



# LIVE-ACTION ROLEPLAYING



ORIENTAL ADVENTURES



# LIVE-ACTION ROLEPLAYING

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# BLOOD AND HONOR

## PART ONE

Shiba Kanshiro believed that there was a Fortune of Destiny, and that she conspired only to make his life difficult.

Kanshiro stepped out of Lord Juro's chambers, struggling to keep the rage and frustration from his face. Kanshiro thought he saw a guard smirking at him as he closed the door, but when he looked at the man his eyes were politely averted. What was it with this place? Why did everyone here seem to go out of their way to make things difficult? Kanshiro adjusted the two swords tucked beneath his obi and moved on with all the dignity he could muster. He quietly fumed as he made his way back to the gardens, planning his next move.

The Shogun was not a man known for indulging in worldly luxuries, but he was a canny politician who recognized that there were many who did. Seppun Juro, most realized, was more important for being known as the Shogun's karo than for his position as governor of Honored Treaty City. The governor's palace served as a place to entertain those who wished to have the Shogun's ear, keeping them comfortably entertained and away from strategic operations in nearby Shiro Henka. These gardens, like this palace, were not designed for the Shogun but for his guests. Subtly curving rock paths wound between delicate trees, bushes sculpted in wondrous natural patterns, and a brilliant riot of beautiful flowers. Kanshiro liked this place, and had spent quite a great deal of time here since his arrival. Even so, the beauty of the gardens only slightly mitigated his anger.

"Kanshiro-san," called out a delicate voice from his left. "Things did not go well, I take it?"

He looked toward the source of the voice. A woman in the red silken robes knelt just beside the entrance of the courtyard. She peered up at him over the top of her book, dark eyes encircled by a red velvet mask in the manner which distinguished the Scorpion Clan. Kanshiro's training cried out at him not to trust a Scorpion, but during his time in the governor's palace he had become quite fond of Soshi Kaoru. His heart said she was not like other Scorpion, even as his brain told him this was quite possibly exactly what she wanted him to think. In any case, he had no secrets, so he saw no harm in befriending her even if her motives were impure.

"The Shogun's karo is being difficult," Kanshiro sighed. "I have told him of the situation in my home village, how the bandit attacks are increasing in frequency and organization, but he seemed almost amused. It sounded as if he believed the attacks were our fault, as if my family had failed to protect our home... he refused to dispatch troops to aid us."

Kaoru frowned sympathetically. She rose, folding her book and tucking it into her obi. "Juro has become corrupted by his position," she whispered to him. "With the Shogun occupied keeping peace in the south, his word here is absolute. If rumor has it right, he is easily distracted by worldly pleasures. I have heard that many, like you, have found greater success in keeping his focus on important matters by bestowing certain gifts upon him."

Kanshiro's eyes widened. He glanced about to see if Kaoru had spoken while any of the other guests were in hearing range. Of course she had not. "Bribes?" Kanshiro

hissed, outraged. "Such is not conduct worthy of a samurai, especially a samurai who serves the Shogun directly!"

Kaoru studied Kanshiro for a moment, as if gauging the sincerity of his words. She smiled gently. "You are a good man, Kanshiro," she said with just a hint of sadness. "An honorable man. Some days I fear there are too few like you left in Rokugan." She moved past him down the garden path, walking slowly enough that he could follow if he so chose.

"Is something wrong, Kaoru-chan?" he asked her, walking beside her.

"A family matter," she replied. "You have your own problems, Kanshiro-san. I would not wish to impose upon you."

"My own mission here seems futile," Kanshiro replied. "If there is any way that I can help you, it is my duty as a samurai to do so."

Kaoru looked at him over one shoulder. "Not all samurai would be so generous to a Scorpion."

"Since I arrived here, you are the only one who has shown me kindness and courtesy," Kanshiro replied. "I will not repay that with distrust."

Kaoru's face flushed slightly with surprise. She nodded to Kanshiro, thanking him for his kindness. "It is my cousin, Yoshino," she replied. "Lady Uidori dispatched the two of us here to present a gift from our family, a crystal flower carved by the legendary Ashalan sandsmith. We have been here for two weeks now. Yoshino claims that it is his responsibility to remain here until the Shogun returns to claim his gift, but this is not true."



"Oh?" Kanshiro replied. He had met Kaoru's cousin a time or two since his arrival. He had seemed a curt, arrogant, and impatient young warrior.

Kaoru glanced around carefully, then looked up at Kanshiro. "Yoshino is having an affair with Seppun Isa, Lord Juro's daughter. It is for her sake that he makes excuses to remain."

"But the karo's daughter is betrothed to Mirumoto Aichi," Kanshiro replied, "an officer in the Shogun's guard, due to arrive at the castle this very day." Kanshiro had not expected a problem of this scale – he almost regretted his selfless offer to help.

"Now you understand my difficulty," Kaoru replied. "Aichi's clan, the Dragon, and my clan are allies. If this shameful affair should see the light of day not only would the Scorpion's reputation with the Shogun be greatly harmed, but our alliance with the Dragon Clan would be as well."

"I am not certain how I can help," Kanshiro replied, "but I promised, Kaoru-chan."

"Arigato, Kanshiro-san," Kaoru said gratefully. "I only ask you be careful not to speak of this matter. Even if a mere servant should overhear, and report to the Mirumoto..."

A sudden commotion behind them drew his attention. A dozen samurai in fiery armor of the Shogun now spread across the garden, taking up positions at every exit. Some herded guests into the open area, looking at the guards and at one another in confusion, irritated. A lanky woman in a billowing green kimono stepped into the center of the garden. The winding image of a snake tattoo coiled itself over her shaven head, and she scanned those present with a calculating eye.

"Guests of Honored Treaty City," she called out. "I am Kitsuki Temko, agent of the Shogun. In the name of the Emperor, none of you are to leave this castle, and should any of you desire to leave the confines of these gardens, you shall do so only in the company of my chosen guardsmen. And so it shall remain until the murder of Lord Juro is solved."

## WHAT IS ROKUGAN LIVE-ACTION?

As the name suggests, this is a game set in a fantasy world known as Rokugan, an Empire of heroic samurai, mystical shugenja, and fearsome creatures from the Shadowlands. Though the setting draws heavily from the culture and history of Japan and other Asian nations, it is a unique fantasy world.

*Legend of the Five Rings*™ first appeared in 1995 as a collectible card game. This game introduced a revolutionary idea: a game whose story was influenced by the actions of its players through the results of major tournaments. *Legend of the Five Rings* later expanded into a role-playing game in 1997, the game upon which many of the rules and mechanics of this game are based, though previous knowledge of the game is not necessary to use this book.

Those familiar with the role-playing game may note that the rules here are greatly streamlined. As a live-action game, it is designed to move much more quickly and with less Game Master participation than a tabletop roleplaying game. This is not to say that the rules for Live-Action Role Play (or LARP as it is more commonly referred to) are inferior to its tabletop counterpart — they are merely designed to take the best advantage of the medium at hand. We have taken away the dice, replacing them with a deck of normal playing cards.

Welcome to Rokugan, where honor is a force more powerful than steel.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

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LARP can most closely be compared to a mix between tabletop role-playing and an improvised play, where each player portrays his character. The use of props and costumes is encouraged. As opposed to dealing strictly with Non-Player Characters (NPCs) or working cooperatively in a party, players often have a variety of objectives and there are generally few Game Master-controlled characters. Rokugan Live-Action still has Game Masters (GMs), though their role more closely resembles that of a referee or judge rather than representing all the other assorted characters in the game. LARP has been called is a more intensive role-playing experience, with players leaving character rarely, if at all during a game session.

GMs accustomed to keeping their players on a short leash may have problems running their first LARP session. This is not to say that you cannot achieve storyline agendas or have one-on-one sessions with players. In this environment players should become more responsible for familiarizing themselves with the rules so as to not to cause too heavy a strain on the GM. The main duty of the players is to enter into the persona of the characters they have created and see the world through that character's eyes. As in all role-playing games, there is no defined way to "win" or "lose" a LARP other than the objectives players set for themselves — you get out of it what you put into it.

Imagination plays an important part in LARP. As appropriate settings can be difficult to find, just about any environment can be turned into a suitable space for play. A park that is isolated, someone's home, a college campus, or a church can all provide places for the game provided you manage to secure permission. Make certain LARP area is clearly defined before play begins so players do not wander out of the intended boundaries.

Setting a mood is also important, and can help players feel more in character. One of the easiest ways to make any environment feel more like Rokugan is to remove items of modern design (if possible). An area with sparse furnishing is far less jarring to the mood of the game. Playing background music such as the sound of taiko drumming significantly enhances

the tone of the game. However, keep in mind that loud music, dark rooms, and smoke, while they may set an intriguing mood, can be disruptive and confusing for players.

Costumes, while optional in many LARPs, can also help set a mood and get everyone into character. Costume is probably one of the biggest concerns when playing in a LARP and this book explores costuming in detail. Dressing in a traditional Japanese fashion can be costly and the array of accessories needed makes the prospect daunting to the newcomer. The costuming chapter in this book will walk readers through how to make a basic costume, something workable and attractive for a LARP, without breaking their budget.





## THE MOST IMPORTANT RULES

This book includes a number of rules for creating and playing characters. One should feel free to tinker with and adapt these rules to fit his or her style. However, there are a number of rules that are critical, and should not be altered. These rules are designed to make certain the LARP experience is safe and fun for all parties:

- No alcohol or drugs should be present. These substances not only impair judgment and affect role-playing, but can also make players uncomfortable.
- No weapons should be present. Even the presence of realistic toy weapons cause problems. Players often get carried away with the emotions of their characters, so better that the temptation not be available.
- No touching other players in any way. While a good rule to maintain player etiquette in general, this also fits in well with the flavor of Rokugan, where physical contact is considered rude.
- Respect other players, and remember the boundaries between “in character” behavior and etiquette to your fellow players. Instituting a hand signal to indicate that one is communicating “out of character” is a good way to prevent unfortunate misunderstandings.



CHAPTER ONE:

# HISTORY OF ROKUGAN

## BLOOD AND HONOR PART TWO

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Kanshiro was the first to be taken aside, seated in a small dining chamber while magistrates interviewed him. Kitsuki Temko studied him coldly, walking in slow circles around the young Phoenix. The Kitsuki family was known for its relentless investigators. Once they smelled a mystery, they did not cease their pursuit until the truth had been uprooted. Kanshiro knew that he was guiltless, but even so he could not help but feel self-conscious under Temko's scrutiny, as if she might reveal some clue that suggested he was in fact the killer by some means so devious that he had fooled even himself.

Kanshiro tried not to think about the fact that Temko was a member of the Dragon Clan, and the Dragon were not particularly fond of his own clan, the Phoenix. Surely a Kitsuki magistrate would be honorable enough not to abuse her position for petty politics, and would desire only the truth.

"Confess now, Kanshiro," Temko said as she paced around him. "Do not compound the shame of your actions with falsehood."

"I did not kill Lord Juro," Kanshiro replied, somewhat outraged. His hands rolled into fists at his side. One of Temko's guards rested his hand meaningfully on his katana.

Temko stopped pacing, and turned to look at him again. Though she looked young from a distance, Kanshiro could see that the magistrate's face was a map of fine lines and elegant wrinkles. This was a woman experienced in separating truth from fiction, well versed in seeing into the heart of the matter. She was not afraid of him. "You were the last man to see him," she said. "I already know that you argued with him, that you were angry about his refusal to dispatch aid to your village."

“Why would I kill him?” Kanshiro asked. “What good would that do my village, to murder the only man who could aid us?”

Temko shrugged. “A crime of passion,” she said. “Young men such as yourself are known for brash acts.”

Kanshiro reached for his sword. The guards took a quick step forward, but Temko did not flinch. In fact, she held out one hand, signaling them not to attack. Kanshiro drew the blade from his obi, still sheathed in its saya, and held it out to her with both hands. A thick silken cord bound the sword to the saya, tied in a complex knot.

“On the day I arrived in Honored Treaty City, I prayed to the Fortunes at the temple of Benten,” Kanshiro said. “I vowed to Mio, the master of the Temple, that my sword would not be drawn again lest it be drawn in the name of justice — a vow of peace in hopes that the gods would protect my village while I am gone. Mio tied this peace knot with his own hands as he blessed me. It has not been disturbed since — I could not have used this weapon to kill Lord Juro.”

“I believe you, Kanshiro,” she replied. “I believe that you are not responsible for this crime.”

Kanshiro felt as if a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders. He bowed to Temko from where he sat and tucked the sword back into his obi.

“Though it is not what you say, but the sincerity with which you say it that leads me to believe,” she continued. “After



all, the Phoenix is a clan of scholars. If one such as yourself had a desire to learn the complex peace knots of the Brotherhood, I have no doubt you could do so. Juro was poisoned, struck by a dart coated in a potent variant of Night Milk, not slain with a sword."

"Poison?" Kanshiro replied.

"It was your assumption that Juro was killed with a sword that led me to believe you," Temko went on. "Juro was an old man, but he was yet a warrior, hand-picked by Toturi I to govern this city. Had he been attacked in broad daylight, would he not have cried out? Would he not have defended himself? Is it not likely that you would have been wounded, or at least not exited meekly from his chambers without so much as a drop of blood on your kimono?"

Kanshiro looked slightly embarrassed. "I... suppose it is unlikely, Temko-sama," he said.

"Precisely, Kanshiro-san," Temko replied. "You are no murderer. Such guile is not within you. Further, I suspect you have never even been in combat, not even with the fearsome bandits that menace your home." Kanshiro's face flushed even more deeply. "Yes, I know the danger that faces your village. I knew you quite well before we ever met, Kanshiro-san. Such is the way of the Kitsuki."

"You are right," Kanshiro said. "I reached gempukku only three months ago and have never been in real combat. Though my sensei believes I am an excellent swordsman, my father believes I am not yet ready."

"Making you the perfect choice for a diplomatic mission," Temko said. "Send the most inexperienced warrior on a doomed mission to retrieve help. Thus occupied, he will not trouble the true samurai."

Kanshiro scowled up at Temko. "Watch your tongue, Dragon," he said without thinking. "I am a true samurai of the Phoenix Clan. If you insult my honor again, I will show you."

The guards reached for their swords again, but Temko continued to stare placidly at him. "Excellent," she said.

Kanshiro blinked, confused.

"Other than my personal guards, you are the only man in this castle who I know for certain is innocent," she replied. "However, innocence and integrity are different things. You are outnumbered, inexperienced, you have no idea what I am capable of... yet when I tested you, you were prepared to defend your honor. You are a worthy son of the Phoenix Clan, Shiba Kanshiro. I believe you can aid me in my investigation."

"Aid you?" Kanshiro asked, removing his hand from his sword in numb surprise.

"Whoever murdered the Shogun's karo has covered his tracks well," Temko said. "I am trained to analyze evidence and testimony, but the murderer will know this... and seek to cloud my investigation. You, on the other hand, are nothing." She looked at him with a smile. "No offense intended... but you are a Phoenix in Phoenix lands, a young samurai from a village with no political significance. To the eyes of many here, you are invisible. You can move where I cannot, see what I cannot. You might hear answers I would miss. Invisible, honest, reliable, you are my perfect ally. Will you help me, Kanshiro?"

"Hai," the young Phoenix said without hesitation.

# HISTORY OF ROKUGAN

## WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE (PRE-HISTORY)

Before the genesis of mankind, several civilizations rise and fall including the Five Races (kenku, ningyo, trolls, kitsu, and zokujin), the Naga, the Ogres, and the Nezumi. Each of these civilizations ruled the land that is currently known as the Empire and, for various reasons, faded into memory. Some rare ruins, such as the City of Night, the Naga temples, and the Nezumi cities in the Shadowlands mark the existence of these once-proud civilizations.

## RECORDED HISTORY

### **Fall of the Kami: Established pre-calendar**

After dueling his father for the lives of his siblings, the ten Kami, children of Lord Moon and Lady Sun, tumble to the mortal realm. Hantei, Hida, Doji, Togashi, Akodo, Shiba, Bayushi, and Shinjo gather the orihumans and establish the Empire of Rokugan. Fu Leng is separated from the others and falls to the southwest, where he is lost to the corruptive power of Jigoku. Tenth Kami, Ryoshun, dies before finally reaching the mortal realm.

### **The War Against Fu Leng and creation of the Shadowlands**

The armies of the Lost Brother, Fu Leng, swarm across Rokugan and liquidate everything in their path. The servants of the Hantei fight valiantly, but find that they are losing the War. When all seems lost, a mysterious man named Shinsei arrives and gathers a hero from each clan. Shinsei's conversations with Hantei are recorded as the Tao of Shinsei, which later becomes the foundation of Rokugani philosophy and religion. Shinsei and the Seven Thunders go on to bind the soul of Fu Leng in the Twelve Black Scrolls. This conflict comes to be known as the Day of Thunder. Only Shinsei and Shosuro, the Scorpion Thunder, survive the battle. Both disappear shortly thereafter.

### **Shinjo's Exodus: year 45**

The Kami Shinjo, leader of the Ki-Rin Clan, decides to take her followers and explore the world.

### **The Phoenix Clan find Uikku, the Serene Prophet: circa year 72**

The Phoenix discover Uikku, a young child cursed with the gift of prophecy. His ravings are alternately inspiring or baffling, but many of them involve the future or interpretations of the Tao. The Phoenix transcribe

all of his pronouncements, which come true with chilling frequency.

**Mantis Clan Founded: circa year 80**

Osano-Wo acknowledges his illegitimate son Kenzan as ruler of the Crab rather than the legitimate Kaimetsu-uo. Kaimetsu-Uo leaves Crab lands find his own destiny across the Rokugani seas, on the islands he names the Isles of Spice and Silk. His followers call themselves the Mantis, though they are not acknowledged as a clan until much later.

**Disappearance of Bayushi: year 83**

The First Scorpion is said to have left behind his mask and sword for his son, with the note "I have lost her forever."

**Death of Akodo: circa year 99**

While surveying the construction of the Hall of Ancestors and the Ikoma Libraries, Akodo One-Eye is confronted by an army of Tsuno (though he does not recognize them as such). Akodo stands against the horde with one hundred men, and meets his enemy in the Seikitsu Pass. When the battle seems lost, Akodo's mighty roar collapses the pass, bringing down a mountain upon him and the enemy.



**Kuni Nakanu notices Taint on corpses: circa year 100**

The first signs of the Shadowlands Taint, and its effects, are studied by the Crab Clan as early as the first century after the Empire's founding. Nakanu dies shortly thereafter when he is overwhelmed by zombies during an ill-advised experiment.

**Reported Death of Togashi: year 101**

When Doji travels to the land of the Dragon clan to visit with her brother, Togashi, she is turned away. This was the first news of the death of the Dragon Kami.

**Disappearance of Doji: year 102**

Lady Doji imparts her final wisdom to her son Nio and walks into the tide, never to be seen again.

**Emerald Magistrates and Emerald Legions founded: year 153**

Experienced military officer Doji Hatsu and skilled courtier Soshi Saibankan draft methods by which quality soldiers could be conscripted and magistrates could enforce the law of the Empire. Hatsu and Saibankan devise the framework for the Imperial Legions and the Emerald Magistrates, respectively. The new system guarantees that the Emperor's conscripts and magistrates will work closely, with powers that complement one another.

**Disappearance of the Kami Hida: year 210 (traditional date)**

In the year 210, the aged Kami of the Crab takes up his tetsubo, announces he intends to seek out his lost son, and departs into the Shadowlands. He is never seen again.

**Yasuki Tanaka Invents the koku: year 243**

The system of exchanging valuable items for goods or services existed prior to 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. Tanaka's coins 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.

**Beginning of Nezumi-Crab Alliance: year 314**

Twelve year old Hiruma Kazuma forges the bonds of trust between man and Nezumi, drawing upon their resources to save the besieged Hiruma Castle. The Crab continue to show greater understanding and friendship toward the Nezumi than any other single clan at present.

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

The great Crab — Crane war was the first large-scale internal war in Rokugan. Caused by the Crab seizing territory along the Crane's southern borders (presumably to feed the Crab's beleaguered troops after a number of major battles against the Shadowlands), and the split of the Yasuki family from Crane to Crab, the war lasts for over a decade.

**Rulership of the Gozoku: years 391–435**

After the kidnapping of Hantei Fujiwa's heir, the Hantei Emperor has little choice but to concede to the demands of the Gozoku Alliance, a conspiracy between the Crane, Scorpion, and Phoenix Clans to undermine the Emperor's rule. Fujiwa falls ill and dies shortly after capitulating to the Gozoku, leaving his aged uncle, Otomo Tohojatsu, as regent until Hantei Kusada can claim the throne. Tohojatsu falls in with the Gozoku, as he had always coveted his nephew's power and the Gozoku helps him secure his clan. Hantei Kusada (Hantei VI) seems destined to serve as nothing more than a figurehead — by the time he is of age to take the throne, Otomo Tohojatsu's concessions to the Gozoku had rendered them completely in control. The Gozoku are interested in establishing the independence of the clans, with the Hantei Emperor to serve as a "face" for their rule. The Gozoku's rule is a prosperous time. They encourage a detailed system of roadways and new ways of conducting trade and travel so that the clans can be independent but still in close contact. Art and culture flourish. Unfortunately, crime and corruption increase dramatically as it becomes clear that even the Great Clans have little respect for the Emperor's law.

**End of the Crab-Crane War and Sparrow Clan founded: year 400**

The Empire's first civil war results in an Imperial Edict banning large-scale open warfare among the Great Clans. Since that time, only small battles are permitted, and only with the Emperor's consent. During an earlier failed negotiation for peace, Crane official Doji Onegano is ousted from the Crane Clan. The Emperor grants Onegano lands stripped from the Crab and Crane for his use. The lands are harsh, unforgiving, and largely worthless. Onegano retires to a monastery but his son, Suzume, remains to found the Sparrow Clan.

**Snake Clan corrupted: year 401**

Chuda Tamihei, great-grandson of Isawa Chuda, succumbs to the temptation of a spirit and unleashes a dreaded Shuten Doji in the lands of the Snake. The spirit begins extending its influence throughout the tiny clan, completely assuming control in a matter of a month. In an event that comes to be known as the Five Nights of Shame, the Phoenix clan are forced to exterminate all Snake Clan members possessed by the spirit. A handful of Chuda family members not home at the time survive, and quickly go into hiding.

**Coronation of Hantei Yugo-zohime: year 435**

When Hantei Kusada dies of old age, his heir is brought from Phoenix lands to assume the throne (and maintain the Gozoku stranglehold on the power of the Empire). However, Kusada's forgotten daughter Yugo-zohime challenges her brother to a duel for the throne, and defeats him. With the support of the Lion and Dragon behind a confident and powerful Hantei Emperor, the strength of the Gozoku is shattered.

Yugo-zohime (Hantei VII) enacts great changes to the Empire's government, granting many powers of the Imperial Court (that the



Gozoku used to their advantage) to the Otomo family, effectively splitting the court's influence and preventing further attempts to undermine the Emperor's power.

**Gaijin Ambassadors Arrive at Imperial Court: circa year 440**

At the behest of the Mantis, a small group of gaijin explorers are allowed admission to the Imperial Court while their fleet docks in Golden Sun Bay. The Emperor opens limited trade and exchange of ideas with the foreign visitors. The gaijin are allowed two years to prove their honor and their respect for the Empire.

**Battle of White Stag/Raging Seas: circa year 442**

The gaijin are commanded to leave Ootosan Uchi, and retaliate with violence. In the ensuing battle, Hantei Yugo-zohime is slain. The united clans band together to slaughter the gaijin, driving the shattered remnants of their fleet to sea, where many of their number are consumed in a mysterious storm. Yugo-zohime's uncle Hantei Muhaki assumes the throne.

**Battle of Stolen Graves: year 510**

Soshi Takasho and Akodo Minobe discover the secret cult of the blood sorcerer Iuchiban, who plans to animate the bodies of the Imperial crypts and attack the Emperor. Rousing the armies of the clans, Iuchiban is defeated. It is soon discovered that Iuchiban cannot be killed, thus he is imprisoned within a labyrinthine tomb. The architect, Kaiu Gineza, is killed by Scorpion assassins so the secrets of the tomb will remain safe. The Emperor issues a formal edict that all corpses of the dead will henceforth be cremated, to prevent such an army from rising again.

**Reign of the Steel Chrysanthemum: from 589–597**

Hantei XVI takes the throne when his father retires early at his son's behest. Hantei XV believes his son will usher in a new age of prosperity. Hantei XVI proves to be a different sort of ruler, however. Paranoid since birth, the Steel Chrysanthemum's rule slowly becomes a merciless dictatorship. Hantei XVI mercilessly crushes any threat to his power, real or imagined. Thousands die in the throes of his cruel reign. Those who follow the Steel Chrysanthemum into death when he is finally deposed are said to be cursed to follow him forever.

**Seppun Hanako writes the Articles of Heaven: year 622**

Having endured the brutal reign of Hantei XVI during her youth, Hanako eagerly assists the young and inexperienced Hantei XVII in his rule of the Empire. In an attempt to curb the baser tendencies of Rokugani society, she pens the *Articles of Heaven*, a set of legal reforms that touches on virtually all parts of the Empire's legal system.

**The Battle of Sleeping River: year 750**

Two hundred years after his first defeat, the dreaded sorcerer Iuchiban rises once more to threaten the Empire. Armed with the secret of moving his spirit from body to body, Iuchiban spends these two centuries procreating a massive cult throughout Rokugan. The Bloodspeakers, his

loyal followers, amass an army of corpses on the plain beside Sleeping River. An ise zumi discovers Iuchiban's spirit and alerts the clans to his treachery. After driving Iuchiban's forces from Ryoko Owari, the united clans converge upon the plains of Sleeping River and destroy the sorcerer's army. The ise zumi who first discovered Iuchiban captures and holds his spirit until he can be re-imprisoned within his tomb.

### **The Unicorn Clan returns to Rokugan: year 815**

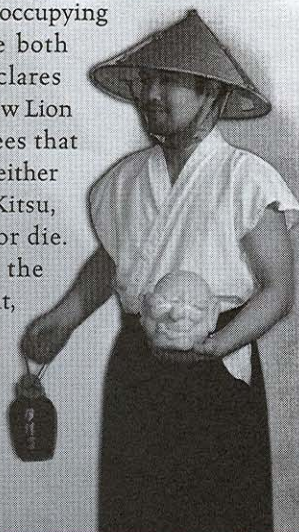
After eight centuries of wandering, the clan once known as the Ki-Rin return to the Emerald Empire. Pursued by the Shadowlands Horde, the Unicorn know they cannot afford to take time to peacefully explain their approach to the Crab. Instead, the Unicorn smash through the Crab fortifications and speed into Rokugan. The Unicorn emissaries prove they are the returned Ki-Rin by returning a fan given to Shinjo by Lady Doji centuries ago. The Emperor decrees that the Ki-Rin have come home and restores their lands.

### **The Scorpion Clan Coup: year 1123**

The Scorpion Champion Bayushi Shoji discovers an ancient prophecy that indicates that the Emperor will become possessed by Fu Leng. Shoji launches a devious plan to prevent the prophecy by ending the Hantei line. He secretly places his army throughout Otsan Uchi and cuts his close friend Hantei XXXVIII down in cold blood just as his troops take over the capital. Realizing Akodo Toturi is the only tactical mind capable of undermining his well-laid plans, Shoji arranges for Toturi's assassination. Unfortunately for Shoji, Toturi's geisha assassin cannot bring herself to kill Toturi and simply drugs him so that he will be unable to stop Shoji's attack.

Shoji declares himself Emperor, defending the city despite an attack by the combined Great Clans. Only when Toturi returns are the clans able to pierce the city's defenses, and the Lion slays Shoji in a duel. Believing the Hantei line to have been exterminated, Toturi declares himself the Emperor of Rokugan.

The Hantei's son, smuggled to safety by the Phoenix during the Coup, returns to find Toturi occupying his throne. Consumed with rage, he both dissolves the Scorpion Clan and declares Akodo Toturi a dishonored ronin. The new Lion Champion Matsu Tsuko quickly decrees that anyone bearing the Akodo name must either swear fealty to the Matsu, Ikoma, or Kitsu, join the Deathseekers, live as ronin, or die. The renowned sensei Akodo Kage is the exception to this edict. As an afterthought, Hantei XXXIX takes Bayushi Kachiko as his bride to end the traitorous Bayushi line forever.



**Yogo Junzo opens the first Black Scroll: year 1123**

In anguish over the destruction of his clan, Yogo Junzo opens the first of the twelve Black Scrolls. The scroll creates a deadly Wasting Disease that subsumes Rokugan, bringing misery and death to all who contract it. The spell also transforms Junzo, transforming him into Fu Leng's loyal servant. Junzo begins seeking out the other Black Scrolls in his new master's name.

**The Naga awaken: year 1124**

Although scouts have been active for nearly two centuries, it is not until recently that the Naga awaken in significant numbers. It is a slow process at present, and one that will require time to complete, but at last the serpent folk begin to stir from their sleep of ages.

**The Clan War: years 1125–1128**

When Hantei XXXIX falls victim to a mysterious illness without leaving an heir, the clans vie among themselves to determine a successor. In truth, Empress Kachiko has been slowly poisoning the Emperor. The ronin



Toturi returns from underground, gathering an army of ronin to deal with the growing threat of Yogo Junzo's army. As the Empire spirals into chaos, it is understood that Fu Leng has possessed the body of the last Hantei, and with the unfurling of each Black Scroll, his hold on the young Emperor grows stronger. The descendant of Shinsei returns to unite the descendants of the Seven Thunders and face Fu Leng. In final battle with the possessed Emperor, Toturi and Crane Champion Doji Hoturi strike down the Ninth Kami. Hoturi dies of his wounds shortly thereafter.

**Coronation of Toturi I: year 1129**

Toturi is crowned the new Emperor of Rokugan. The conversations between Toturi and Shinsei's descendant over the winter are transcribed and compiled by Isawa Osugi, and collected as the New Tao. To symbolize the Empire's dedication and survival against the Dark Lord, a new throne of jade is crafted for Toturi I, and Rokugan becomes known as "The Jade Empire."

**War Against the Darkness: year 1130–1133**

What begins as the Emperor's kidnapping is soon realized for the danger it truly is — the Lying Darkness, an incomprehensible force dedicated to the unmaking of all that exists has set itself against the Empire. Its minions, men and women who have lost their identity to the power of Nothing, go about impersonating important individuals and sowing discord in Rokugan. The Lying Darkness sets about destroying histories, genealogical records, and other reminders of Rokugan's past. This crisis culminates in the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, where the Darkness allies with the Shadowlands to destroy Rokugan's blessed ancestors. Only an alliance between the Great Clans and the returned spirits of Rokugan's greatest heroes finally defeats the Darkness.

**The War of Spirits begins: year 1138**

After years of preparation and monitoring the political climate of Rokugan, the returned spirit of the Steel Chrysanthemum, Hantei XVI, demands that the Jade Throne be ceded to him. Toturi refuses, stating that the Hantei dynasty is dead, and the blessing of the Heavens are upon him. With the power of most of the reborn spirits and the assistance of the spirit of Hida Tsuneo, Hantei XVI declares war upon the Empire to claim the throne for himself. Thus begins a long, slow war of attrition between the armies of the living and the dead.

**Birth of Toturi Naseru: year 1139–1150**

Having secretly returned through Oblivion's Gate, Hantei XVI unleashes his plans to retake his Empire. Having worked for years in secret, turning the returned spirits stranded in the mortal realm against their mortal descendants, he unites an army of spirits against Toturi I. Many of the Great Clans, including the Scorpion, Phoenix, and Dragon, are uncertain of their loyalties during this troubling war. In the end, Toturi's allies unite behind him and defeat the Steel Chrysanthemum, who peacefully surrenders and is placed under house arrest.

### **The Four Winds Saga: 1158–1160**

When Toturi is slain during a visit to Scorpion lands, his wife Kaede takes possession of the throne. When she disappears mysteriously, Rokugan is left in doubt concerning the true heir. Toturi's four children, also called the Four Winds, vie with one another for control of Rokugan. During the chaos, a new Dark Lord, Daigotsu, destroys Otosan Uchi and releases the spirit of Fu Leng into the Celestial Heavens. The Four Winds unite against Daigotsu, seeking to destroy Fu Leng's power base, but they do so only at great cost. Toturi Tsudao, seen by many to be the most worthy successor to her father's throne, give her life protecting her brothers from Daigotsu's final onslaught.

### **Coronation of Toturi III: 1160**

Toturi's youngest son, Naseru, is selected as the new Emperor. One of his first acts is to posthumously recognize his sister Tsudao's brief, self-declared title of Empress. He thus names himself Toturi III, the Righteous Emperor.

### **The Rain of Blood: 1165**

Iuchiban escapes his tomb for a second time. Shortly after his escape he enacts a horrifying ritual, bathing the Empire in a blood shower. All those exposed to the rain are faced with the darkest secrets within their souls. Those overburdened with desire, or regret immediately gain the Shadowlands Taint, and most become willing servants of the Bloodspeaker. Thousands are lost to the Rain, and the Empire is left reeling in the face of Iuchiban's new army.

## THE CELESTIAL ORDER

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The structure the universe according to the Rokugani belief system is known as the Celestial Order, the perfect pattern to which all living things are meant to adhere. This Order strictly defines who has authority over whom, from the humblest peasant to the heavenly Fortunes and Dragons. The samurai culture of Rokugan reflects the upper tiers of the Celestial Order, with the samurai caste holding the highest position of social authority in the mortal realm. The Emperor is the master of all samurai, situated between mortals and the higher realms. Thus, the Emperor is often looked upon as a living god. All who dwell in the Empire are expected to kneel before his wisdom, without exception. The Emperor has no peers among mortals, though he may seek advice if he so chooses, and only the Heavens may command him directly. All land belongs to the Emperor, though he allows other samurai to tend his lands and reap their bounty in exchange for their fealty and taxation on their lands.

## THE EMPEROR'S ADVISORS

Though all samurai serve the Emperor, he is directly attended by a handful of advisors: the Emerald Champion, the Jade Champion, the Imperial Advisor, the Imperial Herald, the Imperial Chancellor, the Voice of the Emperor, and the Shogun.

The Emerald Champion is considered the Emperor's personal bodyguard, though in reality the Emerald Champion's duties frequently require him to be away from the Emperor's side. The Emerald Champion leads the Emerald Magistrates, Rokugan's foremost law enforcement organization. In the absence of the Emperor or Chancellor, the Emerald Champion's word is final on all matters concerning Imperial law.

The Jade Champion and his Jade Magistrates serve a similar function for the Emerald Champion. The Jade Champion is technically the Emperor's spiritual guide and protector. Though the Emerald Magistrates enforce all manner of laws, matters of maho (black magic) and other misuse of magic fall directly into the purview of the Jade Magistrates. Though his post does not carry the same prestige as the Emerald Champion, few are foolish enough to defy the Jade Champion.

The Imperial Advisor is an informal position, though one has always existed according to recorded history. The Advisor is, as his title suggests, an advisor though frequently his duties amount to finding other experts and scholars who can offer the Emperor qualified information on a range of

subjects. This individual usually holds no other office so that he has no political entanglements and thus can offer the Emperor free and unbiased advice. The title is usually for life, though the Emperor can dismiss his Advisor and select a new one will.

The Imperial Herald is usually the daimyo of the Miya family, and is thus in charge of the Emperor's messengers, also known as the shisha. The Herald's duty is to greet and organize all guests in the Imperial presence, as well as deliver the Emperor's edicts. Extremely important messages from the Emperor will also be delivered by the Imperial Herald, an honor surpassed only by a visit from the Emperor himself.

The Imperial Chancellor serves as the Emperor's personal ambassador, representing his interests when the Emperor cannot make a personal appearance. The Chancellor has some degree of freedom to issue lesser edicts in the Emperor's absence (though the Emperor can veto them later), granting him extraordinary power.

The Voice of the Emperor is a new title, created by the new Emperor, Toturi III. The Voice is the Emperor's personal diplomat, acting on his behalf to quickly rouse disputes on the Emperor's behalf. The Voice is intended to be granted only to powerful shugenja of the Phoenix, so that they might use their magic to swiftly locate the source of a problem.

The Shogun is also a newly created office. With the recent struggles between the Great Clans, it has become clear that there is a great need for an army that is prepared at all times to seek out threats to the Empire and crush them. Though the Emperor may call upon the Lion Clan, his Right Hand, it is never a guarantee that the Lion will not already be involved in such a conflict. The Emperor also commands the Imperial Legions and the Seppun guards, but their first duty is to protect the Imperial City and the Emperor, making it difficult for him to commit a large force elsewhere. The Shogun commands a roving army of samurai dedicated to one ideal above all others — to crush those that would upset the harmony of Rokugan. When the Emerald Champion fails to maintain order and the Voice fails to maintain peace, the Shogun is ready to mete out punishment to the Emperor's enemies. Those that serve in the Shogun's Army may be called upon to combat their own clanmates one day, and all have taken an oath to never waver in their loyalty to the Shogun should such a day come.

## THE EMPEROR AND HIS ADVISORS

The following characters make up the Emperor's staff in the current timeline of Legend of the Five Rings

- Emperor – Toturi III
- Emerald Champion – Yasuki Hachi
- Jade Champion – Asahina Sekawa
- Imperial Advisor – Doji Tanitsu
- Imperial Herald – Miya Shoin
- Imperial Chancellor – Bayushi Kaukatsu
- Voice of the Emperor – Isawa Sezaru
- Shogun – Kaneka

## RULERS OF THE CLANS

The Daimyo of the Great Clans, also frequently called Champions, rule the eight Great Clans in the Emperor's stead. Most of these individuals are also family daimyo as well, and have a number of responsibilities within their clan. Great Clan Daimyo rarely have time to visit the Emperor, though most make time to attend him (or send a suitably impressive representative) at the annual Winter Court.

The daimyo of the major families serve the Clan Champions. They are responsible for maintaining the day to day affairs of their family and ensuring the family is prepared to fulfill any duty the Clan Champion sets before them. Each family has a carefully defined role in the overall function of the clan. In the Lion Clan, the Ikoma serve as the clan's courtiers, the Matsu are the Lion's rank and file soldiers, the Akodo produce elite warriors and tacticians, and the Kitsu serve as shugenja and spiritual advisors. When these families act in concert, there is little that can stop the will of a Great Clan except another Great Clan. Though these families serve a common desire to further their clan's goals, members of the family tend to vie with one another to prove themselves the most valuable asset to their family daimyo and Clan Champion.

Besides the daimyo of the great houses, each clan holds lords responsible for small offshoots from the main family tree. These provincial daimyo maintain patches of land in the clan's provinces and report to their family daimyo on a regular basis. This is the lowest level of the kuge samurai caste — samurai born to positions of influence and command. It is these daimyo who deal with samurai who own nothing significant

(a castle  
or land)





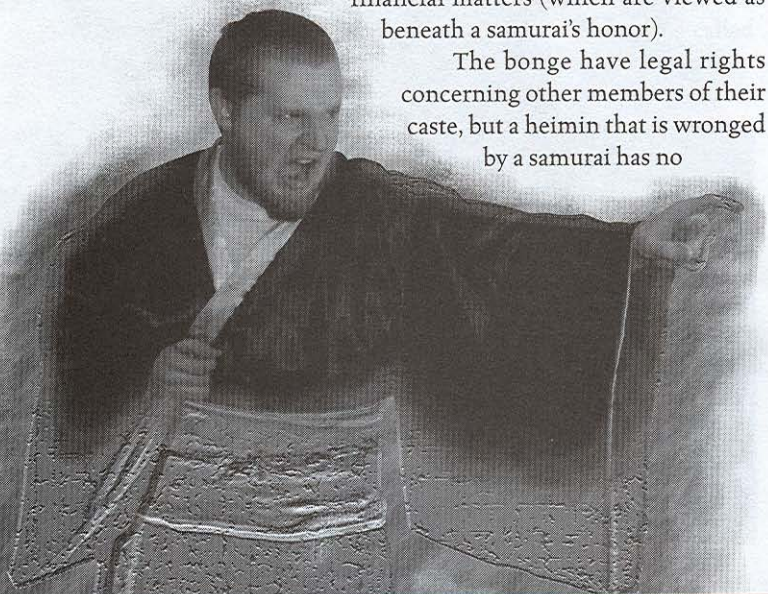
of their own. Samurai who command no land or title are referred to as buke, but may one day ascend to the higher station if they prove themselves worthy. Even samurai who report to minor daimyo tend to have a handful of other, less important samurai under their command.

Finally, outside of the clans, there are ronin. These masterless samurai owe their allegiance to no lord, and while they technically have samurai status, have little means by which to enforce this status other than personal strength of arms. They have little chance of advancement, as most ronin are in this predicament due to dishonor or disgrace and thus new lords are reluctant to tolerate their presence. Ronin tend to be universally shunned by other samurai because of what they represent — a lack of duty, and often a lack of honor.

Beneath the samurai caste is the clergy, comprised of monks. Though shugenja are priests, they are also samurai and thus of higher rank than most clergy. The Brotherhood of Shinsei, the largest organization of monks, do not seek glory or honor. They command no political authority, but are universally revered and respected. They are the keepers of wisdom and enlightenment, thus even the most boastful samurai tends to give them leeway. This is not considered dishonorable for the samurai since it is the duty of monks to provide others with guidance and understanding.

Beneath the clergy caste resides the bonge. The bonge are also referred to as *heimin* (or “half-people”) and are comprised of peasants, merchants, and craftsmen of no noble status. Among the bonge, the farmer is considered of the greatest importance, as farmers personally tend to the lands and provide crops to feed the Empire. Peasant villages are organized by a village headman — the latest in a line of farmers to hold the position. Beneath the farmers is the artisan, who brings works of art into the world. Finally, the merchant is considered the least worthy of the *heimin*, because he creates nothing and serves no purpose but to crudely handle money. Though some samurai may refer to themselves as merchants, in fact these samurai are patrons of peasant merchants and generally avoid dealing directly in financial matters (which are viewed as beneath a samurai’s honor).

The bonge have legal rights concerning other members of their caste, but a *heimin* that is wronged by a samurai has no



recourse. A samurai who feels he is wronged by a heimin does not need to bother with any sort of legal trial and may execute the peasant. However, most samurai are exceedingly cautious with such behavior. After all, even peasants serve a higher power, and should a powerful daimyo become offended because his swordsmith was unjustly slain, it is the samurai who killed the peasant who will ultimately pay the price.

The lowest position of mortals in the Order is that of the *eta* (the “non-people”). These peasants engage in activities that mark them as “unclean.” This includes any person whose work involves contact with blood or flesh. This includes criminals, entertainers, and assorted seedy personalities. Eta may not look at or speak to samurai unless they are spoken to, and are usually deferential even to heimin. Eta are not technically considered human, so even the heimin may abuse them with little fear of reprisal. Killing an eta is not considered criminal, since they barely exist in the Order. For all their lack of rights, rampant murder of eta is extremely uncommon. Eta perform a necessary role, and without them the samurai would be cremating their own corpses and disposing of their own garbage. In addition, clever eta often ingratiate themselves to powerful samurai, thus protecting themselves from the wrath of lesser samurai. (Geisha are particularly adept at this.)

## ROKUGAN CULTURE AND ETIQUETTE

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Rokugan is a nation defined by tradition. What is accepted as proper is similar to that which was practiced centuries ago. Such rules of behavior are not cast aside without consequences — even the most thick-headed Crab is mindful of keeping face and remaining respectful toward superiors. While most interactions maintain protocol, for the sake of brevity only the most important customs and rules of etiquette are covered here.

Rokugan citizens define themselves by one thing that sets them apart from “barbarians” and animals — manners. Even the most ruthless Scorpion samurai knows better than to behave like a rude child in mixed company. Even if there are none present with suitable rank to admonish the Scorpion for his behavior, you can be assured that someone up the chain of command will hear about it and rectify the situation. The Empire simply will not tolerate those who do not take the time to act civilized, and punishments can range from simple public humiliation to the dishonorable execution of the offender, stripping noble status and name from his immediate family.

Those who feel the need to be offensive are allowed to do so in accepted ways - cunning insults are a favorite in noble court, and those who cannot respond in kind or at least handle the situation honorably, stand to lose tarnish their reputation. Enemy commanders meeting in the field should never show disrespect with childish taunts. Accepted forms of boasting

about one's lineage and accomplishments, or recounting the misdeeds of an opponent are a more acceptable (and common) precursor to a battle. If there is a situation where one can be seen doing something (and the ancestors, spirits, and Fortunes are always watching), you can be sure there is protocol for doing so politely.

The thing to keep in mind is that Rokugani value those who can maintain a calm demeanor over those who bluster with curses and boasts. Many situations can be made far more interesting when a character is forced to keep his cool while his enemies sit merely two feet away, taking tea at the same table, protected by the rules of protocol and honor. This goes back to the matter of honor and duty, as there will be times that the edicts of civility will overrule the character doing something that he'd much rather do.


## ON (FACE)

Despite the importance of truth in both Rokugan's texts and laws, the Empire has customarily been more concerned with appearance than fact. Those who present themselves with confidence are admired over those who speak the truth poorly in court. A character's *on* (which loosely translates to "face" or "respectability") is a measure of a character's reputation, and ability to control one's emotions in public. This is something a little different than honor or glory, though a samurai who fails to keep face might be judged as dishonorable and as such limit his political mobility.

A large part of *on* deals with restraining outbursts of emotion. All displays of emotion are subtle. While a samurai may smile in public, he will not show his teeth or laugh out loud. Physical contact is also to be avoided, as it is an open display of a close emotional tie with someone. Of course the requirements are different from place to place. The Mantis and Unicorn, for example, are gregarious people who are forgiving of emotional outbursts. Samurai of the Crab Clan see rage as a useful tool, in limited situations. The Crane and Phoenix, at the other extreme, shun all unseemly outbursts.

Generally the reaction to such displays is to ignore them. A samurai who flies into a tantrum in court will find his fellows quietly turning their backs upon him, continuing on as if he were invisible. This is, in fact, a courtesy, allowing the offender a final chance to regain his composure. If the samurai continues his unacceptable behavior, one of his superiors will admonish him. This is an embarrassing situation for both the samurai and his superior, as it suggests that the offending samurai was so poorly trained his superior had to interrupt his duties to issue a command the offender should have had the common sense to follow all along.

