

ADVENTURES
ORIENTALS



 Legend of the
Five Rings™

SECRETS OF THE LION™



SECRETS OF THE LION™

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THE LION'S DEN

PART ONE

Three men crested the hills that divided the Crane and Lion lands, their horses trotting along comfortably in the bright light of late morning. The middle rider, in the trappings of a Miya herald, stopped short to look upon the plains stretching endlessly before them. The other two riders followed suit, and the three men basked in the view for several long moments before anyone broke the silence.

"Taneji-san," said the man in the middle, "tell me what you see."

The young Otomo on his left frowned as he looked over the plains. In the distance, a village could be seen. "I see the lands of the Lion Clan, Hatori-sama, specifically the Akodo provinces. The Akodo are renowned for their dedication to bushido and strict adherence to Imperial law, so despite our Imperial crests, we can expect our travel papers to be closely scrutinized. However, once they see that all is in order we shall be greeted with the greatest hospitality the Lion have to offer."

Miya Hatori nodded, expecting Taneji's clinical, slightly dismissive response. "And what of the Lion as a rule, Taneji?"

Otomo Taneji struggled with his words for a moment before answering. "They are a drab, uninteresting clan interested only in battles and warfare. They have precious little in the way of culture and no interest in politics. I find them boring."

Hatori turned to the man on his right. "And you, Sekkou?"

"I see a beautiful stretch of plains, my lord," the young shugenja responded. He was not yet twenty, and retained a childlike sense of wonder. "You can see the rolling of the grass in the winds. It is truly a magical place. How lucky we are to be here!"

"And what of the Lion, Sekkou?"

"I do not know, my lord," responded the ronin agreeably. "I have never met one, so I would be loath to judge them."

Taneji scowled at the ronin's words, but Hatori merely smiled inwardly. The two young men who served as his assistants were as different as night and day. In truth, that was their strength: each counseled him differently, allowing him to see both sides of any issue. As a historian and a diplomat, it was a great boon to have such counsel.

"You were once a student of the Lion, were you not, master?" Hatori had expected Sekkou's question. The young man's open and curious nature would have led him to inquire sooner or later, although Taneji deliberately avoided it. Even now Hatori could sense the Otomo's discomfort at the topic having been broached at all.

"A student and more, yes, Sekkou," he answered. "I studied for many years in the vast libraries of the Ikoma. I traveled the face of the Empire, to various libraries and courts, gathering information and lore wherever I could." His tale stopped for a moment as he grew silent, lost in memory.

"Did your duties to the Miya call you away from the Ikoma, my lord?" Sekkou's inquiry again betokened his innocent nature.

"You idiot!" scolded Taneji harshly. "Can you not see such questions are inappropriate? Cease your ignorant prattling!"

"No, no, Taneji," Hatori admonished. "Sekkou's question is valid, and if we are to travel these lands together," the older man said as he gestured toward the plains stretching before them, "then you deserve to know the truth." Hatori drew himself up in his saddle, squaring his shoulders in anticipation of the unpleasant tale. "I learned that I was being used by someone within the Ikoma. I still do not know who, but this individual or group abused my trust and sent me across the Empire to gather information that was unavailable to them. After all, who would refuse a member of the Miya family?"

Both of Hatori's companions could tell this was an unpleasant memory for their lord, and neither wished to cause him further pain. The Miya eventually broke the silence himself. "What does this unfortunate lesson teach us? Taneji?"

Taneji cleared his throat, uncomfortable. "Well," he began, "I suppose that it tells us there is more to the Lion than appearances would indicate, if they could manipulate someone as intelligent as yourself."

"Yes," nodded Hatori. "Very wise indeed. There is far more to the Lion than one would suspect. Sekkou?"

The young shugenja sat thoughtfully for a moment before answering. "It means that because a person is honorable does not mean they should be trusted."

Hatori chuckled at that, and even Taneji cracked a small smile. "Very good, very good, my trusted advisors. We are about to descend into the lands of the Lion Clan. Never forget that for all their honor and straightforwardness, they can be as unpredictable as any other samurai. With the Scorpion, perhaps even with the Crane, one expects duplicity. But when a Lion manipulates you, how are you to know? How do you react, knowing that your enemy has the best interests of the Empire in mind and acts only because he knows that he is right? Be on guard at all times, my young friends."

"Are we not to trust them at all, then?" Sekkou asked. The young man seemed crestfallen, as if his expectations had been totally destroyed.

"That is not what I said, Sekkou," Hatori chided. "A great many Lion are every bit the honorable warriors they appear to be. But do not make the mistake of thinking all of them are. No clan is so simple as to fit a single stereotype. We are mortal, one and all, with all the strength and weakness inherent therein."

"Yes, my lord." Sekkou bowed his head in thought.

As the three men descended the hills into the Akodo lands, Hatori wondered if anything he said could truly prepare his advisors for the Lion. Perhaps no other clan in Rokugan had such hidden depths, so many facets that the outside world was not privy to. Taneji and Sekkou would learn, that much was certain. Hatori only hoped that they emerged from their education unscathed.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Secrets of the Lion is for players and GMs who are interested in adding depth to their visions of the Lion Clan. Unlike *Way of the Lion*, which described the history and major institutions of the clan, this book gives finer detail to the different families, their organization, holdings, vassal families, and lesser-known schools.

Secrets of the Lion is broken down into chapters as follows:

The Introduction deals with the recent history of the Lion Clan, some customs that the clan embraces, and several new rules options for the honorable Lion samurai.

Chapters One through Four each deal with an individual family of the Lion Clan: the Akodo, Ikoma, Kitsu, and Matsu families. Each chapter presents information on the holdings of the family, including several points of interest for each holding, and adventure hooks for GMs; major NPCs within that family, and descriptions of the vassal families that serve them; and new rules for characters from that family.

Chapter Five delves into the mysteries of one of Rokugan's most secretive locations. It contains all the information a GM needs to use the Kitsu Tombs as the centerpiece of a campaign, or a player needs to have a background involving the Tombs.

Chapter Six details the darkest, most unpleasant truths about the Lion. Every clan has some shame buried deep within its histories, and this chapter explores the tragedies and secrets that the Lion hide from everyone, even themselves.

CUSTOMS OF THE LION CLAN

BIRTH

The birth of a Lion is a glorious event, usually attended by the child's close relatives and a representative of the local daimyo or provincial governor. A Kitsu shugenja is often on hand to discern any omens at the birth. At the birth of any high-ranking samurai, a sodan-senzo importunes the ancestors to divine whether any have taken a particular interest in the child. Everything is recorded dutifully, and from that day forward, the young Lion is guided towards the destiny the Kitsu have foretold. The only exception to this is if the child has an unusually strong connection to the kami; then he is tutored by the Kitsu when he is of age.

Most Lion parents are too occupied with their duties to raise the child themselves. In most cases the newborn is raised solely by a chosen protector (usually a high-ranking ashigaru or ji-samurai) with occasional visits from the parents. This protector is no nanny; it is his duty to insure that the young Lion is prepared to meet his destined course. If a Lion should become dishonored later in life, his childhood protector often takes his own life out of shame.

GEMPUKKU

Despite the Lion's reputation for inflexibility, they are neither stupid nor wasteful in their dedication to bushido. Failure is a dishonor, but one that can be corrected and learned from. Wild tales of Matsu children slitting their bellies in mass numbers and Akodo students killing each other to weed out the "unfit" are popular throughout the Empire, but the stories are largely unfounded. While completely devoted to their arts, the Lion would rather bring a "lesser" child up to an acceptable level of skill than waste the time and resources spent on him in his younger years by killing him.

A Lion finds himself once again the center of his family's attention during his gempukku ceremony. This is the only time a true Lion fears scrutiny, because these are the people that he values most in his life. The Lion will never face an opponent whom he considers a worthy judge of his skill. He will, however, spend his entire life bowing before his superiors within the clan.

Those who fail cannot truly escape or erase the stain they place on their names. However, those who fail despite their best efforts often receive another chance. Though they are seen as inferior to their peers, they are afforded the same training and encouragement.

COURTSHIP

Relationships between Lion are generally dispassionate. Arranged marriages are the overwhelming rule, as notable and powerful bushi commonly unite to raise a stronger and more perfect generation of Lion, or to cement necessary political alliances with the leaders of other clans. Notions of romantic love are uncommon among the Lion families. Only the Ikoma find any sort of interest in the notion of romantic affairs, as they are raised to embrace emotional displays. However, as the most political of the Lion families, they too usually marry for political reasons.

Children of influential figures are generally betrothed by the age of ten. Others might have their marriages arranged at any time in their lives, as circumstance and glory demand. Occasionally a betrothal is delayed for years while a samurai's parents seek an appropriate partner. Members of the Ikoma family act as matchmakers and chaperones between engaged Lion samurai, and make the perfect emissaries should a Lion marry outside his clan.

Once the arrangement is made, the Lion weds, lest he shame both his own family and that of his spouse. Often Lion enter tournaments of skill and dedicate their victories to their spouses, and donate winnings to the spouse's family.

SUPERSTITION

Lion are slaves to tradition, and a large part of tradition includes superstition. Many Lion samurai are intensely superstitious. The most common Lion superstitions follow.

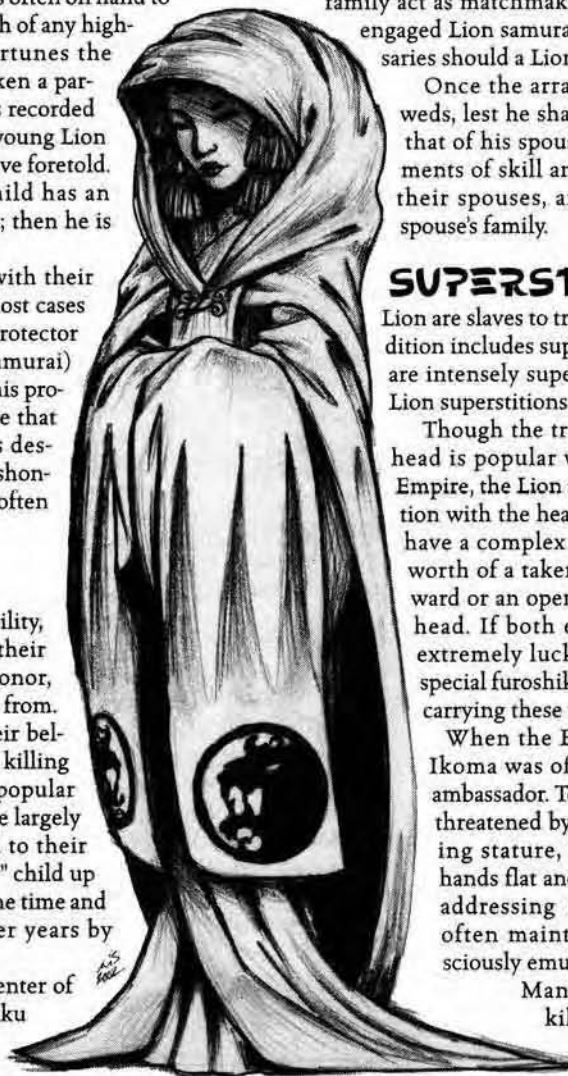
Though the tradition of taking an enemy's head is popular with many bushi across the Empire, the Lion are infamous for their fascination with the heads of their enemies. The Lion have a complex system for determining the worth of a taken head. Eyes pointing downward or an open mouth indicate an unlucky head. If both eyes are closed, the head is extremely lucky. Lion samurai often carry special furoshiki sacks for the sole purpose of carrying these trophies.

When the Empire was young, the wily Ikoma was often the only available Lion ambassador. To ensure that others were not threatened by his deep voice and overbearing stature, Ikoma often kept his large hands flat and motionless on his obi when addressing courtiers. Ikoma diplomats often maintain a similar posture, consciously emulating their namesake.

Many Lion have an aversion to killing spiders. The Lion traditionally believed that if you killed a spider, its spirit

would follow you home and plague your house with bad luck. After the Great Sea Spider rose and destroyed much of the Crane farmlands, Lion samurai have tended to fondly move spiders to safety rather than kill them, and some houses have "lucky spiders" fondly regarded as family pets.

Some Lion samurai believe riding allowing a peasant to cross the road in front of you can make your horse trip and break its legs. Some brash horsemen will charge through an intersection just before a farmer caravan does to ensure this curse does not befall their steed. More zealous Lion samurai



will even trample peasants before they finish crossing the crossroads. Lion peasants are well aware of this superstition, and most are very careful to look both ways before crossing a busy road.

WAR

Every Lion knows that one day he must die. Since death is inevitable, a glorious death is preferable. Even the most cloistered Kitsu and Ikoma is prepared to die at the command of his lord. A Lion approaches every confrontation as a battle. Every act, every word, is an advance or a retreat. This attitude often causes conflicts, as it is not in the nature of the Lion to take anything lightly. A warrior's life cannot be wasted in half measures.

There is only one way to gain true glory or prestige within the Lion, and that is through conflict. Combat is only the most obvious manner of conflict. The most respected trait in a Lion officer is the ability to delegate authority responsibly. Leaders who do not recognize the ability of their troops are looked down upon, as the Lion abhor misuse of any of the gifts the Heavens have bestowed upon them.

RETIREMENT

After the conversations between Shinsei and Hantei were recorded as the Tao, Akodo insulted the Little Teacher and refused to accept the New Way. Hantei was shocked by his brother's behavior and asked why he would treat the Enlightened One so poorly. "It is not my way," Akodo growled, shaking his katana in its saya. "This is my way." Hantei commanded Akodo to apologize to Shinsei and display a copy of the Tao in his clan holdings. Unwilling to disobey his brother and Emperor, Akodo agreed.

Since that day, a copy of the original Tao has been in every dojo of the Lion. Pristine and untouched, these copies have never been opened. Few Lion samurai openly disdain its teachings — it is, after all, the religion of the Emperor — but the main focus of a Lion life is combat. It is only when a samurai can no longer wield a weapon that the life of a monk is acceptable.

For the Lion, giving up the way of the warrior is not always easy. Instead of retiring, many retiring Lion become advisors for the next generation. Those who seek the favor of a Lion daimyo would be wise to please his elder advisors. This will win the favor of the daimyo twofold — not only do these elders hold a great deal of influence, but by respecting his advisors, one shows respect for the daimyo's judgment.

Even those Lion who retire to the life of an inkyo are unlike the monks of other clans, for they seldom remain cloistered. Many become traveling holy men, or work with the Kitsu and Ikoma to maintain their records, or guide the more spiritual aspects of the clan.

FUNERALS

Death is life's inevitable conclusion, and a necessary step within the kharmic cycle. A Lion does not long for death, but he meets it without complaint. A Lion who falls in glorious combat will die at peace, for even if his army is defeated the Heavens will remember that he died as a samurai.

How a Lion is honored after death depends on how he lived his life. Deceased samurai have been cremated since the Battle of Stolen Graves hundreds of years ago, and often communal funeral pyres are made on the battlefield where Lion soldiers

fell. Large numbers of rank-and-file soldiers are committed to the Void in this manner, as a Kitsu or Ikoma records the names and deeds of those who have passed on. Many Lion bushi receive promotions after death to acknowledge their bravery and skill in battle. Sometimes these promotions bring with them positions and land that pass to the soldiers' descendants.

Important deceased figures usually have long, somber rituals to celebrate their lives. A Kitsu sodan-senzo or Ikoma omoidasu is typically on hand to recount the glorious deeds of the deceased to assembled family and friends. If the Lion had any special wishes that were to be enacted after his death, a family retainer makes these wishes known at the funeral. Such requests often involve disposition of property among the heirs, and any titles or positions his children inherit.

The most glorious funerals are reserved for true heroes of the clan and family or clan daimyo. Those who are noticed by the leadership of the Lion may be interred in the Hall of Ancestors, with a commemorative statue. Such fortunate Lion are considered the guiding ancestors of the clan, shining examples to all who come after. The name and deeds of such a Lion will never be forgotten as long as any member of the clan draws breath.

HISTORY OF THE LION CLAN

The following section contains a brief summary of the history of the Lion Clan, focusing mainly upon the period since the Second Day of Thunder, but also revealing more detail on major events in the history of the Lion Clan. More information about the history before this time can be found in *Rokugan* and *Way of the Lion*.

Denouncement of ancestral testimony: year 53

While the Empire is in its infancy, many Kitsu are called upon to use their gifts to have spirits of the dead give legal testimony. This practice comes to an abrupt halt when the Scorpion reveal that one of the "spirits" testifying in a particular trial is supposedly the soul of a Matsu general who is in fact still alive. The Lion accuse the Scorpion of twisting their gifts, while the Scorpion simply counter that the magic is unreliable. Unwilling to let the matter get out of hand, Hantei Genji declares all magic invalid in legal proceedings.

Acquisition of the Fox lands: year 67

When she led the Ki-Rin Clan exploring outside Rokugan, Shinjo left behind peaceful farmers and ji-samurai to guard her lands. They settle into their territory for less than a generation before the Lion clan takes notice of their fertile farmland. The Lion Clan secures the rights from the Imperial Court to take the lands under their own care — by force if necessary. The remaining Ki-Rin put up a heroic struggle, but are crushed soundly and swiftly. Hantei Genji relocates Shinjo's followers to the southern Spine of the World Mountains, and the Lion lay claim to a much-needed source of foodstuffs for their massive armies. This event leads the Shining Prince to forbid Great Clans to war upon Minor Clans, and recognizes Shinjo's followers as the minor Fox Clan.

Death of Akodo: circa year 99

While surveying the construction of the Hall of Ancestors and the Ikoma Libraries, Akodo One-eye is caught unawares by an army of savage ogres. Akodo stands against the horde with a hundred men, and meets his enemy in what was once the Seikitsu Pass through the Spine of the World Mountains. As the advancing Shadowlands army reaches him, he reaches deep within himself and looses the last bit of divinity in his soul with a mighty roar. The peaks of the mountains shake and collapse upon Akodo and the enemy, killing them all.

Book of Sun Tao written: circa year 145

The famous ronin general Sun Tao is said to have completed his great treatise on warfare during this time. Sun Tao distributes credit for his knowledge among all of the clans, and gives a copy to each of the clan daimyo before vanishing into the Burning Sands seeking the clan of the Ki-Rin. The book is compared to Akodo's treatise *Leadership*, and many value the work as much as the Lion Kami's own writing. The Lion Clan has mixed reactions to the popularity of the book at first, but quickly master the ideas presented within it and start placing it in positions of honor next to *Leadership*.

Founding of the Ikoma Spymaster academy: year 400

The Lion learn far too late about the quiet problems between the Crab and Crane, and realize that the sudden defection of the Yasuki to the Clan of the Crab is not as abrupt as it appeared. The Lion Clan daimyo and the Ikoma family daimyo devise a practical solution, and secretly found the Spymaster school to strengthen the information-gathering resources of the Lion.

Matsu Itagi journeys into the Shadowlands: year 412

Exuding pride and overconfidence, Lion daimyo Matsu Itagi contends that he can seal the Festering Pit alone. He visits the Crab lands and proclaims that if the Lion inhabited the Crab lands, the Shadowlands would have been defeated generations ago. Itagi boldly strides into the Shadowlands, only to be rescued weeks later by the selfless sacrifice of Crab daimyo Hida Tadaka. This gesture forestalls hostilities between the two clans for centuries.

Hantei Yugozohime fostered to the Lion: year 432

During the time of the Gozoku's control over the Imperial Throne, the Lion are granted the honor of raising Hantei Yugozohime as a foster daughter. Dragon diplomats meet in secret with the leaders of the Lion Clan, opening their eyes to the true danger of the Gozoku's rule and the blasphemy of subverting Hantei rule. The Lion, convinced, train Yugozohime as a leader and warrior. With the support of the powerful Lion Clan, she breaks the power of the Gozoku.

Battle of the Great Climb: year 711

Insulted by an Agasha ambassador, the Lion general Akodo Yokutsu assaults the lands of the Dragon, carefully avoiding the lands of the Dragonfly he swore to leave unmolested. Yokutsu takes the opportunity to duel his nemesis Mirumoto Asijin when that swordsman leaves the lands of the Dragonfly Clan he founded to fight alongside of the Dragon. The Akodo general bests Asijin and declares himself the daimyo of the small Dragonfly Clan. Yokutsu's reign is only days old before Asijin's own son cuts down the Akodo in a duel, forcing the withdrawal of Lion forces from the Dragonfly lands. The clan of the Dragon formally adopts the Dragonfly as their official emissaries, protecting them from further Lion violence.

Kitsu Taiko becomes the Master of Fire: year 761

Though not known for their impressive mastery of magic, the Kitsu nonetheless train the talented Kitsu Taiko so thoroughly that the Phoenix take note of his prowess. His skill with fire magic and his leadership in battle make him a mighty force on Lion battlefields. When advancing age forces him into retirement, the Phoenix Clan offer him a position on the Elemental Council as Master of Fire. Taiko accepts, becoming the only non-Phoenix to ever sit upon the Council.

The return of the Unicorn Clan: year 815

The return of Shinjo's children to the Empire affects the Lion more than any other clan. The Lion find another Great Clan on their borders, one whose mounted tactics confound the great Lion generals for nearly a generation. The Lion, who refuse to return lands that they have tended for centuries, keep a good portion of what was once Ki-Rin land. The two clans cordially loathe each other for generations.

The second Day of Thunder: year 1128

The second Day of Thunder clearly answers the question the Lion had asked for the duration of the Clan War — was the loyalty to the Empire or the Emperor their higher duty? The possession of Hantei XXXIX by Fu Leng and his subsequent destruction by the Seven Thunders proves to the Lion that mortal flesh, no matter how suffused with divine power, is fallible. Their place is to preserve the greater idea of Rokugan as an Empire of honor and justice.

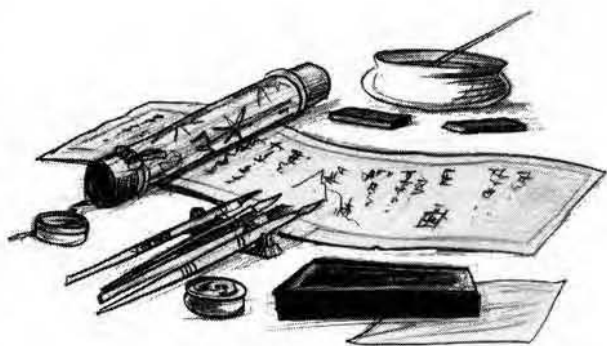
This point in history also becomes a harsh reminder of the Lion's lack of political acumen, as they lose the opportunity to more closely ingratiate themselves to the new Emperor Toturi. Though Toturi was once of the Akodo family, the Lion Clan cannot use this fact to their advantage to gain position within the Empire. While they remain the strong right hand of the Emperor, they do not convince Toturi to marry a Lion bride or grant new territory to the Lion. Many within the clan privately acknowledge that it is a sad waste of opportunity.

Succession of the daimyo: year 1128

One of the first acts of Emperor Toturi I is to ensure the stability of the clans by ordering them to fill any empty leadership positions, especially those of family daimyo. As one of the clans which suffered heavy casualties during the wars, the Lion find young and inexperienced samurai forced into command. The Emperor names Ikoma Tsanuri Champion of the Lion, while the Matsu pronounce the spirited young Matsu Ketsui their daimyo.

The Test of the Jade Champion: year 1131

Weakened by years of fighting, the Lion look for any opportunity to gain new resources or power. When the first Test of the Jade Champion in centuries is announced, a determined and capable shugenja named Kitsu Okura enters on behalf of the Lion. Though his defeat of Unicorn, Crab, and even Phoenix shugenja is impressive and breathtaking, it is suspected his talent does not lie with the kami. Whispers of maho use follow Okura's ascension to his new position, though none dare accuse the Jade Champion openly. These accusations later prove correct, and Okura's example leads to the corruption of a large number of Kitsu shugenja.



Storms over Matsu Castle: year 1132

Driven mad by the Lying Darkness, Toturi uses rumors of Lion maho use as an excuse to order the Unicorn into war against his former clan. Many Otaku Battle Maidens die battling a massive army of corrupted Lion soldiers fighting alongside Oni summoned by the Kitsu. Disgusted with their comrades and themselves, many Lion samurai and shugenja commit seppuku in defiance, or to escape the Taint that has claimed them. Many more band together behind Ikoma Tsanuri and swear to purge the Lion Clan of its corruption. Though Okura's actions originally had only the best interests of the clan in mind, he now openly defies Tsanuri. The powerful Oni Lord Akuma now controls his will.

Loss of the Ikoma Histories: year 1132

The Lying Darkness destroys the Imperial Histories of the Ikoma in an effort to sever Rokugan from its past. A very few scrolls are rescued by daring bushi and historians who brave the fire and Darkness-spawn to retrieve the precious histories. The Ikoma are left reeling from the blow, and hope that they can in time restore the library.

Attacks on the Land of the Dead: year 1132

Though stretched to their limit and corrupted in large numbers, some Kitsu have not abandoned their duty as the voices of the ancestors to the living. Un-Tainted Kitsu find it increasingly difficult to contact the Realm of Blessed Ancestors. Eventually the spirits only howl mournfully from Yomi. While many point to the corruption of the family as a reason, the Kitsu fear a much darker force is behind the ancestors' silence. The Kitsu family's fears are confirmed when lost spirits wandering the mortal realm report that minions of the Lying Darkness have attacked Yomi. The Kitsu discover that these spirits are returned shiryo who have passed through the now unguarded Oblivion's Gate.

Reinstatement of the Akodo: year 1133

The defeat of the Lying Darkness is largely attributed to the actions of Hitomi, now looking down upon Rokugan as Lady Moon. She uses the wisdom of the enlightened monk Takao to name the Nameless, and gives it the lost title "Akodo." The noble spirit of that name forces the Darkness into physical form. The minions of darkness become samurai without names or pasts, who know only that they are "Akodo." Many of these are discovered to be former Akodo ronin who were consumed by the Darkness. Emperor Toturi I returns the Akodo lands and appoints his retainer Ginawa, a former Akodo, as

daimyo of the Akodo family. The Emperor generously permits all surviving Akodo to return to the family with no stigma, and most accept. Toturi enjoins all Akodo, Ginawa in particular, to live up to the name the Heavens have given them.

Succession of the daimyo: year 1133

With the death of Ikoma Tsanuri at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, her designated successor, the cunning tactician Kitsu Motso, becomes Champion of the Lion. After revealing that Motso's long-time hatamoto is an agent of the Kolat, the clever historian Ikoma Sume is granted the position, and later becomes daimyo of the Ikoma family. Sume seems reluctant to assume the position, which carries with it the daunting tasks of recovering the Ikoma libraries and furthering the Lion's political position. Despite his reluctance, he performs admirably.

Theft of the Histories: year 1134

The Ikoma are stunned when the Emperor informs them that a Miya lord named Hatori has suggested that the Miya rather than the Ikoma maintain the new Imperial Histories. Once of the Ikoma family himself, Hatori uses his vast resources to wrest the honor from the Ikoma, claiming that only an Imperial family can be properly impartial. Additionally, after the destruction of the Ikoma and Asako libraries, the heraldic records of the Miya are now the most complete historical record in the Empire. Though Hatori never admits it, both he and the Ikoma know that his campaign originates from his bitterness toward the Ikoma for what he feels was an unjust expulsion from their lands. Tradition works to Hatori's disadvantage, as most of the Empire ignores his efforts. The Ikoma have always been the Empire's historians, so their library is naturally assumed to be more complete.

The Battle of Firefly River: year 1136

Eager to both expand his holdings and test the powerful Lion Clan, Khan Moto Gaheris of the Unicorn commands his Moto army in a strike across Firefly River with the aid of Iuchi war shugenja. The Ikoma lands prepare for the sudden assault while the diplomats of the family stall the Unicorn army in formal parley. Thinking his position impregnable, Gaheris allows himself to be delayed. The Unicorn Champion is completely surprised by the sudden counterattack of an elite army of Akodo samurai who rushed to their cousins' defense during the lull. In their first true battle, the new Akodo truly prove themselves worthy of the name, exceeding expectations of all save Ginawa himself. The Unicorn army is pushed back over the Firefly River.

The War of Spirits begins: year 1138

When Emperor Toturi refuses to cede the Imperial Throne to Hantei XVI, the mad Steel Chrysanthemum unites many of the returned spirits from Oblivion's Gate against their living descendants. The war is tragic and bloody, but it proves to be the chance the reborn Akodo waited for to show their worth to the Empire. The Akodo fare well in the war, and the Lion learn again what it was like to have the unrivaled Akodo tacticians in their armies. Akodo Ginawa parleys with many of the returned Akodo spirits, and convinces most to join Toturi defending the Empire. These spirits prove invaluable to the Akodo, as they teach their inexperienced heirs what it truly means to follow the path of Akodo One-Eye.

Collapse of Beiden Pass: 1150

Considered the unofficial ending of the war against Hantei XVI's armies, the cliff sides of Beiden Pass are collapsed upon the spirit armies. This brings a grim smile to many Lion, who realize they no longer share a border with the treacherous Scorpion Clan. Some Matsu regret this turn of events, for now they will have to journey further to cross swords with the Bayushi.

Succession of the daimyo: 1150

When the solitary Kitsu Motso dies, the position of Lion Champion stands empty with no clear path of succession. Akodo Ginawa quells rumors that he might take the position by openly asking his Emperor not to appoint him Champion of the Lion. His duties continuing to rebuild the Akodo, he claims, are too pressing. Matsu Ketsui also distances herself from the position, declaring that although she is not too old to lead her family into battle, she cannot be expected to guide the future of an entire clan at her advanced age. When Ketsui suggests a relative unknown as Champion — her son Nimuro — Ginawa supports the suggestion. He says that the boy acquitted himself well in the War of Spirits, and would make a fine Champion given proper guidance. Toturi agrees quickly, though he requires Ginawa serve Nimuro as advisor for as long as the new Champion requires his aid.

Also during this year, Kitsu daimyo Kitsu Toju retires and appoints his distant cousin as daimyo of that family.

Campaign in the Crane lands: year 1153

Thought to be brutish and easily manipulated, Matsu Nimuro stoically endures attempts from the Crane and other families to goad him into senseless violence. These attempts cease when Nimuro appears outside of Shiro no Yojin with an army of Akodo and sacks it with terrifying precision. The loss of Crane and Lion life is minimized. Crane hostages are released later for a reasonable amount of koku and favors that Nimuro will "name later." Eager to mitigate the shame of their defeat, Crane courtiers agree to his demands.

Once the hostages are ransomed, the Crane seek to slander Nimuro in court. They claim his attack was full of subterfuge and trickery, and that the Lion would have never had reclaimed the castle had an honorable battle occurred. The Lion Champion responds by detailing, before the Imperial Families and the Crane representatives, the route he will take from Shiro no Yojin to Toshi Ranbo. He announces his intention to attack Toshi Ranbo within the week, and invites the Crane to study his battle plans.

The Emperor refuses to intercede, and the Crane are trapped by their own words. Scrambling to muster their troops, the Daidoji are completely outmaneuvered as Nimuro anticipates every Crane defense. Toshi Ranbo falls as quickly and easily as Shiro no Yojin, and Nimuro secures his place in the ranks of the greatest heroes of the Lion Clan.

The Imperial Bastard is revealed: year 1155

A young man named Kaneka announces himself to the Emperor's court as the illegitimate son of Toturi. Toturi meets with him, and although the Emperor does not recognize the boy's claim, neither does he seek retribution for Kaneka's presumptuousness. Toturi instead commands Akodo Ginawa to grant Kaneka fealty. The Lion do everything within their power to put themselves in Kaneka's good graces, and show him the way of Akodo's Technique, which he absorbs with amazing speed. In Kaneka, the leaders of the Lion see a chance to regain the opportunity lost when Toturi I claimed the throne.

With the absence of a true father figure, young Kaneka quickly attaches himself to the stalwart Akodo Ginawa. Kaneka's keen mind and extraordinary skill with the blade earns him a position among the leaders of the Lion, and he is seen often in the company of Akodo Ginawa and Matsu Nimuro. It is rumored that Nimuro offered to surrender his position as Lion Champion to Kaneka, only to be refused. Only the highest-ranking members of the clan know that this tale is true.

Alliance With the Phoenix: year 1156

Due to the political acumen of Toturi's son, Hantei Naseru, the Lion enter into an alliance with the Phoenix Clan. The intent of this alliance is to stage a massive attack against the Shadowlands. Though Naseru has yet to make arrangements with the Crab Clan for such a campaign to be permitted, he believes that time is on his side, as it will take three years to muster the troops, weapons, and magic required for this attack.

Death of Toturi I: year 1158

The Emperor is slain while traveling in the Scorpion lands. Many believe the Emperor was on his way to Ryoko Owari to acknowledge Akodo Kaneka as his heir. Regardless, when the Empress also disappears, the Lion are uncertain which of Toturi's children to support. Many Akodo believe in Kaneka as the true heir, seeing within him aspects of both their daimyo and the Emperor. Though Nimuro supports Kaneka openly, many Akodo and nearly all of the Matsu are taken with the honorable and powerful Toturi Tsudao, leader of the Imperial Legions. Hantei Naseru counts many allies among the family of the Ikoma, who believe the Lion will gain great favor in the courts of the Empire if they help him achieve the Steel Throne. The quiet Kitsu admire the singular vision of Toturi's shugenja son, Toturi Sezar.

Destruction of the Dragonfly Clan: year 1158

When the Phoenix declare war upon the Dragon Clan, the Lion are bound by their alliance to join in the attack. Akodo Ijiasu uses the war as an excuse to assault the Dragonfly Clan, avenging the insult the Minor Clan gave the Akodo four centuries ago. Within weeks of the fighting, the small Dragonfly Clan is all but eradicated, their lands torn apart by the Akodo, their samurai scattered to the wind.

Burning of the Kitsu Tombs: year 1158

The Lion suddenly find themselves fighting on two fronts as a mysterious enemy appears from the mountains and assaults the lands of the Kitsu family. Though the Lion receive the help of Toturi Tsudao and the Imperial Legions, the savage Tsuno wreak unchecked havoc. They force their way deep into Lion territory, pillage the Kitsu Tombs, capture the Clan Champion's brother Matsu Domotai, then with unmatched maneuverability disappear as quickly as they appeared.

The Island in the Mist: year 1158

Led by Ikoma Otemi and Matsu Kenji, a Lion ship stumbles upon the mythical Island in the Mist, the lost stronghold of the pirate Yasuki Fumoki. Through the heroic efforts of the Lion and the aid of Nezumi living on the island, Otemi and Kenji slay a fearsome undead Orochi guardian and claim the pirate's impressive wealth for the coffers of the Lion Clan.

Betrothal of Ikoma Otemi: year 1159

For his valor and service to the clan, Ikoma Otemi is honored with a betrothal to a student of Imperial Chancellor Bayushi Kaukatsu. The marriage will strengthen ties between Ikoma Sume and Kaukatsu.

Aikune betrays the Lion: year 1159

Responding to the Tsuno threat, the Lion recall most of their troops, leaving only a few token units of skilled advisors to honor their treaty with the Phoenix. Seeing the Lion's withdrawal as an act of cowardice, Shiba Aikune impugns the honor of all Lion for their perceived betrayal. Matsu Shinya, leader of the remaining Lion troops, challenges Aikune to a kenjutsu duel. Forming the powerful nemuranai Isawa's Wish into a fiery katana, Aikune slays Shinya. Outraged, more Lion attack Aikune, and they too are destroyed. Aikune commands his Shiba samurai to kill the remaining Lion and declares their alliance at an end. Only a few Lion samurai survive the slaughter.

Toshi Ranbo Falls: year 1159

Distracted by their conflict with the Tsuno, the Lion are unprepared when Daidoji Gudeta leads an army of Crane to besiege Toshi Ranbo. Both sides are surprised when Hantei Naseru intervenes in the dispute, offering a diplomatic solution. They accept his mediation only to be further surprised when Naseru decides in favor of the Crane. Some wonder whether the Anvil truly favors the Crane or if he seeks to punish the Lion for their support of Kaneka and Tsudao. In either case, the Lion stand by their word and abide by Naseru's decision.

The Shogun: year 1159

Though many still resist the idea of Kaneka as Toturi's son, the young Lion still considers it his destiny to rule the Empire. Calling upon an obscure reference in the book of Sun Tao, he declares himself shogun, military leader of the Empire. All those who will serve him are to break their wakizashi as a show of fealty. Kaneka will forge a new sword, a shogun's sword, from the steel. Akodo Ijiasu is one of the first to swear fealty to Kaneka, and many other Lion follow.

NEW MECHANICS

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

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

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

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

SHINRAI, THE CELESTIAL SWORD OF THE LION CLAN

Decades ago the original Ancestral Swords of the Great Clans were collected by the Kami, Shinjo and given to the goddess Amaterasu, who distributed them in the sky to show her displeasure with humanity. After Amaterasu's death the new Sun God, Yakamo, ordered the Fortune of Steel to create new blades for the Champions of the Clans using the star-filled steel of the Celestial Heavens. Shinrai, the Celestial Sword of the Lion Clan, was one of these.

The Lion Clan Champion of the time, Kitsuo Motso, took the Celestial Sword as his own personal weapon. When Matsu Nimuro became Champion, he presented Shinrai to Toturi I as a symbol of the Lion's oath, just as the ancestral sword Shori was kept by the Emperor except in times of war. Toturi returned the blade to Nimuro with his blessing, telling him that he would accept it when Rokugan was truly at peace. Nimuro has sworn to one day fulfill Toturi's wishes and return Shinrai to its proper place in the Imperial City.

Nimuro normally does not wield Shinrai. He has sworn to draw it only against the minions of the Shadowlands, or against other Clan Champions who take up arms against him.

d20 SYSTEM™

Shinrai is a +5 mighty cleaving mighty smiting speed katana. Shinrai gives the wielder a +8 sacred bonus to his initiative and deals triple damage on a critical.

L5R RPG 2E:

Shinrai is an Exceptional Quality katana with a 4k4 damage rating. It adds 2 to its wielder's Kenjutsu and Katana skills, or gives Kenjutsu 2 or Katana 2 to characters without those skills. The wielder adds his Honor × 5 to all Initiative rolls and may make an extra attack per round against any opponent with a lower Honor Rank. To use the latter ability, the wielder must know that his opponent has less Honor.

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

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

TORITAKA TATSUNE

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

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

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



NEW DISADVANTAGES

With the recent jump from the Clan War timeline to the Four Winds era, many campaigns may wish to include NPCs and even player characters from the previous timeline. With this in mind, these two new Disadvantages are presented to more accurately portray characters of advanced age. They may be purchased during character creation or bestowed upon a character once he reaches the appropriate age. A character may not possess both of the following Disadvantages; Elderly replaces Old.

(Note: d20 System™ rules for characters of advanced age can be found on page 93 of the *Player's Handbook*.)

OLD (2 POINTS)

The character is still quite spry but is no longer in his prime. This generally includes characters between the ages of forty and fifty-five, although individuals vary. Characters in this age group must make one Raise to successfully make any Strength or Agility rolls, including Skill rolls based on those Traits. On the plus side, every Knowledge skill the character possesses provides two additional Insight.

ELDERLY (5 POINTS)

The character is far past his prime. This generally includes characters above the age of fifty-five, though, again, individuals vary. Characters in this age group must make two Raises to successfully make any Strength or Agility rolls, including Skill rolls based on those Traits, or once to make any Stamina or Reflexes rolls, including Skill rolls related to those Traits. On the plus side, every Knowledge skill the character possesses provides two additional Insight, and every Lore skill the character possesses provides four additional Insight.

NEW COURTIER ABILITIES

At fourth level, and every third level thereafter, members of the courtier character class gain courtier abilities chosen from a short list (see page 35 of *Rokugan*). Though most Lion courtiers come from the Ikoma family, the following new courtier abilities are available to any courtiers of the Lion clan. Members of other clans who have taken the Different School feat and applied it to the Lion may also learn these abilities. The normal courtier abilities are still available for Lion courtiers.

Ikoma's Favor (Ex): The tales of the Ikoma can hearten the weak and make the unworthy feel like heroes. A number of times per day equal to his Honor rank (not including Honor ranks gained by this ability), the courtier may spend a full round action encouraging an ally within earshot. This requires a Perform check (DC 15 + the target's level). If successful, the target gains one rank of Honor for one hour. A courtier of 10th level or higher grants two ranks of Honor instead. A courtier may not use this ability on himself, or upon an ally with higher Honor than himself.

Ikoma's Spite (Ex): Those who offend the historians of the Empire are doomed to be remembered in dishonor. Their tales can make even the purest of heart feel weak and dishonorable. A number of times per day equal to his Honor rank (not including Honor ranks gained by Ikoma's Favor), the courtier may spend a full round action chastising an enemy within earshot. This requires a Perform check on the part of the courtier. The target must make a Will save (DC equals Perform check minus 10) or lose a rank of Honor for one hour. A courtier of 10th level or higher removes two ranks of Honor instead. A courtier may not use this ability on himself, or on an opponent with higher Honor than himself.

Tell the Tale (Ex): Lion courtiers are experts in Rokugani myth and legend. The most talented can quote the lineage of total strangers from memory. A courtier gains a +10 bonus when using his Gossip ability, but the knowledge gained when using the ability always pertains to the history of the subject in question (or his family, in the case of a person). This ability is not always necessarily relevant to the matter at hand, but the chance of it being true increase by ten percent. A courtier may choose not to use this ability when applying Gossip, and instead gain information that relates to the present. This ability also grants a +1 bonus to all Knowledge checks and a +2 bonus to Knowledge (history) checks.

COMPLETE LION TECHNIQUE FEAT LIST

The table on the following page lists all feats available to samurai player characters as bonus technique feats. This list supersedes the ones presented in *Oriental Adventures* and *Rokugan*. Feats which were prerequisites for other feats on this list have been added, and those with excessive prerequisites that did not fit the theme of the Lion fighting style have been removed. To balance this loss, other feats from the *Player's Handbook* have been added.

Abbreviations for the locations of these feats are as follows: PHB = *Player's Handbook*, MoR = *Magic of Rokugan*, SoL = *Secrets of the Lion*, WoNin = *Way of the Ninja*.

COMPLETE LION TECHNIQUE FEAT LIST

Feat	Prerequisite	Location
Akodo's Technique	Base attack bonus +8 or higher Str 13+ Way of the Lion	Rokugan
Armor Focus	Armor Proficiency	Rokugan
Armor Proficiency (heavy)	Armor Proficiency (light)	PHB
	Armor Proficiency (medium)	
Cleave	Str 13+ Power Attack	
The Current's Pull	Cha 13+ Wis 13+	SoL
Daisho Specialization	Base attack bonus +5 or higher Weapon Focus: Katana or Wakizashi	Rokugan
Death Trance	Base attack bonus +1 or higher	Rokugan
Depths of the Void	Void Use Samurai	Rokugan
Different School	By DM permission only	Rokugan
Expertise	Int 13+	PHB
The Final Lesson	Base attack bonus +10 or higher Power Attack	Rokugan
Great Cleave	Base attack bonus +4 or higher Str 13+ Cleave Cleave Attack	
Greater Daisho I	Samurai level 13th+	MoR
Greater Daisho II	Samurai level 15th+	MoR
Greater Daisho III	Samurai level 17th+	MoR
Greater Daisho IV	Samurai level 19th+	MoR
Improved Initiative	—	PHB
Improved Trip	Int 13+ Expertise	PHB
Iron Will	—	PHB
Know the School	Knowledge (clan or family, 2 ranks)	PHB
The Lion Cannot Fail	Base attack bonus +1 or higher Taking the Measure	WoNin
Matsu's Roar	Base attack bonus +6 or higher Void Use	Rokugan
The Patience of Tides	Wis 13+ The Current's Pull Void Use	SoL
Perception Becomes Victory	Base attack bonus +10 or higher Spot (8 ranks) The Final Lesson	WoNin
Power Attack	Str 13+	PHB
Skill Focus (battle)	—	PHB
Soul Forge	Iron Will or ancestral daisho Masterwork weapon or armor	MoR
Strength of Purity	Honorable	Rokugan
Taking the Measure	Spot (2 ranks)	WoNin
Toughness	—	PHB
The Will of the Waves	Base attack bonus +5 or higher Wis 18+ The Current's Pull The Patience of Tides Void Use	SoL
Void Use	—	Rokugan
Way of the Lion	Base attack bonus +1 or higher Str 13+	Rokugan
Weapon Focus (no-dachi)	Base attack bonus +1 or higher Martial Weapon Proficiency (no-dachi)	PHB
Weapon Focus (katana)	Base attack bonus +1 or higher Martial Weapon Proficiency (katana)	PHB

BANNERS AND STANDARDS

(This information originally appeared in *Winter Court: Kyuden Asako*. It has been revised and updated here because personal heraldry is so important to the Lion Clan.)

Many samurai wear personal standards in mass combat. The Akodo say that a samurai who sees only his own colors feels bravery, and a samurai surrounded by enemy banners feels fear. These items often have no mechanical effects, but are merely for style and personality.

If a samurai wishes to have a personal mon, he should register it with the Miya Imperial family to avoid confusion or duplication. Though a samurai can craft a mon without registering, the purpose of a mon is to be recognized, so not registering the mon's significance with the heralds of the Empire would make the mon pointless. For this same reason, samurai seldom change their personal mon.

The choice of an individual mon is a matter of great pride, and always a distinctly personal choice. Many samurai hire the most skilled artisans to create their mon and banner, and care for the result almost as well as they would their katana. Carrying an army's standard in battle is a great honor, and dropping one is an incredible disgrace.

Costs for standards are listed in koku and in the amount of character points necessary to begin with them using the Inheritance Advantage in the L5R Second Edition system.

Many banners impose penalties on their bearers, more because of their clumsy shape than their weight. A banner may be dropped instantly at any time to negate these penalties, though letting a standard fall is shameful.

FUKIRUKI

A large, cylindrical streamer, reinforced with rods or papier-maché. Designed to be mounted on a saddle, or the walls of a castle. This is an extravagant sort of standard popular with wealthy samurai. *Market Price:* 7 koku / *Cost:* 3 points. *Weight:* 15 lbs.

GOHEI

A ceremonial wand or staff decorated with silk and papier-maché, blessed by the spirits to bring good fortune. Only shugenja or monks may bear them. *Market Price:* 4 koku / *Cost:* 1 point. *Weight:* 4 lbs.

J'UMA JIRUSHI

A "great standard." These are enormous, painted in intricate detail, and crafted of the finest materials. Only powerful daimyo may bear them. These banners indicate the general's position on the field, so they are a popular target for enemy archers and must be repaired often. The bearer of a Great Standard moves very slowly, and cannot fight while bearing the standard. The legendary Ancestral Standards are nemuranai versions of these.

The general of an army with a great standard gains a +10 circumstance bonus to all Battle checks that involve commanding troops on a massive scale. The person carrying a j'uma jirushi moves at half speed, may not run or charge, may only fight one-handed, and suffers a -4 circumstance penalty to attack rolls and Reflex saves.

The general of an army with a Great Standard may add three to his battle roll, and receives four Free Raises when delivering commands using the Battle skill. The standard bearer can move only very slowly, suffers a +15 penalty to all TNs when carrying the banner, and may only fight one-handed.

Market Price: Effectively priceless. A samurai does not pay to make one; he earns the right to have one and then commissions his artisans to make it. *Weight:* 25 lbs.

KO'UMA JIRUSHI

A "lesser standard" in comparison to the j'uma jirushi. A character carrying this standard can do little but march in a straight line and try not to be blown over by the wind.

A general with a Lesser Standard in his army gains a +4 circumstance bonus to all Battle checks that involve commanding troops on a massive scale. The person carrying a ko'uma jirushi may not run or charge, may only fight one-handed, and suffers a -4 circumstance penalty to attack rolls and Reflex saves.

The general of an army with a Lesser Standard may add 1 to his Water + Battle roll, and receives two Free Raises when delivering commands using the Battle skill. The standard bearer suffers a +15 penalty to all TNs when carrying the banner, and may only fight one handed.

Market Price: 100 Koku / *Cost:* 7 points. *Weight:* 15 lbs.

VASSAL FAMILIES

This book introduces a number of vassal families, lesser samurai who serve the great families of the clans. Though described in previous sourcebooks (such as *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun* and *Rokugan*) these vassal families have never before been specifically detailed.

Vassal families occupy an unusual social position within the samurai class. Within the family and clan that they serve, they are recognized by their unique family name as a means of recognizing their distinctive service to the clan. Outside the clan, however, they are identified by the name of the family they serve. Favoring one's vassal name above the samurai family that one serves when speaking to an outsider is presumptuous and arrogant, implying that the individual presenting himself is so well known that the listener would be more familiar with his own lineage than that of the family he serves.

For example: Katai Shiranui is a member of the Katai vassal family of the Akodo. To all members of the Akodo and other Lion families, she is known as Katai Shiranui. In the Ikoma histories and to outsiders, however, she is known as Akodo Shiranui. When presenting herself to others outside the clan, Shiranui may introduce herself as "Akodo Shiranui of House Katai" or simply "Akodo Shiranui of Katai." If a member of any other clan should visit Shiranui at the Katai family estate, then she would be entitled to refer to herself by her vassal family name, for it is assumed the visitor realizes that he is in the lands of the Akodo.

NOBORI

A simple type of standard that can be held one-handed or mounted on a saddle. It is not especially large or decorative, but it bears the mon of the samurai's clan, rank, and unit. *Market Price: 2 Koku / Cost: 1 point. Weight: 5 lbs.*

SASHIMONO

The most common and popular sort of personal banner. This banner is attached to the back of a samurai's armor by cords that loop around the armpits and fasten to the samurai's chest plate. This banner displays the clan or family mon, along with the samurai's rank. Some samurai might wear as many as three sashimono at one time to denote their wealth and rank. Phoenix and Crane samurai sometimes wear a pair of stylized sashimono designed to flutter in the breeze and give the appearance of ephemeral wings. *Market Price: 3 koku / Cost: 1 point each. Weight: 5 lbs.*



CHAPTER ONE:

THE AKODO

THE LION'S DEN
PART TWO

The Emperor's Road stretched before the trio, winding its way toward the center of the Lion lands. There it would split, leading west toward the Unicorn lands and south toward the collapsed ruin of Beiden Pass. Ahead, six mounted samurai waited in the center of the road, waiting patiently for the three men to reach them. Hatori stroked his chin and turned to his companions. "Sekkou, how far have we come into the Lion lands?"

"I would estimate about two miles, Hatori-sama."

"Yes, that sounds right," Hatori agreed. "Strange that the first Lion we encounter are so far within the border. When we entered the Crane lands, we were met almost immediately by Doji magistrates." He glanced to his left expectantly.

Taneji did not disappoint. "Not necessarily strange, my lord," he offered. "The Doji are vigilant, yes, but they would prefer to deflect unpleasant visitors altogether. These Lion, I think, have been watching us for some time. They waited so that if we turned out to be enemies or criminals we could not easily flee their jurisdiction. These Lion do not wish their enemies to escape."

"Excellent, Taneji," Hatori responded with a smile. "You have been reading the treatises on the tactics of the Great Clans, I see."

"It seemed an appropriate choice, given our travel plans, my lord."

"Indeed it was, Taneji. Your father would be very pleased." While the Otomo basked in the glow of his praise, Hatori turned to his shugenja companion. "And what of you, Sekkou? Do you know much of the Akodo?"

"Very little, Hatori-sama," the shugenja admitted. "They have very few strong shugenja bloodlines within the family, although on rare occasions a very powerful shugenja appears. Their children rarely inherit the gift, however. I thought it strange that the gift of the kami seems so hereditary in other families, yet so random in the Akodo."

"Very astute, Sekkou." Hatori nodded. "In truth, several bloodlines within the Akodo possess the gift of speaking with the kami, but they choose to ignore it."

"What?" gasped Sekkou. "Why? What purpose would such a thing serve?"

"Duty," said Hatori. "The first servants of Akodo were soldiers. Even after all these years, their descendants continue to fulfill the vows their ancestors made. To an Akodo, duty is the most important consideration. More important than personal feelings, more important than religious beliefs, even more important than the demands of the kami."

"Well," said Sekkou, "then it seems odd that there are ever any Akodo shugenja at all, if that is their philosophy."

"On occasion, one with such raw talent appears that the family considers it the will of their ancestors that they be trained as a shugenja," Hatori finished. "Even then, it is a matter of duty and reverence. As with all things concerning the Akodo." Hatori nodded toward the samurai, whom they had all but reached.

"Hold please," the lead Akodo said with little ceremony. His age was difficult to determine, but his armor clearly bore the mark of the Lion and Akodo, and he wore the trappings of a warden, the elite force that policed the Lion roads. "What is your business in the Lion lands?"

Taneji knew his cue. "I am Otomo Taneji, sworn servant of the esteemed Miya Hatori, traveling through the Lion lands on official business for the Imperial court." The Otomo bowed deeply from his saddle, a maneuver far more difficult than it appeared.

The Akodo gunso displayed no reaction save for a respectful nod toward Hatori. "May I see your papers, please?" It was phrased as a question, but clearly was not open to debate. The gunso extended one hand.

"Certainly!" replied Sekkou. He dismounted and removed a roll of paper from his satchel scroll. With a bow, he held it forward.

The warden accepted the papers with a very slight nod, for Sekkou was wearing the trappings of a ronin. He reviewed the papers with a quick, efficient glance, pausing only slightly. "Otomo Taneji, Miya Hatori, and... Fuzake Sekkou?" He glanced at the shugenja. "You bear no mon. Are you ashamed of your clan?" A cool, hard edge had appeared in the warden's voice.

"Of course not, Akodo-sama," responded Sekkou. "Quite the opposite, in fact. I am on a musha shugyo. I feel that I must undertake a warrior's pilgrimage before I can earn the right to bear the mon of the Monkey Clan. I hope to prove myself in service to Hatori-sama and, through him, the Empire. Only when I am worthy will I take up the name and the symbol of my birthright."

The Akodo gunso smiled very slightly. "A warrior's pilgrimage. And a shugenja, no less. A noble goal, and an honorable vow." He rolled up the papers carefully and returned them to Sekkou with a respectful nod. Turning his attention to Hatori, he inclined his head deferentially to the higher-ranking samurai, who bowed his head slightly in return. "Hatori-sama, I hope that you find your travels through the Lion lands pleasant and uneventful. If you should require the services of the Akodo at any time during your journey, you have only to ask."

"Your hospitality is a great honor, Akodo-san. I thank you."

With one final bow of his head, the Akodo turned to his men and ordered them forward. The patrol passed by the three travelers and back toward the Lion border they had so recently crossed.

Taneji's brow was furrowed in dismay. "Strange that they were unaware of our arrival, my lord. Are the Lion not expecting us?"

"They are indeed, Taneji," Hatori said.

"Then what purpose was served by that encounter?" The Otomo was clearly frustrated. "They surely knew who you were. It was a waste of time."

"No," said Hatori, "not for them. They are wardens."

"Duty is never a waste of time," added Sekkou.

"Excellent, Sekkou. Now," Hatori added, turning his attention back to the business at hand, "once we have finished our task here in the Akodo lands, you two will go to the Kitsu provinces while I travel ahead to the Ikoma lands. Afterwards, we will meet on the northern border of the Matsu territories."

