

ADVENTURES
ORIENTALS



SECRETS OF THE PHOENIX™



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TOO CLOSE TO THE FLAME PART ONE

Miya Hatori tucked his hands into his sleeves and quickened his pace. He had begun planning his trip to the Phoenix lands only a few weeks ago, and now he had received word that an ambassador from the Isawa had arrived and requested an audience with him. It was a most unusual circumstance, and one that had instantly placed Hatori on the defensive. Which was, most likely, his visitor's intent. Priests and pacifists the Phoenix might be, but the aging historian had witnessed their prowess in court far too often to allow them even the slightest advantage. Even one such mistake would have Hatori where the Phoenix representative wanted him.

Hatori arrived before the chamber doors and took a moment to compose his thoughts before entering. Adopting a practiced look of total indifference with a hint of gracious hospitality, he swung open the door and entered the private audience chamber with a flourish of his exquisitely crafted kimono. The man within smiled politely and bowed. "Miya Hatori, historian of the Empire. I am honored to make your acquaintance."

The historian returned the bow appropriately. "Shiba Yoma, Voice of the Elemental Masters. It is I who am honored to host such a prestigious guest."

"You flatter me, Hatori-sama."

"I am not disposed to flattery, Yoma-sama," replied Hatori. "I find that it seldom assists in honest and forthright conversation."

Yoma's smile widened and took on a genuine look, if only for a moment. "Sometimes I feel there is precious little of that in the Empire, my friend. Where would the winters be spent if not mired in flowery conversation and meaningless flattery? I suppose they would be terribly boring."

Hatori said nothing. He knew full well that Yoma was as skilled in court as any Crane, and would say whatever he believed the historian wanted to hear to gain his trust.

The Phoenix's smile never faltered. "I must confess to you, Hatori-sama, that my visit is hardly a social one. I have come on behalf of the Elemental Masters."

"I would have expected as much, given recent events."

"Of course," Yoma said with a nod. "Word has reached the Council of the Imperial Court's interest in Phoenix affairs. Naturally, the Masters are concerned about the Otomo's notorious meddling in what is essentially a matter for the clan."

"You can understand the court's interest, I hope," said Hatori wryly. "Your lord Aikune..."

Yoma cleared his throat softly. "Shiba Aikune is neither the Phoenix Champion nor the Shiba daimyo. He is not my lord, but merely a prominent military commander. Aikune has chosen not to step forward and name himself as daimyo, for he knows that the responsibility of controlling Isawa's Last Wish is too great."

"And that is partially the point of my visit," said Hatori. "The Shiba, a major warrior family, are without a leader. And Shiba Aikune has seized control of the Phoenix armies using an artifact that, a thousand years ago, the Shining Prince ordered never to be used. Of equal concern is the Masters' recent disappearance and return, and Isawa Riake's death. I am certain there are reasonable explanations for all that has occurred, for the Phoenix have always been an exceptionally reasonable clan. Nonetheless, the court has taken an interest, and they have ordered me to take the testimony from your family daimyo. It is a mission I shall perform with honor and discretion, but I will complete it with or without your

cooperation. I respect your advice, Yoma-san, but I cannot afford to show bias. I do hope you will forgive my forthright nature."

Yoma sighed dramatically and paced across the room to admire a blade hanging upon the chamber's wall. "This is all so unnecessary, Hatori-sama."

"Is it?" the historian asked. "The Phoenix are as mysterious as any clan in the Empire. They delve into forgotten secrets and hidden forms of magic that other families have not stumbled upon and may not discover for decades or centuries. None can question their unparalleled expertise in all things mystical."

Shiba Yoma held up one hand in protest, smiling demurely as if he were directly responsible for all the accomplishments Hatori had cited. "Please, Hatori-sama, such things are hardly..."

"And yet this power seems to inspire a certainty that only the Phoenix are capable of comprehending such things," Hatori continued. "A certainty that none other are worthy or even capable of understanding your ways, much less worthy of sharing your secrets with. How many times has it led to disaster? Will Aikune become another Isawa Tsuke? Will the Empire's citizens have to look to the north and wonder if the flames that so often envelop the Phoenix will spread south?"

The Phoenix courtier looked aghast, paling visibly. Hatori did not relent long enough to allow dissension. "Yours is a clan blessed with rebirth, but the Empire is not so fortunate. If there is any chance that the secrets you hide could spell doom for our way of life, then I must know the truth, so that we may prepare. But if it is as you say, that there is no threat, then my investigation will prove a minor inconvenience and nothing more." He crossed the room and stared pointedly at Yoma. "Would it be so tragic to bear so small an indignity for so short a time if it turned the eyes of the Empire away from your affairs?"

Shiba Yoma frowned, his brow furrowing in thought. After several long minutes, he finally said, "I will arrange the necessary meetings for you and your vassals. If it will serve the interests of my lords, then I will hasten your investigation as much as possible. And once it is done, then this unpleasant business will not be mentioned again in the court, I trust."

"I certainly hope so," said Hatori with finality. "The alternative is... most unpleasant to consider."

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Secrets of the Phoenix is for players and GMs who are interested in adding depth to their visions of the Phoenix Clan. Unlike *Way of the Phoenix*, 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 Phoenix is broken down into chapters as follows:

The Introduction deals with the Phoenix Clan's history, some general customs that the clan as a whole embraces, and several new mechanical options appropriate for the honorable Phoenix samurai.

Chapters One through Four each deal with an individual family: the Isawa, Shiba, Agasha, and Asako families. Each chapter presents information on the family's holdings, 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: Gisei Toshi inspects the hidden city, Gisei Toshi. All the information needed for a GM to use Gisei Toshi as the centerpiece of a campaign, or for a player to have a background involving Gisei Toshi, is presented.

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

GEMPUKKU

Shugenja figure prominently in Phoenix gempukku ceremonies. The shugenja of any clan oversee a ritual prayer for those passing their gempukku, blessing the transformation of children into adult samurai. In most clans, the head shugenja of a given dojo performs the ceremony. The Phoenix

CUSTOMS OF THE PHOENIX CLAN

BIRTH

A Phoenix birth is a joyously heralded step in the karmic cycle. A shugenja always joins the child's parents when a samurai-caste child is born. As with many other events, the kami's blessings are a traditional part of childbirth; the Fortunes are asked to bless the infant and the family's ancestors are called to guide the child's hands. The soul being reborn is petitioned as well, to rise from the ashes of death and bring honor to the clan.

The shugenja's presence serves another purpose. While other clans may wait to test a child until they show an affinity for the kami, Phoenix children are tested for magical ability only hours after their birth. Occasionally, the element they will focus on later in life can be divined at this time. Children who lack a strong connection to the Fortunes are guided down paths better suited to their abilities. Most other life decisions and responsibilities are left to the child's parents or mentors.

Peasant births are also frequently attended by shugenja, or at least by monks. Though they represent a lower level of the Celestial Order, childbirth is no less joyous. Thus shugenja see it as their duty to celebrate the event.



traditionally have the most elder shugenja present lead the blessing, followed by the student who has shown the most potential throughout training. They believe that this properly honors both their ancestors and the Fortunes, celebrating the past that has gone and the future yet to come.

The Phoenix believe that gempukku tests the soul as well as the mind. The ceremonies surrounding the graduation of new samurai are steeped in ritual, and involve difficult trials to ascertain the candidates' strength of will while testing their knowledge. Each Phoenix family's ceremony is unique.

Young samurai in the Isawa lands perform complex rituals that tax the body and mind to their limits. Prospective graduates must memorize the contents of one spell while casting another, as a group of shugenja (usually those who passed their gempukku the previous year) distract them or shatter their concentration with their magic. Generally the shugenja don't try too hard to distract their younger brethren, and never use any truly harmful spells. The display of magic and friendly competition always adds an air of excitement, and Isawa gempukku ceremonies attract crowds of interested onlookers.



Shiba gempukku are reserved by the standards of most samurai families. There is no display of martial prowess — the Shiba are presumed to have learned such things in the dojo — but instead the students are asked to recite how they intend to protect the Phoenix. These speeches are as carefully thought out as a samurai's death poem. Shiba samurai often quote the gempukku speeches of famous Shiba samurai (such as Shiba Tsukune) as reminders of the value of duty and honor. If the Shiba is intended to be yojimbo to a specific shugenja, that shugenja attends, and may comment on the speech.

Though they are now a Phoenix family, the Agasha retain many Dragon traditions. Their gempukku involves extended silent meditation ceremonies, followed by ritual tattooing.

Though the tattoos of an Agasha are not magical like those of a Togashi or Hitomi, they still have a deep personal meaning. No two Agasha bear exactly the same tattoos.

The Asako's secretive gempukku ceremonies are typically attended only by other Asako. While the gempukku of Asako shugenja resemble those of their Isawa brethren, the henshin's ceremonies are a strange mix of philosophical debate and unarmed combat. At least one henshin master attends, monitoring those present to determine which, if any, show particular promise on the Path of Man.

COURTSHIP

Courtship traditions are steeped in history, so the traditional Phoenix are strict about all of their aspects. Simply put, the extraordinarily religious Phoenix take their ceremonies seriously. While Phoenix weddings are solemn and ritualized, they are still enjoyable social events.

A shugenja advises the family on all marriages, and arranges every aspect of the union. When the marriage is celebrated, this same shugenja generally performs it as well. Most Phoenix children have been found a potential match by the age of 8, but may marry as they wish if this match has not been confirmed by the time of their gempukku.

The Phoenix originated the custom of wearing red and white clothing during the wedding ceremony, a symbol of the new couple's rebirth to each other as well as to the clan. Phoenix weddings always take place in a shrine to the Fortunes and are quiet affairs. Levity dishonors the commitment being made. Offenders are removed from the shrine.

If an arranged Phoenix marriage falls through for any reason, the abandoned party receives appropriate compensation from the other partner's family. The Isawa have an extraordinarily complex system for determining the value of marriages that factors in both parties' age, social station, and position in the clan. This ensures that there is no ill will between the families involved and gives the honorable party, whether Phoenix or not, something for the trouble they will have to go through in arranging another marriage.

Peasant marriages are usually simple affairs, though a particularly valued peasant servant of a Phoenix lord can expect a ceremony with all the pomp and circumstance of a samurai wedding. For the samurai lord, a fine wedding demonstrates his gratitude to those who serve him, and celebrates the future birth of those that will continue to serve.

SUPERSTITION

Respectful of all types of tradition, the Phoenix are keenly aware of all superstitions, their own and those of other clans. While they claim not to believe in superstition, the Phoenix may have more superstitions than any other clan. The Phoenix do not, however, consider them superstition — they consider them fact. Laughing at another's superstition (or calling it superstition at all) is considered both disrespectful and extremely bad luck.

In accordance with their familiarity with relic magic, Phoenix samurai often carry a rice grain carved to resemble a Fortune. This grain is believed to give the bearer the protection of that Fortune, and symbolizes the samurai's devotion to that Fortune.

Sometimes, when they are about to enter a forest, Phoenix shugenja shout loudly and slash at the trees with a sprig of pine to frighten away ghosts. In Isawa Mori this is particularly useful, as hauntings are extraordinarily common.

The first day that snow falls is generally regarded as the luckiest day of the year. This superstition seems to stem from Phoenix pacifism, for warfare during the winter months is nearly impossible. They also believe that with the snow comes Yuki no Onna, a beautiful snow maiden believed to live in the Phoenix's deepest forests. They warn those who might view her graceful form not to follow her into the woods, lest they become lost in the snow forever. It is said that Yuki no Onna follows those who see her for the rest of their lives, eventually claiming them as her own. A samurai who is truly pure of heart, legends say, could one day melt her frozen heart and give the Snow Maiden a mortal form, but only so long as his love for her remains true.

The Isawa have thousands of minor superstitions regarding the Fortunes, so many that even educated shugenja have difficulty keeping up with all of them. Some include carrying a shard of oak bark to honor Osano-Wo (in remembrance of the mercy he showed the Phoenix by only damaging the gates of Shiro Shiba when they unknowingly harbored his murderer), blowing the dust from one's doorstep before a journey as an offering to Kaze-no-Kami, leaving an old quill on an altar before beginning a large research project as an offering to Tengen, and tracing in the dirt a small katana (to represent Ofushikai, the Ancestral Sword of the Phoenix) to draw the favor of Tsukune.

WAR

The Phoenix have always been pacifists, fighting only to defend their homeland. The Isawa, Asako, and Agasha use their magic to defend their homeland, but avoid taking lives unless war is unavoidable. As a warrior family, the Shiba will fight if necessary, but are willing to leave negotiation in the other families' hands in most cases.

One of the clan's greatest tales of dedication to peace is Shiba Toriiko's. During her reign as Clan Champion, the Kakita and Matsu had leapt into war with one another yet again. Toriiko put her small force defiantly between the two armies. The Phoenix Champion and her men stood their ground despite being slaughtered by the Lion and Crane alike.

When the Kakita general came to speak to Toriiko, she refused to choose a side in the conflict. The Kakita believed she was tricking him into fighting and cut her down out of pride. Shiba Toriiko never moved. After this public display of earnest pacifism, at least two Lion commanders were so deeply moved that they requested permission to commit seppuku in protest. The Kakita general broke his blades, sent them to the Matsu leader and retired to an Asahina monastery, determined to help make a world that Toriiko would have been proud of. The Lion general accepted the blades and left the field of battle, though it was whispered that he did so to avoid losing face rather than in agreement with Toriiko's pacifistic ways. (Many Lion questioned what the Phoenix army was doing on Lion and Crane territory in the first place.) Peace and determination had defeated pride and anger.

The Phoenix celebrate Toriiko's sacrifice on the 4th day of the Horse. On that day during the first month of summer, each temple in the Phoenix provinces performs a small ceremony dedicated to the memory of the Phoenix Champion's sacrifice. Under no circumstances will the Shiba or Isawa engage in battle during that day, honoring the world Shiba Toriiko has been a part of making.

RETIREMENT

The Phoenix regard retirement as a great step along the kharmic cycle towards enlightenment. Those Phoenix shugenja and bushi who are about to become monks celebrate their transition, and retired samurai are honored former members of the clan. Retirement allows them to contemplate the mysteries they never had the time to delve into during their active careers.

Monasteries can be found throughout the Phoenix provinces and are typically closed to all but the most influential visitors. The monks' solitude is sacrosanct. The cloistered inkyo of the Asako are especially strict, never allowing visitors to enter the central buildings of the monastery. Those who bring the monks supplies must place them a proper distance away from the buildings and wait for those inside to emerge and claim them. The other Phoenix families regard such strictures as part of an extreme dedication to the pursuit of enlightenment.

Those who do not wish to retire typically teach at Phoenix dojo, passing their wisdom to another generation while still serving their clan.

FUNERALS

Death to the Phoenix is a transition to a new beginning, whether the departed soul is destined to be reborn or become an honored ancestor in Yomi. As the clan with the largest number of shugenja, the Phoenix are familiar with death rites and their place in them. Their shugenja often officiate at funerals for samurai of other clans. With the exception of the most devout enemies of the Phoenix, most samurai welcome a Phoenix shugenja's presence at a funeral. Whether the ceremony they direct involves a communal grave or just one soul, Phoenix shugenja perform a quiet ritual to honor the accomplishments of those who have gained a respite from the mortal coil.

Unlike many shugenja, the Phoenix recognize even those who have died dishonorably and commend them to the afterlife in the hopes that they will find better fortune in the next life. For this reason, the families of dishonored samurai sometimes travel to Phoenix lands in search of a shugenja to grant peace to their unfortunate kinsman's soul.



Property and title among the Phoenix is handed down to the next of kin or allocated by the Elemental Council's retainers if the deceased had no living family. Any land or possessions that Elemental Council claims are eventually redistributed to other clan members. In recent times, most such unclaimed property has been transferred to the Agasha. As the youngest family, their wealth and power is not quite equal to the other families and the Council sees this as a way to bolster the family's strength and spark goodwill.

While samurai never fear death, many view it as an ending to that life's story. The Phoenix have a unique view of death. All change breeds growth, and death is the ultimate change. Like the firebird they take as their symbol, the Phoenix believe that death is a necessary part of life.

KEITAKU, THE CELESTIAL SWORD OF THE PHOENIX CLAN

Of all the Celestial Swords created by Tsi Xing Guo, none has a greater legacy to live up to than Keitaku, the Celestial Sword of the Phoenix. The original Phoenix ancestral sword, Ofushikai, was arguably the most powerful ancestral sword. It not only granted its wielder great skill in battle, but also served as the mortal anchor for the immortal Soul of Shiba. Whenever the previous Phoenix Champion died, the Soul would move to its next chosen recipient, and bring Ofushikai with it. With the loss of Ofushikai, Shiba's anchor was lost as well. Though Shiba Tsukune retained the Soul of Shiba, if she died it would have passed into Yomi with her. The Celestial Sword, though quite powerful, was not an acceptable substitute and so was passed on to Shiba Aikune.

After obtaining Isawa's Last Wish, Aikune knew that he would be unlikely to use Keitaku. Rather than let the powerful sword go to waste, he gave it to his friend Mirabu, who now wields it in Aikune's defense.

Keitaku is simple in appearance, with no distinctive markings on the blade or tsuba. Only those who can sense the dance of the elements, such as shugenja, notice anything unusual about the blade. To such individuals, Keitaku always appears wreathed in brilliant silver flame in the shape of a soaring phoenix.

D20 SYSTEM:

Keitaku is a +5 spell storing flaming katana. Keitaku can hold as many spells as the wielder has Void Points at maximum. When the wielder spends a Void Point to improve a roll, the bonus is increased from +2 to +5 per Void Point spent.

LSR R7G 2E:

Keitaku is an Exceptional Quality katana which inflicts 3k3 Wounds and adds 3 to its wielder's Kenjutsu and Iaijutsu skill. Whoever wields the blade may command it to become wreathed in flame, as per a Katana of Fire spell cast with three Free Raises. In addition, any shugenja may cast a spell into the blade, where it is stored and may be released later by the wielder. The sword can hold a maximum number of spells equal to its current wielder's Void Ring. Any time the wielder spends a Void Point to improve a roll, he gains two additional dice instead of one.

HISTORY OF THE PHOENIX CLAN

Isawa gathers his tribe: Pre-calendar

Before the Kami fall to Ningen-do and create the Great Clans, powerful mortals begin gathering followers. Isawa, perhaps the greatest mortal spellcaster, is the most notable of these. He gathers a large tribe and founds Gisei Toshi, a city which serves as the family's power base for over a thousand years. The scholars of Gisei Toshi begin recording events in a great calendar, designating the year of the city's founding as Year 1. Coincidentally, this is the same year in which the Kami fall from Tengoku. As this calendar is more stable and less relative than the practice of keeping track of the years by the current Emperor, many sages and scholars choose to adapt this calendar.

Creation of Isawa's Last Wish: year 37

Isawa creates a wedding gift for his daughter, who is to marry Sagoten, the son of Asako and Yogo. The magical artifact is known as Isawa's Last Wish, a powerful item incorporating all five elements. Many powerful shugenja aid him in his work, but the work would be impossible without Isawa's genius. The Wish is given an innocent and childlike intellect, and learns much from Isawa and those around him.

Yogo leaves the Phoenix: year 39

Having been cursed by a powerful maho-tsukai during the war against Fu Leng, the shugenja Yogo leaves the Phoenix to join the Scorpion Clan and follow Bayushi. He is cursed to betray the one he loves, and he cannot bear to harm his family among the Phoenix. Some speculate that Yogo's abandonment was his betrayal, as it leads to his son's death.

The Tao of Shinsei transcribed: year 42

When the little teacher known as Shinsei speaks with Hantei, the Emperor's brother Shiba is present and records the volumes of wisdom imparted that fateful night. This collection of lore comes to be known as the Tao of Shinsei. The Phoenix champion the Tao, encouraging the other clans to accept Shinsei's teachings. They transcribe the third of the Tao's three books, the Book of the Soul, that rectifies the many discrepancies between Shinseism and kami worship and allows the two religions to exist simultaneously without conflict.

The Death of Shiba: year 42

After the defeat of Fu Leng, the Kami Shiba journeys into the Shadowlands in search of Shinsei and the Thunders. Shiba is mortally wounded while slaying the First Oni, but ensures that Shosuro returns to the Empire alive. Shiba's spirit is guided by the wisdom of Shinsei and enters the body of his successor, using the Ancestral Sword of the Phoenix, Ofushikai, as his anchor to the mortal realm. This begins the tradition wherein the Soul of Shiba manifests in each Phoenix Clan Champion over the centuries.

Revelation of the Path of Man: year 42

When Shiba's spirit returns to the new Phoenix Champion, Shiba Tsuzaki, he visits his follower Asako and reveals to her great secrets of the universe known as the Riddle of Man. Asako and her followers perceive a level of enlightenment that could, if mastered, lead to their ascension to a higher plane of existence. The Asako who study these riddles come to

be known as the henshin. The Isawa are consumed by jealousy at being denied this gift, and the rift between the families leads Isawa's daughter, Akiko, to cancel her betrothal with Asako Sagoten.

The Concealment of the Wish: year 46

The Isawa and Asako families' bickering over the fate of Isawa's Last Wish and the henshin's secret finally results in the Hantei's intervention. Hantei Genji, second Emperor of Rokugan, orders the Wish sealed away forever. As only shugenja can utilize the Wish, only the Shiba can be trusted to guard its tomb. His decree is that such power is too great for any family to wield, and the Phoenix accede to his wishes.

Destruction of Shiro Akiko: year 66

An old and bitter man, Asako Sagoten resolves to break the curse on his father and restore Isawa Akiko's love for him. He does this the only way he knows how — he breaks into its vault and steals Isawa's Last Wish. Sadly, Sagoten's selfish desires are his undoing. The Last Wish flares out of control, killing Sagoten, Akiko, and hundreds of others. Akiko's palace, the palace built by her father to honor the marriage that would have been, is reduced to a barren field. To this day, no vegetation will grow there and the Phoenix avoid the area. The Last Wish is returned to its shrine by the cataclysm's sole survivor — a mournful Shiba bushi.

The Discovery of Uikku: year 72

The Phoenix discover a child blessed and cursed with the gift of prophecy in their northernmost provinces. The child, named Uikku, alternates between incredibly keen observations into the Tao, prophetic visions, and insane ramblings that cannot be deciphered. The Phoenix care for him for eighteen years until his death in the year 90.

The Siege of Shiro Shiba: year 97

The Mantis, a "clan" of island-dwelling sailors not officially recognized by the Emperor, attack Shiro Shiba. Kaimetsu-uo, son of recently murdered Crab Champion Osano-Wo, demands that the Phoenix turn over a guest of the castle, who he claims is responsible for the murder. The Phoenix refuse the brash ronin's request and their shugenja unleash their magic on the invaders. Kaimetsu-uo reaches the gates alone and calls on his father to aid him. Lightning erupts from the sky, splitting the gate open and striking the Phoenix shugenja deaf. The Phoenix, convinced by the obvious supernatural display, surrender the murderer. Osano-Wo is named the Fortune of Fire and Thunder not long thereafter.

Shrouding of Gisei Toshi: year 234

Relations between the Isawa and Asako continue to deteriorate. Isawa Hidetsugu determines that he will uncover the Asako's secrets one way or another. Seizing Isawa's Last Wish from its guardians, he attempts to use it to see into the Asako henshin's hearts. When he does so, Gisei Toshi suddenly erupts into flame. The Wish's power consumes Hidetsugu. The blaze can be seen for miles, and much of Gisei Toshi is destroyed.

Following the catastrophe, the Wish is again moved to safety by Shiba guardians. The Isawa determine to make the most out of the tragedy, and tell the Empire that Gisei Toshi has been destroyed. They then shroud the city with powerful magic. Henceforth only the Isawa family's most trusted family members, a handful of Shiba guards, and the resident peasants may dwell in the city, and those who enter are rarely allowed to leave. It is here that the Isawa family's most delicate magical



experiments take place, and it is here that they collect the most deadly magical artifacts so that they can be safely contained. (The Last Wish is an exception to this, as its presence is seen as an irresistible temptation to the shugenja who dwell there.)

Birth of Oni no Akuma: year 283

In a spectacular public display of maho, Isawa Akuma, a notorious shugenja, dies and the Oni Overlord Akuma is born. The oni is born in the city of Gisei Toshi, and for the second time in a century, the hidden city is ravaged by uncontrollable magic. Portions of the Tao's original manuscript are lost before the Elemental Masters can drive the oni out.

Formation of the Asahina family: year 353

After Crane intervention stops hostilities between the Lion and Phoenix, Master of Air Isawa Asahina rampages through the Crane lands, destroying several villages and caravans. The Crane Champion's daughter halts his campaign. She will not strike him down, but is horribly injured when she chooses to intercept his spells rather than let them kill innocent people.

Isawa Asahina halts his campaign of vengeance and marries the young samurai-ko, and is eventually given leave to form his own family. The Asahina gain early numbers when shugenja lines from the other Crane families join their family to give them more legitimacy.

Rulership of the Gozoku: years 391–435

During a period of weakness in the Hantei Dynasty, a conspiracy of Crane, Scorpion, and Phoenix courtiers form the Gozoku Alliance. The Gozoku kidnap the Imperial Heir and force the Hantei to capitulate to their wishes, making him their puppet on the throne.

The Gozoku rule for nearly fifty years, and though their rule is arguably tyrannical they are also responsible for many political reforms and cultural growth in the Empire. Their mistake is fostering the Emperor's daughter to the Lion, for she becomes a strong, charismatic leader who eventually breaks the Gozoku's rule. Many Phoenix are executed for crimes committed against the Emperor.

The Five Nights of Shame: year 402

Having received information that the Snake Clan, a minor clan founded near the Phoenix holdings by a former Isawa, has been corrupted by a powerful corrupted spirit known as a shuten doji, the Phoenix move in to deal with the situation. Every man, woman, child, and animal in the Snake lands is killed to prevent the spirit from escaping in a possessed body. The Empire is horrified, but the Phoenix insist upon the necessity of the action.

The Dragonfly Clan is founded: year 704

Despite her betrothal to an Akodo, Isawa Maroko marries her true love, Mirumoto Asijin of the Dragon Clan. The Phoenix choose to recognize this marriage in an attempt to gain favor with the Dragon. Maroko's jilted suitor, Akodo Yokutsu, leads an army against the couple's holdings only to find both parent clans defending their wayward children. The Phoenix do not permit Yokutsu to withdraw until he vows never again to move against Maroko and Asijin's holdings. The Emperor, already predisposed against the Lion, is pleased with the outcome and recognizes the two as the progenitors of the Dragonfly Clan. Shortly thereafter, the Phoenix and Dragon enter into a trade agreement favorable to the Phoenix.

Kitsu Taiko becomes the Master of Fire: year 755

In an unprecedented move, the Isawa invite the recently retired Kitsu Taiko, widely acknowledged as one of the most powerful shugenja in the Empire, to join their Council as the new Master of Fire. Taiko accepts the position and serves loyally for many years. Many suspect the Isawa bestowed this honor upon Taiko purely to maintain their reputation as the most powerful shugenja in the Empire, but the Isawa refuse to acknowledge such base accusations. It is the first time a non-Phoenix is ever given a position on the Council.

Revelation of the Henshin: year 1126

Disastrous events at Winter Court reveal many of the henshin's secrets to the Isawa family. The Isawa discover the henshin's potential immortality due to the machinations of Kuni Yori, and spend months embroiled in rekindled hostility with their old rivals, the Asako.

The Phoenix open the Black Scrolls: year 1127

In a daring mission to fight the Taint's power, Master of Earth Isawa Tadaka steals into Yogo Junzo's Iron Citadel seeking the Black Scrolls. The Council of Elemental Masters, confident that they can control the forces contained within, opens a total of four of the cursed Black Scrolls. Only Isawa Kaede, Master of the Void, refuses to participate. The other Masters gain much insight, but the Scrolls' power Taints them.

Opening of the Phoenix Gates: year 1130

Following the clan's devastation during the Clan War, the Phoenix open their gates to any who bear the kami's gifts, offering fealty to many ronin. These newcomers help swell the clan's ranks once more, and the tutelage of Naka Kuro, Grand Master of the Elements, aids in gradually bringing the Phoenix back to the peak of their power.

Defection of the Agasha: year 1131

Agasha Gennai leads most of the Agasha family away from the Dragon to join the Phoenix Clan. The actions of Hitomi, Champion of the Dragon, appall Gennai and his followers. They swear an oath of fealty to the Phoenix in exchange for lands and resources comparable to those they possessed with the Dragon.

The Mantis siege: year 1132

Arguing that the Phoenix, still not fully recovered from the Clan War, are too weak to maintain their lands, the Mantis Champion Yoritomo claims their provinces. Shiba Tsukune views this as an act of war and responds accordingly. Despite their magical superiority, the Phoenix do not have sufficient troops to rebuff the Mantis, and Yoritomo's forces press deeply into the Phoenix lands.

The Loss of the Ancestral Sword: year 1132

Angry with mankind over the death of her husband Onnotangu, the Lady Amaterasu dispatches Lady Shinjo to gather the Great Clans' ancestral swords and scatters them among the heavens. This includes the Phoenix Ancestral Sword, the focus necessary for the Kami Shiba's soul to remain in the mortal realm. With it gone, Shiba Tsukune fears that for the first time in history the Soul of Shiba might die when its bearer passes on. For the time being, she keeps these feelings private.

The Mantis are repelled from Phoenix lands: year 1133

Despite the Mantis' six-month occupation of their lands, the Phoenix do not surrender. Small units led by Shiba Tsukune harass the Mantis forces until the occupation becomes too costly for them, and Yoritomo withdraws his forces.

Rise of the Evening Star: year 1133

Unable to cast off her mortal form alone, Hitomi receives aid from an unlikely source — a relatively unknown Phoenix samurai by the name of Shiba Odoshi. After aiding Hitomi in rising to become the new Moon, Odoshi also rises into the Celestial Heavens to become the Evening Star.

Asako Sagoten Returns: year 1149

Though Asako Sagoten returned through Oblivion's Gate, he carefully avoids the temptation to take up the Last Wish once more. The Steel Chrysanthemum's soldiers learn about the Wish and attempt to force Sagoten to find it and use it on their behalf. Escaping from their custody, he flees toward the Shrine of the Last Wish with the Hantei's shugenja in hot pursuit. Taking up the Last Wish a final time, Sagoten begs for its forgiveness and, for the first time since Isawa, uses its power to a selfless end. He creates the Children of the Last Wish — guardian spirits of pure Void — to protect the artifact from the Steel Chrysanthemum and then commits seppuku so that his knowledge will never fall into the evil Hantei's hands.

Sagoten's actions cause a sudden surge in the Wish's evolution, causing it to develop to a point that it even non-shugenja can call upon its power.

The Phoenix Children are Kidnapped: year 1150

During the War of Spirits, the despotic Hantei XVI retreats to the Phoenix territories to escape Toturi's forces. With the Tainted Agasha Tamori's help and advice, the Hantei's chief lieutenant Hida Tsuneo kidnaps dozens of children from the most influential members of the Phoenix Clan and blackmails Shiba Tsukune into aiding him. When Tsukune does not join wholeheartedly with the Hantei's forces, the Master of Earth's daughter is murdered. Rather than capitulating, the Phoenix violently revolt, and Tsuneo is forced from Phoenix lands.

Yobanjin Invasion: year 1154

The fractious barbarian tribes of Yobanjin to the north of Rokugan join together and suddenly invade the Phoenix lands. The Isawa are caught completely off guard and the Imperial Legions must be called in to aid the Shiba forces. This conflict is the first command victory for a young Toturi Tsudao, the Emperor's daughter and commander of the First Legion. The Sons of the Wind tribe, the Isawa family's long-time secret ally, covertly aids Tsudao's forces in locating and destroying rogue Yobanjin encampments.

Treaty with the Lion Clan: year 1155

Prompted by Hantei Naseru, the Phoenix enter into a treaty with the Lion to protect the Empire from the supernatural threats that have ravaged it throughout its history, and ultimately aid the Crab in attacking the Shadowlands. The Phoenix will defend the Empire with magic, and the Lion with steel.

The Dragon-Phoenix War begins: year 1158

With the sudden eruption of a new volcano in their lands, the Dragon Clan faces almost certain famine. Mirumoto Uso moves his people onto the plains between the Dragon and Phoenix territories, a land that technically belongs to the Dragon but has been untenanted for centuries. The Phoenix, who have cared for and protected the land, see this as an invasion. Tempers flare during a meeting between Dragon and Phoenix representatives (particularly Isawa Taeruko and Tamori Shaitung) and the two clans enter war. The starving Dragon are unprepared for the Phoenix onslaught.

Shiba Tsukune Ascends: year 1158

Confronted by the Fortune of Thunder, Phoenix Champion Shiba Tsukune is given a choice: ascend to the heavens as the Fortune of Rebirth and save the Soul of Shiba, or remain in the mortal realm and offer guidance to her wayward son Aikune. Osano-Wo warns Tsukune that if she leaves, she will be unable to save her son from the dark fate that awaits him, but if she remains the Soul of Shiba will die permanently. Tsukune chooses to save Shiba's soul and accompanies Osano-Wo to Tengoku, where she is reunited with Ofushikai and becomes the Fortune of Rebirth.

The Disappearance of the Masters and the Death of Isawa Riake: year 1158

The Elemental Masters take the field of battle against the Dragon, but underestimate the power of Tamori Shaitung, the Tamori family daimyo. Shaitung defeats two Masters individually, then casts a deadly spell that consumes her and the Masters in a deep pit of earth.

Underground, Shaitung and the Masters discover Agasha Tamori, now the Dark Oracle of Fire. Combat ensues; Shaitung and Isawa Nakamuro escape, Master of Water Isawa Riake is killed, and the remaining Masters are imprisoned within the earth by Tamori's power. They remain trapped for several months before freeing themselves and returning to the Phoenix.

Shiba Aikune Retrieves the Last Wish: year 1158

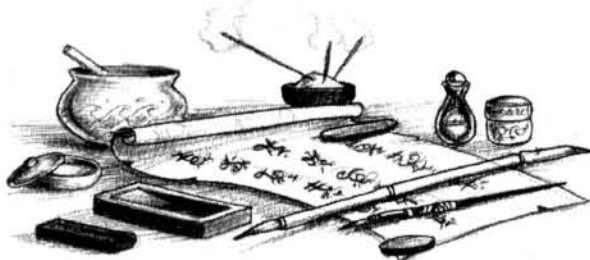
With Clan Champion Tsukune gone, the Elemental Masters missing, and their Lion allies withdrawing to deal with Tsuno attacks on their own lands, the Phoenix armies are in danger of being overwhelmed by the Dragon. Shiba Aikune desperately attempts to use the Last Wish against his clan's enemies, fully prepared to die for doing so. Instead, the Wish finds a kindred spirit in Aikune's lonely and forsaken soul, and the two quickly form a bond that allows Aikune to assume control of the Phoenix armies with his incredible power. The Dragon are forced to fall back to the Shrine of the Ki-Rin.

Lion-Phoenix Alliance is Broken: year 1158

Tragedy ensues when Aikune confronts the remaining Lion troops in Phoenix lands, accusing them of cowardice for withdrawing from the war with the Dragon. Tempers flare, and Aikune accidentally unleashes the Last Wish upon the Lion advisors, incinerating dozens of them. Matsu Nimuro is outraged, though conflict with the Tsuno prevents him from seeking reprisal.

The Crane-Phoenix Treaty: year 1159

Facing conflicts with the Lion and potentially with the Crab, the Crane Clan seeks an alliance with the Phoenix. Doji Akiko — once known as Isawa Akiko, the daughter of Isawa who has returned through Oblivion's Gate — lobbies the Elemental Council for a treaty. The Council accepts, and places Akiko on the Council of Elemental Masters as the new Master of Water.



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: Nasu Eizan is a member of the Nasu vassal family of the Shiba. To all members of the Shiba and other Phoenix families, he is known as Nasu Eizan. In the Ikoma histories and to outsiders, however, he is known as Shiba Eizan. When presenting himself to others outside the clan, Eizan may introduce himself as "Shiba Eizan of House Nasu" or simply "Shiba Eizan of Nasu." If a member of any other clan should visit Eizan in the Nasu family estate in Honored Treaty City, then he would be entitled to refer to himself by his vassal family name, for it is assumed the visitor realizes that he is in the lands of the Shiba.

NEW MECHANICS

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

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

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

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

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

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

TORITAKA TATSUNE

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

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

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

COMPLETE PHOENIX 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 that were prerequisites for other feats on this list were added, and those with excessive prerequisites that did not fit the theme of the Phoenix fighting style were 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, SoP=Secrets of the Phoenix, WoNin=Way of the Ninja.

EYES OF THE PHOENIX

PHOENIX TECHNIQUE

You easily defeat those who do not possess your sense of focus.

Prerequisites: Void Use, Way of the Phoenix.

Benefit: You gain a +1 Void bonus on all attack rolls against living targets that have a lower Void Point total than you. Targets without the Void Use feat are considered to have zero Void Points remaining.

FROM THE ASHES

PHOENIX TECHNIQUE

You can continue fighting even after your body has been destroyed, so long as your soul is willing.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +8 or higher, Depths of the Void, Void Use.

Benefit: Any time you are reduced below zero hit points, you may automatically spend two Void Points to immediately gain temporary hit points equal to twice your maximum Void. These temporary hit points last for one minute per character level. If you have not been healed above zero hit points before this effect ends, you suffer the normal penalties. You may use this feat if you are knocked below -10 hit points with a single attack. You may use this feat even if helpless or unconscious. Note that temporary hit points gained from the same source (such as this feat) do not stack.

COMPLETE PHOENIX TECHNIQUE FEAT LIST

Feat	Prerequisite	Location
Armor Focus	Armor Proficiency	Rokugan
Blind-Fight	—	PHB
Combat Reflexes	—	PHB
Daisho Specialization	+5 Base attack Weapon Focus: Katana or Wakizashi Samurai	Rokugan
Depths of the Void	Void Use	Rokugan
Different School	By DM permission only	Rokugan
Dodge	Dex 13+	PHB
Elemental Attunement	Wis 14+	Rokugan
Expertise	Int 13+	PHB
Eyes of the Phoenix	Void Use Way of the Phoenix	SoP
From the Ashes	Base attack bonus +8 or higher Depths of the Void Void Use	SoP
Great Fortitude	—	PHB
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
Greater Depths of the Void	Depths of the Void Void Use	SoP
Improved Initiative	—	PHB
Improved Trip	Int 13+ Expertise	PHB
Invincible Sword of the Void	Void Use Depths of the Void Base attack bonus +10 or higher	SoP
Iron Will	—	PHB
Know the School	Knowledge (clan or family, 2 ranks)	PHB
Mobility	Dex 13+ Dodge	PHB
No Illusions	Void Use Wis 13+ Way of the Phoenix	Rokugan
No Mind	Shiba's Technique Base attack bonus +9 or higher Void Use Wis 13+ Way of the Phoenix	Rokugan
Quick Draw	Base attack bonus +1 or higher	PHB
Shiba's Technique	Void Use Wis 13+ Way of the Phoenix	Rokugan
Shield of Honor	Void Use	Rokugan
Spring Attack	Dex 13+ Dodge Mobility Base attack bonus +4 or higher	PHB
Void Smite	Depths of the Void	SoP
Void Use	—	Rokugan
Way of the Phoenix	Void Use Wis 13+	Rokugan
Weapon Focus (katana)	Martial Weapon Proficiency (katana)	PHB
Whirlwind Attack	Dex 13+ Int 13+ Dodge Expertise Mobility Spring Attack Wis 13+	PHB

GREATER DEPTHS OF THE VOID

PHOENIX KIHO TECHNIQUE

You possess an even keener insight into the Void than most.

Prerequisites: Depths of the Void, Void Use.

Benefit: Your maximum Void Points are increased by four, plus one for each additional time this feat is taken.

Special: You may gain this feat multiple times. This feat counts as Depths of the Void for the purposes of prerequisites that demand multiple Depths of the Void feats.

INVINCIBLE SWORD OF THE VOID

PHOENIX TECHNIQUE

Your keen focus and understanding of the Void allows you to attack with blinding speed.

Prerequisites: Depths of the Void, Void Use, base attack bonus +10 or higher.

Benefit: You may spend three Void Points as a free action to gain an additional attack at your highest base attack bonus, but each attack (the extra one and all subsequent normal ones) suffers a -2 penalty. You may use this feat multiple times in the same round if you have enough Void to spend, but all penalties are cumulative. You must gain the extra attacks from this feat before your normal attacks for the round. You must use the full attack action to use this feat.

VOID SMITE

PHOENIX TECHNIQUE

You can draw upon deep inner reserves of strength to deal great damage to an enemy.

Prerequisites: Depths of the Void, Void Use

Benefit: Once per day you can declare a smite attack against an enemy as a melee attack. You gain a Void bonus to your attack roll equal to your remaining Void Points and a damage bonus equal to your character level. If the attack misses, it is wasted for the day.

Special: You may gain this feat multiple times. Each time it is taken, it may be used an additional time per day.

THE AGASHA FAMILY

Since the publication of the *LSR Second Edition Player's Guide*,™ the Agasha family has left the Dragon Clan and found a new home with the Phoenix. The Agasha family attributes have not changed since their relocation, but are presented here for the sake of completeness. Statistics for the Phoenix version of the Agasha shugenja school appear in the Agasha chapter of this book.

LSR RPG 2E:

The Agasha are curious, impulsive, and gregarious. Their ability to explore new things makes them extremely personable and skilled at reading emotions.

Benefit: +1 Awareness.

PHOENIX COURTIERS

Unlike many other Great Clans, the Phoenix do not have a dedicated courtier family. Instead, every Phoenix family has its share of courtiers, most of whom spend a lot of time attempting to repair relations with other Phoenix families. The greatest number of Phoenix courtiers are found among the Shiba and the Asako. Shiba courtiers usually serve as diplomats and emissaries to other families. Asako courtiers serve as magistrates, and often aid Asako Inquisitors in their investigations. The Asako have the greatest number of courtiers, and even have a small courtier school within Kyuden Asako.

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*™). The following new courtier abilities are available to any Phoenix Clan courtiers. Members of other clans who have taken the Different School feat and applied it to the Phoenix may also learn these abilities. The normal courtier abilities are still available for Phoenix courtiers.

Voice of the Void (Ex): Like Phoenix bushi and shugenja, Phoenix courtiers have learned that great insight can be found through harmony with the Void. The courtier gains an additional +3 Void bonus any time he spends a Void Point on a Will save. He also gains this bonus on any Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma related skill roll (with the exception of the Iaijutsu Focus skill). Like any Void bonus, this effect stacks with all other Void bonuses.

Invincible Mind (Ex): Phoenix courtiers spend a great deal of time studying the ways of their shugenja brethren, and are experts at preventing magical influences from swaying their will. The courtier gains spell resistance equal to his courtier level +10 vs. all mind-affecting effects.

Wisdom of the Ages (Ex): Phoenix are noted for their wisdom and far-ranging expertise. The courtier gains 10 skill points, which must be spent immediately. This ability may be selected multiple times.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE AGASHA

TOO CLOSE
TO THE FLAME
PART TWO

Fuzake Sekkou struggled to keep from grinning with pride, ignoring the bewildered look of the Agasha functionary as she disappeared into the next chamber to announce the shugenja's arrival. This was the first time Sekkou had been entrusted to make an official visit in his lord's name without Taneji. Hatori had confided in him that Taneji's family was not well disposed toward the Agasha, and while he was certain that the young man would carry himself well, he had been concerned that Taneji's prejudices might affect his mission. Accordingly, Hatori had dispatched Taneji to the Asako provinces and sent Sekkou on to the Agasha lands alone.

On one hand, Sekkou found the notion of acting on his own exhilarating. It was a sign of Hatori's increasing trust in him. On the other hand, he still had much to learn about the eccentricities of those who held power over entire families. His recent experiences in the Moshi lands alongside Hatori had been most confusing. Sekkou sincerely hoped that the Agasha would prove easier to get along with.

Sekkou understood that the Agasha had once served the Dragon Clan, but had abandoned their oaths and sworn fealty to the Phoenix sometime during the War Against the Shadow. Given his own family's history, Sekkou could certainly understand the pressing need for such behavior, particularly if the historical accounts he had read of Mirumoto Hitomi's behavior during the

War Against the Shadow were even close to accurate. Was it any wonder that even now, after Onnotangu's death, worship of the Moon was still looked upon with suspicion and unease?

The Agasha functionary who had taken Sekkou's papers returned to the waiting chamber. "Sekkou-sama," she said, bowing deeply. "Hamanari-sama will see you immediately."

The young shugenja rose with a sensation of mild surprise. There had been nothing to indicate that his visit was expected, but then again Hamanari was said to be a seer, and they were notoriously difficult to surprise. Yet for such an important personage as the Agasha daimyo to see a visitor without delay was highly unusual. Normally one would be kept waiting for several days while the daimyo attempted to discern the nature of the trip. Perhaps Shiba Yoma had indeed laid the groundwork for their discussions, as Hatori had implied.

The chamber into which Sekkou was led was unlike any other audience chamber he had yet visited. He had witnessed both excess and minimalism during his service to the Miya historian, most notably in the courts of the Mantis and Lion recently. This, however, was a new experience, one he could only describe as ascetic. The only furnishings were a low writing desk, an altar with several sticks of incense burning upon it, and a series of small, comfortable cushions that were apparently intended for guests. Between the cushions and the desk, Agasha Hamanari knelt upon the floor. He appeared to be deep in meditation. Unsure of what to do, Sekkou stood silently and waited.

After nearly half an hour, Hamanari's eyes opened and he smiled at the young shugenja. "You are a patient man, Fuzake Sekkou. Many samurai are willing to wait to be admitted, but once within the chamber few are so willing to await my recognition. Thank you for allowing me to finish my meditation."

Sekkou bowed deeply. "I could not dishonor so gracious a host, Hamanari-sama."

The Agasha daimyo nodded appreciatively and gestured to the cushions before him. "I was most pleased to hear of Hatori's impending visit to our clan's lands," he continued. "Several months ago I had a vision of a monkey on a quest for knowledge. I thought surely my abilities had finally been subsumed by senility, but here we are." Hamanari smiled broadly.

Sekkou frowned in confusion for a few moments before he realized the daimyo was making a joke. His features broke into an easy grin. "My uncle once complained of similar visions. Of course, the sake he had been drinking had long since gone bad."

Hamanari smiled again, disarming Sekkou despite the daimyo's severe features. Sekkou had to admit that he was not prepared to find the Agasha so humorous and genial. His shaven head and the twining tattoos that were only barely visible at his collar and sleeve gave him a decidedly intimidating appearance.

"How may I assist the great Miya Hatori in his duties, Sekkou?" Hamanari asked.

"It is a simple enough task. As you know, the war between the Dragon and Phoenix and the recent incident between Shiba Aikune and his former Lion allies have greatly concerned the courts. Hatori is gathering information so that he may make an informed opinion, but he desires your advice. With your unique knowledge of the future, he wishes to know: are you concerned about your clan?"

The seer was silent for a moment, obviously considering his words carefully. "I am always concerned about my clan, but I do not think that is what you mean to ask," he said. "I had a vision recently. It was a terrible sight. A great flaming bird of prey rose from the Phoenix lands and laid waste to the Empire, leaving nothing but ash and death in its wake."

The color drained from Sekkou's face. "Aikune?"

"I am not certain," Hamanari said. "The visions that swirl around the young Shiba lord are rarely so obvious. I do not think this was Aikune. All I can say for certain is that the Last Wish was somehow involved, but whether it shall bring about what I have seen or whether it can prevent it, I cannot say."

"Can this vision be avoided?" Sekkou asked.

"The future is like the water of a great river," Hamanari said. "It is always changing, always in motion. Nothing is certain. I find that the more we try to alter fate, the more we play directly into its hands."

"And what will the Agasha do?"

"We stand with Shiba Aikune and the Masters. The Masters have allowed us to do as we wish, to study the paths of magic we have embraced for centuries. In return, we offer our counsel to Aikune and hope to prevent the fate we have seen through wisdom and brotherhood. We shall hold the clan together." Hamanari stared into space for a moment. "My family once left the Dragon because they feared that Mirumoto Hitomi's power would lead her to madness. If instead we had realized that she needed us and remained, offered her advice and compassion, then the War Against the Shadow might have ended long before it did. I will not allow the Agasha to make such a mistake again. We will not abandon Shiba Aikune even if he does not wish our help."

Sekkou nodded respectfully, but he pictured the great bird of fire laying waste to the Empire and shuddered. Agasha Hamanari was supposedly one of the greatest seers in Rokugan. Could even he dare hope to prevent such a grisly fate? Time alone would tell.

The thought was not comforting.

THE AGASHA PROVINCES

The provinces of the Agasha family are unlike any other in the Phoenix Clan. The lands the Agasha now hold were a generous gift from the Isawa, bestowed after their exodus from the Dragon Clan. Some Agasha would argue that the Isawa have not quite realized the meaning of the word "gift," for many Isawa bureaucrats and functionaries hold positions in the Agasha lands to this day, and since the lands originally belonged to the Shiba anyway. The Isawa would similarly argue that their aid is necessary to help their new cousins acclimate to the nuances of living in Phoenix lands, and that the climate of the former Shiba lands was like that of the Agasha's former home and thus a more suitable location.

After over three decades of help from their northern neighbors, some might think that the Isawa are being excessively meddling, but most Agasha do not seem to mind. With experienced Isawa functionaries overseeing the minor day-to-day concerns of governing a province, the Agasha are free to continue their research in the avenues of science and magic.

MAJOR AGASHA HOLDINGS

Compared to other Phoenix families, the Agasha have but few holdings. They are both a recent addition to the Phoenix and typically uninterested in matters unrelated to magical study. They deal with their vassals and peasant followers only as much as is required to maintain their samurai status, and are otherwise reclusive.

KYUDEN AGASHA

(LOCATION 721 IN ROKUGAN, BETWEEN LOCATIONS 717 AND 719 IN THE GAME MASTER'S GUIDE™)

From the outside, Kyuden Agasha appears plain and functional. At one time, it was a minor Isawa military fortress, as indicated by its many watchtowers and outlying walls. The interior of the castle, however, is opulently decorated with Mantis silks and Crane artwork. It is illuminated at all times by flickering fire kami, enticed into specially prepared lanterns by Agasha shugenja. At all times the castle is filled with the scent of incense, mostly to cover the pungent odors of mizugusuri experiments gone wrong.

Visitors to Kyuden Agasha are quite rare. The daimyo seldom invites outsiders to his home and few choose to go their of their own accord. Though the Agasha do their best to be courteous to outsiders, their experiments take up a great deal of time and guests often feel neglected.

Though Kyuden Agasha is rarely threatened, situated as it is deep in Phoenix lands, the castle has impressive defenses. It stands on a great cliff overlooking the sea. The castle has many

large catapults loaded with arcane chemicals created in the Agasha laboratories, ready to hurl their contents at hostile ships. Local bandits know better than to attempt to attack Kyuden Agasha, whose residents typically carry unlabeled potions too dangerous to sell on the black market.

Shortly after moving in, the Agasha were delighted to discover that the cliffs beneath the castle were riddled with large natural caves. After thoroughly exploring these caves and warding them against unwanted intrusion, they moved their more controversial laboratories into the depths beneath the castle. Kyuden Agasha sports many secret entrances to the warrens, and in the event of a truly dedicated attack the entire populace could vanish into the maze of tunnels in a moment.

THE AGASHA FOUNDRIES

As members of the Dragon Clan the Agasha were renowned for the great strides they made in the field of metal-smithing. The original Agasha Foundries (now the Tamori Foundries) produced many of the most famous blades the Dragon Clan has ever wielded, including Togashi's own daisho. When the Agasha left the Dragon to join the Phoenix, they took many of the secrets of their art with them. The new Agasha Foundries are not in Kyuden Agasha, but set into a particularly large cave in the cliff face overlooking the sea. There is no entrance to this cave from the inside, so the workers must climb the sheer cliff or use magic to enter and leave. Agasha Hirotada, the master of the foundry, could easily open a passage to the rest of the caverns if he so chose; he refuses. He rarely leaves the caverns, and believes that making them difficult to access builds character.

