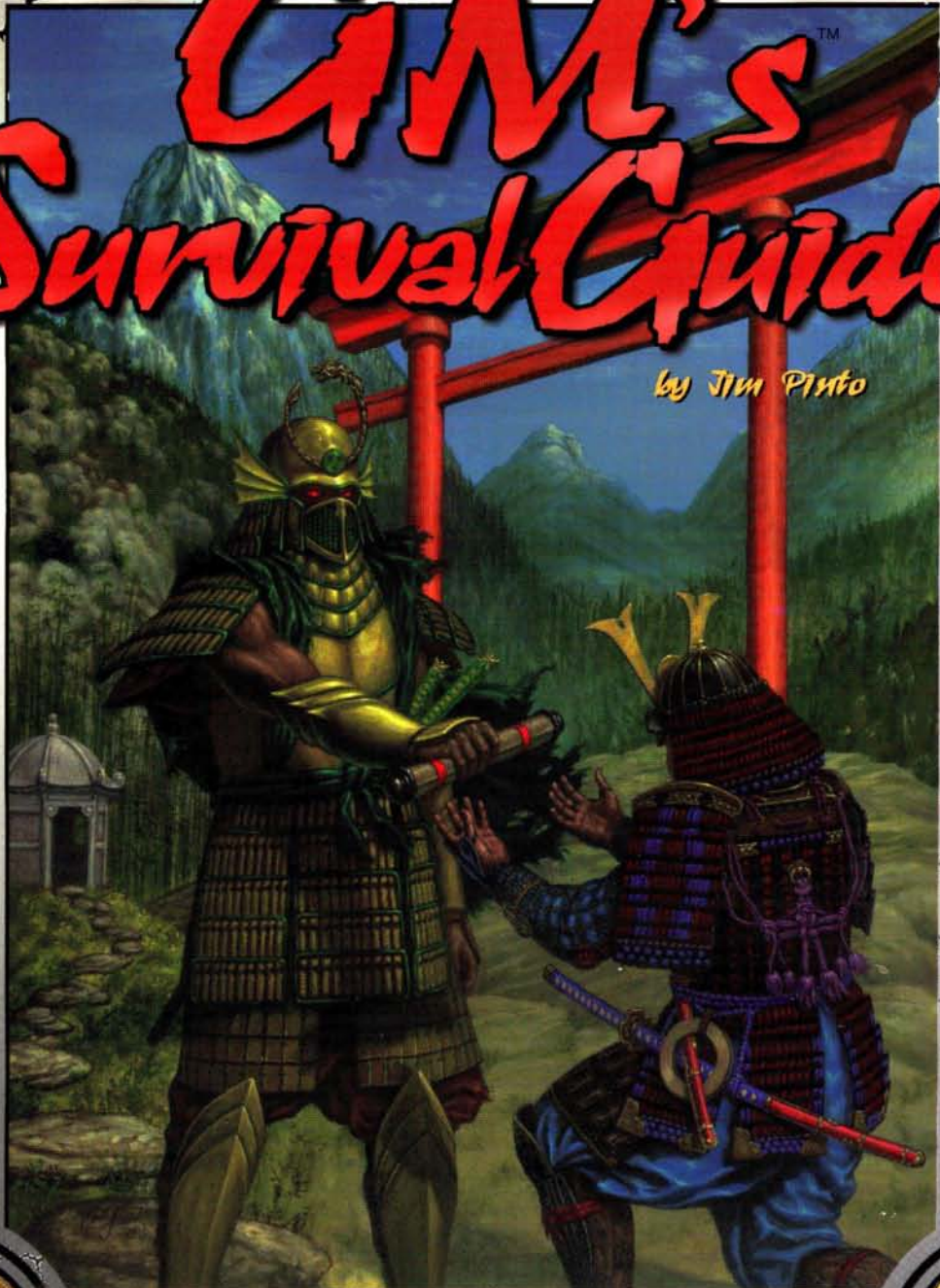




*Legend of the Five Rings™*

# GIM's™ Survival Guide

*by Jim Pinto*



*1001 Campaign  
Hints, Tips, and Answers*





# Legend of the Five Rings

## Gamemaster's Survival Guide



*"No snowflake ever falls in the wrong place."*

**- Togashi Yokuni**

## Credits

**WRITTEN BY JIM PINTO**

**ADDITIONAL MATERIAL BY KEVIN P. BOERWINKLE, STEVE HOUGH, PATRICK KAPERA, MIKE LEADER, MUSTAFA, REE SOESBEE, ROB VAUX, JOHN WICK, JOSEPH WOLF, RAY YAND**

**GAME SYSTEM BY DAVID WILLIAMS AND JOHN WICK**

**ART DIRECTOR: JENNIFER WICK**

**COVER ARTWORK: CARL FRANK**

**INTERIOR ARTWORK: CRIS DORNAUS, LIZ DANFORTH, CARL FRANK, DAERICK GROSS, ROB HINDS, GARY MCKEE, JEFF MENGES, JENNIFER WICK**

**MAPS: JENNIFER WICK**

**ARTWORK PREPRESS: DAVID AGOSTON, BRENDON GOODYEAR,**

**LINE DEVELOPER: REE SOESBEE**

**LINE EDITOR: D.J. TRINDLE**

**EDITING: PATRICK KAPERA, LAURA SEGARRA, ALAN SMITHEE**

**INTERIOR LAYOUT: DAVE AGOSTON, BRENDON GOODYEAR, STEVE HOUGH, PATRICK KAPERA, JIM PINTO, REE SOESBEE**

### THANKS TO...

Patrick, who put everything together and made it sound like I knew what I was doing. I couldn't have asked for a better editor. You rule and only you and Mustafa know it.

Ray Yand, who typed until his fingers bled and then typed some more. None of his charts made it in here.

Ree, who told me to get back to work, and said "cut everything that sounds stupid."

John Zinser, who called my house every morning even though I was sleeping in my office. John kept saying, "Stop typing. You're done." Thanks for yelling at me when I needed it.

Jennifer, who kept bugging me about art descriptions and maps.

MOOSE, who read every book four times in a week, because I asked him to.

Avi Gowe, whose constant challenges prove to be a menace and a tool for further development.

Laura, who let me stay out past my bedtime.

Mike Leader, who is always telling me that he likes my work, even when he doesn't.

John Wick, who answered all of my questions and even wrote a sidebar.

Marcelo, who really isn't cool, but he helped on charts when it was needed and gamed with me when no one else would.

Mustafa, whose secret identity is safe with me.

Kundun, who taught me patience and humility.

Maureen "Gamera" Yates, who kicked ass every day, even when she didn't have to.

All of the Metal Monkeys, who were there with advice, questions, concerns, and stories even when I wasn't listening.

The Kolat Master is in here somewhere, but you'll never find her.

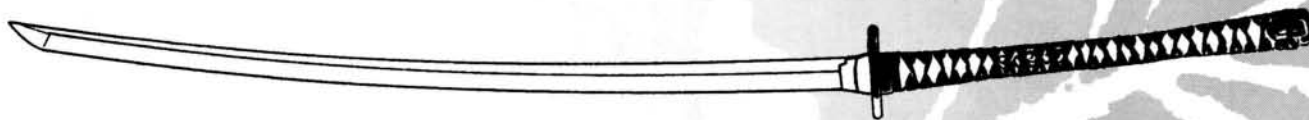
Most important, Andy, who is never far from my mind...

### DEDICATION

This one is for Lenny Freibott (the third), who has been playing with me more years than either of us wish to remember. Some day we'll tell a story that's worth mentioning, but in the meantime... bring your own damn dice!

# Table of Contents

Introduction . . . . .	4	The Book of Air . . . . .	68
TASKS OF A GM . . . . .	7	SAMURAI ETHICS . . . . .	70
The Book of Earth . . . . .	8	STYLES OF PLAY . . . . .	73
THE EMERALD EMPIRE . . . . .	10	DURING THE GAME . . . . .	77
THE LAND . . . . .	12	TROUBLESHOOTING . . . . .	82
THE PEOPLE . . . . .	15	HANDLING NPCs . . . . .	83
HABITS AND LIFESTYLE . . . . .	18	CREATURES OF ROKUGAN . . . . .	108
RELIGION . . . . .	22	The Book of Void . . . . .	110
FOOD . . . . .	24	MAKING L5R YOUR OWN . . . . .	112
The Book of Water . . . . .	28	CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE . . . . .	114
ASSUMING THE ROLE . . . . .	30	ADVENTURE STRUCTURE . . . . .	119
METHODS OF CHARACTER . . . . .	31	THE FIRST ADVENTURE . . . . .	138
MECHANICAL CHARACTER DESIGN . . . . .	39	THE GREAT SLEEP . . . . .	140
CHARACTER OPTION COMPILATION . . . . .	42	Appendix . . . . .	142
The Book of Fire . . . . .	48	AUTHOR'S NOTES . . . . .	144
USING THE SYSTEM . . . . .	50	MISCELLANEOUS TABLES . . . . .	145
COMBAT RULES . . . . .	50	MAPS . . . . .	156
CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT . . . . .	55		
TOOLS OF THE TRADE . . . . .	56		
OPTIONAL RULES . . . . .	61		





# Introduction





## A NOTE ABOUT WORDS

You may notice that this book is written in a conversational style. While most L5R books are written with a voice that relates a sense of the world as well as its stories, this book is designed to be resourceful and utilitarian. There are no histories here, no poems, or prose. There is nothing within these pages that could be confused as story material. This book is for GMs and players who want more out of Rokugan.

# Introduction

The first thing I need to say about this book is the most important: You are the GM, and can ignore what you don't like.

Whew. Got that out of my system. Okay. Now, I know that every other game supplement you've ever read says exactly that, but it's still true no matter how many times you hear it. While reading through this supplement, be sure to note that some of these details may not be for you. Take what you like, and leave the rest.

The idea behind a GM's book for any roleplaying game is to put power and information into the Gamemaster's hands, information that may be lacking or missing in the core game release. Every RPG has a GM's section that reads something like this: "You are the players' eyes and ears. You define the world that they see. It is the GM's job to provide players with the proper context for their environment. Ultimately, you are their guide on a magical journey."

But since every roleplaying game says the same thing, no *new* information is presented to GMs about their role. We hope that the information and guidelines within this book give GMs all of the proper tools for making their Rokugan fun. In addition, players who pick it up to read all the "secrets" may find much of the content helpful in their struggle to understand samurai.

This book's ultimate intention is to encourage more fluid play of the *L5R RPG*, and offer options to GMs that may not have been considered before. Details are an essential ingredient to good roleplaying, and GMs may find that not everything they need to detail their L5R campaign is available in the core book. Hopefully, you've picked up *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*, and learned a great deal about the political and cultural life in Rokugan. But where *Winter Court*

resides only in the Imperial Palaces, the *GM's Guide to Rokugan* guides players into the heart of Rokugan - its cities, villages, rice paddies, and forests.

Perhaps your players keep asking what is in a nearby village or what the people of the city of Boshunakori are selling this time of year, and you're not fully prepared to answer them. How long does it take for a samurai to reach Beiden Pass, or the Kaiu Wall? On foot? On horse-back? How many servants do Rokugani samurai have? How does a samurai announce himself at his daimyo's home? At a peasant's home? When is it okay to refuse a gift? Maybe you're interested in adding more subtle flavor and texture to your L5R adventures. Or perhaps your players are as confused about samurai life as you are. After all, Rokugan is as foreign from 20th century Earth as you can get.

This book is presented in the same order as the core *L5R Rulebook*, so you can cross-reference necessary information quickly, and run your adventures with a little more ease. If all you're looking for is new combat rules, check out those *The Book of Fire* (page 48). But it is our hope that this book is useful for GMs of all levels.

Many sections contain tips to help you design and play through gaming sessions that appeal more to your own select style. Those interested in such an endeavor may find many portions of this book useful - either as a series of guidelines, or to help flesh out the world and answer those nagging questions (like what a palanquin is).

In order to play a game well, players need to know its parameters. By "well", we mean without having to stop and read the book every few seconds to check how a sword is drawn, or how a geisha applies her make-up. In a world like Rokugan, it is unfair to expect GMs to be able to answer numerous complex questions about every facet of the society. Further, if any of us were playing L5R and the GM decided to make things up that defied the laws of logic or fair play, we would find ourselves lost, frustrated, and betrayed. Being grounded from the beginning can give the right focus to a potentially good campaign, and turn a great game into something memorable.

Inside this book, you will find rules clarifications of every kind. Charts are located throughout that will help GMs flesh out their own Rokugan early on in a campaign. Veteran GMs can use them to spruce up campaigns with tips,



ideas, and hooks that may have been lacking before.

Whatever you take from this book, always remember that the GM is right and – in your world – everything he or she says is final and perfect. Gamemastering is an art, and no art can ever be wrong. It is subjective and opinionated, but never bound by a set of inflexible rules. The rules are a loose foundation, but the GM is the creative force behind interpreting what that foundation becomes. Nothing AEG publishes should ever distort or blur your vision of Rokugan; it should only enhance and focus it.

Which brings me back to the start. You are the GM. Your word is law. I hope this book makes everything clearer for better adventuring, anywhere.

and engages the players has missed the point of roleplaying in the first place.

GMs who can master all of their duties will find the job thankless, but the rewards unparalleled. This book is your guide, and we hope it paves a path through the dark and unsettling woods.

### OPTIONAL RULES

Throughout this book, you will find many new rules, dice conventions, and ways of playing L5R. Note that the majority of these are not canon in the AEG house system or in the L5R core rules. They have been included here to give the GM a jump start in producing their own house rules, and tailoring the game system to their own liking.

Enjoy!



*"GMs wear many hats. They are referee, administrator, actor, author, and storyteller, and all of this without a paycheck. Anyone who doesn't appreciate what their GM does for them has no soul."*

– Anonymous

Before beginning your journey as a Gamemaster, it is important that you understand your role at the table. A GM who does not understand the rules well will conflict with players who are sticklers for regiment. Those who do not handle disputes and questions well will be forced to confront difficult issues during the game, disrupting the flow of play. A GM who does not act the role, giving a voice to the NPCs, is likely to have trouble keeping players focused. Any GM who does not know how to write a story, or who continues to create adventures that do not interest the players, is sure to have many dreary evenings ahead. And a Gamemaster who does not know how to tell her tale in a manner that excites







# *Chapter One*

土

*The Book  
of Earth*

## A ROKUGANI VIEW

AEG has now published seven *Way of the Clan* books, each detailing important aspects of their respective clan's culture, and fleshing out key elements of Rokugan as a whole. *The Way of the Lion* details warfare for all of the clans, not just the Matsu. *The Way of the Phoenix* is the handbook for religion across the Empire, and *The Way of the Crane* provides material on the high culture for all Rokugan.

GMs should avoid looking at these in separate, autonomous vacuums. Instead, they should be considered guides for running adventures within the boundaries of each clan, while striving to present them as a cohesive whole, coexisting within one Empire. This will help to make your own Rokugan a living, breathing, changing thing, rather than a stagnant place where the actions and history of one clan have little or nothing to do with those around it.

# The Emerald Empire

## Economy

Each Clan has its own currency and mints its own koku, to distinguish the value of their farms from those of their rivals. Each daimyo has advisors who maintain the value of currency each year, and keep accurate records of how much has been minted. Each season, the daimyo of the family takes the rice of her villages and the lord of the estate receives a small share of it in return, in the form of koku.

Because Rokugani barter with one another almost exclusively, the concept of "cost" is a difficult topic to tackle. Few samurai have an understanding of the *value* of money (such matters are left to wives and money-lenders), and as a result the introduction of the koku into Rokugani society was, for the most part, misunderstood by all except the merchants.

The desire to represent the value of one's farms was the original intent of koku, but the fluctuating value of coinage made it nearly impossible to discern its exact merit. Ambitious courtiers and wily merchants quickly devised methods for making the koku system work for them, and it is now fairly common to find them trading one clan's koku for that of another to make a profit.

Because there is no hard and fast rule to determine the value of a single season's koku, it is nearly impossible to extrapolate the value of anything in the Empire. As such, a price list for items becomes useless. One season, a flute might cost 5 koku, and in another, 10.

Never once would a samurai stop to ask an item's cost (to ask a cost would imply that they do not know, insulting them, as if telling them they are wrong). Rather, samurai give whatever they believe is fair, in barter, for items they desire.

An honorable samurai always gives *something*, but others just take what they like. Ronin are notorious for terrorizing peasants who cannot defend themselves, taking whatever they wish. Bear in mind that an honorable weaponsmith will not make a katana for anyone he does not know without the order of his lord, and katanas do not sit around on shelves waiting for a ronin to come around and buy them (all are forged by specific order, for specific people).



## ECONOMICS 101

### *Top to Bottom*

First off, the Emperor owns all the land. Every last bit of it. In exchange for fealty, he has divided out portions of it to the various clans. The clans have the right to tax the land, while handing over a healthy portion of that tax to the Emperor (it is *his* land, after all).

Now, let's go down a step and look at how each of the clans deals with their land. Clan daimyos place a bunch of magistrates in charge of four provinces, and each province has a governor in charge of collecting the taxes of the province and handing them over to the daimyo. In each province, there are a number of cities, and each city has its own magistrate, who in turn collects taxes and hands them over to the governor. See a pattern developing here?

Each city - including the clan capitals - is surrounded by farms. Each farm produces rice, silk, vegetables, milk, and other products, that are all taxed by the city's magistrate. Each city also has a military garrison with blacksmiths, coopers, carpenters, and other workers to maintain the city and soldiers that stay there. All the samurai who are sworn to a city magistrate have their needs provided for by the city. If a samurai needs a new sword, the magistrate orders the blacksmith to make it for him. If he needs a new horse, the magistrate provides him one from the stable master.

### *Bottom to Top*

So, now that we've looked at how Rokugan breaks down from the top down, let's look at it from the other way around. You are a Rank 1 samurai. When you pass your *gempukku*, you swear fealty to a lord (commonly - though not necessarily - your family lord). You go to that lord's castle and you serve him. He provides you with the tools necessary to do so. Like we said above, if you need a horse or a sword, you've got it.

When spring rolls around, you go to the farms surrounding your lord's land and collect taxes from the peasants. When the harvest is good, you get a lot of rice. When it's bad... well, that's when things start breaking down.

People need to eat. The more rice a lord has, the more men he can feed. When he can feed more men, he can hire more samurai, not to mention more blacksmiths, coopers, carpenters,

sake brewers, geisha, etc. If the rice crop comes up short, he can no longer fulfill his end of the feudal contract. Men start going hungry, and have to look for other lords who can feed them. Of course, loyal samurai will stick by their lord through famine as well as feast, but some men are more loyal to their stomachs than to their lords.

When a daimyo's crop comes up short, that's when Rokugan's bartering system comes into play. When Bayushi Shoji's crops are short, he has to turn to other clans to feed his men. Of course, he has to trade for their rice; nothing in Rokugan is free. Perhaps he could part with that lovely red dye his southern provinces are so famous for? Or how about a few of those Shosuro-trained geisha?

### *Ronin*

Yes, it's cool to be a ronin. You get all those extra points. You get to wander the countryside on your own time, with nobody telling you what to do. Pretty neat.

But what are you going to eat?

How are you going to repair your sword and saddle?

When a samurai needs help, he turns to his family and his lord. When a ronin needs help, he has nobody to turn to. He comes into a Phoenix Clan town looking for a blacksmith to make him a new sword, and the blacksmith says, "I cannot. I am busy making swords for Shiba-sama."

That's right. A peasant telling a samurai, "No." Just what is the ronin going to do about it? If he's smart, he'll bow and walk away. If he's dumb, he'll probably just kill the peasant and take a sword... and call down the wrath of the Phoenix Clan. Remember what Shinsei said: "Those who stand alone, fall alone."

If he's smart, he'll become a hire-on, a man who exchanges temporary service to a village or daimyo in exchange for goods and food. However, such an arrangement is rarely in the ronin's benefit, nor does the ronin usually have any recompense if he is cheated or given shoddy material.

The path of the ronin is not an easy one. The entire world stomps in your face, even when they don't mean to. Peasants have no time for you. Samurai laugh at you. You're on your own, with nobody to help you out. Congratulations, you're a loner. Hope you got what you asked for.



## THE IRATE SAMURAI

**Challenge:** A drunk Crane, Doji Uriko, is in a peasant village. She has drawn her katana and is screaming at the peasantry, demanding things they cannot provide. The local innkeeper has taken a deep wound to his side, while the samurai continues to spout obscenities. The doshin have surrounded her, but her skill with the blade is too great for them. The headmaster of the village finally sneaks up behind her and smashes her in the back of the head with a bo.

**Focus:** Several weeks have passed with no news of the whereabouts of Doji Uriko. Perhaps the PCs are sent to find her, or perhaps they merely happen upon the village. Once there, the PCs find the headman nervous and distracted. Although nothing in the village seems out of order, the samurai may wish to look into the headman's odd behavior.

**Strike:** Underneath the headman's house lies a trove of armor, weapons, koku, and other gear that samurai carry. The personal journal of Doji Uriko is among the belongings (along with her armor and katana). It seems that the death of the Crane was not the first in the village, and the headman's own version of justice has happened more than once.



## Travel

How big is Rokugan? How can 33 million people live in such a small area? How far is it from the Heart of the Shadowlands to the Kaiu Wall?

The Official Imperial Map of Rokugan, compiled by the Ikoma, is located in the core Rulebook. The scale upon it relates the relative distances between locations in the Empire, and none would dare question the validity of the map, for that is questioning the word of the Emperor.

Thus, the size of Rokugan remains unchanged from the original estimation. This means that archaic cartographers have influenced everyone's view of the Emerald Empire, despite the fact that the Unicorn claim to have a more advanced method of mapping.

Many samurai have learned that it is more than a two day journey from the Kakita bastions to the Capital, but none would dare say it took so long, or present their route differently than upon the accepted map. It is always safe to tell one's daimyo, "I honored my ancestors at every shrine. That is why my journey was so lengthy. My humble apologies." Most lords also know the true distance, but are just as unwilling to verbalize it. With so many waystations along the prominent roads of Rokugan, it would seem contrary that the slowest samurai takes ten weeks to travel from the Shiro Shinjo to Doro Owari Mura when it is a mere 230 miles overland, and some 300 by the road.

Of course, the Emperor probably knows that the map is wrong, but he would never correct it. It has been verified by the will of a Hantei, and the Hantei's will is the will of the Celestial Heavens. Although no one questions the official map of Rokugan, and everyone attributes the lengthy travel time to worship and reflection, samurai who visit the many locations of the Empire have learned to quietly plan for the proper length of journey, regardless of the map.

## ROADS

The Emperor's roads are not meant for everyone to travel upon. To allow horses, carts, or anything else on them would slowly destroy them, requiring massive rebuilding each year (paid for with Imperial taxes better allotted to other endeavors). Therefore, it is forbidden for anyone to walk, ride, or pull a cart over the Emperor's roads who is not strictly permitted. Even those with traveling papers must have written permission to ride a horse along the roads, and only a merchant who has lobbied for, purchased, and made enormous offerings to the





## Flora and Fauna

### FLORA

Arrowroot, azaleas, *bara* (the Rokugani rose), barley, bellflower, bramble, camellia, carmine, cattail, cherry, cherry blossom, chrysanthemum, cinnabar, cucumber, cumin, fruit trees, grass, *hariju* root, hay, hemlock, hollyhock, honeysuckle, iris, kempi, lichen, lily, lime, lotus, morning glory, moss, mulberry, oats, oleander, onion, orchids, peony, persimmon, plum, poppy (*keshi*), reed, saffron, snapdragon, sorghum, straw, vines, waterlily, wheat, wisteria, and yarrow.

### TREES

Apple, ash, balsa, bamboo, bonsai, cedar, cyprus, ebony, fir, hackberry, juniper, lacquer, mahogany, maple, oak, orange, peach, pear, pine, poison ivy, rattan, sandalwood, spruce, teak, and wicker. Bamboo paper, rice paper, and vellum come from trees, as do most construction materials and firewood.

### ANIMALS

Badger, bat, bear, black viper (*tsunari*), boar, cat, chameleon, chicken, cougar, deer, dog, donkey, fox, frog, goat, gopher, hare, horse, leech, lion, lizard, monkey (*saru*), mountain goat, mouse, mule, ox, panther, pig, pony, rabbit, rat, sheep, slug, snake, snapping turtle, snowfox, squirrel, stag, tiger, tortoise, turtle, wolf, and yak.

### BIRDS

Canary, crane, crow, dove, eagle, falcon, game hen, hawk, nightingale, osprey, owl, pheasant, pigeon, quail, raven, sparrow, swallow, and wren. The eagle, hawk, falcon, and osprey are all considered birds of prey, yet a falconer may only train the hawk, falcon, and osprey.

### INSECTS AND BUGS

Ants, bees, beetles, bureli wasps, butterflies, centipedes, crickets (they bring good luck), dragonflies, fireflies, flies, grasshoppers, horse flies, hornets, locusts, mosquitoes, preying mantis, scorpions, spiders (there are over 100 species of spiders in Rokugan), ticks, and wasps.

### AUTUMN FLOWERS AND GRASSES

Autumn flowers have a special place in Rokugan. During the eighth and ninth months of the year, Rokugani take time to admire the natural, unpretentious beauty of the seven flowers of autumn. They include the *fujibakama* (ague weed), *hagi* (bush dover), *kikyo* (balloon flower), *kuzu* (kudzu vine), *nadeshimom* (fringed pink), *ominaeshi* (valerian), and *susuki* (pampas grass).

These are arranged in simple bamboo baskets that complement their subtle beauty. Rokugani identify strongly with nature, and their adoration for autumn flowers reflect how they are moved by the simple beauty of the seasons. These flowers are chosen for their natural and imperfect beauty, and not for their scents or colors. *Kiku* (chrysanthemum), and *momiji* (autumnal maple leaves) are admired during this season as well.

## Common Raw Materials

Alabaster, amber, aquamarine, bloodstone, brass, clay, copper, coral, crystal, diamond, flint, garnet, glass (glass in Rokugan is very rare, as the sand of the Empire is far too coarse to be blown properly), gold, granite, *hakudo* (a "white bronze" copper and tin alloy), iron, ivory (comes from animals originating in the Ivory Kingdoms, beyond the Shadowlands), jade, lapis lazuli, lead, limestone, malachite, marble, moonstone, mother of pearl, onyx, pearl, ruby, sapphire, *sawari* (an alloy made of copper, tin, and lead), *shakudo* (a copper and brass alloy), shale, silver, tin, topaz, tourmaline, and vermillion.



## FABRICS

Rokugani use a variety of materials in their everyday activities. Burlap, cotton, *fukusa*, *kasuri*, and silk are used for just about anything. Most sacks are made of burlap, and almost all peasants have clothes made of cotton. *Fukusa* is a thin silk used for wrapping gifts, although plain rice paper is used also. *Kasuri* is another cloth worn by peasants, primarily in the summer. Peasants also wear *dobuku* (a short coat made from a heavy cotton) on formal occasions. Silk is the predominant material in Rokugan, however, and one in every twenty villages has a silk works.

Emperor's *karo* may pull a cart along the main roads of Rokugan.

Because there are such stringent rules governing merchants, most are forced to sell whatever they cannot carry on their backs before embarking from a village. This keeps most merchants moving in small patterns, going to the same villages again and again. The Rokugani usually see the same merchants over and over,

making the same circuits and selling the same wares each time.

The more rural merchants make so little that they are lucky to barter their goods for food and a warm place to sleep. It is not uncommon to see a small band of merchants travelling together from village to village, while the larger towns and cities have Merchant Houses (*Yasuki*, *Ide*, *Daidoji*) that make the rounds. Families like the *Matsu* and *Mirumoto* have little need for elaborate trinkets, and these strongholds are home to many more peasant merchants than noble ones. In the *Book of Void*, GMs can find a list of items that a merchant might have in his pack.

## THINGS PEASANTS DO

Many peasant craftsmen make their homes in villages, trading their crafts for rice and dietary staples, while providing enough product to their lords to recompense any taxation. Often, peasants in villages pay less taxes than those who choose to live in far-distant areas. This way, the daimyos encourage villages to prosper, and make it easier to protect honored craftsmen. Below is a short list of important peasant functions:

- Armorer
- Blacksmith
- Bladesmith
- Brewer
- Carpenter: Foreman, Plasterer, Roofer,  
Sawyer, Stonemason.
- Cobbler
- Cook
- Cooper
- Craftsman
- Dyer
- Farmer
- Fletcher
- Innkeeper
- Jeweler
- Lacquerer
- Mat maker
- Merchant
- Miller
- Painter
- Paperer
- Peddler
- Shingler
- Silversmith
- Stonemason
- Sword-sharpener
- Thatcher
- Tilemaker
- Tiller
- Tobacco cutter
- Weaver

## VILLAGES

Most farming villages are linked by small paths and dirt roads, which constitute a few hours of travel. These pathways are level with the ground around them (unlike the Emperor's raised roads), and are far too narrow to guide a cart over. Most carts must take the larger roads, and then only with a permit (thus, there are very few carts in Rokugan, as their use is so limited). Rural villages off the beaten path are lucky to see a monthly merchant or traveler. Even the nobles of these lands are only likely to see a *yoriki* or *gokenin* visit during tax time. Most are hamlets far removed from the main culture of Rokugan, and have found their own way of life over the generations, which is far different from that of the larger towns upon the main roads.

These "backwater" places are like another world to city samurai. Villages too far from civilization commonly become targets for dishonorable ronin, bandits, and monsters looking for easy prey. Many adventures can focus around this kind of place. GMs are encouraged to create their own distant villages to send samurai as well, which allows them to deviate greatly from the norm in their games.

## Approaching a Village

When a samurai makes her way to a new village, the villagers can see her from quite a distance. A samurai approaching a rural village is a rare sight, and peasants are always leery of their visits. If the samurai is far enough away, the peasant fetches the headman (*chonin*), or headmaster of the village. Should the *chonin* desire to properly greet the samurai, he arrives



with four *doshin* (peasants with jitte in their belt), and asks if she has eaten. Samurai are expected to interact with the headman for most matters, and if she intends the villagers any harm, the headman will address it here.

The headman invites the samurai in, informs her of the village's name (if she asks), and escorts her to an inn. If there is no inn, then the samurai is led to the headmaster's home. She is given food, sake, and bedding. If she requires anything else, she need but ask. It is considered rude to deny the samurai anything, whether she is from the same clan as the headman or not. Even ronin receive food and comfort; after all, as long as there is a samurai at the village, there is no fear that bandits will come around. Any time a samurai is fed and given a place to sleep by a village, the headman is certain to include the instance in their taxes, and will be repaid for their hospitality by their daimyo at the end of the year.

If taken to the village inn, road house, tea house, or geisha house, the samurai is introduced to the owner. There is no cost for a samurai to eat, drink, stay the night, or visit a geisha, but as stated in *Economy*, any honorable samurai will leave something behind in honor of the service. Disruptive samurai are dealt with by the village's *doshin*. Commonly, they are knocked unconscious and tied up until the *yoriki* or magistrate can arrive. However, in some cases, peasants have

been forced to kill a drunk samurai; the repercussions for such an act are always grim.

Samurai often refer to townspeople as *chomin* in an unknown locale. When peasants hear the word, they know to bring the headman. Peasants speak to samurai only when spoken to, and never give them information they did not ask for. Samurai always speak first, and peasants know to bow and avoid eye contact at all times.



## The Life of a Farmer

Rice cultivation is labor-intensive and remains a task that cannot be accomplished easily. As a result, families pool their labor in order to meet the demands of the samurai caste. More importantly, most families share their water resources and irrigation facilities. Typically, irrigation requires that water run downhill and that all the farms of the surrounding families are linked to a shared communal resource.

With so much water about, a farmer's skin is almost constantly wet, and old peasants find it harder and harder to move their joints freely. The moisture seeps into their bones over time, and their bodies begin to stoop from so much bending over. By the time peasants reach 50, their bodies are usually racked with pain, and a "stoop" begins to form. Samurai know that old peasants stoop from years of harvesting rice, but most don't realize *how* it happens.

Villagers live in small houses clustered around a single landmark. In smaller villages and hamlets, there is no defensible wall, and therefore no reference for planning new buildings. A lord taking interest in a lop-sided village often burns down the odd buildings, and starts from scratch.

土

### NOT EVERYTHING IS MADE OF RICE PAPER

Handmade paper in Rokugan is often referred to as rice paper. However, it is not made from rice. The pulp of other plants, such as the mulberry bush (*kozo*), is used to create "rice paper". It has thousands of uses, and is prominent in every facet of Rokugani life.

Despite its importance, rice paper is not used for everything. Most buildings have stone, brick, or wood on the outside, and rice paper is used mainly for interior doors. Screens made of rice paper are called *shoji* screens. The frames are made of pine or fine woods.





## BRIDGES

Bridges in Rokugan are always arched. From the smallest bridge crossing a tiny stream to the great Kaiu Bridge, all have a bend. The Rokugani believe that it is not possible for spirits to cross an arched bridge, and the tradition of building bridges in most homes is derived from this superstition.

Bridge construction is considered an art in the Empire, and elaborate designs on the sides of bridges (kanji that honor the kami) are all dignified techniques incorporated into the construction.

But in large villages, the structure is planned and coordinated to use space efficiently.

Since rice is planted on the same day by all families, they must depend heavily upon each other for water after the first few days. By default, their way of life necessitates an emphasis on the group, not the individual. It is common for a headmaster to take charge of a village and make decisions for his fellows in the absence of a lord. And because of the proximity of families, pseudo-democratic skills usually flourish within such places.

The villages of Rokugan are composed of more than just farmers however. Many specialize or dedicate up to 20% of their work force toward another luxury they can thrive upon. Sake, tea, and silk are all valuable commodities which peasants can produce.

## More on Ronin

Ronin in Rokugan are rarely born; they are *made*.

"Where does a ronin come from?" can be a difficult question to answer. The number of ronin in Rokugan is not great when compared to the number of people within the Great Clans, but a player interested in starting the game without a master should be allowed to develop their own story, regardless. However, a few facts should be presented.

A ronin has no master and therefore has no obligation, no liege, and no honor. As the Rokugani see it, a ronin is in many ways beneath even the lowest eta. A ronin has *no* place in the Celestial Order, since she serves nothing but herself. Even the code of Bushido is interpreted differently for a ronin; her allegiance can easily be questioned.

Ronin are a difficult lot for the Major Clans to define, and most other samurai simply ignore them until the situation becomes dire and requires their attention. Samurai in a tea house know they are better than the ronin beside them. The ronin brash enough to speak out in the company of samurai is sure to incur the wrath of all honorable warriors around them.

Ronin have no lord to protect their honor, or to inquire as to their death. Although this rarely means that samurai go around chopping down every ronin they meet, it certainly adds an element of danger to the ronin's existence.

## PLAYING RONIN

Roleplaying games are about heroes. But sometimes the PCs can take a very anti-heroic stance. A common symptom of such games is that players often want to play rogue individuals serving their own selfish needs, ignoring the woes of the world. Often, they even exploit the problems plaguing a world to serve their own ends, and push aside the needs of others. GMs interested in running this sort of campaign with L5R may be in for quite a shock.

To begin with, Rokugan has no such characters, and GMs running L5R with ronin PCs are put into a difficult position. The world of the ronin is far different from the world of the honorable bushi, and players looking to break away from the strict code of Bushido will find Rokugan an unforgiving place. These sorts of campaigns should be perpetually haunted with an "on the run" atmosphere.

Ronin without papers will be hounded. Those in a private tea house will be asked to leave. Those without coin may not be allowed to eat, while a landed samurai could take what he needed. Ronin who turn to intimidating and murdering the peasantry will be hunted like bandits.

If the PCs want to be ronin, make sure that they understand the social climate they are bound for, and that the people of Rokugan do not look kindly on traveling bushi without loyalty or honor.

## Clothing

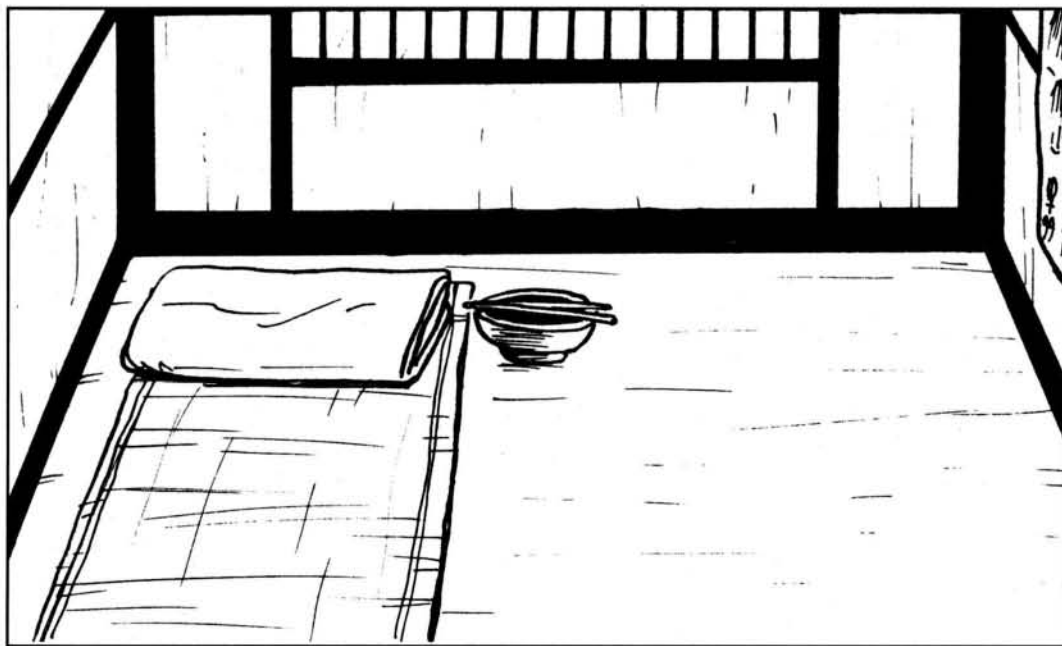
As stated in the L5R core Rulebook, the clothing of a samurai is designed to be functional. Cottons are only used during cold periods, and then only with the least amount of material possible. A sweating samurai knows not to wear cotton, and if she does, changes her clothing often. Several extra kimonos are kept in one's pack, and changes of clothing are not uncommon for the honorable and stately individual. A *yakuta* is a thin informal cotton robe that is worn on cool summer evenings, washed often, and removed at the first sign of becoming soiled.

Samurai and nobles wear a variety of colors and designs. Every kimono is unique, and players of samurai should be encouraged to describe their state of dress during each new encounter. Even the simplest patterns can evoke interest



## BOOKS

The process of binding does not exist in Rokugan, and most scribes have a large collection of scrolls or parchments to keep information together. Although the word "book" is used throughout the L5R RPG and Rokugan, it actually refers to a folio of pages held together by some mundane means, and not a book with a glued spine. The people of Rokugan use the word "book", or *kioku* (which means "memory") to describe any journal or record that is kept in such a fashion.



from strangers, and others that a samurai might meet. Presently in Rokugan, orange and yellow are prominent colors to place in geometric patterns on one's kimono. But samurai of some clans continue to wear the same styles of clothing from year to year, regardless of trend.

## Dwellings

### CITIES

Rokugan's cities are crowded, and the hustle and bustle of the streets can become quite pressing upon one's personal space. A typical city, at several thousand, consists of one castle, a large number of "districts", and an eta village located outside the city walls or boundary. Some of the major distinctions between the classes of the Rokugani populace can be most clearly seen in their architecture - the artisan class is allotted a district, as are those of the "pleasure class", and the merchants and the craftsmen as well. Members of the samurai class, even those who are not "in command" of the city, are typically given houses out of the city's central body and well away from the commoners.

"Districts", known as *shiamachi*, are sometimes physically separated from each other with walls or distance. They are also controlled by a guild headman, or *chonin*, who reports directly to the samurai head of the city. The term "shiamachi" specifically refers to the "area

around" (the castle), where the merchants and craftsmen reside. Small businesses and shops, separate from their homes, run alongside the major streets, while the houses and residential areas of the district are usually a distance away from the busy roadway. Homes, particularly in the craftsmen district, are almost always extremely close together, pressed against one another by the need for space within the city.

### ETA VILLAGES

The ranks of eta increase whenever a samurai or peasant is banished from the whole of Rokugani society. A battle maiden that falls from her horse in battle or a samurai that touches dead flesh are all sent out from their clan and temporarily considered eta until such time as they become "clean" again (see the description of a cleansing ritual on page 22, and in the L5R adventure pack *Night of 1000 Screams*).

The true eta of Rokugan are permanently unclean, and are therefore not permitted to live among even the lowliest peasants. Their villages, located outside the city they work within, is where the services of leather workers, butchers, morticians, and any other profession considered dirty, can be procured.

Under no circumstances can an eta be made samurai. If they are extraordinary, they may be given rank, and made heimin, by the Emperor himself - but this is an extremely rare thing.



## OTHER FORMS OF ADDRESS

Although most people who are familiar with Rokugani culture know to address a samurai of greater stature with the name ending "-sama", and to address a samurai of equal or lesser status with the ending "-san", there are other name endings which are less common. These are often only used in familiar situations, such as with family members or life-long friends, but they are also appropriate for children and lovers.

- dono (for an inferior)
- chan (familiar female / child)
- kun (familiar male)

Also, position titles - such as sensei, daimyo, *shirekhan*, and others - are appropriate, both as singular forms of address ("Hai, Sensei"), and as titles at the end of a name ("Forgive me, Akodo-sensei" or "Forgive me, Kage-sensei").

## HOMES AND HOUSING

Because of the crowded conditions in most of Rokugan's cities, houses are built to make the greatest possible use of space. A typical Rokugani house has enough room for six to eight people, who share bedrooms, front (or "living") rooms, and garden space.

Whether they belong to a member of the samurai class or are heimin, houses are always clean, sparse, and well-maintained. In many farming villages, the homes of heimin are located near to their samurai lord, ensuring that the village does not waste (read: build upon) any of the precious fields which surround it.

### *A Samurai's Home*

Two important parts of a samurai's home are the house itself, and the garden which surrounds it. The structure is typically made of wood, with rice-paper doors and walls within. While this arrangement makes it extremely vulnerable to fire, it keeps the warm temperature of the land from becoming overbearing, and also allows the home to be easily and cheaply rebuilt after earthquakes (which are fairly common), or other natural disasters. Post-and-beam construction, with a sloping tiled roof and a wooden veranda surrounding the entire house, are common to a samurai dwelling. It is said that these simple materials - wood and clay - represent the importance of nature to the lives of those within. Further, while most Rokugani houses - particularly those of the samurai class - are surrounded by a tall hedge or fence, such structures are not designed to "close out the world". Rather, they convey a feeling of openness that leads the eye naturally toward the home.

Traditional homes are always designed to face south, but also have an opening on the northern side, to allow for cool breezes in the summer and warm air in the winter. They are built on small wooden "platforms", or pillars, that rest on foundation stones in order to help absorb the shock of passing earthquakes. The roof is always constructed to protect the house from rain, as the monsoon season can be very damp. Learning to build homes that will withstand the harsh seasons is highly-valued skill in Rokugan; nature is a fickle force in the Empire.

*Shoji*, or wooden doors which lead into the interior of the house, are made of thin wood, with a rice-paper overlay glued to the door's frame. It is thin enough to allow light to pass from within

the house, but thick enough to block winds and rain. There are many kinds of *shoji*, from the simple paneled door to the elaborate *karado*, or painted paneling with ledges.

Once inside, the main entryway, or *genkan*, can be found. There, the family's alcove, called a *tokonaka*, holds sacred items and flower arrangements. Such items as the family's ancestral sword, a poem written in honor of the house, or an ancient and highly valued piece of family memorabilia are displayed in the *tokonaka*, for others to enjoy. To disturb such a display is considered rude and disrespectful, and is due cause for a duel or other public reprimand.

Shoes are removed within the *genkan*. It is common practice during the rainy season for servants to check inside the *genkan* repeatedly, cleaning mud from the shoes of visitors and tending to the cleanliness of any other objects left within.

*Tatami* mats cover the floor of a Rokugani house, and are replaced monthly (or perhaps more often if they become soiled). These mats, woven from thick straw, are of regular size: always 6 feet long and 3 feet wide, and often as much as 2 inches thick. The earliest *tatami* mats were woven from cloth or raw silk. Since that time, *tatami* have become widely used as a general covering, and are changed to prevent the collection of dust, dirt or other materials, upon the floor. Some *tatami* mats are woven with a seamed cloth binding in the traditional color of the household.

Interior doors, known as *fusuma*, line the inside of the house and separate the individual rooms from one another. Like *shoji*, such doors are mere frames with paper glued to them, and do not prevent noise from passing easily through to either side. A Rokugani house is separated more by formality than by solidity - the *fusuma* only provide social clues which inform visitors to "ignore what is on the other side of the door". Sometimes, in large houses or stone castles, these interior doors are made of thin wood paneling, or sliding glass, and are known instead as *sugito*.

Beyond the *genkan*, a visitor to a samurai's home might find the traditional reception room, or *zashiki*. In this room, the host has a low table, some small cushions for kneeling (*zabuton*), and perhaps another, smaller alcove in which flower arrangements and poetry are hung. This room often has built-in shelves lining one or more walls, and usually has another door - a *shoji* -



which leads into the family garden. In warm weather, this door commonly remains open at all times, encouraging those inside to admire the beauty of the garden.

Other rooms within the house include the kitchen, at least three chambers used as bedrooms at night, and internal parlors or meeting rooms occupied during the day. Low chests, or dressers with thin doors can also be found in these rooms. They often contain shelves which hold sleeping mats and pillows or additional clothing, and are decorated with brightly colored paintings glorifying the deeds of the family.

A samurai's garden may contain one to three smaller buildings intended for meditation, as well as a Shintao garden, formed of sand and rocks in evocative patterns. The flowers and trees are carefully tended, and a gardener might be allowed a small house within it (or perhaps on its edge).

#### *A Farmer's Home*

A farmer's house is not so different from that of a samurai, provided a similar number of people live within. In fact, the largest difference between the two is the number of family members asked to live within a single dwelling - for a samurai, it may be as low as six to eight, while a farmer's

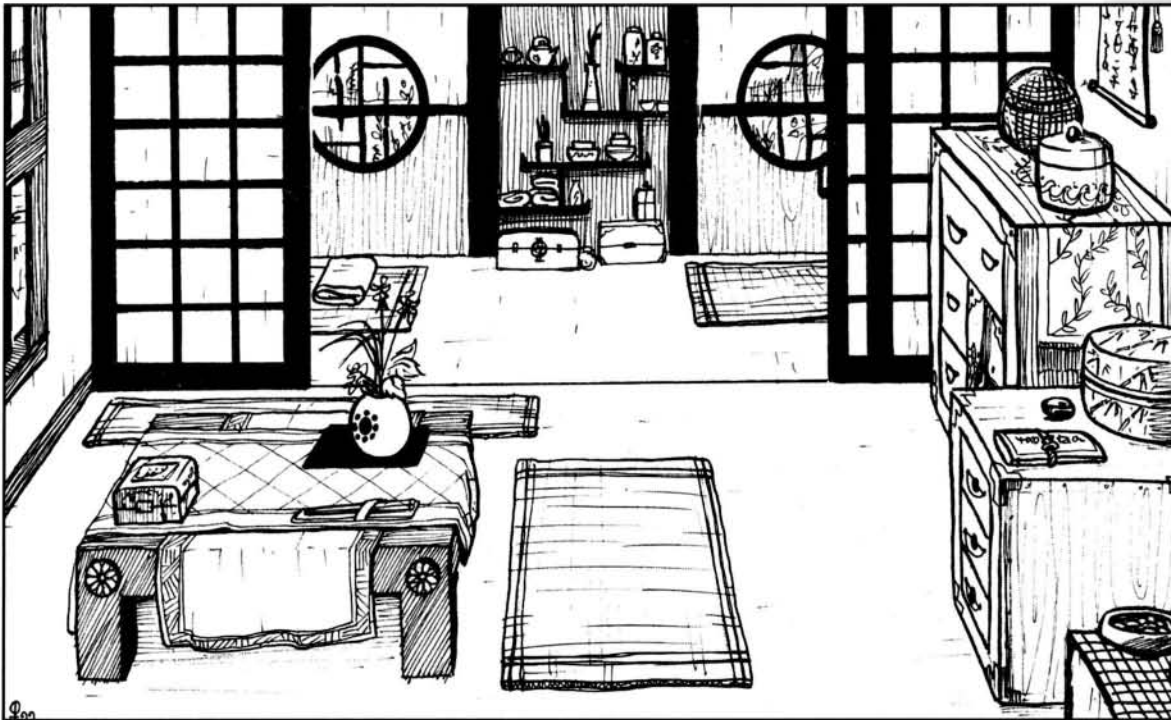
house might accommodate as many as twenty. Also, a farmer's house may have less valuable furnishings, fewer or no *byobu* (folding screens), and will rarely - if ever - have a garden.

#### *A Heimin's Home*

A traditional heimin's house might also contain an *iroi*, or hearth where a pot is hung above a fire pit. In a samurai's house, the kitchen is often a low building directly beside, but not attached to, the home proper. A heimin's home usually integrates the two buildings, for the sake of heat in the winter. A craftsman's home might contain a room for the specific purpose of practicing his craft (although the majority of such work would be done in his shop), and a farmer's home might allow less room for an entry hall, or skip the wooden veranda entirely.

#### *Eta Homes*

Eta rarely have more than one room within their house; all the members of an eta's family will most likely live in that single room. Nevertheless, the room is always neat and clean, furnished with sparse tatami mats and silk or cotton quilts for sleeping. They have no garden, although an aspiring eta village might have a single garden-like area where all the members of the village tend the plants and pathways. While



## THE SHOJI SCREEN

In Rokugan, shoji are paper screens used to conceal private conversations. When a servant has placed a shoji screen up to divide a field or room in two, the occupants behind the screen are presumed to have absolute privacy. Others that can listen are expected not to. Anything heard or discerned by listening to a private conversation is considered a fabrication of the observer; no court would ever listen to such lies.

As a natural evolution of this, it has become common practice when inviting an adversary to your home to provide her privacy when she is speaking with her advisors. The servants of the lord often bring out shoji and allow the conversation to occur privately behind the screen, without interruption. The guest is expected to speak in a normal voice because of the privacy the screen provides.

these gardens rarely contain exceptional examples of Rokugani flora, they are one of the few places where nature shows its raw beauty amid the roughness of city life.

## FURNITURE

Furniture in Rokugan is very simple, often made of wood with brass trimmings or inlays. Clothing and other items are stored in low chests called *tansu*, and shoes are kept in the entrance hall.



## Names

“O-” is a sign of respect. It is added at the beginning of a samurai’s given name by her lord. When a samurai performs an act dignified and important enough to justify promotion, a lord may also choose to honor him or her with this addition to their given name. Today, in Rokugan, this practice is almost unheard-of, and only Hida O-Ushi has taken the prefix. No one seems willing to challenge the title yet.

At the gempukku ceremony, a samurai earns their given name. A sensei, father, lord, or other person of importance to the child may ask them to take a specific name, and under these circumstances, it is up to the samurai to decide for herself which name she will take. It is considered a grave insult to take a family name as a given name (Iuchi Shiba, for instance). No samurai would dare commit such an act.

## Addressing Samurai

*“There is no such thing as coincidence. There are only auspicious occasions.”*

– Tao of Shinsei

The manner in which samurai address one another is a delicate topic in Rokugan, which requires close inspection. GMs concerned with this aspect of social interaction should study the following section carefully and make sure the players fully understand it.

## THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

If two samurai meet one another and neither knows the station, clan, or family of the other, they are expected to refer to each other as *samurai-sama* until they have been introduced otherwise. If one knows the social (read: School) Rank of the other to be equal or lesser, then the address is *samurai-san*.

If two samurai meet and know the clans of one another but not the station, they are expected to refer to each other as *clan-sama* (*Lion-sama*, *Crane-sama*), until they have been introduced otherwise. If one knows the Rank of the other to be equal or lesser, then this address becomes *clan-san* instead.

### *Presenting One’s Heart*

Should two samurai meet and know the family of one another, they are expected to refer to each other as *family-sama* or *clan-sama*, depending on the placement of their mon. The mon nearest the heart determines which the samurai holds most dear. She might even wear the mon of the school she was trained at near her heart, while belonging to another family altogether.

It is not considered an insult to refer to a Doji as *Kakita-sama* if she has worn her mon in this fashion, and in fact she might consider it a compliment. Until they have been introduced otherwise, samurai continue to treat each other according to these rules to signify their respect.

### *Before the Introductions*

Two samurai who meet and know the clan, family, and name of the other, but have not been introduced to each other by name yet, refer to one another as *family-sama*. The greatest compliment they can pay the other, however, is to refer to

them as [family name - given name - sama] (*Matsu Tsuko-sama*). This shows great respect to a samurai: that she be recognized and addressed in such a manner. For daimyo, it may be more appropriate to refer to them as *Lord* or *Lady*, or *My Lord* if they are a member of the same clan or family.

Until they have been introduced properly, a samurai's full name, or family name, should be used exclusively. Family-*san* is expected if the addressee is of equal or lower Rank. If the samurai knows the other to be of higher Rank and still chooses to use her full name, adding *-san*, she is barely paying respect in that she recognizes the samurai, but is not allowing him the gesture of introducing himself properly. Brash samurai may take this an insult, and highly honorable or proud samurai are sure to think the samurai to be assuming and overbearing, and in need of a strong lesson in manners.

### LATER ENCOUNTERS

If two samurai meet one another and know each other on sight, they are expected to refer to each other by name. As an example, Agasha Goeman and Ide Ujiaki have been visiting with each other's families for some time, and they have spoken formally once or twice. *Agasha Goeman-san* is a perfectly acceptable address, but *-sama* would show the samurai reverence. Until they have grown comfortable with the company of one another, two samurai should continue to address one another in this manner.

It is not insulting to call someone you know and are familiar with by only their given name, but it will almost never be done in public. When samurai travel together in a relaxed group (such as a group of traveling Magistrates), they may prefer to leave off honorifics unless they are in the presence of those they do not know.

### GOOD FRIENDS

Finally, two samurai that know each other well and are good friends may address each other in the "familiar" method, stating either their full name or given name with no additional suffix (i.e. *-sama* and *-san* are no longer necessary). Other samurai that witness this sort of behavior commonly assume that the samurai have great camaraderie. Samurai that behave this way without cause, however, are doing each other a great dishonor.

## THE MINOR CLANS

Note that the Minor Clans are not as deserving of a samurai's respect, and a Mantis or Dragonfly encountering a member of the Shiba family is not likely to be addressed according to their station. Rather, they will be referred to as *samurai-san*, or just *samurai*. Although this may be perceived as rude, the Minor Clans are treated differently than the Seven Great Clans, and it isn't until some level of comfort has been reached between them that they will breach this code of etiquette.

### OTHER FORMS OF RESPECT

Additional suffixes may also be added to the names of prominent samurai. The ending *-hime* means "princess"; noble women that are not yet named are commonly called *Koi*, but can also be addressed as *Koihime*, if the speaker desires to pay them respect. Other female suffixes are *-mi* and *-ko*, meaning "beauty" and "little" respectively. When addressing the wife of a bushi, *-gozen* is added to her name (*Shizuka-gozen*). Of course, if either she or her husband is more powerful, *-sama* is just fine, too.

### INSULTING ADDRESS

There are a number of ways to purposefully insult a samurai. The first is to refer to them as "samurai" when the clan, family, or name is obvious ("Quickly, samurai. Speak."). To continue to address a samurai as such when the name of her ancestors is clearly identified on her *kamishimo* is an insult to every bushi who ever wielded a sword.

Another insulting form of address occurs when one samurai addresses another as familiar without cause. A samurai who refuses to use the proper suffix (including *-san* instead of *-sama*), or none at all, when addressing another, will quickly get under their skin. This is highly dishonorable, and definitely worth the removal of a few Honor boxes from the sheet of both parties (provocateur and insulted as well). A samurai who knows herself to be of higher station may refer to a samurai as familiar without repercussions.

In addition to the obvious *faux pas* above, those that do not bow, kneel, or at least nod their head are sure to incur the wrath of an honorable samurai. Those who have earned a high degree of glory are not likely to take their station lightly. Hida Kisada worked hard to become the daimyo of his family and clan. It would be dangerous to address him as anything but Lord.

## THE SHOJI SCREEN (CONTINUED)

But because war is so prevalent in Rokugan, samurai behind such a screen know that their conversation is being heard. It has become a cultural norm that the lord of the house will use whatever information he hears to his advantage.

In contrast, a samurai who does not offer the screen to an adversary and instead leaves the room is showing disrespect. To not consider the words of one's opponent important is the same as to say that one's opponent is not important. This is the ultimate sign of dishonor. Such treatment is grounds for a duel, or seppuku - whichever the lord of the offended samurai deems necessary.

Of course, the Scorpion and Crane are very familiar with all of these customs, and have a tendency to exploit them as often as possible (within the bounds of common honor, or course).





## TOUCHING DEAD FLESH

Touching dead flesh (even if it was thrown at you and you didn't mean to) is a major transgression in Rokugani culture. To put it simply, a person who has touched dead flesh is the cultural equivalent of someone in our world who has thrown up on themselves and refuses to change clothing because its "impractical". Others won't want to go near them, or touch them or any of their belongings. Shugenja won't heal them, or cast spells on them. Other players and samurai NPCs might not even talk directly to them, considering them temporary *eta*.

A player who touches dead flesh must be purified by a shugenja through a complex ritual. Any shugenja knows how to enact this ritual, which takes fifteen minutes and requires walking through a Torii Arch (there are usually such arches located at major religious sites and cities, and occasionally at smaller holy shrines throughout the country).

However, keep in mind that any samurai who is constantly visiting these shrines – or who does not have a good reason to have broken the Celestial Order by touching the flesh of the dead – will most likely gain the disapproval of the kami and of her clan's ancestors.

They may even choose to take a hand in things, should the samurai go too far...

## Unclean

Being clean is of great importance to samurai. By touching things that do not fit their definition of "clean", samurai anger the ancestor kami that watch and guide them. To their mind, this act also soils the soul, and violates the tenets set down by the Fortunes.

Sweat and blood are considered unclean, and it is taboo to touch the flesh of another if either is upon them. Even a kimono or the pommel of a katana must be made of silk to keep the sweat from being absorbed into the material. The smell of anything unclean is reviled. Fish, rabbit, and bird are considered the only meats that samurai may consume without dishonoring themselves.

Samurai rarely touch each other as it is, and a samurai's hands fall upon the skin of another only during sports or other athletic activity. When it is necessary to touch someone, it is either upon the hands or the clothes alone. Kuni admit the need to touch flesh, but it is rare that anyone else ever sees this, and no Kuni would dare discuss it, even in the company of their own.

When a samurai does touch dead flesh, the following conditions apply:

1) Whether intentionally or not, they have destroyed their place in the Celestial Order and tainted their soul. If they were to die in such a state, they would not be allowed into Jigoku, and would certainly be reborn as an *eta* in their next life. GMs should note that *eta* are required to move dead bodies from time to time, and most know to let them do their work.

2) Whether anyone sees it or not, the character involved loses Honor. All of it. Period. This is unavoidable; the ancestors are always watching. The samurai is not allowed an Honor Test to avoid or undo this damage to their soul. GMs should be unforgiving on this principle. See the *Book of Fire* for more on Honor.

3) Samurai in battle are *not* dishonored by the blood that splatters onto their hands and clothes. War, in itself, is considered very honorable. A Matsu covered from head to toe in the blood of a hundred dead rivals is not to be trifled with. Her honor is above reproach, and the death of her enemies serves the Celestial Order and her ancestors well. However, she is still expected to undergo a cleansing ritual when the battle is done, both to purify the death on her soul, and the blood that has stained her body. No kami

would think ill of a descendent so skilled in war, but the samurai who does not bathe soon afterwards carries the stench of death with them, and is certain to become dishonored as a result.

Note that some GMs may decide that Kuni and other scholars are unaffected by these rules while acting within the context of their professions. They should still suffer the Honor loss if they persist in coming into contact with things unclean outside these parameters, however.



## Magic

Close inspection of the spells in the L5R RPG reveals that most are merely an extension of the spells Sense, Commune, and Summon. Creative players and GMs should be quick to notice that outside of these three spells, the spell lists merely adds flavor and pushes characters in the right direction.

GMs are encouraged to use this knowledge to help present spell use in their campaigns. The easiest and perhaps most efficient method of presentation would be to come up with three basic effects or descriptive standards to apply when detailing what the PCs see. Know what the spirit world looks like and keep it consistent throughout your games, always describing spell rituals and the kami that answer them within the confines of the same visual theme. When "Sense" spells are cast, PC shugenja are looking into this world. When "Commune" spells are cast, PC shugenja are touching that world, or speaking with the kami beyond. "Summon" spells bring kami out of the spirit world, and into the physical world where the PCs reside.

## Astrology

Astrologers in Rokugan identify stars and constellations, and shugenja among them can sometimes read them to glean a hint of things to come (in effect, "telling the future"). The accuracy of simple divinations depends upon the level of belief the diviner has in the veracity of the stars (i.e. his Skill level in Astrology).

If a character wishes to use Astrology as a divination tool, their unmodified TN is 15. The Gamemaster should give them a general view of events in the future, simply supplying a list of adjectives such as "pleasant, peaceful, and uneventful" or "dangerous, death is in the future". The more vague you keep such descriptions, the easier it will be to make them come true in your sessions. Note that astrological omens can effect these predictions as well, and should be factored into modifiers applied to such attempts (perhaps by adding 5 or 10 to the TN or granting a Free Raise).

The day, date, and year of a person's birth may be used to predict future events or omens about them. Visiting a seer can be an excellent way to start an adventure (the astrologer reveals something important about the PC, which spawns a new subplot or direction for the campaign).

## Ancestors

Sometimes in a roleplaying session, the clues needed to get to a new scene are too vague, the information too difficult for the players to obtain, or the details too obscure for the GM to present without immediately tipping the PCs off that they are important. Ancestors offer a unique way to introduce such information to the players that is both interesting and accepted within the game setting. What follows are a number of ways the GM can facilitate the introduction of Ancestors in her game.

### EPIPHANY

There is no real communication with the ancestor. The GM merely provides the PC with access to any important information, hinting at it with subtle ploys and notes. "You have a feeling that someone is hiding behind that door..." A few Awareness rolls never hurt using this method.

### DREAMS

Movies are filled with instances where the protagonist is visited in her dreams by a haunting image. This imagery can be used to propel the PCs along in the story, or even to grant them a nocturnal audience with their lost loved ones. GMs can use it quite effectively to get the characters back on track as well, as the ancestor faces the PC directly, and may impart information with words instead of obscure imagery or symbolism.

### HAUNTINGS

Spirits are a piece of the universe that has taken a new shape. A *gaki* was once a person who thirsted for power or died with ambition on their lips. A ghost may have connections to a place that it visits often, and that the PCs encounter during their adventures. Hauntings remind the PCs that this world is temporary, and that their actions here will affect their lives beyond. GMs may use this tactic to remind players to think before they act; remember, karma is a serious thing in Rokugan, one that can have a tangible effect on the PCs during play if you enforce it.

### "CORPORAL"

Ancestors are still a part of the world, and can from time to time take corporal form. This may seem spooky to PCs who encounter them at first, but remind the players that most ancestors are a welcome sight in Rokugan. Otherwise, such a scene might play out much like a ghost or dream visitation (above).

### REVENANTS

The rarest form of spirit is the revenant: one which has been bound to a person, place, or object by the use of powerful and dark magics. A revenant could have been bound to an important samurai by a relative that is concerned for her well-being, or to a shrine to ensure that it is never defiled.

## The Fortunes

If you are considering a heavy Fortune influence in your game, be aware of how powerful they are, as well as the level of reverence paid to them by everyone on Rokugan. It can be very unsettling for samurai who find themselves



### ALCOHOL

Rokugani consume great amounts of sake (rice wine) and *shochu*. Shochu is the Rokugani equivalent of hard liquor - more sour than sake, and much more potent. It is rarely served, as it is not considered to be a "polite drink" for company. Many also enjoy the taste of plum brandy (the most popular of the fruit brandies).



### HERBS OF SPRING

There are seven edible herbs that the Rokugani grind into a gruel on the seventh day of the year, as part of the New Year celebration. These herbs ensure good health, and it is not uncommon for Rokugani to enjoy them even after the festival.