Deep in conversation, the three rode ever farther into the Lion lands.

THE AKODO PROVINCES

The Akodo family has gradually reclaimed control over its ancestral provinces over the past few decades. During the period of time when the Akodo did not exist, the other families of the Lion Clan administered these lands. They were reluctant to return full control to the Akodo when that family returned, but Akodo daimyo Akodo Ginawa arranged a gradual return of the lands so that the Akodo could regain the clan's trust. Under his dynamic leadership, the Akodo regained full control of their lands after the War of Spirits.

The lands of the Akodo are in the northern portion of the Lion Clan holdings. They are bordered on the west by the Kitsu provinces and on the south by the expansive lands of the Matsu family. To the east lie the lands of the Lion's most frequent enemy, the Crane Clan. As with most of the Lion lands, the majority of this region is open grassland with very little change in elevation beyond gentle, rolling hills. There is one particularly precious resource that distinguishes these holdings, however; the Akodo lands are home to the only major forest that lies wholly within Lion lands.

MAJOR AKODO HOLDINGS

The Akodo are a practical family. With their strong military history, they place great value on locations of strategic importance, including not only the Crane but also the Dragon and Phoenix. Accordingly, many of their major military holdings are located along the borders of their provinces, particularly the eastern border with Crane and Imperial lands.

The Akodo also recognize the importance of logistical locations, places that are instrumental in supplying the family and the armies with the resources they need. The Akodo greatly value areas which are rich in natural resources or fertile.

HIGHWAYS OF THE AKODO PROVINCES

The Emperor's Road (Connects L13 to L12 and L13 to L9) — This portion of the great Emperor's Road meets the Lion lands at Shiro Akodo and runs north through Ninkatoshi toward the Crane lands and west through Tonfajutsen toward the Unicorn lands. Lion wardens diligently patrol this road, which is maintained in excellent condition should the Emperor ever deign to travel it.

The Road of Endless Plains (Runs from L9 through L8 and L12) — This road divides the Akodo provinces, traveling through their innermost resources to the Kitsu lands. Accordingly, the heavy merchant traffic along this simple road has worn it very flat.

Ever Vigilant Road (Connects L5 to L4) — So named because of the heavy military presence along the road, this highway defines the northern borders of the Lion holdings and marks the proverbial line drawn in the sand centuries ago by the Dragonfly Clan. Since Akodo Ijiasu's campaign against the Dragonfly and the Lion's war with the Dragon, patrols along this road have intensified.

NINKATOSHI (LOCATION L9)

Also known as Permission City, Ninkatoshi is one of the most crucial military outposts in the Lion lands. Before the Clan War, Ninkatoshi was a simple farming village. Matsu Tsuko, who became Lion Clan Champion after the Scorpion's failed coup, transferred the headquarters for the Lion's ongoing border war with the Crane to Ninkatoshi.

The village was transformed almost overnight. Barracks sprang up to house the military forces attached to Tsuko's command staff. Once the presence of so many soldiers became common knowledge, enterprising merchants quickly set up new sake houses and geisha houses. Blacksmiths and armorers appeared to meet the needs of the military. Surprisingly quickly, Ninkatoshi was transformed from a simple village to a bustling city.

The military outpost at Ninkatoshi has seen a considerable amount of conflict. The constant battles with the Crane were coordinated through the command outpost here. The repeated changing of hands of Violence Behind Courtliness City has, from the Lion's perspective, been controlled through Ninkatoshi. Control of Toshi Ranbo has shifted hands so often that its control has become more a matter of prestige than a truly reliable resource of the Lion. Ninkatoshi, meanwhile, has become a major Lion city. When Shiro no Yojin fell to the Daidoji after the Clan War, Ninkatoshi-based troops reclaimed the city in a few months' time.

In the present time of trial for the Lion, the forces at Ninkatoshi have been reduced due to the Lion's two-front war against the Dragon Clan and the mysterious Tsuno raiders. Taking advantage of their enemy's weakness, the Crane recently retook Violence Behind Courtliness City. Even in the face of their battles with the Tsuno, the Lion cannot allow such a grievous slight to their honor to stand. The Akodo are marshalling their forces, planning the inevitable assault on the city that will begin as soon as the clan's other conflicts have been resolved.

SOULS OF HONOR

Souls of Honor is the most prestigious smithy in Ninkatoshi. Hitai, the smith, is famed throughout the Akodo provinces as a bladesmith, and many prominent samurai proudly display his ornate work in their obi. Although most of Hitai's time is occupied crafting blades for various Lion daimyo to give to their retainers, he still makes time to create a few other weapons during his spare time, generally between one and four a month depending upon the quality and style of weapon. At any given time, he has a selection of aiguchi, tanto, nodachi, naginata, or nagamaki available in his shop. Few other weapons are ever available, as Hitai considers himself exclusively a bladesmith rather than an armorer or fletcher.

HITAI

[Samurai 7/Master Smith 8; None (equivalent of Kaiu Engineer 5)]

Hitai is a giant of a man with a clean-shaven head and an intense, piercing stare. He seems perpetually distracted, though not disrespectfully so, intent only upon his work. Although most assume he is a heimin, none realize the true tragedy of Hitai's life.

Hitai was once a member of the Tsi ronin family, the master bladesmiths who live in East Hub Village. A few weeks after his gempukku, he was forced to choose between saving the life of his true love or obeying the Crab officer he served. Hitai chose the latter. His betrothed died a horrible death, and he never recovered. When he discovered that the lord he served was a dishonorable, corrupt man, he killed him and disappeared in the night.

What Hitai does not realize is that his true love cursed him with her dying breath. His honorable nature does much to combat the curse's effects,

but in Rokugan the dying breath of the wronged has great weight.

Approximately one in every ten weapons that Hitai crafts is cursed, and brings pain and suffering to those who bear it. If Hitai were to realize this, he would never make another weapon. His one passion in life would be taken from him, and he would likely take his own life to spare others a pain that should be his own. Removing the curse would involve finding the ghost of Hitai's beloved and allowing Hitai to apologize to her.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The characters are sent by their lord to commission Hitai to create a number of katana. Their lord is eager to acquire a small number of the prestigious blades to give to allies he wishes to impress. Accordingly, he authorizes the characters to negotiate an exchange for the blades.

Focus: The characters are present when a ronin makes an attempt on Hitai's life. The bedraggled ronin is obviously highly trained and fights in the traditional Lion style.

Strike: The ronin is a former high-ranking Lion whose cursed Hitai blade brought about his downfall. The former Lion recognized a pattern of occurrences among the Akodo over the past few decades and has decided to eliminate the threat Hitai poses once and for all.

WARDEN OUTPOST

Lying near the portion of the Emperor's Road that heads north toward the Phoenix and Dragon lands, Ninkatoshi is a natural location for a Lion warden outpost. From here, the wardens travel the roads to the east that lie outside clan boundaries, ensuring that no dishonor comes to the Emperor's name through inappropriate use of his roads.



This particular outpost is home to twelve wardens, who live within the outpost itself. The wardens are grouped in squads of four, with each squad patrolling a different region each day: one travels north along the Emperor's road outside the clan lands, one travels south, and one travels west back into the Lion lands, keeping all who travel the roads comfortable in the knowledge that the Lion will allow no threat to go unpunished. In time of need, the wardens can summon four dozen combat-ready ashigaru from the local farmers' homes.

AKODO HAKUSEKI

[Samurai 6; Akodo Bushi 1/Akodo Warden 1]

Hakuseki is a young warden assigned to the outpost at Ninkatoshi. His father was an Akodo who swore fealty to the Kitsu when the Akodo family was dissolved after the Scorpion Clan Coup. He met and married a young Kitsu samurai-ko, only to return to the Akodo when the family was reinstated many years later. As a result, young Hakuseki was exposed to the philosophies of both families, and has become a better student of the martial arts because of it.

Hakuseki is an idealistic man; some might even call him naïve. He is eager to prove his worth to his ancestors, and commits himself fully to any task placed before him. Those who come under his scrutiny as a warden find that he is not an angry or vengeful man, merely one very intent upon his duty.

SHIRO AKODO (LOCATION L13)

Many who see it for the first time mistake Shiro Akodo for another in a seemingly endless series of stark military outposts. In a sense, they are correct; Shiro Akodo lacks the creature comforts of most ancestral estates. The chambers within the large castle are only furnished to an extent that is appropriate for any guests that might visit the Akodo. Such guests often remark on the "austere, utilitarian" nature of Shiro Akodo, so that they can avoid describing it as "empty."

When Akodo Ginawa was appointed the head of the Akodo family by Emperor Toturi I, Ginawa decreed that all adornments within Shiro Akodo were to be removed until the Akodo could fill the castle once more with the trappings of their victories. In the years since that time, many tapestries, works of art, and other furnishings have been added as the Akodo gradually work their way back toward the height of their glory and honor. As yet, however, many chambers remain remarkably sterile.

Although there has been much bad blood between the Akodo and the Matsu in the past, that time is over. Matsu Nimuro, Lion Clan Champion, places great value on the counsel of Akodo Ginawa and his tacticians. The recent time of strife for the clan, with the Lion pitted against the Crane, the Tsuno, and the Phoenix, has sorely tested the tactical minds of the Akodo family. Ginawa and his generals, the stoic Akodo Koun and the tempestuous Akodo Tadenori, have held together the Lion armies, even in the face of such adversity.

THE ESTATES OF AKODO KANEKA

Dominating the villages that surround Shiro Akodo, the estates of Akodo Kaneka are opulent by Lion standards, but would be considered austere by those of other clans. His estates consist of a large personal residence, outlying buildings for servants, and a small parcel of farmland.

This estate was given to Akodo Kaneka shortly after he swore fealty to the Akodo family, but Kaneka rarely visits. Ginawa felt it was only appropriate that the son of the Emperor receive the birthright he had been so long denied. It

was a gift that Kaneka could not refuse, for Ginawa would not tolerate such an insult. Eventually, Kaneka came to realize the land's value, and it only deepened the bond he shares with the Akodo daimyo, who is in many respects the father he never had. However, his frequent travels across the Empire prevent him from spending much time at the estate.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: While serving a rotation as guards at Kaneka-sama's estate during his time away from home, you are confronted by representatives of both the Crane and Crab clans who demand to speak to Kaneka-sama regarding his activities in the Yasuki lands. Formal etiquette requires that they be allowed entrance regardless of Kaneka's presence, and be allowed to remain until they grow bored and leave.

Focus: The representatives from the visiting clans, obviously unable to seek an audience with Kaneka himself, begin squabbling with each other. Their disputes continue to grow louder and more disruptive, and their respective yojimbo seem prepared to attack one another at any moment.

Strike: Because Kaneka's hatamoto, Akodo Yobi, is not in residence (he has gone to fight alongside his lord), the characters are responsible for anything that occurs within the estate. If the Crab and Crane visitors are allowed to continue their feud, any blood spilled will bring enormous dishonor to the PCs.

YU SEIDO

Throughout the Lion lands, there are seven shrines devoted to the tenets of bushido. When the Tao of Shinsei was forced upon the clans by Imperial edict, Akodo did not accept it without protest. "Worship idle words if you must," he is alleged to have said. "I will place my faith in a code of honor." The devotion of Akodo One-Eye has passed on to his family and followers. Different families maintain the different shrines, depending on the values that each family considers most important.

To the Akodo family, there is no greater truth than bushido's lessons in duty and loyalty. Thousands of samurai come to this modest shrine each year to pray or meditate upon assignments given them by their lords. Having accepted such a burden, each Akodo knows that this responsibility has become a part of his own honor until such time as their vow has been fulfilled. To fail in one's duty is to fail as a man, as a samurai, and as an Akodo.

Yu Seido is a modest shrine within a larger ancestral temple outside the gates of Shiro Akodo. It celebrates Heroic Courage, a virtue the Akodo hold very dear. The monks who maintain the shrine are exclusively former members of the Akodo family. Although they are no longer members of the samurai class, the monks consider their duties to those who frequent their shrine, and to the heimin in the area who rely on the monks, to be every bit as binding as the vows they once accepted as samurai.

KOKORO REZUBAN MORI

Although blessed with considerable arable land, the Lion have few other natural resources within their lands. The lack of mineral deposits can be easily overcome, as the Matsu lands border upon the Spine of the World Mountains. Timber, however, is substantially more difficult to come by, and a standing military the size of that maintained by the Lion requires a substantial amount for arrows, supply carts, saya, and even the paper required for scrolls and messages. Fortunately for the

Lion, Kokoro Nezuban Mori, the Heart of Vigilance Forest, lies completely within the Akodo lands, unlike the larger forest to the south that lies halfway between the Matsu and Crane lands.

The villages that exist on the edge of Kokoro Nezuban Mori are, ironically, composed almost entirely of stone (such as the notable Renga Murai, detailed below). The Akodo carefully regulate how much wood is removed from the forest and are always careful to replace the trees they cut down by planting seeds or saplings. The heimin villagers who work the forest may not use the wood for their own purposes beyond gathering dead wood for fires in the winter. Not a single scrap is wasted or squandered.

There have been problems in the past with unsavory sorts attempting to hide within the deepest forest to escape detection by Lion authorities. Bandits, criminals, and ronin looking for a place to escape the elements have laid claim to tracts of the forest in the past. Oftentimes, these fugitives come into conflict with the work crews that the Akodo send to harvest wood. Once they are detected, the Lion send detachments of soldiers to eliminate them. Akodo samurai show no mercy to those who attack the lumberjacks. As a result, those who seek sanctuary within Kokoro Nezuban Mori have learned to avoid the work crews at all cost.



KOKORO NEZUBAN SEIDO

Years ago, Lion bushi overseeing the foresters discovered this mysterious shrine. It is a crude structure, little more than a rough-hewn stone altar in a small natural clearing. The symbols on the shrine indicate the involvement of a shugenja, but the cipher is one that no Kitsu has yet identified and no other clan recognizes. The only facts readily apparent about the shrine are that it is very old and that it is devoted to a large number of Fortunes, including the patrons of agriculture, soil, and stone.

The peasants who work the forests treat the shrine with great reverence, viewing it as the sacred heart of the forest. They have deliberately avoided harvesting any wood within a mile of the shrine in order to avoid upsetting the Fortunes and kami. In years past, an unpleasant samurai who was unhappy with his assignment overseeing the workers ordered a crew to cut down trees near the shrine. When they refused, he had them killed. The next morning, he was found dead in his bed. No cause for his death was ever established, and the Kitsu could not contact his spirit in Yomi. To the heimin, the meaning was obvious: the Fortunes would tolerate no disrespect. No one has attempted to harvest wood near the shrine since.

HIDEOUT OF THE FOREST-KILLERS

Decades ago, a bandit lord named Yugoro ruled over a dozen bandit groups scattered across the Empire. He used many names, and few suspected that the various bandit lords plaguing Rokugan were all the same man. Once Yugoro's reign came to an end, one of his largest groups, the Forest-Killers, fragmented. The largest group remained within the Shinomen Mori, but smaller groups scattered across the land. One such group came to rest within Kokoro Nezuban Mori.

These are canny bandits, men and women who are accustomed to dwelling unseen within the forest. They remain well out of sight of the Lion and the peasants who work along the edges of the forest. They never strike a target, be it travelers or a village, any closer than two days' ride from the forest. As long as they are careful, the bandits hope to keep their hideout deep in the center of Kokoro Nezuban Mori a secret. While this group keeps the Forest-Killer name, they are unaffiliated with the bandit group of the same name led by the ronin, Kuso (see *Way of the Ninja*).

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The forestry crews that work the edge of Kokoro Nezuban Mori have been plagued with problems. Accidents in the forest, illnesses plaguing the workers, and strange sounds in the night have paralyzed the peasants with fear. Unless the samurai overseeing the project (or travelers passing through) discover the cause of these woes, work in the forest threatens to grind to a halt.

Focus: Some of the workers have come dangerously close to the hideout of the Forest-Killers, who are using their typical scare tactics to make the workers think that they have offended hostile spirits or angry Fortunes. They have attacked and killed workers in the forest, poisoned the water supply, and used illusion spells to frighten the workers in hopes of keeping them away from their hideout.

Strike: The bandits are behind the strange events, just as the characters are likely to discover. However, the violence within the confines of the forest has angered the Fortunes who watch over the shrine at Kokoro Nezuban Seido. If the bandits are not stopped soon, then a true show of the Fortunes' anger will be forthcoming.

THE PLAINS OF BATTLE

This large expanse of grassland spans the Akodo and Matsu lands, extending from the southern reaches of the Akodo holdings all the way down to Shiro no Yojin on the border between the Matsu and Crane lands. These bountiful plains supply a significant portion of the Lion Clan's food. Both the Akodo and the Matsu have therefore ringed the region with outposts and small villages to protect it in the event of an extended war with the Crane or other foe. For the same reason, many small fortresses called hirajiro dot the plains.

In addition to the agricultural value of the Plains of Battle, the size of the region makes it an excellent place to train an army. With the considerable size of the Lion military, there are very few such locations at their disposal. Unfortunately, the leaders of the Lion military have always been confronted with the simple fact that if they utilize the Plains of Battle for training rather than food production, a significant number of the heimin who serve the Lion would go hungry or even starve. Given the harsh truth of the matter, the Lion commanders have wisely chosen to refrain from such endeavors so far.

THE RUINED OUTPOST

This outpost, one of many dotting the Plains of Battle, was destroyed in an earthquake several months ago and has not yet been rebuilt. Earthquakes are relatively uncommon in this portion of the Empire, but travelers passing this way could clear out enough debris to find a dry place to sleep. It would also be possible, if one were willing to spend several hours digging through the wreckage, to find several buried polearms. Although they would be of little use to properly outfitted samurai, these damaged weapons would be very valuable to peasants or desperate ronin.

BANNIN MURA

This small village rests on the eastern edge of the Plains of Battle. The heimin who live here consider protecting the Plains their sacred duty, and allow none to pass without permission from their Lion lords. Some ashigaru in Bannin Mura trace their lineage as proudly as any Lion, and pass rigid training regimens to their descendants. That the peasants take such a vested interest in the affairs of the samurai class is somewhat inappropriate, but the Akodo recognize their pride in the status of the Lion Clan and allow it to pass unpunished.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A farmer from Bannin Mura has been murdered, and the signs seem to point to a ronin or bandit, as he appears to have been cut down in the field with a samurai weapon.

Focus: The villagers suspect that the culprit is a ronin who passed through a few days ago. He was run out of town because the villagers believed he might be a Crane spy. The Akodo stationed in the village did nothing to discourage their prejudice.

Strike: The ronin fled town and hid in the ruined outpost. He was killed when a stone slab collapsed on him, but his body was almost immediately possessed by one of the spirits of Toshigoku that periodically manifest on the Plains of Battle. Under the spirit's influence, the ronin's body is wandering the Plains, attacking anyone it comes across.

MINOR AKODO HOLDINGS

Although many locations within the Akodo provinces have no strategic value or natural resources to speak of, the Akodo are renowned for their practical approach to managing assets. Little is wasted in these lands. The following are considered minor holdings of the Akodo, though each has a specific role in the governance of the family's affairs.

OIKU (LOCATION 15)

Half a century ago, Oiku was one of the most prestigious Lion military outposts, a post for the finest soldiers. The Lion armies used Oiku as a base for their strikes against the city of Toshi Ranbo, a city that has passed from Crane to Lion hands and back many times since that time. Oiku's demise began when Lion Champion Akodo Arasou died in an attack on Toshi Ranbo, launched from the stronghold, in front of his betrothed, Matsu Tsuko. When Arasou's successor, Akodo Toturi, was cast out of the clan, new champion Matsu Tsuko

relocated her command staff and their forces to Ninkatoshi, leaving Oiku virtually deserted. During the absence of the Akodo, it became a punishment station for disgraced or disliked bushi. Oiku was a dreaded assignment, one that effectively signified the end of a military career. The surrounding village fell into corruption and criminal activity.

Oiku came alive again in the wake of the Akodo's return and the appointment of Akodo Ginawa as family daimyo. Having lived as a wave man, Ginawa was not in the habit of allowing resources to go unused. He appointed new Akodo as local provincial governor and magistrates and gave them one year to end criminal activity in the city.

Unknown to the Akodo, during the brief period in which the city fell to crime it became a haven for the Kolat. Though the city has been restored to its former glory, the Kolat smuggling rings once based there were too cleverly hidden for the Akodo magistrates to find. Members of the Coin Sect still operate out of Oiku, under the very nose of the Akodo.

JIN SEIDO

Another of the shrines ordered by Akodo to revere the tenets of bushido, this shrine honors the virtue of compassion. Jin Seido is a small shrine, attended by no more than half a dozen monks. Sadly, it has fallen into disuse over the years, as Matsu Tsuko's abandonment of Oiku as a primary military post meant that those assigned there were bitter and forlorn, not compassionate.

AKODO NINSEI

[Samurai 5; Matsu Bushi 2]

Akodo Ninsei is a quiet man who speaks only when spoken to, and then only to superior officers. He is not anti-social, as most of his fellow soldiers believe, but merely consumed with guilt and rage, driven to prove himself to be an honorable man. Ninsei's brother, who had a notoriously bad temper, was executed for the murder of another samurai. Most think Ninsei punishes himself constantly for the dishonor to his family, as if to make up for his brother's sin. The truth is far more sinister: Ninsei was the one guilty of the murder.

Ninsei's older brother forced Ninsei to obey him, allowing him to take the blame for the murder. Ninsei has been wracked with self-loathing ever since. Ironically, it is this horrible secret that drives him to embrace bushido and honor so completely. He seeks atonement for his crime, but feels certain he can never earn it without devaluing his brother's sacrifice. And so every day he hurls himself into his duty with a zeal that amazes those around him. To them, Ninsei is the perfect samurai. To himself, he is an honorless cur.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: As the characters are traveling near the northern edge of the Lion lands, they come across a terribly injured samurai bearing the mon of the Dragon Clan. He begs for the characters' aid, and solicits their word of honor that they will help him if possible. His injuries are beyond the party's ability to treat, and the nearest settlement is Oiku.

Focus: The party is told that while they may enter Oiku, the Dragon may not. He was a victim of the Lion's raid on the Dragonfly, and he fled like a coward, hiding in the kimono of a Dragon. His dishonor is such that the Lion will refuse to aid him because he shamed his clan with his cowardice.

Strike: The characters could find themselves in a very unpleasant predicament. If they offered their word that they would aid the stranger, then they are honor bound to fulfill their vow. However, the Lion have a legitimate reason to refuse him admittance, and even if he recovers they may wish vengeance for his shameful behavior. How will they honorably resolve the matter?

RENGA MURAI (LOCATION L8)

A small village a day's ride to the south of Kokoro Nezuban Mori, Renga Murai is unique because of its uniform construction: all buildings in the village are made from red stone bricks. Renga Murai is the primary clearinghouse for timber harvested from the forest to the north. The Katai vassal family oversees the collection of the timber, and prepares it to be shipped throughout the Lion lands. There are in fact several small villages, little more than ramshackle buildings set up for the purpose of harvesting from the forest, ringing the great forest, all of which feed their product through Renga Murai for processing.

The peasants of Renga Murai are actually very well off. The Akodo ship food to the village so that the villagers can spend their time harvesting wood for the clan. The workforce therefore does not have to farm in order to pay taxes, but can still raise a small amount of rice on the side, providing a substantial bonus to their relative wealth. During the summer, the village is often empty except for the elderly and children, as most able-bodied workers labor in the forest for days on end without returning to the village. The winters, on the other hand are full of merriment and time spent with family. The workers have an excess of dead wood to warm them through the winter, and the forest cannot be worked during the cold, snow-filled months, so they enjoy a lengthy reprieve from work and spend the winters in a level of comfort most heimin can only dream of.

IMPERIAL MAGISTRATE'S OFFICE

Renga Murai serves as a rather unlikely base of operations for the chief Imperial magistrate for the Akodo lands, Akodo Jusho. The villagers largely ignore the small, unassuming office. Since Renga Murai is so close to the center of Akodo lands, Jusho can travel anywhere he is needed within a few days at most. A side effect of Jusho's presence is a quiet, peaceful village. The occasional bandit seeking to hide within the confines of the forest, or thieves attempting to harvest wood from Kokoro Nezuban Mori, are the extent of the criminal activity normally found within Renga Murai.

AKODO JUSHO

[Samurai 6/Emerald Magistrate 3; Akodo Bushi 3]

Akodo Jusho is the chief Emerald Magistrate for the Akodo provinces and a former student of Akodo Hirotsu. He is famous throughout the Lion lands as an honorable and just servant of the Empire and a scourge upon all who would dare break the laws of the Emperor. Jusho is all of these things, but he is also extremely bored. He has always been a man of honor, but also a man of action. His duty has until now involved hunting down criminals, engaging the enemies of the Lion, and protecting valued members of the Imperial Court. When he was sent to his family's home provinces, he rejoiced at the thought of defending his home. In the long months since that time, he has come to regret the assignment.

Though he was briefly called from his post to join the assault on Kyuden Tonbo, the moments of glory only served to heighten his boredom. He nevertheless fulfills his duty without question. He is an Akodo, after all.

HOUSE OF THE STEADFAST OAK

The largest and most popular gathering place in Renga Murai, the House of the Steadfast Oak provides virtually every form of recreation that exists: tea, sake, geisha, and food are all available at a reasonable cost. The owner, a portly, affable man named Hyobe, seems to know everyone in the village and is always milling about the main chamber, making sure people are enjoying themselves. He is locally famous for refusing to accept money from magistrates, including the village's own Akodo Jusho. A magistrate protects the people, he says, and should be treated with respect and deference.

Hyobe is an exceptional actor. He provides a number of illicit services to the relatively wealthy populace of the village, including opium and gambling. He keeps these activities extremely well hidden, and offers them only to those that he knows he can trust to keep quiet about it.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Traveling through Renga Murai, the characters present themselves before the highest authority in the village as is appropriate. Eager for the company of fellow samurai, Akodo Jusho invites the characters to dinner at the House of the Steadfast Oak. The characters are of course honor bound to accept such a gracious offer. He converses with them at length, hungry for tales of glory.

Focus: As the characters are dining, one of them notices a few patrons all asking for the same geisha. Each time, Hyobe escorts them through a door leading upstairs. Knowing that a single geisha rarely entertains multiple guests, the character could easily reach the conclusion that something is amiss at the House of the Steadfast Oak.

Strike: Should the characters investigate the strange business practices of the establishment? Doing so might be an insult to Jusho, who makes the goings-on of Renga Murai his business. Of course, bringing the oddities to his attention would be impolite as well, as they would be implying that he had not detected them himself. Doing nothing at all would allow a possible crime to go unpunished. It will be a difficult decision to make for any true samurai.

Whether or not anything is really amiss is up to the GM.

SHIRO NO SHININ

Once a very minor military outpost of the Akodo family a day's ride west of Kokoro Nezuban Mori, the building that would become Shiro no Shinin fell into disuse after the Akodo were disbanded. The Matsu seemed to have little use for facilities located so far from the front lines of the Lion-Crane conflict. All but abandoned, this facility soon became a haunt for the suddenly increased numbers of Deathseekers, that strange sect of Lion warriors who wish to atone for dishonor by dying valiantly in battle. While many such samurai flocked to the unused dojo at Shiro sano Ken Hayai, those who felt unworthy to remain in the ancestral home of the Akodo gravitated to this small outpost, which soon became known as Shiro no Shinin, the Castle of the Dead.

Shiro no Shinin served as an outpost of the Deathseekers throughout the Clan War, the protracted conflict with the Lying Darkness, and the War of Spirits. Upon the conclusion of that long period of conflict and the restoration of the Akodo line, the reclamation of Shiro sano Ken Hayai by the Akodo sensei caused most remaining Deathseekers to relocate to here, their secondary outpost. It was designated by Akodo Ginawa as a Deathseeker stronghold, for use in whatever capacity they wished. The Deathseekers now use Shiro no Shinin as a place to meditate on the enormity of their dishonor and hone their skill in battle. The death of an unskilled warrior does little to expunge the honor of one's family name, after all.

DOJO OF THE DEATHSEEKERS

This unnamed, unmarked building is the primary dojo for Shiro no Shinin's squads of Deathseekers. There are no sensei at this dojo, although the seasoned veterans among the Deathseekers often train their younger counterparts in the finer points of combat.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: One of the characters receives word that a distant relative has died. The character is nevertheless the closest living relative and is therefore obligated to see to the dead relation's effects now that he has passed on to Yomi. Among these possessions is a trunk containing a series of sealed scrolls that appear to be a private journal.

Focus: The journal scrolls detail the horrific exploits of a dishonorable man's life. The character's relative was an unethical, unscrupulous individual with no regard for bushido. Near the end of the man's life, however, his journal records great regret over his actions, particularly the carefully orchestrated dishonor of a Lion samurai who had aroused his ire. The journal records the relative's fear that he will never rest until restitution is made.



Strike: The Lion samurai who was dishonored so many years ago is dead, but his son lives on as a Deathseeker. The character must decide whether he will seek out the young, bitter warrior at Shiro no Shinin and inform him that the great disservice done his family was a mistake, and that they have suffered in shame for years for nothing.

AKODO SETAI

[Samurai 10/Matsu Elite 4; Akodo Bushi 5]

One frequent visitor to this dojo is Akodo Setai, who has the unusual distinction of being the best-known Deathseeker in the Lion Clan. He has been a Deathseeker for over twelve years, and seems absolutely impossible to kill in battle. Setai became a Deathseeker when he disgraced his family and sensei. In love with the daughter of the provincial daimyo he was assigned to protect, he allowed an assassin to strike while he was distracted. Although respected for his martial prowess, the other Deathseekers avoid him. He is an unfortunate reminder of the best and worst thing that they can become — a Deathseeker who cannot be killed, who is forced to continually expunge his dishonor on the field of battle.

AKODO FUMIO

[Samurai 3/Fighter 3; Akodo Bushi 3]

One of the younger Deathseekers, Akodo Fumio is a seething cauldron of rage. Those who dare comment speculate that his dishonor was one of passion. The truth is much more depressing. Fumio was one of the most promising students of his class, and his prowess made him arrogant. One night, after a bit of sake, he fell asleep at his post. Nothing unusual happened, and Fumio was not caught. He would likely have been forgiven after a moderate punishment, but Fumio could not get over the anger he felt at such an embarrassing failure. After a short time attempting to continue his duties, he requested permission to join the Deathseekers. With reluctance, his daimyo allowed him to go.



THE RUINS OF SHIRO SHIMIZU

In a rarely traveled corner of the Akodo provinces near the border of the Kitsu lands, there lies a patch of rocky, unproductive land that contains no villages, no outposts, no structures of any kind. In the lands of the practical Akodo, this forgotten and barren patch of land seems strangely out of place. Akodo who are asked parrot the explanation that the lands are strategically unimportant, and that the effort necessary to grow crops in the rocky soil is not worth the time and expense. Travelers who find their way to this empty tract of land are often met by magistrates, who request their papers and speed them on their way. Only Kuni Witch Hunters and Asako Inquisitors are not bothered in this area, and for good reason.

This piece of land holds unpleasant memories for all Akodo, ones they do not wish to share with others. The land once belonged to the Shimizu family, a family born of the Akodo for valorous service to the Emperor. The Shimizu were a covetous lot, however, and their constant warring with neighboring provinces led to their demise at the hands of the Akodo. It is not a lesson that the Akodo have forgotten, for a full account of those events lies within their libraries and the libraries of the Ikoma, but neither is it one that they share with outsiders. (More information on the Shimizu family can be found in Chapter Seven.)

MAGISTRATE'S OFFICE

The lone structure in this unpleasant place is a small, unassuming building that serves as the office, temple, and living quarters of the magistrate left to keep watch over this desolate land. Most who first find this building assume it to be the home of a recluse or perhaps a solitary farmer. Few suspect the true nature of the building until they meet the magistrate who dwells within, or until they enter it.

AKODO SHIYAKO

[Shugenja 6/Jade Magistrate 4; Kitsu Shugenja 3]

One of the rare Akodo who possess a rapport with the kami, Shiyako was chosen at an early age to train with the Kitsu. Hailing from a long line of proud bushi, Shiyako felt somewhat uncomfortable with her lot, but accepted it as her duty. After completing her training, Shiyako was given the unpleasant task of monitoring the lands near the ruins of Shiro Shimizu.

Shiyako believes that her appointment here reflects a failure on her part, or the Akodo family's perception of shugenja as weak. In truth, Akodo Ginawa selected her personally for this lonely task because he recognized the inner strength she possessed and knew without question that she could fulfill the difficult duty.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Traveling through the Lion lands (or perhaps carrying a message to Shiyako), the characters come across the desolate Shimizu lands and the offices of Akodo Shiyako. The offices are in great disarray and appear to have been partially burned. A rudimentary search turns up a blood trail leading away from the offices.

Focus: Shiyako has been captured by a ronin shugenja who hopes that the spirits of the maho-using Shimizu still haunt this land and can make him a maho-tsukai. He plans to sacrifice her at midnight in a bid for power.

Strike: Although Shiyako appears helpless, she has allowed the fledgling shugenja to believe he has defeated her. She believes that he can lead her to a maho cult operating some-

where within the Lion lands and hopes that he will give her the information she needs before the sacrifice. If not, she plans to free herself and take him into custody. If the characters attempt to rescue her, she attempts to convey her plans to them without alerting the ronin. If they kill the shugenja before she can learn what she needs to know, she becomes irritated and unhelpful.

EXTRA-TERRITORIAL HOLDINGS

The Akodo are above all else a practical and honorable family, and do not see much point in extending their influence beyond their own lands. They consider it foolish to place a possession somewhere outside their ability to protect. Despite that feeling, there are a small handful of holdings that lie outside the family's provinces, including their most prestigious bushi dojo.

SHIRO SANO KEN HAYAI

The Castle of the Swift Sword houses one of Rokugan's legendary military schools. The finest Akodo warriors have trained at this prestigious military academy for centuries. Nevertheless, the castle is not actually an Akodo holding; it is the ancestral home of the Kitsu family. This odd location for a bushi school dates back to the original Akodo, who betrothed daughters to the original kitsu. In recognition of the close bond between the two families, and in remembrance of the site where Akodo and Matsu first met, Akodo's great-grandson relocated the school to the Kitsu lands, where it has remained.

More information on Shiro sano Ken Hayai is available in *Way of the Samurai*.

THE AKODO ESTATES

IN RYOKO OWARI TOSHI

The daimyo of the Akodo family, Akodo Ginawa, spent many years as a wandering ronin, hunting an assassin that he still firmly believes had ties to the Scorpion Clan. To say that Ginawa has a very low opinion of the Scorpion would be a gross understatement. He does, however, have tremendous respect for their information network, and he recognizes the need to keep a close eye on one's enemies. Shortly after the reformation of the Akodo, Ginawa was granted permission to maintain an estate in the name of the Lion Clan in Ryoko Owari, the second-largest city in the Empire and one of the Scorpion Clan's most important holdings.

From their moderate holdings in Ryoko Owari, the Akodo can keep a close eye on the Scorpion's activities, and monitor the Unicorn who contest the city's rule. An assignment to Ryoko Owari is dreaded among the Akodo. The threat of provoking a war with the Scorpion is too great, and thus the possibility of combat is virtually non-existent there. At the same time, the constant threat of humiliation and dishonor remains very high, creating a most uncomfortable situation for most Akodo. Only the most even-tempered and clever Akodo are appointed to protect this estate.

More information on Ryoko Owari can be found in the *City of Lies* boxed set and the forthcoming supplement *Secrets of the Scorpion*.

IMPORTANT AKODO NPCS

AKODO GINAWA

True war has once again come to the Lion, and Akodo Ginawa could not be more satisfied. The Akodo daimyo was careful to keep to himself his opinion of the Lion's involvement in the Dragon-Phoenix war, but now such considerations seem to be from the distant past. Ginawa has turned the full might of the Akodo on the invading armies of the Shadowlands — especially the hated Tsuno. So far, his Akodo have performed admirably in this new conflict, and the forces of the Shadowlands have suffered.

However, with the slow and steady rise of war, Ginawa finds himself once again unsure of the future of Rokugan. As the Winds continue to work against one another, the Empire is unraveling at its seams. Ginawa knows nothing good can come from the fracturing of Rokugan between the four children of Toturi. Such thoughts he once again keeps to himself, as he stands beside both Matsu Nimuro and Akodo Kaneka to preserve some semblance of control throughout Rokugan, and helps Toturi Tsudao exterminate the Tsuno.

As much as Ginawa had hoped to avoid such entanglements, he now finds himself deeply involved in the struggle between the Winds for the Throne. The aging Lion hopes that his influence can help prevent the civil war that the children of Toturi seem bent on causing.

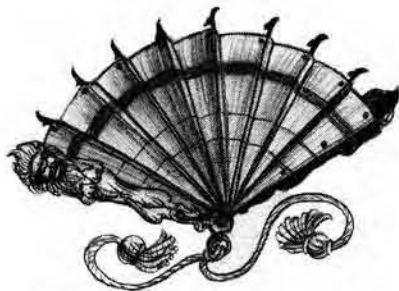
AKODO GINAWA

Male human Sam15/Ftr3: CR18, Medium-sized humanoid; HD18d10+54; hp 195; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC23 (touch 16, flat-footed 22); Attack +24/+19/+14 melee (1d3+6, tessen of smiting); SQ Class Skill - Battle (family bonus), Samurai abilities (Ancestral Daisho); Dojo (Castle of the Swift Sword); Honor 2; AL LG; SV Fort +17, Ref +11, Will +15; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 13; Height 5 ft. 8 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Zokujin), Battle +12, Climb +14, Diplomacy +7, Handle Animal +6, Iaijutsu Focus +8, Intimidate +11, Jump +14, Knowledge (Bloodswords) +5, Knowledge (Ninja) +5, Ride +10, Sense Motive +10, Swim +12; Akodo's Technique, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Endurance, The Final Lesson, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Void Use, Way of the Lion, Weapon Focus (katana).

Dojo: Castle of the Swift Sword; **Kata:** Gentle Blade of Winter, The Soul's Roar, Striking as Water.

Possessions: tessen of smiting (as mace of smiting), masterwork great armor, ring of mind shielding, haori of resistance +5, bracers of armor +5



AKODO GINAWA

Earth: 4

Endurance: 6

Water: 5

Fire: 4

Agility: 5

Air: 3

Reflexes: 4

Void: 4

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 5

Dojo: Castle of the Swift Sword

Honor: 2.6

Glory: 9.3

Advantages: Quick Healer

Disadvantages: Insensitive

Skills: Bard 3, Battle 7, Defense 4, Hand-to-Hand 6, History 2, Horsemanship 4, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu 7, Kyujutsu 5, Lore (Bushido) 5, Stealth 2, Tessen 4, Shintao 4

Kata: Gentle Blade of Winter, The Soul's Roar, Striking as Water

AKODO SENKE

Akodo Senke was born under several auspicious signs, indications that he would become a great figure in a war that would shake the Empire. His parents took every step necessary to ensure the young Akodo would be prepared to meet his destiny. An accomplished master of the Akodo War College tutored Senke privately. The sensei spent less than a season with the boy before meeting with his parents. The sensei told them bluntly that their son would never be a warrior. He had no portion of the self-control an Akodo needed; he might, with proper training, be turned into a berserker and be of some utility to the clan. Senke's father was so infuriated that he drew steel on the fearsome bushi.

After that incident, Akodo Senke was banned from the Akodo school. It took every favor and bit of charm Senke's mother possessed to get her child into even a minor Akodo dojo. Once Senke truly began his training, the incident with his former tutor seemed inevitable once again. The truth was clear to every student Senke fought beside — he was unfocused and too hot-tempered for the Akodo Technique.

Senke's lack of talent for the path before him only strengthened his resolve. He would prove to everyone that they were wrong. He was an Akodo. Nothing in this world should be impossible for him. Senke applied his mind to the peaceful arts in order to find his center, but to little avail. While he has slowly mastered some of the more advanced techniques of Akodo's style, he knows that further secrets will forever be out of his reach until he can balance his raging soul.

When the Lion began their war with the Dragon Clan, Senke found his harmony as last. The great Void of War that others spoke of was clear to the Akodo bushi now, and his skill on the battlefield far outstripped what his sensei ever thought possible. Senke's newfound "enlightenment" has proven invaluable to the Lion forces who were left behind with the Phoenix when Nimuro moved the bulk of his clan against the Tsuno. The betrayal of the Lion by Shiba Aikune has left a small army of Matsu and Akodo samurai stranded and surrounded in Phoenix lands. Senke has managed to rally these troops behind him, and is now completely prepared to meet his fate.

AKODO SENKE

Male human Sam7: CR7, Medium-sized humanoid; HD 7d10+21; hp 62; Init +6; Spd 20 ft.; AC 20 (touch 12, flat-footed 18); Attack +2 katana +13/+8 melee (1d10+8 damage); SQ Class skill — Battle (family bonus), Samurai abilities (Ancestral Daisho); Honor 3; AL CN; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8; Height 5 ft. 5 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Battle +11, Iaijutsu Focus +9, Intimidate +9, Jump +11, Ride +8, Swim +9; Daisho Specialization (katana), Death Trance, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Void Use, Way of the Lion, Weapon Focus (katana).

Dojo: Castle of the Swift Sword; **Kata:** Striking as Fire.

Possessions: +2 katana (ancestral daisho), +2 wakizashi (ancestral daisho), lamellar armor +2, masterwork yumi of strength (+2) and 20 arrows, amulet of mind shielding, bracers of archery

AKODO SENKE

Earth: 3

Endurance: 4

Water: 3

Strength: 4

Fire: 3

Agility: 4

Air: 2

Reflexes: 4

Void: 2

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 3

Dojo: Castle of the Swift Sword

Honor: 3.2

Glory: 4.1

Advantages: Death Trance, Strength of the Earth (1 Rank), Combat Reflexes

Disadvantages: Antisocial (2 points), Black Sheep

Skills: Athletics 4, Bard 2, Battle 4, Hand-to-Hand 3, History 2, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 2, Meditation 3, Poetry 1, Shintao 1, Tea Ceremony 2

Kata: Striking as Fire

AKODO IJIASU

Glory and honor have rained upon the name of Akodo Ijiasu. He is the general who led the Akodo forces to crush the Dragonfly on their own lands and ripped down the Tonbo banner with his own hands. It is Akodo Ijiasu who stands beside Shogun Akodo Kaneka as he attempts to impose his rule upon his father's Empire. The name Ijiasu will live forever within the Ikoma Histories as the man at the right hand of the first man to ever proclaim himself Shogun of Rokugan.

At the end of each day, Ijiasu can only pray his accomplishments are enough. At the end of each day, Ijiasu worries that they are not.

Since he was a child, Ijiasu has harbored a secret deep within his soul, one he cannot bear to share with even his great mentor, Kaneka. While his elders lectured him and his peers that the ancestors always watching each Lion, everyone around him seemed to understand something he didn't. His kin would talk about how they felt the guidance of ages past, but Ijiasu could never fathom what they were speaking of.

The Akodo general has turned to every source he dares question in order to find out one thing — why? Why do the ancestors turn a blind eye to him, and how can he gain their attention? Nothing has provided answers, not even the Kitsu in whom he confided. The old sodan-senzo listened to the

Akodo's plea with compassion in his eyes, and turned Ijiasu away with pain in his heart. The Kitsu told him he would never receive comfort from heroes long past; such a fate has befallen brave warriors of the Lion from time to time. The only recourse was to struggle even harder to prove oneself.

Since that day, Ijiasu has found great comfort in the Kitsu's advice. He will fight to prove himself, to gain the favor of the glorious souls that came before him. When he has proven himself worthy, he will hear the guiding voices and praises of the ancestors, and then he will truly feel at peace. Every victory he dedicates to them in his heart, and has never given up faith that one day his efforts will bear fruit. Until such time, he is extremely eager to seek the acceptance of his fellow samurai, especially the Shogun. Kaneka does not proclaim it openly, but Ijiasu knows he is indispensable to Kaneka, easily more so than his Mantis and Unicorn allies. And when he has helped his Shogun attain the Throne of the Empire, Ijiasu knows that the blessed souls of Yomi will speak to him at last.

AKODO IJIASU

Male human Sam10/Sie4: CR14, Medium-sized humanoid; HD 10d10+30 plus 4d8+12; hp 150; Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC19 (touch 11, flat-footed 18); Attack +3 keen lawful katana +22/+17/+12 melee (1d10+9 damage plus 2d6 vs. dishonorable); SQ Command +2, Class skill — Battle (family bonus), Samurai abilities (Ancestral Daisho); Honor 3; AL LG; SV Fort +14, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 8, Cha 14; Height 5 ft. 8 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Battle +17, Craft (Weaponsmith) +13, Diplomacy +19, Disable Device +10, Handle Animal +12, Iaijutsu Focus +19, Intimidate +12, Ride +14, Sense Motive +12, Spot +8, Tea Ceremony +7; Akodo's Technique, Alertness, Cleave, Endurance, Improved Critical (Katana), Leadership (18), Power Attack, The Final Lesson, Weapon Focus (katana), Void Use, Way of the Lion

Dojo: Castle of the Swift Sword; **Kata:** Striking as Fire, Striking as Earth

Possessions: +3 keen lawful katana (ancestral daisho), +3 wakizashi (ancestral daisho), lamellar armor +3, bracers of speed, periapt of proof against poison

AKODO IJIASU

Earth: 4

Water: 3

Strength: 5

Fire: 3

Agility: 4

Air: 3

Reflexes: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Akodo War College 4 (Castle of the Swift Sword)

Honor: 3.7

Glory: 6.1

Advantages: Death Trance, Kharmic Tie — Akodo Kaneka, Tactician

Disadvantages: Can't Lie, Forsaken

Skills: Archery 5, Athletics 6, Battle 7, Etiquette 3, Hand-to-Hand 6, History 2, Horsemanship 4, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6, Meditation 3, Shintao 4

VASSALS OF THE AKODO FAMILY

THE KATAI FAMILY

In the fifth century of the Empire, the Gozoku Alliance controlled the Empire through the Emperor, Hantei Kusada. During its reign, this alliance of Phoenix, Scorpion and Crane courtiers greatly improved the infrastructure of the empire; art and culture flourished. However, the Gozoku also allowed crime and corruption to run unchecked. After more than thirty-five years, the Emperor began to chafe under their rule.

While the Gozoku ruled through her father, the Matsu and Ikoma trained Yugozohime in the tenets of bushido and wisdom of the Celestial Heavens. When the Imperial princess learned of the true glory of the Hantei, she began planning to overthrow the Gozoku and return Rokugan to its rightful rule.

When Hantei Kusada died, his Phoenix-controlled son was brought in to replace him. Yugozohime dued him for the throne and won. With support from the Lion and Dragon, the newly crowned Hantei Yugozohime, Hantei VII, destroyed the Gozoku Alliance. However, without the aid of a ronin samurai-ko and the plans she put into motion, Yugozohime's success would not have been possible.

Few now remember that the ronin who served Yugozohime had once been a Lion.

During the reign of Hantei Fujiwa (Hantei V), the first Gozoku-controlled Emperor, a young Matsu Mochihime strode into the Imperial Court, openly defied the Gozoku and the Emperor, and stormed out again. Soon thereafter, tales began to spring up of a ronin named Mochiko and a heroic band who fought at her side against the Gozoku. Mochiko's brave campaign against the Gozoku during both Fujiwa's and Kusada's reigns paved the way for Yugozohime.

As one of the first acts of her reign, Empress Yugozohime commanded the Lion to grant fealty to the ronin Mochiko. Although she was decades beyond the usual retirement age, Matsu Mochiko was the Lion's representative at the next Test of the Emerald Champion and won, after Yugozohime's consort turned down the position. Mochiko's destiny was set. The group of heroic ronin who had helped her achieve so much was thought to have disbanded soon after Matsu Mochiko's coronation as Emerald Champion. The truth of their fate, however, is far different.

The ronin following Mochiko knew that she had originally been Matsu Mochihime and followed her proudly, knowing what she had given up in the name of bushido. They served Mochiko with the understanding that they were fighting for the future of the Empire. When Mochiko once again swore fealty, however, they were without a leader. Her lieutenant Katai took over the group of ronin and decided to find a home in or near the Lion lands, to wait until they were needed again, by Mochiko or by the Empire.

The Lion investigated the origins of these ronin on their lands, and after tracing the ronin back to Mochiko and discovering her previous acts as Mochihime, the politically-minded Ikoma realized that the enemies of the Lion might discover Mochihime's earlier defiance of the Emperor and twist it against her. Rather than risk a whispering campaign, the Ikoma nipped the potential for rumor in the bud by silencing Mochiko's ronin with a great reward. They were made a vassal family of the Lion.

As Katai had formerly been an Akodo samurai-ko, the leaders of the Lion families thought it appropriate to make the group of ronin a vassal family of the Akodo and put them in charge of Kokoro Nezuban Mori. They would be assigned to Renga Murai, supervise the lumber production there, and make a new home far from prying eyes.

Throughout the centuries, the Katai have been an unassuming family, tending to the Lion's forests, but mostly staying near Renga Murai. When the Akodo were disbanded, the Katai were unfazed. They continued to produce lumber for the Lion Clan, despite once again being ronin. When the Akodo were reinstated, the Katai once again reported to their Akodo lords, as if nothing had ever changed. They were one of many families who helped to acquaint Akodo Ginawa and the other Akodo with the lands they had left untended for decades. Ginawa values their services greatly, and knows that without their noble service much of the soul of the Akodo family would have been forever lost.

Recently, the Katai have been working to expand their family, building a dojo in Renga Murai and attempting to attract the eye of Akodo Kaneka. Daimyo Katai Seihai knows that the eldest son of Toturi is bound for a great destiny, and that such a man could help the Katai (like the Matsu a matriarchal family) become greater in the eyes of the Lion.

RENGAI TORID-E (BRICK KEEP)

Although the home of the Katai family is called a keep, it is in reality just the largest building in Renga Murai. Few visitors to the village realize that it is even a samurai residence, as the Katai place little value on appearance.

The Katai have nevertheless worked very hard in the last few years to change Renga Murai from a small, sleepy town into a thriving village. Travelers of all kinds are welcome, and visitors from nearby Tonfajutsen and Ninkatoshi marvel at how much the village has grown.

Small amounts of wood were set aside from each harvest to build a small dojo for the Rengai Torid-e, which was recently completed. Katai Norio, son of the family's daimyo, has begun to train students there in the basics of forestry along with standard martial training. Norio focuses on the defense of the forest and its surrounding lands, as its vital resources must be protected at all costs.

THE KATAI FAMILY [D201]

Favored Class: Samurai

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skills: Wilderness Lore

Starting Outfit:

1. Masterwork light armor, masterwork wakizashi and 50 koku
2. Climber's kit, masterwork ashigaru armor and 45 koku

THE KATAI FAMILY [2ND EDITION]

Benefit: +1 Agility

Glory: 0.5

Special: Members of the Katai family who attend the Akodo Bushi School may choose to give up History or Bard from their beginning skills to increase their beginning Defense to 2 ranks.

THE SEIZUKA FAMILY, VASSALS OF THE AKODO

Akodo Seizuka's mother was born a Daidoji and his father was an Akodo, so Seizuka's path was dedicated to warfare even before he was born. Always an explorer of sorts, the young samurai spent his formative years wandering throughout the Lion lands, comparing the land to Imperial maps, noting where the land or roads had changed since the Emperor's surveyors had last passed and sending copies of his notes to local magistrates. Seizuka's detailed maps were only a curiosity to his superiors, who accepted only the Imperial maps. Undiscouraged, Akodo Seizuka continued to make his maps, patrolling the borders between the Lion lands, Imperial lands and Crane lands to the south for years. He hoped one day he might be noticed and granted a position as an Imperial Cartographer.

In the summer of the year 1153, Matsu Nimuro, Champion of the Lion Clan, was in a quandary. He had been publicly challenged by Crane courtiers after having taken Shiro no Yojin. The Crane declared that Nimuro had taken the castle dishonorably, by trickery, and the Lion Champion realized he would have to beat the Crane at their own game. He knew that while the Crane were reeling from the defeat at Shiro no Yojin, he could move to take Toshi Ranbo, but only at a high cost. After returning to his troops, he summoned his commanders to plan for the arduous campaign. One of those commanders was Akodo Seizuka.

Nimuro had laid out his course to his command unit and instructed them to consider it for the evening. They were to report early the next morning with any additions, changes, or questions. Some of the commanders trusted their Champion to have already taken their suggestions into account. Others made minor alterations to troop deployments here or unit movement there, but nothing that amounted to a significant deviation from the route Nimuro had shown them. When it came to Seizuka's turn, however, he bowed before the assembled commanders, removed a tanto from his belt, and carved a line in the planning table from the Palace of the Emerald Champion to Toshi Ranbo.

The seeds of Akodo Seizuka's childhood curiosity had finally borne fruit. Quickly presenting his maps to Nimuro, Seizuka proposed that the Lion armies use a path that the Crane would never suspect: their own supply lines. Small supply trains had been moving through the Plain of Peasant's Sorrow for years, keeping the troops at Toshi Ranbo fed and armed. That road had been kept off of Imperial surveys, but was well-documented on Seizuka's maps.

Matsu Nimuro returned to the Imperial Court the next day and responded to the Crane challenge by informing them that he was going to take Toshi Ranbo, and indicated exactly which supply dumps he would capture and which villages he would sack along the way. The Crane never considered that Nimuro would not be traveling directly between the points that he indicated, but would be moving along the Daidoji's own secret supply routes.

In the resulting campaign, Matsu Nimuro moved through the Plain of Peasant's Sorrow, destroying hidden outposts and razing Crane villages, and proceeded to Toshi Ranbo with little resistance. Seizuka's maps proved invaluable, allowing the Lion troops to take advantage of the terrain and forestall Crane ambushes. Nimuro amazed the Empire with his advance and earned the nickname "the Golden Lion of Toshi Ranbo."

As a reward for Seizuka's service, he was made the head of a new vassal family under the Akodo. Matsu Nimuro and Akodo Ginawa ordered Seizuka to continue mapping the lands of the Empire, overseeing the creation of a new set of maps for use by the Lion armies. He continues that quest to this day, accompanied by his wife and children. Together, they survey the Lion provinces and the lands that border them.

SEIZUKA SHIRO

Halfway between the city of Ninkatoshi and Toshi Ranbo lies a small castle that is home to the Seizuka family. Built in 1155, Seizuka Shiro has become a stopping place for those wishing to travel to Violence Behind Courtliness City from the south. It could become a staging point from which Lion armies could attack Toshi Ranbo if needed.

Visitors often comment that Seizuka Shiro reminds them of a monastery inside castle walls. There is a constant stream of foot traffic in the castle, with intent cartographers carrying scrolls. The castle has several libraries; the joke goes that the castle will never be taken by surprise, as someone is always up poring over a scroll or updating a map.

The stables here are personally tended by Seizuka Kaiko, wife of the founder of the Seizuka family. She ensures that the horses are kept in top shape for her husband and the men under him as go out on their surveying missions.

