



# Legend of the Five Rings™

Second Edition

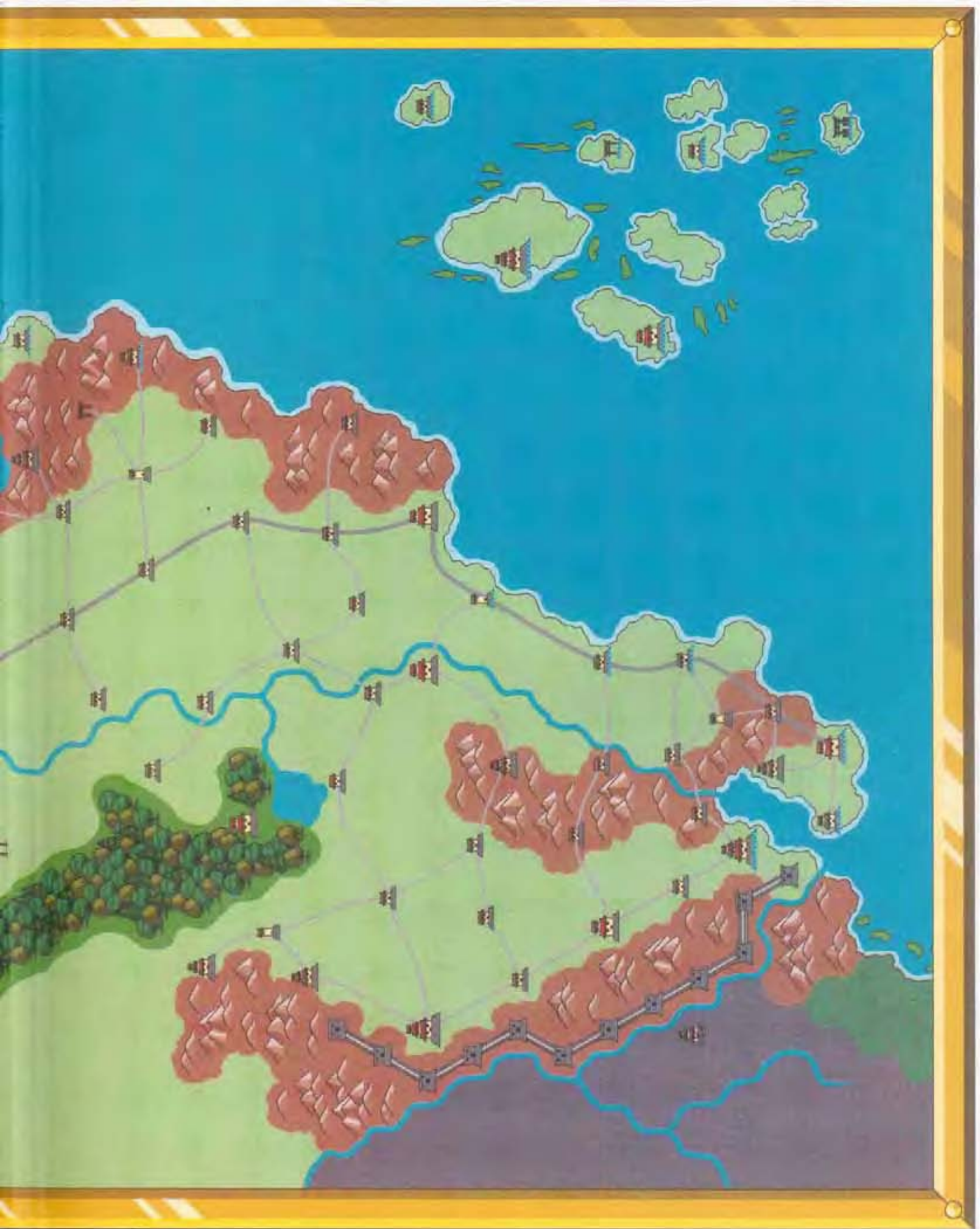
PLAY EVERY SINGLE DAY













# Legend of the Five Rings™

Second Edition



## Player's Guide



# Credits

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# Chapter One: Earth



## “Three Days”

I stood in the court of the Emperor of all Rokugan, and I was afraid.

Not for myself, but for the Empire. The court seemed strangely aloof, withdrawn from its usual lighthearted politic, and I listened to the conversations around me with awe and concern. Rather than the standard bickering over trade rights or favors, I heard whispers of war.

My name is Doji Shizue, and I am the storyteller to the Empire. Crane by birth, my mother was Scorpion, and some say that I have the wits of both. I can only hope that the Fortunes have blessed me as well, that I may understand our troubles and elude them.

The Emperor, Hantei the 39th, rested upon his Emerald Throne, his heavy robes encasing his body like the cocoon of some strange caterpillar. Resplendent in silver, gold and jade, he listened with half an ear to the advisors on the dais beside him.

Before him, the Crane and the Lion argued incessantly over the right to rule the Osari plains, the richest land in the Empire. Both clans hold some small title to them, though the Crane have ruled them for several hundred years. The Emperor seemed uninterested in their careful arguments and their flattery.

To the side, the Unicorn pranced in their violet robes, their watchful eyes guarded and reserved. I have heard tales that they fear for the Emperor's health – as do we all, fear that he will die of this plague that sweeps the Imperial City. The Unicorn sent their own doctor – a strange, primitive shaman, I fear – to assist the Emperor. It has done nothing.

The Phoenix, always our allies, stood alone in the corner of the chamber, speaking to none but themselves. They looked around at the rest of the Empire with eyes touched by fear, and I did not know what troubled them. All I could gather was that some strange magic was at work, something that they could not yet comprehend. Their Elemental Masters were strangely absent, mysteriously meeting in solitude atop their grand palaces to the north. I did not ask their reasons; they offered none.

Even the Dragon seemed strangely quiet, their whisperings and riddles fallen to the side of the court. Without their steady quips, the court seemed a far more somber place, devoid of the banter and ready witticisms of that enlightened clan.

Something troubled us all, and we knew not what it was.

I bowed to Ishikawa as he passed by. The Emperor's most famous guardsman, captain of his legions, Ishikawa was seen as a bastion of honor – and I wished I knew his thoughts as he paced the floor like a captured wildcat.



The doors flew open, and dozens of guards stood ready to protect the young Emperor. Standing in the doorway, a gray smoke oozing from his skin, a Seppun samurai knelt, his eyes wide. “My Lord,” he said as he bowed, and the boy on the Emerald Throne raised his eyebrows at the intrusion.



"The Crab raise an army," he panted, holding one arm where blood had heavily stained his brown and gold gi. "I have seen them, heading north from the Wall."

Seppun Ishikawa stepped forward, his gait hesitant. When he saw the man bore Taint and plague, his step hastened. He would protect the Son of Heaven at any cost.

The samurai lowered his head once more, green blood trickling from

beneath his robe. Ishikawa paused a few steps away, his hand trembling.

"Don't touch him!" Shiba Ujimitsu called out, stepping between the Emperor and the Seppun messenger. "He has the Taint!"

"The Crab have brought it north," the messenger whispered, barely heard over the frightened rustling of the courtiers. "Their armies are not samurai. They bring great machines, *maho*-casters, and worse."

"No..." Ishikawa refused to believe, even as the proof stained the mahogany floor of Otosan Uchi's great palace.

"Oni, my lord. Demons of the Shadowlands, and their minions. Kisada has gone mad."

At the Emperor's side, Ujimitsu stepped forward. Remembering another tainted messenger, another court, he asked. "Did you see a great darkness among them—signs of a magic that

spread black shadow across the land?"

"No," the messenger sighed. "Only *maho* and blood."

"Still." Ujimitsu pondered softly, whispering to his yojimbo. "I have felt this coming for some time. Kisada is only the first step."

Not hearing the Phoenix's quiet words, the Seppun guardsman spoke again. "I saw Kisada's son, among the others. Fighting beside a massive oni... of blood and bone." The Seppun choked on the words, coughing as Taint clutched at his throat and seized his voice.





"Yakamo?" The Emperor said, startled.

"*Hai*. Fighting with the others, surrounded by his Hida guard."

"Yakamo has but one hand – how can he come to battle?" called Doji Yosai, an older courtier with graying hair and a weathered face.

"One-handed no more, Doji-sama." The Seppun messenger wiped away the blood that trailed between his lips. They had turned grey with exertion, and the blood seemed almost black against his darkened skin. "Yakamo fights with a hand made of iron, steel, and flesh – a giant claw cut from Fu Leng's own hide, I believe."

A scream came from one of the younger courtiers, swiftly cut off as her Unicorn master silenced her. Ide Tadaji stepped into the ring that had formed around the kneeling Seppun. "Does Yakamo fight alone? Perhaps he has gone renegade... or perhaps he is mad."

"*Iye*. No. He has a hundred Hida Guards, a thousand of Tsuru's men, and Kuni – Hiruma – many of the Crab join him. This is no renegade, my lord. This is war."

The Emperor frowned again, and it was as if thunder broke above the palace, hiding the palace from the light of the sun.

"Bah." One of the Lion raised a hand arrogantly. "This is some ruse performed by the Crane, to draw attention from the true war – the Osari plains. The Crane must give them to us, or..."

"Or what, Lion?" Kakita Yoshi smiled. "Or you, too, will march upon us with the Shadowlands at your side?"

The court descended into arguing and chaos, and the Emperor stood from his throne. He was small, no older than twenty but with the frail appearance of a boy much younger. At his side, the Empress Kachiko caught at his elbow to help steady his pace, and he smiled trustingly at her.

Her own smile was laced with poison, but the Hantei did not seem to notice. "Thank you, wife."

"By your leave, Master," she bowed, grateful for his kind words.



Because I stood near them, I heard more than the rest of the bickering and weeping courtiers behind me in the hall. I listened as Ishikawa knelt before his cousin, not touching the Tainted man. "Do you know their purpose?" he whispered as the courtiers began their squawking noise once more.

"They plan..." the Seppun's voice was choked, his body shuddering. "...to seize... Beiden Pass." The answer was low, hidden from the prying ears of the others. Ishikawa's face turned purple, then he quickly recovered his peace.

From the Emperor's dais, one of the high-ranking courtiers pointed a stern finger at the wounded Seppun who knelt at their door. "That man," Seppun Bake curled his lip and fluttered his ornate lace fan, "must be destroyed."

The Seppun on the doorstep smiled one last time, gasping with sickness with each breath he drew. "I beg the Emperor's permission to commit seppuku, now that my duty has been fulfilled."

"It is yours," Hantei the 39th said somberly.

Before the samurai could reach for his sword, his body shook, unable even to complete his bow of thanks. He tried to lift himself from the ground, but a trickle of dark blood drained from his mouth and nose, and the Seppun messenger fell forward, his last energy spent.

Ishikawa stood, drawing his sword as the light left his cousin's eyes. Before the Taint could completely take control of the Seppun's flesh, Ishikawa cut the head from the samurai's shoulders with a clean stroke, and the body ceased shaking. As the blood spread across the Emperor's throne chamber, the body at last lay quiet on the ground, still and motionless.

Silence filled the hall. The only sound that reached us was the soft, rhythmic sound of Ishikawa's tense breathing. No one moved.

Then, finally, Ishikawa turned to bow to his master on the Emerald Throne. "The body must be blessed. Then burned."

The Emperor nodded, steeping his hands to hide his quivering mouth. The Taint had already begun to spread through Rokugan, and plague seized the lands of the Crane. Soon, the other clans would feel it too – a dark poison that rotted the Empire from within.

On the dais at the Emperor's side, Kachiko, Mistress of Lies, smiled behind her silken mask.

Thus began the first true battles of the Clan War, a time of trouble and of trial. As the Crab marched northwards through the lands of the dishonored and defeated Scorpion, the Lion and the Crane battled over riches and pride.

The Unicorn, ever watchful, returned to their solitary ways, content to allow the Empire to burn around them, and the Dragon retreated to their mountains, claiming that some great mystery was about to begin. The Phoenix, ever allies of the Crane and of the Emerald Throne, had only fearful prophecy to tell, whispering of great dark magics that were spreading from the southland. As we watched for the world to right itself, a great shudder shook the land, and plague spread through the Imperial City, catching even the Son of Heaven in its grasp.

The Emerald Empire would never be the same again.

– *Three Days from Doji Shizue's Dark Tidings*





# Introduction

## What is Legend of the Five Rings?

*Legend of the Five Rings* is a game set in Rokugan, a land of heroic samurai, mystical shugenja, and fearsome creatures from the Shadowlands. It started in 1995 as a collectible card game (CCG) with a new twist: each new set of cards changed the world, as the cards told the story of the Clan War that ravaged Rokugan. Although the shape of the two-year story arc was roughed out during the original all-night design meeting in February 1995, it left scope for variation so that the game's players could have an effect on that story.

The game stayed remarkably true to its initial vision: a high-fantasy samurai epic, exploring the theme of honor against the backdrop of sweeping battles and lightning-fast *iaijutsu* duels. The players exceeded our wildest expectations: we put control of major story threads in their hands, and they treated them with as much reverence as we could have given them ourselves. *L5R* fans are legendary for their honor, sportsmanship, fair play, and eagerness to help out new players.

In the spring of 1997, a few months before the legendary Day of Thunder tournament that concluded the CCG's Clan War storyline, we released the first edition of the *Legend of the Five Rings Role-Playing Game* (RPG). With two years of card game story development behind us, we already knew Rokugan's clans intimately: we'd seen them ally, clash, maneuver for the favor of the Emperor, and strike bargains with dark powers. We decided to set the RPG a few years earlier in the storyline than the CCG, in a time when the Scorpion had not yet made their play to save the Empire by destroying the Emperor, when the wisdom of the Akodo family still guided the Lion Clan, and when the Crab Clan still faithfully guarded the Kaiu Wall against the constant assaults of the Shadowlands.

Over the next three years, sourcebooks like the *Winter Court* series and the *Otosan Uchi* boxed set advanced the story, while the *Way of the Clans* series explored Rokugan's factions in depth. The Scorpion Clan Coup has come and gone, reducing the Scorpion Clan to hiding in the shadows and destroying the Akodo by Imperial fiat. Akodo Toturi, cast down from his place as the Champion of the Lion, has kept his honor despite being stripped of his name, and has begun organizing the lordless ronin. The Naga have awakened from their thousand-year sleep to find a vastly changed world – but one in which their ancient enemy still lurks. And the Clan War ignited when the Lion and the Crane escalated from exchanging insults in the Imperial Court to exchanging volleys of arrows on their mutual border.

Now, in the second edition of the *Legend of the Five Rings RPG*, the Clan War gets underway in earnest. With new schools and spells for your bushi and shugenja, Rokugan is more involving than ever. The revamped mechanics give characters more scope for advancement, encouraging them to become larger than life. And with the chaos of the Clan War beginning to sweep across Rokugan as the Emperor coughs on his sickbed, the opportunities to advance your Clan's fortunes are more prevalent than ever.

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

## What is a Role-Playing Game?

First of all, the object of a role-playing game, like any game, is to have fun. That's the first rule, and it's an important one.

What is a role-playing game? How do you play *Legend of the Five Rings*? *Legend of the Five Rings* may be played with any number of players, though you need at least two. The best groups average about four to six players. One player is chosen as the Game Master (or GM), and the others are all players.

The duty of the players is to enter the world of Rokugan in the persona of a character. A character may be similar in attitude to its player, or it may be wildly different; that is the choice of the player. If you are a player, the idea of role-playing is to take the role of your character, to see the world of Rokugan through your character's eyes, to help your character grow and change, and to accompany your character in their adventures.

The Game Master's duty is to be the story-teller, bringing the player characters to the Empire of Rokugan. If you are a Game Master, the idea of role-playing is to describe the setting, present challenging problems for the players to solve, to portray the villains and supporting cast, and to act as a referee when conflict arises. Being a GM is a difficult job, but you're not alone. The players are



there to help you create a fun and interesting game. So long as everyone participates and has a good time, the game is being played correctly, no matter how much you deviate from the canon rules.

What do you need to play *Legend of the Five Rings*?

First, you need the rulebook you're currently holding. The GM is expected to use these rules to enforce his decisions, though if deviation from them increases the enjoyment of the game, this is encouraged as well.

A copy of the character sheet in the back of this book is also necessary for each player. This will allow the players to keep track of their character's strengths, weaknesses, how much damage he has taken, and what items that character may have discovered while adventuring. Also, make sure everyone has his own pencil. It's a little thing, but it's important. During the final dramatic confrontation, it adds to the mood if people aren't interrupting to borrow each other's erasers.

Legend of the Five Rings uses 10-sided dice, available at most game and hobby stores. These are rolled to resolve in-game actions, using the character's statistics as a guideline. While the character's talent increases the chances of success, the actual roll of the dice adds an exciting element of uncertainty. Each player and the GM will need several dice, though no more than ten are necessary.

Also, the Game Master will need some sort of notebook in which he can keep track of the adventure, write down secret information, and keep track of the statistics for villains and other supporting cast.

Welcome to the Emerald Empire.



### Rokugan, Not Japan

Before we get started, one thing should be made explicitly clear.

Rokugan is not Japan. We have drawn heavily from Japanese history, culture, religion and mythology, but if you are looking for the Land of the Rising Sun, you will not find it here. When playing the *L5R RPG*, don't get bogged down wondering how the Japanese did things or spend time arguing how "it really was" in feudal Japan.

This is Rokugan.

Every day, samurai debate the true nature of honor, glory and the meanings of Rokugan's philosophy and religion. Your characters should be no different.

# The Beginning

*Heroes are born and die, like ordinary samurai. They live, breathe, love and serve their lords. Only one thing sets them apart from all other men.*

*The telling of their tale.*

– Doji Shizue

Do you see the circle I have drawn, child? Where is the beginning? Where is the ending? Of course, you cannot answer, for there is no answer to this question. There must be a beginning and an ending, but there is neither.

Just like the circle, this story has no beginning and no ending. Before this world, there was another. After this world, there will be another, and our souls will fall into that world, carried by the weight of our great and lowly deeds. This is the way of things, child, a way you must learn. Only by learning the way will you find peace in this world of sorrow.

The beginning of this world, as it has been for every world, is with nothing. Nothing was alone in the void, and so it was for countless ages. Then, without warning, Nothing realized that it was alone, and it was afraid. This created one third of the world. Then, Nothing realized it desired a companion. This created another third. Lastly, Nothing realized that its weakness had created the world, and it felt regret, wishing to undo what it had done. Nothing's regret completed the world and made it whole.

When Nothing spoke its words, the world was made. At first, the stuff of the world was like an egg whose heavy yolk had been broken and mixed together with the delicate white. The delicate separated from the heavy and the delicate rose as the heavy fell. The delicate rose ever higher, but some of it hesitated and became the sky and clouds. The rest climbed for what seemed to be forever and created the high Heaven. The heavy stuff fell deeper and deeper, forming nothing but the shapeless chaos of a jellyfish. And so it was for many, many years.





## The Sun and Moon

With the creation of the Heavens came the creation of the Three Gods Whose Names Cannot Be Spoken. They recognized the need to bring form to the earth below, and so together they created a young man and a young woman to give it shape and form. In order to create the man and woman, they used up their names, which is why we cannot say any more of them.

The man and woman were born in Heaven and looked down upon the shapeless earth, seeing need to bring it shape. They descended on a rainbow and found that it was like the jellyfish. The man and woman pondered on how to give it shape, and realized that the only way to do so would be to name it. They thought long about the name to give to the world, and when it was ready, they kissed the formless earth and whispered the name. As the name was spoken, so were their own names. The woman became Amaterasu, the Sun, and the man became Onnotangu, the Moon.

Together, they floated across the sky and about the newly named earth as it took shape. The land separated from the sea and from the fertile soil, plants grew. In the warm oceans, the fishes took their many shapes. In the Heavens, the Fortunes began to take form, born in the dreams of the creatures who slept far below. The Moon and the Sun flew around the world again and again until all the creatures chose their shapes. Then they rested, and looked down to the earth. To their amazement, some of the creatures began to build. These creatures were the Naga, who came before humanity and who vanished into legend in the coming of the Great Sleep.

## Children of the Sun and Moon

Since the beginning of time, Lord Moon has chased Lady Sun about the world. One day, he caught her, and as her light faded, one by one, the Naga fell to sleep. Many months later, Lady Sun gave birth to nine children: Hida, Doji, Togashi, Akodo, Shiba, Bayushi, Shinjo, Fu Leng and Hantei. Lord Moon knew that any children whose veins carried both elements of Sun and Moon would grow to be greater than he, and so, despite the protests of Lady Sun, he swallowed the children, one by one.

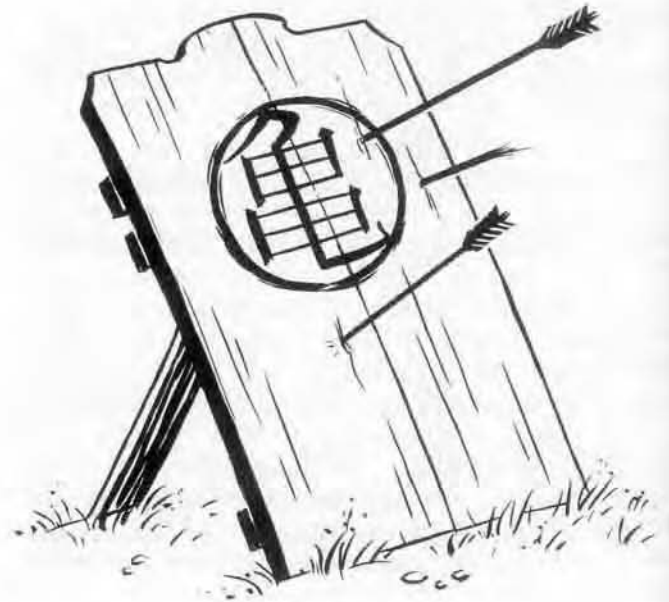
Lady Sun had to think quickly. As Lord Moon swallowed her first child, she said, "My Lord, certainly you must be thirsty after such a meal," and she offered him a cup of sake. Lord Moon thanked her and drank it down. After each child, she repeated her offering and he accepted it, not knowing that each cup had a single drop of poison swimming in the sake. Down each child went into Lord Moon's stomach, and as he swallowed them down, Lady Sun's many

tears fell. As they fell far down from the Heavens to the Earth, they mingled with the stuff of the air and the stuff of the wind. Finally, the tears of the Sun touched the Earth, and where each of them fell, they remained still, silent and sleeping.

Soon, Lord Moon became so drunk and numb that he did not notice when she replaced the last child, Hantei, with a rock. Lord Moon fell into a deep sleep, and as he slept, Lady Sun smuggled Hantei away and hid him from sight. Lady Sun explained to her child that he must rescue his brothers and sisters. She trained him in the arts of combat, preparing Hantei for the moment when his father would awaken.

It is said many years passed during this time, and it is also said many centuries passed. When Lord Moon awoke, he found Lady Sun and the young Hantei waiting for him. The battle that took place was great; in the end, Hantei sliced open his father's belly, and the children and his entrails fell out to the earth below. Lord Moon reached out at the last moment to grasp the children, but caught only little Fu Leng. Hantei then sliced his father's hand, breaking his grip and causing Fu Leng (and his father's severed hand) to follow his brothers and sisters to the earth below. But as Fu Leng fell he reached out at the last moment and grabbed Hantei, dragging his brother down.

Lord Moon's blood fell to the earth, finding the puddles of shapeless form Lady Sun's tears had made. When they found each





other, the blood and the tears mingled and a man and a woman formed from each of the thousands of puddles.

Fu Leng fell apart from his brothers and sisters, into a deep crevasse far to the west. Trapped under the earth, he struggled to reach the surface, but he was no longer the same. His many months under the ground had given him dark knowledge. It poisoned his mind and body, corrupting him into a twisted mockery of who he once was.

## When the Last Akodo Falls

As soon as the Children of Sun and Moon touched the earth, they ceased being divine. While they were not mortal men, they were also no longer gods. They looked about and found the scattered beginnings of mankind, and knew what they must do. Mankind was as naked and naive as newborn children, and the Children of Sun and Moon made this promise: "We will teach you the ways of the world and we will protect you from its evils. Serve us with humility and obedience and we will keep this promise."

The Children of Sun and Moon, except for the trapped Fu Leng, decided they would hold a tournament to see who among them should rule the world. There was a contest of speed, a contest of strength, a contest of wits and many others. Togashi declined to compete in the tournament, for he looked at his brothers and sisters and knew the outcome. The final contest was a great melee.

Lord Hida relied on his great strength to carry him through the battle, but he was swiftly overcome by the speed and accuracy of Shinjo's strikes. Lady Shinjo's quickness proved to be her undoing. Lord Bayushi used her impetuosity to catch her off guard, and with his tricks and distractions, he defeated her. Lord Shiba was too crafty for such trickery, however. He observed Bayushi's tricks and his actions were unmoved by the distractions. Then Lord Shiba turned to meet Lady Doji. The slender and beautiful Doji stood back

and waited for Shiba to strike, knowing that her brother would gain too much knowledge from watching her movements. Shiba's patience ran out; he attacked and was swiftly defeated by Doji's technique. Then Akodo stepped forward. He knew Lady Doji's tactic and used it against her. Finally, only Akodo and Hantei stood on the battlefield. They fought with the love of brothers, but as the battle's intensity increased, so did Akodo's temper. At a crucial moment, Akodo's great fury overcame him. Hantei sensed his brother's rage and used it against him. It was a thoughtless mistake that caused Akodo to lose his duel with Hantei, a mistake that should have cost him his life. Because Hantei spared Akodo, Akodo swore to his brother that he and his family would serve him. Togashi, watching the battle from a distance, whispered: "When the last Akodo falls, so falls the last Hantei."



### The Great Sleep of the Naga

**Before humanity, there were the Naga. They knew that a time would come when the Sun Goddess would fall to sleep, and so, too, would they. But they cared little, for their people had lapsed into quiet contemplation, content in their belief that their civilization would outlive any catastrophe that could befall them. The Great Sleep did come, but not when they expected it, and when Lord Moon caught Lady Sun, the Age of the Kami ushered out the Age of the Naga.**

**Now the Naga have begun to awaken from their Great Sleep, and their scouts have encountered "huu-mans" for the first time.**

formed the Ki-Rin Clan.

For many years, the Empire flourished as Hantei and the Clans built roads, palaces and temples. But one day, an army of foul and putrid creatures attacked the palaces and temples of the Children of Sun and Moon. They were the forces of Fu Leng, who had fallen far away from his brothers and sisters. His mastery of the magic of the underworld was complete. Armed with the spirit-creatures he had summoned from the darkest parts of Jigoku, he planned to destroy the Emerald Empire and claim the souls of mortal man for his own power and glory.

## The Hantei Dynasty

At the end of the tournament, it was decided Hantei's dynasty would rule the others. Hantei declared that the Children of Sun and Moon should build a mighty Empire, an Empire that would show their devotion to their sacred mother Amaterasu. As Hantei was Emperor, each of his brothers and sisters went out into the known lands, gathered together mankind and created the Seven Clans. Hida formed the Crab Clan, Doji formed the Crane. Togashi formed the Dragon Clan and Akodo formed the Lion. Shiba formed the Phoenix Clan while Bayushi formed the Scorpion. Lastly, Shinjo





## The New Way

Hantei and the Clans gathered an army to combat the goblins, ogres and shape-shifting Oni of Fu Leng, but no magic or steel could defeat his evil sorcery. Every battle forced Hantei to fall back. Finally, as his ragged army prepared for one final assault, a small man with a shaved head dressed in robes came to visit the Emperor Hantei. The man introduced himself as "Shinsei," which means "new way." He promised the Emperor that he could defeat the armies of Fu Leng, but Hantei was unimpressed. He commanded that the little man be removed, but when the guards tried to touch Shinsei, he defeated them all without using a weapon. Then, he turned to the Emperor. "Let me take seven warriors with me to your brother. There, I will stop the armies that march on your lands."

Hantei was intrigued by the little man. He spent the entire night questioning Shinsei as his brother Shiba recorded every word. The record of this conversation, called The Tao of Shinsei, can still be found in the Emperor's library and in the libraries of all the Clans. At the end of the evening, Hantei was convinced. He wished to send his brothers and sisters, but the little man shook his head saying, "No. It must be mortal men, for fortune favors the mortal man." Hantei saw the wisdom in Shinsei's words and sent one warrior of each of the Clans along with Shinsei. He called them *samurai*, which means "servant."

Many weeks passed, and the armies of Fu Leng gained strength and ground with every battle. But one day, their power mysteriously ebbed, and at a crucial moment, Hantei's armies charged. The ranks of darkness broke and fled. Hantei knew then that Shinsei had somehow fulfilled his promise. In anticipation of the heroes' return, he prepared a great feast for their victory, but only a single samurai returned. It was the Scorpion, Shosuro, bearing twelve scrolls and an enchanted hand made of obsidian. "Hide these scrolls," she said, "for they were the doom of Fu Leng." Then she died in Bayushi's arms.

The Emperor forbade the breaking of the scrolls' seals and gave the duty of hiding and guarding them to the Scorpion Clan. He then commanded the Crab to stand between the Empire and the dark lands of the underworld, now known as the Shadowlands, to guard Rokugan from its evil. The Crane and Lion Clans swore to protect the Emperor. Doji was selected to be the Emperor's first champion while Akodo led the Emperor's armies on the field of battle. The Dragon and Phoenix chose the paths of contemplation; both Clans took the Tao of Shinsei and incorporated it into their own understanding of sorcery. Lastly, the Ki-Rin Clan left the Empire to find what lay beyond its borders.

## A Thousand Years of Peace

### A Tale of Heroes

Thus, the world began – or so it is told in the record-scrolls of the Seven Great Clans. Thus, the Empire of Rokugan has grown and flourished, rising in power as its culture and art soared into the heavens with enlightenment and grace. Thus, the Imperial Throne has ruled the land for a thousand years, keeping the peace despite feuds, invasions, and treachery.

The Empire of Rokugan is a shining pearl in a dark world, constantly under attack from the evils of the Shadowlands. It is a haven for honor and glory, a land of heroes and of villains. It is a world where strength of will is as important as the power in a samurai's sword-arm. It is a land of jade and silk, a foreign place of magic and mystery. The histories of the Empire are not complete – like any land, the passage of a thousand years has broken fact into fiction, breeding myth and apocrypha. The stories we tell of our heroes are as true as those of Odysseus, Confucius and Cuchulainn, and as real to the Empire as any star in the heavens. The lineage of the Imperial Hantei has been unbroken for over a thousand years, destined to rule the Empire now – and forever.

The time called the "thousand years of peace" was hardly peaceful. Clans fought for territory, gained political strength in the court, and built on the foundations of the philosophy that Shinsei left behind. Emperor Hantei and his brothers and sisters grew old and their children assumed their responsibilities and duties. As the age marched on, each Clan developed its character.

In the span of a thousand years, the population has grown to 30 million, including two million samurai. The strengths of the Seven Clans have ebbed and flowed, political boundaries have been redrawn and fought for many, many times. But some things never change, only grow and mature. Each clan has grown from its beginnings, transforming themselves into a distinct force, each an



individual power to be reckoned with. "Minor Clans" also developed, but none were as significant as the Seven Great Clans that were born of the Children of Sun and Moon.

From these seven Great Houses, many heroes have been born. Their families have served the Empire and the Emperor faithfully, fulfilling their duties with honor and glory throughout the history of Rokugan.

## The Clan of the Crab

For a thousand years, the Crab have steadfastly defended the Emerald Empire from the evil hordes of the Shadowlands. Unfortunately, this duty has left them little time for courtly activities, thus making them the most blunt and uncouth of the Clans. While their courage and honor is never questioned, the other Clans often point to the fact that the evil aura of the Shadowlands lingers on everything it touches, and they wonder how many Crab samurai have gained what the Phoenix call "the Shadowlands Taint."

## The Clan of the Crane

When it came time for Hantei I to wed, all the Clans offered up their most beautiful daughters for consideration. It was the daughter of Doji, from the Crane Clan, that he chose. Ever since that day, every Emperor has chosen a bride from the Crane Clan. That is how the dynasty of Doji has maintained its hold on the Imperial Court: every Emperor has a Crane he calls "Mother." Also, every Emperor has attended a Crane *kenjutsu* (fencing) school. The Kakita School is the most prestigious in the Empire, its students legendary for their

prowess and courage. Ultimately, however, the Crane are seen by the other Clans as sycophants for their relationship with the Emperor.

## The Clan of the Dragon

Since the earliest days of the Hantei dynasty, Togashi and his Clan have remained secreted away in the high mountains of Rokugan. Practicing their strange meditations in privacy, the Dragon Clan the most misunderstood samurai in the Empire. Their spellcasters are fluent in the ways of war, and their samurai are familiar with the ways of sorcery. The strangest of their Clan – the *ise zumi* – shave all hair from their bodies and cover their skin with detailed tattoos. Always enigmatic, the Dragon Clan are sometimes seen as aloof and bizarre by the other Clans.

## The Clan of the Lion

If the Crane are the "left hand" of the Emperor, then the Lion are his right hand. The Lion Clan has always maintained a reverence for the Emperor, a devotion unparalleled anywhere in Rokugan. The samurai of the Lion Clan are some of the most brilliant tacticians the Empire has ever known, commanding small armies against large ones with legendary success. However, some would say the Lion Clan clings too tightly to tradition, and their rigidity has caused much strife between them and the other Clans – especially their chief rival, the Crane.

The Lion suffered a heavy blow during the Scorpion Clan Coup two years ago. Their daimyo, Akodo Toturi, overstepped the bounds of propriety after defeating Scorpion daimyo Bayushi Shoji and his legions. Toturi wrongly assumed that the scion of the Hantei line had been slain; in retaliation, the young Hantei XXXIX stripped him of his title and clan and forbade him to commit seppuku to expiate his offense. He further gave the entire Akodo family a single day to renounce their names – living as ronin or being adopted into the other Lion families – or commit seppuku. Since that day, the Akodo family is no more.

## The Clan of the Phoenix

The word "shugenja" has many meanings in Rokugan: holy man, prophet, sorcerer, priest. The most powerful shugenja in the Empire, without any doubt, belong to the Phoenix Clan. The scribe who stood by the Emperor and wrote down his conversation with Shinsei was the Kami Shiba, founder of the Phoenix, and he brought back all the details and verbal nuances of that conversation to his Clan. No other Clan has a more fundamental understanding of the Old Religion of Rokugan and the "new way" of Shinsei. It was the



### Clan Colors

Members of the Seven Great Clans can almost always be identified by the colors of their formal clothing. The colors most often associated with the clans are:

**Crab:** Blue-gray, plus black, red, and brown.

**Crane:** Sky blue and silver.

**Dragon:** Gold with dark green accents.

**Lion:** Yellows, browns, and earth tones.

**Phoenix:** Red, yellow, and orange.

**Scorpion:** Blood-red and black.

**Unicorn:** Purple, white, and gold.





Phoenix who melded the two into the current belief taught across the Empire. However, in their study of the sublime, the Phoenix samurai have suffered. Days spent in contemplative meditation and reading ancient texts are days unspent learning the finer aspects of swordplay and battle.

## The Clan of the Scorpion

In the beginning, there were Seven Great Houses: each descended from one of the First Hantei's brothers or sisters.

That is no longer the case.

The families of the Scorpion, masters of secrecy and subterfuge, betrayed the Hantei Emperors and nearly destroyed their line. They have been condemned by the ruling Emperor as traitors, honorless dogs and foul murderers.

They are hunted across the Empire.

Still, the few Scorpion who survive remember their duties. If there are secrets to be known, a Scorpion somewhere knows them. They are the masters of double-dealing and subterfuge. Theirs is a clan of spies and information peddlers. Once you strike a deal with a Scorpion, however, you can never clear yourself of the debt.

## The Clan of the Unicorn

Just after Hantei took the Throne, he turned to his sister Shinjo and asked her to ride into the outlands of the Empire to seek allies and look for possible dangers. Shinjo left with a small band of followers – the Ki-Rin Clan – and was not heard from again for eight hundred years. Two hundred years ago, they returned, as the Clan of the Unicorn, with wealth undreamed of, fabulous treasures of foreign make, and their most valuable prize: the war-horses of the west. The Unicorn Clan also brought with it many strange customs and beliefs, making them strangers to the people of Rokugan. Their ignorance of the delicate etiquette of Rokugan has made them appear to be “barbaric” and “uncivilized” at times, but their mighty horses and valiant samurai (all trained in what the Lion call “barbarian tricks”) have made them valuable allies to any who would take them.

## The Great Sleep of the Naga

It is said that once, long before the Kami fell to the earth, a great race of snake-men lived upon the earth and formed their own civilization. When the Kami fell, and the Sun and the Moon fought in the Heavens, the Naga fell into a great sleep. They abandoned

their cities, and a powerful magic held them without age or decay, waiting until the time was right for them to awaken. It was said that these Naga were able to change their shape into many forms. They practiced art and war much like mortals do today, but in the age of Naga, there were no samurai.

It was said that they also worshiped the Thousand Fortunes who dance in the stars and on the snow-capped mountains, much as do the priests of the Empire. They knew that a time would come when the Sun Goddess would fall to sleep, and so, too, would they. But they cared little, for their people had lapsed into quiet contemplation, content in their belief that their civilization would outlive any catastrophe that could befall them. They were proud, and that was their downfall. The Great Sleep did come, and as Hantei battled his brothers and sisters on the hilltop that would become the greatest city of the Empire, the Age of the Kami ushered out the Age of the Naga.

That, too, was once considered only a myth – until the Naga came out of their sleep, moving from the forests that had held their torporous bodies. They came to the Empire with strange weapons and practices, and their ways are foreign to the samurai of Rokugan. Yet some clans, notably the Dragon and the Crane, show interest in dealing with these strange beast-men.

No one knows why the Naga have awakened, or what their purpose may be. Many believe they seek the destruction of the Empire, but others say they come in peace.

Only time will show which may be the truth.

## Minor Clans

Sometimes, a samurai will perform such a heroic or selfless act that his daimyo rewards him with title and land beyond that of a normal reward.

The Minor Clans of Rokugan are the families of these samurai. While they are not considered equals to the Great Clans, they are still regarded as daimyo. The most wealthy and influential minor Clan is the Mantis Clan, whose homelands are off the coast of Rokugan on the Islands of Spice and Silk.

Some of the other significant minor Clans (and families) are:

- The Badger Clan (Ichiro) (*now defunct*)
- The Centipede Clan (Mochi)
- The Dragonfly Clan (Tonbo)
- The Falcon Clan (Toritaka)
- The Fox Clan (Kitsune)
- The Hare Clan (Usagi) (*now defunct*)
- The Sparrow Clan (Suzume)
- The Wasp Clan (Ashinagabachi)



# "Doubt"

Sukune could not remember his mother's face.

Try as he might, he could not. She had died when he was young, a troublesome birth. Sukune had been weak and sickly since, always the butt of his siblings' jokes and his father's disdain. Now, with the need for skilled officers to lead the armies north, Kisada had finally recognized his son's tactical prowess. Sadly, now that he had found his father, he could no longer remember his mother.

The young samurai stood on a hill crest, watching the armies of the Crab march. They moved at his command. At his signal, they were ready to march and die, because the Great Bear had ordered it so. A sea of blue-grey sashimono and great standards flapped in the morning breeze, the blood-red mon of the Crab burning bright in the morning sun. The Crab were eager for war.

"Will they be so eager," Sukune whispered, "when they discover who our allies are?"

"They are Crabs," whispered an oily voice. Kuni Yori appeared, seemingly from nowhere, at the young officer's side. "They know their duty."

"It does not feel right," Sukune replied, not looking at the shugenja. "We have spent ten centuries fighting the Shadowlands. Why do we ally ourselves with them?"

"They do as the Great Bear commands," Yori answered coolly. "We shall use these beasts and toss them aside when we are done. Do you doubt Lord Kisada intends anything but the noblest ends?"

"I only wonder at the quality of the advice he has been given," Sukune replied, meeting the shugenja's gaze evenly. Sukune did not trust Yori. Something was not quite right behind his eyes, though Father seemed to approve of him.

"Lord Kisada knows what he is doing, Sukune," Yori said tersely. "The Empire languishes under the rule of one who is weak. You of all people should understand the price of weakness."

Sukune scowled. "And what price will the Shadowlands demand?"

"One of no consequence, I imagine," Yori answered. "Lord Kisada would not have entered into an agreement if the end result had not been well worth it. With all of the Empire at stake, what price would be too great?"

Sukune said nothing for a moment, then turned to watch the armies again. "I am keeping my eye on you, Yori," he said simply.

Kuni Yori nodded. He studied the boy's youthful face. So unlike his father's.

So weak.

"I do not take offense that you doubt me, boy," Yori said with a sigh. "Lord Kisada's confidence is all I require. You shall see my wisdom in time." Yori turned and moved away down the hill, dark robes seeming to hardly brush the ground.

Sukune watched the shugenja with a sneer. He felt a terrible chill in his heart as the armies marched north and his thoughts turned to the battle ahead.

Why could he not remember his mother's face?







# Rokugan

Rokugan is a rocky, mountainous land, surrounded by mountains on three sides (north, west and south) and an ocean to the east and south. There are nearly two hundred volcanoes, approximately fifty of them active, and hundreds of hot springs dotted across the mountainous regions. Only about a fifth of the land is flat; the majority is rolling hillsides, steep gorges, narrow valleys, ravines and mountains. The closer one gets to the ocean, the flatter the land gets. This is where the farms can be found. The nobility have used the mountainous region to their advantage, building castles in tight or inaccessible passes. The flatlands are used for farms, ports, and cities.

There are many rivers running through Rokugan, flowing from mountain springs across the landscape and emptying out into the ocean. Cities and rice farms build up around the flatlands where the rivers run, on stilts for protection from the spring floods.

The climate is diverse. Winter is short, but cold. Summer is long and sultry. Fall is cool and spring is wet. Just one look at the buildings and clothing of Rokugan can tell a foreigner the Rokugani find summer's heat far more unpleasant than the chill of winter. Rokugan experiences heavy snowfall during the winter, so much so that travel nearly grinds to a halt.

The two largest cities of the Empire are its capital, Otosan Uchi, and the trading city of Ryoko Owari. From these two hubs, commerce flows to the provinces of the noble daimyo and their servant samurai. Though many other powerful cities dot the lands of the Empire, these two trade centers - one in the north, and one in the south - are considered the twin heartbeats of the nation.

## The Fury of the Elements

Rokugan is no stranger to disaster. Over the thousand years of Hantei rule, the Emerald Empire has seen hundreds of earthquakes, tsunami and hurricanes.



Earthquakes occur regularly. At least once a year, a minor tremble is felt under the earth. Earthquakes can occur as slight tremors that rumble for a few moments, or as great quakes that rip down buildings and pull up the earth for minutes at a time. There have been five great earthquakes in the history of Rokugan, all of which were quickly followed by a tsunami.

Tsunami is the Rokugani word for "tidal wave." After an earthquake, Rokugani always begin preparation for a tsunami. They can usually count on the tsunami arriving within three days at the most. Even minor quakes can cause tsunami, but the severity of the quake always foreshadows the severity of the tsunami.

Hurricanes are also frequent visitors to Rokugan's shores. These great storms destroy entire villages, but also bring great bounty to the fishermen when they are over.

Another sign of nature's force takes the shape of volcanoes. As mentioned above, there are many volcanoes in Rokugan, not all of them dormant. The Rokugani people usually build their villages in the lowlands, but the nobility builds its fortresses high in the mountains, near the threat of eruption. Although the mountain fortresses are not built near the active volcano chains, most Rokugani know the (doubtless apocryphal) tale of a group of shugenja who cast a powerful ritual that awakened the fire of the earth to devour an enemy's castle...

## The Provinces of the Clans

By the dictates of the Emperor, all land in Rokugan belongs to the Imperial Hantei. It is ceded to the Great Houses for their use, and taxes are collected yearly in order to support the populace of the Empire.

Each of the Great Houses has its own territories, provinces, cities and other holdings, centered around the ancestral palace of their founder.

The lands of the Crab are rocky, mountainous, and border the wastes of the Shadowlands. Over three hundred years ago, their clan built a tremendous wall of stone, to keep out the beasts and Oni of Fu Leng's land, and that wall still stands as the greatest defense the Empire has ever known. The palaces of the Crab dot the wall like watchtowers, looking down upon their enemy with a careful eye. The Crab lands do not grow much rice or foodstuffs, and so they are forced to trade heavily to keep their troops alive. However, their mountains are rich in iron and other ores, and they are the finest weaponsmiths and armorers in all of Rokugan.

The Crane lands, in comparison, are filled with plenty and prosperity. As the closest family to the Emperor, the provinces of the Crane are wealthy and covered with rice and fields of grain. Their



### The Celestial Order

The Emperor, who is the first son of Amaterasu, is at the apex of Rokugan's social order. All land and all property is his; he permits his loyal retainers in the Clans to manage it for him.

Ranking just below the Emperor are the lords of the Six Clans; just after them, approximately coequal, are the lords of the families and lords of the minor clans. Below the daimyo are the samurai caste (bushi and shugenja), those who live and die to serve the lords of Rokugan.

Below them are the "half-people," the *heimin*, including the monks, farmers, craftsmen, artisans and merchants. Lastly are the "non-people," the *hinin*, including geisha, morticians, and torturers.

palaces are opulent, artistically designed to take advantage of their sea-cliffs and magnificent forests.

Commercial routes weave through the lands of the Crane like veins and arteries, keeping the Empire's outermost provinces fed and clothed in rich silks. Their lands stretch along most of Rokugan's ocean paths, and of the Great Houses, only the Crane have any expertise in shipping and utilizing the ocean waves for transport.

The high, rugged mountains of the Dragon are located in the far northern reaches of the Empire. The families of the Dragon pride themselves on their independence, making food grow wherever the land could possibly bear fruit. Though the tops of the mountains are covered in snow more than half the year, the palaces that hide in the mountain crevasses are comfortable and sturdy, protected from weather and the assault of enemies by the great cliffs and twisting roads that cling to the far northern marches of this solitary clan.

Of all the lands of the Empire, none stretches so far and wide as do the golden plains of the Lion. Though they command the largest portion of Imperial lands, the Lion clan is not wealthy. All their money goes toward the upkeep of their massive armies, and encouraging all preparedness for war. Their constant feud with the families of the Crane do not leave them much time to develop or cultivate their otherwise profitable farmland, and the demands of travel through their lands (located in the heart of the Empire) restricts their use of land for other poses. Although the Lion are by





no means poor, their fields have little to offer beyond food and a rich supply of copper, located in the southern provinces, along the Spine of the World mountain range that breaks Rokugan in two.

The Phoenix provinces lie along the upper coast of the Empire, hugging the edge of the mountains and stretching down to the cold northern ocean. Their forests are lush and undisturbed, and spirits live deep within their shadowed mountains, keeping to the sacred groves and holy places that cover the Phoenix lands.

The Phoenix are a peaceful clan, and their open palaces show their philosophy. Beautiful, ornate gardens and elaborate shrines and temples dot the landscape, shrouded by the thick green canopy of forest and glen.

Once, the Scorpion lands were beautiful and forested, with wide rivers of fresh water sparkling in the sunlight. But since the fall of the Great House, the Scorpion lands have become as bitter and empty as the heart of their people. Their palaces, once labyrinthine and regal, now lie in smoking ruins. Their forests, too, have been burned, and their plains torn apart by the iron-shod feet of marching armies.

Little remains in the Scorpion lands save the slowly-moving rivers, and the secrets hidden somewhere deep beneath the darkened fields.

The gentle windswept provinces of the Unicorn are as untamed and wild as their steeds, rolling from hill through valley and over a wide lake shore with gleeful abandon. Although they do not produce much rice, they are sufficient, and the diamond mines in the southern mountains provide the clan with an almost inexhaustible supply of wealth.

Unicorn palaces are strange, built with wide pathways and high ceilings, pointed towers and curved walls in the style of the foreign lands which had once been the clan's home. Those who visit Unicorn lands find them to be somewhat disturbing, but somehow, strangely beautiful.

Only one place in the Empire is not claimed by the Seven Great Houses. It is a single tremendous forest, reaching for hundreds of miles. The trees stand wider than three men abroad, and reach into the sky with massive limbs of iron oak and thick pine. This ancient and mystical forest is known as the Shinomen, and has been the safe haven of the Naga for over a thousand years, as they slept beneath the powerful magic of their people. Now that they have awakened, the Naga seek to rebuild their sprawling cities within the forest.

## The Samurai Class

While the culture of Rokugan may seem quite foreign, it is very much like the feudal Europe familiar to fans of history and fantastic literature. The following section is devoted to the regimented societal structure that makes up Rokugan. While it may appear intimidating at first, it is in fact quite simple. Rokugani society is based on a hierarchical structure called "The Celestial Order." The Rokugani believe that everything is part of a divine pattern. Even humanity has a role to play in this order. They believe that everyone has a destiny, and must work toward fulfilling it, even if it means displeasure, pain or death; for as terrible as one's path may be, an even more terrible fate awaits those who try to cheat their destiny.

### Three Tiers

Rokugan is very formal. The universe operates under a tiered structure: men and women are born into one of the three tiers of the Order, and must live the rest of their lives in the roles they were born to play. There are times when those of one tier move to another, but they are the exception rather than the rule.

There are three classes of people in Rokugan: Nobility (those who make war), Peasants (those who work), and Clergy (those who pray). Those who fall outside of this structure are considered "non-people" (or *hinin*) and are not protected by the Emperor's justice.

Rokugan itself is a feudal state. There is a single Emperor who owns all the land. Everything under the sun belongs to the Emperor because his bloodline traces back to the first Hantei who won the Tournament of Sun and Moon. Lesser nobles (*daimyo*) swear fealty to the Emperor. They govern the territory they are given and make certain the Emperor's laws are obeyed and enforced. In exchange, they gain the right to tax the land they govern. Likewise, a *daimyo* can give some of his land in exchange for fealty. Peasants work the land in exchange for protection from other nobles. Unfortunately for the peasants, the "feudal contract" is a little lopsided in Rokugan.



Daimyo and samurai are not required to protect the peasants. Those that do so act out of courtesy rather than obligation.

## Samurai: Those Who Make War

The highest social class in Rokugan is the warrior, or samurai. All those who are born into a samurai family are considered samurai regardless of their profession. The Emperor and his family are the first rung of the samurai ladder. The major daimyo of the Great Clans are on the second rung and the daimyo of the families are on the third. The fourth rung are the samurai who have sworn fealty to the family daimyo, and under them on the fifth rung are those who have been born into the family, but have not taken up warrior training. Lastly are the ronin ("wave men", called so because of their wandering nature), the masterless warriors who wander the countryside. Characters created with the system in *The Book of Water* are members of the samurai caste (except, of course, for the Naga, who either stand apart from the Order or fall into the *hinin* category, depending on whom you ask).

Only a samurai is allowed to wear the daisho: two swords tucked into the belt, or obi. The first is a katana (long sword) and the second is called a wakizashi (short sword). Samurai live by a code of conduct called bushido. This complicated system governs all of a samurai's actions. See the Bushido section for more information.

Some Clans are highly devoted to the religion of Rokugan, while others are rather less so. The samurai of the Phoenix Clan must study many holy texts as well as learning bugei

(fighting skills). They undergo a religious ceremony upon their receiving of the daisho, in which the front of their heads are shaved and anointed by a shugenja (priest, someone who can talk to the Fortunes and have them answer; see the Religion section). The Crab Clan samurai do not hold with such frivolities. A Crab learns how to fight and how to die. That is all he needs to know.



## Political Ranks

*"The will of the Emperor is the will of the land."*

*"The death of an Emperor is the winter, and his rebirth is the springtime rain. What can harm our Empire, while the favored child of Amaterasu tends it?"*

*- Shinjo Yokatsu*

In addition to advancing within the elaborate social system in Rokugan, a great deal of the Empire's politics come from moving within a single social level: for example, a samurai might wish to be a great general, or a courtier might hope to become of the Emperor's advisors in his court. These 'political rankings' may appear arbitrary, but they are strictly adhered to in the Emerald Empire, and their relevance is taken into account every day. Further, such moves are much easier to achieve than advancing to a higher social class: it is likely that a samurai maiden of low family might be allowed to marry into a more prestigious one if her dowry is exceptional, while it is extremely unlikely that a heimin will be allowed to marry even the lowest samurai.

## The Kuge

The *kuge*, a social class of inherited nobility intertwined with powerful positions in the central government, are the 'elite' of the samurai class. A wide social disparity has always existed between the floating grandeur of the Imperial Capital and the harsh reality of life in the outlying provinces. The *kuge*





includes the Hantei, Otomo and Seppun of the Imperial House, the daimyo of each Great Clan, and the members of their immediate families.

While there are thousands of samurai in the Empire with the family name 'Doji', only a very few are actually part of the Doji noble house. Others, including feudal daimyo who care for the Doji lands, are actually adopted into the house. These lesser house members, or 'vassal families,' actually have the house name (in this case, Doji), but in many cases also have their own family name (such as Tsume Retsu from the adventure *Honor's Veil*). These vassal houses are not considered part of the kuge class, although they are samurai and members of the nobility. They are also considered members of the noble house to whom they owe fealty, and commonly introduced in court as a simple member of their noble house (Retsu would be listed in the Imperial scrolls as Doji Retsu, and the house name 'Tsume' would not appear). Any samurai who is so bold as to use his own personal house name in official matters, rather than the name of his lord's house, insults his lord's name.

## The Buke

Below the kuge are the *buke*, the hereditary/official military class. The buke make up the bulk of the samurai caste: the generals, warlords and other powerful but non-landed individuals of a clan. Originally formed of farmers gathered to serve in the military of the Seven Clans, the first buke rebelled against high taxation. From them came a form of proto-samurai: farmers and lesser samurai who were trained as bushi and could be called to battle in short order. The buke class, then, encompasses the gamut of warring types, from the lowest foot-soldier (ashigaru) to the most illustrious governor-general (daimyo).



The buke also includes the lesser sons and daughters of the kuge, those who would not inherit their family's power or land. Often, these buke are treated as less than their siblings, as if they had fallen from the Celestial Order by virtue of their birth. They are expected to regain their position and maintain their family's good name by their deeds.

## Ji-samurai

Ji-samurai, or 'half-samurai', are the lesser samurai warriors from the 'vassal' families. They are expected not only to maintain their family's honor, but to raise their social and political position through glory in battle. Consequently, these warriors often have to be forcibly restrained from throwing their lives away in the heat of battle.

Traditionally, the ji-samurai class also includes ronin, half-samurai, and those who have been given samurai status but have not yet found a daimyo to serve. These 'wave-men' are reviled through the Empire, seen as little better than samurai criminals without honor or purpose. Often, they are conscripted into armies and forced to fight for daimyo of the various clans, given little more than food and water in exchange for their service. In many ways, it is the best life a masterless man can expect; the chance to die with honor.




## The Bonge

At the bottom of the political scale are the masses of commoners, *hinin* and *heimin*, known as the *bonge*. This class includes not only the peasants and merchant class, but also the social 'untouchables' known collectively as *eta*. These poor unfortunates have the lowest social ranking besides *gaijin* (non-Rokugani).

Because of the lack of segregation in the political field, non-*eta* commoners are therefore eager to distinguish themselves any way possible, hoping to one day be allowed to join the ranks of the *buke*, or be accepted (by marriage) into the lesser, 'vassal' families of the *kuge*. Members of the *bonge* class are unable to approach the Emperor or the great houses of the *kuge* under any circumstances, although if they rise to become members of the *buke* class, they are allowed to speak on military matters.

Geisha are not officially included in the *bonge*, but are considered a separate class. Because of their position, they are allowed to speak to members of the samurai class on many occasions, and are expected to comport themselves as if they were samurai, although they gain none of the rank, social prestige or political power held by the *kuge* or vassal families.

## Heimin: Half-People

Heimin, or "half-people," are the common folk. The highest commoner in the Order is the farmer, for he provides what is most necessary in life: food. Without the farmer, everyone goes hungry. Next is the artisan, for he creates things that people need. The merchant is lowest on the structure since he does not create anything; he only sells what others create. It is quite legal for a samurai to kill *heimin* if his honor has been compromised by their rudeness. What constitutes "rudeness" is usually up to the samurai who has been offended, so *heimin* always try to be as humble as possible in the presence of samurai.

## Hinin: Non-People

The *hinin* ("non-people") include criminals, entertainers (including actors, musicians and geisha), charlatans (stage magicians and tricksters), and gamblers. Also included are the *eta*. *Eta* are people who inherit "dirty" jobs that involve touching corpses of humans and animals. *Rokugani* – with the notable exception of occasional Unicorn – detest touching anything dead. They believe that touching corpses (or anything relating to corpses, such as blood) stains their souls. Jobs such as leather workers, morticians, and torturers, are left to the *eta*. While a samurai may need a good reason to kill a farmer, killing *hinin* is not considered a crime because they are not actually a part of the Order. However, killing certain *hinin* (such as a samurai's favorite geisha) can cause serious repercussions.

## Ninja

Ninja are considered *eta*, and therefore non-persons. It would not be a crime to kill a ninja, and no consequences could be derived from such an action. A samurai would lose face for dealing with a known ninja, but no one knows for sure that the ninja actually exist. The threat of ninja is all that is needed to make peasant and noble alike shudder beneath their kimono. A shuriken left behind in a dead servant's body is warning enough, but is not concrete evidence of the existence of ninja.



## Women

In Rokugan, a woman's caste – not her gender – constitutes her position in the Celestial Order. Women are equal to men as far as caste; however, there are a few differences that must be noted.





## Samurai-ko

*Samurai maidens who remain faithful to their lords get their names in history books. The ones who fall find their names in tragic love songs.*

– Doji Shizue

One of the favorite stories of Rokugani poets is of the sister of a murdered samurai who put on her brother's armor and took up his sword to avenge him. "Hitomi's Tale" has moved many young women to become bushi, and has justified the act in the eyes of many daimyo. The samurai ritual of changing one's name has brought many samurai-ko – female samurai – to take the name "Hitomi" upon taking the daisho, including the renowned Dragon Clan samurai-ko Mirumoto Hitomi.

One of the vows that some samurai-ko take during their initiation ceremony is a vow of celibacy (a samurai-ko cannot be devoted to both a daimyo and a lover or husband, after all). If a celibate samurai-ko is found to have a lover, she often renounces her station and joins the ranks of a monastery. Of course, the key word is "discovered." There are many samurai-ko who take lovers, and every poet's repertoire has several stories of samurai and samurai-ko who doom themselves for love. Samurai-ko are treated as samurai warriors in the Celestial Order. They are no different from male samurai in that regard.

Samurai-ko are treated with the deference due a lady of their station, ignoring their ability as a bushi unless they are dressed and prepared for war. If a samurai-ko is dressed in 'mannish' attire, she is referred to with her military title, in addition to (or instead of) her 'social' one. Samurai-ko have all the rights of men, including the ability to rule a house or land, speak for their clan, and go to war on behalf of their daimyo. In no way are they restricted in their actions, so long as they dress and act appropriately to their station.

Samurai-ko, however, are also female, and there are many social conventions to which female members of the samurai class are expected to conform. Women are expected to speak more softly than men, use smaller gestures and motions, and move more slowly. While samurai-ko are not always expected to be perfect 'ladies', they are still expected to remember their sex. Unmarried women and men, for example, are not allowed

to be alone together; thus, female samurai-ko often have an 'honor retainer', a person of their family who follows them about, ensuring that they follow all proper conventions and are never alone with a man who might stain their virtue.

## Wives

Marriage in Rokugan has nothing to do with love. A marriage is strictly a business matter, arranged by the parents of the couple and a middle man. One is not necessarily expected to love one's spouse. However, a slight against a samurai's wife is a slight against her husband.

In Rokugan, the wife handles all of the money and is in charge of the household in every respect. A male samurai is given a stipend by his wife which he is allowed to spend in any way he wishes, but the wife determines how the rest of the money is allocated. She manages the finances, hires workers to repair and improve the house and handles all of the entertainment for visitors. However, other than that, a wife has little to do but gossip with the wives of other samurai and read the various romantic tales (called "pillow books") that are sold in the marketplace.

## Lady Doji and Lady Shinjo

Traditionally, when a woman is married, she takes the name of her husband. However, when Lady Doji and Shinjo were married, their husbands took the Lady's name to retain the family's link to the Sun Goddess. In fact, it is because of Lady Doji that the tradition of the woman being in charge of the household came about. She insisted on managing her husband's household while he went away to war and served as magistrate to their lands.

## Geisha

While there is very little romance to be found in a marriage, the same cannot be said for affairs outside a marriage. Although a samurai's extramarital affairs are ignored by society, he is expected to be discreet, so he does not



insult his wife's family. When samurai seek such company, they often find it in the arms of a geisha. Geisha are entertainers. They are trained in the arts of music, poetry and conversation. While highly respected for their skills, they are still only hinin in the Celestial Order.

When entering a geisha tea-house, samurai are expected to leave their katana at the door (to avoid bloodshed within). Legends are filled with samurai falling in love with geisha, and the danger that such passion brings. A samurai is expected to have such passion for one thing only, and that is the protection of his lord. Other passions compromise the samurai's devotion to his lord, and are frowned upon greatly in Rokugan.



*"The Tao is a task to be studied,  
A hymn to be learned,  
And a memory to be remembered..."*

– Tetsuya

The Celestial Order does not apply to mankind alone. The gods of Rokugan – commonly referred to as "Fortunes" – are also part of the great universal machine, and they must obey its rigid laws and codes as well.

There are many, many Fortunes. For every village, city, family, Clan, grotto, mountain, river and tree, there is a Fortune that watches and guides the life of that village, city, etc. The shugenja of Rokugan are educated in the religion of the Fortunes. They learn the names and mannerisms of the Fortunes as well as rituals and prayers to petition and appease them.

Also, to a certain degree, shugenja are educated in the philosophy of the Five Rings that was taught to the Emperor one thousand years ago. Each Clan has a different opinion on "Shinseism," but all regard his teachings with respect.

## Forms of Worship

There are two main religions in Rokugan: veneration of the Seven Fortunes and the study of the Tao. Although unified by Imperial edict, these belief systems have little in common besides their practical, straight-forward methods. They both speak of 'becoming one with the universe' and encourage a practitioner to seek enlightenment – the understanding of the Five Rings of Nature.

One of the oldest religions in Rokugan, the ancient religion of the Isawa is still practiced without interruption in the lost city of Gisei Toshi. To the Isawa, the 'Way of the Gods,' Kami-no-michi, is the first religion of Rokugan, and the Seven Fortunes still hold their prestigious place in the heavens throughout the Empire. The Rokugani believe the world is filled with supernatural beings with the power to affect their lives. These are the Thousand Fortunes: Lady Sun and Lord Moon, Ebisu, Bishamon, Inari and a myriad of nature spirits. Every rock, river and grove has its own deity. The kami protect villages, bring rain, protect fishermen on their journeys and much more. When angry, they cause calamity and hardship, bad luck, torrential storms and illness. Properly appeased, they bring good fortune, health and calm weather. At important times such as birth, harvest, or calamity, Rokugani call upon the Fortunes to bless their lives.

Perhaps the oldest of the religions in Rokugan, ancestor worship venerates the souls of those who have gone before. Rokugani believe the spirits of the dead live on in a portion of Jigoku known as Yomi, the Underworld, where they work off negative karma accumulated in life. One's ancestors, honored spirits free of their tasks in Yomi and compelled to maintain contact with the mortal world, watch over the family. They provide aid in the form of advice, or reproach



### The Three Sins

**The Three Sins committed by Nothing are what formulates the basic foundation of Rokugan belief. All three sins – Fear, Desire and Regret – poison the mind and keep it from acting with certainty.**

**When the Three Sins are portrayed in temples, bowls of pebbles are provided so those who come to the temple can throw rocks at the images before they leave.**





in the form of hauntings. People make offerings of food, prayer and incense to their ancestors, in gratitude for the gift of life and a way to ensure future prosperity.

The Kitsu, Lion Clan shugenja, teach that the living can help free a soul languishing in Yomi by offering prayers and incense. Thus, honoring one's ancestors not only encourages good fortune, it helps speed the ancestor to reincarnation. Neglected ancestors, or those who don't have anyone to pray for them, often return to feed on the living or terrorize a disrespectful family. Angry spirits who died a shameful or ignominious death stalk the world, seeking revenge before they can be reborn. Properly cared-for spirits, however, sometimes return to provide guidance or supernatural aid to their descendants.

Monks and shugenja serve the needs of the Fortunes, as well as providing for the blissful rest of the spirits in Yomi and Jigoku, thus helping to unify the two religions. Their position in the political strata is an extremely limited one, restricted to serving the needs of others through the foundation of the religions of Rokugan. Monks are not expected to involve themselves in political situations; therefore they are granted no permission to approach or address a daimyo or superior in any manner relating to worldly concerns. However, where matters of faith and enlightenment are at hand, the monk (or shugenja) is given full honors and welcomed at the side of the daimyo, the court, or the Emperor

## A Samurai's Life

Like the seasons and the tides, human life travels through a cycle. To deny this cycle is to deny that one is part of the order, and to deny one's place in it. Not only is this dishonorable to the gods, but also to one's ancestors who expect better of a young samurai.

### Birth and Youth

When a child is born, it is born into the caste of its mother and father. Childhood in Rokugan is very different than childhood in the

west. Children are not considered adults until they go through the gempukku ceremony (q.v.). A child is not a "little adult." He is a child who has not been taught the rules of adulthood, and therefore must be treated with kindness and leniency. Once he is seven, a child is sent to a school where he spends many years training in the ways of his caste and profession.

### Coming of Age: The Gempukku Ceremony

Young samurai are raised in schools where they are taught history, swordplay, language, battle tactics and philosophy. It takes approximately nine years to finish the training, and students rarely – if ever – see their parents. At some point between the years of 15 and 21 (typically at sixteen), a child performs a rite of passage called *gempukku*, and is, for the first time, considered an adult. Children are often expected to take a new name – their adult name – at this time.

### Marriage

Marriages are arranged by the parents of the bride and bridegroom, and only occasionally do the two find themselves in the throes of romance. A middleman frequently arranges the marriage; this is very often a member of the Crane Clan, as they are always aware of births in the noble families of Rokugan. The two are usually introduced to each other sometime after their gempukku ceremony.

On the wedding day, the bride wears white, the color that is symbolic of death, to show that she is now dead to her family. During the ceremony, she peels away the white vestments to show a red dress underneath, symbolizing her rebirth. After the ceremony, there is little chance for romance to bloom. The bride is taken away by the groom's mother to be taught the skills she will need to be a good wife while the husband goes on a pilgrimage to a holy place to "celebrate." The celebration usually includes the samurai meditating on this new phase of his life and the changes he will need to make to his lifestyle.

### Love

While the concept of love is often tragic in Western literature, it is also found to be uplifting. Not so in Rokugan. Passionate love has no place in a samurai's heart; there is only room for complete, unquestioning devotion to one's daimyo. Any other emotions conflict with one's devotion, clouding loyalty. Passionate love is often



frowned upon in samurai circles; it is an emotion for “lower people” such as courtesans and geisha. Only very rarely does a love story end happily for samurai. While this may be an accepted truth in Rokugan, lovers who can overcome the odds are often seen as heroic and honorable, while those who fail are tragic and sometimes even vilified.

## Inkyo: Coming of Old Age

In Rokugan, a samurai is considered a “young man” until he reaches his twentieth year. Then, he is “middle aged” until he is forty. On their fortieth birthday, it is considered proper for samurai to shave their heads, change their names and become a monk to prepare for the next lifetime.

It is considered proper, but that doesn't mean it's a universal truth. Crab Clan daimyo Hida Kisada, now in his mid-fifties, has no intention of shaving his head and joining a monastery. Likewise, the “Gray Crane” Kakita Toshimoko also shows no sign of wanting to prepare for the next life; he isn't done with this one yet.

When the Emperor or a daimyo retires, leaving a young samurai in their stead, they often remain in the court as an “advisor.” Of course, the rest of the court recognizes who the real authority is, which makes the youth sitting on the Throne a puppet monarch until their predecessors pass on.

## Death and Seppuku

Fear of death is not only improper, it is also dishonorable. Because the Rokugani believe in a spirit world where the souls of the departed go to await rebirth, they expect to join their ancestors in the spirit world after death. Two worlds – Jigoku, the land of the dead, and Yomi, the ancestral haven – await the samurai after he has finished with this life. Reincarnation is a fact of life: once a soul has ‘unlearned’ its life in Jigoku, it is returned to Rokugan to again attempt to reach the perfection that is attainable through enlightenment.

This astonishing courage in the face of mortality can make for short-lived samurai. Often, when a samurai fails in his duties, or his courage is questioned, the need to prove his mettle arises: the ultimate test of courage.

*Seppuku* is that test, the ritual of proving one's courage in the face of death. Before the ceremony, a samurai spends the day in a temple (dedicated to a family deity) writing poems and letters to beloved ones. At the end of the day, the samurai kneels on a mat to protect the holy soil from his blood, draws his wakizashi and makes three deep cuts in his torso. He must not cry out in pain, and often times a close friend or relative will stand behind him, his katana

drawn and ready to make “the final cut” lest his friend disgrace himself with a sound.

Samurai do not commit seppuku to protect their own honor, but to protect their families' honor. It is, perhaps, the most misunderstood aspect of samurai culture, and every game master must put great thought into including seppuku in their game.



A heimin's life is very different from the life of a samurai. A farmer spends his entire life relying on the predictability of nature and the certainty of the seasons. When disasters occur, the farmer is convinced that he has done something wrong to bring misfortune to his house. Farmers are always suspicious of strangers and change, as they both disrupt the pattern; they can mean nothing but trouble.

## The Seasons

The four seasons define the life of a farmer. Spring is full of rain, making the ground good for planting. Plums and cherries mark the beginning of spring, while the falling of the cherry blossoms tells the farmer summer is on its way. Summer is a season to be endured rather than enjoyed. It is the time when rice is growing, and little manual labor can be done without drawing a sweat. This is also the time of typhoons which ruin all the farmer's hard work. Autumn is a welcome season. The temperature cools down and the rice is harvested. Winter is short in Rokugan, but bitter and cold. Winter is the time for brewing sake (a rice wine that is one of the two most popular drinks in Rokugan), weaving silk and other cloths, and practicing other industrial skills. Of course, the end of winter brings the beginning of spring when market places open and the crafts that were made in the winter can be sold and traded.





## The Fruits of the Farm

Rice is not the only crop on most farms; they also produce fruits, nuts, and vegetables. The most valuable commodity of a farm is, of course, silk. Silk is so valuable that even bad silk is kept to be sold in the marketplace in the spring. Rokugan's two favorite beverages – tea and sake – are also grown and brewed in the farms of Rokugan.

## Craftsmen and Merchants

While craftsmen and merchants may fall very low in the social order of Rokugan, they are also the richest. Samurai and peasant alike always need cobblers, carpenters, coopers, smiths and other craftsmen to repair or replace their tools, weapons, houses and clothes.

In Otosan Uchi, the capital city of the Empire, a samurai can find bladesmiths, sword-sharpeners, scabbard workers, silversmiths, lacquerers, fletchers, dye-makers, perfumers, jewelers, scores of sake houses and tea houses, and the best turtle soup in the Empire. All of these craftsmen find steady work from the peasantry, the citizens of the city, and the lord of the land.

## Economy

The basis of Rokugan's economy is called a "koku", which is enough rice to feed a man for a year (approximately forty gallons). A single koku is broken down into 5 bushels, or silver coins called ichibukin or "bu." Each bushel can be further broken down into ten copper pennies called "zeni." The actual monetary system of the Empire breaks down like this: 1 koku = 5 bu = 50 zeni.

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

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

The desire to represent the value of one's farms was the original intent of koku, but the fluctuating value of coinage made it nearly

impossible to discern its exact merit. Ambitious courtiers and wily merchants quickly devised methods for making the koku system work for them, and it is now fairly common to find them trading one clan's koku for that of another to make a profit.

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

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

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



## "The First Step"

Two men strode down the mountain pass. Both were Dragons, but they were not the same by any means.

The one on the left was young, dressed in the richly ornamented emerald armor of the Mirumoto. A daisho with bright golden tsuba gleamed upon his belt. His face was handsome, shining with the arrogant pride of youth.

The man on the right was slightly older, but moved with greater energy than the other. Though his head was shaven in the manner of an ascetic, he carried a daisho tucked into his belt. The swords were plain, as were his dusty hakama and rough sandals, a striking contrast to the brightly painted dragons of red, green, and gold that stretched across his torso and arms. His face was weathered by a



lifetime of travel, but bent into a permanent smile. He was a walking mass of contradictions, in the manner of the Togashi.

"I do not like this, Mitsu," the young man hissed for the thousandth time since they had departed Togashi Mountain. "Why does Yokuni-sama send us to parley with ronin trash? We should meet the Black Wolf as warriors, not ambassadors. We should lead the Mirumoto to cast his rabble from our lands. Instead, we are to meet him as equals. Does it not shock you?"

"Shock me?" The *ise zumi* grinned. "Indeed, I am quite shocked. Flattered, really, to think of Toturi as an equal."

Daini frowned, shaking his head. "Do not twist my words," he retorted. "You know what I mean. Toturi is a traitor, a man without name or honor."

"Really," Mitsu said, nodding thoughtfully. "I suppose you would know better than most. You studied with him. Was he such a bad teacher?"

"He was an excellent teacher," Daini replied. "In my youth, he was an example of all that was noble. Now he is nothing."

"Because he saved the Emperor?" Mitsu asked. "Or because he was punished for it?"

"He is a man without a name," Daini replied.

"Ah," Mitsu nodded. "Tell me, Daini, does a name give a samurai strength or does the samurai empower his name? What good would the name Akodo be if Akodo had not existed?"

"That is ridiculous," Daini snapped. "Akodo was like unto a god."

Mitsu nodded and smiled once more. "Yes, he was. We all have our faults."

"What do you mean?" Daini asked sharply.

Mitsu seemed to ignore the question. A moment later, he replied, "Daini, there is an old Lion saying: 'May you live in interesting times.' Do you know it?"

"Yes, I know it. It is meant as a curse. May you live during troubles."

Mitsu looked at Daini. "Do you think it a curse?"

"No," Daini replied, "I think to die in interesting times would be worse."

Mitsu laughed out loud. "There may be hope for you yet, Mirumoto Daini," he chuckled.

The pair walked on in silence.



Many aspects of Rokugani culture are different from our own. From their traditional greetings and naming practices to the food and clothing they choose, the Empire is a unique and richly traditional place. The following information should help you when you're getting into your character's mindset.

## Language

There are two distinct languages in Rokugan: the common parlance and the high language used only by the nobility, shugenja, and monks. All samurai are taught the common parlance, and a few are taught the high language.

The common language of Rokugan has many dialects. A samurai could travel through three different provinces and hear three different pronunciations for the word "rice." Often, a samurai's accent will give away his clan, possibly even his family.

The high language is the only one used in the shugenja schools and in the Imperial Court. Official documents are written in the high language (to prevent forgery from the lower classes) and common dialect is not allowed in courtrooms. Samurai do not consider it important that peasants understand the order of the court; they only need to obey.

## Literacy

Members of the samurai caste are assumed to be able to read and write, at least at a basic level of comprehension. As a general rule, a shugenja (whose profession relies on reading and writing) will be more literate than other samurai of his clan.

The Phoenix, who have more shugenja than any other clan, and the Crane, who are accomplished courtiers, tend to be the most literate clans. Also, the Lion Clan's Ikoma family is noteworthy for its historians. Don't expect a Crab general to write moving poetry.







but he will be able to cut a clear set of orders for the commander of his army's right flank.

Heimin and hinin, for the most part, don't read well if at all. Their traditions and histories tend to be oral, and told as stories or songs.

## Food

*"Have you eaten rice today?"*

*– Common Rokugani greeting*

Rokugani do not greet each other with "Hello" or "How are you?" They ask each other if they've had anything to eat, and the one product that makes its way into every meal is rice. Rice is the staple of the Rokugan diet. It is steamed and served as a main dish, boiled into a thick gruel, or mixed and shaped with vinegar. It is often crushed and made into rice cakes or ground into flour and made into dumplings and noodles. If rice is not available, or is too expensive, millet – the poor man's rice – is used instead.

### Fruits and Vegetables

Rokugani eat a variety of vegetables (always served with rice). Vegetables are almost never eaten raw: they are steamed, fried, pickled and stewed. Popular vegetables are beans (especially the soy bean which is used to make soy sauce and tofu) which are stewed or mashed into a paste.

### Seafood

Seafood is a delicacy all across Rokugan. Obviously, only those who live close to the coast or the rivers have access to fresh seafood. Fish is boiled, broiled, fried, stewed, or served raw on vinegar-treated rice (and called *sushi*). Typical types of seafood include: abalone, bonito, clam, crab, eels, fish maw, herring, jellyfish, kelp, mackerel, octopus, oysters, pike, pufferfish (the famous "blowfish" that is poisonous if prepared incorrectly), sardines, scallops, sea bass, sea cucumber, sea urchin, shrimp, squid, swordfish, and tuna.

### Meat

Red meat is not eaten in Rokugan. Cattle are very rare and their milk is considered more valuable than meat. Both peasants and nobility eat chicken and pork regularly, while eta eat game meat such as boar and stag. Nobility stay away from eating meat; they believe it makes them smell dirty.

### Drinks

Tea is the most popular drink in Rokugan. An entire ceremony is dedicated to the proper preparation and serving of this drink.

Rokugani do not add sugar to their tea (although some Unicorn still drink theirs with horse milk).

Rice wine, called *sake*, is very popular for those who can afford it. It is served hot (at body temperature) and is drunk from small cups that can be held in one hand. A more potent version of sake is called *shochu*. Only very serious drinkers partake of shochu.

For the lower classes who cannot afford sake, there are fruit brandies, beers, and meads.

## Clothing

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

Samurai and nobles wear a variety of colors and designs. Every kimono is unique, and players of samurai should be encouraged to describe their state of dress during each new encounter. Even the simplest patterns can evoke interest from strangers, and others that a samurai might meet. Less fashion-conscious samurai wear the same styles of clothing from year to year, regardless of trends.

Clothing is designed to keep a person warm and dry. In Rokugan, clothing also has another function. You can often tell a person's station by the clothes they are wearing.

The samurai caste wear silks and cotton. The *kimono* is the robe-like, full-sleeved garment that most westerners are familiar with. In summer, Rokugani wear light silk kimono. In winter, Rokugani wear heavier kimono, padded with cotton. During the rainy months of spring, an umbrella is deployed to keep the kimono dry. Small items can be kept in the kimono's wide sleeves. A sash, called an *obi*, is worn about the waist. The obi is pleated, which serves the purpose of pockets. Also, small pouches can be tied to the obi for larger objects. The *daisho* is tucked under the obi. A *hakama*, a pleated, divided skirt worn over the kimono, is often worn on formal occasions. A *haori* (an upper garment worn to give the illusion of larger shoulders) is also sometimes worn on formal occasions.

### Women's Clothing

Women also wear kimono, but often wear a set with complementary colors. A woman does not wear a hakama. Her kimono is often very long, trailing behind her. Her obi is usually wider than a man's and is tied in an elaborate bow. Her complexion is often painted white, including the lips. Her eyebrows are shaved



and shapely eyebrows are painted on. Usually, it is the ladies of the Imperial Court who determine "proper" style, although many women (such as those of the Scorpion Clan) often ignore the Court's attitudes on style.

Samurai-ko, on the other hand, usually follow in the footsteps of their male counterparts. They are seen wearing hakama, haori and daisho, but can also be seen in more feminine dress.

### Peasant Dress

The clothing of heimin and hinin is usually made of cotton, hemp or wool. The colors are usually very drab (they can't afford the expensive dyes that make the nobility so colorful). Instead of umbrellas, the lower classes employ hats and overcoats made of straw. Peasant hats are very practical. They are round and wide-brimmed to keep the sun and rain out of the peasant's eyes. They wear kimono and obi with a cotton undershirt and loincloth.

### The Mon

Heraldry in Rokugan is less formal than heraldry in the west. The *mon*, or Clan symbol and colors, are worn by all samurai sworn to a Clan. A *kamishimo*, which is a small vest worn over the kimono that bears the mon, is often worn on formal occasions. A samurai wears the mon of his clan on his back, and the mon of his family on his left sleeve to be close to his heart, or his right sleeve to guide his sword.

A samurai usually incorporates his clan colors into his formal clothing, while private clothing tends to be in drab grays and browns. Samurai often wear hats for formal occasions, which can be very simple or very extravagant.

## Hair

The traditional hairstyle for a samurai is the shaved pate and top knot which is doubled forward over the crown. However, there are many in Rokugan who use hairstyle to identify themselves with their Clan.

Some Crane dye their hair white and let it grow long and fine. The Dragon shave their heads completely, decorating their bald heads with tattoos. The Lion often let their hair grow long and wild

and dye it gold. The Phoenix are very traditional, shaving their pates and tying up top knots. The Scorpion Clan often keep their features hidden while the Crab Clan couldn't care less about a samurai's hair.

A woman of the samurai caste almost never cuts her hair. Samurai-ko sometimes emulate their male counterparts, but not often. Often, a woman's hair can reach down to the floor. A woman only cuts her hair when she is widowed and while in mourning.

## Samurai Dwellings

The homes of the samurai are much more extravagant than those of the peasantry, often ten times as expensive and expansive as a farmer's home. A samurai's home is always decorated with a garden, and includes three sections. The front section is used entirely for business. The lesser interior is reserved for guests and for sleeping. The third section is the great interior, where the food is prepared and the women have their private chambers.



### Non-Bushi Samurai

Those who are born into the samurai caste but are not trained in bushido are still considered samurai. There are many stations within the samurai caste. They are not all on an equal level with one who wears the daisho. They may still wear a wakizashi if they wish, to show that they are of the samurai station. However, anyone wearing a katana is presumed to be able to use it, and to accept challenges on his own behalf.

### Castles

Each family daimyo lives in an ancestral castle which is surrounded by a town or city and is rimmed with farms. It is often walled and moated to discourage invaders. Each castle has a number of strongholds (typically one to four) which house the barracks, the lord's residence and

food stores. Each stronghold sits high on a steep stone battlement with only a narrow advance with tall steps which limits troop movement into and out of the castle to single file progress. The inner hallways of the stronghold are made of stone. It is a vast labyrinth that only allows a single man to advance at a time, making it easy to defend. Each hallway is filled with slots to shoot arrows through and holes along the ceilings to drop oil, acid and poison. Atop the stone hallways is the daimyo's home, which is a larger, more extravagant version of the samurai's home. It usually houses a retinue of forty to fifty people (in-laws, bodyguards, etc.).

Samurai who serve the lord of a castle live in either the barracks (if they are bachelors) or in the city with their wives. Samurai-ko, having lost their family during their gempukku ceremony, stay with the lord's family or in a separate barracks.





## Cities

The cities that are protected by the walls and moats of the fortresses of the daimyo are the heart of Rokugan's economy. Cities are divided into districts which are gated, walled, and watched over by the local police force (see Yoriki on page 40). Identification papers are needed to pass from district to district after dark. Generally, illiterate peasants are not welcome in the city. They do their business in the village during the spring market season.

Rokugani can navigate cities by paying attention to the street names. Merchants and craftsmen reside on the same streets, and so the streets are named after their storefronts. (Need a carpenter? Go to Carpenter's Row.) Geisha houses, tea houses and theaters can be found in the same district as well (usually far away from the temple), and samurai are expected to leave their swords behind at the entryway to the geisha district.

## Heimin Dwellings

Housing in Rokugan is almost always temporary, designed to be destroyed by fire and earthquakes, or other calamities. Because of the fleeting nature of such things, samurai often have more than one dwelling - sometimes in different cities - where they can live while their house is being rebuilt after a particularly nasty disaster. Peasants, of course, have no such luxury.

Houses are traditionally built from stone and wood, with sliding wooden frame doors, covered in a thin rice paper. Although this does not allow for any actual privacy, the culture of Rokugan considers it 'rude' to pay attention to the occurrences on the other side of such a screen. Once the door is 'closed', inhabitants are required to act as if they do not hear or see any events transpiring on the other side.

## Farmers

Farmers do not live on isolated farms. Farms surround a village in which all the farmers and their families live. A farmer's home is very simple. It often has two rooms: a living room and sleeping quarters for a total of approximately 500 - 600 square feet. More important villagers (such as the headman) will sometimes have a

larger home, complete with a "quality room" in which he can entertain visiting samurai. The interior walls are made of paper, the floors made of wood. Homes are often built out of cedar, which is flexible (for the strong winds of storms) but also more flammable than most other wood. A quick summer brush fire can level an entire village in a single day. Valuables are kept in a stone locker in the rear of the house to protect them from fires and theft. Shoes are always removed and left in the entryway before entering the house.

Troughs filled with excrement can also be found along the road, which help to fertilize the fields; travelers are encouraged to contribute.



## Taxes

Every harvest season produces approximately 25 million koku of rice for Rokugan. It also produces tax collectors who arrive at the farms, ready to collect 60% of everything the farmer has produced that year.

Tax collectors do not always collect food. Farmers will offer silk, sake, clothing or tea to the tax collector as well. Often times, they even make such offers as bribes to the tax collector so he won't report a new field of rice to his lord.

## The Village

All villages are surrounded by fire ditches to help prevent the all-too-frequent fires that occur in the dry summer. They are also surrounded by trees, giving the villages constant shade to protect them from the summer heat they so despise. Roads that run along a village are lined with trees (again, for shade) and tall hedges.

## Cities

Rokugan's cities are crowded, and the hustle and bustle of the streets can become quite pressing upon one's personal space. A typical city of several thousand people consists of one

castle, a large number of "districts", and an eta village located outside the city walls or boundary. Some of the major distinctions between the classes of the Rokugani populace can be most clearly seen in their architecture - the artisan class is allotted a district, as are those of the "pleasure class", and the merchants and the craftsmen as well. Members of the samurai class, even those who are not "in command" of the city, are typically given houses out of the city's central body and well away from the commoners.

Districts are usually separated from each other with walls or distance. They are also controlled by a guild headman, or *chonin*, who reports directly to the samurai head of the city. Small businesses and shops, separate from their homes, run alongside the major streets, while the houses and residential areas of the district are usually some distance away from the busy roadway. Homes, particularly in the craftsman district, are almost always extremely



close together, pressed against one another by the need for space within the city.

### Eta Villages

The ranks of eta increase whenever a samurai or peasant is banished from the whole of Rokugani society. A battle maiden who falls from her horse in battle, or a samurai who touches dead flesh, is sent out from the clan and temporarily considered eta until such time as they become "clean" again (which generally requires the samurai – with the assistance of a shugenja – to walk through a torii arch at a shrine and say a precise series of prayers, a process which takes about a quarter of an hour).

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

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



**Bushido.** The immortal code of the warrior, defined in Rokugan by the greatest general who ever lived: Akodo One-Eye, founder of the Lion Clan. It is the code to which all samurai adhere, and it is a major foundation for all aspects of life, military codes, and culture within the Emerald Empire. It emphasizes a life of virtue and integrity. All of these virtues are encapsulated in a samurai's Honor, and can be seen through his actions and choices during his life.

### Courage

*You cannot live while hiding from life.*

– *The Tao of Shinsei*

A samurai is expected to be ready to give up his life for his daimyo at any moment. The people of Rokugan not only believe in reincarnation, but also that the actions of this life will affect a thousand lifetimes to come. This belief in karma (a kind of spiritual energy that follows one's soul from life to life) shows why a samurai cares so little for his own safety. He knows that if he selflessly gives his life serving his lord, his station will be better in his next lifetime. Common folk allow fear to swallow their hearts. An extraordinary soul is the one who has the courage to truly live life to its limits, to live as if each moment is the last one.

### Loyalty

*A handful of wealth is worth a handful of dust when compared to the riches a samurai's family gives to him.*

– *The Tao of Shinsei*

There is another reason that a samurai is so willing to live dangerously. He knows if he gives his life for his daimyo, his daimyo will look very well upon his family. The concept of loyalty goes both ways. A daimyo will be loyal to a fallen samurai's memory by rewarding his family in return for his devotion. This concept of giving one's life to better one's family is very important. In Rokugan, nothing is as important as your family. Without family, a samurai's life (even a peasant's life) is worth nothing.

### Sincerity

*You own every word you speak.*

– *The Tao of Shinsei*

Sincerity does not mean honesty; sincerity is the ability to appear honest. A samurai is expected to lie to protect his family's honor. That is why in court, the testimony of family members is not considered valid. A man or woman who can cry on command has a valuable skill in Rokugan. The ability to appear sincere while apologizing is highly regarded. Rokugani are more concerned with saying what people want to hear than telling the truth. To tell the truth brings embarrassment to all parties involved, and is therefore dishonorable.

On the other hand, a samurai's word is always good. If a samurai says he will do something, he will do it, or he will die trying.

### Perception and Truth

Too much emphasis can not be placed on the difference between perception and reality. To be honest in Rokugan is to be rude. All that matters is perception, not truth. If a samurai is a drunken,





gambling, womanizing wretch, the court doesn't care, as long as he's discreet about it. To point out another's weakness embarrasses them and you, thus bringing shame to his family and your own. The same can be said of faith and bushido. If a samurai presents himself as a pious man trying to burn away his worldly concerns, the court considers him honorable. The truth is often spoken in gossip circles, but then it is regarded for what it is; harmless gossip which gets ignored.

The clans are concerned with results. A samurai who wins battles and brings his family glory is hailed for his greatness. A samurai who fails shaves his head while he is young so he will not bring further shame to his family.

Once again, everyone in Rokugan knows that many samurai are wretched, spoiled brats who need to be taught a lesson in humility, but in order to save face, they say nothing. It is the clever samurai who is able to humble brutish samurai without causing his family a loss of face that is hailed above all others.

## On

*A courageous man has no need to be cruel.*

– *The Tao of Shinsei*

Rokugan is more concerned with appearance than truth. Being considerate to others can win many favors, while being inconsiderate can cost you your life. The main reason for all this politeness is the idea of *On* (which translates best into "respectability" or "face"). *On* is literally how well respected you are in your caste. A samurai with no *On* has been disgraced and may only save his *On* by committing seppuku. Rokugani are respectful of each other because causing a "scene" will bring a loss of *On* to both parties. Discipline is very important in Rokugan, and when someone shows a burst of emotion, you could say he has "lost his face."

## Excellence

*While you rest, your enemy practices.*

– *Akodo's Leadership*

A samurai must always strive to be the best in all aspects of his life, not just military matters. Every action requires the utmost concentration, because every repetition brings the practitioner closer to perfection. The Rokugani believe that the philosophy of Shinsei can be practiced in all things; swordsmanship, hunting, gardening... Even breathing is an act that can always be improved.

## Duels

The concept of the duel is not foreign to western shores. However, in Rokugan, duels can involve more than just a lethal exchange of steel...

*A summer wind sweeps the green of the trees that stand beside a short bridge across a river. On either side of the bridge step two samurai. They reach the center, each of them realizing that one must stand aside for the other.*

*One of them says, "Let me see your stance."*

*The second obliges and falls into a ready position. The first follows his example.*

*Tense moments pass. Then, suddenly, they both stand straight and the first steps aside to allow the second to pass.*

What just happened? The answer, of course, is that a duel occurred on that bridge, and one samurai stood aside to allow the victor to pass. The samurai evaluated each other's skill and the "loser" (who knew he would have lost in a duel with this opponent) stood aside to let the better man pass.

There are many kinds of duels that samurai engage in, and not all of them end in bloodshed. Many samurai feel that drawing blood when it is not necessary brings shame to their blade.

Samurai sometimes duel with wooden swords called *boken*, especially if they are friendly, or from the same clan. Clan daimyo often forbid dueling within the clan to prevent the loss of valuable skilled swordsmen.

When a samurai goes seeking a place to test his skill, he often goes to rival sword schools, "looking for a lesson." This is done to show the superiority of one's own technique over the technique taught by the rival school. This activity occurs with regularity in Rokugan, with brash samurai trying to gain favor with their sensei by proving their worth against rival schools.

(See the "Duels" topic in the "Life and Death" section, page 47, for more information about dueling in Rokugan.)

## Revenge

*"No man may sleep while the killer of his father walks the earth."*

– *Rokugani proverb*

When a member of a samurai family is slain (including a sensei or daimyo), any member of that family may go to the killer's daimyo and ask permission for revenge, although the first right of refusal legally falls to the first-born son. If the killing occurred between families of the same clan, the samurai seeks out his own daimyo. If the killing occurred between families of different clans, the procedure is different. If, for instance, a Crane samurai was killed by



a Dragon samurai, the brothers of the Crane samurai must ask Doji Hoturi (the daimyo of the Crane Clan) to ask Togashi Yokuni (the daimyo of the Dragon Clan) permission to authorize the duel. It may seem as if daimyo would reject such challenges, but that would show their lack of faith in their own samurai, and could also be seen as a display of cowardice.

Before such a challenge can be made, however, the family must be certain of the killer's identity, and the killing must have been "public": that is, there must have been witnesses to the killing. Once the challenge has been accepted, it is made publicly known. Magistrates are not to interfere in a blood challenge, as it is considered a capital crime to interfere with a man trying to avenge the spirit of his ancestor.

Needless to say, once the challenger or the challenged (or both) are killed, the challenge is over. Death in a such a sanctioned duel is a rightful death, and therefore, cannot be "avenged," at least not within the confines of the Emperor's law.