They are *Daikon*, *gogyo* (cudweed), *hakobe* (a type of chickweed), *hotokenoza*, *nazuna* (an herb known as "shepherd's purse"), *seri* (dropwort), and *suzuna* (a turnip ground into a powder), and are parallel to the autumn flowers and grasses of the Empire, which are not eaten but arranged during the eighth and ninth months of the year.

talking face to face with Jurojin or hearing the faint whisper of their dead grandfather.

The Fortunes can be portrayed as powerful beings, or they can become a distracting and abrasive aspect of Rokugan's thousand-year history. Be careful how you present them, however - the players could become used to and accept the Fortunes if they are helpful or benign. Or they might resist them, feeling that the GM is "guiding their hand", or removing their freedom of choice.

### FLESH

It is not uncommon for a kami to take human form. Many of the lesser kami take on a very specialized role to defend a brook, glade, bridge, or other location of importance. After all, if a well goes dry, the kami of that well dies with it. The Seven Fortunes are not as attached to specific locales, and so do not involve themselves as much as their lesser brethren. The GM who introduces them in her game should have a specific reason for disrupting the harmony of the Celestial Order (and preferably one that promotes or enhances the adventures of the PCs).



### RICE

The people of Rokugan have a varied diet, rich in vegetables, fish, and meats. But there is one staple that makes its way into every meal - rice. The primacy of rice as a dietary staple is even echoed in the language. *Gohan* is both the word for cooked rice and "meal". The use of *gohan* in Rokugani is extended with prefixes to indicate other meals as well, such as breakfast, lunch, and dinner (*asagohan*, *hirugohan*, and *bangohan*, respectively).





## COOKS OF THE EMPIRE

Rokugani cooks (*ryorishi*) are more than mere culinary specialists – most have a full knowledge of herbs, flora, and unusual spices. They are skilled not only in the preparation of food, but in the creation of antidotes and the detection of poisons as well.

Because of this unique position, they achieve a status between that of samurai and house servant. Many of the greatest *ryorishi* in Rokugan have also been known as the greatest herbalists. Their knowledge of remedies which cause sleep, healing, or even death – all with natural ingredients – have given them a dubious reputation throughout the centuries. A good *ryorishi* can recognize poisons and toxins easily, allowing the noble whom he serves to rest peacefully – as long as the chef is loyal.

White and sticky rice is the most common in Rokugan, but other types have become “fashionable” among rich nobles. The Unicorn Clan brought *basmati* rice to Rokugan, for instance. It is a longer, more flavorful grain than any other in Rokugan. Although considered bitter by many, it is slowly becoming a select delicacy in the Empire.

White rice is the standard for Rokugan, and is consumed by those of all levels of its culture. *Hakumai* is white rice that has had the bran and rice germ removed, making it less nutritious but more flavorful. *Haigamai* still has the rice germ, but is typically eaten only by the peasantry.

White rice is always served plain in its own bowl, with the chopsticks laid sideways across the top. Rice is also used to make sushi and rice balls (*onigiri*), which are a basic ingredient in portable food boxes known as *bento*. *Bento* are often made by the wife of a samurai or peasant before they travel, and is good for no more than two days.

Sake is brewed from white rice, and drunk before a meal, but is usually not served during the meal (when rice is being eaten). Drinking sake plays an important role in Rokugani religious life because the beverage is considered sacred to kami. Rice vinegar and *mirin* (sweetened rice wine) are used in cooking.

Also known as *genmai*, unpolished brown rice is used in the cooking process of *mochi* (see below), and is sometimes mixed with green tea (*cha*) to make a beverage called *genmaicha*. Brown rice is considered by many monks and priests to bring Rokugan closer to the earth. They believe that its rich color and texture is an indication of this.

*Mochi* is a small, dense rice-cake, baked brown on the outside. It is pounded from a glutinous rice called *mochi-gomi*. This sweet grain is soaked, steamed, pounded into small 2-inch squares with a large mortar and pestle, and left to dry. It solidifies into a hard cake which is either broiled or baked. As it cooks, the cake puffs up with a crispy shell; inside it remains soft and sticky.

*Mochi* is eaten with soy sauce and grated *daikon* (radish), or filled with sweetened bean paste. As a treat, *mochi* can be served grilled with a side of sweetened red beans. This is known as *shiruko*, and many Rokugani find it the most delicious of treats. *Mochi* is chewed slowly and carefully because it is hard to swallow (and a treasure to savor). Many monks, who value

temperance, only allow themselves one *Mochi* cake a year.

*Mochi* is generally eaten during ceremonial events such as the New Year's Festival, but many Rokugani indulge all year long. The concentration of rice in the delicacy is a symbol of wealth and longevity, and many celebrations include decorative displays of big white *mochi* cakes. *Mochi* is also used as an offering for many religious ceremonies.

Rice crackers, known as *sembei*, are a popular snack food for samurai and peasants alike. Kept dry, rice crackers can keep for a week or more, and therefore make excellent travel food.

## NOODLES

Noodle dishes are called *menrui*, and – next to rice – are the most popular of Rokugani foods. They can be consumed quickly, and satisfy the need for a complete meal. For this reason, peasants and soldiers eat them when time is crucial.

Many noodles are made from rice, while others come from a variety of flours. *Hiyamusi*, *kishimen*, *ramen*, *soba*, *somen*, and *udon* are the most popular. Each has a distinct flavor and way of being cooked.

The *soba* noodle is made from a mixture of buckwheat (*soba-ko*) and wheat flours. Buckwheat requires cool and dry growing conditions, and therefore *soba* is mainly consumed by the Crane and Phoenix. *Udon* is thick and light colored, while *soba* is long, thin, and light brownish-gray.

*Kishimen* noodles are flat, while *somen* are like a very thin spaghetti. *Hiyamugi* are thin and served cold in the summer, with a dipping sauce. *Cha-soba* are buckwheat noodles with green tea added to the dough, while *ramen* uses egg.

Most servings of *ramen* are served within a pork or chicken broth seasoned with soy sauce or miso. Rokugani peasants eat *ramen* more than any other noodle. Samurai, however, enjoy the *udon* noodle.

When Rokugani move into a new home, they offer *soba* as a gift to their neighbors; the shape of the noodles can symbolize a fortunate relation if they are narrow, or “proper”, in shape. Rokugani also eat *soba* on New Year's Eve, while listening to the temple bells ring. This dish is called *toshikoshi*, or “year passing”, and the long noodles represent one's desire for a long life.



## BEANS

Beans, known as *mame*, are one of the most important foods in the Rokugani diet. Soybeans are widely used by Rokugani. *Tofu* is a bean curd made from soybeans, and comes in soft white blocks (like cheese) cooked with a coagulant. *Miso* (soybean paste) is made from fermented soybeans. It is used to make soups and other dishes, and even soy sauce (*shoyu*) is derived from soybeans. When served and eaten fresh, soybeans are boiled in their shells.

*Azuki* are small, dried red beans. Cooked azuki beans are sometimes mixed with white rice. This is called *sekihan*, or "red rice", and is served mainly during auspicious occasions. Sometimes the beans are boiled with sugar, and then mashed to make sweet bean paste, which is used in many *kashi* (Rokugani sweets). Sweet bean paste is at the heart of almost all sweets in Rokugan.

## DAIRY

Eggs are primarily boiled in Rokugan. Fried eggs are uncommon, and scrambled eggs are unheard of. The eggs of chickens are eaten mostly by peasants, as few samurai enjoy the taste of animal by-products (milk and cheese included).

## SOUPS (SHIRUMONO)

The Rokugani are fond of two different kinds of soup. The first is called *suimono*, which literally means "something to drink", and is the most formal of the two. *Suimono* is a clear soup made from *dashi* (a water stock cooked with flaked bonito fish and *konbu* - an edible seaweed). The *daishi* stock is seasoned with salt and soy sauce, although many chefs add herbs, spices, and seasonal garnishes for flavor. Chicken, fish, shellfish, eggs, vegetables (such as bamboo shoots or mushrooms), and *tofu* are sometimes added to the *suimono*.

Another soup, known as *miso shiru*, is made from a thick soybean stock (*miso*). *Miso* is less

# Rokugani Foods

## ROKUGANI VEGETABLES

Alfalfa sprouts, azuki beans, baby corn, beats, broccoli, butter lettuce, cabbage, carrots, cucumber, *daikon* (long horse radish), eggplant, eggs, green peppers, mushrooms (there are many varieties of mushrooms throughout Rokugan), onion, parsley, peppers, potatoes, radish, sesame seeds, snow peas, soybeans, spinach, sweet potatoes, *tofu*, tomatoes, turnip, water-chestnut, and watercress.

## ROKUGANI FLAVORINGS

Black pepper, brown sauce, brown sugar, cinnamon, cumin, *dashi* (a broth made from fish and kelp), garlic, ginger, ginseng, honey, jasmine, *kinome* (the leaf of a prickly ash called *sansho*) *komezu* (rice vinegar), maple syrup, mirin, mustard, *nori* (dried seaweed), pickles, rosemary, sake, sea salt, sesame, seaweed, seven-taste-pepper (a popular Rokugani spice made from powdered red pepper, brown pepper, poppy seeds, dried orange peel, rake seeds, and *nori*), soy sauce, sugar, teriyaki sauce, toasted sesame seeds (*goma*), tumeric, vinegar, and wasabi (horse radish).

## ROKUGANI SEAFOOD

Abalone, carp, clam, crab, eels, fish maw, glowing eels, goldfish, grey sand crab, herring, jellyfish, kelp, mackerel, moonfish, octopus, oysters, pike, pufferfish (*fugu*), salmon (dozens of species), sardines, scallops, sea bass, sea cucumber, sea urchin, seagrasses, shrimp, squid, swordfish, trout, *tsu* fish, and tuna.

## ROKUGANI FRUITS AND NUTS

Almonds, apples, apricots, blackberries, blueberries, cashews, cherries, chestnuts, *dai dai* (a decorative fruit), grapes, *mikan* (Rokugani tangerine), oranges, pears, peanuts, plums, pomegranates, raspberries, squash, watermelons, and *yuzu* (grapefruit).



formal than *suimono*, and could be considered the Rokugani version of "home-style cooking". Miso is the central dish in any traditional Rokugani breakfast, and is usually accompanied by rice, fish, pickles, and tea. Miso soup may also be served at lunch or dinner. During these meals, the soup is heavier, and many chefs also add tofu, vegetables, and tasty seaweed.

Rokugani soup is served very hot, and is brought to the table in a lacquered bowl with a lid. When the lid is removed, the diner savors the aroma. Soup does not come with a spoon, so the Rokugani must pick the bowl up with their left hand to drink the contents, using his chopsticks (always with his right hand) to eat any small, loose ingredients.

*Nabemono* (meaning "things in a pot") are stews cooked in a large pot right at the table. They are eaten mostly by the peasantry and the Unicorn Clan, and mainly during cold weather. Chicken, fish, tofu, vegetables, a noodle made of a starch called *shirataki*, and anything else that the cook can find are added to the broth. *Shichu* is the most famous nabemono soup.

Another common practice involves large soup pots that are hung over an open hearth (called an *irori*) in the center of a peasant's home. This way, peasants can cook food and warm the home all at once.

## TEA

The finest tea of Rokugan is known as *gyokuro*, a delicate green tea that is also very aromatic. Gyokuro tea comes from virgin leaves, picked at the peak of ripeness, and then infused with flavor using the same method as with *sencha*.

*Matcha* is used only during the tea ceremony. It is a powdered tea that is ground from fine leaves, rather than crushed ones. Matcha is dark green, strong, and very bitter. Sweets are served with it to deaden the bitter taste.

*Sorghum* teas (both green and red), are becoming popular as well, and the Crane Clan has devoted several harvests to wild growing sorghum tea leaves. Blood River Village produces more red sorghum tea than any other.

Peasants normally drink *bancha*, made from older leaves that are not fit for samurai. It has a brown tint to it, and a strange astringent odor. Samurai that are not particular have also been known to drink *hojicha*, a very strong tea made from roasted bancha.

*Genmaicha*, a roasted barley tea heated to the season, is made from toasted rice grains. Again, it is typically drunk by peasants, but the Crab and Unicorn have been known to enjoy the taste as well.





# *Chapter Two*

水

*The Book of  
Water*

## A PROMISE

Either through prophecy or the solemn act of a samurai, any epic should have a promise. Some examples are:

*"I intend to serve the Emperor, in this life and the next."*

*"The Empire falls when the last head of wheat is chaffed from the earth."*

*"One of you in this room will betray me, and cause the downfall of this family."*

Should you wish to undertake such a challenge, it is helpful that you have an idea of the campaign's focus prior to its start. More importantly, the *players* must have an idea of the your focus.

The easiest way for this to occur is through the use of a Campaign Handout. Such a tool can guide the players, helping them create characters that are more in sync with your vision for the campaign, and perhaps even solidifying the ideas in your head before playing.

Refer to *The Campaign Handout* section (page 35) for more on using this GM tool.

## Assuming the Role

## Getting the PCs Into the Setting

Rokugan's society is very different from our own, and although most gaming environments are purposely fantastic (in order to transplant us from our own "grounded" 20th century lives into a heroic setting), L5R is a 180-degree turn from anything we've encountered in our own world. Many of the actions we take for granted today would certainly dishonor both ourselves and our families in the Emerald Empire, and since Rokugani fear that they will suffer eternally in the afterlife for their transgressions in this one, they tend to take such slights very seriously.

Sometimes the GM may need to lead players by example, demonstrating very honorable behavior in order for them to understand and appreciate the tenets of Bushido. But this alone will probably not be enough; the players should take time in-between sessions to watch movies and read books about samurai. *Kagemusha*, *Rashomon*, *Sanjuro*, and *The Seven Samurai* all present very honorable and sometimes trusting samurai, as well as detailing the culture of Japan, to which Rokugan owes much of its original flavor.

While it is necessary for the GM to prepare her stories ahead of time in order for the adventure to feel as fluid as possible, the players should always prep

their own characters by practicing how to be a samurai. GMs should encourage players to get into character, and research their own backgrounds before play begins.

Players should ask themselves many questions about their characters before they come to the first session. Some examples are:

*What does her kimono look like?*

*What is the style of the tsuba on her katana?*

*What are the names of her parents?*

*What is her sensei's favorite color?*

*What was the first day of fishing with her father like? What did they do, and how did they become closer as a result?*

*Did she receive a gift at her gempukku, and if so, what was it?*

More questions that a player can ask of their character can be found in the section *Twenty Questions Revisited* on the opposite page.

Details like this make samurai come alive and leap off the flat paper, helping to solidify their "humanity", which in turn helps the players (and you, the GM) identify with them at the table.





# Methods of Character

## Character Concepts

*"What you call T is merely a door that moves when you inhale and exhale."*

- Tao of Shinsei

Often in our home-brew campaigns (L5R or otherwise) we have a notion of where the world came from, who our gods are, where the King of a certain nation was born, and how often the volcanoes of our world erupt.

Maybe your style is to create the characters first and make the environment fit the clans you've made, placing an emphasis on the "power-hitters" of your world. Or perhaps your games are designed upon a lifeless chunk of rock, and you add the people and nations like spices to the pre-existing terraform. The people might be like the humans of our own earth, merely moving through history with a very real and determined fate, or the level of power might be significantly lower, and the chance to impact and influence the environment far less likely or obvious.

In RPGs as in the real world, there are a host of elements that make up the society. Some games provide the players with every detail they could ever require, from the cost of tuna to the size of a bag of rice, while others may play up the importance of the major conflicts and subdue the specific details of culture, leaving GMs and players to guess at the significance of less obvious facts.

It is the duty of the GM, and perhaps a Campaign Handout (which we will detail in a later section) to explain the most important facets of a game setting. No player wants to find out that

there was no point in spending seven Character Points on Poetry when all of their adventures take place on the Kaiu Wall or in the Shadowlands. By the same token, no player wants to create a Unicorn Explorer that spends his days protecting the same thicket of rice from bandits.

Hopefully, the following essays will assist players and GMs to hammer these problems out before they crop up in their games.

## Twenty Questions Revisited

Equally as important to the players as to the GM, the *20 Questions* section of the core Rulebook gives players a hint of what an L5R character is and was, but not of what they can become.

The following is a list of 20 more questions that GMs may ask the players of their characters, to assist them in defining both the characters themselves, and the world the GM will need to create for them to adventure in. Note that several of them can (or should) be addressed directly to the *character*, instead of the player - an important distinction for those who choose to really indulge in their roles.

### **DOES YOUR CHARACTER HAVE AN ULTIMATE GOAL AND, IF SO, WHAT IS IT?**

Knowing what the player intends to do with their character can help a GM to focus sub-plots for their stories. A PC Lion Bushi who is courting a young samurai-ko from the Dragon Clan may find it a little disconcerting that the GM never introduces her in the campaign, and that his every attempt to make contact with her fails. It is also very frustrating for a player who comes to a game table with a specific goal that the GM's story excludes the possibility of fulfilling it.

### **WHAT IS HER SECRET, AND WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF IT IS DISCOVERED?**

Everyone in Rokugan has a secret (and somewhere, there is a Scorpion who knows it). If the GM wishes to play up the intrigue and treachery of Rokugan, it may be good idea to ask this question during creation so that players may be a little more prepared for the campaign (or vice-versa). If one or more of the players feels that



水

### **DEFENSE SKILL ERRATA**

#### **(FROM THE IMPERIAL HERALD)**

One rule that has been updated since the core release and is considered canon in the AEG house system is the following revision to the Defense Skill.

When a character goes to Full Defense, roll a number of dice equal to his Defense skill and keep the highest - *i.e.* (Defense)k1. Add that die's total to his TN to Be Hit.





## MAKING THE CLANS COOL

Samurai in your game should be rich and detailed and full of life. As is the case with all RPGs, the ability to act in character beyond the limits of your imagination is difficult at best, and impossible for some.

RPGs are rooted to the reality we perceive. If the Asako or Agasha seem too far removed from the game, imagine how hard it must be for the rest of your group. Some players will choose clans and families who are easy to identify with, and therefore easy to play. Many RPGs create stereotypical classes to facilitate this. It is not uncommon to create a character in a game that has a similar background to the player's own. Due to the nature of the clans, the easiest characters for most westerners to roleplay are the Crab and Unicorn.

they will be slighted if they answer, you might consider requiring that each buy a two- or four-point Dark Secret Disadvantage, to level out the playing field.

### WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER THINK OF THE POLITICAL CLIMATE IN ROKUGAN?

Not everyone loves the political side of Rokugan. The character may have tired of the infighting and bickering that so many of the courts are known for, or thrive on the subtle conflict seen every day upon the battlefields of the Empire.

This question should be posed both to the player *and* her character, as the two answers can have significantly different impacts on your campaign. Some players may have designed characters with high courtly Skills, thinking that they will benefit them during the game, but have no interest in prolonged sessions of courtly intrigue, while others would be happy coming to the table week after week, running the entirety of Winter Court from beginning to end.

### WHAT DOES THE CHARACTER DO TO RELAX?

If the samurai enjoys painting, then perhaps she can be found in a very specific part of her estate or homeland during the early or late hours of the day. A bushi known for drinking and gambling might have a favorite tea house or gambling house that they enjoy visiting. Knowing more about your PCs helps to establish their importance and relevance in your games. Knowing more about what they do puts the characters into perspective and provides a great deal of information to help flesh out their actions in play.

### IF THE CHARACTER WERE GIVEN A KOKU, WHAT WOULD SHE DO WITH IT?

With money in the Emerald Empire such a nebulous thing, and everything a samurai needs provided by her lord, there is little need for additional funds. Presented with one or more koku, many Rokugani would find themselves at a loss for what to do with it.

Yet several important facets of a character could result if they are hypothetically posed with this question. Would they offer it to their lord, perhaps to be grouped with the taxes of the land,

to better the stations of both? Or would they greedily withhold it, hoping that it might come in handy at a future date?

The moral fortitude of a person can be quickly assessed by their reaction to "free money", along with an insight into their likes, dislikes, and views upon the Empire as a whole. Encourage players to think about this question carefully before responding.

### DOES THE CHARACTER HAVE A STEREOTYPICAL VIEW OF HEIMIN OR HININ?

How the clans view peasants has been discussed in detail throughout the L5R RPG line; their relevance and importance to the Celestial Order cannot be ignored. And with over 100 peasants for every samurai, they are a constant source of interaction during most campaigns.

Both samurai and peasants know their place, and nearly all servants are careful to respect theirs. *Jin*, the Bushido tenet of Compassion, teaches all samurai to show mercy, to honor the peasantry for what they are, instead of rebuking them for what they are not. The two castes have coexisted within Rokugan for centuries and will continue to do so. And though most NPC samurai do not respond violently to every peasant that suffers a slip of the tongue, there is no such guarantee for PCs.

Some players abuse the lower classes at every opportunity, because they are not as helpful as they would like, or simply out of an odd sense of pleasure. Others merely harbor superior views of those below them, caring little for the masses. As it is likely that characters will interact with peasants at many points during the campaign, their views of them become an important part of how they interact with the GM's world.

### WHAT ARE THE NAMES OF THE PC'S PARENTS, AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

What the parents of a PC do affect their development, from their childhood through their gempukku and beyond. Talking with your players about their character's parents, and detailing what was important about them while growing up, is an important step toward creating a well-rounded character whose background meshes with their surroundings.

For example, a Hida character that grew up near the Kaiu Wall might have become brash and



have trouble making new friends as a result, having a great deal of trouble everywhere else in the Empire, regardless of how well he got along with his family. A relative of his, however, might have taken a dislike to the typical lifestyle of his parents, gravitating toward the less martial aspects of samurai life, and drawing constant derision from those around him. Yet today, as the traveling magistrate the player has created, he might have a far better chance of fitting in outside his homeland.

Both characters have another layer of development to draw from during the game as a result. Strive for such definition whenever possible in character creation. It can only increase the believability of your games.

### **WHAT REWARD WOULD THE CHARACTER MOST WANT TO RECEIVE?**

This is another aspect of the character's goals, but also provides insight for the GM into the mindset of the PC, regarding what she considers "fair". Glory, power, and station are equivalent rewards for a samurai, and those that desire such are sure to tell you so. Others who think honor is its own reward may have trouble answering this question, and may have even lost their focus in life, questioning the very precepts of Bushido as Rokugani know it.

### **WHAT DO THE CHARACTER'S KATANA AND SAYA LOOK LIKE?**

Is there a unique design on their hilt? On their saya? Is their tsuba unique? PCs who have a kinship with and love for their blade will find it easier to draw their katana than their tetsubo, feeling that they are honoring the weapon in doing so. Others may not consider their blade, which is something most honorable samurai they meet in the game will look down upon.

### **DOES THE SAMURAI WORSHIP SHINSEI OR THE FORTUNES?**

The religious climate of Rokugan is absolute. Over 90% of Rokugani worship the various Fortunes, their ancestors, and Shinsei. Many are devoutly dedicated to all three. Samurai should have an opinion regarding this worship. Honorable samurai will find ancestor worship as important as Fortune worship, if not more so especially the Lion, who feel their earth tremble

beside them at every moment with the footsteps of those who have come before.

The religious outlook of a character can determine many things for him. Some players see this as limiting, feeling that adherence to a certain faith restricts their options at the table, while others see it as a function of their decision-making process, judging everything they see by the virtues of their belief.

Never ask a player to roleplay devotion to a higher power if it makes him uncomfortable.

### **WHAT IS YOUR CHARACTER'S FAVORITE POSSESSION?**

Although the soul of a samurai is worn on her belt, a typical character should also try to define the object that she most adores. She might carry it with her everywhere, or keep it in an important place at home. PCs are encouraged to give such items a backstory (e.g. "This obi was worn by my sensei at the battle of Chukoni Pass", or "My sister wrote this poem for me at my wedding").

### **WHO IS THE CHARACTER'S CLOSEST FRIEND?**

In Rokugan, friendship is a difficult commodity to come by, and many samurai find themselves alone in a room filled with people. The structure of Rokugan requires that all samurai behave in a set way, and it may be hard for PCs to accept such a strict moral code. In that light, true friends are very important, and a close companion of the samurai would address them as familiar, without the need to use *-san* or *-sama*. This might even be an NPC the Gamemaster could draw upon in the game.

### **WHAT DOES THE SAMURAI LOVE, HATE, AND FEAR?**

It is easier for the GM to create a subplot or find a particular motivation that draws upon the emotions of the PC when she understands who they are at the start of the game. Such knowledge also prevents awkward gaming moments when the GM must tell the PC what their emotions are to justify their expected reaction to a scene.

Together, these feelings and what the character associates with them are often considered the emotional core of their humanity. By understanding them, you understand far more about a character than ever need be said.

## **MAKING THE CLANS COOL**

I've heard more stories about the thick-necked Hida Berserker than I ever will about the pontificating Doji, or the Bushido-obsessed Matsu. Often the desire to make the game more accessible can detract from the atmosphere of the setting.

GMs can encourage players to undertake more honorable samurai by making the NPCs of less favorable clans come alive. Give major individuals from those clans the most attention, and endeavor to make each one special in their own right. Give the players reason to think that such groups are fun to play by making them attractive in the setting.

If your games encourage role-playing over roll-playing, then ask the players to choose something beyond their current range, like an Asako or Ikoma, maybe even creating a list of clans and families that are available, deliberately leaving out the more common clans (or those that you would rather not see in this campaign). In your next campaign, you might make an effort to see that these excluded clans are included, so players can enjoy all aspects of the L5R world.

Remember, be SAMURAI!, not just samurai.

## PLAYING FOLLOWERS

Players need not always be the center of the action. Roleplaying games have a common vein – they offer daring heroism to every character, despite what their aptitude might indicate. A very social individual may have trouble reconciling his character with the bloodthirsty Hiruma played by another, and those interested in making a more useful team may find the goals of Seven Clans difficult to reconcile. Therefore making workable, friendly teams requires the right direction early on.

The idea of playing a follower to a superior PC or NPC, an excellent solution, is contrary to how RPGs are commonly approached. Most often, players are the heroes of the story, unblemished and perfect, risking everything for the drama of existing in an imperfect world. They rise above the squalor and strike down their enemies without prejudice.

### HOW DOES THE CHARACTER FEEL ABOUT EACH OF THE MAJOR CLANS?

PCs do not have to fit into the stereotype that all Crab hate Crane, and all Lion hate Scorpion. By reinventing these relationships specifically for a single character, different loyalties can be presented, and GMs can create a more dynamic relationship between the clans in their game as a result.

### HOW DOES THE CHARACTER FEEL ABOUT BUSHI, SHUGENJA, ETA, KAMI, AND OTHERS IN THE CELESTIAL ORDER?

Again, the PC's views on the more prevalent groups (social, racial, and spiritual) in Rokugani culture can not only help define their character, but also the GM's world around them. Remember that in the Emerald Empire, perception is more powerful than fact.

### DESCRIBE THE CHARACTER'S IDEAL MATE.

In Rokugan, true love is about as common as *gaijin*. Most samurai are in arranged marriages that the family considers important. Remember, the world of Rokugan is about roles, and everyone understands their place in it. Few samurai would be able to answer this question well, but those who provide the GM with a detailed response provide a great number of roleplaying opportunities in the process.

### THE CHARACTER HAS JUST SEEN A RELATIVE TOUCHING DEAD FLESH. WHAT DOES SHE DO?

When this question is asked, do not allow the player time to consider their response. The key here is to see how a character "reacts", rather than acts. The knee-jerk reaction of a samurai says more about the character than her day to day behavior, which is practiced and careful. By placing her in a situation that leaves many options (especially if few of them are culturally correct), you get a detailed response that reflects their inner self.

### HOW DOES THE CHARACTER FEEL ABOUT MAHO AND THOSE WHO USE IT?

Again, this is a key element to specific campaigns, and the driving force behind many

characters. Given the large amount of material already written on maho for L5R, the ramifications of this question in a game should be self-explanatory.

### WHO DOES THE CHARACTER TRUST MORE THAN ANYONE?

A character's sensei can be expected to know much about a samurai and support them in times of need. A fellow clan member that finished her schooling at the same time as the PC is sure to share a relationship with the character that few others can attest to. Such people can become permanent fixtures in the life of a character, and any one of them might gain their trust along the way.

This question will surely make the player look over their shoulder, giving them reason to think that a crafty GM will use their trusted friend as an adventure hook. But it should not be used expressly to betray the PC. By understanding who the PC trusts, the GM can create a "confidant" NPC that makes recurring appearances in the game, who interacts with the PC during important moments, and who is a constant source of plot reinforcement.

This method can be used to get a PC back on track. A visit from a friend that asks the simple questions: "What's going on?", "What have you accomplished?", and "How do you feel about X?" can help the player to reinvigorate their role in the GM's story. A visit from a trusted friend every third session or so might add a great deal to the roleplaying experience, and help GMs to keep their stories alive.

### HOW WILL THE CHARACTER DIE?

This is a particularly advanced question for a particularly advanced level of play. Most players are not comfortable with the idea of their character dying. But in Rokugan, the life of a samurai is much shorter than that of characters in other RPGs. This question is an opportunity for the GM and player to work out a strategy for the *life* of the character. No samurai wants to die alone somewhere in a field, with a shuriken in their belly and two broken legs, but some of the best tragedies have such an ending.

Knowing the long-term probabilities for a character can influence his life in many ways. With regards to an RPG campaign, this means that the player may help to lay the foundation for a successful ending with her GM, foreshadowing



events they see in the future with their actions at the table today. A mutual vision for how the character's saga will end can also provide an extra layer of depth to the present storylines he is experiencing, especially when the audience (in this case, the other players) also understand the connection.

### PERSONALITY QUIZ

Another suggestion to make here is for the GM buy a cheap personality quiz and have the players each take it in character. This helps them flesh out the characters in their heads - especially if the character's statistics and final background are not yet set in stone - and gives the players something to do during that first session while the GM is preparing her notes.

## The Campaign Handout

The easiest way to convey the basic concepts behind a campaign is to simply sit down and talk to the players. Often, you can merely discuss the adventure hook ahead of time to ensure that the players create characters that will be useful during the game.

As an example, "This adventure is going to be about the decay of a small section of the Shinomen Forest. Your Daimyo is sending you out to visit a small outpost on the edge of the forest to investigate the rot of some trees and grey patches of grass on the floor of the forest. There is a small contingency of forces posted at the watchtower there. You are expected to reinforce the units, and assist them in any way possible."

Pretty simple. The concepts in this adventure are very straightforward, and the players could make a host of bushi and shugenja that are well-balanced, and therefore

ready for any problem that may arise. However, once they get there, they may find that a team of ogres and a lone Necromancer have been ravaging the forest. If none of the PCs took any Shadowlands Skills, they would be at odds as to how to defeat them. All of a sudden, the adventure becomes difficult or impossible to overcome, as the PCs realize that they are unable to combat an unknown enemy, or that they do not have the tools with which to stop it. And the GM is left wondering how this could have been avoided without alerting the players that Shadowlands beasts were in the forest.

One way of overcoming this problem is through the use of a Campaign Handout, a resource given to the players at the start of a game and (commonly) written as something the PCs would encounter within the game setting. Through such a text, the GM can sprinkle various clues to the players about what they can expect to encounter. This will hopefully set them on the right track toward generating characters that can be diverse, yet mutually helpful during play.

Your handout should include a number of things important to your gaming goals, most of

### PLAYING FOLLOWERS (CONTINUED)

But sometimes, the game can acquire a different focus by asking the players to take on roles with less chance of conflicting with the goal of their fellow adventurers. Rank 0 characters and two-player games share a more subtle and toned-down atmosphere, where the PCs are not Glory 5 samurai making a name for themselves at every turn. Rather, they remind the PCs about cause and effect, that any man can be a hero, and not every champion is a bare-chested brawler.



**SIDEKICKS**

No one wants to play second fiddle in an RPG.

Nearly all PCs expect to be equal to their companions, if not better. That means equal abilities, equal attention, equal game time, equal attempts at killing the bad guy, and equal shares of the Glory.

PCs who continue to hog the spotlight hinder the enjoyment of the other players. Even experienced GMs, who are well-skilled at making sure everyone in their regular group is having fun, sometimes have trouble keeping play balanced in this way.

One solution involves the idea of sidekicks, or supporting characters. A campaign could focus around a single important character (in this case a PC or NPC one or two Ranks higher than the rest of the party). Although this may sound like playing second fiddle, it isn't. If the players are mature and comfortable enough to play lower-Rank characters, then this sort of campaign can add a new dimension to your game.

**Pre-Campaign Handout Example**

Welcome to Ryoko Owari, noble samurai.

You have been selected as Emerald Magistrates, to serve the Emperor with honor and integrity.

I am your new sensei and karo to the great Emerald Champion, Akodo Gamuro.

While in my city, you will find the use of peasant weapons to be punishable by death. Samurai will have little time to prune trees or write poems while serving as guards here. The work here is demanding; once a week, you will be expected to serve in the court of Lady Shosuro Hyobu, Governor of Ryoko Owari. Brash, unruly samurai will not be permitted to speak at court, and men with enemies will not last long in the City of Lies. If you have ties to the Crane Clan, you will find times difficult here. Also, many careless Unicorn and Dragon have been murdered in their sleep within these walls.

While you are here, do not take for granted that you are magistrates. You must earn the respect of the people here, or you will find your work doubled. Ryoko Owari is a place for heroes, not children.

Your families are welcome here, and your estate will be large enough to accommodate an extended number. Do not hesitate to visit the city's monks and worship in the Torii shrine located within the city walls.

In the above example, the players may glean the following about the campaign:

- History and Lore: Lion are important Skills.
- No peasant Weapon Skills are allowed.
- Courtier is a valuable Skill, and characters with high Honor will be recognized for their station.
- Crane players are frowned upon, as well as Crane Allies or True Friends.
- Unicorn and Dragon players are not allowed.
- Lore: Ryoko Owari is a must, and a servant-samurai relationship is important to cultivate (perhaps the city is unsafe or treacherous).
- The heroic method of play will be used (see *The Book of Fire*).
- Shintao is important.
- Players with a spouse and children will find them relocated to Ryoko Owari – perhaps they can be taken as Dependents (according to the Advantage).

Much information was conveyed here, and although more could have included, this sufficiently illustrates how to prepare players for the campaign in question. Your version of such a handout should cover as much of the campaign as you desire, but need not follow this example. Use whatever jargon, style, and presentation theme you like, but make sure you convey all of your concerns to the players before the first session. After that, it becomes harder and harder to reverse established habits of game play.

which can be drawn from various portions of this book. In the box on the opposite page, you will find a sample Campaign Handout that GMs can hand to their players, and how it is useful to the adventure it is drawn from. Your own handouts should mimic the intentions of this example.

## Two Player Games

Most RPG sessions thrive by having a larger playing group. Three, four, or more characters can cover all of the essential parts of the team, and – with so many clans and professions to choose from – no two groups of adventurers should ever look the same. In fact, many gamers believe that without a large team at your disposal, variety and depth of character may be lacking.

Despite that, two-player groups provide GMs and PCs with an entirely new avenue of play. And although many GMs do not like running a game for only one or two players, they can be useful to keep the action moving smoothly while allowing more time to focus on interpersonal subplots. Conversely, many adventures are not fit for only two bushi. This can be a huge detriment for a game with a very specific focus (war, grand heroism, etc.)

A game focused on intrigue, subtlety, and cunning should have fewer players to increase the time each is in the “spotlight”, while one in which players are constantly faced with large monsters, oni, and other hazards will quickly come to a screeching halt if additional PCs are not there to save off the body count.

GMs are encouraged to develop plotlines that do not follow the standard Emerald Magistrate campaign portrayed in the core Rulebook; the following two-player suggestions present several options for those who desire to do so. In each, players can both choose characters from the same clan if they wish, and still justify their relationship. Any of them may be restructured as one-player games as well, should the GM wish.

Note that many of the teams listed here require that one of PCs be of higher station than the other. Players that find this unbalanced may try to take turns in these sort of campaigns. For instance, Kevin might play the eta in the first game, but in the second, Doug would be forced to play one of the lower castes, allowing Kevin an opportunity to be the samurai.

### *Magistrate or Kuni Shugenja + Eta Assistant*

A Kitsuki Magistrate often requires an eta to do all of the work samurai consider “unclean” (see the sidebar on page 22) – lifting bodies, carrying and storing certain evidence, and performing the small tasks that are necessary. A magistrate who is well aware of the frailty or imperfections of Bushido may even treat the eta well, especially considering how much she must depend on him. A more investigative campaign with many details is perfect for this style of play.

An eta character should have no Techniques, 1 in each Trait, and 8 CP to spend on Bugei and Low Skills. PCs interested in playing this sort of game should be reminded that a samurai is much more powerful and important than an eta, and that the players had best trust one another, and have a great rapport both in and out of the game, to prevent hard feelings during play. Also, that an eta can be killed at any time, by any samurai, regardless of clan. Worse than a peasant, an eta is not allowed inside most buildings except at the express permission of a samurai, and will certainly be treated poorly. If you're an eta, those are the breaks. The horses are treated better than you – and you can't touch them, either.

### *Bushi + Ikoma*

Players may find the range of roleplaying with Ikoma Bards difficult and unbending. But a bard attached to a specific samurai PC has an easier transition to the game than one who does not. By giving the Ikoma another character to focus his abilities upon, the bard may develop a relationship with a three-dimensional PC samurai, rather than a “show-up-when-the-GM-has-time”, two-dimensional NPC samurai.

As a three-player game option, one Ikoma may serve two samurai, or two bards may serve one very important samurai. Be aware that the Ikoma must be of lower Rank than the samurai, and serves the samurai in many capacities beyond those detailed in *The Way of the Lion*. He will have less individual adventuring to do than other samurai. That is much of the allure of this character class, however, and PCs who wish to explore the full gambit of Bushido are encouraged to play this pairing.

### *Magistrate + Scribe*

In this situation, the scribe is there to document and verify all claims that the magistrate makes. Although very similar to the



## SIDEKICKS (CONTINUED)

One interesting campaign could involve the PCs acting as servants under an adventuring NPC who is constantly forgetting himself. The work of PCs, although not glamorous, allows for constant activity and countless directions for them to adventure in (“Find my gift for the Lord!”, “Get my horse!”, “Find me a Geisha”, “Which way to Yogo Shiro?”).

A Rank 3 PC or NPC leading and training a group of Rank 0 (see *The Book of Water*, page 39) or Rank 1 Magistrates during their initial assignments is another excellent break from typical L5R campaign structure. This can benefit the players by focusing on details that few games bother with.

A supporting cast is usually made up of voiceless NPCs that the GM rarely has time to integrate into the story. But by having the players take on the supporting roles, the GM can focus on the story and let the game develop with a singular hero.

GMs interested in running a campaign that includes a single hero and her supporting cast should also mix and match the level of encounters, and rotate the status of “star” and sidekicks from campaign to campaign.

**ILL OMEN**

**Challenge:** A superstitious NPC (possibly a friend of the PCs) continues to speak of a visit with a seer. The seer has convinced the NPC that she is cursed and her entire family will die in a horrible fire, possibly within a few weeks or days.

**Focus:** One of the PCs decides to try to meet with the seer. The PC has the seer divine her future and all of the signs and stars suggest that she, too, is doomed in the same event. No fair or objective interpretation of the stars claims anything but doom. Perhaps a second method, or another seer, also interprets the same event – laying credibility to the prediction.

**Strike:** Either the two fortune tellers are traveling Scorpion spies, hoping to discover information about the family of the NPC through leading her in trace-visions and false meditative states, or perhaps the visions of the future are accurate, and there is to be a terrible fire. Afterwards, the PCs are certain to take such astrologers more seriously...

eta option shown above, scribes can read and write, and are members of the samurai caste. In addition, this union allows an *inductive* player and a *deductive* player to fully utilize their talents together. In Rokugan, there is rarely any room for deductive reasoning, but with enough evidence the Scribe can verify most any claim the Magistrate makes.

**Shugenja + Apprentice**

One player can play the Rank 1 or 2 shugenja, while the other would be a Rank 0 apprentice just before his gempukku. In this campaign, the lower-Rank shugenja would be secondary to the first in terms of skill, but not necessarily in terms of story. A good GM can provide more interaction for the apprentice, perhaps by focusing the story on a young samurai with too much power.

**Bushi + Shugenja**

A classic pairing, there are countless campaign ideas that combine these character roles: two friends that have known each other since childhood and spend much time together, a yojimbo assigned to protect his shugenja, magistrates (Clan or Imperial) who serve the will of the Empire, and emissaries sent to investigate – or keep an eye on – events in another domain. Campaigns of this caliber benefit from having two characters from the same clan that can compliment each other's talents. Just remember – avoid getting locked into stereotypes.

**Bushi + Ashigaru or Budoka**

Similar to the situation above, the Bushi leads a common person who yearns to be more than common. She seeks to learn more of the code of Bushido and emulate the ways of samurai. The budoka or ashigaru could eventually swear fealty to the clan as a climax to the story, but in the meantime, she must serve her bushi lord as best as she can.

**Samurai + Yojimbo or Personal Champion**

Although few bushi would be caught with an entourage of soldiers accepting challenges for them, a well-known samurai (perhaps a courtier or shugenja) is likely to have at least one if not many yojimbo. In fact, the GM could assign the samurai PC with many yojimbo, making them either the most or least important of the group. A fair degree of roleplaying could be drawn from such an arrangement. In a larger group, all of the

PCs could be yojimbo, while an NPC takes the role of their noble.

**Courtier + Ambassador**

If a second player is lacking for this game, the ambassador can easily become an NPC. In this campaign, the ambassador is from another clan or even from another nation (e.g. one from the the Burning Sands). The courtier and her entourage are expected to guide the ambassador through the capital city, to each of the clan strongholds, and as many of Rokugan's important locations as possible, while remaining honorable and respectful along the way. Foreigners add the unpredictable element of their cultural norms, as well as possible unperceived slights in the territories visited, which the PC would have to smooth over.

**Guide + Cartographer**

Players who enjoy the frontier feel of other fantasy roleplaying games may find this campaign very interesting. The guide and cartographer could be mapping out an uncivilized portion of Rokugan, or traveling beyond the horizon to find new lands to settle. The Unicorn crossed the great mountains, but never conquered the seas. Perhaps a Shinjo and Otaku are making their way to someplace new, or maybe their quest has been stymied by events beyond their control.

**Dishonored Samurai**

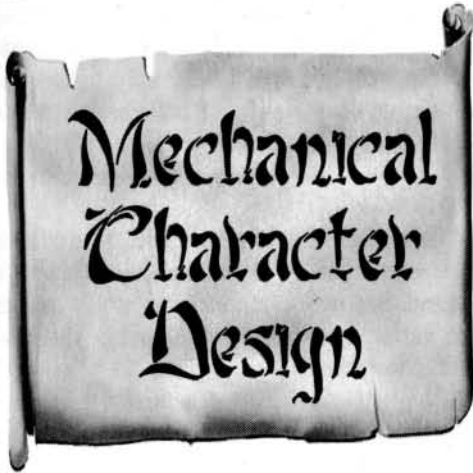
Two (or more) samurai from the same clan or family have been ordered to commit seppuku and have refused. Their lord has ordered them banished from the family (they now have the Social Disadvantage and Black Sheep Disadvantages), and now they must walk Rokugan as dishonored ronin. This could be a favorite with PCs who hate taking orders.

**Master and Student**

The old man and the young man are a time-honored combination. In Rokugan, the need to fill roles produces masters and students who must behave in accordance with their respective stations. The student is expected to ask senseless questions so that the master may direct her. The master is expected to have an answer, no matter how cryptic, to every question asked. The GM should give the *sempai* (master) character more points for Skills, though less for Traits, while the student should be conversely limited on Skills.

### Spouses

Characters who know each other well may feel comfortable enough to play spouses. Almost any of the above combinations could be integrated with this campaign. Another idea is to play a very subtle city or stronghold game, where one of the characters simply takes care of the house, and many of the story angles involve rivalries and disputes between neighboring castles, families, etc.



## The Rank 0 Campaign

The gempukku's meaning is that a samurai has come of age, may wear a daisho, and is ready to accept the responsibility of being part of the most important caste of Rokugan. Before a samurai's graduation, she is a Rank 0 samurai preparing to learn about the world and how the Empire works. Her mind is open. She is still being taught everything she needs to know before embarking on her life-journey for the next 25 years. She is naive, however, and not completely ready to do what her brothers may have done. The world around her is vast and no samurai can fully comprehend all of its contents without the proper tools.

This being the case, samurai of such low station are ready to *see* the world, but little else. Those of most clans are sent to "experience" what their sensei cannot teach them, in an environment that suits their future lot in life (i.e. School Profession). A Lion bushi will most likely be preparing to serve as a soldier. A Hida is going to be charged with taking the head of an enemy

in the Shadowlands. An Isawa is still learning new magic or studying arcane scripts. A Crane visits relatives, learns new arts, attends various courts, and prepared to travel the lands of the Empire. A Togashi might meditate or travel wherever her feet might take her. The Rank 0 goal for samurai of each clan is different, and each family or school may require something of importance from their young samurai as well. The most rewarding thing is that once the character has "proven herself", she is ready to complete her gempukku ceremony - the greatest honor of a young samurai's life.

Should a group desire to play Rank 0 characters, they and their GMs should come to an agreement as to the best goal for their characters before the game begins. They can follow the suggested guidelines below for this purpose. What is most important is that the players create characters from clans that work well together. And don't forget, a character's gempukku is a time for fantastic gifts, any one of which may come in handy during tight squeezes they will surely encounter while striving for their Rank 0 goal.

### RANK 0 SAMURAI

A Rank 0 Samurai has a 1 in each Trait (not including the Family and School bonuses due them). They also have 3/4 of the Skills that a starting samurai receives from their School training, and 15 starting Character Points to build any character they would like. They are allowed only five CP worth of Disadvantages, and since their Glory is 0 and most (if not all) of their Rings are 1, they may not take Social Disadvantage or Weakness. They do not have a Rank 1 School Technique (shugenja get no bonus dice for spells or Free Raises), and are given a poorer outfit than they would start with as Rank 1 characters. Allow them a single item of quality that is one step higher than this outfit allows.

Rank 0 samurai are allowed much more leeway than their Rank 1 brothers. After all, they are still learning the code of Bushido. Few samurai would dare ignore another still learning the path who requires an example. It is a matter of duty to allow young samurai to learn their way through the world. It is also important to allow her to make mistakes. Rank 0 samurai are also a favorite target of Scorpion and Crane manipulators, though, and GMs should feel comfortable pitting them against such adversaries.



水

### MAXIMUM SKILLS

The following is an optional rule intended to help limit players that consistently design their characters to be mechanically efficient, regardless of the story or theme behind their samurai.

The GM may limit a starting samurai's combined Skill Ranks to their Fire x 10. This helps the GM in many ways. First, it forces the players to carefully consider what Skills that they will add to their character. Second, it puts a lid on PCs who seek to add many Ranks of Skills in order to raise their Insight.

GMs who choose to impose this rule need not concern themselves with other rules regarding the monitoring of Skill purchases. This should be sufficient to balance the existing system under almost all circumstances.





## THE MOUNTAIN DOES NOT MOVE

This Rank 2 Hida Bushi Technique seems to garner more attention from players than any other School benefit. So much discussion ranges on this topic that it deserves its own sidebar in this book.

*The Mountain Does Not Move* works in this fashion:

The Crab does take a hit, and is bleeding from it. He is able to "shrug" off the *damaging* effects of the wound. The wound simply "wasn't that bad". In an Iaijutsu duel, however, it still very definitely counts as a loss – the Crab *was* hit by his opponent.

If the Crab spends a Void Point, and makes the TN for his ability (a simple Earth roll at TN 20), then he may ignore the damage. Even in an Iaijutsu duel.

Although he has ignored the damage, do not overlook that the Crab has been struck – the cultural and psychological effects are still there, even if the damage is not. If the Crab continues to attack his opponent after he is struck, the "late blow" will undoubtedly cause him dishonor.

# The Sun and Moon: Balancing Characters and Campaigns

One of the key problems facing every GM is game balance, and there is little to limit players from buying up their "pertinent" stats – Agility, Perception, and Reflexes. GMs need to be creative when dealing with players who never raise their Willpower or Strength, or who continue to purchase a host of Skills at Rank one for a better Experience Point cost break later in the game. In addition, players may find that a few of the Disadvantages are easier to "fake" (i.e. the ones that only require that you roleplay them), and that the points gained therefore become "free". So it becomes important for GMs to steer the players away from these sort of pitfalls.

Character creation is one point where game balance can be ensured from the beginning. By imposing limits on what the players can and cannot purchase, the GM takes a firm grasp over the world. With limits, the GM also defines the samurai's place in their universe. Many of the great samurai of Rokugan have few if any disadvantages, and a GM with a great deal of concern for her epic should most certainly veto the the one-armed ronin bushi trying to become the next Phoenix Clan Thunder in their game.

One option available to GMs in this regard is to limit the amount of Disadvantages available. Ten CP is a fair number, but in a game with several players, these points can build up quickly. Before she knows it, the GM must maintain a detailed story *and* still make sure that every Disadvantage is utilized each session (or at least as often as they feel each is worth). This can become a daunting task. GMs should decide on an acceptable level of Disadvantages (perhaps 3, 5, or 7 CP), and alert players of the Disadvantages that are available, omitting any that they feel are counterproductive to their current story or style of play.

Another method for keeping characters in check is to limit the number of Skills that each player may start with to 3. GMs may wish to impose that no Skill be raised by more than one, or that it costs *three* CP to raise from a 2 to a 3. This hinders players from starting the game with 3 of the 5 possible Skills that they can ever have.

In the Rank 0 game (see *The Rank 0 Campaign*, above), additional rules address this method of character creation, providing an alternate, limited starting package for PCs.

GMs may also be interested in running a true samurai game. In this style of campaign, each samurai is expected to write poetry, paint, fish, visit shrines, and generally uphold the virtues of Bushido, including those that do not fall into a martial category. Using this system, a certain percentage of the players' starting CPs would be devoted to High Skills alone. Players must spend those points on High Skills only, above and beyond any starting High Skills they may have earned from their School.

## BIDDING

The bushi techniques from each Clan provide an excellent variety of abilities from samurai to samurai. But unless the samurai are in combat, the variety of these abilities in practical application (and appearance) is lost. And although – in roleplaying situations – the player's personality ultimately drives the character, her stats serve to represent the character mechanically, and therefore stand out the most to many groups. It is important to recognize that players want to feel needed and be an important part of the team. No one wants to be a redundant feature – like that extra bun in a hamburger.

With this in mind, bidding for Advantages, Skills, and Traits is another excellent way to ensure game balance. Many of the Advantages of the game are so prevalent in character creation that they would have to be staples of samurai culture to justify it (i.e. Large, Benten's Blessing, and Quick). In order to give the game the feeling that every player is filling a niche (and to represent some diversity to the GM's pool of samurai across the Empire), the characters could be disallowed from duplicating abilities.

Each facet of the game (i.e. game statistic or character option) is a niche that only one person might be allowed to fill. When more than one person buys this position in a group, they are undermining the importance of their fellow samurai.

To avoid this, the GM should ask players how many CPs they wish to spend to buy the highest Awareness, the highest Kenjutsu, Courtier, Defense, Void, etc., before play begins. This is only necessary, however, for the parts of the system you as the GM feel are the most tricky (and which



you would like to see least in a group) – perhaps the highest Reflexes, the Quick advantage, the highest Iaijutsu Skill.

The GM may begin the bidding at however many points they feel is fair (a good starting point is the standard cost of the option + 1), and may conduct the “stat auction” as a round-table (where the player to his left bids, followed by each to his left, etc.), or the classic “open table” format (where everyone calls out their bid in response to the latest, highest one. It is recommended that no player be allowed to raise the bid by more than one point at a time, though some GMs may relish the excitement of an open-ended forum, in which

PCs may commit many or even all of their CP to a certain option.

Using this option, no player may have the statistic at an equal or higher Rank than the winning character at the end of character creation (or have it at all in the case of Advantages and Disadvantages). GMs are encouraged to avoid allowing the winning player any benefit with the statistic (like buying it beyond its normal starting maximum), as this defeats much of the purpose for the bidding system in the first place.

If the GM wishes, she can have a secret auction (where all the players write their bids on pieces of paper and hand them in, the highest winning).





## CHARACTER OPTION COMPILATION

The following is a compilation of the current list of Skills, Advantages, and Disadvantages which are available in the L5R RPG at this time. We've tried to lay them out in a photo-copiable form; feel free to hand it out to your players for reference.

They are listed here in simplified form; the locations of the original writeups can be found on the table. Please refer there for detailed descriptions and mechanics.

In all cases, when a book is referred to as (Clan), we are referring to the appropriate Way of the Clan Sourcebook. When we refer to (RPG), the material is located in the basic L5R RPG.

WC:KS indicates the skill or advantage came from the *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun* sourcebook.

These entries are updated through the release of the *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun* sourcebook, and do not contain material printed thereafter.

## CHARACTER OPTION COMPILATION - SKILLS

<i>Name of Skill</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mechanics</i>
<b>Advanced Medicine</b>	Phoenix	High	PER + Skill (TN 15) patient (heals at 2x normal rate thereafter); Poisons - TN 20 with Poison or Lore: Poison Skill; can only be used once
<b>Acting</b>	RPG	High	Disguise (Simp/Cont Aware + Skill TN PER x 5)
<b>Animal Husbandry</b>	Unicorn	High	None
<b>Appraisal</b>	Crane	Merchant	None
<b>Archery</b>	RPG	Bugei	REF + Skill to use bows
<b>Yomanri (Archery)**</b>	Unicorn	Bugei	AGL + Skill; Requires Full Attack; aim up to Skill Rank (or 1/2 for moving) in turns, each granting one Free Raise.
<b>Armorer</b>	RPG	Bugei	None
<b>Artisan *</b>	Crane	High	Various applications, by type (Acrobatics, Jester, Origami, Storytelling, Dancing, Music, Painting, Ikebana, Noh/Kabuki, Poetry)
<b>Astrology</b>	Crane	High	Divination TN 15
<b>Athletics</b>	RPG	B/M	Various physical applications
<b>Bard</b>	RPG	High	None
<b>Battle</b>	RPG	Bugei	None
<b>Bojutsu</b>	Lion	Bugei	Same as Bo Stick
<b>Bo Stick</b>	RPG	Bugei	None
<b>Calligraphy</b>	RPG	High	None
<b>Chisaijutsu</b>	Lion	Bugei	Same as War Fan
<b>Cipher</b>	Phoenix	High	INT + Skill; INT + Skill to read (vs. TN)
<b>Commerce</b>	RPG	Merchant	None
<b>Courtier</b>	RPG	High	None
<b>Craft *</b>	RPG	Merchant	None
<b>Craft: Mitsugusuri</b>	Dragon	Merchant	None
<b>Craft: Tattooing</b>	Dragon	Merchant	Raises required for elaborate/complicated tattoos
<b>Dance *</b>	RPG	High	None
<b>Defense</b>	RPG	Bugei	Cannot take Full Defense option without this Skill
<b>Engineering</b>	Crab	Merchant	None
<b>Etiquette</b>	RPG	High	None
<b>Explosives</b>	Scorpion	Bugei	None
<b>Falconry</b>	WC:KS	High	Based upon Rank; Contested AWR + Skill vs. bird's Intelligence for success
<b>Forgery</b>	RPG	Low	Simp AGL + Skill to create document PER used to notice (vs. TN)
<b>Gambling</b>	RPG	Low	Cont PER + Skill vs. gambler's AWR + Skill to notice someone cheating
<b>Goblin Culture</b>	Crab	Low	None
<b>Hand-to-Hand</b>	RPG	Bugei	None
<b>Heraldry</b>	RPG	High	Simp PER + Skill (TN 20)
<b>Herbalism</b>	RPG	Merchant	None
<b>History</b>	RPG	High	None
<b>Horse Archery **</b>	Unicorn	Bugei	Requires dai-kyu; avoids +10 TN modifier for firing from horseback; same mechanics as Archery
<b>Horsemanship</b>	RPG	High	None

## CHARACTER OPTION COMPILATION – SKILLS

<i>Name of Skill</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mechanics</i>
Hunting	RPG	High	None
Iaijutsu	RPG	Bugei	Allows "Fast Draw" sword combat
Ichi-Miru **	Dragon	High	(Kitsuki only) None
Intimidation	Crab	Bugei	None
Investigation	RPG	High	None
Jujutsu	Lion	Bugei	Same as Hand-to-Hand
Kagaku **	Dragon	High	(Agasha/Kitsuki only) None
Kenjutsu	RPG	Bugei	None
Knife	RPG	Bugei	None
Kyujutsu	Lion	Bugei	Same as Archery
Umayari (Lance)	Unicorn	Bugei	Requires yari; damage is DR+turns charged Then, STR + Skill (TN 5 x charging time)
Law	RPG	High	None
Locksmith	RPG	Merchant	Simp AGL + Skill to create lock or pick one (vs. TN)
Lore *	RPG	High	None
Lore: Ancestors	Lion	High	None
Lore: Maho-Tsukai	Crab	L/B	(Bugei for Witch Hunters/Low for all others)
Manipulation	Crane	High	None
Medicine	RPG	High	None
Meditation	RPG	High	VOID + Skill (TN 20) to regain all spent Void
Mimic	Scorpion	Low	AWR + Skill vs. PER x 5 to avoid notice
Mountaineer	Dragon	H/L	High for Samurai/Low for heimin/hinin
Music *	RPG	High	Clan play one instrument per Rank; use lowest of either AGL or AWR when playing
Nazodo **	Dragon	High	Acts as Investigation for logic, riddles, and puzzles
Ninjutsu	Scorpion	Low	Gain one tool per Rank
Nofujutsu	Lion	Low	Covers all peasant weapons
Obeiesaseru **	WC:KS	Bugei	(Seppun, Otomo, Miya) Cont. WIL + Skill vs. Willpower of freeze in tracks for 1 round. Requires token of Imperial authority
Oratory	Crane	High	None
Origami	Crab	High	None
Painting	RPG	High	None
Political Maneuvering	Crane	High	(Crane only) INT + Skill vs. Aware + 5 to make others perform as you desire or lose one Honor; Cannot be used vs. those of higher Honor Rank
Poetry	RPG	High	None
Poison	RPG/Sco.	Low	None for Scorpion / Others use HV, p. 37
Ratling Speech	Crab	Low	Lose one Honor if used outside Nezumi presence
Research	Phoenix	High	-5 TN to research spell (once); -1 week research / Rank in Skill (min. one month)
Rhetoric	Crane	High	None
Seduction	RPG	Low	Cont Aware + Skill vs. target's Aware
Shintao	RPG	High	No Traits over three without Rank three Shintao
Siege	Crab	Bugei	None
Sincerity	RPG	High	None
Sleight of Hand	Scorpion	Low	None

### SKILLS ADDENDUM

\* These Skills must be further defined by choosing a specialization.

\*\* Can only be acquired by those of the specified clan (see the Location and Mechanics columns).

Italicized Skills are other (more formal) names for pre-existing Skills.

## CHARACTER OPTION COMPILATION – SKILLS

<i>Name of Skill</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Mechanics</i>
<b>Spellcraft</b> **	Phoenix	High	(Shugenja only) INT + Skill (TN 20) to sway kami's opinion; TN 25: tells if spells have been cast recently and what the effects were if cast on a person; also identifies spells used
<b>Stealth</b>	RPG	Low	None
<i>Subujutsu</i>	Lion	Bugei	Same as Tetsubo
<i>Tantojutsu</i>	Lion	Bugei	Same as Knife
<b>Tea Ceremony</b>	RPG	High	Requires thirty minutes; Simp VOID + Skill to regain one Void
<b>Tetsubo</b>	RPG	Bugei	None
<b>Theology</b>	RPG	High	None
<b>Torture</b>	RPG	Low	Contested AWR + Skill vs. (STA - Wounds)
<b>Traps</b>	Crab	M/L	Merchant Skill for Kaiu
<b>Tsangusari</b> **	Crane	High	(Asahina shugenja only) Used to create "fetishes"
<i>Umayarijutsu</i>	Lion	Bugei	Same as Lance (WoUnicorn)
<i>Yarijutsu</i>	Lion	Bugei	Used with Naginata
<b>War Fan</b>	RPG	Bugei	Simp AGL+Skill to pass signals
<b>Weaponsmith</b>	RPG	B/M	None
<b>Wrestling</b>	RPG	Bugei	None

## CHARACTER OPTION COMPILATION – ADVANTAGES

<i>Name of Advantage</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Mechanics</i>
<b>Absolute Direction</b>	RPG	1	Add 2 dice to any roll involving direction
<b>Allies</b>	RPG	Varies	2 points per minor, 4 points per Major
<b>Ambidextrous</b>	RPG	3	Without this Advantage, lose 2 dice using off-hand
<b>Balance</b> **	Lion	4	(No Matsuo) PC ignores all modifiers to Honor rolls; During Iaijutsu duels, may Raise a number of times equal to Void+2
<b>Benten's Blessing</b>	RPG	3/2	Add 1 die to Persuasion (2 dice if attracted)
<b>Blackmail</b>	RPG	Varies	Info obtained against person with Glory = Rank Advantage
<b>Bland</b>	Phoenix	2	PC is unassuming, and harder to remember
<b>Blood of Osano-Wo</b>	Crab	3	PC cannot be harmed by weather; PC always succeeds with related STA checks
<b>Bloodlines</b> **	Lion	5	(Kitsu) Keep 2 more dice when dealing with ancestors; ancestors only cost 1/2 normal CP
<b>Cadence</b> **	Crane	3	(Crane) None
<b>Chosen by Oracles</b>	Phoenix	5	None
<b>Clear Thinker</b>	RPG	2	All attempts to confuse PC are at +10 TN
<b>Combat Reflexes</b>	Lion	6	PC may "swap places" with next highest Initiative
<b>Crab Hands</b>	Crab	8	All weapons Skills default to Rank One if the character has no other Rank in those Skills
<b>Crafty</b>	Scorpion	3	Automatic Rank one in all Low Skills
<b>Dangerous Beauty</b>	Scorpion	2/1	Adds 3 dice to all Seduction attempts
<b>Daredevil</b>	Phoenix	4	When PC performs incredible feat, 50% for +10 bonus
<b>Death Trance</b>	RPG	3/2	Automatic success at all Fear Tests
<b>Different School</b>	RPG	5	Learned in different clan's school



## CHARACTER OPTION COMPILATION – ADVANTAGES

<i>Name of Advantage</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Mechanics</i>
<b>Ear of the Emperor</b>	Scorpion	5	Awareness in dice to manipulate Imperial Court
<b>Elemental Attune</b>	Dragon	1	AWR vs. TN (GM) to detect magic use
<b>Elemental Attune</b>	Phoenix	6	TNs for opposed elements are at +5 and -5 to use
<b>Elemental Converge</b>	Phoenix	6 **	(Ishiken) May use 1 Void spell # times equal to Void Rank per day; does not count toward available spells
<b>Favor Tables</b>	Crane	3-15	Up to three items (cost of Rank by table chosen)
<b>Forbidden Know **</b>	Phoenix	1-10	(Phoenix) Modified "Inheritance"
<b>Gaijin Gear **</b>	Unicorn	2	(Unicorn) Have one piece of gaijin gear
<b>Gentry</b>	WC:KS	Varies	Points spent determine details of estate
<b>Great Destiny</b>	RPG	4	If killed, instead ends at 1W (unc), 1x per story
<b>Hands of Stone</b>	Crab	5	Keep two dice of HTH Damage instead of one
<b>Heart of Vengeance</b>	Scorpion	3	Keep (but don't roll) one extra die vs. clan of choice
<b>Heartless</b>	Scorpion	2	Two Raises are required to woo this person
<b>Higher Purpose</b>	RPG	2	Gain one extra EP when fulfilling promise
<b>Inheritance</b>	RPG	Varies	Ancestral item retained; GM determines cost
<b>Imperial Spouse</b>	WC:KS	2	None
<b>Innate Ability</b>	RPG	3	1 spell can be cast w/o scroll; Free Raise if scroll used
<b>Inner Gift</b>	Crane	6	Animal speech, empathy, precognition, psychometry and etc.
<b>Irreproachable</b>	Unicorn	Varies	TNs for Seduction/Bribery on PC are at +5/Rank; May not also have Greed or Lechery
<b>Ishiken-do **</b>	Phoenix	5	(Isawa) PC cannot be Void mage without this Adv.
<b>Kaiu Sword</b>	Crab	5	3k3 katana of fine quality; if others touch it, PC loses 1 Honor; if lost, PC loses 2 Ranks in Honor, permanently
<b>Kakita Blade</b>	Crane	8/4	User rolls and keeps one die when attacking and can re-roll a single Damage die during any Iaijutsu duel
<b>Kharmic Tie</b>	RPG	1-5	Roll (not don't keep) Rank in dice to protect tie
<b>Large</b>	RPG	2/1	+1D to all Damage rolls; -2D from all Social rolls
<b>Leadership</b>	Lion	7/4	Followers performing the same Skill as the PC, they gain Rank 1 in that Skill; PC must have R3
<b>Luck</b>	RPG	3/6/9	Re-roll for a Skill check once per Story per Rank
<b>Magic Resistance</b>	RPG	2/4/6	TN of spells used on PC are at +5 TN per Rank
<b>Multiple Schools</b>	Crane	5	Old SR frozen; PC gains Techniques of new school]
<b>Noble Birth **</b>	Dragon	3	(Monks) None
<b>Patron **</b>	Crane	1-5	(Artisans) Patron is influential by Rank
<b>Perfect Balance</b>	RPG	2	Add one die to all balancing rolls
<b>Precise Memory</b>	Crane	3	INT roll (TN 20) to remember intricacies
<b>Quick</b>	RPG	3	Roll two dice and keep the highest for Initiative
<b>Quick Healer</b>	RPG	3	PC heals as if his STA were one Rank higher
<b>Ratling Ally</b>	Crab	2	Design and name ratling
<b>Read Lips</b>	RPG	2	Read lips with successful PER check
<b>Sensei</b>	RPG	1/3/5	Sensei's SR determined by Rank (1-2 / 3-4 / 5)
<b>Social Position</b>	RPG	5/Rank	Ranks add to starting Glory
<b>Strength of the Earth</b>	RPG	2/4/8	Wound penalty decreased by one die per Rank

### ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES ADDENDUM

You will notice that many of the Advantages and Disadvantages listed in this compilation are given variable costs. These may cost less for a specific clan, or may have a variable cost which affects the benefit of the option. Please see the appropriate sourcebook for more complete descriptions of any option listed here.



