

ADVENTURES
ORIENTAL



*Legend of the
Five Rings*™

**SECRETS OF THE
SHADOWLANDS**™

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PLUMBING THE DARKNESS PART ONE

Miya Hatori set his brush down and rubbed his aching hand. He had hunched over his writing desk for hours, and his joints throbbed from inscribing hundreds upon hundreds of tiny characters on an endless series of scrolls. Still, he felt a great sense of relief and fulfillment. Nearly six years ago, he had begun a strange odyssey that had taken him and his attendants all across the Empire. They had met with Champions, assassins, merchants, and madmen. Every destination led to another, and just when they had thought their journey complete, new problems required them to press on. In time he, along with Otomo Taneji and Fuzake Sekkou, had visited every clan's lands before they could finally return.

Hatori had forgotten who first suggested he write an account of his travels, but the idea had stuck with him for months after his homecoming until he could not deny the urge any further. The past few years had seen him staying at home to work on his story far more often than his increasingly infrequent missions for his lord Miya Shoin. Truth be told, it was probably for the best. Hatori had not been a young man in a long time, and his vassals were now free to pursue their own ends.

The scroll before him held the details of his meeting with Togashi Satsu, Dragon Champion and the heir of Togashi Hoshi. Though it had been many years, Hatori remembered the meeting vividly. Once he finished committing the memories to paper and summarizing the long trip back to Kyuden Miya, the tale would finally be done. It would be his legacy.

"Hatori-sama," a servant said softly. "A visitor wishes to see you."

"Who is it, Benru?"

The servant shifted uncomfortably. "He would not give his name, my lord, but he is a Miya."

Hatori frowned. It was quite unusual for a Miya to behave in such a manner. "Show him in."

Benru receded into the outer corridor. A few moments later, the visitor entered Hatori's study in a shuffling of robes. "Thank you for seeing me, Hatori-sama. It is a great honor to finally meet you."

Hatori stood suddenly in surprise. "Miya Gensaiken-sama," he said. "It is I who am honored to meet you. You do all Miya a great honor with your service to lord Sezaru-sama." He looked at the herald strangely. "Why ever would you wish to remain anonymous? You will always be welcome in my home."

"I did not give my name because I did not wish to take you from your work," Gensaiken said, gesturing toward the writing desk.

The old man smiled. "You flatter me. I was not aware that my work was of interest to any but a handful in the Empire."

"It is of great interest to me and to Sezaru-sama," Gensaiken said with a somber expression. "He believes that your book will be a great success, as many will wish to read about the clans and families they may never meet. He also believes that your work would be a great opportunity to educate the people of Rokugan about their enemies."

Hatori frowned again. "What do you mean?"

"You have discussed the children of all the Kami," Gensaiken said, gesturing toward the desk. "Except for one."

The historian paled. "You cannot be serious."

"But I am," Gensaiken insisted. "Those who forget history shall revisit it. Sezaru wishes to impress upon you his great concern regarding this matter. You are, of course, welcome to do as you wish."

"I know little regarding the Shadowlands," Hatori said. "While I appreciate your lord's point of view, I am not capable of providing the information he desires."

"That is why he sent me," Gensaiken said quietly. "I will tell you all you wish to know."

"Forgive me, Gensaiken-sama," Hatori said cautiously, "but what would a courtier of your station know about the Shadowlands?"

"Miya Gensaiken died in his crib," Gensaiken said plaintively. "I replaced him. I am not human, Hatori-sama. I am a Pekkile. A creature of spirit."

Hatori said nothing for several moments, regarding Gensaiken carefully. "Is this some sort of joke?" he finally asked.

"I assure you it is not. I took Gensaiken's place so that I might watch over the Empire's court. The Dark Daughter, Shaha, ordered me to become close to Toturi Sezaru in hopes of corrupting his troubled mind. I failed miserably, and was left with nowhere to call home. Remaining with Sezaru was dangerous, for I feared he would eventually discover me, but I could not return to the Shadowlands, lest I be killed for my failure." He shrugged. "In the end, I discovered that Sezaru knew all along. He allowed me to remain near him so that he could watch me. When his brother ascended to the throne, Sezaru destroyed my connection to the Taint. I am Pekkile no Oni no longer. I am merely Pekkile, and I wish revenge upon the Shadowlands for controlling me as they did."

Again, there was a long silence from the old historian. "This is madness."

Gensaiken smiled wistfully. "I thought perhaps you would require... convincing." The younger man stepped forward into the light, the lanterns illuminating his face. And then, his features changed. His face flowed together as if there were fish moving beneath it, as the surface of a pond might.

"Monster!" Hatori spat. "Shoin will hear of this!"

"But will he believe it?" Gensaiken was not concerned. "I am Sezaru's vassal, and a prominent courtier in the Imperial Court. Make such accusations and there will only be a sad whisper that the vaunted Miya Hatori's mind is finally failing him."

Realization dawned in Hatori's eyes. "Sezaru really did send you, didn't he?"

"As I said," the other man confirmed. He fixed Hatori with an inquisitive look. "Are you ready to begin? I will tell you everything I know about the Shadowlands, and you will write of it as you wrote of the other lands of Rokugan."

Miya Hatori stared at Gensaiken in contemplation for quite some time. "Very well," he finally said, taking up his brush. "Let us begin."

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Secrets of the Shadowlands™ is a sourcebook for players and GMs who are interested in adding more depth to the inhabitants of the Shadowlands, especially those unfortunate individuals who have surrendered their souls to Jigoku's seductive power: the Lost. Three other books have explored the Shadowlands in the past — *The Book of the Shadowlands*,™ *Bearers of Jade*,™ and *Way of the Shadowlands*.™ This book differs from them in that it focuses primarily upon the places and people currently in the Shadowlands itself, rather than Shadowlands beasts that wander the Empire or the Taint as an all-pervading evil. Everything required to create memorable Shadowlands villains (or even player characters) or run an extended campaign based on the Shadowlands is featured here.

Secrets of the Shadowlands™ is broken down into chapters as follows:

The Introduction deals with the Shadowlands' history, some general customs practiced by the Lost, and several new mechanical options appropriate for Shadowlands characters.

Chapters Two through Six each deal with a powerful group within the society of the Shadowlands: the Daigotsu, the Chuda, the Tsuno, servants of the Shadow Dragon, the Blood-speakers and assorted beasts. Each chapter presents information on the group's territories, including several points of interest for each area and some adventure hooks for GMs, major NPCs, and new mechanical options for characters from that group (or rules for playing such characters if none exist).

Chapter Seven: The Wall of Bones delves into the haunted wall of living bone that protects the City of the Lost from prying Hiruma scouts and other invaders. All the information needed for a GM to use the Wall of Bones as the centerpiece of an adventure is presented.

Chapter Eight: Behind the Veil details the darkest, most unpleasant truths about the Shadowlands. The true motivations behind many of the deadliest servants of darkness are revealed here for the first time.

CUSTOMS OF THE SHADOWLANDS

LIVING IN THE SHADOWLANDS

For much of the Empire's history there has been no true civilization in the Shadowlands, only a few scattered bakemono tribes and gangs of Lost samurai united by a mutual hatred of the Empire. All of this changed a generation ago at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. Thousands of samurai banded together on a march into the heart of the Shadowlands, bent on defeating the Lying Darkness before it could spread its corruption across the Spirit Realms. Though Rokugani's greatest heroes were successful, many of them also paid the ultimate price. The Shadowlands Taint spread like fever through the wounded and dying. Many of the Empire's defenders found themselves Lost to corruption before the battle even ended. Hundreds departed the field of battle, abandoning their comrades as they answered Jigoku's call.

HONOR AND BUSHIDO IN THE SHADOWLANDS

The samurai who follow Daigotsu and Iuchiban have developed a variant of Bushido that blends the samurai traditions of their ancestors with the inhuman appetites that well from the Taint. Lost samurai still claim to honor bushido, though their definitions of the seven virtues are quite different from those seen in any Rokugani bushi dojo. The following are how the Lost samurai view each of the traditional seven virtues.

Gi (Honesty and Justice): For the samurai, honesty is one's primary concern, and foremost is honesty to oneself. The human spirit has many emotions, many appetites. Vengeance and anger are among these. To deny these motivations is to be dishonest with oneself. Further, justice is defined by strength. What is right depends upon the strength one possesses to enforce one's beliefs. Justice and violence are one in the same. Victory is ample justification of one's deeds.

Yu (Heroic Courage): The Lost agree with the Kakita motto: "For the coward, there is no life; for the hero, there is no death." In the Shadowlands this takes a more macabre meaning. The Lost believe that true immortality can only be seized by those not afraid to draw upon Jigoku's power. They consider all Rokugani samurai cowards who fear the power of the Shadowlands.

Jin (Compassion): Compassion is the ability to show mercy to those below you in the Celestial Order. The Lost are surprisingly compassionate to their brethren, treating their peasants with respect (if not kindness) and restraining their violent impulses toward one another. For those who betray the Lost, or those who stand against them, there is no compassion. To fail to acknowledge Jigoku as the pinnacle of the Celestial Order betrays an ignorant defiance of the truth. Compassion is wasted on such individuals. As such, a Lost samurai who treats a Tainted peasant with mercy and patience will display no such compassion toward a Rokugani samurai, especially members of the Crab Clan.

Rei (Polite Courtesy): A samurai's place is at the pinnacle of society. It is important that samurai be practiced in etiquette and the courtly arts. Rudeness and disrespect are intolerable — marks of poor training that speak ill not only of the samurai, but also his family and sensei. Those who view the Lost as vicious animals might be surprised to see how seriously these corrupted samurai take their art and culture. Of course a Tainted samurai's definition of art can vary wildly from his Rokugani counterparts. While some Lost practice origami or poetry, others view torture or self-mutilation as serious art forms, and practice them with all the stately grace of a Kakita artisan.

Meiyo (Honor): The Lost definition of Honor is the most twisted of all. Rokugani samurai believe that external judgment is meaningless — the true measure of worth comes only from within. That which lies deepest within the heart of a Lost samurai is none other but the Taint. Therefore, all that the dark powers deem necessary is therefore honorable. All honor, all forgiveness, is found in the depths of Jigoku.

Makoto (Complete Sincerity): This virtue varies the least from Rokugani definitions. Deed and action are one. The Lost take their vows as seriously as any samurai.

Chugo (Duty and Loyalty): The Lost view of duty is also similar to that of other samurai. The Lost who follow Daigotsu honor him as they would the Emperor, and worship the dark powers of Jigoku as the Rokugani do the Fortunes. The samurai who follow Iuchiban owe their loyalty to no master other than raw power. They follow Iuchiban because he is the most powerful, and should he fall they would follow his successor.

This difference in beliefs has created the greatest schism within the Lost. The Daigotsu samurai now believe not only that Iuchiban must be destroyed for having dared to strike down their master, but so must those disloyal Lost who follow him. The current civil war in the Shadowlands, unlike similar conflicts in the past, is at its heart a matter of honor.

These scattered refugees banded together out of necessity. They were now willing servants of the Shadowlands, but this afforded them no protection from the horrible beasts that prowled the wastelands. These nomadic bands found strength in numbers and began to build villages deep in the Shadowlands. A new generation was born that had never seen Rokugan. They clung to their parents' traditions, a perversion of Rokugan's bushido, as a means of retaining sanity when surrounded by madness. As many of their parents had once been the Empire's greatest heroes, the new Lost also inherited their parents' discipline and fighting techniques. They were Lost, but they were also true samurai.

Though the time after the Battle of Oblivion's Gate is remembered as a time of relative peace with the Shadowlands, there were more Lost at this time than in any other in the Empire's history. These Lost samurai did not trouble the Empire, for they spent these decades in endless territorial disputes both among themselves and with the powerful beasts that ruled the Shadowlands. Their true potential as the Empire's greatest enemy was not realized until the Dark Lord, Daigotsu, arrived to unify the warring Lost factions. The City of the Lost finished construction soon after his appearance, and the people of the Shadowlands finally stood as one.

When Iuchiban appeared and struck down the Dark Lord, true divisions began to appear among the Lost once more. While many Lost took their oaths to Daigotsu to heart and followed their master into exile, most others were awed by Iuchiban's power and acknowledged him as their new leader.

BIRTH

Birth in the Shadowlands is a rare and treasured event, as this is a dangerous place for a child. During Daigotsu's reign, he instituted strict laws outlawing violence against children. The youth are tomorrow's warriors, after all, and Fu Leng would be greatly angered to be robbed of his future servants. Iuchiban has little regard for Fu Leng, but he sees the wisdom in Daigotsu's laws, and has maintained them.

Though the Lost obey these rules and are protective of the young, not all the beasts that dwell in the Shadowlands are so respectful. Children are generally kept indoors, under the care of a samurai or several well-trained bakemono. Only once they have reached gempukku age are they allowed to venture outside, and even then they are watched carefully.

GEMPUKKU

Once a year, during the time that marks the Chrysanthemum Festival in Rokugan, the City of the Lost holds a great celebration called the Festival of New Blood. All youths who have reached gempukku age in the previous year receive their daisho and swear their vows to their masters. After the ensuing celebration, the new samurai's career begins with a first glimpse of the blasted wasteland that is their home. Groups of young samurai are taken out into the Shadowlands in the company of a large band of older warriors. What follows amounts to a hunting trip across the bleak Shadowlands. The samurai track and kill wild bakemono, wandering oni, or trolls.

From each hunting band, the three youths who prove themselves the most talented and courageous are selected to join an elite band for more dangerous hunts. These warriors might be sent to kill Crab scouts, attack a Nezumi pack, or even venture into Rokugan to pillage a peasant village. This band is named the Legion of New Blood, and is feared throughout the Shadowlands for its youthful zeal and mad ferocity.

COURTSHIP

Marriage and courtship are strictly regimented. Daigotsu recognized early on that the dark impulses and inhuman appetites that sometimes stem from the Shadowlands Taint could cause problems where questions of marriage and fidelity are concerned. Fearful that matters of love, romance, and emotion could bring about the downfall of his carefully balanced city, he instituted strict laws restricting marriage. Essentially, childbirth or romantic involvement outside of a marriage approved by one's lord is a capital crime. It is a harsh law, but it has also prevented many problems among the sometimes bloodthirsty and impulsive Lost. As with many of Daigotsu's laws, Iuchiban has seen this one's wisdom and maintained it during his own rule.

Marriage ceremonies vary in ostentation and complexity. Daigotsu samurai tend to have large, prolonged celebrations, calling upon the blessings of Fu Leng for a long and happy marriage. Iuchiban's followers are far more pragmatic. Once a Bloodspeaker acknowledges the marriage is official, the ceremony is done and everyone departs to go about their daily business.

SUPERSTITION

Some might believe that the Lost would have little in the way of superstition, as they already embody that which most of the Empire dreads. The Lost know the truth: there is always something more powerful to fear. Deadly oni, vengeful spirits, and even the Dark Oracles prowl the lands beyond the City of the Lost, and the wise learn how not to offend their unpredictable neighbors. Foremost among Lost superstitions is the belief that uncorrupted jade is incredibly unlucky. Such material not only numbs the power of the Taint, but also causes pain and discomfort to powerful Shadowlands creatures. The wise learn not to carry it, and either destroy jade when it is discovered or hide it safely until it can be properly corrupted.

WAR

Daigotsu samurai have simple beliefs where war is concerned. Those who defy Jigoku have proven themselves undeserving of respect. As they have exiled themselves from the Celestial Order, they do not deserve the mercy even an animal would be shown. Iuchiban's followers have slightly different beliefs, though the result is the same. Iuchiban's samurai believe that power is justification for any action, and that any crime committed during war is justified by victory. For these reasons both Iuchiban's and Daigotsu's followers will resort to nearly any tactic and commit unspeakable acts to cow their enemies into submission.

RETIREMENT

Retirement is not an altogether unknown practice among the Lost. Some older Daigotsu become monks of Fu Leng so that they might better honor their dark master. Among Iuchiban's followers, retirement is unheard of. Iuchiban has ruled the City of the Lost only briefly, but has already made it quite clear that he holds a low opinion of those who retire to a life of contemplation, unless they intend to contemplate the mysteries of blood magic. The few monks of Fu Leng who have not fled to Daigotsu's camp or died at the hands of Bloodspeakers keep an extremely low profile.

FUNERALS/DEATH

There are no funerals in the Shadowlands, for death is simply of no consequence. When someone dies in the Shadowlands, their body is discarded somewhere where it will not be an annoyance to others. There, it is either devoured by the local wildlife or, if Jigoku is willing, returned to life as undead. Bodies are never cremated in the Shadowlands as they are in Rokugan, as this leaves the door open for the deceased to return in some form.

HISTORY OF THE SHADOWLANDS

Fall of Fu Leng: Pre-history

The immortal son of Amaterasu and Onnotangu, Fu Leng, falls to the earth after a devastating battle with his father in which he and his siblings are freed from their father's gullet by his brother Hantei. Fu Leng falls far away from his brothers and sisters, landing in a region dominated by non-human civilizations, including the Nezumi, ogre, and troll empires. The sudden collision of Ningen-do and a child of Tengoku tears a deep hole in the earth and opens a portal to Jigoku, the Realm of Evil. The Nezumi and ogre civilizations are all but wiped out by the disaster and ensuing chaos as oni pour forth from the portal to corrupt the mortal world, and Fu Leng is trapped in Jigoku for so long that he becomes corrupted as well.

The War with the Shadowlands: Year Unknown

Fu Leng leads a vast army of foul creatures, either bent to his will or created by his power, in an attack on Rokugan. His brothers and sisters are woefully unprepared for the assault, and their clans are pressed farther and farther back. It is not until the prophet Shinsei offers counsel to Hantei that hope is given to the Empire. With the Seven Thunders accompanying him, Shinsei finds and confronts Fu Leng. The Thunders, led by Isawa, weaken the dark god in combat and then bind his immortal soul inside twelve powerful spells created by Isawa. Fu Leng's power forever corrupts and taints the spells, perverting their original function. Only Shinsei and Shosuro survive the battle, but Fu Leng is defeated and his forces are routed.

The Nature of Taint explored: Year 100

Crab scholar Kuni Nakanu studies the effects of Shadowlands Taint on corpses, discovering much of how it affects both the living and the dead. The research is of great use to the Crab, and saves many lives. It also establishes many fundamental ideas later used by maho-tsukai who discover his works. Nakanu comes to a bad end when his research delves too far and he is overwhelmed by zombies in his own home.

The Snake Clan corrupted: Year 401

Weakened by years of temptation, the ruling Snake daimyo Chuda Tamihei accepts the promise of power offered by a corrupt spirit, a shuten doji. The Snake Clan, already teetering on the brink of corruption from years of studying maho, is overtaken by the spirit and its kin, and is consumed with corruption within a matter of weeks. This condition lasts only a few months. The Phoenix discover the truth and descend upon the Snake in the early winter months of 402, wiping them out in a massive assault that historians call the Five Nights of Shame.

A lone vassal, a servant familiar with maho, escapes the destruction. He goes into hiding and spends his remaining years practicing blood magic in secret. He teaches the secrets to his daughter, who goes on to teach them to her child, and so on, establishing the secret Snake line for centuries to come.

The Battle of White Stag: Year 442

A massive battle between Imperial forces and a large gaijin faction in the seas around Ootosan Uchi benefits the Shadowlands in many ways. When the gaijin sea captain Garen escapes the bay with a small number of great warships, they stumble into the Sea of Shadows. Several ships are lost, but two are corrupted and absorbed by the sea. They return as undead revenants that haunt the Sea of Shadows for centuries.

The Battle of Stolen Graves: Year 510

The Emperor's young brother Otomo Jama, now known as Iuchiban, is discovered by a Lion and a Scorpion magistrate to be plotting against the throne. Iuchiban accelerates his plans, raising a small army of undead from the Imperial graveyard to send against the Imperial troops. Again, the efforts of Akodo Minobe and Soshi Takesho foil his efforts, destroying his army and capturing him before he can escape.

The enormity of Iuchiban's treachery and the mysterious nature of his powers require a special solution. The Empire constructs a mystical tomb to contain Iuchiban, locking him away on a distant border and executing his followers.

The Battle of Sleeping River: Year 750

Having learned the secret of moving as a spirit from his apprentice Yajinden, Iuchiban returns to the Empire and instructs his followers to amass a vast quantity of corpses for his new army. His plans are discovered by an ise zumi, and again his agenda must run ahead of schedule. His army is incredibly vast, and only the combined might of all the Great Clans is able to destroy it. Iuchiban's spirit is imprisoned again, this time with precautions to prevent his escape. Of all his inner circle, only Yajinden escapes.

The Battle of the Cresting Wave: Year 716

The oni lord known as the Maw, having ravaged the southern Crab provinces and all but destroyed the Hiruma family's lands, launches the second stage of its attack targeting the southern edge of Hida lands. Its army is too vast to be overcome, and the Crab fall back. A lone shugenja, Kuni Osaku, creates a powerful spell that holds the Shadowlands at bay by making a border river impassable. Osaku maintains her spell for nearly three months while the Crab hastily construct the Great Carpenter Wall. When the spell ends, the Maw's forces cannot take the Wall and suffer terrible losses. A flanking attack by the Crab virtually destroys the Maw's army, and the beast itself is slain by the Crab Champion.

The Bloodspeakers capture the Empress: Year 1111

The Bloodspeakers uncover a prophecy that indicates the last living Hantei will fall to Jigoku's power. In an audacious strike, the Bloodspeakers surprise and overwhelm the Imperial forces protecting the Empress on her journey home from the Phoenix lands. Her guards are murdered; the Bloodspeakers plan to sacrifice her and the Imperial heir Sotorii so that the Emperor will become corrupted. A ronin named Yotsu happens upon the scene and escapes with Sotorii, leaving his own son in the heir's place. Yotsu's son defiantly reveals the Bloodspeakers' failure, so the Bloodspeakers keep Hochiahime and the boy alive as hostages while they flee west.

The Birth of Daigotsu: Year 1112

When the Bloodspeakers realize that the Empress is with child, they spare her life. Using a foul and unprecedented ritual, the unborn child's soul is merged with that of an unnamed oni. The child is thereafter banished to Jigoku so that he will grow strong in the powers of darkness beyond the Empire's ability to rescue him.

The First Black Scroll is opened: Year 1123

A grieving Yogo Junzo, wishing to avenge the death of his daimyo Bayushi Shoji, opens the first of the Twelve Black Scrolls that keep Fu Leng's soul imprisoned. Over the next four years, as the Scorpion try to rebuild and the Clan War begins, more of the Black Scrolls are opened as the Clans attempt to harness their terrible power.

The Elemental Terrors are created: Year 1126

In preparation for the conflict they sense approaching, the Dark Oracles unite to create the Elemental Terrors, oni infused with the power of the elements. Each Oracle creates a Terror of their element, and the group crafts a terrible creature from the raw energy within the Void. The Terrors' initial rampage razes

the lands occupied by the Crippled Bone, a tribe of Nezumi warriors. The Crippled Bone must abandon their home and move north toward the Crab lands in order to survive.

Fu Leng possesses the Emperor: Year 1127

After eleven of the Black Scrolls are opened, the imprisoned soul of Fu Leng can once more emerge into the mortal world. Emperor Hantei XXXIX, whose body has been weakened by the poisons of his wife Bayushi Kachiko, is the perfect vessel. When Crab Champion Hida Kisada concludes his strike on Otosan Uchi with an appearance in the throne room to demand the Imperial power, Fu Leng reveals himself and grievously wounds the Crab, whose son Yakamo must haul him to safety outside the Imperial City.

The Second Day of Thunder: Year 1128

The Great Clans marshal their forces and attack Otosan Uchi, home of Fu Leng's mortal host and the seat of his power. The fighting is fierce, and during the confusion Shinsei's descendant leads the reincarnated Seven Thunders to the Imperial throne room to confront Fu Leng. Two Thunders are killed, as is Fu Leng. With the dark god's spirit banished from the

**AKKUAU-UO,
THE DARK LORD'S BLADE**

The sword Iuchiban carries has a long and complex history. It was once the sword of the Hantei dynasty, forged for Hantei Genji by legendary swordsmith Yasurugi. The fifth Hantei was the first to take the sword into battle, charging into combat beside the Crab Champion. His victory awakened the true spirit of the blade, granting it incredible powers against the Shadowlands. The sword was returned to Otosan Uchi, where it remained until Hantei XXXIX, possessed by the spirit of Fu Leng, drove the blade into Hida Kisada's stomach. Crab Champion Hida Yakamo fled Otosan Uchi with his father and the sword, and kept the blade until the renegade Crab, Kuni Yori, captured Yakamo deep in the Shadowlands.

When Yori was banished from the mortal realm by the Naga, the sword lay abandoned in the Shinomen as the Naga were unaware of its significance. A band of Monkey magistrates returned it to Lady Shinjo, who set it in the Celestial Heavens beside the other ancestral swords. When Fu Leng invaded the Heavens, the Shadow Dragon followed. For reasons known only to itself, the mysterious dragon stole the Hantei blade and brought it back to the Shadowlands. He gave the blade to Omoni, forcing Omoni to promise to serve only the one who wielded it. Omoni then gave the sword to Daigotsu.

When the Dark Lord drew the blade in the Temple of the Ninth Kami, Fu Leng placed his blessings upon it. The sword's pure magic was utterly corrupted until it could be safely wielded only by a Tainted member of the Hantei line. Daigotsu kept the blade by his side until Iuchiban invaded the City of the Lost. Badly wounded, Daigotsu was forced to leave it behind during his escape. As Iuchiban was also once a Hantei, he found he could wield the sword safely and has kept it as his personal weapon.

In the meantime, many of those, like Omoni, who swore to obey the rightful wielder of the blade are now forced

into Iuchiban's service. Among the many other things he has promised he will do when he takes his vengeance upon the Bloodspeaker, Daigotsu has sworn that he will have his sword back.

Akkuai-uo is an impressive blade, a no-dachi made of golden metal that shines with a black fire when a corrupted Hantei wields it. The sword was once a potent weapon against the Taint, but now serves as a powerful tool against those who are not yet corrupted.

D20 SYSTEM:

Akkuai-uo is a +5 unholy no-dachi of wounding. It inflicts an extra 2d10 damage against any target who does not have any Shadowlands Taint. On any critical hit, any target without Shadowlands Taint suffers 1d10 permanent Strength damage. Any target reduced to zero Strength dies and rises again as a Tainted undead. The wielder may use his Taint modifier in place of any ability score modifier, if it is higher, so long as the sword is carried. The sword bestows none of these effects if its wielder is not a Tainted member of the Hantei line (and though Iuchiban is not in his original body it seems to function perfectly for him).

LSR R7G 2E:

Akkuai-uo is a nemuranai no-dachi that inflicts 6k4 damage. The sword rolls and keeps two extra dice on damage rolls against any target that does not have any points of Shadowlands Taint. If the wielder makes three Raises on an attack, he may reduce the target's Water Ring by 2 as well as inflicting normal damage. Any target reduced to a Water of zero dies and rises again as a Tainted undead. The wielder may use his Shadowlands Taint in the place of any Ring or Trait so long as the sword is carried. The sword bestows none of these effects if its wielder is not a Tainted member of the Hantei line (and though Iuchiban is not in his original body it seems to function perfectly for him).

mortal realm, his armies break and the Shadowlands is defeated. The former Lion Champion Toturi is chosen as the new Emperor of Rokugan.

Daigotsu Returns: Year 1132

The Bloodspeakers summon the infant son of Empress Hochi-ahime back from Jigoku and begin his instruction in the ways of maho. To the child, no time seems to have passed. He is given the name Daigotsu.

The Battle at Oblivion's Gate: Year 1133

The forces within the Shadowlands ally with the Lying Darkness's minions in an attempt to destroy the Great Clan armies that are marching on the lost city of Voltturnum. The armies reach the Gate despite heavy losses, and the Gate is opened so that the Darkness might consume the ancestors of Rokugan. A vast army of spirits emerges to combat both the Shadowlands and the Darkness, and the forces of evil are defeated. The Shadowlands claims victory anyway, as the ranks of Lost and undead swell greatly with the dead from the battle. Additionally, the Darkness is destroyed and its remnant power and minions are absorbed into the Shadowlands' forces.

Daigotsu Escapes the Bloodspeakers: Year 1150

His patience exhausted from enduring his Bloodspeaker masters, Daigotsu escapes with his comrades, Omoni and Kyoden. Though the Bloodspeakers scour the Empire for their missing student, the clever and capable Daigotsu eludes them and seeks out his own destiny.

Daigotsu finds the Tsuno: Year 1151

Daigotsu uses a powerful maho ritual to reach Toshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter. There, he seeks out the Tsuno, the warped and twisted Kitsu descendants who were cast out from the City of Night nearly a thousand years previously. Daigotsu alerts the Tsuno to how much time has passed in Ningen-do and to what has come of the descendants of those who slaughtered their ancestors. The Tsuno agree to work alongside Daigotsu so long as they have the opportunity for vengeance, a condition to which he readily agrees.

Emperor Toturi is killed: Year 1158

While traveling to Ryoko Owari to meet with his illegitimate son Kaneka, Emperor Toturi is attacked by a large Shadowlands force. His Seppun and Scorpion defenders cannot protect him, and Toturi is slain by Fushin, the Onisu of Betrayal. Daigotsu occupies Fushin's body during the battle, delighting in killing the man who murdered his elder brother Hantei XXXIX.

The Great Wall falls: Year 1159

Using surprise tactics and Tsuno magic, the Shadowlands army besieges the Great Wall from behind and captures four of its seven watchtowers. The Crab are pushed back from their defensive line and must abandon much of the Wall. Crab Champion Hida Kuroda is lost in the fighting. His brother Kuon assumes command and retakes the Wall within a few months, but one tower is forever corrupted. Kuon orders the Kaiu to tear down the Wall around the Tower of Fear and rebuild it whole and uncorrupted.

Otosan Uchi is destroyed and Fu Leng returns: Year 1159

Daigotsu moves his armies to the capital aboard the ghost ships of undead gaijin Garen. The devastation is considerable, and entire city quarters are reduced to smoldering ruins. Daigotsu uses the confusion to conceal his true purpose:

he enacts a powerful ritual at the site of Fu Leng's death to return the Fallen Kami to Tengoku, the Celestial Heavens. Fu Leng summons a great army from Jigoku and launches an assault against the Heavens that lasts for nearly a year.

Daigotsu falls to the Four Winds: Year 1160

The Four Winds reach the City of the Lost, protected by an army of Tataka's Children and the artifacts known as Doji's Tears. Toturi Sezaru and Akodo Kaneka wreak a terrible toll on the Lost, and Hantei Naseru cunningly defeats not only Daigotsu, but Fu Leng as well, casting the Dark Kami from Tengoku by sowing doubt in his most devoted follower, Daigotsu. Daigotsu's vengeance is thwarted when Toturi Tsudao sacrifices herself to kill him, ending his threat and uniting the three surviving Winds.

Daigotsu's death is only temporary. His boyhood friend and ally Goju Kyoden sacrifices his life to seal a bargain previously made with the Shadow Dragon. That creature returns a part of Daigotsu's soul it had retained for safekeeping. Daigotsu returns to life, albeit weaker than before.

Iuchiban reborn: Year 1165

Shahai manipulates a group of samurai into opening Iuchiban's Tomb and reaches the innermost chambers where the Bloodspeaker is imprisoned. She strikes a bargain with Iuchiban, seeking his aid in restoring Daigotsu's power in exchange for freedom. Iuchiban refuses to negotiate, and with Yajinden's aid he overcomes Shahai and forces her to release him from his prison. After he escapes, he deposes Daigotsu and takes over the City of the Lost. Many of Daigotsu's followers eagerly accept Iuchiban's leadership, although some remain loyal to Daigotsu.

The Reign of Blood: Year 1165

Enacting a ritual discovered decades ago by Jama Suru, Iuchiban and his followers sacrifice the Ki-Rin, and use its life force to unleash a terrible storm all across the face of Rokugan. The clouds churn and spill forth a rain of blood that corrupts all who feel its touch for too long. The Lion and Mantis are particularly hard hit by the disaster, as the Lion armies near the City of the Rich Frog and the Mantis fleet on the sea have little protection from the elements.

NEW MECHANICS

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

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

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

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

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

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

TORITAKA TATSURE

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

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

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

SHADOWLANDS FAMILIES

One institution recently introduced during Daigotsu's tenure is the idea of Shadowlands family names. These names were introduced as an attempt to foster greater unity in the ranks of the Lost, to instill a sense of brotherhood similar to that found among the samurai of Rokugan. Thus far, the tradition has been remarkably successful. The Lost families may not have the same blood relations and long tradition of other Rokugani families, but they are nonetheless extremely loyal to one another.

Shadowlands characters should, for the most part, be limited to NPCs. However, if the GM wishes to allow these characters in his campaign or wishes to make more detailed NPCs, the rules for their creation are as follows.

THE DAIGOTSU FAMILY

The Daigotsu take their name from the Dark Lord, and show their loyalty to their namesake first and foremost. They are fervently dedicated to Fu Leng, and firmly embrace Daigotsu's twisted view of bushido. Members of this samurai despise Rokugani samurai, bearing a special malice toward members of the Hida family. That the Crab are now the enemies of their hated foes, the Bloodspeakers, is a fact that many Daigotsu find difficult to accept.

THE DAIGOTSU FAMILY

Favored Class: Samurai
Starting Honor: 1
Class Skill: Knowledge (Shadowlands)
Starting Outfit: (Choose one)
1. Masterwork yari, 50 koku.
2. Masterwork lamellar armor, 50 koku.
Bonus Languages: Bakemono, Ont.

THE DAIGOTSU FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Strength.

THE CHUDA FAMILY

The Chuda are loyal Bloodspeakers and acknowledge Iuchiban as their master. They are a family of maho-tsukai who practice their blood magic with all the reverence of a Rokugani priest. They are cultured, elegant, and well dressed, doing their best to break the stereotype of a Shadowlands madman.

THE CHUDA FAMILY

Favored Class: Shugenja
Starting Honor: 0
Class Skill: Knowledge (Maho)
Starting Outfit: Two 2nd level divine scrolls, two 1st level divine scrolls (no Air spells, may select maho spells with starting outfit).
Bonus Languages: Onti, Yobanjin.

THE CHUDA FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Willpower.

THE GOJU FAMILY

Many members of the Goju family were once servants of the Lying Darkness, supernatural creatures who gave rise to the Rokugani myth of ninja. When Goju Adora was slain and the Lying Darkness given form, the Goju were left without the Darkness' protection in the heart of the Shadowlands. Without any jade, the Goju were swiftly tainted. They now obey the Shadow Dragon, the mysterious creature which harnessed the power of Nothing after the Darkness was destroyed.

The Goju are a strange family. They follow the whims of the Shadow Dragon, an unpredictable and mysterious creature. The Goju frequently act as spies and assassins, carrying out the will of more powerful creatures. Many of them currently serve Daigotsu in exile, but a handful also obey Iuchiban. As the Shadow Dragon has not yet declared its fealty on one side or the other, both would-be masters of the Shadowlands have attempted to curry this family's favor.

THE GOJU FAMILY

Favored Class: Ninja
Starting Honor: 0
Class Skill: Hide
Starting Outfit: (Choose one)
1. Disguise kit and one vial of cobra venom.
2. Masterwork aiguchi and ashigaru armor.

THE GOJU FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Agility.

KOKU IN THE SHADOWLANDS

It may seem curious at first that members of the Daigotsu family are offered koku as part of their starting outfits. However, keep in mind that the Shadowlands families have begun to adopt an organization that closely mirrors their Rokugani counterparts. It is not unusual to see a thriving shop or sake house in the City of the Lost, offering its wares to the Dark Lord's servants.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE DAIGOTSU

PLUMBING
THE DARKNESS
PART TWO

Hatori stared across the darkened chamber, studying the face of the thin man that sat before him. Though he attempted to hide behind his courtier's façade, he could not help but shift nervously in Gensaiken's presence.

Gensaiken sipped his tea and inspected Hatori curiously. "You seem uncomfortable, Hatori-sama." The young herald set his cup down with an audible click, causing Hatori to jump slightly. "I assure you I spoke truly. You need fear nothing from me. I am as much the Shadowlands' enemy as you are, now."

"That is not what upsets me," Hatori replied.

"What, then?"

"I have known you all of your life, Gensaiken. I know your parents. I trusted you as a member of my own family. I am left only to wonder how long you have been what you are."

Gensaiken smiled slightly. "Always," he replied. "The child who might have been Gensaiken was delivered by Shahai, in the guise of a peasant midwife. I was put in his place, and have used my shapeshifting to appear as an infant, a child, and a man as the passage of time demanded."

Hatori was silent for a moment as a chill passed through him. "So what became of the child that you replaced?" he asked. "Did the Bloodspeakers kill him?"

Gensaiken's smirk faded, and an uncomfortable expression crossed his face. "I do not know," he said. "Truth be told, I suspect he suffered a worse fate. He probably serves the Shadowlands now, as I did. The Bloodspeakers often increase their ranks through kidnapping. Children are impressionable, easily influenced, and grow into strong servants. The Bloodspeakers are nothing if not patient. Daigotsu himself was raised in such a manner, though he slipped through their grasp."

"Only to become the most dangerous madman the Empire has known since the rise of Uchiban," Hatori replied.

"That is a matter of opinion," Gensaiken replied. "Granted, yours is now an opinion with which I agree, but there are many who regard Daigotsu as a hero."

"Among the Lost, perhaps," Hatori retorted. "As if that matters. They are slaves to Fu Leng, with no thoughts or opinions besides those he gives them."

"Ah, but you are wrong, Hatori-sama!" Gensaiken answered. "If the Lost were truly the mindless drones you paint them to be, they would not be half so dangerous. No, the Lost have free will. They have a choice, and they choose evil. That they choose to be what they are is what makes them so dangerous. I visited the City of the Lost, once, when my master Sezaru was deep in studies and Shahai had great need of me. I expected to find a city of wandering lunatics and murderous madmen. This was not what I found."

"Then what did you find?" Hatori asked.

"The City of the Lost was quiet, peaceful, orderly," Gensaiken replied. "More peaceful perhaps than Otosan Uchi in its prime. Certainly more orderly than Toshi Ranbo. And clean. The streets were swept and carefully tended. Not a thing was out of place. The city was perfect. And yet behind it all there was a sense of fear. I felt as if the city was so safe, so clean, so orderly because those who

dwelled there feared what might become of them were it otherwise. When the Dark Lord demands peace in his city, you do not risk his wrath by giving him anything else."

"A city of fear," Hatori said.

Gensaiken nodded. "I made my report and left swiftly. I did not wish to tarry. Even when my loyalties were tied tight to the Dark Lord's whim, I did not wish to risk any misstep in his presence. Perhaps it is simply that we Peckles are somewhat... capricious... in nature, but a city built so firmly upon absolute obedience was not a place where I felt welcome. Daigotsu's ebon samurai patrolled the streets in packs, and the wise moved quickly aside and pressed their foreheads to the earth when they approached."

"So is it true, then what I have heard?" Hatori asked. "That Daigotsu's samurai have fashioned for themselves a reflection of our own Empire? That they obey him not merely out of hatred for the Empire, but with the loyalty a samurai shows his Emperor?"

"Very much so," Gensaiken replied. "Daigotsu has been quite cunning to succeed where other Shadowlands warlords have failed. Yogo Junzo and Kuni Yori might have turned many to their side during the Clan War — but on the Day of Thunder, when so many of the corrupted saw their honorable brethren united against them, Junzo and Yori truly failed. Many of the Tainted felt regret that day, wishing that they had not succumbed to the Taint. But Daigotsu's soldiers do not feel separated from the Empire. They have lost nothing. In their minds they are the true Empire, serving the most powerful of the Kami. To them, it is Rokugan that is corrupted and debased. It is we who have proven ourselves weak by not daring to call upon the power that Jigoku offers. The samurai who take Daigotsu's name believe they are the only true samurai."

"But how can one obey bushido and also follow Fu Leng?" Hatori asked.

"Come now, Hatori, do not be naive," Gensaiken chuckled. "Even here in the Empire there are many interpretations of bushido. Ask a Crane what honor means, then ask a Scorpion. Ask a Crab how he would define mercy if he met a goblin child. Ask seven different Lion bushi to define the virtues; you will receive seven different answers. Ask a Dragon any question at all, and try to understand his answer. In the Shadowlands, it is no different. Their definition of bushido is more twisted than most, but it is bushido just the same. They consider themselves men of honor, though their honor is quite alien to men such as ourselves."

"You are not a man, creature," Hatori replied.

"This is true," Gensaiken answered with a chuckle. "Now listen closely, and I will tell you more of what I saw in the City of the Lost."

DAIGOTSU LANDS

The Dark Lord's followers once ranked more highly than any other Lost samurai, but since Iuchiban's return that time is gone. Today, the Daigotsu gather in the deep southern Shadowlands, in areas where Fu Leng's influence upon the mortal world is great. There they are relatively safe from Iuchiban's power. There they plot to retake what has been stolen from them.

THE CITY OF THE LOST

Just north of where the Black Finger River meets the River of the Dark Moon stands a city, the only one of its kind in the Shadowlands. It is not a forgotten troll ruin or Nezumi warren, but a vast and thriving settlement populated by the Lost. Corrupted samurai, peasants, and eta dwell here, their civilization a twisted parody of life in Rokugan. Though Iuchiban and his Bloodspeakers recently conquered the City of the Lost, the Daigotsu family still considers it home. The Daigotsu family's eagerness to defeat the Bloodspeakers and retake their city is eerily reminiscent of the grim resolve of the Hiruma during the long centuries when the Shadowlands Horde occupied their ancestral lands.

TEMPLE OF THE NINTH KAMI

In the center of the city an enormous temple towers above the surrounding structures. This was once the palace of Daigotsu, though it was primarily a temple to the Dark Kami, Fu Leng. During the period when Fu Leng ravaged the heavens, this vast temple was the heart of his power, so it was here that the Four Winds stood against the Dark Lord and broke him. It was also here that Iuchiban first appeared in the City of the Lost and struck down Daigotsu. This temple, the focal point of the city, is also a living reminder of the Daigotsu family's greatest failures.

After conquering the city, Iuchiban retained the temple as his headquarters. He has gone about destroying all remaining symbols of Fu Leng, transforming the temple into an enormous Bloodspeaker temple. Regardless, many residents of the city still refer to the temple by its original name. Iuchiban encourages this, for he enjoys the irony that Fu Leng's greatest temple is now devoid of any reference to him.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: In the deep Shadowlands, the party encounters a band of Tainted peasants escorting a large covered wagon. At first sight of the player characters they flee, leaving their burden behind. Captured peasants recoil in terror, begging for mercy. If pressed for details about their burden, the leader admits that he found something extremely valuable in the rubble outside the City of the Lost and is hoping to bring it to Daigotsu for a great reward.

Focus: The wagon contains an enormous stone head crafted of obsidian, apparently broken off of a colossal statue. The piece is an extraordinary work of art, though its face is grim and fearsome. Anyone knowledgeable in Rokugani religion realizes that this statue depicts the Ninth Kami, Fu Leng. If the party are Tainted characters from the City of the Lost, they recognize it as the head of the statue that once stood in the central worship chamber.

Strike: The party must now decide what to do with this artifact. They could of course destroy it, but there are other options. Daigotsu's followers would pay dearly for this broken relic of their temple, and Iuchiban would go to great lengths to see that they do not obtain it. The head could be a powerful weapon to bolster or destroy morale on either side of the Shadowlands conflict, if the characters wish to become a part of it. Then again, it may be wiser to simply leave the broken statue behind.

THE BLACK FINGER RIVER AND THE RIVER OF THE DARK MOON

(LOCATION III IN ROKUGAN™, LOCATION 000 IN THE GAME MASTER'S GUIDE™)

Deep within the Shadowlands, the Black Finger River splits off from the River of the Last Stand. Even further into the wastes, the River of the Dark Moon extends from the Black Finger. The land that falls between these two rivers is the most powerfully corrupted in all the Shadowlands, for it is here that the Dark Kami fell. Anywhere beyond the place where the rivers split radiates extremely high levels of Taint. Jade decays twice as fast as normal in this area.

The waters of these rivers are extremely dangerous to the uncorrupted. Drinking the water of the Black Finger or the River of the Dark Moon exposes the drinker to Taint as if he had spent an entire day in the Shadowlands, and jade offers no protection against this effect. The Lost and other creatures native to the Shadowlands suffer no ill effects for drinking this stagnant and vile water, though the wise are still wary near the river. Oni and other predatory beasts are known to make their home within the depths. Even Daigotsu's samurai and Iuchiban's Bloodspeakers are cautious when crossing the rivers, as the creatures that live here owe fealty to no lord other than hunger.

THE HASHI BRIDGE

Just an hour's travel south of the fork between the rivers there once stood a bridge leading deeper into the Shadowlands. Daigotsu samurai constructed this bridge so that they might easily cross the river on pilgrimages to the Festering Pit. When Daigotsu and his followers fled the City of the Lost, they escaped across this bridge and destroyed it behind them to dissuade pursuit. Now only the ruined foundations still stand.

Of course, Daigotsu knew that he could not hide in the Shadowlands indefinitely. Though his magic was sufficient to bear him across the rivers safely, a new bridge would be required if he intended to move his troops across the river to face Iuchiban once more. To this end, he has made a deal with one of the more intelligent oni that dwell within the river's depths. The beast known as Hashi is a wormlike oni with a

broad, armored back. When Daigotsu or one of his followers speaks a secret word of summoning, Hashi no Oni rises from the river and allows the Daigotsu samurai to use its back as a bridge. However, this service comes at a price. Each time the Daigotsu summon Hashi, they must offer it a living sacrifice. Usually this comes in the form of a captured Crab scout or a peasant kidnapped beyond the Wall.

While Hashi understands the bargain it has made, its eyesight is poor and it has trouble distinguishing one human from another in the bright light above the murky river. If a human visitor knew the word of summoning and offered a sacrifice, Hashi would gladly serve as a bridge. Serving the Daigotsu has taken the edge off of the demon's once-vicious nature, however, and it is no longer willing to fight for meals. If a summoner does not immediately offer a sacrifice or dares to attack, the oni flees beneath the waters as swiftly as it can.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: If the player characters have an encounter with Daigotsu samurai, the Daigotsu may seek to take one more of them as a living prisoner. Any imprisoned player character is treated with the utmost hospitality during his journey through the Shadowlands, unless he attempts to escape. The Daigotsu confiscate his weapons, of course, and are even reasonably polite to so that the character does not become enraged and attempt to escape. They even provide jade to keep the character safe from Taint, as Hashi prefers the taste of uncorrupted flesh.

Focus: The Daigotsu claim that they are keeping the player character alive to present him to their Dark Lord, for they know that prisoners are less likely to attempt to escape if they believe they have time to do so. After a while, the player character may realize his time is running out. Perhaps he overhears a Daigotsu samurai talking about the bridge ahead, or after a failed escape attempt the Daigotsu might seek to intimidate their prisoner by telling him the true fate that lies ahead.

Strike: If the player character escapes, either by his own wit and skill or due to the rest of the party's aid, he may escape with knowledge of the Hashi Bridge. It then falls to the character to decide what to do with this information. Does he tell the Crab the word of summoning in case they wish to use Hashi to scout deeper into the Shadowlands? Does he summon the beast and attempt to destroy it, thus forcing Daigotsu's troops to find a new bridge? Or does he merely put the situation behind him and flee the Shadowlands as quickly as possible?



BLOODSPEAKERS AND THE DEEP SHADOWLANDS

Many powerful Bloodspeakers have devised means of controlling their Taint. Some have incredibly high Taint levels, corruption that would normally lead to their becoming Lost, but continue to dwell deep in the Shadowlands and maintain self-control. These individuals have essentially traded enslavement to Jigoku for enslavement to Iuchiban, so the end result is the same. However, Jigoku is a jealous master and does not appreciate how Iuchiban has subverted so many of its would-be servants. The Deep Shadowlands is a dangerous place for a Bloodspeaker. Iuchiban has cautioned his servants not to cross the fork in the Black Finger River and the River of the Dark Moon, for in this region Bloodspeaker techniques begin to falter.

D20 SYSTEM:

Any Bloodspeaker with sufficient Taint ranks that he would normally become Lost must make a Fortitude save (DC 15+1 per hour) every hour he spends in the Deep Shadowlands. If this save fails, he immediately becomes Lost. Such Bloodspeakers either become Shadowlands madmen or true servants of Fu Leng. Within sight of the Festering Pit, the DC of this save becomes 25+1 per ten minutes and must be made every ten minutes.

15R RPG 2E:

Any Bloodspeaker with sufficient Taint ranks that he would normally become Lost must make an Earth roll vs. TN 15+2 per hour for every hour he spends in the Deep Shadowlands. If this save fails, he immediately becomes Lost. Such Bloodspeakers either become Shadowlands madmen or true servants of Fu Leng. Within sight of the Festering Pit, the TN of this roll becomes 20+2 per ten minutes and must be made every ten minutes.

RUINS OF THE KAPPA

(LOCATION ??? IN ROKUGAN,TM LOCATION SSS IN THE GAME MASTER'S GUIDETM)

In the early days of the Empire, this was a Crab fortress. The slow expansion of the Shadowlands inevitably consumed Haikyo sano Kappa, transforming it into a wretched mockery of itself. It has become a home to countless feuding tribes of bakemono, living in the shattered remnants of the once-mighty fortress. Unlike Hiruma Castle, the Crab have little desire to take back Haikyo sano Kappa. It was never truly that important to the clan in the first place, and since the bakemono infestation it is just a heap of disjointed rubble. To the Crab, the Ruins of the Kappa are an unpleasant memory and nothing more.

OMONI'S FORGE

The goblins that dwell in the ruins have rarely had a true leader, only occasional warlords that bullied the others into obeying their whim. In recent years, this has changed. Daigotsu's comrade, Omoni, felt a certain fondness for the ruins

and claimed them as his home. It is here that the goblin-man built his forge, where he sculpts the flesh of other creatures into more powerful and appealing forms.

The bakemono that dwelled here were Omoni's first and arguably finest creation. He transformed many of the small, cowardly, comical bakemono into stronger, more aggressive creatures. These stronger bakemono quickly multiplied and devoured their weaker brethren, replacing the entire Shadowlands population of bakemono within a generation. Though this new breed of bakemono can be more willful and difficult to control than their predecessors, they have also proven far more deadly.

THE FORGOTTEN TOMB OF FU LENG

(LOCATION TTT IN ROKUGAN,TM LOCATION XXX IN THE GAME MASTER'S GUIDETM)

This is the most desolate place in the Shadowlands. It is said that Fu Leng's body was laid to rest here after Isawa bound his soul in the Twelve Black Scrolls, and that all varieties of ogres, goblins, oni, and other beasts rose from the tomb to avenge their master. The tomb is certainly impressive enough to house a Kami's remains, and constructed in a style alien to the architecture of the Empire. The Forgotten Tomb and its environs are unique in the Shadowlands in that they are devoid of life. Not even the usual deformed vegetation and small predators live close to the Forgotten Tomb.

The few Crab scouts who have ventured this far into the Shadowlands have been mystified by the Forgotten Tomb. Two centuries ago, a daring band of Crab samurai led by legendary scout Hiruma Kosami ventured into the tomb with the intent of securing it as a stronghold. Twelve samurai entered the tomb; none returned. Another scout group was dispatched later to find the twelve, but there were no remains, nor signs of combat. The Kuni shugenja with the group felt an overwhelming sense of evil within the tomb, and advised the others to leave as swiftly as they could. No one has since attempted to use the Forgotten Tomb.

With the aid of his Tsuno allies, Daigotsu has learned the truth about the Forgotten Tomb. It was created long ago by a renegade member of the Five Races, a troll whose name has been forgotten. The entire tomb is essentially a passage into Gaki-do. Those who linger within for too long are dispatched into the Realm of Hungry Ghosts, to be devoured by gaki or to become gaki themselves. The Dark Lord finds the potential of such a structure quite intriguing, and has already locked a few Bloodspeaker prisoners inside.

THE FESTERING PIT OF FU LENG

(LOCATION SSS IN ROKUGAN,TM LOCATION WWW IN THE GAME MASTER'S GUIDETM)

The Festering Pit can rightfully be called the heart of the Shadowlands. The great seething wound in the earth swirls with black mists and bubbling red sludge. The sky overhead is constantly wracked with horrible storms, and blood, grease, and bile rain down upon it. Horrible monsters spawn from the pit, crawling out of the depths into the eerie light of the Shadowlands. These creatures feed on or are eaten by the other beasts that slouch out of the pit, so that only the most fearsome remain. The Festering Pit is the one place that Iuchiban dares not go, lest even his legendary control of his

Shadowlands Taint falter. Even Daigotsu is cautious here, for the beasts that rule these lands owe no fealty to the Dark Lord.

It is here that Fu Leng's power is strongest, for it is here that the Dark Kami fell to the earth and pierced a hole into hellish Jigoku. Anyone mad enough to dive into the pit and swim deep enough into the seething mass that fills it could enter Jigoku physically.

The Taint within sight of the Festering Pit is stronger than anywhere else in the Shadowlands. A Rokugani hour of exposure (120 minutes) is equal to a day of normal exposure to a corrupted environment. In addition the landscape constantly shifts, confusing travelers. Those who draw near to the Festering Pit are unlikely to escape before their jade runs thin or one of the beasts that dwells here makes them into a meal.

IMPORTANT DAIGOTSU NPCS

DAIGOTSU, THE FALLEN LORD

Daigotsu's story is a long and strange one. He is the son of Hantei XXXVIII. His mother was kidnapped by Bloodspeakers while she carried him, as the cultists had planned to wipe out the Hantei line and fulfill an ancient prophecy that would bring about the doom of the Empire (the very prophecy that culminated in the Second Day of Thunder). When a heroic ronin named Yotsu rescued Daigotsu's older brother Sotorii, the Bloodspeaker plot was foiled. The cultists spared Empress Hochiahime as a bargaining chip should they be caught. When they discovered she was with child, their plans grew more sinister.

