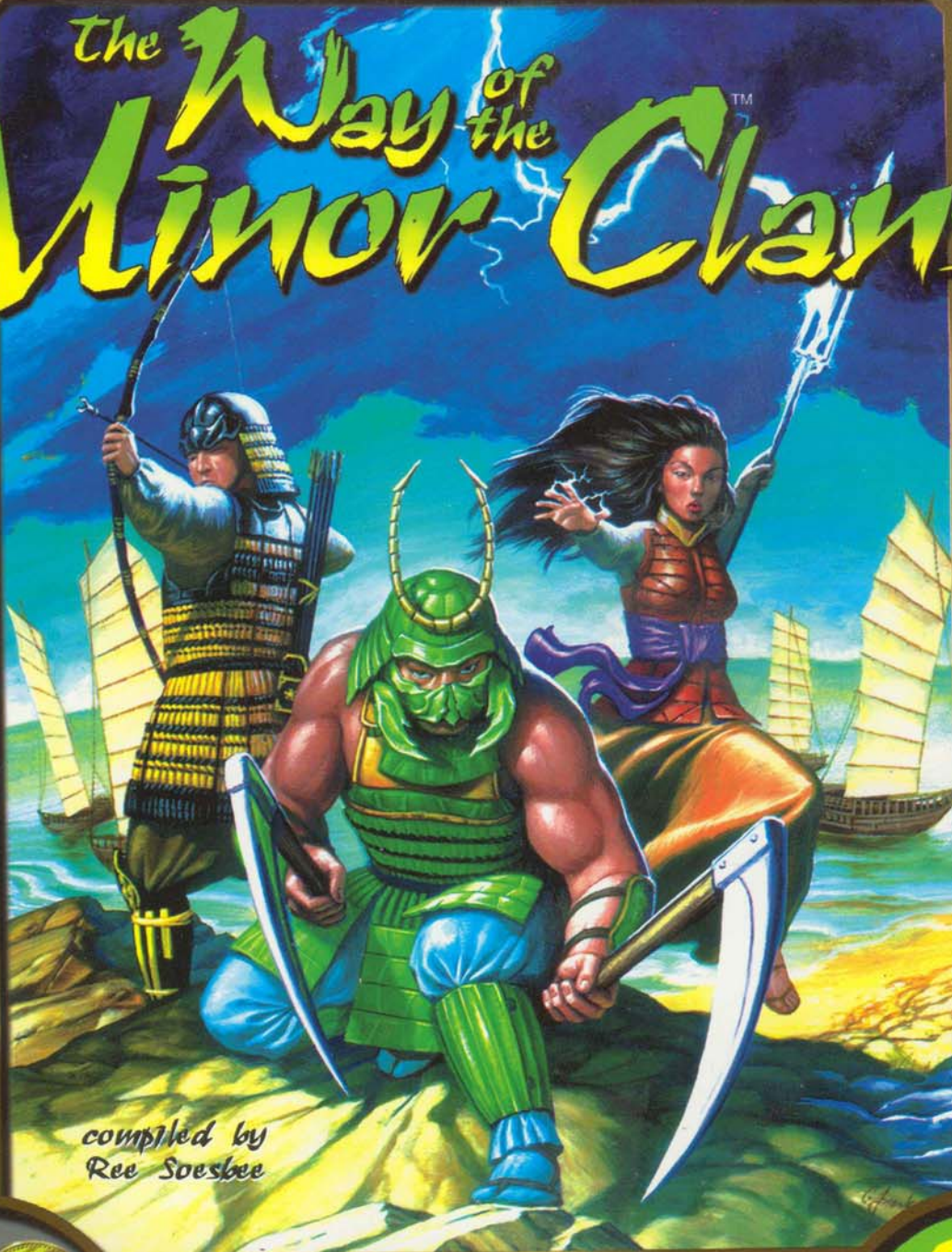




The Way of the Clans: Book Nine

The Way of the Minor Clans™



*compiled by
Ree Soesbee*



Legend of the Five Rings™





Legend of the Five Rings

The Way of the Minor Clans



"We must strike out and take what destiny will not give us. Fate has no place for humble men."

– Masasue, Mantis



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D.J. Trindle, for not minding when his favorite Minor Clan became the longest-running joke in the office. He is Suzume Mukashino, but we don't let him know it.

The unidentified Mantis player (hereafter to be known as 'Yoritomo Furikae' for the CCG card in his honor), who injured himself between matches during the Attack on Morikage Castle. He received stitches in his head, and came back for another round, just to represent the Mantis in a tournament filled with the samurai of the Greater Clans. Your courage honors us all.

Finally, this book is truly dedicated to all those who root for the underdog, and who will not allow doubt, indecision, or the scorn of others to sway them from their destiny. You are all Sons and Daughters of the Storm.

- RS

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MINOR CLAN COLORS

Mantis: Teal-green and gold

Fox: Red-brown and silver

Dragonfly: Jewel tones, in a rainbow of color

Sparrow: Dun brown and black

Badger: Pale gray with stripes of white and black

Centipede: Orange, black, and brown

Falcon: Dark gray and forest green

Tortoise: Blue-black and gold

Wasp: Black and gold

The Lost Three

Boar: Dark blue and green

Hare: Red and white

Snake: Silver, black, and grey-purple



Ten months after the Fall of the Scorpion...

Around her, the forest crackled and twisted, turning every step into a shout. Even the greatest hunters cannot be silent in Kitsune Mori – unless they are one of the spirits who live there. Branches creaked overhead, but their noise was no more than a greeting to the young samurai-ko that moved beneath them. Her footfalls caressed the dry branches, the crackling leaves, and yet the only sound that escaped was the soft sigh of the wind.

Kitsune Mori was her home.



"Follow your own path," Shinsei taught, "or you will fall into the pitfalls left behind by others."

The forest sounds grew thicker, heavier in the dusky twilight. There was not much time now, and soon the night would cover all paths and blur all ways. The forest would sleep – but the spirits of the *kitsune* who lived there would awaken. The sword hung at her side, slung across her back by a thin cord of her own hair.

It, too was sleeping.

Her dark hair hung thickly about her face, pulled lightly back with a forgotten piece of twine. Green-brown eyes, their color reflecting

her heritage, shone under the knitted brows. Her fingers were slender, but callused from use of the *nagamaki* she carried, and her sleeve bore the *mon* of the Fox.

"Ryosei," the wind whispered, and the vines beneath her feet shivered. She took another step toward the ancient grove, and the trees shook again. "Ryosei..."

This time, the voice was audible. The samurai-ko stopped, peering through the brush to her left, and saw a white flash.

With a faint smile, the daughter of Kitsune Gohei, daimyo of the Fox, went to one knee in the forests of Kitsune Mori and awaited the spirit's message.

It was small, as spirits go, darting from bush to bush in a near-frantic attempt to stay hidden and yet carry its message to her. "Stop, Ryosei," it snarled softly. Red ears pricked behind a thornbush, and the flash of a white-furred breast shone through the vines beneath an ancient oak. "Stop." The kitsune spirit shivered in the shadow of a pine tree, leaping across a fallen branch in its excitement. Twilight deepened.

"Greetings, honorable one." Ryosei nodded politely. "I salute you with blessings." She reached into a small bag tied at her waist in order to pull out one of the sweetened candies there. "Take this, and let your daughter pass."

But the kitsune ignored her, staring to the west apprehensively. Its foxlike nose quivered once, then the too-bright green eyes of the spirit turned again to her. "Please... stop."

A howl pierced the night, keen and clear, and the little kitsune leapt away, twisting its body in midair as if caught by a snare. Ryosei stared after it as another howl rang out, then a third. A fourth. The small one barked sharply, stared longingly at Ryosei as if to speak more, and then, as a fifth howl rang out only a few steps away, it fled into the forest with a broken sob. Fox feet scrambled at branches and leaves until the spirit vanished into the underbrush, lost to the forest and to its pursuers.

Ryosei stared in shock as the forest moved around her. For an instant, she was frozen, and then her *nagamaki* was in her hand.

Four more kitsune stepped from the brushes, one lifting its head in a long howl of remorse and woe. The eldest one, the largest, had patches of silver behind his graying ears, and one green eye was dulled with age. Seeing her, the others

paused in their chase and the hair on their hackles raised in tension. Ryosei slowly lowered her weapon – these were spirits, after all – and carefully bowed to the kitsune.

The spirits nodded, and the three younger foxes looked at each other with narrowed green eyes. “You are Ryosei-chan?” the elder barked gently, though he knew the answer.

“Hai, Genkuro-sama. On a mission for my father... to complete my *gempukku*.” Though she looked younger, Ryosei had seen sixteen winters, and the spirits of the forest had run with her from the day she was born. The old kitsune nodded.

“Do not let us disturb you, child,” he sniffed. “We hunt a traitor.”

“Traitor...?”

“*Iye*.” The old fox refused her question. “This is not the business of mortals.” The other kitsune began to sniff the air, catching scents as they passed in the wind. “She will not be allowed to interfere... indeed, we ourselves are forbidden, even now, to interfere.” With that, one of the kitsune howled, catching the scent, and the pack moved.

Genkuro, the aged, gray kitsune spirit, paused. “Mark this day well, childling,” he whispered before fading into the trees. “And remember... dreams are truths.”

With that, the path was silent again, and Ryosei knelt alone in the brush of a chilly evening, more aware than ever of the lack of sun through the trees. Shaking her head slightly at the strangeness of the evening and the enigmatic words of the ancient kitsune, Ryosei stood and placed her *nagamaki* back in its carrying sheath. Then, with a sigh, she leapt into a jog down the twisting forest path. Her father was waiting, and she must not be late.



The grove of Inari – one of the most sacred places in Fox land, where the ancient kitsune spirits first approached her ancestors, bringing words of peace and gratitude. The branches of the grove spread open before her as Ryosei stepped into the clearing, and the bitter smell of lantern-oil tinged the forest air.

“Father?” she murmured, moving forward again.

“Here, daughter.” Gohei’s voice was as brittle as pine, and his age covered his face with deep wrinkles and liver stains. He nodded his head politely as Ryosei knelt and formally bowed, and his dark eyes shone with anticipation. Two foxes turned toward her, startled, and fled through the trees. As she murmured words of respect, Ryosei caught a glimpse of their eyes. Brown. These were simple forest-beasts, nothing more. Not that she should have expected the spirits to be here – the kitsune had never been close to her father, for reasons Ryosei did not understand.

“I have completed my task, father,” she said proudly, as she had the night before in the audience hall of the Fox Clan. “I bring you the sword of our ancestors, so long lost beneath the mountains of Otosan Uchi, hidden in deep caverns and behind guarded paths.” And, as he had asked, she had come tonight to present the weapon to him privately, a task set from father to daughter to honor the blood between them. Ryosei withdrew the weapon from its *saya*, laying it upon the ground in homage to the ancestors of the Fox.


As she did, the wind began to whisper, and the trees shook with sudden fear.

“Lost...” Kitsune Gohei murmured, kneeling to accept the blade. “For nine hundred years, hidden. Since the time of the First War against the Dark One, the ancestral blade of the Fox has remained hidden from the light. Taken by the Emperor, the Shining Prince, son of the first Hantei, to honor our path as Shinjo’s children, it was reforged at the hands of Togashi Nyoko, and its hilt is bound with silk woven from the Kami’s own hair. Lost to us for nine hundred years.” His hands shook as he ran his palms over the smooth black cords that wound around the hilt of the katana like a web of darkness.

“Stolen by the Scorpion.” Ryosei completed the tale bitterly.

“They needed it!” Gohei stood, carrying the blade as if it were a treasure greater than life. “And now, in this time of darkness, they need it even more.” Ryosei looked up at her father with a question clearly written on her fine features, but he paid no attention. With a gentle hand, he placed the sword atop the carved white fox statue of Inari that served as a low ritual table for the grove.





"The hilt, wound with the hair of a true Kami... where better, to hide their secrets?" Gohei's hands unwound the silk reverently, pausing as his old hands shook with the failing disease of an ancient man. "Where else...to protect their lies?"

From her stance at the edge of the grove, Ryosei saw the silk fall away from the sword's hilt in soft patches, rotted with age but still gleaming and fine. Beneath the silk, the soft, carved wooden frame of the *tsuka* began to show, and beneath that...The wind tugged at her clothing, and the earth's deep fastness shivered faintly beneath her feet.



Ryosei squinted in surprise.

Beneath the wooden *tsuka* that made up the katana's hilt, a scrap of black paper had been wedged. As Gohei began to slide the *tsuka* free, Ryosei could see the metal tang of the sword's blade, wrapped within a scroll of strange black paper. Paper made out of a sheet so thick it could have been taken from a man's own skin...

"Father..." Ryosei said, standing as the wind began to whip the trees and tear at the earth beneath her. "Father, what are you doing?"

"Immortality, child," he laughed, holding aloft the scroll. "You have brought me immortality... and I am seizing it!" His howling cries echoed through the grove, and the ancient katana fell to the ground, its blade's sheen darkened by dirt... and by Gohei's own blood.

"I call to you, Yogo Junzo... bearer of the Scorpion's honor... betrayer of the light... I call to you, Fu Leng... Ancient father..." he chanted, and Ryosei's screams were battered by a bloody wind.

"Father, no!" she screamed, reaching for her *nagamaki* and staggering as the earth beneath Kitsune Mori shook the forest with a pounding blow. "You cannot do this!" The ground steadied, then bucked again, and her weapon flew to the ground as she fell.

"And with your blood, daughter." The creature who had been her father turned toward her, but his brown eyes had become cavernous, hidden like cysts in a face of ruined tissue and swollen

muscle. "I dedicate this sacrifice to the Dark Lord!" The sword of the Fox, a steel tooth with no hilt, shone in one hand as the scroll began to unroll upon the broken back of the white fox table. "Fu Leng. Make me your walking horror, to rule the night at your command. Give me immortality!" The last word was a high-pitched scream, swallowed by the night and the roar of wind.

As the Fox Clan sword raised above her, the earth shuddered and rolled. Trapped on the lip of a tremendous chasm, Ryosei could not move, could not roll, could not escape the downward plunge of the blade. She saw her father's maggot-infested hand shake once more, and then he screamed again. This was not a scream of triumph, but of rage. He turned, grasping at his neck, and Ryosei saw the reason her life had been saved.

A small kitsune with a gleaming white breast hung by its teeth from the side of Kitsune Gohei's throat. Blood poured from the wound, and a savage blow of lightning reflected in the green eyes of the spirit creature.

"Run..." Ryosei heard the young fox yelp as her father's sword tore into its side and threw the kitsune to the ground. "Run!"

Another lurch of the earth threw Ryosei to her knees on the far side of a rapidly widening cleft. Her father screamed in outrage, lifting the sword again, and again, stabbing into the heart of the kitsune at his feet.

Knowing she could not win the battle, the daughter of Kitsune Gohei fled into the woods, reaching for the ancient oaks to give her shelter from the blood and the storm.



Morning parted the clouds, and a ray of light spilled onto Ryosei's face as she sat up suddenly from her sleeping futon. The palace of the Kitsune seemed strangely quiet after the night's festivities, and Ryosei remembered the gay laughter of her *gempukku* ceremony. Images flashed through her mind... kneeling before the court, seeing her father's proud congratulations. Could it have been a dream? Her muscles began to relax in relief, as

she turned to look at the ornate sword stand on the low table.

It was empty.

Beneath it, in a small and bloody pile, lay the skinned pelt of a white-breasted fox.

"*Dreams are truths.*" The ancient kitsune's voice rang in her head. "*And we are forbidden to interfere.*"

Ryosei knelt before the bloody pelt on the floor with reverence, bowing her head to the kitsune's courage. "I know that you cannot interfere in my destiny without penalty, my kitsune brothers," Ryosei swore, "But I can seize the future... and change it to my own."

"One day, I will find you, father... I swear that I will."



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Welcome to the ninth book in our Way of the Clans series, *The Way of the Minor Clans*. Unlike the other books in this series, the Way of the Minor Clans book does not depict a single clan or group within the structure of Rokugan, but rather describes a group of smaller clans that serve the Empire in their own ways. You hold in your hands the backgrounds, descriptions and the pride of nine full clans. Though their numbers are small and their voices may seem faint after the thunder of the Seven Houses of Rokugan, you will find them as brave and noble as any samurai of the Greater Clans. Perhaps, in some ways, more so.

It is from these lesser clans that some of the greatest tales of bravery and courage come. When a samurai has nothing to lose, he has everything to gain.

It is important to note that Minor Clans such as these do not simply 'appear'. Instead, they are created by the Emperor, formed of bands of ronin or from lesser houses of the Seven Great Clans. When a group has earned the right to Minor Clan status, they are formally given a katana from the Emperor – a weapon which will become the symbol of their house for the rest of the clan's existence. If the Minor Clan is ever disgraced and

has their Clan status revoked, their clan weapon is broken by the Emperor's hand.

It is exceptionally difficult to become a minor clan, and most bands who attain that status have years of history, performing dramatic deeds for the Emperor or a major lord, using exceptional courage and prowess, or completing some impossible task.

Not all Minor Clans have family names. Over half of the Minor Clans have no 'first' or house name. House names are given separately, also by the Emperor's command, and only on rare occasions – only seven family names are recorded to have been given to Minor Clans in the history of the Empire.

Each chapter of this text has been dedicated to a single Minor Clan, detailing their history and their personal school – be it the study of weaponry or of spellcraft. The chapters are ordered not only according to level of prominence, but according to the timeline of each Minor Clan's inception. The only exception to this is the Mantis, who still argue with the Fox Clan as to which of them is indeed, the oldest of the Minor Clans in the Empire. Both were 'founded' within years of each other, and the records of that time are sparse and often contradictory.

The final chapter of this book describes the Three Lost Clans: Boar, Hare and Snake, each destroyed by some great cataclysm in the Empire. They are included as much for completeness as for your Gamemaster to draw from them for historical NPCs, or modern-day adventures. While we don't recommend that PC characters come from these three clans, your Gamemaster ultimately has the final decision.

We've also deliberately stayed away from any family tree or bloodline connections to the Greater Clans – the Minor Clans are important because of who they *are*, not who they descended from. Call a Mantis the 'son of Hida' and you'll have one heck of a fight on your hands.

For a thousand years, the Great Clans have trumpeted their superiority through the Hantei Emperor's court and on the battlefields of Rokugan. It is time for the samurai of the Minor Clans to rise up and seize their place in the Empire.

It is time for the children of Man to stand beside the descendants of the Kami, and make our voices heard. Do you have the courage to raise your sword with the rest?

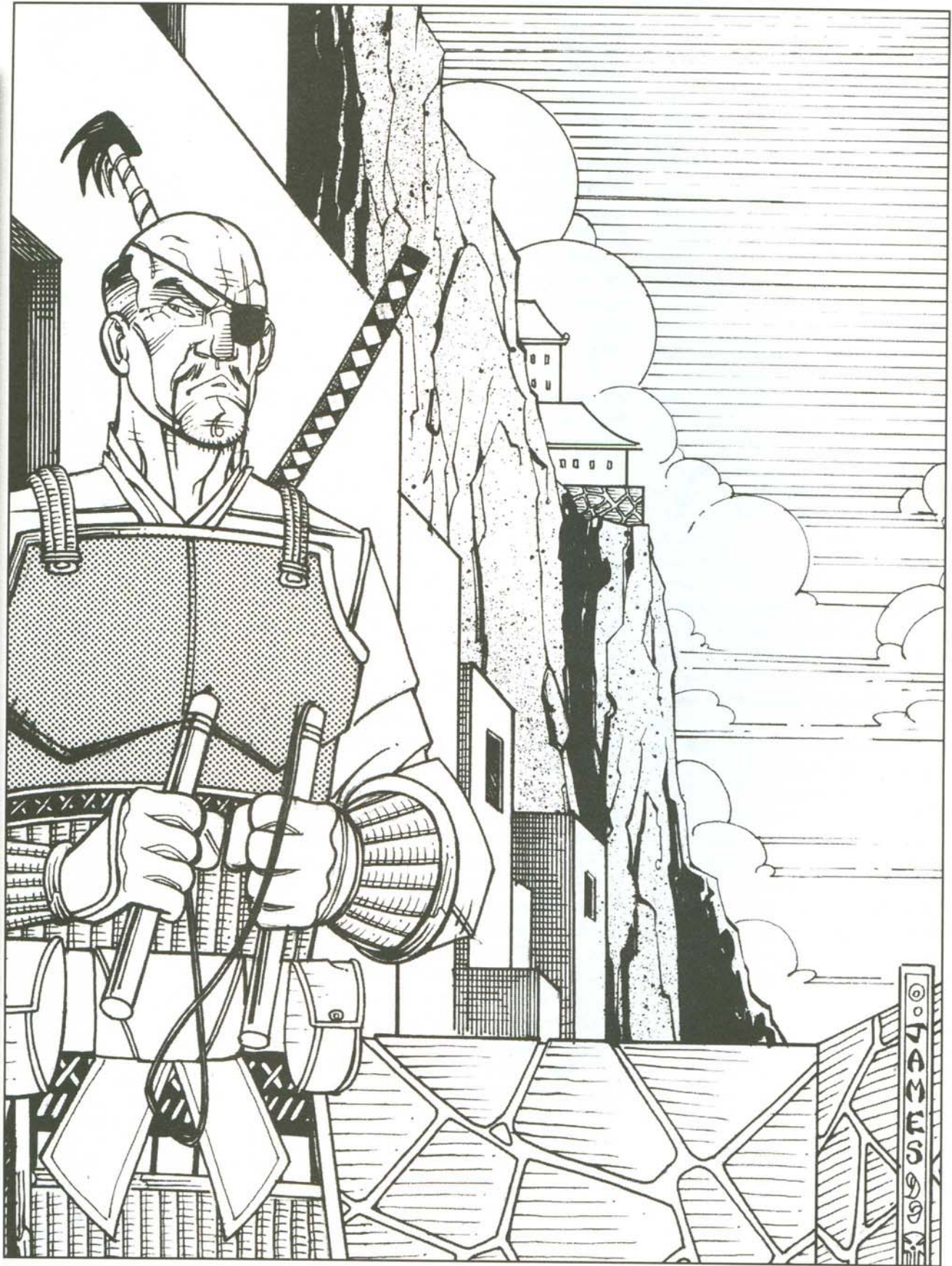
Will you brave the fury of the storm?

MINOR CLAN RESTRICTIONS

There are a few drawbacks to being a member of a Minor Clan. Aside from being looked down upon by members of the Great Clans – no small matter in a society as status-obsessed as Rokugan is – the opportunities for advancement are also limited. A Minor Clan daimyo, for instance, does not have the same Glory as his Great Clan counterpart.

A samurai or shugenja in a Minor Clan is also more limited than one in a Great Clan. Samurai and shugenja in the Minor Clans can advance only to Rank 3, no matter how high their Insight gets. The only exception is the Mantis Clan, whose members may progress to Rank 4.






Chapter One



The Mantis



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Crab*: Some say the Mantis are our brothers.

Let them talk. The only brother I know is the sword at my side. If these Mantis wish to be the Crab, let them stand a year on the Great Wall. Then we shall see if the blood of Osano-Wo runs true.

– Hida Kisada

• *Crane*: Petty mercenaries whose loyalty can be bought with koku.

There is nothing to fear from the Mantis, save a lighter purse.

– Kakita Yugoro

• *Dragon*: From such humble origins come great men.

– Togashi Yokuni

• *Lion*: Those who cross blades with the Mantis do not have time to regret their stupidity. They will make fine allies for the Lion in the coming war.

– Matsu Gohei



The Way of the Mantis

"I know my place in history. My destiny is to defeat you."

– Kaimetsu-uo

Long ago, the son of Hida struggled to defeat the Shadowlands before they could rise to challenge the strength of the new-born Empire. Osano-Wo came to be one of the most famous legends in the history of the Emerald Empire. He has become a Fortune in his own right and, some say, also assumed the mantle of the mysterious creature known as the Sixth Dragon upon his death.

It is said that Osano-Wo was the son of the Dragon of Thunder, and that the blood of the Celestial Heavens ran in his veins through both his Kami father and his Serpent mother. He destroyed the Kingdom of the Trolls and drove the Shadowlands far from the Empire – a defeat from which Fu Leng's minions took centuries to recover.

When Osano-Wo chose to marry, his bride was the daimyo of the Matsu. On the day she announced her pregnancy, Osano-Wo celebrated with *sake*. Too much *sake*. The next morning, he awoke in a little peasant hut with a little peasant girl who handed him his tetsubo with a smile.

Nine months later, two children were born ... on the same day. Osano-Wo formally acknowledged the child of the peasant as his own, and the boy was brought to Hida Palace to be raised with his Lion half-brother. When the heir to the Crab was decided, it was the son of the peasant who was given the Crab Clan sword.

In a rage, Osano-Wo's Lion wife cut off her hair and left it on the floor of their sleeping chamber, taking her son away from the Crab lands to begin

a life of their own. They traveled across the wide waters of the Crane bay to a distant island chain known only as the Islands of Silk.

The son's name was Kaimetsu-uo, and this is the story of his clan.

KAIMETSU-UO

"Never be afraid to speak, for the words of a true samurai are recorded in the histories of the Celestial Heavens, even if the men of this world are blind to the truth."

– Doji Satsume

Kaimetsu-uo, son of Osano-Wo, was born at the palace of the Crab and lived his early life in luxury. While the Crab are not renowned for great wealth, within the walls of the Crab fortress Kaimetsu-uo was given everything he needed: food, weapons, and the training to become one of the finest soldiers in the Empire. He saw everything as his right. As the son of the Champion, he had every right to believe that one day he would assume his father's mantle as leader of the Crab.

On the day that Osano-Wo was to give Chikara, the sword of the Crab, to his son and heir, Kaimetsu-uo knew that he would not be the one to receive the prize. His father had come to him the night before the ceremony and had spoken for many hours with his son. They talked of battles, and of duty. When dawn came, Kaimetsu-uo knew his destiny.

He found his mother sobbing and cutting off her hair in his father's chambers, and helped her rise. "Stand, mother," he told her. "You are a Matsu."

"I am a Matsu," she agreed. "But you are a Crab."

"No, mother," the boy said, gathering his *daisho*. "I do not know what I am, but I know what I am not."

With that, the mother and her son traveled away from the lands of the Crab. Kaimetsu-uo gathered those few men who were loyal to him and set out for the islands to the east.

Seventeen years later, Kaimetsu-uo had built a small town, a tall palace on a rocky ledge, and a thriving legion of soldiers. One day, he received a letter from his brother, now Champion of the Crab. Their father had been poisoned by a traitor, and that man was being sheltered in Phoenix lands.

"I cannot avenge our father," Kaimetsu-uo's brother wrote. "I must stay here, and defend the Empire against the Shadowlands ..."



With a cry of vengeance, Kaimetsu-uo led his men to battle against the Phoenix. The Great Clan heard rumors of the small force and laughed behind raised fans, whispering with their Crane allies about the joke. They did not ready their armies, nor were they prepared when the storm came.

Only ten ships followed Kaimetsu-uo to the northern coasts, ten small *kobune* boats filled with loyal men. As they approached the shores of Kyuden Isawa, the sky grew black and dark around them, hiding them from the mighty spellcasters on the Phoenix walls.

Lightning led the way through the high seas as the wind threw spray into the faces of the soldiers. Although the Isawa called to the spirits of air and water, no magic at their command turned back the mighty storm. Kaimetsu-uo's men landed on the beaches and made their way toward the enchanted walls of the palace, unafraid. Despite the wind, the Phoenix blindly hurled spears of

flame and pillars of stone down upon the advancing army. Kaimetsu's men died in agony, but no sound crossed their lips as they followed their lord in silence. No noise betrayed their position.

When they reached the gates of Kyuden Isawa, only fifteen brave samurai still lived. Seeing the tremendous oaken barriers lodged firmly in the stone walls of the palace, Kaimetsu lifted his arms to the raging heavens. His face drenched with rain and hail, bruised from the agonizing climb, he howled like a madman to the storm.

"*FATHER!*" he screamed, "Let me avenge your death! Give me a sign of your will, and I will move the mountain itself to find your killer! Open the gates, and I will not fail!" With those brave words, Kaimetsu lifted his sword and cut deeply into the wood of the gates, leaving a long scar. As he struck, the heavens shattered, and a bolt of blue flame raced down from the sky, exploding

the gates from their iron braces and opening the palace of the Phoenix.

The Isawa, mute in the face of this obvious intervention of the Fortunes, offered treaty with the pitiful remnant of Kaimetsu-uo's army. They refused shelter to the man accused of Osano-Wo's death, and offered recompense of silver and jewels. Kaimetsu-uo and his men, weary but rewarded, returned to the lands of the Crab bearing the head of the murderer. Once there, Kaimetsu-uo and his brother brought the body of their father to the plains where he had been born, and returned it to the flames of the spirit.

But since that day, the Mantis, children of Kaimetsu-uo, have forever felt the spirit of their forefather, and the presence of his hand in their lives. His heart may have remained with the Crab, but his soul stands by the son who never failed.

THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Phoenix:* The eyes of the Mantis hold not the cold flame of honor, but the burning wrath of ambition. It is best that they drown their words in the sea, or someone may choose to drown their name, as well.

- Isawa Tsuke

• *Scorpion:* The wealthiest men have the greatest secrets. The Mantis know this... as do we.

- Bayushi Hisa

• *Unicorn:* The tales say that the Mantis turned their back on the Empire, but I do not believe them. Because of their rank, the Mantis have had to fight harder and longer than any other clan in Rokugan's history. That strength serves them well.

- Shinjo Hanari

• *Other Minor Clans:* Yoritomo is a brave warrior, a strong daimyo, and a cunning general. If he chose to go to battle, I would gladly stand by his side.

Better that, by far, than stand in his way.

- Kitsune Katsuda



The Mantis are the strongest Minor Clan in Rokugan because of their rich and established history. Although the Mantis are not the wealthiest Minor Clan, they have many resources available from trade of the fine silks which their islands produce. Because of this income, the Mantis have the leisure to develop Techniques and create their own distinct style of fighting.

Undisputed masters of sailing, it is often the servants of the Mantis who pilot the *kobune* ships on their ocean voyages. The Rokugani have little knowledge of navigation because of the frequent storms in Umi Amaterasu, so the art of deep ocean voyaging has never been discovered. Instead, they are proficient in reading tides and wind along the coast. Trade ships sail up and down the Doji coast carrying silver from Phoenix lands, silk from the Mantis isles, and iron and steel from the Crab highlands.

But it was not always this way.

THE AGE OF GUSAI

Gusai was the first great daimyo of the Mantis clan. Gusai was a powerful daimyo and a great Lord, and he was called into the court of the Emperor to build trade through the Empire, for the Mantis were rich indeed in those days.

But Gusai sat in the court, and said not a word while all the courtiers of the Empire chattered and negotiated. Days passed, and still Gusai would speak to no one but the Emperor. "Speech and action," he said to the Hantei, "are the basis of governing. They can move heaven and earth, but they are not as strong as steel."

The Emperor said to Gusai, "Show me that steel is stronger, and I will make you a lord of my court."

With a warrior's motion, Gusai drew a blade hidden in his robes and touched with it the Hantei's throat. "There is nothing which can take your life as easily as the steel of a strong man. If you do not know fear, then you do not respect steel."

The Emperor smiled, and Gusai removed the blade. "Very good, Gusai-san," he said, and called forth his guard. "You have proven your point. Steel is strong enough to make you a Lord." With a wave of his hand, Gusai was made the first daimyo of the Mantis. "Your children shall bear your name, and your clan shall be welcome in my court.

"But, Lord Gusai, before you go," the Hantei smiled, "let me show you how much stronger a man's words can be." With a pen stroke, he signed Gusai's execution warrant, and that day, the sun sank into a bloody sea.

For three generations, the Mantis were known by their first daimyo's name: Gusai. Then, in an act of retribution for his grandfather's death (and, some say, as a political move designed to elevate the Mantis to the status of Great Clan), Gusai Rioshida attempted a coup, holding the Emperor's son hostage as a 'guest' of the Mantis Isles.

The attempt ended in disaster, and only because another Mantis samurai, a man named Yohihotsu, rescued the young Prince and helped him to escape the Mantis palace did the clan survive. The daimyo was commanded to commit *seppuku*, along with all his family and descendants, and the samurai who had proven his loyalty to the Emperor by returning his son was named the daimyo of the Minor Clan. The Mantis was stripped of its family name, but permitted to continue serving the Empire as a recognized clan within the borders of Rokugan.

What the stories do not tell is this: Yohihotsu was commanded by his daimyo, Gusai Rioshida, to take the boy to safety when he realized that his coup attempt was failing. The Lion armies had been swifter than expected, and with unexpected assistance from the Kakita had arrived on the shores of the Daidoji peninsula days before they were expected. Realizing that his entire clan would be destroyed if he did not sacrifice his life, Rioshida gave the Prince to Yohihotsu, and ordered that the 'betrayal' commence.

His actions saved the Mantis, but destroyed his family name. To this day, the Mantis refuse to hear scornful words about 'the traitor Gusai', and some still consider the Gusai family name to be a

revered (if defunct) lineage among the Mantis survivors. Some even whisper that Yohihotsu was the illegitimate son of Gusai Rioshida, and that the family name still continues in secret, to this day.

THE STORM LEGION

"A man makes his own destiny. Each wave that tears its mark upon the shore can show you that."

– Yukue, Commander of the Storm Legion

The Islands of Silk and Spice have been the home of the Mantis clan for over seven hundred years, ever since the original bride of Osano-Wo and her son came to the shores of the archipelago. Only a few loyal Crab and Lion bushi, sworn to obey their lady and her son, followed them into their self-imposed exile, and of those, fewer still remained on the shores of the island after the Lady Matsu Kyoda died.

Matsu Kyoda lived her life at Hida Palace, learning the ways of the Crab and channeling her Lion fortitude and strength into raising the finest son she could offer. When he was passed over by Osano-Wo, a terrible insult, she took her son and

left the lands of the Crab vowing never to return. The descendants of those few samurai who remained with her and served her son after her death are known as the Storm Legion, first in bravery and loyalty to the line of the Mantis. Their place in the clan is assured, and any of them would die to defend their Lord and their islands.

The islands to the east of the Rokugani coast are volcanic, with thick black sands and hot springs dotting the coastline, and mountains of jagged rock jutting up through thick jungle and treacherous terrain. Yet, in their own way, they are strikingly beautiful. Waterfalls spray from hundreds of feet above the ground, and twisted rivers wind through lushly carpeted forest, scattered with bright birds and delicate flowers. Although the winters can be cold, the islands are usually warm, due to the volcanic heat below the archipelago. Its steam and warmth keep the jungles fertile through more than seventy percent of the year.

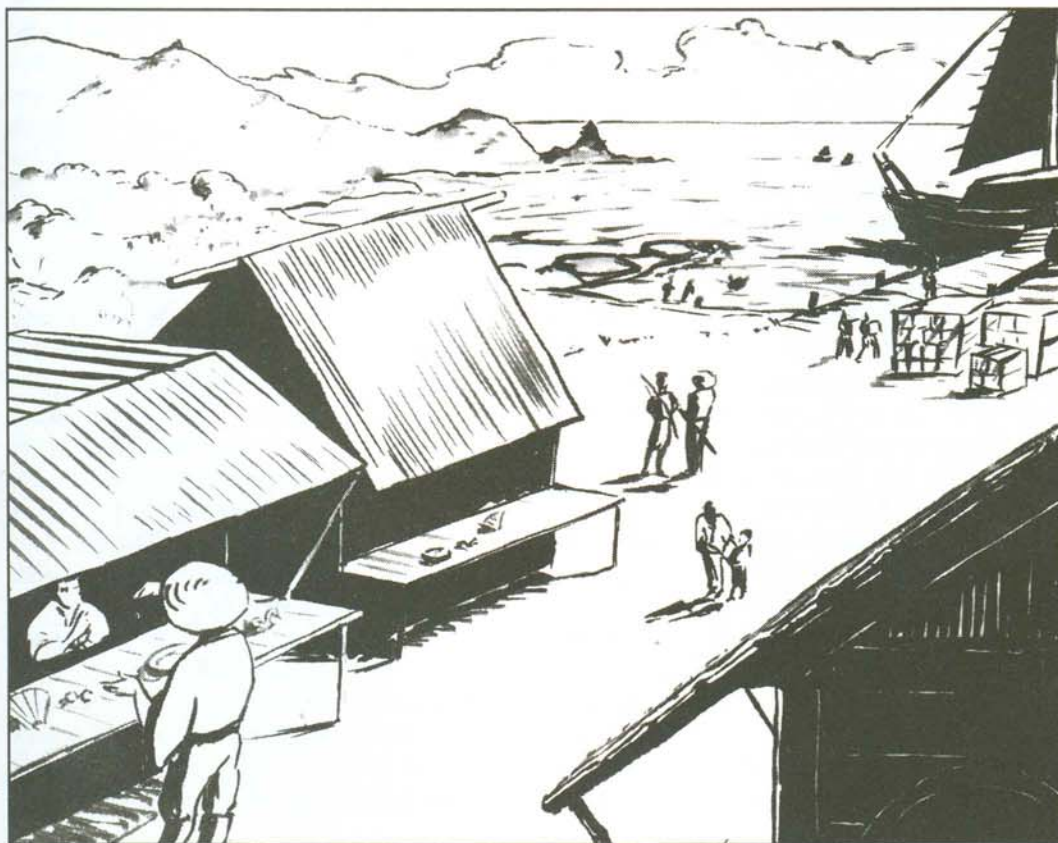
Those Mantis who have served the clan for generations tell tales of the caves beneath the mountains, carved through intense heat and channeled lava. Deep beneath the greatest palace of the Mantis, these chambers run for miles, and



ANCESTOR: KAIMETSU-UO (5 POINTS)

Hida Kaimetsu-uo was the son of Osano-wo and a Matsu daimyo, who was denied his rightful place of honor within the Crab Clan. When his mother took her son and left for the Islands of Silk, Kaimetsu-uo renounced his name and ties to his father's clan. He is depicted in story and song as having been very much like his father: a volatile man who believed in action, not words, and whose temper was legendary.

Descendants of Kaimetsu-uo inherit their ancestor's nasty disposition, and can be easily provoked to combat with insults. However, their will is indomitable. They gain one free Void Point to spend on any tests involving Willpower, save those tests which would allow him to avoid combat.





ANCESTOR: GUSAI

(3 POINTS)

Gusai was the first, and shortest-lived, daimyo of the Mantis Clan. His bravery and brashness won the Mantis their place in the records of Minor Clans, but also cost Gusai his life. While there are those who would revile Gusai for his tactics, the Mantis revere him as an unsung hero. For three generations, the Mantis bore the family name Gusai, before it was stripped from them by Imperial Decree.

Those samurai who are descended from Gusai do not brag of their lineage, even to other Mantis. To do so would be to cast shame upon the name that had been taken from them. Instead, they revere Gusai in silence, dedicating their lives to his vision of the Mantis as a Great Clan in the Empire. One day, perhaps, that vision will come true.

A descendant of Gusai can never be completely stripped of weapons, unless they choose to be. No matter how well searched, unless they are completely naked, the Mantis will always be able to conceal some weapon (tanto or smaller). They may also spend a Void point to conceal a single other item, so long as it could be carried in the palm of the Mantis's hand.

All descendants of Gusai automatically have the disadvantage Brash, for no points.

only those of the Storm Legion are taught their treacherous, winding paths. Only they know the inner methods to enter the castle unseen, and only they know where to find the hidden inlets and secret coves whose caverns have become warehouses and docks for Mantis smugglers.

They are the most trusted of all of Yoritomo's followers, and they are sworn to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. When a member of the Storm Legion dies, his helmet is placed within the deepest cavern beneath Kyuden Gotei (the palace often referred to as Kyuden Mantis by those not native to the island), where it is said that there exists a flame that can never die. A ritual which has been honored for centuries, each son of the Storm Legion is taken to this room to spend the night before their *gempukku*, praying to their ancestors for guidance and hearing the stories behind each of the hundreds of helmets that rest within that great and ancient chamber.

THE TAO OF THE BUKE

"Following another man's footsteps only leads you to another man's destiny."

— Gusai Ihonbo

The *buke* are the 'lower class' of samurai within the Empire. Minor Clan samurai, no matter what their lineage within their clan, are considered *buke* by the upper classes of Rokugan. This is an unfortunate truth, and one often argued against in the courts of the Minor Clans, but it is the way of the Empire.

This is not to say that Yoritomo, the daimyo of the Mantis, will be treated with less respect than Ide Ashijun, a common samurai of the Unicorn. Of course, a samurai of a Minor Clan will be treated as a noble, but the difference between a well-to-do member of a Minor Clan and a common member of a Great Clan is minimal.

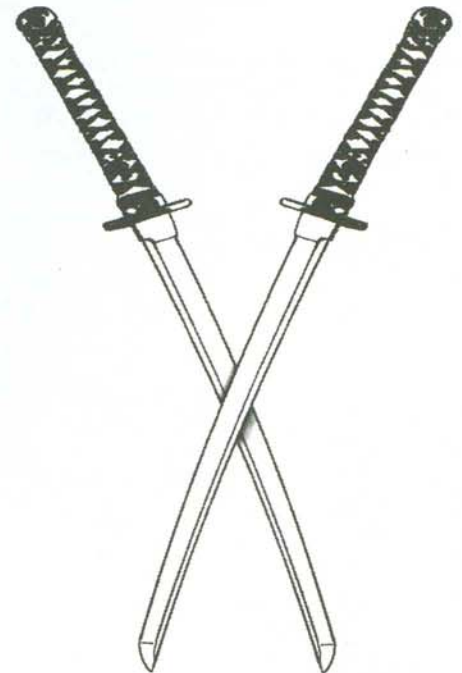
Although in recent years, the Mantis have gained the respect of the Crane, and of the unified armies of the Fox, Wasp, and Sparrow clans that has been called the 'Three Man Alliance', they still struggle to find respect in an Empire that ignores their contributions. But it will not always be so, vows their daimyo, and one day the Empire will bow to the Mantis. If they will not admit the Mantis to their rightful place among the Great Clans, than the Empire itself will pay the price. Yoritomo knows this to be the truth, and he will do anything to have this upheaval come to pass within his lifetime. He believes it to be his destiny.


TERRITORY

The Mantis Clan lives in a fertile archipelago to the east of the Crane shoreline, within view of Kyuden Doji. Their island is beautiful but dangerous. Volcanoes form the heart of the islands, their snowy tops reaching into the clouds far above the ocean. Not all of these are inactive, however, and earthquakes rock the shores of the Islands of Silk each year.

One mountain in particular, known as Haiyama (Ashen Mountain), is formed of thousands of layers of exploded ash and lava around a tremendous crater high in the hills. This mountain, located on the small island near Toshi no Inazuma, has collected the clear rainfall of hundreds of years, and now contains a crystal lake within its high rock walls. The site is a sacred place to the Mantis, and small shrines dot the hillside above the water.

When earthquakes rock the island, the peasants say that it is the snore of the great Osano-Wo, whose spirit traveled to the Islands of Silk in order to watch over his true son years after the great samurai had stepped down from being the Champion of the Crab. Of course, this is only peasant superstition, but even some of the more level-headed Mantis samurai believe that the spirit of Osano-Wo still dwells within the Islands of Silk, watching over the children of his outcast son.





Sailing the Seas of Rokugan

SAILING AND SHIPBUILDING

In addition to forbidding travel between the Emerald Empire and the Ivory Kingdoms, the Hantei Emperors prohibited the construction of large ocean-going vessels. After the defeat of the ocean-going *gaijin*, the Emperor decreed that Rokugan would not seek out the dangers of the ocean. Coupled with the difficulties that Umi Amaterasu's harsh weather presents to sailors, the decree ensured that all Rokugani ships would be coastal vessels, incapable of long ocean journeys.

The Rokugani never invented the idea of laying down a keel: a single piece of wood running from the bow to the stern, to which the larger frame of the vessel is anchored for stability and greater seaworthiness. The decks are rows of unfastened planks, waiting to be washed away by the first big wave – after which any further waves can pour straight in. In addition to their poor construction and lack of strength, traditional Rokugani vessels have been truly deficient in terms of sailing performance. One primary reason for this has been a lack of fore-and-aft sails with which to propel the vessel. A fore-and-aft sail runs almost parallel with the keel, in contrast to a square sail, which runs across the vessel. Fore-and-aft sails make it possible to proceed windward in a zigzag fashion, while square sails work only with a tail wind. Traditional Rokugani ships rig only the latter type, and thus are of little use without oarsmen to propel the ship in the case of poor wind.

Fore-and-aft sails make it possible for ships to reach any destination on the water as long as the wind is blowing. No matter the direction of the wind, the sails can direct it so as to propel the vessel. Without this technology, Rokugani ships

become stranded, and sometimes are lost at sea. However big a ship they might build, a square-rigged ship has little ability to sail into the wind. Because of this limitation, it is very difficult for Rokugani ships to navigate the ocean.


As Otsan Uchi and the surrounding territories began to prosper in the early days of the Empire, the Hantei Emperors relaxed the limits on boat size, permitting the construction of large vessels in order to transport the rice and other commodities required by the city's residents. Popularly called *sengokobune*, these ships had a capacity of close to 100 gross tons. But while this could have been the occasion for the development of greater waterproofing and ocean-going navigation techniques, the Rokugani did not work to develop them. Still, these relaxed restrictions made it possible for shipbuilders to begin experimenting with more advanced building techniques and navigation styles.