## ABBREVIATIONS

**Clan Name:** Taken from Way of that Clan sourcebook.

**CoB:** Taken from the Code of Bushido adventure pack.

**NIKS:** Taken from the Night of 1000 Screams Adventure Pack.

**RPG:** Taken from the L5R RPG.

**WC:KS:** Taken from Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun sourcebook.

## CHARACTER OPTION COMPILATION – ADVANTAGES

Name of Advantage	Location	Cost	Mechanics
Tactician	Lion	5/3	Battle Table rolls may be adjusted by 3 points (up/down); may not be used if in Reserves
True Friend	RPG	Varies	Influence + Devotion determine cost; details
Voice	RPG	2	Add one die when speaking
Way of the Land	RPG	2/1	PC never gets lost and knows best routes
Wealthy	Crane	1-10	PCs gain two starting koku per Rank

## CHARACTER OPTION COMPILATION – DISADVANTAGES

Disadvantage	Location	Cost	Mechanics
Adopted Blood	Unicorn	Varies	PC must gain 5 extra Glory to obtain new Glory Rank/Rank of Disad; each new Glory Rank reduces this by 1
Antisocial	Lion	2/4	2 Points – PC keeps one less die with social rolls; 4 Points – PC keeps two less dice with social rolls
Ascetic	Dragon	3	Limited starting outfit (DB, p. 41); Glory of no import
Bad Fortune	RPG	1	Roll on table (p. 75) or GM's call for effect
Bad Health	RPG	3	Wound Ranks figured as if STA is 1 less; Cannot be taken if starting STA is 1
Bad Reputation	RPG	2	NPCs add 1D to recognize PC; bad reaction
Benten's Curse	RPG	2	Add one die to Fear/Intimidation rolls; Subtract two dice from Etiquette rolls
Black Sheep	RPG	5	No School Ranks past one in current school
Brash	RPG	2	Honor roll (TN 20) to avoid acting when affronted
Can't Lie	RPG	3	PC always fails when attempting to lie
Chem. Dependency	RPG	3	Lose one die for every day addiction is not fed
Colorblind	Crane	1	None
Compulsion	RPG	2-4	Honor roll (TN 15/20/25) or lose control if present
Contrary	Phoenix	3	Simp Will roll (TN 5-20) to avoid during stress
Coward	Lion	Varies	PC keeps less dice (varies by Rank) when facing those with higher Glory
Cruel**	WC:KS	3 / 4	(Otomo) May not spend last Void Point, or raise their Void Ring above lowest Ring; AWR is -1 for all social checks and their Honor is one point lower during Honor Tests
Curse of Kami	NIKS	10	Spells take twice as long to cast; are at +10 TN
Dark Secret	RPG	5	None
Deathseeker	Lion	7	Must die in combat; starts with 0 Glory; can gain none
Dependent	RPG	1-4	Age of dependent determines cost (Adult to Child)
Dishonored	Lion	3	PC begins with no Glory; may not spend EP until Rank 1 in Glory gained; then, limited purchases
Driven	RPG	3	None
Enlightened Mad**	Dragon	2/4/6	(Ise zumi) Simp Will (TN 15/20/25) or lose control
Enlightened Mad**	Phoenix	1/3/6	(Phoenix shugenja) Simp Will roll (TN 20) or lose control with specified element (cannot be Void)
Epilepsy	Crane	4	When under stress, Will roll (TN 15) to resist seizure; thereafter, Will roll (TN 20) to end



## CHARACTER OPTION COMPILATION - DISADVANTAGES

<i>Disadvantage</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Mechanics</i>
<b>Fascination</b>	Crane	2	None
<b>Forgotten</b>	Phoenix	4	PC cannot be a shugenja or use magical items
<b>Forsaken</b>	Lion	2/3 (Lion)	Ancestors may not be purchased
<b>Frail Mind</b>	RPG	3	Add two dice when opposing PC's Willpower
<b>Gaijin Name **</b>	Unicorn	1	(Unicorn) -1D for all social with non-Unicorn/gaijin
<b>Greed</b>	Unicorn	Varies	Others +1 die per Rank to Bribe PC; no Honor roll
<b>Gullible</b>	RPG	3	TN to convince the PC of anything is 5
<b>Haunted</b>	RPG	Varies	Cost determined by frequency
<b>Idealistic</b>	Lion	2	Honor changes are at +1 Point per every 5
<b>Insensitive</b>	RPG	2	PC must spend 1 VP to risk herself for another
<b>Jealousy</b>	Phoenix	2	Can be attached to Skill; PC strives to be best
<b>Junshin **</b>	Scorpion	3	(Scorpion) Modified Black Sheep
<b>Lame</b>	RPG	3	PC subtracts two dice from all Agility rolls
<b>Lechery</b>	Unicorn	Varies	+1 die/Rank to Seduce PC; no Honor roll
<b>Lost Love</b>	RPG	2	When lost love mentioned, PC loses one die until he spends a Void Point
<b>Low Pain Threshold</b>	RPG	5	When PC is wounded, his penalty is one higher
<b>Meddler</b>	RPG	2	None
<b>Missing Eye</b>	CoB	3	PC is at +5 TN to all visual PER rolls and attacks
<b>Missing Limb</b>	RPG	3	All of PC's appropriate TNs are at +10
<b>Momoku</b>	Phoenix	8	PC cannot use Void Points
<b>Moto Curse **</b>	Unicorn	0	(Required for all Moto) None
<b>Nemesis</b>	Scorpion	5	PC cannot use Void Points vs. his Nemesis
<b>Never Sat on Horse</b>	Unicorn	1	PC will fall off horse during combat/chaos
<b>Obligation</b>	RPG	2/4	Two Points for small, four Points for large
<b>Overconfident</b>	Unicorn	3	PER + Battle (TN 30) to retreat in face of better forces; PC may not also have Great Destiny
<b>Permanent Wound</b>	RPG	5	PC always at -1 Wound modifier
<b>Phobia</b>	RPG	2/4	When fear faced, all of PC's actions are -1D/Rank; PC may spend 1 VP to avoid penalty for 1 Action
<b>Proud</b>	Lion	1	None
<b>Shadowlands Taint</b>	Crab	1-5	PC gains Taint effects by Rank
<b>Small</b>	RPG	3	PC must drop highest Damage die
<b>Social Disadvantage</b>	RPG	3/Rank	PC's Glory reduced by 1/Rank
<b>Soft-Hearted</b>	RPG	2	Simp Will roll (TN 20) to kill anyone
<b>Spoiled</b>	WC:KS	3	Will check (TN 15+) to resist object of desire
<b>Sworn Enemy</b>	RPG	3-6	Enemy is same SR as PC at cost 3; every additional point makes him one SR higher
<b>True Love</b>	RPG	3	PC must spend one Void Point to deny love, and cannot use Void if he has lost superior's favor.
<b>Unluck</b>	RPG	3-9	GM may force PC to reroll once/story per Rank
<b>Vanity</b>	Crane	1	None
<b>Vanity</b>	Dragon	1	None
<b>Weakness</b>	RPG	5	One of PC's Traits lowered to 1 (min. 1) at start
<b>Yogo Curse **</b>	Phoenix	3	(All Asako roll); 15 or higher - PC will betray the one he loves the most
<b>Yogo Curse **</b>	Scorpion	0	(All Scorpion roll); 15 or higher - PC will betray the one he loves the most)





Jind

# *Chapter Three*

火

*The Book  
of Fire*



## TRAITS

The Traits and Skills of L5R are the cornerstones of the system. However, there may be times when you find that a character's Traits are not balanced in your campaign (e.g. the players all have high Reflexes and Perception because they are expect to make rolls with them), or that the same player keeps lowering his Strength because she doesn't care if his Crane bushi rolls one less die. This abusive treatment of an RPG system happens, whether we like it or not, as many players continue to take on a "Me vs. the GM" attitude.

In this case, we would recommend that the Gamemaster begin to evolve play, and character, toward roleplaying and use of the Skills which are lower. Thus, the abusive Crab bushi who has every military Advantage in the book is placed into a situation where all players must perform a tea ceremony for their Lords. If he is unable to do so to the daimyo's satisfaction, then his lord will reassign him back to the Wall - and out of the campaign.

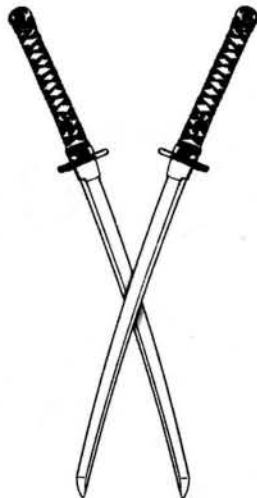
By minimizing such situations with Trait-balancing rules, (such as increasing the cost of certain Skills or abilities), and by promoting a holistic view in our game worlds, we can improve the game for both players and GMs. After all, nobody wants to be the *eighth* player with *laijutsu* 5.

## Using The System

It was once said that you can't break an RPG, you can only break GMs. There is some truth to that. GMs should feel compelled to challenge their players whenever they try to challenge the system. If they find a way to create a Rank 2 samurai out of the gate, create a Rank 3 bandit to teach them a lesson in play. Don't ever think that the actions of your players can somehow outweigh the actions of the powerful NPCs around them. These figures are your tools; they exist as much to fill the game environment as they do to perform tasks for you, the GM.

There are no limits to NPC use in this regard. If you want a significant NPC to encounter the group, make it happen. If you want the PCs to be the world shakers instead, do so. Just remember the power you are putting in their hands.

In this chapter, we will detail three levels of L5R play - *realistic*, *heroic*, and *cinematic*, along with tips for how to apply these in your games, and examples of them, on a case by case basis.



## Combat Rules

### Skirmishes

As mentioned, there are three levels of play in most any roleplaying game. Depending on the interest level of the group, the game can have serious, realistic, heroic, supernatural, dark, or even comical tone, but this *style* does not necessarily determine *game play*. Dark games can be *cinematic*, and campy games can have very rigid rules of play (i.e. *realistic*).

No matter the style, most play still falls into one of the three basic categories - realistic, heroic, or cinematic. The following is a breakdown of these systems.

#### REALISTIC

This is the L5R where samurai clash and a quick victor is determined by very bloody and very swift combat. In the realistic game, there are no Void points, no techniques, and no healing magic. Damage is deadly and samurai that fall (usually from a single blow) never get back up. It represents the samurai of history, not the samurai of legend. This style of play is very fast, deadly, and unforgiving.

In the realistic game, there are no Wound Levels; a hit is a kill. A samurai who takes a single blow from a blade either dies instantly from a fatal dissection or slowly lingers from a belly wound. There are no rules for being Down or Out. If the samurai takes a single hit from any weapon, hand them over to the GM. Armor still continues to function in the same capacity, but the realistic game brings about faster resolution to combat, making initiative even more deadly

than it already is. The Quick advantage in the realistic game costs 6 points, instead of 3.

Options for a realistic game include little or no magic, no techniques, and the elimination of supernatural abilities that ignore Wounds or cause Fear. GMs should analyze these on a case-by-case basis.

### HEROIC

Heroic is the game you've been playing, the L5R that was designed by AEG and presented in the core Rulebook. GMs should feel free to augment this system as much as they would like, developing house rules to tailor the game to their liking. Bear in mind that - in this system - the more Wounds you have, the less initiative matters, and that the higher your TN to be hit is, the less effective a large samurai becomes.

### CINEMATIC

Cinematic L5R is by far the least balanced method of play. However, many players have found the L5R combat system too deadly. The following rules will increase their chances of living through a battle.

The first thing a GM should consider is changing the Wound multiplier. Instead of x2, you may wish to go as high as x3, x4, or even x5. Such an increase allows the PC to last longer; upwards of 80 points would be necessary to kill an Earth 2 samurai, as opposed to 32 in the standard (heroic) game.

As mentioned later in the *Book of Fire*, the cinematic version of L5R allows samurai to spend incredible amounts of Void to perform a host of actions. Healing, automatic success, and escape from imminent death are very plausible uses for Void in this system. Such vast expenditures of Void also require that they be replenished faster. In the cinematic game, it may become necessary to replenish Void after each scene, especially since combat occurs more often in this style of play.

In the cinematic game, there is also no maximum number of Disadvantages a PC may purchase. (Alternately, the GM may decide that the PCs are very heroic, and cannot take any, merging aspects of this system with those of the realistic game). In either case, cinematic PCs should start with 35 to 45 CP, instead of 25. This will most definitely result in Rank 2 characters. GMs may also wish to ignore the 2-Point limit for increasing Skills and Traits, or merely adjust this number to a maximum 3-Point increase.

GMs are encouraged to develop other, alternate methods of play when they find the combat too slow or too deadly, or the system too slow or fast to resolve.

## Duels

There is much concern over how and when a player might initiate a duel. Understand that it is a very formal and rigid process to challenge another samurai in such a manner. GMs should encourage players to follow the steps below.

Not all duels focus on Iaijutsu, and not all are to the death. Many duels are merely a display of power. For the Unicorn, many are impromptu and happen with boken, or shinai, or perhaps even bows. For the Phoenix, they are displays of magic power, or history recitals. For the Crane, a test of poetry or sculpting may decide the fate of an entire province, while the Crab often replace the need for bloodshed with a boasting contest. Understanding that death is not always necessary is the first key to understanding the intricacies of a Rokugani duel.

### TO THE BLOOD

In this format, the first samurai to draw blood wins. Killing your opponent is unacceptable. Doing the least amount of damage possible is a far greater testament to one's skill than killing an opponent with a single blow. A duel that is agreed upon under such terms is expected to be resolved with only a single drop of blood. Understand that blood touching a person during a duel does not make them unclean, but that not washing soon after does.

### TO THE STRIKE

Here, the first strike with any sort of weapon can end the duel. Boken, shinai, and katana (in or out of the saya) are all excellent ways to resolve the first-strike duel. Again, killing is unacceptable (although more acceptable than in the format above); if non-lethal weapons are used, a samurai who purposefully "murders" another is sure to dishonor herself, her lord, and her family.

### TO SUBMISSION/UNCONSCIOUSNESS

Similar to the first-strike duel, this confrontation is fought with non-lethal weapons (0k1 shinai or 1k1 boken), and resolved with the "last man standing" mentality. Such a duel is

### ALLED SHOTS

Some bushi out there make called shots to the eye to avoid armor penalties. In doing this, they are also increasing their dice total for rolling damage by earning three or four Raises. This grants them additional benefit for attempting and succeeding with difficult maneuvers, encouraging a certain (mythic) style of play. Some GMs may have a problem with this. They may think that gaining such benefits simply for succeeding with a longshot action is unfair. There are a number of ways to deal with this.

A gamemaster can, of course, disallow such raises, preferring that Raises should only be used for Damage. She can lower the Advantage gained from such a shot by allowing the samurai to receive half-armor bonuses for "uncovered" areas, attributing it to the NPC's reflexes or other conditions.

Also, the Rank 1 Akodo Technique allows a bushi to ignore the effects of armor, or gain a Free Raise - which can mean a number of things, such as targeting a specific location or fighting over a wall. Still, there should never be a situation where an Akodo (no matter how skilled), is allowed to cut out someone's eye without additional Raises - one Free Raise just doesn't cut it. Four is more appropriate.





## ASK THEM TO ROLL FOR IT

So, you've got them making characters with depth and personality, but now they're debating why they should raise their Willpower to a 4 (no one's seducing them) or waste another three Experience Points to raise their Bard Skill again (when they haven't even visited anyone's court). You need to remind them that balancing the character sheets is as important as balancing your campaign.

It isn't easy to make Calligraphy or Dance useful every session, but finding creative uses for these Skills can make your games seem more resonant of Rokugan than they will be if every adventure is about the Crab, or court. By asking the PCs to make Bard rolls when hearing a story, or Courtier rolls to get into some places, the players can be taught their importance during play.

As for the Traits, some PC abilities may be naturally downplayed more than they should. Thinking of creative methods to invoke the use of certain Traits can be difficult. Making players roll Willpower or Stamina to stay up all night, or listen to a boring story can be pretty unfair if your group isn't used to rolling for such mundane tasks.

considered extremely vicious, and few samurai put themselves in such a situation. The Crab and Unicorn, however, are comfortable with it, and the Unicorn have very specific rules regarding this style of dueling.

## WRESTLING

Wrestling (*sumai*) duels are performed in a dojo. Blessed rice is used to line the outside of the wrestling circle they are fought within. The first samurai pushed out of the circle loses. GMs may require a contested Willpower + Intimidation or Meditation before the match, to allow the contestants a chance to bolster their chi. Strength + Wrestling is used in Contested rolls until the GM feels that one of the two has won (perhaps by winning the best two out of three or some other combination). The loser is the samurai who first steps out of the circle with both feet.

## SKILLS

A demonstration or competition of skills is an excellent way to challenge an adversary without the finality of a fatal *laijutsu* strike. Sculptures, poems, songs, histories, painting, archery, orations, and a host of other high and bugei competitions can be used to facilitate a duel. Judges oversee such a duel and the winner is determined by an impartial party (usually an uninvolved clan member or Imperial Arbitrator). Magistrates are excellent for this.

## EXHIBITION

Duels of this nature occur before a large crowd; the samurai involved in the duel meet on a stage or raised platform. It is very similar to the Skill duel above, but the crowd is responsible for determining the victor. In this sort of duel, Appearance and Awareness are as important as one's Skill with the method of challenge, if not more so. Both of these Traits should play important parts in the duel, whether the Skill in question requires them or not.

## A GAME OF GO OR SHOGI

A very peaceful way for samurai to resolve a conflict is over a simple game of Go or shogi. The duel is only one game, and an impartial judge overlooks it. The winner is vindicated and his opponent is expected to honor the requisite compensation for losing the duel. GMs should only allow this type of duel if the participants have had a chance to buy the Gaming Skill.

## QUEST

This sort of duel is normally reserved for competitions and invitationals. However, it may become necessary when a slight cannot be resolved any other way. The samurai are brought together at the court or hall of the local lord. They are sent on a quest to obtain an object of relative rarity, or some other objective. The difficulty of the quest corresponds to the severity of the slight and the social status of the duelists. The item might be hidden in a stronghold, or hidden away on some mountain top. Alternately, the item could be unique, and its whereabouts unknown. Such a quest is an excellent source for adventure, and GMs should prepare something esoteric to fit the tone of the duel's surroundings and conditions.

## Dueling Etiquette

Entering into a duel is like playing poker, using your lord's very expensive sports car as the stakes. It is a dangerous proposition under the most benign of instances, and should never be attempted without careful consideration by both parties, their lords, and - if the slight is severe enough - others of importance within their clans.

The ramifications of a duel can be quite serious, ranging from the loss of Honor for small offenses or near losses to great shame and seppuku, or worse. Lords are very careful about whom they grant permission to duel, as well as the identity of the samurai challenger. They remember how even territories may be lost if a subordinate fails in his duty...

The following rules of dueling etiquette apply under all but the most extreme circumstances, and will be enforced religiously by all involved. Keep them in mind while running dueling scenes at your table.

1. When a duel is resolved by any means other than death (i.e. one of the contestants is victorious), the matter is settled. It is dishonorable for any one to continue the contest (e.g. a brash Crab Bushi is defeated in a duel to first strike, but continues to attack his victorious opponent); there are no exceptions.

2. When samurai duel with lethal weapons, it is always with the katana; again, there are no exceptions. Not only is it dishonorable, no daimyo would approve a duel with anything else. In addition, you cannot properly perform an

lajitsu strike with a tetsubo (Hida Yakamo's infamous duel with Mirumoto Satsu is a single, glaring exception that none are likely to repeat in the near future).

3. When anyone from the samurai caste challenges or is challenged by a bushi, she may choose a stand-in. However, if her stand-in loses the duel, the non-bushi is obligated to bear any negative affects of the loss (i.e. in a duel to the death, the non-bushi is obligated to commit seppuku). On another note, non-bushi of the samurai caste are allowed to wear a wakizashi as a symbol of their station; a katana is an outward display of skill in the bushi's weapon. Therefore, those who wear a katana must accept the duel on their own and without a stand-in.

4. Shugenja may duel each other with magic (see *The Way of the Phoenix* for the details).

5. Samurai should always decline a challenge from a lesser samurai. Even if they accept, the lesser should step down after seeing the stance of a greater samurai. It is understood in Rokugan that a duel that is refused after the stance has been seen is much less dishonorable than outright denial of the same.

It is still a loss of face, however. Remember the parable of the bushi on the bridge: there is no shame in admitting that someone is better than you. A samurai's life is not something to be

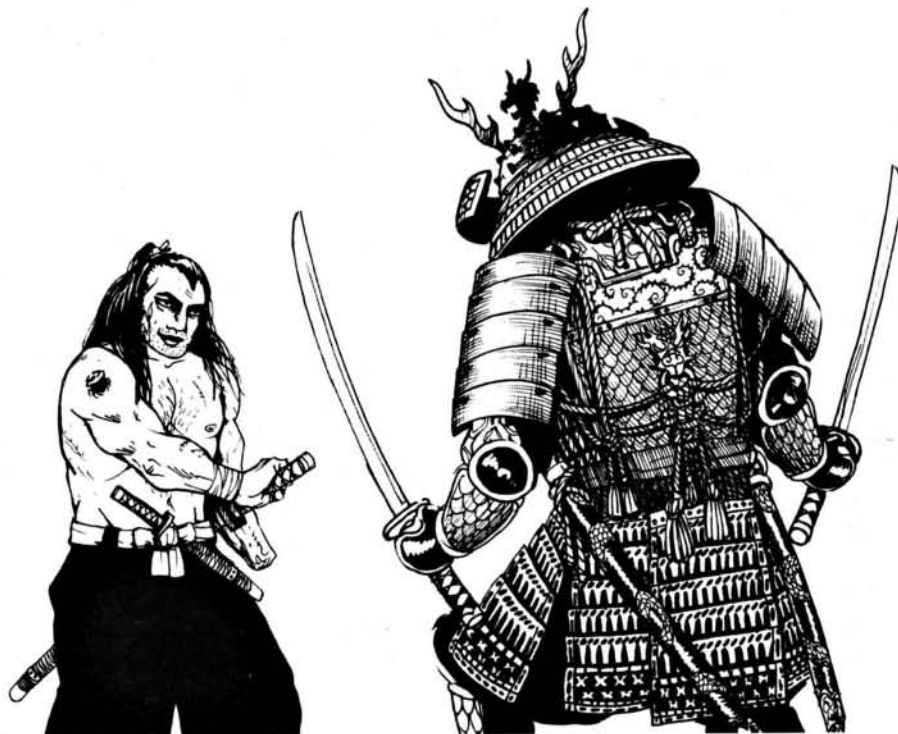
thrown away for the sake of ego, as a samurai's lord will freely tell them. Better to avoid a fight than die in vain.

6. If a character thinks she can take an opponent but you as GM know otherwise, make a hidden Perception roll for her (TN 15), using the character's Perception Trait. Modify it if the opponent is trying to deceive the player with his stance or facial expressions.

On page 108 of the L5R core Rulebook, there are detailed rules for "showing your stance" to an opponent. Use these to keep the characters alive. Let them see things about their opponent that the rules don't cover. Then let them decide if they still want to fight before actually bidding (Focus/Strike).

7. Once a character has accepted a duel, the proper way to avoid fighting would be to take their hands off of their sword and bow to their opponent. Nothing more. There is no loss of life, and no shame, in such an action.

A more formal way would be for them to remove their sword from their belt, still sheathed, and place it on the ground before their opponent. Further still, they may publicly announce that they accept that the opponent is more skilled than they are. Of course, by this action they do lose Honor, but you should consider going easy on them in light of their heroic admission.



## ASKING THEM TO ROLL FOR IT (CONTINUED)

But asking them to make Willpower checks to keep their legs from falling asleep whenever the daimyo they are meditating with sits in silence for many hours might work. In application, this a more accurate reflection of how difficult it is (even for a society as patient as Rokugan) to endure endless idleness. Willpower + Meditation is a fair combination for this sort of endurance as well.

Strive to come up with your own Trait + Skill combinations, branching out from your standard (and if you are experienced, perhaps narrow) standard. Each new challenge that you present the players with is another layer of their character brought to light, for good or ill, and another aspect of the game highlighted for a moment.

And the moments are mostly why we play.



## BONUSES

Often great roleplaying can outweigh the power of the dice. (A player in the middle of a soliloquy has little time to check her stats.) Few GMs would interrupt a great dialog between a PC and an NPC with a die roll. Even a rules-lawyer is likely to forgo the numbers in a social game like L5R. But making sure the players are the players and the characters are the characters is important to game balance. How does a GM reward good roleplaying without handing out the "magical +1 tongue" that adds to all social situations?

One way is to reward the player with additional EPs after the game. Good roleplayers who write poems, bring flowers, or brew tea should be handed extra Experience for their effort.

The GM can even go around the table after play, asking the players to rate one another. They can determine, case-by-case, every example of excellent roleplaying, costumes, props, and adherence to atmosphere. You'll be surprised to find what they consider important details, and what you may have missed.

## SAMPLE HONOR AWARDS AND LOSSES

Bushido Tenet (Award)	Cb	Cn	Dr	Ln	Ph	Sc	Un
<i>Gi</i> : Honesty and Justice	0-1	2-4	0-2	1-3	1-2	0	1-2
<i>Yu</i> : Heroic Courage	3-5	1-2	1-3	3-5	1-2	0	2-4
<i>Jin</i> : Compassion	0-1	1-3	2-4	1-3	2-4	0	1-3
<i>Rei</i> : Polite Courtesy	0	2-5	1-4	1-2	1-3	0	1-2
<i>Meyo</i> : Honor	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5
<i>Makato</i> : Complete Sincerity	1-2	2-5	2-4	2-5	2-4	-2-5	1-3
<i>Chugo</i> : Duty and Loyalty	2-5	1-3	1-3	2-4	1-2	3-5	1-3
Prevent your lord from losing face	1-2	2-5	1-3	2-4	1-3	3-5	1-3
Dishonorable Action (Loss)	Cb	Cn	Dr	Ln	Ph	Sc	Un
Allow an act of honor to occur	1-3	1-5	2-5	3-5	2-5	0	2-4
Betray a trust	2-4	2-5	2-4	3-5	2-5	+1-5	2-4
Breach of etiquette	0-2	4-5	1-3	3-5	3-5	0	1-3
Caught lying	1-3	3-5	2-4	3-5	2-4	0	1-3
Forcing an unjustified duel	0-1	4-5	3-5	3-5	2-4	0	1-3
"Murder" another samurai	1-5	3-5	2-5	2-5	3-5	0	2-4
Show emotion in public	3-5	1-3	1-4	3-5	2-5	0	2-4

8. Dueling is very formal, and spontaneous duels are not as common as everyone thinks (although as discussed before, drama sometimes precipitates that they must happen). A spontaneous duel that results in death is going to have many people asking questions, especially the noble lord of the deceased.

Every samurai in her charge is valuable to a daimyo, and when one is killed, she is going to want to know why, and perhaps even question the validity of the challenge (she is politically in a position to do this). This could surely gain the victorious duelist an enemy...

9. A formal duel begins with a petition from a character's own lord to challenge the offender. If she accepts your petition (she's in a position to say no), she or an emissary speaks on your behalf to the lord of the challenged. Their lord must accept the petition on behalf of his samurai before the duel may commence. Only then must the challenged accept the duel. Dueling is not as common in Rokugan now as it is during a time of war, and this process can currently take months, if not years, to complete.

10. If a PC challenges a samurai of higher station than herself, then she most likely deserves to die. A noble lord (governor, daimyo, Emerald Champion, etc.) does not have to accept a duel from a samurai of lower station. She has nothing to prove to the samurai, and therefore has no

need to justify herself or her actions. Furthermore, the noble lord can take this challenge as a slight to her honor and petition the samurai's lord for the PC's *sepukku* in response. GMs and PCs are encouraged to find a less direct approach to resolving conflicts in the game.

11. Winning a duel does not gain you Honor. It either defends a slight to honor, or resolves the matter at hand. Losing, on the other hand...

## Iaijutsu Duels

The Iaijutsu duel can be one of the most climactic events in Rokugan. Movies like *Sanjuro* and *Seven Samurai* show the intensity of dueling that is so different from the western show-down. In L5R, this intensity stays alive with the tension of the bidding process. However, the dueling mechanics can be cumbersome at times to those unfamiliar with its subtlety. A high-ranking duelist may die at the hands of a lesser swordsman all because someone bid at the wrong time. The following information is an updated method for running a duel in L5R.

### KHARMIC STRIKE

During an Iaijutsu duel, it is possible that the challengers will be unable to determine who may

choose "Strike" or "Focus" first (all of their relevant Traits and Skills being the same). This is called a *Kharmic Strike*, and no dice are rolled.

Both combatants draw their swords and cut one another down. Both die and are awarded one box of Glory + the Glory Rank of their opponent in boxes. Scribes will record it, and poets will write about it for some time to come.



## Experience Points

At the end of each session, GMs are expected to award Experience Points to the characters. Typically, the amount of XP awarded depends upon the success of a character during the adventure in question. But it could also be argued that failure is a greater teacher than success, and that the character who continues to "learn" from her mistakes is a greater samurai than the one who has never known defeat. GMs should be fair about XPs, and make sure that everyone at the table is being treated equitably at all times.

Additionally, good roleplaying should be a factor. Players who portray their characters well should be awarded a few extra points. Note, however, that after only a few sessions, this discrepancy will soon reflect in the numbers on the character sheets. GMs who award good roleplaying should also award good problem solving, great note taking, and players who have taken time out to research the time period or their characters. Such activities increase the fun of the game and levels the playing field for those who are not as outgoing or well-versed in drama.

## Gaining Experience

In the L5R Rulebook, it recommends that GMs give out some 1-3 XP per session. While this may be ideal for a GM running more than once a week, or who prefers a slower running game, many players would like to see more immediate results. A Strength 2 character that becomes a Strength 4 character after two months of play is exciting for players and, although unrealistic, has merit in a roleplaying game, where the GM and players are focused on "fun".

Giving the PCs 1-3 XP per session is not set in stone, however. Five points will ensure that PCs can increase a Trait about once every other session. Eight points per session will develop very powerful characters in little or no time. Ten per session should be the benchmark to avoid breaking; beyond this, the game begins to seriously bend the laws of physics.

Lastly, never forget that characters who are detrimental to the game and the enjoyment of the other players should be penalized as well. We recommend lowering the standard XP award by one for the first offense, and by one more with each session the player does not improve. If they persist beyond the point where they are gaining no XP at all, you may want to consider having a talk with them, or eliminating them from the campaign altogether.

## Honor Awards and Losses

Most of the idea behind the Honor system in L5R concerns what a samurai thinks of herself. Some GMs may believe that when such a system is arbitrated by the GM, it detracts from a samurai's own portrayal of their own code of conduct.

GMs may find this method impossible, and have a hard time understanding how it works. There are no hard and fast rules for Honor awards. It is a sliding scale, and something that an upstanding Phoenix or Lion does to gain Honor may not be justifiable for someone else.

As a general rule, refer to the chart on the previous page for examples of Honor Awards and Losses for the various clans.

### BONUSES (CONTINUED)

Another is to remove the numbers from the game and play a free-form live action variant. Players familiar enough with one another, and the ones that find it difficult to separate character from player (it is a lot harder than you'd think), should consider playing L5R without the character sheets, constructing character "models" instead.

These models could include the PC's clan, family, Honor, Glory, features, strengths, weaknesses, and the like. This creates a character sheet more in line with the 20 questions sections found in the L5R RPG and this book.





## CEREMONIAL ARMOR PREPARATION

(Originally in *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*)

Samurai have a particular method of putting on their armor, and it is always followed exactly. A samurai who did not put their armor on in precisely the traditional order would be considered unlucky, and many times, would not be allowed to fight - a great dishonor.

**Example:** Matsu Tsuko is preparing for war, and her noble retainers have brought her armor to her tent so that she may dress for the battle. First, she puts on her *fundoshi*, a loin cloth that covers the bushi's chest and torso. Rather like a long tabard of the medieval ages, it provides protection against the armor's chafing.

Tsuko then asks for a *shitagi*, or shirt, and then a plain obi to hold the shirt. Once they are arranged, she is ready for the *kobokama*, a set of trousers. Placing the left leg into the socket of the pants first, and then the right, Tsuko follows the duty of her martial spirit. The left leg is the sign of awakening the martial soul before battle; by putting it in first, Tsuko readies her fiercest chi.

GMs should consider the current Honor level of the PCs, and base Honor awards upon their already-established code of conduct. If a PC has a background that suggests they adhere more (or less) to the tenets of Bushido, or that they are decidedly stout in their beliefs, consider awarding them based upon that background. Honor is flexible, and could vary in small ways from character to character without offending anyone, if the players understand the reasoning for it. Additionally, having a set idea of what acts are worth what Honor can make it a little easier for you to assign values to PC awards.

For example, if a samurai with an Honor of 1 and another with an Honor of 3 both perform an act worth 4 Honor boxes (saving a burning village, for instance), the lower-Honor samurai might earn 3 boxes of Honor, while the other might only receive 1. Remember, a samurai with high Honor has more to lose than she has to gain. For one with an Honor of 4, performing honorable deeds is par for the course. But for those of Rank 1 or 2, it is a little more unusual, and worthy of note.

## Glory Awards and Losses

What distinguishes Glory from Honor is that it comes from *outside* the samurai. A daimyo, sensei, or noble of significance who proclaims a samurai worthy is awarding her Honor. In such an instance, the adventure can pause while the GM and players roleplay through the act of receiving such a distinction, or the GM can just

say "check three boxes". Either way, make sure that NPCs encountered from then on have heard of the PCs' exploits, and that samurai see them in a different light.

## Tools of the Trade

### Rokugani Armor

In L5R, the system is fast, and the samurai who draws his sword often will find himself dead due to the devastating nature of the game. Below are a couple additional armor rules that GMs may include in their games to keep PCs alive a little longer.

#### *Armor always adds to your TN*

No matter what happens: full attack, backstab, called shot, etc., armor is always there. The abstract nature of the L5R combat system infers that no matter where a shot is targeted, the armor *must* be taken into account.





### Oni Armor Always Works

An oni's armor rating is always taken into account, and no Raise can ever circumnavigate it. GMs may insist that the Rank 1 Akodo Technique is also subject to these rules. In such a case, the GM is determining that an Akodo simply cannot bypass the thick skin of an oni, and that the armor rating is therefore always in effect.

Armor is not typically worn in times of peace. Although many of the warlike clans are comfortable wearing their armor off the field of battle, and take great pride in the code of Bushido, it is unrealistic to wear armor everywhere. In addition, many clans find it offensive for foreign samurai to wear armor in their lands. It suggests the offender does not trust them, and such an act is considered both an insult and an affront.

Remind your players every time they want to pull on their *haidate* that where they are going should be a major factor in how they conduct themselves. Samurai are never allowed to wear armor while on the Emperor's roads without the proper papers.

## Rokugani Weapons

The following section lists most of the weapons found in the L5R core Rulebook, citing new rules and information concerning their make, use, and history.

Note that all prices for weapons in the basic book are approximate, based on availability, fluctuation of rice harvests in the land where they are being obtained, and a myriad other factors.

### Honorable Weapons

In Rokugan, samurai drawing a weapon other than their katana in a one-on-one fight (other than *Iaijutsu*) is generally looked down upon by other honorable warriors. GMs may be concerned that the integrity of their world is being tarnished by players who insist on using weapons with high Damage Ratings, regardless of the social ramifications.

*The following optional rules are intended to solve this problem.* The first time that any samurai in the party uses one of these weapons, the GM may penalize her one point of Void. The next time they do so, they lose another point of Void, and a box of Honor.

The third time, they lose two Void, two Honor, and are visited by an angry and powerful ancestor ("Why do you dishonor me, by not drawing my soul? Are you ashamed of the name Hida?"). It causes a samurai's ancestors great pain each time the act is repeated. GMs should continue to penalize the players for daring to wield the *nodachi* or *naginata* over their own katana. A two-point Haunted Disadvantage is a great way to keep PCs who insist on this course in line.

### SWORDS

**Aiguchi** **1k2**

This weapon is quick to draw and used in situations where the attacker wishes to surprise their opponent. GMs may allow an additional +5 to initiative for characters who have successfully kept the blade hidden.

The *aiguchi* is the preferred weapon of geisha, assassins, and anyone trying to conceal their attack. A successful Perception + Notice at TN 30 is required to spot the blade under a character's

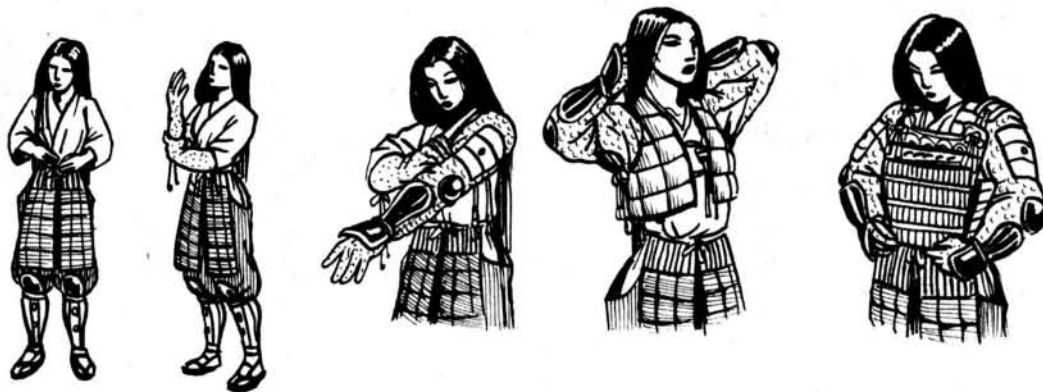
### CEREMONIAL ARMOR PREPARATION (CONTINUED)

The sock-like *tabi* are given to Tsuko for her approval, and placed over the bottom of the *kobokama*. The *tabi* are divided between the first and second toes of each foot, so that the sandals may be placed over the feet properly.

Next comes Tsuko's actual armor. As seen in the basic *Legend of the Five Rings* RPG, a samurai's armor is formed of metal plates lacquered and laced with silk cord. Tsuko certainly has not used dense lacing for her armor-plates, as the cord would absorb water. Waterlogged cords are more difficult to clean, last less time, and often attract ants and other bugs. (Further, a samurai's sweat will soak into the cord, making the armor smell).

Then, she places *kiahn*, or armored shin coverings, followed by the sandals. Now, Tsuko can step outside her tent and begin the long process of arranging the heavy suit of metal armor awaiting her. Because she is the daimyo of the Matsu family, she might have as many as thirteen servants, each holding a piece of armor ready to be worn.

(Continued)





## CEREMONIAL ARMOR PREPARATION (CONTINUED)

Tsuko next receives the *Suneate*, over shin guards which are heavier than the *kiahn*, and less flexible.

Afterwards, the thigh-coverings, known as *hiadate*, are applied, followed by the *yugake*, or gloves. The *kote* are Tsuko's armored sleeves, formed of a single piece of thick material, and laced up beneath the arm. The sleeves do not attach to the body armor, and are occasionally covered with metal plates for extra protection.

Now, Matsu Tsuko asks for her main body armor.

This elaborate piece of protection is made up of the *wakibiki* and the *do*, both for her upper torso, and both made of tightly laced plates. If Tsuko had been an archer, or engaged in extremely light combat, she might do without the *wakibiki*, but since she's a heavy combat bushi, her armor must be much more protective. A *kusazuri* hangs from her *do*, giving her armor a shirt-like appearance. She then ties another belt on, this time called an *uwa-obi*. It holds the armor close against the body. Tremendous *sode*, laced shoulder plates, follow, and then the katana and wakizashi are reverently placed in Tsuko's *uwa-obi*.

clothing. If kept in the pommel of a katana, the TN is 40 to notice it (you might hear it move inside). If the wielder conceals it in a readied position (such as up a sleeve or against one's side), a Contested Perception + Notice vs. Agility + Sleight of Hand will determine the result.

*Tantojutsu* is the appropriate Skill for using the Aiguchi.

### Katana 3k2

There are a great number of samurai in Rokugan using weapons other than the katana against humans. Although the Crab have set a precedent of using the *Tetsubo* against non-human enemies so as not to dishonor their ancestors, it is a great dishonor not to use the katana against a human enemy. Players who continue to use weapons other than their katana should be treated poorly by high ranking samurai around them, feel their Honor slip and Glory questioned, and observe their general worth plummet.

The Kenjutsu Skill is used to wield a katana.

### No-dachi 3k3

The *no-dachi* is reserved for battlefield tactics. Samurai using the *no-dachi* indoors, or in situations where there is less room to maneuver, will find themselves cutting holes in rice paper walls.

The Kenjutsu Skill is used when wielding a *no-dachi*. However, GMs may wish to reduce their skill by one to reflect that 90% of training is with the katana, and that the *no-dachi* is not an honorable bushi weapon.

### Tanto 1k2

The *tanto* is nearly the same size as the *aiguchi*, but it cannot be drawn as easily. Like the *aiguchi*, it is nearly impossible to spot one under a kimono. A Perception + Notice roll at TN 30 will detect one under a character's clothing. If kept in the pommel of a katana, the TN is 40 (you might hear it move inside). If the wielder conceals it in a readied position (such as up a sleeve or against one's side), a Contested Perception + Notice vs. Agility + Sleight of Hand will indicate whether or not it remains hidden.

*Tantojutsu* (Knife) is the appropriate weapon Skill for using the tanto.

### Tessen 0k2

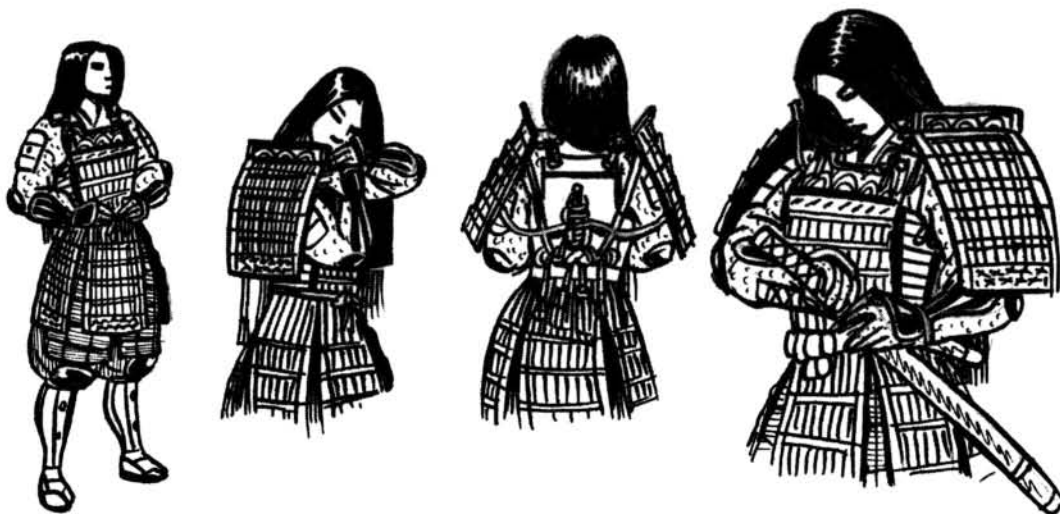
The *Tessen* is a weighted weapon (it is ribbed metal, after all). There are hundreds of styles, and a true general has a unique design on his war fan that reflects his personality.

If a samurai has both a katana and tessen, he may add his *Chisaijutsu* Skill to his defense during a Full Defense maneuver. GMs that find this too powerful may ignore this rule, alternately allowing an ambidextrous character to add the *Chisaijutsu* Skill to her Reflexes for the purposes of determining her TN to be Hit. Again, if this seems too powerful, do not allow it.

*Chisaijutsu* (War Fan) is the appropriate Skill for using a tessen as a weapon in combat. It is also the appropriate skill for using the tessen to give commands during a battle.

### Wakizashi 2k2

The *wakizashi* is rarely drawn for fighting, although the Dragon are notorious for their two-





weapon *niten* technique. It is most prominently used in seppuku ceremonies.

Kenjutsu is the appropriate Skill for wielding a wakizashi.

### POLE-ARMS

The length of a pole-arm keeps a samurai at bay during the initial rounds of combat. However, the initiative bonus gained while using one is lost after three rounds against the same opponent.

#### Die tsuchi 2k2

Note that some ronin and bandits have been known to employ this weapon when ambushing men on horseback. Its deadly weight makes it an incredibly powerful weapon; the *die tsuchi* treats heavy armor as light armor, and light armor is ignored. Against creatures, it reduces their armor modifier by 3. The *die tsuchi* does not gain the normal initiative bonus for being a pole-arm.

Anyone employing a Die *tsuchi* must have the Tsubojutsu Skill and a minimum Strength of 3.

#### Nage-yari 2k2

The *nage-yari* can be thrown to a maximum of 50 feet. Beyond 30 feet however, the weapon's Damage Rating is reduced to 1k2. The *nage-yari* is light-weight, and many samurai can hold one in each hand.

Although smaller and easier to wield than a yari, the *nage-yari* still requires the Yarijutsu Skill to use.

#### Nagamaki 4k2

*Yarijutsu* is the appropriate Skill for wielding a nagamaki.

#### Naginata 3k3

A Naginata is more than simply a "sword on a stick". The blade of a naginata is very different from that of a katana, and must be created by a naginata-specific smith. While it is possible to put

a katana-blade on a naginata handle, it makes an unbalanced weapon with reduced effectiveness.

*Yarijutsu* is the appropriate Skill for wielding a naginata.

#### Ono 3k3

The *ono* is an excellent chopping weapon, and a favorite of the Crab.

The *Onojutsu* Skill is specific to wielding the weapon.

#### Sasumata 0k2

*Yarijutsu* is the appropriate Skill for wielding a sasumata.

#### Sodegarami 0k1

A successful *Yarijutsu* roll against the target (in place of an attack), can dislodge a plate of armor or rip a kimono sleeve from the target. Each dislodged plate reduces the TN bonus of the armor by 1. Like the *sasumata*, the *sodegarami* may trap an opponent, but a Strength test at a TN of 10 is all that is required to escape.

A *sodegarami* is wielded using the *Yarijutsu* Skill.

#### Tetsubo 2k2

The *tetsubo* is most popular weapon among the Crab against non-human enemies. Originally designed to fight against horses and larger animals, the weapon finds its true use when employed against creatures of the Shadowlands. When used against samurai, it ignores armor. When employed against non-human creatures, it reduces the monster armor modifier by 5.

Anyone employing a *Tetsubo* must have the Tsubojutsu Skill and a minimum Strength of 3.

#### Yari 4k2

Some yari may be as long as 7 1/2 to 8' long. The weapon is used to keep samurai and large monsters far away from the wielder. *Yarijutsu* is the appropriate Skill to wield the yari.

### CEREMONIAL ARMOR PREPARATION (CONTINUED)

Finally, Tsuko takes a throat protector, called the *nodowa*, around her neck, and the *hachimaki*, or head cloth, is worn over her skull. A *hoate*, or half-mask, may be worn under her helmet, or a full *mempo* may be worn instead. At last, she lifts her *kabuto*, or helmet, and places it firmly upon her head. She is finally ready to go to war.

With this much preparation and ritual, it is easy to see why samurai did not wear their armor every day. Although Crabs usually wear their armor for extensive periods of time, they are also used to the smell of the plates and lacings after a few days in the harness. One does not wear armor in court under any circumstances.

For a visual step-by-step representation of this procedure, please see the illustrations along the bottom of the pages corresponding with these sidebars.





## THE WARE BOX

**Challenge:** A lacquer ware box is found with a single strange kanji drawn on to its top. The symbol is indecipherable to the PCs and there is no mention of the mark in any of the libraries of their schools.

Inside the box are a handful of odd coins and stones.

**Focus:** No one recognizes the symbol. Even the Asako have no idea of its true meaning. They, however, would like to study it further.

**Strike:** If the players think to analyze the brush strokes on the box, or visit a Kitsuki, they will learn that they do not form kanji, but are directions on a map. Further investigation reveals that the map leads to several places where a single brush stroke is located on a stone, a tree, under a rock, etc. (The final location is somewhere underground.)

What they find is up to the GM.



## Bows

The first round with a bow is crucial. It takes two rounds to remove it from one's pack and connect the drawstring. Samurai who wish to do this faster may make an Agility + Archery roll at a TN of 20. Success indicates that it only takes one round to arm the weapon; failure indicates that it take three. Samurai do not run around with their bows pre-strung, being trained to string them quickly on the field of battle.

When carrying a bow and skilled in its use, the samurai gains 1 to the TN to be Hit for every Rank they have in the Skill.

All bows use the Archery or Horse Archery Skill.

### Dai-kyu As Arrow

Samurai that choose to fire a dai-kyu from the ground must add 10 to their TN due to the heftiness of the weapon.

### Yumi As Arrow

Like the dai-kyu, the yumi is difficult to fire from an unfamiliar position (in this case, horseback). A samurai that uses a yumi to fire arrows from this vantage point adds 10 to her TN.

## ARROWS

### Watakusi 3k3

Against creature armor, watakusi arrows are treated a little differently. If a monster's Armor Rating is 5 or less, ignore it and roll the dice to hit and for Damage normally. Creatures with an Armor Rating of 6-10 double the armor's value against such an arrow, while those with an 11 or greater ignore the arrow altogether. The Crab are wise to fight Oni will shod, metal sticks instead.

### Karimata 1k1

Cutting through ropes or cords requires three to four Raises.

### "Humming bulb" 0k1

On the battlefield, this ammunition grants a Free Raise for all Battle rolls involving the movement or organization of troops.

During an ambush, it can signal to troops that there is trouble ahead.

### "PEASANT" WEAPONS

All peasant weapons use the Nofujutsu (Peasant Weapons) Skill, found in *The Way of the Lion* (page 48).

**Bo** 2k2

Against armor, the bo is very difficult to use. Attacking those with light armor increases the TN by 5, and heavy armor increases this modifier to 10.

**Jitte** 1k1

A disarming maneuver with a jitte requires Three Raises (two including the Free Raise gained naturally for this maneuver with this weapon). If the optional Full Defense rules are being used, this weapon provides an additional 5 to the wielder's TN.

**Jo** 0k2

The jo is very difficult to use against armor. Attacking those light armor increases the TN by 5, and heavy armor increases this modifier to 10.

**Nunchaku** 2k2

The wood is dense and hurts more than a boken or shinai when used.

**Sai** 1k1

A disarming maneuver with a sai requires Three Raises (two including the Free Raise gained naturally for this maneuver with this weapon). If the optional Full Defense rules are being used (see page 63), this weapon provides an additional 5 to the wielder's TN.

**Tonfa** 1k2

The tonfa can be used quite effectively for defense. If the optional Full Defense rules are being used, this weapon provides an additional 5 to the wielder's TN.



## Void

Of all the Rings in the game, Void is potentially the most difficult to understand. It represents an elusive concept – that of nothing and everything, all at once, and serves as the foundation for Shintao philosophy in the Rokugani view of the cosmos.

The game statistic is sometimes just as hard to define. It represents that certain “spark of heroism” some samurai achieve at moments of critical importance, granting them mystic ability to endure and exceed more than any around them for one brief moment of purity.

Void plays a different role in each of the recommended styles of play (see page 50). In a realistic game, GMs may just ignore it. But in the heroic and cinematic versions of L5R, Void becomes a very important Ring. On the next page is a chart detailing many ways that players can spend Void Points during the game. The GM should review it well before the first session and decide which, if any, she will incorporate into her campaign.

## Dice Conventions

How does a GM get her players to make characters with more style and less “game-breaking” potential? One way is to re-emphasize the importance of the Rings. So how can the GM do that? One option is to make them keep their Ring instead of their Trait when making rolls.

For instance, when samurai rolls Agility + Kenjutsu, they commonly keep their Agility in



### THE BEGGAR

**Challenge:** A messenger arrives with a scroll for the PCs. (An old beggar gave it to her along with a few coins.) The kanji written on it are flowing and beautiful, and encapsulate the life of a humble young man, growing to become a great warrior. The story ends with the hero dying, fighting a powerful evil, and saving his native village.

**Focus:** Upon closer examination, the PCs notice that the kanji are arranged in such a way that a powerful spell combination is hidden in the passages between the lines. Attempts to learn the origin of the scroll are useless, and the messenger knows nothing beyond what she was told. A shugenja may need to be consulted regarding the spell's power and use, in which case the PCs learn that the spell is used to destroy and banish Oni.

**Strike:** The beggar is a kami in disguise. He wishes the PC to retrace the steps of the boy in the story and fight an evil that is sleeping beneath a tall, reclusive mountain. GMs interested in running this adventure should write out the story and detail every action of the hero, so the PC knows what to do next.





## THE SPIRIT OF MOTION

**Challenge:** An important ritual must be performed by a powerful shugenja of the PC's clan. In order to complete the ritual, a dance must be completed by the PC, one which has not been performed in over 300 years.

**Focus:** Once the ritual begins and the PC starts dancing in time with the shugenja's chants, the ancient kami of this dance imbues the samurai with the skill to complete it.

**Strike:** Once the ritual is finished however, the kami finds leaving the PC difficult. After all, she has not been worshiped in over 300 years, and she finds contact with a living being somehow satisfying.

### OPTIONAL VOID USE

- Avoid 10 Wounds of Damage. \*
- Changed a declared action (cannot change an attack method - Full remains Full, etc.).
- Convince a peasant to perform an especially important favor.
- Gain an additional Action for one round (cannot be an additional Attack).
- Heal 1 Wound Rank.
- Recognize or locate someone in a crowd.
- Ignore the fatigue or concentration requirements of any spell.
- Increase your TN to be Hit by 10. \*\*
- Intervene during an attack on another PC (volunteer to take the arrow, etc.).
- Modify initiative +/- 5 points.
- Notice if someone is acting in an unusual manner.
- Get one Free Raise.
- Recall an important piece of information (perhaps something that the player has forgotten).
- Reroll the lowest Attack die.
- Stop an opponent's die from exploding (see *More Than Ten Dice*, opposite).

### SPEND TWO VOID TO:

- Avoid 30 Wounds of Damage. \*
- Avoid the gaze of a charismatic samurai.
- Get in to see a Family daimyo.
- Heal three Ranks of Damage.
- Keep an extra die.
- Reroll an Attack.
- Switch initiative with someone.
- Talk to a kami.

### SPEND ALL (3 OR MORE) VOID TO:

- Avoid an entire Attack. \*
- Get in to see the Clan Daimyo.
- Learn the location of an enemy hideout or the identity of a hidden nemesis.
- Successfully escape a siege. \*\*
- Successfully stare down a very high ranking samurai.

\* Be aware that these may be in conflict with the Rank 2 Hida Bushi Technique. See *The Book of Water* (the sidebar on page 40) for a discussion on this ability.

\*\* These are especially appropriate ways for NPCs to use Void.

dice, and throw the lowest dice away. But with this optional rule, they would instead keep their Fire in dice, which may be one or two less than their Agility. The justification is simple: the balance of the soul assures a swift and deadly strike. A similar argument could be made for any Element. As a result, the GM will have players taking an active interest in the Rings that they increase. This has the added bonus of getting them to spend their accumulating Experience Point "bank" more often.

Such a system, however, promotes characters who focus on a single Ring, or two very important Rings. This attitude is hard to break, and GMs may find all their players making combat machines instead of well-balanced samurai.

There is another way to limit players from building "game breaking" characters. GM can rule that the players cannot raise their Void above their lowest Trait. Since Void is the embodiment of all the elements, they must all be aligned before it can be advanced. This ensures that Void is the last Ring to advance, and GMs will notice the PCs working hard to raise all of their Traits to accommodate.

This is especially detrimental to certain character types (*Ise zumi*, Void Shugenja) and GMs may wish to apply the rule on a case-by-case basis. In addition, certain families start with a +1 Void. If you find this unbalancing, tell the players that they must either pick another Trait to get the bonus in, or that they cannot raise their Void any further until the rest of the Traits have been increased beyond it.

Another way is to rule that players may not increase any Ring more than one higher than another. To compensate, the GM may decide to offer the character a free roll on her Heritage Table, or give her samurai an additional item of fine quality at the beginning of play. Or maybe the samurai is more renowned than the others, with 1-5 extra boxes of Glory.

You might also want to eliminate the Traits and only use the Rings. Base the character's TN to be Hit on Air, roll and keep Fire for Attacks, and use Water for anything involving Strength or Perception.

## More than Ten Dice

The situation may arise where a player has more dice to roll than the maximum ten allowed by the L5R rules. It can be very frustrating to blindly throw their dice away, but the rule is important for system balance. Unless GMs want the PCs jumping across 100-foot wide chasms, they should continue to observe this rule.

However, there may be cases where a GM wants to allow the PCs to utilize their entire dice pool. In either a heroic or cinematic game, samurai are expected to accomplish a great number of things that might be considered "super-heroic". To represent this, we provide two optional rules that will increase the potential of the players' actions, should the GM find them appropriate. Note that it is highly recommended that these rules not be combined.

### *Every two dice is an automatic 10.*

For every two dice beyond the 10th (i.e. 12th, 14th, 16th, etc.), the PC adds 10 to the final (read: rolled) total. For instance, a player that could roll 15k8, would instead roll 10k8, adding 20 to the final total. The dice that become an automatically generated total in this fashion are called "exploding" dice.

### *Every two dice convert to a kept die.*

This system is a little more limited, but still provides for some very heroic action. Every two dice beyond 10 become an additional kept die. So, in the above example, 15k8 would nicely convert to 10k10. Any additional dice are lost using this system.

## Combining Skills

There are occasions in the L5R RPG where combining Skills makes a great deal of sense. For example, it can be very useful to combine Battle and Tessen into a single roll, to make decisions quickly and convince one's troops to follow orders. Investigation and Lore may be combined to discover the unnatural properties of items, or historical references.

There is a simple way to do this, but GMs should only use this system when two rolls make no sense separately. In order to determine what is wrong about some animal tracks, for instance,

Investigation and Hunting could be combined. If the animal had been domesticated, Animal Husbandry would also be in order.

The GM must first determine which Skills are necessary to perform the feat. She should then average the Skill Ranks (by totaling the Skill Ranks together and dividing by the number of Skills involved, rounding up). For each Skill beyond the first, one should be added. This is the total number of Skill dice the player should roll, in addition to *one* relative Trait (still keeping the Trait in dice).

**Example:** Laura's Agasha has been investigating the trail of a maho-tsukai. Inside a cave are powders, liquids, bone fragments, and blood. She could try to learn something about the evidence, and the GM might determine that her Lore Skills in Maho, *Kagaku* (chemicals), and Anatomy are all relevant. Because the GM has asked for all of them to be rolled, she totals her Lore: Anatomy + Lore: Maho + Lore: Kagaku. She has an Anatomy of 1, Maho Lore of 2, and Kagaku of 3. Her Skill total once all of the math is finished is 2 ( $1+2+3 = 6$  divided by 2 is 2, plus the total number of Skills beyond one, or 2 more).

A simpler method, and one that uses less math, is to take the lowest Skill Rank in the group, and add one to the total for each additional person with the Skill beyond the first. This system is much more abstract, and does not take into account the extent of knowledge that a character might have. It is faster, however, and keeps the action moving.

An interesting twist in this system is to use a different colored die for each Skill and Trait, so that the GM may interpret how much each person's Skill is affecting the equation.

## Full Defense

This system is recommended for GMs looking for more flexibility than the original defense rules offer. Take the Agility of the personality while they are using Full Defense, add her Defense Skill, and multiply the total by 5. This can increase the TN by upwards of 25 for characters with high defense statistics. This is exceptionally useful for shugenja characters who aren't prepared to face some of the situations their bushi brethren regularly drag them into.



### EULOGY

**Challenge:** The PCs are asked to deliver a message to the Imperial Court. The Doji are presenting a new bride to the Seppun family, and the PCs' daimyo is eager to give his favor to the wedding. The PCs escort a very respected and elderly *omoidasu* - Ikoma Sukemi - to the palace to receive an oration at the wedding.

**Focus:** Two weeks into their travels, Sukemi dies in his sleep. All of his scrolls and equipment are intact. The duty of the eta is to burn the body and all of its belongings while returning his wakizashi to the family.

Before they can put the body onto a funeral pyre, the players must decide whether or not to take the scrolls Sukemi would deliver at the wedding. In addition, they must now deliver the oration themselves, with only a few days left in their journey.

**Strike:** Upon arriving at the capital, they find the city bustling with news of the wedding. Many samurai assemble to share gifts with the couple, and the players must now figure out how to impress the court. Everything imaginable is being presented in the hopes of currying the favor of the new couple's proud families. Do the players present the very sincere and personal story written by Ikoma Sukemi as an epitaph to his life? Or do they have other plans?





## Cinematic Armor System

In the existing system, armor merely raises the TN of all attacks directed at the wearer, without providing any additional protection if the strike is true. Although this is a valid representation of metal plates (*sode*), remember that these plates are laced together with silk cords, and that they are being slashed at with a razor sharp katana.

GMs who wish to add another layer to the armor system may use the Cinematic Armor System, detailed here. It greatly increases the chances of samurai wearing armor surviving combat. Those who pursue this method are encouraged to add 5 or 10 to the TNs of all those who do not wear armor, to offset the additional game effects light and heavy armor will gain.

In this system, samurai armor behaves more like creature armor, absorbing a certain percentage of the damage rolled.

Light armor still adds 5 to the wearer's TN to be Hit, but also provides an Armor value of 4. This means that any Attack dice that roll 3 or less are treated as having rolled a 1.

Heavy armor still adds 10 to the wearer's TN to be Hit, but also provides an armor value of 7 (i.e. any Attack dice that score less than 7 are treated as having rolled a 1). Heavy armor still encumbers, making all the wearer's physical Actions (fighting, running, jumping, etc.) more difficult, adding 5 to all such TNs. Note that some GMs may wish to apply a 1-die penalty to all Agility Actions, rather than increasing the TN of all physical Actions by 5.

If using the cinematic wound system in conjunction with the cinematic armor system, the multiplier should be no higher than x3. Otherwise, the PCs will *never* go down.