AGASHA HIROTADA, MASTER WEAPONSMITH

[Shugenja 12; Agasha Shugenja 4]

From his appearance, most would never guess that Hirotada is a shugenja. He is a massive, broad-shouldered man with coarse skin baked by a life at the forge. He prefers the simple loincloth of a blacksmith to the fine robes of a priest, and keeps his spell scrolls in a small satchel over one shoulder. His life is his work and he does not appreciate being drawn away from it by outside matters. Hirotada never takes commissions, but creates as the mood inspires him. If he decides to make a katana, he makes a katana. If he wishes to make a fine kabuto, he makes a kabuto. Whatever the result, he hands it to an apprentice who will deliver it to Agasha Hamanari, and moves on to his next inspiration. The Agasha daimyo has learned not to interfere with Hirotada's labors, for his works are the finest he has seen. Though Hamanari never knows what the apprentices might bring him, he is never disappointed.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Agasha Hirotada dispatches one of his apprentices to bring the characters to meet him in his caves. As usual, Hirotada makes no effort to make entering the cave easy, so the PCs must find some way down the cliffside. They do have incentive: the apprentice tells them that Hirotada is in need of a favor, and in return he would be willing to craft a fine helm for leader of the party.

Focus: Hirotada tells the PCs that a fine blade he has just finished crafting has gone missing. His apprentice, Doi, was to deliver the blade to Agasha Hamanari, but disappeared en route. The boy was an excellent climber, and Hirotada is certain he could not have fallen from the cliffs. He would like the

ROADS OF THE AGASHA PROVINCES

Heart's Fire Road (Connects P19 to P21) — This road connects Kyuden Agasha to the City of Remembrance. As visitors to Kyuden Agasha are rare, it is mainly traveled by the castle's residents. Before the Agasha joined the Phoenix this was known as Dead End Road, for Kyuden Agasha was a minor military outpost of little military significance; duty there was an assignment for those who had displeased the Council of Masters. Upon moving into the area, the Agasha chose to rename Dead End Road, though residents of the City of Remembrance call it by its former name as often as not.

The Road of Lion Tears (Connects P16 to P19) — So named because Matsu Hitomi used this road on her approach to the City of Remembrance, its name has become ironically appropriate in recent times. When allied Lion forces recently withdrew from Phoenix lands, one of the two remaining groups of Lion advisors was stationed in Nikesake. When news arrived that Aikune had destroyed the other group for perceived cowardice, it was down this road that the Lion advisors strategically withdrew from Phoenix lands to the coast, where Ikoma Otomi's *Deathless* ferried them back to their home provinces.

Isawa's Blade (Connects P16 to P18 to P20) — Some might think that this road received its name because it marks the border between Phoenix lands and those of the Dragon, Crane, and Lion. In truth, an Otomo cartographer assigned the name when he noticed the road's sharp, pointed shape on the maps of what were then the Isawa provinces. The Agasha, amused by the name's origin, decided not to change it.

Kagaku Path (Connects P19 to P20) — Though it appears on no maps, Kagaku Path is a well known to the shugenja of the Agasha family and their trusted messengers. To the untrained eye, it is not a road at all. However, when granted a special pass phrase (changed once per month by the Agasha daimyo) the roots, weeds, and stones move aside to allow a traveler swift and safe passage to Zumiki-Mihari. The Isawa know of the existence of the road, but they are not privy to the password, a fact that irritates them.

PCs to find the blade and his apprentice, and return both safely. If both are not returned, Hirotada will not reward them.

Strike: Finding Doi is not difficult if the PCs know where to look. The other apprentices know that Doi was unhappy serving the dour smith and often spoke of running away to the City of Remembrance. If the PCs follow him there, they find Doi in the custody of the local magistrate. The magistrate caught Doi trying to sell the fine blade, assumed that he was a peasant who had stolen it, and plans to execute him at dawn. It will take some fast talking or impressive credentials to convince the magistrate that Doi is actually the apprentice of the Agasha master and should be returned home safely.

THE AGASHA LABORATORIES

The caverns beneath Kyuden Agasha also house laboratories dedicated to kagaku (chemistry) and mizugusuri (alchemy). These caverns are off-limits to all save the shugenja who work there and their apprentices. There are sleeping quarters and food stores within the cavern, so the more dedicated Agasha rarely venture forth from the caverns. Visitors are almost never admitted, for the delicate experiments that take place here could go disastrously awry if interrupted by a curious guest.

Though he is often busy dealing with the day-to-day maintenance of his family, Agasha Hamanari is an occasional visitor to the laboratories. It is within these hidden laboratories that he first pioneered the field of multi-elemental magic, and the other Agasha who live and work here look upon the daimyo's visits with a sort of awe. Hamanari is notorious for his keen intellect, often solving problems that have bewildered the resident shugenja for months by adding extra pinch of a reagent or adding an additional syllable to a complex ritual.

AGASHA OSHU, KAGAKU SPECIALIST

[Shugenja 4/Ikakeya 5; Agasha Shugenja 3]

While Hamanari tends to his duties as daimyo, his former student Agasha Oshu oversees the strange experiments in the Agasha Laboratories. He is an eager, intelligent man who learns new things rapidly. Unfortunately, he has a short attention span, causing him great difficulty in mastering any single field of magic or science. In Hamanari's mind, this makes Oshu the perfect administrator for the laboratories. He can walk into one of the many chambers beneath Kyuden Agasha, quickly grasp what the shugenja are doing there, and offer advice without becoming too wrapped up in a single experiment. He makes a customary daily round of the caverns, though he usually finds a particular experiment interesting, becomes distracted, and spends the rest of the day there. For this reason, he never begins his rounds in the same cavern; that way eventually all of them benefit from his expertise.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A sensitive experiment is taking place in the Agasha Laboratories, and a poorly scheduled chemical explosion has unexpectedly consumed several of the necessary reagents. Most of them can be easily replaced with herbs and minerals of the area, but some are unavailable locally. Oshu requests the party's aid in recovering some of the most difficult to obtain reagents.

Focus: Oshu knows that this sort of mission does not normally require samurai intervention, and apologizes for taking up their time, but he does not want to risk failure by giving the mission to peasants.

Oshu and his fellow Agasha have magically delayed the chemical reaction that is taking place in their laboratories, but cannot do so forever. If the proper ingredients are not found within weeks, the resulting explosion could collapse the tunnels beneath Kyuden Agasha. The alternative would be to throw the entire experiment — and months of work — into the sea.

Strike: Among the ingredients is a special flower that the Agasha brought with them from Dragon lands. Unfortunately, all the specimens they brought with them were destroyed in the initial explosion. The party must swiftly visit the lands of the Tamori and return with the herb — and may the Fortunes help them if the Tamori find out the PCs are on a mission for the Agasha family.

Specific details of the Agasha experiment's purpose are left to the GM's devious imagination.

THE CITY OF REMEMBRANCE

(LOCATION ?19)

Ironically, the name this city had before Matsu Hitomi died here had been long forgotten until the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. Returned spirits who visited the city called it the City of Suffering, though



none would reveal why. One spirit revealed that the city had once been home to a powerful maho-tsukai, a villain so powerful only the combined powers of the Jade Champion and the Elemental Council could lay him low. In dying, the tsukai laid a powerful curse on the city, one that would one day allow him to return. The Agasha were interested in confirming the strange spirit's tale, but he vanished without ever giving his name.

The City of Remembrance is named in honor of Matsu Hitomi, who died there many centuries ago. With her death she invoked a powerful curse that punished her former lover Akodo Godaigo and his lieutenant, Kitsu Uragiri, for betraying her. Since the mysterious spirit's revelation, the Agasha wonder if Hitomi unintentionally drew upon some small part of the curse laid upon the City of Suffering. Agasha Hamanari finds the correlation particularly upsetting; two such powerful curses in a single city is unlikely to be a coincidence.

Matsu Hitomi was one of the many spirits who returned to Rokugan through Oblivion's Gate. She lives in the land of the Lion to this day, but has never returned to the City of Remembrance. During the Phoenix Clan's alliance with the Lion Agasha Hamanari invited her to the city many times, hoping that she might shed some light upon the mystery, but his invitations were never answered.

Despite all this talk of curses, the City of Remembrance is a relatively normal place. By Agasha standards it is a bustling metropolis, dealing mostly in trade with the Shiba and Crane families. The people here are honest and hard working, if a bit more superstitious than most Phoenix.

THE SHRINE OF REMEMBRANCE

The most notable landmark in the City of Remembrance is a shrine to Matsu Hitomi. Though the shrine is not large or opulent, it always attracts a large crowd. Local superstition claims that those who do not visit the shrine at least once a week will draw the wrath of Matsu Hitomi's vengeful spirit. The fact that Hitomi is no longer dead has not affected this tradition in the least. In fact, some of the locals claim that Hitomi returned because the locals were not sufficiently respectful, and their clan's current rivalry with the Lion will end in her returning to destroy the city unless they redouble their efforts. The Isawa governor has been quick to point out several logical fallacies in this belief (for instance, it was Shiba Aikune who attacked the Lion, and not vice versa) but the peasants are as unshakable in their traditions as any Phoenix.

NICHIBOTSU, GUARDIAN OF THE SHRINE OF REMEMBRANCE

[Inkyo 3; Seven Fortunes Monk 1]

The young monk Nichibotsu is the only servant of Shinsei who tends Hitomi's shrine. He is a calm, friendly man who is always ready to lend an ear to the locals. Nichibotsu's patient demeanor and sound advice attracts as many people to the shrine as local superstition. It is a pity, Nichibotsu thinks, that one day all of these fine people will have to die.

Nichibotsu is not the calm, friendly monk that he appears to be. Once he was, but he has become thoroughly possessed by the sinister ghost that haunts the City of Remembrance. This spirit, the ghost of the maho-tsukai who once cursed the City of Suffering, is enraged that his own death has been forgotten in the wake of Matsu Hitomi. For years now the spirit has been gathering information on the local residents,

using Nichibotsu as its pawn. The spirit is not yet prepared to act — it fears the power of Agasha Hamanari and his shugenja — but once it has a plan and an opportunity, it will bathe the city in blood.

THE GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE

The largest building in the City of Remembrance is the governor's office. The governor of the city has always been an Isawa, and this tradition continues even under the reign of the Agasha. This is part of the Isawa family's continuing effort to help the Agasha adjust to their position in the Phoenix family. Though some might argue that thirty years is enough time for anyone to adjust, the Agasha do not seem to mind the presence of their Isawa cousins, and bear the paranoid meddling of their Isawa friends with typical Agasha patience.

ISAWA FUMIHIKO, PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR

[Shugenja 5; Isawa Shugenja 2]

As provincial governor, it is Fumihiko's duty to keep order in the City of Remembrance. For the most part, her duties are quite simple. The people here are courteous and honest. Crime is rare, and bandits avoid the city for fear of drawing Agasha Hamanari's wrath. Fumihiko has a small but capable force of magistrates under her command, mostly Shiba samurai with a few Agasha and Isawa shugenja.

Fumihiko's Isawa superiors have warned her to be cautious in her associations with the Agasha. The Elemental Council has told her that Hamanari is duplicitous and untrustworthy, but in her experience he has been nothing but forthright, generous, and helpful. When a small cult of Bloodspeakers began operating in the woods several years ago (the sole interesting incident during her tenure here), Hamanari came forth from Kyuden Agasha and used his prophetic visions to help Fumihiko find and exterminate the entire cell within weeks.

Researching the alleged curse on the City of Remembrance is something of a hobby for Fumihiko. She does not truly believe in the curse; all of her mystical abilities tell her that absolutely nothing is wrong with the city. Even yet, she knows that Hamanari and the local residents take the curse very seriously, so she continues her research in an effort to put their fears to rest.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Several residents of the City of Remembrance humbly approach the PCs, begging their assistance. The heimin have heard that Matsu Hitomi was one of the many spirits who returned through Oblivion's Gate. They want Matsu Hitomi to know that her sacrifice has been remembered; perhaps she could be gently encouraged to visit the city. None of the peasants have the time or freedom to journey to Lion lands, but they beg the PCs to honor their request. The heimin have little to offer aside from the gratitude of the City of Remembrance, but wise PCs may see the value in such a reward.

Focus: Naturally this is anything but a simple request. Matsu Hitomi is an honored hero of the Lion Clan living in a monastery near Shiro Matsu. The Matsu are extremely suspicious of anyone who demands an audience with her, especially agents of the Phoenix Clan. It will require quite a bit of guile, cleverness, and determination to win the Lion's trust.

Strike: Even if the party gains access to Hitomi, they find her unwilling to cooperate. The aged heroine is pained by reminders of her former life, and is unwilling to return to the

site of her death. Only a truly sincere request will convince Hitomi to venture forth from the monastery and see the great monument the Phoenix have erected to her courage. Even then, Lion Champion Matsu Nimuro may be extremely suspicious if one of his most trusted advisors should suddenly decide to visit the lands of the Phoenix. So soon after Shiba Aikune's violent attack upon the Lion, Nimuro will be highly reluctant to grant Hitomi permission to leave, even if the PCs can convince her that the trip is necessary. If the players can succeed, however, they will have earned the respect of an entire city and may have taken a critical step in repairing relations between the Lion and Phoenix.

MINOR AGASHA HOLDINGS

As noted previously, the Agasha have few holdings, so "minor" is a relative term. Like their major holdings, many of these are administrated by Isawa family members, or occasionally even left in the hands of capable peasants.

HONORED TREATY CITY (LOCATION P18)

This city was founded centuries ago to honor a peace treaty between the Lion and the Phoenix. When Hantei Naseru brokered the new treaty between the two clans, he did so in this city. As the southernmost city in Phoenix lands, Honored Treaty City has a moderate climate to go with its large amount of arable land. Normally it has such a surplus of rice that it makes a healthy profit through trade with Nanashi Mura and Toshi Ranbo. Unfortunately, the recent Dragon incursion into Phoenix lands and subsequent war have laid waste to much of Honored Treaty City's farmland. The peasants are hard pressed to feed themselves and pay taxes, let alone find surplus to trade.

After the Lion withdrawal from Phoenix lands and Shiba Aikune's violent confrontation with the remaining Lion advisors, Shiba Aikune personally came to the city and burned the treaty with the power of Isawa's Last Wish. A large number of Aikune's supporters accompanied him here and fortified the city against possible Lion retribution. Though the Lion have not yet sought reprisal for the deaths of their advisors, Aikune's samurai remain. Honored Treaty City has become a tense, quiet place. Bands of armored Shiba samurai patrol the streets at all times. The mood here is somber. The residents know that it is only a matter of time before either the Dragon or Lion return, and even should Aikune's warriors hold the line the price in Phoenix lives will be great.

THE SHIBA BARRACKS

The newest feature in Honored Treaty City is a massive military outpost at its western edge. Constructed in only two weeks by Shiba Aikune and a handful of Asako shugenja who follow him, the fortress is large and sturdy. It was intended not only to house Aikune's Shiba troops, but also to serve as a refuge for the peasants of Honored Treaty in case of invasion.

Shiba Aikune and his followers are better spellcasters than architects. Due to the building's hasty magical construction the barracks are not quite as practical as one might hope. The ceiling in the eastern wing is abnormally low, causing the

soldiers to bang their heads against the ceiling when rising from bed too quickly. The floors in the kitchens are sharply slanted, drawing no end of complaint from the chefs. The basements are almost entirely inaccessible, as the doorways are too narrow for all but the thinnest resident to pass through.

Such results are not unexpected when using magic to replace physical labor, but under normal circumstances they could be easily rectified by dedicated shugenja. Unfortunately the few shugenja in Honored Treaty City are not powerful enough to rectify the barracks' architectural oddities. Shiba Aikune is aware of the problem, and has promised to dispatch shugenja to deal with it at the earliest opportunity, but for the moment his attention is fully occupied with organizing the Phoenix defenses in other areas.

SHIBA TAKEISHI, BARRACKS COMMANDER, HONORED TREATY CITY

[Samurai 7; Shiba Bushi 3]

Shiba Takeishi was one of the first samurai to follow Shiba Aikune. He was impressed by his kinsman's force of character and ability to control the massive power under his command. After watching Aikune single-handedly drive back the invading Dragon forces, Takeishi was completely prepared to follow his young lord's every command.

That was before he was placed in command of Honored Treaty City. No single incident could hope to shatter his loyalty to Shiba Aikune, but hundreds of daily inconveniences have come very close. With each day more reports come to him of oddities and inconsistencies in the architecture of the barracks, problems that could have been overcome if Aikune and his shugenja had paid more attention to detail in constructing the fortress. Takeishi often considers moving his forces into the less defensible (but more practical) city, or even hiring peasants to build a new fortress. He knows that Lord Aikune might see either action as an insult, so for the time being Takeishi continues to be patient and hopes that his request for a capable Earth shugenja to repair the fortress will soon be answered.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: This challenge is most appropriate if there is a shugenja of moderate to high power in the party. The Shiba bushi living in the local barracks ask the party shugenja to repair the building's bizarre architecture.

Focus: Any shugenja who has access to spells that can move earth and stone is a natural for this mission. Others can be provided with scrolls generously donated by the Agasha family (scrolls that do the bushi residents no good, but are powerful in trained hands).

Strike: The job becomes more interesting when the party draws the attention of the clan of mujina who have taken up residence in the barracks cellar. It seems that the bizarre construction of the fortress was no fault of Aikune or his shugenja, but the effect of a family of mujina using their magic to tamper with the fortress' layout soon after it was built. The mujina, of course, like the building fine the way it is. The tricksters do everything in their power to hamper the party's efforts, from stealing spell scrolls to convincing the superstitious Shiba that the building has become haunted (which, in a manner of speaking, it has). Details regarding mujina can be found in the *Game Master's Guide*,™ *Creatures of Rokugan*,™ and *Fortunes and Winds*.™

ZUMIKI-MIHARI

This lone watchtower stands at the edge of Phoenix lands, guarding the boundaries between Agasha and Otomo territory. Though the Otomo have never had an aggressive military, the Isawa maintain the tower and greatly relish keeping an eye on the most meddlesome of Imperial Families. Upon first arriving in these provinces the Agasha found the Isawa practice of spying on the Otomo somewhat dishonorable and distasteful. After three decades of dealing with rude Otomo diplomats and obnoxious emissaries appearing at Kyuden Agasha with little warning or provocation, though, the Agasha have also come to take a shameful joy in the presence of Zumiki-Mihari. Here, Isawa wisdom and Agasha ingenuity come together, as the two families work in harmony toward new ways to monitor the Otomo.

AGASHA MAIKO, CARETAKER OF ZUMIKI- MIHARI

[Shugenja 9; Isawa Shugenja 3]
Maiko is that rare Agasha who governs an Agasha holding. She was a student of the Isawa school, and her talent for Air magic — and information gathering abilities — are without par. The former Isawa caretaker quickly surrendered his position to her when he saw that she was far better than he at quietly gathering information on the Otomo. Unlike most in her family, Maiko is terse, secretive, and manipulative. Her kin blame it on her time with the Isawa. The Isawa, for their part, find her much easier to get along with than most Agasha.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Agasha Maiko has stumbled upon a disturbing incident. While spying on the Otomo borders she witnessed Otomo Itsuko, a high-ranking member of the Imperial Family, journeying across the plains with her bodyguards. Maiko saw Itsuko's bodyguards attack a trio of farmers, stuff them into baskets, and carry them swiftly back to Itsuko's palace. Maiko knows that Itsuko is a shugenja, and fears that she may be a maho-tsukai. She asks the party to investigate — discreetly.

Focus: The obvious obstacle is that the party cannot reveal what they know without also revealing how they came about the knowledge. To admit that the Agasha have been spying on the Otomo would bring great dishonor upon the family. The PCs are left to their own devices to investigate the crime.

Strike: Itsuko is expecting visitors, and eagerly invites the PCs into her home (assuming they approach in such an obvious manner). The farmers are alive and well, and Itsuko is no maho-tsukai. Itsuko staged the entire event, hoping to trick the Agasha into revealing the true purpose of Zumiki-Mihari. She tries to trick the party members into revealing something, or, failing that, bribe or intimidate them into betraying Maiko.



IMPORTANT AGASHA PCs

AGASHA CHIEH

Agasha Chieh is the daughter of Agasha Hisojo, a famous Dragon Clan magistrate. All her life has been lived in the shadow of her father's exploits. Those who once worked by her father's side expected great things, and watched her development eagerly. Despite her inexperience she was awarded a post as an Emerald Magistrate, with the freedom to choose any location in the Empire to work for the cause of justice. Seemingly to spite those who anticipated greatness from her, she chose to offer her protection to the Izaku Library, a peaceful backwater. Only recently has she chosen to emerge from the library and walk the same paths as her father, if for no other reason than to prove herself equally capable.

Life has been surprisingly difficult for Agasha Chieh. While most in her family are reviled as traitors to the Dragon Clan, she is respected, for her father's deeds are legendary among the Kitsuki. She stands between the Dragon and the Phoenix, two clans that despise one another. Her position compels her to somehow repair relations between them, but she is uncertain how a minor shugenja can go about doing so. Her only option, is to follow in her father's footsteps until she commands the same respect he once did. Then, perhaps, she may have a chance to work for peace.

Months ago she was selected by Hantei Naseru to join a band of Emerald Magistrates under the command of Miya Shoin, son of the famous returned spirit, Miya Dosonu. Chieh and the others were assigned to discover the identity of a mysterious assassin bent on murdering the remaining returned spirits from the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. With Chieh's expertise in investigation and potent magical abilities the group discovered that it was none other than Gusai, the former Mantis daimyo and a returned spirit himself, who was responsible. After a hard-fought battle in the heart of Otosan Uchi, Gusai was defeated and Chieh was rewarded with a permanent partnership with Shoin.

Chieh is uncertain if the matter is truly settled. During the chase, Gusai displayed many abilities that were unnervingly reminiscent of the minions of the Lying Darkness. Though Gusai was slain, they never discovered the source of his powers. She knows from her father's experiences with the Lying Darkness that where one spawn of Shadow walks, more always follow. Chieh now searches tirelessly for any clues regarding who granted Gusai his abilities and how they did so. Thus far her lack of success has been extremely frustrating.

Chieh is extremely emotional, but hides her feelings behind a veil of indifference. She is passionate and protective of her friends, and has a fierce love of justice. Her appearance varies frequently, as she is fond of disguising herself with illusion magic. When her appearance is not altered by illusion she is a small, beautiful woman with long white hair (a legacy of her father's Crane ancestry).

AGASHA CHIEH

Female human Phoenix, Shu 6: CR 6; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 6d6+12; hp 38; Init: +1; Spd 30 ft.; Atk masterwork tanto +4 melee, (1d4); AC 14 (touch 12, flat-footed 13); Dmg 1d4 masterwork tanto; SQ Class Skill — Alchemy, Element Focus (Fire), Sense Elements; Honor 3; AL CG; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 19, Wis 15, Cha 17; Maximum Void: 2; Ht: 5 ft. 8 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language — Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Naga, Yobanjin, Alchemy +11, Concentration +11, Diplomacy +11, Heal +8, Knowledge (Fortunes) +10, Knowledge (law) +10, Knowledge (maho) +8, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +9, Knowledge (Shintao) +11, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +13, Spot +11; Elemental Attunement, Spell Focus (Illusion), Versatile (Spot, Sense Motive), Void Use.

Dojo: Kyuden Agasha.

Spells Known (6/7/6/4; base DC 14 + spell level; Elemental Focus — Fire. Spells Known (Agasha School): 0 — Agasha's touch, commune with elements, dancing lights, disrupt undead, ghost sound, light, summon, whispers of the kami*; 1st — *burning hands, change self, evil ward*, hypnotism, silent image;* 2nd — *hurried steps*, detect thoughts, the fires that cleanse+;* 3rd — *importune kami III*, searing light.*

Possessions: amulet of natural armor +1, bracers of armor +1, masterwork tanto, ring of protection +1.

AGASHA CHIEH

Earth: 2

Willpower: 3

Water: 2

Perception: 5

Fire: 3

Air: 3

Awareness: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Agasha Shugenja 2

Honor: 3.1

Glory: 4.5

Advantages: Social Position (Emerald Magistrate)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Difficult), Overconfident

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Etiquette 5, Heraldry 4, History 4, Horsemanship 2, Intimidation 2, Investigation 4, Manipulation 3, Meditation 4, Music 3, Shintao 3, Sincerity 3, Spell Research 3, Tea Ceremony 4, Theology 4

Dojo: Kyuden Agasha

Spells: (Spells marked with * are memorized) By the Light of Lord Moon, Evil Ward, False Face*, Fires of Purity, Force of Will, Hurried Steps*, Know the Ground, Mists of Illusion*, Summon Fire Spirit, Waiting Flame

AGASHA HAMANARI

Hamanari is hardly the typical mad Phoenix prophet. He is calm, friendly, and personable, accepting his visions as they come and seldom worrying about the future. He does not seek to gain political power over the other families of the Phoenix, and accepts their attempts to undermine his own family with patient serenity. He has no particular talent in the destructive style of fiery magic the Agasha favor; he has extraordinary talent in Water magic and trained under Isawa Mitako, the shugenja who went on to become the current Oracle of Water.

This, of course, makes the Elemental Council and the leaders of the other families terribly suspicious of Hamanari. They wonder what plans he might have that he conceals so well, or what he knows of the future that he chooses not to share. The leaders of the Isawa, Asako, and Shiba families dislike him despite his best efforts to be friendly and diplomatic.

The distrust of his fellow Phoenix deeply disturbs Hamanari. He is uncertain how to go about convincing them that he truly has no hidden schemes or secret knowledge. He is truly at peace with his ability to see the future, and knows that only by not fighting against what is to come can one hope to change it for the better. He does not seek to undermine the other Phoenix families because he knows that as the newest of them, the Agasha cannot afford to play political games. His one major foray into politics went horribly wrong.

After he and his Agasha kinsmen developed the radical new rituals that allowed multi-elemental spells, he presented the information to the court as a gift, sharing credit with the Isawa even though they had done nothing but attempt to usurp and steal his research. Rather than perceive it as a gesture of peace, the Isawa saw it as an open display of defiance, a statement that the Agasha family would not be manipulated. Sadly, many members of his own family supported Hamanari's actions when they heard how the Isawa reacted, so he allowed their misconception to continue.

Hamanari is a man of boundless optimism, so he remains friendly towards his fellow Phoenix despite their constant snubbing of his family. He hopes that one day they will see the truth and allow him to use his visions to help them. He looks upon the empty chair on the Council, the seat of the Master of Water, and wonders if they will recognize his talent and allow him to help guide the Phoenix as he should. He would never ask, of course. To do so would only make them even more suspicious.

Hamanari constantly has visions of the future due to a karmic connection with Isawa Norikazu that not even he entirely understands. Thus far Hamanari has dealt with the visions peacefully and displays none of Norikazu's madness. Over the last few months, the visions have grown more frequent. He sees terrible times ahead for the Phoenix, chaotic events almost universally tied to their conflict with the Dragon. When he looks upon Shiba Aikune, however, his visions are more confusing. He sees both a bright future and a terrible fate for his clan when he looks upon the son of Tsukune, and as far as he can tell the two fates are indivisible from one another, and unavoidable. Thus far he has only told his closest advisors of this vision, for not even he understands what it portends.

AGASHA HAMANARI, AGASHA FAMILY DAIMYO

Male human Phoenix Shu 10/Ike 5: CR14; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 14d6+14; hp 61; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; Atk wakizashi +8 melee (1d6); AC 13 (touch 9, flat-footed 13); SQ Agasha's Wisdom, Class skill — Alchemy (family bonus), Relic Mastery, Shugenja abilities (Element Focus — Fire, Sense Elements); Honor 2; AL LG; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +18; Str 11, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 20 (24), Cha 18; Maximum Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 5 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (High Rokugani, Kami, Rokugani, Yobanjin), Alchemy +28, Concentration +18, Craft (calligraphy) +14, Diplomacy +19, Heal +20, Knowledge (arcana) +22, Knowledge (elements) +22, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (Shintao) +16, Sense Motive +15, Spellcraft +20; Brew Potion, Elemental Insight, Mad Visions (Ancestor: Isawa Norikazu), Master Researcher, Multi-Element Mastery, Ritual Magic, Void Use; Dojo: Kyuden Isawa.

Spells Known (6/8/8/8/7/7/6/4, Base DC 17 + spell level, Elemental Focus — Water, Isawa School): 0 — commune with elements, create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, ghost sound, mending, purify food and drink, purity, read magic, summon; 1st — animal friendship, cure light wounds, endure elements, expeditious retreat, sense spirit, water and earth; 2nd — Bente's touch, lesser restoration, locate object, make whole, protection from arrows, water and air; 3rd — air and earth, create food and water, cure serious wounds, dispel magic, remove curse; 4th — ice storm, importune kami IV, restoration, stifling wind; 5th — city of mists, commune with nature, the path not taken, righteous might, scrying, wall of iron; 6th — karma, path of Suitengu, true seeing; 7th — guardian of water, spell turning.

Possessions: ashigaru armor +1, haori of resistance +3, periapt of wisdom +4, wakizashi.

AGASHA HAMANARI

Earth: 3

Willpower: 4

Water: 4

Fire: 2

Intelligence: 5

Air: 3

Awareness: 4

Void: 4

School/Rank: Agasha Shugenja 4

Honor: 2.3

Glory: 7.1

Advantages: Aligned to the Elements (Water), Ancestor (Isawa Norikazu), Clear Thinker, Irreproachable

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (distrusted by other Phoenix daimyo)

Skills: Astrology 6, Calligraphy 4, Courtier 4, Etiquette 4, History 3, Kenjutsu 4, Lore (shugenja) 5, Medicine 3, Meditation 6, Mizugusuri 5, Omens 6, Research 7, Shintao 5, Spellcraft 8, Tanto 4





Dojo: Kyuden Agasha

Spells: As the daimyo of a major shugenja family, Agasha Hamanari has access to any spell the Agasha family has in its libraries. As one of the creators of the multi-elemental style of magic, he is particularly fond of multi-elemental spells.

AGASHA YUBISAKI

Few men would volunteer for Agasha Yubisaki's position. He is an advance scout of the Phoenix armies. He works beside small units of Shiba trained in stealth and espionage, creeping behind enemy lines and gathering vital intelligence for Shiba Aikune. Sometimes he must disguise himself as a Dragon and accumulate information in the heart of an enemy city; Yubisaki, only one generation removed from the Dragon, is ideally suited for such missions.

Even among the Phoenix shugenja are a valuable commodity, so it is rare that one would be risked on such dangerous missions. Yubisaki is one of the chosen few. He has specialized in a unique blend of spells that grant him the stealth to gather information and the firepower to escape when things get rough.

Over the last few months, Yubisaki has realized that he is unique but expendable, a paradox that strikes the easy-going Agasha as endlessly humorous. He tends to be in a chipper mood most of the time; this makes the Shiba who work beside him slightly uneasy, as they find his bawdy humor and occasional inattention to personal hygiene more appropriate for a Crab than a Phoenix. His second-in-command Shiba Koshiro, who has been with Yubisaki longer than the others and has some experience dealing with quirky Agasha shugenja, realizes that it is simply his way, and deeply respects the shugenja's intellect and power.

In the last few weeks Yubisaki has seen many burnt-out Dragon villages or sites where units of Dragon samurai were killed to the last man by some powerful source of fire. Survivors' stories always blame Shiba Aikune, reports which disturb and confuse Yubisaki. As his unit reports directly to Aikune, he knows the young Shiba lord's location most of the time. Many of these attacks occurred at times when Aikune was far too distant to possibly be involved, or was seen in other places by reliable Phoenix samurai at the same time. With the power of the Last Wish, it is entirely possible Aikune may still be to blame, but Yubisaki finds it unlikely. He has fought beside Aikune,

and spoken to him on numerous occasions. The man may have his flaws, but he is not capable of casual slaughter on the scale the Agasha has witnessed.

Yubisaki has yet to reveal these discoveries to anyone. He knows that more is going on here than he understands, so he plans to solve it this problem in the only way he knows: by continuing to watch, and to listen.

AGASHA YUBISAKI,

AGASHA ADVANCE SCOUT

Male human Phoenix Shu 8: CR 8; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 8d6+24; hp 64; Init +1; Spd 30ft.; Atk +1 katana +8 melee (1d10+5); AC 16 (touch 11, flat-footed 15); SQ Class skill — Alchemy (family bonus), Shugenja abilities (Elemental Focus — Fire, Sense Elements); Honor 2; AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 10; Maximum Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 3 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (High Rokugani, Kami, Naga, Rokugani, Yobanjin), Alchemy +15, Concentration +14, Disguise +11, Heal +12, Hide +12, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Scry +14, Spellcraft +14; Leadership (11), Martial Weapon Proficiency (katana), Versatile (Disguise, Hide), Void Use.

Dojo: Kyuden Agasha.

Spells Known (6/7/7/6/3, Base DC 17 + spell level, Elemental Focus — Fire, Agasha School): 0 — *Agasha's touch, call fire, crow's vision, flare, flaring speed, guidance, hands of clay, mage hand, whispers of the kami*; 1st — *burning hands, cause fear, change self, faerie fire, hypnotism, pass without trace*; 2nd — *cat's grace, eye shall not see, hurried steps, produce flame*; 3rd — *clairvoyance/clairaudience, fire wings, fireball*; 4th — *fire shield, wall of fire*.

Possessions: ashigaru armor +2, katana +1, necklace of fireballs (type I).

Note: Yubisaki's cohort (from his Leadership feat) is Shiba Koshiro (Male human Phoenix Ftr 3/Rog 3), second-in-command of Yubisaki's scouting party. 3 1st-level warriors and 3 1st-level experts make up the rest of his unit. These six are Phoenix vassals who accompany Yubisaki, but typically remain behind when he and Koshiro attempt particularly dangerous missions.

AGASHA YUBISAKI

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Perception: 4

Fire: 4

Air: 3

Void: 2

School/Rank: Agasha Shugenja 3

Honor: 2.1

Glory: 3.2

Advantages: Bland, Crafty, True Friend (Shiba Koshiro), Way of the Land (Phoenix)

Disadvantages: Benten's Curse

Skills: Battle 4, Calligraphy 2, History 2, Investigation 4, Lore (shugenja) 2, Medicine 3, Meditation 4, Mizugusuri 5, Shintao 3, Stealth 2,

Dojo: Kyuden Agasha

Spells (Spells marked with * are memorized): Cloak of Night, Elemental Ward, False Face, Hands of Clay, Hurried Steps, Secrets on the Wind, The Fires From Within, Walk Without Passing, Wall of Fire, Wings of Fire

VASSALS OF THE AGASHA FAMILY

THE ATSUMARU FAMILY

This tiny family, small even by the standards of vassal families, began centuries ago with early members of the Agasha who studied *kagaku*, their strange alchemical magic. The brilliant but reclusive Agasha Nakune was one of the first Dragon to experiment with the strange blend of magic and science that would one day produce the crafts of *mizugusuri* and *kagaku*. It was far from a perfect practice, however, and Nakune's many failures meant that he was constantly searching for the proper combination of components for his strange concoctions.

During one of his many expeditions into the wilderness to gather the ingredients he required, Nakune encountered a ronin named Kadokawa who made his home within the forest. Nakune demanded to know what business the wave man had in the Agasha forests. The two might have come to blows were it not for the timely intervention of an enraged bear. Kadokawa drew his sword and distracted the bear while Nakune calmed the enraged beast magically, allowing them both to escape unharmed. Impressed with the ronin's courage and somewhat embarrassed for judging Kadokawa too harshly, Nakune offered the ronin a lucrative position gathering the components he needed for his experiments.

Decades later, the materials Kadokawa provided had allowed Nakune to master several new and impressive forms of magic, and the ronin's aid gave the shugenja more time to conduct his research. Nakune's research finally began to draw the notice and respect of his fellow Agasha. When the daimyo of the family died with no close relatives, there was little surprise when Nakune was asked to step into the position. His first act as daimyo was to grant Kadokawa and his children the vassal family name of Atsumaru.

The Atsumaru family is very close-knit, never numbering more than about a dozen. The name is limited to the ruling descendant of Kadokawa, his or her spouse and their children. Whenever leadership is passed to a new daimyo, that daimyo's siblings have the option of swearing fealty, but they are never entitled to pass their name on to their children.

ATSUMARU MURA AND ATSUMARU MORI

When the bulk of the Agasha family swore fealty to the Phoenix Clan, the Atsumaru followed them. In the process, however, they gave up the woodlands that had been their home for centuries. The provinces the Agasha were given had only sparse woodlands, and so the Atsumaru vowed to create their own. During their wanderings to collect components for the Agasha, the Atsumaru also collect seeds and saplings, which they return to a growing orchard outside the village of Atsumaru Mura.

Atsumaru Mura and the orchard (Atsumaru Mori) are very small and do not appear on many maps. There are fewer than fifty people dwelling in the general area who serve the Atsumaru family, and they are a quiet, private people who interact with outsiders only for the sake of politeness.

THE ATSUMARU FAMILY

Favored Class: Ranger

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skill: Alchemy

Starting Outfit:

1. Masterwork ashigaru armor and 50 koku

THE ATSUMARU FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Perception

Beginning Honor: 2, plus 5 boxes

Glory: 0.5 (as opposed to the normal 1.0)

Skills: Regardless of what school he attends, a member of the Atsumaru family may sacrifice one rank in any of his school skills to gain a rank (or an additional rank) in Craft (Mizugusuri) or Hunting.

Other: May only attend Agasha or Shiba schools.

THE IZAKU FAMILY

A relatively young family, the Izaku were formed in the aftermath of the Clan War. During that epic conflict, the undead shugenja Yogo Junzo destroyed many of the learning centers of the Phoenix while seeking the Black Scrolls, and ravaged temples of the Brotherhood and Dragon Clan searching for the descendant of Shinsei. When the Clan War ended, precious few locations still retained any magical knowledge. Having already lost so much knowledge, the scholars of the Dragon and Phoenix clans united in an attempt to recover as much as possible. A small library under construction in the city of Heibeisu, equidistant between the lands of the Dragon and Phoenix, was chosen to house this knowledge. Originally intended as an archive for texts on crop production and grain distribution, the humble Izaku Library suddenly became the greatest repository of magical knowledge in the Empire.

Asako Miruko and Agasha Tsuru, two relatively low-ranking samurai, did most of the work accumulating scrolls for the library. The two traveled across the face of the Empire many times over in their quest for knowledge. When their task was finally complete, their lords offered each of them, separately, a single favor. Miruko asked only to be wed to Tsuru, whom she had come to love. Tsuru asked only that Miruko be wed to a lord, for he had come to love her as well and did not wish for her to live out her life in obscurity. Both clans agreed. Agasha Tsuru became the lord of the Izaku vassal family and Miruko became his bride. As their love had allowed the mystic knowledge of the Empire to be reborn, their children would protect that knowledge forever. The Agasha (who were not yet Phoenix) and Asako agreed to share the resources of the library so that both the Dragon and Phoenix might benefit.

The Izaku were sorely tested during the War Against the Shadow. Like Junzo, the forces of the Darkness made a concentrated effort to destroy as much accumulated knowledge as possible, and only the fierce determination of the Izaku protected their library's contents from Nothing. Many brave Izaku died or were consumed by the Darkness, and as the tiny family desperately tried to recover, their Agasha patrons abruptly abandoned the Dragon Clan to join the Phoenix. Some small number remained behind, but the vast majority of the family was gone, leaving the Izaku to fend for themselves.

Despite their circumstances, the Izaku persevered. After a few years, the Agasha of the Phoenix contacted the Izaku about continuing their sponsorship. The aging Izaku Miruko

chose to honor the vows of allegiance she had taken, serving both the Agasha that had joined the Phoenix and those who remained with the Dragon Clan. When the Tamori were granted a family name, the Izaku petitioned the Imperial Court for permission to be considered a vassal to both families. Though such a thing was unprecedented, the Izaku believed that maintaining some peaceful contact, no matter how small, between the Agasha and Tamori was necessary for them to continue protecting the magical knowledge both clans had accumulated.

Currently, the Izaku are the sworn vassals of both the Agasha and Tamori families. Many find this a very strange arrangement, but both clans value the Izaku too highly to abandon them. For either the Agasha or Tamori to abandon the Izaku would be, in a manner of speaking, to concede victory to their rivals — something that Tamori and Agasha pride would never allow.

THE IZAKU LIBRARY

The Izaku have only one notable holding, but its existence is the entire purpose of their family. The Izaku Library is not only a great archive of knowledge, it is also the home of the Izaku family. The humble library has expanded greatly since its construction, and now dominates the city of Heibeisu.

Though the Dragon and Phoenix consider the Izaku Library neutral ground, the city is a focal point in the war between the two clans. This places the Izaku in an uncomfortable position, as both sides seek to exploit the knowledge within the library for use as a weapon against the other. The Izaku know that they cannot serve either side in good faith if it leads to the destruction of the other. As a result, they recently locked away in the depths of the library all spell scrolls with military applications, vowing to refuse access to both sides until the conflict has ended. Neither the Agasha nor Tamori are pleased by this, but they have not pursued the matter. Though the Izaku Library is impressive, both sides have plenty of other magical resources they can bring to bear.

IZAKU SHIRIKO, DAIMYO OF THE IZAKU

[Courtier 9; Agasha Shugenja 3]

Shiriko's Isawa parents died of the Wasting Disease during the Clan War, leaving her orphaned and alone. Asako Miruko and Agasha Tsuru discovered her wandering her village alone, frightened and starving. They took her with them on their journeys, eventually adopting her when they were married and the Izaku Library was founded.

Though Shiriko's parents loved her, she was a homely child who did not make friends easily. Many wondered if she would be fit to control the family. During the War of Spirits a shugenja named Yeiseo, a disgraced henshin spirit serving the Steel Chrysanthemum, came to the libraries and demanded that Izaku Tsuru grant his shugenja access. Tsuru and Miruko refused, so Yeiseo's henchmen killed them. Yeiseo turned to Shiriko, the new daimyo by default, and demanded her submission, threatening to sack the library if she refused. Shiriko agreed, but refused to grant access to the Library's most powerful spells. She claimed she would burn them before she allowed him to use them against the Empire, and an uneasy peace was maintained as Heibeisu became a stronghold of the Hantei's forces. In the meantime, Shiriko quietly organized the Izaku and the people of the city to prepare to revolt against their enemies.

AGASHA MECHANICS

NEW ANCESTORS

While the Agasha have been a family for centuries, they have only recently become Phoenix. This tends to cause a great deal of discord when they attempt to call upon their ancestors, especially those ancestors who disapprove of the shift in allegiance. While this disturbs the Agasha, they tend to be less concerned with the veneration of their ancestors than other Phoenix families and deal with the situation as best as they can.

AGASHA HANUJITO

A little over four hundred years ago, the reappearance of Iuchiban and his Bloodspeakers drew the attention of every shugenja in Rokugan, especially those of the Dragon. Agasha Hanujito was shireikan to the Mirumoto general who helped win the now-famous Battle of the Sleeping River. Thanks to the wisdom of both General Mirumoto Gojanuwan and Hanujito, the Dragon forces at the battle were properly prepared to fight Iuchiban's blood zombies. The combined might of the Clans of Rokugan defeated Iuchiban that day and locked him away forever.

Hanujito had watched over the Dragon Clan's Agasha for the three hundred and fifty years after his death. Their recent defection to the Phoenix angered this usually passive spirit and sent nightmares rippling through the minds of his descendants. Hanujito visited Agasha Gennai in his dreams and demanded to know why the new Phoenix daimyo had become a traitor to his clan. Gennai explained what had happened to Hitomi and her personal vendetta against the Moon. Hanujito was still displeased with Gennai's actions, but understood the hard choice that the Agasha had made. Despite his belief that his descendants have made a poor choice, Hanujito refuses to abandon those who carry his family name. When visiting his Phoenix descendants, he is surly and disagreeable, but dispenses wisdom that has not waned with the passing of time.

ANCIENT WISDOM

PHOENIX ANCESTOR FEAT:

AGASHA HANUJITO

You are blessed with the wisdom of Agasha Hanujito, hero of the Battle of the Sleeping River. Unfortunately, the shiryō's constant disapproval can be somewhat depressing.

Clan: Phoenix

Benefit: You gain a +4 bonus to all skill checks involving Wisdom-based skills, but suffer a -2 penalty on all Charisma checks.

AGASHA HANUJITO

(4 POINTS)

You are blessed with the wisdom of Agasha Hanujito, hero of the Battle of The Sleeping River. You may add your Fire Ring to the total of any skill roll involving Intelligence, but must make one Raise on any Awareness roll to be successful.

When word reached the remote library of the Hantei's defeat at the hands of Toturi, the Izaku acted quickly, overwhelming the Hantei loyalists in a matter of hours. Shiriko emerged from the library, handed a satchel containing Yiseo's head to a courier bound for Otosan Uchi, and quietly returned to her library.

Since that time, Shiriko has returned to her meek and complacent nature. Though she is by no means lovely, those who know her respect her surprisingly sharp wit and agile mind. The Izaku are grateful for her leadership and confidence, and the family is flourishing under her command.

THE IZAKU FAMILY

Favored Class: Courtier

Starting Honor: 3

Class Skill: Knowledge (History)

Starting Outfit:

1. Courtier outfit, four first level divine scrolls (no Water spells).

Bonus Languages: Any (excluding secret languages)

NEW FEAT

IZAKU SCHOLAR (GENERAL)

You have full access to one of the most comprehensive libraries in the Empire, and can use all its research facilities.

Clan: Dragon or Phoenix

Prerequisite: Int 14+

Benefit: For each full day spent in study at the Izaku library, you gain a +6 competence bonus that can be applied to any single skill use within the next month. This bonus may be applied to any single Intelligence or Wisdom-based skill check. You may accumulate multiple such bonuses by studying at the Izaku libraries for a length of time, but any bonus not used within one month's time is lost. You may accumulate a maximum number of such bonuses equal to your Intelligence modifier. Only one bonus may be spent per skill check.

THE IZAKU FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Beginning Honor: 2, plus 5 boxes

Glory: 0.5 (as opposed to the normal 1.0)

Skills: If attending the Agasha or Isawa shugenja school, a member of the Izaku family may give up a starting skill of his choice to gain an additional rank in History, Lore, or Spell Research (allowing him to possibly gain 2 ranks in a skill if it is also given by his school). One only skill rank may be exchanged in this manner.

Other: May purchase the Izaku Librarian Advantage for 2 points.

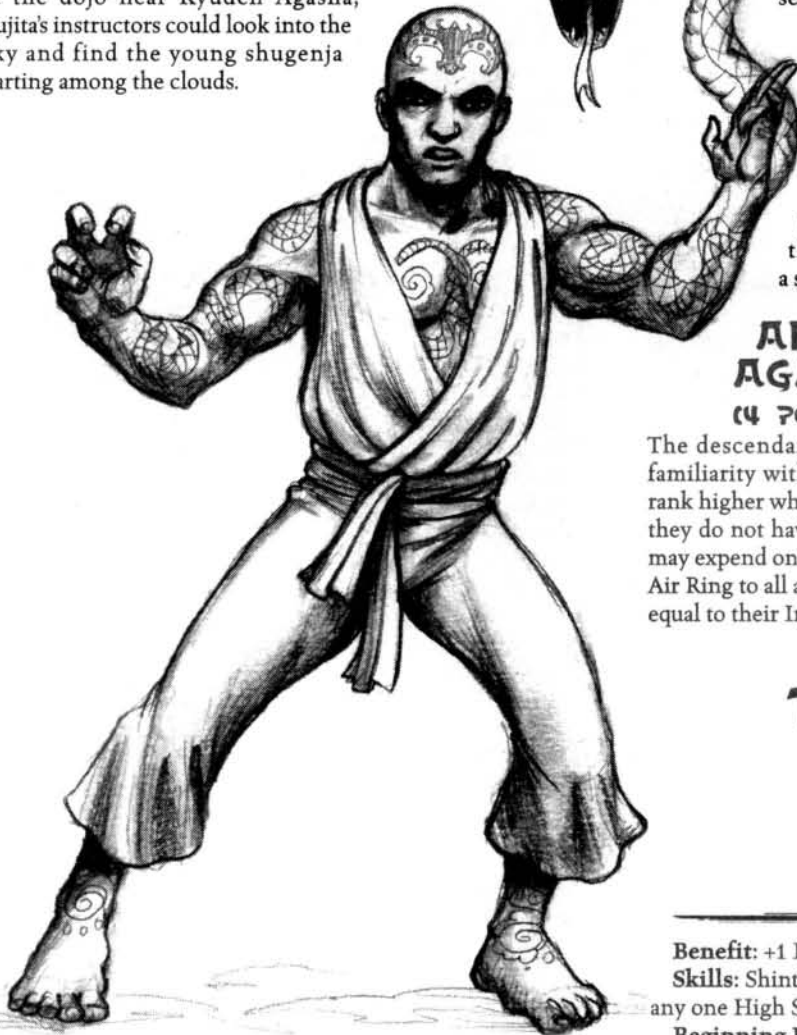
NEW ADVANTAGE

IZAKU LIBRARIAN (4 POINTS, 3 POINTS FOR AGASHA OR TAMORI CHARACTERS)

Members of the Izaku library have full access to the inner sanctum, where the more sensitive materials are stored. Those who have access gain one Free Raise that may be used on Spellcraft rolls or when casting a spell for every day they spend studying. These Free Raises must be used within one month of the library visit or they are lost. No individual may have more Free Raises than his Void + 2 at any one time. Only one Free Raise may be used per roll.

AGASHA FUJITA

Agasha Fujita was one of the first Agasha to pass his gempukku after the family's defection to the Phoenix. Early on in life, it was clear that Fujita had a very strong connection to the air kami. This was rare for an Agasha, who were typically closer to the fire kami than any others. When he couldn't be found at the dojo near Kyuden Agasha, Fujita's instructors could look into the sky and find the young shugenja darting among the clouds.



It was during the War of Spirits that Fujita found his true calling. When the Phoenix were forced into helping Hantei XVI, their units often lost many yojimbo in tough skirmishes. Agasha Fujita found that he had a natural affinity for the art of kenjutsu and began to teach young bushi to wield a blade when there was no one else left to protect the Phoenix shugenja in battle. Fujita's training regimen included an understanding of how a shugenja could augment a samurai's abilities and how to spot those enhancements. He trained many well-known Shiba samurai before their gempukku, including Tsukune's son Shiba Aikune and the current Voice of the Masters, Shiba Yoma.

Agasha Fujita was killed in one of the final battles leading up to the Devastation of Beiden Pass while trying to protect another young shugenja, Isawa Nakamuro. The air kami mourned Fujita's death, but part of his power lives on in his descendants.

ONE LIFE, ONE BLADE

PHOENIX ANCESTOR FEAT: AGASHA FUJITAI

You are descended from a powerful Agasha shugenja whose familiarity with the katana was second only to his connection to the air kami.

Clan: Phoenix

Prerequisites: Divine spellcasting ability, Element Focus (Air)

Benefit: You may wield a katana as if you had the Martial Weapon Proficiency (katana) feat. As a free action you may expend a spell slot to gain a +1 insight bonus to attack rolls for a number of rounds equal to the level of the spell slot expended. This is a supernatural ability.

ANCESTOR: AGASHA FUJITA (4 POINTS)

The descendants of Agasha Fujita share their ancestor's familiarity with the blade. They are always considered one rank higher when using the Katana or Kenjutsu skills (even if they do not have any ranks in either skill). In addition, they may expend one of their Air spell slots for the day to add their Air Ring to all attacks with the katana for a number of rounds equal to their Insight Rank.

THE AGASHA SHUGENJA SCHOOL (UPDATED)

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Skills: Shintao, Calligraphy, Meditation, History, Research, any one High Skill, any one Bugei skill

Beginning Honor: 2, plus 5 boxes

Beginning Spells: Sense, Commune and Summon, plus 3 Fire, 2 Earth and 1 Air

Affinity/Deficiency: Students of the Agasha Shugenja have Affinity to Fire and Deficiency to Water.

THE AGASHA IKAKUYA

Throughout their history, the Agasha have been focused on the world of the alchemical. Their family founder went so far as to create a special language, *bubun*, to help describe how the elements were a part of all things, animate or inanimate. Through this study, the Agasha family has learned how the elements combine in different forms in nature and has created an ever-growing list of chemical formulae, cataloguing those combinations.

IKAKEYA (PRESTIGE CLASS)

The Agasha have contemplated the mysteries of the world for generations and made a science of understanding how parts of each element exist in all things. The ikakeya have specialized even more and are masters of mizugusuri, kagaku and other technical arts.

Hit Die: d6.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become an ikakeya, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Skills: Alchemy (11 ranks), Knowledge (elements) (11 ranks), Spellcraft (11 ranks).

Feats: Elemental Attunement, Master Researcher, Void Use.

Special: The character must have the ability to cast 4th-level divine spells. Must be a member of the Agasha family or have special dispensation from the Agasha family daimyo to receive this training.

Note: As with all prestige classes with divine spellcasting requirements, shugenja may multiclass freely with this prestige class.