## Bragging

*The samurai rode out before his army, the dew on his armor gleaming in the early morning light. He thrust his spear into the air and shouted across the field at us:*

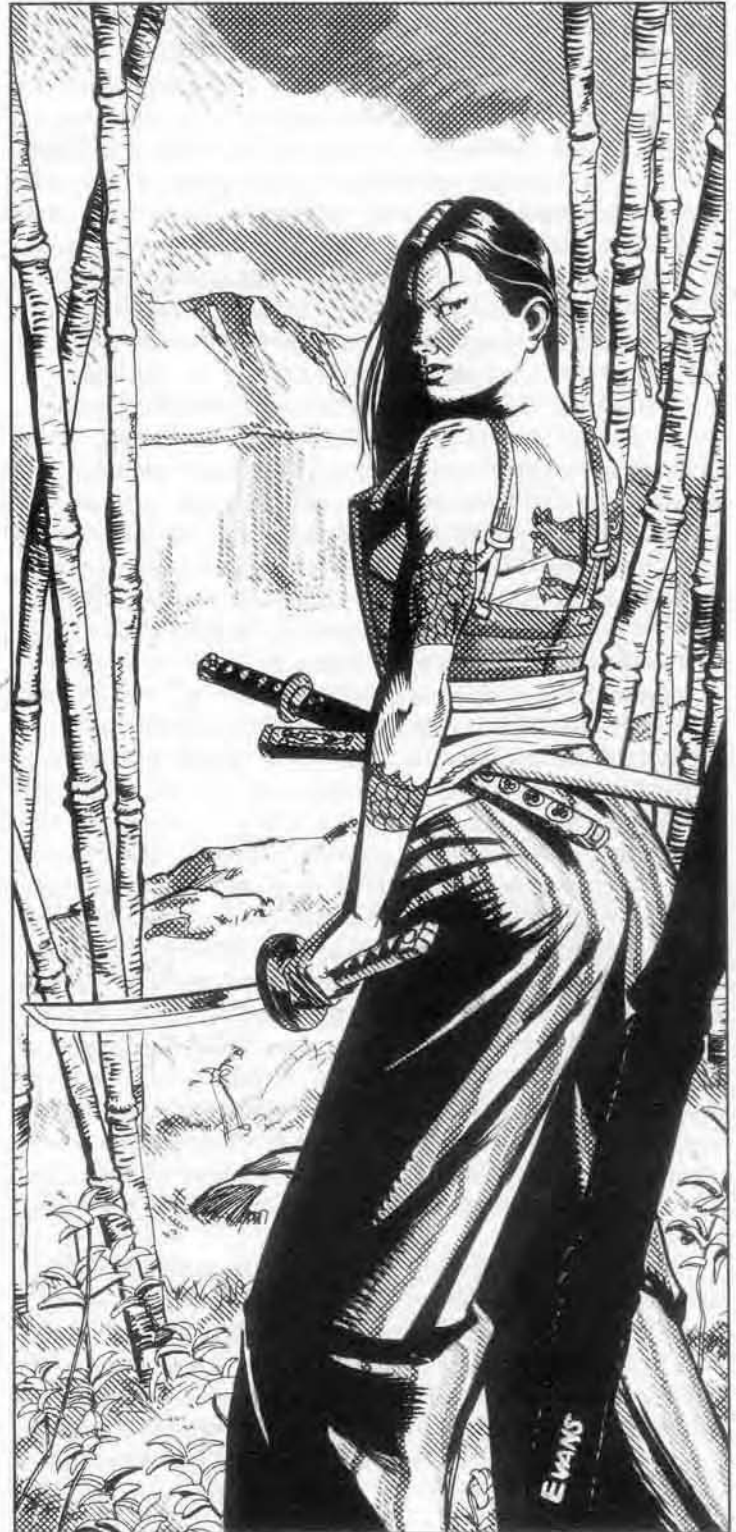
*"I was at the battle of Denoben Falls! It was my arrow that slew Iuchi Kizawan! When Otomo Chizen's head fell from his shoulders, it was I who was wiping his blood from my blade! I am Matsu Gohei, and the blood of a hundred generations of Lion flows in my veins. This day, your blood will feed the grass beneath your feet!"*

Samurai are famous for their pre-battle bragging. Bragging allows the opposing commander to know who it is he is facing: a possible psychological advantage. Granted, a slight advantage at best, but as a samurai sees battle, a slight advantage is all that is needed to win the day.

Bragging is also a way of calling out your opponent. By stating your name, lineage and deeds, you are telling the opponent that you have no fear. You're not worried who he is; he should be worried about who you are. It also identifies a samurai who wishes it to be known he is at the battle, thus bringing prestige and honor to his family and Clan.

## Swords

A sword is sometimes referred to as a samurai's soul. Swords are handed down from generation to generation, and the people of Rokugan believe that continual close contact with an item can leave a "spiritual echo" on it. When a samurai wields his family's sword, he is also carrying around a part of the souls of his ancestors. Thus,







to show disrespect to a samurai's sword is to show disrespect to his ancestors.

What a samurai does with his sword when visiting another's home is indicative of his opinion of his host. A samurai always leaves his sword at the front door when he is visiting a friend. When visiting a stranger or an enemy, a samurai always carries his sword with him into the home. However, when he is greeted by his host (seated in the greeting hall), he can either place his sword on his left or on his right. If he places it on his left (making it easy to draw), it shows that he does not trust his host - or perhaps his host should not trust him. If he places it on his right, it shows that he trusts his host, because he cannot get to his sword quickly. Also, if he places the sword next to him with the hilt pointed toward his host, it shows that he does not think much of the host's skill with a sword.

Touching a samurai's sword, or even breathing on it, shows great disrespect for the sword, and a magistrate would condone the samurai attempting to "cleanse the stain" by drawing the blood of the offender. Woe to the man who chose to walk over a sword rather than walk around it. A typical sign of a ronin is a samurai who has his sword on his shoulder rather than on his belt, showing his nonchalant view of "respectable" behavior.

Katana are kept in the obi "blade down" (so the saya, or scabbard, does not rest on the blade, thus dulling it). However, when a samurai is insulted, he turns the katana "blade up" so when it is drawn, the edge is pointing at the offending party.

## Gifts

While many western economies are based on the bartering system, Rokugan is based on gift giving. While this may not seem to be a great difference, it is one of the most fundamental differences between western cultures and Rokugan. The giving of gifts is a very formalized and honored practice. The way a Rokugani gives you a gift can tell you if he respects you, if he is a friend, or if he is your deadliest enemy. When you give a gift, the recipient is assumed to be able to return your generosity equitably and quickly. You must not give a gift to someone that is beyond their means to return. This tells the recipient that you know he cannot return your generosity, thus insulting him.

Also, the giving of the gift has a ritual that must be observed. When the giver offers the gift, the recipient must refuse the gift twice. This offers the giver three opportunities to show that he truly intends to give the gift. Taking the gift too soon impugns the giver's sincerity. Also, if the giver offers the gift, is refused and then fails to continue to offer the gift, that shows the recipient that the giver never meant to give it in the first place. Gifts can be of great

monetary value, but the most valuable gifts are those of sentimental value.

## Bowing and Kneeling

Always bow to someone in your own social caste; i.e. samurai bow to other samurai, heimin bow to other heimin. Always kneel before someone who is of greater social standing. Samurai always kneel before their daimyo, and heimin always kneel before samurai. If bowing to someone who is of superior station (such as your father), always bow a little lower than he bows to show him respect. Samurai and eta alike kneel before the temple of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess.



*"There cannot be two suns in Heaven, nor can there be two Emperors on Earth."*

*- Rokugani proverb*

At the center of the Empire is Otosan Uchi, the home of the nobility and the seat of the Imperial Throne. The hub upon which the city and the Empire turn is the Emperor, Imperial Hantei, the thirty-ninth of his unbroken line, which has reigned for over a thousand years. The Emperor creates all the laws, is the head of the church and owns all the land. He has a bureau of administrators who handle the daily affairs of state. Justice is meted out by the Emperor and his rightly appointed officials.

## The Imperial Court

Members of the Imperial Court are the direct members of the Emperor's family. They are the aunts and uncles, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters of the Emperor, and while they have no real political power, they have immediate access to him. The Emperor's



court is filled almost exclusively with members of the Crane Clan, but there are those from other Clans who have married into the Emperor's family to gain access to the privilege of the Imperial Court. The most recent example of this – although an unwilling one – is the wife of the Emperor himself. When he broke the power of the Scorpion Clan after their failed Coup, the young Hantei took as his wife the beautiful (and freshly widowed) Bayushi Kachiko, formerly the wife of Scorpion Clan Champion Bayushi Shoji.

The members of the court do not inherit land from their position. Without land, the Imperial Court does not have access to real resources, and they must trade political favors for money. Some members of the Court inherit cash from the Emperor, but most must rely on exchange of favors to make their living.

### What is the Imperial Court?

There are no phones in Rokugan. There are no television, no movies, no radio and no automobiles. In short, when winter comes along with its cold wind and snow, there isn't a whole lot to do. And so, during those cold winter months, Rokugani spend their hours in court.

Winter is Rokugan's social season, and at the end of the fall, nobility begin to decide where they are going to spend the winter. Invitations are sent out by all the Clans, promising the best food and entertainment. Of course, the guest who brings the most amount of honor to a household is the Emperor, and everyone tries to gain an invitation to the household he will be staying at.

There are great opportunities for a samurai to gain glory and prestige in court. After all, those in attendance are the greatest daimyo in Rokugan. Impressing the Emerald Champion with your swordsmanship can get you an appointment as a magistrate, while impressing the ladies of the court with your wit and candor will win you great fame (and other rewards) across the Empire.

## The Emperor's Magistrates

Those who are appointed to mete out justice in the Empire are called "magistrates." These officials are given the Emperor's authority. In other words, questioning a magistrate's authority is questioning the authority of the Emperor, a crime punishable by death. Traditionally, the magistrates are drawn from the Great Clans. The clan which controls the most magistrates has great political power in the Empire.

The duty of the magistrates is to keep the Emperor's laws enforced. Magistrates may employ retainers to assist in their duty, but they must be paid for by the magistrate. Magistrates meet once

a month to report their activities to the chief magistrate: the Emperor's Emerald Champion. The Emerald Champion is responsible for the activities of the magistrates. The position of chief magistrate is a life-long position, determined by right of combat. Ordinarily, when a Champion dies, a tournament is held to determine a new Champion, with the winner of the tournament gaining the office. This is not presently the case. The previous Emerald Champion, former Crane Clan daimyo Doji Satsume, died during the Scorpion Clan Coup, and the Emperor has somehow never gotten around to sanctioning the tournament which would permit the designation of a successor. Whispers in the Court claim that the Lady Kachiko prevents the boy Emperor from appointing a new Emerald Champion, in retaliation against the Crane – but none dare speak of it above a whisper.

Magistrates are chosen by the Emperor and, on occasion and with the Emperor's permission, the Emerald Champion. Magistrates can be removed from position by the Emperor and the Emerald Champion. There is no fixed number of magistrates; the Emperor and Emerald Champion decide how many are needed.

Magistrates were once given assignments by the Emerald Champion, and bound by duty to perform those duties to the best of their ability. Some of these duties could bring much glory to a magistrate's family, such as routing a small Shadowlands army that has crept into the Empire or stopping an assassination attempt on a member of the Imperial Family. Other duties are not so glamorous, like watching over a way station on one of the Emperor's roads. These days, with no Champion to lead them, the Emerald Magistrates have largely been thrown on their own devices. The more experienced and respected magistrates suggest courses of action to the younger ones, but their authority is moral only and not official. Some magistrates, unchecked by the Emerald Champion, have even begun to use their power to enrich themselves rather than to serve the Empire.

Magistrates are rewarded for good service, and dismissed if they fail in their duties. A magistrate of the Emerald Champion can expect to earn anywhere from two thousand to four thousand koku a year, which is chiefly used to pay his own assistants.

## A Magistrate's Duty

*"We serve the Emperor and only the Emperor. A blow against one of our own is a blow against the Imperial Hantei."*

– Ikoma Ujiaki

For one thousand years, peace has reigned in Rokugan. There have, of course, been battles and skirmishes, but lengthy and costly

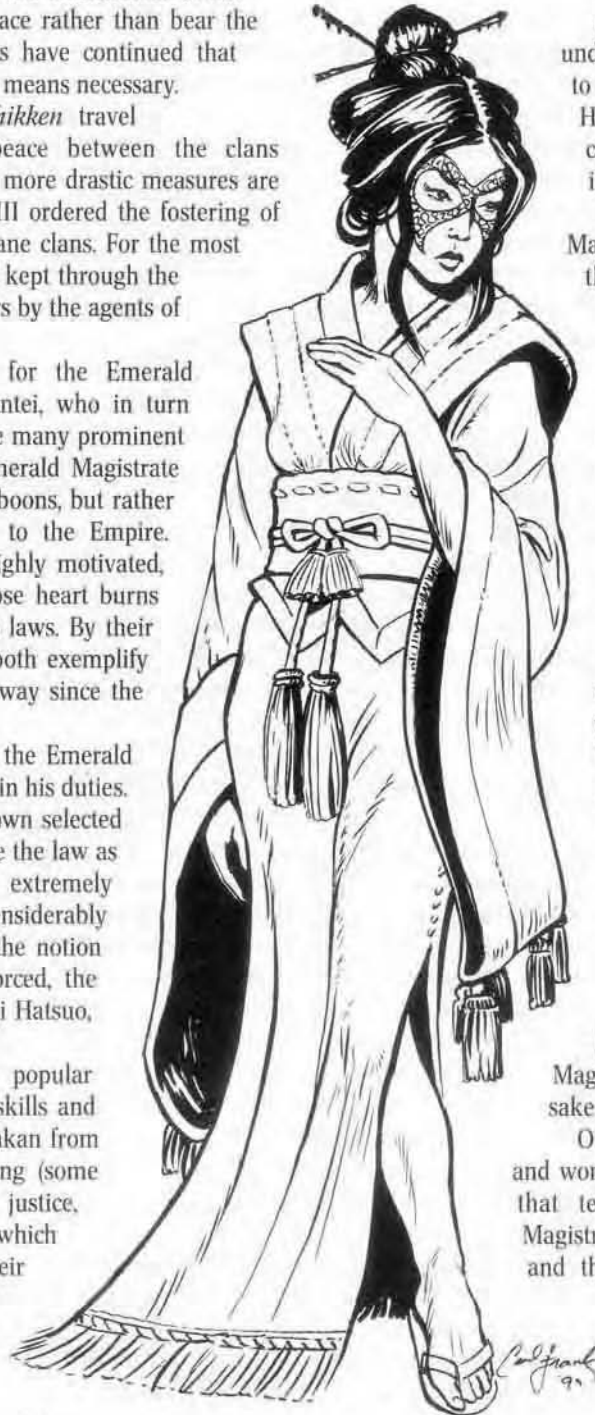


wars are largely unknown in the history of the Emerald Empire. It was the wish of Hantei that the descendants of his beloved brothers and sisters know peace rather than bear the hardships of warfare. His descendants have continued that tradition, maintaining the peace by any means necessary. Imperial ambassadors known as *shikken* travel throughout the Empire, keeping peace between the clans whenever conflict arises. Occasionally, more drastic measures are required, such as when Hantei XXXVIII ordered the fostering of children between the Lion and the Crane clans. For the most part, however, the peace of Rokugan is kept through the strict enforcement of the Emperor's laws by the agents of the throne: the Emerald Magistrates.

The Emerald Magistrates speak for the Emerald Champion, the right hand of the Hantei, who in turn speaks for the Emperor himself. Unlike many prominent posts in Rokugan, the majority of Emerald Magistrate positions are not granted as favors or boons, but rather are earned through glorious service to the Empire. Ideally, an Emerald Magistrate is a highly motivated, intelligent, and skilled individual whose heart burns with devotion to the Emperor and his laws. By their very presence, these valiant samurai both exemplify and enforce the law. It has been this way since the inception of the Emerald Magistrates.

In the earliest days of the Empire, the Emerald Champion had no magistrates to assist in his duties. Instead, each province or city had its own selected judge, who would interpret and enforce the law as he or she saw fit. This led to an extremely arbitrary judicial system that varied considerably from place to place. Displeased with the notion that his laws were not properly enforced, the Emperor instructed his Champion, Doji Hatsuo, to establish a more consistent system.

Hatsuo summoned a particularly popular judge, renowned both for his courtly skills and his penchant for fairness: Soshi Saibankan from Taiyo One Toshi. Possessed of a strong (some might say uncharacteristic) sense of justice, Saibankan proposed a system by which individual samurai, each selected for their devotion and ability, were dispersed throughout the Empire to enforce the law, all answerable only to the Emerald Champion himself. Furthermore,



Saibankan wrote a charter that would detail the exact duties of the magistrates, including which crimes fell under their auspices and which were to be left to the individual cities or provinces. Together, Hatsuo and Saibankan presented this concept to the Hantei, who ordered its implementation immediately.

In modern Rokugan, Emerald Magistrates face threats the likes of which their predecessors never imagined. Treacherous courtiers, *gaijin* interlopers, fugitives from the Shadowlands, *maho* cults, and treasonous conspiracies threaten the Empire. The peacekeepers of today's Rokugan have had to destroy entire villages in order to ensure that a *maho* cult did not endanger the greater good of Rokugan, or to execute innocent *heimin* to preserve the honor of a city governor. Some of them see petty crimes such as theft, assault, and even opium trafficking as barely worth their time, permitting their underlings to deal with them or ignoring them altogether. These are not evil men, merely men who have seen the true threats and chosen to face the greater evil.

It has been this dedication, this grim resolve on the part of Emerald Magistrates that has prevented war all these years. The countless battles that have been narrowly averted over the course of the Empire's history were bought with the lives of selfless Magistrates who sacrificed themselves for the sake of peace.

Others now look to the Emerald Magistrates and wonder if they can maintain the fragile order that teeters on the brink of collapse. The Magistrates do not wonder. They know their duty, and they know that they must overcome, no matter the cost.

It is what they do.



## Justice

Samurai are official representatives of their daimyo and the daimyo are official representatives of the Emperor. The Emperor is the chief lawmaker in the land, and therefore, the samurai and daimyo are the keepers of that justice, just as knights were the keepers of the King's justice in feudal Europe. Villages often have heimin "police" who inherit their position from their fathers to keep the peace when samurai aren't around. However, having a drunken samurai around can sometimes be as deadly as having a gang of criminals in your tavern house. Rokugan has a very unforgiving justice system, but before anyone can be brought to justice, a confession must be made by the perpetrator, or the criminal must be caught red-handed. Torture is a common method of obtaining confessions.

### Crime and Punishment

Murder can cause a blood feud (see the Revenge section, page 34). Forgery and robbery are punishable by death, and the perpetrator's wife and children are slain as well. Treason against the Emperor or daimyo is also punishable by death. Samurai may escape execution (and a loss of honor to their family) through seppuku. Sometimes, for particularly vile crimes, samurai are offered the chance to commit seppuku, but their daimyo offers them a wooden sword to complete the ritual. This shows that the daimyo does not believe the samurai has the courage to complete the act, and is only going through the motions to save face. Seppuku can even be denied to a samurai (a severe punishment), forcing him to live out the rest of his life in shame. Lesser crimes can be amended through public beatings, house arrest (for samurai only), fines, or "cuffing" which involves the offender being handcuffed for extended periods of time.

Often, when a villager commits a crime, the headman of the village is punished for his crime. Likewise, when a samurai's son is found guilty, the father is expected to atone for the crime.

## Emperor's Roads and Way Stations

Long ago, the first Hantei ordered that roads be constructed to connect the palaces of the Great Clans and the Imperial City, Otosan Uchi. For a thousand years, these roads have been maintained by the Clans to varying degrees. The Crane spend incredible sums to keep their roads in good condition, while the Crab Clan only bothers to maintain those roads that speed up troop movements along the Shadowlands border.

Along many roads are tall, wide trees to provide shade and protection from rain. Way stations are located along the Emperor's roads; they're typically guarded by samurai apprenticed to magistrates. There are many of these way stations, all of which vary in size and staff.

The officers at way stations provide assistance to travelers, act as advance scouts (looking for invading armies) and keep an eye out for general trouble. They are often staffed with a shugenja or two, just in case of emergencies.

### Travel Papers

Well-kept roads mean quick travel between cities. It also means quick travel between provinces, which is not good for clans who fear invasion. When samurai or peasants travel, they must gain permission from their daimyo and carry travel papers (indicating their destination and business) to do so. Papers are checked at way stations and at the borders of most provinces.

## The Clan Daimyo

While the Emperor holds the highest position in the Empire, it is held through prestige and not real military or political power. The most powerful positions in the Empire are held by the great lords, or *daimyo*, of the Great Clans. The Emperor holds power because of the daimyo's respect of his position. While the Emperor lacks real power, the daimyo can take no action without his blessing. The Emperor is the final authority in all matters.

The daimyo's main source of power is land. While the Emperor owns all the land, he has given regency to the daimyo. The daimyo tax the peasantry, giving a portion to the Emperor and keeping the rest. Through taxation, the daimyo gain real resources, while the Imperial Court must curry favor in exchange for hard cash. With their access to real money, the daimyo are able to form armies and (with political influence) use them to add to their lands.

### The Daimyo's Magistrates

Every daimyo has a group of advisors and magistrates. The most important of these is called a karo. He is in charge of all magistrates and is chief advisor. The karo is given his position by the daimyo, and likewise, the daimyo can take his position away. This is not often done, however, because of the danger of a karo going to another clan, taking his advice (and clan secrets) with him. The karo can expect a bonus of approximately seven hundred to two thousand koku a year.

Like the Emperor's magistrates, a daimyo's magistrates are representatives of their lord. To question their authority is to question the authority of the daimyo. While it is typical practice to





give each magistrate a region of authority, it is not uncommon for a daimyo to have “wandering” magistrates who walk the countryside and halt injustice where they find it. It is also not uncommon for a daimyo to have “secret” magistrates to keep an eye on the regions he feels suspicious about.

## Yoriki

Each magistrate has approximately 25 *yoriki* working under him. *Yoriki* are samurai who keep the peace on a local level. There are two *yoriki* per town, each alternating a month of duty.

*Yoriki* are allowed “deputies” called *doshin*. *Doshin* are drawn up from the peasant class. They are not permitted to wear swords, but instead use non-lethal weapons. Most prefer to use a *jitte*, a two-pronged sword-catching hand weapon useful for disarming drunk samurai and rowdy bandits (see illustration in *The Book of Fire*, page 180).

## The Families

Under each of the clan daimyo are families. The head of each family swears fealty to the daimyo of their Clan. The samurai of the families swear fealty to the head of their family, thus swearing fealty through him to the daimyo, and to the Emperor. Just as the magistrates of the daimyo have many duties to perform, so do the samurai of the families. They tax the peasantry, delivering the bounty to the magistrates of the Clan daimyo. Because they deal more directly with the peasantry, they tend to be more sympathetic to the lower classes.

## The Lesser Clans

During war, political and social rules often fall by the wayside. One side-effect of this fact are the *ji-samurai*, small bands of samurai who have formed into “minor Clans.” An example of a *ji-samurai* is a ronin who is given a small fortification as a reward for his servitude to the Emperor (or other lord). The ronin offers protection to the peasants of the area and also sends word out to any other ronin who wish to help him protect his lands. The ronin becomes a lord, with land, vassals and samurai at his service. See page 22 for more information about *ji-samurai*.

While it may sound unlikely, this occurs with great frequency during wartime. Monks and peasants who serve a lord with ferocity and valor may receive land and title for their service.



Shiba Katsuda was not a young man. He had seen his share of battle, and wished to see no more. He looked forward to the day that he would retire, and leave the life of a warrior behind him.

That day would not be coming. From the battlements of Nikesake, he could see the fires of the Lion army. They dotted the horizon like malevolent yellow stars, countless. The young Lion, Matsu Gohei, made no secret of his love of blood and battle. After the conquest of Violence Behind Courtliness City, the Phoenix were clearly his next target. Nikesake had the misfortune of standing close to the borders of the Lion. Katsuda’s wife and children had been moved north, to safer provinces.

Katsuda would run no further. He would face the Lion here, and he would die.

When the Lions first appeared, Katsuda’s advisors suggested surrender. Katsuda laughed. He had known samurai like Gohei in his time. Such men did not accept surrender. Gohei would consider such a show of weakness by his enemies an insult to his own honor. He would slaughter them all rather than accept.

A girl in the burnt orange robes of a shugenja hurried up the stairs behind Katsuda, kneeling deeply as she paused to catch her breath. Katsuda recognized her as Isawa Taeruko, cousin of the Master of Earth. She was young, little more than thirteen.

“Lord Katsuda,” she gasped. “Lady Tsukune sends word.”

“Speak,” Katsuda replied.

“The Phoenix army marches,” she replied. “In three days’ time, they shall arrive to reinforce your position against the Lion.”

“The Lion will not give us three days,” Katsuda replied, gesturing at the campfires. “Our defenses are light. Nikesake will be overrun. I fear you have come here to die, Taeruko-chan.” Katsuda’s voice was thick. The old samurai remembered her birth as if it were just yesterday. Now, he would watch her die in a pointless battle.

“No, my lord,” Taeruko replied. “Lady Tsukune has sent me at the head of two dozen shugenja hand-picked by my cousin. The spirits



will reinforce your castle. By the Fortunes, I swear to you that the walls will hold."

Katsuda's eyes widened. "Twenty-five shugenja?" Katsuda whispered, scarcely daring to believe it. "Why would the Phoenix risk so many? This is a small castle. It is hardly worth the effort."

"Were you willing to die here, Katsuda-sama?" Taeruko asked bluntly.

"Yes," Katsuda replied.

"Can we do less?" Taeruko asked. "The Phoenix are one."

Katsuda nodded silently, shamed by the girl's selfless honor.

"I was of the impression," Taeruko continued, "that Tsukune-sama wishes to send a message. If Matsu Gohei would bring war to the Phoenix, he must be prepared to face the consequences."

The old samurai was surprised by the steel in the young girl's gaze. Her strength gave him hope. When he was as young as she, had he been so fierce?

Or was the world simply becoming a different place?

# Addressing Samurai

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

*- Tao of Shinsei*

The manner in which samurai address one another is a delicate topic in Rokugan, which requires close inspection. Players concerned with this aspect of social interaction should study the following section carefully.

## The First Encounter

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

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

## Presenting One's Heart

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

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

## Other Forms of Respect

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

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

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





## Insulting Address

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

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

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



*"Each thing you are is reflected in each thing you do."*

*— Isawa Uona*

Rokugan is a land obsessed with etiquette. There is a proper way to do everything. All of this stems from the Celestial Order. Each action which a samurai takes reflects his social standing, his house, his clan, and his ancestors – and each is treated with equal seriousness. Here is a list of common social situations, and the appropriate behavior for each one.

## Entering and Exiting a House

A samurai's house is a sacred place, filled with the spirit of his house and family, and respected by all members of the samurai caste. This respect even extends to enemies of the family, and people the samurai would consider 'untrustworthy'. By carrying their weapons into another samurai's house, they disrespect a thousand years' worth of ancestors, and risk angering their own.

When a samurai arrives at another samurai's home, he is expected to announce himself to the gateman (usually a peasant or ji-samurai), and await the reception of his host or hostess. If the host is not at home, the gateman will politely offer the visitor a cup of tea, telling them that the host is unavailable, and will be back tomorrow. 'Will be back tomorrow' is the conventional response, even if the samurai is away for several weeks. It is considered inappropriate to inquire the host's whereabouts, as the host may in fact be home with a more prestigious visitor.

The common way to announce yourself when you arrive at the home of another samurai is to present a copy of your chop (or personal mon, if you have been granted one) to the gateman, with a short speech identifying yourself, any positions or rank you hold, and your business inside the home. Even if the host is not at home, the samurai's mon will be kept so that the host knows who his visitor was.

## Asking To See a Lord

If a samurai needs to speak with his lord, it is proper for him to speak to the lord's advisor (or house shugenja) and make an 'appointment' to formally discuss the matter. Even if the samurai sees his lord on a daily basis, any important or formal questions (such as permission to commit seppuku, get married, or journey out of the daimyo's lands) must be handled appropriately.

The daimyo will set an appointment for the samurai – though, if the daimyo wishes, he may simply say 'the appointment will be arranged' and never return to the samurai with a date. Such treatment is, of course, extremely dishonorable, and will be noted by other samurai who serve the lord, decreasing their loyalty and respect for such an individual.

## Presenting Themselves

A samurai may present himself before a ranking individual if he has been introduced by the shugenja or advisor to that noble lord. Often, if a lord wishes to see another daimyo's retainer, he will have



his advisor request that the retainer ask for an appointment with the lord. Then, the lord immediately sets the appointment date (often, within hours) and has the meeting.

If the samurai is approaching the lord, he must first present himself, a copy of his chop (or personal mon) and his questions to the house advisor. If this advisor is the lord's wife or first courtesan, it is sometimes appropriate for the asking samurai to provide a gift for her, as well as his information.

## A Samurai's Word

It's been mentioned before, but it is impossible to stress the difference between perception and reality too strongly. Honesty is considered rude. Although in many cultures lying is considered dishonorable, in Rokugan it is an art form. Telling someone what you think can only be done through a veil of caution and courtesy, and so it is possible to understand one another without a single word. Topics such as love, hatred, and other emotional subjects are grounds too dangerous to tread upon, and often, a samurai will spend hours discussing tea with someone – and meaning much more.

One of the exceptions to this rule is a samurai under the influence of sake. A samurai who drinks too much is always excused for his behavior and any insults he makes, so long as his actions do

not involve such disgraces as murder, disloyalty or treason. When a man is drunk, he cannot be expected to cover his 'true face', and is given more leeway to act as he wishes. It is a delicate loophole, though, and not one to be abused. This, and other virtues of polite society, are important to note for anyone who plans to make a journey to the Emperor's Winter Court.

## Gifts

In Rokugan, gifts are given to celebrate good service, to announce favor or disfavor with an individual, and to recognize a service or honor. The value of a gift is not chosen for its monetary expense, but rather for its sentimental value. If a daimyo wanted to make a very public statement of favor toward his loyal servant, he'd probably give them something dear to his heart, like his father's fan, or the kimono that Emperor Hantei XIII once wore while resting in his palace for the weekend. While many Western economies are based on the barter system, Rokugan's is based on gift giving. While this may not seem to be a great difference, it is one of the most fundamental differences between western cultures and Rokugan. The way a Rokugani gives you a gift can tell you if he respects you, if he is a friend, or if he is your deadliest enemy. Because samurai are given everything they reasonably need, giving something for its usefulness is considered impolite, if not an outright insult to the samurai's



daimyo. Armor, weapons, horses – all are provided by a samurai's clan (or by the Emperor or Emerald Champion, if they are in service to the Throne). A samurai's response to being given money would be "Are you implying that my daimyo doesn't provide for me?"

Similarly, a gift of money is a veiled insult. If a samurai needs something, he asks his Lord; unless it's impossible or impractical, the samurai gets it. What the samurai cannot ask for is the honor of owning the favorite fan of the Lady Kachiko, which she held at the coronation of Hantei XXXIX... now that's a gift!

Purchasing gifts can be an equally difficult task. Buying something is considered dishonorable for a samurai, and often, if something must be purchased, a servant is sent to do so. However, if he is attempting to purchase a gift for, say, the daimyo of the land, certain things must be taken into consideration. A daimyo can simply take anything in his province that he wishes. It's all 'his,' anyway; he just has to decide he wants it. Once he does, the heimin merchant is only too honored to give it to him (it's good for business, after all, when the daimyo selects your wares for his personal use). So, buying something as a gift isn't going to make too much of an impact. It's not a bad idea, but it is not going to get you into the Emperor's Winter Court.

Literally, in Rokugan, it's the thought and presentation that counts, more than anything else. Significance, personal meaning,

and enlightenment are all key words for gift-choices. Examples of these ideals are:

- Significance: It's the very first fan ever made.
- Personal Meaning: It bears your father's mon, and was carved from the wood of a tree which was planted on his grave...
- Enlightenment: "There is a story of how the wise Shinsei held a fan such as this one in his hand. He spoke this tale..." (Here, the samurai tells the enlightening tale.) "I hope that when you see this humble fan, Shinsei's wisdom will rest upon your shoulders, great Lord of the Lion."

### Giving and Receiving

*"With allies in every house in the Empire, a wise man can find aid wherever he needs it."*

– Kakita Yoshi

Status in Rokugan is inextricably tied to gifts. Although it is not necessary for a samurai to offer a gift to every lord he meets, it is considered extremely poor manners if he does not. Any time a samurai receives a formal invitation to an event (such as Winter Court, for example) or visits a location to conduct business (such as diplomatic negotiations), it is proper etiquette for him to offer a gift to his host.

A gift must be carefully selected, and appropriate for the recipient. Daimyo of repute can expect gifts that appeal to their personal interests, whereas more obscure individuals will likely receive a gift that reflects the stereotypical interests of his clan. For example, a gift for Shiba Akiuji, a daimyo known for his passion for finely crafted armor, might be an exquisitely detailed mempo bearing both the mon of the Phoenix. A lesser-known Phoenix lord might instead receive a rare spell scroll or collection of sayings from the Tao.

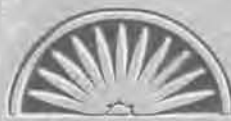
While gift-giving is a great opportunity to gain favor with a host, it is also an opportunity to cause enormous insult, as the wrong gift can greatly offend the host. A collection of romantic haiku is of no use to a Crab daimyo and clearly indicates to him that his guest has no knowledge of the Crab's sacred duties guarding the Wall. Such social faux pas have incited wars.

Traditionally, a guest presents his gift to the host upon his arrival. It is not unheard-of to send the gift ahead of the guest, but the majority of courtiers and ambassadors prefer to present the gift in person, which permits the host to offer the customary two refusals before accepting.

Some daimyo who host a court offer a small gift to each of their guests. This is not necessary, and only the wealthiest lords do such a thing. Often, this gift is a trinket of some sort that plays a role in a contest to be held during the court.








# Architecture

## Cities

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

Districts, or *shiamachi*, are physically separated from each other with walls or distance. They are also controlled by a guild headman who reports directly to the samurai head of the city. The term "shiamachi" specifically refers to the "area around" (the castle), where the merchants and craftsmen reside. Small businesses and shops, separate from their homes, run alongside the major streets, while the houses and residential areas of the district are usually a distance away from the busy roadway. Homes, particularly in the craftsman district, are pressed against one another by the need for space within the city.

## Eta Villages

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

## Homes and Housing

Because of the crowded conditions in most of Rokugan's cities, houses make the greatest possible use of space. A typical Rokugani house has enough room for six to eight people, who share bedrooms, front (or "living") rooms, and garden space. Whether they belong to a member of the samurai class or to heimin, houses are always clean, sparsely furnished, and well-maintained.

### A Samurai's Home

The structure itself is typically wooden, with rice-paper doors and walls within. While this arrangement makes it extremely vulnerable to fire, it keeps the warm temperature of the land from becoming overbearing, and also allows the home to be easily and cheaply rebuilt after earthquakes or other natural disasters. Post-and-beam construction, with a sloping tiled roof and a wooden veranda surrounding the entire house, are common to a samurai dwelling. It is said that these simple materials – wood and clay – represent the importance of nature to the lives of those within.

Traditional homes always face south, but also have an opening on the northern side to allow for cool breezes in the summer and warm air in the winter. They are built on wooden pillars that rest on foundation stones in order to help absorb the shock of earthquakes. The roof is always tightly waterproof, as the rainy season can be very damp. The ability to build homes that will withstand the harsh seasons is highly valued; nature is a fickle force in the Empire.

*Shoji*, the wooden doors which lead into the interior of the house, are made of thin wood, with a rice-paper overlay glued to the door's frame. It is thin enough to allow light to pass from within the house, but thick enough to block winds and rain. There are many kinds of shoji, from the simple paneled door to the elaborate *karado*, or painted paneling with ledges.

Just off the main entryway, or *genkan*, the family's alcove, called a *tokonaka*, holds sacred items and flower arrangements. Such items as the family's ancestral sword, a poem written in honor of the house, or an ancient and highly valued piece of family memorabilia are displayed in the *tokonaka*. To disturb such a display is disrespectful, and cause for a duel or public reprimand.

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

*Tatami* mats cover the floor of a Rokugani house, and are replaced monthly (more often if they become soiled). These thick woven-straw mats are always exactly 6' long and 3' wide, and often up to 2" thick. *Tatami* have become widely used as a general covering, and prevent the collection of dust, dirt, or other materials



upon the floor. Some tatami mats are woven with a seamed cloth binding in the traditional color of the household.

Interior doors, known as *fusuma*, line the inside of the house and separate the individual rooms from one another. Like *shoji*, such doors are mere frames with paper glued to them. A Rokugani house is separated more by formality than by solidity – the *fusuma* only provide social clues which inform visitors to “ignore what is on the other side of the door”. Sometimes, in large houses or stone castles, these interior doors are made of thin wood paneling, or sliding glass, and are known instead as *sugito*.

Beyond the *genkan* is the traditional reception room, or *zashiki*. In this room, the host has a low table, some small cushions for kneeling (*zabuton*), and perhaps another, smaller alcove containing flower arrangements and poetry. This room often has built-in shelves lining one or more walls, and usually has another door – a *shoji* – which leads into the family garden. In warm weather, this door remains open at all times, so those inside may admire the beauty of the garden.

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

## A Farmer's Home

A farmer's house is not so different from that of a samurai, provided a similar number of people live within. In fact, the largest

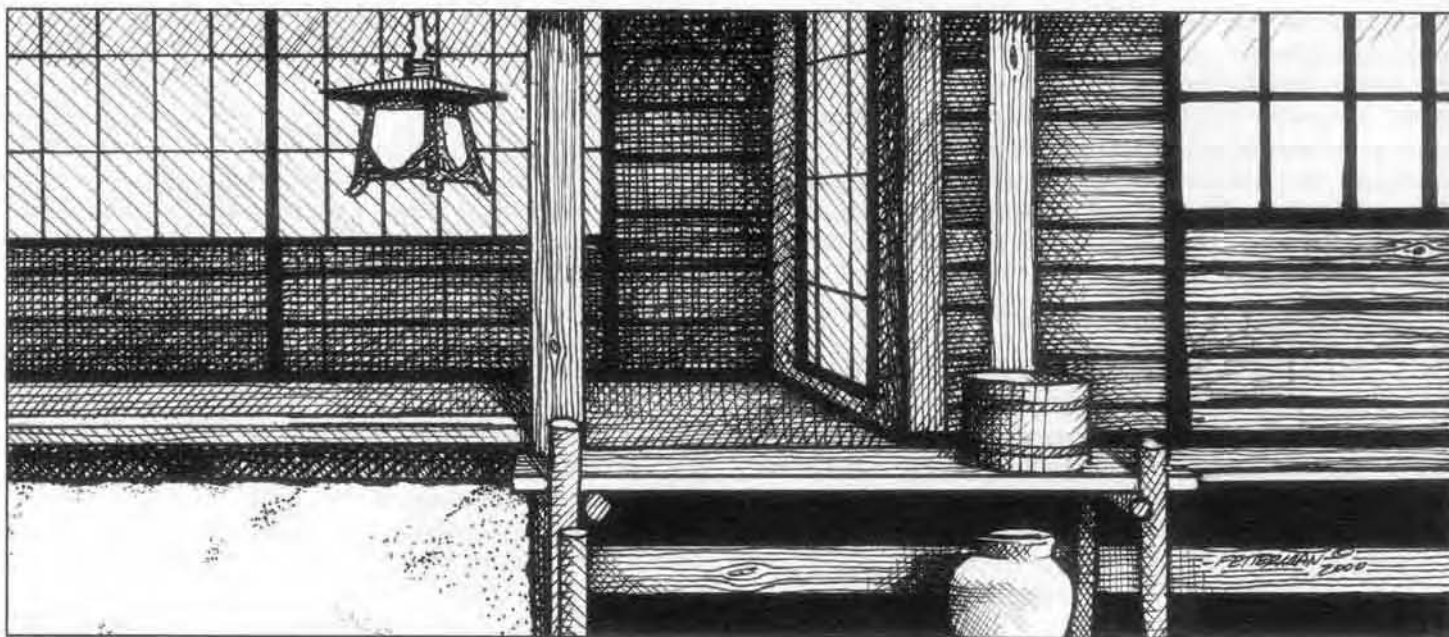
difference between the two is the number of family members which live within a single dwelling – for a samurai, it may be as low as six to eight, while a farmer's house might accommodate as many as twenty. Also, a farmer's house has less valuable furnishings, fewer or no folding screens, and rarely – if ever – has a garden.

## A Heimin's Home

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

## Eta Homes

*Eta* rarely have more than one room within their house; the entire *eta* family lives in that single room. Nevertheless, the room is always neat and clean, furnished with sparse tatami mats and silk or cotton quilts for sleeping. They have no garden, although an aspiring *eta* village might have a single garden-like area where all the members of the village tend the plants and pathways. While these gardens rarely contain exceptional examples of Rokugani flora, they are one of the few places where nature shows its raw beauty amid the roughness of city life.





# Life and Death

*"I have borrowed my ancestors' name. I must return it to them untainted."*

– Matsu Tsuko

One of the most important rituals in the Emerald Empire is the ritual of *seppuku*, or formal suicide. Death is the final testimony, a permanent record of protest or support, and is only performed if the situation is of the most extreme seriousness.

This concept is among the most important, and most commonly misunderstood, customs in Rokugan. Seppuku may not be entered into without express permission of the feudal lord which a samurai serves. No matter what the offense, or how dire the dishonor, samurai may never kill themselves unless their lord permits it. Seppuku could take place (and would likely be approved) only under specific circumstances, such as if the samurai in question needed to resolve a conflict of loyalty between one's lord and the Emperor. Atoning for dishonorable actions is also appropriate, especially if the action had stained the samurai's house or family. Samurai may also commit seppuku in order to avoid dishonorable defeat, and often, a daimyo will grant his generals permission to do so before they leave for the field. In some cases, a samurai gains permission to commit seppuku in order to avoid execution for a major crime. Execution is considered the most dishonorable of deaths.

One of the least used reasons for seppuku is called *kanshi*, or taking one's life in order to reprove the actions of one's own lord. Of course, the daimyo in question rarely accepts *kanshi* politely, but the samurai must ask and receive permission anyway. It is considered bad form to refuse a *kanshi* request, as it angers the spirits of the house, and may bring bad fortune down upon the daimyo.

If they are not samurai-ko, female members of the samurai caste are allowed to commit *jigai* by cutting their throat with a tanto. This

is considered a less vicious form of death, although no less honorable. At times, a male child who has not yet reached his *gempukku* will also be allowed to kill himself with *jigai*. If a child is too young to kill himself in order to fulfill a daimyo's seppuku request, it becomes the duty of the parents to kill their own children before they commit seppuku.

(For more information about seppuku, see "Death and Seppuku" in the section entitled "A Samurai's Life", page 47.)

## Duels

When a samurai considers challenging his opponent to a duel, several traditions must be followed. First, the reasons for the duel must fall within acceptable parameters, and a proper challenge must be made; second, the type of duel must be decided; and third, the appropriate ceremonies and rituals must be performed.

When a samurai feels that his honor has been sullied, he may cleanse it with a challenge to duel the person who has insulted him. It is also allowable for a samurai to carry a challenge for someone else, such as a courtier, his daimyo, or his wife or daimyo's wife. It is not considered acceptable to challenge someone to a duel if they are of significantly higher station than you are (more than 3 points of Glory), or if your own honor was not insulted (you cannot claim someone else's insult as your own unless you have been asked to intercede). Insults from a superior of much higher station should be borne with honor. If they cannot be ignored, the samurai should ask his daimyo to take up the responsibility for avenging the insult to their house.

Further, a samurai may not initiate or accept a challenge to the death unless he has gained the full support of his daimyo. For a samurai to fall serving his lord is honorable. For him to fail in his duty to his lord because he threw his life away is considered shameful.

There are many types of duels in Rokugan. The duel to first blood (*ketsuiki*) is the most common, as it allows samurai to defend their honor without bringing the attention of their lord or causing shame to their house. *Ketsuiki* usually involve the *iaijutsu* skill, and end when blood is first drawn. A strike after the first wound is considered extremely dishonorable. A second, less common duel is the duel to the death (*shi*). These duels (also commonly *iaijutsu*) always take place over extremely serious circumstances, usually on the battlefield, or in a formal setting between two bitter enemies. To challenge someone to this type of duel over a lesser insult is dishonorable, and the challenged samurai may refuse with honor, particularly if his daimyo forbids him to accept such a demeaning challenge.





Shugenja have their own method of dueling with spells, known as the *taryu-jiai*. The two shugenja spend their magical ability, and use the power of their raw spellcraft to determine the victor. Shugenja take these duels as seriously as the duels of bushi; they are often even more dangerous than those of their sword-wielding associates.

Duels allow other weapons as well, provided both participants agree. A duel between two courtiers might include a poetry competition, or an acting challenge, in which each participant is given an impromptu character to portray. Two Crabs might decide to duel with *tetsubo* (using the appropriate skill) and two warriors on the battlefield might not use *iaijutsu* because they cannot resheathe their swords.

Witnesses are integral to a duel environment. In formal duels, a messenger delivers the challenge, carefully written in calligraphy on rice paper. The challenge must be made in public – even spontaneous duels must begin with the formal proposal of the duel. It must entail all the insults or dishonors which spurred the challenger to duel (“He said my mother was a *heimin*!”) and the challenged may freely admit to the truth of those words (“His mother was a *heimin*. Here is the testimony of his father!”).

Afterwards, witnesses are assembled. A duel which held without witnesses is no more than an honorless battle, and the participants will gain no glory or honor. Preferably, the samurai’s *daimyo* should attend a duel, particularly *shi*. If a proxy is involved (a bushi defending the honor of a female courtier, for example), the noncombatant in question will certainly attend.

If a duelist championing the cause of another fails, that person is expected to suffer the same fate as his champion. Many courtiers, in a show of alliance with their champion, will use a knife to inflict similar wounds on themselves, once the duel finishes. In this way, a bushi who takes a minor wound to his arm might see the courtier whom he defended take a knife and cut her own arm open as well.

Once a duel ends, the matter is finished. No further accusations or clarifications can be made. Ever. It is considered an insult to the spirits of the two duelists to have the matter brought up again, even if further testimony arises to deny the insult (“I’m his mother, and I’m a *heimin*!”). The duel is considered the absolute arbitration of the matter.

Rules governing the various types of duels can be found in the *Book of Fire*, page 164.



## The Shadowlands

The story of Fu Leng has been told countless times, changing slightly with each retelling. Elders tell chilling stories to wide-eyed children of the monsters of the Dark Lord’s Realm who will punish them if they misbehave. Sensei ignite the fire of battle in their students with descriptions of the evil foes that lurk there. There are poems and songs, woodcuts and paintings that portray dead, desolate landscapes and grotesque figures with stylized forms and traditional techniques.

These popular tales and depictions spring mostly from hearsay and legend. They are distorted, exaggerated, misinterpreted, inaccurate and twisted by the conventions of society and popular concept.

The realities of the Shadowlands are not for the faint of heart, nor weak of spirit. It may be best that the delicate nobles and superstitious peasants remain ignorant of the disturbing truth. Perhaps they should be left to their brightly-patterned pictures and carefully sculpted words, lest harsh reality crack their minds beyond repair.

But Fu Leng is a force that cannot be ignored, nor hidden behind pretty lies. Such an adversary must be exposed, studied, understood; only through knowledge and familiarity can the children of the Kami ever hope to drive him from their world.

## The History and Origin of the Shadowlands

The Crane storytellers speak of Hantei’s evil brother, Fu Leng, who fell to earth far to the south after being cut from the belly of his father. The force of his impact created a deep pit, and he sank down into *Jigoku*. There, he became twisted with hate, as foul spirits whispered encouragement and swore their allegiance to his cause. The evil of his presence spread out from the pit where he lurked.



corrupting the countryside into inhospitable wasteland. Trees and plants withered and died, or twisted into carnivorous menaces. Clear, pure water turned foul and clouded with rancid pollutants. The air filled with the stench of decay and infection. The warming light of the sun was reduced to a pale, watery illumination that struggled to penetrate the miasma of noxious vapors and thick, cloying fogs. The birds and beasts that resided there were affected as well. Most simply died – their bodies unable to survive the torturous changes. Others lived on, warped into forms both malicious and deadly.

While poets decorate the story with beautiful words and fabricated embellishments, the tale appears to be built upon a core of truth. It is obvious that some kind of blight has created the desolate region of the Shadowlands, one which grows stronger the further south one proceeds. The Nezumi – who claim to be native to the area – have their own history that closely parallels the Rokugani myth. All accounts maintain that the region was once lush and green, but that the land, the living things, the very air itself was poisoned by the emanations from the Dark Lord's Festering Pit. Regardless of its origins, no one can doubt the corrupting presence that pervades the region. A pall of unease infuses every moment spent there, and every detail reeks of the unholy. Even fires do not burn naturally – sputtering and hissing with a sickly green light – and none of the wood or other fuel in the Shadowlands will catch. Those who can manage to sleep within its boundaries are plagued with vivid nightmares that leave them shaken and drenched with clammy sweat.

## The Taint

The sinister force that made the Shadowlands linger there still, poisoning the area with its contaminating presence. Everything that walks and breathes among it is affected. All who tread in the Dark Lord's realm are bathed in his evil, and most suffer horribly from the exposure. This corruption is commonly known as the Shadowlands Taint.

The Crab family of the Kuni, and in particular their most famous scholar, Kuni Mokuna, have studied the nature of the Taint for centuries, and have discovered how to defend against it, slow its progress, and even heal the damage it causes – to a certain degree. It is not an easy task. The Taint affects the body, mind and spirit. It mars the flesh, maddens the brain, and poisons the soul. It blocks the natural flow of the elements through the body, enabling Fu Leng's contamination to seep into the blood and tissue. It curdles the vital fluids, causing unnatural growth and infusing the flesh with virulent cancers. It slows the flux of *chi* through the body, making it sluggish and polluted. Although a common superstition holds that the Taint can imbue the victim with supernatural strength, this is





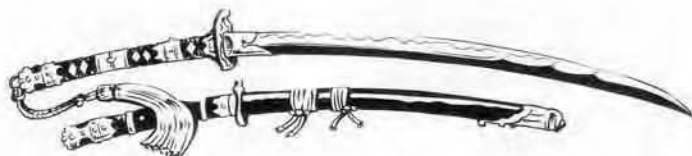
rarely the case. If left unchecked, the Taint can transform its victims into corrupted puppets: tattered husks under control of Fu Leng. Only by recognizing the extent to which it reaches – on every level of its victim's existence – can a shugenja hope to halt or reverse its effects.

Physical corruption can take an infinite variety of forms – all of them nightmarish. It typically starts slowly, much like a disease or other infection, then spreads with increasing rapidity. The first indications include a general feeling of imbalance and illness; nausea, vomiting and trembling spasms soon follow. Sores often break out across the skin in malignant clusters, oozing with blood, pus, and other noxious fluids.

The Taint affects the mind as well as the body, causing terrible madness in its victims. Initially, their dementia follows a predictable course, much the same way as physical symptoms do. The first signs are an unshakable irritability and increasing aggressiveness, difficult to detect in many cases. The Taint weakens the victim's chi and upsets the elemental balance, ultimately infecting the mind. The more severe stages of madness are as individual as each victim, but all are extremely dangerous and disturbing. Most victims exhibit extreme homicidal mania, attacking their closest relation with any weapon that comes to hand. Some mutter and scream obscene babblings before swallowing their own tongues, a process too shocking to describe. Honorable men have been reduced to scuttling things, feeding off of refuse or even swallowing small animals whole.

Jade is the only known thing that can prevent the Taint: carrying a piece the size of a finger can stave off the onset of Taint for about a week. At the end of this time, the jade has absorbed the corruptive energies, and becomes soft, black, and useless against further incursions of Taint.

The only known treatment of the Taint once a samurai has contracted it involves Jade Petal Tea, a rare brew made from a plant grown exclusively in the Crab lands. A single cup holds the Taint at bay for about half a day, but it does not eliminate it; it simply alleviates the symptoms.



## "Harmless"

"Never trust a Scorpion," Kakita Yoshi said with a chuckle. "You taught me that yourself."

"Ah, but I am Scorpion no longer." Bayushi Goshiu replied mildly. He smiled behind his mask, a porcelain covering that featured the sharp horns and great flaming eyes of an oni. Since the fall of his house, Goshiu's voice had faded from the court. His masks, on the other hand, had become increasingly more shocking and demonic.

They walked in silence through the shadowed halls of the Palace. An Imperial Guard rounded the corner and paused, bowing deeply to the powerful courtiers. They moved on, not saying a word. The guardsman breathed a sigh of relief and continued his patrol.

"It is true that I considered you a friend," Yoshi said. The Crane's voice was elegant in its tone and rhythm, as practiced a weapon as any samurai's blade. "However, friends do not keep secrets." The Crane left the pointed statement hanging in the air.

"You believe I knew something of the Coup?" the Scorpion laughed, briefly. "I am a samurai, but I am no more a warrior than you, Yoshi-san. Why would the Master of Secrets share his plans with one such as myself?"

"He would not," Yoshi admitted. "Even so, you have a remarkable power to hear what is not said. It surprises me that such a high-ranking Scorpion could return to the Emperor's favor so quickly. It makes me wary of your words."

"Why?" Goshiu asked, shrugging. "The Son of Heaven sees only the truth. He sees that I have abandoned the ways of my traitorous clan. I wish for nothing but the glory of the Empire. That is why I am speaking to you now."

"For the Empire," Yoshi mused.

"For the Empire," Goshiu nodded.

"Of course," Yoshi smirked.





"Now tell me," Goshiu said, lowering his voice as the two continued their walk. "Do you find that Lord Hoturi has been acting a bit odd of late?"

"Odd?" Yoshi replied, narrowing his eyes thoughtfully. "I do not know what you mean."

The Scorpion smiled inwardly. After years of gentle probing around the periphery of the Crane presence at court, he had finally hit upon something. Though the reaction was slight, it was obvious that even Kakita Yoshi apparently had mixed feelings about his new champion.

The hard part was over. Now Goshiu just had to make something up.

"Well as you said, I hear things," Goshiu chuckled. "What is odd about Doji Hoturi? Rather ask, where should one begin?"

The Scorpion chuckled inside as the Crane listened to his lies with rapt attention. Bayushi Goshiu had noticed the most intriguing phenomenon. Before their fall, the Scorpion were a powerful presence, great in number, never to be trusted.

Now that they were broken, no one seemed to see the harm in keeping one harmless Scorpion around.

The trick was in becoming that "one harmless Scorpion," and then finding someone foolish enough to underestimate you.

It was quite easy, really.

*The dismal stink of the Shadowlands surrounds my companions and me. A towering oni grabs a pair of bushi and shakes them like children's dolls, snapping their bones into powder. I hear their pleas for help and ignore them, knowing that I am condemning them to a fate worse than death. My daimyo is depending upon me to escape this horror, or else hundreds more will die as my companions have.*

*And you lie in your garden and tell me about duty.*

*The wall stretches a thousand leagues long, filled with samurai preparing for siege. A sea of goblins stands before me, howling unnameable curses into the air. As they begin to cross the river, I hear that the Crane have launched another foray against our borders to the north. Yet I can do nothing but stay where I am and ensure that no goblin escapes to terrorize the same Cranes who steal our land.*

*And you stand in your silk robes and explain to me what honor is.*

*You are children playing games to fill your empty lives. You are infants squalling for your toys, pretending that nothing else holds meaning in this world. You are old women hunched around the fire, telling yourselves that the shadows beyond cannot hurt you.*

*I am the Crab. I have witnessed horrors that you could scarcely imagine and watched the death of enough samurai to fill an hundred battlefields. I have seen what lies beyond the soft confines of this make-believe kingdom, and I am charged with ensuring that your dream does not dissolve into nightmare. I am the sole and only protector of your pathetic existence.*

*So laugh at me if you will. Mock my uncouth behavior, start at my crude language. But do not speak to me of courage, little man. Do not speak to me of duty or honor. You haven't the slightest idea what they mean.*

## The First Crab

When the sons and daughters of Heaven fell to the Earth, they held a series of contests to determine who among them was fit to rule. Hida, by far the largest and strongest of the eight, easily won all of the tests involving power and endurance. In the contests that required wits and insight, however, he was sorely outmatched by his more canny brothers and sisters. During the final test, he was the first of the eight to fall. Counting on his tremendous strength to compensate for his simple tactics, he was no match for Lady Shinjo, whose speed and cleverness quickly rendered him helpless. The humiliation at such a loss – and so early in the test – was more than

*Something bearing my father's face and weeping my mother's tears comes clawing up from the depths, screaming for me to join them. I feel its talons against my armor, snapping leather and metal as if they were origami. I reach for my tetsubo as I hear its hideous laugh, and I know that one blow is all it will allow before it tears the entrails from my bones.*

*And you sit in your palace and lecture me on courage.*



he could bear. He berated himself for hours, cursing his clumsiness and his inability to marshal his strength effectively.

His brooding was broken by the appearance of a little old man with a shaved head, dressed in the simple robes of a monk. He sat down opposite the hulking Hida, who did not stir at his approach.

"Why are you angry, my son?" the old man asked.

"I am angry because I am weak, and because my strength could not save me from that weakness."

The old man smiled, sadly it seemed, and spoke again. "Knowing your weakness is a form of strength, First Crab. Seek the truth in



that, and you will never be beaten again." With that, the old man bowed and went on his way.

Hida pondered the discourse for many hours before finally rising and returning to his brothers and sisters. As the years went by, he learned to temper his strength with strategy, and engage opponents on his terms, not theirs. He developed ways to goad his enemies into an unthinking rage. He watched the Lion and Dragon closely, working to gain their tactical knowledge and apply it to his own style. And he came to appreciate the concept of calculated loss, of expending only part of his power to exhaust and undermine his foes.

The first war against Fu Leng gave Hida an opportunity he could not resist. Where others saw only death and destruction, Hida saw a test: a test to see if he, and his brothers and sisters, were truly strong enough to rule. The monstrous spirits of Fu Leng had to fight their way through the Crab before engaging other units, and while Hida's forces took horrendous casualties, they ensured that the Oni paid for every step. Legend has it that Hida engaged Fu Leng himself at one point during the war, shattering his personal guard and delivering a painful injury to the dark lord. Standing on the battlefield afterwards, surrounded by the bodies of a thousand dying demons, Hida swore to battle the Shadowlands until Lord Moon and Lady Sun fell from the sky.

Hearing Hida's vow and impressed with his performance in the war, the Emperor charged him with protecting Rokugan from any further attacks. "Our safety is on your shoulders, brother," Hantei said. "For only you are mighty enough to bear its weight." Gathering his followers together, the First Crab traveled to the southern reaches of the Empire, a fierce and rocky place where the Elements themselves had grown strong. At the foot of a great mountain range, Hida stopped, and turned to the followers.

"This is where we will live," he boomed. "And where we will work to ensure that He Who Must Not Be Named can never threaten the Emerald Empire again."

## The Present

For ten centuries, that remained unchanged. The Crab lost much, but they never wavered in their duty. They battled tirelessly against the Shadowlands, whether they came in great numbers or few. The crucible of the Great Kaiu Wall had forged them into the mightiest army in Rokugan, which let them stand toe to toe with the minions of Fu Leng. For a thousand years, that remained unchanged.

Now, however, things are different. The current daimyo, Hida Kisada, has become increasingly vocal in his criticism of the Emperor; he believes that the Son of Heaven is not strong enough to properly lead the Empire. Kisada saw the might of the Shadowlands, and wondered if he could use them somehow against



his enemies in Rokugan. Ironically, the Shadowlands creatures he has confronted are the only beings that have commanded his respect. He is contemptuous and condescending to all non-Crabs, believing them to be mewling kittens hiding behind him for safety.

When the Clan War began to tear the Empire apart, Kisada saw his chance. If he were to become Emperor, he could end this chaos and destroy the Shadowlands once and for all. But he could not do it while guarding the Kaiu Wall; it required too many men, men who were occupied fighting the Shadowlands. In order to seize Otsan Uchi, it seemed he would have to abandon his duty and allow Fu Leng's minions to run rampant. The dilemma did not sit well with him.

As he pondered the possibilities, his thoughts were interrupted by his aide, Kuni Yori. The daimyo of the Kuni family knew of his lord's desires, and believed he had found a way to achieve them. Instead of letting the Shadowlands creatures run rampant, he reasoned, why not ally with them? Their strength would be a tremendous asset on the field of battle, and by throwing them against Kisada's enemies, he could save countless Crab troops. If the oni and goblins of Fu Leng were under Crab command, they could be kept in line, and not cause undue damage to the heart of Rokugan. And once the goal was achieved, once Kisada had become Emperor, they could crush their erstwhile allies like bugs. Then, the Crab could turn on the forces of the Shadowlands and backed by the whole of the Empire, destroy them once and for all.

Initially, Kisada vehemently rejected the idea, but as time went on he has begun to see wisdom in Yori's words. So it was decided, and with Yori's help, Kisada contacted the unspeakable rulers of Fu Leng's realm. They proved remarkably willing to ally themselves with their former foes, and soon monstrous new forces marched under the banner of the Crab.

And now, the Crab army fights to claim the Emperor's throne. They battle with passion and fervor, for they know that their lord is just. Only Kisada can be trusted with the future of Rokugan. And with the horrible beasts of the Shadowlands serving as their cannon fodder, victory is almost certain. Many of the Crab armies are full of Shadowlands creatures, and it is little wonder that those who have been the leaders of these armies are now being afflicted with the Shadowlands Taint. The Taint, an evil that rots and corrupts the agents of the Shadowlands, has infected the Crab, sending their warriors to the brink of death – and beyond. Yet a terrible price has been paid: one of the most powerful oni has been given the name of Kisada's eldest son, tied in a blood pact to strengthen the alliance. It inspires fear in their enemies, but those Crab who see it can only shudder at the change that has come over their once-proud house.



## The Crane

*Of the Eight Kami, only two remained on the hilltop where the first tournament had been held when the snows came. Those two were Hantei and his sister, Lady Doji. The first city had been raised upon that hill, and a great palace was being built – a palace that would one day be known as Otsan Uchi, the city of the Emperor. The winter blew its harsh breath over the land, coating it with white frost and thick snow. One day, Lady Doji stood at her window in the high towers of Otsan Uchi and looked down upon the budding city below.*

*On the road outside of the palace she saw a thin beggar-man, sitting outside the warm houses of the city. His cloak was ragged, and his weathered staff lay by his side with his begging bowl. There were no travelers on that road, only the company of bitter wind and freezing snow.*

*Lady Doji called to her samurai guards, instructing them to bring the beggar inside the palace, that a small room would be found for him. But when the guards returned, they said that the beggar refused the request, and would not listen to what they said.*

*So, Lady Doji called to her maidservants, and gave them a bowl of steaming rice and fish, and told them to go to the beggar. They went out into the cold winter wind, but although the beggar gratefully accepted the food, he again refused the shelter they offered. Puzzled by his strange behavior, Doji went to her window again, but the little man had not moved. He simply sat by the road, calmly accepting the cold winter day around him.*

*At last, despite the pleas of her maids, the Lady Doji left the palace and walked down the road away from Otsan Uchi. Bearing only a blanket woven of thick wool, she stood in the thick snow near the little man. "They tell me," she said softly, "that you will not come inside. Will you not at least take this warm blanket?"*

*"Why would I want to do that?" The beggar's voice was rough, uncultured, but not disrespectful.*





*"So that you can live. The day grows darker, and the night will bring fierce storms, and snow. Do you wish to freeze and die?"*

The wizened beggar looked up at the lady, her face as white as the snow which lightly crusted the ground. "Die?" he chuckled. "You say that word with dread, my Lady." His thin eyes pinched shut as he calmly took a bite of fish from the warmed bowl.

"Are you not afraid of death?"

"Rather, my Lady, I am not afraid to live." Doji stared at the man, a faintly puzzled look on her perfect features. "Look around you, Lady. What do you see?"

Doji gazed at the land around her, from the palatial walls of the new construction in Ootosan Uchi, down to the rolling ocean on the rocks below. "I see... the world."

"That is all you see? You do not look right in front of your face." The little man chuckled, and Doji flushed with anger. "Gentle Lady Doji, I do not mean to insult you. Tell me..." he reached down and scooped up a handful of the snow at her feet. "Do you not see the snow?"

"The snow?" she said. "Of course I see the snow. There is snow everywhere."

"Ah, but do you see the snow?" As Doji looked at him perplexedly, he pointed at a large flake which fell near her face. "That one. What do you see there?"

She looked at the tiny flake of snow as it fell lazily past her face, through her fingers, and landed on the ground at her feet. After a moment, she said, "It has seven spires, from a single point."

"And that one?"

"Three spires – it looks like a dove in flight." She paused, "I had never noticed..."

"In all the thousands of snowflakes of all the thousands of snowfalls, there are no two which are alike." The little man chuckled gleefully. "No two in all eternity. If I were to go inside with you now, I would never see that snowflake. Its pattern would never occur again." He pointed a wizened finger at a slowly falling splinter of ice.

"It is only a piece of water." Doji watched in fascination as the beggar peered at another snowflake.

"And life is only a single day, one upon the other, until years have passed and you have grown old, and then you say, 'Where have all the days gone?'" He chuckled again. "Ah! Six spires – like the wheel of a wagon." He paused, and the snow fell silently between them. After a moment, the beggar continued, "How did you spend this morning, Lady?"

"This morning?" The curious question surprised her, and she murmured, "I was weaving – a new kimono for my brother, Hantei."

"Four blocks and a single spire!..." The beggar chortled, pounding his feet upon the ground as he pointed at another flake of

snow. After a moment, he continued, "Do you remember each silken string that you wove into the pattern of your brother's kimono?"

"Why, no, of course not!"

"Why not?"

"There are hundreds of fibers in the pattern – thousands of strands in all. How can I remember each one?"

"Yet, I suppose you remember every mistake you made, and the hours it took to correct them."

Doji flushed. "Of course."

"Perhaps if you had taken a moment to see every strand, to understand each fiber, you would never have made those mistakes, neh? As you did not see the snowflake, you ignore what is around you – you ignore the days of life, to see only the years." He snorted. "You cannot change the passing of years. But you can change the passing of hours – and what you choose to do as that time passes. Will it be something you will remember, or will your days pass you by as if they were nothing but a fog of snow?"

The lady stared at the little man, her vision blurring as the snow began to fall faster, the wind rippling through her hair. "You are more than a beggar, little man." A tear slid down her pale cheek and vanished into the snow – another lost piece of ice, among the millions.

"But are you more than just one life among many?" His voice was soft, but it cut through the wind like a scythe. "And when you die, will you be remembered, or will you be another strand in the tapestry – uncounted, and irretrievable? The snow will melt, Lady Doji, and in a few days it will be gone and forgotten forever. Who will remember it?" He paused, and turned from her face to look at the swiftly falling snow. "Who will remember you?"

After a moment, Lady Doji knelt beside the thin monk, and together they sat by the side of the road as the silent snow fell, piece by piece, onto the plains around them.

## The House of the Crane

*To the chaos and conflict, I introduced peace.*

*To the rough and unrefined, I brought civilization.*

*To the unclean and uncultured, I showed beauty.*

*To each new generation, I bore a Hantei Emperor.*

*Without me, Rokugan would be a dark and ugly battlefield.*

*I am Crane.*

The clan of the Crane consists of four powerful families, each with an equal voice in the operation of the clan. Such egalitarianism is caused by the complete symbiosis of the noble houses of the Crane – no two families overlap in their duties, and all are needed to keep the clan's power intact.



The Doji are the voice of the clan and the heart of its strength. They control most of the political power within Rokugan. Through their efforts, the Crane lead society, help build the arts and civilization, and create political alliances with the other clans of Rokugan. The Kakita, famed for their iaijutsu duelists, also are the creators of beautiful things – their artisans are the most respected in the Empire. The Daidoji are the Crane's military power, keeping the Crane borders safe. They also perform the secondary service of being the Crane's underhand – dealing with things too dishonorable or too dangerous for the other families. The Asahina, the only shugenja in the clan, spend their time in peaceful meditation and the creation of items arcane and wonderful.

The Kakita are descended from the first follower of Lady Doji, when she and her brothers fell from the sky and created the nation of Rokugan. Kakita was the first Emerald Champion, the first Champion of the Crane, and husband to Lady Doji. Their children chose to follow either their father or mother's path, and thus were the two houses born. The Daidoji were the children of the fifth son of Doji and Kakita, who followed a different path and created his own house in the service of the Crane.

The Asahina, an offshoot of the Phoenix Isawa whose leader had fallen in love with a Crane samurai-ko, added their voice to the halls of the Crane. They brought with them the knowledge of creating magic items, and when they joined their gifts with the remarkable works of art formed by the Kakita artisans, the Asahina house quickly became known as the greatest artificers in Rokugan. The history of the Crane is an illustrious and glorious one, and its stories are still part of the myths of Rokugan. Their past – and their future – is inextricably linked to the Emerald Empire.

Despite their apparently weak military, the Crane are extremely experienced in war. Defending themselves against both Lion and Crab aggressors have made the Crane battle-ready, and the Daidoji are always on the alert for an attack. The Crane live in ornate palaces, and are renowned for their political acumen. Indeed, the Crane are said to have allies in every house in Rokugan, on whom they can call to enlarge their army in times of need. Cranes are cultured, sophisticated and elegant. To speak with a Crane is to become immersed in civilization and grace. A Phoenix samurai, defending a Crane artisan against a Crab's brutish verbal assaults, once said, "You fight the war against the Shadowlands so that Rokugan can live. The Crane give Rokugan something to live for."

There is a myth about a crane in Rokugani lore, in which a man freed one of these graceful birds from a fisherman's net. In gratitude, the crane changed into a woman. She visited the man the next day, offering friendship and companionship. The two were married, and the woman painted pictures of great beauty for him to sell. Soon the couple became rich, and lived well for the rest of his days. When the

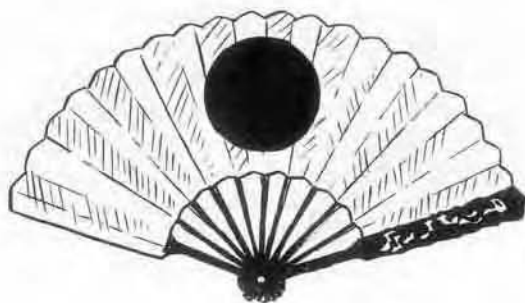
man died, legend says that the woman wept at the side of his funeral pyre for three days. At the end of that time, she raised her hands to the heavenly sun, and became a crane once more, never to be seen again. Such dedication, loyalty, and beauty are attributed to the crane, and to the clan which bears its name.

It is important to note the difference between what the Crane are, and what they want you to think that they are – underestimation is a powerful tool.

## The Present

Since the beginning of the Clan Wars, it appeared that the Crane would be the first to fall. Known for their dueling ability and their political prowess rather than battlefield acumen, heavy assaults from the Crab and Lion immediately cost the Crane two provinces. Perhaps the Crane have been the most assaulted clan because of their great wealth and their influence in the Emperor's court, or because their provinces have been weakened by the terrible plague that sweeps through the Empire. These, and other difficulties, have placed the Crane in a dangerous position – that of the defender against the two most powerful armies in the Empire: the Lion and the Crab. Only the valiant armies of the Daidoji, coupled with the Crane's allies in the Phoenix and Unicorn Clans, protect them from complete devastation. Even their greatest swordsman is not safe. Kakita Toshimoko, the Crane Clan iaijutsu Master, was nearly killed by a ninja assassin during an assault on the Crane's famous Winter Court.

The, a greater horror struck the lands of the Doji. An army of Shadowlands creatures has begun to march across Rokugan, gathering in the Crab provinces and lashing out at the Crane's southern territories. Rumors of plague in their northern lands bring more fear to the eyes of the Crane peasants, once well-cared for and peaceful. It seems that for a clan who seeks peace, war will come all too soon. This is the time for heroes to rise, to defend the clan against such invaders – and return peace to the opulent lands of the cultured Crane families.






# The Dragon

The armies of the Kami's dark brother marched across the world, killing all who stood in their path. The first Hantei was lost. His brother was using magic he did not understand. Even noble Akodo and wise Shiba could not advise him.

He decided to face his dark brother alone. Akodo forbade the Emperor to do so. "That is my duty," he said. But Hantei ignored Akodo's assertion and prepared to face Fu Leng on his own, knowing half in his heart that he could not succeed.

But before he could leave, a man dressed in a simple kimono, a wide hat and a long staff approached him and bowed low. "I am Shinsei," he said to the Emperor.

"What do you have to bring the Emperor, little man?" asked Akodo.

"Only wisdom," answered Shinsei.

"Well, then. Let us see your wisdom," said Akodo and he stepped forward, drawing his sword...

...The defeated Akodo rubbed the bruise on his neck as he listened to the little man's words. All about him, the Children of Sun and Moon also listened, but Shinsei's words were directed to the Emperor Hantei.

As he spoke, the Emperor and his brothers and sisters asked questions. Shinsei answered them, but more often than not his answers only led to more questions.

The only one who was silent was the one whom Shinsei called "Togashi." Togashi listened quietly, showing no sign of understanding, or even of interest. But then Shinjo asked a question and when Shinsei answered, Togashi stood. All of his brothers and sisters were startled by Togashi's sudden action, but Shinsei was not. He watched Togashi look at him, and then watched him walk away into the forest.

As he walked, two men followed. Their names were Mirumoto and Agasha, and they were loyal to Togashi. When they found him

alone in the forest, he told them to stay back. When they asked him why he said, "I will not move until I understand."

Mirumoto looked at Agasha and the two were perplexed. "My lord?" asked Mirumoto. "What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say," replied Togashi.

Despite their pleas, Togashi refused to move, or eat, or drink. Mirumoto and Agasha tried to bring him food and sake, but he did not move.

Nine days passed this way, with the sun rising and setting and Togashi motionless in the center of a circle of food and drink. Mirumoto and Agasha begged Shinsei to speak to Togashi but Shinsei shook his head and said, "When the student is ready, the teacher is there."

On the morning of the tenth day, Togashi could barely speak. His body was dying and his mind was dim. His vision was clouded with shadows, but he saw a little man step to the edge of the circle and kneel beside it. Togashi recognized the little man, and Togashi told him, "I will not move until I understand."

Shinsei smiled and nodded. "Neither will I," he said, and he stepped over the food and drink and sat down in the circle next to Togashi.

Togashi's murky eyes filled with astonishment and then, his dry lips smiled. He nodded and a nightingale flew into the circle as well, carrying a branch from a plum tree. Together, he and Shinsei sat quietly and ate the food that encircled them.

## The House of the Dragon

The Dragon Clan is unique in Rokugan, in that, they are not truly a clan (in the Rokugani sense of the word). All of the other clans can trace their ancestry back to a single kami (and his or her followers), but the samurai of the Dragon Clan cannot. Their founder – Togashi – did not establish a bloodline. Those who bear the Togashi name are members of a monastic order founded by Togashi one thousand years ago. When a samurai takes the "Togashi" name, he drops the name he was born with to show he is no longer the man he once was. He is now a Togashi, an *ise zumi*, a Tattooed Man.

Two other families – the Agasha and Mirumoto – derive their names from the two samurai who served Togashi until his death. Agasha was a highly skilled shugenja who was one of the first to see the connections between Shinsei's wisdom and the religion of the Seven Fortunes, and Mirumoto was Togashi's *yojimbo* (bodyguard) and founder of the famous Dragon two-sword style. The recently-established Kitsuki family is an offshoot of the Agasha.

Eight men and women followed Shinsei into the Shadowlands, and Mirumoto was one of them. When Shinsei told Hantei that mortal men and women must follow him, Mirumoto was the second





to step forward, a half-step behind the Lion Thunder, Matsu. None of Mirumoto's fellow Dragons questioned his claim.

Mirumoto was the founder of a unique style of kenjutsu. Instead of using just a katana, Mirumoto would use both the katana and wakizashi. He was recorded as saying, "I have two swords in my belt, why should I let one of them rest?"

When the news of Fu Leng's defeat reached Togashi, he took those who had chosen to follow him and went into the mountains far above Rokugan. He was not interested in politics or courtly life, war or conflict, only a quiet life of contemplation. Those who followed him also sought a life of tranquility and introspection.

The two most notable followers of Togashi were the first Agasha and a Mirumoto named Yojiro, the son of the Dragon Thunder. In the mountains, Agasha established schools, shrines, and temples, while Yojiro was concerned with maintaining their security. The two worked closely together, each learning much of the ways of the

other. Over the years, a friendship grew between the bushi and shugenja. Mirumoto encouraged his bushi to watch and learn from Agasha's students and Agasha did the same for his pupils.

This practice continued, even after the deaths of the founders of the two schools. Mirumoto bushi – while not able to cast magic – are highly attuned to the Five Elements, and Agasha shugenja – while not bushi – understand the basics of tactics and strategy.

Over a thousand years, the roles of the families have developed. The Agasha family are now responsible for keeping the knowledge gathered by the Dragon Clan while the members of the Kitsuki family act as the diplomats for the Dragon. The Mirumoto, on the other hand, are responsible for the defense and security of the mountain keeps of the Clan. The Togashi "family" follow their own private edicts, which are so cryptic that often not even the Agasha or Mirumoto can explain them.





## The Present

Recently, the Dragon have remained aloof and uninvolved with their surroundings, allowing their generals to choose their own paths. Although the might of the Dragon is great, without the guidance of their Champion, they have been like an undirected spear, fragmented into many directions.

Among the Mirumoto, two names have risen as the greatest samurai of the Dragon: Mirumoto Daini and Mirumoto Hitomi. Brother and sister, they work for their clan in vastly different ways, carrying out their Champion's wishes even as they forward their own goals. Hitomi leads no army, but fights on her own, hunting down the Crab that killed her brother. She moves with relentless anger, disciplined only in the fires of hatred. The Dragon do not control her; she fights for their cause, but will never forget her own.



*The clouds raced the wind from edge to edge of the sky's bright blue expanse. A thousand roars echoed, all merging in a scream of war. Armies with bright banners raised a thousand swords to the heavens, daring the darkness to oppose them.*

*A warrior, his eyes shining, turned to a Lady. "It will be glorious, Matsu." A thousand times it had been said, and a thousand times she had answered with a tumultuous scream of war and pride. Akodo looked down, watching his soldiers march, shaking the earth. His plumed helm rippled in the wind as he held the reins of his horse tightly. Beside him waited a woman with eyes black as death, her lips stretched in an expectant smile.*

*"To the right!" Akodo howled from his horse, charging beside his legions. "They flank to the right! Strike!"*

*The men charged, their swords cutting bloody swaths in their enemy. The aberrations, called up by Akodo's brother, screamed their*

*hatred as they were trampled underfoot. Akodo looked south and saw Matsu's followers making a valiant stand against twisted oni, their hands dripping blood and poison. Matsu was a head above them, a tremendous sword in her hand. Shouting, she charged the largest oni. First to the right, her blow parrying its claws, and then a cut to the beast's legs. Sparks flew as the no-dachi cut into the creature's metal scales, and it roared in pain and fury.*

*Matsu.*

*Akodo smiled. What a wife she would have made! Her swordsmanship was unmatched, and every man in her command would give his life for her. The Lady of Lions, indeed.*

*Suddenly, with a roar, ogres burst from a rocky ledge, falling upon Akodo and his men.*

*Akodo smiled as he wiped the ogre blood from his katana. Three brave samurai had died valiantly, but they had seen the dark creature die. Akodo looked about, rain spattering on his helmet. His pony was gone, cut from beneath him, and he stood surrounded by the dead.*

*"To the Emperor!" he cried, and raced toward the body of the battle. It had gone poorly. Akodo saw a tide of twisted figures, churning through the Rokugani troops like a storm, scattering samurai before them. Near the Emperor, Kakita's men clenched like a knot, swords covered in blood.*

*Matsu stood alone, her honor guard destroyed. Her armor was torn, her face a mask of fury. Akodo charged to her, breaking through the fray with wide sweeping blows. From the side, an oni charged him. Akodo twisted beneath its grasping claws, trying to drive his sword into its chest. It was fast, and his blow only sliced the creature's hide. Black blood splashed down on Akodo's face, blinding him as the oni laughed. Seeing only shadows, Akodo parried any movement, backpedaling to gain an advantage as he wiped the acrid liquid from his eyes.*

*He heard a grunt, and a scream, and lunged toward the hulking shadow. His blade met bone and sinew, but was torn from his hand. Another moment, but no return strike. Akodo tried to see past the pain and blood. Standing above him was a woman, her hair tangled and wild. Her eyes narrowed, and she offered him his sword.*

*"Matsu!" Akodo cried, seeing that the demon had fallen, headless, to the ground. She reached for his arm and dragged him to his feet, leading him to safety. Many times, he heard the ringing sound of battle, but his eyes could make nothing clear. Men rushed past, and he heard Matsu scream orders in his name.*

*Finally, in the safety of the Emperor's encampment, a healer attended Akodo's wounds. "You will see again from the right eye, my lord, but the left..." the man's voice faded uncertainly.*



*"It is all right," Akodo murmured. "I do not need two eyes to find my enemy." He paused. "Matsu?"*

*"Here." Her voice had no submission, no reverence. Only the faintest tinge of respect marked her position as his vassal.*

*"I should be at your side." His voice was harsh, rough with anger and despair. "But that cannot happen today. Take the armies." After a long moment, "You were right."*

*"We can never fight side by side, my Lord. No matter what you command," Matsu whispered. "It was never meant to be." He heard her laugh once, as the silken tent flap rustled, and then there was only silence. Silence, and the cries of the distant battlefield.*

*We were never meant to fight side by side, my Lord. Her words echoed in Akodo's mind. He watched the monk approach. The strange little man would take Matsu into the darkness. Akodo lowered his head wearily and his fingers brushed the patch that covered his lost eye.*

*"It is time for us to go, my friend," the monk murmured. "Will you remember everything I have taught you?"*

*Akodo nodded wearily, his hand falling to his side. "Hai, Shinsei-sama. All will be remembered. By my word, I swear."*

*A pause. Then, "Do you wish to speak with her before we go?" The monk looked at the tall figure standing on the hillside, her black hair fanning like a banner in the brisk winter breeze.*

*Akodo looked once more, then turned away. "No. She knows my heart. No words remain."*

*As the tiny man walked away, his words rang in Akodo's mind. "No path is so narrow that a man must walk it alone. Be one with your brothers, and stand by them. In their strength, you will find your own."*

*"Matsu..." he whispered, but they were gone.*

## The House of the Lion

At the time when the Kami fell from the sky, the number of men and women in Rokugan was small. The seven Kami searched among them for "the finest." Shiba chose the wisest, Hida the strongest, and so on, but Akodo stood alone. "I do not look for men for to follow me," he said. "I look for men worthy to stand by my side."

Akodo went out in the world to seek men to stand beside him, to become samurai; those who were willing to die to protect the Emperor. For every man who stood up to Akodo's challenge, there were one hundred who met their fate at the end of his blade.

Unworthy.

Weak.

Cowardly.

For nearly three years, Akodo traveled through the lands, testing each mortal who came to him, yet few were worthy in his eyes. Slowly, Akodo's clan grew. Led by Ikoma and Kitsu, Akodo's troops began to form an army of great proportions. The rivalry between Akodo and Matsu has long been a popular theme in plays and song. The Ikoma historians tell the tale each year on the first day of winter. From Matsu's refusal to fight Akodo, to her violent rejection of his wedding proposals, and finally, the time she turned to leave him and follow Shinsei, Matsu has been portrayed standing alone, sacrificing her life for the future of the Clan. Akodo, on the other hand, is often shown with his men, standing among loyal followers and trustworthy companions.

The families of the Lion derive their names from those who stood beside Akodo. The stories of the founders of each family are heralded in the Clan histories – from the insightful Ikoma to the bold Matsu – but all Lions choose to test their steel against the daimyo of their family on the day of their gempukku. For them, it is more than a ritual, it is a celebration of the courage in their hearts and a part of becoming a true Lion.

For a thousand years, the Lion Clan has been the right hand of the Emperor, recording the political and military interactions between clans. Further, their role as the largest standing army in Rokugan has given them battle prowess beyond that of any other clan in the Empire. To the Lion, their ancestors are more than spirits of the past; they are a guiding force in their everyday life, walking beside their descendants, shaping their destinies. They are more than legend, more than myth or parable. They are more than a part of the clan's past, they are also a part of its present and future.

## The Present

In recent years, the Lion have been weakened. After the Scorpion Clan Coup, they lost the entire Akodo family line due to Imperial decree. Their greatest daimyo, Akodo Toturi, was sentenced to live as a ronin, outcast from his clan and social position in the Empire. In the few years that have passed since the beginning of the Clan Wars, more blasphemies and insults have been heaped upon the Lion, yet they have borne them all with courage and strength. The Lion lands have been weakened by the plague, and the Unicorn run freely upon the Lion's western plains, while the Scorpion armies hide to their south. Only Matsu Tsuko's war of revenge against the Crane goes well, and the Doji are slowly crushed beneath the swords of the Lion.






# The Phoenix

One night, long before the Empire was whole, when the Kami had newly fallen from the earth, the Kami Shiba had a dream. It was more vivid and intense than any he had experienced before, and it burned into his soul with the truth of its vision. In it, he stood upon a high mountaintop while a huge flaming bird flew toward him. The bird's feathers were scarlet and yellow, and seemed to burn into the fabric of reality itself. It soared over his head before settling on a tree branch and staring at him imperiously.

"What sort of creature are you?" he breathed.

"I am the universe entire," the bird returned.

"How can you be the universe entire," Shiba asked, "when you are so obviously composed of the element of Fire?"

"Fire is my form, but not the totality of my being. I was hatched from an egg, from the fluids of life, so I am obviously from the element of Water. I soar through the skies with the wind under my wings, so I am quite clearly from the element of Air. I die as ash and rise, whole again, from the ground, so I must be from the element of Earth. And I am all these things, and none of them too, so I am truly from the element of Void."

Shiba pondered its words carefully before speaking again.

"But if you are the universe entire, then how can I be separate from you?"

"You are not separate, but one and the same. I am the reflection of your soul just as you are the manifestation of mine. We are death reborn, immortality through a thousand lifetimes. We are the cycle of the cosmos, spinning in patterns as old as time. We will die in flames only to rise again and again, until the sky itself collapses. We are the Phoenix – the Eye of Eternity."

The fallen Kami woke with the bird's words on his lips. Without saying a word, he rushed from his rooms into the heart of Gisei Toshi, where he rang the great summoning bell. The citizens gathered around to hear him speak, and even the Isawa shugenja

stirred from their libraries, for they sensed something monumental was afoot.

"Hear me, my people," Shiba began. "For too long we have been divided – divided from ourselves, from our common goals, and from the Empire we serve. For too long, we have been Isawa and Shiba, peasant and noble, scholar and warrior. That period is past. I have seen our future in the fires of destruction and the joy of rebirth. From this moment forward, we will be known as the Phoenix Clan."

The Isawa murmured quietly among themselves, for they had heard that word before. According to prophecy, one would come among them who would speak with the voice of the elements. He would be as a flaming bird that would never die, only fall and rise again as the centuries rode by. They would know him by the name he came as – Phoenix, life-giver, redemption in destruction. And as the populace raised their voice to cheer Shiba's words, they nodded in assent. Surely this was meant to be.

## The House of the Phoenix

In the time before the immortal Kami, the blood of the Moon fell from the heavens, mixing with the tears of the Sun. Between these two most illustrious substances, a bit of earth was caught, and the world was formed. Man walked upon the surface of the world, and the greatest of these was Isawa.

When the Kami gathered the population of the world together and divided them into clans, Isawa stood among them, watching carefully as the Kami fought for domination. When the first Hantei was crowned and the awestruck populace bowed before the Prince of the Heavens, Isawa did not bend his head to the ground. "What makes them worthy of our servitude?" he whispered to his brothers and sisters, and they nodded in unison.

With that, the Isawa family left the hill which was to become Otosan Uchi, and headed to the north, to begin their own city. In the northern mountains, despite bitter cold and harsh conditions, the city thrived. It is said that when the armies of Fu Leng invaded Rokugan from the corrupted fields of the Shadowlands, the people of the city of Isawa ignored the threat. The danger of the invading horde seemed irrelevant to their peaceful tribe. Soon, however, the wandering groups of Oni and goblins made their way to the northern lands, destroying the villages and blackening the land with their Master's foulness.

On the day that Isawa's youngest sister was killed by a marauding Oni, Shinsei and Shiba arrived to call Isawa and his people to fight for the Empire. After the burial, Isawa, Shiba and Shinsei met. Isawa listened, and Shinsei spoke long into the night. By the time the moon set in the summer sky, a bargain had been made. Isawa would come with Shinsei into the darkness of the



Shadowlands if Shiba would swear that he and his descendants would always protect the city. To cement this, Isawa swore his fealty to Shiba's line – but with a condition. "I am not your subject," Isawa thundered, "and I will not have my people believing that I have sold them into slavery. If I am to swear my children to your line, you must kneel before me as I offer service."

To another Kami, this request might have seemed preposterous – a son of Amaterasu bending down before a mortal. However, to Shiba, the price was low. By bending his knee, he would gain not only the powers, knowledge and strength of the Isawa family, but also a Thunder for the salvation of the Empire. It was a simple choice between personal pride and the lives of thousands.

Without hesitation, Shiba knelt, and Isawa gave him the oath of his people. To the south, on the fields of Ootosan Uchi, the threat of war grew nearer. Thousands died on the battlefield, Lion and Crab alike, defending the bastions of the Empire. As they fell back before a brutal assault, a tremendous light scarred the heavens above them. From the north, twenty shugenja flew, their robes fluttering in the wind which held them aloft. Their hands moved with dangerous incantations, and fire sprang from their fingers. Confused and unable to counter the sorcery, the Oni fell back from the battle, fleeing to their Master's side.

## The Present

The Phoenix Clan has been forced to leave their peaceful provinces, expanding their military in order to protect themselves from threats within the Empire. For a great part of the Clan Wars, they have expended their resources not in battle, but in research. They have sought out the true reason for the wars that divide the Empire, and of all the clans, they know the most about the horrifying days to come. Where they could, the Phoenix have aided their allies in the Crane, sending quiet legions to support the Doji's struggle against the Lion. However, with only those exceptions, many of the Phoenix samurai have not ventured far past their own borders. Something else is stirring within the libraries of the Isawa – something dreadful and ancient – and wisdom that was once locked away has been opened at last.



# The Scorpion

*The doors flew open as dozens of guards stood ready to protect the Emperor. Standing in the doorway, gray smoke oozing from her skin, Shosuro stood shaking, a black bag thrown over her shoulder.*

*Her mask was torn, but still, little of her face was visible. Her weary eyes scanned the court, and her lips whispered a single name: "Bayushi."*

*He stepped forward, his gait hesitant. His lips trembled. When he saw her standing there, surrounded by terrified guards, he ran to her, throwing off hands that would keep him back.*

*She fell to her knees when she saw him, an exhausted smile finding her lips.*

*"Don't touch her!" Shiba called out. "The Taint!"*

*Bayushi did not hesitate. He took the dying Thunder in his arms and pulled her close. They whispered together for a moment, the drama of the moment drowning their words. Then, as the court came closer, their conversation could be heard.*

*"It doesn't matter, little one," Bayushi told her. "It does not matter any more."*

*The Thunder shook her head. "I came back... I came back because I needed to tell you..."*

*He shushed her, but she continued. "I need to tell you..." she whispered again, her words so soft, they were lost to all but the man who held her.*

*Bayushi nodded. "I understand. And I forgive you."*

*Shosuro smiled one last time. Then the light left her eyes and her body fell deep into his arms, still and motionless.*

*Silence filled the hall. The only sound that reached us was the soft, rhythmic sound of Bayushi's breathing. No one moved.*

*Then, finally, Bayushi stood, his eyes remaining on the broken body on the floor. He spoke, his eyes never shifting.*

*"The body must be blessed. Then burned."*



*Bayushi paused, catching his breath. Then, he continued. "The bag," he said. "The bag contains the method they used to bind our brother. She promised Shinsei she would bring it back to us."*

*Hantei nodded. "Then she was successful."*

*"They must be guarded," Bayushi said. "The duty belongs to me."*

*Hantei nodded again. "I have no argument."*

*Bayushi turned back to the bag. He lifted it into his hands and turned to his followers. "Come, my children," he said. "We have much to do."*

*- from Kakita Uniko's Day of Thunder*

## The Hidden Scorpion

Of all Rokugan's clans, the most maligned is the Scorpion. Nearly every play, song and story features a Scorpion villain. They are portrayed as liars, murderers and cowards. Every samurai in Rokugan knows the truth: a Scorpion can never meet the gaze of an honest man without flinching.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Before the Scorpion Coup, some two years before the Clan War, the clan was a functional member of Rokugani society. Their power lay in secrets and histories, in knowing each man's secret, and in hiding – or displaying – their knowledge for the Emperor's use.

Where the Lion claimed to be the 'right hand' of the Emperor, fulfilling the military protection of the Empire; and the Crane volunteered as his 'left hand', occupying the prominent position in the court and within diplomatic chambers; it was the Scorpion who were whispered to be the Emperor's 'underhand', capable of performing the most dishonorable and wicked deeds in order to keep the Empire running. There are always secrets in a political Empire, always hidden truths and murders to be uncovered. This was the province of the Scorpion, and of the Bayushi in particular.