THE SEIZUKA FAMILY 10201

Favored Class: Samurai

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skills: Intuit Direction

Starting Outfit:

1. War pony, saddlebags, military saddle, bit and bridle, dai-kyu and 50 koku.

THE SEIZUKA FAMILY 12RD EDITION1

Benefit: +1 Awareness

Glory: 0.5

Special: Members of the Seizuka family may purchase the Crafty or Way of the Land Advantages for one fewer point. Those who attend the Akodo Bushi School may choose to give up Bard from their starting skills in place of Horsemanship.

AKODO MECHANICS

ANCESTORS

The Akodo have always been devout in honoring their ancestors. No other family truly possesses the quiet, absolute devotion of the Akodo. Almost every Akodo household has at least one shrine to the ancestors. The Akodo do not eschew the Tao or the worship of the Fortunes, but they do place a disproportionate amount of emphasis on the worship of their ancestors. With the Emperor's word as their mandate and their ancestors watching over them, the Akodo believe they can never be led astray.

AKODO HARI

Akodo Hari was a contemplative, philosophical man who nevertheless excelled at the arts of war. He rose through the ranks to achieve the rank of taisei in the Akodo armies at an early age, and refused all further opportunities for advancement. He claimed that to advance farther than his present rank would be to advance to a position where he did not know his men, and a true leader must know his men or face certain defeat. While some disagreed with Hari's philosophy, none could deny his performance: Hari's troops were never defeated during his lifetime.

During the Scorpion Clan Coup, Hari refused an order to charge the shattered Scorpion army. "I will not slaughter defeated men," he told Lion Champion Matsu Tsuko. He requested and was granted permission to perform seppuku on the battlefield, and died that day in front of his men.

QUIET SPIRIT

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: AKODO HARI

You possess both a quiet determination and a keen insight into the motivations of others.

Prerequisites: Must be honorable.

Benefit: Up to three times per day, you may add a +3 insight bonus to any Spot or Sense Motive checks. Sense Motive is always a class skill, regardless of what class you are currently advancing.

AKODO HARI

(4 POINTS)

You have a gift for studying others and gaining insight into their true motivations. You gain a Free Raise on any Perception roll attempting to determine another's true feelings or motivations. You also gain +5 to any rolls made on the Battle Table.

AKODO IKAWA

Even as a child, Akodo Ikawa was an atypical Akodo. His constant smoldering anger and tendency toward violence were more the mark of a Matsu than an Akodo. As a youth, his anger was tempered by his Akodo sensei's discipline, but even then his rage could not be fully cooled. Some said that Ikawa's tempestuous nature stemmed from a karmic link between him and a Scorpion bushi, born on the same day and bearing the same name. If there was some mysterious link between the two, however, it died with them, for both fell in battle on the day the Scorpion's coup was broken. Ikawa died as he had lived, lost in a battle rage, and surrounded on all sides by the corpses of his enemies.

FURY WITHOUT END

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: AKODO HARI

Overcome with battle rage, you may ignore wound penalties to continue to fight long after you should have fallen.

Clan: Lion

Benefit: When reduced to 0 hit points, you may make an Honor check (d20 + Honor rank, DC 13) to ignore all penalties and keep fighting. An additional Honor check must be made each time damage is taken. If you are reduced to -10 hit points, you continue fighting for one additional round, then die instantly. If reduced to -25 hit points or less, you die instantly. Additionally, Knowledge (Scorpion Clan) is always a class skill for you.

AKODO IKAWA

(6 POINTS)

Descendants of Ikawa gain their ancestor's endless lust for battle and sheer determination. At any time when you are suffering from a Wound penalty, you may make an Honor test to ignore all penalties for the next round. The TN for this roll is equal to your wound penalty. Down and Out have a TN of 25 and 30, respectively. If you are reduced to the Dead wound level, you continue fighting for one additional round, then die instantly. If you take more than twenty Wounds beyond the Dead Wound Level, you die instantly. Additionally, you may purchase the Karmic Tie Advantage for one point less than normal if the tie is with a member of the Scorpion Clan.

AKODO MINOBE

One of the most venerated of Lion ancestors, Akodo Minobe was a magistrate in Otsan Uchi during the Battle of Stolen Graves. Together with his former rival, a Scorpion shugenja and magistrate named Soshi Takasho, Minobe exposed and defeated Iuchiban and his loyalists before his insidious plan to overthrow the Emperor and his court could succeed. It was his defiant cry of "Sacrilege!" that restored the courage of the Lion troops so that they could end the Bloodspeaker threat. After Iuchiban's defeat, Minobe was hailed as a hero and appointed to a prestigious position serving the Emerald Champion. In time, Minobe retired from active duty and returned home, where he served as a hatamoto to the Lion Champion and unofficial leader of the Lion magistrates.

EVER VIGILANT

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: AKODO MINOBE

Clan: Lion

Prerequisites: Wis 16+

Benefit: You maintain a constant vigil for the unexpected. Any time you are subject to an attack that would deprive you of your Dex bonus to AC (such as an attack by an unseen opponent), you may make a Wisdom check (DC 20) to detect the attack and add your Dex bonus to your AC after all. This effect does not function when you are helpless.

AKODO MINOBE

(5 POINTS)

Minobe's proud descendants often serve their clan as magistrates and military officers. You gain an additional 5 points (not ranks) of Glory at character creation, and gain a Free Raise for any social interaction with a member of the Lion Clan who has less Glory than you. You may add your Honor and Insight Rank to all Perception rolls.

AKODO YOKUTSU

Easily one of the most controversial figures in the Lion Clan's history, Akodo Yokutsu is portrayed in historical accounts as a vengeful warmonger, a victim of circumstance, and a love-stricken samurai acting only in the name of his family. The truth lies somewhere in the middle. Yokutsu was betrothed to Isawa Maroko, who instead married Mirumoto Asijin and formed the Dragonfly Clan. With the Dragon and Phoenix clans protecting the Dragonfly, Yokutsu could do nothing to right the insult to his family over the broken vows, and thus let it remain.

Years later, another slight by an Agasha resulted in the Akodo daimyo ordering Yokutsu to avenge the twin insults. Yokutsu led a legion of Lion samurai against the Dragon and Dragonfly forces and emerged victorious after killing Mirumoto Asijin. In an attempt to make reparations for the bloodshed, Yokutsu declared himself daimyo of the Dragonfly and stated his intent to marry Maroko. Although his intentions were honorable, the vengeful son of Maroko and Asijin challenged Yokutsu to a duel. Knowing he could not defeat the Shiba-trained duelist Tonbo Kuyuden, Yokutsu nevertheless agreed, tried his best, and lost the duel, hoping to end the conflict once and for all.

Unfortunately, that did not occur. The bitter Dragonfly made Yokutsu out as a wretched villain, further besmirching his honor and that of the Akodo and enraging the Lion in the process. Since that day, the Lion and the Dragonfly have been enemies, which recently culminated in the Dragonfly Clan's virtual extinction at the hands of Akodo Ijiasu after the beginning of the Phoenix-Dragon war.

HONOR'S VENGEANCE

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: AKODO YOKUTSU

The strength of your ties with your ancestor gives you the strength to right wrongs done to you and your family.

Clan: Lion

Prerequisites: Honor 2+

Benefit: Whenever you are facing a loss of Honor for anything other than an action or failure on your part, the loss is reduced by a number of points equal to your current Honor, to a minimum of 1 point. In addition, you have a +4 insight bonus to all attacks made against an opponent who has caused you to lose Honor. (This does not include members of your own clan who are above you in social standing.) If your Honor falls below 2, you lose the benefits of this feat until your Honor increases above 2 again.

AKODO YOKUTSU

(5 POINTS)

Like your ancestor, your honor and the honor of your family are of paramount importance to you, and few can doubt your honorable nature. Whenever you lose honor and it is not a direct result of an action or failure on your part, reduce the loss by a number of points equal to your current Honor, to a minimum of 1 point. You also gain a Free Raise on all attack rolls versus anyone who causes you to lose honor for any reason. (This does not include members of your own clan who are above you in social standing.)

THE LION WARDENS

Always the servants of the Emperor, the Lion have been instrumental in the Son of Heaven's defense and protection since the time of the Kami. One aspect of their service has been policing the roads that connect the Lion lands with those surrounding Otsan Uchi, to ensure the Emperor's safety. As a matter of course, the wardens of the Lion patrol the roads within their own lands as well, for all roads ultimately belong to the Emperor.

Before the onset of the Clan War, Lion Champion Akodo Toturi began training the wardens who patrolled the roads within the Lion lands as an elite cavalry force. The effectiveness of the Unicorn forces had impressed Toturi so much that he wished to emulate their tactics. Although this was not well received by other Lion generals, the warden commander Matsu Agetoki and his forces proved themselves so thoroughly that even after Toturi's banishment following the Scorpion Clan's coup, the wardens remained an essential component of the Lion military.

The Lion wardens saw extensive use after the Clan War, in the conflicts sparked by the Lying Darkness and the War of Spirits. During the years when the Akodo were non-existent, the Ikoma family continued the tradition of the wardens. When Akodo Ginawa assumed control of the Akodo holdings following the family's reinstatement, he swiftly reclaimed of the Wardens. It was the tradition begun by Akodo One-Eye, he reasoned, and should be continued by his descendants. The legacy of the Ikoma's governing of the wardens is obvious, however, as one of the highest-ranking members of that august body was until recently Ikoma Otemi, a prominent hero of the Lion.

LION WARDEN (PRESTIGE CLASS)

Wardens serve as a mobile police force, ensuring that there are no threats to travelers on the Emperor's roads or on the roads that cross the Lion Clan lands. They have training as magistrates, allowing them to root out lies and forgeries among those whom they police, but they are most often employed as an elite cavalry unit against bandits or enemies who penetrate the Lion's borders.

Hit Die: d8.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Lion warden, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +5

Skills: Ride (6 ranks), Sense Motive (6 ranks).

Feats: Mounted Combat, Way of the Lion.

TABLE 2-1: THE LION WARDEN

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+0	+2	+0	Bonus Feat
2nd	+2	+0	+3	+0	Expert Rider +2
3rd	+3	+1	+3	+1	Bonus Feat, Rolling Thunder
4th	+4	+1	+4	+1	Eternal Rider +4
5th	+5	+1	+4	+1	Bonus Feat

CLASS SKILLS

The Lion warden's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Knowledge (Law), Ride (Dex), Search (Wis), Sense Motive (Cha), and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the Lion Warden prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Lion wardens are proficient in all simple and martial weapons as well as in light and medium armor.

Bonus Feat: Beginning at 1st level, the warden gains a bonus feat that may be selected from any feat that has the Ride skill as one of its prerequisites. The warden gains another such bonus feat at 3rd and 5th levels.

Expert Rider: Wardens are trained to overcome any obstacle in order to apprehend their prey. Beginning at 2nd level, the warden gains a +2 competence bonus to all Ride skill checks. This bonus increases to +4 at 4th level.

Rolling Thunder: Warden training grants superior mounted combat abilities. At 3rd level, penalties for any ranged attacks made while mounted are reduced by 2 (this is cumulative with the penalty reductions granted by Mounted Archery), and the higher ground advantage gained in melee combat is increased by 1 (making the advantage +2 versus Medium-size opponents and +1 versus Large opponents).

LION WARDEN (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 1

Path of Entry: None. This is an entry-level path.

Path of Egress: Akodo Bushi/War College, Ikoma Tactician, or Matsu Bushi 1

Benefit: +1 Perception

Beginning Skills: Athletics, Etiquette, Horsemanship, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Law, any one High or Bugei skill.

Honor: 3, plus 5 boxes

Beginning Outfit: As Akodo bushi, with steed.

Technique: Rolling Thunder — Wardens are trained to maximize the advantage mounted troops receive against infantry, but also learn how to counteract the benefits of cavalry should they face mounted opponents while on foot. A Warden gains a Free Raise on attack rolls and +5 to Initiative against an opponent who is mounted while the Warden is on foot, or is on foot while the Warden is mounted.

AKODO ARMOR

The Akodo family is above all else a family of soldiers. While their cousins the Matsu live for combat, the Akodo live for battle. Strategy, tactics, maneuvers, and feints are the lifeblood of every Akodo-trained warrior. Even novice Akodo bushi know how to seek the weaknesses in opponents' armor. Accordingly, the Akodo design their armor with large-scale combat in mind, and it typically performs far better than other sets of armor.

Akodo armor is finely crafted armor that confers a +2 circumstance bonus to all Diplomacy checks made with individuals who possess at least 4 ranks of the Battle skill. Akodo armor also increases the maximum Dex modifier great armor can support by 1. In addition, the attack bonus gained by the Way of the Lion feat is halved when applied against an individual wearing Akodo armor. Akodo armor, when available for purchase, is masterwork armor with triple the standard market cost. Unless made to order, Akodo armor is always partial armor.

Samurai who wear Akodo armor receive a Free Raise in any social interaction with an individual who possesses at least 2 ranks in Battle. The Way of the Lion technique ignores only half the armor bonus granted by this armor (round up). Light Akodo armor counts as heavy armor when determining Wounds on the Battle Table, and heavy Akodo armor reduces the amount of damage dice rolled by 1 (in addition to the 1 die normally subtracted for wearing heavy armor). Akodo armor, when available for purchase, is Exceptional quality.

AKODO BLADES

Although not as skilled as the artisans of the Kakita or the smiths of the Kaiu, a small number of Akodo devote their lives to studying the ways of metal. The precision they bring to their art is typical of the Akodo family. The katana produced by these samurai seem no different from typical blades, but in the hands of a skilled Akodo, they come alive.

These blades were initially designed to guard against the possibility of Akodo armor being used against Lion troops. A friendly rivalry has formed between the weaponsmiths and armorers of the Akodo, as each continually tries to outdo the other.

This non-magical blade is an exceptionally well-crafted katana that can inflict additional damage. For every 5 points by which an attack surpasses an opponent's AC, the wielder of the Akodo blade may add +1 to the damage roll. For example: An Akodo samurai attacks a rival Doji and rolls a 26 for his attack. The Doji's AC is 18, so the attack exceeded his AC by 8, meaning that the Akodo adds +1 to his damage roll. If the Akodo had rolled 28 instead, he would have added +2 (for the 10 by which he exceeded his opponent's AC). When an Akodo blade is wielded against a character of lower level, Akodo armor they are wearing does not reduce the effects of the Way of the Lion technique feat. When available for purchase, these blades are masterwork weapons with triple the normal cost. Unless made to order, Akodo blades are always katana.

(Damage 2k2) An Akodo blade is an extraordinary weapon designed to exploit an Akodo's ability to strike an appropriate weak point. For every two successful Raises made by the wielder of an Akodo blade for a called shot, the Akodo blade rolls (not keeps) one additional die for damage. When wielded against a character of lower Insight Rank, Akodo armor they are wearing does not reduce the effects of the Way of the Lion technique. An Akodo blade is considered to be of Exceptional quality; characters whose starting outfit ordinarily include a fine katana may spend 2 CP to instead begin with an Akodo blade.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE IKOMA

THE LION'S DEN
PART THREE

Miya Hatori looked placidly at his own feet. Trouble started much sooner than he anticipated. He looked up at the three mounted Ikoma magistrates before him, speaking firmly and pleasantly. "Is something amiss?" Hatori extended his traveling papers to the foremost samurai.

While the leader examined the papers, Hatori inwardly re-evaluated the wisdom of choosing to travel to the Ikoma lands alone. As an influential member of an Imperial family, he could have come into the lands of his old family with an Imperial Legion surrounding him. However, such a display would only cause trouble. As for his advisors... Hatori preferred his vassals not witness the events that would undoubtedly unfold here.

The magistrate opened his mouth to speak, but the moments of introspection had given Hatori the brazen attitude of a man who had nothing left to lose. With a sharp gesture, he cut the Ikoma off and said, "Take me to see Sume, please. I am sure that I will end up in his custody sooner or later, and at my age, I think I've earned the right to get there on my own terms."

The leader raised an open palm to wave back his two yoriki. "I am Ikoma Seikono, Miya Hatori-sama," he said with a bow slightly briefer than etiquette required. "I believe you and I should have some words before I allow you to enter the land you have spent your life slandering and dishonoring." The magistrate replied to Hatori's arched eyebrow dismissively, "Do not believe there is a single Ikoma alive who does not know who you are, Miya-sama, what you have done, or what you continue to do."

Seikono leaned forward in the saddle and meaningfully placed both of his hands on his obi, well away from his katana. The act was not lost on Hatori: it was an old Ikoma custom, to show an adversary that the Ikoma did not consider him a threat. "It is our duty to know, Ikoma Hatori," he said slowly, spitting out the Miya's former name. "And though the Shosuro may know deeper secrets and the Togashi study greater truths, it is the Ikoma who carry the names of the dead into honor or... less." Seikono sat back upright and eyed the Miya critically. "You have forgotten what you once were, Miya, which is a shame. But you have forgotten what we are, which is disgusting." With that, he motioned his two assistants back into Ikoma lands. "I am honored to be your guide, Hatori-sama, as I lead you out of the comforting self-deception you and your Scorpion allies have formed around you, and back into the truth."

Hatori watched as the three Lion magistrates rode away, and could not but follow them. For only the second time in his life, the Miya found himself without words or even much dignity.

...

It took two days to see Sume. Two days of polite refusals, endless apologies that invoked the duties of a family daimyo, and sudden attacks of ill health. Hatori had not forgotten this about the Ikoma — like any other Lion, when the battle came, it would be in a place and at a time of the Ikoma's choosing.

Now the two aging men sat across from each other in one of Kyuden Ikoma's gardens. The day's heat and humidity would probably have distracted visiting Crane or Phoenix emissaries, but Hatori remembered it fondly, as a link to his youth. Sume absently waved a fan as he silently waited for a servant to pour the tea. Hatori did not miss the message when his tea was slopped into the cup before him.

Hatori thought to himself.

"I see you did not arrive in company," Sume began formally, not bothering with the ritualized greetings generally employed for men of Hatori's station. The old Lion sipped thoughtfully and gazed out beyond the sparse bushes that cordoned the area from others.

It was clear the aging Ikoma daimyo wished to take Miya Hatori off-guard with his directness. Hatori thought, "Not here, Sume-san," Hatori replied serenely, nodding to his host. Without preamble, the shisha poured half of his tea onto the ground beside him, staining the bleached stones. "An offering, Sume-san, to the Fortunes that delivered me safely into your care. I consider us fortunate that there are so few bandits in Lion lands. Imagine the havoc they could have caused while your magistrates were distracted searching for one old Miya." Though Sume's face betrayed no hint of anger or surprise, the fact the Ikoma daimyo did not immediately reply was a victory for Hatori. "I would have made such an offering at a shrine, but I did not seem to find any on my way here," Hatori continued.

The old daimyo chuckled and raised his cup with a graceful flourish before emptying it into the grass. "Perhaps I should give all of mine to the Fortunes, then, Hatori-san. I do not think they would protect my poor provinces if we were to show them anything short of full devotion—" he said the last pointedly, "—and not having the extravagant resources of an Imperial Family at my disposal allows me the self-control to go without my daily tea now and then." Sume didn't let Hatori respond, continuing in a pleasant tone. "My provinces, it would seem, are your business here, are they not? You follow an Imperial edict to view the histories of each of the great families, so the great libraries at Otosan Uchi can swell with the knowledge of all the Empire?"

Unsure where the Ikoma lord was heading, Hatori simply nodded. "That is so."

Sume looked the other man square in his eyes and said quietly, "So, Hatori. To whom will you give this great work?"

"To the Empire, Sume-san," Hatori replied, nearly caught off-guard by the implications of the question. He had been given his mandate by the Blessed Emperor before Toturi had died; now Sume seemed intent on implying that Hatori was, by one interpretation, a masterless samurai. Just as he had been when he was expelled by the Ikoma. "Otomo Hoketuhime will perhaps handle the actual issue of finding where the scrolls will rest once the job of transcribing and organizing them is complete. As daimyo of the Otomo, I believe she would be best suited to handle such a duty."

Hatori realized with a touch of concern that while he had prepared well for this meeting with Sume, he was now on the defensive.

"I see." Sume nodded to himself as he looked into the empty cup he still held. "Do you think Toturi would have asked Hoketuhime-sama to handle such a task?"

The Miya lord dropped any pretense of formality and stood. "You dare? The Emperor himself held faith with me and I will not be second-guessed; no, not even by you. I do not know what you are getting at, Sume, but if you do not explain your lack of manners, I guarantee to you it will not be worth the price you pay."

Sume stood instantly once Hatori had risen to his feet. "You are in my lands, Hatori. I define what is proper and what is not here. So tell me, Miya. Answer the question. Shall I repeat it?" Sume's tone did not rise, though it somehow became more insistent, full of steel. "Do you think you are acting as the Emperor would have seen fit?"

"Of course!" Hatori hissed, barely able to keep himself from yelling over the Ikoma's monotone speech. "I serve the Empire, Sume. How dare you question that?"

"Because I cannot help but wonder," Sume replied. "If you had died with Toturi, would your existence finally have served a purpose?"

"What?" Hatori yelled back, unconcerned with the Lion guards that waited patiently not far away, "What kind of question is that? What if I asked the same of you?"

"That is hardly in question," Sume snarled, his eyes narrowing. There was a moment of silence, and the old Ikoma's face fell into lines of fatigue. "I have proven myself loyal to my family time and again. I serve the Empire. You serve only your own selfish egotism, and those ends merely meet the Empire's from time to time. And that is why I allow you to work against my family, Hatori." His voice was calm again, almost remorseful.

"You act as if I am the fool here, Sume, when you show me all too well why I perform this duty for the Empire," Hatori growled. "You believe I abandoned the Ikoma, when it was they who had abandoned their way. While the Empire was being torn by war, the Ikoma seemed all too happy to follow the Matsu screaming into battle against the Unicorn, the Mantis, the Crane... Not once did they look to the lessons of the Clan War and remember that even an Emperor can become a pawn of darkness." The shisha's cup fell unnoticed from his hand and shattered with a delicate sound against the stones. "When I sought peace, I was cast out as a traitor. You remember only what you wish and as you wish it, Sume, but I have the Empire know the truth of all things. Not just a Lion's truth."

"You know so little, Hatori, and that surprises me. But you will learn, in time. Steal our histories; usurp the crowning glory of my family. In the end, the Empire knows that it is the Ikoma who tell the tales of Rokugan. Your history will be forgotten. You will be forgotten. One day, after you are gone, the Miya will realize the truth and surrender whatever small knowledge you have gleaned into our keeping. All your work is pointless. You do not matter. Your quest is simply another life given in service to the Throne, and to the Empire. As I serve the Empire as well, I am proud to watch you waste your life struggling against reality."

Hatori's breath came out in quick bursts, as if he had run a thousand miles. Slowly, the Miya realized how quickly he had allowed his emotions to surface, and how easily Sume had manipulated him, drawing him through a full range of emotions like a fisherman playing a prize catch. How easily the Ikoma blood in his veins howled with rage and bared his heart. A display of such deep feeling would be shameful to all but an Ikoma, and now Hatori found himself completely at the mercy of his nemesis.

The Ikoma daimyo turned away from Hatori and waved his hand dismissively. "You are more Ikoma than you care to admit, boy. I am not sad to sleep each night, knowing the Histories will some day rest with your family and not mine. For a time." After another moment, Sume clapped his hands, and the familiar form of Ikoma Seikono rushed to his lord's side and dropped to his knees. "Seikono, allow Hatori-sama into the libraries. Answer all his questions, and do not allow anyone to interfere with his duty."

Without another word, without a backward glance, Sume walked off. The Miya looked over at Seikono, who had risen and come to stand beside him. "If you would like, Hatori-sama, I will lead the way."

Hatori gave the Ikoma a sideways glance, and then started off. "I remember the way, Seikono-san."



THE IKOMA PROVINCES

The lands of the Ikoma have always been the most welcoming to outsiders in Lion lands. Visitors always find the company of the Ikoma more hospitable than their serious cousins, and the Ikoma are always interested in learning from outsiders. Geographically, the land also contains the only break in the rolling plains of the Lion — Shiranai Toshi rests in the shadow of a single mountain that stands within Lion lands. The area around Kyuden Ikoma also receives many visitors who wish to see the Mountain of Thunders.

The Ikoma enjoy a well-protected position as the Seikitsu Mountains, the Firefly River, and the provinces of the fearsome Akodo border them. The Ikoma's border with the Unicorn has been threatened by a major attack only twice. Since Moto Gaheris' defeat a generation ago, the Unicorn have been friendlier towards their neighbors for the time being.

MAJOR IKOMA HOLDINGS

The Ikoma value the historical significance of their lands more than any other family. Any Ikoma can tell you about his home city at great length, and among the Ikoma it is a point of pride to have been born in a town with a colorful history.

TOSHI NO MEIYO GISEI (LOCATION L1)

The City of Honor's Sacrifice takes its name from an infamous samurai-ko who kept her lover secreted in this city long ago. The woman's name has long since been forgotten, as her actions were deplorable and she was barely able to retain her honor. When the woman's secret was brought before her daimyo, she was accused of placing her own interests before those of her lord. She begged permission to commit seppuku, to prove that she longed only to do what was best for her master. The daimyo agreed, but when the time of the seppuku ritual came, the daimyo presented the bushi with a wooden wakizashi, implying she lacked the honor to complete the ritual. Shamed by the insult, the samurai found the strength to complete the ceremony with the boken.

Though this story is remembered as a lesson of what happens to those who are deficient in the Seven Virtues, it also illustrates the city to this day. Meiyo Gisei is a place where a Lion's secrets can be kept, and where those who prefer action to discipline can find a moment's rest. As the closest Lion city to the "barbaric" Unicorn, it is also a major trade center, and has many exotic wares available. Lion outside the Ikoma regard this city with either disdain or admiration — every Lion seems to have an opinion of the City of Honor's Sacrifice, though it's usually not a high one.

Since the Tsuno have started appearing in Lion lands, the guard at Toshi no Meiyo Gisei has been doubled. Toturi Tsudao's investigations have confirmed that the Tsuno often attack from the Shinomen Mori, so the city has been fortified against Shadowlands attack. So far, the Tsuno have shown no interest in Toshi no Meiyo Gisei.

MEIYO SEIDO

One of the seven Shrines of Bushido, the Shrine of Honor was built shortly after the ill-fated samurai-ko took the life of her lover and her own. An image of the woman stands in an open area behind the shrine, and zealous Lion bushi visit the shrine to throw stones at her. The monks who maintain the shrine encourage this, and often allow samurai to recount transgressions against their own honor to the monk. The holy man usually then assigns the samurai some task to help remove the burden from his soul, and performs a small ritual of cleansing upon him.

KWAI

[Shugenja 5/Inkyo 3; Kitsu Shugenja 3]

The elder monk that tends Meiyo Seido is a quiet and compassionate retired Kitsu named Kwai. Kwai has spent his life in the City of Honor's Sacrifice, and studied under the previous elder monk. The Kitsu monk showed his talent with the kami at a very early age, though it was apparent he could not commune with the shiryō like many of his family. Kwai was then placed under the care of the aging Kitsu Shanegon and was his student for nearly fifteen summers before the old man finally passed into the next realm.

Kwai is both fascinated and revolted by the activities of the city around him. Though he is not sheltered enough to think Toshi no Meiyo Gisei is the most depraved place in the Empire (he visited Ryoko Owari once and gained perspective), he is quite sure it is the most corrupt city within Lion lands. Having lived here his whole life, he is familiar to the residents of the city, even those who have little time for honor or noble ideals. Kwai knows he is but one humble holy man in a city that is slowly becoming just a Scorpion gambling town. However, he does what he can to sternly discourage the more illicit practices that occur within the city, and is welcomed wherever he goes for his patient wisdom and calm temperament.

The old monk takes a great walk around the city at least once a week. He does his best to drop in on his "friends" that run geisha houses or gambling dens at the most inopportune times. So far, everyone involved has had the humility to be embarrassed by these visits, and Kwai believes he's making an impact on the city.

HOUSE OF THE MORNING DEW

Both honorable samurai and those who are looking for little more than entertainment frequent the House of the Morning Dew. This geisha house has a reputation as being both the best kept within the Ikoma lands and the seediest. The oka-san of the house prides herself on being able to find suitable company for anyone who walks in her door. Even with its somewhat shady reputation, the House of the Morning Dew does not tolerate any sort of violence. Kimiko, the mistress of the house, pays a small group of loyal and powerful ronin (some of whom are rumored to be former Shinjo) to keep the peace within her tiny empire.

This does not prevent violence from occurring outside the geisha house, but when it does Kimiko and her attendants firmly refuse to become involved. Many of the ladies in the establishment have a habit of instigating such violence, and Kimiko punishes them severely for it. However, the incidents do continue. It is very likely that the oka-san and all of her underlings would have been thrown out long ago if Kimiko did not willingly volunteer to the Ikoma spy network any information her women happen to pry from their visitors.

Only a very few of Kimiko's clients know that she has a very rare and dangerous item in her care — an exotically beautiful gaijin woman with hair as golden as the sun and eyes clear and pale blue like the sky. The woman is said to possess a haunting voice, and can entrance even the most stoic guard with her foreign songs. Questions about this lovely creature are turned aside with a shocked look and offended remark.

KIMIKO

[Expert 4; None (Insight Rank 2)]

The oka-san of the House of the Morning Dew is a clever and mysterious woman named Kimiko. No one knows of her past before she came to Toshi no Meiyō Gisei, and she prefers it that way. Kimiko was born into the Ichiro family, and at a young age grew sick of the constant struggle to reclaim the past. "Perseverance and patience," her father would say to her, "always win out against the darkest days." Ichiro Saruki, as she was called then, quickly realized that unless she did something, she would be forced into a life of pain and suffering as her "superiors" refused to realize the truth — the Badger Clan was dust.

Saruki stole away in the night, but never seemed to find the freedom she had hoped for. She was truly ronin now, and had little proof of her previous status except a wakizashi and an imperious attitude. It was a short matter of time before Saruki found herself working beside peasants in a village. A traveling oka-san was taken with both her inner fire and outer beauty. The young ex-Badger spent the next fifteen years as a geisha, and deeply enjoyed toying with the affections of passionate samurai. There was little effort involved in convincing one of her would-be suitors to "borrow" some koku from his lord so that the two could escape together, then frittering the money away on expensive gifts for herself and casting the humiliated samurai aside. Each time she did so, she saved a bit for herself.

After a time, Saruki purchased her own contract and bought a failing inn in the City of Honor's Sacrifice. That inn became the House of the Morning Dew, and that former Badger became its oka-san, Kimiko. Saruki is happy with the way her life is turned out, though she would be amused if someone were to point out just where perseverance and patience got her.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: During their stay in Toshi no Meiyō Gisei, the party happens to meet an agreeable traveling samurai by the name of Gofuki. The man is full of interesting tales, and greatly appreciates the PCs' company. He is likely to be staying at the same inn as the characters, or waiting on the attention of the same important noble figure.

Focus: If any of the characters respond to Gofuki by taking tea with him and swapping stories from across the Empire, he mentions the reason he is in the Lion city. Gofuki claims the heritage of the Badger, but is on a *musha shugyo* in the name of his father, Ichiro Saruno. He has been searching the Empire far and wide for the whereabouts of his runaway sister, and has been at his quest for more than ten years at this point. The Badger is convinced his sister, Ichiro Saruki, is in the City of Honor's Sacrifice. However, after long years of searching, Gofuki is beginning to realize Saruki may not wish to be found.

Strike: The next day, the characters hear the news of a brutal murder that occurred late on the previous night. Gofuki's body was found by the local patrol, and if the characters can identify him, they are brought to the magistrate to

help shed some light on the event. The local magistrate confides in the characters (as long as they seem truly interested in assisting the Emperor's Law in this case) that he believes the oka-san of the House of the Morning Dew had a hand in the murder: he has testimony that Gofuki was last seen entering the geisha house as the sun was setting. It is now up to the characters to decide if they wish to confront the oka-san. If they do, the only way to bring the truth to light is to find out everything they can about Saruki — a task that has led to more deaths than just one wandering Badger.

FIREFLY PLAINS TRADING GROUNDS

The source of much activity in the city is the Firefly Plains Trading Grounds, located on the western edge of Toshi no Meiyō Gisei. Unicorn caravans often stop here first, before departing to points all across the Empire. It is here that many of the exotic goods the Unicorn produce first reach the Empire, absorbed by the ever-curious Ikoma. Of course, since the Unicorn do not "produce" these goods but get them in illegal trade with the gaijin, this is the first place that non-Unicorn can obtain such items.

Do the tolerant nature of the city, shady items such as medicinal opium can be found and purchased with relative ease. Of course, explaining the presence of such items to Lion authorities outside the city is another matter completely. This sort of trade tends to draw more trouble than most other trading grounds, and as a result the Firefly Plains area is kept under close guard by the local watch.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: This hook is best suited for beginning players and characters, neither of which should have an easy time making the necessary decisions. The party is instructed by their superior to receive a package that will be coming to the Firefly Plains Trading Grounds on a certain day. They are told to ask for a particular caravan master.

Focus: The characters should be able to pick up the package with no difficulty, but it is quite obvious that what they're now carrying is not something honorable samurai would possess. Their suspicions are confirmed when they are confronted by the town watch on their way out of the city and held over in a small barracks while their "travel papers are checked" and the package is taken from them.

Strike: When the package is returned, it has clearly been tampered with. Contents have been removed by the magistrate of the town. The magistrate's *yoriki* makes it clear (without specifically saying so) that the item removed was an illegal substance from beyond the Path of Sorrows. It is now up to the characters to decide what exactly they're going to do with the half-empty package. As the magistrate believes the characters' claim of ignorance regarding the contents, he has chosen not to punish them. Do they return it to their lord, failing in their mission but conducting themselves honorably in the eyes of the magistrates, or do they attempt to recover the contents?

THE IKOMA LIBRARIES

(AT KYUDEN IKOMA, LOCATION L10)

The pride and glory of the Ikoma family, the Ikoma Libraries are to the Lion as the Kaiu Wall is to the Crab Clan. History and truth are the province of the Ikoma, and they battle daily against liars and those who wish to twist the past for their own selfish gain. It is in this great building that such wars are fought, as every scroll and paper must be perfect. The Ikoma Libraries are the standard against which nearly every other

family in the Empire compares its records, and to house incorrect or forged documents here could result in a terrible scandal.

During the War against the Lying Darkness, the Darkness destroyed every document within the Libraries. The Ikoma were devastated, and dispatched agents across the Empire in an effort to rebuild their histories. Ikoma searched far and wide to copy documents originally from their Libraries. Calling upon their relationship with the Shosuro, the Ikoma ensured that no treachery would take advantage of the situation, as both families acknowledged the need for a complete and unerring account of history. The Shosuro and the Ikoma guard the most sensitive information with their lives.

The Libraries are also home to many monks who tend the building as they would a shrine to a powerful Fortune. To the Ikoma, this is the hall of their ancestors, the shrine of their heroes, and their war college all together.

IKOMA YOSEI

[Samurai 8/Inkyo 7; Monk (Shinsei) 5]

Once a talented and accomplished strategist of the Ikoma Tactician Academy, Yosei retired nearly ten years ago to tend the histories of his family. The Ikoma general has yet to settle into his new role — bowing humbly before the upstarts of a new generation hardly sits well with a man who quietly feels he is superior. Yosei's peers remind him daily that it is a test of humility that he must now pass, and the inkyo can only bow his head and quietly agree.

The only achievement Yosei can comfort himself with is his recent promotion to steward of the Ikoma Libraries. The other monks of Kyuden Ikoma consider his worldly experience an asset in dealing with outsiders and handling mundane details. The former general executes his new duties with great relish, enjoying again the feeling of authority if only for a few hours each day. Yosei tries desperately to adhere to the ways of a proper inkyo, however, and has so far managed to keep the temptation of command from overtaking his vows.

Yosei has changed little since his time as a powerful and talented general. He is generally arrogant in both his thoughts and intent, though his more "enlightened" mind now realizes the folly of such behavior. Yosei is a frequent figure in the small shrine within the Ikoma Libraries, petitioning the Fortunes for forgiveness for his arrogant thoughts and behavior.

THE CHAMBERS OF THE LION

In the shadow of the Ikoma stronghold lies a small building that is both simple and ancient in design. This nondescript home has hosted meetings between the most powerful figures in the Lion Clan since the founding of Kyuden Ikoma. When the small home is not being used for this function, it is maintained by the ancient and wily omoidasu, Ikoma Koriyoto. Koriyoto refers to the structure as his home away from home, and hosts elaborate parties regularly and with the gusto of a Doji lord. These parties are always too small to draw much attention, but large enough that four or five unnamed visitors find it easy to get lost in the revelry and make their way to a hidden back room.

IKOMA KORIYOTO

[Samurai 5/Courtier 7; Ikoma Omoidasu 4]

No one in the city surrounding Kyuden Ikoma knows the age of the withered and cackling Ikoma Koriyoto, who has lived in the city longer than anyone else who is familiar with him. Koriyoto was born and raised in Kyuden Ikoma, and has

rarely ventured outside of its boundaries. He loves the Ikoma, life, and adventure, precisely in that order.

Koriyoto uses his advanced age, his reputation as a gossip and hedonist, and other illusions to serve his family to the best of his ability. He is perhaps the most resourceful agent the Ikoma have, and even wise Sume is consistently impressed by the ancient Omoidasu's capabilities. Few realize that his frequent celebrations always seem to invite people the Ikoma family and the Lion Clan would like to keep an eye on. Koriyoto does not hesitate to use the dizzying atmosphere of powerful drink and personages to get his "targets" to drop their guards. One way or another, Koriyoto has a talent for learning what he wishes to know.

At heart, the old Ikoma is a content and gregarious man. He makes a point to remember every face and name presented to him, and is capable of warmly greeting an unimportant courtier he met briefly over twenty years ago as if he were a lifelong friend.

IKOMA'S EYE

The large urbanized area just outside the gates of Kyuden Ikoma is known as Ikoma's Eye, and houses travelers, diplomats, and others who have business with the elders of the Ikoma. The area earned its name from the adage "If something is worth seeing, then Ikoma's eye has already found it," often attributed to Akodo. Those unknown to the Ikoma are often politely invited here for several days before they may speak with the leaders of the family. During the wait, servants of the Ikoma watch the habits and mannerisms of their visitors. They also listen in on any conversation the visitor has in the presence of the servants (most samurai ignore servants) and pass all that they learn on to the Ikoma.

This area is also a frequent stopover for those traveling through Lion lands, especially to or from the Unicorn and Dragon provinces. It is a well-supplied "last stop" before moving onto the mostly untamed lands of those two clans, and the first place with all the comforts of the Empire for those coming from that area. Ikoma's Eye functions like a great net, and news coming from any direction in the Empire cannot help but be caught by it.

AIKOR HOLDINGS

SHIRANAI TOSHI

(LOCATION 16)

Located at the base of Lookout Mountain, Shiranai Toshi was one of the first Lion outposts to be built after the Ki-Rin Clan left with Shinjo. A party of Ikoma scouts was attempting to find a suitable place to establish the foundations of a Lion city when a great vision appeared to them in the lands of Shinjo's Clan. The scouts were surveying the land when the ground beneath them began to shake — mildly at first, then increasing in violence until the Lion found themselves tossed to the earth. One of the Ikoma watched in silent awe from his hands and knees as a great mountain slowly "grew" from the ground only a mile away from them. There was no breaking and fierce jutting of earth, only a simple outcropping expanding on itself until it became a great mountain on the plains. The scout named it Lookout Mountain, as from its vantage one could see far and wide across the plains.

The Lion soon built Darkness City, named for the shadow of the mountain that covers the city for at least half of every day. Shiranai Toshi was one of the border towns of the Lion, and has lost little of that flavor even since the return of the Unicorn. As much of the Unicorn's land remains untamed and unsettled, the Lion of Darkness City often deal with the same issues their ancestors did over three centuries ago. When the Clan of the Unicorn returned, the Lion ceded most of their lands back to them, but refused to return the land of Shiranai Toshi to the Otaku family. Because of this, the Ide have been contesting the city with the Ikoma since their return, and Unicorn are generally not welcome within the city.

Vast deposits of copper were discovered in the area surrounding Lookout Mountain, a metal previously not found in Lion lands but thereafter quite abundant. Shortly after the mountain appeared, zokujin were drawn to the area in large numbers. Remorseful after the deaths of the kitsu, Akodo refused to allow his samurai to attack the zokujin. Instead, the Ikoma attempted to take advantage of the creatures by putting them to work in the copper mines. The zokujin put up little resistance, eagerly working long hours for just a few pieces of copper and the chance to explore Lookout Mountain.

To this day, few scholars realize the significance of the mountain, or its true origin. Lookout Mountain is the creation of a powerful Phoenix artifact known as Isawa's Last Wish — a powerful nemuranai with an ever-growing awareness and intelligence. Most Lion remain ignorant of this fact, believing the rich veins of copper and protection of the mountain symbols of the Fortunes' favor to the Lion.

BLAZING SUN

One of the most successful smithies on Lion lands is an impressive operation known as Blazing Sun, named after the smith's many fine works of copper and gold. The smithy was founded by an industrious Ikoma who was one of the initial settlers of the town and was the first to begin mining, carving deeply into Lookout Mountain. Ikoma Jonetsu made a name for himself and the descendants who inherited his smithy.

Until recently, the family employed zokujin to plumb the depths of the mountain in search of more deposits. Few of these zokujin remain, as many of them escaped around the same time the volcano in the Dragon lands erupted. The zokujin who remain were held by force, and the Ikoma can barely manage to keep them in line from day to day.

IKOMA JONETSU

[Samurai 7/Master Smith 3; Akodo Bushi 4]

Named for his great ancestor, Jonetsu is a large, happy man who loves nothing more than to work metal. He is also an accomplished bushi who believes that only someone who appreciates a weapon's true worth can forge a truly excellent blade. Outside of Jonetsu's obsession with steel and other metals, little can be said for his accomplishments. His wife understands that she comes a distant second to the smithy, and his many children can only impress their father in one fashion — by taking up his craft.

Jonetsu is an amiable figure, and takes a liking to anyone who favors plain talk and humor over the dour attitude found in most Lion. The Ikoma smith is hardly ever clean or clothed beyond a thick apron. He bathes regularly but almost always finds himself in his small practice dojo or at the forge once again soon after. Unless attending a formal occasion he is usually somewhat dirty and unkempt. His swords, however, are perpetually clean — Jonetsu cares more for them than his own family and even his establishment.

WARDEN STABLES OF SHIRANAI TOSHI

When the Unicorn returned to the Empire, the Ikoma refused to cede control of Shiranai Toshi to the children of Shinjo. The arguments that ensued eventually led to the Lion edict, still in force, that banned all Unicorn from the city. A generation later, the lord of Darkness City decided to punish the Unicorn Clan for their insolence in his own way. He proposed to the Lion Champion that a great training ground be built to instruct Lion bushi in the arts of mounted warfare in order to better combat the Unicorn... should the need arise. The Champion agreed, and the Ikoma lord ordered the construction of the great stables that stand within Darkness City. He ensured that the Lion horsemen were able to roam the plains near the city in such a manner that Unicorn eyes could not help but watch as Lion horsemen trod proudly on their soil.

From the day of its inception, the driving force of the Warden Stables has simply been to train mounted bushi to outmaneuver the Unicorn. During the war with the Lying Darkness, the Unicorn were ordered to attack the Lion Clan, and the students of this city proved a critical force in eventually repelling them. The Unicorn have known of the stables since their construction, but have been completely unable to raise a hand against them, which is just what was intended.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: During a visit to Shiranai Toshi, the party is invited to survey the Warden Stable grounds. The Ikoma and Akodo samurai are extremely proud of their dojo and the prestige their position grants them. All are very receptive to visitors, though any Unicorn in the party (assuming they were able to gain entry at all) are watched with great suspicion.

Focus: While the tour is being conducted, the hint of smoke begins to taint the air, and it is only a matter of moments before shouts and warning bells are raised all about the training grounds. Bushi begin running back and forth with buckets of water and other measures to stop the flames that are now rising over the western edge of the buildings. During the distraction, one of the more perceptive party members notices a black-clad figure attempting to sneak away between the buildings.

Strike: Characters who chase the figure follow him to the outer edges of the town, where he quickly dons a kimono in Unicorn colors. For the briefest of moments, the black and red of the Scorpion mon can be seen beneath the kimono before the disguised saboteur makes his escape toward Unicorn lands. It is now up to the party to keep the Ikoma of the city from staging a reprisal against the Unicorn. If the party believes it will be a simple matter of testimony, they do not fully grasp the inborn hatred of the Unicorn the town has bred into the wardens.

THE ESTATE OF IKOMA OTEMI

A rising figure in the Lion Clan, Ikoma Otemi was granted the governorship of Shiranai Toshi as a wedding gift from his uncle Ikoma Sume. Otemi has yet to actually come and inspect his new fiefdom, as more pressing matters have required his attention. The estate and the city are currently under the watch of Otemi's newly appointed advisor, Ikoma Chikao.

The grounds house a well sized home for the lord of Darkness City, as well as a complement of stables that are the city's trademark. Important men and women are lodged within the estate, and several minor nobles are housed here awaiting the

attention of Ikoma Otemi. Their wait may be long indeed, as Otemi's duty as a Lion samurai and his growing love of the sea have both his heart and his body far from Shiranai Toshi.

MURA SARO EIYU NI SURU (LOCATION L2)

This small village takes its name from a popular story about an Ikoma who became ronin after his lord was killed. Ikoma Teidei spent seven years as a ronin, searching the Empire for the assassin who had taken his master's life. It is said that during this time Teidei learned the wisdom he needed to defeat the assassin from the kenku teacher, Kozue. Teidei eventually found that the killer was the daimyo's own brother, intent on usurping power from the honorable lord. It was then a simple matter of tracking the other Ikoma to this village, and calling him out in an honorable duel. Teidei overcame his lord's murderer, but was cut by the dishonorable Lion's poisoned blade. The young ronin did not move from the spot where he cut down the killer and meditated for a whole day as the Ikoma daimyo was informed of the man's valor. The following sunrise, Teidei, slowly dying from the poison, was informed that he was once again an Ikoma, and the dishonor on his name had been erased forever. Thankfully, Teidei took up his wakizashi and ended his life before the venom overtook him.

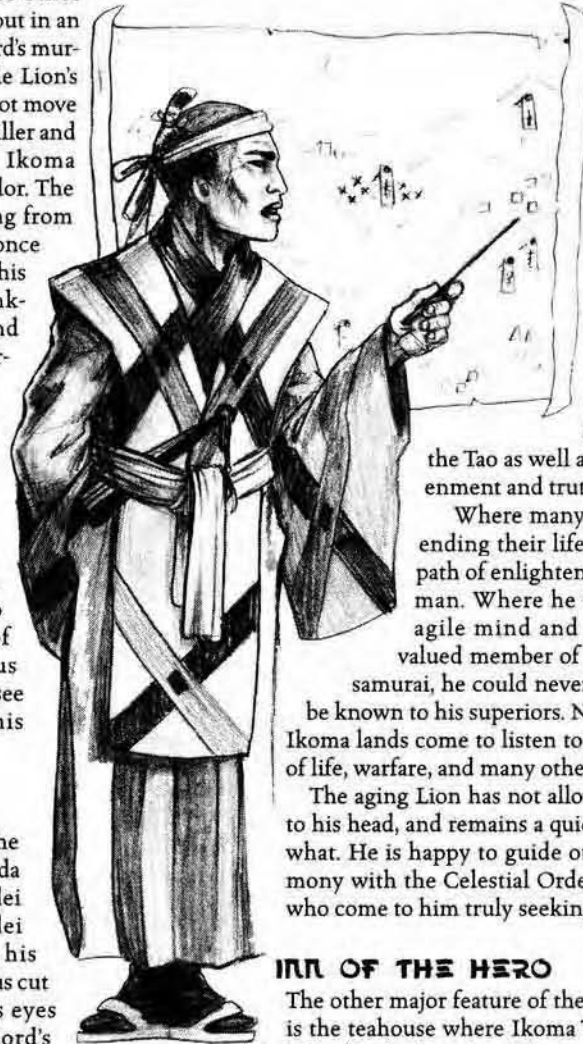
The Village of the Reinstated Hero attracts people for this fact alone, as the Shrine of Duty that was built where he fell honors the spirit of Ikoma Teidei. Many Lion samurai come to pay homage to both Teidei and this shrine at least once in their lives. Unlike the nameless samurai-ko who is represented in the Shrine of Honor, Ikoma Teidei is a victorious figure to be revered. Others come to see the inn from which Teidei lured his master's killer.

CHUGO SEIDO

The main "attraction" of the village, the Shrine of Duty is a large enclosed pagoda that houses the daisho of Ikoma Teidei and his ashes. A large statue of Teidei stands outside the shrine, holding his sword in both hands; there is an obvious cut across his left shoulder. The statue's eyes glare down at the spot where his lord's brother died, as if he were prepared to strike the assassin down should he attempt to rise from the very earth.

The shrine is tended by a small order of monks dedicated more to the virtues of bushido than the text of Shinsei's Tao. Within the shrine there are countless sheaves of paper lying about, some with writing on them. The monks encourage visitors to record their thoughts on the concept of duty, and many samurai respond in haiku form. The papers are full of wisdom and deep ponderings, though a close inspection would undoubtedly reveal a sarcastic or acidic passage no honorable Lion would ever put to paper.

Each year during the Festival of the Wandering Hero, on the fifth day of the month of the Rooster, the most promising young samurai warrior from the local noble families is dressed up like the statue of Teidei. Another samurai volunteers to dress in black armor and carry a broken sword to play the part of the assassin, whom "Teidei" chases throughout the town. Others gather around, dress in kenku costumes, and make wild cawing noises to emulate the influence of Teidei's mysterious sensei. The spectacle ends when the assassin runs ahead of Teidei and stops with his back to the great statue in front of the Shrine of Duty. The assassin looks around for traces of his pursuer and then turns to see the great statue looming over him. Overcome, he slumps to the ground, "killed" by the vengeful glare of Ikoma Teidei.



IKOMA NORITO

[Samurai 4/Inkyo 4; Monk (Shinsei) 3]

Norito is the elder monk who tends the Shrine of Duty, but he has held the position for only three years. Wounded in the War of Spirits, Norito retired due to his physical problems and returned to the Village of the Reinstated Hero where he was born. Norito found the life of a retired monk agreeable with him, as he was able to study such interesting texts as

the Tao as well as many great works on enlightenment and truths of the more temporal world.

Where many look upon their retirement as ending their life cycle, Norito has taken to the path of enlightenment with the vigor of a young man. Where he was a competent samurai, his agile mind and clear vision has made him a valued member of the monk caste. In his life as a

samurai, he could never speak up and let his thoughts be known to his superiors. Now, capable bushi from all over Ikoma lands come to listen to Norito's insights on the nature of life, warfare, and many other subjects.

The aging Lion has not allowed his newfound worth to go to his head, and remains a quiet and humble inkyo no matter what. He is happy to guide other souls on their way to harmony with the Celestial Order, and will readily aid any PCs who come to him truly seeking help.

INN OF THE HERO

The other major feature of the Village of the Reinstated Hero is the teahouse where Ikoma Teidei saw the face of his lord's killer for the first time. The story goes that when Teidei finally found the man for whom he had searched, he could not just simply call him out in the street. An illegal duel would serve no purpose; he had to draw his quarry into revealing himself. Teidei entered the teahouse and sat with the assassin, passing time as amiably as he could. The ronin confided in his new friend that he had come to the village seeking his master's killer, and described the events in detail to the brother of his dead daimyo. Shortly after, Teidei excused himself and stumbled sleepily out of the common room and outside. Drawn by the ruse, the assassin quietly rushed outside to overtake the seemingly fatigued Teidei in the dark of the night and end the matter swiftly.

To this day, the seat where the assassin drank only moments before meeting his end in the street has never been occupied again. Many visitors believe the inn is haunted by the spirit of the assassin, blaming the spirit for the disappearance of items and even the occasional guest. More practical minds believe that this spirit is simply a convenient scapegoat on which to blame petty theft and kidnappings.

KYUDEN IKOMA

(LOCATION L10)

The stronghold of the Ikoma family rests imperiously at the base of the Mountain of the Seven Thunders. It is the least fortified of the major Lion strongholds, as it is protected by its very location. Ikoma began his family here, at what was the edge of the Empire at the time. During the absence of the Unicorn, Kyuden Ikoma stood as the last point of "true civilization" before the more uncivilized lands that were dotted with outposts. The Ikoma palace hosts the largest non-military population and visitors of any Lion city, as it houses the Ikoma Histories, shelters pilgrims to the Shrine of Seven Thunders, and houses dignitaries from every family of the Lion.

Outside of Kitsu lands, the Ikoma palace has the largest number of monks within Lion lands. There are a great many ancestral shrines in the city of historians, and a flock of holy men who tend visitors to the Shrine of Seven Thunders. Monks also maintain the Ikoma Histories along with the nobles of the Ikoma family.

against the Lying Darkness, leaving the Lion lands lightly defended in favor of aiding the Crab in their time of desperate need. At the time, many Lion were offended at Tsanuri's seeming lack of attention to duty. However, now she is revered as an outstanding paragon of what duty truly means, as she was willing to sacrifice everything for the safety of the Empire along the Shadowlands border.

Many Lion bushi make their way to this site on a warrior pilgrimage. Others are ordered to guard the shrine for a year as a punishment which will serve as a daily reminder of the importance of duty to a samurai. Crab samurai also regularly pay their respects. The Hiruma in particular revere this shrine, as Tsanuri's act of courage helped the Crab regain the lost Hiruma Castle from the Shadowlands.

IMPORTANT IKOMA NPCS

IKOMA SUME, IKOMA FAMILY DAIMYO

In the Imperial courts, Ikoma Sume is one of the most well regarded daimyo in the Empire. He is a cheerful, amiable old man who gets along even with Scorpion and Crane. He is a skilled storyteller, able to weave a tale of grand adventure as deftly as a tragic, bitter romance. Most see him as little more than a gentle, harmless old man. Few realize that he is one of the most talented spymasters in the history of the Empire. From his youth, Ikoma Sume had a passion for tales of virtue, courage, and honor. Shortly after his gempukku he requested permission to serve on the front lines with the armies of the Akodo, fighting beside the bushi and witnessing legends as they were created. He fought beside the samurai who stormed the Imperial Palace during the Scorpion Clan Coup. He watched Toturi cast down in disgrace by the Hantei. His Akodo comrades, friends and allies, were stripped of their names and forgotten.

The experience profoundly changed Sume. Though he still valued the tenets of bushido, he began to fear that few truly followed them. Those who upheld bushido, like Toturi, were punished. The Emperor, whom the samurai existed to serve, did not adhere to the virtues that defined a samurai.

Taking a leave of absence from the Lion armies, he assumed a position tending the Ikoma Histories. He studied the history of his clan extensively, wondering whether the downfall of bushido was a new trend. After a time, he discovered that many times the Ikoma family had changed historical records outright to portray the Hantei line in a positive light. The deepest shock came when Sume discovered a private journal of the first Ikoma, which not only acknowledged that Ikoma had used stealth and subversion to spy upon the enemies of the Lion, but encouraged his followers to emulate him.