Following the Oracle of Blood's commands, the Bloodspeakers began experiments that would combine a human child with a Shadowlands spirit. Their first attempt, on a random peasant child, resulted in the goblin-man now called Omoni. The second, an experiment on Yotsu's own son Kyoden, bound the boy to a corrupted spirit of Nothing. When the Bloodspeakers were confident in the success of their techniques, they bound Daigotsu's soul to that of an unnamed oni. The result was a mortal man with powerful control over his own Taint, and unmatched mastery of the arts of maho.

The Bloodspeakers were pleased by what they had created, but the Oracle of Blood cautioned that they could not hide a child of the Hantei from the Empire's eyes for long. Until the Hantei Dynasty fell, Daigotsu would be removed from Rokugan. Powerful magic banished Daigotsu, Kyoden, and Omoni to Jigoku for over two decades.

Though Daigotsu's stay in the Realm of Evil seemed to pass in the blink of an eye, Fu Leng sensed the boy's presence as well as his growing power. The Dark Kami reached out from his prison in Meido, planting dreams within the child's head, granting him the knowledge he would need to unite the Lost and rescue Fu Leng from the Fortune of Death.

Daigotsu remained with the Bloodspeakers for much of his youth, learning what he could. Though he respected their magical prowess, he found their disdain for Fu Leng disgusting. Fu Leng was a powerful figure, a divine personage, an entity worthy of respect and worship. As soon as he was able, Daigotsu escaped the Bloodspeakers, taking with him Kyoden and Omoni. For a time they wandered the Empire, avoiding the Bloodspeakers as well as the Jade Magistrates and Witch Hunters who would have destroyed them on sight. Along the way they met the tattooed madman Kokujin, who helped Daigotsu complete his plans for building a City of the Lost.

Forming an alliance with the mysterious Tsuno, Daigotsu created the nightmarish Onisu and ruled the Lost for many years. Possessing the demon, Fushin, Daigotsu slew Emperor Toturi and threw Rokugan into chaos. During the time of the Four Winds, Daigotsu became the most feared and hated man in Rokugan, earning his title of Dark Lord. With his collaboration Fu Leng escaped Meido and stormed the Celestial Heavens. Otsosan Uchi burned, and many honored heroes of the Empire perished or were corrupted. The Lost were unflinchingly loyal to Daigotsu, and it was only when the Dark Lord's own faith in Fu Leng wavered that the Winds could slay him and banish Fu Leng back to Jigoku.

But even death was not the end for Daigotsu. Months before, the Dark Lord had spoken to the Dark Oracle of the Void, who had revealed the details of Daigotsu's impending demise. Daigotsu accordingly yielded a piece of his soul to the Shadow Dragon for safekeeping. After Daigotsu died, his loyal yojimbo Kyoden sacrificed himself so that shard of Daigotsu's life essence would be returned. The Dark Lord lived once more. Though still strong, his power was greatly reduced.

Until Iuchiban's return, only Daigotsu's most trusted lieutenants knew that the Dark Lord was not as powerful as he once was, but even they did not know the full truth. When Daigotsu returned to life, he found himself cleansed of the Taint, immune to its corruption and no longer able to call upon maho. Strangely, this has in no way affected his loyalty to the Lost or his devotion to Fu Leng. Rather, he sees it as a horrible curse. Daigotsu suspects that the Fortune of Death, who likely possesses the rest of Daigotsu's perished soul, has caused this affliction. Until he can ferret out the truth the fallen Dark Lord lives a lie, modifying his pure elemental magic so that it will appear as corrupted maho to those who follow him. He knows he cannot afford to lose the faith of his remaining followers. He must maintain the charade and appear Tainted until he can somehow restore his corruption.

To make matters worse, Daigotsu has little time to spend planning to confront a powerful Fortune. Iuchiban and his Bloodspeakers now hunt him openly, and on more than one occasion Iuchiban has implied that Daigotsu's rise and fall were all according to his plans. Whether this is true or not is immaterial — all that matters is that Iuchiban be destroyed. With a gutless madman like him in command of the Shadowlands, the inevitable result must be the destruction of the Lost. Even if many of his people no longer follow him, Daigotsu cannot abandon them to such a fate. He must destroy the Bloodspeaker. If he cannot do so by himself, he will seek out allies wherever he can find them — even beyond the Kaiu Wall.

DAIGOTSU'S IUCHI TRAINING

Both mechanical versions of Daigotsu presented in this chapter give him benefits as if he attended the Iuchi Shugenja School. Daigotsu never attended this school, but its mechanical advantages most closely resemble the uncorrupted magic which he learned from Shahai (who was once a student of that school).

DAIGOTSU, FALLEN LORD OF THE SHADOWLANDS

Male outsider Shugenja 20: CR 20; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 20d6 + 100; hp 220; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 24 (touch 19, flat-footed 20); Ark +24/+19 melee (Daigotsu's Blade) 1d10+17 damage plus wounding and possible decapitation; SQ Daigotsu qualities (see below); Honor: 1; AL LE; SV Fort +14, Ref +10, Will +17; Str 26, Dex 19, Con 20, Int 21, Wis 17, Cha 20; Height 5 ft. 10 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Oni, Nezumi, Ogre, Bakemono), Battle +17, Concentration +28, Diplomacy +15, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Knowledge (Gaki-do) +15, Knowledge (Jigoku) +15, Knowledge (maho) +28, Knowledge (Meido) +15, Knowledge (Nobility and Royalty) +10, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +28, Knowledge (Shintao) +10, Knowledge (Yume-do) +15, Knowledge (Toshigoku) +15. Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +25; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Greater Element Focus (Water), Improved Initiative, Ritual Magic, Skill Focus (Knowledge: maho), Versatile (Battle, Sense Motive), Weapon Focus (katana).

Dojo: Temple of the Ninth Kami.

Spells Per Day: 6/7/7/7/6/6/6/6/6/6; base DC 13 + spell level, Iuchi School (see sidebar); **Spells Known:** 0 — commune with elements, create water, detect magic, flash of insight, know direction, mage hand, mending, purify food and drink, read magic, Sutengu's surge; 1st — cure light wounds, detect taint, endure elements, expeditious retreat, protection from taint, sense spirit; 2nd — endurance, lesser restoration, locate object, protection from arrows, silence, wisdom and clarity; 3rd — create food and water, cure serious wounds, dispel magic, remove curse, spirit sight; 4th — death ward, ice storm, importune kami IV, locate creature, restoration; 5th — dimension door, improved invisibility, righteous might, scrying, wall of ice; 6th — heal, karma, true seeing, true seeing; 7th — importune kami VII, spell turning, spell turning, summon nature's ally VII; 8th — binding, tides of battle, waves are ever changing, word of recall; 9th — elemental swarm, tsunami, walking the way, wheel of fortune.

Daigotsu Qualities: The Fallen Lord possesses a number of unique abilities, including the following (these abilities have changed greatly from his description in *Rokugan*,¹⁶ denoting Daigotsu's current relative weakness):

Oni Possession — Daigotsu may possess any oni he can see, at will, as a standard action. This is the equivalent of a *magic jar* spell, except for the following: The oni is allowed no save and Daigotsu needs no receptacle (he may transfer his soul directly into the oni). The oni's soul is suppressed, but aware of all actions performed while Daigotsu commands its body. Daigotsu may return to his own body at will, regardless of range, or may shift his soul to another oni within sight of the possessed oni as a standard action. Daigotsu is aware of all abilities of his host and may use them. The caster level of any

spell-like abilities of the host becomes Daigotsu's caster level, but Daigotsu may not cast his own spells or use his own natural abilities (with the exception of this one) while within a host. He may use all of the host's feats as well as his own. He may use the host's attack bonus rather than his own, if he wishes. If Daigotsu's host is killed, Daigotsu's soul returns to his body regardless of range. This ability also allows Daigotsu to possess any bodies recently possessed by Iuchiban or Yajinden, leading Daigotsu to believe the origins of this ability are more closely tied to Iuchiban's khadi magic than his oni heritage.

Oni Vision — Daigotsu may scry on any oni, at will, as a standard action. The scry attempt is always automatically successful within the boundaries of the Shadowlands.

Outsider — Daigotsu is a native outsider; he may be banished but not dismissed.

Spell Resistance 15.

Taint Resistance — Since his return from the dead, Daigotsu no longer bears the Shadowlands Taint and cannot accumulate or draw upon Taint in any way, nor can he cast any maho spells. Further, he gains a +6 bonus on all saves vs. maho spells.

Possessions: amulet of natural armor +5, Daigotsu's Blade (functions as a +5 *vornal katana* of wounding), Daigotsu's Mask (functions as a *periapt of wisdom* +6 and a *ring of protection* +5), haori of resistance +4.

DAIGOTSU, FALLEN LORD OF THE SHADOWLANDS

Earth: 5

Willpower: 7

Water: 4

Fire: 4

Intelligence: 7

Air: 5

Awareness: 6

Void: 4

School/Rank: Iuchi Shugenja 8 (see sidebar)

Dojo: Temple of the Ninth Kami

Honor: 1.0

Glory: 0.0 (10.0 in the Shadowlands)

Advantages: Allies (Fu Leng), Benten's Blessing, Clear Thinker, Hantei Blood, Great Destiny, Leadership, Magic Resistance (6), Strength of the Earth (8)

Disadvantages: Sworn Enemy (Iuchiban, most of Rokugan, Emma-O)

Spells: Daigotsu has extensive knowledge of magic, and can cast any spell available to a shugenja of his rank. He can no longer use any form of maho, though he has modified most of his spells so that they resemble maho when he casts them.

Skills: Battle 6, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 5, Defense 5, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 4, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Intimidation 7, Katana 7, Lore (Gaki-do) 4, Lore (Jigoku) 10, Lore (Maho) 8, Lore (Meido) 4, Lore (Shadowlands) 8, Lore (shugenja) 3, Lore (Toshigoku) 4, Lore (Yume-do) 4, Meditation 7, Shintao 5, Tanto 5.

Daigotsu's Special Abilities: The Fallen Lord possesses a number of unique abilities:

Oni Possession — Daigotsu may possess any oni he can see, at will. The oni has no chance to resist; its soul is automatically suppressed and Daigotsu's original body becomes inanimate while he controls the oni. Daigotsu may return to his own body at will, regardless of range, or may shift his

soul to another oni within sight of the possessed oni at will. Daigotsu is aware of all abilities of his host and may use them, but Daigotsu may not cast his own spells or use his own natural abilities (with the exception of this one) while within a host. If Daigotsu's host is killed, Daigotsu's soul returns to his body regardless of range. This ability also allows Daigotsu to possess any bodies recently possessed by Iuchiban or Yajinden, leading Daigotsu to believe the origins of this ability are more closely tied to Iuchiban's khadi magic than his oni heritage.

Oni Vision — Daigotsu may view the location of any oni he has seen before, at will. Outside the Shadowlands, Daigotsu must make a Perception roll vs. TN 40 or be unable to view that oni again for one day.

Oni Heritage — Spells and effects which affect oni also affect Daigotsu.

Taint Resistance — Since his return from the dead, Daigotsu no longer bears the Shadowlands Taint and cannot accumulate or draw upon Taint in any way, nor can he cast any maho spells. Further, any maho spell that targets him has its TN increased by +15 (in addition to the penalty from Daigotsu's Magic Resistance Advantage).

DAIGOTSU MANOBU, THE RATSLAYER

Manobu has never known any home but the Shadowlands, having been born beyond the Kaiu Wall. His father Akodo Emon was a Lion samurai corrupted during the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. His mother Hiruma Mayu was a scout who wandered too far from the Wall and found the Shadowlands to her liking when her jade ran thin. Though not particularly notable in their previous lives, they became honored heroes of the Lost, revered among the founders of Daigotsu's city.

Thus Manobu has been raised among the traditions of samurai, instructed in the way of the sword and in bushido, all carefully filtered through the sinister veil of the Shadowlands Taint. He is unswervingly loyal to Daigotsu, and merciless to all enemies. He is particularly hateful toward the Nezumi, as Crippled Bone warriors slaughtered his parents several years ago. He has become obsessed with the Nezumi, causing other Lost to refer to him as 'the Ratslayer.' It is an appellation that does not seem to bother him.

Unlike many other Lost, Manobu does not regard Nezumi as pathetic, laughable, or unworthy. He has captured and interrogated many Nezumi, eager to learn as much as possible about these strange creatures that somehow destroyed his legendary parents. He knows that the Nezumi have a rich culture and traditions as deep and lasting as the Empire's. He knows that their warriors are brave and well trained, their shugenja powerful. He knows that the Nezumi Empire that once ruled the Shadowlands was as strong as Rokugan.

He will see them all destroyed.

Manobu never underestimates Nezumi. He realizes what powerful enemies they can be when properly organized. His scouts keep a cautious eye on large tribes such as the Crippled Bone and Tattered Ear. When new tribes appear, Manobu summons his armies and rides out to crush them before they can unite with others. The Nezumi now recognize Manobu's trademark armor, decorated in the bones of their brethren.

The Ratlings refer to the Lost warrior as M'atch-tek'ch, or Tomorrow's Bushi ('tomorrow' is synonymous with 'death' in the Nezumi language). Even the Stained Paw Ratlings, fellow servants of Daigotsu, avoid Manobu. Crippled Bone chieftain Peptrehek has promised two seasons of cooked meat and fine furs to any Ratling who delivers M'atch-tek'ch's severed head to him. Manobu knows his reputation among the Nezumi, and it pleases him.

For a time, Manobu was forced to set aside his crusade. When Iuchiban defeated Daigotsu and the Dark Lord fled the City of the Lost, Manobu was one of many who followed him. In the young samurai's mind, there was no other true choice. Daigotsu had founded the city. He had brought the Lost their greatest victories. His mother and father had served the Dark Lord with honor. Manobu would serve no other lord, especially one that spat upon the god Daigotsu had taught him to revere. He followed Daigotsu into hiding, and began girding his remaining forces for an eventual counterattack. It galls Manobu that Daigotsu has come to rely so heavily upon his Stained Paw allies, but he knows better than to question his lord's plans.



Recently, Manobu's obsession with the Nezumi has proven fruitful. When Manobu's agents discovered Nezumi ruins deep in the Shadowlands, his extensive knowledge of Nezumi culture allowed him to recognize the ruins as pre-dating the existence of the Empire. According to Nezumi legend, such a city would contain powerful magic and wisdom lost to eternity. Manobu mobilized his forces to take the city for the Dark Lord, but was vexed to discover that the Crippled Bone Tribe had also established a strong presence in the city.

For the time being, the Nezumi ruins are split equally between Manobu's followers and the Crippled Bone, with neither yielding an inch of ground. The ancient Nezumi relics already discovered have convinced Manobu that even greater treasures lie on the other side of the city. He will take them in the name of the Dark Lord, and with them Daigotsu shall gain the power he needs to destroy Iuchiban.

And if in so doing Manobu gets to slaughter more Nezumi, all the better.

DAIGOTSU MANOBU

Male human (humanoid, Shadowlands), Samurai 9/Daigotsu's Elite Guard 1: CR 10; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 10d10 + 30; hp 110; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (touch 16, flat-footed 15); Atk +20/+15 melee (+3 katana) 1d10+14 damage; SQ Ancestral Daisho, Class Skill (Knowledge Shadowlands), Shroud of Death (gains undead subtype and immunities, except for immunity to critical hits); Honor: 1; AL LE; SV Fort +13, Ref +7, Will +10; Str 20 (22), Dex 15, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10, Taint +6; Height 5 ft. 9 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Nezumi), Battle +15, Horsemanship +14, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (Nezumi) +14, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +14, Spot +15; Akodo's Technique, Armor Focus (partial armor), Cleave, Daisho Specialization (katana), Power Attack, Versatile (Knowledge — Nezumi, Spot), Way of the Lion, Void Use, Weapon Focus (katana), (samurai techniques emulate Lion training).

Shadowlands Powers: Blood Sense, Unearthly Regeneration (See *Creatures of Rokugani™* for details).

Dojo: Temple of the Forsaken.

Possessions: +2 partial armor, +3 katana (ancestral daisho), amulet of natural armor +1, haori of resistance +2, obi of giant strength.

DAIGOTSU MANOBU

Earth: 4

Water: 4

Fire: 4

Air: 3

Void: 3

School/Rank: Daigotsu's Legion 3/Daigotsu Elite Guard 1

Dojo: Temple of the Forsaken

Honor: 1.0

Glory: 0.0 (4.0 in the Shadowlands)

Shadowlands Taint: 5.0

Advantages: Heart of Vengeance (Nezumi), Heartless

Disadvantages: Fascination (Nezumi), Overconfident

Shadowlands Powers: Blood Sense, Unearthly Regeneration

Skills: Battle 5, Horsemanship 4, Hunting 4, Intimidation 4,

Jujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 6, Kyujutsu 4, Lore (Nezumi) 6, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Nezumi Language 3.

DAIGOTSU MECHANICS

ANCESTORS (YOKAI)

The Daigotsu family have a strange relationship with the yokai. Since the ascension of the Dark Lord, wandering spirits of the Tainted dead have flocked to the City of the Lost. Some were merely curious. Others were fallen Shadowlands warlords jealous of this upstart. Some were drawn by Daigotsu's connection to Fu Leng, eager to serve his disciple. Daigotsu sensed the arrival of these spirits, and commanded his Lost to honor them as they would their ancestors. Shrines were built to their accomplishments. After a time, many of the vengeful or jealous spirits became protective of Daigotsu and his servants. When the Daigotsu family was formed, some of these spirits also took the Dark Lord's name and became proper ancestors of the family.

DAIGOTSU MIZUSHAI

The spirit Mizushai is a mystery even to those it chooses to protect. Mizushai is also called the Mist of the Black Finger River, for before it came to serve the Daigotsu family this malevolent ghost haunted that place. Mizushai is neither male or female, merely an indistinct cloud that occasionally takes monstrous forms. When it haunted the river it would lead wandering Crab to their dooms, confusing them and leading them deeper into the Shadowlands with its eerie moans.

Since coming to serve Daigotsu, the spirit has become more lucid. When it chooses to speak, it reveals volumes about the terrain and history of the Shadowlands. It knows of places no one else has seen, of creatures that no one has survived. Daigotsu theorizes that the spirit is a powerful corrupted kami, a spirit of the land that has been here since the fall of Fu Leng.

MIST OF THE BACK FINGER

ANCESTOR FEAT: DAIGOTSU MIZUSHAI

You have a supernatural awareness of your surroundings when in the Shadowlands.

Prerequisite: Taint Rank 1+

Benefit: You gain a +4 to all Search, Spot, Listen, and Wilderness checks while in the Shadowlands. You can unerringly find any location in the Shadowlands that you have visited before, even if the location has changed since the last time you were there.

DAIGOTSU MIZUSHAI

(3 POINTS)

You have a supernatural awareness of your surroundings in the Shadowlands. You gain two Free Raises on all Hunting rolls while in the Shadowlands. You can unerringly find any location in the Shadowlands that you have visited before, even if the location has changed since the last time you were there.

DAIGOTSU HYOTARU

In life, Iuchi Hyotaru was reviled as a madman. He betrayed the Unicorn clan and willingly entered Iuchiban's service during the Bloodspeaker's second assault upon the Empire. His path of murder and betrayal elevated him to the highest ranks of the Bloodspeakers, and he became Jama Suru's personal advisor. Unfortunately the city of Ryoko Owari fell from the Bloodspeakers' grasp in large part because Hyotaru refused to recognize the ronin, Reichin, as a legitimate threat. Jama Suru punished Hyotaru before he left, binding the Iuchi's tormented spirit in a large stone on the outskirts of Ryoko Owari.

After learning the legend of Hyotaru from an interrogated Bloodspeaker prisoner, Daigotsu freed the spirit. He promised Hyotaru his vengeance upon the Bloodspeakers in return for his allegiance. The former Bloodspeaker can be deranged and unpredictable at times, but he has been a powerful ally for Daigotsu's forces.

Bloodspeaker characters may not select Hyotaru as an ancestor, and he immediately abandons any character that willingly joins the Bloodspeakers.

THIRST FOR BLOOD

ANCESTOR FEAT: DAIGOTSU HYOTARU

You have an insatiable thirst for vengeance against the Bloodspeakers.

Prerequisite: Taint rank 1+

Benefit: You may add your Taint modifier to all damage rolls against a Bloodspeaker. You gain a +10 bonus to all Spot checks against a Bloodspeaker's Hide or Disguise checks.

DAIGOTSU HYOTARU

(5 POINTS)

You gain free Raises equal to your Taint rank on all attack rolls against a Bloodspeaker and on any Perception rolls against a Bloodspeaker who is hiding or in disguise.

DAIGOTSU HOCHIAHIME

None know for certain the fate that befell the Empress Hochiahime and Daigotsu rarely speaks of his mother. All that is known is that she was a prisoner of the Bloodspeakers for years, and that she never escaped. During the process that caused Daigotsu to become what he is, she became corrupted, and she now lingers in Jigoku as a yckai. Though consumed with madness much of the time, Hochiahime watches over her son and protects those who serve him.

Bloodspeaker characters may not select Hyotaru as an ancestor, and he immediately abandons any character that willingly joins the Bloodspeakers.

MOTHER OF DARKNESS

ANCESTOR FEAT: DAIGOTSU HOCHIAHIME

You watch over those who honor the Dark Lord's name.

Prerequisite: Daigotsu family only Taint rank 1+

Benefit: You lose no Honor when committing a dishonorable act in the name of Daigotsu or his family. You gain a +1 profane bonus to attack rolls when fighting within thirty feet of another member of the Daigotsu family.

DAIGOTSU HOCHIAHIME

(5 POINTS)

You lose no Honor when committing a dishonorable act in the name of Daigotsu or his family. You gain a Free Raise on all attack rolls when fighting within thirty feet of another member of the Daigotsu family.

TAINTED ITEMS

YAKAMO'S CLAW

During the Clan War, the Crab Clan was tempted into an alliance with the Shadowlands by the villainous Kuni Yori. As part of Hida Kisada's bargain, his son Yakamo accepted a fiendish metallic claw to replace the hand that he had lost in a duel with Mirumoto Hitomi. Unbeknownst to Yakamo, this claw was a part of the horrendous oni that eventually took the Crab hero's name, becoming the feared Oni Lord Yakamo no Oni.

Yakamo eventually tore the claw from his arm and destroyed it with the power of the Jade Hand, but an item as powerful as the Claw would not be so easily annihilated. When Yakamo later ascended to the Celestial Heavens as the new Lord Sun and commissioned the Fortune of Steel to create powerful swords for each of the Clan Champions, so did Yakamo no Oni reforge its claw to be given to the mortals.

For a time this claw was worn by Nokatsu, the Dark Oracle of Earth. When the Oracles retreated from humanity, Nokatsu left the Claw behind. It now resides in the shadowy cave where Nokatsu once dwelled, awaiting a new master. Iuchiban knows of the Claw's existence, but has ordered his Bloodspeakers not to use it. He knows that Yakamo no Oni is an ally of Fu Leng and fears the Claw would make a pawn of its user. Bloodspeaker sentinels guard the cave at all time, watchful for any servant of Daigotsu who might try to take the Claw for himself.

This is, of course, exactly what would happen. The Oni Lord can see and hear everything that the Claw's user sees and hears, and reports directly to Fu Leng. The demon lord waits for the day that some Bloodspeaker foolishly dons the claw, or when some loyal servant of Fu Leng finally recovers the weapon.

Yakamo's Claw can only be used by an individual missing a hand, who presses the claw's empty socket to the stump. (Though it originally adorned Yakamo's left arm, the claw can be worn on either arm.) So long as the Claw's owner wears the claw, he accumulates Taint as if he were in the Shadowlands. Jade can protect against this accumulation of Taint normally.

Yakamo's Claw is a melee weapon that inflicts 3d10 damage per hit and has a critical threat range of 18-20. It cannot be wielded effectively unless it is attached, though it requires no proficiency if it is attached. Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialization feats may be taken for the Claw normally. It has a +6 vorpal enhancement and ignores all damage reduction. The weapon also does an extra 2d10 damage against any member of a Thunder's family (Hida, Doji, Mirumoto, Hitomi, Matsu, Toturi, Isawa, Shosuro, Bayushi, or Utaku).

Yakamo's Claw is a melee weapon that can be wielded only with its own specialized weapon skill (but if the wielder's skill is less than 5 it is wielded as if he had a skill of 5). The Claw inflicts 4k4 Wounds in combat, but cannot be wielded effectively unless it is attached. The weapon ignores all carapaces and invulnerabilities. The weapon rolls and keeps an extra two dice of damage against any member of a Thunder's family (Hida, Doji, Mirumoto, Hitomi, Matsu, Toruri, Isawa, Shosuro, Bayushi, or Utaku).

BLADES OF TRUTH AND SECRETS

The story of these two blades is now remembered only by a handful of Crab peasants. Shortly after the Maw conquered Hiruma Castle, the surrounding Crab villages began to fall to the Oni Lord's advancing armies. One of these villages, Kotaru Mura, was besieged by the Maw's lieutenant Chizaro. As the Shadowlands border extended and engulfed the village, jade supplies dwindled. Those who lived there knew that they must soon flee even if it meant certain death at Chizaro's hands.

The governor of the village, a swordsmith named Katu Haru, undertook one final desperate gambit. He threw his body and soul into the creation of two perfect swords to be used against Chizaro no Oni. Each blade was tempered with powdered jade to protect it from the Taint that now filled the village, but even the old master could not fully protect the swords from evil. Each sword was born with a curse, a twist to lead a foolish wielder to destruction. Haru died using the swords to destroy Chizaro, but his sacrifice let the villagers escape.

Since Haru's death, the Blades of Truth and Secrets have appeared a number of times both in the Shadowlands and Rokugan. In addition to the powerful curses which follow these blades, Chizaro no Oni's spawn are still particularly vulnerable to the swords, and hunt their owners.

THE BLADE OF SECRETS

Of the twin swords, this one is more infamous. It appeared several decades ago in Ryoko Owari, and a Chizaro no Oni spawn came hunting it. The resulting bloodbath reinforced a healthy fear for the Shadowlands in the City of Lies. The sword disappeared shortly thereafter and its current whereabouts are unknown.

The Blade of Secrets is a +3 *speed katana*. The blade overcomes all crystal and jade damage resistance. The blade also has a dangerous curse. Whenever the wielder rolls either a critical failure or a critical hit on an attack roll, the blade drains two Void points. If the wielder has no Void Points remaining (or none to begin with), it deals 2 points of temporary Wisdom damage instead. If the wielder reaches 0 Wisdom, he blacks out for 8 hours. Upon awakening, he loses one point of Strength and Constitution permanently (this is not ability score damage, but a permanent reduction of the character's ability score totals).

Whenever the wielder of this sword declares Raises, the TN to hit the opponent does not increase. The wielder gains an additional die, rolled and kept, for damage any time he makes Raises on an attack roll. However, the wielder also spends one Void Point every time he makes a Raise (the GM should keep track of this secretly at first until the wielder is aware of this side of the blade's

power). When the wielder runs out of Void Points, he begins to lose Earth at a rate of one Rank per Raise made. When the wielder runs out of Earth, he falls into a coma for 35 - (Earth × 4) hours. When he awakens, his Earth and Void are permanently reduced by one, and he will thereafter be plagued with horrible dreams of violence and torment (which the GM may or may not utilize to portend dire events in his campaign).



THE BLADE OF TRUTHS

This sword is more obscure than its twin, for whenever it appears its wielder seldom survives long enough to gain much fame. It currently lies abandoned somewhere in the Shadowlands, near the parched skeleton of the Hida samurai who found it last.

The Blade of Truths is a +4 *keen katana*. The blade overcomes all crystal and jade damage resistance. The blade also carries a powerful curse. Any time its wielder delivers a critical hit in combat, the critical threat range of all attacks directed against him is increased by one (after any effects which multiply the critical range). This effect wears off gradually, with the critical threat range bonus

decreasing by one each day until it has returned to normal. If the wielder sets aside the Blade of Truths and does not use it for one week, all critical threat range bonuses against him caused by the sword's curse immediately end.

The Blade of Truths allows its wielder to reroll 9s on damage rolls as if they were 10s. The blade ignores the invulnerability of Shadowlands creatures. The blade also carries a powerful curse. Any time more than two dice are rerolled on the sword's damage rolls, all damage rolls against the wielder roll and keep an extra die. This effect wears off gradually, decreasing by one die per day until the bonus is gone. If the wielder sets aside the Blade of Truths and does not use it for one week, all damage bonuses against him caused by the sword's curse immediately end.

SHADOWLANDS MATERIALS

The craftsmen of the Shadowlands are a creative, if gruesome, lot. Weapons and tools born in the Shadowlands are often made of peculiar materials, and possess strange abilities thanks to their unique origins.

LIVING BONE

Though bone generally makes a poor choice of materials for all but the most crude and primitive weapons, some enterprising maho-tsukai necromancers have made it more effective. Just as undead are given a semblance of life with magic, so are bone weapons and armor given a resilience greater than normal. This resiliency comes at a price, however, as the living bone has a thirst for blood.

Living bone weapons and armor have a +2 natural enhancement bonus that stacks with any other enhancement bonus originating from maho. Living bone weapons must be used on a living target once per day, and living bone armor must be soaked with fresh blood once per day, or they become 'thirsty.' A thirsty living bone weapon forces its holder to make a Will save (DC 20) once per hour or turn the weapon on himself to feed it. Thirsty living bone armor forces its wearer to make a Strength check (DC 20) once per hour or the armor seizes physical control of its wearer and forces him to draw his own blood in some manner. Living bone armor and weapons found randomly in the Shadowlands are usually thirsty. Living bone radiates the Shadowlands Taint.

Living bone has a hardness of 15 and 25 hit points per inch of thickness.

Living bone weapons roll an extra die on all attack and damage rolls. Living bone armor grants a +4 bonus to the wearer's TN to Be Hit. Living bone weapons must be used on a living target once per day, and living bone armor must be soaked with fresh blood once a day, or they become 'thirsty.' A thirsty living bone weapon forces its holder to make a Willpower roll vs. TN 20 once per hour or turn the weapon on himself to feed it. Thirsty living

bone armor forces its wearer to make a Strength roll vs. TN 20 once per hour or the armor seizes physical control of its wearer and forces him to draw his own blood in some manner. Living bone armor and weapons found randomly in the Shadowlands are usually thirsty. Living bone radiates the Shadowlands Taint.

BLACKSTEEL

Blacksteel is low-grade Rokugani steel, dusted with corrupted obsidian during the forging process. The blades thus bear just enough of Jigoku's corruption for their wounds to be slightly more painful than normal. Though the Taint the blades carry is minimal, those who carry blacksteel for long periods of time succumb more easily to poison, sickness, and the Shadowlands Taint. As blacksteel is cheap, easy to produce, and powerful it has become particularly popular with ronin, bandit gangs, and other unsavory groups.

The Kuni Witch Hunters loathe blacksteel, for it radiates no obvious Taint. Any blacksteel weapons they discover are confiscated and destroyed. Any individuals they find forging blacksteel are arrested and executed.

Blacksteel weapons gain a +2 damage bonus on all critical hits. Any individual carrying blacksteel on his person for longer than an hour suffers a -1 profane penalty on all Fortitude saves. Multiple blacksteel weapons impose a cumulative effect. If a person uses blacksteel regularly for a week, this penalty increases by 1. The penalties imposed by blacksteel fade after one week of not using blacksteel. Blacksteel armor has no beneficial properties, though the penalties are the same.

Lost characters suffer no ill effects for using blacksteel weapons. Most samurai of the Daigotsu family wield blacksteel weapons.

Blacksteel has a hardness of 10 and 30 hit points per inch of thickness.

Blacksteel weapons do five extra Wounds on any damage roll where 10s are re-rolled (only once per damage roll). Any individual carrying blacksteel on his person for longer than an hour suffers a +5 TN penalty on all Earth, Willpower, and Stamina rolls. Multiple blacksteel weapons impose a cumulative effect. If a person uses blacksteel regularly for a week, this penalty increases by another +5. The penalties imposed by blacksteel fade after one week of not using blacksteel. Blacksteel armor has no beneficial properties, though the penalties are the same.

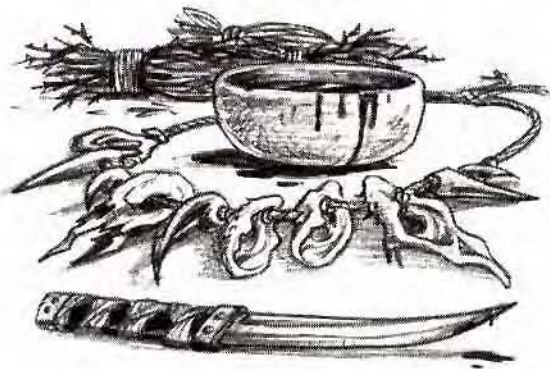
Lost characters suffer no ill effects for using blacksteel weapons. Most samurai of the Daigotsu family wield blacksteel weapons.

ONI CHITIN

With the powerful invulnerabilities many oni possess, it was only a matter of time before some inventive armorsmith attempted to create resilient armor from their hide. The Crab experimented with this for a time, but found the processes used to cleanse oni chitin of the Taint also removed all of its protective ability. Some less ethical smiths have solved this problem by simply leaving the demonic remains Tainted. Thus a number of Lost samurai, ronin bandits, and maho-tsukai can occasionally be found wearing fearsome armor carved from the hides of oni.

Daigotsu and his followers are cautious about the use of this armor, as some oni are greatly offended by it. The Daigotsu family create this armor only from the flesh of bestial and predatory oni, never from the intelligent oni that are their allies.

True oni chitin is easily distinguishable from normal Rokugani armor. It tends to be jagged, uneven, and of unusual color. In addition, some varieties of oni chitin still retain a bit of life — pieces of the armor might move of their own accord, hiss when their wearer is threatened, or exude blood and bile.



Oni chitin armor bestows damage reduction of 5/+2 (jade) on its wearer. Its wearer is also exposed to Taint as if he were in a corrupted environment. A person who wears oni chitin armor in a corrupted environment exhausts any jade protection he wears twice as quickly. A person wearing oni chitin armor is vulnerable to spells and effects as if he had the Shadowlands subtype.

Chitin has a hardness of 20 and 25 hit points per inch of thickness.

Oni chitin armor grants its wearer Carapace 5 which is ignored by jade weapons. Its wearer is also exposed to Taint as if he were in a corrupted environment. A person who wears oni chitin armor in a corrupted environment exhausts any jade protection he wears twice as quickly. A person wearing oni chitin armor is vulnerable to spells and effects as if he had the Shadowlands Taint.

PIT-FORGED OBSIDIAN

This material is the celestial counterbalance to Blessed Jade, the rare and powerful form of jade created in the Realm of the Blessed Ancestors. Rarely seen outside the Shadowlands, pit-forged obsidian is perhaps the closest thing to pure evil that the Empire has seen. More powerful and steeped with corruption than ordinary obsidian and corrupted jade, pit-forged obsidian is found only in the Festering Pit. This jagged black stone is covered with sharp edges, difficult to handle without receiving a thousand tiny cuts. The stone absorbs all light and heat, causing it to appear as a matte black mass surrounded by unearthly cold. Any normal jade that comes into contact with pit-forged obsidian is immediately reduced to black sludge. If blessed jade (described in *Fortunes and Winds*) touches an equal amount of pit-forged obsidian, both materials are immediately and wholly destroyed.

Daring *maho-tsukai* sometimes forge items of powerful dark magic from this stone, though it is quite dangerous in its raw form. The few samples that have escaped past the Wall have wrought havoc and corruption. The Witch Hunters and Inquisitors have thus far neutralized and destroyed every item of pit-forged obsidian known to have crossed the Kaiu Wall, but are ever vigilant for more.

A piece of pit-forged obsidian radiates a corrupted environment in a thirty-foot radius. If the pit-forged obsidian is already in a corrupted environment, all jade in the area is exhausted twice as swiftly by the resulting Taint. Those who carry pit-forged obsidian may not be protected from the Taint by any means (unless they are naturally immune, like a *Nezumi* or *Naga*).

Any target struck by a weapon made of pit-forged obsidian must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or suffer 1d2 Strength damage and gain 1d4 points of Shadowlands Taint (Lost characters and natural Shadowlands beasts do not accrue Taint in this manner). Armor made from pit-forged obsidian protects its wearer from all effects that specifically target creatures with the Shadowlands subtype, except for effects that detect Taint. Pit-forged obsidian always radiates overwhelming levels of Taint to any detect spells, which are effective at double the normal range.

Pit-forged obsidian has a hardness of 20 and 15 hit points per inch of thickness.

Any target struck by a weapon made of pit-forged obsidian must make an Earth roll vs. TN 20 or suffer a +2 TN penalty to all rolls for one day and accrue points of Shadowlands Taint equal to half the number of Wounds inflicted (round down; Lost characters and natural Shadowlands beasts do not accrue Taint in this manner). Armor made from pit-forged obsidian protects its wearer from all effects that specifically target creatures with the Shadowlands subtype, except for effects that detect Taint, which are effective at twice the range and always indicate overwhelming levels of corruption.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE CHUDA

PLUMBING
THE DARKNESS
PART THREE

"I must rest for a moment," Hatori insisted, setting aside his brush and rubbing his hands briskly. "This is all... a bit much to take in."

"Of course," Gensaiken said. By his tone he might have been discussing the weather, or fashion. "We can continue whenever you are ready."

Hatori reached for a cup of tea gone cold with hands that shook, and not only from exhaustion. "The Daigotsu," he said in a soft, conspiratorial voice, "are like something from a nightmare."

"Yes," agreed Gensaiken. "That is their reason for existence. They are meant to be everything that Rokugan is, only sinister and evil. That was Daigotsu's plan."

"A plan that seems to have availed him little," Hatori said in a vindictive tone. "They serve him no longer. Cold comfort, but comfort nonetheless."

"I would not be certain of that," Gensaiken said. "There is little reason to celebrate yet." He frowned. "But Daigotsu has more servants that you should know of."

"Oni, trolls, ogres, that sort of thing," Hatori said with a wave. "Many have written of them in the past. I see no reason to repeat old information."

Gensaiken smiled slightly. "Do not be so sure. In any event, I do not speak of such beasts. Were they all that the Shadowlands possessed, the Empire would be far safer. No, there are others like the Daigotsu."

"That is not comforting," Hatori observed.

"No," agreed Gensaiken. He looked across the study to the vast number of historical scrolls. "Are you familiar with the Snake Clan and their destruction?"

"Of course," Hatori replied. "They embraced *mahe* and were annihilated for it. The Phoenix slaughtered them, their animals, everything, and then burned their lands. Nothing is said to have survived."

"A single vassal escaped. He was not samurai, but had learned his masters' dark arts. He survived the purge, and in time passed on his dark ways to his child, who in turn passed it on to hers, and so on."

Hatori nodded. "Not surprising. There are rarely absolutes in this world. To believe the Chuda were utterly destroyed has always seemed like wishful thinking."

"The line nearly did come to an end during the Clan War," Gensaiken continued. "The reigning Snake of that time was confronted and defeated by a ronin, the last actual descendant of Isawa Chuda. He was believed dead, but his kind is particularly difficult to kill."

"Who was this ronin?" Hatori asked. "How is he the descendant of Chuda?"

"That is unimportant for now," Gensaiken said. "What matters is that Tenkazu, the Snake, survived. He went into hiding and joined the Phoenix near the Clan War's end, when Naka Kuro offered fealty to those who could speak with the kami. He lived the rest of his life in obscurity, fearful of alerting his nemesis to his survival."

"How many know of this?" Hatori asked incredulously.

"Many in the Shadowlands know some of it, but few know the details. Virtually no one in the Empire knows. This must not appear in your work."

"Why not?"

"The Snake are accustomed to hiding," Gensaiken explained. "You would only expose those who combat them."

Hatori frowned. "Very well. What happened next?"

"Tenkazu had a son, Asako Mishime. Mishime longed to fully embrace his heritage, so much so that he eventually joined Daigotsu's forces of his own accord. Before casting aside his façade of service to the Phoenix, he engineered the theft of a sacred blade, the blade used to kill the Steel Chrysanthemum during his mortal life, that had been given to the Phoenix by the Seppun."

"I would hardly call such a blade sacred," Hatori muttered.

"Murder, regicide, treachery... it was certainly sacred to the Chuda," the Pekkles observed dryly. "Mishime returned the blade to Daigotsu and petitioned for the right to use it to offer fealty to others, rebuilding the Chuda. The Dark Lord readily agreed."

"The Chuda," Hatori said with a disgusted expression. "The Empire's defenders have been hunting down filth like them for over a thousand years."

"Not like them." Gensaiken's voice was dark. "They are organized, intelligent, and have resources no lone maho-tsukai could hope to match. They use the Taint as a weapon, but have not cast aside others. They are dangerous, unpredictable, cunning and devious." He shook his head. "Do not dismiss them, Miya Hatori. If your Empire does that, they will rise up and crush you before you realize they exist."

"Do they still serve Daigotsu?" Hatori asked.

Gensaiken frowned. "I do not know. My... connection to the Shadowlands was broken before Daigotsu was deposed. Mishime was loyal to him, but he is an opportunist. If the new lord can offer him power and prestige, he may well abandon Daigotsu."

"You claim the Shadowlands has changed, that it is some new and more dangerous threat," Hatori said, "but I hear only the same treachery and betrayal!"

Gensaiken smiled slightly. "What I have said is that the Shadowlands has become more and more like the Empire. Do you honestly believe that Rokugan is not filled with the same things? If so, then perhaps you are not the scholar my master believes you to be."

Hatori frowned, embarrassed to have said something so naïve. He was accustomed to thinking of the Shadowlands as nothing more than a violent realm of slaving beasts. If all of this was true...

"Please, let us continue," Hatori said. "Tell me all you know about the Chuda. The Empire must be educated."

THE CHUDA ROADS

The Path of Blood — Not truly a road, the so-called Path of Blood is literally a path between Kyuden Chuda and the entrance to the Temple of the Ninth Kami, the seat of power for Iuchiban and Daigotsu before him. The Path merges with other roads within the city, but retains a deep crimson hue along its entire length to advertise the connection between the Chuda and their master.

The Serpent's Road — This roughly hewn path leaves the City of the Lost and winds north toward the mountains that mark the border of those lands controlled by the Tsuno. The Chuda have no history of cooperation with the Tsuno, and the purpose of this road is a mystery. The occasional Chuda traveler can be seen leaving north, although to date none have been seen returning south.

CHUDA LANDS

The Chuda are small in number, but great in power. As power is the ultimate achievement among the Shadowlands, the Chuda control as much land as they can seize and maintain. Perhaps because of their meager needs, or perhaps because conflict is far from their foremost concern, the family controls very little territory. With their increasing role as Iuchiban's advisors and administrators, they may soon expand their control far beyond their current borders.

MAJOR CHUDA HOLDINGS

The Chuda value things that enhance the family's influence and power. Accordingly, they build their most powerful strongholds on sites of mystic power or near to their masters.

KYUDEN CHUDA

The presumptuously named Kyuden Chuda sits on the outskirts of Daigotsu's City of the Lost, the Shadowlands' nominal capital now controlled by Iuchiban and his minions. From this black palace, Chuda Mishime and his disciples conduct horrific rituals in the name of their evil master, garnering power and information to aid in their war against the Empire and Daigotsu's loyalists. Even the Lost fear this place, for it is a bastion of evil, of the foulest powers of the Shadowlands.

The rituals conducted at Kyuden Chuda have attracted the attention of all manner of evil spirits. Kansen, gaki, pennagolan, and all other manner of wicked creatures can be seen circling the black spires even during the brightest days. These creatures do not seem to pose any threat to the Chuda, but others who find themselves alone within the castle or even on its grounds sometimes fall prey to these beasts' supernatural hungers. The Chuda find this quite amusing.

Kyuden Chuda was constructed less than ten years ago, shortly after Asako Mishime was granted leave by Daigotsu to reform the Chuda family. Mishime gathered a small handful of powerful Bloodspeakers whose loyalty he had usurped and used an undocumented maho ritual to summon the castle from the warped earth. Those few on hand to witness its creation claim that the earth vomited forth the obsidian castle as if it were some vile thing to be ejected. The castle's existence is proof to many that despite his normal appearance and demeanor, Chuda Mishime is among the City of the Lost's most despicable inhabitants.

THE FIELD OF BLOOD

Nothing in the Shadowlands epitomizes the horrors of the Chuda like the Field of Blood, a nightmarish place even the Lost avoid. It is a vast field of blasted, barren, hard-packed earth lined with metal troughs that connect to the large stone pedestals scattered across the field. The Chuda bring their victims here, including captured Hiruma scouts, kidnap victims from Rokugan, and even members of the Lost who have become weak or unsuitable to serve. They are strapped to

the pedestals and given terrible, painful, non-lethal wounds. Their blood gathers in the metal troughs and is collected by the Chuda for use in their foul rituals. The Field's exquisitely skilled caretakers keep victims alive for days, slowly bleeding them until they are desiccated husks. Their dried corpses inevitably rise as grotesque undead beasts that serve the family for months.

CHUDA TSIMIKO, BLOOD MASTER

[Shugenja 12; Chuda Shugenja 3]

The Chuda shugenja assigned to maintain the Field of Blood was personally selected for the task by Chuda Mishime. Tsimiko is that most precious treasure, a Kuni who fully embraced the darkness for personal power. She is extremely beautiful, even by the most conservative standards, resembling a tiny porcelain doll. She is gentle and seductive with her victims, taunting them with sweet words and lustful promises. She delights in their suffering and vain hopes, claiming that it makes their blood much sweeter. Mishime tolerates her bizarre excesses so long as she keeps the Chuda amply supplied with blood, a task at which she excels.

THE TEMPLE OF VENOM

Dominating the largest chamber within Kyuden Chuda is the Temple of Venom, the primary dojo and training facility for the Chuda family. "Temple" is a somewhat misleading, as the Chuda do not revere the spirits or the Fortunes. They believe that magic is a matter of personal power and strength of will, and that all shugenja bend the elements to their liking through the sheer force of their minds. To the Chuda, maho is the purest form of magic because it discards all pretense. The strong can seize power from the kansen, fueling it with the essence of the weak. To the Chuda, magic is more a philosophy than a religion, doubtless reflecting their line's cooperation with the Bloodspeakers over the centuries.

As a result of their unique outlook, the teaching that takes place at the Temple of Venom is unlike that of any other temple in the world, even such bizarre and sinister places as the Tsuno Soultwister temples. Students are berated and chastised, even beaten, to foster anger, resentment, and frustration. These negative emotions, the Chuda believe, attract the kansen that power maho spells, therefore making it easier for the students to employ blood magic. Although this method seems to be successful, it engenders hostility as former students turn on one another and on their teachers.

This arrangement is perfectly in keeping with Chuda Mishime's plans. He wishes his underlings to be ambitious and competitive, insuring that they will be caught up in their own meager power struggles and attempts to avenge their own petty insults. This renders them unable to turn their attention toward him. Of course, Mishime does not fear any among his family, but he prefers to be certain.

CHUDA HANOSHI

[Inkyo 12; Temple of Venom 3]

A man of many roles, Hanoshi has been a courtier, magistrate, and monk in his lifetime. It was not until he fell in battle against the Shadowlands at Oblivion's Gate that he became something else: a madman. After becoming corrupted, Hanoshi became convinced that the Taint was the key to enlightenment. He went so far as to stitch his eyes shut in order to fully devote himself to the new sensations he was experiencing. Despite his obvious insanity, Hanoshi discovered many new and powerful secrets to unlocking the Taint.

Hanoshi's particular brand of madness fascinates Chuda Mishime. Even though Hanoshi is not a shugenja, Mishime offered him fealty, which the mad monk impulsively accepted. Hanoshi now teaches at the Temple of Venom, and while most cannot fathom his rambling, inane dissertations on the Taint's nature, his remarkable abilities are sufficient for Mishime to keep him around.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: This hook assumes the characters are students at the Temple of Venom. Perhaps they are ronin seeking entrance into the Chuda; perhaps they are Inquisitors or Witch Hunters gathering information, or something else altogether. Whatever the reason, the characters are students at the Temple when a senior sensei is found murdered in a very brutal, visceral fashion.

Focus: As might be expected, the Chuda are interested in the sensei's death, but not for the reasons one would normally expect. Magical investigation determines that the sensei was slain by a spirit of exceptional size and power. The Chuda leaders wish to find and capture this spirit, for it can power a variety of important dark rituals.

Strike: The spirit that murdered the sensei did not appear by happenstance. A number of embittered and abused students, despising their tyrannical sensei, combined their power to enact a particularly devious ritual.

THE BLOODWORKS

Nemuranai are created through extreme circumstances or experiences. The annals of Rokugan are full of tales wherein tremendous acts on the part of heroes have awakened the spirits within items. Building on this, the Chuda have set out to create weapons of power in their own sinister way.

The Bloodworks were established years ago following the tattooed madman Kokujin's creation of the Shameswords. This act fascinated Mishime, and he went to great lengths to learn all he could about the ritual. Although unable to duplicate the process, he learned enough to imagine it possible to reproduce the effect. He commissioned a trio of his assistants to study the process at length and produce similar results. Unfortunately, the assistants placed more emphasis on Kokujin's methods than his rituals. They tortured victims at length, believing that their suffering and death would awaken the spirits within the blades used to commit these atrocities.

Mishime was angered by his apprentices' initial results, but on taking a deeper look, he found something interesting. The crude maho rituals combined with the intense suffering had begun to awaken the spirit within the items. More accurately, it had begun to replace the kami dwelling within them with kansen who had been attracted by the pain. Although he had already disciplined his apprentices for their failure, Mishime ordered them to continue their research.

In the years since its creation, the Bloodworks, which bears an eerie resemblance to the Kaiu Forge, has steadily produced a small number of spiritually awakened items for use by the Chuda. These items are invariably sinister, with powers that would result in their instant destruction in Rokugan. Mishime has been greatly pleased with the result, as was his master Daigotsu before his exile. Iuchiban has proven more difficult to impress, himself having a tremendous gift for crafting nemuranai. As a result, the Bloodworks have fallen slightly out of favor with Mishime and the other ruling Chuda, but there is little danger of losing their autonomy so long as they continue to produce results.

CHUDA AKOROU

[Shugenja 10; Chuda Shugenja 3]

Akorou was one of Mishime's earliest pupils, a ronin shugenja angry and frustrated at the cold reception he constantly received in the Empire. Mishime sensed the enormity of his raw ambition and promised him the power and prestige he longed for. Akorou sold his soul to darkness without hesitation or regret, and now he commands power such as he never imagined.

While not a particularly powerful shugenja, his life as a ronin has left Akorou with a ruthless sense of self-preservation. He has loyally served Mishime longer than most, and his seniority combines with his tendency to destroy potential threats to keep him in power. He was among the three apprentices that founded the Bloodworks, and is the only one still living. Akorou is comfortable with his position and has little desire to move upward, as he feels his present situation is the best he can manage without taking unacceptable risks.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: A tanto created in the Bloodworks comes into the possession of a courtier attending the characters' lord's court. The hapless victim acts erratically for weeks before succumbing to madness and going on a bloodthirsty rampage. Many are slain before the courtier escapes into the wilderness, and the lord stands to lose much honor if he cannot bring the murderer of his guests to justice.

Focus: The characters are ordered to bring the madman to justice, no matter the cost. It is difficult to follow him, but the trail of bodies he leaves behind is clear enough. After a few days, it becomes evident that the man is fleeing toward the Shadowlands at an incredible speed.

Strike: The courtier is one of many recipients of a Bloodworks item, carefully placed throughout the Empire by the Chuda as an experiment in chaos. The goal is to sow discord among the courts of Rokugan and, if possible, to lure magistrates into Chuda lands so that they might become subjects for the family's terrible rituals. It is, after all, quite difficult to locate strong, pure subjects so deep in the Shadowlands.

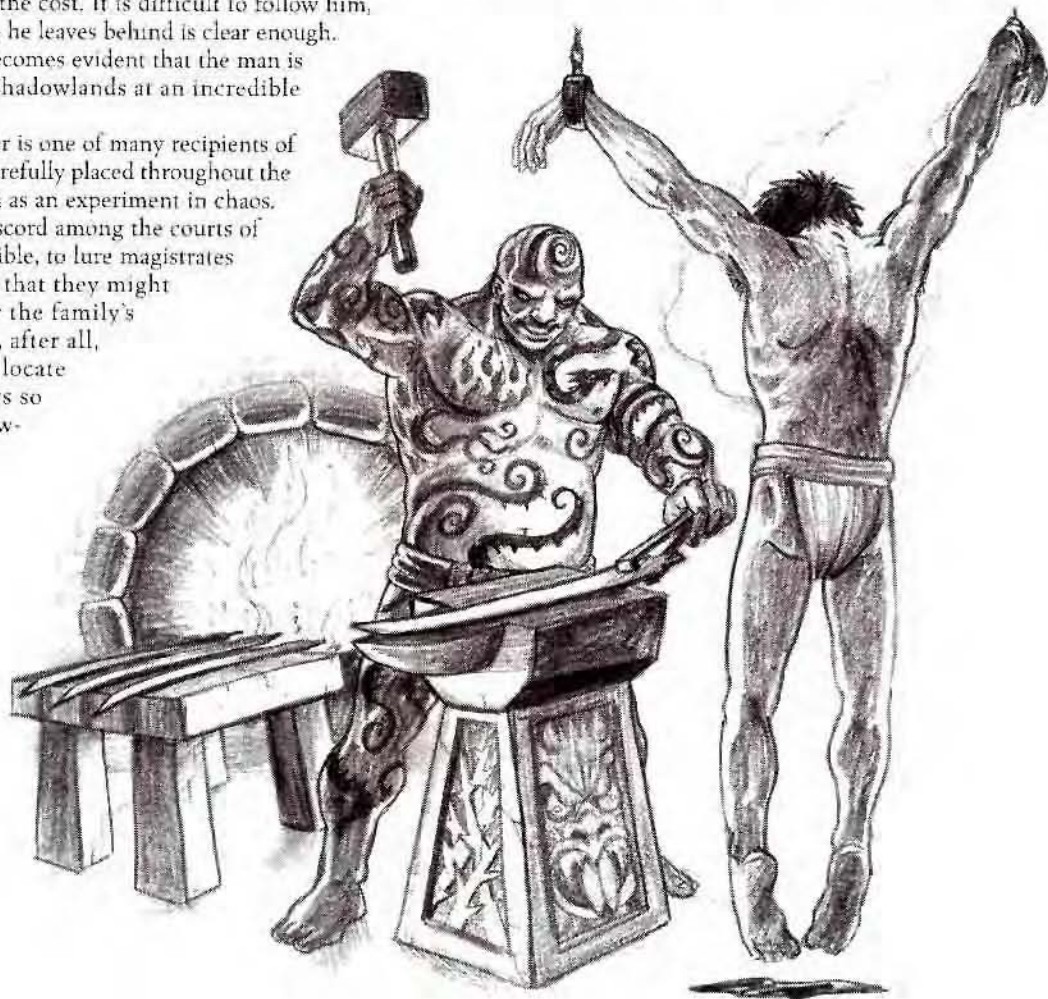
AIKOR CHUDA HOLDINGS

Possessions that the Chuda do not consider directly important to their agenda are rarely afforded attention. Those that they do deign to call their own are typically necessary for some resource or another, and are overseen by one or two shugenja

THE TEETH OF THE SERPENT

Near the Tsuno's territory is a great outcropping of crystal that resembles a serpent's fangs. The Teeth are in a secluded valley far from prying eyes, else they would likely have been destroyed long ago, given that crystal tends to have a painful effect on corrupted creatures. The Chuda discovered the Teeth a short while ago and have been studying the crystal discreetly. Mishime is not concerned that his family will be susceptible to its effects, but he deeply mistrusts the Shadow Dragon and its devious Goju and Ninube minions. He has ordered extensive study of the Teeth in case they can be used as weapons against the Dragon, should that be necessary.