CLASS SKILLS

The ikakeya's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Alchemy (Int), Concentration (Con), Decipher Script (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Listen (Wis), Ride (Dex), Scry (Int) and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the ikakeya prestige class. Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Ikakeya gain no additional weapon or armor proficiency.

Spells per Day: An ikakeya continues his general study of elemental magic as well as specializing in alchemical studies. For each level he gains in this class, he gains new spells known and spells per day as if he has also gained a level in a divine spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of turning or controlling undead, metamagic or item creation feats, increased range of *sense elements*, and so on). This essentially means that he adds these levels to the level of some other divine spellcasting class he has, then determines spells per day, caster level, and spells known. If the character had more than one spellcasting class before he became a ikakeya, he must decide to which class he adds each level for this purpose.

Bubun: The ikakeya gains a bonus equal to twice his class level when using the Alchemy skill.

Bonus Feat: At 2nd level, the ikakeya may select one of the following feats: Brew Potion, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Rod, Craft Staff, Craft Wondrous Item and Forge Ring. The ikakeya must meet all prerequisites for these feats, and gains another from the list at the 4th level.

Agasha's Wisdom: At 3rd level, whenever he is crafting any sort of magical item, the Ikakeya is considered one caster level higher for each 5 ranks he has in the Alchemy skill.

Relic Mastery: Upon reaching 5th level, the ikakeya has become so efficient at creating magical items that his XP and gold costs for creating such items is reduced by one-fourth.

THE AGASHA IKAKEYA (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Agasha Shugenja 2

Path of Egress: Agasha Shugenja 3

Technique: Agasha's Wisdom — You may add your rank in this New Path to any of your former shugenja school ranks. You gain no Affinity or Deficiency for this New Path, but retain any Affinity or Deficiency formerly acquired.

You may add twice your Insight Rank to the total of any Craft: Mizugusuri, Explosives, Medicine, Kagaku or Poison roll.

NEW SPELLS

AGASHA'S FURY

Transmutation

Level: Shu 6 (Fire)

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 full round

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Target: One item / 2 levels

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Will negates (object)

Spell Resistance: Yes (object)

You may summon the kami of fire to destroy utterly a nearby object. A targeted item or set of small items in the area of effect bursts into flame before being rent into nothingness. Enchanted items are allowed a saving throw to resist and artifacts are immune. If the item destroyed is being held or worn as the kami disintegrate it, the bearer of the item may make a Reflex save to resist the effect. If he fails the save, the bearer takes 1d8 points of damage per caster level (maximum 20d8) as the item burns to nothing.

TABLE 1-1: THE AGASHA IKAKEYA

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Spells per Day	Special
1st	+0	+0	+1	+2	+1 level of existing class	Bubun
2nd	+1	+0	+1	+2	+1 level of existing class	Bonus Feat
3rd	+1	+1	+2	+3	+1 level of existing class	Agasha's Wisdom
4th	+2	+1	+2	+3	+1 level of existing class	Bonus Feat
5th	+2	+2	+3	+4		Relic Mastery

CASCADING FIRE

Evocation

Level: Shu 4 (Fire and Air — Multi-Element)

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Long (400 feet + 40 ft./level)

Targets: Up to 6 targets, no two of which can be more than 40 ft. apart.

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell allows you to call forth a great tempest of fire and thunder above opponents which lances them with bolts of flame and lightning before dissipating. The bolts deal 1d6+1 fire damage and 1d6+1 electric damage.

The bolts generated by this spell unerringly strike the targets you indicate, even if the target is in melee or has anything less than complete cover or concealment. Inanimate objects can be targeted and damaged by this spell.

For every three levels of experience beyond 8th, you gain an additional bolt. You have three when you can initially cast this spell at 8th level, four at 11th, five at 14th and the maximum of six bolts at 17th level or higher. If you shoot multiple bolts, you can have them strike a single target or multiple targets. Each bolt can strike only one creature. You must designate targets before you roll for spell resistance or roll damage.

DROWN THE SPIRIT

Necromancy

Level: Shu 7 (Air and Water — Multi-Element)

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 full round

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (special)

Spell Resistance: Yes

With this spell, you may twist the elements in your target against each other, draining them of strength, stamina and sometimes even the will to live.

A nimbus of dark, crackling energy begins to form around your hand during the round in which you cast this spell. This energy remains until the spell is discharged by a successful melee touch attack.

The target of this spell must make a Fortitude save or suffer a -2d6 enhancement penalty to Strength, with an additional -1 per 3 caster levels (maximum additional penalty of -6). If the target's Strength would be reduced to less than 1, he is paralyzed and must make an additional Fortitude save every round he is under the continuing effects of this spell. If the target fails this Fortitude save, the conflicting forces wracking his body kill him.

AGASHA'S FURY

Elements: Fire

Mastery Level: 5

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: 1 item

Range: 100 ft.

This spell allows the shugenja to summon the kami of fire to cause any targeted item within range to burst into flame before being rent into nothingness.

Greater nemuranai like celestial swords or other powerful items may not be affected by this spell, but any lesser magical items may be affected according to the GM's wishes. Anyone holding or wearing affected items may make a Water roll (opposed by the caster's Fire) to negate the effect. If they fail, the item is destroyed and they suffer 8k8 Wounds.

CASCADING FIRE

Elements: Fire and Air — Multi-Element

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: Instantaneous

Area of Effect: 20 ft. radius

Range: Line of sight

The caster summons a great tempest of fire and thunder above the heads of his opponents. Air and fire kami lance the selected targets with bolts of flame and lightning before dissipating.

The caster of the spell gains control of 5 bolts he may direct at up to 5 different targets within the radius for this spell. Each bolt inflicts 2k2 Wounds, half of which is fire, the other half lightning. A single target may be struck by more than one bolt.

Raises may be made to summon additional bolts, with one extra bolt for every two Raises.

DROWN THE SPIRIT

Elements: Air, Water and Void — Multi-Element

Mastery Level: 5

Duration: 1 minute

Area of Effect: 1 target

Range: Touch

This spell twists the elements in its target against each other, draining them of strength, stamina and sometimes even the will to live. As the caster summons the air, water and void kami involved in this spell, his hand is surrounded by dark, crackling energy that remains until the spell is discharged.

The target of this spell has his Strength reduced by half the caster's Air or Water Ring, rounded down, whichever is lower. If the penalty generated by this spell would reduce the target's Strength to 0 or lower, he is immobilized. Every round an immobilized target is under this spell's effects, he must roll his Earth versus a TN of 5 × (the caster's Air or Water, whichever is lower). If he fails this roll more than twice during the spell's duration, he dies instantly.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE ASAKO

TOO CLOSE
TO THE FLAME
PART THREE

The Asako provinces were the least tamed of the Phoenix lands. Mountains dominated the entire western portion, and even the arable portions were filled with rocky outcroppings and vast cliffs and bluffs. Fortunately, Kyuden Asako was situated near the eastern border, and travel there was not as arduous as one might expect. That was most appropriate, Otomo Taneji thought, considering how many Emperors considered the palace one of their favorite spots to convene a Winter Court.

Taneji had to admit, however unpleasant traveling the Asako lands might be, the view of the unspoiled wilderness from the balcony of Kyuden Asako was breathtaking. Only a few roads and the occasional village dotted the landscape. It reminded Taneji of the plains beneath Kyuden Miya, near his lord's estates. Sometimes it seemed that precious few such places remained in the Empire. With the recent destruction of Otosan Uchi and the wars that had erupted among the clans, Taneji valued nature's majesty all the more.

"I am pleased to find you here, Otomo-san." The voice came from the doorway into the palace. A stooped older man with the shaven head and saffron robes of a monk walked through the door and joined Taneji at the railing. "It is one of my favorite places to meditate. There is a certain perspective that only such serenity can bring."

"If all our homes had such beauty, there would be more serenity, I think," Taneji answered.

"Beauty is all around us," countered the old man. "Most do not know where to find it."

"True. Very true." Taneji stepped back from the rail to bow deeply before the older man. "I am sorry to trouble you, Brother, but I have been waiting here for some time. Do you know when I might be admitted into Lord Toshi's presence?"

The old monk chuckled. "I am Asako Toshi, my friend. Am I not what you expected?"

Taneji bowed again in apology. "I must admit, no," he said. "In my experience, most daimyo put on great airs of superiority and display their station with pride. I was unprepared for a man so..."

"Plain?"

"I would have said 'humble,' Toshi-sama. I am honored to meet you at last. I am honored again by your consideration."

"As am I, Taneji-san," Toshi said, turning to look out at the landscape again. "The Miya and Otomo families are great allies to all the clans. The Phoenix remember those who serve the Empire, even if others forget." He favored the courtier with a smile. "Your master and your father both were honored guests of my predecessor in their times, and now I am pleased to have you a guest as well."

"Thank you, Toshi-sama. My father spoke well of his visits here, but his tales could not do such beauty justice. Kyuden Asako is truly a wonder of the Empire." The two were silent for a time, then, taking in the glory of the sunset. It was some time before either was willing to break the silence.

"What errand has Ikoma Hatori sent you to fulfill, Taneji?" Toshi asked sharply. "We know the historian does not venture forth from his libraries without good reason, and the Asako are ready to offer him whatever we can. He is a just and honorable man."

Taneji inclined his head respectfully. "Your generosity is much appreciated, Lord Toshi." He finally turned away from the view to regard his host frankly. "Hatori-sama is gathering the testimony of the Phoenix lords on behalf of the Imperial Court. There are... concerns among some members of the court as to the present state of your clan, and Hatori must determine if they are unfounded."

"You speak of recent events, of course. The war with the Dragon Clan."

"Among other things," Taneji said. He was reluctant to enumerate the concerns of the court, but Hatori had instructed him to be very specific with the Asako. They were a very literal people, after all, and Hatori trusted them more than any other Phoenix family. "The disappearance and reappearance of the Elemental Masters, the absence of a Master of Water, the death of Aikune's Lion advisors, the Dark Oracle of Fire... these are all concerns that must be addressed."

"Your specific omission of the Last Wish is quite notable, Otomo Taneji. Do you wish to avoid that topic in particular?"

The courtier shifted on his feet uncomfortably. "No, my lord. I am merely perplexed by those things I do not understand. I have little expertise in the realms of magic, and little wish to gain any."

"You were taught to avoid topics you have no knowledge of?" Toshi laughed softly. "Hardly typical training for an Otomo."

"Yes," Taneji said sheepishly. "My sensei always advised me to take advantage of my strengths and find allies to defend against my weaknesses. To address matters one has no knowledge of invites disaster, and for me magic is one of those areas. Fortunately, Hatori-san has a very capable shugenja in his employ... even if that shugenja behaves like an incompetent much of the time."

Toshi raised one eyebrow. "I imagine your sensei must have been a very boring conversationalist." His smile seemed natural, unforced, but it was short-lived. "All things are part of the great kharmaic wheel, Taneji. The Celestial Order governs all. The Phoenix are more aligned with the ebb and flow of the kami than most other clans, and we cannot ignore our blessings. Our ways are strange, I know, yet they are necessary. As are yours. I will help you to understand what has transpired in Phoenix lands as much as I am able."

"Necessary?" Taneji asked. "I do not mean to argue, but how was your war with the Dragon necessary?"

"Everything is part of a cycle," said Toshi firmly. "This is no different. Ruin and rejuvenation are inevitable. Shiba no Kami foresaw this, and named our clan after the immortal Phoenix. The Phoenix become strong. The Phoenix become arrogant. The Phoenix suffer the price. The Phoenix return, gain wisdom, and begin again. Though we suffer, our wisdom benefits all. The names change. The events change. The result is the same. The Phoenix will be destroyed. The Phoenix will rise again."

Taneji frowned slightly. "You are not concerned? It does not weigh heavily upon you that your clan could face destruction again?"

"Of course I am concerned," Toshi said. "The thought of the Dark Oracle rising up to destroy the weakened Council of Masters fills me with dread. The idea of Phoenix soldiers charging into combat with our Dragon cousins disgusts me. The power of the Last Wish is utterly incomprehensible to me. Yet I am only one man. I do what I can, but I am not so arrogant as to assume I can change the way of the universe, and I do not allow my life to be consumed with worry over that which cannot be changed."

The younger man shook his head. "What am I to tell my master then, Toshi-sama? That the Phoenix are doomed?"

Toshi took a moment to breathe in the crisp mountain air before

answering. "We are not doomed," he said. "We are blessed. What other clan lives with the knowledge that their destruction guarantees glorious rebirth? I do not look forward to the dark days to come, Otomo Taneji, but neither do I truly fear them. The Phoenix is eternal."

THE ASAKO PROVINCES

The Asako are a quiet and contemplative family, requiring neither the resources of a bushi family nor the temples of shugenja. Their lands are far from the civilized areas of Roku-gan. To the outside world, the Asako are a contradiction — a samurai family ruled by ascetic monks. They contemplate the inner way and the strength of the mortal soul. Their few great structures and cities generally befit the family's role as historians and scribes.

The lands themselves are located in the Phoenix provinces' northwestern reaches. These regions do not border the holdings of other clans, though they rest on the edge of the Dragon Heart Plain that separates the Phoenix and Dragon's northern borders. In the light of the Dragon war, many Phoenix are concerned that the poorly defended Asako holdings may come under attack, but only the Ki-Rin's Shrine has been the source of any major conflict on Asako lands.

MAJOR ASAKO HOLDINGS

With the exception of Kyuden Asako, notable Asako structures come in only two forms — libraries and temples. A bushi from the Asako family is practically unheard of, and their relative distance from the rest of the Empire allows the Asako to forego construction of large castles and fortifications. The mountainous terrain also discourages large-scale development.

KYUDEN ASAKO (LOCATION ?14)

Originally known as Shiro Asako, Kyuden Asako was renamed after the Emperor's Winter Court fifty years ago. The castle is within Mori Isawa's borders and rests upon a great pillar of black stone that rises above the treeline. From the castle walls, one can see the entirety of the southern Phoenix provinces on a clear day. The palace is also known as the "Castle of the White Phoenix" or "Morning Glory Castle" due to the bleached stone walls that reflect the first rays of the sun each morning. In the early light, the castle resembles a glowing beacon hovering above the Isawa woodlands. Its position allows the ancestral Asako home to get by with few fortifications and an extraordinarily small guard. Unlike Kyuden Isawa and Kyuden Agasha, the Asako castle has almost no Shiba bushi on hand. During the Clan War, the Shadowlands Horde bypassed the castle due to its fortified position and lack of any Black Scrolls. After the Clan War it was the only major Phoenix castle left entirely intact.

During the Mantis invasion a generation ago, Kyuden Asako was the first of the Phoenix strongholds to fall to Yoritomo's armies. Oddly, the Mantis were impressed enough by the breathtaking beauty of the castle that they did as little damage to the structure as they could, and the peaceful Asako surrendered once it was clear the Mantis meant to do little more than occupy the land.

OYO SEIDO

The Shrine of Asako Oyo is just north of Kyuden Asako, hidden within the woods of Mori Isawa. The structure is a new addition to the Asako family holdings, having been built only twenty years ago. This humble and tasteful shrine is dedicated to Asako Oyo, the man who catalyzed a new age of learning among the henshin. Oyo reportedly died shortly after Asako Isamu reached the great insight that placed the Asako back onto the Path of Man. Only Isamu witnessed the older Asako's death and did not speak of the matter before his own disappearance.

Oyo Seido has become the center of many ghost stories among the Phoenix due to the secretive nature of the Asako family. To the majority of the Empire, Oyo was a madman and fool, a pawn of Kuni Yori who was used to divide the Phoenix. Naturally, many wonder why such a man would deserve a monument, and the Asako are stingy with answers. Outsiders have filled this gap with their own colorful tales: the restless spirit of Oyo demanded this tribute before he could find peace, or the Asako found Kuni Yori and entombed him in jade deep beneath the earth on this spot. (Of course Yori is not entombed here. The true reason the Asako value Oyo's memory can be found in Chapter 6.)

Nonetheless, none who have visited the shrine have been able to deny the serenity of the location. Many young Asako and Isawa visit the shrine to calm their minds and meditate upon complex problems. The Asako revere Oyo as an ancestor and request his guidance in finding their way through troubling times and difficult mysteries.

HIGHWAYS OF THE ASAKO PROVINCES

Stone's Shadow Road (connects P10 to P12) — The road between Ukabu Mura and Michita Yasumi is often in the shadow of the nearby cliffs. This road is well traveled by merchants, samurai, and pilgrims on their way to Reihaido Uikku (a minor road forks off toward that shrine halfway along Stone's Shadow). Like the Drowned Merchant Road in the Shiba lands, this road is frequently used by parties of Imperial Family members and is thus heavily patrolled.

Barefoot Walk (connects P10 to P14) — When Asako began her family line, she is said to have journeyed alone for a month to find the perfect location for her family's home. Eventually her simple sandals wore down to nothing and Asako was forced to continue through Mori Isawa barefoot until she came upon the place where Kyuden Asako would be built. This carefully-maintained road is the most direct route to Kyuden Asako from the major outer Phoenix cities. However, it is not heavily traveled, as the Asako do not often invite outsiders into their castle, and thus is poorly watched.

ASAKO OYO

[Inkyo 10/Henshin Master 10; Henshin 5/Seven Fortunes Monk 3]

As befits his enigmatic life, Asako Oyo neglected to die after the Asako's experiments were over. The final step of the henshin's work pulled Oyo from the dark way of madness and once again onto the Path of Man, and helped the entire family enter a new phase of their studies. Though Oyo was forever scarred by the insanity that gripped him, he is once again much the wise and peaceful monk he had been before. Oyo's death was announced to the Empire to prevent others seeking to exploit him as Yori once did, and the immortal henshin has retired to the forests near his own shrine. Most think he is just a simple hermit. Even among the Asako, few know the truth. He has revealed his existence only to Asako Toshi and a handful of others.

Oyo possesses one of the keenest intellects in the Empire and is quite willing to lend his talents to the new Asako daimyo, Toshi. The two men have become close friends since Oyo regained his sanity. He is still plagued by nightmares and occasional lapses into confusion, but Toshi has been able to aid Oyo in these times to prevent any further problems.

SEIDO JUROJIN

(LOCATION ??)

Next to their ancestral home, the great Shrine of Jurojin is the Asako's largest single structure. As healers and monks, the Asako have always venerated the Fortune of Longevity above all others. It comes as no surprise that the Phoenix lands house the most notable of Jurojin's shrines. The site predates the Empire of Rokugan; the Tribe of Isawa built a tiny temple to the Fortune of Longevity on this site. Its inaccessible location among the high cliffs made it the destination of only the most dedicated petitioners to Jurojin. Jurojin visits the site when he enters the Realm of Mortals, as he has never forgotten the pure dedication of Isawa and his brothers and sisters.

When Asako founded her family, Isawa's siblings gave her the shrine, a gesture which honored her dedication to Shiba, Isawa, and the way of peace. This act shaped the Asako, as the sick and weary traveled to visit not only the shrine but also the legendary shugenja of the fledgling Phoenix Clan. Since that time, the Asako have built a great road from the shrine to the rest of the Empire so that even the most wretched can reach the structure and beseech Jurojin's favor. However, the Asako are quite selective as to whom they allow into the inner chambers of Seido Jurojin.

When the Wrath of the Kami volcano erupted, many Dragon peasants fled to the Dragon Heart Plain and a considerable number of their elders made the pilgrimage to Seido Jurojin. When the relations between the Phoenix and Dragon turned hostile, the Asako priests could not bring themselves to evict the Dragon refugees. The Council of Masters were outraged, but the Asako monks pleaded for clemency. Could the Isawa pursue their war inside the shrine of one of the Seven Fortunes? The Isawa concluded that the Asako would be allowed to show mercy on two conditions. First, no Dragon would be allowed to carry weapons within the shrine, not even the daisho. Second, none of the refugees would be allowed to leave. A contingent of Shiba bushi was stationed at the shrine and watches at all times, making certain that no one leaves the premises. It is a situation the Asako monks find reprehensible, but accept for now as they have no alternative. They continue to serve the refugees and hope that the Council will eventually end this foolish war.

ASAKO MORIHARI

[Inkyo 7/Henshin Master 10; Henshin 5/Seven Fortunes Monk 1]

Morihari has been the aged headmaster of Seido Jurojin since the time of the Clan War. No one is sure how old the wizened monk is, and no visitors have ever had the gall to ask. Every other monk in any position of responsibility within the shrine arrived at Seido Jurojin sometime after Morihari was appointed headmaster. None can recall the monk seeming to age, although it would be difficult for him to appear any older.

Morihari is the archetypical peaceful and wise Asako. He is never too busy to tend to those around him and has yet to find a problem that simple meditation or his keen mind could not conquer within a day — the single exception, of course, being the war with the Dragon. Some believe that Morihari is a mortal extension of Jurojin, but the old Asako laughs when he hears such rumors. Though none dare to ask his age, many have questioned Morihari about the secret to his longevity. He tends to avoid the question, but when pressed politely he shrugs and replies, "A warm kimono." Every resident of the shrine loves the old man, and they would lay down their lives for him should the need arise. Even the dour Shiba bushi who guard the shrine against the refugees' escape have come to admire him.

Morihari has earned the Dragon refugees' trust and become a close counselor to the few Mirumoto samurai who currently stay in the shrine. The old monk makes it a point to direct every conversation in a manner that shows the wisdom of ending the Dragon/Phoenix conflict. One Dragon samurai asked why Morihari has not taken a more direct role in resolving the war; the Asako replied, "Look about you, child. Do you not see the Phoenix and the Dragon sleeping and working side by side? I have already put this war behind me. Now I wish for the rest of the Empire to catch up."

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The characters have arrived at Seido Jurojin as part of a long journey — perhaps as pilgrims. Perhaps they come to see the shining example of peace the shrine has become. Perhaps they have come to mock the pathetic Dragon samurai who gave up their daisho to hide from the war. Whatever the case, they find that the rumors of Dragon peasants and samurai finding refuge in Phoenix lands are true.

Focus: The serene backdrop of Seido Jurojin is quickly shattered. Over the course of days (or even a single night), several men and women of both Phoenix and Dragon descent are murdered. Hostilities peak between Dragon and Phoenix within the shrine, who immediately blame one another. While no one has become openly violent, it is only a matter of time before tempers flare and the fragile peace is shattered.

Strike: Clever characters will quickly see the ploy to stir up conflict for what it is. All the victims were murdered in the same way, so who would have something to gain by killing both Phoenix and Dragon samurai? The murders have been perpetrated by one of the junior monks, a former Isawa shugenja whose family was slaughtered in the war's early days. He hates the Dragon for their involvement in his family's death (though the Dragon samurai at the shrine are not responsible) and he hates the Asako for showing them mercy. Mad with rage and grief, the Isawa has been killing members of both sides and using his magic to escape unseen. He hopes that he can ruin the Asako's fragile arrangement so that there will be no peace, and the Dragon can be destroyed as he feels they deserve to be.

HOPEFUL REST CITY**(LOCATION ?10)**

Hopeful Rest City (Michita Yasumi) is the only true city under Asako control. Trade between the lower and upper Phoenix provinces flows through Hopeful Rest, as does much of the Phoenix's trade with other clans. Though the Asako are unconcerned with the city's mercantile interests, they are too traditional to relinquish their claim on the land and allow it to maintain itself without interference. The Shiba and Isawa have often petitioned for control of the city, eager to take advantage of Michita Yasumi's wealth, but the Asako always politely deny their requests.

The great amount of traffic through this city has caused it to become an unofficial "waiting room" for non-Phoenix who wish to study with the Asako and Isawa. The great Kanjiro Library is home to several powerful shugenja, and they often take apprentices or send promising students to others that will. Inns and teahouses prosper here, serving the hundreds of young shugenja who hope to impress the powerful Isawa and the mysterious Asako. Michita Yasumi does a brisk tourist trade, catering to optimistic shugenja and merchants seeking to sell things to them.

In recent times, the city has filled with bushi moving to the front lines of battle with the Dragon. Michita Yasumi is usually the last civilized city both soldier and caravan master see for before their destination. Ronin have flocked here in an attempt to find work in the Shiba armies. The city has become boisterous and chaotic, a fact that greatly disturbs the city's Asako masters.

MICHITA YASUMI MARKET

The Asako rarely deal in trade outside of this city, and dislike the very idea of commerce. Because of this, they have not bothered to even name the large trading ground at the center of Hopeful Rest City and tend to ignore it when reckoning their taxes and population. The merchants that make the place home have variously nicknamed it "The Invisible Market" and "Yasumi's Shadow."

Traditionally, the Michita Yasumi market has been the center of trade to and from the Isawa and Asako lands. Crane tribute to their allies in the north often rests here for a while before proceeding to Kyuden Isawa. Some time ago, this was also true of trade from the Dragon lands, though the recent war between the two clans has choked off commerce.

A small amount of black market Yobanjin goods are traded here. Such wares are very uncommon as the Asako are less tolerant than the Isawa. At any given time, however, such curiosities as weapons, armor, cloth, spices, and other trinkets can be found here. Even underhanded merchants are extremely cautious as to who they sell these goods to, however, and procuring prohibited items is never easy.

KANJIRO LIBRARY

The Kanjiro library is relatively new, having been completed only three hundred years ago. As Michita Yasumi grew in size, the scattered and disorganized libraries contained in the city began to be overshadowed by larger buildings and surrounded by deteriorating areas. The governor at the time, Asako Kanjiro, ordered a large library to be built which would consolidate the contents of all the libraries in a single safe building. Kanjiro retired and died of old age shortly after construction began. When the building was finished, it was named in his honor.

Like many Phoenix libraries, the building was also a large temple and holy place. Shugenja were slowly drawn to the library as they visited, and several made the library the center of their studies and prayer. Shugenja that did not live on the premises often purchased a small home nearby or became an advisor in a close estate. The city's northwest corner became known as the Kanjiro District, as nearly everything in it was connected to the library in some way. It has become one of the largest repositories of knowledge in Phoenix lands.

With all this attention, a small but respected dojo for shugenja has sprung up within the library. The school does not share any secret Phoenix magic, but serves as a testing ground for those who petition to attend the Isawa and Asako schools. Prospective students often spend a winter at Kanjiro library attempting to impress the school's masters. The gifted are apprenticed to nearby shugenja or given a written recommendation to their family shugenja school unless they show true talent, in which case they are invited to attend a Phoenix school. The school never forces any visitors to leave, and some students have been known to haunt the grounds for years before finally recognizing they will never be accepted.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: While wandering the grounds, one of the PCs stumbles upon two Phoenix shugenja in a shouting match. At the height of the shouting, one assumes an offensive stance while the other steps backwards in desperation. The first summons a great burst of air from his fingertips and slams a controlled blast into the other. Without a sound, the victim of the attack falls to the ground motionless.

Focus: The two shugenja were brothers, members of a minor Isawa family. Due to their father's gambling habits the family has neither the wealth nor prestige to impress the Isawa masters, so the two boys have taken it upon themselves to earn the Kanjiro school's favor. The result of their rivalry has ended in the younger brother's death. The older brother is horrified; he has no idea how his simple spell could have killed his brother. Any shugenja in the party who witnesses the event can corroborate this fact. The library masters have witnessed the boys' sibling rivalry for several months, and are not surprised that it has come to a grisly end. The local magistrates (possibly the PCs) are summoned to put the boy under arrest.

Strike: The accident is the result of a curse that a Scorpion agent placed upon the older boy. The boys' foolish father owed the Scorpion ambassador to the city a large gambling debt, a debt he is unable to pay. Failing to pay it off has cost him his son's life, and if he does not pay the Scorpion have threatened to make certain that the other son is executed for murder. Only slight traces of foul play are present. Proving the murder will be difficult without the use of magic, which is of course inadmissible in a Rokugani court.

MINOR ASAKO HOLDINGS

Most Asako holdings are villages and temples dotting their mountainous homelands. These areas get few visitors due to their relative inaccessibility and a general lack of interest in ascetic monks. Due to the difficulty of moving goods over the rocky terrain, the Asako have become quite adept at making these holdings self-sufficient.

REIHAI DO UIKKU

(LOCATION 713)

The Shrine of Uikku is located on a great plain in the western Phoenix lands. No major roads connect the holy site to the rest of the Empire, and pilgrims must walk, as the rocky ground is dangerous to horses. Few complain about the journey, as Reihaido Uikku is considered one of the holiest sites in the Empire.

Uikku was a small child found some thirty years after Rokugan defeated Fu Leng on the first Day of Thunder. On the Phoenix plains, a traveling peasant family found a young boy playing in a small stream that bubbled out from a black rock on the plain. There were no villages close by and it was unlikely the child could have survived a journey to the location alone. The villagers assumed the child had been abandoned and took him in as their own. It became clear that the child was not as simple as he appeared at first — at the apparent age of four, he could quote and understand the three books of Shinsei's Tao.

As he grew older, Uikku began to quote the Tao less and less, instead predicting the future. It became apparent that the child spoke prophecy, and the Asako began recording the boy's words. The more he prophesied, the darker his prophecies became, until finally the Phoenix cloistered the boy away from public view so his ravings would no longer disturb the people. A brotherhood of monks and samurai called the Defenders of Uikku were founded to protect Uikku's prophecies and see to it that the darkest among them never came to pass. The Defenders have discovered to their chagrin that none of Uikku's prophecies have ever been averted, though occasionally they can lessen the damage.

In Uikku's final days he became wracked with fever and spouted eight prophecies that became known as the "Dooms." Each predicted the downfall of some unnamed group within the Empire, presumably the seven Great Clans and some other entity. Though it was originally thought that the Dooms came to pass during the Clan War, the Defenders of Uikku do not think that this is so; they have noticed that his prediction of the Empire's destruction has not been fulfilled. Now there are eight Great Clans, one for each doom. Perhaps the time for Uikku's Dooms has finally come.

SHINDEN ASAKO

The strange structure of Asako Temple is hidden well within the confines of Mori Isawa. Only a narrow trail leads to it from Hopeful Rest City (P10). This structure has existed since the Asako family's founding and the henshin order's formation. Shinden Asako remains the henshin's only formal dojo.

The temple's structure is almost completely stone, and keen visitors notice that the foundation seems to be natural rock. Few outside the henshin order are allowed to find the temple. Considering the sheer size of the surrounding forest, there is almost no chance someone would stumble upon the place — few are willing to travel deep enough within the haunted woodlands, and the Asako have erected wards against the intrepid. Between these two factors, few individuals outside the Asako have set foot upon the sacred grounds since their construction.

SHRINE OF THE MOON

A new addition to the grounds of Shinden Asako, the Shrine of the Moon is hidden from the sight of Shinden Asako. With the backdrop of the Mori Isawa, the shrine looks entirely sinister. The shrine is the result of Asako Bairei's research into the Moon's nature. He believes that the very nature of the entities of Tengoku can be altered by the way they are venerated, and that the madness and evil that had gripped Onnotangu might someday envelop Hitomi.

Hoping to counteract this, Bairei has constructed the Shrine of the Moon and begun peaceful worship of Hitomi. Hitomi Reihaido, the Shrine of the Moon, is far enough from Shinden Asako that visitors to the shrine have no real chance of stumbling upon it. In addition, those who come to the Shrine of the Moon are usually unsettled enough to leave of their own volition, much less conduct investigations into other things the Asako might be hiding in the Isawa Woodlands.

Bairei's "experiment" began too recently to affect the nature of Lady Moon or any of her followers. The Asako has found allies in the Order of Odoshi, a small monk brotherhood dedicated to the Evening Star. At the request of Master of the Void Shiba Ningen, Hitomi family monks have also been invited to the shrine so long as they approach unarmed and unescorted.

It was Ningen's feeling that the Asako's efforts would come to nothing if the Hitomi continued to worship the Moon with their usual mad zeal. Surprisingly, several dozen Hitomi monks have already dared cross the battle lines to live at the shrine, and one or two more appear every week.



IMPORTANT ASAKO NPCs

ASAKO MISAO, ASCETIC CARTOGRAPHER

In his youth, Asako Misao was an inattentive boy who spent more time chasing young women than studying the spells his teachers assigned. One winter he wandered far from the school and became lost in the woods, and returned full of stories of the beautiful snow maiden who had rescued him from the cold. His sensei had heard enough, and gave up any hope for Misao showing any promise whatsoever as a shugenja. Upon his gempukku Misao was assigned to a minor role in the Hub Villages and forgotten.

It was there that Hantei Naseru discovered him, as he was beginning to build his network of contacts and operatives. He saw great potential in Misao, who was by no means a great shugenja, but was clever and perceptive. The maps he had crafted of the areas around the Hub Village were masterful in their craftsmanship. Rather than look at Misao as a shugenja with a tendency to be distracted by worldly matters, Naseru saw him as a charming, observant man with a bit of magic — the perfect spy. Further, the disdain Misao's family held him in meant that the young shugenja would be eager to serve someone who treated him with respect, so Naseru made Misao his personal cartographer. He would send the Phoenix to map sensitive locations, knowing that along the way Misao would talk to those he met, and listen. The information he brought back was more valuable than any map.

Misao took great pride in his duties as an Imperial Cartographer, and if he ever realized his true role as the Anvil's spy he never dwelled on it. He served well in this capacity for three years. Then, after a visit to Unicorn lands, he abruptly returned home, shaved his head, and retired to a cavern near Shiro Asako. His fellow Asako believed that Misao had become mad, or enlightened, or both, and left him to his own devices. When Naseru came to investigate Misao's disappearance, he quickly saw through the facade and realized that Misao was not mad at all.

In truth, Misao is deathly afraid of what he saw in Unicorn lands. While visiting Seikitsu Pass, he roamed deep into the Way of Night without permission and witnessed Moto Vordu's strange and horrible experiments. The sight shook Misao to the core, reminding him of something he saw while lost in the woods as a child but forgot long ago. He feigned madness so that he could flee the City of Night and escape Vordu's wrath.

Now he hides in the caverns near Shiro Asako, afraid to face his memories.

ASAKO MISAO

Male human Phoenix, Shu 3/Crt 3: CR 6; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 6d6; hp 30; Init: +2; Spd 30 ft.; Atk wakizashi +5 melee, 1d6+1 damage; AC 12 (touch 12, flat-footed 10); SQ Class Skill — Concentration, Element Focus (Air), Gossip, Sense Elements, Style and Grace, Talent, Wealth; Honor 3; AL LG; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 17; Maximum Void 2; Height: 5 ft. 8 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language — Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Bluff +17, Concentration +10, Craft (mapmaking) +12, Decipher Script +9, Diplomacy +28, Gather Information +17, Innuendo +17 (transmit) +7 (receive), Knowledge (Etiquette) +12, Knowledge (History) +12, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +12, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +5, Listen +7, Sense Motive +7, Spot +12; Blessing of Air, Chosen by the Kami, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Void Use.

Dojo: None.

Spells Known: (6/7/6/4 base DC 13 + spell level Elemental Focus — Air, Isawa School): 0 — *commune with elements, detect magic, flash of insight, flock of doves, guidance, know direction*; 1st — *detect taint, obscuring mist, quiescence of air, silent image*.

Possessions: circlet of persuasion, eyes of the eagle, wakizashi.

ASAKO MISAO

Earth: 2

Willpower: 3

Water: 3

Fire: 3

Air: 4

Awareness: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja 2 (Air Affinity)

Dojo: None

Honor: 3.1

Glory: 2.3

Advantages: Ear of the Emperor, Higher Purpose (maintain purity of Imperial Histories)

Disadvantages: Coward (moderate)

Spells: (Spells marked with * are memorized) *Benten's Touch, By the Light of Lord Moon, Commune**, *Mists of Illusion, Reflections of Pan Ku**, *Sense**, *Summon Fog, Summon**, *Sympathetic Energies, Wisdom of the Kami**

Skills: Calligraphy 6, Cartography 4, Courtier 6, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 6, Investigation 2, Lore (Shadowlands) 3, Meditation 4, Shintao 3, Theology 3

ASAKO TOSHI, ASAKO FAMILY DAIMYO

The ronin monk Toshi was a relatively obscure hermit living in one of the many small caves near Kyuden Asako when the War of Spirits erupted. Though the chaos that consumed the Empire greatly disturbed him, he chose to remain in his seclusion and continue seeking enlightenment rather than join the Phoenix armies. His choice was fortuitous. Toshi happened to be in the forest gathering wood when he stumbled upon a large band of bakemono led by a free ogre, planning to attack the lightly defended Kyuden Asako while the Phoenix troops were away.

Toshi hurried to Kyuden Asako and warned daimyo Asako Togama to shut the gates and prepare a defense. The henshin remaining at Kyuden Asako did so just in time to prevent the goblin forces from storming the castle. Toshi stepped forth to

battle the free ogre, felling the beast with a single well-placed kick before the gates of Kyuden Asako. Their leader defeated, the goblin forces scattered. Breathless and exhausted from his encounter, Toshi was surprised to find himself facing Asako Togama, the aged family daimyo.

Togama congratulated Toshi on his bravery, whispered the great secret of the Asako into his ear, and walked off into the forest never to be seen again. Since that day, to Toshi's surprise, the Asako have faithfully obeyed him as their daimyo. (This has not, however, prevented other Phoenix from questioning his ascension.)

Over the last decade the exhaustive duty of serving as daimyo of a Phoenix family, protecting his family's secrets from the jealous Isawa and proud Shiba, has visibly aged Toshi. Though most Asako agree that Togama disappeared to take his place among the enlightened henshin in Tengoku, Toshi often wonders if his predecessor simply tired of the job and passed it off to escape.

Strangely, he thinks he finally understands why Togama did what he did. Togama had mastered the henshin's deepest secrets. The mortal world no longer had a place for him. The other Asako were divided by mortal concerns, distracted from their quest for enlightenment by politics and conflict. Toshi was strong enough to lead, but wise enough to know that continuing to follow the path of self-discovery was the Asako's most important duty.

To Toshi's chagrin, he finds that the opposite seems to be true, and he is becoming involuntarily influenced by the more worldly Asako. He is becoming increasingly more absorbed in the demands of ruling a clan. With each passing year he spends less and less time contemplating the infinite. He wonders whether one can truly find enlightenment when entangled in the mysteries of politics.

Most days, he envies Togama.

ASAKO TOSHI

Male human Phoenix, Ink 12: CR 12; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 12d8+24; hp 105; Init: +3; Spd 30 ft.; Atk unarmed +11/+6, 1d8+2 damage; AC 18 (touch 15, flat-footed 15); SQ Class Skill — Concentration, Improved Void Use, Purity +4; Honor 4; AL LG; SV Fort +12, Ref +13, Will +15; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 21, Cha 17; Maximum Void: 12 (14); Height: 5 ft. 5 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language — Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Yobanjin, Concentration +18, Diplomacy +20, Knowledge (Fortunes) +18, Knowledge (Shintao) +18, Search +18, Sense Motive +20, Spot +20, Tumble +18; Depths of the Void (x2), Eyes of the Phoenix, Flee the Darkness, Greater Depths of the Void, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, Self/No Self, Soul of the Four Winds, Spirit Strike (x2), Void Use, Way of the Phoenix.

Possessions: amulet of the void, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +2

ASAKO TOSHI

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Fire: 3

Air: 4

Void: 4

School/Rank: Asako Henshin 4

Dojo: None

Honor: 7.8

Glory: 2.3

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Read Lips, Social Position (Asako daimyo)

Disadvantages: Ascetic, Obtuse

Kiho: Rest My Brother, Self No Self, Soul of the Four Winds, Way of the Willow

Skills: Atemi 5, Calligraphy 3, Etiquette 5, Hand-to-Hand 4, Investigation 4, Lore (Elements) 9, Medicine 5, Meditation 8, Shintao 8

ASAKO BAIREI

For many years Asako Bairei has been custodian of the Asako's great libraries, serving as a scribe and historian. It was his duty and his honor to restore the scrolls damaged when the Lying Darkness' minions attempted to wipe out the Empire's history, and to copy many more lent to the Phoenix by allies in the Miya, Kitsune, and Ikoma families. He has come to think of the past as the world he lives in, with the present being simply the medium he must travel through while he waits to discover more about Rokugan's history.

When Bairei first heard rumors of Fu Leng's escape from Meido and ascension into the Celestial Heavens, he found he could no longer ignore the world outside his library. The thought of Fu Leng corrupting the heavens horrified him. Sadly, he found that many of his brethren were not overly concerned with the chaos in the heavens: surely when facing the Fortunes, elemental dragons, Sun, and Moon, Fu Leng could have little hope of victory. Bairei was not so certain. He had studied the history of various moon cults, and the Hitomi family's recent spiral into savagery greatly troubled him. Bairei feared that Lady Moon had begun to fall victim to the same madness that had consumed her predecessor. If Fu Leng were to discover such a thing, he would be certain to use it to his advantage. Against Fu Leng and Lady Moon, the chances of the armies of Heaven prevailing against Jigoku did not seem nearly so great.

Believing that a solution lay in the wisdom of the past, he retreated into his library. For many weeks he disappeared into study, and were it not for the assistance of his beloved friend Asako Yuya, it is altogether possible Bairei might have forgotten to eat, drink, or rest. Bairei discovered many practices of various moon cults that had been recorded by Asako Inquisitors, and he believed that some of these rituals could be modified and used to calm Hitomi's madness. By worshipping Hitomi in this way, he could make certain that she would never fall victim to the same insanity that had driven Onnotangu to ally with the Lying Darkness. All that remained was for him to persuade the Elemental Masters that this course of action was wise. Considering their feelings for his family and their opinion regarding the Dragon Clan (of which Hitomi was once daimyo) he knew that he would only have one opportunity. He continued his research, seeking some way to make the Masters listen.

Surprisingly, he found it in the same files that described the rituals of the Moon Cult. He discovered the leader of a powerful Moon Cult, a man known alternately as "O-Sama" or "Isawa Orimono" was in truth Isawa Muchito, brother of Isawa Tsuke and uncle of current Master of Fire Isawa Hochiu. Muchito's cult had been on the very brink of completing a ritual that would have destroyed the city of Ryoko Owari, murdering countless innocents in one tremendous sinister offering to Onnotangu. The news chilled Bairei, for it suggested that the madness that consumed Isawa Tsuke was not an isolated incident. Hero or no, the information could greatly tarnish Isawa Hochiu's reputation.

Though it pained him to do so, he subtly used his knowledge of Muchito's identity to convince Hochiu to allow him to build a shrine to Hitomi in the lands of the Dragon. Surprisingly, Hochiu was impressed with Bairei's courage and granted him permission. Even yet, as Bairei and Yuya oversee the construction of the Shrine of the Moon, he wonders if Hochiu is truly as supportive as he seemed. The Master of Fire is a dangerous enemy.

ASAKO BAIREI

Male human Phoenix, Shu 7: CR 7; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 7d6+21; hp 49; Init: +0; Spd 30 ft.; Atk masterwork tanto +3 melee, 1d4-1 damage; AC 10 (touch 10, flat-footed 10); SQ Class Skill — Concentration, Element Focus (Water), Sense Elements; Honor 3; AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +10; Str 8, Dex 11, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 19 (21), Cha 9; Maximum Void: 2; Height: 5 ft. 2 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language — Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Yobanjin, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +9, Gather Information +7, Knowledge (etiquette) +7, Knowledge (Fortunes) +8, Knowledge (history) +14, Knowledge (maho) +9, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +9, Knowledge (research) +14, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +7, Knowledge (Shintao) +8, Sense Motive +15, Spellcraft +14; Elemental Insight, Skill Focus (Knowledge (history)), Versatile (Gather Information, Sense Motive), Void Use.

Spells Known (6/8/6/4 base DC 15 + spell level Elemental Focus — Water. Isawa School): 0 — commune with elements, create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, flash of insight, purify food and drink, purity, read magic; 1st — cure light wounds, detect taint, endure elements, expeditious retreat, sanctuary, sense spirit; 2nd — locate object, make whole, protection from arrows, wisdom and clarity; 3rd — clairaudience/clairvoyance, create food and water, dispel magic.

Possessions: haori of comprehending languages and reading magic, masterwork tanto, periapt of wisdom.

ASAKO BAIREI

Earth: 2

Water: 4

Fire: 2

Intelligence: 4

Air: 3

Void: 3

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja 3 (Water Affinity)

Dojo: None

Honor: 3.8

Glory: 3.6

Advantages: Blackmail (Isawa Hochiu), Bland, Clear Thinker, Precise Memory, True Friend (Asako Yuya)

Disadvantages: Fascination (Lady Moon), Obligation (Shrine of the Moon), Small

Spells: (Spells marked with * are memorized) *By the Light of Lord Moon*, *Commune**, *Force of Will*, *Path to Inner Peace**, *Reflections of Pan Ku*, *Sense**, *Silent Waters*, *Summon**, *Sympathetic Energies*, *The Tie That Binds**, *Wisdom and Clarity**, *Wisdom of the Kami**

Skills: Calligraphy 7, Courtier 3, Etiquette 3, Investigation 5, Lore (History) 7, Lore (Maho) 2, Lore (Shadowlands) 2, Meditation 4, Research 7, Shintao 3, Spellcraft 5, Theology 3

VASSALS OF THE ASAKO FAMILY

THE NANI FAMILY

Soon after Lady Asako received the burden of the Path of Man, she realized that its power might someday fall into evil hands. Misused, the henshin's secrets could bring great harm to those who attempted to use them.

One example was a henshin named Asako Nani. The ambitious Phoenix, in his arrogance, believed that the mission given by Lady Asako would be a glorious one. One day, when all of mankind ascended to enlightenment, he would be godlike in stature and power, second only to Asako herself. Little did Nani know the future that lay before him. In his quest for power, he wandered onto a False Path and was consumed by madness. Lady Asako took him into her personal care and, after many years of guidance and meditation, restored him to sanity. Nani was consumed with remorse over his foolishness, and begged Lady Asako's forgiveness. She willingly granted it, on the condition that Nani serve to aid others who were like himself. Lady Asako bestowed a vassal family upon Nani, his followers other henshin who had recovered from the insanity of a False Path.

Lady Asako brought Nani and his followers to a secluded glade in the northernmost Phoenix lands, near where the Castle of the Faithful Bride would eventually be built. With a heavy heart, she explained the true depth of their mission: those who followed a False Path towards ascendance must be carefully watched and aided. She revealed that the Path of Man was not unique to the Asako family. Occasionally, those outside the family might find enlightenment similar to the henshin's by chance or circumstance. These individuals were in particular danger of following a False Path. Those who followed Asako Nani would have to be ever vigilant and understand that their work might never be done. With each cycle, the False might rise again and continue down their corrupted Path, and Nani's children would always be needed to provide guidance and mercy.

Nani, aware of his heavy burden, retreated into seclusion. Years later, he reconvened those who had met with Lady Asako and accepted the mantle of leadership. The Nani would become a vassal family of the Asako, but one whose true purpose few outside the family would ever know. Publicly, the Nani were known as historians who roamed the Empire recording tales for the Imperial Libraries. Few if any outside the Asako were aware of their true purpose, and so it remains to this day.

Throughout the Hantei Dynasty, the Nani worked quietly to ensure that their brother Asako were following the Path of Man. Occasionally, henshin driven mad by False Paths would become violent or Tainted, forcing the Nani to use violence. While they deeply regretted the deaths they were forced to cause, the Nani did their duty. Family members could be found traveling throughout Rokugan following tales of immortal spirits, those who aged incredibly slowly, or even families who happened to always have a member who fit a certain description. While they never hesitated to act once a soul was confirmed to be following a False Path, the Nani endeavored to bring such people back to the Phoenix lands and restore their sanity. Years might pass before they reached

a final decision, but once confirmed by a council of the family elders, the local observer would be expected to move quickly to remove the threat.

NANI TOSHI

The small village of the Nani family can be found on the road north between Kyuden Isawa and Doro Owari Mura, Road's End Village. Very few travelers pass through the village, as the inhospitable reputation of Road's End Village has spread. The few Phoenix patrols that stop in Nani Mura are welcomed and invited to stay the evening for dinner.

THE NANI FAMILY

Favored Class: Shugenja

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skill: Gather Information

Starting Outfit:

1. Four 1st level divine spells (no Earth) and 20 koku.

THE NANI FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Perception

Glory: 0.5 (rather than 1.0)

Special: Members of the Nani family may give up any of their starting school skills to gain a rank of Investigation instead. If their school already offers Investigation, they gain a second rank when they do so. Nani students of the Isawa shugenja school always have Affinity to Air and Deficiency to Earth.

THE CHUKAN FAMILY

When the Empire was founded and the Phoenix Clan formed, few in Rokugan seriously considered the way the families of each clan would expand. The Asako were especially blind to this consideration, as they were used to being a small group with little land and less influence. However, it became clear that the Asako would have to expand their numbers as they were given the lands of the Hantei Emperor to tend and watch over.

The Asako thought little of the way of the warrior and did not encourage any of their number to train with the Shiba. Accordingly, many Asako samurai became monks and shugenja, as the lords of the family intended. Once again, however, the Asako were somewhat shortsighted as to practical needs. Temples of every size were constructed around the Asako lands to accommodate the spiritual needs and training of each generation — and every generation was larger than the last.

In 112, family daimyo Asako Chukan took a direct interest in the matter. The records of each temple were disorganized, and without a proper filing system new research became burdensome. Chukan dedicated three years of study to the effort and received assistance from lords of the Ikoma and the Seppun families, who sent librarians and scribes.

By the year 119, Asako Chukan had developed a method of cataloguing and sharing records and scrolls between several major temples in the Asako lands. Over the next two years, Chukan applied this method to nearly every library on Phoenix soil, and the results were amazing. All major records were kept in the significant temples of the Phoenix by edict of the Elemental Council, and smaller temples nearby could easily request such information. All newly researched spells had to be submitted to Chukan, whose subordinates prepared copies for the Asako temples.

Once this system was in place, Chukan was presented with a new problem. The method by which he distributed the scrolls and papers throughout the Asako lands relied heavily on the expertise of non-Phoenix. Ikoma scribes, Miya messengers, and Doji librarians had become too integral to Chukan's work to send back to their homes and replace. In a bold move, Chukan offered his subordinates fealty and new lives among the Phoenix. They could honorably swear to a man they had served for years and maintain their former duties. With few exceptions, Chukan's assistants petitioned their lords to join Chukan's banner and were allowed to do so.

Since that time, the Chukan family has held one responsibility — to update and coordinate the staggering amount of knowledge in the countless libraries of the Asako provinces. Few outside the Phoenix can fathom the size of the task — the Asako scroll vaults make the Ikoma Histories seem like a satchel full of scroll scraps. The Chukan must spread every bit of new knowledge to all the major Phoenix libraries and each Asako temple. They keep strong contacts with the Izaku, Otomo, Miya, the Ikoma, the Doji, and Shosuro. To this end, the Chukan are very well traveled within the Phoenix lands, though their duties almost never take them outside the borders of their clan.

SHINDEN CHUKAN

Possibly the largest temple to Tengen, Fortune of Writing, Shinden Chukan is an enormous library within the walls of a five-story temple. Here the Chukan historians and scribes carry out the endless, thankless details of their task. The temple is located far to the south of Kyuden Asako (P9) along the Emperor's Road. Shinden Chukan is therefore close to all of the Phoenix lands while not too far away from Kyuden Asako.

Shinden Chukan, unusually for a temple, houses a large stable. The horses here are bred from an Utaku stock that the Chukan received as a favor exchange long ago. The Chukan are never in short supply of steeds — or riders, as the entire family lives here.

Otomo bureaucrats and Asako shugenja are constantly in attendance at this temple. The Otomo have long been the Chukan's allies, as each family respects the other's skills. A line of Asako live here as sensei to the Chukan shugenja.

THE CHUKAN FAMILY

Favored Class: Shugenja

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skills: Knowledge (Any one topic)

Starting Outfit:

1. Horse (Heavy), 20 koku
2. Two 2nd level divine scrolls, two 1st level divine scrolls (no Fire spells).

THE CHUKAN FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Glory: 0.5

Special: Members of the Chukan family who attend the Isawa Shugenja School may choose to give up Investigation from their beginning skills to gain History or Lore as a starting skill instead. Chukan students of the Isawa shugenja school always have Affinity to Water and Deficiency to Fire.

ASAKO MECHANICS

THE ASAKO COURTIER

Generally regarded as a family of monks and mystics, few outside the clan recognize the Asako's role within the Phoenix. They are an eccentric and unusual family, but they also possess a keen insight into the nature of the human mind. Considering that the Asako have hosted many of the most important social events in the Phoenix Clan's history, it comes as no surprise that some members of that family have developed a unique philosophy that aids them in the court.