One of the most famous shipbuilders in the Empire lives on the Islands of Silk and Spice. His name is Watanabe, and he serves the fierce Lord Yoritomo. His vessels have been purchased by both the Crane and Crab Clans, each eager to increase their trade up the coast of the Empire. For over 400 years, before Watanabe, shipbuilding in the Empire was considered a 'perfected' art. No further developments were encouraged, and no increases in shipbuilding or manufacture were made. Watanabe, an arrogant man, builds kobune and larger ships, referring sneeringly to the smaller vessels as 'tubs.'

Some of his improvements, however simple, have been seen as all but miraculous to the Empire. Like traditional wooden vessels, Watanabe's kobune come apart when they dry out, and become watertight only when the wood is swelled by moisture. But Watanabe's vessels are much sturdier, and the deck is attached firmly to the frame. Thus, the vessel is much like a sturdy watertight box – a great improvement over traditional shipbuilding styles.

THE EMPEROR'S SEAS

Seafaring is not a strong point of the Emerald Empire. The Rokugani are an insular people and are not known for exploratory urges. Much of the sea just off the coast remains unknown despite centuries of travel. A typical ship captain follows the courses and instructions laid down centuries ago rather than risking disaster and certain death by venturing off the traditional sea lanes. To do



THE MINOR CLANS AND THE GREAT CLANS

No Clan, Minor or Great, can be ordered by another clan to take up arms against a force within the Empire. This law was enacted by one of the earliest Hantei, who realized that the Minor Clans were all too often being used to fuel wars between the feuding houses of Lion and Crane.

However, when the force is external (the *gaijin* at White Stag, or the frequent invasions from the Shadowlands), the Great Clans may demand that samurai from the Minor Clans assist them in their duties. Most Minor Clans keep a segment of their personal guard in readiness for these times, and when the Great Clans call, they are sent to represent their house.

Such squadrons of warriors are known in popular Rokugani slang as '*kiban* samurai', or 'cornerstone' units. Their dedication to their houses is so great that they will risk their lives for something that does not affect their house's well-being or personal affairs in order to follow the commands of their daimyo and represent the honor of their Minor Clan.

While '*kiban*' is considered a mocking term to the Great Clans, many samurai of the Minor Clans wear the term as a badge of honor.



DIET

The diet of a ship crew is somewhat rougher than that of the average Rokugani traveler. Because of the danger of fire on wooden ships, especially in rough seas, few ships are prepared to actually cook food. A sailor's staple diet consists of cold precooked rice, dried or pickled vegetables, edible seaweed, and of course fish and other seafood, such as roe (fish eggs) and shellfish. The fish is served either raw, or 'cooked' with an acidic marinade. Larger ships might have a well-secured brazier or hibachi on board as a source of warmth, and to allow some cooking, but this is rare, as it is difficult to maintain a cooking fire (even a small one) aboard a kobune craft.

otherwise would invite mutiny from his superstitious and fearful crew. The deep ocean is just too dangerous for the fragile *kobune* employed by the Rokugani. To most, the deep sea simply does not exist. A few clans make exceptions: brave Yasuki patrol the edge of the Shadowlands in stout ships. Rich Crane merchants ply the coast, transporting goods in fat kobune and barges. Tortoise fishermen keep Otosan Uchi safe from seaward threats. But only the Mantis truly travel the sea.

The craft of boating began with simple dugouts and rafts along the rivers and coasts. As the Kami brought wisdom and civilization to the wilds of the Empire, the need for travel and transport arose. Dugouts and rafts became sampans and barges loaded with cargo.

The Sea

Along the coastline, the sea is shallow and warm, broken by small islands and reefs. Offshore, the fisheries and pearl beds are rich, supplying the Crane and Mantis with both food and wealth. Numerous rivers and bays break up the shore, providing safe harbors and many ports of call along the gentle shore. The Crane hold most of these pleasant reaches.

Further north, the lands of the Phoenix are rugged, with mountains down to the sea in great cliffs. Reefs and shoals abound, the sharp rocks lurking to gut a *kobune* in a heartbeat. Ports are hidden in coves and bays that open out suddenly. The services of a pilot are as essential as prayers to Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea. Only a fool would try to enter one of these ports without a pilot, and Mantis pilots charge for their services appropriately.

Beyond the lands of the Phoenix lie inhospitable mountains and coasts barren of all save great sheets of ice and snow. Only the Yobanjin tribes live here, plying the strange hide boats they call *kaiaku* back and forth among the ice flows. Nothing in this land is of interest to the Rokugani and only the occasional ivory hunter or shipwrecked sailor come here. Fewer still return.

Like the northern coast, the Crab coastline is rugged and cut by deep bays. The Yasuki control the waters here, their guardships and turtle boats (q.v.) keeping a wary eye on the Shadowlands. To the south lies the Tainted Sea and the Coast of Dark Mists. Here, next to the Shadowlands, the waters are thick and toxic, with terrifying creatures lurking under the black surface. Even

the boldest Crab ventures into these waters with trepidation, but some of their tales have reached the rest of Rokugan.

They may be just the tales told by drunken sailors or they may have a grain of truth. Within this dark sea lies a series of islands, some rising high in craggy splendor. One of these is a reputed spawning ground of monsters and *umibozu* (sea trolls), but no man has ever returned from the deep oceans alive and sane. Some islands seem to be bases for *funa-yori* (ghost ships) and kobune crewed with skeletons. To the great fortune of Rokugan, these terrors seldom leave the Tainted Sea to trouble safer climes.

In the direction of the sunrise lie the deepest ocean ways. These sea roads are never traveled, forbidden by an ancient Imperial decree and cursed by the evils of the deepest sea. Of the dangers sailors whisper, the most important is the fear of becoming lost forever beyond sight of land.

The Rokugani follow courses that have been laid down by other, successful pilots. Those who stray are often never seen again or return with tales of great sea dragons and terrible spider oni haunting the deep waters. Rokugani fear the deep sea; the deeper waters beyond their coasts are a terrible mystery to them. Only the Mantis are willing to explore further, and they do so only fitfully.

Navigation

Only the long-forgotten Naga possess the secrets of navigating by astronomy; the Mantis and the rest of Rokugan have no such knowledge. While the Phoenix and Crane have sophisticated astrology, it is used for auguries, horoscopes and planting crops. The shugenja would never allow this sacred knowledge to be put into the hands of mere sailors. After all, what use is navigating the seas? Oddly, the Unicorn and their nomadic allies are able to navigate across the vast plains by the stars, but they are strangers to the sea. The most important navigational device is a sunstone. Sunstones are crystals with the remarkable property of showing the direction of the sun if it is overcast. Even most of the charts used appear in the form of instruction scrolls called "*koukainisshi*." These are not charts, but rather a series of directions, distances and landmarks. They are the nautical equivalent of "travel three miles, then turn left at the second big rock." *Koukainisshi* dwell on prevailing winds, tides and

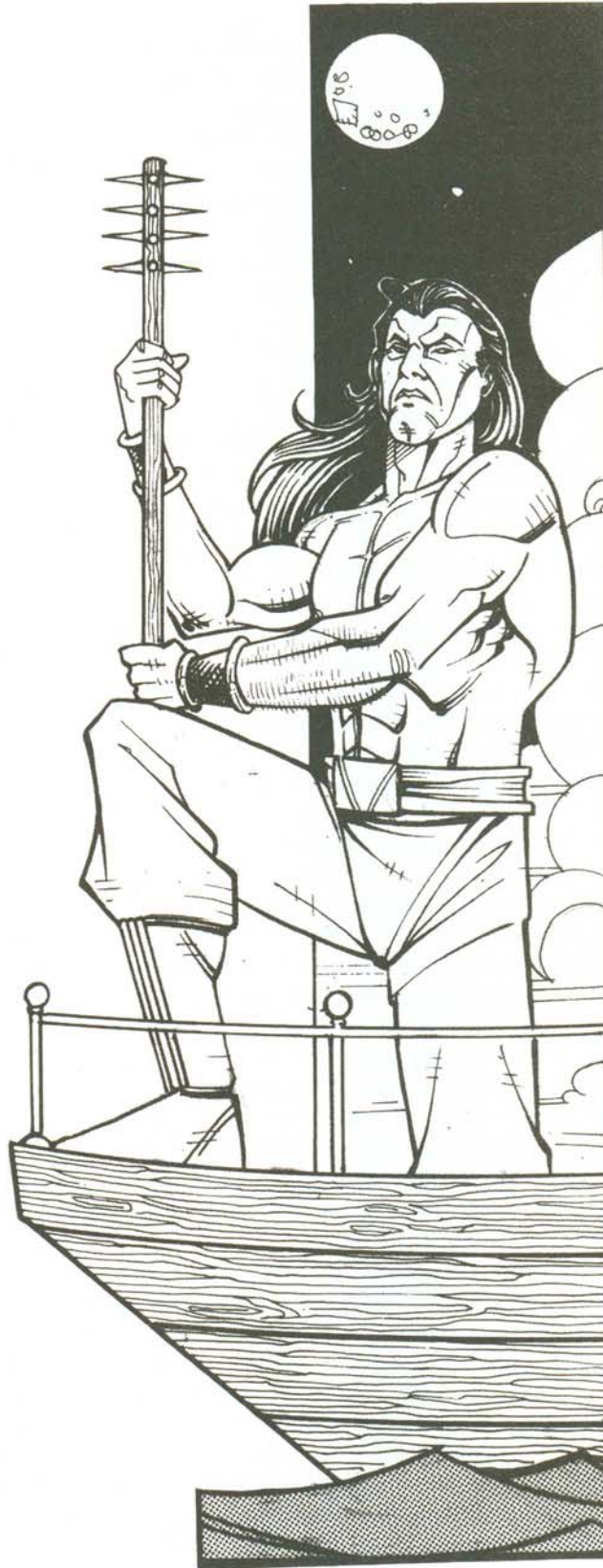
seasonal changes. Written by previous successful voyagers, they are traveled by rote. Those captains unlucky enough to be swept off these safe routes are seldom heard from again.

Sailing Life

A sailor's life is harsh and full of danger. Sailors live back to back with death. The poor quality of the boats available and the sheer harshness of the sea has made them both hard and superstitious. Umi Amaterasu is a formidable ocean swept constantly by storms, including typhoons, and concealed beneath its surface are great currents. When the threats of monstrous sea-serpents known as Orochi are added, many regard sailors and fishermen as a foolhardy lot. Faced with these dangers, the sailors have become incredibly superstitious. The vast majority of sailors die at sea, swept overboard or drowned when the fragile crafts finally fail them.

When not in port, the sailors are constantly busy. Sails constantly require repair and the rigging must frequently be adjusted as the salt water soaks the ropes or the sun dries them. Water seeps in constantly and must be pumped or bailed out. Except during storms, ships trail fishing lines in the hopes of supplementing their stores with something fresh. And when there is a storm, they all fight for survival. It is little wonder that they drink, fight, and gamble the instant they go ashore. But all too soon they leave again to travel the seas once more.

Sailors often wear ragged tunics and *gi* of thick cotton, as the harsh salt air rots silk and other cloth. Sometimes they go naked and are burnt almost black from the sun and wind. Sandals are seldom worn as they do not provide traction on the slick decks nor do they survive the harsh conditions.



NAMES AND MINOR CLANS

In reading through the descriptions of the Minor Clans, you'll notice two things: one, that not all clans are named after their founder, and two, that not all of the Minor Clans have earned a family name.

In Rokugan, when a samurai makes a significant contribution to the Empire, he may be allowed to carry his personal name through his children's line, thus forming the name 'Yotsu Seiki' rather than simply 'Seiki, daughter of Yotsu.' However, this is very separate from the *generations* of contributions and honors that must be earned by a samurai, or group of samurai, in order to even be considered for the status of a Minor Clan.

Mechanically, this means that not all of the Minor Clans have the bonus trait earned with a family name. That's exactly the point. They haven't earned a family name.

That's why they are called *Minor Clans*. Its also one reason why they are treated with a certain amount of scorn by their 'betters' among the *kuge* class of samurai.

Starting Glory for any Minor Clan character, also because of how they are viewed as 'lessers' by the majority of Rokugan's samurai, is zero. Their starting Honor, however, is unchanged.



DIFFERENT SCHOOLS?

Although all samurai of the Minor Clans are considered to be a 'group' by the rest of Rokugan, they certainly don't consider themselves in such a manner. If a samurai of the Fox Clan wishes to attend the bushi school of the Sparrow, they must go through the elaborate rituals and requests necessary to join any different school. If a Minor Clan samurai wishes to attend another Minor Clan school, they must purchase the 5-point Advantage in the basic RPG sourcebook.

However, if a samurai of a Minor Clan wishes to attend the school of a Major Clan, the Advantage costs them 7 points, rather than the usual 5. It's tough to work your way up in the world, you know.

Pirates / Wakko

One of the greatest threats in Umi Amaterasu is pirates. These reavers and their swift craft lurk in isolated coves and remote islands along the rocky coast and swoop down on rich merchants and unsuspecting kobune. Some think that the Mantis sponsor these vermin in exchange for a share of the spoils. A few islands off the Crane and Phoenix coasts are home to large bands of pirates called "*wakko*." These ronin are often little better than thieves and prey upon coastal trade mercilessly. Strangely, they never prey on the fishing boats, which are perhaps just too poor to whet a pirate's appetite. But then many a quiet fishing village holds darker secrets, and the nimble boats catch more than fish when the opportunity allows. When crushed by taxes, it is very tempting to take the riches that sail by, and some peasant fishermen turn pirate when the need takes them.

In the past, there have been some extremely large *wakko* groups. When the Crane or Yasuki hunt them, they flee to the Mantis. When the Mantis hunt them, they move their bases to the Phoenix. No one has ever mounted a coordinated campaign against the pirates.

Trade Routes of the Mantis

Over the centuries, the Mantis have discovered several sources of wealth that they have kept to themselves. Some islands in the Silk and Spice Islands are rich in gold and silver, a bounty which the Mantis mine with convict labor. Crimes that would result in the death of a peasant or *eta* on the mainland instead results in another soul being fed to the hungry mines. Indeed, some of the wretched workers may be victims of *wakko* who have raided the coasts and taken them away. No one has ever survived these mines nor left the islands. The hungry sea and patrolling kobune see to that.

Unknown to the rest of the Empire, the Mantis trade irregularly with distant *gaijin* nations. Far to the south of the Tainted Sea lie the Coral Islands – a chain of islands stretching south and west. Discovered by a fortunate ship blown far, far off course, the Mantis at first cherished these islands for their timber, coral and pearls. Only after several decades did they realize that they shared the islands with another people. Merchants and adventurers from what they called the "Kingdoms of Ivory" also claimed the islands' bounty. After some early disputes, the two merchant clans

decided to trade rather than lay the islands waste in dispute. Once a year, the winds allow a small fleet of Mantis *sengokobune* to visit the islands. From the north and far south, bold Mantis traders gain rare gems, ivory, exotic feathers and all-important timber. In return, they trade gold, spices and silk. Unicorn knick-knacks are also eagerly sought by Ivory Kingdoms traders. When the winds change, the fleet sails back to enrich the Mantis.

Observation of the Rhumal, a assassin cult of the Ivory Kingdoms, and their cruel religion has made the Mantis very thankful that the secret of navigating back to the Islands of Silk and Spice remains theirs alone – for the moment. Should the leaders of the Rhumal assassins find their way to the Emerald Empire, the repercussions would be devastating to the Mantis.

SHIPS

Early Rokugani made their boats with softwood timber. Easily worked and shaped, these woods were devoured by worms when the ships reached warm, salty seas and the ships quickly rotted. But since the Empire had all it needed within its boundaries, this was not considered a problem. Only with the Mantis settling the Islands of Silk and Spice were steps taken to build truly seagoing craft. Methods of curing and treating timber were developed that let ship hulls last long enough to be useful. Shipwrights improved on the humble barges and dugouts of their predecessors, and the *kobune* was born. Further improvements followed, such as using pitch to seal the seams between the planks to prevent leaks and the discovery of methods to season cedar, teak and other durable woods so they could be made into properly shaped hulls.

One of the greatest impediments to building seaworthy craft is finding proper wood. The coasts of the Empire have been settled for a very long time. All the forests close to the cities have been thoroughly combed for hard timber. Now, any timber suitable for boats is found far upstream and must be rafted down the rivers at great expense – each daimyo lays claim to the wood as it passes through his lands and takes his share of taxes. And, since logs that are long and strong are much in demand by those very same nobles to build their castles, very little quality lumber is left for the construction of mere ships. When the Mantis settled the Islands of Silk and Spice a wealth of ancient woodlands became available to

shipwrights, and a golden age in shipbuilding soon followed.

One oddity among the Rokugani fleets is the absence of galleys. The samurai caste do not approve of oar-powered ships as warcraft, as this would require either that the samurai work mightily to row them or that peasants form the crew of the galley. Samurai don't row, and what is the point of having a peasant crew on a galley if they cannot fight? Furthermore, galleys do not carry enough cargo to make them worthwhile merchant ships.

Another characteristic in Rokugani shipbuilding is the long laths that run horizontally through the sails. These give the fragile bark-skin sails the strength to hold the wind at the cost of much of their power.

As noted earlier, the Rokugani have not yet seized on the idea of building a ship by first laying down a single timber – the keel – lengthwise from bow to stern. This would serve as a backbone to which the ribs are attached. Atop them, the deck can be firmly anchored. Rokugani shipbuilders sometimes join several sections of wood together with dowels to serve as a segmented keel; but in high seas, the joints have a distressing tendency to give way, and the ship breaks up.

Most of the following Rokugani ship designs have been standard for centuries. Little innovation in naval architecture has been encouraged lest people travel too far and become corrupted by outside influences.

Kobune

Tonnage 70 tons, length 75', draft 6', crew 25+, 5 or more officers

By far the most common seagoing vessel, the *kobune* evolved from a simple dugout. Planks were built out from the sides to extend its width and curved up to provide shelter to the sides. Eventually, the dugout would form what became a proper backbone for the ship. The boards are edge on, not overlapping, which results in a hull prone to leaks and warping. In heavy seas, these seams often burst, causing a fatal decrease in seaworthiness. The greatest flaw of the *kobune* is its hull design: it has no ribs to provide support for the frame. Only primitive bulkheads run across the hull, dividing it up into three holds. These give the ship a characteristic bamboo-like structure.

The classic *kobune* has a small quarterdeck at the stern, providing a platform for the helmsman at the tiller. This also provides a handy platform for up to a dozen archers if the ship engages in combat. While a *kobune* is usually lightly-crewed, in times of war it can carry a hundred samurai – or pirates. Beneath the quarterdeck are up to four cramped cabins for the captain, officers and other important people. Only the captain has his own quarters; the other officers share. The rest of the crew makes do with small spaces in the hold and on deck. At sea, space is always at a premium.

The first of the two (sometimes three) short masts are square-rigged to let the ship move swiftly with the prevailing wind. The larger aft mast is rigged at an angle so that the ship has some ability to sail against the wind. The sails are made of woven bark-cloth and painted gaily with symbols of clan, family, business and good fortune. To compensate for the fragile sail material (usually bark), they are set with the characteristic laths or cross bars. These improve the durability of the sails but make them harder to manage and far less powerful. Along the side of the ship are oars for rowing the boat in and out of harbors and tight confines where the wind or current make sailing impractical or dangerous.

Much of the ship's capacity is taken up by traveling supplies. Several sets of sails are essential to replace the fragile bark-cloth the ship relies on. Spare oars, timber, pitch to caulk the ever-leaking seams, and tools are also kept on each craft. Further, over twenty tons of food and water can be carried, allowing the ship to range for up to a month. Most ships carry far fewer supplies to make room for more cargo.

Sengokobune

Tonnage 100 tons, length 90', draft 6', crew 40+, 5 officers

The largest and best seagoing vessels were an outgrowth of the *kobune* called *sengokobune*. The first *sengokobune* were created early in the career of the famous Mantis shipbuilder Watanabe, and their use is still restricted to that clan. The planks of their hulls overlap rather than being joined edge-to-edge. There are internal braces for the hull, and all the masts are rigged with lateen (angled) sails for better into-the-wind maneuverability. They often carry large oars for maneuvering under calm conditions. The methods used in their construction are not



ANCESTORS

It should be noted that the ancestors in this book are individual to their respective clans. Only a Fox character may take a Fox Clan ancestor, and so forth.

Gamemasters may allow for unusual circumstances, as the final call on such matters rests ultimately in their hands.



MANTIS BUSHI

Outfit: (All items are of average quality): Any one weapon (No swords, bows or daggers), Light Armor, Helm, Traveling Pack, Kimono, 3 Koku.

Unlike other Minor Clan samurai, all Mantis begin with a Glory of 0.5, as the Mantis is one of the most well-known Minor Clans in the Empire.

considered traditional, and many authorities, including Imperial ones, disapprove.

Sampans

Weight 2-5 tons, length 15-30', Draft negligible, crew 2-6

The most common small boats on the rivers and coasts are *sampan*. Their small covered cabin in the back, which resembles a barrel cut in half, distinguishes these small boats from other watercraft. Used by more humble merchants and fishermen, they are the most common boat in Rokugan's waterways, making it the boat of choice for Yasuki smugglers or spies.

Sampan are divided into two types, each appropriate for a certain coastline. A vessel commonly referred to as a "duck" sampan is used along rivers, where the sandy bottom is shallow. Duck sampans are flat bottomed and have a square prow (thus resembling a duck's bill, giving the craft its name). "Chicken" sampan are used along the Phoenix and Crab coastlines, where the coast is rockier. These craft have a more pointed

prow (like a chicken's beak), and a curved bottom.



This gives it a deeper draft, but also allows it to carry more cargo. Neither type of sampan has a centerboard, which makes them dangerous to sail in rough water. Most mount only one mast, with bark-cloth sails. The modest cargo is exposed on the deck and subject to wind and wave. A typical sampan crew is 2-6 and is often a family who live aboard.

Barge

Weight 20-200 tons. Length 45-120', Draft 6-9', Crew 10-200 crew and samurai plus officers

The workhorse of trade, great barges ply the rivers of Rokugan. They transport grain, silk, and other bulky goods up and down stream.

Propelled by square sails and broad sweeps, they move laboriously upstream, often towed by gangs of sweating peasants. Downstream, the ponderous craft fare little better. Some are no more than rafts of freshly felled trees, bound from the remote forest, and they will be dismantled for lumber after their cargo is delivered.

Koutetsukan

Weight 120 tons. Length 65-110', Draft 6-9', Crew 100+ samurai and shugenja

Looking for a way to combat the Shadowlands more directly after the Maw's attack, Kaiu Sunshin created the *koutetsukan* to sail the treacherous seas and rivers of the Shadowlands. The result was a wicked-looking craft named the 'Iron Turtle.' This hundred-foot-long 'turtle' has a low, rounded roof bristling with spikes of iron and jade. Iron plates and jade cover the hull, protecting the craft from attack below the waves. Unfortunately, the weight of this armor renders the ship very ponderous and prone to taking on water or capsizing in any sort of rough sea (hence the craft's sardonic nickname of 'turning turtle'). The ship carries jade-tipped rams as well as a dragon's head on the prow that spits smoke, fire or clinging tar at need. Flat-bottomed, the *koutetsukan* can land scouting parties or traverse shallow waters easily, and thus is excellent for the rivers and coasts of the Shadowlands.

Kaiu Sunshin's experimental craft proved unable to handle rough seas,

but handled adequately in coastal waters where they can take shelter from harsh weather. Much to the delight of the Crab, they proved almost invulnerable to the dwellers of the Tainted Sea. The iron plates were proof against beak, claw, tooth and tentacle. To this day, the Crab send them on missions along the Coast of Dark Mists. In the time of Hantei XXXVI, they handily destroyed a fleet of *kobune* and their skeletal crews that emerged from the islands in the Tainted Sea to harry the coasts.

Unlike most Rokugani vessels, the Iron Turtles are galleys with a dozen oars to each side, each rowed by three Yasuki or Hiruma volunteers. In addition, its mast can be raised or lowered at need, letting the ship make use of the winds as well. These ships have met with mixed success in several forays into the Tainted Seas about the Shadowlands. Due to their inherent unseaworthiness, these ships are not employed by the Mantis.

THE IVORY KINGDOMS

Some Mantis sailors in recent years have begun to explore the dangerous waters of the far south, relying on their knowledge of direction to carry them safely down the coast. Many of these ships do not return – much of that coastland has been corrupted by the Shadowlands. When the Oni of the deep south and the great Orochi do not destroy the boats, the trolls of marsh and ocean often find such wandering *kobune* and tear them asunder.

It is a dangerous trade, but a rich one, for unknown to the rest of Rokugan, beyond the far southern border of the Shadowlands lie the Five Kingdoms of Ivory. These Ivory Kingdoms trade in astounding wealth, jewels and spices that are completely unknown in Rokugan, as well as mystic knowledge and strange lore. For some Mantis, the gains are worth the risk, and the Mantis Clan has slowly built a trade route with these foreigners in the interest of their own gain.

But on those Ivory Thrones, the God-Kings of the provinces watch as the small boats leave the white sands of their kingdoms. They see that the *kobune* are headed north, and they wonder what lies at the other end of their journey. One day, the Great Ones may rouse themselves to discover this 'Rokugan' and claim it for their own.



MANTIS BUSHI SCHOOL

The Mantis pride themselves on their seamanship and their unpredictability, as well as their long-standing tradition of mercenary gain and being swords-for-hire. They will work for the Emerald Champion, and as easily turn their backs to perform an assassination for a well-paying Scorpion Courtier. They do, however, have a code of honor: once a job has been accepted, it will be completed, and all aspects of the contract will be fulfilled. This keeps them from being seen as mere ronin, or from being destroyed as a matter of course by their employers. Once a Mantis has been paid for, he has been permanently bought. No questions asked.

Benefit: +1 Agility

Beginning Honor: 1

Basic Skills: Athletics, Battle, Commerce, Defense, Kenjutsu, Sailing, any one Bugei skill.

New Skills: *Sailing (Agility)*

Sailing is considered a Merchant skill, but it is not dishonorable for a Mantis Clan member to know and use it. Knowledge of this skill includes how to sail simple *kobune* craft, maintain a course on coastal seas, and understand the rudiment of boat craft and repair.

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Fight Without Steel

The origins of the Mantis are noble, but their lives have been spent mixed with the simple *heimin* of the Islands of Silk. Because of this heritage, Mantis Clan members have a great familiarity with improvised, unusual, or 'peasant'



NEW ADVANTAGE: STORM LEGION (4 POINTS)

To be a member of the Storm Legion of the Mantis is as much a responsibility as it is an advantage, for it confers responsibility and absolute loyalty to the Mantis Clan above all else. A character with this advantage can never take the Different School or Multiple Schools advantages, nor can they take the Black Sheep disadvantage or reduce their starting Glory.

In exchange, a member of the Storm Legion need never question the loyalty of a Mantis Clan member. No person born of Mantis blood, or formally adopted into the Mantis will – or can – betray them. It simply can't happen. In fact, a Mantis Clan member must spend a Void point in order to lie to a member of the Storm Legion, and further, must treat a member of the Storm Legion as if they were one full Glory rank higher than they truly are. Lastly, they automatically gain one point in the Gentry Advantage, allowing them a small stipend of *koku* per year.



weapons, such as the tonfa, the nunchaku, or kama. Mantis bushi may use any Low Weapon Skill as if it were a High Skill. In addition, Mantis bushi fight with any weapons they do not have a Skill Rank in as if they have a Skill Ranking of 1. This is not a substitute for regular Skill Ranks, and all weapons skills must be purchased as normal. Also, Mantis bushi train for years on the unstable footing of the Silk Islands and the rolling boats of the Mantis fleets. This training allows Mantis bushi to ignore any penalties for unsure footing and imbalance during combat.

Rank 2: Voice of the Storm

Mantis live knowing that they are the true heir to the strength of Osano-Wo. Using the storm within their souls, they fuel their ferocity against an opponent. The Mantis bushi may spend a Void Point when declaring a Full Attack, so that the bushi's TN to be hit stays at its normal level and is not reduced due to the Full Attack.

Rank 3: Claws of the Mantis

Long ago, it is said that the son of Osano-Wo, Kaimetsu-uo, learned a style of fighting from a traveling Dragon monk. If the bushi has a medium or smaller sized weapon in each hand, he rolls initiative separately for each, and gets an attack with each weapon every round. If the character is already ambidextrous, he may use the higher initiative for both weapons.

Rank 4: Yoritomo's Rolling Wave

The bushi masters of the Mantis Clan have developed a weaving and dodging style of fighting that is perfectly suited to the rolling waves of Rokugan's wide oceans. This movement is hypnotizingly slow and unpredictable, and causes the Mantis to be more difficult to hit. While making a normal attack, the Mantis bushi's normal TN to be hit is increased by the bushi's Water Ring times five. It is said that the newest Mantis daimyo, Yoritomo, created this technique on his own, and has taught it to his followers.

The Mantis are the only Minor Clan with four techniques in their school; a fact that they prize highly. They guard the secret of this fourth technique with their lives, and have sworn not to teach it to anyone that was not born of their clan.

Who's Who in the Mantis

YORITOMO

Mantis Bushi 4

EARTH 6

WATER 4 Strength 5

FIRE 3 Agility 5

AIR 4

VOID 5

Honor: 2.5

Glory: 7.9

Advantages: Ancestor: Gusai, Combat Reflexes, Great Destiny (Elevation of the Mantis to a Great Clan), Inheritance: Mantis Kama, Natural Leader, Quick, Strength of the Earth (4 points)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation: Mercenary, Brash, Insensitive

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 4, Bujutsu: Nofujutsu 5, Commerce 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 1, Hand-to-Hand 5, History 2, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation 5, Investigation 2, Kenjutsu 4, Sailing 4, Shintao 4

Bold, brash and ruthless, Yoritomo is the daimyo of the Mantis. He is a powerful man and a strong general. Singlehandedly, he has unified the Minor Clans against the banditry and bickering of the Great Houses of the Empire, declaring that the voices of the lesser clans shall be heard; they will be ignored no more.

With a single stroke, Yoritomo has united the Minor Clans and brought them to the forefront of the battles which ravage Rokugan. He rides at the front of a terrible, bloody wave of men, and they scream his name with pride and courage. Yoritomo, along with the generals of the Minor Clans, is prepared to stand in front of the Great Houses and demand the one thing they do not wish to give him: equality. And Yoritomo is

prepared to back up his threats with violence. He has prepared a hundred legions to raise his banner. If the Great Clans ignored his threat before, they are not doing so now. Beneath his scarred and worn helmet shine the bright eyes of a powerful man.

So long as Yoritomo leads them, the Rise of the Mantis will not be denied.

However, Yoritomo's past is not as easy to read as his future seems to be. When Yoritomo reached his *gempukku*, the man he had known all his life as 'Father' took the boy to the top of the Mantis cliffs.

"You are much like me, in your anger." Yoshitsune looked down, his face hard as stone. "Sit, boy."

Surly but compliant, the boy sat on the high cliff wall, looking down over the towering fortress of his clan. "Seven years ago today, Yoritomo," Yoshitsune began, "your mother and your two brothers were murdered. This much I have told you. The scar you bear, my leg, these are the remains of the past.

"I must speak to you about the night your family was murdered. I can only tell you this tale once, my son, so you must listen closely. It is all you will ever have."

"You told me my family died in battle..."

"Silence, child!"

Confused and angry, the boy stared, but the man's thoughts were already far away. "The night you were born, the storms raged across the heavens, and your mother's screams were echoed by the thunder of the *kami*. You have always been strong - as she was, though I see your father's cunning behind your eyes. Three years later, your eldest brother came to me, speaking of treachery and betrayal."

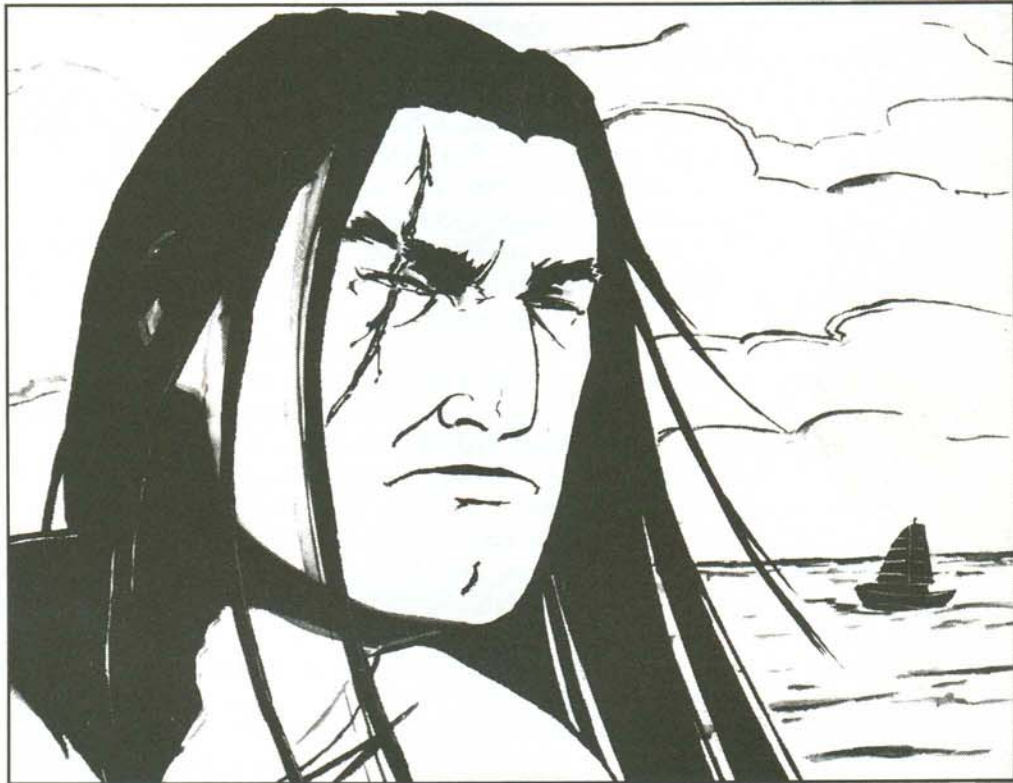
"Betrayal?" Yoritomo's eyes narrowed.

"Quiet, boy." The words were harsh, sharp. "There is much to tell, and little time. It was late in the evening, and the servants had gone to their rest, leaving us alone in the chambers of the daimyo, deep in the heart of Kyuden Gotei.

Your brother told me of the storehouses of silk beneath our palace, and of the *gaijin* - strangers from a far-distant land - who would trade much for our wares. He said they would take our silk from us if we did not bargain with them as petty merchants.

"They spoke to him, these *gaijin*, of dangerous sorceries, and they encouraged him to speak to his father of their offers." The old man smiled, his wrinkled face creasing in a thousand directions. "Your brother knew what the answer would be: No trade, at any cost. The Imperial Decree has stood for over five hundred years, and the Mantis would not have their name sullied as the clan who chose to break that command.

"Yet your brother did so." His voice was tired, but Yoshitsune continued. "Your brother sought out an assassin, and asked the man to murder his father. He wanted the assassin to 'take Yoshitsune's place in all things.' The traitor was paid with 50 koku of gold, and gave his word to the bargain. Once the false daimyo had broken the Emperor's decree, your brother would restore the family's honor by killing the 'traitor', yet afterward, continue with his trade." Seeing the boy's shocked face, Yoshitsune nodded sadly. "There are those who would have done worse."





"My brother was a traitor?"

"Yes, but there is more. If you are a Mantis, you can bear to hear it." The old man waited for the child's arrogant nod before he continued. "The *gaijin* from the south sent spies - men with twisted knives and red-painted faces - to murder the family of the daimyo while they slept.

"The *gaijin* crept into the hallways of the castle, silent and deadly, and where they touched the wall, they left it marked with the acid of their hands and feet."

"I have seen the marks," the boy interrupted, "on the castle walls."

His father raised a hand, and the boy was silent. "Those marks are the signs left by the *gaijin* sorcerers, who kill at night without mercy and without honor. Remember them when I am gone.

"They murdered your mother as she slept. Their hands left only white bone in their passing, and the touch of their skin burned black holes in her flesh. She did not even scream. Your second brother leapt from his bed, hearing them in the hallway. He tried to raise the alarm, but the paper walls of our palace crumbled from their burning touch, and they tore his eyes from their sockets with their fingers.

"Of your oldest brother, the foulest tale must be told." The man looked down at the boy, seeing his young frame shake with fury. "The traitor was slaughtered with his own katana, as the red *gaijin* faces leered and grinned. The marks of their feet upon the floor carved such holes in the stone that your brother's spilled blood remained for days. Even the lowest *eta* would not remove it."

"But the *gaijin* did not kill you, father."

"No, my son. They did not." He shifted upon his crutch, the stained wood twisting upon the stone of the cliff. "The servants had begun to scream, and the guards came quickly, finding the *gaijin* as they moved into your small room - the youngest child of Yoshitsune and Kirei. I fought them there, tearing at them with your ancestor's sword until the Storm Legion could come. But the assassins left us both with scars." Almost without thought, the Mantis daimyo reached to touch his crippled leg, the old scars crisscrossing the flesh as finely as spider's silk.

"My face." The boy's hand flew to the white trace down his cheek.

"Yes. I could not stop them entirely." The sorrow in the Mantis daimyo's voice spoke volumes. "Yet I saved your life, as was my duty as

your father, and so the family line will live on." Below them, the mighty wave crested the horizon, racing toward the shore with the fury of all the elements. Its lofty peak stood fifty men high beneath the black storm, and within seconds, the tiny seaside village would be crushed by the massive weight of the water.

"It was my duty to tell you this, as it is my duty to give you your *gempukku*. Then you will be a man, Yoritomo, and no longer in need of me. This is my last duty to you, as your father." The boy stood in the sprinkling rain, amazed, as Yoshitsune raised the ancient sword of the Mantis from his obi. "...in all things."

"Your... duty." The boy whispered in comprehension. "The *gaijin* did not kill my father." The tsunami crashed into the land, throwing houses and trees into the air like chips of wood, and the young son of the Mantis closed his fist about his father's sword. "You did."

"Fifty koku of gold, and my honor. That was what your life cost." The man whispered, stepping back as his crutch fell to the ground.

"But you will always be... my son."

The crashing wave tore at the barricades of Kyuden Mantis as the old man threw his body into the sea. Above him, the storm tore at Yoritomo's hair, and the thunder drowned his scream of rage.



"Peasant" Weapons

All these items are considered 'peasant', or Nofujutsu weapons. As such, the samurai of the Greater Clans will generally refuse to use them. Many of these weapons can be used to entangle. Entangled opponents must double their TN to Hit until they have freed themselves with a successful attack versus a TN of 20, destroying the entangling chain. However, if a weapon has been used to entangle, it may not also be used to attack.

CHIIRIKI **3k2**

A normal spear to which is added a length of weighted chain on the non-bladed end. It can be used as a normal spear, or the chain can entangle an opponent rather than causing damage.

KUSARI-GAMA/KYOKETSU-SHOJI **2k2**

The kusari-gama is a kama with a long weight of chain attached, used for climbing as well as entangling. The Kyoketsu-shoji is effectively the same weapon with a difference in head design and a heavier length of chain. Both provide a free raise when used to climb short distances.

KAWANGA **Ok1**

The kawanga is a simple climbing hook and rope. It can entangle (though the TN to escape is 10). It provides two free raises when used to climb short or medium distances.

LAJATANG **1k1**

Similar to the *sasumata* (mancatcher), the lajatang is a 6-foot long pole arm. However, the lajatang has capture hooks at both ends. A target can escape the lajatang with a simple strength test, TN 20.

MANRIKI-GUSARI **1k2**

Another entangling weapon, the manriki-gusari is a simple chain with weights at each end.

PARANGU **2k2**

A standard machete, the parangu is not made of the intricately folded steel of a katana, and will certainly break if matched against a samurai's sword.

SHIKOMIZUE **2k2**

The shikomizue appears to be a simple bamboo walking staff, but inside hides a sharpened blade for fighting. If used as a staff, the shikomizue is 1k2 because of its light weight.

TANKOJI (STICK WITH TALC) **Ok0**

The Tankoji is not effectively a weapon, but is often used by Mantis sailors in brawls. It is a hollow stick, corked on both ends, containing a large amount of stinging talc. When broken, the talc explodes, blinding everyone within 5 feet who does not make a simple Willpower roll versus TN 20.





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Chapter Two



The Fox



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Crab*: The Fox once served a purpose in the Empire: to carry Shinjo's words while her true children were away. Their time is done, and their sword should have been broken long ago. Let the Unicorn take them in. Their mewling requests are a waste of the Emperor's attention.

- Hida Tampako

• *Crane*: The Fox are the most noble of all the Minor Clans, serving the Empire with dedication and honor. If they have need of an ally, we shall give them one.

- Kakita Yoshi

• *Dragon*: Wisdom is found in the blood of the spirits, and courage in the heart of man. The Fox have both; they are doubly blessed.

- Mirumoto Sukune

• *Lion*: Minor Clans are good for marching before the heart of the army. They are useful for discovering the traps of the Daidoji - and for sacrificing their lives to save their betters. The Fox are no more than this: expendable.

- Matsu Eji



The Way of the Fox

"Even the largest mountains are made of small stones."

- Ryosei

Near the wide plains of the Scorpion lands, a tremendous forest spreads through valley and dale. This forest, though not as old and grand as the ancient Shinomen, holds secrets and hidden glens whose beauty has often been lauded by Crane poets. The forest known as the Kitsune Mori (Fox Forest) is the homeland of what is perhaps the oldest and certainly the most respected of all the minor clans: the Fox. The lands are fertile, though tangled with forest and unable to support any but the most rudimentary rice production. The peasants live on the bounty of the forest, from the quail and other game birds, to the berries, acorns, fruits and nuts that are plentiful through the lands.

The Fox Clan was born of the remnants of the Ki-Rin, when Shinjo led her children over the northern mountains toward distant and unknown lands. They are the survivors of the ancient war with the Shadowlands, and for seven hundred years they were considered the voice of Shinjo's children within the Emperor's court.

For nearly a generation, the Clan of the Fox lived in the Unicorn lands, building Otaku Palace with their own hands and gathering the food and rice that they tilled from the fields. The Fox were clever farmers - too clever for their own good. They used the rich land to their advantage, and soon caught the notice of the nearby Ikoma scouts.

With a command from the Emperor's court, and a deed instructing them to distribute the

lands to their peasants and contribute a greater share to the granaries of Otosan Uchi, the Lion marched an army to the border of the Fox lands, expecting to battle over the lands. Bravely, the warriors of the Fox fought, but were utterly crushed by the Lion. The much smaller Fox Clan had no choice but to do as the Lion requested; they could not hope to fight against the greatest military force in Rokugan. The Emperor, to bring peace, resettled the Fox in the lands below the southern Spine of the World mountains, hoping that the distance and hard terrain between the Fox and the Lion would end their battles. In some ways, it did: the Lion no longer wanted the Fox Clan's land, and so they did not pursue combat with the followers of Shinjo. However, the Fox have never forgotten their harsh treatment at the hands of the Lion, and the enmity between the two has never diminished.

When the battered remnants of the Fox arrived at the forest which would be their new home, they were a ragged band. They had brought only what they could carry, and had no provisions for stores. In desperation, they turned to game-hunting to feed their children, weeping at the need to kill and eat the flesh of animals - even that of rabbits and other small game.

One day, the daimyo of the Fox discovered a dead female fox in one of his traps, her two small kits mewling at her side. For a week, he struggled to feed the small ones out of a sense of guilt and respect for their mother's spirit. He brought them to a shugenja of his clan, and there the secret of the kitsune was revealed. The fox that had died in the trap was the last of the ancient kitsune, who had remained behind when the kami fell to earth and ordered the spirits home. She had been unable to travel to the Celestial Heavens because her kits were too young to make the journey. Now she lay dead at the hunter's feet, and her cubs were his to raise. The Fox daimyo, Shinun, accepted the burden as his rightful penance for breaking the laws and sullyng his flesh with the meat of animals. The shugenja saved the lives of the cubs by transforming them into human form, so that the clan could care for them as sons of the Empire. Those two, a man and a woman, are the legendary founders of the Kitsune line. Their names were Osusuki and Akomachi, and when they were old enough to marry, Osusuki took a wife from the children of Shinjo, and Akomachi became a fox and married with the spirits of the land. They form the bond between the Fox and

the kitsune, and truly, all the children of Kitsune Mori are of one blood.

THE UNICORN

"No one loves the mother more than the child who has been taken from her."

– Shinjo

As suddenly as they had left, Shinjo's clan returned. They rode great, towering beasts, and screamed of blood and vengeance as they charged through the Shadowlands, the Crab lines, and toward the heart of the Emerald Empire. The daimyo of the Unicorn invited the Fox to rejoin their clan, and become one with the Ki-Rin again, but the Fox Clan refused. They had been too long independent to bow their head to another, no matter what blood ties bound them.

When the Unicorn returned to the Emerald Empire, the Six Clans were in chaos. Some shouted that the Unicorn were truly the children of Shinjo, and all their rights and properties should be returned to them. Others argued that these warriors were impostors with no claim to Shinjo's legacy. Some of these turned to the Fox, offering their support against the newcomers.