## Hit Locations

Sometimes, a GM may wish to expand on the damage PCs take during play. He may desire more description than merely "A single blow divides the samurai in two." The following tables expand the various locations where a strike may fall. There are two - Simplified and Expanded. Both are optional, and GMs should alert players as to which system she will be using before play.

## DAMAGE

Some attacks can disable or destroy a limb. A samurai who does a great deal of damage to an arm can remove it in one blow (in the realistic game, this is automatic). In the heroic game, it is possible to determine whether a single wound has disabled or destroyed a specific location. Consult the nearby charts to determine where a successful attack falls, then use the Wound Severity Table to find out how it affects the character.

### *Disabled Locations*

A disabling injury is one that seriously impairs the abilities of the target. Such injuries include, but are not limited to, serious sprains, broken bones, deep wounds, bruising, and internal bleeding.

### *Destroyed Locations*

Destroyed locations are potentially life threatening. Blunt attacks cause maimed or pulped limbs, crushed joints, and death by internal bleeding. Slashing attacks sever the effected limb, and piercing attacks cause severe organ and nerve damage, as the victim is impaled on the attacker's weapon.

## LEGS

**Disabled:** The defender falls and can move only short distances (hobbling, crawling, etc.). Her TN to be Hit drops by 10 (minimum 5), and a leg remains Disabled. If both legs become Disabled, the samurai cannot move, and all Attacks directed at her automatically hit. Full Defense with one Disabled leg suffers a +10 to the TN; two Disabled legs are at +25.

**Destroyed:** The limb is severed or maimed beyond repair. The defender falls to the ground, and Attacks against her hit automatically unless she opts for Full Defense. Only 1/4 her normal movement is possible. Slashing or piercing attacks cause bleeding equal to 6 minus the defender's Earth Ring, per round, until medical attention is received (the Medicine Skill, magic, or divine aid). Further hits and damage to the legs are applied to the Torso.

## ARMS

**Disabled:** The defender's limb is useless until healed (see above). Attacks with that limb are impossible, and her TN to be Hit is reduced by 5.



**Destroyed:** The limb is severed or maimed beyond repair. The victim's TN to be Hit on that flank becomes 5 unless she opts for Full Defense. Slashing or Piercing attacks cause 5 Wounds minus her Earth Ring in bleeding, per round, until medical attention is received (see above). Further hits and damage are applied to her Torso.

**TORSO**

**Disabled:** The defender falls and is unable to move beyond a crawl. Her TN to be Hit is 5. Piercing and slashing attacks cause 8 minus her Earth Ring in points of bleeding, per round, until medical aid is applied (see above).

**Destroyed:** The defender is killed, impaled or cut in half by the attack. This is particularly appropriate for a cinematic or realistic game. A good example of this can be seen in many of Akira Kurosawa's films.

**Head Disabled:** The defender is knocked unconscious for a number of minutes equal to her Strength, and also suffers a special effect (roll a die on the nearby table to determine the effect).

**Destroyed:** The defender is killed, her head pulped or severed.

# Wound Levels

Another recommendation: that players are always allowed to roll at least one die for any situation, and that their Strength is never reduced by their Wound Level. This optional rule is meant to counteract the effects of reduced Strength upon the PC's initiative (which can be very important in L5R combat).

## EXPANDED HIT LOCATION TABLE

Roll	Location Affected*	Roll	Location
2	Lower Leg	12-13	Chest Lower Arm
3	Shin/Calf	14	Hands
4	Knee Upper Leg	15	Forearm
5	Thigh	16	Elbow Upper Arm
6	Hip Vitals	17	Bicep
7	Groin	18	Shoulders Head
8-9	Belly Torso	19	Neck
10	Ribs	20	Head
11	Sternum		

Roll 2 dice. Use the following modifiers to determine the location and extent of a strike. Again, these are optional and should only be used with this chart.

Situation	Modifier
Attacker's height < Defender's height	- 1/2 difference to die roll
Attacker's height > Defender's height	+ 1/2 difference to die roll
Blow struck in melee combat	+ 2 to die roll
Attacker's Skill with weapon	+/- Skill level to die roll

## SIMPLIFIED HIT LOCATION TABLE

Roll 2 Dice	Location Affected*
2-4	Lower Leg
5-6	Upper Leg
7-9	Vitals
10-13	Torso
14-15	Lower Arm
16-17	Upper Arm
18	Neck
19-20	Head

\* Whenever appropriate, roll one die. On a 1-5, the hit is to the left side of the body. On a 6-10, the hit is to the right side of the body.

## WOUND SEVERITY TABLE

Location	Disable	Destroy
Legs	Earth x 4	Earth x 6
Arms	Earth x 3	Earth x 5
Torso	Earth x 10	Earth x 15*
Head	Earth x 5	Earth x 7

\* This is the equivalent of a character dropping from full health to death by a single blow.

## HEAD DISABLED TABLE

Roll	Effect
1-2	Scar (+5 to all seduction TNs)
3-4	Concussion (-1 to all physical statistics for one week)
5-6	Broken Teeth (+10 to persuasion TNs)
7	Nose smashed or cut off (+10 to all interaction TNs)
8	Ear cut off, deaf in one ear (+10 to hearing TNs)
9-10	Eye destroyed (-10 to Attack from that flank)



## GLORY RECOGNITION TABLE

Glory Rank of Target	TN to be Noticed
0.0 - 0.5	.40
0.6 - 1.0	.35
1.1 - 1.5	.30
1.6 - 2.0	.25
2.1 - 3.0	.20
3.1 - 3.5	.15
3.6 - 4.0	.10
4.1 - 5.0	.5
5.1 - 6.0	.20 / 40 *
6.1 - 7.0	.15 / 40 *
7.1 - 8.0	.10 / 40 *
8.1 - 9.9	.5 / 40 *
Emperor	Automatic / 40 *

\* The TN to the left applies when the NPC is with attendants and an entourage; the TN to the right applies when alone.

Glory Rank of target is two higher / lower than PCs	.....+10
Glory Rank of target is five higher / lower than PCs	.....+25
PC has Heraldry 3 or higher	.....-10
PC is a ronin	.....+20
Target has a Bad Reputation	.....-10
Target has Benten's Blessing	.....-10
Target has Benten's Curse	.....-10
Target has Dangerous Beauty	.....-10
Target has Bland	.....+10
Target is a Black Sheep	.....-10
Target is Antisocial	.....+5/+10
Target is from the Dragon/Unicorn and the PC is not	.....+5
Target is from the same clan	.....-10 (-5 for Lion or Crane)

## Glory: Recognizing Each Other

It may not always be easy to spot and recognize every samurai, even the ones in your own Clan or family. After all, there are over 400,000 Lion Bushi alone. How does the GM determine who a samurai knows, and who she doesn't? Although Glory provides a way of keeping track of the character's reknown, what about NPCs which the characters meet along the way? How often should they recognize or not recognize the PC? An arbitrary system of picking and choosing NPCs at random works, but it may

be better if their Glory Rank play a role in the process.

In order to take notice of another NPC (or PC), a player should roll her Intelligence plus her Glory, keeping Intelligence and compare it to the TN listed above. The chance to recognize a character is based on the Glory of the target, as well as the Glory of the viewer. A PC trying to notice someone from her own class is much more likely to recognize them over someone whom she may only have heard of.





# *Chapter Four*

風

*The Book  
of Air*

## THE CODE OF BUSHIDO

### Gi: Honesty and Justice

Be acutely honest throughout your dealings with all people. Believe in justice, not from other people, but from yourself. To a true samurai, there are no shades of gray in honesty and justice.

There is only right and wrong.

### Yu: Heroic Courage

Rise up above the masses of people who are afraid to act. Hiding like a turtle in a shell is not living at all. A samurai must have heroic courage. It is living life completely, fully, wonderfully. Heroic courage is not blind. It is intelligent and strong.

Replace fear with respect and caution.

### Jin: Compassion

Through intense training, the samurai becomes quick and strong.

She is not as others. She develops a power that must be used for the good of all.

She has compassion. She helps her fellow humans at every opportunity. If an opportunity does not arise, she goes out of her way to find one.



## Etiquette

L5R has a unique element that is unparalleled in other gaming environments - Sincerity. With this single cultural norm, the entire process of social interaction is given a twist, as the proverbial rug we stand on is removed from beneath us. Sincerity is the living, breathing embodiment of all moral fiber in Rokugan. And from a GM's perspective, it is their best friend.

In Rokugan, guards are not lazy, low paid, first-level fighters. The daimyos are not boy-kings easily tricked by the tongue of a slippery counselor. One thousand years of tradition and regimen have crafted a very simple and unique method of conveying sympathy. PCs unable to convince NPCs of their sincerity will quickly find themselves in a quiet ceremony, a sword thrust into their belly by their own hand. GMs should not underestimate such a valuable tool.

In most roleplaying game environments, PCs looking to charm their way out of a fix would merely interact with the GM and do whatever they could to make their message resonant in his ears. Those *players* most skilled at conversation would gain the GM's attention and get exactly what they needed, while those with less interpersonal acumen would suffer within the game environment, regardless of their *character's* Skill.

In such campaigns, the game system (or its use) encourages players to avoid putting points into their social Skills, knowing they could smooth-talk the GM, or fight their way out of sticky situations. In L5R, players who do this are twisting the spirit of the game, making their

characters more powerful in one arena than the others, and undermining the Gamemaster's careful world balance. GMs interested in leveling the playing field are encouraged to utilize the following examples of Sincerity in action.

### Notes for the Examples

Alex is playing Doji Shogo and Eli is playing Bayushi Akeu. Both characters are meeting a young Seppun woman for the first time. Each has separately prepared for the event and brought gifts for the lady. The following is an example of how not to handle the situation, and a second shows how to be fair to both players. Alex is a decidedly more skilled *roleplayer* here, and Eli is therefore at a disadvantage socially. On the other hand, Eli's *character* has better stats.

### SITUATION I

In this example, the GM takes neither Eli's lack of experience or his character's Skill into account.

**GM:** Seppun Masekeri steps from her parlor and meets you in the front room. She wears her hair up, and her beautiful face pales before the beauty of her deep blue eyes. She bows, and kneels on the floor before you. Her eyes lower and then raise to meet your gaze.

**Alex (Shogo):** Shogo bows to Masekeri. I would like Akeu to go first, so Shogo is bowing his head to indicate he wishes to offer Akeu the opportunity to speak.

**GM:** Okay. Eli, Alex has done an excellent job of properly waiting for you. He's treating you with the respect of a samurai above your station. You should be impressed.

**Eli (Akeu):** Great. I give her the gift, and read her the poem. Can I make an Etiquette roll, and a Poetry roll?

**GM:** Sure. Awareness + Skill for each.

**Eli:** My rolls are 23 for Etiquette and 11 for Poetry.

**GM:** The package is wrapped marvelously, and she smiles at you as she gingerly takes the box in her hand and places it at her side. You aren't sure, but you think she frowned a little when she heard your poem.

**Eli:** It figures.

**GM:** She looks up at you, Shogo. What do you say?

**Alex:** Shogo steps forward and bows low, never taking his eyes off of her. I know he's being a little flirtatious, but Shogo finds her beauty



mesmerizing. "My lady, I am Doji Shogo. I am most honored to be in your home visiting with such a charming woman. It would most please me to hear you speak, so that I may treasure the words."

Alex: "I am most flattered that you have invited me to your home. I have crafted a lacquer bowl for you myself, and painted the name of your family on it. It would please me if you would accept this gift."

GM: She's blushing now. She pulls a fan from her kimono sleeve and politely waves the heat from her face. "I am Seppun Masekeri, and I am most pleased to meet such a noble member of the Doji family." [GM Rolls some dice.] She seems genuine and very sincere. (As an aside) I rolled a 37.

Alex understands the intricacies of Rokugani culture far better than Eli (as shown by his polite and careful approach), and this should count in his favor. Yet while Alex could draw upon this knowledge whenever he liked, Eli was limited by the use of his *character's* Skill to keep up.

The GM did not give Eli any opportunities to improve his situation after his initial failure with Poetry. One low roll was all it took to ruin the scene for him.

While Eli was rolling dice and playing a roleplaying game, Alex and the GM were playing a live action game. Although it may not seem like it, there is a subtle difference between the two. Live action gaming most definitely favors the more articulate and dramatic player.

## SITUATION 2

In this example, the players and the characters are treated in distinctly different ways, according to their ability. Alex is given more leeway to roleplay *his own* knowledge, while Eli is allowed several rolls to represent his *character's* knowledge.

GM: [Introduces Seppun Masekeri as in *Situation #1*].

Alex (Shogo): [Indicates that he would like Akeu to go first, as in *Situation #1*].

GM: Make an Awareness + Etiquette roll.

Alex: Okay. 14.

GM: Eli, Alex is bowing his head to you. He's indicating that he wants you to step forward first and offer your gift. Would you like to bow to him? If you roll better than a 14, I'll make him go first. Be aware that he is trying to treat you with the respect of a samurai above your station. You should be impressed.



## THE CODE OF BUSHIDO (CONTINUED)

### Rei: Polite Courtesy

Samurai have no reason to be cruel. They do not need to prove their strength. A samurai is courteous, even to her enemies. Without this outward show of respect, we are nothing more than animals. The true inner strength of a samurai becomes very apparent during times of stress.

### Meyo: Honor

The true samurai has only one judge of her honor, and that is herself. Decisions you make and how these decisions are carried out reflect who you truly are.

You cannot hide from yourself.

### Makato: Complete Sincerity

When a samurai has says she will perform an action, it is as good as done. Nothing on the earth will stop her from completing what she has said she will do. She does not have to "promise". The act of speaking alone has set the act of doing in motion.

### Chugo: Duty and Loyalty

A samurai who has done something or said something owns that thing. She is responsible for it and all consequences that follow. To those she is responsible for, she remains fiercely true.





## ETIQUETTE FOR THE BUSHI

*"I kneel before my lord. I kneel before the lord of my opposition. I bow my head as I rise and gaze onto the face of my challenger. I am ready."*

GMs who find their samurai avoiding the purchase of the Etiquette Skill may wish to evoke a few tricks to make them reconsider.

It is necessary to prepare yourself for a duel – mentally, physically, and spiritually. Those who do not follow the etiquette for duels are sure to look foolish in the eyes of their betters, and be doomed before the blades are even drawn.

How would a duelist feel if her opponent were bowing properly, while she was clumsy and unsure? In cases where one duelist obviously outclasses an opponent, Willpower or Etiquette rolls can affect the course of a given duel acutely.

Optionally, you may ask for as many Etiquette or Willpower rolls before a duel as you like, perhaps Contested by the opponent's averaged Willpower and Etiquette x5. Each failed roll becomes one less die that the samurai may roll during the Iaijutsu challenge.

**Eli (Akeu):** Thank you. Yes. I would like to roll Awareness + Etiquette. I rolled 24. Is that enough?

**GM:** Yeah. That's enough. Alex, Akeu is showing more respect than you by bowing further. You have to go first.

**Alex:** Shogo steps forward and bows low, never taking his eyes off of her. I know he's being a little flirtatious, but Shogo finds her beauty mesmerizing. "My lady, I am Doji Shogo. It is with great pride that I take in your beauty. Your home is charming and its pallor is beyond compare. You honor me with your invitation."

**GM:** Roll Awareness + Sincerity. Your TN is a 15.

**Alex:** I'll raise to 25 for two Raises. I rolled 29.

**GM:** [Behind the screen, the GM makes a few notes.] She's blushing now, and pulls a fan from her kimono sleeve. She is fanning herself and smiling. "I am Seppun Masekeri, and I am most pleased to meet such a noble member of the Doji family." [GM Rolls some dice.] She seems genuine and very sincere.

**Alex:** "I am most flattered that you have invited me to your home. I have crafted a lacquer bowl for you myself, and painted the name of your family on it. It would please me if you would accept this gift."

**GM:** Roll Awareness + Etiquette. Again, the TN is 15.

**Alex:** Can I raise it to a 20?

**GM:** Sure.

**Alex:** 33.

**GM:** Wow. She is taken aback by your gesture. You can see that she is smitten with you. "I cannot accept such a beautiful gift. Surely you intend to charm a woman more suited to your station."

**Alex:** "I know that it is nothing in comparison to the your beauty, but it would honor me if you would accept such simple trinket of my admiration."

**GM:** Good stuff. Give me another roll. Awareness + Sincerity this time. The TN is still 15.

**Alex:** I rolled 18.

**GM:** That's fine. She's already amazed. "Simple it cannot be. I would never think to take such beauty from you, when your presence in my home is gift enough."

**Alex:** "I would never be sold bold as to insist that my gift being taken, dear lady, but it is all I have to offer such a beautiful woman."

**GM:** One more Sincerity roll, please.

**Alex:** 23.

**GM:** Geesh. "Thank you, Doji-sama!"

**Alex:** "Shogo." Shogo steps forward, bows and presents the gift to her with his hands up, and the gift laid out across his palms. It is a simple box, wrapped with yellow paper, and red string. The paper has flowers and canaries painted on it. Shogo wrapped it himself.

**GM:** Awareness + Etiquette?

**Alex:** 19.

**GM:** You can see that she is very impressed with you. She smiles widely and tells you she will be most pleased to open it later. Akeu, she turns to see you. [The GM notices Eli writing something down on a piece of paper.] Eli? Are you ready?

**Eli:** Just two more seconds. Okay. Now I see how it's done. [Finishes writing.]

**GM:** She's looking up at you. What do you say to her?

**Eli:** Ahem. "Lady Seppun. I have here a gift. Crafted by a merchant, but presented to you by my very hand. Your beauty has compelled me to song; I have written a Haiku for you. Would you like to hear it?"

**GM:** Okay. First the Awareness + Sincerity for that speech. And a Etiquette roll for the gift.

**Eli:** Sincerity, 25. And Etiquette... 29.

**GM:** Wow. Okay. She smiles at you as she gingerly takes the box in her hand and places it at her side. She is pleased by your deportment. She's probably never met anyone like you. "Yes. I would love to hear the Haiku."

**Eli:** I actually wrote one while Alex was roleplaying with you. Should I read it?

**GM:** Really? Great. Go for it.

**Eli:** I've never written a haiku before, but it's 5-7-5 right?

**GM:** In Rokugan it is. [Laughs.]

**Eli:** Beauty is for those  
Earnest enough to live loud  
And worship soundly

Our world is alive  
The breathing of the wind, now  
And before time was

Do not hesitate  
Waver, you shall sink below  
Life, an unsure wake

**GM:** [Scratches head.] Did you just come up with that?

Eli: Yeah. While you two were talking. It was fun.

GM: Amazing. Give yourself an extra Point of Experience that has to go toward Poetry. And roll Awareness + Poetry.

Eli: [Shaking dice for a long time.] Nuts. All that and only a 15.

GM: A 15 is good. You'll charm her socks off.

Eli: Yeah?

[Cue sunset.]

You may notice that in the second example, the GM asked for many dice rolls from both players throughout. This served to balance Alex's superior roleplaying abilities, and to give Eli ample opportunity for his character's superior Skills to shine. The GM distinguished between player and character, and never once gave any game benefits to the characters that were not substantiated by rules.

In the first example, the GM awarded Alex with lower TNs or no die rolls based on the quality of his roleplaying. This meant that he had the advantage mechanically as well as dramatically, which was doubly unfair to Eli.

In the second, the game's action was reflected by the Skills and talents of the characters, equally. The awards for roleplaying came at the end of the session, in the form of an XP award to Alex for his great roleplaying, and to Eli for his impromptu poem. Both instances taught the other player something about the culture and how to play the game, which is the kind of thing that should be rewarded at the table.

Statistics represent what a character *is*. In order for the game to be balanced, the stats must be reflective of what is important in the game world. Since PCs cannot create characters with superb fighting Skills and then "act out" the fight and earn bonuses for excellent blows, it serves to reason that a PC should not be awarded with a bonus to their die roll for describing their use of the Etiquette Skill.

Reward roleplaying with Experience Points. If someone brings flowers, a kimono, and several poems to the table, give them bonus XP for their Etiquette, Poetry, and any other Skills they use the props with. Otherwise, props and witty banter become merely +1 swords that work all of the time, *replacing* the need for a rules system instead of enhancing it.



Whenever anyone asks me what a roleplaying game is, I always compare it to pretending as a child, *a la* cops and robbers. Children take on "roles", usually people with a title or level of importance they aspire to (cops, cowboys, etc.). Although the *personality* is always similar to their own, they perform the *duties* required of that role. They *act* in the character they have chosen, which is much like we do at a gaming table.

Many of us roleplay in the first person, speaking (and sometimes moving) as our characters would in the same situation. Players using this style of gaming commonly identify more closely with the person they wish to be, and take on the role in a more personal light.

Third-person gamers are known for saying things such as "She opens the door" or "My character bows and says thank you." Although a bit sterile, this style of play is not uncommon for beginners. The third person allows a player to engage in the action of the game, while still providing her room to join in-character "discussions" at her leisure.

The shift from one style to another is simple, requiring little more than an adjustment in how each player described their actions. With a little nudge and some direction, those familiar with third-person gaming should have no problem adjusting to the first-person style. This will benefit everyone involved by giving them a common ground from which to approach the imaginary environment their character are experiencing. Also, it will lift the average level of intensity at the table, encouraging all involved to support the drama of the moment, becoming even closer to their characters.



## DICE

Diceless roleplaying has a certain stigma to it. The concept of someone making an "arbitrary" decision to effect the fate of your character can be upsetting, while the dice never judge the player, remaining completely impartial to the fate the PC. This creates the illusion of control that players are so fond of.

But it must be made clear that the dice themselves are, in effect, an arbitrary force. The dice do not care about the fate of the PC, and never step in with sympathy, mercy, or concern. A bad roll is a bad roll, regardless of the consequences.

We sometimes see the GM as being an "arbitrary" force, when in actuality, the GM cares more about the fate of the PC (whether good or bad) than the dice ever could. Keep this in mind when deciding whether diceless roleplaying is an option for you.

## Abstract vs Detailed Roleplay

Whether we know it or not, most roleplaying sessions are run in one of two ways – as either abstract or detailed. The method used affects how the the players conduct themselves.

### ABSTRACT

In the abstract game, players adventure from event to event and decipher clues in-between with the simplicity of a few dice rolls. The abstract game rarely worries about the hows and whys of the plot, and merely gets to heart of the matter without pretense.

#### *A Scene From an Abstract Game*

“The tea house is busy, and there are a few empty seats. A tough looking ronin is sitting by himself in the corner. Roll Etiquette plus

Awareness.” [Totals dice.] “Okay. Bob, you really impress the master of the Tea House with your Etiquette and are offered a nice table in the back. You sit down and enjoy some green tea for a while. A giant of a man, dressed in Crab armor, enters the room and starts shouting. What do you do?”

Chaos ensues, and the players fight. Afterwards, an Investigation + Perception roll is made to notice a scroll in the dead Crab’s belt. It leads the characters to a ruined tower on the southern edge of the Unicorn lands. Once there, the GM picks up the game, with no events in between.

This example is purposely obtuse. GMs who run this sort of game may find that no matter what RPG they pick up, their games are all very similar, and in the end the world they use only provides them with different monsters and character archetypes to draw upon. There is nothing wrong with this type of gaming. In fact,

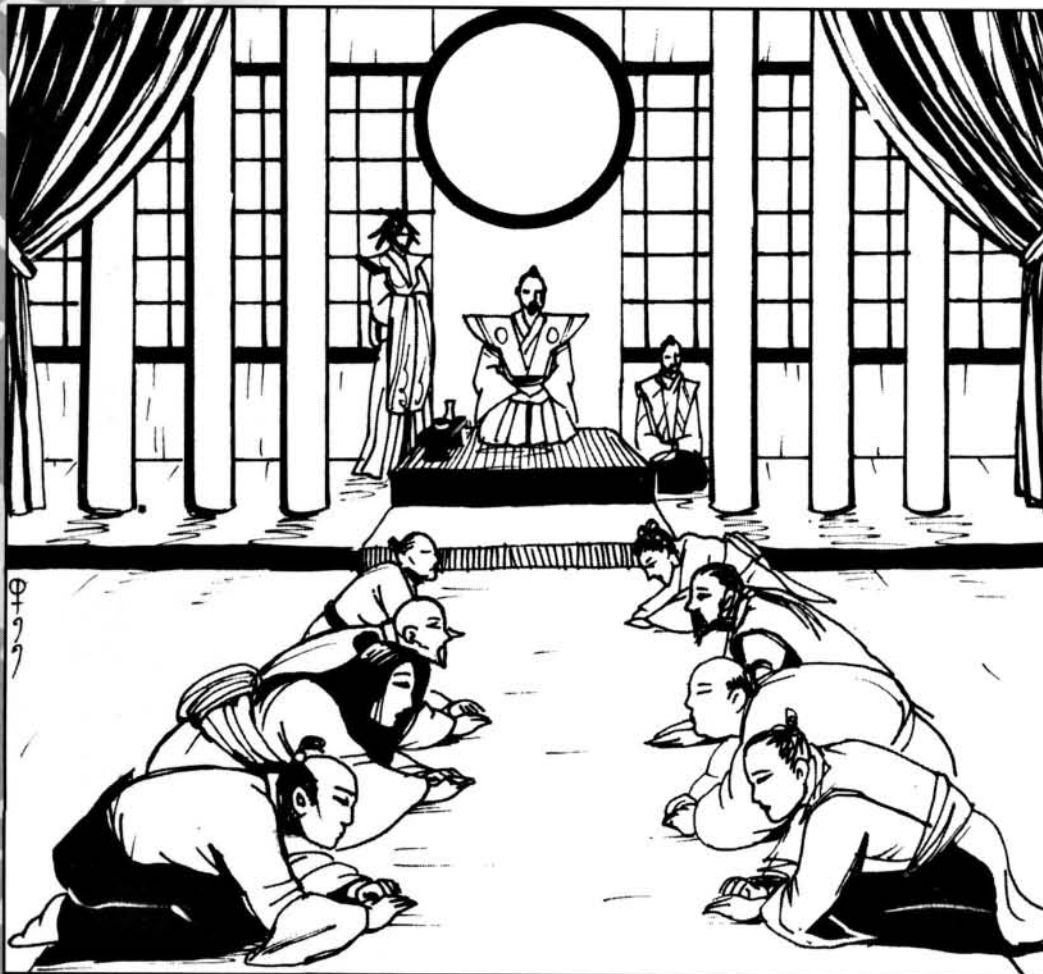
such campaigns can draw upon high-action movies and stories as great resource material.

### DETAILED

In a detailed game, there is a much greater focus on the little things that go on between major scenes. Such a campaign may see many divergent subplots, as the players tackle smaller stories en route to the big showdown.

#### *A Scene From a Detailed Game*

“The tea house is busy. The air is hot, and the smell of rich spices are pouring out of the back room into the main hall. The short, squat tables are surrounded on all sides by samurai and merchants. The scene is lively, and there don’t appear to be many empty cushions to kneel on. Several merchants, ronin, and clan samurai are enjoying





themselves. Some have even started playing games at their table. The master of the tea house approaches you and bows very low. He introduces himself as Gorei, and asks if you would like to try his famous green bunkaisan tea?"

"We bow, not as low, and say 'Domo arigato'. Can I make an Etiquette roll?"

"Sure. It's an open roll, so there's no TN."

"Awareness + Etiquette. I rolled a 19. Does he notice my clan mon and my station as a high ranking bushi?"

"Hmm... He smiles. He seems very pleased with your manners, and asks you to follow him. He has a fine table for you and your men. He leads you through the loud room, and into a separate one, where is it much more quiet. Will this do?"

"Hai."

"He beckons you to sit as he places a stick of incense at the center of the table. The table has carvings on the legs and top. It appears to be made from oak, and is much nicer than the tables in the main room. He bows his head low, waiting to hear what you will have..."

"We would be delighted if you would choose a fine tea and meal for us this evening."

This example was at least twice as long as the previous one, and the players have yet to drink their tea. It will be a while before any action happens, but the GM has utilized the scenery, the hospitality, culture, and nuances of Rokugan. There characters have no doubt where they are.

Slow development of the environment allows the players time to get into character before being thrown into combat. It also presents the level of detail that some of us have grown so fond of in our favorite stories.

### **A COMMON GROUND**

The GM should tailor his descriptions to meet the playing style of his group. If not, the players might expect one style and present themselves in that manner, while the GM intends another. This "common ground" must be maintained to ensure that the flow of action is to everyone's liking.

## **Reactive vs. Active Roleplaying**

### **THE REACTIVE GAME**

Most players and GMs are familiar with the reactive method of gaming. Here, the players make characters, the GM writes an adventure, and the players show up to respond and react to the situations that the GM presents to them. When the action is slow, the players remain passive and inert, waiting for an opportunity to do what they are told. This is more common for beginners than the active method.

In the reactive game, the quality of play is dictated by the quality of the GM's story. Generally, the only change in play style occurs when the GM has run out of adventure, or a new player has been introduced to the environment, and the dynamic is thrown off. Reactive games rely on the skills of the GM to propel the adventure forward, and many of the clues must be obvious and easy to follow.

#### *Pulled by the Nose*

Reactive adventures are designed to proceed from point A to point B in a straightforward manner, with little leeway. If this works for you, do it. Expect, however, that your players will not take the initiative very often, and that they will rarely speak out of turn. Ultimately, this style of games provides few opportunities for the PCs to do anything.

### **THE ACTIVE GAME**

Active roleplaying is a little different. Using this method, the players come up with motivations and actions for their characters, even when the action is slow. The GM must be good at playing off of the imagination of her players, and be ready with an answer to any question they ask. Active roleplaying is generally more lively, less structured, and more social than reactive gaming. As a result, GMs and players must work harder to produce results.

#### *Let them do what they want*

One principal concern in active games is how to keep the players focused on the GM's story without reverting to a reactive style of play. Many GMs allow PCs the freedom to act as they wish - regardless of plot, action, and intrigue - until they



## PROPS

Players love goodies. With a little work, GMs can create props that have significance in the story, or that have some value to game play. One example is a package that must be delivered; the players can hold on to it through the session, investigating it over the course of the game.

Atmospheric props are less important to the game, and can include most anything. The following is just a small list of items a GM might use to spice up her game:

Bonsai tree  
Brush  
Chopsticks  
Clan War figures  
Costume jewelry  
Cricket (real or otherwise)  
Dry rice  
Fan  
Kimono  
Koku coins  
Lantern  
Locket  
Miniature Zen (Shintao) garden  
Model of a small shrine  
Model of a torii arch  
Pearl  
Piece of jade  
Piece of silk  
Scroll  
Shogi screen  
Tea or sake set  
Tsuba  
Wooden pillow box

stumble upon the evidence. This works best for players who love getting into the psyche and drama of their own personal samurai, but GMs may find that planning ahead for such games is counterproductive. They are likely to plan three hours of gaming material that takes the PCs five sessions to get through.

Players who miss the type of subtle hints that occur in active games, chase after the wrong clues, and track down all the wrong leads, must be carefully guided at all times. GMs must find ways to keep them on track, like the intervention of important NPCs and visits from estranged relatives. Such hooks must remain realistic, or the game will spiral into a farcical comedy where the players' suspension of disbelief takes a back seat to the plot.

For more on maintaining an active gaming style, please continue reading through the next section, *Running on the Fly*.

## Running on the Fly

GMs who do not prepare for every contingency, or that start with only a few ideas, will find most of their story developing off the top of their heads. Although there is certainly nothing wrong with this method of storytelling, it is not an easy chore to undertake. GMs who insist on running games in this manner should be aware of a few things.

### KEEP TRACK OF WHAT YOU SAID

Nothing hurts a campaign more than a PC who keeps better notes than you do. If you are going to make everything up as you go along, be sure to write it all down. You don't want to say that the Dragon is 742 years old and describe every scale on its frame, just to have the players be the only ones to remember the details six sessions later. Running on the fly requires immense attention to detail, especially if the campaign or adventure is going to last more than one evening.

Keep it simple. Define what you want, but keep the details of the plot vague until you've had a chance to reread your notes from former sessions. When the game is over, you should immediately begin to plan for the next week. Never assume that you've covered everything.

### WHAT'S BEYOND THAT HILL?

Even the most careful GMs will be forced at times to detail something that they haven't prepared for. In a game without a net, the likelihood an unforeseen question is a constant concern, and one that can seriously jeopardize their adventure. Hopefully GMs who choose to run on the fly will be able to answer them quickly to keep the action moving. But this isn't always the case. If the PCs start asking questions you aren't prepared to answer, the game can begin to stagnate. The tables at the end of this book that can be useful in this regard. Keep them handy. Make copies of the ones you reference more often.

### NPCs

Making up an NPC on the fly can be the hardest task facing a GM. There is no quick and dirty method. No matter what style of play you and your group have grown accustomed to, NPC generation is the first to become outmoded by unforeseen circumstances at the table. A chart of well developed NPCs with names is useful to the group that plays once a month, but more frequent games will quickly become stale without ways to determine more and more detail for each new personality.

The following are several ways to alleviate this problem.

**The Cards:** Guidelines for using the Personality Cards from the L5R CCG to construct a random PC can be found on page 106. Put together a deck that you think includes the clans, professions, and character traits you want to see in your story.

**The Chart:** In the Appendix, GMs will find enough information to generate an NPC on the fly quickly, including their clan, family, Honor, and Glory. Peasants and other non-samurai can also be generated using this method. GMs should feel free to sample what they need from these lists, or flesh out the results as the see fit.

**Creation:** Take a stereotype and break it in half. Now you have two NPCs. By picking a clan and family, you have a preset stereotype for how these characters should behave (as detailed in the various *Way of the Clans* books). By breaking the mold in half (i.e. taking all of the concepts and utilizing them in less obvious ways, or just picking and choosing), you can create simple NPCs which can be expounded upon during play.

For example, the PCs are in the Phoenix lands. The GM decides an Isawa encounter is likely. The Isawa stereotypes include powerful shugenja, rulers of the clan, and elemental masters. From this you can create two NPCs, one that is a Elemental Acolyte of some power in the clan and another that is a very honorable, very powerful shugenja who partakes in the arts of the samurai class. Voila.



## Running L5R

Maintain the proper atmosphere of Rokugan at the table. Stay true to the genre by invoking the language whenever possible. Say words like *saya*, *tsuba*, and *domo-arigato*. Kneel, bow, speak in staccato patterns. Bow your head when playing a peasant, and puff out your chest when playing a daimyo. Use your body as a tool to remind players where they are. Put your hand on your hip and pretend you are wearing the *daisho*; adjust your belt as if it were an *obi*. Take your arm out of your shirt and pretend you are keeping your hand inside your *kimono*.

Use metaphors true to the genre: don't compare the house to a large bus, because there are no buses in Rokugan. Describe the tea and the spices in the food. Honorable samurai take pleasure in everything around them. The simple movements of a flickering candle may cause a meditative samurai to stop and reflect. Make sure every peasant waits for the samurai to speak. Have the inn-keeper offer the special (fish), and roleplay his humble responses to the samurai's compliments, no matter how many times he hears them.

Rokugan has a veracity that no other RPG world can mimic. Strive for your games to tap into this at every opportunity. If the players start telling jokes at the table, robbing the atmosphere of splendor, reduce their Insight, or lower their Void until they must meditate upon their indiscretions. Every joke about *Monty Python* or *Babylon 5* should be countered with a lesson from the Tao and a quick penalty to their Honor and Glory.

Characters who ignore the atmosphere of the Shadowlands when you dim the lights and describe the carnage of a half-eaten bushi should lose their eyes or gain the Taint. You have taken the time to read the rules, write the adventure, tell the tale, and prepare the props. If the players can't find it within themselves to respect your game, perhaps you need a smaller band of samurai.

## Maintaining The Illusion

In roleplaying games, the PCs should *believe* that they have control over their own fate. This illusion is very important to maintain. Without it, players will feel powerless or over-powered, and are destined to destroy your campaign. Knowing when to maintain the illusion and when to discard it is another key to great gamemastering.

Imagine the illusion as a veil the players may see through every once in a while. Every time you rescue a PC from death, or have an NPC show up with a vital clue that the samurai missed in the second village they visited, the illusion is pierced. Every instance where the GM halts play to recap, or asks the players to stop bickering, the veil is there. And when the illusion is visible, it is in danger of being destroyed.

The illusion is your friend. Use it wisely.

The L5R RPG provides many tips for maintaining the atmosphere of Rokugan, which aid in the creation and maintenance of the veil. Food, sounds, lights, voices, accents, posture, and anything visual or audible helps, making our own Earth a faint memory, and Rokugan the forefront of the players' perceptions.

You will find with persistence that the veil is much easier to maintain when you use techniques that the players respond well to.



## PROPS (CONTINUED)

Some helpful hints for creating props follow:

Age paper with lemon juice to make an excellent scroll. Burning the corners when you're done adds to the effect.

Take old knick-knacks and use them as magical components or old relics.

Put drops of red paint on paper and make it look like blood.

Spray perfume into an envelope or onto a nice sheet of paper, roll the corners, and write a love note with flowing ink and nice calligraphy.

Take an old used book (hardback), rip off the spine, and write cryptic messages on each page. Together, the pages can become a journal, the PCs collecting them over the course of a game.

Be creative and make the props as fun for the players as it is for you.

## HAVING FUN

The main goal of roleplaying games is to provide players an opportunity to tell a tale, be heroic, and have some fun in the process. If a game can accomplish this, then 99% of the work is done. It's when gaming stops being fun that the participants must investigate their situation.

There are many negative events that can occur during a gaming session, but naming them won't help a GM stop them from happening. A list of grievances and penalties wouldn't serve anyone. Rather, we recommend that when the gaming stops being fun, it's time to change the circumstances.

This may mean a change of pace at the table, or maybe a drastic alteration of the gaming environment (from the High Courts of Otosan Uchi to the depths of the Festering Pit of Fu Leng, perhaps). Or it might require something a little more invasive (such as playing at a different location, or eliminating or adding people to the gaming group).

Whatever the means, a game can only benefit from change once it has become stale or lacks the interest of all involved. Always try to keep it fresh and invigorating, and you're halfway there.

## THE SENSES

You are the players' guide through Rokugan. Everything you say sets the tone and environment for them. It is not enough to merely say that you are their eyes and ears. If you say it is law, it is. A great level of trust is required to maintain that. GMs who lie to their players in or out of the game will quickly learn that their tricks aren't working. Maintaining a rapport with them and earning their trust is one of the most important goals of a GM.

A good way to "bait and switch" the players is to avoid stating anything as fact. The players' perception is their reality. Detail what they see, hear, and experience, but never answer a question that is out-of-character with an absolute.

For example, if a player asks, "So does that mean that she was a ninja?", respond with "Who is asking?" If the player is asking the GM to clarify the evidence in the game, the answer should always be, "I don't know." After all, who is the samurai turning to for help in this case? Are they shouting to the Fortunes? Or asking another samurai? Players should learn how to make the game work for them, just as you should learn what sort of game they want.

## THE PLAYERS

Unlike other hobbies, RPGs require several people to congregate around a small table and get along. If you don't like the people you're playing with, chances are you won't like playing with them either.

Players must respect the limitations of others, and the space provided to play in. Gaming is an event where cooperation outweighs competition, and players and GMs who bring their personal problems to the game are asking for its quick and painful death.

GMs who require strict adherence to rules, or who tire of negotiating with troublesome gamers, may have to result to more extreme measures. RPGs are not like talk-shows where airing dirty laundry solves the problem. Tempers can flare and emotions can run high. In situations where someone is being asked to compromise themselves for the sake of another player, the parties involved are not being fair to the spirit of gaming.

Here is where the illusion becomes frail. If your players do not respect the game, it may very well ruin the experience for everyone. The veil will slowly slip away, and your games will

become a place to talk about last night's football game instead of a different world, where adventure is the order of the day.

Talking with a thick accent, standing straight and rigid, and playing authentic music in the background can only go so far. The participants must *interact* for the game to succeed. Remind the players that the world they live in is shaped by the people that lived in it before, and that they are the models for what will come tomorrow. The integrity of the setting is relying on them.

Many gamers think nothing to have their characters say, "What's going on?" in a setting where there are no conjunctions and no modern slang. "What's up?" is not a Rokugani expression, and whenever players resort to this manner of speech, they are not invoking the spirit of the genre. Some players think nothing of this, claiming that their samurai is "saying it the way a samurai would say it".

If you are comfortable with this, then there is no problem. But you may feel that this detracts from the suspension of disbelief that most RPGs rely upon to thrive. If so, have the NPCs they are speaking to respond with a confused look. If they are in a portion of Rokugan that is using the High Language of the court, subtract Honor or Glory from their character sheets.

## THE GAMEMASTER

GMs should never, *ever* use gaming as a tool to lash out at others. Bad feelings at the table perpetuate arguments. When GMs kill a character maliciously and deliberately, they are actually causing psychological trauma on many levels. First, they are squashing the *player*. Not the character, but the player. Killing a character in this manner, the GM is manifesting angry feelings as action, and deliberately harming a portion of the player's psyche. A character is only an extension of the player controlling it. By murdering the character, the GM is letting the player know that their feelings are irrelevant and insignificant. Any GM exhibiting this sort of behavior is going to run out of friends quickly. They are violating the trust of the group and have lost the illusory veil that was so carefully constructed. If a GM feels compelled to kill a character, the reasons should be concrete and justifiable.



## Keeping Things Interesting

An honest GM who goes to the same well too many times for her tricks (i.e. "The bandit gets away with a magical swoosh and a flash of lightning... again.") may have the same problems as a GM who lies. The players will see right through their tricks and will fail to be surprised when, for example, their daimyo has tricked them into chasing down yet another red herring. If the players wake up to find the camp slaughtered

Ingenuity is the mother of invention, and players who solve your riddles in a creative way should be rewarded for it, not subjected to a contrived ending to support your long-term story.

If the players beat the bad guys with a well-thought out plan, add an unexpected twist. Perhaps their daimyo is in the estate they are about to set on fire, or an enemy hideout has pitfalls that only the bandits can navigate. Never settle for short, quiet finales, when you can have dramatic endings that cry to the heavens.

You can add new dimensions to your sessions by varying the encounters and events your players face as well. Some GMs prefer a style



every morning, they will stop caring about those who die. And as the body count rises, they will feel powerless to stop their enemies, who are always a few moves ahead. Eventually, this kind of unimaginative game play will lead to hurt feelings and an abrupt end to the campaign.

Keep the players interested with variety and interesting hooks. Don't feel threatened if the PCs out-smart you every once in a while. It happens.

where getting to the climax is more challenging and interesting than reaching it. There is nothing wrong with this. Hitchcock's stories were never about the plot. They were about the hows and whys along the way. *How* am I going to get out of this? And *why* did I do that? If the introduction is light, the action crisp, the twists numerous and engaging, and the villains meaty, then a light climax won't bother anyone.





## ROKUGAN IS A QUIET PLACE

Making a ruckus in Rokugan is not smart. There are ways that a samurai is expected to behave, and those who continue to be loud and brash are sure to get a whack with the hard end of a boken. Samurai that believe being loud and obnoxious is cool will soon find themselves taking on roles befitting their station.

A Matsu who talks too much will find herself at the front of a very large army.

The Crab who fights in public is sure to be placed on the wall where a great warrior belongs. And the Battle Maiden who can't stop bragging or the Crane who is too proud will find themselves guarding their lords' prize peacocks or horses.

Rokugani do not accept individualistic, brash behavior. It is insulting, embarrassing, and contrary to all of the ideals of the samurai caste.

So the next time a PC smashes a sake glass in a peasant's face, make sure that a few others are there to witness it. (Even in the Crab lands, everyone knows when Kisada or Yakamo are home).

## FREE WILL

Roleplaying games are filled with PCs enjoying the *illusion* that they are free to do as they wish - mercenaries killing bad guys; dark heroes punishing their enemies; solo oriented characters with no regard or respect for how someone else might do it. In these environments, characters have little need for partners. But roleplaying games are about teams. They are about groups of adventurers, and they are about many smaller stories instead of one large saga.

In movies and novels, we often see a single hero, fighting alone against all odds. In many cases, the hero is crass and boorish. Our 20th century heroes are a reflection of our 20th century mindset, and a society like ours so at odds with its own identity is constantly reconstructing the idea of heroism.

But in Rokugan, heroism has been static and unchanging for over 1000 years. Although skirmishes and battles have plagued the Emerald Empire since the first Hantei fell from the sky, the idea of heroism has not changed or faded from the view of the common person. The peaceful samurai is in conflict with the code of the warrior, and their dedication to duty.

## CHALLENGES

In the world of L5R, samurai breathe a certain way, walk a certain way, strike a certain way, live a certain way, and speak a certain way. Their actions are fuel for their soul and the embodiment of all that is right. With Bushido as a guidebook for how to live, it is uncommon that samurai go astray. However, what happens when they're thrust into situations that are not covered by the code?

Decisions are the very life-blood of a Rokugani epic. Does the honorable Mirumoto Ugemi, on the edge of the Shadowlands, rip open the body of a dead goblin to retrieve the lost Ruby of Osano-Wo? Or does he leave the body, return with an eta grave-digger, and hope that it has not been eaten by a troll?

Bushido is a tangible source of dilemmas. Without this code, samurai lose their verve. All intrigue dies away, and evidence replaces the word of a samurai. The need to profess the "truth" becomes useless and prosthetic. All that remains are men with katanas, meeting each other out in the street for a quick-draw.

GMs and players should use the code, working within its limits to create spectacular epics

beyond the standards for other genres. Honorable, zealous samurai may be forced to deal with the barbaric manners of a xenophobic Unicorn. Perhaps a champion of the brave, disciplined Matsu must continuously counter the taunting and hypocrisy of the Scorpion.

Bushido is a tool. Use it to provide hard decisions that challenge samurai ethics. In the end, this can only lead to decisions, therefore supporting their sense of free will.

## EVENTS VS. ENCOUNTERS

The difference between Events and Encounters is simple. During an event, the PCs are bystanders, unable to change the course of the action. Events are used to move the story forward, regardless of the PCs' desire. They illustrate that the environment is bigger than the heroes. Most events convey important information rather than challenging the players.

An encounter is any situation where the PCs may redirect the action by making decisions or eliciting responses. In an event, they do nothing, often becoming witnesses, not directly involved in the occurrence. What really separates the two is the illusion that the players may affect an encounter, while an event is beyond their control.

The use of encounters can serve your ends well, especially if you have a very large story to tell. In some situations, the players are merely there to interact with the NPCs and glean some new information from them. These allow players the greatest degree of roleplaying freedom. It becomes important that the GM have a list of what an NPC might know available, to encourage interaction and interrogation.

## "When the Last Akodo Falls": Death and Transitions

*"Living safely is a neither living nor dying and the time we spend defining it is the time we spend not living it."*

- Misuto, Acolyte of the Void

Death in roleplaying games is often overdramatized or trivialized. Characters and NPCs who pass away in a game are destined to be either martyred or forgotten. There is no middle



ground. In Rokugan, this level of drama is perfect, and the nuances of L5R play well against it. A samurai who dies in a great tragedy is never forgotten. The words of a great scribe or poet may often soothe or exacerbate the drama of a samurai's story.

Death in L5R should not be taken as harshly or personally as it would in other RPGs. A samurai who does not leave their mark is destined to be forgotten. And there is no greater tragedy to one's family than to live a lackluster life.

So how does a GM deal with a player once her character has been removed through a purposeful or accidental death? Despite the connection the player may have felt to her character, it may be even more difficult to introduce a replacement PC into the story. GMs should come up with new methods for bringing characters into the campaign, similar to the way a team is brought together for the first time (see *Hooks*, page 138).

For example, a party searching for a reclusive shugenja loses a Hiruma scout to the ravages of an Oni. Now the player must design a new character and introduce her into the campaign. In this situation, the new character could be anyone seeking the same reclusive shugenja.

When considering how to bring new PCs into the game, GMs should decide what the most important element in the present adventure is,

and what would inspire the new character to join the group in its current endeavor. Be careful not to set the character up as an outsider. Keep it simple, and get back to playing.

Take care when thinking of introducing new characters in the same session a previous one has died. Parties rarely juggle numerous complications well, and are generally more accepting of new partners when the climate has cooled down a bit. Also, such an action undermines the importance of the previous character's death, overshadowing it with the more present situation (sizing up the new guy).

In the meantime, GMs should take time out to discuss the situation and play out the ramifications of a character's death. One possibility is an "aside" with the deceased character's daimyo, playing out her response upon hearing of the samurai's death.

### NPC DEATH

Nothing can bring your game to a screeching halt faster than a PC dying for no good reason. If you've been following the tips in this book, you may have learned by now how to stop this from happening every time you pick up some dice. But what do you do if the PCs kill someone important to the game world, and you can't fudge dice results or descriptions to save them?



While the L5R system owes much of its deadliness to the initiative system, GMs should not let that hinder them. Rokugan is filled with ancestors, spirits, and kami. Who is to say that the guiding hand of a player's ancestor doesn't force him to take a lower roll? Or perhaps a gust of wind from an air spirit blows dust into her eyes.

No one wants to use tricks like this, but as GM, you may be forced to. Beware how often you invoke "GM fiat" to save NPCs, however. If you do it too much, the players will look to kill every NPC they can, just to watch you jump through hoops. If you don't do it at all, your PCs will probably wind up killing the Emperor, and carrying +7 katanas.

The players' trust is the most important commodity you have. No NPC's life is worth violating it. Every time you up the ante, the players should be compensated with a really great ending or helpful NPC ally. Be creative, let the mistakes go, and never let the players see you sweat.



It's not 100% your responsibility to ensure that the group gets along. If the players want to play, then they must make an effort to get involved as well. The PC who constantly tries to go off and cause problems is not interested in gaming at your table. Some examples follow.

### THE RUFFIAN

Nothing ruins a great roleplaying session faster than the player with too much testosterone. Players often find it cute to be intimidating, expecting the world to jump when they speak.

In one campaign, there was a chest pounding, knuckle-dragging Crab. He would stare down NPCs (or sometimes even the PCs) and create

bad feelings. Needless to say, it got old in about five minutes. Some GMs find this is the most annoying character anyone can play.

There a number of ways to handle this. One foil for the blaring Matsu or stoic Hida is to arrange a visit with his sensei. A few minutes of sparing with *shinai* (or even worse, *boken*) will result in some serious bruising and humiliation. This is even more effective in front of the other PCs. Not only should this humble the dinosaur-like character (big body, little brain), but it should also drop his Honor to a level more commensurate with the irrepressible cur that he is.

Or he could meet another just like himself. Did he buy the Nemesis Disadvantage? Or Haunted? Perhaps a visit from grandfather? How about a whole bunch of dishonorable bandits? GMs with this type of problem may also want to consider eliminating the Intimidation Skill from their games.

### THE WRONG LEAD

It's Murphy's Law.

If you didn't plan for the players to worry about that sick geisha you just made up, they most certainly will. They might even look to avenge her by killing the villainous ronin who gave her the flu. Don't be alarmed. It happens. Luckily for GMs, duty and honor are more important than personal interest, and a samurai can easily be put back on track with a few Honor tests or a few stern words from a major NPC.

Fully-motivated NPCs make for excellent interludes when the action is slow. By having a well developed NPC appear often throughout a campaign, and in a manner befitting the story, her presence during the "what we know" segments won't feel so contrived. A kindly old NPC who only shows up to save the players is a throw away McGuffin, and the players will only resent it. Pace things, use the NPCs where they should be used, and never point out that the players did anything wrong.

### CAUSE AND EFFECT

*"Let not the fruit of action be your motive to action. Your duty is with action alone, not with its fruit. Let the dragon act, and leave reaction to the wolf."*

- Togashi Jodome



RPGs give us the opportunity to be great for four hours a week, and no one should tell us how to play our game. While an unfocused game that allows the players to run around and kill bandits as they see fit may be fun, it can grow stale once the players have been allowed to raze their fifteenth castle. GMs who do not take care with how they present their world, and do not provide cause and effect for the player's actions will find themselves unfulfilled.

In the world of Rokugan (in fact, in any world), every action has an equal and opposite reaction. The laws of the universe state that any change in a system is likely to conform to the system. Players who continue to make your life difficult with foolish tricks should quickly learn that Rokugan punishes those who fall out of sync with the Celestial Order.

If the players continue to disrespect your boundaries by pushing the limits of acceptable behavior, they are forcing your hand. As a GM, you should always plan your actions out and have

prescribed events occur as you dictate them. In instances where the PCs keep ambushing wandering magistrates, something *must* be done to stop them.

Do not allow your game to become stagnant, and do not allow your players to believe that they can act with impunity. This will only serve to ignite their drive to perform random acts of chaos. Instead, ensure that everything they do has a suitable reaction.

And don't forget that the opposite is true as well. If the PCs act valiantly and in accordance with the code of Bushido, award them.



### CAUSE AND EFFECT TABLE

When a PC continues to act without regard for cause and effect, and all other methods of reconciling the situation have failed, feel free to roll on the following chart to determine his fate (or simply choose one). Note that these are extreme responses, and should be carefully considered before being used.

Roll	Penalty Box
1	Lose one die boxes in Honor
2	Lose one die boxes in Glory
3	Lose two Void Points
4	Lose all Void Points for one week
5	Lose One Void permanently
6	Gain one point of the Shadowlands Taint permanently
7	Gain the Haunted Disadvantage (2 points first time, 4 points each time after)
8	Lose your clan affiliation
9	Hunted by a Rank 4 Kakita or Mirumoto Magistrate *
10	Hunted by Tsuruchi and three Wasp Yojimbo *

\* Statistics are not an issue, because these NPCs have no intention of losing against the characters.

## Players in the Celestial Order

The Celestial Order is clearly defined in the *L5R RPG* and further defined in *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*. The following information takes into account all of the *Way of the Clan* books and the stations a samurai may maintain. The associate chart is referential, and you can find descriptions of some of the vague classes below, along with simplified Skill packages and adventure hooks for each. In all cases, a samurai with a Glory of 7 can tell those with lower Glory what to do, no matter their titles. This section is merely intended to provide some perspective for how the classes rank over one another, as well as explain some of the more obscure positions of the Empire.

Bear in mind that a samurai with military rank or of high station is awarded great privilege, but even more responsibility. No samurai with a



### CHILDREN OF THE SUN AND MOON

One of the features prevalent in the Japanese stereotype is that everyone is stoic and brooding. Rokugan is not Japan, and the personalities of the Emerald Empire are vibrant and real.

Not every samurai is stern and unfeeling.

Not every geisha giggles at the funny samurai man.

Not every peasant cowers in fear at the approaching ronin.

Not every monk is a kindly old man, quiet and reserved, sitting patiently for someone to address him.

Not every blacksmith is a large, gregarious man who works with his shirt off.

And not every old man is a toothless drunkard.

GMs are encouraged to break the popular molds, and create characters that will inspire the players.

Glory Rank of 6 runs around killing Oni. They are given a home and lands to manage, and may even be assigned a gokenin (see below) to manage its day-to-day duties. They must maintain the sanctity of their station without fail, or risk suffering its loss.

Some clans break this established mold, and those should be addressed by the GM on a case-by-case basis. However, the model is held in high esteem by the Imperial Court and honorable samurai everywhere.

### THE LOWER CASTES

The Glory of heimin and hinin is relative to how well they are known, but eta can have a Glory as low as -10. Remember, Glory is only awarded to the samurai class and - in rare situations - to those who have performed a great feat. It is used here to represent how well-known the particular heimin or hinin is, and how much power they might wield. A doshin or budoka that is awarded enough Glory, for example, might eventually be made samurai by the Emperor.

### SAMURAI: THOSE WHO MAKE WAR

#### Chancellor

The chancellor becomes regent to the Emperor when he cannot rule (from illness or age, or any situation that keeps him from performing his duties). If need be, she might even be called upon to govern territories in the stead of those who are found lacking.

This is a highly honored station, commonly held only by those who have somehow established that they can handle delicate political situations with care. The chancellorship is an elected position, and the only the clan daimyo may vote on her appointment.

PC Magistrates often find themselves in this position without the benefit of title during L5R games.

**Suggested Skills:** Acting, Bard, Courtier, Etiquette, Heraldry, History, Investigation, Law, Oratory, Rhetoric, Shintao, Sincerity, Tea Ceremony.

## APPROXIMATE GLORY RATINGS

### SAMURAI

The Emperor	.10
The Imperial Family	.9.5
The Seppun/Otomo/Miya	.9.2
Emerald Champion	.9
Chancellor ***	.9
Imperial Advisor ***	.9
Clan Daimyo	.8
Family Daimyo	.7
Provincial Governor ***	.6-7
Hatamoto ***	.6
City Governor	.5
Karo ***	.4.7
Emerald Magistrate ***	.4.5
Clan Magistrate ***	.4
Clan Artisan ***	.3+
Diplomat ***	.2+
Gokenin ***	.2+
Witch Hunter	.0.5+
Noble Merchant **	.0.5+
Bounty Hunter ***	.0.1+
Ronin **	.0.1+

### HEIMIN ("HALF-PEOPLE")

Monk ***	.2**
Doshin ***	.1
Budoka ***	.1
Ashigaru Soldier ***	.0.7
Hyakusho ***	.0.6
Shokunin ***	.0.5
Akindo ***	.0.5
Peasant Retainer ***	.0

### HININ ("NON-PEOPLE")

Entertainers ***	-.1
Charlatans	-.3
Criminals	-.5
Eta ***	-8 to -10*

\* Those that handle dead animals are higher than those that handle dead humans.

\*\* Monks are unconcerned with Glory and therefore, their station is therefore of no relevance to them.

\*\*\* See the individual entry for these positions for a short description, Skill package, and adventure hook to use them in your game.



**Adventure Hook:** An Imperial Regent arrives to mediate the trade agreements between the home of one of the PCs and a rival territory. At first, everything seems to be progressing well, and then the regent's suggestions begin to slight the character's homeland. Shortly thereafter, the regent is killed, and the PCs must split their attention between calming the swelling hostility between the regions and discovering the murderer. Their path is plagued with problems, however, including a series of attempts on their lives that seem to stem from one of the leaders in the PC's own home...

#### *Imperial Advisor*

Behind every great daimyo there is another who supplies him with a ready stream of advice. Few advisors set out in life intending to perform that role, and many are harshly judged if they cannot do it well. Advisors stand behind the scenes in Rokugan - making decisions that may never be seen, or responsible for events they never receive credit for.

They are sometimes difficult to introduce in a campaign due to this innate distance, but they can still serve well as spies for or against the PCs. Or they could be in the group's employ, granting them wisdom in exchange for koku or favors.

**Suggested Skills:** Bard, Battle (if a military advisor), Calligraphy, Cipher (if a spy), Etiquette, Heraldry, History, Law, Lore (any or all).

**Adventure Hook:** The last several assignments the PCs' lord has sent them on have been foolhardy and dangerous. Is the man going mad, or is this the work of the new advisor he acquired recently?

#### *Provincial Governor*

A provincial governor is a samurai with a Glory Rank of 6 or 7 and the Gentry Advantage (see *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*, page 95). Provincial governors receive a large staple of land to control, and maintain gokenin beneath them to manage their territories. A provincial governor is expected to report to the family or clan daimyo (depending upon who gave her the land). She collects taxes from the gokenin, who collects it from samurai beneath them. It is the governor's duty to adjudicate koku and deal directly with the gokenin, providing them with resources to perform their duties.

**Suggested Skills:** Calligraphy, Courtier, Etiquette, Law, Oratory, Sincerity.

**Adventure Hook:** After the PCs are drawn into an intrigue concerning a governor who is accused of falsifying his taxes, they find evidence that he may only be covering up something far larger, dating back to the time when his father was on the throne. The PCs must recover the true facts about the case, comparing their own evidence found in the daimyo's lands and castle to the old records. Meanwhile, the present governor tries desperately to cover the incident up...

#### *Hatamoto*

A hatamoto, or honored retainer, is someone who has been chosen by the daimyo of a noble family as an official representative of the family name. This means that a hatamoto can speak with authority for her lord in his absence, and even agree to minor contracts and negotiations for their family. A hatamoto therefore has a great deal of political power.

Typically, however, hatamoto are only called upon when their lord cannot attend the negotiation. To be a hatamoto means that a daimyo regards one's advice highly; he has placed a special "mark" upon her, so that all will know that she is one of his most favored subjects.

Often, the title brings with it a certain amount of land, on which the retainer is expected to live while she continues her service. Similar to a military title, that of hatamoto brings with it a great deal of responsibility, as well as glory. However, hatamoto are primarily servants to their feudal lords in whatever capacity they can best fulfill. Diplomatic, artistic, advisory, or military hatamoto are all possible.

**Suggested Skills:** Any, as per the necessity of her position and in what capacity she aids her daimyo.

**Adventure Hook:** Something is killing peasants in the wilds at the edge of town. No one knows what it is, but its strength and ferocity are evident in the savaged remains it leaves behind. It has even attacked one or two of the *eta* sent to gather them, and the hatamoto has requested of his daimyo a group of samurai willing to track and kill the beast. He claims to have seen the beast before, and his mangled body shows the marks of its prowess.

#### *Karo*

A *karo* is an advisor to a lord. She performs many of the basic functions of a hatamoto, but has little, if any, real power. The *karo*'s duty

consists of advice and support. She also acts as a manager and go-between for her lord. Often, a karo will be the one whom a samurai sees and receives orders from, alleviating many of the more "routine" duties from the daimyo. Additionally, the karo is responsible for governing the magistrates (Clan, or Emerald in the case of the Emerald Champion), and maintaining a lot of the clan's secrets. Much like a hatamoto, a daimyo rarely releases a karo from her duty. Otherwise, another clan could learn the daimyo's secrets.

**Suggested Skills:** Any, as per the necessity of her position and in what capacity she aids her daimyo.

**Adventure Hook:** Shortly after the PCs arrive at a small fortified castle to attend a festive gathering of nobility, a courtier is found dead. Everyone is asked to remain within the castle until the murderer is discovered, and an investigation begins. The characters are expected to help, or they will appear suspect.

When evidence is discovered pointing to another of the visiting dignitaries, he is found to be missing, and a search organized. His body is found within an hour, which means that he must have had an accomplice. Again, the hunt begins, and the PCs are drawn into the intrigue.

Another suspect is named, then later found murdered. And another. By the next night, a karo has arrived to administer the remainder of the investigation, and recruits the PCs to help. Each new lead results in another corpse, and the nobility are dwindling. Who is the killer? Why, the karo, of course! But even after the PCs know, proving it may become troublesome...

*Magistrate*

This role should be well known to most players of L5R. The basic game setting is designed to accommodate a group of magistrates enforcing the Emperor's Law across the Empire. Within such a game, the PCs will come across others performing the same actions on a regular basis. Even in alternate environments, they will be approached by or encounter them with fair regularity. For greater detail on the organization and expectation of magistrates, as well as how to play "the magistrate game", please see the L5R RPG and *City of Lies*.

**Suggested Skills:** Any allowed by their clan and family restrictions.

**Adventure Hook:** Someone is killing magistrates and leaving their bodies on the Emperor's roads. The identity of the individual is

unknown, the only communication found upon the bodies themselves - farewell letters written in the hand of each of the victims, intended for their families. The Emerald Champion refuses to do anything about the situation, citing that the victims were dishonorable to accept their deaths so readily (as evidenced by the notes).

Then one of the PCs (or someone they know if none are magistrates) is attacked, but lives, claiming that they



were "possessed" by the spirit of Kakita Dojen, an infamous magistrate whose dishonorable acts stained the reputation of his profession for all time. Somehow, the affected party now has a connection with the spirit, knowing where it will strike next (or perhaps even where it is at any time, if you would like the hunt to progress faster). The PCs are part of the group recruited to stop it.

#### *Gokenin*

Gokenin are managers of land. A Gokenin commonly has a Glory Rank of 3 to 5 and is a senior member of her clan. Sensei are often gokenin, and the title is bestowed upon samurai with a land grant. They are often the day-to-day operators of a large estate or smaller province. They report to the provincial governor, and can sometimes be expected to act on the daimyo's behalf, but only in a very limited capacity.

**Suggested Skills:** Etiquette, Law, Lore: Land Management, Oratory, Sincerity.

**Adventure Hook:** The PCs are traveling with a package that must make it to a certain locale by a certain time, and find an entire army garrisoning the pass they must travel through. The soldiers have been ordered to permit no one through, and to strike down all that try to force the issue. The PCs must somehow convince the gokenin in charge of the province that their cause is just, and to let them through.