Although the Asako family administers the Asako Courtier School, they allow any member of the Phoenix Clan to study with them, even their Isawa rivals (as the Isawa allow Asako to attend their lesser shugenja schools). As a result, there are many Asako-trained courtiers from the Shiba, Isawa, and even Agasha families. The family branch that maintains the school is very small, and while they have the family's full support and resources, few of their kinsmen long for life in the courts.

Although the Isawa and Asako frequently feud with one another, the Isawa trust the Asako implicitly when it comes to relations with other clans. The Phoenix may be internally divided, but they traditionally present a united front to outsiders. An Asako who would take advantage of the Isawa by drawing upon the help of outsiders is dishonors himself and his clan, looked down upon even by his own family.

ASAKO COURTIER

Courtiers from the Asako family are best represented in the d20 System™ with the Courtier base class found in Rokugan, pages 33–36. Such characters can be further customized to represent the Asako's unique training by using the new alternate courtier abilities found on page 14. These abilities represent the Asako courtier techniques.

THE ASAKO COURTIER SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Willpower

Beginning Honor: 3, plus 5 boxes

Skills: Courtier, Etiquette, Heraldry, History, Shintao, Sincerity, any one High skill

Outfit: (All considered to be of Average quality)
Kimono, wakizashi, traveling pack, steed, 10 koku

TECHNIQUES:

Rank 1: Temple of the Soul

A true Phoenix knows that the soul can learn to find peace even in unfamiliar surroundings. Whenever the courtier spends at least one month in the court of another lord (most assignments are between 3 and 6

months), the courtier may always keep one additional die in all social rolls made at that court thereafter. The Asako is trained to recognize subtle patterns that seldom change, so this bonus endures even should the courtier leave the court and return many years later.

Rank 2: From the Ashes

Even in dishonor there is wisdom. If the courtier loses Honor or causes another to lose Honor, he rolls extra dice equal to the number of Honor points lost for all social rolls for a number of hours equal to his School Rank, so long as those social rolls apply directly to repairing the damage done by his dishonor. Additionally, should the courtier's actions cause himself or another to gain honor, he gains a number of dice equal to the amount gained (in points) on all social rolls for a similar amount of time.

Rank 3: Voice of the Void

By listening to the tranquility of the Void, the courtier may prepare himself perfectly for any task. A number of times per day equal to his School Rank, the courtier may spend a Void Point to double his number of rolled dice on any single social roll.

Rank 4: Wisdom of the Ages

The enlightened mind can perceive parallels between the past and the present that escape those less versed in such matters. By spending a single hour with another individual, making a successful History/Willpower roll contested by the target's Willpower, and spending three Void Points, the courtier may grant the individual either five ranks of the Kharmic Tie Advantage or the Nemesis Disadvantage with a subject of his choice (even himself).

Rank 5: Invincible Mind

To the enlightened mind, there can be no deception. Any attempt to deceive the courtier, whether through use of Sincerity or similar skills, or through the use of spell effects that cloud the mind or create illusion, requires a contested Willpower roll between the courtier and his opponent. The courtier's opponent may not benefit from any Raises, Free or otherwise, on this roll. If the attempt would normally require a contested roll, the courtier may roll twice and choose the more favorable result.

THE HENSHIN

Shortly after the first Day of Thunder, the Isawa shugenja used their magic to divine that two of the Empire's heroes had survived the confrontation with Fu Leng — Shinsei and Shosuro. However, they were still deep within the Shadowlands and would likely perish even after such a heroic struggle without aid. Shiba vowed to rescue the two survivors and forged into the Shadowlands alone, where he confronted the First Oni and was fatally wounded. It was at this time that the immortal Shiba truly understood what it meant to be mortal.

Shiba's spirit survived in his heir, so he could pass on his epiphany to his closest friend, Asako. Shiba called this gift of knowledge the Path of Man, as the philosophy detailed a great journey a mortal soul could take to become one with the universe... and as powerful as the Fortunes. This secret was perilous; such power could be corrupted, causing the ones who walked a False Path to become extremely dangerous.



Asako kept this secret buried deep within her soul, revealing it only to the monastic orders of her family. She would not even trust the knowledge to the other Phoenix families. Since this time the Asako have been the guardians and advisors of humanity, guiding mortals where they can so that eventually all the world can walk correctly upon the Path. The Asako family has kept its founder's vow of secrecy, and has acted all this time without revealing its motives and intentions. The majority of the Empire, even many of those within the Phoenix Clan, carries on unaware of the henshin order's true purpose.

THE HENSHIN MASTER (PRESTIGE CLASS)

Though most Asako henshin contemplate the Path in secluded monasteries, a number of Asako travel the Empire and secretly guide others along the Path of Man. These monks are known as the henshin masters, though they carry such monastic titles as Brother of the Path and Guide Along the Way. The henshin masters represent most henshin that do not

confine themselves within the Asako lands, and tend to be outgoing and gregarious monks who are always eager to lend a hand or a sage word of advice.

Hit Die: d8.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Henshin Master, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +4.

Alignment: Any lawful.

Honor: Not dishonorable.

Skills: Knowledge (Shintao) (6 ranks), Heal (6 ranks), Diplomacy (4 ranks).

Feats: Depths of the Void, Void Use.

Special: Must possess at least three different kiho feats.

CLASS SKILLS

The henshin master's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), Sense Motive (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), Tea Ceremony (Wis), Tumble (Dex), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the henshin master.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Henshin masters gain no additional weapon or armor proficiency. They suffer the same penalties for wearing armor that monks do if they have monk abilities.

Monk/Inkyo Abilities: If the henshin master has any levels in the monk class, he may add his henshin master class levels to his monk class levels when determining his unarmed damage and unarmed base attacks. If the henshin master has any levels in the inkyo class, he may add his henshin master class levels to his inkyo class levels when determining his unarmed damage. If the henshin master has levels in both the monk and inkyo classes, he must determine, when he chooses to enter this prestige class, to which class he will apply his henshin master levels when determining these abilities.

Riddle: The henshin study the nature of the kami as they progress upon the Path of Man in an effort to find their own unique brand of enlightenment. Where the henshin once attempted to "trick" the kami into acting in a way of their choosing, they now have a better understanding of the kami and do not need to deceive them. However, the kami still enjoy the wit of their mortal companions, so henshin masters are taught how to spin a riddle to impress and amuse the kami.

At 1st level, the henshin master chooses one element that he has learned to appease in this manner. At 3rd, 5th, and 7th levels, the henshin master chooses another element he has gained an understanding of and may use the Riddle of that element. The Asako can use each Riddle a number of times per day equal to half his henshin master level (rounded up) without cost. If the henshin master wishes to use the Riddle more times than this allows, he must spend a Void Point each time he activates it. For example, a 4th level henshin master has taken the Riddle of Earth and the Riddle of Water; he has used the Riddle of Water twice already today and the Riddle of Earth only once. He may choose to spend a Void Point and use the Riddle of Water again, or he may use the Riddle of Earth without spending any Void Points. If he uses the Riddle of Earth, he will have to spend a Void Point to use the Riddle of Earth later that same day. All Riddles are considered supernatural abilities with a descriptor of their appropriate elemental type. Use of a Riddle is a standard action that draws an attack of opportunity normally. Riddles may be used on the defensive without drawing attacks of opportunity by making a Concentration check (DC 15). Riddles may not be used if the henshin master is magically silenced or unable to speak.

The Riddle of Air: The henshin master has learned how to amuse the whimsical air kami. He may choose to use this Riddle to gain a +4 bonus to his next Charisma-based check or impose a -10 penalty on another creature's Charisma-based skill check within 30 feet. The target of this effect is allowed a Will save to avoid its effects (DC 10 + the henshin master's Charisma modifier + his level in this prestige class).

The Riddle of Earth: The kami of earth grant the blessings of wholeness and purity upon those they favor. The henshin master may use this Riddle to gain a DR of X/- where X is the character's henshin master level. The DR lasts for a number of rounds equal to half the henshin master's level in this prestige class (rounded up). The Riddle of Earth may also be used to create a magical effect identical to a *cure* spell of a strength depending on the character's henshin master level.

Henshin Master Level	Cure Spell
1-2	<i>cure light wounds</i>
3-4	<i>cure moderate wounds</i>
5-6	<i>cure serious wounds</i>
7-8	<i>cure critical wounds</i>
9-10	<i>healing circle</i>

The spell is considered to be cast by a cleric of the henshin master's character level, and the henshin master may choose to cast a less powerful spell than indicated by his level (for example, a 9th level henshin master may cast *cure serious wounds* instead of *healing circle* when using this Riddle if he chooses). The henshin master may not use the *cure* spell ability upon himself.

TABLE 2-1: THE HENSHIN MASTER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+2	+2	Monk/Inkyo Abilities, Riddle
2nd	+1	+3	+3	+3	Mystery
3rd	+2	+3	+3	+3	Riddle
4th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Mystery
5th	+3	+4	+4	+4	Riddle
6th	+4	+5	+5	+5	Mystery
7th	+5	+5	+5	+5	Riddle
8th	+6/+1	+6	+6	+6	Mystery
9th	+6/+1	+6	+6	+6	Diamond Body, Diamond Soul
10th	+7/+2	+7	+7	+7	Riddle of Fate

The Riddle of Fire: The kami of fire are creatures of passion, speed, and inspiration. By drawing on their blessing, the henshin master may use this Riddle to gain a +4 bonus to his next Intelligence-based skill check. He may also use this Riddle to add his Wisdom modifier to all attack rolls for the next combat round if he is fighting unarmed or with a bo staff, jitte, sai, nunchaku, or kama. This bonus stacks with all other attack modifiers.

The Riddle of Water: The henshin master has gained the understanding of the water kami, who grant the favors of inexhaustible strength and boundless wisdom. The henshin master may use this Riddle to gain a +4 bonus on his next Wisdom-based skill check, or to double his Strength modifier on all damage rolls for the next combat round if he is fighting unarmed or with a bo staff, jitte, sai, nunchaku, or kama.

Mystery: In studying the kami, the henshin wish to become like them. The Asako strive to become part of the perfect harmony of the Celestial Order like the Fortunes and Elemental Dragons. As the henshin master becomes closer to this harmony, he can tip the balance of the elements in himself and those around him. At 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th levels, the henshin master chooses one element to manipulate in this manner. Each use of a Mystery requires the henshin master to spend a Void Point. Mysteries are considered supernatural abilities with a descriptor of the appropriate elemental type. Using a Mystery is a standard action that draws an attack of opportunity normally and lasts a number of rounds equal to the character's level in this class. Mysteries may be used on the defensive without drawing attacks of opportunity by making a Concentration check (DC 15). Mysteries may not lower an ability score below 1 and can only affect targets within 30 feet and line of sight. The target of this effect is allowed a Fortitude save to avoid its effects (DC 10 + the henshin master's Wisdom modifier + his level in this prestige class). Targets immune to ability score damage may not be affected by Mysteries.

Mystery of Air: The henshin master may raise or lower the Charisma or Dexterity of himself or another creature by one-half of his henshin master level (rounded down).

Mystery of Earth: The henshin master may raise or lower the Constitution or Wisdom of himself or another creature by one-half of his henshin master level (rounded down).

Mystery of Fire: The henshin master may raise or lower the Dexterity or Intelligence of himself or another creature by one-half of his henshin master level (rounded down).

Mystery of Water: The henshin master may raise or lower the Strength or Wisdom of himself or another creature by one-half of his henshin master level (rounded down).

Diamond Body (Su): At 9th level, the henshin master is so in harmony with the universe that he gains immunity to poison and non-magical disease of all kinds.

Diamond Soul: At 9th level, the henshin master's soul is so aligned with the Elements that unwanted magic is turned away without effort. The henshin master gains SR equal to his character level + 10. To affect the henshin master with a spell, a spellcaster must roll the henshin master's spell resistance or higher on 1d20 + the spellcaster's level.

Riddle of Fate (Su): At 10th level, the henshin master has finally achieved the last step he will take on the Path of Man while he exists in the Realm of Mortals. He is forevermore treated as a native outsider rather than a humanoid (the henshin master may be *banished* but not *dismissed*). He also gains a permanent DR of 5/- that stacks with the Riddle of Earth. As an outsider, the henshin master may be affected by spells that repel enchanted creatures such as *protection from*

law. Finally, the henshin master has gained the power to alter the dictates of fate — he may spend a Void Point after a roll is made to force a re-roll. The henshin master then chooses which roll he wishes to be the "real" roll; that roll determines the outcome. The henshin master must pay 250 XP each time he wishes to use this ability and may not lose class levels by using this ability.

THE ASAKO HENSHIN SCHOOL

School Benefit: +1 to any Trait

Skills: Calligraphy, Hand-to-Hand, Lore (Elements), Medicine, Meditation, Shintao

Starting Honor: 2, plus 5 boxes

The henshin have come a long way along the Path of Man. Their studies have been accelerated by the lesson of Asako Oyo (see Chapter 6). The Asako no longer seek to become as gods, but try to exist in perfect unity with the elements around them.

RIDDLES

Where once the Asako sought to trick the kami of the elements with their riddles, they now treat the kami as friends. However, the Asako have learned that the kami are quite fond of the henshin's riddles, and now the henshin use them to amuse the kami.

Using a Riddle is a standard action that requires a skill roll using the henshin's Lore (Elements) Skill and keeping the character's School Rank. The starting TN for all Riddles is 5, and a henshin may begin using all four Riddles at Rank 1. If the henshin possesses a Lore Skill of the element whose Riddle he is using — Lore (Elemental Air), Lore (Elemental Earth), Lore (Elemental Fire), or Lore (Elemental Water) — he adds his rank in that Skill to the total roll and may choose to roll using that Lore Skill instead. For example, if the henshin has Lore (Elements) 5, Lore (Elemental Water) 6, and Lore (Elemental Earth) 4, he may roll 5 dice for his Riddle of Earth and add 4 to the total, or roll 6 dice for his Riddle of Water and add 6.

Each Riddle may be used a number of times per day equal to the henshin's Ring in that particular element. A henshin may spend a Void Point to use the Riddle an additional time each day beyond this limit.

The uses for the four Riddles is as follows.

Air: The henshin adds his Air Ring in rolled (not kept) dice to one social interaction skill roll. The henshin may make a Raise to increase the number of dice this adds by one. The henshin may instead add his School Rank times his Air Ring to another's social skill roll TN.

Earth: The henshin ignores twice his Earth Ring in Wounds as they are suffered. Instead, he may heal another character of a number of Wounds equal to his Earth Ring times his School Rank. He may make a Raise to add 5 to the total in either case.

Fire: The henshin adds his Fire Ring in dice rolled (not kept) to Hand-to-Hand attack rolls in the next combat round, and may make a Raise to add an additional die. He may instead add his Fire Ring times his School Rank to the total of an Intelligence-based skill check, and may make a Raise to increase his effective School Rank by one.

Water: The henshin adds twice his Water Ring to Hand-to-Hand damage rolls for a number of consecutive combat rounds equal to his School Rank, and may make a Raise to

increase his effective School Rank by one. Instead he may add his Water Ring in dice rolled (not kept) on a Perception check, and may make a Raise to add an additional die.

MYSTERIES

Using a Mystery is a standard action that requires a skill roll using the henshin's Lore (Elements) skill and keeping the character's school rank. The starting TN for all Mysteries is 5, and a henshin may begin using all four Mysteries at Rank 1. If the henshin possesses a Lore Skill of the element whose Riddle he is using — Lore (Elemental Air), Lore (Elemental Earth), Lore (Elemental Fire), or Lore (Elemental Water) — he adds his rank in that Skill to the total roll and may choose to roll using that Lore Skill instead. For example, if the henshin has Lore (Elements) 5, Lore (Elemental Water) 6, and Lore (Elemental Earth) 4, he may roll 5 dice for his Mystery of Earth and add 4 to the total, or roll 6 dice for his Mystery of Water and add 6. Each Mystery affects the appropriate Ring — the Mystery of Water affects the Water Ring, etc. There is no Mystery of Void. Each Mystery may be used a number of times per day equal to the henshin's Rank in the appropriate elemental Ring. A henshin may spend a Void Point to use a Mystery an additional time per day beyond this maximum.

A henshin may use a Mystery to raise or lower his own Ring by his School Rank, but the TN of the roll is increased by 5 for every rank in the Ring gained or lost past the first. The henshin may make two Raises to increase or decrease the Ring by one additional rank.

A henshin may use a Mystery to raise or lower another's Ring by one-half his School Rank, rounded down, but never below 1. The TN of the roll is increased by 10 for every rank in the Ring gained or lost past the first. The henshin may make two Raises to increase or decrease the Ring by one additional rank.

When a Ring is raised or lowered, both associated Traits are raised or lowered by an equal amount. This may never lower another character's Trait below one.

NEW ANCESTORS

ASAKO ISHIO

The young Asako Ishio had little affinity for the elements, but was instead a talented drummer. In his youth he directed impressive taiko drum performances for daimyo from all families of the Phoenix. When the Clan War erupted, Ishio turned his talent to a more practical use — ritual drums had long kept restless spirits at bay, and the strength of Ishio's chi confounded and dazed the armies of the Shadowlands.

Asako Ishio died on the second Day of Thunder shortly before the defeat of Fu Leng. His remains were found largely intact — a rarity on that day of grisly combat. Ishio was found dead beside his drums, drumsticks clutched in both hands. After playing without rest for several days, he had died of exhaustion. The look on his face was one of great pride, and he is remembered among the honored heroes of the Phoenix.

SPIRIT DRUMMER

PHOENIX ANCESTOR FEAT:

ASAKO ISHIO

You are fearless, and can hearten your allies as well.

Clan: Phoenix

Benefit: You are immune to fear effects generated by Shadowlands creatures, outsiders, and *maho* spells. If you play a steady rhythm on a drum, all those who can hear the drum may use your Perform check in place of their Will save against all fear and compulsion effects. Perform is always a class skill for you.

ANCESTOR: ASAKO ISHIO (5 POINTS)

You are unaffected by fear effects generated by Shadowlands creatures and *maho*. If you play a steady rhythm on a drum, all those who can hear the drum may use your Music skill check in place of their Willpower roll to resist fear, or any opposed rolls to resist mental control.

ASAKO SAGOTEN

The child of Asako and Yogo, Sagoten is one of the most controversial ancestors of the Asako family. Early in life, he was a great hero. He fought against Fu Leng and aided in the creation of Isawa's Last Wish. Later in life, he became central to the feud between the Asako and the Isawa. Using the Last Wish, he destroyed Kyuden Akiko and himself. The story of Sagoten is often related to young Asako as a warning about the dangers of unbalanced emotions.

The story of Sagoten is also used to show the way of change and the growth of the soul. During the War of Spirits, Sagoten returned to Rokugan changed by his time in the realms of the dead. When Hantei XVI attempted to force him to reveal the secrets of the Last Wish, Sagoten escaped and used the Last Wish's power to protect it from the agents of the Steel Chrysanthemum before committing seppuku and finding peace in Yomi.

DRIVEN SOUL

PHOENIX ANCESTOR FEAT:

ASAKO SAGOTEN

Your mind is nearly impossible to sway once it is fixed on a certain task.

Clan: Phoenix

Benefit: Each day, you may select a goal that can reasonably be achieved that day (DM's discretion). For the next day, when making any roll that would further your pursuit of that goal, you receive a +1 circumstance bonus on all skill checks, attack rolls, and saving throws. This goal may not be as broad as "fighting," for example, but can be focused to attack rolls against a specific opponent. Likewise, something as broad as "Diplomacy checks" is not acceptable, but "convincing Doji Tanitsu to accept a peace treaty with our clan" would be fine.

ANCESTOR: ASAKO SAGOTEN (5 POINTS)

Each day, you may select a certain goal that can reasonably be achieved that day (GM's discretion). When making any roll that would further your pursuit of that goal, you receive a single Free Raise. This goal may not be as broad as "fighting," for example, but can be focused to attack rolls against a specific opponent. Likewise, something as broad as "Diplomacy" is not acceptable, but "convincing Doji Tanitsu to accept a peace treaty with our clan" would be fine.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE ISAWA

TOO CLOSE
TO THE FLAME
PART FOUR

"Miya Hatori, my lords," the attendant announced. The shisha strode purposefully through the great open doorway that led into the Elemental Council's chambers. The aging Miya needed no introduction. The Elemental Masters had known of Hatori's coming weeks in advance — as rulers of their family they had been extended the same courtesy as any powerful daimyo or champion. Though no single Master ruled the Isawa, the Elemental Masters together dictated the Phoenix Clan's fate.

Silently, Hatori reminded himself that the Isawa probably would have been prepared for him even had he not sent word. The more powerful Phoenix shared the Dragon's habit of rarely being surprised by any turn of events.

The Imperial noble kept up his stride as he moved across the vast and arched room. He let no hint of his apprehension show as he gathered himself to deal with what was possibly the most powerful group of shugenja in the Empire. "My lords," he said curtly, and bowed low once he reached an acceptable distance from the Council's round stone table. "I am honored to stand before you as an agent of the Imperial City." Hatori continued without raising his head. It did not escape his notice that two of the Council's seats were vacant.

"Rise, Miya Hatori," Isawa Hochiu said in deep tones. Hochiu was easily the most intimidating Elemental Master. The Master of Fire was much taller than his fellows, with the confident bearing

of a bushi. "I trust you were guided to our presence without incident," Hochiu stated flatly.

"The road from Otosan Uchi has been dangerous of late," said Shiba Ningen. The Master of the Void stared directly at Hatori, his lily black eyes seeming to peer deep into his mind. There was a depth in the Master of the Void's eyes... or an emptiness he could not fathom. Hatori felt as if he was a boy barely past his gempukeku locking eyes with his sensei and could not help looking away.

"I am afraid so, esteemed Master," Hatori said, quickly regaining his wits. "Troubling times."

The Master of Earth spoke this time. "Then your duty must be of great importance, Hatori-san." Isawa Taeruko's face was as serene as the Master of the Void's, though her politeness had a forced edge. Before Hatori could continue, Ningen spoke. "Every blade of grass must exist to complete the garden, Hatori-sama, but the gardener does not examine each root." His tone carried a warning. "Only the wild growths."

There was a great commotion outside the chamber. Without preamble, a thin man in brilliant orange robes strode into the room. The attendants stopped short of entering after him, looking both resigned and fearful as they gave up the chase. "I apologize for my tardiness, my fellow Masters," the man said as he took his seat, making no indication that he had even noticed Hatori.

It had to be Nakamuro, the Master of Air. Such an odd entrance could mean only two things — either it had been staged to throw Hatori off guard, or the Council was more deeply fragmented than it appeared even to the Miya's sharp perceptions. Hatori would have to strike now to be sure. "Nakamuro-sama," Hatori bowed low to the Master of Air. "I am honored by your presence. I am doubly honored that now I truly stand before the Elemental Council."

"Rise, Miya," Nakamura said softly, letting his cold gaze linger on the Master of Earth for a moment too long for it to be a false gesture. So there was indeed a division in the Council that ran deeper than their inability to appoint a new Master of Water. Just as Hatori had feared.

"I have come to report that my vassals and I have found our stay within the Phoenix lands... acceptable," Hatori said, allowing the word to carry a meaning clear to all assembled. "I will report to the Imperial families that any fears for the Phoenix Clan's stability are unfounded, and I humbly beg forgiveness for our intrusion."

"Nonsense," Ningen said. His response obviously cut off both Hochiu and Taeruko. "The Imperial families have long been close to the Phoenix. Did the Seppun not bring the word of Tao to the Isawa? Do the Miya and Shiba not bleed together for peace in the Empire? It would have been a graver insult had the Phoenix heard nothing from our cousins in the Imperial Lands during this time of strife."

"I thank you, Ningen-sama," Hatori said slowly, bowing once more. He had been dismissed, that much was clear, and he knew little more than he had upon his arrival. The Phoenix had strong internal divisions, but they were quite practiced at concealing their internal problems from outsiders. "I wish to learn one final thing before I report back to Miya Yumi," he said, leveling his gaze slowly upon each of the Masters. "I understand that the Tamori held Nakamuro-sama hostage, but released him without threat or injury. It is curious, given the fact that your clans are such great enemies, and I would like very much to know why."

"The Tamori believe that the Dark Oracle of Fire is a greater threat," Nakamuro said. "They wish to work for peace."

"While they continue to slaughter our bushi," Taeruko spat, drawing a sharp look from Nakamuro.

The two locked gazes for a moment. Hatori was saddened. If two Phoenix could make their hatred so obvious before an Imperial visitor, then it must be venomous indeed. With such conflict within the Council, it was no wonder they had not chosen a new Master of Water to replace Isawa Riake. Hatori wondered what had passed between Taeruko and Nakamuro, if the past could be mended and the Council made whole once more.

"Has the Council yet decided what is to be done about Agasha Tamori?" Hatori asked.

"Agasha is a Phoenix name now, Hatori-san; the Dark Oracle does not deserve to wear it," Isawa Hochiu said forcefully. "He is only Tamori now. I know that you are not as satisfied as you claim to be with the fragile peace in our lands, but do not fear. Truly, the events of the coming days will be a grand period for the Phoenix. Perhaps you can return to write of them in your histories."

"Go forth now, Miya Hatori-san," Shiba Ningen said, "and carry with you the blessings of the Council of Masters."

Hatori bowed to Ningen a final time. Many said that Void mages were in touch with a power beyond human understanding, madmen at best. The fact that Hatori considered the Master of the Void the most levelheaded and amiable Master was not a comforting notion.



THE ISAWA PROVINCES

As one of the wealthiest families in Rokugan, it comes as little surprise that the Isawa control more land than most. The followers of Isawa settled in the mountains and woodlands long before they heard the name of Shiba, and they have retained control of them for over a thousand years. These lands are rich in natural resources, including lumber, gems, and silver. They are also easily defensible, situated in rugged terrain at the very heart of Phoenix territory.

MAJOR ISAWA HOLDINGS

As might be expected, the most valued and well-guarded Isawa holdings are those that relate directly to theology or research. Of nearly equal importance are those holdings that are essential to the Isawa maintaining their position within the courts. The Isawa are careful to retain their reputation for pacifism and unquestioned authority on all matters pertaining to religion and magic.

PALE OAK CASTLE (LOCATION 78)

Given their private nature, the Isawa are extremely reluctant to host major social events such as the Emperor's Winter Court in their ancestral home at Kyuden Isawa. To avoid insult to guests, the Isawa constructed a magnificent castle on the breathtakingly beautiful Aojiroi Oku Heigen, the Pale Oak Plain. Aojiroi Oku Shiro, as this location is also known, was designed to be the perfect court environment. The Phoenix insist that the castle was constructed solely to protect a great pale oak tree that gives the plain its name, as the tree grew upon the site where Hantei XVII insisted upon being buried. Between the novelty of the tree's presence and the castle's sheer beauty, the Isawa have successfully diverted attention away from the fact that they do not welcome their most honored guests into their own home.

Because of its importance, Pale Oak Castle is one of the most secure locations in their land, third only behind Gisei Toshi and Kyuden Isawa. Several dozen Shiba guardsmen discreetly patrol the grounds, and several talented young Isawa shugenja serve as supplemental security. The castle also contains more nemuranai than any other castle in the Phoenix lands, as serenity lanterns and kouken blades abound.

THE GREAT WHITE OAK

This gigantic tree is one of the largest oaks in the Empire. Guests who see it for the first time often assume that the Isawa have increased its size with magic, but its grandeur is completely natural. The oak exudes an aura of mystery and majesty, seeming somehow more real than its surroundings. Even animals are not immune to its strange effects, and occasionally sit transfixed before the tree.

The Great White Oak truly bears the blessings of the Hantei's spirit, although only the Isawa know this for certain. The Isawa gather all the bark that falls from the tree for their own purposes and do not allow anyone to even touch the tree. The bark can be distilled into a powerful healing broth by anyone with any skill with herbs. This broth, when imbibed, is as powerful as the most potent healing magic.

WHITE OAK HEALING BROTH

The broth acts as a *cure critical wounds* spell cast by a 16th level cleric.

WHITE OAK HEALING BROTH

The broth acts as a *Path to Inner Peace* spell cast by a shugenja with 8 Water making 5 Raises.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: One crisp winter morning, the alarm is raised at Pale Oak Castle. During the night, someone assaulted the Great White Oak and cleaved out a large chunk. This is an enormous dishonor for the Isawa, who will be quick to recruit assistance from their allies in the castle to deal with the situation, and eager to punish the party responsible.

Focus: The prime suspect is a visiting Unicorn shugenja of the Moto family. Not one for tradition, this brusque shugenja has been constantly seeking approval to acquire a specimen from the tree for experimentation. The Unicorn asserts his innocence and insists that his rival, a Soshi, has framed him.

Strike: Neither the Unicorn or the Scorpion is to blame. The fault lies with a half-mad ronin living in the wilderness near the castle. A loyal follower of the Steel Chrysanthemum during the War of Spirits, the ronin has become unhinged and finally attacked the Great Oak due to its association with Hantei XVII, the man responsible for the assassination of the insane Hantei XVI.

ISAWA NODOTAI

[Shugenja 8; Isawa Tensai (Fire) 3]

One of the principal shugenja responsible for the castle's defense, Isawa Nodotai enjoys a sterling reputation. He is well liked by the Shiba and Isawa he works alongside, and is known for his ability to accomplish any task set before him purely by determination and good cheer. These very qualities caused his lord to select him as liaison to the Lion forces during the Lion-Phoenix treaty. This duty served as Nodotai's undoing.

In a completely uncharacteristic moment, Nodotai found himself thoroughly enthralled by a young Matsu samurai-ko among the Lion delegation. The woman's beauty and devotion to duty absolutely stunned the shugenja, and in a matter of days he found himself fighting alongside the Lion on the field of battle. Nodotai tried desperately to forget his emotions, and was given a chance when he left her side to compete in the Jade Championship. Even there he could not forget her. Even though she knew nothing of his feelings, he was smitten. He later learned that the samurai-ko was none other than Matsu Satomi, sister of Lion Champion Matsu Nimuro. Though he was relieved to hear that she left Phoenix lands before Aikune unleashed his wrath upon their former allies, he was saddened by the thought that he will likely never see her again. Nodotai has returned to his duties at Pale Oak Castle, but he has not forgotten her. He wonders if he ever will.

MORI ISAWA

(LOCATION G)

The Mori Isawa has the distinction of being one of the largest forests in Rokugan, second only to the vast Shinomen Mori. Although far less hazardous than that enigmatic forest, Mori Isawa is nevertheless a place of mystery. The forest's deepest regions have never been explored. Some areas are known to be haunted by malevolent spirits, and even the Elemental Masters avoid them. It is a spiritual place, with strange occupants and manifestations. The Asako theorize that somewhere within the forest exists at least one passage into the Spirit Realms. If such a passage exists, its location is unknown, and may even change from time to time. What Realm this passage might touch upon is also in question, for there are natives of many different Realms among the forest's denizens.

While the Asako view the forest as a site of spiritual learning and the Shiba see it as a place of mystery to be respected, the Isawa consider it purely a resource. Strangely, this implies no lack of respect for the spirits of the wood. The Isawa consider themselves such masters of the spiritual arts that the presence or absence of spirits in the wood are beneath their concern. The wood from Mori Isawa produces exceptionally resilient scrolls, and shrines built using lumber from the forest almost always attract the Fortunes' favor. The Isawa are always certain to harvest lumber showing the proper respect and gratitude to the forest kami, and think no more on the matter.

THE HEART OF NATURE

Deep inside the Mori Isawa, unseen by mortal eyes, is the Heart of Nature. The Heart of Nature is a naturally occurring passage that touches on many different Spirit Realms, including Chikushudo, Sakkaku, and even Yume-do. The passage has no permanent location, but moves throughout the forest at random. There is no way to predict what Realm the passage opens upon. Even those denizens of the Spirit Realms who wander through the passage have no way to know how to return to their home Realm unless they have magic to aid them, which is one of the reasons that the Mori Isawa has such a reputation for strange and unusual inhabitants.

YUKI NO ONNA

[Snow Maiden Shugenja 14; Isawa Shugenja Rank 4 equivalent]

Some of the most well known denizens of the Mori Isawa are the Yuki no Onna, the Snow Maidens. These enigmatic and mercurial beings are generally believed to originate within the Spirit Realms, although scholars debate their home Realm. Some think that they are mortal creatures transformed by the essence of winter that suffuses the forest even in the warmest months. Still others are certain that these mysterious beings are natives of Ningen-do. Which of these theories is true, if any, is as yet unknown.

Snow maidens are known to have a strange fascination with certain mortals. No one knows what draws these beautiful creatures to a certain samurai, but the Isawa histories are full of young men and women who become enamored of the mysterious women and eventually disappear into the forest's depths. In the previous generation of Phoenix, the renowned warrior Shiba Tetsu spent his life fulfilling his duty in an exemplary manner in joyful anticipation of his destiny with the snow maidens. If the maidens have chosen such a champion in the current generation, that individual has not yet made his presence known.

HIGHWAYS OF THE ISAWA PROVINCES

The Path of Elements (Connects P5 to P9 and on to P15) — This is the primary route through the eastern Phoenix lands, connecting the Shiba and Isawa provinces. Merchants travel north along the coast to bring their wares to the villages and cities of the Isawa.

Honored Guest Road (Connects P8 to P10) — Although not extensively traveled for trade purposes, this road connects the western Isawa provinces to the Asako holdings to the south. Honored guests traveling to the Isawa Winter Court at Pale Oak Castle travel along this highway, ensuring that it is one of the safest routes in all the Phoenix lands. This road is maintained in perfect condition because of the castle's popularity with past Emperors, who were known to visit frequently.

The Northern Way (Connects P4 to P5) — Rarely used by any except the Isawa, this narrow road was driven across Mori Isawa's border and along the northern mountains so that the residents of those two holdings would not be required to circle around the Mori Isawa to visit the other. This has had the additional benefit of providing a far more direct route from Kyuden Isawa to Pale Oak Castle.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A young samurai fresh from his gempukku disappears while patrolling the forest's outer edge. The busy Isawa can spare few men to pursue a single sentry, and ask the characters for their assistance. Gaining the Isawa family's favor is no small feat, and this is an opportunity that should not be ignored.

Focus: Peasant accounts of a golden demon at the forest's edge have stirred up apprehension among the villagers around the forest, and only fear of the Isawa keeps them working. They seem convinced not only that this demon was responsible for stealing away the young bushi, but that a veritable army of the creatures will explode forth from the forest at any moment to destroy everyone.

Strike: The golden demon that the peasants have reported seeing is very real, but hardly a demon. It is a Lion bushi that has become separated from his unit (see *Shiro sano Chujitsu na Shinpu* below) and is living near the village, stealing food to survive until his comrades arrive (which he is certain will happen soon). He had nothing to do with the missing bushi. That young man has run away with his childhood sweetheart and is currently on his way to the Unicorn lands, where the two hope to be married and start a new life together.

MORI KUROI

Before there was a Phoenix Clan, the villagers who lived in what would become the Isawa provinces had another name for the Mori Isawa: Mori Kuroi, the Black Forest. To them, the forest was a dreadful, terrifying place. Bizarre superstitions were based upon the creatures the peasants believed dwelled within the forest's depths, and any hardship or misfortune was attributed to the forest. It was only after Isawa dared to venture into the forest alone, returning safely after seven days

and nights with the spirits, that fear of the forest began to recede. In time, the Isawa family's fostering of Shinseism and the worship of the Fortunes drove most of these superstitions from the peasants' minds.

But the peasants have never truly forgotten their fears. The dark forest they still call Mori Kuroi is by far the most sinister and suspicious portion of the great Mori Isawa. Timber and other natural resources are not gathered from the woods except in the direst of circumstances. The peasants cannot be dissuaded from what they know to be true: something sinister lurks within the depths of the forest.

One known hazard inside the forest is an abandoned manor house that once belonged to the Isawa. It was once home to a shugenja who summoned an oni to curse the Isawa with a plague. The oni was meant to bring vengeance for the shugenja, but in the end it brought only suffering to everyone. The oni's plague took a terrible toll on the Isawa not once, but twice. Fortunately, the Isawa are now aware of the house's existence and have placed powerful wards to ensure that no passage to Jigoku can ever be opened there again.

KUZUSHI, FREED YOKAI

[Male human Freed Yokai Shugenja 10; Isawa Shugenja 3] The man once known as Isawa Kuzushi has had a most difficult existence. His folly released an oni into the heart of Mori Kuroi centuries ago, and the beast tortured his soul in Jigoku for a timeless time. Finally, the creature turned its attention to Kuzushi's descendant and used the energy of Kuzushi's soul to open a gateway to the mortal realm, where it began its campaign of terror anew in the Empire shortly before the Clan War. Fortunately, an intrepid band of samurai banished the oni and sealed the gate.

During the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, Kuzushi's spirit escaped Jigoku and returned to the mortal world. Maddened by an eternity of suffering, Kuzushi stealthily returned to Mori Kuroi where he has hidden for decades, slowly trying to recover his sanity. He has been successful, but his hold is tenuous at best. Kuzushi is currently trying to determine if he should attempt to atone for his crimes or throw his lot in with the Shadowlands and make one last bid for power.

KYUDEN ISAWA (LOCATION P9)

The home of the most powerful shugenja family in Empire and one of the most extensive magical research facilities in Rokugan, Kyuden Isawa is a truly magnificent structure. Although deceptively well constructed, the Isawa family's incredible power has ensured that there is little need for the extensive physical defenses that most such structures require. Instead, the palace's appearance has been designed to inspire serenity and awe. In that, it succeeds beyond any expectation.

The shugenja school at Kyuden Isawa is the largest of its kind. Dozens of shugenja are trained there each year as the Isawa's ranks continue to swell beyond those of any other shugenja family in the Empire. The school's resources far outstrip those of other facilities, and the Isawa sensei here continually screen their students to reveal hidden aptitudes for the more specialized Tensai and Ishiken dojo. The versatility and flexibility of the sensei allows the students of Kyuden Isawa to find their own path through their training, resulting in a group of shugenja with wildly different elemental talents and spellcasting specialties.

In addition to its educational features, Kyuden Isawa is host to the Isawa court, a powerful and well-respected institution. The Emperor's Winter Court is rarely held here, for the Isawa value their privacy too much for so enormous an undertaking, but they do have a number of guests at all times. Such guests are invited, of course, for no one would dare insult the powerful Isawa by simply appearing and expecting hospitality. The greatest honor the Isawa can offer is a standing invitation to join them at Kyuden Isawa. At present, only Toturi Sezaru and Utaku Xieng Chi have been offered such invitations, the former due to his close bond with his Phoenix mother and the latter for her meritorious service protecting Kyuden Isawa at the side of Otaku Kamoko during the Clan War.

THE GREAT LIBRARY

The Isawa value knowledge above all else, and they have collected it since the days their founder walked the land. As a result, the family has countless volumes of lore detailing every aspect of the Empire's history and development as well as the Phoenix Clan's history and mythology. One of the most extensive repositories lies within Kyuden Isawa. The Great Library is one of the most well-known and heavily-used libraries in the Empire. Dozens, sometimes hundreds, of samurai from every clan petition for access every month. Naturally, the Isawa are rather jealous of their accumulated knowledge, and restrict access accordingly.

Petitions to access the Great Library must bear the chop of at least a provincial daimyo to be considered. There are exceptions, of course, particularly for requests from prominent scholars, but generally speaking the Isawa will not consider any request without the endorsement of a daimyo. Obviously, endorsements by Phoenix daimyo are given extra consideration. Once the request has been turned over to the Isawa, the petitioner must wait. High priority cases can expect a wait of at least a few days, and unimportant requests have been known to wait for a year or more.

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER OF THE ELEMENTAL MASTERS

Deep beneath Kyuden Isawa lies a chamber shaped by the countless Masters of Earth over the centuries. A single large chamber comprises the focal point of the castle's underground section. This chamber contains no adornments or decorations, only a large table shaped from the marble of the stone floor. Upon the table are the symbols of all five elements, and a single chair at each element in which the Elemental Masters sit. Other chambers exist around this council chamber, but they have no set purpose and can be used as the individual Masters direct.

Under normal circumstances, the Council of Elemental Masters meets roughly once per month. Given the clan's present state, however, the Masters have been meeting weekly to determine the most appropriate way to deal with the Phoenix's war with the Dragon, the power of Shiba Aikune and his followers, and the lack of a Master of Water.

ISAWA IHARA

[Shugenja 10; Isawa Shugenja 3]

Strangely out of place at Kyuden Isawa, Isawa Ihara was one of the first to swear her loyalty to Shiba Aikune. Those who knew the tempestuous shugenja before this event are taken aback by the change in her personality.

Where Ihara was once a shy, reclusive young woman, now she is intense, passionate, and temperamental. Those who knew her before rarely associate with her now. This does not upset Ihara, for her work promoting Aikune's cause among the Isawa takes most of her time in any event.

Ihara feels somewhat conflicted about her role at Kyuden Isawa. She truly believes in Aikune's power and is quite genuine in her efforts to explain his motives and actions to others among the Isawa. However, there are times when she looks back at who she was before she was exposed to the Wish and cannot understand why she is so different now. She hopes that in time, understanding will come. But for now, she continues her work and tries to forget the doubts that keep her awake at night.



ISAWA MAASAKI

[Shugenja 12; Isawa Shugenja 4]

One of the most driven shugenja within Kyuden Isawa, Isawa Maasaki recently arrived at the palace from his previous post in the southern Phoenix provinces. While he has never been particularly important, he has been given unrestricted access to the Great Library, an honor almost unheard of even among the favored students of the Elemental Masters. He has also been allowed permission to enter and leave Gisei Toshi, a rarity for any of such relatively low status. Most believe that Maasaki is researching something that pertains to the Last Wish.

The truth is far more sinister. Maasaki recently came into possession of one of the infamous Black Scrolls. It was given to him by Ryosei, Fox Clan daimyo, who recovered it from the depths of the Shadowlands and was afraid to keep it. Maasaki has theorized that it is possible to purify the Black Scrolls now that Fu Leng's mortal essence has been completely purged from Ningen-do. If this could be done, the purified scrolls could bind his essence once again, eliminating the threat he poses to Tengoku. Maasaki is not certain if this can be done, but he intends to find out, and Isawa Taeruko has given him the resources he needs.

THE TEMPLES OF THE TENSAI

In the wilderness surrounding Kyuden Isawa, there are many natural wonders that demonstrate the kami's power and majesty. Some believe that these places sprang into being due to the Isawa family's proximity, while others believe that the Isawa settled in this region because of these natural oddities. Whatever the reason, these elemental oases serve the Isawa very well as the site of the Tensai temples.

A cave at the edge of the Mori Isawa contains a path to a lava pool beside which is the Temple of Fire. A tranquil lake just inside the forest's edge is host to the Temple of Water. An outcropping of rock on the plains north of Kyuden Isawa, comprised of different types of colorful stone, serves as the Temple of Earth. A narrow valley east of the palace is constantly buffeted by winds and serves as the Temple of Air. The Temple of Void is not a physical place at all, but is said to exist wherever the Master of the Void chooses to meditate.

MINOR ISAWA HOLDINGS

The Isawa consider any holding that does not directly contribute to their primary interests of diplomacy and research to be minor. The family is aware that these smaller resources have their place within the clan's economy, however; they do not consider them to be important in the grand scheme of things.

ROAD'S END VILLAGE

(LOCATION 76)

Road's End Village (Doro Owari Mura) has always been a relatively unimportant holding. It is recorded on all the Emperor's censuses, and taxes are collected exactly on schedule every year, but beyond that there has never been any reason for anyone of importance to go there. No samurai live there, and the peasants enjoy a nearly totally isolated existence.

Prior to the onset of the Clan War, a group of Asako henshin lived here. The peasants there thought little of them, mistaking them for common monks. In truth, however, the henshin who made Road's End Village their home were those closest to solving the final riddle and ascending to the Celestial Heavens. The village's serenity allowed them to contemplate the riddles they needed to complete their transition to divinity. Unfortunately, the village's secrecy was shattered by three separate events.

The first came immediately after the Scorpion Coup, when the local magistrate (who had for years been on the Scorpion Clan's payroll) allowed the Scorpion poison master and Shosuro family daimyo Shosuro Hametsu to take refuge in the village, eventually bringing some hundred and fifty Scorpion exiles with him. When some of the local henshin became curious about this disruption in their quiet lifestyle, Hametsu saw to it that they died quietly in their sleep.

The next blow came when Kuni Yori exposed the henshin's secrets to the Isawa. The hostilities between the two families led to the exposure of the henshin within Road's End Village, which the Isawa annexed in an attempt to find out more about its mysterious monks. Unable to continue their work under such scrutiny, many henshin left the village and retreated deeper into the mountains. The only benefit of the sudden Isawa attention was that the hidden Scorpion likewise departed, eager to escape notice.

The final blow came when a descendant of the Snake Clan, disguised as a traveling merchant, began peddling corrupted netsuke. This merchant caused a great deal of strife before a ronin shugenja (also a descendant of the Snake) arrived and drove him from the village. The event, while dealt with quickly, attracted the Otomo family's scrutiny. The Imperial Family permanently stationed a group of Isawa magistrates within the village. This made it far more difficult for the Asako to operate in secrecy. In the decades since, the village has remained within Isawa control and has largely been forgotten once again.

THE FALLING BLOSSOM

This tea house is one of the larger structures in the village, and is one of the only two buildings inside the village aside from peasant huts. In older times, it was the headquarters for the Asako henshin who lived here. They could meditate and enjoy the village's tranquility, for few peasants can visit a teahouse during the day when they should be working the fields.

Since the henshin's exposure decades ago, however, the Isawa have taken the house for their use. The lower floor still serves as a teahouse, although it does not do the brisk trade it once enjoyed, but the upper floor is taken up entirely by the offices and chambers of the Isawa magistrate within the village. The returned spirit Isawa Ijime, one of the great Heroes of Rokugan, was known to spend time here enjoying the same serenity that the Asako so valued until she was murdered by Gusai. Currently, the only resident of the Isawa offices is a mournful magistrate by the name of Isawa Sayuri, reported to be one of the enigmatic Ishiken void mages.

ISAWA SAYURI,

MAGISTRATE OF ROAD'S END VILLAGE

[Shugenja 6/Void Disciple 3; Isawa Ishiken 3]

Already accustomed to the oppressive nature of Isawa magistrates cursed with a meaningless duty, the peasants of the village have come to fear and avoid their overseers.

The most recent appointee, however, has changed their views considerably. Isawa Sayuri is a private, sad woman who leaves the peasants to their own devices unless they call on her. Her beauty and sadness has enchanted several of the men of the village, although they recognize that they could never hope to win her heart.

Isawa Sayuri has a twin sister. The two have always been close, even for twins. A little over a decade ago, her sister Mitako became the Oracle of Water. No longer fully human, Mitako barely remembers Sayuri and the bond they shared, but Sayuri feels the loss very deeply. She can sense her sister somewhere at the edge of her senses through the Void, but can never connect with her spirit. It pains her terribly. She requested her duty here at Doro Owari Mura so that she might be alone to deal with her sorrow.

YOBANJIN MURA

(LOCATION ?)

This small, unobtrusive village lies near the northern border of the Isawa lands, at the foothills of the Great Wall Mountains. The village cannot be reached without taking a seemingly random path along a number of small, poorly maintained roads. The village is not merely out of the way, it is nearly impossible to find even if one is looking for it. Many Isawa who have visited the village once have been unable to find their way back.

This is exactly how the Isawa family wishes it.

Yobanjin Mura is very difficult to find because the Isawa do not wish outsiders to witness what goes on there. The village is a neutral ground where family representatives can meet with and conduct trade with various factions of the Yobanjin tribes. The trade conducted here is minimal, and is scheduled well in advance to take place once every few months. The materials that the Isawa trade for seem harmless enough, and are used to further their magical research. The family considers the crime of trading with gaijin a worthy transgression to advance the Isawa's ability to defend and protect the Empire.

In addition to the trade conducted at Yobanjin Mura, there are several villagers who share at least partial ancestry with the barbarians from beyond the mountains. Many peasants in the village have a very exotic look about them, and remind others of the Unicorn or Ox in many ways. For their part, the villagers are treated well by the Isawa in exchange for their service and are generally left to their own devices. It is a very agreeable arrangement.

THE MARKET

This stretch of road on the northern edge of the village is devoid of any storefronts or building facings of any kind. Under normal circumstances, it is empty and quiet. It only truly comes to life when Yobanjin traders are spotted on the horizon, or when a scheduled visit by the Isawa grows near. Then dozens of peasants hastily erect ramshackle booths and carts to display the wares they have for trade to the Yobanjin, or that they have obtained from the Yobanjin in the Isawa's name. Any outsiders fortunate enough to stumble across the village during one of their market days would be stunned by the overabundance of supplies the peasants have to offer their Yobanjin partners, and even the Unicorn might be shocked at the sheer volume of gaijin goods available to the Isawa as a result of the villagers' trading.

MUNKHBAT,

HETMAN OF YOBANJIN MURA

[Rogue 8/Fighter 2; None (Insight Rank 3)]

The lives of the villagers of Yobanjin Mura, while very prosperous, are also very stressful. These men and women commit acts each day that could result in their outright execution if anyone outside the Phoenix Clan ever discovered them, and could result in their deaths just as fast if they were ever to displease their Isawa masters in any way. Fortunately for the villagers, they have an extremely shrewd and cunning leader to guide them along the path to prosperity rather than grisly death.

Munkhbat's father was a wounded Yobanjin raider who recuperated within the village. Apparently, he found at least one of the local women comely, and Munkhbat was the result. Fortunately for him, he was born in perhaps the only place in the entire Empire where he is valued for his mixed heritage rather than ostracized for it. Even in his teen years, Munkhbat was the village liaison to the visiting Yobanjin, and he has come to serve as the village's leader after years of hard work and dedication. Though he is only a simple peasant by Rokugani standards, his barbarian cousins have taught him how to defend himself well. Though he presents himself respectfully to his samurai lords, he could likely best most of them in single combat. Should Yobanjin Mura ever fall under attack, Munkhbat could quickly organize a formidable defense.

Munkhbat respects and admires his Isawa lords, but believes they have very little idea of exactly what they are doing where Yobanjin matters are concerned. Likewise, he fears that his Yobanjin allies do not truly comprehend the Isawa family's honor, tradition, and raw power. Without Munkhbat's able assistance, it is unlikely that the village could continue to operate as peacefully as it does.

IMPORTANT ISAWA NPCS

ISAWA HOCHIU, MASTER OF FIRE, GENERAL OF THE FIRESTORM LEGION

Isawa Hochiu is a hero.

This is a simple fact of Rokugani history, one that Hochiu seldom lets others forget. It was he, in his youth, who rode the Dragon of Air into the city of Voltturnum and confronted Goju Adorai at the threshold of Oblivion's Gate. It was he who defeated the Lying Darkness, destroyed the gate, and set right the terrible catastrophe that would have torn the Empire apart. He is brave, powerful, and fully deserving of his position on the Elemental Council and as commander of the Firestorm Legion. His father was Isawa Tsuke, the most murderous maho-tsukai the Phoenix Clan has ever known. Hochiu rose above his bloodline to save the entire Empire from darkness, and it is a deed his clan will not soon forget. He is beloved and respected wherever he goes, even by members of the other Phoenix families.

Hochiu is by far the most visible Elemental Master. He frequently accompanies the Phoenix armies on their patrols. When it becomes necessary for the Masters to personally intervene, he is usually the first one on the scene. The mere rumor of Hochiu's arrival is usually enough to end a peasant rebellion or convince a greedy neighbor to leave Phoenix territory. Hochiu's abilities tend to specialize in the areas of mass destruction; the Master of Fire knows and accepts this, as do the others on the Council. If violence is not required, the Hochiu is not required. He is the mailed fist of the Elemental Council.

Hochiu's displays of arrogance and power are mostly for show. Hochiu remembers his youth, the days following his father's betrayal. He remembers growing up in the blasted, empty lands of the Phoenix. He remembers how hopeless and unfocused his people were in those days. Only after Oblivion's Gate was his clan's pride restored; only after he proved that the Phoenix could not merely recover from the wounds Tsuke had dealt them, but that they could triumph where the other clans failed. Hochiu believes that he is a living symbol of what it means to be a Phoenix, and so long as he is confident and strong will his clan be likewise. In the wake of the War of Spirits, Hochiu has nevertheless become somewhat depressed. The abuse the Phoenix suffered at Hantei XVI's hands scarred their people, drove a wedge between the Shiba and Isawa, and fractured the Elemental Council. Ironically, Hochiu looks to the war with the Dragon Clan with a strange eagerness. Perhaps another great victory for the Phoenix will unite them and give them strength as the Battle of Oblivion's Gate did.