The Chuda laboratory at the Teeth of the Serpent is a testament to Mishime's overwhelming paranoia. The few vassals who serve there are either those he feels he can trust (or at



least anticipate), or those who are being closely supervised by those he does. Many Chuda at the Teeth of the Serpent wonder: if they are making it possible to move against the Shadow Dragon one day, are there other Chuda poised to attack other Shadowlands minions? And are there those among the other factions poised to destroy the Chuda when the time comes?

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: For one reason or another, the characters' lord suddenly needs a lot of crystal. Perhaps a Goju assassin is plaguing his court, or the peasants have been overcome with superstition, or the daimyo has become convinced he is under surveillance by the minions of Darkness. Regardless, he has scoured the archives for any trace of a crystal outcropping and found only one: the Hiruma annals make vague reference to a huge deposit of pure and potent crystal deep within the Shadowlands.

Focus: The characters are selected to retrieve this exquisite treasure, and their lord outfits them with everything they need, including precious jade. The Hiruma are disgusted by the expense for what seems like a frivolous mission, but accompany the characters in hopes of gaining valuable information on their enemies among the Shadowlands. The trip to the Teeth of the Serpent is fraught with peril, and the party could easily spend weeks battling their way through a sea of deadly opponents.

Strike: The primary difficulty of this adventure is in the journey. Upon arriving at the Teeth of the Serpent, the characters could discover that the Shadow Dragon and his minions are in the process of dismantling the Chuda operation in the most violent means possible. If you prefer a more sinister outcome, the characters' lord is in league with the Chuda, and sent them not only to provide fresh, strong test subjects, but also to erase knowledge of the Teeth of the Serpent's existence and discourage any from seeking them out in the future.

IMPORTANT CHUDA NPCs

CHUDA MISHIME, CHUDA FAMILY DAIMYO

No one in the Phoenix lands ever suspected the quiet and unassuming Asako Mishime capable of treachery, much less of the staggering blasphemy that has defined his life. Like many Chuda unaware of their heritage, Mishime was isolated from other Phoenix during his childhood, forcing him to be both extremely loyal and dependant upon his parents. When his mother died during his youth, he came to rely on his father. Shortly after his gempukku, Mishime's father took him aside and revealed their family secret: they were the Chuda family's spiritual heirs, practitioners of the most arcane black arts.

Mishime was shocked, but also fascinated. His loyalty to his father was overwhelming, and he accepted his fate cautiously, eager to see what mysterious new wonders Tenkazu would introduce. His first lesson was to conceal the corruption that his magic would inevitably cause. Fortunately for Mishime,

this was the one area in which his father excelled. Mishime learned to wrap himself in an aura of purity that no Inquisitor could penetrate.

Years passed as Mishime practiced his dark craft in secret. Ironically, his reclusive and hermitic lifestyle gained him a reputation for piety. Mishime practiced his arts in secret, inwardly cursing the fame he accrued despite his best efforts to the contrary. He became determined to find a way to abandon the fools whose name he shared, and spent years deceiving all around him until he was awarded the title of Asako Inquisitor, a hunter of evil and destroyer of corruption.

Mishime's final assignment as an Asako Inquisitor was perhaps the deadliest and most difficult task any Inquisitor ever faced. He attempted to infiltrate the City of the Lost and discover more information about Daigotsu and his agenda. Mishime regarded this as a unique opportunity, and took to it with relish. The plan failed, however, as both his attempts at deceit and the spells that protected him from the Shadowlands failed. Confronted with certain death, Mishime countered with an offer that intrigued Daigotsu. Mishime would swear loyalty to Daigotsu if only he could be given leave to openly study the arts he had practiced in secret his entire life. Curious and with little to lose, Daigotsu agreed.

For a short time, Mishime lived a double life. In the Shadowlands, he was Chuda Mishime, the self-declared heir to the Snake Clan's lost legacy. In Rokugan, he remained Asako Mishime, a quiet Inquisitor scarred by the horrors he witnessed in the Shadowlands. Mishime's continued presence in Rokugan had a purpose: when Daigotsu launched his attack on Ootosan Uchi, Mishime was there to take advantage of it. A contingent of Seppun were in the city to present a nemuranai to a Phoenix representative for safe-keeping: the sword that had ended the mortal life of Hantei XVI, the Steel Chrysanthemum. Mishime attacked and killed them, but the sword passed to the Phoenix in spite of his efforts.

Months later, Mishime succeeded in wresting the blade from the Phoenix through simple deception — but the theft brought Mishime into conflict with Reikado, the man who had plagued his father years ago. Victorious, Mishime brought the blade and presented it to Daigotsu, asking only that he be allowed to use the blade to swear others to the Chuda, the recreated family that would serve the Dark Son under Mishime's direction. Daigotsu readily agreed.

With the prospect of recreating the Chuda before him, Mishime finally abandoned the shallow, meaningless life he had led in Rokugan. He committed himself fully to aiding Daigotsu in creating a new Empire. He did not allow his zeal to cloud his judgment, however, and was extremely selective in his choice of who would join the Chuda. Only the finest, brightest *maho-tsukai* were worthy to bear the name of his ancestors, and in the six years since the family was created, he has only accepted a few dozen members into his powerful new family.

Mishime's agenda has changed somewhat with Iuchiban's return. Despite his perceived loyalty to Daigotsu, Mishime considers Iuchiban a kindred spirit. Like Iuchiban, Mishime has no faith in Fu Leng. He places his faith only in what power he can control, and Iuchiban controls more power than anyone Mishime has ever met.

CHUDA MISHIME, CHUDA FAMILY DAIMYO

Male human Chuda, Shu6/Tsu8: CR 14; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 6d6 + 12 and 8d8 + 16 (hp 88); Init: +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd. 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 armor,

+2 Dex); Atk +13 melee (1d4+4, +3 tanto of spell-storing); SQ Class Skill — Knowledge (Maho) (family bonus), Elemental Focus, Sense Elements, Taint Suppression, Blood Conversion, Spell Conversion (has converted all spell levels to Maho), Maho Metamagic; Honor 0; AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +14; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 19, Wis 20, Cha 16; Taint +7; Ht: 5 ft. 6 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Bakemono, Oni), Alchemy +21, Concentration +19, Craft (tanto) -13, Diplomacy +12, Knowledge (maho) +21, Knowledge (Phoenix Clan) +16, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +21, Scry +21, Spellcraft +21, Craft Wondrous Item, Hidden Threat [Ancestor: Chuda Tenkazu], Improved Initiative, Maho Focus, Scribe Scroll, Toughness.

Possessions of Note: +3 tanto of spell storing, amulet of natural armor +2, haori of resistance +2.

Spells Known (5/5/4/4/4/3/2); Base DC 17 + spell level; Elemental Focus — Earth, Chuda School: 1st — bane, cobra's breath, doom, inflict light wounds, ray of enfeeblement; 2nd — darkness, death knell, inflict moderate wounds, kiss of the toad, summon swarm; 3rd — animate dead, contagion, poison, vampiric touch; 4th — cloud of taint, inflict critical wounds, phantasmal killer, polymorph self; 5th — blood of fire, cloudkill, nightmare, slay living; 6th — circle of death, create undead, harm; 7th — control undead, finger of death.

**CHUDA MISHIME,
CHUDA FAMILY
DAIMYO**

Earth: 4

Fire: 3

Intelligence: 5

Water: 3

Perception: 4

Air: 5

Void: 3

Taint: 4.2

School/Rank: Chuda

Shugenja 5

Honor: 0.1

Glory: 5.7

Advantages: Ancestor (Chuda Tenkazu), Great Destiny

Disadvantages: Benten's Curse, Driven, Obligation, Sworn Enemy (Reikado)

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Chisaijutsu 3, Etiquette 3, Heraldry 4, History 5, Investigation 4, Lore (Maho) 6, Lore (Shadowlands) 5, Poison 3, Shintao 3, Sincerity 5, Spell Research 6, Stealth 4, Tantojutsu 4, Theology 3, Torture 3

Spells: As head of a maho-wielding family, Mishime has access to perhaps the largest library of blood magic spells in existence. Given that he also has a virtually unlimited supply of blood, Mishime can cast any maho spell, including many previously unknown spells that simulate elemental effects. Mishime may also cast elemental spells, particularly Earth spells, as the GM deems appropriate.

**SHAHAI, DARK DAUGHTER
OF FU LENG**

Youngest child of the Iuchi family daimyo, Iuchi Shahai wanted for little. She was Iuchi Daiyu's only daughter, and bore such a striking resemblance to her late mother that Daiyu could refuse her nothing. It was not long after her gempukku that her thoughts turned to subjects normally forbidden, as spoiled, bored young people's minds often do. So at first, it was nothing more than morbid curiosity that led Shahai to investigate maho.

It was in a small copse of trees near Shiro Iuchi known as

the Forest of the Dreamers that

Shahai's life changed forever. The

forest was forbidden, but it

was not difficult for Shahai

to gain entry. Once within,

she marveled at the twisted

trees that supposedly served as

home to evil dream spirits, and

wondered at the deaths caused by

those spirits centuries before. And

then she discovered a strange white

stone buried in the dirt, with only

a small portion showing. Overcome with

a strange curiosity, Shahai attempted to

unearth the stone.

It was no stone, but a human skull — and

not just any skull, but one that spoke to

Shahai in whispers only she could hear.

A skull that called itself "grandfather," and

promised to teach her secrets. Shahai

began a descent into darkness that would

shame not only her father, but her

entire family. She spent the years

following the Clan War embroiled in

plots to destroy her family, gaining

allies among the Bloodspeakers

with "grandfather's" help. Eventu-

ally, her plots became too grandiose

to conceal, and she was revealed as a

maho-tsukai and a murderess. Her own

father ordered her execution, but she

escaped and hid until the Battle at

Oblivion's Gate.

The years following the Darkness's

defeat were relatively quiet ones. Shahai

could not return to the Unicorn lands,

but it was an easy matter to disap-

pear into the Empire-wide network

of Bloodspeaker cells. Her consider-

able power made it a simple matter for

her to gain influence and prestige among the

cult, and soon she was given virtually unlimited access to

the spells and rituals maintained by every cell she visited.

Shahai's power grew by leaps and bounds. Among her most

interesting discoveries was a man called Daigotsu, rumored to

be the product of a bizarre Bloodspeaker experiment and an

extraordinarily powerful maho-tsukai. The two were instantly

attracted to one another, but Daigotsu disappeared before their

relationship developed. Months after Daigotsu's disappearance,

leaders among the Bloodspeakers requested that Shahai

find him. Curious for her own reasons, she readily complied.



Shahai's search took her deep into the Shadowlands, her powerful spells and the presence of "grandfather" keeping her safe from marauding beasts. There, she encountered the arrogant creature called the Dark Daughter of Fu Leng, who led her to a mysterious city. Shahai was shocked to discover the city had been constructed by an army of Lost samurai led by Daigotsu. Daigotsu invited Shahai to join him; she accepted by slaying the Dark Daughter with a powerful ritual and assuming her place in the Shadowlands hierarchy.

The new Dark Daughter actively aided Daigotsu's war effort. She assisted in the sieges of the Great Carpenter Wall and Otsan Uchi, and she personally fought the Sword, Toturi Tsudao, in the depths of Shinomen Mori. Shahai and her pawn, the corrupted ronin Mirumoto Junnosuke, were supposedly slain in that confrontation, but the Empire soon learned it is all but impossible to kill the Dark Daughter of Fu Leng.

Since Daigotsu's death at Tsudao's hands, Shahai has worked tirelessly to restore his full power. She was personally responsible for locating the Tomb of Iuchiban and putting into motion the series of events that led to his release, hoping that he would be able to aid in Daigotsu's restoration. Iuchiban proved far less grateful than she had imagined, and her lord and master attacked and dethroned her lover before she realized what was happening.

Shahai now sits in a precarious position. She is ostensibly one of Iuchiban's most favored advisors, yet her heart still yearns for her to go to Daigotsu's side and aid him in recovering what she believes is rightly his. In the depths of her twisted, corrupted heart, she feels the stirrings of affection that defy all lust for ambition and power, the precepts she has revered above all else for years. Is it possible, she wonders, for the Dark Daughter to know love?

SHAHAI'S SCHOOLS

Shahai is listed as a student of the Chuda shugenja school. Although she has never studied with the Chuda, her style of magic is very similar to theirs in that it focuses on maho. This, together with the fact that she often associates with the Chuda, is the reason for her inclusion in this chapter.

SHAHAI, DARK DAUGHTER OF FU LENG

Female human Unicorn *Shu7/Tsu11*: CR 18; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 7d6 + 21 plus 8d8 + 24 (hp 123); Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (touch 13, flat-footed 19); Atk +9/+4 melee (1d4+1, +2 tanto of wounding); SQ Class skill — Spellcraft (family bonus), Sense Elements, Suppress Taint, Blood Conversion, Spell Conversion (has converted all spell levels to Maho), Maho Metamagic; Honor 0, AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +7, Will +11; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 15; Taint +6; Height 5 ft. 5 in.

Dark Daughter Qualities: Shahai possesses the following supernatural abilities.

Akutenshi: Shahai is considered to have all the abilities conferred by the akutenshi template found in *Oriental Adventures*,™ with the exception of shapeshift.

Dark Presence: Any creature possessing either the Shadowlands subtype or any amount of Shadowlands Taint must succeed at a Will save (DC30) before they can attack Shahai. Those who fail are unable to initiate an attack against her, although they may defend themselves normally.

Damage Resistance: Shahai possesses DR 25/+3.

Maho Potency: All maho spells cast by Shahai are considered to have been Empowered. If she chooses to Empower a spell, the benefits are doubled.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Oni), Bluff +10, Concentration +18, Heal +13, Hide +9, Innuendo +5, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +12, Knowledge (Maho) +23, Knowledge (Arcana) +19, Spellcraft +23, Torture +13; Blood Sorcerer (ancestor), Craft Wondrous Item, Extend Spell, Innate Ability (speak with dead, dispel magic, slay living), Maho Focus, Maximize Spell, Meishodo, Ritual Magic.

Spells Known (6/8/13/7/7/7/6/6/4); Base DC 21 + spell level; **Elemental Focus** — Water, Iuchi School; all spells are considered maho: 0 — commune, create water, cure minor wounds, daze, detect magic, purify food and drink, read magic, summon; 1st — blood rite, cure light wounds, detect taint, remove fear, rise again!, silent image; 2nd — cure moderate wounds, detect thoughts, protection from arrows, remove paralysis; 3rd — create food and water, dispel magic, speak with dead, wonderful origami furoshiki; 4th — arcane eye, cloud of Taint, heart ripper, polymorph other; 5th — magic jar, nightmare, slay living, unhallow; 6th — circle of death, create undead, forbiddance, harm; 7th — blasphemy, control undead, finger of death, insanity; 8th — create greater undead, planar binding, symbol; 9th — weird, summon monster IX.

Possessions of Note: ring of wizardry II, bracelets of armor +6, +2 tanto of wounding, amulet of natural armor +2, ring of protection +2, meishodo: maximized cloud of taint, extended protection from arrows, maximized cure moderate wounds, extended daze.

SHAHAI, DARK DAUGHTER OF FU LENG

Earth: 4

Willpower: 7

Fire: 6

Water: 5

Perception: 8

Air: 6

Void: 3

Taint: 5.8

School/Rank: Iuchi: Shugenja 3, Chuda Shugenja 4

Honor: 0.3

Glory: 6.6

Advantages: Dark Daughter (see properties below), Innate Ability (numerous)

Disadvantages: Obligation (to Iuchiban and the Bloodspeakers), Sworn Enemy (Kuni Kiyoshi), True Love (Daigotsu)

Skills: Calligraphy 4, Defense 5, Herbalism 4, Horsemanship 4, Hunting 3, Intimidation 6, Lore (Maho) 8, Lore (Shadowlands) 7, Manipulation 4, Meditation 4, Poison 3, Seduction 5, Shintao 3, Sincerity 6, Spell Research 7, Tantojutsu 4

Spells: Shahai has access to all maho spells, plus a large number of her own devising. She also has access to all Water spells. She knows other elemental spells as the GM sees fit.

Special: Shahai possesses the following qualities as a result of being the current Dark Daughter of Fu Leng.

Akutenshi: The Dark Daughter of Fu Leng is considered to be an akutenshi, a fallen angel of Fu Leng. Shahai may be considered to possess any six of the akutenshi abilities found in Bearers of Jade at any one time. She may change these abilities by performing a two-hour ritual.

Carapace: Shahai possesses Carapace 7.

Dark Presence: No creature possessing the Shadowlands subtype may attack or harm Shahai in any way unless she specifically commands them to do so.

Maho Potency: All maho spells cast by Shahai automatically gain three Free Raises.

MINIONS OF THE CHUDA

Like the Bloodspeakers with whom they have often found sanctuary over the centuries, the Chuda have mastered several blasphemous arts that the shugenja of Rokugan barely understand. Their rituals can infuse hideous creations with vitality, creating strange new monstrosities that sacrifice their short, false lives to further the Chuda's sinister interests. Although many such entities are unique, varying from ritual to ritual, a small handful of servitors have proved useful enough for the family to commit their creation rites to memory.

THE MAHO-BORN

Among the most insidious Snake Clan practices was the kidnapping of children to perform their experiments. Silent assassins ranged hundreds of miles from Shiro Chuda to steal infants in the dead of night, often burning down houses and killing entire families to conceal their crimes. These doomed youths were subjected to horrors that cannot be imagined, and few survived the foul rituals. Whatever goal the Snake shugenja hoped to achieve is unknown, for their clan was destroyed before their practices bore fruit.

The centuries since the Five Nights of Shame have seen dozens of generations of *maho-tsukai* working in secret to revise and further these experiments, although use of live subjects has been quite limited. Progress was limited, although occasionally a shugenja of great skill made major advances. Chuda Mishime has dramatically improved upon the work of his predecessors, developing a process through which a subject can be permanently infused with the power of maho. They receive sinister mystical abilities even though they may never command kami or kansen as a shugenja.

The most potent abilities possessed by the maho-born require that the rituals be conducted upon infants, allowing the power to grow and blossom as the individual matures. Obviously, this takes a great amount of time and devotion, and the Chuda's experiments have not yet yielded a harvest of adult maho-born raised from infancy. There are a dozen young children, all between the ages of five and ten years of age, who dwell within the innermost chambers of Kyuden Shiro. These are the most potent maho-born. Mishime's personal creations. What powers they shall command upon reaching maturity no one can say, but rumors among the Lost hold that the children already possess power like that of the most potent *maho-tsuka*.

THE MAHO-BORN AND THE DESICCATED

Obviously, neither the maho-born nor the desiccated are a family in any sense. The rituals they undergo, however, tend to have a uniform effect upon their physical abilities in addition to whatever powers they may receive. The following statistics can be used to represent a maho-born or desiccated character. These abilities are only gained by characters initially created as maho-born or desiccated, and are not gained by those who become so at a later point.

While the true maho-born have not yet reached maturity, many adults have undergone the Chuda's rituals and now serve the family with terrible powers. Mishime conducted his initial experiments on unwilling subjects, but after an incident when his subject gained sufficient power to pose a threat, he restricted his attempts to power-hungry Lost volunteers.

Other Lost regard the maho-born with a mix of trepidation and admiration. Their strange abilities and typically elitist attitude tend to inspire distrust and hostility among many, but at the same time their mystical powers, unique even among the Taint-empowered Shadowlands armies, cause them to be regarded almost as holy warriors.

The exact rituals used to create a maho-born are known only to a handful of Chuda, but they involve heavy ritual scarring and the binding of a kansen into the subject's living blood, uniting the two entities until one dies. Some maho-born manifest their abilities instantly upon receiving the ritual, while others take years to fully develop their true potential.

THE MAHO-BORN DOJO

The maho-born tend to keep to themselves. The Chuda, seeing the benefit of sequestering their minions from outside influences, have provided them with a dojo and facilities on the outskirts of Kyuden Chuda. Here, the maho-born practice martial arts in private, developing their unique abilities. Indeed, the maho-born are similar to many samurai families in that their lives consist exclusively of martial exercises and service to their lords, the Chuda.

THE MAHO-BORN

Current Daimyo: None. The maho-born are universally sworn to serve the Chuda, and have no leader of their own.

Favored Class: Fighter

Starting Honor: 0

Class Skill: Intimidation

Starting Outfit: Masterwork tetsubo and ashigaru armor

THE MAHO-BORN

Benefit: +1 Strength.

THE DESICCATED

The desiccated are a particular type of undead that came about purely as a by-product of Chuda blood-gathering rituals in the infamous Field of Blood. In the Field, the Chuda slowly drain victims of all their blood over a period of days, attracting evil spirits with their horrendous suffering. While these benefits alone would surely have been enough to satisfy the sadistic Chuda, it was discovered shortly afterwards that the dried, ruined husks of victims often became vessels of exceptional quality for the many kansen summoned by pain and agony.

The Desiccated, as these undead became known, are different from many forms of undead in the Shadowlands because they retain a semblance of intelligence. The spirits that possess the bodies can access vague memories from the husk's former life, and can understand those who speak to them, although they are unable to communicate in return (all attempts at speech produce dry, rasping sounds that often result in clouds of dust and dead flesh bursting forth from the ruined throat).

Although crude and hostile, the desiccated are not stupid. They have established a rough pecking order, and while they all feel some measure of anger toward the Chuda as a result of their hosts' latent memories, they serve the family of their own free will, knowing that their service will be rewarded. In many ways, these warped beings' very existence allows the kansen who occupy them the opportunity to experience life among the physical realm in a way never previously imagined. They gain the abilities conferred by a physical body, along with the difficulties associated with uncontrollable emotions and frustrating partial memories.

THE HOUSE OF DUST AND ASH

With twisted Chuda humor, the large facility created for the desiccated was built and named in the manner of a geisha house. The corpses taken from the Field of Blood are left here, usually in a small empty room on the second floor. The Chuda secure these rooms well, for a newly awakened desiccated typically experiences disorientation that manifests in rage. This does not last long, fortunately, and afterwards the new undead is free to join its brethren. What activities these monstrosities conduct within their private abode, none can say for certain.

BLOOD FAMILIARS

The basic precept of maho is that blood can unleash terrible power if one knows the proper secrets. It is rumored that the Tribe of Isawa knew these secrets, and the Shadowlands spirits known as kansen will gleefully whisper them in the ear of any who petition them, but the true power locked within living blood can only be touched upon with common maho. The Chuda do not practice common maho.

Chuda Mishime's absolute devotion to research has led him to secrets that have enabled him to avoid the corruption so many *maho-tsukai* suffer. He has also rediscovered forgotten rituals that have aided his fledgling family in consolidating their power.

One of Mishime's first successes was in developing a ritual that uses a *maho-tsukai*'s blood to bind other creatures. Although this has proven unsuccessful with more powerful or intelligent creatures, the Chuda have learned to use it to their advantage by employing smaller creatures as scouts, spies, and even assassins when possible. The ritual involves the replacement of blood in a minor creature, usually a rat, large insect, or bird, with the *maho-tsukai*'s blood. Such a ritual, anathema to most Rokugani, provides a permanent link between the sorcerer and beast, allowing them to channel their dark power through the creature.



Creatures that undergo this ritual, referred to as blood familiars, are invariably transformed by it. Birds appear to have crimson flecks, like a splattering of blood, across their feathers. Rats gain eerie red eyes and large, crimson stains on their fur. Insects are larger, darker, and somehow exude a preternatural awareness that belies their harmless appearance. This makes the creatures more conspicuous, but samurai rarely notice such unimportant things as animals.

The *maho-tsukai* can focus on his blood contained within the familiar and use it to perform minor rituals. The most common is a simple scrying ritual that allows the creator to see through the familiar's eyes. This seemingly innocuous ability has allowed the Chuda to wreak havoc in Rokugan, for even the Kuni and Asako can overlook such a minor maho effect.

Other abilities can be more sinister. The *maho-tsukai's* blood imbues the familiar with intelligence far beyond a normal specimen, and the creator can send simple commands to his loyal companion. These commands may not be particularly complicated, but commands such as "bring me the scroll," "knock over the candle," and even "put the poison in the water" are possible to those skilled in the art. As a *maho-tsukai* refines his control, he can command multiple creatures, which may be larger and more powerful than their mundane brothers. Rumors persist that true masters of this wretched art can even dominate the minds of weak-willed humans, overriding their thoughts and creating puppet minions that they can control from great distances. If this is true, then the Chuda have access to perfect assassins that could penetrate virtually any defense the Empire mounts.



CHUDA MECHANICS

ANCESTORS (YOKAI)

The product of a long line of secrecy and loyalty, to one another if no one else, the Chuda lord Mishime has enormous reverence for his ancestors. Those who have flocked to his banner, few of whom have any actual blood relation to the Chuda, pay homage to those who have gone before in hopes of gaining their favor and the power that accompanies it. The spirits of bygone Chuda are relatively rare, as none have passed on to Yomi and only a handful are strong enough to retain their sense of self while drifting in the nothingness of Jigoku.

CHUDA BARAKUN

Barakun was a fourth-generation ronin Chuda, a descendant of the survivor of the Five Nights of Shame. Unlike many of his line, Barakun was not bitter or vindictive. He was content to contemplate the depth and complexity of blood magic in a meditative manner befitting a monk. He was a *maho-tsukai*, to be sure, but approached it almost as an academic interest. Ironically, the least dangerous of all the Snake Clan shugenja to have existed in Rokugan since the great purge was also perhaps the most actively hunted.

Perhaps because of his unique philosophies, Barakun was not as cautious as many of his ancestors and descendants would prove to be. He was hunted by magistrates his whole life, and although he rarely committed any true crimes aside from practicing maho, he did kill a great many magistrates who attacked him. Eventually, he chose and trained an apprentice purely because he feared that the insights he had discovered during his lifetime would be extinguished if he were killed. He was eventually captured and executed, although his chosen student avenged his death.

POTENT BLOOD

ANCESTOR FEAT: CHUDA BARAKUNI

You share your ancestor's gift for powerful maho effects.

Benefit: You may add your Intelligence modifier to all spell damage rolls. This only applies when using your own blood to fuel a spell.

CHUDA BARAKUN

(6 POINTS)

You add your Insight Rank to all damage rolled as the result of a maho spell. This effect only applies if you are using your own blood to power the spell. The blood of others does not confer this bonus.

CHUDA SINJUKO

Chuda Sinjuko lived during the Snake Clan's last generation, and was slain during the Five Nights of Shame a few weeks after her twenty-seventh birthday. It was clear from an early age that Sinjuko would be a woman of exceptional beauty, and she was assiduously courted by dozens of suitors among the Chuda and the neighboring Dragon and Phoenix clans. Sinjuko's passion was duty, however, and she never married. After her induction into the Chuda's deepest level of secrets, she became a unique and dangerous assassin of all who threatened the Snake and their dark ways.

With her already incredible beauty enhanced by her Tainted powers, Sinjuko would seduce those who threatened the Snake Clan, killing them in their sleep once their passion was spent. On other occasions, she would seduce others throughout the Empire, Tainting them and discreetly exposing them to the law's justice to draw the attention of magistrates away from the Snake's indiscretions.

DARK BEAUTY

ANCESTOR FEAT: CHUDA SINJUKO

Your corruption manifests as a sinister, seductive allure that others find almost impossible to resist.

Prerequisite: Must possess the Shadowlands Taint.

Benefit: You may add your Taint modifier to the result of any Charisma or Charisma-based skill roll used to deceive or seduce others.

CHUDA SINJUKO

(8 POINTS)

Your Taint manifests in a darkly alluring way, drawing others to you with pure attraction and lust. You may spend one Taint point to gain a Free Raise on any Awareness roll intended to deceive or seduce another person. Only one Taint point may be spent in this manner per roll. Using this ability more than three times per day results in your gaining a derangement (see *Way of the Shadowlands™*).

CHUDA TENKAZU

Chuda Tenkazu was, in many ways, the most successful Chuda heir since the Snake Clan's brutal demise centuries before his birth. Tenkazu was the son of a simple merchant, a man who appeared to be common and unassuming in virtually every way. It was not until Tenkazu reached gempukku age that he learned his father was something different. Inducted into the Chuda in a dark ceremony, Tenkazu was lost to corruption at age of fifteen.

Tenkazu spent most of his adult life masquerading as a Mantis merchant, traveling all across the Empire in the years prior to the Clan War. He learned many secrets with his dark arts, and became obsessed with reawakening the spirits of his dead predecessors. Framing his nemesis, the ronin Reikado, for murder, Tenkazu stole his blade and reunited the Snake Clan daisho.

The *maho-tsukai* took the blades to the Falcon lands, where the border between Ningen-do and the spirit realms was thin. There he enacted a ritual that opened a portal, allowing the evil spirits of lost Snake samurai to reenter the world and possess mortal hosts. Tenkazu's spirit army would surely have wrought horror upon the Empire had not Reikado and a band of magistrates disrupted the ritual and closed the portal. Tenkazu was thought dead after the battle.

He survived, though his spirit was broken. He no longer lusted for power, but hid among the Phoenix as an Asako and bore a son. He taught his son Mishime the Chuda techniques and plotted for him to succeed where Tenkazu had failed, a fate that has very nearly come to pass.

HIDDEN THREAT

ANCESTOR FEAT: CHUDA TENKAZU

You are particularly gifted at concealing your dark talents from others.

Prerequisite: Must possess the Shadowlands Taint.

Benefit: You gain SR 15, but only against spells that specifically attempt to detect the Shadowlands Taint.

CHUDA TENKAZU

(8 POINTS)

You are particularly adept at concealing your corruption. Any spell, Technique, Advantage, or effect targeting you that specifically detects the Taint has its TN increased by 10. Such effects that would automatically succeed now require a contested Awareness roll before they can take effect.

THE CHUDA FAMILY

The Chuda are not a true family, but an order sworn to serve Chuda Mishime and his lord Iuchiban. The family is small but influential. There are at most three dozen members at the present time, although Chuda Mishime longs to expand that number tenfold.

THE CHUDA FAMILY

Current Daimyo: Chuda Mishime (see *Important NPCs for statistics*)

Favored Class: Shugenja

Starting Honor: 0

Class Skill: Lore (maho) or Lore (Shadowlands)

Starting Outfit: (Choose one)

1. Two 2nd level divine spells (no Air spells)
2. One 2nd level divine spell and six 1st level divine spells (no Air spells)

THE CHUDA FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Willpower.

THE CHUDA SHUGENJA SCHOOL

The Chuda teachings have survived the centuries only through deception and paranoia, two traits that have considerably colored the techniques currently practiced by the Chuda shugenja serving the Shadowlands. As in the past, there is but a single master of Chuda magic, the family lord Chuda Mishime. Unlike the past five centuries, however, Mishime has taken multiple apprentices, so many that the family now numbers in the dozens as each of his students takes students of his own. The ancient writings of Mishime's ancestors have always predicted that such abandonment will result in the Chuda line's demise, but Mishime has sworn that it will not be so.

The Chuda magical style originally emphasized water magic, the type practiced by Snake Clan founder Isawa Chuda. At some point over the centuries, however, the style has shifted to embrace earth, the element that ironically is both most similar to maho and most effective against it. Naturally, all Chuda seem to possess an affinity for maho.

THE CHUDA SHUGENJA SCHOOL (ELEMENTAL FOCUS: EARTH)

- 0 Call Earth. Creates 2–5 small stones.
- 1 Protection from Taint. +2 AC and saves, counters mind control, hedges out oni.
- 2 Tetsubo of Earth. Melee attack deals 1d10+1/two levels damage.
- 3 Tremor. Causes minor earthquake in area.
- 4 Mountain's Teeth (*Spike Stones*). Creatures in area take 1d8 damage, may be slowed.
- 5 Wall of Stone. 20 hp/four levels, can be shaped.
- 6 Banishment. Banishes 2 HD/level extraplanar creatures.
- 7 Disintegrate. Makes one creature or object vanish.
- 8 Time's Deadly Hand. Rots nonliving matter completely.
- 9 Maw of the Earth. A volcanic surge erupts nearby.

THE CHUDA SHUGENJA SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Stamina

Beginning Honor: 0.0

Beginning Skills: Calligraphy, Lore (Maho), Lore (Shadowlands), Sincerity, Tantojutsu, and any two skills.

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, and one of the two following: 3 Earth, 2 Water, and 1 Fire spell, or 3 maho, 2 Earth, and 1 Water spell.

Starting Outfit: Kimono, jingasa, scroll satchel, traveling pack, wakizashi.

THE TEMPLE OF VENOM (NEW DOJO)

The Chuda have few holdings that could accurately be described as temples, predisposed as they are against religion. The Temple of Venom, the family's primary dojo and training center for new inductees, is a temple only in name and appearance. During Daigotsu's tenure as the City of the Lost's leader, the Chuda paid lip service to Fu Leng. Now that Iuchiban has assumed control, their sole loyalty is to the raw power they command.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

The Chuda are reviled by the Empire and feared among the Lost. There is no social benefit for attending the Temple of Venom.

TRAINING BENEFIT

The methods used to instruct students at the Temple of Venom are hideous and cruel, yet effective.

Training Benefit: You may choose to ignore any one feat prerequisite for gaining entry into the *maho-tsukai* prestige class (see *Oriental Adventures*).

Training Benefit: Your Lore (Maho) skill is considered to be one rank higher for the purposes of determining what maho spells you can cast (see *Chapter Six* for more information on the casting of maho spells).

TEMPLE OF VENOM

In addition to serving as the primary temple and training center for Chuda shugenja, a small sect of corrupted monks have begun to study at the Temple of Venom. These eccentric individuals congregate around Chuda Hanoshi, a sensei at the Temple. Chuda Mishime has not expressed a desire for the monks to be removed, and thus most Chuda are afraid to move against the monks, knowing of Hanoshi's strange abilities.

Starting Honor: 0

Beginning Skills: Athletics, Jujutsu, Lore (Maho), Lore (Shadowlands), Meditation, Shintao, any one skill.

Benefit: Monks from the Temple of Venom may select one Minor Shadowlands Power at character creation just as if they were attending the "Shadowlands School" (see *Way of the Shadowlands™*). Any kiho gained as a result of advancing as a monk may be a dark kiho instead.

NEW SPELLS

The Chuda combine the most potent and vicious elemental magic with the blasphemous power of maho. The new order in the Shadowlands provides the family with resources that no *maho-tsukai* has ever had before, and the fruits of their research has been terrible indeed, resulting in new and insidious spells that they have used to great effect against the Empire.

FLOCK OF BLOOD

Transmutation

Level: 5

Components: M, S

Casting Time: 1 full round

Range: Self

Effect: Transforms caster into swarm of lesser creatures

Duration: 1 hour/level

Saving Throw: No

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You may transform your body into a swarm of small creatures, such as insects, rats, or small birds. You transform into a number of creatures equal to your total hit points. These creatures are identical to their normal counterparts except that they each have only a single hit point. These creatures also have some identifying mark, such as a smattering of crimson feathers on a bird, a blood-red splotch on the fur of a rat, or a strange red marking on a bug. When the spell ends, the creatures reform into your body exactly as it was when you cast the spell. Any creatures destroyed or separated from the group at the time of reformation disappear, and you lose one hit point.



for each creature lost. Your total hit points at the spell's end is equal to the number of surviving creatures. Lost hit points may only be regenerated by rest, and only at the normal rate of recovery. Magic cannot heal this damage.

FLOCK OF BLOOD

Element: Maho (Considered Earth for the purposes of counterspells)

Mastery Level: 4

Duration: 1 hour per Insight Rank of caster

Area of Effect: Personal

Range: Touch

You may transform into a swarm of small creatures, either rats, insects, or small birds. The total number of creatures is equal to your maximum number of Wounds. Each creature is identical to others of its kind, but possesses only one Wound. When the spell expires, you reform at the site of one creature of your choosing, and all other creatures disappear. Any that are killed or captured do not return, and you reform missing a number of Wounds equal to the total number of dead or missing animals. These missing Wounds may only be recovered through rest, and may not be healed magically.

CHUDA CREATIONS

The Chuda embody the word sinister. The notion that they create some crude mockery of life in their dark rituals, sending twisted constructs out to fulfill their will, would turn the stomach of even the strongest samurai. Yet this blasphemy is a cornerstone of their family's research and experimentation. Blood familiars, Maho-Born, and the Desiccated, three common Chuda creations, were explained earlier in this chapter. Included below are the mechanics necessary to include these entities in a campaign.

NEW FEAT: BLOOD FAMILIAR

You possess a familiar created from your own blood and attuned to your individual essence.

Family: Chuda

Prerequisites: Must know at least one spell with the maho or necromancy descriptors.

Benefit: You gain the familiar ability as if you were a sorcerer of first level. Every time you gain a level after taking this feat, the abilities of your familiar increase as if you had gained one level of the sorcerer class.

NEW ADVANTAGE: BLOOD FAMILIAR

(8 POINTS)

You gain a small animal companion — a bird, rat, snake, or something similar — that has been bound to you by a lengthy maho ritual that infuses the animal with your blood. You may, after one round of concentration, see through the animal's eyes or issue a short, one-sentence command that the animal will follow to the best of its abilities.

NEW FEAT: MAHO-BORN

You have been subjected to excruciating Chuda rituals that have infused you with the power of blood magic.

Prerequisites: Must possess the Shadowlands Taint.

Benefit: You gain the ability to cast a single maho spell as if you were a shugenja equal to your character level. This spell may not be higher than 3rd level, and is determined by the maximum spell level that you could cast if you were a shugenja at the time you take the feat. *Example:* A character who selects Maho-Born as a feat at first level may gain only a first-level spell, as this is the maximum spell level a first level shugenja could cast. You may cast this spell a number of times per day equal to your Charisma modifier.

NEW ADVANTAGE: MAHO-BORN

(12 POINTS, TRUE RONIN ONLY)

You may select any one maho spell of Mastery Level 1 or 2. You may cast that spell as if you were a shugenja of Insight Rank equal to your own a number of times per day equal to your total Insight Rank.

THE DESICCATED

Medium-size Undead

Hit Dice: 2d12+3 (16 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares; can't run)

AC: 12 (+2 natural)

Attacks: Slam +3 melee (1d6+2)

Face/Reach: 5ft. by 5ft./5ft.

Special Attacks: Breath weapon

Special Qualities: Damage Reduction 8/slashing, darkvision
60 ft., undead traits

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +3

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 10, Con —, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 1

Skills: None

Feats: Toughness

Climate/Terrain: Any

Organization: Any

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Honor: Nil

Alignment: Chaotic evil

Advancement: By character level

The desiccated appear identical to typical zombies save for their dried appearance. They are more intelligent than the average undead found within the Shadowlands, and their crude tactics and strategies can catch unsuspecting enemies off-guard.

COMBAT

Lone desiccated tend to avoid combat unless it is obvious that their potential opponent is obviously weaker. Wounded opponents are a favorite target for wandering desiccated. In groups, they tend to use deception, acting like less-cunning undead to lure opponents into a false sense of security, then using ambush and feinting to catch them off guard and destroy them.

Breath Weapon (Su): The desiccated can spew forth a cloud of mystically charged dust particles that absorb all moisture from everything they touch. This cloud is 15 feet long and 8 feet wide at its widest point. This may be done once every d6 rounds, Reflex save DC 18 half. This attack inflicts 3d6 dehydration damage.

THE DESICCATED

Earth: 3

Fire: 2

Water: 4

Strength: 6

Air: 2

Rolls to Attack: 5k3 unarmed, 4k3 dehydrate attack

Rolls to Damage: 3k3 unarmed, 6k4 dehydrate attack

TN to Be Hit: 22

Carapace: 5

Wounds: 20: +5, 40: +10, 60: +15, 75: Destroyed

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Dehydrate: The Desiccated are capable of a devastating ranged attack, spewing forth a cloud of mystical dust that drains moisture from everything that it touches. This attack has a range of 15 feet and is cone-shaped, roughly 8 feet wide at its maximum width. Using this ability is considered a Full Attack.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE TSUNO

PLUMBING
THE DARKNESS
PART FOUR

As Hatori finished scribbling quick notes about the reborn Chuda family, he looked out at the gardens near his study. The hour had grown late, and the single flickering candle between himself and Gensaiken was the only illumination. "Perhaps," Hatori said, his throat dry, "I should call one of my attendants to fetch another lamp."

Gensaiken waved a hand dismissively. "It is of no matter to me, Hatori-san. Unless the dimness of the room is making your progress difficult, I find myself more comfortable with the low light," he said, looking around casually. "Though Sezaru-sama has wrested the dark grip of Jigoku from my spirit, I never found my love of the shadows derived from the Taint. Perhaps it is my frite nature as a Pekkle, wishing to cause mischief from the darkness." Gensaiken's smile did very little to set Hatori at ease.

"I see," Hatori replied, setting his brush down. "Mischief," he repeated. "There seems to be no end to the insidious and mischievous servants of the Dark Kami that remain unknown to Roku-gan." The old historian rubbed his eyes with one hand and stared blankly down at his paper. "It is a wonder if a samurai will be able to see his enemy for what it truly is."

Gensaiken nodded somberly. "It is true that the servants of the Shadowlands are much more cunning than most realize. However, some of the beasts make little attempt to cover their nature and need for destruction."

"Hai," Hatori said. "The ogres and goblins. Trolls and oni. I have seen their like, and there is little confusion on how they must be dealt with."

"You forget, Hatori. The Tsuno. Though they are not slaves to the designs of Fu Leng like the goblins, they are as fearsome as oni and as cunning as men."

"Yes, the Tsuno," the historian said, standing to stretch his cramped legs. "I have heard of them. Though I have not dealt with them personally, I have read accounts on their nature and behavior in the war journals of Akodo generals and the writings of the Kuni." Hatori's eyes narrowed inquisitively. "You said they are not slaves to the designs of Fu Leng. What did you mean by that?"

Gensaiken stood and stared into the same garden Hatori had looked upon only moments ago. "The Tsuno are unlike anything from the Shadowlands," he said gravely, as if explaining the death of a parent to a child, "because they are not from the Shadowlands. They are not of Jigoku, but Ningen-do. Our mortal world."

"I do not understand," Hatori replied. Though the confusion was clear on his face, he picked up his brush again and dipped it in fresh ink. The old Miya had learned long ago that historians did not always instantly understand what they were recording or researching. "You say they are natives to this world, not horrors like the oni. You say they are not corrupted, then, but they bear the Taint of the Shadowlands."

"Tell me, Hatori, are you that kimono you wear?" Gensaiken asked, turning to regard the other Miya. "Or do you don it to suit your needs for the day?"

The older man looked at his papers for a moment, then back to Gensaiken. "Are you saying they wear and doff the Taint like a robe? I do not mean to sound naive, Gensaiken-san, but that is supposed to be impossible."

Gensaiken nodded slowly. "They are fascinating creatures, the Tsuno," he said, stepping to the doorway and inspecting a group of flowers. "They once were Kitsu, led astray by the ambition of their leader and banished from their race and their home. No, not just banished but sentenced to wander the Spirit Realms unanchored. The Kitsu believed that without a home, they would eventually die out without compromising the morals of their race by executing them." Delicately, Gensaiken reached out and cupped a single iris in his hands and looked at Hatori meaningfully. "But it was not to be. The Tsuno learned, Hatori. They learned to survive in the chaos between the Spirit Realms and master the ways of moving between them. For generations they made the Realm of Slaughter their home, unwilling or unable to enter the Realm of Mortals... until one day."

"Daigotsu," Hatori said flatly, having turned back to his writing as Gensaiken had spoken.

"Hai," the other man replied, brushing the petals of the flower with his hand. "The Lord of the Shadowlands brought them here to serve him, not as master and vassal but as equals. In order to achieve their goals, they allowed the corrupting touch of the Shadowlands to taint them, but it has no more hold on their souls than your sandals have on your feet. When the Empire first encountered them, all they knew was that some new breed of Tainted monster had found its way out of the Shadowlands. Instead of asking where they had come from or why, the Tami settled the matter of their origin in the eyes of the Empire."

"But why the Tsuno, and why then?"

Gensaiken did not answer for a moment. "Why Daigotsu chose to contact the Tsuno at that moment, I do not know. Perhaps it was the soonest he had learned of their existence, or perhaps he was waiting until the time was right. When the Tsuno were first seen, where did they appear?"

"Lion lands," Hatori said quietly, stroking his temple in thought and fatigue. "You said they were once of the Kitsu... do they still remember that time?"

"The Tsuno are undying, Hatori. They travel between the Spirit Realms as easily as we walk from one room to another. Each fallen Tsuno's spirit is quickly recovered and returned to his body, so long as it is intact. The Tsuno do not merely recall a time before when they were once one with the Kitsu race. They are the very same Tsuno who were banished to die alone and forgotten in the depths of the Spirit Realms."

"So it is for vengeance, then," the older Miya said somberly. "The Tsuno allied with Daigotsu to further both of their ends, and though Daigotsu has fallen, there is little to indicate that will be the end of the Tsuno's incursions."

"Yes," Gensaiken agreed, closing his fist around the delicate flower. "I will tell you what else I know of the Tsuno, Hatori. They are stronger, faster, and older than any army in Rokugan and just as organized. Like any threat, however, they are not unstoppable... perhaps." As Gensaiken opened his hand, the crumpled and broken iris fell to the ground before it was blown away by the night's breeze.

TSUNO LANDS

While having no "provinces" per se, the Tsuno control a large area of land deep in the heart of the Shadowlands, far enough south that no human has seen them and returned. This Realm-jumping race of creatures has carved its own niche in the corrupted lands under Jigoku's influence, bringing their temples

from the far reaches of Toshigoku, Jigoku and Yume-do to the mortal realm. This shift has given the Tsuno a base of operations and allows them to interact with the other denizens of the Shadowlands with greater ease.

As the Tsuno consider themselves far superior to the other Tainted races, they rarely seek out the rest of those influenced by Fu Leng's touch. However, the Tsuno's position as advisors to Daigotsu and their endless quest for revenge against the Lion Clan have made forays into the Shadowlands and the rest of Rokugan necessary. The twisted race views the Bloodspeakers and the Lost as pathetic. Goblins have long since learned to quietly accompany any Tsuno-led groups if they don't wish an early death. Only trolls and ogres command any sort of attention from the Tsuno, as the former were one of the founding races of the Empire was created and the latter are the only creatures (besides oni) that can consistently cause enough damage one-on-one to make it impossible for a Tsuno to be resurrected by the Soultwisters.

MAJOR TSUNO HOLDINGS

Tsuno structures vary between rune-inscribed buildings that look incredibly ancient and newer locations that have been constructed with obsidian and stone mined in the Shadowlands. The various holdings of the twisted race are placed for one reason: military advantage. While some structures are close to the Kaiu Wall and allow the Tsuno to mount attacks against the Crab, others are built or moved from other Spirit Realms because of the strong links between Ningen-do and some other Realm in a given location.

TOGUCHI SHINDEN

One of the newer additions to the Shadowlands, the temple of the Tsuno Soultwisters is still one of the oldest structures in Rokugan. Toguchi Shinden, also known as the Temple of Doors, was created by the Tsuno hundreds of years before Voltturnum, Oblivion's Gate, or any of the other ancient races' extant relics. When contacted by Daigotsu to join him in the Shadowlands, the Tsuno Soultwisters knew that they would need to bring their stronghold to the mortal realm. Powerful Tsuno magic shifted their temples through the Spirit Realms and placed Toguchi Shinden between Jigoku, Ningen-do and Toshigoku.

The Temple of Doors, while primarily residing in Ningen-do, has sections that bleed into the other two Realms and allow the Tsuno shugenja (as well as groups of Ravagers) to move between them with ease. Without such a convenience, travel between the Spirit Realms can be extremely dangerous. That the Tsuno have become masters of Spirit Realm travel speaks to their hardiness and indomitable will. This goes double for the Soultwisters, as one of their coming-of-age rites involves traveling to each of the Spirit Realms and defeating a denizen in combat. Many would-be graduates have found themselves torn limb from limb or stranded in a Spirit Realm for centuries when they underestimated an unknown foe. Those who do survive the grueling process are some of the hardest of their race.

Covered in runes and carvings that depict the Tsuno defeating many different races and their cycle of death and resurrection, Toguchi Shinden is a monument to the Tsuno's strength.



If anything can be viewed by their culture as religious, it's their devotion to protecting this structure and their reverence of the Soultwisters that inhabit it. The main temple is over 120 feet tall, and the grounds cover as much area as a small Rokugani city. The other buildings on temple grounds are used for equipment storage, or residences for the Soultwisters and their students.

The interior of the temple is expansive, well-crafted, and ancient. Ironically, the temple walls are reminiscent of the Asahina's grand Temple of the Morning Sun, every last inch carved with tales of the Tsuno race. Unlike that peaceful Crane temple, the walls of Toguchi Shinden are covered with stories of war, domination, and destruction. Tsuno Soultwister neophytes often stop and read the tales as a source of inspiration. The older Tsuno shugenja have long since become accustomed to the terrible stories that surround them.

Tsuno Yokoshima, leader of the Tsuno at Toguchi Shinden, is generally referred to by his title of Supreme Soultwister. Assisted by Tsuno Nintai, Yokoshima brought the temples of the Tsuno into the mortal realm. He is not an imposing figure, but most Tsuno know of his mystical abilities and his reputation for cruelty. Those few who have studied under Yokoshima are some of the most powerful Soultwisters known to the race, and also some of the most sadistic.

TSUNO KIRA

[Fighter 6/Shugenja (Soultwister) 6; Tsuno Soultwister 4] Tsuno Kira hides a dark secret under her ordinary exterior: she is the first Tsuno to believe that the humans might eventually defeat her brethren. After multiple defeats at the hands of Shinjo Shono, Toturi Tsudao, and others, Kira has concluded that although the Tsuno have strength and cunning,

the humans' superior numbers and familiarity with Rokugan might outweigh them. She has begun to study humans closely, watching the Bloodspeakers and the Lost. Kira plans to expand her studies to the untainted samurai of Rokugan.

Kira does not know that Supreme Soultwister Tsuno Yukoshima is aware of her studies, allowing them to continue out of curiosity. Yukoshima does not believe that the samurai of Rokugan can ever prevail, but figures if Kira can find a new weakness to exploit in the humans, so much the better. Yukoshima has informed the sensei of Nikushimi Shinden of this matter, and Kizuato has agreed to a mutual exchange of information on human tactics and fighting styles should Kira discover anything useful.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: The party, while visiting a retired Hida general in a village a few miles southwest of Kyuden Hida, has been contacted by a Kuni shugenja who wishes to meet with them. Local villagers say that the shugenja, Kuni Morihei, is gone for long periods of time and only shows up in the village to resupply before heading south past the Karu Wall.

Focus: The tall and gruff shugenja tells them a tale of several Shadowlands creatures he has captured, one of which sounds like a Tsuno to anyone familiar with them (anyone with Knowledge/Lore related to the Shadowlands or just about any Lion). The Kuni says that he needs a group of hardy samurai to help him slay some of the beasts who have raided the cave where he lives. He was wounded in the most recent attack, he says, and does not know how much time he has left. He assures the party that he is Taint-free and submits to any tests necessary to get the party to trust him. Tests come up negative, though a shugenja with Knowledge/Lore (Spirit

Realms or Tsuno) might sense something amiss. Only a specifically trained Kitsu or Kuni would consider the anomaly anything but the lingering effects of an ancestor's presence.

Strike: Morihei is actually a Tsuno named Kaimen, a student of Tsuno Kira. The magic with which she has masked Kaimen's Taint and changed his shape cause him constant pain and soon kill him, though not before the party reaches his cave. Appearing to be one of the creatures trapped in a cage, Kira "springs free" and fights to immobilize the party rather than kill them. Once she has subdued them, the Soultwister tortures each party member in an attempt to learn their weaknesses. The party is not doomed; the remains of the disguised Kaimen are found by a pair of Kuni Witch Hunters, who quickly track down the characters. Once found out, or if close to defeat in the initial combat with the party, Tsuno Kira attempts to escape through a portal into Toshigoku with her information. The portal, cleverly disguised as ring of stalagmites near the back of the cave, remains open for several hours after Kira leaves. It's up to the party whether they follow Kira into the unknown or simply thank the kami (and the Witch Hunters) that they survived.

