Ancestors

Optional Rules for Legend of the 5 Rings Third Edition

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The people of Rokugan believe in the Celestial Order. This grand design dictates not only one's station in life, but how one rises or falls based upon one's actions. It is a commonly accepted notion that every soul has a destiny, a single purpose for which it was created. Until this destiny is achieved, the soul is continually reincarnated, gaining or losing rank within the Celestial Order based on merit. Souls that achieve their destinies are honored by the gods with a place in the Spirit Realm of Yomi, the Realm of Blessed Ancestors. Here, the souls may rest, their lifetimes of toil rewarded with an idyllic existence. The spirits of this realm, called shiryo, possess the ability to see into the mortal realm. Many shiryo offer subtle guidance to their descendants, blessing them with vestiges of the expertise they once possessed.

The Rokugani revere their ancestors. Every social class, from eta through to the Imperial Families, ack-nowledge and thank their predecessors for their deeds, accomplishments, and insights. Every samurai extends respect not only to his immediate ancestors, but to the great heroes of his family and Clan as well. Every member of the Great Clans knows his relationship, however distant, to his Clan's Thunder.

In a society like Rokugan, where familial ties and social standing are considered as important as individual merit, it is no wonder that samurai honor their ancestors. The family name, social rank, and opportunities for advancement a samurai enjoys are largely due to the accomplishments of his predecessors. Bushi, for example, need only look to the daisho, traditionally passed down from grandparent to grandchild, to be reminded of the continuity between generations.

Rokugani spend a great deal of time acknowledging the deeds of their ancestors. Most families have a shrine to their predecessors upon their estates, and many samurai spend time during meditation reflecting on the lessons and experiences of their ancestors. A samurai's relationship with his ancestors reflects upon him in the same manner that the state in which a bushi keeps his weapons indicates his worthiness as a warrior.

The people of the Empire know that their ancestors watch over them, guiding their actions and lending them insight. Even though only a few shugenja can actually see ancestors in the Realm of Mortals, everybody can see the evidence of their influence. A perfect cut in a duel, the burst of inspiration during research, just the right phrase in a tense negotiation — all of these are clearly gifts from ancestors.

Outsiders to the Empire such as the Nezumi, Naga, and gaijin find the obeisance Rokugani give to their ancestors to be bizarre. Aside from a handful of shugenja, few Rokugani can honestly say they have directly observed an ancestor, or clearly felt their guidance. Even those favored by their forefathers can rarely point out examples of their intervention. Most of the Empire accepts the existence and power of ancestors in a combination of faith and tradition.

Mechanics.

Every character may begin play with a single ancestor Advantage. This Advantage costs no character points, although the base abilities conferred by it may be improved with character points if the player wishes to do so.

Step One: Concept

The ancestor's concept comes first. This may be as simple as selecting a historical figure from Rokugan's past to serve as the ancestor, then assigning appropriate mechanical benefits. Instead, a player may wish to create a new ancestor closely tied to his character's past and abilities, like a grandfather or sensei. Generally speaking, ancestors only offer guidance to those who maintain the same clan affiliation, although it is not unheard of for a spirit to watch over his descendants who have married into another clan.

Step Two: Profession _

The first mechanical benefit an ancestor confers comes from the spirit's profession in life. The tasks assigned a samurai by his lord hold great importance, even in the next world, and a lifetime of expertise can be of considerable assistance to a young samurai. From the list below, select the primary profession the character's ancestor held during his life, and gain the listed mechanical benefit. Administrator: Your ancestor oversaw a holding for his lord: perhaps a village, fortress, or city. You gain one Free Raise on any Social Skill roll made with someone over whom you are in a position of authority.

Artisan: Your ancestor was an artisan of exceptional skill, creating works of art for her lord and his guests. Select any one Artisan Skill: you roll two additional dice when using this Skill.

Courtier: Your ancestor was an elegant courtier. He moved among the courts, forging new alliances for his clan and manipulating his enemies to keep them at a disadvantage. You gain three additional Character Points at the time of character creation that must be spent on the Allies Advantage. You may combine these points with others from your normal amount when purchasing Allies.

Daimyo: Your ancestor was a daimyo in command of land, troops, or other valuable holdings. She may have been a provincial daimyo, or even a family or clan leader. You gain 0.5 additional Status at the time of character creation, and you may purchase the Leadership Advantage for 3 points less than normal.