Hochiu's drive to deliver his clan to greatness serves another purpose as well. It occupies his mind and allows to live with his nightmares. Each night the ghosts of countless kinsmen murdered by Isawa Tsuke visit Hochiu. Occasionally, he hears the Shadow Dragon's whispered voice, the former Dragon of Air that sacrificed itself to corruption carrying Hochiu to Voltturnum. Hochiu ignores the creature, defies the Shadow Dragon, and remains strong.

Upon escaping the Masters' prison after their battle with Agasha Tamori, Hochiu was quite impressed to see how Shiba Aikune had kept the Phoenix lands safe in their absence. The fact that he unleashed the Last Wish to do so does not disturb Hochiu in the slightest. Hochiu has always seen something of himself in Aikune, and believes that the boy has a potential to become a great hero of the Phoenix. Hochiu knows from experience that a hero is nothing until he is tested. What better test than to use Isawa's Last Wish and survive?

ISAWA HOCHIU

Male human Phoenix, Shu 4/Ten 7/Ele 8: CR 19; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 19d6+76; hp 170; Init: +4; Spd 30 ft.; Atk +5 flaming katana +19/+14/+9 (1d10+9 +1d6 fire); AC 26 (touch 16, flat-footed 22); SQ Class Skill — Spellcraft, Element Focus (Fire), Element Metamagic (Extend Spell, Empower Spell), Elemental Prodigy, Elemental surge (2/day), Improved Element Focus (+3), Sense Elements, +11 caster level, +1 caster level with Fire spells; Honor 3; AL CG; SV Fort +16, Ref +12, Will +19; Str 16, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 21 (27), Wis 13, Cha 17; Maximum Void 5; Height: 6 ft. 1 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language — Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Alchemy +22, Battle +23, Concentration +26, Iaijutsu Focus +25, Knowledge (elements) +30, Knowledge (Lying Darkness) +30, Knowledge (maho) +18, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +18, Listen +10, Scry +18, Spellcraft +31,

Spot +10; Depths of the Void, Friendly Kami, Ritual Magic, Skill Focus: Knowledge (elements), Superior Element Focus (Fire), Versatile (Battle, Iaijutsu Focus), Void Use, Way of the Phoenix.

Dojo: Gisei Toshi.

Spells Known (6/8/8/8/8/7/7/5 base DC 25 + spell level for all Fire spells, 16 for other spells, Isawa School, Element Focus — Air): 0 — call fire, dancing lights, flare, flaring speed, flickering flame, ghost sound, guidance, hands of clay, light, whispers of the kami; 1st — burning hands, cause fear, evil ward, eye of the sun, faerie fire, importune kami I, never alone, protection from taint, ruined earth, shocking grasp; 2nd — bull's strength, burning kiss of steel, burning the ashes, cat's grace, fires that cleanse, flame blade, heat metal, hurried steps, produce flame; 3rd — fire wings, fireball, greater magic weapon, haste, keen edge, Osano-Wo's blessing, searing light, summon nature's ally III (fire only); 4th — fire shield, importune kami IV, lightning bolt, Tamori's curse, vengeance, wall of fire, warning flame; 5th — burning steps, confusion, feeblemind, fire breath, flame strike, spell resistance, symbol of fire; 6th — chain lightning, fires of purity, greater dispelling, karma; 7th — chain lightning, importune kami VII, prismatic spray, scatter the soul's flame.

Possessions: +5 ashigaru armor, +5 flaming katana, amulet of natural armor +2, haori of resistance +3, headband of intellect +6, mantle of fire, ring of protection +2.

ISAWA HOCHIU

Earth: 4

Willpower: 3

Water: 3

Strength: 5

Fire: 7

Air: 3

Reflexes: 4

Void: 6

School/Rank: Isawa Tensai (Fire) 5, Firestorm Legion 2

Honor: 3.1

Glory: 8.9

Advantages: Aligned to the Elements (Fire), Balance, Bente's Blessing, Daredevil, Social Position (Master of Fire)

Disadvantages: Brash, Driven (to greatness), Haunted, Nemesis (the Shadow Dragon), Proud

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Courtier 3, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 8, Intimidation 6, Investigation 4, Katana 9, Lore (Elements) 4, Lore (Lying Darkness) 9, Meditation 5, Shintao 3, Theology 3

Dojo: Gisei Toshi

Elemental Guardsman Secrets: Can cast Katana of Fire and Wall of Fire once per day, each, as a single action with no chance of failure and without counting against his spell slots for the day.

ISAWA TAERUKO, MASTER OF EARTH, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL OF MASTERS

Though Isawa Hochiu is the most flamboyant and visible member of the Council, few doubt that Taeruko is the most powerful. She has held her position the longest, having fought in the Clan War, the War Against the Shadow, and the War of Spirits. Although she is a cousin of the legendary Isawa Tadaka, her magic has allowed her to retain a youthful appearance for decades.

Most of the time Taeruko is a wise and moderating force on the Council. Like the mountains from which she draws her magic she is calm, serene, and unopposable. She is also quite stubborn and never forgets a grudge. The most notable example of her fearsome temper is her hatred for Shiba Aikune, Isawa Nakamuro, and the Tamori family. All of these spring from the same source — her hatred for Agasha Tamori.

Taeruko married shortly after the Battle of Oblivion's Gate and had a single child, born on the same day as Toturi Tsudao. Her husband was slain by Yobanjin raiders shortly thereafter. Her heart broken by the loss, Taeruko never remarried. Her daughter, Yaruko, became the center of her life outside the Elemental Council. Yaruko was arranged to be married to the son of Phoenix Champion Shiba Tsukune, an act that Taeruko hoped would make the tempestuous Shiba more amenable to the Council's advice.

During the War of Spirits, Agasha Tamori and the armies of the Dragon infiltrated Phoenix lands at the command of Hantei XVI and kidnapped the children of several influential Phoenix families. Among these were Taeruko's daughter, Tsukune's son, and the young Acolyte of Air Isawa Nakamuro. When Yaruko defied her Dragon captors, Tamori slew her without hesitation. The other Phoenix children struck out at their captors and escaped, and soon the entire clan was filled with righteous rage at Tamori's actions. Taeruko hunted the Dragon personally for years, but he eluded her and disappeared at the end of the War of Spirits.

In her misdirected rage, Taeruko blamed Nakamuro and Aikune, both of whom attempted to protect Yaruko and failed. She has used the power of her position to hobble Aikune's rise through the Phoenix ranks, and opposes Nakamuro on nearly every issue brought before the Council as a matter of principle. She bears an even deeper hatred for Tamori Shaitung, the daughter of the man who killed Yaruko, the woman who eagerly accepted Tamori's wretched name following the War of Spirits. After a catastrophic Winter Court Emperor Toturi learned not to invite Shaitung and Taeruko at the same time.

As powerful as Taeruko's anger can be, her dislike of Aikune and Nakamuro and her animosity toward Shaitung are far outstripped by her pure hatred for Agasha Tamori. When Taeruko discovered that Tamori yet lived as the Dark Oracle of Fire, all of the anger that had built up in her heart for nine years exploded to the surface. Despite her rage, she was denied vengeance. After escaping the Masters' prison deep beneath the earth, she immediately returned to Kyuden Isawa and began researching the Oracles of Light and Dark for any possible weaknesses.

Ironically, it was Tamori's return that allowed Taeruko to begin to make peace with Isawa Nakamuro. He is an expert on the Oracles, and has faced Tamori twice and survived, so Taeruko is at last ready to heed the youngest Master's advice. She even grudgingly admits that Tamori Shaitung might be a worthy ally against the Dark Oracle — if she can be trusted.

The same, sadly, is not true for Shiba Aikune. Since his acquisition of the Last Wish, Taeruko has become absolutely convinced that Aikune is a danger to the Phoenix. She believes that if he does not surrender the artifact, he will destroy himself as all other wielders have. Sending Aikune against the Dark Oracle is, in her mind, an abominable idea. The Last Wish should not be used at all; risking the loss of such an artifact in a foolish combat with a powerful Shadowlands madman is unthinkable.

ELEMENTAL MASTERS AND SPELL LISTS

Players of the 2nd Edition system may be wondering why the Elemental Masters do not have spell lists. Simply put, they're the Elemental Masters, so if they need access to a spell scroll, they have it.

Conversely, players of the d20 System™ may be wondering why the Elemental Masters have limited spell lists. In d20, that's merely a function of the way the shugenja class works, so the spells the Masters actually know in that system are listed. However, should a Master need a scroll of a particular spell, he can have it at hand at a moment's notice, so assume that if an Elemental Master truly needs to cast a shugenja spell of any kind, he can do so with minimal effort.

ISAWA TAERUKO

Female human Phoenix, Shu 10/Ten 10: CR 20; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 20d6+200; hp 285; Init: +2; Spd 30 ft.; Atk kouken wakizashi +12/+7 melee (1d6+2); AC 23 (touch 14, flat-footed 21); SQ Class Skill — Spellcraft, Element Focus (Fire), Element Metamagic (Extend Spell, Empower Spell, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell), Elemental surge (3/day), Improved Element Focus (+3), Sense Elements, +10 caster level, Supreme Element Focus; Honor 2; AL LN; SV Fort +21, Ref +13, Will +20; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 24 (30), Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 10; Maximum Void 2; Height: 5 ft. 1 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language — Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Concentration +33, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (arcana) +25, Knowledge (elements) +25, Knowledge (maho) +20, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +20, Scry +16, Spellcraft +26; Craft Wondrous Item, Friendly Kami, Ritual Magic, Roar of the Earth (Ancestor: Isawa Tadaka), Skill Focus (Knowledge (elements)), Superior Element Focus (Earth), Void Use, Way of the Phoenix.

Dojo: Gisei Toshi.

Spells Known (6/9/9/8/8/8/7/7/7 base DC 27 + spell level for all Earth spells, 20 for other spells, Isawa School, Elemental Focus — Earth): 0 — *be the mountain, commune with elements, hands of clay, Jurojin's balm, mage hand, mending, purity, summon, wisdom of the fortunes*; 1 — *cure light wounds, earth's stagnation, mage armor, protection from taint, Tadaka's gift, whispers of the land*; 2 — *barkskin, bull's strength, endurance, hold person, lesser restoration, murmur of earth*; 3 — *greater magic weapon, Kaiu's jade, magic circle against taint, protection from elements, stone shape*; 4 — *dismissal, importune kami IV, jade strike, lightning bolt, minor globe of invulnerability*; 5 — *dispel taint, passwall, scrying, spell resistance, wall of stone*; 6 — *antimagic field, disintegrate, power of the earth dragon, stonesskin*; 7 — *earthquake, guardian of earth, laughter of the risen earth, summon nature's ally VII*; 8 — *binding, devastation of stone, oni warding, protection from spells*; 9 — *castle of earth, essence of earth II, importune kami IX, imprisonment*.

Possessions: +5 ashigaru armor, amulet of natural armor +3, bracers of health +6, cloak of resistance +5, jade pendant, kouken wakizashi (see *Magic of Rokugan*), ring of fire resistance (minor), ring of protection +3, rod of metal and mineral detection, serenity lantern.

ISAWA TAERUKO

Earth: 7

Water: 4

Perception: 5

Fire: 3

Air: 4

Reflexes: 4

Void: 5

School/Rank: Isawa Tensai (Earth) 8

Honor: 2.6

Glory: 8.7

Advantages: Aligned to the Elements (Earth), Ancestor (Isawa Tadaka), Social Position (Elemental Master)

Disadvantages: Contrary, Lost Love (daughter), Proud, Sworn Enemies (Isawa Nakamuro, Shiba Aikune)

Skills: Calligraphy 6, Courtier 5, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 6, Go 5, History 4, Intimidation 7, Investigation 5, Lore (Elements) 7, Lore (Shadowlands) 8, Meditation 6, Shintao 5, Sincerity 5, Tanto 5, Theology 6

Dojo: Gisei Toshi

ISAWA NAKAMURO, MASTER OF AIR

Isawa Nakamuro is the youngest member of the Council of Masters. He is an earnest, thoughtful young man whose quiet demeanor hides his quick wit and clever mind. He is a talented shugenja who has been prone to self-doubt and depression since the terrible events of his early career.

Nakamuro was born to a minor branch of the Isawa family. His talent with Air magic was noted early on, and he quickly rose through the ranks of the Isawa Tensai. Master of Air Agasha Gennai was especially proud, and took Nakamuro as his personal student. It became quickly evident that the aging Gennai was grooming Nakamuro to become his successor, and the rest of the Council highly approved. Gennai taught Nakamuro the subtleties of Air magic and shared with him the lore of the Oracles, secrets previously known only by a obscure sect of the Agasha family of which Gennai was the last surviving member.

During the War of Spirits Nakamuro was assigned to protect Taeruko's daughter, Isawa Yaruko. It was while serving in this duty that he met Shiba Aikune, and the two grew to be friends. Though Nakamuro knew that Aikune was betrothed to Yaruko, he found it difficult to deny his feelings for her, and continued to court her without Aikune's knowledge.

When Agasha Tamori's troops murdered Yaruko, Aikune and Nakamuro fought side by side to free the other Phoenix children from the Steel Chrysanthemum's custody. Afterward, Aikune learned of his father's death and fell into a deep depression. When Nakamuro attempted to console Aikune, the young Shiba lashed out. He told Nakamuro that he knew of his secret affairs with Yaruko, and bitterly insulted him for his lack of loyalty. Nakamuro was shocked and ashamed. He left Aikune's presence, and has not attempted to make peace with him.

After Yaruko's death, Isawa Taeruko became hostile toward Nakamuro. When she attempted to bar Nakamuro from any future missions for the Council, Agasha Gennai intervened. "You are a stubborn, heartless fool," Gennai said. "If you wish to blame someone for the death of your daughter, then blame Tamori. Blame the Hantei. Better yet, blame yourself. But do not blame this boy, for as of now he is Master of Air. I retire from the Council and name him as my successor, for I no longer wish to be a part of these proceedings."

Needless to say, such a beginning to Nakamuro's tenure on the Council did not win Taeruko's respect. Instead, she has opposed him constantly. He truly regrets her anger, for he knows that like him she wishes nothing more than peace for the Phoenix Clan.

Following the Council's recent encounter with Agasha Tamori, Nakamuro voluntarily exiled himself to Dragon lands as a hostage of Tamori Shaitung. Nakamuro saw that by continuing the war between Dragon and Phoenix both sides were playing into the Dark Oracle's hands. He hoped that if the Council believed he was a prisoner, they would negotiate. During his time with Shaitung, he came to respect and admire the strong-willed Dragon. Nakamuro has slowly realized that he loves Shaitung, though he knows that her stubborn and independent nature would never allow her to accept him as anything more than an ally. Instead, he has kept his feelings private so that they will not interfere with their war against the Dark Oracle.

After several months with the Tamori, Nakamuro realized that the Phoenix were preparing for war again despite his presence in Dragon lands. Realizing he could do nothing further from outside the Council, he reluctantly left Shaitung's side and returned to Kyuden Isawa. He is somewhat surprised by Isawa Taeruko's sudden eagerness to heed his advice and experience fighting the Dark Oracle, but he does not question it. He knows that Taeruko wants nothing more than to destroy Tamori.

For once in his life, he agrees with her.

ISAWA NAKAMURO

Male human Phoenix Shu 4/Ten 9: CR 13; Medium-sized humanoid (human); HD 13d6; hp 59; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (touch 11, flat-footed 16); Atk wakizashi+6 melee, 1d6-1 damage; SQ Class skill — Spellcraft (family bonus), Elemental focus (Air), Element Metamagic (Empower Spell, Extend Spell, Maximize Spell), Elemental Surge (3/day), Improved Element Focus (+3), Sense Elements); Honor: 2; AL LG; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +13; Str 9, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 11, Cha 20 (24); Maximum Void: 5; Height: 5 ft. 7 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Languages (High Rokugani, Kami, Rokugani, Yobanjin), Alchemy +12, Concentration +16, Craft (bonsai) +11, Diplomacy +19, Heal +12, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (elements) +19, Knowledge (Oracles) +19, Knowledge (Shintao) +15, Spellcraft +20; Blessing of Air, Depths of the Void, Elemental Insight, Friendly Kami, Self No Self, Void Use.

Spells Known (6/8/8/8/7/7/5; base DC 24 + spell level for Air spells, 17 for other spells; Elemental Focus — Air, Isawa School): 0-Level — cure minor wounds, daze, detect magic, flash of insight, gathering swirl, ghost sound, guidance, know direction, purity, read magic; 1st — change self, cure light wounds, expeditious retreat, obscuring mist, quiescence of air, sleep; 2nd — Bente's touch, detect thoughts, eye shall not see, lesser restoration, lessons of the lion, wind wall; 3rd — clairaudience/clairvoyance, glyph of warding, gust of wind, haste, major image; 4th — air walk, blessings of Isora, bridge to Yomi, lightning bolt, shout, wisdom of the kami; 5th — bad karma, control winds, dimension door, improved invisibility, symbol of air; 6th — forever secret, legend lore, teleport.

Possessions: amulet of natural armor +2, bracers of armor +4, haori of resistance +3, obi of charisma +4, wakizashi.

ISAWA NAKAMURO

Earth: 2

Willpower: 3

Water: 3

Strength: 5

Fire: 4

Air: 6

Reflexes: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Isawa Tensai (Air) 5

Honor: 2.9

Glory: 8.0

Advantages: Ally (Tamori Shaitung), Higher Purpose (Peace), Meek

Disadvantages: Idealistic, Lost Love (Isawa Yaruko), Sworn Enemies (Agasha Tamori, Isawa Taeruko), True Love (Tamori Shaitung), Unluck (1 level)

Skills: Bonsai 2, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 5, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 4, Intimidation 7, Investigation 6, Lore (Elements) 5, Lore (Oracles) 6, Medicine 4, Meditation 5, Omens 4, Shintao 3, Theology 3

VASSALS OF THE ISAWA FAMILY

THE SHINGON FAMILY

During the year 1127, in the northern Phoenix mountains, two hardy souls met, driven by an unknown purpose. One was an Iuchi shugenja named Yogosha. The other was an Asako henshin named Shingon. Both were guided to their meeting place through their dreams, by a beautiful voice, one that could not be denied.

Yogosha and Shingon had been brought halfway across the Empire for one purpose: to jointly create five powerful elemental nemuranai. These items of power would enable the Empire's heroes to defeat the Elemental Terrors that had been unleashed upon the world.

With great care and deliberation, the Oracle of Air instructed Yogosha and Shingon in the nemuranai's construction. They worked diligently in the wilds, finding the perfect location for each item to be crafted. In tandem, they created one item for each of the elements. As they neared the final hours of the Void item's creation, the Asako and the Iuchi understood they must give their lives to finish what they had begun. With that sacrifice, the balance was restored between light and dark, corruption and purity.

Throughout the rest of the Clan War, tales would be told of these powerful items: a katana of Fire, a gansen of Water, a yari of Air, a mempo of Void and armor of Earth. The Isawa, having heard of their brother's sacrifice, investigated these tales, attempting to locate the items. In Shingon's memory, a small group of Isawa shugenja began to focus solely on these elemental nemuranai, seeking to understand their power and how they were created. Despite the fact that Shingon himself was an Asako, the Isawa could not deny the genius that he created and honored him nonetheless. During his gempukku, Shingon's son took on his father's name in homage and joined the Isawa to help understand these items of power and their history.



This band of Isawa obtain each of the items once, if but for a short time. This gave the Shingon enough time to study the elemental nemuranai, but once they understood the items' destiny, they sent them back out into the Empire. Eventually, each of the weapons were used to help defeat the Elemental Terrors. During those precious days that the Shingon did have access to the elemental items, they gained a much better understanding of relic magic, information they shared with their Phoenix brethren.

Shingon's son and his followers were granted vassal family status by the Isawa, with the responsibility of tracking and cataloguing nemuranai. The family now maintains the third-largest collection of nemuranai in the Empire (behind only Shiro Tamori and Gisei Toshi).

During the rest of the Clan War and most of Toturi the First's reign, the Shingon family worked with the Asako to advance the Phoenix understanding of how to craft magical items. When the Agasha joined the Phoenix, the Shingon found they had more in common with their new brothers than they had anticipated and formed a new friendship with the former Dragon Clan family. Some of the finest weapons the Agasha have ever forged were created during that time, partially due to the Shingon's expertise.

Since the War of Spirits and the ascension of Tsi Xing Guo as the Fortune of Steel, the Shingon have begun to venerate the former Master Smith, requesting his guidance during their travels. Their daimyo, Shingon Hiroga, has even gone so far as to erect a statue of the Fortune of Steel near the family temple in Shiro Shingon.

For the last few decades, the Shingon have tracked the movement of many powerful magical items and gained a vast understanding of the different properties of jade, crystal, obsidian and steel. They are particularly intrigued by Ashalan crystal and have collected many items made of the material since the Scorpion's return. Many Asako and Agasha shugenja continue to work together with Shingon members to craft some of the finest and most powerful nemuranai the Empire has ever seen... and some that the Empire will never know of.

SHIRO SHINGON

The castle that houses the Shingon library is located to the west of Holy Home Village and is one of the last places travelers can rest before entering Mori Asako on their way to Kyuden Isawa. The Shingon welcome visitors to their library but never speak of the vault below the castle that houses the nemuranai they have collected. At the Isawa daimyo's behest,



a small Shiba contingent has been permanently located here as well, ostensibly to protect the road to Kyuden Isawa but in reality to guard the valuable storehouse of magical treasures.

THE SHINGON FAMILY

Favored Class: Shugenja

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skills: Appraise

Starting Outfit:

1. Masterwork merchant's scale, magnifying lens, light horse and 20 koku.

THE SHINGON FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Glory: 0.5 (rather than 1.0)

Special: Members of the Shingon family who attend the Isawa Shugenja school may exchange one of their starting skills for the Appraisal skill to reflect their family training in recognizing the value of items, both magical and mundane.

ISAWA MECHANICS

NEW ANCESTORS

The Isawa are a family strong in tradition, and worship of one's ancestors is a vital part of that tradition. The Isawa show the utmost respect to their departed dead. As a family with a strong shugenja presence, they are nearer to the spirits of their dead than any save the Kitsuo and Asako (and the Isawa would argue that their relationship with the dead is even closer than the Asako's). Their shugenja monitor the spirit world very closely, and a Phoenix hero is rarely reborn without their knowledge.

This is both a blessing and a curse. While being a reborn Isawa hero grants great prestige, it also means that the clan's eyes are upon you. A reborn hero is expected to be as great as he was in his former life, if not more so. Likewise, a reborn criminal or dishonorable samurai is likely to be judged for the actions of his past life, actions of which he has no memory.

ISAWA CHUDA

Though his name is reviled for its association with the fallen Snake Clan, Isawa Chuda was a just and honorable man. His father was secretly a maho-tsukai, a dark secret that drove Chuda to hunt down shugenja who dared draw upon the power of corruption. Despite Chuda's best efforts to stamp out the Taint of maho, he eventually lost his will to fight when he discovered that his own wife and son were maho-tsukai. He retired to a monastery to die in obscurity, long before his clan joined with the shuten doji and destroyed themselves.

RAGE AGAINST THE DARKNESS

PHOENIX ANCESTOR FEAT:

ISAWA CHUDAI

Your fury against the minions of the Shadowlands is boundless.

Prerequisite: Honorable alignment.

Benefit: You gain a +1 bonus on all damage rolls (including damage inflicted by spells) against creatures with the Shadowlands subtype. This bonus increases to +2 for any creatures that have used maho against you or injured you in combat. You also gain a +2 bonus on all Knowledge (Shadowlands) and Knowledge (maho) checks.

ANCESTOR: ISAWA CHUDA

(4 POINTS)

You gain a Free Raise in combat against all creatures with the Shadowlands Taint. You inflict extra Wounds equal to your Insight Rank against any creatures who have used maho against you or injured you in combat.

ISAWA NIMURO

Though Isawa Nimuro was not renowned as a great warrior, he nonetheless has earned his place in Rokugani history. He was a contemporary of Sun Tao, and had the honor of hosting the general during his stay with the Phoenix Clan. Nimuro learned much from Sun Tao, and though he was not a warlike man he applied those lessons in a typical Phoenix manner.

Nimuro invented the game of Go, the complex strategy game enjoyed to this day throughout the Empire.

The Golden Lion of Toshi Ranbo, Matsu Nimuro, took Nimuro as his gempukku name to honor one of his father's greatest ancestors.

CALM AND PERCEPTIVE

PHOENIX ANCESTOR FEAT:

ISAWA NIMURO

You can read any situation with a quick and agile mind.

Prerequisite: Wis 13+.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on all Battle skill checks. Spot and Listen are always class skills for you.

ANCESTOR: ISAWA NIMURO

(2 POINTS)

When making Battle and Investigation checks, your maximum number of Raises is determined by your Void plus your Insight Rank.

ISAWA NORIKAZU

Though he was considered mad, Isawa Norikazu was one of the greatest prophets of the Phoenix Clan. His predictions allowed the Isawa to prepare for the terrible days of the War Against the Darkness, at the end of which he became the Oracle of Fire. Sadly, despite the normal longevity of the Oracles, the same malady that caused his madness eventually took his life. His duties as Oracle passed on to his brother, Mitori.

MAD VISIONS

PHOENIX ANCESTOR FEAT:

ISAWA NORIKAZU

You receive visions of the future at the cost of your sanity.

Benefit: Once per week you may cast a divination spell as a shugenja of your total character level. Which spell you can cast depends upon your maximum Void Points, as follows:

Void	Spell
0-2	augury
3-5	divination
6-9	commune
10-14	divine the future

Each time you use this ability, you must make a Will save (DC 10 + your character level + your highest ability modifier) or suffer 1d8 permanent Wisdom damage. You may also suffer permanent insanity symptoms at the DM's discretion.

Special: Only shugenja and inkyo may take this feat.

ANCESTOR: ISAWA NORIKAZU

(3 POINTS)

You often have visions of the future. By meditating for one hour, you may make a Void roll vs. a TN set secretly by the GM (default TN is 10, but increases for more critical information) to receive a vision of the past, present, or future. Specific information revealed is always left to the GM's discretion, but the more Raises you make the clearer and more helpful the visions will be. If you fail your initial Void roll, you gain one of the following Disadvantages (chosen by the GM) — Antisocial, Bad Health, Bentsen's Curse, Can't Lie, Compulsion, Contrary, Coward, Cruel, Driven, Enlightened Madness, Epilepsy, Frail Mind, Gullible, Insensitive, Jealousy, Phobia, or Weakness. This Disadvantage is permanent, and usually relates in some way to the nature of the divination. A character attempting to find information about the Dark Oracle of Fire, for instance, may develop an intense phobia of fire if he fails. The spell Peace of the Kami can permanently remove a Disadvantage caused by this Ancestor, but only one can be removed per month.

Only shugenja and monks may take this Ancestor.

ISAWA TADAKA

Isawa Tadaka is one of the most beloved and respected heroes of all time, even outside the Phoenix Clan. He was the second man to bear the burden of serving as the Phoenix Clan Thunder. He unlocked the Black Scrolls' mysteries at the cost of his own corruption, and yet rose above his own corruption to destroy the mad Isawa Tsuke and battle Fu Leng.

To many Isawa, Tadaka represented everything the Phoenix aspired to be. He was willing to sacrifice himself for the greater good. Though he valued peace and understanding above all, he did not shy away from battle when it became necessary. Though the wisdom he brought the Phoenix caused the deaths of many Isawa, Fu Leng could not have been defeated without his sacrifice.

ROAR OF THE EARTH

PHOENIX ANCESTOR FEAT:

ISAWA TADAKAI

You possess extraordinary power over Earth magic, especially when used against the minions of the Taint.

Prerequisite: Shugenja with Element Focus (earth), Knowledge (Shadowlands) (4 ranks), Con 16+.

Benefit: You cast Earth spells as if your caster level were one higher. Any spells you cast against Shadowlands creatures function as if you had the Spell Penetration feat. If you also have the Spell Penetration feat, you gain an additional +2 bonus to overcome the target's spell resistance.

ANCESTOR: ISAWA TADAKA

(8 POINTS)

You gain a Free Raise when casting Earth magic. You roll one additional die when casting any spell against a Shadowlands creature. Only Earth Tensai may take this ancestor.

THE ISAWA TENSAI

In the forests near Kyuden Isawa stand four temples, each dedicated to a single element. Though none of these temples is large, they are quite prestigious. These temples serve as the schools of the Isawa Tensai, the most powerful elemental shugenja in Rokugan.

While all major shugenja schools focus on a single element, no school can match the expertise of the Isawa Tensai. They are the unequaled masters of their respective elements. A Tensai of Fire's mastery over Fire magic dwarfs that of a typical Fire shugenja as much as that Fire shugenja's mastery of Fire magic dwarfs students of other elements.

Not all shugenja have the potential to be Tensai. Students do not choose to become Tensai, but are selected by the masters of each temple. Those who show promise go on to be elemental Initiates, Acolytes, or even Masters.

The Elemental Masters are almost exclusively chosen from the ranks of the Tensai, except for the Master of the Void. Though Ishiken have speculated that perhaps a shugenja could master Void as a Tensai masters the elements, the prospect is considered impossible.

ISAWA TENSAI (PRESTIGE CLASS)

The Isawa tensai are the most powerful shugenja of the most respected shugenja family in Rokugan. Though their mystical power is great, so is their responsibility to the Phoenix Clan.

Hit Die: d6.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become an Isawa tensai, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Skills: Concentration (7 ranks), Knowledge (elements) (7 ranks), Spellcraft (7 ranks).

Feats: Skill Focus: Knowledge (elements), Superior Element Focus, Void Use.

Spells: Must be able to cast divine spells of 2nd level or higher. Must have element focus in the appropriate element.

Special: Must be invited to join the Tensai by an Elemental Master or a sensei of the Tensai Temples.

CLASS SKILLS

The Isawa tensai's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are Alchemy (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Tensai are proficient in all simple weapons and the wakizashi.

Spells per Day: A tensai continues his general study of other elements as he delves deeper into the mysteries of his element of choice. For each level he gains in this class, he gains new spells known and spells per day as if he has also gained a level as a shugenja (unlike other spellcasting prestige classes, this ability only applies to the tensai's previous shugenja levels, not other spellcasting classes). He does not, however, gain any other benefit a shugenja would have gained (increased range of *sense elements*, for instance). This means that he adds these levels to the levels of his shugenja class, then determines spells per day, caster level, and spells known.

Upon becoming a tensai, a shugenja must select one spell that he knows outside of his element focus on each spell level. This spell is removed from the character's Spells Known and replaced with a spell from the tensai's element focus of the same level.

TABLE 3-1: THE ISAWA TENSAI

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Spells per Day	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	+1 level of existing class	Improved Element Focus +1
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	+1 level of existing class	Elemental Surge 1/day
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	+1 level of existing class	Element Metamagic (extend)
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	+1 level of existing class	Improved Element Focus +2
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	+1 level of existing class	Elemental Surge 2/day
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	+1 level of existing class	Element Metamagic (empower)
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	+1 level of existing class	Improved Element Focus +3
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	+1 level of existing class	Elemental Surge 3/day
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	+1 level of existing class	Element Metamagic (maximize)
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	+1 level of existing class	Supreme Element Focus Element Metamagic (quicken)

Any time the tensai gains access to new spells, the first non-element focus spell on each level is always replaced with a spell from the tensai's element focus.

For example, Isawa Kaigen is a 5th level shugenja/3rd level fire tensai. Kaigen gains a fourth level of tensai (and thus becomes a 9th level caster). Normally a 9th level shugenja would be allowed to learn one new 3rd-level fire spell, and new spells on 2nd level and 4th level from any element except Water. Instead, Kaigen must learn a fire spell on 4th level, as this is the first time he has had access to a non-element focus spell on 4th level. His new 2nd level spell may still be of any element except Water.

Improved Element Focus (Ex): At 1st level, the save DC of all spells in the tensai's element of focus are increased by +1. At 4th level, this bonus becomes +2, and at 7th level it becomes +3. This ability stacks with Superior Element Focus.

Elemental Surge (Su): At 2nd level, the tensai gains the ability to draw upon his own inner reserves of strength to empower a spell from his element focus. The tensai may spend any amount of Void Points to increase his caster level for that spell by the number of Void Points spent. This may be done once per day. At 5th and 8th level, it may be done an additional time per day.

Element Metamagic (Ex): At 3rd level the tensai gains the ability to apply metamagic feats to spells of his element focus without increasing the casting time of the spell, and without possessing the appropriate metamagic feat. The spell level is still increased normally. This may be done a number of times per day equal to the tensai's level. At 3rd level, he can emulate the Extend Spell feat in this manner. At 6th level he can emulate the Empower Spell feat. At 9th level he can emulate the Maximize Spell feat. At 10th level he can emulate the Quicken Spell feat (even though shugenja cannot typically take or use this feat).

Supreme Element Focus (Ex): At 10th level the tensai achieves total mastery of his element focus. He gains a +10 bonus on all checks to overcome spell resistance when casting spells of his element focus (this stacks with the bonus provided by the Spell Penetration feat). In addition, spells of his element focus can no longer be countered except by other tensai of the same element focus or by spellcasters that are at least five levels higher than his casting level.

THE ISAWA TENSAI

The Isawa Tensai school appeared originally in *Way of the Phoenix*.™ The following is an update of that school for Second Edition rules. This version of the Tensai supersedes the one found in the appendix of the *Second Edition Player's Guide*.™

Benefit: +1 to one Trait in the Ring of the Tensai's chosen element.

Skills: Calligraphy, Meditation, Shintao, Theology, History, plus two other High Skills.

Beginning Honor: 3, plus zero boxes.

Beginning Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, four spells of their primary element and two of any other element (except for their element of Deficiency). Tensai select one Element as their Element of Affinity. The opposing Element (Fire opposes Water, Air opposes Earth) becomes their Element of Deficiency.

Techniques: Isawa Tensai possess a more potent mastery of their chosen element. The Innate Ability Advantage costs one point less when applied to elements from their Affinity. Tensai need make only two Raises when casting a spell of their Ele-

ment Focus if they wish not to expend one of their spell slots for the day (normally this requires three Raises). Finally, Tensai may add their Ring to all spellcasting rolls when casting spells from their element of Affinity.

For example, a 2nd Rank Tensai with Fire Affinity and 4 Fire would roll 4k3+4 (4 Fire, keep two dice for School Rank and another for Affinity, add four for Fire) to determine whether or not casting a Fire spell was successful.

Tensai must pay one additional point to learn innate abilities from all other elements, and must Raise four times to cast spells from elements not of their Affinity without expending a spell slot.

ELEMENTAL "ACOLYTES"

The term "Acolyte" is given to any Tensai who masters his art to such a degree that he gains the attention and recognition of the Elemental Masters. (Until then, students of the Tensai school are referred to as "Initiates.") Acolytes are referred to by their element of choice: Acolyte of Earth, Acolyte of Air, etc. Generally, only those who are Elemental Acolytes are considered for positions on the Elemental Council, though there have been exceptions.

Acolytes of the Void are far more rare. Individuals gain this title at the whim of the master of the Isawa Ishiken school.

D20 SYSTEM:

In the d20 System™ only a character with at least four levels in the Tensai prestige class gains the title "Acolyte."

1.5R RPG 2E:

In Second Edition, only a character with at least Rank 3 in the Isawa Tensai school gains the title "Acolyte."

THE ISAWA ISHIKEN SCHOOL (UPDATED)

Benefit: +1 Void

Skills: Lore (Void Magic), Meditation 2, Shintao, Theology, any two High or Bugei Skills.

Beginning Honor: 2, plus 5 boxes.

Beginning Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Sense Void, Drawing the Void, 2 spells of any other element, 1 spell of a third element.

Affinity/Deficiency: Ishiken have an Affinity for Void spells. Unlike most shugenja, they are not Deficient in any element. The Void is everything and nothing, and those who study possess an inherent grasp of all elements, although they do not excel at them.

Starting Outfit: (All considered to be of Average Quality, player chooses one item to be of Fine Quality) Kimono, traveling pack, scroll satchel, wakizashi, tanto, first aid kit, 2 blank spell scrolls, 4 koku.

SENSE VOID

Element: Void
Mastery Level: 1
Duration: Concentration
Area of Effect: Self
Range: 5 miles per Insight Rank of the caster

By allowing their souls to slip free of their bodies, Ishiken can experience the world as incorporeal beings of pure Void, perceiving things that are not visible to those fully in the mortal realm. This is a taxing process, and the Ishiken always risks becoming permanently separated from his body. The initial roll to cast the spell lasts for 30 minutes. Each 30 minutes thereafter, the Ishiken must make an additional roll at the original TN plus 5 for each roll after the first.

While free of their bodies, roaming Ishiken can perceive many things. With an Awareness roll versus a TN of 10, the Ishiken can determine the following information from any one target at a time.

- The surface thoughts of an individual
- An individual or animal's emotional state
- Any injuries or illnesses that a living creature possesses
- The elemental composition and proportions of any one creature or object
- Any supernatural phenomenon affecting a creature (including spell effects, the Shadowlands Taint, corruption by the Lying Darkness, maho curses, whether the individual being observed is anything other than human, etc.)

DRAWING THE VOID

Element: Void
Mastery Level: 1
Duration: Instantaneous
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Self

Ishiken can merge their souls with the Void, drawing upon the energy of all that is and all that is not to restore themselves to their fullest potential. This simplest of actions allows the Ishiken to rejuvenate not only their spirit, but their physical bodies as well. Upon the successful completion of this spell, the Ishiken heals a number of Wound Ranks equal to his Insight Rank and gains a number of bonus Void Points equal to his Insight Rank. These Void Points must be spent within by the end of the day or they are lost. This spell slot may only be regained by sleeping for 8 hours, and this spell may not be mastered.

NEW SPELLS

The Isawa are extremely secretive about their spells, especially where the other families of the Phoenix are concerned. The Isawa, Asako, and Agasha compete jealously for magical superiority, and while the Agasha flaunt their discoveries, the Isawa keep their spells close secrets. The following are a few of the Isawa family's secret spells.

VENGEANCE

Abjuration
Level: Shu 4 (Fire)
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: You; 60-foot radius when discharged
Duration: 24 hours or until discharged
Saving Throw: None, Reflex half for those in blast radius
Spell Resistance: Yes

This bizarre spell is often used as a last resort by Isawa shugenja in dangerous combat situations, and those who have seen it in action learn to avoid those who bear its telltale glow.

When it is cast, you become suffused with a pale red light for 24 hours. If you are killed at any point during this time, your body violently explodes, inflicting 1d8 damage per caster level in a 60-foot radius. This damage is raw force, and cannot be countered by elemental resistance. You may choose to cancel this spell at any time, even as a free action immediately before you are slain, thus preventing the possibility of accidentally harming your own allies when the power of vengeance is unleashed.

FOREVER SECRET

Illusion
Level: Shu 6 (Air)
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Object touched
Duration: Permanent
Saving Throw: Will save if interacted with
Spell Resistance: Yes

The Isawa often use this spell to protect their most valued possessions and spell scrolls. Most ofuda that contain this spell, in fact, have been rendered invisible by it.

You may cast this spell on any object weighing up to 25 pounds per caster level. The spell renders the object permanently invisible, except to you and any specific person or persons you name when casting it. Alternately, you can choose for the object to be visible to a specific clan, family, or to the students of a particular dojo. You may also choose to have the object be visible only to those of a certain alignment, Honor, or race.

Anyone who interacts with the object (including someone who searches for it specifically) receives a Will save to see through the invisibility. Once an unintended person sees through the invisibility, the spell is cancelled.

TADAKA'S GIFT

Transmutation
Level: Shu 1 (Earth)
Components: V, S, F, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Two small stones
Duration: 1 day/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell was created by Isawa Tadaka shortly before his journey into the Shadowlands so that his love, Shiba Tsukune, could watch over him even from the distant lands of the Shiba.

When cast, you enchant two stones to become magically linked. The carrier of each stone always knows the general state of the other stone's bearer: whether he is healthy, injured, diseased, poisoned, unconscious, or dead. A bearer also knows if the other bearer no longer carries the stone, or if a different creature now carries it (though he will not necessarily know the identity of this creature).

You gain a +10 bonus to your Scry check if you hold one of the stones and use magic to scry upon the other stone's holder (though this spell does not grant any scrying abilities in and of itself). If you possess the *teleport* spell and hold one of the stones you may teleport to the other stone's location as if you were very familiar with it.

You may only have one pair of these stones at a time. If you cast the spell again, the previous set of stones become non-magical. If one of the stones is destroyed, the spell ends immediately.

Focus: The two stones, which must be the same sort of stone.

VENGEANCE

Element: Fire
Mastery Level: 4
Duration: 24 hours or until discharged
Area of Effect: You; 60 foot radius when discharged
Range: Personal

This bizarre spell is often used as a last resort by Isawa shugenja in dangerous combat situations, and those who have seen it in action learn to avoid those who bear its telltale glow.

When it is cast, the caster is suffused with a pale red light for one day. If he is killed at any point during this time, his body violently explodes, inflicting 10k10 Wounds in a sixty-foot radius. This damage is pure force, and even resistance to fire does nothing to prevent it. The caster may choose to cancel this spell at any time, even immediately prior to his death, to prevent the possibility of harming allies.

FOREVER SECRET

Element: Air
Mastery Level: 5
Duration: Permanent
Area of Effect: 1 object of no more than 500 pounds
Range: Touch

The Isawa often use this spell to protect their most valued possessions and spell scrolls. Most ofuda that contain this spell, in fact, have been rendered invisible by it.

The object touched by this spell becomes invisible to everyone except the caster and any specific group he names (including a family, clan, or students of a particular dojo). He may also choose to have the object be visible only to those with a certain Honor Rank, Glory Rank, or race.

Anyone who is not excluded from the invisibility that searches for or touches the object may make an opposed Air roll with the caster. If successful, the spell is permanently broken.

The caster may make Raises to increase the scope of the spell. For every raise, he can affect an additional fifty pounds.

TADAKA'S GIFT

Element: Earth
Mastery Level: 1
Duration: 1 day
Area of Effect: Two small stones
Range: Touch

This spell was created by Isawa Tadaka before his journey into the Shadowlands so that his love, Shiba Tsukune, could watch over him even from the distant lands of the Shiba.

The caster enchants two stones of the same material so that they become magically linked. The carrier of each stone always knows the general state of the other stone's bearer: whether that character is healthy, injured, diseased, poisoned, unconscious, or dead. The carrier also knows if the other bearer no longer carries the stone, or if a different creature now carries it (though he does not necessarily know the identity of this creature).

While holding one of the stones, the caster may cast *Secrets on the Wind* or *Reflecting Pool* on the other stone regardless of range (assuming he knows these spells).

A shugenja may only have one pair of these stones in existence at a time. If he casts the spell again, the previous set of stones become non-magical. If one of the stones is destroyed, the spell ends immediately.

NEW MAGIC ITEM

AMULET OF THE VOID

The mystery of the creation of these amulets is a well-kept secret of the Isawa Ishiken. They are given as gifts to important political allies or those who perform important tasks on the Elemental Council's behalf.

AMULET OF THE VOID

The wearer of this amulet gains all the advantages of the Void Use feat. If he already has this feat, his maximum Void is raised by two while wearing the amulet.

Caster Level: 12th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *spiritual presence*, creator must have the Ishiken-do feat or be a member of the Void Disciple prestige class; **Market Price:** 8,000 gp; **Weight:** —.

AMULET OF THE VOID

The wearer of this amulet gains an additional two Void Points to spend per day. An Ishiken may make one of these amulets by spending a week in meditation and spending 20 Experience Points.

THE GREEN-GREEN WHITE TRIBE

The Green-Green-White Tribe is a reclusive tribe of Nezumi living deep in the Mori Isawa. They are distinctive for their pure white fur and the heavy stone hatchets with which they fend off outsiders. The Green-Green-White are mostly farmers, growing crops of fruit and nuts unseen amid the

tangled undergrowth of the deep forest. These Nezumi are extremely xenophobic, regarding even other Nezumi with deep suspicion.

The Green-Green-White have about three hundred and fifty members though they hide their numbers well. They take full advantage of their natural camouflage, remaining in the trees as much as possible. They make their burrows in treetops, masking their tracks so that they are invisible to those on the ground. A human could pass directly through a Green-Green-White warren without ever realizing they were there.

Green-Green-White Nezumi are available as a character option in addition to the Nezumi tribes in Rokugan (though a Green-Green-White PC should consider carefully why he chose to leave his tribe behind and join with outsiders). Green-Green-White Nezumi have the following abilities in addition to normal Nezumi abilities.



GREEN-GREEN-WHITE NEZUMI

- **+2 Constitution, +2 Wisdom, -2 Intelligence:** life in the wilderness has made the Green-Green-White tough and self-reliant, but somewhat primitive. This replaces the normal Nezumi ability modifiers.
- **All Green-Green-White Nezumi gain weapon proficiency with the Green-Green-White axe (a masterwork stone throwing axe.)**
- **Cold resistance 5:** Life in the harsh Isawa Woodlands has made these Nezumi naturally resistant to cold.
- **Skills:** Green-Green-White Nezumi gain a +2 bonus on all Wilderness Lore and Move Silently checks. These skills are always class skills for Green-Green-White Nezumi. Even the most inexperienced Green-Green-White Nezumi is quite at home in the deep woods.
- **Darkvision:** This is in addition to a Nezumi's normal low-light vision.
- **Improved Ambidexterity:** Green-Green-White Nezumi have highly prehensile tails, granting a +2 bonus to all Climb checks in addition to the normal bonus all Nezumi receive. Green-Green-White Nezumi may take the Multi-dexterity feat and use it to make extra attacks with a Small or smaller weapon held with the tail. Green-Green-White rangers with Multiattack emulate the Multi-Weapon Fighting feat rather than the Two-Weapon Fighting feat when wearing light or no armor. (Multiattack and Multi-Weapon Fighting are described in the *Monster Manual*.™)
- **Favored Class:** Ranger. Green-Green-White rangers cannot cast spells. Instead, they gain a bonus feat from the fighter's list of bonus feats (excluding Weapon Specialization) any time they normally would have received access to a new level of spells. Green-Green-White Nezumi who reach 4th level in the ranger class gain Weapon Specialization (Green-Green-White axe) as a bonus feat even if they do not have the prerequisite Weapon Focus feat.
- **Non-Magical:** Green-Green-White Nezumi have no talent in magic of any kind, and can never gain a level in any spellcasting class.
- **Level Equivalent +1:** Green-Green-White Nezumi gain levels more slowly than other races. They are considered to be one level higher for the purposes of gaining experience, though they gain no extra abilities for this experience level. For example, a Green-Green-White Nezumi with 10,000 experience would be only 4th level, not 5th. The DM is advised not to allow starting characters to be Green-Green-White Nezumi unless the party is making characters of second level or higher.
- **Starting Outfit:** Green-Green-White Cloak (camouflaged cloak provides a +2 circumstance bonus to Hide checks in a wilderness setting), Green-Green-White Axe (masterwork stone throwing axe).

GREEN-GREEN-WHITE NEZUMI

Details on how to play a Second Edition Green-Green-White Nezumi can be found in *Way of the Ratling*.™

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE SHIBA

TOO CLOSE
TO THE FLAME
PART FIVE

Miya Hatori was not a man who felt fear often. During the course of his lifetime, he had endured challenges that would curdle the blood of a weaker man, but he had faced them all. He had not always been victorious, but he had never fled. The blood of the Ikoma might run in his veins, but his was the soul of a Miya.

Now, however, he was afraid. Hatori would never let it show, but he felt fear's icy grip around his heart and crawling up his throat. He had been witness to the power of the Oracles twice during his life, and once he had even seen the great Thunder Dragon soaring through the sky. Even then, Hatori was not certain he had seen the equal of the power he was about to face.

A cool breeze rustled the trim of Hatori's kimono. The garment was soiled in places from the long climb to the top of the plateau where he awaited the arrival of Shiba Aikune. It was a ludicrous meeting place, and one he was certain was chosen purely to demonstrate the power of the Last Wish that Aikune bore.

Even as the thought formed in his mind, Hatori felt a strange surge through the air, as if the kami were more active than normal. Then there was a great roaring like that of the ocean. A great hole opened in the middle of the air before him, flames dancing all around its edge. Stepping through the hole as easily as through the door to one's own chambers was Shiba Aikune, commander of the Phoenix armies.

The young commander smiled rakishly. "Greetings, Hatori. I bid you welcome to the Shiba lands. I apologize for not greeting you sooner, but as I am sure you can imagine, these are busy times for my family."

"But not so busy that you could not find time to impress me with a show of your power," Hatori said evenly. "That was your intent, was it not? To impress me?"

"And were you impressed?" Aikune seemed genuinely curious.

"Yes," admitted Hatori. "The Wish is truly a marvel of the mortal realm."

"It is indeed," said Aikune breathlessly, holding his blade before him to examine it. For the briefest moment, Hatori thought he heard some sort of whispering, like a child trying to speak to him. It must have been only in his mind. "The greatest mistake of the Isawa," continued Aikune, "and I shall use it to bring the Shiba to their rightful place in the Empire."

"Some purists might take exception to such phrasing, Aikune-sama," said Hatori. "Many remember the oaths Shiba swore to Isawa before the first war against Fu Leng. They will certainly ask if those vows are no longer important to your family."

Aikune frowned. "Shiba could never have known the humiliation the Isawa would heap upon his children. He would never have wanted us to be reduced to this. Bent to the will of mortals? With no blood of heaven in their veins? Preposterous!"

"Perhaps, but you are using an artifact of their creation. Does that not prove their worthiness?"

"Do not presume to tell me the state of affairs in my clan, historian," said Aikune angrily. "You know nothing of what the Shiba have suffered."

"The Shiba?" asked Hatori. "Or you, Aikune-sama?"

Aikune grew very quiet for a moment. "I know what you are trying to do, Hatori. It will not work. I am no slaving madman, nor am I a conqueror bent on crushing the Empire beneath my heel. I wish only for what the Shiba deserve, and nothing more."

"I have no doubt that the Shiba family deserves power and prestige, Aikune-sama," Hatori said genuinely. "They have served as an example to the Empire for over a thousand years. Compassion, sincerity, honesty... so many seem to have forgotten that these are a part of bushido as surely as war and death. But the Shiba have not. They have attended to their duty without complaint, without glory, since the dawn of the Empire. I know of no other family so deserving."

"Yes," agreed Aikune, his eyes fiery. "You understand."

"And I understand one other thing, Aikune-sama. I understand that what the Shiba deserve is not necessarily what the Shiba want. Do you understand that? Have you spoken to your kinsmen? Do they share your passion, or do you simply see what you wish in them?"

"They flock to my banner, old man. Their vision is the same as mine."

"Are you certain they do not see it as their duty, regardless of their own feelings?"

Aikune frowned. "No, that's not it at all. You do not understand."

"Perhaps it is because of your mother's memory that they serve you," Hatori continued. "She was a great hero and a magnificent leader. How could true samurai refuse the request of their daimyo's son, especially so soon after her death?"

"It isn't like that," the Phoenix protested.

"I hope that it is not," said Hatori. "Aikune-sama, you are yet a young man. You have a great destiny before you, and none can dispute that. I can only counsel you to be cautious. Do not let ambition cloud your mind. I am old enough to have seen the Phoenix torn apart by the power they wielded." He glanced down at the Last Wish. "Your power is so great that if such a thing occurred again, I am not sure the Phoenix would survive. Nor even the Empire."

In the long silence that followed, Aikune would not meet Hatori's eyes. Finally, he looked up, and once again the historian was taken aback by the burning power contained within the Phoenix's gaze. "To gain that which is mine, I am willing to take that risk."

THE SHIBA PROVINCES

Where most clans have several bushi families, the Shiba alone carry the two swords among the Phoenix. They are the strong arm of the clan and because of this, they find their strongholds scattered throughout the Phoenix provinces. The Shiba's acknowledged boundaries stretch across the middle of the clan's provinces, reaching from the eastern shoreline to the western edge of Phoenix lands. This gives the Shiba quick access to all parts of the Phoenix lands.

The terrain of the Shiba lands is quite varied, from flat beaches along the east to the rocky cliffs and mountains of the northern reaches. Shiba patrols have become quite adept at dealing with a variety of battlefields and tend to favor tactics that use the land against their foes. The majority of the Shiba lands occupy the rolling plains between Mori Isawa and the mountains of Treacherous Pass, allowing the Shiba to move easily within their own lands.

MAJOR SHIBA HOLDINGS

Almost all of the Phoenix's military structures are either directly commanded by the Shiba or supervised by at least one experienced general. Though the buildings of the Shiba family are hardly dreary, they are obviously built with a military application in mind. Though such construction is hardly unusual outside the Phoenix lands, visitors tend to view the Shiba's fortresses as out of place compared to the elegant but defenseless temples of the rest of the clan.