NIKUSHIMI SHINDEN

Training center for the Tsuno Ravagers and location of the Tsuno Bushi "school", the Temple of Hatred appeared in the Shadowlands at the same time as Toguchi Shinden. As ancient as the Soultwisters' temple, Nikushimi Shinden's exterior is similar, covered with tales in the cuneiform language of the Tsuno. Unlike Toguchi Shinden, the stories of the Temple of Hatred describe ancient Tsuno heroes and specific historical events.

The denizens of Nikushimi Shinden often argue as to whether Bushi or Soultwister training is the more dangerous of the two regimens. The Tsuno Bushi understand that Soultwisters are truly powerful, but many of them have seen far more combat in a week than a Tsuno shugenja might see in a lifetime. Tsuno trainees are given real weapons the instant they begin their training and must fight through their entire schooling without the benefit of the Soultwisters' flesh-mending spells. Those who become too injured to fight any longer commit a form of seppuku and their bodies are incinerated.

Those Tsuno who survive are feared: they usually become leaders in the packs of Tsuno that are left in the Shadowlands to fend for themselves. The packs survive through teamwork, cunning, and stamina, fighting off oni, yokai, and other Shadowlands creatures. Such trials create a powerful loyalty among pack members, who often sacrifice their own lives to protect another in their group. Subtle spells cast by the resident Soultwisters at Nikushimi Shinden eventually generate a weak form of telepathy among Tsuno packmates. Their loyalty extends even beyond death; the pack must recover the body of any fallen member, no matter the cost. As a practical point, this means that most of the Tsuno killed on a mission are revived by Soultwister magic, but the pack members view body recovery as a matter of honor rather than logistics. Leaders of such groups are usually Tsuno Ravagers, the Tsuno's elite troops.

Nikushimi Shinden has at its center an enormous building more than 200 feet tall, bristling with spikes and towers to defend the temple complex. The structures around the temple are mostly barracks for troops and foundries that forge the powerful Tsuno Blades. Special quarters are set aside for visiting elder Tsuno, for the Master Sensei, and for the Tsuno House Guard, but all others receive identical barracks, no matter what their rank or training.

The interior of the Temple of Hatred has some small chambers for the few resident Soultwisters; the rest is carved into training dojo. Classes meet at all hours, and the clash of weapons is a constant background din.

TSUNO KIZUATO

[Samurai 16; Tsuno Ravager, Tsuno Bushi 6]

The leader of the Temple of Hatred is an old Tsuno Ravager named Kizuato. He is a gnarled, battle-scarred Tsuno who is deeply respected by all members of his race, as he is one of only three in the history of his race to have never needed resurrection even through all of his travels through the Spirit Realms. The spry old Tsuno always wears a special set of armor and his massive Tsuno Blade. Like other sets made at the foundries of Nikushimi Shinden, Kizuato's armor is made of Tsuno steel and took more than two years to craft. During that time, Kizuato taught classes and directed his troops from the forge, never moving an inch during the entire process. His presence and fortitude awakened the armor, making it the only known Tsuno item to contain several kansen's blessings as well as the energy of the Spirit Realms. The magic makes the armor indestructible and even heals Kizuato as he wears it. If the old Ravager was formidable before, he is now unstoppable.

Tsuno Kizuato has ordered his troops to bring human specimens from the Great Clans of Rokugan to study, but has been relatively unimpressed with what he has seen so far. Matsu Domotai made an impressive show of stamina, but eventually he began to be corrupted by the Shadowlands. Kizuato continues to have humans brought in, but, at this point he holds little hope of gaining any useful information from them. Special jade and crystal-lined chambers near his quarters hold the prisoners and retard the Taint spreading through their bodies. Perhaps he will eventually find a human worthy of his time.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: This is an adventure for a party made primarily of Tsuno player characters. Two members of the Tsuno House Guard are retiring to become sensei at Nikushimi Shinden. The party may participate in a set of contests and battles to determine who will fill their positions.

Focus: The player characters have three days to complete trials of stamina, dexterity, and tactical knowledge. During that time, they are not allowed to rest and any spell casting done by members of the group must be approved by one of the Ravagers who are judging the contest. No magic may be cast except for the most basic healing spells. Those found using other spells or equipment other than that provided by the judges will be removed from the contest and expected to commit seppuku for dishonoring the traditions of the Tsuno.

Strike: If the party succeeds in getting a member or two into the Tsuno House Guard, they gain a world of prestige and responsibility. However, they've also gained enemies among the Tsuno that failed. One group in particular, made up of one-horned Tsuno (the other was broken off and intentionally not healed), clearly intend to avenge their loss. Even if the party didn't get any members into the House Guard, the one-horned pack will find a reason to fight (maybe most of its members are insane, or perhaps it's the influence of outside spellcasters). It's up to the party to decide how to handle the situation and may even define the Tsuno code of honor in your campaign.

NIKUSHIMI FOUNDRY

The forges of the Tsuno are active day and night, manned by Tsuno with both Bushi and Soultwister training as well as an advanced knowledge of metals and minerals. These Tsuno, collectively known as the Furnace, create blades that meld steel and obsidian in a mystical process. They channel energy from the Spirit Realms into the metal, making the steel especially deadly to those who travel the Realms. Such blades are some of the strongest materials in Rokugan. Each Tsuno Blade takes more than three months to forge, and is considered more valuable than the Tsuno that wields it.

The massive curved blades forged by the Furnace are cooled in special vats with water kept just above freezing. Such a cooling bath would typically make a metal brittle, but some part of the process of forging causes the ice water to strengthen the blade instead. In a prolonged battle with Rokugani samurai, the resilient Tsuno weapons will eventually break all but the finest Kakita or Kaiu steel.

The Nikushimi Foundry also crafts Tsuno armor, but has no quick process to create smaller pieces of their special steel. While made with the same materials as the Tsuno Blades, the armor requires a much more complex ritual, binding the many sections of steel together spiritually. Those Tsuno who wear significant amounts of armor (like the Tsuno House Guard) must have each member individually fitted, and the enchantment process requires them to be physically present at the forge for the year it takes to create each suit. When finished, the armor turns a rusty brown or orange, usually matching the skin tones of its owner. Because of the duration of this process, Tsuno armor is far rarer than Tsuno Blades.

ARMOR TSUNO HOLDINGS

TSUKUROI SHINDEN

One of the most secret locations of the Tsuno, this temple is dedicated to the healing and resurrection of Tsuno who have fallen in battle. Many Soultwisters are brought here shortly after they are deemed fit for combat by the Supreme Soultwister at Toguchi Shinden. Once they learn to patch up their brethren, Tsukuroi Shinden's head Soultwister sends them into Rokugan to accompany groups of Ravagers during their campaigns of terror.

The position of head Soultwister at the Temple of Mending rotates from year to year, allowing the more experienced Tsuno shugenja to work out in the field with elite Ravager packs or to teach at one of the other temples. This also ensures that no one Tsuno gains influence over those who decide who will be healed or raised. The Tsuno have never actually had a problem with the Supreme Soultwister of Tsukuroi Shinden becoming politically corrupt, but tradition mandates the change, so the Tsuno perpetuate it.

Located deep within the Shadowlands, the Temple of Mending is connected to Nikushimi Shinden and Toguchi Shinden by several small portals that can only be opened by Soultwisters on either end. This allows the transport of bodies for resurrection and conversely allows revived Tsuno to easily resume their posts.

The interior of the temple has no markings on its walls whatsoever. The Tsuno believe that if an enemy were to ever

find the temple, tales of their continual resurrections and mystical processes might give the foe an advantage in future combat. Even the doors to the portals to the other Tsuno temples are bland and unremarkable, so as to make them useless to an invader.

The current Supreme Soultwister of Tsukuroi Shinden is a young Tsuno named Mosagi who has held the post for only two months. He has grown into his role quickly, but is still amazed by the number of Tsuno that go in and out of the temple each day. That number has increased markedly as the Tsuno attack the Lion and the combined might of the Imperial Legions. Mosagi is sure he and his subordinates are up to the task of healing or reviving all the troops coming in, but wonders at the increase in casualties.

VAULT OF THE TSUNO

While not exactly in Rokugan, the gateway to the Vault of the Tsuno can be found in the Shadowlands, masquerading as a pair of statues that revere Daigotsu and Fu Leng. Speaking the correct command phrase opens a portal to Gaki-do, the Realm of Hungry Ghosts, which leads directly into the Tsuno structure there. This is where the Tsuno keep their spoils of war: nemuranai they have acquired from fallen Rokugani samurai, materials from other Spirit Realms for Soultwister incantations, and anything else deemed to be useful for study. The Tsuno also house here some of the more dangerous spirits they've found in their travels of the Realms, with the idea that they may be useful for any number of parts or abilities they might have.

The vault has several small rooms towards the front of the structure to house the guards and attendant Soultwisters. The rest of the building is dominated by a multi-level safe that can only be opened by the leaders of the three temples of the Tsuno and the Captain of the Tsuno House Guard. Such precautions guard against those who might wish to steal or destroy the Tsuno's treasures.

Most of the items stored in the vault would seem useless to most Rokugani, being relics from different areas of the Spirit Realms or cages that hold specimens of different spirits and races that the Tsuno have come across. One level in particular, however, is so protected that no one but Daigotsu or Iuchiban could bypass its wards, locks, and guards. This is where the Tsuno keep the magical items that they have taken from their enemies, including those looted from slain Rokugani samurai.

Some of the items in this level include jade and crystal katanas forged by the Blessed Guard in Yomi, shards of the carapace from Nikushimi (the Onisu of Hatred), one of the only cages known to be able to trap mujina (or any creature from Sakkaku, for that matter) and various sets of armor made to protect non-Tsuno travelers from the ravages of the Spirit Realms.

Of particular interest are the weapons of Iuchiban that had been buried in the Ancient Mausoleum in Otsan Uchi. A special detachment of four of the Tsuno House Guard protect the weapons in a separate section of the vault while several Soultwisters research the enchantments that created the arsenal. While the Tsuno originally believed the weapons to be forged by Iuchiban and his minions, they have discovered that the katanas, yari and yumi liberated from the mausoleum are actually enchanted to help slay the Bloodspeakers. A group of Iuchiban's followers have been negotiating with the Tsuno for the weapons ever since they learned of their existence, but have yet to offer anything that the twisted race deems more valuable than the potential to dispose of Iuchiban.

IMPORTANT TSUNO NPCs

TSUNO NINTAI

Nintai is the only son of Kishenku, a powerful elemental mage responsible for breaking the alliance between the Five Races. The founder of a kitsu sect called the Order of the Tsuno, Kishenku yearned for power. In an attempt to harness the power of the crystal city which the Five Races built, Kishenku nearly destroyed the world, and the forces unleashed during the coup slew him. Nintai and the rest of the Order fled from retribution.

Soli Izumo, the last lord of the kitsu, hunted them down. Many lives were lost, but in the end Izumo and his followers triumphed. As they were a peaceful people, the kitsu did not wish to slaughter the Order of the Tsuno outright, instead deeming it appropriate to banish them to Teshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter. The remaining kitsu magically exiled Nintai and the rest of the Tsuno order from this Realm, binding them — nominally forever — in Teshigoku.

They lost hope of ever escaping, but then a youthful Daigotsu approached Nintai. Normally they would have killed him like any other, but they could not deny his aura of power. Nintai spent a timeless time talking with Daigotsu, who informed him of the great changes in the mortal realm. Discovering that the kitsu had been slain and all but swallowed by the Lion Clan, he thirsted for vengeance. After centuries of imprisonment, Nintai followed Daigotsu's instructions to lead the Tsuno to freedom, although the Tsuno were not accustomed to owing any sort of favor to even powerful members of a lesser race. The young maho-tsukai left them to their new freedom, but promised that one day he would return to them.

Their time in Teshigoku had honed them into skilled warriors; nothing in the Shadowlands could threaten them. Nintai did not believe that physical prowess was enough. In order to conquer Ningen-do, they would need to supplement their might with magic. Rather than return to the mortal realm immediately, Nintai and his brethren began to explore the Spirit Realms. He learned to harness the powers of each dominion and incorporate them into his own magic. When he had finally mastered the mysteries of each Realm, he founded his own school in the temple of Toguchi Shinden to instruct others. In addition to magic, Toguchi Shinden also trained them in the arts of war.

Daigotsu again visited Nintai. He asked the Tsuno to ally themselves with the Shadowlands that Daigotsu now controlled, in return for the knowledge that had freed them. As a partnership would also give Nintai a chance to avenge the kitsu, he agreed. He also taught some of his craft to Daigotsu, showing him how to manipulate the essences of the Spirit Realms and create the Onisu. Realizing that the ensuing chaos would be the perfect cover, Nintai left Toguchi Shinden in the care of his best student, Tsuno Yokoshima, so that he could finally pursue his revenge.

With the Emperor's death at the hands of an Onisu, the Tsuno began to wreak havoc on the Empire. Under Nintai's direction they tracked down the lairs of the Naga and tortured them in their sleep. Nintai's Soultwister magic transported Daigotsu's troops across the breadth of Rokugan in an instant,

stepping between the nightmares of the sleeping Naga and those of humans across the Empire. This technique even breached and captured the Kaiu Wall. Though he was unable to keep the Wall, Nintai knew he would always be remembered as the creature that succeeded in taking the Wall after hundreds of years of Shadowlands failures.

While causing wanton destruction throughout Rokugan, the Tsuno sought the City of Night, the same city that had taken Kishenku's life. Nintai knew that if he could harness the city's power he could simultaneously destroy the Lion Clan and the rest of the lower races. In the Unicorn Clan's lands he discovered the crystal city, but it had been enchanted in such a way that the Tsuno were barred access. Through the manipulation of Moto Vordu, a shugenja excavating the city, Nintai had his father's remains returned to him and resurrected him. Nintai was finally reunited with his father, but not for long. Due to Hantei Nasceru's interference, Kishenku was slain and his body immolated. With his father's soul forever lost to Meido, Nintai vowed vengeance against the son of Toturi.

Nintai could not have foreseen that Daigotsu would be slain with the help of this same infuriating courtier. With the Dark Lord's absence, many of the inhabitants of the Shadowlands reverted to infighting. Nintai waited to see what new power would take control of the Shadowlands, and shortly after Daigotsu's death and resurrection, Iuchiban appeared in the City of the Lost to seize the dark empire. Suspecting Daigotsu was not yet done with the mortal plane, Tsuno Nintai maintained cordial relations with the new ruler of the Shadowlands, stopping short of declaring his allegiance to Iuchiban. Tsuno Nintai has decided to remain neutral in the war between Iuchiban and Daigotsu. It benefits the Tsuno far more to wait until the stronger of the two emerges with victory. In the end, the two would-be rulers of the Shadowlands are only human and not worthy of true loyalty.

TSUNO NINTAI

Male Tsuno, Shugenja (Soultwister) 18: CR: 18; Large Monstrous Humanoid (Shadowlands, Spirit); HD 18d6+72; hp 152; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (touch 12, flat-footed 19); Atk +1 *Huge Falchion* +14/+9, 2d6+4 damage; SA Fear Aura, Spell-like Abilities; SQ Damage Reduction 10/+2 (jade), Detect Passage, Elemental Focus (Air), Scent; Honor: 0; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 19, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 20; Height 8 ft. 1 in.

Dojo: Toguchi Shinden.

Skills and Feats: Speak Languages (Chikushudo, Kami, Mujina, Naga, Ogre, Oni, Rokugani, Tsuno), Battle +10, Concentration +21, Diplomacy +20, Heal +15, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (Arcana) +15, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +14, Knowledge (Spirit Realms) +21, Move Silently +10, Scry +10, Spellcraft +21; Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Ritual Magic, Weapon Focus (Huge falchion).

Spells per Day (6/6/8/7/7/7/7/6/5/3; base DC 15 + spell level): *Elemental Focus* — Air, Tsuno Soultwister School); 0-level — *Agasha's touch, call fire, daze, ghost sound, guidance, flash of instigat, flight of doves, know direction, Suitengu's surge, whispers of the kami*; 1st — *blessed winds, burning hands, essence of air, feather fall, legacy of the dark one, quiescence of air*; 2nd — *eyes shall not see, flame blade, lessons of the lion, locate object, mists of fear, reflecting mirror*; 3rd — *animate dead, call lightning, dispel magic, haste, invisibility*; 4th — *cloud of taint, discern lies, hallucinatory terrain, lightning bolt, the fires from within*; 5th — *dimension door, gift of the kansen, improved invisibility, Osano-wo's embrace, scrying*; 6th — *create*

undead, dominate the mind, fire seeds, wind walk; 7th — blasphemy, endless deluge, guardian of air, vanish; 8th — blessings of Jizo, create greater undead, incendiary cloud; 9th — rise tami, teleportation circle.

Possessions: ring of counterspells, wand of resurrection, +1 huge falchion, robe of the magi +5.

TSUNO RITAI

Earth: 2

Willpower: 4

Water: 4

Strength: 6

Fire: 5

Air: 6

Taint: 8

School/Rank: Tsuno Soultwister 5

Dojo: Toguchi Shinden

Honor: 0

Glory: 9

Rolls When Attacking: 6k5

Rolls For Damage: 9k2

TN to Be Hit: 30

Carapace: 7

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Heart of Vengeance (Lion), Quick

Disadvantages: Driven (to kill Naserai), Overconfident

Spells: Agony's Embrace, Biting Steel, Burn the Soul, Commune, Drink the Soul, Essence of Air, Heart of the Inferno, Karmic Sundering, Night of Screams, Quiescence of Air, Sense, Separate the Soul, Summon, The Eye Shall Not See, The Fires from Within, The Smith's Lament, Twisted Form

Skills: Athletics 6, Hand-to-Hand 5, History 8, Lore (Herbalism) 5, Lore (Kami) 8, Lore (Shadowlands) 8, Lore (Spirit Realms) 10, Stealth 5, Theology 5, Torture 5, Tsuno Blade 6

ARMIONS OF THE TSUNO

THE MIKATA

The Free Ogres are one of the few races the Tsuno respect. Most creatures never escape the powerful thrall of Fu Leng's will, yet the ogres once more walk the Shadowlands ruled by none. With their supernatural strength, ogres are fearsome opponents for even skilled samurai. Faced with the prospect of having to rely on goblins to strike terror in the hearts of Rokugani, Daigotsu sent envoys to the ogres, only to have them returned in pieces. Finally Daigotsu asked the Tsuno to approach them, in the hopes that they would prove more successful than the Lost and the goblins. Tsuno Kurushimi and his small pack of Ravagers approached a strong band of ogres led by the cunning Kayobun. Realizing that the ogres respected strength more than words, Kurushimi challenged Kayobun to unarmed combat. Though Kayobun was a skilled warrior, Kurushimi had countless centuries of experience in the Realm of Slaughter. After subduing their leader, Kurushimi made a pact with the ogres promising them their freedom in return for their loyalty to the Tsuno.

The few Ogres following the Tsuno are called the Mikata, an archaic Tsuno term meaning "those who fight beside the race." Most Free Ogres view the Mikata as Tsuno slaves. The two groups frequently clash, and thanks to the techniques the Tsuno have taught them, the Mikata usually win. The Mikata possess all of the strength and cunning of the Free Ogre brethren, but have also learned discipline. Instead of small groups on their own, they work in deadly concert with one another. The Mikata are also better armed than most ogres. They have mastered rudimentary swordplay, and in many cases wield a forged no-dachi (rare Mikata are honored with a Tsuno blade) instead of a makeshift tetsubo.

The Mikata follow Kayosai, son of the legendary Kayobun. As fearsome a warrior as his father, he often leads raids against the Wall. Kayosai intends to see the Crab Clan obliterated, as he holds them responsible for his father's death. His main grudge is against the Crab Champion, not only for Kayobun's death, but for the utter disdain Kuon has shown the Ogres. Kayosai was at the battle when the Crab retook the Wall, and marked the scorn with which Kuon rejected his father's proposed alliance between the Great Clans and the ogres. Kayosai would like to teach him how foolish a mistake he made, but realizes that his people are better served by following the commands of the Tsuno for now.

One of the favorite pastimes of the Mikata is to capture a samurai and set him free to wander in the Shadowlands. They surreptitiously follow him until he is within sight of the Wall or Hiruma Castle. Just as the samurai believes he has escaped, they subdue and butcher him. It delights the Mikata to watch their victims realize their freedom was merely an illusion. The Mikata have claimed a small area in the City of the Lost to make them more easily contacted by the Tsuno, but few Free Ogres wish to live in the shadow of the Temple of the Ninth Kami. Most inhabitants of the City of the Lost know better than to wander within their sector, as the ogres enjoy tormenting the weaker races.

For the most part, the Mikata are employed as shock troops in attacks against the Wall and guards for the pathways the Tsuno use when traveling between the Spirit Realms and Ningen do. Any task that requires bloodshed or martial prowess is entrusted to the ogres. They rarely guard Tsuno captives, as the Mikata do not agree with the philosophy of hostages. The Tsuno have to be particularly careful to state which prisoners they don't wish eaten or slowly tortured to death, as the ogres are easily bored. Even if given specific directives not to harm captives, the Mikata are best not left unsupervised, as they may torment on those in their care merely to prove their independence.

In many cases their assistance has proven invaluable, as many Rokugani believed the ogres to be neutral until the siege against the Wall. Not a true vassal family in any sense, the Mikata help the Tsuno with the clear understanding that they can quit their service at any time. Proud of their newfound freedom, they are easily offended by anyone who thinks that they are servants. This has led to friction between the arrogant Tsuno and their ogre allies. The alliance is tenuous at best, for the Mikata feel as if Daigotsu deceived them. Most of them are afraid of Fu Leng's return, and bear no love for the man who gave him his freedom. Some vassals of Iuchiban have approached Kayosai to woo him to the new Dark Lord's side. Many Mikata would willingly join Iuchiban's cause, if only to spite Daigotsu. The Tsuno's neutrality has created unrest among the Mikata, who languish with no battles to fight and no blood to spill. It is only Kurushimi's reassurances of future plunder that have kept the Mikata loyal to the Tsuno.

The rare ogre spellcasters are particularly interested in the magic of the Soultwisters and have endeavored to learn the spellcraft of the Tsuno. If they could master death as the Tsuno have done, they would be a force to be reckoned with.

TSUNO MECHANICS

TSUNO CHARACTERS

The Tsuno are not recommended for a normal campaign setting. They despise the people of Rokugan and would find little value in allying themselves with samurai even for a short time. For the most part, the Tsuno respect only the original Five Races and have little regard for anyone else.

Larger and more powerful than humans, a Tsuno averages around eight feet in height and is all sinew and muscle. Soultwister characters are smaller in stature but just as deadly, usually taking up a weapon specialization, just like their bushi counterparts. Rules for the Tsuno Soultwister School can be found in *Way of the Shugenja*.TM Rules for the Tsuno Bushi School can be found in *Way of the Samurai*.TM

Tsuno receive a +2 racial modifier to Strength and a -2 modifier to Dexterity. They cannot take any of the clan-specific technique and ancestor feats, nor any of the following: Ear of the Emperor, Perceived Honor, and Void Use.

As they are inhuman by nature, Tsuno do not have a Void Ring. For purposes of rank advancement, a Tsuno requires 20 fewer Insight points to advance to the next School Rank. They may not take the Techniques of any of the Clans. Tsuno are also barred from taking the following Advantages and Disadvantages: Adopted Blood, Deathseeker, Ear of the Emperor, Hero of the People, Imperial Spouse, and Momoku.

TSUNO STEEL

The black-tinted steel of Tsuno armor and weapons is the subject of much speculation. Lion samurai, Imperial generals, and Crab researchers have yet to claim equipment from a Tsuno attack, but all agree there is something otherworldly about the material. The Tsuno guard the secrets of their steel jealously, since it could easily be turned against them to devastating effect. At the end of a conflict when the Tsuno carry away the bodies of the fallen, a handful of warriors always ensure that no piece of Tsuno weapon or armor is left behind either.

After centuries of wandering the Spirit Realms, the lessons that the sages of the Tsuno race learned were methodically applied to the arts of warfare. Tsuno steel emerged not as a result of a secret technique in forging metal, but applying arcane arts to the steel as it is forged. The resulting metal cruelly damages those who draw unusual power from the Spirit Realms or venture outside their native Realm.

Weapons and armor can be made from Tsuno steel, though only cutting (slashing and piercing) weapons such as katana, naginata, and arrows benefit from it.

ARMOR

Tsuno steel armor gains a +1 enhancement bonus under most circumstances. When being attacked by a creature outside of its native plane or affected by the influence of another plane (magical or by means of a Spirit Realm's influence), this bonus rises to +4.

Caster level: 8th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *protection from (any)*; *Market price:* +2 bonus.

WEAPONS

Tsuno steel weapons gain a +1 enhancement bonus under most circumstances. When attacking a creature outside of its native plane or affected by the influence of another plane (magical or by means of a Spirit Realm's influence), this bonus rises to +4.

Caster level: 8th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *protection from (any)*; *Market price:* +2 bonus.

ARMOR

Armor made from Tsuno steel raises the wearer's TN to Be Hit by 10 whenever he is being attacked by something outside its native Spirit Realm or touched by the influence of a Spirit Realm outside of the one it is currently in. For example, a human samurai attacking something in Tsuno armor while in Ningen-Do would suffer no ill effects. However, if the Lion were Tainted, or fighting the Tsuno in the Realm of Slaughter, the Tsuno's TN to Be Hit would increase by 10.

WEAPONS

Weapons made from Tsuno steel punish enemies under similar circumstances. When attacking a target that is not within its own Spirit Realm or under the influence of a Spirit Realm that it is not currently in, the attacker gains a Free Raise on both attack and damage rolls.

TSUNO MAGIC

TWISTED SPIRIT

Necromancy

Level: Sor 5

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: Creature touched

Duration: 1 minute/level (D)

Saving Throw: Fortitude negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This insidious spell causes the target's body and chi to become altered by any weaknesses they bear. The target is affected as described below:

- If the target is a spellcaster, he gains a Spell Failure chance (affecting divine or arcane spellcasting) equal to 20% minus the lowest of his Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution. This failure stacks with any existing Spell Failure chance, except multiple castings of this spell.
- Non-spellcasters recalculate their attack and damage modifiers using their lowest non-physical attribute.
- Creatures without the Void Use feat are stunned for 1d4 rounds.
- Creatures with 0 Honor are affected by *confusion* for 1d6 rounds (creatures without any honor rank are not affected by this).

Creatures affected by the Shadowlands Taint are not subject to any effects of this spell. Its effects are cumulative.

SPIRIT RENDING

Evocation
Level: Sor 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium (100 ft. +10 ft./lvl)
Target: One creature
Duration: 1 minute/level (D)
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

By calling upon the mysteries learned by the Tsuno Soultwisters and their journeys in the Spirit Realms, you sever the connection between one target creature and a Spirit Realm it is not currently in. The most obvious and devastating effect of this spell is that the target immediately loses all benefits of any Ancestor Feats (unless the target is within the Ancestor's Realm of residence). This also has the same effect as if you had cast *dispel magic* at the target, but only spells cast by creatures not native to the plane you are both currently in are affected.

CALL THE SPIRIT OF MY BROTHER

Conjuration (Summoning)
Level: Sor 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Effect: Summoned Tsuno spirit
Duration: 1 minute/level (D)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

One of the minor spells that allow the Tsuno to cross between the Spirit Realms, this spell summons another Tsuno to fight beside you. The size of the Tsuno summoned depends on your caster level, though the spell may be cast on a specific Tsuno earlier in the same day with the intent to cast the spell again that day to summon that same target. If cast

in this manner, the spell has a 10% + 5% chance per caster level of successfully summoning the named target. Failure means the casting has no effect, though another attempt may be made.

Caster Level	Tsuno HD
1-6	7
7-10	9
11-14	12
15-19	16
20	21

The summoning is imperfect, and you must maintain full concentration for the duration of this spell or the summoned Tsuno returns from whence it was summoned.

GUISE OF THE SPIRIT REALMS

Conjuration (Creation)
Level: Sor 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Duration: Special
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: No



One of the deepest secrets of the Tsuno Soultwisters, this spell allows the Tsuno to travel between the planes without suffering the ill effects of a Spirit Realm's touch. The target becomes immune to any of the effects of a Spirit Realm's Control, though he accumulates points of Control normally. Affected creatures gain no special abilities or status effects due to these levels of Control, but may be targeted and affected by effects that check for such levels of Control. For example, although a creature under the effect of this spell would accumulate points of Shadowlands Taint, he would suffer no ill effects from the Taint and could not draw upon the Taint for powers, but he would still be wounded by a *jade strike*. This spell normally lasts for a number of days equal to your caster level. Casters of level 12 or higher may choose (at casting) to make the effects permanent until either dispelled or changed by another casting of this spell.

AIR SPELLS

TWISTED SPIRIT

Mastery Level: 4
Duration: 1 minute
Area of Effect: One target
Range: Touch

This insidious spell causes the target's body and chi to become altered by any weaknesses they bear. The target is affected as described below:

- If the character is a spellcaster, all of his spells have their casting TNs raised by 20, minus $5 \times$ the caster's lowest physical Trait.
- Non-spellcasters use their lowest non-physical Trait instead of their Strength when rolling for damage.
- Creatures with a Void Ring less than 4 are stunned and unable to act other than to defend themselves from attack for a number of rounds their Ring is below 4.

Creatures affected by the Shadowlands Taint are not subject to any effects of this spell. Its effects are cumulative.

SPIRIT READING

Mastery Level: 4
Duration: 5 rounds
Area of Effect: One target
Range: 100 ft.

By calling upon the mysteries learned by the Tsuno Soultwisters and their journeys in the Spirit Realms, you sever the connection between one target creature and a Spirit Realm it is not currently in. The most obvious and devastating effect of this spell is that the target immediately loses all benefits of any Ancestor Advantages (unless the target is currently within the Ancestor's Realm of residence). This also ends all spells cast on the target by creatures not native to the Spirit Realm the target is in.

CALL THE SPIRIT OF MY BROTHER

Mastery Level: 3
Duration: 5 rounds
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Self

One of the minor spells that allow the Tsuno to cross between the Spirit Realms, this spell summons another Tsuno to fight beside the casting Soultwister. The Tsuno is typical in size and statistics, though Raises may be made to increase a Trait on the summoned Tsuno on a one for one basis. The spell may be cast on a specific Tsuno earlier in the same day with the intent to cast the spell again that day to summon that same target. If cast in this manner, the spell has its TN raised by 15. Failure means the casting has no effect, though another attempt may be made.

The summoning is imperfect, and the caster must maintain full concentration for the duration of this spell or the summoned Tsuno returns from whence it was summoned.

GUISE OF THE SPIRIT REALMS

Mastery Level: 4
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: One target
Range: Touch

One of the deepest secrets of the Tsuno Soultwisters, this spell allows the Tsuno to travel between the planes without suffering the ill effects of a Spirit Realm's touch. The target becomes immune to any of the effects of a Spirit Realm's Control, though he accumulates points of Control normally. Affected creatures gain no special abilities or status effects due to these levels of Control, but may be targeted and affected by effects that check for such levels of Control. For example, although a creature under the effect of this spell would accumulate points of Shadowlands Taint, he would suffer no ill effects from the Taint and could not draw upon the Taint for powers, but he would still be wounded by a *jade strike*. This spell normally lasts for a number of days equal to your caster level. Casters of Insight Rank 4 or higher may choose (at casting) to make the effects permanent until either dispelled or changed by another casting of this spell.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE GOJU

PLUMBING THE
DARKNESS
PART FIVE

Hatori leaned back on his heels, trying to assimilate all the information about the otherworldly Tsuno. "So sad," the historian muttered to himself.

"What is, Hatori-san?" Gensaiken's face betrayed no sign of real curiosity.

"The Tsuno," the older Miya replied. "They serve as a grave reminder that the touch of Fu Leng's realm is not the only way for a soul to be lost. They destroyed themselves long before they came to stand with the minions of the Shadowlands."

"It is not as simple as that, I think," Gensaiken replied, sitting across the worktable from Hatori. The odd Pekkle spirit smoothed his kimono carefully before he continued. "Not every lost soul was intentionally corrupted by Jigoku, but that dark realm is always alert for depraved spirits. Such was the fate of the Goju."

"The..." Hatori nearly choked, caught between a laugh and a short gasp at the name. "The Goju? The Goju were destroyed, Gensaiken-san, and they were never corrupted by the touch of Fu Leng's evil. No, the Lying Darkness was a sinister force all its own!"

"I see," the other man replied, sticking an unscen bit of lint from his obi. "You heard of Goju Adorai's destruction, then?"

"I was there, Gensaiken," Hatori said. In his mind's eye, the aged Miya noble saw the horrors of the march to the Shadowlands... and the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. The Goju, the stuff of darkest

nightmares, and the minions of the Shadowlands beset the forces of the Empire on all sides. Victory had seemed impossible that day. Even now, the old historian wondered from time to time how he had survived.

"You were there, Hatori? The front lines of such a conflict are hardly the place for a politician and a historian." Gensaiken's tone was genuinely intrigued.

Hatori smiled darkly. "Of all people, Gensaiken-san, I think you should understand that the men we are today do not necessarily mirror the men we were years ago."

Gensaiken returned the grin. "True enough, Hatori. But tell me this — you have heard nothing of the Goju since the Battle of Oblivion's Gate and are assured in their defeat?"

"Absolutely," Hatori replied. "The most vigilant members of the Scorpion, the Dragon, and the Seppun have yet to see a trace of that forgotten menace. The master of the Lying Darkness was destroyed by Isawa Hochiu, and its power was broken for all time."

"The Scorpion," the Pekkle spirit replied. "The Dragon. The Seppun. No doubt they sought diligently for an enemy they knew did not exist, just as you know it does not exist."

"What are you saying?" Hatori asked lowly, his eyes narrowing at the implied insult.

"I am saying only this, Hatori-san. Are you foolish enough to believe that the minions of the Lying Darkness were obliterated in one clean stroke? Or do you understand that the fact the Empire has heard and seen nothing of these demon-ninja for over forty years means something else entirely?"

Hatori opened his mouth to reply, but found he could not. Wonderfully the Miya noble looked about his study, and the shadows about them seemed to grow longer.

GOJU LANDS

The lands that are home to the Shadow Dragon have become amorphous, influenced by their inhabitants. Much like the Shadowlands near the Festering Pit, the ground and sickened vegetation shifts with alarming regularity. Unlike the rest of the Shadowlands, however, here it is due to the reality-warping touch of the Darkness instead of the influence of the Taint. There are few constant structures or sites in the Goju lands. Only that which serves the Shadow Dragon's purpose remains untouched by the changes in the landscape.

MAJOR GOJU HOLDINGS

Unlike the twisted mockeries of civilization that the Lost Samurai maintain or the chaotic rubble the goblins and trolls lay claim to, the holdings kept by the Goju are eerily pristine and human. The buildings are almost always bone white and shadow black, standing out against the supernatural darkness of the Shadowlands.

HOUSE OF GOJU

In the City of the Lost, only two buildings stand out against the sprawling mass of houses and other structures. The titanic Temple of the Ninth Kami reaches endlessly into the sky, easily outstripping the rest of the city in magnificence. Second only to this sacred site is the sprawling and sinister House of Goju, the physical center of the Shadow Dragon's power in Ningen-Do. It is from here that the feared assassins and stalkers of the Goju serve the whim of the Dragon, and even the fearsome Lost samurai avoid the structure. The Goju and their stronghold are free of the Taint, but walk openly with the blessings of Daigotsu and the Shadow Dragon, instilling both mistrust and awe.

Even after the fall of Daigotsu, the Goju have lost none of their standing within the ranks of the Shadowlands. The support of the Lord of the Shadowlands may be gone, but few are willing to move against the demon ninja. Even Iuchiban does not know how to deal with the minions of Shadow, as he does not wish to draw the corrupted Dragon's wrath.

DOJO

The House of Goju, the training grounds for the assassins of the Shadowlands, does not forgive failure. The great castle has a large open courtyard for martial practice, and a deep maze of twisting tunnels and dead ends underneath for stealthy training. As a creation of the Shadow Dragon, every piece of the grounds and the structure is alive and reacts to its environment. The masters of the Goju academy often direct the House to strike down students as punishment or destroy them completely if they have failed. Goju eliminated in this manner are returned to the Shadow Dragon, possibly reborn later deep within the catacombs to haunt unwary students.

Without Daigotsu directing their activities, the Goju have turned their attention to recruitment. Secretly, they have begun corrupting those who have abandoned Daigotsu's ideals in favor of Iuchiban's rule. Though the ninja are careful not to draw attention to their activities, they are not overly

concerned with their choice of victims. A Bloodspeaker of no particular consequence disappears every day or so, and the ranks of the Goju swell.

GOJU SHINGO

[Samurai 5/Ninja 3/Shadow Walker 10, Darkness Spawn Template; Shiba Bushi 2/Goju Ninja 5]

The master of the House of Goju has become increasingly busy within the past few years. As the mortal master of the Goju family, Shingo has found himself bereft of the Shadow Dragon's guidance more frequently than he is accustomed to. Though the sensei would never question his immortal master, he cannot help but wonder what matter has drawn the Shadow Dragon away from his agents and his most trusted minion.

Though things have become uncertain, one thing is clear to Shingo — Daigotsu must be restored to power. The rule of Iuchiban is unacceptable, as Shingo knows that the Bloodspeaker master will crush the Goju at the first opportunity. Where Daigotsu saw the true potential of the Goju, the usurper wants only power for himself and will blindly destroy anything in his way. Shingo has quietly begun a campaign against Iuchiban that he knows will end with one of their deaths.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: There have been reports of a mysterious spirit in the lower catacombs culling the weaker assassins. While such activity is hardly unusual, these incidents have begun to draw the attention of the Shadow Dragon (and in turn, the masters of the Goju school). Whatever spirit this may be, it is not under the influence or control of the Shadow Dragon.

Focus: Attempts to identify or even purposefully confront the spirit have failed. It comes and goes as it pleases, never encountering the groups hunting it, but always returning to destroy another Goju. Some are beginning to believe the spirit is a kansen controlled by the Bloodspeakers in retribution for the acts the Goju have perpetrated against them in secret.

Strike: The spirit is the soul of a restless Shosuro ninja that died in the Shadowlands, far from home. Unable to complete its journey to Meido, it followed an errant Goju assassin back to the City of the Lost. Enraged by the survival of the Goju, it destroys them when it can and hides when it must. Left unchecked, the spirit may well spark a war between the Goju and the Bloodspeakers, consuming the entire City of the Lost in its fury.

MOUNTAIN OF SHADOWS

Somewhere deep in the recesses of the southern Lost lands is a mountain of dark gray stone and pale flora. The Mountain of Shadows is a testament to the reality-twisting power of the Shadow Dragon, for it does not always appear in the same location. From far away, the Mountain appears shrouded in mists, though as one draws closer to the landmark it becomes clear that it is not entirely substantial. The Mountain of Shadows seems to be a sentient thing, animated by the will of the Shadow Dragon and jealously guarded by an elite cadre of Goju Stalkers. The unwelcome meet their end swiftly; the very mountain shifts below their feet and drops them to their death, or the minions of the Dragon deal with them.

The Mountain of Shadows also harbors a dangerous secret known only to the Shadow Dragon and a handful of his most powerful minions. When Daigotsu created the Ashura, the

Shadow Dragon was enthralled by their elegant and purely destructive nature. In his search to discover how the Lord of the Shadowlands had created such magnificent servants, he stumbled upon the answer in the Realm of Dreams. Daigotsu had found the dreams of a sleeping Fu Leng. In these dreams the Ashura had been created, but the Shadow Dragon found something else as well — a mountain of darkest shadow. Goju Adorai, the human master of the Darkness that perished in reality at the hands of Isawa Hochiu, was alive and well in this nightmare mirror. Instead of patiently awaiting the death of Fu Leng, Adorai had turned Mirumoto Hitomi against the other Thunders, laying claim to her soul and her Clan. From the twisted and formless peaks of the Dragon Mountains, Adorai ruled his own kingdom that opposed even Fu Leng's dominion in Rokugan. Intrigued, the Shadow Dragon recreated the greatest peak in these dreams out of the formless Nothing, away from the eyes of Daigotsu, Iuchiban, and any other power in the Shadowlands.

KYUDEN ADORAI

The otherworldly bastion of the Togashi family was twisted into the center of the Lying Darkness' power in the strange dream, and the Shadow Dragon found it to his liking. Crawling with shadows both alive and mundane, the Dragon has named the castle after the fallen previous master of the Goju for his own amusement. Though Adorai ruled this castle in Fu Leng's dreams, the Shadow Dragon did not bother to recreate that detail and instead claims the twisted stronghold for his own. The castle seems to be constantly bathed in moonlight, bright enough to darken and lengthen the shadows that cover the halls and rooms of the structure. The layout of Kyuden Adorai constantly shifts, on the Shadow Dragon's whim and because of its unstable nature.

It is within these halls the Dragon enacts its most secret desires and rituals. Far away from the prying eyes of the City of the Lost, the Goju are free to plan whatever they wish — even the destruction of whichever Lord of the Shadowlands emerges victorious once the conflict between Daigotsu and Iuchiban is over. None save the Goju are welcome here, except those that the Shadow Dragon chooses to corrupt personally. Those who have the strongest wills or most depraved souls are brought before the Shadow Dragon here in the bowels of Kyuden Adorai so it may savor their corruption first hand.

GOJU SHUNSEN

[Shugenja 6/Monk 6, Darkness Spawn Template; Agasha Shugenja 4]

Once of the Togashi *ise zumi*, Shunsen was corrupted by the Shadow Dragon two years after Goju Adorai's death at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. Shunsen had been a tortured soul, searching for the meanings of his constant nightmares and attempting to temper his innate lust for destruction by studying the Tao. He never found peace with the Togashi order, but when the Shadow Dragon took him Shunsen found his true calling. He has become a cruel and calculating master of manipulation, and enjoys nothing more than leading hapless fools to their dooms.

When the Shadow Dragon created the Mountain of Shadows, Shunsen found himself inexplicably drawn to it. Though he had never disobeyed his master, the corrupted monk was compelled to go to the Mountain and see the castle at its peak, even though the Shadow Dragon forbade it. When the unnatural mountain refused to obey the Shadow Dragon's commands to destroy the monk, and Shunsen slipped by the most

experienced assassins of the Goju to reach his goal, the Dragon was befuddled. In the realm of Fu Leng's dreams, the corrupted Togashi Shunsen had visited another Togashi monk and encouraged him to displace the Darkness from the Dragon Mountains. While the Shadow Dragon is unsure if this Shunsen will be as traitorous as the dream-monk, it is clear that the corrupted monk belongs on the Mountain of Shadow for now.

NINUBE TEMPLE

Located in the far southern reaches of Lost territory, the stronghold of the Ninube family remains a jealously guarded secret. Those who survived the death of Goju Adorai and the madness of the Taint were inexorably drawn to his place in the early years of the Shadow Dragon's existence. While the corrupted Air Dragon was learning of the Taint that had touched it and the power of the Darkness that it had stolen from the dead Adorai, the scattered remnants of the Ninube slowly regrouped. Unwilling to be a slave to the whims of Fu Leng's pet Dragon but unable to deny that many had become Tainted, the Ninube gathered here in the deepest shadows of the Shadowlands and waited. Skilled after centuries of infiltrating and disappearing without a trace, their existence was unknown to even the Shadow Dragon. For years, the Ninube gathered without knowing why.

It was the unyielding essence of Goju Hoseki, the Ninja Mystic that had given herself completely out of love for the Darkness, that had gathered her new 'children'. Though she did not reveal herself to all of these Ninube, she told their self-appointed leaders what they must do — it would be the duty of the Ninube to bring down the Shadow Dragon and restore the Darkness to its rightful state outside the influence of the Dark Kami. Through the Ninja Mystic, who ironically existed only at the whim of the Shadow Dragon, the Ninube restored their connection to the primal Nothing and regained much of the power of the Darkness. In short, the Ninja Mystic took the place of Goju Adorai as the human face of a new Darkness, though much weaker.

Without knowing their true master, many of the Ninube used their shadow magic to create a great temple of insubstantial darkness where they could worship Goju Adorai. Many of them believe they serve the immortal master of the Darkness still, and they not disabused of their notions. The fewer that know about the true state of Hoseki, the Shadow Dragon, and the Darkness, the less likely the Ninube are to catch the Dragon's attention.

THE EGG OF P'AN KU

Deep within the heart of Ninube Temple lies an artifact that holds the terrible power of the Dark Kami. The Egg of P'an Ku has a dark history of its own, though it was most recently used to create a mad double of the Crane Thunder, Doji Hoturi, during the Clan War. After the defeat of the False Hoturi, a scavenging Nezumi squirreled it away. It lay in the treasure hoard of a small tribe for generations until Fu Leng's assault on the Celestial Heavens allowed the Dark Kami to once again reach into the mortal realm and refresh its power. The False Hoturi rose to terrorize the Crane and swore fealty to Fu Leng's mortal representative, Daigotsu. Dubbed Daigotsu Hoturi, the child of the Egg was as powerful as he was cunning and became one of Daigotsu's most feared lieutenants.

With Daigotsu's defeat at the hands of Iuchiban, the Ninube found a unique opportunity to strike a blow against the Dark Lord and situate themselves close to Iuchiban to betray him

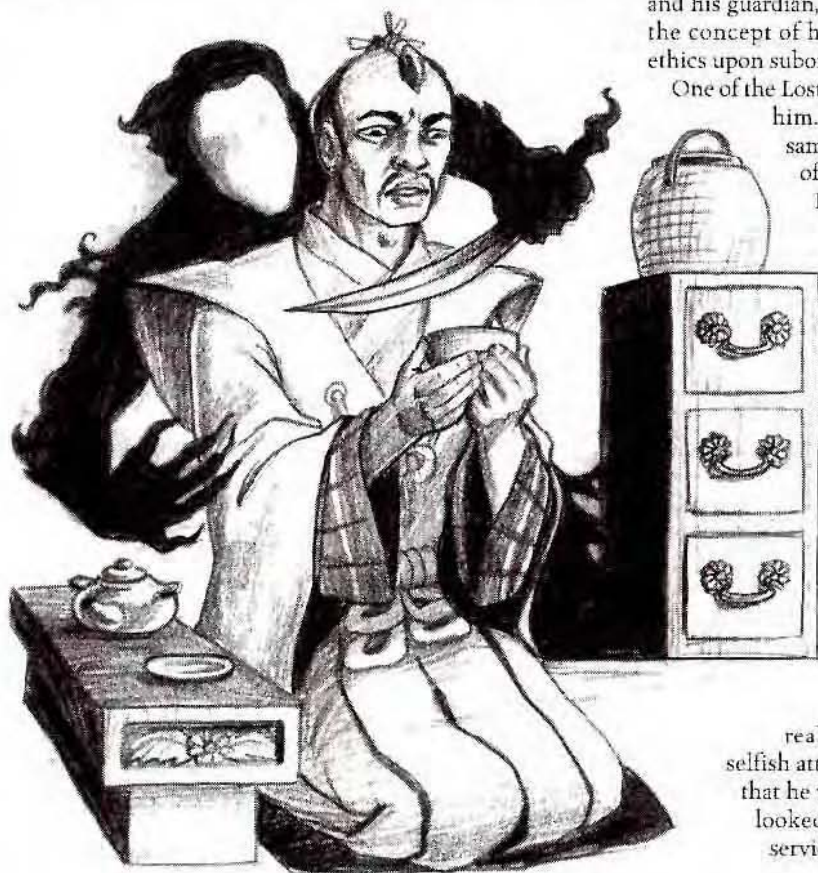
later. The Ninube approached Iuchiban, promising fealty. Using their connection to the power of Nothing, the antithesis of creation, two powerful Ninube confronted Hoturi and forced his essence back into the Egg of P'an Ku. They then Ninube offered the Egg to Iuchiban, who in turn instructed the Ninube to guard it for him until the day he called for it. Because the Egg represents Iuchiban's trust in the Ninube, they keep it safe in their hidden Temple, and none may touch it until Iuchiban is prepared to use it. Should the Egg be lost, Iuchiban's wrath would turn upon the shapeshifting ninja and their plans would scatter to the wind.

NINUBE OGOKU

[Shugenja 6/Ninube Shugenja 3 ; Ninube Shugenja 3]
She is the most trusted servant of Ninube Eisai, and many Ninube report to Ogoku instead of their dark mistress. Ogoku is fiercely loyal to Eisai and believes that only through her leadership will the Darkness be restored to its previous state. Though she has been a child of the shadow for longer than her mistress, Ogoku has been harder hit by the loss of their immortal master. She is prone to fits of insanity and bloodlust in times of stress, but remains deadly as both a spy and infiltrator.

MINOR GOJU HOLDINGS

Myriad small structures dot the lands of the Goju, telling of the newly independent minds of the Goju minions. These landmarks are almost always the creation of the Shadow Dragon's minions and are as real as the stone and earth they are built from. Without exception, these structures serve a personal purpose, but eventually fall into disrepair as their creators are drawn further into the Shadow Dragon's service.



ADORAI'S GRAVE

A small shrine dedicated to the Master of the Darkness lies just outside the Mountain of Shadows. None recall who erected the memorial, though it is kept in a state of decent repair by newly corrupted Goju. Some minions mistake it as a shrine to the Shadow Dragon and worship accordingly. Others realize shrine's true nature and attempt to use it to anchor their slowly fading memories. The Shadow Dragon allows the shrine to stand only due to the amusement he finds in watching such aspirations crushed.

The physical remains of Adorai lie within this shrine, though few are privy to this secret. Even deep in the Shadowlands, the influence of the Shadow Dragon keeps the bones of Goju Adorai from rising again in service to Fu Leng. However, should its location reach the ears of the Bloodspeakers or even Iuchiban, that may very well change.

IMPORTANT GOJU PLACES

GOJU KYOJIRO, HEIR OF GOJU KYODEN

In the Shadowlands, honor is a joke to the Tainted beasts and a lie to the Lost. Honor is a noose that the samurai of Rokugan place around their own necks, and the armies of the Shadowlands are more than willing to tighten it. Though the Daigotsu and his guardian, Kyoden, had a somewhat malleable view of the concept of honor, they never attempted to force their ethics upon subordinates.

One of the Lost, however, did not need the idea forced upon him. Hiromori, a son of the Ikoma house and a samurai who became Tainted during the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, fell into deep despair when Daigotsu became the master of the Shadowlands. Where the Taint once wiped away all trace of human regret and emotion, the Lord of the Shadowlands blessed his followers with the free will previously denied them. Now fully aware of what he had been and what he had become, Hiromori's soul warred against itself. Though he hated the Empire and his clan for abandoning him to the Shadowlands, he was a man without honor and purpose. He had failed his previous masters, as unworthy as they were, and his returned sense of self despised his shortcomings.

In effect, Daigotsu's change caused Hiromori to regain his sense of honor. Though the fallen Lion considered seppuku to ease the strain on his soul, he realized that twisting such a noble act into a selfish attempt to end his own pain would only prove that he was a dog without honor. Instead, Hiromori looked to the only example he could find in the service of Daigotsu: Goju Kyoden.

The Obsidian Champion fascinated Hiromori. Kyoden served two masters, Daigotsu and the Shadow Dragon, without failing in his duty to either. He obeyed without question when given his commands, and served even when it was clear he disagreed with his orders. Hiromori made it his goal to become worthy of Kyoden's respect, and entered Daigotsu's legions. The Ikoma recalled his lessons at the tactical schools of the Lion and quickly became a valuable asset. Hiromori was a talented general and a powerful warrior, and in under two years he became a part of Daigotsu's personal war council.

It was shortly after this that Hiromori took the final step in emulating his idol. The Tainted Lion petitioned Kyoden for an audience with the Shadow Dragon, a rare request even more rarely granted. Hiromori had studied the workings of the Darkness and understood that by becoming one with the Shadow Dragon, the Lost and the Goju would never truly lose his aid should he fall in battle. Deciding that the Shadow Dragon should determine Hiromori's fate, Kyoden agreed, and the man was left to strike his bargain with the master of the Darkness in person.

Ikoma Hiromori never emerged from the House of Goju. His soul and mind were laid bare before the Shadow Dragon, and the Dragon was amused by Hiromori's ambitions and sense of honor. It warned Hiromori that his days as a typical samurai, Tainted or not, were over. The place of the Goju, even Kyoden, was in the shadows, serving in the darkness where even oni feared to tread. Without a touch of fear, Hiromori accepted the Dragon's offer, quietly relishing the opportunity to serve in an even more elite capacity.

To honor the man who had served as an idol, Hiromori took the name Kyojiro. Though the Shadow Dragon and Daigotsu both thought Kyoden would have taken offense to the former Lion naming himself as if he were the Obsidian Champion's son, Kyoden said nothing. Silently, Kyoden was satisfied that he had created a legacy to pass along, and he knew Kyojiro was a worthy successor should he fall defending Daigotsu's life.

GOJU KYOJIRO

Human Sam6/Nin 4 (Former Lion, Darkness Spawn Template): CR 12, Medium-size humanoid; HD 6d10+12 plus +d6+4; hp 86; Init +5; Spd 30ft.; AC 19 (touch 14, flat-footed 19); Attack +1 *unholy katana* +15/+10 melee; SQ Class Skill — Knowledge (History) (Family Bonus), Darkness Spawn Qualities, Ancestral Daisho, Sneak Attack +2d6, Ninja Dodge (+1), Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC), Poison Use, Speed of Darkness; Honor 2; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +6; Str 18, Dex 19, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14; Height 5 ft. 7 in; Shadow Points: 10.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Climb +17, Diplomacy +15, Hide +9, Intimidate +11, Jump +17, Move Silently +9, Ride +13, Sense Motive +9, Use Rope +9; Blackened Honor (Ancestor: Goju Kyoden), Child of Shadow, Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Way of the Lion (taken twice).

Dojo: None; **Kata:** None.