#### *Yoriki*

Charged with inspecting the travel papers of all those who pass their waystations, *yoriki* are subordinate to magistrates. They live within the medium- and large-size villages of Rokugan, attending to problems there and watching for situations that require official intervention. Anyone passing through a village in which a *yoriki* resides is expected (read: required) to pay him a visit and inform him of their intentions and destination.

**Suggested Skills:** Appraisal, Archery, Athletics, Defense, Etiquette, Forgery, Heraldry, Investigation.

**Adventure Hook:** The PCs recover a wounded carrier bird. The message it bears was penned by a nearby *yoriki*, and is particularly sensitive, perhaps talking of coming war or an intended assassination. The party must decide what to do with the information, as well as the bird itself.

#### *Diplomat*

The Emperor's line has long recognized the need for these mediators, offering positions of Imperial office to those with the skill who are willing to help retain the peace. PCs often play the role of diplomats in many L5R campaigns (whether they realize it or not), and so come in contact with many others of the same station.

An ambassador is a very high ranking diplomat who may speak for a samurai. Often an ambassador is also a hatamoto. The ambassador can create contracts, and lend aid. Anything that an ambassador offers must be honored by the ambassador's lord. To ignore the contract dishonors the name of the ambassador and brings shame on the lord who ignored her station. Ambassadors are considered part of the diplomatic corps. The Crane Clan is known for elevating the status of its diplomats and courtiers above the station of common bushi, but other clans consider them below active warriors.

Emissaries are dignitaries of a daimyo assigned to a very specific task. An emissary could merely carry a message, or plead the case of her daimyo in his absence. They are single-minded in their goal, and few courtiers dare petition an emissary for anything beyond her purview.

Courtiers are the lowest rung of diplomats, and make up the bulk of samurai who speak the will of the court, daimyo, or anyone else that has "bought" their favor. A courtier is expected to speak for visitors of the court, and know the inner workings of high culture. They have many attendants, and spend much of their time in discussion and argument with others. The Crane have the largest body of courtiers in the Empire, and therefore control the Emperor's ear.

**Suggested Skills:** Calligraphy, Courtier, Etiquette, Heraldry, History, Investigation, Law, Oratory, Political Maneuvering, Research, Rhetoric, Sincerity, Tea Ceremony.

**Adventure Hook:** When tensions swell between the home province of one of the PCs and another, the group is assigned "diplomatic duty", and told to resolve the issues as quietly as possible, and without bloodshed. They are to work with a diplomat from the other province in an effort to come to an equitable solution to the dispute. But as the hours of discussion drag into days, the PCs discover that the diplomat is only there to keep them busy while something else happens.



### THE FALLEN LION

Though written in the standard adventure hook format, this can work well as either a character background or central ingredient in a campaign of the GM's devising.

**Challenge:** Samurai Matsu Kunuri pillows down with a woman he assumes is his wife, but she is actually a Shosuro Actress in disguise. Years later, she returns with his son and tells him the details of that evening.

**Focus:** Kunuri is driven to madness by the revelation, and commits *seppuku* rather than face the truth of his actions. The Shosuro returns to her land to raise the boy as a Scorpion.

**Strike:** At his *gempukku*, the Actress reveals to her son that he was born from a Matsu who hated him, and who would rather commit *seppuku* than admit he was the father. Hatred is spawned deep within the young Shosuro, who is now mature enough to travel the world.





## THE WOUNDED FALCON

**Challenge:** The PC finds a falcon, wounded on the ground next to a tree. It appears that the falcon has been trying to get up for some time. Its hood is still on, and the Akodo mon is printed into the hood's cloth.

**Focus:** The falcon is partially trained, but its owner is nowhere to be seen. The bird appears to have taken a fall and with the hood on was unable to take flight. If the PCs give it care, the wound will heal in a few days.

**Strike:** A young Akodo girl was training her falcon when she was cut by its claw, and she threw the bird to the ground. She left it, ran home, and told her father that it had flown away when its hood was removed. She even provided a spare hood as evidence.

When the PCs trace the falcon back to the father, the girl's actions are sure to incur her father's wrath.

For statistics and details for a falcon, see page 106.

### Artisans

Whether the act is merely a hobby or a profession determines whether an artisan is from the samurai or *heimin* caste. Professions are for peasants, while distractions are for nobles. A Crab who builds suits of armor for battle is a *heimin*. A Crane artisan who makes origami for nobles' parties is of the samurai. The actual standing of the artisan is based on what duty they perform. A blacksmith is not nearly as important as an armorer, and a weaponsmith is nothing compared to a katana maker. Rokugan is very specialized, and it is not unheard of to have someone focus their entire lives on a single task.

**Suggested Skills:** Any, depending on their profession or craft.

**Adventure Hook:** The party is charged with recovering an ancient (and very Tainted) artifact of great power. They are told that its location is hidden in three coded maps scripted by a famous calligrapher who is favored by the Emperor. But when those maps are mysteriously destroyed, they must rely on the calligrapher who drew them to find the item.

Unfortunately, his prolonged exposure to the artifact has driven him mad, and his personality has split in two, each diametrically opposed from the other. One wishes to help the party recover (and destroy) the artifact, while the other desires it only for himself...

### Merchant

Noble Merchants are a little different than *heimin* merchants (*akindo*). They serve the will of their clan, rather than their own ends. The Noble Merchant has a family name, and performs an important and distinct function. The Yasuki are the most well-known Noble Merchants, with the Daidoji and Ide also comprising this rank. Many samurai consider them unimportant, and some even count them among the peasants.

**Suggested Skills:** Appraisal, Bard, Commerce, Courtier (if high enough status), Craft (if they make their own wares), Etiquette, Knife, Oratory, Sincerity.

**Adventure Hook:** While in a large city or remote location, the PCs are accosted by a pushy merchant who insists an item he is selling will change their lives. It is a small lacquered box with beautiful silk lining, large enough to store a tanto or tonfa in. The price he is asking is incredibly low, and will decrease as the PCs refuse them item, until he finally tells them to take it for free.

By this time, he is frantic and quickly urges them through the process of taking the object three times, the standard for gift-giving.

After he is gone (and they are left with the box), they find it filled with something they have been seeking or desire. But once they touch the contents, they are accepting a gift from the corrupted kami that dwells within it. They have two more chances to either give the box away or sell it (they cannot simply throw it away; it must be taken voluntarily by another) before they are corrupted as well, losing one Rank of Void. From that point, they will lose one additional Void Point per day until they absolve themselves of the cursed object, or reach 0 Void, and die. Good luck!

### Bounty Hunters

Fugitives are relatively rare in Rokugan. Justice is typically swift and harsh, and those who manage to escape the hand of justice find themselves ronin - a fate worse than death. Then there are the bounty hunters, samurai charged with pursuing them, who are specially trained to notice things most others miss. An interesting campaign could center around a PC who has been trained or hired as a bounty hunter, or perhaps the group can be seeking someone also chased by their like.

**Suggested Skills:** Archery, Athletics, Hand-to-Hand, Horsemanship, Hunting, Iaijutsu, Investigation, Kenjutsu, Law, Research, Stealth.

**Adventure Hook:** The PCs are tracking down a Scorpion whose courtly intrigues have plagued their daimyo for some time, and eventually meet with a bounty hunter also charged with finding him (likely for other reasons). The twist is that the bounty hunter is also a Scorpion (a Shosuro Actor) in league with the first, who is leading the PCs into a trap.

### Ronin

Ronin are one of the three primary player character options in L5R. They represent all those who have lost their standing for some reason, and whose stature in the Celestial Order is now only slightly above that of non-warrior samurai. They may come from any clan, and may have any skills necessary to their former role in the Empire. As such, their purpose and placement within a game is limited only by their focus in life.

Ronin are the most difficult of the samurai caste to define. Often they were born from a powerful family and have committed an act that



has disgraced their name. Now they walk the lands of the Empire seeking their fortunes, and hassling peasants. Many turn to crime; those that harm innocents are considered criminals and many be killed on sight as eta. Most ronin cannot read. There are two types of ronin in Rokugan, and each requires a discussion.

Clan ronin come from any of the Major Clans, and now serve no one. Perhaps their lord was murdered and now they walk Rokugan seeking revenge. Or maybe a loss of honor resulted in the ronin's disgrace and banishment from the clan. Conversely, a clan ronin could be someone who has turned her back on the clan, and taken a stand against the dishonorable ways of her lord.

True ronin are another story. They are samurai who are born ronin. They can include samurai from a small deposed clan; who never learned any techniques; who never completed gempukku; whose sensei died while they are being trained. There are an endless stream of perplexing and difficult scenarios that could result in a true ronin, the are lowest of all samurai.

**Suggested Skills:** Any.

**Adventure Hook:** There is one out there without a face, someone with nothing but contempt for the PCs, who will not rest until they are shamed without hope of mercy or honorable death. She is maniacally devoted to killing the PCs' masters - one by one. She is ronin, without a master of her own to guide her hateful hand... because she was a samurai beneath someone the PCs once killed. The PCs created her, and she will not be satisfied until she has returned the favor.

## HEIMIN ("HALF-PEOPLE")

### *Doshin*

These are peasant warriors in the service of a samurai charged with protecting the Emperor's villages. They do not merit inclusion in the samurai caste, having been born into the peasantry, but share the warrior-caste's duty to Bushido and protection of the Empire.

**Suggested Skills:** Archery, Athletics, Battle, Bo Stick, Defense, Hand-to-Hand, Heraldry, Intimidation, Kenjutsu, Nofujutsu (Peasant Weapons), Siege.

**Adventure Hook:** The commanding samurai of a small village has been murdered. The village is near a military outpost, and the only witness to the event claims that she saw the back of an ashigaru soldier running away. The PCs must

discover who the murdering soldier was, with the help of the *doshin* in charge. But at every turn, they seem to be thwarted, as if the evidence is being erased, and the PCs gradually come to realize that there was more than one soldier there that night...

### *Budoka*

A budoka is commoner, a peasant who has taken up a weapon and chosen to learn the code of Bushido, with or without the teachings of a samurai. She may have been an ashigaru warrior who never wanted to see a farm again after a war. Perhaps she was born with ambition beyond her station and is now a hidden warrior taking on a "better" role. Despite the budoka's effort to violate the Celestial Order, many bushi treat them with respect for their desire to be greater than they actually are. Budoka are rare however, and few make their way to the lands of the Seven Great Clans.

Budoka do not use samurai weapons, and are normally well versed in unarmed combat. A budoka looking for work may attach herself to a ronin, without expecting or demanding the pay and respect that comes with being a member of the samurai caste. The longer a budoka follows her way of life, the closer she clings to the life of a bushi; with the right teaching, she can even learn to master the code of Bushido.

**Suggested Skills:** Animal Husbandry, Archery, Athletics, Bo Stick, Defense, Hand-to-Hand, Nofujutsu (Peasant Weapons), Wrestling.

**Adventure Hook:** An apprentice begins to hound one of the PCs (who is at least Rank 2), trying to convince him to begin training her. Regardless of whether the PC relents or not, he shortly finds something important missing, and the apprentice gone. Soon after, he is visited by a ronin who claims that the "apprentice" was a dishonorable budoka, who has duped several samurai in the last several months. The ronin lost something important as well.

### *Ashigaru (Footsoldier)*

The massive armies of the Empire rely upon ashigaru as their foundation, for while an army might win a battle due to one man, it is the collective efforts of the rank and file that carry it through the long weeks or months before. Ashigaru are drawn from the best of the "common man" (*heimin*), and are in this way like

## VILLAGE NAMES

Chishi-Yorino  
 Guno-Yahe  
 Heraku-Irahuro  
 Hisato-Kesu  
 Hiwa-Numuri  
 Hoki-Ichi  
 Imo-Nonare  
 Inichi-Chimogo  
 Kochushen-den  
 Kusori-Bayosu  
 Menaka-Tohore  
 Naromimo-Koshuban  
 Nayamu-Wate  
 Nomatsu-Koya  
 Oreka-Yumo  
 Sayahi-Goshiku  
 Sewagu-Sokori  
 Sho-Nagori  
 Shogi-Nezagi  
 Shiro-Zaemon  
 Shuyi-Ttaka  
 Tamura-Moro  
 Taro-Zaye-Monori  
 Teji-kaya  
 Yoshi-Tsugo  
 Yoshi-Tsune  
 Yoshiko-hi

conscripted soldiers in our own world. Anywhere that an army marches, you may find ashigaru.

**Suggested Skills:** Archery or Kenjutsu, Athletics (about half the time), Defense, Hand-to-Hand, and a small variety of second weapon Skills.

**Adventure Hook:** Something descended upon the a battalion of Crab soldiers stationed on the Carpenter Wall, ripping all but one of them to shreds. The Emperor desires to know what kind of being could do this, and stop it. The remaining ashigaru seems to have acquired some kind of mystic bond to the creature, and can lead the PCs to it - if they have the courage to face it.

### Hyakusho

In order of their placement in the Celestial Order, *hyakusho* consist of farmers, woodsmen, and fishermen. They are the highest of the non-martial *heimin*, being responsible for feeding the samurai caste. Farmers, woodsmen, and fisherman in the same village have a very strong bond that helps to solidify their strength. A *hyakusho* headman is slightly higher in station than other *hyakusho*.

**Suggested Skills:** Animal Husbandry, Archery, Athletics, Bo Stick, Craft: Any Rural, Herbalism, Hunting, Knife, Mountaineer, Nofukutsu (Peasant Weapons), Traps.

**Adventure Hook:** The characters have need of a woodsman, but before they even begin asking around, an aging *hyakusho* offers up his services. He leads them into the terrain of their choosing, acting as their guide and a source of important knowledge (such as which plants can be eaten and where the dangerous animals wander).

As their journey continues, the party (especially those with the Astrology Skill or Absolute Direction Advantage) begin to wonder if they have somehow gone astray. Then something - a beast of immense proportions that cannot clearly be defined - begins assaulting their camp nightly. The truth of the matter is that the *hyakusho* has purposefully led them off the beaten path so that they may be consumed by the kami of the mountain they are traveling upon, a voracious monster that only he can communicate with.

### Shokunin

Craftsman and porters compose the *shokunin* class of *heimin*. They create all the things that people of the Empire *use*. This is a distinction

from the artisan portion of the samurai caste, which make things that people *enjoy*. Armorers and weaponsmiths are included in this class.

**Suggested Skills:** Armorer, Artisan, Craft: Any, Weaponsmith.

**Adventure Hook:** After one of the PCs has his armor repaired, he begins having visions of another person's life, and death, at the hands of the armorer (who appears younger and dresses as a samurai). Some investigation reveals that the armorer has been plagued by the ghost of a man he killed in a duel many years before, and that he has bound the man's spirit into the armor to bring the endless assault to an end.

### Akindo

Merchants and peddlers are known as *akindo*, and are the lowest of *heimin*, for they create nothing, relying on others for their trade. Some clans consider them more important than others, but most consider *akindo* nearly useless. The Lion are notorious for their distrust of merchants, and the Crane leave the more important trading to the Daidoji. *Akindo* have no headmasters, except in a merchant village (a very rare thing in Rokugan).

**Suggested Skills:** Acting, Appraisal, Commerce, Etiquette, Oratory, Sincerity.

**Adventure Hook:** Over the course of several adventures, the characters are introduced to an *akindo* who claims to see the future, and is willing to sell her visions. Most likely skeptical, she provides the PCs with details of their own immediate future - all of which occur just as she predicts. When they seek her out, she tells them that she can continue to help them at times in exchange for a simple task - to prevent the death she sees in her own fleeting life. Can they succeed? That's up to you...

### Peasant Retainer

When an army is understrength and there are no able bodies to recruit, most military commanders exercise their right to draw from the villages of their territories for reinforcements. Peasant retainers (levies) are the bottom of the military food chain, commonly men ill- or non-skilled in combat, who have been given peasant weapons (see p. 125 of the L5R RPG), and perhaps the odd polearm. As with most military NPCs, these can be found anywhere armies are, though they are more common in beleaguered areas.

**Suggested Skills:** Bo Stick, Gambling, Hand-to-Hand, Knife, Nofujutsu (Peasant Weapons),



Sincerity, Shintao or Theology, and any Skills gained in their "civilian" professions (Animal Husbandry, Armorer, Commerce, Craft, Hunting, etc.).

**Adventure Hook:** The party is assaulted and robbed by bandits while they are traveling, and all badges of their station are taken from them. This should involve a requisite Honor loss, particularly if any of them carried important ancestral items.

As is the samurai way, they demand food and lodging from a peasant village nearby. When dawn comes, they can make their way to a locale where they are known. But before first light, a recently routed regiment sweeps through the area, claiming all able bodies in the village as reinforcement levies, the PCs included.

For the next day, or perhaps longer, your characters must associate with the commoners of their "unit". The interaction between them and the rest of the "lower" soldiers is just the beginning - if you want, you could even subject them to combat with "inferior" weapons before they are recognized and freed of their humiliating position. Of course, they could refuse the commander, but that would be an insult, and likely result in a duel or other social contest.



Sleight of Hand, Tantojutsu (Knife), Tea Ceremony.

**Adventure Hook:** Either one of the PCs or someone the PCs care about has become the target of a traveling dancer's affections. The entertainer woos him constantly, performing intricate (and often embarrassing) physical serenades in an effort to sway him. All too soon,

however, the PCs discover that the dancer is not all that she seems - she is already married, and her dances are only a small part of a larger maho ritual to replace her hated spouse...

## HININ ("NON-PEOPLE")

### Entertainers

Across Rokugan, performers ply their talents at villages and small towns, gathering crowds if they are skilled or drawing anger and derision if they are not. They can play a valuable role in ongoing campaigns as informants and spies, picking up information for the PCs during their performances. Or they can be used as social contacts within a given locale.

**Suggested Skills:** Acting, Artisan (if Crane), Bard, Dance, Etiquette, Mimic (if Scorpion), Music, Oratory, Origami, Poetry, Rhetoric, Sincerity,

### Geisha

Comforters of the strong and companions to the weak, geisha are part of a "lost" social caste in Rokugan. They are perhaps the only ones that samurai can speak the truth to, and yet they are a part of society that warriors dare not venture into. They are commoners who are allowed to touch greatness. And they may be the only group capable of expressing their true feelings.

PCs do not (officially) come in contact with geisha all that often, as they are frowned upon in

## THE GIFT

**Challenge:** The sensei of a PC in the group presents him with an elaborately wrapped gift. It is incredibly heavy. It is impolite to unwrap the gift before the giver, so the PC is likely to take the present and leave.

Later, she is surprised to find a rather ordinary river stone inside. The rock is round and flat, its sides all worn smooth with age.

**Focus:** Several months later, the sensei asks the PC if they are enjoying her gift.

With an amiable response, he explains why the gift is so special.

"Long ago, I engaged in my first duel," he explains. "My opponent and I decided to conduct it near a river and ask the kami of the waters to judge the outcome. I reasoned that my youth and speed would overcome his experience. I couldn't have been more wrong. Focused as I was upon my immediate goal, I was unable to adequately clear my mind. I knew the moment his blade left its saya that my life was over.

"His resolve, beyond my years, had honed his mind to a fine edge. I tripped on a stone jutting up from the soft river bank and fell backward, causing his strike to cut through the air harmlessly, where I no longer stood.

polite society even as they are being supported by it. Yet they may present one of the best roleplaying opportunities in the setting, allowing the PCs to open up to an NPC without fear that their words will offend.

**Suggested Skills:** Artisan (any), Dance, Etiquette, Herbalism, Knife, Music, Seduction, Sincerity, Tea Ceremony.

**Adventure Hook:** A geisha in Ryoko Owari has been told something terrible that threatens to shake the foundations of the Imperial Court. The PCs (who are in the city at the time and are "relatively unknown") are asked to escort her to Otosan Uchi so that she may present her information to the Court herself. Unfortunately, there are others who do not wish her to make it there alive, and they are willing to kill the PCs to get to her if necessary.

### *Eta*

The only ones charged with directly touching the flesh of the dead, *eta* are nearly an invisible class within Rokugan. With so many deaths to war, famine, plague, and simple prejudice in the Empire, their duties are both widespread and common. Yet still they are not recognized for their work. Instead, they are ignored, rejected, and left to themselves; in fact, most go through their entire lives never looking at, let alone speaking to, any but other *eta*. The only ones beneath *eta* in the Celestial Order are *gaijin*.

**Suggested Skills:** Etiquette.

**Adventure Hook:** All those born on a certain night many years ago, when the moon became a perfect silver disc in the sky, are being murdered. No one is sure why except a frantic astrologer, who is seeking out all that remain, including one of the PCs, and an *eta*. The astrologer tells the story of an Oni that was summoned from the dark heavens on that night so long ago, and how it will not rest until all of its "children" are consumed, or they have managed to destroy it first.

The PCs must contend both with the beast, and their new *eta* companion, a young man with an intense desire to rise out of his caste and join them in battle. Much roleplaying potential rests with this individual, and his unique perspective. But be careful not to present him as annoying, or the PCs will simply kill him (which they are - by virtue of their station - permitted to do).

## Important People

### PLAYING NPCs

Those familiar with the card game already have some knowledge of these personalities, how they behave, their motivations, and their histories. Doji Hoturi, Bayushi Kachiko, and Emperor Hantei are all important to the overall L5R storyline. In addition, they can be extremely useful to a GM eager to begin their own saga. However, as influential as these NPCs are, they may be very difficult to roleplay.

Rokugan is filled with exciting NPCs, rich in detail and bigger than life. Many are prominent personalities that can be quite intimidating to a GM. Portraying them all accurately is a concern. You can imagine the depth of a great sensei and know her every motivation and mannerism, but until their first words spill from your lips, you may not be prepared to face presenting them before your group.

Outlined here are a few of the ways to get these NPCs working for you, rather than against you.

### *Keep Them Hidden*

The most basic way to use these NPCs is to keep them hidden. Every daimyo, great general, sensei, seductress, and magistrate has plenty of hatamoto, karo, yoriki, assistants, and lesser nobles to aid him. Rather than have Doji Hoturi contact the PCs himself, he may send one of his most trusted advisors to approach them.

You may use this same technique on the other end of the spectrum as well. Hoturi is much too busy to see the PCs himself; instead, the players must struggle with one of his many assistants. This is a great technique for new GMs who are still trying to acquire the feel of the world and its characters. Such prominent NPCs can upset the game if the GM is not careful, and a first adventure ruined by a duel with Toshimoko can distract a GM enough that he won't ever run a successful campaign again.

Additionally, most players will feel that they are merely walking in the shadows of these NPC giants, and this can serve to eliminate a player's sense of free-will. By keeping the prominent NPCs hidden, GMs can alleviate this dilemma. If in the future the PCs meet one of these characters, it should be a highlight to remember, not just, "Oh yeah. That's Kisada."

### *Never Ask Questions*

The easiest way to portray a powerful NPC is to avoid asking questions of the samurai; always make statements. If the NPC, in this example Kachiko, requires information, leave a poignant pause at the end of her sentences. Anxious players should feel obligated to fill the vacant air with answers. "Ahhh, Hoturi-san! I'm pleased you have arrived. Seeing you always brings such... warmth. That samurai with you... he must be..."

A simple pause should cause an uncomfortable silence, and in the hands of skilled GMs, this will keep the players guessing. Often the PCs will give away more information than they intended to... which is precisely Kachiko's plan. This style of roleplay works for any prominent NPC, including clan and family daimyos, lesser nobles, and any who believe that they know everything. If a samurai asks a question, he indicates that the important information he seeks is lacking. With subtlety and guile (and just a slight pause), the PCs are invited to "remind" him.

### *Body Language*

Another important feature of these characters is their intimidating stature. Although players resent being intimidated, presenting an NPC as confident and powerful (without resorting to yelling) shows the players that they deserve the proper respect. There are a few simple techniques for making NPCs appear larger than life.

First, try standing while speaking. Keep the players seated and make them look up at you while you speak. This is a subtle technique, but well worth the effect. The players will physically feel the power the NPCs have over them. In some games, the players are seated on the floor (there are no chairs in Rokugan), and the PCs are expected to remain seated while the GM walks around the room. This is a helpful psychological tool that suggests freedom and power, in relation to their subservient station. Although this can be intimidating, it is not oppressive, like a GM mimicking Hida Yakamo smashing a table or dais with his bare hands.

### *Make Them Wait*

For further effect, keep the characters waiting in a large, empty meeting room before the NPC actually arrives. Describe how long their characters are there, and drag it out a little with tiny descriptions of insignificant details that one

would notice after having to wait that long. Have a player roll Willpower, failure indicating that the character begins to shift and grow antsy, perhaps right as the NPC arrives. Thereafter, have tea served in silence, followed by more waiting. Only when the players are fidgeting in their chairs should you deign to address them.

### *Control the Room*

To demonstrate their power, portray NPCs of this caliber as though they control the entire situation. A confident samurai is never deterred by a slight distraction or off-hand comment. She is sure, and powerful, and commands the attention of those around her. If the events begin to slip from their grasp, so will their power and the PCs' awe. Upsetting a player's personal space is another tactic for reminding them who they are, but can feel menacing and intimidating if the players are not comfortable with you. Just as in real life, Rokugani like their personal space. Exploit this if your group is comfortable with it, but avoid physical humiliation or confrontation. Do not use these techniques with beginners and new groups.

### *Signatures*

Help your players identify with NPCs. It is hard to feel any kinship, trust, or hatred for someone you can't pick out of a crowd. Since it's just you - the GM - in front of your players, you may wish to adopt signatures to help the players identify the NPCs you portray. How does Kuni Yori *sound* when he speaks? How does proud Akodo Toturi *stand* in court? Voice and posture are two good ways to bring some personality to NPCs. If you are portraying someone like Kuni Yori, for instance, you may wish to use a hoarse whisper while speaking.

### *Make Them Listen*

Make the players take an active role in listening to you. Never repeat yourself. When playing a courtier, keep a slight grin on your face at all times, as if you know a secret and are willing to share it with someone if they prove worthy. Stand tall and puff your chest out if you are roleplaying a proud Lion, like Akodo Toturi or Matsu Tsuko. Again, keep your players seated so you can look down on them. Never let their focus waver. A commanding samurai is the most important person in the room until they leave, and the PCs shouldn't forget it.



## **THE GIFT (CONTINUED)**

"As he looked down at me, half smiling at my feebleness and half shocked at his own miss. I struck with the fury of a hundred samurai.

"That stone is the only reason that I am standing here today. I call it 'Life.' Since that day, I have meditated upon the Fortunes, thanking them for the blessing it has been. I have learned much about the universe since that day. If not for that stone, who would have this knowledge?"

**Strike:** After some silence and reflection, the sensei says that he would like to see the honored location where the stone rests in the PC's home. If they did indeed honor the gift with a respectful location in their home when they received it, they gain 3 Honor Points. Otherwise, they lose 3. If they threw it away or have lost it somehow, they lose 1 Honor Rank.

## CCG USE: EXAMPLE I

I have two decks; one has Characters and Locations, the other has Action cards, Items, Kihos, Events, Followers, and Spells.

First, I draw two personalities - Ginawa and Shinjo Yasamura - and a holding, Bridged Pass. I decide that I really like Yasamura, but not Ginawa. I decide to change his name to Kuriyowa, a reputed disreputable ronin and bandit. I also decide that they are standing on either side of a river (Bridged Pass).

The PCs will encounter them "showing their stance", standing on either side of the bridge's archway. It already looks grim for these two, and I haven't even drawn from the other deck. From the other deck I draw a few more cards until I see something I like. Obsidian Blade (ouch), Ryokan's Sword (hmm... I'll need a good story for this one), Iaijutsu Duel (as if I didn't know), and Kharmic Strike (oh no).

### Using the Cards as Props

Using the CCG personality cards can help too. Place them on the table when that NPC is in the game. Shuffle them in and out; don't leave Toturi on the table if he isn't there. Also, be sure to include characters that aren't as prominent. Mirumoto Taki and Asako Oyo should be just as likely to make an appearance as Matsu Gohei or Otaku Kamoko. The cards provide an excellent visual tool for the GM, and should not be overlooked.

The techniques presented above are just a few of the ways to make the NPCs work for you. A subtle, understated encounter can be more meaningful than one with a NPC that is in the PCs' face demanding respect. Think of how a Shosuro would take control of a situation, and intersperse your NPCs with varying levels of power, before the players grow tired of the big boys.



# Using The CCG With The RPG

*"If there are no ripples, there is no point in telling the story.*

*No one notices a still pond."*

- Ikoma Sukemi, Lion Clan *Omoidasu*

You may own cards from the CCG. If you do, you have an invaluable resource of ideas for stories and adventures that your players may encounter. By building a small story deck, you can assemble short adventures and encounters on the fly, while devising new combinations of characters and events. The creative mind is sparked in mysterious ways, and the CCG can help build deep NPCs, as well as interesting locales, with a few simple adjustments.

For examples of how to construct decks and use them to create stories, adventures, and characters, please refer to the sidebars on pages 94 - 97.

## PERSONALITIES

The personalities may be used as they are - e.g. Akodo Kage, Bayushi Aramoro - or to represent members of the clan they are drawn from. The *Scorpion Clan Coup* set is perfect for drawing upon characters that appeared before that event, and that may have a smaller effect on the whole of Rokugan. Such characters are easier to drop into a story without creating damaging ripples in the RPG that will cause it to deviate from the "historical RPG".

### *Converting the Card Stats to the RPG*

Although the Clan Books detail many of the leaders of Rokugan, some players and GMs may wish to convert their favorite personalities from the CCG to be used at the table. There are a number of ways to convert the numbers to properly balance your games. The most obvious, of course, is to realize that many of the Personality Cards are much more powerful than any Rank 1 Bushi. Matsu Gohei, for instance, is a war hero, and Bayushi Aramoro is one of the most important Scorpions in Rokugan.

Keeping track of the numbers may be a little difficult if the GM is not used to rolling a lot of dice. As shown in the *Running on the Fly* section (page 76), we encourage GMs to roll a number of

dice that represent the samurai's physical power (i.e. Attack dice, physical tests, etc.). To discern the same for CCG characters, we suggest rolling dice equal to the Personality's Chi and keeping their Force (those with 0 Force keeping 1). For mental power (used for social tests, Intelligence-based rolls, and such), invert the CCG stats - rolling Force and keeping Chi (minimum 1).

### *Earth*

To determine an NPC's Ring of Earth, take the Force of the personality and add one or two to either Stamina or Willpower (but not both).

### *Water*

Chi is an excellent representation of Water. A personality with higher Chi than Force will have a Perception one higher than their Ring. Conversely, those with a higher Force should have a Strength increase of one or two.

### *Fire*

The Fire values of bushi should be one, two, or three points lower than the Force of the personality, with Agility nearly equal to its Force. With non-bushi, however, the ability to determine Fire becomes more difficult. Intelligence is an important Trait for shugenja, magistrates, courtiers, and other members of Rokugan's "higher mind". Take the Chi of the personality and make this their Fire Ring, and then add a point or two to find their Intelligence.

### *Air*

Unique Traits such as **Justicar** or **Distractor** may indicate a higher Awareness. There is no hard and fast rule for this, so GMs should feel inclined to address them on a case-by-case basis.

### *Void*

The Chi of the Personality in the CCG can double for the Void of the character in L5R. Give the Personality a +2 Void if they have Double Chi, as well as increasing their Iaijutsu score to a 3 or better.

### *Honor*

The personal Honor printed on the card translates exactly to the RPG. Add 0-9 boxes at your leisure.

## CCG USE: EXAMPLE I (CONTINUED)

After seeing that, I decide that I've flipped enough cards. The scene set before me does not bode well.

Perhaps, when both samurai are killed at once in a Kharmic Strike, the PCs will be intrigued enough to investigate. Maybe the black blade will draw their attention, or the haunted sword may try possess a weak samurai standing nearby. Perhaps Shinjo Yasamura is an Emerald Magistrate and a very important letter is in his obi. Now the PCs must take the note for the dead Magistrate or find out why someone was trying to stop him. Whatever happens next is now up to the players, and the GM should be ready to address their concerns.





## CCG Use: EXAMPLE 2

I have three decks; one for setting, one for characters, and one for plot. The setting deck includes regions, holdings, and important cards that would indicate where an adventure might take place. The character deck includes personalities, events, and followers. This deck is used to determine what sort of encounters the PCs might happen upon, or what events might befall them in their journey. The plot deck has everything else that a GM might require – action cards, kihos, spells, and items all add flavor to the events and locations. I draw a Torii Shrine, Togashi Yokuni, Sanzo, and Whispers on the Wind. I decide that the PCs will happen upon Yokuni passing a scroll to a ronin. Neither the scroll nor the samurai are recognizable: a cryptic sight, indeed. Before the PCs can interact with the NPCs, Yokuni walks away, and the ronin vanishes. What has happened? The PCs can try to find out.

### Glory

Glory is more difficult to define from looking at a card. A champion most certainly has a Glory Rank of 9. Other Rare cards should have from 5 to 8, as most are known throughout Rokugan. Another method is to look at their gold cost to bring into play. The higher their gold cost, the greater their Glory. An excellent ratio is 3 Gold = 2 Glory, or 4 Gold = 3 Glory for personalities that never became Experienced. Depending on the clan, this ratio may vary a little – the Crane and Lion promote often, for instance, while the Phoenix and Dragon are not as preoccupied with fame and bragging.

Uncommon cards should have a Glory Rank between 3 and 6. The above ratios are still good indicators, but GMs should trim down really high numbers for samurai that are more warlike, and less likely to govern. Common card personalities are lucky to be noticed at all, and should have a Glory Rank similar to their personal Honor or Chi.

### School Rank

The simplest system is to make common card Personalities Rank 1 or 2 (preferably 2), uncommon ones Rank 2 or 3, and rares Rank 4 or 5. Since this is not always a perfect system, GMs should always consider them to be slightly better than a starting character.

### Skills and School Techniques

The standard Family package is a must, but it is also important to know where many are trained. Although the Unicorn do not cross-pollinate with other clans, there certainly are Daidoji and Doji duelists, and many Hiruma warriors alongside the Hida.

A high Force indicates the Battle Skill or the Leadership Advantage. The Tactician Trait is similarly important, as is the ability to destroy Terrain cards, or leave a battle. Cavalry indicates at least Horsemanship 3, and a fine steed. Higher-ranking samurai will have 3 or more in given Skills (Kenjutsu, Iaijutsu, Sincerity, Battle, Investigation, etc.), and Champion-level samurai are bound to have Rank 5 in many Skills.

Wherever a CCG ability indicates manipulation of card play (Seductress or Poison Tokens, for instance), provide that Personality with the appropriate Skills in the RPG. A Sensei Token could indicate an Insight bonus of some kind, and the ability to redirect Actions may

indicate the Manipulation, Courtier, Etiquette, and Sincerity Skills.

The ability to straighten or bow cards may indicate an increased Willpower or Intelligence. Ranged Attacks indicate the Archery Skill, equal to the Strength of the Attack (+1).

### Advantages and Disadvantages

Play the stereotypes for many of these characters. Give the Crab Personalities the Strength of the Earth and Large Advantages. Matsu with high Honor should have Death Trance, and Crane with Double Chi should have an Iaijutsu of 4 or 5. All Phoenix should have a Innate Ability, and all *ise zumi* should breathe fire or jump like a monkey.

It's your game. This sort of balance is dependent on your style of play. We could print 800 pages of rules on converting characters and still get something wrong. Aramoro's ability to discard Dynasty cards does not mean he should be able to destroy an entire Rice Harvest or Village – only that he can make things happen by getting personally involved.

## EVENTS

Events represent occurrences that cannot be foreseen or controlled. Natural disasters, taxes, wars, and similar large-scale effects can all be categorized as events. GMs that do not want to cripple their players with unavoidable tangents may wish to exclude Events from their decks.

The following Events can be very useful in game play. Some of them are better than others to help get your creativity flowing. Others are easily interpreted a hundred different ways, and GMs should refer here for starting ideas.

### *A Black Scroll is Opened*

If you play this one, the Coup is not far off. This is a very story-specific event. On the other hand, it could also indicate a shugenja that has used forbidden magic or very destructive *maho*, and now the players must deal with the repercussions, stopping the antagonist from doing it again.

### *Alliance*

The samurai are asked to visit one of the families of a rival clan. The GM could set up a series of tasks that the family requires before they will be swayed to ally with their daimyo. Perhaps



the family merely needs to be presented with a gift and a fine performance of the tea ceremony. This style of adventure is best suited for courtier characters.

#### *Ancestral Duty*

A visit by an ancestor guides the samurai on a quest, or commands them to perform some duty for the family. No lord would dare deny a samurai who chose to follow the voice of his ancestor in service of the clan...

#### *Chrysanthemum Festival*

The Chrysanthemum Festival can represent almost any celebration in Rokugan, but the obvious choice is the Chrysanthemum Festival itself. GMs can read up on it in *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun* (page 66).

#### *Corruption of the Harmonies*

A few "experimenting" shugenja have performed a ritual that has destroyed or banished many kami. The spiritual backlash can be felt by other shugenja, and it has caught the attention of the PCs' lord.

#### *Duty to the Empire*

Similar to Ancestral Duty, the samurai have been asked by the Emperor or a regent of the Imperial Court to perform an important function. Perhaps the adventure hook is another card, and the drawing of Duty to the Empire means that an important Imperial family member is the person asking them.

#### *Enlightened Ruler*

A new daimyo is being established in the Empire, and the PCs are assigned as emissaries to her court. She is known for thinking before acting, and many clans are interested in working with her.

#### *Enlistment*

The samurai have been conscripted into the army of a high-ranking noble. Or perhaps the samurai must gather their own forces by levying troops. If a war has not yet broken out, why would a daimyo have the samurai involved in such a plan? Rationalize the enlistment with a few additional card combinations.

#### *Factionism*

The opposite of Alliance, a rival family has grown hostile and openly opposes everything the PCs' lord does. This can be used to tell the tale of two lords' animosity toward one another in a prologue (see the *Book of the Void*). The game introduction could include one lord denouncing another in public, their reactions, and a short interlude into the character's lives. This works especially well if the PCs are from each of the rival clans involved.

#### *Festival of the River of Stars*

The Festival of the River of Stars is detailed in *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun* (page 67). Perhaps the samurai have been invited to a remote estate to celebrate with a lord of the Unicorn or Phoenix. This is excellent excuse for thievery on behalf of a crafty and immoral NPC. Such a scenario pits the PCs against the lord, in whose house the transgression has occurred. GMs should consider using this merely as a backdrop if they do not wish to incorporate too many details into their games, or do not have the *Winter Court* book.

#### *Finding the Balance*

An excellent way to incorporate this into an ongoing campaign is to have a samurai's sensei see flaws in her fighting technique. She has demanded that her prize student train for a few weeks and re-focus her energies. Perhaps the next Experience Points she earns must be spent on her lowest Trait.

Additionally, this card can be used as a quest to find an element that is out of balance, or missing. The players must visit important masters and derive clues as to the fate of the element. An Oracle could be consulted to receive very cryptic or misleading information. This is an ambitious adventure (or campaign) plot.

#### *Glimpse of the Unicorn*

The true Unicorn brings good luck and fortune to those who see it. If peasants are the ones who have seen it, then rumors will begin to spread through Rokugan that the Ki-Rin has returned. If samurai other than the PCs have seen it, a lord may send them out to investigate. If the PCs have seen it, perhaps they gain Insight, Glory, Honor, or learn of some unknown or forgotten Lore.

### **CCG USE: EXAMPLE 2 (CONTINUED)**

This section will help you to generate a story on the fly. Within this section, you will find a list of cards that are helpful in the RPG. It is by no means exhaustive, and the GM should feel free to draw upon other concept cards that will help improve their game.

Be aware that adding story-specific Events and Actions (*Kisada's Wake*, *The Crab Arrive*) can greatly change the course of your campaign. Although GMs should feel free to create their own Rokugan, official L5R RPG material considers *Kisada* alive and kicking, for instance, and a vibrant part of the world.



#### *Hototogitsu*

The bird of good fortune has paid a visit to a local farm and now the peasants feel blessed and have begun working harder, pleasing their lord greatly. Alternately, the bird may have forsaken the village (or so they believe), and the villagers are not working as hard as they could. GMs should consider having bandits, ronin, or maybe even monks visiting the struggling village, with varying degrees of concern.

#### *Hurricane*

Is it coming? Has it hit? Who has suffered and who has benefited? Natural disasters can take a lot of the guesswork out of an adventure, as well as a lot of power out of the players' hands.

#### *Imperial Funeral*

Does a Seppun or Otomo pass away? Or someone more important? GMs can use this card for any funeral and it works especially well as foreshadowing or a flashback. This can be a very

grim event in the right GM's hands. *A la* David Lynch, your L5R campaigns can go places no one understands or dares to tread.

#### *Imperial Gift*

This event could be as simple as a roll on the gift chart or might indicate an item that has gone missing. What if the PCs must escort or carry an Imperial gift for one of the families? Perhaps the Imperial family wishes to have the PCs' lord as a trusted karo or hatamoto, and the PCs are bearing witness to a gift bestowed upon her. Does she leave? What can the PCs do, and how would this effect them?

#### *Imperial Levying*

Someone of proper station - an Imperial family member, the family or clan daimyo, or a sensei - has "gifted" the samurai with an Imperial station. Does she reciprocate the gift and offer a relative of the giver an important position in her army? Perhaps the Imperial family offers



peasants or other samurai to the PC to be used in defense of the Empire for some specific purpose, such as war, or to quell a dangerous uprising. Other adventure ideas could include peasant or ronin enlistments and applications to the Imperial Army. Of course, the PC could also be conscripted into someone else's army, if needbe.

#### *Inheritance*

Someone must usually pass away for others to inherit something from them, but a retirement or the simple passing of a gift could be represented by this card. Is the inheritance an item of quality or a responsibility that appears more like a curse?

#### *Peasant Revolt*

The samurai must put down a rebellious village that will not harvest for the Emperor. Killing all of the peasants will serve no one, however; they must use guile to achieve their end. Perhaps the revolt is in a neighbor's territory, or the family lord has asked the PCs to start one in a rival's land. Additionally, the adventure could be about something completely contrary, and the peasant revolt could be a short break between adventure hooks.

#### *Proposal of Peace*

What would the PCs do if a rival family visited their lord with gifts and good will, especially when they knew them for liars and cheats? Perhaps the PCs are emissaries of peace, or must act as a third party in delicate negotiations. What if the lord has invited a peace accord to her stronghold or home, only to have a war break out within the walls? Remember, peace in Rokugan never lasts forever.

#### *Retirement*

When a samurai retires there are many ways of life they can follow. No matter what she chooses, however, she is no longer considered part of the samurai caste. If she becomes a monk, she is thereafter *heimin*. If she gives her sword to her son and sits behind his throne as advisor, she is probably the same. And if she should dedicate her life to an art or craft, she becomes part of the artisan or merchant class. How would it affect a PC to have their parent or sensei retire? Does she leave word that a few of her subjects are troublesome or loyal? And what are the PCs expected to do about it?

#### *Severed from the Emperor*

An offense against the Imperial line has resulted in the offending family's banishment, decreed by the Emperor himself. Is it the PCs' family, or another in Rokugan? Does a new clan seek to align the family to theirs and speak on their behalf? What would the Scorpion have to gain from such an act? The Lion? The Crane?

GMs should carefully consider the ramifications of applying this card to a PC's own family; there is rarely redemption from such a fate, and few players desire to see their characters forever relinquished to a status beneath the station they have become accustomed to.

#### *Test of the Emerald Champion*

The samurai is invited to any of the great Rokugani tournaments - Jade, Emerald, Topaz, Pearl, Crystal. Whatever the GM dreams up is a fine test. Perhaps the PCs are asked to investigate the conditions of the Championship, or they are guards outside the events, patrolling the grounds and making a presence for their lord's own glory and repute.

#### *The Darkest Magics*

Is it a *maho-tsukai* at work, or something much worse? Do the players become involved with the Living Shadow at this time (see *The Way of Shadow* for more), or is the impending fear of something sinister in the Shadow enough to creep them out? If the GM decides to unleash some dark magic, the Phoenix may take an interest.

#### *When Dark Winds Howl*

An omen or vision perplexes the samurai, challenging their judgment and asking them important, life-affirming questions. Perhaps the dream is merely a prophecy of things to come. Alternately, the sighting could be from the eyes or mind of someone who as already gone mad because of it.

#### *Winter Warfare*

Nearly one-third the months of Rokugan are spent in snow. If the PCs are involved in a winter adventure, it should be enough that the snow slows them down. Interjecting a war into their lives is not completely necessary unless you wish to ruin their plans for a relaxing winter. Another possibility is that winter is over, and that there is no word from a certain clan since the snow has begun to thaw.

### **A FEW NOTABLE EVENTS**

In addition to the Event cards described here, the following list includes some others that GMs may find useful for game play:

- Contemplation
- Disgraced
- Disobedience
- Iris Festival
- Kharmas
- Loss of Face
- New Year's Celebration
- Pillaging
- Pride
- Proud Words
- Rampant Plague
- Setsuban Festival
- The Great Feast
- The Longest Night
- Threat
- Tsunami



## A FEW NOTABLE ACTIONS

In addition to the Action cards described here, the following list includes some others that GMs may find useful for game play.

A Gift of Honor  
A Stout Heart  
A Vision of Truth  
Arrows From the Woods  
Block Supply Lines  
Call to Arms  
Carrier Pigeon  
Concealed Weapon  
Confusion at Court  
Counterfeit  
Darkness Feeds...  
Desperate Wager  
Disfavored  
Disloyalty  
Emperor's Protection  
Empty Words  
Exhibition  
Exile  
Family Loyalty  
Final Charge  
Geisha Assassin  
Honorable Seppuku  
I Believed in You  
Investigation  
Kharmic Strike  
Levy Troops  
Night of a Thousand  
Fires

## ACTIONS

The following cards are examples of actions NPCs can take in court, on the battlefield, or in social settings to challenge the characters. Many of these cards require a drawn Personality to determine who is acting or who is being acted upon.

### *Bad Karma*

Past sins are haunting the PCs and there seems no end in sight to what the kami will do to them. Characters with low Honor are obvious targets of such a subplot. Careful planning can keep this alive for a while, dogging the samurai. After all, evil spirits make excellent house guests. Bad karma can manifest in die rolls as well as roleplaying situations. For instance, a saya might crack, the katana within falling to the floor (a highly dishonorable event), or one's only "fashionable" kimono might become dirty, torn, or missing.

### *Betrayal*

Someone close to the samurai, or their lord, has committed a horrible transgression, and the PCs become privy to this information. Perhaps the GM can hint that the trusted karo is behind it. Another plot device is to have the PCs earn the trust of a rival family's lord, and then betray them later. The adventure possibilities here are numerous; be creative using it, both for and against the PCs. These themes are more common in Rokugan than you might think, and are a great adventure hook for courtiers and Scorpion.

### *Blood Oath*

A samurai has given her word, a daimyo has made a great sacrifice, and the fate of the Empire lies in the balance. This card is highly dramatic, and its use will increase the tension in the PCs' lives. Perhaps they have been forced or tricked (maybe socially) to give their word to perform something next to impossible, or someone has given her word to them, and then reneged (a great offense). No matter the context, the blood oath should not be taken lightly.

### *Breach of Etiquette*

A dishonorable act has been committed by one of the PCs, or a samurai has shamed their family. The GM may wish to decide if the samurai was at fault, or if some other factor led to the breach. Another option is to allow the plotline to

run its course and let the players decide. If one or more PCs are courtiers, perhaps they are expected to make a gift disappear or cause a prominent NPC to look foolish in court.

### *Bribery*

The PCs are approached by a ronin offering koku, a gift, or something else to make them look the other way after witnessing something. Perhaps a lord has been confronted about a questionable transgression and is now offering the PCs a "gift". Or maybe the PC samurai have been asked to deliver a gift to an important NPC, not realizing that they are unwitting pawns in the bribery of an Imperial official. This can have serious repercussions if a PC should mention who gave them the item.

### *Brilliant Victory*

A bard speaks well of a recent conflict and the session opens in court with the players listening to a powerful soliloquy. Perhaps the samurai are introduced to a prominent sensei who is known for an important victory for the clan. Additionally, the card could be used to relate a parable to the PCs, and encourage them to greater deeds. This card works exceptionally well during a battle while using the chart located on page 115 of the L5R RPG.

### *Chasing the Wind*

Chasing the Wind is a fascinating card, and can mean more than just the change of tactics for a cavalry unit. Its uses can range from battle actions, to quests, to festivals. GMs should focus on the name of this card and not on the game effect in the CCG. In one campaign, a PC thought he was the Oracle of the Wind and used this to justify his quest.

### *Court Jester*

This character can act as an elusive NPC that speaks in curt riddles, or a plot device that is slain or goes missing. Depending on the presence of the NPC in your campaign, it may feel more like a plot device than a dramatic conflict. GMs should consider how it will interact with other cards and perhaps make the jester an enemy and traitor of her lord to spice things up. See the *Way of the Crane*, page 63, for more on court jesters.



### *Cowardice*

There are a number of dishonorable Action cards on this list, but this may quite possibly be the worst. If drawn in conjunction with a samurai Personality, the GM should assign the Coward Disadvantage to the NPC. Otherwise, the card could represent foreshadowing, or hint at a subtle or transparent PC act. A daimyo's cowardice could also be the motivation for an adventure.

### *Cremation*

The samurai is invited to a funeral pyre where many mourners have gathered. It is up to the GM if the corpse is of anyone the PC knows - draw a Personality card and find out. Otherwise, the cremation could be part of a battle or just a roadside encounter. If a campaign were to open with a powerful NPC's cremation, the PCs would likely take notice.

### *Day and Night*

The samurai must stand guard all night as workers toil to rebuild a destroyed bridge or perform other important work. The tension of working beyond their endurance could be played up, as well as their fear of night spirits. Peasants who are not particularly loyal may take this as a chance to rebel...

### *Deadly Message*

Did the message arrive on a dead body, or does the message hint at a death to come? Perhaps the daimyo is merely asking the PCs to deliver a message, but they arrive in a death-trap. Was it planned? Did the daimyo know? What part can the PCs be expected to play? See Doji Shogo's adventure in *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun* (page 110) for story ideas on using this card in an adventure.

### *Disrupted Resources*

A lord is having trouble managing his lands. For whatever reason, the taxes are low this year, and she may be forced to commit seppuku if she does not pay the Emperor. More Action cards may be drawn to develop what has been happening to the daimyo's holdings. The disrupted resources could also be the goal of the players' plans: "Go and kill a few peasants in these lands. Do not come back until their holdings are in shambles."

### *Double Agent*

An NPC is serving two lords. To generate more ideas, the GM should draw three Personality cards - one for the main NPC and the other two to determine which clans she is serving. Alternately, it could be someone close to the PCs' lord that is working for or against her. Do the PCs expose or exploit this menace?

### *Doubt*

Disfavor, Disloyalty, and Doubt make an incredible sub-plot combination for samurai struggling with their beliefs. If doubt is plaguing an NPC (draw a card), then who is she in relation to the players, and why will it affect them? If a lord is in doubt, how long has she been making unpopular decisions, and why hasn't anyone noticed yet?

### *Extortion*

In Rokugan, this is a popular way of getting a lord to do your bidding. The PCs might be trying to protect their lord or themselves, actively hunting down an extortionist. Alternately, a lord could ask the PCs to "invite" the son of a rival to visit, only to make them witness her extortion plot unfold. Like *Deadly Message*, the GM should determine whether anyone has been hurt, and what NPCs are involved. What the NPCs can do about this situation is of the utmost importance.

### *Flattery*

"My lord, that color is beautiful on you." This card is very useful in a courtly game (see *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*), and GMs that draw an NPC with this Action may have an offended or delighted individual to play with. Perhaps a sycophantic NPC enjoys the company of the PCs and is quick to note every decision they make. Or maybe the PCs have been asked to be "nice" to a specific NPC, and have strict instructions as to how to behave.

### *Fog*

Although fog is an excellent battle Action card, it can also imply adverse weather conditions for an adventure. The GM can use this card to upset bouts of calm weather that the samurai may have been enjoying, or provide cover for NPCs to slip through enemy lines of defense. It can also represent a magical fog that the PCs have to deal with. What if a PC woke one morning in a fog bank to find the party had left her behind?

## **A FEW NOTABLE ACTIONS (CONTINUED)**

Passing on the Soul  
Plea of the Peasants  
Poisoned Weapon  
Political Dissent  
Political Mistake  
Rear Guard  
Ride Until Dawn  
Shallow Victory  
Shame  
Slander  
Spoils of War  
Stand Firm  
Subversion  
Surrender  
Test of Honor  
Test of Might  
The Blood Feud  
The Code of Bushido  
The Path of Wisdom  
The Perfect Gift  
Threat of War  
Trusted Counsel  
When Darkness Draws  
Near  
Your Life is Mine

*His Most Favored*

One of the PCs has been proclaimed in open court to be the most favored of the daimyo. The PC has inherited a great mantle of responsibility and respite. NPCs that lobbied the daimyo for her favor may find the PC obtuse and ignorant. If there is a ceremony involved and a few additional Action cards are drawn (Deadly Message or Arrows From the Woods, for example), this could become a particularly bloody event.

*Iaijutsu Challenge/Duel*

It's important to know who the central challengers of the duel are, and why they are fighting. *The Book of Fire* details the proper protocol for a duel.

*Imperial Edicts*

Imperial officers have arrived with new laws and procedures for the people to follow. It may be necessary to hand out a prop detailing the new laws. The PCs could be asked to tack the new legislature upon posts around the lands, stopping at tea houses and villages to verbally recite them to those that cannot read. This is an excellent adventure for Imperial or Clan Magistrates.

*Imperial Taxation*

The tax collector has arrived in the lands of the PCs' daimyo early, but the taxes have yet to be gathered. Any honorable lord would be wise to welcome him for a few days while his samurai collect rice from the local farms. The PCs could be asked to escort the very somber tax collector from city to city and village to village. What problems are caused by the situation? Can all the families pay? Does someone try to murder the tax collector? A host of adventures are possible if the GM is willing to create friction between the clans and families (or perhaps even cause havoc on the road while the PCs are trying to collect the rice).

*Kitsuki Evidence*

Combined with Investigation and Imperial Edict, this card could indicate that a Kitsuki is expected to investigate the claims of ninja, Shadowlands creatures, or a host of other unexplainable events. Alternately, the PCs could come across the journal of a noted Kitsuki detailing something that no one is suppose to know. *The Way of Shadow* contains a great deal of information for including Kitsuki journals (and ninja) in your campaigns.

*Kyujutsu*

The samurai's sensei has invited them out to her home for target practice, and it is up to the PC whether they will try to "win" or not. This provides PCs with a great deal of roleplaying opportunity. If drawn with an NPC, perhaps the character is very proficient with the bow - i.e. Sanzo with Kyujutsu 4. Kyujutsu could also indicate that bow use will be necessary or used heavily in the adventure.

*Nemesis*

A Sworn Enemy of one of the PCs has arrived. Generate some stats, or draw an NPC card and make the PCs sweat. If the nemesis isn't concerned with killing the PC outright, she could draw the attention of someone else (a lord perhaps), and cause a great deal of trouble for all concerned. A nemesis should be a recurring feature, not a one-shot kill. If two NPCs are drawn along with this card, then the PCs might witness an impromptu duel.

*Oath of Fealty / Offer of Fealty*

Fealty cards draw upon a very ambiguous part of game play. Do the PCs leave their clan to join another? What disfavor or honor would come from it? Additionally, the PCs could be expected to find ronin worthy to join the clan or visit with a Minor Clan to solicit their allegiance. Fealty is not offered or given lightly.

*One Koku*

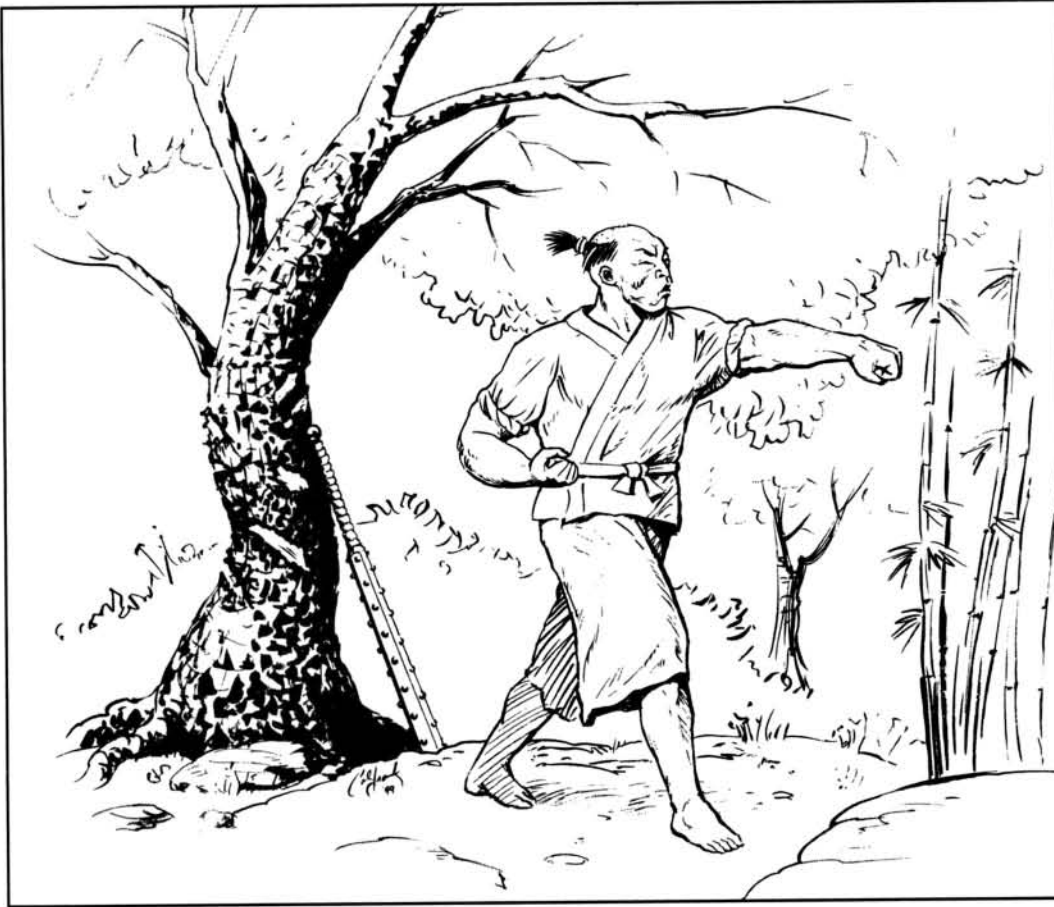
The possibilities of this card are endless. Remember what people have done for the sake of a dollar in our own world...

*Political Marriage*

The PCs' lord has asked them to take the hand of another samurai in marriage. It would be a great honor to the family if they accepted. An Imperial spouse is a valuable advantage, and a Doji bride is coveted by all. Alternately, the PCs might be expected to protect a bride en route to a very important wedding.

*Refugees*

What has happened to dispossess these peasants? Maybe it is war, bandits, natural disaster, a relocation effort, or something else altogether. This is a very specific Action card, and is rare during times of peace.



#### *Remorseful Seppuku*

Someone is committing seppuku over a dishonorable act, or as proof of their sincerity. GMs should consider carefully whether or not they wish to apply the effects of this card to a PC. Players rarely appreciate being “forced” to die. However, any Personality drawn with a seppuku card can combine this event with that of another Action on this list. GMs should determine what is causing the seppuku and how it will affect the PC, especially if their lord is the focus.

#### *Salt the Earth*

During times of war, salting the earth is a radical tactic which prevents the attackers from living off the land. This is a rather severe action, as the land rarely - if ever - regains enough topsoil for another crop. The process involves burning the plantation and then salting the ashes. It is highly destructive and the daimyo that chooses this route had best have a good reason for doing so. Unless, of course, the card is interpreted as bandits...

#### *The Fault is Mine*

There are a number of ways to use this card. The PC's daimyo could have committed an offense and asked the samurai to bear his shame. The samurai might have committed an offense, and another has offered to accept the blame. Perhaps an NPC has incited the wrath of the PC's lord. Does she intercede? Two NPCs drawn together with this Action card could indicate that one is now considered eta, in dedicated service to the other, or that one always steps in for the other.

#### *Utter Defeat*

The PCs bear witness to a horribly unfair duel, or a very weak ronin challenges a PC to a duel. Utter Defeat indicates that the victor did not kill her opponent when she could have. What are the ramifications? Does the loser feel indebted to the winner? Does someone decry the act as cowardly or the duel as rigged? Having the PCs suffer for a victory can be quite a twist for players that have grown used to success.





## A FEW NOTABLE HOLDINGS

In addition to the Holdings described here, the following list includes more that GMs may find useful for game play.

Akodo Tactical School  
Armory  
Basecamp  
Battlements  
Black Market  
Bridged Pass  
Dark Sanctuary  
Dojo - Hiruma, Bushi, Ronin  
Dragon's Teeth  
Earthworks  
Fort on a Hill  
Gambling House  
Garrison  
Geisha House  
Goldsmith  
Hida War College  
Island Wharf  
Ki-Rin Shrine  
Monastery  
Palisades  
Pitch and Fire  
Shinjo Stockades  
Silk Farm  
Stables  
Storehouse  
Temple  
Togashi Testing Ground  
Watchtower

## HOLDINGS

Many Holdings are meant to represent locations, and do not require an explanation. The same is true of Fortifications, although they are typically reserved for wartime. GMs that include them may wish to center the adventure around an old battle site where ramparts still lie. It is important to note that some of these Holdings are actually retainers and should be put into either the Personality or Action decks, depending on how the GM intends to use them (a "master painter" is not a *place* where a fight takes place, but his shop certainly could be).

### Artificer

The GM should determine if the artificer's skill is of any worth, or if he is merely a mediocre craftsman. It may also be helpful for the GM to determine the Skills the artificer is proficient in, as well as a few items of note in her shop. Most retainers serve a lord if they are skilled enough, and artificers are no exception.

### Funeral Pyre

A funeral pyre is built to honor the passing of a single samurai. Similar in effect to Cremation (above), this card can be used as the location where a funeral pyre once took place - the mound and ash can still be seen - or an eta village outside the city.

### Garden

A particularly lavish garden could be designed in such a way that it has become an excellent place for a lord to meet her vassals. A Shintao garden could help define the life of a samurai. Gardens provide the world of Rokugan with an aesthetic and acetic quality. GMs should use them to enhance the backdrop of their stories.

### Grove of the Five Masters

This is a unique location. The Five Masters are detailed in *The Way of the Phoenix* (page 28 and throughout the Who's Who chapter). Adventures taking place here should have some relevance to the Phoenix Clan. Alternately, the grove could be the site of a single Master, dedicated to a single kami or Element, or just be a simple grove outside a temple or shrine.

### Historian

If the Historian is an Imperial Ikoma scribe or Lion Clan *Omoidasu*, then the GM should use

this card as an NPC of some influence and importance. Otherwise it may be important to determine who the NPC serves and what worth they have to offer the adventure.

### Kakita Kenjutsu School

Remember that there are many schools within the Kakita Academy, and that kenjutsu is just one skill taught among them. This card could represent almost anything unique within the walls of Shiro sano Kakita, or it could be a reclusive dojo where a retired sensei shows her students strange, deadly techniques.

### Library

Any of the library or school cards can become a generic location or specific site for adventure. Most libraries are located in the great cities of Rokugan (remember that only samurai are allowed to read).

### Marketplace

Most every location in Rokugan has a marketplace or business where goods may be purchased. Additionally, an impromptu road-side sale could include several merchants and their wares.

### Master Painter

Every season (or perhaps annually in less wet regions), it is important to refresh the paint upon buildings, especially that of the smaller designs, such as the fish and birds upon doors of various businesses. A particularly skilled painter could do more than just paint charms on doorways, however, and might be retained by a powerful lord.

### Merchant Caravan

A merchant caravan makes for a great road encounter. In the Appendix, you can find a chart for determining what a merchant has for sale, and with a few NPC cards you can determine who is there buying what, or even who is protecting the merchant. Of course, if some ronin are drawn in conjunction with this card, the caravan might be "visited" in a very unfortunate manner.

### Mine

Any of the mine cards can suffice for underground adventuring (i.e. the mine is haunted, samurai are trapped within, etc.). Additionally, these might be major holdings for

any landed noble, reflecting troubled or prosperous times ahead.