UKABU MURA

(LOCATION ?12)

The westernmost holding of the Shiba, Ukabu Mura has known little but peace during most of its history. Until the recent Dragon/Phoenix conflict, the city had never seen war. Even during the Clan War when the armies of Yogo Junzo ran rampant across the Phoenix lands, the Shadowlands army did not wish to come so close to Dragon territory lest they be caught between the two clans.

Floating Village was one of the last major settlements of the Shiba family in the Phoenix Clan's initial campaign to civilize the lands given to them by Emperor Hantei. Expansion in the Phoenix lands moved south from the Tribe of Isawa's original outposts. As the protectors of the Isawa, the Shiba family were primarily interested in securing the nascent clan's borders with the aggressive Lion Clan and the northern barbarians. The Shiba believed they would not have to contest the Dragon border — a theory that proved correct for over a millennium.

Though the holding is referred to as a "village," Ukabu Mura retains that title only because the Phoenix venerate tradition. Ukabu Mura is one of the largest Shiba cities, and frequently houses dignitaries whom the Shiba wish to speak with before they visit the northern Phoenix lands. As it often sees guests of great importance, the Shiba have spent generations making Ukabu Mura a cosmopolitan city worthy of even Imperial caravans. The constant flow of important people has stimulated the growth of Ukabu Mura's geisha community. Due to both the Phoenix's connection to the Seppun and the city's nearness to Imperial lands, promising geisha from Floating Village often continue their careers in the lands of the Imperial families.

Recently, the war with the Dragon and rumors of Lion refugees have begun to take its toll on the bustling city. Though Ukabu Mura has yet to suffer an attack, it is the perfect staging point for troops and supplies along the Drowned Merchant River. The Shiba know that Ukabu Mura is a valuable point of supply and communication right now for the Phoenix, and they assume the Lion and the Dragon have deduced the same thing. The city is constantly patrolled by rotating units of samurai and scouts tirelessly report from all over the area. Some guards, such as the surly and aggressive Shiba Hayoto, are eager for the Dragon to attempt to seize the village. So far they have been disappointed, but most feel it is only a matter of time.

HOUSE OF THE EVENING STAR

The most notable of the myriad geisha houses within Ukabu Mura is a splendid building once referred to as the House of Spring Flowers. Over a generation ago, the geisha house's most notable patron was a Shiba general by the name of Odoshi. Though Odoshi maintained the typical Shiba reserve even in the comforting surroundings of the House of Spring Flowers, he was quite fond of the geisha house and its mistress. Odoshi was greatly impressed by the beauty the geisha brought into the world, and visited often. Eventually the oka-san of the house began to fall in love with him, responding to his his kind and humble nature.

When Odoshi came to Hitomi's side to rise into the Celestial Heavens as the Evening Star, the mistress of the House of Spring Flowers was heartbroken and would not emerge from her room for days. After some time, one of the servants dared to disturb his mistress only to find her dead — she had not taken food or drink since Odoshi left. In her memory and that of the Shiba general all the geisha held dear in their hearts, the house was renamed the Evening Star. Though the geisha saw it as fitting tribute, some Phoenix holy men were somewhat disturbed by the possibly blasphemous name. However, the title of the establishment has been allowed to stand.

Ukabu Mura's reputation for producing the some of the finest geisha in the Empire is largely due to the House of the Evening Star. The mistresses of the geisha house drill and instruct their ladies with all the kindness and mercy of a grizzled old Matsu sensei. The Evening Star has long made great efforts to conceal a somewhat unsettling truth from outsiders; the Oka-san of the Evening Star often throws unpromising students into the street if they do not meet her expectations. This fact is never hidden from the geisha in training, and goes a long way in motivating them.

The House of the Evening Star also ensures its patrons know the difference between it and some Scorpion brothel. The geisha there are not honorless women, nor are they spies and informants to be hired out by seedy samurai and daimyo attempting to extract secrets from those who have had too much to drink. The geisha of the Evening Star are paid well in order to maintain their loyalty. Only the most powerful daimyo in the Empire have enough resources to impress the pampered geisha here.

MINEKO

The current oka-san of the Evening Star is the daughter of the previous oka-san and the third to take the name. Mineko took her mother's name both out of devotion to the woman and to add a sense of mystery to the geisha house. The phrase "Oka-san Mineko is the woman to see in Ukabu Mura about geisha," has now survived three generations and has only added to the reputation of the place.

Her mother, the woman who loved Shiba Odoshi, raised Mineko on tales of great Shiba generals. Like many geisha (but unlike most oka-san), Mineko is in awe of the samurai and her eagerness to please them is genuine. She has run the Evening Star for ten years and has only improved the house's reputation. Where many oka-san are simply motivated to take the koku of a samurai and protect her "daughters," Mineko does all she can to ensure all within her building are pleased even when there is no immediate cash reward.

Other geisha houses within Ukabu Mura were prepared to take advantage of the apparently simple and naive young woman once she took control of her mother's business. When

attempting to outsmart the young oka-san failed, her rivals turned to blackmail and slander, but to no avail. Mineko is legendarily flawless in both beauty and soul, and her exploits to protect herself from the machinations of the other geisha houses have become well known. She is often called "Sakura" for her delicate and beautiful purity, while others have become so enamored with her to refer to the oka-san as the Snow Maiden. Mineko takes all these compliments with a smile and a humble denial, simply happy to be admired by the samurai of the Phoenix.

HIGHWAYS OF THE SHIBA PROVINCES

The Emperor's Road (connects P17 to P15) — This section of the Emperor's Road follows the coastline from Kyuden Agasha to Shiro Shiba. The road once traveled through the heart of Mori Kage Toshi, but that section of the road has since been destroyed and rebuilt to give the haunted ruins a wide berth. It is an Imperial Highway simply because it follows the most direct route from Otosan Uchi to three of the Phoenix families' strongholds (Kyuden Agasha, Shiro Shiba, and Kyuden Isawa).

Drowned Merchant Road (connects P16 to P12) — Named for the river it moves alongside, Drowned Merchant road is the main highway for caravans and armies moving through the Phoenix lands. Though not technically part of the Emperor's Roads, many Imperial nobles use this road to get to and from Ukabu Mura, so it is patrolled and maintained. There has been talk for generations of this road becoming an Imperial Highway, but so far nothing has come of it.

Esade's Walk (connects P11 to P15) — At the dawn of the Empire, Master of Earth Shiba Esade oversaw the construction taking place at Holy Home Village. Pilgrims came to the holy town bearing rocks from all over Rokugan for Esade to incorporate into the village. The road is relatively unimportant since Holy Home isn't much of a military target, but receives regular patrols due to its connection to Shiro Shiba.

THE SHRINE OF AGASHA KITSUKI

Over three hundred years ago, the daring and eccentric shugenja Agasha Kitsuki performed his last and most famous investigation. Kitsuki intercepted a Scorpion plot to murder a Lion daimyo and fled into the lands of the Phoenix in order to decode the message and elude agents looking for him in his Dragon homelands. Unfortunately, the Scorpion outmaneuvered Kitsuki, as the message was a decoy and laced with a deadly poison. Though the murder plot was real and eventually foiled by Kitsuki's promising students, the Scorpion had achieved their intended goal — the death of Kitsuki.

The Phoenix wished to erect a shrine to Agasha Kitsuki on the spot where he died; the Dragon agreed, but they asked for the land to be ceded to the Dragon so that Kitsuki's shrine would be on Dragon soil. At the time, the Kitsuki family was small and had very little influence. Though the Dragon and Phoenix were on friendly terms, the Shiba flatly refused to surrender any portion of their land to the tiny family and the Kitsuki were forced to politely withdraw their request.

Every generation, the Kitsuki have petitioned the masters of the city and the Shiba family to grant their initial request. For the first few generations, the request was simply denied because the Shiba thought it would be shameful to cede any of their land to such a small and powerless family. The Kitsuki have grown in both influence and reputation, but the Shiba still refuse because it has become traditional to do so. Before the Dragon/Phoenix war, it was the only point of real contention between the two peaceful clans.

Kitsuki's Shrine is a significant reason that the Shiba generals fear for the security of Ukabu Mura. They know the Kitsuki have never forgotten what the shrine represents and will not miss the chance to take by force what they could not take by words. The Dragon and Phoenix may never go to war again — so this may be the Dragon's only opportunity.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: While in Ukabu Mura, the party is approached by a shugenja who introduces himself as a holy man of the Agasha family. The shugenja is kind and patient, and eventually reveals that his business with the characters involves the controversial shrine of Agasha Kitsuki.

Focus: The Agasha contends that the Dragon's claim on the shrine is completely invalidated because the Agasha family now serves the Phoenix Clan. Kitsuki may have founded his own family, but he was indeed an Agasha. Furthermore, the shugenja informs the characters that the Dragon still maintain shrines to Agasha ancestors, which the Agasha family would like to see released to the control of the Phoenix.

Strike: Should the characters prove at all receptive to the shugenja's suggestions, he may ask them to help him parley with the Dragon. Due to the war, the talented Shiba yojimbo are occupied with the front lines of the conflict. If they agree, the party may find themselves drawn directly into a series of events that results in a major Dragon offensive on Ukabu Mura.

SHIRO SHIBA

(LOCATION 715)

The ancestral home of the Shiba family, on the northern stretch of the Phoenix shores, overlooks even Kyuden Isawa from its uppermost watchtowers on a clear day. Shiro Shiba was the second great stronghold of the Phoenix Clan, constructed shortly after Kyuden Isawa was built for the descendants of Isawa and his siblings. The original castle faced out over a cliff and has been expanded on countless times since then.

Though a city sprawls around it, the castle is very nearly a city unto itself as the Shiba have added "improvements" through the generations. Each time the Empire discovers a new marvel of defensive warfare, the Shiba incorporate the

design into their castle. Keen observers and students of architecture note the haphazard placement of such borrowed techniques as Kaiu walls, Matsu battlements, and even Shinjo marshalling grounds. What makes Shiro Shiba truly unique is the way the Shiba have blended these structures.

During the Clan War, Yogo Junzo led a horde of Shadowlands beasts and troops through the Phoenix lands on an inexorable march to Kyuden Isawa. Though the Shiba family bravely defended their lands, they were outmatched and outnumbered by a supernatural enemy they had never encountered. The Shiba attempted to abandon the castle in hopes the horde would be delayed by sacking and destroying it, but Junzo's army simply pressed on toward Kyuden Isawa once the castle stopped resisting. Much of the surrounding

area of the castle had to be rebuilt, which only added to the structure's maze-like quality.

Shiro Shiba is easily the most defensible location within the Phoenix lands. The Asako and the Isawa have better defensive terrain, but to not maintain their lands with an eye toward military purposes. Because of this, Shiro Shiba is one of the largest castles in the Empire so it can house important Phoenix in times of war.

REIHADO SHIBA NO KAMI

The ancient shrine of Shiba is located deep within the twisting paths and halls of Shiro Shiba. The shrine occupies an inner courtyard open to the light of day and filled with trees transplanted from Mori Isawa. Few non-Shiba are allowed within the sacred grounds, though family members may freely pass. The shrine itself is both beautiful

and simple, carved entirely from stained and polished lengths of wood and held together in a puzzle-like fashion. The wood pieces interlock with one another to hold the structure together, though they can be pushed in the proper way to be moved out of place — a subtle metaphor of how Shiba saw both the Elements of the universe and the role of man.

The inside of the building contains two of Shiba's relics — his sandals and his writing brush. Outsiders would be shocked to see such simple artifacts held in the shrine of a bushi, especially a kami. The Shiba see no insult in the choice. Shiba recorded the Tao with this very brush, and it was in these sandals that he knelt before Isawa and later traversed the length of the Shadowlands to rescue Shinsei and Shosuro. Though the Shiba take their duties very seriously, they never forget that a samurai must be more than his sword.



In the time when the Soul of Shiba chose every Champion of the Phoenix, the newly-chosen Champion would find himself drawn to this shrine and meditate for days while the Soul of Shiba whispered the secrets of a thousand years into his soul. More than one such Champion was driven into madness by this practice, quickly ending his reign as daimyo. The Phoenix have had far more Champions than they admit.

For now, the shrine stands quiet as the Shiba go to war and the Soul has ascended into the Celestial Heavens. One of the few regular attendants is Shiba Unasagi, a member of the elite Brotherhood of Heaven's Wing who was badly injured during the Battle of Otosan Uchi. Unasagi has chosen this sacred place to meditate while recovering from his wounds and waiting to see if he has become Tainted by his foes during his valiant defense of Sunset Tower.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: When Shiba Tsukune ascended to the Celestial Heavens to become the Fortune of Rebirth, she did not carry the Ancestral Armor of the Phoenix with her. It was left in the hands of mortals near the Shrine of the Ki-Rin, which is now under control of the Dragon.

Focus: Naturally, the Shiba would like to have their founder's armor back. They have recently received a missive from a monk at the Ki-Rin's Shrine stating that he possesses the armor and has hidden it from the occupying Dragon forces. If the party has no Phoenix characters, they are dispatched to fetch the armor, as they should appear to be a neutral group to the Dragon and less likely to raise suspicion. Phoenix characters are simply commanded to use what means they can to obtain the artifact.

Strike: This adventure hook ties in with the one presented in the Reihado sano Ki-Rin entry in the Asako provinces. The party may very well be the same group sent by the head monk of the shrine, finding themselves unable to speak with Aikune and instead sent to Shiro Shiba to deliver their message. Mikoshi has the armor, and will give it to the characters should they (discreetly) show the proper credentials from the Shiba family. All that remains is leaving the Shrine with the armor of Shiba with the Dragon none the wiser.

MORI KAGE TOSHI

(LOCATION 717)

The city known as Forest Shadow is synonymous with darkness and sinister forces. Originally built in the year 304 as a minor outpost along the Phoenix shore, the city took its name from the nearby sparse forest, which is higher than the city and shades it for most of the day. The city was closer than Shiro Shiba to Otosan Uchi and Crane lands along the shoreline, and became a trade center. Eventually the Shiba began to host official functions in the castle that overlooked the city, Shiro Mori Kage. For some time, there was talk that the seat of the Shiba's power might even move here.

In 782, the Shiba governor of Mori Kage Toshi reluctantly announced his engagement to a young Agasha shugenja. The marriage was meant to seal a political alliance between the families, but Shiba Kojiro wanted none of it. Though he knew his duty, an Ikoma maiden had won his heart and he went to great lengths to ensnare the Lion woman. Through a series of political maneuvers, Kojiro made it apparent that perhaps the lord of Mori Kage Toshi would be better wed to an Ikoma. Kojiro's lord eventually agreed, and his marriage to the Agasha was called off.

"WHY IS MORI KAGE TOSHI STILL STANDING?"

Over a generation ago at the start of the Empire's conflict with the Lying Darkness, Emperor Toturi I was kidnapped by agents of the Darkness and held here while he was slowly corrupted and driven insane. When the samurai of the Unicorn freed Toturi a year later and restored him to the throne, the Phoenix were convinced the time had come to finally destroy the ruins once and for all. However, the Mantis Clan's sudden attack on the Phoenix tore the clan's attention away from the abandoned city for the time. It is important to note here that minions of the Darkness posing as his advisors goaded Yoritomo into his attack on the Phoenix.

Since then, Mori Kage Toshi has simply escaped the notice of the Phoenix. Daimyo that believe the haunted ruins should be razed are reminded that the curse will likely outlive the structures of the city. The effort would most likely be wasted. Naturally, the lords of the Phoenix seldom remember just which of their advisors give them such sensible guidance, but they agree with it fully.

Officially, Mori Kage Toshi was considered "cleansed" of any hidden danger (beyond the curse itself) with the defeat of the Darkness at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. Isawa Hochiu has declared the Darkness defeated at his own hands, and thus the corruption festering within Mori Kage was destroyed. Few are willing to debate the Master of Fire on the matter.

Kojiro's betrothed, Agasha Yuriko, was heartbroken. Though she had no feelings for her future husband initially, she now found herself deeply in love with him. Yuriko's mother, the Agasha daimyo, saw the truth and was angered by the Shiba's callous treatment of her tearful daughter. Without preamble, she called forth a dark curse upon the city, the castle, and the forest of Mori Kage. In less than a day, the dark branches of the nearby trees stretched out and covered over half the city. Thick vines grew from the ground and crawled up the foundation, ruining the stability of the castle and practically covering the structure. Reports of walking shadows and restless ghosts began shortly thereafter, and within a week, Mori Kage Toshi had been all but abandoned. The Shiba sent word to the Dragon, demanding the Agasha daimyo lift the curse, which could be interpreted as an act of war. However, the shugenja had been called to account for her actions in front of the Dragon Champion and was never heard from again.

The Shiba attempted to enlist the aid of the Isawa in lifting the curse. Several of the clan's most talented shugenja were called upon, but all failed. Eventually the matter attracted the attention of the Elemental Council, which sent the Masters of Void and Water to undo what had been wrought by Agasha magic. When even the might of the Elemental Masters, the Shiba were compelled to abandon the city and start anew elsewhere.

Since that time, Mori Kage Toshi has been a popular subject for ghost stories. What few actually know is that the shugenja who laid the initial curse paid for the power of the magic with her very soul. The woman's thirst for vengeance and the power

to enact it was so strong that the Lying Darkness heard the Agasha's call and granted her wish, consuming her and binding her to the castle at the same time. Since then, the abandoned city has become a focus point for malign supernatural activity, much of it connected with the Darkness. The city also contains a flickering "hole" to the Spirit Realm of Toshigoku, and often those who die in or near the location are damned to spend eternity among the Legacy.

SHIRO MORI KAGE

The castle of Forest Shadow City has long since lost its glory as the most opulent stronghold of the Phoenix. The crawling vines which shattered the stone foundation of the castle cling with unnatural endurance — the vines have never decayed in four hundred years. The outer walls have faded and cracked where they are visible through the choking vines, and the wood trim has long since rotted away. The castle would simply appear to be an old ruin if it were not for the eerie glow that comes from within the castle and occasionally outlines moving shapes and shadows.

Should travelers find themselves in Mori Kage Toshi, they are unlikely to happen upon the castle. The city is wrapped in a persistent fog and the structures within the city move and reappear at random, and even in the few morning hours when the city is bathed in light the haze reduces the sun's glow to a milky luminescence. If a visitor is fortunate, the city will confuse him and eventually lead him away from the city and into relative safety. If not, the path to Shiro Mori Kage will be unbarred and inevitable as dead ends and twisting paths lead the traveler to the gates of the abandoned castle. Only those the Darkness favors are shown this way, as Shiro Mori Kage houses the secrets of the dark forces there and protects its servants. Outsiders shown the way to the castle are almost always corrupted by the Darkness or the Taint of the cult that currently resides there.

THE TEMPLE OF ONNOTANGU

During the reign of the Gozoku, Hantei Kusada commanded a small order of monks, the Anshin, to spy on the Gozoku leaders. The peaceful members of the Brotherhood reluctantly agreed, as they could not refuse an edict from the Emperor. Four of the Anshin were caught and executed by the Crane Champion as Kusada was forced to watch helplessly. The leader of the Anshin, a monk named Bunrakuken, was infuriated by the affair, thinking he had been tricked into causing more chaos and death instead of stemming the tide. In his anger, he led the Anshin away from Otosan Uchi so they could meditate in the Seikitsu Mountains and reevaluate their position within the Celestial Order.

What the monks found there was almost exactly what they sought. Bunrakuken and his order stumbled upon an old cave with carved statues of the moon god, Onnotangu. Though the temple had been abandoned due to Onnotangu's ambivalence to the mortals of the Empire, it had become the home of several treacherous kansens. The evil spirits played upon Bunrakuken's anger and betrayal, leading him to believe he would now serve the Moon God and find enlightenment in Onnotangu's service. The monks fell into corruption and Taint, at the same time drawing the attention of the Lying Darkness due to their adoration of the Moon.

The cult of Onnotangu survived the centuries largely due to their anonymity. They rarely emerged from the cave to share their philosophy with outsiders, and those that accused them of madness, corruption, or heresy were simply sacrificed

upon the altar of Onnotangu. Beyond their murderous nature, the monks of Bunrakuken's order seemed much like other monks — they were still wise and patient advisors. Ironically, it was this even temperament that has allowed the cult to rationalize its actions and come up with ways to deny Taint from either the Darkness or the Shadowlands.

Recently, the cult has found themselves drawn away from the Seikitsu due to the activity of Lord Sun and the pass that was created there. The Cult of Onnotangu emerged from their centuries-old lair and made their way slowly across the Empire following Bunrakuken once again. The monk led his followers to another place where they could worship in peace — Shiro Mori Kage. Completely ignorant of the ascension of Hitomi, the death of Onnotangu, and the defeat of the Lying Darkness, Bunrakuken's cultists have made their new home within the cursed ruins of Mori Kage and begun their rituals anew.

BUNRAKUKEN

[Inkyo 18; Seven Fortunes Monk 2/Temple of Onnotangu 5]

The master of the Moon Cult has survived through all the centuries that have passed since he began his journey down his False Path. Though Bunrakuken has sent agents to wander the Empire and bring the word of their order to others, he never left the Temple of Onnotangu until he led his followers to Shiro Mori Kage. The Shadowlands Taint and the influence of the Lying Darkness have made him an ageless and powerful tool, though Bunrakuken sees his longevity simply as a reward for his virtuous path.

Bunrakuken has begun to take a more active role in the affairs of the Empire since moving his base of power to Mori Kage. In his journey, word of Hitomi's ascension to replace Onnotangu reached him, and the monk was outraged. Surely these tales were pure heresy, meant only to lead the unwary away from the true path. Onnotangu defeated by mortal hands? Unthinkable. Such stories have stirred Bunrakuken into action for two reasons: He wishes to spread the influence of his teachings further to save the people of Rokugan from this false Moon Goddess, and he also wishes to see all of her heretical followers destroyed without exception.

So far, the Cult of Onnotangu has had mixed results. They are too far from the lands of the Dragon to encounter the order of the Hitomi family and the kikage zumi, so conflict between the two has been kept to a minimum. The tattooed men of the Hitomi family are only vaguely aware of the cult's existence and have no idea of the threat they could possibly represent to the Hitomi family and the Moon herself. The agents of Bunrakuken who have gone forth to share his teachings with the Empire have been killed or arrested for heresy by the monks of the Brotherhood or the watchful Asako Inquisitors. Though these factions have proven to be a serious thorn in the side of the Cult, they were unprepared completely to encounter their most stalwart adversaries — the Hare Clan.

The Hare are dedicated to hunting down maho and Kolat activity, and are only a threat because of Bunrakuken's arrogance. He had hardly heard of the minor clan, and paid them no mind when Usagi samurai seemed to have through pure luck killed or foiled the moon cultists. Because of this, the Hare have learned much more about the Cult of Onnotangu than the Dragon or even the Asako. Bunrakuken has finally realized the error in his judgment and has called his followers to war against any who wear the colors of the Hare.

It is important to note that Bunrakuken, like all his followers, believes he is a righteous and pious monk. Though he has clearly been driven insane by the dark forces that hold sway over his soul, he is not a homicidal madman. Bunrakuken is polite, wise, and helpful to those who do not invoke his anger. He represents the greatest danger the Shadowlands can represent to great minds — corruption through rationalization.

MINOR SHIBA HOLDINGS

The Shiba are not particularly extravagant, and have few opulent holdings. Instead, they assess each holding in their possession, determine its true value to the family, and place it appropriately within their military and economic priorities.

NIKESAKE (LOCATION 716)

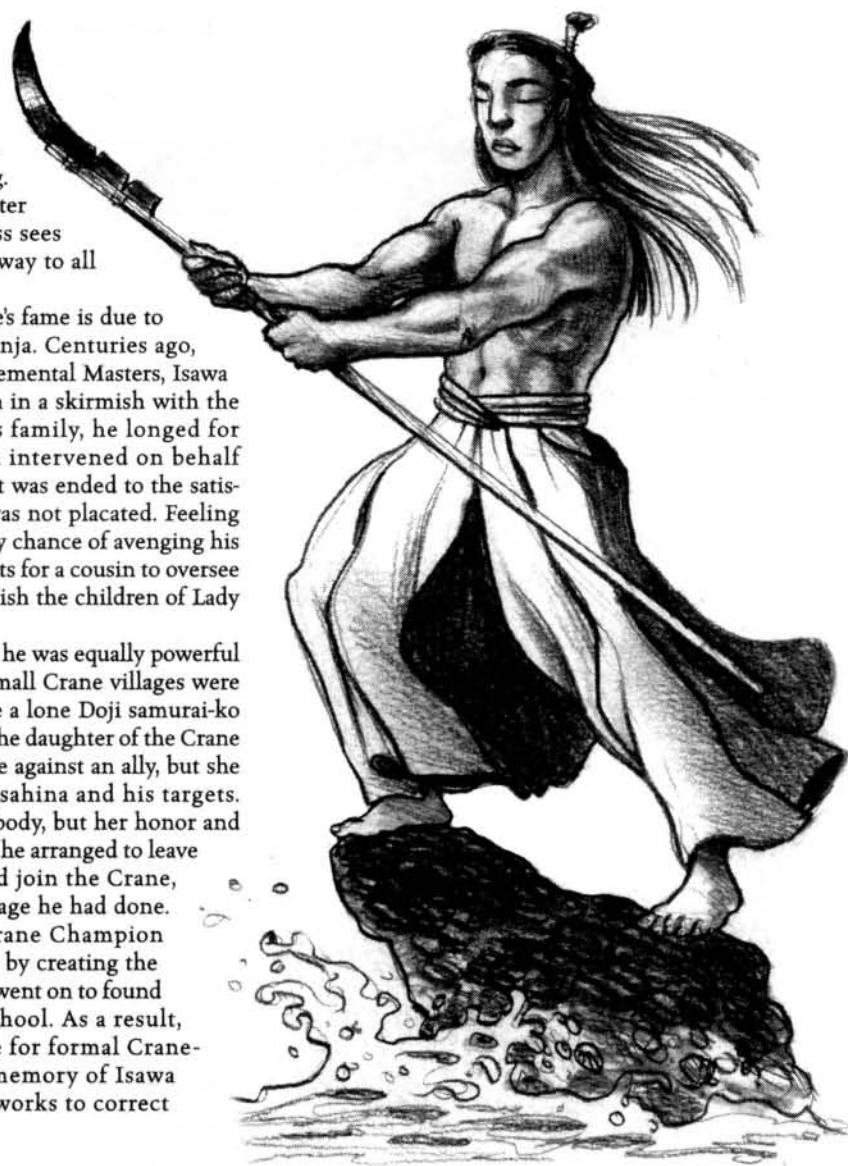
The origins of the small trade city Nikesake were largely unremarkable. Like many similar cities across the Empire, the city came about as a result of its proximity to province borders, making it a natural location for both inter- and intra-clan trading. Although it is far from a thriving center of commerce, Nikesake nevertheless sees its share of trade caravans on their way to all parts of the Phoenix holdings.

It is a Shiba holding, but Nikesake's fame is due to the actions of a single Isawa shugenja. Centuries ago, Nikesake was home to one of the Elemental Masters, Isawa Asahina. Asahina's brother was slain in a skirmish with the Lion clan, and unlike many of his family, he longed for vengeance. When the Crane Clan intervened on behalf of their occasional allies, the conflict was ended to the satisfaction of both clans, but Asahina was not placated. Feeling that the Crane had robbed him of any chance of avenging his brother's name, he made arrangements for a cousin to oversee his estate while he rode forth to punish the children of Lady Doji for their affront.

Asahina was the Master of Air, but he was equally powerful in the element of fire, and several small Crane villages were all but destroyed by his hand before a lone Doji samurai-ko confronted him. The Crane warrior, the daughter of the Crane Champion, refused to draw her blade against an ally, but she placed herself directly between Asahina and his targets. His powerful spells devastated her body, but her honor and loyalty won him over. In short order, he arranged to leave the Phoenix Clan to marry her and join the Crane, spending his life repairing the damage he had done. As he lay on his deathbed, the Crane Champion recognized his years of loyal service by creating the Asahina family, and his descendants went on to found the clan's first formal shugenja school. As a result, Nikesake has always been the site for formal Crane-Phoenix diplomatic relations in memory of Isawa Asahina and his lifetime of good works to correct a mistake born of passion.

During the Clan War and the War of Spirits, the ties between the two clans were sometimes strained because of the constantly shifting allegiances of certain individuals. In recent months, however, the Phoenix and Crane have renewed their alliance, as both have been in need of allies during the recent wave of conflict that has erupted across Rokugan. The culmination of this treaty was in the appointment of Doji Akiko, a former spirit who in life was daughter of the great Isawa and wife of Crane Champion Doji Kurohito, to the position of Elemental Master of Water. The induction ceremony, normally secret, was conducted in Nikesake before the assembled Council of Masters and the family daimyo of the Crane Clan.

Nikesake remains a minor trade center of the Phoenix as well as a location for diplomatic relations with the Crane. With Doji Akiko serving as the Crane representative, however, the distinction as a diplomatic city is largely a ceremonial one. Minor issues are occasionally resolved between the Phoenix representative, Shiba Itami, and the Crane ambassadors, but Nikesake is ultimately of relatively minor importance.



THE CRANE EMBASSY

This surprisingly plain building is not what most would expect from a holding of the Crane Clan, but it fits in perfectly with the Phoenix architecture. This is only natural given that it was once a magistrate's way station of the Shiba family, a family known for its meager accommodations. Upon entering the building, however, visitors are always taken aback by its opulence. The Crane stationed here needed only a few months to rebuild the interior in proper Crane style.

Although the Crane who work within the embassy are well aware that they are essentially redundant, a school of thought championed by the chief ambassador Doji Iname, they are nevertheless determined to endear their clan to the Phoenix by whatever means are possible. They often host important Shiba, and have extended numerous invitations to other Phoenix as well. They have hosted several truly impressive and lavish parties within the embassy, and typically invite most of the samurai within the city. While it may be true that the Crane embassy at Nikesake has accomplished little in the way of true diplomatic affairs, none can deny that they are very popular among the Phoenix within the city.



ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: After a particularly large party, the samurai stationed at the Crane embassy discover that a netsuke kept on display in their audience chamber is missing. Although it appears to be of minor value, the netsuke is actually a relic of the time of the Asahina family's founding, and is of significant historical and sentimental value. With no magistrates of their own to call upon, the Crane seek an outside party to investigate the matter as discreetly as possible.

Focus: There were at least two dozen guests for the party. A dozen of them were prominent citizens of Nikesake, with half again that number yojimbo and servants. The remaining six guests were miscellaneous samurai of other Great Clans who happened to be visiting the city during that time and were fortunate enough to receive invitations.

Strike: Although the Crane's principal suspects are the servants of the Phoenix guests and the guests from other clans, the truth is far more surprising. Shiba Hitsuko, an elderly stateswoman of her family, has become increasingly senile in her old age. In a bout of confusion, she took the netsuke before her mind cleared. She has since recovered her wits and is currently wondering where the netsuke came from. She suspects it may have come from someone else, and is looking for a way to return it without dishonor. If she cannot find a way to do that, she may destroy it in order to conceal her shame.

DOJI INAME

[Courtier 8; Doji Courtier 2]

Despite a prestigious position as the chief ambassador to the Phoenix lands, Doji Iname is not particularly pleased with his lot in life. His appointment to Nikesake was a great accomplishment, for such a position rarely falls to one so young and inexperienced. Unfortunately, in the months since his arrival, he has come to realize that the Phoenix consider Doji Akiko to be the chief representative of the Crane, and while they are polite and accommodating to Iname, they do not include him on many important matters. The truth cannot be denied: he is redundant. He and his staff are an afterthought.

Iname occupies his considerable free time by serving as an unofficial liaison to any non-Phoenix who travel through Nikesake. He has entertained numerous representatives of the Unicorn, Scorpion, and even Lion clans since his arrival. His home in Nikesake is very lavish, which is one of the few things he considers to be appropriate to his station. The Phoenix of the city do not seem to mind his efforts. Indeed, it gives the Crane something to do rather than get underfoot in matters that do not concern him.

SHINSEI & SUMAI MURA

(LOCATION ?11)

One of the oldest villages in the Shiba lands, this strangely named village was once simply known as Sumai Mura after the reputation of the young men who lived there. Even before the village was sworn to the Shiba, the followers of Isawa would hire the burly warriors who lived here as yojimbo and assistants. So great was the reputation of these warriors' strength that the village was named Sumai Mura.

After the formation of the Great Clans, the little man known as Shinsei traveled to the northern lands to walk among the followers of Shiba and Isawa. Even then he knew that a war with the Lost Brother was coming, and wished to impart some fraction of his wisdom to those who could most benefit from it before he left with the Seven Thunders to meet his destiny. Shinsei witnessed the arrogance of the people of Sumai Mura, and made his home within the village for two months. At the end of that period, the people of Sumai Mura were humble, philosophical individuals with great respect for the natural order. They wished to change the name of their village to honor their teacher, but he insisted that they keep the original name, for he had only improved what already existed. As a compromise, the name was changed to Shinsei & Sumai Mura.

For centuries, Shinsei & Sumai Mura was visited by those who studied the Tao of Shinsei. Pilgrims brought stones from their own homes and left them in the village. No one knew the reason for such a practice, not even the travelers. They merely claimed that it seemed the proper thing to do. After decades of this, the Elemental Master of Earth, assisted by members of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, built a shrine with the stones, and found that they fit together perfectly.

Today, the village endures as it always has. Its shrine to Shinsei is one of the largest in the Empire, perhaps second only to the legendary Reihado Shinsei somewhere deep inside the great Shinomen Mori. The Shiba, ever a contemplative family, take great pride that the shrine is within their lands and ensure that sufficient resources are always available to the Brotherhood for its upkeep. They maintain a small presence within the city, with a squadron of bushi under the command of Shiba Kai protecting the shrine.

SHINSEI SEIDO

Although it is a shrine to his memory, the monks and pilgrims who visit Shinsei Seido come not to mourn the little teacher's loss, but to celebrate his teachings. The shrine is a great center of learning for the Brotherhood of Shinsei even though it is a small building with few facilities. There are a mere dozen monks stationed here in a building that accommodates three times that number. The remainder of the facility is left for itinerant monks and particularly pious or otherwise deserving pilgrims. There are rarely any available rooms, even in the dead of winter.

Unlike in many other shrines and monasteries, the brothers of Shinsei Seido are not known for their good works. They are not particularly active in the activities of the village, nor are they well known for their benevolent assistance working with the peasants of the land. They are an introspective, contemplative sort, given to long hours of study and meditation upon the wisdom of the Tao.

SHOKO

[Inkyo 11; Temple of the Seven Fortunes (Insight Rank 3)] In a previous lifetime, Shoko was a fierce samurai-ko, a warrior without compare. She stood in a sea of blood on the battlefield, surrounded by the cold, lifeless bodies of her dead enemies. It is a vision that still haunts her. After a lifetime of meditation, she has only begun to cleanse the taint of bloodshed from her soul. Others marvel at her composure, her devotion to and knowledge of the Tao. Often she too is lost in the illusion, but her nightmares always remind her of the truth: she cannot know true peace of mind until she has atoned for her horrible sins.

The irony of Shoko's situation is that she sees the good in everyone around her. No matter how heinous one's sins, Shoko is more than willing to aid in achieving wisdom through the Tao. She truly believes that any wrongdoing can be exonerated through enlightenment... except for her own.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A Shiba lord discovers a strange artifact, a flat circular stone that bears a kanji no one can identify, within the possessions of a deceased relative. Certain that the object is somehow important, the daimyo commissions a group to bring the item to the Brotherhood of Shinsei temple at Shinsei & Sumai Mura in hopes that their wisdom may bring understanding.

Focus: The monks cannot identify the item, but they share the daimyo's opinion that it is something unique. Shortly afterwards, one of the brothers begins to act strangely, snapping at anyone who crosses his path. Finally, the monk attacks his fellow monk, the wise Shoko. The characters are barely able to stop him, as he possesses far more strength and agility than would be expected of a man his size.

Strike: The stone is a relic from Meido, the Realm of the Dead. Its presence has awakened in several monks the memories of past lives. One brother had a past life ended by Shoko on a battlefield. Filled with rage, the brother will do anything to gain revenge, and if he succeeds it will be impossible to return him to his right mind.

THE ARTISAN ACADEMY

Secluded on an unremarkable section of the Shiba coastline, this small settlement is known throughout the Empire for its beautiful works of art. Although they have never achieved the level of renown that the Kakita artisans enjoy, the artisans of the Shiba family are nevertheless famed for their artistic skill in painting, poetry, music, and sculpture.

The land upon which the artisan academy is built is idyllic, but has very little in the way of natural resources. This is probably the reason the academy has been left undisturbed for so long: even in military situations, there is nothing there to defend nor anything to attack. Even the stone and wood necessary for the artists' work must be brought in by the academy's patrons. Fortunately, the academy has a large number of wealthy patrons who enjoy the fruits of the artisans' labors, and as a result the academy rarely wants for anything essential.

ASAKO ICHIRO

[Courtier 6/Artisan 3; Isawa Shugenja (Water) 2, Shiba Artisan 1]

While not a particularly prestigious member of the academy, Asako Ichiro is still regarded as an expert in sculpture. Ichiro has traveled all across the Empire in search of beauty and inspiration. He is as fascinated by the rough, utilitarian work of the Kaiu as he is the angular gaijin style of the Moto. His collection of rare and exotic sculpture is well known throughout the world of artists, and he receives countless invitations each year to witness new works from all across Rokugan. An appearance by Ichiro at an exhibition can bring enormous renown to a young artist.

Ichiro is an honorable man, but his passion sometimes overwhelms his good sense. He owns several pieces of art that are clearly of gaijin origin, and are therefore illegal to possess inside the boundaries of Rokugan. He does not allow others to see them, but he cannot bring himself to destroy them.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: There has been an outbreak of violence at the normally peaceful Artisan's Academy, and the Phoenix are eager to have the matter investigated. Any guests staying at the Academy or the surrounding area would be welcome to participate in the local magistrate's investigation, and the Phoenix might even call in the aid of outsiders or Imperial magistrates to ensure the matter is dealt with impartially and objectively.

Focus: Although none of the artists at the academy have discovered the truth as yet, there is a small group of Yobanjin raiders in the area harassing the place. It is not uncommon for such barbarians to harass the Phoenix from the northern mountains, but raids this far south are virtually unheard of. Furthermore, the raids have been very selective, almost surgical in nature. Thus far, two sentries have been killed and two different art studios have been ransacked. It seems almost as if the barbarians are looking for something specific.

Strike: One of the sculptures in the collection of Asako Ichiro is a holy relic of a Yobanjin tribe. Somehow, the tribe has learned of its location and has sent some of its finest warriors to retrieve it. Assuming the characters are able to deal with the menace, the questions of how to deal with Ichiro, what to do about the Unicorn merchant who sold him the piece, and discovering how the Yobanjin discovered the artifact's location and moved so easily through the Phoenix lands remain unanswered.

IMPORTANT SHIBA NPCS

SHIBA AIKUNE, MASTER OF THE LAST WISH

Power.

This has been the ultimate goal of Shiba Aikune's life, and it is a goal that he has achieved. His mother was Shiba Tsukune, the legendary Phoenix Champion who went on to become an immortal Fortune. His father was Shiba Kanjiro, a brave samurai who saved his mother's life during the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. Kanjiro was a relative unknown; his duties entailed guarding a minor shrine deep in the mountains of Shiba territory. Aikune seldom saw his father. Regardless, Aikune was beloved by his parents and seemed destined for greatness. Aikune was betrothed to Isawa Yaruko, daughter of the Master of Earth Isawa Taeruko. His friend Isawa Nakamuro seemed certain to replace the aging Agasha Gennai as Master of Air. Aikune's marriage to Yaruko and friendship with Nakamuro would bring unprecedented unity between the families of the Phoenix. The only shadow on Aikune's otherwise perfect life was a tragic inability to commune with the ancestors of his family — though he often prayed to them, he never sensed any reply.

Then came the War of Spirits.

At its height, Hantei XVI took prisoner the children of many influential Phoenix to blackmail the Shiba armies into joining his crusade against Toturi. Isawa Yaruko was one of many who were taken. Aikune, barely past his gempukku, fought fiercely to save her, but could not prevent her from being slain. Aikune blamed himself for Yaruko's death, as did her mother. To make matters worse, Aikune soon learned that his father had died in a minor battle protecting the shrine that was his charge. When his friend Nakamuro attempted to console him, Aikune lashed out angrily. Their friendship died there, as both were too proud to apologize to the other.

Isawa Taeruko's influence over the Elemental Council stymied Aikune's career in the armies of the Phoenix, as he was repeatedly passed over for important assignments and promotions. Though his mother was Phoenix Champion he refused her aid, preferring instead to stand or fall on his own merits. Sadly, it seemed as if his best efforts were not enough. He achieved the rank of a minor officer in the Shiba armies, but progressed no further.

When the time came for the Test of the Emerald Champion, an invitation was delivered to Shiro Shiba. Seeing opportunity, Aikune took advantage of his position as son of the Champion for the first time in his life and demanded the right to represent the Phoenix. In the semi-final rounds, Aikune was severely injured by the Scorpion Bayushi Kwanchai (who had flagrantly disregarded the rules of the duel). An Isawa shugenja rushed to heal Aikune, who otherwise might have been permanently injured. Unfortunately, the rules that the presiding Scorpion shugenja had laid down strictly forbade magic use. Aikune's healing was deemed a breach of the rules, and the representatives of the Council of Masters forfeited on Aikune's behalf rather than apologize.

Aikune was enraged. He suspected that the Isawa healer knew what would happen if he used magic without the Scorpion's permission, and intentionally disqualified Aikune. He went home to find that his mother had vanished into the Celestial Heavens and the Elemental Masters were as distant as ever. The armies of the Dragon advanced across the lands of the Phoenix, and every day his clan seemed to lose ground.

It was clear to Aikune that his family needed leadership, but few would support his claim. In the past the Soul of Shiba had guided the family, but now it resided in the Heavens with his mother. Confused and uncertain how best to help his family, Aikune prayed to his ancestors for guidance. As always, he received none. Frustrated, Aikune began to research his family's history to discover if perhaps he had inherited a curse of some kind from his father. He soon discovered that his father was not the guardian of some minor shrine, as he had always been told, but was one of the protectors of Isawa's Last Wish, an artifact of legendary power. As he suspected, his father's bloodline was naturally resistant to the influence of spirits, a trait that made them well-suited to stand so close to the seductive power of the Wish.

Aikune was seduced by the idea of seizing the Wish for himself, using its power to teach the Council a lesson in humility. His friend Shiba Mirabu talked him out of the idea, pointing out how so many others who had used the Wish selfishly had been destroyed. Aikune reluctantly agreed with Mirabu's wise counsel, and determined to leave the Wish where it lay even if it meant living a life of mediocrity.

A few days after this decision Aikune learned that the Elemental Masters had disappeared during a battle with Tamori Shaitung. Without their most powerful leaders, the Phoenix were broken and demoralized. The armies of the Dragon marched on Shiro Shiba. Aikune knew what he must do. He journeyed to his father's shrine and took up the Last Wish, determined to save his clan even if it meant sacrificing himself to its power.

Ironically this decision, the first selfless act of Aikune's self-centered life, is what has allowed the brash young samurai to control Isawa's Last Wish. Though he has often been tempted to use its power to satisfy his own violent urges, he has thus far restrained himself to using it in the defense of the Phoenix. His two yojimbo, Mirabu and Arai, are divided on the issue. Mirabu counsels restraint and Arai power. Thus far, Aikune has chosen to listen to Mirabu.

Only once has he allowed his control to slip, when his temper overwhelmed him and he used the Wish to strike out at the Lion advisors who he felt had not lent sufficient aid to his clan. When the bloody haze cleared, Aikune found himself in the center of a field of charred corpses. Aikune was horrified at the sight. He has not apologized to the Lion, for he knows if he does so it may make the Phoenix appear weak. Instead, he has vowed never to use the Wish as anything but a defensive weapon. Even so, such great power can be seductive, and every day Aikune finds it more difficult to resist using the Wish to fulfill his every desire...

SHIBA AIKUNE

Male human Phoenix Sam 15: CR 15; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 15d10+60; hp 174; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; Atk Isawa's Last Wish +25/+20/+15 melee (1d10+12 + 1d6 fire plus 1d10 fire and 1d8 sonic damage on critical and Fort Save (DC 14) or be deafened permanently) (15–20/×20 critical); AC 24 (touch 14, flat-footed 22); SQ Class skill — Knowledge (Arcana) (family bonus), Samurai abilities (Ancestral Daisho);

Honor: 3; AL N (NE until recently); SV Fort +14, Ref +9, Will +10; Str 16 (20), Dex 15, Con 16 (18), Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 10; Maximum Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 10 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Languages (High Rokugani, Rokugani), Climb +13, Diplomacy +7, Iaijutsu Focus +18, Intimidate +18, Jump +13, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Ride +10, Sense Motive +16, Swim +13; Depths of the Void, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Critical (katana), Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Mobility, Shiba's Technique, Spring Attack, Void Use, Way of the Phoenix, Whirlwind Attack.

Dojo: Eternal Phoenix. **Kata:** Striking as Fire, Striking as Water.

Possessions: bracers of health +2, haori of resistance +2, Isawa's Last Wish (special unique artifact, see Chapter Six), netsuke of natural armor +2, obi of giant strength +4, partial armor +4, ring of protection +2.

SHIBA AIKUNE

Earth: 4

Water: 3

Strength: 4

Fire: 5

Air: 2

Reflexes: 4

Void: 5

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 5

Honor: 3.3

Glory: 7.4

Advantages: Great Destiny, Magic Resistance (6)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (destructive), Brash, Dark Fate, Sworn Enemy (Isawa Taeruko)

Skills: Athletics 4, Defense 5, Etiquette 2, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 6, Intimidation 6, Kenjutsu 7, Kyujutsu 5, Meditation 5, Naginata 3, Shintao 4, Tea Ceremony 3

Dojo: Eternal Phoenix

THE LAST WISH

The full powers of the Last Wish are described in Chapter Six. However, certain attributes of the Last Wish vary depending on their wielder. When Shiba Aikune wields the Last Wish, its variable attributes are as follows:

THE LAST WISH

In Shiba Aikune's hands, the Last Wish functions as a +5 keen thundering flaming burst katana.

The Last Wish grants Aikune spellcasting abilities as follows:

Spells Known (6/8/7/7/7/6/4, Base DC 15 + spell level, Elemental Focus — Fire, No School): 0 — call fire, dancing lights, disrupt undead, flaring speed, ghost sound, guidance, light, mending, resistance, whispers of the kami; 1st — burning hands, evil ward, expeditious retreat, eye of the sun, faerie fire, protection from taint; 2nd — cat's grace, courage of the seven thunders, the fires that cleanse, hurried steps, produce flame, silence; 3rd — call lightning, clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, fireball, protection from elements; 4th — detect scrying, fire shield, fist of Osano-Wo, spell immunity, warning flame; 5th — confusion, flame strike, improved invisibility, spell resistance, symbol of fire; 6th — fires of purity, greater dispelling, stonewall, summon nature's ally IV (fire only); 7th — chain lightning, disintegrate, guardian of fire.

THE LAST WISH

In Shiba Aikune's hands, the Last Wish is affected by a permanent Katana of Fire spell with three Raises. It inflicts 6k3 damage.

The Last Wish grants Shiba Aikune access to the following spells (see Chapter Six for details regarding how these spells are cast): Mastery Level 1: Fires From the Forge, Fires of Purity, The Fires That Cleanse, Tempest of Air, Wings of Fire; Mastery Level 2: Courage of the Seven Thunders, The Fires From Within, Hurried Steps, Secrets on the Wind, Summon Fire Spirit; Mastery Level 3: Essence of Air, The Fist of Osano-Wo, Heart of the Inferno, Waiting Flame, Wind-Borne Speed; Mastery Level 4: Armor of the Emperor, Fire Walking, Rays of Amaterasu, Sacred Ground, Symbol of Fire, Wall of Fire; Mastery Level 5: Burn the Soul, Earthquake, Follow the Flame, Following Osano-Wo, Whirlwind.

SHIBA NINGEN, MASTER OF THE VOID

Shiba Ningen is proof that the Void is both mysterious and ultimately unknowable. As near as any historical record has been able to show, Ningen's family has never displayed any talent with the kami. This is not unusual, for the Shiba are not known for magical acumen. What is unprecedented is an individual from a line with no magical tendencies becoming an Ishiken. In those rare instances where an Ishiken has appeared outside the Isawa family, it has always been in a family with some degree of magical ability. Until Shiba Ningen, that is.

Ningen's childhood was ordinary, giving no indication that he would prove to be anything more than a dependable bushi. The only complaint Ningen's family had was regarding his seeming inability to pay attention to his exercises. He was a somewhat unfocused (some might have called him clumsy) and often stared off into the distance with an absent expression. It was expected that this tendency would be curbed by the rigorous instruction of the Shiba sensei. If he had not been the younger sister of Phoenix Champion Shiba Tsukune, it is unlikely anyone would have had the patience to give him any serious training.

Ningen had great difficulty paying attention to his studies and was often punished by his teachers. On the rare occasions when he did focus on what was happening around him, he excelled at anticipating his opponents' reactions and responding accordingly, but his lack of martial skill was laughable, and he often suffered at the hands of his classmates. It was during one such encounter — Ningen was being beaten by four classmates — that his abilities first manifested. One of his attackers did not survive, and two others lived on in a catatonic state for several years before wasting away. Ningen's sensei was horrified, but he knew the signs: Ningen had been touched by the Void.

Ningen's ability with the Void was surprising to the Isawa not only because of his lineage, but also because of its sheer potency: Shiba Ningen is one of the most powerful Ishiken in the history of the Phoenix Clan. His rise through the ranks of the school to the position of Master of the Void was a surprise only to the Shiba, who never expected such a thing for one of their family. The Isawa knew, however, that one so powerful as Ningen must have a place on the Council or else become a threat to it. It was Isawa Hochiu who appointed Ningen to his position, and who has watched over the younger man for decades to ensure his loyalty. In the opinion of Hochiu,

the Master of the Void is more loyal to the Council than to his own family, and that is exactly as it should be. The two are close friends, and where the opinion of one turns the other often follows.

To date, the continued existence of Gisei Toshi has not been revealed to Ningen by the other Masters. He knows it exists, of course; it would be nearly impossible to keep such a thing from the Master of Void, to whom all thoughts are as clear as the morning sunrise. Ningen is mildly offended that the Masters exclude him because of his family, but takes comfort in the simple truth that Gisei Toshi holds no secrets from him. When the other Masters finally choose to include him, then he will know that he is truly their equal. Or rather, that they believe themselves to be his equal.

Recently, Ningen realized to his surprise that Shiba Yoma was a Kolat agent. Ningen was quite amused when the truth came to him, but was not angry at Yoma. Looking deep into the Shiba's soul, Ningen saw that his first loyalty was to the Phoenix, and that he held a deep and abiding respect for the Masters. So long as Yoma continues to serve loyally, Ningen sees no harm in letting him keep his secret. However, should Yoma's Kolat affiliation ever cause harm to his clan, Ningen will be the first to show the Voice of the Masters his displeasure. Not even a Kolat can hide from the Master of the Void.



SHIBA NINGEN

Male human Phoenix Shu6/Voi12: CR 18; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 18d6+18; hp 104; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23 (touch 12, flat-footed 23); Attack wakizashi +9 melee (1d6-1); SA void suppression; SQ +8 caster level for shugenja spells, altering the course, class skill — Spellcraft (family bonus), Element Focus (Air), moment of clarity (4/day), sense elements, sense void (empathic senses, 6/day), void release; Honor: 3.9; AL NG; SV Fort +12, Ref +10, Will +23; Str 8, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 22 (28); Maximum Void: 14 (16); Height: 5 ft. 6 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Languages (High Rokugani, Kami, Naga, Rokugani, Yobanjin), Diplomacy +32, Heal +25, Knowledge (arcana) +25, Knowledge (elements) +25, Knowledge (etiquette) +25, Knowledge (history) +13, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +14, Scry +25, Sense Motive +14; Depths of the Void, Greater Depths of the Void (x2), Ishiken-do, Ritual Magic, Spell Penetration, Void Use, Way of the Phoenix.