They pledged to support the Kitsune in cutting down those who would sully the name of their ancient ancestor.

The Fox alone were silent.

They remained in the lands given to them by the Emperor, and did not attempt to rejoin their 'former clan'. Some claimed that the Fox were waiting to be invited home, but the Fox said they had for too long walked the forests alone, and would not now journey behind another. Kitsune Hanru phrased it best: "Follow your own path. To walk behind another is nothing more than to become captured in another man's pitfalls. We know our weaknesses and our strengths. For nearly a thousand years we have walked alone. I see no reason to change that path."

The Unicorn and the Fox have amicable relations, and indeed, members of the Unicorn Clan are the only ones allowed free access to the Kitsune libraries (other than the Emperor and the Kitsune themselves, of course). The Unicorn have occasionally pressured their 'little brothers' to return, but seem quite proud to claim relations with the Fox. In their eyes, the Fox have served Shinjo well, and they have great respect for the



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Phoenix:* If the Fox spent as much time on their spellcraft as they do in their forests, they might be a force to be respected. As it is, only their uncanny relationship with the spirits gives them the strength to hold their land; but that alone will be enough.

– Isawa Uona

• *Scorpion:* We know the secrets of the Fox, and we know their cleverness. If other clans mistake their true worth, so be it. They will only make our alliance with the Fox all the more fruitful for their scorn.

– Bayushi Tasu

• *Unicorn:* They are our errant children, confused as to their place in the world. We must convert them, and bring them home to the side of the Unicorn. It is our duty, and it is their destiny.

– Shinjo Yokatsu

• *Other Minor Clans:* The Fox are strong, and they are clever, but they are not brave. Though they hide in their forests and beneath their magic, one day they will be flushed from the trees and the groves. Then we shall see the courage of the Fox.

– Ichiro Chuga



KITSUNE BEHAVIOR

The kitsune spirits of Rokugan are tricksters, good-natured but eager to play a prank or teach a lesson. They are not evil – but, then again, they are not truly good. Some few kitsune choose to leave their spiritual selves behind and integrate into mortal society, giving up their powers and abilities for the space of a moon, a year, or a hundred years, in order to interact with the Emerald Empire.

Kitsune understand lessons, and they are willing to put up with nearly anything (within reason) if it is explained to them in the context of learning a valuable skill or a new idea. But they like to teach as well as learn, and a samurai who takes on a kitsune's education should be prepared to learn some harsh lessons.

The legends of kitsune say that their wisdom was once sought by the first Hantei, when he wished to ease his sister, Shinjo, of a great burden. There are legends of kitsune guarding samurai, while others speak of kitsune stealing away a lover. For each legend of kitsune aiding the peasantry, there is another in which they steal food from an innocent traveler.

The kitsune are most likely guilty of all these things.

minor clan. Still, even the Unicorn do not truly consider them equals.

THE KITSUNE MYTH

Popular Rokugani legends of the 'spirit foxes' known as kitsune call them everything from demons to *kami*, attributing bad fortune, magical spells and abilities, and even claiming that they are seductresses and *maho*-users. These scornful words spring from the Rokugani culture's genuine fascination with a creature that does not want their attention. The moment you look for a kitsune, she is gone. Yet, on the day you decide that you are no longer looking, you may see her at the corner of your eye. Only the Fox Clan has any innate understanding of the gentle woodland spirits, and their tie to the kitsune runs deep – deeper than blood.

To understand the truth behind the kitsune – both the creatures, and the clan which bears their name – requires a samurai to take an extended stay in the woods of the Fox Clans, learning their traditions and their secrets. And then, if the samurai has been truly dedicated, and truly understands the nature of these most elusive and rare spirits, he may catch a brief glimpse of a woman with red-fox hair and amber eyes before she slips away into the woods once more, lost to the spirit-ways. The spirits come and go as they please, and no mortal controls their actions.

To demand that a Fox Clan member show you a kitsune will only make them laugh.

Kitsune, according to legend, are mysterious, clever, wise and mischievous. They are pranksters with a good sense of humor, and they are creatures of kindness and loyalty. Tales say that if you have earned the respect and loyalty of a kitsune, she will forever follow you, hoping one day to return the kindness. A popular myth speaks of a woodsman who had set a trap to catch a wolf that was stealing his oxen. A fox was captured instead, and the hunter, having a kind heart, bandaged its wounds and let it free. Days

later, when he had forgotten his act of kindness, the wolf came to steal his oxen once more. The wolf cornered the poor woodsman, and was about to eat him alive, when a valiant fox leapt from the bushes, knocking the wolf to the side and allowing the hunter to spear the beast with his small knife.

Kitsune are known to possess the magic of illusions and misdirection, helping them to hide in the thick woods and to deceive those that seek to find them. According to some less flattering legends, the kitsune feed on the living spirit of mortal men in order to fuel their magic, drawing their sustenance from the dependency of others. The Fox Clan reject this myth, and it is considered to be the height of bad form to mention it in the hearing of a Fox samurai – so much so that several noted duels have been fought over the subject.

Kitsune are said to be able to change forms into whatever they please, either male or female, and are always said to be exceedingly beautiful when in mortal form. There are few tales of kitsune who permanently give up their fox-form



to live among the samurai of Rokugan, as the kitsune always seem to be too dedicated to their woodland and their freedom to be trapped in one form for long.

Long ago, the ancient tribes of Rokugani spoke of a battle that occurred between the kitsune and the Tiger-spirits, a race of man-beast that is now unknown in Rokugan. It is said that the kitsune tricked the Tiger-spirits into leaving Rokugan forever, never to return. Scholars, particularly those Isawa who have studied the tale, say that this is no doubt apocryphal. They believe that the story describes the separation of Rokugan from the distant Ivory Kingdoms to the south, and that these mythical 'Tiger-Men' were most likely a primitive tribe that left for the south before the time of the Kami and the creation of the Shadowlands.

CULTURE

"Fall down seven times; stand up eight."

– The Fox Clan Banner

Modern culture within the Fox Clan is still very simple, a legacy of their previous duties. They maintain an excellent library, keeping all the records of Imperial Courts and Imperial mandates. Although they do not track the political and courtly affairs of the Empire as do the Seppun, the Kitsune library is renowned for its legal and historical information. It was to be their legacy to Shinjo, when she returned: details of all the decisions made by the Emperors, and information covering the lineage and legacy of the Champions, their children, and their extended families. When a clan or noble family is left without an heir, the Empire turns its eyes to the Fox, for their lineages are maintained in exacting detail as far back as the first war with the Shadowlands. The only clan whose records they do not have are those of the Unicorn. No records were kept by the Ki-Rin, and though the Fox have repeatedly attempted to piece together the lineages of the Ide, Iuchi, Otaku and Shinjo, they have only the briefest of details and their records are inadequate at best.

The Fox Clan is still very close to their brothers in the Unicorn, despite the difficulties that sprang up at the beginning of their interactions. Over time, the Unicorn repeatedly show that their nature is honorable, and they bring nothing but friendship and allegiance to those that stayed behind. In fact, many of the

Unicorn refer to the Fox Clan samurai as their 'brothers,' a tribute to their shared lineage.

HUNTING WITH A FOX

The Fox are a peaceful people, more inclined towards study rather than war, but their natural bent toward trickery and deceit does not bring them much honor in the Emperor's court. Although they are deeply connected with the spirits, particularly those of forest and field, they are politely shunned when they come to the great gatherings. This trend has been even more pronounced since the return of the Unicorn Clan. Recently whispers have circulated that the Fox shouldn't be a clan at all; they have outlived their usefulness as 'Shinjo's Voice,' and now they should return and join the true children of the Ki-Rin, or that they should become ronin, their land given to the Scorpion or the Crane.

Much to the detriment of the Greater Clans, the children of the kitsune are wily, and they know the politics of deception and trickery. Although the Fox do not often match wits with the Great Clans, they are more than willing to risk their lives in order to protect their clan and the forest that surrounds it.

From their earliest days, children of the Fox Clan are taught the paths and dangers of the outdoors, encouraged to play in the fields and woods, and given instruction in the uses of the thousands of plants that grow throughout Rokugan. Hardly a province in the Empire does not wish that it had a permanent Fox Clan resident, to be midwife, herbalist, and healer. The Fox learn the myths and the medicinal properties in each woodland thing, and from their first steps they are taught to walk the secret paths of the animals. They have an almost uncanny ability to track and hunt, and they are most at home when they are alone in a forest, no matter where that forest lies in the Empire.

Even when they are invited to spend a season in the court of another clan (or in the fabulous courts of Otosan Uchi itself), a Fox is almost never idle. They spend their days in healing crafts and in hunting, performing as a guide to the provinces they know, and learning the ways of the land in unfamiliar areas.

The Fox are in an unusual position: they are the only Minor Clan other than the Mantis to have the blood of a Kami in their lineage. Moreover, they were adopted by, and have the blood of, a spirit creature, and thus their nature is



THE LADY OF THE FOREST

The Lady of the Kitsune is detailed in myth as either a ten-tailed fox spirit or as a magnificent woman with silver hair and hands as pure as snow. Either vision of the Lady is correct, by the words of most Fox samurai. She is worshiped as a secondary image of Benten, Fortune of Beauty, and much revered in the Fox Lands. By all myth in the Empire, she is a unique creature, capable of granting wishes, and of stealing men's hearts forever if they glimpse her face only once. She is said to be the mother of the kitsune race, the patron of the Fox Clan (and because of that, also thought to be another image of Shinjo, the kami of the original Ki-Rin).



twofold. They are not truly the children of Shinjo, but neither are they born of ronin stock nor granted their position through the Emperor's generosity. They are not a great clan, but they have been the representatives of Shinjo for over seven hundred years – a renown that has not faded, even after the Unicorn's return.

ART

The Fox Clan are not renowned for their art, although they are dedicated to its pursuit. Rather than conform to the interests of the Imperial Court in paintings and great statues, to a Fox Clan samurai there is no greater beauty than can be found in the wild places of the Empire. They travel in groups to visit such beautiful locations as Ki-Rin's Shrine and the shores of Shinden Asahina. The Fox believe that removing something from its origin (such as a plucked flower or transplanted tree) only decreases the beauty of that thing. They value trees which grow in strange and gnarled patterns, and often leave offerings to the beauty of such a place. A visitor will find no ikebana arrangements in Kyuden Kitsune, only small flowering plants that are allowed to grow freely over the outer walls of the palace. A visiting Phoenix once remarked upon the overgrown and strangely wooded beauty of the Fox lands, and it is precisely that feeling which the gardeners of the Fox wish to invoke. If a tree wishes to lean, they allow it to lean, tidying only the weeds and young growth that clusters around its base.

Because of this strange quirk, Fox Clan art is not very well received in the Imperial Court. They bring twisted wooden staves, worn to a polish by the wind and the tide and covered in natural pearls plucked from oysters in the Crane bay. Their handiwork, and its explanation, is ignored and forgotten by the courtiers of Otosan Uchi. Fox art is described as 'informal' and 'rough', without consideration for the thousands of waves that wore the wood into its current state.

MAGIC

The Kitsune have a unique relationship with the spirits of the forest and of the wild places, an affinity that is reflected in their study of magic. Although they are not the most powerful shugenja in the Empire, they are the most attuned to the wilderness, and are certainly the most practiced in deception and trickery. Fox shugenja learn to use an enemy's own weaknesses against

them, and with this in mind, they succeed. Their magic may not be among the most respected in the Empire, but it can be one of the most effective if used with imagination and subtlety.

The Kitsune have another advantage over their more 'book-learned' cousins. Fox shugenja are well versed in the land, and in the plants and their medicinal properties, and are able to create medicines for common illnesses and diseases. They are less likely to be refused by woodland spirits, as well, and have a certain advantage when they cast their spells in the outdoors.

Fox bushi are less common, although they do exist. Every shugenja of the clan is taught to defend themselves in battle and trains with at least one weapon. The Kitsune feel that it is important to be able to maintain one's safety without magical aids, and they train this discipline into their young shugenja as well.

LAND

Kitsune Mori, the forest of the Fox, lies between high hills and twisted valleys, growing in a thick tangle up and down between the plains of the Scorpion and the Crane. They spread across the edge of the Ronin Plains, and they cover the lower hills where the Wasp keep their palace above the Lake of Silent Dreams. It is a verdant place, filled with animals and rich vegetation, and the greenwood smell of the trees stays in visitors' clothes for days at a time. Though the ground is undeniably fertile, the Fox Clan has no interest in agriculture, and will quickly take arms against the woodsman who raises an axe toward any of the older trees.

The Fox Clan lands cover the entirety of the Kakusu province, and their palace is well hidden behind thick forest. The legends of spirits that inhabit the forest are known to all travelers, and rarely does a visiting samurai camp anywhere but on the road itself. To venture deeper into the forest may mean giving yourself to the trickery of a passing kitsune spirit, something most samurai strenuously avoid.

The kitsune spirits are not the only small *kami* that inhabit the woodland. Unlike its greater cousin, Shinomen Forest, Kitsune Mori is a place of idyllic beauty and wide groves. No trace of foul enchantment taints the magnificent autumn leaves, and no sign of Taint is permitted within the realm of the forest. The kitsune can quickly detect a traveler who approaches their homeland with Taint in his heart, and just as quickly, they



THE THREE MAN ALLIANCE

Three years ago, the armies of Bayushi Tomaru invaded the Suzume Hills, seeking an easy route to the rich Daidoji ports of the coast. After his invasion of the Sparrow, he was certain to begin expanding north, taking the lands of the Fox and Wasp as well. Ryosei, who had only recently gained the position of Fox Clan daimyo, did not wish to see Scorpion boots crush the verdant forest. When she was approached by Tsuruchi, she paid careful attention to the words of the Wasp daimyo. As the Scorpions charged against the Sparrow in the hills of the Suzume lands, they found their forces assailed by arrows from the sky and spells of deception were lifted to reveal a command of Fox shugenja. Tomaru was handily defeated, his men routed and chased by the spirits of the field, and the Three Man Alliance was formed.

When the battle was done, the Wasp daimyo proposed an alliance among their three clans, to prevent the Scorpion or the Crane from attacking each other through the lands and routes in the territory of their clans. The other two agreed with little deliberation, and thus began the first major alliance in the Empire's history forged between Minor Clans. The site of the tremendous battle became known as Mitsuo Otoko Rengo Heigen (Three Man Alliance Plain) in honor of the day and the honored alliance.

turn his road around and twist his path so that he can not disturb them or venture farther.

The hills and valleys that wind through the forest are thickly covered with tall trees and vine-crusted groves. Unlike the Shinomen, there are no signs of Naga inhabitation or of past shrines, but the valleys of Kitsune Mori do have several areas of caves, clefts in the hillsides and deep incisions into the earth. Some say that a hidden labyrinth of passages connects all areas of the Kitsune Mori, and that it is these passages which the Fox Clan uses to ensure their safe (and rapid) travel through the area without disturbing the spirits or the forest itself.

LIVING WITH SPIRITS

The Fox insist that kitsune are nothing more than magical spirits of nature who choose to inhabit their forested lands, and the mountains to the north. They do not serve the Fox Clan, nor does the Fox Clan owe them any obligation other than friendship. Although many of the common *heimin* leave offerings outside their villages to appease the kitsune, the Fox Clan insists that these spirits are not worshiped, but only revered.

Spirits are said to be immortal, and it is the same with the kitsune – and that tremendous life span affects their descendants. Where a man of the Empire can expect to live no more than an ancient 100 years, there are documented members of the Fox who have died at the ripe old age of 250. Such occurrences are unusual, but they do happen; the clan attempts to prevent rumors from spreading. Still, many samurai have come to the Fox lands seeking the mystical 'waters of life' that keep them young and healthy for such a long time, and which allow them to live beyond the time of a normal man.

There are numerous small holy sites in the woods of the Fox, some hidden from the main paths and roads of the Empire. Some of these shrines are quite ancient, built by the first Fox samurai just after Shinjo left Rokugan. White foxes adorn many of these locations, carved into free-standing torii arches and placed within small caves that dot the mountainous northern province of the Fox Clan.

Some of these locations are so sacred to the Fox Clan that they also contain Shintao statues to honor their ancestors, as well as the white kitsune



HIDDEN FOOTSTEPS

Ring: Earth

Base TN: 15

Casting Time: 4 actions

Duration: Instant

Mastery: 4

Raises: Casting time,
Area Covered

When a shugenja casts this spell, it raises up the spirits of the Earth in the area, giving them temporary form and physical presence.

These spirits immediately scour the area, purging the earth of any tracks, evidence of a traveler's passing, campfire, or other lingering trails. They will clear a ten by ten foot area in front of their caster to its natural, undisturbed state in such a manner that it will be impossible for a tracker or hunter to tell that anyone was ever there.

The spirits are not otherwise under the caster's control, and have no obligation to perform any other tasks. When they have finished, they will return to the earth and become dormant once more.

Each raise of the spell adds an additional five by five foot area.

carvings. The name for these fox-carvings is *myobu* (also the word used to describe ladies of courtly rank and noble lineage), and they are considered good luck. Often, women of the Fox Clan who have discovered that they will soon bear a child travel to one of these caves, and spend the night there alone, hoping to gain the kitsune's blessing for their child.

One popular tale of the Kitsune lands concerns their affection for the priests of Inari, the Lesser Fortune of Rice. Once, long ago, a traveling kitsune couple sought shelter in the temple of the Seven Fortunes. The two foxes cowered beneath the eaves of the temple, but the monks would not let them inside. Though the rain was cold and the female was obviously gravid with young, the foxes were hurried away with the brush of a stiff broom.

Nearby, a monk of the *mikokami* Inari opened the door of his small hut and called to the foxes. "Come inside," he said. "For though my hut is small, my fire will warm you. Though my food is poor, there is rice that you may eat, and your fair lady may rest herself upon my humble blanket." In gratitude, each of the two kitsune bowed their heads to the ground before the humble monk, and swore ten oaths to Inari, to protect and defend her temples. Also for this reason, foxes do not eat rice, in remembrance of the monk whose food they took when they were in need. Since that day, small white fox statues can be found at the temples of Inari in remembrance of the kitsune's vow. Temples to Inari are popular in the small villages of the Fox Clan, and for this reason can be found throughout the province.



NOTABLE BATTLES: NIGHT OF A HUNDRED DEATHS

The Fox have been involved in numerous battles during their time in the Empire. Though they have tried to stay out of disputes, their location (directly between the Crab, Crane and Scorpion) prevents them from maintaining a completely peaceful border.

Three decades ago, a rivalry emerged between the Hare and Fox Clan, leading to a series of small armed confrontations. The Fox claim that the rivalry began when a Hare scout fired upon an unarmed party of Fox shugenja. The Hare denied this.

The small war stalled when Kakita Toshimoko arrived to arbitrate. Unfortunately, before diplomatic discussion could begin, one hundred Fox diplomats were suddenly murdered. The Fox immediately declared war upon the Hare. A small but vicious war erupted and was cut short only by the direct intervention of the Emperor. A Crane advisor was forced upon the Fox and Hare Clans, with veto power over their daimyos' actions. Though both clans chafed at the brusque treatment, the bloodshed seemed to be over.

The cause was simple for the Fox to ascertain: the Hare were using blood-magic, and wished to cover their tainted lies with the blood of the Fox Clan. A Fox emissary, sent to the Hare before the war began, returned with a story of secret chambers within the Hare palace where rituals to the Dark One were performed with the daimyo's own blood. Aware that their own ancient sword held a dark secret, Kitsune Oshirin, daimyo of the Fox, suspected that an agent in the Hare clan was attempting to overthrow the Fox in order to capture their ancestral weapon – and planned to free the scroll that lay hidden in the hilt of the ancient weapon. This must not be permitted to happen, no matter how many must die to prevent it. However, if the Crane were told why the *maho*-using Hare were attacking the Fox, they would certainly claim the sword for themselves. The secret would be forever revealed, and the scroll would surely fall into the hands of those who would break its seal and use it for evil.

This could not be allowed.

With much work and guile on their part, the Fox have eradicated their enemy. The Hare Clan is no more, and the sword of the Fox remained hidden.

Kakita Toshimoko and Kitsune Ryoden

The battle known as the Night of a Hundred Deaths is one of the most recent in the Empire's history, occurring only 30 years ago. Despite constant Crane diplomacy, the two feuding families threatened war. At that time, a young bushi named Kakita Toshimoko courted the daughter of the Fox Clan daimyo. He fell in love with her, and asked her father's permission to

marry, but Kitsune Oshirin refused. Toshimoko led the small army of Kakita assigned to defend the Fox lands. Finally, a group of Kakita samurai, led by the young Kakita Toshimoko, met with the gathered troops of the two families on the border. After persuasion and open threats, the two Clans agreed to turn their back on war and seek a diplomatic solution.

Late that night, a group of assassins apparently hired by the Hare slaughtered many of the sleeping Fox Clan dignitaries. Kitsune Oshirin refused diplomacy and the two Clans met in battle the next morning. The Crane, feeling that the Fox Clan were in the right, sided with them against the Hare, and the battle was swiftly over.

When the battle was over, the Fox daimyo challenged Toshimoko to a duel, claiming that it was the Crane's unwanted love for his daughter that blurred his vision to the truth about the Hare's wickedness. The daimyo claimed that if Toshimoko had been serious about his love for Kitsune Ryoden, the Crane would have sided with the Fox from the beginning, rather than seek a diplomatic solution to the war. Toshimoko, already one of the finest swordsmen in Rokugan, was forced to accept the duel, and killed the man in a single stroke.

Oshirin's daughter, Kitsune Ryoden, fled the site in tears at the death of her father. Her brother Gohei accepted his father's position with sorrow. Ryoden spent her time in the gardens of the Fox, refusing all visitors and swearing vengeance for her father's needless death. At last, on the day her brother's first child was born (the babe who would one day become Kitsune Ryosei), Ryoden took her father's armor and sword, and went to seek out the wisdom of the Dragon Clan. For many years, she remained among the Mirumoto and the Togashi, learning the skill of weapons and trying to appease her hunger for revenge with their wisdom. She never returned to the forests of the Fox, and when news of her death at the hands of Kakita Toshimoko was brought to Kitsune Gohei's court, the clan mourned for a daughter who had been lost to the sacrifices of honor.



THE KITSUNE FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Willpower

KITSUNE SHUGENJA SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Skills: Calligraphy, Defense, Herbalism, Hunting, Kenjutsu, Meditation, any one Bugei skill.

Beginning Honor: 1, plus 8 boxes

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

KITSUNE TABOOS (1 POINT FLAW, UP TO 3)

Kitsune, as with other spirits who spend a great deal of time among the people of the Empire, have been 'sullied' by being too much surrounded by mortal man. In order to keep themselves distant (and avoid losing their spiritual powers), the kitsune who interact with the Fox Clan have adopted several taboos which guide their behavior and mannerism. Some human members of the Fox Clan, as well, have chosen to adopt these taboos, respecting their spiritual guides and making it less likely that a visiting kitsune will be noticed. Not all Fox samurai choose to accept a taboo, but those who do follow it faithfully all their lives. It is said that a Fox who accepts the burden of a taboo is especially loved by the kitsune, and if he abides by it faithfully, will be well cared for if ever in great need.

- The kitsune are creatures of the land and of the woods. The samurai may not harm a commoner, nor may he allow the woodland to be defiled or destroyed without cause. He must care for the needs of the common *heimin*, and in



CROW'S VISION

Ring: Air

Base TN: 15

Cast Time: 2 actions

Duration: 1 hour per School Rank.

Mastery: 4

Raises: Casting time, Other (See Description)

The Fox spell known as Crow's Vision is extremely rare in the Empire, and not often taught outside the Fox Clan. It allows the caster to both see normally through their own eyes, and if they close their eyes and concentrate, to see the landscape around them as if they were a crow flying above the ground. This unique perspective can be used to foil ambushes, to scout the area, or to pursue a hunter's quarry.

For every three raises, the casting shugenja may also give the gift of Crow's Vision to another individual.



exchange, he will be warmly greeted and well-cared for when he visits a village.

- The kitsune are creatures of deceit and mischief. The samurai who chooses this taboo may never tell the complete truth, and must cover their words with a veneer of falsehood. This is a dangerous taboo to accept, and the samurai must be doubly careful not to mislead his lord while still adhering to the bonds of the taboo.

- For a spirit to become involved in the affairs of mortal man, they must be invited to take action. This taboo requires the samurai to never directly affect either a battle or any other major scenario without first having been asked to interfere. They may not enter houses unless they are invited to do so by name, and they may not offer aid until they have been asked for it.

- The samurai cannot eat rice, but must make do with the natural berries and foods of the forest, supplemented by a diet of fish and fowl. In this way, they attune themselves to the forest, rather than to agriculture and the ways of mankind, and remember the kitsune oath to Inari, Lesser Fortune of Rice.

- Being alone is abhorrent to many kitsune, who live for affection, dedicated attention, and mischief. Samurai who accept this taboo may never be alone, and must always be in the company of at least two other individuals – even when sleeping.

- As with many spirits, kitsune become ill if they are not able to keep their promises, and follow their word of honor. A samurai who accepts this taboo will commit *seppuku* before he breaks a promise (even one given in haste), and if someone else breaks a promise to them, they will rapidly become deadly enemies.



RYOSEI

Rank 3 Kitsune Shugenja
EARTH 3 Willpower 4
WATER 3
FIRE 3 Agility 4
AIR 2
VOID 3
Honor: 3
Glory: 4.2

Advantages: Ally: Tsuruchi, of the Wasp, Ancestor: Osusuki & Akomachi, Crafty, Quick, True Friend: Yoshun, Way of the Land (All of Southern Rokugan)

Disadvantages: Heart of Vengeance: Hare Clan, Kitsune Taboo: Must follow Word of Honor

Skills: Battle 2, Calligraphy 3, Defense 2, Etiquette 2, Herbalism 2, History 4, Hunting 5, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Black Scrolls 1, Lore: Scorpion Clan 1, Meditation 1, Seduction 2, Shintao 3, Yarijutsu 2

Spells: Benevolent Protection of Shinsei, Calling the Elements, Crow's Vision, Elemental Ward, Hands of Jurojin, Accounts of Shorihotsu, Cloak of Night, Command the Mind, Wind-Borne Speed, Fist of Osano-Wo, Yuki's Blessing, The World is Not Heavy

When Kitsune Ryosei was young, her father chided her, calling her 'daughter of Shinjo.' Ryosei has not forgotten the taunt, and resents its implications. In her mind, the Fox are a free people, born with the tears of Amaterasu and once led by a *kami* but not enslaved by one.

Ryosei has clung to that belief with an iron grip. In the last two years, she has seen change and hatred, anger and betrayal. Her own father has fallen victim to one of the greatest of the

Black Scrolls, and now walks the land as the Walking Horror of Fu Leng, slave to the evil of the Shadowlands.

The title of daimyo has fallen on her shoulders with a terrible burden. She believes that it was her quest to find the lost sword of the Fox Clan which caused her father to fall into *maho*, and perhaps her anger holds some truth. Whatever the final outcome, she swears that she will see the dead return to death, and that her father's decayed and blasphemous body will be destroyed. It is her hope that this act will free his soul; in reality, it may be the salvation of her own.

To others, Ryosei is a gallant compatriot, brave and well-versed in the ways of war. She is a dedicated leader, expert in hidden warfare as well as direct assault. She is open and friendly to all members of her clan, ignoring other responsibilities in order to give them her full attention. Never has a member of the Fox been turned away from an audience with their daimyo; if they are in need, Ryosei brings all her talents to bear for her brothers and sisters. In many ways, her men respect her more for her lack of formality.

Ryosei is still a young daimyo, younger than either the Wasp or the Sparrow Clan daimyos with whom she has an alliance. Still, they trust her instincts, and respect her fervor to see the minions of Fu Leng crushed before they gain a foothold in the Empire. Although they do not understand the reason for her dedication, the other clans of the Three Man Alliance realize that Ryosei will be true to her word.

Her dearest companion is a young monk named Yoshun. He is a burly fellow, born of *heimin* stock and taken into the monastery when he was but six years old. His mentor was Ryosei's tutor as a child, and the two were often taught their lessons together. Their friendship has developed into a bond between companions. Working together, they have helped many *heimin* escape difficult lives in other parts of the Empire, and relocated them to safer havens.

Ryosei is not a stunning woman, but she is an attractive one. Her

eyes are hazel strangely flecked with green. However, to hide her unusual features, Ryosei frequently keeps her eyes narrowed in the presence of those not of her clan.

On occasion, Ryosei has even worked with the Tortoise and their strange Yobanjin allies, learning a few of the trade routes that carry *heimin* from the Empire. Although Ryosei does not agree with the methods of the Tortoise, she cannot argue with the results.

Ryosei is standoffish to those not of her clan, attempting a formal demeanor when necessary, but when she is in the Fox lands, she is charming and witty. She enjoys hunting through the woods, and the kitsune of the forest love her as though she were their true-blooded sister.

The only truly odd thing that visitors frequently comment on is the strange white-breasted fox pelt that decorates a corner wall in her chambers. Although a Unicorn Clan member tanned it well, it still seems strangely out of place.

Ryosei will not discuss it.



OSUSUKI & AKOMACHI (3 POINTS)

In the story of the pilgrimage of the Fox and their union with the last kitsune of the forest, the male kitsune's name was Osusuki, and the female's name was Akomachi. In some art depicting kitsune, the male is black, while the female is white. Either the black fox or the white fox are good omens, with the black fox being called *genko* and the white fox being called *byako*.

These oaths allow the kitsune to gain power through the shrine itself, and to be able to live there, and find shelter. The kitsune, in turn, protects those who work and live near the shrine, and aid those who come to them for help. Fox characters who purchase Osusuki and Akomachi as ancestors are descended from the kits of their union, through human form. They automatically have the unusual green eyes of the Kitsune family, and may spend one Void Point in any area of the world, in order to gain the advantage Way of the Land for that area for one day.

Further, they gain one free die (rolled and kept) for any action taken when they are in the forest of Kitsune Mori. However, the character must take at least one point of Kitsune Taboos.

Chapter Three



The Dragonfly



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Crab*: These children are a blight on the Empire. Let them come to our lands and spend a few months defending the Empire from the Shadowlands as we have before they make a mockery of all the things we have sacrificed to protect.

- Hida Kisada

• *Crane*: Their diplomacy and staunch service to the Dragon Clan is admirable, but they must learn that blasphemy wins no friends in the Emperor's court. For all their talk of enlightenment, they do not act very wisely.

- Doji Hoturi

• *Dragon*: The Dragonfly profess the single most dangerous philosophy in all of the Empire. It is for this reason that others hate them. All men hate what they fear.

- Togashi Yokuni

• *Lion*: These insolent puppies may have swindled the Emperor's favor, but it will not last forever. The doctrine they preach will be their undoing. On the day when they have pushed the Emperor past his tolerance we will crush them - and those who created them.

- Matsu Shiro

The Way of the Dragonfly

Nature follows the path of least resistance.

The path to enlightenment is the path of nature. Do not resist. Follow.

- *The Tao of Shinsei*

A little east of Kyodai na Josho Suru (the Great Climb) lie the lands of the enigmatic Dragonfly Clan. The House of Tonbo is considered to be one of the most important minor clans, not because they have any especially important cultural contribution to make to Rokugani society (although they do), nor because they harvest any special resource, but because the Dragonfly are the sole emissaries to the Dragon Clan. Without the Dragonfly, no one sees the Dragon. In this way, they have become critical to Rokugani politics. To find out what the Dragon families' opinion on anything may be, to get an audience with the Dragon daimyo, to deliver messages to the Dragon, one must first approach the Dragonfly Clan.

It was not always so. Many years ago, a young Phoenix shugenja named Isawa Maroko was betrothed to Akodo Yakutsu, an ambitious bushi from the Lion Clan. Prior to her intended marriage, she was sent by her family to the Dragon lands to study their ways. There, she met and fell desperately in love with an older Dragon bushi by the name of Mirumoto Asijin. Asijin was without a family: his wife had died while giving birth to their first son. The boy died only days later. Grief-stricken, Asijin had begged his daimyo, Mirumoto Tomo, first for the opportunity to commit *seppuku* and then to be released from his duties so that he could become a monk. Both requests were refused. His master told him he had

had a vision of Asijin, and that he had a great destiny he had yet to fulfill for the clan.

Asijin found that Maroko eased his long pain, and she found a gentle strength in this man who had served his clan so faithfully in the face of his sorrow. They grew to love each other, and Asijin decided that he could not face the pain of losing another woman for whom he cared, he again begged for permission to commit *seppuku*. Again he was refused. Tomo said simply, "Fate whispers in your ear. Do not ignore what it says."

That night, he and Maroko made a pact to marry, with or without their families' blessing. Asijin asked for permission to leave his duties, and to his surprise his family assented. The lovers traveled to Kyuden Isawa, where Maroko explained the situation to her master Isawa Ejuko, then the Master of Water. Though she had little political power to aid them, she gave the young couple her blessing.

The two left and traveled west. Their attendants went with them, and they settled in the foothills of the Dragon mountains. There, they organized a bushi school and a shugenja school to continue the work they had begun with their respective families.

When news of his jilting reached Akodo Yakutsu, he was furious. He sought redress with both clans. But the Phoenix's famous pacifism denied him. They forbade him to take revenge on a family member, even one who had forsaken her duties for something as base as love. As for the Dragon, they also refused, saying only, "If they wish to leave the service of their families for the folly of love, let the Fortunes decide their fate."

Yakutsu was enraged. He mobilized his army and marched on the small settlement, slaughtering Asijin's students. Only the magic of Maroko and her students kept his forces from overwhelming the settlement in the first day of battle. Yakutsu went to sleep that night and dreamed of taking his revenge the next day when no bushi remained to defend the settlement.

He awoke the next morning to find himself surrounded. To the west was an army of Dragons; to the east, the Phoenix. And behind him to the south were more shugenja of both clans than he had ever seen in his life. He was not allowed to retreat until he swore to leave the lands of the couple forever. Impressed by the show of support, the Emperor blessed the marriage and awarded them clan status.



Many years later, a much older Yakutsu was insulted in court by an Agasha ambassador. The Emperor found in Yakutsu's favor. Seeing his chance for revenge at last, he brought an army of 5,000 Lions to the Dragon lands and prepared to lay siege to their mighty fortress. He carefully avoided the Dragonfly lands so that he would not break his vow and thereby lose the chance for his masterstroke.

Once he had set up his siege, he met with the Dragon daimyo, Togashi Ayoko, and told him that his honor could only be satisfied if he were allowed to duel Mirumoto Asijin.

Asijin was summoned to Shiro Agasha. The Dragon daimyo told him what had transpired. Then he told him, "Your folly has gone far enough. It is time for you pay for the breach you have caused us with the Akodo family. You will duel Akodo Yakutsu, and you will allow him to win. Your honor will be preserved, and Yakutsu will be satisfied with his revenge."

Asijin agreed, but not without a condition. "Ayoko-sama," he said, "I will do this to restore the honor of my family, the Mirumoto, and the Dragon Clan, our benefactor. But I beseech you to promise me that forevermore, the Dragonfly Clan will have the allegiance and the protection of the Dragon Clan. For these things, I will gladly give my life." Togashi Ayoko agreed.

The next day, he faced Yakutsu. Snarling, Yakutsu drew out his katana, and struck Asijin down. The Dragonfly daimyo never even attempted to draw his sword.

Drunk with satisfaction at finally achieving his revenge on Asijin, Yakutsu led his army to the Dragonfly lands. He entered Asijin's house and confronted Maroko. "I have killed your husband," he roared. "Now I will have my revenge on you as well." Yakutsu declared himself the new daimyo of the Dragonfly Clan, and announced his intention to marry Tonbo Maroko.

Infuriated at the gall of the hateful Lion, Maroko's son, Tonbo Kuyuden, challenged him to a duel. The revenge-minded Lion agreed. He had nothing to fear from a boy barely past his *gempukku*, he reasoned, and he could remove the threat of a future

THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Phoenix:* The Dragonfly are to be admired. The courage to defy all of society in the name of wisdom and enlightenment is staggering in its profundity, if not in its wisdom.

- Isawa Tomo

• *Scorpion:* They are fools. Everything they say makes them more vulnerable to attack. It will be a simple matter to destroy them should the need ever arise.

- Yogo Asami

• *Unicorn:* Like our own, the ways of the Dragonfly are foreign to the Empire. While we do not agree with many of their tenets, we feel a certain kinship with them - if only for the way we have both been ostracized.

- Otaku Kamoko

• *Minor Clans:* Tell the Dragonfly Clan to study their scrolls and be silent. Every time one of the fools opens his mouth, he makes things more difficult for the rest of us.

- Yoritomo



revenge attempt. But the boy had been well trained. He had studied at the Shiba bushi school before returning home to be instructed by his father in Mirumoto fighting techniques. He slew his father's killer at dawn the next day.

When Kuyuden learned what the Dragon daimyo had forced his father to do, he was furious and wanted to seek justice. But Maroko forbade him. "There has been too much bloodshed over this issue," she said. "Let us turn our thoughts to more productive matters." Seeing that his mother bore no hatred for the Dragon for ordering her beloved husband's death, he was chagrined at his own emotion. He begged her forgiveness and immediately set the clan to the task of studying the path to enlightenment.

Since then, the Dragonfly have served as the Dragon's emissaries. The Great Clan grew weary of the constant requests for audiences and enlightenment, and charged the Dragonfly with weeding out the unnecessary and the foolish requests. Now, those seeking audience with the Dragon must ask the Dragonfly, a fact that galls all of the Great Clans except the Phoenix. As for

the Lion, they bear the Dragonfly Clan unmitigated hatred, but fear to act on it lest they have to face the Dragon as well.

CULTURE

I will tell you a secret.

Our brothers and sisters will never achieve enlightenment. They cling to tradition the way moss does to stone. Tradition does not allow for change, and what is enlightenment if not changing one's view?

— Tonbo Ikuru

The Dragonfly do not enjoy a great deal of respect from the Great Clans. There are several reasons for this. The first is the fact that they act as emissaries for the Dragon Clan. The Dragon are legendary recluses, and they have become more so since the Dragonfly took on the role of emissary. More than half of the requests for audience with the Dragon are denied. This denial rarely takes the form of outright refusal. Usually, ambassadors are stonewalled. "I am so sorry, my lord, but an avalanche has blocked the Climb. It





TONBO SHUGENJA OUTFIT

(All considered to be of average quality): Kimono, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, Wakizashi, Tanto, 1 Koku

will be some time before it can be cleared away." "Please excuse me, my lord, but the heavy rains this season have made the road treacherous, and I could not allow my family the shame of allowing you to perish in an accident." "It is unfortunate that your journey was delayed, my lord. But the person you wish to see has left for an extensive tour of the Unicorn lands. He will be not be back for two months." Those who choose to stubbornly wait out the delay are given comfortable lodgings and treated with respect. If the Dragon truly refuse to speak with the visitor, the Dragonfly will create a new obstacle to be given to them after the current delay expires. If they continue to stay and the Dragon still refuse, they are stonewalled again. And again. And again, until they finally leave in exasperation and disgust.

This infuriates the other clans. They know that they are being slighted by a Minor Clan, but they can do nothing about it since the Dragon have made the Dragonfly Clan their gatekeepers, and this status is supported by the Emperor.

Worse, no Phoenix ambassador is ever refused, fueling speculation that the Dragonfly show deliberate favoritism to their parent clans. The Dragonfly only shrug and say, "The distinguished Phoenix ambassador was granted an audience by our patron. What can we do but allow him to ascend into the mountains?" Since to challenge the assertion is to call into question the honor of

both the Phoenix and the Dragon Clans, no public challenges are made.

Moreover, the Lion Clan especially hates the Dragonfly for the losses at the Battle of Kyuden Tonbo and the Battle of the Great Climb. Lion courtiers spread vicious rumors about the Dragonfly in the back halls of courts across Rokugan. They rarely openly insult the honor of the clan, but they seek to besmirch the Tonbo family's name at every opportunity, fanning the flames of distrust and anger that the Dragonfly's conduct ignites.

But what most hurts the Dragonfly Clan's reputation is its own philosophy and culture. They practice their beliefs openly in their lands, and every hindered ambassador of the Great Clans has had a chance to see them while lodged at Kyuden Tonbo.

After he slew Akodo Yakutsu, Tonbo Kuyuden was awarded a family sword by the Emperor. The new Dragonfly daimyo thanked the Emperor. He then put the fine katana in Kyuden Tonbo. He never wore it; no Dragonfly daimyo ever has. Listening to the wisdom of his mother, Kuyuden dedicated his clan to the study of magic and of enlightenment.

Kuyuden, deciding that there had been enough bloodshed over the formation of their clan, disbanded the small bushi school his father had created. He dedicated the resources of his clan to his mother's shugenja school.



WATER'S SWEET CLARITY (WATER)

Base TN: 20

Casting Time: 5 Actions

Duration: 3 Rounds

Mastery Level: 5

Concentration: Total (20)

Raises: Casting Time, Images

This spell creates the power of augury for the shugenja casting it. He or she must have access to a pool of water to cast it. Even a bowl of water will do. The water should be still so that the images can be reflected more easily, but it can be cast over running water such as a brook or river. GMs may raise the TN by 5 for casting the spell on running water.

After the spell has been cast, the shugenja peers into the water on which he or she has cast the magic.

Images appear to him or her in the water. These images can take the form of events, people, places, objects, or anything else the GM chooses. The images in the water are typically associated with the future. They are visions of things to come. They can sometimes, though, be current events or even images from the past that have some bearing on the present.

(continued)



Sometime after her clan was again safe from the Lion, Maroko, too, had a vision. It was the same vision that her husband's daimyo, Tomo, had had. She saw a great destiny for Asijin, and it was the creation of the Dragonfly Clan. She saw that the clan was destined to be the emissary for the Dragon Clan, but she also saw something that was equally important. The birth of the Dragonfly Clan had created a change in the Empire. Moreover, that birth was change. She saw that change was a key component of enlightenment. The Tonbo Shugenja School therefore came to focus its study on magic that caused change, and the entire clan adopted a philosophy celebrating the idea.

In an empire that worships tradition, this philosophy is startlingly iconoclastic. The Lion consider it tantamount to treason, and the rest of the Great Clans (with the exception of the Dragon and Phoenix) view it with disdain at best. As for the two patron clans, the Dragon say only, "There are many paths to enlightenment. Who can say that theirs is wrong?" The Phoenix say, "Their

shugenja school was founded by an Adept of Water, the very element of change. Is it so surprising that they choose such a philosophy? Can we condemn them for serving the element that gave them life?"

For the Dragonfly, there is wisdom in the words of Shinsei. There is solace in the worship of Lady Amaterasu and the Fortunes. There is honor in the deeds of the past. But tomorrow is another day. It is as different from today as today is from yesterday. Change in life, in people, and in the Empire is inevitable. To fight it is the gesture of a fool. Only when one accepts the inevitability of change

can one find the path to enlightenment. They assert that to achieve enlightenment is to change from being unenlightened. Thus, one must change to become enlightened, and they extend this belief to include the whole of the Emerald Empire.

LAND

Despite all the fighting that's been done over them, the lands of the Dragonfly are not really very valuable. Situated in the foothills of the Dragon's mountains, they are hard and rough. They do yield crops, but only after hard work, and the harvest generally is just enough to provide the Dragonfly province with what it needs in foodstuffs.

Militarily, it isn't particularly defensible. The rolling hills aren't large enough to provide sufficient cover for a defending army. Their greatest value in any military campaign is the access that they provide to the Great Climb, but even then warring on the Dragon Clan requires

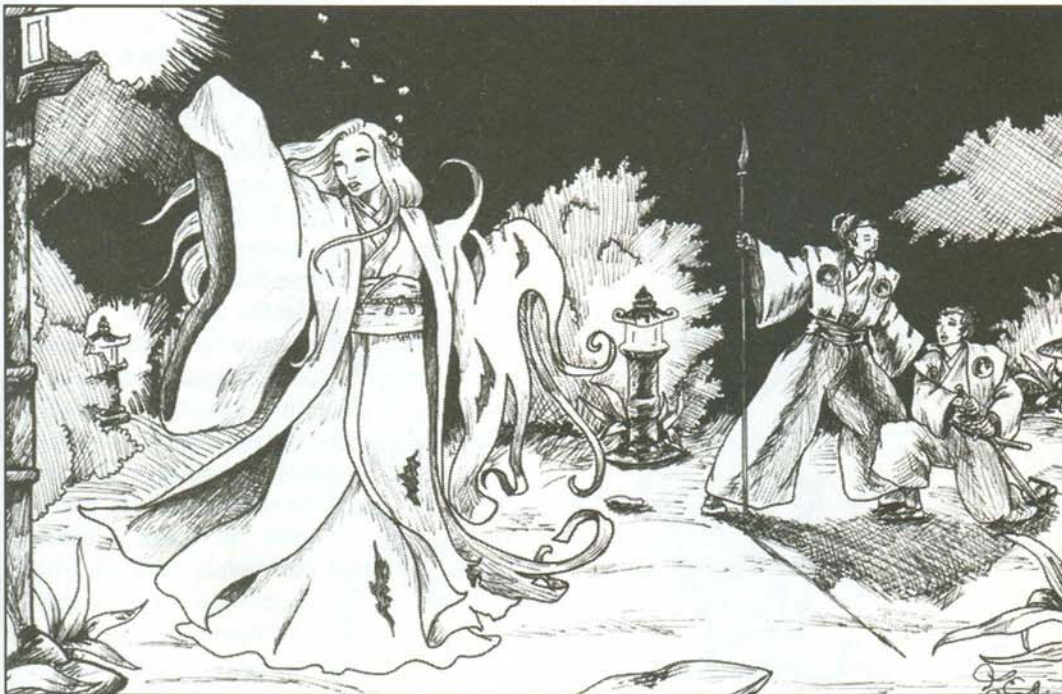
an opponent to move into the mountains where the Dragon are firmly entrenched.