Possessions: +1 *unholy katana* (ancestral daisho), +1 *unholy wakizashi* (ancestral daisho), *netsuke of protection* +3, *kote of armor* +2.

GOJU KYOJIRO

Earth: 4

Willpower: 5

Water: 5

Fire: 3

Agility: 6

Air: 3

Reflexes: 5

Void: 1

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 2/Goju Ninja 2

Glory/Honor: 0.0/2.7

Shadow Points: 5

Advantages: Child of Shadow, Ancestor: Goju Kyoden

Disadvantages: Contrary

Skills: Athletics 4, Bard 2, Battle 7, Defense 5, History (Lion Clan) 4, Kenjutsu 7, Kyujutsu 6, Lore: Goju Family 4, Meditation 5, Ninja-to 5, Ninjutsu 6, Shintao 4, Shuriken 4, Stealth 6.

Weapons & Armor: Katana, wakizashi, yumi and 20 arrows, light armor.

NIJUBE EISAI, MISTRESS OF THE NIJUBE

Eisai. The name burns in her memory as the only reminder of a life that has been consumed with anger, guilt, and violence. To those that follow her, Eisai is a fearless and merciless leader. To herself, Eisai is a stranger and a distant dream that only fuels the bitterness which led to her complete corruption at the hands of the Lying Darkness.

Like many others, the Niube mistress was completely different before being consumed by the Darkness. Her name was once Giri, "duty," the name of a man. She was a contemplative monk in a minor temple to Shinsei in the southern Dragon lands. The orphaned daughter of farmers slain in one of the countless conflicts between the Crane and Lion Clans, she was fostered to the Brotherhood before she could stand. Giri never knew her father or her mother, nor even the place of her birth. Her entire life was in the temples, studying the text of the Tao in serene contrast to the violence that had taken her true life away before she could live it. To ease the strain that her beauty began to cause in the monastery, she took the name of a man and a vow of silence.

During the Clan War, Giri watched with horror as the Great Clans turned upon one another and the twisted blasphemies of the Shadowlands walked freely within Rokugan. When the masses of displaced farmers, wounded samurai, and other hopeless began to pour into the Temples, Giri became a tireless agent of the Brotherhood's mercy. Her vow of silence began to go unnoticed, as she had neither the time or inclination to speak to anyone as she moved with the speed of the wind from one petitioner to the next.

When the armies of Yogo Junzo came to the temples of Shinsei, looking for the Little Teacher's descendent, Giri's order began to prepare for the inevitable. With the clans struggling amongst themselves, what chance did a small temple have to be spared the wrath of the Shadowlands? On the day that the Tainted monstrosities came for Giri's temple, she knew she would become just another forgotten casualty of the war. Just as the army began to put the temple to the torch, another great army appeared seemingly from nowhere. Walking from the mists of the mountains, the Dragon Clan samurai cut through the undead, while Agasha shugenja and fire-breathing tattooed monks burned away the oni and goblins that stood against them.

It was then that she saw him. The immortal and divine son of Togashi, Hoshi. He was magnificent and unstoppable — as if he were the wrath of the very Celestial Heavens come to rescue her from the unholy beasts. Though she never spoke to him that day, her memory never let go of Togashi's son, and she knew she was destined to love him. Years later, when the

rise of Hitomi as Dragon Champion forced Hoshi and the Togashi monks from their home, Giri was there when the Brotherhood welcomed the banished Dragons. When Hoshi announced to his allies his intentions to reclaim the Dragon Throne from Hitomi, by force if necessary, Giri was among the first to swear fealty to the half-god.

At this time another silent monk joined the ranks of Hoshi's swelling army: Eisai. None knew where she came from, though she was welcomed with a strange sense of inevitability, as if she had always been part of Hoshi's order. Within weeks, it was clear that Hoshi was smitten, and Giri's heart shattered. How could this have happened? She was the same as Eisai — silent and beautiful, a wise monk who had a pure soul and a pure love for him. Had Eisai suffered or endured the trials Giri had? It wasn't possible. Giri became obsessed with the mysterious woman and her obsession quickly grew into hatred. She wanted to be Eisai, wanted whatever it was that set her apart. Her hatred grew so great that the Darkness came for her swiftly, already watching Hoshi's army closely due to his plans to destroy Hitomi.

When Giri disappeared one night, never to be seen again, few noticed.

The Darkness made Giri their pawn, showing her great power, always promising that soon she would be as remarkable as Eisai and steal Hoshi's heart away. Eventually, these goals were replaced by inflicting pain upon Hoshi's order of monks and destroying the agents of the Dragon Clan once Hoshi deposed Hitomi. Her love of Togashi's son was completely forgotten, and all that burned within her was the need to be as great as... someone.

By the time the Battle of Oblivion's Gate saw the destruction of Goju Adorai, Ninube Giri had almost completely forgotten herself. Alone and abandoned by the Darkness, she found others like herself, leading them deeper into the Shadowlands. She didn't know how she knew, but it was clear to her that the Darkness had not been completely destroyed. Her connection to it was enough to keep the Taint from consuming her completely, and she taught others how to harness the power of Shadow within them without attracting the attention of the new master of the Darkness, the Shadow Dragon. When one of her minions finally asked her name, all she could recall was a face of serenity and beauty... and a single name. "Eisai," she replied, and the anger that was sparked by that revelation caused her to destroy the ninja that asked. Since that time, none have spoken their mistress' name, except in whispers to one another.

NINUBE EISAI

Human Shu 6/NSH 10 (Darkness Spawn Template): CR 18, Medium-size humanoid; HD 16d6+32; hp 107; Init +6; Spd 60 ft.; AC 28 (touch 16, flat-footed 23); Attack +2 *tainted ninja-to of speed* +12/+7 melee; SQ Class Skill — Move Silently (Family Bonus), Darkness Spawn Qualities, Elemental Focus — Air, Sense Elements, Shinobi Magic (Air x3, Water, Fire); Honor 0; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +15, Will +11; Str 14, Dex 22, Con 15, Int 17, Wis 8, Cha 27; Height 5 ft. 4 in.; Shadow Points: 14.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Concentration +21, Craft (Bonsai) +22, Diplomacy +27, Knowledge (Lying Darkness) +22, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +22, Move Silently +25, Scry +22, Spellcraft +22; Child of Shadow, Combat Casting, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Faceless Soul (Ancestor: Ninja Mystic), Weapon Focus (Ninjato).

Dojo: None; **Kata:** None.

Spells Known (6/8/8/8/8/7/7/6/4): 0 — *flash of insight, gathering swirl, guidance, daze, ghost sound, know direction, detect magic, Suitengu's surge, create water, slaying speed*; 1st — *blessed winds, change self, speed of breath, obscuring mist, ebbing strength, sense spirit*; 2nd — *Benten's touch, distracting spirits, know the mind, wind wall, know the shadows, the ties that bind*; 3rd — *false tongue, clairaudience/clairvoyance, gust of wind, the inner ocean, dispel magic*; 4th — *air walk, whispers of twilight, shout, warning flame, cure critical wounds*; 5th — *bad karma, persistent image, dimension door, confusion, scrying*; 6th — *veil, teleport, legend lore, control weather*; 7th — *mislead, poison of the Windspider, the penetrating drop*; 8th — *slayer's knives, phase door*

Possessions: +2 *tainted ninja-to of speed* (ancestral daisho), *kote of armor* +5, *netsuke of protection* +3, *ring of counterspells*, *boots of striding and springing*, *amulet of natural armor* +4, *obi of charisma* +4.

NINUBE EISAI

Earth: 3

Willpower: 4

Water: 3

Perception: 5

Fire: 5

Intelligence: 6

Air: 6

Awareness: 7

Void: 0

School/Rank: Ninube Shugenja 5

Glory/Honor: 0.0/0.0

Shadow Points: 9

Skills: Acting 7, Athletics 4, Climbing 4, Craft (Bonsai) 3, Defense 4, Forgery 6, Lore (Dragon Clan) 6, Lore (Lying Darkness) 8, Etiquette 8, Manipulation 7, Ninja-to 7, Ninjutsu 5, Poison 7, Shintao 3, Sincerity 8, Stealth 7, Tanto 6

Advantages: Quick

Disadvantages: Insensitive

Weapons & Armor: Katana, wakizashi, yumi and 20 arrows, light armor.

Spells: As one of the most powerful beings touched by the Lying Darkness, Ninube Eisai has an immense number of Air and Water spells as innate abilities and can possibly gather the power to cast other spells if she wished. GMs should feel free to include any spell they feel appropriate for Eisai's arsenal.

GOJU MECHANICS

ANCESTORS (YOKAI)

Like other creatures of the Taint, the servants of the Shadow Dragon have no ancestors in the same sense as traditional characters. Souls corrupted by the Shadow Dragon are eventually absorbed fully by the Lying Darkness. However, some such victims have either too strong a sense of self to be fully

consumed or are too much use to the Dragon to be forgotten completely. The "ancestors" of the Goju are visions, dreams, and hallucinations the Shadow Dragon sends to its minions for guidance and inspiration in the form of a pawn that served in an exceptional manner. These ancestors are not subject to the penalties imposed by the influence of the Lying Darkness separating a character from his ancestor abilities.

GOJU ADORAI

Goju was one of the first mortals fully subsumed by the Darkness. His fearful and hateful nature infected it — the Darkness did not so much absorb Goju as become a shared entity with him. Though the Darkness had always moved towards the goal of unmaking all of creation, it was Goju's bitterness that turned the supernatural force into a truly evil entity. In a sick mockery of the families of Rokugan, Goju gave his name to those who fell to the influence of the Shadow for the short time they bore any name at all. Eventually, shapeshifting servants of the Lying Darkness came to be known as "the Goju," and Goju took another name for himself to cast aside the fleeting memory of the man he once had been.

Goju Adorai was the mortal mind at the core of the Lying Darkness for over a thousand years. Left alone, the Darkness was just a formless and mindless aspect of Nothing, much like the fundamental elements of the universe. Adorai twisted the Darkness and nearly drove it victory over the lands of Rokugan until he was slain by Isawa Hochiu. When the power of the Darkness coalesced into the newly-corrupted Air Dragon, the spirit of Goju Adorai passed into it as well, creating the Shadow Dragon. Adorai often visits the dreams of those who share a close connection with the Shadow Dragon. Though the two are distinctly different beings, Adorai has become fully anchored by the existence of the Darkness in the Shadow Dragon and would cease to be if the Shadow Dragon were ever destroyed.

HEART OF DARKNESS

ANCESTOR FEAT: GOJU ADORAI

Clan: None.

Prerequisites: May not have the Void Use feat.

Benefit: Once per day, you may gain an enhancement bonus to one of your attributes equal to your maximum Shadow Points. This benefit lasts for a number of rounds equal to half your character level (rounded down).

GOJU ADORAI

(5 POINTS)

Once each day, you may raise one of your Traits by half your maximum Shadow Points. This benefit lasts for a number of minutes equal to your Insight Rank.

GOJU KYODEN

Kyoden was the child left to the Bloodspeakers when the ronin Yotsu replaced the Emperor's kidnapped child with his own son. Though Yotsu saved the child of the Emperor, his own heir was lost to the Bloodspeaker cult and presumed dead. The abandoned child was not slain, though the mahotsukai cult destroyed much of what the youth would have become. When he came of age, it was clear the young man retained a strong sense of honor despite his life with the Bloodspeakers. This would have caused the cult to kill him, but his loyalty to the Bloodspeakers was absolute and his skill with the blade incredible.

In addition to all this, the son of Yotsu became a close friend of another young member of the cult, Daigotsu. Already a powerful mahotsukai, Daigotsu's influence was enough to afford his friend a rare luxury among the Bloodspeakers — a gempukku. In the strange ceremony, Kyoden took the name of the man who had murdered the Hantei's wife after she had given birth to Daigotsu. Kyoden served at Daigotsu's side for years until his imbalanced soul attracted the attention of the Living Darkness. Fascinated by the man's sense of honor despite his allegiances, the Darkness consumed Kyoden slowly and drew him away from the Bloodspeaker cell. Year later, when Goju Adorai was defeated and the Shadow Dragon rose in his place, Kyoden's indomitable will preserved his sense of self. His loyalty to Daigotsu earned him a death at the hands of the Lion Champion, Matsu Nimuro. He was restored when Daigotsu took his place as Lord of the Shadowlands, a goodwill gesture from the Shadow Dragon.

Finally, when Toturi Tsudao destroyed the Lord of the Shadowlands, Kyoden returned his master and friend's sacrifice. Now fully consumed by the Shadow Dragon, the memory of the legendary Kyoden is sent to those rare Goju who walk the most difficult path of all — honor and duty.

BLACKENED HONOR

ANCESTOR FEAT: GOJU KYODEN

Clan: Any.

Prerequisites: Any Honor rank above 0, at least 1 Shadow Point.

Benefit: You do not lose Honor while performing a duty in service to the Shadow Dragon or one of his vassals. You gain a +5 circumstance bonus to avoid any effects, magical or mundane, to manipulate your will and turn you from your current mission or foremost duty. You may ignore the "dishonorable" requirement of any Prestige Class you would otherwise qualify for and your honor may not rise above 3.

GOJU KYODEN

(3 POINTS)

You do not lose Honor while performing a duty in service to the Shadow Dragon or one of his vassals (unless the loss comes from failing a Test of Honor). You gain a Free Raise to avoid any effects, magical or mundane, to manipulate your will and turn you from your current mission or foremost duty. Your Honor may not rise above 3, and if it ever drops below 1, you lose the benefits of this ancestor permanently.

THE NINJA MYSTIC

All those that study the Lying Darkness know the name of Kuni Hoseki. Infected by the Darkness as a small child and raised by parents that were not her own, Hoseki was lied to about every aspect of her life, leaving her stumbling through her existence. In short, Hoseki was the perfect victim of corruption at the hands of the Darkness. Though she failed to take her place as a Kuni shugenja, the young woman felt an unnatural and unnamable connection to forces beyond the kami. She could feel the shadows in the same way the shugenja said she should sense the elements. By the time a minion of the Darkness came calling to her, she was ready to claim her true birthright.

What sets the story of Kuni Hoseki apart from countless similar tales is her fanatical devotion to the Darkness and the awesome power she came to control while remaining mortal and somewhat human. To Hoseki, the Darkness was the

family and purpose she had always been missing. She gave every part of her soul to it, and within a year the Ninja Mystic had forgotten every trace of her life with the Crab. Eighteen years of existence were intentionally and completely annihilated by the lonely girl who wished only to find a place in the world. Her fierce drive to become one with the Darkness was rewarded by Goju Adorai, and the Ninja Mystic became one of the most powerful extensions of the Darkness. She became as unstoppable and powerful as the Darkness, and yet somehow was never completely absorbed by it.

Finally, when the Darkness was given a name by Hitomi, Hoseki found herself being drawn back into reality... until the Shadow Dragon caught the woman's powerful essence and drew it into itself. Though the Ninja Mystic's power is now part of the Shadow Dragon, she fights against the power of her new master and attempts to return the Darkness to its previous state. Unknown to even the great Shadow Dragon, her influence extends without its consent. She guides the remaining Ninube to this day, working to achieve her goal.

FACELESS SOUL

ANCESTOR: NINJA MYSTIC

Clan: None.

Prerequisites: Must be a member of the Ninube family.
Benefit: Once per day, you may completely shield yourself from all attempts to detect your presence while moving with stealth (such as with the Move Silently or Hide in Shadows skills). So long as you remain unnoticed by mundane means, you cannot be detected by any supernatural means (such as spells or kiho feats) short of the direct intervention of a Fortune or more powerful being.

NINJA MYSTIC

(7 POINTS)

Once per day, you may completely shield yourself from all attempts to detect your presence while moving with stealth. So long as you remain unnoticed by mundane means, you cannot be detected by any supernatural means (such as spells, kiho, or abilities that rely on something other than the five natural senses) short of the direct intervention of a Fortune or more powerful being. This ancestor may be taken only by members of the Ninube family.

TOUCH OF THE DARKNESS

Long ago, the entity called Nothing was created when a small bit of creation hid as Sun and Moon went about the mortal realm giving everything a name and form. Because of its undefined nature, Nothing was bound to no single form, though it also had no identity of its own. In a fit of loneliness, it touched the mind of another being that shared its pain of isolation — Goju, the ninja driven from the clan of the Scorpion to show the Emperor the loyalty of the clan. Infected by Goju's madness, the Nothing was twisted into the Lying Darkness that eventually tried to claim and unmake all of existence. That which the Lying Darkness touched was granted great power, no longer bound by the laws of the Celestial Order. The price for such power was

great, however — everything claimed by the Darkness forfeited its own identity, becoming solely an extension of the undefined Lying Darkness. Each soul it took in this way unraveled a small bit of reality created by Sun and Moon, bringing Goju and the Darkness closer to undoing creation.

When the hero Isawa Hochiu destroyed Goju at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, what was left of the Lying Darkness was thought to have been obliterated by Hitomi, the new Moon. Separated from the madness of Goju, the formless entity was once again Nothing, neither good nor evil. What few understand is that Nothing had become such an ancient and powerful presence in the universe that to completely destroy it, even by giving it form and shape as Hitomi had, would have caused a great imbalance in the Celestial Order. A sliver of Nothing exists to this day, unknown by nearly all of the mortal world and freed of the need to devour creation.

Sadly, the victory of Isawa Hochiu had come at a terrible price. Goju stood at the heart of a great corrupt army in the Shadowlands, and none could reach him before being driven mad by the Taint. The mighty Air Dragon, heedless of the consequences, took Hochiu upon its back and flew him to face Goju. As the two fought, the holy Air Dragon was claimed by the touch of Fu Leng — a blasphemy the other Elemental Dragons and the Celestial Heavens will never forget. Twisted by the Taint, the Air Dragon became a thing of darkness, spite... and Shadow. Hochiu slew Goju, tearing the touch of the Lying Darkness from thousands of Goju's minions. As they were so deep within the Shadowlands, the influence of the Dark Kami's realm took them almost immediately, reducing some to gibbering madmen, others truly becoming the demon ninja whispered about to this day.

The dying Goju called out to any that would save him from his doom, and the Shadow Dragon heeded him. It and he became one, absorbing the power of the Lying Darkness into the corrupted Dragon. Though greatly diminished by the powers of Lady Moon and the death of his mortal form, Goju still commanded a scrap of the Lying Darkness' power and shared it with the Shadow Dragon. Though the Shadow Dragon draws its influence by corrupting the primal Nothing, it is not powerful enough to completely devour the Nothing as Goju had done before. The Shadow Dragon eats away at the natural formlessness a little at a time, growing slowly in power and influence with each day.

Because of the Shadow Dragon's nature, the path of the Lying Darkness and the Taint of the Shadowlands have become intertwined. Effectively, the relationship between the Shadow Dragon and the Goju has become like that of an Oni Lord and its spawn. Those that serve the Shadow Dragon are much like the Goju ninja of old, though the commands of Fu Leng's realm guides their master.

SHADOW POINTS

Though the ways to gain the Taint of the Shadowlands are many, the Shadow Dragon must be at least indirectly involved with the corruption of a soul by the Lying Darkness. The touch of the Shadow Dragon is enough to cause someone to contract the Taint, but it will rarely share its power with those who have already been corrupted by the Dark Kami. The Shadow Dragon prefers to keep its servants its own, and the influence of the Shadow prevents its minions from gaining the Shadowlands Taint.

One of the most direct ways to gain the attention of the Shadow Dragon is to prepare any ritual in its name. Though this method seems simple enough, the existence of the

Shadow Dragon is known to very few. The Dragon understands that Goju was defeated because he revealed himself to the Empire and was struck down. For this reason, the Shadow Dragon does not make itself known to those outside the Shadowlands, though certain high-ranking members of the Scorpion and Dragon Clans have become aware of its existence since the Battle of Oblivion's Gate.

Existing minions of the Goju also can direct the attention of their master to others, though the victim must be somewhat willing. The Darkness feeds on sin and vice, as it is still touched by the anger of Goju. Minions of the Shadow Dragon often approach those who dream of ambition, death, or glory. The Goju lead these men and women down the path of dark desire until they are corrupted by its influence. In the end, they become faceless Goju drawing others into the Shadow Dragon's influence.

CHILD OF SHADOW (NEW FEAT)

Clan: None

Prerequisites: Must have contact with an agent of the Shadow Dragon, GM's approval

Benefit: You gain two Shadow Points if you possess none; otherwise you gain one. You may spend your Shadow Points as if they were Void Points in the exact same manner as described by the Void Use feat. In any instance that requires you to spend a Void Point, you may instead spend a Shadow Point.

Special: Once you possess this feat, you may not gain the Depths of the Void or Void Use feats. You may select this feat multiple times, each time after the first granting 3 more Shadow Points. If you possess the Depths of the Void or Void Use feats prior to selecting this feat, you may not use Void Points if doing so would lower your current amount of Void Points below your maximum number of Shadow Points. (For example, if you have a maximum of 2 Shadow Points, you may not spend Void Points if you have 2 or fewer Void Points at the time.) When you select this feat, you may choose to give up one of your Depths of the Void or Void Use feats to gain a permanent +1 bonus to any of your attributes and a number of Shadow Points to replace the Void Points lost. Your character also undergoes several other changes, detailed in Table 4.1, depending on his maximum Shadow Points.

TABLE 4.1: EFFECTS OF SHADOW POINTS

Total Points	Effect
-2	Lose the ability to cast Void spells. All magical attempts to locate you are treated as if you have SR 15.
3-5	You must spend a Void Point to gain the benefits of any ancestor feat, which lasts only 1 minute. You gain DR 1/- (crystal).
6-8	Lose the ability to cast 8th level or higher divine spells (excluding maho). Gain <i>change self</i> as an spell-like ability, cast as a sorcerer of your character level, three times a day.
9+	Your GM determines if your character remains under your control.

CHILD OF SHADOW (7 POINT ADVANTAGE)

You gain two points of Shadow corruption if you possess none, otherwise you gain one. You gain a number of Shadow Points each day equal to your total Shadow corruption rank and you may spend your Shadow Points as if they were Void Points. In any instance that requires you to spend a Void Point, you may instead spend a Shadow Point.

Characters and GMs are encouraged to play up the fact that as the Lying Darkness gains more control over a character, he loses more sense of self. Eventually, the character will be driven insane by the Shadow Dragon's influence, unable to recall any of his childhood memories, the faces of his loved ones, who his friends and allies are, or even the previous day.

THE NINUBE

Those that bear the name Ninube were severed from the Lying Darkness when it was ramed at Oblivion's Gate, but fell to the touch of the Shadow and Taint before the Shadow Dragon rose to power. They remain outside the influence of the Shadow Dragon and the Lord of the Shadowlands, creating an unpredictable influence in the operations of both. The Ninube despise the Shadow Dragon, believing it to have stolen the power of Goju Adorai and chained the Goju to the will of Fu Leng. They seek a way to undo what Lady Moon has wrought, and destroy the Shadow Dragon's grip on the Darkness.

Though the Shadow Dragon is aware of the existence of the Ninube and know that they operate outside its influence, it has not openly moved against them. Instead, the Dragon attempts to find a way to draw them willingly under its control. While the Shadow Dragon delays, the Ninube grow more powerful each day, and soon they will be able to stand against their lost cousins.

The Ninube scorn the Taint of the Shadowlands and those that bear it, but understand that a great many of them were subjected to Fu Leng's touch for a time after Adorai had been destroyed. Because of this, Tainted Ninube are not unheard of, but they never advance far within the power structure of the "family."

THE NINUBE FAMILY

Favored Class: Shugenja

Starting Honor: 0

Class Skill: Move Silently

Starting Outfit: Masterwork aiguchi, 2 first level Air spell scrolls.

Bonus Languages: Bakemono, Ogre, Oni

Special: All members of this family gain the Lying Darkness subtype or 1 point of the Shadowlands Taint.

THE NINUBE FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Awareness

Glory: 0.0

Special: Members of this family gain one point of Shadowlands Taint or Shadow corruption.

THE NINUBE SHUGENJA (PRESTIGE CLASS)

The Ninube Shugenja draw the bulk of their ranks from those who were Tainted after Goju Adorai was destroyed and remain in the Shadowlands. Others are drawn in by the promise of power and even greater power after the Shadow Dragon is disposed of. Most Ninube Shugenja are *maho-tsukai* or *ninja*.

Hit die: d6.

REQUIREMENTS

Base Attack Bonus: +2.

Alignment: Any evil.

Honor: Dishonorable.

Skills: Concentration (8 Ranks), Spellcraft (8 Ranks).

Feats: Combat Casting or Martial Weapon Proficiency (Any), Faceless Soul (Ancestor: The Ninja Mystic).

Spells: Ability to cast 2nd level spells.

Special: May forego the spellcasting requirement if the character has at least 6 points of Shadowlands Taint. Must make contact with the existing Ninube.

CLASS SKILLS

The Ninube Shugenja's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually)(Int), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), Spellcraft (Int), and Swim (Str).

Skill Points per Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

The following are class features of the Ninube Shugenja.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Ninube Shugenja are proficient with all simple weapons, ninja-to, blowguns, and the shuriken.

Spells per Day: The Ninube Shugenja is trained in the magic of both the kami and the manipulation of the primal Nothing. When a new Ninube Shugenja level is attained, the character gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in any spellcasting class he had before joining the Ninube Shugenja. He does not, however, gain any other benefits of gaining a level in that class (such as improved sense elements ability, turn undead, etc.). This essentially means that a Ninube Shugenja adds his class level in Ninube Shugenja to his class level in a previous spellcasting class for the purposes of determining spells known, spells per day, and caster level. Shugenja may multiclass freely with this class.

Characters with the Darkness Spawn template and any levels in this class ignore the Darkness Spawn's restriction on spellcasting.

Characters who enter the Ninube Shugenja class with no previous spellcasting class levels follow these rules, but are considered to be shugenja with an Elemental Focus of Air who may cast only Air, Water, and Maho spells. Their total spellcaster level is equal to their Ninube Shugenja class level.

Shinobi Magic: At first level and every two levels thereafter, the Ninube Shugenja chooses either one elemental type of magic (including Maho) or one school of magic to be cast as Shinobi Magic. A Ninube Shugenja's Shinobi Magic is the manipulation of the Darkness and the Nothing, creating false images, or arranging the patterns of reality in small ways more suited to the Ninube (albeit briefly). This causes effects nearly identical to normal spells, but different in several ways.

Shinobi Magic is less "real" and thus less effective at affecting other things. Damage from Shinobi spells is calculated as if you had one less caster level, and any DCs to avoid damage from such spells are decreased by 2.

Shinobi's otherworldly nature makes Will saves against it more difficult. Spells with such saves have their DCs raised by 2 and last as if you had one more caster level.

Whenever you are casting spells from an element or school you have chosen to make Shinobi Magic, you may spend one

Shadow Point to increase your effective caster level by one for that spell's casting. This may be done only once per casting.

You may select the same element/school with this ability multiple times. Each time you do so, the effects stack (i.e. Save DCs increased/decreased by an additional 2, being able to spend an additional Shadow Point on spells to increase your caster level).

Strike From Light: Though capable assassins, the Ninube have always served primarily as infiltrators and information gatherers. The arts of the Ninube make them especially capable of insinuating themselves into an area to reconnoiter. For each day the Ninube spends at least thirty minutes of meaningful contact with a person (not simply staying in the same area unnoticed), he gains a +1 circumstance bonus on Charisma-based skill checks with that person. These bonuses are cumulative, but their total may not exceed the Ninube's level in this class. These bonuses are lost if the Ninube "misses" a day with his victim, but the bonuses decrease by a single point per absent day.

Face of One Thousand: The masters of the Ninube's art can infiltrate any group, no matter how secretive or paranoid, given time. Subtle manipulations of the mind allow the Ninube Shugenja to pass himself off as a welcome friend from someone's past, or perhaps a distant relative. A number of times per day equal to the Ninube Shugenja's Charisma modifier, he may force someone he has eye contact with to make a Will save or fall under the effects of a *charm* spell. The DC of the save is 10 + the Ninube Shugenja's caster level + his Charisma modifier. The subject treats the Ninube as if his story (either friend or relative, whichever is more plausible) were completely true, and will likely blame himself for any logical fallacies that arise ("What do you mean my aunt never had any children? I must have a different aunt in mind."). This effect lasts for a number of days equal to the Ninube's Charisma modifier. If the target saves successfully, the Ninube Shugenja may not use this ability on him for another two days. This ability may not simultaneously affect more creatures than the Ninube's Charisma modifier.

At tenth level, the Ninube's art is so perfect that the effects last for a number of weeks equal to the Ninube's Charisma modifier instead of days. In addition, the Ninube may use this ability to *dominate* any one creature which has fewer total hit dice or character levels than he has. This effect lasts for a number of hours equal to the Ninube's Charisma modifier and may not be saved against (though can be prevented by effects such as spell resistance and *protection* spells as if the Ninube had cast *domination*).

Face of One Thousand is a supernatural ability.

THE NINUBE SHUGENJA SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Awareness

Beginning Honor: 0

Skills: Athletics, Lore (Lying Darkness), Meditation, Ninjutsu 2, Poison, Stealth

Beginning Spells: Sense, Commune, and Summon, plus 3 Air, 2 Water, 1 Fire. Ninube Shugenja have an affinity for Air spells and a deficiency for Earth spells. Characters with any amount of Shadowlands Taint at character creation must give up their initial Fire spell for a Maho spell.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BLOODSPEAKERS

PLUMBING THE
DARKNESS
PART SIX

Breathing slowly and deliberately, Hatori regained his composure. The Pekkle would not shake him.

"What do you know about the Bloodspeakers, Hatori?" Gensaiken asked, breaking the silence.

"What everyone knows. They serve their lord Iuchiban, hiding within the clans for various nefarious ends. They cast maho and wish the destruction of the Empire, but were stopped twice before by Imperial troops and efforts," Hatori recited.

"There is much that you do not know. Yet," Gensaiken teased.

Tonelessly, Hatori said, "Enlighten me."

"Daigotsu himself was once a Bloodspeaker. He was a Hantei boy born into Bloodspeaker captivity—"

Hatori interrupted the Pekkle. "You content yourself with vague rumors, disquieting questions, and reminders of that which I already know. Why should I trust you any further? Daigotsu's origins are not unknown to me."

Quickly and quietly, Gensaiken responded. "You should trust me because I know more, and I am about to tell you. No hints, no trickery. Not this time. Believe me when I say I would like to see the Shadowlands destroyed as much as you would."

This settled Hatori, who motioned for Gensaiken to continue.

"All the truly grave dangers to the Empire have been from maho-tsukai. Iuchiban, of course, but there have been countless

others. Nakanu, Tanayama, Daigotsu, Junzo, Takeshi, Yajinden, Kitami. Most were Bloodspeakers. Do you see why the cult poses a problem? It uses the most powerful tool ever developed by mortal man against you. Every time the Empire faces a foe, be it Fu Leng or the Yang Darkness or Onnotangu himself, you prevail because Shiiinsei was right: Fortune does favor the mortal man."

Hatori continued to stare at Gensaiken. Sensing that he was not going to speak, Gensaiken simply continued.

"Your greatest danger is yourself. Only a man can undo what another has done," Gensaiken paused, hoping for a reaction. None was forthcoming. "Not everyone can use maho, but most can. It is a quick avenue to power. In months, not years, a maho-tsukai can amass tremendous strength. The cost is simply one's soul, and in light of the power that can be attained quickly, human greed is more than enough to compensate. Anything you want can be attained through maho use, and anyone around you could be a maho-tsukai."

"Junzo turned to maho seeking revenge. I have heard of Matsu who have turned to maho to pass their gempukku, believing they will be forced to commit seppuku otherwise. There are still Isawa who claim their original heritage of blood magic, even though it carries too high a price."

"But those who scare even one such as I are those who turn to maho of their free will. Iuchiban... what do you know of Iuchiban himself? Or his lieutenants?"

"Not as much as I'm sure you're about to tell me," Hatori said dryly.

"Do you know who Jima Suro is?"

"The Bloodspeaker who slew Ryoshin? I have heard of him, in passing."

"Jama Suru was once one of Iuchiban's generals. Today, he is 'merely' an extremely powerful Bloodspeaker. I spent some time with him, as he mimics human form as ably as I do."

"So he too is not human? I thought you were warning me of the dangers of human enemies."

"He is all too human, but I couldn't tell you what he looked like before he met Iuchiban, or even what he looks like today. I do know that he was one of the few humans with no natural ability to use maho. He sought Iuchiban to fix that problem. He was power-hungry and angry long before he was a Bloodspeaker, and he has never been alone. Many Bloodspeakers fall prey to the pretty sounds of power.

"Bloodspeakers are often led by shugenja, but they have never been exclusively shugenja. Anyone who feels powerless and downtrodden is a potential Bloodspeaker."

Hatori sighed. "You could be easily describing nine men in ten throughout the Empire."

"More than that. Have you ever contemplated how the peasantry feels about the Celestial Order? It is not pleasant to be coerced into servitude. Most Bloodspeakers come from villages that have never known the Emperor's grace or the prosperity most samurai know."

"Are you defending them, Gensaiken?" Hatori asked rhetorically.

"No, I am simply explaining them. The greatest threat comes from within, and the Bloodspeakers are always going to lie within the Empire. You wish a survey of the forces the Shadowlands have arrayed against the Empire, Hatori? Begin with the eta — eta, and the heimin who can do the most damage with the least exposure. A Bloodspeaker can be trained in six months and a smart one can wreak a great deal of havoc before he or she is stopped.

"When the temptation of maho is such that a man will willingly be subject to it to wield its power, and this temptation dwells in so many for so long, you may rest assured that none of us may rest assured."

Hatori nodded. "Now I understand what you are saying. Suspect everyone. This sounds suspiciously like the sort of plot a Bloodspeaker would engage in."

Gensaiken retrieved a small jade statuette from his robe. "Hatori, I told you I was not Tainted, and truly I am not." He paused, looking down. When he looked up, it was to meet Hatori's gaze. "That is a common ploy among any intelligent foe, to create suspicion. But it would not work half as well were it not absolutely true."

Hatori nodded, taking the new information in. Silence once more reigned over the two Miya.

BLOODSPEAKER CELLS

Even after the return of Iuchiban, most Bloodspeakers do not formally gather in large groups. The vast majority are organized in small, independent cells unified only by their loyalty to Iuchiban. Iuchiban maintains contact with these numerous far-flung groups through the Oracle of Blood, an aspect of himself with which he appears in the dreams of his chosen followers. Through the Oracle, he maintains focus and direction among what would otherwise be chaotic and disorganized groups. This section describes a number of these independent Bloodspeaker cells.

DEMON'S BREATH ACOLYTES (UNICORN CELL)

The Unicorn's great journey through the deserts and *gaijin* cities was, without question, the most dramatic single act of any clan. They were exposed to strange and alien philosophies which supplanted the Ki-Rin Clan's Rokugani sensibilities.

Though Shinjo and her followers found many alien cultures with a variety of magical arts, they never once ran into a cult of *maho-tsukai*. Thus, when the clan returned to Rokugan, they were ill-prepared for what they found.

Were the story of the Demon's Breath Acolytes known, it would be a cautionary tale to those who would forget the power of the Shadowlands.

Iuchi Ryutaro, a direct descendant of Iuchi and cousin of the daimyo, met a stranger on his clan's third night in Rokugan. The stranger had a Phoenix accent, and spoke of a covert alliance with the Unicorn. He offered a trade of information, and to show that he was being truthful, taught Ryutaro the foundations of his magic in a night.

This new magic was strange, and it called upon mystical forces that Ryutaro had only vague knowledge of. Ignorant of the dangers and trusting the stranger's honeyed words of welcome, Ryutaro dove into this strange magic.

It took less than the full night for the Taint to take hold of Ryutaro's mind. With the counsel of the visitor, Ryutaro learned to control this strange new power. Thus, not even fully aware of what he was doing, Ryutaro became the first Unicorn Bloodspeaker.

Weeks passed while Ryutaro and the visitor secluded themselves in study. Slowly, with the assistance of the Taint and mind-manipulating *maho*, the visitor fully indoctrinated Ryutaro into the paths of darkness. Satisfied, Ryutaro bid the visitor farewell and set about the task of forming a cell within his clan. He knew the majesty of Iuchiban, and he knew the power that awaited him that he could develop with allies.

Today, the Demon's Breath Acolytes are the tightest-knit cell of Bloodspeakers. Their members have genuine respect for one another, seeing one another as allies that stand and fall together. As an enormous cell (numbering an astonishing thirty-six members), they often find themselves under investigation by Witch Hunters, Inquisitors, and of late, Jade Magistrates. To counter these investigations, the Acolytes will often hastily train "new recruits" to throw to the samurai. Those who survive are occasionally slaughtered, but occasionally allowed to join the cell.

The most notable recent member from the Demon's Breath Acolytes is Shahai, who has become the Dark Daughter of Fu Leng.

RYUTARO

[Iuchi Shugenja 8/Bloodspeaker Cultist 9; Iuchi Shugenja 2/Bloodspeaker 4]

Ryutaro still leads the cell, amazingly. He long since abandoned his family name and pretense of humanity, and lives in an underground complex in the eastern reaches of Utaku territory, near the Dragon mountains. He is a being of tremendous power, though he values his freedom from Taint far too much to ever truly use his talents. After all, Ryutaro says, he has already been corrupted once. He recognizes that the Taint has changed his mind, and though he does not regret it, the thought of it happening again terrifies him.

He maintains his life with judicious use of *maho*, and occupies his time with the day-to-day concerns of leading a Blood-

speaker cell. He trains his followers, protects the caverns he lives in, and finds petty things to amuse him.

Ryutaro's fear of becoming Lost is a common one, though very rare among such long-lived maho-tsukai. Though he is aware of Iuchiban's return, he has not flocked to the Bloodspeaker founder's banner, as he is too close to becoming fully Lost.

If Ryutaro became Lost, he would truly be a force to reckon with. Until that day, he is nearly harmless, paralyzed with fear.

THE TRUE SONS OF ISAWA

Since before the Empire, the Isawa have been the unparalleled masters of the mystic forces. Today they are shugenja without measure, as all the truly gifted shugenja are, were, or were trained by the Phoenix.

But at the dawn of the world there were only the Isawa, and they had not come to know Shinsei's Tao nor the harmony of the elements. The magic that Isawa used was that of blood: powerful and dangerous. It was the magic of blood that gave the Tribe of Isawa the power to stand up to Shiba's divine might. It was the magic of blood that laid the foundations for much elemental magic.

It was the magic of blood that brought Fu Leng to his knees.

The True Sons of Isawa have histories that the shugenja of Gisei Toshi chose to forget long ago: the magic of blood was once the mightiest force in the mortal realm. It was blood that shaped the Empire and would surely have ushered in an age of mortal man, had the Kami never fallen.

Isawa was the mightiest wielder of blood magic, but his brother Takeshi was almost as powerful. When Isawa became a Thunder at Shinsei's side, Takeshi stayed behind to guard the tribe. And then, the Sons' histories read, a wave of darkness spread across the land. Blood magic became foul, and the consensus of the elders was that Fu Leng's spite accomplish what his will could not, and ensure that the magic that bound him could never again do so.

Within days, all but the weakest incantations became hazardous, as they now attracted the foul kansen that had spread throughout the world. In desperation, the Tribe, now the Isawa family of the Phoenix, adopted en masse the elementalism of Shinsei. Takeshi rejected this wholeheartedly. "Why should we throw off the teachings of my brother, and my father, and my father's father?" he argued. "We did not kneel to one god. We shall certainly not grovel to another."

Takeshi maintained his blood magic practices, and it was his early experimentation that led to the modern fear of maho, for it was increasingly seen as unclean even before it was shown to be dangerous. He gathered apprentices, equally unwilling to accept the elements and uncaring about the kansen.

Once, Takeshi's teachings taught how to harness kansen safely, without letting them contaminate the caster's spirit. As the years went by, even this safe maho became dangerous. Years before Kuni Nakanu identified the Taint, Isawa Takeshi had become an example to the Phoenix Clan about the dangers of their old ways. The persecutor that Takeshi and his students faced drove them into hiding. They knew they were close — very close — to breaking the curse.

Then the unthinkable occurred. Takeshi, in an experiment designed to ward off kansen from an area forever, drew thousands of kansen to him at once. The brother of Isawa became Lost in seconds, and he shared his newfound power and understanding with his students immediately thereafter. (Most were unwilling, nor that Takeshi cared.)

Takeshi's students killed him within days, hoping that by ritually slaying him they could expunge the Taint from their bodies, but their attempt failed and they too became consumed by the Taint.

Their blood magic became easier, working with the kansen rather than against them. Takeshi's students became the first maho-tsukai to stand independent of the Shadowlands. Even Otomo Jama, the man who would become Iuchiban, spent several months practicing their methods after studying the Nakanu scrolls.

When Iuchiban rose to power, the True Sons saw an alliance with the Bloodspeaker as only natural, as they were two of a kind. Iuchiban, for his part, had the Sons infiltrated and co-opted, so the offer of alliance became an offer of fealty and subjugation. Thus did the True Sons of Isawa become a Bloodspeaker cell.

The Sons still hold tremendous power, and find it easy (a Witch Hunter would say 'disturbingly easy') to recruit from the Isawa family, though they accept any Phoenix who wishes to find true power. Notable recent members include Isawa Tanayama, the Necromancer of the Clan Wars, and Asako Kaushen, a minor Bloodspeaker who fought against his brethren and the Lying Darkness during the 27 Days of Darkness.

ISAWA MICHIKATA

[Isawa Shugenja 4/Bloodspeaker Cultist 10/Sorcerer 1; Isawa Shugenja 2/Bloodspeaker 3]

Michikata prefers to think of himself not as a Bloodspeaker — though he certainly works for and beside Iuchiban's minions — but as one of the inheritors of Isawa's true power. In this he is not dissimilar from most of the other True Sons, save that he has genuine disdain for his allies. He 'rules' the True Sons, if only because he is the eldest member of the cell.

The Bloodspeakers as a whole are, as far as Michikata is concerned, a child's cult based on a philosophy of rebellion for its own sake. They have no true goals, preferring mindless destruction for its own sake. Hatred, Michikata says, accomplishes nothing. Thus, when Bloodspeakers come to him for assistance in Phoenix lands, Michikata often requires foolish errands of them simply to inconvenience them.

Michikata's ultimate goal is not the dissolution of the Empire, nor anything of the sort. He desires a return to the old days of the Isawa tribe when blood magic was not controlled by Fu Leng, and Isawa magic ruled the northeastern lands without parallel or question or incident. His efforts are directed to this end, not Iuchiban's war.

With Iuchiban returned, and the Bloodspeakers more active than ever, Michikata's treachery is ill-timed. This has not stopped him from researching Isawa Takeshi's methods. He has not been as successful as he would like, but he has created an incantation to remove Taint from individual spells, which he calls "burning away the darkness." He knows that if Iuchiban were to find out about his spell, he would be rewarded, but if Iuchiban found out why he created it, he would be in serious trouble.

Michikata would desperately like a trustworthy ally, though he has yet met none who could play that role.

IMPORTANT BLOODSPEAKER NPCS

IUCHIBAN, THE FIRST BLOODSPEAKER

The Empire of Rokugan has faced innumerable threats in its thousand years. Internal wars, invasions, supernatural entities and even dark gods have all attempted to destroy the Empire, and all have been defeated by the united samurai who defend it with their lives. Of them, one stands out as the most horrifying, terrible threat ever faced. It was so exceptionally dreadful partly because it came so close to succeeding, and partly because its origin was in something so familiar as petty human emotion.

Iuchiban. The Bloodspeaker. A name that causes terror in child and adult alike, even in modern Rokugan. A single man who seized so much dark power and so much influence among the disenfranchised that he nearly destroyed Rokugan not once but twice. The enormity of his power fascinates and confounds shugenja, and bushi simply stare at the blades and wonder how they could ever have hoped to face such a man. Hundreds all across Rokugan offer prayers of thanks every night that the Bloodspeaker was defeated and has not returned.

Until now.

The man who would become Iuchiban began life as a contented child named Hantei Jama, the Emperor's second son. Life was not as idyllic as some would imagine for a young Hantei, as Jama found himself disregarded by other children for no reason other than that his brother would be Emperor and he would be nothing. Even as a child, Jama found his resentment and anger growing.

After his gempukku, he was fostered to the Otomo family and became Otomo Jama, a reclusive shugenja and scholar who worked quietly in Otosan Uchi's shrines. While some believed Jama's hermit-like lifestyle to reflect piety, in truth Jama had simply grown disgusted with the company of his fellow Imperials. He wisened nothing to do with them, although he could feign kindness and courtesy so well that none ever suspected the wellspring of rage and hatred he concealed within.

Otomo Jama began his descent into darkness in the year 499, when he discovered an ancient cache of scrolls that included not only a copy of Kuni Nakanu's research into the Taint, but a lost and forgotten series of books left in the city after the gaijin invasion at White Stag many years before. With these works, Jama began to create a new form of magic. As his cult began to grow, Jama mastered a particularly dark and terrible secret: he removed his own heart and locked it away, guaranteeing that he could not be killed unless his heart was found and destroyed. Jama took a new name to commemorate his new power: Iuchiban. The Blood Speaker.

With his cult rapidly growing in power and influence, Iuchiban began to experiment to increase his power. He ordered his lieutenant Asahina Yajinden, a gifted crafter of mystical items, to create swords of power that would curse the

samurai he hated. The Bloodswords embodied the opposite of tenets of bushido, the code that Iuchiban despised. Three Bloodswords found their mark, and the Lion, Crane, and Crab Champions all died within two years of receiving them. Only the Scorpion Champion survived. Unknown to Iuchiban, the Scorpion began a quiet investigation into the origin and nature of these deadly blades.

Iuchiban's cult was poised to begin its overthrow of Jama's elder brother, the Emperor of Rokugan. His plan was both simple and sinister. He and his minions would conduct a ritual that would animate the corpses in the Imperial crypts in Otosan Uchi. This army, which would be protected from opposition by the Rokugani's reverence for their ancestors, could quickly overwhelm the Emperor and his court, killing Iuchiban's brother and holding the Imperial Court hostage to ensure the Empire would be loyal to their new ruler, the dread lord Iuchiban.

The dark plot was halted only by circumstance. The cooperation of a Scorpion magistrate and a Lion legionary exposed Iuchiban's plan weeks before it came to fruition. Facing an assault on his mausoleum headquarters by the Imperial Legions, Iuchiban was forced to proceed with the ritual incomplete, animating only a fraction of the corpses that would have risen under the proper circumstances. Iuchiban had planned for emergencies, and had a secret escape route for him and his followers. Unfortunately, Scorpion magistrate Soshi Takasho, who had discovered his plan, had also discovered his bolt-hole, and was there to capture him for the Empire.

Iuchiban was believed gone forever, his undying body imprisoned within a mystical tomb built specifically to contain him, but his soul lived on as a vengeful spirit thanks to the teaching of his assistant Yajinden. For years, he moved through the Empire in secret, manipulating his cult and planning his revenge upon the Hantei and all who followed him. Exposed by an ise zumi, Iuchiban was forced to accelerate his plans. His followers gathered thousands upon thousands of corpses and massed them near Sleeping River. Possessing a new host, Iuchiban animated the vast army and prepared to march against the Empire. Only the combined might of all the Great Clans was able to stop him, and only an ise zumi bearing a special tattoo was able to imprison Iuchiban's immortal spirit, which was then chained and bound deep inside a vast tomb that was hidden far from the eyes of men.

Recently, Iuchiban was roused from his centuries-long stupor when one of his greatest acolytes, the Dark Daughter Shahaï, penetrated his tomb alongside a small band of unwitting samurai. Shahaï bargained with the Bloodspeaker: she would release him if he would return Daigotsu to power. Iuchiban and his treacherous lieutenant Yajinden, whose spirit was imprisoned within the Tomb alongside him, chose to accept Shahaï's offer. As soon as he had the advantage, Yajinden and Iuchiban combined their power to overcome Shahaï and coerce her into releasing them without upholding their end of the bargain. Iuchiban has gone on to conquer the City of the Lost and unleash a rain of blood upon the Empire, corrupting countless individuals.

If the Heartless is not swiftly returned to his Tomb or destroyed, his lust for carnage and power will know no bounds.

IUCHIBAN, THE FIRST BLOODSPEAKER

Male human Sorcerer 10/Bloodspeaker Cultist 10: CR 30; Medium-size humanoid (Shadowlands); HD 20d6 (70 hp); Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30; AC 12 (12 touch, 10 flat-footed); Ark +3 *wounding katana* +15/+10 melee (1d10+2); SQ Class skill: Knowledge (maho) (Hantei family bonus), element focus (maho), sense elements, bleeding the elements, dark wisdom, Bloodspeaker's deal, Yajinden's first lesson, Iuchiban's legacy, Yajinden's final lesson, blood path, Iuchiban qualities; Honor: 0; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +14; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 18, Int 20, Wis 18, Cha 26; Taint +10; Maximum Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 11 in.

IUCHIBAN QUALITIES

Iuchiban possesses a number of unique abilities, including the following:

Advanced Taint Suppression: Iuchiban automatically suppresses any effect that detects or specifically targets Shadowlands creatures within 100 feet of himself. He may suppress this ability at will, or alter it so that the effect applies only to himself.

Possession: As a standard action, Iuchiban may attempt a gaze attack that allows him to possess any living humanoid creature within thirty feet. The target must immediately make a Will save (DC 34) or become possessed by Iuchiban. Iuchiban's former host body immediately dies. The target's body becomes Iuchiban's new host body and the former occupant's spirit immediately dies. Iuchiban's physical ability scores become those of the host body (unless they are less

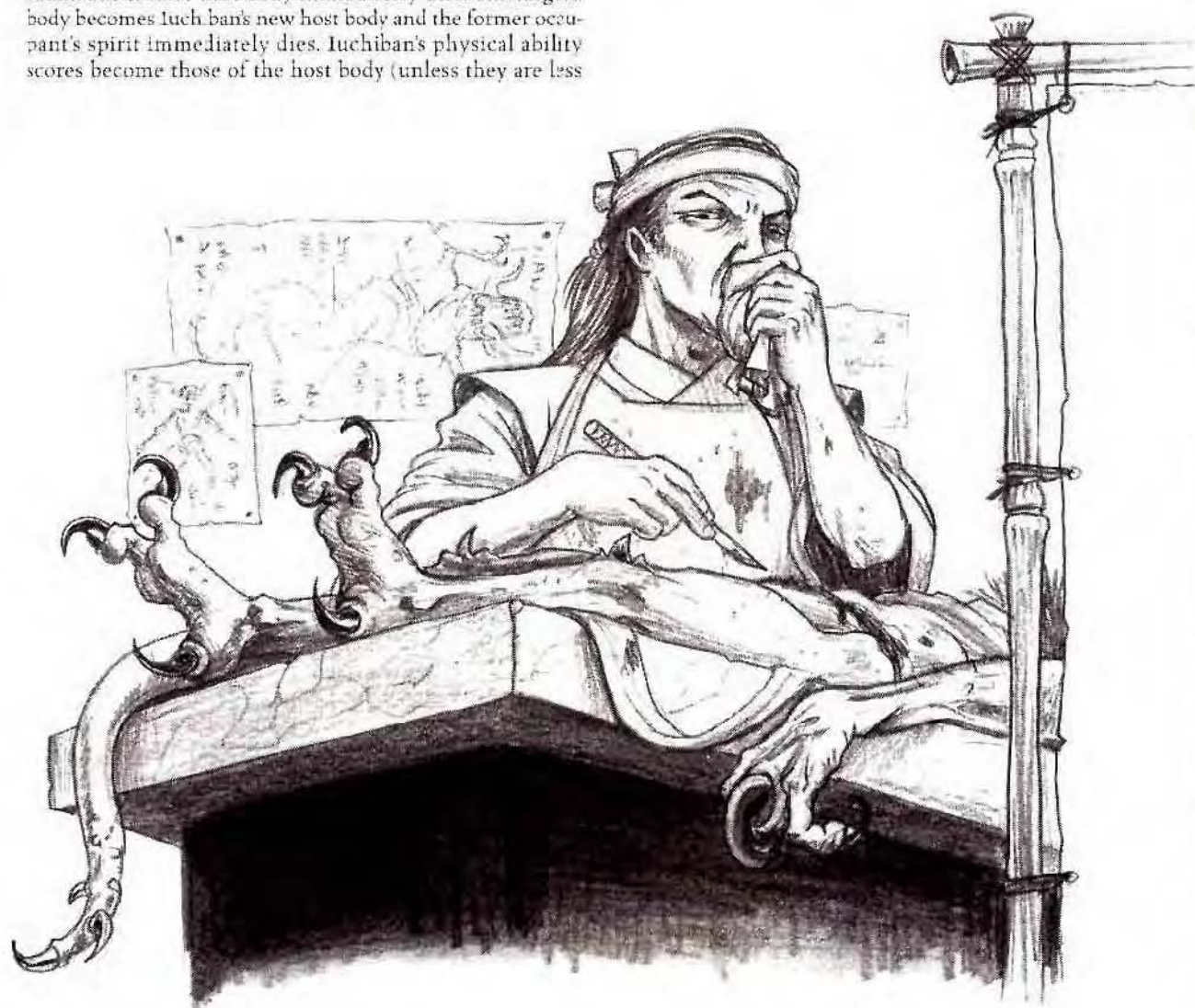
than 15, in which case they increase to 15). The host body retains any natural abilities and ongoing magical effects, but otherwise all its previous abilities (except for hit points) are lost and replaced with Iuchiban's. There is no limit to the amount of time that Iuchiban may remain in a host body. If the initial Will save is successful, Iuchiban remains in his previous body and the target is immune to this effect for ten minutes. This is a mind-affecting supernatural effect. Once Iuchiban possesses a body, the body is considered his own and he cannot be removed by *protection from evil*, exorcism, or similar methods. If the host body is killed with Iuchiban inside, Iuchiban's spirit is immediately expelled and returns to his new physical body, that of the Crab samurai Kaiu Kuma.