Spells Known (6/9/8/8/8/8/6/4 base DC 19 + spell level, *Elemental Focus* — Air (can substitute Void spells for regular spell choices), *Isawa School*): 0 — commune with elements, crow's vision, cure minor wounds, detect magic, drawing out the void, flash of insight, guidance, light, read magic, void touch; 1st — burning hands, cure light wounds, look into the void, silent image, sleep, touch of all; 2nd — boundless sight, drawing the void, eye shall not see, lesser restoration, locate object, unraveling; 3rd — burn the soul, contemplate the void, haste, remove curse, voice of the void; 4th — air walk, endless depth, karmic intent, neutralize poison, whispered blade; 5th — dimension door, essence of the void, unraveling III, void strike; 6th — balance the elements, forever secret, spiritual presence; 7th — essence of all, unbound.

Possessions: amulet of natural armor +3, amulet of the void, ashigaru armor +5, haori of charisma +6, kimono of resistance +5, ring of protection +3, wakizashi

SHIBA NINGEN

Earth: 3

Willpower: 8

Water: 3

Perception: 6

Fire: 4

Intelligence: 6

Air: 4

Void: 8

School/Rank: Isawa Ishiken 5

Honor: 3.2

Glory: 8.1

Advantages: Elemental Convergence, Ishiken-do, Social Position (Master of the Void)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Among the Shiba, arrogant), Bland

Skills: Calligraphy 4, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 4, History 4, Lore (Void magic) 8, Meditation 7, Shintao 5, Spell Research 5, Theology 5

Spells: All known Void spells, many as innate abilities, and elemental spells as the GM sees fit.

SHIBA YOMA

Shiba Yoma's youth and training was quite a departure from that of a normal Shiba bushi. His training as a yojimbo was unexceptional, though marked by athleticism and mental discipline. Yoma's first duty after his gempukku was as a yojimbo for one of the Elemental Masters' apprentices, a prestigious duty for one so young.

As a yojimbo, Yoma's service was adequate, but as an assistant in courtly matters he excelled. At first, his charge rebuffed his attempts to assist in court, and Yoma was chastised repeatedly for failing to know his place. In one particularly intense court session, Yoma watched his charge be thoroughly embarrassed by a superior courtier from the Scorpion Clan. Just when the Isawa was on the brink of completely ruining his career in court, Yoma stepped in and defused the situation handily, leaving all parties pleased with the outcome.

Yoma's charge, Isawa Hatsuken, was outraged. He saved his anger for a more private setting, however. Once the two returned to their quarters, however, Hatsuken berated Yoma for hours on end, promising to assign him to the most meaningless duties the Phoenix could offer in return for his terrible insult. After nearly two hours of foul treatment, Yoma snapped and told Hatsuken to be silent, that he would listen no more to such a fool. He stormed out of the room and into Otosan Uchi.

Yoma spent the entire night wandering the city. He was certain that his actions had ended his career. Still, he knew in his heart that he had been correct to do what he had done, and would not apologize for his actions. When dawn came, he returned to Hatsuken's quarters to face his fate with honor.

Hatsuken, however, was not here. Instead, an older Isawa shugenja was waiting on Yoma. The stranger would not give his name, but praised Yoma not only for his initiative, but for the strength of conviction required to stand up to his charge and then to return to face the consequences for his actions. If Yoma was willing, the stranger promised, he could be introduced to a group of like-minded men and women who could put his talents to use in their fullest capacity. Yoma agreed after a mere moment of consideration.

Shiba Yoma's tenure with the Kolat began with a simple indoctrination in their philosophy and methodology. Yoma found little to disagree with in the Kolat's methods, and embraced their ways fully. Once his training with the sect was complete, the Kolat arranged for him to be trained at the Asako courtier school. There, Yoma flourished. In a very short period of time, he became a skilled orator.

In the intervening years, Yoma has continued to develop his considerable skills both in court and in the dojo. He is not an exceptional warrior, but he is a disciplined one. Likewise his natural gift with people, combined with his courtier training, has consistently and continually improved his position within the Imperial Court. In fact, his prestige has extended to the point that he has been appointed as the Voice of the Masters, the representative to the Imperial Court for the Council of Elemental Masters. As such, he is one of the most influential men in the entire Phoenix Clan. The Kolat, of course, are not at all surprised.

SHIBA YOMA

Male human Phoenix Crt2/Sam7/Kol2/She4: CR 15; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 11d10+22 plus 4d6+8; hp 142; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (touch 12, flat-footed 19); Attack +5 *flaming ghost touch naginata* +24/+19/+14 melee (1d10+12 +1d6 fire) SA Sneak Attack +1d6 damage; SQ Ancestral Daisho, Class Skill — Knowledge (arcana) (family bonus), Poison Use, Power of the Void, Secret Brotherhood, Shiba's Strength (10/+2 DR to individual within 10 feet), Style and Grace, Talent, Wealth; Honor: 1 (2); AL LN; SV Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +19; Str 16 (20), Dex 12 (14), Con 14, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 16 (18); Maximum Void: 5; Height: 5 ft. 7 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Languages (High Rokugani, Rokugani, Yobanjin), Bluff +23, Diplomacy +36, Gather Information +19, Innuendo +21 (transmit) +13 (receive), Intimidate +21, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (etiquette) +6, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Listen +14, Ride +7, Sense Motive +20, Spot +14; Depths of the Void, Invincible Sword of the Phoenix, Iron Will, No Illusions, Perceived Honor, Shiba's Technique, Shield of Honor, Skill Focus (diplomacy), Soul Forge (naginata), Void Use, Way of the Phoenix, Weapon Focus (naginata).

Dojo: Shiro Shiba. *Kata:* Striking as Fire, Striking as Water, Tail of the Sun.

Possessions: +5 *flaming ghost touch naginata* (Soul Forge), +5 *partial armor*, *circlet of persuasion*, *gloves of dexterity* +2, *haori of charisma* +2, *katana*, *obi of giant strength* +4, *oni's tear* (see *Way of the Ninja™* for details), *wakizashi*. When on missions for the Masters, Yoma is typically given *Isawa's Helm*, a unique item described in *Magic of Rokugan™*. While wearing the helm, he is immune to all mind-affecting spells save those cast by an Elemental master, he gains a +10 void bonus to AC, and his CR is increased by 1.

SHIBA YOMA

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Perception: 6

Fire: 3

Intelligence: 5

Air: 4

Awareness: 6

Void: 4

School/Rank: Shiba Bushi 3, Shiba Elite Guard 1, Asako Courtier 1

Honor: 3.6

Glory: 7.8

Advantages: Benten's Blessing, Multiple Schools (Asako Courtier), Social Position (Voice of the Masters), Voice

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Kolat), Obligation (Kolat)

Skills: Athletics 3, Courtier 5, Defense 3, Etiquette 5, Falconry 2, Heraldry 4, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 2, Manipulation 6, Meditation 3, Oratory 5, Shintao 4, Sincerity 6, Yarijutsu 2

Dojo: Shiro Shiba

VASSALS OF THE SHIBA FAMILY

THE NASU FAMILY

In many ways, the rule of the Gozoku alliance (see *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun™* page 38, *Winter Court: Kyuden Kakita™* pages 82–84, and *Way of the Wolf™* pages 26–27 for more information on the Gozoku) was beneficial to the Empire. Lasting alliances were made, peace was imposed, and the arts flourished.

Among the myriad changes the Gozoku made to the structure of the Empire was a dramatic centralization of the bureaucracy. The Gozoku alliance created the Nasu family, loyal only to it, and set above any individual clan or family, even the Hantei. The tasks of the Nasu were manifold:

they issued travel papers, collected census and tax information, made sure samurai were given their yearly stipends. With the invaluable aid of the Nasu, the Gozoku controlled all aspects of life in Rokugan.

All things must end. In the year 435, Hantei Yugo-zohime shattered the strength of the Gozoku alliance. As the Gozoku leaders faced punishment for defying the will of Heaven, Shiba Gaijushiko hid the Nasu in his own family, sheltering them from the wrath of the Empress as he dismantled the rest of the Gozoku's tools. The family's skill and expertise was preserved, though they were greatly diminished: they became a vassal family of the Shiba. Gaijushiko saw the efficiency with which they ran the Empire, and set them to serve the Phoenix in the same manner.

The Nasu have handled the Phoenix bureaucracy for seven centuries. Quietly and efficiently, they deal with the clan's organizational minutiae. It is the responsibility of the Nasu to ensure that no red tape entangles the Phoenix. Surprisingly, the other families have only rarely raised objections. The Asako are too detached from the worldly nature of the Nasu's task, and the Isawa simply don't care as long as the Nasu do their job well. The Agasha, new to the Phoenix fold, have meekly accepted the Nasu as the status quo.

Despite this acceptance, the Nasu keep their distance from the other families of the Phoenix. They are deeply troubled by the thought of one of their own being indebted to another family. If such an event were to occur, the Nasu fear that the other family would exert control over their family through an errant member. No Nasu has ever studied with the Isawa or Agasha and allowed to remain a part of the family — they are adopted into the Shiba proper before such training is permitted. In addition, inter-family marriage is expressly forbidden; the Nasu tend to marry fellow Shiba.

This isolationist mentality, which occasionally borders on xenophobia, has recently come under attack. The new daimyo, the young and beautiful Nasu Itami, has decided that the days of the withdrawn Nasu family are over. She has studied the histories of the days when the Nasu ruled the Empire with the Gozoku, and has realized that the Nasu can rise again to be glorious and powerful. She has approached the Scorpion and Crane, not out of any foolish dream to reinstate the Gozoku, but to become the pre-eminent courtly family in the Phoenix clan — possibly even a major family. Her family is full of trained bureaucrats and courtiers, and she believes that with the right connections, she can receive Imperial positions for her kinsmen, thus gathering more power for the Nasu. Her dreams are grand and are cautiously welcomed by her family, though so far only Doji Nagori of the Crane has responded favorably to her efforts — and that response is far more likely due to her physical appearance than genuine respect.

KANKEI SEIDEN (IN 718, HONORED TREATY CITY)

Sprawling across a full fifth of Honored Treaty City are the Nasu estates. Several hundred residences cluster around the dozens of Nasu offices — a telling mark of the family's all-business attitude. They believe that in order to promote efficiency, a bureaucrat should never stop working. Thus, the officials need quick access to their offices, and there is a small staff working at all hours of the night and day.

Kankei Seiden is plagued with an exceptionally high suicide rate. This problem has sprung up only in the past few decades, and the elders of the family are unsure why it has happened. Some (correctly) theorize that the extra work

placed on the family by the Agasha defection has a great deal to do with it. To combat this, the Nasu elders have begun to cautiously encourage Nasu children to relax more. Tea houses, sake works, and other such recreational facilities in the city have begun to attract Nasu clientele. While some fear this may lead to moral decline, the suicide rate has dropped, and the elders are pleased.

THE NASU FAMILY

Most stationary Nasu choose to stay courtiers until retirement. There's little need for other talents when the character never leaves Honored Treaty City. Among roving Nasu (including most PCs), such as census-takers, tax collectors, and stipend distributors, several pick up levels of fighter, samurai, or even rogue to enable them to defend themselves. Shugenja are rare among the Nasu, even for the Shiba.

Favored Class: Courtier

Starting Honor: 2

Class Skills: Knowledge (Law)

Special: Nasu characters get a +1 reputation bonus when dealing with other members of the Rokugani bureaucracy.

Starting Outfit:

1. Royal outfit and 125 koku.
2. 325 koku.

THE NASU FAMILY

The vast majority of Nasu attend the Asako Courtier School — which, while named for the Asako, is sufficiently unaffiliated to satisfy the Nasu traditionalists. Some characters opt for the Shiba Bushi school, or even on occasion (and Fortunes permitting) the Doji Courtier school. Shugenja are rare among the Nasu, even for the Shiba. Those scant few, of which there have been nine in the past thirty years, gravitate towards the Shiba Tejina school, which they can attend without fear of Isawa influence.

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Glory: 0.5

Special: Nasu characters get a Free Raise on any social interaction roll involving the bureaucracy. Their reputation as masters of paperwork precedes them.

THE SODONA FAMILY

"Who guards the guardians?"

—motto of the Sodona vassal family

Shiba knelt on one knee, and swore to protect Isawa, and for his family to protect Isawa's family. As a result, Isawa agreed to travel with Shinsei as one of the Seven Thunders. Since that time, the Shiba have kept their oaths to the Isawa, though at times the cost has been dear. The Shiba have focused so much on the Isawa's guardianship that they occasionally neglect their own.

After the return of the Unicorn clan in the year 815, this became clearer than ever. For the first several years after the return, a significant number of small battles took place between the clans as they sorted out a new political order that included a seventh Great Clan. Despite the general atmosphere of conflict, the Phoenix elected to not attack their neighbors, as was their pacifistic custom. During one such encounter, the Lion ambushed the Shiba daimyo and his family as they were traveling to Otsan Uchi. The battle was brief and bloody. The Lion completely destroyed the Shiba

lord's family and advanced further into Phoenix territory. The succeeding Phoenix daimyo, Shiba Toriiko, adamantly refused to mount a counteroffensive. She mourned the death of her predecessor's family, and even invited the Lion commander who slew him, Matsu Turun, to the funeral. He refused.

Instead of revenge, Toriiko opted to prevent such tragedies from occurring again. Toriiko was convinced that the fault lay with her own family. They could not properly protect themselves and retain their focus to properly defend the Isawa and the Asako. Her idealistic solution was to create a family charged with the defense of the Shiba. In the year 821, her yojimbo Sodona was granted leave to create his own vassal family, a task which he greeted with enthusiasm.

Despite the idealism surrounding the family's creation, the Sodona in modern days are a much different family. The family balances a razor's edge between practicality and honor: their goal is to defend the Shiba from harm, but certain lines must not be crossed. The Sodona recognize that there are enemies in the shadows: from the Kolat (who the Sodona believe are still existent, but are not certain) to the Blood-speakers to the various bandits that have plagued the Empire since its foundation.

However helpful it may be, most Sodona adamantly refuse to enter the darkness to combat shadows. After all, if the Shiba remain safe at the cost of honor, there is little samurai left of them. Thus, the Sodona will attack a foe from behind in combat, engage in spying or guerrilla warfare, but not assassinate a potential threat in cold blood. They are not assassins. The real assassins of the Phoenix clan — the Sesai (see *Way of the Ninja*, page 8) — find the Sodona amusing. The Sodona are very close in purpose and deeds to the ninja family, but more acceptable to the public.

Most Sodona are assigned charges as yojimbo, leaving the family with a few who search for outside threats. The highest post that a Sodona can receive is that of yojimbo to the Shiba daimyo (at the moment, the Sodona recognize Shiba Aikune as the unofficial daimyo).

The Sodona have few permanent holdings. As dedicated guardians of the Shiba family, they go where the Shiba interests are.

OVERWATCH TOWER

Just across Drowned Merchant River, east of Iron Rings Cascade, stands Overwatch Tower. This wooden tower is little more than a spy post, watching for Dragon Clan troop movements.

The Sodona often set up towers or watch posts in areas of conflict, and alert the Shiba armies or other Sodona forces in the area. The Sodona are a small family (they currently number just under 400 adults, and more than 300 of those are active yojimbo), and do not engage large-scale threats on their own — that's what the Shiba armies are for.

SODONA'S GRAVE

Shiba Sodona committed seppuku just after he learned of Toriiko's death. His mausoleum, located in the outskirts of Shiro Shiba, is sacred to the Sodona. While Sodona has not returned to Rokugan via reincarnation, nor acted as shiryo to his descendants, those of his family who get the opportunity to pray at the shrine in his mausoleum often claim that they can feel his presence.

THE SODONA FAMILY

More often than not, a Sodona remains a fighter throughout his career. Those that multiclass tend to be ninja (though they of course do not call themselves that), rogues, and occasionally samurai.

Favored Class: Fighter

Starting Honor: 1

Class Skills: Battle

Starting Outfit:

1. Wakizashi, ashigaru armor

THE SODONA FAMILY

The vast majority of the Sodona attend the Shiba Bushi school.

Benefit: +1 Perception

Glory: 0.5

SHIBA MECHANICS NEW ANCESTORS

The Shiba are one of the most traditional samurai families in the Empire. They adhere as rigidly to bushido as any Lion or Crane, but choose to spend their lives in quiet contemplation of its tenets rather than make a blustery show. As true samurai should, the Shiba revere their ancestors. There are countless small, unobtrusive shrines scattered throughout their provinces, each devoted to a particular hero or family branch.

SHIBA KYO

An unknown hero of the Scorpion Clan Coup, Shiba Kyo is celebrated by a small number of Phoenix warriors who recognize his contributions to the clan. Kyo began life as a samurai from a very poor family. They wanted for little, for their lord ensured that the entire family was sheltered and fed, but they had little in the way of luxury items. Kyo spent his childhood hunting through the forest to supplement his family's meager belongings: his mother wove clothes from materials he would gather, and his father fletched arrows for the children to practice their kyujutsu. Kyo became a master at moving silently and remaining hidden at a young age.

Kyo's service to the Shiba family was unremarkable for most of his adult life. He served honorably and well, but without distinction. His unit was one of the first to arrive outside Otsan Uchi after the forces of Bayushi Shoju seized control of the city in the year 1123. When his commanding officer needed intelligence about what was going on inside, Kyo volunteered. He made several stealthy trips inside the city, gathering vital information about the Scorpion's defenses and troop movements. On his final mission, he returned to deliver last-minute information about the Scorpion moving their forces back toward the Forbidden City, then perished from his wounds.



Those who know of his life and his sacrifice revere Shiba Kyo as a paragon of duty. Kyo considered himself an extension of his lord's will, serving him as might a hand or pair of eyes. The spiritual descendants of Kyo strive only to prove equal to their ancestor's example.

KHARMIC VISION

PHOENIX ANCESTOR FEAT: SHIBA KYO

You may share rough perceptions with another individual close to you.

Clan: Phoenix

Benefit: Upon selecting this feat, you must declare another individual with whom you share a close bond. Ideally, this individual will be someone close to you, either a relative, your lord, or a childhood friend. Once per day, you may extend your perception to this individual for a number of rounds equal to your character level. This allows the other person to see and hear all that you see and hear, and it appears to them as a vision. This can be disruptive if they are involved in some activity, but can also impart vital information regarding your whereabouts or activities.

ANCESTOR: SHIBA KYO

(6 POINTS)

The descendants of Shiba Kyo share their ancestor's innate connection with others, and can extend their senses to that of another. Descendants of Kyo automatically gain the Kharmic Tie advantage at the 3 point level, although they may pay additional points to increase this value up to 5 points. Furthermore, the descendant may spend a Void Point to allow the individual with whom they are bonded to experience something of their circumstances. This may be done a number of times per day equal to their Insight Rank. The information gained by the other individual is not specific. For example, a descendant who is being attacked by bandits, has fallen into a ravine, or is being mauled by a tiger would all yield the same result: the bonded individual would get a sense that his friend was in danger.

SHIBA TETSU

A difficult, unhappy child, Shiba Tetsu was changed forever when he ran away from his teachers at the Shiba bushi school. Tetsu fled into Mori Isawa and disappeared. He was gone an entire night during the dead of winter, and no one expected him to survive. He did, however, and insisted that his survival was because of a beautiful snow maiden who saved him from certain death. For the remainder of his life, Tetsu was the perfect bushi, mastering every aspect of his training and devoting himself fully to his duties. In the years following the War of Spirits, Shiba Tetsu claimed that it was time for him to fulfill his destiny. He disappeared into the Mori Isawa and never returned. Some say that he met his fate by ending some great menace that dwelled within the forest. Others believe that he somehow stabilized the spirit portal within the woods, preventing a terrible rift between the realms and Ningen-do from developing. Still others suggest that both are true. None can say for certain.

Whatever his mortal fate, Shiba Tetsu now dwells within Yomi alongside his own ancestor Shiba Kaigen, the Realm of Blessed Ancestors. From there, his spirit looks over those who share his affinity for the spirit realms or his utter devotion to duty.

SPIRIT FRIEND

PHOENIX ANCESTOR FEAT: SHIBA

TETSU

You have a strong affinity for creatures of the Spirit Realms, who regard you as one of their own.

Clan: Phoenix

Benefit: No denizen of the Spirit Realms will ever begin an encounter as anything worse than Indifferent on the Initial NPC Attitude chart (see the *GAME MASTER'S Guide™*) unless you are openly hostile toward them or have had previous encounters with them. This applies to all creatures with the Outsider and Spirit subtypes except those who possess any degree of Shadowlands Taint.

ANCESTOR: SHIBA TETSU

(3 POINTS)

Denizens of the Spirit Realms are always positively predisposed toward the descendants of Shiba Tetsu. Such beings never begin an encounter hostile toward the character unless the character has wronged them in some way. In addition, the character gains three Free Raises per day that may be used in any social situation with denizens of the Spirit Realms. This includes creatures and beings from all the Spirit Realms except for Jigoku, Gaki-do, and Toshigoku.

SHIBA CHIKAI

Born to the third generation following Shiba's death, Shiba Chikai was famous for her absolute devotion to duty. Even among the Shiba, her discipline and compassion were legendary. She was offered positions of great rank and prestige on many occasions, but always declined, claiming that her only desire was to fulfill the duty her ancestor swore to the Isawa.

In time, Chikai's valor and selflessness gained her a position as yojimbo to the Master of Water, the most powerful man within the Phoenix Clan at that time. The Master was smitten with Chikai, but she rebuffed every advance. Eventually, he became antagonistic toward her, even verbally abusing her in public. Chikai endured her treatment stoically while continuing to fulfill her duties.

After years of faithful service, Shiba Chikai and the Master of Water were traveling from Kyuden Isawa to Otsan Uchi when they were attacked by a band of assassins. The Master was badly wounded, and Chikai sent him on while she stayed and delayed their attackers. The Master barely survived, healed by the herbalists of a nearby village, but Chikai did not. She perished in battle, taking all ten of the assassins with her into death. The Master of Water was so distraught over her death that he retired to a monastery shortly thereafter.

SELFLESS DEFENDER

PHOENIX ANCESTOR FEAT: SHIBA

CHIKAI

You may choose to sacrifice yourself in order to protect others.

Clan: Phoenix

Benefit: You may choose to lower your AC in order to increase an ally's AC by the same amount. The amount by which you may lower your AC may not exceed your maximum number of Void Points. If you do not possess the Void Use feat, then you may lower your AC by a maximum of 2 through the use of this feat. You must remain within 10 feet of your charge while using this feat.

ANCESTOR: SHIBA CHIKAI (6 POINTS)

Descendants of Shiba Chikai share her peerless devotion to those under their protection. When defending another, the descendant may roll and keep an additional number of dice equal to his Insight Rank on all Defense rolls.

THE SHIBA ARTISANS

While they have never received the same fame and acclaim as the artisans of the Kakita family, Shiba artisans still enjoy a reputation throughout the Empire as masters of the various civilized arts. Virtually every court within the Phoenix lands has at least one artisan in attendance to delight the guests, and courts among the other Great Clans often host such distinguished visitors as well.

Shiba artisans are well regarded by their family, for they serve as ambassadors to the courts of many other clans. Even though primarily a bushi family, the Shiba have a long tradition of introspection, and the development of the arts is considered a natural outgrowth of the family's devotion to peace and harmony.

Shiba Artisans are represented in the d20 System™ by the Artisan prestige class (see *Rokugan*™, pages 65–66). At 1st level and every odd-numbered level thereafter, an artisan may choose an artisan ability. Shiba artisans may select the following options rather than the standard abilities described on page 66 of *Rokugan* if they so choose.

- **Voice of the Ages** (Bard) — The gift of language is rare indeed among the samurai of Rokugan. Those few who possess it considered blessed by the Fortunes. Once per day, the artisan may use the bardic song ability as if he were a bard. His bard level is considered to be equal to his artisan level.
- **Image of Nature** (Painter) — Some particularly gifted artisans are able to capture the essence of nature's beauty. Their work inspires others with its harmony and serenity. Those who spend at least 10 minutes meditating upon the beauty of the painting gain an additional Void Point, even if they do not possess the Void Use feat. This Void Point must be spent within six hours or it is lost. The artisan must spend Void Points during the creation of this painting up to a maximum of twice his Insight Rank. This number is the maximum number of bonus Void Points anyone can gain from the painting during a single week.
- **Rezan's Spirit** (Poet) — An artisan versed in poetry and storytelling can evoke memories of ages gone by, with heroes, villains, triumphs and tragedies. If the artisan spends at least 10 minutes reciting his poem, he can confer a +1 morale bonus to all saving throws and to either attack or Charisma-based skill checks (artisan's choice) for the next six rounds. This ability may affect a number of targets of up to twice the artisan's class level.

SHIBA ARTISANS (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Any Shiba school, Rank 1

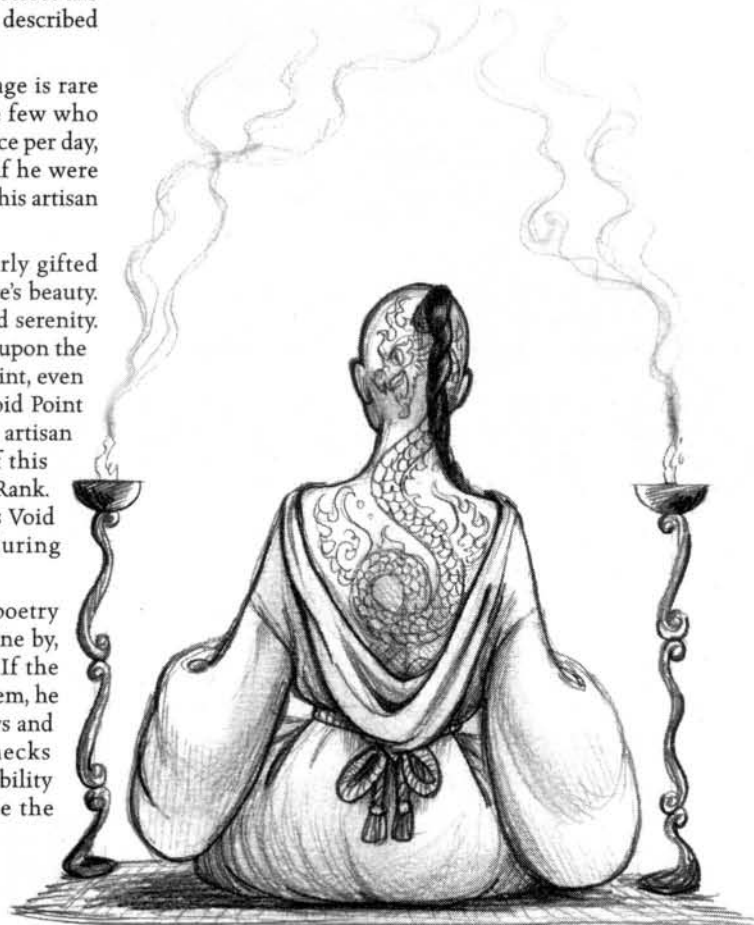
Path of Egress: Reenter the same school at Rank 2

Technique: The Spirit of Beauty — The Shiba artisans are less students of a formal school than they are a group of kindred spirits who have tapped into a shared inner gift. Shiba artisans may add twice their Void Ring to all Artisan skill rolls. The effects of any Void Points spent on Artisan skill rolls are doubled (rolling and keeping two additional dice instead of one).

THE ORDER OF CHIKAI

One of the oldest and most prestigious institutions within the Shiba family, the Order of Chikai is an elite cadre of hand-selected bushi who serve primarily as yojimbo for the Elemental Masters of the Isawa family. Founded after the tragic death of Shiba Chikai, this august group takes its name from that most revered of warriors and has continued in her tradition for centuries.

Although the Order of Chikai regards its primary duty as the protection of the Elemental Masters, that is not their only task. They are limited in what they can accomplish, however,



as there are never more than three dozen members at any one time, and fully one-third of that number are in training. Each member of the Order must locate and train a suitable replacement should he fall in battle. Being selected as the student of a member of the Order is an honor that can elevate the status of a bushi's entire family. Once selected, a bushi serves his master loyally until the master's death, at which point the bushi takes his own student and becomes the master.

At any given time one master-student pair from the Order of Chikai protects each of the Elemental Masters in addition to the Master's own yojimbo. Additionally, one pair is assigned to the daimyo of each of the other Phoenix families, and a pair to each of the families' ancestral estates. The remaining twelve members are responsible for determining when a member of the Order is capable of taking on a student and when members are ready to retire from active duty. These other members can also be called upon to serve as yojimbo for particularly important guests to the Phoenix lands or other such duties.

Obviously, there are hundreds or even thousands of bushi in every generation who aspire to the Order of Chikai but are never chosen. The Shiba yojimbo school arose from the training styles of those who strove to emulate the Order's fighting style and methodology. Despite the school's somewhat derivative origins, even the Order of Chikai recognizes the school as an excellent training ground for potential members and has become an essential part of any member's training.

THE ORDER OF CHIKAI (PRESTIGE CLASS)

Members of the Order of Chikai are handpicked from the very finest soldiers and yojimbo within the ranks of the Phoenix Clan. The Order provides yojimbo for the most important and valued members of the clan and for guests of great importance.

Hit Die: d12.

REQUIREMENTS

Family: Shiba.

Base Attack Bonus: +12.

Skills: Sense Motive (8 ranks), Spot (8 ranks).

Feats: Depths of the Void, Void Use, any three Phoenix technique feats.

Special: Must be honorable, must be chosen by an existing member of the Order, must possess the Ancestral Daisho class ability.

CLASS SKILLS

The Order of Chikai's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Battle (Wis), Diplomacy (Cha), Iaijutsu Focus (Cha), Intimidation (Cha or Str), Listen (Wis), Sense Motive (Cha), Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

TABLE 4-1: THE ORDER OF CHIKAI

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+0	+2	+2	My Life First, In Fulfillment of My Duty
2nd	+2	+1	+3	+3	Bonus Feat
3rd	+3	+1	+3	+3	In Fulfillment of My Duty
4th	+4	+1	+4	+4	Bonus Feat
5th	+5	+2	+4	+4	In Fulfillment of My Duty

CLASS FEATURES

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Members of the Order of Chikai retain all proficiencies from previous classes. If they do not already possess them, they gain proficiency in all simple and martial weapons as well as in light and medium armor.

My Life First: Members of the Order of Chikai are trained to think first of their charges and then of themselves. Any opponent who moves into the member's charge's threatened area immediately provokes an attack of opportunity from the member. This does not count as the member's single attack of opportunity for the round. This may only be done if the member is within 10 feet of his charge, and this does not provoke attacks of opportunity from other opponents.

In Fulfillment of My Duty: None who threaten the charge of a member of the Order of Chikai may live. When facing opponents who pose a threat to their charge, members of the Order may add their Honor to all damage rolls. This bonus increases to twice the member's Honor at the 3rd level, and to three times the member's Honor at the 5th level.

Bonus Feat: At the 2nd and 4th levels, members of the Order of Chikai gain a bonus feat exactly as do members of the samurai class. This feat may be any that would normally be available to a samurai when selecting one of their bonus feats.

THE ORDER OF CHIKAI (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 6

Path of Entry: Shiba Bushi 5 or Shiba Yojimbo 5

Path of Egress: Shiba Bushi 1 or Shiba Yojimbo 1 (must enter the other school)

Technique: None Shall Pass — Those worthy of the Order of Chikai carry the speed and certainty of the righteous. At the beginning of a combat round, the samurai may spend a Void Point to exchange his TN to Be Hit with that of an ally within ten feet. The target must be within ten feet at the beginning of the round, but does not have to remain within ten feet during the course of the round. In addition, the samurai may choose one individual to protect each round. This must be declared before initiative is rolled. By spending a Void Point, the samurai may negate one attack made against his charge that round. Multiple Void Points may be spent per round in this manner. The samurai's charge must remain within ten feet at all times for this to take effect, and the samurai may take any standard action (attack, full attack, full defense) in addition to his declaration of this Technique in a standard round.

CHAPTER FIVE:

GISEI TOSHI



The Tribe of Isawa founded Gisei Toshi, the oldest city in Rokugan, before the Kami's fall. It was the first home of the Elemental Council of Masters after Isawa's death and was the site where Shiba knelt before Isawa to ally with his family. Because of Shiba's selfless act, the city was named Gisei Toshi, the City of Sacrifice. In typically arcane Isawa style, it was called the City of Sacrifice even before Shiba visited, for Isawa always knew that one day Shiba would sacrifice his pride there.

In the year 234 the Last Wish destroyed a swath of Gisei Toshi, and in an effort to conceal their magical research from their Asako rivals, the Isawa allowed the Empire to think the city destroyed. In truth, Gisei Toshi was rebuilt and concealed by a carefully woven illusion. Those who enter the valley see nothing while outside the city walls. Long before entering, harsh weather and the terrifying whispers of restless spirits sap the will of those without the Isawa family's blessing. Those who seek to invade Gisei Toshi often die or turn back in terror.

Likewise, the peasants and Shiba samurai who dwell in the valley are forbidden to leave, and even most Isawa cannot exit without the Masters' permission. Those who leave without permission are subject to terrible curses if they attempt to reveal the city's location. Fortunately the valley is self-sufficient, with the resources not available naturally supplied by its inhabitants' powerful magic.

Gisei Toshi's existence is known only to the eldest and most powerful Isawa. This includes all Isawa members of the Elemental Council, but excludes Elemental Masters who are not Isawa. Shiba Ningen, for example, has not been told of Gisei Toshi's existence, though his powers as Master

of the Void allowed him to detect it many years ago. Ningen keeps up the pretense of ignorance so as not to insult the Isawa.

Though the Isawa's power rests primarily in Kyuden Isawa, many secrets of that mystic family remain within Gisei Toshi. Since the Phoenix Clan's founding, the Isawa have brought all manner of spell scrolls, nemuranai, and other strange objects to Gisei Toshi for study and safekeeping. The nature of this collection varies wildly, but all items here share one common thread — the Isawa consider them far too dangerous to be allowed into any other hands. Possibly the only exception to this rule was Isawa's Last Wish, an artifact perceived as too powerful to risk even in Gisei Toshi.

The continued existence of Gisei Toshi is unknown to those outside the Isawa family. Though many Phoenix suspect the city is not simply a myth, they believe the Isawa keep it a secret from the Empire due to its holy nature. The City of Sacrifice houses Rokugan's oldest temples to the Seven Fortunes, treasures whose loss would be devastating. Though many nobles from all the Phoenix families are invited to retire to the Seven Temples within Gisei Toshi once they are of age, most of them never realize the dangerous powers that are stored there.

Though the Isawa are by nature pacifists, they make a notable exception in the case of Gisei Toshi's secrecy. Considerable effort, both mundane and mystical, goes toward ensuring none stumble across the ancient city, but nothing in this mortal world is guaranteed. Should outsiders enter the City of Sacrifice by accident, they are given a simple choice — live in harmony within the walls

of Gisei Toshi for the rest of their lives, or join their ancestors in Yomi. Patrols around and in Gisei Toshi are meant as much to keep people in as to keep them out, for the magical defenses, while formidable, are not completely infallible. Those leaving the city without proper authorization or under any suspicious circumstances are always forcefully returned until the matter is settled. If they resist, they are destroyed.

USING GISEI TOSHI IN AN ADVENTURE

Putting the City of Sacrifice into your campaign should affect the story and characters significantly. Even if they are Phoenix, only the Elemental Council's most trusted agents may know what truly lies within the Seven Temples. Having such knowledge is both a serious burden and a great advantage.

- Should the characters be from the Phoenix Clan, they may be given the responsibility of transporting a dangerous artifact to the Seven Temples. Alternately, the party could be charged with taking something from the Temples to be destroyed in some unique fashion.
- More likely, the group contains non-Phoenix characters. In this case, only the Phoenix characters are given the sensitive information and allowed to see the city. They are expected to guide the party to and from the Phoenix provinces and as close to the city as Mori Isawa. Phoenix characters are expected to ensure the other party members learn as little as possible.
- It is entirely possible for the characters to "stumble" upon the city. In this case, they become prisoners within Gisei Toshi and will probably wish to find some way out.
- If the party serves a particularly clever or powerful daimyo, they could be dispatched to confirm or deny the existence of Gisei Toshi with their own eyes. Some who hear the myth of Gisei Toshi are not content to believe that the place does not exist and will seek the truth.

HOW TO USE THIS INFORMATION

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

PHOENIX FORCES

Though many patrols guard the way to and from the city, they largely disregard the Seven Temples area. Should the need for armed conflict arise, the monks of the Seven Temples and nearby Shiba bushi are on call to lend their aid. Though the monks are surprisingly adept at combat and the Shiba's expertise is not to be ignored, the true threat to outsiders comes from the area's powerful shugenja. Several talented and

experienced shugenja live here and the Elemental Masters frequently visit the grounds. At any given time, at least ten combat-ready monks and a unit of twelve Shiba bushi will be ready to engage any opponents in the Seven Temples within three combat rounds.

THE ENTRANCE AND CENTER

At a Glance: The low wall that surrounds the grounds of the Seven Temples has a single entrance on its south side. There are usually at least four ceremonial Shiba guards on duty at any given time. There are no towers, defensible walls (the existing wall is three feet tall), or other fortifications guarding the area. The Shiba and Isawa agree that if an intruder could penetrate this far into the city, every capable guardian would already have been slaughtered or captured. The road that leads to the temples' center is a simple dirt path varying from ten to six feet wide along its length. Traffic along this path is light, as the Seven Temples rarely receive visitors aside from the Elemental Masters.

The Center: The entrance path ends in a large circular dirt cul-de-sac. The ground is often littered with the remains of offerings placed at the feet of the large statues depicting the Seven Fortunes that encircle the area. The Phoenix do not bother cleaning up the scraps, as they believe the Fortunes direct the winds to blow away unworthy offerings. The Phoenix do not wish to interfere with the treatment the Fortunes give their offerings, and the statues do indeed generally keep tidy.

Non-residents who have come to worship inside the temples undergo a ritual of purification here before being allowed inside. The Phoenix monks "cleanse" the visitor's soul by casting several spells (also designed to ensure the visitor is not the target of scrying magics or a threat to security). Those deemed acceptable are allowed into the temples' front chambers. Lengthier and more complex rituals detain those who are not, while other monks fetch appropriate means to deal with the intruder.

The Statues: Among the most ancient stone structures in the Empire, these seven statues represent the Seven Fortunes and were crafted by Isawa and his followers. These statues were carved from the natural rock found in the area using no other tool than magic. They are about three times the height of a person and of varying sizes. The years' passing has left no mark on them, although the Phoenix have taken no action to preserve them. When they were crafted, all seven faced east towards the rising sun. However, one morning when the monks arose for their duties, the statue of Bishamon had turned to face to the southwest. Outraged that someone would defile their holy statues, the monks returned the figure to its original orientation only to find it turned once again to the southwest the next morning. This time the statue's eyes were angry. When wise Isawa realized the phenomenon coincided with the corruption of Fu Leng, the tribe understood the meaning; Bishamon intended to protect the city from the Shadowlands. On the day Shiba came to Isawa for aid, it is said that Isawa's initial refusal resulted in the statue's angry eyes turning downward to gaze disapprovingly at the tribe's leader. Though Shiba's act of selflessness eventually led Isawa to agree to join the Seven Thunders, Bishamon's dark glare encouraged Isawa's decision.

THE TEMPLES

At a Glance: The seven oldest holy structures in Rokugan stand in an inward-facing circle. Each stone temple is decorated in a manner appropriate to its Fortune, though most exterior designs have been worn away with time. The Phoenix do nothing to restore a temple's exterior, as they believe it would disrupt the building's harmony. The Fortunes have shown no disfavor to this practice, and the buildings remain tidy without maintenance.

The temples are generally split into three areas — sleeping quarters for the monks, a front chamber for worship and meditation, and the back chamber that houses the artifacts the Phoenix have decided to hide from the Empire. Trespassers imprisoned in Gisei Toshi are kept in sleeping quarters with the monks until they are deemed trustworthy enough to release into the city.

Other than the prisoners (of which there are at least a dozen at any time) all the residents of the Seven Temples are trusted with the temples' secrets. Residents are asked to avoid the large vaulted rooms in the rear of the temple, and that is almost always enough to keep them out. Prisoners are warned once — those foolish enough to show excessive curiosity encounter the Isawa's wards and are rendered unconscious (or worse) long before they find the nemuranai storerooms.

While the temples are historically and religiously significant, characters visiting the area will probably not be on their way to becoming retired residents of the Seven Temples. Though the holy site's importance should not be downplayed, what will more likely have a lasting effect on a campaign is the temples' contents. As the years have passed, the secrecy of Gisei Toshi has made it a perfect repository for things the Phoenix have deemed too dangerous for the Empire but too important to destroy. Within the past five or six generations, it has also evolved into a repository of failed experiments conducted by the Elemental Masters or other powerful figures within the Phoenix.

THE TEMPLE OF EBISU

The northernmost temple is dedicated to the Fortune of Honest Work. Ebisu is possibly the least venerated Fortune among the samurai caste because the samurai caste do not perform labor as such, but he is adored by the much larger peasant population. The monks of this temple are mostly former ashigaru that showed a talent for the Tao's mysteries.

Yajinden's Scrolls

Perhaps the most infamous of Iuchiban's servants was the dread artificer Asahina Yajinden. His perversion of the Crane's crafting skills using the blood magic of *maho* created the powerful Bloodswords as well as other dark artifacts that plague the Empire to this day. Like many shugenja, the scholarly Yajinden kept meticulous notes. These scrolls were thought destroyed in the battle that laid Iuchiban low the first time, but they were instead collected by the Elemental Council and brought to Gisei Toshi. They have remained in the Temple of Ebisu for centuries as the Isawa have sought to undo the Bloodswords' influence. To this day, none have had the bravado or recklessness to study the scrolls for more than a week before refusing to go further.

Yajinden's scrolls may be used as *ofuda* for all known *maho* spells. When used in this manner, the shugenja is considered two caster levels higher for casting the spell. Each time the scrolls are used in this way, the shugenja

gains 2 additional points of Shadowlands Taint. The scrolls also give a +10 circumstance bonus to Knowledge (Maho) skill checks when used as reference. When used as research tools for crafting magical items, the experience cost is reduced by 25%, but the Shadowlands Taint marks the item and will affect the item's final function in a way left in the hands of the DM.

Yajinden's Scrolls contain almost every known *maho* spell and may be used to cast such spells (if the caster may normally do so). If the scrolls are used to cast a *maho* spell the caster has memorized as an innate ability, the scrolls grant one Free Raise in addition to the one granted normally. Each time the scrolls are used in this way, the shugenja gains 2 additional points of Shadowlands Taint. The scrolls also grant two Free Raises on any Lore, History, or Spell Research skill roll related to *maho*. They could conceivably be used to aid in creating magical artifacts as Yajinden once did, but any resulting items will be irrevocably Tainted.

THE TEMPLE OF HOTEI

Hotei's temple is the humblest of the Seven Temples. The Fortune of Contentment has a great many visitors, as the ability to be completely at peace with one's place in the Celestial Order is an avidly sought virtue.

Gusai

One of the more unsettling "pieces" of Gisei Toshi's collection is the preserved corpse of Gusai, the infamous Mantis Champion and assassin. Executed by the Hantei as the result of a duel of wits hundreds of years ago, Gusai returned through Oblivion's Gate and served in the elite squad known as the Heroes of Rokugan during the war against Hantei XVI's spirit armies. Maddened by centuries in Toshigoku, Gusai's ambition and thirst for power made him the Lying Darkness's willing pawn, and the returned Mantis Champion began to assassinate his fellow Heroes. Eventually Gusai set his sights on Hantei Naseru but was foiled by the efforts of a group of magistrates led by Miya Shoin and Agasha Chieh. Once Gusai was defeated, Chieh's masters among the Phoenix, confused by the reappearance of Darkness Spawn years after the War Against the Shadow, brought Gusai's remains to Gisei Toshi for study. The body of a returned spirit corrupted by the Darkness's touch has proven an extraordinarily interesting subject for research. Isawa Hochiu spends much time in contemplation of it, wondering if his enemy, the Lying Darkness, might yet live.

OTHER ITEMS

Some other items hidden away in the depths of Gisei Toshi include:

- The sword "Hunger," forged by Togashi Nyoko.
- A bronze lantern from the Burning Sands, taken from the Scorpion.
- The white pearl that imprisons Kuni Yori and Iuchi Karasu.
- The Bloodsword "Ambition," and the skull of Sanzo, the ronin who last wielded it.

THE TEMPLE OF DAIKOKU

Naturally, Daikoku's temple is the most splendid on the grounds and attracts a number of petitioners. There are many monks tending to Daikoku's Temple, as the temple constantly receives various kinds of tribute to the Fortune of Wealth.

Iuchi Karasu's Sai and Mask

A legendary figure from the Clan War and the War Against the Darkness, Iuchi Karasu was among the most powerful shugenja the Iuchi family had ever produced. Karasu's fate was tied to that of Kuni Yori, and the two indirectly clashed after Yori's corruption during both conflicts. Near the end of Rokugan's fight against the Lying Darkness, Karasu hunted down Yori and aided the Naga in imprisoning the maho-tsukai's essence in a pure white pearl. Karasu was trapped in the pearl as well, though the shugenja's favored weapons and steel mask were left behind. The Isawa have kept the items, believing they contain a bit of Karasu's spirit and thus a way to free him from the pearl while keeping Yori trapped. So far, the Phoenix have had no success.

Iuchi Karasu's sai are +3 *flaming burst sai* that may be used to cast *teleport without error* up to twice a day when the character spends a Void Point. The mask functions as a *ring of wizardry*, doubling the wearer's first- through third-level spells.

Iuchi Karasu's sai are surrounded by an aura of fire that give them an additional 2k1 to damage rolls. Twice per day, if the character is a shugenja, the bearer may spend a Void Point to use the sai to cast *Walking the Way* with no chance of failure. The mask grants the wearer two Free Raises for the purposes of spellcasting, and an extra spell slot per day in each element.

THE TEMPLE OF BENTEN

The Temple of Benten stands on the temples' westernmost edge and catches the last rays of sunlight every dusk. It is said that an honorable man or woman can see the silhouette of their future spouse in the shadow cast by the last moments of light before Lord Sun disappears on the west horizon each night. Benten's temple has a steady stream of visitors, though never many at once. Master of Earth Isawa Taeruko spends a great deal of time here, praying for the souls of her departed husband and daughter.

Shiba's Shadow

After the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the Phoenix were faced with an obvious problem: the Phoenix ancestral sword, Ofushikai, had been cast away by Lady Sun. Since the soul served as an anchor for the Soul of Shiba and was integral in the Phoenix Champion's succession, the Isawa began working immediately with the Agasha in an attempt to remake the sword. The blade known as Shiba's Shadow is the closest the Phoenix came to success — but it is still a far cry from their goal. Shiba's Shadow is a cursed sword, slowly drawing the soul from its wielder and trapping it. So far, three Shiba bushi's souls are imprisoned within the blade, and the Isawa are at a loss. They do not know how to free the souls, and the Elemental Council is convinced that destroying the thing will also destroy the spirits trapped in it.

Shiba's Shadow is a +2 *lawful keen katana*. When held, the wielder must make a Will save at a DC 15 each time he kills an opponent, +2 with each additional kill. Failure means the user dies and his soul is trapped within the blade. (*Raise dead*, *resurrection*, and *kharma* cannot restore him to life; a way must be found to unmake the cursed sword first.)

Shiba's Shadow is a fine quality katana that rolls and keeps an extra die on all attack and damage rolls. Each time a character kills an opponent, he must make a simple Willpower roll at a TN of 10 or die, his soul becoming trapped within the blade. The TN increases by 5 for each additional kill. (The *Kharma* spell will not reincarnate the character until the sword has been unmade.)

THE TEMPLE OF FUKUROKUJIN

The Fortune of Wisdom is revered throughout the Phoenix lands and those who know of Gisei Toshi visit this temple at least once in their lives if they can. Fukurokujin's temple is in a severely traditional style; many Phoenix temples are modeled after it, and the other clans in turn modeled their early temples after the Phoenix. This temple has essentially become the template for all others in the Empire.

Flying Carpet

A relic purchased from the Yobanjin, this mystic carpet originated in the far-away city of Medinaat-al-Salaam. If Yobanjin reports are to be believed, the spellcasting "sahir" of that city regularly use these flying scraps of fabric to move from place to place. Though the carpet is as soft and supple as any carpet when inactive (and quite beautiful as well) it becomes firm enough to support a rider when the command word is spoken, carrying him swiftly through the air by mental direction.

The flying carpet is the 4 ft. × 6 ft. *carpet of flying* described in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*. These items are not normally created in Rokugan.

The flying carpet can fit up to two average-sized humans and fly below cloud level in the sky. The item covers distance as if its *Water Ring* were 15 and can fly for up to six hours. It must then remain inactive for 6 hours to be used again. If the carpet is aloft after six hours of use, it slowly and safely begins a descent straight down.

THE TEMPLE OF JUROJIN

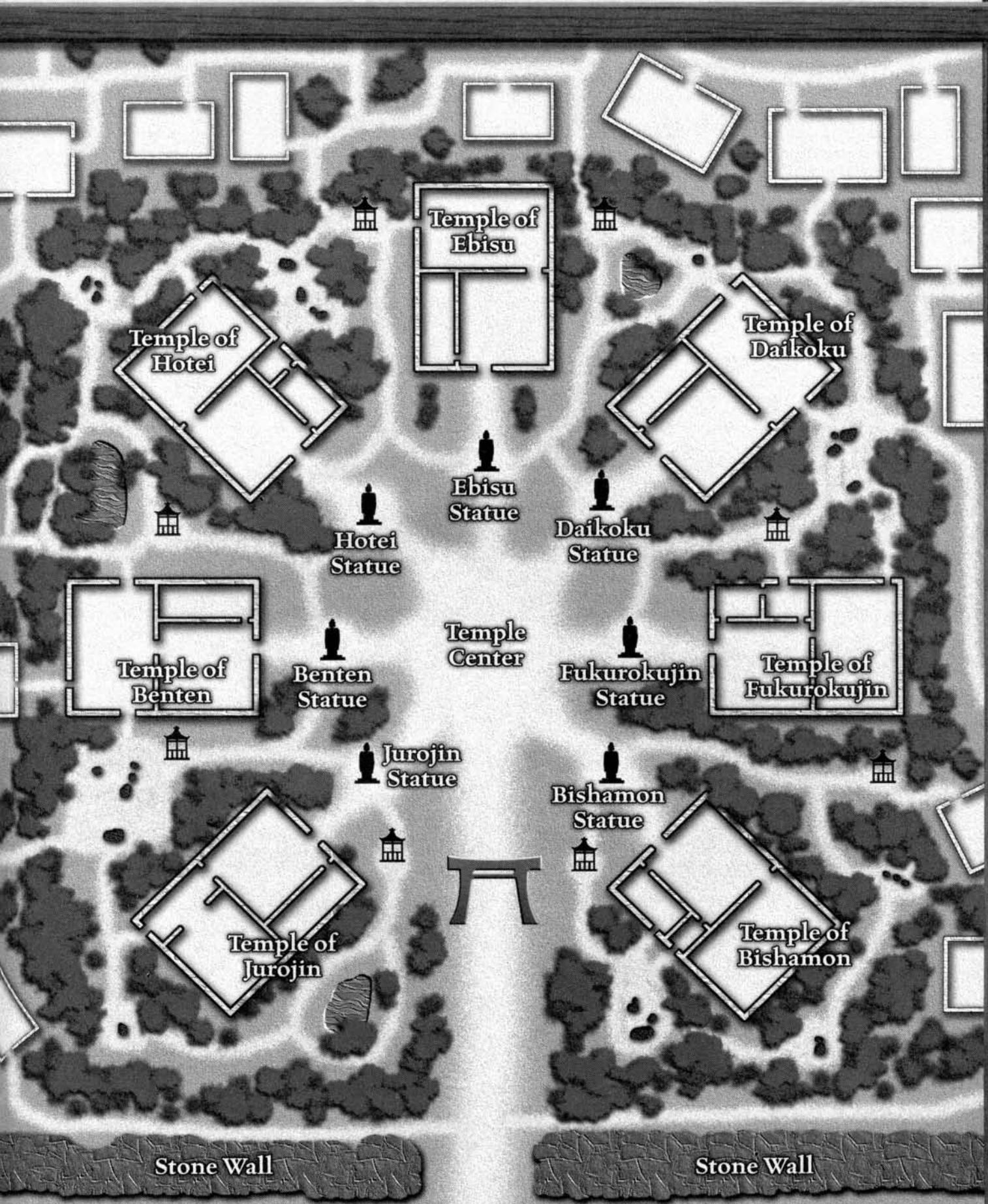
Next to Fukurokujin, Jurojin is the Fortune most revered by the Phoenix. As a clan of pacifists, the Phoenix greatly respect the Fortune of Longevity. This temple contains the greatest number of monks. It also serves as a hospital for the city, as the monks and shugenja who dwell here are quite talented at healing.