At times, loss of face is acceptable. A samurai who has lost a loved one (or his lord) may allow himself a shameful display, sobbing and tearing his clothes in grief. This is the most sincere show of loyalty a samurai can give, demonstrating that the samurai does not care how he is judged, only that his love and sadness be known. In such a circumstance, other samurai will politely leave the samurai in question with his sorrow. Likewise, limited physical contact is acceptable toward a samurai's close friends, spouse, or children. Again, this is a sincere demonstration that the person performing



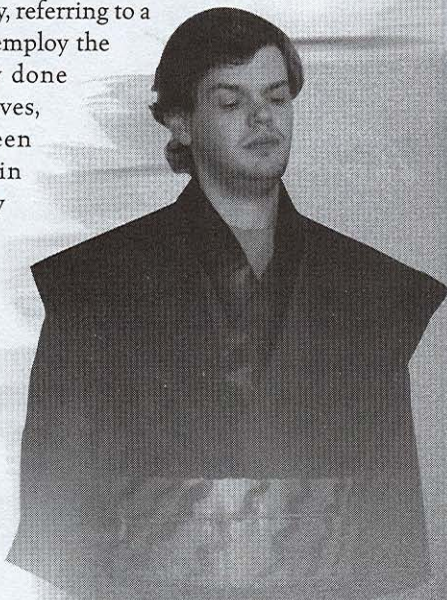
it values the other person so greatly that his own face is not a consideration — an impressive act to say the least. To be touched by the Emperor is an incredible, if rare, honor.

## TERMS OF ADDRESS

How a samurai addresses others is can be either a means of showing respect or offering enormous insult. Samurai of different clans would be expected to address one another by clan name unless it was obvious from their clothing to which family they belonged. For example, calling another samurai “Dragon” when his kimono very clearly bears the mon of the Kitsuki family would be an insult, implying that his family was beneath notice (if one simply does not recognize the family mon it is polite, if somewhat embarrassing, to ask). Using a samurai’s given name rather than his family name implies familiarity, which may or may not be appropriate depending on circumstances. Two samurai of differing clans who refer to each other by their personal names in public are friends, close associates, or related to one another.

When addressing another, it is traditional to add a suffix to their name in order to reflect their relative rank. If one is speaking to a friend or another of equal rank, then *-san* should be added to the end of their name. For example, a Lion magistrate working with a Phoenix might refer to him as "Shiba-san." To a superior, the *-sama* suffix should always be added. It is a symbol of respect, and to refer to a superior as *-san* suggests a familiarity the other samurai might find shameful. Referring to an equal with the *-sama* suffix is a great compliment, though it should also be used with care as it might embarrass the subject. Between members of the opposite sex who are closely involved or related, there are different suffixes to use. Referring to a woman who is a loved one should involve the use of the *-chan* suffix. Conversely, referring to a male who is a loved one should employ the *-kun* suffix. This is commonly done between siblings or other relatives, spouses, or close bonds between friends. Using these suffixes in public may be seen as an unseemly display of familiarity.

One other consideration as a term of address is the prefix *O-* being added to another's name. This means "great one" and is a show of enormous respect and admiration to the individual being so addressed. Typically, this prefix can only be bestowed by one's daimyo after a demonstration of exceptional service and loyalty.



## FOREIGNERS

Visitors to Rokugan are rare. The Rokugani value their traditions highly, meaning that outsiders who do not comprehend their ways will be treated as inferiors. Even those who prove themselves will still find their standing in society never quite reaches that of a native, though the Unicorn and Mantis are somewhat more hospitable toward outsiders. Nonhumans are also viewed with distrust and suspicion, as they are not part of the Celestial Order as the Rokugani view it. Even the Naga, who have proven themselves the Empire's allies time and time again, are greeted with reluctant respect. Some clans make exceptions, such as the Crab Clan's alliance with the Nezumi and the Scorpion Clan's secret friendship with the Ashalan. For the most part, however, anything that is not a part of Rokugani culture and tradition is considered suspicious.

## GIFT-GIVING

When meeting a host or superior for the first time, it is customary to offer a gift. Gifts are also given to demonstrate favor to another or to reward loyalty. Monetary value of a gift is unimportant to a samurai, as all his needs are provided by his lord. Rather, the more personal and sentimental the gift, the more valuable it is. A samurai who gives another samurai a gift clearly purchased from the market is showing his disfavor, but the same samurai awarding his comrade with a well-worn obi once worn by his own father would be showing extraordinary favor.

The gift of a weapon or armor to another can actually be taken as an insult, implying as it does that the recipient either requires protection or that their lord is unable to meet their needs accordingly. A katana is invariably an insult, unless it is given by the samurai's lord or a close relative.

When accepting a gift, it is customary to politely refuse the gift twice before acquiescing. This allows the person presenting the gift to demonstrate their sincerity by continuing to offer it. This has become a popular courtly game, as the gift-giver and recipient match wits in an attempt to provide increasingly clever reasons to accept or deny the gift.

## LEARNING

There are two distinct methods to learn a trade in Rokugan. The first and most common among samurai is the use of the school or dojo. When a samurai reaches a suitable age, normally around seven years old, they are sent to a school that will teach them the skills they will require. The vast majority attend bushi schools, where they gain the martial training. A small number go elsewhere, to various clan-specific schools for courtiers, yojimbo, or even merchant patrons. Finally, a handful are blessed with the ability to speak to the kami, and undergo the rigorous training that will allow them to serve their clan as shugenja. Whatever the training, these schools usually teach their students for at least six years, sometimes as many as nine before granting them their gempukku, or coming of age ceremony.

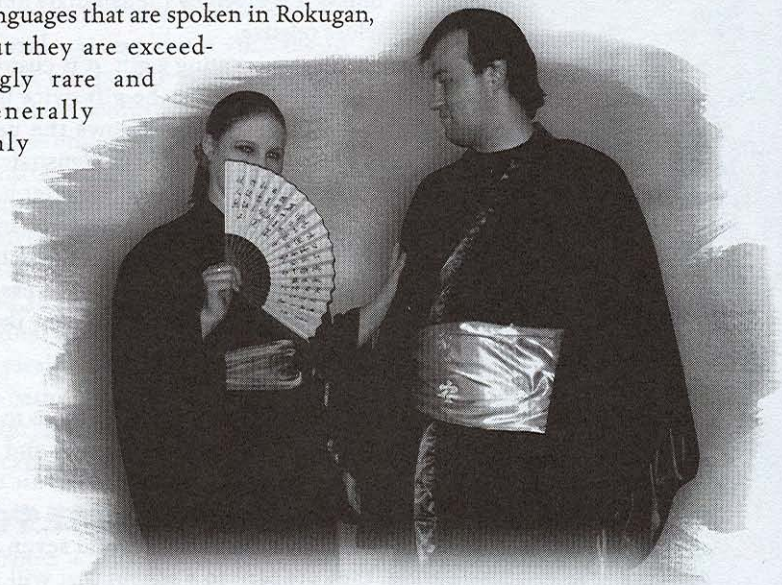
A samurai taught in a dojo continues his education throughout his lifetime, even though he may leave the school for extended periods of time. Students who return to their sensei and demonstrate a certain level of skill are ready to advance. Such students are taught more intricate and complicated secrets of the school's style. Understandably, the sensei of a

clan's schools are highly respected individuals who may have hundreds of different students serving the clan in various positions.

The other primary system of instruction, less common among samurai but used almost exclusively by the heimin and hinin classes, is that of the master and apprentice. Samurai craftsmen and artisans use this system to pass on what they have learned, choosing suitable apprentices to study with them for years and master the techniques they have spent their lives developing. Among the lower classes, various types of craftsmen including smiths, carpenters, and stonemasons employ similar methods to ensure that their talents do not die with them, but that their village will continue to have such skills at its disposal.

## LANGUAGES

It is unlikely that one will encounter any language other than the native tongue in Rokugan. There are other languages that are spoken in Rokugan, but they are exceedingly rare and generally only



spoken in specific locations or circumstances. In Rokugan there are no secret spoken languages. Each clan has its own code that is used in the encryption of spell scrolls and other important documents, but this cipher is written, not spoken. There has never been sufficient demand among the people of Rokugan to develop secret spoken languages.

High Rokugani is not a true language but a particular dialect of Rokugani that is used in court and legal proceedings. It is virtually identical to the common tongue except for its reliance upon flowery addresses and overemphasized pronunciation. This dialect is used at the Emperor's court, and is spoken by most samurai. Using the common tongue in the Emperor's presence is a great dishonor unless the Emperor requests otherwise.

## COIN AND COMMERCE

The economy of Rokugan is a confusing, constantly evolving entity. The monetary unit upon which the country's economy is based, the koku, is in turn based upon bushels of rice. Therefore, the value of a single koku can fluctuate wildly from year to year. If the harvest is bountiful, a single koku might be worth relatively little due to the influx of money in the market. During sparse years, however, a single koku can purchase a great deal.

## TIME IN ROKUGAN

It is said that time began when Lady Sun and Lord Moon brought about the Ten Kami. The first recorded event in the history of the Empire is the fall of the Kami from the Heavens, shortly after which they began to build Rokugan. The Tribe of Isawa are said to have developed the first method for recording time, though at one point or another all the clans have made their own reckoning of time. For the purpose of simplicity, the method of the Phoenix is most commonly used, for it agrees easily with Imperial texts, as well as being the easiest to understand.

The Rokugani day is divided into twelve hours. These hours take up the same amount of time as two hours of our traditional time. Each of these hours has a common name used by the peasantry, and a formal name that is invoked during matters of ceremony and formal occasion. Nobles generally use the formal name of the hours as a matter of habit.

Hour	Common	Formal
6-8 AM	Hare	Sun
8-10 AM	Dragon	Moon
10 AM-Noon	Serpent	Hantei
Noon-2 PM	Horse	Akodo
2-4 PM	Goat	Doji
4-6 PM	Monkey	Shiba
6-8 PM	Rooster	Bayushi
8-10 PM	Dog	Shinjo
10 PM-Midnight	Boar	Hida
Midnight-2 AM	Rat	Togashi
2-4 AM	Ox	Fu Leng
4-6 AM	Tiger	Ryoshun

The hour of the Hare is generally when most villages, houses, and castles perform their morning tasks. Samurai awaken and perform their morning kata directly, farmers begin the tasks of the day before breakfast, and the night watch is sent off duty.

The year is divided into twelve months, just as the days fall into twelve hours. Unlike Rokugani hours, their months match up much more with our own. A Rokugani month is 28 days, and is regarded by a more common name and a formal name. The year begins with the month of the Sun, commonly referred to as the month of the Hare, which matches up with April in the spring.



Season	Common	Formal
Spring	Hare	Sun
	Dragon	Moon
	Serpent	Hantei
Summer	Horse	Akodo
	Goat	Doji
	Monkey	Shiba
Fall	Rooster	Bayushi
Winter	Dog	Shinjo
	Boar	Hida
	Rat	Togashi
	Ox	Fu Leng
	Tiger	Ryoshun

The proper names of the months were added by Imperial Decree of Hantei XXXV, so in many provinces the more common names are what peasants generally know. In other lands, peasants and samurai alike will have different common names for some months, the three most popular differences being Crane (instead of Rooster), Tortoise (instead of Dragon), and Sheep (instead of Goat).

## THE WINTER COURT

The winter court has long served as a passionate subject for L5R fictions and adventures, and is a natural setting for a LARP. Rokugani winters can be fierce with snowstorms and sleet making outside activities impossible. Most time is spent indoors, and the ancient custom of people gathering in one house to conserve heat has evolved into the winter court. Each major house, including the Emperor's, holds a winter court (though the plural "Winter Court" refers to the Emperor's winter court).

Bushi who choose to attend winter court are either versed in politics, or serve as yojimbo to the courtiers and shugenja who attend to such matters. These affairs are the most important political events of the year. As many political figures are essentially trapped in a household with no way to travel, they spend the winter hatching plots, arranging marriages, forming alliances, competing for promotion, or planning for war. The Emperor's Winter Court is the premier social event in all of the Empire. Each year it is held in a different household. While this is a great honor for the master of the house, it is also an extraordinary burden as the lord must insure his home is safe, secure, and presentable for the Emperor and his entourage. Invitations to the court are rare, and many courtiers spend the entire year accumulating favors that might be exchanged for a winter in the Imperial presence. While the political opportunities are obvious, many wish to attend the Winter Court merely for a chance to meet the most famous personages in Rokugan, dine on the fine dishes enjoyed by the Emperor's court, or simply participate in the courtly games, festivals, and unparalleled celebrations of the Winter Court.

## TRAVEL

At the dawn of the Empire, the first Hantei commanded that there would be roads constructed and maintained to connect the Imperial City, Otosan Uchi, with the palaces of the Great Clans. Where it is possible to support such things, trees border the roads, formed a canopy over the road to protect the Emperor from foul weather and shade him from the midday heat of the Sun. Though some of these roads have fallen into disrepair over the centuries, the Emperor's Roads are still, as a whole, the highest quality roads in the Empire.

Along these roads are way stations staffed by younger samurai, usually clan magistrates or low-ranking Imperial Magistrates. These samurai serve as scouts in the event of an invasion, and also patrol the area for bandits and other criminals. They are generally charged with assisting travelers and maintaining order. Large way stations even have one or two shugenja on hand.

These magistrates also check all travelers to make certain they have reason to be in the area. Each clan, Great and Minor, is assigned specific territory by the Emperor, thus any unwarranted incursion into another clan's territory may be considered an act of war. Travel papers grant a samurai temporary permission to enter another clan's territory. These papers must be drafted and notarized by either Emerald Magistrates or ranking samurai of the territory the samurai wishes to enter (daimyo, clan magistrates, or the daimyo's selected representatives). These papers must be carried at all times, and can be revoked by the lord of the province — thus samurai are encouraged to be on their best behavior while in foreign lands. The Emperor can also grant a samurai safe, permanent passage to any roads, anywhere in the Empire, revocable only by his own edict. Emerald Magistrates, Jade Magistrates, and Imperial Legionnaires are all granted such authority.

Another interesting aspect of travel is related to the Imperial Maps. All Imperial Maps are drawn by Imperial Cartographers. The original maps are kept in Toshi Ranbo, but copies are available for any samurai who desire to go there and obtain them. Because these maps are approved by the Emperor, many samurai are fanatical about their accuracy. To put it bluntly, if something is not on the Imperial Maps, then it cannot exist. To say otherwise would suggest that the Emperor is wrong.

## BUSHIDO

*"Strength of steel is nothing without strength of character to guide it,"*  
— Mirumoto Kenzo

Though the samurai of Rokugan often differ in their interpretations of what is honorable and just, there are some consistent traditions. One of these is adherence to bushido, the way of the warrior. Bushido can be accurately described as a series of seven virtues. Some clans favor some virtues over others, but there is no samurai family that denies the worth of all seven virtues of bushido.

**Gi (Honesty and Justice)** — There is no room for dishonesty in the heart of the samurai. Lies corrupt the soul and distract the mind from honest pursuits, something a true and proper samurai cannot abide. Just as a samurai is honest with others, he cannot abide dishonesty and treachery in others. When confronted with criminal behavior, a samurai must see justice done. As such, this is his duty.

Some in modern Rokugan consider full and complete honesty to be a failure of duty, particularly when it works against the goals of one's lord. The Scorpion have been notorious for this philosophy for centuries, and a handful of other families in the Empire seem to have recognized the effectiveness of such tactics, particularly in court.

**Yu (Heroic Courage)** — For the samurai, to die without fear fulfilling one's duty is the ultimate honor. Fear is for the weak of mind and those who have little faith in the strength of their blade.

Courage is valued among the Crab Clan, as they face fearsome monstrosities that can break the spirits of men on a daily basis. However, discretion is the better part of valor, in this case. If by escaping a foe a samurai can survive long enough to warn his brothers of the impending assault, then there is honor in such an action.

**Jin (Compassion)** — The samurai embodies both strength and nobility. By his very nature he is stronger than those of the lesser classes. Mistreatment of those beneath one's own station is a sign of weakness and insecurity, traits no true samurai would ever exhibit. A samurai cares for and protects those beneath him, just as his own lord tends to his needs. This extends all the way to the Emperor, who cares for the people of Rokugan and is looked after by the Heavens. To fail to show compassion to those beneath your station is to fail in maintaining the Celestial Order.

**Rei (Polite Courtesy)** — The samurai is a civilized warrior. In addition to being taught the art of the sword, he is learned in the ways of history, literature, and etiquette. To treat a peer rudely or with disrespect is to abandon that which makes one worthy of the title samurai. Without courtesy, even towards one's enemies, a man is little more than an animal, snarling and lashing out at that which it does not understand. A man cannot be respected who does not conduct himself with poise and good manners.

In practice, this is the tenet of bushido that is most quickly forgotten by modern samurai. The passion in men's hearts is such that when one perceives a slight against him or his clan, he often cannot respond with less than aggression and vitriol. When cooler heads prevail, those who lack courtesy are quickly ostracized.

**Meyo (Honor)** — External judgment is meaningless to the samurai. The true measure of worth comes only from within. If a samurai is true to himself and makes decisions that stem from his own sense of what is right, then he cannot be dishonorable. If a samurai fails to uphold the other virtues, he must judge himself accordingly.

Many samurai use this tenet to justify questionable behavior. For example, the Daidoji family of the Crane participates in battle tactics that could be considered dishonorable (contaminating the enemy's water supplies, sabotage, stealing enemy battle plans, etc). The Daidoji, however, consider it their

duty to protect the clan and ensure their victory on the battlefield, and thus look upon it as an honorable sacrifice made in the name of the Crane.

**Makoto (Complete Sincerity)** — There is no contradiction in what a samurai says and what he does. If a samurai says that he will perform a certain act, then that act is as good as done. It has nothing to do with honesty or dishonesty, merely the recognition that the word and the deed are both the extension of the samurai's honor, that they are ultimately one and the same.

**Chugo (Duty and Loyalty)** —

The most important factor in a samurai's life is his duty.



All actions are defined by duty. Loyalty to one's lord and the execution of the duty with which one is charged are the two traits that define what it means to be samurai. Failure in either respect is inexcusable, and could be considered grounds for being made ronin or even ordered to commit seppuku.

On this count, there is no dissention. All Great and Minor Clans demand and expect all samurai within their ranks to live each day exemplifying all that is chugo. Those who do not recognize their duty are of no use to their lord, and thus are worse than traitors.

## FU LENG

The Ninth Kami. The Fallen Lord. The Dark Brother. Fu Leng is known by many names, and his true name is in fact lost to the ages. Fu Leng is the embodiment of evil, feared and shunned throughout Rokugan. Early in history, Fu Leng's escape from Jigoku nearly destroyed the fledgling

Empire, but it was equally his appearance that galvanized the Empire to stand together and fight as brothers. Though Fu Leng can no longer enter the mortal realm, his influence on the world is symbolized in the wild Shadowlands. His followers are many, and include such powerful lost souls as Daigotsu, Shahaï, and the mad tattooed man, Kokujin. If there is one thing all of Rokugan has in common, it is a fear and hatred of Fu Leng and his minions. His destruction is the one unifying force that can lead even the most bitter foes to set aside their differences and fight for the future of the Empire.

## RESPECT

Like so many things in Rokugan, respect is an expected courtesy between samurai. As all samurai are descendents of the children of Sun and Moon, it is unseemly to treat another samurai with disrespect, even if they are an enemy, unless they have earned it by dishonoring themselves. Respect is a two-way relationship in regard to a daimyo and his vassal, with a lesser samurai showing proper respect to his lord and the daimyo respecting the worth and abilities of his subordinate. Daimyo who do not treat their vassals are regarded as poor lords indeed, though a samurai is still expected to serve a master that does not show him proper respect. Disrespecting a lord, even an unworthy one, only brings greater shame. Samurai who are forced to commit dishonorable acts in the name of their lord sometimes commit seppuku to cleanse their shame.

Bowing and kneeling to other samurai is the most accepted way of showing respect. Two samurai who are equal to one another bow an equal amount upon meeting. A samurai of lower status bows more deeply and longer to a samurai of higher status.

For Rokugani this is automatic behavior practiced from an early age, and is often done without much conceptual thought. The practice began at the dawn of the Empire, as a gesture of humility toward the Kami. Most bows are quick and perfunctory, though one samurai can show heartfelt respect for another by bowing lower than is expected. The opposite is also true, as a samurai may only bow slightly as a thinly veiled insult.

Kneeling is customary when meeting someone of significantly superior rank.

This is done by placing both knees on the ground and touching the forehead to the ground as well, not rising until the person being knelt before gives permission. Additionally, further respect may be shown by placing ones hands palm down on the ground where the forehead is



lowered, keeping one's hands away from his weapons. This position is used to show respect to a superior samurai, even from a different clan, regardless of any affiliation or prevailing political influences. Needless to say, all kneel before the Emperor, just as all peasants kneel before samurai.

Similar to Rokugani penchant for bowing, eye contact is also a taboo in Rokugan. Meeting another person's eyes directly is an act performed only between equals, close friends, or lovers. Even in these cases it is usually frowned upon in public, much like public displays of emotion. No one ever makes eye contact with the Emperor without permission from him.

## WAR AND DEATH

A samurai is taught never to fear death. It is a samurai's duty to bear in mind at all times it is his place to die for his master. War is an honorable pursuit, and thus something not to be shied away from when the time comes. While battle is not something that should dominate a samurai's entire life, a bushi must be prepared for combat. War is where bushi excel, the professional warriors and soldiers of the samurai caste who are taught from an early age how to fight and kill. Other members of the samurai caste usually avoid the battlefield, though even shugenja and courtiers have their place on the grand canvas of war.

To the casual observer, the Rokugani philosophy regarding war is a blatant contradiction. Bushi, the bulk of the samurai caste, constantly train and prepare for war. A samurai's station is noted by the swords he is allowed to wear, and feuds between two samurai often end in the death of the other. However, Rokugani religion abhors senseless violence. A common belief among samurai (traced to Akodo himself) states that "the art of war is the way of preserving peace."

Recognizing that the Empire was a land of warriors in constant competition despite their mutual loyalty to the Emperor, the Emperor long ago acted to stem large-scale conflict. Imperial Edict forbids unprovoked warfare between the Great Clans. Obviously, the definition of "unprovoked" is malleable, and clans that find themselves in conflict must be careful not to draw the Emperor's attention to their affairs. It is a courtier's duty to justify his clan's aggressions against weaker clans, while demonizing incursions by more powerful enemies. When a courtier glibly states that the lives of ten thousand samurai hinge upon his every word, it is not an exaggeration.

Death is accepted as an eventuality of a samurai's service. Death in battle is considered an honorable passing. Samurai who fought and died are often remembered favorably, even in defeat, so long as they fought bravely. Crane Champion Doji Kurohito's shrine to Crab Champion Hida O-Ushi (whom he fought and killed in a duel) is merely one example of this tradition.

## HOSTAGES

In Rokugan, there is a distinct difference between hostage-taking and kidnapping. Kidnapping is the illegal theft of a living person. Hostages are taken legally with prior notification to the hostage's family. This is done most often to insure good behavior in a defeated enemy. However, hostages are just as frequently used to cement an alliance. These hostages are typically the second son of the allying daimyos, symbolizing that each daimyo is serious about his wish for peace, while practical enough to protect his primary heir. Occasionally these hostages are required to swear fealty to their captors, and be schooled the techniques of their new clan.

During violent periods, it is the Emperor's right to invoke the Hitojichi (Hostage) Laws, requiring each daimyo to spend a month of every year in Otsan Uchi. After the daimyo returns home, his family remains in the city for another month as hostages of the Emperor. The Emperor could thus severely reduce the chances of an organized attack by holding the loved ones of important figures.

Hostages are treated as honored guests, not prisoners. A true samurai would not endanger his clan's interests by escaping. Most of these hostages are quite welcome among their captors, and are invited to train at their captors' dojo, leading to the occasional incidence of a samurai adept in the techniques of a rival clan.

## DUELING

When one samurai is in dispute with another, the standard means of rectifying the problem is through a formal iaijutsu duel.

First the challenge is issued. At this point, if the challenged party is of higher station, he may ignore the challenge (a rather embarrassing act for both parties). If the challenge is not ignored, the challenger then determines what form the duel will take. Duels to the death, to the first draw, or to the first blood are the most common though occasionally there are other varieties. Some samurai simply display their dueling stance to



judge who is superior, while others might insist on kenjutsu duels (beginning with weapons drawn) or even duels with less orthodox weapons. Shugenja duel using magic. Contests of wits, poetry contests, or other non-violent competitions are generally not acceptable — though technically they can be named, doing so is an act of supreme cowardice. Dueling is a sacred and honored tradition between warriors; the challenge should be met in the manner of a warrior.

In the case of duels to the death, both parties must ask permission of their daimyo to prevent the possibility of a blood feud (courtiers routinely draw upon illegal duels as justification to declare war upon another clan). A daimyo may agree to the duel, but replace the combatant from his side of the duel with one of his choice. A daimyo who selects a combatant who is unrelated to the original offense may be viewed as rude or cowardly. A daimyo who chooses a combatant who does not serve him (such as a Crab lord selecting a Kakita duelist to replace his cousin in a duel) may be outright refused by the samurai in question with no loss of face. Needless to say, this makes the daimyo look very foolish.

If both daimyo agree, the duel may take place. If the duel is not to the death, but one party dies during the confrontation, then the slain samurai may seek repercussions or declare a blood feud so it is best to obtain permission in any case. Once permission is granted (if it is required) the challenged party may name a second to fight in his place. This is

technically not a cowardly or dishonorable act,

though some may view it as such. If the second agrees, he takes

the challenged party's place in the duel. However,

any repercussions for the loser are inflicted upon

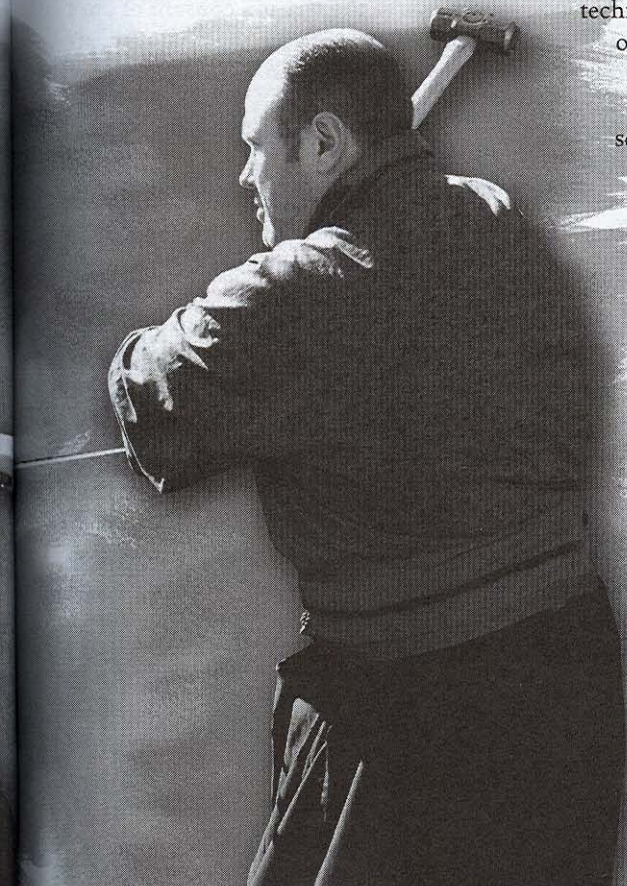
the original challenged party should the second fail. (Thus if it

is a duel to the death and the second loses,

the original challenged individual must

commit seppuku.)

It is a yojimbo's duty to act as a second should his charge be





challenged. If a samurai does not intend to accept a challenge personally, he typically does not wear his katana, carrying only the wakizashi as the sign of his rank. This is not a concrete law, but rather a minor etiquette that prevents any loss of face when a challenged party insists on a second.

A time and place must then be decided upon. Though most duels take place soon after a challenge, they are always performed in a public place with witnesses. A duel without witnesses might as well have never occurred. Once the opponents have faced one another, either duelist may acknowledge his opponent as the victor of the duel before swords are drawn. This is not a cowardly or dishonorable act, though depending on the circumstances the loser may suffer a loss of face for withdrawing. If the duel was to the death, the loser must still commit seppuku, unless the winner releases the loser (winner's choice). In non-lethal duels, a combatant who sees that he is clearly outmatched and does not back down has performed a foolish and shameful act that not only risks his own safety but forces his opponent to waste his time against an unworthy adversary.

When a duel is complete, the matter is considered resolved. For better or worse, a duel is the ultimate arbitrator of justice between samurai.

## BLOOD FEUDS

When a samurai is slain in an illegal duel, or due to the gross incompetence of another samurai, it is the domain of his immediate family to declare a blood feud. A formal blood feud requires the written consent of one's daimyo and is essentially a declaration of war between the dead samurai's immediate family and the offending party. Those who interfere in a blood feud threaten the honor of the offended, and may be dealt with as the offending party deems fit. (The Emperor, his magistrates, Imperial Legionnaires, and other assorted personages of the Imperial Family are exempt.) Once the offending party has been killed, the feud has been resolved and the offended parties are expected to leave the lands of their enemies peacefully.

## SEPPUKU

Seppuku is exclusive to the samurai caste, a highly ritualized form of suicide. Though often glorified, seppuku is rare and considered carefully by those who perform it. Seppuku is never performed for glory, or because a samurai is discontented. It is a means by which a samurai cleanses the shame of his actions, allowing his family's honor to remain pure regardless of his crimes. In no way does seppuku redeem or condone a dishonorable samurai's actions, it simply removes the fault for them from his family line. Samurai convicted of a capital offense (murder, rape, and other atrocities) are usually offered the chance to commit seppuku. Only the most heinous samurai criminals are actually executed, as such a death forever negates the possibility that innocent family members will share the samurai's shame.

Samurai are expected to request permission for seppuku from their lord, who has the right to permit or refuse it according to his whim. If a lord refuses seppuku for no apparent reason, it brings the samurai's family even greater shame unless the samurai is cast out of the clan entirely, in which

case his shame is his own. Daimyo who doubt the sincerity of a samurai requesting seppuku might give permission but offer the samurai a wooden blade with which to perform the act, a gesture indicating that the daimyo does not believe the samurai lacks the courage to truly perform the act and thus does not need a true weapon.

A samurai might commit seppuku without permission as a final act of defiance against an unjust lord. While this is a disloyal act, it invariably brings scrutiny to the lord's actions as other samurai wonder if the suicide was justified. If it is determined that the samurai's lord is truly dishonorable, his denial of his vassal's seppuku will bring great shame upon him, and perhaps end in his own seppuku or execution.

Seppuku is a highly ritualized form of suicide, involving long prayer, purification, and final disembowelment using three specialized cuts with a wakizashi. After the third cut is performed a "second" (usually a trusted samurai comrade or a presiding magistrate) deems whether the samurai performed the act with dignity. If it is so, then the second takes the samurai's head with his katana, ending his pain.

A specialized form of seppuku named jigai has been developed for the wives of samurai and other non-combatants. Far less painful than traditional seppuku, this form of suicide involves simply falling over onto an upturned dagger, cutting one's own throat.

**NOTE:** Seppuku, jigai, and all such forms of suicide should not be simulated in a LARP without serious consideration. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES should any of these rituals be simulated using real weapons, and we highly advise simply not acting out the ceremony altogether. (GM steps in, says "And Hida Kaneda commits seppuku," and the game moves on.) The danger of emulating a dramatic samurai act becoming a very real tragedy is simply too great.



## RETIREMENT

*"The time comes for every samurai to step down and contemplate the Tao. For me, at least, that time is not today." — Kakita Munemori*

Should a samurai attain the age of forty, he is expected to step down and spend the rest of his life in serene contemplation of the Tao of Shinsei and the mysteries of the universe. More and more, however, some samurai choose to break with this tradition and retain their status as samurai well into their late forties, and even fifties. There are even some instances of samurai living for eighty years in the role of a shugenja, courtier, or even a bushi (albeit usually as a military advisor) before finally succumbing to old age.

When a samurai retires, he is expected to sever his ties with his family and clan, forever joining the Brotherhood of Shinsei. The retiree will shave his topknot, a symbol of ending his life as a samurai, and passes his swords to one of his heirs or gives them back to his lord. The samurai's titles and lands pass to his heirs as well. The newly dedicated monk often chooses a new name as well. From this point on, the retiree is a monk in all ways, and does not command the respect and authority of a samurai. Though this is a bitter pill for some samurai to swallow, they also understand that their time has passed and it is proper to make way for the next generation.

While the samurai is expected to renounce his ties to his previous clan, it is not uncommon for the monk to aid those of his former clan with wisdom and advice from time to time. Many daimyo keep a monk as an advisor in their court, and oftentimes this monk is actually the daimyo's retired predecessor.

Not all retired monks come to their new role due to advanced age. Some samurai are forced into retirement due to injury, or to failure too minor to require exile or seppuku but too great to allow the samurai to retain his title. Some samurai simply leave with the permission of their daimyo, seeing the path of enlightenment as a necessary vocation.

## MILITARY RANKS

Though Rokugani military offices have no direct translation to western military ranks and units, the following list gives a rough translation of the ranks from the highest ranks to the lowest.

Position	Translation	Troops commanded
Daimyo	Clan Leader	Entire Clan
Rikugunshokan	General	Army (daimyo's discretion)
Shireikan	Commander	25,000 (five legions)
Taisa	Captain	5,000 (1 legion)
Chui	Lieutenant	800-1,000 (1 unit)
Gunso	Sergeant	50-200 (1 platoon)
Nikutai	Corporal	5-10 (1 squad)
Hohei	Private	none



## CHAPTER TWO:

# MECHANICS

## CHAPTER TWO MECHANICS

### BLOOD AND HONOR PART THREE

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Kanshiro felt privileged to be participating in the investigations. Unfortunately, he also felt quite out of his depth. He knew little about poisons, murder, or subterfuge. As a Phoenix, of course, he was always prepared to learn.

Kanshiro descended into the palace libraries, eyes wide as he took in the countless shelves of books and scrolls that surrounded him. Though Kanshiro was a warrior, he was yet a Phoenix, and thus he had spent a great deal of time here since his arrival. The thought of so much knowledge contained in one place intrigued him. He wondered what mysteries might lay in the countless pages. The libraries filled the sub-levels of Honored Treaty Palace. They were a true hidden treasure of the city. Now, looking upon them again, there was something about these libraries that disturbed him. He could not name precisely what it was.

A polite cough by his side drew him back to reality. An elderly man waited patiently for Kanshiro's attention, holding a small covered lantern. He wore a fine kimono shugenja, stained by ink and tea. This was Seppun Kenzan, the master librarian. He smiled pleasantly as Kanshiro bowed.

"Greetings, Kenzan-sama," Kanshiro said. "I had hoped you might help me find a book."

"Of course, Shiba-san," the old man said in a whispery voice. "What book?"

Kanshiro paused, considering how to broach the subject. He concluded that the blunt truth was his best course. "Do you have any books about poison?" he asked.

The old librarian's eyes widened. After a long pause, he sighed deeply. "Shiba-san, this could get you in a great deal of trouble," he said. Kanshiro opened his mouth to explain, but

Kenzan continued. "If that Kitsuki finds out you are conducting an independent investigation into Lord Juro's murder, he will be quite upset."

Kanshiro blinked. "These are Phoenix lands," he replied instead of what he had been about to say. "A Phoenix should resolve this problem."

"Well said, my lord," the old librarian said with a proud smile. He moved deeper into the library, gesturing for Kanshiro to follow. "You may be surprised to know we have an extensive collection of books about poison," he commented. "Most of it has been only recently added to the library since Shiro Henka was built outside the city. The Shogun felt it would be wise to have such volumes on hand, for the purposes of crafting antidotes. The collection is secret, you know." The old librarian favored Kanshiro with a conspiratorial grin. "Only the Shogun and the late governor knew of it."

"I am honored you would share such a secret with me," Kanshiro replied.

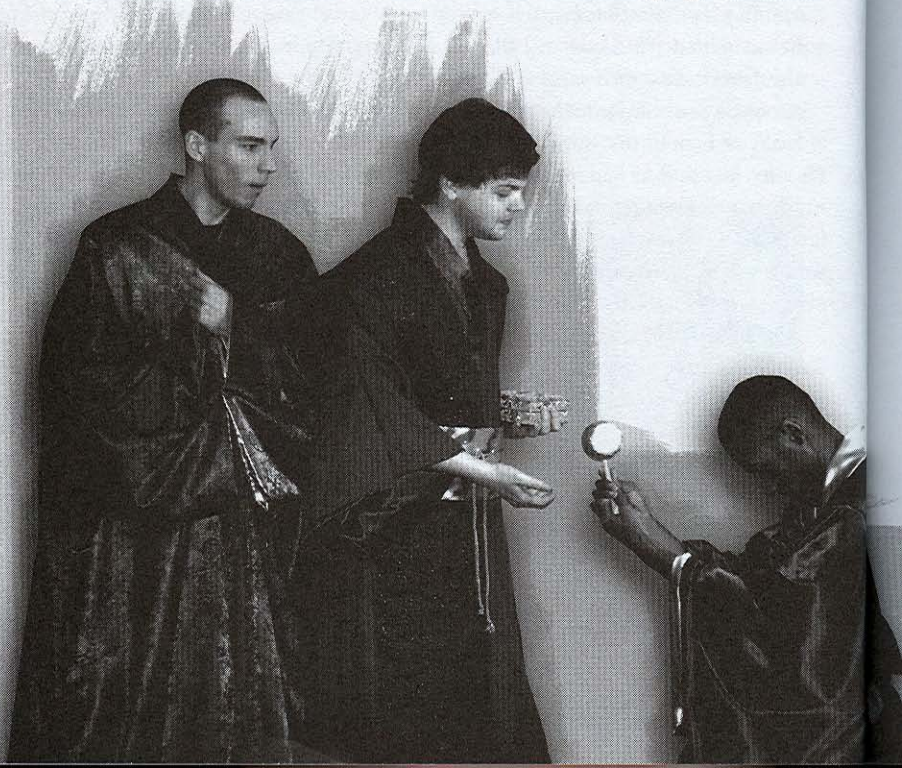
A panicked cry erupted through the ceiling above them, followed by the sounds of heavy feet running across the floor. Kenzan looked at Kanshiro with a concerned expression.

"What part of the palace is above us?" he asked.

"These libraries extend beneath the entire palace," he replied, "the practice dojo is above this section."

"I will return, Kenzan-sama," Kanshiro replied, bowing in apology as he hurried off toward the stairs.

Kanshiro had little idea what could be occurring above, but whatever had caused such excitement surely could not be making matters any better. The dojo doors stood open, and when he stepped inside he found a smug, broad-shouldered warrior in brilliant green armor facing off against a smaller man in red silk, an ebony hawk mask covering his features but failing to conceal his seething rage. Kanshiro



recognized Soshi Yoshino. He could only guess the armored man was Mirumoto Aichi. A handful of rather intimidated looking young samurai hovered in the background, clearly ordered to act as witnesses in the midst of their daily practice.

"What is happening here?" Kanshiro demanded.

"The little Scorpion has challenged me to a duel," Aichi replied, eyes fixed on his opponent.

"You have shamed Isa," Yoshino snapped, his voice nearly hysterical. "You do not deserve her."

"I do not desire her," Aichi retorted. "She is low-born. Her mother was a peasant. I will not sully the blood of Mirumoto."

"If her father is samurai, she is samurai!" Yoshino snarled.

"Her father is nothing," Aichi retorted.

"Villain!" Yoshino snarled. "Such insults demand blood." He reached for his sword.

"A duel to the death is illegal, Scorpion," Aichi warned. "If you draw steel on me, blame for your death shall fall upon your own house."

Kanshiro quickly interposed himself between the duelists, turning to face the Scorpion. "Yoshino," he whispered. "You are no swordsman. Aichi is a trained duelist. You have no chance."

"I do not care if I win," Yoshino whispered back, his eyes intense. "He has insulted her honor."

"Win or lose, your clan will suffer for your actions here, Yoshino," Kanshiro replied. "Is that how you would complete your mission here?"

Yoshino paused for a long moment as reason slowly dawned on him. "What do I do?" he whispered. "I cannot back down to the Dragon now."

"Name me as your second," Kanshiro said. "The Empire will take little notice of one more duel between Dragon and Phoenix."

The Scorpion nodded. He looked toward Mirumoto Aichi. "I name the Shiba as my second," he said, forcing calm into his voice.

Aichi nodded in approval, eyeing Kanshiro carefully. "To first blood?" he asked.

The Phoenix nodded. The Dragon looked relieved. Kanshiro removed his haori and tossed it to the floor, giving himself greater ease of movement. The two men circled one another, watching each other carefully. Kanshiro let thought bleed away, reaching into the depths of his being for the pure focus of the Void. Then all was a blur of movement. Kanshiro reached for his sword, drawing and slicing the air in a single maneuver as his sensei had taught him. In the smooth clarity of the duel, he saw the Dragon's sword fly from its saya first. He saw the blade move toward his body with impossible speed, raw talent honed by years of practice in the field.

But at the last moment, Aichi's sword paused and Kanshiro left a neat gash across the Mirumoto's hip. Aichi grimaced in pain and nearly fell to one knee, but did not. Kanshiro realized, through the glaze of adrenalin, that though he had done well the Dragon was the superior swordsman.

Aichi had let him win.

"Congratulations, Kanshiro-san, Yoshino-san," he said. "Seppun Isa's honor is intact. I apologize if my statements brought her any shame. Good day, gentlemen."

With that, Mirumoto Aichi turned and left the chambers.

Kanshiro only felt more confused than ever.

# MECHANICS

This game is designed to be as simple as possible and still have enough depth to allow players to succeed at playing a character that may possess strengths that they do not have in real life. Tests are designed to be less time consuming and should be resolved in a minimal amount of time.

## THE BASICS

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Not all conflicts can be solved through role-playing in LARP. In these instances there are many techniques and skills that a character can bring into play. In this way the person playing a Doji courtier can still manage to socially outmaneuver the Hida berserker who is obstinately refusing to agree to whatever the Doji is proposing. All you will need to play this game is few decks of playing cards and someone who is willing to run and judge the game for you. In this book we will refer to judges as Game Masters. With larger groups of players, multiple Game Masters are recommended. Generally, a ratio of one Game Master per five players is optimal. In LARPs where only a few Game Masters are in circulation players may opt to draw an opponent's card and vice versa for Opposed Tests. The values of the cards start with the Ace being worth 1, a Jack is 11, a Queen is 12, and the King is 13. Jokers should be included in the deck of cards, though they have no inherent worth and are explained later.

### BASIC OPPOSED TESTS

In order to begin this test, add the Rank of the Skill being used and the applicable Trait. Most skills suggest which Traits are most appropriate for their use in their description, but many skills can utilize other traits. A skill may only draw upon a single Trait for any given test. Both players then draw a single card from a normal playing card deck provided by a Game Master. In games where only a few Game Masters are in circulation players may opt to draw an opponent's card and vice versa. Add this card to the total of Trait plus Skill. The final result compares: Trait + Skill + Pulled Card. The player who has the higher total wins the test. After a test is complete all cards are shuffled back into their decks.

**Example:** Kitsuki Remata is attempting to discern the validity of Akodo Rokku's claim of innocence in regards to his obviously forged travel papers. Remata has a Perception of 5 and an Investigation of 6. He pulls a Ten of Hearts and adds it to his Trait + Skill total of 11. He has a total of 21 ( $5 + 6 + 10 = 21$ ). Akodo Rokku has an Awareness of 2 and a Sincerity of 3. He pulls a Seven of Clubs, which means he now has a total of 12 ( $2 + 3 + 7 = 12$ ). Kitsuki Remata is not even remotely fooled by Rokku's lies and places him under arrest.

## UNOPPOSED TESTS

These are identical to opposed tests, except that the number the player must beat is not randomly determined by another player. Once again the player will need to draw from a deck of cards that a Game Master provides. If the character meets or exceeds a specific Target Number (TN), then he has succeeded in his task. Target Numbers are set by the GM, but generally conform to the following pattern:

TN	Difficulty of Task	Example
2	Very Easy	Identifying your own family mon, climbing a gentle slope
5	Easy	Identifying a well-known family mon, climbing a slightly rugged slope
10	Average	Identifying a famous samurai's personal mon, climbing a mountain face with many handholds
15	Difficult	Identifying an obscure family or personal mon, climbing a vertical mountain face
20	Very Difficult	Identifying a long-dead family or clan mon, climbing a sheer mountain wall
30+	Impossible	Identifying an obscure personal mon from a dead family or clan, climbing a sheer cliff in a thunderstorm

The player's pull must exceed the TN to be successful. After a test is complete all cards are shuffled back into the deck.

**Example:** Kakita Seigi wants to know what would be the correct gift to present to her host, Imperial Herald Miya Shoin. She has an Awareness of 3 and Etiquette of 4. Shoin is a famous personage, but she does not know him that well, so the GM deems that this task is Average (TN 10). She pulls the Four of Hearts giving her a total of 11, and succeeds at choosing something he will appreciate.

## JOKERS

When the Joker is drawn, the player should immediately draw another card from the deck. Double the value of the card pulled. If it is another Joker draw another card and triple the value of the card drawn. Add this total to Trait + Skill.

**Example:** Kakita Seigi is attempting to seduce Doji Nagori. He is inclined to resist her advances as he is occupied finding out information for the Emerald Champion, so he attempts to use Etiquette to withdraw gracefully. Kakita Seigi has an Awareness of 3 and a Seduction of 4. She pulls a Joker and then pulls the Eight of Diamonds. The value of the Eight of Diamonds is doubled so it now adds 16 to Seigi's Trait + Skill of 7. She now has a total of 23 ( $3 + 4 + 16 = 23$ ). Doji Nagori has a Willpower of 5 and an Etiquette of 5. He pulls a Queen, which means he now has a total of 22 ( $5 + 5 + 12 = 22$ ). Despite his reluctance he is overwhelmed by Kakita Seigi's attentions and cannot help but to return her affections.