Duelist: Your ancestor was a great duelist, wielding his steel for the honor of his lord, his family, and his clan. For every Focus you make in a duel, you gain +2 to the total of your Iaijutsu roll when making your strike.

Magistrate: Your ancestor was a magistrate, enforcing the laws of her Emperor and her clan. You gain three Free Raises per day that may be used on any Hunting, Investigation, or Lore: Law roll.

Monk: Your ancestor set aside his oaths and took up the Tao instead, joining the Brotherhood of Shinsei as a monk. Choose any one Skill taught by a Monk Temple (as listed in the Book of Air): you gain 2 ranks in that Skill. These ranks are added to any existing ranks, but may not increase your total Skill rank above 3.

Ninja: Your ancestor sacrificed her personal honor for the good of her people, instead taking to the shadows. You roll one additional die on any Stealth or Ninja Ranged Weapon roll.

Officer: Your ancestor was a great leader on the battlefield, inspiring those who served beneath him to feats of greatness. When making any Cooperative Skill Roll, you are considered to have +2 ranks of the Skill in question. **Outcast**: Your ancestor was cast out of her clan and wandered the Empire as a ronin. Choose one of the following Skills: Animal Handling, Horsemanship, Hunting, Underworld. You gain 2 ranks in the chosen Skill. These are cumulative with other ranks, but may not increase your total Skill rank above 3.

Priest: Your ancestor was a priest, and much beloved by the kami. Choose one of the following Skills: Lore: Elements, Spellcraft, or Theology. You gain 2 ranks in the chosen Skill. These are cumulative with other ranks, but may not increase your total Skill rank above 3.

Scholar: Your ancestor possessed a deep love of learning, and was expert in many fields of knowledge. Select any one Lore Skill. You gain a Free Raise on all rolls made with this Skill.

Sensei: Your ancestor was a gifted sensei, honored by his family and revered by his students. You gain 2 ranks in the Instruction Skill. These are cumulative with other ranks, but may not increase your total Skill rank above 3.

Soldier: Your ancestor was a soldier in her lord's armies. When you spend a Void Point to gain 1k1 on any Bugei Skill roll, you add an additional +3 to the total.

Spy: Your ancestor was a spy, sacrificing his honor and putting himself at tremendous risk in order to gain valuable information for his lord. You roll one additional die on all Acting and Deceit rolls.

Tactician: Your ancestor was a gifted tactician, advising her lord's generals and bringing victory on the battlefields. You gain 1 rank in the Battle Skill. This is cumulative with other ranks, but may not increase your total Skill rank above 3. You may purchase the Tactician Advantage for 3 points less than normal.

Yojimbo: Your ancestor was a valiant yojimbo, protecting his charge from any harm, ignoring any danger to himself. When using the Full Defense posture, you may apply your increased TN to one extra opponent.

Step Three: Drive .

Perhaps even more important than an ancestor's duties is the force that drove him or her. What single trait compelled the spirit's actions more than any other? What strength or failing drove the ancestor toward his or her destiny? The tenets of bushido are common drives for many samurai, although there are less pleasant impulses that likewise inspire some to greatness. From the list below, select the primary drive the character's ancestor had during his or her lifetime, and gain the listed mechanical benefit.

Ambition: A lust for personal power drove your ancestor, perhaps to greatness, perhaps to disgrace. You may roll one additional die on any Social Skill Roll wherein you are attempting to gain more personal power or prestige.

Duty: Enacting the will of her lord was the only driving goal of your ancestor. You gain three additional Void Points that may only be spent in fulfillment of a specific task given to you by your lord. ("Defeat Daidoji Etsumi" is specific. "Destroy the Crane Clan" is not.)

Compassion: A deep respect for the welfare of others marked your ancestor as a beloved figure in his time. You may add your Insight Rank to the total of any roll made to assist someone in need, whether defending them in combat, using Medicine to treat their wounds, or crafting an object they need to perform a duty.

Courage: Your ancestor knew nothing of fear, and was in turned feared by those who faced her in battle. You may roll one additional die on any roll made to resist a Fear effect (whether a creature ability, spell, or Technique) or a Deceit (Intimidation) roll.

Courtesy: Protocol and sophistication were the hallmarks of your ancestor, a famously well-mannered representative of his lord. You may add your Insight Rank to the total of any Social Skill roll made when interacting with others, so long as you maintain a courteous, non-threatening demeanor.