From Scorpion to Scorpion, the tales of Bayushi Shoji's Coup have spread. Their stories of the massacre at Otsan Uchi that day are different from those told by Rokugan's other six clans. They speak of a courtier named Bayushi Daijin. An ancient daimyo of the Scorpion clan, he spoke wisely for his clan until the day he met the Phoenix prophet, Uikku. After speaking to Uikku for some time, Daijin became haunted by visions, plagued by nightmares, and eventually, became completely mad.

He escaped beneath the Scorpion parapets and into the Bayushi Labyrinth, never to be found again. However, his writings – scrolls covered in his own blood – spoke of a dark future, and of the return of a lost God. These scrolls, carefully packaged against age and wear, were placed in a secret chamber beneath Shiro no Bayushi, and forgotten, the product of a deranged mind – until Bayushi Shoji opened them, and read the words within. Shoji realized the





final warning of the scrolls was true: 'From the blood and bone of the last Hantei, the fallen God will rise.' The only way to stop the prophecy was to end the Hantei line forever.

Not all of the Scorpions who joined his secret armies that day knew why they were fighting. Some believed the war was for power, or for ambition. But those few who were privy to the words of Daijin's scroll were committed to the very core of their soul, to the depths of bushido itself.

And when they discovered that Shoji had not been successful in his attempt to destroy the Last Hantei, they hid and swore to avenge him. All the families of the Scorpion, Shosuro, Soshi, Bayushi and Yogo, turned their eyes to avenging Shoji – and completing the task he had set before them: destroy the line of Hantei.

## The Scorpion's Sting

After the failure of the Scorpion Coup, activity between the Clans became tense. A young, inexperienced Emperor sat on the Throne, an Emperor who had taken the Lady Kachiko as a bride to end the Bayushi line. But in that two-year span, mysterious happenings began taking place. A wasting disease spread across the Empire, infecting the Emperor himself. At first, the Court suspected poison, but after an assassination attempt was foiled by the Lady of Scorpions herself, Kachiko was ruled out as a possible culprit. Kachiko had planned the murder attempt, although the court was not aware of this. After the assassin crept in, she took the blow herself, foiling the Emperor's assassination in order to make herself appear trustworthy. She did poison the Emperor, but so subtly, so skillfully, that no one in the Empire is aware of her duplicity.

In reality, Kachiko has worked slowly to kill the Emperor, for she could still become suspect by others. The work is slow, meticulous – and Kachiko has dedicated the last two years of her life to it. But her plan has gone awry. The shugenja known as Yogo Junzo, once a loyal member of her clan and guardian of seven of the Black Scrolls, has turned to evil. Because of Junzo's betrayal, the Black Scrolls have been opened. Their foul magic spreads across the Empire, fueling wars and plagues, and one by one, the seals of the other scrolls break. Junzo himself has gone fully mad, turning to service of the Dark God, Fu Leng, in his desperation to avenge himself upon the Empire – and on the woman who led Shoji to his death. He opens the Black Scrolls one by one, daring their power and calling upon their might to destroy the Empire that killed his Lord – regardless of the consequences.

Kachiko and the rest of the hidden Scorpions desperately seek to find and destroy the traitor, Junzo, but they fear they will be too late. They have not been the saviors of Rokugan – they have been the sign which spurred their own destruction. In creating the Last

Hantei, they have also brought forth the prophecy he is destined to complete.

## The Present

The Scorpion armies of the Clan War are a far cry from their massive forces which stormed Otosan Uchi six years ago. Where once their legions stood proud and defiant, they now seek craftier ways to destroy their enemies. They rely on secrets and subterfuge, led by Bayushi Shoji's brother, Bayushi Aramoro – a ninja, trained by the Bayushi school. He is not the general that his brother was, but in many ways, this is not Shoji's war.

The Scorpion have always been the shadow of the Empire, capable of blinding speed and courage, as well as clever deceptions and ruses. They rely on such things now that their armies have been destroyed, and if they are to succeed, they will have to relearn their own tactics. To strike swiftly is more deadly than to merely stand your ground, and sometimes deception is as deadly as steel. They turn to an ancient document of their clan, Bayushi Tansen's *Lies*, to guide them in their hidden battles. The wisdom there is succinct and blatantly dishonorable, and yet it wins wars that other men would die fighting.



*Shinjo, fleet and fair,  
She was never where she stood;  
Her soul the fifth wind.*

*"Winds blow, fortunes rise and fall, but the simple folk will always be asked to shoulder the weight." Those were Shinsei's words to Shinjo, the founder of the Unicorn Clan. She led her brother, Hantei, to the top of a high mountain and faced towards the south. Shinjo said, "We swore to protect the people from evil and we failed. We fought, but the people died. In the end, it was the people who*



saved themselves, for Shinsei and his Seven Thunders defeated Fu Leng, not the kami."

Then Shinjo turned her brother to face west, towards the setting sun. "You said we know now what peril to expect. But we did not know what to expect when Fu Leng attacked, even though he was our own brother. We were nearly beaten. Should another danger arise, perhaps from beyond those mountains, it would be a new threat, evil and mysterious, of which we would know nothing. Who can say if our empire could stand against it? We must seek to discover such evil before it comes upon us, as did our brother's twisted hordes. And we must find other allies, for Shinsei and his Thunders are lost to us."

As their mother raced from sight, Shinjo knew she would soon follow her.

## The Unbroken Desert

*"The worst enemy is the absence of hope."*

*– The Tao of Shinsei*

The Unicorn Clan are the wanderers who once chose to follow their founder across the world – exploring new territories and returning with news of the world that surrounded the Empire. Three families chose to follow Shinjo on her great journey: Otaku, Iuchi, and Ide. Each family followed by choice; each followed from devotion. These travelers were the Clan of the Ki-Rin.

The first years of the Great Quest were difficult for the Ki-Rin Clan. They entered the desolate dune sea known as Burning Sands as a group of explorers on a challenging adventure, and emerged a battle-hardened group of canny desert warriors. In the Burning Sands they learned how strength is found through privation, peace through aggression, and how the survival of the clan hangs on each and every head.

The first foreigners that Shinjo and her followers met were the Ujik-hai, a nomadic culture of fierce warriors. The Ujik-hai attacked the Ki-Rin without warning, but they were no match for the divinely-born Shinjo and her heroic retinue. That night, many of the Ujik-hai deserted their comrades and came to beg Shinjo for her protection, and many of the nomads were adopted into the Clan, bringing their own ways with them.

Later in the Ki-Rin Clan's journey, Shinjo vanished, and returned seven days later gravid with the children of the Unicorn. Shinjo ordered that, at her death, her followers take on the name of the Unicorn, the only being that could draw her away from them, and so when they returned to Rokugan two centuries ago on their powerful foreign horses, they did so as the Unicorn Clan.



## 200 Years of Adaptation

Even after two centuries, the Unicorn have a long way to go before being fully “accepted” into Rokugan culture. This is partly due to the fact that many feel that it is unimportant to be accepted. Others feel it is up to the Rokugani to make the effort to bridge the gap between them.

Another factor – perhaps even more important – is the amount of conflict the Unicorn have had to face since their return. In two hundred years, the number of battles the Unicorn have seen is second only to the Lion (not counting the Crab’s skirmishes with the Shadowlands, of course).

They have proven to be valuable allies to nearly every clan. Rokugan immediately recognized the advantage of the Unicorn cavalry and tactics, making their decision of allegiance a powerful factor in nearly every battle. And even though they have been so powerful in so many battles, in the social circles of the Emperor’s court, many of Rokugan’s elite refuse to acknowledge them as a Clan – at least while there are no Unicorn emissaries about.

Over two hundred years later, the Unicorn families have learned to adopt the customs and mannerisms of Rokugan... to an extent. Some Unicorns are reluctant to change: “I am told to follow the paths of my ancestors, yet when I do, I am called an unclean eta!” These Unicorns spit in the face of Rokugan tradition, preferring to adhere to Unicorn tradition. They wear animal furs during the winter (unclean meat as clothing?), speak with distinct accents (not even the common courtesy to speak properly) and keep Unicorn holidays rather than those prescribed by the Rokugan Fortunes (and dishonor their ancestors!). Despite two hundred years of co-existence, there is still some friction between the Unicorn and the rest of Rokugan.

## The Present

Since the beginning of the Clan Wars, the Unicorn have been forced to use the many strange weapons, items and philosophies they gained while on their travels. Their steeds have commanded the respect of the Empire, while their clan has earned much honor by seeing to the safety of the peasants and less fortunate, and by caring for those who have no ability to care for themselves. They have become the magistrates of the Empire, moving their armies into position near the capital, Otosan Uchi, in order to deliver a final strike to the Emperor once the war has been sealed. No other army has acted so honorably in defense of the Empire, and yet with their purpose firmly fixed on the Emerald Throne, perhaps it can be said that no other clan has used their power for such treachery to the Emperor. They are like a Clan that has been reborn by the fires of

war and the anvil of discontent, and they are eager to prove their power.

The Unicorn are a force for the protection for the peasants of the Empire. The Unicorn have become the last vestige of order, and with the law of the Emperor in their hands, they are not a force to be trifled with.



*She awoke slowly, pain stabbing her eyes as she adjusted to an unfamiliar sun. She rose, lithe body slowly ascending from the surface of the pond, her mighty tail uncoiling. Water streamed from her emerald skin in glistening rivulets; her scales sparkled in the light of a new morning. She was beautiful, exotic, and her eyes gleamed with ancient power despite her apparent youth. With a sweep of her hand, she brushed aside her limp, wet hair and turned to the dark figure that waited at the shore. The cavern glittered with the white light cast by the energy of the pearls that studded the walls and floor, reflecting the power of the Akasha.*

*“Ashan,” the Shashakar said, its serpentine hood flaring to catch the light. “You have awakened at last.” The great Jakla’s voice hummed through the ether of the Akasha, his fish-like mouth too deformed to produce intelligible speech.*

*“What has happened?” the young Naga asked, her eyes narrowing in confusion. “Something is wrong... How long have we slept?”*

*“Forever,” the Shashakar replied, its eyes glittering golden.*

*“Yet we return too soon,” the Ashan replied, smoothly gliding onto the shore. The Shashakar made a quick gesture, and a staff of pure pearl appeared in his hand. He handed the gleaming shaft to Ashan as she coiled beside him. “The illness that poisons the Akasha has not abated. It has, in fact, grown worse. The egg pits lie silent.”*

*Shashakar nodded. “Our sleep has produced unexpected side effects,” he replied. “Many have died during the long slumber. The cities of Nirukti and Kalpa have been lost, destroyed by circumstance or pillaged by those who have come since.”*





"What is your plan, mighty Shashakar?" Ashan asked. "Surely you have awakened us so that we might find a way to correct this crisis."

"There is no plan," the Shashakar said with a small shake of his monstrous head. "I do not know the solution to our situation. We awaken to address a greater danger."

"The ones who have come since?" the Ashan asked. Through the Akasha, she had a dim awareness of the new residents of the world outside, the ones the scouts had encountered, the hu-mans.

The Shashakar nodded. "They have unleashed the Foul," the Shashakar replied. "They tempt fate, invite their own destruction, and turn upon one another while the true enemy goes unnoticed. If they continue as they have, the world shall be consumed."

"We have returned to destroy them?" asked Ashan.

"No," the Shashakar replied. "We have returned to save them."

Deep in the heart of the Shinomen forest, long before the time of humans and the Children of the Sun, the race of Naga thrived. Their cities were built within the sheltering boughs of the forests, and the Naga raised great magics in order to protect their cities and villages.

For over seven hundred years, they ruled a blissful land; an empty land, covered in swinging vines and tropical flowers. The palaces of the Naga shone with gems and jewels, and great observatories were built to track the course of stars and planets, revolving through the skies of the Celestial Heavens. The Naga were a peaceful people, living in harmony with the Ratlings and the Trolls, two less intelligent races inhabiting the fair southern lands. The stars hung in their ordered sky, and twin globes – the Eyes of the Akasha – revolved in their paths above the woodland. The Naga named them the Bright Eye and the Pale Eye, the Sun and Moon. While they did not consider the Bright and the Pale to be "gods," the Naga did think of them as portals to the Akasha, necessary in order to understand the balance of all things.

Time passed, and the Naga grew in their understanding of natural magic, such as the power of pearls. The Naga were foes to the Darkness: a powerful evil that hunted the land unchecked, destroying all creatures it could find. Terrible Oni-like creatures and shadows with no faces were their enemies, but the Naga fought back, conquering the evil and sending it away. It is a time of Naga history known as "The First Burning of the Land."

After the war, prophets and astrologers spoke of a time of Great Sleep, a period of Ages in which the Naga would rest, undisturbed, waiting to fight the Dark again, in a far-distant time called only "The Second Burning of the Land." It was accepted by their people as the duty to which their race had been born, and the Naga faced their Sleep with the peace and serenity of wisdom. When it came, the race of Naga vanished from the face of the land, their cities

hidden with great spells prepared by their shugenja, deep within the forest of Shinomen.

For a thousand years and more, the Naga have slept. They slept, and they waited, confident that when the Evil returned to the lands of the mortal world, they would be awakened to fight it again, as their duty demanded. To the humans who conquered Rokugan, the Naga were little more than a child's tale, an ancient and mythical race of unknown origin whose ruins occasionally dotted the western lands. Their lands remained undiscovered, only the ruins of outlying cities exposed to mortal eye.

Now, as the evil in the Shadowlands begins to rise, the Naga have awakened. Their Scouts, ever prepared to clear the way for their people, rise from the Great Sleep to find a world that has been shattered by change, turned from the peaceful forests and rolling hills they once knew into a civilized land, covered in sprawling cities and towering palaces. A land filled with a people whose language was foreign and harsh-sounding, who leveled their shining katana toward your face, calling you hideous names, or worse yet – fell before you, huddled and crouching, as though you were gods.

And, somewhere within all this astonishing change, within the strange and terrifying world these simple Scouts have awakened into, something terrible lies in wait. The Evil is returning... The Second Burning of the Land awaits.

## Physical Characteristics

Most Naga have a centauroid appearance: a human torso, head and arms on a long, serpentine tail. Some Naga, however, look more serpentine, having mutated from the usual form. These mutations are more common in Naga shugenja, particularly the Cobra Bloodline, whose eggs are placed near magical pearls while they gestate. In fact, some members of the Cobra whose mutations are particularly severe do not have a humanoid aspect to their heads and chests at all. These Naga instead have scaled torsos and slitted eyes, strange, snake-like faces, scaled hoods at the back of their necks and shoulders, and other mutations.

The civilization of the Naga is unchanging, a static environment which has evolved only minimally, even in the hundreds of years before the Great Sleep. Their civilization is caste-based, defined by Bloodline but not limiting the social advances a Naga can achieve. (A simple Scout can become the Dashmar – "Lord" – for example, but a Greensnake will never evolve into a Cobra.) Not used to adapting their beliefs, particularly when the beliefs of others seem to be nonsensical, the Rokugani culture is inscrutable to the Naga.

All Naga make horses nervous – the smell of serpents causes them to panic, forgetting their training and skittering sideways, or even charging to get away. Because of this, controlling horses in the



presence of a Naga – whether in “human” form or not – requires constant attention. The only exception to this rule are trained war-horses, such as are used for military purposes. Such horses have been trained to obey their rider’s command, no matter what surrounds them, and so they are able to ignore the scent of serpent that lingers around the Naga armies.

## The Present

In Rokugan, just before the start of the Scorpion Clan Coup, there were few Naga awake in the lands. Those who had awakened knew only that they were alone in a strange new world, a world whose terrain remained familiar, but whose people were hostile and strange. Naga interactions with humans were difficult because of

language and culture barriers, and Naga were often mistaken for kami, or even Oni. Reactions varied, from abject terror to devoted worship, and everything in between.

Recently, they have awakened en masse, and have found the world to have drastically changed. Man now rules, with a culture vastly different from their own. Worse, these men were fighting amongst themselves, ignorant of the fact that the horrors of the Shadowlands were the cause of their strife.

As a force, the Naga are small, but ever-growing as more awaken in the Shinomen. Slowly, with time and as they begin to understand the world into which they have been thrown, the Naga are becoming an army of great power.





# Ronin

*"They are the fallen, the filthy masses that cling to life only because they do not yet realize that they are already dead."*

– Kakita Yoshi

Otomo Yayu sat at the edge of the camp. His unkempt hair stuck out wildly and his robes were stained with dirt from the day's labors. Ink blackened his fingers and a half-healed cut marked one side of his forehead. He concentrated on a large scrap of cloth that lay before him, pinned by three rocks. Yayu balanced a long brush awkwardly on two fingers and considered his work. Around him, the men and women who had come to follow Toturi – mostly ronin but now a few Dragons as well – went about their daily business. A small village of tents had sprung up over the last few months as the Black Wolf's reputation grew. One man stood apart from the rest, watching Yayu with a curious eye and chewing a ball of rice.

"Did you need something, Tzurui-san?" Yayu asked, not looking up from his task.

The samurai simply watched for a moment, then spoke. "Please do not take offense at my question, Otomo-sama," he asked, "but what are you doing here?"

Yayu peered up at Tzurui curiously. "Why would I not be here? I've been here since before Toturi's call to arms."

"That's not what I mean," Tzurui answered. "You're a member of the Imperial family. You're not a ronin, not really. Why in Jigoku are you out here?"

Yayu shrugged and cast his eyes back to his work. "It's my destiny to search for legends," he said.

"Legends?" Tzurui replied, folding his arms and regarding the Otomo curiously. "What sort of legends do you expect to find out here in the middle of nowhere?"

Yayu grinned. "There are many legends here. Would you like some examples?"

Tzurui nodded.

Yayu pointed to a fat man at the edge of the camp, sweating and breathing heavily as he practiced with a boken. "That man was once Unicorn," he said. "He was a magistrate six months from retirement. His wife and children were killed by the plague, and he became ronin, swearing that if the Fortunes would grant him no legacy that he would create one. He is old, his bones hurt, and he will never be a competent swordsman. Yet he fights on without fear."

Yayu looked back over his shoulder and pointed his brush at a second ronin, a pale woman who quietly leaned against a tree and polished her helm. "That one," Yayu said. "She is from a poor vassal family of the Crab, the sister of a promising apprentice to a Kaiu weaponsmith. Her brother's master – a skilled smith but a lecherous and evil man – made advances upon her. She knew if she remained at home that her brother would discover the truth, challenge his master, and cut short a promising career. She fled from her home so that her family might have some chance at greatness, and now struggles to find her own destiny."

"And that man," Yayu pointed at a third ronin, an emaciated man in tattered robes who searched the camp with haunted eyes. "He was once a member of a ronin order of shugenja. He tried to master an ancient spell of great power, and when he came back to himself the library was in flames. His brethren were dead. He now wanders the Empire at the kami's whim. The spirits whisper that they will guide him on the path to absolve his sins. He can do nothing now but listen, until they are finished with him."

Tzurui was quiet for a long time. Yayu returned to his painting.

"Tell me, Tzurui-san, do you not think that these are legends?" Yayu asked, looking up at the samurai. "Surely every man and woman in this camp has such a tale to tell? Tomorrow, we may go to war. Everyone might die, and these legends would be forgotten. Someone must remember them. If the Fortunes allow it, that someone shall be me." Yayu lifted the banner he had been struggling to paint. It flapped proudly in the breeze, a humble black wolf displayed upon the cloth.

Tzurui glanced around the camp. Countless ronin moved about their lives. Only minutes before, they had been merely strangers. Now, in the eyes of each, he saw a story, a bit of himself. He wondered how his own family was faring, if his daughter Kochohime was thinking of him now, and if he would ever see her again. He turned back to Yayu.

"You have become a lone wolf to gather the legends of ronin?" Tzurui asked.

Yayu nodded.

"There are many people here," Tzurui said. "You won't be able to gather them all."

Yayu nodded again. "Yes, but a clever wolf is not alone. Clever wolves travel in packs. Would you like to help me, Tzurui-san?"





*"How can I help?" Tzurui asked.*

*"You can start," Yayu replied with a shrug, "by telling me your legend."*

Ronin in Rokugan are rarely born; they are made.

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

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

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

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

Traditionally, ronin come from the ranks of ji-samurai (lesser sons and daughters of a noble house), or are the illegitimate children

of a samurai father and a heimin mother. Because children are always considered part of their father's caste, children of such a union are samurai, despite their common birth and 'stained' origins. However, unless the samurai can prove his father's identity with witnesses, the 'samurai' is considered ronin, able to claim some status, but not far removed from heimin. Many of those claiming to be samurai are actually simple peasants, with no testimony to support their supposed familial tie, and no skill with the blade to enforce their claim.

Ronin are an enigma in many parts of the Emerald Empire. They must be treated as samurai, yet not so grandly as those of the nobility. They are something more than peasants, but less than the buke class. For the most part, they are ignored and reviled, refused a part in society, yet not willing to descend into the hierarchy of peasants.

Ronin are able to wander the countryside at their whim, with nobody telling them what to do. But what are they going to eat? How are they going to repair their sword and saddle? When a samurai needs help, he turns to his family and his lord. When a ronin needs help, he has nobody to turn to.

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

If they are lucky, they will not starve to death on some lonely road when the winter comes, unmourned and forgotten beneath the falling snow.



Ronin are the scum of the Empire – those samurai without lords who try to seize honor at the edge of their own blade. Until recently, they have been no more than foot soldiers to the Great Clans, who use them as fodder and as expendable legions.

Until now.

## The Present

Ever since the Scorpion Clan Coup, Toturi has been preparing. Despite the shame of disgrace and the hatred of the Lion Clan, he has never forsaken his duty to the Empire; even when that Empire turned its back on him. Always, watching from beneath the ranks of the samurai and the noble classes, Toturi has prepared. He, alone, has seen where the tide of darkness rolls from behind the Crab lines. He alone has been approached by the terrified heimin and eta, risking their own lives to speak to a ronin where they would never dare open their mouths to their own lords. It is out of fear that they turn to him once, and out of respect, they return – as scouts and eyes across the Empire, bringing news of the Great Clans and the ascension of the Shadowlands to the south.

“The Empire will fall by the hand of the Last Hantei,” whispered Shoju as he died on the blade of Toturi’s sword. “And one day soon you will see what I have seen – a future where the Empire is ruled by blood and the Taint of the Shadowlands.”

Toturi remembers Shoju’s parting words. Since that day, Toturi has been waiting, gathering the ronin who would hear his words and stand beneath his banner.

He does not fight for honor or fame.

He fights for the Empire, even when it is too blind to see its own doom

## What It Means To Be Ronin In Rokugan

*Do not be wary of men who take risks with title and lands. Be wary of men who have nothing to lose.*

– The Tao of Shinsei

Of all the citizens within Rokugan’s Celestial Order, none are so thoroughly isolated as ronin. Even the lowly eta have one another to depend upon for support and camaraderie, but one who calls a ronin friend is rare indeed. There is no certainty where his next meal will come from, and no assurances of a warm place to sleep when the rain and cold nights come. Honor must be discarded for practicality and survival.

The Emerald Empire is a hostile environment for the ronin.

Historically, ronin are a dichotomy within Rokugan. Those few who appear in the vast histories of the clans are either heroes of the highest order, or villains of the most despicable lot. The fact that the vast majority has been neither fails to keep most Rokugani from assuming the worst about any given wave man. A ronin must work twice as hard in order to prove himself even half as honorable as any other man.

The harshest reality of ronin is this: for every great hero such as Usagi, Tsuruchi, or Kaimetsu-uo that has existed in the history of Rokugan, there have been ten thousand nameless, faceless wave men who died alone and are remembered by no one.

## Playing Ronin

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

To begin with, Rokugan has no such characters, and so this sort of ronin PC automatically puts your GM into a difficult position. The world of the ronin is far different from the world of the honorable bushi, and players looking to break away from the strict code of Bushido will find Rokugan an unforgiving place. These sorts of campaigns should be perpetually haunted with an “on the run” atmosphere.

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

## How to Survive as a Wave-Man

Rokugan is not a land that caters to loners. The Emerald Empire is steeped in tradition. Loyalty and family are one’s most important assets. Those who step outside of their place are shunned. Those who forge their own path are disruptive influences.

It’s hard to be a ronin.

A ronin is a warrior by trade. Not all wave-men are willing to settle down in a village and become “domesticated.” Many are mercenaries. If there’s no war, then there’s no work. A desperate



ronin may turn to banditry, or even foment a rebellion in order to create an environment where employment is available. For this reason, clan samurai see ronin as dangerous.

If a ronin is lucky, he's ignored. If he isn't, he'll end up challenged to a duel with no escape, no second, no daimyo to refuse permission or avenge him if he dies. If he's really unlucky he may end up bludgeoned to death by fearful heimin and buried anonymously in a farmer's paddy. A lone ronin is an rebel, a hair's breadth away from death at every moment.

So how does a lone ronin survive?

By not being alone.

Make friends who will watch your back. If you can't make friends, make tracks. Don't stay in any one place for long, and don't give the authorities any reason to remember your name. The ronin who survive the longest in Rokugan are those who don't leap into the stereotype. Ronin who take every opportunity to laugh at societal niceties, flaunt their freedom, and seed discontent die. It's just that simple. Ronin who make allies, establish connections, find a place to fit in, and get an honest job survive. Nobody makes a living just wandering around looking scruffy and cool. Not in Rokugan.

For example, take Dairyya, who graces this book's cover. Dairyya seems very much the ronin stereotype, gleefully ignoring all the survival cautions stated here. He starts fights. He's arrogant. He kills people. On the other hand, Dairyya is no fool. He has connections, notably a friendship with Morito Tokei, and through Tokei, Naka Kuro. He frequently hires out to the Mantis. He's built a reputation as a dangerous, but dependable bushi. He's always moving. He knows he has enemies, and sees no reason to present himself as a target. Though he despises Kakita Toshimoko, he's careful not to be overzealous seeking revenge. The last thing Dairyya wants is an army of Crane magistrates hunting him.

Dairyya is certainly dangerous and unpredictable, but he knows how to survive.

So how does a ronin character put this to good use? How does the ronin undo the stereotype that the Great Clans cast upon him?

Don't bother. Let the stereotype be. Samurai don't appreciate being proven wrong, especially by ronin. If a ronin wants to be accepted, he doesn't have to prove that all ronin are honorable, he just needs to prove himself to be the exception. He has to stand out. If a ronin has rare or useful skills, he's likely to be accepted despite his background. Ronin swordsmen are a dime a dozen. Every clan has swordsmen, but a ronin locksmith, spy, or armorer will find his skills in demand. Once a ronin has his foot in the door with the local daimyo, he's got an opportunity to prove that he's the only ronin in Rokugan who isn't a worthless dog.

Many samurai have prejudice against ronin ingrained so deeply that a wave-man will never even get a chance to prove himself.

Though there's no tried and true way for a ronin to know where he'll be accepted and where he'll be slapped in the face, each of the Clans have different general policies regarding the treatment of ronin. Awareness of these policies and prejudices could save a ronin's life.

## The Minor Clans

*Dark clouds surrounded the Island of Silk, but such was always the case. Osano Wo never ventured far beyond the home of his favored children, the Mantis. Three men and one woman met in an open field near the edge of the cliffs. One stood apart from the rest, both literally and figuratively, his young face torn in indecision. Unlike the others, he wore no accouterments of war outside of his daisho. Even the woman, a shugenja, held a wicked yari at her side.*

*"Well, Yugoki?" prompted Tsuruchi, the whip-thin daimyo of the Wasp. "What is your decision? You have heard Yoritomo's proposal. You speak your father's will in this matter."*

*"I am uncertain," Yugoki replied, shaking his head. "My clan does not seek war." Suzume Yugoki was a handsome young man, but his eyes were lined from worry. His father, Sparrow daimyo Suzume Kashira, had not been well and the boy had suddenly found leadership of his clan thrust upon him.*

*"None of us seek a war," replied Yoritomo. The daimyo of the Mantis was an enormous man, intimidating in every element of his presence. Yugoki found that he could not look into Yoritomo's eyes for long, so intense was his manner. "The Three Man Alliance has proven to Rokugan that many can succeed where one would fall and be forgotten. I ask your Alliance only to recognize the chaos that has begun to consume the Empire, and to follow my lead in preparing for... eventualities."*

*"Yoritomo-sama, forgive me if I perceive that there is more to your proposal than mere altruism," said Ryosei. The daimyo of the Fox was almost as young as Yugoki, but more confident. A streak of white in her black hair marked the terrors she had faced.*

*"I make no effort to hide the fact that I am an ambitious man," Yoritomo replied calmly. "Are we less worthy than the Great Clans*





merely because we are more distant from the kami? The Lion and the Crane fight like spoiled children. The Scorpion betray the Emperor and the Crab march at the side of demons. The Emperor's decree has proclaimed the Minor Clans to be sacrosanct in the struggles of the Great Clans, but you three know well that the Emperor's protection is not always enough even in the best of times. These are not the best of times. If the Great Clans would draw us into their war I say the Minor Clans should be prepared to stand together."

"I agree with Lord Yoritomo," Tsuruchi hissed, "but I value the Three Man Alliance. Our clans have prospered from our friendship. I will offer my services to the Mantis, but only if we can be in agreement."

"And you, lady of the Kitsune?" Yoritomo turned to Ryosei.

"I still think there is more to your plans," Ryosei said warily.

Yoritomo shrugged again. "I seek my clan's protection, but if I find opportunity during this war, I shall take it. Would you do any less?"

Ryosei considered this for a moment, then slowly shook her head.

"I suppose I would not. I am with you. Yugoki?"

The Sparrow released a deep sigh. "The Sparrow do not want to fight," he repeated. "We have few bushi."

"Are you afraid, Sparrow?" Yoritomo asked.

Yugoki's eyes narrowed and he met the Mantis' gaze squarely.

"No," he replied. "I am just prepared to find solutions outside of blood and death. Is that so wrong?"

"Certainly not," Yoritomo laughed. "But when you find one, be sure to tell me. In the meantime, will you allow the Wasp and Fox to join my alliance?"

Yugoki paused for another long moment. "Yes, Lord Yoritomo," he said. "The Sparrow will offer counsel, but we cannot give you warriors."

"All I ask is that you join me or stand aside," Yoritomo nodded.

"I applaud you for your discretion, Sparrow, if not your bravery." The Mantis turned then and returned to his fortress. The Fox and Wasp followed. The Sparrow remained by the cliffs for a while, watching the sky grow darker.

He wondered if he had made the right decision.

He wondered if there was a right decision at all.

Small bands of ronin often gather together to join forces toward survival. Such bands often wreak havoc as bandits, mercenaries and thieves, further sinking from their part in the social hierarchy, and casting off all restraint of the Code of Bushido. Others struggle to create a life for themselves, a village or other permanent structure, or by joining the troops of a minor clan. During war, political and social rules often fall by the wayside, and ronin are given

opportunities they might not otherwise have seen. In times such as these, Minor Clans are born. There are nine primary Minor Clans in Rokugan at present, including the Mantis, Dragonfly, Fox, Sparrow and Falcon Clans.

Though their numbers are small and their voices may seem faint after the thunder of the great houses of Rokugan, you will find the samurai of the Minor Clans as brave and noble as any samurai of the Greater Clans. Perhaps, in some ways, more so.

It is from these lesser clans that some of the greatest tales of bravery and courage come. When a samurai has nothing to lose, he has everything to gain.

It is important to note that Minor Clans such as these do not simply 'appear'. Instead, they are created by the Emperor, formed of bands of ronin or from lesser houses of the Great Clans. When a group has earned the right to Minor Clan status, they are formally given a katana from the Emperor – a weapon which will become the symbol of their house for the rest of the clan's existence. If the Minor Clan is ever disgraced and has their Clan status revoked, their clan weapon is broken by the Emperor's hand.

It is exceptionally difficult to become a minor clan, and most bands who attain that status have years of history, performing dramatic deeds for the Emperor or a major lord, using exceptional courage and prowess, or completing some impossible task.

Not all Minor Clans have family names. Over half of the Minor Clans have no 'first' or house name. House names are given separately, also by the Emperor's command, and only on rare occasions – only seven family names are recorded to have been given to Minor Clans in the history of the Empire.

For a thousand years, the Great Clans have trumpeted their superiority through the Hantei Emperor's court and on the battlefields of Rokugan. It is time for the samurai of the Minor Clans to rise up and seize their place in the Empire. It is time for the children of Man to stand beside the descendants of the Kami, and make our voices heard.

## The Tao of the Buke

*"Following another man's footsteps only leads you to another man's destiny."*

– Gusai Ihonbo

Minor Clan samurai, no matter what their lineage within their clan, are considered *buke* by the upper classes of Rokugan. This is an unfortunate truth, and one often argued against in the courts of the Minor Clans, but it is the way of the Empire. This is not to say that Yoritomo, the daimyo of the Mantis, will be treated with less respect than Ide Ashijun, a common samurai of the Unicorn. Of



course, a samurai of a Minor Clan will be treated as a noble, but the difference between a well-to-do member of a Minor Clan and a common member of a Great Clan is minimal.

Although in recent years, the Mantis have gained the respect of the Crane, and of the unified armies of the Fox, Wasp, and Sparrow clans that has been called the 'Three Man Alliance', they still struggle to find respect in an Empire that ignores their contributions. But it will not always be so, vows their daimyo, and one day the Empire will bow to the Mantis. If they will not admit the Mantis to their rightful place among the Great Clans, than the Empire itself will pay the price. Yoritomo knows this to be the truth, and he will do anything to have this upheaval come to pass within his lifetime. He believes it to be his destiny.

## The Mantis Clan

*"I know my place in history. My destiny is to defeat you."*

— Kaimetsu-uo

The Mantis are the strongest Minor Clan in Rokugan because of their rich and established history. Although the Mantis are not the wealthiest Minor Clan, they have many resources available from trade of the fine silks which their islands produce. Because of this income, the Mantis have the leisure to develop Techniques and create their own distinct style of fighting.

Undisputed masters of sailing, it is often the servants of the Mantis who pilot the *kobune* ships on their ocean voyages. Because Rokugani have little to no true knowledge of navigation, coupled with the frequency of the dangerous tsunami, the

art of deep ocean voyaging has never been discovered. Instead, they are extremely proficient in the use of tides, wind and other coastal patterns. Trade ships sail up and down the Doji coast with frequency, carrying silver from Phoenix lands, silk from the Mantis isles, and iron and steel from the Crab highlands.

## The Fox Clan

*"Fall down seven times, stand up eight."*

— Fox Clan Family Banner

When Shinjo left on her travels, only a small portion of her children chose to remain in Rokugan. One of these, a young samurai named Kitsune, came to the Emperor and asked if they could continue to live in the lands of the Unicorn. The Emperor, weak and ill from wounds suffered at the hands of Fu Leng's armies, refused, and relocated the clan south of the Spine of the World Mountains. When asked why, Hantei claimed that he wished Shinjo's children to remain near to him, and that he had promised his wandering sister that he would care for them as if they were his own.

So he has. The Fox Clan, formed from the remnants of the Shinjo who stayed behind, were one of the first Minor Clans to be formed in the Empire (they have an ongoing rivalry with the Mantis, as both Minor Clans claim to have been the first to be granted that status). They have remained in one of the richest provinces in the south, and continue to be accepted at the Emperor's court, no matter what the circumstance. Their shugenja are creatures of the woodlands, and are renowned for their abilities to manipulate terrain and control the powers of the earth.







# Chapter Two: Water



## Character Creation

*The truth of the world can be found sitting at the riverside. The river never begins, the river never ends. All of life is like the river. Lessons never begin and lessons never end.*

– *The Tao of Shinsei*

In order to play L5R, you are going to need a character. This book covers all the information you'll need, but most of the rules and character creation guidelines can be found in this chapter. We'll give you an outline of the steps, then fill in the details.

Character creation is accomplished in three steps. When you're done, you'll have a character sheet filled with numbers and words, but your character should be more than just pencil scratchings on a sheet of paper.

This is your opportunity to create a character, like your favorites in fiction and film. Just looking at numbers and words doesn't tell you anything about your character, except his Strength, Stamina and other Traits. There are some very important questions you'll have to answer about your samurai or shugenja, and the answers will give him a breath of life that will turn him from a two-dimensional caricature into a three-dimensional character.

Before you start making a character, you should consider what kind of samurai you want to play. What clan will he be from? Will he be a shugenja or a bushi? Which family will he owe allegiance to?

The rules below give you all the information you'll need to fill in the blanks on the character sheet we've provided at the end of this book. However, it takes more than numbers to make a character.

Before an author begins writing a book, he has a rough idea about his characters. He knows their strengths and weaknesses, a few of their characteristics and a vague idea of how they would act in different situations. Before you sit down and start creating a character, take some time to think about him or her. Is he brash, easily angered, or is he shy and reclusive? Is your shugenja driven by her curiosity or merely doing her duty to her clan, wishing she could be more like her sword-swinging bushi brother?

## The Game of 20 Questions

To help you get a better grasp on the kind of character you want, take a moment to look through the questions listed below. The first ten have been designed to give you a good idea of who your character might be. Answer these characters in your own voice. The second set of questions are meant to be answered by your character in his own voice to allow you to get into your character's psyche.

### What clan does your character belong to?

This may be the most important question. Determining your character's clan will have a major impact on your character's understanding of Rokugan's people, society and politics. Every clan has a different interpretation of bushido and a different outlook on the other clans.

To help you get an idea of which clan you may want to join, take a look at the Clan Sheets on pages 113-151.



### **How would you describe your character?**

Start with the obvious. Is your character male or female? It's not as simple as you think. Both the genders have significant advantages and disadvantages in Rokugan. Granted, the advantages to the female gender are not as obvious, but they are there.

Once you've decided on a gender, describe other aspects of your character's appearance. Start from the head and go all the way down to the toes. Is your character tall, short, wide, or slender? Is his nose short or long? How about his eyes? Are they watchful and discerning or steady and full of the venom of vengeance?

How about their neck and shoulders, or even his hands? Does your character have any distinctive scars or tattoos? Lastly, how about your character's voice? How does it sound? You can discover a lot about a character just by making a thorough physical description.

### **Is your character a bushi or a shugenja?**

This is also a very important distinction, but not as limiting as it might seem. A samurai can be a scholar as well as a warrior, and many shugenja are noted for their courage under fire.

### **What about your character's family?**

Again, take a look at the Clan Sheets and decide on a family. Then, talk about your character's early childhood. List events that would have occurred before your character would even be able to remember them. Some of these events may be influencing your character's life without him even knowing it.

Also, consider the family's social standing. A character from a rich family will certainly have a different outlook than a character from a poorer family.

### **What is your character's main motivation?**

All great heroes have a motivation that can be summed up in a word. It is the thing that drives them, that doesn't let them fall when the pain and despair is too much. What is your character's motivation? Is it love? Revenge? Pride? Or how about just bull-headed stubbornness?

In short, when everything has turned hopeless and everyone has given up hope, what will keep your character going?

### **Who is the one person your character trusts most?**

This could be your character's sensei or a brother, sister or another family member. Or, it may even be someone outside of the family. Once you've determined who it is, put some thought into why. Why does your character trust this one person above all others? It could make for a very interesting story...

### **What is your character's greatest strength? Greatest weakness?**

Is it his ability to get along with others, or perhaps his ability to root out their secrets? Maybe it is his virtue? His devotion to his daimyo? His skill at lying? His sincerity? Or maybe it's just his good strong right arm.

Conversely, anything that can be a strength can also be a weakness. A character's weaknesses, however, are what makes a reader sympathize with him. And when a hero overcomes his own weaknesses, he teaches us how we can overcome our own.

### **What does your character think of bushido?**

Take a look back in *The Book of Earth* under Bushido (page 33). What does your character think of it? Is it a code that should be followed without question, or is it a list of guidelines? Should you follow its tenets only when others are looking, or does following bushido actually make your soul stronger?

### **What is your character's own opinion of his Clan?**

This one can be tricky. Is your character completely devoted to his clan, or does he feel doubt? Does he view the clan's weaknesses with a blind eye, or does he strive to try and mend them? Does he have faith in the clan's leadership and hope to one day join their ranks, or does he recognize their weaknesses and plan to exploit them for his own ends? Remember, not all Lion are honorable and not all Scorpion are treacherous.

### **Does your character have any prejudices?**

Of course, being a member of your clan will give you a certain viewpoint regarding the other clans, but have you developed any on your own? If you have, how did you get that way? What has kept the fires of hatred burning brightly in your soul for so long? What would it take to douse them, if anything?

### **Is your character married?**

A tough question. Marriage is an arranged affair in Rokugan. If your character is married, then you have ties to another family, possibly another clan. Your spouse's family does not necessarily have to like you, but they are certainly honor-bound to assist you when you or your family are in danger. However, sometimes (especially in the case of a bride), the ties to your spouse's family are severed completely. If this is the case, how does your spouse view his or her new family? And to bring up an even meatier question ... do you have any children?



## To whom does your character owe the most loyalty?

Again, a difficult question. If you are married, whom do you love more: your lord or your spouse? And, to muddy the waters a bit more, does your character have a secret love?

Even if there are no secret devotions in your character's life, the obvious ones can be just as troubling. Who would your character decide between: his sensei or his daimyo? How about his father or his daimyo? His mother or his sensei? All of these questions will come up sooner or later. Samurai spent their entire lives asking themselves these questions so they would be ready to make them without a moment's hesitation.

How ready will your character be?

## What are your character's favorite (and least favorite) things?

Everyone has quirks, the things they like or dislike for completely irrational reasons. Think about them for a while. What are your character's favorite foods? Does he have a favorite horse? How about a grove that he would play hide and seek in as a child? Find something your character loves (or hates) and remember it the next time he encounters it.

## Does your character have any recurring mannerisms?

Think about it for a moment. Is there something your character does when he gets nervous? Does he bite his lip, pinch his fingers into his palm, or chew on his cheek? What are his favorite ways of saying "Hello" and "Goodbye?" When he curses, how does he do it?

## What about your character's psychology?

When it comes to emotions, which ones does he have a handle on and which ones get the better of him? Is it hard for him to restrain his anger or hatred? Does his passion always get the better of him? Does he have a deep, resounding laughter that he just cannot keep locked in his belly? What song or play always brings tears to his eyes?

## How would your character handle an insubordinate servant?

This one tells a lot about your character's attitude toward the lower classes. Would your attitude change toward a different servant? Do you have a favorite servant, one who could get away with almost anything? Is there a servant whom you would risk honor to protect?

## How would your character's parents describe him?

This question reveals much about both your character and his relationship to his parents. Answer this one in the voice of your character's father, then go back and answer it again for your character's mother. You may come up with two very different answers.

## What are your character's highest ambitions?

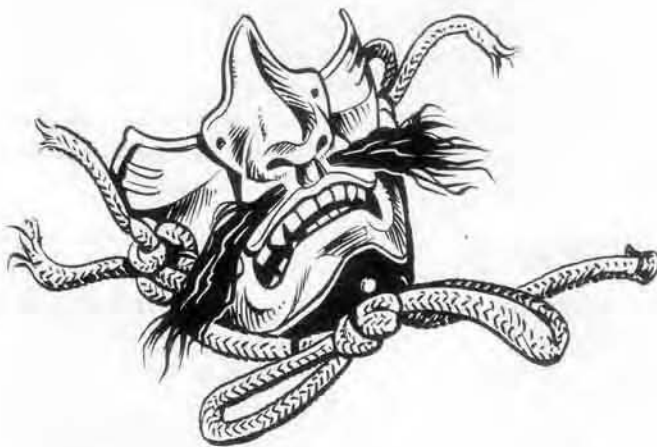
Is it to be a teacher at his school or perhaps a general in his clan's army? Perhaps all he looks forward to is retirement. Impressing a parent is a good (if frustrating) motivation as well as winning the love of a samurai from another clan. After you've discovered the ambition, think about what lengths your character would go to gain that goal. What would he sacrifice to achieve his ambition?

## How religious is your character?

Even with the obvious influence of the Fortunes in the mundane world, many samurai ignore them. "Put faith in your own abilities, not in the stars" is a common phrase among some samurai when speaking on the subject of diviners and shugenja. However, others are devoted to the Fortunes and their religion, saying that those who mock their faith will find themselves burning in Jigoku's deepest pits when their life here is done.

## If you could, what advice would you give your character?

Take a good, long look at the other questions before you answer this one. Speak to your character as if he were sitting right in front of you, and remember to use the proper tone. You'll want to make certain your character actually listens to you when you give him this free advice.







# Character Types

To give you an additional hand in getting an idea of your character's attitude, stereotype (or breaking one) and presence within the world, read through the following list of character types. They are the classic samurai types of legend and history. Feel free to pick one and play it to the hilt, or throw a character quirk in the mix just for a change of flavor.

## Brash

*"Hesitation is the seed of defeat."*

– *The Tao of Shinsei*

A brash character acts quickly, often before he can think about the outcome of his actions. Many samurai are hot-headed, often more concerned with saving face than anything else. The samurai culture allows little time for thought.

A brash bushi is typical in Rokugan, but a brash shugenja stands out in the crowd. Shinsei teaches that one must be certain in his actions. His Book of Void is where he repeats the same phrase over and over again: "Thought and deed must be the same." While an insult to a brash samurai will get your head lopped off, an insult to a brash shugenja can turn your entire village into a smoldering heap.

## Noble

*"Every day of his life a man has only one judge, and that judge is himself."*

– *The Tao of Shinsei*

Noble bushi adhere to the code of bushido. They are not swayed by temptations or distractions. They are loyal to their lord even unto death. They are calm and even-tempered, but they are also unforgiving. The code calls for swift and merciless justice, and that is what a noble samurai dispenses.

Noble shugenja are much like their bushi kin. They are not expected to adhere to the code of bushido (they are not warriors, after all), but they are part of the samurai caste, and so they act as their bushi brethren.

## Courtier

*"Everything is war."*

– *Rokugani proverb*

A bushi who is a courtier is fully engaged in the activities of the Emperor's Court. While his combat skills may be lacking, he gains advantage with political maneuvering rather than maneuvering an army on the battlefield. Rokugani are very much concerned with outcome. If they can win land and title without shedding blood, so much the better.

Shugenja courtiers often prove to be even more efficient than their bushi cousins. With the use of their magic, they are often able to gain information and political favor with subtlety and ease.

## Reluctant

*"A man must find his place in life, or he is a wandering fool, never content, never at peace, bringing discord with him wherever he goes."*

– *The Tao of Shinsei*

Then there are those who wish their lot in life were different. Some perform their duties with quiet dignity while others protest with all the sound and fury of thunder. To deny one's place in society is to bring dishonor and shame to one's family, so many hold their displeasure inside.

While a reluctant bushi faces many challenges in Rokugan, he will also make for stirring drama as he tries to find his rightful place in the world.

Reluctant shugenja have an even tougher time than their bushi counterparts. A bushi needs only believe in himself, but a reluctant shugenja must find faith in a religion that awakens nothing in his spirit. What's worse, the shugenja knows better than anyone else that he is denying his place in the world, and the consequences that will befall him if he does not accept his predetermined destiny.



## Rogue

*"You call me a masterless man. You are wrong. I am my own master."*

– *The ronin, Dairyya*

Many rogue bushi are ronin. They show little concern for etiquette or tradition and are more concerned with filling their pockets with money. While it may seem as if rogue bushi would have it easy in Rokugan, they do not. They are often viewed with mistrust by the peasantry and are targets for local magistrates. Landed samurai are never at a loss for money, while ronin have to rely on less steady sources of income.

A rogue shugenja can be one who has lost his faith and has started experimenting in dark arts, or who has given up his faith altogether to seek out the earthly pleasures his training denied him.

## Scholar

*"If one knows only sword technique, one cannot know the true path... It is that which must be known from the large matters to the small matters, from the shallow matters to the deep matters."*

– *Miyamoto Musashi*

Samurai are expected to be more than swordsmen: they are also expected to be scholars. They are the complete man, the warrior-poet, master of both sword and pen. The scholar bushi dedicates himself to study, learning the history of the clans, embracing the ideals and principles of the Tao of Shinsei and bushido. He spends most of his time in court and in the libraries of the Empire, thus sacrificing his warrior skills to sharpen his spirit.

Shugenja are by their very nature scholars. But some are driven by a deeper fire to solve the questions their studies raised. What is the true nature of the universe? What is the true nature of Void? Does mankind have free will, or do destiny and the Celestial Order rule his every thought and action? These are the questions of a scholarly shugenja.

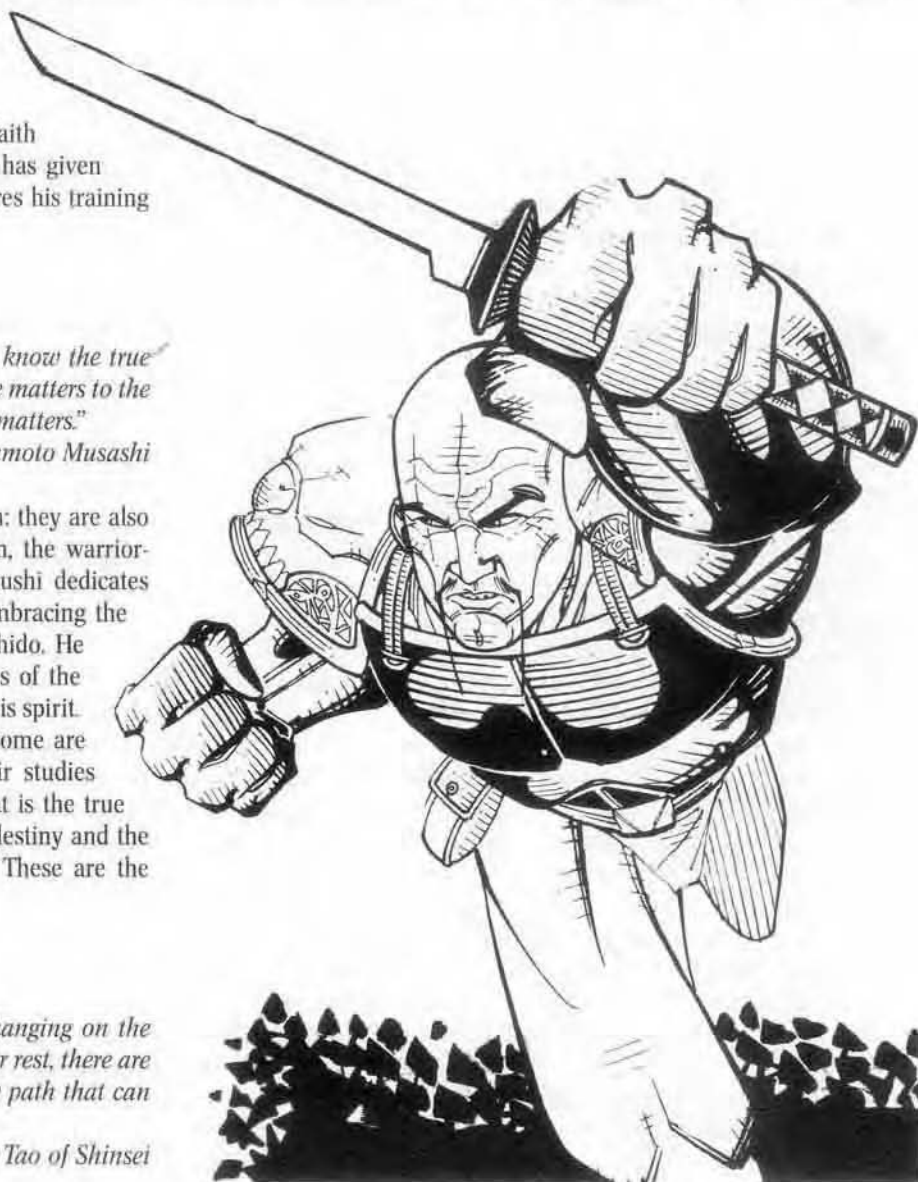
## Vengeful

*"The road of revenge leads straight to the sun, hanging on the horizon. There are no wayside inns to give the traveler rest, there are no detours, byways or deviations. It is a long, bloody path that can only end in a grave."*

– *The Tao of Shinsei*

This bushi has only one objective: to avenge the death of his master (or brother, or father, etc.). Driven by this single passion, the samurai will not rest until he gains his objective. The vengeful samurai can be a problem in a large group, but works well in a solo or ronin game.

Playing a vengeful shugenja could be a true role-playing exercise. While shugenja are part of the samurai caste, they are not samurai bushi (warriors). Challenging a samurai bushi to a duel could prove fruitless, so they must find other ways to gain their rightful revenge.





# Character Sheet

Now that you have a picture in your head of what kind of character you want to play, it's time to transfer that idea down onto paper. Make a photocopy of the character sheet located at the end of this book. It's divided into sections; we'll go through the sections one by one, beginning with Rings and Traits.

## One: Rings and Traits

All characters begin the creation process at Rank 2 in each of the Rings and Traits. A character's Rank in a Ring is equal to the Rank of the lower of its two Traits, so a samurai with a Stamina of 4 and a Willpower of 2 would have an Earth of 2.

In the original *Legend of the Five Rings* roleplaying game, characters could only have Rings up to level 5. While skills and traits of 1–5 are average to maximum for normal humans in Rokugan, we've expanded the system to allow for skills, traits and even rings of 6, 7, and as high as 10 – but a Ring of 10 would imply a power granted by the Celestial Heavens themselves, and is not attainable without supernatural aid and gifts.

To give you some clarification on how rare such high-ranked abilities and skills are, here are some examples. Truly extraordinary characters will have a 6 or 7 in a skill or trait, and once in a generation there will be an 8 (the great swordmaster, Kakita Toshimoko, may attain a Fire of 8). Once in the history of the Empire there will be a 9 (Kisada's incredible, awe-inspiring Earth). 10s are reserved for Celestial Beings (Dragons, the Great Kami, the Oracles or the First Oni, etc.).

NPCs and characters from the old system do not need to be altered to fit with these changes. Instead, this new ruling is designed to give older characters a goal – a place to go with their ambition, and room to grow into true legends. All old statistics in the original RPG and the *Way of the Clans* series are still accurate. In the below examples of traits, we only elaborate up to a rank of 5 – other

statistics are so rare that they are still considered 'impossible' by the majority of the Empire.

## Earth

*"In order for a warrior to follow the path of Heiho, it is necessary to keep in mind that the essence of Heiho is to build an indomitable spirit and an iron will; to believe that you cannot fail in doing anything."*

– Miyamoto Musashi

Earth ("chi") is the element of passive strength, resistance, and fortitude. The mountain is the symbol of Earth. It is quiet, dignified and eternal. All life blossoms from the earth and one day must return to it. It is the element of healing, regeneration and renewal.

The two Traits of Earth are Stamina and Willpower.

### Stamina

Stamina represents a character's "wind." A long-distance runner has a high Stamina, as well as a champion swimmer. The higher a character's Stamina, the longer he can press his physical reserves to the limit.

*Stamina 1:* Weak immune system, prone to chronic illness and disease.

*Stamina 2:* Average health, might catch a cold every so often.

*Stamina 3:* Walk on a sprained ankle without a wince and run long distances before getting winded.

*Stamina 4:* Robust and mighty, able to perform incredible feats of endurance.

*Stamina 5:* Character can swim great distances with ease, recover from illness without medical attention and can ignore serious wounds.

### Willpower

Willpower represents a character's ability to say "No." Just as Stamina is the ability to resist physical distractions, Willpower is Stamina's mental counterpart.

*Willpower 1:* Timid, unassertive, easily frightened, weak-willed and easily manipulated.

*Willpower 2:* Average, easy to convince if goals are the same.

*Willpower 3:* Not a strong will, but not one easily dissuaded from action.

*Willpower 4:* Almost unshakable in resolve.

*Willpower 5:* Iron-willed, steadfast and resolute.







## Fire

*"Fire is beneficial for the success of the upright... Flexibility gets through successfully by clinging to balance and rectitude... Illumination doubled makes fire. Thus do great people shine on the four quarters with continued light."*

- I Ching

Fire ("hi") is the element of active energy. It is the element of activity, motion, action and force. It is also the element of inspiration, illumination and clear thought.

The two Traits of Fire are Agility and Intelligence.

### Agility

Agility is the ability to move with style and grace, to be able to control one's actions. Characters with a high Agility are able to make complicated and coordinated movements with ease.

*Agility 1:* Clumsy and stumbling.

*Agility 2:* Average coordination, require concentration for difficult actions.

*Agility 3:* Even your average actions are graceful.

*Agility 4:* You have almost a second sense for motion.

*Agility 5:* Even your most minute motion is like a dance.

### Intelligence

Intelligence is the ability to acquire and apply knowledge; a character's ability to gather and process information. The higher a character's Intelligence, the faster he will be able to put facts together, solve puzzles and think clearly.

*Intelligence 1:* Easily confused and slow thinking.

*Intelligence 2:* Average thinker, can follow difficult conversations with concentration.

*Intelligence 3:* Can figure out puzzles and decipher codes with a little work.

*Intelligence 4:* Intellect of a scholar, not easily deceived by even the most clever lies.

*Intelligence 5:* A genuine genius, clear-thinking and brilliant.

## Air

*"All things and beings are produced through the sensitivity of heaven and earth. The sensitivity of sages moves people's minds so much that the world is harmonious and peaceful. Be aware... and all things in the universe can be seen."*

- I Ching

Air ("kaze") is the element of intuition. No one can see the air, but everyone can feel its effects. Air represents all the forces that are not seen, but are known to be present. It is also the element of storms. It is the element of both subtlety and unpredictability. Those with a high Air Ring are attuned to things that can only be felt and known (rather than understood, which is very different), and will be able to react quickly to unexpected situations.

The two Traits of Air are Reflexes and Awareness.

### Reflexes

A character's Reflexes represent how quickly he can react to sudden stimuli. A character with a high Reflexes can act almost without thinking.

*Reflexes 1:* You take a moment or two to make up your mind to jump out of the way of large onrushing objects.

*Reflexes 2:* Average reflexes, not well refined.

*Reflexes 3:* Able to react before just about everybody else.

*Reflexes 4:* Cat-like in your ability to

sense danger.

*Reflexes 5:* You're out of the room before anyone knows you're gone.

### Awareness

A character's Awareness Trait represents his intuition and empathy. If a character has a high Awareness, he will be a "quick read," sensitive to the emotional states of others. But awareness goes a little further. Because a character with a high Awareness is able to sense the moods and attitudes of others, he is also able to play off those impressions. A character with a high Awareness can be very charismatic when he needs to be.



### Spending Void

The uses for spending a Void Point during a game are as follows:

- You may spend a Void Point to get 1 point of a skill for a single roll.
- Shugenja may spend a Void Point to cast an additional spell in a Ring within a single day.
- You may spend a Void Point to increase your TN to be hit by 5.
- You may spend a Void Point to activate certain Techniques and abilities.



*Awareness 1:* You almost always find a way to say the wrong thing.

*Awareness 2:* You're able to get along with people who get along with you.

*Awareness 3:* You can usually sense deeper emotions than those that are shown on the surface.

*Awareness 4:* You pick up hints even from those who are skilled at hiding their emotions.

*Awareness 5:* You know everyone's secrets... sooner or later.

## Void

*"From one thing, know ten thousand things. When one learns the principles of Heiho, one will be able to understand all things."*

*—Miyamoto Musashi*

In essence, all Rings are the same Ring: Excellence. The five elements are like five facets on the same gem. It's difficult to pin down a single pair of virtues for each of the elements. It's easy to interpret Earth as Strength, or point out the flexibility of Water.

Void ("ku") is unlike any of the other Rings, for it represents the character's ability to use all Rings as a single Ring. The higher a character's Void, the more he understands that all elements are the same element. He sees the strength of Earth, the adaptability of Water, the intuitive action of Fire and the graceful eloquence of Air. Accordingly, Void has no Traits.

Characters start the game with a number of Void Points equal to their Void. When a player spends a Void Point to augment his character's Action, it represents the one moment when all elements are in perfect synchronicity. It is never a conscious act on the character's part to directly influence the action. The character will, more than likely, be surprised at his own skill (if the Action is successful, that is), step back and say, "How did I do that?"

## Two: Skills

Just as every character has Traits, every character has Skills. Traits define what your character is, while Skills define what your character knows. Skills are abilities you learn and pick up along the long road of life, but unlike Traits, not everyone has the same Skills. In fact, each character will have many Skills, but just like real life, not everyone learns the same lessons, nor comes away with the same experiences. In Rokugan, learning is very formal. When you are born, your parents trade political and personal favors to get you into the best school they can. Of course, what defines "best" varies from Clan to Clan. A complete list of Skills can be found at the end of this chapter.

Skill ranks extend from 1-10, with 10 being the maximum level that you can purchase in any skill. A ranking of 5 in a skill means that your character is exceptional with that knowledge; skills of 6 or higher are truly legendary.

## Three: Clan, Family and School

Now that you know the basics of Rings, Traits, and Skills, it's time to put them to work. At the end of the Book of Water (pages 113-151), you'll find the information you need to create characters from the Seven Great Clans, as well as ronin and Naga. We've devoted four pages to each of the clans to make it easy for you to decide. Each page contains the following:

**Clan Description:** This tells you a little bit about the clan you've chosen.

**Family Descriptions:** There are three families listed for each clan. Choose which family you come from.

**Bushi and Shugenja Schools:** Each clan has two bushi (warrior) schools and one shugenja (spellcaster) school. Which one did you attend?

**Attitudes Toward Other Clans:** A brief quote detailing your clan's opinion on the other Great Clans of the Empire.

### First: Choose a Clan

Find the Clan Sheet for the Clan you want for your character. Read the description and begin to detail some of the rough ideas you came up with in Step One.

### Second: Choose a Family

Choose one of the three Families from your clan and write in that family on your character sheet. Because you come from a certain family, you will gain a bonus to one of your Traits. Record this bonus in the Trait section of the character sheet.

### Third: Choose a School

Now write "bushi" or "shugenja" for Profession on your Character Sheet. Then go down to the bottom of your character sheet and record the name of your school under "School." Your character's training in that school gives him a few bonus starting Traits and Skills. Record the Traits in the Trait section of your Character Sheet. Then write the Skills in the Skill section. Skills your character learns in his School almost always begin at Rank 1. Every bushi school teaches its students a secret maneuver, or Technique, that only they can use, while shugenja learn certain spells. Record this Rank 1 information on your character sheet under "Techniques/Spells."





When a character emerges from a school for shugenja, they are given a few basic scrolls to work with. Each Clan Sheet shows the number of scrolls of each element that are available to a shugenja when he graduates, but he may only select scrolls that have a Mastery Level equal to or less than his appropriate shugenja School Rank.

Your family does not necessarily dictate your destiny; you can, for instance, be a warrior from the Isawa family. You will almost always



On

The Rokugani word *on* means “face,” or “reputation” (as in “Putting on your best face”).

For the purposes of simplicity and clarity, we have divided *on* into two game terms: Honor and Glory.

A character's Honor can be best defined as his self-esteem and self worth. It is his confidence in his own abilities. When a character takes an Action that would cause him an Honor loss, he is literally destroying his own confidence in himself. Lowly acts are easy; honorable acts are hard. That's why it's easy to lose Honor and difficult to gain it.

Glory, on the other hand, is how others view your character through his reputation. When your character misbehaves in public, it is a loss of Glory. Secretive shameful acts will only cause a loss of Honor.

However, both private and public acts will cause a character to lose confidence in his own virtue. As he continues to perform acts viewed as lowly or base, he will doubt his ability to be honorable, thus making it even more difficult to act accordingly.

Honor and Glory are very closely linked to each other, almost to the point of being co-dependent. A samurai cannot be honorable if he does not perform deeds of great Glory, and he cannot gain Glory unless he performs deeds of honorable accord.

go to the bushi or shugenja school associated with your clan; Crab bushi tend to go to the Hida School, while Crane shugenja will almost always attend the Asahina School. It is possible to attend another Clan's school, but this is rare (see “Advantages and Disadvantages” below).

### Fourth: Character Points

Once you've finished with Clan, Family and School, it's time to customize your character. You have 30 Character Points to distribute. You can spend your points any way you wish, but you may not increase any of a beginning character's Skills or Traits above a 4.

- The cost for increasing a Skill is equal to the next Level in Character Points. (To increase a Skill from level 4 to level 5, for instance, costs 5 Character Points.)

- The cost for increasing a Trait is the new Trait  $\times$  3. (To go from Reflexes 3 to Reflexes 4, for instance, costs 12 Character Points.)

- The cost for increasing the Void Ring is the new Void  $\times$  5. (To go from Void 2 to Void 3 costs 15 Character Points.)

- Increasing a character's Honor Rank by one costs 3 Character Points. Lowering a character's beginning Honor Rank gives the character 2 Character Points. Starting characters can only increase or lower their Honor by a single Rank.

- Characters may raise their Glory by purchasing the Social Position Advantage for 5 Points, or lower it by purchasing Social Disadvantage for a bonus of 3 Points.

- The costs to purchase Advantages and Disadvantages are listed under the specific Advantages and Disadvantages.

## Four: Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages and Disadvantages are a special kind of way to customize your character, even more specialized than Skills. Advantages make your character stronger in some sense, so they cost CPs. Disadvantages make your character weaker, so they give you more CPs to spend elsewhere. A character cannot take more than 10 points worth of Disadvantages. The list of Advantages and Disadvantages is on pages 98–111.

## Five: Wounds

Everybody gets hurt, including your character. But just how tough is your bushi? In order to determine how much damage your character can take, we use Wounds. Whenever your character gets hurt, he'll lose Wounds. To determine how many Wounds your



character can lose, multiply his Earth by 2, then go to the Wounds chart on your Character Sheet. In each of the boxes, write this number down. Every time your character loses a number of Wounds equal to the number in a Wound Level, you fill that Wound Level and move down to the next one. If you lose enough Wounds to take you down to the next Wound Level, you'll be at +5; this means that all of your Target Numbers are increased by 5. Characters naturally heal Wounds equal to their Stamina each day. For more information on healing, getting hurt and Wounds, see *The Book of Fire* (page 163).

## Six: Honor

Every character also has an Honor Trait. The Honor Trait is ranked from 0 to 5, and it measures your character's nobility of mind and the purity of his soul. A character with a high Honor Trait is one who can be trusted to keep his word, be fair in judgments and present himself with dignity. He is a man who has a high sense of integrity, one who at the same time is concerned with his status when his integrity is questioned. A character with a low Honor Trait also cares about his reputation, but for different reasons. He never gives his word on anything, because he never intends to keep it. He takes advantage of situations, but does his best not to catch any of the blame. While playing a character with a low Honor may seem easier, there are disadvantages to having a low Honor. Low-honor characters are easily tempted by sly Scorpion tongues and heavy bribes, while a character with a high Honor would scoff at such rude attempts to sway his ethics. Occasionally, characters will take a "Test of Honor." You can find the rules for Honor Tests in *The Book of Fire* (page 169).

Characters with a high Awareness can sometimes gain a sense of another's Honor. Those with low Honor have the feel of a rogue about them; there is something vaguely untrustworthy about them. Honorable characters have a sense of nobility and trustworthiness about them that is unmistakable; they tend to get better deals in the market and attract good people to them.

It should be noted specifically that a character's Honor is how he thinks of himself and his own actions, while a character's Glory is how the world (and the Empire) views that character and his actions. A character's Honor is not affected by his glory, but occasionally his Glory is affected by the honorable or dishonorable actions he takes.

### Honor Ranks and Points

All characters' beginning Honor Rank depends on their Clan (see the Clan Sheets at the end of this chapter). Listed below are the five Honor Ranks. Each has a brief description of a character at that

Honor Rank. Players can use these descriptions as guides for role-playing their own characters.

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

Example: Allan's Lion samurai has an Honor Rank of 3. He currently has 2 Honor Points (he's been a bad samurai), and he's performed an Action that would drop him 2 Honor Points. Allan's Lion is now at Honor Rank 2 and he has 5 Honor Points, representing the fact that he has to start all over again to once gain Honor Rank 3.

If a character performs an Action that is above his Honor, he gains Honor Points. Again, the number of Honor Points gained depends on the GM, but it should be between 1 and 3. A character who has 10 Honor Points increases his Honor Rank by one, and checks off three Honor Points at his new Rank.



### Honor Rank 0: "Honorless Dog!"

Characters with an Honor of 0 do not adhere to the principles of bushido. They mock them, knowing that bushido is a code followed by fools and idealists. These characters cannot be trusted. They would betray anyone – even their own kin – to gain an advantage.

### Honor Rank 1: "Untrustworthy"

A Character with 1 Honor is still untrustworthy, but not to the extent of a 0 Honor character. Kinsmen still need to watch their backs around him, but when he can usually be trusted when the clan is in danger. He recognizes the importance of other people following bushido, but he considers it to be – in the most part – an inconvenience. Even though this character may gain Honor Points, he can still easily ignore his conscience when it suits him.



## Honor Rank 2: "What is Expected"

This is the default level of Honor for those of the samurai caste. This character follows the tenets of bushido to the letter. He still feels qualms in his heart whenever he must put his own interests behind the interests of the Clan, and his resolve is often tested. This character believes in bushido, but sometimes finds it difficult to act on his belief. The difference between this character and an Honor Rank 1 character is that every honorable act makes his resolve stronger, making his conscience more and more difficult to ignore.

## Honor Rank 3: "Exceptional"

The 3 Honor character was once the 2 Honor character, filled with doubt and trepidation. But now he has seen the strength of bushido and embraced it. While he feels the temptations of "low" character, he ignores them easily. Only the strongest temptations can shake his resolve. Because of their devotion to bushido, these samurai tend to be a little less practical than those at 2 Honor. This samurai finds even bending rules a test of will.

## Honor Rank 4: "A Soul Above Question"

Very few samurai ever reach this level of Honor. These are the samurai who cannot be swayed from their duty to kin and clan. However, as the Honor 3 samurai finds bending rules a monumental task, the Honor 4 samurai finds it impossible. In fact, his enemies will find him quite easy to manipulate through his rigid code of honor.

## Honor Rank 5: "Strength of a Thousand Ancestors"

Those who have reached Honor 5 are the stuff of legends. They are so far above reproach that those who question their honor are looked upon with distrust and disdain. Honor 5 characters are selfless, completely devoted to their family and clan, and instantly willing to give up their own lives for the safety and security of others.

# Seven: Insight and School Rank

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



## School Rank, Glory & Honor

A stratified, formal society like Rokugan has quite a few social "ladders" that people occupy. Here's the quick version of these four stats:

School Rank represents how well your character is trained. The more he knows, the more powerful spells or abilities he learns.

Glory is your character's renown in the Empire. It's based on his School Rank (prowess is respected), but can also be increased by doing great deeds.

Honor is how closely your character follows the code of bushido. Dishonorable acts can affect your character's Glory as well.

Finally, Insight is based on your character's stats... and when they get high enough, he can return to his school to gain the next School Rank.

## Insight

To determine a character's Insight, first add up his Rings (Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Void) and multiply that total by 10. Then, add up the character's Skills. You get one point per Skill after the first rank.

For example, Jason is figuring his character's Insight. He adds up his Rings and gets a total of 11.  $11 \times 10 = 110$  Insight so far. Next, he adds up his Skills.

If Jason had 12 points in Skills, all at Rank 1, he would gain no insight from his Skills. If he had 6 Skills, all at Rank 2, he would gain 6 points of insight. If he had 3 Skills, all at Rank 4, he would gain 9 points of Insight. Jason adds this number to the number gained from Rings to get his character's total Insight.

## Keeping Track of Insight

Whenever a character gains a point in a Ring, add 10 to his Insight. Whenever he gains a point in a Skill which he already has, add one to his Insight. Do not add a point to Insight when he gains Rank 1 in a new Skill.

## School Rank

When a character gains Insight, he also brings glory to his School. The more famous he becomes, the more secrets the school's sensei is willing to teach him. This is represented by School Rank. All





samurai and shugenja begin as Rank 1. As a samurai or shugenja gains Insight, he draws closer to Rank 2. When he reaches 150 Insight, he returns to his School and the sensei teaches him the secrets of Rank 2. Samurai learn a new Technique; shugenja learn two more spells, in any element or elements they wish.

When a samurai or shugenja wishes to gain a new School Rank, the character compares his current Insight points with how many he needs to gain a new School Rank. If the character has enough Insight points, then the character returns to his school, and the sensei must be shown his progress. If he is impressed, he will teach the character the secrets he needs to perform at the new Rank. In addition, the character will gain any special abilities conferred for increasing in Rank. Some Schools will also insist that the student pass a test in order to prove his worth. This test could include something as simple as a written exam, while others will demand more esoteric tests of the character's skill.

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

## Experience Points

Everyone gets better at what they do through practice and experience. Your character is no different. At the end of each session, the GM will award your character a number of "Experience Points." These points can be used to increase your character's Traits.

- The cost for increasing a Skill is the next level in Experience Points (e.g. to go from no Skill at all to level 1 in a Skill would cost 1 Experience Point).
- The cost for increasing a Trait is the next level x 3 (to go from Level 3 to Level 4 would cost 12 Experience Points.)
- The cost for increasing the Void Ring is the next level x 5 (to go from Void 2 to Void 3 would cost 15 Experience Points.)
- Increasing a character's Trait or Void above 5 requires a significant amount of roleplay outside of the experience expenditure. Typically, when a character spends the experience to raise a Trait or Void, they must then undergo a series of 'tests' (given by their sensei, some celestial power or other appropriate GM NPC) in order to actually achieve the new level.

## Eight: Glory

Glory is a Trait that will have a great influence on your character's interactions within the Empire. Glory represents how well-known and respected your character is in Rokugan. All characters have a Glory Rank between zero and ten. Their Glory Rank is directly modified by their School Rank. A character's Glory Rank is almost always at least equal to his School Rank.

*Example:* Matsu Turi has reached Rank 2 in the Akodo School, making his Glory Rank also a 2.

Characters can increase their Glory by gaining Glory Points. Glory is always awarded by the character's lord. When a character gains ten Glory Points in his current Glory Rank, he is eligible to rise to the next Rank. However, all promotions of Glory depend on the character's direct superior. A lord cannot advance a character to a Rank that is equal to his own. In fact, many lords may be reluctant to advance a character to a Rank close to their own.

*Example:* Turi gains ten Glory Points and is ready to advance to Glory Rank 3. However, his before his player can make the change on his character sheet, Turi's lord must acknowledge the advance. Until this happens, Turi is stuck at Rank 2.

## Glory Ranks

Only the Emperor has a Glory of 10. The six Great Clan daimyo, and the Emperor's wife and immediate family, have a Glory of 9.

The daimyo of the Great Clan families (e.g. the daimyo of the Yasuki family), the Clan Daimyo of a minor Clan, and a Great Clan Daimyo's spouse all have a Glory of 8.

The spouses of the Great Clan Family Daimyo and minor Clan Daimyo have a Glory of 7.

The Glory Ranks between 6 and 1 are held by samurai-caste characters; greater and lesser nobles, warriors, shugenja, and sensei. Player characters begin the game with a Glory of 1.

Those not in the samurai caste (heimin, hinin, eta, and nonhumans like Naga) have a Glory of 0.



## School Rank vs. Glory

When a samurai gains prestige in his school, he also gains prestige in society. However, just because a samurai has great prestige in the court does not mean he gains prestige in his sensei's school.

Whenever a samurai gains a School Rank, his Glory Rank also increases by three boxes. This reflects Rokugan's appreciation of the military arts. However, when he gains a Glory Rank, his sensei does not automatically begin teaching him the next school secret. He has to earn that through blood, sweat and bruises.



## The Rokugani and Shame

The Rokugani have a very interesting attitude toward public spectacle.

They ignore it.

If a drunken samurai is acting out, those around him will tend to ignore the scene, hoping that someone of sufficient rank will put a stop to the activity. When this does occur, the samurai tends to give the offender a stern warning before he takes public action, thus allowing him a chance to save face.

Game Masters will want to use this technique when their player samurai get out of hand or decide to go on a Glory-smashing rampage. NPC daimyo or samurai of distinguished rank should allow them an opportunity to cease and desist before the GM wipes clean all that hard-earned Glory.



Every Skill listed has the Trait it is most often used with and the mechanic that is implemented when the Skill is used. Remember that the listed Traits and Rings are only the most commonly used traits for a particular Skill, and the Game Master can choose any Trait when asking for a Roll. For more information on how to make rolls, see *The Book of Fire*.

## Skill Rolls

The two basic types of Skill rolls in L5R are the Skill check and the Contested roll. During a Skill check, the player rolls a number of dice equal to a skill the GM deems appropriate and keeps a number of dice equal to a Trait the GM deems appropriate. A common shorthand method of writing this type of roll is "Skill/Trait".

*Example:* Matsu Turi is trying to strike down a hideous goblin with his katana. He will make a Skill check: rolling the number of dice equal to his Kenjutsu and keeping a number of dice equal to his Agility.

Some things are a question of raw Trait rather than Skill (e.g. lifting a large rock). In these cases you will be called upon to make a Raw Trait Roll. Roll dice equal to the appropriate Trait and keep them all. In this way, your character's natural ability is tested, rather than their understanding of a Skill or their learned knowledge.

If you do not have the Skill the GM calls for in a test, you may attempt the maneuver anyway. However, you may roll only one die, and you may not reroll 10s.

## Contested Roll

A Contested Roll is either a Raw Trait roll or a Skill Roll, but instead of a TN assigned by the GM, the characters roll against one another. In this case, the two characters are both attempting to perform an action (or two opposed actions), and whoever has the highest total number on their Kept dice wins.



## Similar Skills

Sometimes the GM will ask for a Skill check for your character, and you will not have the Skill for which the GM is asking. While your samurai may not possess that particular Skill, your character may have another which is close enough to grant him some basic understanding of the challenge. In this case, you can petition your GM to allow you to test using the 'Similar Skill' rule.

If your GM is convinced that your Skill is close enough to the original Skill asked for, he may allow you to substitute the secondary Skill, perhaps with a penalty to your Target Number for the attempt.

*Example:* Kitsu Skya the Lion, with a Battle skill of 6, sits down with her teacher to play a game of Go. Skya doesn't have the Go skill, but because she has quite a lot of knowledge concerning tactics, the GM decides to allow her to roll her Battle Skill at +10 to her TN. Because Skya does not actually have the Go Skill, she may not reroll 10s.

## Matching Skills to the Campaign

Before you choose Skills for your character, talk to your GM about the kind of campaign he intends to run. You don't want to bring an effete Crane courtier to the table only to discover that the GM has planned a campaign on the Kaiu Wall. If the GM hints that the game is likely to be combat-heavy, be sure to take some Bugei skills, if only for self-defense. You might also think twice about bringing an uncouth, battle-mad Crab berserker to an intrigue-based campaign set in Rokugan's courts. Then again, playing against type can be one of roleplaying's great pleasures; it can be a lot of fun to be a fish out of water. Just be careful not to turn your character into a caricature.

## High Skills

High Skills have a unique use in Rokugan. Most RPGs would consider Poetry a throwaway skill, something you put a point into when you've run out of combat skills to max out, and you're looking to add a second dimension to your character. In Rokugan, High Skills represent more about the culture and the intrinsic little games that samurai indulge in, at the behest of bushido. These Skills are honorable for those of the samurai caste to practice.

To a dutiful Crab they are a waste of time, and to the Unicorn they are an often misunderstood part of the culture. To the Scorpion they represent specific benchmarks by which anyone may be judged. To the Crane they are the reason for living, and the honorable Crane

and Lion take the code very seriously. A highly honorable samurai realizes that High Skills maintain peace and understanding within the universe. She may never consider that her beliefs are in direct opposition to a rational way of doing things.

Many of these skills appear in more detail in the *Way of the Clans* books. Where the Crane may master painting and dancing, the average Rokugani is likely to appreciate only the most basic levels of Kakita Shijin's greatest poetic masterpiece.

The Crane are particularly fond of the artisan crafts. GMs should consider the use of such skills an Honor Level 3 act. Any samurai engaging in such an activity is maintaining his high level of honor or trying to become a better samurai. There are no hard and fast rules for determining honor award bonuses for gardening; GMs should be generous in situations where the act of a samurai reflects well on her Clan.

## Acting (Awareness)

Characters with this Skill have an understanding and appreciation of theater. There are two kinds of theater in Rokugan: Kabuki theater and Noh theater. Kabuki theater is flamboyant and full of action and color. It is "samurai" theater, telling the great and tragic tales of lords from the past. Noh theater, by contrast, is quiet and subtle, with light music and little movement against a black backdrop.

Characters with the Acting Skill gain the ability to disguise themselves, although not perfectly. Characters with Acting can convince others they are not of the same caste, profession or even gender. Using Acting in this manner is usually a Simple Acting /Awareness Roll with the TN being another character's Perception x 5. If the character has to actively engage in conversation while in disguise, the Simple Roll becomes a Contested Roll.

## Animal Husbandry [Horses] (Varies)

This is the footman's equivalent of the Horsemanship skill (q.v.). Animal Husbandry may be used to evaluate horses for purchase, treat injured animals, break and train dogs, etc. It can be used just like Horsemanship in all ways but one: it does not allow you to ride in battle. Where Horsemanship can be used to gallop, trot, and perform battle actions while on the back of a horse, this skill only allows the samurai to walk the horse at a very steady and slow pace.

Animal Husbandry allows the user one function that it does not allow the Horseman, and that is care of almost all mammals. The Animal Husbandry skill may be applied to dogs, cats, cattle, goats, horses, and most domesticated animals. Characters with this Skill can treat animals' injuries and, in conjunction with the Battle Skill, can prepare them for war (although dogs and horses are the only animals suitable for war). Combined with Horsemanship the





samurai may not only ride and care for his horse, but may develop a kinship with the animal. It is under the GMs discretion whether the samurai can teach his horse any simple commands like the Falconry skill permits, but he most certainly would be able to train a dog.

### Artisan Skills

<i>Acrobatics</i>	<i>Dancing</i>	<i>Ikebana</i>
<i>Jester</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Noh/Kabuki</i>
<i>Origami</i>	<i>Painting</i>	<i>Poetry</i>
<i>Storytelling</i>		

Although these Skills are elevated to the level of art by the Kakita Artisans, it is not unreasonable for any character to have a working knowledge of these Skills. These skills grant the knowledge of how to perform the ability, including basic knowledge of things associated with it. For example, a character with the Origami skill would have knowledge of papermaking, and a character with the Noh skill would have knowledge of theatrical literature, makeup techniques and costume making. These Artisan knowledges do not grant complete competency in all their related fields; they only give a working comprehension of those areas. These Skills are described in full detail in *Way of the Crane*.

### Astrology (Intelligence)

This is the skill of identifying heavenly bodies and patterns, such as stars and constellations. It allows a shugenja to determine what astrological omens are currently in effect and what their connotations are. This skill can be used for simple divinations about the future, and for determining the appropriate time for the creation of certain items and fetishes. Also, it can be used to identify certain character traits according to the day, date and year of someone's birth, and to predict certain future events or omens. If a character wishes to use Astrology as a divination tool, the TN is 15, and the Gamemaster should give them a general view of the events in the future, simply supplying a list of adjectives such as "pleasant, peaceful, and uneventful" or "dangerous, death is in the

future." Each raise should give the samurai more information, but still bring her no closer to understanding.

### Bard (Awareness)

This is the Skill of telling war stories and reciting history. Storytelling in Rokugan is an ancient tradition. Every lord has a bard in his court, telling tales of samurai of long ago. It is not uncommon for a samurai to tell a tale of his deeds in court, to impress his lord. This translates to Glory awards.

### Calligraphy (Perception)

Calligraphy, or *shogaku*, is the art of writing in the ancient language that was given to man by the Fortunes. A character with Calligraphy can read and transcribe the ancient scrolls in the shugenja school libraries.

Note: Naga have their own version of Calligraphy, which they use to write in the ancient Naga language. Calligraphy does not permit a character to read scrolls written in the Naga language, and Calligraphy (Naga) likewise does not confer literacy in Rokugani.

### Courtier (Awareness)

A character skilled in Courtier knows all the ins and outs of court life. He is aware of who is making the power plays, who is in debt and who pulls the strings.

### Dance (Agility)

There are two styles of dancing in Rokugan: court dancing and folk dancing. Court dances are performed almost exclusively by women. Folk dancing is performed by the peasant folk, both men and women alike.

### Etiquette (Intelligence)

This is the Skill of knowing what to say and how to say it. A character with Etiquette is confident in his social skills, and never makes mistakes in front of the wrong people. This is a very important Skill for those who wish to spend time at court, for the court of Rokugan is very formal. Demonstrating a lack of concern for etiquette displays a person's low character.



### Rokugani Pony

**Height:** 3'4"      **Weight:** 700 lbs  
**Lifespan:** 30+ years  
**Earth** 2      **Stamina** 4  
**Water** 3      **Strength** 6  
**Fire** 1      **Agility** 2  
**Air** 2  
**Attack:** 2k2      **Damage:** 4k2 (Kick)  
**Defense TN:** 10      **Wounds:** 8 (+5); 16 (+10), etc.  
**Gallop:** +5 Defense TN when Galloping  
These are the stats for a common riding pony, such as most samurai in the Empire use for transportation. More creature stats can be found in the GM's Guide to Rokugan.



## Falconry (Awareness)

It should be noted that although Rokugani do occasionally hunt birds for food, they eat very little flesh, and never red meat. This skill is used to train and fly birds of prey.

## Go (Intelligence)

This is the skill a samurai uses to play go. It is an important skill for samurai interested in mastering the tenets of battle and tactics and is a common pastime for samurai. Although this skill confers upon a samurai the ability to play go well, the rules are quite simple and most samurai know how to play, whether they have this skill or not. This skill also includes the ability to play shogi and other games of Rokugan. It does not make one a better gambler, but it does shine light on the holes in many gambling games such as 'Winds and Fortunes'. Bright samurai realize that the game is in the house's favor and do not engage in gambling. The Rokugani do not play card games.

## Heraldry (Perception)

A character with Heraldry has studied the banners and sigils of the clans and families. With a Simple Heraldry/Perception Roll vs. a 15, a character can know one of four things about a person when viewing their banner: 1) their name; 2) their Clan and Family; 3) their Honor Rank; and 4) their Glory Rank. With every Raise, the Herald can know an additional fact from viewing the banner.

## History (Intelligence)

This character has studied history and is familiar with all the pertinent events that have led up to the current political situation.

## Horsemanship (Agility)

Samurai are master horsemen. A character who has Horsemanship knows how to ride a horse and how to fight from horseback.

## Hunting (Perception)

A character with Hunting is skilled in all manner of outdoor skills. He knows how to track, how to make a fire, set up camp, etc.

and can survive for days in the wilderness without food or water, using only the land's natural resources. In the Shadowlands, this is less useful.

## Investigation (Variable)

When on a crime scene, this character (with Perception) knows where to look for clues, how to put disparate facts together (Intelligence) and (using Awareness) how to interrogate suspects.

## Law (Intelligence)

This character is familiar with the inner workings of Rokugan's legal system. He may argue cases with magistrates, defend or prosecute the accused and write up legal contracts.

## Lore [Shugenja, Shadowlands, Bushido, etc.] (Intelligence)

There is much to be learned about a variety of subjects, and this Skill is the general knowledge of those subjects. Characters never have the Lore skill by itself; they only learn about certain topics. For instance, characters who are familiar with the wastes of the Shadowlands have the Lore (Shadowlands) Skill, while those who know about shugenja have Lore (Shugenja). Any realm of knowledge which is not its own skill can be represented by an appropriate Lore skill.



## Shinjo Riding Horse

Height 5'8" Weight: 1,300 lbs

Lifespan 25 years

Earth 3

Water 3

Strength 6

Fire 1

Agility 2

Air 2

Attack: 3k2 Damage 6k2 (Kick)

Defense TN: 10 Wounds 12 (+5), 24 (+10), etc.

Gallop: +5 Defense TN when Galloping

These are the stats for a Unicorn horse, such as most Unicorn samurai are privileged to ride. More creature stats can be found in the GM's Guide to Rokugan.

## Manipulation (Awareness)

Manipulation is the art of using psychology and character interpretation in order to predict someone's actions. It can be used to determine wants, needs and desires and can also tell the character how to fulfill them. As with many other Awareness-based Skills, conversation is required to use this Skill.

## Medicine (Intelligence)

This character is familiar with the medical practices of Rokugan. He may treat diseases and cure wounds to make certain they don't become infected. He is familiar with massage techniques (used to center energies) and acupuncture.



### **Meditation (Void)**

A character with the Meditation (Za-zen) Skill can make a Simple Meditation/Void Roll, TN 20, to gain back a single spent Void Point. Such meditation requires utter, undisturbed silence for one hour.

### **Mountaineer (Strength or Stamina)**

A character with Mountaineer is skilled at climbing mountains, knows how to forage for food in rocky terrains and has a basic knowledge of mountain passes and the like. This skill also helps a samurai climb over shorter surfaces such as a wall or gate. However, such an act would be gravely dishonorable. This is considered a High Skill for samurai-caste characters, and a Low Skill for heimin and hinin.

### **Music (Agility and Awareness)**

This is the Skill of playing musical instruments. For every Rank taken in this Skill, a character may learn another musical instrument. The biwa is a wide bodied flute; the fue is a very popular long, bamboo flute; a hichiriki is a double reeded flute, not unlike an oboe; a koto is similar to a zither; a sanisen is the lute/banjo instrument; and san-ko are the three drums.

While playing an instrument is a demand on the character's manual dexterity (Agility), it is also a demand on his sense of tempo, pitch and harmony (Awareness). When a character plays an instrument, he must use the lower of those two Traits.

### **Oratory/Rhetoric (Perception)**

A character with this skill has training in the art of speechmaking. Oratory – the art of performing a persuasive speech before an audience – can be used to convince a large group of people of a certain point of view. Characters with the Voice Advantage gain a Free Raise when using Oratory. Rhetoric is the ability to write persuasive speeches for others to recite, and can be used in conjunction with other artisan skills in order to create a more effective document. This is considered a single skill with two “branches,” one spoken and one written.

### **Origami (Agility)**

This is the art of paper-folding, the ability to transform scraps of tissue into cranes, horses, and other figures. A character skilled in origami can use tiny creases in the paper to create a likeness of just about anything. This skill is primarily practiced in the courts of Rokugan.

### **Painting (Intelligence)**

This is the art of spontaneous ink painting. Many samurai are skilled in this painting style. It is done briskly and without

forethought, relying entirely on intuition and inspiration, much like iaijutsu.

### **Poetry (Awareness)**

Haiku is the three-line, 17-syllable style of poetry. Again, this style is very popular with samurai for its concise and impromptu nature. Characters with high poetry skills may be invited to perform at noble courts, thus gaining an ‘in’ to Rokugani nobility.

### **Research (Intelligence)**

This is the skill which allows scholars to find their way around a library full of scrolls and locate the only one that has the information they need. It is common among shugenja and courtiers, and less so in the ranks of the bushi.

### **Shintao (Intelligence)**

This is the study of the Tao of Shinsei, the guiding philosophy of Rokugan. This skill allows the character to discuss matters of philosophy and enlightenment, and understand the basic nature of the Rokugani religion, Shinseism. It is essential for shugenja, as they must know how to be a priest as well as a scholar. A character must have a Shintao of 3 or higher to increase any of his Traits or Rings above 5.

### **Sincerity (Awareness)**

The nobility of Rokugan do not value honesty, they value sincerity: the ability to give the appearance that you believe what you are saying. Characters with Sincerity are the most skilled in this respect.

### **Spell Research (Intelligence)**

Shugenja use this skill to learn and create spells. See the “Spell Research” section in the Book of Fire (page 183) for details on its use.

### **Tea Ceremony (Void)**

The tea ceremony is far from simply brewing tea. It requires quite some time to complete, and a ritual location that is appropriate (a carefully tended garden, or a noble enclosure with meditation chamber). It is a detailed ritual, designed to free the mind of outside concerns, thus liberating and cleansing it of distracting thoughts. It takes about half an hour for a character with this Skill to perform a ceremony (a Simple Tea Ceremony/Void Roll; TN at GM's discretion, but not less than 10), and all involved (up to the Skill Rank of the performer) will gain back a single spent Void Point.





## Theology (Intelligence)

Characters with this Skill are familiar with all the rites and practices of worshiping the many *kami* of Rokugan. Religious services are highly formal, and improper procedure may draw down the wrath of the *kami*... at least, that's what the people of Rokugan believe.

## Bugei Skills

These are the Skills taught to fighting men. Most Skills listed below are self-explanatory. Skills that require a little explanation (like Kyujutsu vs. *Yomanri*, or Tessen) have text for clarification.

### Armorer (Earth)

This is *yoroi-sei*, the Skill of making and repairing armor. While this Skill is technically a Merchant Skill (and is listed again in the Merchant Skill section), it is one of the most honorable of all craft Skills.

### Athletics (Varies)

Running, jumping, lifting and similar physical actions fall under the jurisdiction of Athletics. If a character is running, for instance, and wants to test his speed, he uses Athletics/Reflexes. However, if he wants to test his endurance, he would Roll Athletics/Stamina. Athletics is a Bugei Skill for samurai-caste characters, and a Low Skill for *heimin* and *hinin*.

### Battle (Perception)

This is the study of warfare. Characters with Battle have studied the successful strategies and tactics of famous battles and the philosophies of war. This Skill is used both for large-scale battles and for smaller skirmishes.

### Bujutsu (Varies)

The weapons skills of the L5R RPG cover weapons with similar size and weight distribution. We have collected the entirety of them (referred to by Rokugani as *bujutsu*) here for clarification. For game purposes, if a character has one of these Skills, he is assumed to have the same Rank while using all weapons listed with it. For example, a samurai with a Kenjutsu of 2 rolls two dice when he uses a katana, a wakizashi, or a *no-dachi*.

*Iaijutsu* is not included, as it is not a weapons skill per se, but the application of such knowledge in a specific use.