## RAISES

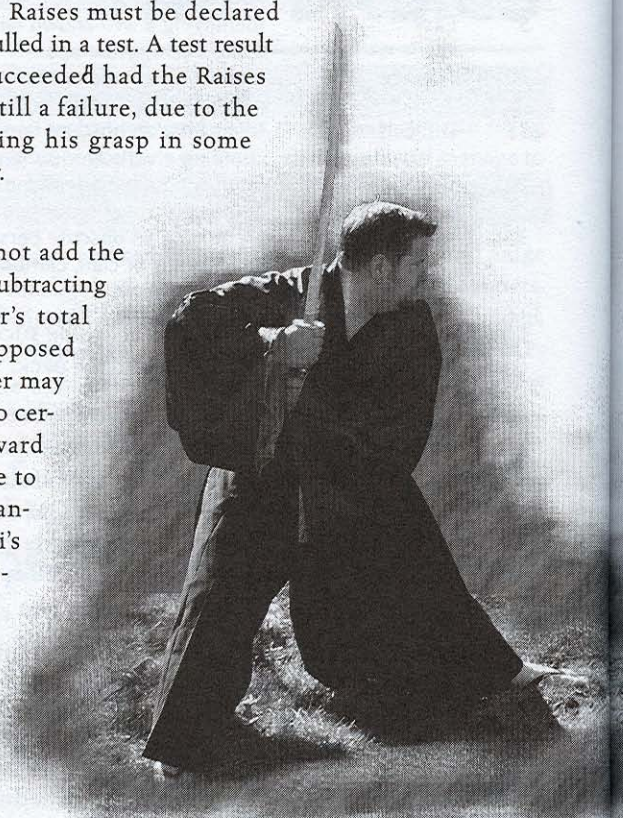
In certain situations a player will not be content to merely succeed at defeating an opponent but may wish for a greater effect. Raises are the means by which this is achieved, adding an element of risk to obtain a greater effect. Raises might be used to inflict more damage with a combat maneuver, learn more information during an interrogation, gain greater influence over a target through persuasion, or merely show off. If Raises can be used for a given skill, that skill's description will define the effects of those Raises. Players have the option of calling for a number of Raises on a single test equal up to their Void Ring. For each Raise they take, subtract 2 from the test total. Raises must be declared before the card is pulled in a test. A test result that would have succeeded had the Raises not been made is still a failure, due to the player overextending his grasp in some unfortunate manner.

### FREE RAISES

A Free Raise will not add the normal penalty of subtracting 2 from a character's total draw during an Opposed Test. A Game Master may award Free Raises to certain players to reward role-playing, or due to some external advantage. (If a samurai's opponent is distracted by the pretty geisha across the room, the GM may award that samurai a Free Raise.) Some Advantages and Techniques give

players the benefit of a Free Raise. A Free Raise confers all of the benefits of a normal Raise and none of the penalties. If the player is entitled to a Free Raise in an Opposed Test and the test either has no stated Raise effects or the player does not wish to use any of the stated effects, they may instead add +2 to their total.

**Example:** Daidoji Sakura and Utaku Rea are racing their horses to Toshi Ranbo. The Game Master has determined that the winner of an Opposed Test will reach the city shortly before the other. Daidoji Sakura has an Agility of 3 and a Horsemanship of 1. She pulls a Five of Spades giving her a total of 9 (3 + 1 + 5 = 9). Rea has an Agility of 4 and a Horsemanship of 7. She is confident she can beat Daidoji



Sakura so she declares that she is taking two Raises. Utaku Rea pulls a Nine of Diamonds giving her a total of 20 ( $4 + 7 + 9 = 20$ ). She must now subtract 2 for each Raise she took giving her a total of 16. This is still more than enough to beat Daidoji, Sakura so she reaches her daimyo hours before Sakura instead of narrowly arriving first.

## UNSKILLED TESTS

Players who do not possess an applicable skill may not attempt Raises, though Free Raises may apply normally. Jokers will also have no effect on their card pulls and they must immediately pull again.

## TIES

Any time there is a tie during an opposed test, the character with the higher Void is considered the winner. If Void is equal, the character with the higher Insight is equal. Failing this, both players must start the test over.

## VOID

A character's Void Ring represents their mastery of the most mysterious of elements, that which is all and nothing. It is also, to a large degree, the character's luck. You have a number of Void Points equal to your total Rank in Void and you may spend these Void Points in a number of ways. You may spend a Void Point to draw two cards on a single pull, keeping the card of your choice. You may only spend one Void Point per test. Void can also be spent to activate certain Advantages, Techniques,

or other character options. Spending a Void Point does not lower the character's Void Ring for the purposes of determining maximum Raises or other effects. A character recovers all Void between sessions, or by using the Meditation skill.

## COMBAT

In a setting such as Rokugan, where samurai daily vie with one another for superiority over the Empire, combat is unavoidable. Though LARP encourages players to act out what their characters will be doing in most situations, combat is a definite exception to this rule. Though some LARP systems allow for more dynamic depictions of combat (even using mock

weapons) the core rules of Legend of the Five Rings LARP do not include such options. When swords are drawn, it is time for the players to call over a judge and resolve the dispute with Tests.

## INITIATIVE

Initiative is the order in which combatants act. Drawing a card and adding it to Reflexes determines Initiative. The person with the highest Initiative may go first. Advantages and techniques may alter Initiative totals. Players with identical initiative act simultaneously. A player may hold their action if their initiative is higher in order to take an action before, after, or simultaneous to another character with lower initiative. Initiative remains the same throughout combat unless a new player enters into the current engagement, then Initiative may be redrawn.

## ROUNDS

Every player has one action each round unless they possess an Advantage, Technique, or Spell that allows them more than one action. A round is completed once all parties involved have completed or declined to perform an action.

## TESTS

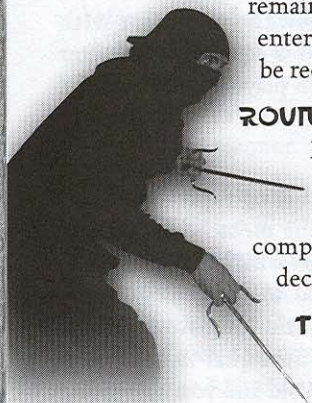
A Combat Test determines if an opponent is hit or emerges unscathed from the conflict. First you must determine how hard it will be to hit your opponent. Striking an opponent is an opposed test. The attacker makes an *Offensive Combat Test* (Agility + combat skill with the weapon they are currently wielding) and the target's makes a *Defensive Combat Test* (Reflexes + Defense skill). Some weapons utilize Traits other than Agility but these are the exception rather than the rule.

## FULL ATTACK

On a player's turn, before his action, he may declare Full Attack. If he does so, he can draw two cards on all of his Offensive Combat Tests that round and add the higher card to his total (shuffling the other card into his deck with no effect). If two jokers are drawn on this initial pull, then three cards are added to the test instead of two. A character under the effects of Full Attack effectively has a Defense skill of zero (not counting bonuses for Armor) until his next turn. Full Attack cannot be used while spellcasting.

## FULL DEFENSE

On a player's turn, before his action, he may declare Full Defense. If he does so, he can draw two cards on all of his Defensive Combat Tests until his next action and add the higher card to his total (shuffling the other card into his deck with no effect). If two jokers are drawn on this initial pull, then three cards are added to the test instead of two. A character under the effects of Full Defense may make no attacks until his next turn. Full Defense cannot be used while spellcasting.



**Example:** Hida Hio is attempting to use his tetsubo to crush the skull of his opponent, Mirumoto Kei. Kei's Reflexes are 2, her Defense skill is 4 and she is wearing light armor. Hio has an Agility of 3 and a Subojutsu skill of 4. Hio's Initiative is higher, so he declares Full Attack. He draws a Five of Hearts and a Seven of Spades. Discarding the Five of Hearts, he has a total of  $(4 + 3 + 7 = 12)$ . Kei has not yet had a turn, so she has no opportunity to go on Full Defense (as she might have had she had the chance). She draws a Two of Diamonds  $(2 + 4 + 2 = 8)$ . Hio successfully lands a mighty blow on her head. Unfortunately he is now vulnerable to counterattack due to declaring Full Attack.

## RAISES

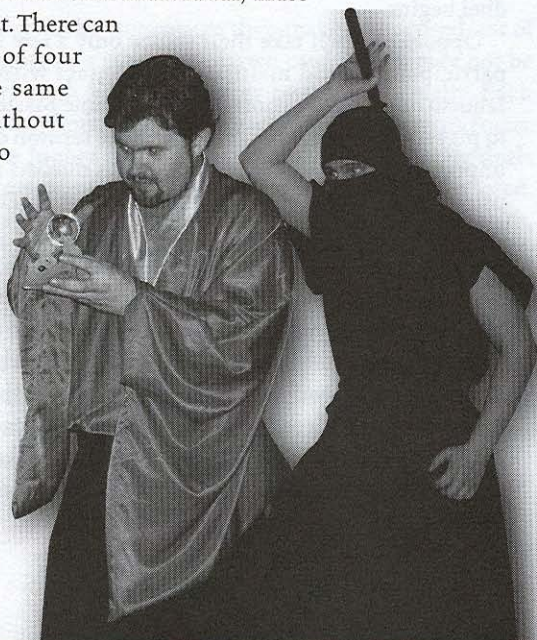
On a Combat Test, players have the option of calling for Raises as usual. Successful Raises give that player the option to add two wounds per Raise onto the damage they inflict on their opponent with that pull. In addition, Raises might be used to strike specific areas of the target, or to perform special combat maneuvers at the GM's discretion. One Raise to strike the torso, two Raises to strike a limb, or three Raises to strike the head are a good guideline. These attacks have no additional effects, unless a character needs to strike a specific area for a particular reason. (The opponent is about to pick up the Twelfth Black Scroll with his left hand, etc.) Three Raises, followed by a successful opposed Agility test, can disarm a target opponent.

For each successful Raise made on a Defensive Combat Test, a character may add 2 to his Initiative in the following round. (A successful Defensive Combat Test is one in which the target was not struck by his opponent.)

## MASS COMBAT

A combat situation can quickly escalate into full-scale battles. When more than one combatant attacks an individual, mass combat rules take effect. There can

only be a maximum of four people attacking the same person at a time without incurring penalties. No more than four characters may attack a single opponent in melee at once. Ranged attacks (including many spells) suffer a -2 penalty for every other character between the character making the ranged attack and his target.



## DAMAGE TESTS

Once a target is hit, damage may be determined by adding Strength + Damage Rating (DR) of the weapon plus a random pull from the deck (Jokers function normally but Raises and Void Points may not be used on this pull). Damage tests are called tests even though you cannot Raise, spend Void, and there is no way to “fail” them. Wounds penalize Damage Tests just as they do all other tests (Raises and Void spent on the initial attack, of course, can affect damage dramatically). Damage Ratings for common weapons can be found on page 144.

## WOUNDS

Each character has six Wound Ranks. Each Wound Rank contains double your Earth in Wounds. As you take damage, mark these Wounds off accordingly. Once you drop to a certain Rank you will start incurring penalties to all tests, including Initiative tests. When you reach the Down level you fall unconscious and may no longer move or act. The Down level has twice as many Wounds as every other level. Once this level is depleted, the character is dead. A quick glance at the damage inflicted by the weapons will show that this is an extremely lethal system, as befits the precarious world of the samurai.

Wound Level	Penalties for Tests
Unscathed	-0
Hurt	-4
Injured	-6
Wounded	-8
Down	N/A
Dead	

## IAIJUTSU DUELS

The formal etiquette surrounding iaijutsu duels is explained in some detail on page 38. This section explains the mechanics involved once a duel begins.

Opponents each take their stance only a few feet from the other. Each participant should maintain eye contact with their opponent, as the Iaijutsu duel is also a contest of wills. Game Masters may award Free Raises to players they feel are accentuating the tension of the duel with a suitably impressive stance and expression. Both duelists make an Unopposed Test using their Awareness trait and Iaijutsu skill. The TN of this test is their opponent's Insight Rank  $\times$  5. A successful test gives them knowledge of their opponent's Agility, Awareness, Iaijutsu, Reflexes, or Void rank (player's choice). They may also opt to call for Raises during this test. Each successful Raise will provide an additional piece of information.

When both combatants are about evenly matched the duel will continue normally with each participant choosing their opponent's Agility, Awareness, Reflexes, or Void — this becomes his opponent's Dueling Attribute for this duel. The combatants then make an opposed Awareness + Iaijutsu test. The winner of this test has the option of Focusing or Striking first.



If a combatant chooses to Focus, then the other combatant must then decide whether to Focus or Strike. If a combatant chooses to Strike, then the duel immediately resolves. A combatant may not focus more times than his Rank in his Dueling Attribute, though a combatant may spend a Void Point to Focus an additional time. A combatant may continue to Focus in this manner until he is out of Void Points or does not wish to spend any more.

When a Strike is declared, the combatants then make an opposed test of Dueling Attribute + Iaijutsu + a randomly drawn card. Raises may not be declared on this test, though Void Points may be spent normally. Each combatant must subtract 2 from his total for each time he chose to Focus. The combatant with the higher total strikes first, and immediately deals katana damage to his opponent. For each Focus that combatant declared, he gains the effects of a Free Raise for damage. If it is a duel to the death, then combat now begins normally. If it a duel to first draw or first blood, the duel now ends.

## TIES

Ties are not resolved in the usual manner during an Iaijutsu duel. Ties are considered “karmic strikes” with each opponent simultaneously striking the other as if he had won the duel. It is not unusual for duelist to draw, strike, and kill each other all in a single moment.

# CHARACTER CREATION

In LARP, you play the role of a character (sometimes one that you create, sometimes one that the GM provides). This character is designed with statistics, recorded on a character sheet. There are many things to consider when creating a character, and the finer points of this process will be detailed later. In this chapter you will find a guideline on how to put a character together. Of course this is only the beginning — all characters are built more from story and background than statistics and rules, but these rules will help define your character and help it function within the game.

Before writing down any information on your character you should visualize the type of character you want to play. Have a rough idea of how your character reacts to situations, his personality, and what some of his strengths and flaws are going to be. Does your character live for the thrill of bloodshed or does she prefer the subtler battlefields of courtly politics? What sort of family and upbringing did he have? These are questions you should answer before laying down your stats on paper.

## FIVE QUESTIONS

The following questions can help you gain a better understanding of what type of character you are going to make. Consider these answers carefully, as they will help you explore parts of your character's background and personality that you might not have considered, giving you an advantage when you play that character in a LARP.

### **What clan does your character belong to?**

For a game based in Rokugan, this is probably the most important question to ask yourself. Every clan has a unique perspective, a unique view of the world and an agenda. While not every character need fit the mold of his clan, it is important to be aware of the sort of environment your character came from. Other characters will also frequently judge your character by your clan stereotypes, expecting your alliances and behavior to reflect the values of your clan. In addition, as a samurai's primary concern is duty to the lord of his clan, it is of utmost importance to know who that lord is. You might decide not to belong to one of the Great Clans, instead selecting a Minor Clan or Imperial Family. You may eschew loyalty to any lord at all and choosing the wild and dangerous lifestyle of a ronin (samurai with no masters). You may decide not to be a samurai at all, or even to play a non-human character such as a Nezumi. This decision will forever color how players perceive your character. For a more in depth description of each Clan and their ideals, take a look at the Clan Descriptions on pages 84.

### **Is your character a bushi, shugenja, courtier, ninja, or monk?**

The above choices are the basic career selections a character may make. The term "samurai" is used to describe the fierce warriors of Rokugan, but

technically not all samurai find their place on the battlefield. Those samurai who choose the way of the warrior are called bushi. Samurai who can communicate with the kami gravitate to the role of shugenja, priests who can call upon elemental magic for a variety of feats. Courtiers are the political backbone of the Empire, using well placed words and complex webs of favors to protect their clan's best interests. Ninja are shadowy spies and assassins, and usually pretend to be one of the other professions publicly. These characters may not be samurai at all, unless it serves their purposes to maintain such a potentially useful cover identity. Monks, while not members of the samurai caste, bear special status as holy scholars of the Tao, and demand respect from samurai and peasant alike. While there is a great deal of flexibility within any of these professions, your character's choice will determine how other characters regard him.

### **What are the driving goals and motivations of your character?**

Is there a particular reason your character decided to be a bushi? Is there someone who they wish to take revenge on? Are there any ambitions your character relishes? Perhaps your character has the ambition to cleanse the Shadowlands, find glory in battle, or become the Emperor's most favored advisor. Perhaps your character wishes nothing more than to serve his lord with honor.

### **What is your character's background?**

Was your character an only child or was he a member of a large family? Are you closely related to the ruling family of your clan, or is your branch of the family tree removed? Family is crucial for a samurai, thus you will want to determine what sort of background your character has. If you are a ronin you will want to decide how you entered such a state. Were you born without a clan, or were you forced into the life of a wave-man by a shameful act?

### **How does your character view bushido?**

What does your character think of bushido? Does she think that the virtues are a strict guideline to life or merely loose guidelines? Is your character one who always acts with honor and compassion in mind or merely when she thinks someone is watching? Do you value some of the virtues more than others? While all samurai are expected to obey their lords, you may wish to decide to whom you show true loyalty. Do you honor a sensei, a family member, or a spouse as much as (or more than) your daimyo?

## **CHARACTER TYPE**

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To give you a basic grasp of your character's attitude you may wish to emulate one of the stereotypes of the classic samurai from films and fiction. Please do not feel that your character must have a two dimensional personality, but some of the archetypes may offer you ideas how to put your character together.



### BRASH

Brash characters never think about the consequences of their actions. Many samurai are quick to act on an insult as maintaining face is an important part of Rokugani culture. Whether you have a chance against your enemy is not a consideration. Death is a welcome fate compared to a life without honor.

### VIRTUOUS

You adhere to the code of bushido strictly and cannot be tempted by others to violate that code. You are even-tempered and resolve disputes before your hotheaded friends get themselves in trouble. Though a virtuous samurai embraces compassion, he also acts with justice and courage — he will mete out punishment to those who deserve it without hesitation. The virtuous samurai's loyalty to his lord is unquestioned.

### MASTERMIND

Rather than dirty your hands with the rigors of a battlefield you prefer to use political leverage to overcome opponents. You are a student of psychology, and know well how to influence others into doing your bidding. While some might call your tactics cowardly, you know all too well how deadly the arenas of the court can be.

### RELUCTANT

Your character cannot help but feel he has been forced into a role not of his choosing. While you might fulfill your orders without question, your self doubt often undermines the results. Ultimately you hope to find your place in the world, and the only thing you know is it isn't here.

### DISHONORABLE

You have no real loyalty unless it serves your purposes. Be cautious not to be too obvious in your self-obsessed desires; a samurai who does not fulfill his duties will be cast out or ordered to commit seppuku. Perhaps your character has already met such a fate, and now lives as an opportunistic ronin.

### SCHOLAR

You are a philosopher, well versed in the Tao of Shinsei as well as the tenets of bushido. You would rather spend time in a library rather than be forced to interact with other samurai. Other people may think of you as naïve and wish to manipulate you, while others might seek out your knowledge for their own purposes.

### VENGEFUL

Your character exists for one purpose: to take revenge on someone who has wronged you. Perhaps you have sworn a blood feud against a samurai who has killed one of your family members. Perhaps you have chosen to pursue your clan's conflict with another clan on a personal level. Your quest for revenge may be obvious, or it may take a subtle turn as you ingratiate yourself with your enemies only to betray them in a moment of weakness.

# CHARACTER SHEET

Now that you know what type of character you want to play you may start creating your character. Make a photocopy of the character sheet at the end of this book. An explanation of each part of the Character Sheet follows.

## ONE: RINGS AND TRAITS

All characters start out with a Rank of 2 in each Ring and Trait. A character's Ring is equal to the lower of its two Traits. A samurai with an Awareness of 4 and a Reflexes of 3 would have an Air Ring of 3.

Your Rings, Traits and Skills can grow as high as 9 over time, but it is quite rare to have a statistic above a 5. You can only attain a 10 with extraordinary supernatural aids. Legendary characters may possess a 6 or 7 in a skill, Trait or Ring, but anything higher is almost unheard of (of course, player characters do tend to be legendary sorts of people).

Each Ring is represented by a physical stat and a mental stat, as follows.

## EARTH

Earth ("chi") is represented by a mountain, standing ever resistant to the elements. More passive than the other elements, earth grants defense and the ability to weather adversity. The two Traits associated with Earth are Stamina (physical) and Willpower (mental).

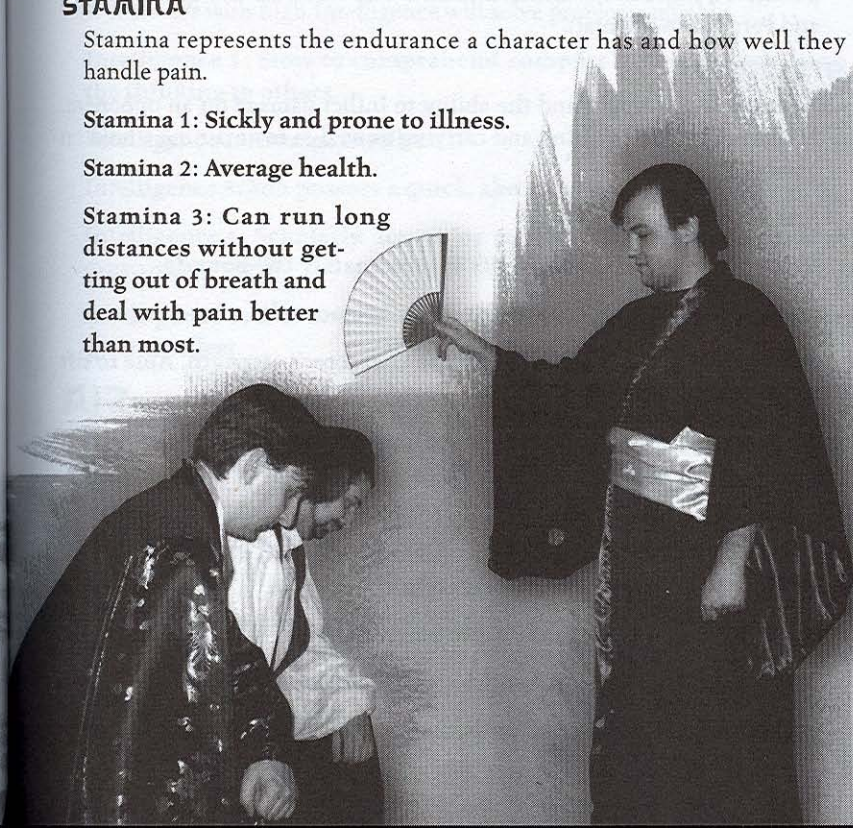
### STAMINA

Stamina represents the endurance a character has and how well they handle pain.

**Stamina 1: Sickly and prone to illness.**

**Stamina 2: Average health.**

**Stamina 3: Can run long distances without getting out of breath and deal with pain better than most.**



**Stamina 4:** Hardy and robust, you do not feel pain as normal people do.

**Stamina 5:** You can ignore wounds that might incapacitate another individual as well as run great distances without breaking a sweat.

### WILLPOWER

Willpower represents a strength of character, the ability to resist someone else's manipulation. A character with high Willpower can resist temptation more easily than most.

**Willpower 1:** Unassertive and easily manipulated.

**Willpower 2:** Average, you are not too hard to persuade as long as the request is not out of the ordinary.

**Willpower 3:** Not easily swayed from a course of action.

**Willpower 4:** Your resolve is hard to break and your enemies view you as stubborn or pigheaded.

**Willpower 5:** Iron-willed, no one can break your resolve once it is made.

### WATER

Water ("mizu") is represented by a curling wave, sweeping away obstacles. Water heals and purifies, helping to clear the way of anything that would pollute the way. The two Traits associated with Water are Strength (physical) and Perception (mental).

### STRENGTH

Strength is raw might and the ability to inflict damage on an opponent. It also encompasses lifting and carrying as well as maintaining a hold on an object.

**Strength 1:** Weak.

**Strength 2:** Average, able to lift approximately 100 pounds.

**Strength 3:** Able to lift approximately 200 pounds.

**Strength 4:** Most are amazed by the character's strength. Able to lift up to 300 pounds.

**Strength 5:** Legendary strength. Able to lift 400 pounds.

### PERCEPTION

Perception is the ability to discern details about one's environment using the five senses. Those characters with a low Perception will miss the details that companions with a higher Perception would not.

**Perception 1:** Totally oblivious to surroundings.

**Perception 2:** Average, most things will slip past you.

**Perception 3:** You notice details that others would not.

**Perception 4:** You notice even small and meaningless details.

**Perception 5:** No aspect of a situation escapes your observation.

## **FIRE**

Fire (“hi”) is represented by the illuminating flame. Fire symbolizes clear reasoning and powers of deduction and perpetual motion. It is a force for change as well as destruction; thought and action are tools of destruction and creation. The two Traits associated with Fire are Agility (physical) and Intelligence (mental).

### **AGILITY**

Agility is the measure of grace, dexterity, and precision that a character moves and acts with.

**Agility 1:** Completely uncoordinated and accident-prone.

**Agility 2:** Average, but not unknown to be clumsy.

**Agility 3:** You move with unusual grace.

**Agility 4:** Every movement you make is fluid and quick.

**Agility 5:** You are poetry in motion; even your most innocuous action bears the smooth elegance of a dancer.

### **INTELLIGENCE**

Intelligence is the ability to retain and draw upon learned information. A character with high Intelligence will solve problems quickly.

**Intelligence 1:** Slow to comprehend complex problems, you leave the thinking to others.

**Intelligence 2:** Average intellect.

**Intelligence 3:** You possess a quick, above-average intellect.

**Intelligence 4:** Scholarly. You enjoy mental challenges and excel at overcoming them.

**Intelligence 5:** A true genius, most people are astounded by your great intellect.

## **AIR**

Air (“kaze”) is represented by the swirling storm. Air can only be felt, not seen, and so it is with its spheres of influence. Intuition and instinct are essential to mastering the power of air. The two Traits associated with Air are Reflexes (physical) and Awareness (mental).

### **REFLEXES**

Reflexes measure the speed in which a character reacts to a sudden change. It determines how finely honed the instincts of the character are. Characters with a high Reflex Trait get the jump on any situation.

**Reflexes 1:** Slow to react, you are usually the last character to make up her mind.

Reflexes 2: Average reflexes.

Reflexes 3: You often react more swiftly than your brethren.

Reflexes 4: You react to danger with preternatural speed.

Reflexes 5: Nothing surprises you. You are prepared for anything.



## AWARENESS

Awareness is a measure of charisma and empathy that a character possesses. Characters with a high level of Awareness are eloquent and well spoken.

Awareness 1: You always put your foot in your mouth.

Awareness 2: You get along well with those with whom you have much in common.

Awareness 3: You are adept at reading the moods of others and get along well with strangers.

Awareness 4: You discern much others would keep hidden, and adapt well to any social environment.

Awareness 5: Other people are an open book; you are a social chameleon, adjusting to other's moods quickly and reacting appropriately.

## VOID

Void ("ku") is the union of all four Rings, and it is nothing. It is the drive to excel at all things accompanied by the absence of ambition. Void is also the

inner strength that all characters possess, which can be drawn upon in moments of duress. No Traits are associated with Void, but it determines a character's maximum Void Points as well as the maximum number of Raises that can be made on a single test.

## TWO: SKILLS

The Traits a character possesses represent their natural strengths, while Skills are abilities gained through experience. Many characters will possess some of the same Skills, but everyone will have varying degrees of mastery in each. A complete list of Skills and their definitions are listed on Page 128.

## THREE: CLAN, FAMILY AND SCHOOL

On Page 84 you will find more information about each of the Eight Great Clans as well as rules for ronin and members of Minor Clans. The first thing you will want to do is choose a Clan (or decide to be a ronin). After choosing which clan your character belongs to, read the descriptions of the families who claim loyalty to each clan and decide which one your character is a member of. You should then decide what profession your character follows and write that under Profession on the Character Sheet. Under the entry for School, write the name of the school where your character was trained. Descriptions of these schools can be found under each clan description. Each School and Family gives bonuses to certain Traits. Increase these Traits accordingly. Next, record the skills that each School grants the character under the Skills section. Those Skills begin at Rank 1. Your Rank in the School also starts at 1 and bushi schools teach a technique that should be written down in the Technique/Spells section of your Character Sheet. Shugenja schools teach certain spells, which should be recorded under the Technique/Spells, section as well. Even if a family that you have chosen is traditionally comprised of bushi, this does not mean your character must be a bushi. Characters almost always attend the schools of their clan but there are some circumstances that will allow the character to attend another Clan's school. (see "Advantages and Disadvantages")

## FOUR: CHARACTER POINTS

After selecting your Clan, Family, and School, it is time to spend Character points. You have 30 Character Points to spend on customizing your character. Character Points are spent as follows:

- Increasing a Skill costs an amount of Character Points equal to the Rank you are advancing the Skill to. To increase a Skill to Rank 3 from Rank 2 would cost three Character Points. To purchase a new skill at Rank 1 costs one skill point. Each Rank must be paid for separately.
- Increasing a Trait costs an amount of Character Points equal to the Trait's new Rank  $\times$  3. To increase a Trait from Rank 2 to Rank 3

would cost nine Character Points. Each Rank must be paid for separately. You cannot increase a Ring directly (other than Void) though increasing the lower of the two Traits associated with a Ring will increase the Ring accordingly.

- Increasing Void costs an amount of Character Points equal to the new Void Rank  $\times$  5. To increase Void from Rank 2 to Rank 3 would cost fifteen Character Points.
- To increase your character's Honor Rank costs three Character Points. Lowering your character's Honor Rank will give you two extra Character Points to spend. You may only increase or lower your Honor Rank during character creation once.
- To increase your character's Glory Rank you may purchase the Social Position Advantage for 5 Character Points.
- The cost for each Advantage and Disadvantage is listed on Page 71.

## FIVE: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Advantages and Disadvantages are another way of customizing your character. While Advantages cost Character Points to purchase, Disadvantages are flaws that your character possesses and gain you additional Character Points. You may only gain 10 Character Points from Disadvantages. (You may take more than 10 points worth of Disadvantages, but you gain no extra Character Points for them.) The complete list of Advantages and Disadvantages is on Page 71.

## SIX: WOUNDS

Your character might accumulate Wounds, either through combat or mishap. The Wound section of your character has seven Wound Ranks, and as your character accumulates Wounds they begin to interfere with his ability to function. Your character should have a number of Wounds equal to his Earth Ring  $\times$  2 on each Rank.

## SEVEN: HONOR

Every character has Honor. Honor is ranked from 0 to 5 and measures your character's nobility and adherence to bushido. A character with high Honor is one who can be trusted to keep his word, be fair in judgments and present himself with dignity. He is a man who has integrity, one who at the same time is concerned when his integrity is questioned. A character with a low Honor Trait also might care about his reputation, but for more selfish reasons. A dishonorable character seldom keeps his word and takes advantage of all opportunities. While playing a character with low Honor may seem easy, there are disadvantages. Low-honor characters are easily tempted perform dishonorable acts, while a character is more resistant to such behavior. This is illustrated through "Tests of Honor." You can find rules for Honor Tests on Page 65.

Characters with a high Awareness can sometimes gain a sense of another's Honor. Those with low Honor have the feel of a rogue about them; there is something vaguely untrustworthy about them. Honorable

characters have a nobility and trustworthiness that is unmistakable; they tend to get better deals in the market and attract other honorable people to them.

Note that honor is not necessarily defined by what is good though those virtues overlap more often than not. A Scorpion ninja who follows his daimyo's orders and is unquestioningly loyal to his clan might be quite honorable indeed, though the dishonorable acts he is asked to perform may ultimately limit how high his Honor can increase.

While a character's Honor is mostly defined by a character's self-image and why he performs the actions he does, a character's Glory is defined by how those around him view that character and his actions — it is a gauge of political status in the Empire. A character's Honor and Glory are independent of one another. A dishonorable samurai might secretly perform horrible deeds and reap political advantage from it, while an honorable samurai might toil forever in obscurity, content with his lot. All characters' beginning Honor Rank depends on their Clan. This should be listed within the description for each clan. Listed below are the five Honor Ranks. Each has a brief description of a character at that Honor Rank. Players can use these descriptions as guides for role-playing their own characters. Honor, unlike other statistics, cannot increase above 5.

When a character chooses an Honor Rank, he begins with 5 Honor Points in that Rank. If he performs an Action that is unworthy of that Honor Rank, he will lose a number of Honor Points. The Game Master determines the number of Honor Points he loses. Minor infringements may incur a loss as small as 1 Honor Point, while a penalty as high as a whole Rank may accrue for a truly reprehensible act. If a character ever loses all of his Honor Points in a Rank he falls one Honor Rank lower, with 5 Honor Points in that Rank.

Honor losses and gains are not static, universal amounts. Characters with low Honor lose less Honor for dishonorable acts, and gain more for honorable behavior. Likewise, characters with high Honor gain less Honor for honorable acts, and lose a great deal more for dishonorable acts. Characters with average Honor lose or gain a moderate amount depending on their actions.

**Example: Yogo Kamatsu has an Honor Rank of 2.1. He has betrayed one of his comrades causing him to lose 3 Honor Points. His Honor Rank is now 1.8.**

The Honor Ranks are defined as follows. Please keep in mind that these are not rigid restrictions upon your character's behavior, merely a guideline for how to appropriately replay a character of each Honor Rank. Your choices, ultimately, are your own.

#### **HONOR RANK 0: "HONORLESS DOG"**

You do not adhere to the principles of bushido. You mock those who do, viewing bushido as a code followed by easily manipulated idealists. You cannot be trusted. You would not hesitate to betray anyone to gain advantage.



### HONOR RANK 1: "UNTRUSTWORTHY"

You are untrustworthy, but not to the extent of a 0 Honor character. You have some veneer of virtue which may be relied upon (perhaps you admire duty and courage but scoff at the rest of the virtues), but still generally disdain bushido. You recognize the importance of bushido, but consider it to be an inconvenience. You easily ignore your conscience when it suits you.

### HONOR RANK 2: "WHAT IS EXPECTED"

This is the default level of Honor for those of the samurai caste. You follow the tenets of bushido to the letter. You have qualms whenever you must let your own interests be supplanted by the interests of your Clan, but you generally do what honor requires. You believe in bushido, but sometimes find it difficult to understand and shy away from truly selfless acts of virtue.

### HONOR RANK 3: "EXCEPTIONAL"

You have seen the strength of bushido and embraced it. While you feel the temptations of "low" character, you ignore them easily. Only the strongest temptations can shake your resolve. Occasionally you allow yourself to ignore virtue in the name of practicality, but this is still a difficult decision to make.

### HONOR RANK 4: "A SOUL ABOVE QUESTION"

You are a rarity, one of the few samurai who cannot be swayed from their duty to kin and clan. Because of your devotion to bushido, others consider you impractical. While you recognize this, you see virtue as more important than pragmatism — honor is its own reward, and wipes away failure.

### HONOR RANK 5: "STRENGTH OF A THOUSAND ANCESTORS"

Those who have reached Honor 5 are the stuff of legends. You are so far beyond reproach that those who question your honor are looked upon with distrust and disdain. You are selfless, completely devoted to family and clan. Ironically at this level, some amount of flexibility is regained — you define virtue with your every action.

## EIGHT: GLORY

Glory is a Trait that greatly influences how the rest of Rokugan views your character and how they will interact with him. Glory represents how well known and respected your character is in Rokugan. All characters have a Glory Rank between zero and ten. Their School Rank directly modifies their Glory Rank. A character's Glory Rank is almost always at least equal to his School Rank.

**Example:** Doji Domotai has reached Rank 2 in the Akodo School, making her Glory Rank also a 2.

Characters can increase their Glory by gaining Glory Points. The character's lord always awards Glory. When a character gains ten Glory Points in his current Glory Rank, he is eligible to rise to the next Rank; these promotions in Glory rank rely on the approval of the character's direct superior. A lord cannot advance a character to a Rank that is equal to his own. In fact, many lords may be reluctant to advance a character to a Rank close to their own. If a character's direct superior is a Non-Player Character then a Game Master can award Glory Ranks.

### TESTS OF HONOR

Any time your character fails a test that directly causes him to lose Honor he may declare a Test of Honor. This allows the character a second chance to make the same test, but he must replace either the Trait or the Skill he used in the previous test with his Honor Rank. If this attempt succeeds, he gains a point of Honor. If this fails, he loses two points of Honor. Only one Test of Honor may be attempted on each failed test.



## GLORY RANKS

Glory is a measurement of political standing and fame. A character's Glory Rank is usually equal to or greater than his School Rank. Any attempt to recognize a character (who is making no attempt to disguise himself) may add the target's Glory Rank to the Perception test.

A general guide to Glory Ranks follows.

### Samurai Glory Ranks

The Emperor	10
Shogun	9.9
Imperial Family	9.5
Voice of the Emperor	9.5
The Seppun/Otomo/Miya family members	9.2
Emerald Champion	9
Jade Champion	9
Imperial Chancellor	9
Imperial Advisor	9
Clan Daimyo	8
Imperial Herald	7
Family Daimyo	7
Provincial Governor	6-7
Hatamoto (a daimyo's honored retainer)	6
City Governor	5
Karo (advisor to a lord)	4.7
Emerald Magistrate	4.5
Clan Magistrate	4
Clan Artisan	3+
Diplomat	2+
Gokenin (estate manager)	2+
Shisha (Imperial messenger)	2+
Witch Hunter	0.5+
Noble Merchant	0.5+
Bounty Hunter	0.1+
Ronin	0.1+

### Heimin (Peasant) Glory Ranks

Monk	2
Doshin (peasant village officers)	1
Budoka (peasant warrior)	1
Ashigaru (peasant soldier)	0.7
Hyakusho (farmers, woodsmen, fishermen)	0.6
Shokunin (craftsmen)	0.5
Akindo (merchants, peddlers)	0.5
Peasant Retainer (peasant levy)	0

### Hinin ("Non-People")

Entertainers, Geisha	-1
Leatherworkers, Butchers	-4
Torturers	-5
Gravediggers	-8
Ninja*	-10

Nezumi, Naga, the Lost, and others who are outside of Rokugani society have a Glory Rank of 0.

\* This assumes the individual's status as a ninja is publicly known — most ninja keep this a secret.

## NOTE: INSIGHT AND SCHOOL RANK

Insight and School Rank are two Traits that will have a great influence on your character interactions within the Empire. Your character's Insight gives an estimate of how experienced the character has become. The School Rank reflects the training he has acquired.

### INSIGHT

To determine a character's Insight add up his Rings (Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Void) and multiply the total by 10. Then total up the number of Ranks in Skills, not counting the first Rank in each Skill. If you have 12 Skills at Rank 1, you get no Insight from your Skills. If you have 6 Skills at Rank 2, you gain six points of Insight. If you have 3 Skills at Rank 4 you gain nine points of Insight. Any time an applicable skill or Ring increases, Insight immediately increases as well.

### INSIGHT RANK

When a character gains Insight, he also gains greater understanding, and may return to his school to learn more. School Rank represents this. All characters begin as Rank 1. As a character gains Insight, he draws closer to Rank 2. When he reaches 151 Insight, he returns to his School and the sensei teaches him the secrets of Rank 2, embodied in a new technique or perhaps new spells and spellcasting ability (in the case of a shugenja). A character may increase his School Rank with Insight as follows.

Rank 1	0–150 pts
Rank 2	151–175 pts
Rank 3	176–200 pts
Rank 4	201–225 pts
Rank 5	226–250 pts

### SCHOOL RANK

For most characters, Insight Rank and School Rank are identical. However, characters who purchase the Multiple Schools Advantage will wish to keep track of these two attributes separately. For characters with Multiple Schools, the Rank in each school is determined independently for the purposes of Rank-dependent Techniques. The total of all Ranks in all schools the character possesses, however, can never exceed his Insight Rank.

## TEK: EXPERIENCE POINTS

Everyone gets better at what they do through practice and experience. Your character is no different. At the end of each session, the Game Master will award your character a number of "Experience Points." These points can be used to increase your characters Traits and Skills. Advantages may be purchased as well with the approval of a Game Master.

Increasing a character's Trait or Void above Rank 5 requires a significant amount of role-play outside of just expending Experience Points. Typically when a character spends the experience to raise a Trait or Void, they must undergo a series of "tests" (given by their sensei, a Fortune, or other appropriate character played by the Game Master or another NPC) in order to actually achieve the new level.

**Traits:** The cost for increasing a Trait is the next Rank  $\times$  3 (to go from Rank 3 to Rank 4 would cost 12 Experience Points)

**Skills:** The cost for increasing a Skill is the next Rank in Experience Points (to go from no Skill at all to a Rank 1 in a Skill would cost 1 Experience Point)

**Void:** The cost for increasing the Void Ring is the next Rank  $\times$  5 (to go from a Void of 2 to a Void of 3 would cost 15 Experience Points.)

**Advantage:** The cost for purchasing a new Advantage is double that Advantage's normal Character Point cost. GM permission is required to purchase a new Advantage, and some Advantages may not be purchased after character creation at all (stated in their descriptions).



CHAPTER THREE:

# CHARACTER BUILDING

## BLOOD AND HONOR PART FOUR

CHAPTER THREE  
CHARACTER BUILDING

Kanshiro waited quietly in the shadows of the library, looking for any sign of movement, any sound that heralded the one for whom he waited. When she appeared, it was completely quiet. Soshi Kaoru simply stepped out of the darkness and smiled at him from behind her mask. Kanshiro was startled, but not truly surprised. Scorpion were taught to move with silence and precision; he considered it something of a compliment that she had allowed him to detect her before she had drawn any closer.

"Thank you for what you did for my brother," she said softly. "Even though Aichi abandoned Isa, he could not stand to hear her mistreated so."

"He told you what happened?" Kanshiro asked, surprised.

Kaoru only smiled. "I am adept at uncovering secrets," she said. "I assume that is why you have asked for my help?"

Kanshiro nodded. "You are the only one here, other than myself, that I know was not in the governor's chamber after I left," he said. "You are the only one I can trust."

Surprise flashed across Kaoru's delicate features. "It is not often that a Scorpion hears those words," Kanshiro replied. "Kanshiro, I think you trust too easily."

"Do I?" Kanshiro replied. "I am no fool, Kaoru. I know you were using me."

"Using you?" Kaoru retorted, a hint of outrage in her voice. "Why would you say that? How did I ever use you, Kanshiro?"

"Of all those here in the court of Honored Treaty City, I was the only one who presented no political advantage, who offered you nothing. Thus, I was the only one with whom you

could relax. With me, there was no pressure to be a Scorpion." He smiled. "That is how you used me, Kaoru. And that is why I trust you."

She looked at him blankly for a long time, then a small chuckle escaped her lips. "You are a strange man, Shiba Kanshiro," she said. "For my part, I hope I don't betray the faith you've placed in me. Now why did you summon me?"

"This library contained Seppun Juro's most valued secret texts, including a collection of advanced texts about poison manufacture," Kanshiro replied. "The library is tended only by a single Seppun librarian."

"Ha," Kaoru replied with a disdainful sniff. "These shelves are spotless."

Kanshiro grinned. "I was thinking the same thing," he replied. "In addition, whoever killed Juro escaped without notice. This library extends beneath the entire palace."

"You expect to find a secret passage of some sort?" she asked.

Kanshiro nodded. "I have heard Scorpion magic excels at finding such things."

"It does," Kaoru replied, drawing a scroll from her satchel and studying it carefully. "I will be glad to help. Though I confess I wondered if perhaps you had ulterior motives for getting me alone in these library halls."

Kanshiro blinked at her.

"I suppose now you will never know," she said with a small smile, moving off into the shadows as she began whispering words of magic.



# CHARACTER BUILDING

This chapter goes into precarious detail on a number of character options which you will need to flesh out your character. As Advantages and Disadvantages can greatly affect your Character Point total, they are listed first, followed by Schools (which will define the overall theme and purpose of your character), Skills, and Spells.

## ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

While your character's School, Rank, Skills, and profession determine much about her they are not the truly defining qualities. Below is a list of advantages and disadvantages that you can take in order to give your character a more complete background. Advantages cost you Character Points and Disadvantages give you extra points, to a maximum of ten. Additional Disadvantages may be taken with the GM's approval, but you gain no extra points for them. The point cost for each is listed in parentheses.

### ADVANTAGES

#### ABSOLUTE DIRECTION (1 POINT)

You never get lost. Gain a +5 bonus to any test involving navigation and mapping. This Advantage must be purchased during character creation.

#### ALLIES (VARIABLE)

You have connections all over. Two points spent gets you a single Minor ally; four buys you a Major Ally. Minor allies will help you get legal items like food, shelter, and some money. Major allies go out of their way to help you and get things like fake travel papers, audiences with a daimyo, or large amounts of koku. This advantage may not be purchased after character creation, but may be awarded if the GM feels you have made significant attempts to gain the alliance of another character. This Advantage represents an alliance with an NPC, and is not necessary to represent friendships with player characters.

#### AMBIDEXTROUS (3 POINTS)

You may use a weapon in either hand with no penalty. A character that does not have this advantage has a -5 test penalty on any attack using his off-hand. This Advantage must be purchased during character creation.



## BENTEN'S BLESSING

(3 POINTS, 2 FOR CRANE CHARACTERS)

You are blessed by the Fortune of Romantic Love. This may translate into physical appearance, or simple charisma, or a combination. Gain a +2 bonus to tests when attempting to persuade others (increasing to +4 if they are already attracted to you). Bente's Blessing is ineffective on Seduction Tests.

## BLACKMAIL

(GLORY RANK OF BLACKMAILED INDIVIDUAL, MINIMUM 1)

You are holding some bit of information or evidence over another person's head. This Advantage functions similarly to Allies except it is far more dangerous. A blackmailed person will be more willing to do things for you than an ally, but be wary of pushing too far — no one likes being blackmailed. The cost of this advantage is equal to the glory of the blackmailed individual, minimum one. The target is unaware of what you know unless you choose to use the information. Be warned that this Advantage does not, in and of itself, protect you from any retribution the target may choose to take on you. Be certain your plan to reveal their shame is solid enough to risk forcing their aid.

You may have this advantage multiple times, each time affecting a different person. Scorpion pay one less point for this advantage, minimum one. This advantage may not be purchased after character creation, but may be awarded if the GM feels you have made significant attempts to blackmail another character.

## BLAND (2 POINTS)

You are either unassuming by nature — a quiet person with average build and features — or you have learned to carry yourself in an unassuming manner. Because you are not striking in any way it is easy to forget your name and appearance. You may not take Bente's Blessing, Danger Beauty, Bad Reputation, or Bente's Curse at character creation. Any test to recognize you has a -10 penalty unless you call attention to yourself.

## BLOOD OF OSANO-UO (5 POINTS)

The Fortune of Fire and Thunder protects you, rendering you resistant to extremes of temperature. You gain a +10 bonus to any Stamina checks involving weather. You gain a Free Raise on any spell with Fire or Thunder in the title.

## CLEAR THINKER (2 POINTS)

You are hard to deceive. When another character tries to confuse, befuddle, or lie to you they get a -5 penalty.

## COMBAT REFLEXES (6 POINTS)

You have a near-supernatural ability to determine other people's actions in combat. After initiative is rolled for combat you may switch Initiative with the character whose action is directly before your own.