#### *Oyabun*

An oyabun is a crime figure of some sort. They are typically known for bullying peasants and intimidating merchants whenever no samurai are around. An oyabun's presence is a sign of corruption and moral decay. An oyabun encounter need not be obvious at all, and GMs can design an entire campaign around uncovering the location and identity of the crime figures.

#### *Pearl Bed*

Pearls are only cultivated in warm waters, and only harvested in the eleventh month of the year (Ox/Fu Leng). Pearl divers are typically female, and are known to leave many oyster beds alone for two or three years at a time, encouraging the growth of bigger pearls. An adventure in a pearl bed could involve a simple patrol or a search for the source of local sea trolls. Draw a few more cards and put it all together.

#### *Philosopher*

Most philosophers have a patron, as none could thrive for long on speeches alone. The patron can be determined with the draw of a Personality card. Ultimately, a philosopher could be used to add flavor to a court setting. Philosophers are considered heimin unless noble-born and supported by the clan (which very few are).

#### *Prayer Shrine*

Temples, monasteries, shrines, and all other places of worship may be represented by this card. The Ancestral Shrines of Otosan Uchi are all located in a very specific portion of the capital. All waystations in Rokugan have shrines somewhere within their confines, and food left for hungry spirits is very common.

#### *Quarry*

Particularly numerous among the Crab, other clans have also found uses for stone gained from the many mines across the Empire. Stonemasons and miners are plentiful in and around quarries. An adventure in a quarry could revolve around the ever-popular guard duty assignment or a simple visit during another routine investigation.

#### *Silk Works*

Silk is the most important material in Rokugan, as everything a samurai wears is made from its smooth fibers. Rich nobles are known for many changes of clothing, and the peasants of Rokugan must meet the demands of the samurai class as well. The works commonly include giant vats of boiling water that are stirred constantly, where worms are processed into long, wet strands of silk. Not all towns have silk works, and these holdings are rarely in any town smaller than 20,000 peasants. Villages will rarely have them, but every city in Rokugan has at least three.

#### *Tomb*

There are many tomb cards in the L5R CCG, all of which have a distinct and unique edge. *The Tomb of Iuchiban*, as an example, is not the sort of adventure you would want to stumble into without time to prepare, but GMs may wish to develop an adventure to make these cards come alive. GMs may also use the card as a rumor, a prologue, or an unfinishable or unfinished quest that draws the party together (if they are not already).

#### *Torii Shrine*

The Torii Shrine is a very common, two-legged shrine that is seen throughout Rokugan. Its curved heights can be seen in any town or large village; they mark that you are entering or leaving a civilized area. One is pictured on the cover of this book.

#### *Trading Grounds*

Different from a Marketplace, the Trading Grounds are reserved for traders and merchants looking to bargain before selling their wares to the public. An adventure in the trading grounds could involve dirty merchants, thugs muscling in on profits, or angry mobs trying to corner the market on a "fashionable" item. Perhaps the PCs stumble upon the trading grounds during their adventures, or the game starts with them on guard in the area.

#### *Tunnel System*

Only the biggest cities in the Empire have underground sewers and tunnels, but those that do have an invaluable source of adventures for GMs to exploit.





## FALCON

EARTH: 1

WATER: 1

Strength: 6

FIRE: 1

Agility: 4

AIR: 1

Reflexes: 5

Rolls When Attacking:

5k4

Rolls For Damage: 5k2\*

TN to be Hit: 25

Wounds Per Level: 5 \*\*

-1; 10: Dead

\* Samurai successfully attacked by a falcon lose an eye if the damage exceeds 6 Wounds. If the samurai loses an eye, have her roll a Willpower check against the Damage to see if they can act in the following round. This roll is made each round until they succeed.

\*\* At this point, the falcon can no longer fly.

## FOLLOWERS

These cards can be used to represent a patrol or single person walking alone in a city or along a road, or an important goal for the PCs to achieve. Like Holdings, there is no set way to use them (Light Infantry, for instance, can represent anything from a unit that the PC serves or directs to a noble's personal guard or patrol).

When drawing a military follower, an easy way to determine the number of soldiers is to quickly add up all the numbers that appear on the card. After a while, add up only a few of the numbers (or multiply them by a value for larger forces). Keep the PCs guessing as to how big a heavy infantry unit is going to be, and therefore what to expect from your campaign.

## KIHOS

We have yet to publish rules for *kihos* and monks in the RPG, and it is not recommended that GMs incorporate these cards into their story decks at this time. Even without these rules, however, you can still represent specific monks with Personality cards.

Many *kihos* have titles that can be used to enhance your story. As an example, Purity of Shinsei can be used as a prologue or prophecy for a story. Perhaps the PCs have to escort a monk to a purification pool. In addition, some of these *kiho* names appear as Spells in *Walking the Way*. Perhaps an adventure to find a lost scroll is in order.

## REGIONS

Region cards are an excellent source for determining locations in Rokugan. Unlike Holdings, however, most are very specific and detail important provinces of the Emerald Empire. Pick and choose regions appropriate to the campaign (e.g. don't put a Shadowlands Region in your Seppun Imperial Court campaign, or the Doji Plains in an all-Dragon mountain adventure).

## ITEMS AND SPELLS

Just about any Item or Spell can be added to your story decks, although duplicates are not recommended. The ratio to other cards should be about 1 in 20 for Items, and 1 in 15 for Spells. More than this and they will be appearing almost every time you draw a card hand. They should be used to add flavor to characters, but not to *every* character.

Spells that are drawn in conjunction with non-shugenja Personalities should be considered blessings upon the character, or a scroll in their charge, or a piece of knowledge that they are seeking. All additional cards drawn can be used for action that has happened or is happening, a goal that should be reached, a past event that has molded the character's background or personality, or a challenge that will draw the PCs into conflict with or against the NPC.

## CREATING PLAYER CHARACTERS WITH THE CCG

Before my first session of L5R, I bought Obsidian boosters packs. Each player opened a pack and designed their character based on the cards inside. My only instructions were that they must use and define every card. When they were done, we had a party of two Cranes, a Unicorn, and a ronin.

The process goes like this: I shall open a booster pack from the *Jade Edition* of the L5R CCG to illustrate.

My pack includes:

- Doji Shizue, Crane Clan Storyteller
- Daidoji Sembi, Crane Clan Samurai (read: bushi)
- Heichi Choeki, the last Boar Clan Samurai, now Unaligned (read: ronin)
- Mirumoto Taki, Dragon Clan Samurai
- Jade Works, Gold-producing Holding
- Fantastic Gardens, Honor-producing Holding
- Market Place, Gold-producing Holding
- Unexpected Allies, Event
- He's Mine, Action
- Entrapping Terrain, Action (battle, terrain)
- Ratling Conscripts, very weak Follower
- Samurai Cavalry, powerful Follower
- Wakizashi, Item
- The Soul Goes Forth, *kiho*
- Strength of My Ancestors, *kiho*

After carefully examining the contents, I notice four cards that link very easily – two Crane characters, a Fantastic Gardens, and the Strength of My Ancestors. Jade Works and Marketplace represent the Crane character's wealth.

So I've decided my character will be involved with the Crane to some degree, even if she is not a Crane herself. I've also decided she will be a bushi. I have two Followers and two Actions that indicate a samurai who takes charge (Samurai Cavalry, Ratling Conscripts, He's Mine,



Entrapping Terrain). So after some more thought, I decide to play a Daidoji Crane. Now I have to put these cards together.

First, Sembi is her sensei. I may even buy the Sensei Advantage because I like the idea. He's always been firm but fair with her, so she respects him and turns to him for guidance when she needs it.

Shizue is another matter. She represents her grandmother's influence on her development. I decide that she doesn't know Shizue, but the idea of a storyteller in her background is too cool to pass up. So I'll use Shizue to represent my character's love of stories that has been fostered by her grandmother's attention.

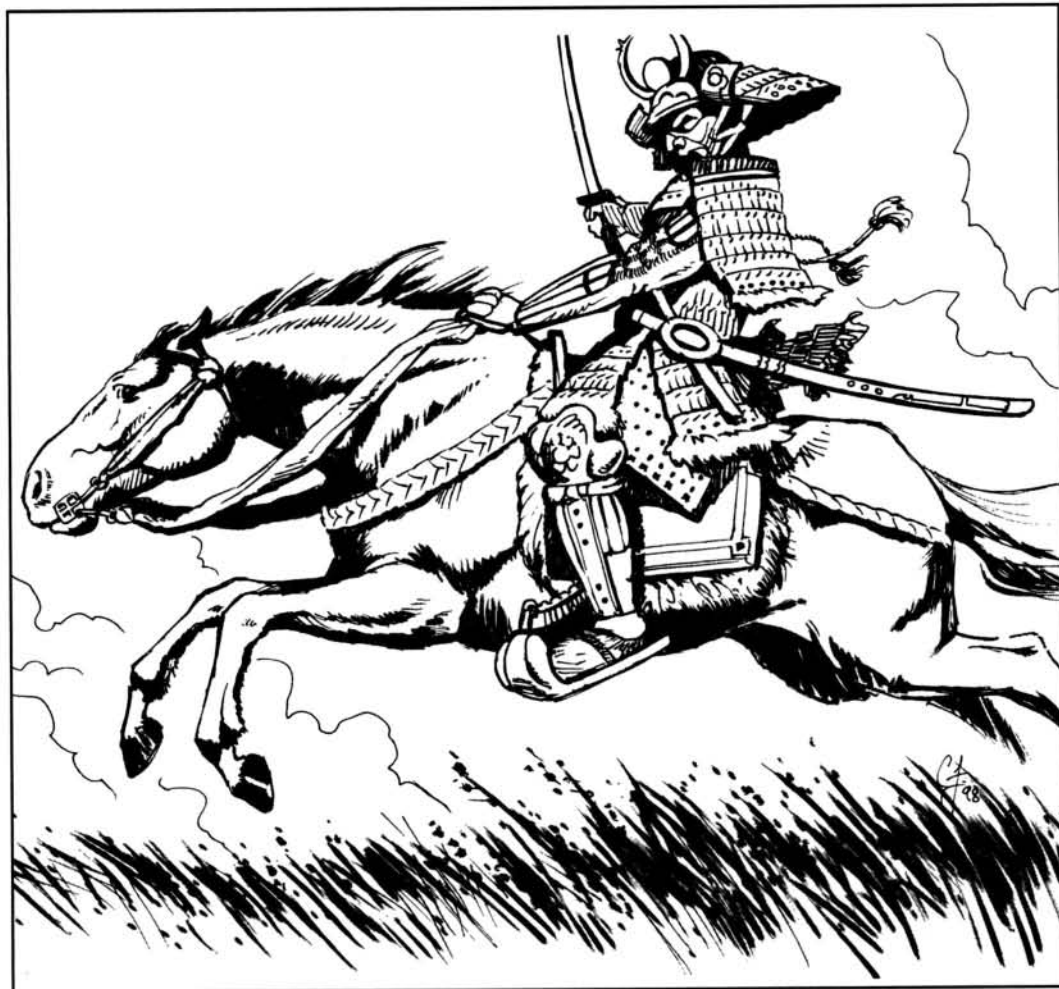
The Fantastic Gardens are among her family's holdings, and she has a knack for gardening (I'll spend points on the Craft or Artisan Skill). The Jade Works and Marketplace are common holdings for a Crane - much of our family's wealth is derived from control of commerce and the carving of jade. The Daidoji are excellent

merchants and it is not far-fetched for my character to have had some experience with commerce by extension. Thus, she'll have the Appraisal Skill.

I decide to name my character Komegumi, which means "fortunate blessing", another gift from her grandmother. Komegumi has a strong tie to her ancestors, which is represented by the Strength of My Ancestors card I've drawn. I give her the ancestor Daidoji Masahigi.

The Unexpected Allies card is Komegumi coming to the aid of Heichi Chokei, who was being attacked by a mad Dragon bushi (represented by Taki). Komegumi noticed the stronger bushi assaulting the older man, and drove off the Dragon with a hardy yell (He's Mine).

Chokei was slightly wounded, but thanked Komegumi for her assistance. She recognized Chokei as a monk (as stated on the card's flavor text) and offered to escort him wherever he wished. The two spent quite a bit of time together



## BEAR

EARTH: 4

WATER: 2

Strength: 6

FIRE: 1

Agility: 3

AIR: 2

Rolls When Attacking:  
4k3

Rolls For Damage: 6k2

Bite 4k3

TN to be Hit: 20

Wounds Per Level: 35:  
+1\*; 60: Dead

Armor: 4

Skills: A black bear has Mountaineering at 3. Both types of bear have Hunting at 3 for the purposes of tracking a scent.

\* Roll, but do not keep. This modifier represents a severely wounded bear that has become frenzied, mauling what is attacking it.

## BOAR

EARTH: 3

WATER: 2

Strength: 3

FIRE: 1

Agility: 2

AIR: 1

Reflexes: 2

Rolls When Attacking:  
3k2

Rolls For Damage: 3k3

Charging 5k5

TN to be Hit: 10 / 5

Wounds Per Level: 18:  
-1; 36: Dead

## CONSTRUCTORS

EARTH: 1-4 \*  
 WATER: 1-4 \*  
 FIRE: 1-3 \*  
 AIR: 1-2 \*

Rolls When Attacking:  
 2k2

5k3 in water

Rolls For Damage: 1k1

Constriction 3k2 \*\*

TN to be Hit: 5

20 in water

Wounds Per Level: 20-40 \*; Dead

Skills: Hunting 2-4 (+1 in water)

\* Constrictor stats vary by size. Shorter snakes (10') have the lowest stats. Larger ones (30') have the medium-level stats. 50' constrictors have all the stats at their listed maximum.

\*\* Each loop adds an additional die to the Strength of the hold (and Damage), to a maximum of 6k2.

## VIPERS

EARTH: 1  
 WATER: 1  
 Perception: 3 (smell)  
 FIRE: 1  
 Agility: 5  
 AIR: 1  
 Reflexes: 4

Rolls When Attacking:  
 3k2

Rolls For Damage: 2k2

Venom 8k8

TN to be Hit: 10

Wounds Per Level: 7:-1; 17: Dead

Skills: Hunting 3  
 Armor: 1

over the next few weeks, and Komegumi eventually brought Chokei home with her to stay.

After a while, Chokei found his soul urging him to leave (Soul Goes Forth), and he had a long discussion with Komegumi about where he would go next, and what he would do. As a gift for her kindness, he gave her a very special, finely crafted wakizashi (per the Item card).

The remaining three cards (Samurai Cavalry, Ratling Conscripts, and Entrapping Terrain) are tricky, so in order to define them I have to back up a bit in her history.

Fresh out of her gempukku, Komegumi was assigned to one of the few Crane cavalry units (guess I'll be buying Horsemanship, too), and sent to the very northern edge of the Kaiu Wall to aid in a confrontation that "the Crab could not commit to alone" (Samurai Cavalry).

Her detachment was led by a very young Daidoji gunso who was promoted shortly after the skirmish. Not two weeks into their assignment, they were attacked by Shadowlands creatures. A small contingent of ratlings (Ratling Conscripts) adjunct to the Crane unit successfully detected their scent, but before the ambush, the Daidoji gunso had picked the perfect terrain for setting up the squad. The ratling horde was driven into a gully and riddled with arrows. Their assignment ended a short time after the news of their victory reached the Crane lands. The rest is history.

So, now I'm ready to build my character. Komegumi will have a high Intelligence, a high Awareness, and Skills and Advantages reflective of what she has done:

Kenjutsu 2, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 1, Battle 1, Lore: Shadowlands 1, Shintao 2, Bard 2, Gardening 2, True Friend: Chokei, Sensei (3): Sembi, Increased Glory, and Sworn Enemy: Mad Dragon.

I may decide to buy some additional Skills, and roll once on the Heritage Tables, although these cards have largely supplanted the need for that it.

All in all, not a bad character.

Not everybody has played the CCG or is familiar with every storyline that developed in it. It is not necessary to use every idea; any GM can buy \$10 worth of booster packs and create a host of NPCs on the fly without knowing a thing about the False Hoturi.

Have each of the players purchase a deck or booster before making their characters, and then ask them to turn those cards in to you to be added to your story deck. That way, every time a card that was used in the PC's character creation is drawn, it can be included in the story. This is especially useful for bringing Disadvantages to bear on PCs that have not been playing up every aspect of their characters.

Don't assume that CCGs are inimical to roleplaying games. They're not. The L5R CCG, for one, is unique enough that a very popular and successful RPG was designed upon its foundation. The fabric of Rokugan is perfectly suited to more than a hundred epics, each played out by your own group.



This section shortly details the ecology, habitat, and stats for Rokugan's natural creatures.

**Note:** Common animals do not have Void.

## BEARS (HIGUMA)

Bears are omnivorous by nature, and most subsist on fish, small game, fruits, and nuts. All bears are very territorial and will defend their homes violently, pursuing trespassers a hundred yards or more in order to drive them off. Besides females with one or two cubs, all bears are solitary by nature.

Most bears are lazy by nature and rarely resort to violence, though some have been known to acquire a taste for human flesh. Those that do will attack groups of men in hopes of an easy meal. Just remember, bears cannot run downhill.

When attacking, bears rear up and strike with both paws. A bear has enough strength to knock a samurai 12 feet or more. A bear may only attack one opponent each round, but if both paws successfully strike, the defender is instead held



fast and crushed in a hug. A hug delivers 3k2 damage each round until a successful contest of Strengths is achieved, the bear is killed, the samurai dies, or the bear releases the hug.

Black bears are more common. They are found anywhere in the wilderness and have been known to climb trees after trespassers. The brown bear is the Rokugani cave bear, and is found in more remote portions of the land. They do not climb trees, they knock them down.

The bear presented in the sidebar on page 107 represents the most common bear standing under 6 feet in height and weighing around 500 lbs.. Larger specimens are known to exist, the abilities of which are higher.

### BOARS (HEICHI)

Boars, or wild pigs as they are sometimes known, are highly aggressive and omnivorous. Fiercely territorial, boars are easily capable of disemboweling even the most heavily armored bushi with tusks over 7 inches in length. The mouth of a boar is lined with widely-spaced, sharp teeth perfect for rending and tearing meat from bones.

Boars travel in herds of 1-3 adults, and usually twice that number in young, which are non-combative. Boars attack with their tusks, attempting to overrun and impale their targets. When they charge, they roll two additional Damage dice, but the TN to hit them is 5.

### DOG (INU)

Dogs are commonly found in villages and small cities throughout the Emerald Empire as pets, guardians, and in some cases, strays. All are carnivorous by nature but easy to domesticate when taken young. Once domesticated, they are very loyal to their master.

The war dog is bred for battle, and gifted with greater size and ferocity. Few dogs are bred for this purpose, but those that are can pull three times their weight, and attack with the strength of a single fighting man.

### FALCON (TORITAKA)

Trained falcons, hawks, and kestrels are used for both recreational hunting and warfare. Although willful and unpredictable, these birds of prey can be trained to strike at a foe's eyes (as shown in the sidebar statistics on page 106).

For the protection of the bird and the handler, it must be hooded at all times until needed. Like

all avians, birds of prey are inherently fearful of enclosed spaces and are exclusively diurnal.

### SNAKES (HEBI)

Reptiles of all kinds are found throughout the Emerald Empire. Vipers are venomous, and make up the greatest percentage of the lethal snake population in Rokugan. Constrictors are very rare, found mostly in Crab and Shadowlands regions. No statistics are provided for the many varieties of non-venomous snake that exist in Rokugan.

Serpents are normally placid, inoffensive animals more willing to flee than to fight to the death, although some species are notoriously aggressive.

Sometimes a constrictor attacks with a bite to establish a hold. On succeeding rounds, coils loop about the prey to restrict movement and slowly squeeze the air out of the captive's lungs. Each round following a successful bite, the snake may attempt to circle an additional coil about the target. The largest constrictors can loop a target with up to 3 coils at a time.

There are hundreds of varieties of poisonous snakes in Rokugan, and they are much more likely to attack humans than the elusive constrictor. Venoms range in strength, and some have been known to kill before a man knows he's been bitten. GMs should assign a DR to the venom of an encountered snake, ranging from 2 to 8.

### WOLF (OKAMI)

Wolves are common to the forested hills and lonely mountain peaks of Rokugan's wilderness. They roam in packs of 1-10 adults, with one to ten cubs and young. They subsist on deer, hare, and other game.

Wolves are territorial, but are shy of humans and afraid of fire. Only rarely, when hungry and desperate, do wolves attack man for food. In the cold months, wolves subsist on mice and smaller creatures that burrow out of the snow.

The most common tactic wolves employ against larger prey is harrying. A pack of wolves surround and pursue their prey, nipping at its heels until it succumbs to fatigue. Death comes quickly then as the rest of the pack falls upon the downed prey.

### DOG

EARTH: 2

WATER: 1

Perception: 3

FIRE: 1

Agility: 3

AIR: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls When Attacking:  
3k3

Rolls For Damage: 1k1

Bite 3k1

TN to be Hit: 15

Wounds Per Level: 10:

-2 \*: 30: Dead

Skills: Hunting 3

\* Wounded dogs will attempt to flee a fight.

### WOLF

EARTH: 3

WATER: 3

Perception: 4

FIRE: 2

Agility: 3

AIR: 1

Reflexes: 3

Rolls When Attacking:  
4k3

Rolls For Damage: 5k2

TN to be Hit: 15

Wounds Per Level: 10:

-2; 20: -3; 30: Dead



# *Chapter Five*

空

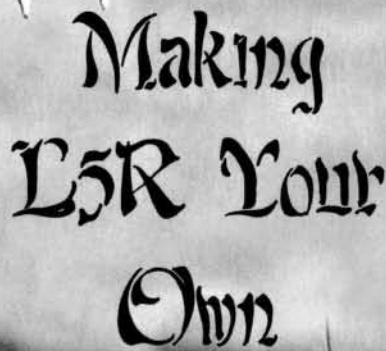
*The Book of  
Void*



**ONE IN 100**

In order for the delicate culture of Rokugan to thrive, all must understand the Celestial Order. Every samurai and every peasant is fully aware of their responsibilities to the Empire. Their station is fully understood and respected. The phrase, "You forget your station, sir", common in many genres, does not belong in Rokugan. No samurai should burden her clan with undo requests, no matter how much she may require something. Still, no daimyo would deny his liege by refusing a request for an additional servant from his pool of subjects.

With the population of Rokugan at 33 million, the work farmers must do to support the masses is incredible, and some sixty percent of the populace tend the fields. With that number in mind, imagine that the whole of Rokugan has as many as 2,000,000 bushi, but many more courtiers, shugenja, artisans, and other non-bushi members of the samurai caste. This means that about 1 in every 100-200 Rokugani are nobles; a drastic contrast to the nobility of eastern Europe where as many as 7 in 100 people were of the nobility.



## Making LSR Your Own

### The Hunter Dynasty

The GM's world is her own. This has been said a hundred times in a hundred different roleplaying games, and no matter how many times it is said, it is never enough. GMs must take their game world and shape it to fit their gaming style. The world of an RPG must be flexible, fluid, and dynamic. None of these things are possible if the game you are playing is not malleable. In order for the world to bend, the GM applies pressure, *making* their particular world fit their vision. Don't worry - there are no GM police who come to your house and tell you that you're doing it wrong.

#### THE NEW WAY

Now that you've decided to make Rokugan your own, the next step is to determine what you can change, and what happens to the world when you apply the pressure. Where does it bend, and where does it push back?

Decide first what you dislike, and remove it. If the Asako make no sense, remove them from your campaign world. Nothing unsettling will happen to Rokugan; people will just see fewer Asako than they would expect to. The vitality of the Phoenix is not diminished. Remove rice, though, and you have a problem.

An important axiom to understand in world design is cause and effect. Rokugan is over 1000 years old, and any GM that moves pieces of the world around without properly weighing the effects is asking for trouble, especially when the players bring the reality mallet to bear. Changing Rokugan is allowed - even encouraged - but

giving horses infrared laser eyes is not. Remember that, although *we* can't come over with the gaming police and make sure your campaign make sense, your *players* can.

In my campaign, I started a war between the Kuni and Moto. Neither clan fully defended the decision, and in the end, the PCs were instrumental in the destruction of all Kuni shugenja. Soon after, the final Moto died as well. The whole of Rokugan continued to flourish without them. Toturi, Kisada, and Hoturi have all been murdered in my game as well. Again, nothing horrible has come of it. Akodo Kage was a murderer, and Matsu Tsuko was slain by the lies of Iuchiban's rebirth. In each case, my Rokugan shifted from the "real" Rokugan a little more, but never once did the reality suspenders snap.

If I had decided that shugenja did not exist, or that ogres lived in the Scorpion lands, the world would have become seriously warped. If the peasants begin to talk back to samurai or the Phoenix are suddenly shape-shifters, the players will begin to question the context of the world. If anything ever violates believability, all of the fantasy in the world will not save you. Men do not give birth and dogs rarely talk. When you begin to play around with nature, no matter how alien the world, the ability to explain it away is diminished more and more.

Making Rokugan your own also means making it real and habitable. Mostly, this is done with NPCs and setting. By giving the players descriptions that break the mold of everyday life, you create a world very different from our own. Beware any changes that challenge their belief too much, or reality will snap back on you and collapse.

### The Life of a Samurai

There are many classes of samurai in Rokugan, and it is important for PCs to know what level they are playing to understand their place in the Celestial Order. All citizens of the Empire are aware of its stringent caste system. When your campaign begins, you should take the information from this (and other) books, and determine the level of play you are interested in.

Low-level samurai (Glory 1-2) usually act as *ji-samurai*, enforcing the will of their lord, or acting



### ONE IN 100 (CONTINUED)

Now, considering that demographic, also imagine that every 20th samurai is a shugenja, courtier, clan monk, or some other noble performing non-military duties. Bear in mind that this is an overview of Rokugan, and that several of the various clans break this mold.

For instance, the Crane have substantially more artisans and monks than other clans, while the Dragon and Phoenix have a considerable percentage of their clan dedicated to the magical arts. These are important numbers to understand when designing your L5R campaigns, so that the players aren't running into an artisan or emissary every five feet in an Akodo stronghold.



as "gophers" that perform any small duty their lord demands. Higher ranking samurai (with Glory of 3 or higher) manage the land, negotiate contracts, command troops, and generally act in accordance with their lords' wishes.

Samurai fresh from their *gempukku* (who commonly have Glory Ranks of 0) are expected to see the world and what it has to teach them; a year or two of travel is not unreasonable. Upon their return, samurai are ready to learn. A sensei will then spend another six months teaching them the Rank 1 Technique of their School. GMs

interested in running the *Rank 0 Campaign* should read more on this in *The Book of Water*.

Those with a Glory Rank above 5 have little "adventuring" time left, and typically retire shortly, although campaigns built around these sort of characters can still be devised, with a little effort. GMs interested in running *gokenin* or governor campaigns should be prepared for a lot of busy work and abstract play, and for the game's speed to slow down considerably (unless, of course, you wish to circumvent the groveling and requests of most courtiers).

## ASSIGNMENTS BETWEEN SESSIONS

There are a number of things you can ask players to be doing between the adventures (and sessions). You could request that they conduct any in-game researches during the break between games – both to ensure a quick return to the action when you sit down to the table again, and to keep their minds focused on the storyline when they are not actively rolling dice.

This kind of “bridge” between sessions serves to keep the players immersed in the world and the saga you are trying to convey, and will help lend the kind of lasting taste to the experience that players will remember for months or years to come.

Also, by beginning each night of gaming with a quick Q&A, you can firmly plant the players into your game-world. Ask them what their characters are thinking; this is always a great way to start a session.

It can be used to clarify concerns, address confusion, redirect meandering intentions, and adjust the PCs' goals, bringing them more in line with the coming adventure.



# Campaign Structure

## The Beginning of The World

*“It is very difficult to trick a fox once she has seen your traps.”*

– Sensei Akodo Gojiro

It's the first session. The most important of any campaign. How can you make sure that everyone gets excited, while taking time to develop the details that will make your story unique? After all, if the PCs are consistently ronin meeting in a geisha or tea house, your campaigns will all look the same. If the adventures are all the same, then the players will not be inclined to make new characters to face them.

There is little more frustrating than running your first session of an RPG without all of the facts in front of you. Although the core Rulebook for L5R provides all of the tools necessary to run the game, even its designer couldn't have predicted every detail that would be important to every GM. How do I challenge someone to a duel? How far is Kyuden Ikoma from Shiro Agasha? What does my garden look like? Although L5R is a roleplaying game, where adventure and intrigue take precedence over painting and calligraphy, the need to flesh out the details often becomes important as well.

Even looking past the minutiae, we can still come up with hundreds of details that make gamemastering in Rokugan a unique experience. Since most who are reading this book have likely played some sort of western fantasy or modern

RPG, the answers to these questions are always a lot easier when we put them in real world terms.

How much does a sword weigh? Where is Paris? Los Angeles? Vladivostok? How many dollars is an English Pound worth, and how much does a case of Vienna sausages cost? The economy of Earth is much easier to define than the waystation system of Rokugan, without opening a text book.

## Building Your Campaign

The concept behind most campaigns is to link your adventures with a single theme. Some GMs feel that a series of adventures with no thread between them lacks subtext, and players may feel that they are jumping from encounter to encounter without cause. The following notes should help you construct a campaign that pleases both your need for long-term stories and the players' need for consistency.

### THE FIRST QUESTION

What do you want to accomplish with L5R? You've just finished reading some 100+ pages of details on how to run L5R; now you'd like to apply it, but you're not sure what you want to do. So the first thing you have to answer for yourself is “What story do you intend to tell?”

The most important thing to decide is the style of play you desire, and how you want to begin things. It isn't always important to have an ending mapped out ahead of time, but some idea of where the campaign is heading is helpful. GMs should review the information here, especially the material concerning adventure scripts. Determine the format of your campaign (open, closed, mini, etc.) according to the descriptions that follow. Once you've gotten all of that squared away, make sure that your Campaign Handout fully details everything the players should know to get started in your campaign world.

### THE OPEN CAMPAIGN

The players have come to the table with a true ronin, a Matsu Deathseeker, an Ide courtier, a Void shugenja, and a Kaiu Engineer. Now you have to give them a reason to be together. Any of the advice in the previous chapter will prove useful, but you're certain that the Deathseeker



would kill three of them in the first session, and you're puzzled at how to make this adventure work.

An open campaign allows the players to make any characters they would like, leaving the GM to make it fit. This is the type of game most people play; don't be surprised if it turns out that you must contend with your players' choices. In that case, be prepared to do a lot of work, while being flexible as well.

As stated before, you can make the players decide how their characters know one another. If the players know this going in, they may think twice about making divergent character types. If not, then take an hour to talk about the campaign and the first scene, and let them brainstorm; most players will be eager to flesh out their backgrounds. Creativity should be encouraged.

PCs who play relatives of one another tend to create unkempt campaign environments, where stories of their childhood overwhelm the present setting, upsetting the fun for everyone. GMs may have to use a firm hand to direct this sort of story if the players are unable to get a workable concept going.

The magistrate game is not always ideal, either. Don't force them to play magistrates because it suits your campaign. If you run an open campaign, remain open and play off of what they do; don't disguise an open campaign by bending it to your original plan.

GMs should allow the PCs to adjust their character concepts slightly before resorting to more drastic methods. The Matsu Deathseeker above might become an Otaku Battle Maiden with a little bit of work, while the Void shugenja could become to a Kuni shugenja, reducing the number of represented clans to 2. Often, the most non-descript characters can be persuaded to join a team of samurai, especially if they're looking for fealty, or are prisoners being returned to face trial.

With a little bit of work, your campaign starts to look less like a costume party, and more like a story.

### THE CLOSED CAMPAIGN

In a closed campaign, you give the players guidelines for creating characters. Here, you let your players know what sort of campaign you have planned. This is exactly what the Campaign Handout is for. Alert them to whatever storylines you are ignoring, and those you are focusing on.

The GM has a lot of control over the character creation process with this type of game. For instance, the GM may decide that only bushi or Crane characters will be allowed in the campaign. Or perhaps, a select set of characters are pre-generated and the players must "dice off" to see who gets to pick. The list could look like this:

*1 Ise zumi*

*1 Bushi (any type)*

*1 Dishonored bushi – starts with Black Sheep and Social Disadvantage*

*1 Iuchi shugenja or 1 Kitsu shugenja*

*1 Ronin, true or ex-Lion*

*Only one of these characters may be a Clan or Imperial Magistrate. Only two of them may buy the Sworn Enemy Disadvantage.*

GMs are encouraged to be as specific as they like with the Handouts and these characters, and to dedicate their first session of play to walking the players through the entire creation process. The most important things to understand about the closed campaign is that it frees up the GM's time, while limiting the players' options.

### THE MINI-CAMPAIGN

Mini-campaigns are more like a single adventure than a lengthy campaign. Where many players may enjoy playing the same character for several weeks – or even months or years – without change, the mini-campaign allows a player to see their character develop and mature with the same scope over a much shorter period of real time.

Most campaigns involve three to six samurai, cover some six months of game play, and develop the characters to Rank 3 or 4. By the time the campaign is over, they've amassed treasure, Glory, stories, and followers of all kinds. After all this, they still manage to be lower on the food chain than Hoturi-sama, because – unlike him – they didn't have a cohesive story connecting it all together.

In a typical adventure, the players receive a mission objective, hunt down a few clues, fight a few bad guys, and follow a trail of blood to the bad guys' lair. In order to turn an adventure into something more grand, the GM must pick tales of greater scope. A simple hunt for a renegade ronin could quickly become four magistrates scouring the wilderness for the mad ronin, Ujemi, before he murders again.

### ASSIGNMENTS BETWEEN SESSIONS (CONTINUED)

Another advantage of the Q&A is to figure out if the PCs are even aware of the plot and the intricacies of your story. If you have long-term goals and the PCs are not following your clues (for whatever reason), then this provides you with an opportunity to drop a few more.

It is very important to note that the players may not be having fun with your game. The Q&A provides you with an opportunity to investigate what the players think of your sessions. They may not feel involved, or able to affect the world, which is the driving force behind many RPGs. Take some time to ask them what they like and don't like. Remember, not having a choice turns interactive fiction into static fiction.

## THE CHALLENGE OF SUCCESS

In order to safely construct an epic, the GM must write the beginning and end of the story first, without knowing the center.

This may be the most difficult part of the process.

How can the story end, before it has even started?

And if you've already determined the outcome, isn't it a little perverse to watch the PCs jumping through hoops to reach the finale? Why even bother to challenge them at all?

Yet without challenges, success is pointless. If all the players want to do is win, never ask them to roll a single die, tell them they've won, and pat them on the back for doing such a fine job. Ding. Ding. Ding.

They win!

But for players who want to be challenged, and look forward to an adventure where they can excel against impossible odds, the central focus of the campaign *must* be challenging.

Such a "mini-campaign" has the potential to be quite bloody and – with enough villages and NPCs fleshed out ahead of time – could keep the PCs occupied for many more sessions than the initial concept would have. To keep things going even longer, the GM could add an unforeseen plot-twist, such as the fact that Ujemi has been carrying a cursed Obsidian blade. At the end of the man-hunt, the blade must be taken somewhere to be destroyed.

Inquisitive Magistrates may wish to know where the blade came from, and might attempt to root out the enemy responsible for it. In this way, another session or two could be added to your mini-campaign, and your players would experience a story with a deep, meaningful ending and perhaps even an epilogue that places the entire saga into perspective. With a little work, a few details, and a lot of fudging, any GM can stretch her creativity, turning a small one-shot adventure into a much bigger tale.

## The Epic

The epic has three acts, and in some cases a prologue and epilogue to frame the story. It documents the hero's journey set against a particular theme. *Star Wars*, *Dune*, *Babylon 5*, *Dragonlance*, and *Lord of the Rings* are the gamer's bibles when it comes to epics, but fans of the classics may also remember *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *The Aeneid*, *Gilgamesh*, *Beowulf*, *Paradise Lost*, *The Divine Comedy*, and the enigmatic *Wasteland* by T.S. Eliot. Each epic has many ingredients that make it grand in scale, and GMs should take these into account before trying to tackle such a story.

1. The central hero should be important to the nation or cosmos. During the *Clan War*, the Seven Thunders and Shinsei were the focus of the final battle with Fu Leng. They came as heroes from the Great Clans to put down the Dark Lord Fu Leng, promoting the epic feel of the story.

GMs wishing to tell an epic must elevate the PCs above the rank of the common man, and create a world fit for them. If Kisada walks among the Crab, how can they be great? What changes do they need to make in Rokugan to affect the world the way they wish?

GMs should consider whether or not their Rokugan must violate the material published by AEG to be epic. The GM will have to do a little

work to create their own "myth". As we stated, it's your Rokugan. Don't flinch when creating a new history, or pretending that the Coup or the Clan War never happened.

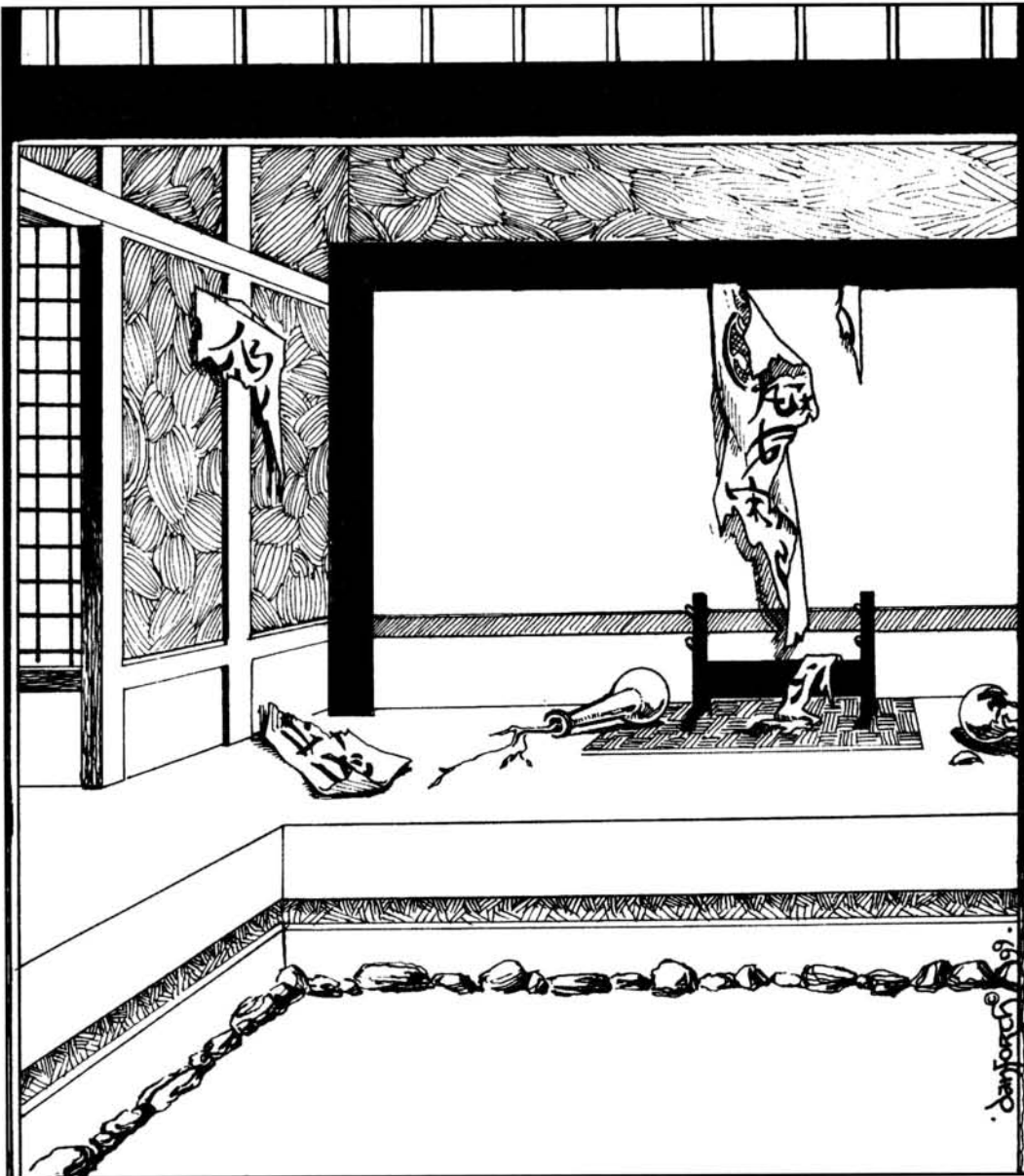
2. The setting should impact the world, or even the universe. Rokugan was shattered by the war with Fu Leng, and the rebellion of the *Star Wars* universe fought time and time again against the forces of Emperor Palpatine. The effects must be felt throughout the world. However, since Rokugan is an isolationist Empire, unconcerned with matters beyond her borders, an epic story must fall within its borders.

3. The action should require superhuman daring. Feats in the battles of an epic should be unduplicated anywhere before or since, and the characters should be able to accomplish tasks that normal samurai cannot. Killing zombie legions, leaping over fiery pits, and commanding armies are the *soup du jour* of epics. Stories that lack combat and action are less likely to be epics, and more likely to fit the role of a drama or tragedy. Be aware of what you're getting the players into and don't create expectations that you can't deliver upon.

4. The gods should take an interest in the world. In Rokugan, the Fortunes, and the ancestors are a constant reminder of the way things were, as well as the way things should be. Visitations by spirits or encounters with the Fortunes in human form are an important ingredient in an L5R epic. Besides, who else could lead the PCs back on track?

5. An epic poem is normally narrated in ceremony. This convention has long disappeared from the modern epic story. There is no chorus in *Babylon 5*, no narrator in *Star Wars*. Rokugan, however, is not foreign to the notion of poets and scribes writing the tales of its heroes. The GM might run her campaign as history that has already happened, opening with a poet entering the Akodo halls and reading the tale of a famous Matsu to an assembly. Soon after, as the players discover, the tale is merely one small part of what their characters have already experienced... and which *they* are just about to embark upon.

6. Most eastern epics end with the death of the hero as she defeats an irrepressible evil. To live on after one's blazing moment in the sun, only to die from old age, is not how the heroes of Rokugan would choose to place an exclamation point upon their lives. Western stories have forgotten this



pathos, and most such stories now end with two cops telling jokes about how they are going to spend their share of the reward money. To properly honor the genre, have an idea of how your campaign will close, and alert the players that death is a part of gaming, should the story end in such a manner.

### WRITING IT

Putting it all together is another issue. Start with a plot and a villain, and decide how it will end. Write the first half of the first act, and the last half of the third act. Consider what will happen in

between, but don't write it down. The players are responsible for plot developments, and it is necessary for them to become greater than they are at the beginning.

In an epic, the GM needs to let things develop and run the game without too much direction and structure; otherwise the game will be little more than you leading them by the nose. No player wants to sit through a game in which you get to make all the decisions for them.

A prologue and epilogue can frame the story well. An introduction with foreshadowing can create coherency that will last for the duration of

**IN MEDIA RES**

*In Media Res* is Latin for "in the middle of things". In roleplaying games it is a technique used by GMs to get play started immediately. By dropping the PCs directly into the action, the game starts with both feet running. The players don't have time to think about what is going on, so the game takes off like a shot, and never slows down. This is a favorite style of play for many gamers who are action-junkies. If the game isn't about the action, than this sort of game play may not be suited for your players. However, a murder mystery opening with a dead body on the porch or a bloody knife in the hand of a PC may get things rolling nicely.

the story. A prologue can be as short as half an hour, or last many sessions. The more details and time the GM spends developing the "state of the nation", the more structure she can expect in her campaign.

An epilogue can have the same feel as an introduction. By framing the story with a scribe or narrator who was there to see the Battle of The Splitting Earth, for example, the GM can give credence to the lives of characters who valiantly defeated the Oni who guarded that realm. This also helps to prevent the campaign from ending on a depressing note, should the GM be able to give just cause for the heroes' names to be remembered, and their deeds to have impact. Some of the best stories end with a hero lying dead, victorious over the villainous hordes.

## One Thousand Years of Darkness

Alternate settings for Rokugan can be just as fun as the world we've created. GMs interested in doing a little leg work are encouraged to try playing in the "Dark Empire", which is an excellent opportunity to run a horrific and conspiratorial game all at once: the Dark Emperor Fu Leng gripping the world of Rokugan in fear; a Shadowlands that extend to Beiden Pass, or over the whole of Rokugan; the sun swallowed by Lord Moon, with only four hours of light touching the earth each day...

Perhaps the combined cults of Rokugan have summoned the strength to raise Iuchiban and place him upon the throne - forever. Samurai interested in fighting countless hordes of madmen, zombies, and sickly demons must justify their rebellious guerrilla war while bending the rules of Bushido to accommodate their efforts. Horror games in a fantastic setting give GMs one more degree of flexibility when it comes to bending the rules of the world. Samurai cannot argue that undead wolves do not fly, if they've never seen one before now.

**ROKUGANICA**

During the Coup: What if the Scorpion had won? Although the RPG has yet to reach the Clan War Saga (cf. the CCG), GMs can still play ahead in time if they wish. A campaign based on a single clan ruling Rokugan (without an Emperor,

or with an Emperor as a puppet) can be an excellent game setting. In the *Scorpion Clan Coup*, Bayushi Shoji attempted to rid Rokugan of the Hantei line, based on a prophecy that Yogo Junzo read from the First Scroll. At the end of the Coup (as the victor is always allowed to write history however she likes), Shoji was considered a traitor to the Empire, and ordered to commit seppuku. Kachiko was taken by the young Hantei as his bride, and the Scorpion went into hiding.

But what if history went differently? What if Shoji defeated the Emperor and secured a future for his own clan? How then would Rokugan be different now? Would the Lion still serve the Empire? Would there be open war between the clans? Who would ally with a "human" Emperor? What would become of Bushido? And what of the Prophecy? Does a Hantei still live somewhere that could cause the Empire's fall? Or is a Bayushi on the throne considered the fall of the Empire?

**ROKUMERICA**

In the history of Rokugan, there have been several encounters with the gaijin. While the Unicorn continue some faint relations with the Burning Sands, the whole of Rokugan remains highly xenophobic. But what if missionaries from the "mainland" came to Rokugan as ambassadors and regents, and made peace with the "savages" of the Emerald Empire. What if the gaijin played a larger role in Rokugan? And the courts had "Europeans" observing or speaking on behalf of others? What if the gaijin were considered above heimin, and the penalty for killing one were more severe than murdering a fellow samurai? How would it affect Rokugan if the gaijin were "owned" or paid fealty to nobles, on a case-by-case basis? What if the Emperor kept a gaijin advisor?

Beside knowing what gaijin can offer Rokugan, the inverse is also important to investigate. What would the gaijin have to gain from the Rokugani? Why have they even come here? What if merchants were teaching the gaijin the language, and the gaijin were teaching the Rokugani slang, and other parlanes? GMs who wish to include gaijin in Rokugan should determine their language, and how many points it costs to learn it as a Skill. Samurai who need to interact with gaijin would be expected to buy their language, while maybe trying to teach them Rokugani in the process.



# Adventure Structure

Firstly, the adventure is the core of any gaming session. Without the adventure as a reference, there is nothing else to gauge the flow of action. Most adventures are simple, straightforward, and short. They include a single plot, a few important NPCs, a twist or two, and a climax to bring it all together. A second plot-point can sometimes come near the end of the story, to give closure and focus to the final act. This second plot point is commonly related to the first in theme, but does not have to draw from the same style. Later, we will discuss the use of plot points and the difference between the first and a possible second (and in epics, a third, fifth, tenth, and so on).

This section is dedicated to designing your own L5R adventures. The charts and concepts in this chapter and at the end of the book are not exhaustive, and should not supplant the creativity of the GM. But they can be helpful in focusing her ideas, and in plotting a complicated campaign.

## Themes

One of the opportunities that Rokugan offers is the ability to design an adventure incorporating more than one theme within the genre. Many games lock themselves into action, or espionage, without providing alternate gaming forums. Conversely, these games rarely get played for long periods, and GMs quickly become drained of

ideas. In Rokugan, GMs are free to create almost any adventure with any theme, keeping the feel of the world new and vibrant every time you encounter it. Below is a chart that you may roll on to determine the theme of your adventure. Or you may simply pick a theme from those listed.

### ACTION

In an action adventure, the PCs are presented with a straightforward challenge involving monsters, spirits, humans, or natural disasters. It is an opportunity to use combat and physical abilities for problem-solving. This is a very popular style of play, and also has the highest body count.

Action adventures should have a high degree of energy and ensure a wide array of action opportunities. Too much of the same thing and the players will grow bored. Remember, that fantastic events can upset the balance of the world, and GMs who insist on making things weird for the sake of surprise may ruin the delicate nature of Rokugan. Spicing up the game can be dangerous if not handled properly.

### COMEDY

Although Rokugan is not perfectly suited for comedic adventures, players

and GMs can have fun chasing after the dark sorcerer whose plans are always falling apart, or following the guidance of the cryptic little Shintao teacher who tells them to walk off the edge of the world. With comedy, the ideas are simple, but the action and drama are askew. Serious themes done in a comic manner can be very macabre, and funny themes taken seriously become slapstick and deadpan.

Comedic adventures can break the monotony of a serious campaign and interject an element of humor for a single night. A continuous stream of such games, though, can damage an otherwise careful GM's reputation, and pigeon-hole her into a single style of gamemastering. Comedic gaming is also riddled with digressions (no pun intended); it is nearly impossible to maintain the veil in a comical game, but it makes for an excellent style for one-shot adventures.

RANDOM THEME TABLE	
Roll 2 Dice	Theme
2-3	Comedy
4-7	Horror
8-10	Action
11-14	Intrigue
15-18	Mystery
19	Romance
20	Roll Twice (ignoring this roll)

### IN MEDIA RES (CONTINUED)

Here are a few ideas for starting an adventure *in media res*.

#### Roll/In Media Res

- 1: Focus or Strike...
- 2: Siege...
- 3: The Battle Maiden is thrown from her horse...
- 4: The geisha cries out, and falls to the floor...
- 5: The Magistrate hands you arrest papers with your name on them...
- 6: The Oni Charges...
- 7: The ronin flees...
- 8: Your daimyo hands you a wooden katana, pommel first...
- 9: Your daimyo sprouts an arrow in her throat...
- 10: Your sleeping companion is dead and the blood is on your hands...



## RUNNING A MYSTERY

All of the NPCs did it. When writing a mystery adventure, one way to be prepared for the players' finger-pointing is to write up a background for how each important NPC could have done it. Then, create enough clues to point to any one of them, according to the players' actions.

Players have a tendency to follow only the evidence they consider important. Eventually, they will point fingers at someone, and if you've been careful and laid the groundwork, they'll be right.

GMs should not overlook the comedy of errors plot structure. An incompetent bureaucrat might give the PCs the wrong traveling papers, or promote them to high-ranking magistrates without proper cause. A Doji courtier who keeps losing her gifts for the Emperor, or a Hida samurai who never seems to have the right weapon at the right time, are great NPCs in a game where nothing seems to go right.

Some other ideas for comical adventures include: witty dialog with samurai shouting puns and insults to each other in court and "Fuzzy Samurai", where the players are actually human-sized animals from their clan (Lion, Crane, Dragon).

## HORROR

Running a horror roleplaying session – be it in a fantasy game like L5R or one more close to the bone like *Call of Cthulhu* – takes patience and practice. In order to be scary, you have to twist your players' perceptions, to make them approach the story in a different way than they might otherwise. Mood and atmosphere are key elements to a horror game, as any GM can tell you. It goes without saying that the setting for a horror session should evoke an atmosphere of foreboding and dread. Hold the game at night, keep lighting to an absolute minimum, play creepy music on the stereo, etc. Without these sorts of trappings, your session hasn't got a chance. But that's pretty basic stuff; if you want to be scary, you've got to take it a little bit beyond.

Roleplaying, as always, should be fun and engaging; that doesn't change just because you're playing a horror game instead of a high fantasy or action-oriented one. The need for entertainment gets lost sometimes when dealing with frightening topics; the desire to treat the topic the way with proper gravity overwhelms the enjoyable aspects of the game.

Some GMs who run horror believe that you have to treat things with the utmost seriousness in order to be menacing: barking out orders, keeping the players disoriented, occasionally delivering threat-laden pronouncements, etc. While this may be true, it shouldn't be the only element of your repertoire, and should never reach a point when it becomes more intrusive than it needs to be.

Often, GMs feel as if they must scare their players through these tactics, instead of the characters they're portraying. This doesn't work.

Nothing short of open violence against the players (which we don't recommend) is going to make them fear for their own lives. If you direct your efforts towards them and not their samurai, they're eventually going to get annoyed and stop playing.

Evoking the proper mood involves both a willingness on the players' parts to be scared, as well as the GM's ability to make them scared. In that respect, a good horror game should be like a good horror movie; the players don't want to feel uncomfortable themselves; they want to feel fear and suspense for their characters. By vicariously experiencing terror, apprehension, etc. through the circumstances of the adventure, the players will become excited by what's going on, and leave the session with a wonderful thrill running through their guts.

In order to do this, keep the players focused on the circumstances of the adventure. Immerse them in the setting and atmosphere, and don't let them come up for air. Try to keep people from wandering off for snacks or straying off-topic in their conversation. Hint that those who leave the table might not have surviving characters when they return. Let them know through your descriptions that their samurai should be scared; emphasize the unseen threats of their surroundings or the eerie events which lead them to it. And when the time comes to hit them with the monster, hit them as hard as you can. As the suspense crescendos and the threatened danger manifests, move quickly, describe things rapidly; don't give them time to think. If you pull it off effectively, you'll find the players hanging on your every word – and loving the session, even if their PCs end up in tiny little pieces.

Above all, keep the creepiness focused in the game, not the game table. Your surroundings – the low lights, the suspenseful music – should help convey the game world, not substitute for it. If you can do that, then the horror of the session will come alive, and leave your players begging for more.

## INTRIGUE

The single most prominent adventure convention in Rokugan is intrigue. L5R is a very social game, and PCs will often be called in to "watch" or guide NPCs as their mission. Subtle adventures that start small are more likely to turn into something larger later. The intrigue-based adventure gives PCs that gentle push forward



before dropping them into a web of back-stabbing treachery. When done right, such an adventure can have more tension and suspense than a hundred goblin hunts.

In adventures featuring intrigue, the PCs are often involved in schemes affecting one or more of the Great Clans. Any clan can be the focus of a "conspiracy", and the more esoteric clans - Unicorn and Phoenix, for example - who are thought to rarely involve themselves in trouble, can make for excellent surprise villains.

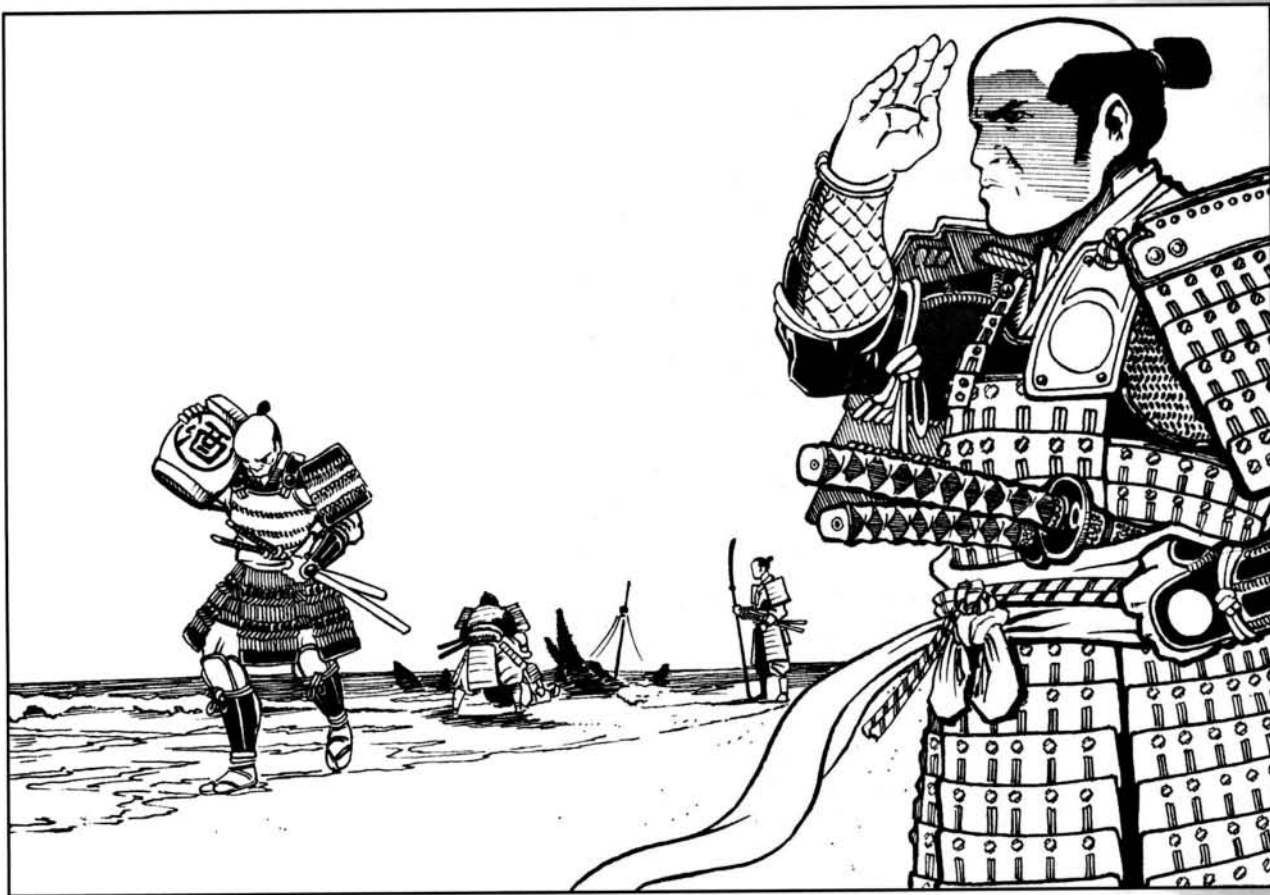
Although not every intrigue involves secret societies plotting the overthrow of Rokugan, these games can form a good conclusion to a lengthy campaign, or an introduction to bigger things on the horizon. Conspiracies involve cults and secret societies; Bloodspeakers, ninja, Kolat, and the like are all fair game for this sort of adventuring. GMs should create an organizational tree for intrigue-based adventures, detailing every character controlled by every other character, who they know, and what they're after.

## **MYSTERY**

Mysterious adventures are some of the hardest to pull off in an RPG. Any story that keeps vital, obvious clues out of the PCs' hands, replacing them with subtle hints and conjecture, is sure to receive an audible groan from the players. If a mystery adventure requires the players to hunt down a specific culprit, the clues must be obvious. But when that happens, it stops being a mystery and starts becoming an investigation.

Mysteries are supposed to keep the PCs guessing; the medium by which we play does not allow for a properly devised mystery. In order for a mystery to work, every detail, or *everything*, must be described - the face of every NPC, their dress, the interior of every room, *everything*. If you intend to mystify and "trick" the players, you must define everything to be fair. Otherwise they will know where the trick is coming from, or they will be blind-sided and not appreciate the element of surprise that you have created.

GMs interested in running a mystery adventure should focus on a subtle plot, and keep the story light and flexible. The more you set in stone, the harder it becomes to maintain the



**VILLAGE OF GOLD**

**Challenge:** The players are required by Lord Isawa Unushiko to visit the home of a neighboring lord, Isawa Jishin. The two have argued recently on their claim to a local fishing village. The peasants are being taxed by both lords, and neither is willing to forgo their claim for the good of the Empire. The situation has reached a combustible level and lord Jishin is prepared to take further action in the Imperial Court. This could cause great dishonor to the clan, and both lords may be forced to commit seppuku.

**Focus:** The samurai must travel to Isawa Jishin's estate and try to assuage bad feelings and come to a settlement. Jishin is a proud and powerful lord and he is not easy to please. He treats the samurai well, but the players will find him antisocial and the occasion to negotiate does not present itself. He puts them off, arranges their meetings to be "interrupted", and subtly ruins their attempts at persuasion.

suspense. Mix in a few other plot conventions as well, and your story will be much more interesting. To press for a long-term mystery, hint at it slowly over time. Do not rush to the villain; do not play your hand too soon. Remember, great murder-mystery villains are always your second guess...

**ROMANCE**

Any game that includes the romantic involvement of two characters (PCs or NPCs) falls into this category. Historically, romances have been the favorite of cultures around the world. But our action-junkie lifestyles often preclude this sort of gaming. GMs interested in running a romantic adventure should take a few important details into consideration.

First, roleplaying games often shy away from this theme, and rightly so. Not only is it difficult for most gamers to portray romantic characters, but it is also difficult for most GMs to keep romantic adventures exciting for any period of time. A campaign built upon earning the hand of a maiden could become boring after the third session of "wooing". GMs should consider mixing Romance with another theme.

Usually, romance works best as a subplot. Perhaps the love of a samurai's life is being sent by her lord to a place where he cannot see her. Or the hero of the story finds himself serving on the Wall, with his loved one left alone at the Imperial Court, where other, more convenient suitors prowl (see Doji Shogo, *Winter Court*). If this subplot were used, the GM might hint at details happening in the court, with short scene-cuts, and then return to the action to find the hero, tied up and unable to return to his love. Bear in mind that a romantic subplot does not necessarily have to involve the PCs. It can be about the NPCs and their need for the players to help them; the issues of duty and obligation come to the forefront in this style of game, tugging on the heart-strings of honorable samurai.

Despite all of this, adventures may succeed while concentrating on this theme. GMs who know their players are up to it might have a seductress approach of one the party members and subdue her for a few sessions. This works especially well with players who cannot make it each week. Perhaps a story like *Romeo and Juliet* (which translates very well to L5R) continues to unfold around the PCs, during a period when they are preparing for war.

## The 36 Plots

It has been theorized that every story falls into one of 36 dramatic situations. GMs can use these as starting points for their stories.

*The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*, written by Georges Polti in the 1920s, addresses tragedies and dramas from the Greek era to the late 19th Century, and illustrates how every story draws upon them. The following list relates the plots with regards to roleplaying games. Each is applied directly to Rokugan, and includes a list of the major characters and components involved in the plot.

These are merely guidelines, and GMs should feel comfortable adding major characters to the story (epic plots require more than four characters to be successful). Many of these plots are small in scope, and require a GM to expand them.

### I. SUPPLICATION (PERSECUTOR, SUPPLIANT, A POWER IN AUTHORITY)

A supplication is a request for aid. This story involves someone of lower station approaching the hero to aid her. This is an excellent opportunity to evoke the code of Bushido and play upon the honor of the samurai. Some examples include:

- *Peasants hiring Ronin to protect them from a cruel lord.*
- *A courtier asking a yojimbo to come to her aid.*
- *A lover, asking the samurai to kill her husband.*

Supplication requires that the players be motivated to help. In Rokugan, duty and honor are praised more highly than anything, though convincing an upstart ronin that helping someone else is in their best interest may be difficult.

Note that characters who are unable to care about the cause of the supplication will ignore the adventure completely. Find out what is important to them and use it to involve them in the story. This helps to diminish arguments within the party, especially when everyone has a personal, vested interest in the outcome of the "mission". *Seven Samurai* is an excellent example of supplication.



## 2. DELIVERANCE (UNFORTUNATES, THREATENER, RESCUER)

Deliverance is recovery or balance. A story where a wrong is righted is an example of this style. All deliverance scenarios need to be rescues, however; a samurai aiding the land by slaying a corrupt daimyo and placing himself upon the throne is just as much a Deliverance plot as a lone ronin saving a kidnapped child. Whereas Supplication is mostly reactive (i.e. the players are offered an opportunity to do right), Deliverance requires the PC to make a moral choice, actively. Whether the action needs to take place is left to the player's discretion, and an entire adventure can revolve around the samurai enlisting the advice of relatives, sensei, or lords.

Deliverance adventures may start in a number of ways. A monk's disappearance or a lord's transgressions can be hinted at in a prologue; this helps to get the players right into the action. A clever samurai, interested in uncovering more information, may decide to take action. Remember that in Rokugan, a single quandary has many ramifications, and no samurai should run headlong into such situations without proper context.

## 3. VENGEANCE (WRONGDOER, ANGER)

The most common theme in action adventures, vengeance is the easiest scenario to run in a Bushido-based culture. It instantly motivates the PCs to lend aid. A samurai may be driven by honor, duty, loyalty, courage, honor of their family, or the death of a lord.

