your GM for a compelling reason you have joined the party (perhaps you are undercover seeking a difficult mark) or reroll if such a character is not suitable for the campaign.

The base attack and skill requirements of the Kolat Assassin prestige class are all reduced by two.

Your Insight is considered five points higher for gaining Ranks in the Kolat Assassin School.

- 7 *Roc Sect:* The Roc are also known as the Qolat, the order's eyes and ears outside of Rokugan. As a member of this sect, you are well traveled and know something about the lands beyond Rokugan.

You gain a +2 bonus on all Charisma checks with non-Rokugani.

You gain a Free Raise on all social interactions with non-Rokugani.

- 8 *Silken Sect:* The subtlest of the Kolat orders, the Silken Kolat are harvesters of information. They do not act on what they have seen, merely record it and report it to other Kolat so that it might be used efficiently without compromising their position. Your character is such an informant, and will be expected to regularly report any noteworthy information to his superiors. Silken Kolat have a dangerous and thankless duty, complicated by the fact that their order has the highest incidence of rogue agents. Thus all Silken Kolat are monitored as closely as is possible without compromising their position.

You may add your Charisma bonus twice when making Gather Information checks.

You may add your Awareness to all Gossip skill rolls.

- 9 *Steel Sect:* The Steel Sect monitor security surrounding the Hidden Temple. Most agents are members of the Ox Clan. This is hardly the extent of the Sect's influence, however. Master Steel is an ambitious man who fully supports the Kolat's transition from a metaphysical conspiracy to a powerful mercantile organization. Steel Kolat are frequently business owners or diplomats, dispatched to foreign lands to protect Master Steel's many interests both legal and otherwise. The benefits of this sect, unfortunately, apply only in the mountains surrounding the Hidden Temple or in Ox Clan lands.

0 *Tiger Sect:* The Tiger Sect is feared even by other Kolat. They are the secret police of the order, insuring that secrecy is maintained at any cost. You are a member of this sect so most of your duties to the Kolat most likely entail investigating the activities of other agents, testing their secrecy and loyalty if need be. Have a care in all that you do, the Tiger are most suspicious of one another... and one never knows when Master Tiger might decide your own loyalty is in question.

You gain a bonus equal to your level on all opposed social skill rolls with other Kolat.

You gain Free Raises equal to your rank on any opposed social skill rolls with other Kolat.

The Heritage Tables here, as well as the NPC descriptions throughout this book, refer to two statistics – Glory and Status. These rules are described in more detail in *Way of the Daimyo* and the upcoming *Legend of the Five Rings Third Edition Player's Guide*. Players of the d10 system are familiar with the term “Glory” but might not know how the use of that term has changed in *Way of the Daimyo*, or how Status relates to it. Players of d20 who do not own a copy of *Way of the Daimyo* may be unfamiliar with either term, so they are summarized briefly here.

Glory is a subjective trait, a measure of a character's personal fame. It increases as the character performs noteworthy deeds and decreases if he ceases to perform them regularly. Glory is measured on a scale of 1-10, with Glory 10 indicating the most famous and renowned heroes of the Empire. Performing dishonorable or criminal acts does not decrease Glory, but may cause one's Glory to become a negative value. Characters with negative glory are considered Infamous. An infamous hero will find that his infamy only increases as he wins battles and makes his name known. Only some act that publicly redeems him for his crimes will cause him to gain positive Glory again.

Status is a relatively static and objective trait, a direct measure of the character's influence and responsibility in Rokugani society. Status increases only as a character is promoted by his superiors, and decreases only with demotion. Status, like Glory, is measured on a scale of 1-10 with the most powerful and influential samurai having higher Status. Individuals with extremely low social standing such as peasants, eta, and various known criminals can have negative Status. Ronin have no Status whatsoever.

Though Glory and Status are independent of one another, characters with high Status often have high Glory, and vice versa. A samurai who performs great deeds will have high Glory, and will likely be rewarded with greater responsibilities (earning him higher Status). Likewise, a high-ranking samurai is likely to be extremely visible and known to the community. Acting in such a public fashion will inevitably accumulate high Glory. That being said, it is not impossible for a character to have high Glory but low Status (peasant heroes) or high Status and low Glory (a reclusive bureaucrat).