Most of the land is given over to temples and lodging for guests of the Dragonfly. There are a number of temples dedicated to Lady Amaterasu, but the vast majority of the temples found in the Dragonfly lands are focused on the study of the Tao of Shinsei and of enlightenment.

Kyuden Tonbo itself is comprised of a series of houses where Tonbo Toryu, the Dragonfly daimyo, holds court, his scholars pursue enlightenment, and his guests lodge while awaiting word from the Dragon.

The most impressive feature of the manor is the Tonbo Shugenja School. Five buildings are dedicated to the school where shugenja are trained in the ways of magic and in the study of enlightenment. Visiting shugenja from other clans stay in sumptuous lodgings, as the Dragonfly feel that the study of the Fortunes through magic to be a key to enlightenment. Opportunities both to learn from other clans and to teach them are relished.

For their part, the Dragonfly are content with the lands granted them. They have what they need to continue their studies and to serve the Dragon Clan. If they require anything they lack, they trade for it, or ask that it be granted by their patrons in the Dragon and Phoenix Clans. Anything more is viewed simply as a distraction from the study of enlightenment and from their duty to the Dragon Clan.



Skills and Techniques

The dragonfly's buzz is no different from the lion's roar. All creatures have a voice with which they express the Way.

So it is with us.

— The Tao of Shinsei

The Dragonfly have no formal bushi school. After his father's death, Tonbo Kuyuden disbanded the school to symbolically end the bloodshed that plagued the clan's birth.

However, the Dragonfly do have bushi. Dragonfly samurai can choose to study either at the Mirumoto or the Shiba schools. Unofficially, however, the clan prefers that their bushi study with the Shiba. The reasons for this are twofold.

WATER'S SWEET CLARITY (CONTINUED)

The spell lasts for 3 rounds. Each round, the character sees another image. The images are all associated, but their relationship might not be exactly clear. For instance, a shugenja might see horses running across a plain, a fierce Crab bushi swinging a katana, and a weeping Crane dignitary. Perhaps the Crab will kill the Crane (who is remorseful for some great crime he has committed) and the horses will run in fear from the strike. Or perhaps a spell has been cast on the horses, causing them to trample the Crab warrior, a childhood friend of the Crane. Ultimately, the character must figure out what the visions mean.

To cast this spell, the player tells the GM what sort of a vision his or her character is looking for: for instance, "some insight into the Unicorn courtier's death". The character then rolls. If the roll is successful, the GM grants the character three images related to what he or she wants to know. Raises can be spent to add one additional image per raise (though this by no means necessarily makes the vision any clearer); each image adds one turn to the duration.



FLIGHT OF THE DRAGONFLY (AIR)

Base TN: 20

Casting Time: 1 Action

Duration: 5 Rounds

Mastery Level: 5

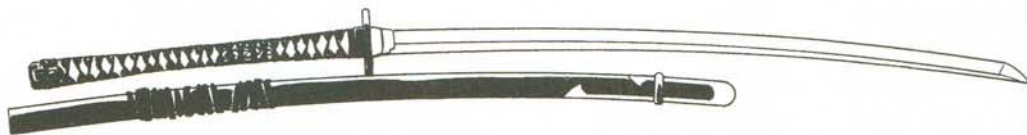
Concentration: None

Raises: Duration, Effect

With this spell the shugenja calls upon the perception and cunning of the dragonfly. The spell causes the creature affected by it to actually appear to be in two places at once.

When the spell is cast, the shugenja must choose a target for the spell. This can be any living creature (including himself or herself). Once the spell is cast successfully, the target creature appears to shift suddenly, hardly remaining still. The spell adjusts their place in the Way so that he or she is perceived by reality to be in both places at once.

The spell adds 10 to the Base TN to hit the character in combat. For each Raise assigned to Effect, the shugenja can add another 5 to the base TN. If an opponent rolls a TN that would have hit the target character normally but misses because of the spell effect, he or she strikes the wrong image, having been fooled by the reality of the appearance. The attacker has been tricked by the Dragonfly's spell into thinking their target was somewhere other than where he or she was.



The first is that the Dragonfly like the fact that the Shiba train their bushi alongside the shugenja. This better prepares them to defend their shugenja when they return home. Secondly, the Dragonfly do not wish to become any more beholden to the Dragon than they already are. Thus, training with the Phoenix allows them to put a little distance between themselves and the enigmatic Dragon.

Dragonfly bushi begin the game with an Honor of 1.5.

THE TONBO FAMILY

The children of the Tonbo are taught from their first days that they are to study and seek the enlightenment around them, in the world. They attune themselves to nature, learning how things work, so that in time, they can discover 'why.'

For the Dragonfly, the reasons are as important as the effects that change causes. Each action is weighed deliberately, and every change is given respect and honor. When the world changes around them, the Dragonfly notice and spend their time learning from the alteration. Through there are some that would criticize this as seeking alternate paths of the Way and ignoring the truth, the Dragonfly only smile, and continue.

They do not try to force their opinions on others; change is only valuable when it comes from within.

Benefit: +1 Perception

TONBO SHUGENJA SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Perception

Beginning Honor: 1.7

Skills: Calligraphy, Etiquette, Meditation, Shintao, Theology, and any 2 High Skills

Tonbo shugenja get a free raise when casting any Water spell.

Beginning Spells: Sense, Commune, and Summon, plus any 3 Water spells, any 2 Air spells, and 1 spell of any element.

MAGIC

The magic of the Dragonfly Clan focuses primarily on the Element of Water and secondarily on the Element of Air. Both elements are extremely important to the Dragonfly viewpoint. Water is the element of transformation, adaptation, and mutability. It embodies change and is therefore central to Tonbo magical thought. Similarly, Air is the element of travel. The Dragonfly see travel as synonymous with change since it is the embodiment of the metaphysical journey one must take to achieve enlightenment. Air is also the element of intuition and insight, which are key concepts and tools in attaining enlightenment. Thus, Dragonfly magic is concentrated on the study of these two elements since the Tonbo believe that they contain the true secrets to enlightenment.

As a result of this focused study, the Dragonfly have developed several unique spells, some of which can be found in the nearby sidebars. GMs should feel free to create others as they see fit; the Dragonfly are often considered the most magically adept of the minor clans, and are quite creative when it comes to pushing back the frontier of magical knowledge.

Who's Who in the Dragonfly

The Empire today will not stand tomorrow.
—Tonbo Maroko

TONBO TORYU

Rank 2 Shiba Bushi
AIR 2 Awareness 3
EARTH 2
FIRE 2 Intelligence 3
WATER 2 Perception 3
VOID 2

Honor: 2.4

Skills: Archery 1,
Calligraphy 3, Defense 1,
Heraldry 2, History 2,
Kenjutsu 2, Meditation 3,
Naginata 1, Shintao 4, Tea
Ceremony 3, Theology 3

Advantages: Way of the
Land (Isawa Woodlands)

Tonbo Toryu is perhaps
the best known member of
the Dragonfly Clan in the
Empire. The Dragonfly
daimyo is a quiet bushi who
trained at the Shiba school
with the intention of
becoming a captain in the
Dragonfly guard.

However, while studying
in the Phoenix lands, he
found a greater love than
simple devotion to his
family: the study of the Tao
of Shinsei. When he finished
his training and completed
his *gempukku*, he set about

studying it further. Toryu visited the Isawa
Libraries, extensively researching the meanings of
the sacred scrolls as the Isawa Masters had
understood them. He spent time with the Agasha
to learn of their understanding of the texts. He
spent months at temples engrossed in the study of
Shintao.

Consequently, he has become one of the clan's
foremost authorities on the subject of the Tao and
is now more a sage than a bushi. To be sure, his
daisho is not purely for show. He is competent in
the use of his weapons, but he spends more of his
time studying the writings of Shinsei than
practicing his swordplay. He is sought out by
other members of the Dragonfly Clan for his
wisdom, and recently members of other clans
have begun to consult him on the subject as well,
a coup for the poorly regarded Dragonfly.

Toryu is quiet and thoughtful. He speaks
respectfully to all who address him, and his face
is typically cast in his characteristic smile.



TONBO MAROKO (4 POINTS)

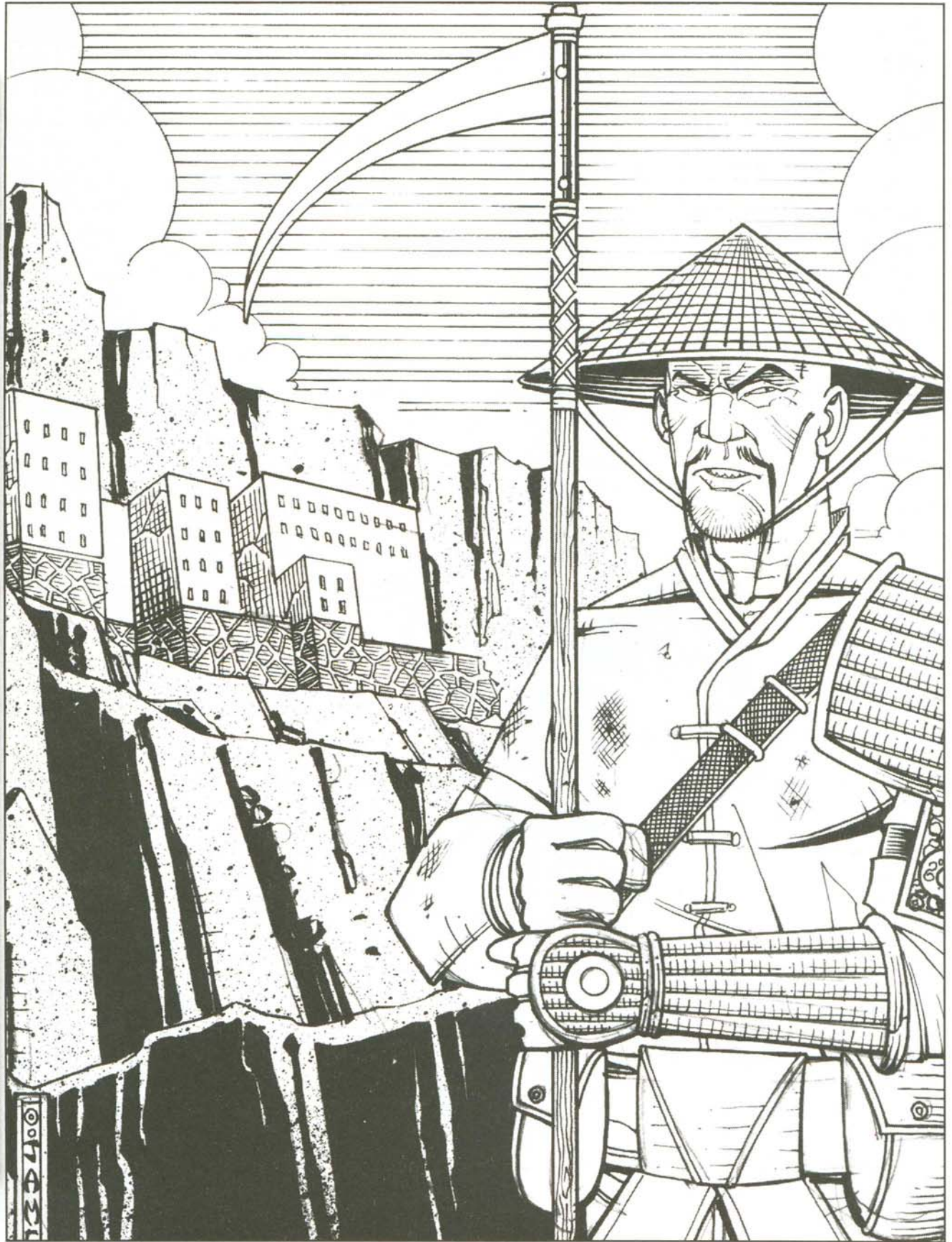
Tonbo Maroko was a
founding member of the
Dragonfly Clan. She left her
duties as an Adept of Water
to pursue her love of
Mirumoto Asijin. After they
left their respective clans
and settled at what is now
Kyuden Tonbo, Maroko
continued her studies. It was
through this work that she
had the vision that would
forever change the
philosophy of the fledgling
clan.

She foresaw that her
love, Asijin, would be forced
to die. She saw that her new
Clan would ally with the
Dragon, and that the
Dragonfly would become
their emissaries. But she
knew that change was
coming to the Empire, and
the Dragonfly were
inextricably linked to it.
Thus, she was able to
prevent her son from taking
revenge.

Maroko is seen as a hero
by all Dragonfly. She is a
courageous figure who had
the bravery to defy tradition,
break with her family and
duties, and thereby create
something new and greater
that benefits all Clans of the
Emerald Empire.

Characters taking
Maroko as an Ancestor gain
a free Raise for any action
that requires the use of
Perception. Maroko was an
intuitive woman, and she
blesses her descendants
with the same type of
insight.





Chapter Four



The Sparrow



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Crab*: Any clan that can carve a life out of such a lifeless pit must have great tenacity, which I can only admire. Their penchant for silly tales and rustic buffoonery, on the other hand, I can only pity.

- Hida Tsuru

• *Crane*: They claim there is much to learn from poverty and hardship. What that might be, I can't possibly imagine.

- Kakita Yinobu

• *Dragon*: Their vision of the world is so simple, yet so perfect. I hope that as they creep out of their nests at last, their innocence survives with their wisdom.

-Togashi Yama

• *Lion*: They remind me of a smaller, weaker, poorer version of the Crane. Were they closer to my armies, I would take the time to investigate the rumors of their prowess personally.

- Matsu Agetoki

The Way of the Sparrow

"A fool, if he holds his tongue, passes for wise."

- Shinsei

"Sometimes I think Shinsei was confused."

- Doji Onegano

Between the lands of the proud Crane and the fierce Crab there is a barren, remote land where little grows other than weeds and lichen. In this tiny cluster of hills, a band of samurai have carved out a life for themselves. In this place, honor and survival weigh in equal measure. These bushi practice the sword with a finesse equal to that of their Crane cousins, cling to what little they have with a tenacity that would shame a Crab, and can quote the Tao of Shinsei as well as any Phoenix scholar. This odd and often misunderstood group is the Sparrow Clan, and for seven centuries they have proudly made their home in the rocky fields and muddy hills that bear their name.

It was not always so. Seven hundred years ago, Doji Onegano was a high ranking Crane official with a somewhat witless son named Suzume. The most important leaders of the Crane Clan had gathered at Onegano's palace to discuss peace overtures with the Crab Clan during the terrible First War. This civil war, the first in the Empire's history, had nearly destroyed both clans. The war had its genesis in a simple dispute over shipping rights along the Kenkai Hanto Peninsula, but had rapidly escalated. The Crab had nearly exhausted their economic resources. The Crane's southernmost provinces were now in ashes and they found themselves betrayed by the Yasuki family. As the Crane Champion Doji Mizobu initiated the discussion whether the Crane would maintain their claim on shipping rights along the

peninsula, Doji Suzume spoke up. It was a simple, flippant comment, meant to do nothing more than to break an awkward silence. Instead, it earned Suzume his small place in history.

"Maybe the world would be a better place if samurai just gave their wealth to the peasants and allowed them to rule?" said Suzume.

Doji Mizobu was a suspicious and vengeful man. The Yasuki treachery was still a raw and painful memory, a failure which Mizobu knew would taint the legacy of his rule. The Yasuki had begun their rebellion by arguing with Mizobu's economic policies, and here was another Crane disputing him in public! From his own family! Determined to forestall another rebellion, he suspended the peace talks and left without another word, his offense apparent.

Some thought that Doji Onegano had concocted an elaborate plan to unseat Mizobu in which Suzume was merely a pawn. Some believed that the old Crane had found enlightenment, and flocked to follow him. Onegano was stunned, denying that he had intended any sort of political coup or stumbled over any sort of enlightened wisdom. Of course, this only led Onegano's allies to believe him modest and his enemies to believe him duplicitous. The Crane court became a flurry of confusion as the courtiers and generals pondered this new "political development," while the First War raged on.

The matter was finally settled by the Emperor himself. As punishment for their civil war, both the Crane and Crab were ordered to surrender an equal portion of their territory to the Emperor, creating a buffer zone between their lands. Peace came swiftly, as the Crab and Crane diplomats immediately began working in unison to find the most remote, barren, and useless territories that would still satisfy the Emperor's requirements. With the exception of what is now the Golden Sun Plain, these lands were given to Doji Onegano to "assist him on his path to enlightenment." He was also granted a family name and a minor clan of his own "for his wisdom and strength of honor." In truth, the Emperor did this in order to remove him from the court scene entirely, allowing the Emperor's Left Hand to stop fighting among themselves and return to their true duties. In the meantime, the rich lands that once belonged to Doji Onegano were appropriated by the Emperor's cousins, the Seppun.



Doji Onegano felt that his life had been ruined. His estates were gone. His reputation was destroyed. He had been banished to a rocky wasteland due to the loose tongue of his idiot son. In a fit of desperate frustration, Onegano renounced his titles, gave everything he owned to Suzume, wished the boy luck, and stormed off to a Phoenix monastery.

At the age of seventeen, Doji Suzume found himself the new leader of a minor clan. He was in a position of responsibility for the first time in his young life. Though he didn't even have a castle yet, Suzume found no shortage of bushi and peasants ready to swear fealty to his name. The people that once had gladly followed his father now followed Suzume, eager to hear more about his ascetic philosophies. Suzume's concept of "honorable poverty" had spread like wildfire. People traveled for miles to learn from him. The day Suzume arrived in what would become the Suzume Hills, he greeted his people.

They said nothing. They were waiting for him to say more.

The weight of what was required of him slowly sank in, and Suzume became afraid. For years, philosophy had been little more than an amusing hobby for him. Now people actually believed in his words, and were ready to die for

them. Suzume decided right then that it was time to make a change in his life. For starters, he could start thinking about what he said before he said it. Further, he determined in the future to make sure he believed in something before he said it. That would help his credibility to no end, presumably. Unfortunately, Suzume couldn't think of much to say. Still, he was sure that this new clan would work out. It was an exciting time.

Luckily he was joined at this point by his aunt, Doji Masako. Masako was an elderly Crane scholar who had become disillusioned by the underhanded tactics on both sides of the First War. She saw her nephew's new clan as a second chance. Her legitimate wisdom and expertise melded well with Suzume's enthusiastic charisma, and together they built the philosophical foundation of what would become the Sparrow Clan.

CULTURE

The history of the Sparrow has been dictated by one overwhelming principle: necessity. Suzume's philosophy dictates that one do nothing which is unnecessary. Excess is unnecessary, and therefore a waste of spirit. Keeping a pure view of what is necessary and what is not leads to a pure, enlightened spirit.

THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Phoenix*: How they can bear such subtle wisdom in the ways of bushido yet be so utterly inept in the ways of magic, I shall never understand. All the same, I think I like them.

- Isawa Tadaka

• *Scorpion*: Anyone who speaks so freely and at such length can have no secrets left. How boring, to be a Sparrow.

- Shosuro Taberu

• *Unicorn*: The respect they hold for the *heimin* is to be commended. Their sword technique is strange, but effective. I think that Rokugan could use a few more Sparrows.

- Shinjo Yasamura

• *Other Minor Clans*: If you can drag one from his farm for long enough to put a sword in his hand, there are few bushi in the Empire I would sooner trust my back to than a Sparrow.

- Tsuruchi





Most Sparrow follow Suzume's philosophy of honorable poverty rigorously, but it isn't as if they have much choice. A life of poverty and hardship is all one can expect from life in the Suzume Hills. The inhospitable terrain has forged the men and women of the Sparrow into a patient, determined lot. The samurai regularly labor side by side in the fields with the peasants, and a strong work ethic and feeling of brotherhood has emerged within the clan. The community within the Suzume Hills is much like a small town. Everyone seems to know everyone else and there are no secrets.

The Sparrow are a peaceful people, but a practical one. Though few would dare live upon the lands they claim, they have never sought to leave or expand their territory. They are content with what they have and believe others should behave likewise. Past experiences with bandits have taught the Sparrow to be cautious with strangers, and anyone visiting violence upon an



inhabitant of the hills can expect swift and merciless retribution.

Sparrow architecture tends toward the simple, durable, and economical. Buildings tend to be tough rather than eye-catching. For example, Suzume Shiro itself is a one-story stone house without any sort of external ornamentation or decoration of any kind. When Daidoji Uji visited the Sparrow lands a few years ago he passed by the "castle," believing it to be a stable or a large storage house. Simply put, the Sparrow don't have the desire to waste a lot of time creating exterior ornamentation. The unpredictable weather makes such frivolities a worthless endeavor. Banners, gilding, paint, and statuary are quickly worn down by the winds and rains that pelt the hills. Of course, the insides of Sparrow households are another story.

In their leisure time the Sparrow are expert artists and craftsmen. Even the simplest Sparrow home is covered nearly wall to wall with intricate *sumi-e* paintings, works of haiku, and *ikebana* floral arrangements, all created from simple and easily obtainable items. The Sparrow believe creating and looking upon such art focuses the soul and expands the mind. Those who have viewed the subtle majesty of Sparrow art tend to agree. Their style is rigidly traditional, but breathtaking in its attention to detail and the obvious care that goes into each piece.

Sparrow artwork is as beautiful as a summer day, but sadly it is just as transient. The humid Sparrow climate breaks down paper quickly, turning masterpieces into moldy pulp within days. This does not deter the Suzume in any way from continuing their work. In fact, it encourages them to do more. As long as their old pieces are degrading, they must create new ones to replace them. Just as the Fortunes create works of natural wonder that fade before the eye can fully take them in, the Sparrow continue to fill their homes with beauty on a daily basis. A Sparrow who is not working in his field or practicing with his sword is very likely sleeping, creating art, or dead.

Though painting, *ikebana*, and haiku are all good and respectable pastimes among the Suzume, the greatest work of art a Sparrow can create is a story. Because stories are ephemeral, they are the perfect form of Sparrow art: passing with the wind, and then forgotten until told once more. A Sparrow bushi can recite the names of his ancestors as well as any Lion, but he can also tell an entertaining story about every one. Oddly



enough, the reason for this is the weather. The same rain and humidity that destroys Suzume artwork makes the care and maintenance of ancestral records a virtual impossibility. There are a few dry, warm places in the hills where scrolls and important paperwork can be kept (Suzume Shiro, for instance), but for the most part circumstances demand that all education and knowledge in the Sparrow lands be passed down orally. Stories become a necessary tool for remembering one's ancestry and keeping track of history. Many Sparrows spend their days in the field rehearsing their stories, refining the tale they plan to tell that evening. A truly skilled storyteller is greatly respected among the Sparrow Clan.

In no one is the tradition of a Sparrow storyteller greater embodied than in the venerable Suzume Mukashino. Once the daimyo of the Sparrow, Mukashino retired several years ago and turned the leadership of the clan over to his son, Kashira. Now he spends his time traveling back and forth across the hills with his grandson, Yugoki, spreading tales of heroic deeds, great tragedies, and whatever else comes to mind. He is eagerly welcomed in every home in the hills and given a place of honor at any table he deems worthy to visit.

Unfortunately, this respect is rarely extended beyond Sparrow society. To put it gently, outsiders tend to consider Sparrow storytellers a bit long-winded. A Suzume will let no detail escape his consideration, no unresolved factor of the plot go unexplained no matter how tangential. Among the Sparrows, this is a valuable trait for a story. Without such detailed accounts, they would have no other way to record their tradition. Among the other clans, Sparrow storytellers are often greeted with polite disdain or, as in the case of Mukashino, barely veiled horror (see Suzume Mukashino's description in *Winter Court: Kyuden Seppun*).

In the courts, Sparrow company is usually shunned. Samurai of the Great Clans consider the Sparrows to be rustics, bumpkins, or rambling dullards. Their disdain for wealth and possessions places them just above peasants and monks in most nobles' estimation. This disrespect irks the Sparrow. They feel that they have earned a place in Rokugani society more than anyone. Most Sparrows are as versed in etiquette as any Crane and as knowledgeable in bushido as any Lion. A place in the Emperor's court is simply their right, and if the samurai of the great clans find them

tiresome, it must simply be a matter of jealousy. The Sparrow endure, and don't expect too much from "outsiders."

Three years ago, the Suzume made their first major step into the outside world. The Scorpion general Bayushi Tomaru invaded the Suzume Hills, seeking an easy route to the rich Daidoji merchant ports of the coast. He expected the Sparrow to put up a fight, but found much more than he bargained for. The Sparrow met the Scorpion army on a rugged field in a raging storm, prepared to fight to the bitter end. As the Scorpions charged, they suddenly found their forces assailed by arrows from the sky. As they turned to seek the archers, the ground beneath their feet bucked and swayed, upending their cavalry and leaving easy targets for the Suzume samurai.

The Sparrow were nearly as surprised as the Scorpion to find their ranks bolstered by a small army of Wasp Clan archers and Fox Clan shugenja. Tomaru was horrified. He had expected easy pickings, but found his army being slaughtered by a "rabble" of minor clan samurai. He retreated to the Scorpion provinces in disgrace. As it turned out, a Wasp magistrate had caught wind of the invasion and quickly delivered the news to his lord, Tsuruchi. The Wasp daimyo realized that if the Sparrow fell, the Wasp and Fox would be Tomaru's next targets, so he immediately mobilized a group of elite troops to halt the Scorpion's advance. The Fox were not about to be outdone, and sent forth a band of their most powerful shugenja as well.

On that very day, in that very place, Tsuruchi proposed an alliance between their three clans in case such an invasion should occur again. Ryosei of the Fox agreed as well. The two turned to Suzume Kashira for his opinion. Kashira was torn. His clanmates prided themselves on their autonomy, but it seemed that the Sparrow could not remain undisturbed in their hills any longer. After much internal debate, the Sparrow entered into what would be called the Three Man Alliance, and the place where the battle was fought was renamed Mitsuo Otoko Rengo Heigen (Three Man Alliance Plain) in honor of the day.

This alliance has opened up a new world for the reclusive Sparrows. To consolidate the resources of the three clans, the Suzume have begun sending their young men and women to the lands of the Wasp and Fox to learn archery or magic. They have taught their fair share of

GOLDEN SUN PLAIN

Directly to the East of the Suzume hills is the famous Golden Sun Plain. In the wake of the First War, the Emperor declared this area sacrosanct. No crops may be grown there. No sword may be drawn, no blood spilled, no spell summoned in anger. The Golden Sun Plain is a lush expanse of fertile land, clustered with rich forest and huge groves of naturally growing cherry trees. While the Golden Sun Plain is not part of the Sparrow Clan's territory, and they are not allowed to make their homes there, it is their official duty to protect the plain from all harm.

For some Sparrow, this duty is a hard one. The rich and beautiful land, undeveloped and fallow, reminds them of how little they have. The temptation to grow some hidden crops on the plain is great. For this reason, only the most noble and trustworthy Suzume bushi are allowed to protect the plain. Though no one in his right mind would ever attack the area (after dealing with the Sparrow, an attacker would quickly have the Imperial Legions breathing down his neck), the Sparrow consider the duty a matter of honor. To protect an unused paradise and then return every night to their rock-and-scrub homeland is a test of their courage, purity, and honor. It is a burden most Suzume are willing to accept.



SPARROW BUSHI

Outfit: (All considered Poor quality, one item Average quality) Kimono, Traveling Pack, Katana, Wakizashi, Traveling Pack, Helm. No koku.



kenjutsu to Wasp and Fox students as well, welcoming long-term outside residents for the first time in their history. The experiment has worked well thus far, as the three clans have remarkably similar philosophies. All three are self-reliant. All three have become master of their territories for unusual reasons. Now, all three are slowly expanding their horizons.

The Suzume have even begun to experiment with magic, something they have not attempted since their break with the Crane. Thus far, their experiments have been dreadful failures. The Sparrow Clan's premier shugenja, Suzume Ito, is barely a novice by Phoenix standards. He can hardly cast a spell without destroying his scrolls, and an experiment (which to this day he refuses to discuss the details of) has left him unable to communicate with the water kami. Still, it is not the Sparrow's way to give up, so Ito perseveres.

LAND

The Suzume Hills are barely a flyspeck on most Rokugani maps. Wedged between the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow to the west, the sacrosanct Golden Sun Plain to the East, the haunted Bells of the Dead to the south, and the Three Man Alliance Plain to the north, there is

little reason for anyone to visit such a remote place. The area has no natural resources, infertile terrain, and unpredictable weather. Wise travelers either pass through with haste, or avoid the area entirely.

The province inhabited by the Sparrow Clan is a simple place. One pass leads in. One pass leads out. In the middle is a twisting maze of barren, impassable rocks and muddy marshes. The land is untamed and wild, filled with a variety of dangerous beasts (see the *GM's Survival Guide* for some examples). It is a wonder that the people can even survive in such a place, much less prosper and grow crops.

Though their survival is impressive, what it all boils down to is experience. In the first few generations, fifty percent of the Sparrows died from weather, famine, disease, and other natural disasters. With hardship came wisdom, and soon the survivors began to learn exactly what their lands were capable of, and how to take advantage of what few resources they had. After seven hundred years of experience, the Suzume have become quite adept at survival. Every Sparrow knows his terrain intimately and precisely. They know exactly how to obtain food and where to defend themselves from wild animals or bandits.



As every Sparrow must struggle daily to maintain what little they have, they have developed a close bond with their lands. A Sparrow may have spent his entire life learning how to survive on his patch of land. To displace him may mean death; the land as little as a hundred yards away may not be so forgiving. A cornered Sparrow is a fearsome foe. For this reason, bandits and invaders usually give the Suzume Hills a wide berth.

The Suzume Hills are lightly populated, and intentionally so. Patches of arable farmland are few and far between. A field that easily supports two may be heavily strained by three, or rendered infertile by four, and the Suzume take no chances. Suzume families are limited by law to two births per couple, so that the population of the hills will neither grow nor shrink. No peasant, bushi, or eta have dared break this law in recent memory.

There are few roads and nothing remotely approaching a city in the hills. The population is sparsely distributed in order to make the best use out of as much land as possible. Thus a traveler passing through the hills might run into a family once every ten miles or so, and a bushi at least as often. Any patch of good farmland in the hills will guarantee the presence of a Suzume bushi somewhere nearby, ready to defend it. For this reason, the Suzume family often intermarries with *heimin*. This guarantees that there will be plenty of Sparrow bushi, well distributed throughout the province and ready to protect their families. The peasants are willing to fight side by side with these bushi, ready and proud to defend their land.

The passes at both ends of the Sparrow territory are always guarded by at least six Sparrow. Travelers are usually only greeted by one or two of these guards, and seldom ever notice the others concealed among the rocks and trees. All are trained snipers, armed with the Sparrow's trademark weapon - the sling. The sling is a simple, easy-to-make projectile weapon that the Suzume first adopted from a passing Unicorn trader centuries ago. These weapons are much easier to carry, easier to make, and easier to find ammunition for than bows. There are some advantages to living in a place with so many small, sharp rocks.



Skills and Techniques

THE SUZUME FAMILY

The Suzume still have the keen oratory skills and natural good looks of their Doji ancestry. They are adept at both public speaking and conversation, and often are mistaken for Cranes - until they begin discussing philosophy. The Sparrow heritage is both their blessing and their greatest bane.

Benefit: +1 Awareness

SUZUME BUSHI SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Willpower

Skills: Bard, Calligraphy, History, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu, any Lore Skill, any High Skill

Beginning Honor: 3, plus 1 box

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: All Things In Time

At this rank, the Sparrow have learned to focus their legendary patience, even in the heat of combat. At the beginning of the round, a Sparrow may voluntarily lower his own initiative to raise his TN to Be Hit by an equal amount. He may not use this technique while making a Full Attack. Also at this rank, and every rank afterward, the Sparrow receives a free raise on a single Lore skill of his choice. Once this skill is chosen, it may not be changed, though the Sparrow may choose a different Lore Skill every time he increases in Rank.

Rank 2: Purity of Chi

The Sparrow who has attained this level of skill wields an aura of purity as dangerous as any weapon. Any human opponent with lower honor rolls one fewer die when attacking the Sparrow.

CONVERSATION

(HIGH SKILL)

This is the art of passing time by talking, a prized and respected art among the Sparrow. The character is adept at finding inoffensive, intriguing topics to pass the time conversing upon. This skill also provides expertise at choosing topics of discussion that your audience will have no problem discussing.

For instance, a Sparrow bushi traveling along the Carpenter Wall finds himself alone in a room with a group of surly Hida samurai. The Crabs are bored, and may decide to amuse themselves with some violence.

The Sparrow decides to save his skin with quick conversation. He quickly realizes that discussing the weather is a bad idea, as it has been raining non-stop for twelve days and the streets around Kaiu Shiro are heavily flooded. Instead, he starts a conversation about what sorts of armor are the most durable, a topic which the Crabs are eager to discuss at great length.



Rank 3: Wisdom is the Greatest Weapon

The Suzume has now become a walking storehouse of information, and knows how to exploit his knowledge. If the Sparrow has a Lore Skill that pertains to his opponent, he may make two attacks per round.

This technique demands very specific knowledge. For example, against a Matsu bushi, Lore: Lion Clan or Lore: Matsu Family are acceptable, but Lore: Samurai is not. Against an oni, Lore: Oni will suffice but Lore: Shadowlands is simply too vague. Attaining levels of skill beyond 1 in a particular Lore provides no additional benefits.



SUZUME YUGOKI

Rank 2 Suzume Bushi

EARTH 3

WATER 2 Strength 3

FIRE 2 Agility 3

AIR 4

VOID 3

Honor: 3.2

Glory: 1.2

Advantages: Sensei (Suzume Mukashino), Precise Memory

Disadvantages: Idealistic, Fascination (Big Cities)

Skills: Bard 3, Calligraphy 2, Farming 3, History 3, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Battle 2*, Lore: Samurai Epics: 2, Lore: Shintao 3, Lore: Scorpion Clan 1*, Nofujutsu (Peasant Weapons) 2

(*indicates skills with which Yugoki receives a free raise from his Suzume Bushi Rank 1 Technique)

Suzume Kashira is the proudest father in all of Rokugan. At the age of 14, his son Yugoki has already passed his *gempukku*. He has mastered the art of the katana and memorized the Tao of Shinsei from beginning to end. He is a capable farmer and a cunning storyteller. When a dispute arises among the peasants, they turn to Yugoki, for they know his judgment will be wise and fair. The boy is not afraid to get his hands dirty with manual labor, and appreciates the subtle beauty of a sunrise over the Golden Sun Plain.

He is everything a Sparrow should be, and one day he shall make a fine daimyo.

At any rate, that was the plan. In his heart, Yugoki longs for something more.

Everything was fine until almost one year ago. The time came for the Sparrow to tender their annual taxes to the Emperor, a duty which demanded one of the Sparrows' rare visits to the outside world. Typically, this meant dispatching a pair of trusted bushi to Otosan Uchi to deliver the koku and return quickly before the winter snows set in. This time Yugoki begged to be allowed to go. He had heard wonderful stories of the Imperial Capital from his grandfather, Mukashino, but he had to see the sights for himself.

Yugoki's uncle, Turai, offered to accompany Yugoki on his journey to guard him from harm. After all, what sort of leader would the boy make if he was never given an opportunity to experience the world? With Turai's reassurances that everything would be fine, Yugoki agreed.

The trip was, in a word, unforgettable. Otosan Uchi was an even larger, brighter, grander picture than Mukashino's vibrant stories had painted. Yugoki was absolutely blinded by the beauty of the eternal city.

"This is nothing," Turai chuckled. "Wait until you see what comes next."

Yugoki was baffled by his uncle's comment. What could be a greater place than Otosan Uchi? They quickly paid their taxes and left the Imperial City behind them with plenty of time to spare. It was then that Yugoki noticed that they were not on the right road home. He pointed out to his uncle that they seemed to be heading too far west, but Turai simply chuckled and led their donkey onward.

Several days later, they emerged from the mountains to find themselves overlooking a city nearly as grand as Otosan Uchi, but not in the same way. The city straddled a mighty river, and

people of every clan and station bustled about busily, hawking wares, doing business, living.

Yugoki was frightened. He had never seen so many people in such a small place. "What are we doing here, uncle?" he asked.

"The taxes were not nearly so high as I imagined they would be, and we have some money left over," Turai said evasively. "I thought we might stay here a day or two, to pick up a gift for your father."

Yugoki nodded obediently, taking a deep breath and looking around once more. "What is this place?" he asked.

"When I was your age," Turai replied, "I thought that the Hills were the whole world. How wrong I was. Now come with me, for I have much to show you."

Three days later, Suzume Yugoki emerged from Ryoko Owari a greatly changed person. He returned home to work on the farm with renewed vigor, but his home seems somehow much smaller now. He still listens to his grandfather's tales attentively, but during the dull parts he finds his mind wandering back to the Scorpion City. He still rises every day to watch the sunrise, though a few of the bushi have pointed out that sometimes Yugoki seems to be looking to the west. Soon, it will be time to pay the taxes once more, and Yugoki intends to visit Ryoko Owari again.

Suzume Yugoki is a young man and looks it. He hasn't a scrap of hair on his face, and couldn't grow a beard or moustache if he tried. He is tall for his age, and though he is very thin his muscles have been hardened from a lifetime of labor and kenjutsu practice. His complexion is dark and his facial features are soft and angular. He tends to wear drab homespun clothing of earthen tones, though in the last year or so many of his friends have noticed the red silken sash he sometimes wears beneath his kimono. If the sash is



mentioned, Yugoki blushes and quickly changes the subject.

Yugoki has a rich, deep voice, perfect for storytelling. However, he speaks only rarely. He tends to spend much of his time listening, memorizing every iota of everything he hears in perfect detail. Yugoki loves his grandfather, and does not find the old man's tales to be boring in the least. He has learned from Mukashino to love a good story and to tell a good story. Yugoki is too modest to presume to tell the tales he has learned, but if prompted, he will exchange gladly exchange stories with anyone who will listen. He is very interested in stories of the lands outside the Suzume Hills, and of tales of Ryoko Owari, Scorpions, and geisha in particular.



(Doji) SUZUME

(1 POINT)

The first Sparrow was known for his quick tongue and his questionable wit. As unintended as his accomplishments may have been, one cannot discount the effect his words have had on thousands of people through seven centuries.


A Sparrow with the blood of Suzume is very clever in conversation, rolling an extra die when using Lore, Oratory, and Conversation skills. However, their words often carry more power than is intended. Whenever the character speaks in large public groups, the GM secretly rolls one die. If the result is a 1 or 10, the character's remarks will be interpreted in a way directly opposite to their intent. (For example, a witty remark might lead to your expulsion from your clan.) To make matters worse, at least half of the listeners will usually find the unintended meaning of the character's words extraordinarily brilliant.



Chapter Five



The Badger



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Crab*: "The Badger are born of Hida. They honor our ancient ancestor. We honor them and their sacred duty."

- Hiruma Yugure

• *Crane*: "A clan of no real strength. Their purpose in the Empire remains a mystery, especially with the Unicorns' return. They should be put out of their misery, and returned to the Crab as fodder for the Wall."

- Kakita Ichiro

• *Dragon*: "We do not need to understand them. Like the mountains, they exist and that is enough."

- Togashi Mitsuru

• *Lion*: "They see foes where none exist. They value our strength, yet they would waste it in pointless aggression. If they wish to serve the Empire in battle, then they should seek out an enemy to fight rather than waiting for an enemy to find them."

- Matsu Turi



The Way of the Badger

North of *Mizu-umi Ryo* (Dragon Lake), along the northern road called *Komichi no Kanashimi* (Trail of Woe) lies the highland home of the Badger. The province of the Badger is little more than a collection of foothills and small mountains, which give way to *Kyodina no Kabe* (the Great Wall of the North). These mountains protect the northern border of the empire from the barbarians of the Burning Sands. Through these highlands Shinjo led the Ki-Rin on their pilgrimage. Hantei realized, as he watched his sister leave, that if she could depart from the empire through the twisting trails and passes of the region, an attacker could enter. He would need a strong clan to watch this northern pass.

Hantei talked to his brothers and sisters, outlining his concern and proclaiming the need for security. None of his siblings could disagree with the necessity. They could, however, disagree on who should defend the passes. Although none of the clans particularly wanted the rocky terrain, there was great honor in such a duty. Hida claimed his followers should be given the task. They were, after all, the defenders of the southern border. The remaining followers of Shinjo argued that this land was simply an extension of the land already offered to them and, as such, theirs to protect. Doji calmly suggested Togashi as the ideal candidate, but her brother shook his head and could not be persuaded to extend the lands given to him to control. After weeks of debate the emperor was no closer to a decision.

Finally, one of Shinjo's retainers, Mako, suggested a duel to decide the issue. He proposed not an *Iaijutsu* duel, but a test of strength. Hantei agreed. After the long war with his brother Fu Leng and the march of his sister Shinjo, he was

loath to lose any more of his warriors to a formal duel. Each clan would choose one champion to vie for the honor of the position. To the winner would go the land surrounding the passes and the sacred duty to protect the fledgling empire's northern border. Mako was the first to step forward, claiming the right in the name of the Ki-Rin. For long moments there were no other challengers. It was small surprise. Although a follower of Shinjo, Mako shared none of the Kami's wanderlust. Where she was free, he was grounded. Where she was the wind, he was the earth. Physically, he was an imposing sight. Thick, bowed legs supported a hugely barreled chest. His arms were short, but corded with muscle. His was a whirlwind in battle and his martial prowess was well known to all. In the silence he began to remove his armor.

Just when it appeared the Emperor would cede the land without a challenge, one man stepped forward. He wore the blue of Hida's followers, but his name was unknown. No others stepped forward. The assembled courtiers and warriors began to whisper, pointing at the man who appeared to be ready to challenge Mako. Although taller than the well-known Ki-Rin, he was much leaner. He looked younger, but those nearest to him realized his eyes held wisdom beyond his years. Like Mako, he began to remove his armor as Bayushi used the saya of his katana to draw a large circle in the dirt. He smiled as he drew, but would not say why. The bare-chested opponents turned toward the emperor and Doji motioned them into the circle. The contest was simple; the last person within the ring would be the winner. Hantei snapped his fan and the contest began.

Mako charged his opponent, seemingly catching the man off guard. At the last moment, however, the Crab shot both hands forward with a great *chi* shout, slamming them into the chest of his charging foe. Mako came to an immediate halt as the Crab quickly moved his hands around Mako's waist. Mako countered with a similar move and soon both were locked in place, immovable within the circle. Chest to chest, both men attempted to win the battle by strength alone. Neither sought to overbalance the other and so the combat went on, the seconds turning to minutes, the minutes to hours. Muscles knotted and veins bulging, the two stood rooted to the spot as the sun began to set. After long hours, the end came suddenly. With a strangled cry Mako's

strength failed him. All resistance gone, the Crab threw the defeated Ki-Rin backward into the dust outside the circle. Chest working like a bellows, the victor turned to the Emperor amid the approval of the crowd.

"Your name?" asked the emperor.

"Domogu," the man replied with another bow.

"Are you prepared for the duty which stands before you?" asked Hantei.

"I am, my Lord," replied Domogu with another bow.

"Lord Hida, you lose a great warrior, but it is for the good of the Empire." Hida returned his brother's smile, bowing at the compliment. "Domogu-san, gather to yourself retainers who would follow your example. Servants will be made available when you are ready to depart. Return to me when you are ready. May Amaterasu continue to smile on you."

Domogu left the assembly and did as the Emperor had commanded. They came from all clans, but chiefly from the Crab, Dragon and the Ki-Rin. The first to present himself was Mako. Ichiro nodded and the Ki-Rin became Ichiro's first retainer. Ichiro looked for months, traveling with Mako to many provinces, his numbers growing by the week. Finally, he felt he was ready to return to the Emperor.

Hantei proclaimed Domogu's independence from the Crab and announced the creation of a new clan. At Domogu's suggestion, the Clan of the Badger was born. As Domogu turned his small band of followers toward their new home, Hida stepped forward. Drawing his former vassal aside, the two spoke for long minutes. Their words were never recorded, but as they prepared to depart,

Hida placed his hand on Domogu's shoulder and walked away.

Domogu led his followers and servants toward the land that would be their home. He quickly founded the first village of the province and began construction on the first fortress. Over the next five years Domogu finished the stone fortress, later called Shiro Ichiro. His followers and their servant spread throughout the passes and founded numerous villages, each centered around a strong stone fortress.

When Heralds of the Emperor came to inspect the province, they were initially unimpressed. Led from village to village by Domogu himself, they viewed the defenses of the region and prepared to report to the emperor. Although each fortress was well-made and amply guarded by the samurai of the village, imperial advisors felt the fortresses were too far apart. In the winding hills and deep valleys, each fortress would be isolated and alone if invaders did threaten. "My lords," replied Domogu, "that is just the way I planned it."