## CRAB HANDS

(6 POINTS; 4 POINTS FOR CRAB CLAN)

You are familiar with many forms of weapons and can wield virtually any of them with some degree of effectiveness. You are considered to have one rank in all weapon skills. You may thus make Raises as normal when using any weapon, even if you normally have no Skill Ranks with it. If you wish to purchase the skill at a later date you must purchase it at Rank 1 as normal.

## CRAFTY

(5 POINTS, 3 POINTS FOR SCORPION CLAN)

Your mind is cunning and devilish, enabling you to perform the dirtiest and most underhanded tasks. You are considered to have one rank in all Low skills. You may thus make Raises as normal when using any Low Skill, even if you normally have no Skill Ranks with it. If you wish to purchase a Low Skill at a later date you must purchase it at Rank 1 as per normal. In addition, some Game Masters may decide that it is easier for Crafty players to scrounge up useful items in times of crisis. Make an Intelligence Test (TN 10). The Difficulty increases depending on the rarity of the item.

## DANGEROUS BEAUTY

(2 POINTS, 1 FOR SCORPION CHARACTERS)

You possess unparalleled beauty. A character with Dangerous Beauty receives a +5 bonus on Seduction tests.

## DAREDEVIL (4 POINTS)

You are a risk taker. Whenever you attempt to do something extremely risky, the Game Master pulls a card. If the card value is even, you receive a bonus of +5 to the attempt (unknown to you until after the results are tallied). If a Joker is pulled, pull again and add a +10 bonus if the card is even.

## DEATH TRANCE

(3 POINTS, 2 FOR LION CHARACTERS)

Death has no hold over you. When faced with it your mind enters into a thoughtless trance that gives you great courage. You automatically succeed in all Fear tests.

## DIFFERENT SCHOOL (5 POINTS)

Your character trained at a school outside of his clan as a hostage or an "exchange student." This required some effort on the part of your family and will most certainly color the opinions of others when dealing with you. You may select a starting school not normally offered to your clan.

## **EAR OF THE EMPEROR (4 POINTS)**

You have a semi-direct line to the Imperial Court, whether through familial connections, favors, social or political influence, or simple respect. You must clearly define the terms of this connection at character creation. You are treated as if your Glory Rank were one level higher than normal in court settings and around courtiers. This advantage may not be purchased after character creation, but may be awarded if the GM feels you have made significant attempts to gain such political influence.

## **GREAT DESTINY (4 POINTS)**

When you were born, the ancestors, the Fortunes, or possibly even the Kami smiled upon you. You serve a purpose, and that purpose will not be denied. Once per session, if you take damage that would kill you, you are instead reduced to the lowest Wound level and somehow escape notice until you have a chance to recover. Once a GM deems that your destiny has resolved itself, you lose this Advantage and gain 8 Experience Points.

## **HANDS OF STONE (4 POINTS)**

Your Damage Rating with unarmed attacks is increased by two.

## **HEARTLESS (2 POINTS)**

All attempts to sway your heart with pleas of compassion, love, or courtesy fall on deaf ears. You gain a +5 bonus when resisting attempts to manipulate you into merciful action.

## **HIGHER PURPOSE (2 POINTS)**

Your entire existence is focused on some overriding goal, named when this Advantage is taken. This must be somewhat specific, such as "fight the minions of Fu Leng" or "avenge my father's death." It cannot be something vague like "survive" or "be a good samurai." Whenever a Game Master determines that you have taken a step towards achieving your Higher Purpose, gain an extra experience point at the end of the session. If you resolve your Higher Purpose permanently, you gain 5 Experience Points.

## **IMPERIAL SPOUSE (2 POINTS)**

You are married to a member of one of the Imperial Houses. Having an Imperial Spouse allows you to know more of the goings-on of the Court and can grant you small boons in times of need. In addition, even though your spouse has your family name they are still considered Imperial by sycophants, well wishers, and those who wish to harm said family. This counts as a Minor Ally and also grants you 0.5 Glory among those who know of your spouse's origins. This Advantage may not be purposefully purchased after character creation, though it may be awarded.

## **INHERITANCE (VARIABLE)**

You are the bearer of some valuable inherited item, carried by your family for generations. Minor magical items cost 2 or 3 points, while legendary

items might cost up to 20 points. The final point cost and abilities are left to the GM's discretion.

## **IRREPROACHABLE (VARIABLE)**

You are devoted to your word. For each point spent on this advantage you gain a +2 bonus when resisting seduction and bribery attempts. You may not purchase Greed or Lechery. The number of Ranks you possess in this Advantage may not exceed your Honor.

## **KHARMIC TIE (1-5 POINTS)**

You have a spiritual connection to another character. Once per session per point in this advantage you can gain a +4 bonus to any test that involves helping or protecting your tie. The exact nature of this relationship must be determined when the Advantage is taken, and the target of your tie does not necessarily possess a tie to you in return. This advantage may not be purchased after character creation, but may be awarded if the GM feels you have developed a special connection to another character.

## **LANGUAGES (2 POINTS PER LANGUAGE)**

For every two points taken in this advantage you are able to read, write, and speak a new language. Possible languages include the following: Ashalan, Bakemono, Chikushudo (animal spirits), High Rokugani, Ivory Kingdoms, Kami (shugenja), Mekhem (a common language in the Burning Sands), Moto, Mujina, Naga, Nezumi, Ogre, Oni, Rokugani, Senpet (Gaijin), Tsuno, and Yobanjin. All members of the samurai caste are assumed to have Rokugani and High Rokugani. (All human Rokugani characters speak Rokugani. All samurai characters speak High Rokugani and all shugenja speak Kami. All Nezumi characters speak Nezumi.)

## **LARGE (2 POINTS, 1 FOR CRAB CHARACTERS)**

You are huge by Rokugan's standards. This is an advantage in combat, but a disadvantage in social situations. You deal +2 Wounds per hit. Apply a -1 penalty to all social checks. This advantage may not be purchased after character creation.

## **LUCK (3, 6, OR 9 POINTS)**

You gain one rank of Luck for every three points invested in this advantage. Once per session per rank of luck, after any opposed or unopposed test, you may declare that you are using this advantage to get a redraw. You must accept the second draw unless you wish to use Luck again (assuming you have uses left).

## **MAGIC RESISTANCE (2, 4, OR 6 POINTS)**

You are highly resistant to spell effects. For every two points spent in Magic Resistance any spells targeting you have their TN raised by 3.



## MULTIPLE SCHOOLS (SPECIAL)

You may take Ranks in another school other than the one you began in. Your Rank in your previous school is permanently frozen, and you cannot take further ranks in that school unless you purchase this Advantage again to return to it. You gain no Trait bonus or skills for joining the new school. Your total ranks in all schools can never be higher than your Insight Rank. You cannot mix shugenja and non-shugenja schools. The only exceptions to this rule are the Kuni Witch Hunter and Kuni Shugenja School — if these are your only two schools you may take ranks from both as you desire once you have purchased this Advantage. Shugenja who purchase this advantage gain all Affinities and Deficiencies from all schools they have attended, but they cannot gain an Affinity or Deficiency they already possess nor can they attend a school that grants an Affinity for any element with which they already possess a Deficiency.

This Advantage may only be purchased after character creation with the GM's permission, and costs 6 Experience Points.



### PRECISE MEMORY (3 POINTS)

It is nearly impossible for you to forget a fact, face, or figure. When you wish to access any basic memory or experience you have had make an Intelligence Test (Difficulty 5). It may be more difficult to access detailed and complex information.

### QUICK (5 POINTS)

You are naturally fast. Gain a +5 bonus to all Initiative draws.

### READ LIPS (2 POINTS)

With a successful Perception Test (Difficulty 5) you can read the lips of anyone whose face you can see clearly.

### SENSEI (1-5 POINTS)

You have a deeper bond with your sensei than most samurai. You each go out of your way to aid one another because of this bond. The cost of this advantage is equal to the rank of your sensei. This Advantage may not be purchased after character creation, but may be awarded if the GM feels you have developed a special relationship with your sensei.



## ROLE-PLAYING ADVANTAGES

At many LARPs, the sheer number of characters makes it difficult for judges to determine if all players are playing their characters appropriately. Many of the advantages can be abused by dishonest players who simply take them for the extra points and then ignore their drawbacks.

To prevent this, GM's may consider rewarding additional Experience Points to players who role-play their Disadvantages appropriately. The lecherous Crane courtier who wanders off to flirt with a pretty Battle Maiden just as the Seppun ambassador he has been charged to meet with arrives may fail in his objectives, but he has succeeded in playing his character extremely well. Disadvantages such as Vanity and Fascination are particularly excellent role-playing tools.

## SOCIAL POSITION

(5 POINTS PER RANK, MAXIMUM 4 RANKS)

You have an important position within Rokugani society and are more readily known because of it. Add one to your glory rank for every five points in this advantage. The exact nature of this position must be determined at character creation. This Advantage may not be purchased after character creation, though Glory may be awarded as your character progresses.

## STRENGTH OF THE EARTH

(2, 4 OR 8 POINTS)

You are more resilient than most samurai and can withstand more damage. For every two points spent in this advantage reduce the penalty for your wounds by 2 on each level (minimum -0).

## TRUE FRIEND (VARIABLE)

True friendship is a rare commodity in Rokugan. You and your friend have a deep bond and would go to great lengths to aid one another. This advantage has two costs:

### Influence

- 1 Point — Minor influence (typical samurai)
- 2 Points — Some influence (magistrate or courtier)
- 3 Points — Major influence (daimyo)

### Devotion

- 1 Point — Would go out of his way, but not risk his honor
- 2 Points — Would risk his honor secretly
- 3 Points — Would do anything to aid you

This Advantage may not be purchased after character creation, but may be awarded if the GM feels you have developed a true friendship. This Advantage represents friendship with NPC's, and is not necessary to represent friendships with player characters.

## VOICE (2 POINTS)

You have trained your voice to be better than most around. You gain a +2 bonus on any social test involving speaking.

# DISADVANTAGES

## ARTISOCIAL (2 OR 4 POINTS)

You are unused to social situations, or you simply do not like other people. The amount of points spent in this Disadvantage determines the penalty you receive in all social tests:

2 Points — Moderate (-3 penalty)

4 Points — Extreme (-6 penalty)

## ASCETIC (3 POINTS)

Material gain means nothing to you. Your priorities are on intangibles such as honor and enlightenment. You start with basic equipment; only what you need to survive (weapon, average clothes, food, and at times armor). A samurai ascetic will own a daisho, but little else of value.

## BAD HEALTH (3 POINTS)

You calculate Wound Ranks as if your Earth were one Rank lower.

## BAD REPUTATION (2 POINTS)

You have earned you a nasty reputation in Rokugani society. Any attempts to recognize you get a +5 bonus, but others generally know of your ill deeds and judge you for them in advance. Choose a one-word description to detail your reputation.

## BENTEN'S CURSE (2 POINTS)

Something about you repulses other people. Either you are ugly or simply rude. You have a -5 penalty on all social tests except Intimidation.

## BLACK SHEEP (5 POINTS)

You have been ostracized from your family. Though not technically a ronin, your family shuns you. You cannot progress beyond Rank 1 in your current school and members of your clan will treat you as an outsider.

## BRASH (2 POINTS)

You are hot-headed and easy to anger. You will react aggressively to any insult on your honor. You can resist your brashness with a Test of Willpower + Honor + a card from the deck (TN 10). The GM may raise this TN accordingly for increasingly infuriating insults.

## CAN'T LIE (3 POINTS)

Simply put, you are not a good liar. Whenever you try, you fail horribly.



## COMPULSION (2-4 POINTS)

You have some uncontrollable urge (drinking, gambling, women, drugs, etc.) that often gets you into trouble. You must make a test of Willpower + Honor + a card from the deck (TN 10 + Points of this Disadvantage) each time you are confronted with your Compulsion.

## CONTRARY (3 POINTS)

You always have an opinion and cannot remain neutral in any situation. You will never stand by idly in a dispute and must choose a side. You can resist this temptation with a test of Willpower + Honor + a card from the deck (TN 10 + Points of this Disadvantage)

## DARK SECRET (5 POINTS)

You have a dangerous secret that would not only jeopardize you, but your entire family or clan if it got out. If the secret ever becomes public knowledge (i.e. known by people other than those involved in the secret) you will be expected to commit seppuku or be cast out as a ronin.

## DEPENDENT (1-3 POINTS)

Someone close relies entirely upon you to look after them. This person is helpless without you (an aged father, naïve spouse, or child).

1 Point — Adult

2 Points — Elderly person

3 Points — Child

## DRIVEN (3 POINTS)

There is a single defining goal that you pattern your entire existence off of and will sacrifice anything, including honor and family, to make certain it is accomplished. The exact goal must be determined at character creation. If presented with a chance to fulfill this goal you must make test of Willpower + Honor + a card from the deck (TN 10) or immediately cease your activities and pursue your obsession.

## FASCINATION (1 POINT)

You are a consummate hobbyist (horses, music, katanas, history, etc.) and will go to great lengths to investigate these pleasures. While not as dangerous or dishonorable as a compulsion, you do spend an excessive amount of time dwelling upon your fascination (much to the dismay of whoever is trapped in a conversation with you).

## FORSAKEN (2 POINTS, 3 FOR LION)

The ancestors have turned their back upon you for some reason (determined at character creation). No ancestor will ever talk to you or come to your aid. If this ever comes to light others will look down on you and you could possibly lose Glory. You cannot be Haunted.

## FRAIL MIND (3 POINTS)

You have a weak mind that makes it easier for others to seduce you, cast spells on you, or do anything that involves your Willpower. In such situations your opponent receives a +5 bonus.

## GREED (1-3 POINTS)

You are greedy. For each point in Greed your enemies get a +3 bonus when attempting to bribe you.

## GULLIBLE (3 POINTS)

You believe anything anyone tells you if they are convincing enough. Opponents gain a +5 bonus to convince you of anything.

## HAUNTED (1-3 POINTS)

An ancestral spirit is not happy with you and shows up to let you know it. He is distracting, insulting, and generally annoying, but you must respect him because he is your ancestor. Characters with a Kharmic Tie to you can see and hear this ghost as well. You cannot be Forsaken.

1 Point — Shows up once a session

2 Points — Shows up twice a session

3 Points — Remains every session

## IDEALISTIC

### (2 POINTS, 3 FOR LION)

A samurai with this disadvantage has a much more extreme view of Bushido than held by most. You are quick to pass judgment, unrelenting in your ideals, and lose more honor than others (one more point per loss).

## INSENSITIVE (2 POINTS)

Your life, your health, and your wealth are the only things that are important to you. Other people are tools to help you along your path. You must spend a Void point to take any action that would help another and not yourself.



### **LAME (3 POINTS)**

You have a crippled leg. Any Test involving Agility has -5 penalty.

### **LECHERY (1-4 POINTS)**

Love is far more important to you than it should be. For each point spent all opponents gain a +2 bonus when attempting to seduce you, and you are often distracted by attractive members of the opposite sex.

### **LOST LOVE (2 POINTS)**

At some point in your life you experienced great love and then a great loss. When you are reminded of your love you become melancholy for at least an hour (all of your draws have a -3 penalty). You can spend a Void point to negate this melancholy for the session.

### **MISSING LIMB (3 POINTS)**

You are missing some part of your body (a hand, foot, leg, etc). Any physical tests involving that limb have a -5 penalty to the draw.

### **MOMOKU (8 POINTS)**

Something has caused a great disturbance in your soul. Whether it be a maho curse, an ancestor's disgrace, or your own failing you cannot spend Void points for any reason.

### **REMNESIS (+2 POINTS)**

This is the dark counterpart to Kharmic Tie. Choose a Sworn Enemy. This person was an enemy to you in a past life as well and the hatred carries over. You cannot spend Void Points against your enemy. Like Kharmic Tie, there is no guarantee your enemy possesses the same weakness where you are concerned.

### **OBLIGATION (2 OR 4 POINTS)**

You have sworn to aid someone in return for a past favor. A two point obligation is a minor favor (would not cause you to lose honor). A four point obligation is a major favor (just about anything). When the obligation is called in you must do everything in your power to honor the request. Failure results in loss of an entire rank of Honor or worse, depending on the nature of the Obligation (at the very least, others will see you as unable to fulfill your promises — a damning reputation in Rokugan).

### **PERMANENT WOUND (5 POINTS)**

You begin the game with a wound that never healed properly. You always start a session with the first Wound level filled. No magic or healing can restore these lost Wounds.

### **PHOBIA (1-5 POINTS)**

You have an unnatural fear of something. Whenever you encounter your phobia all of your Test Difficulties suffer a penalty equal to the points spent

in Phobia. Common phobias are fear of heights, darkness, the dead, blood, etc. The penalty lasts until the end of a session. This Phobia must be something that you would conceivably encounter during a LARP session.

### **SMALL (3 POINTS)**

You are below average height and weight by Rokugani standards. Whenever you deal damage in combat you cause two less Wounds than normal (minimum one).

### **SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE**

#### **(3 POINTS PER RANK)**

Your starting Glory is lowered by one Rank for every three points spent.

### **SOFT-HEARTED (2 POINTS)**

Your conscience overcomes you whenever you are about to commit an act of inhumane cruelty. When you try to take a human life you must succeed at a Willpower Test (Difficulty 10) or be unable to act.

### **SWORN ENEMY (1-5 POINTS)**

You have a sworn enemy who desires your death at almost any cost. The cost of this disadvantage determines your enemy's rank.

### **TRUE LOVE (3 POINTS)**

True love in Rokugan is celebrated, but not openly. It can be a painful experience for lovers when they are forced apart by marriage, clan ties, and status. Whenever you have to choose between your love and duty you must choose your love unless you spend a Void point. If you lose your True Love's favor, your Void is permanently reduced by one Rank until they die or you get it back.

### **UNLUCK (3, 6, OR 9 POINTS)**

You gain one rank of Unluck for every 3 points invested in this disadvantage. Before any test you must inform the Game Master that you have this disadvantage. Once per session per rank of Unluck, the Game Master may activate one rank of Unluck and force you to redraw. You must accept the new draw. It is possible for multiple ranks of Unluck to affect a single test, and you may take both Luck and Unluck.

### **WEAKNESS (5 POINTS)**

One of your starting Traits is hindered by weakness. You can reduce any of your Traits (except Void) by one point to gain 5 character points. You may not reduce a Trait below one, or by more than two with this disadvantage.

### **VANITY (1 POINT)**

Something about you simply radiates excellence... to you, anyway. The rest of the world does not always recognize this quality and in this case it is your duty to inform them of it.

# THE GREAT CLANS

Most player characters will hail from one of the eight Great Clans. Details on each of these clans follows.

## THE CRAB CLAN

For over one thousand years, the Empire of Rokugan has been protected from a terrible evil thanks to the impervious vigilance of the Crab Clan. When the Empire first formed, the Kami Hida gathered the strongest warriors and claimed the southernmost lands as his own, carving a vast realm from the bleak wilderness. When the forces of Fu Leng appeared and were eventually defeated, it was Hida who volunteered to stand guard against the evil that would eternally threaten his brother's kingdom.

The Crab have a well-deserved reputation as uncouth ruffians. They wage war against the Shadowlands every day, and virtually all have lost someone dear to them. They regard other clans as pampered, spoiled children who fail to appreciate the sacrifices the Crab have made in their name. Still, the Crab are universally respected for their military prowess despite this poor reputation, and there are many among the other clans who are eager to lend a hand in their perpetual struggle.

**Allies:** The Crab have forged an alliance with the Crane for the first time in history, and the two are fast allies in all endeavors even if their philosophical differences are considerable. The Lion and Unicorn are also considered allies, if to a lesser extent. The tattooed men of the Dragon are sworn enemies of the Shadowlands, and are thus always welcome in Crab lands even if the Crab do not understand them.

**Enemies:** Though they have always distrusted the Scorpion, the Crab have no true enemies among the Great Clans at present. The Shadowlands is their enemy, and they choose to focus their energy on that fact alone.



## THE FAMILIES

Four of the Crab Clan's families were established when the clan first formed, and two have joined in the centuries since.

### THE HIDA

Lords of the Crab, the Hida are among the largest of all samurai families. They are unquestionably the largest in stature, for the average Hida samurai towers over warriors from other clans. The first Hida was perhaps the largest man to ever live, and perhaps the strongest warrior that Rokugan has known. His followers and descendants value strength and personal power over all things, and have used this strength to defend the Empire from the Shadowlands for over a thousand years. Their brief alliance with Fu Leng's forces during the Clan War is a great stain upon their honor in the opinion of many. The Crab Champions that have reigned since that time have each vowed to see their clan perish to a man before they permit such a thing to recur.

The Hida are invariably warriors, berserkers, and soldiers. There are virtually no bloodlines with-in the family that are strong in magic, and only those who are unable to serve upon the Wall are relegated to duty in court.

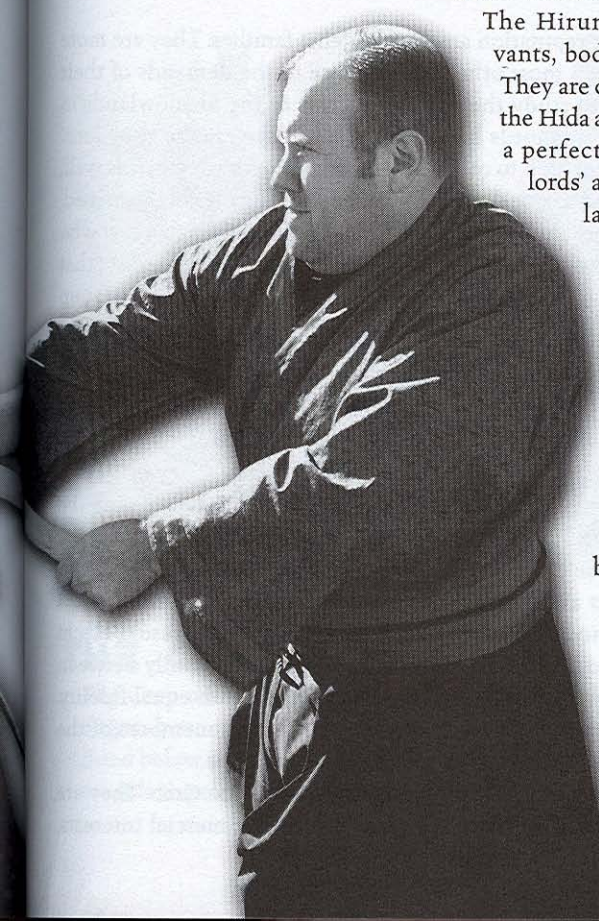
**Benefit:** +1 Strength

### THE HIRUMA

The Hiruma are the Hida's servants, bodyguards, and soldiers. They are cunning and agile when the Hida are strong and powerful, a perfect complement to their lords' abilities. Their ancestral

lands were lost to the Shadowlands for centuries before being finally recovered a few decades ago.

The recovery has been a long and painful process, for many of their provinces remain ravaged or even Tainted by the Ninth Kami's influence. Still, they have retained their home in the face of terrible punishment from the Shadowlands in recent years, and refuse to surrender it ever again.



The Hiruma are warriors, but not like the Hida. They emphasize speed and finesse, and frequently serve as scouts and spies in the Shadowlands.

**Benefit:** +1 Stamina

### THE KAIU

The first Kaiu is still numbered among the most brilliant men who have ever lived, even given a thousand years of innovation. His insights into smithing, engineering, and siege warfare established a tradition of academic warfare that has persisted to the present day. Kaiu's descendants maintain the Great Wall and all the traps and machines that continue to ensure its survivability. The weapons that every Crab warrior carries are likewise products of Kaiu ingenuity. While not as brusque as the Hida or Kuni, the Kaiu nevertheless lack the social niceties that other clans value so highly. A Kaiu simply does not understand the need for pretty words when a precise, logical, and accurate statement is all that is required.

Kaiu samurai tend to be learned warriors, focusing on a single weapon and diverse engineering skills rather than the broad weapon base their Hida cousins tend to study. They are reserved, conservative men and women who think problems through with all the relentless tenacity of a Crab.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

### THE KUNI

The Kuni have a poor reputation among shugenja families. They are more martially inclined than most other families due to the demands of their clan, and are forced to study the noxious secrets of the Shadowlands in order to help their Hida lords better understand the enemy they face. For their part, the Kuni look to other shugenja families with scorn as well, for they sit in safety and deride those who ensure that safety is not threatened.

Kuni samurai almost always study the shugenja path, though a few who do not possess the talent with the kami take up the sword. A small sect that includes both bushi and shugenja make up the Witch Hunters, a group devoted to destroying the Shadowlands' influence both within and beyond Crab lands.

**Benefit:** +1 Intelligence

### THE YASUKI

The Yasuki family's history is tumultuous to say the least. They originally served the Crane, their founder having sworn fealty to Kakita during the Empire's first days. Within a few centuries, however, a bitter war led to the family abandoning the Crane and joining the Crab. Years ago, the Yasuki daimyo died without an heir, and a Crane was declared the new Yasuki daimyo. Another period of conflict followed, but in the end Yasuki Hachi pledged his loyalty to both Crane and Crab, dividing the family between two masters. Thus far, they have served both masters with equal fidelity. Though Hachi claims to be both Crab and Crane, other members of the Yasuki family declare themselves specifically Crab or Crane.

The Yasuki are the merchants and ambassadors for the Crab. They are looked down upon by other clans because of their commercial interests,

but the Yasuki do not care. They recognize the service they perform for the Crab, and for the Crane to a lesser extent, and do not shirk from their duties despite the scorn.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

## THE TORITAKA

Smaller even than the Kuni, the Toritaka are among the smallest families in Rokugan. Four decades ago, the Toritaka were known as the Falcon Clan, a reclusive band of spiritualists who kept to their remote lands and barely interacted with the Empire at large. Mere months before the onset of the Clan War, however, a magical disaster struck the Falcon lands when a maho-tsukai nearly succeeded in opening a portal to the spirit realms. Angered at the near cataclysm, Crab Champion Hida Kisada petitioned the court and was given permission to absorb the Falcon into the Crab. The Toritaka family was the result of this merger.

The Toritaka tend to be solitary folk. They have not abandoned their spiritual outlook, and find the hands of spirits in all things. They are usually warriors and scouts, although a few study the shugenja path and tend to be exceptionally gifted at it.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception



## THE CRAB SCHOOLS

The Crab maintain many different schools, each essential to the clan's ongoing struggle to protect the Empire from the Shadowlands. Those listed below are the most common, although they are by no means the only schools the clan maintains.



## THE HIDA BUSHI SCHOOL

Among the oldest and most respected bushi schools in the Empire, the Hida bushi school is based on the precepts that the great Hida considered most important. Those who study the Hida techniques focus on personal strength, inflicting enormous damage on an opponent meanwhile ignoring damage taken from an opponent's blows.

**Benefit:** +1 Stamina

**Skills:** Battle, Defense, Jiujutsu, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Lore (Shadowlands), Subojutsu.

**Outfit:** Standard Bushi, plus one additional weapon.

**Technique 1:** The Way of the Crab — You may ignore penalties for Heavy Armor. When wielding an ono, tetsubo, or dai tsuchi you may add your rank to the Damage Rating.

**Technique 2:** The Mountain Does Not Move — When taking damage, you may spend a Void point to pull a card and add it to your Earth. If the total is equal to or greater than the damage inflicted, you take no damage.

**Technique 3:** Two Pincers, One Mind — You may make an extra attack per combat round.

**Technique 4:** The Berserker Rage — Before making an attack roll, you may voluntarily take a Wound of damage to increase the Damage Rating of your weapon on a one for one basis. The penalty for these Wounds does not affect you until after your attack roll is made. You may not take more Wounds than your Rank, and this damage may not be negated by The Mountain Does Not Move.

**Technique 5:** The Mountain Does Not Fall — At the beginning of a combat round, you may spend a Void Point to take an action, even if you would be unable to do so because of your wound rank or magical incapacitation. You may ignore all penalties to this action. You may continue to do this every round so long as you spend one Void Point per round. When you have no more Void Points to spend, you return to your previous state.

## THE KUNI SHUGENJA SCHOOL

The Kuni shugenja have a reputation among other clans as a sinister ensemble prone to corruption and various kinds of foul play. This reputation is not undeserved, as the family has had more of their number succumb to the Taint than any other shugenja family. To the Kuni, this is unfortunate but understandable. Though they have taken every precaution the simple truth is that those who stand closest to flame are burnt most easily. It is only logical that more of them will fall than those who cower in their safe and well-defended homes.

**Benefit:** +1 Willpower

**Skills:** Calligraphy, Defense, Kenjutsu, Lore (Shadowlands), Meditation, any one High Skill, any one weapon skill.

**Outfit:** Standard Shugenja, plus three fingers of jade.

**Benefit: Kuni's Secret** — You begin the game in possession of the following spell scrolls: Sense, Commune, Summon, any 3 Earth spells, any 2 Fire spells, and any 1 Water spell. You have an Affinity for Earth spells, and a Deficiency for all Air spells.

## THE YASUKI TRADER SCHOOL

The infamous Yasuki traders fulfill a number of roles that the Crab consider unsavory or secondary to their duty: they are merchant patrons, diplomats, courtiers and record-keepers. Those who attend this school learn to love these duties, for they understand a secret that many in Rokugan do not wish to accept: all the scorn and disgust in the world can not deny the economic power of a wily trader.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

**Skills:** Craft (any), Defense, Etiquette, Gambling, Heraldry, Sincerity, any 1 skill.

**Outfit:** Standard Courtier

**Technique 1:** Way of the Merchant — When engaged in a conversation that regards commerce (debating the value of an item, attempting to procure some tangible resource, etc.), you gain a number of free Raises equal to your rank in this school on any test directly related to commerce.

**Technique 2:** Koku Speaks — When making any opposed social test, you may sacrifice any number of koku to add +2 to your total result for each koku sacrificed.

**Technique 3:** The Carp Smiles — Your convincing demeanor allows you to succeed through perseverance. Any time you lose an opposed test in a social situation, you may spend a Void point to immediately draw another card and use that in place of your previous card.

**Technique 4:** Taka's Lesson — Once per session, you may make an Intelligence/Etiquette test. If successful, this test allows you to obtain any single non-magical item. The difficulty of this test is determined by the judge and based on the item's rarity. For example, a minor work of art might have a difficulty of 6, a katana of exquisite quality bearing the Crane Clan mon might be 12, and a seal bearing the Emperor's chop might be as high as 18 or 20.

**Technique 5:** The Splendid Carp — You are a master at reading the emotions and desires of others, particularly customers. When you are dealing with an individual who wants or needs something in your possession (a resource, object, or service), their card draw is reduced to one-half its normal value in any opposed test against you.

## THE WITCH HUNTERS

The witch hunters, also known as the tsukai sagasu, are among the most feared samurai in Rokugan. They are hand-selected from the most zealous Kuni to be trained in secret techniques developed over centuries of fighting the Shadowlands. These rare, solitary men and women scour the Empire hunting Tainted beasts and those who have sold their souls to Fu Leng, the blood sorcerers called maho-tsukai. Even the Crab are not immune to the Witch Hunters' thankless vigil, and any Crab who falls to darkness can expect a visit from them.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

**Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Herbalism, Hunting, Lore (Shadowlands), any 2 Bugei skills.

**Outfit:** Katana, wakizashi, traveling clothes, steed, travel sack, any two weapons, three fingers of jade, 5 koku.

**Technique 1: To See the Darkness** — You can center yourself, making the disharmonious presence of the Taint easier to detect. You may make an Awareness/Lore (Shadowlands) test (TN 10 for a 10 foot area around you, with an additional 2 foot radius for each Raise). If successful, the judge will reveal to you whether or not there is Taint present within the room. This ability does not allow you to specifically locate a Tainted person or creature, merely reveals if the Taint is present.

**Technique 2: To Strike the Darkness** — Whenever you make an attack against a target that you know to possess the Taint, you gain a Free Raise on your attack.



**Technique 3: To Repel the Darkness** — You may spend a Void point and become immune to all spells cast by individuals with the Shadowlands Taint for one round. You may do this for as many rounds as you have Void points. This is done on your action, and lasts until your next action.

**Technique 4: To Punish the Darkness** — You may make one extra attack per round. This attack must target a Shadowlands creature or a target that you know to possess the Shadowlands Taint.

**Technique 5: To Shatter the Darkness** — After making a successful attack against any Tainted target, you may sacrifice any number of your wounds to inflict that many additional wounds upon your target.

# THE CRANE CLAN

The children of Lady Doji, the Crane Clan have protected and nurtured every Emperor that has sat upon Rokugan's throne since the first Hantei. Whenever the Emperor convened his court, Crane advisors stood ready to counsel him. Whenever an Emperor has required a bride, a bevy of Crane daughters has been available to love, guide, and advise him. Whenever the Emperor has stood in need of a blade to champion his cause, a Crane duelist has stood at the quick.

The Crane's favored status has garnered them many an enemy. The first true inter-clan war was waged between the Crane and Crab clans early in Rokugan's history, and was due in no small part to the resentment held by the Crab toward the Crane's arrogance and wealth. The Lion and Scorpion have stood at odds with the Crane for similar reasons for centuries, and the children of Doji have survived only thanks to their peerless political acumen, the Emperor's favor, and the ruthless tactics of the Daidoji family's military forces.

The Crane's social domination of Rokugan has been interrupted only periodically throughout history. The Clan War was particularly taxing, as Clan Champion Doji Hoturi was kidnapped and replaced with a twisted duplicate that nearly left the clan in ruin. Although the clan rebuilt quickly, they were divided again only a few years later, when the Lying Darkness's manipulation created a civil war between the Champion Doji Kuwanan and his general Daidoji Uji. Again, the Crane endured.

The current Crane Champion, Doji Kurohito, has sworn to consolidate the clan's power and achieve such power and prestige that the clan will fear threats to its power again. With strong alliances with other clans, domination of the Imperial Court through an alliance with the Otomo and a Crane as Imperial Advisor, and the occupation of both Emerald Champion and Jade Champion by loyal Crane samurai, it seems that Kurohito's goal is rapidly becoming a reality. Though some might call him ruthless, Kurohito would reply that he is not without compassion — he simply reserves none for his enemies.

**Allies:** In keeping with Kurohito's intention to return the Crane to the pinnacle of their power, the Crane currently maintain diplomatic relations with every clan. Their particularly strong alliances with the Crab and Phoenix have made the Crane a truly powerful force in modern Rokugan.

**Enemies:** The Scorpion have always been the Crane's rivals in the court, and do not plan to surrender the field peacefully. Though technically allied with the Lion, there are also many among that clan who have not forgiven the Crane for their ancient feud.

## FAMILIES

The Crane are unique among the Great Clans in that they have as many if not more samurai devoted to pursuing politics and the arts as they have soldiers. Of the four families that bear the Crane mon, only one has devoted itself entirely to warfare.

## THE ASAHINA

There is no family in the Empire quire like the Asahina. When Isawa Asahina went on a murderous rampage against several Crane villages, the daughter of the Crane Champion boldly attempted to bring him to peace. Astounded by the girl's courage and shamed by his own actions, Asahina repented his violent ways and embraced pacifism, as did those who swore fealty to him. After marrying the Crane who saved his honor and his soul, he was eagerly invited to join the Crane. Since that time, the Asahina have studied the kami and foresworn the use of steel. The taint of the original Asahina's vengeful anger is a constant temptation, but it is a temptation the Asahina rarely fail to rise above.

The Asahina are a shugenja family, and it is rare that any ever pursue another path. Their philosophy of strict pacifism make it all but impossible for an Asahina to consider becoming a warrior, and the few who are without the ability to speak to the kami often enter a monastery rather than accept a less worthy path.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

## THE DAIDOJI

More than any other family, the Daidoji fail to conform to the typical image of the Crane. Where the Doji are stylish and elegant, the Daidoji are rough and practical. Where the Kakita are lithe and athletic, the Daidoji are muscular and powerful. Where the Asahina are pacifists, the Daidoji live every day in preparation for war. They are the Crane's strong arm, the power behind their clan's armies. The Daidoji accept that the Crane are do not possess the Lion's military might, the Unicorn's mobility, or the Crab's dogged tenacity. They make up for this by seizing every possible advantage, even resorting to sabotage and guerilla tactics to defend their lands. Often times this is enough, as it is only necessary to delay an invading army briefly while a Crane courtier summons finds reason to condemn their enemies and draws support from the Imperial Legions. If some degree of honor must be sacrificed for the clan's greater well being, then that is a sacrifice the Daidoji gladly make.

The Daidoji are almost exclusively bushi. There are very few among their number that pursue a political or artistic path, and there are no bloodlines that have ever consistently produced shugenja among their number.

**Benefit:** +1 Strength

## THE DOJI

In virtually every court in Rokugan, there is a Doji who has significant influence. Those few that lack a representative from the Crane Clan are simply beneath the Doji's notice. The Doji are descended from Lady Doji, the first Emperor's sister and the architect of many basic social traditions that have been practiced for over a thousand years. The Crane are the Emperor's Left Hand, the clan that protects his honor and power by championing him in the court, and none exemplify this duty more completely than the Doji.

Doji tend to be bushi or courtiers. Shugenja are rare, but not unheard of. Artisans are likewise embraced as a natural outgrowth of the family's quest for perfection and mastery of every high art.

Doji frequently have blue eyes, a rarity among other families, and bleach their hair white in honor of the Crane hero, Daidoji Hayaku.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

### THE KAKITA

While the Doji mirror their founder's exquisite gifts, the Kakita continue the tradition of their founder by pursuing excellence at a chosen task. A Kakita selects one thing to pursue as their life's goal, and they focus upon it with startling intensity. Their family's belief is in excellence, in living in pursuit of perfection. What perfection means varies for each individual, but the Kakita permit each samurai to follow his own path. Perfection is not a final, achievable goal, after all, but the quest of an entire lifetime.

The Kakita are a varied family, with many bushi, artisans, and courtiers among their number. They are nearly as large as the Doji, although not as prominent as their cousins. The Kakita are not as prone to flamboyance as the Doji, and rarely bleach their hair. They have light, athletic builds.

**Benefit:** +1 Agility

### THE YASUKI

Years ago, the Yasuki daimyo died without an heir. Imperial historians retraced his lineage and discovered that the nearest clear line of succession lay with Daidoji Hachi, a minor gunso in the Crane armies. This was exceptional because the Yasuki family had defected from the Crane and joined the Crab centuries earlier. This controversial decision led to a brief but intense conflict between the two clans that was only resolved when their daimyo, now known as Yasuki Hachi, pledged his loyalty to Hida Kuon as well as to Doji Kurohito. The Yasuki now serve both clans equally.

Much as with the Crab Clan, the Yasuki serve as merchant patrons for the Crane, overseeing all necessary matters of commerce. This is a distasteful duty for any samurai, but the Yasuki revel in it, enjoying the material rewards of their labor even as they suffer scorn from other clans as a direct result.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

## THE CRANE SCHOOLS

The Crane are an incredibly diverse clan, supporting a wide number of schools that cover a more varied field of professions than any other clan. Crane bushi are feared for their skill at dueling just as much as the clan's artisans are heralded for their unparalleled mastery of the performing arts.

### THE ASAHINA SHUGENJA SCHOOL

Focused on purification of the spirit more than the use of magic in combat, the Asahina shugenja school has virtually no offensive focus. Their particular emphasis is on the creation of simple fetishes: single-use magical items created with the blessing and consent of the kami that power them. The Jade Champion and his followers are exceptions to this rule — they see the Shadowlands as the living embodiment of the defilements the Asahina battle against, and deal with them accordingly.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

**Skills:** Calligraphy, Etiquette, Lore (Theology), Meditation, Shintao, Tea Ceremony, any 1 High skill

**Outfit:** Fine Shugenja (no wakizashi)

**Technique:** Asahina's Gift — You begin knowing the following spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, any 3 Air spells, any 2 Water spells, and any 1 Fire spell. You have an Affinity for all Air spells, and a Deficiency for all Earth spells.

### THE DOJI COURTIER SCHOOL

Only the Scorpion would question that the most powerful force in Rokugan's courts has always been and remains Crane Clan, and generally they do so out of earshot of the Doji. Many families from other clans seek to have their young courtiers study with the Doji, but few are admitted without owing the family a great favor in return.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

**Skills:** Courtier, Etiquette, Heraldry, Manipulation, Oratory, Sincerity, any 1 High Skill.

**Outfit:** Fine Courtier

**Technique 1:** The Perfect Gift — A number of times per session equal to your Air Ring + 1, you may call upon a favor owed you or your family by a non-hostile samurai present. This favor may be material in nature, perhaps an object or a small number of koku, or it may be a service, such as safe passage or travel papers that are within the individual's power to grant. The GM will determine which samurai you can obtain this favor from. If the target fails to comply, he will lose Honor, Glory, or both (GM's option).

**Technique 2:** A Whisper From The Soul — You can subtly influence the moods of others through careful manipulation during conversation. If you spend at least five minutes talking with another character, you may make an opposed Awareness/Courtier test. If successful, you may change the emotional state of your target by one step, from Friendly to Neutral to Hostile. This emotion will not necessarily be directed toward you, but possibly toward the topic of the conversation. It is up to you to channel the target's emotions appropriately, before they come to their senses and realize what has been done.

**Technique 3:** Test of Honor — You may spend a Void Point to force another to undertake a test of Honor before they attempt any single action. This test requires you to step in front of the target and speak to them clearly, questioning their honor. Both you and your target must then make an Honor test (Honor Rank + card pull). If your total is greater, your target suffers a penalty to the test for his subsequent action equal to your Honor. If your opponent's total is greater, you lose one Honor point. This technique must be used carefully, as questioning a samurai's Honor often leads to a duel.

**Technique 4:** The Gift of the Lady — You gain Free Raises equal to your Insight Rank on any Etiquette, Courtier, Heraldry, Oratory, or Sincerity check.

**Technique 5:** Your Life Is Mine — You may drastically alter the feelings one person has toward another. If you succeed at an opposed Awareness

test, you may determine how the target feels toward any one other character, causing the target to feel fondness, hatred, suspicion, or admiration toward a target of your choice (including yourself or the target's self). This artificial relationship requires your attention to maintain, however. You must speak to the target at least once per hour for a minimum of five minutes and succeed at another opposed Awareness test to maintain it. Outrageous manipulations, such as making a samurai lord fall in love with an eta or convincing an Emerald Magistrate that he hates the Emperor are impossible. Subtlety is key here.

### THE KAKITA BUSHI SCHOOL

Kakita was an unparalleled swordsman and duelist, and the techniques that he and his sons created during the Empire's formation have persisted for over a thousand years, never equaled and save for Mirumoto's Niten techniques, never rivaled. The Kakita place emphasis on speed and precision, believing that one perfect strike can win wars that armies cannot. Indeed it is a standard Crane tactic for a Kakita duelist to insult the honor of a key enemy officer. This inevitably leads to a challenge the enemy cannot win, leaving their ranks in chaos while the Doji and Daidoji swoop in for the kill.

**Benefit:** +1 Reflexes

**Skills:** Etiquette, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Sincerity, any Bugei Skill, any High Skill.

**Outfit:** Fine Bushi





**Technique 1: Way of the Crane** — You may add your Iaijutsu skill to your Initiative tests when wielding (or about to draw) a katana.

**Technique 2: The Sudden Strike** — When involved in an Iaijutsu duel, your weapons all inflict extra Wounds equal to your School Rank.

**Technique 3: Strike from the Void** — You may spend multiple Void points on an Iaijutsu strike, drawing a number of cards equal to the Void Points spent and keeping the card of your choice.

**Technique 4: One Strike, Two Cuts** — You gain an extra attack each round.

**Technique 5: Strike with No Thought** — Before Initiative is rolled for the first round of combat, you may make an opposed Void test against your opponent. If successful, you gain a free attack before combat begins. If involved in an Iaijutsu duel you may use this action after the strike is performed, but before the duel proceeds into normal combat (effectively striking your enemy twice if you win the duel).

### THE KAKITA ARTISAN ACADEMY

Lady Doji and her husband Kakita were incredibly gifted, each having mastered (and created) a number of sophisticated arts. Doji was a child of heaven, of course, and could achieve nearly any task that she attempted. Kakita was a master swordsman, a gifted musician, and an exceptional craftsman. Their children and descendants have retained this gift for the arts, and the Kakita Artisan Academy has continued to develop their talents for centuries.

**Benefit:** +1 Intelligence

**Skills:** Calligraphy, Courtier, Etiquette, Lore (any appropriate to specialty), any 1 High Skill, and 2 ranks in the character's specialty skill

**Outfit:** Fine Courtier

**Technique 1: A Soul of Beauty** — You may choose any one artisan skill, including Acrobatics, Acting, Dance, Ikebana, Jester, Music, Painting, Poetry, and Storytelling. You receive a +2 bonus to your tests when using this skill.

**Technique 2: Free the Spirit** — Your work inspires others to great feats. When presenting an artistic endeavor (presenting a painting, reading a poem, acting a scene from a play, telling a story, etc.), you may select any one observer. That observer will receive a Free Raise to their next test.

**Technique 3: The Soul's Dream** — Your artist's perceptions grant you insight into others' souls. You gain a bonus equal to your primary artisan skill (as chosen at Rank 1 above) to all opposed social tests made against an individual with a disadvantage that indicates a strong need or desire (Greed, Driven, Lecherous, Vanity, etc.).

**Technique 4: Undying Name** — Your art becomes even more impressive and inspiring. The bonus granted by the Rank 1 technique increases to +4, and your Rank 2 Technique now provides three Free Raises (which can be given to a single observer or split between multiple observers).

**Technique 5: Walk Among the Heavens** — Your reputation is so exceptional that many find it difficult to raise their hand against you. Any samurai who wishes to attack you must first succeed at an opposed test,

their Awareness/Etiquette against your Awareness + artisan skill of your choice. If you win, your detractor is physically unable to attack you unless you are openly hostile, though he may still apprehend or threaten you.

## THE DRAGON CLAN

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Ever enigmatic and mysterious, the Dragon Clan was secretly ruled by their founder, the Kami Togashi, for over a millennium. The great Togashi could see the future unfold, but could never see his role there. For this reason, he kept the Dragon removed from the Empire, taking action only when failing to do so would make matters drastically worse. Because of Togashi's reticence, the Dragon developed a reputation as recluses, mystics, and madmen.

Truthfully, the samurai who serve the Dragon Clan have never had any more understanding of their clan's role than anyone else. They merely followed their lord's wishes loyally and without hesitation, as their duty demanded. Having never known any other different path, the Dragon simply became accustomed to a life of mystery. An uncertain future was, by some accounts, a certain future by the Dragon perspective. They are a philosophical and gleefully contradictory people, taking more delight in thought-provoking questions than boring answers.