Honor: Your ancestor's honor was her life. Nothing else mattered. Your Honor is considered one rank higher whenever you make an Honor roll or a Test of Honor.

Judgment: Your ancestors found the flaws within others, and strove to better himself by using others as examples of weakness. You roll one additional die on any Contested Roll against an opponent who has more points of Disadvantages than you.

Justice: The law drove your ancestor, who never stopped hunting those who defied the Emperor. You may add your Insight Rank to the total of any roll made against an opponent who has broken the law (this must be corroborated by legitimate testimony or evidence, not merely suspicion).

Passion: Love and lust drove your ancestor; some may remember his indiscretions as well as his name. You gain one Free Raise on any Deceit (Seduction) roll, or on any Etiquette (Sincerity) roll targeting a member of the opposite sex.

Sacrifice: Your ancestor gave of herself that others might flourish. You add your Insight Rank to the total of any roll made when you are sacrificing yourself for others (acting as a diversion so others can escape, committing a dishonorable act for the benefit of others, etc.).

Sincerity: Your ancestor believed that word and deed were one, carefully choosing his words so that he never spoke an untruth. You roll one additional die on all Etiquette (Sincerity) rolls.

Vengeance: The need to avenge insults drove your ancestor, and she is remembered as a fearsome and implacable foe. You roll one additional die any time you are avenging an insult to yourself, your family, or your clan.

Step Four: Devotion _

The degree of reverence a samurai has for his ancestors strengthens the bonds between them. Once a samurai understands the bond he shares with those who have passed on to Yomi, it is possible to strengthen that bond. In doing so, the samurai becomes more like his ancestor, and the ancestor offers greater guidance.

The final step of constructing an Ancestor is the Devotion attribute. All Ancestors default to Rank 1. It is possible to increase Devotion through the expenditure of Character Points or Experience Points, although in order to retain the Ancestor's increased mechanical advantages, the samurai must perform certain duties. If he is forcibly prevented from doing so, the requirements are waived until such time as he is once again capable of performing them. If the samurai ever chooses not to fulfill the requirements, the Ancestor automatically drops one Rank and cannot be raised again except through the expenditure of additional Experience Points.

Rank: Ancestor Advantages begin at Rank 1, and may be increased up to a maximum of Rank 4 as described under Cost below. Under certain circumstances, Ancestor Advantages may be reduced to Rank 0 as described under Requirement (below). A Rank 0 Ancestor confers no mechanical benefit. **Requirement:** Ancestors require their descendants to behave appropriately if they wish to retain the ancestor's guidance and blessing. The higher an Ancestor's Rank, the more stringent the requirements become. The most common requirement is to visit a temple of appropriate dedication and offer prayers to one's ancestors. The frequency and duration of these visits is determined by Rank. A Rank 1 Ancestor requires only that her descendants visit the temple once per week and offer prayers for a short time (even a few minutes suffice). Rank 2 requires at least an hour of prayer once per day, and so on. The table below describes these requirements. All prayers must be completed while in the temple.

Circumstances legitimately beyond a samurai's control can prevent him from the proper expression of devotion. The ancestors understand this. A samurai stationed deep in the wilderness who has no access to a temple will retain his benefits so long as he offers the appropriate number of prayers. A samurai who chooses not to complete the requirements has his Ancestor Advantage reduced to Rank 0 if he misses three consecutive increments (3 weeks for a weekly temple visit, 3 days for a daily visit, etc.). Regaining an Ancestor Rank requires a number of weeks of appropriate behavior equal to twice the Rank (2 weeks of weekly prayers to regain Rank 1, 4 weeks of daily visits to regain Rank 2, etc.). Such a character must also pay the normal cost for increasing an Ancestor Rank as described under Cost below.

Rank 4 Ancestors are particularly demanding of their descendants, and require an indulgence of their living Drive as well as the normal temple prayers. A samurai with a Rank 4 Ancestor must demonstrate that Ancestor's Drive in some way each day. An Ancestor with the Drive of Honor must behave honorably at all times, while one with the Drive of Passion must demonstrate love or obsession for another individual or for a particularly cherished object or activity each day. This is highly subjective, and ultimately up to the GM's discretion. Ultimately, the connection between a samurai and a Rank 4 Ancestor is so great that the Ancestor's personality and interests become part of that samurai's personality, kharmically uniting the two. **Cost**: There is no cost if a samurai retains his Ancestor at the default Rank of 1. Increasing the Ancestor's Rank may be done at character creation through the expenditure of Character Points, or during a campaign by spending Experience Points. In either case, the point expenditure is the same. It costs 4 points to increase an Ancestor from Rank 1 to Rank 2, 8 points to increase from Rank 2 to Rank 3, and 12 points to increase from Rank 3 to Rank 4. Ancestors of Rank 5 and above occur perhaps once in a generation, and should only be achieved by a samurai who performs some monumental task for his ancestors. This is a highly individualized process and should be determined by the player and the GM in accordance with what is appropriate for the campaign.