Domogu's plan was for each fortress to be totally self-sufficient. The defenders living near each fortress would be totally responsible for that fortress's supply and defense. Individual commanders were given great latitude to make their fortresses as defensible as possible. The advisors were unconvinced of Domogu's plan. Surely, each fortress would ultimately fall and the invaders, if they appeared, would march to the next fortress. Domogu's smile broadened. "You are correct."

Later that day, Domogu explained his simple plan. The province was composed almost totally of rough and broken terrain. Movement through



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Phoenix*: "A clan doomed to fail. They rely too heavily on their knowledge of the mountains. A single earthquake will ultimately destroy them all."

- Shiba Tsukune

• *Scorpion*: "There is a hidden strength behind their silent rocks and cliffs. If they chose to carry that strength to the rest of the Empire, they could change the face of this land."

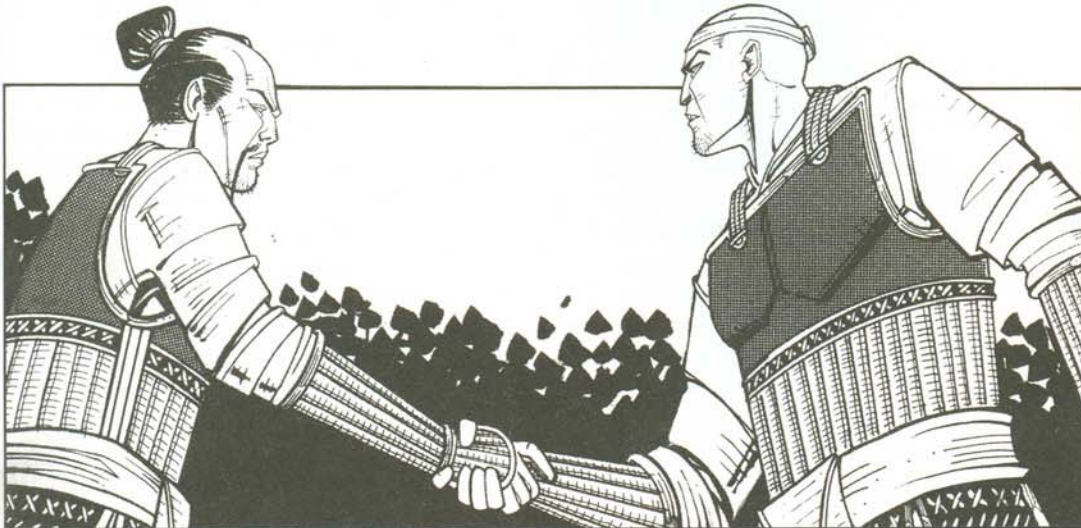
- Bayushi Tangen

• *Unicorn*: "A strong clan. They understand much, yet they rely too heavily on the strength of their mountains. If we could come through the south, so too can the enemies of the Empire. How prepared can they be, when they lock the door but leave the window open?"

- Iuchi Daiyu

• *Minor Clans*: "We know little of the Badger save their surly demeanor. Let them be content in their little mountain pass. The rest of the Empire does not need them."

- Yoritomo





SHIRO ICHIRO

Shiro Ichiro is located in the center of the Badger province. The castle, built on a high hill, commands a view of the entire area. The rear of the castle is built along a forty-foot rock face, which makes assault from that quarter impossible.

Built for functionality, the Badger have reluctantly modified and expanded the castle to provide hospitality for occasional visiting dignitaries.

The walls of the castle are solid stone. The donjon is three stories high; only the top story is made of wood. The castle holds storehouses and training grounds. Clearly designed for a long siege, the exterior buildings are silent. The storerooms within, however, are full, packed with weapons, food, and supplies.

The other castles follow a similar architectural theme. Nearly all are built of stone. Most are two or three stories high. Few have exterior walls, opting instead for ditches, palisades, and earthworks. The rooms on the lower levels are almost always large and open, providing a marshalling area in times of siege and maximizing the amount of storage space available. Ichiro made it a requirement that all the villagers living near a fortress could be housed there in time of need. Although this has not been necessary in the past, it remains a consideration for all expansion.

it would be hard, but not impossible. Domogu felt the best defense against invasion would be to make that movement all the harder. By locating the fortresses in defensible terrain, attackers would be forced to deal with each and every fortress before they could pass through the province. If they did not, the samurai within would be free to launch assaults and savage their supply lines. While Domogu and his men slowed the invaders, the Empire could organize a stronger defense in the plains beyond the province.

As the night grew long, the advisors queried Domogu and his closest advisor, Mako, on the specifics of their plan. As the dawn approached, they began to share Domogu's smile. Domogu and his men knew they would not survive a dedicated invasion. They knew, however, their defense would give the Empire the best chance of defending itself. As Amaterasu rose above the eastern mountains, the advisors left for Ootosan Uchi, confident in the security of their northern border. After the Imperial Advisors returned to the Empire, the Badger were also granted the family name 'Ichiro', for their dedication to their task.

As the years passed and a new generation of defenders assumed command, they improved the province's fortifications by reinforcing the fortresses; strengthened the natural barriers by hiding deadfalls and pit traps along the passes and trails through the mountains; and provided defenders with the means to harass an enemy even if they could not reach one of the fortresses by caching supplies throughout the region.

Generations passed and the defenders continued to prepare. Keeping to Domogu's strategy, they worked to make their province the most heavily defended in the Empire, not just along the border, but throughout the province. In time Kaiu engineers came to view their defenses. Most returned to the lands of the Crab impressed with the structures they'd seen. Others stayed and traded information with the Ichiro, as they were now called, on building and maintaining their fortifications.

For nearly a thousand years the Badger have guarded their province from any who would seek to invade the Empire. In all that time there has never been a serious threat to the province, yet the Ichiro stand firm. Where others may have allowed their attention to wane, the Ichiro of today are more ready than ever to defend the

empire. Ichiro Chuga, the current daimyo, is convinced the coming years will bring changes to the empire the likes of which his forefathers had never seen. He is determined that he and his clan will remain true to their ancient oath. If the changes he foresees do come from the north, he will stand ready.

CULTURE

The Badger have been shaped by fifty generations of life in a harsh climate. Theirs is a cold, wet land of rugged hills and canyons. Their duty weighs heavily on them, producing a somber and stern clan of rugged individualists. In their view, they've been given a duty and they can carry it out without anybody's assistance. As a result, they rarely leave their province. They don't need to be a part of the Emerald Empire to protect it.

Domogu and his lieutenant Mako were strong men who valued similar qualities in their followers. Both believed that strength, in its many forms, was the key to victory. Over time, a unifying philosophy has developed for the Badger: "individual strength allows our clan optimum flexibility." A Badger samurai is expected to be strong in all aspects of his life, but physical strength is particularly emphasized. This is reflected in all that a samurai does.

Like all samurai of the Empire, a Badger bears the traditional daisho as a sign of his status. The daisho is kept in the samurai's home except on formal occasions or during war. At all other times, whether on patrol or guard duty, the samurai will bear the largest weapon he can effectively use. The no-dachi is by far the most common, but heavy axes and hammers are also used. A samurai gains status by wielding a large weapon effectively, proving his physical strength. Feats of strength provide additional prestige.

Every year samurai of the Ichiro gather at Shiro Ichiro for the "the Great Games." This three-day event began as a sideline during local leaders' meetings with the daimyo. While the leaders met within the castle halls, their retainers pitted their strength against one another. Over time these matches became more formal. These mostly-martial tests pit the members of the clan against one another in events such as dueling (always with no-dachi), nage-yari throwing, stone throwing, boulder carrying, and dead-lifting. It is not uncommon for the Badger daimyo to invite

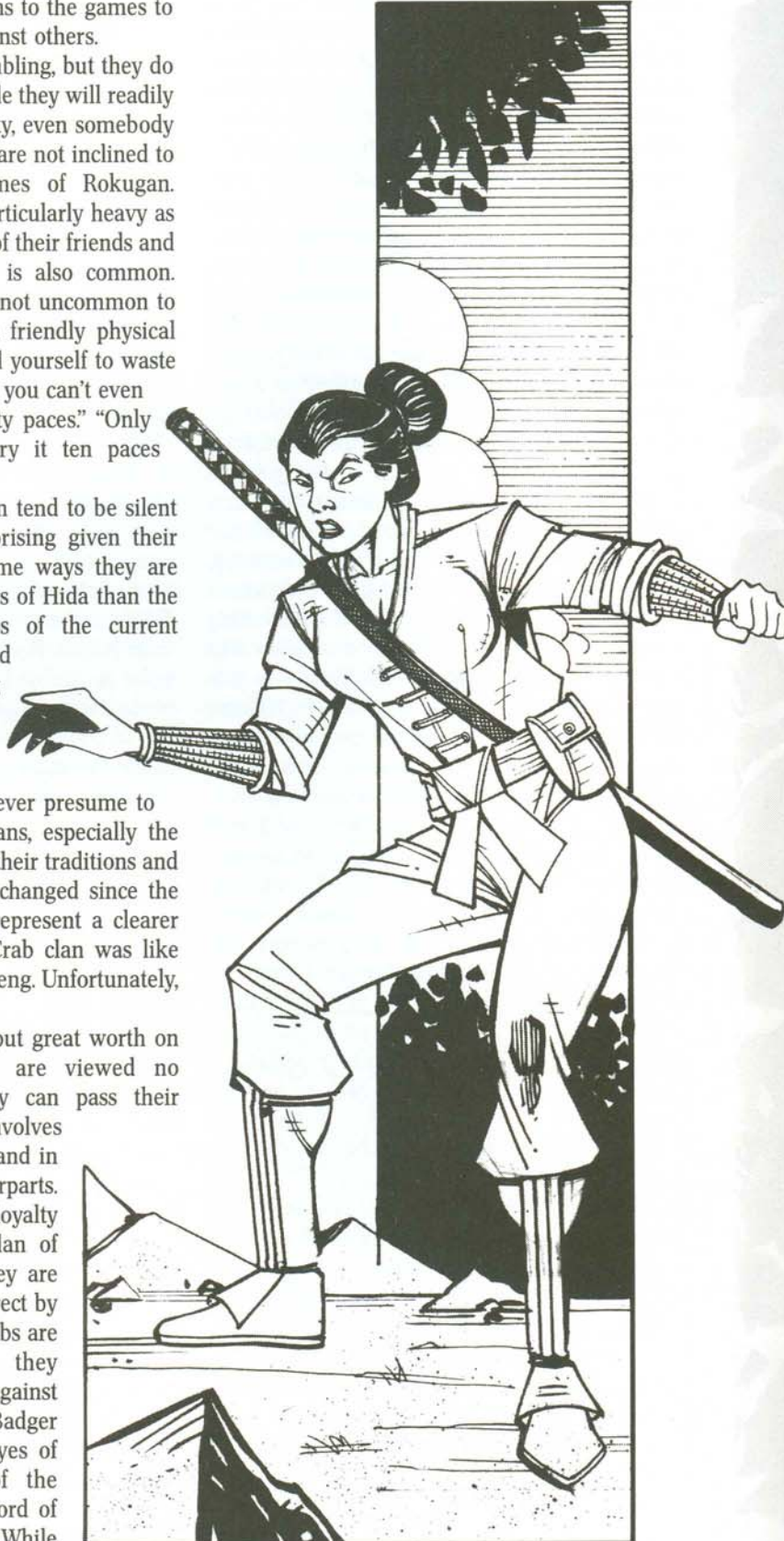


notable strongmen of other clans to the games to pit the strength of his clan against others.

The Ichiro greatly enjoy gambling, but they do not enjoy games of chance. While they will readily bet on a person's physical ability, even somebody who is unknown to them, they are not inclined to play the more common games of Rokugan. During the games betting is particularly heavy as samurai wager on the abilities of their friends and comrades. Impromptu betting is also common. Upon meeting a clanmate it is not uncommon to begin the conversation with a friendly physical challenge: "I see you've allowed yourself to waste away to a mere shadow. I'll bet you can't even carry that small boulder twenty paces." "Only twenty? I'll wager I can carry it ten paces further than you!"

Members of the Badger clan tend to be silent and stoic. This is hardly surprising given their roots in the Crab clan. In some ways they are more like the original followers of Hida than the Crab are today. While Crabs of the current generation have been changed and molded by their long struggle with the Shadowlands, the Ichiro have had no such outside influence. While they would never presume to point this out to the other clans, especially the Crabs, they take great pride in their traditions and beliefs, which are virtually unchanged since the first Ichiro. As a result, they represent a clearer picture of what the original Crab clan was like following their battle with Fu Leng. Unfortunately, this is not a compliment.

Like the Crab, the Badger put great worth on the the individual. Women are viewed no differently than men. If they can pass their *gempukku*, which normally involves a feat of strength, they may stand in battle beside their male counterparts. The clan values strength and loyalty above all else. Although a clan of great humor and laughter, they are viewed as blunt and far too direct by the rest of the Empire. The Crabs are viewed as barbarous, but they dutifully hold the Kaiu Wall against the Shadowlands horde. The Badger is equally barbarous in the eyes of the more cultured clans of the Empire, but they have no record of military service to fall back on. While





VISITING THE BADGER

The samurai of the Badger are warlike, but not aggressive. When they find strangers in their province, they react quickly and harshly. Trespassers are rarely given a chance to defend themselves, whether they come from the north or the south. Spies are dealt with by roving patrols of four to six samurai, who travel for a week at a time along the Path of Woe and the surrounding area. Northerners rarely have a chance to state their purpose before being assaulted. Rokugani are, at least, given a chance to state their business before being attacked. Only imperial messengers and eloquent heralds of the other clans manage to survive long enough to speak with the Ichiro leadership.

they stand prepared to fight against a northern invader, they've never actually had to fulfill that duty. As a result, their failures in society and perceived lack of social grace are much less likely to be forgiven. In many parts of the Empire, Badgers are viewed as little better than *gaijin*.

Fortunately, the Ichiro rarely leave their mountain homes, so they are spared the contempt of the rest of the Empire. Although their courtiers are present in the imperial city, they have no standing retinue at any of the other houses. When they wish to talk to one of the other clans, they simply send a herald who may act in the name of the clan. When necessary, the clan daimyo travels or receives visitors from other clans.

Individually, the samurai of the Badger are strong, militant, and confident to the point of arrogance. They have a thousand years of success to back them up and they're not likely to forget that. When discharging their duty they are suspicious in the extreme and prone to caution, meaning 'kill it before it can do something harmful.' One-on-one, Badgers are much less likely to start a fight. They know their duty is to protect the province and thus the empire. Fighting for personal honor has no place in a Badger's philosophy. Consequently, they will withstand a great deal of taunting or abuse before they react. Challengers had best be prepared to defend themselves instantly, however, because Badgers have no respect for the concept of a 'formal duel.' When a Badger finally decides to react, he does so instantly. If challenged, he attacks with the weapons at hand, whether it is in a crowded

banquet hall, temple, or courtyard. They always use their heaviest weapon if possible. If weapons are not available, they use any improvised weapon they can, from utensils to furniture, attacking bare-handed if nothing presents itself.

MAGIC

If there is an area of weakness in the Badger, it is in their shugenja. The Badger value strength, but only as it flows from the individual. Magic, to them, is a form of cheating. Consequently, the members of the clan would rather fail without magic than succeed with it. This has led to some conflicts within the clan. Over time, this physical reliance has caused a rift between the bushi and shugenja within the samurai caste.

Shugenja are looked down upon. While they are technically samurai status, they definitely rank below the bushi within the clan. There are Badger shugenja, but they are few and scattered. Most fortresses do not even have a shugenja. Spiritual duties are handled by monks, rather than priests. Rarely, if ever, are the kami called upon to perform a task for the clan. Better if several samurai perform the task, no matter what the cost or time. This carries over to magical healing. Badgers always refuse magical healing, no matter what the situation, preferring to fight and die based on their own skills and strength.

In most cases, Badgers who want to become shugenja become outcasts. To the Badger this is someone "unknown to me." The outcast retains all the rights and responsibilities of his samurai status, but he is no longer considered a member





of the clan (depending on the reason for being outcast). Their motives are suspect and their loyalties are questioned. An outcast, returning to the province after studying to be a shugenja, would be viewed no differently from an approaching Phoenix. If the outcast proves himself, he may partially regain the trust of the clan; however, he will always be viewed as something of an outsider.

LAND

The province of the Ichiro is among the most rugged in all of the Emerald Empire. To the east the province is mostly mountains, with peaks that gradually rise to the lands of the Dragon. While they do not possess the majestic height of the Dragon peaks, they are equally impassible. The western portion of the province is only slightly more traversable; here the crags gradually give way to the foothills of the south.

On the whole, the province is cooler than most, located as it is in the north of the Empire. Moist, warm air rises from the south and stalls at the mountains, cooling and condensing. Add the significant elevation and you have a cool, wet climate. It rains frequently, but rarely heavily. Snow begins in the early fall and lasts until the middle of spring. Some claim this is the most beautiful time of the year, as colorful spring blossoms peek out from a white blanket of snow.

Traveling through the province is a nightmare for those not at home in the region. Trails dead-end into box canyons. Ravines and chasms cut through hillsides, forming a twisted landscape of crags and buttes. The entire province rises and falls through hills and valleys, which are crosscut with gorges and bluffs.

Farming is difficult, even in the best of conditions. The few functional farms are normally located near one of the fortresses. Farmers work the land in small plots, assisting their kinsmen with their fields. Irrigation is an absolute necessity, with most fields being irrigated from nearby streams fed by snowmelt. Near Shiro

Ichiro, the farmland is flooded every spring to allow the nutrients brought down from the mountains to replenish the soil. This region is by far the most fertile, and is one of the few areas that can supply a surplus of food for other villages. Although it is almost impossible to grow rice, the villages do well with wheat and soybeans.

As a result of the scarcity of arable land, most inhabitants rely on hunting and fishing as their main food sources. A wide variety of fish exist in the cold streams of the higher elevations. With few natural predators, their numbers supply the Ichiro with ample food for the long winters. Speckled trout are the most common, but lesser varieties also exist along with a host of smaller fish.

Hunters normally focus on game birds, especially geese and ducks, which are also raised domestically. The Ichiro rely on the nage-yari to bring down the birds, rather than the more common bow and arrow. Although certainly more efficient, the bow is rarely used in the province due to the difficulty in maintaining the bowstring in such a harsh climate.

Komichi no Kanashimi, the Path of Woe, dominates the western half of the province. Although routinely marked as a single path through the mountains, it is anything but a simple trail. There are countless paths through the mountains as the trail splits, twists, and rejoins itself. Rockslides, caused by erosion brought on by the winter snows, close portions of the trail while opening others. As a result, the Path of Woe is almost constantly changing and only the Ichiro know it in its entirety. Their fortresses lie along the most prominent passes. Gorges are trapped with deadfalls and potential avalanches.

Although the Ichiro occasionally make use of the sure-footed Rokugan pony, in more cases than not these animals are more a hindrance than a help. Paths tend to run either along the ridge lines, where a single misstep can mean a long, tumbling fall down the slope, or along the valley floor, where breaks in the trail are common. In cases where the Ichiro have spanned the smaller chasms, they have chosen to do so with narrow rope bridges that sway in the wind. Traversing them is difficult for men; impossible for animals.



MUSIC

Seemingly at odds with their aggression is the Badgers' deep love of music. Their tunes are often haunting and soothing at the same time. Most Ichiro play at least one instrument. Many are truly gifted and spend hours practicing each day. At night, in seemingly desolate hills, it is often possible to hear music from a far-off Badger camp as it echoes off the bluffs and canyons and across the province.



ICHIRO SHUGENJA

As mentioned above, the Ichiro dislike magic in general. As a result, most members of the Ichiro family are reluctant to follow the path of a shugenja, even if they have the natural ability. How can a man truly test his strength if he has aid from the kami? For those determined to follow this path, however, there are several options. Most choose to study with the Unicorn at the Iuchi school. Others follow the mountains and study with the Dragons at the Agasha school. A very few drift toward the Crane and the quiet Asahina school.



Skills and Techniques

NEW DISADVANTAGES

Outcast (Variable) (Badger clan or Ronin only)

You have been outcast by the Badger clan. Perhaps your worldview did not agree with that of your father or your clan. Perhaps you're just too eager to embrace new ways. Whatever the case, they now treat you like an outsider. They don't necessarily hate you, but now they look on you with suspicion. You'll have to earn their respect and, perhaps, regain their trust.

Refused by Family (1 point)

All social skills with your family keep 1 fewer die. You cannot inherit property or goods. One starting item is good quality, all others are considered poor.

Refused by the Clan (2 points)

As above; in addition, all social skills with your clan roll 1 fewer die. (Badger shugenja must take this disadvantage.)

THE ICHIRO FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Strength

ICHIRO BUSHI SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Strength

Skills: Athletics, Defense, Jujutsu, Kenjutsu, Wrestling, Yarijutsu, any one High Skill

Beginning Honor: 1

Outfit (all considered average quality): Katana, wakizashi, No-dachi or Ono, Nage-yari, clothing, musical instrument, 2 koku.

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Return the Strike

Because of their tenacity and outright stubbornness, the Badger are feared as opponents in combat throughout the Empire. They are burly,

tough, and capable. There is a proverb in Rokugan: "If you plan to strike a Badger, prepare to accept your own strike."

The Badger rolls first for initiative and then may subtract as many points as desired to a minimum initiative result of one. The amount subtracted may be added to all To Hit rolls in the round.

Rank 2: Refuse to Fail

As Badger samurai learn to adapt to their native mountains, they often practice feats of tremendous strength. As games, the Badger test their ability to lift and throw, often hurling large trees or small boulders as part of a bet or a gambling match.

The bushi may reroll any strength roll (even one that succeeded) to get a better result. Once rolled, however, the second roll must be accepted.

Rank 3: Crushing Blow

Armor? Armor is weak compared to the stone of the mountains, and the Badger know well that a truly crushing blow cannot be turned aside by mere flaps of metal and silken cord. When the Badger strikes, either with their hand or with a weapon, armor provides no TN protection versus the bushi's attack.



Who's Who in the Badger

ICHIRO CHUGA

Rank 2 Badger Bushi

EARTH: 5

WATER: 4 Strength: 6

FIRE: 3

AIR: 3

VOID: 4

Honor: 1.2

Glory: 0.7

Advantages: Hands of Stone, Large

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation: Intractable,
Phobia: Large Cities, Enemy: Yogo Asami

Skills: Athletics 5, Bard 3, Defense 4, Hunting 2, Jujutsu 4, Kenjutsu 1, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Lore: Unicorn 3, No-dachi 4, Shintao 4, Wrestling 4, Yarijutsu 3

Ichiro Chuga is the current Badger clan daimyo, and has been in that position for more than seven years. Chuga took the position following the death of his older brother, Akitomo, during a visit to the lands of the Crane. The two were best of friends and Chuga took the news very hard. He mourned his brother's death for nearly a year, and many wondered if he would ever recover.

The only reason he did was because he learned the identity of the individual who ordered the murder: Yogo Asami. While in the gardens of the Crane, Ichiro Akitomo happened upon the Lady Scorpion, Bayushi Kachiko, and spoke to her for a few moments. Later, he met with her again, and she had no recollection of the conversation – as if Akitomo had been speaking to someone else entirely. Curious and concerned that some unknown person was falsifying the identity of the lady of the Scorpions, Akitomo began to

investigate Bayushi Kachiko's movements and those of her handmaiden, Yogo Asami.

The next time his brother saw him, Akitomo's dead body was being dragged from an icy river by Crane *eta*.

Publicly, Chuga has refused to comment on the issue, or testify against anyone, and carries on, seemingly unconcerned with the issue. Inside, however, he knows that Yogo Asami had pretended to be her lady for some sinister purpose, and he burns to see her head on a pike outside Shiro Ichiro's highest peak.

He has never spoken any word of anger to condemn the Crane, who provided numerous gifts of compensation (mostly in food) for allowing the death to occur in their lands. His main concerns seem to be finding a new wife (his first wife died of illness shortly after their marriage) and producing an heir. For the first time in many generations, he is considering going outside the clan to find a suitable woman. He deals with the concerns of the clan with efficiency and none can find fault with his decisions and actions.

Inside, however, Chuga is drowning in despair and confusion. He doubts he can ever be the leader his brother was, and he worries how others will view his rise to power. More than anything, he wants to avenge his brother's death and understand what Akitomo discovered that led to his murder.

Only Ichiro Chuga's sense of duty and the lack of a suitable replacement have prevented him from resigning his position and traveling into the Empire, even with his intense fear of public streets and large cities. They are anathema to him after the solitude and companionship of the Ichiro mountains, yet he would gladly risk the fear if it would free his brother's soul.

Although hiring individuals (or commanding a few samurai of the Badger) to look into the matter for him is another option, Chuga has yet to find somebody he feels he can trust with the potentially dangerous mission. It will take a practiced hand, and as yet all of his men seem to have more aptitude with brute force than with investigations and politics.

He fears his brother will never be avenged, and it eats at his soul like the poison of a Scorpion tongue.



ICHIRO FUREHESHU

422 – 462

(3 POINTS)

During his life Fureheshu was the strongest man in the province, perhaps in all of Rokugan. It is written that he could wrestle a charging bull to a complete stop.

Although skilled and intelligent, he repeatedly refused promotion, and remained a simple bushi all his life. He was calm and soft-spoken, preferring to let his actions speak for him. Fureheshu died several months before his scheduled retirement. A huge oni somehow found its way to the province and the entire clan was mobilized to track it down. Fureheshu found it first and rushed to engage. In the ensuing struggle, Fureheshu crushed the creature's skull with his bare hands as the abomination broke his back.

Once per day, someone with Fureheshu as an ancestor may substitute his or her Strength for any attribute roll.



Chapter Six



The Centipede



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Crab*: "I do not waste time with fireflies. When they have numbers worth mentioning or power equaling that of my little finger, let me know."
– Hida Kisada

• *Crane*: "Silly and backward. I would sooner listen to a barnyard full of chickens than those little girls. Dowry them all off and be done with it."
– Kakita Yoshi

• *Dragon*: "Hidden strength can be the most powerful of all. Yet it fades if unused, like a bird who never flies."
– Togashi Hoshi

• *Lion*: "They say a clan full of women can be nothing but weaklings. Our family has a similar tradition, and no one speaks ill of it. I wonder, would Rokugan condemn them so if they were not few?"
– Matsu Tsuko



The Way of the Centipede

To the east of *Tiken no Roka* (Traacherous Pass) in the Mountains of Regret lies a small valley open to the sea. The tall cliffs prevent all but the most hardy sailors from approaching, and a narrow spur off the pass is the only overland route. A small family of shugenja lives within the valley, along with the peasants under their care. They call themselves the Centipede, and for seven hundred years they have been content to keep to themselves.

The valley originally housed a modest shugenja school, founded by a quiet daimyo from the Phoenix Clan. He died leaving no son, but eleven daughters, who inherited the school and his station. They, too left mostly female heirs, and by three generations a *de facto* matriarchy had sprung up. In time, the matriarchy became formal: first born daughters became the daimyos instead of sons, family advisors were women, and while male members of the family weren't maligned, they simply never held the clout that their female relatives did.

Because of their isolated location, few other clans interacted with them, and they were allowed to develop as they saw fit. Other Rokugani who visited were taken aback by the rigid matriarchy, and rarely paid due respect to the clan daimyo. Such incidents only furthered their insular lifestyle, cutting them off more and more from the whole of Rokugan. Only the nearby Phoenix clan – and the occasional Mantis willing to scale the seaside cliffs – maintained regular relations with them. The Centipede didn't seem to mind. Their valley was fertile enough to sustain the tiny clan, and the solitude gave them a chance to practice their magic in peace.

While lacking the power of the Phoenix or finesse of the Crane, Centipede magic had a unique clarity unseen elsewhere in Rokugan. The Centipede claim that it came directly from Lady Sun herself. According to legend, an early clan daimyo, Moshi Azami, had lost the harmony of her soul and climbed the highest mountain of the vale in order to meditate. After three days, she received a vision. It seemed as if Lady Sun herself stepped down from her perch in the sky, settling next to the old woman on the peak. She wore shimmering robes of blinding gold and a benevolent smile upon her face. "Mine is the only voice you shall hear," she told her. "For my wisdom requires it."

Azami listened with joyful tears as the Kami mother explained. The Centipede would be her acolytes, keeping testament of her experience among themselves. While the Phoenix and Dragon would struggle to match her omniscient knowledge – the collected knowledge of the entire universe – the Centipede would serve as a testament to her individuality. Of her – the sun, the great flaming ball which traveled across the sky. She was, after all, a single being and while her vast consciousness encompassed the whole of the cosmos, she still had a unique identity, separate from the world which she had created. By understanding her sense of self, the Centipede would help her anchor it, serving Amaterasu's will amid the rollicking chaos of creation. Almost to the exclusion of the Seven Fortunes, Kami and other holy spirits of Rokugan, the Centipede promised to serve and worship the Sun Mother, turning to her alone and following her will.

Since that day, the Centipede have striven to hear the voice of Lady Sun – the quiet call at the heart of the universe. Their magic slowly came to emulate it, focusing on the elements of Fire and Air almost exclusively. Clan shugenja fly as quick as thought and project their consciousness miles away (reflecting Lady Sun's view as she travels across the sky). They send great bolts of fire from their hands and make ceremonial flames caper and dance to their whims. All of it comes from Amaterasu's consciousness – her thoughts as understood by the Centipede shugenja. Despite their isolation, the Centipede have stayed well-informed about the world outside their borders; their magic allows them to. They often gained political favors from other clans by carrying messages for them – traveling across Rokugan with breathtaking speed.



For most of their history, they remained alone in their valley: ignored by and ignoring the Empire beyond their borders. A few times, however, they felt compelled to emerge, either to combat a threat to the Empire as a whole, or to defend their concerns from more aggressive Clans. The Battle of the White Stag against the *gaijin* invasion was one such occurrence. At that battle, the Centipede marched alongside the Phoenix, lending their deadly fire magic to the defense of the Empire. When the conflict ended, they retreated once more to their valley, content simply to do their part. On other occasions, they ventured forth to prevent the subjugation of their territory by another Clan. In the year 580, the nearby Lion laid claim to their valley, and sent an expeditionary force to take it. The Centipede used a combination of magic and the nearly impassable terrain to hold them off until political pressure forced the Lion to withdraw. Nearly the entire family was involved in this process, either as defenders or as diplomats to the Emperor's court. Had any fewer been used, the Lion would have crushed them flat before the Crane and Phoenix could force a retreat. Again, as before, the Centipede retreated into obscurity once the threat was over.

Today, the Clan remains one of the smallest and least known in all of Rokugan. They haven't appeared in any numbers in almost two hundred years, and only the Phoenix have any permanent diplomats in their tiny ancestral home. A single courtier represents the clan at the Emperor's court, out of respect for the Hantei and to inform them of any significant political developments. Their yearly tax levies arrive on time and with no comment attached. Other than that, they have no contact with the remainder of Rokugan. They tend to their land, study their sacred scrolls, and try to stay out of the Empire's way.

CULTURE

The Centipede is defined by two unique aspects: their

connection to Amaterasu and their matriarchal power structure. Some maintain that there is no difference between the two – that Lady Sun chose them to reveal her soul precisely because they were led by women. To the Centipede, it's simply the way things are.

Ever since the founding of the Clan, the daimyo has been female, as have her closest advisors and the highest-ranking samurai. Titles descend to the eldest daughter in the line, followed by the second eldest and so on. Only when there are no daughters do men inherit the position, and then only as regent until their eldest daughter comes of age. Men take their wives' name when they marry (unless they marry outside the Clan), and remain connected to the female side of the family. As far as gender-related duties are concerned, there is little difference from the rest of Rokugan – the men still act as samurai and the women (those who aren't samurai-ko) still tend the household. The only difference is that the women have the authority to act as they see fit, without consulting their husband. They sign official documents and



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Phoenix*: "We welcome our little sister for the wisdom she brings, and pledge our strength to give her the silence she needs to cultivate it."

– Isawa Kaede

• *Scorpion*: "They are unimportant, unimaginative, utterly useless. Still, their magical aptitude bears watching."

– Bayushi Aramoro

• *Unicorn*: "They ask for nothing and expect nothing. They thrive without assistance and never take more than they need. Can any other clan or daimyo say as much?"

– Ide Tadaji

• *Minor Clans* – "The time will come when we will stand as equals amid the Great Clans. The Centipede can be an important pillar in that union."

– Yoritomo



represent the Clan at all pertinent gatherings. The men simply don't enter into the equation. Every now and again, a male inherits some position of authority – about as often as a woman does outside the Clan. For all practical purposes, the Centipede women are in charge.

This doesn't mean that men aren't valued. On the contrary, their contributions matter greatly to the Clan, and their wisdom – both scholarly and military – strongly influences the decisions of the daimyo. They simply have little official capacity. They don't hold positions of authority and they can't make decisions affecting the Clan as their female relations do. Ironically, many Centipede men consider this a blessing. Without those constraints, they have the leisure to hone their samurai skills, or study the wisdom in the Clan library in order to pursue enlightenment. That way, when the daimyo calls upon them, they can act to the best of their abilities.

Part of what makes this reversal possible is the size of the Clan. The Moshi family numbers only about fifty members, the vast majority of whom are shugenja. There are maybe nine hundred peasants beneath them, along with perhaps a hundred ronin samurai hired to defend the passes. These ronin are well-treated and permitted to live in their own small houses on the borders of the valley. While under the command of Centipede samurai, they are disciplined enough to do their jobs well. (Some of them even marry Centipede women, integrating with the clan and providing fresh blood to the line.) The peasants similarly have little to worry about. They are expected to stay away from the family home/shugenja school and do their jobs quietly. In exchange, they are not heavily taxed, and may keep an unusually large share of the crops they reap. Few peasants in *Tani Senshio* (the Valley of the Centipede) ever go hungry. With such tiny numbers, it becomes easier to impose certain cultural irregularities without making a fuss.

Naturally, the Centipede have paid a price for such “backward” thinking. Few Rokugani clans wish to deal with a woman on equal terms. Those who travel to Tani Senshio return with wild tales of men dressed as women and of bickering old ladies making decisions they clearly know nothing about. While they have a few admirers in the Phoenix clan and the Matsu family respects their proud tradition, their insistence on being completely led by women has won them no friends.

The men receive even less respect than the women. While as competent as any in Rokugan, they have a reputation as weaklings outside their tiny valley. Centipede men who leave their homeland usually either turn ronin or get used to defending their honor often. Because the family is so small, most choose to remain home – which only insulates the Clan further. Many serve as border guards alongside the ronin, devoting themselves to their duty and teaching the rare interloper that Centipede men are stronger than they look.

None of this bothers the Clan unduly. As long as they are left alone, they don't care what the rest of Rokugan thinks. With the tolerant Phoenix nearby, they have little to worry about besides a few sneers and the occasional duel. Their magic has been powerful enough to elicit respect, and their relative unimportance has kept tradition-bound Rokugani from forcing the issue.

The Centipede spend the vast majority of their time in study and contemplation, as most shugenja families do. Their ancestral fortress is really more of a school than anything else, and their library of scrolls fills most of the lower floors. When not discussing clan policy or dealing with a crisis, clan members spend their time amid the scrolls or meditating on the world around them. In stark contrast to such placidity, their spells are quite spectacular; shugenja zip across the valley floor at blinding speed, firing intense pyrotechnics from their fingers or even creating clouds of living flame which float in the sky like kites. Many Centipede shugenja test their knowledge of Air by diving from the cliffs into the sea, only to fly up again as quickly as they fell. Such displays are irregular, but certainly add excitement to an otherwise thoughtful and unremarkable existence.

Centipede life centers around their devotion to Lady Sun. They seek to understand what they call the “soul within the goddess,” the individual thoughts and desires that drive Rokugan's most powerful celestial figure. They claim to call only upon those spirits who serve Lady Sun, and indeed that they cannot speak to any others. To do so would violate the duty Amaterasu laid down for them all those centuries ago.

Most Clan rituals center around Amaterasu, and all of their important ceremonies begin with a praise of Lady Sun. Each morning at dawn, all available and able-bodied family members congregate at the seaside cliffs, where they kneel



in silent prayer. As the sun emerges from the eastern ocean, they chant a welcome to Amaterasu, expressing their devotion. There has been at least one Centipede at the cliffs each morning to perform the ritual for over eight hundred years.

Like the Phoenix, the Centipede follow a pacifistic lifestyle. For all their pyrotechnic power, they avoid bloodshed and seek peaceful solutions to their problems. They hire ronin to protect their valley, ensuring that their family need never spill blood unnecessarily. The few Centipede samurai leading their tiny army receive purification rituals before their *gempukku* ceremony, permitting them to spill blood in the course of their duties. The remainder can then maintain their nonviolent stance without fear for their safety.

Unlike the Phoenix, however, the Centipede concede that violence is sometimes necessary. Threats such as the *gaijin* fleet, or even aggressive Lions, cannot be met with only calm words. When violence becomes necessary, the Centipede react with as much force as they can muster, hoping to end the conflict quickly. Their powerful Fire spells assist them greatly; they have found such displays can cow the enemy before he causes too much damage. They always leave the door open to negotiation should their opponents wish it. All they truly care about is sovereignty within their small province, which is easily defended by magic and the imposing geography. Armed conflict with the remainder of Rokugan is thus exceedingly rare, dictated only by invasion of their lands, or a threat to the entire Empire. Otherwise the Centipede can maintain their pacifistic lifestyle more or less unhindered.

LAND

The Centipede's province is small, smaller perhaps than any other Clan's. Bound by geography and isolated from its neighbors, it has remained essentially intact since the founding of the Clan. They


consider the borders inviolable, and have never claimed more than the fertile valley where they live, and a few surrounding peaks. What they call a "valley" is actually more like a shelf, a narrow strip of land with mountains surrounding it on three sides. The fourth is open to the sea, with sharp cliffs dropping off straight into the surf. A few tiny beaches can be used for fishing, and hardy sailors may be able to dock a ship or two, but the cliffs prevent any real harbor from being constructed. Fewer than half a dozen Centipede fishing boats ply these waters – the most their coast can support.

The valley floor consists of land rich enough to support all who dwell upon it. Most buildings are peasant huts, dotted with the odd magistrates' estate and lookout posts on the fringes of the territory. The ronin charged with defending the passes keep homes near their posts; simple buildings but better than their brethren outside the valley. The Moshi family, head of the Clan, lives in a small palace at the north end of the vale. The palace houses the Centipede court and their shugenja school which takes up most of the lower



LADY SUN

Other rituals performed by the Centipede follow more traditional Rokugani patterns, but still include Amaterasu in some way. Weddings begin with a supplication to Lady Sun, while funeral parties ask her to watch over the souls of the departed. Often, they replace the Emperor's name on official documents with Amaterasu's, a habit which earns considerable hostility from more conservative clans. (The Emperor, however, has given them leave to do so; as long as they pay him proper respect, they may continue to revere his spiritual mother.) The Clan asks each new Emperor for permission to do so as soon as he assumes the throne. Other rituals follow a similar pattern: traditional Rokugani style overlaid with the quiet adoration of Lady Sun.



FLAMES OF THE GODDESS (FIRE)

Base TN: 15

Casting Time: 4 actions

Duration: 10 rounds

Mastery Level: 5

Concentration: Total

Raises: Casting time, duration, number of apparitions

This spell allows the shugenja to conjure life-like spirits out of an existing fire and set them against specified targets. For every campfire-sized blaze (minimum one foot diameter), the shugenja can create one apparition. It may take any form (man-sized or smaller), and it will be composed of living flame. While its basic shape remains constant, its features flicker and billow, ever-changing for the duration of the spell. The apparition follows the summoner's orders. It ignites flammable materials is comes into contact with and has a DR equal to the casting shugenja's Fire Ring.

It cannot be harmed by normal weapons, but a large amount of water (5 or more gallons) destroys it.

Additional apparitions can be conjured for every Raise, but the fire must be large enough to accommodate all of them. The creatures' duration can be extended by one round or the casting time reduced by one action per Raise. Disrupting the shugenja's concentration at any time during the spell's duration causes all apparitions to vanish. This spell may be attempted only once on any given fire.



floors; it has no walls and maintains only a skeleton guard. Should an enemy penetrate the valley, it will be utterly defenseless.

Thankfully, penetrating the valley is monumentally difficult. Travelers seeking audience with the Centipede must approach from one of three passes leading out of the province. All of the passes lead through the Mountains of Regret, eventually joining Treacherous Pass. They are narrow and winding, providing only enough space for a few people to pass at once. The Centipede guard have few problems defending such locations, and can easily hold off an army many times their size with just a little planning. Only the Lion have come close to breaking through, and political pressure forced them back before they could do so. Even then, the Centipede held them off long enough for the diplomats to do their work.

The cliffs are equally impassable – sheer walls of harsh rock that rise straight up from the sea. The Centipede maintain a series of rope pulleys for their fishermen to use and for the occasional Mantis sailor who comes to visit. The pulleys can

be cut with a minimum of difficulty, and climbing is a practical impossibility. The Clan has stated that any party larger than ten attempting to scale the cliffs will be considered a hostile force and dealt with as such. It scarcely matters. No commander worth his rank would even consider such a foolhardy approach.

While the Clan doesn't officially claim the mountains around their land (save one, which will be discussed momentarily), no other clan has contested their ownership. The peaks are tall and imposing, marked by snow-covered summits and hard, rocky surfaces. A few caves darken the sides, inhabited only by wild goats or the odd monk retired to the wilderness. While they form a striking background to the Centipede's picturesque province, few ever bother to climb them. There is simply no reason to do so.

The sole exception is *Yama sano Amaterasu*, the Mountain of Lady Sun. It stands on the far northern

end of the valley, with the Moshi ancestral palace at its foot. According to legend, it was this peak which Moshi Azami ascended after she lost her powers, and where Lady Sun herself touched earth to speak to her. A golden shrine to Amaterasu stands upon its summit, polished clean by the wind and snow. The climb is arduous, and often takes several days (unless you fly, that is), but is well worth it. The entire valley can be seen from the peak, laid out like a children's model. From the summit, one truly feels as if she can see as Lady Sun does. It is the duty of every Centipede daimyo to ascend the mountain and commune at the shrine at least once in their life. Most do it within a week of taking the mantle. Centipede shugenja who meditate at the shrine for at least eight hours receive a free raise on all Air and Fire spells cast within the next seven days. Only Centipede shugenja receive such a bonus, and only this shrine imparts it to them.

Skills and Techniques

No bushi school exists in Centipede lands. Most family bushi travel elsewhere to receive their training – usually to the Shiba school of the Phoenix. Those who don't generally apprentice themselves to a family member, or to some trusted ronin who has served the Centipede for a long time. Such samurai are considered True Ronin for rules purposes, save that they lack the Ronin disadvantage and all items in their beginning outfit are considered Average quality. Centipede bushi start with an honor of 1.3, regardless of where they receive their training.

THE MOSHI FAMILY

The Moshi are a clan led by women, but their teachings are open to all members of the clan. Although the males in the Centipede clan are not encouraged to attend lessons in spellcraft, they are not barred from learning the teachings of the Lady Sun.

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

MOSHI SHUGENJA SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Agility

Beginning Honor: 1.5

Skills: Athletics, Calligraphy, History, Meditation, Shintao, Theology, any one High skill.

Beginning Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon plus 3 Fire and 3 Air.

MAGIC

Centipede shugenja tend to focus almost exclusively on Fire and Air spells – placing emphasis on speed and long-range magic. In so doing, they hope to emulate Lady Sun during her daily trek across the sky. While a few Clan members learn Water and even Earth spells, they

are a tiny minority – and in a family of less than fifty, that number is small indeed.

Through their adoration of Amaterasu, the Centipede have learned numerous spells unique to their Clan. They allow other shugenja to study them, but never allow the scrolls to leave their valley. Non-Centipede spell-casters must journey to the isolated province if they wish to learn, and can never copy the scrolls to take with them. Needless to say, few make the effort.

Two sample Centipede Spells are listed in the nearby sidebars. GMs should feel free to create more if they wish.

Who's Who in the Centipede

MOSHI WAKIZA

Rank 2 Moshi Shugenja

EARTH 2 Willpower 3

WATER 4

FIRE 5

AIR 3 Awareness 4

VOID 3

Honor: 2.3

Glory: 3.8

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Perfect Balance

Skills: Athletics 4, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 2, Etiquette 2, History 4, Lore (Amaterasu) 4, Meditation 3, Shintao 5, Tea Ceremony 1, Theology 4, War Fan 2

Spells: Amaterasu's Anger, Amaterasu's Blessing, Essence of Fire, Fires of Purity, The Fires That Cleanse, The Fire From Within, Heart of the Inferno, The Light of Amaterasu, Wings of Fire, Arrow's Flight, Call Upon the Wind, Castle of Air, Gust of Wind, Osano-Wo's Breath, Tempest of Air

The eighteen-year-old daughter of the ancient Clan daimyo, Wakiza has already impressed her teachers with her command of magic. They say

THE ARCHER'S REACH (AIR)

Base TN: 15

Casting Time: 2 actions


Duration: Instantaneous

Mastery Level: 4

Concentration: None

Raises: Number of missiles, range of effect, range of flight

With this spell, the shugenja uses the power of the wind to extend the range of missile weapons. Loosed arrows fly farther than they ordinarily could, yet strike with the same power and accuracy as they would otherwise. Once cast upon a hand-held missile weapon (either thrown or launched), the weapon's range is effectively doubled – arrows fire out to four hundred yards instead of two hundred, etc. The thrower suffers no penalties for this increased range, although normal penalties for cover, visibility, etc. still apply. The affected missile must be within thirty yards of the caster for the spell to function. For every raise, the shugenja can increase the range of flight by twenty yards, increase the casting range by ten yards, or affect one additional missile within range. With four raises, the spell can be cast upon siege weapons such as catapults and ballista. The Crab army once used a master of this spell to launch an entire piece of the Kaiu Wall at a fleeing Oni army. The wall crushed an entire legion, including the army's commander.