Togashi was killed in battle with his brother Fu Leng on the second Day of Thunder nearly forty years prior. Since his death, the Dragon have learned, with difficulty, to govern themselves. Without the Kami's vision, they have had no choice but to depend upon their own wisdom to find their way in the world. The Tao of Shinsei says that fortune favors the mortal man, and no clan knows this to be truer than the Dragon.

Since Togashi's death, the Dragon have been through a great deal. His successor, Hitomi, became obsessed with the Lying Darkness and its connection to Onnotangu, Lord Moon. She eventually slew Onnotangu, usurping his place in the heavens, then defeated the Lying Darkness by robbing it of the very lack of identity that lent it power initially. The trials of Hitomi brought even greater change to the Dragon Clan, though the Dragon have risen to meet the challenges admirably. Their recent war with the Phoenix left the Dragon with an inherent distrust of powerful nemuranai (magical items). The Dragon have thus taken it upon themselves to patrol the Empire, disposing of dangerous artifacts.

**Allies:** The Dragon are an enigmatic clan at best. They are on friendly terms with the Scorpion, who understand the value of mystery and secrets better than most. The Crane are also on friendly terms with them.

**Enemies:** The Dragon only recently emerged from a war with the Phoenix. Though this war was instigated by the Dark Oracle of Fire's manipulations, bad feelings still run deep between the two clans. The Dragon's interference in recent Unicorn-Lion conflicts has won them a fair amount of enemies among these clans as well.

## THE FAMILIES

The Dragon are a clan of small families, except for the Mirumoto family. They tend to be highly compartmentalized, far more so than other clans. To many Dragon families the other families are just as much of a mystery as they are to the rest of the Empire.

### THE KITSUKI

The Kitsuki are the ambassadors and magistrates of the Dragon Clan. They are an offshoot of the Agasha, a shugenja family that defected to the Phoenix several decades ago. The Kitsuki are unique in their emphasis on studying forensics. They believe that physical evidence outweighs the power of testimony, an enlightened view that others in the Empire do not share. With their keen powers of observation, the Kitsuki often serve as the Dragon Clan's representatives in court, using their powers of perception to pick up on subtle cues that others might miss. Criminals and conspirators across the Empire have come to fear the intervention of a Kitsuki magistrate.

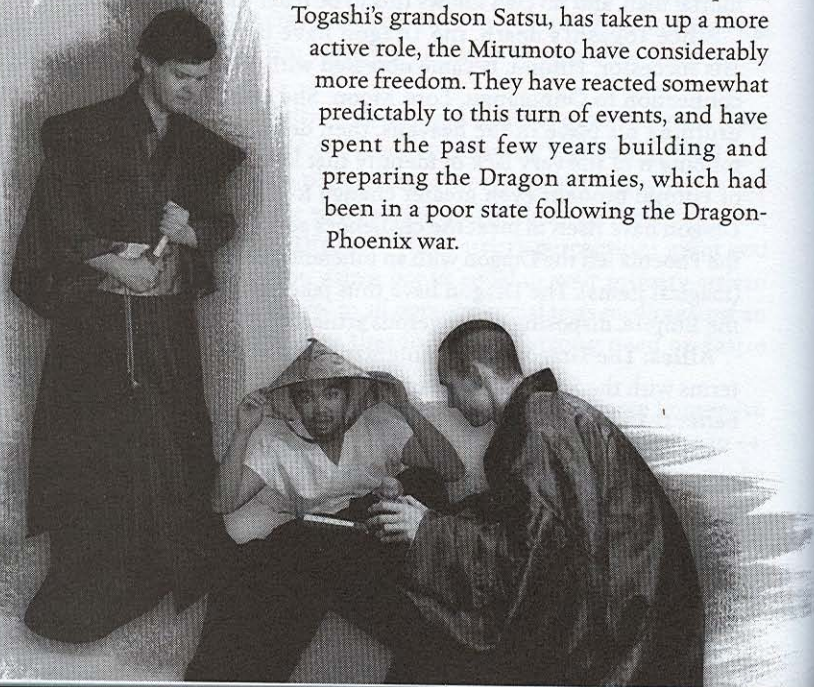
The Kitsuki are usually magistrates or courtiers. The family's leaders recognize that in any other clan, Agasha Kitsuki would never have been permitted to follow his own path and eventually create a family. In recognition of this great boon, they permit those of their number to follow whatever profession they choose.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

### THE MIRUMOTO

By far the largest Dragon family, the Mirumoto are both the bulk of the clan's military force and the administrators of their lands. For centuries, the

Mirumoto daimyo was left to look after clan affairs while the enigmatic Togashi looked after his personal pursuits. Now that the Champion, Togashi's grandson Satsu, has taken up a more active role, the Mirumoto have considerably more freedom. They have reacted somewhat predictably to this turn of events, and have spent the past few years building and preparing the Dragon armies, which had been in a poor state following the Dragon-Phoenix war.



The Mirumoto tend to be soldiers, warriors, and yojimbo. They are a stolid people, with a practical outlook. While they rarely indulge in the enigmatic games of other Dragon families, they respect their fellow Dragon for pursuing their own paths.

**Benefit:** +1 to any Trait

### THE TAMORI

The Tamori are a family of shugenja, but in keeping with the Dragon's unique nature, they are unlike any other shugenja family. The Tamori do not have the same philosophical leanings as other families, and could perhaps be likened only to the Kuni family of the Crab. They take an active role in the clan's governance, efficiently overseeing their family's provinces and advising the Clan Champion in all things, including and not excluding political and military endeavors. The Tamori are obsessed with unlocking the mysteries of nature, and often use their discoveries to enhance the military prowess of their Mirumoto brethren. The Tamori are resentful toward the Agasha family of the Phoenix; the Tamori was a branch of the Agasha family until the Agasha abandoned the Dragon years ago. The Tamori have never forgiven their cousins for their departure.

The Tamori are universally shugenja, although there are rare instances of a child born who does not bear the gift for the kami. These few unfortunates are either pledged to another family or allowed to serve as yojimbo and guardians.

**Benefit:** +1 Stamina

### THE TATTOOED ORDERS

Although not a family in any true sense of the word, the Dragon Clan includes three orders of tattooed monks that are given the same considerations as a samurai family. The Togashi, the Order of the Eternal Dragon, were the first, an order of monks given mystical tattoos using the blood of Togashi himself. The Togashi have been elevated to the level of myth throughout Rokugan, as the peasants have many tales of such men and their obscure tattoos. Since the Clan War, two other orders have been created. The Hoshi, the Order of the Celestial Wanderer, follow Togashi's son Hoshi. A third order, the Hitomi, Order of the Lady of the Moon, were created by Hitomi shortly before her duel with Onnotangu. Although the progenitors of all three orders have departed Rokugan, powerful members of the Togashi and Hoshi orders are able to pass on tattoos with their own blood. Hitomi are born bearing tattoos, a sign of their Lady's continuing guidance and blessing. Sometimes the Hitomi are born outside the Hitomi. These individuals soon realize that they are chosen by the Lady and soon join her service.

By definition members of a tattooed order are monks, though the Dragon show them the same respect and status as samurai. All members of the Three Orders bear mystical tattoos granting them supernatural abilities. Tattooed monks vary wildly in their philosophies, and are generally regarded by Rokugan's populace with a mix of confusion, fear, and admiration.

**Benefit:** +1 Agility

## THE DRAGON SCHOOLS

The Dragon Clan maintains perhaps the most unconventional schools known anywhere in the Empire. It is perhaps a result of Togashi's centuries of governance allowing his followers to pursue their own interests that results in this extensive range of skills and vocations.

### THE KITSUKI MAGISTRATE SCHOOL

The secrets taught by the Kitsuki are uncomplicated. The founder of both school and family, Agasha Kitsuki, theorized that it was not necessary to speak to the kami to learn their secrets; one could discern all that was needed simply from observing and thinking logically. These skills have been developed for decades, and there are few criminals who do not fear the keen, practiced eye of a Kitsuki magistrate.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

**Skills:** Courtier, Heraldry, History, Law, Lore (any), Nazodo, Sincerity.

**Outfit:** Standard Courtier

**Technique 1: Kitsuki's Method** — As a Kitsuki, your powers of perception are nothing less than amazing. You may spend any number of Void points when making a test that involves Awareness or Perception.

**Technique 2: Wisdom the Wind Brings** — When making any test involving Awareness or Perception, you gain a number of Free Raises equal to your School Rank.

**Technique 3: Finding the Path** — You automatically succeed on any unopposed test involving the following skills: Heraldry, History, Investigation, or Law. No card pull is required. You are automatically assumed to have achieved the minimum result necessary for success. You may not make Raises on this test, although you may still benefit from free Raises as granted by Rank 2 above. You must make opposed tests normally.

**Technique 4: Know the Heart's Rhythm** — Your intuitive understanding of others' techniques grants you an advantage. When facing an opponent, you may become familiar with any technique they use against you by making a contested Awareness test. Any time you are facing an opponent who is using a technique you are already familiar with, they must spend a Void point in order to use their technique against you. This is cumulative with any Void point requirements the technique may have. You may be familiar with a number of Techniques equal to your School Rank, and can "forget" an old technique to familiarize yourself with a new one.

**Technique 5: The Eyes Betray the Heart** — Those who wish to lie to you must first succeed at an opposed Awareness test. Those who are unsuccessful are unable to tell you a lie, although they are not required to tell you the complete truth. If an opponent has a higher Awareness than you, they may lie to you if they wish, but you will automatically know that they are not telling the truth if they fail the initial test.

### THE MIRUMOTO BUSHI SCHOOL

The Mirumoto fighting style is unique throughout the Empire in that it teaches the use of both swords rather than focusing on the katana. While not heretical, this practice is extremely controversial. There is a



centuries-old rivalry between the students of Mirumoto's style and the students of Kakita's style, one that is not likely to be resolved any time in the near future despite the efforts of many warriors throughout history.

**Benefit:** +1 to any Trait

**Skills:** Battle, Defense, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Meditation, Lore (Shugenja), any 1 High or Bugei skill.

**Outfit:** Standard Bushi

**Technique 1:** The Daisho Technique — Trained to wield two blades, you have a much more efficient defense than most. Your Defense Skill is increased by 2 + your School Rank (+3 at this rank, +4 at the next, etc.) when you are wielding a daisho.

**Technique 2:** Strong and Swift — You may make an extra attack per combat round.

**Technique 3:** The Blood of My Brothers — You were trained alongside shugenja and understand their ways. You may spend a Void point to increase or decrease by 2 the card pull made by a judge to determine if a spell targeting you succeeds or fails. This only applies to spells that specifically target you, not spells that affect an area.

**Technique 4:** The Unrighteous Will Fall — The speed of your attacks is nothing short of amazing. Any time you make a melee strike that kills your opponent, you may immediately make another melee attack against any other target within range.

**Technique 5:** The Heart of the Dragon — You may make an extra attack per combat round.

## THE TAMORI SHUGENJA SCHOOL

The Tamori are a surprisingly visceral family, and their training focuses less on ritual and more on practicality than most shugenja schools. Most Tamori possess at least rudimentary martial training, either in unarmed or weapon techniques.

**Benefit:** +1 Willpower

**Skills:** Calligraphy, Kenjutsu, Lore (Elements), Meditation, Shintao, any 2 High or Bugei skills.

**Outfit:** Standard Shugenja

**Technique:** Tamori's Strength — You know the following spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, any 3 Earth spells, and 2 Fire spells, and any 1 Water spell. You have an Affinity for all Earth spells and a Deficiency for all Air spells.

## THE TATTOOED MONK SCHOOL

The Three Orders do not possess an organized school as such. Rather, they are loose confederations that share a philosophy and who are granted mystical tattoos upon reaching certain levels in their training. These tattoos are always unique, although common themes and symbolism can be seen in the images and abilities they confer.

**Benefit:** +1 Void

**Skills:** Craft (any), Jiujutsu, Meditation, Nazodo, Shintao, any 2 other skills

**Outfit:** Simple clothing, hat, travel sack.

**Techniques:** Tattooed men do not gain technique in the same manner as students of other schools. You begin the game with a single mystical tattoo, and gain an additional tattoo each time you advance in rank. These tattoos vary considerably in appearance and effect, but you may construct your own using the following guidelines. All tattoos are subject to judge approval well in advance of the LARP session.

**Attack Bonus:** An attack bonus tattoo grants a +2 bonus on all attack skill combinations when using a specific Weapon Skill (including unarmed combat). The tattoo usually takes the form of the weapon in question or of a swift animal of some sort.

**Damage Bonus:** A damage bonus tattoo allows you to spend a Void point to increase your Damage Rating by your School Rank when using a particular type of weapon. The tattoo usually takes the form of a flaming aura around the weapon in particular, or a powerful predator.

**Free Raise:** A tattoo granting a free Raise confers a free Raise on tests made using any one particular trait (or Skills that utilize that Trait). This ability may be used a number of times per session equal to your School Rank  $\times$  2. The Trait should determine the tattoo's image (a crab for stamina, a lion for strength, etc.).

**Skill Bonus:** A tattoo granting a skill bonus confers a +3 bonus to your relevant ability/skill when making any non-combat test. The skill selected should determine the image the tattoo takes (a hawk for Investigation, a rat for Stealth, etc.).

# THE LION CLAN

The Lion are the strongest military force in the Empire, and take pride in this distinction. Their founder, Akodo One-Eye, is said to be the greatest tactician that ever lived. Since Akodo's time, the Lion have had a long and violent history. The feud initiated by Lady Matsu and Kakita has never been resolved, and the Lion and Crane have survived in a state of near-constant warfare for a thousand years. The Imperial edict prohibiting open warfare between the clans has prevented the Lion and Crane from wiping each other out, relegating them to simple border skirmishes that constantly exchange hotly-contested holdings such as Shiro no Yojin and, until recently, Toshi Ranbo.

Recent years have seen the Lion do the unthinkable: join in a tentative alliance with their long-term rivals the Crane. The two clans jointly administrate the Empire's new capital city, Toshi Ranbo, seat of power for the Righteous Emperor Toturi III. They are currently engaged in a war on their western border with the forces of Moto Chagatai, the Unicorn Khan, and have suffered at the hands of Bloodspeakers just as all other clans have.

**Allies:** The Lion are not currently on good terms with any clan. Though technically allied with the Crane, one could say their alliance simply amounts to little more than a cessation of hostilities between ancient enemies. Though the Lion are wary of the Scorpion, a secret alliance between the Ikoma and Bayushi families has yielded great power and influence for both families.

**Enemies:** The Lion are currently at war with the Unicorn Clan, and are not on good terms with the Dragon due to their interference in that conflict. A broken alliance with the Phoenix years ago left them hard feelings as well.

## THE FAMILIES

There are only four families in the Lion Clan, each with a carefully recorded history that dates back to the time of Akodo One-Eye and his followers. Each family has a well-defined role within the clan, and considers it a sacred duty to fulfill that role without hesitation or variance.

### THE AKODO

The Akodo have a unique and troubled history. They ruled the Lion for a thousand years before their lord was disgraced in the Scorpion Clan Coup in 1126. The Emperor's outrage at Akodo Toturi's actions was so great that not only did he cast down the Lion Champion, but he dissolved his family as well. For six years, there were no Akodo in the Empire save one — Akodo Kage. It was not until the Lying Darkness was destroyed at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate at Voltturnum that the Akodo returned. The Darkness was destroyed by being named, and the name given it was Akodo. The many souls absorbed by the Darkness over the centuries were returned as



amnesiac samurai, aware only that their names were Akodo. Many Akodo ronin returned from obscurity to guide these lost souls down the path of the Lion. The decades since then have seen the Akodo return to their former position, albeit only through great hardship.

The Akodo are a varied lot, though most become soldiers and tacticians. Shugenja are rare but not unheard of. There are many historians and a handful of courtiers among their number as well.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

### THE IKOMA

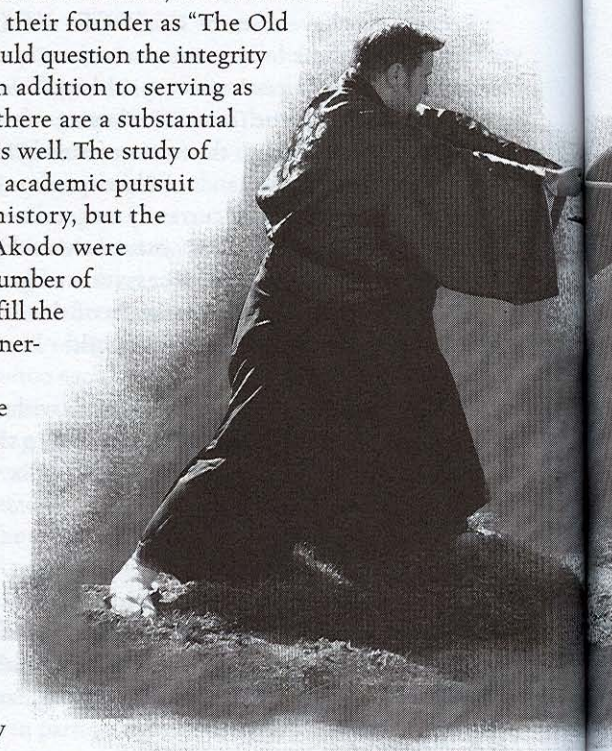
The Ikoma are the Lion Clan's memory, maintaining the Empire's most extensive historical records. The first Ikoma was a sly warrior who impressed Akodo with his cunning. There are those who suggest that he was not the most honorable of men, and even some Ikoma fondly refer to their founder as "The Old Spy." Few, however, would question the integrity of his descendants. In addition to serving as bards and historians, there are a substantial number of tacticians as well. The study of tactics was largely an academic pursuit throughout most of history, but the period wherein the Akodo were dissolved saw a large number of Ikoma step forward to fill the gap left by so many generals and officers.

The Ikoma are the most varied of all Lion families, with strong traditional lines of historians, tacticians, and magistrates. The numbers of Ikoma who pursue outside interests is never large enough to threaten their primary duty as historians.

**Benefit:** +1 Intelligence

### THE KITSU

Possessing a unique and distinct ancestry, the Kitsu serve the Lion as shugenja, forging a spiritual link to their ancestors. The first Kitsu were members of a mystical race of feline spirit creatures called kitsu. These creatures survived the Lion Clan's ill-conceived campaign to slaughter their kind. Too late Akodo recognized that the kitsu were not evil creatures, and in reparation for his actions he took the last five surviving kitsu and offered them a home among the Lion. The kitsu took human form and



thus the Kitsu were born. The unique spiritual powers the kitsu once demonstrated survive in their descendants, as a rare few Kitsu shugenja possess the ability to sense and speak to ancestral spirits. These exceptionally rare men and women are the holiest treasures the Lion possess, for they represent a persistent and concrete link to their ancestors, the one thing all Lion value more than anything.

Those who bear a strong blood connection to the original kitsu are immediately recognizable. All of these individuals have red-gold eyes, and some possess bright auburn hair.

The duty of a Kitsu is to speak to the kami. Those Kitsu who are unable to do so are usually fostered to other families, meaning that there are only a handful of Kitsu in any generation who are not shugenja.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

### THE MATSU

Easily the largest family in Rokugan, the Matsu are also the fiercest and most violent of all warrior families. They are descended from Lady Matsu, Akodo One-Eye's most fearsome follower.

Matsu was lost to the Shadowlands alongside Shinsei and the Seven Thunders, and Akodo never recovered from her loss. For a thousand years, the Matsu served as the Lion's weapon, guided by Akodo wisdom and tactics. Shortly before the

Clan War, the death of Akodo Arasou, the Lion Champion and Matsu Tsuko's betrothed, drove a wedge between the two families. When the Akodo were dissolved, the Matsu eagerly took command. When the Akodo were finally reformed, the Matsu

embraced their cousins once more, and continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with them, though the Lion Champion currently remains a Matsu.

The Matsu do not embrace any path save that of a warrior. Their philosophy and mindset is one that cannot accept any profession other than that of a bushi. Shugenja are unheard of, and the Matsu do not consider politics or investigation to be tasks worthy of the Matsu legacy.

**Benefit:** +1 Strength

## THE LION SCHOOLS

The Lion are a highly traditional clan, placing enormous value on reverence for the past and the following of rituals and practices that have been observed for centuries. Their schools have existed for centuries with very little change and are unlikely to change in the near future.

### THE AKODO BUSHI SCHOOL

Among the oldest and most revered bushi schools in the Empire, the Akodo school teaches precision above all else. No move is wasted, no energy squandered. The Matsu consider the school's techniques somewhat anachronistic and conservative, but no one can deny their overwhelming effectiveness.

**Benefit:** +1 Agility

**Skills:** Bard, Battle, Defense, History, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, any 1 High Skill.

**Outfit:** Standard Bushi

**Technique 1:** The Way of the Lion — Any opponent you attack gains no Defense bonuses from Armor against your attacks.

**Technique 2:** The Strength of Purity — When making an attack, you may add your Honor rank to the total of your Offensive Combat Test.

**Technique 3:** With the Strength of My Ancestors — You may make an extra attack per combat round.

**Technique 4:** The Hand of Destiny — You no longer need to declare raises on Offensive Combat Tests for any purpose other than increased damage.

**Technique 5:** The Final Lesson — When you make Raises on an attack test and fail to meet the new target number but still meet the original number if the Raises were not met, you succeed in your attack but gain no effects from the Raises.

### THE IKOMA OMOIDASU

In addition to the clan's historians and tacticians, the Ikoma act as the Lion's living memory. The Ikoma omoidasu remember the greatest tales of Lion warriors and relive them for the soldiers on the front line and the clan's allies and enemies in court, reminding all who will listen of the Lion's honor and prowess.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

**Skills:** Bard, Calligraphy, Heraldry, History, Law, Lore (any 2).

**Outfit:** Standard Courtier

**Technique 1:** Path of the River — You are trained both to fight and represent your clan. You may choose any one weapon skill and any one social skill. You may add your School Rank to tests involving either of these skills.

**Technique 2:** The Current's Pull — You gain a number of free Raises per session equal to your School Rank. These Raises may be used on any Sincerity, Law, Bard, Manipulation, or Etiquette test.

**Technique 3:** Patience of Tides — Your patience is legendary. Any time someone Raises on an opposed social test (Courtier, Etiquette, Intimidation, Seduction) against you, you gain a Free Raise on your own test.

**Technique 4:** Master the Flow of the Heart — Any time that you are making an Awareness test, you may spend a Void point to add your rank in this school to your Awareness. You may still spend a Void Point on this test normally.

**Technique 5:** The Will of the Waves — The secret of an omoidasu is that you must never consider failure. When making any opposed test, you may spend two Void points to force a second test using Awareness or Perception (your choice). If you are successful in the second test, you are automatically considered to be victorious in the first. This ability may not be used if you declare any Raises in the first test, although you may benefit from any free Raises you are entitled to as a result of techniques or advantages.

### THE KITSU SHUGENJA

The Kitsu are among the most traditional of the shugenja families, maintaining rituals they can trace to the First Five.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

**Skills:** Calligraphy, Etiquette, Heraldry, History, Meditation, any 1 Bugei Skill, any 1 High Skill.

**Outfit:** Standard Shugenja

**Technique:** The Kitsu's Path — You begin knowing the following spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, any 3 Water spells, any 2 Earth spells, and any 1 Air spell. You have an Affinity for all Water spells and a Deficiency for all Fire spells.

### THE SODAN-SENZO

The sodan-senzo are a unique sect of the Kitsu shugenja school, available only to those who possess the blood of a true Kitsu in their veins. The bloodlines that are able to access the secret magic once practiced by the kitsu are rare, and there are perhaps a half-dozen at most born in any generation. The sodan-senzo are able to perceive the connection of Yomi, the Realm of Blessed Ancestors to the mortal world, and are even able to send their souls to visit the spirit realms through lengthy rituals.

The sodan-senzo are held in particularly high regard by the Lion, as they are able to communicate directly with the clan's revered ancestors. They can even communicate with the ancestors of other clans and benefit from their blessing for short periods of time.

The Different School feat may not be used to enter this school. Its students must be members of the Kitsu family; even other Lion families are not accepted.

**Benefit:** +1 Willpower

**Skills:** Calligraphy, Etiquette, Heraldry, History, Lore (Ancestors), Meditation, any 1 High or Bugei Skill.

**Outfit:** Fine Shugenja

**Technique:** The Blood of Lions — You begin knowing the following spells: Sense Ancestor, Summon Ancestor, Commune with Ancestor, any 2 Air spells, any 1 Water spell. You have an Affinity for all Ancestor spells, and a Deficiency for all Earth and Fire spells.

# THE MANTIS CLAN

The Mantis Clan is unlike any other clan in Rokugan's history. They were born when Hida Osano-Wo's son took his Matsu bride and set out to find his destiny, discovering it on the isolated Islands of Silk and Spice. Once established, Kaimetsu-uo and his followers became the Mantis Clan, Rokugan's first Minor Clan (although that claim is disputed by the Fox).

Geographic isolation kept the Mantis from playing a major role in Rokugani history. They were granted a family name, Gusai, but it was stripped from them when the Mantis daimyo attempted to assassinate the Emperor. The clan was allowed to remain in existence only because the daimyo's heir turned against him and returned the Hantei's kidnapped son to him. This incident gave the Mantis a shadowy reputation as criminals and pirates, as even their heroic acts were not performed without subterfuge.

The Mantis have thrived by seeking fortune in an arena most Rokugani shy away from — the high seas. The Mantis are master sailors, plying the waves both as merchants and explorers. They are not afraid to explore distant lands, and often engage in surreptitious trade with gaijin nations. With their great mobility, Mantis troops can be quickly dispatched anywhere in the Empire. Combined with the geographic isolation of their most important holdings this makes them prize mercenaries. The Mantis can offer their services in any dispute and fear little chance of reprisal. The Mantis Clan also has a reputation for piracy that is not entirely undeserved. They consider the seas to be their domain, and do not think twice about attacking a ship that invades their territory without showing the proper respect (usually in the form of a share of their cargo).

During the Clan War, the Mantis daimyo Yoritomo united several Minor Clans under his banner and created Yoritomo's Alliance. Together, the Mantis, Fox, Centipede, and Wasp clans were the equal of any Great Clan, and they stood against the Shadowlands Horde beside Toturi the Black while the Great Clans squabbled among themselves. The Alliance quickly became famous, and on the second Day of Thunder, Yoritomo stood with the Great Clan's Champions and demanded to be recognized as an equal. His gambit was rewarded, and in the aftermath Emperor Toturi I proclaimed the Mantis to be a Great Clan.

The Mantis's history over the past few decades has been tumultuous. They engaged in open conflict with both the Crane and the Phoenix during the War Against the Darkness, and lost the legendary Yoritomo during the Battle at Oblivion's Gate. They fought a secret war against the cultists of the Ivory Kingdoms, unknown to any in the Empire. Their mercenaries fought on both sides in the War of Spirits before finally throwing their weight behind the Toturi Dynasty. Though not as devious as the Scorpion Clan, the Mantis Clan's history is checkered by subterfuge, guile, and ambition.

The Mantis recently recovered from a disastrous civil war between Yoritomo Kitao and Yoritomo Kumiko, the long lost daughter of Yoritomo. Kumiko emerged victorious but spared Kitao's life. During the Rain of

Blood, Kitao fell to the Shadowlands and now leads a Tainted fleet against the shores of Rokugan and the fleets of her former clan.

**Allies:** The Mantis frequently offer their services as mercenaries, couriers, and merchants and thus find it useful to remain on good terms with most clans. The Crane share their interest in promoting the Empire's economy, while the Unicorn understand the Mantis' curiosity about foreign lands better than any other. The Mantis also possess strong ties to all the Minor Clans, a claim no other Great Clan can ever match.

**Enemies:** The Emerald Champion is suspicious of the Mantis' claims that their acts of piracy are justified, but thus far has taken little action against them. The Scorpion are their most bitter enemies, as the Mantis have never forgiven them for assassinating their Champion, Yoritomo Aramasu.



## THE FAMILIES

The Mantis Clan is composed of three families, each of which is a former Minor Clan. The unification of three formerly independent clans into the Mantis Clan has not been easy, but all three are now settled into their roles and work well together, each complementing the others.

### THE MOSHI

Once the Centipede Clan, the Moshi have undergone the most dramatic change of all Mantis families. Once, they were a matriarchal family of shugenja who revered Amaterasu, the Lady Sun, above all Fortunes and

ancestors. When the Lady Sun died shortly before the Battle at Oblivion's Gate, she was replaced by Hida Yakamo, who became the Lord Sun. This all but severed the Moshi's link to the heavens, and they have had to adapt to new rituals and practices. While the line of succession is still clearly female and their religious influence is still strong, male Moshi and bushi are now allowed to participate more fully in the family's rule.

Female Moshi are generally shugenja, and many male family members are as well. The kami's favor is not as predominant among males, however, and many are fostered to the Yoritomo or Tsuruchi to study the arts of war as the Moshi have no true bushi school of their own.

**Benefit:** +1 Intelligence

### THE TSURUCHI

As conflicted and unorthodox a family as can be found in Rokugan, the Tsuruchi are an exercise in contradiction. The family was founded less than a century ago by an extraordinary man named Tsuruchi. Tsuruchi was the son of a Lion and a Scorpion. His parents were betrayed by both clans and murdered for the sake of greed and ambition, disguised as honor. Tsuruchi gathered a band of his fellows and sought his revenge. Though he had little hope of success, he not only avenged his family but managed to save the lives of his followers by securing a special role as servants of the Emerald Champion (a Crane, the Champion had no love for the Lion or Scorpion).

Though he remained a samurai, Tsuruchi felt that the precepts of bushido were too easily abused by those consumed by lust for power. In their place, Tsuruchi created a code that he and his followers would follow, and took up the bow in place of the blade. Armed with these weapons, the samurai who served him became the Wasp Clan, the finest archers and most implacable bounty hunters in the Empire.

Tsuruchi samurai are typically archers, as that has been their tradition since the Wasp Clan was founded decades ago. A small number of younger members have not taken up the bow but rather choose to study the blade, finding Tsuruchi's philosophies outdated. These younger members profoundly disappointment older Tsuruchi.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

### THE YORITOMO

The Yoritomo are the Mantis Clan's heart and soul. They are a rowdy, surly lot but they possess a determination and integrity that those who would underestimate them find surprising. The Yoritomo are a proud family, intent on proving their equal to any of the Great Clan ruling houses and quick to anger when discounted as a "Minor Clan."

The Yoritomo are the Empire's finest sailors. These samurai come face to face with the sea's fury early in life, either on the countless Mantis kobune that sail the ocean or the vicious storms that assail their island home. All develop reverence for the sea at an early age, and rare is the Yoritomo who is unfamiliar with the ways of the ocean. Yoritomo look on their Tsuruchi and Moshi brothers and sisters as equals, but regard families from other clans as arrogant, conceited fools. Ironically, this attitude often creates a similar perception of the Yoritomo in others.

Yoritomo are most often bushi, although there are a surprisingly large number of shugenja among them as well. They are a self-sufficient family that believes strongly in fending for oneself and depending upon no one for aid. At heart they are adventurers — the more impossible the quest, the better. Whether the object of their quest involves plumbing the secrets of a distant land or the earning respect of their fellow Great Clans, the Yoritomo will not falter.

**Benefit:** +1 Strength

## THE MANTIS SCHOOLS

The Mantis families are specialized, each controlling their own lands separate and distant from their kinsmen. As a result, there is little cross-cultural conflict between the families, and each continues to practice the same arts they have developed since before the clan was formed.

### THE MANTIS COURTIER SCHOOL

Upon their ascension to Great Clan status, the Mantis found themselves in dire need of representation in court, where they had never had a significant presence. The finest courtiers from the Yoritomo, Moshi, and Tsuruchi families were gathered to consolidate their experiences and techniques into a single school. It has taken several decades, but the Mantis courtier school has been a surprising success.

**Benefit:** +1 Willpower

**Skills:** Courtier, Defense, Intimidation, Kuenai, Poetry, Poison, any 1 Bugei Skill.

**Outfit:** Standard Courtier

**Technique 1:** Duty Before Honor — When interacting with individuals who have an Honor rank of 2 or less, you gain a free Raise on any Awareness or Willpower related test.

**Technique 2:** Storm Heart — The benefits of a Void point spent on any Intimidation test are doubled for you, allowing you two redraws if you so choose. Additionally, any individual with a lower Willpower who attempts to use Intimidation or a fear effect on you automatically fails.

**Technique 3:** Command the Winds — You may add your ranks in Intimidation to your Initiative tests. You may also choose to use your Intimidation skill in place of the Sincerity skill in any test.

**Technique 4:** Will of the Storms — When attempting an Intimidate test against an opponent with a lower Willpower, you may spend a Void point in order for the test to automatically succeed. If an opponent has an equal or greater Willpower, you instead gain a number of free Raises equal to your School Rank by spending a Void Point.

**Technique 5:** Strength in All Things — When making an opposed test against an opponent with lower Willpower, your opponent may not spend Void at any point during the test (either for the test itself or to activate techniques) unless you do.

### THE MOSHI SHUGENJA SCHOOL

The Moshi's focus is shifting from Fire to Air given the loss of their patron Amaterasu. This change caused philosophical debate to erupt among the



membership, but as time goes on and a new generation takes over, the Moshi are able to set aside their grief and embrace their new role.

**Benefit:** +1 Agility

**Skills:** Calligraphy, Divination, History, Lore (Theology), Meditation, Shintao, any 1 High or Bugei Skill.

**Outfit:** Standard Shugenja

**Technique:** Lord Sun's Blessing — You begin knowing the following spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, any 3 Air spells and any 3 Fire spells. You have an Affinity for all Air spells and a Deficiency for all Earth spells.

### THE TSURUCHI ARCHER SCHOOL

Despite the lingering resentment some Tsuruchi feel over their absorption into the Mantis Clan, they have never flagged in their duty. They remain among the finest hunters and magistrates, and are widely recognized as the greatest archers in Rokugan.

**Benefit:** +1 Reflexes

**Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Hunting, Kyujutsu 2, Lore (any, often Bushido), Stealth.

**Outfit:** Yumi with 40 arrows, wakizashi, light armor, standard clothing, travel pack, any one weapon, 5 koku.

**Technique 1:** Never Let the Blade Reach You — You gain a number of free Raises equal to your rank in this school when making any archery-based attack.

**Technique 2:** The Sting of the Wasp — You gain an extra attack per round, but only if all your attacks this round are with a bow. You gain another such attack when you reach Rank 4 in this school.

**Technique 3:** The Arrow Knows the Way — You may spend any amount of Void Points when making a ranged attack.

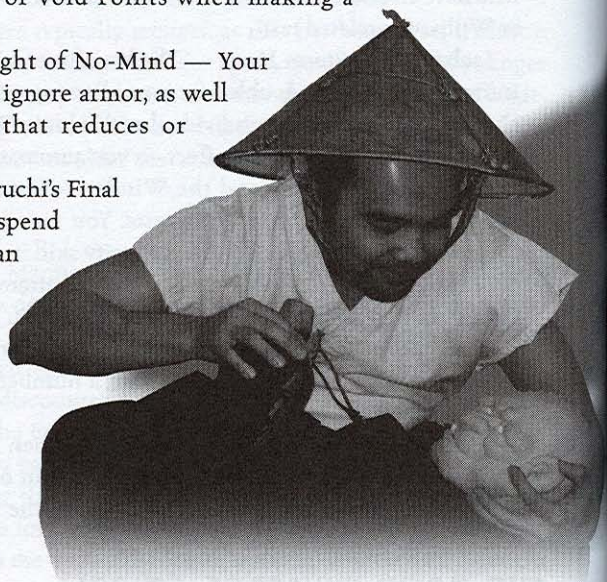
**Technique 4:** Flight of No-Mind — Your archery attacks may ignore armor, as well as any Technique that reduces or negates damage.

**Technique 5:** Tsuruchi's Final Lesson — You may spend a Void Point to gain an extra attack with a bow.

### THE YORITOMO BUSHI SCHOOL

The Yoritomo fighting style is unique in the Empire. They focus on the use of peasant weapons, simple tools easily replaced if lost at sea.

**Benefit:** +1 Agility



**Skills:** Athletics, Battle, Defense, Jiujutsu, Kenjutsu, Nofujutsu, any 1 Bugei Skill.

**Outfit:** Any two weapons, light armor, standard clothing, 10 koku.

**Technique 1:** Fight Without Steel — You lose no honor for using peasant weapons. Your Rank with any Skill using a peasant weapon is considered one higher than its actual Rank on all tests (if you have no Ranks, you are considered to be Rank 1).

**Technique 2:** Voice of the Storm — When making an attack using a peasant weapon smaller than a katana, you gain a Free Raise on that attack. You gain another such Free Raise at Rank 4.

**Technique 3:** Claws of the Mantis — When wielding two peasant weapons that are both smaller than a katana, you may attack with each one in a single round.

**Technique 4:** Yoritomo's Rolling Wave — While making an attack or on Full Attack, your Defense Skill is increased by your School Rank until your next turn.

**Technique 5:** Hand of Osano-Wo — When wielding two peasant weapons smaller than a katana, you may make a single attack this round that uses both weapons. Only one weapon inflicts damage with this attack, but its DR is doubled. You may spend any amount of Void Points on this attack.

## THE PHOENIX CLAN

The Phoenix Clan has an unusual history given that the Kami Shiba swore an oath to Isawa (a mortal) to protect and defend his descendants. This established a unique precedent in that the mortal Isawa were essentially given free reign to do as they pleased while the divine Shiba tended to their protection and other needs. It was the Isawa who derived the Tao of Shinsei from Shiba's record of Shinsei and Hantei's conversations, and their unparalleled access to that information cemented their role as Rokugan's preeminent scholars early on in history.

The Phoenix are respected as the Empire's most powerful and sophisticated shugenja. Their clan boasts a larger number of shugenja than any other, and all major Phoenix palaces feature impressive magical defenses. It is perhaps fortunate for the Empire that a clan with such great power is so firmly dedicated to peace. The Phoenix are devout pacifists, avoiding war at all costs save self-defense. Though the Phoenix are quick to forgive and slow to anger, their wrath is incredible when given no recourse but violence. Entire armies have been washed away by waves of elemental fire, entire islands dragged beneath the waves by the power of the Council, and mountains torn from the earth by Isawa's creations. The Phoenix recognize the devastating nature of their power if left unchecked, and thus use it reluctantly.

Sadly there is a darker side to Phoenix brilliance. The Phoenix also tend to be arrogant. They frown upon aid from those outside their clan, and

tensions between their own families are high. The Phoenix have such faith in their intellect and power that they often shun aid from others until it is too late. Fortunately they are also resilient, and have recovered from a number of disasters that would be the death of any other clan.

During the Clan War, the Isawa Elemental Masters took drastic steps to defeat the Shadowlands and opened the Black Scrolls. While this offered the insight they hoped for, it also resulted in their eventual corruption. All the good the Masters accomplished was wiped away during the second Day of Thunder, when the Master of Fire went mad and killed the others countless other samurai, including two other members of the Council. The decimation was so great that following the Clan War's conclusion, the Phoenix opened their gates to any who could speak to the kami, offering them fealty in hopes of rebuilding their numbers.

At the end of the Four Winds Era the Phoenix were joined by two former heirs to the throne, Toturi Sezar and Kaneka. While Sezar willingly joined his mother's clan and took the Isawa name, Kaneka was ordered to join the Phoenix by his half-brother, the Emperor. Toturi III rightly feared the Shogun's ambition, and as a means of keeping his power in check he commanded Kaneka to swear fealty to this most peaceful of clans.

**Allies:** The Phoenix keep largely to themselves, as association with more warlike clans inevitably leads to conflict. They currently have a strong alliance with the Crane, who share their preference for peace over war.

**Enemies:** The Phoenix recently emerged from a war with the Dragon Clan, and bitter feelings still boil between the two clans. Tensions with the Lion Clan are also high due to a broken alliance that occurred during their war with the Dragon.

## THE FAMILIES

The Phoenix Clan is comprised of three families of shugenja and a lone family of bushi.

### THE AGASHA

The first Agasha was a follower of Togashi, the Kami that created the Dragon Clan. The family that bears her name served Togashi's line loyally for centuries. His death at the second Day of Thunder led to Hitomi's ascension as Clan Champion, and her bizarre behavior led to immediate conflict with the Agasha family. After her slaughter of many Togashi monks, many Agasha abandoned their oaths to the Dragon and swore loyalty to the Phoenix Clan. They were granted small provinces near the Shiba lands and permitted to study their own unique magical styles, but otherwise were largely left alone. The Agasha have served their Phoenix kinsmen well, and all parties have been pleased with the arrangement thus far.

The Agasha are a family of shugenja, one among many in the Phoenix Clan. They are an enigmatic clan, as befits their Dragon heritage. They experiment with a variety of unusual schools of magic, and some among their number are cursed with visions of the future. The Agasha are focused predominantly on fire magic.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

## THE ASAKO

A monastic family, the Asako study the kami purely as a means of deciphering the universe's mysteries. The spirit of Shiba imparted significant wisdom to the first Asako shortly following Fu Leng's first defeat, and as a result the family follow a mysterious path to immortality. Those who followed this path, the Path of Man, became known as Henshin. In addition to shugenja and henshin, the Asako maintain a small group of Inquisitors who ruthlessly aid the Kuni Witch Hunters in their passionate search for corruption. The family is also responsible for maintaining the clan's only courtier's academy.

The Asako are a varied family. There are large numbers of both shugenja and monks within the family, as well as a significant number of henshin and courtiers. Asako shugenja tend to be highly specialized.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

## THE ISAWA

The Isawa are the largest shugenja family in Rokugan, twice as large as any other is. Their study of magic predates Rokugan, and none question their position as the most powerful shugenja in the Empire. While they are pacifists and scholars by nature, many Isawa are arrogant and set in their ways. The Isawa do not have a daimyo, but rather are ruled by a body known as the Council of Elemental Masters, featuring one powerful Master of each of the Five Elements. The Council is not exclusively Isawa, but that family usually dominates the Council.

The Isawa are shugenja, almost without fail. It is rare for one to be born without magical aptitude. The rare few who embrace violence and martial ways are shunned by the rest of their family.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

## THE SHIBA

The Shiba are descendants of the Kami whose name they bear, the samurai who transcribed the Tao and rescued Shinsei and Shosuro from the Shadowlands. He swore an oath to serve and protect the descendants of Isawa, an act of humility and selflessness unmatched by any of his brothers or sisters. The Shiba continue to honor this vow, protecting the Phoenix lands with their armies and protecting the Isawa as their ever-present yojimbo. Despite their focus on matters of war and violence, the Shiba are a contemplative folk, believing in violence as an answer only when every other option is exhausted.

The Shiba are the largest Phoenix family, and are comprised primarily of bushi. The family's two main schools are for bushi and yojimbo, both of whom fulfill an integral role in a clan with so many shugenja. Shugenja are rare among the Shiba, but they appear only on occasion. The current Master of the Void is Shiba Ningen, the first Master of the Void born outside the Isawa family.

**Benefit:** +1 Intelligence

## THE PHOENIX SCHOOLS

Schools maintained by the Phoenix Clan are predominately shugenja-oriented, and focus on meditation and study even if when the kami are not emphasized.

### THE ASAKO COURTIER SCHOOL

Utilizing magic in court is a complicated business, strictly regulated by Imperial Law. Thus Phoenix ambassadors are forced to fall back upon their diplomatic abilities. To compensate for this, the clan long ago organized a courtier school for their ambassadors and dignitaries.

**Benefit:** +1

**Skills:** Courtier, Etiquette, Heraldry, History, Shintao, Sincerity, any 1 High Skill.

**Outfit:** Standard Courtier

**Technique 1:** Temple of the Soul — If you are familiar with a court setting, having spent some amount of time there (at least one session or a significant amount of your back history), your High skills are considered to be one rank higher in all non-combat tests.

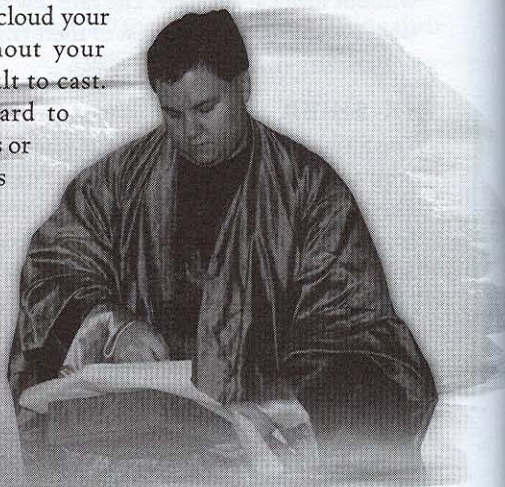
**Technique 2:** From the Ashes — If you are defeated in an opposed social test with another individual, you gain a +2 bonus to your Trait/Skill total for the next opposed social test made against that same person.

**Technique 3:** Voice of the Void — You may spend a Void point to double the next card you draw in an opposed social test.

**Technique 4:** Invincible Mind — Any spell that attempts to alter or cloud your mind, even those cast without your knowledge, are more difficult to cast.

When the judge draws a card to determine if the spell succeeds or fails, the TN of the spell is increased by double your Rank in this School.

**Technique 5:** Wisdom of the Ages — By spending a Void point, you may increase your rank in any one High skill to 10 for the purpose of making a single test.



### THE ISAWA SHUGENJA SCHOOL

There can be no question that the Isawa family produces the finest shugenja in all of Rokugan. Their magical tradition predates the Kami's fall, and it was the Isawa who interpreted Shiba's original copy of Shinsei's wisdom to decipher how the kami might be invoked through prayer and ritual.

**Benefit:** +1 Void

**Skills:** Calligraphy, Investigation, Lore (Theology), Meditation, Shintao, any 2 other High Skills.

**Outfit:** Fine Shugenja

**Technique:** Isawa's Truth — You begin the game with the following spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, any 3 spells of the element of your choice, any 2 spells from another element, and any 1 spell of a third element. You have an Affinity for all spells of your primary element and a Deficiency in all spells of the element that opposes your primary element.

## THE SHIBA BUSHI SCHOOL

The most introspective of all bushi schools, the Shiba are contemplative and studious lot. The Tao is the primary source of their training, and they apply its wisdom liberally to any tactical situation. Shiba bushi are not respected for their martial prowess, but their incredible focus gives even the most belligerent Matsu pause.

**Benefit:** +1 Reflexes

**Skills:** Defense, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Meditation, Shintao, Tea Ceremony, any 1 High or Bugei Skill.