The discovery brought young Sume to two shocking conclusions. First, he realized that the appearance of honor, if believable enough, was more important than its presence. Second, he realized that by controlling information, one could control history. Truth was as subjective as those who perceived it; truth was a weapon.

EXTRA- TERRITORIAL HOLDINGS

HOUSE OF THE IMPERIAL CENSUS

As the record-keepers of the Empire, the Ikoma were long ago entrusted with the vital and arduous task of the Imperial Census. The Census is maintained and calculated from this building just inside the walls of Kyuden Seppun (outside of Otosan Uchi — location A9). A small family of Ikoma lives here, working beside the Imperial Families and their own Lion kin to ensure the accounts of the Imperial Census are both swift and accurate. These Ikoma are practically an arm of the Seppun and Otomo, but refuse to swear fealty to either of those houses. The Lion remain true to the ancestral oaths, and ensure the honor that is theirs remains with their clan.

The Spartan furnishings of the building shock most visitors. Surrounded by the beauty and opulence of the Seppun home, the House is little more than a barracks with tables covered by scrolls and papers. These documents are scattered in a seemingly haphazard manner, though residents of the House can easily locate any single paper. There is a small stables attached to the building specifically for official agents of the Imperial Census, which is held once every five years. Of course, the actual work never ends, as the endeavor of survey and calculation lasts almost exactly five years.

THE SHRINE OF IKOMA TSANURI

Located within sight of the Carpenter Wall, this humble and sturdy shrine commemorates the life and death of Ikoma Tsanuri. Tsanuri led the Lion Clan through the horrors of the War

His studies brought him into contact with the students of Honor's Sacrifice Dojo, a small group of Ikoma who also embraced the secret teachings of Ikoma the spymaster. They encouraged Sume to keep his philosophies to himself. Many idealistic Lion would perceive such cynicism as dishonorable. From the sensei of Honor's Sacrifice, Sume learned that those who recognized the power of properly controlled information could better protect those who were truly honorable; the truth could be armor as well as a weapon. Sume became an agent of Honor's Sacrifice, a spy of the Lion Clan.

Sume's faith in bushido was restored when Toturi not only redeemed his name but also assumed the throne. Sume and his brethren made certain that word of Toturi's heroic actions was carried throughout the Empire, and those who sought to denounce the new Emperor were quietly silenced. Sume's talent and discretion fueled his rise through the ranks of the Lion spymasters. He organized a personal network of informants, keeping tabs on some of the most prominent daimyo in Rokugan. He frequently dispatched his infiltrators into enemy territory, harvesting valuable intelligence for Lion generals. Sume became the face of the operation, filtering and transferring information so that his sources would not be discovered.

At first, many Lion questioned Sume's tactics and ignored the information he offered. Whenever this occurred, Sume politely apologized, knowing better than to challenge the conservative Lion interpretations of bushido. When Sume's agent Kitsu Osen recovered the lost Ancestral Sword of the Lion by infiltrating the Daidoji family, the generals ceased their questioning. When Sume revealed the fact that Kado, the ronin who had served Lion Champion Kitsu Motso's as hatamoto for many years, was secretly an agent of the Kolat, he was appointed in the traitor's place. (Kado vanished, and is hunted by Sume's spy network to this day.) Shortly thereafter, Motso appointed Sume daimyo of the Ikoma family when that position was left vacant.

Though Sume was greatly honored by these appointments, he privately found them confining. The last thing a spy desired was recognition. Sume could no longer participate directly in espionage missions for fear of being recognized. He now restricts himself to administrative duties, conducting and overseeing the actions of the Lion Clan's spy network. Sume never married and has no children. In his nephew, Otemi, he sees much of the same idealism and courage that he once felt. He feels that with the proper experiences, Otemi may one day assume his role as mastermind of the Ikoma spy network, but that day has not yet come.

IKOMA SUME

Male human Lion Crt 7/Sam 9: CR 16; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 7d6+7 plus 9d10+9; hp 120; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (touch 13, flat-footed 18); Atk +5 keen, lawful katana +17/+12/+7 melee (1d10+5 damage, +2d6 vs. chaotic, 17-20 critical); SA — Courtier Abilities (Ikoma's Favor, Tell the Tale); SQ Ancestral Daisho Class skill — Knowledge (history) (family bonus), Gossip, Style and Grace, Talent, Wealth; Honor: 2; AL LN; SV Fort +13, Ref +10, Will +22; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 21, Wis 18 (20), Cha 21 (27) (these ability scores take into account Sume's modifiers for venerable age); Height 5 ft. 2 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Battle +14, Decipher Script +20, Bluff +17, Diplomacy +42, Games (Sadane) +14, Gather Information +26, Innuendo +21 (transmit) +16 (receive), Knowledge (Crane) +9, Knowledge (Etiquette) +19, Knowledge (History) +25, Knowledge (Imperial Families) +10, Knowledge (Lion) +9, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +20, Knowledge (Research) +15, Knowledge (Scorpion) +10, Listen +15, Perform +33, Ride +7, Search +15, Sense Motive +21, Spot +15; Ichi Miru, Iron Will, Leadership, Perception Becomes Victory*, Political Maneuvering, Power Attack*, Skill Focus (Gather Information), Taking the Measure, The Final Lesson*, The Lion Cannot Fail, Versatile (Diplomacy, Perform, Sense Motive), Void Use.

Dojo: Honor's Sacrifice; **Kata:** Striking as Fire, Striking as Water.*

* **Note:** These feats and kata were selected when Sume was younger, and had the Strength required to use them. With his penalties for venerable age, he can no longer use these feats.

Possessions: +5 keen lawful katana (ancestral daisho), +5 keen lawful wakizashi (ancestral daisho), +3 ashigaru armor, +6 kimono of charisma, courtier's obi, haori of resistance +4, periapt of wisdom +2, ring of protection +2.

IKOMA SUME

Earth: 3

Willpower: 5

Water: 3

Perception: 6

Fire: 5

Air: 5

Void: 6

School/Rank: Ikoma Spymaster 5 / Ikoma Omoidasu 2

Dojo: Honor's Sacrifice

Honor: 2.6

Glory: 7.3

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Crafty, Precise Memory, Multiple Schools, Voice

Disadvantages: Elderly, Insensitive, Meddler

Skills: Battle 3, Calligraphy 4, Cipher 6, Conversation 4, Courtier 5, Diplomacy 7, Etiquette 6, Gossip 3, History 8, Investigation 7, Kenjutsu 3, Kuenai 6, Oratory/Rhetoric 7, Poetry 4, Sadane 4, Sincerity 5, Stealth 2

Kata: Striking as Fire, Striking as Water

IKOMA FUDAI, HANTEI LOYALIST

Ikoma Fudai is the grandson of Ikoma Ujiaki, who notoriously refused to abandon his oaths to the Hantei even after it was revealed that the Emperor was the reincarnation of Fu Leng. Though Ujiaki died on the Day of Thunder, his oaths were not forgotten. Ujiaki's son, Ken'o, reluctantly acknowledged Toturi, but taught his son of the glory of the Hantei line. Fudai learned that loyalty was its own rewards, and that maintaining loyalty to one's lord through adversity was the truest test of a samurai.

During the War of Spirits, Ken'o was one of many traditionalist Lion who joined the Steel Chrysanthemum's cause despite the atrocities he perpetrated. During combat against Toturi's Scorpion supporters at Beiden Pass, Fudai watched his father fall. Fudai clearly recalls the look on his father's face as he died fulfilling his family's oaths, an expression of ultimate peace and fulfillment.

When Hantei XVI was defeated, Fudai's emotions were mixed. Though he was saddened that the Hantei line had been defeated once more, he was relieved that the mad Steel Chrysanthemum had not taken the throne. The young Ikoma requested, and was granted, a position attending the defeated Hantei during his house arrest at Kyuden Otomo. During his time there he learned truly reprehensible Hantei XVI was, and how fortunate the Empire had been to escape his rule. He also came into contact with Hantei Naseru, the son of Toturi. For years, Fudai watched the Steel Chrysanthemum abuse Toturi's son. Perhaps the Hantei intended to force Naseru to break his father's treaty; perhaps he was simply cruel by nature. Despite his treatment, Naseru never failed to appear at the appointed time. His will was such that he would not allow the former Emperor's physical and mental tortures to force him to violate Toturi's promise. Fudai came to respect Naseru greatly; the Anvil combined the iron will of the Hantei line with the loyalty and dedication of Toturi. The omoidasu felt that it was a great shame that due to Naseru's youth he was unlikely to obtain the throne.

When the recent confusion began regarding the true heir to the throne, Fudai was one of the first to support Hantei Naseru. He has rallied many members of his family to his cause, drawing upon the oaths of the elder Hantei loyalists as well as the pragmatic nature of many younger Ikoma. Fudai often speaks for the Anvil in the courts, offering scathing criticism of Naseru's enemies and presenting his exploits in the most positive light. Though he is quick-witted and eloquent, he is often excessively insulting toward those who challenge Naseru's right to rule. Fudai's sharp words have earned him more than his share of enemies. Fudai sees this as a temporary situation; once the Anvil takes his rightful place upon the throne, his enemies will see how wrong they truly were.

While Naseru appreciates Fudai's support, he is careful not to associate himself too closely with the Ikoma. The omoidasu is simply too controversial, and evokes memories of his father's questionable alliances with the Steel Chrysanthemum and Hantei XXXIX. For the moment, Naseru feels that Fudai serves him best from afar. Fudai's bluster and menace distract Naseru's potential enemies, turning their attention toward the bard rather than the Anvil.

IKOMA FUDAI, HANTEI LOYALIST

Male human Lion Crt 6/Sam 1: CR 6; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 6d6+6 plus 1d10+1; hp 42; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 25 (touch 16, flat-footed 24); Atk +1 no-dachi +9 melee (2d6+5 damage); SA — Courtier Ability (Ikoma's Spite); SQ Ancestral Daisho, Class skill - Knowledge (history) (family bonus), Gossip, Style and Grace, Talent, Wealth; Honor: 2; AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +11; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 17; Height 5 ft. 5 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Battle +6, Bluff +22, Diplomacy +22, Forgery +8, Games (sadane) +18, Gather Information +18, Innuendo +22 (transmit), +15 (receive), Knowledge (Etiquette) +9, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (law) +8, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +9, Listen +11, Spot +11, Perform +18, Ride +5, Sense Motive +11; Iron Will, Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Innuendo), Versatile (Forgery, Knowledge (law)), Void Use, Weapon Focus (no-dachi).

Dojo: Honor's Sacrifice; **Kata:** None.

Possessions: +1 no-dachi, circlet of persuasion, masterwork partial armor.

IKOMA FUDAI, HANTEI LOYALIST

Earth: 2

Willpower: 5

Water: 3

Perception: 6

Fire: 3

Intelligence: 5

Air: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Ikoma Omoidasu 3

Dojo: Honor's Sacrifice

Honor: 2.4

Glory: 4.2

Advantages: Ear of the Emperor, Major Ally (Hantei Naseru), Voice

Disadvantages: Contrary, Driven (see a Hantei Emperor on the throne)

Skills: Bard 4, Battle 2, Calligraphy 2, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 3, History 5, Horsemanship 3, Law 3, Lore (ancestors) 3, Lore (Bushido) 2, Oratory/Rhetoric 5, Sincerity 5

Kata: None

IKOMA OTEMI, CAPTAIN OF THE DEATHLESS

Unknown among his clan a year ago, Ikoma Otemi has risen to a position of prominence even among the Lion's greatest heroes. Once he was merely another Lion warden guarding the lands of the Lion. Today, he is a decorated hero and captain of the famous koutetsukan, the *Deathless*. Perhaps no one is more surprised by this turn of events than Otemi.

Otemi's parents met via a political marriage arranged by Otemi's uncle, Ikoma Sume. His father was a sheltered omoidasu, his mother a fiery Akodo bushi. Sume was a great influence upon the young Otemi, regaling him with the tales of mighty Matsu heroes and legendary Akodo generals. Otemi would ask why there were so few Ikoma heroes. Sume would smile and reply, "It is our duty to tell the tales, not create them."

When given the choice of the pen or the sword, Otemi decided to prove his uncle wrong and follow his mother's example. At the Castle of the Swift Sword, he trained beside the likes of Akodo Ijiasu and Akodo Kaneka. His skill was remarkable, but beside such individuals his sensei hardly noticed him. Otemi passed his gempukku and was assigned to protect the Ikoma Libraries, a site of great cultural importance but little strategic value. Otemi accepted the mission dutifully, for he enjoyed being close to his uncle and the tales of his youth, but he chafed at the lack of action.

Soon, the time came for Otemi to begin his own tale as he had always dreamed. After an encounter with a group of bandits, Otemi discovered a map revealing the location of the fabled Island in the Mist, hideout of the infamous pirate, Yasuki Fumoki. Sume quickly dispatched Otemi to recover the stolen Crane gold reputed to be hidden there. Otemi discovered the island at the heart of the Seas of Shadow, a vast area of Tainted sea haunted by the undead spirit of the orochi that slew Fumoki. With the aid of a tribe of Nezumi, the ghost of Fumoki himself, and Battle Maiden Matsu Kenji, he defeated the orochi and broke the curse upon the island. Returning triumphant at the helm of the *Deathless*, Fumoki's koutetsukan warship, Otemi became a hero of the Lion Clan. Taking advantage of his nephew's fame, Sume quickly arranged a marriage between the young bushi and Shosuro Yasuko, a student of Imperial Chancellor Bayushi Kaukatsu.

Otemi knew his duty, but could not forget his feelings for the fiery Battle Maiden who had accompanied him on his earlier adventure. Despite his better judgment, he succumbed to temptation and requested that Kenji be granted a permanent post as first mate on the Deathless. Matsu Nimuro eagerly complied, proud to have a member of his family serving beside such a renowned hero. To his surprise, Otemi found not only Kenji but also an entire unit of Matsu Battle Maidens assigned to his ship.

Otemi has come far in a short am time, but he has not allowed his accomplishments to distract him. He knows that there are many who look to him as an example or rely upon his command. He is uncertain if he is truly worthy of their attention. He knows that his marriage to the Scorpion still lies in his future, and he is uncertain what he will do when the time comes. His bravery has sustained him thus far, but is he truly courageous enough to sacrifice his love for his duty?

IKOMA OTEMI, CAPTAIN OF THE DEATHLESS

Male human Lion Sam 5/Lion Warden 5: CR 10; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 5d10+10 plus 5d8+10; hp 93; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 25 (touch 16, flat-footed 24); Atk +3 vorpal katana +17/+12 melee (1d10+9 damage); SA Rolling Thunder; SQ Class skill - Knowledge (history) (family bonus), Ancestral Daisho; Honor: 2; AL LG; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 16; Height 4 ft., 11 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Battle +12, Diplomacy +12, Handle Animal +12, Jump +7, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (law) +3, Profession (Sailor) +7, Ride +19, Sense Motive +10, Spot +8, Swim +7; Ancestor (Akodo Samune), Daisho Specialization (katana), The Final Lesson, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Trample, Way of the Lion, Weapon Focus (katana).

Dojo: Castle of the Swift Sword; **Kata:** Striking as Fire, Striking as Water.

Possessions: +3 vorpal katana (Yasuki Fumoki's sword), +3 wakizashi (ancestral daisho), +3 partial armor.

IKOMA OTEMI, CAPTAIN OF THE DEATHLESS

Earth: 3

Willpower: 5

Water: 4

Perception: 6

Fire: 4

Intelligence: 5

Air: 3

Void: 3

School/Rank: Akodo (Lion) Bushi 4

Dojo: Castle of the Swift Sword

Honor: 3.7

Glory: 4.9

Advantages: Ancestor (Akodo Samune), Great Destiny, Ratling Ally (K'Chee)

Disadvantages: Bitter Betrothal (Shosuro Yasuko), Idealistic, Small, True Love (Matsu Kenji)

Skills: Athletics 4, Bard 2, Battle 4, Defense 4, Diplomacy 3, History 3, Horsemanship 6, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu 6, Kyujutsu 4, Sailing 3

Kata: Striking as Fire, Striking as Water

VASSALS OF THE IKOMA FAMILY

THE HOSOKAWA FAMILY

Possibly one of the most obscure families in the Empire, even for a mere family of ji-samurai, the Hosokawa exist because the Ikoma needed riders who would always be available to travel the Empire. As the incredible Ikoma Libraries chronicled the history of the entire Empire, the Ikoma family constantly found itself sending agents everywhere to accurately record important events.

One of the Ikoma's more dedicated members was an intense man named Kyube, who spent perhaps one week out of every season within the lands of his family. The stern Kyube took these days to ensure his dutiful wife was directing his small estate properly and to admire his strong sons and daughters as they grew. The Ikoma's dedication and honor did not go unnoticed, and when the Unicorn returned to Rokugan the political climate of the Empire was rocked to its core. Through it all, Ikoma Kyube and his children, now adults in their own right, served with unflinching devotion.

It was shortly after this event that Kyube and his heirs were granted the Hosokawa family name. They were to serve the Ikoma in the manner Kyube had already made his life's work. Kyube's holdings have expanded to accommodate his new position, and are still the ancestral home of the Hosokawa family. The Hosokawa are in a unique position for a vassal family — they coordinate the reports of other Lion scribes who wish to submit their findings to the Ikoma Libraries. Because of this, they enjoy some authority over other Ikoma, and over any Lion who reports to the masters of the Libraries. However, it is a very small amount of power, and the Hosokawa are far too concerned with duty to waste time with petty abuses of their authority.

The few Hosokawa in the Empire combine the most derided aspects of their Ikoma cousins with the straightforwardness of the Matsu (albeit without the heated displays). In general, the family is a nondescript lot, more concerned with the coordination of thousands of scrolls than much else in life. Though they are Lion and can be as fierce as Akodo, even one Asako has gone so far as to describe them as "utterly uninteresting." The Hosokawa are pleased with this reputation, as it helps them move around Rokugan without encountering much resistance or notice. They would much rather witness an event than be part of it.

SHIRO KYUBE

Shiro Kyube is the ancestral home of the Hosokawa family, and is named for the first Hosokawa. Though never intended to serve as the home of a distinct family, Shiro Kyube has been transformed over the generations into an estate worthy of such distinction. As is appropriate to the Hosokawa, the largest structure in the small province is the great library, followed closely by the expanded home. There are also quite a few stables, as Shiro Kyube serves as a waypoint between many of the other more important sites within the Ikoma lands; and, of course, the Hosokawa themselves are constantly coming and going.

Ikoma Kyube was a practical man, the son of many practical men before him. Because of this, Kyube's home is near several natural resources scarce in the Lion lands. Though these materials (such as fertile farmland and scattered deposits of gold and minerals) are not in quantities that would garner much attention from the rest of the clan, they help fund the Hosokawa's endless expeditions. The Hosokawa take great pains to ensure this remains a secret outside of the Ikoma, lest a more powerful family decide to relocate them.

HOSOKAWA MURA

This large town is the pride of the Hosokawa family, a result of their organization and resources despite their status as a vassal family. Hosokawa Mura is not an unusual town save for the abundance of literate peasants and an unusual number of workers skilled in scroll making. Compared to many Lion towns, it is a subdued place. There are very few armed bushi or ashigaru walking about, on duty or otherwise.

The most remarkable feature of Hosokawa Mura is the shrine to Ikoma Kyube near the center of the town. The ancestral shrine is immaculate, and is rarely without visitors at any time of day. It is here that Kyube's wakizashi and original journals are enshrined. Chiseled in the stone near the artifacts are the words, "Truth is shaped by the witness," a quote from the Hosokawa founder which is invoked frequently by his descendants.

THE HOSOKAWA FAMILY

Favored Class: Courtier

Starting Honor: 3

Class Skills: Knowledge (history)

Starting Outfit:

1. Royal outfit (See the *Player's Handbook*), pony, riding saddle, bit and bridle, saddle bags, 20 koku

THE HOSOKAWA FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Glory: 0.5

Special: Members of the Hosokawa family who attend the Ikoma Herald School may choose to give up either Battle or Defense from their beginning skills to increase one of their beginning History or Lore skills to 2 ranks.

THE MURAME FAMILY

The Murame are a relatively young family, having been created shortly after the Battle at Oblivion's Gate. When Lady Moon and the approval of the Emperor reinstated the Akodo family, the Ikoma family lost many samurai who had once been Akodo. The Ikoma returned the stewardship of the ancient Tactical School of the Lion to the Akodo, and the family lost many of its generals to the Akodo as well.

The few true Ikoma that were changed by the return of the Akodo family had a difficult time adjusting to the shift within the Lion. Though the military bent of these samurai was far from out of place in the Ikoma family, they clearly were not the typical sort of soldier the Ikoma produced. These men and women favored military prowess over anything else, and would obviously pass these teachings down to their children. The Ikoma agreed that these samurai were not simply Ikoma anymore — something new had been born.

These Ikoma, led by Ikoma Murame, became the Murame family. Murame was honored and respected throughout the clan, and made an excellent leader for the fledgling family. Since that time, they have guarded the Ikoma lands, blending the wit of the Ikoma with the tactics of the Akodo to become a respected unit of samurai within a clan of unparalleled bushi.

Though a lesser family, the Murame are much more recognizable than many other ji-samurai. The skills of the Murame represent a cunning tactical eye as well as the practical mind of their Ikoma blood. It is not uncommon for minor Lion engagements to involve one (or, rarely, more) Murame commanders.

Murame units favor yari and naginata, preferring to take terrain advantages instead of simply outnumbering or overpowering their opponents. Many recent Lion skirmishes have involved the Murame, though their units are often referred to as "Ikoma elite regulars," or considered just another unit of Matsu spearmen. The vassal samurai care little for personal glory, reveling in the fact that every victory they help achieve is another testament to the might of the Lion.

MURAME TOSHI

To the northeast of Kyuden Ikoma is the home of the Murame family, known as Murame Toshi. Unlike the older Hosokawa family, the Murame are not well enough organized to claim an entire estate as an ancestral home. There have been only two generations of Murame daimyo, and Ikoma Murame possessed no regal estate for the dynasty of his family's leadership in which to take root. Murame's son Nitobe, the current daimyo of the Murame, houses the leadership of his small family within one of the large barracks in Murame Toshi. Under Nitobe's guidance, the barracks have been transformed into a small castle, appropriate for receiving honored guests.

Other than this unusual feature, Murame Toshi is a rather unremarkable Lion village. The local smithy has been assimilated as honored retainers of the Murame, as have stables and scattered farmland nearby. The samurai that patrol the village are typical Lion, though obviously influenced by their Ikoma heritage. Due to the centralized (and localized) power structure of the Murame, the city is also quite heavily defended, and would be one of the hardest small cities to take by force.

MURAME DOJO

Located near the southern edge of Murame Toshi, the new dojo of the Murame is housed in the other barracks building within the city. The building has been expanded quickly and efficiently, to the approval of Ikoma Murame and his son. There is a large training area for outdoor practices, and the dojo opens on a wide field to the south of the city that is used for mock battles. Ikoma Murame used his favor with the Kitsu family to have shugenja sculpt this field so that every major terrain type is present save snow and ice, though on a somewhat abbreviated scale.

The Murame Dojo isn't very highly regarded, as few outside the Lion are aware it exists. Even within the clan, a great many samurai have never heard of the school. The dojo is barely a generation old and there has yet to be a clear master sensei of the school. However, like any group of students, the Murame are fiercely loyal to their dojo and are more than pleased to demonstrate the skills it has etched in them. The students of Murame Dojo have not yet developed any outward signifier to show loyalty to their school.

Classes: Fighter, Samurai

Schools: Ikoma Tactician

Students of the Murame Dojo are taught to outthink their opponent, much like many Ikoma and Akodo bushi. The Murame, however, tend to take this a bit farther and wait much longer for their opponent to make a mistake than other samurai.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

None.

TRAINING BENEFIT

Benefit: If a student of the Murame dojo uses a ready action to attack, that attack roll gains a +1 circumstance bonus.

Benefit: If an opponent misses a student of the Murame Dojo with a melee attack, the student's next attack roll against that opponent gains a bonus equal to the Murame's Insight Rank.

THE MURAME FAMILY

Favored Class: Samurai

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skills: Knowledge (Battle)

Starting Outfit:

1. Masterwork light armor and a naginata or yari.

Benefit: +1 Perception

Glory: 1.0

Special: Members of the Murame family who attend the Ikoma Tactician School may choose to give up either Defense or Kenjutsu from their beginning skills to increase their beginning History to 2 ranks.

IKOMA MECHANICS

THE OPEN HAND OF THE LION DOJO

Classes: Samurai, Courtier, Rogue

Schools: Ikoma Omoidasu

Students of the Open Hand serve with their wits as much as their steel. Because their duty brings them to both the court and the battlefield, they understand the ways of the courtier

trained in the art of the sword, or a general who is a powerful political figure. Those who pass their gempukku from this dojo honor it by lengthening the fangs on the Ikoma mon they wear. Even to those outside the Lion, this meaning is obvious — there is danger and power to be found in this Lion's words.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

None.

TRAINING BENEFIT

Benefit: Members of the Open Hand dojo gain a +2 circumstance bonus to all Charisma, Intelligence, and Wisdom skill checks against characters with levels of more than one character class.

Benefit: Members of the Open Hand dojo gain a Free Raise to any Awareness or Intelligence contested roll against a bushi with more than three ranks in any of the following skills: Courtier, Diplomacy, Etiquette, or Sincerity. The Ikoma student also gains this bonus against a shugenja or courtier with three or more ranks in any two bugei skills.

THE CURRENT'S PULL LION TECHNIQUE FEAT

You have learned from the Ikoma not only how to slip into and out of situations with the grace of water, but how to change the tides in battle and social situations.

Prerequisites: Wisdom 13+, Charisma 13+.

Benefit: When making any opposed roll involving Wisdom, Intelligence, or Charisma, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus to your roll.

THE PATIENCE OF TIDES LION TECHNIQUE FEAT

Though the mountain is known for its strength, an enlightened mind realizes that even the smallest stream eventually wins out against the hardest stone. You have learned not to emulate the fixed and unmoving patience of the mountain, but the constant and unyielding pressure of the current. This inhuman patience and unshakable calm unnerves your opponents.

Prerequisites: Void Use, The Current's Pull, Wisdom 13+

Benefit: If you take the total defense action for a round, any opponent who attempted to attack you during that round and failed to hit you suffers a -5 circumstance penalty to all attack rolls against you for the next round. In addition, the bonus granted by The Current's Pull increases to +4.

THE WILL OF THE WAVES LION TECHNIQUE FEAT

The final lesson of the Ikoma Omoidasu is that in order to maintain peace, a true samurai must constantly be prepared to destroy all enemies.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +5, Wisdom 18+, Void Use, The Current's Pull, The Patience of Tides.

Benefit: Any time you make an opposed roll, you may spend a Void point to replace the Ability Score normally used for the roll with your Wisdom or Charisma.

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Path of the River

"Swim swiftly down the stream that is life, or fight it with all your might. Never just float."

— Akodo Tadenori

The first lesson the Omoidasu teach is that the wise man does not fight the stream of life, but rides the ebb and flow to his advantage. The Omoidasu chooses one Bugei skill and one High skill — when he rolls for either of these skills, he adds his Water Ring to the total.

Rank 2: The Current's Pull

"That which moves the world does not move everything at once."

— Sun Tao

At this Rank, the Ikoma has learned not only how to slip into and out of situations with the grace of water, but how to change the tides in battle and social situations. The Omoidasu gains a number of Free Raises equal to his School Rank when attempting to use Sincerity, Law, Bard, Manipulation, or similar skills in a contested roll to sway the opinions of others.

Rank 3: Patience of Tides

"The mountains may never have learned to step aside, but the river never had to bother asking."

— Kitsu Juri

Though the mountain is known for its strength, an enlightened mind realizes that even the smallest stream eventually wins out against the hardest stone. By this rank, the Omoidasu has mastered the nearly inhuman patience of his school, and gets a Free Raise to contested Awareness and Willpower rolls, and Meditation. In combat, this attitude unnerves opponents. If, in any round the Omoidasu is using Full Defense, an opponent attacks but fails to strike him, that opponent drops his highest die on every attack made on the Omoidasu the following round. Omoidasu often employ insults and other tactics to provoke an opponent to focus on the practically untouchable Lion while his allies whittle the unwary attacker from flanking positions.

Rank 4: Master the Flow of the Heart

"Just like water, if you give your opponent only one way to flow, you will never be surprised by him."

— Toturi

As a student of both human nature and the world, the Ikoma Omoidasu has learned to use his perceptive mind to turn his enemy's actions to his advantage. If the Omoidasu makes a contested Awareness roll, he may spend a Void Point to cause his opponent to drop all dice that roll below the Omoidasu's School Rank. In addition, when the Omoidasu battles an opponent with a lower Perception, he may make two attacks against that opponent.

Rank 5: The Will of the Waves

"Stand aside if you want. It does not make a difference to me in the end."

— Matsu Nimuro

The final lesson of the Omoidasu is that in order to maintain peace, a true samurai must constantly be prepared to destroy all enemies. Failure is simply not a possibility. If the Omoidasu makes a contested skill roll against an opponent, he may spend two Void Points to make an additional contested roll, comparing the Omoidasu's Awareness or Perception to that of his opponent. Success in this roll means the Omoidasu automatically succeeds in the original contested roll. This Technique may not be used if the Omoidasu makes any Raises to the original roll.

ANCESTORS

IKOMA KYUBE

The first Hosokawa was an ordered and honorable man — many Lion even outside the small family he founded admire him as a man who balanced devotion to his superiors with devotion to his own family. The travels of Ikoma Kyube are recorded extensively in Kyuden Kyube, and survived the attack of the Darkness against the Ikoma Libraries. Kyube's journeys are the stuff of legend, as he traveled the width of the Empire in order to expand the histories in the great libraries of the Ikoma. Kyube is said to have died on the 11th day of the Ox, when he returned from Unicorn lands with the burdens of one of his many journeys. Wounded by bandits many hours earlier, Kyube would not die until he had submitted to the Library the scrolls he carried.

SINGLE PURPOSE

LION ANCESTOR FEAT:

IKOMA KYUBEI

Clan: Lion.

Benefit: You have a keen sense for the patterns of life, and gain a +4 circumstance bonus to all Sense Motive and Spot checks made while you're observing (but not participating in) an event.

IKOMA KYUBE

(3 POINTS)

You have a keen sense for the patterns of life, and gain a Free Raise on all Awareness or Perception rolls while you're observing (but not participating in) an event.

IKOMA TSANURI

When Emperor Toturi I was Akodo Toturi, Champion of the Lion Clan, his protégé was Ikoma Tsanuri, a talented and young bushi of the Akodo style. Tsanuri was as passionate as a Matsu, but her keen mind and calculating heart tempered her inner fire; Toturi knew she would one day become one of the greatest Lion samurai. During the time of the Clan War, those who mistakenly followed the corrupted Emperor Hantei the Thirty-Ninth were led in battle by Tsanuri, who had made it her personal goal to find and destroy her sensei, now seen as a



traitor to all the Empire. She saw the error of the ways after Matsu Tsuko's sacrifice, and joined Toturi in his battle against the Horde.

After Toturi took the throne, Tsanuri was named Champion of the Lion, and led the clan through the turbulent times of the war against the Lying Darkness. Tsanuri later led much of the Lion Clan to aid the Crab in their time of need, and though her motives were mistaken at first, eventually she helped clear the way for the Crab to rescue the soldiers who failed to hold Hiruma Castle.

Tsanuri died during the Battle at Oblivion's Gate, bravely leading a small Lion force to distract the armies of Akuma. The oni lord overwhelmed her unit, and a shrine to her valor was erected within sight of the Kaiu Wall. Tsanuri's shrine receives as many Crab visitors as Lion; both clans hail her as a hero.

HUMBLE GENERAL

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: IKOMA TSANURI

Clan: Lion

Benefit: Ikoma Tsanuri, the Lion Clan Champion who was a great general because she was always a soldier first, guides your actions. Your allies within fifty feet gain a circumstance bonus equal to twice your Honor on all saves against fear effects and on all opposed rolls against Bluff and Intimidate checks. You do not gain this bonus.

IKOMA TSANURI

(2 POINTS)

Ikoma Tsanuri, the Lion Clan Champion who was a great general because she was always a soldier first, guides your actions. Your allies within fifty feet add four times your Honor Rank to all of their rolls against fear and intimidation. You do not gain this bonus.

IKOMA NORITOBÉ

Noritobe was one of the first samurai to swear fealty to the original Ikoma, and took the family name as his own at the dawn of the Empire. Like his lord, Noritobe was a storyteller and deeply interested in the tales from all over Rokugan. Noritobe suggested that the Ikoma begin a history, realizing the need for an accurate account of the events that unfolded in Rokugan. The idea was brought before Akodo, who in turn presented Ikoma Noritobe to Hantei Genji in order to propose the idea. In honor of the Shining Prince, Noritobe wrote a great epic tale of the Emperor's adventures entitled "The Prince of Heaven." The Shining Prince was taken by the simplicity and power of the work, and gave the honor of recording the deeds of the Empire to the Ikoma family. Ikoma naturally chose Noritobe to become the master of the Ikoma Libraries, and he spent his entire life laying their foundations.

Noritobe died shortly after construction of the Ikoma library was completed. His remains are interred at the base of the scroll racks that detail the dawn of the Empire, one of the few racks that was entirely untouched by the fire that consumed the Histories.

GATHERER OF TALES

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: IKOMA NORITOBÉ

Clan: Lion

Benefit: You gain a +4 circumstance bonus to all Perform checks involving the performance of great stories. In addition, you gain an additional +2 bonus to all opposed Charisma

checks if you possess a Knowledge skill pertaining to the target (for example, this bonus would be gained when dealing with a Kakita samurai if you possessed the Knowledge (Crane) or Knowledge (Kakita) skills, but knowledge (Rokugani History) would be too general).

IKOMA NORITOBÉ

(5 POINTS)

You gain a Free Raise on all Bard or Storytelling skill checks, and the Sage Advantage for free. In addition, if you possess a History or Lore skill that directly relates to another character, you gain a Free Raise on all Awareness rolls involving him. For example, if you were attempting to use Sincerity on a Kakita bushi and you possessed Lore (Kakita) or History (Crane Clan), you would gain this bonus, but History (Rokugan) is too general.

IKOMA KOMORI

The son of Ikoma was a credit to his father's spirit — he was unmatched in single combat by any of Akodo's troops and could talk his way into or out of any situation. His charm and cunning were legendary, as he saw how all the great and small things in the universe related. Even the esoteric monks of the Phoenix and Dragon were impressed by his ability. Komori was a charismatic and passionate man who led his family with unflinching strength and vigor until his untimely death in Otsan Uchi.

Komori's nemesis, Bayushi Karitono, plotted to shame the Ikoma daimyo both in court and on the battlefield, but was defeated at every turn. Their feud culminated in the death of both men. The Scorpion forced Komori into a position where he would die and protect his son and heir, or live and stop the death of a key Matsu general at the hands of Karitono. Komori duped the Scorpion into believing he had chosen to save his son, but two days later ambushed Karitono on the cliffs of Otsan Uchi where the Scorpion planned the assassination of the Matsu. Both men fell to their deaths in the struggle, and Komori foiled his enemy a final time.

UNYIELDING SPIRIT

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: IKOMA KOMORI

Clan: Lion

Benefit: Choose one skill that is based on Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity, and one skill that is based on Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma. If one of these skills is a cross-class skill, it is now a class skill for you. While one of these two skills is within three ranks of the other, it gains a +4 synergy bonus. You choose which skill gains the bonus when you pick this feat, and that skill is the only one that gains this bonus.

IKOMA KOMORI

(7 POINTS)

Choose two High Skills and one Bugei Skill. As long as your skill ranks in these three skills remain within one point of each other, you gain a Free Raise on either the Bugei Skill or the two High Skills. You choose which skill(s) gain the Free Raise when you gain this ancestor.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE KITSU

THE LION'S DEN
PART FOUR

"Hatori-sama was once an Ikoma?" Sekkou asked with wonder.

Taneji shook his head slightly. What had possessed him to try and explain their master's complicated past to the young shugenja? Clearly, it had been a mistake. Still, there was no turning back now. Best to resolve it as neatly as possible and then never, ever broach the topic again. "Yes, Hatori-sama was once an Ikoma. He joined the Miya of his own free will once he realized that the Ikoma were using him to spy on their enemies. He vowed to collect a true history of the Empire, not one colored by their deceit, as he viewed the Ikoma Histories."

"Fascinating! I imagine the Lion have a different version, though."

"Yes. Yes, they certainly do. Many Ikoma would be quite insulted to hear what Hatori thinks of their family."

Sekkou was thoughtful for a moment. "I have heard many different tales of Hatori-sama's past," he finally added. "It seems many have their own version of the tale."

"Yes. Controversy fomentis misunderstanding. There are very few who know the true depth of his relations with the Miya and Ikoma, and fewer still who will discuss the matter."

The conversation was brought to an abrupt end when a young Kitsu appeared through the doorway. Bowing respectfully, the shugenja informed them that Kitsu Juri would speak with them now. Taneji rose from his seat gratefully; they had been waiting for three days to speak with Juri. Assuming their request would be granted, they had only three more days to complete their task before leaving to meet Hatori-sama near the border with the Matsu

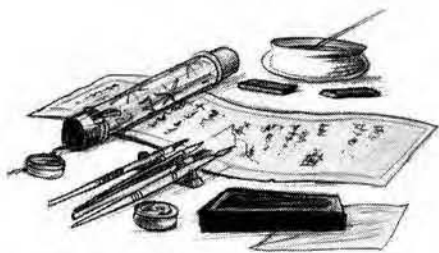
lands. It would be difficult at best, impossible if Juri chose not to honor their papers.

The chamber into which the two men were led lay deep in the heart of Shiro sano Ken Hayai. Accustomed to a division between bushi and shugenja, Taneji found it strange to see Akodo bushi performing kata in the same courtyard with a group of meditating Kitsu shugenja. Perhaps all that ringing of swords and shouting eventually sounded harmonious if you sat in it long enough.

Kitsu Juri's audience chamber was surprisingly small. It seemed to belong in a monastery, not the ancestral home of a Lion family. There were only a handful of people in the room, mostly Juri's attendants and scribes. The man sitting upon the dais was Juri himself. Behind him was a shrine, and Taneji could smell the incense wafting through the room. Juri's clothing was plain and simple, though well crafted. There was no sign of the shows of wealth so many daimyo found essential for intimidating their guests.

"Otomo Taneji and Fuzake Sekkou." Juri's deep voice boomed within the small chamber. "Welcome to Shiro sano Ken Hayai. What business brings us the honor of your presence this day?" There was no posturing, only a straightforward sincerity. Juri appeared far younger than his years, but his red-gold eyes were fiery and intense with wisdom and power. Taneji had heard rumors in court that Juri had wandered the Spirit Realms for so long that he was no longer entirely human. His appearance lent credence to the tales. His face was round, his lips tilted in a disturbing little grin. His eyes were sharply angled in his ancient, lined face. The overall appearance was vaguely feline.

"Taneji-san and I are honored beyond words to meet you, Kitsu Juri-sama," Sekkou answered reverently. "To meet the Master of the Kitsu Tombs and the chosen successor to the legendary Kitsu Toju... it is an honor I never expected."



THE KITSU PROVINCES

Juri's lips curled even further. "I think perhaps you have spent more time in court than in the temple, Sekkou. You speak like a politician, afraid to step upon his own words." His smile widened when Sekkou flushed at his words, baring the smallest hint of teeth. He looked at the young shugenja quizzically. "Otomo Taneji's lineage is known to me, for I met his father years ago. I see his spirit beside him. I see no proud shiryo following you, Sekkou. Who were your ancestors and why would I know them?"

Sekkou was startled by the bluntness of the question. "My mother was Mineko, a ronin who fought with Toturi during the Clan War and helped found the Monkey Clan. My father was Yasuki Masado, who served the Crab Clan loyally for many years before joining the Monkey Clan with Fuzake Garou."

Juri raised an eyebrow slightly. "Your mother was a ronin? Your father abandoned one family and clan to serve another? It is unusual to find one so forthcoming with such... controversial family information."

Sekkou bowed his head respectfully. "My parents are heroes. It is I who must prove worthy of them, Kitsu Juri-sama, not the other way around."

A low chuckle of approval escaped Juri's lips. "An excellent answer, Sekkou-san." He glanced at one of his aides and nodded almost invisibly, then returned his attention to the two men before him. "And how may the Kitsu be of service to the vassals of Miya Hatori?"

Taneji shifted slightly in his seat. "We have been authorized by Hatori-sama to pursue his mandate in the Kitsu provinces." He inclined his head to the shugenja who had shown them in, who in turn presented two scrolls to Juri. One bore Hatori's chop, the other an imperial seal. "As you are no doubt aware, Kitsu Juri-sama, Hatori-sama's mission is to assess the historical records of every family in the Empire and present a condensed version of that information to the Imperial Court."

Reviewing the scrolls before him, Juri nodded solemnly and was silent for several minutes. Finally, he rolled the scrolls up deliberately and returned them to his aide, who in turn stepped down and handed them back to Taneji, who accepted them with a slight bow. "I find no fault with your papers. You are most welcome to review our scrolls and make what notes you wish. However, you will not be allowed to enter our sacred libraries. You will tell my assistants what information you desire and they will make it available to you. We mean no offense, but none save those of the blood of the First Five are allowed in those sacred chambers."

Sekkou bowed again. "Thank you, Juri-sama. Of course no offense is taken." Taneji quickly echoed his thanks. Both men knew Juri had given them a great compliment by bothering to explain why the library was forbidden.

"When you rejoin Hatori—" Juri's omission of their master's family name was quite obvious—"you might inform him that entrance to our libraries may not be gained through a scroll. Only an order from the Emperor, given directly to me, can compel me to open them." He fixed each of them with his strange eyes. "Our secrets are not for the weak of spirit."

"We understand, of course. Thank you, Juri-sama." Taneji rose to leave the chamber. This would be a very busy three days.

The Kitsu family controls the central and north-central Lion provinces. The borders of the Kitsu lands extend from Drowned Merchant River at the north, south along No Horse Road past the city of Foshi, to the small Matsu city of Tonfajutsu (which lies just outside Kitsu territory). The border continues west along Crossing Plains Way past Bishamon Seido to just before Kyuden Ikoma. The western border technically cuts straight north from there, through the plains, but in practice that area is undeveloped and never a source of friction.

The provinces of the Kitsu offer little to outsiders, save the city of Rugashi in the north. Many pilgrims come to the Kitsu provinces to pay respects to the Thunders and other great heroes at one of the many shrines. The provinces are nearly entirely plains, lacking any significant geographical landmarks.

MAJOR KITSU HOLDINGS

If the majority of the Kitsu had their way, they would tend temples, revere the heroes of the past, act as advisors and assistants to the living and the dead, and do little else. The only holdings they would maintain would be those the family needed to survive and prosper. Unfortunately, the needs of running a major samurai family must be attended to, even by those as uninterested in the physical world as the Kitsu family. That said, the Kitsu maintain hundreds of tiny shrines throughout the provinces to various shiryo. These familial shrines are always tended by those of the samurai caste — the venerated ancestors are too important to allow any lesser individuals to attend to them. This becomes part of the training of lesser Kitsu — hurrying across the land to make certain that the many lesser shrines have been tended to with regularity.

SHIRO SANO KEN HAYAI (LOCATION L3)

The Castle of the Swift Sword is the most significant Kitsu holding. It is a base of operations for military campaigns, it is the dojo for the Akodo school, and most importantly, it is the ancestral home of the Kitsu family.

The original five members of the Kitsu family (referred to as the First Five) were kitsu, a mystical race that possessed extraordinary mastery of the Spirit Realms but was destroyed when the Kami Akodo mistook them for Shadowlands creatures. The war ended when Akodo realized that the kitsu were intelligent beings, but the race never recovered from the war's losses. When the race of kitsu dwindled to only five living members, the Sun Goddess Amaterasu blessed them with a gift that would let them survive: she transformed them into humans.

The First Five of the Kitsu swore fealty to Akodo — not just as their conqueror, but also as an ally and a patron. Upon their transformation to human form, they realized that they would need a home. They took Akodo's daughters as wives and honored their patron with a shrine to his divinity at the place where he met the Lady Matsu for the first time. Tradition holds that the last of the five founders was buried there in an unmarked grave.

At the behest of Lion Champion Akodo Tokoyama, grandson of Akodo, the temple was expanded to a full castle. When the job was done, the Kitsu discovered that Tokoyama had added many unexpected structures to the temple. A bushi dojo and military stronghold now stood in the heart of the Kitsu homeland. According to Tokoyama, he valued the Kitsu so much that he felt they should never be without the Akodo family's protection. Many consider this a mixed blessing, as the duties of the Kitsu do not often coincide with the duties of the Akodo.

SHRINE OF THE FIRST FIVE

The five founders of the Kitsu have a shrine in the deep recesses of the Kitsu home. Before the Castle of the Swift Sword was built, the shrine was located in Dragon lands, in the foothills where the Kitsu once lived. It was moved into the castle in a great ritual affirming the oaths of loyalty the First Five made to Akodo One-Eye.

It is a great honor to be chosen to care for this shrine. Typically, each year the most gifted student from the Kitsu Tombs dojo is nominated to tend it. The shrine is contained in a small room in the lowest basement of Shiro sano Ken Hayai, in a secluded place strong in the power of all five elemental kami. It is a place that no non-Kitsu has ever entered.

It is said that the First Five watch over their shrine and would violently tear asunder anyone who violated the sanctity of their shrine. The truth of the matter has never been put to the test.

KITSU HATSUE

[Kitsu Shugenja 2; Kitsu Sodan-Senzo 1]

Hatsue is a talented young shugenja with an excellent memory and a close rapport with the kami and the ancestors. She entered the Kitsu Tombs dojo at the tender age of seven, and passed her gempukku before she was eleven. Soon thereafter she became the youngest ever chosen to tend the Shrine of the First Five. Hatsue is potentially the most gifted sodan-senzo of her generation, but deep in her heart, she resents her talent.

She is acutely aware that she is still a fourteen-year old girl. Her precocious mind has not failed to notice that other girls her age are still behaving like children, enjoying life and playing in the sun while she studies in murky temples. She feels that she has grown up much too fast, and would like to put adulthood aside until she is physically mature.

In addition, while she cares for her ancestors, she would much rather be in a court setting. The idea of politics and social interaction intrigues the cloistered young shugenja. She is bright and quick, and thinks she would comport herself with dignity and grace representing her clan at the Winter Court.

GOLDEN SPIDER DOJO

The Golden Spider Dojo is a small school founded a decade ago during the War of Spirits. The Kitsu, in mourning over the loss of Kitsu Motso, decided to honor his memory by training a select handful of shugenja to enter battle. Though it was never publicly acknowledged, a few Kitsu felt guilty over their failure to protect their lord, a rare Lion Champion from their family.

Kitsu Reizo created the Golden Spider Dojo to train Kitsu shugenja to enter battle as leaders and tactical advisors, not merely to support others. The past decade has seen the Golden Spider grow slowly. A handful of Akodo have retired from active duty in the Lion army to teach here. The school is beginning to develop a reputation for excellence, though only time will tell if the dojo lasts.

The dojo's name comes from an old Lion superstition that spiders are lucky creatures, and from the golden color prevalent in the hair and eyes of many Kitsu.

Classes: Shugenja

Schools: Kitsu Shugenja

SOCIAL BENEFITS

None.

TRAINING BENEFITS

Benefit: The Alchemy (Int) skill is replaced by the Battle (Wis) skill on your class skill list.

Benefit: Students of the Golden Spider Dojo have the following starting skills: Battle, Heraldry, Defense, History, Calligraphy, Meditation, any one Bugei skill.

KITSU REIZO, MASTER SENSEI OF THE GOLDEN SPIDER DOJO

[Kitsu Shugenja 13; Kitsu Shugenja 5]

When Kitsu Motso ascended to the Championship of the clan, none were happier than Reizo. Motso's brilliance brought prestige to the Kitsu family, and Reizo reveled in it. When Hantei XVI's forces killed Motso, the grieving Reizo threw himself into battle. His rage carried him far, but a seri-



ous injury forced him to return to the ancestral castle. A month later, after recovering from his wound, he begged the new Lion Champion, Matsu Nimuro, for permission to establish the Golden Spider Dojo in Motso's name. Reizo considers Motso to have been the ideal samurai, and allows none to dishonor his name. To Reizo, Motso's life is as perfect and sacrosanct as any of the Hantei emperors.

Rules Notes: Reizo has a wide selection of combat spells, both for large and small scale conflicts. He is also versed in battle tactics in addition to the traditional Kitsu teachings of the ancestors. He is a competent tactician, but he leaves the instruction in such matters to the Akodo instructors, whom he acknowledges as his superiors. They were, after all, a great influence on Motso-sama as well.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: At a Winter Court the PCs are attending (not a Lion court or one at the PCs' house), a recent graduate of the Golden Spider dojo is attending as a vassal of a Kitsu dignitary. The boy, Kitsu Sukuto, fresh from his gempukku, has set his sights on a young maiden of the same clan as one of the PCs. The young man has recently read *The Subtlety of the Court* and has taken to heart its core lesson — the court is identical to war. This makes him, in his own estimation, a superior courtier. Unfortunately, the lady does not see things the same way and spurns his advances in public.

Focus: Sukuto's training for war includes the use of magic that is not totally appropriate in a court setting. Sukuto favors spells that focus on illusions, mental influence, and the like. He uses these talents to make her fall in love with him, and his efforts are wildly successful. However, it does not last. As the magic lapses, she realizes what has happened.

Strike: When the young maiden finds out she has been manipulated, she runs to the PC of her clan for help. She has clearly been taken advantage of, but it is difficult to prove — the daimyo is unlikely to involve himself in this lovers' quarrel. How will the PCs respond: a duel of honor, a quiet assassination, public humiliation, or some other way?

RUGASHI (LOCATION L4)

Rugashi is the busiest city in the Kitsu provinces. It is not a particularly wealthy city, nor the largest, yet it boasts a sizable permanent population and many visitors. Rugashi is an oddity — a Kitsu holding for the worldly, and a city that boasts semi-permanent residents from nearly every clan. The city's startlingly cosmopolitan nature is somewhat reminiscent of Prosperous Plains City (Location CN5).

Rugashi is attractive to merchants and travelers because tariffs are extremely low, making the city a hub of trade. In fact, it is said that anything that can be bought, can be bought in Rugashi. However, this statement is always punctuated by assurances that the Lion will tolerate no foolishness in the city. The local Kitsu magistrates are intolerant of smuggling, illegal trade, or any other such foolishness. Those who come to Rugashi seeking a Lion version of Ryoko Owari will be sorely disappointed, and probably jailed. (Such individuals would be better off visiting the City of Honor's Sacrifice, described in Chapter Two.)

The constant commercial traffic has encouraged merchant families from all over Rokugan to move to the city — even a family of Fox peasants live and operate in Rugashi. These families have brought with them goods found in few other places in the Empire. It is a cycle of prosperity which only increases the renown of Rugashi.

Recent years have, unfortunately, soured the city's reputation. While the Kitsu benefit from the town's wealth, the merchant dynasties from other clans benefit even more. The merchants have, in recent years, subverted the city guard. The merchants now handle their own affairs, turning in their taxes rather than having them collected, and in exchange the city guard receives the benefits of luxurious living. So long as the merchants refrain from smuggling or dealing in illegal trade, the guard is willing to be lax regarding tariffs. The Emerald Magistrates have noticed this slight decay in the ethics of the local magistrates, but so far there have been no incidents, so no action has been taken.

HANO SAKE

Three centuries ago, a greedy Mirumoto named Hano instructed several of his servants to move to Rugashi and act as merchants to take advantage of the low tariff rates. The merchant family has lived in Rugashi for generations, buying and selling trinkets, food, clothing, and anything else that can turn a profit for their Dragon patrons. By keeping an eye on the larger picture, the family has avoided risky strategies that have ruined other merchant dynasties. This conservative approach has made the house of Hano, oldest of the merchant families here, easily the wealthiest, and as proud as any true samurai family. They consider it a point of pride to supply samurai with whatever is required — the shop may be called Hano Sake, but it sells more than just alcohol. Nearly any kind of food or entertaining diversion may be purchased within so long as Imperial Law permits it. The store's namesake drink is quite good; any connoisseur of fine sake knows the Hano brand.

ITAMITO

[Expert 4; None (Peasant, Insight Rank 2)]

Hano Sake is run by a man named Itamito. He is nearing his sixties, with only a hunch and mild arthritis to show for his years of dedicated service. His life has been spent in service to the Mirumoto family, though he has never left Rugashi. Over his thirty-three years as the head of the Hano merchants, he has sent his profits to Shiro Mirumoto. He hasn't heard from his Mirumoto superiors in a decade, and this neglect has made him bitter. In the twilight of his life, he wants to believe that his life meant something — and he can't see that it has. He has begun pocketing some of the profits and using them to live a more comfortable life. At least that brings him some satisfaction.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The characters are waylaid on an Imperial highway by bandits posing as merchants. The wagon that the "merchants" had contains sake and written agreements with the Hano merchants of Rugashi, sponsoring the banditry.

Focus: Itamito denies the accusation. If interrogated, his conscience overcomes him and he confesses to stealing from his Mirumoto masters, but denies banditry. He did not set the bandits to their task, nor does he know who did.

Strike: The bandits were sent out by a rival merchant house hoping to remove the Hano from competition. The characters may now choose how to deal with Itamito's theft. He has stolen from a samurai, but his masters are not present. He offers to return the money if they tell no one it was missing in the first place, as restitution for his crime. If the party seems dishonorable enough, he may even offer them a gift in return for their silence. He is an old man who has made only one

mistake in an otherwise respectable life. The characters would be justified in punishing him, but how they do so says much about them.

TORATAMA'S SILVER HEAVEN

Toratama's Silver Heaven is a small but famous shop in the center of Rugashi, conveniently located at the junction of several busy streets. The store is tended by a kindly old monk who calls himself Toratama. Though monks are forbidden personal possessions, Toratama merely tends the store on behalf of his brother Kaien, a ronin bushi who lost a leg fighting for the Lion in the War of Spirits and now lives in a small estate outside the city. The shop deals strictly in jewelry and other pretty trinkets that Toratama has made, and the shop is far more successful under Toratama's management than it ever was under Kaien's. The monk is not only a prolific sculptor and silversmith, but also a talented tailor whose fashions are worn throughout northern Rokugan. As his works are so popular, his clientele tends to be mostly wealthy courtiers and daimyo. Occasionally a visiting dignitary from an Imperial family graces his store with a visit; Toratama is always eager to relate those tales and has crafted replicas of all the works he created for the Imperials so he can display them proudly to visitors.

TORATAMA

[Inkyo 7; Monk 3 (Seven Fortunes)]

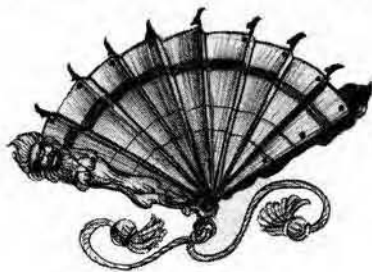
Toratama is a member of an esoteric sect of the Brotherhood of Shinsei that believes enlightenment comes through beauty. He lives in Rugashi to further his quest for enlightenment. Creating beautiful things brings peace to his soul. He is a humble man, but he takes great joy in the pleasure others find in his creations.