Blood Mastery: When using his own blood as a material component or focus for a spell, Iuchiban takes no damage and need make no Concentration check. If he wishes to use maho metamagic he must take damage normally.

Damage Reduction 30/+4 applies to any host body Iuchiban occupies.

Dark Knowledge: All skills are class skills for Iuchiban.

Gajin Magic: Iuchiban may select spells from the sorcerer spell list as well as from the spell list of whatever class he happens to be advancing.



Immortality: Iuchiban cannot be killed by any means unless the Hidden Heart of Iuchiban is destroyed.

Improved Saves: If Iuchiban successfully saves against any effect with a "partial" result, the spell does not affect him. **Manifestation:** If not possessing a host body, Iuchiban can force his spirit to take intangible form for one hour per day. In this form, he has the above listed stats for his "spirit form."

Regeneration 6: Iuchiban takes subdual damage from all attacks. (Though undead are normally immune to subdual damage, regular damage inflicted as subdual damage is inflicted on Iuchiban normally.) This regeneration does not affect his host body.

Spell Resistance 25, 35 vs. maho effects.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Mekhem, Oni), Alchemy +28, Concentration +23, Knowledge (khadi sorcery) +28, Knowledge (maho) +28, Knowledge (nemuranai) +28, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +28, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +9, Scry +28, Spellcraft +28; Craft Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Perceived Honor (x2), Forge Ring, Leadership (26), Versatile (Knowledge (khadi sorcery), Knowledge (nobility and royalty)), Void Use.

Spells Per Day: (6/8/8/8/8/7/7/7/7/6) base DC 28 + spell level, all spells are considered maho; **Spells Known:** 0 — arcane mark, call earth, call fire, commune with elements, detect magic, detect poison, ghost sound, prestidigitation, read magic, summon; 1st — blood rite, comprehend language, deathwatch, obscuring mist, protection from good, undetectable aura; 2nd — alter self, darkness, desecrate, locate object, mists of fear, summon swarm; 3rd — animate dead, dark wings, inflict serious wounds, speak with dead, vampiric touch; 4th — arcane eye, heart ripper, pain, rise again, wall of bones; 5th — cloudkill, contact other plane, gift of the kansen, magic jar, nightmare; 6th — create undead, dark favors, sinful dreams, summon greater kansen; 7th — acid fog, blasphemy, blood of the ages, teleport without error; 8th — create greater undead, greater planar binding, symbol, trap the soul; 9th — energy drain, "Rise, Taint," soul bind, wail of the banshee.

Possessions: None. Iuchiban has occasionally been known to use the Ruby of Iuchiban or other powerful maho items that bear his name, but generally does not rely upon items. His own natural power is usually sufficient.

IUCHIBAN, THE FIRST BLOODSPEAKER

Earth: 6

Water: 5

Fire: 4

Intelligence: 6

Air: 6

Void: 4

Shadowlands Taint: 8

School/Rank: Iuchiban's gaijin magic makes him the equivalent of a Rank 8 Isawa Shugenja with Earth Affinity.

Honor: 2.9

Glory: 0.0 (9.1 when alive)

Advantages: Cadence, Hantei Blood, Heart of Vengeance (Dragon Clan, Imperial Families, Scorpion Clan), Heartless, Leadership, Perceived Honor (2 ranks)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Iuchiban), Benten's Curse, Dark Fate, Jealousy (elder brother), Overconfident, Spoiled

Spells: Iuchiban has all known maho spells as Innate Abilities, plus any number of other non-maho gaijin spells that resemble the spells in the Player's Guide. The full limit of his magical knowledge is difficult to imagine, and is ultimately left to the GM's discretion.

Skills: Courtier 3, Etiquette 2, Heraldry 5, Lore (gaijin sorcery) 8, Lore (maho) 10, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Meditation 7, Spellcraft 9, Tanto 6, Torture 7.

Special Abilities: Iuchiban possesses a number of unique abilities.

Advanced Taint Suppression: Iuchiban automatically suppresses any effect that detects or specifically targets Shadowlands creatures within 100 feet of himself. He may suppress this ability at will, or alter it so that the effect applies only to himself.

Possession: Iuchiban may attempt to possess any living humanoid creature within thirty feet by locking gazes with them. The target must make an opposed Willpower roll or become possessed by Iuchiban. Iuchiban's former host body immediately dies. The target's body becomes Iuchiban's new host body and the former occupant's spirit immediately dies. Iuchiban's physical Traits temporarily become those of the host body if they are greater than his own. The host body retains any natural abilities and ongoing magical effects, but otherwise all its previous abilities (including Wounds) are lost and replaced with Iuchiban's. There is no limit to the amount of time that Iuchiban may remain in a host body. If the target's initial Willpower roll is successful, Iuchiban remains in his previous body and the target is immune to this effect for ten minutes. Once Iuchiban possesses a body, the body is considered his own and he cannot be removed by exorcism or similar methods.

Blood Mastery: When casting maho using his own blood, Iuchiban takes no Wounds unless he makes Raises (not including Free Raises). Iuchiban gains two Free Raises when casting maho (not counting Raises for Innate Abilities).

Carapace: 6.

Improved Magic Resistance: The TNs of all maho spells targeting Iuchiban are increased by 10 unless he is a willing target.

Immortality: Iuchiban cannot be killed by any means unless the Hidden Heart of Iuchiban is destroyed. Should his body be destroyed, he regenerates in an invisible, incorporeal state one to four months later. In this form, he can neither attack nor use magic. The only ability he may use is his Possession ability.

Manifestation: If not possessing a host body, Iuchiban can force his spirit to take tangible form for one hour per day. In this form, he has the listed stats.

Regeneration: Iuchiban heals a die of Wounds every round, even if he is injured beyond the Dead level.

ASAHINA YAJINDEN, BLOODSPEAKER MASTER CRAFTSMAN

Asahina Yajinden's beginnings were very simple. He was a Crane and lived most of his early life with no signs that he was any different from the dozens of young men and women who began schooling in the Asahina arts alongside him. In short order, however, the elder Asahina noticed Yajinden's incredible gift for artifice. The young man mastered the ancient art of Tsangusuri in mere weeks, and was creating new and impressive fetishes long before his gempukku. Yajinden was heralded as one of the finest shugenja of his family, and great things were expected.

He quickly grew bored. There was no challenge in the arts his family practiced, and he grew weary of their looking to him for grand new feats of magic. It was only a few years after

his gempukku that he began to yearn for excitement. Finally, he used his gifts to gain the favor of several important members of the Crane leadership and arranged a position in the courts at Orosan Uchi. Surely the largest city in the Empire would hold something of interest for an intelligent and engaging young man.

Yajinden was in Orosan Uchi less than a month before meeting the charismatic Otomo Jama. His personality was quiet, but magnetic, and Yajinden was drawn to him. Over time, Jama began to share some of his theories of magic with the young shugenja Yajinden, intrigued, became Jama's confidant. Even when their experiments turned dark and sinister, Yajinden did not break away. At last he had found something that interested him.

It was not until after Yajinden had forged the Bloodswords for his master that their machinations were exposed. The pair's plans for the capital might have gone undetected if not for the interference of a pair of magistrates. Unfortunately, the Scorpion magistrate Soshi Takasho was far more cunning than Jama, now called Iuchiban, and arranged for both Iuchiban and Yajinden to be captured by the Legions.

The Crane, furious, devised a punishment to match the enormity of Yajinden's crimes. Rather than allow his black knowledge to continue to be a threat, the pacifist Asahina erased his memories, leaving him a simpleton. Satisfied, the Asahina left Yajinden's shattered husk to tend the gardens in the Imperial City.

But Yajinden had triumphed. He had mastered a new art: he could transfer his spirit into others' bodies. He switched his mind with that of an Imperial guard just seconds before his mind was erased, leaving the guard a simpleton and him dead to the Empire. He hid in his new identity for a while before leaving the body to explore others. He spent decades wandering the Empire in a variety of bodies until, at long last, his master returned through the same technique. Together, they shook the foundations of Rokugan at the Battle of Sleeping River. In the end, they were defeated, but Yajinden escaped his master's imprisonment.

After centuries working for Iuchiban, Yajinden had come to hate him. Iuchiban had grand theories, but it was Yajinden who had forged the Bloodswords, and it was Yajinden who mastered the art of spirit travel. He was the true master of the Bloodspeakers, not Iuchiban. Full of anger, he devised a plot to drain his master's imprisoned spirit of its power, making him the one true master of the dark arts he had always dreamed of being.

Yajinden's plot nearly succeeded. Possessing a Kuni witch-hunter, he opened Iuchiban's tomb and made his way to the innermost chambers. There, he used an artifact of his own devising to summon Iuchiban's captive spirit and began to absorb its power. The timely intervention of a group of samurai halted his plan, and it was Yajinden who found himself absorbed by the ravenous spirit of Iuchiban.

For decades he existed as nothing more than a shadow within the more powerful Bloodspeaker's spirit. He was freed only by sheer coincidence: when Shahai, the Dark Daughter of Fu Leng, came to steal the power of Iuchiban, Yajinden saw an opportunity. He offered his captor a proposition: The two would together overpower her, and escape. Assistance and fealty for his freedom, Yajinden realized, was a fair trade.

Fealty is only as reliable as the honor of the man who swears it.

ASAHINA YAJINDEN

Male human Crane Shu10/Bloodspeaker Cultist 10:
 CR 22; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 20d6+20 (hp 90); Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (touch 12, flat-footed 10); Atk +2 *wounding wakizashi* +13/+8 melee (1d6+3); SQ Class skill — Knowledge (Shintao) (family bonus), Sense Elements, Element Focus (Air), Bleeding the Elements, Dark Wisdom, Bloodspeaker's Deal, Yajinden's First Lesson, Iuchiban's Legacy, Yajinden's Final Lesson, Blood Path, Yajinden Qualities; Honor 0 (1); AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +15; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 20, Maximum Void Points 2; Taint +9; Height 5 ft. 8 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami), Alchemy +16, Bluff +17, Concentrate +24, Diplomacy +29, Disguise +15, Heal +23, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (Elements) +9, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +26, Knowledge (Shintao) +11, Spellcraft +26, Bleeding the Elements Blessing of Air, Craft Magical Arms and Armor, Improved Initiative, Maho Focus, Perceived Honor, Taint Repression, Void Use

Spells Known (6/8/7/7/7/7/6/6/6, base DC 15 + spell level, DC 17 + spell level for air and maho): 0 — call fire, daze, detect magic, flare, flash of insight, flight of doves, gathering swirl, ghost sound, guidance, read magic; 1st — cause fear, change self, ebbing strength, expeditious retreat, silent image, sleep; 2nd — cure moderate wounds, detect thoughts, guidance of the wind, inflict moderate wounds, summon swarm, winter's touch; 3rd — dark wings, curse of weakness, false tongue, gayun flames, invisibility; 4th — fire and blood, heart ripper, phantasmal killer, rise again, taint strike; 5th — gift of the kansen, nightmare, piercing the soul, symbol of air, unhallow; 6th — blade barrier, create undead, dark favors, harm; 7th — acid fog, harvest of death, summon oni, tomb of earth; 8th — antipathy, create greater undead, tainted aura, trap the soul; 9th — energy drain, implosion, soul bind, weed.

YAJINDEN QUALITIES

Yajinden possesses a number of unique abilities.

Advanced Taint Suppression: Yajinden automatically suppresses any effect which detects or specifically targets Shadowlands creatures within 100 feet of himself. He may suppress this ability at will, or alter it so that the effect applies only to himself.

Supreme Artificery: Yajinden needs no feats to create any magical item. All creation costs for him are reduced by 10% and the benefits from the Yajinden's First Lesson class ability are doubled (thus potentially reducing an item's cost by 60%).

Possession: Yajinden may attempt to possess any living humanoid creature within thirty feet by locking gazes with them. The target must make an opposed Willpower roll or become possessed by Yajinden. Yajinden's former host body immediately dies. The target's body becomes Yajinden's new host body and the former occupant's spirit immediately dies. Yajinden's physical Traits temporarily become those of the host body if they are greater than his own. The host body retains any natural abilities and ongoing magical effects, but otherwise all its previous abilities (including hit points) are lost and replaced with Yajinden's. There is no limit to the amount of time that Yajinden may remain in a host body. If the target's initial Willpower roll is successful, Yajinden remains in his previous body and the target is immune to this effect for ten minutes. Once Yajinden possesses a body, the body is considered his own and he cannot be removed by protection from evil, exorcism, or similar methods. Yajinden's current host is the body of the ascetic cartographer Asako Misao (see *Secrets of the Phoenix*, pages 36–37).

ASAHINA YAJINDEN

Earth: 4

Willpower: 7

Water: 4

Fire: 5

Air: 6

Void: 3

Shadowlands Taint: 9.4

School/Rank: Asahina Shugenja 5

Honor: 1.9 (2.9)

Glory: 0.0 (7.6 when alive)

Advantages: Allies (Bloodspeakers), Cadence, Perceived Honor (1 rank), Way of the Land (Crane, Imperial)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Yajinden), Dark Fate, Jealousy (Iuchiban), Obligation (Iuchiban and the Bloodspeakers)

Spells: Yajinden knows all maho spells and possesses many as Innate Abilities. He also has access to many elemental spells, and while his Affinity is for Air, he has overcome his Deficiencies and can cast Earth spells with no penalty. The full limit of his magical knowledge is left to the GM's discretion.

Skills: Courtier 5, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 5, Lore (maho) 8, Lore (nemuranai) 8, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Meditation 6, Spellcraft 7, Tanto 6, Tsangusuri 7, Weaponsmithing 8.

Special Abilities: Yajinden possesses a number of unique abilities.

Advanced Taint Suppression: Yajinden automatically suppresses any effect which detects or specifically targets Shadowlands creatures within 100 feet of himself. He may suppress this ability at will, or alter it so that the effect applies only to himself.

Possession: Yajinden may attempt to possess any living humanoid creature within thirty feet by locking gazes with them. The target must make an oppose Willpower roll or become possessed by Yajinden. Yajinden's former host body immediately dies. The target's body becomes Yajinden's new host body and the former occupant's spirit is permanently forced into Yajinden's previous body. Yajinden's physical Traits temporarily become those of the host body if they are greater than his own. The host body retains any natural abilities and ongoing magical effects, but otherwise all its previous abilities (including Wounds) are lost and replaced with Yajinden's. There is no limit to the amount of time that Yajinden may remain in a host body. If the target's initial Willpower roll is successful, Yajinden remains in his previous body and the target is immune to this effect for ten minutes. Once Yajinden possesses a body, the body is

considered his own and he cannot be removed by exorcism or similar methods. Yajinden's current host is the body of the ascetic cartographer Asako Misao (see *Secrets of the Phoenix*, pages 36–37).

JAMA SURU, IUCHIBAN'S LIEUTENANT

The man who would be Jama Suru was born into a minor vassal family of the Shiba as Iga Suru. His parents were ji-samurai, as were their parents before them. Suru's father was the daiyō of the tiny family, and Suru was destined to be leader too. His life was circumscribed by subservience to his betters, and — if he was truly fortunate — a loveless marriage for political ends.

Suru was a sullen boy, and made his feelings known at every possible opportunity. He kicked peasants he passed in the streets, seeing them as a reminder of his inferiority to other samurai, and he insulted anyone who got in his way. His tender age, his parents' goodwill, and his rank (low as it felt, he was still above the local militia) were the only things that kept him alive. Even this depressed Suru. If he couldn't be of any importance, and certainly the daiyō of a very small vassal family was of no importance, he didn't want to live. His parents lamented his behavior but could not change it. Suru's outbursts became more and more frequent. When he was sixteen, he heard that the younger son of the Emperor was going to be passing through his village, and his parents would be waiting on him, taking care of his every need. Suru formulated a plan: he would speak to the Emperor's son. This boy, nearly the same age as Suru, was the reason he and his family lived among the peasants, barely wealthier than the farmers they ruled. This boy was the cause of all Suru's frustrations, and he would speak his mind to him. That he would probably be cut down for his words didn't bother him: after all, life was hardly worth living already.

Otomo Jama came through the village on the way to Shiro Shiba, and Suru watched him be greeted by his parents. Minutes went by, and Suru's rage and frustration built quickly. He approached the Imperial retinue (consisting of merely Otomo Jama and a single yojimbo, as Jama was the second son and quite out of favor by his father), waving to and greeting his parents as if nothing was at all amiss. He bowed to his parents, and turned to the Hantei as if to kneel. Instead, Suru leaped out at the Hantei boy. Screaming at the top of his lungs, Suru tackled him before the yojimbo had a chance to react.

Coincidentally, a group of bandits had planned to kidnap the Imperial child. When they came through seconds later, finding a samurai couple, two mud-caked boys wrestling and a single yojimbo who turned to face them, they cut the three



samurai down before they had any chance to even draw their weapons. The bandits, blood still dripping from their blades, asked Suru where the Hantei boy was, but Jama could say nothing and Suru stammered that he did not know. The bandits could not identify Jama themselves, as he was covered in mud and was not readily identifiable as anyone significant. The bandits rode on, searching for the boy, leaving the two teenage boys alive.

Suru took his hands back from around Jama's neck and looked at his parents. Jama could not help but stare at the dead bodies. When the two boys found their voices, Jama ordered Suru to take him to nearby Shiro Shiba. Suru, dumbstruck, complied.

When they arrived, Jama thanked Suru, and offered a boon for saving his life. Jama granted Suru his name, if Suru would pledge his loyalty and serve him. Suru, never one to back away from an opportunity, took the name Jama Suru. Even in this, befriending the son of the Emperor, Suru found the entire world acting against him, as the Emperor berated Jama and perpetually threatened to execute Suru over petty quarrels.

Years passed, and the two became genuine, if not close, friends. The Emperor died, and Otomo Jama's brother took the throne. As tradition held, Jama took the Otomo name and a lesser position in the courts. No longer was he the Emperor's son and second in the line of succession, he was the Emperor's brother, and long since out of favor.

Jama, in his bitterness, confided in his one friend his anger that for him there was no ascension. Nothing more could be gained. Suru grinned and reminded him that once he too had thought that way.

A solution came in the form of a timid newcomer to the Imperial City named Asahina Yajinden. Suru never trusted him, but Jama saw potential. Already involved in maho research after his discovery of the Nakanu scrolls, Otomo Jama approached Yajinden, developing first a rapport, and eventually an alliance. Suru was ever wary, as he did not trust or like Yajinden. Even after the three men journeyed into gaijin lands to learn the secrets of khadi magic and were the only three members of the Imperial retinue to survive, Suru never fully trusted Yajinden.

When Yajinden and Jama began their maho development in earnest, Suru attempted to join them. After all, he was loyal to Jama and wished to assist, aware all the time that maho could benefit him as much as the two samurai.

Suru had no aptitude for it. Much to the dismay of the two maho-tsukai, Suru could not attract the attention of even a minor kansen. Unperturbed, Jama and Yajinden hit upon a solution, one that would become Bloodspeaker tradition: the crafting of an ally the same as any other tool. Yajinden found a way for the kansen to imprint into Suru's spirit the same magical aptitude he carried, and thus Suru became in an instant a mighty shugenja and maho-tsukai. The imprinting was not complete, as Suru never grasped the more advanced concepts, but it was deep enough to change Suru's character forever. No more was he the wry loyal servant of Otomo Jama: now Jama Suru, the general of Iuchiban, was a dark and hate-filled man.

Since Iuchiban's first appearance, there has always been a man named Jama Suru. However, it has not always been the same person. Every time Iuchiban returns, he calls upon a Bloodspeaker to become the new Jama Suru. This person is then granted the powers of the original Suru, and as time goes on becomes more and more like the original Suru in behavior and character. The current Jama Suru is an oddity, for he pro-

nounced himself Jama Suru long before Iuchiban escaped his Tomb. Suru claims he was granted his powers by the Oracle of Blood, and as Iuchiban does not contest his claims no other has argued with him.

JAMA SURU

Male human Shu10/Bloodspeaker Cultist 10; CR 20; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 20d6+20 (hp 90); Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (touch 12, flat-footed 10); Atk +4 *arguchi* +17/+12 melee (1d4+7 crit. 19-20/x2); SQ Sense Elements, Element Focus (Air), Bleeding the Elements, Dark Wisdom Bloodspeaker's Deal, Yajinden's First Lesson, Iuchiban's Legacy, Yajinden's Final Lesson, Blood Path, Suru Qualities; Honor 0; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +17; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 22, Maximum Void Points 5; Taint +9*; Height 5 ft. 7 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami), Battle +30, Bluff +16, Concentrate +13, Diplomacy +23, Heal +16, Intimidate +18 Knowledge (Elements) +15, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +26, Knowledge (Shintao) +12, Knowledge (War) +8, Move Silently +12, Sense Motive +26, Spellcraft +26, Bleeding the Elements, Depths of the Void, Leadership, Maho Focus, Taint Repression (x2), Versatile (Battle, Sense Motive), Void Use.

Spells Known (6/8/7/7/7/6/6/6; base DC 15 + spell level, DC 17 + spell level for air and maho): 0 — call fire, daze, detect magic, flare, flash of insight, flight of doves, gathering swirl, ghost sound, guidance, read magic; 1st — cause fear, change self, ebbing strength, expeditious retreat, silent image, sleep; 2nd — cure moderate wounds, detect thoughts, guidance of the wind, inflict moderate wounds, summon swarm, winter's touch; 3rd — dark wings, curse of weakness, false tongue, gaijin flames, invisibility; 4th — fire and blood, heart ripper, phantasmal killer, rise again, taint strike; 5th — gift of the kansen, nightmare, piercing the soul, symbol of air, unhallow; 6th — blade barrier, create undead, dark favors, harm; 7th — acid fog, harvest of death, summon oni, tomb of earth; 8th — antipathy, create greater undead, tainted aura, trap the soul; 9th — energy drain, implosion, soul bind, weird.

SURU QUALITIES

Suru possesses a number of unique abilities.

Taint Adaptation: Suru never mastered the ability that both Yajinden and Iuchiban share to suppress Taint indefinitely by sheer force of will. He can, however, spent five minutes meditating to suppress his Taint entirely for two hours.

Spell-like abilities: Suru has the following spell-like abilities. Their save DC is 17 + spell level. 1/day: hate's heart, obsidian armor; 3/day: darkness, taint strike.

JAMA SURU

Earth: 5

Stamina: 7

Water: 5

Fire: 5

Agility: 6

Air: 5

Reflexes: 6

Void: 4

Shadowlands Taint: 9.1

School/Rank: Cult of the Blood-Red Moon 5 (see *Way of the Shugenja*,TM page 91) / Bleeding the Elements / Asahina Shugenja 2

Honor: 0.0

Glory: 0.0

Advantages: Allies (Bloodspeakers), Heartless, Leadership
Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Suru), Dark Fate, Jealousy (Iuchiban), Obligation (Iuchiban and the Bloodspeakers)

Spells: Suru knows all maho spells and possesses many as Innate Abilities. He also has access to many elemental spells, and while his Affinities are for Maho and Air, he has overcome his Deficiencies and can cast Water and Earth spells with no penalty. The full limit of his magical knowledge are left to the GM's discretion.

Skills: Astrology 4, Battle 7, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 5, History 8, Lore (Maho) 8, Lore (Shadowlands) 7, Meditation 6, Sincerity 6, Spellcraft 7, Stealth 5, Tanto 6, Torture 4

Special Abilities: Jama Suru possesses the following unique ability.

Taint Adaptation: Suru never mastered the ability that both Yajinden and Iuchiban share: to suppress Taint indefinitely by sheer force of will. He can, however, spent five minutes meditating to suppress his Taint entirely for two hours.

MINIONS OF THE BLOODSPEAKERS

THE BEAUTY OF DEATH

The average Crane Clan samurai knows little about the Shadowlands Taint. He believes that the Shadowlands and its servants are far away from his lands, contained by the Crab and their Wall. This lax attitude has allowed a very dangerous Bloodspeaker cell to flourish in Shiro sano Kakita.

Asahina Touji was considered a prodigy by his Asahina sensei; the air kami seemed to follow his will faster than they would for anyone else. His magic talismans performed better than all expectations, and many shugenja of the school began to proclaim Touji as the successor-to-be of the Master of the Asahina School.

When Touji turned seventeen, however, his supporters were appalled at the catastrophe that occurred. Touji's talismans no longer functioned, and none of the kami would respond to his spells. None of the shugenja at the school could explain the disaster, and the kami near the school refused to explain. Before experts (including Kuni tsukai-sagasu) could investigate the matter, news of the deaths of Touji's parents reached the school and the young man disappeared. A year later, Touji entered the Kakita Artisan School as 'Doji Adoka.'

The voice of Asahina Yajinden had always called to Adoka, and a few months before his 'catastrophe,' it led him to a secret alcove in the Asahina School. There Adoka found hundreds of maho scrolls, scrolls that Yajinden himself had hidden. Adoka read through the scrolls, unable to resist the temptation of vast knowledge and power. The spell *Dancing with Demons* caught his eye, and the voice inside of him whispered, "What bliss it would be to destroy the Crane Clan with dancing!" Ten years later, Adoka had become the founder of the Graceful Crane Dojo and the leader of the Beauty of Death cell.

The Beauty of Death cell currently has ten members. All of the maho-tsukai have been extensively trained in the art of dance and music. Most of the cultists work as sensei in the Graceful Crane Dojo, except for a few whose Taint symptoms have progressed too far to mingle in public. The dojo handles a few dozen students per year. The dojo is genuine and all of the students leave the dojo more skilled than when they had

entered. However, some of the more eager, less skillful students leave the dojo with unnatural beauty and an unhealthy dose of the Shadowlands Taint.

KAKITA RUKAWA

(Shugenja 4/Artisan 1/Bloodspeaker Cultist 6; Kakita Artisan 1/Bloodspeaker 3)

The current head of the Beauty of Death cell is the handsome and charismatic Kakita Rukawa. He was once ugly and inept, and was mocked by the rest of the students. He eagerly took the powers and beauty Doji Adoka offered him and never looked back at the life he left behind. Rukawa gladly helped Doji Adoka in all that he did; he helped Adoka find a suitable dojo, and he helped recruit the other maho-tsukai for the cell. When Doji Adoka could not hide his Taint any longer, Rukawa covered for his cell while Adoka ran. He made sure to erase all connections between the Graceful Crane Dojo and Doji Adoka, and replaced Adoka as head sensei of the school.

Rukawa is not and has never been a good shugenja, but he can cast *Dancing with Demons* better than everyone else in the cell. He uses maho rarely, casting it occasionally to keep respect in the eyes of the other Bloodspeakers. He is not as dedicated to the Bloodspeakers as he should be; all he cares about is his beauty and power. He has acknowledged Iuchiban's power and plans to follow his route to glory... someday. For now, Rukawa is much too comfortable in his position to change anything.



THE WORKERS OF FLESH

The Twilight Mountains are a major feature of the Crab lands, going through the Hida, Kaitu, and Toritaka provinces. There are few settlements, and those settlements are small and sparsely populated. Toritaka phantom hunters patrol the area at all times, looking for signs of trouble. The First Oni died there, but the Crab samurai have found no traces of Taint in the mountains.

The Workers of Flesh cell has quietly avoided discovery from those patrols for nearly fifteen years. The cultists of the Workers of Flesh cell are very paranoic of detection (even more so than normal Bloodspeakers) because of their location in the middle of the Crab lands. Because they are prudent and keep cultist activity to a minimum, no one suspects any wrongdoing in the Twilight Mountains.

The Workers of Flesh cult was created by the infamous maho-tsukai Mohai a few years after the end of the War of Spirits. Mohai narrowly escaped the Jade Champion Kuni Utagu and his wife, Kuni Tansho, by cutting his connections with his Bloodspeaker cell. He reached the Twilight Mountains as quickly as he could and disappeared into them. He was disappointed at the lack of corruption where the First Oni spilled its blood, and at losing many maho scrolls to the Jade Champion in his haste to flee justice.

Eventually, Mohai set out to create a new base of operations in the mountains. After a month of traveling, he selected Tea Village and went to work. Mohai seduced the first villager very quickly and easily. Eta are not treated as badly in the Crab lands as elsewhere, but they are still treated as eta. Many were eager for power over those who oppressed them all their lives. Mohai shared his scrolls with them, and they took the lessons of power to heart. In a year, the cult grew to twenty eta.

Mohai left soon after following his own goals, and the first villager he recruited — an eta called Tanner — took over as the head of the cult. He was more ambitious than cautious, and decided to go work at Kyuden Hida. At Kyuden Hida, he proposed, he would be able to gain access to maho scrolls and Tainted items that the Hida confiscate from those that attacked them. The rest of his cult was dubious, so he left the village with only one other cultist.

It was an error that nearly destroyed the cult. He was caught immediately, and executed along with his follower. Two Kuni *sukai-sagasu* scoured Tea Village for more cultists. A quick-thinking eta named Shovel let their most disposable and most Tainted cultists flaunt their Taint in front of them. The Witch Hunters quickly executed the six in front of the whole village, and figured that the grisly deaths of the maho-tsukai would discourage any more would-be Bloodspeakers. The Witch Hunters have never again focused on Tea Village, which suits the quiet eta of the Workers of Flesh just fine.

SHOVEL

(Expert 4/Bloodspeaker Cultist 2; Bloodspeaker 2)

Shovel is an eta who buries the dead animals of Tea Village. He is old and weary of serving his samurai superiors. His new life as the cell leader suits him; the other cultists finally give him the respect he deserves. Also, the majority of the cell's maho scrolls lie in the tunnels underneath his hut, and the knowledge of such power nearby emboldens him. As the cell leader, he leaves Tea Village to find out more spells and information for his cell; Shovel enjoys those trips out of the austere village as much as leading the cell itself.

Shovel has learned that the ancient Bloodspeaker leader named Iuchiban has risen from the dead, but the thought does not thrill him. He is afraid to show the cell to Iuchiban; after all, the first Bloodspeaker is yet another samurai who would see him as just another eta. He fears the day Iuchiban turns his eyes on Shovel's small cell, and fervently hopes that it will never come.

BLOODSPEAKER MECHANICS

ANCESTORS (YOKAI)

KITSU GONGSUN

For the Kitsu, the reign of Kitsu Okura was a shameful time. No other family has fallen so far so fast, and yet managed to persist. Gongsun was tempted to darkness as a young boy, as he feared he would be unable to match his brother's prowess. Huiyuan, Gongsun's younger brother, was a brilliant military mind, and highly praised by all the generals of the Lion armies he served in. Gongsun, on the other hand, was never as physically or mentally gifted, nor was his connection to the ancestors, so highly praised among the Kitsu.

Gongsun, unable to remain forever in Huiyuan's shadow, turned deeper into the darkness. There, he found power and allies. Kitsu Okura granted him leadership of part of the Tainted Kitsu, and Jama Suru included him in the scheme that eventually slew Ryoshun, the Tenth Kami.

Despite his power, Gongsun was eventually slain by his little brother, though his hateful spirit lives on.

STAND TALL IN THE SHADOW

ISADOWLANDS/LION ANCESTOR FEAT:
KITSU GONGSUN

Gongsun shares his powers of darkness with you

Clan: Lion or any Tainted character

Benefit: You may apply half your Taint modifier as a profane bonus to all attack and damage rolls, a number of times equal to your Taint modifier each day. You begin play with two points of Taint.

KITSU GONGSUN

(4 POINTS)

Gongsun's strength has passed on to you. You gain a number of unkept dice on all Strength rolls (including damage rolls) equal to half your Taint Rank, rounded down. You begin play with two points of Taint.

ISAWA TAKESHI

Isawa Takeshi was Isawa's younger brother, though the two were not close. They fought constantly growing up, and Takeshi always ended up as the loser in their fraternal disputes.

When Isawa left to join the Seven Thunders, Takeshi mocked him, saying that the alliance with the Kami Shiba was not worth Isawa's life. When blood magic became corrupted, as a result of the battle with Fu Leng, Takeshi became infuriated, but focused. He refused to give in to the corruption of Fu Leng, and spent the rest of his life researching a way to free himself and his magical heritage from the Taint.

An experiment gone wrong on the eve of his success led to his doom (see above), and Takeshi became Lost, his loyalties shifting from the Isawa to the Shadowlands. As a yokai, he watches over his 'children', ensuring that enusuring that they are guided toward the same dark magics that consumed him.

PEACE WITH THE DARKNESS

ISHADOWLANDS/PHOENIX ANCESTOR

FEAT: ISAWA TAKESHI

You have inherited Takeshi's ability to avoid the Taint

Clan: Phoenix or any Tainted character

Prerequisite: Shugenja level 1

Benefit: You gain a maximum of two points of Taint per maho spell you cast. These points of Taint cannot be further reduced, but it can be eliminated later. You may learn maho spells as if they were not maho, but simply of another (non-opposed) element. You begin play with two points of Taint.

ISAWA TAKESHI

(5 POINTS)

You gain a maximum of two points of Taint per maho spell you cast. These points of Taint cannot be further reduced, but it can be eliminated later. You begin play with two points of Taint.

DOJI HIROFUMI

Hirofumi was a contemporary of Otomo Jama, one of the most prominent Crane courtiers of his day.

Once, when Jama's brother fell deathly ill, Hirofumi began to befriend Jama, hoping that Jama would be the new Emperor and Hirofumi and he and the Crane would benefit from their friendship. After several days went by, and Jama had warmed up to Hirofumi, Jama's brother made a full and miraculous recovery.

Hirofumi left Jama's side instantly to return to the heir's presence. Passing it off as "consoling Jama," Hirofumi did not even suffer disfavor from his blatant political ploy.

Jama went to Hirofumi and asked him, "Why did you abandon me? I thought we were friends."

"I thought you were going to be Emperor," said the other boy.

This was not forgotten, even years later when both boys had grown up. When Iuchiban's armies attacked Orosan-Uchi, Iuchiban himself came to Hirofumi. Terrified, the courtier promised anything to Iuchiban, as long as he promised not to harm Hirofumi. Iuchiban, with a wicked grin, infused the courtier with a significant amount of Taint, then slit his throat.

Hirofumi awoke in Jigoku, and has suffered eternities of torture in the centuries since. He has been forced to grant his blessing to Tainted Crane and others as directed, and he sees

what the Bloodspeakers have done to the Empire with his help. At this, he weeps. He is not allowed to become Lost, for it would end his suffering if he began to like what was happening. He is simply a vessel for pain and suffering.

Iuchiban, for his part, forgot about Hirofumi three hundred years ago.

DARK TONGUE

ISHADOWLANDS/CRANE ANCESTOR FEAT:

DOJI HIROFUMI

You have Hirofumi's social abilities.

Clan: Crane or any Tainted character

Benefit: You gain a +2 profane bonus to your Charisma. You begin play with 2 points of Taint.

DOJI HIROFUMI

(8 POINTS)

You gain +1 Awareness and +1 to your Courtier skill. You begin with a rank of Taint.

ALTERNATE MAHO RULES

Oriental Adventures presents rules that do not strictly represent Rokugani maho. The alternate rules here more precisely depict the strain of calling on Fu Leng and Jigoku.

When a character casts a maho spell, he automatically gains Taint and risks gaining more Taint according to Table 5-1: Maho and the Taint. An unskilled maho-tsukai can easily become Lost after a few days of maho use. Those who have prospered with the power of the Dark Lord — even those Lost to the Shadowlands — have all found methods of protecting themselves from the Taint's psychological and physical havoc.

The now-defunct Scorpion organization called the Shadowed Tower (see *Secrets of the Scorpion*,™ pages 90-94, and the entirety of Chapter Five) is a recent example of a successful maho-based organization. They had such a technique, borrowing a concept from the Bloodspeaker cult. The various cells of the Bloodspeakers have all developed defenses against the Taint.

It is important to stress this point. No successful organization of maho-tsukai has existed since the first War against Fu Leng without a technique to defend against the Taint. Even those who dwell in the City of the Lost do not dare use maho unprotected.

TABLE 5-1: MAHO AND THE TAIN

Maho Level	Taint Points Gained	Taint Points Risked	Minimum Taint Rank
1	1	0	0
2	1	1	1
3	1	2	2
4	1	3	3
5	2	3	4
6	2	4	5
7	3	4	6
8	3	5	7
9	4	5	8

BLOODSPEAKER DEFENSES

To avoid getting the Taint listed in the Taint Points Risked column, the character must make a Fortitude save, with a DC of 10 + spell level.

The avoidance of Taint is not inherently good. A minimum level of Taint is required to cast maho spells, as shown on table 5-1. Those who avoid the Taint entirely limit themselves in their eventual power, as the most powerful magic only comes to those whom Jigcku has a deep control of already.

Once per day, any character who knows one or more maho spells can perform a ritual to remove one point of Taint. This cannot reduce Taint Rank; i.e. you cannot remove a point if its removal would lower your Taint modifier. (See page 137 of *Roku-gan™* for more information on the Taint.)

MAHO COMPLICATIONS

Errata to *Way of the Shugenja's Bloodspeaker Cultist Prestige Class*, found on page 91:

When using these alternate rules for maho, the Bleeding the Elements class ability is inappropriate. Each cell has alternative training methods, found below under "Bloodspeaker Defenses." Replace with the following ability:

"Suffer the Darkness: The Bloodspeaker Cultist gains a bonus to Fortitude saves to resist accumulating the Taint Points risked equal to his class level of Bloodspeaker Cultist."

NPCs in this book are not designed with this ability in mind, though it is strongly recommended that this option be used.

ALTERNATE MAHO RULES

Rules for maho in the *Legend of the Five Rings RPG* are as follows. These rules supersede previous rules.

- Nearly anyone can learn and cast a maho spell, though training is required for all but the simplest spells. The shugenja's natural gift to speak to the kami is irrelevant; the kansen will speak to anyone who is willing (and quite a few besides). Rare individuals cannot cast maho, but less than one in ten thousand is affected this way.
- To learn a maho spell, a character must spend a week to learn the first maho spell, but only a few hours for later spells. The roll to learn a new maho spell is Spell Research/Earth, with a Target Number of (Mastery Level). The character can neither roll nor keep more dice than he has in Lore (Maho), though even novices find they do not have difficulty learning the most advanced spells. The character also receives one point of Taint per Mastery Level, which cannot be reduced.
- To cast a maho spell, a character must have the Lore (Maho) skill at or higher than the Mastery Level of the spell he wishes to learn. To cast a maho spell, roll Lore (Maho)/Earth, against a Target Number of (5 × Mastery Level). The caster must also shed the blood of an intelligent being; at least (2 × Mastery Level) Wounds worth.
- The amount of Taint contracted without protection is equal to the difference between the TN of the spell (Raises included) and the total of the roll made. Remember that a caster can always choose not to keep the highest dice rolled, and increasing a character's Lore (Maho) skill rank can be an effective defense in and of itself.

These feats represent the many abilities of the various Bloodspeaker cells. Most focus on the reduction and prevention of the acquisition of the Shadowlands Taint, which many Bloodspeakers go to great lengths to shield themselves from. After all, many reason, maho is the means to power, but if you subjugate yourself in the process then you have gained nothing.

Treat these techniques as ronin band Techniques (see the *LSR Second Edition Player's Handbook* p. 147) with the following exceptions: each character can have only one, and all requirements, including experience point expenditure, must be met. The Cult of the Blood-Red Moon's technique from *Way of the Wolf™* is reprinted here for completeness.

BLEEDING THE ELEMENTS

IGENERALI

You can turn the force of Taint away from you when you cast maho.

Prerequisites: Con 13+, one or more maho spells, must be a Bloodspeaker.

Benefit: When you cast a maho spell, you may Taint the area around you in lieu of taking the Taint upon yourself. If you do so, you gain two fewer points of Taint when casting your spell. The immediate area shows symptoms of Taint: plants wither, statuary takes on a fiendish look, animals look away, etc.

BLEEDING THE ELEMENTS

(CULT OF THE BLOOD-RED MOON)

Type: Bloodspeaker Cell

Required Traits: Earth 4

Required Skills: Calligraphy 1, Cipher 1, Lore (Maho) 3, Meditation 2

Other Requirements: Dark Secret (maho-tsukai), Shadowlands Taint (at least 4 points), Shugenja

Technique (8 points): The maho-tsukai has mastered the art of turning the dark power of his magic away from himself, dispersing it to the elements. Each time he casts maho, he may make a Willpower roll vs. the same TN as the spell. If this roll is successful, then the amount of Taint he accumulates is lowered to one-fourth (round down). Unfortunately, the use of this technique is not subtle. The immediate area shows symptoms of Taint: plants wither, statuary takes on a fiendish look, animals look away, etc. The cultist may choose two maho spells when he learns this technique.

BLOOD-FORGED

IGENERALI

You have developed a barrier between you and the darkness, inhibiting your accumulation of Taint and your potency with maho.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+, one or more maho spells, must be a Bloodspeaker.

Benefit: All Taint you gain from your maho spells is reduced by one point. All saving throw DCs of your maho spells receive a -2 morale penalty.

BLOOD-FORGED

(TAUGHT BY MANY MINOR CELLS)

Type: Bloodspeaker Cell

Required Traits: Water 3

Required Skills: Lore (Maho) 2, Meditation 2

Other Requirements: Dark Secret (maho-tsukai).

Technique (4 points): The maho-tsukai has somewhat distanced himself from Jigoku and its power. Maho becomes more difficult, but the Taint is also eased significantly. All of his maho TNs increase by 5. Whenever the cultist gets Taint from maho, he reduces the Taint accumulated by two points.

ELEMENTAL DISASSOCIATION

(GENERAL)

You have cut yourself off from the kami, and the kansen favor you for it.

Prerequisites: Int 13+, one or more maho spells, must be a Bloodspeaker.

Benefit: All Taint you receive from any source, including your own maho spells, is reduced by one point. You cannot cast divine spells.

ELEMENTAL DISASSOCIATION

(DEMON'S BREATH ACOLYTES)

Type: Bloodspeaker Cell

Required Traits: Awareness 3, Intelligence 3

Required Skills: Lore (Maho) 4, Meditation 2

Other Requirements: Dark Secret (maho-tsukai), Shugenja

Technique (7 points): In stark contrast to the Blood-Forged technique, the Demon's Breath Acolytes embrace their connection to Jigoku, forsaking the traditional Rokugani elements in a three-hour ritual. This sacrifice appeases the kansen, reducing the Taint they inflict. The disassociated maho-tsukai can drop as many dice as he wishes when casting maho, making it much easier to receive less Taint from casting a spell. However, the kami are forever lost to any who undergo the ritual; those who do so may never again cast an elemental spell.

GONGSUR'S CLOAK

(GENERAL)

You perceive the subtle shifts in the energies of Jigoku, and can thereby reduce the amount of Taint you receive from casting maho.

Prerequisites: Wis 13+, one or more maho spells, must be a Bloodspeaker.

Benefit: You may make a Spot check (DC 15) immediately before casting a maho spell to reduce the Taint gained by one point. If your Spot check result is 20 or higher, instead reduce the Taint gained by two points.

GONGSUR'S CLOAK

(TAUGHT PRIMARILY BY THE DEFUNCT
TAINTED KITSU, NOW AVAILABLE FROM
MANY CULTS)

Type: Bloodspeaker Cell

Required Traits: Water 4

Required Skills: Battle 2, Lore (Maho) 4, Meditation 2

Other Requirements: Dark Secret (maho-tsukai), Shadowlands Taint (at least 4 points)

Technique (10 points): The maho-tsukai has learned to sense the ebb and flow of the dark energies of Jigoku and can take advantage of its nearly-imperceptible shifts. After he rolls to cast a maho spell, he may retroactively declare Raises which have no effect other than to decrease the difference between the TN and the result. (The Taint received from casting a maho spell is equal to the difference between the roll and the spell's TN, so each such Raise is effectively five fewer points of Taint accumulated.) The cultist may also choose two maho spells when he learns this technique.

MOHAI'S LEGACY

(METAMAGIC)

You can lead ritual maho spellcasting, channeling your energy with your fellow maho-tsukai, increasing the power of the maho and reducing the Taint gained.

Prerequisites: Ability to cast maho spells, must be a Bloodspeaker.

Benefit: You may cast all your maho spells as rituals (see page 87 of *Rokugan*). Any Taint gained by the casting is evenly split amongst those participating in the ritual. All participants gain at least one point.

MOHAI'S LEGACY

(THE WORKERS OF FLESH)

Type: Bloodspeaker Cell

Required Traits: Agility 3, Awareness 3

Required Skills: Autopsy 2, Lore (Maho) 2

Other Requirements: Dark Secret (maho-tsukai), Shadowlands Taint (at least 4 points)

Technique (8 points): The maho-tsukai casts his spells with the help of his peers. He may cast all his maho spells as rituals. Only the highest Rank maho-tsukai rolls to cast the spell. He gains a number of Free Raises equal to the number of maho-tsukai helping in the ritual. The Taint gained from the maho spell is evenly distributed to all participants, with everyone gaining at least 1 point of Taint.

STRIKE THE ANCESTORS

(METAMAGIC)

You corrupt the connections between you and your ancestors while casting maho to stave off the Taint.

Prerequisites: Must possess at least one ancestor feat, ability to cast maho spells, must be a Bloodspeaker.

Benefit: You may forfeit the abilities granted you by one of your ancestor feats for 24 hours to reduce the Taint gained from casting a maho spell by two. You may do this multiple times per day, but only once per maho spell and once per ancestor feat forfeited (until it returns).

STRIKE THE ANCESTORS

(THE BEAUTY OF DEATH)

Type: Bloodspeaker Cell

Required Traits: Void 4

Required Skills: Lore (Maho) 3, Meditation 2, History 1

Other Requirements: Any Ancestor, Dark Secret (mahotsukai), Shadowlands Taint (at least 4 points)

Technique (9 points): The maho-tsukai has learned to stave off the Taint by redirecting it to his connection to his ancestors. Once per day, he may choose to reduce the Taint accumulated from casting a maho spell by two. When he does so, his ancestors withdraw from him for one day. During this time, the ancestors give no benefits to him. Every time the maho-tsukai uses this technique, the ancestors deny him their benefits for one additional day. If the ancestors shun him for one full week, they leave permanently.

TAINT REPRESSION

(GENERAL)

Your Taint is well-hidden.

Benefit: For the purposes of physical effects and deformities, your Taint Rank is considered to be three ranks lower.

Special: This feat may be taken multiple times. Its effects stack.

BLOODSPEAKER SPELLS

CURSE OF WEAKNESS

Transmutation

Level: Mah 3

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: One creature

Duration: Permanent

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This common Bloodspeaker curse inflicts an overall weakness. Maho saps the victim's body, mind, and spirit.

Your target suffers a -2 profane penalty to all of his ability scores, and a -1 profane penalty to all skill checks, attack rolls, and save DCs for shugenja spells he casts.

DANCING WITH DEMONS

Transmutation

Level: Mah 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 hour

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

Target: One person

Duration: 1 week / level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell is unique to the Death of Beauty cell. You (or a willing substitute) dance with kansen summoned by this spell. If the kansen are pleased with the dance, they grant you beauty or curses your opponent.

If the dancer makes a successful Perform(Dance) check at DC 18, he may either give the target an enhancement bonus to Charisma of 1d4+1 points or inflict 1d4+1 points of temporary Charisma damage. The dancer only needs to willingly dance for the spell to work; he does not need to be aware of this spell.

Material Component: One of the target's possessions.

HARVEST OF DEATH

Necromancy

Level: Mah 7

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Target: One creature/round

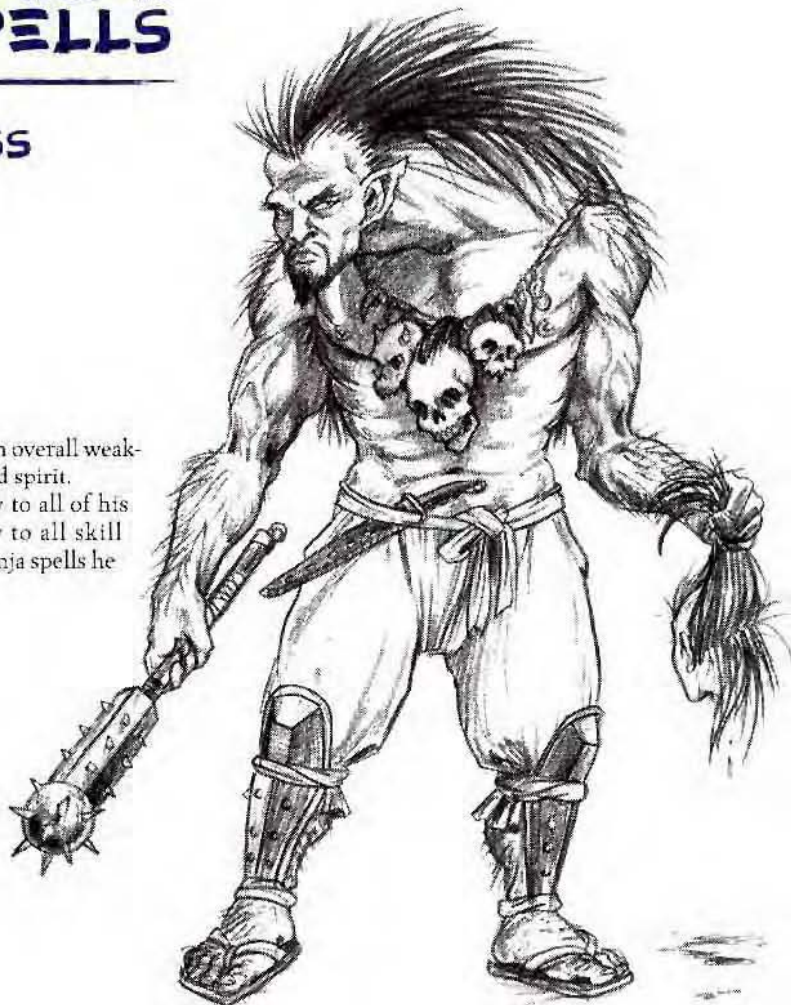
Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

You call forth the dark powers within the blood of the living to make it cease to function. This relatively simple incantation requires a great deal of power.

While this spell is active, you may slay one creature per round with simply a touch.



DARKNESS RISING

Enchantment [Compulsion]
Level: Mah 2
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft. / 2 levels)
Target: One character
Duration: Permanent
Saving Throw: Will negates (*see text*)
Spell Resistance: Yes

You summon a *kansen* and bind it to another character. The *kansen's* effect is subtle yet profound: at nearly every choice the character is faced with, the *kansen* counsels impulsive and dangerous acts. A courtier afflicted with a *kansen* may find that he speaks his mind even when inappropriate, or a bushi may become more irritable and likely to perceive everything as a threat to his honor.

Once per day, the GM may have the *kansen* attempt to compel a specific reaction. If the character fails a Will save against a DC of 15, the *kansen* takes control of the character's action.

CURSE OF WEAKNESS

Element: Maho
Mastery Level: 1
Duration: Permanent
Area of Effect: One creature
Range: Touch

This common Bloodspeaker curse inflicts an overall weakness. Maho saps the victim's body, mind, and spirit.

All TNs for that target are increased by +2. Only one Curse of Weakness can affect a character at once.

Raises can increase the TN penalty by one. Thus, two Raises increase the TN penalty to +4, three Raises increase the TN penalty to +5, etc.

DANCING WITH DEMONS

Mastery Level: 3
Duration: Permanent
Area of Effect: 1 Target
Range: 100 ft.

This spell is unique to the Death of Beauty cell. The *maho-tsukai* (or a willing substitute) dances with the *kansen* summoned by this spell. The dance lasts for an hour of full concentration; at the end of the hour, the dancer makes a Dance/Awareness roll at a TN of 5x the CP cost of an Advantage. If the *kansen* are pleased with the dance, they permanently bestow upon the target any personal physical or mental Advantage affecting them alone. For example, they could gain Dangerous Beauty or Magic Resistance, but not an Ancestor, Kharmic Tie, or Social Position. Failure in summoning or dancing means the *maho-tsukai* (and the dancer) burns horribly, taking 1k1 Wounds per CP point of Advantage sought. The willing dancer and the *maho-tsukai* equally share the Shadowlands Points that result from this spell. The dancer only needs to willingly dance for the spell to work; the dancer does not need to be aware of this spell.

The *maho-tsukai* may instead impose a Disadvantage on a victim that is present and watching the dance. It must be a personal physical or mental Disadvantage affecting the victim alone. The *maho-tsukai* must offer the *kansen* an object that is owned by the victim.

DARKNESS RISING

Element: Maho
Mastery Level: 2
Duration: Permanent
Area of Effect: 1 Character
Range: 15 ft.

A Bloodspeaker can summon a *kansen* and bind it to another character. The *kansen's* effect on a person is subtle yet profound: at nearly every choice, the *kansen* counsels impulsive and dangerous acts. A courtier afflicted with a *kansen* may find that he speaks his mind even when inappropriate, or a bushi may become more irritable and likely to perceive everything as a threat to his honor.

Once per day, the GM may have the *kansen* attempt to compel a specific reaction. If the character fails a simple Willpower roll against a TN of 15, the *kansen* takes control of the character's action.

Three Raises allow the caster to increase the TN required for self-control by 5.

HARVEST OF DEATH

Element: Maho
Mastery Level: 5
Duration: 5 minutes
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Touch

The Bloodspeaker calls forth the powers of Jigoku in an unsubtle fashion: pure death. This spell is not heavily favored by Bloodspeakers, as it tends to kill many and corrupt few, but it certainly has its use for the more battle-ready cultists. For the duration of the spell, anyone the Bloodspeaker touches must make an Earth roll (TN 25) or be slain instantly. The caster may maintain the spell, allowing him to continue touching and killing for an extra time equal to the initial duration, by repaying the initial Wound cost. This maintenance does not incur new Taint.

Two Raises allow the caster to increase the spell's duration (and any subsequent maintenance) by five minutes.

CHAPTER SIX:

THE BEASTS

PLUMBING THE
DARKNESS
PART SEVEN

"Tell me, Gensaiken said, looking into the darkness that shrouded the garden near Hatori's study. "Do you truly believe what we have done here today will aid the Empire?" For the first time, the strange man's voice was not full of mystery and unspoken thoughts. He sounded truly curious.