**Outfit:** Standard Bushi

**Technique 1:** Way of the Phoenix — You may spend any amount of Void Points on a single test.

**Technique 2:** Dancing With the Elements — You have been trained alongside shugenja and are familiar with their ways. You may spend a Void point to increase or decrease by 2 the card pull made by a judge to determine if a spell targeting you succeeds or fails. This only applies to spells that specifically target you, not spells that affect an area.

**Technique 3:** One With Nothing — You may spend a Void point to gain an additional action per combat round. This action may not be used to make an attack. This ability may be used once per round.

**Technique 4:** Everywhere And Nowhere At Once — You gain an additional attack per round.

**Technique 5:** One With All And Nothing — By spending a Void point, you may substitute your Void ring for any Trait or Skill in any test.

## THE ISHI-KEN SCHOOL

The rarest of all aptitudes, the term Ishiken applies to those incredibly rare individuals who are born with the ability to perceive and manipulate the Void. This can be a deadly gift, as those who are not quickly identified and taught to control their abilities can be overwhelmed and consumed by the sheer power.

**Benefit:** +1 Void

**Skills:** Lore (Theology), Lore (Void Magic), Meditation 2, Shintao, any 2 High or Bugei Skills.

**Outfit:** Fine Shugenja

**Technique:** Nothing and Everything — You begin the game with the following spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, any 3 Void spells, any 2 spells of another element (your choice), and any 1 spell of another, non-opposing element. You have an Affinity for Void spells and a Deficiency for either of the two elements for which you do not possess any spells (your choice).

# THE SCORPION CLAN

## CHARACTER BUILDING CHAPTER THREE

Every tale demands a decent villain, and the Scorpion are often that villain in Rokugan. The first Bayushi allowed himself to be defeated in the Kami's tournament to see who would become Emperor, preferring a role outside the spotlight where he could make his plans outside of the sphere of social politics. This began a tradition of deception, deceit, and treachery bent towards a single end — protecting the Empire. While the Scorpion's tactics may seem dishonorable, their loyalty to the Empire and to one another is limitless. They make sacrifices that others would not, unbound by the restrictions of honor. Even yet, the Scorpion are samurai, and are not without their own peculiar interpretations of bushido. Those who betray the Scorpion or shirk their duties are branded as the basest of cowards. Such individuals see the souls torn from their body in a magical ritual and bound to the trees in Traitor's Grove, where their descendants weep for their weakness and children gather to throw stones.

The first Scorpion Thunder, Shosuro, is the only Thunder to return from the Shadowlands after Fu Leng's defeat. Shosuro carried the Black Scrolls, powerful corrupted artifacts that held the secret of Fu Leng's defeat. Mourning Shosuro's loss, Bayushi demanded to right to protect the Scrolls. The Emperor agreed, granting the Scorpion considerable leverage in the process. Thus the Scorpion became the Clan of Secrets.

During the reign of Hantei XXXVIII, Scorpion Champion Bayushi Shoji learned of a prophecy that foretold the Hantei bringing about Fu Leng's return. Shoji attempted a coup, but failed and was killed. The Scorpion were disbanded, but survived in hiding until the second Day of Thunder, when the new Emperor restored their status to reward their efforts in restoring the Empire. The clan was nearly destroyed again several years later when the Emperor disappeared, but were banished instead. The Scorpion endured great hardships in the Burning Sand, but returned stronger than ever with their ranks bolstered by the addition of secret gaijin allies.

The Scorpion have recently recovered from an internal civil war. A traitor named Bayushi Atsuki attempted to usurp control of the clan and return them to what he perceived as their true purpose. Atsuki's organization was destroyed, though Atsuki himself escaped. Scorpion Champion Bayushi Sunetra has reunited her clan under her leadership.

Nearly all Scorpion wear masks, except in the most intimate surroundings. This is a tradition that can be traced to Bayushi himself. A Scorpion's mask is a reflection of that individual's moral outlook. A handful of Scorpion choose not to wear a mask, claiming instead that their mask is the fact that they wear no mask.

**Allies:** The Scorpion are a clan for whom enduring alliances are ultimately unknown, though they have maintained an alliance with the Dragon for some time. They also foster hidden alliances with the Moto and the Ikoma families.

**Enemies:** The Scorpion have a curious perspective on Rokugan. While many clans despise them overtly, the Scorpion do not consider any other clan their enemy. The other clans are merely tools in a toolbox. If the Scorpion require aid from a certain clan, then they will act to repair their reputation with that clan, aid them for as long as necessary, then discard them once they have obtained what they desired in the first place.

## THE FAMILIES

As might be expected, each Scorpion family has its own secret set of practices. Only the Bayushi truly understand the depths of any Scorpion plot, and even then there are those among the other families who are given leave to pursue their own interests without supervision.



## THE BAYUSHI

Lords of the Scorpion, the Bayushi are the clan's presence in court and on the battlefield. They are the Scorpion that one finds, distracting enemies from the hidden endeavors taking place behind their back. The Bayushi are well known for their elaborate and eye-catching masks. These masks not only say "you cannot trust me," but they also draw an opponent's attention, leaving them open for an attack from unexpected quarters. The Bayushi thrive upon their unseemly reputation, as each Bayushi uses his wiles to convince his target that he is the exception to the Scorpion stereotype of villainy.

The Bayushi are as varied a family as exists in a Great Clan. They have vast numbers of bushi and courtiers, but do not discourage individuals from pursuing other paths. Bayushi students study at virtually every school the clan maintains, although it is rare for one to display an affinity with the kami.

**Benefit:** +1 Agility



## THE SHOSURO

The Shosuro are a silken glove where the Bayushi are a mailed fist. They are a family of courtiers, poets, and diplomats. Unknown to almost the entire family, they are also Rokugan's premiere ninja family. If a Shosuro cannot deal with an enemy through persuasion, another Shosuro stands ready to dispose of them in a more permanent manner.

The Shosuro family's focus is, ironically, their lack of focus. The Shosuro boast an equal number of bushi and courtiers, as well as a fair number of shugenja. Ninja are also numerous, though obviously they do not draw attention to themselves. Most Shosuro ninja disguise themselves as mediocre politicians, so to remain hidden in until the time is right.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

## THE SOSHI

The Soshi are the Scorpion's premiere shugenja family. Their mastery of magic is influenced by Scorpion philosophy, and places a strong influence on disguise, illusion, and ferreting out secrets.

The shugenja tradition is strong within the Soshi family, but like the Bayushi they do not place restrictions on their members. Soshi have often served as courtiers and even bushi.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

## THE YOGO

Perhaps no family has a more tragic history than the Yogo. Their bloodline is cursed, with each true Yogo doomed to betray whoever they love most. The Yogo avoid this curse in a unique manner, by remaining aloof and distant from others (and thus avoiding love altogether). The Yogo are powerful shugenja, and are particularly adept at crafting wards. They are sworn enemies of the Shadowlands, and show no mercy to those who practice maho.

The Yogo are a shugenja family. Although a handful have chosen to study other paths, every Yogo born has the ability to speak to the kami if they choose to pursue it. Some believe this is a form of balance to the terrible curse their family bears, although the Yogo find little comfort in it.

**Benefit:** +1 Willpower

## THE SCORPION SCHOOLS

There are no more tightly kept secrets in Rokugan than the secret techniques taught by Scorpion schools. This is in part due to the clan's mystique — a clan that deals in secrets must protect its own vehemently.

## THE BAYUSHI BUSHI SCHOOL

Lion bushi are feared for their precision. Crab bushi are feared for their strength. Scorpion bushi are feared for their unnatural speed, but even more so because it is impossible to predict what they will do next. The Bayushi technique is quick and ruthless, taking advantage of every mistake an opponent makes.

**Benefit:** +1 Intelligence

**Skills:** Defense, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Poison, Sincerity, Stealth

**Outfit:** Standard Bushi.

**Technique 1:** Way of the Scorpion — You double the value of any card you pull for Initiative.

**Technique 2:** Pincers and Tail — An opponent who attacks you and effectively has a Reflexes Rank of 0 against your attacks until their next turn.

**Technique 3:** Strike at the Tail — You may choose to attack an opponent normally, adding their rank in the weapon they are wielding added to their Defense Skill. If successful, you disarm them rather than inflict damage. If you make two Raises successfully, you not only disarm them but confiscate their weapon in the process.

**Technique 4:** Strike from Above, Strike from Below — You may make an extra attack per round.

**Technique 5:** The Pincers Hold, The Tail Strikes — You may declare Raises on your attack tests after the card pull has been revealed.

## THE BAYUSHI COURTIER SCHOOL

The same philosophies that make the Bayushi bushi school dangerous are true for the family's courtier school, and perhaps even more so. A Bayushi courtier is a ruthless, relentless foe that will exploit any and every weakness an opponent reveals to gain the advantage. Many courtiers are eager to ally with a Bayushi simply so that they do not have to face them in court.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

**Skills:** Courtier, Etiquette, Investigation, Law, Seduction, Sincerity, any 1 skill.

**Outfit:** Fine Courtier

**Technique 1:** Weakness Is My Strength — When making any opposed social test, you may add the number of Character Points your opponent has gained from Disadvantages to your total.

**Technique 2:** Shallow Waters — After five minutes of conversation with someone, you may make an opposed Awareness test. If successful, you learn that character's lowest Trait. You may spend a Void point to learn the next lowest Trait.

**Technique 3:** Secrets Are Birthmarks — After five minutes of conversation with another character, you may make an opposed Awareness test. If successful, you learn one Disadvantage the character possesses (GM's choice).

**Technique 4:** Scrutiny's Sweet Sting — For every hour you spend in conversation with or observing social interaction on the part of another character, you gain one level of the Blackmail advantage. This requires a successful opposed Awareness test at the end of every hour. (If the character possesses no secrets that can constitute as Blackmail, you gain nothing.)

**Technique 5:** No More Masks — You may, after five minutes of conversation in a public place, spend Void points to give others Disadvantages. For every Void point you spend, you may grant your target 2 points worth of disadvantages, which they will endure for the remainder of the session. Disadvantages granted in this manner must be social in nature. No physical disadvantages can be conferred by this technique.

## THE SHOSURO SHIROBI SCHOOL

No one outside the Scorpion Clan who learns that the Shosuro shinobi school exists is permitted to live. The shinobi are the finest assassins and infiltrators the clan has at their disposal, assassins among assassins. The rare occasions when their agents have been sighted (or allowed themselves to be seen) have given rise to the legends of ninja, possessed of incredible magical abilities.

**Benefit:** +1 Reflexes

**Skills:** Athletics, Defense, Explosives, Poison, Stealth, any 2 skills.

**Outfit:** Katana, wakizashi, black clothing, one vial of spider venom, any three weapons, 5 koku.

**Technique 1:** The Shadow Has No Mask — You may add your School Rank to all Stealth tests.

**Technique 2:** The Shadow Has No Mercy — When attacking an opponent unaware of your presence, you may make any number of Raises, unlimited by your Void Ring.

**Technique 3:** The Shadow Has No Form — You may use a shinobi distraction technique against an opponent, increasing your Defense Skill by five until your next action. Using this technique also reduces any Offensive Combat Tests you make by five for the same duration.

**Technique 4:** The Shadow Has No Substance — By making a Difficult Awareness + Acting test, you may exchange the name on your nametag for that of another character (you have disguised yourself as them). Your character's abilities and statistics remain the same.

**Technique 5:** The Shadow Has No Soul — You are intimately familiar with the stalking and hunting of others, so much so that you are aware of others stalking you. You may never be surprised, and may always roll initiative during the first round of combat. When an opponent attempts to ambush you, you may make an opposed Reflexes test. If you are successful, you gain +5 to your Initiative for the first round of combat.

## THE SOSHI SHUGENJA SCHOOL

Without the Lying Darkness's influence, the Soshi have struggled to find a focus for their teachings. Their students learn the most effective means of using magic to gather information on enemies, move unseen through the mortal realm, or strike down an opponent with no one being the wiser.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

**Skills:** Calligraphy, Courtier, Lore (Theology), Meditation, Shintao, Sincerity, any 1 High or Bugei skill.

**Outfit:** Standard Shugenja

**Technique:** Strength in Shadow — You begin knowing the following spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, any 3 Air spells, any 2 Fire spells, and any 1 Water spell. You have an Affinity for all Air spells and a Deficiency for all Earth spells.

# THE UNICORN CLAN

At the dawn of Rokugan, when Fu Leng and his forces had been defeated by the Seven Thunders, the Kami Shinjo went to her brother the Emperor and asked him how they could protect their Empire if they knew not what lay beyond it. As Fu Leng had destroyed everything they had built, so too could some new, unknown foe appear to wreak such definitive havoc. Saddened at the notion of losing his sister, the Emperor reluctantly agreed to Shinjo's plan. With her followers, the Ki-Rin Clan, Shinjo left the Empire and traveled north across the Burning Sands into the unknown lands beyond.

Eight hundred years later, Shinjo's followers returned now under the moniker of the Unicorn Clan. Their trials abroad had altered them significantly, but they eventually proved the truth of their identity. The period of adjustment was lengthy, and never truly ended. Even in the present, many consider the Unicorn uncouth barbarians. The Unicorn, for their part, do not feel that they have abandoned their traditions. They are samurai, but they have incorporated their ways with customs adopted to survive in harsh foreign lands. They are a clan of nomads, explorers, and warriors.

In modern Rokugan, the Unicorn are stronger than they have ever been. The Moto now rule the family, led by the merciless Khan. Their armies rival those of the Lion, and the two clans have engaged in open conflict on their shared border. For now, the entire Empire holds their breath to see which clan will emerge as the greater military power.

**Allies:** The Crab are on good terms with the Unicorn, and the Crane and Mantis have a lucrative trade agreement with them. The Unicorn also boast alliances with many kingdoms beyond the borders of the Empire.

**Enemies:** The Unicorn are currently at war with the Lion Clan, and are resentful toward the Dragon for their attempts to interfere in that war. They otherwise get along well with most Clans and have no outstanding grudges.

## THE FAMILIES

The Unicorn have more families than any other clan save the Crab. The Khan believes that so long as each family serves him well, there is no reason to consolidate them.

### THE HORIUCHI

More an order than a traditional family, the Horiuchi are the adopted children and grandchildren of Horiuchi Shoan, an Iuchi shugenja granted her own family name shortly before the Clan War. Shoan adopted several children orphaned by the Clan War and the Battle at Oblivion's Gate, and each has adopted her name in turn. Shoan has since retired to the Four Temples of Kyuden Seppun, but her son Shem-Zhe now administrates the family's small holdings near the Iuchi provinces.

There are only a handful Horiuchi in existence, and all are shugenja. There have to date been no instances of a Horiuchi who has not possessed the kami's gift and followed in their founder's footsteps.

**Benefit:** +1 Willpower

### THE IDE

The Ide are a family of pacifist diplomats. The founder was a peaceful, introspective man who truly believed violence was never an acceptable solution. When Lady Shinjo took her followers across the Burning Sands, Ide served her well. Countless conflicts with strangers the Ki-Rin met along the way were defused before they erupted into open warfare. Even Shinjo's most militant followers had no choice but to agree that Ide was an invaluable asset to the clan. His descendants follow in his footsteps, representing the clan in court and attempting to defuse whatever unnecessary hostilities may arise. The Moto family's rise to power has made this duty considerably more difficult, as the Khan has no interest in avoiding hostility.

The Ide are typically courtiers, ambassadors, and diplomats. There is a division of the family that has no interest in diplomatic pursuits, and they tend to serve as merchant patrons, sponsoring or even leading vast merchant caravans that cross Rokugan and even venture into the gaijin lands beyond in search of trade and commerce.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

### THE IUCHI

Other shugenja families regard the Iuchi with a mixture of curiosity and revulsion, for their magical style combines the basic precepts of traditional Rokugani magic with questionable rituals and techniques learned from a hundred different gaijin sorcerer traditions. Still, the Iuchi are perhaps the most traditional of the many shugenja groups within the clan, as the Moto shugenja, Horiuchi shugenja, and meishodo practitioners are all looked upon with decided distaste by the rest of Rokugan for one reason or another.

Iuchi are invariably shugenja. Like all shugenja families, there are occasionally those born who do not possess the kami's gift. These samurai usually study with the Shinjo or the Utaku infantrymen, as the Moto and Iuchi have some fundamental philosophical differences.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

### THE MOTO

Once considered little more than gaijin barbarians, the Moto are now the most powerful family in their clan. The Moto are descended not from the original Rokugani, but from the barbarian Ujik-hai tribes who swore fealty to Shinjo during her journeys. The Moto's ascension to rule the clan has wrought many changes, as the Moto have little interest in adjusting their culture and beliefs to suit Rokugan in the same manner the Shinjo once did. Their tactics, lifestyle, demeanor, even their diet and architecture are a radical departure from the norm, and the Moto would have it no other way.

The Moto are a bushi family, and most have trained in various weapons traditions for years before they ever begin formal study for their gempukku. Their White Guard is among the most feared military units in the Empire. The few among the family who prove to possess a talent for the kami often become priests of death, shugenja who serve the gaijin death gods called the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang.

**Benefit:** +1 Strength

### THE SHINJO

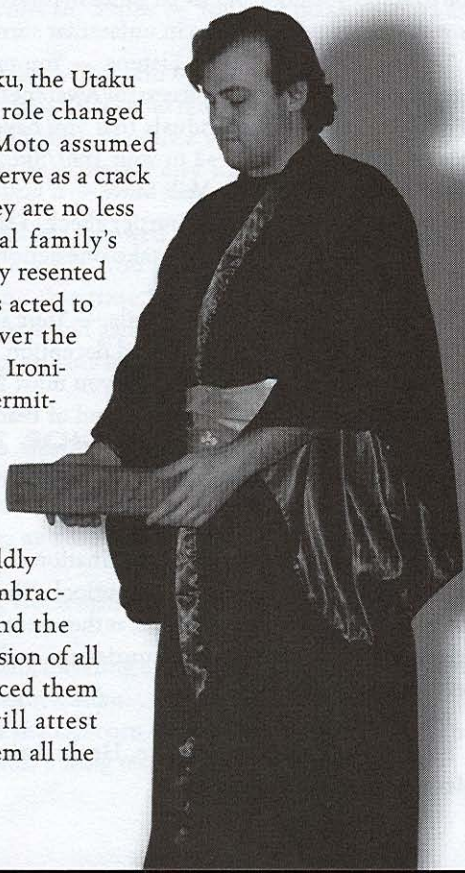
Once lords of the Unicorn Clan, the Shinjo suffered tremendously during the return of their founder to Rokugan. Lady Shinjo recognized the Kolat's influence on her descendants, and angrily purged all those who were disloyal from their ranks, including the Unicorn Champion, Shinjo Yokatsu. In the decades since, the Shinjo have been reviled by all for their perceived weakness. Their daimyo, Shinjo Shono, hates the Kolat with a ferocity that few can match, but is not particularly motivated to return his family to power as he feels in many ways he and his kin deserve their punishment. Shono has vowed that his people will not fail again.

The Shinjo are predominately bushi and scouts, although there is a strong magistrate tradition among the family as well. The Shinjo govern the clan's northern provinces, and are considered among the finest horsemen in the clan, surpassed only by the Utaku and their near-mystical connection to their warhorses.

**Benefit:** +1 Reflexes

### THE UTAKU

Once known as the Otaku, the Utaku family is aware that its role changed noticeably since the Moto assumed power. The Utaku now serve as a crack reserve unit, though they are no less feared. The matriarchal family's disdain for men is clearly resented by the Khan, and he has acted to limit their influence over the clan since his ascension. Ironically, this change has permitted the Utaku to return to the pious, ascetic lifestyle their founder espoused. They forsake many worldly goods and pleasures, embracing study of the Tao and the martial path to the exclusion of all else. Those who have faced them on the battleground will attest that it has only made them all the more fearsome.



Utaku women are trained as Shiotome, the elite Battle Maidens that serve as the most devastating cavalry unit in the Empire. Males are permitted to study as infantrymen or allowed to study the cavalry techniques of other families, but are not allowed to ride the magnificent Utaku battle horses.

**Benefit:** +1 Agility

## UNICORN CLAN SCHOOLS

The Unicorn have a vast array of schools and techniques, many of which revolve around horsemanship or the strange gaijin fighting styles they brought back with them from the Burning Sands and the mysterious lands beyond.

### THE IDE EMISSARY SCHOOL

The Ide school teaches absolute non-violence, and as such it is the only school that the Khan has forbidden members of his family to study. The school depends heavily upon the ability to read an opponent, discovering the hidden emotions that drive their ambitions.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

**Skills:** Courtier, Etiquette, Horsemanship, Investigation, Sincerity, any 2 High or Bugei skills.

**Outfit:** Fine Courtier

**Technique 1:** The Heart Speaks — You may spend a Void Point at any time to automatically succeed at any unopposed Etiquette test. This allows you to automatically avoid social gaffes in time of need, instinctively sensing how to behave politely even in unfamiliar surroundings.

**Technique 2:** The Heart Listens — You may identify a person's clan, family, and school with a successful Awareness + Diplomacy test (TN 10). When dealing with individuals that you have successfully studied with this technique, you gain +2 to your Trait/Skill on all opposed social tests.

**Technique 3:** When the Veils Move — If hostilities erupt in your presence, you may make a Reflexes + Courtier check (TN 10) prior to Initiative being rolled. If successful, you may take one action before Initiative is rolled. This action may not be an attack.

**Technique 4:** Piercing the Veils — Your ability to perceive another's emotions makes manipulation and deception difficult. Any opposed tests intended to deceive or manipulate you must Raise twice to be successful.

**Technique 5:** The Immovable Hand of Peace — So long as you remain non-violent (no weapon in hand, no threats, etc.), no one may attack you without first succeeding at an opposed Awareness test.

### THE IUCHI SHUGENJA SCHOOL

The Iuchi school is a unique combination of traditional shugenja magic combined with gaijin rituals and outlook. The techniques there resemble the Kitsu school in many respects, as they were both based on the same basic principles taught by Shinsei centuries ago and have both developed along very focused lines.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

**Skills:** Calligraphy, Defense, Herbalism, Horsemanship, Hunting, Meditation, any 1 Bugei skill.

**Outfit:** Fine Shugenja

**Technique:** Iuchi's Method — You begin with the following spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, any 3 Water spells, and 2 Earth spells, and any 1 Air spell. You have an Affinity for all Water spells and a Deficiency for all Fire spells.

## THE MOTO BUSHI SCHOOL

The ruthless fighting style practiced by the Moto is direct, brutal, and relentless. The Moto utilize a large number of weapons from their homeland beyond the Burning Sands, weapons that many samurai are ill-prepared to face.

**Benefit:** +1 Agility

**Skills:** Defense, Horsemanship, Hunting, Intimidation, Kenjutsu, any 1 Bugei skill, any 1 weapon skill.

**Outfit:** Fine Bushi

**Technique 1:** The Way of Moto — Your Rank in Horsemanship and any Skill using a peasant weapon is considered one higher than its actual Rank on all tests (if you have no Ranks, you are considered to be Rank 1).

**Technique 2:** Master of Destiny — You may spend two Void points on any combat test, rather than the normal limit of one. When making a normal offensive combat test, you may choose to spend one Void point to alter the roll after the test is made if you did not spend any Void points prior to making the test.

**Technique 3:** Swift Across the Plains — You may make an extra attack per combat round.

**Technique 4:** Never Yield — You gain a +3 bonus to Initiative totals for every rank of Wounds you possess. Wound ranks never affect your Initiative tests. You may spend a Void point to reduce your wound penalties by one rank for the round. You may spend any number of Void points in this manner.

**Technique 5:** Bloodied but Unbowed — Upon receiving damage that would kill you, you do not die. You may act for that round and one additional round. During this time, you suffer no wound penalties. You gain +5 to your Initiative and gain an additional attack. You die at the end of the round, regardless of any magical healing you receive during the extra round.

## THE SHINJO SCOUT SCHOOL

The disgraced Shinjo are often outriders, scouts, and explorers that push back the boundaries of Rokugan's borders. They focus on hunting, horsemanship, and exploration, and are largely self-sufficient in any situation.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

**Skills:** Battle, Defense, Horsemanship, Hunting, Kenjutsu, Stealth, any 1 Bugei skill.

**Outfit:** Katana, wakizashi, traveling clothes, steed, yumi with 30 arrows, travel pack, any two weapons, 8 koku.

**Technique 1:** Grace of the Unicorn — You may add half your rank in Stealth to your Defense Skill during tests.



**Technique 2:** Speed of the Viper — You may add twice your School Rank to your Initiative every combat round.

**Technique 3:** The Stars Are My Guide — You gain the Absolute Direction advantage, if you did not have it. You may add your School Rank to any test involving Perception.

**Technique 4:** A Soul As Swift — You may make an extra attack per combat round.

**Technique 5:** Purity of the First Strike — You may add your rank in Stealth to the total of any attack test you make against an opponent who is unaware of your presence.

## OUTFITS

**Standard Bushi Outfit:** Katana, wakizashi, yumi with 20 arrows, light or heavy armor, standard clothing, any one weapon, 5 koku.

**Fine Bushi Outfit:** As above plus steed, one additional weapon, 10 additional koku.

**Standard Courtier Outfit:** Wakizashi, standard clothing, 8 koku.  
**Fine Courtier Outfit:** As above plus steed, 10 additional koku.

**Standard Shugenja Outfit:** Wakizashi, scroll satchel, three blank scrolls, standard clothing, 5 koku.

**Fine Shugenja Outfit:** As above plus steed, 10 additional koku.

## SKILLS

One of the most dynamic / unique ways to customize your character is by selecting their skills. Skills add a great amount of depth to a character that sets him apart from others from the same, clan, family, and school. Two bushi from the Ikoma family and Akodo school may share a similar attitude and basic training, but one may be much more of a scholar while the other spends his time perfecting his hunting skills to impress his daimyo.

When picking skills, it's important to address any strengths and weaknesses you want your character to possess, as well as any hidden surprises (such as a burly Hida bushi who is the master of the tea ceremony) you wish to add.

Skills come in four categories — High, Low, Bugei, and Merchant. The most common are High and Bugei skills, as they are the domain of the samurai caste. High skills represent more “refined” skills that tend towards social activity and more cultured learning. The term cultured learning in Rokugan also encompasses violent and physical arts such as hunting, as it is considered an honorable pursuit that is acceptable even for those who are not necessarily warriors. Bugei skills are arts studied almost exclusively for a combat arena. Swordplay, athletics, wrestling, and the like are bugei skills and largely the province of bushi. Warriors tend to have a great many

bugei skills, though all among the samurai caste (bushi, courtier, and shugenja alike) are expected to be able to show at least a broad mix of scholarly training.

Low Skills are talents those among the samurai caste are not supposed to cultivate. Sneaking, stealing, and lewd behavior are all reprehensible acts that bring about shame as a direct consequence. Low skills are often employed by criminals and peasants in their day-to-day activities, however, and are listed here largely for completeness (and for the sake of the occasional ninja or villainous player character). Performing a Low skill is grounds for a loss of Honor, and being caught in such an act will certainly result in a loss of Glory. Circumstance is an important factor to consider when dealing with the use of Low skills — a Hirma scout using Stealth to slip past a band of ogres is not acting dishonorably, but a ninja creeping through the halls of an enemy castle at midnight certainly has no such excuse.

Merchant skills are neither honorable nor dishonorable. They are skills that certainly have their uses and are not strictly forbidden to samurai, though those with more traditional values will prefer to leave such acts to the peasantry.

Some skills are considered related or complimentary to one another. Related skills can be substituted for one another but are used at a penalty when done so. For example, the game of Go emulates the tactical ebb and flow of mass combat (generals are often masters of the game) and a character may use his Battle skill when playing Go if he doesn't have the skill. Such skills are considered to be effectively two Ranks lower for such purposes (so it is not worth substituting them unless you have at least three Ranks). Complimentary skills are such that they benefit from having several people with the same skill working together. In these cases, the test is made using the highest relevant skill and trait among the group, with a Free Raise being granted for every two characters working together beyond the first. There is a logical limit on such assistance that varies from skill to skill (it's likely that 30 characters with the Craft (Engineering) skill could work together on the same castle, but 30 cooks would not be as helpful making one pot of soup) that may be determined by the GM as appropriate to the situation.

## ACTING (HIGH, AWARENESS)

The art of pretending to be someone (or something) else for the entertainment of others is amazingly popular in Rokugan. Plays are both events for appreciation of the arts and a social setting to mingle with powerful and influential nobles. While the plays tend to be highly received events, the actual actors tend to be forgettable unless they have a great deal of individual notoriety. Ranks in this skill represent the proficiency for the art, with no roll required. If the skill is used to impersonate a particular subject or convince a particularly skeptical viewer, it becomes an opposed test against the opponent's Intelligence + Investigation. Using this skill for dishonorable deceptions (such as trying to pass yourself off as a daimyo or

his son to gain access to forbidden areas) makes its use a Low Skill. Raises may be required by the GM to impersonate or perform a particularly difficult role.



## APPRAISAL

(MERCHANT, INTELLIGENCE)

Tests are made with this skill when attempting to determine the value of an item (or group of items). The difficulty should range from Easy (the value of a common kimono) to the Difficult (a haori woven from rare silk found only on the Mantis isles and crafted by the chaste nuns of the Moshi family). Failure indicates an inaccurate assumption of something's worth, which may turn out poorly when the appraiser attempts to get such an odd price. This skill may also be used to detect forgeries of specific materials, such as a phony copy of a famous Shiba swordsmith's blade. Raises may be made to reveal obscure details about the item's creation, or the identity of a person or group who might find the item unusually valuable.

## ATHLETICS

(BUGEI/LOW, STAMINA/STRENGTH/AGILITY)

This skill may be used for a large number of purposes, such as determining how fast a character can swim or run and for how long, or how well he can climb with or without aid. Trials of endurance use the Stamina trait when making a skill check, while functions that rely solely on physical power (such as lifting) use the Strength trait and acts of prowess (such as climbing or tumbling) use Agility. Raises may be made for additional effect (such as a burst of speed) or to put on a better performance than an opponent.

## AUTOPSY

(LOW, INTELLIGENCE)

The Autopsy skill is used by the eta, the lowest social class. A skill check indicates basic information gathered from the body, such as cause of death (if not carefully obscured) or how long the body has been dead. Raises are required to gain specific information such as an exact time of death or psych-ing out information that was purposely hidden (such as using a rare poison to make the death look like a heart attack). Kuni sometimes possess this skill so that they might examine the corpses of Shadowlands creatures.

## BARD

(HIGH, AWARENESS)

In the courts of even the most minor daimyo, there is always at least one retainer on hand to recount the glorious deeds of his ancestors and famous heroes of the family and clan. More than just telling a story, the adept bard is able to rouse the emotions of listeners and turn even the most indifferent audience into admirers of his subject. Additionally, when a samurai has performed a particularly great deed or acted a noteworthy manner, he is summoned before his daimyo to recount the tale before it is acknowledged more formally. Ranks in this skill gauge a proficiency with the art, though skill checks may be required to win over a particularly hostile audience.

## BATTLE

(BUZZ, PERCEPTION)

The Battle skill encompasses leading troops, devising plans to crush the enemy, and being able to adapt to the constant struggle against the enemy commander's strategy. The tide of large battles can be determined by an opposed Battle + Perception test between the enemy generals. The Battle Skill can also be used to scan an area for possible points of ambush, or find a secure place to make camp. Raises can be used to gain more detailed information, or perform more complex maneuvers.

## CALLIGRAPHY

(HIGH, AGILITY)

Every samurai is literate, but the Calligraphy skill indicates a focus on writing not just correctly but beautifully. There are no tests for using this skill, unless the writer wishes to make raises to ink a particularly striking work of art. This skill is very useful for samurai seeking an easily obtained yet sentimental gift for another samurai.

## CIPHER

(HIGH, INTELLIGENCE)

Ciphered messages are often sent in the guise of harmless letters to those being held hostage, or used as a way to get orders to a well-planted spy without causing any potential problems. Attempts to decipher the message are done with an Intelligence + Investigation test (TN equal to the initial result of the Cipher role). If the writer made any Raises while writing the

message, those attempting to read it must make at least as many Raises to understand the cipher. Characters who know the code used to cipher the message need not make any roll. Additional Raises may be made to make the cipher more difficult to break as noted above, or they may be used to give a specific reader recipient a Free Raise (on a one for one basis) to break the code if he is not aware of the code.

## CONCEAL

(LOW, REFLEXES)

Also known commonly as “palming,” the art of concealing may be used to hide a small item anywhere on a character’s body (not just in the hand). Whenever the character is searched or comes under reasonable scrutiny that may reveal the hidden object, the character makes a Contested roll with this skill against his opponent’s Perception + Investigation. Raises may be made to hide objects in a particularly imaginative and difficult manner, forcing investigators to make an equal number of Raises to discover the item.

## CONVERSATION

(HIGH, AWARENESS)

In the highly charged political settings of Rokugan, making meaningless small talk to pass the time is considered a fine art. Conversation is used as a way to politely distract or entertain others. This skill may be used to simply “pass the time” with meaningless small talk. If a character realizes someone is attempting to seduce or manipulate him, he may make an opposed Conversation + Awareness skill against the Skill + Awareness of his opponent to dominate the conversation, not giving the other speaker a chance to work their wiles.

## COURTIER

(HIGH, AWARENESS)

The Courtier skill represents a general knowledge of how the courts operate, from the lowest daimyo’s events all the way up to the Imperial Court. It is also a general gauge of being able to apply diplomacy and read the political climate. This skill can be used to determine known alliances, farm rumors, and subtly manipulate others to seeing your point of view without behaving dishonorably. It is the primary tool of emissaries and diplomats of all stripes. Raises may be used to obtain a greater amount of information.

## CRAFT

(HIGH/MERCHANT)

The Craft skill actually represents multiple skills. Each time it is selected, pick a specific sort of craft, such as bonsai, armorsmithing, origami, weaving, and the like. Multiple crafts are separate skills and must be advanced separately. Raises may be made for countless reasons, though usually they increase the worth of the final result or to compensate for less than desirable tools and circumstances.

## DANCE

(HIGH, AGILITY)

There are a great many dance styles, as each clan tends to have their own styles and many of the major families have traditional dances of their own. In most cases, these are graceful, coordinated movements performed by a single dancer or in unison with a troupe. Ranks in this skill gauge general proficiency with the art, though skill checks may be made with raises to make a particularly striking performance.

## DEFENSE

(BUGEI, AGILITY)

Defense is an essential skill practiced by most bushi and a good number of shugenja and courtiers as well. It is described in detail in the combat section.



## DIVINATION

(HIGH, VOID)

Though many spells offer a glimpse of the future, divination is not the exclusive domain of shugenja. Characters with the Divination skill know one (or more) method of divining the future, be it through Kowaru coins, astrology, or reading omens. Once per session, a character with the Divination skill may question the GM and use this skill. Simple questions or general questions about significant events (“Will the world end tomorrow?”) require no Raises, though specific questions about far-off events or important individuals may require a great deal of Raises (“What family will my daimyo’s unborn child marry into?”). If possible, this test should be made in secret by the GM, with the GM providing an incorrect or unintelligible answer in case of a failure.

## ESCAPE

(LOW, AGILITY)

This skill is used to escape various means of binding. Commonly, this means rope bindings, though the Crab are known to employ Kaiu-

engineered chains and cuffs, while the Phoenix are known to beseech the kami of earth to hold a criminal in place. Common forms of binding may be escaped with a test of Average Difficulty, though the GM may rule that more complex methods have a higher TN or require Raises to negate.

## ETIQUETTE (HIGH, AWARENESS)

Etiquette is a complex art form in Rokugan. This skill can be used for a variety of purposes, from knowing the proper rituals involved in a common greeting to recognizing obscure local customs. A master of etiquette is adept at avoiding social embarrassment as well as finding polite means of escaping manipulation. Etiquette + Awareness can be used in contested social tests whenever a character wishes to back out of a situation gracefully. Along with Courtier it is a necessary skill for diplomats, emissaries, and politicians — these two skills are essentially the attack and defense of courtly arts. Raises may be made to make a lasting impression on others, or to reveal particularly obscure customs of etiquette.

## EXPLOSIVES (LOW, INTELLIGENCE)

Gunpowder is called “gaijin pepper” in Rokugan, and the Emperor explicitly forbids its use outside of a handful of harmless Dragon fireworks. Naturally, while all of Rokugan agrees with the Imperial Edict openly, more than one major family employs it in clandestine operations. The Shosuro, Tamori, and Daidoji families are particularly curious about explosives, and the Kaiu are known to covertly deliver such explosives to Hiruma scouts to destroy Shadowlands outposts. The Explosives skill encompasses the use, understanding, and crafting of such products. Raises may be made to create particularly destructive explosives.

## FALCONRY (HIGH, INTELLIGENCE)

One of the common arts of the samurai caste is the care and training of hunting falcons. Though many samurai do not actually employ these birds for hunting, possessing a notable flock of well trained falcons is a point of honor and reputation among many nobles. Others keep their falcons to themselves, using them only for practical purposes, not bothering to display them for the amusement of others. The Falconry skill may be used to train falcons and other hunting birds over a period of time, but does not include the knowledge of breeding them. Raises will result in exceptionally trained animals.

## GAMES (HIGH/LOW, VARIES)

There are a great many ways for the samurai caste to pass the time, all of which involve one or more partners in the game. Go and shogi are popular games of strategy among the samurai as they tend to emulate the sort of tactical decisions required on the battlefield. Less honorable are games of

pure chance and gambling such as Winds and Fortunes, a popular dice game played for large stakes in Scorpion and Mantis lands.

## HERALDRY

(HIGH, INTELLIGENCE)

Every clan and family possesses identifying heraldry. Beyond that, samurai also have their own personal seal (a 'chop') that serves as their signature and mark of authority, and often have personal mons as well. In armies, different legions and divisions can be recognized by the chop, mon, and other markings on the standards that accompany them as they march (the most famous and respected of which being the Imperial Chrysanthemum and the laurel leaves of the Emerald Legions). The Heraldry skill signifies the ability to recognize these marks. The GM may force a character to make Raises to recognize a particularly obscure symbol, such as the personal chop of minor daimyo far removed from the character's sphere of influence.

## HERBALISM

(MERCHANT/HIGH, INTELLIGENCE)

All samurai understand the bounty that the natural world provides, and most respect it. There are a great many scholars and holy men who pursue the art of herbs who are able to coax elixirs, salves, and even food out of the raw resources found in nature. This skill may be used to bind wounds, counteract natural poisons, and scout for the bare minimum of sustenance for a number of individuals up to the character's rank in this skill for a single day. Raises may be made to increase the effectiveness of healing salves and poison cures according to the situation.

## HISTORY

(HIGH, INTELLIGENCE)

Many scholars devote their entire lives to the study of the past, as tradition and history are powerful forces in Rokugan. Exceptionally traditional families, such as the Akodo and Isawa, expect their children to be able to recite their lineage back to the founder of the family name. Raises may be made for a more obscure information, or to tell historic tales in a more engaging manner.

## HORSEMANSHIP

(HIGH, AGILITY)

Characters without this skill must make a Reflexes check (TN 5) every minute while mounted to prevent falling off, every round if galloping or in combat. Characters





with the Horsemanship skill need only make a skill check when traversing unusual situations (such as crossing a swift river) or keeping control of a spooked mount. Raises may be made to perform more advanced stunts and tricks, such as leaping over obstacles, or to urge a horse to greater speeds.

## HUNTING

### (HIGH, PERCEPTION)

Hunting is almost exclusively a sporting affair, as any sort of meat for foodstuffs is generally procured by the peasantry. Daimyo are expected to show some skill in the art of hunting due to their station as leaders and commanders. This sport is most popular among the Unicorn and Mantis clans, who have the unsettling habit of killing their own meals on a regular basis. This skill also encompasses the arts generally called upon during a prolonged hunt, such as camping, and basic wilderness survival. It can also be used to track a target through the wilderness. If the target makes any effort to conceal his tracks, this becomes an opposed Perception + Hunting test.

## IAIJUTSU

### (BUGEI, AGILITY)

The art of iaijutsu, the “fast draw,” is considered the most honorable way for bushi to settle a dispute. The etiquette of the iaijutsu duel is described on page 50 and mechanics for formal dueling are found on page 38. Outside of an iaijutsu duel, the skill may be used to draw and use a katana in the same round — otherwise an unprepared combatant must spend his first round of combat readying his weapon.

## INTIMIDATION

### (BUGEI, WILLPOWER)

The Hida and Moto families favor Intimidation over subtler forms of manipulation. An intimidated opponent may find himself more receptive to answering certain sensitive issues under pressure, though it is important to understand that no daimyo appreciates other samurai pushing around their vassals. It may be used in the same manner as Courtier to manipulate an opponent (albeit in an obvious manner), though it may also be used in combat. If a character spends a round making a successful Intimidation + Willpower check against an opponent, he gains a Free Raise on attacks against that opponent for the duration of the combat.

## INVESTIGATION

### (HIGH, VARIABLE)

This skill encompasses many functions, all of which center analyzing and processing information. It is used as an opposed skill against a number of skills involving stealth and deception. In addition, it can be used to analyze a crime scene. Raises may be made to gather more information at a scene, make more outstanding leaps of logic, or similar effects.

## JIUJUTSU

(BUGEI, AGILITY)

The basic art of unarmed combat, jiu-jutsu involves simple punches, kicks, and throws. There are many variations on the basic principles (the most famous of which being the Kaze-do style of the Dragon Clan), though they all tend to come down to the same point — hitting the enemy without a weapon. This is a Weapon Skill.

## KUENAI

(LOW, AWARENESS/WILLPOWER)

Just as the courtiers and statesmen of the Empire understand the nuances of correct behavior in the courts, canny rogues and criminals make it a point to understand the proper channels for getting things done in the underworld and appearing in control. This skill functions exactly like the Etiquette skill, but applies only to situations dealing with the criminal underworld and other unsavory regions of Rokugani society.

## LAW

(HIGH, INTELLIGENCE)

In such an ordered society, the study of the Emperor's Law is an exceptionally honorable pursuit. Though every member of the Empire is expected to understand the law, those with the Law skill have taken an unusual effort to memorize it. This skill not only confers an increasing knowledge of the fine details of Imperial Law, but with a successful skill check, the character is likely to be able to "bend" certain laws because of some obscure application of other laws or loopholes in Imperial Edict. Such manipulation is not particularly honorable, nor is it technically dishonorable, though some may find it intellectually dishonest.

## LORE

(HIGH, INTELLIGENCE)

The Lore skill represents a concentrated study of one particular subject. The actual subject is chosen when the skill is picked, and is recorded on the character sheet accordingly. Some popular examples are Lore (Shugenja), Lore (Bushido), Lore (Shadowlands), and Lore (Gaijin Nations). Multiple subjects may be chosen but are considered separate skills and must be advanced in on their own. Raises may be made to increase the worth of the information recalled. History, Law, Shintao, and Etiquette are essentially specialized Lore skills.

## MEDICINE

(HIGH, INTELLIGENCE)

This skill represents formal training in the field of maintaining one's well-being and others as well as healing the sick and injured. A skill check may be used to diagnose a sickness, bind a wound, find an appropriate cure for a poison, or similar activities. Raises may be made (or called for by a GM) to conduct particularly difficult tasks, such as identifying a rare disease.

## MEDITATION

(HIGH, VOID)

Most samurai meditate at 3:30 a.m. as it is the most beneficial time of day to work with the activity of one's mind but the Meditation skill represents a deeper dedication to the art. Those highly skilled in meditation can enter a trance from which the outside world cannot bother them (if they choose) and even completely refresh the character's spirit as if he could rest completely. A simple Meditation skill check (TN 10) after five minutes of meditation will allow a character to regain a single Void point.

## MUSIC

(HIGH, AWARENESS)

The art of music is well respected in Rokugan. A character with this skill chooses an instrument (such as the biwa, koto, taiko drum, samisen, shakuhachi, or singing) when this skill is taken, but may choose another instrument (or learn to sing) at each additional rank. A skill check (TN 10) may be made to give a simple performance, with Raises or more difficult TN's to enhance the performance.

## ORATORY/RHETORIC

(HIGH, AWARENESS)

This is the art of public speaking, a highly valued skill in the courts of Rokugan. While skills such as Courtier, Lore, and History might help a character find pertinent information to share, this skill is used to present that information in a charismatic manner, while speaking loudly and clearly enough for a large audience. Combined with Conversation this skill can be used to hold the attention of a large group for an extended period while saying nothing important in particular.

## POETRY

(HIGH, AWARENESS)

Poetry is quite possibly the most respected art form in Rokugan, as it combines deep wit with simplicity. Haiku is the most famous form of poetry, with the most common form being three lines of five, seven and five syllables. The best haiku are simple yet profound, often making references to natural beauty without drawing upon complex metaphors. Such poetry is often composed spontaneously for the amusement of others in a courtly setting (in fact many Rokugani poets feel that to write down poetry or compose it in advance spoils it). An opposed roll between two poets can determine the winner of a poetry contest, though having the players actually compose poetry can be interesting at times.

## POISON

(LOW, INTELLIGENCE)

Imperial Law strictly forbids the use of poison, without exception. Such cowardly and base tactics can earn a man swift and honorless death for even carrying the substance. Naturally, there are those who believe such risks worth the rewards of seeing a hated rival die slowly, or cutting down

a foe with a poisoned blade in battle. This skill encompasses the study, use, and crafting of poison, from the most common venoms to the most exotic toxins from far-off lands. Expertise with poison in and of itself is not dishonorable, as even the strictest magistrates realize that knowledge of poison is necessary to craft effective antidotes. Raises may be used to craft especially unique substances, to alter common poisons for a more tailored effect, or to create an antidote for a virulent poison.

## RESEARCH

(HIGH, INTELLIGENCE)

Characters may use the Research skill to utilize a library (or similar resource) to reference and investigate information contained therein, supplementing their own Lore skills. A successful check vs. a TN set by the GM will give Raises to a subsequent Lore skill. Raises may be made to find more information or highly obscure texts.

## SEDUCTION

(LOW, AWARENESS)

A proper samurai is taught to ignore desire. In a perfect world, a samurai is bereft of such emotions, but the realm of mortals is hardly perfect. Desires for physical and emotional pleasures are a constant temptation and there are always those ready to take advantage of this. The art of seduction is highly dishonorable, as is giving into its ways. Use of the Seduction skill does not necessarily imply a sexual temptation, but instead it is the general art of turning a subject's desires against his honor (such as convincing a tired guard that his post will be safe enough should he take a short nap). Seduction is always a Contested roll using this skill against the target's Willpower + Etiquette, Courtier, Seduction, or Honor (target's choice).