Unfortunately, this success has worked to Toratama's disadvantage. His brother, Kaien, is jealous of his success and has begun to consider returning to his shop despite his injury. The thought fills Toratama's heart with dread. He has come to love the work he does here, and regrets his brother's jealousy. He does not wish to leave the shop and return to the monastery, but neither does he wish to bring his brother any pain.

GI SEIDO

Gi Seido is the only one of the Lion Clan's shrines to the tenets of bushido located in the Kitsu lands. Given the large number of shrines that already exist in the Kitsu holdings, they simply cannot maintain more. Besides, while the Kitsu embrace the code of bushido as fully as any samurai family, they also recognize that it is more relevant to bushi than shugenja, and allow the more militant families of the clan to maintain the majority of such shrines.

Gi Seido extols the virtues of Honesty and Justice, two principles that suit the Kitsu well. In dealing with one's ancestors, honesty is as vital as breathing. For a family that pursues justice for the departed, the shrine is doubly appropriate.



Gi Seido is a small, unassuming shrine a few miles outside of Shiro sano Ken Hayai. Like most of the bushido shrines, it is built from ancient stone that shows its age. The quiet and diligent monks that care for the shrine are mostly former magistrates and wardens.

This shrine was built much later than the other shrines, simply because the Lion Champion who originally commissioned their construction began to run short of funds. A Crane joke goes that the Champion forgot that there were seven virtues, and had to quickly go back and construct this shrine when a Crane told him. Needless to say, this tale is not popular with the Lion.

FOSHI (LOCATED L7)

The city of Foshi is located on the border between the Kitsu and Akodo provinces. It is a large city, easily the largest in Kitsu lands, more than twice the size of Rugashi. Unlike Rugashi, however, it is not a trading city. In fact, non-Lion in Foshi are viewed with a great deal of suspicion. Outsiders are unwelcome, as Foshi is a military city.

Armies are expensive, and the Lion clan maintains the largest standing army in the Empire. In addition to the obvious necessities of feeding and arming every soldier, there are thousands of support staff that need food and equipment. Foshi's extensive farmlands provide the wealth required to feed the Lion armies.

The farmlands are a massive project of efficiency and productivity. Vast tracts of land are packed with rice paddies, fruit orchards, and giant silos that hold food for future consumption. The silos are blessed with powerful Kitsu preservative enchantments. Additionally, many small collections of houses, most too small to be called villages, litter the landscape. Because this area is obviously a major supply area for the Lion armies, it is a prime target for enemy saboteurs. Foshi has thousands of troops stationed within the city itself and throughout the farmlands at all times.

Historically, the major threat to Foshi's production was the Crane, whose Daidoji family has been known to salt farmlands to sabotage food production. This threat has never been substantial, since Foshi lies so deep in Lion lands that it is not an easy target. Recently, however, the conflict with the Phoenix has highlighted Foshi's vulnerability. The Phoenix can magically transport their troops to other places in the Empire when it is prudent and tactically sound. Fortunately, outside of Aikune's attack upon Lion troops the Phoenix seem to have no interest in the Lion. The conflict between the two clans mostly hinges on the Lion redeeming their honor for the slaughter of their troops.

The most dangerous threat is the Tsuno. These creatures have demonstrated an ability to appear unexpectedly in remote areas and also harbor a grudge for the Lion. Some guards in Foshi have reported lone Tsuno on the fringes of the area, lurking about farms, but thus far there have been no attacks. The city is constantly ready for battle. Only time will tell the fate of Foshi.

QUARTERMASTER SEIYOKO'S OFFICE

Every army needs a supply line. Quartermaster Seiyoko's supply line is shorter than most, but that makes her job no less difficult. The quartermaster's office processes countless forms and authorization papers, and Seiyoko sometimes jokes that more paper passes through Foshi than food. Her building is constantly busy — with thousands of troops in and around Foshi, there is always someone with a request, a need, or an order.

Dealing with the bureaucracy presents difficulties Seiyoko never envisioned during her training with the Akodo. Once a request goes into the system, it can take weeks to be processed and approved. It's not that they're not efficient, dedicated, or skilled: the office merely has a tremendous amount of work to do, and everything has to be processed as necessity requires and regulations demand. Without Seiyoko, the entire operation would quickly degrade into havoc while the Kitsu scrambled to find another supply manager even remotely as capable. Some unknown Akodo with a sense of humor once compared Seiyoko's office to the famous quote attributed to Lord Sun — "twenty million drown in paperwork if I am weak." It amused Seiyoko so much that she had the line painted above her office's front door.

KITSU SEIYOKO

[Samurai 3/Fighter 2; Akodo Bushi 2]

Seiyoko is the quartermaster for the armies of Foshi, and she is constantly busy. Not that she minds; she was only moderately talented with the sword and never really had a head for politics. She was to be married off at the first convenient opportunity, since her one manifest virtue was that she was quite comely. The Akodo who ran the quartermaster's office in the city of Foshi needed a wife, and the Kitsu matched her to him.

When he died in battle after one month, she took over his duties. She walked into the office, asked for the records, and flew into a rage at the incompetence and disorganization she saw. She had the office's extensive records burned in an open field and started from scratch. The Kitsu lords of the city were aghast, but one week later the office was running more efficiently than ever. One year later Matsu Nimuro arrived in Foshi to personally commend her for the improved efficiency and offered her a higher position. Seiyoko refused, replying that without her the office would be doomed.

Her job makes her feel happy, useful, and necessary. She is constantly busy, but she accepts that tranquilly. She has found her destiny.

BISHAMON SEIDO (LOCATION L11)

Most Lion tend to worship their ancestors more frequently than they pray to the Seven Fortunes. The notable exception is Bishamon, a Fortune whose ideals and practices mesh well with the Lion's philosophies.

Bishamon Seido is a large shrine, built by Lion from every family to honor Bishamon as well as Matsu Itagi, a Lion Champion of the fifth century. Itagi, legend has it, claimed to be as strong as the Shadowlands. He boasted that he could defeat Fu Leng and seal the Festering Pit with his bare hands. He was very nearly successful, reaching several miles into the Shadowlands and surviving for weeks without succumbing to the Taint. (Further information about Matsu Itagi can be found in *Way of the Crab*.) Many Lion regard Matsu Itagi as an incarnation of Bishamon.

This heroic feat of bravery and strength is found in the teachings of the shugenja who tend to the shrine. The shrine acts as a dojo for the famed Matsu Lion's Pride and the Kitsu shugenja. Both types of students are encouraged to develop their physical strength beyond what would be required at other dojo. Even the shugenja in residence are far stronger than their counterparts elsewhere, as the duties of tending a shrine to the Fortune of Strength tend to involve a great deal of physical exertion.

CEASELESS VIGIL WATCH

Every time the Lion Clan goes to battle, shugenja hold a prayer vigil in Bishamon Seido, praying to Bishamon to guide the blades of the Lion to victory.

In the past half-century, the Shadowlands have made more concerted attacks on Rokugan than in all the years previous. In the past year, the Shadowlands forces of the Tsuno have attacked Lion lands directly. Those with the purest Kitsu blood recognize that their power is echoed in the Tsuno, and fear that these creatures hold some connection to the dead kitsu. They prepare themselves solemnly for the battle to come, keeping a constant watch for the inevitable return of the Tsuno.

Eight shugenja maintain the vigil at all hours, at the top of a large watchtower constructed for this purpose. Regardless of weather conditions — snow, hail, rain, thunderstorms — they remain, praying for victory.

Visiting ambassador Hida Kuoshi, when asked his opinion of Ceaseless Vigil Watch, laughed, nodded, and said, "That's a good start."

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: While visiting Bishamon Seido, the characters find the corpses of the eight shugenja at Ceaseless Vigil Watch. They were praying for victory against the Shadowlands forces, and thus an attack on them is a capital crime, tantamount to aiding the Shadowlands. No visitors other than the PCs arrived at the shrine in the past week. Thus, the killer must be someone already present.

Focus: The PCs are the primary suspect, though no one is forthcoming with any damning testimony. In the complete absence of testimony, it is politely suggested to the PCs that they find some way to prove their innocence.

Strike: The shugenja on vigil were poisoned by one of the servants. After they died he returned, mutilating the bodies with the shugenja's own wakizashi to make it appear that combat had occurred. The servant is a Pekkle no Oni dispatched to sow paranoia by a Tsuno Soutwister making preparations for a later attack. Some forensic investigation could reveal the truth, but the PCs will be hard pressed to find a way to make the paranoid Kitsu listen to outsiders. (Lion samurai in the party will be very helpful.)

MILOR HOLDINGS

BLUE CHRYSANTHEMUM VILLAGE (TEN MILES NORTH OF BISHAMON SEIDO, LOCATION L11)

A little over two hundred years ago, Kitsu Kozu left this village to enter training. He had little aptitude for the ways of the shugenja or the sodan-senzo, but showed promise as a bushi — even being accepted into the dojo at the Castle of the Swift Sword. From the beginning of his training, he had a constant companion: Echiko, a Doji maiden fostered to the Akodo. He was the only Kitsu in the class, and she was the only Crane, and at the most prestigious bushi dojo of the Lion clan, they were equally outsiders. It seemed that nothing could separate them: they trained together, they lived together, they cared for each other. Their childhood love was pure and open.

Once they passed their gempukku, they were forced to separate. Echiko returned to her family, and Koza stayed at the castle. They kept in contact through letters, and after a year had passed, they decided to marry. They petitioned their fathers to arrange the marriage, and their parents consented. Koza would marry into Echiko's family, and they would be happy.

Word of this reached the recently appointed Lion Champion Matsu Goratu, who held no love for the Crane. He was outraged at the very idea of one of his clan marrying a Crane, especially a Crane his predecessor had allowed to train in a Lion dojo. The lowborn Kitsu marrying into the hated Crane was anathema.

The Champion came to Koza and gave him a solemn duty. "Our clan has been insulted," he said. "I need you to avenge the insult and restore our clan's honor." With those words, Koza left for Violence Behind Courtliness City... at the head of an army seven thousand men strong.

Koza's instructions were clear — he had to return to his Champion with the head of the harlot who presumed to marry a Lion and her scheming father. The attack was swift and unexpected. It was not difficult for Koza to reach Echiko's home. Killing his true love was much more difficult.

With a heavy heart, Koza returned to his lord with the head the Champion demanded. The Matsu lord smiled at Koza and offered him command of an army — he was quite well trained for the position of general, and his service to the clan had been great. Koza refused. "I cannot serve you, my lord," he replied, "until I have atoned for my crime." The heartbroken Koza committed seppuku to show his disdain for the Champion's demands.

Matsu Goratu was shamed by his vassal's actions. He proclaimed himself unfit for the position of champion, passing that honor to his Akodo advisor, and retired to the life of a monk. Goratu raised a shrine to Benten in honor of Koza and his love, and spent the rest of his life in the village, tending the shrine. When he died, his ashes were spread around the shrine's grounds. Blue chrysanthemums sprouted up from the ground, giving the village its name.

IWAO

[Inkyo 5; Monk (Seven Fortunes) 2]

Iwao is an elderly member of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and he maintains the only shrine to Benten in the Lion lands. He's a skilled gardener and teacher, and the children love him. Long ago, he was a Crane. He was a Doji courtier, and a skilled one. He was eloquent and persuasive, clearly touched by Benten. Ironically, Iwao tired of the constant politicking. He would negotiate a trade deal or a marriage or an alliance of some sort, and then he would be overruled and contradicted, or some other thing would happen that would render his work moot. It grew tiresome, and so he retired. Things are simpler now. He cares for the unique flowers around the shrine, and for the villagers. Lion so rarely hear the wisdom of Benten, he thinks, that it's worth staying here even without any other monasteries nearby.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: One of the PCs' daimyo has heard of the blue chrysanthemums, and instructs the PC to fetch some for him — with the roots intact. He wishes to cultivate the rare flower as a curiosity.

Focus: Two obstacles stand in the way of the daimyo's dream. First, Iwao does not allow any flowers to leave the shrine. The chrysanthemums are incapable of growing anywhere but around this particular shrine to Benten. Second, the challenge was presented as a bet between the daimyo and one of his peers, and the daimyo's peer seeks to undo the PCs in any manner short of open violence.

Strike: The PCs can report back to the daimyo with failure, or come up with a way to fake the chrysanthemums. The no-win scenario is an excellent test of the PC's character — though of course he can always cheat.

EXTRA-TERRITORIAL HOLDINGS

SHINDEN YUISHO

(NOT IN ROKUGAN)

Just past the path of death, far from Rokugan in the Spirit Realm of Yomi, lies the only Lion holding outside the mortal realm. It is a solemn place of reverence for those who have gone before, and is the most difficult temple to reach. The only permanent route to Yomi goes through the famed Hall of Ancestors in Ikoma lands.

Shinden Yuisho is a small temple, constructed in Yomi by the sodan-senzo over the years. The initial concept was the dream of a self-assured sodan-senzo named Kitsu Hariko. Permission to build the temple took nearly a decade to receive, and when it was finally acquired, construction proved to be agonizingly slow. So few can reach the site, and few sodan-senzo are carpenters or architects. Many shiryō offered assistance, including several Kaiu, but their offers were not accepted. Hariko said that the temple was a way for the living to honor the dead, and it would simply not be appropriately reverent if the dead helped to build it. Though she did not live to finish construction, she watched the last stone fall into place from the fields of Yomi.

Several centuries passed before the temple was completed. During construction, it was derided, the very idea mocked. "Why should we build a temple in Yomi?" the sodan-senzo masters asked. "If our ancestors wanted a temple in their own lands, wouldn't they have built one themselves?"

Those who followed Hariko ignored the masters and kept building the temple, rationalizing it as a test of faith. Finally, near the end of the end of the seventh century, Shinden Yuisho was completed.

It is a marvel to behold, a living monument to those who have passed before. The Kitsu often visit it when they fulfill their ancestral duty of guiding lost souls to their destinations. The sight of the temple eases the trauma of death for many who end up in Yomi, and makes the transition easier.

The temple is maintained by those rare sodan-senzo who have the power to enter Yomi.

KITSU HUIYUAN NO SHIRYO

[Shugenja 10/Sodan-senzo 5; Sodan-senzo 5]

Huiyuan knew from the beginning that he was subject to the old Akodo curse, "May you live in interesting times." From his childhood days as the target of bullies to his early days in the Lion armies, Huiyuan never knew a moment's peace. After eight years of constant military activity — from battles against the Crane in 1124 up to the end of 1132 — Huiyuan was the oldest thirty-year-old in the Lion Clan. Like much of his clan, he was wearied by the near-constant war.

He returned to the Kitsu Tombs as a war hero, and found an oni guarding the gates and maho-tsukai running his family. So he did what any true sodan-senzo would do — he consulted his ancestors. The Living Darkness was attacking Yomi, and the ancestors were too busy to answer any queries. Huiyuan looked at himself and looked at the dark forces that now owned his temple. He couldn't stop them, but he could not stand aside.

So he fought them.

He killed several tainted Kitsu — including his Bloodspeaker brother Gongsun — and even an Akuma spawn in the Tombs, but in the end was powerless to remove their corruption. He lay dying on the stone floor of the Tombs, acidic oni blood eating into his heart, when he saw a great light and the spirit of one of the First Five came to him. "Come with me, Huiyuan, and together we shall give the Lion strength." With one of his greatest ancestors made flesh before him, he had little choice but to happily accept. The kitsu carried Huiyuan into Yomi, where he joined his ancestors in the battle against the Living Darkness. Once it was defeated, Huiyuan no shiryo decided to pay his respects to the kitsu by maintaining Shinden Yuisho. He is the only dead spirit that has ever been allowed to tend the shrine.

THE LION HALL OF ANCESTORS

The Lion's greatest tribute to their ancestors is the legendary Hall of Ancestors. Each family has an enormous hall dedicated to its ancestors. Hundreds of giant statues line the walls, each one a likeness of a dead hero. The Hall is open to any visitor who is properly respectful, so it is a popular attraction for samurai traveling through the area, truly one of the wonders of Rokugan. It lies ten miles east of Kyuden Ikoma, on Crossing Plains Way, just past the border between Kitsu and Ikoma lands.

There are four great halls in the complex, each one several stories tall to accommodate the immense statues, which have been crafted by the finest sculptors in the Empire. Several omoidasu tend the shrine, prepared to tell the tales of the ancestors to any who would hear them. Generals often visit before a battle to hear an Ikoma relate an inspiring tale so that they might be guided by the victories of the past.

The halls are filled with scrolls containing tales of the heroes and urns containing their ashes. The more notable the hero, the more easily accessible his remains are. The greatest heroes are displayed in massive well-lit rooms decorated by many offerings. More obscure heroes are tucked away in side chambers, which are nevertheless carefully tended by the devoted Kitsu.

In addition to these duties, the resident monks and shugenja transcribe ofuda for the Kitsu shugenja and sodan-senzo. Most Lion spell scrolls are made here. It is a great honor to have spell scrolls from in the Kitsu Hall of Ancestors, under the watchful gaze of some of the greatest shugenja of the past. The Kitsu Hall of Ancestors also houses a permanent passage to Yomi, though the Kitsu guard this secret well. The passageway leads directly to Shinden Yuisho (see above).

Recently the Tsuno attacked the Hall of Ancestors. Though the attack was only a feint to conceal their attack upon the Kitsu Tombs, many of the outlying structures were damaged, as were some of the statues of past heroes. The Kitsu were outraged by the insult, and many of the peaceful shugenja have sworn blood oaths of revenge against the blasphemous creatures.

THE FIFTH HALL

Each of the Halls has a basement storage level often used as a work area. The rituals followed during the transcription process require complete concentration, and the slightest interruption can ruin the process. Because of this, the only people allowed in this area are the shugenja and monks who do the transcription work.

If one could get access to the basement of the Akodo Hall, and one were to look carefully at the halls, it could be determined (with some difficulty) that one of the walls was constructed recently. This wall is merely two and a half centuries old, not even a quarter the age of the rest of the building. On it is a beautifully constructed shrine to Okura no Oni, the oni that redeemed the Jade

Champion Kitsu Okura's soul, banished Akuma no Oni to the pits of Jigoku, and now guards the gates of Tengoku.

The wall has a hidden door, the handle worked into the shrine to Okura no Oni so carefully that someone who didn't know exactly what he was looking for would find nothing. Behind the door is the lost fifth hall of Ancestors. The Shimizu family of the Lion (see chapter 7 for full details) was once the fifth major family of the Lion clan. It is unknown why the Shimizu chose to have their hall constructed underground, but it has made the Kitsu's task of concealing the Shimizu hall much easier.



THE KITSU CHAMPION

After the Shimizu's destruction in 917, their Hall was boarded over and warded with the most powerful magic the Kitsu knew. Like the rest of the Shimizu family, it was intentionally forgotten. Originally a silk curtain covered the door, but when Okura no Oni redeemed itself, her shrine was placed in front of it.

Unknown to the Kitsu, a handful of ronin descended from the Shimizu have discovered the existence of the hall and tunneled in from the outside. The dark family now uses their sealed-off Hall of Ancestors as a meeting-place, honoring the forgotten heroes of their past as they make plans for the future.

KITSU TANUYAME

[Kitsu Shugenja 6; Kitsu Shugenja 2]

Tanoyame is an elderly shugenja who tends the Akodo Hall of Ancestors. He is brusque and antisocial, and is frequently rude to the temple's visitors. His attitude has prevented him from rising in the ranks of the Kitsu, and in his early fifties he still tends and cleans statues of the most obscure heroes of the Lion. He is a bitter, acerbic man carefully avoided by most visitors.

He seems to respect only the walls around him and the statues he lives with. They don't talk to him. They don't argue with him, or berate him for his inability to learn from his mistakes. They won't whine to him about how he's a poor husband who neglects his wife or blame his poor talent as a father for the fact his children never write. They're just silent, and that's how he likes it. Anyone who disturbs the old man's serenity receives his full arsenal of venom and sarcasm.

THE KITSU TOMBS

(LOCATION L19)

The Kitsu Tombs lie in Matsu lands, and are detailed in Chapter 6.



IMPORTANT KITSU NPCs

KITSU JURU, DAIMYO OF THE KITSU FAMILY

The current lord of the Kitsu family is older than many of his predecessors, but his mind is still sharp. When Kitsu Motso fell in the war against Hantei XVI's spirit armies, there was none with a stronger claim to the position. Juri's reign as Kitsu daimyo has been alternately frustrating and insightful to him and his family.

Juri's demeanor does not endear him to the younger members of his family, though this does not overly concern him. His long tenure in the Hall of Ancestors and his undeniable loyalty to the Kitsu and the Lion Clan place him above reproach. While some consider him a terse, irritable, and sour old man, he always places the interests of his family first, and he has done much to open relations between the reclusive Kitsu and other families within the Empire. Though Juri's early position was precarious, an interloper would now be hard pressed to find a single Kitsu willing to speak slightly of the family daimyo. Juri is not a pleasant man, but he is a strong leader.

The attack on the Kitsu Tombs was perhaps the greatest loss the daimyo has ever felt. Juri's influence has rallied the Kitsu in their first major commitment to war. Though many in the peaceful family are wary about entering into a true war, none will permit the defiling of their sacred temples to go unanswered.

For now, Juri has found himself responsible for protecting the homelands of the Lion. Nimuro and Ginawa are fully occupied with events transpiring beyond Lion borders, so Ikoma Sume is the only other Lion of real power to whom Juri can turn. Kitsu Juri does not miss the irony in seeing the two "peaceful" families of the Lion pushed to their limits destroying the enemies of their Clan. He makes sure to laugh every time it comes to mind, just to let everyone know he has not forgotten how.

KITSU JURU

Male human **Shu14/Sen5**: CR19, Medium-sized humanoid; HD 14d6+14 plus 5d4+4; hp 98; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 24 (touch 15, flat-footed 23); SA ; SQ Class skill — Knowledge (Ancestors) (family bonus), Kitsu Abilities (Sense the Rift, Touch of Crystal, Spirit-Walker — all types, The Beast Within); Shugenja abilities (Element Focus — Water, Sense Elements); Honor 3; AL LG; SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +24; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 19 (25), Cha 17; Height 5 ft. 2 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Concentration +18, Craft (Gardening) +12, Diplomacy +29, Heal +29, Knowledge (Ancestors) +25, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (Fortunes) +4, Knowledge (Shintao) +5, Knowledge (Yomi) +24, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +24; Call of the Ancestors (Ancestor: Kitsu Hariko), Depths of the Void, Ear of the Emperor (Ancestor: Miya), Kitsu Blood, Leadership (27), Pure Kitsu Blood, Revere the Past (Ancestor: Kitsu Toju), Ritual Magic, Spell Penetration, Superior Element Focus (Air), Void Use.

Dojo: Kitsu Tombs (see *Way of the Shugenja*).

Spells Known (6/8/8/8/7/7/6/6/4; Base DC 17 + spell level; Elemental Focus — Water, Kitsu School): 0 — cleanse, commune with elements, create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance, purity, suitengu's surge, summon, wisdom of the fortunes; 1st — cure light wounds, detect taint, endure elements, never alone, remove fear, sanctuary, 2nd — commune with lesser spirit, courage of the seven thunders, lesser restoration, lessons of the lion, locate object, wisdom and clarity; 3rd — cure serious wounds, dispel magic, importune kami III, remove curse, remove disease; 4th — bridge to Yomi, cure critical wounds, detect scrying, locate creature, slash of the lion; 5th — atonement, commune, commune with nature, scrying, summon nature's ally v; 6th — control weather, heal, karma, true seeing; 7th — grandfather's word, greater restoration, guardian of air, spell turning; 8th — discern location, importune kami VIII, mass heal, tides of battle, 9th — peace of the kami, seeing ages past, wheel of fortune.

Possessions: amulet of natural armor +4, bracers of armor +5, haori of resistance +4, lantern of revealing, periapt of wisdom +6, ring of protection +4.

KITSU JURI

Earth: 3

Willpower: 5

Water: 3

Perception: 6

Fire: 3

Intelligence: 4

Air: 4

Awareness: 6

Void: 4

School/Rank: Kitsu Sodan-senzo 5 (Kitsu Tombs)

Honor: 3.2

Glory: 8.1

Advantages: Ancestor (Kitsu Hariko), Ancestor (Kitsu Toju), Full-blood Kitsu Ancestry, Kitsu Abilities (Sense the Rift, Touch of Crystal, Spirit-Walker — all types, The Beast Within), Sage

Disadvantages: Small

Skills: Bojutsu 4, Calligraphy 5, Defense 5, Etiquette 5, Heraldry 6, History (Lion Clan) 7, Lore (Ancestors) 9, Lore (Ghosts) 5, Lore (Jigoku) 5, Lore (Toshigoku) 6, Lore (Yomi) 9, Meditation 7, Shintao 6

Dojo: Kitsu Tombs (see *Way of the Shugenja*)

Spells: As the master of the Kitsu family, Juri has access to nearly any spell generally available to a shugenja, plus any secret spell of the Lion Clan. Juri has the following spells as innate abilities — Sense Ancestor, Summon Ancestor, Commune Ancestor, Sacred Ground, Slayer's Knives, Path to Inner Peace, Reflective Pool.

KITSU DEJIKO, RIGHT HAND TO TOTURI TSUDAO

Few people understand the heart that beats beneath the armor of Kitsu Dejiko, and the samurai-ko has learned to cherish those few she can call friends. Dejiko was born into an unremarkable family, and can claim only a distant relationship to the most prominent and ancient ancestors of her line. She was surrounded by mediocrity from birth, and Dejiko decided she would have none of it. The young woman chose to become a bushi when she learned she did not carry the talent for the kami. Her choice was made with little remorse, as she had already taken the first step to becoming what she wanted — someone worth remembering.

Eventually Dejiko's quest led her to join the Lion's Pride. Her great talent impressed even her sensei. Her family scoffed at her dreams: a Kitsu attempting to wear the armor of a Matsu would never amount to anything.

Dejiko's dedication and honorable nature drew the attention of the Imperial Legions, which offered the Lion samurai-ko a position. Dejiko was moved by this gesture, the first real sign of the validation she struggled for. She remembers her first term of service in the Legion with bittersweet fondness; it was during that time that she witnessed the greatest acts of glory and the foulest acts of dishonor she had ever seen. Only a short time into her tour with the Legion, she was placed into a scouting party with Mirumoto Junnosuke, a man who sneered at the virtues of mercy and compassion. It was on their only mission together that Junnosuke was disgraced for his brutal tactics, but it served to teach Dejiko just how base a man can become without true adherence to bushido.

Like many Kitsu, Dejiko has found herself thrust into a sudden war for the lands she calls home. After being recalled from the war with the Dragon, she was assigned to a small command that would skirmish with the Tsuno and draw them into the bulk of Lion forces. As fate would have it, this would be the first of many Lion units Toturi Tsudao would conscript into her own efforts against the sudden menace of the Tsuno. It was also at this time that Dejiko's past caught up to her, as a Dragon detachment used the confusion created by the Tsuno to counterattack the Lion in their own lands. These Dragon were led by Mirumoto Junnosuke, and Dejiko was not fool enough to believe the Dragon commander's proximity was coincidence. Junnosuke's sudden emergence was brought to a stunning halt as Tsudao commanded the Dragon to stand down in the name of the Empire. During this confrontation, a Scorpion bushi named Bayushi Paneki appeared and turned Junnosuke's own men against him by revealing the Dragon's dishonor during his days in the Legion.

Tsudao was impressed by Dejiko's dedication and ability, and soon took the hot-tempered Lion under her wing. The acceptance and glory Dejiko longed for she has found following the daughter of Toturi, and Dejiko knows that she serves a commander worth dying for. She has learned much while becoming one of Tsudao's most trusted advisors, and the Sword has tempered Dejiko's anger and spirit into a far more cunning and deadly weapon. Dejiko has also learned from the other three notable samurai in Tsudao's command group — Doji Jotaro, Bayushi Paneki, and Toturi Miyako. From the Crane she has learned that a warrior can still appreciate art, culture, and beauty. From the Scorpion commander, Tsudao has learned the value of subtlety. The young Monkey samurai, Miyako, has served as a sterling example of dedication, courage, and loyalty.

KITSU DEJIKO

Female human Sam10: CR10, Medium-sized humanoid; HD 10d10+20; hp 78; Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC19 (touch 13, flat-footed 17); Attack +15/+10 melee (1d10+5 +2 katana); SQ Class skill — Knowledge (ancestors) (family bonus), Samurai abilities (Ancestral Daisho), Dojo (Shiro Matsu); Honor 3; AL LG; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 8; Height 5 ft. 5 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Battle +5, Climb +9, Diplomacy +2, Handle Animal +5, Iaijutsu Focus +6, Intimidate +8, Jump +9, Ride +10, Sense Motive +10, Swim +7; Death Trance, Endurance, Improved Critical (Katana), Improved Initiative, Spirited (Ancestor:

Akodo Samune), Strength of Purity, Void Use, Way of the Lion, Weapon Focus (katana).

Possessions: +3 katana (ancestral daisho), wakizashi (ancestral daisho), masterwork lamellar armor, masterwork yumi and 20 arrows, haori of resistance +2, amulet of natural armor +1, tortoise shell talisman.

KITSU DEJIKO

Earth: 4

Water: 4

Strength: 5

Fire: 3

Agility: 4

Air: 3

Reflexes: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Matsu Bushi 4 (Shiro Matsu)

Honor: 3.7

Glory: 6.1

Advantages: Kharmic Tie: Toturi Tsudao, Ancestor: Akodo Samune, Death Trance

Disadvantages: Brash

Skills: Archery 5, Athletics 6, Battle 4, Hand-to-Hand 6, History 2, Horsemanship 4, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 6, Lore (Tsuno) 2, Meditation 3, Shintao 4

KITSU HISASHI, WRATHFUL SODAN-SENZO

Kitsu Hisashi never imagined he would stand upon a battlefield, as he had been raised since birth for a position in the famous Kitsu Tombs. Hisashi learned the ways to guide his Lion cousins through life with the wisdom of the ancestors and the blessings of the Celestial Heavens. This was Hisashi's destiny, and he was content to live in it.

After his gempukku, Hisashi was indeed sent to the Kitsu Tombs. The Kitsu went about his duties with his characteristic dispassionate but efficient manner. Some commented that the young man had Otomo blood in his veins, as he acted without emotion and seemed to live only to perform his endless painstaking tasks. Hisashi did not bother reacting to any of the derisive comments. He was happy. His life was ordered, and each day was his to live as he wished.

All of that would change in a sudden attack that took every Lion by surprise.

Hisashi had been away from the Tombs, called to act as a healer to a group of Legionnaires. Had he been in the Tombs at the time of the attack, he would have surely died. For weeks afterward, Hisashi stayed at the defiled site and worked with other shugenja to purify the lands. While others rested from a long day of weary work, Hisashi learned. He plumbed the scattered scrolls of the Kitsu libraries, searching for ways to strike back at those who would dare attack the peaceful brothers and sisters of his order. Hisashi's masters were concerned at first that this thirst for vengeance would overtake him, but it soon became apparent he regarded his new path with the calculating and cunning mind of an Akodo — his family had been struck, and it was simply his duty to crush those who would raise a hand against his brethren.

Hisashi's meditations eventually led him to do something he had never tried before — travel alone among the Spirit Realms, looking for answers. When Hisashi moved into the realm of Toshigoku, he finally caught a glimpse of his nemesis. A small Tsuno raiding party rejoiced as they slaughtered the spirits that wandered the landscape.

It did not take long for the Tsuno to notice Hisashi, which did not surprise the Kitsu. There was a perceptible pull between him and the creatures, as if the very nature of the world called out for violence. The Lion shugenja knew he would never survive a direct conflict with these monsters, but had gotten what he had wanted — a close look at the things that would forever be his mortal enemies. He quickly returned to the Realm of Mortals. One of the Tsuno warriors followed him arrogantly, wishing to kill the intruder for sport.

That Tsuno was swiftly knocked unconscious by the magical trap Hisashi had prepared at the far end of the passage. The Kuni that Hisashi had hired vivisected the beast with joyous fervor. Hisashi stood by and watched the entire process, a grim smile upon his face.

Since that time, Hisashi has become truly fearsome in combat. He is a dispassionate man, dispensing what he feels is the justice of both the mortal world and the Celestial Heavens to his enemies. Inwardly, Hisashi revels in the divine clarity that has taken hold of his life. Never has he felt surer of his purpose. Nothing can stop him from achieving it.

KITSU HISASHI

Male human Shus/Sen2: CR10, Medium-sized humanoid; HD 8d6+16 plus 2d4+4; hp 63; Init +4; Spd 30ft.; AC16 (touch 11, flat-footed 16); Attack claws +5 melee (1d4 damage); SQ Class skill — Knowledge (ancestors) (family bonus), Kitsu Abilities (Touch of Crystal), Shugenja abilities (Element Focus — Water, Sense Elements); Honor 2; AL CG; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +12; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 17 (19), Cha 13; Height 5 ft. 7 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Concentration +15, Heal +17, Knowledge (Ancestors) +17, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (Shintao) +9, Knowledge (Tsuno) +5, Knowledge (Yomi) +16, Scry +11, Spellcraft +16, Spot +9; Claws of the Ancestor (Ancestor: Kitsu Tendo), Death Trance, Improved Initiative, Pure Kitsu Blood, Void Use, Weapon Focus (Wakizashi).

Dojo: Kitsu Tombs.

Spells Known (6/7/7/7/6/4 Base DC 14 + spell level, Elemental Focus — Water, Kitsu School): 0 — *cleanse, commune with elements, cure minor wounds, detect magic, flash of insight, mending, pebble charm, purify food and drink, purity, suitengu's surge*; 1st — *cure light wounds, earth's stagnation, ebbing strength, never alone, obscuring mist, shield of faith*; 2nd — *bull's strength, commune with lesser spirit, endurance, fortune's turn, lesser restoration, lessons of the lion*; 3rd — *cure serious wounds, greater magic weapon, magic circle against taint, remove curse, water breathing*; 4th — *bridge to yomi, cure critical wounds, jade strike*; 5th — *commune with greater spirit, righteous might*.

Possessions: +2 ashigaru armor, periapt of wisdom +2, ring of counterspells, ring of protection +1.

KITSU HISASHI

Earth: 4

Water: 3

Perception: 4

Fire: 2

Intelligence: 4

Air: 3

Awareness: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Kitsu Sodan-senzo 3 (Kitsu Tombs)

Honor: 3.1

Glory: 3.7

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Kitsu Abilities (Touch of Crystal), Magic Resistance (4 points)

Disadvantages: Driven (Destroy Tsuno), Insensitive

Skills: Bojutsu 5, Calligraphy 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 3, History (Lion Clan) 4, Lore (Ancestors) 5, Lore (Tsuno) 3, Meditation 6, Shintao 3

Dojo: Kitsu Tombs

Spells: (Innate abilities are in italics) Sense Ancestor, *Commune Ancestor*, *Summon Ancestor*, Mists of Illusion, Essence of Air, *Summon Fog*, Fires From the Forge, *Jade Strike*, Armor of Earth, Hands of Jurojin, Tremor, Evil Ward, Fires of Purity, *Bo of Water*, *Path to Inner Peace*, Purify Water, Wisdom and Clarity

VASSALS OF THE KITSU FAMILY

THE ISE FAMILY

The Ise family of the Lion claims a history nearly as ancient as the Kitsu they serve. Shortly after the first Day of Thunder, the Empire's infant clans began to settle into their roles. The Kitsu began their research into the Spirit Realms slowly at first, but soon their curiosity overcame their good sense. The shugenja of the Lion forged their way across Toshigoku, Meido, Yomi, and even Gaki-do with impunity. They had little idea what repercussions these actions would have, but they would soon learn.

Drawn by the spiritual energies the Kitsu toyed with, denizens of other realms began to follow the Lion shugenja back to the Realm of Mortals. The incidents were scattered at first, but eventually reports of ghosts and demons came from all over the barely settled lands of the Kitsu. The samurai of the other Lion families were nearly helpless against the threat these outsiders represented. The Kitsu argued over what action to take — some claimed that the destruction of those native to other Spirit Realms was the worst kind of arrogance, while others considered these spirits the same breed of evil that Fu Leng represented.

One of the militant shugenja was a brooding and fierce man by the name of Kitsu Ise. Ise refused to sit idly by while the elders of his family debated for weeks. Their inaction led to the deaths of those under the Kitsu's care. With a small group of highly trained ashigaru, Kitsu Ise began to hunt down and exterminate the supernatural threats one at a time. The leaders of the shugenja family were so wrapped up in their debate that Ise's quest was half over before they noticed it.

Crediting their victories to the blessings of the Fortunes and the Celestial Order, Ise rallied other Kitsu to his cause and the unwelcome spirits were quickly destroyed. The elders of the Kitsu were unsure how to treat the incident; they had never forbidden anyone to act against the outsiders, but Ise had not asked permission to enact his small war. The Kitsu brought the problem before Akodo himself, who was not so confused. Ise had clearly done a great service for the clan, and Akodo demanded that he be rewarded.

Ise was granted his own vassal family to serve as the strong arm of the Kitsu. Ise was hailed as a hero in his homeland, and his name would be remembered for all time. Ise began teaching his followers how to protect their Kitsu cousins from threats of both the mortal world and other Realms.

The Ise may have been the only force that kept the Kitsu Tombs from being completely destroyed when the Tsuno assaulted the ancient site. Many Ise died forcing them back, and in the end the Tsuno were forced to kill, loot, and escape rather than burning the Tombs to the ground as they would have preferred. The survivors of the Ise now stand ready to go to war with the Shadowlands forces that attacked their home, just as Kitsu Ise himself once protected these lands from supernatural assailants.

TSUMEKURACHI KITSU SHINDEN

The Temple of the Lion's Claw is the home of the Ise family and its elegant blend of Kitsu wisdom and Matsu fury. The grounds resemble a temple to Osano-Wo, as shugenja and monks train in the fighting arts while studying the way of the kami and the Fortunes. The temple is guarded like a small fortress, with a sentry posted at every key location. The temple is located just north of the Kitsu Tombs, where many of the Ise go to perform duties for their cousins and masters in the Kitsu family. There are often a few Akodo or Matsu soldiers posted here to train the Ise in warrior skills.

The temple contains a large library for both the prayer scrolls of the family and meticulously researched records of the Spirit Realms. There are detailed accounts of every single known entity within the Realms, as well as a wealth of more general information about them. The Ise are quickly and quietly gathering as much information as they can about the Tsuno, though few of the family are willing to risk traveling the Realms in search of their enemy. They are powerful enough within Ningen-do, and it would be foolish to track them to their own den.

THE ISE FAMILY

The Ise are shugenja, monks, inkyo, or multi-class combinations of any of those classes and fighter. Ise never show the talent to become sodan-senzo. (They may not take the Pure Kitsu Blood feat.)

Favored Class: Shugenja

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skills: Knowledge (Spirit Realms)

Starting Outfit:

1. Four 1st level divine spell scrolls (no fire), masterwork light armor.

THE ISE FAMILY

The Ise almost exclusively train as shugenja or monks. They attend the Kitsu shugenja school, and never show any talent to become a sodan-senzo. (They may not take the Bloodlines Advantage.)

Benefit: +1 Strength

Glory: 0.5

Special: Members of the Ise family who attend the Kitsu Shugenja School may choose to give up either Etiquette or Heraldry from their beginning skills to choose either Defense or a weapon skill instead.

THE NOROKO FAMILY

The Noroko are an oddity among families, especially those of mere vassal family status. Their proud heritage stems from defiance of the very family they serve under. During the war with the Living Darkness, Kitsu Motso led a large portion of the Lion forces toward the Kaiu Wall in order to assist the Crab. A group of Kitsu traveled with this army to heal the wounded and lend their wisdom. Though the time these shugenja spent fighting against the horrors of the Shadowlands was short, the experience had a profound effect on them. When the Lion returned to their homeland, the shugenja were horrified at what had become of the Kitsu lands.

Kitsu Okura had sold his family to the Taint in the name of strengthening the clan. A handful of shugenja saw Okura's madness before their brethren. Some of these individuals committed seppuku from shame. Others left the clan, knowing that their testimony would never stand against their daimyo's.

After the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, Emperor Toturi was made aware of the plight of these ronin shugenja, and commanded Kitsu Juri to restore their status as Lion. While Juri appreciated the difficulty of their decision, the fact that they abandoned their duties rather than standing against evil did not sit well with him. A true samurai would have shown his displeasure with Okura by committing seppuku. While Juri was unwilling to restore them completely, he made them vassals of the Kitsu so that one day they might earn full status in the family again.

The man once known as Kitsu Ryo stepped forward, as he had come to lead these ex-Lions through their troubled times. Juri proclaimed Ryo the daimyo of the Noroko family, and all the ex-Lion shugenja his vassals. The Noroko family would serve the Kitsu and the Jade Champion against the threat of the Taint that waits for the unwary.

Since that time, the Noroko have barely begun a new generation. The family totals less than fifty, but they are as full of pride as any Lion would be. They served Kuni Utagu as an elite cadre of Jade Magistrates when the time was needed, and have begun to learn the ways of both the Asako Inquisitors and the Kuni tsukai-sagasu in order to perform their duty. With the ascension of Asahina Sekawa to the position of Jade Champion, they have yet to take up their duty to the position again. While the Noroko are all too eager to fulfill the duties set before them by Emperor Toturi I, they are uncertain if they wish to obey a Crane Jade Champion. If Sekawa can prove that his position is more important than his clan, then perhaps they will aid him.

HISUI SHINDEN

The Temple of the Jade Lion is the home of the Noroko family. It is upon these sacred grounds that the Noroko train the next generation of guardians and seekers of evil. The temple is one of the very few holy sites consecrated to the Tao of Shinsei and the Fortunes within the lands of the Lion Clan. The Noroko family values the wisdom of Shinsei's words as well as the protection of Osano-wo, Bishamon, and Jurojin in the execution of their duties. Hisui Shinden has a large area for guests, as many Kuni and Asako visit to help instruct the small family.

Hisui Shinden is a small building just south of Bishamon Seido (Location L11). Due to its proximity to the training grounds of the Lion's Pride, many initiates of the Matsu are stationed near the temple to serve as guards. Combined with the Noroko's no-nonsense approach to duty and the unyield-

ing strength with which they carry out their sacred vows, this has resulted in cordial relations between the Noroko and Matsu families.

NOROKO DOJO

Though not officially a school, Noroko Dojo has its name due to its proximity to the Kaiu wall. The Noroko family struck a bargain with the Crab that allows their shugenja to stay within the Noroko Dojo for one year before their gempukku in order to better understand the true nature of the Shadowlands. The Noroko see this experience as vital to the training of a worthy shugenja, while the Crab always appreciate assistance from those who are willing to learn to fight the darkness.

The building is a rather small temple in the shadow of Kyuden Hida. Shrines to Bishamon, Osano-wo, and Yakamo are prominent within the temple, showing the Crab bent of the instruction that goes on within the dojo. Noroko Dojo is the place where the Noroko stay during their time in Crab lands, and very rarely does any actual training occur within the building. Though Kuni shugenja occasionally visit to help the Ise with their studies, most everything a Noroko learns while in the provinces of the Crab is imparted while they defend the Kaiu Wall.

THE NOROKO FAMILY

Shugenja from the Noroko family may choose from the Kuni shugenja school instead of the Kitsu shugenja school if they wish. Such characters have their starting Honor lowered to 1. They gain no access to Crab technique feats (unless they take the Different School feat), but may select Lion technique feats normally.

Favored Class: Shugenja

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skills: Knowledge (Shadowlands)

Starting Outfit:

1. Two first level divine spell scrolls (Earth or Water only), one second level divine spell scroll (Earth or Water only), two jade fingers.

THE NOROKO FAMILY

Shugenja from the Noroko family may attend the Kuni shugenja school by taking a 2-point Obligation to the Kuni family instead of taking the Different School advantage. The shugenja gains no points for this Disadvantage.

Benefit: +1 Willpower

Glory: 0.5

Special: Members of the Noroko family who attend the Kitsu Shugenja School may choose to give up either History or Heraldry from their beginning skills to instead begin with Lore (Shadowlands) 2.



KITSU MECHANICS

ANCESTORS

KITSU MOTSO

Forsaken by his ancestors. Shunned by his family. A legendary general. The only Kitsu Lion Champion. Motso was all these things and more.

As a young man, Motso was an angry child, desperate for acceptance from someone — anyone. His ancestors, and thus his living family as well, turned away from him. He sought acceptance by burying himself in his bushi training. Within the Matsu bushi school, Motso found a place for his talents. He excelled at swordplay and tactics, and his keen mind impressed his sensei. These gifts, combined with his high birth, meant he swiftly became one of the youngest Lion generals ever.

As the clan began to fracture in the months before the Day of Thunder (see *Time of the Void*), Motso called the clan together in the abandoned husk of Shiro Akodo. His words inspired the leaderless clan to reunite under the banner of Toturi. He reminded the Lion that their oaths to the Empire were more than words, and that no Lion should protect an Emperor possessed by the dark god Fu Leng. While the ultra-traditionalist faction of the Lion opposed him, Motso led half the clan to the field on the Day of Thunder.

Though he was not declared Champion then, he advised Ikoma Tسانuri for years to come. She named Motso as her heir, so when she died Motso became the first Kitsu to become the Champion of the Lion Clan. He led the clan for only a short time before being slain by the forces of Hantei XVI during the War of Spirits.

TACTICAL PROWESS

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: KITSU MOTSO

You have the tactical wisdom of Kitsu Motso.

Clan: Lion

Benefit: Knowledge (war) and Battle are always class skills for you, and you gain a +4 competence bonus to use the Battle skill to find advantage or find weakness (see the description of the Battle skill in *Rokugan*).

KITSU MOTSO

(7 POINTS)

Motso's guidance comes in the form of tactical and strategic genius. The character may modify his roll on the Battle table by five, in the same manner as the Tactician advantage. In addition, the Battle skill costs one fewer experience point per rank to raise.

KITSU TOJU

Kitsu Toju, the previous Kitsu family daimyo, was a soft-spoken, quiet man. In stark contrast to his brother Motso (see above), he was a reserved man who rarely took an active role in worldly affairs.

Even as a child, Toju felt more at home with the spirits of the dead and the kami than his family. Cursed with a stutter and painfully shy, he vastly preferred the halls of the Kitsu Tombs and the Castle of the Swift Sword to the political landscape. His father, the former daimyo, chose him as heir for precisely that reason — the Kitsu, he felt, were not supposed to be involved in the affairs of the living.

Throughout his reign as daimyo, Toju adhered to this precept. He led through example, and kept to the temples as much as possible. He gave wise counsel to the Champions he served and taught the lessons of the ancestors to the next generation. In all respects, he was an honorable and proper daimyo, leading by example. His loss is still felt.

REVERE THE PAST

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: KITSU TOJU

Kitsu Toju's quiet but firm reverence for his ancestors has passed on to you, as he watches you from Yomi.

Clan: Lion

Benefit: The save DC of any spell with the Ancestor tag is increased by 2. This stacks with the effects of Spell Focus or Element Focus. If you possess this feat, you may take an extra bonus ancestor feat when you enter the sodan-senzo prestige class (see *Way of the Shugenja*).

KITSU TOJU

(5 POINTS)

When casting an ancestor spell, you need only make two Raises to not exhaust a Spell Slot after casting it. (Normally you must make three Raises to do this.)

KITSU HARIKO

Hariko was a full-blooded Kitsu, niece of the family daimyo, and able to walk the Spirit Realms as easily as she could walk across a room. Her memory was phenomenal, and stories are still told of her ability to casually recite not only her lineage but also those of all of her sensei.

Despite her stunning abilities as a sodan-senzo, she had a monomaniacal view of the world. She took it upon herself to create a temple inside Yomi itself. After all, she reasoned, where better to honor the dead than in a place the dead can visit?

She was ridiculed, and a faction within the Kitsu family fought the temple's construction. She nonetheless prevailed, though her reputation suffered. In her day, she was considered the laughingstock of the family, humored only because of her ties to the daimyo. She died in disgrace, the temple still unfinished.

All that changed when her dream was completed. The sodan-senzo masters of the day stood in awe at its beauty. Even those unconnected to the project felt a great sense of accomplishment, and the Kitsu daimyo embraced it with open arms.

In modern times, Hariko is considered (somewhat ironically) by the Kitsu to be a symbol of unyielding loyalty to the traditions of the family. Her steadfast determination to construct Shinden Yuisho has made her an icon for latter-day Kitsu to emulate.

THE KITSU CHAMPIONS

CALL OF THE ANCESTORS

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: KITSU HARIKOI

You can speak directly to your other ancestors and call on their wisdom.

Clan: Lion

Prerequisite: Pure Kitsu Blood or Kitsu Blood

Benefit: Once per week, you may speak with any other ancestor who guides you (you have taken as a feat). This is identical to the commune spell cast as a cleric of your character level (plus sodan-senzo class level, if any), without need of material, divine focus, or experience components. This version of the commune spell is added to the shugenja spell list as a 5th level Water spell with the [Ancestor] tag. You must still choose to learn that spell normally — this feat simply gives you that opportunity.

KITSU HARIKO

(4 POINTS)

You can speak directly to a collective of all of your ancestors and call on their wisdom. Once per week, you may make a Meditation/Awareness roll (TN 10) to speak with your ancestors and ask them a question. You may ask more questions for one Raise each, to a maximum number of questions equal to your Lore (Ancestors) skill. Each question must be answerable with “yes” or “no”. The ancestors answer truthfully, but they are not omniscient — they might answer “we don’t know.” You must have the Half- or Full-Blooded Kitsu Ancestry advantage to purchase this ancestor.

KITSU TENDO

The kitsu Soli Tendo never liked the Lion, never liked Rokugan, and he certainly never liked humans. When Akodo exterminated his race, he was the dissenting voice that did not wish to surrender to the humans. However, when Akodo presented himself to the First Five and humbly begged their forgiveness, he was also the first to forgive him.

For the duration of his human life, Tendo repressed his violent urges and his hatred of humans. He served his lord as was proper. Yet he never forgot who he was, nor forgot what the Lion did to him. As such, he only guides those whose bloodlines contain some hint of the true kitsu — others are simply not worth his time.

The spirit of Tendo has a special hatred of the Tsuno, creatures it recognizes as an aberrant criminal tribe of kitsu. The Tsuno are a perversion of everything Tendo ever stood for. He defended his pride and tribe with his warlike ways, but he never attacked or killed for pleasure, even when he faced the butchers of his people. He respected his enemy, even when they did not respect him, just as a hunter should. The Tsuno are his fallen cousins, and Tendo considers it a mercy to kill them. He urges his descendants to destroy the Tsuno whenever they are encountered.

CLAWS OF THE LION

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: KITSU TENDO

You have a natural aptitude for combat. Like your ancestor Tendo, you are always prepared for it.

Clan: Lion

Prerequisite: Pure Kitsu Blood or Kitsu Blood

Benefit: You gain a claw attack using your bare hands and are considered armed. The claws are not physical claws, but your hands are capable of cutting and tearing just as a claw would. The claws deal 1d4 slashing damage, plus the character’s Strength modifier. If the character already has improved unarmed attack damage, this feat increases the damage by one die type (from 1d4 to 1d6, and so on, to a maximum of d20). You gain a +2 damage bonus whenever making an unarmed claw attack against Tsuno.

Normal: Unarmed strikes deal 1d3 points of subdual damage from a Medium-size creature, and 1d2 points of subdual damage from a Small creature.



KITSU TENDO

(7 POINTS)

The character may use his hands as claws in unarmed combat. The claws are not physical claws, but the character's hands are capable of cutting and tearing just as a claw would. These phantom claws deal 1k2 Wounds, plus the character's Strength as unkept damage dice. You also gain a Free Raise on all unarmed attacks against Tsuno. This is cumulative with the Hands of Stone Advantage or other such effects. You must have the Half- or Full-Blooded Kitsu Ancestry Advantage to purchase this ancestor.

KITSU TOKUO

Kitsu Tokuo was a shugenja of little repute. He had a tenuous connection to the ancestors, and was not exceptionally skilled with magic. However, he had a knack for the law, and was a popular and effective magistrate. He became an Emerald Magistrate within three years of becoming a magistrate, as his daimyo was proud to sponsor him for the post. With his charisma and friendly attitude, he could charm testimony out of nearly anyone, even the occasional guilty party.

His final assignment found him deep in Crane lands, investigating the suicide of the Crane daimyo Doji Tanaka. Tokuo discovered the truth behind the incident — the Bloodspeaker cult's plan to sow chaos before a major attack. The Bloodspeakers found him and slew him before he could report to anyone. Fortunately, his yoriki saw to the situation and avenged his noble master.

SEEK THE HIDDEN

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: KITSU TOKUO

You are a skilled investigator, like your ancestor.

Clan: Lion

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on Gather Information and Sense Motive checks. Search is always a class skill for you.

KITSU TOKUO

(4 POINTS)

The character guided by Tokuo rolls and keeps an additional die on Investigation rolls. The character gains one extra Insight for every two ranks of Investigation.

THE FORGOTTEN ANCESTORS

The Ikoma have kept meticulous records of genealogies since the dawn of the Empire, but it is the Kitsu who travel to the Lands of the Dead and speak with the spirits. (The Lands of the Dead include the Spirit Realms of Yomi, Meido, Toshigoku, and Jigoku. See *Fortunes and Winds* for more information on the Spirit Realms.) As such, the Kitsu have genuine testimony about events that have transpired in centuries past. This testimony has occasionally given the Kitsu insight into parts of the histories that have been unintentionally lost. (This testimony is not legally admissible, but as samurai have been taking guidance from the dead for a thousand years, the sodan-senzo see little difference, aside from the directness of the communication.)

Samurai who disgraced their lords unforgivably, those found guilty of treason, maho, or other such capital crimes, and even some *gaijin* exist in the realms of the dead, each with a forgotten tale of tragedy and disgrace. They lurk in Meido, and await forgiveness that will never come. The histories do not record these individuals as ever having existed; their shame has caused the Empire's historians to strike their names from all scrolls.

Emma-O, the Lord of Meido and Fortune of Death, allows no souls to leave the Realm of Waiting before their time. However, sodan-senzo can help a willing spirit trapped in Meido to "stretch" between the Realm of Waiting and the mortal world, allowing the spirit to assist the Kitsu in times of need. In this way, Emma-O's dictate is respected and the spirits are able to reach Ningen-do.

While officially the Kitsu do not venerate these spirits (such an act would dishonor the Kitsu family and the lord responsible), many sodan-senzo consider it a duty to help these dead souls find the peace and honor that they lost while living. Unfortunately, in the vast majority of cases, the true descendants have no desire to associate with their dishonored ancestors. This leaves those disgraced spirits none to speak to save the Kitsu — and only the Kitsu will help them to set right what they once made horribly wrong.