- Bojutsu (Bo Stick): Bo, Jo
- Chisaijutsu (War Fan): Tessen, Tonfa
- Jiujutsu (Hand-to-Hand): Mizu-do, Kaze-do
- Kenjutsu: Katana, No-dachi, Wakizashi
- Kyujutsu (Archery): Dai-kyu, Yumi
- Nofujutsu (Peasant weapons): Jitte, Kama, Nunchaku, Sai (This is considered a Low Skill)
- Subojutsu (Tetsubo): Die tsuchi, Tetsubo
- Tantojutsu (Knife): Aiguchi, Tanto, Kama
- Umayarijutsu (Lance): Lance
- Yarijutsu (Naginata): Nagamaki, Naginata, Yari, Nage-yari, Sasumata, Sodegarami
- *Yomanri* (Unicorn and Naga Archery): Dai-kyu, Yumi
- Ninjutsu: Ninja-to, Shuriken, Blowgun, Nageteppo, Tetsubishi, Han-kyu (This is considered a Low Skill)

Ninjutsu works a little differently from the rest of these Skill groups. At Rank 1, the character only learns how to use one of the tools listed at Rank 1. For every further Rank gained in the Skill, the character gains an additional Rank in the use of tools already known, and another tool at Rank 1.

*Note:* It is also possible to take a specialized weapon skill: for instance, instead of taking Kenjutsu, you could take the specialized weapon skill Katana. (It is, of course, possible to learn both Kenjutsu and Katana.) The benefits and disadvantages to specialized skills are listed in the Combat Section; see also the "Specialized Weapon Skill" entry later in this list.

### Defense (Agility)

Every character knows how to get out the way (that's their Fire Ring). This character knows how to do it effectively. Any character who does not purchase at least Rank 1 in Defense cannot make the Full Defense Maneuver.

### Explosives (Intelligence)

This skill represents a character's experience with the small explosives used in stink bombs, smoke bombs, flash paper, etc. "Gaijin pepper" – gunpowder – is forbidden by Imperial decree, and Rokugani explosives are more useful for pyrotechnics than sheer blasting power.

### Horse Archery (Agility)

A character with the Horse Archery skill can not only fire a bow from the back of a moving horse, but can do so without falling off and with a reasonable expectation of hitting the target. The bow used for this skill is the *dai-kyu*, a long, asymmetrical bow particularly suited to the task.



The strength of the dai-kyu comes from its size and greater draw, thus giving more force to the arrow; and a Bowman on horseback is at least three feet taller than one on the ground, affording a much broader field of fire, and range.

The Horse Archery skill is based on the Unicorn art of Yomanri (and uses the same mechanics), and so is not generally available to non-Clan members. A character who knows Yomanri or Kyujutsu, but not Horse Archery, has his TN raised by at least 10 when firing from the back of a horse; characters who don't know how to handle a bow at all probably ought to hope for divine intervention. A similar penalty would apply if, for some reason, a character trained solely in Horse Archery were forced to fire from the ground.

Unicorn bushi can shoot at a gallop, and can fire at targets up to 90° to their right or at anything to their left side, even at targets straight behind them. Few other bushi are this skilled at horse archery, and the only shugenja so skilled are found in the Unicorn clan.

### Iaijutsu (Agility)

Those who practice Iaijutsu practice the art of the "fast draw." It is only practiced by samurai; Iaijutsu may only be performed with a Katana, and not with *any* other weapon. It is a formal duel that must follow explicit rules, or the offending party is dishonored and expected to commit seppuku. Two samurai stand a few feet apart with their katana sheathed. Then, in a furious explosion of motion, both suddenly draw their swords and attack in a single movement. The rules for Iaijutsu duels can be found in *The Book of Fire* (page 164).

A samurai with his sword in its saya must use the Iaijutsu Skill if he wishes to attack in the current round of combat, or must spend the round drawing and preparing his weapon. A drawn katana uses either the Kenjutsu or the Katana skill, not Iaijutsu.

### Intimidation (Willpower)

Intimidation is the ability to coerce others through fright or the intention to harm. Crab samurai are the unquestioned masters of menace, and can intimidate others with a mere pause or the raising of an eyebrow.

### Jujutsu (Agility)

Jujutsu is the art of fighting with bare hands. Legend has it that Shinsei brought this skill with him from across the mountains. Damage from a Hand-to-Hand strike is (Strength)k1 (see the *Book of Fire* for details, page 181).

### Kenjutsu (Agility)

See: Bujutsu



### Kyujutsu (Reflexes)

Characters with Kyujutsu are practiced in the Skill of shooting a yumi (bow). However, the style of kyujutsu is very spontaneous, relying on instinct rather than aim. "The arrow knows the way" is a common phrase among archers of Rokugan. Characters use Kyujutsu/Reflexes when firing bows. See also Bujutsu.

### Lore (Maho-Tsukai) (Perception)

Characters with this skill are knowledgeable in the ways of black magic and can identify those who practice it. This is not the same as learning maho; those who have it cannot summon oni, drain the soul, or perform other unwholesome maho spells. Rather, it gives them an overview of the discipline, allowing them to recognize signs of maho activity if they come across it. They also know which particular spell is being practiced, and the protective wards against it, if any exist. It is rare to find this knowledge outside of students of the Kuni Witch Hunter school, for only they have need of it. It is a Bugei Skill for the Witch Hunters, a Low Skill for anyone else.

### Siege (Perception)

If Engineering is building, Siege is tearing down. Similar to Battle, Siege represents a character's ability to gauge the strength of a given fortress and devise the best way to breach it. By observing the target for a given length in time, a siege master can determine the number of samurai guarding it, the shifts in their patrols, possible escape routes from the castle, and the most effective direction to launch an attack. It also covers the ability to operate a siege engine – such as a catapult or man o' war – and to direct it where it will inflict the most damage.

### Specialized Weapon Skill (Varies; usually Agility)

Characters may specialize in a weapon instead of, or as well as, learning the Bujutsu skill associated with that class of weapon. Characters who specialize in a weapon gain a bonus to their attack roll equal to their Skill in that weapon. For instance, a character with Katana 3 would add +3 to all his attack rolls with a katana. On the other hand, a character who has only a specialized weapon skill and not the Bujutsu skill associated with that weapon is considered unskilled in the other weapons of that type. For instance, a character with Katana but not Kenjutsu would not be proficient with a wakizashi or no-dachi. He would have a +10 to his TN to use either of those weapons, and could not reroll 10s.

### War Fan (Agility)

The tessen, or war fan, is an iron-ribbed fan that has two purposes. It is used as a hand-to-hand weapon, typically to parry strikes from unsuspected attackers. It is also used to give signals on

a battlefield. To give signals on a battlefield requires a Simple Tessen/Agility Roll; to decipher them, a Simple Tessen/Intelligence Roll.

### Weaponsmith (Earth)

This is the art of making and repairing weapons. While this is also a Merchant Skill (and is listed again in the Merchant Skill section), it is one of the most honorable of all craft Skills.

### Wrestling (Strength)

This is sumai, the forerunner of sumo wrestling. It is a sport rather than a lethal skill. Using this Skill, a character can throw his opponent with a successful Contested Strength Roll. If his opponent is thrown, he must make a successful Wrestling/Stamina Roll at a TN of 5 x the Strength of the thrower (+5 for each Raise of the thrower), or he is stunned and can take no Action next Turn.

### Yomanri (Agility) (Unicorn Only)

Most Rokugani practice what they call *kyujutsu*. This is a fast method of shooting the bow, and relies primarily on instinctive aim, feel, and experience. It's the equivalent of "hip-shooting" with a bow. In their travels to distant lands, the Unicorn learned a different method, involving careful aim. Instead of drawing and firing instinctively, the bowman looks down the shaft of the arrow and aims it. They found this method to be superior to the Rokugani method, for they could fire rapidly when they needed to, but they could also take their time and aim the arrow when scoring a hit was of critical importance. The Unicorn call this technique by its gaijin name, "yomanri," and all Unicorn samurai use it. As you might imagine, gaijin use this skill as well; the Naga have also been seen aiming their bows, and Naga characters also use this Skill. The downside of this technique is the stillness it demands on the part of the archer: use of this skill is considered a Full Attack.

The Yomanri skill is based on Agility rather than Reflexes. The Unicorn samurai can fire once a round like their counterparts, but they may also take time to aim their bow. For each round a Unicorn archer spends aiming (and doing nothing else), he gains a free Raise on his to hit roll. An archer can only aim for a number of rounds equal to his Yomanri skill.

Also, the amount a target is moving restricts the amount an archer can aim. You can only spend half your skill in rounds aiming at moving targets.





## Merchant Skills

These Skills are used by those who are not of the samurai caste. While it is not dishonorable to use them (except Commerce) it is not honorable to use them, either.

### Appraisal (Perception)

With this skill, characters can determine the approximate value of an item or group of items. Further, a character with the Appraisal skill has a greater chance of identifying forgeries and counterfeits.

### Armorer (Earth)

This is yoroi-sei, the Skill of making and repairing armor. This is one of the most honorable of all craft Skills.

### Commerce (Awareness)

This is the Skill of bartering, handling currency and merchandising. It is dishonorable for a samurai to practice this Skill.

### Craft (Variable)

Craft is the Skill of making and covers many different areas. Every manner of craft can be listed with this Skill, except Armorer and Weaponsmith, which are regarded above all other Crafts. Samples of Craft Skills include: Brewer, Carpenter, Cobbler, Cook, Farmer, Fisherman, Gardener, Mason, Potter, Seamstress/Tailor, and Shipwright.

### Craft: Tattooing (Agility)

A character with this Skill knows the art of tattooing. Raises all more complicated and elaborate tattoos. Samurai that are not Togashi are merely trained in the art of tattooing. A Togashi with this skill (and the blood of Yokuni) is able to create ise zumi tattoos.

### Engineering (Intelligence)

Engineering is the ability to design, build, and repair large structures. This can be as simple as constructing a lean-to in the forest or as complex as strengthening the foundations of the Kaiu Wall. A character skilled in engineering knows how to survey the land for optimum building sites, can find the best places to cross a stream, and can warn other characters not to smash that load-bearing wall. All Kaiu are expected to have a point or two in Engineering.

### Herbalism (Intelligence)

This Skill is the peasant version of Medicine. It is used to cure wounds and heal maladies. Instead of acupuncture, it uses herbs.

### Locksmith (Agility)

This Skill not only allows a character to make locks, but to break them. When a locksmith creates a lock, he makes a Simple Locksmith/Agility Roll. This sets the TN for the Lock. When another Locksmith attempts to pick the lock, he must make a Simple Roll vs. the lock's TN.

### Weaponsmith (Earth)

This is the art of making and repairing weapons. This is one of the most honorable of all Craft Skills.

## Low Skills

These Skills are dishonorable for those of the samurai caste to use.

### Athletics (Variable)

Running, jumping, lifting and similar physical actions fall under the jurisdiction of Athletics. If a character is running, for instance, and wants to test his speed, he uses Athletics/Reflexes. However, if he wants to test his endurance, he would roll Athletics/Stamina. Athletics is a Bugei Skill for Samurai-caste characters, and a Low Skill for heimin and hinin.

### Autopsy (Intelligence)

Where anatomy allows a samurai to understand the intricacies of the body, autopsy allows the user to understand how these functions cease. When cutting open a body, it may become important to understand that the heart stopped because of a poison or a rupture of a vessel. In conjunction with anatomy, a samurai may perform an autopsy on the body of non-human creatures as well. Although this skill may determine the how someone was killed (after opening them up), with the proper lore skill (poison, weaponry, etc.), the information will be vague and inconclusive. For example, a courtier is killed by a rare poison know as green lotus tongue. The samurai using Autopsy will only be able to discern that a poison killed the courtier, but cannot identify the poison without a poison skill roll. This skill is considered dishonorable to use, since its use perforce involves touching the dead.

### Climbing (Strength)

A character with Climbing is capable of scaling walls and gates. Sheer sides of buildings can be navigated easily and an individual using climbing tools receives three additional unkept dice.



## Forgery (Agility)

This Skill allows a character to forge official documents, letters, etc. When forging a document, the forger must make a Simple Forgery/Agility Roll. This sets the TN for the document. When another character views the document, he must make a Simple Perception Roll (sometimes supplemented by Law or Investigation, depending on the GM) to beat the TN of the document.

## Gambling (Awareness)

This is the Skill of professional gambling. In other words: cheating. The Trait to use with Gambling is Awareness. To detect cheating, a character must make a Contested Gambling/Perception Roll against the gambler's Gambling/Awareness.

## Mimic (Awareness)

You have learned to mimic the voices of others. When this Skill is used against someone who is unfamiliar with the person you are attempting to mimic, you must roll Mimic/Awareness against their Perception x 5. If they are familiar with the person you are attempting to mimic, expect the GM to increase the TN, depending on the degree of familiarity. For instance, someone with a casual acquaintance would increase the TN by 5 or maybe 10, but if you are attempting to fool someone's wife or husband, expect the TN to go up by as much as 20.

## Ninjutsu (Varies)

See the Bujutsu Skill in the Bugei Skills section.

## Nofujutsu (Varies)

See the Bujutsu Skill in the Bugei Skills section.

## Poison (Intelligence)

A character with this Skill can detect, analyze and use the various poisons available in Rokugan.

## Seduction (Awareness)

Honorable women do not act seductively. That activity is left to geisha. Seduction uses a Contested Seduction/Awareness Roll vs. the opponent's Awareness.

## Sleight of Hand (Agility)

This Skill allows the character to use sleight-of-hand tricks such as palming items, picking pockets, and other acts of prestidigitation.

## Stealth (Agility)

A character with Stealth (shinobi) moves silently through shadows, unseen by the casual observer. To use Stealth, a character must make a Contested Stealth/Agility Roll against another character's Perception.

## Torture (Awareness)

The use of torture is dishonorable because it involves touching blood, sweat and dead flesh. When using Torture, a character is trying to extract information from the tortured character using pain. Torture is a Contested Torture/Awareness Skill vs. the opponent's Stamina.

## Traps (Perception)

This is the ability to build, set, and detect all manner of booby traps, from the merely incapacitating to the gruesomely lethal. Not only can a character with Traps design and construct such pitfalls, but he knows how to conceal their presence until they are sprung. Consequently, he can identify the tell-tale signs of a hidden trap, and may roll to detect it before it goes off. This is a Merchant Skill for Kaiu, a Low Skill for anyone else.





## Advantages

Below is a list of advantages the player may purchase to enhance his character. Each shows how many Character Points you need to spend at character creation to gain the Advantage. You may not take an Advantage more than once unless the Advantage specifically permits it.

### **Absolute Direction (1 Point)**

This character never gets lost. He always knows which way is north, even in a garden maze in the middle of the night – or even after hours of fleeing from enemies. There are places in the Shadowlands, however, which can mislead even those who have Absolute Direction, so be careful when you're beyond the Wall...

### **Allies (Variable)**

You are connected. For every 2 points you spend on Allies, you can gain a single Minor Ally, and for every 4 you can gain a Major Ally. Minor Allies are folks who can get you legal things like food, shelter and perhaps a small amount of money. A Major Ally can get you things that are slightly less easy to acquire – like fake travel papers, an audience with a daimyo, or a quick midnight ride out of the province.

### **Ambidextrous (3 Points; 2 for Dragon)**

You may use both hands without penalty. Any character who does not invest in Ambidextrous has all TNs increased by 10 when using his off-hand.

### **Benten's Blessing (3 Points, 2 for Crane)**

You fascinate people. It may be your looks or your charm, or may be both. You just have that certain "something." Whenever you make a roll involving persuasion, keep an additional die (two if they are attracted to you).

### **Balance (4 Points)**

You have the ability to remain neutral – even level-headed – regardless of your inner emotional state. You may ignore any comments designed to taunt you or impel you to react. In game terms, this means you ignore any modifiers to your Honor roll. Also, during Iaijutsu duels, you may Raise a number of times up to your Void + 2. Matsu characters may not purchase this Advantage.

### **Blackmail (Glory of Blackmailee, Minimum 1)**

You have a bit of information or evidence that you can hold over someone's head. This Advantage is similar to Minor Ally, but far more dangerous – and much less public. Because a person who is being blackmailed is more willing to do terrible things at your bidding than a Minor Ally would be, this Advantage has a distinct difference. However, it should be noted that no one likes to be blackmailed, and overuse of this Advantage could result in some very unpleasant results. Because of this information, you can gain advantages over the guilty party. The cost of this Advantage is equal to the Glory Rank of the individual. This Advantage costs one point less than usual for Scorpion Clan characters.

You may take this Advantage multiple times, once for every individual being blackmailed. This Advantage may never cost less than one point, even for Scorpions.

### **Bland (2 Points)**

Characters who are bland by nature tend to be unassuming, quiet folk with average build and features. Because they are not striking in any way, it is easy to forget their name and appearance. They have no real distinguishing features, and many people simply look away when they pass nearby. Being bland is both an advantage and a disadvantage; someone who is bland has a greater likelihood of being ignored when disguised or not wishing to be noticed, but they also have a smaller chance of being noticed for recognition or award by their daimyo. One cannot be Bland and have Benten's Blessing, Benten's Curse, nor Dangerous Beauty. This Advantage cements the character's appearance and makes it difficult to detract from that, although Benten's Curse could be "acquired" later. A Bland PC is more difficult to recognize than other samurai. Therefore a +10 TN modifier should be applied to any roll to recognize a samurai with this Advantage.

### **Blood of Osano-Wo (5 Points)**

You are a descendant of the great Osano-Wo, the Crab warrior whose stamina and battle fury rivaled that of the elements themselves. His blood has rendered you resistant to cold, heat and extremes of temperature. You cannot be harmed by any weather-related phenomena and always succeed at any Stamina checks





involving temperature changes. Anyone attempting to cast a Fire spell or other appropriate spell (GM's discretion) on you against your will has a +10 to the spell's TN. This Advantage is typically only found among the Crab; however, the Blood of Osano-Wo is strong and flows through the breadth of Rokugan. Matsu and Mantis have been known to carry the blood with them, as the Crab marry only the strongest of samurai.

### **Chosen by the Oracles (5 Points)**

Occasionally, a child is noticed by the Oracles and guided gently through her life. While this does not mean that the person so chosen is destined to become the next Oracle, it means that the Oracle takes a definite interest in such a person's life and well being – to the point of interfering when the individual is not doing as the Oracle thinks best. Because the Oracles are mystical, barely-human creatures, their idea of 'best' and 'worst' can be very different from our own, and their meddling can be a double-edged sword. See the Book of Air in this book for information on the supernatural.

### **Clear Thinker (2 Points)**

It isn't easy to trick you. Whenever another character tries to confuse, befuddle, or lie to you, add 10 to the Target Number.

### **Combat Reflexes (6 Points)**

After initiative is rolled, while actions are being declared, you may switch places with the character whose action is directly before yours. For example, if you are third in line for actions this turn, you may switch places with the character who is second. That person becomes the third in line.

### **Crab Hands (4 Points; Crab Only)**

You have a familiarity with many forms of weapons, and can wield most of them with some degree of effectiveness. You fight with any weapon you do not have a Bujutsu skill ranking in as if you had a Bujutsu skill ranking of 1. This is not a "substitute" for regular skill ranks, and all weapon skills must still be purchased as normal. *Example:* Hida Shitoki has the Crab Hands Advantage, a Kenjutsu Rank 3 and no skill in Subojutsu. He fights as if he has a Kenjutsu Rank 3 and Subojutsu Rank 1. If he purchases a Rank of Subojutsu through experience, he still fights as if he had a Subojutsu Rank 1. This Advantage is only available to Crab characters. This is a powerful Advantage, and no more than one PC in the party should have access to it.

### **Crafty (5 Points)**

Quite simply, you are very good at acting in a devilish manner. You are considered to have at least one Rank in all Low Skills, even

Skills for which you have not yet purchased a Rank. If, however, you wish to buy a Low Skill you do not have, you must purchase Rank 1 with Experience Points as normal. It is still considered dishonorable to use these skills, even if the PC is not highly honorable. GMs may rule that a Crafty PC may never have an Honor above 2.5. Crafty PCs are considered resourceful by nature and GMs may wish to allow them to make an Intelligence roll to scrounge up a useful item in a crisis. The TN is dependent upon the value of the item. This is a powerful Advantage, and no more than one PC in the party should have access to it.

### **Daredevil (4 Points)**

Whenever a Daredevil does something risky, or performs an impossible feat, the GM secretly rolls a die. If the die roll is even, the character receives a +10 bonus to their roll (unknown to the player) for that feat. Otherwise, there is no benefit from this Advantage. This is a particularly cinematic Advantage and GMs should consider allowing it in games that have a very heroic flair. Realistic games would rarely have use for such an ability.

This Advantage provides the PC with ample opportunities to put herself in harm's way. PCs that abuse this Advantage or try the same thing twice will find that it isn't so daring once it has already been done.

### **Death Trance (3 Points, 2 for Lion)**

This samurai understands that death has no hold over him, and has taken the philosophy of bushido to heart. When he faces death, he enters into a thoughtless trance that gives him great courage in the face of adversity. A character with Death Trance automatically succeeds at Fear Rolls.

### **Different School (3 Points)**

This character did not go to his clan's bushi or shugenja school, but was instead an "exchange student" at another clan's school. This requires the prospective student's family to cash in a number of favors, and may have some effect on others' perception of him; a Crab bushi who studied at the Kakita School would almost certainly be mocked by his cousins. This Advantage may only be taken once.

### **Ear of the Emperor (5 Points)**

The PC has a (semi-)direct line to the Imperial Court, whether through familial connections, favors, social or political influence or simple respect. The terms of the connection must be clearly defined before a PC with this Advantage can be brought into play. You are generally treated as if your Glory Rank is one or two levels higher. Depending on the circumstances, the PC might not need to be



present in court when it is proposed, relying instead on a third party to relay and insinuate the desired information.

## Gentry (Variable)

Most samurai characters are not responsible for any land, instead being sworn to samurai of higher Glory and paid a stipend from the taxes their lords collect. Characters with the Gentry Advantage have land they must attend to and collect taxes from. This provides the samurai with additional income, but also requires some responsibility. After all, the samurai must now deal with bandits, wandering ogres, *maho-tsukai* and all other threats, real or imagined, to his fiefdom. Administrative duties over the area (cataloging births and deaths, etc.) are also now his responsibility, although he may assign an assistant to handle most of it.

A character must spend at least 5 Character Points on the Gentry Advantage. These grant him one village to tax and govern. Additional points can be spent for additional villages, or to augment the villages he's already purchased. See the table below to determine exactly how much.

### Cost for Village: 5 Points

Every village the character is responsible for costs 5 Character Points. A village provides a samurai:

- 5 Koku a year in taxes (at least 3 go to the lord who granted the samurai his title)
  - 1 Yoriki (peacekeeper stationed at the village)
  - 50 farmers
  - 10 Ashigaru soldiers (commissioned at tax time)
- Villages may be augmented with character points.

### Farm: 1 Point

Each village is considered a farm, but for 1 CP, the village has an additional farm, which provides more rice, and thus more taxes. See *The Harvest* below to determine how much more.

### Holding: 2 Points, 4 Points, 6 Points

There are many kinds of Holdings, and each provides the village with new taxes. A samurai who governs a village with a blacksmith has an exploitable resource for new armor and arms. Creative samurai can find a benefit in any kind of Holding, from sake works to geisha houses.

Holdings are either Basic (2 Points), Fine (4 Points) or Excellent (6 Points). For each additional two points spent on the Holding, the quality of merchandise they provide is just that much better. There are few if any holdings in Rokugan over 10 points, however. Basic Holdings provide just what they promise: merchandise that sells. Fine Holdings have a bit of a reputation for providing memorable

and striking quality. Excellent Holdings, on the other hand, provide merchandise known throughout the Clan, and perhaps throughout the Empire. Some examples of Holdings include: Blacksmith, Mine (gold, silver, copper, etc.), Sake Works, Tea House, Geisha House, Silk Works, Leather Works, Hawks and Falcons, etc. Players of the CCG should be able to come up with a few creative holdings on their own.

### Followers: 2 Points

Samurai may acquire a retinue of soldiers to assist them in managing a particularly difficult area. Characters can build a retinue of soldiers commissioned to their service. These soldiers will serve their lord's commands, even unto death (they are all samurai themselves, after all). Samurai must be at least Rank 2 to purchase Followers. Every 2 Character Points spent on Followers gains the samurai 10 additional soldiers (Rank 0 samurai).

Rank 0 Samurai all have a 1 in each Ring, and a 2 in one Ring of your choice. They have 3 High Skills, and 2 Bugei skills. They have yet to attain a Technique and are fresh out of their *gempukku*.

### Harvest and Taxes

At the beginning of each harvest (there are two each year), the governing samurai must collect taxes. As mentioned above, he is given (at least) 10 ashigaru to aid him in this task.

### Expenses

At least 3 Koku goes to the samurai's lord.

At least 1 Koku goes to each Samurai under the character's command.

When the samurai collects taxes, roll on the following table to determine the fate of the village:

Roll	Event
1	Catastrophe! (Roll for type below, lose 3 dice of Koku)
1-5	Plague
6-0	Famine
2-3	Bandits! (Lose 2 dice of Koku)
4-6	No Event
7-9	Unusual or Supernatural Event
0	Bountiful Harvest (Add 2 dice of Koku to taxes)



### *The Harvest*

For each farm in the village the samurai controls, roll one die per year (each village has at least one farm). You may re-roll 10s as usual. The total is the number of Koku in rice that the samurai takes from the village. The samurai then gives this rice to clan magistrates to give to his daimyo. At this time he receives the actual minted Koku. Add 3 Koku to the result for each Basic Holding, 4 for each Fine Holding and 5 for each Excellent Holding. The village itself provides 5 Koku, so even the smallest village produces 1 die+5 Koku per year.

### **Great Destiny (4 Points)**

When this character was born, it may have been that the stars were aligned just right, or a birthmark was in just the right shape, but the ancestors smiled and a Destiny was created for this child. The great wheel moves this character slowly and surely towards this destiny. If this character takes damage that would kill him, he is reduced instead to a single Wound at the Out Level. The Seven Fortunes will only protect a character in this manner once per story. The GM will decide what the Great Destiny is, but need never reveal it. Once the Destiny has been fulfilled, these points are turned into 8 Experience Points.

### **Hands of Stone (5 Points)**

Crab hand-to-hand combat techniques are brutal in the extreme and make good use of the Hida's great size. But you are a prodigy even by their standards. In bare-handed combat, you may keep 2 dice of damage instead of just 1. This Advantage is only available to Crab and non-Crab samurai that have the Large Advantage. Bear in mind that this makes a Crab's hands nearly as deadly as a katana. This is a powerful Advantage and no more than one PC in the party should have access to it.

### **Heartless (2 Points)**

All attempts to woo or sway your heart to pleas of compassion, love or courtesy fall on deaf ears. Any appeal to your heart shall find it made of stone. Any Skills used with Awareness in such an attempt (such as Seduction, Poetry, Acting, or Sincerity) have a +10 to their TN. Note: this is an Advantage, where Insensitive is a Disadvantage. A PC cannot take both.

### **A Heart of Vengeance (3 Points)**

Choose any Great Clan. For some reason or another, members of that clan will always draw your wrath. Whenever you are using any Skill against a member of that clan, you always keep (not roll) an additional die. You must take a 2-point Sworn Enemy from that clan

when you take this Advantage, but you receive no points for the Enemy.

### **Hero of the People (2 Points; Ronin Only)**

You have overcome the class barrier between the samurai and the peasants. Peasants identify with you, view you as a leader and hero. As long as you treat the common folk with respect they will go out of their way to help you.

### **Higher Purpose (2 Points)**

Your entire existence is focused on some overriding goal. Whenever the GM determines that you have taken a step toward achieving your Higher Purpose, you gain an extra experience point (see "Experience Points" on page 87) at the end of the session.

### **Imperial Spouse (2 Points)**

In rare cases, a member of the Seppun or Otomo families marries someone of the seven Clans, and chooses to join the household of their spouse. Having an Imperial Cousin as a wife or husband is a mixed blessing – they will certainly know events happening in the Imperial Court, even as far away as the Phoenix or Crab Lands (letters from the Emperor's family travel rapidly). Also, they will be able to secure invitations, audiences with the imperial Advisors or one of the daimyo of the Imperial House (Seppun, Otomo or Miya), or extra koku and supplies for troubled times. However, if an Imperial wife is in danger, the families of the Emperor may choose to take direct action, without considering the wishes of the husband, his clan, or their alliances. Although she has changed her name to suit her wedding, a Seppun is always a Seppun. Thus, the character may be constantly plagued by well-wishers, sycophants, and threats from the Imperial Families as they make certain that "our cousin is well-treated."

### **Inheritance (Variable)**

You have been given an ancestral item of some sort. This item has been carried by your ancestors and its spirit has become more powerful than a normal item. The cost in points and the nature of the item must be agreed upon with the GM, but even a minor magical item would cost 2 or 3 points. A Clan's Ancestral Weapon or Armor might cost 20 points or more.

### **Inner Gift (6 Points)**

The character with Inner Gift has been blessed with an uncontrollable talent, perhaps empathy, precognition, or the ability to sense when danger is near. It is up to the GM to let the character know when the gift activates, and what that means to the current situation. A character with the inner gift of precognition, for





example, might have a series of dreams about a bloody knife, only to wake up one morning and find their dearest friend has been assassinated. A character with empathy might be able to tell when someone is lying to them, or a character with a gift of psychometry (reading emotions from objects) might gain a flash of insight when they touch a samurai's katana. The gift must be clearly defined at the time a character purchases this Advantage. The Gifts a character can choose are: precognition, animal speech, psychometry, and empathy.

### **Irreproachable (Variable)**

You are devoted to your word. For each point you spend on this Advantage, you add +5 TN to your ability to resist seduction and bribery attempts. You may not purchase Greed or Lechery. GMs should not allow PCs to spend a number of points on Irreproachable higher than their starting Willpower.

### **Kharmic Tie (1–5 Points)**

The Rokugani believe in reincarnation, that every soul lives a hundred thousand lifetimes. When you meet someone, the relationship(s) you've had in past lives influence your reaction to them in this life. You feel uneasy around the people you've had bad relationships with while you feel comfortable around those you've had good relationships with.

If you purchase a Kharmic Tie, your character has found someone they are connected with from a past life. Your relationship depends on the amount of points you invest in this Advantage. For every point you invest (up to 5), you may, once per game session, roll an additional die when you are fighting for or protecting your tie. You do not get to keep the additional dice you roll.

### **Large (3 Points, 2 for Crab)**

You are big. The average male Rokugani is approximately 5'6" to 5'8" tall. You are anywhere from 6'0" to 6'3". This can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. Whenever you engage in social situations, your TNs are increased by 5. However, all of your melee weapon and hand-to-hand Damage Rolls gain a +5 bonus. You may not purchase the "Small" Disadvantage.

### **Leadership (7 Points; 4 for Lion)**

A character with the Leadership Advantage is able to bestow limited benefits on those who follow him. If another character is following a samurai with Leadership, he is able to use some of his leader's Skills. Whenever a character is following a leader's example (performing the same action as the leader), he automatically gains a bonus Rank in that Skill. If the character does not have the Skill, then he performs as if he had Rank 1. The leader's Skill must be

higher than those who follow him, and must be at least Rank 3 in order for his followers to gain this bonus.

### **Luck (3, 6, or 9 Points)**

For every level of Luck, you may reroll one unsuccessful roll during a session.

### **Magic Resistance (2, 4, or 6 Points)**

For some reason or another, you are highly resistant to spell effects. For every two points spent on Magic Resistance, any spells that target you add 5 to their TN.

### **Multiple Schools (6 Experience Points)**

This is an unusual Advantage, in that it can only be bought after a bushi (and only a bushi and only to another bushi school) has progressed beyond level 1 in his school. GM permitting, this Advantage lets the player switch schools without losing his old techniques.

When the bushi switches schools, his old Techniques are "frozen". He won't learn any further techniques from his old school, but he'll begin learning new techniques in his new school immediately. As soon as he gains permission to begin training at the new school, he more-or-less immediately learns the Rank 1 Technique (GM's discretion on the length of training necessary, but probably not longer than 3 to 6 game months). The bushi then begins gaining Techniques in his new school as his Insight goes up.

*Example:* Doji Kuwanan purchased the Different School Advantage (3 points) and immediately began training at the Akodo school (now the Lion Bushi School) under Akodo Toturi. After he gained enough Insight to learn the second Technique, he bought Multiple Schools (6 Experience Points), returned home to attend the Daidoji school, and learned the first-rank Daidoji technique instead. When he attained enough Insight to learn a new technique, he learned the second rank Daidoji technique. He did not learn the second or third rank Akodo technique, since he was no longer at that school. Kuwanan now knows the first rank Akodo technique (and will never advance again in that school), and the first and second rank Daidoji Technique. Even though he has the Insight of a third rank bushi, he doesn't know the third-rank Technique for either school. See the end of this section for rules for purchasing Advantages once play has started.

### **Precise Memory (3 Points)**

You have a phenomenal ability to memorize facts, figures and written material. Your mind records information easily, but this does not make you infallible. Neither does it give you any unusual ability to understand the information, nor learn new skills or languages.



Characters wishing to remember something intricate, or precisely memorize large amounts of information, must make a simple Intelligence roll at a TN of 10. More complex information may require a higher TN to memorize. GMs should keep a short list of the highlights of the information. PCs that can be trusted may maintain these notes as well.

### Quick (5 Points)

You're just faster than other folks. When determining initiative, you roll (but not keep) an extra die.

### Quick Healer (1 Point)

You heal Wounds as if your Stamina were one Rank higher.

### Ratling Ally (4 Points; 2 for Crab)

You have a friend among the Nezumi, one who will help you in time of need. He can act as a liaison between you and the tribe.



provide accurate information on the surrounding landscape, or even assist you in covert tasks like scouting or hiding from oni. You should design a name and personality for your Ratling friend (your GM has more information about Nezumi in his book), as well as a reason why the two of you are connected.

While other Rokugani may look upon you with distrust for keeping such a tie, the Crab Clan knows its real value and will treat you with respect. GMs may wish to turn this Advantage into a bad reputation or hamper the PC with negative social effects. If so, the cost of the ally should become 1 point, and the PC should lose one die in social situations with individuals that are aware of the relationship.

### Read Lips (2 Points)

With a successful Perception Roll (TN determined by the GM), you can read the lips of anyone whose face you can see clearly.

### Sensei (1-5 Points)

You and your sensei have developed a bond that makes you inseparable. You would do anything to protect your sensei and his school, and he would do the same. The cost of a sensei depends on his renown. Your sensei will not be able to accompany you on journeys (he has responsibilities, after all), but he will be able to assist you in other ways.

The number of points you spend on this Advantage determines the School Rank of your Sensei. Each point you spend buys your Sensei one School Rank.

### Servant (Variable)

Most ji-samurai have one servant to attend to their needs and their home. It is considered excessive for a ji-samurai to require more than that. There are exceptions, and PCs interested in having a servant to tend to other matters may spend character points based on the duty they perform. Landed nobles with many attendant servants under their care are still expected to buy them per these rules.

1 Point = eta servant

2 Points = stable hand, personal attendant

3 Points = groom, peasant armorer, peasant bladesmith

4 Points = peasant scribe, spy (both are very rare)

There is no set limit to the number of servants you may have (although it is not honorable to have more than one eta servant at a time), but the GM should not allow you to purchase more servants than three times your Glory (factoring in the boxes as well). *Example:* A PC with a Glory of 1.1 could only have 3 servants, while a PC with a Glory of 1.5 could have 4 servants ( $1.5 \times 3 = 4.5$ ). If your



Glory ever goes down for any reason, the number of servants in your care is reduced to your maximum (the daimyo takes away your privileges, and therefore the GM decides which ones return to her). You do not get the points back for the separating servants. Servants may be purchased with Experience Points as per the rules at the end of this section. *Under no circumstances should a GM allow a PC to have more than one scribe or spy.*

A personal attendant is expected to do any odd task that does not require a great deal of skill. It is not uncommon for a number of personal attendants to serve a single samurai. A stable hand feeds the horse, while a groom is expected to care for a horse at every level (assume Animal Husbandry 2). A personal armorer or bladesmith cares for and repairs items, but does not forge them. A personal bladesmith cleans and sharpens the samurai's katana, but only when he has ordered it. The bladesmith never touches the samurai's katana without permission. The bladesmith is also responsible for maintaining the samurai's other weapons, even a bow. Such a servant would be the equivalent of a holding or retainer (see Gentry Advantage). A scribe is a peasant that has been taught to take notes and write reports for a samurai, while a peasant spy can serve the samurai in many ways.

Crab samurai may purchase one bladesmith for 2 less.

Crane samurai may purchase up to three personal attendants for 1 less.

Ise zumi do not have servants.

Kitsuki samurai may purchase one eta for 1 less.

Lion samurai may purchase one armorer for 2 less.

Phoenix samurai may purchase one scribe for 1 less.

Scorpion samurai may purchase one spy for 1 less.

Unicorn samurai may purchase one groom for 2 less.

Servants are one of the lower rungs of the heimin caste, but a samurai still wields power over them. It is perfectly natural to remind a peasant of her station, but it is unacceptable to kill a peasant that serves your family or Clan. The peasant is not yours to do with as you see fit. Of course peasants must obey samurai, but your lord has ultimate power over the peasant's fate.

### Social Position (5 Points per Rank)

A character who has additional Social Position gains a bonus to their Glory, and therefore to their position within Rokugan society. This can come from being closely related to a daimyo (or even the Emperor himself), or possibly from having a great omen appear when you were born, etc. Record exactly how you gained this Advantage.

### Strength of the Earth (2, 4 or 8 Points)

A character who has the Strength of the Earth may ignore some effects of Wound Levels on their rolls. The Wound Level penalty is decreased by 5 for every level the character has invested into Strength of the Earth.

### Tactician (5 Points; 3 for Lion)

You were trained in the art of warfare at the Ikoma War College, and you know how to look for opportunities in the clamor of battle. Whenever you roll on the Battle Table (and you are not in the Reserves), you may modify your final roll by 3 points, up or down (i.e. a roll of 13 can become either 10 or 16). GMs may wish to decide if a player may purchase this Advantage more than once. Since this is a very specific Advantage with limited use outside of the battle, it is not an unbalancing ability to purchase more than once. For each level of Tactician that a samurai buys, allow them to check one box of Glory at the beginning of play.

### True Friend (Variable)

True friendship is a rare commodity in Rokugan. You and your NPC friend have gone through much together, and would do anything for each other. Having such a friend is a blessing, but also demands great devotion and loyalty. The cost for a True Friend depends on his influence and his devotion.

#### Influence

- 1 Point = A character of minor influence (a samurai without land or political position).
- 3 Points = A character of some influence (a samurai with land and/or political position).
- 5 Points = A character of great influence (a daimyo with land and political position).

#### Devotion

- 1 Point = Your friend would go out of his way for you, but would not risk family honor.
- 3 Points = Your friend would risk family honor to aid you, but would do so secretly.
- 5 Points = Your friend would do anything to aid you.

### Voice (2 Points)

A character with the Voice Advantage receives a Free Raise for rolls involving speaking, such as Oratory.

### Way of the Land (2 Points, 1 for Unicorn)

You know your home province like the back of your hand. You never get lost and know all the best travel routes. Characters may





also purchase this Advantage more than once and may choose provinces other than their own or those owned by their clan.

### Wealthy (1–10 Points)

For each point a character spends on this Advantage (up to a maximum of ten), they begin with four additional koku.

## Buying Advantages Once the Game has Started

The PCs may decide that they would like to purchase an Advantage once the game has started. This is rarely possible. A character does not suddenly become Large, or gain Crab Hands. Therefore, GMs should rule against purchases that contradict their campaign rules. It may be fun to buy Way of the Land, Gentry, or Blackmail for instance once the game has started, but all of these require role-playing opportunities to justify and no PC should be allowed to buy them without a very good reason.

The Experience Point cost for buying an Advantage is twice the cost of the Advantage.



# Disadvantages

Disadvantages are worth points; when your character takes one, he gains the number of Character Points listed. These are added to and not subtracted from the Character Point total. No character may gain more than 10 points from taking Disadvantages. You may not take a Disadvantage more than once unless the Disadvantage specifically permits it.

The Disadvantage system in L5R is purposely very deadly. The effects are designed to hamper any PC that would think the Character Points so important to take one hand, a bad leg, or a bloodline curse.

GMs may wish to lower the 10 point Disadvantage limit. It is often difficult to monitor so many Disadvantages in a large group. 6 points is a fair limit that allows the PCs to take one or two good character “features” while still not unhinging the GM’s sanity.

### Antisocial (2 or 4 Points)

You have difficulty getting along with others. Perhaps this manifests as shyness, troubled speech, discomfort around people, or even bouts of depression. Whatever the symptoms, you find it hard to communicate your feelings properly or withdraw from contact with others. This is a debilitating Disadvantage for samurai and players should consider carefully before taking this as a Disadvantage.

*Moderately Antisocial:* 2 Points. All social skills keep 1 fewer die.

*Extremely Antisocial:* 4 Points. All social skills keep 2 fewer dice.

This may result in the character keeping zero dice, which is an automatic failure. This rule is distinctive to this Disadvantage.

### Ascetic (3 Points)

You aren’t interested in material wealth or temporal power, glory or gaudy fashion. This world is only a transitional place between one reality and the next, and you have passed beyond the need to cling to it. An ascetic bushi owns only one kimono, one pair of sandals, one obi, and his daisho. Ascetic shugenja own one kimono, one pair of sandals, one obi, and a pouch full of scrolls. Maybe – maybe – they own a hat.

These are the only material objects you will ever own. You are unconcerned with Glory, but Honor is still very important. After all, a liar is concerned with the immediate consequences of his actions, and thus still clings to a material world. An ascetic samurai has no need of such things and therefore is more concerned about a person’s actions.

GMs should not concern themselves over awarding the PC Glory, although great role-playing opportunities can arise from a samurai rejecting his lord’s offer of Glory. Mainly, the PC and GM should come to an understand of the PC’s views on Honor and Glory and allow the PC to monitor his own behavior.

### Adopted Blood (1–5 Points)

Your parents were adopted (or perhaps you were). You must prove yourself to overcome the stigma of being a recent addition to the clan. For every point gained from this Disadvantage, you must gain an additional five points of Glory before you may move up a Glory rank. Each time you go up a Glory rank, this penalty drops by five. **Example:** A samurai takes four points of Adopted Blood. He has a



Glory of 1. It will take 30 Glory points before he is recognized as a Glory 2 samurai. It will take 25 after that to become a Glory 3 samurai; then 20, and then finally 15 until the Disadvantage is gone. Remember, the more points in the Disadvantage, the more disrespect the samurai receives from his peers.

### Bad Fortune (1 Point)

A character with Bad Fortune puts his fate in the hands of the GM. The Game Master makes a secret roll on the table below (or just chooses one of the options). Some of the results are obvious ("evil eye", allergy, etc.) but others are less so. You may not take this Disadvantage more than once.

Few of the outcomes on the list below have any effect on game mechanics, but all can cause role-playing challenges. You have been warned!

1: Someone is secretly in love with you and will go to great lengths to mess up your current love life (if any) to make room for their affections.

2: You have a disfiguring scar or birthmark: the mark of being born under a bad sign. Just touching you can cause bad luck. Good luck getting a massage.

3: You lack one item from your standard outfit.

4: You have an allergy to a common item. Tobacco smoke, sushi, silk and cotton are all good examples.

5: You have the "evil eye" (one of your eyes is discolored). People avoid your gaze and whisper about evil spirits as you pass by.

6: One of these days, one roll – a very important roll – is going to fail completely. You won't even need to make the roll. You won't get to use Luck or any other mechanic to salvage the situation. It's your destiny. Accept it.

7: You have an enemy in another Clan. You won't even know you've developed this enemy until it's far too late, of course.

8: Your father has accrued a great gambling debt that you will have to pay off. Soon. Very soon.

9: You just haven't gotten the hang of one of your Skills just yet. All TNs for one Skill are at +5. You may spend one Experience Point to get rid of this Bad Fortune.

0: You have lost some or all of an ear, through misfortune or combat. This may be a social handicap unless you disguise it.

### Bad Health (3 Points)

A character with Bad Health has his Wound Ranks figured as if his Stamina were one Rank lower. A character cannot take this Disadvantage if his Stamina is 1.

### Bad Reputation (2 Points)

You've already earned yourself a bad reputation in Rokugan. Whenever other samurai see you, they add a die to the recognition roll, but they begin with a bad impression of your character. You should choose a single word to define your reputation.

### Benten's Curse (2 Points)

There is just something about you that others find repulsive. The TN of all your attempts to be cordial, persuasive, or use Etiquette are increased by 10.

### Black Sheep (5 Points)

You've been ostracized from your family. You have no family ties – although you may purchase some with the Allies Advantage. Any samurai from your Clan who see you are expected to treat you as if you were eta (so don't go offending them or you'll find yourself in a duel). You may not attend your family School beyond Rank 1 and must find another school to attend. Ronin may not take this Disadvantage.

### Brash (2 Points)

Characters with this Disadvantage are hot-headed. They seek to avenge any slight on their honor, and they must make an Honor Roll (TN 20) in order to keep control of their emotions when insulted.

### Can't Lie (3 Points)

A character with this Disadvantage just can't tell a good lie. Whenever he tries, he fails; the party listening doesn't even need to make a roll. They simply know the character is lying, and will act accordingly.







## Compulsion (2–4 Points)

You have an uncontrollable urge (drinking, gambling, a love of geisha) that gets you into trouble. You must make an Honor Roll every time you confront your compulsion to keep you from losing control and giving into your compulsion. The cost of compulsions depends on the TN of your Honor Roll:

TN 15 = 2 Points

TN 20 = 3 Points

TN 25 = 4 Points

## Contrary (3 Points)

A player character with this Disadvantage may not remain neutral about anything. He is not compelled to action at every turn, but must have an opinion about everything he encounters. This means that the player must take a side in every dispute, seek to solve every problem (even if he can't), and never stand by idly while others take action. In game terms, this means that he must make a Simple Willpower roll vs. a TN determined by the GM (commonly between 5 and 20) to avoid acting in tense situations. Should he fail the roll, he must do something decisive, regardless of the consequences.

## Coward (Variable)

You are secretly afraid. It might be that you lack confidence in your own abilities, or that you are sure that everyone is better than you are. Whatever the case, you have an increased TN when facing an opponent with a higher Glory, or certain Shadowlands creatures.

*Moderate Cowardice:* 3 points, 4 for Lion characters. Your TNs are increased by 5 when facing an opponent with higher Glory than you, or when facing a Shadowlands creature with a Fear rating.

*Extreme Cowardice:* 6 points, 8 for Lion characters. Your TNs are increased by 10 when facing an opponent with higher Glory than you, or when facing *any* Shadowlands creature.

## Cruel (3 Points)

The Imperial Court is prone to create people with very different tastes from the rest of Rokugan. Cruel people are not an exception. Beyond being uncaring, a cruel person delights in the suffering of others. In Rokugan, there are few that would be considered so dishonorable as to take pleasure in the pain of others, but there are those who think nothing more enjoyable than watching a samurai squirm. The cruelty need not manifest itself as physical, but instead could be just glee in making someone dance on their strings.

A Cruel person can never spend his last Void Point, nor raise his Void Ring above his lowest Ring. In addition, his Awareness score is considered one less when interacting with anyone socially, and his Honor is one full Rank lower during Honor Tests. A truly cruel

character is expected to behave in a cruel manner, and if ever caught engaging in a cruel act, may suffer greatly for his transgressions.

## Dark Secret (5 Points)

You are keeping a secret that would jeopardize your family's standing if it was revealed. Dark Secret should not be taken lightly. If a character's secret is ever revealed, he will be expected to commit seppuku to clear the shame. An enemy who gains knowledge of the secret will own the character's life, holding the secret over his head with the very real threat of ruining the character's family. For examples of Dark Secrets, just look under the capital crimes in the Justice section in *The Book of Earth* (page 39). If a character's Dark Secret is discovered, this Advantage can be exchanged for an Obligation Advantage that can never be bought off. This Obligation represents blackmail, or a life debt to an NPC who has saved the character from seppuku somehow. As always, the exact arbitration is up to your GM.

## Dependent (1–3 Points)

You have someone who is completely dependent upon you. Who they are (a child, grandparent, etc.) is up to you, but they are helpless without you. Good examples of dependents include small children and aged grandparents, but a naive spouse could also be included as a dependent.

1 Point = Adult Dependent

2 Points = Elderly Dependent

3 Points = Child Dependent

## Dishonored (5 Points)

You begin at Glory Rank 0 with no points. You are not a ronin, and ronin may not take this Disadvantage, but you have to earn your Glory back. You can't spend any Experience Points you've earned until gaining Rank 1 Glory, and then can only buy up to three Skill Ranks, one Ring Rank, or one Trait Rank (total) per adventure. You may not also purchase Social Disadvantage.

## Driven (3 Points)

Similar to the Higher Purpose Advantage, a character who is Driven has a single goal that he will sacrifice anything to achieve. He will turn his back on his friends and family, and even sacrifice his honor to gain his goal.

## Deathseeker (7 Points; Lion Only)

You are a member of the elite Lion outcasts – the Deathseekers. Your family has been dishonored, your name erased from the records of the Lion Clan. The only way to redeem your family name is to give your life in combat against a superior foe. To achieve this,





you must seek a situation where your death can benefit the clan, and you must die for the cause. Unless your family's name can be cleared, this is your only option. Remember, the Ancestors do not look favorably on those who shirk their duty...

As a Deathseeker, you begin the game with no Glory, nor may you ever gain any. You may not take the Black Sheep Disadvantage. This is a particularly heinous Disadvantage and the character that takes it has given himself a very short life expectancy. Most GMs only allow this Disadvantage in one-shot adventures and short campaigns. The whole point of this character is to die gloriously. Period. It's hard to give such a character long-term goals.

### **Epilepsy (4 Points; 5 for Crane)**

Because the Crane families often interbreed with the Emperor's lineage, some simple genetic problems have evolved. One of these difficulties is epilepsy, a rare disease which can cause rigidity of muscles, shaking symptoms, and even death. Epilepsy is a genetic dysfunction which often arises when the character is under stress. Also, flashing lights (such as a fireworks display) can trigger a seizure. The Rokugani believe that characters with this malady have been touched by the kami, and that they are channeling divine influences. Thus, any character who shows obvious signs of epilepsy (shaking fits, spasms, etc.) might be shunned by common society, but treated as a mystic or holy man by those brave enough to come near.

When a character with epilepsy is in a stressful situation, he must make a Willpower roll at a TN of 15 to resist a seizure. If the character enters a seizure, he may make a Willpower roll each round at a TN of 20 to end the seizure. This Disadvantage is rare outside of the Crane, but not unheard of; non-Cranes should justify this Disadvantage by explaining their hereditary connection to the Imperial lineage.

### **Fascination (1 Point)**

The character has a fascination with something – music, horses, ancient history – and will go to any length to learn new things about it. A character with a fascination for spell-craft might resort to stealing scrolls from other shugenja. Someone who has a fascination with horses would go to any length to purchase (or otherwise obtain) one of the finest steeds of the Unicorn, and someone who was fascinated with the Naga would leap at the chance to travel into the forests of Shinomen, searching for Naga ruins even if the forest were crawling with monsters.

### **Frail Mind (3 Points)**

Whenever you are the subject of a magical spell, Seduction Roll, or any other task that would involve your Willpower, the attacker gets two Free Raises.

### **Forsaken (2 Points; 3 for Lion)**

This is a particularly bitter handicap in which, for reasons of the player and GMs devising, the PC's ancestors do not listen to or aid him in any way. No ancestor will ever, under any circumstances, talk to you. Other Rokugani will assume that someone whose karma is so bad that their ancestors shun them completely must have done something very wrong indeed. This is not quite as bad as a true Dark Secret, but it will certainly reflect poorly on the Forsaken character should the truth ever come to light.

A PC can never be both Forsaken and Haunted.

### **Greedy (1–4 Points)**

You've spent too much time watching the caravan masters and not enough learning their ways. A greedy samurai is concerned with material wealth over glory and honor. For each point of Greedy, your enemies have a Free Raise on all attempts to bribe you. You may not make an Honor roll to resist bribery attempts.

### **Gullible (3 Points)**

You have a soft spot in your heart for sob stories. You believe almost everything anyone tells you if they are convincing enough. The TN to convince you of anything (this usually involves a Sincerity/Awareness roll) is 5.

### **Haunted (1–3 Points)**

You are haunted by the spirit of an ancestor who is not happy with you. He is distracting, insulting and irritating, but he is also your ancestor, which means all you can do is try to do better.

1 Point = The ghost only shows up once per story.

2 Points = The ghost appears up to three times per story.

3 Points = The ghost is with you at least once a day.

A PC can never be both Haunted and Forsaken.

### **Idealistic (2 Points; 3 for Lion)**

Some samurai are extreme in their views of bushido. While all adhere to the code in theory, if not necessarily in practice, Idealistic characters hew to a more stringent code for behavior and ethics. Whenever an Idealistic PC loses Honor, he loses one extra point of Honor. Whenever he gains five or more points at once, he gains one extra point of Honor.

An Idealistic samurai may be quick to pass judgment, act as mentor, or look down at others. Although an irreproachable and idealistic samurai is likely to beam with pious energy, such a combination is difficult to role-play and still fit into a group. When taken in addition to Meddler this Disadvantage is very potent.



## **Insensitive (2 Points)**

The three most important things in your life are your health, your welfare and your wealth. You care little for the plights of others and you don't make any pretense of keeping it a secret. You must spend a Void Point whenever you want to put yourself at risk for another, even for your daimyo or the Emperor himself.

## **Jealousy (1 Point; 2 for Phoenix)**

Because of the highly competitive nature of the Phoenix Clan, this Disadvantage is common among their members, resulting in much infighting and other problems. A PC with the Jealousy Disadvantage must choose another character or dependent NPC, and constantly try to outdo them. Once they feel that they have successfully 'beaten' the character in question, the disadvantaged character will 'latch on' to another, better opponent, and continue with their sense of rivalry. Unlike the Proud or Vanity Disadvantages, the Jealous character does not necessarily feel that they are superior – simply that they must prove themselves so, at any opportunity. With the GM's permission, this Disadvantage can be attached to a skill or ability instead, and the character will be driven to constantly prove their ability with that one maneuver, particularly against anyone else who has shown aptitude with that skill.

## **Lame (3 Points)**

You have a crippled leg. All Agility Rolls are at +10 TN, as well as any roll that requires leg strength.

## **Lechery (1–4 Points)**

Love is more important to you than it should be to a samurai. For each point of Lechery, your enemies get a Free Raise on all Seduction skill rolls they make against you. You may not make an Honor roll to resist seduction attempts. Lechery is not necessarily a dishonorable trait, but a samurai that puts priorities before his lord is sure to bring shame to himself eventually.

## **Lost Love (2 Points)**

You once knew true love, and now it's gone. You tend to have fits of melancholy when you are reminded of your love. Whenever your love is mentioned, all of your TNs are increased by 5 until you spend a Void Point to bring yourself back to the present. Spending the Void Point prevents you from having a relapse into melancholy for at least an hour.

## **Low Pain Threshold (5 Points)**

Whenever you get wounded, add an additional +5 to your Wound Penalty. This does not apply until you have reached the second wound level.

## **Meddler (2 Points)**

You cannot resist getting into other people's business. You always have an opinion and enjoy sharing it with others. You know what's best for everyone and have no qualms about telling them. This can get you in a lot of trouble. The Rokugani are a very private people, and meddling in another's affairs is considered an insult – it implies that they can't take care of their own house. Sticking your nose in other people's business could get it cut off. All of your Courtier and Etiquette rolls have their TN increased by +10.

## **Missing Eye (3 Points)**

You have only one eye, and therefore have no depth perception. It is difficult to spot exactly where someone is standing. All visual Perception rolls of their TN increased by 5, and the TN to attack with a melee weapon is also increased by 5. Firing a bow becomes much more difficult and the TN is increase by 10 up to 50' and by 15 beyond that. A PC missing an eye is subject to the same social stigma as one that is missing a limb.

## **Missing Limb (3 Points)**

You are missing a hand, arm, foot, or leg. All physical tests involving this limb have their TNs increased by 10.

## **Momoku (8 Points)**

Every Rokugani hero has the potential to achieve "greatness". Periodically, there come moments in every hero's life when she must tap into a reserve of "something extra" to perform a miraculous feat or obtain a remarkable victory. Characters with the Momoku Disadvantage do not have this reserve to tap into. They must rely solely on their own skill and daring to solve the problems they face.

Perhaps this is because of some dark dabbling with *maho*, or due to their ancestors' disgrace before or angering of the Fortunes. Whatever the cause, this character cannot use Void Points. As far as he is concerned, Void is a distant, unknowable thing, and he has either turned a blind eye or is without the knack for it.

## **Nemesis (+2 Points)**

The dark counterpart to the Kharmic Tie Advantage, Nemesis attaches you to an enemy from a past life rather than an ally. To purchase this Disadvantage, you must already have purchased the Sworn Enemy Disadvantage. This Disadvantage turns your Sworn Enemy into a Nemesis. Whenever you face your Nemesis, you cannot use Void Points.

## **Obligation (2 or 4 Points)**

You owe someone a favor, and someday they are going to collect. An Obligation is worth 2 Points if it is a small favor and 4 Points if



it is a large favor. When your Obligation is cashed in, you are honor bound to do everything in your power to complete the request – even at the cost of your own life, if the Disadvantage is a 4 point one. If you fail, or refuse, your Honor is permanently reduced by two full ranks (for a 2 point Obligation), and you may additionally receive the Black Sheep Disadvantage (for a 4 point Obligation) for no points.

A small favor would include something that would not threaten your position and/or your family's standing, but would cause you inconvenience. A major favor requires a great deal of effort and risk on your part, and will take significant time and resources to repay.

### **Overconfident (2 Points)**

You never retreat, never choose to fight another day. You are possessed of the youthful illusion of immortality. When faced with superior forces, you must make a Battle/Perception skill check at 30 or you stay and fight. You may not purchase Great Destiny.

### **Permanent Wound (5 Points)**

You begin the game with a wound that has never properly healed. In game terms, this means that you always begin each day at the +3 Wound Level, with your +0 Wound Level completely filled (see "Getting Wounded", in *The Book of Fire*, page 163).

### **Phobia (Variable)**

Every time you encounter your phobia, the TN of all rolls you make go up by +5 for every point you gained from this Disadvantage. Having a phobia must be approved by the Game Master.

Listed below are some possible phobias for your character:

Fear of Heights, Fear of Open Places, Fear of Enclosed Spaces, Fear of Insects, Fear of Blood, Fear of Being Alone, Fear of Dead Things, Fear of Fire, and Fear of Darkness.

### **Small (2 Points)**

You are below average height and weight. Your movement rate is figured as if your Water Ring were one less. Small characters roll one fewer Damage die when using a Tetsubo or Die tsuchi. You may not purchase the "Large" Advantage.

### **Social Disadvantage (3 Points per Rank)**

You have slipped from your position within the Celestial Order. For every 3 points of Social Disadvantage, the character's Glory Rank is reduced by one from his School Rank. All Ronin characters must have at least 3 Points of Social Disadvantage. Characters that fall below Glory Rank zero are hardly considered part of the Celestial Order.

### **Soft-Hearted (2 Points)**

You have a profound respect for human life. Your conscience overcomes you whenever you are about to commit an act of inhumane cruelty. Whenever you try to take a human life, you must make a Simple Willpower Roll against a TN of 20 or you can't follow through with the Action. If you kill someone, all of your TNs are at +10 for the next full day, and you must somehow attempt expiation.

### **Spoiled (3 Points)**

A Spoiled character is used to having the best of everything. Like the Compulsion Disadvantage, a Spoiled character must make a Willpower roll to resist the object of their desire. If they succeed against a TN of 15 (or greater in instances where the object is of extreme value) then the object is merely admired and jealously desired. However, if the character fails their roll, they must find a way to acquire the item regardless of consequences, or at least (GM's discretion) find a similar copy.

Obviously if the item in questions is unique or very rare, like a daimyo's sword, a duplicate will not work. In instances where a unique item or object is sought after the TN should be exceptionally high.

A spoiled character also desires people, and this is exceptionally difficult and abusive when the person is already taken by another – servant, spouse, craftsman, or otherwise. This Disadvantage is akin to the Compulsion Disadvantage, with less focus over what it is the character desires. Such is the way of a spoiled individual.

### **Sworn Enemy (2–5 Points)**

The character has a sworn enemy who desires his death. Having the Sworn Enemy is worth 2 points: up to three additional points can be gained if the sworn enemy is a higher rank (at one point per School Rank higher). See also the Nemesis Disadvantage, for a more virulent type of Sworn Enemy.

### **True Love (3 Points)**

Finding true love in Rokugan can be a painful experience. Any character who takes True Love finds himself torn between his true love and loyalty to his Clan, his sensei, and his family. Whenever he must choose between love and duty (to the Clan and/or family, sensei, daimyo, etc.), he must spend a Void Point to choose duty. Also, if he ever loses his True Love's favor, he may spend no Void Points at all until he can gain the favor back.

### **Unluck (3, 6, or 9 Points)**

Any character with Unluck will find himself the victim of the GM's whim. For every 3 Points the character "invests" in Unluck, the GM may – once per session – command the re-roll of any roll the





character makes. It is possible to take both Luck and Unluck, although not very bright and even harder to justify. A GM may not use Unluck on a roll the character has just re-rolled using the Luck Advantage, and vice versa.

Characters with this Disadvantage are opening themselves up for more than just re-rolls. GMs should feel free to make unlucky samurai the target of many midnight raids.

### Vanity (1 Point)

You are gorgeous and/or brilliant – and you know it. The rest of the world doesn't always notice your clear superiority, though, so you had better make sure they know the quality of person they are dealing with! Players should role-play out this Disadvantage, and GMs should assign appropriate penalties based on how other characters react to the PC.

### Weakness (5 Points)

You can reduce Agility, Awareness, Intelligence, Perception, Reflexes, Stamina, Strength, or Willpower by one point to gain 5 Character Points. You may not reduce a Trait below one, or by more than two levels.

## Example of Character Creation

Richard, a new player of *Legend of the Five Rings*, has decided to create a warrior from the Dragon Clan to play in his friend's new campaign. Rich decided on the Dragon Clan because he liked the clan's mysterious nature and wanted his character's motives to always be slightly unclear to the other players.

Rich decides that a conversation with his friend (the GM) about his character's past is going to be easier than writing out the answers to "The 20 Questions". First, Rich decides that his character is going to be from the Mirumoto family, and be named Kuro. He thought about being from the more enigmatic Tōgashi family, but decided that the versatility of the Mirumoto was more to his liking. Kuro is

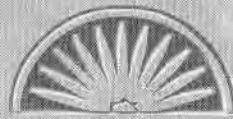
going to become a reliable Dragon Clan samurai – likable and skilled, an able emissary to those outside of the Mirumoto Stronghold.

With the basic idea of a strong, well-rounded samurai, Rich begins walking through the creation process step by step. The first step has already been decided, so he writes Kuro's name, family, clan and profession on his character sheet: "Mirumoto Kuro, Dragon Clan Bushi".

By deciding to be from the Mirumoto family, he gets a +1 to any Trait, and the Mirumoto Bushi School provides another +1 to any Trait. Rich decides to add one each to his Agility and Reflexes – very basic bushi traits that will make him more accurate with his katana and harder to hit. Kuro now has a 3 in both Agility and Reflexes, but still just a 2 in his other Traits. Besides improving a few of his Traits, the Mirumoto School gave Kuro basic training in a few Skills – Defense, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Lore (Shugenja), and Meditation. Finally, before leaving the Mirumoto School, Kuro is taught the signature style of the school: the Daisho (two-sword) technique. Kuro's TN to be hit will always be at least +6 when he has both of his swords because the daisho is so hard to get past with an attack.

Now, Kuro is given 30 Character Points to spend to gain Advantages and Disadvantages, and to improve his Traits and Skills. First, Rich decides to check over the Disadvantages to see if any of them are appropriate for the vision he has for Kuro. He thinks about the various disadvantages for a while and decides that only an Obligation is appropriate. Rich and the GM decide that Kuro's family owes a small favor to the Asako family that Kuro is responsible for repaying. He doesn't know when the Asako family will request his aid, but he knows that fulfilling the request could make for an interesting story on its own. After taking the 2-Point Disadvantage, Rich has 32 points to spend to fill out his character. He begins with Advantages, deciding quickly on Benten's Blessing (Kuro is going to be naturally friendly and easy to talk to) and Great Destiny. Rich wants Kuro to be an important part of the legend of Rokugan, so choosing Great Destiny will tend to weave him into the bigger plots as well as keeping him safe in the worst circumstances. He also takes Ambidextrous; since Dragons are trained to use both their swords, it's easier for Dragon characters to buy this Advantage.

Next, Rich is going to work on his Traits: since Kuro is going to be an emissary, Rich wants him to be charismatic. Benten's Blessing was a very good start, but he decides to add a point of Awareness as well to make Kuro very charming. Since he had already increased his Reflexes, the Awareness of 3 also means that Kuro's Air is now Rank 3. Rich decides against increasing Kuro's Traits by more than one because he wants his character to be well-rounded rather than one-dimensional. Since Air is the only Ring in which Rich has increased both of Kuro's Traits, his other Rings remain at Rank 2.



Kuro's advantages cost him nine points: three for Benten's Blessing, two for Ambidextrous, and four more for Great Destiny. The one trait cost him 9 more, leaving only 12 points left to increase his Skills, but that's okay. The first place he starts is with his Kenjutsu; like any samurai, Kuro does not want to be defeated in battle. Rich improves Kuro's Kenjutsu Skill to Rank 3. Rich also decides that Horsemanship is a good Skill for his character, since he's going to be riding all over Rokugan. Rich buys Horsemanship, and then increases it to Rank 2; and he learns the basics of Commerce (from Rank 0 to Rank 2) – those skills should help Kuro in his travels.

Kuro's Character Points are all spent, so all that remains is to fill out the character sheet. Since he didn't change Kuro's Honor Rank, Rich writes down Rank 2 for Honor and checks off five of the ten boxes. Kuro's Earth Rank is a 2, so he gets four Wounds per level, and Rich puts a 4 in each box under Wounds. Like all starting characters, Kuro has a Glory of 1. Kuro has a standard set of equipment, and notes his primary weapon and armor on his sheet; Kuro uses a Katana (damage 2k2; Kuro will add his Strength of 2 to this, and he'll roll four damage dice, keeping two) and light armor (+5 TN to be hit while he's wearing it). Kuro's basic TN to be hit is his Reflexes x5 (15) plus 5 points for his Light Armor, and 5 more for his Dragon Clan *daisho* technique. This gives him a total TN to be hit of 25 – very impressive. It will be quite difficult for the bad guys to hit Kuro, but that's a good thing since Kuro can't absorb a whole lot of punishment.

The last thing for Rich to do before Kuro begins adventuring is to determine his Insight. Kuro's Ring Ranks add up to 11, so he gets 110 points from his Rings. With 4 points of Skills above Rank 1, his total Insight is a 114.

With his *daisho* under his obi, Kuro sets out to change the future of Rokugan.



## Clan Pages

The following pages – the Clan Pages – contain:

- A step-by-step guide to creating starting characters for a clan.
- A brief overview of the clan's history and philosophy.
- A summary of the leading families in the clan, and the Trait bonuses which samurai from that family receive.
- Two bushi schools, detailing their students' Trait benefit, beginning Honor, basic Skill curriculum, and Techniques.
- One shugenja school, detailing its students' Trait benefit, beginning Honor, basic Skill curriculum, beginning spells, and Elemental Affinity and Deficiency.
- The clan's opinion of the other clans. This is the opinion an average member of the clan may hold; individuals, as always, hold opinions which are solely theirs, and which sometimes differ sharply from the opinions of their brethren.
- The beginning outfits for students of each of the schools.

### A Procedural Note

Several bushi Techniques depend on the bushi using a specific Bujutsu skill, like Kenjutsu. Bushi with such Techniques who have a specialized weapon skill from that class of weapons may substitute the specialized weapon skill when using such a Technique without suffering a penalty.

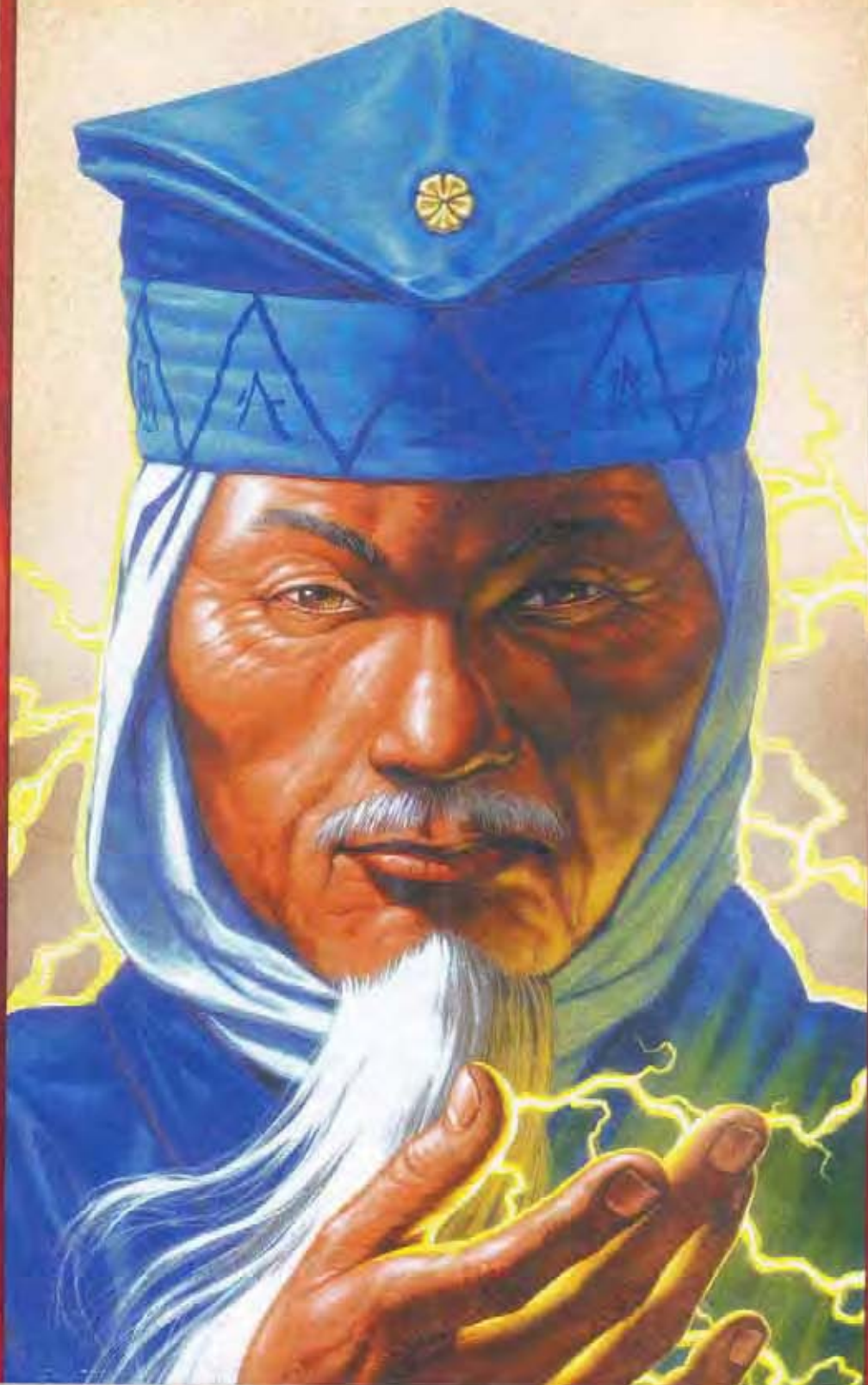
*Example:* Mirumoto Kenru, from the Mirumoto Swordmaster School, has Katana 3 and Kenjutsu 1. When he uses his School's Rank 1 Technique ("The Swordmaster may use his Kenjutsu skill for all Iaijutsu rolls"), he may substitute his Katana skill instead without penalty.

### Free Attacks

Some bushi schools give their students "free attacks." A free attack is simply an attack that does not use up one of the bushi's attacks for that turn. A free attack also does not use up one of the bushi's actions for that turn.



*Legend of the  
Five Rings*



THE  
CHANGING





# Character Creation

## Step One

### Choose a Family

Is your Crab Clan character from the Hida family, the Kuni family, or the Yasuki family?

### Choose a Profession

You are either a bushi or a shugenja. Write down the Skills your School teaches you as well as your Rank 1 Technique (Bushi) or Spells (Shugenja).

## Step Two

### Customize your Character

Your character's Traits and Rings all begin at a 2; his Glory is a 1. You may now spend 30 Character Points to customize your character. You may spend points on Traits, Skills, or Advantages. You may gain additional Character Points by purchasing Disadvantages.

### Character Point Costs

Trait: New Level x 3

Void Ring: New Level x 6

Skill: New Level x 1

**Lowering and Raising Honor:** It costs 3 CPs to raise your character's Honor. Lowering your character's Honor gains you 2 Character Points. Honor can only be raised or lowered one Rank.

### Determining Wounds

Multiply your character's Earth by 2 and fill in each Wound box with that number. These are your character's Wounds.

## Step Three

### Determining Insight

- Find the sum of all of your Rings. Multiply that total by 10.
- Then, find the sum of your Skill points above 1.
- Finally, add the totals together. This is your Starting Insight.
- Whenever your Skills or Rings increase, re-adjust your Insight.

## Step Four

Determine your character's history and background. Create a place for your character within the world of Rokugan, and justify all of his or her Advantages and Disadvantages. Is your character young? Old? Sworn to vengeance? Easy going?

Create a history that is appropriate for your clan and background, and begin to think about your character's short and long-term goals.

Determine any additional equipment your character may have access to, including horses, weapons, and travel papers. Is your character a Magistrate, or is this samurai solely sworn to his or her clan?

When you've answered all the background questions and completed the mechanical creation for your character, you're ready to play!

# The Crab Clan

For a thousand years, the Crab Clan has performed its duty of guarding the Emerald Empire against the horrors of the Shadowlands. Its samurai are among the most highly trained in Rokugan. Their schools teach the ways that a small army can defeat a larger one, for when the Shadowlands assault the fortresses of the Crab, the samurai are outnumbered by at least three to one.

The Crab have in the past been considered the 'true defenders of Rokugan.' These words were once heartily applied to the Crab, but they sound hollow in recent days, and with good reason. Since the beginning of the Clan Wars, the Crab have forsaken their ancient vow, and have allowed the Shadowlands to enter Rokugan unopposed. As well, many Crab armies are full of Shadowlands creatures, and it is little wonder that those who have been the leaders of these armies are now being afflicted with the Shadowlands Taint. The Taint, an evil that rots and corrupts the agents of the Shadowlands, has infected the Crab, sending their warriors to the brink of death—and beyond.

Although very powerful, and with a strong support base for raising troops, the Crab are not known for their political prowess. Their lack of diplomats has provided the other clans with an edge against the Crab, and the Crab suffer when the weapons of diplomacy are used against them. "There are no lies between allies on a battlefield," is an old saying that every Crab samurai knows and understands. They carry this philosophy from the battlefield into the court, and are quick to demonstrate a flash of red-hot temper when they feel they are being lied to. The Crab view the political situation in very simple terms. The strong have more right to rule than the weak. Those who cannot protect the Empire do not deserve to rule it. If a time arose when a Hida could take the throne from the ruling Hantei, then they would do so without question.

## The Families

### Hida

**Benefit: +1 Strength**

The Hida represent all the best and worst aspects of the Crab Clan. They plan the clan's military tactics, lead its armies and coordinate its defense. They are the unquestioned leaders, acting efficiently and decisively whenever a decision is called for. They enter battle with a controlled fury and resist assaults that would topple mountains. Yet they are also impulsive, bullying, and hot-headed. They tend to shout when they speak, and use their large frames to intimidate those around them.

### Kuni

**Benefit: +1 Intelligence**

The Kuni family represent some of the most feared sorcerers in Rokugan. The Kuni are skilled in the arts of the physical form; they understand anatomy and the mixture of the five elements that occurs within every body. Kuni shugenja schools are thus heavily steeped in biology and the construction of living forms.

### Yasuki

**Benefit: +1 Awareness**

The Yasuki family are the Crab Clan's link to the other Clans. The bulk of the Yasuki family are politicians and merchants. The Yasuki focus primarily on their mercantile interests. Their traders are among the best in the Empire, and the family has amassed a network of merchants surpassed only by the Crane. Smuggling is also a favored Yasuki profession. The Yasuki have learned all manner of tricks to evade the Imperial magistrates, and take a perverse pride in sneaking their wares right until their rivals' noses.



# Hida Bushi School

Benefit: +1 Stamina

Beginning Honor: 1, plus 5 boxes

## Skills

Battle, Defense, Jiujutsu, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Lore (Shadowlands), Tetsubo

## Techniques

### Rank 1: The Way of the Crab

The bushi begins by learning how to tap into his own Earth energy. Every time the bushi rolls attacks or damage, he adds his Earth to the total of the roll. Also, because Crab bushi training is always done in full armor, they can ignore the penalties other bushi suffer from wearing Full Armor (+5 to all physical TNs).

### Rank 2: The Mountain Does Not

Move

At this Rank, the bushi learns the secret of true resilience. When he is about to take Wounds from a blow, the bushi may spend a Void Point to make a simple Earth roll with a Target Number of the number of Wounds taken. If he succeeds, he ignores those Wounds.

### Rank 3: Two Pincers, One Mind

At this Rank, the bushi has learned how to make two attacks per round.

### Rank 4: The Berserker

Rage

There are times in Rokugan when the Earth rages. At this Rank, the bushi learns how to tap into that energy. At the beginning of each round, the bushi may choose to sacrifice 3 Wounds to keep an additional die on an attack or damage roll until the end of the round.

### Rank 5: The Mountain Does Not Fall

The bushi may now spend a Void Point at the beginning of a round to take a single action, even if he cannot due to Wound Rank (Down, Out or Dead). The bushi can continue to take a single action per round as long as he has Void Points to spend.

# Crab Bushi



# Crab Shugenja

## Kuni Shugenja School

**Benefit:** +1 Willpower  
**Beginning Honor:** 1, plus 5 boxes

### Skills

Calligraphy, Defense, Kenjutsu, Meditation, Lore (Shadowlands), any one High Skill, any one Weapon Skill

### Beginning spells

Sense, Commune, and Summon, plus 3 Earth, 2 Fire, and 1 Water. Kuni Shugenja have an *Affinity* to Earth, and a *Deficiency* to Air.

## Outfit

Your outfit (beginning equipment) is listed below. The Equipment List is on page 150. List your possessions and money on the back of your character sheet. Choose your Primary Weapon and how many dice you'll roll and keep when using it, your Armor and its protection, and your TN to be hit.

### Bushi Outfit

(All considered to be Average Quality): Katana, Wakizashi, Bow, 20 Arrows of any type(s), Heavy Armor, Helm, Traveling Pack, Kimono, any 2 weapons, 5 Koku

### Shugenja Outfit

(All considered to be Average Quality): Kimono, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, Katana, Wakizashi, Tanto, 3 Koku

### Taskmaster Outfit

(All considered to be Average Quality): Katana, Wakizashi, Whip (0k1 weapon, uses Nofujutsu), Light Armor, Helm, Traveling Pack, Kimono, any two weapons, 6 koku





# Yasuki Taskmaster School

The Taskmasters are the sub-officers and commanders of the rank and file troops. They keep the heir in line, but have also proven quite useful in controlling the Shadowlands beasts that have become the Crab's allies.

Students of the Yasuki Taskmaster School may learn the Whip specialized weapon skill as a Bugei Skill instead of a Low Skill.

**Benefit:** +1 Willpower

**Beginning Honor:** 1, plus zero boxes

## Skills

Athletics, Defense, Intimidation, Jujutsu, Kenjutsu, Lore (Shadowlands), any Bugei Skill

## Techniques

### Rank 1: Fear is a Gift

The Taskmaster has learned the art of cowering those weaker than himself. He may roll an extra die on all attack and Intimidation rolls against those with less Willpower than himself.

### Rank 2: Taking the Gift

As his action for the round, the Taskmaster may activate Taking the Gift. Once on, it stays activated until the Taskmaster takes another action. If an opponent hits the Taskmaster while Taking the Gift is active, the Taskmaster may immediately attack that opponent, once; this attack automatically hits. The Taskmaster's damage roll is increased, if necessary, to be at least the amount of damage done by the attacker. The Taskmaster may not counterattack if he is at the Down, Out, or Dead Wound Level.

### Rank 3: Giving the Gift

The character is well on his way to mastering the arts of intimidation. The Taskmaster may taunt or insult any one opponent who can understand him (even while the Taskmaster is attacking or doing something else), making a contested Intimidation/Willpower roll with that target. If he succeeds, he may add the amount by which he succeeded to one attack roll against that opponent in the following round.

### Rank 4: Fear's Bane

The Taskmaster's rage has become so terrifying and overwhelming that he may now make two attacks per round.

### Rank 5: The Test of Might

The Taskmaster has mastered the arts of fear and intimidation to the point that they are a part of his being. Opponents attacking the Taskmaster subtract twice his Intimidation skill from all attack and damage totals against him.

# Crab Views of the Other Clans



"They they have hidden behind the Emperor's robes for a thousand years. Now their protector lies weak and dying. So too will it be with them."



"The Dragon remain hidden in silence even as the winds of war blow across the Empire. There comes a time when contemplation must give way to action... and when neutrality becomes cowardice."



"The Lion still command great strength and their loyalty to the Emperor will not bend. If we are to save Rokugan from itself, it must be over the bodies of these, our most worthy adversaries."



"Forest snakes. When they have earned their scars against a true enemy, then we will consider them something more than beasts. Not before."



"The Phoenix know - as we do - that only darkness can defeat darkness. But until they drop their mistrust of us and learn to see the wisdom in our actions, we can only work at cross-purposes."



"Traitors and cowards though they were, the Scorpion at least realized how weak the Hantei had become. They simply lacked the strength to overthrow them. When the last Scorpion lies dying beneath our feet, they will know that ambition cannot equal strength."



"Still brave allies, still naive in the ways of the world. They watch where others cannot and defend those lost in the conflict. The Empire will be stronger for it."



"You say that the ronin have something to prove? Come to the Wall, and you will have opportunity to prove yourself, or die like the honorless dogs you are."

# Crab



# Character Creation

# The Crane Clan

## Step One

### Choose a Family

Is your Crane Clan character from the Doji family, the Kakita family, or the Asahina family?

### Choose a Profession

You are either a bushi or a shugenja. Write down the Skills your School teaches you as well as your Rank 1 Technique (Bushi) or Spells (Shugenja).

## Step Two

### Customize your Character

Your character's Traits and Rings all begin at a 2; his Glory is a 1. You may now spend 30 Character Points to customize your character. You may spend points on Traits, Skills, or Advantages. You may gain additional Character Points by purchasing Disadvantages.

### Character Point Costs

Trait: New Level x 3

Void Ring: New Level x 6

Skill: New Level x 1

**Lowering and Raising Honor:** It costs 3 CPs to raise your character's Honor. Lowering your character's Honor gains you 2 Character Points. Honor can only be raised or lowered one Rank.

### Determining Wounds

Multiply your character's Earth by 2 and fill in each Wound box with that number. These are your character's Wounds.

## Step Three

### Determining Insight

- Find the sum of all of your Rings. Multiply that total by 10.
- Then, find the sum of your Skill points above 1.
- Finally, add the totals together. This is your Starting Insight.
- Whenever your Skills or Rings increase, re-adjust your Insight.

## Step Four

Determine your character's history and background. Create a place for your character within the world of Rokugan, and justify all of his or her Advantages and Disadvantages. Is your character young? Old? Sworn to vengeance? Easy going?

Create a history that is appropriate for your clan and background, and begin to think about your character's short and long-term goals.

Determine any additional equipment your character may have access to, including horses, weapons, and travel papers. Is your character a Magistrate, or is this samurai solely sworn to his or her clan?

When you've answered all the background questions and completed the mechanical creation for your character, you're ready to play!

For centuries, the Crane have used political maneuvering to gain its position as advisors to the Emperor. When the First Hantei needed a bride, there was the Crane Clan with a host of beautiful girls for him to consider. Every generation of Hantei has been married to a woman from the Crane Clan. But Hantei is not the only one. Generations of Cranes have made their way into the dynasties of other Clans, thus providing the Crane Clan with sympathy in such and every clan. Because the mother of every Emperor has been a Crane, this has provided the clan with many advantages. They are able to call upon favors on nearly every occasion from nearly every clan.

The Crane Clan also attracted the finest swordsmen in the Empire to its dojo to train the Crane samurai in the art of kenjutsu, and now the Kakita School of Kenjutsu is the pre-eminent teaching school in Rokugan. Attending the school is considered one of the greatest honors a samurai can receive. Of course, attendance is by invitation only, which means many samurai must pay highly to have their sons and daughters receive the finest kenjutsu training in the land.

The families of the Crane clan have existed since the foundation of the Empire, and stood at the Emperor's hand since the first city was built, most having been founded in the time of the original Hantei. Doji and her husband had five children: two went with Shinsei into the Shadowlands, and the remaining three founded the first three houses of the Crane. The fourth house, Asahina, joined the Crane a short time later, as a shugenja of the Phoenix married into the Doji family and began his own.

## The Families

### Doji

Benefit: +1 Awareness

The most well-known family of the Crane is the Doji. Their courtiers are seen in the Imperial Court, and a Doji has always been the mother of the Emperor. Their contributions throughout the course of history have shaped civilization in Rokugan, binding the essential ceremonies and protocol that allows the delicate political system to be successful.

### Kakita

Benefit: +1 Agility

The history of the Kakita family begins with its honorable progenitor, Kakita. Kakita was the first true iaijutsu duelist, and his style became the famed Kakita iaijutsu school many years later. He is remembered as a samurai devoted both to his clan and his Emperor, and as one of the most honorable men who ever lived. Kakita passed on his knowledge of iaijutsu to all who had the discipline and ability to learn. Iaijutsu demands patience, practice and dedication, and the Kakita Dueling Academy is the finest school of swordsmanship in the Empire.

### Asahina

Benefit: +1 Perception

The shugenja of House Asahina are peaceful and introspective. The Asahina love to create things. Magic is in their Isawa heritage, but the influence of the Kakita bloodline may have something to do with their love of beautiful things. Tinkerers, inventors, shapers of the unusual and unique, the Asahina delight in the magic of formation, creation and art. *Tsangusuri*, the creation of talismans and charms, is a focus of the Asahina school. These talismans range from the amusing to the powerful, and come in a wide variety of forms.



# Kakita Bushi School

Benefit: +1 Reflexes

Beginning Honor: 3, plus 5 boxes

## Skills

Etiquette, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Sincerity, any High Skill, any High or Bugei Skill

## Techniques

### Rank 1: Way of the Crane

The Kakita School emphasizes the more traditional and ritualistic fighting styles. Bushi from the Kakita School may add twice their Iaijutsu Skill to any Initiative roll and may also use Iaijutsu in the place of their Kenjutsu Skill when attacking with a katana.

### Rank 2: The Sudden Strike

The bushi now learns the famous "sudden strike" of the Crane Clan. When engaged in an Iaijutsu duel, the samurai can Raise the TN by any value, not just multiples of 5. He may still only Raise a number of times equal to his Void.

### Rank 3: Strike From The Void

At this Rank, Crane bushi learn how to spend more than one Void Point when engaged in an Iaijutsu duel.

### Rank 4: One Strike, Two Cuts

The bushi learns how to move so quickly that he can make two attacks per round.

### Rank 5: Strike With No Thought

At the very beginning of combat, before Initiative is even rolled, the bushi makes a Contested Void Roll with his opponent. If he succeeds, he gains one attack before combat begins. This Technique may not be used to strike prematurely in an Iaijutsu duel.

# Crane Bushi





# Crane Shugenja

## Asahina Shugenja School

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

**Beginning Honor:** 3, plus 5 boxes

### Skills

Etiquette, Meditation, Shintao, Calligraphy,  
any three High Skills

### Beginning spells

Sense, Commune, and  
Summon, plus 3 Air, 2 Water,  
and 1 Fire. Asahina Shugenja  
have an *Affinity* to Air, and a  
*Deficiency* to Earth.

### Outfit

Your outfit (beginning equipment) is listed below. The Equipment List is on page 150. List your possessions and money on the back of your character sheet. Choose your Primary Weapon and how many dice you'll roll and keep when using it, your Armor and its protection, and your TN to be hit.

#### BUSHI OUTFIT

(All considered to be Fine Quality):  
Katana, Wakizashi, Bow, 20 Arrows of any  
type(s), Light or Heavy Armor, Helm,  
Traveling Pack, Steed, Kimono, any 3 weapons, 10  
Koku

#### SHUGENJA OUTFIT

(All considered to be Fine Quality): Kimono,  
Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, Tanto, 10  
Koku, Steed

#### MAGISTRATE OUTFIT

(All considered to be Fine  
Quality): Katana, Wakizashi,  
Bow, 20 Arrows of any type,  
Light Armor, Jitte, Helm,  
Traveling Pack, Steed, Kimono,  
Badge of Office, any weapon, 10  
Koku





# Doji Magistrate School

The Crane have always had a close relationship with the Emerald Championship, often holding the office itself. Even when a Crane is not the Emerald Champion, many Cranes carry on the search for justice.

**Benefit:** +1 Intelligence

**Beginning Honor:** 2, plus five boxes

## Skills

Etiquette, Heraldry, Iaijutsu, Investigation, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Law

## Techniques

### Rank 1: Eternal Vigilance

The Magistrate's first lesson is that his eyes must always be open, ever prepared for ambush from any quarter. His TN to be hit is increased by his Perception

### Rank 2: The Eyes of Doji

The Magistrate has infused the duties of his position into the core of his being. Spending a Void Point or making a Raise on any Law or Investigation roll has double the normal effect. (Add two dice instead of one, or gain the effect of two Raises for each Raise made.)

### Rank 3: Strike of the Just

When in combat against a Rokugani who is in severe violation of the Emperor's law (any crime punishable by death), the Magistrate rolls additional dice equal to his Honor for all attack rolls against that opponent.

### Rank 4: Judgment Swift as the Blade

The Magistrate is so dedicated in his pursuit of justice that he may now make two attacks per round.

### Rank 5: Eternal Justice

The Magistrate no longer needs to roll on any Law or Investigation tests, unless he wishes to make a Raise. If the Magistrate Raises on any Law or Investigation tests and fails, but still rolls greater than the original TN, the roll succeeds without the benefit of his Raises.

# Crane Views of the Other Clans



"Now at last, the Crab's true colors show. Arrogance, brutality and crude ambition married to the unholy creatures which they once claimed to protect us from. Look upon their armies and ask yourself: were they ever true Rokugani?"



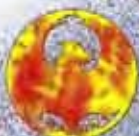
"With the Crab and the Lion on the march, we need allies... and find the Dragon. Though mysterious and enigmatic, they alone listen to our pleas and promise aid. I pray to the Fortunes that it arrives in time."



"How can they speak of loyalty to the Emperor? How can they claim to defend the Hantei? Their continued hostility in the face of so many threats may destroy us all... and for what? Arrogant-pride and the right to rule a graveyard."



"They are uncivilized beasts, barely capable of speech. If they are to be trusted, then they must be treated like any other beast - they must be placed beneath whip and yoke, and taught to serve."



"Though still wise and courteous, the Phoenix can no longer be trusted. Madness burns in their eyes, despair gnaws at their hearts. Perhaps they can delay the Lion long enough for us to gather our strength. Otherwise they are lost."



"The Scorpion are gone. Their clan lies in ruins, and their lady has become a harmless toy of the Hantei. We do not concern ourselves with the honorless dead."



"Our careful courting of the barbarian horsemen has borne potent fruit. Strong and proud in the face of the storm, the Unicorn have the power to save the Empire. They owe us much and the time has come to collect our debts."



"What do I feel about ronin? Nothing. I do not waste time judging animals."



# Character Creation

# The Dragon Clan

## Step One

### Choose a Family

Is your Dragon Clan character from the Togashi family, the Mirumoto family, or the Agasha family?

### Choose a Profession

You are either a bushi or a shugenja. Write down the Skills your School teaches you as well as your Rank 1 Technique (Bushi) or Spells (Shugenja).

## Step Two

### Customize your Character

Your character's Traits and Rings all begin at a 2; his Glory is a 1. You may now spend 30 Character Points to customize your character. You may spend points on Traits, Skills, or Advantages. You may gain additional Character Points by purchasing Disadvantages.

### Character Point Costs

Trait: New Level x 3

Void Ring: New Level x 6

Skill: New Level x 1

**Lowering and Raising Honor:** It costs 3 CPs to raise your character's Honor. Lowering your character's Honor gains you 2 Character Points. Honor can only be raised or lowered one Rank.

### Determining Wounds

Multiply your character's Earth by 2 and fill in each Wound box with that number. These are your character's Wounds.

## Step Three

### Determining Insight

- Find the sum of all of your Rings. Multiply that total by 10.
- Then, find the sum of your Skill points above 1.
- Finally, add the totals together. This is your Starting Insight.
- Whenever your Skills or Rings increase, re-adjust your insight.

## Step Four

Determine your character's history and background. Create a place for your character within the world of Rokugan, and justify all of his or her Advantages and Disadvantages. Is your character young? Old? Sworn to vengeance? Easy going?