## SHINTAO

(HIGH, VOID)

Shintao is the study of the Tao. As the Tao of Shinsei holds a great deal of sublime wisdom, those who master its mysteries gain some small shred of enlightenment. As well as providing mastery of Shinsei's great teachings, ranks of the Shintao skill count double toward a character's Insight Rank (though the first rank still does not count).

## SINCERITY

(HIGH, AWARENESS)

The word of a samurai is considered truth, and the more convinced the samurai is of his own word (or the more convinced he appears to be), the more easily he can convince others. The Sincerity skill is used to show a character's deep resolution that what he has spoken is truth. Though the intended use of this skill is for a samurai to demonstrate the truth of his words, it can also be abused to tell convincing falsehoods. A successful test (opposed by the listener's Perception + Investigation) indicates you appear to believe what you have said.

## SPELLCRAFT

(HIGH, INTELLIGENCE)

Though all shugenja study the ways of the elemental kami, some take such scholarship a step further and learn how to identify the signs of magic use and the science of spellcasting. With a successful Spellcraft check, a character can tell if there was magic used within the past hour within a fifty foot radius. Raises may be made to determine more specific facts (the element in question, the general nature of the magic, the specific location affected, etc.). Similarly, this skill may be used to identify what sort of magic is being invoked if a shugenja is seen casting a spell. The TN is generally equal to the spell's Mastery Level  $\times$  5 minus the observer's shugenja school rank  $\times$  5.

## STEALTH

(LOW, AGILITY)

Like all arts of deception, stealth is not considered proper samurai behavior. Exceptions are made for hunting, for scouts during times of war, or by the Hiruma family while traversing the Shadowlands. Stealth may be used to avoid notice and is always a Contested check against another character's Perception + Investigation. Obvious obstacles, such as unusually good lighting or specially treated (squeaking) floors may necessitate Raises to the Stealth check.

## TEA

### CEREMONY

(HIGH, VOID)

The tea ceremony is one of the most popular rituals in Rokugan. The event centers around two or more individuals quietly executing a long ritual of preparing tea in a precise manner. The point of the exercise is one of meditation and focus, allowing all who participate to share a quiet moment away from the stress and anxiety of the world. Tea ceremonies can also be events of social significance, and attending the tea ceremony of a powerful individual is a great honor. The ritual lasts at least ten minutes, at the end of which the character leading the



ceremony makes a Tea Ceremony skill check (TN 10). If successful, all characters involved (a number up to the lead character's Tea Ceremony Skill) regain a Void Point.

## WRESTLING (BUJŪI, STRENGTH)

Wrestling is a form of unarmed combat, but has little in common with jiu-jitsu. Where jiu-jitsu teaches several forms of attack and defense, wrestling focuses only on crushing the opponent with superior strength and hurling him into hard objects (like the ground). A character must successfully attack with an unarmed strike to use wrestling. Instead of damaging his opponent normally, he may choose to then make a Contested Wrestling skill test against his opponent's Strength + Wrestling. Success indicates that the character has grappled his opponent successfully and can forcibly throw him a number of feet equal to the thrower's Strength and causing normal unarmed damage. In addition, the victim of this attack must make a Stamina check or be stunned (losing his next combat action). Raises may be made to throw an opponent an additional foot per raise.

## WEAPON SKILLS (BUJŪI, VARIES)

Weapon skills represent proficiency with either a broad group of weapons (a General weapon skill) or exclusive study with a particular kind of weapon (a Specialized weapon skill). Most weapon skills use Agility as the relevant trait, though ranged weapon skills use Reflexes to represent the instinctive style of Rokugani ranged combat. Taking a General weapon skill bestows proficiency (at the General skill's rank) with all weapons in that weapon category. Taking a Specialized weapon skill bestows proficiency with that particular type of weapon only, but also confers a bonus to signify the benefit of specialized training. For every three ranks a character

has in a specialized weapon skill, he gains a Free Raise when using that weapon. (So while the Kenjutsu skill offers mastery of a larger number of weapons, the Katana skill offers greater advantages with a single weapon.)

A list of general weapon skills and the specific weapons that fall under that category are as follows:

- Bojutsu — Bo staff
- Kenjutsu — Katana, wakizashi, no-dachi
- Kyujutsu — Yumi, daikyu
- Nofujutsu — Kama, tonfa, sai, jitte
- Subojutsu — Tetsubo, ono, dai-tsuchi
- Tantojutsu — Aiguchi, tanto
- Yarijutsu — Naginata, yari, sodegarami
- Ninjutsu — Various ninja weapons

## EQUIPMENT

For the most part, equipment is not particularly important in LARPs. If you believe your character would reasonably have a piece of equipment, simply ask a GM. Be careful not to abuse this privilege or take advantage of it for gratuitous amounts of unnecessary or inappropriate gear. A samurai who walks into the Emperor's Winter Court carrying one hundred feet of rope, a sledge, a stepladder, nine large sacks and a barrel of apples will likely only make himself look like a fool. Your character can be assumed to be carrying whatever gear is physically part of your costume. Any items you wish to carry but do not actually have (including weapons) can be represented by index cards with the name of the item written on them.

A guideline to some common Rokugani equipment follows:

### Basic Equipment

Backpack, wicker

Basket

Bowyer's Kit

Candle

Chest

Chopsticks

Dice, Fortunes and Winds

Divination Kit (Kawaru coins, yarrow sticks, etc)

Flint and Steel

Furoshiki Sack

Games (go, shogi, etc)

Inro (small box worn on the belt)

Lantern

Medical Kit

Mirror

Musical Instruments

Samisen

Biwa

Kokyu

Shakuhachi (flute)

Taiko drum

- Netsuke (figurine worn as jewelry)
- Paper
- Pillow Book
- Puzzle Box
- Quiver
- Rope (hemp)
- Scrolls
- Sumi-e (writing) kit
- Umbrella

## ARMOR

To simply matters, there are two basic types of Armor, Heavy and Light. Light armor is normally made up lighter steel and leather that protects the head, torso, forearms, and feet. Heavy armor covers the samurai from head to toe in metal plates bound together by tough cords. Heavy Armor imposes penalties to all tests while it is worn.

Type of Armor	Bonus to Defense Skill	Penalty to Tests
Heavy Armor	+4	-2
Light Armor	+2	None

## WEAPONS

Though samurai favor their katana, a variety of weapons can be found in Rokugan. The following traits are important to keep in mind when reading weapon statistics:

**Entangling:** This weapon may be used to perform an Entangling attack. Upon a successful strike, the wielder makes an Agility roll, contested by the target's Agility or Strength. If successful, the target is entangled by the weapon, cannot move, and is automatically struck for damage the following round. On each attack you may choose to make another opposed test to inflict damage and keep the target pinned or release them. If you move from your current position or drop the weapon the target is no longer entangled.

**Gaijin Weapon:** Any weapon not originating in Rokugan. These weapons are looked upon with a mix of fear and disdain by most clans, with the Unicorn, Mantis, and to a lesser degree the Scorpion using them frequently. A character who does not hail from one of these clans and wishes to use a gaijin weapon must have a decent for how he obtained it.

**Peasant Weapon:** A weapon normally utilized by heimin or eta. Use of peasant weapons can bring a samurai a loss of honor if it is brought to attention.

**Polearm:** A shafted weapon, granting its wielder additional range in melee. A Polearm grants its wielder a +5 bonus to his Initiative test on the first round of combat. Polearms suffer a -2 penalty to all attack tests in tight quarters. Their Damage Rating is increased by 2 against charging or mounted opponents.



**Ranged:** A weapon that can be used at a distance. Unless the description says otherwise, Ranged weapons may not be used in melee. For calculating the damage of ranged attacks, your Strength cannot be higher than the Strength rating of the weapon (usually 2 unless noted otherwise). Thrown weapons use your own Strength.

## WEAPONS

**Aiguchi/Tanto:** A short knife. The tanto has a small hilt, while the aiguchi has no hilt. You gain a +4 bonus to Conceal tests to hide an aiguchi or tanto. An aiguchi or tanto may be used as a melee weapon or thrown as a ranged weapon up to thirty feet. *Damage Rating: 2*

**Arrows:** An arrow is useless without a yumi or daikyu to fire it. A variety of different arrows are utilized in Rokugan, including the following:

*Ya* — The standard arrow. *Damage Rating: 3*

*Armor Piercer* — This arrow ignores all Defense bonuses from armor. *Damage Rating: 2*

*Watakusi* — The “flesh-cutter” arrow. This arrow has a Damage Rating of 1 against armored opponents. *Damage Rating: 4*

*Karimata* — A “rope cutter” arrow. With two Raises this arrow can be used to cut ropes or cords from a distance. *Damage Rating: 2*

*Humming Bulb Arrow* — Not designed for combat, this arrow releases a loud keening sound when fired. *Damage Rating: 1*

**Barehanded Attack:** The default unarmed attack for all characters. *Damage Rating: 0*

**Bo:** The simplest of Peasant Weapons, a bo is little more than a wooden staff. Armor provides double the normal Defense bonus against a bo. *Damage Rating: 3*

**Dai Tsuchi:** A large hammer with a metal or stone head reinforced for battle. A favorite weapon of the Crab, a dai tsuchi excels at crushing the armored carapaces of Shadowlands creatures. Armor bonuses to Defense are reduced by 3 against a dai tsuchi. A character must have at least 3 Strength to wield this weapon. *Damage Rating: 4*

**Daikyu:** A long bow, designed for use by cavalry. A typical Daikyu has 2 Strength, though Fine versions may have more. This Ranged can strike targets up to 300 feet away. Attacks with a Daikyu suffer a -2 penalty to attack tests on foot. Damage for a Daikyu depends on the type of arrow used.

**Jitte/Sai:** A blunt knife. The sai has a pair of curving prongs extending from the hilt, while the jitte has only one prong. These weapons receive a Free Raise for disarm attacks. These are Peasant Weapons, except in the hands of magistrates.

**Jo:** A shorter version of the bo. Armor provides double the normal Defense bonus against a bo. *Damage Rating: 2*

**Kama:** A wickedly sharp sickle used as a farming tool. This Peasant Weapon is particularly favored by the Mantis Clan as it was Yoritomo's weapon of choice. *Damage Rating: 3*

**Katana:** The weapon of choice for samurai, the katana is a finely crafted sword with a curved steel blade, often folded hundreds or even thousands of times during its creation. These weapons are razor sharp and rightfully the pride of the samurai. Non-samurai are forbidden to touch a katana on pain of death. You may add half your Katana skill (round down) to your Initiative while wielding this weapon. *Damage Rating: 4*

**Longsword:** The typical gaijin sword, a straight shaft of metal mounted on a hilt. This Gaijin Weapon is rare among the Unicorn, who prefer higher quality weapons. *Damage Rating: 3*

**Nagamaki:** A shorter version of the naginata, this weapon is a short haft attached to a long sword blade. This polearm suffers no penalties in tight quarters. *Damage Rating: 3*

**Nage-yari:** A short javelin. This weapon can be used in melee or thrown as a ranged weapon up to sixty feet. *Damage Rating: 4*

**Naginata:** A long spear. This polearm is popular with the Shiotome of the Unicorn Clan. *Damage Rating: 4*

**No-Dachi:** A larger, broader version of the katana designed especially for use against mounted troops. You suffer a -5 penalty to Initiative tests when wielding a no-dachi. *Damage Rating: 6*

**Nunchaku:** A pair of short staves attached by a length of chain or rope. Originally used as a grain flail, nunchaku have become favored weapons of budoka, monks, and ninja. *Damage Rating: 2*

**Ono:** A broad-bladed axe invented by the sohei of Osano-Wo. A character must have at least 3 Strength to wield this weapon. *Damage Rating: 5*

**Sasumata:** A long Polearm with twin curved hooks at the end, lined with barbs. This weapon is Entangling. *Damage Rating: 2*

**Scimitar/Khopesh:** Wickedly curved gaijin swords, these weapons are wielded in Medinaat-al-Salaam and the Senpet Empire, respectively. Though their designs vary, they are for mechanical purposes identical. These are Gaijin Weapons. *Damage Rating: 4*

**Sodegarami:** This long Polearm features a crossbar covered with wicked barbs. Also called a "sleeve-entangler," this Polearm is Entangling. By making a Raise on your opposed Agility test, you can reduce the TN bonus of a suit of armor worn by a damaged opponent by 1. This penalty lasts until the target takes a round readjusting his armor. *Damage Rating: 1*

**Tessen:** A war fan. Unlike the paper fans of the court, tessen are broad and crafted from steel, used for signaling troops across the battlefield. While their primary purpose is not as a weapon, they can be a deadly weapon as a last resort. *Damage Rating: 1*

**Tetsubo:** A long wooden staff bound and studded with steel. Another favorite crushing weapon of the Crab, it is adept at overcoming armor. Armor bonuses to Defense are reduced by 4 against a tetsubo. *Damage Rating: 3*

**Tonfa:** A short wooden staff with a perpendicular handle. This weapon is most often used as a defensive tool, increasing its wielder's Defense Skill by 1 when wielded. *Damage Rating: 1*

**Trident:** A triple headed spear, this Gaijin Weapon is popular among the gladiators of the Yodатаi Empire. Polearm. Entangling. A trident may be used as a melee weapon or thrown up to ten feet. *Damage Rating: 3*

**Wakizashi:** The companion weapon to the katana, a short curved sword. These weapons have the same extraordinary quality as the katana, but are rarely used as a weapon except by those in the Dragon Clan. Non-samurai are forbidden to touch a wakizashi on pain of death. *Damage Rating: 3*

**Whip:** A long leather cord used to discipline prisoners or slaves. This Peasant Weapon is often wielded by Yasuki taskmasters. Entangling. *Damage Rating: 1*

**Yari:** A long spear designed to be wielded from horseback. The Damage Rating of this weapon increases by 1 while mounted. Polearm. *Damage Rating 3*

**Yumi:** A short bow, designed for use by infantry. A typical Yumi has 2 Strength, though Fine versions may have more. This Ranged weapon can strike targets up to 200 feet away. Damage for a Yumi depends on the type of arrow used.

## MAGIC AND SHUGENJA

To understand Rokugani magic one must first understand the nature of shugenja. These men and women are more than simple spellcasters — they are the mouthpieces of the divine. Shugenja manipulate, coerce, and befriend the kami — little spirits that inhabit every aspect of life from the tiniest rock to the ocean and sky. Shugenja serve as priests and preside over funerals, weddings, festivals, and gempukku rituals, calling the kami to bless the participants. They are also scholars and sometimes serve as advisors and scribes. Lastly, a shugenja's role demands that he be the keeper of the profoundest secrets of his clan.

Among the peasantry shugenja are revered almost as highly as the Fortunes. Not only are shugenja capable of speaking with the very spirits of life, they are able to cause these kami to manifest into miraculous displays of power. A shugenja's blessing can bring fortune to the crops. Their

learned wisdom is regarded most highly in disputes. This recognition of their worth is to be expected from the heimin and samurai caste alike, but it is considered unseemly for a shugenja to use this glory for personal gain.

Most shugenja are not expected to defend themselves in martial combat and it is considered irreverent to assault these holy men and women. Some clans do prefer their shugenja know how to fight, however, and there are shugenja who endure martial training. Those shugenja who wish to show their martial prowess will typically wear both the katana and wakizashi of their daisho, implying that they do not intend to demand a second if challenged.

Each Great Clan has at least one house of shugenja at their call — some have more. The most respected shugenja in the Empire are the Isawa and they are typically the standard to which every other shugenja is compared. Those few ronin born with the ability to communicate with the kami are more respected by samurai than their bushi brethren, but will typically be better served as guides for the peasant classes.

## DEFINITIONS

*Affinity* — Trained ability to cast spells of a certain element over others. Most shugenja start with one element as a chosen affinity.

*Ancestor* — Spells with this descriptor fall under the Ancestor Affinity.

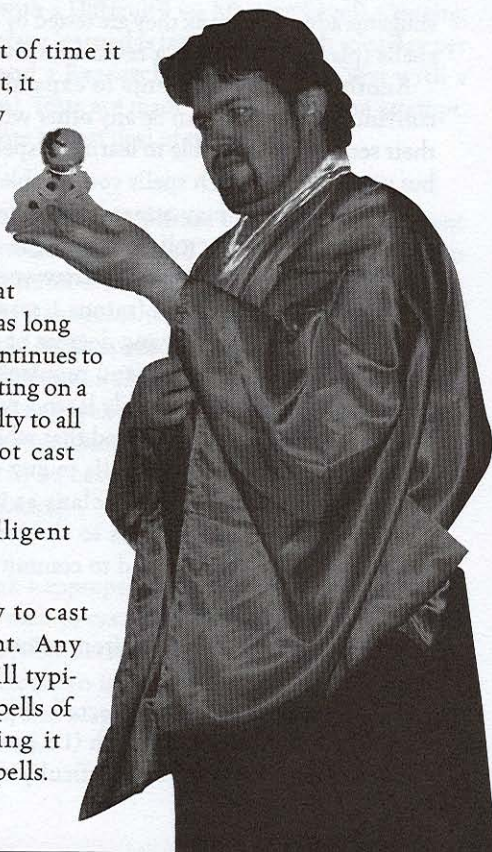
*Area of Effect* — The amount of space or number of targets a spell effects.

*Casting Time* — The amount of time it takes to cast a spell. In combat, it takes one action per Mastery Level to cast a spell. Otherwise, it takes 3 seconds per Mastery Level.

*Concentration* — A special increment of duration that allows a spell to be constant as long as the shu-genja who cast it continues to concentrate. While concentrating on a spell, shugenja have a -5 penalty to all other actions. They may not cast spells while concentrating.

*Creature* — Any non-intelligent animal.

*Deficiency* — Weaker ability to cast spells of a certain element. Any shugenja with an affinity will typically have a deficiency with spells of the opposite element making it more difficult to cast those spells.



*Duration* — The amount of time a spell lasts. Typically, spells have increments of seconds, minutes, hours, or even days as well as durations of Permanent or Instantaneous.

*Instantaneous* — A duration that means the spell's effect happens instantly and then ends.

*Mastery Level* — The power level of a spell. The higher the mastery level the more difficult it is to cast a spell.

*Memorize* — The ability to take a spell as an Innate Ability.

*Permanent* — A duration increment that means the spell's effect remains constant.

*Self* — Spells with this description target the caster.

*Sight* — Spells with this descriptor require you to be able to see your target.

*Spell Slots* — The number of times you can cast spells of a chosen element.

*Target* — The recipient/victim of the results of a spell.

## MECHANICS

### LEARNING A SPELL

Shugenja players start with a set number of spells. These represent the character's years of training, but are not the only spells he will ever know. As shugenja advance in rank they are tested by their sensei and granted two new spells (player's choice) as a reward for their growing power and wisdom.

Another way for shugenja to expand their repertoire of spells is to convince a teacher (it can be any other willing shugenja) to reveal to them their secrets. It is possible to learn any spell — even those you cannot cast, but you may only teach spells you are able to use.

Lastly, shugenja may attempt to learn new spells by studying other shugenja's spells. All scrolls are as unique as fingerprints and require some time to be able to read. Learning a new spell this way requires 1 session per Mastery Level of the spell (minus 1 session per rank) and a Research + Intelligence Test with varying degrees of difficulty (*see below*). Failing this test wastes the study time and requires the shugenja to start all over. A shugenja may simultaneously learn a number of new spells equal to her School Rank. It should be noted that while it is theoretically possible for any shugenja to teach his spells to any other shugenja, this practice is highly frowned upon by the clans as it is the sensei's duty to teach. Those who teach their spells to shugenja outside the clan are firmly reprimanded, or even ordered to commit seppuku if they reveal a closely guarded spell.

- When learning a spell from someone you know, the base difficulty is 6.
- Learning a spell from a scroll written by someone you have only a passing familiarity with (i.e. someone who attended the same school as you) is a base difficulty of 9.

- Learning a spell from a scroll written by someone you understand very little (i.e. someone who attended a different school than you) is a base difficulty of 12.
- Learning a spell from a scroll written by someone with a totally different mindset (i.e. a normal shugenja learning maho, or a human attempting to learn a Naga spell) is a base difficulty of 15.
- After determining the Base Difficulty to learn a spell, add the Mastery Level of the spell to the number.

### MEMORIZING A SPELL (INNATE ABILITY)

To cast a spell a shugenja must have the required spell scroll in hand. In important circumstances this restraint wastes precious seconds spent fumbling for the right scroll. In order to solve this problem, some shugenja go to the extra effort of memorizing spells that they will often cast. To do so they must learn the spell as an Innate Ability Advantage. This costs 3 Character Points or Experience Points. Thereafter, the spell may be cast without the required scroll and having the scroll in hand as per normal actually grants a Free Raise on the casting attempt.

### CREATING A SCROLL

Creating a scroll for a spell that you have as an Innate Ability is easy (requiring a number of minutes equal to the Mastery Level). Creating a scroll for a spell you know, but do not have as an Innate Ability, requires more time and effort (60 minutes per Master Level of the Spell and a Research + Intelligence Test with a Difficulty 5 + Mastery Level). Copying a scroll for a spell you have not yet learned is far more difficult (one day per Master Level of the Spell and a Research + Intelligence Test with a Difficulty 10 + Mastery Level). Tests are made at the end of the attempt, leading a failed attempt to waste a great deal of time.

### SPELL SLOTS

Shugenja are limited in their ability to continue to cast spells. Constant communion with the spirit world takes its toll and not all shugenja can meet it. A shugenja can cast a number of spells per session equal to their appropriate Ring. For example, a shugenja with a Fire 3, Water 2, Earth 2, and Air 4 could cast 2 Water and Earth spells, 3 Fire spells, and 4 Air spells per session. Making a Void + Meditation skill (TN 10) and spending fifteen minutes in meditation recovers one spell slot. A Void Point may be spent to cast a spell without expending a spell slot. Alternately, making three Raises during casting allows a spell to be cast without expending a spell slot (see Mastering a spell under Raises).

### DIFFICULTY TEST

To cast a spell, add your Rank + appropriate Ring (the Ring that matches the Element of the spell you wish to cast) as well as other modifiers and attempt to beat the Difficulty. After determining the Base Difficulty for a spell add all modifiers. Modifiers can include any Raises (see below), as well as Innate Ability Bonuses, and Magic Resistance. The Base Difficulty for a spell is its Mastery Level  $\times$  3.

## RAISES

Like any other Test, spells allow for Raises. Here is a list of available effects:

- **Casting Time:** For one raise a shugenja can lower the casting time of a spell by one increment.
- **Duration:** All spells have a listed duration. For one raise, a shugenja can increase the duration of a spell by one increment (an increment is the normal duration of the spell). Spells with a duration of Instantaneous or Concentration cannot be raised this way.
- **Master:** A shugenja can allot 3 raises towards Mastering a spell when they cast it. This causes the spell to not count against the number of times they can cast per session.
- Shugenja may cast a spell at less than its full effect automatically. He can end any non-Permanent spell by concentrating for one action.
- **Special Effects:** Shugenja can allot any number of raises to special effects. These can change the spell in any minor (non-mechanical) way such as making Fires from Within look like water instead of fire.
- **Other:** Some spells have special attributes that can be manipulated with Raises. This will be noted in the spell's description.

## SUMMONING ANCESTORS

Kitsu Sodan-senzo have the ability to summon ancestors using the Summon spell. They may not have more summoned ancestors than their Honor  $\times$  2. Sodan-senzo take on the personality traits of all summoned ancestors. Ancestors remain until dismissed or until the session ends and grant abilities appropriate to their history. The following is a list of abilities that can be gained followed by examples of ancestors and their traits:

- +1 to Attack tests with a specific weapon (*Example: Matsu — brash; Yoritomo — arrogant*).
- +1 to the DR of a single weapon (*Example: Kaiu — determined; Moto — disturbing*).
- +2 to Defense (*Example: Hiruma — efficient; Bayushi — deceptive*).
- A free raise on Tests using a single Trait or Skill (*Example: Kakita Toshimoko — lecherous; Tsuruchi — quick-witted*).
- 2 to a single non-combat Skill (*Example: Kitsuki Kaagi — logical; Miya — amiable*).

## STEPS TO CASTING A SPELL

There are a number of factors that a shugenja must take into account before they are able to cast a spell. Below is a quick description of how to go about using your shugenja's power.

### Step 1: Are you capable of casting the spell?

Your rank must be equal or above the Mastery Level of any spell you wish to cast. Spells in your Affinity are considered one Mastery Level lower and those in your Deficiency are considered one higher.

### Step 2: Difficulty

Determine Base Difficulty (*see above*).

**Step 3: Raises**

Add +2 to the Difficulty of a spell for each Raise made when casting. Add any other modifiers to the spell at this time.

**Step 4: Area of Effect**

Declare who you wish to be targeted by the effects of the spell. Most spells will have a listed Area of Effect.

**Step 5: Draw**

Add your Rank + appropriate Ring after determining the Difficulty. Draw a card and add the value of the pulled card to your total. If this number is equal to or higher than the Difficulty, you succeed. If it is not, you fail.

**Step 6: Casting Time**

If the draw was successful, you must now wait until the casting time elapses before the effects of the spell are determined. If you are incapacitated during this time the spell will not be successfully cast and you will still lose the spell slot normally. A spell requires a number of rounds to cast equal to its Mastery Level, unless stated otherwise. Raises may be made to decrease casting time normally.

**Step 7: Results of the spell**

If the spell was cast successfully, declare all results that the intended spell has accomplished. Inform all recipients/victims of the spell that they are targeted and apply appropriate results.

**Step 8: Duration**

Unless the spell is Instantaneous or Permanent, a duration will now elapse. It is up to the shugenja and anyone affected by the spell to keep track of how long the spell lasts. If a spell affects a large number of people, or a whole room, a Game Magistrate will help determine duration.

**Step 9: Spell Slots**

Unless you attempted 3 raises to Master the spell, you must now mark off one spell slot.

## BASIC SPELLS

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These spells are taught to all shugenja before gempukku and are universal. Each spell occupies one scroll, but when cast it is considered to belong to whichever element is being chosen for purposes of Difficulty and spells per day. Kitsu Sodan-senzo may cast variants of these spells that affect Ancestors. All are Mastery Level One. All shugenja receive Sense, Commune, and Summon as Innate Abilities for free during character creation.

### COMMUNE

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** One kami

**Range:** Sight



Commune allows the caster to experience the world from the point of view of a single elemental spirit. To cast the spell, the shugenja must first placate the spirit. The difficulty depends on the spirit's importance (a fire in a lantern might wish for you to burn a small piece of paper, where a lake might require you to feed the fish that live within it).

Spirits are generally uninformed about the world of mortals and only relate information that has directly affected them. Experiences that alter it are more important to the spirit. For example, a stream could not tell you the description of someone who passed through, but it could inform you if someone bled in it.

You may opt not to ask the spirit questions, but instead view a single experience from its perspective.

Lastly, spirits are highly attuned to Elemental Magic and will always remember recent castings of their element within their vicinity.

Raises may be made to ask additional questions or for greater clarity of information.

## ELEMENTAL WEAPON

**Duration:** 5 Successful Hits

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

Elemental Weapon is unique in that it is universal and a version exists for every element as a separate spell. It summons a weapon made entirely out of the element used to cast the spell. Air summons a Yari; Earth, a Tetsubo; Fire, a Katana; and Water, a Bo Staff. Each weapon uses stats and skills as per the normal weapon. The weapon vanishes if the shugenja becomes unconscious or dies.

Raises change the type of weapon or increase the duration by 1 Hit per raise.

## SENSE

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 10' Radius

**Range:** Self

The caster becomes aware of all sources of the chosen element within the area. Anything even partially composed of the element is revealed and the exact distance is determined. Only the location and size of the object is revealed. Raises increase the area by 5'.

## SUMMON

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 1 Cubic Foot

**Range:** 10'

Summon creates 1 cubic foot of one of the four basic elements. The caster can shape the element however he wishes while concentrating. He may summon any substance composed of a single element, but only things that exist naturally and he is familiar with. Once the caster stops concentrating,

the item remains, but will immediately act normally. Thus, a bird-shaped mass of water will lose its shape.

Magic materials, including jade and crystal cannot be summoned. Kitsu Sodan-senzo may use this spell to summon ancestors (*see Spell Mechanics*).

## AIR SPELLS

### BENTEN'S TOUCH

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 5 Tests

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

The target of Benten's Touch gains a bonus to all social Tests of +3. The target is more attractive, witty, and socially apt. Raises increase the bonus by +1.

### BLESSINGS OF JIZO

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 6

**Duration:** 10 Spells

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

Blessings of Jizo causes spells targeting the caster to backlash upon the source. The source takes the full brunt of the spell as if they were the target. Raises increase the duration by 1 spell per raise. This spell does not work against Sympathetic Energies.

### BY THE LIGHT OF LORD MOON

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Sight

This spell allows the caster to target one object (+1 per raise) and make an Air + Rank Test vs. a TN set by the GM (usually 10). If successful he knows if the object has any hidden items on or in it and where, but not what.

### CALL UPON THE WIND

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** Special

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

This spell grants a single target (+1 per raise) the ability of flight. The recipient can fly at twice their normal rate of movement in any direction to a maximum height of 100'. The spell continues for one session or until the shugenja stops concentrating. The caster does not incur the normal penalties for concentrating.

## CALL UPON THE WIND

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 4

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Sight

The caster summons wind spirits around a single target (+1 per raise) that immobilizes and lifts him into the air. The target(s) may be moved at a rate of 10' per 5 seconds. To break free, the target must succeed at an Earth/Rank vs. the caster's Air/Rank Test.

## CLOAK OF AIR

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

The caster of this spell becomes invisible and is able to pass through solid objects at a rate of 1' per round. Quick moving objects (swinging swords) ignore this spell and deal damage accordingly. If the target draws attention to himself (attacking or speaking) this spell ends immediately.

## COMMAND THE CLOUDS

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** 1 Session

**Area of Effect:** 1-mile radius

**Range:** Self

This spell alters the weather within the area. The caster may control temperature, wind, and precipitation. The Game Master will declare the current weather conditions and the caster may alter them up or down one rank (+1 per raise) according to the following chart:

Temperature	Wind	Precipitation
Sweltering	Calm	Clear
Hot	Moderate	Partly Cloudy (light rain/snow)
Warm	High Winds	Moderately Cloudy (medium rain/snow; light hail)
Cool	Storm Force	Overcast (heavy rain/snow/hail)
Cold	Gale	Storm (Driving rain/snow/hail)

## ECHOES OF A BREEZE

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Unlimited

This spell allows the caster to speak to one target he knows personally over any distance. The target will hear the caster's words, but may not speak back without this spell.

## QUIESCENCE OF AIR

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** Special

**Range:** 10'

This spell creates a bubble around an object that encompasses the caster and one other person (+1 per raise) that is within 10'. No sound escapes this bubble.

## SECRETS ON THE WIND

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 50' radius

**Range:** 1 mile

A shugenja may only cast this spell on an area they have studied for at least 10 minutes. While maintaining concentration the caster hears all conversations inside the area as if he were in the area himself.

## SLAYER'S KNIVES

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** Special

**Range:** Self

The caster of this spell must stretch out his hands and a strong burst of wind blasts forth from them. The wind extends 25' from the caster and affects all creatures in a 10' area. The wind created is violent and will rip clothing, destroy paper, hurl light objects, and otherwise damage living creatures (DR = Caster's Air + Rank).

## TEMPEST OF AIR

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** 25'

This spell causes a blast of air to fly from the caster's fingertips targeting one person (+1 per raise). Affected players must make a Test using Earth + Insight Rank vs. the caster's Air + School Rank. Players who fail are knocked down and must make new Tests to stand up. Players knocked down suffer Wounds equal to the caster's Air Ring.

## WHISPERING WIND

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 1 target

**Range:** Sight

This spell reveals to the caster if the last thing the target said is true or not. This will only tell the caster if the target was lying — if a target believes what he said is true, the spell does not function.

## WIND-BORNE SLUMBERS

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Sight

This spell saps one target (+1 per raise) of energy and makes him sleepy. If the target is relaxed (inattentive, sitting, etc.) he will fall asleep. If they are stimulated (in combat, casting spells, etc.) they receive a -5 penalty to all Tests. To ignore the effects, a target makes an Earth/Rank vs. the caster's Air/Rank Test.

## WIND-BORNE SPEED

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 3 Rounds of Combat

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

This spell grants the target (+1 per 2 raises) a single extra action per round of combat. This action may not be an attack or spell, but movement is acceptable. Raises may also increase duration.

## WISDOM OF THE KAMI

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 5 Tests

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

This spell grants the caster a +5 bonus to all Tests with a single skill for the duration. Raises increase duration by +1 Test per 2 raises.

# EARTH SPELLS

## ARMOR OF THE EMPEROR

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 4

**Duration:** Special

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

This spell summons the spirits of former Emperors to protect one target (+1 per 2 raises). The recipients are immune to all damage from a number of attacks equal to the caster's Earth + Rank.

## BENEVOLENT PROTECTION OF SHINSEI

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 Day

**Area of Effect:** 15' radius

**Range:** Touch

This spell can only be cast upon an object of jade or a token from a Temple of Shinsei. Everyone inside the radius feels calm and at peace and must make a Willpower Test against the caster to perform any violent action. If the object is inside a Temple of Shinsei it affects the entire structure and will not expire for ten days.

## COURAGE OF THE SEVEN THUNDERS

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 1 Session

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

This spell calls forth the spirits of the Seven Thunders and renders one target (+1 per raise) immune to Fear for a single session. This spell may only be cast on someone from the original Seven Great Clans.

## DIVIDE INTO ASH

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** Permanent

**Area of Effect:** 100 cubic feet

**Range:** Sight

This spell disintegrates up to 100 cubic feet of any earth-like substance. It may not be used on living beings (except Earth spirits) and nemuranai are unaffected.

## EARTH'S STAGNATION

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Concentration  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Sight

This spell causes Earth spirits around the target to gravitate downward forcing the victim to act clumsy and awkward. The target's Agility and Reflexes are lowered by 1 (+1 per raise) to a minimum of 1.

## ELEMENTAL WARD

**Ancestor**  
**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 5 Spells  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

The Earth spirits protect the caster against other Elemental Magics. When the spell is cast, the shugenja chooses an Element. Spells of that Element have their Difficulty raised by the caster's Earth + Rank. Raises increase the duration by one per raise.

## FIRES FROM THE FORGE

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Permanent  
**Area of Effect:** 10 Cubic feet  
**Range:** Sight

This spell instantly mends a single item that is broken. It will not restore magic lost to the destruction, but can repair any single nonliving material.

## HANDS OF CLAY

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** Concentration  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

This spell allows the caster to walk along any surface made of earth. He cannot slip or fall, even if he is upside down, as long as he moves no faster than a walk.

## HANDS OF JUROJIN

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Touch

This spell removes all trace of disease and/or poison from one target (+1 per raise). This does not affect the Shadowlands Taint. It will not repair damage done by either source.

## IMMORTAL STEEL

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** Permanent

**Area of Effect:** 1 Weapon

**Range:** Touch

This spell requires one hour to cast. The caster of this spell draws dormant Earth spirits dormant in any non-nemuranai weapon. The shugenja may only have one weapon with this spell in existence at a time and a weapon may only be affected once. The weapon's DR increases by 2 permanently.

## JADE STRIKE

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Sight

This spell only functions on creatures with the Shadowlands Taint. The caster fires energy of pure jade at one target (+1 per raise) who immediately takes wounds equal to the caster's Earth + Rank. The DR can be increased by one per raise.

## KAMI'S STRENGTH

**Mastery Level:** 6

**Duration:** 10 Hits

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

This spell causes one target's (+1 per raise) skin to turn into stone. The Earth spirits within the target render her immune to damage from any non-magical source. Raises increase the duration by 1 Hit per raise.

## SPIKES OF EARTH

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 100' radius

**Range:** Sight

This spell causes violent eruptions from the ground in a 100' radius triggered by movement. Foot-long, sharp spikes erupt from the ground underneath moving targets dealing damage equal to the caster's Earth every 5'. Slow-moving creatures may attempt a Reflexes/Rank Test vs. the caster's Earth/Rank to avoid damage.



## STRENGTH OF THE CROW

**Mastery Level:** 3  
**Duration:** 1 Session  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Touch

This spell calls upon Shinsei's faithful companion, the crow. This spell renders one target (+1 per raise) immune to the effects of the Shadowlands Taint. If the target willingly embraces the Taint (e.g. casts a maho spell) the spell will not function.

## TOMB OF JADE

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** Special  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Sight

The spell only affects creatures with the Shadowlands Taint. The caster and the target make contesting Earth Tests until either the creature is destroyed or the caster fails. Each time the target fails it takes the caster's Earth + Rank in wounds. Raises grant the caster a +3 bonus to draws for the Tests.

## TREMOR

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** Concentration  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Sight

This spell causes a minor, localized earthquake to appear anywhere the caster can locate visually. It affects only poorly crafted buildings or individual targets (+1 target per 2 raises). Structures are destroyed unless otherwise bolstered and targets take wounds each round equal to the caster's Earth.

## FIRE SPELLS

### *Aura of Flame*

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** 10 Hits  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

This spell wreaths the caster's body with flame causing him to glow with a pale red aura. The caster's TN is increased by 5. Raises increase the duration by 1 Hit.

## BITING STEEL

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 5 Hits  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Weapon  
**Range:** Touch

This spell only targets non-magical weapons with steel blades. The weapon's DR is increased by 2.

## DEATH OF FLAME

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** Special  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Sight

This spell renders all Fire spirits within a target inert (lowering their Fire and related traits to 1). The victim makes a Fire/Rank Test against the shugenja each round to negate this.

## EVERBURNING RAGE

**Mastery Level:** 5  
**Duration:** Special  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Sight

Everburning Rage causes excruciating pain due to invisible flame passing through the target's flesh and causes them to act as if they were at the Down wound rating.

This lasts a number of minutes equal to the caster's Fire + Rank, but otherwise deals no damage.

## EVIL WARD

Ancestor  
**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 1 Session  
**Area of Effect:** 10' radius  
**Range:** Touch

This spell requires 10 minutes to cast. The shugenja inscribes a rune in a fixed location. Anything entering the radius with the Shadowlands Taint takes damage equal to the caster's Earth every round.

## EXTINGUISH

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 100' radius  
**Range:** Self

Extinguish dismisses all fire spirits in the area, extinguishing all fires. This also renders the spell Commune: Fire is useless in the area until more flame is introduced.

## FIRE WALKING

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** 10 minutes  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Touch

The target (+1 per raise) is immune to the effects of non-magical fire.

## FIRES FROM WITHIN

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** 50'

This spell creates a small ball of flame (+1 per 2 raises) in the caster's palm. He may hurl the ball at any target in sight making an attack roll using his Fire + Rank. The fire has a DR equal to the caster's Fire. Flammable objects on the target are destroyed.

## FIST OF OSALO-WO

Ancestor  
**Mastery Level:** 3  
**Duration:** Concentration  
**Area of Effect:** 30' radius  
**Range:** Sight

This spell summons lightning and thunder in the shape of balled fists, pummeling an area. Weak structures are destroyed, but strong buildings (like the Kaiu Wall) remain unaffected. Anyone in the area must draw a card. If it is 3 or lower, they immediately take wounds equal to the caster's Fire.

## FURY OF OSALO-WO

Ancestor  
**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Sight

This spell summons the wrath of the Fortune of Fire and Thunder. One target (+1 per raise) is immediately struck by lightning for the caster's Fire + Rank in wounds. Creatures within 100' feet of the target are deafened for 1 minute. If it is raining, the DR increases by 5.

## HEART OF THE INFERNO

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Sight

This spell functions the same as Fires from Within except as follows:

- DR is equal to twice the caster's Fire + Rank and can be raised by 2 per raise.
- Only one missile can be summoned

## HURRIED STEPS

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** Next 5 Spells

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

This spell lowers the casting time of the next 5 spells (+1 per raise) cast by this shugenja by his Rank (minimum 1).

## INFERNO'S TOOTH

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 1 Object (2 cubic feet)

**Range:** Sight

This spell causes an inanimate object to spontaneously combust. Anyone touching the item takes damage equal to the caster's Fire every round. Flammable objects are destroyed and objects prone to melting will be destroyed in less than a minute.

## RAYS OF THE SUN

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 4

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 50' radius

**Range:** Self

The caster evokes an aura of light, which illuminates the area around him as if it were daylight. Creatures with the Shadowlands Taint take damage equal to the caster's Fire + Rank each round.

## TSUKE'S CALL OF HEAVEN

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 6

**Duration:** 1 Combat

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

The recipient (+1 per 2 raises) of this spell appears to be immolated in flame. The fire deals no damage to the target, but causes wounds equal to the caster's Fire + Rank to anyone within 5'. Unprotected arrows and poor quality weapons will dissolve and deal no damage. All other weapons are scorched and their edges are blunted if they remain in the fire for more than one attack.

## WAITING FLAMES

**Mastery Level:** 3  
**Duration:** 1 Session  
**Area of Effect:** 10' radius  
**Range:** Touch

Waiting Flames causes all Fire spirits in an area to become inert. This angers the spirits tremendously and when anything disturbs the area they immediately deal damage equal to the caster's Fire + Rank. The spell ends afterwards. Raises increase the DR by 1.

## WATER SPELLS

### AVOIDANCE

Ancestor  
**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** 5 Attacks  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

Avoidance grants the caster the ability to deflect melee and missile attacks. She makes a Water/Rank Test against any successful attack with a Difficulty equal to the attackers To Hit draw to avoid all damage. Raises increase the duration by 1 attack per raise.

### HEART OF MORTALITY

Ancestor  
**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** Permanent  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Touch

The recipient of this spell must be willing and may end the bond at any time. The bond enables both characters to know the general direction and distance of the other and allows them to cast spells with a Range of Touch regardless of distance. The effects end if the characters move farther than 1 mile from each other and can only effect one target at a time.

## NEAR TO ICE

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** 1 Target

Near to Ice allows the target to ignore pain and effects of wound penalties.

## PATH OF THE SCORPION

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 5 Attacks

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

This spell causes the spirits of Water within the caster to become unusually violent. Anyone attacking the caster uses their lowest Trait when attempting to hit. Raises increase the duration by 1 Attack.

## PATH TO INNER PEACE

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Permanent

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

This spell heals a number of wounds equal to the caster's Water + Rank +2 per raise.

## PEACE OF THE KAMI

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 6

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

This spell renders the target pure of imperfections such as poison, damage, disease, and toxins excluding the Shadowlands Taint. This may only be cast once per day.

## PERCEIVE HARMONY

**Mastery Level:** 4

**Duration:** 3 Rounds of Combat

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

Perceive Harmony grants the caster precognition. This enables him to declare his actions last in combat. Two raises increase the duration by 1 round.

## PURIFY WATER

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 100' radius  
**Range:** 10'

Consumable liquid in the radius of this spell is reduced to pure water unless already absorbed into the body.

## REFLECTIONS OF PAN KU

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Item  
**Range:** 10'

Scrying within a clear bowl of fresh water, the shugenja is able to commune with the awakened spirit of a single nemuranai. She may speak with the item as if with the Commune spell to determine its nature, creation, history, or powers. The caster receives one question per Rank (+1 per raise).

**Note:** Some nemuranai ignore the caster, especially if they are ancient, or extremely powerful (i.e. Clan swords, maho-crafted items, etc.)

## REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

Ancestor  
**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 3 Tests  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Sight

The shugenja's ancestors grant the target their luck and wisdom for 3 Tests (+1 Test per raise). The target of this spell gains a bonus of +5 on all Tests.

## SILENT WATERS

**Mastery Level:** 3  
**Duration:** Varies  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

Silent Waters causes a single Water spirit to blend with the caster's soul. This spell is cast in conjunction with another unmodified spell. When cast the shugenja declares a trigger that immediately casts the second spell regardless of the shugenja's state unless the second spell requires a chosen target.

## SYMPATHETIC ENERGIES

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Varies

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Sight

This spell allows the caster to transfer the effects of a spell that would otherwise only affect the caster to another target. The spell continues to function normally as if the new target were the caster.

## WAVES ARE EVER CHANGING

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

This spell grants the caster the ability to shapeshift into the likeness of any living creature he has seen (except unnatural, intelligent, or magical creatures). The caster gains the physical traits of the creature.

Note: You cannot cast most spells without hands to hold scrolls.

## WISDOM AND CLARITY

Ancestor

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

This spell allows the caster to read at twice his normal rate, effectively halving the Research time needed to study a scroll.

## WHIRLPOOL

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** 50' radius

**Range:** Sight

This spell creates a whirlpool within any large body of water. The whirlpool sucks in any object within 200'. To resist this effect, creatures or objects must make a Water Test against the caster. Once a creature is sucked in, he may attempt a Swimming/Strength vs. the caster's Water/Rank Test to get out or he drowns.



# VOID SPELLS

## CONTEMPLATE THE VOID

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Next 5 Tests  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

The shugenja temporarily increases the number of Void they can spend in a Test by one (+1 per raise). Lost Void points are regained normally.

## DEPTHS OF THE VOID

**Mastery Level:** 3  
**Duration:** 1 Session  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

This spell grants the caster the ability to alter future events. The caster gains one temporary rank of Luck (+1 per two raises) that may be used on any Test. This may only be cast once per session.

## DRAWING THE VOID

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

This spell can only be cast once per session and allows the shugenja to gain a temporary void point (this may exceed their Void ring).

## ESSENCE OF VOID

**Mastery Level:** 5  
**Duration:** Concentration  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Sight

This spell renders another character unable to move while the shugenja concentrates. To cast the spell, the shugenja and target make Void/Rank Tests. Thereafter, the target may spend a Void point to attempt another Test. Otherwise, the target remains inert.

This may only be cast on a target with a Void Ring and it must be lower than the caster's.

## KHARMAIC INTENT

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** Session

**Area of Effect:** Caster and one target

**Range:** Touch

This spell allows a shugenja and one target to share their Void points. The target must be willing and the link may not be broken once the spell is cast.

## MOMENT OF CLARITY

**Mastery Level:** 4

**Duration:** 3 Tests

**Area of Effect:** Self or Target

**Range:** Touch

The shugenja must spend a Void point and may increase any skill possessed by a willing target by the caster's Void Ring. The duration increases by one Test per two raises.

## SENSE VOID

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Sight

Sense Void allows the caster to discern specific qualities about another person. The shugenja and target make Void/Rank Tests and if the caster is successful they may determine one of the following qualities:

- Surface thoughts (i.e. whether someone is lying)
- Emotions
- Illnesses, poison, or injury
- Supernatural phenomena (presence of Taint, powerful spirits, etc.)

The caster may attempt to gain further information by maintaining concentration and making another Test.