There are three distinct vengeance plots.

The *slain family or ancestor* allows the GM to contrive a simple plot and then provide the necessary clues to ensure that the samurai remains on course. Bloody notes or distinctive weapons are easy clues to start the adventure with, for instance. The more plot hooks are provided, the longer the chase will last before the enemy is caught. It is very Rokugani to have a samurai catch up with his captor, only to suffer defeat, thus dying with shame. Such tragedies are the subject of many great kabuki plays.

*Vengeance for intentional injury* is a little more difficult to run. It is never easy to know when a PC will find the need to exact retribution. Such instances, although very reactive and spontaneous in RPGs, can sometimes take many sessions to fester before a samurai plots his move.

GMs unprepared for this may find themselves running a reactive campaign without preparation, as the PC runs about his enemy's province setting fire to everything in sight.

*The pursuit of criminals*, which is the final vengeance plot, is the most obvious. The PCs can be bounty hunters, magistrates, or regents of their lord, exacting "justice" in the name of the Emperor. In order for the scenario to satisfy the terms of vengeance, however, the PCs must have a personal stake in the adventure. Otherwise, it is a Pursuit plot (see #5).

## 4. VENGEANCE TAKEN FOR FAMILY UPON FAMILY (AVENGING KINSMAN, GUILTY KINSMAN, RELATIVE)

This can be the most passionate and bloody of the Rokugani tragedies. In this scenario, a mother might enact vengeance upon the father for the death of her son. A son might be dishonored and dispossessed for letting harm befall the family. A young wife could slay the mother and father of her dead husband after their lord demands his seppuku.

The concept of kindred in Rokugan can be taken one step further, to include anyone in the clan (Matsu, Otaku, etc.). A cousin defending the honor of the family, or betraying the trust of another lord, might be banished from the clan, or receive the visit of an army upon her estate. The variations on this theme are endless. Tread lightly.

## 5. PURSUIT (FUGITIVE, PURSUER)

Chases are difficult stories to tell. In order to keep the energy up, both the danger and the intensity of the chase must grow consistently throughout. The story must also include character developments to maintain interest. The individual being pursued is frequently innocent, or being hunted for the wrong reasons. GMs can put a twist on this by either making the PCs the guilty parties, or making the guilty party someone close to them.

Another idea is to accuse the hero of a crime that no one can take blame for, so that she is forced to run, knowing her innocence. A well constructed tale shows empathy for the hero, and makes others eager to aid her. This is a difficult situation to construct in Rokugan, as many samurai will face the consequences rather than run. Yet a few dishonorable samurai will hide away rather than face their daimyo's certain wrath.

## VILLAGE OF GOLD (CONTINUED)

**Strike:** The fishing village lies on a small river that comes down from uncharted hills. The village is unimportant, but recently, Jishin's men have found traces of gold in the stream. Jinshin believes that he can find its origin and claim the gold vein, if he has time to find the river's source. He intends to stall the players for two weeks, and threaten to inform the Imperial Court. Once he has found the gold mine, he will allow Unushiko to settle the claim, and take for himself the land where the mine is located. At that time, all papers will be ratified, he will seem the "polite loser", and in three or four months, the gold mine will be made public.

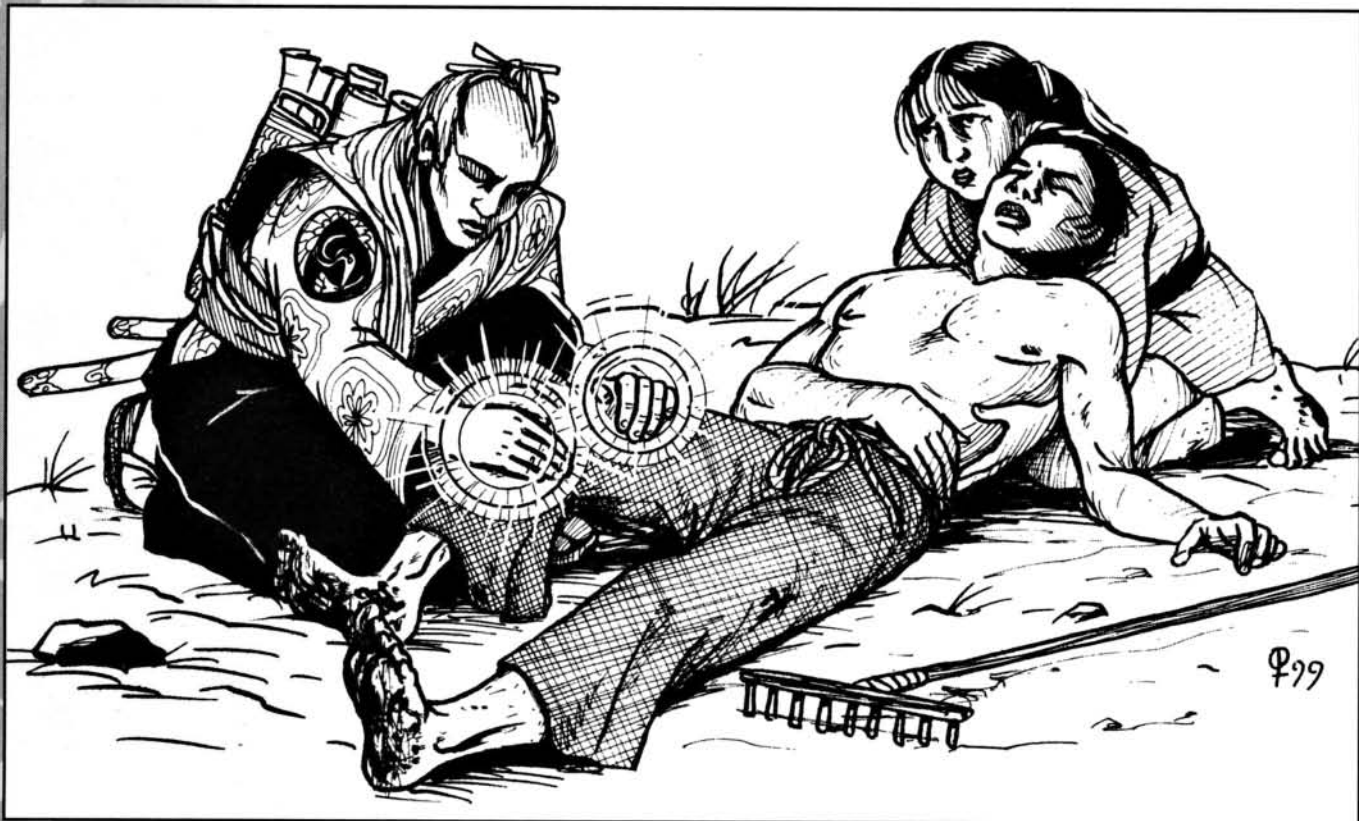
There are three reasons why the hero might be pursued. First, there is *the fugitive from justice*, being hunted by an oppressive or neutral policing agent. In the second instance, there is *the pursuit for the fault of love*, which might be kissing the wrong hand, or being forced to marry the wrong man. Lastly there is the story of *the hero running from a powerful force determined to see her death*. Perhaps she saw too much, or knows too much, or is the last of a line that must be put down. In this scenario, the samurai is probably an innocent bystander.

GMs should be aware that these are typically the hardest adventures to run, and that in Rokugan samurai rarely flee from danger. If a GM decides to pursue this line of adventuring, she should be prepared to find ways to perpetuate the chase. And because the PC can decide at any moment to head somewhere else, the GM is always forced to run this type of adventure on the fly.

## 6. DISASTER (VANQUISHED POWER, VICTORIOUS POWER OR MESSENGER)

Disasters include large-scale changes, or upheavals that affect more than just one hero. Often the story involves many facets of the culture and the PC is expected to survive or lead people to safety, in some cases even freeing them from the catastrophe. The event need not be an act of Mother Nature to be included as a Disaster scenario. The fall of Troy is considered a disaster, for instance.

In the Disaster scenario, a defeat is suffered at the hands of a powerful force, or a lord is overthrown. On a smaller scale, it can also be an insult or the loss of a loved one. The key to the disaster is how it is portrayed. If the story fixates on revenge, then it is not a disaster. But if the tragedy of the disaster carries the PCs through the story as victims sifting through the debris of their lives, or propels them to take action against evil for the sake of good, and not for the sake of personal vengeance, then the sanctity of Disaster remains intact.





Disaster stories involve pain, despair, anguish, and suffering. PCs that do not want to game in a Rokugan where the populace is marred by natural or human transgressions should not utilize this sort of adventuring.

### **7. FALLING PREY TO CRUELTY OR MISFORTUNE (UNFORTUNATES, MASTER OR UNLUCKY PERSON)**

This scenario is even more sorrowful than Disaster. In this story, the hero/victim has fallen prey to those bent on taking advantage of her – no matter the cost. She is made a victim by many situations, ranging from ambitious intrigue to the destruction of hope. This can include the political machinations of the society as it grinds down the will of the hero in exchange for her land and name.

Greedy nobles bent on gaining more power can rob a naive samurai of her life by seeing her dishonored, unseating her, and making her a ronin. Lastly, the death of hope can be more supernatural than natural; striking PCs blind, mute, or blighting their entire family with pox also sets the stage for misfortune. GMs set on running this adventure should present the worst, and PCs should brace for heartbreak and hopelessness.

### **8. REVOLT (TYRANT, CONSPIRATOR(S))**

A revolt is a revolution or conspiracy to overthrow a single lord, an entire government, or a nation. No orders need be issued in this sort of game; honorable or dutiful samurai will know what the best course of action is to see the revolt through. This adventure easily justifies the eclectic group of rag-tag samurai – ronin and clan members fighting for a single cause.

It is here that honorable samurai find themselves in conflict with the code. Obedient samurai may find it difficult to defy their lord, even for the sake of Rokugan. In the interest of drama, the PCs could easily agonize over what is *right* and what is *proper*.

To create an effective revolt of a conspiratorial nature, all of the major players in the government structure should be included. If the overthrow is of a minor lord, then all of her friends, courtiers, assistants, and potential allies and enemies should be written up and defined by the GM. In a larger-scale game, the major NPCs and their

attendants need to be identified to increase the dramatic intrigue of Rokugan.

### **9. DARING ENTERPRISE (BOLD LEADER, GOAL, ADVERSARY)**

Many plots can be drawn from Daring Enterprise: preparations for war, war itself, the capture and/or retrieval of an important person or object, and the expedition to find just about anything real or abstract that the GM can imagine. The following table is given as a guideline without definition, to spark a GM's imagination, while leaving the details free for him to design.

#### **RANDOM PURPOSE TABLE**

##### **Roll Plot**

- 1 . . . Roll Twice (ignore this result again)
- 2 . . . Capture a Prisoner / Item
- 3 . . . Delivery of a Message / Item
- 4 . . . Exploration of a Frontier
- 5 . . . Fight Enemy
- 6 . . . Fight Monster
- 7 . . . Ambush a Caravan
- 8 . . . Prepare Troops for Battle
- 9 . . . Retrieve an Item
- 10 . . . Gain Power or Wealth (although this is rarely important to a samurai).

### **10. ABDUCTION (ABDUCTOR, ABDUCTED, GUARDIAN)**

A note arrives notifying a samurai that her son is "visiting" someone else after his disappearance so many evenings ago. What should the samurai do? It is extortion, but going to one's lord is an admission that she cannot handle the situation herself.

In Rokugan, kidnapping is considered highly dishonorable. PCs caught in the web of an abduction will no doubt find it distasteful. But since abductions can include rescues as well as captures, the samurai may think they are doing a great deed instead of causing harm – when in fact, their behavior is being guided by someone with an agenda.

GMs need to answer important questions about an abduction before writing the adventure. How was the hostage taken? Why? What do the kidnappers expect in return? Is the hostage dead? Can the PCs successfully return the hostage? (If

not, this may be a revenge plot.) How can the hostage be rescued? Will any plan of action work? Or is it a waiting game? Children and innocents are normally the focus of abduction stories, and PCs with dependents are perfect targets for a kidnapping. Be aware that the plot rarely involves a plea for help (i.e. the PCs must decide for themselves what is necessary without being told). Deliverance stories are rescues where a third party is asking for help.

## **II. THE ENIGMA (INTERROGATOR, SEEKER, PROBLEM)**

The enigma is an engrossing story where the central character finds his own intelligence at odds with a riddle or in opposition to a powerful will. Possible enigmas can revolve around a search, riddle, or temptation, or a seductress or powerful individual might offer an opportunity for power, or demand it under penalty of death.

This sort of scenario can be very taxing on PCs as not every detail of a game world is fully detailed, and a missed clue could result in the inability to devise an answer. GMs should create a riddle in the flavor of Rokugan which can also be solved by a western mind, to avoid robbing the adventure of its tenuous atmosphere. This is not an easy task. If your group roleplays in the context of the game world, but solve problems with their own modern, western mindset, you should forego the idea of remaining true to the genre, or give up this scenario altogether.

## **12. OBTAINING (TWO OR MORE OPPOSING PARTIES, OBJECT, AN ARBITRATOR)**

What makes Obtaining different from other situations is that diplomacy and guile supersede action and force. In this scenario, the PC takes on the role of tempter and despoiler, out to claim something for herself, or her lord. An object is an excellent focus for this adventure, as are land, titles, or favors. In Rokugan, the need for favor and approval can be or more important than a hundred rice fields. (Maintaining one's station is a constant chore.)

An endeavor that is sought either by one's own persuasiveness or through the use of an arbitrator are equally valid scenario hooks. Campaigns built around intrigue may use this situation more than others, and GMs can cycle through a great deal of obstacles and scenario ideas.

## **13. ENMITY OF KINSMAN (TWO FAMILY MEMBERS WHO HATE EACH OTHER)**

A character that has garnered the hatred of brethren for any reason falls into this situation. Whether reciprocal or not, this scenario focuses on the unquenchable hate that a samurai may feel toward a family member. In this scenario the hate may be focused by the PC, or against them. In the former, the GM must allow the PC to plot each move, and then must react to everything she does. In the latter, the PC is the victim of a relative's dislike, and is expected to respond to their maliciousness. PCs with the Black Sheep or other Social Disadvantage are prime candidates for this plot.

This is not an easy scenario to run, but GMs looking for an adventure with subtlety, complexity, and drama should consider running this scenario for one or two players. It is also much slower and more perplexing than most other stories. Enmity can serve as a constant subplot behind the scenes of a bigger story, building and building until the PC finds herself amidst a sea of hostility and death threats.

## **14. RIVALRY OF KINSMAN (PREFERRED KINSMAN, REJECTED KINSMAN, OBJECT)**

What separates Rivalry from Enmity? Here, the focus of the psychological antipathy stems from childhood; not from action or decisiveness, but from a darker, more lurid look at the human soul. Be prepared for the repercussions that follow when you introduce this plot into your games.

The Rivalry of a Kinsman is rooted in the characters' histories. While Hatred stems from a single act, Rivalry's source is an object, a parent's affections, or a sibling's need for acceptance. In this scenario, the Hatred is not outward and the psychological residue is exposed slowly over time.

Malicious rivalry with a simple motive is Enmity. But malicious rivalry toward a sibling, with the stake of conquest held firmly in one's grasp so that another may never claim the mantle of leadership, falls under this situation. Rivalry toward any kinsman is the necessary element of this situation; GMs should remember that death is not necessary in these stories. What is important is that once again a plot like this can take a back seat to a larger story arc, and drive the PC's own personal story.



## 15. MURDEROUS ADULTERY (TWO ADULTERERS, THE BETRAYED)

Before we define the parameters of this scenario, it is important to define adultery in Rokugan. Samurai and samurai-ko occasionally indulge their libido, by visiting a geisha (yes, there are male geisha in Rokugan – only less common than the female variety). Married or not, samurai can visit geisha without fear of reprisal. It not considered a crime, or even a dishonor, though most husbands and wives would prefer never to know of it.

Although Rokugani rarely marry for love, many ladies still find it intrusive and insulting for their husbands to take comfort in the arms of another woman (particularly if the other woman is not a geisha; such indiscretions are ignored, while those with other samurai become personal). The same is true of a woman that is unfaithful to her husband.

Murderous Adultery can open or close an adventure. Perhaps the story begins with a PC finding her husband in the arms of a lady. Her jealousy, rage, or dishonor pushes her to slay one or both of them, and she spends the remainder of the adventure hiding the fact from others. She is now forced to deal with the Remorse of her action (see below), or carry on as if nothing has happened. Often, the player will determine for herself what is best for the story, and the GM should listen to all ideas about where the saga can go next. The best situation is one where the GM and player have planned things together, ahead of time.

Murderous Adultery can also close a story. If a PC learns that her husband has been unfaithful, she may choose to plot his or the lover's death, or both. If so, the adventure will focus around creating an alibi and planning the murder. This plot can be assimilated into others on the list, forcing the samurai to prioritize and plan according to her own duties and obligations. As the samurai tries to plan her husband's death, she might be asked to perform other tasks, or perform simple errands for her lord. Conversely, complications may be added by introducing Kinsman, Ambition, or Conspiracy.

GMs should not shy away from this storyline because of the delicate nature of the topic. After all, most successful thrillers have a very similar story to tell.

## 16. MADNESS (MADMAN, VICTIM)

Madness can drive Rokugani to almost any extreme. Murder, jealousy, and dishonor all befall the mad. Such events can drive samurai to fits of rage that cannot be explained. Akira Kurosawa's *Ran* is an Eastern retelling of *King Lear*, who is driven by a madness sparked by the petty jealousy of his children. Even Lady Macbeth "inherits" the madness of her husband and is driven to suicide.

GMs wishing to incorporate Madness into their scenarios are introducing a powerfully debilitating theme. Players may resist the GM's forcing mental deterioration on a character they feel is stable. Work this out ahead of time before designing the adventure. The madness of an NPC is always easier to justify, roleplay, and conceive than imposing insanity upon a player who sees induced Madness as a form of mind control.

## 17. FATAL IMPRUDENCE (IMPRUDENT PERSON, VICTIM OR LOST OBJECT)

In a story where the protagonist continues to act against common sense and good will, the hero is her own worst enemy. *Othello* features Iago, who continues to plague the hero with maddening details of Desdemona's alleged affair. Here, the villain has an agenda and goes to great lengths to destroy and discredit the hero. Not all Fatal Imprudence plots require the hero to be opposed by someone with an agenda, however.

Imprudence causes misfortune, dishonor, and the loss of loved ones. Misfortune can drive the hero to murder her own loved ones to satisfy an oath, or to violate a trust that brings about the disfavor of the family. A samurai that strikes a hasty bargain often regrets it.

Dishonor is easy to define, and it is assumed that GMs can apply it to their games using temptation. A weak samurai can be the impulse of a story, or the final link in a long epic. PCs with Weaknesses and Dependents can easily be exploited, and a GM set on destroying the honor of the PC's family can use this scenario to bend her against herself. When used against players, this story is a tragedy, but when used upon NPCs that the players can later vindicate, it can become quite heroic.

## THE ANGRY WIFE AND THE RONIN

The following adventure hook is derived from Dramatic Situation 15, Murderous Adultery.

**Challenge:** A ronin is hired to murder the spouse of an angry wife, who resents his affections for a geisha.

**Focus:** The ronin's plan is simple, and he commits the act without difficulty.

**Strike:** One (or more) of many possibilities:

- The curious ronin learns that the wife was married to the man he killed (previously unaware).
- The ronin falls in love with the "widow".
- The ronin is captured and sentenced to death for murder.
- The ronin corners the weak husband and hesitates, giving the victim an opportunity to turn the tables.

If this plot does not satisfy you, replace every use of the word "ronin" with the words "best friend".





## 18. INVOLUNTARY CRIMES OF LOVE (LOVER, BELOVED, REVEALER)

A samurai can easily be tricked into committing adultery without knowing it. A male samurai seduced by a married NPC, or a married female PC who sleeps with someone she thinks is her spouse (e.g. actors, shapeshifting, trickery) are both plots that fall into this category. Usually in these stories, a revealer (knowing, or ignorant of the facts) brings forth evidence of the crimes to the characters involved. The story's plot resolves, and the characters involved must decide what will happen now that the truth is out.

## 19. SLAYING OF AN UNRECOGNIZED KINSMAN (KILLER, VICTIM, REVEALER)

This plot is almost self-explanatory. Any circumstance where the main character murders someone that they later learn was a family member falls here. Slaying could involve factors contrived by an instigator, or that derive from a curse or prophecy. Oracles, necessity, rivalry, ignorance, hatred, duty, advice, dishonor, vengeance, duress, and apathy are all possible causes of suffering in this plot.

A samurai driven to anger could easily slay someone through accident or misinformation without the proddings of a devilish NPC, but a character driven to murder by a third party is a much greater tragedy in Rokugan.

Even more perplexing is when a kinsman is slain because of a *mistake* made by a family member. Perhaps a sword drawn in drunken anger that strikes down a kinsman, or a samurai steps in to stop a brawl, only to have a friendly blade run them through. GMs may feel inclined to write a story in which the news of a kinsman's death at the hands of a rival clan is delivered to their PCs or the daimyo. Later, information points at a member of their own clan that struck down the samurai. But war is already on the way...

## 20. SELF-SACRIFICING FOR AN IDEAL (HERO, IDEAL, PERSON OR THING SACRIFICED)

Perfectly suited for the world of Rokugan, this adventure works best with honorable samurai, or those who believe in something bigger than themselves. Although virtue may be sacrificed as easily as life, the way of the samurai often makes any other choice difficult.

Sacrificing one's life for the sake of their word is the most common story in Rokugan, and yet still the most powerful and poignant. In order to determine the exact magnitude of the samurai's action, the GM must determine what she is fighting against, and what she is fighting for. A samurai driven to self-sacrifice is often resisting events that would dishonor herself or her family.

But the real challenge lies in whether the samurai is fighting to be the victor over her true enemy - or her own failings. Tales of samurai involve accomplishment and success. But more often the reality of Rokugan reveals that a samurai is flawed, and dishonor is not as far away as it was thought to be. PCs should be allowed to decide if this fate works for them, without outside influence or pressure.

A samurai may be expected to sacrifice herself for any number of reasons. Her word, the family, the Empire, and many other plots can drive a samurai to seppuku or death in the line of duty. Honor - instead of life - may be lost in almost any of these situations as well. GMs interested in an all-ronin campaign could start this as the background or initial adventure, especially if the party's goal is to regain their honor.

Sometimes the loss of a virtue, rather than the loss of life, can be the focus of an adventure. In Rokugan, this can be a delicate plot, and the GM should be careful not to drive a PC to the loss of all things, for a samurai without honor is nothing. For more on the loss of ideals and passions, see Dramatic Situation 22.

## 21. SELF-SACRIFICE FOR KINDRED (HERO, KINSMAN, PERSON OR THING SACRIFICED)

Rokugan is at war with itself - the samurai that knows duty knows no ambition, but the samurai that knows no ambition has no soul. The constant battle with the human and the "more than human" code of Bushido is a classic of Rokugani literature.

Very similar to the previous situation, this plot does not always require the death of a samurai. Rather, the samurai is expected to do what is right and place the family or clan above both the good of the samurai and the good of the Empire.

Life, love, ambition, and honor are all sacrifices that a samurai can be expected to make for the family. Scenarios of this type can involve NPCs that are brutal, selfish, dishonest, ambitious, or righteous. The antagonist in these stories is



easy to identify, and players looking for a focus for their rage will find one easily.

This sort of adventure works best with players that have a very active roleplaying style; for example, a PC that comes forth and approaches you with a desire to move her character in a selfless direction, without provocation, should be rewarded with a well-crafted adventure designed just for them. Endeavor to provide the player with a satisfactory conclusion to their character's saga.

## 22. ALL SACRIFICED FOR A PASSION (LOVER, OBJECT OF PASSION, PERSON OR THING SACRIFICED)

Samurai should know reason and passion in balance. The code of Bushido requires samurai to think with their mind, spirit, and soul, but also – and in equal measure – with their compassion for life. No samurai should place any other virtue before another. In a vacuum, this can be achieved with regularity. In Rokugan, this is a near impossibility.



Few samurai have attained a status of honor that frees them from their personal passions, and the PCs are no exception. Vows, duty, ideals, and health can be sacrificed in the name of passion. Samurai with a weakness, vice, or compulsion are easy to tempt, and therefore easy to exploit. In these scenarios, a third party can be involved in the downward spiral of the hero, but it is not always necessary. Nature has a way of culling the weak.

A dishonored samurai could seek to prove her worth with a selfless act after such an ordeal, or merely bear the weight of her shame. Seppuku seems a common escape from such a situation. A samurai looking to regain her honor and prove her family's worth, however, could go to almost any extreme to be pardoned for her shame. This can be an excellent plot hook to begin a campaign with.

### **23. NECESSITY OF SACRIFICING AN INDIVIDUAL (HERO, BELOVED VICTIM, NEED FOR SACRIFICE)**

Samurai faced with difficult decisions are – at their very core – the greatest of all heroes. A situation that threatens the good of the clan, and imposes difficult decisions on the hero, is a risk that comes with a great reward. In this situation, there is no right or wrong.

Tragedies are filled with tales of people sacrificing a loved one for the greater good. In roleplaying games, such a story can be an immense, sweeping tale that forces the character to make an important decision.

### **24. RIVALRY OF SUPERIOR AND INFERIOR (SUPERIOR, INFERIOR, OBJECT)**

The Rivalry plot can include a great many dramatic combinations: the young noble and the powerful Emperor at odds, neither willing to resolve the enmity; the master shugenja and his apprentice, who is unable to maintain her powers, constantly engaged in verbal and academic disputes (the worth of the apprentice seems to validate her use to the clan); a PC whose ancestor believes she is not worthy of the title “samurai”.

A one-shot L5R adventure could involve two samurai returning home, one a prisoner to justice. Traveling such a great distance, their opportunity to roleplay and develop a tale of compassion and respect could either end with the release of the prisoner, or the sentencing of a friend to death.

### **25. ADULTERY (DECEIVED SPOUSE, TWO ADULTERERS)**

Do not confuse this with Murderous Betrayal; a lover or spouse betrayed does not always act out of love. GMs interested in this story should consider a long-term act of betrayal. In Rokugan, a geisha is an accepted distraction, but wives do not have to approve, and many act once their patience has been gnawed thin.

### **26. CRIMES OF LOVE (LOVER, BELOVED, THEME OF DISSOLUTION)**

The Crime of Love plot may be invoked in any situation where an unapproved or dishonorable affair is transpiring. GMs should look at this as yet another opportunity to exploit the feelings of love that one is unable to (or cannot) express.

This adventure should have some history behind it. If NPCs are the only ones involved, the players should receive the information through rumors, gossip, and hearsay. The news of such “forbidden” love could reach the PCs through anonymous sources, or they could witness it themselves after listening to testimonies. Once the players have learned of the affair, they must determine what is important. Is either offender a member of the family? The clan? Or are they from a clan which the family would like to see discredited? Be prepared to respond to the player's actions throughout.

If a PC is involved with another (PC or NPC), this subplot can build over many sessions before requiring a specific resolution. GMs may wish to invoke this storyline several times during the campaign for PCs who have taken the True Love Disadvantage.

Be aware that Romance-based story threads are not easy to run. If the subplot remains contextual and is used for background, the plot may be easier to stomach.

### **27. DISCOVERY OF THE DISHONOR OF A LOVED ONE (DISCOVERER, GUILTY ONE)**

Very much like a soap opera in its appeal, this situation can involve shame voluntarily or involuntarily. The samurai learns that her relative or loved one has committed a dishonorable act, or has somehow been violated. The samurai is then expected to act; if the GM paces and focuses the adventure right, this can be combined with Dramatic Situation 23 (Sacrifice of an Individual).



Dark Secrets abound in this scenario, and the GM should flesh out several NPCs with very dishonorable pasts that come to bear in this story. This scenario can involve a traitor, assassin, thief, or lover with a dark secret.

### **28. OBSTACLES TO LOVE (TWO LOVERS, OBSTACLE)**

If a marriage is prevented, disallowed, or considered dishonorable by Rank or any other reason, this situation could be included in the adventure. Enemies or clan rivalry could easily cause such distress, and a Lord might even order the affair terminated, under penalty of death. The tale of a young Doji falling in love with an Akodo has been recreated in hundreds of Rokugani plays, and the myth is not far from the truth.

The rarest of these occasions in Rokugan is a marriage that lasts under the temperance of love. However, these stories normally conclude with a samurai realizing her love for another long after the opportunity has passed.

### **29. ENEMY LOVED (BELOVED ENEMY, LOVER, HATER)**

In this scenario, the PC or an NPC is involved in a relationship with someone forbidden to them. Similar to Obstacles to Love, this plot involves a romance that continues to exist even without the approval of, or against the warnings of, a very powerful family (this story is a dishonor to the families involved). Perhaps the rivalry exists because of the PC, or the rivalry is rekindled when the PC commits an atrocity against the family. This story should be revealed slowly over time, or interspersed with other situations.

### **30. AMBITION (AMBITIOUS PERSON, COVETED THING, ADVERSARY)**

The samurai is asked to guard against a noble or protect an important daimyo as he travels across the Empire. An ambitious lord will do almost anything to secure their own station, and even further to secure a better station. A lord who seeks for herself, before seeking for the Empire, is both dishonorable and treacherous. Rokugani plots involving ambition should address this issue thoroughly.

Mostly, these stories involve the main character covering her tracks and committing more crimes to keep herself alive and untarnished. *Fargo*, *Quicksand*, *Ghost*, and a host

of other movies have detailed this story, in which someone must commit another crime to cover themselves. In *Ran*, the wife of the eldest brother is driven to any act to see her family thrive, even sending thousands of men to their death for the sake of her vanity.

In most every case, the ambition that drove the villains becomes the source of their demise. But in Rokugan, if the players were to find information implicating another samurai, they might find themselves hard-pressed to do anything about it; the word of a noble is stronger than the "evidence" against her, and PCs may not have the option of pointing fingers at an NPC with a Glory of 7.

Ambition can drive a samurai to murder, betrayal, and lies. Once a samurai has tasted power, she may never wish to drink anything else again.

### **31. CONFLICT WITH A GOD (MORTAL, IMMORTAL)**

This is an arcane plot that can be made to work in Rokugan with only a little work. The Fortunes, kami, and Lady Sun are all powerful forces in L5R; stories that follow this thread are certain to bridge into high fantasy. A race to destroy or protect a shrine can be the pulse in an adventure that takes PCs from this world to another, one which is less rooted in reality.

The other end of these adventures, and one that might impact the PCs more often, could involve an ancestor that is punishing them, and a haunting that seems to drag them into despair. Persecution for beliefs, or religious sects that differ on the importance of values in a religion, may be the focus of an adventure as well. Bear in mind that even shugenja will grow tired with this theme if used too often.

### **32. MISTAKEN JEALOUSY (JEALOUS ONE, OBJECT OF JEALOUSY, SUPPOSED ACCOMPLICE, AUTHOR OF MISTAKE)**

With or without an accomplice, this is the source of many scenarios in Rokugan. A suspicious mind can conjure jealousy with or without provocation, and even a platonic relationship can be mistaken for more than it is. A samurai who does not remain focused on virtues can be easily blinded, and a wily samurai can twist an honorable samurai around like a top.

In a sample scenario, a lone female enters or leaves the home of a samurai while his wife is out. When the wife returns, her husband seems perplexed and annoyed. Perhaps he is innocently planning an elaborate gift for another woman. Ideally, rumors could begin to surface, or another samurai could enrage the wife's jealousy with lies and half-truths. If involving an additional accomplice or NPC, the GM should develop the motivations of the character and plan out their actions accordingly.

Othello's jealousy of his wife's supposed transgressions is fueled by hearsay and conjecture. In the end he murders her from jealousy primed by a hateful author.

### 33. ERRONEOUS JUDGMENT (MISTAKEN ONE, VICTIM OF MISTAKE, AUTHOR OF MISTAKE, GUILTY PERSON)

A samurai who wishes to discredit another speaks out in court. Their words fall upon the ears of those that can cause harm, and no one is there to defend the honor of the individual being accused. The story begins when the court's judgment arrives, and the samurai is dishonored. Thereafter, she bears the shame of an act she has not committed.

An Erroneous Judgment can cause great dishonor to a samurai, and may spark a powerful epic. Perhaps the PC has created her character as a ronin and this is her opening story. Through a few sessions of play, the GM puts together a plot to exile the samurai from her clan. An adventure





that starts with a PC discredited for crimes against the Empire forces the group to become problem-solvers and vindicators of the samurai's fouled honor. A story of this magnitude can be used as background to a much bigger tale, or it can involve the PCs taking steps to clear their names and expose the guilty parties.

Erroneous Judgment is the fabric of so many Rokugani stories that GMs can run this adventure over and over, without fear of repetition. A courtier that speaks out against a lord, or a samurai who is asked to bear the shame of another's action are examples of the manipulatory nature of Rokugan, and the common life of a noble.

Here are some examples of Erroneous Judgment in action:

- Testimony has been gathered to dishonor a samurai, but many of the conclusions are false.
- A judgment has been made against an enemy, and the PCs must help to avoid impending war.
- Evidence has been gathered, and a lord has incorrectly concluded its meaning.
- There is no real villain; rather, the narrator is merely piecing together unrelated drama, and making the PCs' lives miserable.

### **34. REMORSE (CULPRIT, VICTIM, INTERROGATOR)**

In the Remorse scenario, a transgression has faulted the honor of another, a crime has been committed, or a loved one has been maligned. The act can be simple or complex, but the focus of this adventure lies in the lingering shame that a samurai carries from such an act. It is quite possible no one knows of the act, or it could be public knowledge. The importance of the Remorse scenario is that the conscience of the character is at war with itself, and in Rokugan the tenets of society define how you are judged. Bushido is in conflict with this notion, and a highly honorable samurai will fight for its cause despite what others may think.

If the news of the act in question has not come to light, the PC or NPC may have to carry the guilt and shame of her act. The act may be simple: a small lie or betrayal that no one has learned of. Or it can be complex: a murder with great repercussions (especially the murder of a loved one). A samurai who has been overlooked as the criminal may still carry Remorse from the crime she has committed.

### **35. RECOVERY OF A LOST ONE (SEEKER, ONE FOUND)**

This is not a rescue scenario. Rather, it is a situation where an NPC of importance to the players returns after being missing for a long time. This is probably resolution of a deeper plot, but Recovery adds an additional dynamic to the world of the samurai. A parent, child, or sibling who returns after 10, 15, or 20 years is sure to bring many complications with them. GMs should determine what angle they wish to explore in this case, as the story may go in many directions.

Who holds the seat of power now, with her return? What is the station of the missing person? Has she aged? Where did she go? How will the family react, now that the household has changed? What would a samurai do, if the lost ancestor-spirit of her father returned with news of his death? Stoic, rigid samurai will not like this adventure, but GMs should think of this as a challenge for such characters.

### **36. LOSS OF LOVED ONES (KINSMAN SLAIN, KINSMAN WITNESS, EXECUTIONER)**

This scenario is very straightforward and deliberate, yet is hard to investigate in a roleplaying environment. The audience (the PCs) is forced to watch the unstoppable death of a loved one in horror. They are faced with the tragic cause of discovering "why", with no answers forthcoming.

Many of these stories open without the characters knowing who has passed; the victim's identity is eventually revealed and the story enters a new arena thereafter. This is an example of an "In Media Res" opening (see page 118).

Rokugani view death differently from westerners but are still no more hardened to its effects. Stories that open with a death are sad and melancholy. GMs should be careful how they use them.

This is a strong, powerful background option for a character, but could also be the main plot of a sweeping epic. GMs should include other plots with this situation as well, to keep the action alive and force the samurai out of their stupor, lest the game become too depressing to continue.

## OMENS

The Oracles and prophets of Rokugan have many sagely truths that GMs may twist to mean whatever they wish when the time is right. Prophecies and doom are common elements in Eastern storytelling; GMs are encouraged to include a prophecy at the beginning of their campaign that forebodes an event in the future (see *A Promise*, p. 30).

Opposite are a few ideas for omens and prophecies to get your creative juices flowing. Feel free to change the family names if necessary, or convert them to fit your own campaign. Some are purposely vague, while others seem rigid and unbending. Such is the nature of prophecies.

## Plot Point Two

Plot point Two is the surprise twist in the middle of the adventure – the thing your players aren't expecting. It is the GM's opportunity to turn the tables on the story. For example, players who have been following a murderous shugenja may find that the real threat is a pack of sea trolls who can possess a man's mind.

GMs should use one plot to get the PCs involved in the action, and potentially include a second to throw them for a loop. If the initial plot point is the rescue of an important noble from the clutches of an evil shugenja, for instance, a stereotypical follow-up might be to make the PCs' daimyo the mastermind behind the kidnapping. A more creative plot point, however, would make the noble a necessary element in the survival of the universe – perhaps he must be sacrificed to appease an angry kami?

Although movies commonly employ a second plot point, literature has a strong history of not doing so, starting with a single thread and continuing with it all the way to the end. GMs should show care when developing a story with many divergent plots; by choosing more than one dramatic situation, they are risking convolution of the adventure's central theme.

## Constraints and Complications

Constraints are details the GM adds to the plot to make it unique. By invoking a constraint upon the plot, the GM creates limits for the PCs, forcing them to work within confines, while serving the additional benefit of keeping them on track, focused on the adventure. A constraint that forces the PCs to be humble may be an efficient quest for proud samurai. Honorable warriors may be taxed by one that requires them to carry their shame. The following several constraints work exceptionally well at keeping the PCs on target.

Complications are much like Constraints, except that they develop during play. GMs should consider adding one or more complications during a latter act of the story, to see how the samurai respond. With practice, you will come to find which ones work well in each circumstance, and how to control their use.

### RANDOM CONSTRAINT CHART

#### Roll Constraint

- 1 . . . Ancestor Guidance
- 2 . . . Curse/Disease
- 3 . . . Diplomacy
- 4 . . . No Magic
- 5 . . . No Harm May Befall the Guilty
- 6 . . . No Weapons
- 7 . . . Poison
- 8 . . . Secrecy
- 9 . . . Shame
- 10 . . . Time-Limit

### ANCESTOR GUIDANCE

The samurai know that their ancestors are there. Every step of the way, the spirit of a great-grandmother continues to remind them that they are being watched. Perhaps the PC is seeking vengeance in the name of her ancestor, or the Lion have sent them to find a lost sword, having discovered its location from such a spirit.

### CURSE / DISEASE

A curse continues to haunt the PCs. Take care not to make such a constraint too powerful; anything that causes limbs to fall off is probably too much, while one that slowly eats away at the samurai over 20 years would be appropriate. In order for the curse to be effective, it must hinder the PCs constantly, but not cause them to stop playing altogether.

A disease constraint is similar to a curse, but the character may die if it is not cured. Alternately, the samurai might be required to obtain a cure for an entire village, town, or stronghold.

It is possible that the goal of an adventure is dependent upon lifting the curse or curing the disease. Additionally, the completion of the goal could remove the constraint, though this makes the it the goal of the adventure instead of a hindrance.

### DIPLOMACY

With this constraint, the PCs have been ordered to treat someone (or everyone) kindly. The adventure the constraint is applied to should be sensitive; samurai who dishonor their clan with mischief should be threatened with open



war or equally disastrous results if they fail. Other than forcing the PCs to behave, this is a relatively simple constraint, and GMs are encouraged to try using it during their first few sessions. It works well for all character types, and forces the players to actively roleplay for the majority of the session.

### **NO MAGIC**

Simply put, magics do not work or are forbidden in an adventure with this constraint; shugenja must find another way to be useful to the group. Perhaps all of their scrolls have been stolen, or the adventure takes place in a zone of the Shadowlands where magic is countered. This is a considerably severe constraint, but works to promote problem-solving and character interaction.

### **NO HARM MAY BEFALL THE GUILTY**

The PCs are expected to treat an antagonist and relevant NPCs with care. If returning a noble to justice, they should be expected to keep her alive. If fighting against another clan, men must be taken prisoner rather than told to commit seppuku or killed outright. This constraint is especially useful for games in which pivotal NPCs must be kept alive.

### **NO WEAPONS**

Similar to No Harm, this adventure constraint prevents the PCs from drawing their weapons. They must think rather than act through every situation. Although L5R's lethal combat system already imposes this rule to some degree, those GMs playing with different rules or with more liberal combat may wish to impose this law in the game. GMs should avoid using this constraint if the NPCs can use their weapons; in such a case, the characters might as well be prisoners, or absent from the game.

### **POISON**

Similar to a Curse, the PCs have been poisoned at the outset of the adventure. Perhaps the poison is a ruse to cloud their mind, keeping them away from the true objective of the adventure, or is meant to toy with them for the deranged pleasure of a particularly vindictive enemy.

Is there an antidote? A catalyst? GMs should consider who poisoned the characters, and whether or not the PCs will have the chance to

find the person who poisoned them, before play. This can easily become a subplot adventure between larger stories.

### **RED HERRINGS**

GMs who decide that the players are moving too quickly toward the climax or conclusion often incorporate red herrings. Rokugan has ample opportunity to keep the PCs guessing about their fate, and rumors and gossip that continue to lead the players to dead ends will certainly keep the GM who likes to play "cat and mouse" very happy.

### **SECRECY**

The PCs are being asked to do something privately. Perhaps their lord demands that they murder a rival. He will never admit having given them the order to kill the man; they have no "official" sanction to perform the act, and no traveling papers will be issued.

The honor of the samurai should come into question if they are caught, and if the act is extreme, they may even be ordered to commit seppuku.

### **SHAME**

The PCs are somehow shamed or dishonored, and yet must still serve their lord. Perhaps the story opens with an explanation of their shame (in the prologue; that way, they can do nothing to prevent it), and the adventure is spent trying to prove their worth, or find the culprit responsible. In the end, they will be exonerated or permitted to commit seppuku. Either way, they have succeeded.

### **TIME-LIMIT**

The adventure has a built-in countdown. As the PCs race to achieve their goal, other factors conspire to come crashing down around them. Perhaps they have been given a matter of hours to find an abducted Seppun noble, or they will be found guilty of his kidnapping. Another possibility has the players discovering a hidden army approaching their home. They must make it back to their daimyo in time to warn him, or lose their ancestral lands to the enemy. Be sure to keep careful track of the time in this type of adventure; the players will want to use every moment to their advantage.

### **SAMPLE OMENS**

- "The ancestors will vanish when the last step is taken, returning when the stones are disturbed."
- "The day shall come when a young woman, born of an orphan, draws a sword and kills her brother."
- "When the last man is defeated, the daughter of a champion will rise to destroy the usurper."
- "Tread lightly where the Thunders have walked."
- "The road to Jigoku is marked with indecipherable words. Every samurai must learn to read without her eyes, and to speak without her tongue."
- "A Doji will betray you, a Yogo will seduce you, and a Kitsuki will murder you. Stay clear of well-traveled roads."
- "Know that when you draw your sword, your ancestors guide you. But the day you draw your sword against one pure of heart, you draw it alone."
- "The sting of the serpent is no different than the sting of the scorpion. But you may choose who bites you, and when..."
- "The signs are unclear, but the heavens battle this day for your soul."



## THE SCRIPT AS LANGUAGE

Putting words in the players' mouths can greatly distract from the focus of the game. After all, making choices is what RPGs are all about. However, with the right group and great dialogue, the following methods can help get your adventures started.

One way to get the players involved in the action is to dictate the opening scene. By preparing the opening words, the scene can flow exactly as the GM plans. She may wish to write the actual dialogue of the characters at the beginning of the session to get right into the action; a group that trusts their GM will probably go along with it to speed up play.

## Rumors

Rumors are meant to give the samurai something to chase after, a smaller goal to accomplish or object to acquire during play. Red herrings, subplots, and other diversions from the central plot can add flavor to an adventure when ideas have run dry, or can form the launching point for an unexpected (though not necessarily unpleasant) scene. Rumors add an interesting element in games where the GM has had little time to prepare, giving the PCs simple plots to resolve that the GM may roleplay on the fly.

Commonly, the first sentence of each rumor sums up its core idea. Further sentences can be ascertained once the samurai has begun

investigating. Whether they are true or not is up to the GM.

Should you wish to include rumors in your games, we recommend that you prepare a list of probable (and plausible) ideas. These should include a sentence or two about how the plot will progress, should the PCs follow up.

## Gossip

What separates gossip from rumors? Rumors are small stories designed to impress the locals, exaggerated with each retelling. Gossip, on the other hand, has its foundation in envious words. Although gossip can snowball and turn into something much uglier and more widespread than originally intended, it is usually rooted – to some degree – in fact.

Gossip can add a great deal of color to your campaign. It can be used like rumors, to propel a story forward, though it works best as a series of red herrings, or to contrive responses when the players succeed with a courtier roll.

## The Script

*"I am here. This is all I can say. Perhaps you know more about it than I, but this is all I can attest to. To ask more is to ask for deceit."*

– Ikoma Tsuge

The script is a GM's outline when running adventures; it should have enough details to be useful, and enough flexibility to remain intact when the group diverges from it. GMs who write themselves into corners, or leave too much to chance may find it better to run without one.

A script should include the beginning of an adventure, its end, and all of the conflicts in the middle. GMs should try to plan for each step of their adventure ahead of time, but leave

the actual details of the script to their players – much like a play with setting, location, and plot, but no lines. When and how the characters enter the script, who they are, and what they intend to accomplish should mostly be left up to them (unless the conditions of your script demand otherwise).

With much of the script left to the PCs, the GM is free to fill in

the other pieces – encounters, side adventures, and major NPCs. As the campaign progresses, they will respond to the actions of the players by introducing events to either derail the party's forward momentum or to get them back on track. GMs who have a script written ahead of time are more apt to create an epic rather than a series of adventures.

Please refer the to Sample Adventure Script on the opposite page for an example of how to compose a simple plot outline, and notes for how to use it.



# Adventure Script Example

## A DEADLY HUNTSMAN

### Introduction:

*The village of Goguri Moriko is a lovely village, filled with cascading waterfalls and gardens. Water is plentiful, and the village inhabitants grow rice and many rare fruits in the thick foliage which is abundant here. The forest is lush as well. Birds sing, children play, and workers look up from their labors as you approach...*

The players arrive in village of Goguri-Moriko.

Because this is their first time playing these characters, I'll need to know why they are there.

Characters: Lion, Crane, 2 Dragon and a ronin.

The first Dragon and both Lion have magistrate backgrounds - set up their arrival together; they are between missions for an Emerald Champion.

The ronin wants to "make good"; has he been hired to guard the village from bandits?

The other Dragon and the Crane - I'll have to ask.

### Body:

The headmaster is a brutish looking man (his name is Eko). His wife is dying and cannot work any longer. The villagers hate him.

The local merchant is named Furumi and he's an ugly, short, dirty man. Maybe the players will see him on the street or in the tea house.

### Something horrible happens!:

Sometime during the adventure, a ninja will steal a child away from a peasant hut and run into the local forest. Of course, they won't know it's a ninja - the peasant will say it was a monster (he's actually a bandit who knows about the black pajamas).

I'll need a name for the forest - perhaps the player's will ask the headmaster?

Some clues should be left, including the silk wrap from the pommel of his tanto. It has been dyed, and is stitched in the style of a local silk works.

### The Chase:

The forest is thick, but not deadly. Finding him will be hard. He knows the trails well. Keeping the characters moving should be the point of this adventure.

### Climax:

Two villages over, the Bandit Gurote has a deal with the yoriki Daidoji Heicho. He is hiding out there. The child is to be ransomed back to the family. The players can fight it out any way they like. Turning Heicho in should be fun. I think he has many friends. Include some statistics for the bad guys, and a list of the major NPCs.

## THE SCRIPT AS LANGUAGE (CONTINUED)

Players who are animated and that do not mind standing up and pretending that they're drawing swords can be given dialogue that suits their personality. For instance, two PCs standing off against one another in the opening dialogue can be a lot of fun (but only if the script has them backing down without any hurt feelings or "scores to settle" - it's not a great idea to begin a game with the deaths of two characters).

GMs should only use these techniques if they have the time and their players are of the sort who would receive it well. Otherwise, they can easily cause hurt feelings or even give the impression that player decisions are meaningless in the GM's world.

空



## The First Adventure

It would not hurt to spend about 30 minutes per player, running a one-on-one session with them. This will give the player a chance to get into character and figure out how he intends to deal with simple situations. By giving each *player* their moment in the sun, you make every *character* important to the story. Incorporating their individual tastes into subplots only makes them happier.

### 3 RONIN, 2 DRAGON, AND A CRANE WALK INTO A BAR

So, you've written a great adventure. You're about to begin a journey that will span five years of the characters' lives. You've found a way for them to visit every Major and Minor Clan, plus a trip to the Shadowlands.

How do you get them together without resorting to the old standard of making them magistrates? You've read all of their backgrounds, you've poured over every ounce of detail in their character concepts. But the players are just too diverse to be a team.

Not every RPG intends for players to begin as a team. L5R, with so many diverse clans, actually lends itself to the opposite end of the spectrum. Getting the players to like each other, or to consider every member of the group vital to the team is not an easy task. Also, short of having them train at the same school or be brothers or age-old companions, there are few options that shine outside the magistrate game.

First of all, GMs should encourage the players to make their characters together. Beyond that, we have included a host of semi-common themes to begin campaigns with. Refer to the following list for some examples, and notes for how to use them in your game.

## Hooks

### ACCUSED OF A CRIME

Everyone has been summoned to court. The PCs have all been accused of a crime, either the same one or several, as the GM sees fit. After initial testimony, the party is allowed to speak their peace. Whatever they say, the outcome is the same. The daimyo presiding takes pity upon them, and sends them to gather "evidence" of their innocence. The game might open with the players' testimony, as they try to defend themselves, or upon the road, with the trial conducted through flashbacks.

### ACT OF GOD

The players start the adventure unconscious and bloodied. They wake to find themselves in a prison cell, upon an island wharf, in a glade, or in some other remote location. Their daimyos are missing, and they do not recognize one another. A scroll or other plot device should be placed to lead them into the adventure.

Act of God forces the players together in a remote location, somewhere that leaving the group is not an option. This is among the rudest of ways to begin a campaign, and GMs that do so should not be surprised if the PCs resent it. In a mini-campaign, this opening can become the constant driving force behind finishing the adventure. Just be sure that they have a chance to find out how they were brought together by the end of the campaign.

### ASK THEM TO EXPLAIN IT

In a simple, low-key adventure, this may be as simple as giving the PCs a locale and asking them, "What are you doing here?" The game can open with a wedding, a gempukku, anywhere. This is one of the easiest adventure hooks to use.

### BURN DOWN A VILLAGE

Something tragic has occurred that affects all of the clans. Each PC has been sent to investigate, representing the clan they hail from. This hook grants the PCs a lot of personal freedom to make decisions regarding their fate – after all, they're only here to investigate and report back. This is an exceptionally good way to extend an adventure and still maintain the independent perspectives of the clans.



## COMMON GREAT DESTINY

If the GM feels comfortable giving all the PCs Great Destiny for free, the players can be brought together for a single great purpose. Perhaps you want the PCs to be the equivalent of the Thunders, or Champions of the clans. In such an adventure, the PCs will likely be “heavy hitters”, expected to perform duties outside the purview of a lesser samurai. Bear in mind that a Great Destiny campaign does not necessarily demand that the PCs be powerful to begin with. In fact, many great stories begin with weak individuals growing to fit their expected roles.

## DEATH

Although not a pleasant way to start a campaign, a GM with the right story may feel inclined to murder an important NPC, bringing the PCs together to discover the circumstances of her death. This works exceptionally well with groups that do know each other, particularly if the victim was a sensei that all of them had trained under, or a communal friend or loved one.

If you're feeling especially twisted, ask a player to design an additional character, and plot to murder the first she brings to the table. Introduce the player's second character as an NPC that remains in the background until some predetermined point in the game. Then the first is killed and the second is introduced as the player's new character. If you avoid alerting the other players to your plans, the effect can be extraordinary.

## EMISSARY

The characters have been called together to serve their lords. They are not expected to stay together forever – only long enough to complete their task (though this may be fairly long-term with an inventive GM). In this situation, the players represent their clans and must do whatever they can to dignify their family. A perfect starting adventure hook, Emissary completely supports the players taking on stereotypical clan roles.

## INHERITANCE

Someone has passed away, leaving an inheritance to the PCs. The inheritance requires that they work together somehow (managing a piece of land, protecting a village, etc.). This hook gives players an opportunity to roleplay quite a

bit, and perhaps even develop details about the late NPC, if the GM has yet to flesh her out.

## ODD MAN OUT

Firstly, the GM must know which clans are *not* represented by the PCs; the PCs' clans are at war with one or more of these. The PCs have been gathered as a single fighting unit, or as an expeditionary force to war against the enemy clan. The PCs' objective or mission statement can be simple, with the GM taking on the recurring role of their lord or commanding samurai, giving them direction as needed.

## PROPHETIC VISIONS

The game begins with all of the PCs gathered in a sacred place, each with a different story seed for how they came to be present there. Perhaps each player is allowed to play out the vision that brought them there, or the GM might simply explain the PCs' dreams of the last few nights, and that they have awakened in the starting locale. Intuitively, each PC might know that they are important to the rest, or the GM may decide to maintain their anonymity, hoping to draw some drama from the inherent mystery of the situation.

## SAME CLAN

Before the players sit down to create characters, you should offer them additional CPs to make characters who are all from the same clan. They can be allowed to choose the clan together or told the clan ahead of time (perhaps in a Campaign Handout). Alternately, the GM may choose to outline the professions available, letting the players choose or “dice off” to see who they will play.

## SENSEI/ANCESTORS

A sensei or ancestor has asked (or demanded) that the PCs travel to a specific place and perform a great deed. This type of adventure hook commonly has a built-in duration, allowing the GM to tell a self-contained story with ease.

## WINTER COURT

An invitation to Winter Court arrives at the home of each PC, asking them to the palatial estate of a governor, noble, lord, etc. The entire campaign can be spent in the winter home, with many adventures taking place through the season.

## WHY USE HOOKS

I recently had a conversation with an L5R player, who stated that his group was constantly getting together to draw swords and kill each other. I hope they're having fun. And I also hope that they aren't expecting the GM to do any work. Often GMs go to a lot of trouble preparing for a campaign or series of adventures, only to see the story ignored. In such a case, GMs commonly find it difficult to get the players started.

One method of getting groups together is to force them to make characters who get along. If certain players still desire to play characters that you don't want to see at the table, simply tell them to make up something else. They may not like it initially, but in the long run, it helps the campaign immeasurably.

### WRIT OF DECREE/IMPERIAL DECREE

Although not magistrates, the PCs have been "volunteered" to help perform an Imperial action. These orders are from the Emerald Champion himself (real or otherwise); the PCs should find themselves gathered before a high-ranking samurai at the beginning of the game, who orders them to cooperate on a mission.

### YOJIMBO

The PCs have been assigned as bodyguards to serve a single noble. Samurai serving as yojimbo are expected to behave loyally and do as they are told. This sort of campaign allows the GM to take the PCs almost anywhere the NPC goes, encouraging a full range of adventures.



## The Great Sleep

Every saga must end. Nothing lasts forever. Eventually, every GM must end a campaign.

Some of the best stories in history have ended on very different notes than the audience expected; RPGs need not be any different. Good storytellers should never reveal their ultimate plans for a story until they are ready, but when they do, they should do so in style. Never let a good game fizzle out in the end – it only cheapens the memory of the whole for all involved.

So how do you end a great campaign without making the final moments seem trite and contrived? The following is a list of possible answers.

### DEATH BY PRIDE

A hubris is a tragic flaw that manifests itself in the form of overwhelming self-confidence. Many heroes with a strong hubris disregard the words of their ancestors, even to the point of violating important codes or moral beliefs for the sake of their pride.

A story that ends with the death of such a prideful character can be quite powerful. The character will be remembered for her failings, and those that hear her tale will most certainly learn from it. Matsu Tsuko's pride caused her own death in the *Clan War* saga, but her life ended on a strong note because of it.

### EPILOGUE

After the final chapter of a campaign, the GM can place a signature upon the story with a short epilogue. This is a set of closing information, usually from a perspective that is very different from that of the PCs. A narrator, scribe, bard, or poet recounts the last episode of the heroes' tale, and defines the after-effects of their actions.



Perhaps the PCs never really understood the full backstory of the campaign; in such a case, an epilogue becomes an excellent tool for bringing the more subtle points of your story to light.

### **OUTSIDE INFLUENCES**

Sometimes, campaigns end for the wrong reasons. No matter what a GM does to keep her story alive, the saga ends without resolution. In these cases, the GM must deal with the problem and move on. She should not blame herself; the game's thread has been lost, and there is no one to blame. Gaming is unique in this way. It is the only hobby where the artist is also a member of the audience, and where group dynamics dominate function.

Games can die in this manner for a number of reasons. Perhaps a few players can no longer make it, or the impulse to finish the "quest" has waned. Too many PCs may have passed away, leaving the core group without the skills and motivations to move forward.

Regardless of the cause, the best advice a GM can receive in these situations is to take what she's learned and start again, with or without the same players. Every session should be treated as a learning experience; this one was just more costly than usual.

### **PASSAGE OF TIME**

Flash-forward a number of years and describe a scene with the PCs gathered in one of their favorite locations. Let them roleplay as themselves (though several years older). Let them make up whatever they wish for the missing years; at this point, it can't hurt your game. Let them reminisce about "old times"; this should provide the players with a certain degree of insight about the campaign they would not have been able to gain out of character.

Show how the world of Rokugan has changed as a result of their actions and the end of the story. This works especially well if the GM plans on returning to the same setting at some point in the future (like in the *Star Trek* movies), with new characters taking up the old mantle in an Emerald Empire possibly altered by their actions.

### **RETIREMENT**

The campaign you've been playing is several years old, and the characters have suffered every malady possible. The idea of continuing is hard to justify, and the players are interested in starting

anew. In this case, the GM might consider retiring the samurai - having them shave her heads and become monks. The GM should award Karma Points as if the character dies honorably (see *The GM's Screen* for more on awarding Karma). Note that this is more common when ending the life of a single character, rather than an entire campaign.

### **RIDE OFF INTO THE SUNSET**

The great and terrible threat is vanquished, and the PCs step from the smoke and rubble into the grandeur of a new world. Similar to the Passage of Time, this finale allows the GM to pick up the campaign at a future date.

### **SEPPUKU**

Most Rokugani believe in karma and the afterlife. Ancestor worship is as strong as Shintao, and samurai who respect the tenets of Bushido expect to be rewarded with a glorious life in Jigoku. The act of seppuku, when done in the proper context, ensures that a samurai and his family will be blessed with good karma.

GMs and players should not consider seppuku an admission of failure. It isn't. Seppuku is an honorable and revered act, admired as the greatest duty a samurai can perform for their lord. A campaign that ends with the ritual suicide of one or all of the PCs can be the perfect signature to a great campaign.

### **SHAME / DISHONOR**

The shame and dishonor of the characters could very well end their careers as heroes, or could spark a new (ronin) campaign. If the PCs choose (or are ordered by their lord) to commit seppuku, the campaign can simply end. But should the characters desire to continue paying as ronin, the GM must determine whether the story may continue in that context. If not, another (appropriate) ending is in order.

### **VICTORY**

Did the players win? By that, did they complete their mission? Is the campaign's main thrust completed? If so, it may be necessary to step back and determine if there is anything more for the character to do. How has the world been changed? Tally up the changes and make sure that by telling another tale with the current characters, you are not diminishing the impact of their accomplishments.

### **ENDING IN THE NARRATIVE**

GMs who desire to end their campaigns with a pre-written epilogue may not wish to roleplay the entire sequence; the lack of control common with open gaming scenes may not support their vision of the story's climax.

In this case, they may choose to utilize the Narrative format, in which the GM either reads a prepared passage, or provides the players with scripts to follow. Though the level of interaction is lost with this style of ending, the GM's intended message reaches the players without the chance of a random element ruining its flavor.

This is the easiest way to end a campaign, though GMs should be forewarned that it is also the most anticlimactic.



# *Appendix*







## A NOTE ABOUT PRIORITIES

A little while back, a young man named Adam

McTavish died from complications due to his constant battle with Cystic Fibrosis. Adam was a long time fan of AEG and SHADIS Magazine and his constant contact with Mary Zinser will be sorely missed.

Some time ago, we sent Adam a stack of games to occupy his time with fantastic stories and imaginary places. No story in the world cure Adam, however, and a few weeks back (it is March 3rd, 1999 as I write this), it became more and more difficult for Adam to breathe. He was taken back to the hospital for observation. A major lung infection had become resistant to all antibiotics and took its toll - one week later, he had passed.



Many of you may be wondering what would possess someone to write so much detail, worrying about the little things when there is so much adventuring to be had. I've talked with a lot of L5R players since the game's release. Few RPGs have come along which the players desire to know so much. And where a game set in the real world does not require clarification on the types of fish that someone may eat, Rokugan has players asking the questions, "What type of wood are the homes made of?" and "How many servants do I have tending my garden?"

The ideas herein came from hundreds of sessions and discussions with players. I hope I have covered everything pertinent. I could have written a 300-page book about all that a GM could know to run a game, and I still wouldn't be able to tell you *everything*. Some concepts just cannot be summed up with words, and by explaining it we rob the feature of the beauty it possesses. All of you have unique experiences that you think everyone goes through, while having typical events in your campaigns that others would consider unreal or ridiculous. Remain objective and everything here will be useful. I promise.

In the meantime, here is a bibliography of some of the books and movies that have most influenced the structure and feel of the Emerald Empire, and the contents of this book. They describe Oriental settings, ideals, and culture; they show heroism in the true Japanese sense. We suggest you read, watch, and absorb these as much as possible - not only are they informative, many of them are just plain incredible.

We hope you enjoy them as much as we have.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms, Sixth Edition*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1993.

Brucato, Phil. *Book of Mirrors*. White Wolf Publishing, 1997.

Charrette, Bob and Paul Hume. *Bushido*. Fantasy Games Unlimited, Inc., 1981.

Costikyan, Greg. *I Have No Words And I Must Design*. Interactive Fantasy, Hogshead Publishing, Ltd. 1994.

King, Winston L. *Zen and the Way of the Sword*. Oxford University Press, 1993.

Lau, D.C., trans. *Mencius*. Penguin Press, 1970.

Nitobe, Inazo. *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. Charles E. Tuttle Publishing Co., Inc., 1969.

Perkins, Dorothy. *Encyclopedia of Japan: Japanese History and Culture, from Abacus to Zori*. Roundtable Press, 1991.

Polti, Georges. *The Thirty Six Dramatic Situations*. The Writer, Inc., 1977.

Tsai Chih Chung, *Zen Speaks*. First Anchor Books, 1994.

## MOVIES: CHINESE AND JAPANESE

Kaige, Chen, dir. *Temptress Moon*. China Hong-Kong, 1996. 127 minutes.

Kadokawa, Haruki, dir. *Heaven and Earth*. Japan, 1990. 119 minutes.

Kurosawa, Akira, dir. *Kagemusha*. Japan, 1980. 159 minutes.

---. *Ran*. Japan-France, 1985. 161 minutes.

---. *Rashomon*. Japan, 1950. 88 minutes.

---. *Sanjuro*. Japan, 1962. 96 minutes.

---. *Seven Samurai*. Japan, 1954. 141 minutes.

---. *Throne of Blood*. Japan, 1957. 108 minutes.

---. *Yojimbo*. Japan, 1961. 110 minutes.

London, Jerry, dir. *Shogun*. United States, 1980. 125 minutes.

Mizoguchi, Kenji, dir. *47 Ronin*. Japan, 1941-42. 112 minutes.

Ping, He, dir. *Red Firecracker, Green Firecracker*. Hong Kong, 1994. 116 minutes.

Yimou, Zhang, dir. *Raise the Red Lantern*. China-Taiwan-Hong Kong, 1991. 125 minutes.

---. *Red Sorghum*. China, 1987. 91 minutes.

---. *Shanghai Triad*. China-France, 1995. 109 minutes.

---. *To Live*. China, 1994. 132 minutes.



# Miscellaneous Tables

## Settlement Generator

This is a simple settlement generator for creating villages, towns, or cities quickly. If time permits, it can be used to develop core ideas and flesh out a settlement with NPCs, adventure hooks, and a detailed key of events. The following steps are a helpful guide through the design and construction of a Rokugani settlement. For certain areas of the design, we've provided tables to assist the Gamemaster with preparation. For others, they should rely on their own intelligence and common sense.