Create a history that is appropriate for your clan and background, and begin to think about your character's short and long-term goals.

Determine any additional equipment your character may have access to, including horses, weapons, and travel papers. Is your character a Magistrate, or is this samurai solely sworn to his or her clan?

When you've answered all the background questions and completed the mechanical creation for your character, you're ready to play!

There is so little that can be said with certainty about the Dragon Clan. They were founded a thousand years ago, when the kami known as Togashi retired to the mountains and built a monastery. There, he remained for many years. It wasn't until two samurai - Mirumoto and Agasha - joined him in his temple that the Dragon Clan was actually born. Since then, the remainder of what is known is only speculation.

There are rumored to be many secret Orders in the clan. One Order, the *ise zumi*, has gained great recognition in Rokugan. Their practice of tattooing their entire bodies with elaborate designs, symbols and pictures is better known than understood. Their shugenja are equally mysterious. Clan Dragon is a blend of both the physical and the spiritual.

The Dragon Clan was also the first clan to teach the "two sword" technique. The Dragon samurai are famous for their katana/wakizashi style, and while Kakita School students may mock it, they do so out of concern for the honor of their school rather than out of genuine disrespect for the style. Of all the Clans, the Dragon samurai are regarded as the most devout followers of the religion of Rokugan.

The Dragon Clan remains in their cold, forbidding mountains, keeping their secrets to themselves. They rarely travel outside their own lands, and when one is seen, it is treated by the peasantry as a sign of changing times and omens. Their mystical nature is well known through the Empire, as is their command of the mysteries of the sword.

## The Families

### Togashi

**Benefit: +1 Agility.**

The family consists of Togashi Yokun's students - those who have risked their lives to find him and who have proven themselves to be worthy of his teachings. These powerful individuals shave their heads and join a monastic order called the *ise zumi*. In doing so, they leave behind their former lives, family, and affiliations. They are adopted into the Togashi family, accepting the name and teachings of Yokun himself.

### Mirumoto

**Benefit: +1 to any Trait.**

The Mirumoto family are often known for their adaptability to any situation. The history of the Mirumoto family begins with Togashi yojimbo (bodyguard). While he was also a cunning tactician, he is remembered for being a brilliant duelist. His unique style of swordsmanship utilized both the wakizashi and katana. His style, 'Niten,' is studied by all samurai schools, if only to gain insight into the philosophy of Rokugan's most enigmatic clan.

### Agasha

**Benefit: +1 Awareness.**

It is said the Agasha understand very little about Shintao, but their skills at spellcasting are impeccable, especially with regard to fire. The "magic" of the Agasha shugenja is of a more subtle nature than other schools of magic. The Agasha shugenja's most impressive effects include great plumes of brightly colored smoke, sudden explosions and bursts of rainbow fire, and the production of fumes and noxious vapors that can instantly incapacitate or even kill a foe.



# Mirumoto Bushi School

**Benefit:** +1 any Trait  
**Beginning Honor:** 2, plus 5 boxes

## Skills

Defense, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Meditation, Shugenja Lore

## Techniques

### Rank 1: The Daisho Technique

The Mirumoto School teaches bushi a radical technique that uses both the katana and wakizashi. Because opponents have to deal with two weapons instead of one, the TN to hit an initiate of this school is increased by 5 plus his School Rank any time he's using both weapons; this includes during a Full Attack.

### Rank 2: Strong and Swift

At this Rank, the bushi has become so attuned to his style that he may make two attacks per round.

### Rank 3: The Blood of My Brothers

Unlike the bushi from other Clans, Dragon bushi are not segregated away from their shugenja kin. Because of this, Dragon bushi may spend a Void Point to aid (or hinder) spells that are targeting them, either giving the caster a Free Raise or raising the TN by 5.

### Rank 4: The Unrighteous Will Fall

The bushi has mastered the meditative "no-mind" techniques taught to him by the Mirumoto School. If this bushi's damage roll with his katana kills his opponent, that strike does not count as one of his attacks this round and he may attack again immediately. This technique only permits the bushi to attack those opponents that were within range at the beginning of the round.

### Rank 5: The Heart of the Dragon

A true master of the blade, the bushi now may make three attacks per round.

# Dragon Bushi





# Dragon Shugenja

## Agasha Shugenja School

**Benefit:** +1 any Trait  
**Beginning Honor:** 2, plus 5 boxes

### Skills

Shintao, History, Calligraphy, Meditation, plus any High or Bugei Skill

Agasha shugenja get a free raise for all Fire spells

### Beginning spells

Sense, Commune, and Summon, plus 3 Fire, 2 Earth, and 1 Air. Agasha Shugenja have an *Affinity* to Fire, and a *Deficiency* to Water.

## Outfit

Your outfit (beginning equipment) is listed below. The Equipment List is on page 150. List your possessions and money on the back of your character sheet. Choose your Primary Weapon and how many dice you'll roll and keep when using it, your Armor and its protection, and your TN to be hit.

### BUSHI OUTFIT

(All considered to be Average Quality): Katana, Wakizashi, Bow, 20 Arrows of any type(s), Light Armor, Traveling Pack, any 1 weapon, Kimono, 2 Koku

### SHUGENJA OUTFIT

(All considered to be Average Quality): Kimono, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, Wakizashi, Tanto, 3 Koku

### SWORDMASTER OUTFIT

(All considered to be Average Quality, Katana is Fine Quality): Katana, Wakizashi, Bow, 20 Arrows of any type, Light Armor, Traveling Pack, any 1 weapon, Kimono, 2 Koku





# Mirumoto Swordmaster School

The Dragon equivalent of the Kakita Iaijutsu duelists, these Mirumoto are the masters of Niten, dueling counterparts to their more combat-ready bushi brethren.

**Benefit:** +1 Agility

**Beginning Honor:** 3, plus zero boxes

## Skills

Defense, Katana, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Meditation, Weaponsmith, any High or Bugei Skill

## Techniques

### Rank 1: Two Heavens

"All paths are one." - Mirumoto's *Niten*

The Swordmaster may use his Kenjutsu skill for all Iaijutsu rolls. In addition, TN to be Hit is increased by his Fire Rank.

### Rank 2: Half Beat Strike

"Victory passes between the space of a heartbeat."

- Mirumoto's *Niten*

When in a duel, the Swordmaster may spend a Void Point each time he Focuses to reduce the maximum number of times his opponent may Focus by 1.

### Rank 3: Let Him Go By

"When the enemy charges with strength and urgency, let him go by." - Mirumoto's *Niten*

Immediately after an opponent attacks him and misses, the Swordmaster may spend a Void Point to gain an immediate free attack against that opponent. This action may be performed on Full Defense.

### Rank 4: The River Sword

"Strike like the flowing river, without beginning or end." - Mirumoto's *Niten*

The Swordmaster may make two attacks per round.

### Rank 5: Truth is in the Killing

"The greatest example of a Swordmaster's skill is the final one." - Mirumoto's *Niten*

The Swordmaster may spend a Void Point at the beginning of a combat round or duel to prevent all enemies within ten feet for spending Void for any reason during that round or duel. The Swordmaster may spend Void normally. (In the case of two dueling Swordmasters, the use is simultaneous.)

# Dragon Views of the Other Clans



"One cannot truly know light until one has embraced the darkness."



"Pretty words and empty promises will not hold a crumbling dam."



"Untamed strength can be deadly - to the user as well as his foe. We must direct the wild stream to where it will do the most good."



"Our emissary tells us much of these ancient people, and we are eager to learn their ways. Despite their differences, we may find that they are allies to be respected."



"They see the truth and are prepared to make the necessary sacrifices. Death follows life, and that which dies will be born again."



"The pincers are gone, but the tail still remains - lurking in the shadows, thirsting for revenge. The darkest enemy is the one you cannot see."



"The hummingbird is quick, but it does not know where to turn. If it waits too long, the stormclouds will consume it."



"Although a fallen man does not mean a fallen heart, more often than not these ronin are no more than brigands. When I see a dead ronin, only then will I will mourn them."



# Character Creation

# The Lion Clan

## Step One

### Choose a Family

Is your Lion Clan character from the Matsu family, the Kitsu family, or the Ikoma family?

### Choose a Profession

You are either a bushi or a shugenja. Write down the Skills your School teaches you as well as your Rank 1 Technique (Bushi) or Spells (Shugenja).

## Step Two

### Customize your Character

Your character's Traits and Rings all begin at a 2; his Glory is a 1. You may now spend 30 Character Points to customize your character. You may spend points on Traits, Skills, or Advantages. You may gain additional Character Points by purchasing Disadvantages.

### Character Point Costs

Trait: New Level x 3

Void Ring: New Level x 6

Skill: New Level x 1

**Lowering and Raising Honor:** It costs 3 CPs to raise your character's Honor. Lowering your character's Honor gains you 2 Character Points. Honor can only be raised or lowered one Rank.

### Determining Wounds

Multiply your character's Earth by 2 and fill in each Wound box with that number. These are your character's Wounds.

## Step Three

### Determining Insight

- Find the sum of all of your Rings. Multiply that total by 10.
- Then, find the sum of your Skill points above 1.
- Finally, add the totals together. This is your Starting Insight.
- Whenever your Skills or Rings increase, re-adjust your Insight.

## Step Four

Determine your character's history and background. Create a place for your character within the world of Rokugan, and justify all of his or her Advantages and Disadvantages. Is your character young? Old? Sworn to vengeance? Easy going?

Create a history that is appropriate for your clan and background, and begin to think about your character's short and long-term goals.

Determine any additional equipment your character may have access to, including horses, weapons, and travel papers. Is your character a Magistrate, or is this samurai solely sworn to his or her clan?

When you've answered all the background questions and completed the mechanical creation for your character, you're ready to play!

The Lion Clan was founded by Akodo, child of the Moon and Sun. When the Kami fell, the number of men and women in Rokugan was small, and the seven Kami searched among them for "the finest." Shiba chose the wisest, Hida the strongest, and so on, but Akodo stood alone. "I do not look for men for to follow me," he said. "I look for men worthy to stand by my side."

The Lion Clan are the traditional defenders of the Emerald Throne. A Lion samurai is quick to judge and quick to take insult, and he never takes insult lightly. For a thousand years, the Lion Clan has held the largest standing army in Rokugan, giving them battle prowess beyond to any other clan in the Empire.

From the time of the original Hantei, the Lion have stood at the side of the Emerald Throne, leading the Emperor's armies and serving as his advisors in matters of honor and warfare. They are the right hand of the Emperor: to defy them is to invite the wrath of the Heavens. The Lion are courageous, and honorable, and deeply respect the ways and traditions of the past. To them, honor is everything—mother, father and guide, and a Lion samurai would give their life willingly for the Emperor and the Empire.

The Lion tragically lost an entire family recently, and the repercussions are still being felt. The Akodo family was dishonored during the Scorpion Clan Coup, and all who bore the name were forced to renounce it, become ronin, or commit seppuku. (See page 146 for more information about the Akodo.) The less-reflective Matsu family took over leadership of the clan, and has been much more aggressive in diplomacy and in border skirmishes with the rival Cranes.

## The Families

### Matsu

**Benefit:** +1 Strength

The other families of the Lion Clan do not dispute the Matsu's natural leadership in battle. Matsu are hot-tempered, emotional, strong-willed and intractable, but they are also courageous, dedicated, loyal and fierce. The Matsu believe that the purity of a samurai's spirit is as powerful a weapon as the sharpness of his blade. The Matsu are highly reverent of their ancestors, believing that they will guide the samurai's actions if he is worthy, diligent, and filled with noble spirit.

### Kitsu

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

The Kitsu is one of the most unusual shugenja families in Rokugan, and the only school that utterly forbids entrance to non-Lion Clan members. They are spiritualists, concerned with the ancestors and the lands beyond death. The Kitsu are the keepers of their memories and the protectors of their spirits. Unlike other shugenja, the Kitsu actually travel to the lands of the dead, seeking wisdom and knowledge from the spirits of the past. It is their birthright to stand between worlds; their duty to revere the souls of the fallen.

### Ikoma

**Benefit:** +1 Intelligence

To the Empire, the Ikoma are the historians, responsible for keeping the records of each battle fought on Imperial soil. The Ikoma are also fierce warriors, bold tacticians and deadly foes. Because of their interest in the accurate recording of history, they often see difficulties with a judicious eye, learning from each incident rather than treating it as a loss. This allows a skilled Ikoma general to provide a depth of understanding that other Lion samurai do not have. The ability to remain impartial, to maintain neutrality even in the face of violent emotions, has always been the Ikoma's most valued trait.



# Lion Bushi School

This once was known as the Akodo Bushi School; when the Akodo family was declared anathema, many of the Akodo sensei simply changed their family name to Matsu or Ikoma and stayed with the Clan, continuing to teach the Techniques of this ancient school.

**Benefit:** +1 Agility

**Beginning Honor:** 3, plus 5 boxes

## Skills

Bard, Battle, Defense, History, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, any one High Skill

## Techniques

### Rank 1: The Way of the Lion

The Lion School is one of precision. Bushi of this School may ignore their opponent's armor or gain a Free Raise while attacking (to gain an additional die of damage, strike a specific location, etc.).

### Rank 2: The Strength of Purity

At this Rank, the Lion is taught how a righteous heart guides a righteous strike. When rolling for attack and for damage, the Lion adds his Honor Rank to the total of the roll.

### Rank 3: With the Strength of My Ancestors

Lion bushi truly believe that their ancestors guide their every action. At this Rank, the bushi may attack twice per round, once for himself and once for the ancestor guiding his hand.

### Rank 4: The Hand of Destiny

By this time, the Lion bushi understands that there is no such thing as luck, and that all actions are pre-ordained. At Rank 4, the bushi no longer needs to raise his TN for any called shot. The bushi must still raise if he wishes to do additional damage.

### Rank 5: The Final Lesson

The bushi has learned the final secret of the Lion technique: there are no failures. If the bushi Raises his TN, misses the Raise but rolls greater than the original TN, the roll succeeds, although he does not get the benefits of his Raises. This advantage can be used in both physical and mental contests.

# Lion Bushi





# Lion Shugenja

## Kitsu Shugenja School

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

**Beginning Honor:** 3, plus 5 boxes

### Skills

Etiquette, Heraldry, History, Calligraphy, Meditation, any one High Skill, any one Bugei Skill

### Beginning spells

Sense, Commune, and Summon, plus 3 Water, 2 Earth, and 1 Air. Kitsu Shugenja have an *Affinity* to Water, and a *Deficiency* to Fire.

## Outfit

Your outfit (beginning equipment) is listed below. The Equipment List is on page 150. List your possessions and money on the back of your character sheet. Choose your Primary Weapon and how many dice you'll roll and keep when using it, your Armor and its protection, and your TN to be hit.

### BUSHI OUTFIT

(All Average Quality; Player chooses one item to be of Fine Quality): Katana, Wakizashi, Bow, 20 Arrows of any type(s), Light Armor, Helm, Traveling Pack, Kimono, any 2 weapons, 5 Koku

### SHUGENJA OUTFIT

(All considered to be Average Quality): Kimono, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, Wakizashi, Tanto, 3 Koku

### TACTICIAN OUTFIT

(All considered to be Average Quality; Player chooses one item to be Fine Quality): Katana, Wakizashi, Bow, 20 Arrows of any type, Tessen, Light Armor, Helm, Traveling Pack, Kimono, Sashimono, 5 Koku





# Ikoma Tactical School

With the loss of the Akodo, many peaceful Ikoma have begun to step forward to apply what they have learned from their lost cousins in their own manner.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

**Beginning Honor:** 3, plus five boxes

## Skills

Battle, Bushido, Defense, History, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, any High or Bugei Skill

## Techniques

### Rank 1: Knowledge Lies in Knowing

The Tactician has learned the first lesson of the great general Sun Tao, to observe Heaven without stepping outside. He may add his Honor to all Battle Table and Initiative rolls.

### Rank 2: Triumph Before The Battle

The Tactician learns from his foes even in the midst of chaos. Once per attack roll or opposed Battle roll, the Tactician may spend a Void Point to reroll all dice that roll equal to or lower than his Battle.

### Rank 3: To Prepare for Death, Die

Like Sun Tao, the Tactician knows that thought should not interfere with strategy in the heat of conflict. He may now make two attacks per round.

### Rank 4: On Deadly Ground, Fight!

The Tactician has learned to goad his opponents, to lead them into making critical errors at the worst times. When making an opposed Battle Roll, the enemy general must drop all dice that roll equal to or less than the Tactician's Water. Similarly, all opponents making an attack roll against the Tactician must drop all dice that roll equal to or less than his Water.

### Rank 5: Master's Tactics

The final lesson of Sun Tao: when you can go no further, change. The Tactician may spend a Void Point before the opponent's attack roll to make an opposed Battle/Perception roll against any attack - including spells - directed against him. If the Tactician rolls higher than the attack roll, he has foreseen the attack and it misses completely. If commanding troops in a Battle, the Tactician may shift his Battle Table rolls by one column (from Losing to Even, from Even to Winning).

# Lion Views of the Other Clans



"Useful tools for the time being. They fight the Crane and that is good. But Kisada has his eye on bigger prey - and when he turns towards the Emperor, we shall be ready for him."



"For too long, we have borne their insults, and watched them count their money. Now they shall learn the terrible price for their folly... and all of their poisonous words cannot save them."



"They remain in their temples, locked in contemplation as they always have. Their neutrality reveals wisdom, for surely they know that we would destroy them if they stood against us. Let them stay in the mountains - they can count the dead when we have won."



"They die. What more needs to be said of them?"



"They are soft and weak, like the Crane. They still will not fight, even though it means their doom. We have no time for such cowards - they will be washed away like their feathered brethren."



"Watch Lady Kachiko, for she has not abandoned her cause. She is the Emperor's wife and we shall obey her orders... until her inevitable treachery reveals itself. Then she shall die, like the rest of her misbegotten clan."



"We have long said that they need instruction in the ways of the world. They should watch closely, for the lessons we teach will not be forgotten."



"You can depend upon ronin. If you pay him, you can depend on him to die in battle. If you turn your back, you can depend on his tanto in your kidneys. If only all samurai were so dependable."



# Character Creation

## The Naga

### Step One

#### Choose a Bloodline

Is your Naga character from the Asp bloodline, the Constrictor bloodline, or the Greensnake bloodline?

#### Choose a Profession

You are a bushi. Because Naga magic is radically different from the shugenja of Rokugan. If you wish to play a true Naga *jakla*, see *Way of the Naga* for more information. Write down the Skills your School teaches you as well as your Rank 1 Technique.

### Step Two

#### Customize your Character

Your character's Traits and Rings all begin at a 2; his Glory and Honor are both 0. You may now spend 30 Character Points to customize your character. You may spend points on Traits, Skills, or Advantages. You may gain additional Character Points by purchasing Disadvantages. Naga characters have "Akasha" instead of Void; it functions the same way.

#### Character Point Costs

Trait: New Level x 3

Akasha: New Level x 5

Skill: New Level x 1

**Lowering and Raising Honor:** Naga do not subscribe to the code of bushido, and have no concept of human "honor." Naga Honor is always zero, and they can neither gain nor lose honor.

#### Determining Wounds

Multiply your character's Earth by 2 and fill in each Wound box with that number. These are your character's Wounds.

### Step Three

#### Determining Insight

- Find the sum of all of your Rings. Multiply that total by 10.
- Then, find the sum of your Skill points above 1.
- Finally, add the totals together. This is your Starting Insight.
- Whenever your Skills or Rings increase, re-adjust your Insight.

### Step Four

Determine your character's history and background. Create a place for your character within the world of Rokugan, and justify all of his or her Advantages and Disadvantages. Is your character young? Old? Sworn to vengeance? Easy going?

Create a history that is appropriate for your bloodline and background, and begin to think about your character's short and long-term goals.

When you've answered all the background questions and completed the mechanical creation for your character, you're ready to play!

Deep in the heart of the Shinomen forest, long before the time of humans and the Children of the Sun, the race of Naga thrived. Their cities were built within the sheltering boughs of the forests, and the Naga raised great magics in order to protect their cities and villages.

Naga are not human. Most Naga have a centauroid appearance, a human torso, head and arms on a long, serpentine tail. Some Naga look more serpentine, having mutated from the usual form. Some Naga have scaled torsos and slitted eyes, strange, snake-like faces, scaled hoods at the back of their necks and shoulders, and other mutations. All Naga revere the *Akasha*, the greater "mind" of the Naga. It is a sort of "conscious-subconscious" that unifies their actions, the combined wisdom and knowledge of all the souls that have ever been Naga, poured back into the pool of the *Akasha* at the end of each life.

For over seven hundred years, the Naga ruled a blissful land; an empty land. The stars hung in their ordered sky, and twin globes – the Eyes of the *Akasha* – revolved in their paths above. The Naga are ancient foes to the Darkness: a powerful evil that hunted the land unchecked, destroying all creatures it could find. Terrible Oni-like creatures and shadows with no faces were their enemies, but the Naga fought back, conquering the evil and sending it away.

After the war, prophets and astrologers spoke of a time of Great Sleep, a period of Ages in which the Naga would rest, undisturbed, waiting to fight the Darkness again. When it came, the race of Naga vanished from the face of the land, their cities hidden with great spells prepared by their shugenja, deep within the forest of Shinomen. For a thousand years and more, the Naga have slept. To the humans who conquered Rokugan, the Naga were little more than a child's tale.

Now, as the evil in the Shadowlands begins to rise, the Naga have awakened.

## The Bloodlines

**Asp Benefit:** Wounds are as if the Asp's Earth Ring is one higher.

The Asp serve as the warleaders, the strength of the Naga race. The Asp have always been the defenders, the warriors and the armies of their people. Their eternal vigilance, even through their thousand years of sleep, caused them to be among the first to awaken when the danger from the south began to rise. Always on the front lines, bearing spears and scimitar, and they will fight until the land is purged of the evil that infests it.

#### Constrictor Benefit: +1 Strength

The Constrictors are few among the Naga race, and many believe that they are doomed to extinction. They are the wise ones, the priests of the *Akasha*. Their strength comes from their massive bulk, and from their powerful wills, trained through centuries of meditation and communion with the Eternal *Akasha*. They are strong, but gentle.

#### Greensnake Benefit: +1 Intelligence or +1 Awareness

The Greensnakes tend to be diplomatic, their minds easily adapting to learned knowledge and modern thoughts. Greensnakes are often chosen to be scouts because of their ability to rapidly learn languages, negotiate treaties and understand new concepts. Their vast capacity for learning is only matched by their great curiosity. They were the first to master the language of the humans and the Greensnake consider it their duty to bring peace between the two races.



# Naga Warrior School

**Benefit:** +1 Stamina, Agility, or Reflexes

**Beginning Honor:** 0, plus 0 boxes

## Skills

Athletics, Battle, Defense, Hand-to-Hand, Rokugani Language, Swordsmanship, Yarijutsu (Naga), Yomanri

## Great Lessons

### Rank 1: Drawing From the Deep

The first thing taught to all Naga Warriors is how to balance their fighting style. Characters at this Rank may add the value of their Akasha (Void) Ring to all attack and damage rolls.

### Rank 2: The Tides of War

Early in his career, a Naga Warrior is introduced to the open battlefield, where the Fortunes are reckless and the Akasha reminds one of his failings.

When performing a Full Defense, this Naga may make a (Weapon)/Agility roll against a single opponent, with a TN of his opponent's Water x 5. If the Naga is successful in this roll, he may remain out of range of any melee attacks other than pole-arms, as he automatically weaves and dodges attacks by shorter melee weapons. This use of Full Defense does not permit the normal Defense/Agility roll. While he is successfully using The Tides of War, the Naga Warrior may gain the pole-arm Initiative bonus every round, not just the first.

The Naga must be using a pole-arm to use this Great Lesson.

### Rank 3: This Blood Shall Guide Me

Naga of this Rank are able to draw from the spiritual strength of the Akasha to aid them on the field of battle. They may perform two attacks per round.

### Rank 4: The Pillar of Blood

True warriors of the Naga are able to derive near-superhuman strength from the collective soul of all who have come before, all who live today, and all those yet to come. At this Rank, the character is able to ignore a number of Wound Levels equal to his Akasha.

### Rank 5: The Bonds Between Us

Finally, a Naga Warrior of this caliber has become one with the Akasha. This character may roll and keep an extra die on all of his combat rolls. Also, any Naga or humans under this Naga's direct command also gain this benefit so long as they are within 50' of the Naga.

# Naga Warrior





# Naga Jakla

Naga jakla (shugenja) are very different from shugenja of the Empire. They are fully explained in the *Way of the Naga*, but for purposes of simple play, use the normal shugenja rules and the details below.

**Benefit:** +1 Akasha

## Skills

Calligraphy (Naga), Lore (Pearl Magic), Investigation, Meditation, Pearl Carving, Rokugani Language, any other 2 Skills

## Beginning spells

Sense, Commune, and Summon, plus 3 in each of the Naga's highest 2 Elements, and 1 in their second highest Element. Naga Jakla have an *Affinity* to either Earth or Water (player's choice), and therefore have a *Deficiency* to either Air or Fire, respectively.

## Outfit

Your outfit (beginning equipment) is listed below. The Equipment List is on page 150. List your possessions and money on the back of your character sheet.

### BUSHI OUTFIT

(All Average Quality, save the bow, which is of Fine Quality): Any primary weapon, Clothing, Spear (use Naginata stats), Hunting Knife (use Tanto stats), Traveling pack, 3 pearls (worth 1-2 koku each)

### SHUGENJA OUTFIT

(All considered to be Average Quality): Robes, Traveling Pack, Pearl Case, Bow, Hunting Knife, Tanto, 3 pearls (worth 1-2 koku each)

### SLAYER OUTFIT

Starting Outfit: (All considered to be Average Quality, save the bow, which is Fine Quality): 1 Weapon of Choice, Clothing (usually leather), Spear, Knife, Traveling Pack, 2 pearls (worth 1-2 koku each). A Slayer can give up his weapon and pearls in return for a sword of jade or crystal.

# Naga Views of the Clans



"The Crab once stood their wall and fought the Foul Darkness. Now they embrace the enemies they once struggled so hard against. Are all huu-mans this foolish?"



"The Crane? We have seen them - small, soft and polite. They seem cultured but weak. When they stop crying to their Imperial parents for guidance and assistance, then we will listen to their words."



"We have known no Dragon other than the one who teaches us the language of the huu-mans. If they are all as brave and willing to stand beside us, then at least we will have one true ally when the Final Battles come."



"The Lion seem brave, bold, and worthy of respect. If we must fight them, we will do so with great regret - they would prove better allies than enemies."



"The great spellcasters of the huu-mans - ah, yes. They serve this being known as the 'Tao', but they do not search for peace within themselves. How sad."



"The huu-mans with masks speak honestly of their own lies and treachery - and can therefore be trusted. One who admits his own weakness is worthy of assistance."



"Swift, deadly. These horsemen are the bane of our existence. If only they would stop their race and listen to our words."



"We do not understand how these 'wavemen' are different from the other huu-mans, but we are told that they are abominations within their race. Let the huu-mans deal with their shame; their paths are not for us to understand."

# Naga



# Naga Slayer

Naga Slayers are the elite of the Naga Warriors, created to cleanse the earth of the enemies of the Akasha. When created, a Slayer must choose one of the following to be his Enemy: Shadowlands, Shadowspawn, Nezumi, Zokujin, Ghosts, Animal Spirits (kenku, kappa, etc.), Abominations, or any other race the GM allows. This Enemy never changes.

Keep in mind that destroying the Slayer's Enemy is the entire reason the Slayer exists. As a result, Slayers will never be able to cooperate with one of their Enemies! At the very best, an Enemy might earn the Naga's disdainful disregard. That's about it. Slayers tend to be brutal, single-minded, and very determined. The rest of the Akasha consider Slayers to be dangerous but necessary weapons, and watch them closely.

**Benefit:** +1 Strength

**Beginning Honor:** 0, plus zero boxes

## Skills

Athletics, Battle, Jujutsu, Lore (Enemy) 2, Rokugani Language, Swordsmanship, Yomanri

## Great Lessons

### Rank 1: Akasha's Enmity

The hunt begins. The Slayer gains a number of Free Raises equal to his Rank on all attack rolls against his Enemy, or on Hunting rolls to locate an Enemy. In addition, the Slayer's strength and zeal give him additional Wounds on each level equal to his Rank.

### Rank 2: Anger of the Bright Eye

The Slayer gains a free attack per round against his Enemy, and earns an extra Experience Point when he kills an Enemy.

### Rank 3: Tears of the Pale Eye

The Slayer can use the omnipresent Akasha to detect his Enemies. The Slayer can tell when an Enemy is within a radius equal to his Akasha times fifty feet. To locate the Enemy, the Slayer must roll Lore (Enemy)/Awareness; his TN is his opponent's Air x 5.

### Rank 4: Fury of the Serpent

The Slayer may make two attacks per round. Due to his Rank 2 Great Lesson, the Naga Slayer gains three attacks per round against his Enemy.

### Rank 5: Bleed the Spirit

When facing his Enemy, the Slayer may make an opposed roll using his Akasha and the Enemy's Willpower. If the Slayer succeeds, the Enemy is staggered by the Slayer's fury and stands motionless for one round. (Remember, the TN to hit a motionless target is 5.)

# Naga Terminology

The Naga predate humanity, and as such have a few terms of their own. More details about the subtle differences between human terms and their Naga equivalents can be found in *Way of the Naga*. The Rokugani Language skill lets them speak Rokugani; the higher their skill, the more fluent they are. Meanwhile, treat the following terms as equivalent:

## Naga

Great Lesson  
Akasha  
Caste Rank  
Swordsmanship  
Pearl Carving

## Human

Technique  
Void  
Glory  
Kenjutsu  
Tea Ceremony

## Naga Skill: Pearl Carving (Akasha)

The Naga know how to turn a simple pearl into a work of tremendous beauty. More than simply working the pearl with tools and carving knives, the Naga use a series of prayers and meditations to help the pearl attain the form they desire. This Skill works as the Tea Ceremony does for humans, taking one half hour (and requiring a non-enchanted pearl). When performing the ceremony, the Naga may invite any other Naga he (or she) wishes to participate. Each participant then enters a ritual trance, touching the mists of the Akasha and speaking with the spirit of the pearl. The artist carving the pearl may then make a Simple Pearl Carving/Akasha roll (TN, as in a Tea Ceremony, is GM's discretion but not less than 10); if he is successful, all Naga involved (up to the performer's Skill Rank) regain a single spent Akasha Point (although Pearl Carving may not increase a Naga's Akasha Points beyond his Akasha Ring).

This is a High Skill for Rokugani. Humans gain no benefits from its use, however.

# Female Naga

Playing a female Naga can be an interesting experience and a unique role-playing opportunity. Only female Naga have the ability to alter their physical form, exchanging their tails for humanoid legs. This ability occurs at the onset of puberty, and females can begin using their legs almost immediately. However, constant use of legs means that they are not as good as other Naga with the use of their tail - which becomes somewhat stunted through disuse, and may be shorter than a typical Naga of their size. If this is the case, the female often has trouble with leverage, movement, or other things requiring use of her tail. Also, female Naga must study their skills twice, learning how to use their bodies with and without the leverage provided by their tail. In order to exchange her tail for legs or reverse the process, a Naga must spend five hours in meditation, learning from the Akasha and reunifying her soul with its cause.



# Character Creation

# The Phoenix Clan

## Step One

### Choose a Family

Is your Phoenix Clan character from the Isawa family, the Shiba family, or the Asako family?

### Choose a Profession

You are either a bushi or a shugenja. Write down the Skills your School teaches you as well as your Rank 1 Technique (Bushi) or Spells (Shugenja).

## Step Two

### Customize your Character

Your character's Traits and Rings all begin at a 2, his Glory is a 1. You may now spend 30 Character Points to customize your character. You may spend points on Traits, Skills, or Advantages. You may gain additional Character Points by purchasing Disadvantages.

### Character Point Costs

Trait: New Level x 3

Void Ring: New Level x 6

Skill: New Level x 1

**Lowering and Raising Honor:** It costs 3 CPs to raise your character's Honor. Lowering your character's Honor gains you 2 Character Points. Honor can only be raised or lowered one Rank.

### Determining Wounds

Multiply your character's Earth by 2 and fill in each Wound box with that number. These are your character's Wounds.

## Step Three

### Determining Insight

- Find the sum of all of your Rings. Multiply that total by 10.
- Then, find the sum of your Skill points above 1.
- Finally, add the totals together. This is your Starting Insight.
- Whenever your Skills or Rings increase, re-adjust your Insight.

## Step Four

Determine your character's history and background. Create a place for your character within the world of Rokugan, and justify all of his or her Advantages and Disadvantages. Is your character young? Old? Sworn to vengeance? Easy going?

Create a history that is appropriate for your clan and background, and begin to think about your character's short and long-term goals.

Determine any additional equipment your character may have access to, including horses, weapons, and travel papers. Is your character a Magistrate, or is this samurai solely sworn to his or her clan?

When you've answered all the background questions and completed the mechanical creation for your character, you're ready to play!

The Phoenix Clan are the most sorcerous clan in the Empire, using their vast knowledge of magic and spellcraft to dominate their lands and call forth the enchantments that lie dormant in the Empire. Their unity with the Five Elements is legendary; their mastery of magic is even more so. Religious and dedicated, the Phoenix Clan studies Shinsei's Tao and reveres the teachings of their ancestors.

Of all the other clans (even Crane), Phoenix is the least militant. They prefer peace over warfare and enter battle only if forced to do so. A Phoenix shugenja will always look for a peaceful solution to a problem, even when his enemy is knocking down his walls with siege engines. A Phoenix samurai, on the other hand, is willing to kill and to die in defense of his people and his duty. While the other clans view the Phoenix as reluctant to fight, their attitude is only half correct. The samurai are willing to fight; it is the shugenja that are difficult to convince.

The families of the Phoenix are possibly the most powerful in the Empire, the mystic knowledge of the Asako and the Isawa tempered by Shiba sword. However, they are a peaceful clan, and not given to war, and as such they often choose not to engage rather than to cause bloodshed. However, when given no choice, they can be deadly opponents. The Phoenix are also among the most traditional of the clans, conforming to their stereotypes more often, and rarely venturing outside their own lands. They serve the Emperor, and they quest for the knowledge of the ages. That is their purpose; that is their goal.

## The Families

### Isawa

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

Of the noble Phoenix families, the Isawa are by far the most prominent. For hundreds of years, the clan has been shaped by the will of the Council of Elemental Masters, the most powerful group of shugenja in Rokugan. For the Isawa, to be a shugenja is to become one with the greatest powers of the universe. Of all the families of the Empire, the Isawa are the most traditional. Advocating the ways of life instituted a thousand years ago, the Isawa maintain their lands and lifestyle without significant change. Because of their conservative views, other clans often defer to the Phoenix to settle disputes over the traditional way to handle matters.

### Shiba

**Benefit:** +1 Intelligence

The Shiba occupy a curious position in the scheme of Rokugan. They are the descendants of Kami, with the blood of the gods flowing through their veins, yet they remain subordinate to the mortal Isawa family. They are warriors in a clan of peace, fighters in a province where violence is abhorred. Yet they remain vital to Phoenix interests, and perform their often thankless roles with courage, honor, and conviction.

### Asako

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

The Asako family have two benefits that most other families of the Great Clans have been without - the time to develop independently and freedom from political interference that would otherwise have stunted their growth. This has resulted in a decided solidarity among the members of this reclusive family. The isolationist Asako do not consciously oppress or criticize anyone outside their house. They are aloof and difficult to get a clear answer from. But they are also extremely knowledgeable, and thus can provide great wisdom. They follow the Way of Shinsei and prepare the 'younger clans' for a time when they can become enlightened.



# Shiba Bushi School

**Benefit:** +1 Reflexes

**Beginning Honor:** 2, plus 5 boxes

## Skills

Defense, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Meditation, Naginata, Shintao, Tea Ceremony

## Techniques

### Rank 1: The Way of the Phoenix

Shiba bushi are trained in the "no-thought" technique, and may add their Void Rank to any attack or damage rolls. They may also spend up to their maximum Void Points on a single action.

### Rank 2: Dancing With The Elements

Because the Phoenix bushi train with the Phoenix shugenja, they have become trained to be more attuned to the manipulation of the elements. The bushi may spend a Void Point to aid (or hinder) spells that are targeting him, either giving the caster a Free Raise or raising the TN by 5.

### Rank 3: One With Nothing

At this Rank, the bushi learns to fall into a "no-mind" trance. The bushi may spend a Void Point to gain an additional action this Round. This ability cannot be used to gain an additional attack or Full Defense. This Technique may be used more than once per round.

### Rank 4: Everywhere and Nowhere at Once

At this Rank, the bushi has learned to let his Void flow to such an extent that he gains two attacks per round.

### Rank 5: One With All and Nothing

The bushi has finally learned to release the full power of "no-thought." By spending a Void Point, the bushi may substitute his Void Rank for any Trait or Skill until the end of the round.

# Phoenix Bushi





# Phoenix Shugenja

## Isawa Shugenja School

**Benefit:** +1 Void

**Beginning Honor:** 2, plus 5 boxes

Isawa shugenja may use any number of Void Points when they are casting spells.

### Skills

Calligraphy, Investigation, Meditation, Shintao, Theology, any other  
2 High Skills

### Beginning spells

Sense, Commune, and Summon, plus 3 of one Element, 2 of a second and 1 of a third. Isawa shugenja may choose their natural *Affinity*, but must also take a *Deficiency* in the opposed element (Fire-Water or Earth-Air).

### Outfit

Your outfit (beginning equipment) is listed below. The Equipment List is on page 150. List your possessions and money on the back of your character sheet. Choose your Primary Weapon and how many dice you'll roll and keep when using it, your Armor and its protection, and your TN to be hit.

#### BUSHI OUTFIT

(All considered to be Average Quality): Katana, Wakizashi, Bow, 20 Arrows of any type(s), Light Armor, Traveling Pack, any 1 weapon, Kimono, 2 Koku

#### SHUGENJA OUTFIT

(All considered to be average quality; Player chooses one item to be of Fine Quality): Kimono, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, Wakizashi, Tanto, 4 Koku, First Aid kit, 2 scrolls (blank)

#### YOJIMBO OUTFIT

Starting Outfit: (All considered to be Average Quality): Katana, Wakizashi, Bow, 20 Arrows of any type, Light or Heavy Armor, Traveling Pack, Kimono, 2 Koku





# Shiba Yojimbo School

Those who protect the Elemental Masters and their servants. They are similar to the traditional Shiba, but use their skills entirely for defense.

**Benefit:** +1 Willpower  
**Beginning Honor:** 2, plus five boxes

## Skills

Defense, Jaijutsu, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Meditation, Shintao, one Bugei Skill

## Techniques

### Rank 1: A Single Life

The Yojimbo knows his place in the universe, and is prepared to sacrifice himself for another. When performing a Full Defense, instead of the normal bonuses, the Yojimbo may attempt to intercept a number of attacks equal to his Void per round. The Yojimbo may intercept an attack within 10 feet by announcing that he is intercepting the attack before the attack roll is made, and then making an opposed Defense/Agility roll vs. the attack roll. If successful, the target of the attack is changed to the Yojimbo.

### Rank 2: Shield of Honor

The Yojimbo may spend any amount of Void to raise his TN to be Hit for a single round. On Full Defense, his TN to be hit is increased by 10 per Void Point spent instead of 5. This Full Defense benefit may be combined with the Rank 1 Technique.

### Rank 3: No Illusions

The Yojimbo has become mystically linked to someone under his care. By spending a Void Point and meditating for one hour with an individual, he places that person under his charge. Afterward, the Yojimbo will always know what direction that person lies in regards to himself by spending a Void Point to do so. This does not indicate distance, location, or even if the charge still lives, only direction. A Yojimbo may only have one "charge" at a time.

### Rank 4: Sword of the Phoenix

The Yojimbo may make two attacks per round, even while using his Rank 1 Technique. (This is a special bonus. He does not otherwise get to attack on Full Defense.)

### Rank 5: Purity of Fire

The Yojimbo's spirit is like the flames, unquenchable, unconquerable. The Yojimbo's opponent rolls one fewer Damage die for each Rank in the Yojimbo's Water Ring; someone attacking a Yojimbo with Water 4 would roll four fewer Damage dice than usual. The opponent may always roll at least one die.

# Phoenix Views of the Other Clans



"Everyone points to the horrors that shamble alongside their armies, yet we ourselves study those same horrors in an effort to save the Empire. Could it be that we are walking the same path?"



"They cannot be left alone in this, their hour of need. The Crane remind of us of why we fight. In the midst of our own darkness, we must not forget the light they bring."



"They move. At last, they move."



"Like the mighty oak in a thunderstorm, the Lion will not bend. This time, I fear they will be broken. We must ensure that they do not break the Empire in the process."



"We have much to learn from these serpent-men and their strange magic, but we must always realize that they are not part of the Tao, and therefore not to be trusted."



"They began this madness and have a part to play still. We watch the darkness and wait for them to reappear – for therein lies our salvation."



"The time has come for Rokugan's little brother to take his place at the table. We shall see their true mettle in the upcoming conflict. We shall see if they have earned their place."



"As water conforms to its vessel, so do these wave-men conform to their environment. You say that ronin are worthless vagabonds. Let us change ourselves, and this ronin plague will no more curse our lands."



# Character Creation

## Step One

### Choose a Family

Is your Scorpion Clan character from the Bayushi family, the Shosuro family, or the Soshi family?

### Choose a Profession

You are either a bushi or a shugenja. Write down the Skills your School teaches you as well as your Rank 1 Technique (Bushi) or Spells (Shugenja).

## Step Two

### Customize your Character

Your character's Traits and Rings all begin at a 2; his Glory is a 1. You may now spend 30 Character Points to customize your character. You may spend points on Traits, Skills, or Advantages. You may gain additional Character Points by purchasing Disadvantages.

### Character Point Costs

Trait: New Level x 3

Void Ring: New Level x 6

Skill: New Level x 1

**Lowering and Raising Honor:** It costs 5 CPs to raise your character's Honor. Lowering your character's Honor gains you 2 Character Points. Honor can only be raised or lowered one Rank.

### Determining Wounds

Multiply your character's Earth by 2 and fill in each Wound box with that number. These are your character's Wounds.

## Step Three

### Determining Insight

- Find the sum of all of your Rings. Multiply that total by 10.
- Then, find the sum of your Skill points above 1.
- Finally, add the totals together. This is your Starting Insight.
- Whenever your Skills or Rings increase, re-adjust your Insight.

## Step Four

Determine your character's history and background. Create a place for your character within the world of Rokugan, and justify all of his or her Advantages and Disadvantages. Is your character young? Old? Sworn to vengeance? Easy going?

Create a history that is appropriate for your clan and background, and begin to think about your character's short and long-term goals.

Determine any additional equipment your character may have access to, including horses, weapons, and travel papers. Is your character a Magistrate, or is this samurai solely sworn to his or her clan?

When you've answered all the background questions and completed the mechanical creation for your character, you're ready to play!

# The Scorpion Clan

If there is something you do not wish to be known, some Scorpion somewhere knows it. The Scorpion have never had the strongest samurai or the most skilled shugenja, and so they made up for the difference with secrets. You never know if a Scorpion is telling you the truth, or if he is telling you a lie, because he can gain an advantage with either one. In a society that values sincerity over honesty, none can ever fully understand the machinations of the Scorpion. Scorpions have traditionally worn masks. Each mask is unique to the individual, but the intent is still the same. The mask is telling the world, "You cannot trust me." Recently, the Empire found out to its dismay just how much the Scorpion were to be mistrusted.

Before the Scorpion Coup, some two years ago, the clan was a functional member of Rokugani society. Their power lay in secrets and histories, and in hiding – or displaying – that knowledge. However, two years ago the Scorpion Clan invaded the capital city, murdered the ruling Emperor and nearly ended the Hantei line. Their treachery infuriated the Empire, and together, the other six clans destroyed the Scorpion. Those who remain live in hiding, covering their true names and identities so that they can plan their revenge, putting on disguises by taking off their masks. Where once their legions stood proud and defiant, they now rely on secrets and subterfuge.

The Scorpion have always been the shadow of the Empire, capable of blinding speed and courage, as well as clever deceptions and ruses. To strike swiftly is more deadly than to merely stand your ground, and sometimes deception is as deadly as steel. They turn to an ancient document of their clan, Bayushi Tengen's *Lies*, to guide them in their hidden battles. The wisdom there is succinct and blatantly dishonorable, and yet it wins wars that other men would die fighting.

## The Families

### Bayushi

**Benefit:** +1 Agility

Studying the Bayushi family is no easy matter. It can be said that the Bayushi have more secrets than fish have scales, and that they guard them as tightly as pearls in the ocean. Wild tales of ninja, poisons, shadow magic and conspiracies are at the heart of the rumors spread about their devious family, and although the stories are generally regarded as peasant superstition, many samurai refuse to deal with a known Scorpion, for fear of discovering what they did not wish to learn.

### Shosuro

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

The Shosuro are the eyes and ears of the clan, keeping ready for the time when the Scorpion can strike. They maintain communications between the Empress Bayushi Kachiko and the remainder of their broken clan, ensuring that attacks by the Scorpion forces are most effective and efficient, refusing to waste the life of even a single Scorpion bushi. The Shosuro have kept the Scorpion alive, to strike again at the heart of the Empire. The students of Shosuro are expert actors, and this is why the Empire fears them. They can be anywhere. They can be anyone.

### Soshi

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

The shugenja of the Scorpion Clan almost always train at the Soshi shugenja school, which has a sinister reputation throughout Rokugan. For many centuries, the Scorpion have experimented with a peculiar magic. Generations of apprentices have followed up on Soshi's pioneering work, resulting in a unique magic type the Soshi call "Shadow-magic." As other shugenja study the Five Elements, the Soshi tap into raw shadow, turning darkness into their strength.



# Bayushi Bushi School

Benefit: +1 Intelligence  
Beginning Honor: 1, plus 5 boxes

## Skills

Defense, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Poison, Sincerity, Stealth

## Techniques

### Rank 1: The Way of the Scorpion

The Bayushi School's motto is *Strike First, Strike Last*. This bushi rolls and drops extra initiative dice equal to his School Rank.

### Rank 2: Pincers and Tail

The bushi has learned the infamous Scorpion feint. The TN for this bushi to hit an opponent who attacked and missed him last round is reduced to 5 + armor.

### Rank 3: Strike At The Tail

Scorpion bushi know that there is more than one way to defeat an opponent. Instead of making a normal attack, this bushi can make a Simple Kenjutsu/Agility roll against his opponent's Weapon Skill x 5. If successful, he has disarmed his opponent. If he raises the TN twice, he may take the weapon into his own hands.

### Rank 4: Strike From Above, Strike From Below

The bushi has gained enough skill in the art of distraction that he may make two attacks per round.

### Rank 5: The Pincers Hold, The Tail Strikes

Finally, the Scorpion learns how to use his distractive techniques to spend a precious moment before the strike to make it as deadly as possible. This bushi may declare Raises after his attack roll.

# Scorpion Bushi





# Scorpion Shugenja

## Soshi Shugenja School

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness  
**Beginning Honor:** 1, plus 5 boxes

### Skills

Calligraphy, Courtier or Etiquette, Sincerity, Meditation, Theology or Shintao, plus any other 2 High Skills

### Beginning spells

Sense, Commune, and Summon, plus 3 Air, 2 Water, and 1 Fire. Soshi Shugenja have an *Affinity* to Air, and a *Deficiency* to Earth.

### Outfit

Your outfit (beginning equipment) is listed below. The Equipment List is on page 150. List your possessions and money on the back of your character sheet. Choose your Primary Weapon and how many dice you'll roll and keep when using it, your Armor and its protection, and your TN to be hit.

#### *BUSHI OUTFIT*

(All considered to be Average Quality): Katana, Wakizashi, Bow, 20 Arrows of any type(s), light Armor, Traveling Pack, any 1 weapon, Kimono, 2 Koku

#### *SHUGENJA OUTFIT*

(All considered to be Average Quality): Kimono, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, Wakizashi, Tanto, 3 Koku

#### *SABOTEUR OUTFIT*

(All considered to be Average Quality): Katana, Wakizashi, Light Armor, Traveling Pack, any 1 weapon, Kimono, Lock Picks, 2 Koku





# Bayushi Saboteur School

Students of Bayushi Kyono, the saboteurs are now among the most important Scorpion operatives, wreaking the vengeance of the Bayushi behind the scenes.

**Benefit:** +1 Intelligence  
**Beginning Honor:** 1, plus five boxes

## Skills

Acting, Engineering, Explosives, Locksmith, Poison, Stealth, any Low or Buger Skill

## Techniques

### Rank 1: The Forest For the Fire

The Saboteur may add his Stealth to his TN to be hit. Also, while operating near a source of large distraction (a conveniently located fire, explosion, avalanche, etc.) the Saboteur keeps all dice on Stealth rolls.

### Rank 2: Find the Flaw

For every ten minutes the Saboteur spends observing a target location, he rolls and keeps an extra die on Stealth, Explosives, Engineering, and any other rolls to infiltrate or destroy what he has observed. He cannot gain more dice than his School Rank.

### Rank 3: Soul of Bayushi

The Saboteur gains the Inner Gift advantage. Specifically, he gains a sixth sense about being ambushed. He knows instantly if he is spotted, and from what direction. The character may always roll initiative when he is ambushed.

### Rank 4: No Mistakes

To the Scorpion, sabotage is not a crime, but erring in the service to your lord behind enemy lines is an inexcusable offense. The Saboteur may roll twice on all rolls involving stealth and sabotage, keeping the better roll. (This does not include attack rolls.)

### Rank 5: Follow the Pincers

Like his bushi brethren, the Saboteur has learned the Scorpion's greatest trick, to lead with the pincers while the tail finds its target. If the Saboteur knows he has been noticed, he may spend a Void Point and make an opposed Stealth/Agility roll vs. the Investigation/Perception of the observer. If the Saboteur is successful, he creates a small distraction and leads the observer to believe that he was imagining things, giving the Saboteur an opportunity to resume hiding.

# Scorpion Views of the Other Clans



"The Crab proved themselves to be more subtle than we had anticipated during the Coup. We were certain that Kisada's lust for power would bring him to our side. Perhaps it shall yet."



"The Crane's mask is torn away and all that is left is a crying little girl. A pity. We had expected so much more."



"They know themselves and they know the world - now more than ever. If they ever rouse themselves, all of our plans could fall before them."



"Our mistress holds their heart in her hands. I pray that I will be there when she begins to squeeze."



"A child who does not know the secrets within the box will always be mystified by them. So, too, are the Naga easy to manipulate - and that may be our greatest strength."



"They know about Junzo! I swear on the grave of my lord that they know! But does this make them allies... or our greatest enemies?"



"They are nothing: insects buzzing around our heads. As predictable as they are harmless."



"There is strength within the waves, and in the shadows that lie beneath. The wolf in your path means three more hunt behind you. If you hunt ronin, take all your weapons - for you can be sure the fifth have ten swords where you have one."

# Scorpion



# Character Creation

## Step One

### Choose a Family

Is your Unicorn-Clan character from the Shinjo family, the Otaku family, or the Iuchi family?

### Choose a Profession

You are either a bushi or a shugenja. Write down the Skills your School teaches you as well as your Rank 1 Technique (Bushi) or Spells (Shugenja).

## Step Two

### Customize your Character

Your character's Traits and Rings all begin at a 2; his Glory is a 1. You may now spend 30 Character Points to customize your character. You may spend points on Traits, Skills, or Advantages. You may gain additional Character Points by purchasing Disadvantages.

### Character Point Costs

Trait: New Level x 3

Void Ring: New Level x 6

Skill: New Level x 1

**Lowering and Raising Honor:** It costs 3 CPs to raise your character's Honor. Lowering your character's Honor gains you 2 Character Points. Honor can only be raised or lowered one Rank.

### Determining Wounds

Multiply your character's Earth by 2 and fill in each Wound box with that number. These are your character's Wounds.

## Step Three

### Determining Insight

- Find the sum of all of your Rings. Multiply that total by 10.
- Then, find the sum of your Skill points above 1.
- Finally, add the totals together. This is your Starting Insight.
- Whenever your Skills or Rings increase, re-adjust your Insight.

## Step Four

Determine your character's history and background. Create a place for your character within the world of Rokugan, and justify all of his or her Advantages and Disadvantages. Is your character young? Old? Sworn to vengeance? Easy going?

Create a history that is appropriate for your clan and background, and begin to think about your character's short and long-term goals.

Determine any additional equipment your character may have access to, including horses, weapons, and travel papers. Is your character a Magistrate, or is this samurai solely sworn to his or her clan?

When you've answered all the background questions and completed the mechanical creation for your character, you're ready to play!

# The Unicorn Clan

When Hantei first took the Emerald Throne, he commanded his sister Shinjo and those who would follow her to go out into the world and explore. She was to bring back news of what was on the other side of the great mountains that lay to the North, and Shinjo did so. She brought with her three samurai: Otaku, Iuchi and Ide, and together, the four went into the unexplored realms. They would not return for eight hundred years.

Two hundred years ago, the descendants of the four returned with mighty horses (the native horses of Rokugan are much like ponies) and a way of combat that was very different from the descendants of the Children of the Sun and Moon. Everything about them was different. Their dress, style of clothing, speech and tactics were all learned from different cultures and adapted to fit the religion of the Seven Fortunes and the philosophies of Shinsei.

Now that they have returned, the descendants of Shinjo have found it very difficult to fit in with the other Clans. Eight centuries of positioning have created a delicate balance among them and the arrival of a new clan has caused much friction. Being inexperienced in subtleties of Rokugan society, they have found it very difficult to adapt. Some see them as uneducated youths while others see them as uncouth barbarians who are only nominally Rokugani.

The one thing all Clans do agree on is the power of their horses. The overwhelming advantage of Unicorn cavalry in a general's army is one factor that cannot be overestimated. The Unicorn Clan has picked up on this and uses it to its advantage. The Crane Clan has treated the Unicorns with respect, and so their borders are patrolled by Unicorn cavalry. The Lion Clan has turned a cold shoulder to the newcomers, and are not so fortunate.

## The Families

### Shinjo

**Benefit: +1 Reflexes**

Shinjo was honorable, personable, yet aggressive. Shinjo are not generally hot-headed, but it is easy to think them so. Long years in strange lands taught them to take action. Faced with an insoluble problem, a Shinjo will do something, anything, instead of sitting and endlessly pondering. Further, when he takes action, he takes it wholeheartedly, without reservation or delay. They firmly believe that the swiftness and sureness of a blow outweighs the accuracy of the strike: "better the first blow than a well-aimed blow that never falls."

### Otaku

**Benefit: +1 Agility**

The Otaku are perhaps the most prominent Unicorn family, earning their reputation through their swiftness and reckless bravery. They are a family ruled by women, and only battle-maidens can ride the famous Otaku steeds. When an Otaku pledges her sword, however, she means it without reservation or hesitation - the word of an Otaku is law, and nothing can make her break it.

### Iuchi

**Benefit: +1 Awareness**

Iuchi shugenja are more open-minded and willing to experiment than the shugenja of most other Clans. They tend to be very ambitious and drive themselves relentlessly in everything they do. They constantly strive for improvement in all aspects of life, and believe that much can be gained by trying new things and learning from new experiences.



# Shinjo Bushi School

**Benefit:** +1 Strength

**Beginning Honor:** 2, plus 5 boxes

## Skills

Defense, Hunting, Kenjutsu, Horsemanship 2, Naginata, Yomanri

## Techniques

### Rank 1: The Way of the Unicorn

Unicorn bushi are almost raised on horses. When on horseback, the bushi may add his Horsemanship Skill to any Bugei Skill roll.

### Rank 2: The Dance of the Blade

The Unicorn fighting style involves techniques the clan learned while on the other side of the mountains. The samurai may choose to make a "Shinjo Parry." The TN to hit a parrying bushi is (Reflexes + Defense + Kenjutsu) x 5. This is considered a Full Defense Maneuver.

### Rank 3: The Four Winds Strike

At this Rank, the bushi learns the sweeping style that allows him to make two attacks per round.

### Rank 4: One Spirit

The link between the bushi and his steed is complete. When performing any physical acts on horseback (fighting, riding, jumping, etc.) his steed can make up for any imperfections in the bushi's technique. If he Raises his TN, misses his Raise, but makes the original TN, the roll succeeds, but he gains no benefit from his Raises.

### Rank 5: Dancing with the Fortunes

Some call it luck; the Unicorn call it "dancing with the Fortunes." After any roll, the Unicorn bushi may choose to roll again to get a better result. (The bushi may not re-roll this second roll; he has to keep it.) The bushi may even re-roll a success if he wishes to try for a better result.

# Unicorn Bushi





# Unicorn Shugenja

## luchi Shugenja School

Benefit: +1 Perception

Beginning Honor: 2, plus 5 boxes

### Skills

Calligraphy,  
Defense, Herbalism,  
Horsemanship,  
Hunting, Meditation,  
any one Bugei Skill

### Beginning spells

Sense,  
Commune, and  
Summon, plus  
3 Water, 2 Air,  
and 1 Earth.

luchi Shugenja  
have an *Affinity* to  
Water, and a *Deficiency* to Fire.

### Outfit

Your outfit (beginning equipment) is listed below. The Equipment List is on page 150. List your possessions and money on the back of your character sheet. Choose your Primary Weapon and how many dice you'll roll and keep when using it, your Armor and its protection, and your TN to be hit.

#### BUSHI OUTFIT

(All considered to be Fine Quality): Katana, Wakizashi, Bow, 20 Arrows of any type(s), Light or Heavy Armor, Helm, Traveling Pack, Steed, Kimono, any 3 weapons, 10 Koku

#### SHUGENJA OUTFIT

(All considered to be Fine Quality): Kimono, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, Wakizashi, Tanto, 10 Koku, Steed

#### SCOUT OUTFIT

(All considered to be Fine Quality): Katana, Wakizashi, Bow, 20 Arrows of any type, Light Armor, Traveling Pack, Steed, any 1 weapon, Kimono, 10 Koku





# Shinjo Scout School

The Hiruma scouts have long trained in the lands of the Unicorn, and the Unicorn have applied much of what the Crab have taught them.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

**Beginning Honor:** 2, plus five boxes

## Skills

Battle, Defense, Horsemanship, Hunting, Kenjutsu, Stealth, Yomanri

## Techniques

### Rank 1: Grace of the Unicorn

The Scout has learned well from his Hiruma allies; when on Full Defense, he may add his School Rank x 5 to his TN to Be Hit. In addition, he is given a steed specially trained to move swiftly and quietly, allowing the Scout to use Stealth while on horseback. (The horse knows not to make noises when the scout commands, and can move with relative silence. Obviously, a horse is still easier to notice than a person and there are some limitations to a trained animal's abilities.)

### Rank 2: Speed of the Viper

While the Hiruma are endurance runners, the Shinjo are sprinters. For a number of minutes equal to the Scout's Earth, he may run at a speed equal to his Water x 20 in feet per round. After this time, the Scout receives a +15 penalty to all TNs until he rests for an equal amount of time.

### Rank 3: The Stars are My Guide

The scout has a keen sense of direction, rarely becoming lost even in unfamiliar territory. He may always locate true north, and rolls extra dice equal to his School Rank on all Perception rolls.


### Rank 4: A Soul as Swift

The Scout's incredible speed is now incorporated into his fighting style, and he may make two attacks per round.


### Rank 5: Purity of the First Strike

The Scout has become the master of the swift ambush. He may roll extra dice equal to his Stealth when attacking any foe unaware of his presence. Those actively trying to detect the Scout drop all dice that roll equal to or lower than the Scout's Air.


# Unicorn Views of the Other Clans




"There were our allies once, but now their ambition has consumed them. I will weep for them as I once wept for the rabid dog my father destroyed."




"The Crane have helped us in the past, and now we must help them. The Unicorn repay their debts, and we have never met creditors more worthy than these."




"As always, the Dragon remain a mystery to us. I have heard they gather ronin within their borders, but for what purpose, and for whose benefit?"




"Vain and arrogant, the Lion have always hated us. Now they presume to destroy our ally and think that we will do nothing to stop them. We must teach them the error of their ways."




"They are serpents, and our horses know how to deal with snakes: crush them under a hoof."



"The Phoenix walk a dangerous path, one that may swallow them as it swallowed the Crab. Still, we may need their knowledge, so we wait to see what they uncover. The killing blow must not fall until we are sure."



"They remain in hiding, as well they should. If any of them show their faces to me, I will send them to join their honorless lord."



"Show me two ronin that are alike. Only then will I judge them. Until then, I must follow my family's tradition and place them where they belong: at the front lines of our army, where they will die gloriously and redeem themselves."

# Unicorn



# Character Creation Ronin

## Step One

### Choose a Type of Ronin

Is your Ronin character a Clan Ronin or a True Ronin?

### Choose a Profession

You are either a bushi or a shugenja. Write down the Skills your School teaches you as well as your Rank 1 Technique (Clan Ronin Bushi) or Spells (Clan Ronin Shugenja). True Ronin have no particular technique or spells, but may purchase the "The Fifth Wind" technique.

## Step Two

### Customize your Character

Your character's Traits and Rings all begin at a 2; his Glory is a 1. You may now spend 30 Character Points to customize a Clan Ronin, or 50 Character Points for a True Ronin. You may spend points on Traits, Skills, or Advantages. You may gain additional Character Points by purchasing Disadvantages.

### Character Point Costs

Trait: New Level x 3

Void Ring: New Level x 5

Skill: New Level x 1

**Lowering and Raising Honor:** It costs 3 CPs to raise your character's Honor. Lowering your character's Honor gains you 2 Character Points. Honor can only be raised or lowered one Rank.

### Determining Wounds

Multiply your character's Earth by 2 and fill in each Wound box with that number. These are your character's Wounds.

## Step Three

### Determining Insight

- Find the sum of all of your Rings. Multiply that total by 10.
- Then, find the sum of your Skill points above 1.
- Finally, add the totals together. This is your Starting Insight.
- Whenever your Skills or Rings increase, re-adjust your Insight.

## Step Four

Determine your character's history and background. Create a place for your character within the world of Rokugan, and justify all of his or her Advantages and Disadvantages. Is your character young? Old? Sworn to vengeance? Easy going?

Create a history that is appropriate for your clan and background, and begin to think about your character's short and long term goals.

Determine any additional equipment your character may have access to, including horses, weapons, and travel papers. Is your character a Magistrate, or is this samurai solely sworn to his or her clan?

When you've answered all the background questions and completed the mechanical creation for your character, you're ready to play!

Ronin ("wave men") are samurai who, for one reason or another, have no family and no clan, and so they have no family name. Ronin are considered to be just above non-warrior samurai in the Celestial Order. The most common reason for a samurai to become ronin involves losing a lord. Whether in a battle or by an assassin's blade, ronin who have lost their lord are in disgrace because they were unable to give up their life for his. They wander the countryside looking for the one who stole their honor. Ronin have the advantage that they have no lord or honor to answer to, but will find great difficulty in finding a teacher. Few wish to stain their family honor by teaching their family's art to a fallen man.

As far as these basic rules are concerned, there are two kinds of ronin character. The first is called the "Clan Ronin." This is a character who once belonged to one of the Great Clans, but has lost favor with his Lord. The second kind of ronin is called the "True Ronin." True Ronin have never had a clan.

### Clan Ronin

- Create a character from one of the Seven Great Clans.
- Then, take at least 3 points of Social Disadvantage (see page 110). You have been severed from your Clan, and are a ronin.
- Clan Ronin gain the Rank 1 Technique, but may not gain further Ranks in their School. They must seek out other Schools to gain further Ranks.

### True Ronin

- True Ronin have no Clan or Family Advantages.
- They must also take the Social Disadvantage: Ronin Disadvantage.
- Instead of 25 Character Points to customize their character, True Ronin have 45.
- Ronin may still only raise a Trait or Skill by 2 Ranks with Character Points.
- True Ronin Shugenja start with Sense, Commune, and Summon, plus any seven other spells with Mastery Level less than or equal to their Ring Rank plus one.
- Ronin begin with Hunting, and any six Skills. Ronin may also use Low Skills without losing Honor.

**Ronin Beginning Honor:** 2, plus 5 boxes

## The Outcasts

### Akodo

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

The Akodo were once the leading family of the Lion, known for their unswerving loyalty and dedication to the Emperor. Their name was ancient, borne through the ages by some of Rokugan's most famous heroes. But no more.

Since the Scorpion Coup, the Akodo have become dishonored, their kami's children scattered to the winds. The Akodo are a dead line. Their name is spoken across the land with distaste, and no Lion claims the Akodo heritage. Once a proud house, their lineage is now scorned, reviled and disclaimed. The Akodo are forgotten - by Imperial Decree. Soon they will be lost to history forever. Many of the Akodo line committed seppuku on the fields of Otosan Uchi, adding their blood to that of the corpses which littered the field. Most turned away from the Lion house entirely, giving up their name and heritage to wander the land as ronin.



## Ronin Bands

Ronin bands form for a variety of reasons. Some seek the power that lies in numbers to bring wealth. Some band together as a protest against injustice. Others are simply thrown together by circumstance. Many ronin bands have existed for so long that they have begun to develop the rudiments of techniques, and guard these secrets as fiercely as any clan school. Those who wish to learn the technique must first prove themselves.

A True Ronin character may obtain the following technique at character creation, if he is willing to pay the character point cost listed. A ronin need not learn the secret technique at creation, but if the ronin elects to learn this technique later, the cost is three times the character point cost in experience.

The following ronin ability is not a proper technique like the ones taught in Clan dojos, but is more like an Advantage. A ronin with this technique is still considered Rank 1. Other abilities which affect opponents' techniques are still effective against this technique.

The skills and traits listed are *not* bonuses; they are *requirements*. Any prospective member must possess all of these requirements at the listed ranks, or they may not learn the technique.

## Gaze of Sun Tao

It is uncertain where the name of this technique originated, or who devised it. Sun Tao, of course, is one of the most famous ronin in Rokugani history, but there is no reason to think that he had anything to do with the development of this Technique; it was most likely just named in his honor. At any rate, it is a widespread technique utilized by many ronin duelists, and has been used to lay low many an unprepared Kakita and Mirumoto. There is no true brotherhood associated with this technique; a ronin may pass it on to whoever he deems worthy. Naturally, this usually means defeating the ronin who knows the technique, which is never easy.

**Required Traits:** Agility 3, Void 3

**Required Skills:** Iaijutsu 3,  
Investigation 2

**Technique:** *Gaze of Sun*

*Tao* - (4 CP or 12 XP) The ronin always gains one extra piece of information when making an Awareness check before a duel. Even if he fails his check, he learns one thing. In addition, the ronin may Focus one extra time in any duel.

# Ronin Bushi





# Ronin Shugenja

## Ronin Shugenja

True Ronin Shugenja have no *Affinity* to any element, and no *Deficiency* to any element. Clan Ronin or Ronin who studied at a clan school of magic gain the Affinity and Deficiency of their school.

### Outfit

Your outfit (beginning equipment) is listed below. The Equipment List is on page 150. List your possessions and money on the back of your character sheet. Choose your Primary Weapon and how many dice you'll roll and keep when using it, your Armor and its protection, and your TN to be hit.

Clan Ronin take the Outfit of their clan.

#### True Ronin Bushi Outfit:

(All considered to be Average Quality; two items of Poor Quality)

Katana, Wakizashi, Bow, 10 Arrows of any type, Light Armor, Traveling Pack, Kimono, 10 zeni (copper coins)

#### True Ronin Shugenja Outfit:

(All considered to be Average Quality)

Kimono, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, Wakizashi, Tanto, 10 zeni (copper coins)



# Skills

## High Skills

Acting (Awareness)  
 Animal Husbandry [Horses] (Varies)  
 Artisan Skills  
 Astrology (Intelligence)  
 Bard (Awareness)  
 Calligraphy (Perception)  
 Courtier (Awareness)  
 Dance (Agility)  
 Etiquette (Intelligence)  
 Falconry (Awareness)  
 Go (Intelligence)  
 Heraldry (Perception)  
 History (Intelligence)  
 Horsemanship (Agility)  
 Hunting (Perception)  
 Investigation (Variable)  
 Law (Intelligence)  
 Lore [Various] (Intelligence)  
 Manipulation (Awareness)  
 Medicine (Intelligence)  
 Meditation (Void)  
 Mountaineer (Strength or Stamina)  
 Music (Agility and Awareness)  
 Oratory/Rhetoric (Perception)  
 Origami (Agility)

Painting (Intelligence)  
 Poetry (Awareness)  
 Research (Intelligence)  
 Shintao (Intelligence)  
 Sincerity (Awareness)  
 Spell Research (Intelligence)  
 Tea Ceremony (Void)  
 Theology (Intelligence)

## Low Skills

Athletics (Variable)  
 Autopsy (Intelligence)  
 Climbing (Strength)  
 Forgery (Agility)  
 Gambling (Awareness)  
 Mimic (Awareness)  
 Ninjutsu (Varies)  
 Nofujutsu (Varies)  
 Poison (Intelligence)  
 Seduction (Awareness)  
 Sleight of Hand (Agility)  
 Stealth (Agility)  
 Torture (Awareness)  
 Traps (Perception)

## Bugei Skills

Armorer (Earth)  
 Athletics (Varies)  
 Battle (Perception)  
 Bujutsu (Varies)  
 • Bojutsu (Bo Stick): Bo, Jo  
 • Chisaijutsu (War Fan): Tessen, Tonfa  
 • Jiujutsu (Hand-to-Hand): Mizu-do, Kaze-do  
 • Kenjutsu: Katana, No-dachi, Wakizashi  
 • Kyujutsu (Archery): Dai-kyu, Yumi  
 • Onojutsu (Ono): Ono  
 • Subojutsu (Tetsubo): Die tsuchi, Tetsubo  
 • Tantojutsu (Knife): Aiguchi, Tanto  
 • Umayarijutsu (Lance): Lance  
 • Yarijutsu (Naginata): Nagamaki, Naginata, Yari, Nage-yari, Sasumata, Sodegarami  
 • Yomanri (Unicorn/Naga Archery): Dai-kyu, Yumi  
 Defense (Agility)  
 Explosives (Intelligence)  
 Horse Archery (Agility)  
 Iaijutsu (Agility)  
 Intimidation (Willpower)

Jiujutsu (Agility)  
 Kenjutsu (Agility)  
 Kyujutsu (Reflexes)  
 Lore (Maho-Tsukai) (Perception)  
 Siege (Perception)  
 Specialized Weapon Skill (Varies; usually Agility)  
 War Fan (Agility)  
 Weaponsmith (Earth)  
 Wrestling (Strength)  
 Yomanri (Agility) (Unicorn Only)

## Merchant Skills

Appraisal (Perception)  
 Armorer (Earth)  
 Commerce (Awareness)  
 Craft (Variable)  
 Engineering (Intelligence)  
 Herbalism (Intelligence)  
 Locksmith (Agility)  
 Weaponsmith (Earth)

# Advantages

Absolute Direction (1 Point)  
 Allies (Variable)  
 Ambidextrous (3 Points; 2 for Dragon)  
 Bente's Blessing (3 Points, 2 for Crane)  
 Balance (4 Points)  
 Blackmail (Glory of Blackmailee)  
 Bland (2 Points)  
 Blood of Osano-Wo (5 Points)  
 Chosen by the Oracles (5 Points)  
 Clear Thinker (2 Points)  
 Combat Reflexes (6 Points)  
 Crab Hands (4 Points; Crab Only)  
 Crafty (5 Points)  
 Daredevil (4 Points)  
 Death Trance (3 Points, 2 for Lion)  
 Different School (3 Points)  
 Ear of the Emperor (5 Points)  
 Gentry (Variable)  
 Great Destiny (4 Points)  
 Hands of Stone (5 Points)  
 Heartless (2 Points)  
 A Heart of Vengeance (3 Points)  
 Hero of the People (2 Points; Ronin Only)  
 Higher Purpose (2 Points)  
 Imperial Spouse (2 Points)  
 Inheritance (Variable)  
 Inner Gift (6 Points)  
 Irreproachable (Variable)  
 Kharmic Tie (1-5 Points)  
 Large (3 Points, 2 for Crab)  
 Leadership (7 Points; 4 for Lion)  
 Luck (3, 6, or 9 Points)  
 Magic Resistance (2, 4, or 6 Points)  
 Multiple Schools (6 XP)  
 Precise Memory (3 Points)  
 Quick (5 Points)  
 Quick Healer (1 Point)  
 Ratling Ally (4 Points; 2 for Crab)  
 Read Lips (2 Points)  
 Sensei (1-5 Points)  
 Servant (Variable)  
 Social Position (5 Points per Rank)  
 Strength of the Earth (2, 4 or 8 Points)  
 Tactician (5 Points; 3 for Lion)  
 True Friend (Variable)  
 Voice (2 Points)  
 Way of the Land (2 Points, 1 for Unicorn)  
 Wealthy (1-10 Points)

# Disadvantages

Antisocial (2 or 4 Points)  
 Ascetic (3 Points)  
 Adopted Blood (1-5 Points)  
 Bad Fortune (1 Point)  
 Bad Health (3 Points)  
 Bad Reputation (2 Points)  
 Bente's Curse (2 Points)  
 Black Sheep (5 Points)  
 Brash (2 Points)  
 Can't Lie (3 Points)  
 Compulsion (2-4 Points)  
 Contrary (3 Points)  
 Coward (Variable)  
 Cruel (3 Points)  
 Dark Secret (5 Points)  
 Dependent (1-3 Points)  
 Dishonored (3 Points)  
 Driven (3 Points)  
 Deathseeker (7 Points; Lion Only)  
 Epilepsy (4 Points; 5 for Crane)  
 Fascination (1 Point)  
 Frail Mind (3 Points)  
 Forsaken (2 Points; 3 for Lion)  
 Greedy (1-4 Points)  
 Gullible (3 Points)  
 Haunted (1-3 Points)  
 Idealistic (2 Points; 3 for Lion)  
 Insensitive (2 Points)  
 Jealousy (2 Points; 3 for Phoenix)  
 Lame (3 Points)  
 Lechery (1-4 Points)  
 Lost Love (2 Points)  
 Low Pain Threshold (5 Points)  
 Meddler (2 Points)  
 Missing Eye (3 Points)  
 Missing Limb (3 Points)  
 Momoku (8 Points)  
 Nemesis (+2 Points)  
 Obligation (2 or 4 Points)  
 Overconfident (2 Points)  
 Permanent Wound (5 Points)  
 Phobia (Variable)  
 Small (2 Points)  
 Social Disadvantage (3 Points/Rank)  
 Soft-Hearted (2 Points)  
 Spoiled (3 Points)  
 Sworn Enemy (2-5 Points)  
 True Love (3 Points)  
 Unluck (3, 6, or 9 Points)  
 Vanity (1 Point)  
 Weakness (5 Points)






# Equipment

Samurai seldom pay for anything. If they want something, they take it or they command their peasantry to make it for them. However, with the rising power of the merchant class in Rokugan, items of higher quality are coming into demand. When characters receive their Outfits, they'll want more than just a sword and helmet. Below is a list of possessions available to samurai and shugenja. You may notice that the list has no costs. It is up to the GM (as your family daimyo) to decide what you may or may not start with. Pages 175-180 illustrate weapons and explain their use in the game.

## Basic Equipment

- Backpack, wicker
- Basket, large
- Basket, small
- Bedroll (futon)
- Bowyer's Kit
- Box, iron
- Box, puzzle
- Candle
- Chest, metal
- Chest, wooden
- Chopsticks (ivory)
- Cloth, silk bolt
- Dice and dice cup
- First aid kit
- Fishing kit (includes hook, net, etc.)
- Flint and Steel
- Furoshiki sack
- Games (go, shogi, etc.)
- Inro (medical kit)
- Lantern, metal
- Lantern, paper

- Lantern oil
- Mirror, small
- Mirror, large
- Musical instruments
  - samisen
  - biwa
  - kokyu
  - flute
  - drum
- Paper, writing (pouch of 5 sheets)
- Pillow book
- Pot, iron
- Quiver
- Rope, braided hair
- Rope, hemp
- Scrolls
- Sumi-e (writing) box
- Sword stand
- Travel pack
  - (dried rice and fish wrapped in rice paper)
- Umbrella

## Clothing

- Tessen
- Hakama
- Haori
- Kimono (includes obi)
- Obi pouch
- Sandals
- Silk cloak

## What is this stuff?

**Furoshiki sack:** A bundle of fabric folded and thrown over the shoulder; used to carry small items.

**Inro:** A small, segmented box used to carry personal belongings.

**Samisen:** A Rokugani guitar.

**Biwa:** A four-stringed lute.

**Koto:** A thirteen-stringed harp.

**Kokyu:** A three-stringed fiddle.

**Tessen:** Fan (often metal and edged)

**Hakama:** Divided skirt (only worn by men and samurai-ko)

**Haori:** A vest-like garment that exaggerates shoulders



# Outfit

Each character begins with a different “Outfit” depending on his family and profession. It should be noted that even though samurai do not practice commerce, they are given a stipend of koku from their lord, with which to hire servants (who do their shopping for them, of course!) and maintain their equipment. All of a bushi or shugenja’s equipment is a gift from their daimyo, or feudal lord. A true samurai owns very little – his swords, his name, and his honor. All else is the property of his daimyo, and through the daimyo, of the Emperor Hantei.

Some outfits mention Fine, Average and Poor quality equipment. A Fine quality item adds a small increase (e.g. a Fine sword might roll, but not keep, an extra die for Attack or Damage). For instance, a Fine Quality katana may have a DR of 3k2 rather than 2k2. Your Game Master will determine exactly what Skill roll, if any, is affected by your fine quality item.

Average quality items give no bonuses, and Poor quality items actually detract from their user’s skill (a Poor quality sword would roll one fewer die for Attack or Damage). High-quality items can affect a character’s dice in nearly any skill, and GMs are encouraged to determine their own uses for such non-magical items.

Fine quality items tend to be as much as ten times more expensive than normal quality items, but they are, at the very least, impressive, and – sometimes – more useful. Fine quality items are the work of a master craftsman, and are quite rare. They are sometimes given as gifts from a character’s daimyo for outstanding service. A small vassal family might have a single exceptional quality item, be it a sword, a piece of artwork, a kimono or other such object. Rare, indeed, is the samurai who is allowed to carry such a fine item, and it is a mark of great favor to be bestowed such a gift.

Your character’s starting Outfit is listed on the same pages with the Schools.







# Chapter Three:

# Fire



## Mechanics

The L5R game system is simple but flexible. Any Skill can be used with any Trait, allowing any kind of roll, simulating just about any kind of situation. The *Legend of the Five Rings* RPG system is designed to be heroic, reflecting the daring and honor-bound style of the original samurai epics such as Akira Kurosawa's *Ran*, *Yojimbo*, and *Sanjuro*. Because of this, you may find the L5R system to be very deadly – duels kill, and combats rarely resolve without a great deal of bloodshed. So remember to read this chapter carefully, and consider your character's actions before you rush into combat – sometimes, a samurai's best weapon is *not* his sword.

Listed below are the eight Traits and how to use them with the Skills. We've also taken a few lines under each Trait to show you how it compares to, contrasts with, and complements the other Traits. But first, we need to give you a glossary of definitions for terms you'll find, and use, repeatedly while playing the Legend of the Five Rings RPG.

## Definition of Terms

**Action** – Anything a character is trying to do in a given round. Each movement a character wishes to make is considered a single Action. Examples of Actions include attacking a foe, casting a spell, picking up a rock, running, or reading a scroll.

**Attack** – A specific action involving striking an opponent in combat. Typically, an attack is performed with hand-to-hand or melee weapons, but it may be ranged, spell-based, or even use siege engines.

**Auto** – This action is so simple it is automatically successful. Your GM should assume that, under typical circumstances, your character will always be able to perform this maneuver (such as a Unicorn riding his horse across open, level ground, or a Crane courtier doing simple origami).

**Ring** – Air, Earth, Fire, Water, or Void. A Ring is the main classification of your character's strengths and weaknesses. Each Ring is made up of two Traits, as defined on the character sheet. Your Ring is always equal to the lower of the two Traits which make it up.

**Round** – A single Round is three seconds of game time, and may contain more than one Action, if your character has the ability to act twice in one Round.

**TN (Target Number)** – The number that must be rolled, on kept dice, in order to succeed on a given roll. A Target Number is determined by your GM, and may be made more or less difficult according to outside influences such as hiding behind cover, performing a spell while distracted, or riding a horse at full gallop while folding origami.

**Trait** – A Trait is a sub-classification for a character Rings. Traits include things like Perception and Strength, and are the physical and mental descriptions of how competent your character is within certain parameters.





## Traits and Rings

An L5R character is a compilation of Skills, Rings and Traits built together around a personality and story designed by you, the player, and your GM. This chapter should help you familiarize yourself with your character's physical mechanics and his boundaries. To that end, here are a few definitions with which you will want to familiarize yourself.

### Air Ring

#### Reflexes Trait

Reflexes represents quickness and reaction time. It is the body reacting on an unconscious level, without the conscious mind giving it commands. Agility, on the other hand, represents conscious use of the body. Reflexes is coupled with a Skill to reflect the body's intuitive reaction to a situation.

#### Awareness Trait

Awareness measures a character's intuition. It is used when the ability to think quickly is brought into play. Awareness is also the character's ability to sense the emotional state of others.

Any time a character is caught off-guard, you can judge his response with an Awareness roll. For instance, a character is questioned in the Imperial Court about his opinion on a topic he wasn't prepared for. The GM can ask him for a Courtier roll, using the character's Awareness to represent his quick-thinking reaction to the question, and also bringing into play the character's intuition about the question and the person asking it.

Awareness is different from Perception in that Awareness judges a character's ability to sense things that are not immediately evident. A GM could classify a successful Awareness check as a 'hunch', telling the player, "You get a very bad feeling about this."

Perception, on the other hand, has everything to do with the senses and pure physical evidence.

### Earth Ring

#### Strength Trait

Strength is rarely used with Skills: Strength rolls mainly involve raw muscle. Typically, a character's Strength is used to determine simple feats such as lifting boulders, pushing aside obstacles, or dragging heavy weights.

#### Perception Trait

This Trait is used whenever a character is trying to observe details. Perception can be used with just about any Skill when the character is trying to gain information. He could use Perception with any weapon Skill to determine a weapon's quality, if it has been damaged, or any other minute details. Any time a character is trying to gather information, he uses his Perception.

### Fire Ring

#### Agility Trait

A character's Agility reflects his ability to control his movements. The more delicate the movement, the more he needs to rely on his ability to control it. GMs can call for Agility checks when the character's ability to control his movements are in question. Agility complements many physical Skills including Stealth, Painting, Kenjutsu, and just about any other Bugei Skill.

#### Intelligence Trait

Whenever memory or reasoning ability is called into question, a character's Intelligence is used. Almost any Skill can be coupled with Intelligence to test a character's knowledge of that particular Skill.

The main difference between Intelligence and Perception is that Perception is used to gather facts and clues. Intelligence is used to recall information that Perception has gathered and to put it together into a logical and reasonable format.

### Water Ring

#### Stamina Trait

Whenever the physical determination of a character comes into question, the GM can call for a Stamina Roll. Stamina can be used with just about any physical Skill to test a character's resolve over long-term actions.



For example, Stamina would be an appropriate skill for a dancer who must perform while injured, or for a rider to maintain control over a horse after racing across the plains all night long.

### Willpower Trait

On the other end of the determination scale is Willpower. As Stamina is the testing board for a character's physical endurance, his mental endurance is measured by his Willpower.

Temptation is the key word when speaking of the difference between Willpower and Stamina, especially temptation from external sources. Temptations of wealth, influence and power (as well as more carnal temptations) are those that call for a test of a character's will, while temptations of the body (to rest when weary, or to stop moving when injured) would be tests of Stamina.

# The Basics

Every task you wish your character to perform in an L5R game is resolved with a die roll. This section describes the dice and how they are used to determine the success or failure of a character's actions.

## Dice

The L5R RPG uses 10-sided dice exclusively. These dice are added together and compared to a Target Number. When called upon to make a roll, you will typically roll a greater number of dice than you are allowed to keep. Once you have rolled all the dice you are allowed to use on a single attempt, you may then choose which dice you wish to keep – typically, but not always, the highest available dice.

Once you have decided which dice you will keep, total the value of those dice. If this number is greater than or equal to the TN assigned by the GM, the roll is successful, and your character will succeed in his action.







## Open Ended Tens

An 'open ended ten' refers to a die which has naturally rolled a ten. Such a die may be rerolled again, and the resulting number may be added to that die's individual total. If the die again rolls a ten, it may be rolled again and added to the die's combined total, and so forth.

It should be noted that open ended tens are used only in conjunction with Skills at which your character is proficient. A player may not reroll tens on a Skill Roll if his character does not have at least one point in the Skill being attempted. This is to reflect that someone with training – however little – knows more about performing that skill than someone who knows nothing about the technique.

## Rolls

There are three types of rolls you may be called upon to make in L5R. Each of them involve rolling a certain number of dice and keeping a certain number of dice.

### Skill Check

The first type of roll is a skill roll (or "check"). Roll a number of dice equal to a skill the GM deems appropriate and keep a number of dice equal to a Trait the GM deems appropriate. If you do not have the Skill the GM calls for in a test, you may attempt the maneuver anyway, but you may not reroll 10s, and the GM may penalize your Target Number. A common shorthand method of writing this type of roll is "Skill/Trait".

*Example:* Matsu Turi is trying to strike down a hideous goblin. He makes a Skill check: since he is using a katana, he rolls a number of dice equal to his Kenjutsu Skill and keeps a number of dice equal to his Agility Trait. This could also be referred to as a "Kenjutsu/Agility roll."

### Raw Trait Check

Some things are a question of raw Trait rather than Skill (e.g. lifting a large rock). In these cases you will be called upon to make a Raw Trait roll (or "check"). Roll dice equal to the appropriate Trait and keep them all. In this way, your character's natural ability is tested, rather than his understanding of a Skill or his learned knowledge.

Raw Trait rolls are typically physical, such as lifting boulders with Strength, but may take the form of other challenges, such as discerning the true purpose of someone's actions with Awareness.



## Contested Roll

A Contested Roll is either a raw Trait roll or a Skill Roll, but instead of a TN assigned by the GM, the characters roll against one another. In this case, the two characters are both attempting to perform an action (or two opposed actions), and whoever has the highest total number on their kept dice wins.

## Similar Skill

Sometimes, when the GM asks you to make a Skill check, your character does not have the Skill. While your samurai may not possess that particular Skill, he may have another which is close enough to grant him some basic understanding of the challenge. In this case, you can petition your GM to allow you to use the 'Similar Skill' rule.

If your GM is convinced that your Skill is close enough to the original Skill asked for, he may allow you to substitute the secondary Skill, perhaps with a penalty to your Target Number for the attempt.

*Example:* Kitsu Skya the Lion, with a Battle skill of 6, sits down with her teacher to play a game of Go. Skya doesn't have the Go skill, but because she has quite a lot of knowledge concerning tactics, the GM decides to allow her to roll her Battle Skill at +10 to her TN. Because Skya does not actually have the Go Skill, she may not reroll 10s.

## Difficulties

When you want to perform an Action, you have to roll equal to or higher than the Target Number. A common target number for a simple, unopposed action is typically a 15. You must meet or exceed

this number with the added total of your Kept dice in order for your character to succeed in her action.

The GM can announce any Target Number he wishes, using the list of standard TNs as a guide. Remember that the difficulty of an action is based on a marginal success, and that players can make Raises if they want to be more effective. Those players who want their characters to succeed by leaps and bounds, or who wish to be very specific with their actions, must make a number of raises for each additional heroic twist they wish to add to their character's basic action. Lifting a boulder is hard – lifting a boulder with one hand and carrying it away from the geisha who is nibbling on your ear, however, is much more difficult.

While TNs do not have to be in multiples of 5, they tend to be, and it keeps things simple. Still, this is only a guideline and there is no reason for the GM not to ask for TNs of 14 and 23 if the situation calls for them.

## Raises

Players and GMs can *Raise* the TN of an action in increments of 5 to gain more dramatic or spectacular effects.

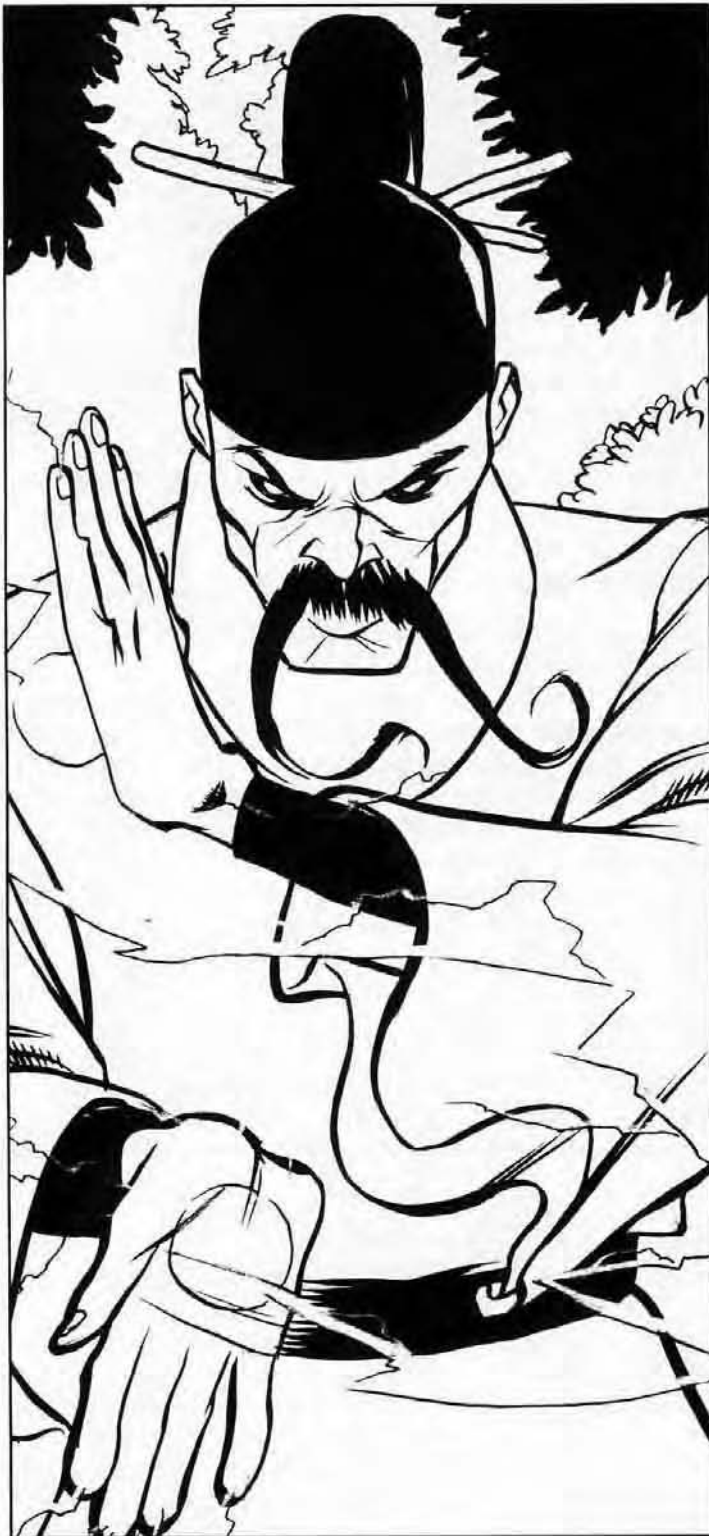
When the GM has announced a TN for a roll, skilled characters may realize that they have an easy roll to make, and may wish to make their potential success more spectacular. A player can voluntarily increase the TN in order to achieve a greater, or more dramatic success. This is called a *Raise*. The player announces how many Raises he is taking and rolls normally.

Players may not make more Raises on a given roll than their Void Ring – a bushi with a Void of 2 may make 1 or 2 Raises to a roll, but not 3.

For every Raise, the TN increases by 5, but the level of success increases as well. Rolling against the TN announced by the GM will give the character a successful result, but more can be achieved with one or more Raises. Keep in mind when declaring a Raise that, if the

TNs	Difficulty	Physical	Mental
Auto	Mundane	Getting out of bed	Remembering your sword
5	Easy	Striking an unmoving target	Recognizing a friend
10	Average	Carrying half your weight	Finding a misplaced item
15	Hard	Lifting your own weight above your head	Recognizing someone in disguise
20	Very Hard	Climbing a mountain barehanded	Finding a crucial clue in a murder scene
25	Heroic	Diving safely from a waterfall	Remembering a speech in perfect detail
35	Unprecedented	Out-wrestling a troll	Naming all the samurai at a famous battle
45	Unbelievable	Lifting a small shrine, single-handed	Outwitting a Fortune





roll ends up less than the new TN, it is a failure, even if it is higher than the original TN.

Raises can have all sorts of different results, and the exact mechanics of the results are dependent on the GM and player. Your GM will tell you when it is appropriate to make a Raise, and what effects you can gain from one.

Spell Raises are similar, but can only be done for specific spell effects, as defined by the spell in question. Shugenja who wish to use Raises when performing a spell will want to read the spell descriptions in the *Book of Air* very carefully, to understand the limitations and guidelines for such Raises.

When making Perception Rolls or any other roll about gaining information, a successful Raise results in more information, more reliable information, more relevant information, and/or more detailed information. In combat, Raises result in more powerful and more accurate strikes, as well as successful special maneuvers (disarms, called shots, etc.).