Hatori set down his brush once again and began to rub his aching hand. "That's quite a question, coming from the one who said he was instructed to do this. Do you not agree with your master, Sezarū-sama?" Though the two had spoken almost through the night, the older Miya's mind was still sharp. If Gensaiken was not exactly what he had said he was, if there was any sort of treachery in his heart, Hatori would not be taken in by the illusion.

Gensaiken turned to regard his companion. "I agree with him, Hatori-san. That was not my question." The Pekkle spirit turned and sat across the small desk from Hatori. With a strange intensity in his eyes, Gensaiken repeated, "Do you truly believe, Hatori?"

"I..." the aged historian began, taken off guard by the other's sudden emotion. "I do not know, Gensaiken. Perhaps?" Hatori paused for a moment in consideration. "Perhaps those that read this will see the Shadowlands as a place plagued by divisions and intrigue, just as Rokugan is. Though I do not think others will come to fear the forces of the Shadowlands less, it is likely they will

have a better understanding of the enemy. Perhaps not."

"You," Gensaiken said with a quiet steel in his voice, punctuating his words by tapping his palm against the table, "Must. Believe. So." The two locked eyes for a moment, until Hatori turned away from the depths in the Pekkle's eyes. Gensaiken leaned back and continued, "Though there are divisions in the dark lands as you say, some never falter in their fervor and service, knowing they serve Fu Leng always."

Gensaiken's tone was growing passionate, unnerving the older Miya. "Oh?" Hatori asked, still unsure how to proceed. "What do you mean?"

"The beasts, Hatori-san," the younger man said, standing and pacing away from the table in agitation. "I am trying to make you see," he continued in barely a whisper, "but you do not. The children of Fu Leng's realm, the minions of Jigoku itself, the oni, the goblins, the ogres. These things serve no petty intermediary between themselves and the Dark Kami, for they are his own and blessed from their spawning by his touch."

Hatori gave Gensaiken a curious look, not sure how to take his suddenly agitated behavior. Nonetheless, understanding began to dawn. "They really are much more than gibbering beasts, then. They are as... the emissaries of Jigoku to the mortal realm."

"Yes!" Gensaiken hissed, turning to smile thinly at the other man. "They do not rise and fall with the transition of another transient mortal powerful enough to style himself Lord of the Shadowlands. These things are much more than those consumed by the touch of the Shadowlands. They are the reason the Shadowlands exists. They do not hesitate or find themselves unsure of their place in the world, Hatori. Only equal devotion and courage from the servants of the Empire can stop them."

BEAST LANDS

The ogres, oni, goblins, and other Shadowlands beasts lack the cohesion of the more organized Shadowlands factions, but their sheer numbers let them claim a number of significant sites in the Shadowlands.

FALLEN CHRYSANTHEMUM LAKE

In the year 1133, while the other Clans and the rest of the Unicorn fought the Lying Darkness at Oblivion's Gate, the Moto family battled to determine its own fate. At the climax of the battle, Kyoso no Oni betrayed and slew Moto Tsume, leaving the Dark Moto forces disorganized and demoralized. This proved to be the undoing of the Dark Moto, as the legendary Unicorn Khan Gaheris easily routed their remaining Tainted cousins.

Fallen Chrysanthemum Lake is surprisingly serene for a site in the Shadowlands. Chosen by Tsume for the trees along its sides and the blood-red sakura blossoms they grew, Fallen Chrysanthemum Lake is no longer the hub of activity it once was. Scattered about the now quiet lake and decrepit barracks are a few skeletons, some with broken blades still impaled where their bellies would be. Items of any value have long since been looted. All that remains are scattered scrolls detailing events from the reign of the Dark Moto and a tattered half-banner, bearing a scrap of the original Dark Moto mon and phrase: "...but can never yield."

The once awe-inspiring encampments of Fallen Chrysanthemum Lake have fallen into disrepair. A band of ogres has settled around the Lake, creating a makeshift camp upon the ruins of the old. Most other denizens of the Shadowlands give this band a wide berth, as they are reputed to be the ogres personally selected by the Realm of Evil to exterminate the remnants of the Dark Moto — the ones who survived after such failure.

THE KEEP OF FINAL REGRETS

With their defeat on the field of battle and the breaking of the Blood Curse, the Dark Moto found that the Taint that had corrupted and sustained them was leaving their bodies and souls. As the Taint receded, many withered, their bodies suddenly subject to the ravages of age. Most horrifying was the fact that, as the Taint left them, their free will returned — leaving them to grapple with the enormity of the crimes they had committed upon their kin and Empire. For some, seppuku was the answer, a final attempt to atone.

Those who did not immediately slay themselves took refuge in the only major fortification constructed near Fallen Chrysanthemum Lake, Moto Tsume's former headquarters. There, the Moto did what they could to fulfill their original mission — to assist the Crab in containing the Shadowlands threat. All of the files, maps, and military logs accumulated in centuries of warfare against the Empire were carefully compiled in the hope that the Rokugani would someday find them and use them to strike back at the dark god. Jigoku, however, had other plans.

Even as the enfeebled Dark Moto were finishing their task, a force of ogres and trolls were sent to ravage their camp and

slay the stragglers. The two races, who commonly suffered when the Moto sought "sport" during quiet times, were eager for vengeance. The beasts ensured that the Moto lived just long enough to see their efforts put to the torch. All that remains within the keep are shattered bones, overturned tables, and redemption denied.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Challenge: Ikoma Gome, an Imperial Historian, has requested assistance in "verifying the accuracy of certain reports." The fact that Gome has requested the assistance of "individuals experienced at surviving the Shadowlands" implies that this is far outside the usual realm of Imperial expertise. Publicly responding to an Imperial summons represents a golden opportunity to improve family fortunes — something the daimyo of party members are quick to point out.

Focus: Gome is chronicling the events that occurred during the War Against the Shadow outside of the war itself. Although Unicorn records indicate that the Dark Moto were wiped out during the final battle, Crab logs from the Kaitu Wall recorded several scattered groups of riders flying over the Wall and retreating into the Shadowlands. Recently, Hiruma scouts claim to have located what appears to be the base camp once used by the Dark Moto, and Gome would greatly appreciate it if the PCs could determine the truth of the matter.

Strike: In addition to the hazards of the Shadowlands itself, the PCs have to contend with the political ramifications of their mission. The Unicorn are certainly interested in the ultimate fates of any of their brethren who survived the conflict. Likewise, the Crab are put off by Gome's requisition of a generous supply of jade for the mission, which they feel could be put to far better use supplying troops on the Wall. Although little remains intact at the Lake, one half-torn scroll seems to indicate that the Dark Moto seized the Ancestral Sword of the Ki-Rin, the blade Moto Gaheris wielded during the conflict. The scroll further states that one of the Moto planned to venture through the Shadowlands in an attempt to return the blade to his Clan. The possibility that a sacred nemuranai of the Unicorn still exists would cause quite a stir in the courts — if the PCs choose to reveal this information.

KYOSO'S RETRIBUTION (SPAWNING POINT OF NEW KYOSO NO ONI)

Kyoso no Oni is unique even among Fu Leng's myriad servants. Most oni are formed when a pact is forged between Jigoku and a mortal's soul, linking the essence of the mortal with the oni-to-be. Kyoso stands alone, for she is a merging of human and oni.

The merger between Agasha Kyoso and the oni essence created a creature that retained Kyoso's basic identity, magnified and warped by Jigoku. More than most of the Lost, Kyoso retains a link to her former human nature. While this has provided her with the ability to manipulate and work with the Empire, it has also left her with distinctly human ambition and hatred, which have led her to her current situation.

Her ambition drove her to betray Moto Tsume in order to increase her personal power. Daigotsu banished her to Jigoku and slew all her oni spawn, lest her schemes interfere with his plans. However, the very humanity that led her to betray Tsume has left her a tenuous, but persistent, link to Ningen-

do. After years of struggle, Kyoso has found a way to send her spawn back into the Empire. Kyoso represents a powerful third party in the struggle between Daigotsu and Iuchiban for dominance in the Shadowlands.

Kyoso has had many hidden lairs in her years in the Shadowlands. Although Daigotsu sought out her most recent lair and confronted her there, Kyoso prepared multiple hideaways and bolt-holes in case of emergency. Kyoso's Retribution is the first lair Kyoso ever rested in, the place where she took sanctuary immediately after her transformation from human to oni. Freed from the conventions of etiquette and morality, she let loose the anguish and rage that motivated her to become an oni. The ferocity of her anger blasted the landscape, drove the native denizens away, and permanently marked the Shadowlands.

KYOSO'S SANCTUARY

Although oni, being foreign to Ningen-do, could be banished by sufficiently powerful shugenja, Kyoso still retained a sliver of humanity — which she used to protect herself.

Kyoso's Sanctuary is as luxurious as she could make it in the barren hills of the Shadowlands. A handful of knickknacks hint at her former life as a human, such as a torn kimono with the Agasha mon, but most are significant only to her. The runes and wards towards the back of the Sanctuary combine Jigoku's dark insights with the Agasha's knowledge of alchemy, forcing Ningen-do to identify her as the daughter of mortal parents. Kyoso has warped the essence of Ningen-do around her home. Here, Ningen-do recognizes her not as an oni, but as a human.

Ningen-do, much like Jigoku, is a possessive realm. While it is normally necessary for a portal such as the Festering Pit to be in place for travel to occur between realms, Kyoso's Sanctuary treats Kyoso no Oni and her spawn as natives to the Realm. Through it, Kyoso has been able to send her spawn back into the Shadowlands, in spite of Daigotsu's edict barring her access to the known portals. Although Kyoso has not yet returned to Ningen-do, she is monitoring the struggle between Daigotsu and Iuchiban, waiting for an opportunity to avenge herself upon Daigotsu.

ADVENTURE HOOK: AN ONI SCORED

Challenge: More than anything else, Kyoso is defined by her all-consuming need to avenge herself on those she feels have wronged her. Chief on this list is Daigotsu. Even though she does not want to intervene personally, Iuchiban's seizure of the City of the Lost has given her an opportunity to strike back at Daigotsu.

Focus: With no structured power base, Daigotsu must rely on his secret supporters within Rokugan. Kyoso has been sending her spawn into the Empire to assassinate key individuals in Daigotsu's network. Although few PCs would have a problem with the Shadowlands fighting itself, the amount of collateral damage some of these assassinations has caused is staggering. They must be stopped.

Strike: Kyoso is primarily concerned with striking back, preferably without having her hand in these matters revealed. She is quite willing to cease the attacks if the PCs were to take care of the problem individuals for her. If the PCs refuse, she continues to have supporters of Daigotsu brutally slaughtered along with their associates, innocent or otherwise. If the PCs accept, they must come to terms with the fact that they are allying with an oni.

BASHER'S LEGACY

The journals of the legendary Kuni Mokuna contain many countermeasures against the Shadowlands' power. Although their techniques have been disseminated by the Kuni family, resulting in the survival of many samurai, Mokuna and his ideas remain scorned by most of the Empire. This has forced the Kuni to postpone several promising lines of investigation due to absence of resources or presence of Imperial scrutiny. One such untraveled avenue of investigation concerns the goblin known as Basher.

Basher was a goblin of unusual wit, capable of holding an intelligent conversation with a human. Basher realized that his kin needed to develop intellectually before they would be able to replace humanity as Fu Leng intended. He sought out experiences and opportunities to engage in discourse, often talking at length with Mokuna.

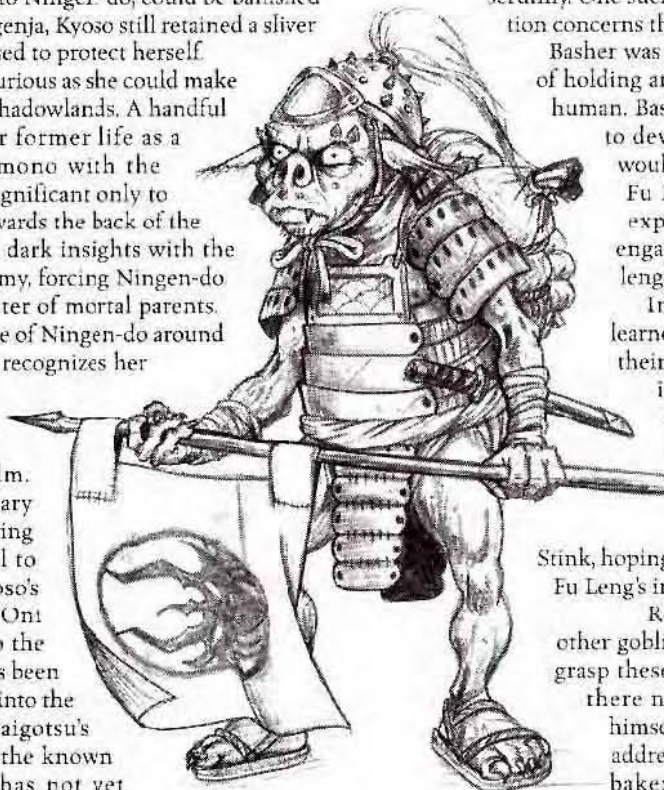
In their conversations, Mokuna learned a great deal about goblins and their society. In turn, Basher gleaned insight into human society, as well as the underlying logic behind such concepts as "money" and "government."

Basher imparted these lessons to the goblins in Big Stink, hoping that his race could grow beyond Fu Leng's initial vision.

Recognizing that many of the other goblins simply lacked the capacity to grasp these concepts, Basher realized that there needed to be more goblins like himself for the race to advance. Basher addressed this problem in a distinctly bakemono manner, by fathering as many progeny as he possibly could, and raising them himself. Within a few generations, Basher's descendants took over an entire wing of Big Stink, and were even clever enough to hide from the goblins from the Deep Shadowlands when they came to destroy the pseudo-city. Basher's heirs have returned and carved their own home out of the ruins. For now, they spend their time teaching each other concepts such as mathematics, waiting for the day their skills and prowess will lead them to ascension over Rokugan and the rest of the Shadowlands.

BASHER'S HUT

One of the lessons Basher passed on to his children was the importance of breeding. Only the strongest, smartest, and most attractive (by goblin standards) goblins have been accepted into Basher's line. This has resulted in a steadily improving stock of goblins, which has given the Crab increasing problems on the battlefield over the last few decades.



The hut originally occupied by Basher has been converted into a combination shrine and library. In its capacity as a shrine, artifacts such as walking sticks Basher used and the teacup with which he shared tea with Kuni Mokuna are preserved, with extremely protective guards at the door. Likewise, rough records contain the lineage and accomplishments of goblins in Basher's line such as Thuk-Kigi, whose infamous "War Machine" was used to good effect during the siege of Otosan Uchi.

THE OGRE BARRACKS

Before Fu Leng's fall from Tengoku, the Ogre race had a primitive but thriving civilization. After the spread of the Taint, the Ogres slowly had their minds and wills sapped, turning them into dull thralls in the service of the dark god. While most of the Ogres succumbed at the same time, a few of their keenest minds spotted the degradation in time to act.

The Ogres rapidly realized that countering the effects of the Taint was beyond their skills, but were determined to leave some vestige of their culture intact. They took a village from their tainted brethren, and proceeded to labor. Painstakingly, they dug a shelter beneath the floor of one of their huts and placed in it items such as carvings of their history, tribal totems, and personal trinkets. Even as their minds began to cloud, they buried the evidence of their existence by laying a giant stone over the floor of the hut, trusting that their now feeble-minded kin would not think to search underneath the ground.

Ogres still live in the former village, although they are a far cry from the desperate souls who created the memorial. Soon after the free Ogres finished their memorial, they were overrun by their Tainted brethren, who reclaimed the village. The highly militant inhabitants of the village live, serve, and fight for Fu Leng, never realizing that their own past is literally beneath their footsteps.

THE LAST STAND OF THE FREE OGRES

In the middle of the Ogre Barracks is a small pyramid of bones, fossilized by the Taint. The current inhabitants of the Barracks claim that these bones are those of a rival tribe of Ogres that they crushed to claim the land for their own. What they do not realize is that the "rival tribe" — the Free Ogres — wanted to be slain defending the village.

As they were finishing their work, the Free Ogres faced a serious dilemma. Many of their number had fallen to the Taint, and the rest were weakening. In addition, other Ogres had begun to attack the village, believing that the Free Ogres had been hoarding food and weapons. This made flight impossible, as the now bestial Ogres would tear up the village and destroy its contents to find the "secret cache" if they ran away.

The siege of their village gave the Free Ogres a final way to both escape Fu Leng and ensure that their work would be preserved. The Free Ogres concealed all their stores in a "hidden" location that would be found by a cursory search, and intentionally weakened their defenses. Within days, the rest of the Ogres broke through the walls. Knowing that their deaths would preserve a seed of the Ogre heritage, and that each of their kin who fell before them would also be freed from bondage to Fu Leng, the Free Ogres fought with conviction that any samurai would respect. After they fell, the surviving bound Ogres looted the village, finding the "hidden" food and weapons. However, the true work of the Free Ogres still lies beneath the ground, waiting to be rediscovered.

THE ONIKAGE RANGES

While the Taint can be concealed from humans with proper preparation, animals, particularly horses, shy away from those who are Tainted. This has proven to be a significant hindrance to the Lost, as the majority of their onikage — undead horses animated by the power of the Taint — were lost when the Dark Moto fell. Traveling through the Shadowlands is hazardous even for the Lost, and steeds are greatly valued.

Daigotsu's attempts to civilize the Shadowlands were hampered by the lack of ready mounts for messengers. To alleviate the problem, he ordered the creation of the Onikage Ranges — pens dedicated to the breeding of new onikage for the use of his followers. Periodically, ponies and horses were stolen from the Empire and taken to the Shadowlands to replenish depleted stocks.

The Ranges are barrens around the City of the Lost where onikage roam freely. Attempts to keep the onikage in traditional pens failed dismally, as their equine instincts combined with the Taint resulted in several unfortunate incidents with their handlers. They remain close at hand when needed, and provide the City with an extra line of defense, as the onikage roam in very aggressive packs.

THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE

Daigotsu realized that stealing ponies and horses individually would be both inefficient and insufficient for the Shadowlands' needs. He instructed his agents to select the finest steeds they could find — mostly Crab war ponies and a handful of Unicorn horses — and bring them back to the Shadowlands. Here, in special pens shielded from the Taint, they could be bred.

Daigotsu issued strict orders that the fittest and strongest specimens be used solely as breeding stock, but the rest of the foals had another fate in store. After reaching adulthood, steeds are taken to the Slaughterhouse. Once the onikage-to-be has been slain, its corpse is carried to a separate area, well away from the pens, where it is reanimated by the Taint. The use of the Slaughterhouse has allowed the Shadowlands, with careful conservation, to steadily increase the number of onikage they have available.

IMPORTANT BEAST NPCS

OMONI, SCULPTOR OF FLESH

The past is an undecipherable haze to Omoni. When he tries to remember, his mind burns with pain, and for the most part he is content with not remembering. His origins, his experiences, how he learned to bring flesh to life, and whether he is truly a man or a bakemono — Omoni prefers to let these questions lie unanswered.

He cannot stop the nightmares, however, and there he is forced to face the truth. He remembers. He remembers the cultists holding him to a crude stone altar. He remembers the excruciating pain that filled all parts of his body as the soul of a bakemono invaded his mind and as his body mutated to

something beyond human. He remembers the demons waiting eagerly to devour his soul as the Bloodspeakers opened a portal to Jigoku itself. And he remembers Jigoku.

Omoni can remember his childhood in Jigoku better than anything else in his past, for his experiences there were too horrid for even Daigotsu's magic to erase. Jigoku went on forever, a never-ending land of formless terrain and countless oni. It was torture, pain, exhaustion. To survive, Omoni let the goblin side of his mind free; in time, it became as easy as thought to submit to the beast in him. By the time he left, Omoni no longer had a human side and a goblin side; there was only Omoni.

Finally, Daigotsu led him out of Jigoku and into the Shadowlands. After the years spent in Jigoku, little in the Shadowlands could disturb Omoni; besides, nothing in the Shadowlands seemed to be able to withstand his friend's power. Omoni begged his friend Daigotsu to erase his horrible memories of Jigoku, and Daigotsu agreed.

Omoni did not know if he was truly a goblin or a human. He felt he was human, for he looked human and he felt like a human most of the time. However, there were days when an unstoppable anger rose in him and animal impulses urged him to kill. He couldn't prevent himself from obeying those urges. If he was human, why couldn't he control those urges? If he was goblin, why does he feel so much like a human?

Omoni began to experiment with captured goblins to vent his frustration. *If I find out what makes a goblin a goblin, he reasoned, I will find out what I truly am.* To his disappointment, he found there was nothing unique about a goblin. If he manipulated the goblin's body a little, he could make it as strong as a human, if not stronger. On a whim, he forced those changes in the goblin with his hands; to his surprise, the goblin did not die. It grew even more vicious, and when Omoni let it loose, it killed nearly a dozen normal goblins before it was overwhelmed. Omoni smiled, he could finally help Daigotsu in his quest to rule the Shadowlands.

The Lost samurai that followed Daigotsu noticed the times when Omoni became unpredictable, of course, and began to avoid his presence. When Omoni attempted to talk to them, they could barely hide their disgust. They were Tainted, but they were still samurai. In contrast, Omoni was neither samurai nor human. Omoni felt the disgust, and threw himself into his duty, Daigotsu never judged him, and when Omoni did good work Daigotsu was pleased. Daigotsu asked him to make the goblins stronger, to make them obey his bidding. Omoni now had the perfect excuse to live amongst the captive goblin tribes, where no one talked to him with veiled abhorrence.

Since Daigotsu's defeat, Omoni has been torn with regret and indecision. He serves Iuchiban, working beside Yajinden to create new beasts and weapons of incredible power. He knows that Iuchiban does not respect him as Daigotsu did — when the Bloodspeaker looks upon Omoni, his expression is pure disgust.

And yet there is nothing Omoni can do. Omoni swore an oath to the Shadow Dragon that he would always obey the hand that held Akkuai-uo, the Tainted Hantei sword, and now that blade is in Iuchiban's possession. If Omoni escapes Iuchiban to serve Daigotsu, he will have violated his oath to the Dragon. What, then, would prevent the Dragon — the being that resurrected Daigotsu — from violating his own oaths and returning Daigotsu's soul whence it came? Omoni must no longer serve the Dark Lord out of loyalty to the Dark Lord. It is a contradiction that has made the goblin-man's life even more conflicted and tormented than before.

SCULPTOR OF FLESH

Flesh sculpting is an ability that is unique to Omoni. He may alter living, Tainted beings to be stronger, faster, and more powerful. Omoni may bring to life dead flesh or modify beasts to create new species. This always requires a great deal of time, but there are virtually no limits to what Omoni can create given time to experiment.

OMONI

Male bakemono Ftr 9/Daigotsu's Elite Guard 1: CR 10, Medium-sized humanoid; HD 9d10 + 18 plus 1d12 + 2; hp 92; Init +7; Spd 30 ft; AC 23 (touch 13, flat-footed 20); Attack +2 *keen unholy katana* +13/+8 melee (1d10 + 3 damage + 2d6 vs. good); SQ Flesh Sculpting, Shroud of Death; Honor 0; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 15; Height 5 ft 6 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, Bakemono), Climb +3, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +8, Knowledge (Jigoku) + 8*, Listen + 6, Spot + 6; Armor Focus (hide), Cleave, Dodge, Hunger of the Maggots, Improved Critical, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, The Shadow Dragon, Weapon Focus (katana).

Possessions: +2 *keen unholy katana*, *hide armor* +2, *amulet of natural armor* +3.

Note: The skill Knowledge (Jigoku) has been hidden from Omoni's mind by Daigotsu.

OMONI

Earth: 3

Reflex: 4

Water: 4

Stamina: 5

Fire: 4

Air: 4

Void: 1

Shadowlands Taint: Innate (Goblin)

School/Rank: Daigotsu's Legion 3/ Daigotsu's Elite Guard 1

Honor: 0

Glory: 7.6 (0.0 away from the City of the Lost)

Advantages: True Friend (Daigotsu), Quick, Heart of Vengeance (Bloodspeakers)*

Disadvantages: Renten's Curse, Driven (Destroy the Bloodspeakers)*, Momoku,

Shadowlands Powers: Blackened Claws, Blood Domination, Child of Darkness, Terror of Fu Leng, Uncanny Speed

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Climbing 1, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 6, Hunting 5, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu 4, Lore (Jigoku) 5*, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Craft: Flesh Sculpting 8, Stealth 3, Torture 3

* The Advantages, Disadvantages, and skills marked with an asterisk have been removed from Omoni's consciousness by Daigotsu; Omoni remembers them only through dreams.



NEW SHADOWLANDS BEASTS

The Shadowlands has had many lords, from powerful demons such as the Maw to zealots such as Yogo Junzo. Foul bake-mono, gigantic ogres, disgusting hags, and frightening oni all roam the lands Fu Leng perverted. Until recently, no matter what power was ascendant in this land of demons, it seemed that the Shadowlands was doomed to fail, susceptible to the chaotic nature of its evil.

Things changed with the arrival of the Dark Lord Daigotsu. Seemingly out of nowhere this powerful maho-tsukai turned the Shadowlands into a realm of controlled evil. By no means is the entire landscape a beacon of law and order, but under Daigotsu's hand more powerful denizens came to the forefront. Stronger goblins from the Deep Shadowlands join more powerful oni and formerly unknown beasts. Constructed terrors have grown stronger, and even Spirit Realms such as Gaki-do, Toshigoku, and Yume-do have spawned servants for the Dark Lord. The Shadowlands is still a place where only the strongest survive and the weak are trampled, but the samurai of Rokugan have begun to realize that a once-scattered realm now has its own version of the Celestial Order.

HELLBEAST

While some Lost samurai settle for the hideous onikage as mounts, the more powerful among them seek out stronger and more reliable steeds. Rare creatures called Hellbeasts run wild in the deepest regions of the Shadowlands tirelessly seeking out prey. They are massive, standing between eight and ten feet at the shoulder. Hellbeasts are covered in hideously thick hairless skin and are roughly the shape of gigantic boars. Hellbeasts' hooves are jagged and their tusks massive, but their ability to continue running tirelessly is their most valuable aspect. These creatures loathe being ridden, but can be subdued with the promise of horse or human flesh. Only the most powerful of the Lost seek out a hellbeast for a mount because, until subdued, the creature will attack anything that gets near it.

HELLBEAST

Large Beast (Shadowlands)
Hit Dice: 5d10+25 (53 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 50 ft.
AC: 15 (-1 size, +6 natural)
Attacks: Gore +13
Damage: Gore 1d8 +13

Face/Reach: 5ft. by 10ft./5ft.
Special Attacks: Trample 1d8 +13
Special Qualities: Ferocity
Saves: Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +2
Abilities: Str 28, Dex 11, Con 21, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 10, Taint 5
Skills: Listen +9, Spot +8

Climate/Terrain: Shadowlands
Organization: Singular
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Honor: Nil
Alignment: Always Chaotic Evil
Advancement: 6-12 HD (Large), 13-17 HD (Huge)

COMBAT

Hellbeasts fight with the ferocity of an oni with only slightly more control. A hellbeast will allow itself to be controlled during combat by a rider, but always wants to attack the nearest creature. Left to itself a hellbeast charges, gores, and tramples the nearest combatant. Hellbeasts seem to have a desire for horse and human flesh.

Ferocity (Ex): A hellbeast is a frightening combatant and will continue to fight without penalty even while disabled or dying (see the *Player's Handbook*).

Trample (Ex): A hellbeast can trample Medium-size or smaller creatures for automatic gore damage. Opponents who do not make attacks of opportunity against the hellbeast can attempt a Reflex save (DC18) to halve the damage.

RIDING A HELLBEAST

Before riders can mount a hellbeast they must succeed at a Handle Animal check (DC 30). Hellbeasts are rarely willing mounts, but can be slightly subdued by feeding them horse or human flesh (lower the DC by 5).

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a hellbeast is up to 400 pounds; a medium load, 401-800 pounds; and a heavy load, 801-1,200 pounds.

HELLBEAST

Earth: 5
Fire: 2
Agility: 4
Water: 5
Strength: 7
Air: 2
Rolls When Attacking: 4k4
Rolls For Damage: 7k2
TN to be Hit: 35
Carapace: 5
Wounds: 25: +5; 50: +10; 75: +15; 100: Dead
Shadowlands Powers: Unholy Stamina, Terrible Armor, Beast of Fu Leng (Quadruped)



SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fear: 2

Gore: A hellbeast's normal attack is an attempt to gore its opponent. If successful, the creature's massive tusks rip open skin and destroy armor. For every raise a hellbeast makes on its attack roll it permanently lowers the benefit of armor by 2. Injured opponents not wearing armor suffer 5 further Wounds each round until tended.

Mount: While rare, hellbeasts are the preferred mount for powerful Lost samurai because of their ferocity and resilience. To be ridden, a hellbeast must first be mounted: an Athletics, Jiu-jitsu, or Horsemanship roll, TN 20. Even after mounted a rider must subdue the beast and get it used to being ridden while it attempts to buck and gore: consecutive Horsemanship rolls, TN 20, 25, and 30. Failure on any of these rolls means the hellbeast has bucked the rider and successfully gored him. A subdued hellbeast allows that rider and no other to mount it until death.

Trample: Hellbeasts can declare an attack while running at top speed. They are considered to be Full Attacking and keep two extra damage dice. A hellbeast may only perform this attack once every other round.

HOUNDS OF THE LOST

The creatures called the Hounds of the Lost originate at the Festering Pit of Fu Leng. Various Dark Lords would cultivate some of the minor oni spirits that crawled around the entrance to Jigoku and place them into the bodies of Roku-gani dogs and wolves. The resulting creatures are akin to rabid wolves, but can be tamed. The hounds are fearsome and when in the wild travel in terrifying packs. While tamed, they typically serve Obsidian Magistrates in groups using their uncanny ability to track anything — Tainted or otherwise — through the corrupted lands.

Hounds are hideous red-eyed mockeries of real wolves. Their bodies are emaciated and sharp bones protrude from their bodies at odd angles. Their massive jaws help them tear through any kind of food, as do their razor sharp claws. Even tame hounds refuse to submit to any restraint, like a collar.

HOUND OF THE LOST

Medium-size Outsider (Evil, Oni)

Hit Dice: 5d8+8 (30 hp)

Initiative: +2 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural)

Attacks: 2 claws +7 melee, bite +7 melee

Damage: Claw 1d6+4, bite 1d6+6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Fear

Special Qualities: Scent, oni qualities

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +5

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10, Taint 7

Skills: Hide +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +1*



Climate/Terrain: Shadowlands

Organization: Solitary, pack (5–10)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Honor: Nil

Alignment: Always Chaotic Evil

Advancement: 5–16 HD (Medium-size)

COMBAT

When Hounds sense prey they become rabid and immediately attempt to attack. By themselves they always Full Attack the nearest creature. When in groups they have a pack mentality and attempt to work together to bring down stronger foes. Hounds always try to bite an opponent.

Oni Qualities (Su): Hounds do not possess the alternate form or telepathy abilities.

Fear (Su): DC 13. Add 1 to the DC for every three Hounds, up to DC 16. Target is shaken. If the Hound succeeds at its bite attack the target must check against Fear again.

Scent (Ex): Scent ranges are tripled when tracking a creature with warm blood or any Shadowlands Taint. Hounds can distinguish among types of Shadowlands creatures.

Skills: Hounds receive a +1 racial bonus to Listen, Move Silently, and Spot checks and a +2 racial bonus to Hide checks.

* It also receives a +4 racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.

HOUD OF THE LOST

Earth: 4

Fire: 2

Agility: 3

Water: 3

Air: 3

Reflexes: 4

Rolls When Attacking: 5k3

Rolls For Damage: 6k3

TN to be Hit: 20

Carapace: 4

Wounds: 16: +5, 24: +10, 36: 48: Dead

Shadowlands Powers: Blood Sense, Fu Leng's Hunger, Taint Sense

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Fear: 3. This increases by one for every three hounds in a pack to a maximum of 6. If the Hound of the Lost damages an opponent that character must make another Fear check.

KOKU NO SEISHIN, THE EMPTY SOULS

The Koku no Seishin are one of the Dark Lord's newest creations — spirits ripped from Meido and imbued with the Taint. During his brief stay in the Realm of Waiting Daigotsu took advantage of Emma-O's weakened state to steal some of the tortured spirits residing there. Other Realms have previously been mixed with Jigoku to create such beings as the Ashura, the Gaki, and the Pekkle, but never before has a creature of Meido been altered this way. The resulting spawn were not entirely intended, but have proven very useful.

The Koku no Seishin constantly seek the release that should have been granted them after the Celestial Pattern decreed them cleansed. They lack identity and strive to steal other's souls in order to gain a sense of self. Unlike the Living Darkness, the Koku no Seishin do not steal spiritual energy to unmake the world. Rather, they strive to harness enough karma to finally break free of their horrid state and ascend to a different Realm.

Koku no Seishin retain enough of their connection with Meido to share some of that Realm's qualities. Their insubstantial bodies are indistinct and covered with misty gray energy. Under this spiritual fog lies a human body in full samurai armor carrying a katana. Neither the spirit's armor nor its katana can be removed. They are difficult to detect and very resistant to magic.

When Koku no Seishin are killed they return to a site designated by Daigotsu inside the Temple of the Ninth Kami where they must purify themselves. Every time they use their fearsome spirit rend attack they become more real — they lose some of their connection with Meido. In order to come back to "life," a Koku no Seishin must release all of this stolen energy. This tortuous process removes all stolen ability points along with the precious karma it needs to con-

tinue its cycle through the Celestial Pattern. It takes a number of days equal to the amount of traits it has taken for this process to finish.

KOKU NO SEISHIN

Medium Outsider (Shadowlands, Spirit)

Hit Dice: 12d8 +12 (66 hp)

Initiative: +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30

AC: 24 (+2 Dex, +7 spirit armor, +5 natural)

Attacks: Spirit blade +15 melee

Damage: Spirit blade 1d10+2 and spirit rend

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft. / 10 ft.

Special Attacks: Spirit blade, spirit rend

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 25/+3 (jade), SR 25, natural invisibility, spirit armor, twisted elements

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +9

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 17, Taint 10

Skills: Bluff +15, Concentration +16, Hide +15, Jump +14, Listen +15, Move Silently +15, Search -15, Sense Motive +4, Spot +15

Feats: Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (Spirit Blade)

Climate/Terrain: Deep Shadowlands, any land and underground

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 15

Treasure: None

Honor: Always 0 Honor

Alignment: Neutral

Advancement: 13+ HD (Medium)



COMBAT

Koku no Seishin seek out shugenja and those weak against their spirit rend assault. They use their invisibility and magic resistances to get close enough to make their attack and avoid anyone those that can bypass their defenses. They are rarely seen outside of battle.

Spirit Armor (Ex): A Koku no Seishin wears heavy armor that is an extension of itself and thus cannot be disarmed or destroyed. It protects against both corporeal and incorporeal attacks.

Spirit Blade (Ex): A Koku no Seishin wields a katana that is an extension of itself and thus cannot be disarmed or destroyed. These weapons are incorporeal ignoring corporeal armor and negating damage reduction.

Spirit Qualities (Ex): As spirits, Koku no Seishin gain a +4 racial bonus against all enchantment effects except those of other spirits. Koku no Seishin can sense any passage to Jigoku within one mile.

Spirit Rend (Su): Living creatures hit by a Koku no Seishin's attack suffer 1 negative energy level. Every time it takes two levels of negative energy it may choose to suppress one of its other special attacks or special qualities and permanently gain one Hit Die, gaining all benefits of advancement. This suppression lasts for one week.

A slain Koku no Seishin with any stolen hit dice is sent back to the Shadowlands. It must lower itself back to its starting hit dice at a rate of one die per week before it can become active again.

Twisted Elements (Su): A Koku no Seishin's spell resistance affects not only itself, but everything in a 25-foot radius around it. A Koku no Seishin may negate or reinstate this effect as a free action, as often as it likes.

Natural Invisibility (Sp): A Koku no Seishin remains invisible even when it attacks. It can cancel or resume this ability as a free action.

KOKU NO SEISHIN (EMPTY SOUL)

Earth: 2

Fire: 2

Water: 2

Air: 2

Taint: 3

Rolls When Attacking: Xk3 (Special, see below)

Rolls For Damage: Xk3 (Special, see below)

TN to Be Hit: Special

Carapace: 10 (Special)

Wounds: 10: +5; 25: +10; 50: Dead (Special)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Invulnerability: This ability is lost once it has taken more than three points with its Spirit Rend attack (see below).

Magic Immunity: A Koku no Seishin creates a spiritual void 10 feet around its body that adds +15 to the TNs of all spells cast in the area. This ability is lost once it has taken more than five points with its Spirit Rend attack.

Bland: An Awareness roll at a TN of 25 is required to sense a Koku no Seishin's presence. This ability is lost once it takes any points with its Spirit Rend attack.

Spirit Rend: A Koku no Seishin attacks the very soul of its opponent. It targets a victim's Trait and makes a contested roll against that person rolling 7k4. If successful, the target loses a temporary point from that Trait and the Koku no Seishin gains it. For every two Raises it makes on the roll it takes one

extra point. The victim regains points at a rate of one per day. This attack can never reduce a victim's Trait below one.

Special: Any time a Koku no Seishin's Earth Ring increases from its spirit rend attack, it heals 25 Wounds. Its TN to Be Hit is equal to its current Reflexes \times 5 plus 5. It rolls a number of dice to attack and for damage equal to its current Agility and Strength, respectively. A Koku no Seishin's Carapace is lowered by one each time it successfully uses its Spirit Rend attack.

BEAST MECHANICS

ANCESTORS (YOKAI)

The majority of the corrupted spirits that serve as yokai are human, even though the majority of the Shadowlands is not human. The main reason that spirits such as Junzo and Yoshimitsu return instead of the average bakemono is because they possess more willpower, a stronger sense of self. However, not all yokai were formerly human. Occasionally, a goblin, hag, troll, or some other horrid beast returns to offer its "guidance." While these beings are unusual, there is no doubting the power they offer.

ORSCHAT

One of the more unusual yokai to crawl back from Jigoku is the being known as Orschat. This goblin hero was one of the few bakemono to elevate himself above the raving hordes. Orschat was a warmonger during Kuni Yori's reign. He was brave to the point of being suicidal, but always returned from battle with barely a mark on him. He began to be worshiped as a demigod among the goblin race and was believed to be nigh invincible. The secret to Orschat's power actually came from another goblin. A wizard calling itself the Exalted Ugu made a deal with the warmonger. He would cast spells to make Orschat impervious to the Crab's weapons if the goblin leader would bring him spells and nemuranai from those he killed. A deal was made and a "hero" was born.

Unfortunately for Orschat, all pacts have an end. Yori was defeated and his army wiped out. Both Orschat and Ugu were slain and their spirits drifted into Jigoku. Normally, Orschat's brief glimpse of glory would not be enough to summon him back as a yokai, but Daigotsu's arrival changed that. With Daigotsu came a more powerful race of bakemono from the southern Shadowlands. Among these creatures was a goblin wizard that sought to empower his brethren with kansen and the souls of demons. His magic was not powerful enough to actually bind oni to other goblins, but he did manage to pull Orschat's soul out of Jigoku. Orschat no Yokai currently "guides" a goblin hero named Gakochun, but would be willing to offer his aid to any creature.

RECKLESS ASSAULT

ANCESTOR FEAT: ORSCHATI

You are granted protection when performing dangerous or suicidal feats in combat.

Benefit: You gain damage reduction 5/jade while making a full attack. You must make a Willpower save (DC 15) during combat or declare a full attack against the most powerful enemy in sight.

ORSCHAT

(6 POINTS)

Those guided by Orschat are devastating in combat, but are constantly pushed towards reckless attacks. While making a Full Attack, you gain a Carapace of 5 that cannot be lowered by non-magical methods. During every combat you must make a Willpower roll against a TN of 15 or you are pushed to Full Attack the most powerful enemy in sight.

KYOJIN

The being known as Kyojin once served as yojimbo to the dreaded Yogo Junzo. He was renowned for his ability with the blade and said to have mastered the intricacies of iaijutsu. His monstrous leonine frame charged into battles, slaying with both katana and talon. Kyojin defended the dark sorcerer up until the second Day of Thunder when a monk named Tetsuya defeated him. No one, including Kyojin, knew his tragic beginning.

Doji Kyojin once served in Doji Raigu's honor guard. His massive frame and strength were unusual for a Crane, but his power was tempered by the study of iaijutsu. It was rumored that Kyojin would one day join the Kenshinzen and possibly even become their master — but the man Kyojin served was corrupt. During his time as Champion, Raigu was revealed to be one of the leaders of the Gozoku alliance and stripped of his status. The men who served under him were disgraced; those not killed were put into positions far beneath them. Kyojin was sent to the Wall.

The Crab received the large Crane with only slightly more enthusiasm than his Crane brethren left him with. They mocked his iaijutsu style, telling him that it would be useless against the slaving hordes of Jigoku. He was assigned to the front lines and eventually ended up in a unit of berserkers. On one of his unit's forays into the corrupted lands they were ambushed by hundreds of bakemono led by a new type of oni. Kyojin fought hard as the men around him fell to the beast's fury. The demon left him for last, considering him weak. Kyojin knew that his single-sword techniques would never prevail against such a foe and resigned himself to death. In that instant, all the fury, despair, and hate that had festered since his lord was dishonored welled up in Kyojin. A red haze permeated his vision — then nothing.

He remembered little after waking. The bodies of countless goblins surrounded him and the oni was gone. The haze had faded, but so had all memory of his former life. The beast that rose from Doji Kyojin's soul stood on four legs and had a body of a demon. Kyojin picked up his katana and a strip of cloth to use as a mask and began a new life in the dark realm.

FEARED DUELIST

ANCESTOR FEAT: KYOJIN

You have an awesome charisma and a demonic light in your eye that frightens your enemies.

Benefit: You gain a fear effect that only comes into play during an iaijutsu duel. The DC is 10 + your level + your Charisma modifier. Opponents who fail their roll suffer a -5 penalty to their iaijutsu Focus check. Opponents who refuse a duel you offer may not spend any Void Points or any ability that requires Void against you during the ensuing combat.

KYOJIN

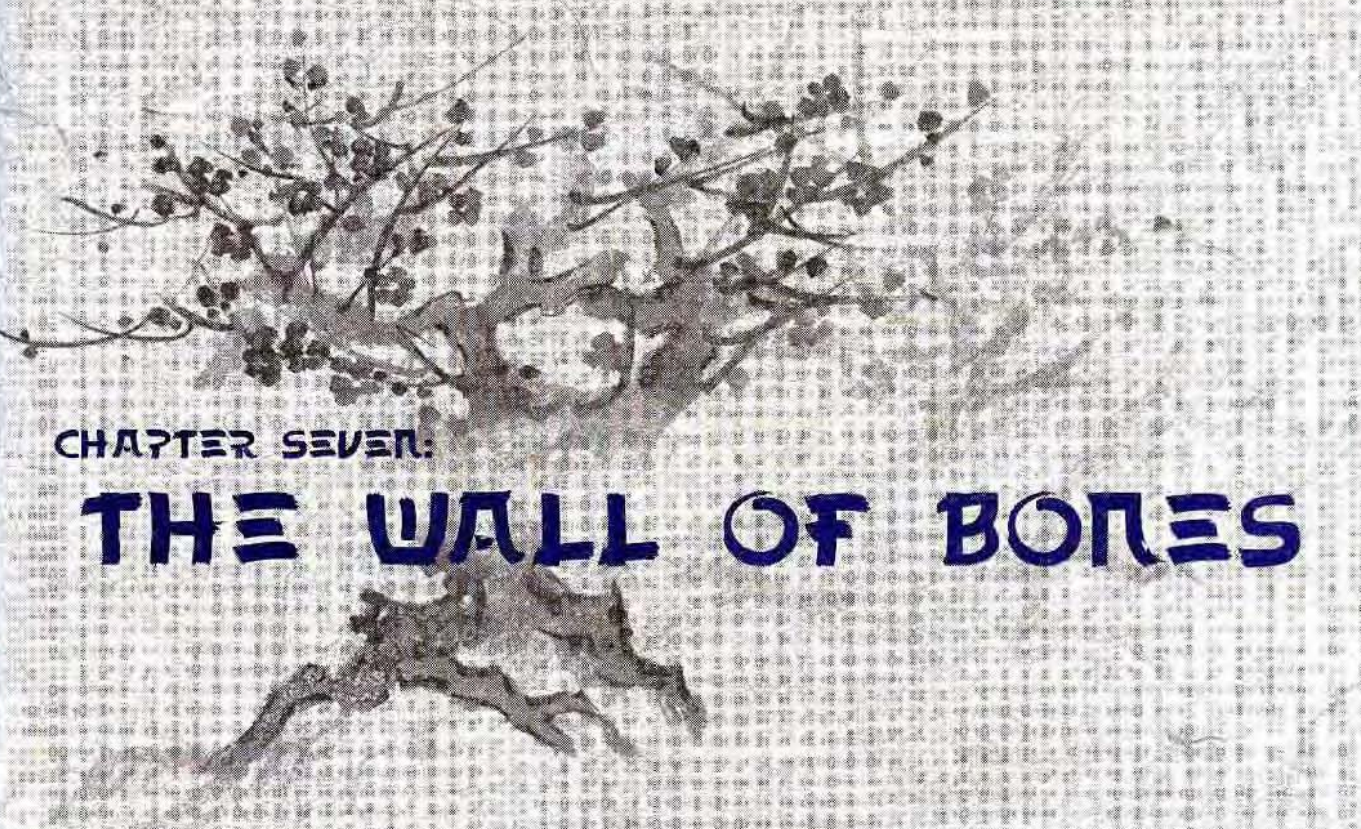
(5 POINTS)

Kyojin grants you a frightening presence when in single combat. You have a Fear rating of 5 while in an Iaijutsu Duel. Any opponent who refuses a duel you offer immediately loses a Void Point and may not spend Void Points or use Void related abilities against you during the ensuing combat.



CHAPTER SEVEN:

THE WALL OF BONES



Maikun held up his fist silently, his troop of Hiruma Stalkers halting in their advance. They had reached the small rise from which the Crab commander had instructed him to observe the enemy. From Hiruma Maikun's vantage, everything the scout had told them appeared to be true. "Fortunes," he swore almost inaudibly. There was no denying it now — Daigotsu's reign as the Lord of the Shadowlands had brought about yet another change in the Lost that threatened the Empire.

Several hundred feet before them, the six scouts gazed upon the great, bleached-white wall that stretched out of sight to north and south. Torches burned upon three great towers near their location and along the length of the wall's top. The elder Hiruma looked at his five scouts and saw his own disturbed thoughts reflected in their eyes. It looked like nothing so much as a parody of the Kaiu Wall.

Maikun studied the gate for a moment, silently looking for the easiest way past it. There were three towers, with two gates connecting them in a triangular formation jutting out from the line of the wall. The height of the wall precluded any sort of climbing for now, as the group had come to gather information only. Perhaps a return trip with the proper equipment would see them over the disgusting blasphemy.

Turning to his two junior scouts, Maikun silently commanded them with hand signs to scout farther to the north and south to see if there were other gates similar to this one. Left with his three senior subordinates, Maikun steeled himself and gave the command to move closer to the gate. It was unlikely they would be seen even by the unnatural senses of the Lost due to their skill and number. Guards such as these were not meant to deal with threats such as Maikun and his scouts.

As they drew nearer, the jaded Hiruma felt his feet and hands grow cold. The wall was not made of sickeningly clean white stone, but pure bone. Spurs of bone, both human and otherwise, juttied out in every direction with no apparent mortar to hold them together. Calculating the possible length of the wall in his head, Maikun shuddered for a moment to think where even the Lord of the Shadowlands would have gotten such . . . resources.

Within minutes, the four Hiruma were literally within arm's length of the wall. Crouching low to the ground and taking advantage of the wall's uneven surface, they crawled close enough to the gate for Maikun to get a good idea of how many armed Hida would be able to fit through. As they studied the construction of the wall of bone, a noise came from the gates, and all four Crab looked over to see the portal opening with a groan inappropriate for mere architecture.

Realizing this was his chance to see both sides of the gale for any sign of weaknesses, Maikun ordered his group forward once again without hesitation. They slid quickly past the gate and began moving away from the area in order to remain unseen.

At that point, the very earth began to shake.

Fearing the worst, Maikun drew his katana and signaled a retreat past the gate. Before he could turn fully, he caught the image of something dark and gigantic rising from the earth before them. As the four moved in unison, the gate came crashing closed with lightning speed. Thinking he was now trapped on the wrong side of this horrific wall, Maikun turned back to forge ahead . . . and realized he was more than just trapped by the gate.

During the years of Daigotsu's reign as the Lord of the Shadowlands, much changed within that dark realm. Understanding that Fu Leng's true purpose was not to

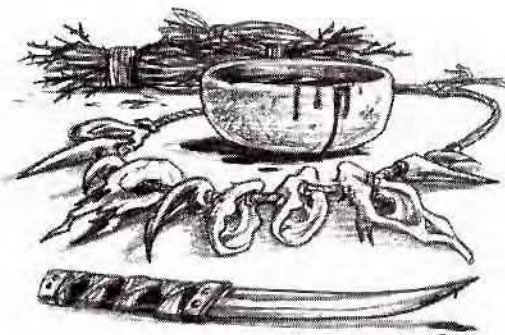
destroy the mortal Empire but to consume it, Daigotsu organized a great City of the Lost, and caused men and women overwhelmed by the Shadowlands Taint to embrace the darkness in their souls instead of fighting it and being driven insane. In a generation, Daigotsu turned a great swath of the Shadowlands into a dark mirror of Rokugan. He was an Emperor of an entirely different Empire — the Lost were his samurai, the goblins and undead his peasants, and the feared Onisu his Champions.

Perhaps one of the most horrific changes Daigotsu brought about was the creation of a great wall separating his new Empire from Rokugan. Ironically, the Lord of the Shadowlands grew weary of incursions by Hiruma scouts and Hida war parties just as the Crab Clan created their wall to curb the unending assault of the Shadowlands.

Daigotsu's wall is formed of the bones of both his failed servants and the corpses of his enemies. Some of the jutting bones are the size of huge trees, while a close inspection shows the skeletons of nezumi, humans, and what many Crab have agreed is an unusual amount of crows. The Wall of Bones carries no withered flesh or muscle, only clean bone torn from those Daigotsu has found unworthy in some regard. Even those mortals slain in the Shadowlands cannot be certain to rise again as undead to attack Rokugan. Instead, those the Lord of the Shadowlands deems unfit join the endless piles of bones on the wall.

The Wall has only one point of entry — a single gate at its center that opens to the only path directly to the City of the Lost. The Wall of Bones stands taller than even the Kaiu Wall, making any sort of large-scale assault over the wall impossible. While the wall's defense is hardly perfect — a single man or small scout team could find a way over or around the Wall of Bones — the fortification is total insurance against an assault on the City of the Lost. Any such force would have to contend with the forces at the Wall of Bones' gate, and the unnatural power of the Shadowlands plus the canny defenses constructed by the Lost samurai (many of them ex-Crab) would be enough to turn back any force the Empire could reasonably organize.

Due to the current struggle for power in the Shadowlands between those loyal to Daigotsu and those who follow Iuchiban, the gate at the Wall of Bones has been gripped by a quiet tension. Though the bushi stationed there would rise up to join their master Daigotsu, they have heard only rumors of his fate since his death at the hands of Toturi Tsudao. In addition, the commanders of the forces here realize they cannot afford to allow infighting to consume the Lost at the Wall of Bones. Unfortunately, they do not believe Iuchiban's followers share their sense of duty and silently agree that some day one of the Bloodspeakers will come to sabotage the Wall just to harm its Lost bushi.



USING THE WALL OF BONES IN AN ADVENTURE

The Wall of Bones symbolizes the significant change in the organization of the Shadowlands brought about by Daigotsu. Though among the Crab it is common knowledge that the Daigotsu was creating a dark reflection of the Empire in the deep Shadowlands, the massive fortification is a stark reminder of the threat.

- The Wall of Bones is of great importance to the Crab, and Hiruma scouts regularly study it from afar and up close. An all-Crab party (or a group under the command of the Crab) could find themselves on such missions.
- Much like the Kaiu Wall is to traditional characters, the Wall of Bones could serve as the backdrop for a group of Lost characters. Especially with Daigotsu deposed by Iuchiban, the wall is seeing an increasing number of fabled creatures turning their attention to the City of the Lost.
- Getting past the Wall of Bones could be the precursor to an adventure in the City of the Lost. Characters who find their way past the wall may find getting back to the Empire an even more difficult task.

HOW TO USE THIS INFORMATION

Each of the major areas of the wall is presented here with all the information a GM should need to use it. Each section contains a heading entitled "At a Glance," which summarizes the components of that area. Certain portions of the wall have their own descriptions, which may be read aloud to players if the GM so desires. Individual GMs are encouraged to alter or expand the information presented here to suit their own games.

WALL OF BONES FORCES

The Wall of Bones is almost exclusively staffed by warriors drawn from the ranks of the Lost. The only exception to this are the *maho-tsukai* under the employ of the masters of the gate, who serve as spiritual facilitators and add firepower in times of crisis.

The forces of the Lost on the Wall of Bones vary wildly in their abilities and statistics, having been drawn from every Clan in the Empire. Typical bushi range from levels 4 to 6 in the samurai class, while officers and commanders range from levels 7 to 10. The *maho-tsukai* at the gate, of which there are fewer than 50, vary in the same manner.

The forces of the Lost on the Wall of Bones vary wildly in their abilities and statistics having been drawn from every Clan in the Empire. Typical bushi are School Rank 1 or 2 in some clan's bushi school, while officers and commanders of the forces there are School Rank 3 or 4. The *maho-tsukai* at the gate, of which there are fewer than 50, vary in the same manner.