Isawa Morihono's Cipher Scrolls

Isawa Morihono was the Master of Air over three hundred years ago and a prime practitioner of the infighting that plagues the Phoenix clan. Though the Isawa had long suspected the Asako of concealing some great secret from them, there was little the shugenja family could do to learn of it. The greatest fruit of their labor at the time was little more

0 5 10 20
Scale in Feet

GISEI TOSHI



Temple of Hotei

Temple of Ebisu

Temple of Daikoku

Hotei Statue

Ebisu Statue

Daikoku Statue

Temple of Benten

Temple Center

Fukurokujin Statue

Temple of Fukurokujin

Benten Statue

Jurojin Statue

Bishamon Statue

Temple of Jurojin

Temple of Bishamon

Stone Wall

Stone Wall

than a small collection of scrolls written in a strange language defying translation. Morihono dedicated his time to the task of learning the Asako's cipher and attempted to develop magical aids to assist him in doing so. Though Morihono never achieved his goal before he died of old age, he created these "cipher scrolls" that could translate anything laid on top of them. The Isawa quietly destroyed any trace of his research and left the scrolls hidden in Gisei Toshi. The Elemental Council feared what the scrolls could do in the hands of a clan like the Scorpion, but were loath to destroy such objects of obvious use.

Incidentally, they do not work on anything written in the Asako cipher, though they work on most anything else.

Isawa Morihono's cipher scrolls are used by unrolling them and placing text on the blank scrolls. The Scrolls' user then spends a Void Point to activate them. The text shifts and is revealed as if *read magic*, *comprehend languages*, and *true seeing* had been cast on the viewer, applying only to the text. The Asako family cipher is unaffected by this item.

Isawa Morihono's Cipher Scrolls are used by unrolling them and placing text on the blank scrolls. The Scrolls' user then spends a Void Point to activate them. The text shifts and is revealed in plain form to the user — unknown scripts become easily readable to the user, hidden meanings or secret code are translated clearly, and any invisible script on the text becomes visible. The Asako family cipher is unaffected by this item.

THE TEMPLE OF BISHAMON

The Fortune of Strength is not popular with non-Shiba Phoenix, as they value wisdom over force. However, Bishamon represents many forms of strength, and often the Isawa associate strength of will and a dedication to honor with Bishamon. Phoenix shugenja who study earth magic or ways to combat the Shadowlands come here at least once to seek Bishamon's guidance. The shrine is also popular due to legends about the statue that moved to face the Shadowlands, a tale which has given Bishamon his reputation as the protector of Gisei Toshi.

WHAT ELSE IS THERE?

Though the following descriptions give lists of major artifacts found within Gisei Toshi, GMs are encouraged to expand upon what the players find here. Adding items with a close connection to the characters is encouraged and will tie the lost city more closely to the campaign. Items do not need to be as powerful or threatening as the ones presented here, though they should be as interesting as they are dangerous. If the Isawa do not have a reason to keep an item instead of destroying it, it will not be found in Gisei Toshi.

The Black Scrolls

Bishamon's temple contains the most dangerous artifacts the Phoenix possess — two Black Scrolls, the spells used to bind the soul of Fu Leng for a thousand years. They are corruptive sources of *maho* and the Isawa have always considered themselves better guardians for these scrolls than the Scorpion, whom Hantei originally entrusted with the scrolls. During the period between the Clan War and the defeat of Hantei XVI's spirit armies, the Phoenix managed to locate and acquire two of the scrolls even though the Scorpion declared them destroyed.

The two scrolls within the Temple of Bishamon are the Doom of Fu Leng and the Walking Horror of Fu Leng, the latter having been acquired in recent months by Isawa Masaaki. Isawa lore records that the scrolls were once twelve pure spells of unequalled power developed by Isawa himself, but which became corrupted after Isawa used them to bind Fu Leng's spirit. Though the Black Scrolls proved impossible to control during the Clan War, the Elemental Council believe that with the death of Fu Leng's mortal form, their direct tie to Jigoku has been broken. Now there is a chance, albeit slim, that they might be purified to their original state.

Isawa Masaaki has been allowed to study the Walking Horror of Fu Leng scroll in an attempt to purify it, and through sheer prowess and determination he has rid it of obvious Taint and corruptive power. Masaaki's breakthrough encourages the Council, though they are wary due to their clan's history with the scrolls. For now, they watch Masaaki and have not informed him that they possess another Black Scroll. Without knowing it, Masaaki has become an experiment rather than a researcher.

Mechanically, the Walking Horror of Fu Leng has greatly changed. The scroll seems blank and no longer casts a spell, but carrying it increases one's magical potential. Only time will tell whether an item so deeply touched by the power of a dark god can truly be cleansed.

A shugenja who carries the purified Walking Horror of Fu Leng has his effective caster level increased by three, gains spell resistance 20, and gains an additional spell slot on 1st through 3rd level. This does not grant spell slots on a level the shugenja cannot normally cast.

A shugenja who carries the purified Walking Horror of Fu Leng gains three Free Raises when casting spells. All harmful spells targeting him have their TN increased by 15. This is cumulative with the Magic Resistance Advantage.

THE GARDENS

At a Glance: The gardens surround the entire temple grounds, and even stand between several temples. Made of both thick bushes and scattered sand gardens, they offer serenity outside the temples to those that prefer the open air. They also make a "quick escape" from the area practically impossible, as they are difficult to navigate quickly without causing a loud clatter. Monks and shugenja tend the plants and sand here throughout the day, seeking a quiet solace far from the Empire. Prisoners of the temples are rarely allowed to wander the gardens, and never without supervision.

CHAPTER SIX:

BEHIND THE VEIL

ISAWA'S
LAST WISH

At the dawn of the Empire, the shugenja Isawa undertook a monumental task. Isawa believed that the difference between humans and kami was only one of perception, and that with effort humans — even those without the gifts of shugenja — could communicate with the kami. Along with the greatest shugenja of the young Phoenix Clan, Isawa determined to create a magical construct that would allow humans and kami to understand one another. He intended to give this artifact to his daughter Akiko and her betrothed, Asako Sagoten, as a blessing upon their marriage. Sagoten and Akiko helped Isawa in his research, as did Sagoten's father, Asako Yogo, and many other talented Phoenix shugenja.

Though the task was difficult, the magical construct Isawa's shugenja created performed beyond any of their expectations. They built an intelligent matrix of magical power, an entity that could communicate with both humans and elemental spirits. Though some of the shugenja involved in the research feared the power they had created, Isawa was no fool. He demanded that they work slowly, cautiously. As a failsafe, the construct was rendered incapable of communicating with kami — and thus unable to use magic — without the aid of a human shugenja.

The first time Isawa attempted to use the construct, he found it curious and eager to please. Using only a fraction of its power, it transformed a wall of Isawa's temple into butterflies, and then set the butterflies on fire. The second time Isawa used it, the construct caused a mountain to erupt in the heart of Lion territory, hundreds of miles away. (This mountain is now known by the Lion Clan as Lookout Mountain, near L6 on the Rokugan™ map.) Simultaneously, an island off the coast near Kyuden Isawa sank beneath the waves, carrying with it the Coral Palace (then a minor fortress of the Phoenix).

When the cursed Asako Yogo left the Phoenix to join the Scorpion, work on the Last Wish slowed dramatically. Yogo had been the most talented shugenja working on the construct aside from Isawa himself, and his loss was demoralizing. When Isawa did not return from the Day of Thunder, work on the Last Wish halted altogether. The Asako and Isawa families fell to fighting among themselves over who had the right to complete Isawa's masterpiece. Akiko called off her marriage to Sagoten after one of his cousins killed an Isawa in a duel erupting from an argument over the Wish. Finally, Hantei Genji himself intervened. Both Sagoten and Akiko cautioned him against destroying the Last Wish, as neither knew a way to do so safely. Genji commanded that the Last Wish never be completed and Isawa's notes destroyed. As only shugenja could use the incomplete Last Wish, it would be given to the Shiba family to prevent its use.

Decades later, Asako Sagoten proved Genji's fears to be well founded when he attempted to use the incomplete Last Wish to make Akiko love him once more. The resulting

catastrophe killed Sagoten, Akiko, and many others and destroyed Isawa's original castle. The Shiba recovered the Last Wish soon afterward and hid it more carefully.

For centuries the Last Wish lay unused. Without human contact, the intelligent construct slowly began to go insane. It clung desperately to the lessons of its creator, Isawa, who had always impressed the importance of mercy and selflessness upon the construct. Occasionally ambitious shugenja would learn of the Wish and attempt to use its power. These attempts always ended badly, with the user destroying himself and occasionally causing massive destruction as well. Always the Shiba came to pick up the pieces, and hide the Wish again.

During the War of Spirits, Hantei XVI's forces attempted to coerce the returned spirit of Asako Sagoten to find and complete Isawa's Last Wish. Sagoten refused, escaped the Steel Chrysanthemum's custody, and fled to warn the guardians of the Last Wish. As one of its creators, not to mention one of the most powerful shugenja in history, he could sense the Wish's location unerringly. The Hantei, who had allowed Sagoten to escape to find the Wish, dispatched his own shugenja to follow.

Sagoten used the Wish one final time, but this time he did so without selfish intent. He used the Wish to create Void spirits he called the Children of the Last Wish that would protect the artifact from improper use. Having done so, he committed seppuku rather than be used as a tool to complete the Wish. When the Hantei's shugenja arrived, the Children destroyed them.

With the Children as its eyes and ears, the lonely Last Wish slowly emerged from the depths of insanity. It also began to understand its own power, and soon had developed to the point that non-shugenja could draw upon it. When the Last Wish heard of the terrible war that had erupted between Phoenix and Dragon, it was consumed with an overwhelming need to help the clan of its creator. It dispatched the Children to find someone worthy to wield it, but they could find no one.

As fate would have it, Shiba Aikune found the Last Wish instead. Though Aikune is brash, proud, and selfish, his desire to use the Last Wish was pure and selfless. Thus, he could use the construct to drive the Dragon back from Phoenix lands and fortify their position through the winter. The Last Wish feels that it has much in common with Aikune. Both were beings of limitless potential that were cast aside and forgotten. Both have a strong desire to aid their "families," but often end up responsible for the deaths of those they love. Both are viewed as dangerous despite their desire to serve the Empire. For the moment, Shiba Aikune and Isawa's Last Wish are the perfect match, though it remains to be seen whether or not that match will ultimately help or harm the Phoenix Clan.

MECHANICS

In its dormant form, Isawa's Last Wish resembles a spinning globe of light. The sphere's interior is a complex latticework of magical energy, which can be seen upon a close inspection. The sphere is weightless, and hovers in midair wherever it was last released. When touched by a mortal, it takes a shape most appropriate to who that person is and an appearance appropriate to how that individual intends to use the Wish. (In Isawa's hands, it remained a perfect sphere of energy.) Many different results are possible, but a few of the different possibilities are listed here:

Form	Meaning
Chrysanthemum	Person of Imperial Blood
Gem	Merchant, seeker of wealth
Hammer and Chisel	Creator or artist
Katana	Warrior
Knife	Criminal, murderer
Quill	Scholar, historian
Tessen	General, leader
Torch	Teacher

Appearance	Meaning
Bloody	Intends to use the Wish for vengeance
Flaming	Intends to use the Wish against an enemy
Clay, glass,	Weak-willed or uncertain about or fragile material what to do
Golden	Intends to use the Wish as a tool of creation
Jade	Intends to use the Wish against the Shadowlands
Obsidian	Intends to use the Wish as a tool of corruption

The Last Wish seems to be entirely indestructible. Sagoten and Akiko once thought that there might be a way to destroy it, but both feared that to do so would be more dangerous than any destruction the Wish could unleash. Some members of the Dragon Clan believe that the Yobanjin, whose magic is very similar to Isawa's, may hold the secrets of destroying the Last Wish.

MAJOR ABILITIES ID201

The Last Wish has three major abilities, all of which demand some consideration by the DM.

First, upon taking a form, the Last Wish gains the abilities of any single magic item worth 200,000 gp or less. Once this is determined, it will not change for that individual unless their reasons for using the Last Wish change dramatically. If the Last Wish becomes an item with a limited number of uses, its powers are recharged once per week. If the Last Wish loses contact with the individual holding it, it immediately reverts to its dormant form and hovers in midair.

Second, while wielding the Last Wish the wielder gains the spellcasting abilities of a shugenja of a level equal to his character level. If the character is already a shugenja, he gains a second separate pool of spells and spell slots equal to that of a shugenja of his character level. Spells and element focus are always chosen by the Last Wish, not the user, and never change for that user. Spells are cast as if the user had an appropriate ability score of 20. The Last Wish's wielder also gains the ability to speak Kami, if he could not already do so.

The Last Wish's third ability involves reshaping reality. This is somewhat more complex than the other abilities and functions the same way in both mechanical systems. It is detailed below.

The Last Wish is an intelligent magical construct with the following pertinent statistics: Int 18, Wis 7, Cha 12. It has chaotic neutral alignment and 2 Honor. It possesses the following skills: Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (history) +16, Listen +10, Spellcraft +16, Spot +10. The Last Wish can communicate telepathically with any intelligent creature within five feet.

MAJOR ABILITIES (2ND EDITION)

The Last Wish has three major abilities, all of which demand some consideration by the GM.

First, upon taking a form, the Last Wish becomes a powerful magical item. This item can permanently emulate any shugenja spell of Mastery Level 3 or less with a duration other than instantaneous (such as a katana that is permanently surrounded by a Katana of Fire spell or an amulet that radiates a continuous Evil Ward). This spell takes effect as if its wielder had made three Raises when casting. If the Last Wish loses contact with the individual holding it, it immediately reverts to its dormant form and hovers in midair.

Second, while wielding the Last Wish the wielder gains the spellcasting abilities of a shugenja of School Rank equal to his Insight Rank, and immediately gains five spells of each Rank he can cast as innate abilities. All of these spells are cast as if the character had a 5 in the appropriate Ring and a School Rank equal to his Insight Rank. If the character was already a shugenja, this magical ability is entirely separate from his original abilities. Spells are chosen by the Last Wish, not the user, and never change for that user. The wielder also gains the ability to cast Commune at will.

The Last Wish's third ability involves reshaping reality. This is somewhat more complex than the other abilities and functions the same way in both mechanical systems. It is detailed below.

The Last Wish is an intelligent magical construct with the following pertinent statistics: Awareness 1, Intelligence 4, Perception 2, Willpower 2. It has 2 Honor. It possesses the following skills: Investigation 5, Lore (History) 8, Lore (Shugenja) 8, Spellcraft 8. The Last Wish can communicate telepathically with any intelligent creature within five feet.

RESHAPING REALITY

This is the most fearsome power of Isawa's Last Wish. Simply put, the Last Wish's wielder can attempt to use it to do nearly anything he wishes. Any time the user wishes to do this, he should tell the GM *exactly* what he intends to do with the Wish. The Wish always interprets these requests extremely literally (even if it does not wish to harm the wielder). The most direct route is taken, heedless of any harm the Wish causes along the way. Extremely complex wishes only confuse the simple, childlike mind of the Wish, so for the purposes of role-playing these commands must be of ten words or less.

For example, if the wielder says "I wish for a mountain of gold," then the Last Wish might create a miniature mountain out of gold, three inches high. Alternately, the Last Wish may create an enormous mountain of gold, more wealth that the character could ever hope to spend, but drop it in the middle of the Burning Sands where they would never conceivably find it. Using the Wish in this manner is always risky and unpredictable. If the user's intent is entirely selfish, the Wish always causes havoc and destruction, even if the user phrased his intent very carefully. For instance, in the above example, the Last Wish might create a mountain of gold directly on top of its user, crushing him instantly. Wishes that are selfless or noble are almost always fulfilled with a minimum of chaos, though accidents sometimes happen.

If the user's intent is selfish *and* his wish involves harming innocents, there is a 50% chance that the Wish will simply flare up with magical energy, destroying everyone and everything (except the Wish) within 200 feet. There is no protection from this effect, especially for the wielder. Each time the wielder uses the Wish in such a way and survives, the next time he uses it maliciously his chance of immolation increases by 10%.

CHILDREN OF THE LAST WISH

The Children of the Last Wish are perhaps the strangest product of the artifact's power. After returning to Rokugan through Oblivion's Gate, Asako Sagoten visited the Last Wish in its shrine. Sagoten was filled with remorse for having used the Wish for destruction and turning it from the path Isawa had intended, and saddened by the loneliness of Isawa's creation. Sagoten knew that he could not remain with the Wish, for he knew how Isawa had created the artifact and feared what might happen should that knowledge fall into the Steel Chrysanthemum's hands. He instead used the Last Wish to create the Children, who would protect it and keep it company, and then committed seppuku.

Until Aikune took up the Last Wish, the Children served as the artifact's eyes and ears beyond the shrine. They eagerly wandered Rokugan, gathering information and bringing it to the Wish. They serve it still, leading many to assume incorrectly that the Children are Aikune's servants. The Children obey the Wish and the Wish alone, and should Aikune's desires ever conflict with those of the Wish, the Children would turn on him in an instant.

Like the Wish, the Children are curious, childish, and naive. They do not enjoy violence, and flee rather than face conflict. The fact that Aikune often asks the Children to enter combat on behalf of the Phoenix does not set well with them, but as the Last Wish agrees with Aikune they obey him for now.

CHILD OF THE LAST WISH

Small Fey (Incorporeal, Void)

Hit Dice: 4d6 (14 hp)

Initiative: +4 (Dex)

Speed: Fly 60 ft. (perfect)

AC: 17 (+1 size, +4 Dex, +2 deflection)

Attacks: Incorporeal touch +7 melee

Damage: Incorporeal touch 1d6 temporary Wisdom

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./ 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Burning screech, Wisdom damage

Special Qualities: Incorporeal, immunities, soul sense, spell-like abilities, SR 15, Void affinity

Saves: Fort +1, Ref +8, Will +4

Abilities: Str -, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 18

Skills: Concentration +6, Hide +14, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Listen +6, Spellcraft +6, Spot +6.

Feats: Void Use, Weapon Finesse (incorporeal touch)

Climate/Terrain: Any land or underground.

Organization: Solitary, in swarms of 3-12, or in groups of 10-20 accompanied by 20-50 Shiba bushi

Challenge Rating: 8

Treasure: None

Honor: Nil

Alignment: Usually chaotic neutral

Advancement: 5-12 HD (Small)

Children of the Last Wish are spirits of pure Void. They resemble tiny, beautiful samurai women dressed in form-fitting armor. Some note the resemblance the Children bear to Doji Akiko; both Sagoten and the Wish were quite fond of Isawa's daughter.

The Children have somehow gained the ability to reproduce, though they only do so when their number falls below fifty.

Recently, the Dark Oracle of Fire has discovered a method of corrupting Children of the Last Wish and turning them to his own will. Such unfortunate specimens are identical to those described here, except that they have the Shadowlands subtype, chaotic evil alignment, and are dishonorable.

The Children of the Last Wish speak the language of the Kami.

COMBAT

Children of the Last Wish are hardly violent, but fight fearlessly in the Last Wish's defense. Shiba Aikune typically matches the Children with platoons of Phoenix samurai and shugenja as support troops. While the Children distract and incapacitate the enemy, the Shiba overwhelm him. The Dragon Clan has come to fear the sight of these flickering Void spirits hovering beside regiments of Phoenix troops.

Burning Screech (Su): A group of three Children of the Last Wish each of which is within fifteen feet of the other two can release a shriek that sets everything around them ablaze. This is the equivalent of a *delayed blast fireball* cast by a 15th level sorcerer (save DC 21), centered on the Children. The Children of the Last Wish and the bearer of Isawa's Last Wish are immune to this effect. A Child of the Last Wish may participate in a burning screech once per month.

Wisdom Damage (Su): The touch of a Child of the Last Wish deals 1d6 points of temporary Wisdom damage to a living foe. In addition, any target with Void Points must make a Will save (DC 14) or immediately lose one Void Point (this Void Point can be recovered normally). A creature reduced to Wisdom 0 by a Child of the Last Wish is left helpless, consumed by bewildering visions.

Incorporeal: 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 own attacks pass through armor. Always moves silently.

Immunities (Ex): Children of the Last Wish are immune to all mind-affecting effects and Void magic.

Soul Sense (Ex): Children of the Last Wish can perceive in their true forms all spellcasters, creatures with greater than 18 Wisdom, Intelligence, or Charisma, or characters with the Depths of the Void feat within thirty feet regardless of magical or mundane disguises or invisibility.

Spell-like abilities: At will — *detect magic*, *detect taint*, *invisibility* (self only); 3/day — *hold person*. These abilities are as the spells cast by a 4th level sorcerer (save DC 14 plus spell level).

Void Affinity (Ex): As spirits of pure Void, Children of the Last Wish can spend and recover Void Points just as a human can. In addition, they may spend up to their maximum Void Points on a single roll, save, or check. Their Void Use feat grants them four more Void than normal, giving the typical Child of the Last Wish a maximum of six Void Points.

CHILD OF THE LAST WISH

Earth: 2

Fire: 3

Water: 1

Perception: 4

Air: 4

Void: 5

Rolls when attacking: 4k3

Roll for damage: Special

TN to Be Hit: 20

Wounds: 5: +5; 10: +10; 15: +15; 20: +20; 25: Dead

Advantages: Magic Resistance (6 points)

Special Abilities:

Burning Screech: Three or more Children of the Last Wish within fifteen feet of one another, they can release a torrent of fire in a twenty-foot radius around their position. This fire does 6k6 Wounds to those within it. Children of the Last Wish and the bearer of Isawa's Last Wish are immune to this effect.

Strange Touch: Each time a Child of the Last Wish touches a target, that target suffers a cumulative +3 penalty to all actions for an hour. If a single target's penalties (including wound penalties) ever surpass +20, that target is incapacitated for twenty-four hours.

Soul Sense: Children of the Last Wish can sense any shugenja or character that can use kiho regardless of any magical or mundane disguise, including invisibility. They can sense any character with Intelligence, Perception, Wisdom, Willpower or Void Ring greater than 4 in a similar manner. Children of the Last Wish can sense the presence of magic or the Shadowlands Taint in their immediate vicinity, though they do not automatically know the source.

Paralyzing Gaze: Three times per day a Child of the Last Wish can force one target it looks upon to make an Earth roll vs. TN 25 or be frozen in place for one minute. This ability only functions against living creatures.

Void Affinity: As spirits of pure Void, Children of the Last Wish can spend and recover Void Points as a human can. In addition, they may spend up to their maximum Void Points on a single roll. Children of the Last Wish are immune to all Void magic and magic that affects the mind.

Children of the Last Wish cannot speak normally, though they can communicate with any Ishiken or a shugenja using the Commune spell (any elemental type).

THE HENSHIN

THE PATH LAID BARE

The strange order of enlightened mystics known as henshin has changed much in the last thirty years, due to the fate of a strange mad henshin named Asako Oyo. Oyo had achieved immortality by mastering the Path of Man during the early eleventh century, but soon thereafter wandered down a false path and became irrevocably insane. Oyo believed that it was the rest of his family that were on a false path and that only by fleeing Phoenix lands could he find others who would understand. Disturbed and saddened by his madness, the Phoenix confined Oyo in a hidden monastery for nearly a century. Inevitably Oyo escaped, and fled as far as the Crab lands seeking allies to aid him in bringing his Asako brethren to sanity.

Oyo was strangely drawn to shugenja. He frequently visited Crab temples, raving mindlessly for several days, begging anyone he could find to help him "fix" the Asako, then fleeing before he could be apprehended. After some time, the Crab magistrates who told tales of him began to refer to Oyo as the "Spell Seeker." He eventually drew the curiosity of Kuni Yori, who captured Oyo in the Crab mountains and brought him back to his tower.

Realizing that there was more to Oyo's babblings than simple madness, Kuni Yori and his apprentice Nakiro studied Oyo for well over a year. What the Crab discovered astounded and intrigued them. Yori's agile mind swiftly pieced together the basic principles of the Path of Man from Oyo's ravings, the path of enlightenment that led the Asako to immortality and, eventually, divinity. The ideas held no personal interest for Yori, who was secretly a maho-tsukai and believed the path of corruption a far easier and more rewarding route to immortality. However, the potential damage he could do by revealing Oyo's secrets had a far greater value. Yori had discovered the most basic truth of that Path of Man: one who knows his own full potential is doomed never to achieve it. This was why the Asako chose to keep the henshin's mysteries so secret — otherwise no more Asako could be enlightened. By giving the Isawa just enough knowledge about the Path of Man to incite suspicion, he hoped to create internal strife among the Phoenix. The distracted Asako Inquisitors would not then notice the growing practice of maho among his family, and Hida Kisada would have time to organize his Shadowlands-reinforced army to march across the Empire.

When Yori felt he had learned all he could from the Oyo, he brought the henshin with him to the Imperial Winter Court held that year at Kyuden Asako. Through deft manipulation of the Phoenix present, Yori exposed the locations of several secret henshin monasteries as well as the fact that many henshin — such as Oyo — had lived for several generations if not centuries. He then turned Oyo over to Isawa custody. Yori was, of course, careful to omit the fact that knowledge of the full potential of the henshin made achieving such enlightenment far more difficult; he merely told the Isawa enough to inflame their natural paranoid curiosity. In a gesture atypically subtle for a Crab, Kuni Yori nullified his family's most dangerous potential enemies during the impending war. The Phoenix never recovered enough to realize the threat the Tainted Crab posed until the final days of the Clan War.

The Asako were completely unprepared to have their philosophies and practices scrutinized. Though parties outside the Phoenix eventually heard of the scandal, the trials of the Clan War were too pressing to allow them time to investigate. The Elemental Council, led by Isawa Tsume, demanded the Asako reveal the full extent of their secrets. The Shiba were simply confused, caught between their distaste for the Isawa's paranoia and the betrayal they felt that the Asako could conceal such secrets from them.

The Asako were forced to derail the other families' investigations by declaring Oyo a madman and a traitor, unwittingly aiding Yori's plot to undermine the Phoenix Clan. The Asako beseeched the other families to grant them a year to look into the matter personally and deal with Oyo's betrayal. The Asako ostensibly continued their investigations, though few paid them any attention once the Clan Wars broke out in earnest.

Deep in the Asako temples, the true investigations began. Never before had one so advanced fallen so far. What had happened this time? The henshin masters found themselves troubled by a far more disturbing question — if Oyo had gone onto a False Path, why did the Celestial Order still bless him with immortality and his harmony with the kami? Why did his madness drive him into the hands of an enemy such as Yori, who nearly destroyed everything they had built over eleven centuries? As the rituals and questions probed deeper into Oyo's shattered mind the answer was as obvious as it was disheartening. The Asako split into two camps, those who refused to believe what Oyo's existence implied, and those who embraced the truth. A henshin named Asako Isamu collected records of several incidents similar to Oyo's and studied the madman himself. He found only one possible explanation, and broke the news to the other Asako: Oyo proved that the Asako had blinded themselves to the True Path.

Other Asako were outraged. How could any question the wisdom of the First Asako, the words given to her by Shiba and entrusted to the Phoenix by Shinsei himself? Isamu's answer was simple — the wisdom of the Path of Man was such that it could not ever be fully known. By believing that they had mastered it in any measure, the henshin had become stagnant. Oyo's destiny was not to drag them from the path, but to burn their preconceptions to the ground so that they could begin anew. Isamu's theories caught on swiftly, and soon the Asako began delving into their meditations with unprecedented vigor.

THE ASAKO FORTUNES

The Asako have long believed that the final step on the Path of Man was apotheosis — the ascent of a mortal into godhood. Those henshin who proved themselves worthy of such a progression simply joined the Celestial beings in the Heavens. There was little evidence of this belief aside from the words of Asako herself. Departed henshin were never heard from again. Henshin scholars believed they became minor Fortunes who represented relatively small things such as a single mountain or waterfall, and thus could never be identified by their mortal brethren. The Asako also believed that the Fortunes remained silent to their kin simply to test their resolve and faith in the Path without confirming their beliefs beyond any doubt.

Asako Isamu discovered that the henshin were only partially correct. The Asako Fortunes did indeed remain silent to test those who remained as mortals within Ningen-do. When Isamu bent his head in prayer to the Asako Fortunes for guidance, he spoke of his concerns and the truths that Asako Oyo had brought to the family. When the Fortunes did not respond, Isamu knew that the henshin's path was not yet complete. After all, if the henshin had no more hope of growth, there would be no harm in the Asako Fortunes providing him with the answer. The fact that they remained silent proved that they felt Isamu could grow strong enough to deal with his problems. In silence, he found hope.

Using the wisdom of the Fortunes, Isamu brought word to his family of what he had learned. To desire the power of a god was folly, and a corruption of Asako's pure teachings. Shinsei, Shiba, and Asako had intended for humanity to reach pure harmony with the universe. While such a state did indeed bring the power of the Fortunes to the hands of the mortals, the way the Asako taught their path somehow became twisted so that what was desired was to be a Fortune. Such a desire could only cloud a pure soul.

Many of the elder Asako would not accept Isamu's words. They argued that the Fortunes were the pinnacle of existence, so how could the desire to be like them be wrong? The debate lasted weeks until Isamu did the only thing he could — in a large assembly of over six hundred Asako, Isamu smiled, bowed, and vanished without a trace, the elements of his body disincorporating as his soul reached a higher plane of existence. Even the mystic Asako could not argue with such results — it was clear that they had much to learn.

THE FALSE PATHS

Though the False Path the Asako had blindly stumbled down threatened their souls and the balance of the henshin order, there were two other such corruptions of the henshin philosophy that were a much larger threat. That these False Paths existed and enticed others down their dark path of corruption was reason enough to destroy them. However, these two cases demanded special attention, as their perversion of the Order threatened more than just a handful of mortal lives...

THE KOLAT

Though Kuni Yori was not personally interested in following the Path of Man, he was not the only Kuni who listened to Oyo's ravings. Yori's apprentice, Nakiro, never succumbed to corruption as his mentor did; instead he fled from Yori during the Clan War, taking his master's notes on the Path of Man with him. In desperation, he fell in with the Kolat, who protected Nakiro from Yori's wrath until the mad Crab was eventually defeated. Nakiro's wisdom and powerful magic proved valuable to that organization, and Nakiro rose through their ranks to become Master Dream. Few understand the reason he has gained so much power so quickly, or what secrets he studies deep within his tower in Crab lands.

Nakiro has mastered a great number of the henshin mysteries, — he has not visibly aged in over ten years — but the subtler aspects of the Path of Man continue to escape him. Nakiro believes he has found the gate to immortality, invulnerability, and the power of godhood itself, but he does not have the key. He has begun using Kolat resources to kidnap henshin, torturing them for information, performing experiments upon them, and transforming them into Kolat sleeper agents. What Nakiro does not know is that his teachings are like those of the Asako before Isamu's reform, but much more ambitious and dangerous. Should Nakiro or one of his students somehow progress all the way down this False Path, they would indeed achieve apotheosis, though as a twisted and blasphemous reflection of the true Fortunes.

YOBANJIN MURA

In the northern provinces of the Isawa lies a tiny village that few know exist and fewer still would wish to visit. None outside the Phoenix Clan have ever laid eyes upon the village, and none even suspect the true purpose for the village. The true purpose of Yobanjin Mura is to conduct trade with the Yobanjin tribes to the north. Its very existence seems paradoxical, as the Phoenix are one of the Empire's most ardent proponents of tradition and adherence to Imperial law.

FALSE PATH MECHANICS

D20 SYSTEM:

Should a member of the henshin mystic prestige class ever willingly embrace the Shadowlands Taint, lose his Lawful alignment, or drop below 2 ranks of honor, he is following a False Path. The henshin mystic does not lose any of his class abilities and may continue to progress in the Prestige Class, with the following modifications:

- He may lose two points of honor to increase his effective level in the henshin mystic by one for using Riddles and Mysteries. This does not grant him access to Riddles and Mysteries he does not already possess, but increases the potency of ones he already knows. This level increase lasts for one minute.
- He may gain two points of the Shadowlands Taint (even if he currently has none but is following a False Path due to his alignment or honor) to increase his effective level in the henshin mystic prestige class by one for using Riddles and Mysteries. This does not grant him access to Riddles and Mysteries he does not already possess, but increases the potency of ones he already knows. This level increase lasts for one minute.
- The henshin mystic may never attain the 10th level of the henshin mystic class as long as he is following a False Path.

LSR RPG 2E SYSTEM:

Should a henshin ever drop below 2 honor or willingly embrace the Shadowlands Taint, he is following a False Path. The henshin does not lose any of his abilities granted by the school, though he does gain the following modifications to his Mysteries and Riddles:

- He may lose two points of honor to increase his effective Rank in the henshin school by one for using Riddles and Mysteries. This does not grant him access to Riddles and Mysteries he does not already possess, but increases the potency of ones he already knows. This level increase lasts for one minute.
- He may gain two points of the Shadowlands Taint (even if he currently has none but is following a False Path due to his honor) to increase his effective level in the Asako Henshin School by one for using Riddles and Mysteries. This does not grant him access to Riddles and Mysteries he does not already possess, but increases the potency of ones he already knows. This level increase lasts for one minute.
- The henshin can never attain the fifth rank of the henshin school as long as he is following a False Path.

The truth is that the Isawa are willing to risk much in the interest of gaining new knowledge and power, and a millennium of existence beside the Yobanjin has taught them to respect the wisdom of these barbarians. Isawa curiosity regarding the barbarians has driven them to find a loophole in Imperial Law that allows the village to operate. The Isawa choose to focus on the fact that Imperial law restricts "trade" with gaijin, and further that Imperial law defines trade as "the fair exchange of goods and services." The Isawa give the Yobanjin less than they think is fair on every exchange. Thus, what they conduct is not trade, and is not illegal. Though even some Isawa raise an eyebrow at this display of logic, others argue that such sacrifices are necessary to keep tabs on the Yobanjin. Should the gaijin ever invade again, the Isawa will know the enemy and be ready to face them.

Ironically, the Yobanjin are aware of the Isawa policy and simply do not care. They have made it their own policy to always ask for more on any trade than they know they deserve, so that in the end they will at least come close to making a fair trade.

Trade at Yobanjin Mura has been going on for decades, but its form has changed since the Yobanjin invasions five years ago. The barbarians' strange practices and mysterious weaponry were unknown to the Phoenix, despite the decades of research they had gathered. The Isawa, the most powerful shugenja family in the Empire, were very nearly brought low by the meager forces of the northern tribes, and the family has vowed never again to suffer such a terrible loss of face. Fortunately, aided by Toturi Tsudao and, covertly, by the Sons of the Wind tribe, they defeated the united Yobanjin tribes and repelled the assault.

THE YOBANJIN

The arrangement at Yobanjin Mura began before the Clan War. Occasional violence between raiding parties and the Phoenix were not uncommon during that time, as there was a great famine in the lands of the barbarians. The Phoenix rebuffed most such attacks, since the raiding parties were rarely large enough to threaten more than a single village. Nevertheless, the Yobanjin could significantly damage small villages before the Phoenix forces could respond. Even as the Isawa attempted to find a solution to this problem, one presented itself.

One of the smaller Yobanjin tribes, a group called the Sons of the Wind, approached the Isawa with a proposition. Since the Sons of the Wind were too small to compete for the resources necessary to survive the famine, they would trade supplies and information to the Isawa in exchange for food and protection. The supplies they offered, various weapons and herbal components, would be of minimal functional use to the Phoenix, but offered a wealth of information on how the Yobanjin operated and how they could be fought. Recognizing a valuable opportunity, the Isawa accepted.

THE TRADING GROUNDS

The Isawa supply the peasants of Yobanjin Mura with ample food, basic amenities, and even peasant weapons, all of which are earmarked for trade with the Yobanjin. Isawa peasants conduct most of the trade with the Sons of the Wind, and representatives from the Isawa appear only periodically to inspect the results of the latest encounter. This not only allows the peasants a great deal of autonomy, which further enamors them of their benevolent Isawa masters, but it also grants the Isawa plausible deniability. Should the goings-on

PLAYING YOBANJIN

Members of the Yobanjin tribes are human, but are considerably different from their neighbors to the south in Rokugan. Their nomadic lifestyle has made them hardy and strong, but they have little opportunity for study or introspection.

D20 SYSTEM:

Yobanjin Racial Traits (all normal human traits are replaced with the following, though Yobanjin are still considered human).

- +2 Constitution, -2 Intelligence
- Medium-size
- Base speed: 30 ft.
- +2 racial bonus on all Fortitude saves: the Yobanjin are a sturdy people
- +2 racial bonus on all Ride and Wilderness Lore checks
- Favored Class: Barbarian or Sorcerer (choose one)
- Automatic Languages: Yobanjin
- Bonus Languages: Mekhem, Moto, Rokugani, Senpet

LSR RPG 2E SYSTEM:

Benefit: +1 Stamina

Schools: While they have no formal schools of their own, the Yobanjin have access to fighting styles that are best represented by the Mirumoto, Moto, or Usagi bushi schools.

of Yobanjin Mura ever come to light and the Isawa's "trade" loophole prove insufficient to absolve them of guilt, they can lay the entire affair at the feet of the peasants and wash their hands of the matter. After all, who would believe the word of peasants over that of the most powerful shugenja family in the Empire?

YOBANJIN GOODS

The Sons of the Wind have become a powerful tribe thanks to their arrangement with the Isawa. For a nomadic tribe to never want for food or clothing is a considerable advantage, and it has allowed the Sons to focus on building their numbers and military prowess. What was once a minor tribe has become a significant power within the Yobanjin society. This has resulted in an increased amount and range of goods available to the Isawa through their contacts at Yobanjin Mura.

Most of the goods available to the Isawa are mundane, but some herbal and alchemical compounds can increase a shugenja's ability to create elemental effects by invoking the kami. There are drawbacks inherent in the use of these materials due to differing Yobanjin magical methodology, but there are always shugenja willing to deal with the aftereffects of their use in exchange for the increased potency it affords them.

YOBANJIN POWDER

D20 SYSTEM:

This strange blend of unique alchemical components lends potency to shugenja's elemental magic. The powder amplifies the effects of elemental magic, but angers the kami that power such spells, making them less receptive to further entreaties. How this powder accomplishes its effects is unknown.

Using one dose of powder as a part of the somatic component of a spell (spells without somatic components require one if using Yobanjin powder) causes the DC of all saving throws versus the spell to be increased by 2. Each use of the powder requires the shugenja to forfeit one spell slot for the day. These sacrificed slots may be of any level the shugenja prefers.

Caster level: 9th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, Spell Focus (any), Alchemy (8 ranks), Spellcraft (8 ranks); *Market Price:* 1 pouch (6 doses), 3,500 koku; *Weight:* —.

LSR RPG 2E SYSTEM:

This strange blend of unique components is consumed by the energy of a spell when it is cast into the air as a shugenja invokes an elemental effect. The powder somehow amplifies the power of the kami, increasing the power of the spell. The kami do not appreciate this effect, and are reluctant to come to the shugenja's aid after such a usage. Yobanjin powder is most often used in small pouches that are placed on a shugenja's obi. A single pouch holds enough powdered components for six uses. Each use provides a single Free Raise for any spell that can only be used to increase damage dice. Only one dose of powder may be used per spell. The TN for casting Sense, Commune, and Summon spells is increased by 5 for six hours following the use of Yobanjin powder.

HAKAI, NIGHTMARE OF THE PHOENIX

None of the Onisu are given freer rein than Hakai. Daigotsu seems to trust the Onisu of Death more than the others, and often sends it on missions beyond the Shadowlands without his supervision. Daigotsu rarely possesses Hakai, allowing it to act of its own accord. The Dark Lord knows that of all the Onisu, Hakai represents the most difficult force to oppose. He also knows that Hakai can be trusted; unlike many of the others, Hakai is extremely forthright and honest in its objectives. Hakai seeks nothing more than death for anything and everything around it.

Hakai appears as a tall thin humanoid with hard, bony skin. Its face is lean, narrow, and covered with sharp horns. Hakai is surrounded by an almost palpable aura of death. Unless it is making a conscious effort to conceal himself it is seldom hard to find — just look for the trail of withered corpses and blackened vegetation.

Hakai is perhaps the second most recognized Onisu after Fushin, the slayer of Toturi. The destruction he wrought during the Test of the Jade Champion and the invasion of Otosan Uchi are still spoken of in hushed tones. The Phoenix can scarcely believe that they are the source of such an engine of death. Isawa and Asako shugenja have begun researching the origins of the Onisu so that creatures such as Hakai might be permanently destroyed; thus far their research has borne no fruit.

HAKAI, ONISU OF DEATH, NIGHTMARE OF THE PHOENIX

Large Outsider (Evil, Oni, Shadowlands, Spirit)

Hit Dice: 15d8 + 75 (141 hp)

Initiative: +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

AC: 23 (-1 size, +4 Dex, +10 natural)

Attacks: Claws +19/+14/+9 melee

Damage: Claw 1d6+5 plus death touch

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft. / 10 ft.

Special Attacks: Death touch, enhancement, possession, spell-like abilities, spells

Special Qualities: Oni Qualities, damage reduction 15/+3 (jade), death sight, honorable vulnerability, regeneration 4, rejuvenation, SR 25

Saves: Fort +14, Ref +13, Will +16

Abilities: Str 20, Dex 18, Con 20, Int 28, Wis 24, Cha 26, Taint 15

Skills: Battle +25, Concentration +23, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (etiquette) +15, Knowledge (Jigoku) +27, Knowledge (maho) +27, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +15, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +27, Knowledge (Yume-do) +27, Listen +25, Scry +16, Search +27, Sense Motive +25, Spellcraft +27, Spot +25

Feats: Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Maximize Spell, Spell Focus (Necromancy)

Climate/Terrain: Shadowlands, Yume-do, any land and underground

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 20

Treasure: Standard

Honor: Always 0 Honor

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: 16–45 HD (Medium-size)

COMBAT

Hakai is one of the smallest of the Onisu, but he is certainly one of the most deadly. It often wears fine red silken robes bearing its personal mon, a stylized skull within a circular pattern. It carries itself with eerily elegant composure.

Hakai is rarely seen alone (which is somewhat ironic considering its desire for the death of others). He is generally encountered with large packs of goblins or Tsuno, or another Onisu such as Nikushimi or Muchitsujo who can complement Hakai's magic with brute force.

Death Sight (Ex): Merely by looking at a creature, Hakai can see the most terrible death that might befall it. Hakai takes great delight in revealing this information to mortals. The mere act of revealing this information has a chilling tendency to cause the prediction to come to pass, despite the target's best efforts to avoid his fate (DM's discretion).

CHAOTIC
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Death Touch (Su): Creatures with five or fewer Hit Dice are instantly killed by Hakai's touch. Targets with more than five Hit Dice simply suffer 1d4 permanent Constitution damage. Hakai can suppress this ability at will.

Enhancement (Ex): Any time a person within 100 feet of Hakai dies pointlessly (such as, for example, getting murdered by Hakai) the Onisu gains 1d8 temporary hit points. All other benefits of advancement (such as higher saves, base attack, and caster level for spells and 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 Hakai commits a selfless act that would promote the life of another, the Onisu receives a negative level (a samurai who attempts to delay Hakai so a friend can escape though he himself has no chance against the Onisu would apply; a shugenja who merely casts a healing spell on another is not sufficiently selfless). 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*.

Possession (Su): Hakai can possess any humanoid with the Shadowlands subtype as a standard action. This is the equivalent of a *magic jar* spell, except for the following: The target is allowed no save and Hakai needs no receptacle (he may transfer his soul directly into the target). The target's soul is suppressed, but aware of all actions performed while Hakai commands its body. Hakai may return to its own body at will, regardless of range, or may shift its soul to another legal target within sight as a standard action. If Hakai's host is killed, Hakai's soul returns to its body regardless of range.

Regeneration (Ex): Holy and honorable weapons do normal damage to Hakai, as do weapons that have been immersed in the water of the Realm of Dreams.

Rejuvenation (Su): If slain, Hakai 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.

Spell-like abilities: at will — *detect passage**, *passage into darkness**, *passage into dream**, *protection from good*; 3/day — *deseccate*. These abilities are as cast by a 15th level sorcerer (DC 15 + spell level). Spells marked with an asterisk are described in *Fortunes and Winds*.™

Spells Known: Hakai can cast spells as an 18th level sorcerer. (6/8/8/8/8/7/7/7/7/6; base DC 18 + 2 for Necromancy spells; Spells Known: 0-level — *arcane mark*, *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*; 1st — *blood rite*, *cause fear*, *obscuring mist*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*; 2nd — *alter self*, *choking death*, *ghoul touch*, *limb disruption*, *spectral hand*; 3rd — *dispel magic*, *gaseous form*, *haste*, *vampiric touch*; 4th — *dimension door*, *enervation*, *screaming*, *wall of ice*; 5th — *animate dead*, *cloudburst*, *telekinesis*; 6th — *circle of death*, *greater dispelling*, *Tenser's transformation*; 7th — *finger of death*, *teleport without error*, *tomb of earth*; 8th — *Fu Leng's champion*, *horrid wilting*, *mind blank*; 9th — *energy drain*, *wail of the banshee*, *weird*.)

HAKAI, ONISU OF DEATH, NIGHTMARE OF THE PHOENIX

Earth: 5

Fire: 5

Water: 5

Air: 5

Rolls when Attacking: 5k5

Rolls for Damage: 4k2

TN to be Hit: 20

Carapace: 5

Wounds: 25: +5; 50: +10; 75: +15; 100: +25; 150: Dead.

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

Carapace: Weapons that have been dipped in the waters of Yume-do ignore Hakai's Carapace rating.

Death Sight: Merely by looking at a creature, Hakai can see its most terrible death. Hakai delights in revealing this information to mortals. The act has a chilling tendency to cause Hakai's predictions to come to pass despite the target's best efforts to avoid his fate. (GM's discretion.)

Death Touch: Any creatures of Insight Rank 1 or lower are instantly killed by Hakai's touch. Other targets must make an opposed Earth roll with Hakai or suffer 2k2 additional magic damage. Hakai may suppress this ability at will.

Enhancement: Any time a person within 100 feet of Hakai dies pointlessly (e.g. by being murdered by Hakai) one of the Onisu's Traits (and all associated attributes) increases by one. This benefit lasts for one week, after which the Onisu loses one bonus Trait per week. The Onisu grows slowly larger each time it draws upon betrayal in such a manner.

Flight: Hakai can fly at will at twice its normal speed.

Honorable Vulnerability: Any time a person within 100 feet of Hakai commits a selfless act that would promote the life of another, one of the Onisu's Traits (and all associated attributes) decreases by one (a samurai who attempts to delay Hakai so a friend can escape though he himself has no chance against the Onisu would apply; a shugenja who merely casts a healing spell on another is not sufficiently selfless). 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.

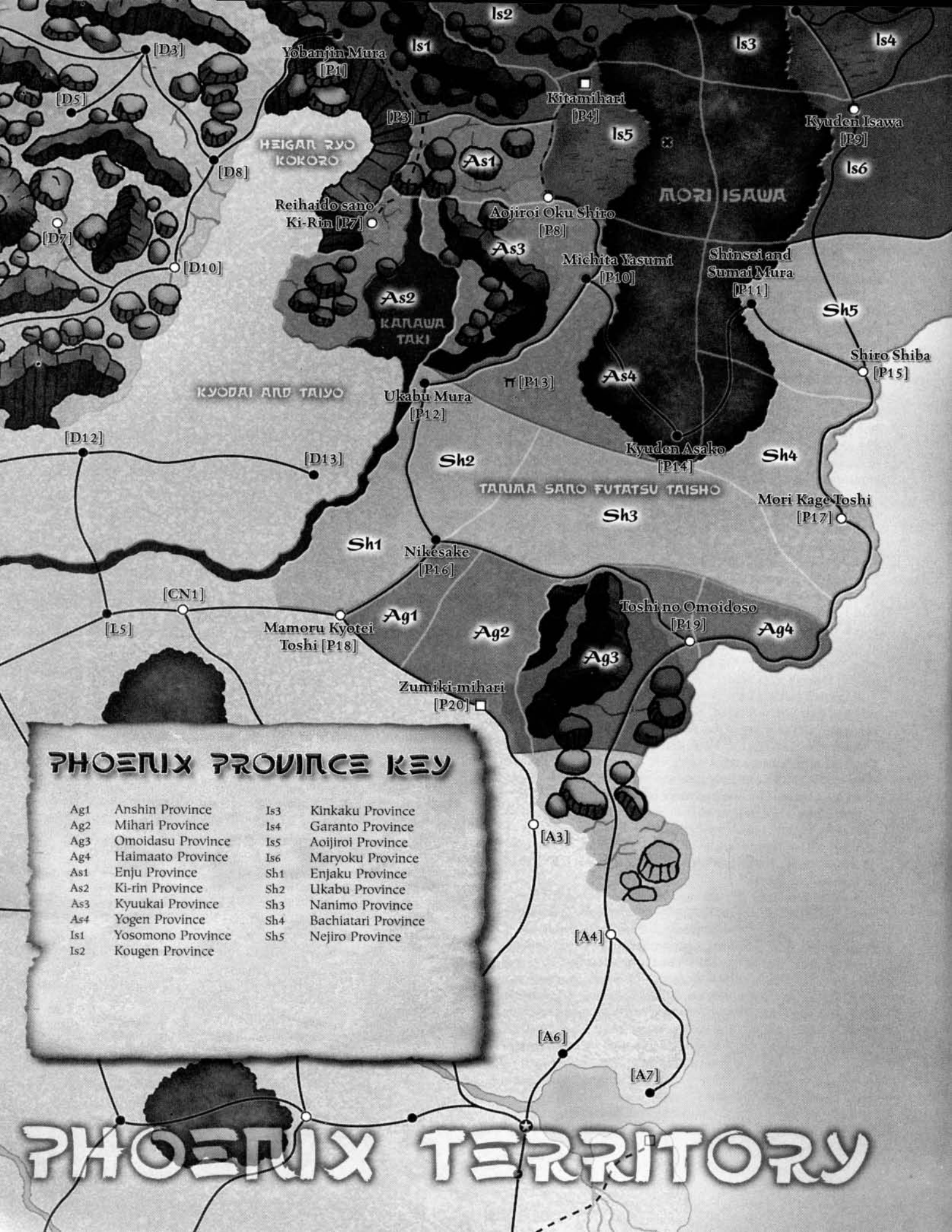
Multiple Attacks: Hakai can attack twice per round.

Passages: The Onisu can cast *Detect Passage*, *Passage Into Darkness*, and *Passage Into Dream* at will.

Possession: Hakai can extend its own consciousness into a goblin, ogre, or Tainted human at will. While in their body, Hakai's mental traits remain the same but its physical traits become that of its host. Hakai's own body becomes inert during this time. If Hakai's new body is slain, it instantly returns to its own body.

Rejuvenation: If slain, Hakai 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.

Spells: Hakai can cast spells as a Rank 5 shugenja (no Affinity or Deficiency) and casts spells without the aid of scrolls. His spell list is as follows: *Animate the Dead*, *Blood and Darkness*, *Blood Rite*, *Choking Death*, *Commune*, *Control Undead*, *Corruption of the Elements*, *Curse*, *Fu Leng's Champion*, *Limb Disruption*, *Obsidian Armor*, *Path to Inner Peace*, *Reflecting Pool*, *Secrets on the Wind*, *Sense*, *Summon Greater Kansen*, *Summon Undead Champion*.



PHOENIX PROVINCE KEY

Ag1	Anshin Province	Is3	Kinkaku Province
Ag2	Mihari Province	Is4	Garanto Province
Ag3	Omoidasu Province	Is5	Aojiroi Province
Ag4	Haimaato Province	Is6	Maryoku Province
As1	Enju Province	Sh1	Enjaku Province
As2	Ki-rin Province	Sh2	Ukabu Province
As3	Kyuukai Province	Sh3	Nanimo Province
As4	Yogen Province	Sh4	Bachiatari Province
Is1	Yosomono Province	Sh5	Nejiro Province
Is2	Kougen Province		

PHOENIX TERRITORY

“One cannot have power without wisdom, and yet only by learning to control one’s power can wisdom be gained. This is the Way of the Phoenix.” — Shiba Aikune, Master of the Last Wish

Secrets of the Phoenix explores the most mysterious Great Clan, illustrating its customs, holdings, and way of life. But have caution: the Phoenix guard their secrets well, and do not take kindly to outsiders in their libraries...

Within, you will find:

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- The darkest secrets of the Phoenix 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 a useful source of 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.

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