Raises are also used when a character wants to achieve a more specific result. If a player wishes a particular result, the GM tells him how many Raises are required to achieve the player's desired effect. The player can then either make the attempt (at the new TN) or try something less difficult.

*Example:* Mirumoto Kuro, who has been sent to acquire a fine horse for his daimyo, is inspecting a possible steed. The GM has said that the TN to determine the horse's quality is 15; Kuro, who is rolling 5 dice and keeping 4, decides to announce 2 Raises. He is intending to spend a lot of money on this horse for his lord and doesn't want to dishonor himself with an animal in poor health. With 2 Raises, he should be able to find out all sorts of important information about the mare.

## Free Raises

A Free Raise gives you the benefit of a Raise without raising the Target Number.

In some circumstances, the GM may award a character a Free Raise for a roll. This means that if the player makes a successful roll, he will be awarded the effects of a Raise without actually raising the Target Number (or an additional one if he is making Raises on his own as well). Free Raises can be the result of magic items, spells, the blessing of the Seven Fortunes, praying at the Temple of Amaterasu, being in a familiar tactical situation, having made a successful Perception roll to analyze your opponent's technique, or many other situations. Your GM may assign you a Free Raise to an action for exceptional role-playing, or you may earn one for keen tactical planning before the battle. In any case, your GM will tell you when and where you may spend these Free Raises. This Free Raise does



not change the TN in any way, and it doesn't count against the PC's limit if he wants to make Raises on his own.

Free Raises given by School Rank or other means may be used to decrease the TN of a specific action by 5, rather than to achieve a specific result. Players who opt to do this must declare it with their GM before the roll, and may not use that Free Raise to create any other effect for the action or the attempt.

*Example:* Kuro succeeded on his information-gathering roll, and now wants to ride the horse before making a final decision. Since Kuro was so careful while gathering information, the GM decides to give him a Free Raise on the Horsemanship/Agility roll Kuro must make to control the horse when the bandits spring out from cover and spook it...

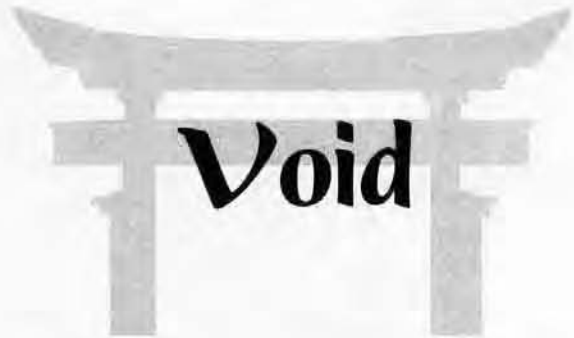
## Ten Dice Per Roll

Sometimes, a character is given extra dice to roll because of magic items, successful Raises on a previous roll, or by other means. However, no roll is *ever* made with more than ten dice. If a PC is called upon to roll more than 10 dice, he changes the extra dice into extra kept dice.

*Example:* Kakita Kyori adds up her bonuses and figures out that she can roll 13 dice on her damage roll, keeping 2 (the DR of her katana). She instead rolls 10 dice, and keeps 5 of them; 2 from the katana itself, and three more for the extra 3 dice she couldn't roll.

## Cooperation

Sometimes characters wish to work together on a roll, like a group of bushi lifting a rock, or a troupe of singers performing for the court. The group chooses one character to lead the effort, and only that character rolls dice. For a Skill Check, the lead character rolls his own skill plus the skill of everyone helping; he keeps only his Trait, as usual. For a Raw Trait Check, the lead character may roll an additional die for each person assisting. Cooperating characters do not roll more than ten dice, and do not change the extra dice into kept dice.



Unlike the other elements on your character sheet, Void does not have any Traits attached to it. It is not a measure of how strong, fast, or wary your character can be. Rather, Void is the depth of spirit, the measure of heart, fortune, and destiny that your character can call upon in order to achieve the greatest tasks and most daring feats.

You have a number of Void points equal to your total rank in Void, and you may spend these Void points in many different ways. Once they are spent, your character will have to regain them through rest, meditation, or heroic efforts of honor.

People in Rokugan can occasionally touch that place where the other elements come together perfectly and perform beyond their normal capabilities. In the *Legend of the Five Rings* RPG, this is known as "spending a Void point." Whenever a character is making a roll, he may choose to spend a void point. Spending a Void point allows you to roll and keep an extra die on any action.

Under normal circumstances, a character may only spend 1 Void point per roll. Under extreme circumstances (up to the GM) a character could spend additional Void points. However, spending more than one Void point in a round is certain to have other side effects – changing destiny can result in angering the kami, causing a backlash of ill luck to surround the character afterwards, or simply making the recovery of Void points more difficult for a short time.

A character has as many Void points to spend as they have in their Void rank. Spending Void points does not decrease their Void in any way.

At the end of a night's sleep (eight hours) or after four hours of uninterrupted meditation, a character has all of his spent Void points restored to him.





## Combat

Combat in L5R is usually swift, and often deadly. Players who intend to make their characters “combat monsters” or “hack-and-slash killers” are more likely to rush through new characters than those who use intelligence and cunning to avoid combat, as well as defeat their opponent. The katana, a samurai’s weapon of choice, is in effect a four-foot-long razor blade – deadly, and incredibly efficient. Katana blades were once tested by chopping through as many as seven dead bodies in a single stroke. If the katana could not make the cut, it was not good enough to be a true samurai’s blade.

However, we all want L5R to be a place of adventure and daring, so the combat rules, while deadly, are not unfair. Those players and GMs who want a less deadly Rokugan are encouraged to tamper with the rules given below, in order to better reflect the combat climate of their Empire.

### Skirmishes

When two small forces face each other, it is called a Skirmish. Skirmishes can involve as few as two combatants or as many as a dozen. Skirmishes are handled with three steps:

**Step One:** Determine Initiative

**Step Two:** Declare Actions

**Step Three:** Resolve Actions

#### Step One: Determine Initiative

At the beginning of a combat round, the GM asks all players to roll and keep their Awareness. As with Skilled Rolls, if a 10 is rolled, roll again and add the result. Wounded characters *subtract* their current Wound penalty from this roll. Wound penalties and other modifiers can cause a character’s initiative to go below zero.

The GM makes a similar roll for all NPCs involved in the combat. The GM records what both characters and NPCs rolled, ranging from the highest number to the lowest number.

The player or NPC who rolled highest gets the first Action, followed by the person who rolled next-to-highest, and so on. The person who rolled lowest will be last to act.

In some cases characters may have multiple actions in a single round. A character who has multiple actions may perform *all* of them on his initiative number, before the next character (in initiative order) gets his Action.

#### Step Two: Declare Actions

Players declare Actions from slowest to fastest, so the character with the highest Initiative Roll gets to hear what everybody else is planning to do before deciding his own Action.

In order to keep things orderly, a Skirmish is broken down into Rounds. Each Round is three seconds long, enough time to give each character one Action. A character who wishes to engage in combat must do so with one of three maneuvers: Normal Attack, Full Attack or Full Defense.

#### Step Three: Resolve Actions

Once all players (and NPCs) have declared their actions, go around the table from the highest Initiative to the lowest and resolve their actions. One by one, the players roll the dice appropriate to their Actions and determine if they are successful.

If your character failed to beat the TN, his Action failed. If your character beat the TN, his Action was successful.

### Combat Raises

Raises are one of the most exciting aspects of playing L5R. They allow players and the GM to manipulate their own Target Numbers to gain a specific effect or perform an involved action. Here are a few examples of what you can do with Raises in combat.

#### Extra Damage

For every Raise to hit an opponent, the character gets to roll (not keep) an additional die when rolling for damage. For the most part, Raises are used in order to do more damage to the opponent. However, sometimes a character will want a more specific effect than just doing more damage. This is referred to as a “called shot.”

#### Called Shots

Rather than simply trying to hit their opponent, characters can try for a more difficult target by making Raises. Typically, the result



of this type of “called shot” is left to the GM’s discretion. A called shot can be anything from “I want to hit him in the head” to something as unusual as “I want to carve my initials into his helm without hurting him.” When a player declares his called shot, the GM tells the player how many Raises will be necessary to perform the desired Action. For the most part, the end result of each of these called shots is determined by the GM; many will simply be the standard increase in damage.

### Disarming an Opponent

A common type of called shot is a disarm attempt, in which the warrior attempts to knock his opponent’s weapon out of his hand. Disarm attempts normally require three Raises. When a disarm attempt is made, the disarming character and his target make a Contested Roll using their respective weapons skills and their Agility. If the disarming character wins the Contested Roll by the required three Raises (that is, by 15), he successfully disarms his opponent.

## Attack and Defense

During an attack, the attacking character rolls his weapon skill and keeps his appropriate Trait: the Trait used is Agility except in unusual cases, which the GM will declare at the time. The TN to hit an opponent during combat with a normal attack is equal to the opponent’s Reflexes x 5. A character may, however, choose instead to perform a Full Defense or a Full Attack.

### Full Defense

If you have declared Full Defense, your character may not attack. If you are truly guarding against your opponent’s blows, you have no time to make strikes of your own. Only with the use of a School Technique should anyone be able to both operate under Full Defense and still be able to endanger his opponent.

If you or your opponent declares a Full Defense, then the person on Full Defense gains a bonus to his TN to be hit, thus reflecting his wary stance and guarded position. When someone who has declared a Full Defense is attacked, the defending character may make a Defense Skill roll (using Agility) and add the result of that roll to the attacker’s TN to hit him. The defending character decides which attacking characters receive this TN penalty; he may go on Full Defense against one attacker per School Rank he has. A Rank 3 bushi, for instance, may go on Full Defense against three opponents at once.

Note that a character or NPC can only declare a Full Defense if he has at least one rank in the Defense skill.

### Full Attack

If you have declared a Full Attack, your character is not attempting to defend himself against the strikes of his opponents. He is instead choosing to open himself up to an attack rather than miss the opportunity to strike – and possibly kill – his enemy.

Mechanically, performing a Full Attack reduces your TN to be hit by 15, making it more likely that you will be struck by your opponent. However, it also reduces your TN to hit your opponent by 10, and you therefore have a better chance to cause damage to your enemy.





## Combat Chart

These are other modifications that may affect an attacker's Attack Roll. If these situations apply, the attacker adds or subtracts the given amount from his total on his kept dice. The basic Target Number to hit an opponent is his Reflexes x 5.

### General

Attacker is using Off-hand: +10 to all TN

Attacker is using a weapon for which he has the specific weapon Skill: -1 per Skill Rank to TN while attacking with that weapon

Defender is motionless: TN is 5

### Armor

Attacker is wearing Heavy Armor: +5

*Note:* This penalty applies to all physical TNs, not just combat.

Defender is wearing Light Armor: +5

Defender is wearing Heavy Armor: +10

### Movement

Attacker is flanking: -5

Attacker is behind opponent: -10

Attacker has completely surprised opponent: -15

Attacker was running the previous round: +5

### Defending

Opponent declared a Full Attack: -15

Attacker has declared Full Attack: -10

Attacker is Wounded: + (number next to appropriate Wound Level)

If you have declared Full Defense, you may not attack.

Opponent has declared Full Defense: + (Opponent's Defense/Agility roll)

### Additional Modifiers for Missile Weapons

Target more than 50' away: +10

Target more than 100' away: +15

Target more than 150' away: +20

Target more than 200' away: +25

Target more than 250' away: +30

Target more than 300' away: Impossible

Firing from a horse: +10

The GM may assign additional modifiers based on visibility, terrain, cover, range, etc.



## Ranged Weapons

Using a ranged weapon in the L5R RPG is not very different from using a hand-to-hand weapon. The GM may call for a higher TN due to cover, range, or the movement of the target. Like melee weapons, it is simply a matter of rolling to hit, and then rolling for Damage if you hit.

There is one difference, however. Rokugani do not "aim" their bows. They rely on instinct and intuition, and a good understanding of their weapon and its capabilities. When firing a bow, samurai who have been trained in the common Rokugani style use their Reflexes rather than their Agility. The two exceptions to this rule are samurai from the Unicorn Clan, who have learned the trick of "aiming" from their ancient barbaric roots, and the Naga, who are not samurai. Both use Agility when using a bow rather than Reflexes.

## Weapon Damage

All weapons have a two-number rating to indicate how much damage they do with each blow. When one character hits another, he uses his Strength to determine the number of Wounds he delivers with his blow. The stronger a character is, the more Wounds he can deliver.

All weapons are listed with a Damage Rating (DR) that looks like this:

Katana 2k2

When your character is dealing Damage, add his Strength to the first number in the Damage Rating and roll that many dice. The second number (the one that follows the "k") tells you how many dice you keep from your roll. For instance, the standard katana listed above, with its DR of "2k2", is telling you: "Roll (Strength + 2) dice and keep 2 of them." The unfortunate soul on the other end of the katana marks off the total of the 2 kept dice from his Wound Track. (See "Getting Wounded" below.)

Weapon damage is considered open-ended (may reroll 10s) if your character has the skill appropriate to the weapon being used. For example, if the character has Bojutsu or the Bo Skill, he may reroll 10s when using a Bo. If the character only has Bojutsu and picks up a katana, his 10s will not be open-ended, because the character has no skill in using that weapon.

Damage that is caused by spells, poisons, or other means has a DR as well. Unless otherwise indicated, roll and keep that many dice to determine the amount of Wounds.

## Getting Wounded

When a character takes damage, the player marks down the Wounds on his character sheet. He begins at the top (at +0) and begins marking off Wounds. If he reaches a number of Wounds equal to the number in the box (his Earth x 2), then he moves down to the next Wound Level and continues to record Wounds.

### Wounded

When you've been Wounded, everything becomes more difficult. When you've got a wicked sword cut down your arm, it's hard to think straight. Whenever you try to make a roll when you're Wounded, add the number listed next to your Wound Level to the TN.

### Down

If a character's Wounds ever reach the "Down" Level, the pain is so great that he cannot stand, move faster than a crawl, or speak louder than a whisper. The TN to hit a character who is "Down" is 5.

### Out

If a character drops to "Out," the pain has overcome him and he falls unconscious for a number of hours equal to the number of Wounds he has taken at the "Out" and "Dead" levels. In order for a character to be killed by his grievous wounds, he must completely fill out the "Dead" Wound Level.

*Example:* O-okami the Ronin has an Earth of 3, so he has 6 Wounds per Wound Level. When the valiant O-okami is hit by an Ogre for 30 Wounds, the first 5 Wound Levels are filled completely and he drops into the "+20" Wound Level. During future sword attacks and other actions, his TN will go up by 20. If he were to take 1 more Wound, he would drop down to "Out."

## Healing

Every morning, after a restful night's sleep, a character heals a number of Wounds equal to his Stamina rating. Simply erase a number of Wounds equal to the character's Stamina.

The most serious injuries ("Down" or "Out" levels) may have more lasting effects, but those are up to the GM and are dependent on the injury sustained as well as the character. There are magical ways to heal damage other than nature's processes, but these work in exactly the same way: simply erase the Wounds.





## Movement

Movement in L5R is based on a character's Water ring. All distances, speed, or basic walking times are based on this ring; only long-distance running or other such movement is based on a character's Stamina.

Characters can move a number of feet per round equal to their Water x 5. If they wish to run at top speed, they may move twice that distance, but may not take any other action for the round. If the character runs at top speed, the following round that character will take a +5 TN to their next round's actions. Characters with a Stamina of 3 or greater automatically avoid this penalty to their next action.

A character may not take any other actions when running, including combat and spellcasting.

### An Example of an Iaijutsu Duel

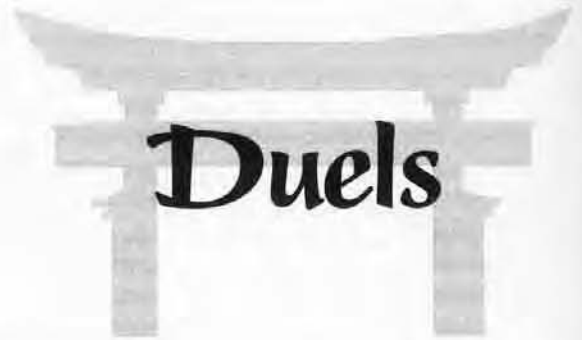
A Phoenix samurai and a Crab samurai enter into an iaijutsu duel. The Crab has an Agility of 3, an Iaijutsu of 2 and a Void of 2. The Phoenix has an Agility of 2, an Iaijutsu of 2 and a Void of 3.

The Crab rolled higher on his initial Iaijutsu/Awareness roll, so he may choose first whether to Strike or Focus. He chooses to Focus. He Raises the TN, which starts at 5, making it a 10.

It is now the Phoenix samurai's turn. He may choose to Strike or Focus. If he chooses to Strike, the Crab will get the first opportunity to roll at a TN of 10. He chooses to Focus, Raising the TN to 15.

Both duelists have Raised once. They may only make a number of Raises equal to their Void Trait. The Crab may only Raise once more (Void 2), while the Phoenix may Raise 2 more times (Void 3).

The Crab samurai chooses to Focus once more (making the TN a 20), as does the Phoenix (TN 25). The Crab is out of Raises and must choose to Strike. Because the Crab called "Strike", his opponent gets the first opportunity to roll his Attack. The Phoenix must roll against the last TN he Raised to, which was a 25. If he misses, the Crab will get a chance to strike him at the last TN he Raised to, which was 20. The Phoenix decides to use his Shiba School Technique, and spends 2 Void Points. He now rolls a total of (Iaijutsu 2 + Void Points 2) 4 dice, keeping (Agility 2 + Void Points 2) all four. Unfortunately, he only rolls a 22. He misses his strike and now it is the Crab's turn to roll at his TN of 20...



One of the most exciting elements of samurai fiction is the iaijutsu duel. Two samurai stand only a few feet apart, each beginning to focus his chi for a dramatic and powerful strike. One will win and the other will die. Such duels typically occur with the sword, katana against katana in a dramatic test of honor, courage, speed and skill. However, characters who are not gifted with the sword may choose other means of settling insults or resolving differences. All three types of duels common to Rokugan (*Iaijutsu*, *Taryu-jiai* and *Shiken*) are detailed below.

## Iaijutsu Duels

The L5R RPG uses a unique mechanic to reflect the tension and drama of iaijutsu, the truest test of the swordsman. Iaijutsu duels involve two competitors, each armed with a katana (and only a katana may be used in an iaijutsu duel – all other weapons are forbidden by the Emperor's Law and Kakita's famous treatise, *The Sword*). Iaijutsu duels are often, but not always, fatal to one or both competitors, and are never occasioned by minor insults or passing arguments. They are the pinnacle of swordsmanship, the ideal of the samurai caste, and the true mark of a master *kenshinzen*, or swordsman.

Once a samurai has decided he will challenge his opponent to an iaijutsu duel, a formal procedure must be followed. First, the samurai initiating the duel must get his master's permission (daimyo, taisei, or other feudal lord) to request the duel. Sometimes, if the daimyo knows that his servant will lose (and die) he will withhold his permission. A samurai's purpose is to obey his lord, and his life belongs to that daimyo. It is not his place to destroy his lord's prized possessions – including his own life.

If the daimyo of the challenging samurai agrees, the samurai must then seek out his opponent and formally request a duel. He



must state the reason the challenge has been offered, and he must precisely name the terms of victory and defeat. For example, two samurai may duel for the right to lead the Wolf Legion, or may fight over an insult ("My grandfather died in battle, and I will prove the truth of my words!").

If the second samurai agrees, he must approach his daimyo for permission to accept the duel. Again, that daimyo may refuse the samurai's right to accept, as the samurai's life is his possession. Worse, he may refuse that samurai's right to accept the challenge, and name another samurai who may accept. ("Your grandfather deserves to be defended by his oldest son, Daori, and thus I will accept the challenge personally.") It is considered rude for a daimyo to agree to a challenge and then give the acceptance to a samurai who is not involved with the original incident. (The daimyo of the Crane, for instance, cannot agree to a Lion-Crane duel and then have Yoritomo of the Mantis accept the fight).

The challenged samurai has the right to name the place where the duel will occur, anywhere within the Empire (but it must be in a public place, with witnesses from both camps). He also has the right to name the time when the duel will be fought, so long as it is no more than one year from the date of the duel's acceptance.

### The Duel

Once the duel has been set, the contest of swordsmanship may commence. As both samurai take their stance a few steps away from

each other, both must make an Iaijutsu/Awareness Roll with a TN of 10. If the roll is successful, they may determine one of three facts:

- The Agility of their opponent;
- The Iaijutsu of their opponent; or
- The Void of their opponent.

The contestants may Raise this TN. For every Raise, they can discover another fact about their opponent.

*Example:* Ikoma Hori is about to enter an iaijutsu duel. He wants to know more about his opponent, so he decides to make an Iaijutsu/Awareness Roll. His Awareness is 3 and his Iaijutsu is 2, so he rolls two dice and keeps both. He decides to Raise the TN by 5 to learn the Iaijutsu and Agility of his opponent. He rolls a 17, enough to beat the TN of 15 (base 10 + a Raise for additional information). Hori discovers his opponent has an Agility of 4 and an Iaijutsu of 3.

After the Awareness Rolls have been made, but before any other Action takes place, either opponent may declare that the other samurai is the victor. This is not a cowardly act; recognizing the winner without spilling blood is always a noble act. If both opponents disengage after one has declared the other the winner, the duel is over.

However, if the opponent chooses not to disengage, he has committed a horrible and dishonorable act. It is most likely that the final outcome of the duel will be the death of one, or both, samurai.





A samurai who does not know when he is beaten has no respect for his lord's possession (namely, his life) and will die in dishonor and disgrace.

If both opponents agree to continue (their attributes are so close that the outcome is not inevitable), the duel proceeds as follows:

- The winner of the Awareness roll decides who will have the opportunity of focusing or striking first. (In the event of a tie on this roll, higher Awareness goes first; if that is also a tie, higher Void goes first; if that is also a tie, roll a single die to randomly choose.)
- During a duel, the TN for a samurai to strike his opponent is 5.
- If the first opponent chooses to Focus, he voluntarily Raises the TN by 5.
- After the first opponent announces "Focus," the second opponent also has the opportunity to Strike or Focus. If he Focuses, he Raises the current TN by 5.
- Focusing continues until one opponent tells his opponent to "Strike." When a duelist announces "Strike," his opponent rolls his Iaijutsu/Agility against the last TN he Raised to; he may take extra Raises on top of this number if he wishes to.

If the attacker rolls under his TN, he misses. In this case, or if the first attack was not fatal, his opponent now has an opportunity to strike. The second duelist rolls his attack at the last TN he Raised to (which should be 5 lower than his opponent's TN, save for any extra Raises the opponent took).

A duelist may not Focus more times than he has Ranks in Void, but may Focus an additional time by spending a Void Point. You may spend Void points before you roll your attack.

When a duelist makes a successful Iaijutsu Roll, he rolls Damage as if he had hit someone in normal combat. Remember that Raises increase the number of dice rolled for damage.

If both sides of the duel are still conscious after they trade their first blows, what happens next depends on the combatants. If the duel is to the death, then they continue their fight using Kenjutsu instead of Iaijutsu.

If the duel is to first blood or is simply a contest of skill, then there may already be a winner, and the duelists may be satisfied.

At the end of the duel, the winner gains Glory equal to the School Rank of his opponent + 1. The loser gains only 1 Glory, posthumously if necessary.



the competition. The initial Target Number of the duel is 15. The competitor who has a lower rank in the appropriate artisan skill must Focus or Strike first.

If a competitor chooses to Focus, the TN is raised by 5 and then the other competitor must now Focus or Strike. A competitor may Focus a number of times equal to their Void, but may Focus an additional time by spending a Void Point.

If a competitor wishes to Strike, then the most skilled artisan on each side must immediately make a skill roll against the current TN. The base artistic value of the piece is the current TN plus the competitor's Artisan skill. A failed skill roll has an artistic value of zero; something went dreadfully wrong. After a Strike is called but before the skill rolls, both competitors may spend any number of Void Points to add 5 to the artistic value of their pieces for every Void Point spent. The competitor who did not Strike may add 10 points to the artistic value of his final work. A character who has attended a school specially dedicated to their art (Kakita Artisan) may add their School Rank x 2 to the final value. An artisan who was clever enough to work something into his piece to flatter his judges can also increase his piece's worth at the GM's discretion. This requires research beforehand and no small amount of guile, but can raise the final value by up to 5 points.

In theory, the artisan whose piece has a higher artistic value wins the contest. In reality, this is only sometimes the case. Art is subjective, and so is politics. Judges are frequently biased, and those skilled at making friends among the court succeed more frequently than those with talent. To express this in game terms, an artisan who is disliked by a majority of the judges may have the final artistic value of his piece reduced by 5, 10, or even as much as 15. This is not to say that an artisan without political connections doesn't still have a chance to win, but he'll have to work much harder than his opponent to impress a biased jury.



Most of the idea behind the Honor mechanic in L5R concerns what a samurai thinks of himself. Some GMs believe that when such a system is arbitrated by the GM, it detracts from the players' portrayals of their characters' own codes of conduct; these GMs often permit the players themselves to suggest fluctuations in their PCs' Honor. Ask your GM how he will manage Honor in his game.

There are no hard and fast rules for Honor awards. It is a sliding scale, and something that brings an upstanding Phoenix or Lion Honor may not be justifiable for someone else.

As a general rule, refer to the chart on the following page for examples of Honor awards and losses for the various clans.

GMs should consider the current Honor level of the PCs, and base Honor awards upon their already-established code of conduct. If a PC has a background that suggests he adheres more (or less) to the tenets of Bushido, or that he is decidedly stout in his beliefs, consider awarding points based upon that background. Some GMs feel that Honor is flexible, and can vary in small ways from character to character without offending anyone, if the players understand the reasoning for it. Alternatively, your GM may have a set idea of what acts are worth what Honor, thereby imposing a more absolute view of bushido.

For example, if a samurai with an Honor of 1 and another with an Honor of 3 both perform an act worth 4 Honor boxes (saving a burning village, for instance), the lower-Honor samurai might earn 3 boxes of Honor, while the other might only receive 1. Remember, a samurai with high Honor has more to lose than she has to gain. For one with an Honor of 4, performing honorable deeds is par for the course. But for those of Rank 1 or 2, it is a little more unusual, and worthy of note. A GM with a more rigid view of Honor might simply award both samurai two points, considering it appropriate compensation for doing what any samurai is expected to do.





### Sample Honor Awards and Losses

Bushido Tenet (Award)	Crab	Crane	Dragon	Lion	Phoenix	Scorpion	Unicorn
<i>Gi</i> : Honesty and Justice	0-1	2-4	0-2	1-3	1-2	0	1-2
<i>Yu</i> : Heroic Courage	3-5	1-2	1-3	3-5	1-2	0	2-4
<i>Jiu</i> : Compassion	0-1	1-3	2-4	1-3	2-4	0	1-3
<i>Rei</i> : Polite Courtesy	0	2-5	1-4	1-2	1-3	0	1-2
<i>Moyo</i> : Honor	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5	1-5
<i>Makato</i> : Complete Sincerity	1-2	2-5	2-4	2-5	2-4	-2-5	1-3
<i>Chugo</i> : Duty and Loyalty	2-5	1-3	1-3	2-4	1-2	3-5	1-3
Prevent your lord from losing face	1-2	2-5	1-3	2-4	1-3	3-5	1-3

Dishonorable Action (Loss)	Crab	Crane	Dragon	Lion	Phoenix	Scorpion	Unicorn
Allow an act of dishonor to occur	1-3	1-5	2-5	3-5	2-5	0	2-4
Betray a trust	2-4	2-5	2-4	3-5	2-5	+1-5	2-4
Breach of etiquette	0-2	4-5	1-3	3-5	3-5	0	1-3
Caught lying	1-3	3-5	2-4	3-5	2-4	0	1-3
Forcing an unjustified duel	0-1	4-5	3-5	3-5	2-4	0	1-3
"Murder" another samurai	1-5	3-5	2-5	2-5	3-5	0	2-4
Show emotion in public	3-5	1-3	1-4	3-5	2-5	0-1	2-4

## Honor Tests

Whenever a character is forced to make an Action that he feels is dishonorable, the player may choose to make an Honor Test. Often times, a Willpower Roll is used to resist temptation (or the source of the temptation makes a Contested roll against the character's Willpower). If that roll fails, as a last ditch attempt, the player can announce an Honor Test to resist the temptation.

*Example:* Mirumoto Kuro is eating rice at a Lion Clan palace. A very pretty Lion samurai-ko has secretly passed him an invitation to her private chambers later that evening. The samurai-ko successfully made a Seduction Roll earlier in the night, and the GM tells Kuro's player that he would be hard pressed to not accept the offer. Kuro announces he will make a Willpower check to resist the temptation. Unfortunately, he fails. The GM tells him he now has very little (if any) choice in the matter. Kuro's player announces that he is now going to make an Honor Test.

If a character takes an Honor Test, he may roll a number of dice equal to his Honor Rank to beat a TN assigned by the Game Master. If the roll succeeds, the character resists the temptation and gains an Honor Point, but if he fails, he loses 10 Honor Points! The GM should use the source of the temptation when determining Target Numbers for Honor Tests.

*Example continued:* Kuro's player picks up two dice (Kuro's Honor). The GM decides to use the samurai-ko's Awareness x 5 for the TN, which makes it a 20. Kuro's player makes a gulping noise and announces he'll be spending a Void Point. He rolls, and gets 7, 3 and 27 (10+10+7!) for a total of 37. Kuro successfully resists the samurai-ko's offer and enjoys a cold bed tonight.

## Unclean

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

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

Samurai rarely touch each other as it is, and a samurai's hands fall upon the skin of another only during sports or other athletic activity. When it is necessary to touch someone, it is either upon the hands or the clothes alone. Kuni admit the need to touch flesh, but



it is rare that anyone else ever sees this, and no Kuni would dare discuss it, even in the company of their own.

When a samurai does touch dead flesh, consider the following:

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

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

3) Samurai in battle are not dishonored by the blood that splatters onto their hands and clothes. War itself is considered very honorable. A Matsu covered from head to toe in the blood of a hundred dead rivals is not to be trifled with. Her honor is above reproach, and the death of her enemies serves the Celestial Order and her ancestors. However, she is still expected to undergo a cleansing ritual when the battle is done, both to purify the death on her soul, and the blood that has stained her body. No kami would think ill of a descendant so skilled in war, but the samurai who does not bathe soon afterwards carries the stench of death with him, and is certain to become dishonored as a result.

Note that some GMs may decide that Kuni and other scholars are unaffected by these rules while acting within the context of their professions. They should still suffer the Honor loss if they persist in coming into contact with things unclean outside these parameters, however. If you intend to play such a character, ask your GM how he intends to deal with such instances before the occasion arises, so as to avoid any untoward surprises.



## Glory

Glory is the reputation a samurai is given by his peers and his superiors. It represents any titles the samurai may have, and any exceptional feats he has performed. A samurai with a high Glory rating can expect his name and deeds to be recognized as he travels through the Empire. A samurai with a low Glory may have to struggle to be heard. Typically, a samurai with a high Glory traveling in a party of lower-Glory samurai will be seen as the leader (if not by the other players, at least by the NPCs).

## Recognizing Each Other

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

When a PC attempts to recognize the face and reputation of another NPC (or PC), use the following mechanic. Subtract the PC's Courtier skill from 10. The PC recognizes anybody whose Glory Rank is equal to or greater than the resulting number.

### The Life of a Samurai

There are many classes of samurai in Rokugan, and it is important for PCs to know what level they are playing to understand their place in the Celestial Order. All citizens of the Empire are aware of its stringent caste system.

Low-level samurai (Glory 1-2) usually act as ji-samurai, enforcing the will of their lord, or acting as "gophers" that perform any small





duty their lord demands. Higher ranking samurai (with Glory of 3 or higher) manage the land, negotiate contracts, command troops, and generally act in accordance with their lords' wishes.

Samurai fresh from their gempukku (who commonly have Glory Ranks of 0) are expected to see the world and what it has to teach them; a year or two of travel is not unreasonable. Upon their return, samurai are ready to learn. A sensei will then spend another six months teaching them the Rank 1 Technique of their School. GMs interested in running a Rank 0 Campaign should read more on this in *The Book of Water*.

Those with a Glory Rank above 5 have little "adventuring" time left, and typically retire shortly, although campaigns built around these sort of characters can still be devised, with a little effort. GMs interested in running gokenin or governor campaigns should be prepared for a lot of busy work and abstract play, and for the game's speed to slow down considerably (unless, of course, you wish to circumvent the groveling and requests of most courtiers).

## Glory Awards

As we've mentioned, battle is a quick way to gain Glory, though it is certainly not the only way. The awards below are suggestions for the GM when he is faced with the task of awarding Glory. A daimyo may choose to give a smaller award, or even (on very rare occasions) a greater one. Use the awards below as guidelines rather than steadfast rules.

### Avenging a Blood Feud

When a character avenges a blood feud, his lord is obliged to award him Glory. The amount depends on the Glory Rank of the enemy.

- Rank 0-3 = 1 Glory Point
- Rank 4-8 = 2 Glory Points
- Rank 9 = 3 Glory Points

### Completing a Quest

When a samurai returns successfully from a quest assigned by his daimyo, the daimyo is obliged to reward him with Glory.

- Minor Quest (Involved little travel and danger) = 1 Glory Point
- Standard Quest (Involved travel and danger) = 3 Glory Points
- Great Quest (Involved great travel and little chance of survival) = 5 Glory Points

### Craftsmanship

Generally, samurai can only gain Glory for craftsmanship when it involves making weapons and armor. Samurai gain 1 Glory Point

for creating a weapon or armor of quality for every Raise above the original Target Number to create the item.

### Defeating Enemies

There are two kinds of enemies: enemies of the Clan and enemies of the Family. Defeating enemies of the Clan gains a samurai greater Glory rewards, but defeating enemies of the family earns a greater degree of respect among close relatives. Again, the amount of Glory depends on the Glory Rank of the Enemy.

- Rank 0-3 = 1 for Family/2 for Clan
- Rank 4-8 = 3 for Family/5 for Clan
- Rank 9 = 5 for Family/7 for Clan

### Defeating Non-Human Enemies

Defeating monsters and creatures from the Shadowlands also gains a samurai Glory. Your GM has further details in his book.

### Gifts

Giving and receiving are prime opportunities for gaining Glory. However, when a samurai is receiving a gift, he can only gain Glory if it was given by someone with a higher Glory Rank. The monetary value of the gift does not determine its value; only the Glory Rank of the gift giver matters.

The Glory listed below is given to both the presenter and the recipient. The gift must be given in public and for a specific purpose.

- Gift from Rank 0-3 Samurai = 1 Glory
- Gift from Rank 4-6 Samurai = 2 Glory
- Gift from Rank 7-9 Samurai = 3 Glory
- Gift from the Emperor = 5 Glory

### Getting Married

While marriage may not be a romantic affair, it is a glorious one.

The bride and groom gain Glory differently. The bride's Glory automatically shifts to represent her new station: her Glory becomes 1 Rank lower than her husband's. The husband, on the other hand, gains Glory Points equal to the bride's father's Glory Rank.

### Honorable Actions

Samurai can gain Glory whenever they gain Honor. If a lord publicly acknowledges a samurai's action that has gained him Honor, he gains a number of Glory Points equal to the number of Honor Points he gained.

### Courtly Glory

Generally, all Glory is allotted in the court of the daimyo. Samurai who present themselves at court have many opportunities to gain Glory. Noteworthy and honorable actions (see above) are



almost always awarded in court. Failing to award due Glory (see above) often draws unwanted attention, ridicule and scorn to the lord of the court.

## Romance

While romance is generally not considered honorable, it is certainly glorious. Tales of samurai and their romantic affairs are some of the most potent tales told in the courts of Rokugan.

Romance is a special circumstance when Glory is concerned. A daimyo would never publicly acknowledge that one of his samurai was engaged in a romance, and so he cannot award the samurai Glory. In fact, if a daimyo must publicly acknowledge the romance, it may mean a loss of Glory for the samurai (see "Glory Losses" below).

Glory from romance is awarded by the home court of the samurai's *amour*. Glory is gained when the samurai publicly proclaims his love. A samurai must be careful about how he does so, however. Samurai are known for their skill in publicly proclaiming their love while hiding the identity of the subject (by hiding the name of his lover in the poem, for instance).

Samurai gain Glory Points when they publicly show devotion. The amount of Glory is equal to the Glory Rank of their *amour*.

However, if the affair is ever publicly revealed, both the samurai and his lover are subject to the wrath of their respective lords (and, in the case of a wife, the lover's husband). Punishments can be as simple as a loss of 1 or 2 Points of Glory to banishment and even a command for seppuku. Samurai-ko are especially vulnerable to punishment. Often times, the samurai-ko is expected to shave her hair and retire from a worldly life.

## Skill Success and Performance

The successful use of a Skill in and of itself is not cause for Glory award. However, there comes a time when a single action can mean the difference between victory and defeat. At these times, awards are in order. Rewards for a moment of courage and valor depend greatly on the daimyo in question, but generally range from 1 to 3.

Successful Skill use in the court is also cause for Glory award. When a samurai composes a moving poem, paints a striking portrait or performs a song that brings the ladies of the court to tears, the awarding of Glory is customary.

If a samurai makes a truly impassioned performance, he is eligible for Glory, depending on the performance. The quality of performance is judged by the success of the player's roll. Generally,





the TN for success is 15. Based on this value, a samurai gains 1 Glory for every Raise he gained.

For example: Kuro is playing his samisen for the Phoenix court. He's declared 2 Raises and now has a TN of 25. Kuro's player rolls the dice and gets a 27. Since this is 2 Raises above the TN (15), Kuro may receive 2 Glory from Ujimitsu. Being a wise daimyo, Ujimitsu awards Kuro his Glory.

## Glory Losses

What distinguishes Glory from Honor is that it comes from outside the samurai. A daimyo, sensei, or noble of significance who proclaims a samurai worthy is awarding him Honor. In such an instance, the adventure can pause while the GM and players roleplay through the act of receiving such a distinction, or the GM can just say "check three boxes". Either way, make sure that NPCs encountered from then on have heard of the PCs' exploits, and that samurai see them in a different light. Needless to say, it is incredibly difficult for a samurai to gain Glory, but when he loses it, he loses greatly. The loss of Glory is a terrible punishment for samurai. It means a loss of social status as well as public shame. Many samurai would rather commit seppuku than face a loss of Glory. As a matter of fact, seppuku is the only way to negate Glory loss. If a samurai is allowed to commit seppuku (he must gain permission from his daimyo to do so), his Glory loss is negated completely.

Like the awards above, the losses listed below are suggestions for the GM. It is much easier for a daimyo to take away Glory than it is for him to give it. A samurai is expected to be completely devoted to his lord, to obey his every request without question. Even the slightest hint of insubordination could result in a loss of Glory, banishment, or even a command to commit seppuku. Even worse, a samurai's request to commit seppuku could be declined, forcing the samurai to carry his shame with him for the rest of his life – even into the afterlife.

Again, these crimes must be publicly acknowledged by the samurai's lord in order for a loss of Glory to take place. A daimyo who refuses to acknowledge an obvious crime jeopardizes his own Honor and Glory.

Unlike gaining Glory, a samurai can lose Glory without his daimyo acknowledging his actions. Speaking poorly of one's daimyo in his own court, wandering around the streets of his city drunk, or making public romantic gestures to his wife will bring shame on a samurai's head even if the daimyo is unaware of his actions. The court has eyes of its own and can distribute shame just as well as the court's lord. Of course, when the daimyo accuses the samurai of his crimes, the shame is escalated dramatically.

The Glory losses listed below assume the samurai commits the acts in public. The only time a samurai loses Glory is when he dishonors himself publicly (public drunkenness, display of affection for a married woman, declining a duel in court, etc.) and if he is publicly confronted with his actions by a samurai of higher Glory Rank.

*Example:* Matsu Toki likes to drink. At a tea house which his superior, Ikoma Tsanuri, is known to frequent, he drinks a bit too much sake and begins to sing loudly (and poorly) to a geisha. Because he is committing a shameful act in public (drunkenness), he loses 1 Glory Point.

Inevitably, Tsanuri herself appears and chastises him for his shameful behavior. The GM rules that Toki now loses an additional 3 Glory Points because he was publicly chastised by a high-ranking superior.

Samurai may lower the loss of Glory by making an apology. Apologies (like everything else in Rokugan) are formal, ritualized activities. In order to make a successful apology, a samurai must make a Sincerity/Awareness Roll. The TN for the roll is the offended party's Awareness x 5. The samurai prostrates himself before the lord (or any other offended party) and explains the shame pounding in his heart. He does not do this quietly. In fact, it is considered good form for the samurai to scream at the top of his lungs while making this apology. It is also considered good form to cry. The point of this exercise is for the samurai to prove his sincerity, to prove that he truly is sorry for the shame he has brought to himself and his family. A successful Sincerity Roll reduces the Glory loss by half, rounding up.

*Example, Continued:* Toki does not wish to lose so much Glory, so he tries to make a Sincerity Roll. Toki's Awareness is 2 and his Sincerity is 3, so he gets to roll 3 dice and keep 2. His TN is 20 (Tsanuri's 4 Awareness x 5). He knows he doesn't have much of a chance, so he spends a Void Point to aid his attempt. Toki's player rolls 18 (10+8), 9, 9, and 3, giving him a total roll of 36. Tsanuri is convinced of Toki's sincerity and his Glory loss is reduced by half.

### Failing to Award Glory

There will be instances when a lord will deliberately choose not to award Glory Points to a samurai. Take for example a Lion daimyo who finds he must award Glory to a despised Crane samurai who defeated all of the daimyo's best bushi in a tournament. He must award the Crane Glory, but chooses not to out of spite.

If a samurai ever fails to award a Glory Rank to a deserving subordinate, he loses a number of Glory Points equal to the Glory Rank of the samurai.



## Honor Loss

It is safe to assume that any action that would cause a samurai to lose Honor will also cause him to lose Glory. If a samurai ever publicly loses Honor for an action, he loses an equal amount of Glory.

## Reprimands

If a character is reprimanded in public by a superior, he loses Glory Points. This loss can range from a single Glory Point up to the difference in their Glory Ranks.

## Brash Behavior

Samurai are expected to be hot-blooded, but only when their honor has been questioned or compromised. Samurai should show no or little emotion, and keep a calm face at all times. When a samurai loses control of his emotions, he is said to have "lost his face," which can cost him greatly. A samurai who is especially violent for no good reason can expect a loss of Glory. Each incident of brash behavior costs a samurai at least 1 Glory. Unnecessary violent acts against samurai will cost him Glory equal to the Glory Rank of the samurai in question. Acts that compromise not only his own honor but also the honor of his lord will cost him even greater losses of Glory.

## Breaking a Promise

If a samurai breaks a promise, he loses Glory equal to the Glory Rank of the character he made the promise to.

## Cowardice

There is no way for a samurai to clean the shame of cowardice from his soul other than seppuku. Once a samurai has demonstrated his fear, he must remove that stain by demonstrating the greatest act of courage. A samurai who is afraid to die for his lord is worth nothing in the eyes of the Rokugani.

If a samurai refuses a formal duel, or retreats from a fight or a battle, he loses half his current Glory.

## Criminal Activity

Theft, burglary and other petty crimes are great offenses for a samurai. If a samurai is found guilty of breaking the law, a daimyo has almost no choice but to discipline the samurai severely. Often, samurai are disowned, making them ronin. At the very least, the samurai will be cuffed (expected to walk about with handcuffs on) for a week, month or even longer if he wishes to keep his status with his lord.

## Overindulgence

Temperance is one of the great virtues Shinsei taught the Emperor, and samurai are expected to follow in his example. A public act of overeating or drunkenness causes a loss of 1 Glory.

## Performing a Low Skill

Samurai who show knowledge of Low Skills lose Glory equal to the Rank of the Skill they perform.

## Refusing a Contest

When samurai are challenged to a contest, martial or otherwise, refusing to participate indicates a fear of failure. This does not include a samurai who must refuse a duel because his daimyo has forbidden him from accepting. In that case, the samurai is doing his duty by refusing the challenge, and does not lose Glory for his actions.

Samurai do not fear failure, but they fear bringing shame to their family. A samurai who refuses to participate in a contest will lose at least 1 Glory. If the opponent is of lower Rank, he loses an additional Glory for every Rank he is greater than his opponent.

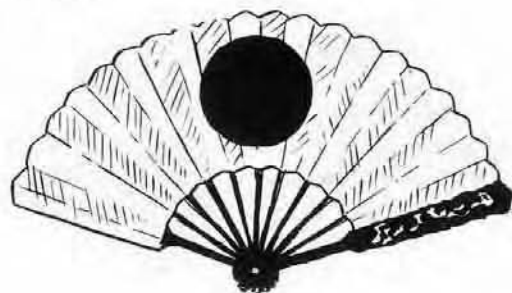
## Refusing a Lord's Request

Refusing a daimyo's request can be a serious offense, depending on the samurai and the daimyo. Many daimyo respect the opinions of their samurai, while others expect them to obey orders without question.

Publicly refusing a daimyo's request can lose a samurai Glory up to the Glory Rank of the daimyo.

## Treason

There is no greater crime than treason. A samurai found conspiring against his daimyo is immediately reduced to zero Glory and is often refused the opportunity to commit seppuku. Worse, he could be given a wooden sword to perform the deed, indicating that the daimyo believes his samurai to be too chicken-hearted to complete the ritual.







Rokugani weapons are very different from their western counterparts. From the katana's unmatched deadliness to the dangerous spikes of the sasumata, the weapons of the Empire are unparalleled in their efficiency and beauty.

## Specialized Skills

There are several different skills which can be used when wielding a weapon. First, a character may choose to have a weapon skill in a particular weapon type (the katana, the sasumata, or the sai). Secondly, a character may have proficiency in a particular weapon class (pole-arms, swords, or peasant weapons). Lastly, a samurai may have proficiency in ranged weapons – the various types of bows used throughout the Empire.

If a samurai has proficiency in a single specific weapon, he gains a bonus to his totals on his kept dice equal to his skill with that weapon. However, this skill only applies to that particular weapon, and not to any other weapon within that "weapon class." A character with a proficiency of 3 in the sasumata, for example, will only gain a +3 to their final total to hit when using the sasumata, and not when using a naginata or other pole-arm, nor do they know how to effectively wield such weapons.

A samurai with proficiency in an entire class of weapons gains no particular bonus when using any of those weapons, but his skill rank is applicable no matter what weapon within that class they choose to wield. A samurai with proficiency in yarijutsu, for example, may use a sasumata, naginata or yari, but gains no special bonus when using any of these weapons – he is not specialized in these weapons.

There are two mutually exclusive schools of bowmanship in Rokugan. The most common one is known as *kyujutsu*; its students do not aim the bow, but simply snap off shots. *Kyujutsu* is based on Reflexes. The other method of using a bow is the one that the Unicorn learned on their travels, and which the Naga remember

from before their long sleep: it is known by the word the Unicorn brought back to describe it, *yomanri*. This method of archery aims the bow, and is therefore based on Agility. Only those who learned bowmanship from the Unicorn or Naga may learn *yomanri*.

Characters who learn a bow as a specialized skill use the *kyujutsu* (Reflexes-based) rules, unless they are Unicorn- or Naga-schooled, in which case they use the *yomanri* (Agility-based) rules.

If your character has a Specialized Skill, but no other skill in weapons of that category, they must use the Similar Skill rules when using another weapon from that category with which they are not Specialized. For example, if your character has only the Katana skill, they may use a wakizashi (or no-dachi), but will fall under the Similar Skills rule: add +10 to the character's TN to hit with these weapons. If your character has no skill with a class of weapon and no skill with a similar weapon, he rolls and keeps only one die with that weapon, and may not reroll 10s.

## Weapon Classes

The weapon classes which a samurai may learn are described below. Any weapons not listed in one of these classes fall under your GM's discretion.

- Bojutsu (Bo Stick): Bo, Jo
- Chisaijutsu (War Fan): Tessen, Tonfa
- Jiujutsu (Hand-to-Hand): Mizu-do, Kaze-do
- Kenjutsu (Sword): Katana, No-dachi, Wakizashi
- Kyujutsu (Bow): Dai-kyu, Yumi
- Nofujutsu (Peasant Weapons): Jitte, Kama, Sai
- Subojutsu (Tetsubo): Die tsuchi, Tetsubo
- Tantojutsu (Knife): Aiguchi, Tanto, Kama
- Yarijutsu (Pole Arms): Nagamaki, Naginata, Yari, Nage-yari, Sasumata, Sodegarami
- *Yomanri* (Bow: Unicorn & Naga only): Dai-kyu, Yumi

Not all weapons are created equal. Some are more effective when used against opponents in armor, while others are better when slicing through flesh unimpeded. To reflect this, many of the weapons blow have additional effects beyond simple damage rolls. Be certain your GM is aware of these additional effects before you choose your character's weapons.

*Example:* Mirumoto Ujiaki is a young samurai who has just learned his Rank 1 Technique from the Mirumoto school. His school taught him Kenjutsu and Kyujutsu as part of the standard curriculum, and he also learned Tantojutsu and, as specialized skills, Tetsubo and Katana. His skill levels are Kenjutsu 2, Kyujutsu 3, Tantojutsu 1, Tetsubo 2, and Katana 3; he has Agility 2 and Reflexes



3. As part of his battery of final exams, he must demonstrate his knowledge of various weapons in front of his sensei (in the form of a series of to-hit rolls).

- **Katana:** Ujiaki can either use his Kenjutsu skill or his Katana specialization here. He uses his Katana skill, since it's higher, and rolls 3 dice, keeping 2. Since he has a specialization in Katana, he gets a bonus of +3 to the total.

- **No-dachi:** Ujiaki cannot use his Katana specialization here, but may use his Kenjutsu skill. He rolls 2 dice (his Kenjutsu skill) and keeps 2 (his Agility). He gains no bonus to the roll, since he's not a no-dachi specialist.

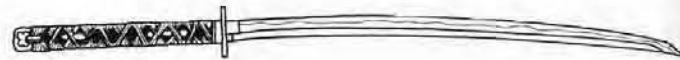
- **Tanto:** Again, Ujiaki has trained with knives in general (Tantojutsu) without specializing in this particular weapon. He rolls only one die and keeps it, receiving no bonus, although he may reroll a 10 if he gets one. Once he learns another rank of Tantojutsu, he'll be able to roll and keep both dice, but for now he can't roll as many dice as he can keep.

- **Yumi:** Ujiaki is good with bows and shows it, rolling 3 dice for his Kyujutsu skill and keeping them all with his sharp Reflexes. Since he's a proper Rokugani and not one of those barbarous Unicorns, he uses Reflexes on this roll instead of Agility. He gets no bonus to this weapon, but is confident enough not to need one.

- **Die tsuchi:** Ujiaki had hoped this weapon wouldn't be on the exam. He isn't trained in either the weapon itself or in the general skill (Subojutsu). The best he can do is to use his training with the tetsubo and invoke the Similar Skill rules; he rolls his Tetsubo of 2 and keeps his Agility of 2, but suffers a +10 to his TN. Since he doesn't have the proper skill, he may not reroll 10s.

- **Kama:** Ujiaki has never trained with one of these nor anything similar. He has neither the Kama specialization nor the Nofujutsu skill. He rolls and keeps only one die, and may not reroll 10s.

TN is 40 to notice it (you might hear it move inside). If the wielder conceals it in a readied position (such as up a sleeve or against one's side), a Contested Awareness roll determines the result.



## Katana

2k2

A long sword, the sword of the samurai, the symbol of his caste. The katana is slightly curved ending in a chiseled point. A katana is forged from two steels: one soft and one hard. These two metals are heated and folded many times, resulting in a blade that is both rigid and sharp. The length of the hilt differs, depending on the social climate. During times of peace, hilts are short, more difficult to use and less cumbersome in an obi. During times of war, however, hilts are longer, which provides greater leverage on the blade but is much more difficult to carry. A katana is just long enough to brush the ground when its owner grips it at the blade end of the hilt. Some high quality katana allow the user to roll (not keep) an extra die.

Although the Crab have set a precedent of using the tetsubo against non-human enemies so as not to dishonor their ancestors, it is a great dishonor not to use the katana against human enemies. PCs who continue to use weapons other than their katana should be treated poorly by high-ranking samurai around them, find their Honor slip and Glory questioned, and observe their general worth plummet.

The katana is a swift weapon. Its users may add either their Kenjutsu skill or their Katana skill as a bonus to the roll after they've rolled initiative.



## No-dachi

3k2

The no-dachi is a great sword, typically 5'-7' long, and is typically reserved for battlefield encounters. Samurai using the no-dachi indoors will find themselves cutting holes in rice paper walls.

Samurai using a no-dachi have a penalty of -10 to Initiative rolls.



## Tanto

2k1

A short knife with a hilt, often used by women, easily hidden in a kimono or the pommel of a katana. The *tanto* is nearly the same size as the *aiguchi*, but it cannot be drawn as easily. Like the *aiguchi*,

## Swords and Tessen



### Aiguchi

1k1

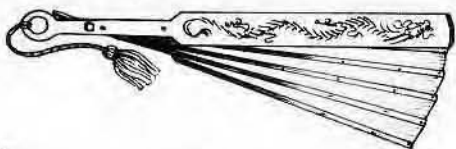
A short knife without a hilt. This weapon is quick to draw and used in situations where the attacker wishes to surprise their opponent. GMs may allow an additional +5 to initiative for characters who have successfully kept the blade hidden.

The *aiguchi* is the preferred weapon of geisha, assassins, and anyone trying to conceal their attack. A successful Investigation/Perception roll at TN 30 is required to spot the blade under a character's clothing. If kept in the pommel of a katana, the





it is nearly impossible to spot under a kimono; it uses the same detection rules as the aiguchi.



## Tessen

0k1

The tessen is the "war fan", a metal-ribbed fan that serves as both a shield (that deflects the blades of assassins) and as a general's tool (used to command units across the battlefield). If the situation is particularly dire, you can swat somebody with it.

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

If a samurai has both a katana and tessen, he may add his Chisaijutsu or Tessen Skill to his defense during a Full Defense maneuver. GMs that find this too powerful may ignore this rule, or they may allow an ambidextrous character to add the Chisaijutsu or Tessen Skill to his Reflexes for the purposes of determining his TN to be Hit.



## Wakizashi

1k2

A short sword, the companion piece to the katana. When together, they are referred to as the daisho. A samurai's wakizashi is rarely drawn for fighting, although the Dragon are notorious for their two-weapon *niten* technique. It is most prominently used in seppuku ceremonies.

## Pole-arms

A character using a pole-arm has a slight advantage over a character using a shorter weapon. To represent this, all characters using certain pole-arms against opponents who are using shorter weapons may roll (not keep) an additional die for their Initiative Roll.

The length of a pole-arm keeps an opposing samurai at bay during the initial rounds of combat. However, the initiative bonus only applies during the first round of combat against an opponent.



## Die tsuchi

1k3

The Rokugani equivalent of a war hammer. This weapon is used almost exclusively by the Crab Clan. The Die tsuchi does not gain the pole-arm initiative bonus. Samurai must have a minimum Strength of 3 to wield a Die tsuchi. The Die tsuchi treats heavy armor as light armor and ignores light armor. Creature armor is reduced by 3 while the Die tsuchi is employed.

Note that some ronin and bandits have been known to employ this weapon when ambushing men on horseback. Its deadly weight makes it an incredibly powerful weapon.



## Nage-yari

0k2

A 3' javelin. It can be used as a hand weapon or thrown. The Nage-yari does not gain the pole-arm initiative bonus. It has a range of 50 feet when thrown, but beyond 30 feet the weapon's Damage Rating is reduced to 0k1. The nage-yari is lightweight, and many samurai can hold one in each hand.



## Nagamaki

1k2

A shorter version of the Naginata, this pole-arm is a long, wooden shaft (approximately 3' long) with a long (3') sword-like end.



## Naginata

1k3

A pole-arm with a large blade on the end. Samurai-ko are often trained in its use. The blade of a naginata is very different from that of a katana, and must be created by a smith who specializes in such weapons. While it is possible to put a katana blade on a naginata handle, it makes an unbalanced weapon with reduced effectiveness.



### Ono

0k4

A battle axe with a wooden shaft approximately 4' in length. Its steel head is often double-bladed. The Ono does not gain the polearm initiative bonus. It is an excellent chopping weapon, and a favorite of the Crab.



### Sasumata

0k1

The "man-catcher" is a 6' long pole-arm with a double-pronged hook at the end, the insides of which are barbed. It is designed to catch a body within and rake it against the prongs. On a successful hit, perform a Contested Agility Roll against the target. If you win the roll, the target is trapped, and you will do damage every Turn that the target is caught. The target can escape the sasumata with a simple Strength test, TN 25.



### Sodegarami

0k1

"The sleeve-entangler" is a 6' long pole-arm with a series of wicked barbs designed to catch the sleeves of kimonos and the loose edges of armor. On a successful hit, perform a Contested Agility Roll against the target. If you win the roll, the target is trapped, and you will do damage every Turn that the target is caught. The target can escape the Sodegarami with a simple Strength test, TN 15.

A successful Yarijutsu roll against the target (in place of an attack) can dislodge a plate of armor or rip a kimono sleeve from the target. Each dislodged plate reduces the TN bonus of the armor by 1.



### Tetsubo

1k3

An iron rod, much like a mace, used with two hands. The end is often ribbed or tipped with metal studs. This weapon does not get the polearm bonus for Initiative. Samurai must have a minimum





Strength of 3 to wield a Tetsubo. Samurai must have a minimum Strength of 3 to wield a Tetsubo.

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



## Yari 1k2 (2k3 from horseback)

A straight spear approximately 6' in length. The yari may be used from horseback with no penalties to attack. Some yari may be as long as 7½' to 8' long. The weapon is used to keep samurai and large monsters far away from the wielder.

## Bows

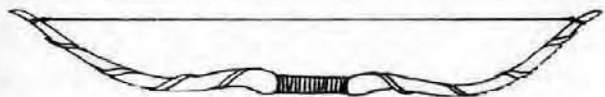
The first round with a bow is crucial. It takes two rounds to remove it from one's pack and connect the drawstring. Samurai who wish to do this faster may make an Agility + Kyujutsu (or Yomanri) roll at a TN of 20. Success indicates that it only takes one round to arm the weapon; failure indicates that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

Bows have a fixed Strength of 2 for purposes of Damage.



## Dai-kyu As Arrow

The "long bow". It is seven feet long and designed to be fired from horseback. Samurai that choose to fire a dai-kyu from the ground must add 10 to their TN due to the heftiness of the weapon.



## Yumi As Arrow

The yumi is designed to be fired while standing. Like the dai-kyu, the yumi is difficult to fire from an unfamiliar position (in this case, horseback). A samurai using a yumi to fire arrows from horseback adds 10 to his TN.

## ARROWS



### Ya 1k2

This is the standard arrow. Also in this category is the yanagi-ba, or "willow leaf" arrow.



### Armor Piercer 0k2

An arrow with a narrow, spiked tip designed for punching through armor. Ignore the target's armor when calculating the TN.



### Watakusi 2k3

This arrow is known as the "flesh cutter." It spins as it leaves the bowstring and augers into unprotected flesh. It is particularly ineffective against armored targets, however; if the target is wearing armor, triple the protection it gives when figuring the TN to hit.

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



### Karimata 0k1

The "fork" arrow. This is a very specialized arrow, used for cutting through ropes or cords. Its points are not very sharp, but the interior curve is sharpened so that it cuts more effectively.

Cutting through ropes or cords requires one to three Raises (GM's discretion).



### "Humming bulb" 0k1

A hollow-tipped arrow that whistles as it flies through the air. It is generally used to signal troops. The tip is rarely if ever sharp, and tends to glance off whatever it hits. On the battlefield, this arrow grants a Free Raise for all Battle rolls involving the movement or organization of troops. During an ambush, it can signal to troops that there is trouble ahead.



## “Peasant” Weapons

All of these weapons were developed by monks and taught to the peasantry so they could defend themselves against bandits and drunken samurai. Samurai do not use these weapons, with two exceptions. Magistrates frequently carry the jitte and the Doji family has been known to employ the bo staff. To use a weapon outside of these conditions brings shame to a samurai's katana.



### Bo 0k2

A long hardwood staff about 6' to 7' long. A character using a bo may roll an extra die for Initiative as with a polearm, and gets this initiative bonus in every round, not just the first.

Against armor, the bo is very difficult to use. Attacking those with light armor increases the TN by +10 instead of +5, and heavy armor increases this modifier to +15 instead of +10.



### Jitte 1k1

Similar to the sai (see below), the jitte has only a single prong. It is rarely sharpened and is used as a defensive weapon. Any character attempting a disarm with this weapon gets a Free Raise to do so; when you're disarming someone with a jitte, you only have to make 2 Raises instead of 3.



### Jo 0k2

A smaller version of the bo, often used in pairs (one in each hand). The jo is usually about 3' long. The jo is very difficult to use against armor. Attacking enemies who are wearing light armor increases the TN by 5, and heavy armor increases this modifier to 10.



### Kama 0k2

A short scythe-like weapon that is easily overlooked as a weapon. It is reputed to be a favorite weapon of the ninja.



### Nunchaku 0k2

Originally intended to be a wheat flail, the nunchaku is two short (2') hardwood poles connected by a short chain less than a foot long. The wood is dense and hurts more than a boken.



### Sai 1k1

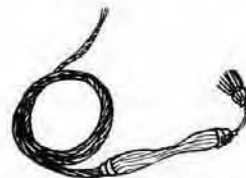
A two-pronged knife used to catch weapons and pull them out of their wielder's grip. It is usually not sharpened and is essentially a defensive weapon. Like the jitte, when you're disarming someone with a sai, you only have to make 2 Raises instead of 3.



### Tonfa 0k1

This weapon was originally the handle of a millstone. It is a short wooden staff – approximately 2' long – with an offset handle. This weapon is swung in a swirling motion.

The tonfa can be used most effectively on defense. This weapon provides an additional 5 to the wielder's TN.



### Whip 0k1

The Yasuki Taskmasters have found this weapon to be as effective at persuading their underlings to move faster as it was to get the attention of farm animals.

When an unarmored person is hit with a whip, he must make a Willpower roll at TN 5 or cry out in pain. The whip's user may Raise his attack roll in order to increase the Willpower roll's TN by +5 per Raise.





# Weaponless Combat

Although almost all combat in Rokugan is conducted with weapons, occasionally (by design or misfortune) one or both of the combatants will be without a weapon. When this occurs, the attack roll is Jujutsu/Agility, and the damage roll is (Strength)k1.

Although Jujutsu is a Bujutsu skill, it does not confer ability in either Kaze-do or Mizu-do, both of which are specific styles. Samurai with the Jujutsu skill may make the standard no-frills attack as detailed above. Those who wish to learn the maneuvers involved in kaze-do or mizu-do must find an *ise zumi* or a Crane, respectively, willing to teach them the style.

## Kaze-do

Jujutsu was developed during the time of Hantei Ningi, the third Hantei Emperor. The Hantei forbade peasants to carry weapons, reserving that privilege to the samurai caste. One Dragon *ise zumi*, Togashi Kaze, found this inequitable, and developed a method of weaponless combat that he taught to the peasants. When called before the Emperor and commanded to demonstrate his new style of combat, he refused, and was slain for his insolence.

Only recently has jujutsu has passed into the hands of the samurai caste. Many samurai schools teach their own versions of jujutsu, but its truest form – kaze-do – still belongs to the peasantry and the *ise zumi*.

### Throwing and Sweeping

A throw is an attempt to use an opponent's weight, strength and momentum against him to throw him to the ground. A sweep is an attempt to kick out an opponent's feet from under him.

If a character attempts to throw another character with kaze-do, he must make a Simple Roll of Kaze-do/Agility to hit a TN of his opponent's Agility x 5. If he fails the roll, he fails to throw his opponent.

If he succeeds, his opponent must make a Simple Agility roll against a TN equal to 15 + 5 per Raise his opponent made in the first roll. If his opponent fails this roll, he takes (Throwing character's Strength)k1 Wounds. If his opponent succeeds on his Agility roll, he takes no Wounds. Any time a character is thrown and takes damage, the TN to hit him next round is 5. Don't forget to add damage dice for Raises.

### Grappling

If one character attempts to grapple another, the procedure is very similar to Throwing and Sweeping above. The grappling character makes a Kaze-do/Agility roll vs. his opponent's Agility x 5. If the roll succeeds, the grappler does (Strength)k1 Wounds, as usual. He will continue to inflict Wounds until the grappled character frees himself.

On the first round of being grappled (if he has an action left for that round), the grappled character can use an action to try and free himself. He must make a Contested Roll against his opponent, but both opponents may use either Jujutsu/Agility or Jujutsu/Strength.

If the grappled character fails to free himself, he will automatically take additional Wounds at the beginning of each round until he frees himself.

## Mizu-do

Mizu-do is a martial art developed by Crane artisans in order to show realistic fighting in their dramatic performances. Because the artisans had no intention of harming anyone, or of using real weapons, Mizu-do is a very defensive martial art. From that humble beginning, Mizu-do has become a Crane tradition, used by artisans and courtiers to defend themselves in dangerous circumstances.

Characters who purchase this skill at creation may choose two of the techniques listed below to begin with; those who purchase their first rank in Mizu-do after character generation select only one. Characters may select another technique from the list each time they purchase another rank in Mizu-do.

All Mizu-do techniques require a "reactionary roll". The character must declare a Full Defense during each round, and then may choose to react with the defensive maneuver once his opponent has begun his attack. If the Mizu-do practitioner wants the option to perform a Mizu-do technique this round, he receives no benefit from declaring a Full Defense. Mizu-do practitioners who choose not to react to an attack may not change their minds once the attacker has rolled his strike. If a Mizu-do practitioner is attacked by two or more opponents, he may react to a single opponent of his choosing. If the reactionary roll is unsuccessful, the Mizu-do artist has been unable to grasp the attacker, and the attacker receives a free Raise on his attack this round. A Mizu-do practitioner may not perform any of the maneuvers against someone who is not physically attacking him this round.



## Bend Like a Reed

This maneuver can be used to escape a direct attack from a striking sword or staff weapon. The practitioner rolls Mizu-do/Reflexes with a TN of five times the opponent's weapon or Bujutsu Skill. If successful, the opponent's strike misses.

## Catch the Shadow

A common tactic of Mizu-do practitioners is to escape other hand-to-hand grappling attempts. If another person attempts to grapple with a practitioner of Mizu-do, the Mizu-do artist may make a contested Reflexes roll to avoid the grappling attempt before the attacker makes his roll to hit. The Mizu-do artist must be aware of the attack before he may Catch the Shadow.

## Dragon Claw

Among the various joint locks which the Mizu-do student learns is this particularly incapacitating nerve hold. It requires a successful Mizu-do/Reflexes roll versus an attacking opponent's Agility x 5, but by using Raises, the Mizu-do artist may further incapacitate the opponent with non-lethal damage to the opponent's nerve centers. This damage is calculated by rolling a number of dice equal to the number of Raises plus the Mizu-do practitioner's Strength, keeping a number of dice equal to the number of Raises. This damage vanishes from the Wound Ranks of the damaged character ten minutes after the Mizu-do practitioner releases his grip. A character cannot go below "Out" from use of this technique. Because the nerves can only be accessed by pressing against the skin of the target, the Dragon Claw cannot be performed against armored opponents.

If the Dragon Claw maneuver is successful, the opponent is subdued unless he wins a contested Agility roll against the Mizu-do practitioner's Agility in order to break away from the hold.

## The Farther You Fall

Much of the success of Mizu-do as a defensive style is based on the throws which the school teaches. As the opponent charges (attempts a strike), the character rolls Mizu-do/Reflexes versus five times the opponent's Agility + Weapon Skill in order to grab him and redirect his movement. This is a "sacrifice throw", meaning the defending character must also drop to the ground, rolling onto his back and using his legs to elevate the attacker into the air, causing him to land a distance away. If the reactionary grapple is unsuccessful, the attack continues as normal. If the Mizu-do technique is successful, the thrown character must make a Jujutsu/Agility or Athletics/Agility roll at a TN of 20, plus 5 for each raise the Mizu-do practitioner added to the original TN. If the thrown character fails, the Mizu-do practitioner inflicts (Strength + 1)k1 Wounds from the fall.

The Mizu-do practitioner throws the opponent Strength x 3 feet. Any Wounds taken by the attacker are inflicted by the rough landing and results in a stun lasting for 1 die of rounds minus twice his Earth. Both characters spend the end of the turn regaining their footing. Remember: the TN to hit an immobile or prone character is 5.

## Flight of Dragons

This throw shifts the opponent's body into a position where he will trip over his own momentum. The Mizu-do practitioner rolls Mizu-do/Reflexes versus five times his opponent's Agility + Weapon Skill. If the Mizu-do technique is successful, the thrown character must make a Jujutsu/Agility or Athletics/Agility roll at a TN of 20, plus 5 for each raise the Mizu-do practitioner added to the original TN. If the thrown character fails, he lurches to a deadfall at the defender's feet, and takes *his own* (Strength+1)k1 in Wounds from the fall.

## Hammer of Earth

This throw is dangerous, but has the greatest chance of defeating the character's opponent in one maneuver. As the attacker charges, the character rolls Mizu-do/Reflexes versus the attacking opponent's Agility x 5 in order to grip the attacker, then leans back until both the attacker and the Mizu-do practitioner fall. Ideally this causes the opponent to land on the crown of his head. The original attacker must make a simple Earth roll against a TN of 25 or lose consciousness. Helmeted characters are not affected. Both attacker and Mizu-do practitioner take Wounds from this technique. The Mizu-do practitioner inflicts (Strength)k1 Wounds on his opponent as usual, and takes 1k1 Wounds himself.

## Thumb Wrench

This painful hold is one of the most effective joint locks in the Mizu-do school. Using an opponent's own strength to force him into motionlessness, the practitioner of Mizu-do can hold the strongest bushi still with a minimum of effort. As the attacker strikes the defender, the defender must make a reactionary roll to grapple and disarm the attacker. This roll is the customary grappling roll (Mizu-do/Reflexes versus five times the opponent's Agility + Weapon Skill) and an additional roll of (Mizu-do/Reflexes versus five times the opponent's School Rank + Weapon Skill) in order to disarm him if he has a weapon. If both rolls succeed, the practitioner of Mizu-do grips the opponent's thumb and uses it to wrench his arm behind his back in a painful and debilitating lock. If the opponent wishes to break the hold or struggle against it in any way, he may do so by rolling a contested Agility roll against the holder's Agility. Whether this attempt is successful or not, the person in the hold takes an amount of Wounds to his arm equal to his own (Strength)k(Strength).





# Spell Research

*There comes a time when you must return to wisdom that which you have learned.*

– Kuni Yori

Certainly, every shugenja school in Rokugan has a library full of established spells. Schools from the Kuni Wastes to the Isawa Woodlands teach Jade Strike and The Path to Inner Peace. But those spells had to come from somewhere.

A new spell begins when a shugenja envisions an effect that he'd like to produce, but which none of the time-tested methods produces. His first move, once he's determined that no refinements on an existing effect will serve, is almost always to retreat to his school's library.

## School Research Libraries

The information taught by shugenja schools, and the main topics covered in their libraries, varies from clan to clan. The Kuni emphasize Earth spells, with their jade-based applications against Shadowlands creatures and their warding magic. The Soshi, on the other hand, favor the information-gathering aspects available through Air magic. If your school has an extensive library in the element you're researching, it's easier to find the information you need.

Some people are more attuned to a particular element, as well. This often gives them an advantage while researching new spells in that element, as they have a natural connection to the kami of the element.

It is, of course, necessary to obtain permission from the head of the school before beginning to use its resources. The honorary head of the school is the family's daimyo, although that person often delegates the responsibilities to someone more pedagogically inclined. If the family daimyo is not the school head, researchers

must obtain permission from both before proceeding. On rare occasions, when the researcher is particularly noteworthy, the clan daimyo involves himself and explicitly grants – or denies – permission to expend the clan's resources on the research. If any of these people fails to grant permission, the researcher may not continue, although (if they wish to push their luck) they may appeal upward through the chain of command. It is nevertheless not honorable to pester the clan elders for permission to research a spell when they have assigned you another duty.

Assuming that the clan approves sponsorship of the research project and grants use of its magical facilities, the researcher works under the auspices of the clan. This means that the clan is the official owner of the spell upon its successful completion; sometimes they decline to share it, resulting in Clan Secret Spells. The clans are always interested in new magical knowledge, and keep a close eye on anyone extending their frontiers. A researcher's notes are customarily left in the school's libraries, whether or not the research bore fruit. It would be unthinkable for a shugenja to research a new spell and not give all materials pertaining to it into the care of his school.

Those who went to a shugenja school of another clan often have a tricky time of it when it comes to research. If the clans in questions are on good terms, there is less of a problem, and both the school at which the student studied and the school at home customarily receive copies of the research. If they are at each other's throats, however, it is very difficult to receive permission from the clan elders to study in enemy territory; and while they may grant permission to study at the home school, its practices will be different enough from those learned at the foreign school that research will be problematic at best. Furthermore, the students and faculty who stayed at home often take a dim view of those who went to another clan's school, and frequently are less than entirely cooperative.

Ronin shugenja, and those out of favor at their school or otherwise not permitted to use a library, have a very tough task ahead of them. Without a thousand years of other people's mistakes to inspect, it's very easy to get in over your head. It's not impossible to create a new spell without the benefit of a research library, but it is extremely difficult.

Newly-graduated students are hardly ever granted permission to begin spell research. Although they might keep notes that could eventually turn into an actual research project, the head of the school generally can't be bothered speaking to shugenja who are not advanced enough to have a reasonable chance at success. Rank 3 shugenja are usually granted permission; Rank 2 on occasion.



## Spell Research: Small Modifications

Some players may say to themselves, "But what if I just want to make a small change to a spell? It just requires a slightly different request to the kami. I shouldn't have to research that!" These players are correct.

If you have a slight change to a spell's effect, tell your GM. He'll tell you how many raises you have to make while casting the spell to produce that change. See the "Special Effects" header under the "Raises" section in the Book of Air, page 205.

## Spell Research: What You Can't Research

No reputable school countenances maho research. Not even the hardheadedly pragmatic Kuni, with their credo of 'know your enemy', permit studies of actual blood magic. The occasional tsukai-sagasu visits to deliver lectures on how to recognize maho and what possible weaknesses a mahotsukai has, but there won't be a hands-on demonstration.

Also, although there is a class of spells which permits you to affect another character's Rings and Traits, these spells do not cross elemental boundaries. If a shugenja wishes to affect someone's Water ring, he has to use a Water spell to do it. Non-water kami don't understand the request.

## Research Rules

Your shugenja wants to come up with a new spell. What does he have to do? The first step is to come up with the effect. Write up the spell's effect in detail: if it's not at least 200 words, your GM may reject it as insufficiently detailed. What is the spell trying to accomplish? Which, if any, of the spells in the Book of Air is it

similar to? What element is most appropriate to the effect, and how will you get the attention of that element's kami? (Will you even use the element most appropriate to the effect?) Once you have their attention, how will you convince them to do what you ask? What's it going to affect: you, someone you're touching, a thirty-foot radius, or someplace across the Empire? Does the spell make a permanent change, or does it last for a set period of time? The core spells represent hundreds of years of Rokugani research. You're advancing the state of the art; make a case for it.

Once you have written up your effect, add to it the element in question, and what (if anything) you want Raises to accomplish. Hand it to your GM. He now reviews the spell and decides whether he'll permit your shugenja to research it. The GM can take as long as he wishes to review your 'grant proposal' - assume at least one full game session - and can require changes to the spell, reject it completely, or permit it in its original form. If he'll let you go through with it, he'll compare it to existing spells and determine the spell's Mastery Level, Duration, Area of Effect, and Range. The bigger the effect you want the spell to produce, the higher the spell's Mastery Level is likely to be. Your GM will also inform you whether he considers the effect to be appropriate to the element you've chosen.

If the GM determines the Mastery Level of the spell to be higher than your shugenja's School Rank (taking into account his Affinity and Deficiency), the spell is beyond your capacity to research, and you'll have to try again with a less-powerful proposal.

Once he's handed this information back to you, you have to decide how diligent your shugenja will be in researching the spell, how naturally apt he is at it, and how much help your library will be. Spell research takes at least one month per Mastery Level of dedicated study, with no traveling, adventuring, or other significant duties to detract from the shugenja's studies.



## Spell Research: Major Effects By Ring

### Earth

Protection and warding  
The ground: earthquakes, the land in general  
Minerals and metals

### Water

Curing: illness, poison, Wounds, fear  
Detection: finding objects, finding kami, scrying  
Water: Rain, rivers, bodies of water

### Fire

Fire: creating and targeting  
Creating light  
Creating and targeting lightning

### Air

Creating illusions and concealing the real (invisibility/hiding in shadows)  
Flight, the wind  
Detection: hidden things, lies, others' thoughts, clairaudience  
Sleep





**Rolling Dice**

The base TN to research a spell is its Mastery Level x 10. The researching shugenja rolls dice equal to his Spell Research skill and keeps dice equal to the Ring of the spell. The chart below lists the things that modify this TN.

Once you have a final TN, roll the dice. If the roll is successful, the spell research is successful. It is traditional to write up three copies of a new spell and give them all to the school; one of these copies is then ceremonially returned to the researcher. This ceremony usually carries a modest Glory bonus, especially if the head of school has been very impressed and invites important functionaries to witness it. A demonstration of the spell is customary at these ceremonies.

**Research Example**

Kuni Mokuna wishes to come up with a better way of capturing Shadowlands denizens. The Jade spells are specialized against the Shadowlands, but tend to cause the subject's death in the process, rendering them less useful for study. Mokuna wants something that can immobilize a target, but not kill it, so that it can be shackled and returned to the lab. Earth's Stagnation is close, but not quite what he needs. After some thought, he roughs out his proposal and begins his research. (As mentioned in *Way of the Crab*, the Kuni do not have a formal school anymore. Mokuna does research among his own papers, then fills in the more specialized knowledge with visits to the appropriate colleagues.)

**Mokuna's Proposal**

Crystal has been noted to have an effect on Shadowlands creatures: it is frequently possible to keep them away by strongly presenting a crystal. Still, crystal does not seem to have the same extreme effects on the Tainted as does jade. It is therefore proposed that the natural antipathy the Shadowlands creatures have for crystal be adapted by entreating the Crystal's sleeping Earth spirits to bind, rather than strictly repulse, the Shadowlands creature. Such a Crystalline Prison could overwhelm the corrupt Earth within the creature and render it incapable of motion.

Such a spell would require a pure crystal no smaller than one's thumb. During the casting, the shugenja must stare through the pure crystal at the corrupt target, and implore the spirits within the crystal to adapt their ordinary behavior. Instead of permitting them to strictly repulse the creature on a straight line away from the crystal, the shugenja must convince them to repulse the target in all directions equally. This would have the effect of preventing the Shadowlands creature from making any motion whatsoever.

Since the crystal spirits are often set in their ways, it will be necessary to stare through the crystal and continue the persuasive chant for as long as the effect is desired. Upon the end of the chant, the spirits are likely to become quiescent, and not even to repulse the creature as normal. It is therefore imperative to bind or otherwise render the target harmless before dropping contact.

After submitting the write-up, Mokuna's player and his GM come up with the following description:

**Earth Spell: Crystalline Prison**

**Mastery:** 2  
**Duration:** Concentration  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** 50'

This spell is only effective against creatures with the Shadowlands Taint. The shugenja must focus his Earth through a crystal, attempting to immobilize the target, which must be within line-of-sight. If successful, the target is immobilized for as long as the caster maintains his concentration on the spell. The first turn after the spell has been cast, the target may make a Contested Earth roll against the shugenja: the shugenja receives one Free Raise to this roll per School Rank. If the target wins, it breaks free and automatically wins initiative for the next turn. If the caster drops his concentration or has his line of sight through the crystal interrupted, the spell ceases to operate. No damage is received by the target.

**Spell Research Modifiers**

Circumstance	TN Modifier
Element is not your school's primary element	+5
<i>[Note: The Isawa school teaches all elements.]</i>	
Element is not taught at your school	+10
<i>[Note: "Not taught at your school" is indicated by the school's starting spells.]</i>	
You are at a different school's library	+15
You are ronin or not permitted to use the library	+20
Double research time	-5
Triple research time	-8
Quadruple research time	-10
GM considers effect to be from appropriate element	No change
GM considers effect to be from inappropriate element	+15
GM considers effect to be from opposing element	+20
You already know ten spells from this element	-3
The spell has an unusual requirement	. GM discretion, up to -5
<i>[Examples: the spell must be cast in full sunlight; there must be total silence during the casting; the spell requires a dram of oni blood, etc.]</i>	



The GM rules that Mokuna, although a recognized authority on Shadowlands anatomy and function, is less well-read on the properties of crystal. Mokuna must visit his colleague Kuni Nisobu, and borrow her works on the topic for at least one month of studies.

Mokuna now determines his TN to make this roll. It starts at 20, but he has the modifiers *Already Knows Ten Earth Spells* (-3) and *Unusual Requirement: Crystal* (-2). The TN is reduced to a 15. Mokuna rolls his *Research* of 3; since his *Earth* is 4, he may keep all three dice. He rolls a 21, successfully researching the spell. He bids farewell to Nisobu (to whom he now owes a favor) and returns to his laboratory to ready a cage for its new occupant.

## Example of Play

Asako Xiu Feng is a young shugenja who is quickly making a name for himself as an investigator of the supernatural. He's a clever and curious individual, but often gets in over his head. Asako Xiu Feng is Brian's character. He gave Xiu Feng the *Clear Thinker* advantage to symbolize the character's quick wit, but he also gave him the *Meddler* disadvantage to portray his tendency to stumble in where he isn't wanted.

Xiu Feng is accompanied at all times by his yojimbo, a Dragon bushi named Togashi Mifune. Mifune is a skilled warrior, but can be inexplicably clumsy at times. Mifune is a dour and brooding bushi, who believes in his heart that he has been cursed by the Fortunes for some error in a past life. Dave, who created and plays Mifune, knows quite well that his misfortune mostly arises from his three ranks of *Unluck*.

Hida Matoko is a Crab bushi, assigned by Hida Kisada to keep an eye on the Phoenix and his assistant during their travels through Crab lands. Her duty is to keep them safe, and to make sure they don't meddle in Crab business. While Matoko is a capable warrior, she is blunt even for a Crab, and her quick temper has earned her this unenviable assignment. Matoko is Becky's character. Becky gave Matoko *Brash*, *Benten's Curse*, and *Can't Lie* so that Matoko would

be as blunt a samurai as possible, but also gave her *Large* and *Strength of the Earth* so she would be able to capably handle the aftermath of her outbursts.

The characters are currently investigating some strange happenings deep in Crab lands, near the village of Kuda Mura. Some farmers have been disappearing, and it's up to Xiu Feng and his comrades to find out why.

Ed is the Game Master. He knows where the farmers went, and is ready for the characters to face it as well.

Statistics for all three characters are provided at the end of this section in case you want to use any of them as templates for player characters. All three are balanced starting characters.

ED: Okay, people. You're coming up on the farmhouse. The sun has almost gone down and it's starting to get pretty dark.

BRIAN: I call out a greeting. I even announce that I'm a magistrate. Do I see anyone? Any farmers?

ED: No, there doesn't seem to be anybody around, though that's not unusual for this time of night. They might have gone to bed already.

DAVE: I'm going to head for that house.

BECKY: I've got a bad feeling about this. I'm going to watch our backs.

ED: Good idea. Give me a raw *Perception* roll, Becky.

BECKY: (Matoko has a 2 *Perception*, so Becky rolls 2 dice, keeping both) 15.

ED: Hmm. (Ed's notes indicate that a 20 is needed to notice the goblin scout in the nearby forest. However, Becky is actively searching so he decides to be lenient.) You don't notice anything in particular, though you catch some movement out of the corner of your eye just as you step toward the house.

BECKY: What is it?

ED: Hard to say. Looks like it's gone now.

DAVE: I open the door and go inside. What do I see?

ED: (smiles) You just walk on in?

DAVE: Sure thing, I'm a samurai. What are a bunch of farmers going to do? I... (thinks better of it) I step in carefully with one hand on my sword, and call out. What do I see?

ED: Nothing. It's a poor, one-room house and there's no one inside.

BRIAN: This smells funny to me. Another family disappeared? I'm searching this house top to bottom.

DAVE: Yeah, I'm going to help. Becky?

BECKY: Have fun, guys. I'm keeping my eye on the door.

ED: Okay, people. Give me an *Investigation* roll. You can roll an extra die since you're helping each other. Default Target Number is





10. I'll give you a free Raise for every ten minutes you search. Who's going to roll?

BRIAN: I guess I am. I'm spending a Void Point and making two Raises. We'll spend twenty minutes searching, for a total of three Raises. Is that okay?

BECKY: You're pushing it. I saw something in that forest. We're sitting ducks here.

BRIAN: I want to know what's going on here!

BECKY: Okay, but no more than twenty minutes.

BRIAN: Cool. (Xiu Feng has a Perception of 3 and Investigation of 3. Brian rolls five dice, since Dave is helping him and he's spending a Void Point. He needs to get a TN of 20.) Wow, two tens! (re-rolls) I got a 37! I should have made another Raise!

BECKY: See? We didn't need to waste so much time.

ED: Okay, after looking around you notice that the sleeping pallet is pushed up against the wall. The pallet beneath the blanket is torn up and there's fresh blood underneath. While you're looking on the floor, Dave notices some broken crockery swept under the table.

BRIAN: There's been a struggle here recently, and someone tried to cover it up.

ED: That's not all. You also find a gouge on the wall, obviously made with a farmer's kama. There's some sort of black residue deep in the gouge. It has a very odd, rotten smell that makes you slightly dizzy. To your enlightened eye, Brian, it seems to have the stink of evil.

BRIAN: Becky, you're a Crab. Come over here and take a look at this!

BECKY: I'm watching the door.

DAVE: I'll watch the door. This is pretty creepy, so I've got my swords out.

BECKY: Fine, then. I walk over and have a look.

ED: Okay, Becky. You're pretty sure you've seen this stuff before. Roll your Shadowlands Lore and keep Intelligence. Do you want to spend Void?

BECKY: No! I might need it later. (Matoko has an Intelligence and Shadowlands Lore of 2, so she rolls 2 dice, keeping both.) 11. Is that good enough?

ED: Just good enough. This one's easy. That's goblin blood.

BECKY: Dave! What do you see out there?

ED: Dave, do a raw Perception roll.

DAVE: Okay. (rolls) Wow! A 19!

ED: (grins) Your Unluck kicks in. Re-roll that.

DAVE: (frowns) I got a 6.

ED: Oooh, too bad for you. You don't notice the goblins at the edge of the forest until they burst out of the underbrush and begin chucking rocks at you. Your TN this round is a 10, since you're just standing there in your armor.

DAVE: Er... I've got my swords out. Can I use my Daisho Technique?

ED: Sorry. (He makes some attack rolls, gets a 13 and a 14; he then rolls for damage, ruling that the rocks do 3k1) All right, Dave, both of the rocks hit you.

DAVE: Imagine that. What's the damage?

ED: 18 Wounds.

DAVE: (marking the Wounds on his character sheet) I knew I should have increased Mifune's Stamina to match his Willpower. I'm already at +15!

BECKY: While he's whining, I grab him and pull him inside before they fire again.

ED: All right. Matoko drags Mifune into the house just as two more rocks thud into the wall. You can hear triumphant screams from outside.

BECKY: How many? I peek out the window, getting my tetsubo ready.

ED: It looks like about eight goblins are charging out of the woods, wielding knives and other rough improvised weapons. They're heading right for the house.

BECKY: Forget the tetsubo. I'm getting out my bow. Can I shoot them?

ED: Go ahead and roll. Brian, what are you doing?

BRIAN: I want to cast Path to Inner Peace on Dave. Two Raises.

ED: That's a Target Number of 15.

BRIAN: Got it. (Xiu Feng has a Water of 3, an affinity for Water, and is a Rank 1 Shugenja. Brian rolls three dice and keeps two.) 15 exactly! I heal three times my Water. That's nine Wounds.

DAVE: Thanks! I'm back up to the +6 level.

BECKY: (with 2 Reflexes and 2 Kyujutsu, Becky rolls 2 dice to hit the goblins and keeps them both. She gets a phenomenal 30!) I'm pretty sure I hit one of them.

ED: (blinks) You sure did! Damage?

BECKY: 14 Wounds. With my Crab Rank 1 Technique and 3 Earth, that's 17.

ED: (nods) One of the goblins screams and goes down with your arrow sticking from its eye socket. The other five pause for a moment, stunned by such a spectacular shot.

BECKY: Fine. Let them stare. I shoot another one. (rolls) lck. Only 12 that time.

ED: That's enough. Damage?

BECKY: (rolls) 16 Wounds that time.

ED: Another goblin goes down with your arrow stuck in its chest.

DAVE: I get my bow out! I want to help!

ED: Fine. You have one more shot before the others get here.

DAVE: (Mifune's has Kyujutsu 2 and Reflexes 3, so he rolls 2 dice and keeps both) Awesome! 16!



ED: Sorry, Dave. Your Unluck kicks in again.

DAVE: (rolls again) Dang. An 8.

ED: You missed. Mifune felt a disturbance in his chi just as the arrow released.



DAVE: Mifune curses the Fortunes.

BRIAN: I look at him a little funny for that.

ED: The six remaining goblins burst into the room. Two of them charge at Dave and Brian. Becky, the big one in the back recognizes your armor and orders the remaining four goblins to charge you, all screaming bloody murder.

BECKY: Is he a Warmonger?

ED: Looks like it. He's wearing armor and he's got a real sword!

BECKY: Let them come. I drop my bow and point my tetsubo at the Warmonger.

DAVE: I want to get my swords out and protect Brian.

BRIAN: I'm casting Jade Strike on the Warmonger.

ED: The goblins spent the round bursting into the house, and you guys spend the same round readying your weapons and scroll. Round two. Roll initiative.

(All the players roll and keep their Awareness.)

BECKY: Ah, man. I got a 5. I guess I'm going last.

ED: Actually, one of the goblins rolled a 4.

BRIAN: 12.

DAVE: 16; minus six is 10.

ED: You've already more or less declared your actions and the goblins plan on attacking, so we'll get right to it if that's okay. Brian, you're up first.

BRIAN: I cast the spell! (Xiu Feng has an Earth of 2; Brian rolls two dice and keeps one.) Whew. 6. Just enough.

ED: A burst of brilliant green magic hammers into the goblin Warmonger. The spell does three dice of damage. Brian?

BRIAN: Oops. My bad. (rolls) 19 Wounds!

ED: (eyes widen as he realizes the Warmonger has exactly one Wound left) The Warmonger bursts into brilliant green flame and staggers backward. When the spell ends, he turns to you, black blood dripping from his fangs. He screams in pain and humiliation and orders his goblins to attack you!

BRIAN: I'm not afraid! The kami are on my side!

ED: Two goblins attack, one at Dave, one at Becky. (He makes some rolls. Both characters have a TN to be Hit of 20.) They both miss, but their friends are trying to circle around to attack you from behind while they distract you. Dave? Your turn.

DAVE: I want to keep them from getting at Brian.

ED: All right. Raise twice on your attacks this round and I'll say that you're keeping them from getting past you.

DAVE: Right. I spend Void to attack. (Mifune has Kenjutsu of 3 and Agility of 4. Because he's at +6 and spent a Void Point, Dave rolls 4 dice and keeps them all, but his TN is 6 higher than it would normally be.) I got a 24, unless the Fortunes have anything to say.

ED: Not this time. Damage?

DAVE: 15 Wounds.





ED: The goblin goes down with a whimper as you lop its head from its shoulders with your swords. Unfortunately, his friend dives in to attack you. He flanks you while you're distracted with keeping Brian alive. (rolls) Ouch! 14 Wounds.

DAVE: Oof! I'm at +20!

ED: Two more goblins attack you, Becky. (rolls) One of them misses. The other gets in a lucky hit by stabbing you from behind. 14 Wounds.

BECKY: (shrugs) I'm a Crab. I laugh it off. Is it my turn?

ED: Yeah, you just beat out the last goblin. He's to your left.

BECKY: That's the one I'm hitting. (Matoko has an Agility of 3 and a Tetsubo of 3. Becky rolls 3 dice and keeps them all, then adds +3 to the result for her specialization in Tetsubo.) 21.

ED: Roll damage.

BECKY: Okay. (Since Matoko has the Large advantage and is using a melee weapon, she adds +5 to this roll.) Wow, 24 Wounds!

ED: You basically hammer the poor thing into the ground. There are four goblins left, counting a very wounded Warmonger. Everyone roll initiative again. Dave, don't forget your wound penalties. You're subtracting 20 points from this roll.

BECKY: Yes! A 19!

BRIAN: ?? How'd I roll a 7 with 3 Awareness?!?

ED: It happens.

DAVE: I got a -13. Can the Fortunes please invoke my Unluck?

ED: Sorry, Dave, they're not listening. You have the worst initiative, so declare your action.

DAVE: I'm going on Full Defense! I'm still trying to protect Brian, by the way.

ED: Fine. That might affect your TN to be Hit if they try to get past you. Brian?

BRIAN: I'm going to heal Dave again!

ED: The goblins all rolled worse initiative than Becky, so I'll declare them next. They're all following the Warmonger's orders. He's ordering them to attack Brian, and it looks like Dave is in the way! The Warmonger himself is going to try to run away.

BECKY: So the goblins are ignoring me this round?