While the Forgotten Ancestors are presented here in the same format as any other ancestor, it would be impossible for a normal character to choose one as an ancestor. As these are not true shiryō, they do not normally have access to those without the power to journey the Spirit Realms. The only possible way that these ancestors can have a strong link to a player character is through reincarnation. At the GM's option, a character who selects one of these ancestors is actually the reincarnation of some aspect of that historical figure. Characters who take these ancestors lose one full Rank of Honor to symbolize their failure in the past life.

Members of the sodan-senzo prestige class may select Forgotten Ancestors as bonus feats with no Honor loss.

Sodan-senzo may channel forgotten ancestors with no Honor loss.

MATSU YUKIMIRA

Born a Kitsu, Yukimira forsook his Kitsu heritage and a prosperous future as one of the most powerful sodan-senzo in centuries to become a common bushi. Though he had both passion and talent for swordplay, his family was outraged. His parents forced him to marry into the Matsu family and change his name, so they would no longer bear the shame of the child who turned his back on his ancestors and his own blood.

Yukimira was quite unhappy with his loveless marriage, and he felt his Kitsu ancestry — which he still revered despite his outcasting — called him to do more than simply be another soldier in the Lion armies. Yukimira was one of the first recruits to join Toturi's Army, seeing the Black Lion's cause as just and proper. He handled himself with distinction while fighting in several small skirmishes as Toturi gathered forces. Sadly, he was slain during the Battle of Beiden Pass. Though Yukimira died feeling he had done the right thing, his parents and wife quietly had his name removed from the histories. They, too, died soon after in the Clan War and thus Yukimira's name was not restored after Toturi's ascension.

PURE SIGHT

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: MATSU YUKIMIRAI

You share Yukimira's vision, allowing you to see spirits and spiritual connections on sight.

Clan: Lion

Benefit: At a glance, you can tell what ancestors a character possesses, as well as any other feats that can only be taken at first level. If two people with a powerful karmic tie (immediate family, true lovers, etc.) are within 30 feet of each other, you also note the connection between the two, though not what type of connection it is. You can also tell if someone has been returned to life through use of the karma spell (see *Rokugan*).

MATSU YUKIMIRA

(3 POINTS)

Yukimira's vision allows the guided character to see some details of another person's spirit. At a glance, you can tell what ancestors the character possesses, if any. If two people with a powerful karmic tie (anyone with the Karmic Tie Advantage, but also immediate family, true lovers, etc.) are together, you also note the connection between the two, though not what type of connection it is. You can also tell if someone has been returned to life through use of the Karma spell (see *Fortunes and Winds*).

SHIBA KONYO

In life, Konyo was known as the "Fire Maiden" for her brash, Matsu-like attitude. The Phoenix scorned her unorthodox instinctive fighting style, as she disdained the fighting styles taught by the traditionalist Shiba bushi dojo. Despite being the black sheep of her family, she brought them honor when she was awarded a post in the Imperial Legions.

During the first uprising of Iuchiban, she led a unit of Legionnaires to the graveyard where Iuchiban's forces were being raised through foul maho. During the battle, she was struck with a curse of blood rage by one of Iuchiban's tsukai. She fell upon her unit and destroyed them to a man, wounding her trusted lieutenant — a favored nephew of the Hantei — before she drew upon enough inner strength to turn her sword on herself.

The Emperor was furious with her actions, and blamed her for his nephew's injury despite the maho. For that crime, Konyo was stricken from the histories.

FURIOUS GUIDED STRIKE

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: SHIBA KONYO1

You carry Konyo's instinctive grasp of battle, and can focus exceptionally well.

Clan: Phoenix

Prerequisite: Void Use

Benefit: Any time you spend Void Points on an attack roll, you gain a +2 Void bonus to hit on your next attack and a +1 Void bonus on the next attack you make after that. Spending multiple Void Points does not increase this bonus, nor do effects which grant you greater bonuses from spending Void Points.

Normal: Void points spent to increase an attack roll give you a +2 Void bonus to hit on your next attack.

SHIBA KONYO

(4 POINTS)

You gain a Free Raise on your attack roll whenever you spend Void Points on an attack roll. This effect applies only once per attack roll.

MIRUMOTO TSUDARO

"Mirumoto Tsudaro" was in truth Jin, the son of a powerful merchant in the newly founded city of Rugashi (see page 49). Dissatisfied with his life, Jin set out to become what he was not — a samurai. His father, wanting to help, acquired a stolen daisho and a book of Dragon Clan techniques.

Over three years, Jin learned everything he needed to know about how to be a proper samurai. It was his great fortune to be visiting Otosan Uchi's Hub Villages when the Battle of White Stag occurred. Jin took the role of "Mirumoto Tsudaro" and leapt into the battle, fighting fiercely against the gaijin. He had planned to disappear after the battle again, returning home with pleasant memories of his day as a samurai. Instead, he was sorely wounded and shipped home to the Dragon provinces.

Though he was not recognized as a Dragon, he played his part so convincingly that the Agasha healers believed him to be a true Mirumoto bushi. For three more years, he lived his dream — serving the Agasha daimyo, even having a marriage arranged. His wife bore him a daughter, whom he loved dearly. Life, as he saw it, was just as it should be.

His lies came to light when Dragon Champion Togashi Imura (who was secretly the Kami Togashi) laid eyes on him. Imura saw through "Tsudaro's" identity and privately approached him: the Champion knew the truth, but did not intend to reveal it. Instead, he asked Tsudaro to perform one final act of bravery, a secret mission that would take him deep into Yobanjin lands. Tsudaro failed in his mission, dying far from home in a foreign land. His last thoughts were of his family, a regret that he could not truly be the samurai he hoped to be.

No one but the Dragon Champion ever knew the details of Tsudaro's mission. His wife and child returned home to the Mirumoto provinces, a home Tsudaro had never seen. His descendants have been some of the greatest heroes of the Mirumoto family. From the gray fields of Meido, Tsudaro watches over them with pride.

HONOR BEFORE TRUTH

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: MIRUMOTO

TSUDARO1

You are adept at lying, though only for purely honorable ends.

Clan: Dragon

Benefit: You gain a +5 competence bonus to your Bluff and Diplomacy checks to convince someone of a lie. If your Honor ever drops below 2, these benefits are forever lost.

MIRUMOTO TSUDARO

(4 POINTS)

The character gains a +2k1 bonus to all Sincerity rolls when lying. However, Tsudaro will leave him forever if his Honor ever drops below 2.0.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE MATSU

THE LION'S DEN
PART FIVE

The Golden Lion of Toshi Ranbo set his katana delicately upon the ancient wooden stand. The stand had supported that same katana for generations, and Matsu Nimuro fully expected it to continue to do so for at least another hundred years. He turned and retrieved a cloth from the shoji screen to wipe his face. His kata had gone on for well over three hours, leaving him feeling exhilarated and covered in perspiration.

Miya Hatori stood silently against the opposite wall. The Matsu who escorted him to this chamber had brought him in during the middle of Nimuro's daily training session. Rather than disturb the great warrior, Hatori simply stood and waited. Nimuro was clearly enjoying Hatori's discomfort, but had remained quiet. Hatori knew not to speak until spoken to.

Finally, Nimuro broke the silence. "How have you enjoyed the past few weeks, Hatori? Did it feel like coming home again?"

Hatori sighed inwardly. This was a common tactic among the Matsu: expose your enemy's weaknesses and display your strength. He was not yet certain whether Nimuro saw him as an enemy. "No, Nimuro-sama," he answered finally, and honestly. "I miss many things from my youth, of course, but I have encountered precious few of them on this trip."

"Did you expect otherwise?" Nimuro asked, a hint of pity in his voice. "Surely you did not think Sume would welcome you with open arms? He still views you as the greatest of traitors, even if you have earned a measure of respect from him."

Hatori glanced down at his feet and said nothing. The room was large, with no one else present. Yet the younger man's force of will seemed to dominate the conversation, filling the room and pressuring Hatori to break. He was very uncomfortable and wished for a servant to come and ask for tea. In the Matsu lands, of course, no servant would be forthcoming unless Nimuro sent for one.

"The great Miya Hatori, at a loss for words?" Nimuro faced the aged historian with his hands on his hips, his eyes locked on Hatori. It was like being assessed by the deadliest of predators. Finally, he turned to the rack and began removing his armor a piece at a time. He left his back to Hatori, showing that he considered the old man no threat. "And how did your mission go? Did you complete your objective?"

Hatori relaxed somewhat, relieved that Nimuro's attention was directed elsewhere. "Yes, it did, Nimuro-sama. I spoke with all of the Lion families and was permitted to review their histories. My aides and I compiled a large amount of previously unknown historical information for entry into the Miya archives. I feel confident that the Imperial Court will be very pleased with our progress, perhaps even..."

"That is not what I meant."

The historian's voice died in his throat. He had hoped this moment would not come, although he had suspected it would from the moment Nimuro had summoned him. There was no reason for him to speak with the Lion Champion in order to finish his mission, unless of course the scroll had been authentic.

Reaching into his obi, Hatori drew out a scroll, the one that he had received in Kyuden Miya before departing for his mission. It bore Nimuro's chop, but Hatori had desperately hoped it would prove to be a forgery.

"Did you assess the loyalty of my daimyo while you were traveling, as I asked? Did you determine if their service to me and to the Lion is as honorable as I have been led to believe?" Nimuro had stopped placing his armor upon the rack, but did not turn around. He waited for Hatori to respond.

"My lord Nimuro-sama," Hatori protested, "I traveled the Lion lands under the orders of the Imperial Court. To supply you with the information you ask... it would besmirch the name of those I represent."

Nimuro turned to face him. "And you were allowed access to the libraries of the Lion only because I ordered it. Without my intervention, your failure would have brought you great dishonor, even though the fault would not have been yours."

Hatori said nothing.

"I will ask you again," Nimuro said, taking one step forward. "Have you seen any evidence that those who serve the clan in my name are disloyal or dishonorable in any way?"

Hatori finally answered, his voice a hoarse whisper. "No, Nimuro-sama. I have seen nothing to indicate they are anything but loyal servants."

"There!" exclaimed Nimuro, cutting the air with one hand. "So very simple! And now I am finished with you, Hatori. I wish you great fortune in your travels once you leave the Lion lands."

The historian did not move, even though he had been dismissed. After a moment, Nimuro turned to face him once more, one eyebrow raised questioningly. "Yes?"

"Why? Why would you demand this of me? Surely you must have known the answer before I gave it."

"Of course I did, Hatori. I do not doubt any of my daimyo."

"Then why?" insisted Hatori.

Nimuro gestured to Hatori's blade on his hip. "Would you carry your grandfather's soul into battle with you, Hatori?"

"Yes."

"And would you trust it to serve you well?"

"Yes, of course."

Nimuro crossed his arms. "But would you not test it first? To ensure its keen edge?"

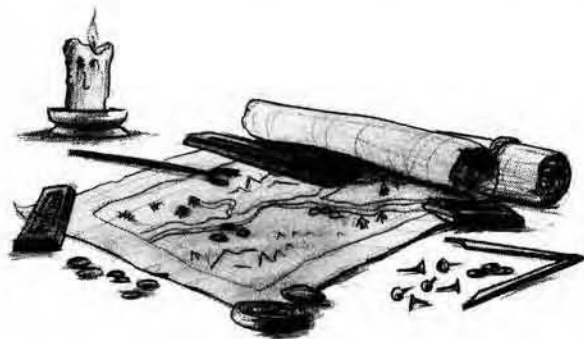
Understanding blossomed within Hatori. He nodded slowly.

"Lion swordsmiths sometimes test their blades on corpses," Nimuro said. "Or other things we have no further use for." Nimuro raised an eyebrow at Hatori.

Hatori frowned. "I think I see your point, Nimuro-sama."

"Do you, historian?" A dangerous glint appeared in Nimuro's eyes. "A Matsu lives for battle. It is his life, his soul, his reason for being. When a Matsu enters battle, there is no outcome except victory, for he has the will, the force, and the weapons to emerge the victor." He paused for a moment to ensure he had Hatori's full attention.

"The Lion Clan is my weapon, Hatori. None shall stand against it. Now return to Kyuden Miya and tell them what you have seen here."



THE MATSU PROVINCES

As the single largest family in Rokugan, it stands to reason that the Matsu control a significant amount of land. Their provinces are nearly twice the size of any other Lion family's holdings, covering about half of Lion clan territory. During the banishment of the Akodo family, the Matsu controlled much of their land as well, splitting their provinces with the Ikoma. Since the return of the Akodo, the Matsu have relinquished the land over time so as not to stress their existing resources with a sudden loss of food-producing lands.

The majority of the Matsu lands are the open plains that make up so much of the Lion holdings. They do possess the mineral resources of the Spine of the World Mountains on their southern border, and a portion of a large forest that spans their lands and those of the Crane. Beyond that, however, the primary natural resource of the Matsu lands is the indomitable will and relentless nature of its people. The Matsu are the backbone of the Lion army. There is no calamity or hardship they cannot overcome, not even those presented by the shortcomings of their ancestral lands.

MAJOR MATSU HOLDINGS

TONFAJUTSEN (LOCATION L12)

The city of Tonfajutsen is not large, but it holds tremendous strategic importance. It lies at the convergence of the territories of the Matsu, Akodo, and Kitsu families, and at the junction of five major roads in the heart of Lion territory. As a result, it is one of the fastest-growing cities in Rokugan. Practically all of the Lion army's troops and war materiel passes through Tonfajutsen. If this city were to fall into enemy hands, the supply line of the Lion military would be devastated. However, it would be difficult for any enemy to hold the city, which would be instantly surrounded by Lion troops.

The city teems with soldiers, craftsmen, and laborers, along with the inevitable people who see to their needs like merchants and entertainers. The laborers and craftsmen work feverishly not only on the new castle, but also on new housing for the continuous influx of new residents. The carpenters and laborers cannot build new houses fast enough, which has led to spiraling prices. A room in an average inn often costs twice as much as it would anywhere else in the Empire — as does an average meal. The burgeoning population requires huge amounts of food, far more than the surrounding area can produce alone. The absence of any nearby navigable rivers means that these food shipments must arrive via the roads.

The tremendous influx of new people leads to an unruly atmosphere, one that the townsfolk and military commander do their best to control. Three hundred and fifty heimin warriors serve as "unofficial" deputies, working together with samurai magistrates to keep order in a city that often flares with fierce passions. These heimin deputies are quite proficient in the use of tonfa, the peasant weapon from which the city garnered its name. These heimin have adopted the name of "The Handles," from their favored weapon.

ROADS OF THE MATSU PROVINCES

Castle Home Road (L10 to L18) — This road runs along the western border of Matsu lands, from Kyuden Ikoma south to Shiro Matsu. Over the years since the collapse of Beiden Pass this road has been used less and less often, but even with this reduction, it is still a well-traveled road.

Fifth Daughter Road (L18 to L17) — This road was named for the legendary Matsu Himeko, the fifth daughter of a Matsu daimyo. Her parents and sisters were killed fighting the Crane when she was only fourteen years old. Legend has it that she ran from Shiro Matsu to Kaeru Toshi (then a Crane city) to avenge their deaths. She returned several days later, carrying a Daidoji's head in his own furoshiki, and took her place as daimyo.

Guarded Stance Way (L17 to L12) — This road was named when Kaeru Toshi was still a Crane holding, and it was constantly patrolled by Lion troops. Though it no longer leads to any Crane territory, the old name remains.

One Leg Road (L17 to CN2) — One Leg Road used to be a Crane road, but has become part of the border between the Lion and Crane with the Lion's acquisition of Kaeru Toshi. The two old enemies both have large border stations along the road. Each clan carefully inspects the traveling papers of anyone who tries to cross, as if looking for an excuse to begin a skirmish.

True Virtue Way (L13 to CN2) — Poets have long noted that this road connects the homes of two families with much in common. Their founders wrote a treatise on the way of the samurai (Akodo's *Leadership* and Kakita's *The Sword*). Both are masters of their chosen style of combat (battle and the iaijutsu duel). The poet Miya Jotahime named this road in a famous poem of the third century in which she called the two families "mirror images" of each other.

CHUSHIMBU SHIRO — CENTRAL CASTLE

Military governor Matsu Suburi grasps the strategic importance of this city, so he has begun expansion of the fortress just outside the city. The existing Chushimbu Shiro, or "Central Castle," can hold a garrison of 1,500 troops; after expansion, it will house 5,000 troops. Construction will be completed in about a year. Since the recent troubles with the other clans and the Tsuno, 20,000 troops have been encamped outside the city for protection and to supply reinforcements to outlying areas. New troops are continuously rotated through the city.

Tonfajutsen is vulnerable because it is not in an easily defended location. There are no natural features like tall hills or rivers to take advantage of. The castle defense must therefore rely on man-made fortifications, which the Lion have built in great abundance. Chushimbu Shiro's outer defenses are some of the most complex in the Empire. Concentric palisades and trenches surround the castle proper. Any approach to the castle comes through a series of switchback roads that pass through at least four guard posts.

MATSU SUBURI

[Samurai 10; Matsu Bushi 4]

Matsu Suburi is an unusual Matsu. He tempers his family's hard-charging fighting spirit with a mind well suited to strategic planning. This makes him a great asset to the Matsu, who must often rely on the Akodo to supply the strategy and tactics necessary to a military campaign.

He distinguished himself early in his career during the War of Spirits. He earned quick promotion to general, and finally became the provincial governor of Tonfajutsen. The Matsu leadership knew he would be well suited to guard such a strategic point because of his battle skills.

Suburi studies Akodo's *Leadership* as diligently as a Togashi knows the Tao of Shinsei. He knows it so well that he can quote from it better than most Akodo.

Matsu Suburi is nearing the end of his fighting career. His eyes are sharp, and his mind is quick, but his hair is shot with generous streaks of gray. His demeanor lacks all levity; every moment is focused on his task. He possesses a wealth of martial and tactical skills, and feats/techniques that make him a formidable opponent in combat.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A fire breaks out during the night in an uncompleted section of the castle expansion. The characters are in a position to save the lives of several carpenters who had been sleeping in the scaffolding. If the PCs can save these valuable artisans, they earn Matsu Suburi's gratitude.

Focus: It is readily apparent that the fire was set deliberately. Matsu Suburi asks the characters to help him find the responsible party. He will reward them generously if they can root out the saboteur, who destroyed several months' worth of work.

Strike: The saboteur is one of the carpenters who was trapped by the fire. He is a ninja working for the Scorpion clan, whose aim is to slow down the completion of the castle. Ironically he was trapped by his own sabotage and currently is recovering from his burns. None of the other carpenters witnessed him starting the fire. Nevertheless, as soon as he is able, he will try again. He takes his orders from a geisha okasan in Tonfajutsen. Who does this geisha work for? Why did she give the order? Answering these questions could be the subject of a long adventure.

LION ARMY ENCAMPMENT

Since the recent troubles began, a force of 20,000 Lion soldiers (mostly ashigaru with a commanding force of samurai) has guarded the city of Tonfajutsen from attack. This army has erected a tent city just outside Tonfajutsen, since the city cannot adequately house them. Several well-worn roads and paths now lead into the encampment. The troops here maintain their separation from the castle garrison, because they are often dispatched to other areas, although they do mix freely when in the city. They serve as not only a protection force for the city, but as a centrally located store of reinforcements for all of Lion territory.

The encampment maintains its own drill grounds, practice grounds, dojo, cooking tents, and servants. It operates independently of the garrison. The general commanding this force is a brash young samurai-ko named Matsu Hirobumi.

MATSU HIROBUMI

[Samurai 9; Matsu Bushi 3]

Passionate, brash, honorable, and deadly, Matsu Hirobumi has seen much combat in recent years, and she has the marks to prove it. She may have once been pretty, but the scars across her nose, brows, and cheeks give her a hard, unyielding appearance. Some of the scars have turned white with age; others are still fresh and pink. She has the demeanor of a general who leads her troops from the front lines.

She chafes at her current assignment, preferring to be in the thick of battle rather than in the rear with the gear. She was reassigned to this post after assaulting a young but higher-ranked Akodo, accusing him of cowardice in the face of the enemy. Her accusation was well founded, but Matsu Ketsui herself stepped in to halt the inevitable duel. The Akodo had powerful friends at court. Now, Hirobumi waits like a caged predator for the day when she can reclaim her rightful place on the battlefield.

KENSON GAKKA — HUMILITY'S LESSON

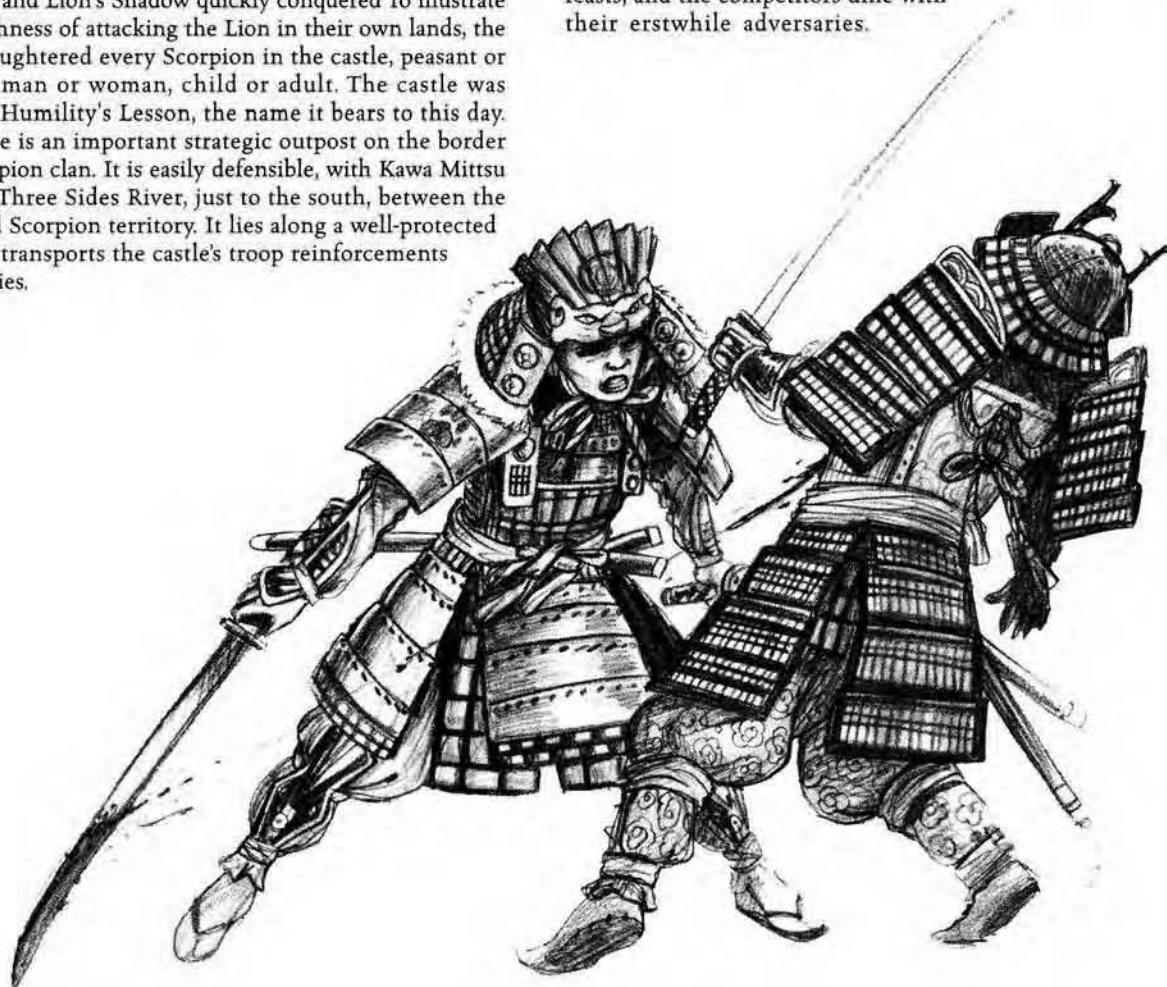
(LOCATION L14)

Humility's Lesson was once a Lion stronghold named Shiro no Meiyō, the Castle of Honor. Six hundred years ago, Scorpion Champion Bayushi Tsuya conquered the castle and renamed it Lion's Shadow, holding his position there for fifteen years. When Tsuya extended his grasp and attempted to conquer Kyuden Ikoma, the Lion retaliated savagely. Tsuya was slain, and Lion's Shadow quickly conquered To illustrate the foolishness of attacking the Lion in their own lands, the Matsu slaughtered every Scorpion in the castle, peasant or samurai, man or woman, child or adult. The castle was renamed Humility's Lesson, the name it bears to this day. This castle is an important strategic outpost on the border with Scorpion clan. It is easily defensible, with Kawa Mittsu Kishi, or Three Sides River, just to the south, between the castle and Scorpion territory. It lies along a well-protected road that transports the castle's troop reinforcements and supplies.

Because of its strategic location and proximity to Scorpion lands, security here is perhaps the highest in the Empire. No one gets into or out of the castle without being checked by the guards at the gate. The only heimin allowed inside are the castle servants, attendants to the commanding samurai, and the ashigaru troops. These latter are no ordinary peasant warriors, but members of ashigaru families who have served with the Lion for generations. Their pride and loyalty are as unquestionable as any true samurai.

The military commander here, Matsu Kouji, is quite concerned about espionage, and has taken measures to help minimize that risk. First, once troops are assigned to Kenson Gakka, they remain here for a minimum of five years. Kouji does not want fresh faces in his garrison. He believes that one of the best ways to keep out spies is for everyone in the castle to know everyone else. This is difficult with a garrison of 2,000 troops, so he sponsors competitions between the troops. These activities often take place at great expense, but he believes the cost is necessary. Matsu Kouji holds weekly competitions, which not only build camaraderie among the units themselves, but also familiarize the troops with those of other units and build morale. Those who do well in the competitions earn more prestigious assignments.

The contests also palliate the boredom of staying in one place too long, and keep the troops in good physical condition. The contests include kenjutsu, yarijutsu, kyujutsu, jiu-jutsu, weight-lifting, sumai, footraces, and anything else that allows the troops to both hone and vent their combative urges. When the contests are over, the entire garrison feasts, and the competitors dine with their erstwhile adversaries.



MATSU KOUJI

[Samurai 12; Matsu Bushi 4]

Matsu Kouji is the portrait of a Matsu in his prime: grim, taciturn, powerful, and accustomed to having every whim obeyed without question. But he is not a man of whims. He makes no decision without careful thought. He is an experienced war leader, but not a brilliant tactician. His true talent is his innate instinct for keeping the morale of his troops high and their fighting edge well honed.

He is an excellent leader; his troops will follow him anywhere and obey him without question.

KENSON MURA — HUMBLE VILLAGE

This village sprawls along the riverbank near the castle. Its populace consists almost entirely of heimin who support the troops in the castle. Weaponsmiths, armorers, servants, sword polishers, teahouses, sake houses, and geisha support, equip, feed, or entertain the troops.

Matsu Kouji's suspicions about espionage are well-founded. The Scorpion have been trying to infiltrate Kenson Gakka for decades, with little success. This village is rife with Scorpion spies who attempt to keep an eye on the castle from the outside. The village magistrate, Matsu Shinjiki, has had many years to hone his skills at counter-espionage. The things he has been forced to do to protect the village and castle from sabotage and espionage would probably brand him as dishonorable among his Matsu fellows, if they knew about them, but he gets the job done. He has tortured and interrogated scores of spies and potential saboteurs, with outstanding results.

MATSU SHINJIKI

[Samurai 4/Ninja 4; Matsu Bushi 3]

Matsu Shinjiki possesses none of the lust for battle of many young bushi. He had most of that beaten out of him during the War of Spirits. What remains is a man still proud of his clan and his family, but one who feels that the ideals of bushido are little more than a lofty goal. The lines in his face run deep; his eyes are dark and haunted. He has seen firsthand the dark underbelly of mankind. Mortals do not need the vileness of the Shadowlands to experience true evil; it exists in everyday men and women.

The thirst for battle he possessed as a youth has been replaced by a drive for justice. Criminals and spies receive no mercy from him, and while he prefers to have his eta servants handle the torturing during interrogations, he has taken part himself when necessary.

He possesses all the skills and abilities normally acquired by a grave, jaded magistrate, including many skills that would dishonorable for a samurai to know or perform. He has the tacit support of Matsu Kouji to do whatever is necessary to root out potential enemies.

YARUKI JUKKO NO TERA — TEMPLE OF COURAGEOUS REFLECTION

This temple is one of the most ancient in Rokugan. It lies within sight of Humility's Lesson, near a beautiful bend in the river, amidst a well-tended grove of trees. The temple was dedicated to the Fortunes in the earliest days of the Empire. Since then it has been converted to a temple of Shinsei.

Local legends say the site of the temple is sacred to the kami. Shugenja who attempt to cast any spells while on the temple grounds find their results to be unusually potent. However, the temple is also the site of many unexplained disappearances throughout the centuries. Dozens of folktales speak of people who wandered into the temple grove, never to return.

The saves of any elemental spells cast while on the temple grounds have their Difficulty Class increased by 5, and their caster level increased by 2.

Any elemental spells cast while on the temple grounds gain two Free Raises.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A Kitsune shugenja has arrived at the temple, seeking to understand the power of the temple. He spends the night meditating in the woods outside the temple, seeking to commune with the kami of this place, to determine why they are so strong here. In the morning, the monks find his equipment in the woods where he had settled to meditate, but the shugenja has vanished.

Focus: There are no tracks in the surrounding earth to suggest that the shugenja walked away from his location. A small wooden statue of a kitsune rests on his meditation mat.

Strike: The location the shugenja chose for his meditation is within a few feet of a passage into Chikushudo, the Realm of Animals. During the night, he was lured into the Spirit Realm by a mischievous kitsune. Now the hapless shugenja is trapped in the Realm of Animals, unable to find his way back into the Realm of Mortals. Anyone else who spends the night at this location is likely to meet the same kitsune, who may already be tiring of her first victim. Why a passage to the Realm of Animals makes the kami of this location more powerful is still unknown.

FESTIVAL OF THE HUMBLE TURTLE

One of the greatest events in this province is the festival commemorating the Lion Clan's conquest of the Honor's Lesson. It is held every spring, just after the planting season. The festival begins with a grand parade that starts at the castle, passes through Kenson Mura, and ends at the parade grounds at the foot of the castle. Several of the finest Matsu units march in the parade, all wearing sashimono with the mon of the Lion clan. When the procession reaches the parade ground, the troops place their sashimono on a long row of upright shafts at one end of the parade ground.

The festival includes contests of many types. There are contests of strength, stamina, and martial expertise, much like the weekly competitions among the troops, but also go tournaments, games of chance, tests of awareness and intuition, and much feasting and revelry.

SHIRO NO YOJIN — CASTLE OF VIGILANCE

(LOCATION L15)

For seventy years the Lion clan has held this castle. It is their foremost outpost at the border of Crane territory, lying at the edge of the Plains of Battle. In fact, it lies just two miles from Shiro sano Kakita, the Kakita Dueling Academy. It is also only a day's travel from Otsan Uchi, making it one of the most strategically important castles in the Empire.

The Lion clan openly ridicules the Crane Clan for giving up the castle so easily. Seventy years ago, a Crane diplomat slighted a Lion ambassador, and the Lion armies marched on Shiro no Yojin to avenge the slight. The Crane holding this castle were so frightened of the approaching army that they threw themselves from the parapets onto the rocks below rather than face the Lion army, leaving the Matsu to simply march through the front gate and claim the castle for the Lion clan. This incident is known as the Night of the Falling Stars. It should be no surprise that the Crane tell the story somewhat differently, minimizing their own cowardice.

For a brief time following the Clan War, the Crane recaptured the Castle of Vigilance, but now the Matsu hold it in both fists. Travelers on the Imperial road must pass through the castle's guard posts before entering or leaving Lion lands. The guards here are skilled at detecting forged travel papers, and fakes are dealt with most harshly.

Since one of the Crane clan's most important holdings is nearby, the Lion here sometimes taunt them with carefully staged troop movements. The Crane call it subterfuge, but the Lion maintain that it is simply good exercise as they permit the Crane to see the coming and going of carefully chosen units. If the Lion clan were to launch a full-scale invasion of Crane territories, this is the most likely starting point. Both sides know it, and both sides plan for it. The Lion allow the Crane to see only what they want them to see.

In spite of its importance, Shiro no Yojin is not a massive fortress, nor is it easily defensible against a large and determined force. The nearest Lion reinforcements must come from Shiro Akodo, thirty miles away. Nevertheless it looks quite impressive. The structure stands over eighty feet tall, with seven interior levels including one underground, rising over a hundred feet above the river along its back side. The castle is built upon a carefully engineered earthen mound, and the single path that leads to the gates passes between two watchtowers. (A map of Shiro no Yojin can be found in the LSR RPG supplement *Legacy of the Forge*.)

Ever since the infamous Night of the Falling Stars, the spirits of the Crane who threw themselves to their deaths have haunted the castle. Even after seventy years, the ghosts of the castle prevent anyone from occupying the uppermost floor, and hardly a week passes without some new tale of the pitiful spirits. For this reason, it is not a popular station. The troops here are more edgy than normal, the servants more fearful.

The daimyo of Shiro no Yojin, Matsu Masahide, has done an admirable job of strengthening the castle defenses. He keeps the Crane clan off-balance with periods of alternating belligerence and laxity. But all such periods are designed to be deceptive. Whenever the castle appears to be least prepared, its true status is quite the opposite. He would like nothing better than to draw the Crane into a foolish attack, at a time precisely of his own choosing, and to send them home again with an embarrassing defeat.

MATSU MASAHIDE

[Samurai 12; Matsu Bushi 4]

Matsu Masahide comes from a long line of proud Matsu generals. He can trace his lineage back to the earliest days of the Matsu family, and that pride is blisteringly evident in every word he speaks, every action he takes. He has proven himself on the field of battle and in the war room time and again. He is a skilled and respected commander, and his men fear him as much as they respect him. His highborn pride brooks no failure from himself or his troops. The slightest infraction of his regulations brings punishment both swift

and harsh. Since he is loath to kill his own men, the most common punishment is public caning, but seppuku or even executions are not unheard of.

Masahide hates the Crane clan with a fury only a Matsu could possess. He openly taunts them, inviting them to attack. Thus far, the Crane have not allowed themselves to be goaded, but should that day come, Masahide will be ready.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The ghosts of Shiro no Yojin have frightened people for decades, but in the last few weeks their visitations have grown more alarming. Several heimin servants report being attacked by the ghosts, and they have wounds to substantiate their claims. The servants say the ghosts have taken on a more evil, almost insect-like appearance. The ghosts attack only at night, but the attacks take place all over the castle.

Focus: A renowned Kitsuo sodan-senzo was brought in to try to exorcise the spirits, but when he did not come down from the top level of the castle for two days, the servants went to check on him. They found his body stretched out on the floor, his chalk-pale flesh covered with hundreds of tiny wounds. All the blood had been drained from him.

Strike: The spirits of the dead Crane, heretofore frightening but physically harmless, have fallen under control of a covert maho-tsukai. The maho-tsukai has been playing the part of an old servant woman for nearly a decade. She was but an infant when her mother and sister died on the Night of the Falling Stars, and was only spared their fate because she was away from the castle in the care of a peasant midwife. As a girl she was given to the Asahina shugenja school. Ever since she was old enough to understand her family's fate, she has hated the Lion, and eventually she turned to the dark powers of Jigoku to wreak vengeance upon the Matsu. She is using maho not only to control the ghosts, making them vengeful and dangerous, but also to give them form, making them capable of physical attacks. She slew the Kitsuo with maho, and she is prepared to do the same to anyone else who threatens her plans.

KAERU TOSHI — CAPTURED CITY (LOCATION L17)

The Matsu family seized control of this Crane city in the year 1124, just before the Clan War. Clan Champion Matsu Tsuko, with typical Matsu sensitivity, unceremoniously renamed it from "Brittle Flower" to "Captured City," and the Lion settled down to spend years pacifying it. The inhabitants despised their new Lion masters and stirred up unrest. Many Crane worked covertly to try to instigate a full-fledged rebellion, but the brutal control of the Matsu quashed uprisings before they could begin.

The Lion clan claimed the city's riches for themselves. It has always been one of the most prosperous trading cities in the Empire. Some caravans rerouted after the city fell to the Lion, fearing their power and brutality, but many did not. In fact, the Lion clan is in dire need of the taxes generated in Kaeru Toshi. Despite possessing one of the largest territories in Rokugan, the Lion clan also perpetually has the largest number of soldiers in arms. With a large population that demands enough calories to support the soldier's life, Lion harvests rarely produce the sort of surpluses that clans like the Crane and the Unicorn divert to Imperial taxes. The Lion in control of the city go to great lengths to lure the richest merchants and trade caravans into the city, hoping to glean as much wealth as possible for the Lion clan.

A profitable partnership exists between Matsu Yorinobu, the daimyo of the province, and Ikoma Harunaga, the administrator of the city. Matsu Yorinobu knew full well when he inherited the province from his father that he did not have the skills necessary to govern a city like Kaeru Toshi. He enlisted the services of Harunaga, an experienced politician and administrator. The Ikoma runs the day-to-day operations of the city, while the Matsu sees to the province. Harunaga ostensibly answers to Yorinobu, but the Matsu is wise enough to let competent underlings handle their tasks without interference. Yorinobu oversees the city's military and peacekeeping requirements; the capable Harunaga and his staff handle everything else.

While the last several years have been relatively quiet, both of them remember well the unrest that plagued the city in the decade after the Lion conquered it. Their extensive network of spies and informants watches for Crane instigators and local conspirators. Any such activity is dealt with swiftly and harshly. As a result, those who live here often seem furtive, unwilling to speak to strangers. The Matsu magistrates can appear and exact summary justice in the blink of an eye. There are rumors of an underground resistance movement, sponsored by the Crane Clan. Many of the inhabitants assume that such an organization must exist, but no one seems to know for certain. The older inhabitants yearn for a return to the days of Crane rule, but the younger residents, to whom this has always been a Lion city, seem to have accepted the inevitable, however much they might complain about the Matsu family's merciless rule.

MATSU YORINOBU

[Samurai 14; Matsu Bushi 5]

Matsu Yorinobu inherited the province containing Kaeru Toshi when his father died. His father was one of the generals who took the city from the Crane clan. Yorinobu was fortunate enough to gain experience on the field of battle before he had to oversee this troubled province.

Enemies and criminals he can understand, but politics and bureaucracy bore and confound him. If any situation verges on the political or administrative, he immediately summons Ikoma Harunaga. He trusts Harunaga implicitly, and respects the Ikoma's judgment and expertise. Nevertheless, they do sometimes clash over the severity of Yorinobu's law enforcement edicts. Yorinobu believes the severe measures he takes to be in the best interests of the clan. Crane spies and saboteurs must be rooted out and eliminated wherever they might be found, by whatever means necessary.

IKOMA HARUNAGA

[Courtier 9/Samurai 2; Ikoma Omoidasu 4]

Ikoma Harunaga was the official historian in Matsu Yorinobu's unit. The two men struck up a friendship that has stood the test of decades. Although they parted ways for years at a time, their paths always seemed to cross. Harunaga's handsome face and charming nature made him popular at court; it was there that he learned the intricacies of politics, knowledge that he puts to good use today.

Harunaga was greatly honored when Yorinobu asked for his help in overseeing the administration of Kaeru Toshi, and he has done his best to rule the city with a fair hand, but at the same time making sure that the Lion Clan keeps a firm grasp on the populace. He is a wise, kind-hearted soul who deplors the punitive excesses of the Matsu while he acknowledges their efficacy.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The characters become aware of a conspiracy in the underworld of Kaeru Toshi. One by one, Crane bushi have been sneaking into the city, with caravans or traveling alone in disguise. They never meet in groups of more than two or three. These Crane are planning something much larger than simple sabotage.

Focus: The Crane are a large force of Daidoji Harriers and heimin saboteurs. The Harriers have been poisoning the Lion army's food and water supplies. The saboteurs have prepared several surprises at strategic locations around the city, including the destruction of Ikoma Harunaga's municipal offices, the sabotage of the city's main gate, and fires to be set at important points throughout the city. Something big is happening; perhaps a prelude to an attack. Whose side will the characters take when the attack comes? Do they attempt to join the conspirators or thwart them?

Strike: Ikoma Harunaga is kidnapped by the Daidoji, and the city erupts in chaos. Fires erupt simultaneously citywide. The Lion army is crippled by a strange illness. Alarm gongs ring throughout the city. A Crane army is approaching, and untold numbers of Daidoji are still loose within the city.

THE BAZAAR OF A HUNDRED FORTUNES

Kaeru Toshi has one of the largest bazaars in the Empire. Its sheer size rivals that of the bazaar in Otosan Uchi. When the Lion first conquered the city, the merchants and craftsmen of the bazaar fled to safer environs, but now the bazaar has almost regained its former extravagance. The Matsu tolerate all this rampant commerce because they know that without it their own coffers starve for gold.

SHIRO MATSU (LOCATION L18)

The grand castle of the Matsu family, one of the oldest castles in Rokugan, was built where Matsu first met Akodo One-Eye. This castle is the center of power for the Matsu family and the entire Lion clan. At any given time over a hundred thousand Lion troops live and train here, and not just Matsu troops. All the other families of the Lion have sizeable contingents here.

The castle is immense, over a hundred feet tall at the summit, with sprawling courtyards, fortified entries, practice grounds, dojo, and smithies. Its majestically sloping stone walls stand over forty feet high, and anyone seeing the castle for the first time cannot fail to be awed by its majesty and power. It is a living symbol of Matsu power and the might of the Lion clan.

Shiro Matsu is situated on what was once a strategically vital location, the mouth of Beiden Pass. However, in the year 1150, Beiden Pass was collapsed upon the spirit armies of Hantei XVI, bringing an end to the War of Spirits. Beiden Pass has never been reopened. The Matsu hold ambivalent feelings towards this. On one hand, they no longer have to defend against the possibility of a Scorpion army marching up through the pass and emerging on their very doorstep. On the other hand, for a thousand years Shiro Matsu stood as a both a deterrent to the Scorpion clan and as a forefront for the defense of Lion territory. Today, Shiro Matsu is neither. The Matsu had an enemy they could fight at a moment's notice; now other Lion families see the castle as an anachronism, and an extremely costly one. The staggering cost to feed, train, and support that many troops has other Lion daimyo considering ways to better allocate their limited resources. But the Champion of the Lion clan is a Matsu, and as long as that is true, Shiro Matsu will remain what it is, the single largest concentration of military might in the Empire.

Nevertheless, changes are already being felt in Shiro Matsu. With the closure of the pass, the need for constant vigilance has been diminished. Punishments for laxness are becoming more common. Watch posts in the nearby mountains have been neglected or abandoned.

The most powerful leaders of the Lion clan reside here. Clan Champion Matsu Nimuro and the daimyo of the Matsu family, Matsu Ketsui, both keep quarters in Shiro Matsu. Because of their presence here, Shiro Matsu is also the center of Lion clan politics. Visiting ambassadors and dignitaries are given special "protection" whenever they are within the walls of the castle. This protection consists of some of the Lion Clan's most loyal and deadly yojimbo, the Matsu House Guard.

The Lion would not have their honor stained by failing to protect those in their care.

But Shiro Matsu is not just a castle; it is effectively the capital of Lion lands. The castle can hold only a fraction of the army stationed here, although the Matsu keep its exact troop capacity a closely guarded secret. Near the castle are the sprawling garrisons of the Lion army, row upon row of neatly ordered barracks, and beyond them lies the city that inevitably sprang up to support the military presence. The city is called simply Shiro Matsu Toshi, but it is still one of the largest cities in the Empire. Aside from thousands of heimin, and all the craftsman and workers who serve the castle, the city also boasts numerous Akodo, Kitsu, and Ikoma holdings. These holdings provide a base of operations for the other families' dealings with the Matsu family, and with the larger Empire. Since most of the political maneuvering both within the clan and with other clans takes place here, the city is home to most of the Lion clan's ambassadors and diplomats.

Another facet of the changes here is the increasingly cosmopolitan atmosphere of Shiro Matsu Toshi. The city is no longer just a war-torn military outpost or a bastion of defense. Older Matsu who remember the days before the collapse of Beiden Pass look upon these new attitudes with derision or outright contempt. They fear the people of Shiro Matsu Toshi are becoming soft. They also are uncomfortable with the distance their forces must travel to meet any incursion. Some of the Matsu leadership feel that Shiro Matsu's importance has passed, and if they do not shift their forces they could react too slowly to new threats, despite whatever sentimental attachment they might have to the castle.

MAKOTO SEIDO

Those who know of the famous bushido shrines scattered across the Lion lands are sometimes surprised to discover that Makoto Seido, the shrine that venerates Complete Sincerity, is maintained by the Matsu family. The Matsu feel it is a perfect match. While many Scorpion have twisted the definition of sincerity so that it is synonymous with the art of appearing to tell what you believe is true, the Matsu cleave to a more traditional definition. Matsu do not believe that lies or deception have any place in the heart of a samurai. They always say exactly what they think without reservation or hesitation. The stereotypical Matsu may be brash, violent, and straightforward, but they undeniably speak their minds.

This is one of the larger bushido shrines, although it is still an ancient stone construction that shows the marks of centuries of weather and thousands upon thousands of visitors over the history of the clan. Only Matsu are allowed to tend to the shrine, and the handful of monks who oversee it were selected because of their great honesty and sincerity during their lives as samurai.

REI SEIDO

Virtually forgotten, Rei Seido is the shrine to the bushido tenet of Polite Courtesy. Ironically, the shrine is also located within the Matsu holdings. It is believed that the Akodo family ordered its construction centuries ago in an attempt to bring some degree of civility to their fiery Matsu brethren. The attempt failed, and the shrine is all but forgotten in an out-of-the-way location bordering on the Spine of the World Mountains.

The monks who tend to the shrine are very few in number. They are not accustomed to visitors and tend to react suspiciously to any who venture in. No member of the Matsu family is thought to have visited this shrine in decades, although that may just be a rumor. Those from other Lion families who visit the shrine, however, cannot help but notice that they never see any Matsu there.

MIKOR MATSU HOLDINGS

KYAKUCHU MURA — FOOTNOTE VILLAGE

(LOCATION 16)

The location now occupied by Kyakuchu Mura started out during the reign of Hantei XXXVIII as a Lion military checkpoint to watch the activities of the Bayushi. After the Scorpion Clan Coup, when the Scorpion Clan was destroyed, it became a staging area for the Imperial Legions to keep order in the chaotic Scorpion territories. The village formed as a by-product of serving the soldiers who were stationed here. This staging ground became a semi-permanent military garrison, with tents becoming wooden barracks, and open grasslands becoming well-trodden training grounds.

The village is also a waypoint for travelers and Lion forces moving between Kenson Gakka and Shiro Matsu. Several modest inns and sake houses have sprung up in the village, all with healthy patronage. The village consists almost entirely of heimin servants to the Lion army, and those who support the troops such as smiths and armorers.

The Imperial Legions also maintain a presence, as they still train here. They exist in harmony with their Lion counterparts, although rivalries occasionally flare, like two spirited predators chained too near to each other. Brawls and duels of honor are common, even though fighting is forbidden by both Imperial and Lion edict.

Because of the presence of the Imperial Legions, Toturi Tsudao also spends time here. She has established a personal command post where she spends her time in this province when she is not out with her Legion.

The proximity of the Scorpion means that the troops here are on constant alert. They are well trained, and can deploy at a moment's notice. The commanders here run that drill constantly, to reduce the time required for the army to pack up and move out.

The Matsu general here is a Lion's Pride member named Maruoka, an astute if inexperienced commander. Whenever Toturi Tsudao is present, Maruoka defers to her.

MATSU MARUOKA

[Samurai 6/Lion's Pride 3; Matsu Bushi 3]

Matsu Maruoka commands with tremendous personal beauty and charisma. When dressed in court finery, her beauty could rival that of any woman in the Empire. When wearing her customary garb of full military dress, her beauty takes second place to her rich voice and commanding presence. She uses these talents to great effect when commanding her troops.

But while these traits helped her gain her current rank, it was a single act of heroism on the battlefield that launched her career. About a year ago, she was in a command of a reconnaissance force sent to seek and destroy a band of the mysterious Tsuno. She found the Tsuno, but there were far more of them than intelligence reports had indicated. What should have been a walkover turned into a desperate battle for survival. She managed to meet the Tsuno commander in battle, and fought him in a duel. The Tsuno should have killed her easily. While she lay on the ground badly wounded, he moved to finish her off, tripped over a corpse, and fell on the point of her sword. The death of their commander broke the Tsuno's morale, and Maruoka's troops routed them.

This victory, coupled with her other talents, gained her the rank of general. Secretly she feels some trepidation about whether or not she is ready for such a great responsibility. She is proud and resolved to do her best, but because of her fears, she sometimes tries too hard to keep her men prepared.

TOTURI TSUDAO'S COMMAND POST

The command post erected among the Imperial Legions' barracks is an unassuming structure. Its simplicity belies the weight of the decisions made within its frail walls. It is here that Toturi Tsudao has made a multitude of sweeping strategic and political decisions. Worthy communiqués reach her from here with great efficiency, thanks to the competent, dedicated command staff stationed here. The command post is a modest building just large enough to contain quarters for the command staff and servants, and Tsudao when she is present. Such notable members of the First Legion as Kitsu Dejiko, Toturi Miyako, Bayushi Paneki, Doji Jotaro, and Tsudao herself have all resided in this tower at one time or another. Even the Scorpion and Crane are treated with respect here, for the Lion know that Tsudao would not have chosen them as advisors if they were unworthy.

In spite of the building's plain appearance, it is constructed with numerous anti-espionage devices such as nightingale floors — special wooden floors made to “sing” whenever anyone walks on them — and secret alcoves built to contain ever-vigilant yojimbo. These alcoves remain empty unless Tsudao is present. There are also hidden panels throughout the building that conceal caches of weapons to help fight against assassination attempts.

EMERALD LILY TEAHOUSE

This otherwise nondescript teahouse has the distinction of being a place that Toturi Tsudao sometimes visits when she comes to Kyakuchu Mura. This teahouse has few distinguishing features and is humble in design, which is precisely the reason Tsudao chooses it when she wishes to indulge herself in a cup of tea. The geisha who frequent this place are talented and the tea is of high quality. The proprietor of the teahouse, a personable old man named Kojiri, keeps a special stock of tea imported from the Mantis Isles just for Tsudao. In fact, he goes out of his way to gain to her trust and goodwill, not only

because she may become Empress, but because he is a spy in the employ of Hantei Naseru.

The man known as the Anvil compensates Kojiri quite well for information pertaining to his older sister. Kojiri is not evil or treacherous by nature, and he admires Tsudao quite a bit. He is merely ensuring that his family is cared for. He occasionally has pangs of guilt, because he holds Tsudao in high regard. However, Kojiri is afraid of what Naseru might do to him if he refused to help any longer. Unknown to Kojiri, his conscience and dedication to his family are the reasons why Naseru chose him as a spy. Naseru seeks the throne, but he has no malicious intent toward his sister, and hopes by keeping tabs on her he can find a way to derail her claim without resorting to violence.

EXTRA-TERRITORIAL HOLDINGS

NISHI NO SHIRO — WESTERN CASTLE

The small castle is the westernmost holding within Lion lands. It lies at the juncture of three prominent rivers: Firefly River, Drowned Merchant River, and Three Sides River. All river traffic to and from the Unicorn clan must pass beneath the watchful eyes of Western Castle. On a clear day, Matsu sentries can see the City of the Rich Frog in the distance. Since the castle is situated on what is technically Lion territory, the Unicorn are unwilling to go to war over its location. Nevertheless, they make their displeasure felt at every opportunity. The Matsu stationed here know that their purpose is twofold. They must watch over the activities of the Unicorn clan and guard their border from these gaijin barbarians, and they also attempt to goad the Unicorns into foolishly attacking without legitimate provocation.

What constitutes provocation is a matter suitable for debate in court, but not here. The Matsu regularly make forays into Unicorn territory to harass peasants or sack villages. They commonly board river barges and simply take what goods they choose. Thus far, the Unicorn have not retaliated, though the Khan is said to be mightily displeased.

The castle is not large; its troop capacity is only 200 men. But it is well fortified and could hold against almost any attack until reinforcements arrived.

BEIDEN OVERLOOK

This small Matsu outpost began as a lookout post at the southern end of Beiden Pass. It lies only three miles to the north of the city of Beiden, ostensibly on Scorpion territory, on one of the mountains flanking what was once Beiden Pass. There is no castle here, merely a few fortified buildings surrounded by wooden palisades. This outpost holds only a hundred troops, but it also sees a steady traffic in some of the hardier merchants who risk the journey over the mountains to trade with the Scorpion clan. The Matsu here never fail to question anyone coming or going from Beiden.

Though Beiden Pass has long since collapsed, a number of high and narrow passes still exist permitting small numbers of troops through the mountains. Unfortunately, these smaller passes are quite treacherous. Should the Scorpion attack

Beiden Overlook, the Matsu would have no hope of reinforcements or escape. Despite the seeming indifference of the Scorpion toward the Matsu who tend this post, this is one of the most dangerous Lion posts. The Scorpion could attack and fade away again, destroying the outpost before any word could be sent. The Lion would be none the wiser until someone bothered to check on the outpost, or a messenger failed to report.

Whether the Scorpion clan considers the placement of a Lion installation on their territory an affront, no one can say, because they have never mentioned it publicly. The Matsu are content with that, for they will take advantage of whatever eyes and ears they can muster, for as long as they are able.

IMPORTANT MATSU NPCS

MATSU NIMURO, LION CLAN CHAMPION

Many regard Matsu Nimuro as the consummate Lion samurai, and for good reason. He has cultivated an image as a fierce warrior, strong, confident, and invincible. Most generals would rather negotiate peace than face the Golden Lion of Toshi Ranbo in battle. His enemies respect his martial prowess and the fury he inspires in his troops, but they expect him to be a boorish oaf. Nimuro is aware of how others perceive him, and encourages this negative image whenever possible.

The truth about the Golden Lion is somewhat surprising. In his youth, Nimuro never expected to become the Lion Clan Champion. Like most firstborn sons of the Matsu daimyo, he believed his destiny was to become the protector of the Hall of Ancestors. While a prestigious duty, the post offered little chance of glory. Resigned to a life of obscurity, Nimuro decided that he owed it to his ancestors to become the most perfect samurai possible. His Lion mother instilled in him a natural talent for the martial arts. His Phoenix father gave Nimuro a great appreciation for literature and spirituality. Many Lion samurai adopt the name of a great hero or famous ancestor at their gempukku; Nimuro took his name from a legendary go master of the Isawa family.

During the years following his gempukku he honed his martial prowess against the greatest sensei of the Akodo and Matsu. He tested his wits against the go masters of the Ikoma. He explored the libraries of the Kitsu, reading all that they had to offer. He was particularly fond of the Rokugani classics. He can quote entire passages of Akodo's *Leadership*, *Subtlety of the Court*, the *Book of Sun Tao*, *Niten*, Kakita's *The Sword*, and even Tansen's *Lies* from memory. He also has a general knowledge of the Tao, quite unusual for a Matsu bushi. In recent memory, only Akodo Toturi was a more cultured and intellectual Lion Champion.