## SPIRITUAL PRESENCE

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** Special

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Sight

Spiritual Presence grants a willing target a bonus to any Ring equal to the caster's Void. This alteration only affects Tests using the Ring or relevant traits. The spell lasts as long as the caster can see the target and maintains concentration.

## VOID STRIKE

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Sight

Void Strike allows the caster to transfer a Void point (+1 per two raises) from a single target to himself. The target may make a Void/Rank Test to resist this effect. A caster may only steal a number of Void points per day equal to his Void Ring.

## VOID SUPPRESSION

**Mastery Level:** 6  
**Duration:** Special  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Sight

Void Suppression forces a target to use their lowest trait for all Tests. The spell lasts for a number of Tests equal to the caster's Void Ring. Raises increase the duration by one Test.

## WINDS OF CHANGE

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** 3 Tests  
**Area of Effect:** Special  
**Range:** Touch

This spell grants the target 2 points in any skill they do not currently possess. It may only be cast on someone with a Shintao of at least 2. Raises increase the duration by one test.



CHAPTER FOUR:

**BLOODSPEAKERS,  
RONIN AND THE  
MINOR CLANS**

**BLOOD AND HONOR  
PART FIVE**

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Kanshiro ran as fast as he could, leaping over snow-covered stones and dodging trees. In the road ahead, he could see a scrawny figure running swiftly. The young Phoenix continued with grim determination, ignoring the bitter chill that tore through his thin kimono. Another man might have given up, assuming the killer had faced justice. For a man on foot in the dead of winter, there was no reasonable escape from Honored Treaty City. By fleeing into the forest his quarry had without doubt doomed himself. Kanshiro was not prepared to let the murderer escape so easily.

As he burst through the tree line onto an open plain, however, he wondered if he had made an error. A sharp pierced his shoulder. A short metal dart protruded from his arm. His left hand clamped down over the wound. Searing pain lanced his body, driving him to his knees. He could hear the approach of sandaled feet crunching in the snow.

"She warned me..." Kanshiro whispered, falling forward on his right hand.

"You should have listened," the killer replied.

"She warned me..." he repeated. "That the antidote... would only make it hurt more."

Kanshiro pushed the pain aside and looked up at his attacker. The peasant blanched as he noticed the thick poultice the Phoenix held over his wound. Kanshiro rose to his feet and drew his sword. "Surrender in the name of the Emperor," he growled.

"We both know there will be no justice for me," the man said, drawing a knife from his belt.

"Do not make me kill you, Genjo," Kanshiro warned. Behind them, the din of shouts and hoof beats drew closer.

The servant paused for a moment, considering his options. Then, with a defeated scream, he ran toward the Shiba with his knife raised high. A single stroke of the katana, and it was over. Genjo fell to the snow a dead man. Kanshiro stumbled and leaned against a tree, the poison sapping his strength. The Emerald Magistrates galloped into the clearing around him. Kitsuki Temko rode at the head, with Mirumoto Aichi, Soshi Yoshino, and Soshi Kaoru just behind him.

"Kanshiro-san," Temko called out, looking down at him in alarm as she climbed from her horse. "You are injured! Are you poisoned?"

"Yes," he said raggedly, "but I will be fine. We Phoenix have a way of rising from the ashes." Kaoru sighed at him as she ran to his side, whispering a spell that would draw out the residual poison.

Temko raised an eyebrow. "Your sense of humor, at least, seems gravely injured," he looked down at the body of the dead servant. "Explain."

Kanshiro nodded. "That is your killer," he replied. "Isa's older brother, Genjo."

"Her brother?" Kaoru asked.

"Ask Aichi," Kanshiro answered. "He knows."

All eyes turned toward the Dragon. He frowned as he looked down at the corpse. "Seppun Isa was not a true samurai," he replied. "Her parents were peasants. Juro never had children of his own. He made . . . arrangements with the servants to adopt one of their infants, to give her a better life. In the end, Juro's honor did not allow him to continue the charade. He summoned me here to tell me the truth in person."

"And Genjo acted to stop Juro," Temko finished. "So that his sister would have hope for a better life."

"I fail to understand only one thing," Kaoru said. "If Juro was killed before Aichi arrived, how does he know the truth of her origins?"

"Isa told me," Aichi replied softly. "I admit I reacted foolishly when I heard the truth. She is an honorable woman, and I thank Kanshiro for not allowing me to sully her honor. I will keep my vow to her, peasant or no."

"Treat her well, Dragon," Soshi Yoshino said tonelessly. "I will be watching."

Aichi gave the Scorpion a cautious look, but nodded.

"An acceptable, if unexpected end," Temko said, looking at the corpse in a decisive manner. "I thank you for your help, Shiba Kanshiro."

"I am glad I could provide it, Temko-sama," Kanshiro answered.

"I suppose once you have rested you will return to your village?" the magistrate said, studying him calmly.

"Hai," Kanshiro answered.

"Night Milk can be a treacherous poison," she replied. "I think it best if you do not return home alone. I will dispatch a legion of Emerald Magistrates to escort you." She paused and reconsidered her statement. "I believe you mentioned some trouble with bandits, as well? I suppose while we are in the area, we can deal with them as well. A favor for a favor, neh?"

Kanshiro looked at her, amazed. "I did not do what I did for a reward, sama," he said quickly.

"Precisely why you deserve one," Temko said curtly, returning to her steed.

"Well done, Kanshiro-san," Kaoru said, her hand tightening on his arm.

He smiled at her. "I could not have done it without you," he replied. "I only wish you could return with me and see my village."

She shrugged. "My travel papers are good for another three weeks," she replied

with a grin. "I may accompany you, if you would have me. Though when my superiors will think I have spent too long in Phoenix lands if they hear I came to the rescue of someone with no thought of reward."

"Nonsense," Kanshiro replied. "Your clan deals in favors, everyone knows that. You are simply accumulating collateral."

"Now you begin to think like a Scorpion," Kaoru said, leading him back to the horses.

# CHARACTER CREATION FOR BLOODSPEAKERS AND TAINTED CHARACTERS

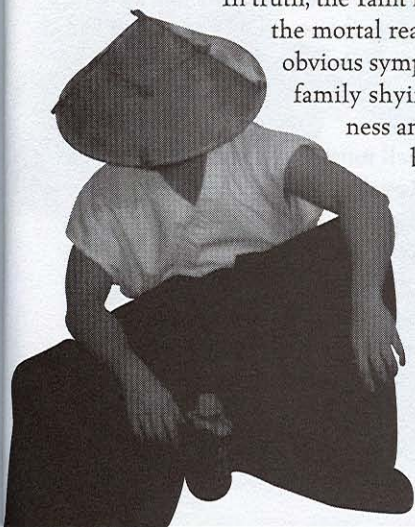
Characters that are members of the Bloodspeaker cult or who are irredeemably Tainted should only be played as NPCs, as their motives are purely villainous. They make perfect antagonists in a long running campaign, however, and it is possible that player characters can eventually be inducted into the Bloodspeakers or become Tainted themselves during game play. Character creation for Bloodspeakers and Tainted characters follows that of a normal character with a few exceptions: they possess at least 1 Rank in Shadowlands Taint, and they have access to maho spells.

## THE TAINT

The phenomenon referred to as the Shadowlands Taint is a metaphysical corruption of the mind that eventually warps both body, and spirit of those who suffer from it. Some theorize that the Taint is a sixth element, the opposite of Void, but many in Rokugan consider this blasphemous.

In truth, the Taint is the manifestation of Jigoku's influence in the mortal realm. For this reason, any person displaying obvious symptoms of the Taint will result in friends and family shying away from them, and at worst, in madness and death. Society is not kind to those it sees bearing the influence of Jigoku.

The first physical changes associated with the Taint are usually pale, translucent skin, greasy hair, and an increased tendency towards violence. These symptoms are most commonly found among the Crab clan, as they are put in constant contact with the Shadowlands, but can be found anywhere that humans have been



exposed to the Taint. Time spent in the Shadowlands is the most common means of exposure, resulting in the character gaining 1 Shadowlands Point per day unless they succeed in an unopposed test using their Earth Ring  $\times$  2. Jade can be used to protect a player from accumulating Taint while sojourning in the Shadowlands, however, and the Crab carry it with them at all times while in that dark realm. When a character accumulates 10 Taint Points, they gain 1 Rank of Taint, and their Points are reduced to zero.

There are advantages and disadvantages to having the Shadowlands Taint. A character may add or subtract twice their Taint Rank to any Strength, Agility, Reflexes, or Stamina test. Each time this ability is used the character gains 1 additional Taint Point. Characters must subtract their Taint Rank from all opposed social tests. If at any time the character's Taint Rank becomes higher than any one of their Rings they run the risk of being consumed by the Taint, a condition known to the Rokugani as being Lost.

There is no way to completely eradicate all traces of Taint, though there are some spells that can reduce its effects or lower the amount of Taint Points a character has. There is no known way to reduce an individual's Taint below 1 Taint Point, however. Jigoku's mark is not easily erased.

## MAHO

Maho is the name given to blood magic, a means of casting spells using the power contained within blood to summon and control corrupted elemental spirits called kansens. Those who practice maho are serving Fu Leng, though (especially the Bloodspeakers) would like to deny that their power is coming from the Dark Kami. Communing and commanding the kansens is far easier and simpler than earning the respect of the kami, making it an attractive option for the impatient and power-hungry. Maho is fast, dangerous, and often deadly. Using maho requires the spilling of a sentient being's blood and prayers to the Dark God, even if the casters are unaware of whom they are entreating.

Blood sorcerers, commonly known as maho-tsukai, practice a variety of magic that includes oni summoning, raising the dead, and cursing. Most of Rokugan believe that maho-tsukai are insane, but the unfortunate truth is that most are not mad, merely greedy for power. They are men and women who have abandoned the Celestial Order and who believe that they are seizing control of their destiny when they are only binding their fate to Jigoku.

Characters wishing to learn a maho spell must make an unopposed test with a Difficulty Modifier of +10 per Level of the spell. Deciphering a maho scroll is difficult for the average shugenja because the spell is written from an entirely different mindset. This test can be bypassed if the character wishes to summon dark spirits of the Shadowlands, which can be done with a successful casting of Summon. After doing so in two game sessions, the spirits have finally taught the character the basics of maho. Following this, the character must commit a blood rite that involves an act of ritual death. This is the final step toward damnation, and the character can now learn any maho spell as if it were a scroll written by an

intimate acquaintance. She may now make an unopposed test with a DM of the spell's Mastery Level. A point of Shadowlands Taint is also gained. In addition to the basic principles of maho, these spirits will eagerly teach the summoner, her friends, anyone who wishes to learn maho how to cast any Mastery Level 1 Maho spell. If the character is willing to do favors for the dark spirits, usually in the form of profane or blasphemous acts of violence and bloodshed, they will also teach higher ranked spells.

### WHO CAN LEARN MAHO?

Bushi as well as shugenja may learn to use maho, but a warrior will be limited in what spells he can cast. He is limited to Mastery Level 1 spells and suffers a -2 DM to all spell casting tests.

### CASTING A MAHO SPELL

Maho is cast in almost the same manner as a normal spell with the following exceptions:

- A maho-tsukai must spill the blood of an intelligent being on the earth to cast any maho spells. He may also use his own blood. A number of Wounds equal to  $2 \times$  Mastery Level of the spell must be dealt.
- Whenever a maho spell is cast the maho-tsukai gains a number of Taint Points equal to the Mastery Level of the spell.
- Maho spells cast do not use up any spell slots for the day.





- To cast a maho spell use the Rank in Lore (Maho) + Earth Ring for the Opposed Test, gaining a +1 bonus for every Taint Rank. A maho-tsukai may learn any Maho spell with a Mastery Level equal to his Insight Rank.
- Maho-tsukai may learn a 1 maho spell for each Rank in Lore (Maho). If enlisting the aid of a dark spirit of the Shadowlands they may learn an additional maho spell every two game sessions. The character will gain the twice the Mastery Level of the maho spell learned in Shadowlands Points.

## MAHO AND THE SHADOWLANDS TAINT

Any shugenja who possesses at least one Rank in the Lore (Maho) Skill can perform a ritual to remove one Taint Point. This ritual must be carried out every game session and after four game sessions results in the loss of one Shadowlands Point. This ritual will not remove Taint Ranks.

# THE BLOODSPEAKERS

The Bloodspeakers cult seeks to destroy Rokugan's current system of government, philosophy, and theology and replace it with a system based on greed and the importance of the individual. Largely autonomous, the society is split up into dozens or hundreds of different cells across the Empire that are unaware of one another's existence. Only a handful of high-ranking members know the location of more than one cell. The cult believes in the survival of the fittest, and will not hesitate to sacrifice members of their order to further the cult's overall goals. The recent return of Iuchiban, the first Bloodspeaker and the cult's founder, and his subsequent conquest of the Shadowlands has galvanized the cult. Any given cell is more active in the modern day than any time in history. Still, most will not risk exposure, preferring to serve their lord from concealment.

The Bloodspeakers epitomize the stereotypical view of maho-tsukai by most Rokugani. However, they are also the least affected by the Taint of any blood sorcerers, and rarely bear any physical deformities, using rituals developed by Iuchiban to prevent such physical corruption.

## ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

### ADVANTAGES

#### Taint Repression (5 points)

Your Taint is well hidden. Your Shadowlands Taint is considered two ranks lower for purposes of deformities and mental aberrations.

### **Bloodspeaker Sensei (5 points, Bloodspeakers Only)**

You have a teacher who is well versed in maho. You may learn one additional maho spell per Insight Rank.

### **DISADVANTAGES**

#### **Shadowlands Taint (1-5 points)**

For every 2 Shadowlands Points your character has, gain 1 Character Point to spend on your character. You can gain a maximum of 10 Shadowlands points in this fashion.

## **MAHO SPELLS**

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### **ANIMATE THE DEAD**

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** Permanent

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

This ritual takes 4 hours and both the caster and the target are considered out of game for the duration of the casting. They will be unable to do anything but cast the spell. At the end of the ritual the target becomes an undead rotting creature that remains self-aware and is considered to be in control of itself when resisting the control of other maho-tsukai. The target may cast any spells and use any skills they possessed before though all spells are cast as if they are maho. Undead may not spend Void. Characters under the effects of this spell will remain conscious and functional until they have taken wounds that equal their Dead Wound Rank, at which point they are physically destroyed.

### **CONTROL UNDEAD**

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** 1 undead target

**Range:** 50'

The caster seizes control of one undead target and it obeys the maho-tsukai's commands without question. If another caster is currently controlling the zombie, the players must make an Opposed test using their Earth Ring.

### **CURSE**

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** Permanent

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Line of Sight

The caster must possess a sympathetic component from the target of this spell, possibly a lock of hair, fingernail clipping, or blood. It cannot be an item of clothing, but must be something that contains the target's spiritual energy, although the target's katana or another family heirloom would be appropriate. If the curse is successful, the caster must maintain constant physical contact with the item. The curse is broken if the caster ever loses the item. The curse can be anything from not being able to lie, or always betraying those who trust them the most.

## DOMINION OF FU LENG

**Mastery Level:** 5  
**Duration:** 1 Hour  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Line of Sight

The caster seizes control of an undead creature and the target may not resist. The target will obey all of the caster's commands without question.

## DRAIN SOUL

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 5 minutes  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** 6'

The target's Stamina is considered 1 Rank lower for the duration of the spell. The maho-tsukai may cast this more than once on a single target, and the effects are cumulative. The target may not drop below Stamina of 1.

## PAIN

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 1 Round  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** 6'

The target is racked by terrible pain. They automatically lose their next action.

## FU LENG'S CHAMPION

**Mastery Level:** 5  
**Duration:** Permanent  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** 10'

This ritual takes one game session to cast. The spell must be cast on a living target that is present throughout the ritual. The target becomes any type of undead that exists in Rokugan, though the GM can require Raises for exotic breeds.

## STEALING BREATH

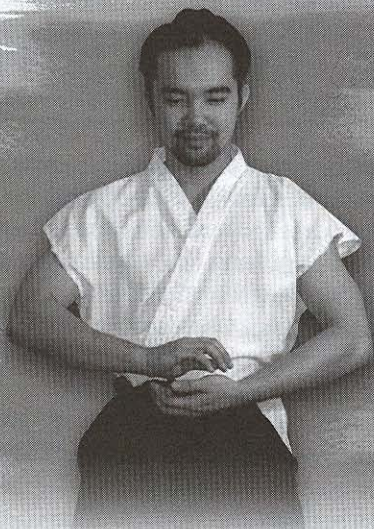
**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** 10'

One of the target's lungs collapses, forcing him to make an Opposed Earth Ring test against the caster or collapse to the ground helpless. The target will be unable to take any actions other than an Opposed Test using the Earth Ring against the caster each round in the attempt to break the spell's grasp.



## SUMMON GREATER KANSEN

**Mastery Level:** 4

**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** 1 Kansen

**Range:** 10'

Over the next hour of game time a misty specter played by the GM or an NPC follows the commands of the caster without question.

### **Kansen Stats:**

Earth 4, Fire 4, Water 4, Earth 2

Considered to have a Skill of 1 in all appropriate offensive Skills.

Attacks have a DR of 2.

Damage is halved unless being attacked by a weapon made of jade or crystal.

## SUMMON UNDEAD CHAMPION

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Permanent  
**Area of Effect:** Dead Body  
**Range:** Touch

This spell creates a zombie if used on a newly dead body, or an animated skeleton if used on something more decayed. The creature will follow the caster's mental commands as long as the caster is within 25 feet of it. If it leaves the caster's radius of control, its natural instincts take over and it will attempt to kill the closest living, un-Tainted being. In order to regain control, the caster must cast the spell again. A GM or NPC should play out the role of the zombie.

## THE MINOR CLANS

Minor Clans are groups with a status similar to those of the Great Clans — a particular duty to the Emperor and the control of some of the Emperor's lands — but a much smaller scale of influence, power, and numbers. A single Minor Clan often does not hold the same resources and prestige as even a single family of A Great Clan, but they are clans nonetheless. The duty and status of a Minor Clan can only be bestowed by the Emperor, usually as the reward for some significant service that a group has continued to provide to the Empire for generations. Sometimes, a single man and his vassals can impress the Emperor so much that he is immediately granted his own clan and charged with a specific duty to the Empire. Being granted such a great honor is unquestionably glorious for the initial samurai who form such a group, but they are often treated as upstart children who do not know their place by the Great Clans. An ancient Imperial edict bans the Great Clans from making war on the Minor Clans, but that does not keep them absolutely protected from their more powerful counterparts. Since they possess extensive political capital, the Great Clans often take what they please from the Minor Clans if something catches their attention. Usually these games result in a Minor Clan desperately attempting to remain intact as it is dragged into the dangerous conflicts between larger clans. At best, wise daimyo are able to play the Great Clans off of each other and escape unscathed.

Samurai from the Minor Clans are not necessarily inferior on an individual level to their Great Clan peers. Many Minor Clan samurai struggle constantly to prove themselves to the rest of the Empire, and there is always a group of Minor Clan representatives at any test of skill and cunning. This attitude is often tempered by the reality that such samurai may prove themselves as another man's equal, but it is unwise to draw the Great Clans' wrath or enter into their dealings as if they are equals. The confrontations between the clans have been known to scatter Minor Clans to the winds, such as the recent destruction of the Dragonfly Clan during the war between the

Dragon, Phoenix, and Lion. In less than two months, one of the oldest Minor Clans in the Empire was annihilated as a random consequence of a sudden conflict.

**Allies and Enemies:** Like the Great Clans, the Minor Clans tend to be diverse in their attitudes and goals. In general, the Minor Clans tend to lack the influence to hold any regular relations with any of the Great Clans. The notable exception to this is the Mantis Clan, which was once a Minor Clan until the Mantis Champion, Yoritomo, proved his followers the equal of a Great Clan.

## THE FOX CLAN

The oldest Minor Clan began as an offshoot of Shinjo's first followers. After the defeat of Fu Leng on the first Day of Thunder, Shinjo swore to travel beyond Rokugan's borders and seek out any threats that lay beyond the horizon. The Kami left behind a group of her most loyal followers to tend the lands left to her care by her brother, Hantei, and began her long exile. The small group worked earnestly to fulfill the duty that Lady Shinjo had set before them, but after a generation passed, it was clear that their tiny numbers left them unable to stay on par with the other clans in a great many ways. This reality was driven home when the Lion, wishing to have the Unicorn's fertile farmlands for their own, decided to make a small incursion into Unicorn lands and test the combat readiness of Shinjo's followers. Naturally, the Lion "proved" the weakness of the Kami's followers and demanded the right to watch over the lands themselves. The Emperor Hantei Genji, Hantei's son, agreed, and moved them to the Mori Kitsune, the Kitsune Forest. There, they were charged with studying the unquiet woodlands and exploring the mysteries of nature there. Finally, Genji pronounced the group a Minor Clan (inventing the notion on the spot) and forbid any Great Clan from making war on a Minor Clan.

In the centuries since, the Fox Clan have come to revel in their new surroundings. The Kitsune Forest was rife with forest spirits, and the gentle nature of Shinjo's former followers made them ideal candidates for befriending them. Their carefree nature has also flourished in the woods of Kitsune Mori, and other samurai tend to view them as uncivilized and "backwater." The Fox are at odds with the Hare, due to constant small skirmishes between the two Minor Clans, and the Mantis. During the Clan Wars, the Fox eagerly threw their weight behind Yoritomo's alliance of Minor Clans, but afterward, Kitsune Ryosei (the daimyo of the Fox at the time) refused to swear fealty to the Mantis as the Wasp and Centipede had. This eventually led to the Fox abandoning their ties to the Mantis and allying with the Crane briefly. The Fox Clan also holds relatively close ties to the Unicorn, who quietly attempt to bring their wayward "little brothers" back home.

## THE HARE CLAN

During the second rise of the Bloodspeakers, the city of Ryoko Owari fell into the control of Iuchiban's forces. Though Iuchiban and his followers were not a threat to be taken lightly, they had been weak in the sense that

they had no defensible base of operations. By taking the City of Stories by force, the Bloodspeakers now controlled walls and ramparts from which to hurl their sacrilegious magic. In short, routing the maho-tsukai had gone from being a careful certainty to a logistical nightmare that would cost the lives of thousands. When there seemed little alternative, a lone ronin named Reichin presented himself to the Scorpion and proclaimed that he could easily sneak into Ryoko Owari and spy on the city's defenses as well as sabotage what he could. The Scorpion had also considered such an alternative, but did not wish to send any of their most experienced "scouts" into a situation which heralded only certain doom for all involved. When several other samurai vouched for Reichin's prowess, the Scorpion agreed, knowing that should the ronin fail it would be no great loss. Not only did Usagi return with valuable information, he was also able to cause enough problems for the Bloodspeakers that retaking Otosan Uchi was far simpler than the Scorpion had hoped.

For all his prowess, Reichin was granted both the honor of controlling a Minor Clan and allowing his heirs to carry the name Usagi into the future. Since that time, the Hare have made it a point to act as hunters and investigators, always managing to "stumble" upon hidden cells of Bloodspeakers, minor Scorpion plots, and other would-be conspiracies. Their inquisitive natures led them into opposition with the Kolat several decades ago. Using highly placed agents, the Kolat convinced the Imperial Court that the Hare Clan was secretly harboring a cult of maho-tsukai under the Emperor's nose. Using the Scorpion's dislike of the Minor Clan to their advantage, the Kolat manipulated the Court until a Scorpion-led army crushed the Hare and brought their threat to an end. Fortunately for the Hare, the shadowy Kolat would be exposed to the Empire at large only a few years later, and the Usagi family was able to restore their honor and return the Hare to their rightful place as a Minor Clan. After their fall and subsequent resurrection, they have redoubled their efforts, their numbers (adding a second family — the Ujina), and their tenacity in the face of their foes. Their attitude has earned them friends in the Lion clan and the Kitsuki family of the Dragon, as well as many allies among the Seppun.

## THE SPARROW CLAN

Easily the most overlooked and least influential Minor Clan, the Sparrow Clan focuses on the concepts of enlightenment and denial of worldly wealth as a way to strengthen one's spirit and honor. The clan was founded by the son of a prominent Doji courtier, who captured the attention of a great many samurai with his uncharacteristic philosophies regarding wealth as a distraction from duty and honor. Intrigued by the Crane's words, the Emperor took the Doji courtier's lands and divided them up amongst others, then named him the daimyo of a Minor Clan to be located on the Golden Sun Plains. The Sparrow have flourished somewhat by debasing themselves with physical labor and working side by side with their peasants. Though this would be unfitting for any other samurai, the unique edict set by the Emperor regarding their formation makes it a Sparrow's duty to toil in such a matter in order to achieve a more enlightened state.

The Sparrow are known for their keen intellect and vast knowledge on almost any subject. The Suzume family places great importance on oration, perhaps due to their Doji ancestry, and are particularly fond of attempting to entertain others with stories on obscure subjects. Because of a Sparrow's intense love for research and knowledge, these stories tend to be exceptionally detailed and intensely boring. Only the most scholarly families (such as the Isawa and the Asahina) purposely maintain close ties to the Suzume, while others tend to ignore them completely. Their distance from every other clan, physically and politically, has caused more than one samurai to jokingly pretend they had forgotten the clan still existed.

## THE MONKEY CLAN

The youngest Minor Clan, the Monkey Clan enjoys prestige and political influence that are normally impossible for such a small entity. The reason for their unique position lies with the loyalty of a single man to his master — the ronin Toku to the man who was first ronin then Emperor: Toturi. During the Clan War, the ronin Toturi drew a great number of both ronin and clan samurai to his banner, including a young and enthusiastic samurai named Toku. The young ronin carried a copy of Akodo's treatise on bushido but he was completely illiterate and begged others to read it to him repeatedly. His energy was boundless, and even during the war's darkest episodes Toku was an unyielding symbol of hope and dedication to the ideal that a single man can make all the difference. When Toturi and the other Thunders faced Fu Leng and the world seemed to be doomed to the corrupted touch of Jigoku, Toku's strength never failed as he rallied his comrades again and again while the Dark Kami was defeated. When Toturi was placed on the throne as Emperor, he charged his loyal friend with commanding the Imperial Guard, and declared Toku and the ronin's closest followers to be the Monkey Clan.

Since their creation, the Monkey Clan has come to serve as the Emperor's personal magistrates. They work closely with the Imperial families and the Emerald Magistrates. Monkey samurai are known for their inquisitive natures, limitless enthusiasm, and refusal to back down even in the face of an unbeatable foe. The Monkey are also unusual in that they have a family name within their clan, but it does not belong to the daimyo's family. During the War Against the Shadow, a curious shugenja wandered the Empire, tending the sick and bringing laughter to the hopeless with his stories. Though he did not topple any great beast or end a threat that could destroy the Empire, he was well regarded by almost every clan for his efforts. Ever one to reward such selflessness, Toturi I granted Toku's request for the young man, Fuzake, to be remembered with a family name.

## THE TORTOISE CLAN

Like the Monkey Clan, the Tortoise serve the Emperor and the Imperial families directly, but that is the only similarity the two Minor Clans share. Where the Monkey serve as magistrates, the Tortoise are expected to carry out some considerably less honorable duties the Emperor must bestow on his servants from time to time. As a Minor Clan, they escape the notice of



most influential powers in the Empire, and are able to slip into places undetected where a Scorpion would be instantly viewed with suspicion. Though they share a role similar to that of the Scorpion Clan, the Tortoise's smaller size usually means they serve as lone agents or perform tasks that the Scorpion Clan finds beneath their efforts. The Minor Clan once based their efforts in the ports of Otosan Uchi and the nearby tower they called home, but since the destruction of that city they have split their numbers almost evenly between the new Imperial Capitol and the eastern shores where the ruins of Otosan Uchi remain.

## MINOR CLAN CHARACTERS

Though the Minor Clans have developed their own schools and techniques, they often use their alliances with one Great Clan or another to send students to the schools of that clan on a regular basis. Below is a listing of what schools characters from a Minor Clan may choose from (either due to mechanical similarity or political alliances):

**Fox:** Mantis (bushi), Unicorn (shugenja)

**Hare:** Scorpion (bushi)

**Sparrow:** Crane (shugenja), Phoenix (bushi)

**Monkey:** Lion (bushi), Crab (shugenja)

**Tortoise:** Mantis (bushi), Mantis (courtier)

## RONIN

The title samurai means "to serve." Much of what a samurai is revolves around his master and his duty to his master.

The samurai vassal of a powerful daimyo, for example, carries much more prestige than the vassal of some minor lord. Being able to declare that you are a samurai in service to an important lord and that you and your family line have faithfully executed your duty for generations is considered the measure of a samurai's worth. Because much centers on service and a daimyo, samurai with no master hold a unique position in the Empire. The ronin, or wave-men, are still technically samurai as is their birth-right; after all, it is by right



of blood that a samurai claims his position in the Celestial Order. However, with no master to kneel before and no record of service to call upon, ronin are generally treated with at best cold courtesy by other samurai. As samurai, they are allowed to wear the daisho, but with no political or military backing behind them, they would be fools to draw steel on their more fortunate peers.

Where most samurai are provided for by their daimyo, a ronin has no such luxury. Masterless samurai must make their own way in the world by hiring themselves out or turning to a life of crime to survive. Historically, there are an equal number of tales of ronin who become great heroes and ronin who allow their difficult path to turn them into bandits. For those who are not the subject of great stories, ronin who stay within the law tend to be ignored and wave-men turned to a life of crime naturally receive the attention they deserve. This disparity in the amount of "noticed" ronin only causes the masses to loathe ronin even more. A masterless samurai can remain perfectly lawful from the day of his birth until he dies, but the Imperial Magistrates may never stop keeping an eye on him no matter where he roams. Ronin in general are considered a possible threat to peace, and large gatherings of ronin are frowned upon by the Emperor's agents.

The daily life of a ronin is much less regimented than that of a clan samurai. With no master to serve, the ronin is forcibly in control of his daily activities, which some ronin find most appealing. Some wave-men are fortunate enough to find regular employment as the yojimbo to some minor daimyo, merchant, or similar figure. Others can spend months earning a steady pay only to have their prospects dry up and die from starvation. During wartime, many masterless samurai find work at the front lines of battle. No matter the prevailing opinion on ronin, few daimyo have any remorse towards hiring them for a pittance to die on the battlefield. Some ronin even distinguish themselves in this manner, and only rarely will a ronin prove himself so useful that a daimyo will offer the ronin a chance at fealty.

**Allies and Enemies:** As such a diverse and independent group, it is hard to categorize ronin by any sort of alliances or feuds. Most clans tend to ignore ronin as a group, except to hire masses of them during longer periods of conflict. The only major exception to this is the Crab Clan's custom of the Twenty Goblin Winter. If the Crab Champion becomes overly concerned that the ranks of bushi on the Kaiu Wall are becoming too thin, he declares a Twenty Goblin Winter. During this time, any ronin who enters the Shadowlands and returns with the heads of twenty slain goblins is granted fealty to the Crab and the Hida name with no questions asked.

## RONIN BROTHERHOODS

Occasionally, ronin will band together in an attempt to increase their chances of survival. These brotherhoods are referred to as otokodate.

Otokodate vary wildly in purpose. Some are brotherhoods of ronin dedicated to remaining honorable samurai, while others are usually little more than gangs of bandits.

## THE TESSEN

This otokodate is based in the city of Toshi Ranbo, the Imperial Capitol. The Tessen (also known as the Brotherhood of the Tessen or the Order of Tessen) is a group of ronin that came together around a central cause: their disgust for the mindless chaos the Lion and Crane spread in their ceaseless conflicts. When the two most powerful clans in the Empire clash, countless peasants are killed and wounded, farmlands are destroyed, and famine runs unchecked while the samurai of the clans turn their attention elsewhere. The Tessen have taken it upon themselves to act in a more "ideal" fashion for a samurai, ensuring lawlessness and strife do not spread unnoticed while the Lion and Crane continue their petty feuds. When the Order was officially established, it was during a period two generations ago when the Crane held Toshi Ranbo beneath their control. The Crane proclaimed that only other Crane would be allowed to draw weapons in public, though other samurai (including ronin) would be allowed to still carry their swords. Because of this, the Tessen take their name from the iron fan that they adopted as their symbol and weapon. Skilled members of the otokodate are able to weave a pair of steel fans into an intricate pattern that even the most skilled swordsmen have trouble piercing.

Because of their unusually vocal distaste for the Lion and Crane, the Tessen often come into conflict with the two clans. As far as the Crane are concerned, the Order of the Tessen are a group of thugs and troublemakers no better than petty ronin. Whenever the chance presents itself, the Crane are only too happy to execute one or more of the group as criminals on what are at times questionable charges. Regardless, the Tessen continue in their self-appointed duties, patrolling the streets of Toshi Ranbo and the surrounding areas where the bushi of the Crane and Lion may not bother to look. After the city was named the new Imperial Capitol, the Seppun have come into conflict with this group more than once, as well. Many Seppun guardsmen see the ronin group's patrols as an insult, a fact that the Order of the Tessen finds troubling. While the ronin have no lost love where the Crane and Lion are concerned, their honorable natures tell them to steer clear of any conflict with the legendary Imperial family. If they become enemies of the Emperor's personal guardians, they wonder, what will that truly make them?

## THE EYES OF NANASHI

Easily one of the most well-known and respected groups of ronin, the Eyes of Nanashi take their name from the ronin-founded city of Nanashi Mura. The city of Nanashi was established with the intention of creating a safe haven for ronin to gather away from the constant harassment of clan samurai. The city is the only known permanent gathering of ronin, and so far it has proven itself honorable and civil enough to escape the wrath of the Imperial armies. The Eyes of Nanashi are an elite brotherhood of ronin

dedicated to the ideals of honor and justice, and are the primary ruling force in the city. The unusual dedication of the ronin and the orderly nature of the city can easily be attributed to the sohei (warrior monks) who took up permanent residence in the city shortly after it was founded. The monks gave no particular reason for their actions and quickly established a temple to practice their arts. The village's ronin were welcome to learn the sohei's arts, and soon many wave-men were instilled with the sense of justice and duty that the monks carried in their hearts. The monks remain a highly respected force in the city, and even the Eye's leaders defer to their wisdom when it is offered.

The Eyes of Nanashi mount regular patrols into the surrounding area to exterminate bandits and hold crime to a minimum. Their honorable and loyal nature means that every member of the otokodate is fiercely protective of each other and will give their lives for one another in the line of duty.

The Eyes of Nanashi's reputation makes them welcome, as far as ronin go, to most samurai who know of them. Even the Crane, who are notoriously intolerant of ronin, tend to overlook the otokodate's status and instead focus on their honorable natures. The Dragon in particular have forged close ties with the ronin group, and often hire them to assist in their conflicts. The Eyes are more than happy to assist the Dragon, as their philosophies and natures mesh well.



## THE MACHI-KANSHISHA

In the City of the Rich Frog, the Kaeru family, vassals of the Ikoma, maintain order in their own way. Notorious for their somewhat malleable sense of honor (indeed, the very reason the Ikoma daimyo, Sume, offered them fealty), the Kaeru have controlled the city of generations. Their interests are the city's heart and soul, and the Kaeru do everything in their power to ensure this relationship endures. To this end, the family maintains a standing force of ronin known as the Machi-Kanshisha, who act as guardsmen and enforcers for the Kaeru. Though they are honorable enough given their public duty as servants of the Kaeru, their darker and secret duties would disgrace them in the eyes of many if they were ever exposed. Unlike typical guards, they do not necessarily punish those outside the law. Instead, the Machi-Kanshisha serve the Kaeru's interests above all else. Petty crimes are often beneath their notice, as are the activities of their patrons. Any who cross the Kaeru are likely to receive a visit from the Machi-Kanshisha long before the city's

magistrate pursues an investigation, however. Those who believe themselves safe with the proper amount of koku to dissuade the ronin enforcers are often unpleasantly surprised. Though the Machi-Kanshisha are not particularly loyal, the Kaeru pay remarkably well.

To facilitate their image as peacekeepers, the Kaeru insist the Machi-Kanshisha draw their swords as little as possible. Instead, the ronin employ long iron pipes that they are quite skilled at using. Typically, a member of the Machi-Kanshisha will use this weapon to disarm, disable, then beat a foe completely senseless, sometimes even if the opponent gives no resistance. These pipes double as smoking instruments that the ronin use to relax after subduing particularly troublesome opponents. Exceptionally talented or flamboyant members use the pipe to blow smoke and ash in their opponent's eyes during combat as well.

## RONIN CHARACTERS

Ronin characters come from one of two categories: True Ronin and Clan Ronin. True Ronin are born into the life of a ronin and have known no other code of behavior. They begin the game with only the most basic equipment of average to poor quality — a katana, a wakizashi, one other weapon, one set of poor quality clothes, 2 koku, and a travel pack. True Ronin characters do not have techniques, nor do they gain any in the usual fashion. Instead, they begin with 30 more character points than normal to reflect the experiences their early life has given them.

Clan Ronin are samurai who once served in family and clan, but were exiled for some particular failure (for instance, allowing the death of one's master is grounds for becoming ronin). Clan Ronin begin the game with the outfit and first rank in their clan school. They may receive further training if they can find a willing teacher, but such a thing is highly unlikely.

## THE BURNING SANDS

The Burning Sands lie just past the Northern Wall Mountains at the edge of Unicorn territory. This merciless desert lies sterile, waiting to destroy anyone foolhardy enough to traverse its unprotected dunes. It is a lethal place both feared and highly respected by those few in the Empire that have visited and returned alive.

A thousand years ago, Shinjo's clan, the Ki-Rin Clan, ventured into this vast nothingness to locate possible dangers outside the borders of Rokugan. Eight centuries passed without incident, and the Empire believed them to have been destroyed. When they returned, now calling themselves the Unicorn Clan, they brought back tales of merciless sorcerers, foreign cities, and exotic cultures. The clan was greatly changed by their experience, but the overall Rokugani view of the Sands as a deadly place was not altered by the Ki-Rin's survival.

Having been exiled into the Burning Sands after being blamed for the disappearance of Toturi I decades ago, the Scorpion Clan is the only other

clan to possess knowledge concerning the Burning Sands. The only other time the Empire has encountered the desert's powerful touch was when the Kami Shinjo returned to the Unicorn and brought with her the united Moto tribes. The Moto aided the Unicorn in destroying the corrupted Dark Moto and took over leadership of the Unicorn Clan at Shinjo's command. Described below are a few details of known cultures and peoples inhabiting the great desert waste.

## THE ASHALAN

Ashalan are an inhuman, immortal race believed to predate the existence of all other known races. A Council of Twelve rules the race and controls the only twelve souls shared between the entire race. Over the centuries, only two half-breed Ashalan have been born to the ancient race. The Ashalan feel responsible for the fledgling races of humanity and often interfere with human politics in secret. Most have decided that the Burning Sands has benefited enough from their influence and have retreated from the world. However, a small group of them ventured back into the Empire with the Scorpion clan and believe there are many problems in Rokugan that their ancient minds can fix.

Ashalan are disturbing to look upon. Tall, gaunt, with almost no hair, they have albino white and blue skin. Mystical tattoos cover their bodies and are believed to be the source of their strange powers. They wield weapons of a material called crysteel that is as durable as folded steel, but has crystalline.

## THE CELESTIAL ALLIANCE AND THE KHAYEL

The Khayel are a group of djinn, powerful spirit beings, that have been returned to the mortal world from an ages old imprisonment. Ruled by Kaleel, the Burning Sands Moon God, the Khayel seek the reinstatement of djinn over the petty races of humanity. They are virtually immortal and tend to formulate highly detailed plans that take years to bear fruit.

A faction of benevolent djinn has allied with mortal *sahir* (wizards) and stand as the only group powerful enough to fight the Khayel. They call themselves the Celestial Alliance and are a powerful, reclusive group.

## THE KHADI

Khadi are not a culture, but simply a group of powerful mortal *sahir* that have undergone a ritual in which they remove their hearts to attain immortality. Called Heartless, they once ruled the great city of Medinaat al-Salaam until the ancient Ashalan purged the city of their presence. The Iuchi of the Unicorn are familiar with the Heartless, as is the First Bloodspeaker, Iuchiban, who is a Khadi himself.

## THE MOTO

The Burning Sands culture most Rokugani are familiar with are the nomadic Moto tribesmen. Shinjo returned from her imprisonment at the hands of the Living Darkness at the head of a massive army of Moto tribes-

men. When she later purged her clan of the nefarious Kolat, she instated the Moto Khan, Gaheris, as the new Unicorn Clan Champion.

There are still a few scattered tribes of Moto in the Burning Sands, but these groups are pale shadows of true Moto. They are mostly scavengers, outcasts, and raiders with little honor. They sometimes serve as scouts for Unicorn merchants traveling the vast desert.

## THE QOLAT

Members of the Kolat's Roc Sect in Rokugan also belong to a much wider sect of conspirators known as the Qolat. The Qolat is a continent — spanning conspiracy that has managed to infiltrate every house and society in the Burning Sands except for the Celestial Alliance and the Khayel. In the Burning Sands, the Qolat consist of powerful merchant houses that seek the destruction of gods, djinn, and immortal races that wish to enslave humanity. They are not an honorable group and often stoop to simple murder, assassination, brainwashing, and theft to achieve their goals.

## THE SENPET

The Senpet have many holdings in the Gem of the Desert, the city Medinaat al-Salaam, but their Empire lies farther across the Burning Sands. Their homeland is roughly the size of Rokugan and is ruled by a powerful Pharaoh called Neferet. According to Senpet mythology, they are the first humans to have ever constructed buildings anywhere. When one visits *their cities this is not hard to believe. Senpet architecture is typically crafted to venerate their gods, a massive pantheon of 10,000 deities, most of which center around Death. Some Senpet temples and monuments far exceed the size of many Rokugani cities.*

The Senpet Empire is downstream of Medinaat al-Salaam and has been running out of resources recently. When the Scorpion were in the Burning Sands, a small number of Senpet joined the clan and returned with them to Rokugan. Because of this, the Senpet are aware of the Empire and the vast resources of water and food it has within its borders. Within roughly 50 years the Senpet will be so in danger of running out of water they will likely attack Rokugan or wither and fade into nothing.

## BEYOND ROKUGAN

Rokugan is an extremely sheltered nation. Traditionally its people are distrustful of outsiders and, other than the Unicorn and Mantis Clans, less than curious about foreign lands. Travelers from abroad are referred to as gaijin, a term that technically means “foreigner” but generally has extremely derogatory connotations. Gaijin are viewed with extreme suspicion. Any gaijin who acts in an aggressive manner on Rokugani soil can expect merciless retribution. Those who approach in a more peaceful manner are generally turned away, or slain by distrustful samurai. On rare



occasions gaijin have earned enough trust to establish embassies in the Imperial Capital, but a large gaijin presence has been unknown in Rokugan since the Battle of White Stag.

## IVORY KINGDOMS

The Ivory Kingdoms are located to the south of Rokugan, beyond the corrupted ocean known as the Seas of Shadow. The Ivory Kingdoms are a collection of allied city states, overseen by a Maharaja. Their society is a strictly caste-based system, ruled by a caste of holy warriors called the Kshatriya. Several decades ago their government was corrupted from within by a sinister cult worshipping a god known as the Destroyer but, with the aid of the Mantis Clan, was able to overthrow the cult and restore the Maharaja's power. The Ivory Kingdoms retain an embassy in Toshi Ranbo as the current Maharaja suffers a rare blood-born illness that can only be treated with a rare herb grown in Crane lands. Presumably the Ivory Kingdoms has access to waterways that lead around the Seas of Shadow to the lands beyond the Burning Sands, for they frequently associate with those nations as well. They are an adventurous people that enjoy exploring the mysteries of foreign shores.

## MERENAE

Many centuries ago, a joint expedition between the nations of Merenae and Thrane landed on the shores of Rokugan. Their initial encounter with the Rokugani ended badly, culminating in the Battle of White Stag (the origin for much of Rokugan's severe anti-gaijin sentiment). Once a proud seafaring kingdom, Merenae was devastated when a party of Senpet explorers unintentionally spread a rare disease (to which the Senpet had been long immune) through their lands. What is today called Merenae is in fact composed of the descendants of the survivors of Merenae and a



dozen other neighboring nations ravaged by this plague. The continent these nations once ruled is now largely uncivilized. Merenae is governed by twelve noble houses, each representing the survivors of a fallen nation. These houses are overseen by a single monarch, whose family can claim ancestry to each of the twelve houses. The Merenae are a cunning, resourceful, and ambitious people tempered by hardship. Though the noble houses frequently squabble among themselves, they readily set their differences aside when the kingdom as a whole is threatened.

## YOBANJIN TRIBES

Though nowhere near as large or well-established as most of the nations listed here, the barbarian tribes of the Yobanjin merit inclusion due to their natural proximity to Rokugan. The Yobanjin live in the mountains immediately north of Rokugan, overlapping Phoenix and Dragon territory in a number of places. They are descendants of the original tribes that ruled Rokugan, who fled the lands that would become the Empire rather than accept the kami's rule. They are thus suspicious of shugenja magic, which often draws upon the favor of gods they refuse to acknowledge. They wield a powerful, primal version of elemental magic, which allows them to harness powerful elemental spirits similar to dragons in the form of "wurm" steeds. Most of Rokugan view the Yobanjin people as an irritating menace, particularly frustrating for their ability to vanish into the mountains when the Imperial Legions are sent to destroy them. The Isawa family quietly conduct trade with one of the more peaceful Yobanjin tribes via a loophole in Imperial Law, and the Kolat remain on good terms with many of the tribes, but Rokugan as a whole otherwise has a difficult relationship with the Yobanjin.

## YODATAI EMPIRE

An ancient, and powerful empire located west of Rokugan, across the vastness of Yakamo's Heart. The Yodatai are a proud people, defined by expansion and conquest. Their civilization comprises the best of countless different conquered peoples, each assimilated into the totality of the Yodatai Empire. The Yodatai are ruled by an Emperor, who is advised in return by a Senate formed of elected representatives from every province under Yodatai rule. Though their military is fierce, the Yodatai's true strength lies in their ability to encourage conquered nations to accept the fair rule and technological advancements the Yodatai have to offer. According to their beliefs, those who die at sea are dragged into a hellish realm beneath the waters, where their soul will never be free to join their ancestors. As a result, they only rarely venture across the seas. Even so, a Yodatai "scouting party" (a large army by Rokugani standards) lost at sea established a colony north of Medinaat-al-Salaam nearly forty years ago. These colonists have spent the time since their arrival eagerly studying the foreign lands where they now find themselves, as well as searching for a way out.

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- A simple diceless mechanic derived from the classic *Legend of the Five Rings* d10 roll-and-keep system, for quick and easy test resolution in the live action environment.
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