MOSHI SHUGENJA

Outfit: (All considered Average quality) Kimono, Traveling Pack, Scroll Satchel, Wakizashi, Tanto, First Aid Kit.

that Lady Sun speaks to her directly, that she channels the power of Amaterasu like no one before her.

Unlike most Centipede shugenja, who learn in classes, Wakiza was taught alone by her mother and by a single tutor from the school. She grew up shy and quiet, but very observant. Her one true love was magic – not the wisdom of the universe per se, but by the spectacular manipulation of that wisdom. Wakiza loved the spectacle of magic: the flashing power of raw creation in action. She quickly mastered the concepts behind such displays, and began concentrating on manifesting them. By the time of her *gempukku*, she was regularly lighting up the valley with fireworks or exploding lanterns, or simply speeding over the valley floor. For all her flash, she never lost control, and the few wildfires she started were doused quickly. Her spells came to compensate for her quiet demeanor, serving as a release to all her pent-up emotions. Without her magic, she was timid and mousy. With it, she was as showy as an Imperial Acrobat.

Her mother initially sought to curb these tendencies by finding her a proper husband – some Phoenix or Dragon who could rein in her wilder side. She gave up when it became apparent that Wakiza would never limit her magic to some spouse's demands. Clearly, Amaterasu had touched the child, and she didn't want to disrupt that mystic connection. Instead, she asked her to move her "practicing" elsewhere – to some place where she wouldn't be such a distraction. Surprisingly, she agreed. Now, she travels out to sea to perform her tricks, skating across the coastal waters near her home rather than depending upon a boat. The fire from her fingertips mixes with the brine to create huge glowing apparitions beneath the sea, apparitions which she can raise to float high above her. Ships from as far away as Otosan Uchi have reported the glow from her magic. For all the danger of drowning, Wakiza

has never taken a boat on her trips. She claims she doesn't need it.

With her *gempukku* well behind her, Wakiza has begun to realize that her idyllic existence can't last forever. Her mother grows older by the day and her clan – as tiny as it is – still needs leadership. She has begun to work on her assertiveness, and on making herself heard without using flashy spells. She has mastered magic of a more pragmatic nature – long-range missile attacks and the like – knowing that enemies may doubt her resolve. While she doesn't look forward to the day she becomes daimyo, she realizes the futility of fighting it, and is preparing herself as best she can. Meantime, her joyful performances continue unabated – she knows she only has a limited number left.

Wakiza is a tall girl, willowy, and was somewhat awkward in her early life. Her dark eyes stir with untold intelligence, and she keeps her hair tied back from her head at all times. She rarely speaks, and used to sound quite timid when she did, but she's growing more assertive. She wears simple clothes, even at the most formal affairs, and carries a fan with her at all



times. When in the grip of her magic, she becomes a different person entirely – laughing wildly with joy and dancing like a woman possessed. She never seeks conflict, but doesn't avoid it either, and is beginning to learn how her spells can affect people's perception of her. Her youthful exuberance is slowly giving way to mature womanhood – leaving a brilliant leader in its wake.



MOSHI JUIKO

Rank 3 Moshi Shugenja

EARTH 2

WATER 1 Perception 4

FIRE 4

AIR 3

VOID 4

Honor: 2.7

Glory: 4.6

Advantages:

Skills: Athletics 4, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 5, Etiquette 2, History 4, Lore (Amaterasu) 4, Meditation 3, Shintao 5, Tea Ceremony 1, Theology 4, War Fan 2

Spells: Amaterasu's Anger, Amaterasu's Blessing, Castle of Fire, Essence of Fire, Fires of Purity, The Fires That Cleanse, The Fire From Within, The Fury of Osano-Wo, Heart of the Inferno, The Light of Amaterasu, Wings of Fire, Arrow's Flight, Call Upon the Wind, Castle of Air, Essence of Air, Gust of Wind, Osano-Wo's Breath, Tempest of Air, Wind's Distraction, Wind-Borne Speed

The aged dowager of the Centipede clan, Juiko hovers over her daughter like a crow over a battlefield. Although she has been impressed with her daughter's progress in her magical arts, and harbors no doubts that she will make a fine daimyo when Juiko steps down from that role, she is increasingly concerned that Wakiza will never find a husband to be her companion.

It might seem that any ambitious young samurai would come to woo the daimyo-to-be of the Centipede, but it is not the case. Wakiza's prowess and her mother's wagging tongue have kept the young girl quite single.

Not that Wakiza is complaining, but her mother certainly is.

Juiko is a powerful shugenja in her own right, having studied with the Phoenix as a young girl. She also served in the Imperial legions with Isawa Tsuke long ago, when her blood was warmer and her temper more open. Although there were whispers that the Elemental Master of Fire once loved the Centipede woman, Juiko was older than Tsuke by ten years, and never returned his passion. They have not seen each other in the more than twenty years since Juiko became daimyo of her small clan.

Perhaps, when Wakiza is safely married and there is a daughter on the way, Juiko will go to visit her old friend in the Phoenix lands.

By then, they will have much to discuss.

Until that day, Juiko contents herself with tending to the daily business of the Centipede province, keeping the accounts and teaching her daughter the ins and outs of political negotiations and the tricks that courtiers use to get what they need for their clans.

Juiko is content with her life, other than her daughter's state of marriage. She is pleasant on most topics, though she can become a whining shrew when she is alone with Wakiza. Moshi Juiko knows how to create and maintain a mask of pleasantness. Or, at least, she believes that she does.

Recently, she's invited a number of eligible young Minor Clan samurai to a festival in the Centipede lands, hoping that one of them will catch the errant young Wakiza's eye. Perhaps, in them, Wakiza will find the love that Juiko never had. Juiko is crafty, cunning woman who has the best interest of her clan at heart. She has seen the corruption of the court, and knows how to manipulate it from afar. She does not enjoy such games, but has been forced to play them in order to secure the Centipede's position in the Emperor's court. She does not relish sending her daughter into those deep waters, but for the sake of their clan, she will teach Wakiza everything she can in order to survive.

Juiko only hopes it will be enough.



MOSHI AZAMI, THE MORNING STAR

(5 POINTS)

Azami was the Centipede daimyo who first spoke with Lady Sun and learned her Clan's destiny. When she returned, she helped set them on the path they currently follow. No one was closer to Amaterasu than she; it was thought that she came as close as a human being could to understanding Lady Sun's soul. Her descendants claim that she still travels with the Lady Sun, her spirit serving as a handmaiden to the great Kami. The morning star – the last one to fade before the sun rises in the east – is said to be her.

Characters who choose Azami as their ancestor channel Lady Sun with ease and assurance. Once per session, they gain one free raise on any skill check involving either Agility or Reflexes.



Chapter Seven



The Falcon



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Crab*: "Their eyes see what the witch-hunters miss. Further, the Falcon fight with swords and deeds. They do not hide behind words, even in a land that would drive men to madness. They are invaluable aids to us."
- Hida Tsuru

• *Crane*: "They spend too much time with the Lion and Crab. Were they truly honorable they would study the culture of our land and bring themselves before the Emperor. They hide their honor behind the stories of children. Let them live in shadow if they cannot stand the light."
- Doji Satsume

• *Dragon*: "The great birds soar high and see the entire world. Yet even the bird cannot always see that which chooses not to be seen."
- Togashi Jodome

• *Lion*: "They have studied the Akodo and they know honor. The desire to learn from the ancestors shows an earnest spirit. The Falcon deserve our respect and we honor them."
- Kitsu Toju

The Way of the Falcon

*Ghost walks on light's edge,
Sharp eyes watching, darkness found.
A Falcon's vigil.*

- Hiruma Megumiko,
Kuni Tsukai-Sagasu

The world created by Amaterasu and Lord Onnotangu is a marvel of beauty and wonder. Their children, the Kami, led the ancient tribes of Rokugan into a golden age of honor and enlightenment. Yet even in the Empire of the Hantei shadows must fall. Darkness lies beneath every rock and behind every tree. Rokugani shun these places, fearing that the voices of the dead will speak to them there, gibbering in mad whispers. Worse yet, they fear that the hungry ones may come to devour their souls. Dark beings skulk at the edge of nightmares.

The mighty army of the Crab holds back a horde of Oni at Kaiu Kabe. Their witch-hunters hunt down and destroy all vestiges of *maho* within the Empire. Yet by their side the Falcon Clan stands vigilant against the fall of night. Falcon eyes gaze upon the blasphemies that haunt the darkest corners of the Emerald Empire. They see spirits, hear the voices of ghosts, and listen, as the spirit of the land cries out for cleansing.

The Falcon alone seek not to destroy the darkness but to understand it. Without knowledge, they say, one cannot protect the people from the fearsome grip of the Dark One. And it is just that they seek to understand: the darkness, in its own way, lifted the Falcon to their place within the Celestial Order.

THE LANDS OF THE FALCON

"It is an unclean land. A place where shadows claw and the spirits of the dishonored scream for blood! Ironically, this land of horror is also one of the wealthiest in the Empire. It is fortunate that the Falcon have little need for money."

- The Great Bear, Hida Kisada

West of the Shinomen Forest and north of the Twilight Mountains lie the small farms and single castle that define the home of the Falcon Clan. Fresh waters from the forest feed their rich and fertile valley. The trees themselves represent a magnificent reserve of timber as well as specialized woods and spices. Yet the Falcon Clan remains poor.

Travelers who cross the mountain pass or emerge from the forest and look into *Tani Hitokage* (Valley of the Spirit) remain until the sun sets, to watch one of the greatest beauties of the Falcon land appear. As the sun falls in the west, suddenly a ring of fire flares into being, outlining the Toritaka province. This wall of light is the hundreds, if not thousands, of lanterns, that mark the boundary of the land, driving away the night. Dozens of lanterns light the primary village, guiding a traveler along paths and protecting homes from the darkness. Scattered around the outskirts of the village lay offerings of food, small wood carvings, and other trinkets. These tokens are gifts to appease the angry spirits of Shinomen and to keep worse things at bay.

Peasants fear the spirits that inhabit the land they work. None cut living trees in the forest. Few toil during the evening. Villagers pray for their safety and hope that the Falcon will leave this land or that the Fortunes will rescue them from the clutches of the forest. And the rest of Rokugan believes they have every cause to fear.

Shinomen Forest is haunted.

Villagers speak of angry spirits wandering the woods, ghostly battles destroying entire fields of crops, hideous snakemen that feed on human flesh, and the noises: wailings, moanings, and whispers that shatter fragile minds, leaving a villager dead with eyes open in terror and skin bleached white. So they toil, reluctantly, in the fields closest to Shiro no Toritaka. The castle and the Falcon provide the strength and courage the peasants need to survive a living nightmare.

Or so they say.

In truth, the land rests quietly. Peasants toil close to the castle, watched by Falcon bushi. This



discourages random attacks by bandits or wandering ronin rather than to defend the villagers from angry spirits. This does not mean that Shinomen is not haunted; quite the opposite. The Falcon speak of battles from a hundred years ago, when they were called into the forest by their daimyo to fight against demonic snakemen. Even today, a lone bushi, or occasionally a student and his sensei, travels through Falcon lands in the dead of night to find the *yorei* (ghosts). Panicked villagers swear the *yorei* are responsible for milk curdling, crops dying, and the fields themselves turning black with Taint. Shadows fall long and dark in this part of Rokugan.

Through it all, the Falcon stand guard, their eyes searching the darkness for an answer. Their words call to the spirits for succor, and claim that their Ancestors speak to them in the night. Every Falcon knows that his life may yet be given to defend the terrified peasants toiling in the shadow of the castle.

More frequently than haunts and ghosts, bandits raid the Falcon villages, believing that the rich land yields a vast profit in rice and koku. Usually they strike at the outer fringe of the land, though occasionally a bold leader attacks the heartland of the Falcon. Between the fears of the haunted forest, and the small numbers of Falcon bushi, the clan finds itself hard-pressed to deal with the bandits effectively. They plead with their 'allies' in the Lion and Crab clans, but the great clans have no time to send a major force to end the menace. Instead, both clans tell the Falcon that they must deal with the problem on their own.

The stoic Falcon refuse to waste their precious bushi chasing bandits through a haunted forest, and so the attacks continue. Some claim that the Hare, at the far side of the Shinomen, aided the bandits in order to disrupt Falcon resources. Those words are whispered very quietly, especially in the Emperor's court.

While the Hare and the Falcon had no declared conflict (given that their established lands are so distant from each other), they were in no way allied. Their rivalry extended over a hundred years of petty banditry, political ploys, and rumormongering in the Imperial Court, and those bushi who were allied to one or the other watch themselves during travel through their rival's provinces.



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Phoenix*: "Searching out the horrors of this world leaves them ill-tempered and sullen. They would be better served by using their meditations to seek enlightenment."

– Isawa Kaede

• *Scorpion*: "They claim secrets the Scorpion do not know. How unfortunate."

– Bayushi Kachiko

• *Unicorn*: "They believe watching and waiting will reveal all. I say, begone! Return when you understand the need of action, and no longer hide beneath a coward's wing!"

– Otaku Kamoko

• *Minor Clans*:

"The difference between a fool and a dangerous man is the difference between watching and planning. Which are you, little Falcon?"

– Yoritomo



FALCON GEMPUKKU

Falcon Sensei frequently take a student on an exploration of the lands and the edges of the forest. The student keeps an account of the evening's events. As they walk, the sensei describes what surrounds them and lectures on how to expand the senses and reach for the sensations that may hint of the *yorei*.

The student is then left alone, deep in the forest, for three days, chronicling their studies. If they survive, the scrolls are entered into the Clan's histories, and the student is pronounced worthy of the name "Toritaka."

Few *gempukku* documents speak of an actual meeting with a *yorei* or other spirit, but some describe horrible snake-bodied creatures, or hungry nightmares that creep through the trees late at night. The training received by Falcon bushi teaches them that failings of the flesh can strand a soul in this world. If the Falcon is visited by a spirit, they must attempt to aid the ghost in any way possible. If they are able to help them leave this world and continue on its kharmic journey, the spirit will give them a token, and their position as a commander of the Falcon guard is assured.

It must be noted that some young bushi never return from the Falcon woodlands.

THE FOUNDING OF THE FALCON

"A soul is sometimes judged before it leaves this world. At those auspicious moments, samurai are cast down and the humble may rise to rule."

— Akodo Tsidaro

All Rokugani know their places. In a given life, a man stands within the Celestial Order based on the sins and virtues of his previous life. Rokugani live honorable lives and conduct themselves with proper decorum in hopes that in a future life the Celestial Order will elevate them to a better position. Very rarely, a soul fulfills a portion of its dharma and the Fortunes smile on it. The Fortunes elevate these souls to Samurai and the Emperor grants them a parcel of land for their courageous acts.

Long ago, in the small farming villages of *Tasogare Mura* (Twilight Village), an Imperial entourage stopped for an evening's rest. During the night, 'ninja' attacked the Emperor's chief advisor and his guards. A local farmer named Hayabusa came to the aid of the advisor, killing the ninja and saving the courtier's life only to lose his own to the assassin's poison. The advisor returned to Otosan Uchi taking Hayabusa's oldest son with him. The advisor described the farmer as a great bird that swooped in and cut down the vicious killer with his mighty claws.

Impressed, the Emperor bestowed upon the son the right to hold a clan in the Toritaka provinces, in honor of the advisor's words. He was granted title rights to his village and the surrounding farmlands. Yotogi returned to the province, and with his three brothers created the Falcon Clan.

Yotogi enlisted the aid of a Lion magistrate and soon discovered the identity of the supposed ninja. He revealed the 'ninja' as nothing more than a maddened peasant possibly aided by dark magic. Yotogi summoned a Crab *tsukai-sagasu* who declared that neither the peasant or land evidenced any *maho*.

Refusing to allow the question to fade, Yotogi sat within a temple to Fukurokujin (the Fortune of

Wisdom) and meditated. He beseeched his father's spirit to help guide him in the formation of the new clan and to reveal the cause of his killer's madness. Seventy-three days passed while Yotogi meditated in the care of the monks. Toritaka province survived but did not prosper, and the local magistrates grew concerned that the lord may have abandoned his place to pursue the contemplative life of a monk.

On the dawn of the seventy-fourth day, Yotogi emerged from the temple wearing a simple kimono and carrying a naginata on his back. He took a wife and immediately retired to the small castle still being constructed on his land.

It is said that a bushi approached him and asked, "What did you learn?"

Yotogi responded, "There are not enough names."

From that day forward the Falcon Clan trained in the arts of meditation. Furthermore, every Daimyo takes the title "The Yotogi," as symbolic of his vigil. People whisper that the Falcon's powers of awareness come from the guidance of their ancestors. Nothing hides from the sight of a Falcon. For while the Scorpion know the secrets of the Empire, the Falcon know what moves unseen within its borders.





Haunted Secrets

"Secrets are kept in the heart as words are kept in a book, poem, or a man's speech. Listen to the whispers that come during the night. While honor defines us and the Tao shows us the path, whispers of those who came before are often all we have to guide us through our lives. Listen carefully to them."

– Bayushi Goshiu

THE FALCON AND THE YOREI

The inquiry of Toritaka Yotogi set the stage for the Falcon Clan. Obsessed with discovering the peasant's fate, Yotogi directed his students (and ronin that joined him) to watch the shadows around them. They learned that a presence must be felt rather than seen. Yorei stalk their lands, often hidden from sight. Every feeling a Falcon experiences, every nightmare they suffer, everything that happens without a known cause is documented by the clan. Students and masters alike pore over these writings in hopes of gleaning an understanding, an answer, an insight, or anything at all from them. Usually, the writings raise more questions than they ever answer.

When meditation and research fail, the Falcon explore. They travel the nearby land and forest attempting to find their prey. They do not trust their eyes as much as their minds. The explorers put their meditations on awareness to use and simply wander, allowing their feelings to guide them. Occasionally, a yorei is found. Occasionally, a Falcon does not return. Very rarely, a Falcon returns to write about what he felt and saw; these records are prized possessions and kept under constant guard in the Falcon library.

Falcons often die before age has a chance to catch up to them. When the Falcon speak of their fallen brothers, they regard these samurai as brave explorers into another world. Those who do survive into ancient years always retire to a small monastery in the Falcon lands, and travel no more. Though rarely given, such a Falcon's advice is highly sought. Usually these Falcons join the *Douzokukai Tasogare* (Council of Twilight). They keep what they say behind closed doors and rarely record or discuss their discoveries with anyone.

Certain Falcons learn something of terrifying importance. Most believe that after living on the edge of the haunted Shinomen, fighting the darkness of He Who Must Not Be Named, and actively seeking yorei, nothing could frighten a Falcon. Sometimes, on a quiet day or in the dead of night, a bushi who is meditating on the shadow of a leaf or where the candle light does not fall, runs screaming from the castle, his eyes open wide in terror and his breathing so heavy that his heart nearly explodes. At these moments, the Yotogi turns a little more ashen and the *Douzokukai Tasogare* convenes. The council members take the afflicted samurai with them. What they discuss no one can say; only one thing is certain. The council summons a Centipede shugenja to bless their *pagoda* with the light of Amaterasu, and pray that no shadows will fall within the tower.

The Centipede, who have a pleasant alliance with the Falcon, are always willing to cooperate. Their clan philosophies are much the same, and the Falcon often send their female shugenja to be trained by the Centipede. Some say that the ronin who guard the Centipede valley seem far too insightful not to be members of the Haunted Clan, and perhaps they are right. The Falcon do not speak of such things; such agreements are for the Moshi and the Toritaka alone.

THE FALCON AND HONOR

"There are not enough names."

– Toritaka Yotogi

Tales speak of the 'little ancestors'; mischievous spirits that plague those who behave dishonorably. Kitsu shugenja warn that a life of dishonor may strand a samurai's soul in this world. The lost soul must remember his purpose in living before he is allowed peace in death. To most, these stories warn or inspire caution; a



FALCON STUDENTS

The Falcon maintain a small school dedicated to the mysteries of the world that surrounds them. Living on the edge of a haunted forest places certain demands on the daimyo of the Falcon. He must protect the peasants from the darkness that lurks at the edge of nightmare.

When a member of another clan – even a member of a Great Clan – requests that their child be enrolled in the Falcon school, they are in for a polite shock. Most likely, they will be refused.

This is not because the Falcon wish to hide their secrets, but because they do not wish to be responsible for the loss of any life that is not their own to command.

The school grounds are small with only a few buildings and a single dojo. Most students spend their time in meditation or sparring with practice weapons.

Students are required to tell their sensei everything they observed every day. The sensei questions the student further so that the young Falcon learns what details they missed. When not meditating or practicing, the student reads fading scrolls that describe events involving the *gaki*, *ubume*, *goryo*, and *shiryo*.



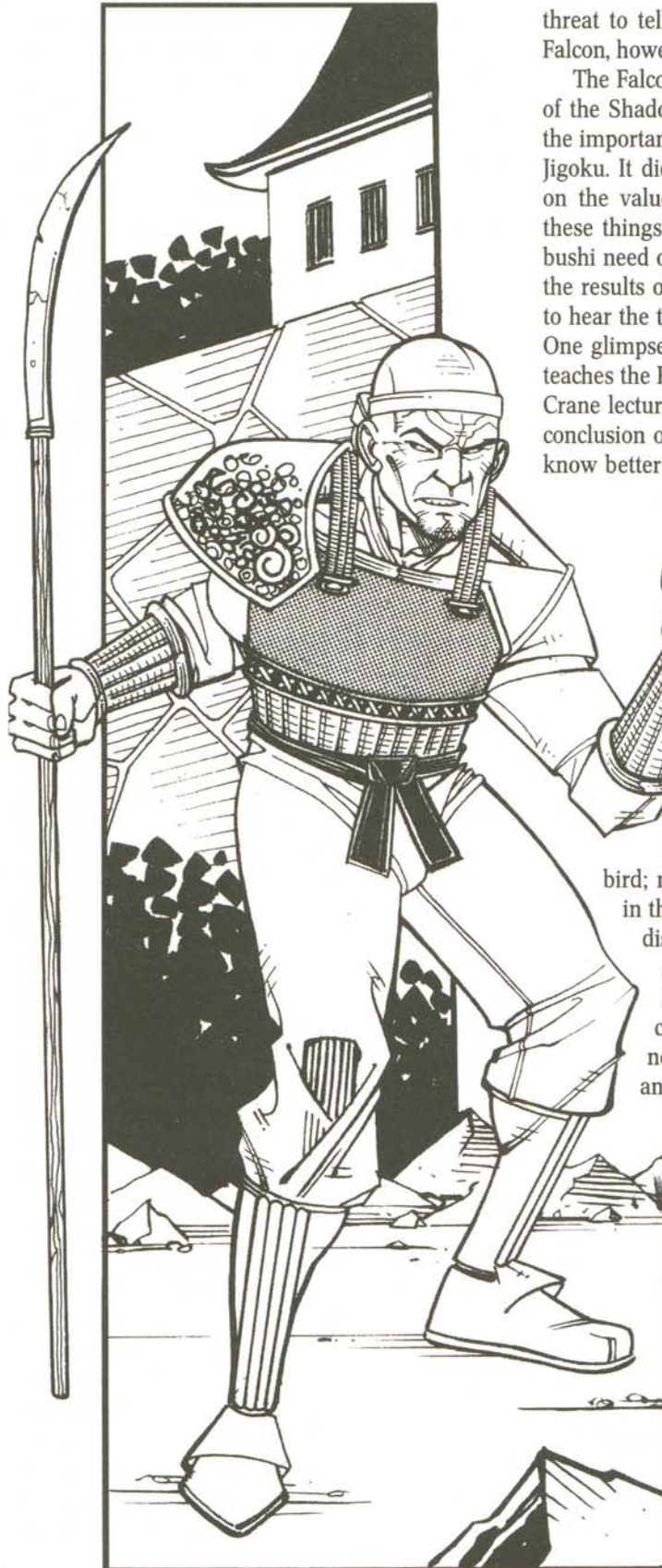
TORITAKA BUSHI

Starting Outfit: (All average quality) kimono, naginata, daisho, traveling pack, diary paper, and stylus

MAHO AND GHOSTS

It should be noted that not all *yorei* are *maho*-creatures, or even creatures of Fu Leng. Although the Falcon has picked up some information about the nature of *maho* and the Shadowlands during their research, they have not focused on such practices, leaving those in the hands of the Kuni witch-hunters.

Instead, the Falcon have much more in common with the Kitsu, practitioners of spirit-magic and students of Jigoku, than they do with the Crab and the lore of *maho*.



threat to tell unruly children to behave. For the Falcon, however, they speak the unhindered truth.

The Falcon learned from the Crab the realities of the Shadowlands. From the Lion they learned the importance of honor and what awaits them in Jigoku. It did not take the Falcon long to decide on the value of honor and bushido. They treat these things with the utmost seriousness. Falcon bushi need only step into Shinomen Forest to see the results of a dishonorable life. They need only to hear the terrified peasants cry out in the night. One glimpse of a specter bleeding from her eyes teaches the Falcon better than any Lion book, any Crane lecture. The Falcon see first hand what the conclusion of a dishonorable life brings and they know better than to tempt the Celestial Order.

So they practice bushido and take great care to maintain their honor. However, the Falcon find it difficult to maintain the culture that the other clans create and the Crane are renowned for. Falcons are not known for their poetry or painting. They are, however, known for their skills of falconry. A nearly mystical attachment binds a falconer to his bird; no other clan can surpass the Falcon in this sport, which serves as more than a display of their honor. A trained bushi and his falcon often see more than a lookout in a tower. The bird communicates with the bushi in ways none can fathom. Together a falconer and his raptor form the finest scout an army could desire. The Falcon Clan frequently lends a falconer to the armies of the Lion or Crab. For a small show of gratitude, the falconer scouts for the army on reconnaissance missions and aids in the planning of critical engagements. Such practices help replenish Falcon coffers.

Given their closeness to unpleasant things, the Falcon usually avoid direct contact with the more 'courtly' clans of Rokugan. In fact, Falcon avoid Otosan Uchi as often as possible. They know their lack of practice

with more refined courtly arts leaves them open to dishonor. As a result, the Falcon avoid dishonor by simply not placing themselves in such a position. For a Falcon there is no dishonor in not putting your honor at risk. As with combat, the most effective defense is to not be present for the strike. Some believe that their closeness to the Lion makes them targets for such political maneuvering, but no evidence supports this belief.

The Falcon refuse to learn the Iaijutsu cut, a direct affront to the favored duel of the Crane and the Emperor. Rather, Falcons who find themselves challenged to a duel set the rules: non-lethal confrontations of form and awareness. Blindfolded duelists strike thrown apples with naginata or katana. Other times a demonstration of kendo, again without sight, decides the victor. To date, no Falcon daimyo has permitted a lethal duel. The scarcity and importance of Falcon bushi prevents the daimyo from permitting his men to cast away their lives in duels, even if he feels certain they will win.

THE FALCON AND OTHER CLANS

Through their long history, the Falcon have most often associated with three clans: Crab, Lion and the ruined Hare. Usually their dealings with Great Clans involve sending scouts to assist with reconnaissance. For the most part, Rokugan does not concern itself with Falcon. One clan, however, refuses to heed the warnings and tests the Falcon's resolve.

Hitokage and the nearby forest holds some of the finest woods and fertile land known in this part of Rokugan. Rumors even allude to diamonds in the Twilight Mountains, diamonds that Falcon peasants refuse to mine. The Hare Clan often cast their eyes across the river to the lands of Toritaka province. Before their destruction, the Hare had twice attempted a formal war with the Falcon. Since they have fallen, no attacks from the Hare have been seen; but the Falcon do not forget the bad blood between their two families.

In one particular instance, the Hare claimed the farmland just beyond the river in Falcon territory. The Falcon let them keep the land. Within a month, desperate messengers arrived from the Hare pleading for assistance from the Falcon. The Hare implored the Falcon for aid in defending the peasants from bandit raids. The Yotogi sent troops to aid the Hare and days later

the Hare withdrew, leaving the lands once again property of the Falcon. Neither clan speaks of the reasons for the Hare leaving the province. The incident has come to be known as the "Three Week Visit."



Falcon define themselves through their observations and knowledge of *yorei*. Students learn to watch the shadow before they see the tree.

Benefit: Because the Falcon have no recognized family name in the court of Hantei, the clan members have no family bonus. They are unofficially called the 'Toritaka' family (called so from their province's name), but the honors of a family name have never been officially granted to them by a Hantei Emperor. They do, however, gain bonuses for a high Awareness. (See sidebar, right).

THE FALCON BUSHI SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Willpower


Skills: Falconry, Hunting, Lore: *Yorei*, Meditation, Yarijutsu, and either Hunting or another rank in Falconry.

Starting Honor: 2, plus 0 boxes

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: The Falcon's Eyes

Above all things the Falcon prize awareness of the world around them. At each school rank this ability improves. Throughout their training, Falcons constantly focus upon meditations to expand their senses. The Falcon's Eyes grants the bushi a +1 per school rank bonus to the total of any rolls involving Awareness. Furthermore, the bushi may substitute Awareness for any roll that calls for Perception.



EYES OF THE EAGLE

A Falcon's training emphasizes the study of unusual conditions, strange occurrences and 'hunches'. A bushi who has spent his life understanding such training gains a benefit from their devotion (rather than the customary family trait bonus).

As a Toritaka's awareness increases, they gain the following additional benefits:

Awareness 3: If a hidden creature or person in the Falcon's normal field of vision moves, the Toritaka will immediately notice.

Awareness 4: The bushi no longer relies solely on his eyes. Darkness and blinding do not affect a Falcon bushi's Target Numbers to hit and to defend.

Awareness 5: The Falcon's mastery of sensing is so great that the bushi cannot be surprised.



SHUGENJA AMONG THE TORITAKA

The Falcon Clan boasts a handful of shugenja that take care of the spiritual needs of the people. Often, wandering shugenja of other clans perform the duties of holy men. On a few occasions, the Kuni school invites the Falcon to send promising youths to their shugenja school. Following this training, such shugenja fulfill a tour of duty at the Great Wall. Afterwards, the shugenja returns to the Falcon bringing new insights into nightmares that walk along the shadows.

On two notable occasions early in Falcon history, a Kitsu *sodan-senzo* arrived in the province requesting that a particular child accompany him to Lion lands. These children returned as samurai with an understanding of the basic shugenja rituals and knowledge of Jigoku. While not *sodan-senzo* themselves, their understanding of the spirit world forever changed the Falcon notions of the yorei into their current beliefs.

In particular, it has convinced the Falcon to construct a Hall of Ancestors and honor the visions and knowledge of the past.

Rank 2: The Falcon's Wings

When the bushi advances to this rank he gains the understanding of the falcon's movements in the skies. The way that the predator chooses its prey become instinctive within the bushi as well. The Falcon Bushi gains two strikes per round, in imitation of the Falcon's instinctive assault.

Rank 3: The Falcon's Talons

Finally the bushi learns the secrets and way of the Falcon. At this rank, the bushi may spend a Void point to make an Awareness roll against his opponents. The TN of this roll is (highest opposing School Rank + number of opponents) x 5. If successful, the Falcon may make up to three attacks during the combat round. Void points spent for this ability do not allow for the rolling of a Void die.



GENZO

Rank 2 Falcon Bushi
EARTH 2
WATER 2
FIRE 2
AIR 2 Awareness 3
VOID 3
Honor 3.0
Glory: 2.0

Advantages: Higher Purpose (Search out Yorei)

Disadvantages: Obligation (4): Kuni Takemura, Brash

Skills: Defense 1, Falconry 1, Hunting 1, Investigation 2, Lore: Yorei 3, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Meditation 2, Yarijutsu 2

A dedicated student of the Falcon School, Genzo spends extraordinary amounts of time

reading all he can about not only yorei but the Shadowlands as well. He excelled during his initial study. His journals filled with observations of such fine detail that the masters found it difficult to question him. More than just details, though, Genzo tracked names. Everything he wrote, he annotated with names. He keeps lists of names that he constantly rewrites. When the Yotogi asked young Genzo 'why,' Genzo replied:

"Toritaka Yotogi told me to do so."

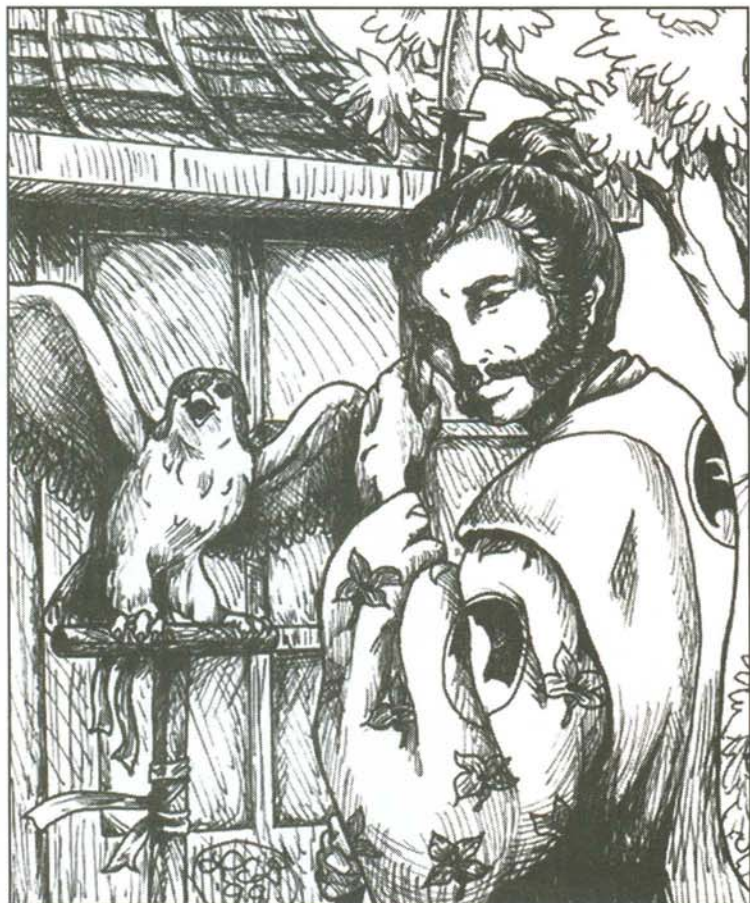
No Falcon ever questioned him again.

After his *gempukku*, Genzo requested permission to travel to the Crab and further his instruction with the Kuni Witch-Hunters. The Yotogi refused, stating that he could not spare any bushi due to the aggression of the Hare. Frustrated, Genzo sent letters to Hiruma Megumiko, a well-known *tsukai-sagasu*, asking for works on the ways of hunting the creatures of the Shadowlands and their relations to the yorei he stalked in Falcon lands. For a time the two corresponded, though Megumiko never revealed the secrets of the witch-hunters. Genzo wrote of the few ghosts he sensed in Shinomen Forest and the single ghost which he had seen but could not reach. The witch-hunter wrote of the importance of meditations and of listening to the elements within the body as they guided one's actions in this world.

One day, during their explorations of the Empire, Hiruma Megumiko and her sensei Kuni Takemura arrived in Toritaka Province. Megumiko, knowing of Genzo's potential, convinced her sensei to instruct the Falcon in seeking the darkness of the Shadowlands. Kuni Takemura agreed on the condition that Genzo would someday repay this great favor.

Takemura sent Megumiko onward to the lands of the Kitsu and remained in Tasogare. For two months he only watched Genzo, walked with Genzo at night in the forest, and studied the way Genzo observed the world. The witch-hunter finally told Genzo a truth about the yorei, and how to distinguish the true minions of the Shadowlands from the restless spirits of dishonored ancestors.

The Falcon, if so inclined, could learn to distinguish between the yorei and the nightmares of the Shadowlands. Takemura realized that the ghosts manifested for the reasons the first Falcon described and not due to the influence of the Shadowlands. After coming to this conclusion, Takemura decided to see if Genzo could find



creatures of the Shadowlands as well as he could sense yorei.

"The elements resonate within us as they do the world. Just as the seasons change with a regular time, a particular rhythm guides our being. It is my belief that the element of corruption damages that timing. Creatures so infused cannot adapt as well as we can, and the flaws of their rhythm can be exploited.

"When next we go exploring, I want you to sense if the beasts we encounter possess the natural rhythm or if it is aberrant and flawed."

Genzo listened, fascinated, to Takemura and remembered that Megumiko had hinted at these ideas in her letters. For the next month, Genzo listened to the rhythms of those around him. He used the Falcon's Eyes to 'see' the rhythm and feel the natural ebb and flow of the elements. At last, Takemura received permission to take Genzo to Kaiu Kabe. Together they crossed the river into the Shadowlands themselves. Barely two hours into the blasted land Takemura called out to the winds.

"I have returned, and this time I have found the one that will slay you!"

The clank of armor assaulted Genzo's senses. From the twisted broken trees emerged a figure whose chest bore a blackened *do* of the Unicorn.

"Who challenges my blade this time, Takemura? What student have you consigned to death for your pride and arrogance?" The voice rang hollow and broken through the *mempo* of the armor.

Genzo strode forward, hands wrapped tightly around his naginata. "I am Genzo of the Falcon! I watch what the Yotogi demands I see! I speak with the *yorei* and return them to the path of enlightenment!"

"Are you ready for Jigoku, Falcon?"

Genzo 'watched' and felt the staccato rhythms in the beat the samurai could not sustain. Immediately, he knew the corruption and would never forget. He leveled the polearm and advanced as the samurai drew his katana.

"What is your name?"

"Moto Saibusu."

Genzo easily struck between the staggered beats of the element of corruption, his senses warning him of the changes before the corrupted Unicorn even knew himself. Within moments the fight ended with Genzo's blade deep in the lost bushi's neck. Takemura immediately decapitated the creature and poured jade powder in its mouth. The witch-hunter bowed to the Falcon and together they returned to Kaiu Kabe. Takemura bid Genzo farewell and offered one last warning:

"There will come a time when the ways of the Crab and the ways of the Falcon must come together as they have in you. For now, Genzo, count your names and find the spirits that walk this world. But know that the Crab will call on you and you must not refuse us."



HAYABUSA

(5 POINTS)

Long ago, a maddened peasant attacked an Imperial entourage. The farmer Hayabusa, waiting outside the sake house for handouts, 'saw' something hidden in the shadows. Hayabusa watched the attacker steal into the window of the advisor's chambers, and he knew that unless he acted immediately, the killer would succeed. With a shriek of fear and fury the farmer leapt through the window, slashing at the assassin with the kama he used to harvest grain. Incredibly his strikes found home and the assassin died, butchered by the crazed Hayabusa. However, the killer's *aiguchi* caught the farmer's neck. While the cut itself would not have killed Hayabusa, the poison coating the blade did.

Characters who have Hayabusa as an ancestor gain the ability to roll (but not keep) an additional die for rolls involving Awareness.



Chapter Eight



The Tortoise



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Crab*: "Most look to the Tortoise and see only the shell, but we see them as a reflection of ourselves. They, too, are alone within the greater whole, yet they carry a fury hidden deep within them, a fury born of the strength and heart of the common man."

– Hida Tampako

• *Crane*: "They are an abomination, mocking the Celestial Order from the shoulder of our own Son of Heaven. How can we be expected to follow the path when the Emperor's own ignore it?"

– Kakita Yoshi

• *Dragon*: "When children decide on teams, they must consider every player on their own. The Tortoise do this, but neglect to consider their opponent's side of the field."

– Mirumoto Daini

• *Lion*: "Their prowess and perseverance are admirable, but they dishonor the Emperor with their actions and their weapons."

– Ikoma Kaoku



The Way of the Tortoise

"Fortune favors the mortal man."

– Shinsei

Clan Tortoise could more accurately be called a small community within Rokugan. Settled exclusively upon the northern White Stag Peninsula and coast north of Otosan Uchi, no more than a thousand Tortoise have graced the idyllic shores of Rokugan at any single point in history; few marriages are arranged with their diplomats, courtiers, and merchants. Yet they persevere, generation after generation, thriving independently of the world around them.

HISTORY OF THE TORTOISE

"Twenty-eight million spirits, invisible to all but us..."

– Kemmei

The origins of the Tortoise are the subject of much debate among the rest of the Empire. All know that the clan was formed in the century following the Battle at White Stag, when the *gaijin* assaulted the Empire from positions offshore and for a time occupied the very land held by the Tortoise today. The founder of the clan is likewise known. He was Agasha Kasuga, a controversial shugenja whose theories about his ancestor's *Nazo Bubun no Agasha* ("Agasha's Puzzle Pieces") earned him notoriety and disfavor during his life.

After the Battle of White Stag, when the few remaining *gaijin* fled up the coast of Rokugan, Agasha Kasuga struck an unusual bargain with a number of Yasuki sea-merchants. He asked that they smuggle the hunted *gaijin* out of the Empire and north, back to their homeland. His motives were never revealed, and his name was thereafter

stricken from Imperial records and his immediate family imprisoned for his dishonorable actions.

Many months later, the Yasuki vessels returned, with Kasuga aboard. His only request was a private audience with Emperor Hantei XIV, which was mysteriously granted on the eve of his *seppuku*. The details of their discussion have never been revealed, but the result is clear. The refugees (and all their knowledge of the world beyond the mountains) were handed over to the Emperor in exchange for his mercy. Kasuga was granted permission to live.

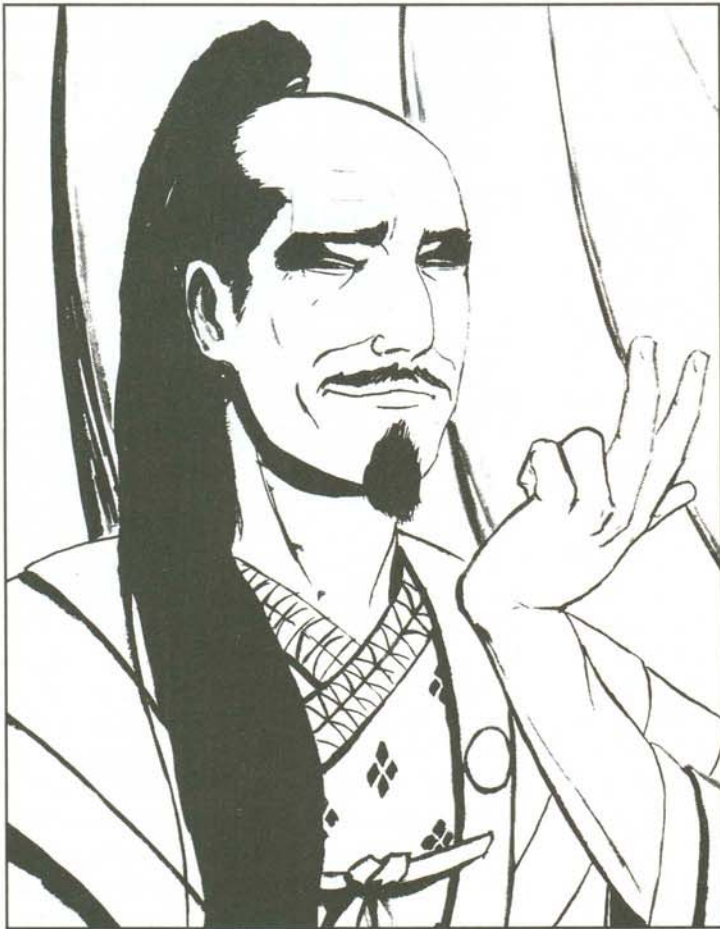
Kasuga and his Yasuki allies were granted the land which the *gaijin* had invaded, and a clan title: Tortoise. The Emperor retained overall authority, naming himself daimyo of the Tortoise (thus ensuring that they would never have a family name), and proclaimed that all successive generations would be commanded by his descendants. Kasuga himself was appointed the clan's *de facto* leader, and was given great latitude to make day-to-day decisions as he wished.

To this day, management of the Tortoise Clan remains in the hands of Kasuga's descendants, while the reigning Hantei keeps the title of Tortoise Clan Daimyo. At any time, the Emperor may overrule the current *kizoku* (sub-daimyo), demanding that the Tortoise perform any task he desires. But for the most part, the Tortoise are left to administer themselves with very little Imperial direction.

THE TORTOISE IN ROKUGAN

The Tortoise have always been at odds with the rest of the samurai caste. When they first took control of their land, most samurai secretly hoped that they would simply die away, to be forgotten. After all, their initial numbers were as small as those of any other Minor Clan at its inception; with the addition of their rough lifestyle and their continual and dishonorable association with mere *heimin* servants, how could they possibly survive?

But survive they did, flourishing in their new home along the *Hanto no Yoake* (the Peninsula of Dawn) between the Bay of the Golden Sun and North Hub Village. At first, they numbered only in the dozens, consisting of little more than Agasha Kasuga and the Yasuki smugglers who had survived their trip beyond the northern mountains. But within a year, they received a petition from several ronin and former veterans



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Phoenix*: "The future will belong to mortals; Shinsei has told us so. But there exists a gap between the divine and the mundane, one that only the Tortoise and the Asako have made an effort to bridge."