Before he became Lion Champion Nimuro gained a great deal of combat experience during the War of Spirits. As a *taisa* in the Lion armies he fought many minor skirmishes against the spirits on the borders between Lion and Scorpion lands. His experience on the front lines deepened his understanding of the troops under his command, adding to his talent as a commander.



Ironically, Nimuro has gained wide approval and loyalty from his clan by concealing his intelligence. He allows his brilliant victories to appear the result of his iron will and incredible luck rather than the orchestra of careful planning and observation they truly are. Nimuro has learned that if others expect him to be a savage, brutal warrior, his enemies will both fear and underestimate him.

He became assured of this during his siege of Toshi Ranbo. Even with his plan of attack and troop movements made known to his enemies, the Crane were unable to defeat him. The opposing general did not believe that Nimuro was capable of executing such a daring and complex attack. This underestimation cost the Crane the battle.

MATSU NIMURO

Male human Lion Sam 14, Matsu Elite 5: CR 19; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 14d10+84 plus 5d8+30; hp 256; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23 (touch 13, flat-footed 23); Atk +5 honorable, keen, thundering katana +34/+29/+24/+19 melee (1d10+34 damage +2d6 vs. dishonorable, 15–20 critical, +1d8 sonic damage on critical hit); SA Relentless, The Matsu's Roar, The Lion's Roar, Lady Matsu's Fury; SQ Class skill — Battle (family bonus), Ancestral Daisho; Honor: 4; AL LG; SV Fort +19, Ref +10, Will +18; Str 23 (29), Dex 11, Con 18 (22), Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 15; Height 5 ft. 8 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Battle +28, Diplomacy +20, Iaijutsu Focus +22, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (etiquette) +6, Knowledge (law) +10, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Knowledge (Shintao) +4, Knowledge (war) +25, Perform +5, Ride +6, Sense Motive +22, Spot +25; Akodo's Technique, Cleave, Death Trance, Improved Critical (katana), Perception Becomes Victory, Power Attack,

Strength of Purity, The Final Lesson, Versatile (Knowledge (war), Spot), Void Use, Way of the Lion, Weapon Focus (katana), Weapon Specialization (katana).

Dojo: Shiro Matsu; Kata: Gentle Blade of Winter, Striking as Fire, Striking as Water.

Possessions: +2 flaming mighty daikyu (+6 Strength modifier), +4 ashigaru armor of moderate fortification, +5 honorable, keen, thundering katana (ancestral daisho), +5 honorable, keen, thundering wakizashi (ancestral daisho), amulet of natural armor +3, bracers of health +4, haori of resistance +4, obi of giant strength +6, ring of protection +3.

MATSU NIURO

Earth: 5

Water: 6

Fire: 4

Agility: 5

Air: 3

Reflexes: 4

Void: 5

School/Rank: Matsu Bushi 2 / Akodo Bushi 5

Dojo: Shiro Matsu

Honor: 4.3

Glory: 8.9

Advantages: Death Trance, Clear Thinker, Daredevil, Strength of the Earth (4)

Disadvantages: Overconfident

Skills: Archery 4, Battle 8, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 3, Hand-to-Hand 5, Heraldry 3, History 5, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 6, Intimidate 8, Kenjutsu 6, Kyujutsu 5, Law 5, No-Dachi 7, Poetry 2, Shintao 3

Kata: Gentle Blade of Winter, Striking as Fire, Striking as Water

MATSU KETSUI, MATSU FAMILY DAIMYO

In her youth, Matsu Ketsui was an impulsive, fiercely independent samurai. She was the stereotypical Matsu Battle Maiden — prideful, headstrong, and disdainful of all save her Matsu sisters. Even other Lion rarely met with her approval if they were not Battle Maidens. She took insult easily and reacted violently. She quickly accrued a reputation as a feared duelist.

The only man she regarded as an equal was Ikoma Koetsu, a brash young bushi who challenged her to a jiu-jutsu duel at a Winter Court. Though she beat him savagely, he never surrendered. On the last day of Winter Court they were married and he took the Matsu name. Three years later, while Ketsui was still pregnant with their second son, Koetsu was slain in a duel with a Kakita kenshinzen. A week after her child's birth, Ketsui took the Kakita's head in another duel.

After the death of Ketsui's cousin Matsu Tsuko and the subsequent Second Day of Thunder, Ketsui became daimyo of the Matsu family. Despite her increased responsibilities — or perhaps because of them — she continued to lead her family as she deemed fit, even defying higher-ranking Lion samurai whom Ketsui considered unworthy. Ketsui was notorious for her open conflicts with Lion Champion Ikoma Tsanuri, often ignoring Tsanuri's orders in battle.

Tsanuri eventually became so angered by Ketsui's defiance that she arranged for a political marriage between the Matsu daimyo and a pacifistic young Phoenix Shugenja named Isawa Kokei. In typical fashion, Ketsui ignored her Champion's command. When the Isawa visited Shiro Matsu to meet Ketsui, she turned him away with mocking laughter. Tsanuri was irritated to hear of Ketsui's defiance, but before she could journey to Shiro Matsu to discipline Ketsui properly, fate intervened.

For many months before, rumors had abounded regarding the corruption of Jade Champion Kitsu Okura's corruption. Ketsui had ignored the rumors as obvious falsehoods perpetrated by the enemies of the Lion Clan. What true Lion could possibly behave in such a manner? When Okura arrived at Shiro Matsu fleeing the wrath of the Otaku Battle Maidens, Ketsui reacted savagely. Her counterattack upon the Unicorn forces gave Okura the time he needed to unleash the power of his summoned oni. Ketsui was shocked by the power that Okura had unleashed, but by the time she realized that she had been a party to a terrible deed it was too late to stop him. Realizing that her pride had led her to ignore a terrible evil in her midst, Ketsui surrendered herself to Ikoma Tsanuri's mercy. She apologized for her foolish, arrogant behavior and begged permission to commit seppuku. Tsanuri forbade it. The Lion armies were making preparations to march on the City of Voltturnum, and needed all the experienced samurai that they could muster. Further, Tsanuri said, Ketsui had not truly found wisdom, she had merely stopped acting foolish. If she were to die, she would be reincarnated as someone else just as foolish.

Though Ketsui burned with shame at her Champion's words, her only reply was to ask what she must do to atone. Privately, Tsanuri demanded that Ketsui go through with her marriage to Isawa Kokei. Fully expecting to die in the siege of Voltturnum, Ketsui agreed. To her surprise, Matsu Ketsui survived the terrible battle that followed. Ikoma Tsanuri did not. Though Ketsui could have easily broken her promise, she knew that to do so would stain her fallen Champion's memory.

Though he had been deeply hurt by Ketsui's rejection, Isawa Kokei had also fallen deeply in love with the Battle Maiden after their first meeting. He gladly forgave her for spurning him, and took the Matsu name after their wedding. It was only ten years ago, after Kokei fell ill and died during a harsh winter, that she truly realized how much she had come to love him in return. She had learned much from the simple Phoenix's boundless patience and profound wisdom. She sees much of Kokei in the eyes of their daughter, Satomi.

As she grows older, Ketsui has begun to realize the value of patience and humility. She looks upon the younger Battle Maidens with some sadness, for she sees in them the same brash pride that she once carried. She realizes that the lessons she has learned cannot be taught; one must arrive at this kind of understanding through experience. Until that time, she is a calm, moderating force on the Matsu family, a source of wise advice to balance the fiery temper so typical in her family.

MATSU KETSUI

Female human Lion Sam 6, Lion's Pride 8; CR 14; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 14d10+14; hp 129; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23 (touch 15, flat-footed 20); Atk +5 keen katana +23/+18/+13 melee (1d10+11 damage, 17-20 critical); SA Matsu's Eyes; SQ Class skill — Battle (family bonus), Ancestral Daisho, Ancestral Favor, No Man's Bride; Honor: 3; AL CG; SV Fort +12, Ref +7, Will +10; Str 14 (18), Dex 15 (17), Con 12, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 15 (these ability scores take into account Ketsui's modifiers for old age); Height 5 ft. 7 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Battle +17, Diplomacy +18, Iaijutsu Focus +19, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (etiquette) +4, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +4, Listen +8, Ride +8, Sense Motive +13, Spot +8; Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Ki Shout, Matsu's Roar, Strength of Purity (x3), Void Use.

Dojo: Shiro Matsu; **Kata:** Striking as Water, Tsuko's Storm.

Possessions: +3 ashigaru armor, +5 keen katana (ancestral daisho), +5 keen wakizashi (ancestral daisho), amulet of natural armor +2, gloves of dexterity +2, obi of giant strength +4, ring of protection +2.

MATSU KETSUI

Earth: 4

Water: 4

Fire: 5

Air: 2

Reflexes: 4

Void: 4

School/Rank: Matsu Bushi 3 / Lion's Pride 2

Dojo: Shiro Matsu

Honor: 3.9

Glory: 7.6

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Dangerous Beauty, Higher Purpose (prove the superiority of the Lion's Pride)

Disadvantages: Brash, Lost Love, Old, Proud

Skills: Battle 5, Etiquette 2, Hand to Hand 5, History 3, Horsemanship 3, Iaijutsu 6, Intimidate 5, Katana 6, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 4, Lore (Bushido) 4, Lore (Shadowlands) 2, No-Dachi 4, Yari 4

Kata: Striking as Water, Tsuko's Storm



MATSU DOMOTAI, GUARDIAN OF THE HALL OF ANCESTORS

The second son of the Matsu daimyo has little to look forward to. There is no guaranteed inheritance, little hope of shining in the shadow of an older brother destined to guard the Hall of Ancestors, or an older sister who will one day rule the family. Of course, being Matsu, this seldom prevents such individuals from finding a way to carve out a role for themselves.

When the time came for the second son of Matsu Ketsui to take his gempukku and choose a samurai's name, he ventured deep into the Hall of Ancestors in search of inspiration. The young bushi eventually came upon the statue of Matsu Domotai, and asked one of the attending Kitsu to explain the samurai's significance.

During the Battle of Stolen Graves, Matsu Domotai fought bravely against the forces of Tsuchiban. Alone, he chased seven Bloodspeakers who attempted to escape the Ancestral Mausoleum. Domotai slew every one, fighting off their magic through raw force of will. Though he was a great hero, Domotai was largely forgotten among the many other heroes that were made that day.

In the young bushi's mind, this was the perfect samurai to emulate. By taking Domotai's name, he would gain some measure of that hero's honor and courage. If he was successful, he would bring glory not only to himself, but to the deserving but forgotten hero he had chosen. At his gempukku the boy became the second samurai to call himself Matsu Domotai.

During the War of Spirits Domotai fought beside his older brother, Nimuro. Defending the lands of the Lion and Scorpion from the armies of Hantei XVI, the two young samurai earned the respect of their fellow Lion. When the time came for a new Champion of the Lion to be chosen, Domotai was not surprised to see that his brother Nimuro chosen. Nimuro bestowed his rightful position as protector of the Hall of

Ancestors on his younger brother in turn, an honor Domotai gladly accepted.

After the end of the War of Spirits, Domotai's life was relatively uneventful. Then the Tsuno came. Suspecting that the Hall was not their true target, Domotai took his legions to defend the Kitsu Tombs. Domotai's instincts were correct, but the Tsuno were too many. Domotai watched every Lion who fought beside him die.

Though he attempted to give his own life valiantly as well, the Tsuno would not allow it. Pack leader Tsuno Kurushimi wished to take a Lion commander as a trophy, to test the true mettle of the humans. Domotai became a prisoner of his clan's greatest enemies.

Domotai was chained in Nikushimi Shinden. The magic of the Soultwisters kept him free of Taint, for the Tsuno did not wish to allow him to escape into the madness of corruption. The Ravagers tortured his body relentlessly, but he would not submit to the pain. The Tsuno seemed impressed, and redoubled their efforts. When Domotai continued to resist, the Soultwisters took over. Their magic plumbed deep into

Domotai's mind, learning all that he knew about the Lion Clan.

Through the pain and humiliation, Domotai watched his captors carefully. As they learned from him, he learned from them. He knows that the Tsuno are a strictly regimented society that in many ways resembles the samurai caste. He knows that they can resurrect their dead by returning them to the Tsuno temple deep in the Shadowlands. He knows that they consider the human race animals to be destroyed, and that they have a personal vendetta against the Lion Clan. He quietly collected all of the information he could, resisted their torture, and waited for the chance to escape.

Eventually the Tsuno tired of Domotai and turned him over to Shaha, the Dark Daughter of Fu Leng. While in her custody, Domotai was rescued by Toturi Tsudao and the First Legion. Domotai was on the brink of death when he was discovered, but through the ministrations of Kitsu shugenja and the same indomitable will that allowed him to survive Tsuno torture he slowly recovered.

Domotai is not the same man he once was. He is grim, quiet, and temperamental. At times he finds it difficult to control his own anger, and flies into rage at the slightest provocation. When he sleeps, he dreams of his torture at the hands of the Tsuno. To his dismay, the dreams are not unsettling; he almost finds himself regretting that the Tsuno cast him aside. Matsu Domotai fears that he may be going mad. Before he does, he hopes to teach his clan as much about the Tsuno as he can.

MATSU DOMOTAI

Male human Lion Sam 8: CR 8; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 8d10+40; hp 109; Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (touch 13, flat-footed 16); Atk +2 katana +14/+9 melee (1d10+9 damage); SQ Class skill — Battle (family bonus), Ancestral Daisho; Honor: 3; AL NG; SV Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 19 (21), Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10; Height 5 ft. 6 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Battle +13, Climb +10, Diplomacy +7, Iaijutsu Focus +11, Intimidate +11, Jump +10, Knowledge (Tsuno) +6, Ride +6, Sense Motive +8; Cleave, Daisho Specialization (katana), Death Trance, Know the School (Tsuno), Power Attack, Void Use, Weapon Focus (katana).

Dojo: Shiro Matsu; **Kata:** Striking as Earth.

Possessions: +2 katana (ancestral daisho), +2 partial armor, +2 wakizashi (ancestral daisho), bracers of health +2.

MATSU DOMOTAI

Earth: 3

Water: 4

Fire: 4

Air: 2

Void: 3

School/Rank: Matsu Bushi 3

Dojo: Shiro Matsu

Honor: 3.9

Glory: 7.6

Advantages: Heart of Vengeance (Tsuno)

Disadvantages: Dark Fate, Obligation (Protect the Hall of Ancestors), Sworn Enemy (Tsuno Kurushimi)

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 3, Battle 3, Hand to Hand 2, History 2, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidate 3, Katana 3, Kenjutsu 4, Know the School (Tsuno) 2, Lore (Tsuno) 2

Kata: Striking as Earth

VASSALS OF THE MATSU FAMILY

THE IKEDA FAMILY

When the Unicorn returned to the Empire over three hundred years ago, the Lion were the last clan to accept the Unicorn as the descendants of the Ki-Rin Clan and Shinjo. The Unicorn and the Lion warred for months, as the Right Hand of the Emperor saw the Shinjo and their comrades as Tainted beasts wearing uncured animal skins and eating meat like beasts. When the Emperor finally commanded the Lion to stand down and welcome their lost cousins back into Rokugan, the clan sullenly complied. At that time, a young Matsu gunso came to his champion and made a simple request.

"Let me watch them," Matsu Ikeda asked of his lord. "I will go unafraid into their foul dens and camps, and I will learn their ways. Even if they do not show me." The Lion Champion agreed that this was wise. They may be the children of Shinjo, but they were powerful and the Lion must be ever ready to combat possible threats to the Throne. Who knew if these *gaijin* would eventually grow tired with their lands and turn their fearsome ways upon the rest of the Empire... or the Emperor himself? Eight centuries was a long time to be away from home. Who knew what the children of Shinjo had become?

Matsu Ikeda was a cunning and capable man, and soon was accepted into the Unicorn lands as an honored emissary of the clan's most worthy adversary. Ikeda quickly learned the customs of the barbaric Unicorn, and earned their trust. Though they taught him how to shoot from horseback, and ride down an opponent with speed and efficiency, they refused to show him deeper secrets of their clan. This did not stop Ikeda, as his quick and agile mind slowly began to deduce what the Unicorn would not teach him outright. All the while, Ikeda became known as a close ally of the Unicorn, and the Empire in turn saw the Unicorn and Lion growing closer.

When Matsu Ikeda returned to the Lion lands, he brought a wealth of secrets and tactics the Lion never dreamed of. Within a year, Ikeda contacted his "allies" within the Unicorn and staged a friendly competition so that he could honor what his generous Unicorn hosts had taught him. The Unicorn happily agreed, eager to be accepted by the Lion and Rokugan as a whole.

By the end of the tournament, it was made plain to the Unicorn what Ikeda had done. The Lion soldiers and horsemen had made fools of the Unicorn bushi in over half of the competitions. The Shinjo saw in the Lion's style their own techniques being used against them, though the rest of the clans in attendance saw nothing more than a great spectacle.

The Shinjo then sent their Otaku Battle Maidens forth. Their demonstration of horsemanship stunned even Ikeda. The Unicorn had showed him much, but they had not shown all. The message was clear. The Unicorn were impressed that the Lion had learned their ways, but the Lion were aware that the Unicorn had not shown them everything. As equals, they welcomed and respected one another. There would be no more blood spilled between Lion and Unicorn, at least not that day. It was a rare sort of victory for the Matsu — a victory without a drop of blood spilled.

To thank Matsu Ikeda for his tireless efforts to bring peace between his clan and the Unicorn, the Emperor offered the Lion samurai any one boon he wanted. Ikeda only requested the resources and honor to ensure what he had learned from the Shinjo would not be lost after a generation. The Hantei quickly agreed, and the Ikeda family was born.

Since that time, the Ikeda have slipped into virtual invisibility among the families of the Empire. Ironically, the Ikeda were instrumental in defeating the Unicorn when they attacked Lion lands during the War Against the Darkness. Currently, the talents of the Ikeda riders are employed in scouting the Tsuno and running down the lightning-fast beasts, a task they are well suited for.

KAMINARI SHIRO

The stronghold of the Ikeda family is named the Castle of Thunder, after the sound their heavy mounted forces make when charging across the plains. Matsu Ikeda lived to see the completion of his family's small castle, and was pleased. The design is peculiar, owing to the Unicorn influence Ikeda used when helping to design the fortress. It is triangular, and a great gateway is hidden by overlapping (and open-ended) rows of stone walls and trees (though these trees are placed well away from the walls to lessen the danger of attack by fire or sapping crews). From the distance, it appears that Kaminari Shiro has no main entrance, and the Ikeda riders simply emerge from the trees.

The castle is three days' travel north of Shiro Matsu, and as such is generally passed off as a Matsu outpost or barracks. The Ikeda do not mind being practically unknown. They prefer it, and understand why Akodo wrote about surprise and deception in *Leadership*. Many soldiers from Kaminari Shiro train for a year or more at the Warden Stables in Shiranai Toshi in Ikoma lands. All Ikeda are expected to make at least one journey in their lifetime to the Lion/Unicorn border near that city, so they may gaze upon the lands from which they learned their ways and may someday be called upon to conquer.

IKEDA TOSHI

The city named after Matsu Ikeda is just large enough to not be a village, an outpost of civilization in the center of unsettled Lion lands. Ikeda Toshi is the only city for two days' travel in any direction, and as such is self-sufficient. The peasants of Ikeda Toshi are infamous for their sheltered nature, as very few of them ever leave the isolated city even once in their lifetimes. The open plains around the city serve as training grounds for the Ikeda bushi, and are flat and barren after generations of such use.

Ikeda Toshi welcomes outsiders, but does not trust them. Like the peasants, many of the samurai here rarely leave their home, and are uncomfortable around those they have not known for years at a time. The citizens of the city tend to act as a large family, and it is common for an Ikeda to walk through the city and recognize every face he or she encounters. This leads to an exceptionally low crime rate in the city, as everyone looks out for everyone else. The insular relations of the people within Ikeda Toshi have also led to uncharacteristically close relationships between the peasants and the nobles. Samurai of Ikeda City are rarely cruel or even dismissive towards heimin or hinin, and they prefer to avoid eta.

THE IKEDA FAMILY

Favored Class: Samurai
Starting Honor: 2
Class Skills: Ride
Starting Outfit:

1. Lamellar armor, horse (light war), masterwork yari.

THE IKEDA FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Agility
Glory: 0.5
Special: Members of the Ikeda family who attend the Matsu Bushi School may choose to give up Hand-to-Hand from their beginning skills to start with Horsemanship.

THE KORITOME FAMILY

The Koritome vassal family are paragons of virtue, demonstrating how an adherence to honor and duty can raise even the lowest samurai to the status of greatness. Matsu Koritome is considered is one of the most revered of ancestors among the Lion families. During the Battle of White Stag after the death of Hantei Yugo-zohime, the clans united under the Empress' uncle Muhaki. The history books say that after this staggering loss, the Empire rallied around their new Emperor and crushed the gaijin mercilessly.

A deeper look into the Imperial Histories reveals the story of Matsu Koritome, perhaps one of the greatest archers to ever live within the Empire. Though slandered as ignorant and barbaric in the records of Rokugan, the gaijin were hardly without cunning. After the death of Yugo-zohime, gaijin spies warned their masters that Hantei Muhaki had taken the throne in an effort to hold together the Empire. Though the gaijin were on the brink of losing their foothold within Rokugan, this new development could turn the conflict sharply in their favor. If something were to happen to the new Emperor...

In an attempt to strike down the new Son of Heaven, the gaijin attempted to parley with the forces of the Empire under a flag of surrender. The foreign emissaries begged for no further blood on either side, and offered quick withdrawal of their forces from Rokugan in return for the vital supplies they would need to make the voyage. The Emperor agreed to this meeting and attended with a well-armed group of Lion bushi and Seppun miharu.

The trap was too perfect, however, and the Seppun and Lion were slaughtered by hidden gaijin employing guns and explosives. When the gaijin were certain they had taken their objective, a single samurai in the gold and brown of the Lion dodged between the rifle fire and explosions, drawing back his bow with a detached perfection. Within seconds, three of the ten gaijin snipers had fallen dead with Lion arrows protruding from their heads. The remaining gunmen did exactly what Matsu Koritome had planned and focused their weapons on him. Less than a minute later, all ten snipers were dead, and the Matsu archer had planted his tanto in the heart of the ambassador the gaijin had baited the trap with. Koritome did not care that he lay dying of countless bullet wounds; the last chance of the gaijin was crushed. The stragglers fled to the sea.

Later that month, Hantei Muhaki ordered a competition among the finest archers of the Lion family to celebrate the hero Matsu Koritome. The tournament lasted over two days and at the end less than two hundred of over two thousand samurai stood before their Emperor to be honored. These men and women performed so well that the Lion Champion declared them the Koritome vassal family at that very moment, and they would carry the legacy of the great hero into the future.

The Koritome have maintained their Matsu heritage as fearless and fearsome bushi, while their training with the yumi honors the valor of Koritome himself. The Koritome pride themselves on being some of the finest bowmen in the Empire, and rival even the Tsuruchi family in their skill. This is not surprising, as Tsuruchi claimed a Koritome Matsu as one of his parents.

SHIRO KORITOME

The Koritome family is one of the most respected and honored of all vassal families, and their stronghold reflects this status. Shiro Koritome's construction and resources match that of many Minor Clan strongholds, and their armies have grown from the initial handful to equal the strength of many smaller but more respected families of the Empire. The castle which houses the vassal family claims an impressive parcel of land located on the road between Kaeru Toshi and Tonfajutsen.

There are squat watchtowers both on and outside the walls of the castle that are connected to the main castle. In an attack, the archers can move swiftly from tower to tower via rope bridges and flexible bamboo ladders. The most skilled archers can move from one tower to another in moments, addressing an attack from any angle with skill and speed.

KORITOME TOSHI

Much of the Koritome family's wealth flows from the city near Shiro Koritome, which is home to some of the most talented bowyers and fletchers within the lands of the Lion. Even the Scorpion, Unicorn, and Phoenix regularly commission the craftsmen here to fashion arrows and bows for their clans. If the other clans are fortunate, the workers are not too busy with their duties to the Lion. However, the Lion's prevailing attitude towards any of these clans tends to dictate just how "fortunate" they are from year to year.

The Koritome are an exception among many vassal families in that members of their senior family often come to them for training and assistance. The Matsu family recognizes the skill of the Koritome, and feels no shame in asking a vassal family to assist them. After all, are they not all descended from Lion blood? This relationship is another contributing factor to the Koritome's unusual influence, as the Matsu are always eager to assist the Koritome at any time they wish.

THE KORITOME FAMILY

- Favored Class: Samurai
- Starting Honor: 2
- Class Skills: Craft (fletchery)
- Starting Outfit:
 1. Masterwork yumi (longbow)

THE KORITOME FAMILY

- Benefit: +1 Reflexes
- Glory: 0.5
- Special: Members of the Koritome family who attend the Matsu Bushi School may choose to give up either Battle or Hand-to-Hand from their beginning skills to increase one of their beginning Archery to 2 ranks.

MATSU MECHANICS

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

MATSU NO KIN-IRO OYOROI THE GOLDEN ARMOR OF THE MATSU FAMILY

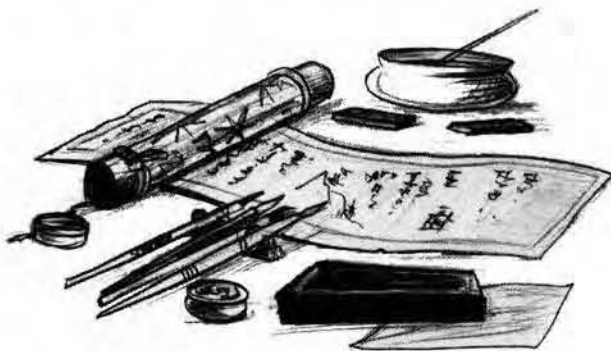
Enshrined with other ancestral artifacts in the heart of Shiro Matsu lies one of the Matsu family's greatest treasures. Matsu no Kin-iro Oyoroï, the Golden Armor of the Matsu, still shines proudly after a thousand years. The armor is an oyoroï-style breastplate, with black-lacquered haidate (thigh guards), kusazuri (waist guards), and sode (shoulder plates) laced together with threads that look like spun gold. The do-o (breastplate) appears to be fashioned from a single sheet of brushed gold, but it is far more resilient. Throughout the history of the Matsu, this armor has been worn in countless battles, but it shows no signs of damage or soiling. Some who look closely at the brushed surface of the gleaming breastplate, one might see the faint image of the face of a lion; others see nothing at all. Why the face is not visible to all is a mystery, but some speculate that the lion looks out upon those it favors. The helm is made from polished black plates, with a crown of layered gold. The mempo also resembles gold, fashioned into the visage of a snarling lion.

The earliest mention in the Ikoma histories of this exquisitely crafted armor comes in the years before the first Day of Thunder. It is said that Akodo One-Eye commissioned a master armorsmith to create a suit of armor for Matsu in an attempt to woo her, but she spurned the gift. Akodo kept the armor safe, believing that one day she would accept it. After Matsu married a mortal and swore fealty to the Lion Clan, Akodo presented the armor to her as a gift. She wore it in many battles, and grew to prize it for its quality and craftsmanship. For that reason she left it behind on the first Day of Thunder, perhaps knowing that if she took it with her to face Fu Leng, it would be lost to her descendants forever.

Several Matsu daimyo have worn the armor since the early days of the Empire, but not all of them. It is said the armor chooses its own wearer. Those who may wear the armor simply know that it is theirs to wear. It may be worn only by Matsu, but its chosen wearer is not always the family daimyo. The criteria by which the armor chooses its wearer are unknown.

THE GOLDEN ARMOR OF THE MATSU FAMILY

This minor artifact armor functions as +5 *great armor*. It also has the qualities of *arrow deflection* (grants the wearer the Deflect Arrows feat), *fortification* (all critical hits and sneak attacks are negated), *invulnerability* (grants the wearer damage reduction of 5/+1), and *spell resistance* (SR 19). The armor has an Intelligence 16, Wisdom 18, Charisma 11, and an Ego of 32. Its alignment is Lawful Neutral, and it is capable of speaking Rokugani, although no one has ever heard it speak. It has an Honor of 4.



The armor's special purpose is to protect the Matsu family and advance their interests. It will not allow itself to be worn by anyone but a Matsu. Whenever the armor is in pursuit of its special purpose, it can cause fear. All opponents within a 20 ft. radius of the armor must make a Will save (DC 14) or suffer the effects of fear for 1d4 rounds.

Caster Level: 18th; Weight: 45 lb.

THE GOLDEN ARMOR OF THE MATSU FAMILY

This wearer of this armor gains +20 to his or her TN to be hit by melee attacks. Against any non-magical ranged attack, the wearer gains +25 to the TN. Any hostile spells cast at the wearer have their TN increased by 15. The armor is an intelligent entity capable of speech, but it prefers to communicate telepathically with its wearer. No one has ever heard it speak aloud. It has Intelligence 4, Willpower 5, and Awareness 2. It will permit only Matsu to wear it. Any attempt to act contrary to the armor's will forces the character to make a contested Willpower roll against the armor. It has an Honor of 4.9.

The armor protects the Matsu family and advances their interests. It will not allow itself to be worn by anyone but a Matsu. Whenever the armor is worn in combat against enemies of the Matsu, it gains the ability Fear 3. Any opponent within a 20 ft. radius of the armor must make a Willpower roll (TN 15); those who fail may spend no Void Points when fighting the wearer, and must drop all dice that roll lower than the Fear rating on all rolls made against the wearer.

HOETE ARASHI HATA JIRUSHI BANNER OF THE ROARING TEMPEST ANCESTRAL STANDARD OF THE LION CLAN

Four hundred years ago, at the Battle of the Sleeping River, the infamous maho-tsukai known as Iuchiban escaped from his tomb and raised a horde of undead. The Lion's Pride stood beside the samurai arrayed against him, an army comprised of all the Great Clans (save the Unicorn, who were still beyond Rokugan's borders). The battle took place on a great plain near Sleeping River. As rank upon rank of zombies threw themselves against the blades of the Great Clans, the mortal lines held, however tenuously. But as the failure of that tactic became clear, Iuchiban gathered his forces and focused the entire weight of his attack on the point in the enemy lines held by the Lion's Pride.

The fierce Matsu women held their position against insurmountable odds. If they failed, the Empire's lines would be broken, and the forces of Iuchiban would seize victory. The undead horde threw itself with mindless, tireless fury against the grim ranks of the Lion's Pride, but the Lion's lofty battle standard never sagged or wavered. Because of the sheer vastness of the undead horde the rest of the army of the Great Clans was helpless to come to their aid. And still in the center of the Matsu line stood the unwavering banner. As the battle

raged, the outnumbered, exhausted Matsu reinvigorated themselves with a steady war cry like the roar of a lion, a war cry that built and escalated until it was stronger than the sum of its voices. When the forces of the Akodo finally broke through to flank the undead assaulting the position of the Lion's Pride, the blood-sorcerer's forces retreated. Only then did the war cry fade away.

As Iuchiban's forces were routed, the blood-drenched and bone-weary Lion's Pride samurai-ko were left to rest and tend their wounds. The Matsu battle standard still did not move. The samurai-ko dispersed their ranks to reveal a single woman, kneeling on the ground with the pole of the battle standard clenched between her knees and clutched in both ensanguinated hands. Her body was stiff and cold; she had been dead for hours. Her face and body had been so hacked and torn that she was unrecognizable. Her identity was never determined.

It is said that the spirit of this samurai-ko infuses this ancient banner. Its vertical wooden pole stands ten feet high, with a four foot horizontal crossbar from which hangs the ancient mon of the Lion clan, above that of the Matsu family. Standard bearers sometimes speak of whispers in their ear warning them of danger. Sometimes a strange tingling shivers through them as battle is joined, a tingling which seems to fill the Matsu with strength. One bearer even claimed that, when attacked by a Crane samurai and unable to defend herself without dropping the banner, a ghostly blade appeared and struck her enemy down.

The Banner of the Roaring Tempest gets its name from the noise that emanates from it when it is carried in battle, the sound of a pride of roaring lions mixed with the rumble of a distant storm.

Through the centuries the Matsu have carried it in dozens of battles, but in spite of its frequent use it looks almost new. The Lion's Pride maintains and repairs it meticulously, for it is a symbol of one of their greatest triumphs and the pride of all Lion.



BANNER OF THE ROARING TEMPEST

The banner is a minor artifact. Every Lion within 100 ft. of the standard bearer gains a +2 luck bonus on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, saves, and skill checks, and is immune to fear. Each foe within the area of effect suffers a -2 penalty on such rolls and must make a Will save (DC 20) or be affected as by the spell fear.

The banner also grants a +4 enhancement bonus to all Battle checks made by Lion within its area of effect. Any members of the Lion clan who stand against this banner in battle receive an additional -2 penalty to all the abovementioned rolls. They must make their Will save with a DC of 25 to overcome the effects of the banner's fear.

Caster Level: 18th; Weight: 20 lb.

BANNER OF THE ROARING TEMPEST

Every Lion within 100' of the standard bearer gains one unkept die on attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and skill rolls, and is immune to Fear. Each foe within the area of effect suffers a loss of one unkept die on all such rolls. During battle, each foe within the area of effect is subject to the banner's Fear rating of 4.

Any Battle rolls made by Lion within its area of effect roll and keep one extra die.

Any members of the Lion clan who face this banner in battle also lose another unkept die with all the abovementioned rolls. Against opposing Lion, the banner has a Fear rating of 6.

KYOURANKEN — BLADE OF FURY

ANCESTRAL SWORD OF THE MATSU FAMILY

This archaic tachi-style sword was created by one of the earliest master sword smiths for Matsu Gohiro, grandson of Matsu. One of the Lion clan's great early generals, Gohiro distinguished himself as a tactical genius in early forays against the Crane and Scorpion clans. But when he married the fiery and beautiful Matsu Shiomi, his military career truly reached greatness. He and Shiomi formed a powerful team on the battlefield; he provided the strategy and tactics, and she provided the passion and battle fury. Together these generals expanded Lion lands far into Crane territory, also claiming Beiden Pass and a swath of Scorpion territory reaching almost to Ryoko Owari. Their story is legendary because not only did they form an unstoppable military leadership, they also loved each other with passion and fury, unusual in Rokugani marriages.

But as so often happens, the careers of these great Matsu were ended by treachery. It happened during the pacification of a Scorpion town only a day's march from Ryoko Owari. Gohiro and Shiomi were resting in their tent, and the fires had burned low, when a roar of grief-stricken rage and the sound of ripping tent-cloth tore through the sleeping encampment. When the sentries reached the source of the sound, they saw that the wall of the generals' tent hung in blood-splashed tatters. Just behind it, amid strips of tent cloth and black clothing, lay what remained of a human body, sliced into so many pieces that it was scarcely recognizable as such. Standing over it was Shiomi, breathing heavily, raggedly. Clutched in the dead man's severed hand was a small blowgun.

It is said that Shiomi's eyes glowed yellow in the light of the sentries' torches as she stood over the steaming corpse. Her husband's dripping sword hung from her fingers, and she sank slowly to her knees, the fire in her eyes diminishing like a starving candle. Her last words were, "Kill them all!" Then she collapsed, and the astonished sentries saw the tiny dart sticking in the side of her throat. They found Gohiro gasping out his last breaths inside the tent, a similar dart protruding from his neck.

The Lion army was incensed by the deaths of their beloved leaders, and they carried out her final orders, razing the town and slaughtering its inhabitants.

Gohiro's sword passed into the hands of his eldest son, who was only four at the time of his parents' deaths. Not long after reaching adulthood, when he had the opportunity to use the sword in battle, he quickly realized its astonishing powers. Even though he had hardly known his mother, he felt her speaking with him, aiding him, as has every Matsu since who has ever wielded this weapon. Many have died wielding it, overcome by their own battle fury, and it is believed that their fighting spirits also add their power to the potency of this weapon.

ANCESTRAL SWORD OF THE MATSU FAMILY

This minor artifact acts as a +4 *keen, mighty cleaving, thundering katana*.

When fighting with this weapon, its wielder enters a powerful battle fury. He temporarily gains +6 Strength, +6 Constitution, and a +3 morale bonus to Will saves, but he suffers a -2 penalty to AC. The character's hit points increase by 3 points per level, but these hit points go away at the end of the battle fury when Constitution drops back to normal. (These extra hit points are not lost first the way temporary hit points are; see Temporary Hit Points in the *Player's Handbook*). While in battle fury, the character may not use skills or abilities that require patience or concentration, such as moving silently or casting spells. The battle fury lasts until no more enemies remain in line of sight. At the end of the battle fury, the character's abilities return to normal, with no other adverse effects. The wielder can enter a battle fury a number of times per day equal to his level/4, rounding up. Caster Level: 18th; Weight: 6 lb.

ANCESTRAL SWORD OF THE MATSU FAMILY

The blade acts as a 4k4 katana. Anyone who wields it gains an additional melee attack each round. When fighting with this weapon, the user immediately enters a powerful battle fury. He temporarily gains +2 Strength, +2 Stamina, and a +1 Willpower, but he suffers a -5 penalty to his TN to Be Hit (to a minimum of 5). The character's Wound levels change along with the temporary increase in Earth, but revert to normal at the end of the battle fury when his Earth drops back to normal. However, the character maintains the same number of Wounds per level, so his Wound level may worsen when the fury ends if he has sustained any injuries. While in battle fury, the character may not use skills or abilities that require patience or concentration, such as casting spells. The battle fury lasts until the character can no longer see any enemies. At the end of the battle fury, the character's traits return to normal, with no other adverse effects. The character can enter a battle fury a number of times per day equal to his School Rank.

NEW ANCESTORS

MATSU SHOUKO

Matsu Shouko was a young samurai-ko in the Lion's Pride, recently married and mother of infant twins. She was killed at the Battle of Three Stone River, where Lion forces were massacred by a few Phoenix shugenja in a defensible position. The Lion forces had no shugenja to counter the elemental assault of the Phoenix, and nine-tenths of the Lion were slaughtered, including Shouko. Her senseless demise at the hands of a few shugenja left her with a deep hatred of them when she departed this world.

Anyone with Shouko as an ancestor is more aware of magical activity in the area, and Shouko does all she can to protect her descendants from the power of the elements.

SHUGENJA'S BANE

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: MATSU SHOUKO

You are descended from Matsu Shouko, and her dislike for the powers of shugenja and the elements help to protect you from them.

Clan: Lion

Benefit: You gain +1 to all saving throws versus Elemental spell effects (this excludes maho). You may, as a standard action, make a Wisdom check (DC 15) to detect any Elemental spells being cast within 30 ft. This is a supernatural ability.

MATSU SHOUKO

(3 POINTS)

You are descended from Matsu Shouko, and her dislike for the powers of shugenja and the elements help to protect you from them.

Any non-maho, hostile spell effect directed at you has its TN increased by 2. You may make a conscious Willpower roll vs. TN 15 to detect an elemental spell being cast within thirty feet.

MATSU YUKARI

Matsu Yukari fought at the Battle of Sleeping River. Her tireless blade dispatched scores of shambling, mindless undead in those horrible days. The battle left her with a seething hatred of the undead, as well as a lifetime's worth of experience in how to fight them. After the battle was over, she volunteered to command a hunting party sworn to eradicate any undead left in the Empire. She died at a ripe old age, having raised seven children. She imparts her wisdom and experience to her descendants.

BACK INTO DEATH

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: MATSU YUKARI

One of your ancestors is Matsu Yukari, and she gives you her hatred for the undead, along with her experience fighting against them.

Clan: Lion

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +1 or greater.

Benefit: You may apply critical threats and critical hit damage normally against undead. (Undead are normally immune to critical hits. This does not grant you the ability to sneak attack undead if you possess the sneak attack ability.)

MATSU YUKARI

(3 POINTS)

One of your ancestors is Matsu Yukari, and she gives you her hatred for the undead, along with her experience fighting against them.

You gain one unkept die to all attack and damage rolls and skill tests when facing undead creatures in combat.

MATSU AGETOKI

Matsu Agetoki was one of the greatest cavalry generals the Lion Clan has ever known. A hero of the Clan War and the War Against the Shadow, Agetoki is remembered fondly by his kin. Legends claim that not even the mighty Unicorn could keep pace with his steed, and that he once caught an arrow fired at him from the air. (See *Way of the Lion* for details regarding Matsu Agetoki.)

AGETOKI'S BLESSING

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: MATSU AGETOKI

You are descended from the cavalry general Matsu Agetoki.

Clan: Lion

Prerequisite: Mounted Combat

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus to all Ride checks. You may attempt to deflect missile weapons fired at you. Once per day, when you would normally be hit with a ranged weapon, you may make a Reflex save (DC 25). If the ranged weapon has a magical bonus to attack, the DC increases by that amount. If you succeed, you deflect the weapon, which misses you. You must be aware of the attack, not flat-footed, and you must have at least one hand free, or holding a weapon. Attempting this deflection does not count as an action. Exceptional ranged weapons like boulders cannot be deflected.

MATSU AGETOKI

(4 POINTS)

You are descended from the cavalry general Matsu Agetoki. You gain one unkept die on all Horsemanship tests. You may attempt to deflect missile weapons fired at you. Once per day, when you would normally be hit with a ranged weapon, you may make a Reflex roll vs. TN 25. If you succeed, you deflect the weapon, which misses you. You must be aware of the attack, and you must have at least one hand free or holding a weapon. Attempting this deflection does not count as an action. Exceptional ranged weapons like boulders cannot be deflected.

MATSU MEIKUKO (YOKAI)

The general who commanded the Lion forces at the Red Snow Battle, Matsu Meikuko was a proud warrior. Too proud, for her pride cost the lives of 15,000 Lion samurai. She foolishly attacked the Dragon clan in their home mountains during the deepest days of winter. When she realized her failure, it was too late. Winter had claimed a great portion of her forces, and Dragons slaughtered the rest. To cleanse the shame, she committed seppuku. The battle became known among the Lion clan as Meikuko's Mistake.

In death, her soul is bound to the Bloodsword Revenge, the weapon which drove her to her death. Her tortured whispers still call out to her kin, offering her aid... for a price.

SECOND CHANCES

LION ANCESTOR FEAT: MATSU NAOTOI

Matsu Meikuko watches over you, and helps keep you from making serious mistakes.

Clan: Lion

Benefit: You may reroll any single die roll, save, or check a number of times per day equal to your Taint modifier (minimum one). Each time you use this ability, you gain one point of Taint.

MATSU MEIKUKO

(4 POINTS)

Matsu Meikuko watches over you, and helps prevent you from making serious mistakes.

Once per day per Rank of Taint you possess (minimum 1) you may reroll any single die roll. Each time you use this ability, you gain one point of Taint.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE KITSU TOMBS

THE KITSU TOMBS

In all the Lion lands, there is perhaps no location so secret, so reclusive, so unseen by the eyes of outsiders, as the Kitsu Tombs (Location L19). The Tombs are not the ancestral home of the Kitsu family, nor even within the Kitsu provinces. Yet still they are the seat of the family's elite sodan-senzo, and the Matsu whose lands house the Tombs allow the Kitsu free passage. This is the prestige that the sodan-senzo carry, for they can speak with the ancestors of the Lion Clan — an ability that the other families can only respect and envy.

The Tombs were built during the early years of the Lion Clan, after the marriage of Akodo One-Eye's daughters to the five kitsu transformed into human form. When the First Five's mortal lives ended, their children respected the ways of their race and stored their ashes beneath the earth in a place of reverence and solitude. The Kitsu chose as the site for this entombment a small valley near where Akodo first returned with the first of the transformed Kitsu. The Matsu gladly permitted them to do so, for in those days the land was wild and untamed, and the Matsu were glad to add more settlements on the vast plains in their possession.

USING THE KITSU TOMBS IN AN ADVENTURE

The Kitsu Tombs are one of the most secret locations in the Lion lands. This, of course, makes them a tempting place to base an adventure. Unfortunately, the Tombs are closed to all except the Kitsu, making it difficult to include them without complicating the PCs' lives. (After all, having the entire Lion army after you does tend to make life complicated.)

Some possibilities for using the Tombs are as follows.

- Matsu Nimuro, Champion of the Lion, might send a group of samurai to the Tombs to ensure that none of the Taint acquired during the rule of Kitsu Okura remains. This would work best with a group of Lion characters, although the same approach would work with a mixed group if they had a higher ranking patron (for example, Toturi Tsudao or Toturi Sezaru).
- A band of samurai in the area might be the first to respond in the aftermath of another Tsuno attack on the Tombs. This might be the only time the Kitsu would welcome outsiders into the Tombs: if those outsiders were expelling their inhuman nemeses.
- For a more nefarious angle, the party might be charged with infiltrating and recovering the secrets of the Kitsu Tombs, one of the most carefully-guarded locations in the entire Empire. The Kolat and the Scorpion Clan could both conceivably be interested in the Tombs' contents.

SPELL EFFECTS

The Kitsu are powerful shugenja, and they have appropriate defenses on their home at all times. You may assume that there are [hallow and glyph of warding spells against all not of Kitsu blood / Word of the Kami and Symbol of Water spells versus all non-Kitsu] in effect on the Tombs at all times. These spells are always cast by a [level 20 / rank 5] shugenja. Sadly, the recent attack by the Tsuno allowed their Soultwisters to dispel these spells. The Kitsu have recently been restoring and strengthening them in the event that the Tsuno return.

HOW TO USE THIS CHAPTER

This section details the multiple levels of the Kitsu Tombs, including both the physical structure and the subterranean levels that are the most secretive of the Kitsu family's holdings. For each level, there is a heading entitled "At a Glance", which encapsulates the important information about that level for the GM. Following that, there are multiple descriptions of each section that offer more detailed information. These may be read aloud if the GM so chooses, or they may be used as a springboard for the GM to develop more detailed ideas of their own. Individual GMs are encouraged to expand upon the information contained within this chapter when using the legendary Kitsu Tombs as the site for an adventure.

THE GROUNDS

AT A GLANCE

The Kitsu Tombs are enclosed by a large wall. The grounds within the wall and the building itself seem innocent enough. A torii arch marks the path to the Tombs' entrance, guarded by two very large stone lions. There is an expansive garden to the left of the building as you enter the main gate. To the left of the entrance is a very small open field with a smaller lake. Benches dot the perimeter of the lake. The front entrance to the Tombs is foreboding, almost sinister. Even though the Taint was eliminated from this sacred place decades ago, some of its frightening countenance remains.

THE ENTRANCE/ARCH

A large torii arch stands above the entrance to the Kitsu Tombs. Traditionally, those who pass beneath the torii arch are purified by a shugenja with a simple ritual. Even without the ritual, the arch evokes sensations of purification and focus. The giant stone lions on either side of the arch are at once menacing and reassuring, with exquisitely crafted jade eyes that seem to follow those who move through the courtyard.

THE GARDENS

The gardens outside the Kitsu Tombs are surprisingly serene, given the nature of the building which they adjoin. Although small, the garden makes maximum use of space with winding paths, privacy bushes, overhanging trees, and small water gardens. Obscured by the bushes are shrines to the individual founders of each Lion family: Akodo One-Eye, Lady Matsu, Ikoma, and the kitsu. Each is surrounded with enough bushes that a visitor can offer his prayers in peace without being dis-

turbed or overheard. Rumor has it that a fifth shrine once stood in the garden, one that was destroyed when the family it commemorated fell from grace. The Kitsu do not speak of this matter under any circumstances, and any who ask after it will incur their extreme displeasure.

Lion characters who offer a prayer at the altar of their family founder receive a +1 enhancement bonus that can be used on any one roll, check, or throw of their choice within the next 48 hours. If this bonus is not used by that time, it is lost.

Lion characters who offer a prayer at the altar of their family founder receive one Free Raise that can be used on any roll within the next 48 hours. If this bonus is not used by that time, it is lost.

THE LAKE

This small lake is serene and placid. Occasionally a koi surfaces, sending ripples that slowly, hypnotically make their way to the edges of the water. Low stone benches are placed at intervals around the edge of the lake, embellished with simple bushes and floral arrangements. Regardless of the hour, there are always a few shugenja at the lake, meditating upon its quiet serenity.

THE FIRST FLOOR

AT A GLANCE

The first chamber on the first floor is a large temple. This is as far into the Tombs as anyone non-Kitsu is generally allowed to proceed. There have been exceptions in the past such as high-ranking Imperial guests who wished a more in-depth tour, and curious Clan Champions who demanded to know what was going on behind closed doors. There are only a handful of recorded incidents, however, and for the most part no one outside the Kitsu family is permitted beyond the first chamber.

The eastern third of the first floor is dominated by a corridor of meager quarters. Monks, lower-ranking members of the family, and the few servants who sleep inside the building are stationed here. The central portion of the floor is taken up by the temple and the Kitsu library, one of the major centers of historical information of the family together with the Tombs below and a similar library at the Castle of the Swift Sword. The western portion of the Tombs is dominated by a large court chamber where the Kitsu discuss matters of importance.

THE TEMPLE

As one might expect with the Kitsu, the first room one encounters within the Tombs is a simple temple. As temples go, it is relatively elaborate, yet it remains austere like most Lion structures. Shrines ring the room, with depictions of many different Fortunes as well as copies of the Tao of Shinsei. Ancestral worship, worship of the kami, and the study of Shinseism are all supported here. The Kitsu, it seems, do not begrudge any their choice of faith. The devout of any discipline are accepted without judgment.

There are but two exits to this room aside from the primary entrance. Both bear kanji that politely bar entry to all save those of Kitsu blood. To drive the point home, a young shugenja sits at the shrine closest to each doorway, prepared to stop any who attempt to enter the rooms beyond.

THE LOWER QUARTERS

These small chambers are little more than a place to sleep. There is very little in the way of furniture, with only a tatami mat, a small desk, and a place for one to store and change clothing. Those who live here generally keep a few personal effects in the desk, but nothing of any real consequence, and the clothing stored in these rooms tends to be standard fare.

THE LIBRARY

This is one of the three foremost Kitsu learning centers in Lion lands. The mysterious Tombs that lie far beneath this palace are their greatest resource, of course, followed by the library at the ancestral family home, the Castle of the Swift Sword, and finally by this library. Thousands of scrolls lie in recessed shelves throughout this large chamber, carefully organized by historical era. Monks who belong to the small order that service the shrines of the Tombs move silently among the records, replacing the scrolls that have been removed for research and constantly reassessing the library's inventory.

Any shugenja who spends a full day researching spells in the Kitsu library receives a +5 enhancement bonus on a Spellcraft roll of his choosing within the next three days. If the bonus is not used in that time, it is lost.

Any shugenja who spends a full day researching spells in the Kitsu library receives a Free Raise of any spell of his choosing within the next three days. If the bonus is not used in that time, it is lost.

THE GREAT CHAMBER

In yet another odd Kitsu tradition, this chamber is a far cry from most court chambers. Large and mostly empty, this chamber is centered around a large dais where the ranking Kitsu officiate at the proceedings. There are a number of cushions scattered around the room so that others may sit and participate. Beyond that, however, the room is unusually devoid of decoration.

THE SECOND FLOOR

AT A GLANCE

The second floor of the Kitsu Tombs is primarily devoted to living space for the higher-ranking members of the family's hierarchy. The western half of the floor is taken up by several large personal chambers as well as a tiny dojo for those bushi members of the family who serve their brothers and sisters as yojimbo.

The central and western portions of the second floor have suites for prestigious members of the family. They also contain several rooms for dining and a large central kitchen where the servants work. A number of large rooms for private or communal bathing round out this floor.

THE LARGE CHAMBERS

These luxurious chambers are reserved for high-ranking Kitsu who need to stay at the Tombs. They are large and comfortable, although not up to Crane or Unicorn standards, and contain all the amenities one would require for a lengthy stay: private bathing chambers, a writing desk, stands for armor and weapons, adjoining rooms for yojimbo, and even a very small "garden" consisting of raked sand with a few bonsai trees.

THE BATHING ROOMS

This floor contains several small rooms for private bathing, and larger ones where small groups can bathe together. These rooms have recessed tubs and small furnaces; those using them can heat water to their liking if they prefer not to have a servant attend them.

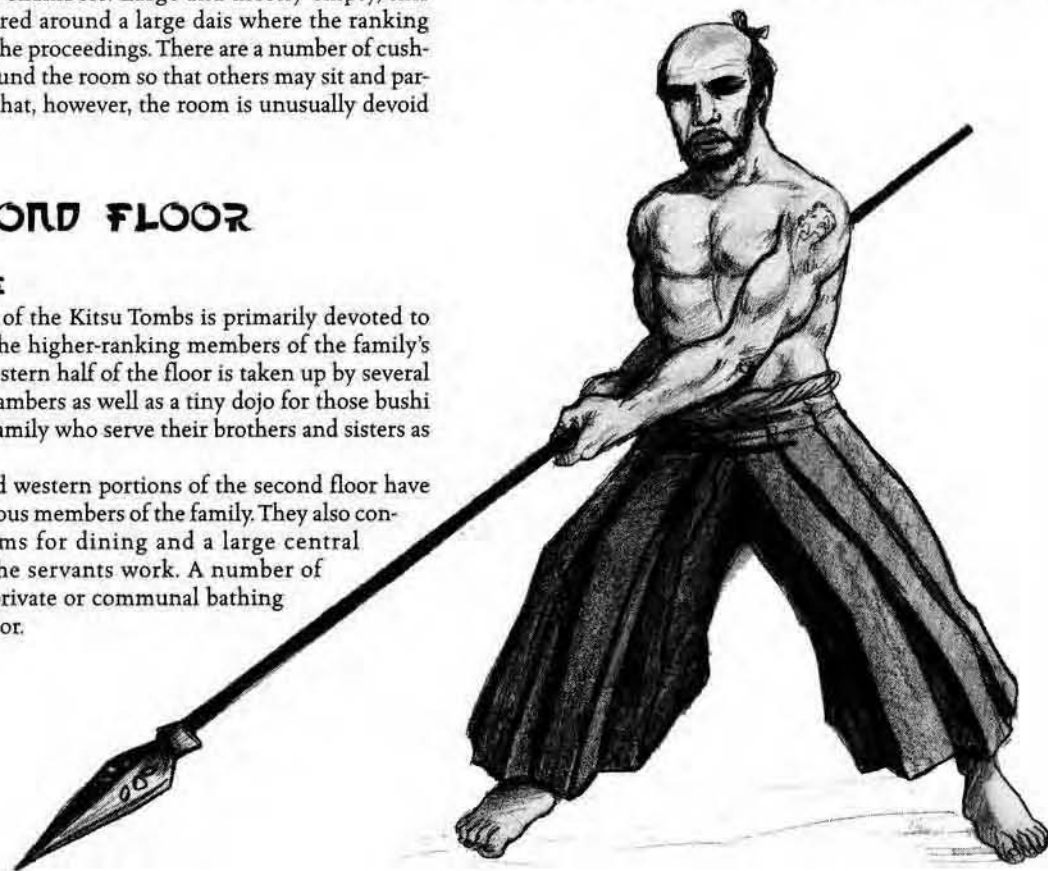
THE DINING ROOMS

Two adjoining rooms comprise the dining facilities of the Kitsu Tombs. The larger, more elaborate room serves for all family functions that involve prestigious members of the family meeting in one place. It is an elaborate and formal setting, with subtle and tasteful sculptures and paintings on the walls surrounding the large, mahogany table.