THE NORTH TOWER

AT A GLANCE

The North Tower is also called the Supply Tower after the storage rooms on its ground floor. It is the least populated of the four towers because it has no manned stations other than the guard post on the ground floor. With vantage points on the top floor that include both sides of the Wall of Bones, only the most alert and swiftest servants are posted here. The North Tower usually spots intruders, as most groups from the Empire move in from the Kaiu Wall to the northeast.

1. GUARD POST

Of all the manned security positions at the gate, the guard post on the North Tower is believed to be the most important. There are at least three Lost bushi on guard here at any time, and two or three more plus a maho-tsukai during times of alert. There are no supplies in the guard room itself, and anyone attempting to enter the North Tower without proper authority is detained by force.

2. WEAPON STORAGE

The weapon cache in the North Tower is easily accessed by those inside the Wall of Bones, but inaccessible to invaders. The room contains countless katana, wakizashi, yari, and a handful of other common bushi weapons. There are no yumi or other ranged weapons here, as they are generally hoarded on the upper floors of each tower. There are no guards posted to this room; no one is expected to enter it except the supply officer on duty. Those caught in the room for any longer than it takes to pass through it are subdued and punished. Sometimes luckless trespassers are added to the Wall.

3. ARMOR STORAGE

Similar in form and function to the nearby weapon storage room, the armor storage mostly contains bits of armor intended to replace destroyed equipment. There are no single full suits of armor here, though the myriad pieces of ashigaru, lamellar, and other armor types could in a pinch, be assembled into several dozen suits. Wall guardians with severely damaged or destroyed armor must requisition replacements, and generally stay off-duty until their equipment is supplied. Countless armor-repair supplies and tools in this room give the appropriate skill checks a large bonus.

4. EQUIPMENT STORAGE

General supplies such as rations, bedrolls, and rope are stored here and watched by at least three armed bushi. Though not as immediately important as the weapons and armor located nearby, these staple items are important to the continued smooth operation of each tower. Those wishing to use the supplies here are not questioned much, but attempts to tamper with the equipment or add unauthorized items to the stockpile are dealt with harshly. This room also contains the stairs upwards to the top floor of the North Tower.

11. WESTERN OUTLOOK

This archer post faces the City of the Lost. Deemed a necessity by the paranoid Lost Crab who helped construct the Wall, only the most trusted archers are assigned to this position. This post is one of the highest honors in the Lost army, and those who hold it command respect and fear. The primary function of this position is to ensure there are no attempts to

take the towers from the west due to some internal struggle for power. Though civil war has yet to occur, the rising tensions between Iuchiban and Daigotsu make it seem inevitable.

12. GUARD POST

The entry to the second floor of the North Tower is guarded so that no one can slip by and surprise the archers. The room is well lit and usually guarded by bushi who have been blessed by Fu Leng with enhanced senses and perception. The room is much larger than any of the other rooms in the tower. At least three bushi are always on guard here, and the archers on either side of the tower fall back to this room if their position is overrun. In addition, there are numerous bowstrings, arrows, and tools to aid in the recovery and repair of both arrows and yumi.

13. EASTERN OUTLOOK

This archer post overlooks the northeastern watch from the gate and often sees action. Between this point on the North Tower and the post on the East Tower, the archers of the Wall of Bones usually fend off incursions from overly bold Hiruma scouts.

THE SOUTH TOWER

AT A GLANCE

Of all the towers at the gate, the South Tower is the least likely to aid in times of an attack. Because of this, it is usually manned by the least experienced or useful of Lost. Bushi who show promise are often stationed on the South Tower, and promotions or recognition usually mean reassignment. The South Tower also carries two of the least strategically important features of the gate — the secondary barracks and a small shrine to Fu Leng.

6. GUARD POST

Despite the comparatively relaxed nature of the South Tower, its guard post is manned by experienced and serious bushi. Due to the presence of the barracks and the shrine, there is no strict policy on who is allowed through to the tower, though only bushi reporting for duty on the upper floors or for duty in the guard room may carry a full complement of weapons and armor. Others may have only a small weapon such as a wakizashi or tanto and no armor. Coupled with the watchful presence of Fu Leng's shrine, this measure ensures none cross the guards.

7. BARRACKS

These are the secondary barracks, and most off-duty bushi spend their time here if they are not in the shrine. Bedrolls and minor personal effects litter the floor. Here the Lost engage in activities that make them seem less like the Tainted abominations stories paint and more like Rokugani samurai. They swap stories of service on the wall — how many wild beasts or Rokugani they have killed in the past weeks in the line of duty — or simply drink strong sake and shochu in silence. There are always a handful of bushi here, and only one token guard on duty at any time.

8. SHRINE

A fair-sized shrine to Fu Leng connects to the secondary barracks through a gaping hole in the inner bone walls. The jagged and broken bones around the doorway always ooze

blood, which puddles and slowly drains into the ground. Two maho-tsukai are permanently posted here to attend to the spiritual needs of the bushi. The shrine is considered the gate's most sacred site, and while no guards are posted here, none are necessary. None of the Lost would be foolish enough to attempt to defile the Shrine to the Dark Kami, and all of the Lost on the Wall would die before they allow the shrine to fall into an invader's hands.

15. NORTH OUTLOOK

The northern outlook of the South Tower watches over the inner yard of the gate. When the West Tower is at rest, this archer post must quell any problem at the inner gates. The least experienced soldiers at the Wall of Bones are generally posted here, as this outlook's archers have never had to fire.

16. GUARD POST

The upper floor of the South Tower sees a great deal of traffic, as the shifts change more frequently than the other Towers. Due to the South Tower's unofficial role as a training ground, the shifts are shorter to afford newcomers more opportunity to adjust to service at the Wall of Bones. Guards here are the finest of the most inexperienced bushi at the wall, as they guard the two archer posts from possible attack. Guards here are soon promoted to another position. At least three bushi are always on guard here, and the archers on either side of the tower fall back to this room if their position is overrun. In addition, there are numerous bowstrings, arrows, and tools to aid in the recovery and repair of both arrows and yumi.

17. EAST OUTLOOK

This archer post watches both the inner yard of the gate and the southern end of the outside. Archers that show promise are often posted here to continue their training. This vantage point sees little combat, as most attacks are from Taint-maddened beasts or Rokugani scouts, from the north and east. Nonetheless, the post is considered a proving ground and its bushi take their duty very seriously.



THE EAST TOWER

AT A GLANCE

As it is the tower that heads the outer protrusion of the gate from the Wall of Bones, the security and staffing of the East Tower are primary concerns. It bears the brunt of attacks while defenders from the North and South Towers assault the enemy unimpeded. Because of this, the East Tower is heavily fortified and filled with only the most elite bushi. A position at the East Tower, no matter the role, is a serious distinction.

9. GUARD POST

Due to the nature of the East Tower's role in the defense of the City of the Lost, security is utterly paranoid by even the most hardened Kuni witch-hunter's standards. No less than ten armed bushi are on post here at any time, and that number doubles within minutes if necessary. The post serves as both a security checkpoint to the center of the gate's defenses and a pool of manpower to draw upon should others fall.

10. EAST OUTLOOK

The only position in any of the towers where archers are located on the ground floor, this room serves a support role to confuse attackers. The stairway between this room and the upper floor is unusually large in order to allow runners to move quickly back and forth. The archer slits here are concealed by the natural formation of the Wall of Bones, so an attacking army would have to be quite close to notice anything. These archers fire at a ground-level trajectory once an attacking army has adapted to the constant rain of arrows from above. Firing arrows at such a low angle requires both immense concentration and more than a little assistance from one (or up to three) maho-tsukai stationed here at all times.

18. OUTLOOK

This large, U-shaped outlook gives archers posted here full command of both sides of the main gates. Several siege engines are stationed at each corner of the area to support the archers and maho-tsukai constantly on duty in this room. Only the most elite Lost marksmen are assigned to this station, and their skills are enhanced by the twisted maho of Fu Leng's chosen. The maho-tsukai stationed here add their firepower to the archers', assist them with their magic, and protect the outlook area with protective spells. As the most obvious and deadly fortification in the gate area, the East Tower logically draws most of the attention of any attacker.

19. SUPPLY STORAGE

The East Tower is the one most easily cut off from the rest of the Wall of Bones. Because of this, a supply room is maintained in case the defenders are unable to reach the other towers. This small cache of weapons, armor, and miscellaneous supplies would last for just over a week in a siege. There is always one bushi on guard who is to destroy the equipment if the tower is about to fall into enemy hands. The items in this room are maintained in perfect orderly groups and the area is kept immaculate to allow runners and archers to move between the three doorways in the area without pause.

20. GUARD POST

Like the guard post on the lower floor, this room is watched by only the most trusted Lost bushi. None may pass except the ranking officer on watch and those assigned to the large

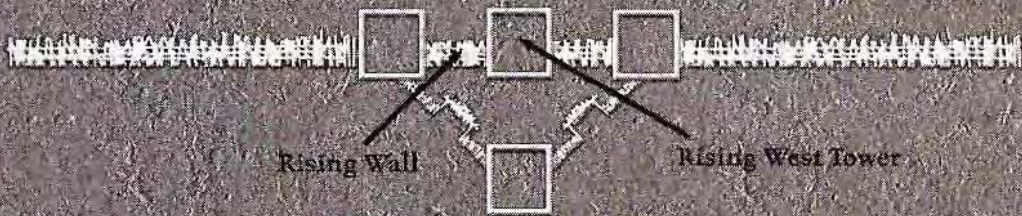
THE WALL OF BONES

Fig 1. Gates Closed

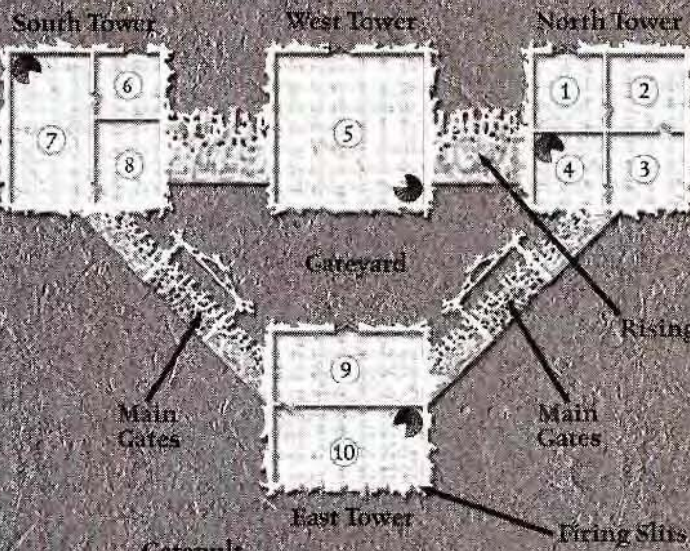


When Main Gates open, the Western Tower and connecting wall rises from the ground (Fig 2).

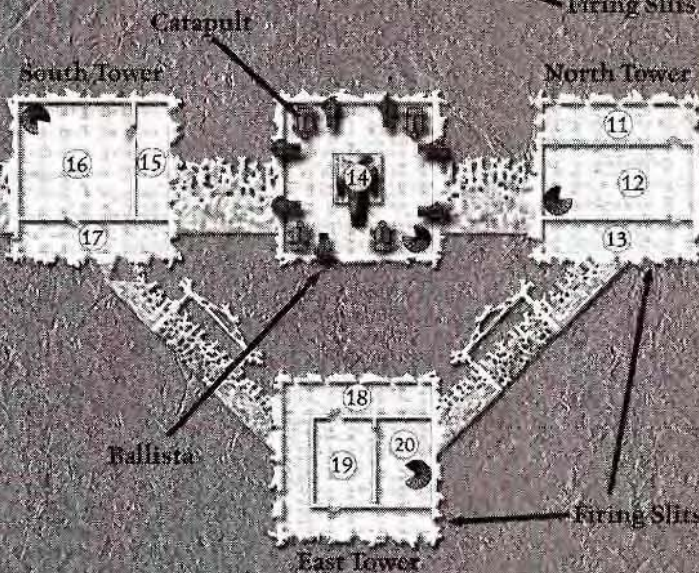
Fig 2. Gates Open



Ground Floor



Top Floor



archer post that almost completely circles the upper floor. At least four bushi are always on guard here, and the archers on either side of the tower fall back to this room if their position is overrun. In addition, there are numerous bowstrings, arrows, and tools to aid in the recovery and repair of both arrows and yumi.

THE WEST TOWER

AT A GLANCE

The hidden secret of the Wall of Bones, the West Tower and the walls that connect it to the North and South Towers are hidden from view beneath the blackened earth of the Shadowlands at most times. Only when the gates are open (by the command of the gate officers or otherwise) to allow traffic through the area does this massive structure rise from the ground, destroying any possibility of a rush charge beyond the Wall of Bones. Those attempting such tactics or who fail to show proper authority to pass are caught in a merciless killing zone of archers and siege engine fire.

5. BARRACKS

The main barracks of the gate area are on the bottom floor of the hidden West Tower. A barely organized sprawl of bedrolls and personal effects covers the floor, with just enough room to walk between them. As the area spends most of its time belowground, the main doorway on the west wall is used only when the tower is up. Otherwise, bushi reporting to and from their posts must exit to the top floor and then to the surface above. Two bushi are on guard here at most times, though there is little call for security. An assault on the Wall of Bones would have to be overwhelming to reach this part. Likewise, any sort of rebellion from within could easily be contained.

14. THE SIEGE ENGINE

On the top floor of the West Tower rests a sick marvel that combines Kaiu engineering with the dark designs of Jigoku. Called only "the Engine," the weapon appears to be a great catapult that fires not up into the air at an arc, but directly forward from where the thing is pointed. The Engine was designed by one of the first Lost Crab to be given true mastery of their Taint by Daigotsu, an aspiring engineer by the name of Yohiro. Kaiu Yohiro went through five previous designs, testing them on hapless wandering goblins and eventually massive trolls until he was satisfied. The result of his work is this massive weapon of blackened and melted steel that seems to grow out of the piled bones that make up the tower.

THE ENGINE

The Engine is a barely sentient construct that requires the full concentration of at least one spellcaster capable of casting 3rd level maho spells to function.

Large Construct (Shadowlands)

Hit Dice: 20d10 (175 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 0

AC: 22 (-2 size, +12 natural)

Attacks: Slam +20 melee, catapult fire +20/+15 ranged

Damage: Slam 2d10, catapult fire 6d6

Face/Reach: 10ft. by 10ft./5ft.

Special Attacks: Taint Blast

Special Qualities: Damage Reduction 15/+4 (fade), regeneration 10

Saves: As commanding maho-tsukai

Abilities: Str: 25, Dex 10, Con —, Int 2, Wis 2, Cha 2

Climate/Terrain: Shadowlands

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 12

Treasure: None

Honor: 0

Alignment: Always lawful evil

Advancement: 21–30 HD (Large)

COMBAT

The Engine is primarily a weapon of ranged destruction, though it can pivot itself and slam into any hostile forces that get near it. The slam attack requires no maho-tsukai assistance.

Taint Blast: Once each round, in addition to any other attacks, the Engine may fire a shot of concentrated fire and Taint energy by dealing 15 damage to its controller. This shot has a range of 300 ft. The blast deals 6d6 fire damage to everything within a 30-foot radius of the impact (Reflex save DC 20 for half damage). Creatures without any Shadowlands Taint caught in the blast take an additional 10d6 divine damage (with no save). This is a supernatural ability.

THE ENGINE

Earth: 6

Air: 1

Fire: 2

Agility: 5

Water: 3

Strength: 7

Taint: Innate

Rolls when Attacking: 6k4 (ranged), 5k4 (melee)

Rolls for Damage: Special (ranged), 7k4 (melee)

TN to be Hit: 10

Carapace: 8

Wounds: 150: +1, 200: +3, 250: +5, 300: Dead

Special: The Engine's ranged attack has a range of 300 feet and strikes everything within 30 feet of the impact for 4k4 fire damage. The Tainted nature of the attack deals an additional 6k6 Wounds to anything caught in the blast without the Shadowlands Taint. This attack requires a maho-tsukai capable of casting at least 2nd level maho spells to inflict 5 Wounds on himself.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

BEHIND THE VEIL

THE DARK ORACLES

There is no greater expression of Iigoku's power than that possessed by the Dark Oracles. Mortals possessing a power of corruption equaled only by Fu Leng's mortal host, the Dark Oracles terrify even other denizens of the Shadowlands. Fortunately for Rokugan, the Dark Oracles are bound by the same rules as their counterparts, the Oracles of Light.

THE RESTRAINTS OF POWER

The Dark Oracles are quite possibly the most powerful entities in the Shadowlands, rivaled only by the mighty Oni Lords and rare souls such as Daigotsu and Shahaï who carry the power of Fu Leng. Their very existence could disturb the balance of power between Tengoku and Iigoku's forces in the mortal realm, were it not for the rules that restrain them. All celestial beings suffer such restrictions when acting in Ningen-do, as do their avatars. There are several overriding principles that determine the actions a Dark Oracle may take.

First and foremost, the Dark Oracles, a particularly violent and powerful group, may not attack any other being unless first invited to do so. The invitation need not be issued by a particular individual, as was demonstrated when Isawa Hochiu invited former Dark Oracle of Fire Agasha Tamori to attack the entire Phoenix Clan, beginning the

Dragon-Phoenix war seven years ago. Likewise, the definition of 'attack' is open to interpretation. The Dark Oracles obviously view any attack against them as an invitation to respond in kind. More belligerent Oracles, such as the current Dark Oracle of Earth, consider any intrusion into their territory to be an invitation. For this reason, the Dark Oracles are approached with great caution and trepidation.

The second principle that circumscribes the Dark Oracles' power is that they must speak a single word aloud when wielding their power. This word must describe their action in some way. This limits the depth and range of things a Dark Oracle may do at any given moment, theoretically restraining their immeasurable power. In practice, the Dark Oracles have been exceptionally creative with their interpretations.

Every mortal who seeks out a Dark Oracle is entitled to ask a single question. This restriction is shared by the Oracles of Light as well, although few are aware of it and even fewer are capable of acting upon such knowledge. In recent memory, only Toruri Sezaru and Daigotsu, arguably the two most powerful shugenja in the world, have been able to capitalize upon this weakness.

The final restraint placed upon the Dark Oracles is by far the most crippling. For each element, there exists an ancient artifact of unknown origin known as the Dark Covenant. Any mortal being who possesses a Dark Covenant is completely protected from the power of the Dark Oracle of that element. The Covenants further empower mortal beings that possess them to issue a single command to a Dark Oracle, who must then fulfill that command to the best of their ability. Once this command has been issued, the Covenant's protection expires. Few survive

the Oracles' subsequent wrath. The Dark Oracles find this destruction unsatisfying, for the Covenant always disappears moments after having been used in this manner.

THE BLESSINGS OF DARKNESS

Although the Oracles rarely take direct action against mortal foes, they indirectly aid the allies of Jigoku. During the Clan War, the Dark Oracles came together and created the oni known as the elemental terrors, beasts of incredible power that plagued the Great Clans. This created an imbalance that was corrected when the Oracles of Light created the elemental nemuranai to aid mankind against the terrors.

The elemental terrors were an exception. The Dark Oracles generally aid others only through their blessings, and that but rarely. Few are found worthy of an Oracle's blessing, although those who do prove worthy find their powers augmented to astonishing and terrible levels.

SOSHI JOMYAKO, DARK ORACLE OF AIR

A shugenja serving in the armies at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, Soshi Jomyako fell to the Shadowlands forces in the heaviest fighting at Volturnum. She was taken from the battlefield by ogres to face a fate too horrible to imagine. Shortly after she arrived at her captors' camp, Jomyako began to hear whispers that offered her tremendous power if only she would surrender her soul. Dreading the alternative, Jomyako accepted the immeasurable power of a Dark Oracle.

A few months after accepting Oracular duties, Jomyako gave birth to a son she had conceived during the march on Volturnum. Knowing that her humanity was rapidly draining away, Jomyako found the boy's father, the Phoenix bushi Shiba Katsuda, magically restored his mental facilities despite his corruption, and gave him custody of their son. Jomyako has only recently discovered that Katsuda still serves Daigotsu. Her detachment allows only rare moments of affection for her son Katsu, but in those moments she suffers terrible pain over his loss.

Of all the Dark Oracles, Jomyako's reason for loyalty to Daigotsu is the simplest: the order that the Dark Lord has brought to the Shadowlands permits her to feel some semblance of her life before she entered the Shadowlands. Before his rule, her life was a chaotic whirlwind of madness and despair, and she welcomes the order Daigotsu brought.

THE DARK BLESSING OF AIR

Soshi Jomyako prefers to remain in solitude, permitting visitors only in certain circumstances such as when her son or Daigotsu wishes to see her. Although more approachable than other Oracles, Jomyako is unlikely to bestow her blessing upon mortals. Those who request favors are refused, and those who persist are destroyed in particularly excruciating ways.

YASUKI NOKATSU, DARK ORACLE OF EARTH

The angriest and most violent Dark Oracle, Yasuki Nokatsu is also the one most likely to take direct action against the forces of Rokugan when given an opportunity. He accepted the burden of a Dark Oracle's power under duress. Because Daigotsu wished to bind Nokatsu, he tortured the Crab samurai for nearly thirty years before Nokatsu finally acquiesced, pledg-

ing his life and loyalty to Daigotsu. Despite his corruption and his power, or perhaps because of it, Nokatsu has no choice but to serve Daigotsu even though he hates him above all others.

Nokatsu dwells within the Twilight Mountains' blackest, coldest recesses, far to the south of Crab lands. He moves through the earth without difficulty, and rarely stays in any particular location. Nokatsu respects only raw, unfettered power. He has been known to offer his patronage to those few beings that have sought him out and survived his wrath. His will has been thwarted only once in recent memory, when the corrupted shugenja Katsu used the Dark Covenant of Earth to force Nokatsu to rebuild Sunset Tower in Otosan Uchi.

THE DARK BLESSING OF EARTH

Kuni scholars believe that it was the Dark Blessing of Earth that allowed the oni lord the Maw to visit devastation upon the Hiruma lands. Whether this is true or not, none can say for certain. Nokatsu is extremely reluctant to bestow his blessing upon petitioners, but any who fulfill his requirements would surely be unstoppable forces of destruction.

TAMORI CHOSAI, DARK ORACLE OF FIRE

Tamori Chosai carries on the legacy of his brother, the infamous Agasha Tamori who betrayed his family, his clan, and his Empire. Chosai aided in manipulating Tamori, the previous Dark Oracle of Fire, into causing the Dragon-Phoenix war during the Four Winds era. When Tamori was killed by the combined efforts of leaders in both clans, the mantle fell to Chosai, who accepted it only to end the endless pain of immolation that his dying brother had cursed him with. Isawa Nakamuro immediately used the power of the Dark Covenant of Fire to force Chosai to flee Rokugan, never to return.

Chosai now dwells deep in the mountains north of Rokugan, his mind broken by the fury that burns within it. He has attracted a few small bands of Yobanjin who revere him as a fire god; they are his eyes and hands in Rokugan. The Dragon have created a defensive series of towers along the Empire's northern edge to keep a constant vigil for Chosai and his minions, impeding the Dark Oracle's agenda. Daigotsu has offered what aid he can Chosai, earning the Oracle's loyalty, or as much loyalty as he can offer from beyond Rokugan's borders.

THE DARK BLESSING OF FIRE

Chosai grants his blessing rather freely, for it is only through his mortal agents that he may seek revenge against his former clan, the Dragon. While he may choose only one to bear his blessing at a time, he can use his magic to augment many agents to use against the Dragon. The fact that the mystical energy he wields consumes his mortal agents does not concern Chosai at all.

MATSU TURI, DARK ORACLE OF WATER

The fallen Lion Matsu Turi is an abomination of everything his former clan holds dear. Of all the Dark Oracles, Turi is the greatest contradiction. He hates the Lion with an unmatched passion, yet will not allow others to speak ill of them. Turi clearly considers slander against the Lion to be a personal attack, and he demonstrates it by unleashing his full power.

Turi has forged a strange alliance of convenience with the Tsuno, the corrupted spirit beings created from the original Kitsu race. The Tsuno despise Turi, but fear and respect his

power. Turi considers the Tsuno crude beasts, but finds them of enormous value in his war against their mutual foes, the Lion. Together, they discovered the remains of Akodo One-Eye, which Turi used to force his clan to grant him an apprentice while the Tsuno retained Akodo's no-dachi. Matsu Domotai thwarted Turi's efforts by committing seppuku after swearing his loyalty, an act that gave the Dark Oracle reason to reflect on the true meaning of honor.

Daigotsu has earned Turi's respect and loyalty through his ruthless leadership and promotion of wisdom as well as power among the Shadowlands hierarchy. More so than any other Dark Oracle, Turi has tremendous respect for Rokugan's social order, even if he loathes the Empire that spawned it.

THE DARK BLESSING OF WATER

Matsu Turi has been actively seeking a mortal agent he considers worthy of bearing his blessing. Turi retains enough of his humanity to be frustrated by the restraints that govern his actions, and wishes to take a more active role in the political and strategic activities in the Shadowlands. Years ago, he sought to extort a willing apprentice from the Lion by ransoming the remains of Akodo One-Eye, but was thwarted by Domotai's seppuku. Since that time, he has yet to find a worthy pupil, although he has not stopped searching.

TONBO TORYU, DARK ORACLE OF VOID

Tonbo Toryu is the most tragic Oracle, Light or Dark. He was once elevated to the position of Oracle of Thunder, Tengoku's champion of mortal heroes and the Thunder Dragon's avatar in Ningen-do. When Isawa Kaede, wife of Emperor Toturi and Oracle of Void, took the throne following her husband's death, she created an elemental imbalance that had to be corrected. The Oracles were never meant to take a direct role in the affairs of mortals, and by doing so Kaede created a need to balance the equation. Toryu accepted the burden and became the Dark Oracle of Void, leaving the position as Oracle of Thunder vacant. Toryu struggles to maintain his honor and purity despite the unbelievable power and Taint that courses through his system.

Toryu makes his home in the ruins of Volturnum, site of one of history's greatest battles, the Battle at Oblivion's Gate. The gate, now destroyed, can still yield great power to those who know its secrets. Toryu once guarded the gate as the Oracle of Thunder, but now merely observes as a Dark Oracle, unconcerned over who comes and goes through his domain so long as his privacy remains relatively uninterrupted.

THE DARK BLESSING OF VOID

As yet, Toryu resists the siren call of corruption. Tainted he may be, but his soul remains pure. He has once been sought out and asked the question to which every mortal is entitled, but thus far none has sought his blessing, and none has been granted that power. What evil could come from the Dark Blessing of Void, few dare conjecture.

DARK BLESSING OF THE ELEMENTS

NEW FEAT

You have received the blessing of a Dark Oracle, and all the power that entails.

Prerequisite: To receive the blessing of a particular element, you must have been subjected to a spell of that element cast by the Dark Oracle of that element and successfully saved against its effects. The DC of this save must be at least 35 to qualify as a prerequisite for the Dark Blessing of the Elements feat.

Benefit: You may cast spells of this element as if you were a shugenja of level equal to your character level and who possessed the Elemental Focus ability for the given element. You gain SR 20 versus all spells of this element and SR 10 against all other elemental spells. You are a viable target for any spell that specifically targets Tainted or corrupted targets, even if you do not possess the Taint.

Special: Only one being may possess the blessing of a particular element at any given time. For instance, one person may possess the Dark Blessing of Earth and another the Dark Blessing of Water concurrently, but they may not both possess the Dark Blessing of Earth at the same time. No one may have more than one Dark Blessing feat.

DARK BLESSING OF THE ELEMENTS

(NEW ADVANTAGE: 20XP)

You have gained the blessing of a Dark Oracle and gained a measure of that Oracle's power. In order to take this Advantage, you must have met with and gained the favor of a Dark Oracle. Having done so, you may choose to take the Dark Blessing of that Oracle's element. Only one being possesses the blessing of each element at a time. You gain the ability to cast spells of one element as if you were a shugenja of rank equal to your total Insight Rank. You are completely immune to spells of this element, and gain Magic Resistance at the maximum level versus spells of all other elements.

RAISES AND DUELING FOR SHADOWLANDS CREATURES

LSR RPG 2E:

For human characters, Void reflects how well the character can use all the elements in harmony. As a result, it is used as a mechanic for dueling and Raises. Unfortunately, many creatures native to the Shadowlands do not have a Void Ring. How do they deal with these situations?

In most cases, a Shadowlands creature doesn't need to duel. However, if such a situation does come up, these creatures use an average of all their Traits (round down) to determine the number of times that they may focus. Raises are likely to be far more important. Use an average of all the creature's Traits (round down) to determine the maximum number of Raises it may make.

For a simpler result, the GM could rule that all Shadowlands creatures may have an effective Void of 2 for the purposes of Raising and focusing only, 3 if they are within the Shadowlands or another Tainted area.

THE SHADOWLANDS TAINT

Perhaps no force in Rokugan is more feared and mysterious than the Shadowlands Taint. The pervasive, seductive essence of Jigoku wells forth from the Festering Pit and covers the southwestern section of Rokugan. No mortal can long withstand the presence of the Taint.

The following section compiles rules for dealing with the Taint, some drawn from other volumes, others presented here for the first time. All have been clarified and updated.

CORRUPTED ENVIRONMENTS

A character risks becoming Tainted anywhere that the power of corruption is strong in the environment. Generally this applies anywhere in the Shadowlands, and in a few other places throughout Rokugan. The Shadowlands Marshes of the Shinomen, the Seas of Shadow, and the homes of the Dark Oracles radiate corruption in the same way as the Shadowlands, and other areas where dark magic is strong may carry a similar corruption at the GM's discretion.

MECHANICS

For every day spent in a corrupted environment, the character must make a Fortitude save. This save begins at DC 10, but increases by 5 per each additional day. This DC decreases by 5 for each full day spent outside the corrupted environment, to a minimum of 10. (Remaining in the corrupted environment with the protection of jade negates the need for saves and prevents the DC from increasing, but does not decrease it.) Characters failing this save gain 1d4 points of Shadowlands Taint.

INJURY IN CORRUPTED ENVIRONMENTS

Any time a person is injured in a corrupted environment, there is a chance that the wound will become infected with Taint. If a character's wounds are bound (Heal check vs. DC 15) then there is no danger of corruption. Characters with untreated wounds must make an Fortitude save vs. DC 20 or accumulate 1–5 points of Shadowlands Taint. Once a character has an infected wound, he continues to accumulate Taint as if he were in a corrupted environment, regardless of any jade he carries, until his wounds are successfully treated. Only one attempt to treat an infected wound may be made per day, at DC 15 plus 5 for every day it has gone untreated.

MAGIC IN CORRUPTED ENVIRONMENTS

A shugenja who attempts to cast a spell in a corrupted environment has a chance of attracting a kansen rather than a kami, thereby corrupting himself. The first time a shugenja casts a spell in a corrupted environment he must make a Fortitude save (DC 5). If this save fails, the spell either fails or has some random effect. The character also gains 1d4 points of Shadowlands Taint. At the GM's discretion, this random effect may be beneficial if the character agrees to accrue 3d4 points of Taint instead. For additional spells cast in the corrupted environment, the DC of this save increases by 1 each

time the character makes a successful save, and by 5 each time he fails a save. The character can reduce this DC back to 5 by meditating for eight hours and making a Concentration check (DC 20) or by remaining out of the Shadowlands for one day for every point of DC above 5. Returning to the Shadowlands for even one day during this period restores the DC to its highest level, as the kansen tend to linger and wait for shugenja to return.

DETECTING CORRUPTED ENVIRONMENTS

Shugenja or those with experience in dealing with the Shadowlands can often sense when they have entered a corrupted environment. A shugenja who attempts to cast any spell or draw upon any magic in a corrupted area is entitled to a Wisdom check (DC 15). If this is successful, he immediately realizes the area is corrupted and can cease spellcasting before he risks corruption. Any character with Knowledge (Shadowlands) can spend ten minutes studying the area and make a skill check (DC 15). If this is successful, the character immediately realizes that the area is corrupted.

SHADOWLANDS ANCESTORS (YOKAI)

020 SYSTEM:

The yokai described in this book are effectively Shadowlands ancestors. Ancestor feats can typically only be taken at first level, meaning that these feats are generally exclusive to NPCs. However, at the GM's discretion, a player character who later becomes Tainted may be allowed to exchange the ancestor feat he acquired at first level for a yokai.

LSR RPG 2E:

The yokai described in this book are effectively Shadowlands Ancestors. Any Tainted character may purchase them as ancestors are normally purchased. At the GM's discretion, a Tainted character may exchange any ancestor for a yokai with equal or lesser character point cost.

MECHANICS

For every day spent in a corrupted environment, the character must make a simple Earth roll. This roll begins at TN 5, and increases by 5 for each additional day. This TN decreases by 5 for each full day spent outside the corrupted environment, to a minimum of 5. (Remaining in the corrupted environment with the protection of jade negates the need for saves and prevents the TN from increasing, but does not decrease it.) Failing this roll means that the character gains 1–5 points of Shadowlands Taint (roll one die and divide by two, rounding up).

INJURY IN CORRUPTED ENVIRONMENTS

Any time a person is injured in a corrupted environment, there is a chance that the wound will become infected and cause Taint. If a character's wounds are bound (Medicine/ Intelligence roll vs. TN 15) then there is no danger of corruption. Characters with untreated wounds must make an Earth roll vs. TN 15 or accumulate 1–5 points of Shadowlands Taint. Once a character has an infected wound, he continues to accumulate Taint as if he were in

a corrupted environment, regardless of any jade he carries, until his wounds are successfully treated. Only one attempt to treat an infected wound may be made per day, at TN 15 plus 5 for every day it has gone untreated.

MAGIC IN CORRUPTED ENVIRONMENTS

A shugenja who attempts to cast a spell in a corrupted environment has a chance of attracting a kansen rather than a kami, thereby corrupting himself. The first time a shugenja casts a spell in a corrupted environment, the DC of the spell is increased by 5. If this increase causes the spell to fail, the spell either does nothing or has some random effect. The character also gains 1–5 points of Shadowlands Taint (he does not gain the Taint if he would have failed regardless of the TN increase). At the GM's discretion this random effect may be beneficial if the character agrees to accrue 3–15 points of Taint instead. For additional spells cast in the corrupted environment, the TN of this save increases by 2 each time the character casts a spell successfully, and by 10 each time he fails (even if he did not fail due to the TN increase). The character can reduce this TN back to 5 by meditating for eight hours and making a Meditation/Void roll vs. TN 20 or by remaining out of the Shadowlands for one day for every point of TN above 5. Returning to the Shadowlands for even one day during this period restores the TN to its highest level, as the kansen tend to linger and wait for shugenja to return.

DETECTING CORRUPTED ENVIRONMENTS

Shugenja or those with experience in dealing with the Shadowlands can often sense when they have entered a corrupted environment. A shugenja who attempts to cast any spell or draw upon any magic is entitled to a Perception roll vs. TN 15. If this is successful, he immediately realizes the area is corrupted and can cease spellcasting before he risks corruption. Any character with Lore (Shadowlands) can spend ten minutes studying the area and make a skill roll vs. TN 10. If this is successful, the character immediately realizes that the area is corrupted.

EFFECTS OF THE TAINT

The Taint affects those infected by it both mentally and physically, and rarely affects two individuals in the same manner. The Lost who follow Daigotsu and Iuchiban are corrupted humans who maintain some measure of sanity, and function more or less normally as a group (though their goals are still decidedly sinister). Other corrupted individuals are less fortunate, becoming raving Shadowlands madmen or inhuman monstrosities.

The Taint is measured in ranks, with every ten points of Taint bestowing one rank. In the d20 system this rank is represented by a modifier (7 ranks of Taint is expressed as Taint +7, for example). Each time the character receives three points of Taint, he develops a Minor Symptom. Every time the character receives a new Rank of Taint, he develops a Major Symptom. This rank is referred to as the character's Shadowlands Taint Rank, though it may also be referred to as a Shadowlands Rank or merely a Taint Rank.

These rules for distributing symptoms are merely a guideline. An extremely Tainted character's symptoms tend to pile up. Symptoms should add interesting drawbacks to the campaign, not tedious bookkeeping. Feel free to distribute as many or as few symptoms to Tainted characters as you deem fit.

To determine what sort of symptom is developed, roll one d10 each time a new symptom is acquired.

Roll	Minor Symptoms
1–4	Physical Symptom
5–10	Mental Symptom
Roll	Major Symptoms
1–6	Physical Symptom
7–10	Mental Symptom

These symptoms are left to your discretion, though extensive lists can be found in *Rokugan™* and *Way of the Shadowlands™*.

MECHANICS

A character with any physical symptom may draw upon his Taint to add it as a modifier to any physical skill check (Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution) or melee attack roll. Doing so causes the character to gain an additional point of Taint permanently. A character with physical symptoms also applies his Taint modifier as a penalty on all social skill checks except for Intimidate checks.

A character with any mental symptom may draw upon his Taint to add it as a modifier to any Will save. Doing so causes the character to gain an additional point of Taint permanently. Any individual speaking to a character with a mental symptom may make a Sense Motive check to determine that something is wrong with him, opposed by the Tainted character's Bluff check. The Sense Motive roll gains a +2 bonus for each additional symptom beyond the first.

A character whose Taint Rank is higher than his highest ability score modifier becomes Lost, a corrupted NPC under control of the DM. Lost characters may no longer spend Void, may no longer draw upon their Taint as described above, and no longer accumulate Taint in corrupted environments or by using maho, though they may now gain advanced Shadowlands powers (see *Creatures of Rokugan™*). In addition, the Lost character gains a number of Corruption Points equal to his Taint Rank. These may be spent in the same manner as Void Points are normally spent (assuming the character has the Void Use feat).

MECHANICS

A character with any physical symptom may draw upon his Taint to roll and drop extra dice equal to his Taint Rank on any Strength, Agility, Stamina, or Reflexes-related roll. Doing so causes the character to gain an additional point of Taint. A character with physical symptoms also applies his Taint modifier as a penalty on all social skill checks except for Intimidation checks.

A character with any mental symptom may draw upon his Taint to increase the TN of any spell being cast upon him by his Taint Rank. Doing so causes the character to gain an additional point of Taint permanently. Any individual speaking to a character with a mental symptom may make a Perception roll to determine something is wrong with them, opposed by the Tainted character's Awareness roll. The Perception roll gains a Free Raise for each additional symptom beyond the first.

A character whose Taint Rank is higher than his highest Ring becomes Lost, a corrupted NPC under control of the GM. Lost characters may no longer spend Void, may no longer draw upon the above abilities, and no longer accumulate Taint in corrupted environments or by using maho, though they may now gain advanced Shadowlands powers (see *Way of the Shadowlands™*). In addition, the Lost character gains a number of Corruption Points equal to his Taint Rank. These may be spent in the same manner as Void Points are normally spent.

LIVING WITH TAINT

There is no reliable cure for the Shadowlands Taint. Even the Crab have no treatments outside of the seldom-used Purification spell. The best thing a Tainted individual can do is stop drawing upon his Taint and hope that it doesn't get any worse. Even this is not a guarantee that the character will not become corrupted further. Once a person has become Tainted, the infection will slowly worsen until it overwhelms its host.

Tea of Jade Petals will prevent any further corruption if taken daily. There are other methods of curing the Taint permanently, but most are extremely difficult or unknown to the general populace.

The following table indicates the interval at which one's Taint will increase.

TABLE 8-1: TAINT INCREASE CHECK INTERVAL

Constitution	Earth Ring	Check Interval
7 or less	1	14 days/Rank
8-13	2	30 days/Rank
14-16	3	90 days/Rank
17-19	4	180 days/Rank
20-21	5	360 days/Rank
22 or more	6	6 years/Rank

MECHANICS

At the end of this interval, the character must make a Fortitude save (DC 5). If successful, the DC increases by 5 with each additional interval until the roll is failed. The TN is then reset at 5. Each time the roll is failed, the character gains an additional Shadowlands Point. If he possesses any Shadowlands Powers (see *Creatures of Rokugan™*), his corruption grows even more swiftly. Minor Shadowlands Powers bestow one extra point of Taint, each, per interval. Major Shadowlands Powers bestow two extra points of Taint, each, per interval. Greater Shadowlands Powers bestow three extra points of Taint, each, per interval. A regimen of acupuncture, meditation, plenty of sun, and a monastic lifestyle lets the character make another save, and decreases additional Shadowlands Points by one per power. (This assumes the character has not been actively using his Shadowlands Powers. Those Powers which cannot be deactivated do not count against this.)

MECHANICS

At the end of this interval, the character must make an Earth roll vs. TN 5. If successful, the TN increases by 5 with each additional interval until the roll is failed. The TN is then reset at 5. Each time the roll is failed, the character gains an additional Shadowlands Point. If he possesses any Shadowlands Powers (see *Way of the Shadowlands™*), his corruption grows even more swiftly. Minor Shadowlands Powers bestow one extra point of Taint, each, per interval. Major Shadowlands Powers bestow two extra points of Taint, each, per interval. Greater Shadowlands Powers bestow three extra points of Taint, each, per interval. A regimen of acupuncture, meditation, plenty of sun, and a monastic lifestyle will let the character make another Earth roll, and decreases additional Shadowlands Points by one per power. (This assumes the character has not been actively using his Shadowlands Powers. Those Powers which cannot be deactivated do not count against this.)

PREVENTING THE TAINT

The best way to deal with the Taint is not to accumulate it in the first place. The easiest way to do so is through the use of

jade. Carrying jade in a corrupted environment instead transfers all corruption that would have infected the carrier into his jade. This works only for a limited time, as follows (a "piece" of jade is counted as one unit the length and width of a man's finger):

TABLE 8-2: JADE PROTECTION DURATION

Pieces of Jade Carried	Duration of Protection
One	7 days
Two	12 days
Three	16 days
Four	19 days
Five	21 days

These times are approximate, and the GM can always rule that the corruption in an area is more intense than normal, causing the jade to deplete its power more swiftly. Near the Festering Pit, for example, the above volumes of jade would last only one-tenth the normal time, if that long. Jade does not protect against corruption accumulated by injury or use of magic in corrupted environments.

As jade corrupts it slowly becomes soft, greasy, and black, eventually melting away into dark sludge.

THE MAW: FORGOTTEN ONI LORD

Of the oni lords that have been created during Rokugan's existence, only Akuma no Oni can truly be said to have wrought the same destruction as the Maw, and even its claim can be disputed. The Maw led the single most devastating attack on Rokugan since the first War with Fu Leng, although Daigotsu's reign could rival the beast's achievements. It was the Maw's power that crushed the Hiruma lands, Tainted the Kuni provinces, and required the construction of the legendary Carpenter Wall.

Unknown to all save the Maw itself, the creature was summoned into the world by Kuni Osuki, a young shugenja with boundless ambition. The Maw fulfilled its bargain, granting Osuki great power by teaching her the secrets of Jigoku and maho, but then defeated her and stole the power of her soul, becoming an Oni Lord. Somehow Osuki survived, and turned her new knowledge against the Maw by holding its armies at bay with the River of the Cresting Wave.

The Maw was banished to Jigoku following its defeat, and Osuki's death severed its connection to Ningen-do, preventing it from returning. Only when Daigotsu assumed power did the Maw finally return, summoned by the Dark Lord's incredible power. The beast has kept a low profile, biding its time until it can make a second play for power. If the Crab should discover that the Maw has returned, they would spare no effort toward slaying the fell creature.

THE MAW, LOST ONI LORD

Huge Outsider (Evil, Oni, Shadowlands)

Hit Dice: 20d8 + 200 (290 hp)

Initiative: +3 (+1 Dex, -2 size, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 24 (+1 Dex, -2 size, +15 natural)

Attack: 2 claws +31 melee or bite +31 melee

Damage: 1d8+11 claws, 2d6+11 bite
Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft./15 ft.
Special Attacks: Improved Grab, Swallow Whole
Special Qualities: Oni qualities, consumption, regeneration 10, spell-like abilities, DR 18, SR 25
Saves: Fort +22, Ref +13, Will +14
Abilities: Str 33, Dex 12, Con 30, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 11
Skills: Battle +25, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (Crab Clan) +27, Knowledge (Maho) +27, Knowledge (Shadowlands) -27
Feats: Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (unarmed), Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (unarmed)

Climate/Terrain: Shadowlands, any land and underground
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 25
Treasure: None
Honor: Always 0 Honor
Alignment: Chaotic evil
Advancement: 21-45 HD (Huge)

The Maw is a gigantic beast, towering above even the largest ogres and oni that normally populate the Shadowlands. Its reptilian, strangely human features are dominated by its truly massive mouth, which expands out of all proportion to the remainder of its form. Its rows upon rows of teeth are visible from any angle.

COMBAT

The Maw is perhaps the deadliest killing machine that Ningen-do has ever seen, capable of slaughtering entire legions of samurai in seconds. It wades into nearly any combat without hesitation, eager to spill blood and rend flesh. Its only hesitation comes when he suspects something unusual is amiss, a mild paranoia it developed while spending centuries in Jigoku awaiting a chance for revenge.

Consumption (Su): Much like the Onisu Hakai, the Maw gains power from the souls of those it kills. The Maw gains 1d8 temporary hit points for each opponent it consumes through use of the Swallow Whole ability described below. All other benefits of advancement (such as higher saves, base attack, and caster level for spells and spell-like abilities) are also gained. This benefit lasts for one week, after which time the Maw loses one bonus hit die per week until it returns to the above statistics.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the Maw must hit a Large or smaller opponent with a successful bite attack. It may then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If the Maw is successful with its grapple check, it may attempt to swallow the foe whole the next round.

Oni Qualities (Su): All oni have certain qualities, described on page 5 of *Creatures of Rokugan*.

Regeneration (Ex): Holy and honorable weapons do normal damage to the Maw.

Spell-like Abilities: The Maw may cast spells as a sorcerer of 18th level. All spells classified as necromancy or maho spells are considered to have gained the benefits of the Empower Spell feat.

Swallow Whole (Ex): The Maw can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of Large or smaller size by making a successful grapple check. One inside, the opponent takes 2d10+5 points of crushing damage and 3d10+10 points of acid damage each round. It is possible for a swallowed opponent to cut his

way out by inflicting 100 points of damage to the digestive tract (AC 30). Any holes caused by such an escape heal the following round.

THE MAW, LOST ONI LORD

Earth: 10
Stamina: 12
Fire: 6
Water: 10
Strength: 12
Air: 5
Rolls when Attacking: 10k8
Rolls for Damage: 9k9
TN to be Hit: 30
Carapace: 20
Wounds: 100: +5; 250: +10; 375: +15; 500: +25; 750: Dead

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Oni Lord Qualities: The Maw possesses the same incredible abilities common to all Oni Lords, although it generally prefers to use its physical might as its primary weapon. The Maw may create smaller, weaker versions of itself to use as its minions. The power of these creations is dependent upon the number that the Maw calls into being at one time. The Maw may instantly summon forth up to thirty smaller versions of itself, each roughly equivalent to a zombie. If only twenty are summoned, they are mechanically equivalent to ogres, and if only ten are summoned, they are equal to Ugulu no Oni.

Maho: The Maw may use any maho spell as if it were a maho-tsukai of Insight Rank 8.

Multiple Attacks: The Maw can attack three times per round, typically two claw and one bite attack per round.

UNDEAD AND THE LOST

Many Lost have symptoms that cause them to appear as undead — fleshless bodies, carrion stench, or the ability to command other undead. Likewise, some undead seem to retain a shred of their former humanity and behave much as they did in life.

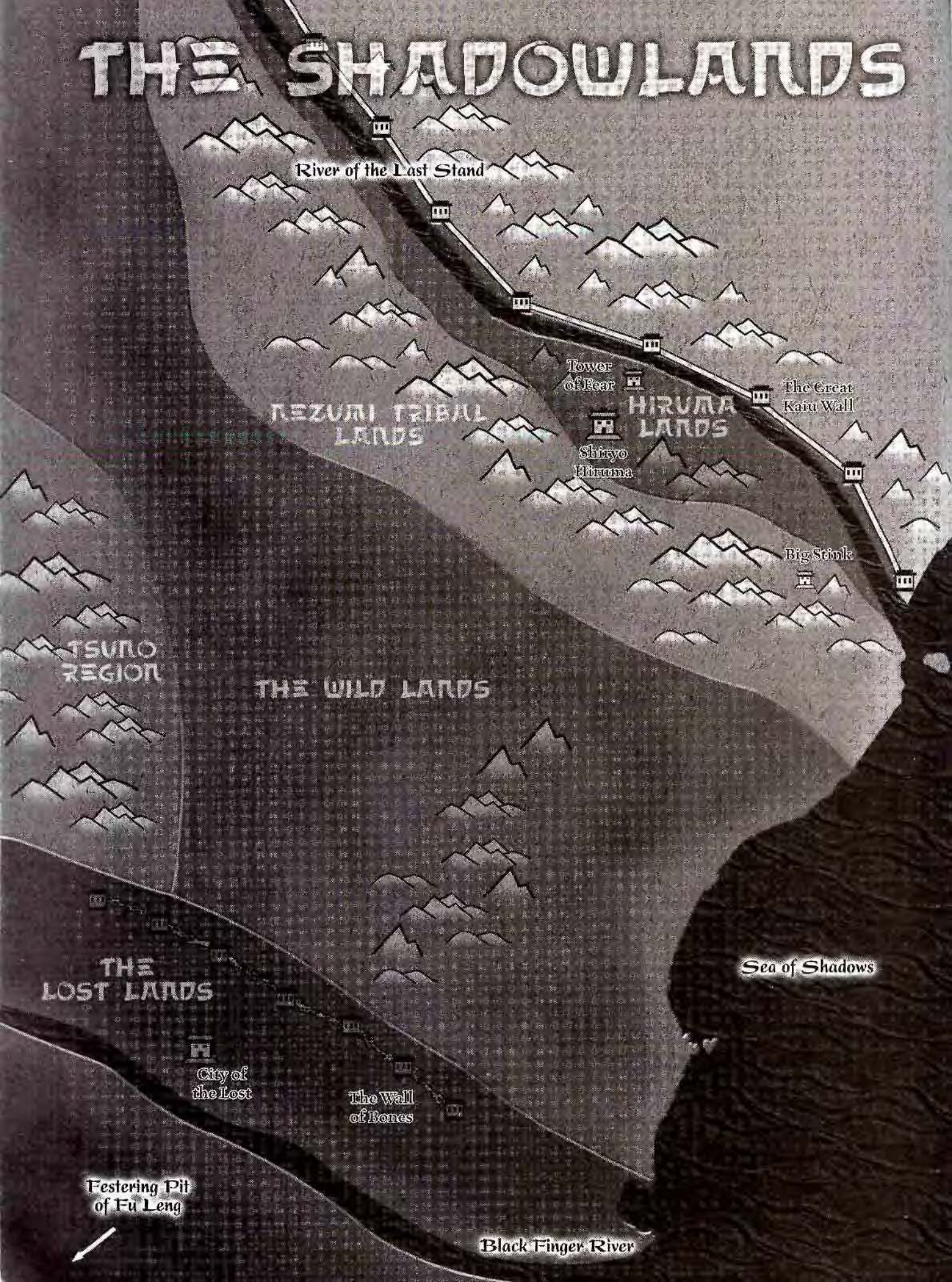
Among Iuchiban's followers, intelligent undead are disdained. Undead are seen as tools, and intelligent undead are merely zombies with delusions of grandeur. Iuchiban would add that these pathetic wretches have already proven themselves unworthy by failing to remain alive.

Daigotsu's followers disagree with this sentiment. If an intelligent undead is powerful and capable, Daigotsu has a place for that individual among his armies. Tsukuro and Kyofu, in fact, are among his most trusted and powerful agents. Daigotsu's followers believe that intelligent undead must be blessed by Fu Leng, for why else would he choose to return them to life?

Of course, this argument just causes Iuchiban to despise undead all the more. A wretch who must rely upon a god's aid to cheat death is beneath contempt.

To the rest of the Empire, most of this is mere semantics. A Crab samurai generally cares little whether the shambling abomination before him is an intelligent undead, a Lost samurai, or an oni in human form so long as he can determine a way to swiftly destroy it.

THE SHADOWLANDS



River of the Last Stand

REZUMI TRIBAL LANDS

Tower of Fear

HIRUMA LANDS

The Great Kaiu Wall

Shiryo Hiruma

Big Stink

TSURO REGION

THE WILD LANDS

Sea of Shadows

THE LOST LANDS

City of the Lost

The Wall of Bones

Festering Pit of Fu Leng

Black Finger River

**“Turn away, foolish samurai, lest you find what you see in the shadows to your liking.”
— Daigotsu, Dark Lord of the Shadowlands**

Secrets of the Shadowlands explores the eternal enemy of the Empire, the Shadowlands. Shrouded and mysterious, the only thing known for certain to lie beyond the Great Wall is inevitable corruption. But what happens after a samurai's soul is taken by darkness? That is only the first step on a longer journey.

Within, you will find:

- The history, traditions, and territory of the Shadowlands Horde, including such groups as the Daigotsu, Chuda, Tsuno Bloodspeakers, and assorted beasts.
- New mechanics for Tainted characters, including Bloodspeaker magic and Shadowlands ancestors.
- A view of the Empire through the eyes of its most hated foes.
- A description and walkthrough of the Wall of Bones, the Dark Lord's response to samurai who venture too far in his lands.
- The darkest secrets of the Shadowlands revealed.

This book is a dual-system supplement for the Legend of the Five Rings Role-Playing Game, Second Edition,[™] and Rokugan,[™] the d20 Companion for Legend of the Five Rings. Players and DMs may also find it useful as a source of interesting new feats and abilities for any d20 System[™] campaign.

Game Masters running the Second Edition L5R RPG will need a copy of the Legend of the Five Rings Game Master's Guide[™] and the Player's Guide[™]. Players need only the Player's Guide.

Dungeon Masters running d20 System[™] games will need a copy of the Player's Handbook[™], the Dungeon Master's Guide[™], Oriental Adventures[™], and Rokugan[™]. Players will need only a Player's Handbook[™].