– Isawa Uona

• *Scorpion*: "The perfect union of guile and brash arrogance. The Tortoise have managed to offend the majority of the Empire and remain above reproach. One must admire that kind of cunning."

– Bayushi Aramoro

• *Unicorn*: "Like ourselves, the Tortoise are outsiders, though for very different reasons. They *choose* to live outside the Empire, taking each step alone. Is that a sign of weakness, or one of strength?"

– Ide Akujin

• *Minor Clans*: "The Tortoise Clan provides two very real advantages to our armies. First, they bring the swelling masses of the *heimin* and *hinin* to bear on the field of battle, tripling the rank and file. Second, they have a new perspective that – while not always helpful – is always refreshing."

– Hogosha

but fewer and fewer people came to them for help after the initial criticisms; it became obvious that the majority of the samurai class felt little but contempt for the Tortoise Clan, regardless of their Imperial support.

Still, those who had joined early on in the first generation of the Tortoise had a tremendous impact on the clan's development. A diverse gamut of skills, talents, techniques, and knowledge was passed on to the founders' children, who were faced with incorporating them into something useful.

At first, members of the Tortoise Clan were allowed to perform the tasks they knew, with the hope that they would work together with others to develop uniform regiments. But this assumption was inherently flawed, as the founders of the Tortoise shared little in common. Without the

habitually communal lifestyle and established tradition of the average Rokugani to draw upon, nearly all attempts at compromise resulted in bickering and even open feuds within the family.

Fearing for the future of her clan, Kasuga's only daughter, the pragmatic Genjiko, concluded that the safest course for the Tortoise would be for each member to follow his or her own path, independent of the rest. Unlike the Major Clans, they would have no identifiable specialty.

Diversity was their pride, and now it would be their strength.

DUTIES OF THE TORTOISE

Today, the Tortoise Clan perform many duties for the Empire and for their host in the capital city of Otsan Uchi. The Tortoise have become known as merchants and diplomats, and are called upon in these capacities regularly. Complementing the trade routes of the Mantis to the south, the Tortoise deliver goods and passengers back and forth from their homeland to the Phoenix and the northern lands of the Crane.

of the Battle at White Stag that agreed with their motives in leading the *gaijin* home.

The Tortoise accepted the stragglers, regardless of their caste or profession, and word spread of their magnanimous gesture. Within weeks, scores more ronin, war veterans, refugees, and even homeless *heimin* flooded into the northern White Stag Peninsula, seeking a new home. All were welcomed by Kasuga with open arms, for that is the way of the Tortoise – acceptance, and the offer of a new lease on life, a second chance to make good with the Fortunes.

This new influx of applicants to the Tortoise wore thin the resolve of many observers, however. Critics of the Emperor's momentous decision to grant land to betrayers rose up once more, citing that a rag-tag clan founded upon thieves, murderers, and dishonorable wave-men only scarred the Empire as a whole – especially when they were but a stone's throw from the capital city.

Kasuga never responded, the Emperor was equally unmoved, and the Tortoise Clan remained. Their open-door policy was unchanged,



SOMEISA (SHINSEI'S RIDDLE)

When the great teacher Shinsei left the Empire, he walked for many days to the south. On the road, he met several travelers, each begging for some great secret to preserve them from the time of war to come. Shinsei refused them all, saying only, "You already know the answers. I have no more to give."

At last, as he took the last steps of his journey, he saw an old woman sitting by the road, offering rice balls to passing travelers. He stopped to take one, and she smiled when she saw him. "Little Teacher," she said, "I have heard that you have no more answers. Instead, I ask this: do you have any final questions for me?"

Shinsei laughed, and clapped his hands at her wisdom. "I have one question, Someisa," he said to her. "But if I ask it of you, you can never tell it to any other creature who could repeat it."

"Of course, Little Teacher," the wife Someisa said.

(Continued)

This is particularly important to the Phoenix when one or more of their few land-bound trade routes is closed due to war or bad weather.

The Phoenix remain one of the primary allies of the Tortoise, even though many of the sailors on their ships are culled from the ranks of *heimin* merchants and laborers. The Crane are not as forgiving. Every so often, when the political climate appears to be favorable, they lodge a complaint with the Imperial Court, attesting that the Tortoise defy Rokugani tradition and sully the honor of all they come in contact with. Of course, such arguments are largely ignored; even without the blessing of Hantei XIV, the Crane could scarcely make such a claim while they were still benefiting from trade with the Tortoise themselves.

The Tortoise maintain their own port (known as *Taimana Choryu*, or "Slow Tide") a short ride to the north of the capital city, where most of their trade operations are headquartered. Smaller and less frequented than the port city of Otsan Uchi, it is ignored by most ships, and the Mantis trade alliance pays them little attention. The Tortoise maintain a ready force of soldiers at all times (most trained to fight only on land or sea, not both). These troops are often loaned out to man or protect trade ships hailing from the port, or to fill out depleted land forces. The current *kizoku*, Kemmei, can nearly always be found at the port city. He is the man to talk to about hiring able men and women of the Tortoise.

Outside their mercantile and political concerns, the Tortoise have been assigned two very important duties in and around Otsan Uchi. First, they are ostensibly the guardians of the Bay of the Golden Sun and its shores. In theory, this means that they are responsible for keeping the city of Otsan Uchi safe from naval assaults (such as the Battle of White Stag, after which they were formed). But in practice, this position simply means that the Tortoise are blamed when the city's defenses fail. Fortunately, no battle at the city has ever been so catastrophic that the Tortoise have been called to account for their 'inefficiency,' and they have been allowed to develop the city's naval defenses as they wish.

Currently, the Tortoise maintain two small sea fortresses, one at the base of each Antler of the Stag and each only a short run or gallop from the gates of the Outer City. These outposts house a small number of soldiers who are rotated twice a year with those at *Taimana Choryu*, and keep two

kobune stationed at the capital's own port city. The Tortoise troops draw weapons, foodstuffs, and supplies from the city in exchange for their services.

Secondly, the Tortoise have been charged with keeping the walls and structures of Otsan Uchi clean, safe, and well-maintained. Toward this purpose, the outposts at Otsan Uchi also house a small number of Kaiu-trained civil engineers who train teams of "firemen" for the city, including a large number of *heimin* and *hinin* that they have gathered around the outposts. These peasants are perhaps the best-fed and happiest in all of Otsan Uchi, benefitting from the magnanimous attitude of the Tortoise Clan while learning proper skills from the engineers. They live in shanties the Tortoise have established around the outposts (there are sometimes in excess of two hundred at the base of either Antler at any given time), and can respond to emergencies within the Outer City within minutes.

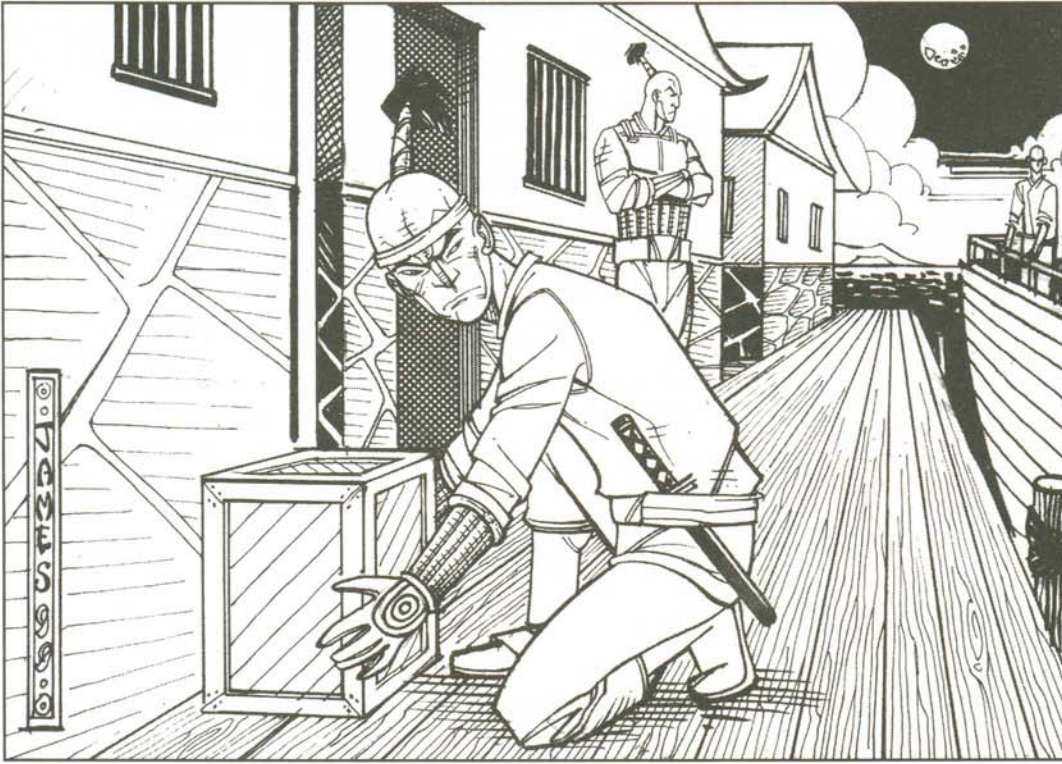
The duties of these teams include providing relief to the victims of earthquakes, monsoons, tsunami, fires, riots, the sudden appearance of sinkholes, and dealing with any other disasters. They are trained to douse fires, apply simple medicine, clear rubble and rebuild fallen buildings, and otherwise deal with emergencies.

Governors of each district in the city send men and women to the experts living at the outposts so that they may learn how to train their own teams, using the teams lodged at the outposts as an example. Since the inception of these teams after a massive earthquake nearly leveled all of Otsan Uchi in the eighth century, the appearance and operation of the city have improved drastically, and support of the Tortoise Clan has spread from the halls of the Imperial Throne to most of the city and its surrounding environs.

Finally, the Tortoise are also responsible for keeping a small number of records for the houses of the Imperial Line, thought mainly to be historical accounts and anecdotal information from peripheral sources (*i.e.* histories of important events, as seen from a variety of perspectives). These records are only accessible by librarians of the Tortoise themselves, and select members of the Hantei, Seppun, and Otomo families.

SECRETS OF THE TORTOISE

The samurai of the Tortoise Clan are considered by most to be as barbaric as the



**SOMEISA
(SHINSEI'S RIDDLE)
(CONTINUED)**

And so, Shinsei whispered a few words into her ear, and passed along his final riddle.

Someisa lived for three hundred years, but she could not stand to keep the secret. During the first hundred years, she told the trees in her garden, and they blossomed a thousandfold. She whispered her secret to the river, and it bubbled with joy and the waters ran silver.

The Emperor ordered her to tell him Shinsei's Riddle, and came to her humble hut by the river, demanding that she speak to him. She bowed to the Hantei, but before he could command her to speak, her body changed, and where she stood rested instead a magnificent Tortoise, the wisest creature under the Heavens. The Emperor, understanding, bowed and returned to his palace of gold.

Form that day forth, the Tortoise has never spoken another word, but instead makes patterns on the sand, remembering the riddle that only Someisa knew.

Unicorn - perhaps more so, given their employment of the lower castes - but given their Imperial support, few can speak against them.

Additionally, there are pockets of support across the Empire, including much of Ootosan Uchi (for reasons described above), the Phoenix, several Crane lords (whose trade relationship with the Tortoise cannot be ignored), and the Yasuki merchants (who value and often use the *heimin* themselves). But several houses of the Yasuki Family have further reason to support the Tortoise - a reason involving illegally smuggled goods and the potential for profits beyond any they could gain inside the Empire.

During their first trip beyond the northern mountains, the Yasuki who followed Agasha Kasuga discovered a strange new port of call belonging to a barbarian tribe known as the Yobanjin. These foreigners, though much like the Rokugani, had a wide array of new trade goods, including the new distilled drink *uisuki*, new forms of tallow (made from animal fat, though Kasuga did not realize this at first), strange weaponry, and many new delicacies. Knowing that the Imperial Court would frown upon these foreign delights, the Yasuki traded most of them through the illicit markets they were already familiar with.

The demand for these goods quickly increased, so the Yasuki of the Tortoise lobbied to continue their trade with the people beyond the mountains. During their first several months along the shores of White Stag, the Tortoise were ill-prepared to mount such a trip, let alone establish a regular trade route; so the Tortoise Yasuki made an offer to their former brethren among the Crab, offering them a percentage of the profits in exchange for access to their current trade network. This offer met with worried speculation at first, but the yield of the first joint expedition back into the lands of the Yobanjin was too high to ignore. Soon, the Tortoise were working with Yasuki smugglers, and the first inter-cultural smuggling operation of the Empire was born.

The items the Yasuki and Tortoise sneak out of Rokugan include various *nemuranai*, pearls, jade, katana, wakizashi and other items the foreigners consider "exotic". Among these items are a sprinkling of refugees as well, members of the *heimin* and *hinin* castes who are tired of their suppressed lives in the Empire and wish to start fresh in a new realm. Generally, peasants are not traded for goods, instead bartering for their freedom with the Tortoise, or offering trade in goods or information for safe passage.



GETTING AWAY WITH IT

Some people may look at the Tortoise Clan as an exception to the rules, which they are. But it must be remembered that they are an exception for three significant reasons.

First, they fulfill a need. The Crane or the Scorpion may point to the Tortoise and recite a laundry list of indiscretions (hiring, training, protecting, and sheltering the lower castes, snubbing established Rokugani standards, etc.). The rebuttal is always the same: "Would you like to put out that fire?"

The Tortoise are somewhat disparaged in Rokugan. They choose to perform a variety of tasks that no other samurai would even consider: touching bodies, harvesting their own crops, and working with their own finances and commercial trade. Despite their constant purification rituals to keep themselves untainted by these activities, the Tortoise are considered to be "dirtier" than samurai ought to be. Further, they perform these menial tasks in the Imperial City of Otosan Uchi, the holy city of the Emperor, making them doubly reviled.

Second, the Tortoise have, at least in name, the stewardship of the Hantei. With the Emperor as their daimyo, it is difficult for others to seek satisfaction for slights made by Tortoise samurai. Per the Rokugani standard, those of other clans must request that their own lord contact the lord of the Tortoise to seek retribution.



The Tortoise smuggling ring is careful not to import items that would blatantly offend Imperial Law or threaten their operation. Also, the Yobanjin tribe knows nothing of the advanced weapons and sea-faring techniques demonstrated by the other *gaijin* nation that attacked the Empire. (That culture was apparently consumed by a hostile force recently arrived from across a vast eastern sea - one that is seemingly terrified of the ocean and uninterested in maintaining their military superiority. Beyond that, the Yobanjin know nothing of life outside their own small borders.)

Several investigations have been mounted into the activities of the Tortoise-Yasuki alliance, always by independent parties who are willing to incriminate the Emperor's personal clan. Some have even gotten close to discovering the origin of the smuggled goods, but so far none have brought the truth to light.

The final secret of the Tortoise Clan is nowhere near as dangerous (though it would likely cause them just as much public shame if it were discovered). According to the original edicts of

Agasha Kasuga, who believed in the Phoenix adage that "fortune favors the mortal man", the historians of the Tortoise focus their scriptures on the genealogies and accomplishments of the *heimin* and the *hinin*. They call this work the *Kenkyo na Kida* ("The Humble Path").

There is still the pretense of recording proper samurai history, many volumes of which deal with the Imperial City and its occupants. But by and large, Tortoise scholars catalogue the activities of the lesser castes in Rokugan, believing that if they do not "make the sacrifice", no one will. They are probably right.

CULTURE

Like their namesake, the Tortoise Clan keeps to itself. Due to the Emperor's gift, the internal affairs of the clan remain largely their own, regardless of the opinions of the rest of the Empire. Each new lord answers to the current Hantei, but there are rarely any extravagant demands (and even fewer that fall outside the boundaries of their original duties). For five hundred years, the Tortoise have been allowed to develop alone, without the input or the interference of those outside their lands.

This has allowed them to increase the authority of their own people without upsetting the greater whole of Rokugan. Perhaps more than any other clan in the Empire, the Tortoise value the rights of the individual, not the arbitrary demands of social structure. They are known for providing their people with great latitude to choose their own path in life, as well as the tools they need to succeed. Though they retain the core beliefs and social mores of Rokugani culture, their lifestyle has fewer restrictions, making it - in their opinion - more fluid.

For instance, honor and glory - though no less important to the Tortoise than to the Empire - are regarded very differently by their samurai. The Tortoise rely upon personal accomplishment to determine their worth, which in turn affects both

statistics. Honor is generally a gauge of how proud a Tortoise is of his own accomplishments, while Glory represents how impressed everyone else is with those same accolades. These definitions vary greatly from the Rokugani norm, in which Honor is a badge of one's integrity in the eyes of one's lord, and Glory marks your rightful place within the hierarchy of the Empire.

The primary difference is that there is no social hierarchy within the Tortoise Clan. There is the Emperor, who controls the clan only when he sees fit, and there is the *kizoku* (historically a descendant of Agasha Kasuga), who manages the clan's affairs and makes the broad decisions that affect its standing in the Empire. But below that, every Tortoise is considered an equal by their brothers in the clan, free to follow their own heart and make their own path.

In practice, every Tortoise is his own lord.

PETITIONING THE TORTOISE

For obvious reasons, few people join the Tortoise by choice. The clan is largely reviled within Rokugan, and most self-respecting samurai feel they are idle criminals seeking safety under an ancient Imperial edict. Even consorting with the Tortoise can cause a samurai misery; they might be harassed by magistrates, cheated by merchants, and ignored by "proper" nobles thereafter, or even ostracized for their indiscretion.



The Tortoise have developed an unusual fighting style, drawing inspiration from various sources while focusing upon their primary asset – the resilience and adaptability of the *heimin* and *hinin* castes.

Benefit: Because the Tortoise have no recognized family name in the court of Hantei, the clan members have no family bonus.

The Tortoise Clan has little interest in upholding the integrity and humility most Rokugani samurai hold dear. As a result, they may purchase Merchant and Low Skills without restriction.

Yet the Tortoise are not respected for their views. Their Glory is considered one full Rank lower for all purposes. Further, they gain the Disadvantage: Bad Reputation for the purpose of interaction with all non-Tortoise samurai.

Other player characters who are not of the Tortoise Clan will be affected by the PC's Bad Reputation. This stigma may be overcome through time and diligent role-play, but will never be completely forgotten, even in the eyes of one's traveling companions.

THE TORTOISE BUSHI SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Perception

Beginning Honor: 1, plus 5 boxes

Skills: Athletics, Defense, Hand-to-Hand, Nofujutsu, any 3 Merchant or Low Skills

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Fortune's Favor

All Tortoise have learned from their *heimin* and *hinin* allies. At the time of their creation, all Tortoise characters choose one peasant weapon as their primary armament. When attacking with



GETTING AWAY WITH IT (CONTINUED)

For minor slights, such a claim might fall on the reigning *kizoku*, but many demands must be directed to the Emperor himself. As many samurai are leery of disturbing the Emperor with minor troubles, many minor slights are forgiven outright.

Likewise, personal vengeance is a precarious strategy. Taking the Emperor's Law into one's own hands is dangerous enough, but to do so with the Emperor's personal samurai is something altogether different. Magistrates tend to look deeper when dealing with suspects of crimes committed against the Tortoise, if for no other reason than to appease the Emperor (whether he asks or not). Often, judgments tend to be made for the benefit of the 'favored' Tortoise and the Emperor who commands them.

Third, and lastly, the Tortoise remain largely innocent of suspicion. Most of their time is spent in quiet, solitary pursuit research and study.

Like their namesake, Tortoise only emerge from their home when they must.



AGASHA KASUGA

(492-532)

2 POINTS

The founder of Clan Tortoise was a passionate and forgiving samurai. He saw something in the *gaijin* refugees worth saving, and risked his own reputation (and life) to get them home. Likewise, when he returned to the Emerald Empire, he pleaded for the safety of his Yasuki companions, who had aided him in the escape, and paved the way for a new type of clan to emerge under the Emperor's eye.

Characters who choose Agasha Kasuga as one of their ancestors gain an understanding of the goodness within all men, regardless of their caste, and are driven by his fire to see humanity in perfect and equal balance. They gain one kept die for all rolls using social Skills with *heimin* and *hinin*.



this weapon, they roll and keep a additional number of dice equal to their School Rank.

Rank 2: The Path of One

Tortoise samurai understand that honor must sometimes be sacrificed along the path to enlightenment. As of this Rank, the Tortoise may give up a number of Honor Points (boxes) equal to their School Rank. For each Honor Point sacrificed, he gains one die (rolled, not kept) for one Action with any single non-High Skill. These extra dice must be used immediately.

Rank 3: The Shell of the Tortoise

Though most other samurai resent it, all know that the Tortoise have the Emperor's blessing, and are careful about attacking them. Their own devotion to the Emperor (their Honor) prevents them from raising their blade against a Tortoise without the consent of their lord (the Emperor). When the Tortoise is attacked by a non-Tortoise without the express permission of the Emperor, his opponent must add his own Honor x5 to the

Tortoise's TN to be Hit. This modifier can be overcome if the opponent sacrifices an Action and succeeds in an Honor Test vs. a TN of the Tortoise's Glory x5. The roll to overcome the modifier may only be made once per Attack upon the Tortoise. Success with such an Honor Test removes the modifier to the Tortoise's TN to be Hit for the remainder of the combat.

For example: a Crane's lord requests a duel between him and a Tortoise bushi, but is refused by the Emperor. The Crane seeks out the Tortoise anyway, and attacks him without provocation. The Crane has an Honor of 3, and must therefore add 15 to his TN to hit the Tortoise, representing his inner doubt about the act. The Crane decides to rally his spirit beforehand, making an Honor Test against the Tortoise's Glory x5 (the Tortoise has a Glory of 3, resulting in a TN of 15). The Crane makes the roll, and may now attack the Tortoise without modifier for the remainder of this skirmish.



Who's Who in the Tortoise

Today, he marshals troops on land, drawing on his natural ability with command and unusual approach to field combat to rally his troops to victory. His success against superior odds is measured by his famed reputation. After only a short time under his leadership, most troops forge an unwavering bond with him, refusing to back down regardless of the circumstances.

HYOBE

Rank 3 Tortoise Bushi
EARTH 4
WATER 2 Strength 4
FIRE 3
AIR 2 Reflexes 4
VOID 3

Primary Weapon: Kama (2k2)
Honor: 3.7
Glory: 5.8

Advantages: Antisocial (4 Points), Balance, Death Trance, Leadership, Missing Eye

Skills: Archery 2, Athletics 4, Battle 3, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 4, Iaijutsu 3, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: *Heimin/Hinin* Culture 2, Nofujutsu 4, Siege 2, Stealth 2, War Fan 2

Trained as a naval commander by the Mantis, Hyobe moved rapidly into a position of leadership among the merchant vessels traveling to the north of Rokugan, and beyond. Hyobe's love of the open ocean would eventually be his undoing, however. One day, several years ago, while out beyond the normal shipping routes, his ship was assaulted by a massive current. The hull of the craft was battered and began to take on water, and Hyobe ordered most of his men to abandon ship while he piloted it toward a nearby island.

The ship approached the island, then veered away as the land mass sank into the waves. Reports vary about what followed, ranging from an attack of rival merchant ships to an enormous leg swatting the vessel like a fly. Hyobe was not seen for many months after that, eventually returning to the mainland with an atrocious scar upon his face where one eye should be, and an unyielding fear of the sea.

KEMMEI

Rank 2 Tortoise Bushi
EARTH 2 Willpower 5
WATER 2 Perception 4
FIRE 2 Intelligence 5
AIR 3 Awareness 5
VOID 3

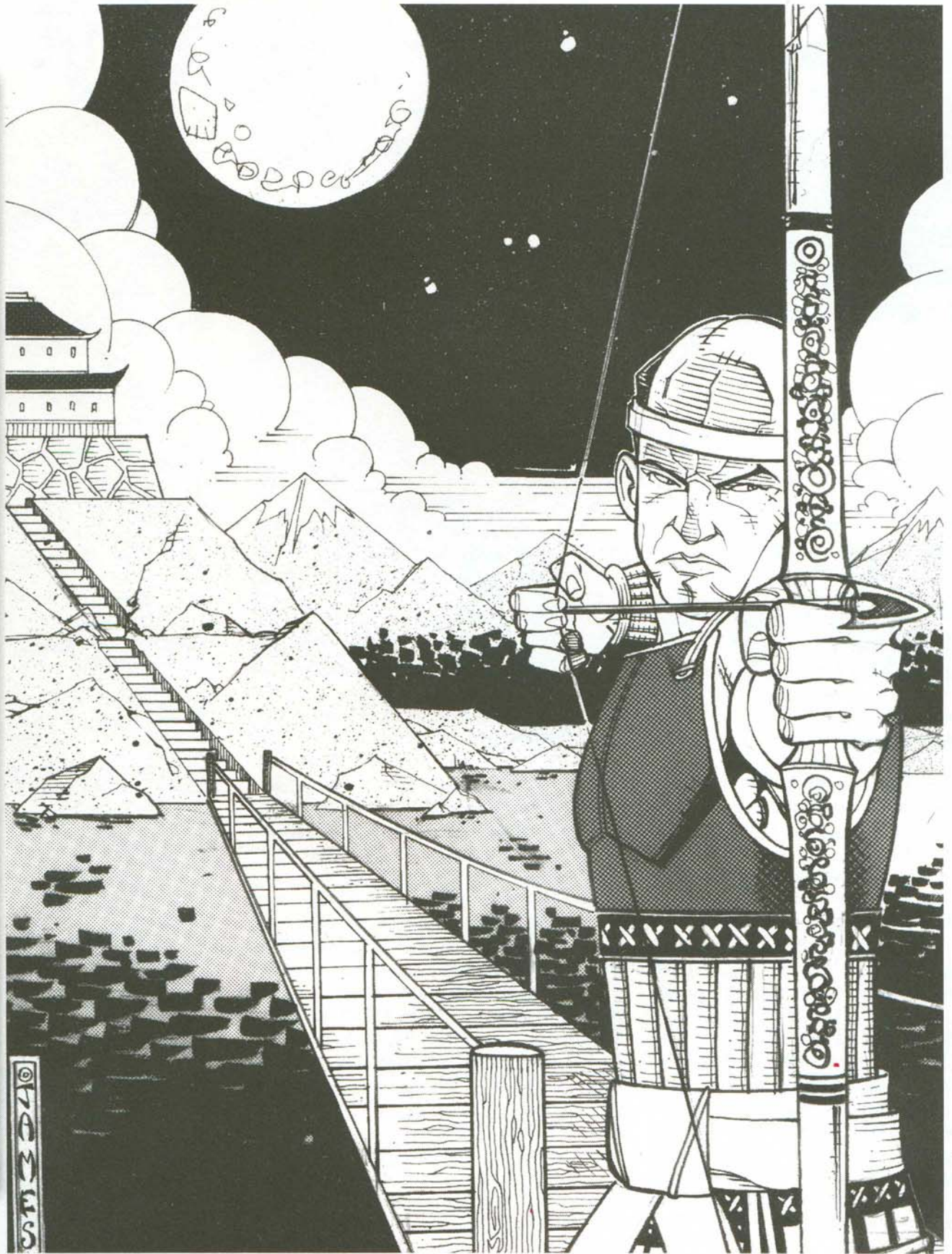
Primary Weapon: Jitte (1k1)
Honor: 1.1
Glory: 6.2

Advantages: Allies (Many), Blackmail (Many), Crafty, Ear of the Emperor

Skills: Acting 4, Athletics 1, Commerce 5, Courtier 3, Defense 1, Forgery 2, Gambling 3, Hand-to-Hand 1, Intimidation 4, Law 3, Lore: Criminal World 4, Lore: Yobanjin 2, Manipulation 4, Oratory 3, Rhetoric 3, Sincerity 4

A student of the Mantis-Yasuki rivalry, Kemmei has learned well the advantages of leaving one's options open. Motivated by greed and a keen sense of opportunity, Kemmei watches the various armies, commanders, courtiers, and daimyo of the Empire, contacting those whose needs demand his "special talents". Kemmei is an information broker and dealer in weapons, skills, and personnel. He works for anyone who can pay his fees, providing them with what they desire, then vanishing to work for their enemies.

The Tortoise are well aware of Kemmei's work outside their chain of command, and welcome the added influence and funding he provides them. They have learned well that the survival of their clan relies upon the generosity of others, with or without their knowledge, and have placed Kemmei in a politically nebulous position to accommodate his efforts, so that they may reap the rewards.



Chapter Nine



The Wasp



THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Crab*: "We do not employ bounty hunters. The Shadowlands have nothing to do with them, and we would have it remain thus. Let them keep their filthy money, and we will keep the Wall clean of their blood."

- Kuni Yori

• *Crane*: "The honorable Wasp has been our ally and helped us on many occasions, and for that we are grateful. Still, they are wily and sometimes duplicitous - an advantage in their chosen calling. Work with them willingly but stay away from their arrows."


- Doji Shizue

• *Dragon*: "Although they follow a different path than we, they are samurai we can honor, although not emulate. True to their word and fervent in their beliefs, these are valued allies and companions."

-Mirumoto Hitomi

• *Lion*: "They owe their existence to a lie, their clan's existence to Crane treachery. They owe us everything that they are, and it is a debt of honor that we plan to take back. They are better left avoided or, better, hunted to a man."

- Ikoma Tsanuri



The Way of the Wasp

The child of a Scorpion and Lion union is bound to be interesting. When that child breaks all tradition and forms his own clan, the results must prove unique, to say the least. The small but significant Wasp Clan claims just such a heritage and has made enough waves in Rokugan during its short lifetime to attract everyone's attention. A clan without samurai, a clan of mercenaries who prize their own honor above all else, a clan of men of noble bearing who despise all that the nobility cherishes, the Wasp Clan warriors embody the contradictions that make up their founder's entire existence.

The troubled birth of the Wasp Clan dates back just a few decades, before its founder was even born. As is so often the case, the love of a man and woman complicated affairs of state more than expected. Bayushi Uchinore, cousin to the Scorpion daimyo and master of the key Scorpion castle Shiro no Uragiru (now Shiro Ashinagabachi), already had a bride chosen for him. Arranged to marry the unattractive but politically useful daughter of an important Unicorn, Uchinore did not look forward to his wedding. Then, as fate would have it, he met the beautiful and decidedly unavailable pride of the Lion Clan, Akodo Tameko.

Over the course of a long winter, the two fell in love and warmed each other's beds throughout the nights. Although they met in secret, they could not avoid the likely result of such a passionate liaison: within a month Tameko was with child. All but cast out from her clan, Tameko took up residence in Ashinagabachi castle, her own wedding plans canceled. Bayushi Uchinore put off his own marital obligations indefinitely, eventually imposing on a distant, much less

important Bayushi cousin to take his place. When the child was born, Uchinore not only recognized it as his, but declared the infant his heir.

The Scorpions at first saw no problem with Uchinore's actions. It might some day prove useful to have a child of Lion blood under their influence. Unfortunately for all involved, Uchinore chose to train his son himself rather than turn him over to his Bayushi relatives. So, against all tradition and good Scorpion sense, father and mother raised and taught their son on their own. As displeased as the Scorpions were at this, the Lion clan publicly decried the whole affair. They could not disown Tameko, a daughter of the Akodo, without great loss of face; and yet the scandal continued to plague them, cropping up periodically in bawdy songs, nasty rumors, and coarse jokes.

A BLOODY GEMPUKKU

From birth, Uchinore and Tameko's son learned equally from both parents. He showed an early talent for handling the bow, a skill which seemed to improve every year to heights undreamed of by mother or father. In his twelfth year of life his mother nicknamed him Tsuruchi or "Little Wasp." Today the nickname is all that remains of the boy's mother and it is the only name he answers to. Tsuruchi became the darling of the castle, a favorite with servants and soldiers alike. From his father, a great leader in his own right, young Tsuruchi learned how to rule other men by winning their respect and devotion. The Little Wasp learned his lessons well and, a year before his twentieth birthday, he seemed prepared to step into his father's shoes should the need arise.

The Scorpion Clan had long relied on Shiro no Uragiru to guard the southern entrance into their realm and command of the castle required the full confidence of the Bayushi family. Galled that Uchinore had kept young Tsuruchi from training in the ways of the Bayushi, the Scorpion Clan insisted on meeting the heir apparent to their southern gateway. Representatives from each of the three Scorpion families came to the castle to make their judgment of the child. They did not like what they saw; much more of the Lion than Scorpion lived in the heart of the nineteen-year-old. They thought him lacking in both respect and deviousness, two very important character traits. They also saw that Uchinore himself had lost much of his Bayushi-honed edge, dulled no doubt



reported the encroaching enemy force, the commander ordered his troops to slay Tsuruchi where he stood. The men, who had loved the boy since his youngest years, hesitated. Using the skills of leadership his father had instilled in him, the Little Wasp turned the men against their commander and the troops still loyal to him.

Tsuruchi won the battle, but at great cost. Much of the castle's garrison lay dead within its walls, and the remainder certainly could not beat back the impending Lion siege. At first, Tsuruchi thought to hold out until relief came from the north. He sent for help but received only regrets; no army could possibly reach him in time. In fact a powerful Scorpion force lurked only half a day away, but the Bayushi refused to send it. Tsuruchi knew the truth; his father's clan wanted him dead at any cost, even if it meant losing this castle for a time.

The Little Wasp sallied forth to parley with his uncle, a man he had never met. The Lion lord offered to spare the lives of any men who surrendered. Already feeling betrayed by his Scorpion relatives, who had no doubt been behind the assassins that had felled his parents, Tsuruchi agreed. After all, why sacrifice himself and his followers for no reason? He was half Lion; perhaps there would be room for him and his with his mother's people.

As his uncle prepared to accept the surrender, he received a scroll from Matsu Kajitoko ordering him to kill everyone within the castle, especially Tsuruchi. Torn between honoring his word and his duty, the Lion chose the latter. As the defenders opened the gates and came forth to surrender their arms and walls to the Lion army, the attack began. In the chaos and slaughter that ensued, Tsuruchi escaped with a handful of followers. The castle fell to the Lions, who soon occupied it with a force too strong to dislodge. The Scorpions, in their fear of what Tsuruchi might become, had gambled and lost their southern fastness.

by the demimonde Lion and their bastard offspring.

The Bayushi, of course, did not disclose their impressions to their hosts. They returned to the clan and declared that action must be taken; the family must die. More importantly, the Lion must be seen as the culprit, for no one must know that the Scorpion had turned against itself. Whispering rumors of Tameko's hatred for her Akodo lineage and most of her Matsu relatives, the Scorpions implied that Uchinore planned to make a claim, in his son's name, on Akodo lands, and that he might well use force to do so. There could be only one result: the Lion detached an army under Tameko's uncle Akodo Hiruchi.

As the Lion army marched on Shiro no Uragiru, Scorpion assassins made their way into the castle first. There, on New Year's Day, two killers disguised as servants crept into the lord Uchinore's private chambers. The assassination was only two-thirds successful; mother and father died, but the Little Wasp managed to escape. Even so, his doom seemed certain, since the commander of the castle guard had orders from his Bayushi masters to ensure the boy's death before the Lion army arrived. Even as scouts

THOUGHTS OF THE CLANS

• *Phoenix*: "The Wasp say that magic has no place in their lives, though they come to us for assistance when their quarry cannot be found. It is a pity that they cannot learn honor as well as duty, for we fear their clan will not survive to see the next thousand years."

- Shiba Katsuda

• *Scorpion*: "Soon, we shall show them the gardens of the Scorpion... and the grove where all such traitors should hang."

- Bayushi Yakuan

• *Unicorn*: "Simple, direct, and unassuming, we like doing business with these masters of the bow. They have great subtlety and ability in hunting the elusive prey, yet they lack the treachery of their Scorpion forefathers. Let them come to us, if they have need. We will be glad to ally with them."

- Otaku Tetsuko

• *Minor Clans*: "The Wasp have grown very powerful, in a very short time. But all fires burn out - and the brightest usually lose their flame more quickly than the rest."

- Hogosha, Mantis courtier

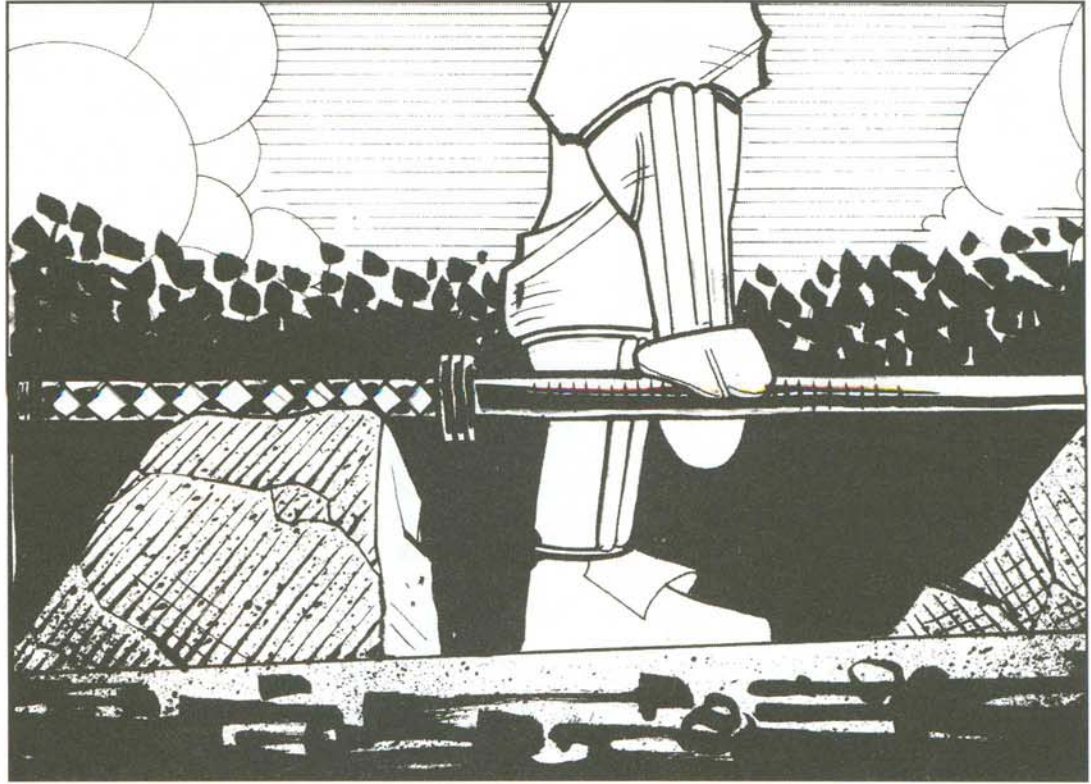


THE BROKEN BLADE

Enraged at the perfidy of paternal and maternal relations alike, Tsuruchi vowed vengeance on them all. He saw how the "honorable" samurai kept their word and respected their own blood. Drawing his father's katana, he placed it against a rock and with a single stomp snapped the finely wrought blade in two. He and his followers there and then renounced their samurai oaths, customs, and names. Practicality, true respect for their own oaths, and trust in no one but themselves became the by-words of Tsuruchi and his followers.

Two years after the broken parley, the Little Wasp paid his uncle back in kind for his treachery. He had grown up in Shiro no Uragiru and knew its ins and outs better than the Lions who now lived there. On the anniversary of his parents' deaths he and his followers infiltrated their old home. Tsuruchi woke his uncle from a sound sleep by placing the tip of a drawn arrow against his throat. As he repaid his uncle in full for killing the unarmed garrison, Tsuruchi's followers barricaded the doors and set fire to the structure where most of the castle's defenders slept. Arrows found their way into the rest of the castle guards and nearly as quickly as they had lost it, Tsuruchi and his men had retaken the castle.

(continued)



WASP CULTURE

"A man need not wield a sword to be a man, only honor his word and mean what he says."

– Sunabe, Monk Teacher

The Wasp Clan has the strangest culture in Rokugan: they have no samurai. Nor do they have any family names, or even families to speak of. A very young clan, they have not had time to develop such lineages, but in all likelihood they never will. Tsuruchi places no value on the ties of family and blood. His own experience taught him that such concepts have no meaning in the real world. The true measure of a man is not his family but the man himself. Therefore, the Wasp Clan recruits exclusively on the basis of merit, and their standards are quite high.

Tsuruchi himself must approve every person who joins his clan. Being a fair and practical man, he relies on more than his own judgment and personal feelings to find applicants. Any person of age from any station in life can theoretically join the clan, be they *eta*, samurai, or anything in between. Every year Tsuruchi holds a tournament for potential Wasps. On the Day of the Wasp archers come from near and far to compete against both one another and the members of the

Clan. To even dream of joining the elite group a competitor must do better than at least one of the competing Wasp archers (no mean feat). Qualifiers compete with Tsuruchi himself. Although no one is expected to beat the Little Wasp, the competition gives him a chance to judge the applicant's skill and character at close range.

At the close of the tournament, Tsuruchi chooses up to a maximum of ten competitors to receive formal Wasp training. It is often the case that there are not ten qualified applicants, but the Little Wasp never lowers his standards. These skilled few are not yet Wasps. They must undergo months of harsh, rigorous training, which involves more than just continued practice with the bow. As magistrates and bounty hunters, every Wasp must be familiar with the ways of tracking, investigation, and life on the open road.

While many who attempt the course are physically up to the tasks (otherwise Tsuruchi would never have chosen them), few can handle the mental and emotional exertions. A Wasp must learn to pick a face he's seen only once from a crowd of hundreds. He must notice details that others miss and ask the right questions of total strangers. Most importantly, he must have



supreme confidence in himself while at the same time penetrating the false confidence of rank and birth many samurai cloak themselves in. Most prospective Wasps come up short over the course of this exhausting regimen and more drop out of their own accord. Seldom do more than three of the ten survive the training to become true Wasps.

BOUND TO THE BOW

The ceremony of acceptance into the Wasps is a solemn occasion, held at the end of each year's Day of the Wasp festival. The two or three men and women who made it through the training regimen receive their *mon* on the last night of the festival, in a private ritual that only full Clan members may attend. There the new inductees swear their loyalty to Tsuruchi and the Clan. They vow never to go against their word and always to see a task taken to its successful conclusion. Those who came to the training in possession of a sword now place the blade upon a special stone mount created from the stones upon which Tsuruchi's parents bled to death with Scorpion blades at their throats. Wrapping their foot in silk taken from the kimono belonging to the Little Wasp's Lion uncle, the new inductees stamp down upon the blade, snapping it in two just as Tsuruchi did on the night of his betrayal. With this final break from samurai tradition a new Wasp is born.

Tsuruchi's devotion to the bow as weapon of choice stems from more than just a dismissal of bushido customs. A practical man above all else, Tsuruchi sees the bow as the ultimate weapon. A skilled archer can do things a swordsman can never dream of. To the Little Wasp, a katana is clumsy and awkward, easily parried or blocked with blade or armor. Few men alive can parry an arrow with a sword, and few of those can do it twice. Every armor has its holes and if your opponent can see you, you can put an arrow in his eye before he draws his blade.

So much for those who would stand and fight. Equally significant is the fact that most of the people the Wasps pursue do not hold their ground with drawn sword. As magistrates and bounty hunters the Wasps hunt criminals. A robber, traitor, or murderer turns and runs more often than not, and no man or horse can outrun a Wasp arrow. Here again, practicality and reliability stand as the most important factors in deciding the choice of weapons.

MAGISTRATES AND MONEY

"Don't ever make a Wasp go back on his word. You'll never get a chance to regret it."

— Shinjo Hanari

The Wasp Clan has little land and no army to speak of. With fewer than fifty magistrates in the clan they have little ability to project and enforce true power. Tsuruchi realized this fact from the beginning and, being both resourceful and innovative, found a new way for his clan to survive and prosper: the bounty. As magistrates of the Emerald Champion, the Wasp Clan has the authority to hunt down and bring to justice any criminals, anywhere in Rokugan. While many other magistrates throughout the land possess such authority, only the Wasps have successfully converted a legal duty into a profitable venture.

Tsuruchi and his followers care little for the law itself. They are not legal experts, and do not spend much time studying the ins and outs of Rokugani justice. They concern themselves with one facet of the law only, the fact that a daimyo or ruling samurai can declare a person criminal and put a price on that criminal's head. A Wasp takes no interest in a crime until such a bounty has been set. Then, more often than not, the daimyo offering the reward makes sure the Wasps know about it, at least if he's serious about seeing the villain brought to justice.

A Wasp takes on any bounty from any legal authority. Politics, clan rivalries, and even religion do not concern these bounty hunters in the slightest. After hearing the terms of the bounty and the nature of the man or woman they must hunt, a Wasp may choose to accept or decline the job according to his own wishes. In many cases the Wasp demands a higher payment, and usually he gets it. Wasps ask to be paid only on completion of their task, since they never want the reputation of taking a lord's money without first earning it.