The smaller adjoining room is far less elaborate, having little more than the actual table and the sitting cushions surrounding it. This room is used by the students and guards who study and defend the Tombs.

THE KITCHEN

The kitchen is unremarkable, identical to thousands of other kitchens across the face of the Empire. The peasant servants who work here are very skilled, but also well versed on their place in the grand scheme of things. They remain here, well



out of sight. All day, this room is a bustling center of activity, although at night most of the servants retire to their homes outside the walls; a privileged few have chambers within the building itself.

THE DOJO

Little more than a large practice room, this dojo in nevertheless very well equipped so that house guards and yojimbo can keep their skills sharp. A rack holds numerous pole-arms and other popular practice weapons, and a number of dummies facilitate the practice of unarmed combat. At any given time there are at least four Kitsu house guards practicing here, although a powerful enchantment prevents sound from escaping and disturbing the shugenja working elsewhere in the building.

THE THIRD FLOOR

AT A GLANCE

Much smaller than the first and second floors, the third floor contains only three rooms and a corridor with stairs leading up and down. The two smaller rooms contain unpleasant secrets of the Lion's past. The larger room is the private study of the daimyo of the Kitsu.

ISOLATION CHAMBERS

These small rooms make the rest of the sparsely decorated building seem lavish by comparison. Each contains only a single feature: in the first, a single sword rests upon a black lacquered weapon rack. In the second, a strange, twisted creature is chained to the far wall of the room, well out of reach of anyone coming through the door.

REVENGE

This is the resting place of the dreaded bloodsword *Revenge*, formerly carried by the ronin *Ginawa* before his elevation to daimyo of the *Akodo* family. *Ginawa* has cast the blade away, fearing that its insidious influence would doom the *Akodo* once more. The Kitsu keep the blade here with wards to prevent its siren call from dooming any of their number. They hope to one day understand the secrets of its creation so that they can find and destroy the remaining three bloodswords. Rules for *Revenge* appear in *Way of the Wolf* and *Magic of Rokugan* for the Second Edition and d20 systems, respectively.

OKURA'S REMNANT

Okura's Remnant is the name given to a strange creature found within the Tombs after the corruption of *Kitsu Okura*. The beast is an enigma, for while it is clearly Tainted, it does not spread its filth to others. Furthermore, killing the beast causes it to resurrect itself in the sublevels of the Tombs, where it inevitably causes all manner of damage until recaptured. The Kitsu have imprisoned the creature here while they search for a way to destroy it. It frequently manages to escape, and habitually explodes into action upon the arrival of any non-Kitsu. For whatever reason, it will not attack members of the Kitsu family.

OKURA'S REMNANT

Medium-sized Outsider (Oni, Shadowlands)

Hit Dice: 10d8+20 (55 hp)

Initiative: +4 (+4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 14 (+4 natural)

Attacks: 2 claw +11 melee, slam +6 melee

Damage: Claw 1d4+1, slam 1d6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: None

Special Qualities: Resurrection

Saves: Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +7

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8

Skills: Hide +13, Listen +13, Move Silently +13, Spot +13

Feats: Improved Initiative

Climate/Terrain: Shadowlands

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 9

Treasure: None

Honor: 0

Alignment: Usually neutral evil

Advancement: 3–5 HD (Large)

Okura's Remnant is a gaunt, emaciated creature with far more strength than its appearance would indicate. It alternately giggles, screams, or sobs, depending on its mood at the time.

COMBAT

Resurrection (Su): If the *Remnant* is ever killed, it reappears — completely healed of all damage and spell effects — in 48 hours. It always reappears in the Tombs, and always during the hours of the night. No known spell has been able to prevent this from happening.

OKURA'S REMNANT

Earth: 3

Stamina: 7

Water: 4

Strength: 6

Fire: 4

Air: 5

Taint: Innate

Rolls when Attacking: 8k4

Rolls for Damage: 10k1

TN to be Hit: 25

Carapace: 4

Wounds per Level: 25: +5; 50: +15; 85: Dead

Special: If the *Remnant* is ever killed, it returns to life within the Kitsu Tombs within 48 hours. All Wounds and negative effects are removed from the *Remnant* when it returns.

KITSU JURI'S STUDY

Several times larger than the isolation rooms on this floor, the private study of *Kitsu daimyo Kitsu Juri* is equally devoid of lavish furnishings, yet bears his distinctive presence. The altar's carvings invoke the ancestral spirits of the Kitsu and *Bishamon*, the *Fortune of Strength*. A large desk is present, with numerous historical scrolls laid out as if in research. A number of other scrolls written in the cipher of the Kitsu are present as well.

THE FOURTH FLOOR

AT A GLANCE

The fourth floor of the Kitsu Tombs consists of exactly one room, a shrine. This is one of the most sacred places in the Lion lands, where the leaders of the Kitsu can commune with the ancestral spirits that guide their lives. Any member of the Kitsu family is permitted to use the shrine, although none but those of the highest rank do so. It is considered the height of dishonor among younger members of the family to use the shrine, for to do so presumes that one is as important as one's elders.

THE SHRINE OF THE ANCIENTS

Although small, this room seems larger than the space its walls actually enclose. All who enter this room sense invisible, impalpable watchers. The Kitsu believe that the Spirit Realm of Yomi is very close to this room, and that the ancestral spirits of Rokugan can see all who enter. There is a constant haze in the room despite the lack of incense or flame, and occasionally visitors glimpse figures out of the corner of their eyes which vanish when they look directly at them.

Any shugenja who meditates for a full 30 minutes and succeeds at a Concentration check (DC 20) may contact the spirit of any of their ancestors (including deceased family members as well as the named individuals from ancestor feats they possess). This DC is reduced to 10 if the shugenja is a member of the Kitsu family. The shugenja may freely converse with the spirit, although a new Concentration check is required to contact a different spirit, and a Diplomacy check (DC 15) is necessary every 2 minutes in order to maintain the connection.

Any shugenja who meditates for 30 minutes and succeeds at a Meditation roll versus a TN of 20 can freely speak with the spirit of any ancestor he or she possesses. The shugenja may converse freely with the ancestor so long as he remains within the shrine, although the spirit may be cryptic or even hostile depending upon the shugenja's activities and attitudes. The TN for the Meditation roll is only 10 if the shugenja is a member of the Kitsu family.

THE FIRST LEVEL OF THE TOMBS (SEE MAP, PG. 96)

AT A GLANCE

The first level of the Tombs, which is roughly 150 feet beneath the first level of the physical estate, is open to all members of the Kitsu family. This is the deepest that Kitsu shugenja who are not sodan-senzo may go. This gigantic chamber is marked with numerous indentions into the wall, each one representing a branch of the Kitsu family. Each alcove is filled with urns containing the ashes of family members who have passed into the Spirit Realms, as well as scrolls detailing the accomplishments of that family branch over the history of the Empire. Many of these were damaged or destroyed outright in the Tsuno attack upon the Tombs in the year 1159.



THE TOMBS OF THE DEPARTED

This gigantic chamber stretches well beyond the torchlight until it disappears somewhere overhead. Around the base of the wall are alcoves carved directly into the rock itself. Each alcove extends roughly a body's length into the rock, with crude stone shelves carved into each alcove. A single torch illuminates the content of each recess, and even from the opening of the chamber hundreds or even thousands of urns can be seen decorating the dozens of alcoves. A large stone outcropping dominates the center of this cavern, which also contains alcoves. Off in the distance, a tunnel leads downward.

THE KITSU ALCOVES

Each of these recessed chambers has its own small shrine and dozens of urns along with scrolls and various other bits and pieces. The kanji inscribed upon the shrine identify the branch of the Kitsu family that alcove represents, and traces its lineage back to the time when their ancestors first came to serve the family. The urns contain the ashes of each deceased member of this branch, and are marked with names, birth dates, and death dates. Each alcove also has dozens of scrolls in a chest beneath the shrine. These sacred scrolls contain the histories of each fallen Kitsu interred within the Tombs. Occasionally, an alcove contains a relic of the family's past, a weapon or a piece of armor. In some alcoves a daisho rests upon a stand, signifying that this particular family branch has died out entirely.

Typical contents of an alcove:

- 10–25 urns of Kitsu remains
- 15–25 scrolls of historical information (10% chance of finding 1–5 spell scrolls)
- Miscellaneous netsuke worth [2d10/1–5] koku total
- 75% chance of one tanto (25% chance the tanto is [masterwork/Fine Quality])
- 25% chance of one daisho (10% chance the daisho is [masterwork/Fine Quality])

THE SECOND LEVEL OF THE TOMBS (SEE MAP, PG. 96)

AT A GLANCE

The second level of the Tombs is reserved for those members of the Kitsu who bear the blood of the inhuman kitsu from the dawn of the Empire. Only sodan-senzo are allowed this far into the Tombs, which is 35 feet below the first level. This cavernous chamber contains a series of mausoleums, each of which represents one of the Kitsu bloodlines who bear the gift of the sodan-senzo. Each structure contains the ashes of the members of that bloodline who have passed before and, like the first level, a record of their deeds and discoveries in the Spirit Realms.

THE SODAN-SENZO MAUSOLEUMS

Each of the large stone structures on this level represents one branch of the Kitsu family that bears the true blood of the ancient kitsu. Descendants of each branch are interred in their ancestral mausoleum upon their death, complete with a record of all their achievements in life. Unlike the alcoves in the level above, none of the families with represented here have a daisho representing a dead line; the Kitsu are far too careful about preserving the gift of the sodan-senzo to allow a family to die out.

Typical contents of a mausoleum:

- 15–45 urns of cremated Kitsu sodan-senzo
- 30–50 scrolls of historical information (10% chance of 1–10 spell scrolls)
- 1–3 daisho sets (25% chance of being [masterwork/Fine Quality])
- Miscellaneous netsuke and other items worth [8d10/10–20] koku total
- 10% chance of one set of [masterwork great armor/Fine heavy armor]

THE THIRD LEVEL OF THE TOMBS (SEE MAP, PG. 96)

AT A GLANCE

This is the smallest and most exclusive room of the Tombs. It is 300 feet below the surface, and is no bigger than a single person's chambers in a humble inn. Only the daimyo of the Kitsu, the masters of the sodan-senzo, and those specifically chosen by them are allowed to enter this chamber. In a circle are five pedestals, each of which bears a single, ancient urn. These urns contain the ashes of the First Five, the kitsu who married Akodo One-Eye's daughters. With the power in this room, the Kitsu can open portals to any Spirit Realm.

THE TOMB OF THE KITSU

This small chamber is lit only by the single torch in the center of the large circle that dominates the room. The only other objects in the room are the five stone pillars evenly spaced along the circle, which is carved into the stone of the chamber floor. Atop each chamber rests an urn, each devoid of decoration save the simplest inscriptions. There is a presence in this room, an overwhelming sense of something just beyond sensation, watching and listening.

THE REMAINS OF THE ORIGINAL KITSU

The urns have no lids, and do not appear to have been moved in years — perhaps decades or longer. Strangely, there appears to be no dust on the urns themselves, although the pedestals on which they rest are thick with it. The urns are roughly shaped from clay in an ancient style. The kanji that adorn them are unfamiliar, and interspersed among the characters are strange, slashing marks that appear to comprise some sort of language, but not one that any living Rokugani has ever seen.

THE ALTAR OF THE SPIRIT REALMS

Strangely, this altar (in the middle of the room) does not have any marks that would indicate it had been hewn from stone. There is a single kanji carved into the center of the stone, with smaller symbols in a circle surrounding it. Tiny grooves connect the central character to the rest of the symbols in a web design.

Any shugenja character who meditates for 20 minutes and makes a successful Concentration check (DC 20) may immediately travel to any Spirit Realm as if the subject of a *plane shift* spell as cast by a 16th level sorcerer. The DC for the Concentration check is reduced to 10 if the shugenja is a member of the Kitsu family. At the DM's discretion, any shugenja who fails the Concentration check may be transported to a randomly selected Spirit Realm.

A shugenja who meditates for 20 minutes and makes a successful Meditation roll versus a TN of 20 may immediately be transported to any Spirit Realm of his choice. At the GM's discretion, a failed Meditation roll can transport him to a random Spirit Realm.

THE TSUNO AND THE URNS

When the Tsuno assaulted the Tombs, their target was the five urns in this room that hold the remains of the First Five. Only one escaped their rampage. Although their ability to open spirit portals is now limited, the Kitsu can still reach the other Realms so long as they possess the remaining urn.



CHAPTER SIX:

BEHIND THE VEIL

"Of course, dear Scorpion, you are correct. The Lion have nothing to hide."

— Akodo Kage

The following section is intended for GM use only.

Now, with that warning deterring absolutely no one, read on to discover the darkest secrets of the Lion Clan...

THE SHIMIZU FAMILY

In the deepest recesses of the Ikoma libraries are items that the Lion Clan consider at best an embarrassment and at worst a stain upon their honor. Of those unpleasant truths buried deep within the catacombs of the Ikoma, the darkest and most sinister is a tale of betrayal, of corruption, and of shame. It is the tale of the Shimizu family, a horror born from the heart of the most noble family of the Lion.

A HISTORY OF SHAME

In the 743rd year of the Empire, Hantei XXII and his general Akodo Gunhiko traveled to the lands of the Crane Clan in search of a suitable bride for the Emperor. Countless Doji and Kakita maidens vied for the Emperor's attention, but only one caught his eye: a courtier named Kakita Edako. Everyone was taken with the beautiful, intelligent young woman. It seemed obvious that the Hantei would take Edako as his bride and continue the tradition of the Crane supplying the Emperor with a wife.

The court proceedings were disrupted when one of Gunhiko's chief magistrates, a gifted warrior and tactician named Akodo Shimizu, requested an immediate audience with the Lion general. Shimizu had failed in his mission to locate and bring to justice an infamous maho-tsukai of the northern lands named Agasha Enshoku. Shimizu entered the court chambers and knelt before Gunhiko, his intent obvious: he would request permission to commit seppuku over his failure.

Even as the magistrate opened his mouth to issue his request, his eyes fell on Edako. For a moment, he said nothing, and everyone assumed he too had been struck by her beauty. Without warning, he leapt up and darted toward her with lightning speed. In the span of a single heartbeat, he crossed the room, drew his blade, and took the woman's head.

The Kakita and Seppun guards were on Shimizu in seconds, but they were still slower than Gunhiko. The elder Lion reached his subordinate first and, striking Shimizu's blade from his hand, held the razor's edge of his own katana to the younger Lion's throat. "Why?" he demanded, his voice even and emotionless.

"This," said Shimizu, pointing to the carcass staining the court's floor, "was Agasha Enshoku. The foul sorceress was a master of disguise, and had created through her dark arts an artifact that could prevent the Taint in her soul from being detected, protecting it even from the Hantei's powerful wards." Even as Shimizu spoke, the corpse twitched and a necklace fell away from the ruined neck. It was a twisted and ruined chunk of obsidian that beat and pulsed like a living thing, causing onlookers to gasp in horror. As they looked on, the thing slowly stopped, and was still.

"If it is my lord's will," Shimizu said, his voice steady as he knelt before the Emperor and his daimyo, "I will gladly commit seppuku for my offense against our gracious hosts and the Son of Heaven."

"That will not be necessary, magistrate," came the Hantei's voice. With a wave, he sent the guards back to their post and set Gunhiko back to his feet. "This... creature that you have slain took the life of someone dear to me, and you have done me a great service by slaying it. Believing it to be another, I could have married it..." the Emperor stopped for a moment. "It is unthinkable," he finally finished.

As Shimizu rose shakily to his feet, the Hantei turned to Gunhiko. "You will send word to your clan. This man shall found his own house within your family, and they will henceforth bear his name as a badge of honor."

Thus was the Shimizu family of the Lion established during the fourth year of Hantei XXII.

The new vassal family was granted modest holdings in the southwestern Akodo provinces, and Akodo Shimizu himself ruled as daimyo during his long lifetime. In the time of his great-grandson, Shimizu Tamayu, however, the affairs of the family began to decline. The vain and envious Tamayu coveted the more prosperous holdings of his neighbors. In the year 827, he launched a disastrous military campaign against the adjoining lands of Ikoma Kuniomi. When the initial assaults failed miserably, Tamayu turned to maho in a fit of jealous rage. He summoned a great oni that observers could only describe as "a creature out of nightmare itself."

In that period of Rokugan's history, intermittent skirmishes between the lords of various Lion provinces was tacitly encouraged. Small intra-clan battles were considered to the Lion's forces sharp, weeding out the weak. It was a practice that would bring disaster.

His forces strengthened by blood magic, Tamayu not only conquered Kuniomi's lands, but in subsequent years added lands from several other small provinces to his own, including those of Akodo Oko, Akodo Nage, and Akodo Kitako. Each time, Oni no Tamayu demanded more from the Shimizu, and each time they willingly paid the price for their ambition.

In the year 911, Tamayu's great-great-grandson Shimizu Otori sent his forces to war with Akodo Miyawa. Unfortunately for Otori, not even the power of the oni could overcome the legendary tactical skills of Miyawa, and the two forces deadlocked in a decade-long war. During this time, Otori's wife was trapped away from her husband's lands, and bore him a son that he never saw during the conflict. When a truce was finally declared, Shimizu Riko and her son Ohoshi gladly returned home.

Ohoshi had already begun his training as a bushi with the Akodo, and although his mother did not realize it, he had taken their teachings of honor and duty to heart. Even at ten years old, Ohoshi sensed something amiss with his parents. He sneaked into the sub-chambers of their palace late one night to find his entire family ritually giving their blood to the inhuman form of an oni. Ohoshi left that night and walked fifty miles to the Akodo that had served as his teachers and friends all his life.

Six years later, a young warrior who had taken the name Akodo Giri at gempukku marched at the head of a great Lion army. At his command, the Lion forces descended upon the holdings of the Shimizu family and slaughtered the entire line. None escaped the purge, and the true fate of the Shimizu is largely unknown to the Empire at large. Most believe that they were wiped out by a virulent plague, but the Ikoma histories hold the truth, one that no Lion is permitted to speak of

to outsiders upon pain of death. Warfare among Lion provincial daimyo is no longer permitted, for many believe this practice aided the Shimizu's rise to power. Those who attack their neighbors now must give a full accounting of their reasons, or face a dishonorable end.

To this day, it is assumed that Tamayu learned maho by using the journals of his ancestor, Akodo Shimizu. The truth is much more sinister.

THE PAINFUL TRUTH

The Shimizu's treachery is a great disgrace to the Lion Clan. The matter is only discussed among the Ikoma historians, and even then in hushed tones within private chambers. Compounding the dishonor is the fact that the intermittent warfare between the Shimizu and their neighbors destroyed a substantial amount of farmland. By the time the clan's leadership realized what was happening and on what scale, the clan faced famine on an epic scale.

The Lion had no choice but to turn to their neighbors for help: the Crane Clan. With winter looming, there was no time to find food from an alternate source. The Crane were only too happy to oblige, but exacted a terrible price: in exchange for the Crane's aid, the Lion had to vow to make no further incursions into Crane lands for at least 30 years. Reluctantly, the Lion agreed. This treaty was very closely observed until the year 960, exactly 33 years after the destruction of the Shimizu, when the Matsu seized Shiro no Yojin from the Daidoji.

What even those who destroyed Tamayu and his legions do not know is that the source of his maho was not Shimizu's journals. Though those books led him to those who would teach him the dark arts, maho merely opened the door.

When experimenting with maho, Shimizu accidentally opened a passage to the Realm of Slaughter, where he encountered a race of strange creatures that offered to teach him what he wished to know. They told Tamayu that they had long been banished from the mortal realm by the power of Lady Sun, but that with his aid they could escape into Ningen-do once more. To tempt him, they taught Tamayu their technique of binding demons to nightmare. If he succeeded in destroying the Lion Clan, the creatures promised they could teach him more.

These creatures called themselves Tsuno.

THE SECRETS OF THE SHIMIZU

Hardly any Lion know that the Shimizu are not truly dead. A lone member of the family escaped Giri's purge, leaving the badly burned body of a servant in his chambers. He escaped into the night with a deadly secret: a larval spawn of the Oni no Tamayu. As he huddled in dark hovels and forgotten forests he suckled the creature with his own blood. Over centuries, it has grown stronger.

The Shimizu have maintained a very low profile, living among the heimin of the Matsu lands where they will not be noticed. They have a cult worshipping the oni, but never allow their numbers to exceed a dozen. Any larger group would be noticed, and the Shimizu wish to avoid the scrutiny that led to their downfall.

The Shimizu know the Tsuno and have cautiously presented themselves to the creatures. Though the Tsuno do not trust the Shimizu, they have made a shaky alliance with them. Privately, the Tsuno consider the Shimizu as untrustworthy and pitiful as any humans (perhaps even more than most, due to their eagerness to betray their own kind). They are, however, quite useful against the Lion, so the Tsuno tolerate them for the moment.

The true power and legacy of the Shimizu lies in the rituals their ragged descendants have developed. Using techniques learned from the Tsuno, they can summon the spirits of the Shimizu who were slain in Akodo Giri's assault and allow them to possess the bodies of the living. In this way, the family has influenced several important figures in the Lion's history. When Ikoma Tsanuri chose to follow the Fu Leng-possessed Hantei emperor near the end of the Clan War, an advisor possessed by a Shimizu counseled her to do so. When Kitsu Okura turned to maho to aid the Lion, a Shimizu first whispered the idea in his ear. When Okura discovered the link between the Spirit Realm of Meido and the Imperial Palace — a link that could be used to release Fu Leng's spirit — a Shimizu was there.

When the Tsuno invaded the Kitsu Tombs and pillaged Okura's discoveries, it was no coincidence.

Whenever the Lion are racked by corruption and Taint, chances are that a Shimizu masterminded the plot. And the family remains hidden within the Lion lands, waiting for their next chance to wreak havoc on the descendants of those who betrayed them.

SHIMIZU YOKAI

Medium-Size Undead (Evil, Incorporeal, Shadowlands, Spirit)

Hit Dice: 7d12 (46 hp)

Initiative: +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: Fly 30 ft. (perfect)

AC: 17 (+4 Dex, +3 deflection)

Attacks: Incorporeal touch +7 melee

Damage: Incorporeal touch possession

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft. / 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Possession

Special Qualities: Undead, incorporeal, naturally invisible, mortal link

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +7

Abilities: Str —, Dex 18, Con —, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 16

Skills: Hide +14, Listen +12, Spot +12

Feats: Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (incorporeal touch)

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: None

Honor: Usually 0

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: 8–21 HD (Medium-size)

Shimizu yokai are a particular type of yokai (see *Creatures of Rokugan*) who retain full memories of their mortal lives and experiences. They are bitter, malevolent creatures who exist only to cause misery in others.

COMBAT

Shimizu yokai avoid combat whenever possible, for they recognize that their strength lies in infiltration rather than confrontation. When forced to fight, the yokai lashes out, taking advantage of its incorporeal and invisible nature.

Incorporeal (Ex): Can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, or magic, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage

from a corporeal source. Can pass through solid objects at will, and its own attacks pass through armor. Always moves silently. (Possessed creatures do not become incorporeal.)

Mortal Link (Ex): Shimizu yokai may only be summoned to the mortal world by one of their descendants. They may only use their possession ability on an individual touched by one of their mortal descendants, making it more difficult for them to possess samurai in positions of power. Casting remove curse on a subject breaks the link, requiring a living Shimizu to touch that person again before he can be possessed.

Natural Invisibility (Su): A Shimizu yokai remains invisible even when it attacks. It can cancel or resume this ability as a free action.

Possession (Su): Any humanoid target successfully struck by the Shimizu yokai must make a Will save (DC 18). If this save fails, the yokai enters the target's body and suppresses his consciousness. Possessed creatures retain their hit points and physical ability scores (with a +4 enhancement bonus to Strength, Dexterity and Constitution), but their Wisdom, Intelligence, and Charisma are supplanted by the yokai's scores. The yokai controls the body until it chooses to leave, the body dies, the yokai's mortal link wills the possession to end, or the mortal link is killed. *Protection from taint* cast upon the possessed creature expels the yokai, as does a successful turn attempt against the yokai. The yokai cannot be harmed while possessing a creature.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.



SHIMIZU YOKAI

Earth: 1

Willpower: 6

Fire: 3

Water: 2

Air: 4

Shadowlands Taint: 5

Rolls When Attacking: 5k4

Rolls For Damage: 4k4

TN to Be Hit: 25

Wounds per Level: 20: +5, 35: +10, 50: +15, 65: Dead

Special: A shimizu yokai must be summoned to the mortal world by a living descendant. The yokai may make a contested Willpower roll against any individual that the mortal descendant touches. If successful, the yokai possesses that individual, gaining absolute control of his body and access to all of his skills, advantages, and abilities. These yokai are invisible and incorporeal unless they wish to be otherwise.

NIKUSHIMI

Nikushimi: Nightmare of the Lion, Onisu of Hate, Herald of the Tsuno

The nightmare demon the Tsuno helped the Shimizu create was imperfect. The process of binding demons to nightmare was ineffective, and at the worst possible moment the oni they gave the Shimizu raged out of control. The experiment taught the Tsuno that simply summoning a demon in the mortal realm was not enough — a powerful magical anchor was needed in Jigoku, a shugenja in the Realm of Evil. They accomplished this years later by forcing the trapped Naka Tokei to aid them. The first creature the Shimizu summoned was an imperfect version of Nikushimi, the Nightmare of the Lion, named after the sacred dojo of the Tsuno Ravagers. The Nightmare of the Lion is a fearsome creature that combines the worst aspects of Tsuno and oni.

Nikushimi embodies the Tsuno's vendetta against the Lion Clan. It lives to destroy, maim and mutilate. Even Daigotsu and the Soultwisters find that Nikushimi can be difficult to control at times, and reserve the Onisu for missions which require brutality and mass destruction.

NIKUSHIMI, ONISU OF HATRED, NIGHTMARE OF THE LION

Huge Outsider (Evil, Oni, Shadowlands, Spirit)

Hit Dice: 20d8 + 140 (230 hp)

Initiative: +9 (+5 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 50 ft.

AC: 23 (-2 size, +5 Dex, +10 natural)

Attacks: 2 claws +29 melee, bite +27 melee

Damage: Claw 1d10+11 plus poison, bite 1d8+5 plus disease

Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft. / 15 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities, enhancement

Special Qualities: Oni Qualities, damage reduction 15/+3 (jade), honorable vulnerability, regeneration 3, rejuvenation, SR 20

Saves: Fort +19, Ref +19, Will +12

Abilities: Str 32, Dex 20, Con 24, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 20, Taint 12

Skills: Battle +20, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (Lion) +20,

Knowledge (Shadowlands) +20, Knowledge (Yume-do) +20, Listen +20, Sense Motive +20, Spot +20

Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Hunger of the Maggots, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack

Climate/Terrain: Shadowlands, Yume-do, any land and underground

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 15

Treasure: Standard

Honor: Always 0 Honor

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: 21-30 HD (Huge), 31-40 HD (Gargantuan)

COMBAT

At sixteen feet tall, Nikushimi stands higher even than the tallest Ravager though it tends to hunch on all fours. It is always moving, pacing, flexing its claws, breathing heavily in anticipation of its next kill. Nikushimi never wields weapons, although it wears the dark chitinous armor typical of that race. It finds the use of its razor-sharp teeth and claws far more satisfying. It usually travels with large numbers of Tsuno, including at least one high-level Soultwister to control it should its rage get out of hand.

Enhancement (Ex): Any time a person within 100 feet of Nikushimi commits a dishonorable act of hatred (such as attacking troops who have surrendered or pursuing revenge over justice) the Onisu gains one temporary hit die. All other benefits of advancement (such as higher saves, base attack, and caster level for spell-like abilities) are also gained. This benefit lasts for one week, after which time the Onisu loses one bonus hit die per week until it returns to the above statistics. Each time the Onisu gains ten levels from this ability, it increases by one size category.

Honorable Vulnerability (Ex): Any time a person within 100 feet of Nikushimi commits an act of selfless mercy, the Onisu receives a negative level. This negative level remains for one week, or until the Onisu can cancel the effect with its Enhancement ability. If the Onisu is reduced to zero levels due to this effect, it perishes. Its damage reduction and spell resistance are entirely negated for any opponent who has committed an act of selfless mercy within the last minute.

Oni Qualities (Su): All oni have certain qualities, described on page 5 of *Creatures of Rokugan*.

Regeneration (Ex): Holy and honorable weapons do normal damage to Nikushimi, as do weapons that have been immersed in the water of the Realm of Dreams.

Rejuvenation (Su): If slain, Nikushimi can be harvested from the Realm of Dreams once more via a special ritual known only to the Dark Lord Daigotsu and the Tsuno Soultwisters. The Onisu cannot be restored more often than once a month.

Poison (Ex): Claw, Fortitude save (DC 24); initial and secondary damage 1d10 permanent Wisdom. Targets affected by the poison lose any immunity to disease and fear effects they might have until all Wisdom damage is healed.

Disease (Su): Supernatural disease — bite, Fortitude save (DC 24), incubation period instantaneous; no damage, but the

infected target must make a Will save (DC 15) each round he is exposed to a stressful situation or become frightened. Frightened creatures flee from the source of their fear as best they can. If unable to flee, they fight, but suffer a -2 penalty to all attack rolls, saving throws, and weapon damage rolls.

Spell-like abilities: at will — *cause fear*, *detect passage**, *dispel magic*, *know alignment*, *passage into darkness**, *passage into dream**, *protection from good*. 3/day — *deseccate*, *emotion*, *gaijin flames*, *haste*. These abilities are as cast by a 20th level sorcerer (DC 15 + spell level). Spells marked with an asterisk are described in *Fortunes and Winds*.

NIKUSHIMI, ONISU OF HATRED, NIGHTMARE OF THE LION

Earth: 4
 Fire: 4
 Water: 8
 Air: 4
 Rolls when Attacking: 8k8
 Rolls for Damage: 6k5
 TN to Be Hit: 30
 Carapace: 5
 Wounds: 25: +5; 50: +10; 75: +15; 100: +25; 150: Dead

SPECIAL ABILITIES

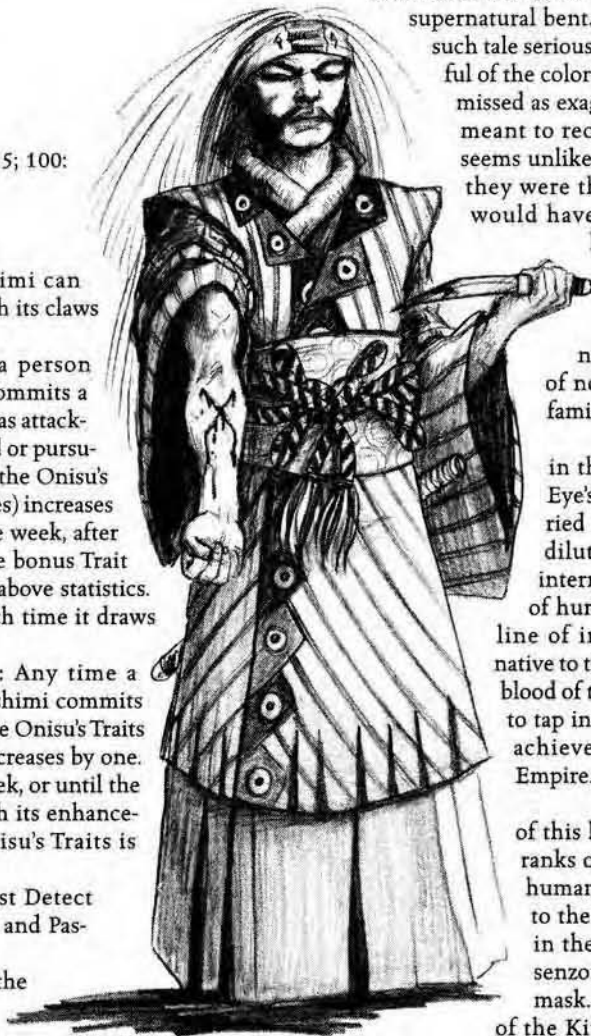
Multiple Attacks: Nikushimi can attack twice per round, once with its claws and once with its bite.

Enhancement: Any time a person within 100 feet of Nikushimi commits a dishonorable act of hatred (such as attacking troops who have surrendered or pursuing revenge over justice) one of the Onisu's Traits (and all associated attributes) increases by one. This benefit lasts for one week, after which time the Onisu loses one bonus Trait per week until it returns to the above statistics. The oni grows slowly larger each time it draws upon betrayal in such a manner.

Honorable Vulnerability: Any time a person within 100 feet of Nikushimi commits an act of selfless mercy, one of the Onisu's Traits (and all associated attributes) decreases by one. This penalty remains for one week, or until the Onisu can cancel the effect with its enhancement ability. If one of the Onisu's Traits is reduced to zero, it perishes.

Passages: The Onisu can cast *Detect Passage*, *Passage Into Darkness*, and *Passage Into Dream* at will.

Poison: Creatures struck by the Onisu's claws must make an Earth roll vs. TN 20 or temporarily lose any immunity to fear they may have for a number of days equal to 7 — their Earth (minimum one).



Disease: Creatures bitten by the Onisu must make an Earth roll vs. TN 20 or be afflicted with a magical disease that instills irrational fear. Anything that remotely threatens the subject gains a Fear rating of 6. This effect may be cured with appropriate magic or one week of bed rest.

Carapace: Weapons that have been dipped in the waters of Yume-do ignore Nikushimi's Carapace rating.

Rejuvenation: If slain, Nikushimi can be harvested from the Realm of Dreams once more via a special ritual known only to the Dark Lord Daigotsu and the Tsuno Soultwisters. The Onisu cannot be restored more often than once a month.

THE KITSU

Tales from the dawn of the Empire often have a strong supernatural bent. Though many peasants take every such tale seriously, most samurai accept only a handful of the colorful tales of that time. Others are dismissed as exaggerations, or even apocryphal tales meant to reconstruct a history lost to time. It seems unlikely that all these tales are true, for if they were then the early years of the Empire would have seen a concentration of mortal heroes, powerful sorcerers, and inhuman races the likes of which has never been equaled throughout history. One tale that is nonetheless true, despite the beliefs of non-Lion, is the origin of the Kitsu family.

The last five kitsu who remained in the mortal realm after Akodo One-Eye's purge took human form and married Akodo's daughters. Their blood was diluted over the centuries by constant intermingling of their essence with that of humankind, but theirs is still a bloodline of inhuman creatures, of spirits not native to the mortal realm. Those who bear the blood of the First Five in their veins can learn to tap into this spiritual power and use it to achieve magical effects unrivaled in the Empire.

The most common manifestations of this heritage occur within the secretive ranks of the Kitsu sodan-senzo, those rare humans with the ability to speak directly to the denizens of Yomi. When traveling in the Spirit Realms, each of the sodan-senzo appears with a unique and stylized mask. These masks are the manifestation of the Kitsu's inhuman heritage. The more primal and realistic the appearance of the mask, the greater the potency of the individual's heritage. Kitsu Juri, daimyo of the Kitsu family, is said to appear in the Spirit Realms with the head of a great roaring lion, one that does not resemble a mask at all. As might be expected, Juri possesses considerable spiritual abilities above and beyond his training as a sodan-senzo.

KITSU SPIRITUAL ABILITIES

The following abilities are only available to members of the Kitsu family. All have class, level, rank, or school requirements that must be met before a character may take them. Kitsu characters that enter a martial field of study (by taking samurai or fighter levels, or by entering a bushi school) may never acquire these advantages.

The more kitsu spiritual abilities a character selects, the more they resemble their leonine brethren. One ability will cause the character's hair and eyes to become a red-golden color (if they were not already). More abilities cause the character's facial features to become increasingly feline, though even at its most extreme this effect is very subtle.

Much like kata, these feats are purchased with experience points. Unlike kata, they have no preparation time or duration unless stated in their description. They are supernatural abilities. Levels of prestige classes with divine spellcasting abilities count as shugenja levels for the purposes of taking these feats.

These Advantages may be purchased with experience points once a character fulfills all the necessary requirements.

SENSE THE RIFT

You are attuned to the presence of all passages into the Spirit Realms, and can locate them wherever they may be.

Prerequisite: Pure Kitsu Blood or Kitsu Blood, shugenja level 3rd+

Benefit: You may cast the spell *detect portal* as a spell-like ability at will. This effect uses your caster level.

XP Cost: 500

Requirements: Rank 1 sodan-senzo or Rank 3 Kitsu shugenja

XP Cost: 3

You gain Detect Passage as an Innate Ability, and receive two Free Raises when casting this spell.

TOUCH OF CRYSTAL

Your attacks, both magical and melee, can damage creatures normally invulnerable to any damage except that caused by jade or crystal.

Prerequisite: Pure Kitsu Blood or Kitsu Blood, shugenja level 8th+, Void Use

Benefit: You may spend a Void Point to gain a +8 bonus to your checks to overcome a creature's spell resistance or to cancel the damage resistance of a creature with the (jade) or (crystal) damage resistance descriptor for one of your attacks.

XP Cost: 1,500

Requirements: Rank 3 sodan-senzo or Rank 5 Kitsu shugenja

XP Cost: 5

You exist in harmony with your spiritual heritage, suffusing your being with the pure energy of the Spirit Realms. All of your attacks against spirit creatures (including spirits who exist physically in other realms, such as oni and Tsuno) count as if they were crystal and/or jade. This includes all magical attacks as well as melee attacks.

SPIRIT-WALKER

You may move between the various Spirit Realms at will.

Prerequisite: Pure Kitsu Blood, shugenja level 15th+

Benefit: Choose one of the following spells: passage into chaos, passage into darkness, passage into death, passage into dream, or passage into harmony (these spells are described in *Fortunes and Winds*). You may cast this spell up to three times per day as a standard action. This takes effect as if cast at your caster level.

Special: You may take this ability multiple times, selecting a different spell each time.

XP Cost: 3,000

Requirements: Rank 5 Sodan-senzo or Insight Rank 8 Kitsu shugenja

XP Cost: 7

Choose one of the following spells: Passage Into Chaos, Passage Into Darkness, Passage Into Death, Passage Into Dream, or Passage Into Harmony (these spells are described in *Fortunes and Winds*). You gain this spell as an Innate Ability and gain two Free Raises whenever casting it.

Special: You may take this ability multiple times, selecting a different spell each time.

THE BEAST WITHIN

You may summon forth the spirit of your ancestral heritage and cause it to manifest physically, transforming you into the powerful form of a living kitsu.

Prerequisite: Pure Kitsu Blood, shugenja level 18th+

Benefit: You may, at will, transform into a kitsu as per the effects of shapechange. You retain all magical abilities while transformed, and gain all physical and magical abilities of your new form. (See below for kitsu stats.)

XP Cost: 3,000

KITSU

Medium-size Magical Beast (Spirit)

Hit Dice: 4d10+4 (26 hp)

Initiative: +2 (+2 Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 10

Attacks: 2 claws +5 melee, bite +0 melee

Damage: Claw 1d4+1, bite 1d6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 10/+2 (crystal), spirit voice

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +4

Abilities: Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10

Skills: Climb +7, Knowledge (spirits) +5, Wilderness Lore +6

Feats: Iron Will

Climate/Terrain: Any mountains, any plains

Organization: Solitary or pack (5–12)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Honor: Always 3+

Alignment: Always lawful good

Advancement: By character class

Spell-like abilities: at will — *polymorph self*. 1/day — *plane shift*. These are as the spells cast by a 16th level sorcerer.

Spirit Voice (Ex): All kitsu possess an innate ability to communicate with any spirit that speaks a language.

THE BEAST WITHIN

Requirements: Insight Rank 6, sodan-senzo school
XP Cost: 7

You have mastered the most intimate secrets of your inhuman blood and can summon it forth to manifest in the physical realm. At will, you may transform your physical body into that of a kitsu, retaining all of your abilities and gaining those of your new form in addition to its physical abilities. You retain your original Rings and Traits, or use those of a typical True Kitsu, whichever is better. (See the below for True Kitsu stats.)

TRUE KITSU

Earth: 3

Fire: 4

Air: 4

Water: 3

Strength: 5

Void: (As normal)

Rolls when Attacking: 6k4

Rolls for Damage: 4k4

TN to Be Hit: 25

Wounds per Level: 15: +5, 30: +10, 45: +15, 60: +20, 75: Dead

Special: A kitsu may, once per day, automatically shift its physical form to any Spirit Realm; no roll is required. In addition, the kitsu may cast the following spells once per day with no roll required: Mists of Illusion, Perceive Harmony, Rays of Amaterasu, Slash of the Lion, Wind-Borne Speed, and Wisdom and Clarity.

Kitsu are majestic creatures that closely resemble lions. They are slightly larger than a lion, with a regal bearing and an aura of wisdom. Their golden fur is thick and luxurious, allowing them to survive and thrive in virtually any environment, although their natural habitat in the mortal realm was once the mountains near the southern reaches of the Lion Clan lands.



THE LEGACY OF THE FORGE

Tales abound of Lion *shiryō* coming to save their descendants, guiding one to wisdom or even returning to the mortal world to right a wrong. However, no tale is so chilling as the Legacy of the Forge. The Legacy is a powerful force that corrupts and destroys samurai, dragging them into the Realm of Slaughter to join the armies of the murderous dead. An endless cycle of death and destruction, the Legacy terrifies even fearless Lion samurai, as it embodies the ultimate failure of honor.

Those who are cursed to join the Legacy are there because they were forgotten, either accidentally or intentionally, after they died on the field of battle. Their souls wander the Spirit Realm of Toshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter. They are in eternal conflict, living for battle, to be slain every day and to rise again with the next dawn. These spirits live in torment, their deeds unknown and their valor forgotten. While these souls begin their time in Toshigoku much the same as spirits in other realms, eventually they become consumed by the forces of the Realm of Slaughter and forget themselves, locked in unending combat, fighting only for the sake of killing. When one is completely lost to this eternal rage, it becomes another mindless spirit, destined to be forever a part of the Legacy of the Forge, locked away from the karmic wheel forever.

Toshigoku touches the mortal realm, Ningen-do, only in places where there has been extreme and senseless bloodshed. Large battlefields are closely connected to the Realm of Slaughter and this connection is especially strong in the Lion lands, where so much blood has been spilled. The Lion were largely unaware of their connection to Toshigoku and the Legacy of the Forge until it displayed its terrible power during the Clan War.

ORIGINS

In the year 815, the samurai of the Unicorn returned to the lands of Rokugan after their wanderings outside of the empire. While they initially fought the clans of the empire with great fervor, they were eventually conducted to Otsan Uchi where they delivered Shinjo's Fan to the Emerald Champion, proving themselves the descendants of the Ki-Rin.

The leadership of the Lion refused to believe that such filthy barbarians could be even remotely related to the noble Kami Shinjo. The Scorpion joined the Lion in opposition to the Unicorn, one of the rare times those two clans were in agreement. The Unicorn, with their powerful steeds and unique tactics, kept even with their opponents, despite heavy losses.

The Emperor, aware of the presentation of Shinjo's Fan, ordered the armies to cease hostilities. That ended the fighting, but the Unicorn Clan wasn't officially recognized by the Hantei until a year later.

In the time between their final battle with the Unicorn and the returned clan's official recognition, the Lion's leadership was in shock. The combined might of the Scorpion and Lion had been matched by barbarians! They believed that falling to such scum was unconscionable and ordered the names of the samurai who had died in battle against the Unicorn to be stricken from the Ikoma Histories. As one Ikoma general said, "Such shame shall not follow our clan into history. Better for those few to be forgotten than for our clan's name to be for-

ever lessened." Ironically, this act created a force that diminishes the Lion to this day: the Legacy of the Forge.

The spirits of the Lion who had died in the Unicorn's return were enraged by their treatment and swore revenge. While they were already in Toshigoku, and subject to its effects, such powerful hate transformed the spirits. The vengeful forgotten became a part of Toshigoku itself, feeding off the endless slaughter that takes place in that Spirit Realm.

PAST

In 1124, the conflict between the Crane and the Lion during the Clan War was at its height. A Scorpion named Bayushi Sozui and a traitorous Kitsu shugenja named Goden instigated the Battle on the Plains of Gaiju Shindai and the Battle of the Forgotten Tide. At each battle, the corrupt Goden unleashed the Legacy of the Forge, allowing the vengeful spirits of Toshigoku to possess warriors on either side of the battle. Their thirst for blood only intensified the conflict. Fortunately, a small group of envoys discovered and foiled Goden and Sozui's plot before the Legacy could corrupt all of Rokugan.

The Kitsu, concerned by the aftereffects of the Legacy, began studying Toshigoku intensely, and carefully sent observers into the Realm of Slaughter in an attempt to understand the Spirit Realm. Very few returned. Those that did all became bushi in service to the Kitsu, convinced that only as warriors could they properly protect their clan from the horrors they had seen.

PRESENT

The Kitsu have been making forays into Toshigoku for three decades and continue to do so, trying to find a way to stop the Legacy. Teams of bushi and sodan-senzo are sent out into the Empire to find places where the Realm of Mortals and the Realm of Slaughter are close to each other. With the help of the ancestors and the kami, these groups cross the veil between the two Realms.

Those involved in the incursions into the Realm of Slaughter know to disguise or hide themselves from its denizens. Otherwise, they become quick targets for the spirits' rage and invariably end up dead. Those who are killed in Toshigoku are immediately lost to the Legacy, rising to harry their living comrades. Sometimes only one or two members of a twenty-man team have returned, forever scarred by the endless vengeance and slaughter they have witnessed.

Through these forays into Toshigoku and their investigation of the Legacy of the Forge, the Kitsu have come to understand the anger of the forgotten spirits and have begun to work on a way to lay those spirits to rest forever. While the ritual used to defeat Kitsu Goden and Bayushi Sozui suppressed the Legacy, the Kitsu found that it was only a temporary solution. Recent missions to Toshigoku have tested methods to remove the spirits from the Realm of Slaughter and return them to other Spirit Realms, including Gaki-do, Yomi, and Meido. Their testing has so far ended in failure, but the sodan-senzo have not lost hope. Their only other option would be to attempt to destroy the spirits, a course of action with uncertain results and which would be anathema to the Kitsu's philosophy.

The Kitsu have begun to realize that while these incursion teams have brought them closer to understanding the Legacy of the Forge, they have also attracted some unwanted attention: that of the Tsuno.

ADVENTURE HOOK:

RETURN OF THE LEGACY

Challenge: The player characters are summoned by Kitsu Juri, daimyo of the Kitsu family, to investigate tales of Tsuno invaders returning to the Lion lands. Once they have arrived at the Ancestral Halls of the Lion and recovered from the rigors of travel, the Kitsu daimyo invites the party to meet him in the main temple hall. There, he tells them the following: "Once again, the Tsuno have come to attack us. Their scourge has left at least three villages near here barren. The buildings there have been razed and the Lion who lived there are nowhere to be found, dead or alive. An Ikoma scout witnessed the attack on one of the villages and saw the Tsuno slaughter every last man, woman, and child. As the Tsuno opened what appeared to be a portal to another Realm, they took with them the bodies of those they had slain. You must return to the village and help us to figure out why the Tsuno have attacked again and what their purpose is in taking our dead. Report your findings to me. May your ancestors guide you in solving this mystery."

Focus: The party finds that every building in the village has been burned to the ground. The only signs that anyone had ever lived there are splatters of blood on the ground, and a few stones that surround what used to be the village well. A close inspection of the wreckage yields a remarkably intact item: the journal of Kitsu Goden. Detailed in the journal are the events of the last appearance of the Legacy and Goden's notes on its origins. Of special interest are the passages detailing the ritual Goden and Sozui used to bring the Legacy of the Forge to Rokugan.

If the party thoroughly searches the area surrounding the village, they find one other item of interest: a massive curved sword, strangely marked, buried halfway in the ground. This is a Tsuno Blade (detailed in *Way of the Samurai*). Upon careful examination, any Kitsu shugenja will recognize some of the symbols as similar to those recorded in the ancient passages that recount the original meeting between the First Five kitsu and Akodo. Comparing the blade and the Goden's journal reveals several marks in common, near the hilt of the blade and within the first few pages of Goden's ritual. As they search the village, a group of Tsuno (detailed in *Creatures of Rokugan* and *Way of the Samurai*) appears through a portal.

Strike: If there are Lion in the party, the Tsuno attack. The Tsuno attempt to parley with non-Lion parties, claiming that they are returned kitsu, the rest of their race having been exterminated by the Lion Clan. According to the Tsuno, the Lion have abused and slaughtered their kind, and have used stolen kitsu magic to create the Legacy as a weapon against the Crane. Now, the story goes, the Lion wish to destroy it because they cannot control what they have unleashed. (Aside from the Tsuno being descended from the kitsu — see *Fortunes and Winds* for more details — this story is entirely false.) The Tsuno encourage the party not to trust the Lion. If the party seems to be buying into it, the Tsuno attempt to coerce them into spying on the Kitsu family.

If the party seems dubious, the Tsuno attack. If half of them are slain, the Tsuno take the bodies of their fallen and retreat through a bright, swirling portal, to return later in larger numbers. This would be an excellent time for the party to return to Juri.

If the party returns the items to the Kitsu, they may avail themselves of the family's healing services and are invited to meet with Juri. He appears with a grave face and graver news: after studying Goden's journal and the markings on the Tsuno blade, it appears that the Tsuno are indeed kitsu who have been twisted by Toshigoku. Using the markings on the Tsuno blade for comparison, the Kitsu daimyo has deciphered the script on a few other items that have been left behind by Tsuno attacks. Juri believes that the Lion corpses were taken in an attempt to create more forgotten spirits in Toshigoku

and bring the Legacy closer to the Realm of Mortals. Juri is uncertain how to deal with the Tsuno threat, and can use any help the party can give. If they ask, he gladly invites the PCs to stay with the Kitsu while he continues to investigate the connection between the Legacy, Toshigoku, the kitsu and the Tsuno.

On the other hand, if the player characters decide to trust the Tsuno, the GM is encouraged to brew up whatever dire fate he can conceive of for such foolishly trustworthy samurai...



SUBLEVEL 1

Stairs to
Ground Level

KITSU TOMBS SUBLEVELS

Alcoves

Stairs to
Sublevel 1

SUBLEVEL 2

Stairs to
Sublevel 2

Mausoleums

SUBLEVEL 3

Stairs to
Sublevel 2

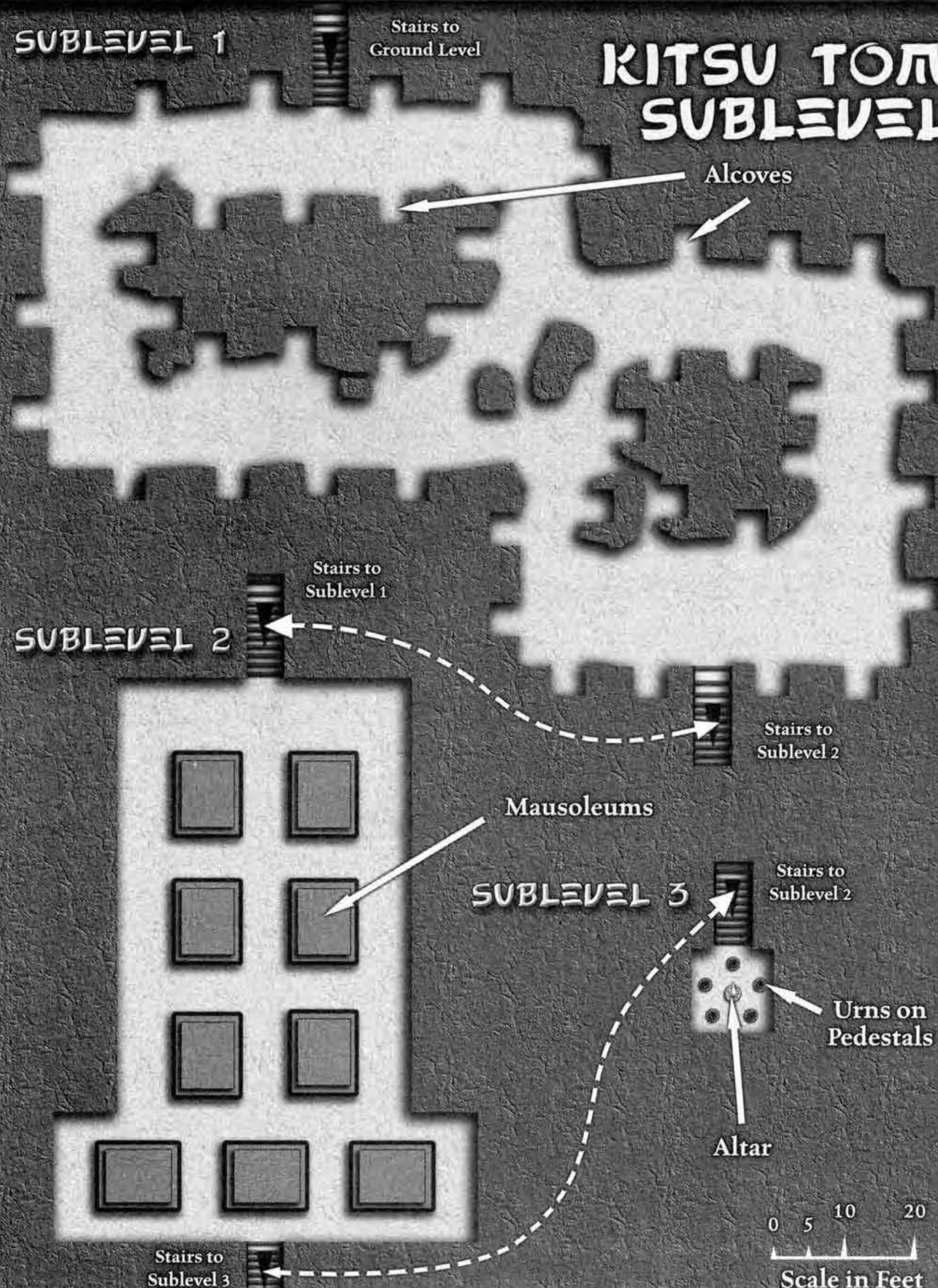
Urns on
Pedestals

Altar

Stairs to
Sublevel 3

0 5 10 20

Scale in Feet



“Ha. What secrets could the Lion have that I need to learn?” — Crane Champion Doji Kuwanan, shortly before the Ancestral Sword of the Lion was stolen from him by Kitsu Osen

Secrets of the Lion takes you deep within the lands of the Lion Clan, exposing their history, culture, organization and secrets for the first time. Far more than the simple soldiers the Empire believes them to be, the Lion Clan are a multi-faceted group with depths that most outsiders will never understand. Within, you will find:

- Insight into the culture of the Lion Clan and the families that comprise it.
- Information on the major and minor holdings of each Lion family, complete with points of interest, notable individuals, and suggestions on how to incorporate these elements into character backgrounds and adventures.
- An examination of the mysterious and enigmatic Kitsu Tombs, complete with all the information necessary to use it as a focal point in your campaign.
- The true secrets of the Lion Clan — the dark, forgotten shames that they hide from outsiders... and themselves.

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

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

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