ED: That's what it looks like.

BECKY: (cackles) Good. That Warmonger isn't going anywhere.

ED: At the beginning of this round, you hear the high-pitched shrieks of angry goblins.

BRIAN: These goblins?

ED: Nope. The ones outside.

BECKY: I knew this was too easy.

DAVE: Maybe for you! I'm nearly down and I still have one rank of Unluck left!

ED: The Fortunes can be merciful, Dave. (evil grin) Okay, Becky, make an attack roll as you charge the Warmonger...

**Asako Xiu Feng (Brian)**

Earth: 2

Water: 3

Fire: 2

Air: 3

Void: 3

School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja 1

Honor: 2.5

Glory: 1.0

Advantages: Clear Thinker

Disadvantages: Soft Hearted, Missing Limb (left arm), Meddler  
 Spells: (Water Affinity) Sense, Commune, Summon, Path to Inner Peace, Path of the Scorpion, Reflections of Pan Ku, Jade Strike, Fires From the Forge, Tempest of Air

Skills: Calligraphy 1, Etiquette 1, Investigation 2, Law 2, Meditation 3, Shintao 1, Tantojutsu 1, Theology 1

**Togashi Mifune (Dave)**

Earth: 2 Willpower: 3

Water: 2

Fire: 3 Agility: 4

Air: 2 Reflexes: 3

Void: 2

School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 1

Honor: 1.5

Glory: 1.0

Advantages: Ambidexterity

Disadvantages: Unluck x 3  
 Light Armor (+5 TN to be Hit)  
 Skills: Athletics 2, Defense 2, Kenjutsu 3, Kyujutsu 2, Lore (Shugenja) 1, Meditation 2

**Hida Matoko (Becky)**

Earth: 3

Water: 2 Strength: 3

Fire: 2 Agility: 3

Air: 2

Void: 2

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 1

Honor: 0.5

Glory: 1.0

Advantages: Large, Strength of the Earth x 1  
 Disadvantages: Bente's Curse, Brash, Can't Lie  
 Heavy Armor (+10 TN to be Hit)  
 Skills: Battle 1, Defense 2, Jiujutsu 1, Kenjutsu 1, Kyujutsu 2, Lore (Shadowlands) 2, Tetsubo 3





# Chapter Four:

# Air



## “Stolen Truths”

*“There is no fear, ronin. Even in the darkest night, we are not alone.”*

*“That’s exactly what I’m afraid of, samurai.”*

*– Kitsu Motso & Matsu Hiroru*

The dawn was cold, and dark, with only the faintest light peering through the cracks in the clouds. Hiroru moved silently past the guards, gliding up the wall of the palace as if he were walking across a courtyard. Once inside the wall, he slipped past the window of the Shiba Champion’s sleeping chambers – empty – and into the inner courtyards of the grand library of the Isawa. The white-garbed ninja used his skills to slink along the ledge outside the library. His clothing shifted color to match the pure stone, and opening the window, he slipped quietly inside.

No one saw him. He owed that to his training, to his old Akodo master, the one that had twisted his perceptions of honor and duty and left him a shell without purpose.

Hiroru slid inside a solitary window in the towering library’s upper chambers, careful not to disturb the trinkets that lay scattered about the shugenja’s alchemy table. The Master of Earth’s workshop,

Within moments, the ninja had unlocked the inner chests and opened their thick wooden lids.

Scrolls spilled through his fingers as he searched hurriedly, aware that the servants would soon be moving about the palace below.

Nothing.

*Where are you hiding, Phoenix?* Hiroru thought to himself, searching each case. *Where have you gone, and why are the other masters hiding the fact that you are not among them here in the Isawa woodlands?*

Hiroru cursed, ducking behind a shoji screen as a pair of giggling maids traipsed down the corridor outside the thin screens of the workroom. The guards outside the door greeted them fondly, and Hiroru used the extra time to slide his hand along the wooden bottom of the thick, enameled chest.

There. Beneath the scroll cases and bags of strange mixtures, Hiroru felt a hidden catch swing open. A false bottom, and more beneath. In his hand, Hiroru felt a thin box, no wider than two fingers, but as long as a wakizashi. Drawing it up from the chest, he tucked it in his gi and closed the lid.

The maids chattered, giggling politely with the guards – thank the Fortunes for young girls – and then began to slide open the shoji screen to the workroom.

By the time they entered, the room was empty, and they were none the wiser.

The box was heavy, and Hiroru knelt in the room of the small inn, fingering its latch. No key, of course, and the lock was complex. He could shatter the box, but any wards or protections would be triggered... Hiroru shook his head. No, too dangerous. This was no mere apprentice shugenja he was dealing with, but a Master of the Elements, one of the finest sorcerers in Rokugan.

A few careful probes, a twist, and the lock shattered under Hiroru’s tanto. Smiling at his fortune, the ninja began to lift the lid of the small box, eager to see the secrets it contained.



"I believe that belongs to us," a soft voice whispered from the window.

Hiroru drew his sword before he realized it, snarling beneath his white mask. "No more, Phoenix," he said to the young woman standing on air outside the window of the inn.

"May I come in?" she asked pleasantly, and Hiroru was ashamed of his bitter response. She was not here for a fight – and after all, his own dishonorable actions had brought her. Sheathing his sword, he nodded. "For now. But remember, you stand in my hospitality. Those things which are mine, you may not take."

"Of course." She smiled pleasantly. "I am not here to steal from you." Rather than an accusation, her voice held only admiration for him. "I do not have your skills."

Stepping inside, the maiden floated to the ground before him, lowering her kimono skirts over her bare feet. "You have bested our palace guards, and entered into the private chambers of the Master of Earth. Very brave."

"Not brave at all, maiden." Hiroru knelt beside the lacquered box, gesturing to a cushion nearby. "I knew that no one was in those chambers. It is adequately clear that the Master of Earth is not in Rokugan."

Her face fell for a second, and Hiroru wondered if she was truly this transparent, or if she was more skilled than a Scorpion actress. "How did you know?" she asked quietly.

"Three times, he has refused a summons from the Imperial Court – the last time, because of an illness known as *samagutra*."

"That is true," she whispered.

"No." Hiroru shook his head. "Samagutra is a child's disease. Once you have it, you cannot again suffer from its symptoms. Tadaka is an old friend of mine. The Master of Earth was ill with samagutra when he was four; I had it at the same time."

"Well done." The woman looked chagrined. "But that does not excuse your... activities. You must return the box, unopened. A great deal depends on it."

Hiroru nodded. "Of course. Once I know what it holds." He reached for the latch, but her white hand caught his wrist, holding it firmly with a look of desperation in her eyes.

"Please," softly.

Amazed at this strange young girl, Hiroru froze. "Where is Tadaka?"

"You cannot know... you must not..."

His hand moved again, and again she caught his wrist. "Please," she murmured despairingly.

"Where?" Hiroru's eyes flickered angrily. "I will not let your games continue. If I must, I will take this box to the Emperor himself. Tadaka, if he is dead, was a good man, and a brave one. This duplicity does not honor his memory."

"Tadaka-sama is not dead," she said resignedly. "But he may wish to be."

"What do you mean?"

"Three days ago, he began his research, and now he has discovered a terrible secret. I cannot tell you what it is, but it is hidden in that box. I cannot let it out again, or the Empire will suffer. We are not ready to control it... not yet."

"We?"

She continued, words spilling out of her mouth as if a guilty relief to share her secret forced her to tell him everything. "The Elemental Masters – my peers – have sworn to save the Empire, as Shoju once did. But instead of killing the Emperor, we shall protect him. He is in danger – very great danger."

"And Tadaka is 'saving the Emperor,'" he said sarcastically.

"No," she murmured, tears forming in the corner of her beautiful eyes. "Tadaka is in the Shadowlands."

Hiroru blanched, his hand shaking. "The Shadowlands... is he mad?"

"We are all mad, ronin. All of us." She drew his hand away from the lacquered box slowly, and he let her take hold of it. "Inside this box is one of the greatest secrets of Rokugan. The scroll is filled with darkness so foul that the box is lined with jade and pearl, to keep its sickness inside until..."

"Until you can destroy it?"

"Iye." She shook her head. "No. Until we can control it, and find its source. Then we, the Five Masters, we will destroy it."

"The source of the Shadowlands is Fu Leng. You propose to destroy the Dark God of the Shadowlands himself?"

She leveled a cold gaze at him. "If we must, to save the Empire." A sigh, and she placed the box on the floor between them. "If you open this box, your flesh will become tainted. I know this, for I have seen Tadaka, and I have seen what the scroll has done to him. Please, I beg you, allow me to take it back to its resting place. You have the information you desired."

As she stepped out of the window into the cold night air, Hiroru said suddenly, "Why was such a valuable scroll left so openly in his chamber? Any competent thief could have found it – and if you, of all the Masters, knew I was coming, you surely must have known I would steal it away. Why didn't you stop me when you could, instead of meeting with me here? Why take the risk? You must know I will tell others. The secret of the Phoenix will not be secret for long."

Her chocolate eyes stared sadly into his. "Of course I knew, samurai. And as for why... let me simply tell you this."

"Isawa Tadaka is my friend, too."

With that, she was gone.





# Magic

In Rokugan, magic is more than the manipulation of energies into formulated spells. The individuals who practice magic are also priests of the highest order, taught to speak with the kami of air, earth, water and fire. These kami are holy beings, immortal parts of the universe and a critical piece of the Celestial Heavens. They are not to be ordered, but rather, respected and treated as brethren of the shugenja. In the following chapter, you will discover the secrets of being a spellcaster in the Emerald Empire. We'll show you how spells work, how shugenja act and are treated by the Empire, and how a shugenja can duel like a bushi when his honor has been insulted. We'll also offer suggestions on how to create spells that are unique to your own campaign.

The original Empire of Rokugan is a world filled with magic. If you are looking for a less enchanted world, it might be best to leave magic at a low profile for your game. On the other hand, if you want a Rokugan of high fantasy and enchantment, you might want to make spells and shugenja more common. As always, in the end it is up to a game's individual GM to decide what spells exist in the Empire.

## The Shugenja

*Be a child of the Elements, and they will protect you. Be a friend of the Elements, and they will tutor you. Be a master of the Elements, and they will guide you.*

— *Isawa Kaede*

The role of a traditional shugenja in Rokugan is that of a wise priest, a keeper of religious teachings and thoughts. Shugenja are expected to perform all the duties of scribe, priest, mouthpiece to the fortunes, and keeper of the secrets of the clan. When a shugenja enters a village, it is not uncommon for the peasants to offer a bowl of rice and tea to the wandering priest. Indeed, to refuse might result in ill fortune for the inhabitants, for it is believed that the Fortunes watch over their chosen children.

If a shugenja settles in a town or village, it is certain that he will be treated with great respect. As a village elder or headman, the shugenja will be expected to solve disputes, guide religious ceremonies such as the blessing of a house or newborn child, and teach the peasants of the Tao and the worship of the Fortunes.

However, it should be made clear that shugenja are far more than wandering priests. They are respected, yes, but not simply for their wisdom and religious insight. A shugenja has the ability not only to speak to the kami, but to cause them to manifest. Fire from the sky, water from stones and other mysterious things occur when shugenja ask the spirits to move in accordance with their will. Only one in a thousand has this ability. They are allowed certain privileges, so long

as they do not abuse them. For while it is proper to speak to a shugenja with deference and respect, it would be inappropriate for that shugenja to ever take note of his position, or to use it for personal gain.

Shugenja, like bushi, are typically born into the samurai (noble) class. They are afforded all the privileges of rank from birth, educated and treated with respect from their first days of life. When they show signs of ability, the shugenja of their household come to speak to the spirits about the child. If the response is favorable, the child is taken to the schools of the shugenja, and trained there. It takes many years to learn the ways of spellcraft – not simply the calling of spirits and how to use their power, but the proper invocations and prayers. To be a shugenja is more than mere magic-

using. It is the unity of your soul with the soul of the universe, and the ability to call upon the kindred spirits for their assistance.

A shugenja is not typically taught the ways of warfare and kenjutsu, but some houses prefer for their magicians to know



### Copying Scrolls

**Allowing a shugenja from another Clan to copy your scrolls is a serious offense. All scrolls are encoded with a magical cipher which is distinctive for each Clan's shugenja school, thus making it very difficult for spells to be copied if they are stolen. Although it is permitted to teach one's intimates how to cast a spell, such instruction does not extend to divulging the school's cipher.**

**More rules for copying spells can be found on page 203.**



something of defense. There is an ancient saying in the Empire: "Let the man who wears the sword use the sword." If a shugenja chooses to wear a katana, he must be prepared to use it – in a duel, on the field of battle, or otherwise. Shugenja who do not choose to wear the sword state that they are non-combatants, and are treated with the same courtesy as a courtier or other peaceful profession. In this way, a shugenja who does not wear a katana may choose a champion to stand for his honor when he is questioned. He may refuse to fight in a battle, particularly if he is from the pacifistic Isawa family.

The Isawa, ruling family of the most magically inclined clan in the Empire, view the craft of the shugenja as the highest calling one can attain. They place it above that of noble rank or awarded honor, for they feel that anyone who has the talent to be a shugenja has been given the greatest gift of mortals – the power to control and command the world about them. They use their abilities for peace, and rarely enter warfare unless they feel that more lives would be lost by refusing to fight. Only in defense will an Isawa shugenja use his spells to destroy, and only when threatened will they be brash or foolhardy. Restraint and control are the heart of the Phoenix shugenja. If a man cannot control his own desires, how can he perfect his spirit?



## The Task of a Shugenja

Despite a thousand years of research and study, magic is still a mysterious force in Rokugan. Shugenja from across the Empire dispute almost every point, each claiming that their school teaches the only truth – or at least the most complete version of it.

In order to understand how magic works in Rokugan, you must understand religion. The Celestial Order reflects the Rokugani belief that the universe is structured and ordered. The Rokugani see structure in the changing seasons, the patterns of stars and the phases of the moon. If nature is structured and man is a part of nature, then he should be structured as well.

The Rokugani put a great deal of belief in the patterns of nature, and so fortune telling is a very popular activity. There are many forms of fortune telling, including astronomy (a high art practiced by shugenja), cartomancy and tea reading (to mention just a few).

## Reincarnation

A fundamental belief in Rokugan's religion is reincarnation. The Rokugani believe that this world is one of a hundred million worlds that were once and will be again. When their souls depart this world, they go to a place to prepare for the next. In the spirit world, the spirits are faceless, without identity. This is because the material world is temporary and unimportant, having very little impact on the eternal soul.

A soul has two aspects that change according to the life the soul has been born into: dharma and karma. Dharma is the soul's duty, or role in this life. All lives in the world have a duty, and they would not have been born into this dharma if their soul was not prepared for it (another reflection of Rokugani belief in the ordered universe). Karma, on the other hand, is the energy the soul gathers for performing its duty. A soul that gathers enough energy earns a better life in the next world, the most advanced souls reaching the status of divinity...

## The Individual and the Universe

The Rokugani see the individual in a very different light than that of most western cultures. In our culture, an individual is expected to wear a social mask and a private mask. Outside of his home, he wears his social mask, which reflects his position in society, his profession and his social obligations. At home, he takes the mask off and wears his private mask. We view someone who wears their social mask at home with some trepidation, as someone who "takes their work home with them."

In Rokugan, there is only the social mask. Every moment of every day, a samurai wears his status. He never lets his mask – or, more properly, his "face" – fall. An individual is the face that he wears in this life, and there is nothing else.






# The Fortunes

The Emperor is the symbolic head of the Rokugani religion (being the one who is closest to the Sun Goddess), but each of the Clans follows its own religious structure. This collage of metaphysical thought causes great debates among the shugenja schools on the nature of the Fortunes, the soul and the teachings of Shinsei.

The native religion of Rokugan contains many, many gods, structured in much the same way their mortal counterparts are. There are many tiers of divinity, beginning with the Sun and Moon, who are the rulers of the universe. Just below them are the Fortunes who commune regularly with mortal man. Below the Fortunes are the thousands of ancestors whom the Rokugani look to daily for advice and direction.

The Fortunes of Rokugan are not kind deities, and one must cajole them to win their favor. They are easily insulted and quick to temper, but they are also very vain and easy to win over with compliments and sacrifices. Shugenja, at their most basic definition, are those who can communicate with the gods. They also know the rites of purification (performed at birth and at death) and the secrets of dispelling evil spirits. When Shinsei came to Rokugan and impressed the Emperor with his Tao of the Five Rings, many shugenja applied the Tao to their native religion. For a thousand years, the shugenja have mingled the religion of Rokugan with the philosophy of Shinsei until now, the two have become inseparable. Children are baptized with blessings from the Seven Fortunes while the deceased are buried with rites prescribed by Shinsei.

## The Sun Goddess

The greatest of all fortunes is Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess. It was she who gave birth to the founders of the Clans.

## Children of Sun and Moon

The arrival of the Children of Sun and Moon ushered in the Age of Man. They taught humanity all the arts and crafts, the concept of the ordered society and have directed mankind's destiny for a thousand years.

Hantei Jimmu Tenno is the first Hantei. He is the ruler of the invisible world of spirits. Those who seek good harvests and protection from the spirits of the invisible world pray to him.

Hantei's brothers and sisters are also worshiped by the Clans that they founded.

The Eight Kami believed to be Hantei's brothers and sisters are Akodo, Doji, Bayushi, Shinjo, Shiba, Togashi, Hida and Fu Leng. Some sects teach that there is a tenth, unnamed brother who died in Onnotangu (the Moon's belly when the children were eaten, but such teachings are generally believed to be pure heresy.

## The Seven Fortunes

The most popular of the Fortunes are the "Seven Fortunes of Good Luck." They ride through the sky on a golden chariot that bestows good luck on whoever sees it. Most prayer in Rokugan is directed to them to gain their favor. The Fortunes have both a peaceful and a wrathful aspect. The peaceful aspect is that of a large, pleasantly smiling figure sitting on a pillow. The wrathful aspect is pictured with black skin, flaming eyes and fangs, often swinging a sword.

**Daikoku** is the Fortune of Wealth.

**Ebisu** is the Fortune of Honest Work.

**Benten** is the Fortune of Romantic Love.

**Bishamon** is the Fortune of Strength.

**Fukurokujin** is the Fortune of Wisdom.

**Jurojin** is the Fortune of Longevity.

**Hotei** is the Fortune of Contentment.

## The Lesser Fortunes

While most prayer is directed to the Seven Fortunes of good luck, there are countless others. Their divinity was granted by the Emperor after their deaths, thus making them "lesser" fortunes in the eyes of the others, but their power and influence is just as great. Many of the lesser Fortunes were actually mortal men and women whose souls were "elevated" to Fortune status by Imperial decree.

Inari is the fortune of rice and good grain. He is also the patron of foxes, and so people who take his name in vain are often visited by his cunning tricksters. Inari was a rice farmer who caught a fox in a trap, but released it when the fox promised to provide a good wife. The wife, of course, was the fox in her human form. When the son of Hantei II grew ill near Inari's home, his wife cured his illness.



After his death, Hantei elevated his soul to become the guardian of good grain and foxes.

Suitengu is the guardian of the waters. Sailors and fishermen pray to him for calm seas and profitable catches, and for deliverance from storms. It is said that he was a fisherman who happened across a young Hantei IV and saved him from drowning. His soul was elevated to Fortune status when Hantei V was saved from a storm after he prayed to Suitengu.

Tenjin is the fortune of writing and literacy. Akodo Tenjin was a cunning and clever poet who wrote a story that Hantei III found offensive. He commanded that Tenjin be executed, and immediately thereafter disease and pestilence fell on the court. Hantei III begged the spirit of Tenjin for forgiveness and created a temple to honor his memory. Since then, poets have prayed to him for inspiration and guidance.

Osano-Wo is the fortune of fire and thunder. He is the most wrathful of all the fortunes, and is never portrayed in his peaceful aspect. Osano-Wo, a son of Hida himself, was one of the first Crab samurai, a man with a temper that matched the thunder. It is said that when he met an enemy in battle, he could call down the lightning into his sword and strike down a thousand warriors at a time. The Rokugani pray to him for protection from disaster. He is also the special protector of the Mantis Clan, and considered to be their patron fortune along with his son Kaimetsu-uo, who founded their clan.

The Guardians of the Four Winds are often pictured standing on a platform which represents the world. Under each of their heels is an oni and in their right hands are flaming swords that can dance on the winds. The Rokugani pray to them for safe, speedy travel. Jikoju rules the East, Zocho rules the south, Komoku the West and Tamon the North.

### Ancestors

Rokugan also reveres the spirits of its ancestors. Honorable spirits of the past have great power, and to offend them is to tempt doom. The Rokugani worship their ancestors as they worship the Fortunes.

Every Clan worships the founder of the Clan, the 'First Kami'. Also, there is a shrine devoted to the oldest ancestor of the family. For instance, a typical Isawa house has a shrine to the original Shiba as well as a shrine to the original Isawa. Houses also have a shrine devoted to revered members of the immediate family.

The rituals for worship include placing food before the shrine, lighting incense and deep meditation. It is during meditation that family members can gain guidance from their ancestors.

# The Role of the Shugenja

Shugenja are one of the facets that are most misunderstood about Rokugan. As mentioned above, the people of Rokugan view nature with reverence. Nature is a force that should not be tampered with, and when they view the "spellcasting" of the shugenja, they feel shivers run up and down their spines.

However, shugenja are much more than just spell-slinging sorcerers: they are the very foundation of Rokugan's religion. They are priests who teach the rituals the Rokugani practice; they keep the names of the Fortunes, measure the passage of time and are the most literate class of people in Rokugan.

A shugenja begins his career (as all Rokugani do) at a very early age. He is apprenticed to a shugenja school, where he spends the next five to nine years cleaning, washing, carrying water and firewood, and performing other manual labors. He also learns how to read and write. When an apprentice is judged worthy, he is initiated into the first level of school secrets. At this level, the shugenja begins to understand how to commune with the Fortunes and perform basic rituals.

These rituals and prayers are written on scrolls that the shugenja carries with him. The scrolls are written in a cipher that only shugenja trained by his school can read. When he wishes to perform a ritual or prayer, he reads the scroll. Some rituals require chanting and incense, while others list simple meditation techniques. These activities look an awful lot like *maho* (black magic, q.v.), which is why the peasantry view some shugenja with fear and even distrust.

### Shugenja and War

For centuries, shugenja have been staunch defenders of peace. Their reason for this has always been an insistence that all life is sacred. From eta to Emperor, each mortal life is a gift from the Fortunes, and no life should be thrown away for temporal reasons. No ties of politics or family can sway a determined Isawa from attempting to find a peaceful solution to all difficulties.





This is not to say that shugenja are incapable of fighting. If more peaceful methods do not work, even the most peaceful shugenja is willing to use binding spells, holding spells and other force to restrain or remove the problem.

### Shintao – The Holy Order of Shinsei

*“The Tao is the stonecutter, and we are but stones. Remember that, when you feel the world begin to shape you.”*

– Tetsuya

When Shinsei brought his wisdom to Rokugan, the first Shiba wrote down his conversations with the Emperor, the document which became the fabled Tao of Shinsei. Many shugenja saw the wisdom of the little man’s words and devoted their lives to pursuing his enigmatic wisdom. They shaved their heads and built isolated mountain temples, retreating to lives of deep contemplation. Some samurai, such as those of the esoteric Dragon Clan, also have embraced Shinsei’s wisdom, and over the thousand years since his arrival, many factions of “Shinseism” have developed. While the isolationistic ideal of the Shinsei Order appeals to many retiring samurai, a recent branch of Shinseism makes the claim that wisdom cannot be found in isolation. Only by interacting with the all the temptations and evils of the world can true wisdom be found. This new branch of Shinseism – called Shintao, “Way of Shinsei” – has become popular with many samurai and monks across Rokugan.

Monks are treated as farmer heimin. Many samurai give up their family name upon taking up the monastic life, thus leaving behind their station. They become essentially peasants, and it is considered impolite and an insult to their holy quest to treat them as samurai once they have taken the vows of a monk.

### Teachings of Shinsei

Earth is the virtue of resilience and temperance. Only by understanding how to hold one’s strength can one release it properly. Fire is the virtue of purity of action. Only action without the weight of thought will be as that of fire. Water is deep and strong and fluid. Only by understanding the strength of Water can one’s mind be pure and deep and fluid and strong. Air is the subtle touch. Only by understanding the shifting winds can one understand the shifting pulse of the heart and the world around him. Void is the last. It is all and it is none. You cannot understand the secret of void; you must know it.

The purpose of Shinsei’s teachings was to free the soul of ignorance, greed and the passions (anger, desire, hatred, grief and joy). Only by understanding and separating one’s soul from these vices could a samurai gain

enlightenment. The world is a place of sorrows, and only by overcoming your perceptions and seeing beyond the world’s illusions can you gain enlightenment. Once a soul gains enlightenment, his name adds the suffix “-noshin.” The departed souls of those who have achieved enlightenment are another source of prayer and blessing, but the ritual for praying to the enlightened ancestors is much less formal than praying to the fortunes. The shrines devoted to Shinsei and the noshin are very simple, using the natural landscape rather than man-made structures to emphasize Shinsei’s lessons of “losing one’s sense of the world.”

Shinsei taught that weakness came from having one’s mind fixed on the material rather than the eternal. The five elements are eternal, while flesh is material and temporal. Passion is a symptom of the flesh while temperance and wisdom is gained from the eternal (one’s ancestors). By focusing on the eternal, a student can free his soul from the material. A radical aspect of Shinsei’s teachings was that anyone – if they were willing – could reach





enlightenment. Even though it may take a thousand lifetimes, enlightenment is attainable to any soul who is willing to seek it.

### Maho: Black Magic

*We stood there, watching the sorcerer as he sliced his palm with the knife and blood oozed from the open wound. "Stay back," he whispered. "Stay where you are, samurai." We could do nothing, uncertain of what manner of black magic he could be summoning...*

Maho (black magic) is a forbidden practice in Rokugan. Sorcerers (*maho-tsukai*, literally "servants of magic") use blood – their own and the blood of others – to give power to their magic. In exchange for their power, *tsukai* swear fealty to an Oni in exchange for knowledge and power, forswearing any former allegiances – although some don't realize the exact nature of the contract into which they are entering. Many *tsukai* keep their dark practice secret, however, so they can gather knowledge from both sources and spread troubles in accordance with their true master's will.

Maho involves curses, raising the dead, scrying, divination and enchantments. Blood is used in sacrifice to the Oni to gain its favor. The Oni also gives his *tsukai* enchanted weapons and items to fulfill the Oni's own dark agendas. It is a dangerous agreement, for the Oni does not wish the *tsukai* to gain too much knowledge. The story of Iuchiban, a *tsukai* of incredible powers, tells of a shugenja who made such a pact and gained enough power and knowledge to trap his master and steal his power.

The practice of maho is a capital crime in Rokugan. All *tsukai* have stained their souls by practicing maho and are considered *eta* in the eyes of the Emperor. Not even a *tsukai*'s family will protect him if they discover his secret.

### Folk Magic

Rokugan's common folk are also known to practice their own brand of magic, although they make a distinction between "folk magic" and the shugenja of the clans and the dark magic of the *maho-tsukai*. Folk magic involves divination through astrology, casting stones and coins. The peasantry views divination as a practice less offensive to the spirits because it is only reading the elements rather than manipulating them.

### Superstitions

Superstition is a series of practices that cannot be proven to be truly influential or effective in matters that pertain to magic and the spirit world. Some of the following superstitions are actually effective while others are simply irrational practices.







- Traveling in a north-east direction is bad luck, because you are traveling against the direction of the turning universe. When samurai find they must travel in a northeast direction, they must zig-zag their movement from day to day, so they avoid the taboo.

- When settling down for bed, a samurai who is experiencing bad dreams often turns his sleeping clothes inside out.

- If someone sneezes while they are talking, they are lying to you.

- On the night before a wedding, the mother and father of the daughter carry the husband's shoes to their bed – sympathetic magic to make certain he does not wander.

- The spirits of a family are known to distract bowmen who are firing at their descendants. Bowmen often twang their bow strings to scare away those spirits to make certain their aim is true.

- Keeping doors open at night invites ghosts into your home.

- Loud drums keep away troublesome spirits.

### What Magic Can Do

“Magic” is a catch-all term to describe the seemingly supernatural effects generated by shugenja. In fact, all the shugenja are doing with their scrolls and chanting is tapping in to the elemental energies that swirl about all Rokugani at every moment. Shugenja are also able to create supernatural effects by petitioning spirits (ancestors and Fortunes) with prayer. If they are properly cajoled, they can bestow incredible powers to shugenja.

Tapping into the power of the elements allows shugenja to influence and alter the world around them. By petitioning the Fortunes, they are able to produce more elaborate effects, including weather and earthquakes. By invoking the names of ancestors, shugenja are able to create wards against evil spirits, oni and other creatures of the Shadowlands.

### What Magic Can't Do

Even with their fantastic powers, there are things that shugenja cannot influence. Humanity cannot change an individual's destiny, but they can change the world. Not even a shugenja dares tamper with the celestial pattern.

When the last breath has slipped out of a body, the soul goes with it. The Rokugani hold no misconception about death. To bring a spirit back to its body is sacrilege and asking for severe troubles. A soul dies when it is time for it to die, and to dabble with corpses is dark work (see Maho, above), punishable by death. On the other side of the coin, magic cannot create life, either.

Also, mortal magic cannot influence tides, the moon and the stars. These are all “celestial” and not to be tampered with by man. Shugenja ask their ancestors (who have much more authority) to create these effects, and do not question a “NO” when they hear it.

## Other Magic

Although the most common form of magic in Rokugan is a shugenja's spells (maho and spiritual), other forms of magic do exist. Some are created by shugenja, but used by samurai (the magical items known as nemuranai), while others include the strange magic of ghosts and spirits, or the spiritual monastic kata known as kiho (detailed in *The Way of Shinsei*).

All of these magics are important in Rokugan. The Kitsu, shugenja of the Lion Clan, use ancestor magic. The Unicorn identify with magic that is more elemental than spiritual, and the monks of the Seven Temples of the Brotherhood of Shinsei practice a magic all their own. The *Way of the Clans* series gives you much more detail on these unusual aspects of Rokugani magic.

### Nemuranai

Nemuranai, or enchanted items, are extremely rare within the Empire. Although some shugenja have the ability to create enchanted items, they are typically very difficult and time-consuming. Smaller items, known as lesser nemuranai, or fetishes, are more common but significantly less powerful than actual nemuranai.

The Rokugani believe that everything in the world has a soul, even precious or holy objects. Legendary objects – such as ancestral weapons, holy artifacts and the like – contain a sleeping spirit that can be awakened with the proper ritual. Cursed items – those that contain angry, vengeful or wrathful spirits – must also be treated with care lest their sleeping spirits be awakened.

Legends of swords that drink blood, dance in the air, sing and even turn into wind are regarded as fact in Rokugan. Even though these weapons are very rare, word of their appearance is never taken lightly.



## Greater Nemuranai

While there are countless shugenja in Rokugan, magical items are not as abundant. Enchanted items are rarely found “wandering” the countryside. They are held by families and passed on through generations. The chance of a wandering ronin stumbling across a cache of magic items is close to zero. The reasons for this scarcity of magical items are many.

To begin with, if a magical item is one that has supernatural properties, then every item is already “magical.” Every sword, every fan, every leaf, rock, and volcano has a soul that can be awakened if the proper ritual is known. One look at the spell list demonstrates that shugenja know many spells that can awaken a slumbering sword spirit for a short period of time. However, truly powerful items are those whose spirits are not sleeping, but active and aware. These items are called *nemuranai* (or “awakened”).

All awakened items are hundreds of years old. *Nemuranai* are not created by shugenja, but awakened by their proximity to those of great honor and glory. It has been suggested by the Phoenix that the sleeping soul recognizes the soul of its owner from a past life, which awakens the soul within the item. There is some evidence to prove this theory. It has been noted that when *nemuranai* are passed down from one generation to the next, the soul remains awakened and loyal to the owner, while certain *nemuranai* – when stolen – fail to operate or even turn on their thief.

Every *nemuranai* is unique. Each one has a personality and temperament. If an awakened item is treated with disrespect by a character, that character may very well be on the end of some nasty curses and inauspicious occurrences that even ancestor worship cannot explain away.

## Ghosts

Perhaps the most important aspect of Rokugani metaphysics is the concept of the departed soul. If a body does not receive a proper burial, the soul does not depart to be reincarnated, but travels to Meido, the dark underworld of woe. There, the spirit is tortured with memories of his life, both pleasurable and painful, until it is filled with fury. It then returns to the world of the living in a form dependent on the sorrow it carries.

There are thousands of types of ghosts in Rokugan. Any time a tragic death occurs, one can be assured that the deceased will return as a ghost. Usually, a ghost must fulfill a purpose in the Living Lands before it can pass on. Those who are deeply in love often return to guard those they love from harm. Mothers often return to protect their orphaned children, or if they died in childbirth, can return to steal the children of others.



# The Elements

*You can not command the elements any more than you can command the stars in heaven. You must learn to hear the music of the celestial chorus. Once that is done, you must learn to dance.*

– *The Tao of Shinsei*

Shugenja do not manipulate or command the elements; they allow their own energies to mingle with the element, thus gaining its favor and influence. Spells are grouped into Shinsei’s five elements, each with an effect that corresponds with the nature of that element. Void shugenja – *Ishiken* – are the only ones who can use Void magic; their strange spells and philosophy are detailed in *Way of the Phoenix*.

As you read descriptions of each of the elements below, you will notice that many of them overlap. As masters of Void can teach you, each of the elements is like a many-faceted jewel. There is strength in Earth, as certainly as Water can be a symbol of stamina and resilience as it carves its way through the mountain.

## Earth

Spells that invoke the quiet strength of the Earth are those that effect resilience and resolve. Earth also represents health and growth. All things grow from the earth, and must return there one day. The body falls apart and returns to the dust that it once came from.

## Water

The element of Water represents many things. Water washes away stains and tarnish, and so it is the element of clarity. But Water is also adaptable. Water can fit into any container, which is why it also represents transformation.





## Fire

Of all the elements, Fire is the least subtle. Almost all of the fire effects are destructive. But fire is a symbol of intelligence as certainly as it is of destruction. Fire spells can invoke raging fire-storms as well as inspiration and creativity.

## Air

Counter to Fire's blatancy is Air, or Wind. Air cannot be seen directly, but its effects can. Air is the element of storms, although a shugenja's ability to influence storms is minor at best. Air is also the element of birds, and therefore the element of travel. Lastly, Air is the element of intuition and influence.

Before you can cast magic in the Emerald Empire, you must understand how spells work in *Legend of the Five Rings*. First you will find a list of definitions that you will need to understand what we mean by round, duration, and other terms used to define the mechanics for the spell system of L5R.

The section after that presents the rules and guidelines for spellcasters in the Emerald Empire, and significant information that you need to play a shugenja in L5R.

Following that, you will find a

list of spells. Your shugenja characters can select spells at the beginning of the game, and may receive new spells as they advance through their school ranks or complete tasks for their daimyo.



# Definitions

*A good carpenter cares for his tools as if they were his life.  
In many ways, they are.*

– Akodo Kage

**Area of Effect** – The number of targets or the area the spell can effect.

**Casting Time** – It normally requires one action per Mastery Level to cast a spell. For instance, a Mastery Level 3 spell would require 3 actions to cast. Spells which have nonstandard casting times list the casting time in the text of the spell.

**Concentration** – The spell lasts as long as the shugenja does nothing but concentrate on it (he may move at a walking pace). If a spell requires concentration, the spell caster may talk or move at a walking pace but is otherwise unable to act until he chooses to stop concentrating on the spell.

**Creature** – A non-intelligent animal.

**Duration** – The amount of time a given spell lasts. Durations are: Concentration, Instantaneous, a number of Rounds, or an increment of time (1 minute, 1 hour, etc...)

**Instantaneous** – The spell lasts for only a fraction of a second.

**Line of Sight** – Typically, anything your character can distinctly make out. Your GM will tell you if something hidden (by shadow, brush, or other cover) is still considered within your clear Line of Sight.



**Mastery Level** – A shugenja can only cast spells which have a Mastery Level at or below his School Rank. (A rank 2 shugenja can cast any spell with a Mastery Level of 2 or less).

**Memorize** – If a Shugenja spends 2 Experience Points he can memorize a spell. After you have memorized a spell you no longer need a scroll to cast it. This is considered an 'Innate Ability.'

**Permanent** – The spell does not expire under normal circumstances.

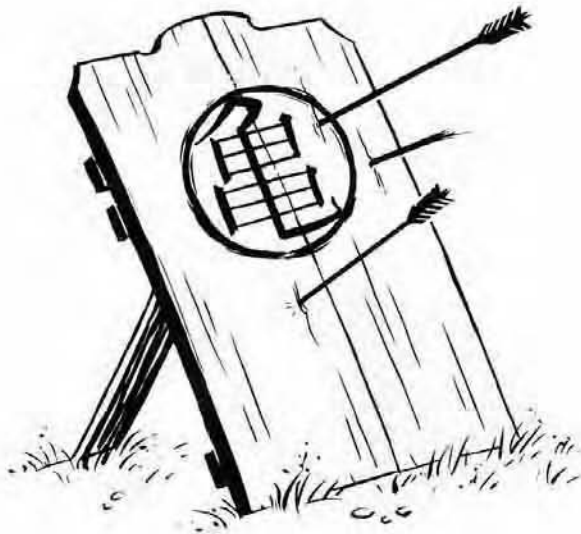
**Round** – 3 seconds of in-character time.

**Self** – When a spell's Area of Effect is "Self", only the shugenja who casts the spell may be affected by it.

**Spell Slots** – A shugenja has a number of Spell Slots in each element equal to his rank in the corresponding element. A shugenja who has used up all of his Spell Slots for an element may not cast any more spells in that element until he has had a full night of sleep, which clears all Spell Slots. *Example:* A shugenja with a Fire of 4 would have 4 Spell Slots available for fire spells.

**Target** – A Human, Humanoid or Creature.

**Target Number** – The number that must be rolled (on kept dice) in order to successfully cast a given spell.



## Mechanics

### Affinity and Deficiency

Many Shugenja have an affinity to a certain element, noted in their shugenja school details. (A shugenja school's affinity is always the element listed first under their spell selection, if not otherwise defined). This represents the element to which the shugenja's school is most aligned. If a shugenja has an affinity for an element, they are considered to be one School Rank higher for the purposes of casting a spell of that element.

*Example:* A School Rank 1 shugenja with an Affinity to Fire would be considered Rank 2 for the purposes of casting Fire spells. This shugenja would be able to cast Mastery Level 2 spells, and would keep two dice when casting such spells.

All shugenja have a deficiency as well as an affinity, symbolizing the element to which they are least attuned. Being deficient in an element means you are considered to be one School Rank lower when casting spells of that element. Deficiencies are always the opposite element from Affinities. For example, a shugenja with Fire Affinity always have Water Deficiency, and vice versa. The same applies to Earth and Air. The element of Void has no natural deficiency.

*Example:* A School Rank 2 Shugenja with a Deficiency in Water would only be able to cast Mastery Level 1 water spells and would keep only one die when casting Water spells. This same shugenja would not be able to cast any Water spells at all when created at Rank 1, thus representing that his school has only minimally taught him the ways of that element. He must wait until Rank 2 before he can begin to cast such spells.





## Learning Spells

The easiest way to learn a spell is from a teacher. Any shugenja can teach a spell that he can cast to any other shugenja. It is possible to learn spells you are incapable of casting, but it is not possible to teach spells you are incapable of casting. Learning spells from a teacher usually requires 1 week per Mastery Level of the spell to be taught.

When a shugenja passes the final tests required by his teachers and is permitted to increase in rank among his school, he will be taught two spells of his choosing from the school's library, unless the school wishes to teach him a particular two spells. It is not honorable to flout the wishes of one's sensei.

The second way to learn a spell is through studying a scroll containing the spell. A spell scroll is as unique as a fingerprint. When a shugenja writes a scroll, what he is really doing is recording, in shorthand, how he communicates with the kami. Because of this, each individual shugenja records his spells differently.

Learning spells from a scroll requires 1 week per Mastery Level of the Spell and a Spell Research roll keeping dice equal to your appropriate ring. The TN for this roll depends on how well you understand the author of the scroll (see below). If the shugenja fails the roll, he must spend an additional week per Mastery Level of the spell trying to figure out what he did wrong. He then receives another opportunity to roll against the original TN.

When learning a spell from a scroll written by someone you know well (e.g., your father or your best friend), the shugenja learning the spell must succeed versus a TN equal to the spell's Mastery Level.

Learning a spell from a scroll written by someone with whose style you have only passing familiarity (e.g., someone who attended the same school as you did) requires a successful roll versus a TN equal to the spell's Mastery Level x 5.

Learning a spell from a scroll written by someone whom you understand very little (e.g., someone who attended a different school than you did) requires a successful roll versus a TN equal to the spell's Mastery Level x 10.

Learning a spell from a scroll written by someone with a completely alien mindset (e.g., a normal shugenja reading a scroll

belonging to a maho-user) requires a successful roll versus a TN equal to the spell's Mastery Level x20.

Shugenja sometimes try to overcome the difficulty of learning spells from scrolls by immersing themselves in the culture of the person who wrote the scroll. This method is effective, but it is frowned upon by the shugenja's school: the Crane dislike students who immerse themselves in Lion culture, and no one approves of researching Maho!

It should be noted that some spells are considered closely guarded secrets by the Great Houses of the clans. These spells are generally written in even more difficult codes and are extraordinarily hard to decipher. Such spells can only be learned from a member of the clan who has mastered it himself, and may never be researched from a scroll containing the spell.



### Optional Rule

**When a shugenja is attempting to learn a spell from another shugenja, the GM may decide to use this optional rule.**

**The teacher must make an Instruction roll, keeping dice equal to his Perception, with a TN of the spell's Mastery Level x10, minus the student's Intelligence x5. If the teacher succeeds, the time required to learn the spell is decreased by one day, plus one day for each raise. The minimum time to learn a spell is one day.**

are capable of casting by spending 2 Experience Points per spell to be memorized and marking it on your character sheet as an Innate Ability.

### Creating a Scroll

Creating a scroll for a spell that you have memorized (as an Innate Ability) is quite easy, and requires only a few minutes. Creating a scroll for a spell that you have learned but not memorized requires 1 hour per Mastery Level of the Spell and a successful Spell Research roll keeping dice equal to your intelligence.

### Memorizing a Spell

Once you have learned to cast a spell and are capable of casting it (determined by its Mastery Level and whether you have the appropriate requirements), you can cast the spell whenever you wish. However, unless you have memorized the spell, you must read it from a scroll each time you cast it.

There are two drawbacks to not memorizing spells. The first is that fishing around for the appropriate spell usually requires an action, which can be deadly in certain situations. The second difficulty comes about when you are not carrying the scroll, and therefore you may not cast the spell.

You can memorize any spell that you



## Target Numbers for Casting Spells

The Basic Target Number for *any* spell is its Mastery Level x5.

If you are casting a spell on an unwilling person, the TN to cast the spell is increased. Multiply the target's Rank in the Ring which opposes the spell by his School Rank. Add this number to the spell's TN.

*Example:* A shugenja is casting a Fire spell at his opponent. His opponent is resisting, so the caster must add his target's Water Rank x School Rank to the TN of the spell. A School Rank 1 character with a Water of 2 would add 2 to the Spell's TN.

If the target knows that you are trying to cast a spell on him and actively cooperates, the resistance modifier does not apply.

If a spell has more than one target, your GM will determine which of your targets is the most difficult to affect, and will increase the TN of your spell by that individual's Ring x School Rank. Visibility and cover can also affect your TN (see the Book of Fire, page 162).

## Raises

Raises increase a spell's potency by adding to the difficulty to cast the spell. While raises in combat can be very effective for a bushi, for a shugenja there are only certain things that can be done with each raise. A list of available raise effects follow. The casting shugenja may choose to apply one, some, or all of these effects to his spell (as applicable), but increases the difficulty of the spell for each one chosen. Each time the caster chooses to take a raise, the TN of the spell goes up by 5.

### Casting Time

For each raise allotted to decreasing the casting time of a spell, the spell's casting time is decreased by one action. Only spells which can be cast in actions may have their casting time reduced. You may not reduce the casting time of a spell if its casting time is listed in minutes or hours.

### Duration

For each raise allotted to duration, the spell's duration is increased by one. If the printed duration of a spell is one round, then





a raise allotted to duration would increase that to two rounds. If the printed duration of a spell is five minutes, then a raise allotted to duration would increase that to six minutes. A spell with a duration of Concentration or Instantaneous cannot have its duration increased with raises.

### Special Effects

By allotting one raise to special effects you can change the effects of a spell in a minor (non-mechanical) way. For example, instead of a simple firebolt you could use a raise for special effects and cause your firebolt to glow green, or be accompanied by a loud screeching sound. Any number of special effects can be added to a spell (each demanding its own special effects raise) but the mechanics of the spell can never be changed through special effects.

### Master

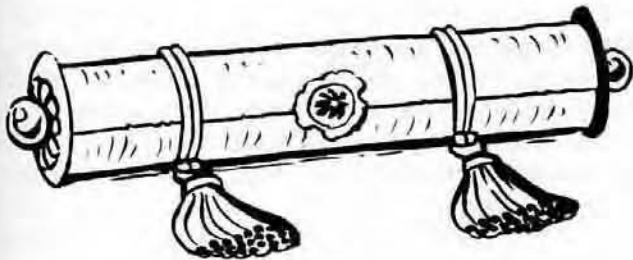
If you allot 3 raises toward mastering a spell, then you are not required to cross off one of your Spell Slots when you successfully cast the spell. (You must raise 3 times every time you cast the spell if you wish to avoid using one of your Spell Slots.)

Some spells allow you to spend raises to accomplish nonstandard effects. Such raises are defined in the text of the spell.

If you have memorized a spell and are also using a scroll to help you cast it, then you receive one free raise to cast that spell, which may be spent in any way you wish.

If the caster wants to cast a spell at less than its full effect, he may do so automatically. If a shugenja wishes to end prematurely a spell he has cast, he can do so by concentrating for one action. A Permanent spell, however, cannot be ended prematurely.

*Example:* If the spell has an Area of Effect of 10', the casting shugenja can reduce it to 9' automatically. If the spell is going to last six more actions, the shugenja who cast the spell may concentrate for one action to end the spell's duration at the end of that action.



# Casting a Spell

*When the Elements speak, listen. You are not their master; you are their companion. If you do not share their burden, they will not shoulder yours.*

– Naka Kuro

Now that you have your spells, and you understand raises and have a copy of the Tao under your kimono, how do you go about actually casting the spells you have earned? Well, read on, and we'll tell you.

### Casting Requirements

1. *Determine if the shugenja is capable of casting a given spell.*

Is the Mastery Level of the spell less than or equal to the shugenja's School Rank, keeping the shugenja's Affinity and Deficiency in mind? Has he memorized the spell? If not, is he holding a scroll with the spell inscribed on it?

Is the shugenja physically capable of casting the spell? All spells require verbal components and some require hand gestures as well.

2. *Calculate the Spell's Target Number.*

See "calculating a Target Number" above. A spell's basic TN to cast is its Mastery Level x5. If you are casting the spell on an unwilling individual or creature, multiply the target's Rank in the Ring which opposes the spell by his School Rank. Add this number to the spell's TN.

3. *Determine your raises.*

How many raises does the player wish to add to the Target Number of his spell, and what is the shugenja using those raises to accomplish?



#### 4. Determine the spell's Area of Effect.

Who or what will be affected by the spell, and where are the spell's specific targets?

#### 5. Roll the dice.

The player of the shugenja rolls dice equal to the Rank he has in the Ring that corresponds to the spell's Element. After rolling, he keeps dice equal to his School Rank. Remember that a character with an Affinity in an element is considered one School Rank higher and keeps one extra die; a character with a Deficiency in an element keeps one fewer die than his actual School Rank.

#### 6. Determine the results.

If the roll is equal to or greater than the Target Number (remember to apply any raises), then the spell has succeeded. If the roll is not greater than the spell's TN, then the spell fails. Assuming the spell succeeds, take the basic description of the spell and add the effects the player chose for his raises, and you have the final result of the spell.

#### 7. Wait for the Casting Time to pass.

If the spell has a casting time of one action then it is cast immediately; otherwise the player must wait until the casting time passes before the spell takes effect.

*Example:* A shugenja has just cast a spell with a casting time of 3 actions. His roll is successful, but the spell will not take effect until his action, 2 rounds from now. Had the shugenja failed the spell roll, he would not have to wait for the casting time to pass before taking other actions.

After the successful casting of a spell, mark off one of your Spell Slots in the appropriate element.

# Basic Spells

There are three spells that are the basis for a shugenja's initiation into Rokugan's spirit world. "Sense", "Commune", and "Summon" are different from the rest of the spells because they are not linked to a single Element. A shugenja may use these three spells to sense, commune or summon Earth, Water, Fire and Air. In other words, a shugenja can use his Sense scroll to sense any of the four Elements: Earth, Fire, Air or Water. He does not have a separate scroll for each Element.

The first spell taught is Sense, the second Commune, and the third Summon. This way, the shugenja learns to sense the Elements about him, then he learns to speak to them, and lastly he commands them into forms and shapes. These spells are considered Innate Abilities as only the rawest students require scrolls to cast these simple spells.

## Sense

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 10' Radius

**Range:** Self

The caster becomes aware of all sources of the chosen element within the Area of Effect. He is able to sense the location of anything composed (even partially) of the chosen element within the radius. The caster is also aware of the nature of any objects he senses (although this is limited by his knowledge in some instances).

*Example:* Tombo the shugenja walks into a room and casts Sense: Water. He becomes aware of all sources of water within the 10' radius. He knows that there is a basin of water sitting on the nightstand, he knows that there is a person hiding behind the door (living things are made of all four Elements) and he is aware that the man has a vial of liquid in his hand. If Tombo had Lore: Poison he would also know that the liquid in the vial is poisonous.







• You may allocate raises to increase the Area of Effect of this spell. Each Raise increases the Radius by 5'.

## Commune

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** One Elemental Spirit

**Range:** 100'

This spell allows the shugenja to experience the world from the perspective of the target spirit and to communicate freely with it. All shugenja learn this spell, as it is essential if you wish to truly understand spellcraft. Commune provides unparalleled insight into the realm of Elemental Magic.

In addition to the requirements of casting this spell a shugenja wishing to commune with a spirit must also placate the spirit in some fashion. A spirit can ask for anything in exchange for communicating with the shugenja, but as a general rule, the larger the spirit, the more it asks of a spellcaster. The spirit of a small stone may ask to be placed in a warm sunny spot by the side of the road in exchange for answering questions, while the spirit of a mountain may require the shugenja to build it a shrine or perform some other time-consuming, or even dangerous, task before allowing him to Commune with it.

Spirits are generally uninformed about the world of mortals, but they are able to provide information about what they are currently experiencing (once it is brought to the spirit's attention). If you Commune with the spirit of a stream it would not be able to tell you who had passed through it, but it would be able to describe a man who was currently standing in its waters. Spirits can also show the caster particularly traumatic or pleasurable experiences from their pasts. A rock spirit may not remember the man who stepped on it two minutes ago, but it would certainly remember someone who threw it off of a cliff, even in the distant past.

*Viewing things from a spirit's perspective* – While this is not very useful with small spirits, it can be extraordinarily powerful when communing with large spirits. Viewing things from the perspective of a mountain can be extraordinarily informative.

*Spirits and Spell Casting* – Generally speaking, spirits pay no attention to the mortal world, but Elemental Magic is a notable exception. Because spell casting deals with pulling the strings of the Elemental Spirits' world they are much more likely to remember the casting and effects of spells.



### A note about Spell Effects

Those players returning from the First Edition L5R RPG may notice that certain spells which were printed in First Edition have had greater or lesser changes to their effects, and that all of the carryover spells have changed mechanics to match the new, simplified system. The Second Edition spell effects are official. Nevertheless, it's your game, and if you wish to petition your GM to permit certain spells to maintain their old effects, feel free to do so. Your GM, as always, is the final arbiter of how magic works in your game.

## Summon

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** One Cubic Foot

**Range:** 10'

With this spell the caster can summon 1 cubic foot of one of the four (non-Void) elements. The element appears in the shape of a ball anywhere within 10' of the caster. The caster can shape the element at will as long as he continues to concentrate. The caster can summon any substance that fits into the category of the Element he chose when casting the spell, but he may not summon objects that do not exist naturally or objects that he doesn't understand. A shugenja could summon water as liquid water, ice, or water vapor. He could summon tea, but he could never summon liquid nitrogen or crafted steel with this spell.

Once the caster stops concentrating, the element summoned remains but it is no longer magical. If a shugenja wanted to summon water and shape it into a majestic bird, he could do so, but once he stopped concentrating it would not hold its shape. Water collapses into a puddle, smoke drifts away on the wind, fire snuffs out (unless it was provided with fuel) etc.

Magical materials, including jade and crystal, cannot be summoned using this spell.




# Air Spells

## Mastery Level 1

### By the Light of Lord Moon

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** 5 rounds

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** 10' Radius

This spell allows the caster to detect hidden objects (traps, false bottoms, a ninja under the bed, etc.). The spell does not allow the caster to know what or who is hidden, only that something is hidden.

*Example:* Someone has hidden a knife under a sculpture. When the shugenja casts By the Light of Lord Moon, he realizes that there is something hidden under the sculpture, but he would not know the item was a knife until after he picked up the sculpture and looked to see what was there. Items which are out of sight but not purposefully hidden do not register with this spell.

In order to find things which were hidden with magic the casting shugenja must make an additional roll using his Air (keeping his School Rank) with a TN equal to his opponent's Ring times School Rank (use the Ring which corresponds to the spell he is using to hide the object).

### Cloak of Night

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Until dawn

**Area of Effect:** 1 object

**Range:** Touch

This spell renders one object invisible (one knife, rock, naked body, etc.). The object will remain invisible for the duration of the spell or until something happens which draws attention to the object. The item would remain invisible until it (for example) was

touched, made a noise, bounced off someone's head, or otherwise interacts with other objects, or until the next dawn.

### Nature's Touch

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** Target

**Range:** 10'

This spell allows the caster to communicate with a single target animal for as long as the shugenja concentrates. Intelligent creatures are not affected by this spell. This spell does not force the animal to speak to the caster; it simply makes it possible for it to communicate with the shugenja.

### Quiescence of Air

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Area of Effect:** 5' Radius

**Range:** 10'

This spell creates a bubble which does not allow sound to pass. Those inside the radius cannot hear sounds originating outside the radius and vice versa. If this spell is cast on a movable object, the radius of effect will move along with the object. Characters using this spell to aid their stealth roll and keep an extra die on Stealth rolls.

- Raises can be used to increase this spell's radius. Each raise increases the radius by 5'.

### Tempest of Air

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Area of Effect:** 25'

**Range:** Self

This spell creates a cone of wind which starts at the caster's hand and extends 25' outward. The wind created by this spell travels at any speed the caster desires, up to 50 miles per hour. If this spell is turned on another character, all of his actions are at -2 dice. If the target's Earth is less than half of the casting shugenja's Air, he takes 2k2 Wounds from slamming into the ground and is blown backwards 10' per round (taking 2k2 each round) until he leaves the Area of Effect.

### Way of Deception

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** 10'





This spell creates an illusionary duplicate of the caster anywhere within 10' of the caster. The illusion mimics the caster's every action, moving, talking, and jumping when the shugenja does. The primary use of this spell is to distract would-be assailants. Anyone wishing to attack the caster cannot tell which of the people standing in front of him is illusionary, and thus has a 50% chance of accidentally attacking the illusion. As they watch their weapons pass harmlessly through the illusionary figures, the shugenja's enemies can use the process of elimination to figure out which one is truly alive.

- Raises can increase the number of illusionary figures produced. Every two raises produce one extra figure.

### Wind-Borne Slumbers

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 1 minute  
**Area of Effect:** 1 target  
**Range:** 50'

This spell saps the target's energies and makes him very tired. If the target is unstimulated, such as standing still on guard duty or sitting on a bench watching the birds, he will quickly fall asleep. Targets which do not fall asleep are at -2 dice to all actions (due to exhaustion) for the spell's duration.

- Raises can be used to add multiple targets to the spell. 1 raise for each target.

### Yari of Air

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 1 minute  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

This spell summons a Yari formed of Air. The weapon is wielded using the Yarijutsu Skill and has a DR of 3k3. If the shugenja becomes unconscious or is killed the weapon vanishes.

- Raises can be used to increase the DR of the weapon. For each raise the number of dice rolled (not kept) is increased by one.

## Mastery Level 2

### Benten's Touch

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** 1 hour  
**Area of Effect:** 1 target  
**Range:** Touch

This spell calls upon the powers of the Benten, the Fortune of beauty and love. While under its influence, the target may roll and keep an additional die on all social rolls. For the duration of this

spell, the target is perceived as much more attractive, witty and socially apt than he actually is.

### Call Upon the Wind

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** 1 minute  
**Area of Effect:** 1 target  
**Range:** Touch

This spell grants the target a limited form of flight. The recipient of this spell's energy can move up to 10' per round in any direction (although strong wind may lessen or prevent this movement). The target may fly at a maximum height of 100', although he should note that the spell's powers make no adjustments for landing. A recipient who is carried aloft by mischievous wind spirits may find himself suddenly unable to fly at the end of the spell's duration – and landing will certainly be more unpleasant the higher he has flown.

### Echoes of a Breeze

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** Concentration  
**Area of Effect:** One person  
**Range:** Unlimited

This spell allows the caster to make his words audible to any target, anywhere in Rokugan. The target of this spell must be someone who is well-known by the caster: the shugenja must have spent quite a bit of time in their presence. Someone the shugenja has met a single time, or whose name the shugenja has heard, does not qualify as "well-known." Casting this spell does not tell the shugenja where his target may be in Rokugan; only the ability to speak across distances is conferred.

If the target also can cast this spell, two-way communication is possible.

### Mists of Illusion

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** 1 minute  
**Area of Effect:** 10' radius  
**Range:** 10'

The caster can create an illusionary duplicate of anything he has seen or can imagine, as long as it can fit entirely inside of the Area of Effect. The illusion is not mobile and is unaffected by the environment. If anyone or anything attempts to touch the illusion, the physical item passes through the illusion, making it obvious that the illusionary object is not real.

Additionally, if someone suspects an object is illusionary, he may roll his Perception with a TN equal to the caster's Air x School Rank



in order to see past the illusion. This spell cannot create an illusion of empty space.

## Secrets on the Wind

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** 5 minutes  
**Area of Effect:** 50' radius  
**Range:** 1 mile

Shugenja who cast this spell can listen in on conversations. The conversation to be listened to must be held in a place with which the shugenja is very familiar. In order to use this spell the caster must spend at least 10 minutes studying the area with which he wishes to make himself familiar. After doing so, he can cast this spell and listen as though he were standing in the center of the area.

- Raises can increase the range of this spell. Each raise increases the range by 1 mile.

## Whispering Wind

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 1 target  
**Range:** 10'

If successful, this spell lets the caster know if the last thing said by the target was true. The spell will only tell the shugenja what the target believes is true, and has no power to determine the accuracy of the statement beyond the belief of the person stating the information.

It is said that this spell may backfire if a caster uses it too often, as it is insulting to the spirits of the Empire to continually question an honorable samurai's words. Therefore, shugenja say anyone who casts this spell too often will be unable to speak a lie himself, bound by the spirits that he abuses.

## Summon Kami of Air

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** 1 minute  
**Area of Effect:** 1 spirit  
**Range:** 10'

This spell summons a small Air spirit, a local kami who is willing to do simple tasks for the shugenja. The kami is 6" tall, mostly invisible, and appears as a humanoid samurai made of swirling winds and blowing dust. The kami has all the properties of Air, and is willing to obey the caster's commands so long as the caster is respectful. The Air spirit can not communicate with nor understand anyone but the caster.

Air spirits are capable of flying up to 100' per round. They can become completely invisible at will, and may pick up small (less than 1/2 pound) items.

Air spirits can not inflict damage nor engage in combat. All of the rings of these summoned spirits are equal to one half their caster's School Rank.

## Mastery Level 3

### Essence of Air

**Mastery Level:** 3  
**Duration:** 1 minute  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Touch

When a shugenja casts this spell, the spirits of the air gather, attracting attention to every corner of the room other than where the spell's target currently stands. Essentially, this spell diverts attention from the target, allowing him to move about invisibly. Those affected by the spell do not realize that they are being tricked by the Air kami, and continue on their way without realizing that the "invisible" person is there.

As long as the target does not draw attention to himself, he is completely unnoticeable by normal means. If the target does something to draw attention to himself (such as picking something up, trying to punch someone, or talking) the spell is broken.

### Forgotten Murmurs

**Mastery Level:** 3  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** 10'

When someone is targeted by this spell, the wind spirits reach into his soul and withdraw a small portion of his psyche, effectively eliminating his memories. The target immediately experiences a faint disorientation, and forgets the last 5 minutes of his life. Other than a second's confusion, it is as if those five minutes never happened. This spell is often used by courtier shugenja who hope to eliminate some faux pas they have made before an important individual.

### The Eye Shall Not See

**Mastery Level:** 3  
**Duration:** 5 Rounds  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

The caster of this spell becomes as insubstantial as air and able to pass through solid objects at a rate of 1 foot per round. Objects





moving faster than 1 foot per round (like swinging swords) completely ignore this spell effect, and the caster is affected normally by such objects.

### Summon Fog

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Area of Effect:** 20' Radius

**Range:** 100'

When Summon Fog is cast, the shugenja brings forth a thick cloud, causing fog to appear all around the Area of Effect. In effect, clouds descend from the heavens at the caster's call. This causes a faint dew to make everything in the radius damp, and drops standard visibility down to 5 feet. Small fires may be obscured and faint flames (such as candles) may be put out, but larger ones are not affected.

When the spell ends, the fog disperses normally over the course of ten minutes.

### Wind-Borne Speed

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 5 minutes

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

This spell allows the target to run twice as fast as normal for the duration of the spell. Further, as he is being borne partially on the backs of helpful wind spirits, the target may travel in this manner without tiring.

If the target takes any action other than running, talking or performing simple tasks while in constant motion, the wind spirits will rapidly become bored and leave. Thus, the spell is canceled.

### Wisdom of the Kami

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

This spell rearranges a caster's own memories, boosted by the intellect and adaptability of the kami of air. While they are assisting him, the shugenja may substitute his School Rank for any one skill for the duration of the spell.

This spell only affects a single skill, and once cast, may the caster's memories may not be rearranged again without recasting the spell. At the end of the spell, the kami replace all of the shugenja's memories, leaving them as if they had never been affected by the spell.



## Mastery Level 4

### Call Upon the Wind

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** 5 Rounds  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** 100'

The shugenja summons wind spirits who immobilize and lift the target into the air. The shugenja has complete control of the target's movements. The target may be moved a number of feet per round equal to the shugenja's Air + School Rank x 10.

• Raises may be used to add additional targets. Each Raise adds one additional target.

### Dominate the Mind

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** 1 minute  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** 20'

A caster using this spell summons forth the ultimate power of the wind spirits to dominate and control an individual's mind by rearranging their entire mental channels. The wind spirits play havoc with the target's memories and thoughts, making the target incapable of self-determination.

The basic Target Number of this spell is 35. If the shugenja succeeds, he takes control of the target's mind: the target will follow all instructions given to him by the caster. Note that this spell creates an automaton, not a willing servant. The target of this spell will do nothing if the caster does not give him a direct and explicit command, and may even injure himself trying to carry out a command which was not properly given. This spell is frowned upon by the majority of the Empire, and was once used to reduce the powerful *maho* shugenja Asahina Yajinden to a humble gardener, as punishment for his crimes against the Empire.

### Sacred Ground

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

Upon uttering this spell, the shugenja and all items he carries are instantly transported to a specifically designated area (usually the caster's home, school, or other personal space). The area must be designated and prepared in advance and a shugenja may only have one such area prepared at a given time. Preparing an area for transport requires the shugenja to study the exact location of all objects in the area and scribe symbols on the spot he will appear. If the area is disturbed even slightly between the time the shugenja prepares the area and the time he casts the spell, it automatically fails. This spell transports the shugenja any distance regardless of his location.

### Symbol of Air

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** Permanent  
**Area of Effect:** 10' radius  
**Range:** 25'

With this spell the caster magically engraves the symbol of Air upon an object, usually a threshold, door, or similar location. Any being other than the caster who comes within range of the symbol feels the effects of a magical sleep come over them.

The targets may make a contested roll of his Earth vs. the shugenja's Air

rank. If the target is unstimulated (sitting on a bench watching the birds) he will quickly fall asleep. If the target does not fall asleep, he will be at -2 dice to all actions due to exhaustion until he leaves the







radius. Anyone who knows this spell may cast it on an existing Symbol of Air in order to dispel it. If the object which the symbol is scribed upon is moved or moves, the spell is broken.

### Wall of Air

**Mastery Level:** 4

**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** Special

**Range:** 100'

This spell creates a 10' tall, 1' wide, 25' long wall of Air. The wall can not be cast in an area in which there are people. Anyone attempting to pass through the wall must roll his Earth with a TN equal to the caster's Air x School Rank; if he fails, he is thrown back 5' per Air rank of the caster and takes 1k1 Wounds for each 10' that he has been thrown (rounding down).

Projectiles will not pass through the wall, nor can arrows or other missile weapons affect anyone across the wall – from either side.

## Mastery Level 5

### Command the Clouds

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** 1 Day

**Area of Effect:** 1 mile Radius

**Range:** Self

The caster may use this spell to change the weather conditions in the local area. The caster can control temperature, wind, and precipitation. The GM decides current weather conditions and the caster may alter the condition up or down one rank. The caster may alter one additional rank per raise.

Temperature	Wind	Precipitation
Sweltering	Calm	Clear
Hot	Moderate	Partly Cloudy (light rain/snow)
Warm	High Winds	Moderately Cloudy (medium rain/snow/light hail)
Cool	Storm force	Overcast (heavy rain/snow/hail)
Cold	Gale	Storm (Driving rain/snow/hail)

### Poison of the Windspider

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** 10 minutes

**Area of Effect:** 25' radius

**Range:** 100'

This spell turns all air within the Area of Effect into a poisonous gas. This cloud seeps along the ground, rolling in a bilious cloud of

faces and horrible claws toward the edges of its Area of Effect. The cloud can easily overtake even the swiftest steed, and will choke and eventually kill anyone who remains in the Area of Effect.

The gas burns the eyes and sinuses, damaging eyes and throats and burning away the flesh of those trapped within the gases. It also causes tremendous nausea, burning pain and violent choking. Anyone trapped within the cloud must make an immediate Stamina roll with a TN equal to the caster's Air x School Rank or fall to the ground, temporarily blinded and choking. No one may leave the cloud until they pass two consecutive Stamina rolls. While in the cloud the victim suffers 2k2 Wounds for every round he remains in the Area of Effect.

### Slayer's Knives

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** Special

**Range:** Self

When casting this potent wind spell, the caster stretches out his hands and a strong burst of wind comes forth from them. The wind extends 25' from the caster's hands and is 10' wide at its base. The wind is strong enough to pick up and throw anyone within the Area of Effect. Those affected are hurled 20' through the air, causing 5k3 Wounds upon landing.

The winds created by this spell are ferocious, tearing at large objects and shredding small ones. Paper lanterns will be destroyed, horses knocked to their knees, and kimono torn to ribbons by the raw power of the air kami. The spell can also blow down paper houses, wooden doors, shoddy buildings, and small trees.

### Whirlwind

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** 10 minutes

**Area of Effect:** 20' Radius

**Range:** Line of Sight

This spell creates a massive whirlwind of air, spinning at the control of the caster and creating devastation in its wake. The spell affects a 20' radius, summoning all available air spirits into a mighty whole. The whirlwind can be moved 10' per round as the caster directs it to shift and travel from place to place.

Anyone who is unfortunate enough to be caught inside the whirlwind suffers 4k4 Wounds each round until he leaves the Area of Effect. The whirlwind reduces movement through it by 75%. It should be noted that the spirits within the whirlwind are friendly to the caster, and the shugenja who directs the spell may move through it freely, sustaining no damage. The same does not hold true for the



caster's friends, however, for the wind spirits only respect the one who has summoned them.

inflicting 3k2 Wounds. Any opponent knocked to the ground must spend one action to regain his footing.

The caster may also use this spell to control up to 25 cubic feet of air (i.e. create heavy winds within a 25' radius of him which blows away small objects and arrows, or moving up to 25 cubic feet of fog in any direction). If the caster is damaged in any way the spell ends immediately and the air returns to normal.

## Mastery Level 6

### The Blessings of Jizo

**Mastery Level:** 6  
**Duration:** 10 minutes  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

This spell causes spells cast upon the recipient to backlash upon their original caster. The original caster takes the full brunt of his own spell with all of its drawbacks. This only affects spells which specifically target the recipient: Area of Effect spells are not reflected back to their caster. However, such spells have no effect upon someone protected by The Blessings of Jizo.

Strangely, this spell does not protect the target from the spell "Sympathetic Energies."

### Rise, Air

**Mastery Level:** 6  
**Duration:** Concentration  
**Area of Effect:** 10' Radius  
**Range:** 25'

With this spell, the shugenja becomes so in touch with the element of air that he can actually command it to take shape and then control its actions. The caster may control up to 25 cubic feet of air, which takes a misty, vaguely humanoid shape, and does what the caster wills it to do.

The air blows furiously for a 30' radius around it, which blows away small objects and disrupts anything traveling through the air such as arrows. Anyone within that area must pass a simple Reflexes roll (TN of the caster's Air x School Rank) or be knocked to the ground. If the caster commands the air to fight, it rolls and keeps the caster's own Air Rank to hit, and each successful hit automatically knocks the opponent to the ground,



### The Wrath of Kaze-No-Kami

**Mastery Level:** 6  
**Duration:** 1 hour  
**Area of Effect:** 1 mile Radius  
**Range:** Self

This spell, if successful, summons a raging hurricane centered on the shugenja. The shugenja is in the "eye" of the storm; he (and anyone within a 20' radius) suffers no ill effects as long as he remains there. The hurricane produces gale-force winds which pick up anything which weighs 500 lbs. or less. Visibility drops to 1', and physical actions taken in the Area of Effect are at -4 dice.

Normal houses will be completely obliterated, and wooden structures will be badly damaged. Stone structures stand the best chance of surviving the hurricane.

Anyone within the Area of Effect must make a roll vs. stamina at a TN of 20 to avoid being thrown through the air and suffering 6k4 Wounds. Those who make the roll (and those who fail) are continuously pelted with flying debris suffering 3k1 Wounds each minute until they leave the Area of Effect or take shelter in a stone building, cave, or other protective structure.





# Earth Spells

## Mastery Level 1

### Earth's Stagnation

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 5 round  
**Area of Effect:** 1 target  
**Range:** 100'

Summoning this spell causes the spirits of the Earth to rise up through your opponent, drawing his energies down into the stagnation of rock and shale. The target of this spell has his Agility and Reflexes lowered by 1 for the duration of the spell.

- Raises can be used to increase the number of targets. Each raise adds an additional target to the spell.

### Elemental Ward

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 1 minute  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

The spirits of the Earth are protective of those who can speak to them, and will defend them from all attacks. The strength of rock is a powerful ally, and this spell makes the caster attuned to the earth around him, drawing on its might for his own defense. When casting this spell the shugenja chooses a Ring. For the duration of this spell, anyone attempting to cast spells of that Element on the shugenja has his TN increased by 5.

- Raises can be spent to increase this penalty. For each raise your opponents' TN is increased by an additional 5.

### Fires from the Forge

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Permanent  
**Area of Effect:** 10 Cubic Feet  
**Range:** 10'

By calling on the spirits of the forges of the Celestial Heavens, a shugenja can mend what has been broken and repair what has been sundered. This spell can target any material – metal, wood, paper or otherwise.

This spell instantly repairs any object or piece of equipment as long as the object has less than 10 cubic feet of volume. Any magic contained in the object before it was broken is lost. This spell has no effect on an item that is intact, nor on living beings.

### Force of Will

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 3 Rounds  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** 10'

This spell can only be cast on someone who has just received a blow which would make him unable to continue fighting (reduced to the Down, Out, or Dead Wound levels). If the caster has not used his action on the round he was hit, he can cast this spell on himself.

For the duration of the spell the target can continue to act at -4. When the spell expires, the target drops into a coma for 2 weeks (unless he is healed above "Down" before the spell's duration ends). If the target suffers any further damage, he will die when the spell expires (unless he is healed above "Out" before the spell ends).

### Jade Strike

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** 100'

This spell summons the power of the avenging Earth, ready to fight against the dark spirits that have corrupted the far southern reaches of the Empire. As such, it is a favorite among the Crab shugenja, and often taught at their school.

This spell can only be used on characters or creatures with the Shadowlands Taint. If successful, the target takes 3k3 Wounds.

- Raises can be used to increase the Area of Effect. Each raise adds an additional target to the spell.

- Raises can be used to increase the damage. Each raise allows you to roll and keep an additional die.



## Know the Ground

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Permanent

**Area of Effect:** 100 Cubic Feet

**Range:** 25'

When the shugenja casts this spell, the kami of the earth flee the area, driven away by the caster's command over their will. Earth spirits do not consider this spell to be very friendly, and occasionally harbor a grudge against the caster for forcing them to flee their homes.

When cast, this spell causes 100 cubic feet of earth to vanish, creating a pit at the designated location. This pit may be part of a tunnel (sideways), or a direct 'hole' in the ground beneath a wall, a house, or even an opponent (although opponents can make a Reflexes roll at TN 20 to jump away from the pit as it forms).

## Speed Growth

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Area of Effect:** 10' Radius

**Range:** 10'

Calling upon the fertility of the Earth and the rapid growth of spring, the shugenja summons forth the sleeping spirits in the ground, rousing them into a frenzy of growth and activity.

All plants in the Area of Effect undergo one month of growth per minute the spell is maintained. Plants affected by this spell for more than five minutes per day immediately go into shock, wither, and die, causing the earth spirits of the area to become sluggish and sorrowful, and possibly ruining the land for the next season's normal growth.

## Tetsubo of Earth

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

When the shugenja casts this spell, he summons the kami of the Earth to meld together into an amazingly powerful weapon formed of the hardest rock and earth. This spell causes the kami to take the form of a heavy tetsubo of rock. The weapon is wielded using the Tetsubo (or Subojutsu) skill and has a DR of 3k3. If the Shugenja becomes unconscious or is killed, the weapon vanishes.

• Raises can be used to increase the DR of the weapon. For each raise the number of dice rolled (not kept) is increased by one.

## Mastery Level 2

### Armor of Earth

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

When this spell is cast, a number of Earth kami come to the caster's defense, clinging to his skin invisibly in order to absorb blows that would ordinarily harm the shugenja. This spell hardens the caster's skin and turns it a faint grey in color.

For the duration of this spell all damage dice rolled against the shugenja which are less than or equal to the caster's School Rank are ignored.

### Courage of the Seven Thunders

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

This impressive spell calls forth the spirits of the ancestors of Rokugan whose ashes have mixed with the Earth. It brings forth their courage and honor so that they can bolster the spirits of their descendants. The target of this spell is immune to Fear for the duration. Only samurai who are members of the seven Great Clans can be targeted by this spell.

• Raises can be used to increase the number of targets. Each raise allows one extra target to be added to this spell.

### Hands of Jurojin

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

Calling on the healing energy of the earth, the shugenja who casts this spell can remove all disease and/or poison from one target's system. The disease or poison thus affected needs not be known by the caster, nor does the caster have to be aware that there is a poison or disease at work. The spell simply cleanses the target of all 'impurities' in their blood system, leaving them feeling refreshed.

This spell does not repair damage inflicted by poison or disease before this spell was used, but does stop any secondary effects – a disease is fully cured, and the recipient does not suffer any aftereffects. Any wounds or boils, therefore, will still take time to heal, but no new ones will form and no further disease can be spread by this individual. After this spell has been cast, the subject





is still susceptible to poisons or diseases of the same nature, if they are so foolish as to place themselves at risk of catching the disease again.

The GM should raise the TN of this spell if the poison/disease is particularly potent or it has gone untreated for some time.

If the poison was crafted by a character (PC or NPC), that character can add his Poison skill x School Rank to the TN to cast this spell.

### Hands of Clay

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

This spell allows the caster to walk along any surface made of earth or stone. There is no chance that he will slip or fall, even if he turns completely upside down and walks upon the stone ceiling. This spell can be used to climb walls, walk down pits or crevasses, or even walk sideways along a cliff wall, as the kami of the earth cling to his feet and ankles, keeping the shugenja safely attached to the ground.

If the caster moves faster than a walking pace the spell instantly ends.

### Summon Earth Spirit

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Area of Effect:** 1 Spirit

**Range:** 10'

This spell summons a small Earth spirit. It is 6" tall, has all the properties of stone and obeys the caster's commands. The spirit is unable to communicate with or understand anyone besides the caster. To the spirits, other individuals are as mute as rocks are to normal humans.

Earth spirits may run at a rate of 10' per round and can carry any object 10 lbs. or less. All of the Rings of these summoned spirits are equal to 1/2 their caster's School Rank. These spirits roll 1k1 to hit. Earth spirits inflict 2k1 Wounds in hand-to-hand combat by turning their limbs into sharp shards of stone. These Earth spirits are destroyed when they receive 25 points of Wounds.

### Tremor

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 5 Rounds

**Area of Effect:** 100'

**Range:** Touch





This spell causes a minor earthquake which causes minor structural damage and could possibly destroy poorly-constructed buildings. Well-crafted structures are immune, although the spell will still knock items from shelves and could destroy fragile or loose objects. Everyone in the area of effect of this spell will be affected as though with Fear 1, except for the spell's caster.

The effects of this spell can be felt for as much as two miles in every direction, although those outside of the Area of Effect are not subject to the mechanical effects of this spell.

- Raises can be used to increase the Area of Effect. Each raise thus used adds an additional 100' to the Area of Effect.

### Walk Without Passing

**Mastery Level:** 2  
**Duration:** 1 Hour  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

By asking the spirits of the earth to aid his passage, the caster makes himself part of the earth and able to pass along its features without trace, keeping all signs of his passage as invisible as the wind on grasses.

Using this spell, the caster can walk through any terrain without leaving a perceptible trail.

## Mastery Level 3

### Benevolent Protection of Shinsei

**Mastery Level:** 3  
**Duration:** 1 Hour  
**Area of Effect:** 15' radius  
**Range:** Touch

This spell can only be cast upon an object made of jade, usually a holy string of beads or a token taken from a Temple of Shinsei. Everyone within the Area of Effect of this spell when it is cast feels calm and at peace. If someone inside the radius of this spell wishes to cause harm to anything, he must first overcome the effects of this spell.

To overcome the spell, a character must roll his Willpower against a TN equal to the casting shugenja's Earth times School Rank.

If the object in question is inside of a Temple of Shinsei, the radius is multiplied by ten and the spell does not expire until dawn.

- Raises can be used to increase the Area of Effect of this spell. Each raise increases the Area of Effect by 5' (applied before the bonus for being inside of a temple).



### Earth's Protection

**Mastery Level:** 5  
**Duration:** 1 hour  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

Calling upon the spirits of the earth to protect and guide him, the shugenja who casts this spell is blessed with a reprieve from the earth's coldness and weather. The target of this spell is unharmed by high winds, heat, snow, exposure, or any other hostile weather for the duration of the spell.

### Immortal Steel

**Mastery Level:** 3  
**Duration:** Permanent  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Weapon  
**Range:** Touch

*Note: This spell takes one hour to cast.*

This spell adds a little of the shugenja's own Earth to a single weapon. The target weapon has both its rolled and kept dice increased by one. Thus, if the spell were cast on a katana with a DR of 3k2, it would be increased to 4k3. This spell only works on steel weapons, not weapons made of wood and steel or any other

substance. It can be cast on weapons with steel blades but wooden handles (naginata, kama, etc.) but not on items made of mixed or inappropriate components (tetsubo, tessen, etc.).

Any shugenja can only have one weapon with Immortal Steel cast upon it in existence at a given time. If a shugenja enchants a





weapon and then tries to enchant a second weapon (or the first weapon a second time), the first spell will dissipate and the weapon that had been enchanted will become nonmagical.

### Preservation

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 Month

**Area of Effect:** 1 Object

**Range:** Touch

The target of this spell must be dead organic material. The earth spirits within the object will be appeased and sated, and unable to ingest any of the material of the object during the duration of the spell. For the duration, the object thus affected will not decompose, rot, or spoil.

### Slash of the Lion

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

When a shugenja calls upon the Lion, he gains the strength and ferocity of one of Rokugan's most deadly predators. This spell increases the number of dice he rolls and keeps for weaponless combat by 2.

### Strength of the Crow

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 Day

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

When calling upon the strength of Shinsei's faithful companion, the crow, the recipient of this spell is immune to the effects of the Shadowlands Taint for a number of days equal to the shugenja's School Rank. If the target willingly embraces the Taint (e.g., casts a maho spell) this spell will offer him no protection.

- **Raise:** The shugenja may make one raise per additional person he wishes to affect.

## Mastery Level 4

### Armor of the Emperor

**Mastery Level:** 4

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

Gifted with the power of the most ancient and honorable spirits of the Earth, the recipient of this spell is encased in a dark grey

vener. This covering makes his skin as tough and hard as rock, yet still flexible and supple as leather. The target may absorb a number of Wounds per strike equal to his Rank x 2 without effect.

### Shatter

**Mastery Level:** 4

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 1 Item

**Range:** 100'

This spell angers the Earth spirits within a single object, causing them to fly apart violently, shattering the object in which they had lived. The spell can be used to shatter one inorganic object up to 1 cubic foot per Earth rank of the caster. Anyone within a 10' radius of the object when it shatters will take 2k1 Wounds from the debris. Magical objects are unaffected by this spell.

### Symbol of Earth

**Mastery Level:** 4

**Duration:** Permanent

**Area of Effect:** 10' Radius

**Range:** 25'

With this spell the caster magically engraves the symbol of Earth upon an object, usually a threshold, door, or similar location. Any being other than the caster who comes within range of the symbol feels the effects of a magical stunning effect. The target may make a contested roll of Air vs. the casting shugenja's Earth rank. Failure indicates that the target is stunned.

Stunned opponents have the following disabilities: for the first round the target cannot move or act. His mind is reeling, and he has been deafened by the spell. Each round thereafter, he regains hearing and movement rate, but will be down by 4 dice until he leaves the area of effect. Anyone who knows this spell may cast it on an existing Symbol of Earth in order to dispel it. If the object which the Symbol is scribed upon is moved or moves, the spell is broken.

### Tomb of Jade

**Mastery Level:** 4

**Duration:** Until Dawn

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** 100'

This spell can only be used on characters or creatures with the Shadowlands Taint. If successful, the target's skin turns to jade. He immediately takes 3k3 Wounds and will take 2k2 Wounds each round until he breaks free from his jade prison (he does take Wounds on the round he succeeds).



Each round that the target is held, he may make a simple Earth roll against a TN equal to the shugenja's Earth x School Rank to break free.

• Raises can be used to increase the TN to escape the Tomb of Jade. Each Raise increases the victim's TN by 5.

## Wall of Earth

**Mastery Level:** 4

**Duration:** Permanent

**Area of Effect:** Special

**Range:** 100'

Causing the greater spirits of stone to rise up at the shugenja's command, this spell forces the earth and stone of the ground to suddenly shoot upward, forming a massive barrier of Earth. Use of this spell creates a 10' tall, 1' wide, 25' long wall of earth and stone, which can be breached as per a castle wall, with siege weapons.

The wall may be shorter or thinner, as desired, within the total specifications, but all mass thus lost may not be 'formed' into the rest of the wall. This mass alteration does mean that the wall may be used to seal passages, repair breached parapets, or seal caverns almost air-tight.

## Mastery Level 5

### Divide into Ash

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** Permanent

**Area of Effect:** 100 cubic feet

**Range:** Line of Sight

This spell causes all the Earth kami in the targeted area to abandon their duties, commanded by a shugenja with such a profound mastery of Earth. As they leave their homes, the area targeted begins to dissolve, torn apart by their flight. This spell disintegrates up to 100 cubic feet of earth, stone, crystal, or any other earth-like substance. This spell may not be used on a living being (with the exception of earth spirits). Magical objects are unaffected by this spell.

### Earthquake

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** 5 rounds

**Area of Effect:** 200' Radius

**Range:** Touch

This spell causes a major earthquake. Only the strongest of buildings in Rokugan can survive this spell and even they will be severely damaged. Everyone in the area of effect, except the caster, is affected as with Fear 2. The effects of this spell can be felt for miles

in every direction (although those outside of the Area of Effect are not subject to the mechanical effects of this spell).

It should be noted that all of the seven Great Clans consider the use of this devastating spell to be a declaration of war, and often will send bands of samurai to destroy a shugenja who uses this spell without proper cause.

• Raises can be used to increase the Area of Effect. Each raise adds an additional 100' to the Area of Effect.

## Prison of Earth

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** Special

**Area of Effect:** 1 Creature

**Range:** 100'

This spell creates a magical binding which affects any unnatural creatures including, but not limited to: Oni, malevolent spirits, Shadowlands beings, and anyone who is Tainted by the Shadowlands. The caster must have a diamond to serve as the prison. The caster chants the ritual words and enter a contested roll with the target. If the caster wins, the target's essence is trapped within the diamond until such time as the diamond is broken, the caster releases the creature, or the caster dies. If the creature wins the contest, it generally becomes infuriated with the caster and directs its efforts towards killing him

## Spikes of Earth

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** 100' Radius

**Range:** Line of Sight

This spell causes the ground within the area of effect to suddenly grow 8-12 inch long, extremely sharp-edged spikes. These can be made of stone, crystal, etc. depending upon the composition of the materials in the ground.

Anyone within the Area of Effect must make an immediate Reflexes roll versus a TN of 40 or fall, suffering Wounds equal to the caster's Earth rank. Anything moving through the area is reduced to one foot of movement per round. Anyone attempting to move faster than a slow walk must make a Reflexes roll versus a TN of 50 or fall, suffering Wounds equal to the caster's (Earth)k2.

## Mastery Level 6

### Fraying of Jigoku

**Mastery Level:** 6

**Duration:** 1 minute

**Area of Effect:** 15' Radius



**Range:** 100'

This spell causes the a 1 foot gash to rend open in the earth at an area within 75' of the caster. From that gash, horrible noxious fumes will spout forth which incapacitate or even kill anyone within a 15' Radius square. Anyone trapped within the Area of Effect immediately takes 5k5 Wounds, and continues to take said damage until removed from the Area of Effect. This spell is primarily used on the field of battle.

To activate this spell, the shugenja must have a small bit of silk rope or cord, and must tear it apart as he calls for the Earth spirits to do his bidding.

**Kami's Strength****Mastery Level:** 6**Duration:** 1 minute**Area of Effect:** 1 Target**Range:** Touch

Calling upon the most powerful Earth kami to serve as their guardians and protectors, the shugenja who casts this powerful spell finds himself protected against even the strongest attacks. For the duration of the spell, the recipient is virtually immune to normal damage of any kind. Blows by katana, tetsubo, arrows and the like are simply shrugged off by the target of this spell, reflecting from a crystal sheen that near-invisibly covers the caster's skin. Effects from spells and nemuranai, however, still damage the recipient.

**Rise, Earth****Mastery Level:** 6**Duration:** Concentration**Area of Effect:** 10' Radius**Range:** 25'

With this spell, the shugenja becomes so in touch with the element of earth that he can actually command it to take shape and even control the actions of all kami in the area. The caster may control up to 25 cubic feet of earth, which rises from the ground and takes a vaguely humanoid shape.

For the duration of the spell, these conjoined Earth kami will perform any tasks or duties that the caster commands, including putting themselves at risk. If the caster commands the conjoined creature to fight, the being rolls and keeps the shugenja's own Earth Rank to hit, and does 8k5 Wounds to anything it hits.

The caster may also use this spell to move up to 25 cubic feet of earth (i.e. the caster can cause a rock slide, shake the foundation of a dwelling, or create a sinkhole). If the caster is damaged in any way the spell ends immediately and the spirits once more sink into the ground, returning to normal.



# Fire Spells

## Mastery Level 1

**Biting Steel****Mastery Level:** 1**Duration:** 1 minute**Area of Effect:** 1 Weapon**Range:** Touch

This spell can only target non-magical weapons made from true steel. This spell will work only on steel weapons, not weapons made of wood and steel or any other substance. It can be cast on weapons with steel blades but wooden handles (naginata, kama, etc.) but not on items made of mixed or inappropriate components (tetsubo, tessen, etc.).

For the duration of the spell, the weapon's wielder may roll and keep an extra die for damage.

**Evil Ward****Mastery Level:** 1**Duration:** 1 Day**Area of Effect:** 10' Radius**Range:** Touch

This spell requires 10 rounds to cast, and involves an elaborate process of preparation. The shugenja must first inscribe a mystical symbol on the object to be warded with chalk, paint, or calligraphy inks.

Once the Ward has been successfully completed, any creature with the Shadowlands Taint coming within the spell's radius immediately suffers 5k5 Wounds as his blood boils. The creature continues to take 5k5 Wounds each round until it leaves the radius. This spell ends instantly if the symbol is marred or the object that the symbol is scribed upon moves.



- Raises can be used to increase the Area of Effect. Each raise adds 10' to the Radius.

### **Extinguish**

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 100' Radius  
**Range:** Self

When this spell is cast, fire spirits in the area are dismissed, fleeing the area swiftly and without interest in returning. All nonmagical fire in the radius is instantly snuffed out. If the caster uses this spell to its fullest, casting out all fire spirits in the Area of Effect, any attempt to commune with Fire spirits in the area will be useless, as there are no spirits left with which to commune.

### **The Fires That Cleanse**

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 30' radius  
**Range:** Self

This spell is considered to be extremely dangerous, and angers those fire spirits who are called to its task. The spell hurls the spirits of fire in the area into a frenzy, causing them to burst forth from the air in a tremendous, unrestrained explosion of fire.

When cast, a huge gout of uncontrolled flame erupts from the caster's location, causing everyone in the radius of this spell to take XkX Wounds, where X is the caster's Fire. Knowing their master, the Fire spirits avoid injuring the shugenja as best they can, so the caster of this spell takes only half of the Wounds (round down).

### **Fires of Purity**

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 1 minute  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** 25'

This spell calls forth the burning protectiveness of Fire, asking it to envelop those enchanted with their pure flame. The target of this spell and all of his equipment is suddenly surrounded by magical fire, flickering along his body and over his equipment. The target of this spell takes no Wounds from the fire, but anyone or anything touching the target or his equipment suffers 1k1 Wounds (above and beyond any Wounds normally dealt from melee with the target).

The target's equipment may only benefit from this spell for as long as he is in contact with the item (i.e. if the target of this spell sets something down and then tries to pick it up again, it will be

damaged by the fire). If the caster is immersed in water, the fire is snuffed out but springs up again as soon as he leaves the water.

### **The Fury of Osano-Wo**

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 1 target  
**Range:** 100'

This spell calls upon the famous wrath of the kami of storms, inciting those fire spirits who follow Osano-Wo to speak in the name of their master. The target of this spell is struck by a bolt of lightning from the sky, burning like holy fire down through the clouds and searing the land throughout the Area of Effect. All those within 10' of the target must make a Stamina roll against a TN of 10 or be deafened for three actions. If it is currently raining, the spell does 3k3 Wounds. Otherwise, it does 3k2 Wounds.

### **Katana of Fire**

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 1 minute  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

This spell calls forth the flickering heat of the air and the resources of any flames in the Area of Effect, summoning into the caster's hand a katana formed of Fire. The weapon is wielded using the Kenjutsu or Iaijutsu Skill and has a DR of 3k3. If the shugenja becomes unconscious or is killed the weapon vanishes.

- Raises can be used to increase the DR of the weapon. For each raise the number of dice rolled (not kept) is increased by one.

### **Wings of Fire**

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 1 minute  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

This spell ignites the caster's arms and turns them into tremendous wings of searing flame. Although the caster takes no damage from these wings, they can be used in combat, doing 1k1 Wounds (above and beyond normal Wounds from Melee) against an opponent foolish enough to walk through their flickering flame. This spell allows the caster to land safely from a fall of any height, and actually glide for short distances from a starting height.

## **Mastery Level 2**

**Aura of Flame**  
**Mastery Level:** 2





**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

Surrounding himself with helpful spirits of flame, the caster of this spell enshrouds his body in fire. While this spell is active, the casting shugenja magically glows with a pale red aura (the light is not enough to read by, but is clearly distinguishable in daylight). All attacks aimed at the target of this spell have their TN raised by 10.

### The Fires From Within

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** 100'

Calling forth the spirits of Fire into a single point, the caster creates a small ball of flame that hovers in his palm, causing no damage to him. As the caster hurls the sphere, however, it swiftly detonates into a roaring ball of flame potent enough to set all inflammable items in the area on fire, and destroy medium sized paper and wooden items (the wall of a house, a shoji screen, etc.).

Effectively, this spell causes a ball of fire to launch toward a single target. If this spell succeeds, the target takes  $XkX$  Wounds, where  $X$  is the caster's Fire.

- Raises can be used to increase the Area of Effect. Each raise allows the caster to strike an additional target.

### Hurried Steps

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

By causing the Fire spirits of the area to awaken from their dormancy and infuse his blood with their passion and fury, the next spell cast by this shugenja (within this spell's duration) has its casting time reduced to one action. Spells with casting times listed in Minutes or Hours ignore this effect.