### DESIGN AND PLANNING

This is the first crucial step. Here the gamemaster sets down some rough guidelines as to what role the settlement will play in her campaign. Whether it is a home base, a temporary rest stop, or a vital strategic point in a war, the village's purpose should be identified. Although the specialty in Rokugan will be determined below, the GM should decide for herself how the village will appear in the game. Bear in mind that these charts do not replace your imagination.

### SIZE

This determines the actual scope of the settlement. A hamlet would have so few people that it could be a single family working the entire plantation. Towns and cities are more important to the general populace of Rokugan and are always walled and fortified, while many smaller villages are rebuilt from year to year due to a number of various catastrophes that may befall

them. Remember, there are very few emigrants within Rokugan. Heimin do not move unless a samurai has ordered it.

### POPULATION

The population of a feudal culture is very delicate. The traditional population density of a society such as Rokugan's is nearly 20 people per mile. An agrarian nation that has not been introduced to high-tech farming techniques cannot support a higher population density without serious detriment to the people's sustenance. Therefore, villages house very few farmers, while producing a great deal of food, much of which is taxed (about 60% is taken for the upper 10% of Rokugan).

### RELATIVE WEALTH

How does the village thrive? What purpose does it serve in Rokugan? Villages that supply rice make up 99% of all the settlements. In addition to rice however, a village may also manage to produce silk, tea, or a host of products the whole of Rokugan require. With a single die, the GM can develop a system for determining the relative value and worth a location has to the ruling daimyo. Where 9 is beyond compare and may bring in some 1200 surplus koku each season, a 1 or 2 is barely getting by and a 0 is failing, altogether.

### SETTLEMENT SPECIALTIES

Beyond the economic base of a settlement lies its specialty. Many settlements of Rokugan are famous for their tea, silk, or whatever. Some settlements aren't known for anything; others have a striking feature that makes them unique. Below is a short list of ideas for specializing your settlements. GMs should be creative in explaining what makes the feature so attractive or noteworthy. "Shinsei Dropped His Hat Here" Village and the City of Hantei's Rest are named for specific events, while Thick Stone Hamlet and "The Town of Rich Flavor" are named for what is produced there.

Roll a die. On 1 or 2, roll on the Settlement Specialty Table to see if the village is known for anything. If the Relative Wealth of a settlement is 8 or higher, GMs should automatically roll at least once on this chart.



### A NOTE ABOUT PRIORITIES (CONTINUED)

His best friend came to visit him and Adam made a tremendous effort to tell him about the books he had received. Adam's mother wanted to let us know how much of a difference it had made to him. It gave her great comfort to know that he was happy when he died. I hope that other gamers can appreciate and respect that sometimes our hobby is more than just dice and pencils. Adam did. He will be missed.

## SOCIETAL VIRTUE

Rokugan has a strict way of life, but that does not prevent peasants from behaving in accordance with their community's morays as opposed to the will of the Empire. By rolling a die, the GM can generate a relative total for determining how "faithful" the people are (1 being low and 10 extremely pious). Add 1 to this roll for a settlement in Seppun or Phoenix lands.

## CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Criminal activity is in direct correlation to the prosperity of a settlement. Like societal virtue, the criminal activity in a region is determined by rolling a die and modifying the roll. A high relative wealth can also affect this roll (GM's discretion). A number between -2 and +11 indicates the relative criminal activity in a region. Where -2 might represent that a village has been raided once this millennium, +11 shows illegal activity on a grand scale. The higher the roll, the more likely the local daimyo is to assign yoriki and magistrates to the settlement.

## Encounters

Sometimes rolling up an encounter on the fly can spice up a situation. It can be especially fun for GMs who do no mind "side track" adventures that move away from the main plot. A short visit with a kindly monk or a scuffle with bandits can provide the players with a break from the mental gymnastics of the Rokugani courts and social structure.

GMs that use the encounter charts should be careful to make the NPCs unique - too many visits with generic merchants or gardeners and the players will wonder if there is anything else in Rokugan. Again, these encounters should be used sparingly, and only to spice up the game. Encounters marked with a † have an additional sub-table that the GM can roll on. Never be afraid to change a family or clan name.

### WILDERNESS ENCOUNTER TABLE

Most anywhere in Rokugan that has not been settled, or farmed is considered the wild. Forests, Mountains, Swamps, and Rolling Hills are the places for such encounters.

- |    |       |              |
|----|-------|--------------|
| 1  | ..... | .Badger      |
| 2  | ..... | .Bear        |
| 3  | ..... | .Boar        |
| 4  | ..... | .Small Game  |
| 5  | ..... | .Snake       |
| 6  | ..... | .Stag        |
| 7  | ..... | .Tiger       |
| 8  | ..... | .Hunter      |
| 9  | ..... | .Wild Horses |
| 10 | ..... | .Wolves      |

### OMEN/PROPHECY TABLE

Anything peculiar that the Rokugani cannot explain as "natural" is often interpreted as an omen. Samurai may find the need to visit a seer, prophet, or oracle with regards to the phenomenon. Whether or not the event is truly prophetic is up to the GM.

- |    |     |  |
|----|-----|--|
| 1  | ... | .Bird Falls out of the Sky, Dead                         |
| 2  | ... | .Bleached White Tree with Blood Red Leaves               |
| 3  | ... | .Dogs Sleeping/Sitting in a Perfect Circle               |
| 4  | ... | .Hail  |
| 5  | ... | .Meteorite Falls to the Earth and Creates a Giant Crater |
| 6  | ... | .Pool of Water with Algae in the Form of A Kanji         |
| 7  | ... | .Rainbow   |
| 8  | ... | .Small patch of flowers surrounded by 1000 Butterflies   |
| 9  | ... | .Thunderstorms in a Clear Blue Sky                       |
| 10 | ... | .Tree Falls in the Middle of the Path                    |

### ROAD ENCOUNTER TABLE

Any road in Rokugan can be dangerous. Just because a village is linked by a mud path through wetlands, does not mean, that bandits and samurai do not use it. Make sure the encounter makes sense, and determine what the NPC is doing here.

- |    |       |                |
|----|-------|----------------|
| 1  | ..... | .Bandits †     |
| 2  | ..... | .Beasts †      |
| 3  | ..... | .Farmers       |
| 4  | ..... | .Hinin †       |
| 5  | ..... | .Magistrate †  |
| 6  | ..... | .Merchant †    |
| 7  | ..... | .Monks         |
| 8  | ..... | .Patrol (Clan) |
| 9  | ..... | .Ronin †       |
| 10 | ..... | .Special †     |

# Legend of the Five Rings

## SETTLEMENT SPECIALTY CHART

d100	Specialty
01-05	Alcohol
06-10	Artisans
11-13	Bamboo
14-17	Bridges
18-22	Carpenters
23-24	Caves
25	Celestial Events
26-28	Chefs
29-32	Cloth
33-37	Craftsmen
38-42	Entertainers
43-45	Festival or Holiday (roll one die)
	1 Kanto Festival
	2 Cherry Blossom Festival
	3 Setsuban Festival
	4 Bon Festival
	5 Festival of the River of Stars
	6 Kami Festival (Local)
	7-8 Shouting Day (Local Festival)
	9-10 Oshogatsu (New Year's Day)
46-48	Food
49-50	Forest
51-53	Fruit Orchards
54-56	Gardens
57	Geisha
58-60	Grain
61	Jewelers
62-63	Lake
	(also Pond, Pool, etc.)
64-66	Mills
67	Mines
68-69	Natural Feature
	Jetty, Rocky Outcropping, Waterfall, etc.,
70-71	Natural Port
72	Purification pools
73	Rice, a unique grain
74-76	River
	(also Brook, Creek, Stream, etc.)
77	Rope
78-81	Shrine
82-83	Silk
84-87	Smiths
88-89	Stonemasons
90	Sweets
91-93	Tea
94-95	Temple
96-98	Tofu
99-100	Weavers

## VILLAGE ENCOUNTER TABLE

Village life is different from city life. Villages and hamlets are home to *heimin* and samurai rarely leave the beauty of a large city to visit the common folk. Encounters in a village reflect the life of an average Rokugani. Keep the action light and quick and do not dwell on anything unless the samurai take an interest in it. Undefended villages are a favorite stop of Ronin and bandits.

1	.....Children
2	.....Craftsman†
3	.....Dog
4	.....Farmer
5	.....Fisherman
6	.....Headman
7	.....Hinjin†
8	.....Ronin†
9	.....Yoriki/Doshin
10	.....Special†

## CITY ENCOUNTER TABLE

This encounter could be on the streets, in a tea house, or even outside the governor's court. GMs should roll on this chart whenever the PCs asking you, "Who do I see?" or "What's going on?"

1	.....Artisan†
2	.....Beggar
3	.....Courtier
4	.....Geisha
5	.....Lesser Noble†
6	.....Magistrate†
7	.....Merchant†
8	.....Priest
9	.....Yoriki/Doshin†
10	.....Special†

## BANDIT TABLE

1	..A Bandit Ambush - Leaders and Followers
2	..Arrows from the Woods - Bandit Archers
3	..Bandit Hunting Party - A Leader, Dogs, and Followers
4	..Bandit Tollbooth - Leaders and Followers
5	..Bandits Dressed as Monks
6	..Bandits Harassing a Lone Merchant
7	..Bandits Preparing Ambush - Leader and Followers
8	..Bandits Sharing/Splitting Goods
9	...Clan Bandits (Low Ranking Samurai - Not Honorable)
10	..Local Bully (Bandit Leader, Large, Rank 1 Technique)

### SHADOWLANDS ENCOUNTER TABLE

As stated in the *Book of the Shadowlands*, a random encounter means random damage. GMs who resort to dropping bakemono randomly on the samurai are sure to find a few dead bodies once the smoke has cleared. Through careless planning, the dice can drop something as tough as a demon to something as weak as a small goblin. Be careful what you put into your games; no player wants to be surprised with an Oni on the side of the road. Remain consistent. If you do include a zombie rummaging through a merchant's sack, have a reason ready when the players ask.

1	.....	Goblin †
2	.....	Hida Patrol
3	.....	Hiruma Scout
4	.....	Kuni and Followers
5	.....	Necromancer
6	.....	Ogre/Troll †
7	.....	Oni †
8	.....	Ratling
9	.....	Zombie/Skeleton †
10	.....	Shadowlands Special †

### GOBLINS TABLE

See *The Book of the Shadowlands* for more on Goblins.

1	.....	Goblin Hunting Party
2	.....	Goblin Madcaps
3	.....	Goblin Scavenger
4	.....	Goblin Shaman
5	.....	Goblin Shaman and Followers
6	.....	Goblin Warband
7	.....	Goblin Warmonger and Followers
8	.....	Half-eaten Goblin Party
9	.....	Swamp Goblins
10	.....	Two Goblins Fighting

### OGRES / TROLLS TABLE

See *The Book of the Shadowlands* for more on Ogres / Trolls.

1	.....	Cave Ogre
2	.....	Marsh Trolls
3	.....	Ogre and Troll Fighting
4	.....	Ogre Bushi with Followers
5	.....	Ogre Sitting on a Pile of Bones
6	.....	Ogre Warband
7	.....	Ogre with Tree Trunk
8	.....	Pile of Bones Lining the Entrance to a Cave
9	.....	Sea Trolls
10	.....	Troll Hunter

### ONI TABLE

See *The Book of the Shadowlands* for more on Oni.

1	.....	Kyoso no Oni
2	.....	Oni no Akuma
3	.....	Oni no Ashi
4	.....	Oni no Byoki
5	.....	Oni no Kamu
6	.....	Oni no Kiri
7	.....	Oni no Manesuru
8	.....	Oni no Shikibu
9	.....	Oni no Tsuburu
10	.....	Oni no Ugulu

### ZOMBIE / SKELETON TABLE

See *The Book of the Shadowlands* for more on Undead.

1	.....	Plague Zombies
2	.....	Porcelain Masks on Ground
3	.....	Rotting Headless Bodies
4	.....	Skeletal Archers
5	.....	Skeletal Carcass Pushing Up Through the Earth
6	.....	Skeletal Troops
7	.....	Zombie Troops
8	.....	Zombie Troops in Armor (Clan)
9	.....	Zombie with No Legs (still moving)
10	.....	Zombies Controlled by a Necromancer

### SHADOWLANDS SPECIAL TABLE

Some of these encounters can be translated to the whole of Rokugan, not just the Shadowlands.

1	.....	Baku
2	.....	Gaki
3	.....	Garagosu no Bakemono
4	.....	Goryo
5	.....	Kumo
6	.....	Oni no Doro
7	.....	Oni no Gekido
8	.....	Oni no Byoki
9	.....	Ubume
10	.....	Undead Crab Berserker / Hiruma Scout

### HININ TABLE

An encounter with Hinin should be subtle; any hinin encountered on a road will step off so that samurai may pass. In a village or hamlet the hinin will avoid the samurai, and in cities they will blend in with the surroundings. Hinin spend their lives learning to avoid the gaze of a samurai and a samurai only notices them when she wants to.

- 1 .....Acrobats
- 2 .....Actors
- 3 .....Butcher
- 4 .....Dance Troupe
- 5 .....Gambler
- 6 .....Geisha
- 7 .....Leather worker
- 8 .....Magician
- 9 .....Mortician
- 10 .....Trickster

### LESSER NOBLES TABLE

- 1 .....Ambassador
- 2 .....Courtier
- 3 .....Daimyo's *Karo* or *Hatamoto*
- 4 .....*Gokenin*
- 5 .....Governor
- 6 .....Imperial Family Member
- 7 .....Imperial Magistrate
- 8 .....Local Daimyo and All Her Attendants
- 9 .....Low Ranking Military Officer
- 10 .....Retired, High-Ranking Samurai

### RONIN TABLE

- 1 .....A Familiar Ronin -  
Someone went to school with her
- 2 .....A Old Ronin and a Crane -  
"I need help to Protect a Village. I cannot pay"
- 3 .....A Small Hamlet -  
Ronin Gather Looking for Work
- 4 .....An Honorable Ronin
- 5 .....Arrows From the Woods - Ronin Archers
- 6 .....Ronin Escorting a Heimin
- 7 .....Ronin Trying to Read a Sign
- 8 .....Samurai Disguised as a Ronin -  
Pulls Out the Emerald Seal and tells the PCs  
to "Come with me."
- 9 .....Seven Samurai
- 10 .....Weaponless Ronin -  
They've Been Robbed (see Bandit Table)

### MAGISTRATE TABLE

(7 in 10 Magistrates should be from the local family / clan)  
Magistrates spend a great deal of their time on patrol. Not every magistrate is amid an investigation; GMs should find more creative tasks for a magistrate to be doing. Remember, magistrates wield great power and are not afraid to remind anyone that they are in the lands of a great daimyo lord.

- 1 ...Clan Magistrate
- 2 ...Imperial Magistrate
- 3 ...Imperial Magistrate and Kuni
- 4 ...Imperial Magistrate and Mantis Assistant(s)
- 5 ...Kitsuki Magistrate and Eta Assistant
- 6 ...Magistrate Investigation
- 7 ...Magistrate Interviewing Peasants
- 8 ...Magistrate with Prisoners
- 9 ...Rank 4 Imperial Magistrate and Three Yoriki
- 10 ...Wasp Bounty Hunter

### MERCHANT TABLE

- 1 ..Lone Merchant Carrying Goods on her Back
- 2 ..Lone Merchant Pulling a Small Cart
- 3 ..Merchant and Attendants
- 4 ..Merchant Exhausted From Exposure to the Elements
- 5 ..Merchant Tied to a Tree
- 6 ..Merchants Carrying Only One Type of Good
- 7 ..Merchants Trying to Sell Something Fake
- 8 ..Merchants With Nothing to Sell (pockets full of koku)
- 9 ..Stuttering Merchant
- 10 ..Two Groups of Merchants Arguing

### CRAFTSMAN TABLE

The *shokunin* class of peasant is known for making crafts for the purposes of sustenance. A peasant who sells quality wares should be known for her skill, and word of the peasant's worth will quickly spread. There are over 1000 varieties of lacquer ware, porcelain, tile-making, etc. Below is a list of the most common craftsman types in Rokugan.

- 1 .....Box Maker
- 2 .....Doll Maker
- 3 .....Glass blower (Crab and Unicorn)
- 4 .....Metalsmith
- 5 .....Potter
- 6 .....Rope Maker
- 7 .....Stonemason
- 8 .....Tile Maker
- 9 .....Weaver
- 10 .....Wicker maker

## CONDITION OF THE NPC ENCOUNTERED

NPCs do not live in vacuums. They do not stand around waiting for the PCs to walk by and visit them. They have lives that involve highs and lows, ups and downs. Often, GMs may wish to determine what an NPC is doing. A farmer on fire or burying a body should be explained with a story, which is half of the fun of this chart.

GMs who roll on this chart can assume the NPC encountered is alive, awake, and walking; anything else is an embellishment of the obvious static features of an encounter.

2 Dice	Condition
01-04	.. Angry or Happy
05-06	... Bathing
07-08	... Being Entertained
09-12	.. Belligerent/Crazed
13	..... Bound and Gagged
14-16	... Buying Something
17-19	... Confused
20-21	.. Conversing/Negotiating with Someone
22-23	... Crying or Laughing
24	..... Dead
25	..... Destroying Something
26	..... Dirty
27-28	... Drunk
29-31	.. Eating
32-33	... Embarrassed
34-38	.. Engaged in a Craft or Art
39-41	.. Fatigued
42-43	... Fishing
44-46	.. Frustrated
47	..... Hiding or Burying Something *
48-49	.. In a Fight/Dueling
50	..... Lost
51-53	... Mad/Deranged
54-56	.. Meditating/Praying
57-58	... Nervous
59-61	.. On a Quest/Hunt
62-63	... Overly Polite or Insulting
64-65	.. Panicked
66-67	... Playing a Game ***
68	..... Questioning Someone
69-72	... Relaxing ***
73-74	... Riding a Horse
75	..... Robbed/Ambushed
76	..... Running or Being Chased
77-78	... Scared/Paranoid
79-81	... Searching for Something *
82-83	... Shamed
84	..... Showing Mercy/Being Merciful
85-86	.. Sick/Ill

87	..... Singing
88-89	.. Sleeping/Resting/Unconscious
90-91	.. Surprised
92-93	... Tending to a Garden
94	..... Tutoring/Learning/Studying
95-97	... Working
98-99	.. Wounded/Bloodied
00	..... Roll Twice and Combine the Results * or someone

\*\*\* Rokugani play Go, Shogi, and Winds and Fortunes (see *The Way of the Scorpion*). Children have a host of games and no list of prescribed activities could ever replace a child's imagination.

\*\*\* There are many things a Rokugani does to relax and GMs should come up with a fitting recreation for the NPC dependent on caste, personality, and duty. Some things to consider are whittling wood, light banter between neighbors, kite-flying, etc.

## SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS TABLE

These encounters are considered rare by Rokugani standards, and are thus on a separate chart. GMs should feel free to ignore or modify these to fit their adventure or setting; most of them require a great bit of work to make sense. Remember that these can seriously derail your plot, so use them sparingly and solve them quickly, if necessary.

01-06	.. A Cremation
07-11	.. A Famous or Important NPC †
12-18	.. A Ronin Carrying a Familiar Blade
19-22	.. A Shadowlands Encounter in the Heart of Rokugan
23-30	.. A Small Enemy Scouting Party
31-37	.. Armored Enemy Patrol (20+ Bushi)
38-45	.. Bandits Raiding a Merchant
46-47	.. Blind Beggar
48-52	.. Broken Arrows
53-54	.. Disemboweled Corpses
55-57	.. Disgraced Samurai Turned Eta
58-61	.. Domestic Animal Roaming Free
62-65	.. Dogs/Wolves Eating a Dead Body
66-67	.. Empty House
68-71	.. Eta Robbing a Dead Body
72-74	.. Ghost Haunting
75-77	.. Heimin Detaining a Drunken Samurai
78-80	.. Lost Child (perhaps an Oni no Pekkles)
81-83	.. Merchant Selling "Magic" Scrolls
84-86	.. Non-Unicorn on Unicorn Horses
87-89	.. Omen or Prophecy †
90-91	.. Public Execution
92-93	.. Refugees
94-96	.. Samurai Praying at a Shrine
97	... Shugenja Duel
98-00	.. Wedding Procession

# Merchant's Caravan

The following is a list of items that a merchant might carry. A caravan could have many items on this list (11-20), while an individual merchant might carry only a few (1-5). Some of these items might not be appropriate in certain areas of the country, or within the lands of certain clans. Bear in mind your setting and location.

- |       |   |       |  |
|-------|---|-------|--|
| 1-2   | Alcohol (sake, shochu, brandy)          | 48    | Heretical scrolls                          |
| 3     | Amulets and talismans                   | 49    | Incense and Incense Burners                |
| 4     | Aphrodisiac                             | 50    | Ink in ceramic vials                       |
| 5     | Armor                                   | 51    | Jade                                       |
| 6     | Bales of Silk                           | 52    | Jewelry                                    |
| 7     | Banners                                 | 53    | Jeweler's Tools                            |
| 8     | Barding                                 | 54    | Kabuki Masks                               |
| 9     | Bedroll                                 | 55    | Kimono and clothing                        |
| 10    | Blacksmith Tools                        | 56    | Kite                                       |
| 11    | Blank scrolls                           | 57    | Kumo gum                                   |
| 12-13 | Bolts of cloth                          | 58    | Lacquer ware                               |
| 14    | Bonsai trees                            | 59    | Lanterns and oil                           |
| 15-16 | Bottles, empty                          | 60    | Literature, pillow books, and haiku        |
| 17    | Bows and Arrows                         | 61    | Lumber, finished or otherwise              |
| 18    | Brushes                                 | 62-63 | Mirror                                     |
| 19    | Buckets                                 | 64    | Musical Instruments (of all kinds)         |
| 20-21 | Canvas                                  | 65    | Paints, dyes, or glazes                    |
| 22    | Ceramics                                | 66    | Paper                                      |
| 23    | Chop set                                | 67    | Perfume                                    |
| 24    | Clothing                                | 68    | Pillow books                               |
| 25    | Cookware                                | 69    | Poison                                     |
| 26    | Cut flowers, dried or fresh             | 70    | Raw cotton                                 |
| 27    | Decorative pottery                      | 71    | River stones for gardens and other baubles |
| 28    | Diamonds                                | 72    | Rope                                       |
| 29    | Dice (winds and fortunes)               | 73    | Sack                                       |
| 30-31 | Dried Fish                              | 74    | Sake and sake set                          |
| 32    | Eggs                                    | 75    | Saya                                       |
| 33    | Fan                                     | 76    | Scholarly works                            |
| 34    | Farming tools                           | 77    | Seeds for planting                         |
| 35    | Finished statuary                       | 78    | Sheet music                                |
| 36    | Fireworks                               | 79    | Silk thread on spools                      |
| 37    | Food (see the <i>Book of Earth</i> )    | 80    | Songbirds in wicker cages                  |
| 38    | Forged papers                           | 81-82 | Spices                                     |
| 39    | Games                                   | 83    | Statues                                    |
| 40    | Gardening tools                         | 84    | Stone suitable for carving                 |
| 41    | Gifts †                                 | 85    | Strongboxes                                |
| 42    | Glass-quality sand                      | 86    | Tea  |
| 43    | Goat's milk (Unicorn lands only)        | 87    | Tea ceremony set                           |
| 44    | Gold, silver, or some other ore         | 88    | Tent                                       |
| 45    | "Good fortune" crickets in wicker cages | 89    | Tao of Shinsei (copies of)                 |
| 46    | Grain, saddles, and grooming Tools      | 90    | Tools                                      |
| 47    | Herbs                                   | 91    | Urns                                       |
|       |   | 92    | Unfinished gem stones                      |
|       |   | 93    | Uniforms                                   |
|       |   | 94    | Unrecorded koku or other valuables         |
|       |   | 95    | Unrefined metal                            |
|       |   | 96    | Water                                      |
|       |   | 97    | Weapons                                    |
|       |   | 98    | Wicker baskets                             |
|       |   | 99    | Wood carvings                              |
|       |   | 100   | Writing implements                         |



# Who's in that Inn?

Sometimes it is important to roll up a few NPCs quickly. Below you will find a list of names, positions, Glory, and Honor. For non-samurai, use Honor and Glory as a guide for how well-known and well-behaved they are.

## Roll for Glory: 2 Dice

2	.....	Glory 6
3-4	.....	Glory 5
5-6	.....	Glory 3
7-9	.....	Glory 0
10-13	.....	Glory 1
14-17	.....	Glory 2
18-20	.....	Glory 4

## Roll for Honor: 2 Dice

2	.....	Honor 4
3-4	.....	Honor 5
5-8	.....	Honor 1
9-10	.....	Honor 1.5
11-13	.....	Honor 2
14-16	.....	Honor 2.5
17-18	.....	Honor 3
19-20	.....	Honor 3.5

This chart allows the GM to create the characters that break the stereotype. You may want to just choose the Honor after you've seen the family. After all, with this chart a Bayushi has as much chance to be honorable as a Crane. You may wish to add or subtract 1 point of Honor for characters that are exemplary or typical of their clan.

Where are the samurai with Honor Ranks of 0, 4.5, and 5? PCs should not encounter these randomly, but rather when you have a plan. Feel free to make such special circumstances occur. If you are rolling up an encounter for anything other than a member of the samurai caste, this chart can be used to determine what area of Rokugan an NPC may hail from.

## Roll for Family Name: 2 Dice

2	.....	Imperial Family
1-4	.....	Miya
5-7	.....	Otomo
8-10	.....	Seppun
3-7	.....	Crane Clan
1-2	.....	Asahina
3-4	.....	Daidoji
5-7	.....	Doji
8-10	.....	Kakita

8-9	....	Crab Clan
1-3	....	Hida
4	....	Hiruma
5	....	Kaiu
6-7	....	Kuni
8-10	....	Yasuki
10	....	Dragon Clan
1-2	....	Agasha
3-5	....	Kitsuki
6-9	....	Mirumoto
10	....	Togashi
11-12	....	Lion Clan
1-3	....	Akodo
4-5	....	Ikoma
6	....	Kitsu
7-10	....	Matsu
13	....	Phoenix
1-2	....	Asako
3-7	....	Isawa
8-10	....	Shiba
14-15	....	Scorpion
1-4	....	Bayushi
5	....	Shosuro

Roll again; on a 1-4 they are in disguise (roll again to determine which clan they are posing as).

6	....	Shosuro
7-8	....	Soshi
9-10	....	Yogo
16-17	....	Unicorn
1-2	....	Ide
3-4	....	Iuchi
5	....	Moto
6-7	....	Otaku
8-10	....	Shinjo
18	....	Ronin
1-3	....	True Ronin
4-10	....	Clan Ronin

Roll again to determine family affiliation; re-roll duplications

19-20	....	Minor Clans
2-4	....	Badger - Ichiro
5	....	Centipede - Moshi
6-7	....	Dragonfly - Tonbo
8	....	Falcon
9-10	....	Fox - Kitsune
11	....	Hare - Usagi
12-14	....	Mantis *
15	....	Sparrow - Suzume
16	....	Tortoise *
17-20	....	Wasp *

\* These clans do not currently have a true family name.

## GIVEN NAMES

The following is a list of 300 common Rokugani names. In order to acquire a random name, first choose list I, II or III, then roll D100.

### I. .1 - 100

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1 . . Agotsu    | 45 . . Godaro    |
| 2 . . Ajo       | 46 . . Gohani    |
| 3 . . Akahito   | 47 . . Gohiro    |
| 4 . . Akiie     | 48 . . Goshiko   |
| 5 . . Akinobu   | 49 . . Guhimi    |
| 6 . . Akira     | 50 . . Gukochi   |
| 7 . . Akiuji    | 51 . . Guro      |
| 8 . . Ameiko    | 52 . . Hachero   |
| 9 . . Amoro     | 53 . . Hajioki   |
| 10 . . Anoso    | 54 . . Hamanari  |
| 11 . . Baisetsu | 55 . . Hari      |
| 12 . . Banasu   | 56 . . Hasaku    |
| 13 . . Bikomi   | 57 . . Hikaru    |
| 14 . . Bokaru   | 58 . . Hiro      |
| 15 . . Bokeru   | 59 . . Hiroji    |
| 16 . . Chikiri  | 60 . . Hisemasa  |
| 17 . . Chiroku  | 61 . . Hitoshi   |
| 18 . . Chisora  | 62 . . Hiyorimi  |
| 19 . . Choei    | 63 . . Hochiu    |
| 20 . . Chomei   | 64 . . Hodashari |
| 21 . . Chuemoko | 65 . . Hoitame   |
| 22 . . Chunigo  | 66 . . Hoitsu    |
| 23 . . Dajan    | 67 . . Hojize    |
| 24 . . Dojiro   | 68 . . Hokii     |
| 25 . . Doro     | 69 . . Horiki    |
| 26 . . Dosemi   | 70 . . Hoshu     |
| 27 . . Dozan    | 71 . . Hotaki    |
| 28 . . Egumi    | 72 . . Ichido    |
| 29 . . Eju      | 73 . . Ichinore  |
| 30 . . Ekiken   | 74 . . Ichiro    |
| 31 . . Emiko    | 75 . . Ieku      |
| 32 . . Emishi   | 76 . . Ietsugu   |
| 33 . . Eto      | 77 . . Iezane    |
| 34 . . Foruku   | 78 . . Igemi     |
| 35 . . Fuhito   | 79 . . Ijime     |
| 36 . . Fukuji   | 80 . . Ikato     |
| 37 . . Fumoki   | 81 . . Ikesu     |
| 38 . . Furashi  | 82 . . Ikumu     |
| 39 . . Furuyari | 83 . . Imoko     |
| 40 . . Fuyari   | 84 . . Imura     |
| 41 . . Gaijutsu | 85 . . Iname     |
| 42 . . Gamaro   | 86 . . Inichi    |
| 43 . . Gehiko   | 87 . . Ino       |
| 44 . . Gemunu   | 88 . . Iruko     |
|                 | 89 . . Ishio     |

- |                |
|----------------|
| 90 . . Isuto   |
| 91 . . Itagi   |
| 92 . . Itaru   |
| 93 . . Itosema |
| 94 . . Izuko   |
| 95 . . Jijado  |
| 96 . . Jingoro |
| 97 . . Jitae   |
| 98 . . Jubei   |
| 99 . . Jumen   |
| 00 . . Jushubu |

### II. .1 - 100

- |                   |
|-------------------|
| 1 . . . Kageki    |
| 2 . . . Kagetoki  |
| 3 . . . Kaigen    |
| 4 . . . Kaiki     |
| 5 . . . Kanamichi |
| 6 . . . Kanamura  |
| 7 . . . Karoki    |
| 8 . . . Katsako   |
| 9 . . . Katsumi   |
| 10 . . . Keisai   |
| 11 . . . Kenro    |
| 12 . . . Ketedore |
| 13 . . . Koishi   |
| 14 . . . Kokini   |
| 15 . . . Kokori   |
| 16 . . . Koso     |
| 17 . . . Kotego   |
| 18 . . . Kunochi  |
| 19 . . . Kyo      |
| 20 . . . Masaru   |
| 21 . . . Masero   |
| 22 . . . Masori   |
| 23 . . . Masote   |
| 24 . . . Masekeri |
| 25 . . . Mei      |
| 26 . . . Mekumu   |
| 27 . . . Mifune   |
| 28 . . . Miho     |
| 29 . . . Mochiko  |
| 30 . . . Mukami   |
| 31 . . . Murai    |
| 32 . . . Muyoku   |
| 33 . . . Nabureko |
| 34 . . . Nagate   |
| 35 . . . Nakano   |
| 36 . . . Nakanu   |
| 37 . . . Nakiro   |
| 38 . . . Nakuso   |
| 39 . . . Namako   |

- |                  |
|------------------|
| 40 . . Naname    |
| 41 . . Naru      |
| 42 . . Nashumi   |
| 43 . . Natsui    |
| 44 . . Nazoko    |
| 45 . . Nio       |
| 46 . . Nishi     |
| 47 . . Nishiko   |
| 48 . . Nobane    |
| 49 . . Noburo    |
| 50 . . Norimi    |
| 51 . . Noyomi    |
| 52 . . Nubu      |
| 53 . . Nunori    |
| 54 . . Ogami     |
| 55 . . Ogoe      |
| 56 . . Oiwa      |
| 57 . . Onegano   |
| 58 . . Onseku    |
| 59 . . Onuri     |
| 60 . . Otago     |
| 61 . . Otaki     |
| 62 . . Otonuri   |
| 63 . . Oyumi     |
| 64 . . Rayoku    |
| 65 . . Renshi    |
| 66 . . Rigori    |
| 67 . . Rikiso    |
| 68 . . Rumaru    |
| 69 . . Ryogo     |
| 70 . . Ryoj      |
| 71 . . Ryuku     |
| 72 . . Sada      |
| 73 . . Sadako    |
| 74 . . Samasu    |
| 75 . . Saneyuki  |
| 76 . . Sanuro    |
| 77 . . Saru      |
| 78 . . Sekigako  |
| 79 . . Shigenari |
| 80 . . Shikei    |
| 81 . . Shiko     |
| 82 . . Shogo     |
| 83 . . Shotai    |
| 84 . . Shujukuri |
| 85 . . Sinoku    |
| 86 . . Sogumi    |
| 87 . . Sojuni    |
| 88 . . Suke      |
| 89 . . Sukeme    |
| 90 . . Suko      |
| 91 . . Sukumi    |

- |                  |
|------------------|
| 92 . . Suruga    |
| 93 . . Tabachi   |
| 94 . . Tadaaki   |
| 95 . . Tadaji    |
| 96 . . Tadamako  |
| 97 . . Tadashiro |
| 98 . . Tadoshi   |
| 99 . . Taehime   |
| 00 . . Roll on I |

### III. 1 - 100

- |                    |
|--------------------|
| 1 . . . Taeruko    |
| 2 . . . Tage       |
| 3 . . . Tagehiro   |
| 4 . . . Taika      |
| 5 . . . Takaai     |
| 6 . . . Taki       |
| 7 . . . Takige     |
| 8 . . . Taku       |
| 9 . . . Takuni     |
| 10 . . . Tamekago  |
| 11 . . . Tanari    |
| 12 . . . Tanoshiko |
| 13 . . . Tegochi   |
| 14 . . . Teju      |
| 15 . . . Tenkazu   |
| 16 . . . Teruzumi  |
| 17 . . . Tesaguri  |
| 18 . . . Todoshi   |
| 19 . . . Tokiuji   |
| 20 . . . Tokonichu |
| 21 . . . Tomaru    |
| 22 . . . Torasu    |
| 23 . . . Toshimi   |
| 24 . . . Toshiro   |
| 25 . . . Tsamaru   |
| 26 . . . Tsubeko   |
| 27 . . . Tsuge     |
| 28 . . . Tsukuro   |
| 29 . . . Tsumatsu  |
| 30 . . . Tsune     |
| 31 . . . Tsuri     |
| 32 . . . Tsuyumi   |
| 33 . . . Ubi       |
| 34 . . . Uchinaro  |
| 35 . . . Ugoku     |
| 36 . . . Ujikiko   |
| 37 . . . Ujira     |
| 38 . . . Ujiasu    |
| 39 . . . Ujiori    |
| 40 . . . Ukemi     |
| 41 . . . Ukote     |

- |                  |
|------------------|
| 42 . . Umako     |
| 43 . . Unanoki   |
| 44 . . Uniko     |
| 45 . . Uniri     |
| 46 . . Unukosa   |
| 47 . . Unurago   |
| 48 . . Uruku     |
| 49 . . Wachigai  |
| 50 . . Warate    |
| 51 . . Watoshu   |
| 52 . . Yabu      |
| 53 . . Yahatsu   |
| 54 . . Yama      |
| 55 . . Yamu      |
| 56 . . Yashiko   |
| 57 . . Yasoma    |
| 58 . . Yasuchi   |
| 59 . . Yasuko    |
| 60 . . Yasumoto  |
| 61 . . Yasushige |
| 62 . . Yasuyo    |
| 63 . . Yoriashi  |
| 64 . . Yoruga    |
| 65 . . Yoshiike  |
| 66 . . Yoshije   |
| 67 . . Yoshinori |
| 68 . . Yoshio    |
| 69 . . Yoshioki  |
| 70 . . Yoshioko  |
| 71 . . Yoshiomi  |
| 72 . . Yoshishoe |
| 73 . . Yoshisuke |
| 74 . . Yoshiyaru |
| 75 . . Yoshiyasu |
| 76 . . Yoshizuni |
| 77 . . Yotogi    |
| 78 . . Yugoki    |
| 79 . . Yuhija    |
| 80 . . Yukiako   |
| 81 . . Yukihira  |
| 82 . . Yukimori  |
| 83 . . Yukimura  |
| 84 . . Yukinaga  |
| 85 . . Yukiyasu  |
| 86 . . Yukiyori  |
| 87 . . Yumashi   |
| 88 . . Yunaki    |
| 89 . . Zanao     |
| 90 . . Zurugu    |
| 91-95 Roll on I  |
| 96-00 Roll on II |

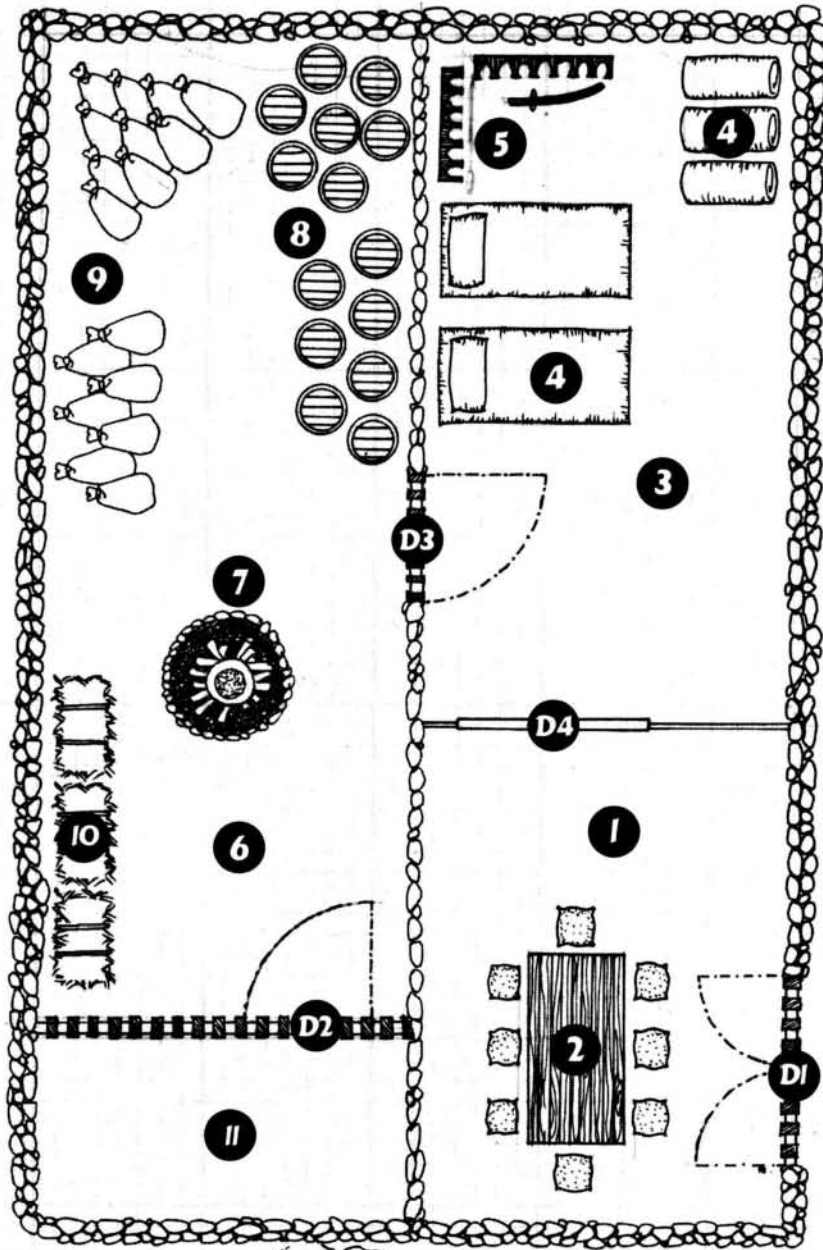
# Gifts

In the following examples, it is assumed that a daimyo gives the gift to a samurai for loyal service to the family and clan. In situations where this is not the case, simply change the term "daimyo" to whatever you choose. As always, the names of families and clans is open to change and should be made to reflect the tone of your campaign. In many cases, the names of families were chosen to reflect those of less skill with the craft in question; the GM should feel free to customize it (e.g. the Shinjo carpenters are obviously nowhere near as skilled as Kakita or Kaiu, but the idea is quaint in its subtlety and subtext; GMs should change it to Asako or Agasha if they see fit).

Be aware that Rokugani do not view gifts the way westerners do. Every act of generosity is observed with equal care and respect. The following gifts are considered fine for the sake of being descriptive, but may be toned down to fit the situation. Again, GMs should customize names, materials, compositions, and construction to fit their own environments.

- 1 . . . . . A healthy and beautiful bonsai tree.
- 2 . . . . . A green ceramic vase painted with the kanji of leadership on one facing side. It should be displayed in a "place of honor" in the PC's estate.
- 3 . . . . . A tall screen or tapestry has been painted with a Unicorn jumping over a roaring tsunami. Kanji have been drawn at the bottom telling a simple haiku of discovery and meditation.
- 4 . . . . . The Personal seal of the daimyo. It allows the PC to pass through most of the lands without question.
- 5 . . . . . A haiku written by a great poet. It details the glory of Jurojin and the long health he provides.
- 6 . . . . . Origami figures folded by a renowned artisan of the Kakita family in the figure of a tortoise, unicorn, etc.
- 7 . . . . . Chop or wax stamp with family or clan mon. The handle is made of bamboo, perfectly cut and painted with a simple kanji expressing "joy". The stamp has been cut from a pine tree high in the Dragon Mountains and sealed with steam from a hot spring in the Phoenix lands.
- 8 . . . . . The PC's daimyo offers the services of a skilled artisan or smith. It is expected that the servant will be well treated and will be returned in an appropriate amount of time.
- 9 . . . . . Go or shogi board with finely crafted pieces - alabaster, mahogany, pearl, silver, and in rare situations, jade or crystal.
- 10 . . . . A fine tessens. The family mon is proudly displayed against a gilded field when the tessens is open.
- 11 . . . . Ornamental chopsticks made of ceramic or a wood that does not splinter easily.
- 12 . . . . A porcelain or fine ceramic tea set. The cups and kettle have been adorned with the image of a *Torii* shrine painted in a few simple colors.
- 13 . . . . An ornate lantern made of paper dyed red and painted with a *kobune* sailing against the horizon.
- 14 . . . . A carefully crafted incense burner made of cedar, with carvings of a simple dragon or fish and tiny kanji meaning "fortune, luck, and hope" along the base. A stick of rosemary incense has been set into the holder begging to be lit while the PC's daimyo visits.
- 15 . . . . Kanji have been drawn out on a very tall hanging scroll prepared by a master calligrapher. They tell of the heroism of the PC. It is intended for a "place of honor" in her estate.
- 16 . . . . Travelling papers to one or several realms, good for a season, or even several years.
- 17 . . . . A lock of hair from the PC's enemy is delivered by a peasant messenger. It is in a simple wooden box, and the lock is bound with two ribbons in the colors of the clan. The hair inside is wrapped in rice paper.
- 18 . . . . A crystal decanter made by a glass blower from the Burning Sands. It is exotic, though crafted by a clumsy hand when set aside the precise talents of Rokugani artisans. It is, however, unique, and when placed in the right room of the PC's home, it gives off a strange azure hue.
- 19 . . . . A *biwa* is delivered to the PC's home by a Geisha or trained musician. She plays the biwa for an hour or so for the PC, and shows the wide range of melodies that the carefully-treated wood and strings produce. Afterward, the biwa is left in the care of the PC with a short scroll detailing a particularly beautiful and popular piece of music. GMs may find it amusing for the daimyo to visit in a month, expecting a performance from the PC.
- 20 . . . . An Imperial family member is invited to the PC's home, and vice-versa.
- 21 . . . . The daimyo offers his own personal and very precious pet cat to the PC. The cat is all white, and was a gift from the Imperial family (either to him, or directly to the samurai). The PC will have to spend a lot of time with the cat, getting it used to its new surroundings. Otherwise, it will find the way back to its previous owner. Such an act would certainly be considered a refusal of the gift, and a dire insult.
- 22 . . . . A songbird (nightingale) in a fine cage.
- 23 . . . . An lacquer ware box, painted black with red veins, with a winter scene on top. A live cricket is inside the box. The gift is not wrapped, so that the cricket will not suffocate.
- 24 . . . . A fine haiku written by a family poet, about an important battle in which the PC was involved.

- Details of youth and frustration are prevalent. The gift is read aloud in court by the poet before offered to the PC.
25. A stone from a sacred mountain.
  26. A decorated or ornate wooden pillow.
  27. An audience with a lord of the PC's choosing.
  28. A thoughtless nick-knack that has little relevance.
  29. Fine green tea from the Dragon Mountains, a rare tea from the Burning Sands, or a handful of sorghum seeds.
  30. A scroll from *Walking the Way*, or a spell of the GM's own creation.
  31. A *koku* (memory book), in a nice lacquer box. The pages tell of a lost history, or arcane knowledge. The information could be about exploration beyond the borders of Rokugan, a lost minor clan, or a kami that has been banished.
  32. The daimyo restores the lost honor of the PC's father.
  33. A stack of parchments written in another language.
  34. A bottle of fine sake, shochu, or plum brandy. Perhaps a Yasuki merchant has procured an exotic alcohol...
  35. A very large responsibility is offered to the samurai. Guarding an important tower, escorting an ambassador, become a *karo* or *hatamoto*, or any other task beyond the talents of the samurai.
  36. A haiku written by a great poet and transcribed in gold ink by a great calligrapher.
  37. A piece of jade – either for a Shadowlands trip or one that has survived the trip.
  38. Decorative candles carved by an artisan in elaborate designs fitting the season.
  39. A fine set of clothes.
  40. The giver grants a favor to the PC. This is a grand gift and should not be squandered.
  41. A banner or war fan for leading one's own army.
  42. Mirror (and make-up set for a courtesan) in an elaborate wooden or lacquer case.
  43. A performance by actors, dance troupes, etc. at the samurai's home.
  44. A skilled artisan to serve in the PCs court or home.
  45. A copy of Akodo's *Tactics*, Bayushi's *Lies*, etc.
  46. An elite yojimbo is provided to the PC to be her champion.
  47. Invitation to the Emperor's Winter Court this year.
  48. A chime, mirror, incense, and candle. If this gift is for a shugenja, they have been blessed.
  49. Land. The PC gets the Gentry advantage or another village is added to her lands. An increase in glory and title is also appropriate.
  50. The PC is treated to hear a guarded family secret.
  51. A fine book of literature written some 300 or more years ago.
  - 52-58. A fine *tsuba* crafted in the shape of a crane.
  59. A scroll with a spell that cures a disease or curse. The scroll is consumed during the casting of the spell.
  60. A piece of a map that may or not lead to anything.
  61. A small tower of fortification is added to the PCs home, or one outside the stronghold that is no longer of use to the daimyo.
  62. A scrap torn from a banned or rare scroll.
  63. The PC is offered admission or a single visit to a specific school (chosen by the GM).
  64. An ancient fan... with a mysterious origin.
  - 65-70. A *karo* is assigned to the PC to aid them in their work. The assignment is permanent.
  71. The daimyo offers her the appointment of sensei.
  72. A complement of soldiers – ashigaru to medium infantry.
  - 73-75. A fine horse with tack and mon.
  - 76-80. An Ikoma Omoidasu visits the PC's home prepared to learn all that is necessary to tell the samurai's tale. The glory award should be reflective of the rules in *The Way of the Lion*.
  81. The blade that killed your father.
  - 82-83. A fine tea set painted with birds and flowers.
  - 84-85. A mempo – intimidating or glamorous.
  86. A helmet crest that has been hand crafted by a Kaiu.
  87. A blank pillow book for transcribing one's own diary.
  88. A trip to the wall as an observer or as a participant.
  89. A mastersmith's services are offered to the samurai for a short time. The samurai is expected to care for and house the smith, while she creates items for the PC.
  90. A well-connected spouse is offered to the samurai.
  91. An ornamental blade forged from a rare mineral.
  92. A blessing from a priest of the Clan.
  93. A feast in your honor is presented at the daimyo's home. Many members of the clan are invited and regaled with tales of your deeds. The evening should be spectacular and unforgettable.
  94. The services of a cartographer are offered for a short time, while the samurai explores an important region within the boundaries of the Clan's holdings.
  95. An elimination of a debt to an individual of importance.
  96. A finely crafted hourglass, made from mahogany or a rare wood not found in Rokugan.
  97. A parasol or umbrella with a flamboyant design, relative to the giver or receiver.
  98. An empty box made of a fine wood.
  99. An delicate jade figure strung on a fine silk cord. It is reputed to have mystical powers...
  100. A shrine built in your family's honor.

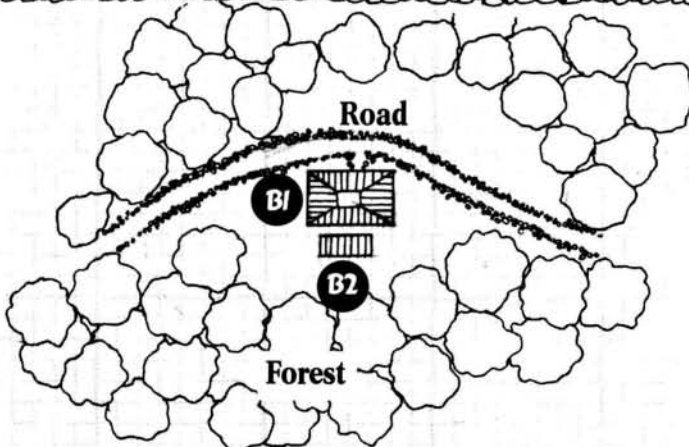


## Road house (INTERIOR)

1. Small gathering room
2. Eating table, sitting cushions
3. Sleeping room
4. Bed rolls
5. Weapon rack
6. Cooking and dry storage room
7. Fire pit
8. Barrels
9. Bags of rice
10. Bales of hay
4. Secondary storage room

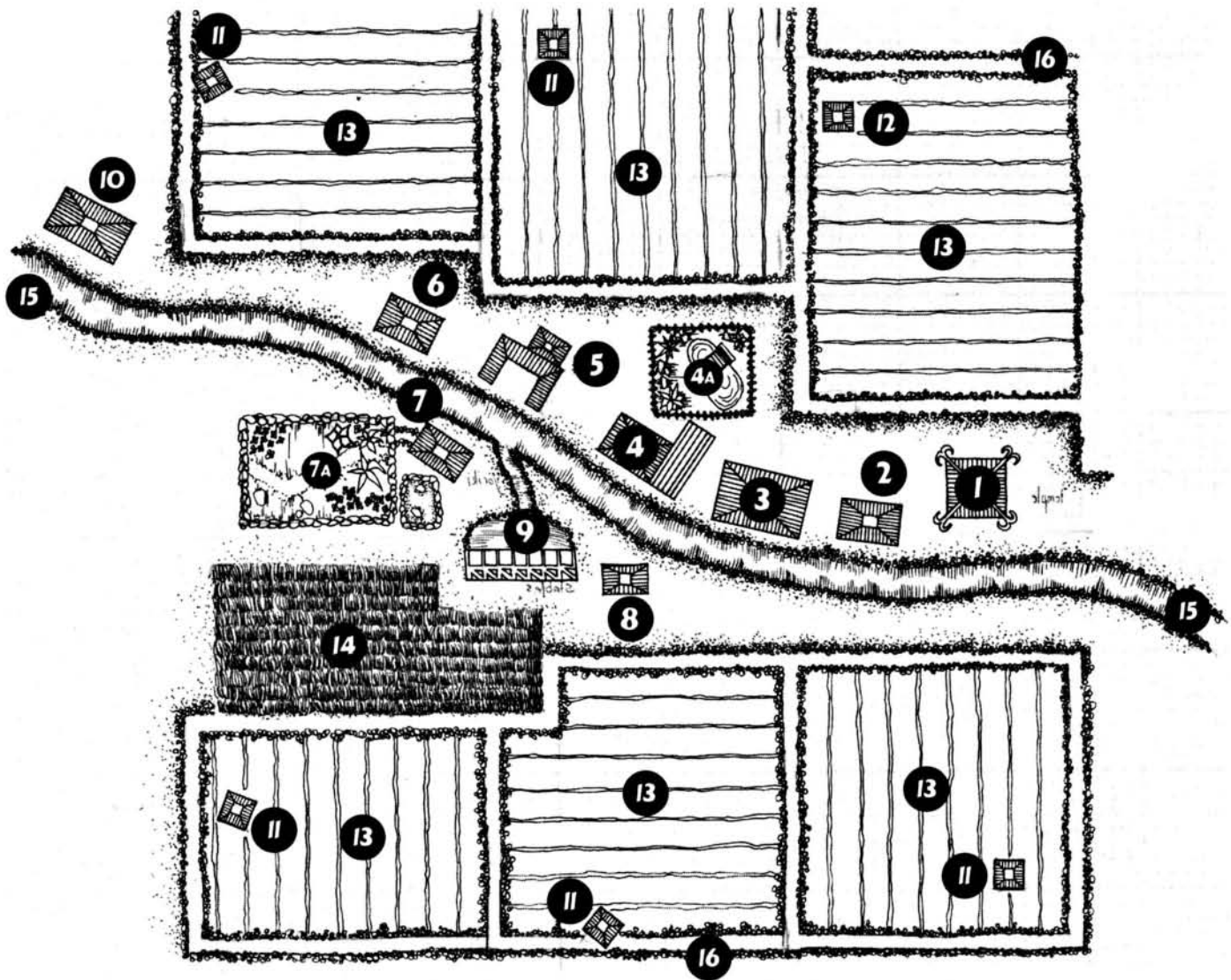
D1-3 Solid wood sliding doors  
D4 Shoji screen sliding door

# Legend<sup>TM</sup> of the Five Rings



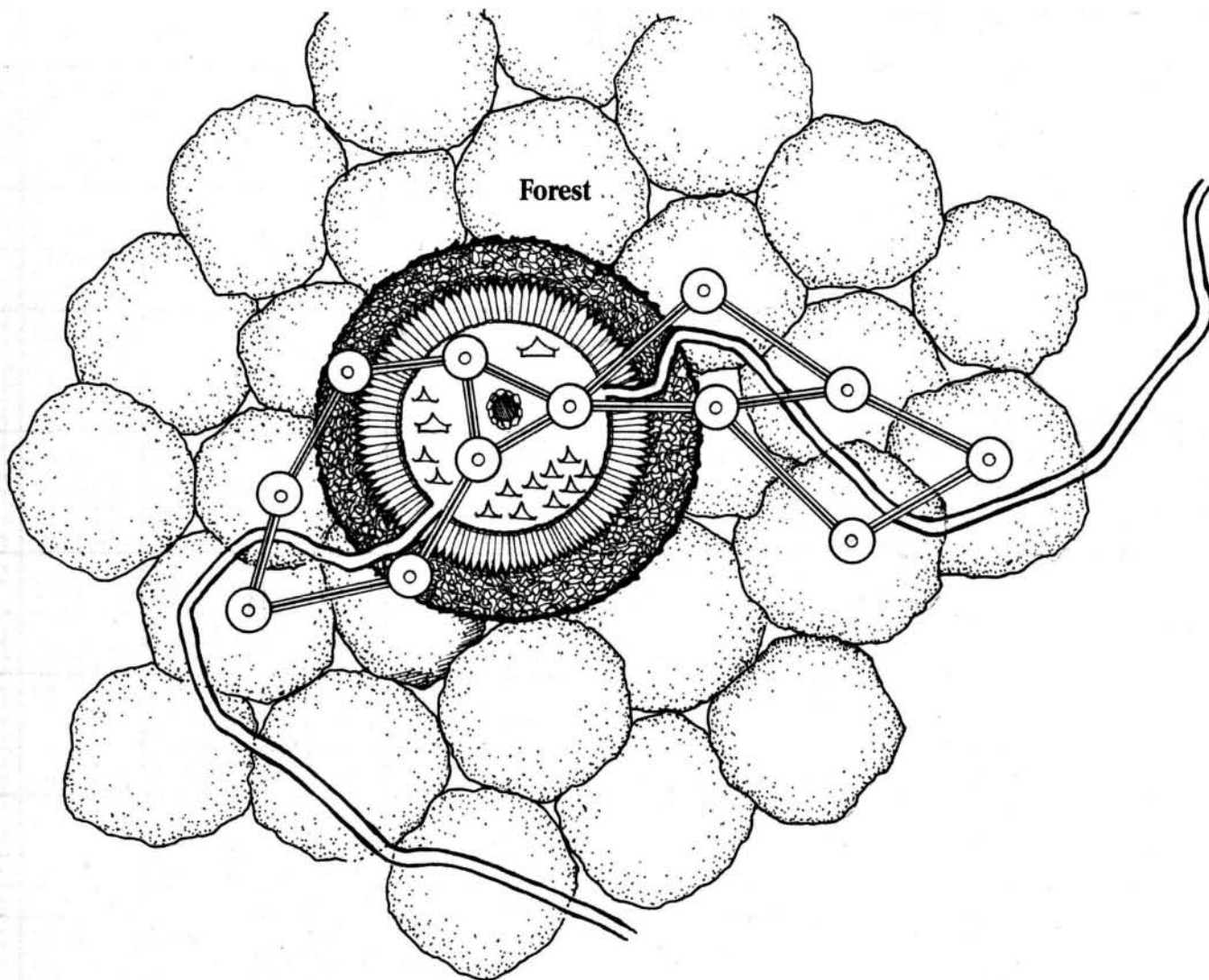
## Road house (EXTERIOR)

- B1 Road house main building  
B2 Outdoor bath chamber (Ofuro)



## Farming Village

- |                     |  |                           |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------|
| 1. Temple           | 6. Tea house                               | 11. Peasant hut           |
| 2. Sake house       | 7. Yoriki's house                          | 12. Headman's house       |
| 3. Craftsman house  | 7a. House Garden                           | 13. Rice patty            |
| 4. Inn              | 8. Stable master's house                   | 14. Wheat field           |
| 4a. Inn Garden      | 9. Stables                                 | 15. Major road            |
| 5. Merchant's house | 10. Road house ( <i>see previous map</i> ) | 16. Stone-lined footpaths |



## Bandit Hideout

-  Storage tent
-  Fire pit
-  2-man lookout post
-  Suspended rope walkway
-  Dragon teeth (pike barrier)
-  Bramble/Thicket
-  Hidden path
-  Tent

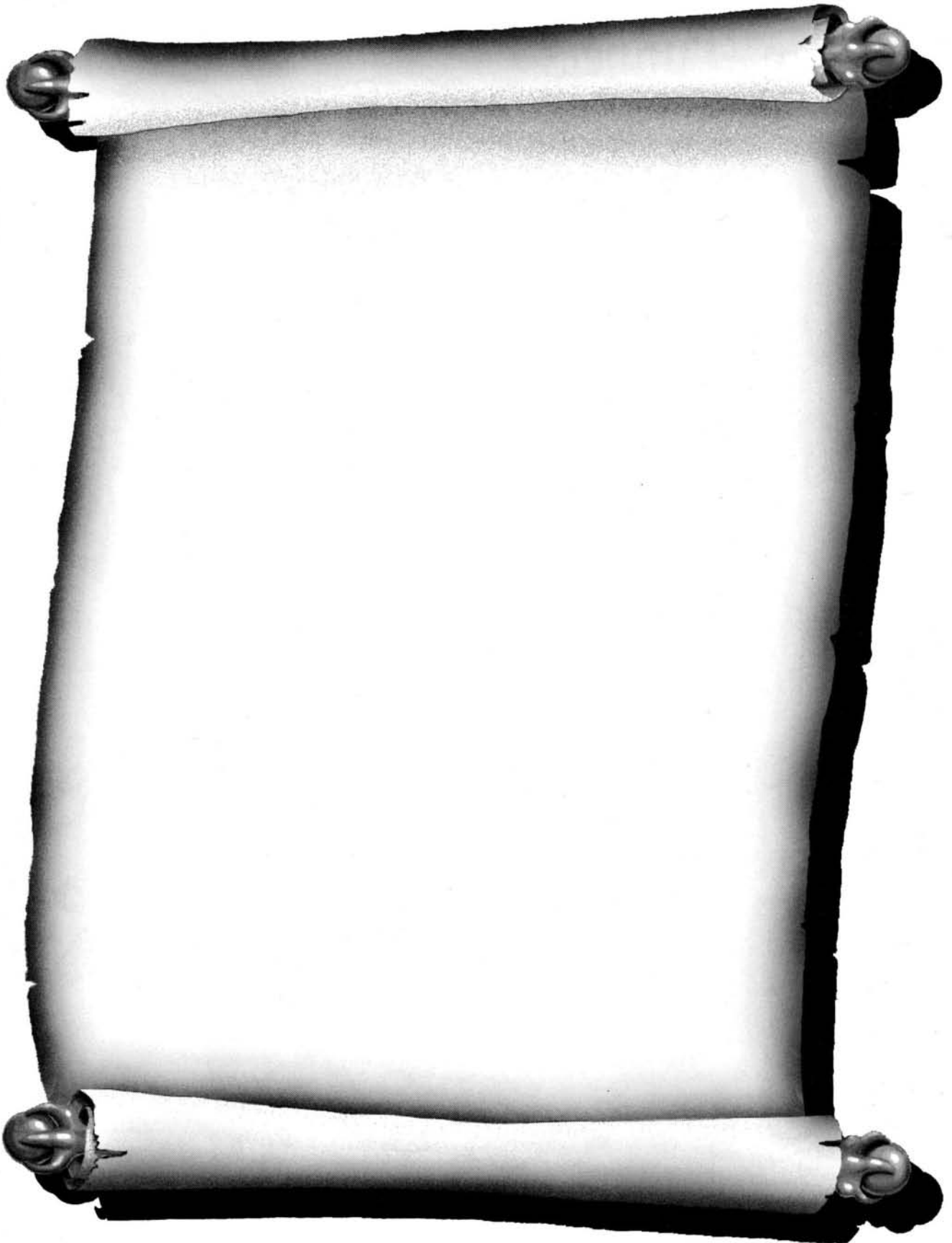
# Legend<sup>TM</sup> of the Five Rings

# Hidden Tunnels



1. Entrance tunnel
2. Main entrance chamber
3. Guard post
4. Descending tunnel
5. Refuse
6. Private chamber
7. Trapped room
8. Barracks
9. Bath chamber
10. Cold pool
11. Water supply
12. Dry storage
13. Escape tunnel





Copyright © 1999 Alderac Entertainment Group. Permission granted  
to photocopy for personal use only.



# G.M.'s<sup>TM</sup> Survival Guide

Honor. Glory. Loyalty. Steel.  
These are the only tools a samurai requires.  
But a true Master needs more...

Within the pages of this book, over 1001 tips, hints, answers, and options are available to help Gamemasters customize their campaigns in the Emerald Empire. Valuable advice and expansive charts organize everything from plot structure to village inhabitants, from creatures to crops. Flexible rules options assist with mechanics, and pages of useful information outline many details of culture, economics, and the ins and outs of samurai life.

- **Sample Plots:** A complete guide to creating detailed plotlines, handouts, and game scripts designed to encourage both roleplay and player interaction.
- **Expanded Section on Rokugani Culture:** Adventure hooks and campaign ideas, as well as expanded information on setting and society, provide Gamemasters with detailed and comprehensive information on the Emerald Empire.
- **Comprehensive Skills, Advantages, and Disadvantages Chart:** All the information you need to define a character is now collected and compiled in one location for ease of reference.
- **Using the CCG in the RPG:** Innovative ideas for fans of the L5R Collectable Card Game, providing for easy integration of personalities, locations, and other elements defined in the CCG.



7 29220 30015 7

**\$23.95 M.S.R.P.**



Alderac Entertainment Group