It is possible for Ancestor Advantages to be reduced to Rank 0. If this happens, the character must meet certain requirements (see "Requirement" above) to bring the Ancestor back to Rank 1. It costs 4 points to return a lapsed Ancestor from Rank 0 to Rank 1.

Benefit: For each Rank of Devotion an Ancestor possesses, the samurai gains an additional benefit from either Profession or Drive. If the Ancestor grants Skills, the samurai receives an additional Rank in the chosen Skill. If the Ancestor grants Free Raises or Void Points, the samurai receives an additional Free Raise or Void Points. If the Ancestor grants additional dice on a roll, the samurai receives one more additional die on that roll. If the Ancestor grants a bonus to the result of a die or a roll, the samurai receives an additional +1 to the result of that die or roll. You may not increase the bonuses granted by the Courtier and Daimyo Professions.

For example, a samurai possessing a Rank 2 Outcast/Vengeance Ancestor could choose to add one additional Skill Rank from his Outcast component, or gain one additional rolled die from the Vengeance component. Gaining a higher Rank in an Ancestor also increases the maximum benefit allowed. In the Outcast example above, the maximum rank in the selected Skills would be increased to 4 rather than 3. The samurai could choose to increase a different Skill each time his

Rank	Requirement	Cost
1	Visit temple once per week, pray to ancestor	None (default)
2	Visit temple once per day, pray for one hour	4 points
3	Visit temple daily, pray for at least three hours total	8 points
4	Visit temple daily, pray for at least three hours, indulge Drive daily	12 points
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Ancestor Rank increased, or he could instead increase the same Skill's bonus ranks repeatedly.

Example Ancestors.

There are many possible combinations of ancestor options. Combining them in different ways can create a wide variety of unique themes for characters. Particularly powerful spirits may even confer different benefits on different descendants. For example, each of the Four Winds were blessed by their father, the Splendid Emperor Toturi I, in different ways. The ancestral Advantages they possessed might have looked something like this:

Toturi: The Black Lion (Outcast/Courage/1)

In the days before the Clan War, the ronin Toturi rode among the people. The suffering he saw there opened his eyes, and he saw the signs of impending war long before many among the Great Clans. Setting aside pride and any vestige of previous allegiances, Toturi gathered a mighty army of ronin, eventually bolstered by his allies among the Dragon, and rode forth to guard the Empire against those who would harm it. Though many doubt his motives, Toturi's son Kaneka wishes to protect his father's Empire — now his brother's — from a similar fate, and rides among the people as his father once did.

Toturi: Commander of the Imperial Legions (Officer/Duty/3)

The Empire's histories remember Toturi I as a proponent of justice and law. Under his rule, the Emerald Magistrates and Imperial Legions were strengthened considerably, aiding the Emperor's Champions in ensuring that all his subjects were protected. In this regard, Toturi's greatest legacy was his daughter Tsudao, who embodied his zeal for justice throughout her brief life.

Toturi: Emperor of Rokugan (Administrator/Sincerity/1)

Despite his training as a warrior and an officer, the Splendid Emperor never failed to control his Imperial Court with a firm but gentle hand, preventing the power games of misguided courtiers from exploding into unnecessary martial conflicts. Toturi's successor and youngest son Naseru shares his father's gift for guidance, and uses it to ruthless effect in manipulating his enemies.

Toturi: Student of the Tao (Scholar/Judgment/2)

In his youth, Akodo Toturi was sent to a monastery. There, he combined his interest in military tactics, such as those found in Akodo's Leadership, with the simple wisdom of the Tao. Despite the many hardships he faced, this love of learning never left Toturi, and even after he became Emperor he devoted time each day to reading. These scholarly traits were passed on to his son Sezaru, who spent much of his youth in the capital city's temples and libraries.