*Example:* If the casting time is 4 actions, after Hurried Steps has been cast, the casting time for that second spell is now only 1 action.

### Inferno's Tooth

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** 1 Object (up to 2 cubic feet)

**Range:** 25'

This spell causes the Fire kami in an item to become excited, causing any one inanimate object to spontaneously burst into flame. Anyone touching the target object takes  $2k2$  Wounds each round





until he drops the burning item. Flammable objects are destroyed by this spell (as are objects prone to melting). This spell cannot harm steel or forged objects, but a golden bracelet would be completely melted and destroyed.

Magical objects are unaffected by this spell.

### Summon Fire Spirit

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** 1 Spirit

**Range:** 10'

This spell summons a small Fire spirit. It is 6" tall, has all the properties of Fire, and obeys the caster's commands. The spirit can't communicate with nor understand anyone other than the caster.

Fire Spirits are capable of flying 25' per round. They can light any flammable material on fire and if ordered to attack inflict 2k2 Wounds. All of the Rings of these summoned spirits are equal to one half their caster's School Rank. These spirits roll 1k1 to hit.

If the spirit is doused in a significant amount of water, the Fire spirit will flee and the spell immediately ends.

## Mastery Level 3

### Breath of the Fire Dragon

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** Special

**Range:** Self

By praying to the Oracle of Fire, this spell calls upon the very essence of flame and the greater Kami of its nature. Once this spell is cast, a burst of flame spurts from the caster's mouth. The flame is 15' long and 10' wide at its base. Anyone caught in the area of effect suffers Wounds equal to the caster's Fire Rank. The caster suffers 1k1 Wounds every time he uses this spell.

### The Fist of Osano-Wo

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Area of Effect:** 30' radius

**Range:** 100'

Everything in the Area of Effect of this spell is pummeled with continuous lightning strikes. These strikes rain from the heavens in the form of massive fists of flame and are instantly distinguishable as the Fist of Osano-Wo to any shugenja with even a single Fire spell. Normal buildings in the area will slowly but surely be destroyed, and anyone caught within the Area of Effect must roll one die each

round. If he rolls a 1, he receives XkX Wounds, where X is the caster's Fire.

Extremely well constructed buildings (the Kaiu Wall, palaces, or other battle-structures) will survive this spell with only minimal damage. Most smaller, more fragile structures will cease to exist beneath the hailstorm of flame and lightning.

- The range of this spell can be increased with Raises. Each raise will increase the range by 100 feet.

- The Area of Effect of this spell can be increased with Raises. Each raise will increase the Area of Effect by 10 feet.

### Heart of the Inferno

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** 300'

Similar to The Fires From Within, this spell calls forth the spirits of Fire into a single point. As he casts this powerful spell, the caster creates a small ball of flame that hovers in his palm, causing no damage to him. As the caster hurls the sphere, however, it swiftly detonates into a roaring ball of flame potent enough to set all flammable items in the area on fire, and destroy large paper and wooden items (a paper or straw house, a barn of grain or rice, etc).

The ball of fire created by this spell rushes at the caster's direction toward any single target. If this spell succeeds, the target takes 6k6 Wounds.

- Raises can be used to increase the Area of Effect. Each raise allows you to strike an additional target.

### Isawa's Rage

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** One Item

**Range:** 100'

This spells is a more powerful version of the Inferno's Tooth spell and targets non-living objects of the shugenja's choice. If the spell is successful, the target begins to heat rapidly, eventually melting away to nothing. Anyone in contact with the target object suffers 1k1 Wounds immediately after the spell is cast, and each successive round thereafter until the end of the spell's duration, or until the person breaks contact with the targeted item.

Magical objects are unaffected by this spell.

### Waiting Flame

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** 10' Radius



**Range:** Touch

Pacifying the kami of Fire is never an easy task, but when accomplished, it can be a devastating weapon. Easing the spirits of flame within an area, the shugenja who casts this spell causes them to react to a single trigger effect – a word, an item's passing, an action taken within the radius, etc. When this spell is used the caster must choose a trigger and inform the GM of their chosen action.

Once this spell is triggered, the Fire spirits awaken violently, exploding outward within the radius in a burst of energy and heat. The spell immediately does 4k4 Wounds to everyone in the radius, and then ends.

## Mastery Level 4

**Death of Flame**

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** 1 minute  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** 100'

Withdrawing the blessing of the kami of flame from a target can be used by shugenja to devastating effect. This spell temporarily lowers the target's Fire rank by the Fire rank of the caster, down to a minimum of 1.

To escape this spell's effect, the target can make a contested roll vs. the shugenja's Fire rank, once per round.

**Fire Walking**

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** 1 minute  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Touch

By praying to the spirits of Fire and asking their assistance, the shugenja enables those touched to withstand the heat of non-magical fires (the target is invulnerable to normal fire damage). The spirits of flame will agree not to harm those who are chosen by the shugenja who casts this

spell, embracing them in friendship rather than in anger. The spell reduces any damage taken by a magical fire spell by  $\frac{1}{2}$  (round down).

- Raises can be used to increase the number of Targets. Each Raise will add an additional target to this spell.

**Rays of Amaterasu**

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** 10 Minutes

**Area of Effect:** 50' Radius  
**Range:** 50'

The caster evokes a soft beam of light which is centered upon the caster. The light illuminates his surroundings as if it were daylight. Any Tainted or unnatural creatures in the Area of Effect take Wounds equal to the caster's Fire rank for each round they remain in the Area of Effect.

**Symbol of Fire**

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** Permanent  
**Area of Effect:** 10' Radius  
**Range:** 25'

With this spell the caster magically engraves the symbol of Fire upon an object, usually a threshold, door, or similar location. Any being other than the caster who comes within range of the symbol suffers the effects of a magical flash of light. The targets may make a contested roll, his Water vs. the shugenja's Fire rank. Failure indicates that the target is temporarily blinded.

This blindness lasts for one hour.

Anyone who knows this spell may cast it on an existing Symbol of Fire in order to dispel it. If the object which the Symbol is scribed upon is moved or moves, the spell is broken.



**Wall of Fire****Mastery Level:** 4**Duration:** 1 Hour**Area of Effect:** Special**Range:** 100'

Causing the greater spirits of flame to rise up at the shugenja's command, this spell forces the fire spirits of the area to suddenly shoot upward, forming a massive barrier of Fire. Use of this spell creates a 10' tall, 1' wide, 25' long wall of flame. The wall can not be cast in an area in which people are currently standing. Anyone attempting to pass through the wall will take 6k6 points of Wounds.

The wall may be shorter or thinner, as desired, within the total specifications, but mass thus lost may not be 'formed' into the rest of the wall.

**Mastery Level 5****Burn the Soul****Mastery Level:** 5**Duration:** Concentration**Area of Effect:** 1 Target**Range:** 25'

When a person is successfully targeted with this spell, his skin will begin to blacken and peel as if he were being burned alive. There are no obvious flames surrounding the caster or the target – the fire comes from within the target, burning him alive with his own energy. If the target manages to get 25' away from the caster of this spell, the spell expires.

There are several stages to this spell, and it is limited only by the caster's concentration. Once his concentration is broken, the spell ends in the stage in which it was broken. If all stages of the spell's casting are completed, the target will most likely die.

*Stage One:* First round

In this stage the target's skin blackens and feels as if it is burning. Target takes 1k1 Wounds, suffers a -1 die penalty to all rolls, and cannot concentrate enough to cast spells.

*Stage Two:* Second round

The target's skin begins to peel back, revealing the lower layer of skin which begins to blacken. Target suffers 2k2 Wounds and is at a -2 die penalty to all rolls.

*Stage Three:* Third round

Target's second layer of skin burns away. Target suffers 3k3 Wounds and is at a -3 die penalty to all rolls.

*Stage Four:* Fourth round

Target's muscles begin to burn away. Target suffers 4k4 Wounds and is at -4 dice to all rolls.

*Stage Five:* Fifth and final round

Target's organs begin to boil and bones blacken and burn. Target suffers 5k5 Wounds and, if still alive, is considered Out.

Anyone who recovers from this spell but suffered Stage Three or worse gains the Disadvantage: Weakness; his Stamina will be lowered by 1 for each stage beyond 2 he suffered. Anyone whose Stamina is reduced below 1 will be bedridden for one month, after which time his Stamina becomes 1.

Stamina thus removed may be recovered at the rate of one point per two months.

**Everburning Rage****Mastery Level:** 5**Duration:** 10 Minutes**Area of Effect:** 1 Target**Range:** 25'

Torn apart by fire spirits, the target of this spell suffers excruciating pain spasms. As invisible spirits of flame pass through the target's flesh, he suffers tremendous pain, wracking his entire body. For the duration of this spell the target is considered to be at the Down wound box, with all penalties incurred for that position.

When the spell expires, the target may stand up and perform actions as if nothing had been wrong – no damage is actually incurred by this spell.







### Follow the Flame

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** 300'

When cast, this spell immobilizes the caster in a thin veil of flame which does no harm to the shugenja. The caster may then target anything within 300' (as long as it is within his line of sight) and a stream of fire will shoot forth down the caster's arm, through the caster's body and travel along the ground at a rate of 75' per round until it reaches its target or the target moves more than 300' from the point the spell was cast. The stream of fire may turn as many times as necessary in order to reach its target. The target bursts into flame when the stream of fire makes contact, causing initial Wound dice equal to the caster's Fire rating, and causing 1/2 of the caster's Fire rank in Wounds per round thereafter until the flame is doused.

• Raises can be used to add additional Targets. The caster may create one additional stream of fire per raise.

### Following Osano-Wo

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 10' radius

**Range:** Line of Sight

The caster of this spell summons the most powerful Fire spirits in the area, creating a roaring vertical column of fire which descends upon the target within range. The column of fire causes 8k6 Wounds to anyone within its area of effect. If there are no sources of fire within 100 yards of the caster, the caster must take 2k1 Wounds, as the flames of his own soul are used to spark the anger of the kami.

## Mastery Level 6

### Rise, Flame

**Mastery Level:** 6

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 10' radius

**Range:** 25'

With this spell, the shugenja becomes so in touch with the element of fire that he can actually command it to take shape and then control its actions. The caster must have a source of fire in order for this spell to work; a burning building or a raging bonfire works well.

The caster may control up to 25 cubic feet of fire, commanding it to take on a vaguely humanoid shape. Once the Fire spirits have

gathered into a collective, the being will do anything that the caster wills it to do. Any flammable object touched by the being of fire will ignite if touched for 2 actions or more. If the caster commands it to fight, the creature rolls and keeps the caster's own Fire Rank to hit, and does 5k4 Wounds to anything it hits.

The caster may also use this spell to cause a natural fire to increase in size by up to 25 cubic feet (i.e. the caster causes a lit torch to increase in size to 25 cubic feet, thus encompassing a nearby house). If the caster is damaged in any way the spell ends immediately and the fire returns to normal.

### Tempest of Fire

**Mastery Level:** 6

**Duration:** 10 Minutes

**Area of Effect:** 30' radius

**Range:** 100'

Using this spell is both a blessing and a terrible judgment by the casting shugenja. During the casting, the shugenja incites all Fire spirits in the Area of Effect into tremendous anger, searing Air, Water and Earth alike with the force of their uncontrolled wrath.

When this spell is cast, the entire area of effect is overwhelmed with sheets of roaring flames. Any combustible material within the Area of Effect will instantly detonate, and even difficult to burn items (such as metals and rocks) will ignite.

Any creatures within the Area of Effect suffers 8kX Wounds, where X is the Fire ring of the caster, for as long as they remain within the Area of Effect.

### Tsuke's Call of Heaven

**Mastery Level:** 6

**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

Created by the current Master of Fire, Isawa Tsuke, this spell contains a tremendously powerful magic, and should only be used in the most dire predicaments.

The recipient of this spell appears to be immolated in flame. These flames give off extreme heat such that anyone who comes within 6' of the recipient, friend or foe, takes Wounds equal to the caster's Fire Rank plus School Rank per round.

The recipient is effectively immune to arrows, as they will burn up before striking the recipient. Poor quality swords will likely burst into flame, and even excellent quality swords will have their edges ruined and their steel blackened by the fire's scorching heat.



# Water Spells

## Mastery Level 1

### Bo of Water

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 1 Minute  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

When the shugenja casts this spell, he melds the kami of the Water in the surrounding area together into an amazingly powerful weapon. The weapon is wielded using the Bojutsu Skill and has a DR of 3k3. If the shugenja becomes unconscious or is killed the weapon vanishes.

- Raises can be used to increase the DR of the weapon. For each raise the number of dice rolled (not kept) is increased by one.

### Castle of Water

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** 5 Minutes  
**Area of Effect:** 5' radius  
**Range:** Self

This spell creates a 3' tall, 1' thick wall of Water which encircles the caster. Anyone attempting to move through the wall must roll his Earth with a TN equal to the caster's Water x School Rank. If he fails he takes 1k1 Wounds and the churning water tosses him outside of the radius.

No projectiles will pass through this wall, and most simple arrows or small darts will be destroyed by the force of the rolling waters.

- Raises can be used to increase the radius of the wall. Each raise adds 5' to the radius.

- Raises can be used to increase the height of the wall. Each raise adds one foot of height to the wall.

### Heart of Nature

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Permanent  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Animal  
**Range:** 10'

This spell creates a bond between the caster and any one normal animal. The animal will not risk his life but will follow the caster's mental commands as long as the caster is within one mile of the animal. If cast upon a horse (or other mount) this spell gives the caster a free raise when doing maneuvers on the animal.

A shugenja can only have this spell cast upon one animal at any given time. If he attempts to cast this spell on another animal, he loses his link to the original animal.

### Path to Inner Peace

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Permanent  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Touch

This spell realigns all the elements within a target's body, using the healing powers of water to soothe and readjust the flow of karmic energy within their flesh. When this spell is cast, the wounds upon the target's body instantly begin to close and repair themselves, and damage is removed from the target's body. The target instantly heals a number of Wounds equal to the caster's Water.

- Raises can be used to increase the effect. Each Raise allows the target to heal an additional amount equal to the caster's Water.

### Reflections of Pan Ku

**Mastery Level:** 1  
**Duration:** Instantaneous  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Item  
**Range:** 10'

Scrying within a clear bowl of fresh water, the caster of this spell may determine the nature and powers of any single item, revealing certain elements of its past and gaining a clear vision of the energies that have been awakened within the object. Casting this spell upon an item causes visions of the item's past to appear within the bowl.

It is up to the caster to determine the exact nature of the item's powers from these brief visions, and these sights can in no way reveal information about item's past possessors beyond very vague details (nemuranai are notoriously self-glorifying, focused on their own ability and not that of their wielder). The spell could thus reveal the





nature and powers of any magical item, and high rolls may cause the GM to reveal the exact nature of damage and to-hit bonuses as well.

It should be noted that this item rarely works on ancient or sentient artifacts (such as Shosuro's Hand or the Ancestral Sword of the Crane). Further, certain highly magical items, or items created with maho, may partially or completely resist this spell at the GM's discretion.

### Reversal of Fortunes

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** 1 Target

Water is the most beneficial and bountiful of the elements, allowing those that it favors to choose their own luck and spiritual energies. Once this spell has been cast upon the target, they may then take the blessings of the water spirits with them as they wish, for the spell's duration. During the spell's duration, the recipient of a Reversal of Fortunes may reroll any one die of his choosing each time he rolls.

### Sympathetic Energies

**Mastery Level:** 1

**Duration:** Varies

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** 10'

Using the powers of water to shift and change the nature of reality, use of this spell allows its caster to transfer the effects of one spell from himself to the target or vice versa. This spell can both be used to steal spell effects from an enemy shugenja, or to transfer caster-only spells onto another targeted individual, once the spell has been cast. The caster of this spell is henceforth considered the caster of any spell he moves using Sympathetic Energies.

This spell does not affect spells with a duration of Instantaneous or Concentration.

## Mastery Level 2

### Heart of Mortality

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** Permanent

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** 10'

This spell creates a bond between the caster and any one willing target. If at any point the target becomes unwilling, the spell immediately ends, and the caster is aware of the spell breaking contact.

While this spell is in effect, the caster will always know the general direction of the person affected by this spell. He may then cast any of his spells on that target as if he were within normal range of that spell's effect. If the caster gets more than a mile away from his target, the spell instantly breaks. All spell effects generated before the spell breaks are maintained for their usual duration.

A shugenja can only have one person sharing a Heart of Mortality at a given time. If he attempts to cast this spell on another person, the spell on the original person breaks.

### Purify Water

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 100' Radius

**Range:** 10'

Any liquid in the radius of this spell is reduced to pure, pollutant-free, Taint-free water. The spirits of the water are cleansed through contact with their purer nature, and thus are freed of any impurities.

This spell has been attempted upon such famous Shadowlands rivers as the Black Finger, but the infamous Taint of that foul place immediately causes the water within those rivers to become foul once more. However, this spell would instantly cleanse water within





a clay pot or other water carrier, even if the water had originally been taken from the Shadowlands.

Dirty water, alcohol, and even poison are affected by this spell, although it cannot affect liquids which have already been absorbed into the body.

### Reflective Pool

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 5 Minutes

**Area of Effect:** 50' Radius

**Range:** 1 Mile

Water's talent for knowing the inscrutable is a powerful ally when a shugenja has need to see a place where he can not stand. The caster can use this spell to see a place he is familiar with.

In order to use this spell the caster must spend 10 minutes studying the area he wishes to be 'familiar' with. After doing so, he can cast this spell and see as though he were standing in the center of the area.

• Raises can be used to increase the range of this spell. Each raise increases the range by 1 mile.

### Summon Water Spirit

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** 1 Spirit

**Range:** 10'

This spell summons a small Water spirit. It is 6" tall, has all the properties of Water and will obey the caster's commands. It can't communicate with or understand anyone besides the caster.

Water Spirits may run at a rate of 10' per round or swim at a rate of 50' per round. They can move any object 1 lb. or less by rolling it along the ground. A Water spirit can extinguish flames up to the size of a torch.

### The Tie that Binds

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** 1 Mile

This spell gives the caster the distance and direction to any one person or object that the caster is familiar with (i.e. has studied for at least an hour).

• The range of this spell can be increased with raises. Each raise adds one mile to the range.

### Wisdom and Clarity

**Mastery Level:** 2

**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

Blessed by the gift of the gentle water spirits, the shugenja is gifted with a clear mind and an immense ability to conceptualize. The target of this spell can read at twice normal speed and will remember everything he has read. However, this spell does not grant the target the inherent ability to understand what he has read - a shugenja reading a language he does not understand, for example, or reading a scroll he cannot master, does not receive any special insight or ability that he does not already possess.

## Mastery Level 3

### The Flow of Time

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** 10' Radius

**Range:** Self

As long as the caster remains absolutely motionless and silent, he can perceive time at any speed he desires (up to 100 times faster or slower).

For the caster, only one minute will pass (possibly more if he uses raises to increase the spell duration) but the rest of the world will seem to move at any pace the caster desires. He can watch the next 100 minutes pass in the span of 60 seconds, or he can slowly watch a single second of time for one minute.

### Near to Ice

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** 1 Target

While affected by this spell, the beneficial spirits of Water absorb all pain for their possessor, withdrawing all energy of torment or agony and allowing a damaged individual to act as though he had suffered no injury.

The target is unable to feel pain for the duration, and Wound penalties are considered one less for the duration of the spell.

### Path of the Scorpion

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self





Even the purest spirits of water can become enraged when they are not given the proper respect, and this spell relies on that source of vengeance within their usually pure and calm souls. The shugenja receives from them the power to perceive and take advantage of the weaknesses of others. Anyone who faces the caster of this spell must use his lowest Trait for all to-hit rolls.

### Regrow the Wound

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

Though Water spirits have a great capacity to ease suffering, they are often taxed to perform great feats of healing, passing injuries through their own spirits and releasing them into the greater Celestial Heavens, the ocean mother that gives life to all kami beneath the sun.

Using this spell, a shugenja becomes one with that powerful ocean spirit, and uses the stored energy of a thousand water kami to slowly wash away the impurities and imbalances caused by wounds or injuries. As long as the caster concentrates and maintains physical contact with the target, the target heals one Wound per round until they have no further injuries.

### Silent Waters

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** Varies

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

The ocean's memory is a long one, and so too are the memories of its servants. When this spell is cast, a single Water spirit blends itself within the shugenja's soul, awaiting the day when it will be released and perform its stated duty.

This spell is cast in conjunction with another spell (which must be cast within one minute of this spell). The caster must decide upon a trigger and when the trigger occurs the stored spell is released. *Example:* "The next time I fall, Silent Waters will trigger and automatically cast Wings of Fire." The spell to be stored must be of Mastery Level 3 or less, and may be of any element. The caster must be able to normally cast the spell to be stored within the Silent Waters, and the spell to be stored may not contain any raises or other modifications.

Shugenja may store spells to be cast on themselves even if they are unconscious, but if they use Silent Waters to trigger a spell that targets another person, they must be awake when it triggers.

### Way of Still Waters

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

Those who respect water's life-giving power must also respect its ability to drown life within seething waves and churning foam. When this spell is cast, the recipient gains the ability to breathe, see, and move freely underwater. This spell does not remove the target's ability to breathe air, nor does it confer any special swimming abilities or gills. It simply allows the target to breathe water (salt or fresh) as if it were air.

When this spell is cast upon a native water-breather, it has a reverse effect, allowing them to breathe air freely.

### Walking Upon the Waves

**Mastery Level:** 3

**Duration:** 1 Minute

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

Upheld by the spirits of Water, the recipient of this spell's blessing does not displace water and can therefore walk, run, sit or perform any action on the surface of any body of water. However, if the water is particularly rough or roiling, the target may be required to make rolls in order to remain standing (if they fall, they will simply become seated on the water's surface, not sink beneath it).

If the water upon which the target walks takes a sudden turn (up or down, as a waterfall), the target receives no special ability to walk up or down the surface of the sliding water, and may easily fall to his death – as the water beneath the waterfall will also act as if it were a solid surface.

Samurai should be reminded that water can be unforgiving...

## Mastery Level 4

### Avoidance

**Mastery Level:** 4

**Duration:** 10 Minutes

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

For the duration of this spell, the caster may use his hands to deflect melee and missile attacks against him. The water spirits surrounding him are guided by his motions, and deflect those projectiles as best they can. The caster must roll his Water Ring against a TN equal to the To Hit roll of the attacker. The caster of this spell must direct the spirits at his command; he must be able to see the attack in order to be able to deflect it.



## Perceive Harmony

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** 1 Minute  
**Area of Effect:** Self  
**Range:** Self

By using this spell the caster commands the water spirits of the area to do her bidding, whispering secrets of the area and revealing all that they know. To her secret allies, all creatures of the area are as glass, transparent and easily seen.

The casting shugenja immediately perceives all sentient beings within 20' and knows what their actions will be. This allows the caster to declare her action for the round last, after all other actions have been declared each round, until the spell ends.

## Symbol of Water

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** Permanent  
**Area of Effect:** 10' radius  
**Range:** 25'

With this spell, the caster magically engraves the symbol of Water upon an object, usually a threshold, door, or similar location. Any beings other than the caster who comes within range of the symbol feel the effects of a magical fear come over them. Those who see or feel the symbol (the targets) may make a contested roll of their Fire vs. the casting shugenja's Water rank. Failure indicates that the target suffers the effects of Fear equal to the caster's Water Ring.

Anyone who knows this spell may cast it on an existing Symbol of Water in order to dispel it. If the object which the Symbol is scribed upon is moved or moves, the spell is broken.

## Wall of Water

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** 1 Hour  
**Area of Effect:** Special  
**Range:** 100'

This spell creates a 10' tall, 1' wide, 25' long wall of Water. The wall is impassable and can not be cast in an area in which there are people. Anyone attempting to pass through the wall must roll his Fire with a TN equal to the caster's Water x School Rank. If they fail, they become stuck and take drowning damage (2k2 Wounds) each round until freed.

Someone thus restrained within a Wall of Water can roll each round to attempt escape.

## Within the Waves

**Mastery Level:** 4  
**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** 20' Radius  
**Range:** Self

Within the Waves creates an air bubble around the caster and others within 20'. Its caster can move through or on the water at a rate of 50' per round. At the end of the duration, if the bubble is underwater, it rises to the surface and bursts.

## Mastery Level 5

### Part Water

**Mastery Level:** 5  
**Duration:** Concentration  
**Area of Effect:** 100' Depth, 1000' Length  
**Range:** Line of Sight

Commanding the spirits of water to rise up and break apart at the shugenja's command is one of the most fearsome powers of a water shugenja, and one of the most revered. The caster can part any body of water not exceeding 100' deep and 1000' in length. The water will remain parted as long as the caster concentrates. The caster may still walk and speak while concentrating. Any sudden jolt or any Wounds taken will break the concentration of the caster, causing the waters to crash back together without pause.

If this spell expires while someone is attempting to cross a body of water the GM should determine the effects. If this spell was used to keep a lady's kimono dry while crossing a 3' deep stream, the effects will be inconvenient. If it were being used to cross a 100' deep lake, loss of concentration would likely cause instant death.

- The Area of Effect of this spell can be increased with Raises. Each raise will allow the corridor of water to extend an additional 1000' in length.

### Power of the Ocean

**Mastery Level:** 5  
**Duration:** 1 Week  
**Area of Effect:** 1 Target  
**Range:** Touch

*Note: This spell requires 1 hour to cast.*

The recipient of this spell may go without food, water, and sleep, sustained by the power of the Water spirits at the shugenja's command, for a number of weeks equal to the shugenja's School Rank. The target may also refresh his Void points a number of times per day equal to the shugenja's School Rank. The target suffers absolutely no penalties due to lack of food or rest for the duration of this spell.

Once the duration ends, the target must rest for one full day for each two days of the spell's duration. During this period of rest, the target may not move faster than a slow walk, and may not travel at





all – not even in a palanquin or other conveyance. If the recipient of Power of the Ocean exceeds these bounds during this convalescent period, his stamina is considered a 1 for all actions, and his Wound Ranks drop by one each day he does not fully rest until they lapse into unconsciousness.

### Waves are Ever Changing

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** Self

**Range:** Self

Water is deceptive, and so are its abilities. Because of the flowing nature of the waters, a true master of the element can actually cause his own shape to conform to any vessel, forcing his body to assume the likeness of any living creature he has personally seen and encountered. This spell does not allow the caster to emulate unnatural creatures (such as the beasts and Oni of the Shadowlands) or any magical or intelligent creatures (Ki-Rin, Dragons, Naga or humans).

During the casting of this potent spell, the caster actually becomes the creature he chooses, assuming all of the creature's physical characteristics while maintaining his own intellectual characteristics (including skills and spells). It should be noted that most spells can't be cast without hands and vocal cords; exceptions are at the GM's discretion.

### Whirlpool

**Mastery Level:** 5

**Duration:** 1 Hour

**Area of Effect:** 50' Radius

**Range:** Line of Sight

This spell creates a 50' radius whirlpool in any large body of water; the whirlpool will suck in any unpowered object within 200'. Any powered object or any person caught in the whirlpool must make a contested roll of Water Rank vs. Water Rank against the caster to avoid being sucked in. If a person is sucked in he is subject to another contested roll, the target's Swimming skill vs. the caster's Water Ring. If he fails, he will drown.

## Mastery Level 6

### Peace of the Kami

**Mastery Level:** 6

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 1 Target

**Range:** Touch

When the shugenja uses this spell, the greatest of water spirits descends upon the target, washing them clean of any imperfections of body or blood. All of the recipient's wounds are completely healed, all toxins purged from their system. The target is brought up to full health, as if he had never sustained any damage. In addition, this spell purifies his body, nullifying any poison, venoms, or unnatural diseases except the Shadowlands Taint.

This spell may only be used once per day, as the spirits of water consider this to be one of their most holy rituals and will not stand for its abuse.

### Rise, Water

**Mastery Level:** 6

**Duration:** Concentration

**Area of Effect:** 10' radius

**Range:** 25'

With this spell, the shugenja becomes so in touch with the element of Water that he can actually command the kami of Water in the area to join together, taking shape. The caster may fully control the conjoined water creature's actions. The caster must have a source of water in order for this spell to work, e.g. a river, lake, or ocean. The caster may control up to 25 cubic feet of the water, which takes a vaguely humanoid shape, and does what the caster wills it to do. If the caster commands it to fight, it rolls and keeps the caster's own Water Rank to hit, and it does 6k4 Wounds to anything it hits.

The caster may also use this spell to increase or diminish a body of water by up to 25 cubic feet. The caster must concentrate to maintain the animation. If the caster is damaged in any way the spell ends immediately and the water returns to normal.

### Words of the Kami

**Mastery Level:** 6

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Area of Effect:** 15' radius

**Range:** Self

To utter the holy words of the kami is to bring forth magic of awesome power. This spell instantaneously destroys any Shadowlands creature or creature with the Shadowlands Taint in area of effect which has a Water less than 1/2 of the caster's. Those with more than half of the caster's Water take 4k4 Wounds. Any lesser oni, goblins, ogres, or creatures with the Shadowlands Taint are instantly obliterated upon hearing the holy words. This spell is not without its cost, however, as the caster and all pure (non-Tainted) souls around them (in the Area of Effect) are temporarily deafened upon the utterance of the Holy Words. The deafness lasts for 1 hour. Deafened characters are stunned within their souls, and suffer a -2 penalty to all rolls for all actions for the next full day.



# "Starlight"

The stars shone down on the battlefield in glittering spirals, adding to the moon that lit the earth as bright as day. The sparks of a thousand campfires mirrored their glow, scattered across the Lion camp in equally intricate patterns. Lao-Tse stood at the edge of them and sighed quietly, an enigmatic smile on his face. So far from the golden hills of his homeland, the stars were the only thing he truly loved about this place.

He stretched beneath his armor and stifled a yawn, cradling his naginata closer to himself. Guard duty was the least glorious duty a soldier could perform, and with an army as splendid as this before him, it seemed almost a waste of time. Who would dare attack the forces of the Lion now? What could an enemy hope to gain from it? Better to rest and prepare for the battle tomorrow than stand on watch for an assault that would never come. Not even the Crab were foolish enough to strike in the dark.

Looking up from the camp, Lao-Tse turned his attention to the sky above, his thoughts wandering. When the war was over and his clan claimed the Emerald Throne, what would he do? Return home, of course, to serve the new Emperor at his ancestral palace. But what then? He remembered the geishas he had visited the night before he left, remembered the charms they had plied on his willing body. Were any of them still there? Would one of them perhaps make a fit wife? He smiled at the thought. A pretty wife to hold him and care for him when his duties ended. A wife to stand by him while he defended the honor of the Lion Clan. How many women would jump at the chance? How many women would be honored to stand by his side? They were innumerable, he answered, in response to his own question. As many women as there were stars in the sky...

He was still studying those stars when the knife reached around him and sank into his throat.



The general's tents were a buzz of activity, with pages and servants scurrying to fulfill their masters' wishes. There would be no sleep for the Lion's leaders tonight; Hida Kisada was too wily a foe to take lightly, and the coming battle would test their mettle to the limit.

In the center tent, the leaders of the clan stood around a scale map of the field. The golden sigil of the king of beasts marked the tokens of their own forces, while the Crab troops were signified by a pair of chitinous claws. The enemy was spread out on a ridge to the north, ready to ride down and sweep over them like a wave. Each lord and samurai present had an idea on how to circumvent the Hida forces, and all felt the need to share them with their peers. Tactical movements and strategies passed back and forth among the circle, animated assertions and testy arguments following in their wake. Not a man at the table was silent.

Slightly behind the heated debate stood Matsu Tsuko, the recently chosen Champion of the Lion Clan. Tall and imposing, she could view the tactical display quite easily over the smaller generals. Her youthful face was still and unmoving, focusing completely on the conversation. The leather of her armor creaked silently as she shifted from foot to foot, her dark hair brushed back behind the Lion's ceremonial helmet. Though only twenty-one, she had already distinguished herself in the arts of weaponry and tactics, and the older men around her were already deferring to her instincts. She followed the darting arguments with focused interest, waiting until they died down before voicing an opinion.

As she listened, she absentmindedly stroked her leather-sheathed shoulder. Beneath the armor, the golden tattoo of the Lion's crest began to itch slightly. The mark had been given to her when she was still a child, just before she began her training. She remembered the pride she had felt when the old man stitched it into her, the pride that had overridden the tears of pain. Its presence meant she had been selected for something far greater than she could possibly have imagined. She was to be a warrior of the Lion, a defender of the noblest clan in Rokugan, and a protector of the Emperor himself. It was an honor few could dream of, and almost none could attain. But she had been invested with it and would happily die in the defense of its cause. The mark they gave her was irrefutable proof of that status.

The tattoo was there for her as she began her long years of training; it reminded her of what she was fighting for when she was tired and exhausted. It helped her strive farther and faster than her peers, to reach the fulfillment of her potential at an astoundingly early age. The crest had watched when she slew her first warrior, had shined with satisfaction at her victory. She was only thirteen when she first drew blood in combat and her battles since then had only grown fiercer. The Lion had been with her all the while, guiding her progress towards whatever destiny the fates had in store for her.

Its itch was a familiar comfort here on the eve of the battle.





Finally, the jabbering of the generals slowed, the debates around the table quieted. A dozen faces turned towards her, ready now to hear the words of their champion. She smiled calmly, and gestured at the table.

"The Hida family is well named," she asserted. "Scuttling and chittering, they make a great show of power when threatened. But we will see how fierce they are when they no longer have their holes to crawl back to. Flank them to the east and we cut off their supply routes. Allow our forces in the valley to fade back, drawing them further and further from their perch. When they over-extend themselves, we will order a counterattack. And they will be ours."

Her eyes swept the assemblage, as thoughtful nods and pleased grins met her words. The eldest general, a leathery old man whose armor was riddled with countless ribbons and medals, cleared his throat.

"It shall be done, honored champion. Our forces have the strength and the will to carry out such a plan, and come the dawn, Hida Kisada will be counting the cost. With the blessings of Osano Wo, the banner of the Lion will emerge triumphant."

A low murmur of assent followed his proclamation, the lords and samurai nodding their approval. Tsuko smiled and leaned back against a tent pole as renewed debate rose around the table. The marshaling of forces and tactical particularities were now the focus, their arguments geared towards the how and wherefore instead of the what. It was good.

Their discussion was interrupted by the appearance of a young boy, dressed in messenger's garb, at the entrance to the tent. He was sweating and out of breath, having apparently run here at top speed. The conversation died down as the generals turned to regard the child.

"Murder!" he panted. "Murder most foul. O noble lords, an assassin has struck our right flank and treacherously executed two of our number."

Instantly, Tsuko was standing. Whirling on her toes, she turned to face the messenger, towering above his tiny form. "Where?"

"The eastern edge of the camp, mistress. A guard was slaughtered while standing at his post, the local commander taken as well. The symbol of the Crab was left with both bodies."

"Assassins," Tsuko whispered, her voice like a razor. "Is there no depths to which Kisada will sink?" The other leaders clustered forward, the upcoming battle momentarily forgotten.

"What is being done to apprehend the killer?" the elder general inquired of the boy.

"The honored Matsu Yojo is organizing a search party, and all the local commanders under him have been alerted."

"And the killer?"

"No sign, although the bodies have not yet been examined."

"This commander who was killed... what is his station?" Tsuko inquired

"The leader of a single cadre, my lady," the boy replied dutifully. "His second in command has assumed his responsibilities."

"I see. A regrettable loss, but not one which will greatly affect the upcoming battle..." Tsuko appeared thoughtful for a minute, then regarded the boy again.

"Tell Yojo to have his commanders stand down. Tell him that the situation has been dealt with and further repercussions are unlikely. Have him warn the men on watch to attend to their duties and take extra care lest more assassins come slinking out of the shadows."

She turned to face the assembly.

"This is a bad omen. Unless the killer is apprehended, he will spread fear and doubt through our ranks. Without sleep, our troops will not perform well on the morrow, and our plan may suffer for it."

"Could this be the beginning of an attack?" one of the younger samurai queried.

"On a night as bright as this? We would have noticed any significant troop movements hours ago. No, this is but a single man or small group of men, sent to dull our edge before the battle."

She turned back to the men. "You honored gentlemen continue with your preparations. I shall remove this thorn in our side myself."

The lords started.

"My lady, is that wise?" The eldest asked. "Your expertise is sorely needed here, and a skirmish in the dark may lead to a broken leg or worse. Surely, we can dispatch someone else to deal with this interloper."

The mask of her face broke in a darkened frown as her mark began to itch again.

"Am I not the new champion? Is not mine the right? The day I cower behind the lines while the enemy strikes at us is that day the Shadowlands claim my soul! I have faith in your tactical skills, honored gentlemen. Have faith in my ability to deal with a few crawling worms. Continue as you have. I will find this Crab assassin, this coward who skulks in the dark like a dog, and I will teach him what it means to cross the Lion. We will carry his head before us in battle as a warning to his scuttling masters."

She touched the hilt of her katana and looked down at the boy.

"Take me to the bodies, child. We shall see who pays the dearer cost this night."



The corpse of Lao-Tse lay as it was found, his head tilted upward at the glittering sky. His armor was stained with his own blood, his naginata lying useless as his side. A deep hole in the center of his throat gave grisly account of the cause of death, its pulpy core staring up like a third eye. His bewildered expression was almost



comical, like some bumbling sensei who had found enlightenment while voiding his bowels. Tsuko knelt and stared into that face for almost five minutes, her unblinking calm standing in sharp defiance of its madness.

"It's an end, you fool," she said to herself, "a perfectly normal end to one who watches the stars and not his duty. No need to look confused by it."

The small crowd of soldiers in the area had orders to stay back, lest their clumsiness destroy some bit of evidence. Tsuko had approached the body with an equal amount of care, and now turned her attentions away from the deceased and towards some sign of his killer. For a tracker such as her, one wasn't hard to find. The footprints were planted firmly in the dirt, bathed in the brilliant moonlight. Their imprint was small but deep in the surrounding earth. He walked on the balls of his feet, she noted quietly. Silent and noiseless to all save the gods. The prints led directly into the commander's tent, then back out again, along the edge of the camps towards the no man's land of the battlefield and eventually the camp of the Crab army. No fool, this one. He had not dallied excessively here, content merely to wreak his havoc and return the way he had come.

Fortunately, there was quite a bit of distance to be covered before he reached the safety of the Crab's camp. He had struck on the eastern edge of the army, a good league and a half from the front line and a considerable ways from nearer and therefore more attractive targets. Why exactly, Tsuko was not certain. Possibly to send the Lion commanders a false impression of troop movements. Possibly just over-confidence and a need to "strike with impunity." Either way it did not matter. The killer would keep to the edge of the camp lest he be discovered, and would need to move with caution in the brightness of the night. She did not. Turning towards the footprints that trickled away like a glowing string, she smiled thinly to herself and strode off in pursuit. The soles of her boots left spaces twice as wide between them.

The stars wheeled and spun in their patterned dance as she followed the course, her step neither wavering nor slowing. As the trail continued, she found herself able to read the footprints much more clearly. They seemed to grow as time went on, to become larger and more pronounced. Sloppier. The tracks led through bushes and around clumps of trees, always positioned so as to obscure their owner from the camp. Yet it still appeared odd that one so careful about his approach should be so careless in covering his retreat. Tsuko was challenged twice by sentries as she made her way along, which was comforting, but also deepened the mystery. Was this killer so good that he could just sprint by them without notice?

Finally, the tents of the Lion began to thin, becoming wider and less clustered. The glow of the campfires lessened, no longer strong enough to compete with the blazing sky. Her army fell away behind

her, leaving the battlefield spread wide. The earth and grass were untouched here, stretching straight and level as far as the eye could see. In two days' time, they would be crushed by bodies, the blood of countless men staining their roots. Beyond them, several leagues away, lay the armies of the Crab, their own campfires just another set of stars from this distance.

Tsuko paused and surveyed the plain, crouching low like her predatory namesake. Not a thing moved between her and the Crab, not a bird, not a mouse, not a worm. It was as if the ground itself sensed what was coming, and was holding its breath in anticipation. Only the footprints stained its canvas, an interloping Crab scuttling across the battlefield. She scanned back and forth with piercing eyes, looking for some sign of the man who made them. The moonlight lit her face with an ivory glow beneath the mane of her helmet.

From the corner of her vision, something stirred. A dark form, crouched low against the ground, began moving slowly and methodically across the plain.

"Still wary, little crab?" she whispered to herself. "Why the caution now? You are almost free of the Lion's jaws..."

With a single fluid motion, she leapt to her feet and sprinted after the form. The wind whistled through her ears and she felt her heart sing as she sped towards her prey. The man did not even turn at her approach; he leapt forward and began running madly towards the enemy camp. Tsuko cursed and drew her katana, intending to cut the cur down like a row of wheat. He was a small man, she noticed, barely high enough to reach her shoulder. She sprinted after him, covering three steps for each of his.

In a flash, she was upon him, the hilt of her blade striking between the shoulders. He went sprawling to the ground, a long knife falling from his hands.

"I am not some foolish guard to be caught unawares, killer." Tsuko hissed. "Turn and face me before I put you in your grave."

She reached down and grasped the smock of his black shirt, flipping him over on his back. She could feel the fabric rip beneath her fingers as her quarry launched a vicious kick at her midsection. It careened harmlessly off her armor and she laughed.

"It will take more than that to..."

Suddenly, she paused, her instincts sensing something just beneath the wind. She released the killer from her grip and spun around in a flash, seconds before the whistling blade sped past her head. She lashed out reflexively, then ducked and rolled free of her quarry. Springing to her feet, she whirled to face this new threat.

A pair of soldiers dressed in the armor of the Hida family stood before her, their faces invisible beneath the painted sneers of leather masks. Weapons flashed in the silver light, their murderous intentions all too apparent. Behind the pair, the Crab assassin slowly clambered to his feet.





"HAI!!!" Without pause, Tsuko charged into the fray, denying her opponents the opportunity to think. She parried the first thrust with deceptive ease, pushing herself past the soldier and back towards the killer.

The second Crab sprang towards her, a tetsubo gripped in both hands. Without turning around, she reversed her free hand, feeling her elbow connect with the man's throat. A vicious kick brought the assassin to his knees again, knocking the wind out of him. That taken care of, she spun around a second time, ready to face her opponents on her own terms.

The first soldier rushed at her again, his katana spinning in his hand. She lifted her own sword to block the blow, feeling sparks as the steel connected and slid down to her hilt. They locked eyes and she smiled serenely, feeling the first hint of fear in her opponent's soul.

His expression stiffened behind his mask, and she felt the wind behind her grow thick. In an instant, he had given the game away.

She pivoted slightly and pulled her katana away from him while the second soldier came hurtling up behind her. She dodged beneath his blow as the tetsubo crashed into the first soldier's arm with a resounding snap. Using the momentum of her turn, she brought her katana down into his midsection. It snapped through metal and leather alike, cutting deeply into his unprotected belly. The blade bit deeply and she felt a satisfying tug as it pulled away, dragging bits of dripping gore from its unfortunate victim.

Tsuko stepped sideways and wiggled free as the second soldier lurched into his companion. Before the first man could react, she had

turned again and with surgical precision, brought her scarlet blade down upon his throat. With her free hand, she produced her wakizashi and planted it firmly between the second soldier's shoulders. Releasing the hilt, she stepped away from their entangled forms and readied her katana for another blow.

It never came. The men fell away from her in a fumbling heap, their air of menace gone. The second soldier jerked spasmodically as his hands tried feebly to hold in his intestines. The tip of Tsuko's wakizashi poked out from his armored chest, the strength of her blow driving it completely through him. The first soldier struggled to free himself of his companion, then staggered to his knees, his broken arm flopping like a rag doll.

"The battle comes with the dawn, little crawlers, not before." Tsuko spoke with a voice taut as wire. "Did you think you could strike at us with impunity, then scuttle back to your dank little holes without retribution?"

The soldier could only gobble a reply as blood spat out of the broken cracks of his mask. He made one final effort to bring his sword around upon her, then fell backwards again, his form stilled. His katana stood straight up, wedged between his arm and his companion's shuddering corpse. It stabbed the night sky like a nail, spattered with blackened drops of its owner's blood.

Tsuko waited as their thrashing slowly subsided, then retrieved her wakizashi from the corpse. Quickly surveying the area, she allowed herself to relax slightly. No other Crabs would follow these. A pair of shallow trenches were visible a short ways off, dug just deep





enough to hide a human form. *They must have been waiting there for the assassin to return*, she thought. Her attentions turned back to the killer. Her blow had knocked the wind out of him, but he was staggering slowly to his feet. With easy grace, she bounded over to him, spinning him around to look upon his face for the first time...

And all the questions were suddenly answered.

"Lion dog! Release me!"

The youthful face glared back at her with vicious hatred, its skin unblemished with the perfection of a child. A long shock of hair, once tied back behind her head, blew across her face in untended snarls. She couldn't have been twelve years old. So this was the assassin Kisada had sent to sow destruction in their ranks. A girl. A skilled, silent, invisible girl. A girl without the experience or the patience to avoid leaving a trail behind her.

Tsuko could see a dark splotch along the skin of her shoulder, visible beneath the torn cloth of her sleeve. With a grunt, she ripped the rest away, revealing the bare skin of her side to the glow of the stars. Unobscured, the splotch now took fixed form, explaining away the hate that welled up in the girl's eyes.

It was the blue tattoo of a jointed crab. The symbol of the Hida.

Tsuko's eyes softened at the sight, and she felt the skin of her shoulder itch. The murderous intentions she harbored mere moments before smoldered and died within her breast.

"So the honored Hida Kisada sends a child to perform his killing for him. Who are you that would attack us so?" she asked quietly, her grip never wavering for an instant.

"Only a loyal servant of the True Emperor, performing the orders of my general as given to me!"

"Kisada's daughter? His niece? A cousin of the family? Or just some peasant girl seduced by dreams of glory?"

"It matters not, Lion filth! Where I have come, many will follow, and on the morrow we will soak the ground with your heart's blood!" She continued to struggle beneath Tsuko's hold.

"No doubt as bravely and fiercely as you have, little crawler," she whispered, trying hard to quell the emotions building within her. "Is this the way the Crab trains its youth? To skulk in the dark like grubs?"

"All means are honorable if victory is the result. My knife has tasted a Lion's throat tonight. Tomorrow, my fellows will do the same with yours."

"Is that so? Did your general tell you that when he sent you off? Or just your wetnurse?"

The comment brought another round of kicks and curses from the girl, but Tsuko's grip never yielded. She hoisted the flailing assassin up beneath her arm, and began moving back to the Lion camp, all thoughts of murder forgotten. *Battling children is not the way of the Lion*, she told herself. Best take her back, and decide what to do with her after the battle tomorrow.

"Come, girl, back to the warmth of my fire. Perhaps I will allow you to view our army in action when we destroy your general."

"Cur! You have no idea what you face tomorrow! We are the Crab! We are legion! And when battle comes, you will know how terrible your enemies truly are."

Tsuko's eyes clenched shut at the fervor of the remark.

"Your belief in your cause is... touching, child," she replied at last. "Perhaps... perhaps when the battle has ended I will teach you its value more fully."

The child sneered from beneath her arm.

"You do not understand. None of the Lion has ever understood. Tactics is nothing. Planning is nothing. We have faith in our cause and our cause is just. We have powers and allies that you could not imagine in your worst nightmares. When the battle commences, we will wash over your toy soldiers like a wave. Then you will know the terrible strength of the Crab!"

With a flash, she twisted around and sank her teeth into Tsuko's wrist. The champion cried out – more in surprise than in pain – and loosened her hold for an instant. The girl scampered free, landing on her feet and scuttling back towards the battlefield with a speed that belied her size. She turned toward her captor as she ran and laughed.

"Watch and mark, Lion dog! Watch the power of a Crab's faith!"  
"WAIT!"

Tsuko cursed under her breath and turned in pursuit, confident that she could run the child down. The girl flew on, heedless of her captor's rapid approach behind her. She sprinted straight to the deceased soldier, whose body lay broken and bent like his spindly namesake. His katana struck upward from his twisted hand, braced and pointed to the sky by his shattered body. The girl launched herself towards it, springing upward in a great leap as she impaled her form on its unbending shaft. She did not scream as the blade pierced her chest, did not twitch as she sank down upon it to the hilt. The only sound was the swish of Tsuko's boots as the champion rapidly closed the distance between them.

The girl was fading when she reached the bodies, crimson dripping from her nose and mouth. She turned and looked at the Lion, a hideous smile breaking across her blood-caked lips.

"I... am... but... one of many..." the girl snarled weakly. "One... of a legion... and when we come... we will bury you beneath us..."

Tsuko stood there in silence, watching the child's body shudder and still with unblinking eyes. She looked at it with a calm that belied the unease she felt, the disturbance that rose from the depths of her soul. The girl's words echoed in her ears as she slowly turned her face up towards the Crab camp, dotted ominously on the ridge beyond them. Far above, the timeless stars matched her gaze.





# Changes From First Edition

Players returning to Rokugan from the First Edition of the RPG are likely to notice some changes to the Emerald Empire. To make the transition easier, here's a list of the major alterations.

## The Book of Earth

The storyline has advanced. First Edition started about two years before the Scorpion Clan Coup. Second Edition starts shortly after the Clan War gets underway: it's been about two years since the Coup. The Scorpion are dead or in hiding, and Empress Kachiko is ministering to the sickly Emperor Hantei XXXIX. It's a bad time to be a Crane, as they are getting the worst of their war with the Lion, and the plague is spreading beyond the Crane and Phoenix provinces. The Crab have enlisted a number of Shadowlands creatures under their banners. The former Akodo Toturi – now just Toturi – is organizing the ronin; and the Naga are beginning to wake up in force.

## The Book of Water

There has been a major change in the way characters make rolls. They used to roll their Trait + Skill, keeping their Trait; now they roll their Skill and keep their Trait.

Characters used to just roll their Trait when they didn't have the Skill called for in a roll; now there are two ways of treating unskilled characters. If the GM agrees that one of the character's skills is similar to the one called for, the character can roll that skill, with a penalty of +10 to the TN, and without rerolling 10s. If the character has no similar skill, he rolls and keeps one die, and still does not reroll 10s.

Instead of rolling fewer dice when they accumulate Wounds, characters now roll the same number of dice, but take increasingly higher penalties to their TNs. We've also added a Wound Level.

First Edition used to cap Skills and Traits at 5. Second Edition allows characters to increase them to 10.

L5R Second Edition has added quite a few Skills, Advantages, and Disadvantages which originally appeared in various supplements. Point values for a number of Advantages and Disadvantages also changed.

Each of the Clans got a new bushi school, as the pressures of the Clan War brought new Techniques to the fore. These schools have never appeared anywhere before.

Along with the Clan samurai and ronin available in First Edition, players may now choose to play Naga.

The ronin have a new "technique," similar to the ones which appeared in the *Way of the Wolf* supplement.

## The Book of Fire

Initiative rolls and keeps Awareness, instead of one die plus Reflexes. The character's Wound TN penalty is subtracted from his Initiative roll, so it's possible to have a negative Initiative.

Bugei skills have more detail. There are now Bujutsu skills and weapon specialization skills. In short, a Bujutsu skill (Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu) allows a character to wield an entire class of weapons (swords, bows); a weapon specialization skill (Katana, Yumi) gives characters bonuses when using that specific weapon.

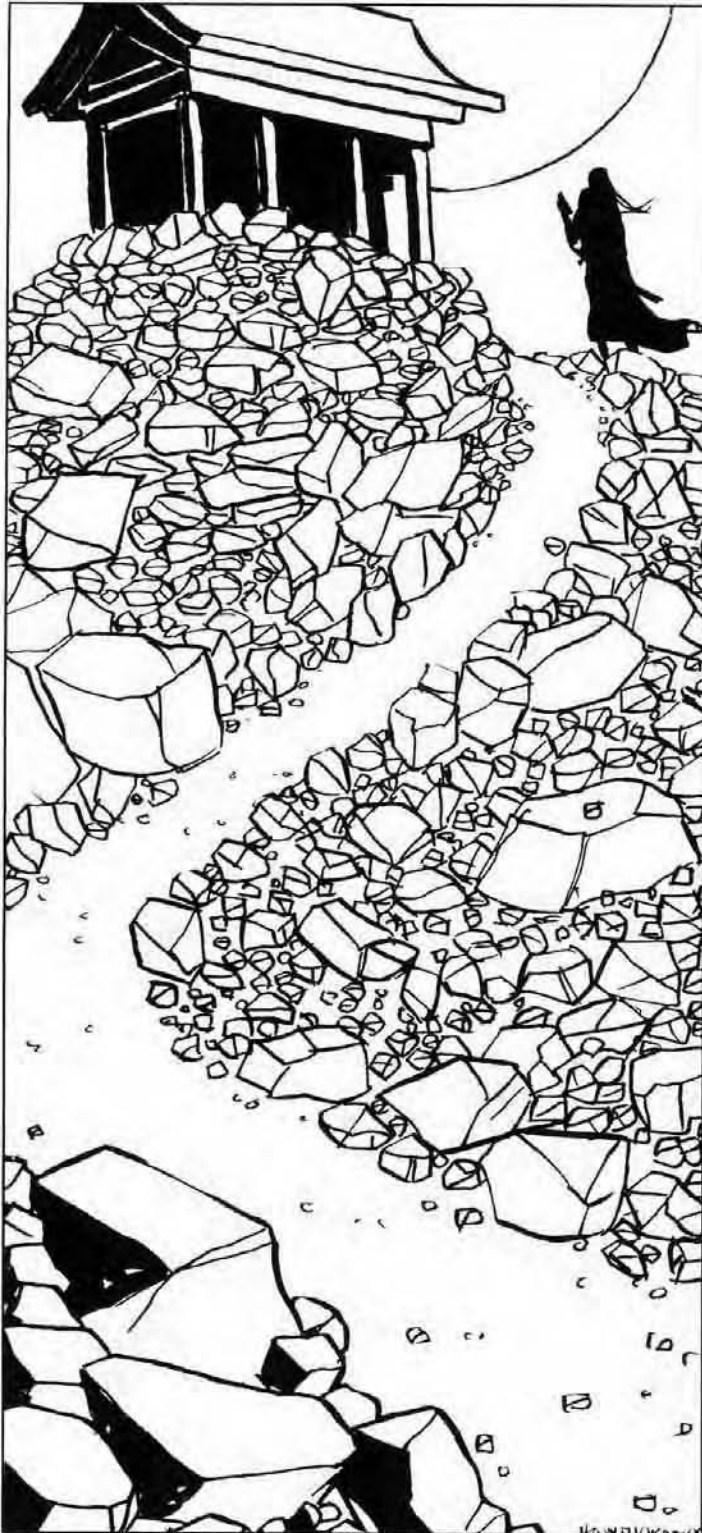
Weapon damage ratings received wholesale changes to bring them into line with the new die-rolling rules. See the chart here in the Appendix, or consult the Book of Fire.

## The Book of Air

Shugenja now have an affinity and a deficiency. An affinity for an element means your School Rank is considered one higher for spells of that element; a deficiency means your School Rank is considered one lower.

Mastery Level now wholly determines the TN to cast a certain spell; the TN is the spell's Mastery Level x 5. Shugenja can learn any spell with a Mastery Level equal to or less than their School Rank (instead of less than or equal to their Ring + School Rank). Mastery Levels have changed throughout to reflect these changes.

The spell list has been totally reworked, with a number of entirely new spells. Spells which have been translated from First Edition rules have been altered to match the new Mastery Levels; many of them have new abilities as well.



# Appendix I: A Glimpse of the Way

The following seven pages contain extracts from the *Way of the Clans* series. These books, already in print, contain all the information about each clan that we couldn't fit into this book. Each book contains the following sections:

**Chapter One:** Letters from various Rokugani, giving insight into the way the members of the clan think, act, and live

**Chapter Two:** The history of the clan and its families, including information on its legendary Kami founder, its struggles in the last thousand years, and the battles it's fought

**Chapter Three:** New Skills, Advantages, Disadvantages, family bonuses, and schools, plus the Heritage Tables, a way to determine events which have shaped your character's past

**Chapter Four:** Who's Who in the Clan, detailing the most important people in the clan and famous ancestors who may be around to guide present-day characters

**Chapter Five:** Templates of beginning characters, which can be run as-is or used as inspiration for your own character's background

**Appendices:** A guide to the geography of the clan's provinces, and everything that doesn't fit neatly into the previous categories

Clearly, we couldn't fit seven books' worth of information into two books' worth of space, even if we didn't have to use that space to explain how to play the game, so all of this information can't be included here. Nevertheless, the next seven pages contain information which will be useful when designing a new character, drawn from the various Chapter Threes of the *Way* books. We'll include at least one of the new family bonuses, and at least one of the new Schools. We'll also give you a short list of some of the other things you can find in each *Way* book, in case you're interested in the Clan and want to know more.





# From Way of the Crab

## The Hiruma Family

The Hiruma family has learned how to travel great distances without stopping, and ways to survive on an absolute minimum of food and water.

**Benefit:** +1 Stamina

## The Kaiu Family

Daimyo Kaiu Utsu stresses the ability to gather and properly interpret information. Kaiu must understand the concepts of engineering, and know how to apply those concepts to practical situations.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

## Hiruma Scout School

The formal Hiruma school was lost along with their ancestral lands. However, a branch of the Shinjo school houses a vast majority of Hiruma, and has become a *de facto* family school. It emphasizes stealth and observation techniques as preparation for the scouts.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

**Skills:** Athletics, Jujutsu, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Lore (Shadowlands), Stealth 2

**Beginning Honor:** 2, plus zero boxes

**Outfit:** (all Average quality) Daisho, clothing, traveling pack, running sandals, carved piece of jade, black body paint, 2 koku

### Techniques

**Rank 1: Dance the Razor's Edge**

The first thing Hiruma bushi learn is how to avoid their enemies' blows. The forces of the Shadowlands have taken their homeland,

but they must not be allowed to take them as well. Thus do the Hiruma maintain the balance between duty and vengeance. For every School Rank the bushi has, add 5 to his TN to be hit by any Shadowlands creature.

**Rank 2: Run Like the Wind**

Scouts must be able to outdistance the horrors of the Shadowlands and report back to the Kaiu wall. Those who reach this rank know how to push their endurance beyond normal human limits. They can maintain a running pace for a number of hours equal to their Stamina times two, after which they must rest (no activities and little movement) for the same amount of time. Assume they can keep a pace of at least 10 mph during the length of their run.

**Rank 3: Smell the Dark Lord's Touch**

At this Rank, the Scout has learned how to detect the subtle nuances of the Shadowlands Taint. It grants him a sense of absolute direction when traveling through Fu Leng's Realm – how far into the darkness he has gone, where the Taint is strongest, and the nearest path back to the Crab lands. The Scout can never become lost while in the Shadowlands and always succeeds on any rolls involving direction therein. Also, the Scout gains the ability to sense the Shadowlands Taint in nearby sentient creatures. The aura of awareness extends a distance of approximately 10' per School Rank.

**Rank 4: Harness the Falcon**

The bushi learns to translate his fleet-footedness to combat. At this level he may make two attacks per round against Shadowlands creatures.

Also, the Scout's memory facilities are enhanced considerably. At any time, he can hold a image in his head, and recount the details of that image on demand with perfect clarity, as if he were still standing there. He may only hold one image at a time in such a manner.

**Rank 5: Veil of the Spirits**

The Scout has learned how to keep himself perfectly still, and to remain hidden within that state. By spending a Void Point and remaining still, the Scout gains an effective "invisibility," unable to be seen by any creature. He or she must be making a conscious attempt to hide – using available cover, wearing camouflaged clothes, etc. – and can conduct no actions while hidden; any movement at all disrupts the effect.

## Also in Way of the Crab:

The Kuni *Tsukai-Sagasu* school: the infamous "Witch Hunters" who root out *maho* by any means necessary

The Crab Berserker "School," where the "dead-eyes" Crab berserkers learn to channel their rage

The Yasuki Merchant School, for Takas-in-training

The Kaiu Engineering School, where the builders of the Wall learn their trade



# From Way of the Crane

## The Daidoji Family

The Daidoji tend to be the most physically strong members of the Clan. Their craftiness and cunning are well-known throughout Rokugan, as is their mental fortitude and iron will. A member of the Daidoji family can be identified by his family's *mon*, which is tattooed upon his wrists at the time of his *gempukku*.

**Benefit:** +1 Strength

## The Daidoji Bodyguard School

The Daidoji are among Rokugan's craftiest fighters, concentrating on defensive maneuvers and a style of fighting that induces their opponents to defeat themselves. They make excellent bodyguards, although these abilities also can be turned toward the "darker" side of life, and many Daidoji work as smugglers, spies and espionage men. The Daidoji aren't ashamed of their illicit activities, although they don't go to any extremes to shout them to the world. Similar to underground spies, the Daidoji are the shadows in the court, gathering information and protecting the Doji diplomats. If something is needed, the Daidoji can find it. If there's a shipment that must get through, there's a Daidoji willing to take it there. Let the Doji use their skills to hide any dishonor; the Daidoji are willing to do what must be done, for the sake of the clan.

**Benefit:** +1 Agility

**Skills:** Battle, Defense 2, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, any one High or Bugei skill

**Honor:** 2, plus 5 boxes

**Outfit:** (All Fine quality) Daisho, yari, light or heavy armor, helm, traveling pack, steed, kimono, any three weapons, 10 koku

### Techniques

#### Rank 1: The Force of Honor

At the first rank, the Daidoji bushi adds his Honor rank to the number of Wounds he can take for each Wound Level. Round all fractions down.

#### Rank 2: Wielding the Inner Fire

At this rank, if the bushi chooses Full Defense, he automatically gains the highest (fastest) initiative in the combat round following the round in which he declared a Full Defense. The bushi does not need to roll, and this overrides any other initiative ability.

#### Rank 3: Moving the Shadow

The bushi can use his opponent's armor against him, forcing the opponent to move against the constrictions of tightly laced *do-maru* and restricted peripheral vision. The bushi dodges and moves in ways which force his opponent to work against the restrictions of his own armor. The bushi's own TN to be hit is increased by the value of his opponent's armor.

#### Rank 4: Strike Beneath the Veil

At this rank, the bushi has gained the ability to pierce his opponent's defenses to such an extent that he may make two attacks per round.

#### Rank 5: To Tread on the Sword

The bushi at this rank has learned how to use his opponent's school against him. If the bushi faces an opponent whose school technique he has previously seen, he may choose to spend Void equal to his opponent's School Rank. If he does so, the opponent may not use any of his school's Techniques or abilities that round.

## Also in Way of the Crane:

The Doji Courtier school, where the Cranes learn from master political manipulators how to take fullest advantage of the Rokugani favor-exchange system

The Kakita Artisan Academy, where iaijutsu is only one part of the curriculum

The Kakita Blades, some of the finest swords in Rokugan





# From Way of the Dragon

## The Kitsuki Family

The Kitsuki are considered some of the most brilliant diplomats and magistrates in the Empire, not because of their skills as courtiers, but for their skills at investigation and deduction.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

## Skills

### Nazodo (Intelligence. Dragons Only)

This is a special version of the Investigation Skill, available only to Dragon characters. This Skill operates in exactly the same way as the Investigation Skill, but characters with *Nazodo* can also use this Skill to solve puzzles, riddles and logic games. *Nazodo* is also effective when attempting to understand omens, portents and other natural conundrums. This is a High Skill.

### Ichi Miru (Perception. Kitsuki Magistrates Only)

*Ichi Miru* (or "first look") is the art of observation. A character with this Skill can glean information from another character through observation (what modern shysters call a "cold read"). From observing the character's actions and behavior, he can determine nature, disposition, temperament, habits and mannerisms. This is a High Skill.

## Kitsuki Magistrate School

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

**Skills:** Courtier, History, *Nazodo*, Law, Heraldry, Poison or Herbalism, and any Lore

**Beginning Honor:** 2, plus 5 boxes

**Outfit:** (all Average quality) Daisho, light armor, traveling pack, kimono, small iron box, 3 koku

## Techniques

### Rank 1: Kitsuki's Method

At this Rank, the magistrate has learned how to focus his perceptions to such a degree that he can notice even the most minute details. This magistrate may spend as many Void points as he has available when he makes an Awareness or Perception roll.

### Rank 2: Wisdom the Wind Brings

This character has an advanced understanding of Kitsuki's method. When making any Awareness or Perception roll, he gains a number of Free Raises equal to his School Rank, in addition to any Free Raises he's already entitled to.

### Rank 3: Finding the Path

At this Rank, the magistrate's duties have become effortless, almost second nature. When using Heraldry, *Nazodo*, Law and History, the magistrate does not need to roll to succeed. He gains no Raises from using this effect. If he wants to Raise, he must still roll.

### Rank 4: Know the Rhythm of the Heart

At this Rank, the magistrate has gained an intuitive understanding of the ways and methods of the clans of Rokugan. If he faces a samurai who uses a School Technique he has seen, that samurai must spend a Void Point (or an additional Void Point) in order to use it.

### Rank 5: The Eyes Betray the Heart

When a Kitsuki magistrate reaches this level of skill, not even a Scorpion has a chance of fooling him. Whenever a character tries to lie to the magistrate, compare their respective Awareness Traits. A character with a lower Awareness cannot even bring himself to lie; he is overwhelmed by the chi of the magistrate. A character whose Awareness is equal to or greater than the magistrate may lie to him, but the magistrate automatically knows that the character is not telling the truth.

## Also in *Way of the Dragon*:

The *ise zumi* order of Tattooed Men, whose designs grant them the power to breathe fire, run tirelessly, or vanish into shadows

The Agasha Foundries, which teach *kagaku* (alchemy) and *mizugusuri* (elixir-brewing) to the scientifically-minded Agasha students



# From Way of the Lion

## The Lion War College

Like the Lion Bushi School, the Lion War College also once carried the name "Akodo." Its surviving sensei also have changed their names and their school's name, but attendance is sharply down. The Matsu are now in the ascendant, and their school has so many applicants at present that they must turn away prospective students.

The Lion War College is the branch of the Lion Bushi School dedicated to knowledge of tactics, military history and strategy. Most importantly, however, the college's students (known as Tacticians) gain a keen understanding of how to apply the information they learn in practice. This is why, more than any other clan in Rokugan, the Lion learn from the mistakes made in the past: both their own and those of the rest of the Empire.

Treat Lion Tacticians just like Lion Bushi from page 127, with the following changes to their basic package:

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

**Skills:** Bard, Battle 2, History 2, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu

## The Matsu Bushi School

The Matsu bushi are possibly the fiercest, most dedicated group of warriors in Rokugan. Although they are matriarchal, men are treated as equals within the battle corps. The males are easily as bold and daring as their more well-known female counterparts, and make up the majority of the Matsu armies.

Although the Matsu Bushi School does not yet have the same attendance level as the former Akodo Bushi School – now the Lion Bushi School – it has many more students now than at any time in its history, while the former Akodo school has seen its attendance

drop. With the Akodo officially cast out of the clan, most Lion students are casting their lots with the reigning Matsu family.

Generations of warfare and years of training give the Matsu several advantages on the field of battle, and their rigid instruction and relentless practice before their *gempukku* teach them unswerving dedication and fortitude.

**Benefit:** +1 Reflexes

**Skills:** Battle, History, Jiu-jutsu, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, plus 2 other Bugei (not Defense)

**Starting Honor:** 3 plus 5 boxes

**Outfit:** (all Average quality, one Fine quality) Daisho, any three weapons, light armor, kimono, traveling pack, 5 koku

### Techniques

#### Rank 1: The Lion's Roar

When making a Full Attack, the Matsu bushi creates a Fear effect for all those who oppose her. The Fear Rating is equal to her School Rank +1. (See the *GM's Guide* for rules on Fear.)

#### Rank 2: Matsu's Fury

The Matsu bushi may now make an additional attack per round, as long as it is a Full Attack.

#### Rank 3: With My Ancestors Beside Me

When making a Full Attack, the Rank 3 Matsu bushi rolls a number of initiative dice equal to her Honor.

#### Rank 4: The Lion's Claws

The bushi may now make two attacks per round. If the Matsu bushi is performing a Full Attack, then she can attack a total of three times per round (see Rank 2 Technique).

#### Rank 5: Matsu's Courage

If the Matsu bushi is making a Full Attack, she ignores Action penalties she would suffer as a result of Wounds, up to her Honor Rank. Thus, if a Matsu with an Honor of 4 is making a Full Attack, she ignores the +5, +10, +15, and +20 Wound modifiers. This does not apply to the "Down", "Out", or "Dead" Wound Ranks.

## Also in Way of the Lion:

The Kitsu *Sodan-Senzo* Ancestor Magic School, where those of Kitsu blood learn to communicate with honored ancestors, who guide the Rokugani from the land of the dead

The Ikoma *Omoidasu*, or Bards, who are the living memory of the Lion Clan, and who sing of the glorious deeds performed by their patron samurai





# From Way of the Phoenix

## The Isawa Tensai School

Isawa shugenja are trained from a very young age to become guardians of the elements. More than any other clan, the Phoenix expect their children to be in touch with the *kami*, and to have a thorough grasp of magical theory. From birth, Isawa children see spellcraft in use, watching elders and apprentices as they learn their skills through study, devotion, and hard work.

Thousands of apprentices are presented to Masters each year, but very few are chosen by the Masters of the Council, the Grand Shugenja of the Elements themselves. The Elemental Masters have only three to five apprentices of their own, but they have a scholarly system where they may actually have ten to fifty children learning from their 'school'. An apprentice is responsible not only for his own studies, but for a small group of younger children who look to him for training and tutelage. In this way, say the members of the Council, the children learn not only spellcraft, but also responsibility for themselves and others – the true requirement for anyone who wishes to sit upon the Council of Five. These children study to become *tensai*, a word which means 'prodigy'; they learn how to manipulate one element to the exclusion of all else, suffering in their overall knowledge in order to further their unique talent with one.

Perhaps fifty new children each year are chosen by the Elemental Council; of those, fewer than half remain after their first year's study. Apprentices to the Elemental Masters do not see their Lord or Lady for many months while they are trained by another, higher-ranked and more experienced tensai. Competition and rivalry are rampant in this system, as each apprentice knows he may be the one chosen to replace the Master when that shugenja's time on the Council ends. Thus, the tensai schools are extremely competitive and require the utmost dedication. Students who fail return to another Master, who

is more willing to give them the 'personalized' training available to typical Isawa shugenja.

But for those who are chosen to achieve the supreme position of Master of an Element is the greatest accomplishment of a lifetime. The tensai chosen to bear the burden of leading the Phoenix Clan and sit on the Council of Five must be willing to speak for their clan and guide its philosophies and actions. These wizards truly guide the destiny of the clan, so their backgrounds must be impeccable, and their complete mastery of their spellcraft unquestioned.

**Benefit:** +1 to one trait in the Ring of their chosen element

**Skills:** Calligraphy, History, Meditation, Shintao, Theology, plus 2 other High skills

**Beginning Honor:** 3, plus zero boxes

**Beginning Spells:** Sense, Commune, Summon, plus 2 of their 'primary element' and 1 of a 'secondary element'

Like other Isawa shugenja, tensai have an Affinity to their chosen element, and a Deficiency in the opposed element.

**Outfit:** (all Average quality, one Fine quality) Kimono, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, Wakizashi, Tanto, 4 Koku, 4 scrolls (blank)

### Techniques

Because the tensai shugenja are taught as standard Isawa shugenja for the first few years of their training, they have full knowledge of the workings of general spellcraft. However, they have completely devoted themselves to their singular field of study, be it Earth, Air, Water or Fire. Void tensai are covered in their own school; see *Way of the Phoenix* for details on Void magic.

In game terms, this means that tensai receive a Free Raise to any spells within their element for each School Rank. Thus, Isawa Tsuke, who is a Rank 5 tensai of Fire, has 5 Free Raises for all fire spells. These raises may be used in any way the player chooses, whether for distance, damage, or accuracy, and may be divided as the player sees fit.

However, such devoted training to one element is certain to leave a tensai somewhat lacking in knowledge of other elements. Although the tensai can learn and cast spells of any element, it is more difficult for them to do so. Spells of all elements other than their primary have a +5 to their TN for every School Rank past the first the tensai has achieved. Isawa Tsuke, in our example above, has a +20 TN to all of his Water, Earth or Air spells.

### Also in *Way of the Phoenix*:

The Isawa *Ishiken* (Void Magic) school, where initiates learn to sense and shape the mysterious energies of the fifth element

The Asako Henshin Academy, whose graduates trick nature into submitting to their will with "Mysteries" and "Riddles"



# From Way of the Scorpion

## The Yogo Family

For a thousand years, the Yogo family has guarded the Twelve Black Scrolls that defeated Fu Leng. Despite their family curse, no Yogo has ever betrayed that duty.

**Benefit:** +1 Willpower

## The Shosuro Butei School

The skills taught by the Shosuro Butei (Acting) School have become particularly important now that the Scorpion are in hiding.

**Benefit:** +1 Awareness

**Skills:** Acting, Etiquette, Forgery, Locksmith, Poison, Seduction, and either Stealth or Sleight of Hand

**Beginning Honor:** 1, plus 5 boxes

**Outfit:** (all Average quality) Daisho, kimono, traveling pack, makeup, tanto, 2 koku

### Techniques

#### Rank 1: A Scorpion Has A Thousand Hearts

Drawing upon his rigorous acting training, the Actor rolls and keeps extra dice equal to his School Rank whenever he is attempting to influence or persuade. His Rank is also added to his Awareness when others are attempting to test his candor and sincerity.

#### Rank 2: The Scorpion's Sting

The Actor has been taught how to strike an unaware opponent with such skill that only a single strike is necessary. When an opponent is unaware or unable to defend himself - making his TN to be hit 5 - the Actor's Raises are not limited by his Void.

### Rank 3-5: The Thousand Masks

From this point on, the Actor learns the deepest secrets of Shosuro's technique. While other bushi spend months learning new fighting techniques, the Shosuro Actor spends that time learning a new identity. At each new School Rank, the Actor gains a new "Persona," an identity that is etched into his own personality. Therefore, at Rank 3, the Actor gains one Persona, at Rank 4 he gains a second, and at Rank 5, he gains a third. When he assumes his Persona, he has the Skills of that Persona. If he takes the role of a Lion bushi, he has the Skills of a Lion bushi. If she takes the Persona of a geisha, she has the Skills of a trained geisha.

While in the mindset of one Persona - including his own "native" Persona - he cannot use Skills from another without great difficulty. It requires a Meditation/Void roll at a TN of 5 x the Rank of the Skill. This represents the fact that greater Skills are more deeply etched into the core of that other Persona, and therefore are more difficult to summon. To switch between Personae, the Actor must spend five minutes of complete concentration as he sheds one set of trappings and dons another.

### Shosuro Personae

The following Personae are taught by the Shosuro School. As an Actor learns each new Persona, he gains these Skills at Rank 1. The Actor must pay double the regular Experience Points in order to increase these Skills.

**Clan Bushi and Shugenja:** A Shosuro Actor who takes on the role of a clan bushi gains all the Skills of that School, but not the Techniques. Particularly confident or foolhardy Actors may also attempt to impersonate the shugenja of respective clans, but they may not use spells.

**Geisha:** Conversation, Dance, Etiquette, Music, Seduction, Tea Ceremony

**Monk:** Bojutsu, Jujutsu, Shintao, Tea Ceremony, Theology, any 2 Craft Skills

**Farmer:** Herbalism, Hunting, Lore (Farming), Lore (Peasant Superstition), Tantojutsu, any 2 Craft Skills

**Merchant:** Commerce, Gambling, Law, Lore (Streetwise), Sincerity, any 2 Craft Skills

## Also in Way of the Scorpion:

The Bayushi Courtiers, whose strengths lie in others' weaknesses  
*Kake yakiin:* The shadow-brands discovered and administered by the Soshi family, whose recipients gain power from Shadow





# From Way of the Unicorn

## The Ide Family

Generations of experience in dealing with merchants and leaders from all different cultures have given the Ide family an insight that is beyond the understanding of even many Unicorns.

**Benefit:** +1 Perception

## The Otaku Battle Maiden School

All Otaku females join this school. Other Unicorn females must take the Different School advantage to join, while females from other clans are not allowed. This is because all females in this school must have a direct blood tie to the original Otaku. No males may join this school; many Otaku males end up at the Shinjo bushi school.

Students of this school are the *samurai-ko* of wonder and legend. They are swift, fearless, and have abilities which move beyond legendary and into the mystical, piquing the curiosity of bushi, shugenja, and monk alike.

**Benefit:** +1 Reflexes

**Skills:** Battle, Defense, Horsemanship 2, Kenjutsu, Lance, and any High or Bugei Skill

**Honor:** 3, plus 5 boxes

**Outfit:** (all Average quality) Daisho, heavy armor, helm, traveling pack, steed, kimono, any four weapons, 8 koku

### Techniques

#### Rank 1: Riding in Harmony

Her fiery ancestral blood yearning to be free, the battle maiden is one with Otaku when riding, preferably fast. Whenever the battle maiden uses one of her six school skills while mounted, she can roll and keep an extra die.

#### Rank 2: The Void of War

The battle maiden has learned to strike first and strike hard. After everyone rolls for initiative, the battle maiden can switch the values of her initiative roll and her TN to Be Hit for the rest of the combat round.

#### Rank 3: Sensing the Breeze

The battle maiden has learned to avoid damage by rolling with the impact. Subtract her School Rank from the total Wounds done by each strike that lands successfully. This also applies to Wounds from the Battle Table.

#### Rank 4: The Wind Never Stops

The battle maiden has learned the secret of the continuous strike. This has two advantages. First, when making an attack from horseback, she can angle her weapon to make two attacks in a single round. Second, if a battle maiden happens to kill an opponent with any attack (even if she is not mounted) she may attack another foe at the end of the round. Each attack the battle maiden makes in a given round can have a second attack associated with it, but if she kills her enemy with the secondary attack, she does not get a third.

#### Rank 5: Otaku's Blessing

The Otaku believe their ancestor looks upon them as they charge into a battle, bestowing her blessings on her most favored. During combat, mounted or unmounted, the Battle Maiden may re-roll dice that roll less than her appropriate Trait. This may only be done once per round.

### Lance (Uma-Yari) (Strength) (Unicorn Bushi schools only)

Unicorn bushi use this skill when trying to lance, *e.g.* with a yari. Obviously, lancing an enemy can only be done from on top of a moving horse. If the Unicorn samurai succeeds in hitting his target with a lancing attack, he does not add his own strength to the roll. Instead, if his mount is charging, he rolls the weapon's DR plus the number of rounds he's charged for damage. He must also make a Lance/Strength check against a TN equal to five times the number of rounds he charged. This extra roll is not considered an action. If the bushi fails this roll, he loses his grip on his pole-arm. If he fails it badly (Game Master's discretion), he can even be unhorsed.

## Also in Way of the Unicorn:

The Moto family and their school – the lost Unicorn, who rode into the Shadowlands and never returned

The Ide Emissary School, where the Unicorn diplomats learn the lessons that hundreds of years of dealings with new civilizations have taught the clan



## Basic Spells

Spell Name	Mastery Level	Duration	Area of Effect	Range
Sense	1	Concentration	10' Radius	Self
Commune	1	Concentration	One Elemental Spirit	100'
Summon	1	Concentration	One Cubic Foot	10'

## Air Spells

Spell Name	Mastery Level	Duration	Area of Effect	Range
By the Light of Lord Moon	1	5 rounds	Self	10' Radius
Cloak of Night	1	Until dawn	1 object	Touch
Nature's Touch	1	Concentration	Target	10'
Quiescence of Air	1	1 minute	5' Radius	10'
Tempest of Air	1	1 minute	25'	Self
Way of Deception	1	1 minute	Self	10'
Wind-Borne Slumbers	1	1 minute	1 target	50'
Yari of Air	1	1 minute	Self	Self
Benten's Touch	2	1 hour	1 target	Touch
Call Upon the Wind	2	1 minute	1 target	Touch
Echoes of a Breeze	2	Concentration	One person	Unlimited
Mists of Illusion	2	1 minute	10 radius	10'
Secrets on the Wind	2	5 minutes	50 radius	1 mile
Whispering Wind	2	Instantaneous	1 target	10'
Summon Kami of Air	2	1 minute	1 spirit	10'
Essence of Air	3	1 minute	1 Target	Touch
Forgotten Murmurs	3	Instantaneous	1 Target	10'
The Eye Shall Not See	3	5 Rounds	Self	Self
Summon Fog	3	1 minute	20' Radius	100'
Wind-Borne Speed	3	5 minutes	1 Target	Touch
Wisdom of the Kami	3	1 Hour	Self	Self
Call Upon the Wind	4	5 Rounds	1 Target	100'
Dominate the Mind	4	1 minute	1 Target	20'
Sacred Ground	4	Instantaneous	Self	Self
Symbol of Air	4	Permanent	10' radius	25'
Wall of Air	4	1 Hour	Special	100'
Command the Clouds	5	1 Day	1 mile Radius	Self
Poison of the Windspider	5	10 minutes	25' radius	100'
Slayer's Knives	5	Instantaneous	Special	Self
Whirlwind	5	10 minutes	20' Radius	Line of Sight
The Blessings of Jizo	6	10 minutes	Self	Self
Rise, Air	6	Concentration	10' Radius	25'
The Wrath of Kaze-No-Kami	6	1 hour	1 mile Radius	Self





## Earth Spells

Spell Name	Mastery Level	Duration	Area of Effect	Range
Earth's Stagnation	1	5 round	1 target	100'
Elemental Ward	1	1 minute	Self	Self
Fires from the Forge	1	Permanent	10 Cubic Feet	10'
Force of Will	1	3 Rounds	1 Target	10'
Jade Strike	1	Instantaneous	1 Target	100'
Know the Ground	1	Permanent	100 Cubic Feet	25'
Speed Growth	1	1 minute	10' Radius	10'
Tetsubo of Earth	1	1 minute	Self	Self
Armor of Earth	2	1 minute	Self	Self
Courage of the Seven Thunders	2	1 minute	1 Target	Touch
Hands of Jurojin	2	Instantaneous	1 Target	Touch
Hands of Clay	2	1 minute	Self	Self
Summon Earth Spirit	2	1 minute	1 Spirit	10'
Tremor	2	5 Rounds	100'	Touch
Walk Without Passing	2	1 Hour	Self	Self
Benevolent Protection of Shinsei	3	1 Hour	15' radius	Touch
Earth's Protection	3	1 hour	Self	Self
Immortal Steel	3	Permanent	1 Weapon	Touch
Wall of Earth	4	Permanent	Special	100'
Preservation	3	1 Month	1 Object	Touch
Slash of the Lion	3	1 minute	Self	Self
Strength of the Crow	3	1 Day	1 Target	Touch
Armor of the Emperor	4	1 minute	1 Target	Touch
Shatter	4	Instantaneous	1 Item	100'
Symbol of Earth	4	Permanent	10' Radius	25'
Tomb of Jade	4	Until Dawn	1 Target	100'
Divide into Ash	5	Permanent	100 cubic feet	Line of Sight
Earthquake	5	5 rounds	200' Radius	Touch
Prison of Earth	5	Special	1 Creature	100'
Spikes of Earth	5	1 Hour	100' Radius	Line of Sight
Fraying of Jigoku	6	1 minute	15' Radius	100'
Kami's Strength	6	1 minute	1 Target	Touch
Rise, Earth	6	Concentration	10' Radius	25'





## Fire Spells

Spell Name	Mastery Level	Duration	Area of Effect	Range
Biting Steel	1	1 minute	1 Weapon	Touch
Evil Ward	1	1 Day	10' Radius	Touch
Extinguish	1	Instantaneous	100' Radius	Self
The Fires That Cleanse	1	Instantaneous	30' radius	Self
Fires of Purity	1	1 minute	1 Target	25'
The Fury of Osano-Wo	1	Instantaneous	1 target	100'
Katana of Fire	1	1 minute	Self	Self
Wings of Fire	1	1 minute	Self	Self
Aura of Flame	2	1 Minute	Self	Self
The Fires From Within	2	Instantaneous	1 Target	100'
Hurried Steps	2	1 Minute	Self	Self
Inferno's Tooth	2	1 Minute	1 Object (up to 2 cubic feet)	25'
Summon Fire Spirit	2	1 Minute	1 Spirit	10'
Breath of the Fire Dragon	3	Instantaneous	Special	Self
The Fist of Osano-Wo	3	1 hour	30' radius	100'
Heart of the Inferno	3	Instantaneous	1 Target	300'
Isawa's Rage	3	1 Minute	One Item	100'
Waiting Flame	3	1 Hour	10 Radius	Touch
Death of Flame	4	1 minute	1 Target	100'
Fire Walking	4	1 minute	1 Target	Touch
Rays of Amaterasu	4	10 Minutes	50' Radius	50'
Symbol of Fire	4	Permanent	10' Radius	25'
Wall of Fire	4	1 Hour	Special	100'
Burn the Soul	5	Concentration	1 Target	25'
Everburning Rage	5	10 Minutes	1 Target	25'
Follow the Flame	5	Instantaneous	1 Target	300'
Following Osano-Wo	5	Instantaneous	10' radius	Line of Sight
Rise, Flame	6	Concentration	10' radius	25'
Tempest of Fire	6	10 Minutes	30' radius	100'
Tsuke's Call of Heaven	6	1 Minute	1 Target	Touch





## Water Spells

Spell Name	Mastery Level	Duration	Area of Effect	Range
Bo of Water	1	1 Minute	Self	Self
Castle of Water	1	5 Minutes	5 radius	Self
Heart of Nature	1	Permanent	1 Animal	10
Path to Inner Peace	1	Permanent	1 Target	Touch
Reflections of Pan Ku	1	Instantaneous	1 Item	10
Reversal of Fortunes	1	1 Minute	1 Target	1 Target
Sympathetic Energies	1	Varies	1 Target	10
Heart of Mortality	2	Permanent	1 Target	10
Purify Water	2	Instantaneous	100 Radius	10
Reflective Pool	2	5 Minutes	50 Radius	1 Mile
Summon Water Spirit	2	1 Hour	1 Spirit	10
The Tie that Binds	2	1 Minute	Self	1 Mile
Wisdom and Clarity	2	1 Hour	Self	Self
The Flow of Time	3	1 Minute	10 Radius	Self
Near to Ice	3	1 Minute	1 Target	1 Target
Path of the Scorpion	3	1 Minute	Self	Self
Regrow the Wound	3	Concentration	1 Target	Touch
Silent Waters	3	Varies	Self	Self
Way of Still Waters	3	1 Minute	1 Target	Touch
Walking Upon the Waves	3	1 Minute	1 Target	Touch
Avoidance	4	10 Minutes	Self	Self
Perceive Harmony	4	1 Minute	Self	Self
Symbol of Water	4	Permanent	10 radius	25
Wall of Water	4	1 Hour	Special	100
Within the Waves	4	1 Hour	20 Radius	Self
Part Water	5	Concentration	100 Depth, 1000 Length	Line of Sight
Power of the Ocean	5	1 Week	1 Target	Touch
Waves are Ever Changing	5	1 Hour	Self	Self
Whirlpool	5	1 Hour	50 Radius	Line of Sight
Peace of the Kami	6	Instantaneous	1 Target	Touch
Rise, Water	6	Concentration	10 radius	25
Words of the Kami	6	Instantaneous	15 radius	Self





# Weapon Damage Chart

## Swords and Tessen

Weapon	Damage Rating	Special rules
Aiguchi	1k1	Concealable
Katana	2k2	+ (Skill) on Initiative roll
No-dachi	3k2	-10 on Initiative roll
Tanto	2k1	Concealable
Tessen	0k1	
Wakizashi	1k2	

## Pole-arms

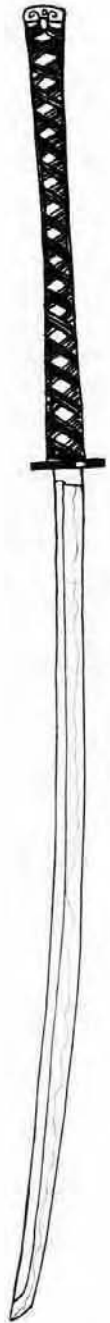
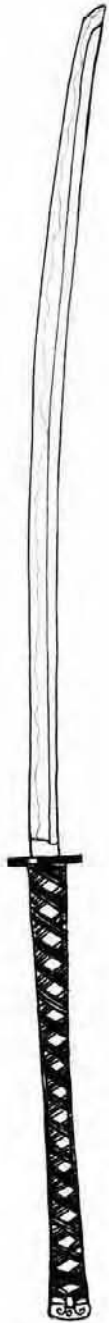
Dai tsuchi	1k3	Bonus against armor
Nage-yari	0k2	Throwable
Nagamaki	1k2	Roll extra Initiative die
Naginata	1k3	Roll extra Initiative die
Ono	0k4	
Sasumata	0k1	Roll extra Initiative die
Sodegarami	0k1	Roll extra Initiative die
Tetsubo	1k3	Bonus against armor
Yari	1k2	2k3 from horseback

## Arrows

Ya	1k2	
Armor Piercer	0k2	Ignores armor
Watakusi	2k3	Armor protection doubled
Karimata	0k1	Cuts ropes
"Humming bulb"	0k1	Signal arrows

## "Peasant" Weapons

Bo	0k2	Armor protection increased
Jitte	1k1	Free Raise to disarm
Jo	0k2	Armor protection increased
Kama	0k2	
Nunchaku	0k2	
Sai	1k1	Free Raise to disarm
Tonfa	0k1	+5 TN to be hit
Whip	0k1	Makes opponent cry out








# Resources

Here is a bibliography of some of the books and movies that have most influenced the structure and feel of the Emerald Empire, and the contents of this book. They describe Oriental settings, ideals, and culture; they show heroism in the true Japanese sense. We suggest you read, watch, and absorb these as much as possible – not only are they informative, many of them are just plain incredible.

We hope you enjoy them as much as we have.

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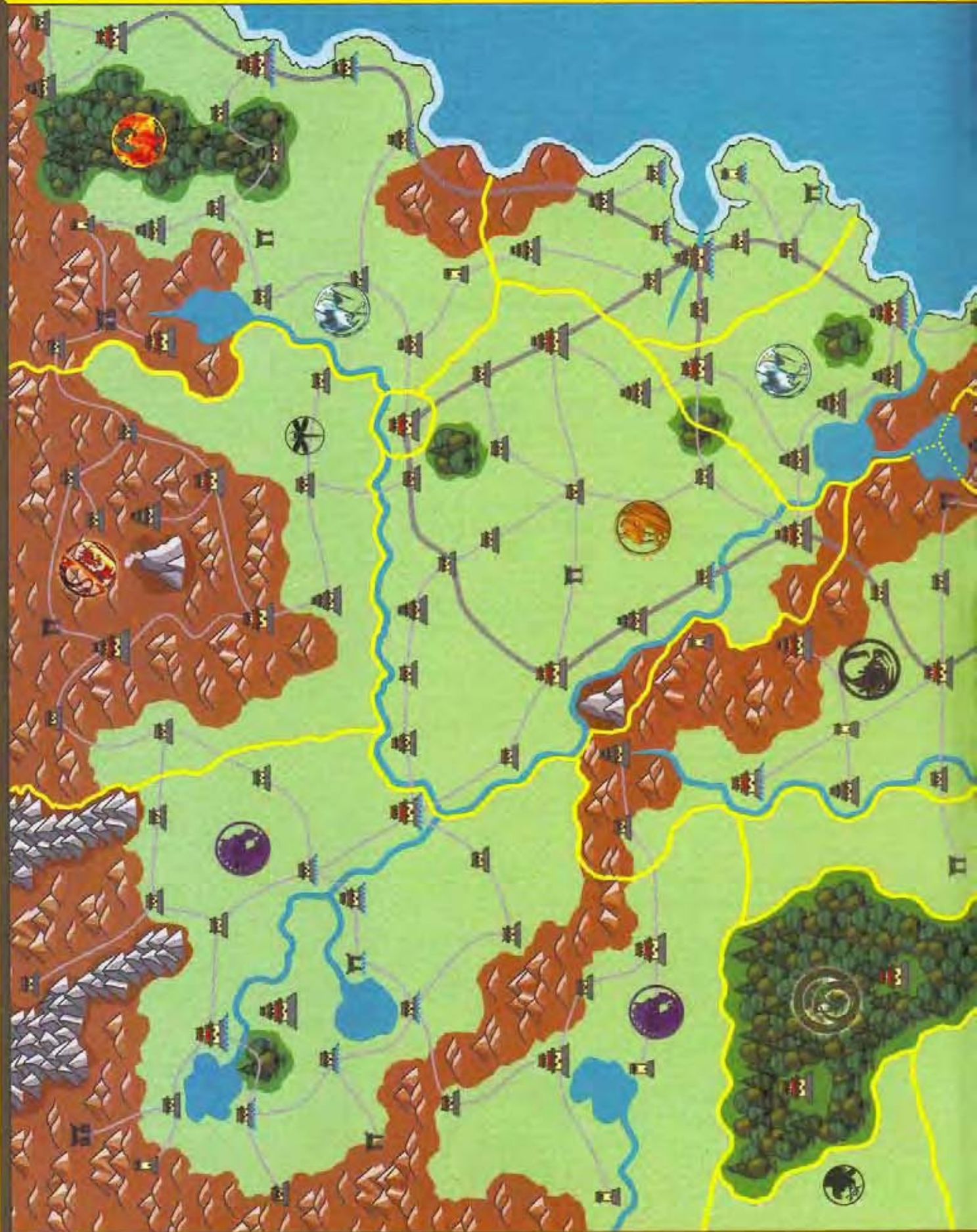




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