It is worth noting that Wasps do not question whether or not the people they hunt down deserve to die. Questions of guilt and innocence have no place in their world view. Consequently, a daimyo or high ranking samurai can easily hire the Wasps to do their dirty work as long as they provide some thin veneer of legality to the bounty (and some Wasps don't even require that). Wasps simply consider themselves weapons; very expensive, self-guided weapons. Moral and legal considerations fall upon the person who uses the

THE BROKEN BLADE (CONTINUED)

Tsuruchi declared himself daimyo of the castle of his birth and refused to swear allegiance to Lion or Scorpion, though he had little more than his word and less than fifty soldiers. Always a practical man, Tsuruchi had already accounted for this problem. He set forth immediately for an audience with the Emerald Champion and the Daimyo of the Crane Clan. There he told his story with pride, of Lion and Scorpion plottings and betrayals, of his own forswearing of bushido and his samurai status.

Although the Crane Daimyo remained unimpressed, the Little Wasp's words and demeanor impressed the Emerald Champion. He not only recognized Tsuruchi's claim to the castle, he also named the Little Wasp a magistrate of the Emerald Champion. He declared that Ashinagabachi castle should henceforth be a stronghold for magistrates under the direction of Tsuruchi and his heirs. At his behest, the Hantei was pleased to grant the new lord of the castle the right to form his own clan and wear whatever *mon* he desired. The choice of *mon* was made before Tsuruchi even had a chance to think on the matter. In honor of their leader, the men already had chosen a *mon* which they presented to Tsuruchi, reflecting the goals of the fledgling clan. The Wasp seemed the perfect badge for men who followed the way of the archer Tsuruchi.



weapon, which is to say, the employer. A Wasp keeps half of the bounty, after deducting expenses. The other half belongs to the clan.

Taking on a bounty job means swearing an oath to the lord who pays the bounty. The standard Wasp oath declares that the hunter shall endeavor above all else to find the villain and bring him to justice, dead or alive: Wasps usually prefer the former, since it is simpler to shoot a man down than it is to capture him. They further swear that nothing shall dissuade them from their goal; no offer of money, no threat of violence, no decree of daimyo. Many a victim has tried to buy off a Wasp at the last minute, offering vast sums of money or political favors. The Wasps take great pride in refusing all such temptations (although they do sometimes take the dead man's money and possessions as part of their bounty).

Tsuruchi despises an oath breaker more than anything in the world. Only once has a Wasp broken his oath, and he did not live to see the next new moon. His body, pierced by a hundred arrows, hung from the walls of Ashinagabachi for

months as a warning to all who would follow in the man's footsteps.

Bounty hunting has proven quite profitable, especially for a clan of such modest size. This must continue to be the case, since the clan needs money in order to survive. With so many of its members traveling throughout Rokugan hunting criminals, Tsuruchi relies on bounty income to pay for the protection of Ashinagabachi. There are rarely more than a dozen Wasps actually in the castle. The clan hires hundreds of ronin and other mercenaries to guard its walls. Many of these are competitors from the Day of the Wasp tournament who showed some ability but were not up to Tsuruchi's incredibly high standards for true Wasps. These men feel a certain loyalty towards Tsuruchi that one would not usually expect from mercenaries. They not only like the pay rates (which are quite good) but also respect their employer a great deal.

On especially tough assignments a Wasp may call upon some of these mercenaries to help him in the hunt. Those who perform particularly well during such excursions usually receive better



consideration in the next year's tournament and several have gone on to become full-fledged Wasps. Like their employers, the mercenaries cannot, by Tsuruchi's order, use the katana. All of them are skilled with the bow and many employ the ono and yari in hand to hand combat. Many still own swords, but they keep them locked away in their quarters for the day when they no longer work for the Wasps, and visiting samurai leave their swords outside the castle 'to be polished'. Any sword Tsuruchi sees within the walls of Ashinagabachi he orders broken immediately.

THE WASP'S NEST

Even by minor clan standards the Wasps have very little land. In fact, the entirety of their property consists of Ashinagabachi castle, located in a narrow valley at the southern border of the Scorpion lands. The castle occupies the entire mouth of the valley, which rises up sharply to either side, blocking the path for traffic in both directions. The original castle was quite large, requiring hundreds of warriors to defend effectively and capable of housing thousands. The road itself runs alongside the castle through a series of five gates. Archers in the main castle have clear lines of fire on anyone passing through the gates, as do guards posted in the ramparts above the portals.

Tsuruchi has made some significant adjustments to the castle since he took over, especially in recent years when profits have been high. The central keep, once the home of his parents and their closest followers, now houses the true Wasp warriors. Each Wasp has his or her own suite of rooms. Less distinguished clan members have enough space for themselves and a few family members to sleep and relax in comfort. More important Wasps have large suites of many rooms, including servant quarters and even private gardens. The Wasps take great pride in their home, decorating the rooms with trophies from their most noteworthy adventures and booty from their greatest bounties.

The outer buildings of the castle house the ronin and mercenaries who help defend the walls against all comers. Although less luxurious than the homes of the Wasp members, they are still spacious compared to other mercenary quarters, since the Wasps use only about a quarter of the personnel that the Scorpion predecessors used to defend and operate the castle. There are no diplomats, assassins, or even shugenja in the

ranks of the Wasp, nor are there any cavalry, massed footmen, or samurai. Tsuruchi has found that ten trained archers behind the wall serve better than twenty or thirty sword-wielding samurai.

Inside the castle walls live some of Rokugan's best fletchers. Recently the Wasp Clan has found another way to make money: selling their arrows, widely regarded as the best in the land. Profits from these sales help pay for the high price of quality wood and feathers needed to make the arrows Wasp warriors depend upon. In fact, the arrows the artisans sell to the rest of the world do not match up to the high-quality shafts reserved for the Wasps, but few archers outside the clan have the discerning eye to realize this fact.

The annual tournament takes place a mile from the castle in the very field that once saw a Lion army slaughter many of Tsuruchi's men. In this sacred place, the Wasp clan sets up the great festival, held just five days after the New Year. Although the festival centers around the tournament, a great deal of other business and fun transpires during the festivities. Since all Wasps do their best to make it to the tournament, many prospective employers come as well, looking for the best bounty hunters for whatever task they have at hand. The festival atmosphere also allows the Wasps a chance to relax and enjoy themselves, dropping their usually grim demeanors as they sing, drink, and make new friends of every persuasion.

Although the Wasps try not to let personal feelings and prejudices enter into their business dealings, they have certain predispositions towards other clans. Still, no matter what he might feel, a Wasp who makes an oath to serve a lord must carry out his duty to the best of his ability.



TYPICAL BOUNTIES

Peasant Charged with Non-Violent Crime: 1 Koku

Peasant Charged with a Violent Crime: 2 Koku

Trained Soldier Charged with a Non-Violent Crime: 3 Koku

Trained Soldier Charged with a Violent Crime: 5 Koku

Samurai Charged with a Non-Violent Crime: 10 Koku

Samurai Charged with a Violent Crime: 20 Koku

Shugenja Charged with a Non-Violent Crime: 50 Koku

Shugenja Charged with a Violent Crime: 100 Koku

Additional charges for distance, number of followers, capturing the target alive, and other difficulties can increase the bounty significantly.



FLETCHERY

(MERCHANT SKILL)

Fletchery is much like Weaponsmith, but specializes in the art of making arrows. A fletcher can make arrows from small bundles of wood, and from loose branches. This is not considered a Bugei skill as no samurai would make his own arrows.

Skills and Techniques

Benefit: Because the Wasp have no recognized family name in the court of Hantei, the clan members have no family bonus. Although recent rumor says the Wasp may soon be receiving an official name, the Hantei has not yet granted them a family honorific.

WASP BUSHI SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Reflexes

Skills: Archery 2, Defense, Fletchery, Hunting, Stealth, Lore: Area Knowledge

Beginning Honor: 1, plus 5 boxes

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Never Let the Blade Reach You

The first lesson the archer learns is to trust his instincts. Whenever firing an arrow, he gains a number of Free Raises equal to his School Rank. Each School Rank, including this one, extends archery range by 50'.

Rank 2: The Sting of the Wasp

Now moving beyond instinct, the archer may make a number of attacks when firing a bow equal to his School Rank.

Rank 3: The Arrow Knows the Way

Finally, the archer and arrow become one. The archer no longer needs to roll to hit when firing his bow, but hits automatically. No Raises of any kind may be applied to this attack. The Wasp archer may only use this Technique for one attack per turn.

Who's Who in the Wasp

TSURUCHI

Rank 3 Wasp Bounty Hunter

EARTH 3

WATER 4

FIRE 4

AIR 3 Reflexes 6

VOID 4

Honor: 1.7

Glory: 6.4

Advantages: Allies (Crane), Allies (Dragon), Allies (Fox), Allies (Sparrow), Allies (Unicorn), Clear Thinker, Quick, Way of the Land (Crane, Dragon, Lion, Scorpion, Unicorn, Wasp)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation, Driven, Unluck (1 per game)

Skills: Archery 5, Athletics 4, Battle 2, Defense 5, Fletchery 5, Heraldry 5, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 5, Intimidation 2, Investigation 3, Jujutsu 5, Lore: *Lion Clan* 5, Lore: *Scorpion Clan* 5, Lore: *Crane Clan* 3, Lore: *Unicorn Clan* 3, Lore: *Dragon Clan* 1, Medicine 3, Poison 3, Shintao 3, Sincerity 1, Stealth 5, Theology 1

The Little Wasp still takes an active role in his clan. In fact, in many ways he is the clan. Were something to happen to him, many doubt that the fledgling Wasps could survive his loss. He has yet to take a wife or sire any known children. Now in his forties, many of his closest friends constantly urge him to either begin a family or start grooming a successor. As of yet he has done neither.

At least for now, Tsuruchi plans to concentrate on strengthening his growing clan. He spends a great deal of time on the road visiting daimyos throughout Rokugan, helping to arrange important bounty agreements with them and



checking up on his own people. He has ruffled more than a few feathers in his time since, outside of the Emerald Champion or the Emperor's presence, he seldom behaves according to proper etiquette. He is particularly disdainful of ardent samurai who feel their way is not only the best path, it is the only one. A skilled conversationalist, he takes great pleasure in using his quick wit to turn bushido aphorisms and pretensions against the samurai who spout them.

Tsuruchi takes on the occasional bounty hunter himself, particularly if it seems challenging or interesting or allows him to loose a few arrows into some Scorpion or Lion samurai. The price for hiring the master himself usually means only a daimyo can afford him, but they can rest assured that not only will the Little Wasp get the task done, he'll do it quickly and with style. Often Tsuruchi leads groups of Wasps on particularly dangerous or challenging hunts, especially when the target is likely to have a number of guards (up to and including entire armies).

MUKAMI

Rank 2 Wasp Bounty Hunter

EARTH 2

WATER 2 Strength 3

FIRE 2

AIR 2 Reflexes 3

VOID 3

Honor: 1.9

Glory: 3.6

Advantages: Sensei (Tsuruchi)

Disadvantages: Black Sheep (Scorpion),

Skills: Archery 3, Athletics 2, Defense 5, Fletchery 5, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Investigation 3, Lore: *Crane Clan* 3, Lore: *Scorpion Clan* 4, Lore: *Dragon Clan* 2, Medicine 5, Poison 3, Shintao 3, Stealth 5, Theology 4

Ten years younger than his lord Tsuruchi, Mukami has been a faithful bodyguard and friend to the Little Wasp for many years. Formerly a Scorpion samurai, Mukami dropped his family name along with his sword when he swore allegiance to the Wasp clan and its founder. These days Mukami seldom gets the chance to serve as Yojimbo to the his lord, as his importance within the clan structure prohibits it. While Tsuruchi is away, Mukami oversees most of the day-to-day affairs at the castle. He also trains and commands the ronin defense force that protects the fortress from would-be invaders.

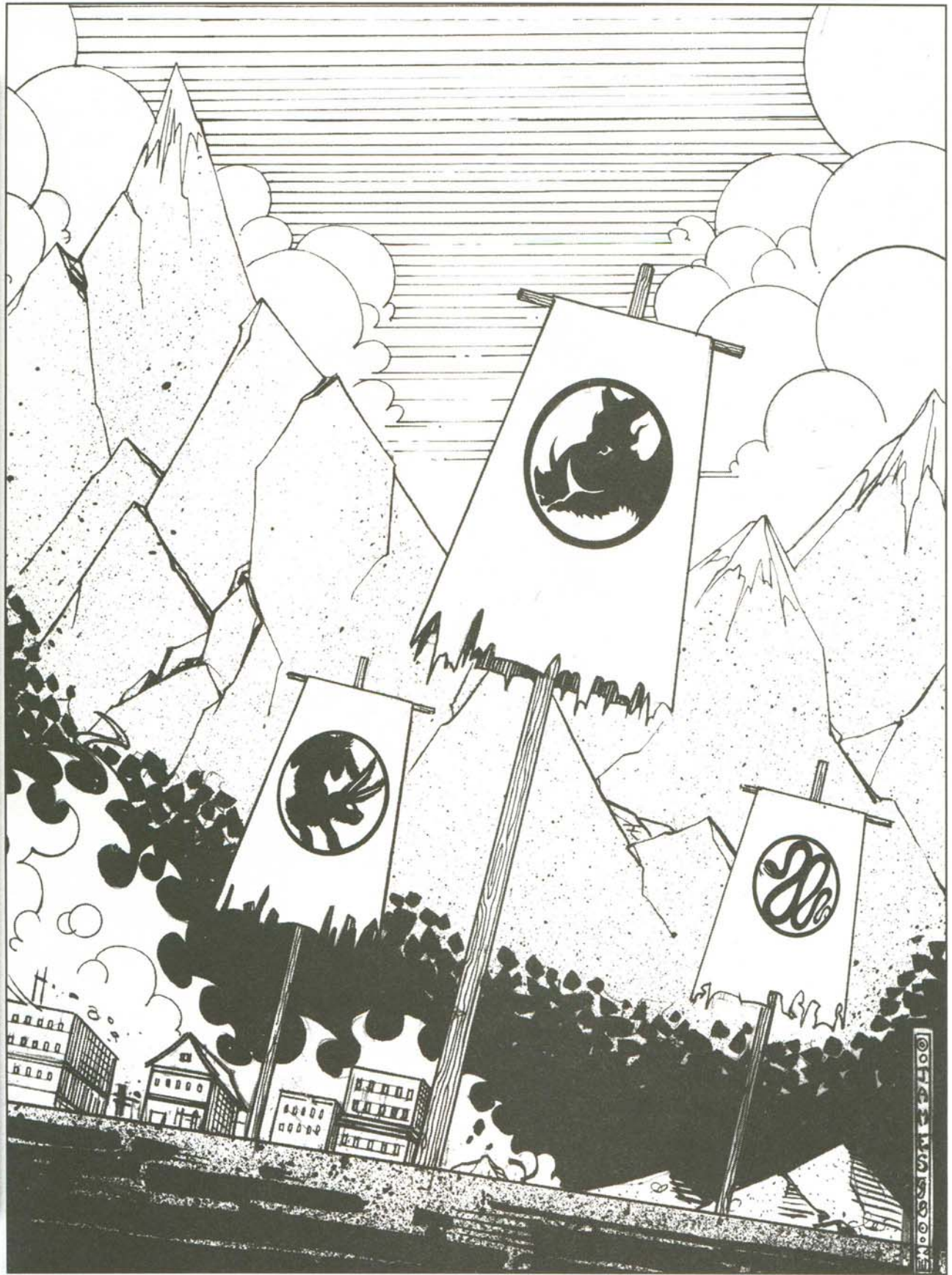
Mukami's greatest fame in modern times comes from his reputation as master trainer in the castle. He personally oversees the vigorous training program that weeds out potential Wasps and hones the successful few into the land's finest archers and bounty hunters. Every year he takes the new Wasps out to capture some particularly challenging bounty as a final training exercise. When nothing challenging enough is available he often devises his own, usually with some Scorpion or Lion samurai as the prize.



WASP BUSHI

Outfit: Wasp Clan Bounty Hunter (all of average quality except the archer's own bow)

Bow (fine quality), 20 Arrows of each type, Light Armor, Traveling Pack, Traveling Papers (one region), Kimono, any one weapon, 2 Koku, Mon of the Emerald Champion



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Chapter Ten



The Lost Three



The Way of the Boar

The Boar Clan is considered by historians to be no more than a footnote to history; a brushstroke across a single scroll of the Ikoma archives. Although it existed for only a short time, in that time it changed the face of the Empire.

Only six daimyo have ruled the lands of the Boar, and their name existed on the rolls of the Imperial Clans for less than two hundred years. Their daimyo's public denial of the Hantei's commands sealed dishonorable deaths for the nobility of the Heichi, but some few of their men remained after the destruction, commanded by the Emperor to remember the fate of pride.

Still, the lands they once commanded lie empty, the rich earth unturned by pick or shovel and their deep mines forbidden to explorers. Peasants say that the spirits of the Boar do not rest easy in their fouled graves, and claim that the spirit of the shugenja who betrayed them now roams the hills, destroying all who dare to search for his secrets.

His name has long ago been forgotten. The peasants refuse to speak it. Now, the force which has claimed the desolate mountains of the Boar Clan is known only as the Shakoki Dogu, a creature of hatred and pride.

Those who unquestioningly follow the Emperor know that the Boar were destroyed for their arrogance, their refusal to obey a command of the Imperial Hantei Emperor. Still, somewhere far beneath the surface of the earth, hidden in the depths of the Twilight Mountains, lies the true secret of their fall.

And somewhere, in those mountains, a spirit walks, and the Shakoki Dogu searches to avenge itself on those who once claimed the strong keep of the Boar.

FOUNDATION

The Twilight Mountains of the Crab are known for two things: iron and jade. Yet beneath the craggy rocks and steep, overpowering cliffs, a darker ore winds through the mountain range. The tale of the Boar Clan begins within that of the Crab, as loyal servants to the line of Hida, and it is there that the tale of the Dark Ore must begin.

To the west of Shiro Kaotsuko no Higashi, the mountains become more rocky and dangerous than almost anywhere else in the Empire, filled with steep crags and deadfalls. Eager nevertheless to reclaim the precious iron in those hills (not to mention the jade that defends the Crab against their ancient enemies in the Shadowlands), the Crab made preparations to claim the high peaks of the Western Range.

Three hundred years after the beginning of the Empire, Hida Ichido sent a large party of samurai, *heimin* miners, and retainers into the Western Range. Their first reports were sporadic, but they eventually established a productive mine and several tall watchtowers along the ridge of the highest mountain peaks. Once they had taken control of the area, the iron and jade began to pour from the small encampment. The Crab were pleased; their risk had proven profitable, and the iron was swiftly turned into fortifications and weapons to use against the Shadowlands - and the steady encroachments of the neighboring Crane.

Then, suddenly, a massive earthquake shook the range and the mountains thundered down rock and shale. Many Crab outposts were lost, buried under tons of stone. Among them was the small fort on the Western Range; no word was heard through the shattered passes, no message could be sent down clogged rivers, and no sign of flame shone on the high watchtowers.

Shortly thereafter, the Yasuki War between the Crane and Crab broke out, and no efforts could be spared to locate the mining detachment that was presumed to have been destroyed. The battles between the clans took all of the Crab's resources, and many years passed before the fighting was halted by Imperial command, the Kenkai Hanto peninsula to be divided between Crane and Crab.

Another generation passed as the Crab healed from the wounds of the battles against the Crane, and as they struggled to defend against the Shadowlands. Realizing that the Crab were weakened by their conflict within the Empire, the minions of Fu Leng threw force after force of



creatures against the southern border of the Hida lands, seeking any gap in the Imperial defenses.

At last, more than three generations later, a proud band of young samurai came down from the hills, their *heimin* carrying with them more than three tons of jade and iron ore. But the samurai did not come through the destroyed passes into the Crab lands, but rather exited the western range of the Twilight Mountains to the north, into the plains that would one day become Falcon lands.

They marched to Otosan Uchi, refusing to speak to the Crab and Scorpion ambassadors that approached them on their journey, and laid the spoils of their labor at the feet of the Hantei. "Our clan has forgotten us," they claimed. "The Crab left us to our deaths on the cold and barren peaks of the Twilight Mountains, and through our own prowess, we have survived. Now, my Lord Emperor, we bring to you the prosperity of these lands - not Crab lands - but yours."

In his wisdom, the Emperor considered the gesture before replying. "Are you offering me payment for the lands?"

No samurai, of course, owns the land he lives upon; all the world belongs to the Emperor alone.

The Seven Clans hold their provinces because of the commands of the Emperor, not because the lands are 'theirs.' And so the clever daimyo of the lost samurai bowed. "No, your Imperial Majesty, I have not explained fully. This ore is yours, not as a gift or as a bribe, but to fulfill the taxes that we owe to you for living in your mountains for over a hundred years."

The Hantei, surprised to hear such a bold and wise answer from the samurai, smiled. "Then return to your clan, and carry with you the name 'Heichi,' which means 'strong one', for your people are among Rokugan's most enduring. Carry also this *mon*, that the Boar may lend you his strength and perseverance through the dark winter days in your land."

And with that, the Clan of the Boar was born.

PEACEFUL RECKONING

The Boar Clan inhabited the westernmost regions of the Twilight Mountains for nearly two hundred years, mining the ores and burrowing through the mountains with skill and certainty. Their lands were prosperous, and their family distinguished itself with its ability to make nearly legendary armors from the strong minerals and



SHAKOKI DOGU

Deep in the haunted mountains of the Boar Provinces, a wandering spirit roams. That spirit is known to the *heimin* of the Crab Clan as the Shakoki Dogu, and although their samurai refuse to believe in its existence, the Crab peasants make idols and images in its honor, to ward away its wrath.

Those few scholars who have attempted to investigate believe that the Shakoki Dogu is not a single entity, but rather, the combined spirits of all those members of the Boar who were slaughtered by the forging of the Anvil of Despair. It is a malicious entity that turns streams to blood, and leaves animals strewn across the paths into the Western Range of the Twilight Mountains.

Even the samurai of the Crab, for all their condemnations of those who believe in the Shakoki Dogu, do not mine the mountains of the Boar.

The Ghost of the Twilight Mountains feeds its pain on the blood of those who step within its territory.

The creatures of the Shadowlands do not claim the entity to be one of their own. They, too, refuse to cross the mountains above the Crab lands, instead seeking some safer way to gain access to the Empire.

iron deposits within their provinces. Four of the Seven Ancestral Armors of the Great Clans were forged by Boar manufacturers, and nearly all of the armors were made from Boar Clan steel.

The Boar, though not a large clan, were a productive one, and with the exception of the old wounds that kept them apart from the Crab Clan, they had no enemies in the Empire. They occasionally saw incursions of Shadowlands forces fleeing from Crab assaults or seeking an 'easier' way into the Empire, but with the tenacity of their forefathers, the Boar kept their lands free of Taint.

Their skills with metal-crafting were known throughout the Empire, and shugenja and samurai of the Great Clans would travel to the treacherous lands of the Boar, braving earthquakes, avalanches, and high mountain passes. Often, the travelers would pledge their services to the Boar for a span of five years, during which they would exchange the wisdom of bushido, or magical spellcraft, in exchange for the tutelage of the Boar.

One such visitor was Agasha Ryuden, a shugenja of the Dragon who sought the secret of several unknown ores that spotted the deepest mines in the lands of the Boar. Secretly, Ryuden sought to collect not ore, but the mineral that had formed from the blood of the First Oni when it fought Shiba at the end of the War with Fu Leng. That blood had trickled through the cracks in the earth, staining the ground with its corruption and foulness, and had become a vein of 'ore' through the Twilight Mountains - surfacing in the heart of the Boar Clan lands.

Exactly what occurred during Agasha Ryuden's stay in the Boar lands is unknown, but its ramifications have haunted the Empire ever since. From the ore stolen by the Agasha, a great Anvil was forged in the Boar Clan foundries. The anvil stood half as high as a man, a twisted soul of corruption - formed of blood-iron, but harder than any steel in the world. To it, Agasha Ryuden fed the Boar Clan's courage, their honor, and at last, their lives.

It is known as the Anvil of Despair.



THE BOAR'S HEART

While Agasha Ryuden was gathering the ore from the mountain's black heart, Heichi Shizugai, first son of Heichi Batsuda, Fifth Daimyo of the Boar Clan, was visiting the Imperial Court on petty business.

It was in that court that Heichi Shizugai accidentally witnessed a spontaneous duel between Rikugunshokan Matsu Dainoku and his Taisa, Mirumoto Chorude. The duel was offense enough, as neither of the two had asked their daimyos for permission to duel, but worse, the Matsu's final blow to the Mirumoto took the form of a hidden knife in the belly while their swords were locked together. It was clearly murder of the most dishonorable sort.

With fear, Shizugai reported the murder to his father. The Boar daimyo brought it to the attention of the Emerald Champion, Doji Shioden. Knowing his son to be forthright and honest, Heichi Batsuda formally charged Matsu Dainoku with the murder, asking his son to speak as a witness in front of the Emerald Champion's court and the magistrates of the Emperor. Only one other witness could be found - a samurai servant to the Emerald Champion's Lady. Yet even

two to speak against such a foul crime can sometimes be enough.

Conveniently for the Lion, though, the second witness also died violently under mysterious circumstances, and the Heichi stood alone against the villainous Matsu.

With only one witness to the supposed crime, the charge became no more than an accusation: a slight to the honor of Matsu Dainoku. To satisfy the requirements of honorable face, Dainoku swiftly challenged Heichi Batsuda to a duel. In the blink of an eye, Heichi Batsuda was no more.

Seeing his father die for his commitment to truth, Heichi Shizugai vowed before the court that justice would be served for both "murders", and stormed out of Ootosan Uchi for the last time.

THE FALL OF THE BOAR

Six months later, Imperial Magistrates returned from Shiro Yaban-no Buta in the Twilight Mountains with a report that Heichi Shizugai, Sixth Daimyo of the Boar Clan, had refused to yield up his clan's Imperial tax. The Boar Clan was declared to be in rebellion against the Empire, and in response Shizugai himself proclaimed that until such time as Matsu Dainoku was punished for the murders of Mirumoto Chorude and Heichi Batsuda, the Boar would stand without the Empire.

The Emerald Champion sent forth his army to formally demand not only the taxes, but the death of the Boar Clan. Ahead of the army, a small group of ambassadors was sent to speak with the Heichi before the armies arrived in the province of the Boar. If the ambassadors could convince the Heichi daimyo and his family to *seppuku* before the Emerald Champion's army arrived, the rest of the Boar would be spared death.



When the armies arrived, they found the Boar Clan roads open, their watchtowers empty and filled with blood. The palace, too, was bloodstained, and the bodies of the dead were scattered on every tower and wall. The gruesome scene was punctuated by bloody handprints that covered every tile in the palace, from floor to ceiling, and twisted black vines of blood and entrails clutched at the walls and the hallways, defiling the banners of the ruined Boar.

Neither the ambassadors nor their bodies were never found, nor could the corpse of Agasha Ryuden be located among the slaughtered. Since then, the Boar Clan lands have been considered haunted by the ghosts of the vengeful dead, and not even the bravest samurai of the Crab have dared that bloody ground since the murders.

THE RONIN HEICHI

The Emperor took away their clan title and land, but not their name, and a few scattered remnants of the Boar lived as ronin for hundreds of years. Although the Heichi have no family home and no verifiable lineage, the name resurfaces occasionally as another ronin boldly claims that his bloodline can be traced to the fallen Boar.

Such announcements are quickly stifled by the Emerald Magistrates, who report that the true line of Heichi was eradicated when the last known true son of the line died while serving as a mercenary during the Lion-Phoenix conflict known as the Battle of Three Stone River.

However, one ronin has recently announced a claim to the Heichi lineage, and no amount of polite threats has yet persuaded him to alter his name. The ronin styles himself Heichi Chokei, a mercenary shugenja of some skill. Those who challenge his right to the name of the lost Boar have been swiftly punished for their arrogance, and the Emerald Magistrates do not wish to send their own enforcement. Some say they will not challenge the bold shugenja because they believe that their shugenja will be bested by the ronin Chokei, and others say that they do not challenge because Chokei's claim is a true one.

In any case, Heichi Chokei still claims the name of the fallen Boar, and it is possible that he will continue to do so until his word is proven false in the Emperor's court or on the field of honorable combat.



BOAR WEAPON (MAI CHONG)

4k2

The Mai Chong is a spear with a uniquely curved and wavy head. The spear is eight feet long, and has a blade length of over eight inches. The blade is double-edged, with a three-inch hook pointing back toward the handle.

(See illustration, sidebar, page 114.)



Skills and Techniques

Although the Boar and their school are lost to the Empire, some of their teachings may still remain. Occasionally, ronin declare themselves to be 'lost members' of the Boar, but their heritage is rarely that of the Heichi. Even the most prominent 'Last Boar', Heichi Chokei, studied spellcraft and knows nothing of the Boar school of bushido. Any who do know the School of the Boar are not open with their techniques; it is possible that the school of the Boar Clan may be truly lost.

NEW SKILLS

Mining (Intelligence)

Similar to the architectural skills of the Crab Clan, a good miner must have more than knowledge of the earth and its ores. This skill provides needed information about shoring up weak walls, where and how certain ores travel through the ground, and the ability to recognize unworked metals with only a few simple tests. This is considered a Merchant Skill, and may be purchased by a member of any clan.

Mai Chong (Yarijutsu)

The Mai Chong is the epitomal weapon of the Boar Clan, which their school of bushido is based upon. Although having the yarijutsu skill confers knowledge of all other spear-based weapons, the unique Mai Chong is an exception. A character must purchase at least one rank in this skill in order to have mastered any of the techniques of the Boar. Further, purchasing the Yarijutsu skill does not confer any particular ability with the Mai Chong, because of the many differences in style needed to effectively utilize the weapon. Of course, this is a Bugei skill.

THE HEICHI FAMILY

When the world is against you, and you believe that you have already lost, it is in that moment you must rise up again. In that action, you will feel the courage of the Boar.

— Heichi Mariako

The school of the Boar Clan is based on a single weapon: the Mai Chong. The Mai Chong is a spear with a uniquely curved and wavy head. Often, the spear tip is decorated with tassels or strips of silk to better hide its movements from the opponent. The spear is typically eight to nine feet long, and has a blade length of over eight inches, with some blades recorded to be as long as a foot and a half. The blade is double-edged, with a three-inch hook, or spike, pointing back toward the handle.

One famous story of a Boar Clan Master related how he was capable of using his spear to cut the laces and bindings of his enemy's armor as they fought, immobilizing his opponent without harming him.

Benefit: +1 Reflexes

HEICHI BUSHI SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Strength

Beginning Honor: 1, plus 5 boxes

Skills: Athletics, Defense, Hunting, Mai Chong, Lore: Twilight Mountains, Yarijutsu, any one Bugei Skill.

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Anger of the Boar

When using their Mai Chong, the bushi may strike a number of adjacent opponents (within reach of the Mai Chong, *i.e.* within 5' of the Boar Clan bushi) equal to half of his Mai Chong skill, rounding up. Only one roll is made to strike all of the opponents. That roll is made against a TN equal to that of the opponent with the highest TN plus 5 for each additional opponent. If this roll is successful, the damage for the single strike is divided equally among opponents thus struck (rounding all fractions down). The bushi must declare a Full Attack for the round in which he wishes to use the Anger of the Boar.

Rank 2: The Strength of Opposition

At this point, the Heichi bushi has trained with his weapon on the steepest slopes of the Twilight Mountains, learning the advantage in challenging an opponent's footing and balance. His Mai

Chong has become more than a simple spear in his hands, and the devastating potential of the rear-pointed hook can be unleashed. When he has successfully used his Mai Chong in an attack (once damage has been calculated and applied), the bushi and his opponent must roll an Opposed Strength Test. If the bushi wins the test, his opponent is entangled in the Mai Chong's hook and automatically acts last in the following round.

Rank 3: Beyond the Mountains

At this rank, the Boar Clan bushi has so mastered the length and advantage of their Mai Chong that they may declare a Full Defense, and still receive a single, unmodified attack on one opponent in the same round. This secondary attack may not receive any bonuses, additions, or follow-up benefits of any kind.

It should be noted that all Heichi techniques must be performed with the Mai Chong, and are not available when using any other weapon.

MAI CHONG 4K2

The statistics and particulars for the Mai Chong, except where mentioned previous to this, are all the same as those for a typical fine-quality Yari. Few metalsmiths have the knowledge to make such a weapon, but the Mai Chong is not a difficult blade to forge. Only its rarity prevents weaponsmiths from understanding how to create the particular spear-head that tops the Mai Chong, and those weaponsmiths who are made familiar with the weapon can easily reproduce it. The Mai Chong is a polearm, and as such receives the standard polearm initiative bonus.




In the shadows of the City of Lies stand the ruins of Usagi Castle. A few of the towers still stand, freshly-burned timbers exposed. The air still holds the stench of smoke from the fires that recently rent the proud castle asunder. Here once stood the home of the Hare Clan, a Minor Clan whose tale began in glory and ended in tragedy.

About three centuries ago, a bushi named Reichin made his home in Ryoko Owari. Some say that Reichin had once been a Yasuki, some claim his father was a Bayushi. All that is known now is that he was then a ronin, a man with no home and no master, attempting to carve a life for himself in the Scorpion city. He was a gambler, a smuggler, a thief, and an information peddler. He got himself into trouble often, but his charming, clever nature always got him back out just as quickly. The local magistrates found themselves turning to Reichin for advice as often as they were arresting him. He became a highly regarded member of the community despite his low social standing.

Years passed and it seemed like Reichin would be one of many clever men to live in Ryoko Owari and never be remembered. One day, however, he was playing cards upriver with a gang of Mantis smugglers when he caught a glimpse of something on the horizon, something white gleaming in the noontday sun. The sailors claimed he was seeing things in attempt to excuse himself from the game, which he was losing. Reichin laughed it off, but his mind could not rest. Something bothered him about what he had seen. He quickly excused himself from the game and climbed a tall tree to get a better look. It was then that Reichin's sharp eyes picked out a sight that made his blood run cold. A horde of men were





MY TESTIMONY IS MY LIFE

In Rokugan, samurai only give their testimony before an Emerald Magistrate if their words are something they would defend with their lives. The judicial system in the land is based on honor, virtue, and trust in a samurai's word. If many samurai confirm a misdeed with their testimony and their honor, their words must be considered true.

Thus, when samurai of the Crane, the Falcon, the Fox and the Crab each stepped forward with testimony declaring that the Hare were researching and using *maho*, their words were proof of the Hare Clan's obvious misdeeds. With this testimony before him, Hantei XXXVIII stripped the Hare of their clan status, denying them the right to hold lands or collect taxes. Their name was expunged and their honor destroyed.

To this day, the shattered remnants of the Hare still profess their innocence, but no one believes them. After all, who could possibly have enough political ability to convince so many noble samurai to lie on their testimony about such matters? Most importantly, who would wish to do such a thing, even if it could be done?

Those questions still haunt the survivors of the Hare, and perhaps they always will.



marching toward Ryoko Owari. The white glint he had seen had been the reflection of the sun from their porcelain masks. The rumors from Dragon lands were true. The Bloodspeakers had returned.

Reichin ran back to the city to spread the news. Had any other harbor-dwelling ronin come running into the city bringing such bizarre news, the magistrates would have arrested him for drunken behavior and thought nothing of it. Knowing that Reichin was an intelligent and perceptive man, the Scorpion constabulary quickly dispatched a scouting team. When the scouting team did not return, they mobilized the city for evacuation.

The Bloodspeaker army cut a grisly swath through the heart of Rokugan. Ryoko Owari soon lay in ashes, and the Scorpion clan counted heavy losses. Reichin soon found a katana in his hand as he was pressed into the Scorpion army. He saw horrors that would haunt him forever. He battled zombies, *maho-tsukai*, and creatures of darkness that he could not name. He waded through a field of fallen comrades at the Battle of the Bloody Retreat. He took up the banner of a fallen general and led soldiers into combat at the Battle of Sleeping River. In the span of a few short months, he had changed from a gambler and a thief of minor notoriety to a bushi noted for his cunning and martial prowess. Soon, the battle was over and Iuchiban had been banished. Doji Daisetsu, Emerald Champion, stood before the assembled armies.

"Iuchiban's spirit has been captured," he said to the tattered soldiers. "The Dragon, Phoenix, Crab, and Scorpion will see to it that he does not escape again. In the meantime, many of his lieutenants are still unaccounted for. Even now, his minion, Jama Suru, fortifies his position in the ruins of Ryoko Owari. Suru must be rooted out and destroyed. It will take precious time for our army to recover and begin the march for the city, time we do not have. Someone must scout ahead and sabotage Suru's defenses. This is an impossible mission, a thankless mission, but it is a deed that must be done. I ask for a volunteer."

Reichin stepped forward. "I will go," he said. "I am Reichin, and I know the city."

Daisetsu nodded. Without another word, Reichin ran for Ryoko Owari as fast as his legs would carry him. For weeks, the ronin prowled Ryoko Owari like a shadow, setting fires to Jama Suru's supplies and sowing discontent and



paranoia among his human minions. When Daisetsu finally arrived with the armies of the seven clans, Jama Suru fled rather than face the annihilation he knew would come next. Even without Suru's direction, Daisetsu's army fought for seven days and seven nights before Ryoko Owari was liberated, so fierce and relentless were the Bloodspeakers and their undead troops. At the end of the campaign, Reichin took an arrow meant for the Emerald Champion, nearly sacrificing his own life for Daisetsu's. The Emperor was informed of the ronin's bravery and selfless honor, and awarded him the family name 'Usagi', minor clan status, and titles for his deeds. His lands would be the plains to the south of Ryoko Owari, the place where Reichin first sighted Iuchiban's horde. Dozens of ronin samurai who had participated in the war with the Bloodspeakers swore fealty to Reichin's name. The first stones of Shiro Usagi were laid only a week after Suru's defeat.

Thus began the stories of the Hare Clan.

Their tale ended far less gloriously.

Shiro Usagi lies in ruins. Usagi Oda, once proud daimyo of the Hare, is dead. The bushi of the Hare are likewise dead or scattered to the winds, their family name forgotten. It is known that one year ago the Scorpion were the ones who laid siege to the castle. It is known that the Hare's Lion allies were strangely absent from the conflict. It is known that Oda died in a duel during the last days of the siege, in return for the safe passage of his peasants and a few loyal retainers. What is not known is the initial reason for the attack. Even the Scorpion general who commanded the siege, Bayushi Tomaru, is strangely silent on the subject. He claims no glory for the victory. Rumor has it that Tomaru had planned to wed Oda's daughter, Usagi Tomoe, but she disappeared only days after the end of the siege. When the subject is broached, Tomaru quickly changes the subject. The heir to the Hare Clan, Usagi Ozaki, is thought to have fled the castle during the siege and is now a wanted criminal for crimes he has since committed in Phoenix lands. The people of Ryoko Owari avoid the ruins of Usagi Castle, claiming that Oda's ghost now haunts the area with a furious anger. Few who survived the battle will admit being members of the once-proud Hare Clan, even bushi who were known to inhabit the castle. It is as if the Hare Clan never existed.

And no one knows why.

HISTORY

Before their destruction, the Hare were generally ignored by many of the other clans. The Lion Clan considered them a minor ally. The Scorpion Clan considered them an occasionally useful nuisance. The Crab, their neighbors to the south, thought little of them one way or the other. For the Hare, this was largely intentional.

For three centuries the clan of the Hare survived while other clans faded away. Their resourcefulness and discretion gave them an edge they could never attain through brute strength or arcane knowledge. When a cell of Bloodspeakers assaulted Shiro Usagi seeking vengeance for the defeat of Jama Suru, it was the Hare's cleverness that won them an ally in the Lion Clan. When the Crab Clan attempted to cripple Ryoko Owari by blockading Earthquake Fish Bay, it was the Hare who secretly ferreted Crane food and weapons to the city in return for a healthy reward of Scorpion koku.

The Hare managed to maintain such a quiet existence for three centuries, lurking just beneath the dangerous attentions of the Great Clans. Hares triumphed in the court by making themselves appear too minor to be of consequence, gaining ground against potential enemies simply by losing none. Hares triumphed on the battlefield by making themselves useful enough to rate powerful allies in the Lion. For a time, they prospered.

Though the Hare Clan's public facade was that of a timid and backwater rural clan, in truth the average Hare was very well educated. "A sharp blade dulls quickly without a sharp mind to guide it," was the motto of the Usagi family. Every Hare bushi could read and write skillfully. All were thoroughly trained in their clan's history. All Usagi had studied their family's past struggles against the Bloodspeakers. Even the feared Kuni *tsukai-sagasu* respected the Hare's extensive knowledge regarding the cult of the Bloodspeakers. (A great pity; if the Bloodspeakers should return, the Hare are no longer available to help in the fight against them. Some theorize that this is no coincidence.)

Athletic prowess was also highly valued among the Hare. On the whole, Usagi bushi were not as large or as strong as most Rokugani, but they tended to be wiry and quick. Yearly competitions were held at Usagi castle, featuring acrobatics, foot races, wrestling, and high jumps. Young bushi from the Crab, Scorpion, and Lion



**REICHIN
(3 POINTS)**

The original Hare was a man of action, but had sharp wits as well. Those who carry the blood of the first Usagi have an uncanny knack for puzzling out codes and detecting traps. They may roll and keep an extra dice when attempting such activities.

Sadly, their curious nature also tends to get them into trouble. The character rolls and keeps one fewer die when attempting to use stealth to gain an advantage or spy on an opponent.

were always in attendance, though they seldom returned home with prizes. The acrobatic prowess of an Usagi bushi was a marvel to behold. Their movements were graceful and fluid, changing directions and momentum in a fraction of a moment.

Since the destruction of the Hare, the lands they once held are uninhabited. The Crab have slowly begun to expand into the area, wary of Scorpion resistance. The Scorpions, strangely enough, seem uninterested. Once the castle fell, their troops withdrew and have not been to the area since. Most of the Usagi bushi captured during the siege were released shortly thereafter. A few of them still make their homes in the area, still proudly wearing the red and white of their clan though their castle, family, and clan are no more. They still privately consider themselves the Hare. They pass their techniques to their children in secret. They wait for the day that Usagi Ozaki will clear his name, return to them, and lead their clan to glory once more. They know it is only a matter of time.

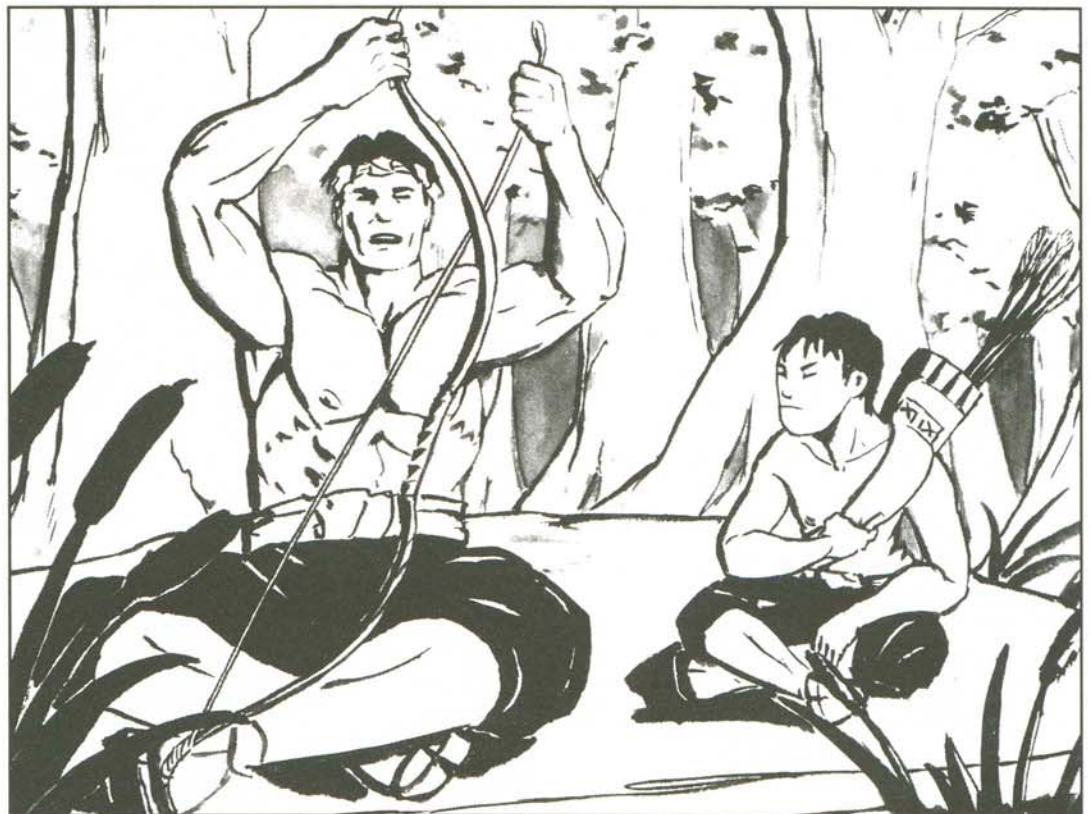
Most former Hares, now ronin, take a more realistic approach. They have accepted the dark reality of their situation and wandered out into the world seeking careers as ronin mercenaries.



Skills and Techniques

The school of the Hare Clan was destroyed during the Battle of Shiro Usagi. Few of the students live on. Usagi Ozaki is currently the most skilled student of the school, but he is unwilling to trust strangers enough to teach them the secrets of the Hare, given his current circumstances.

The few Hare who survive cling to their old territories. They are wary about sharing their techniques with outsiders, and unwilling to give away secrets which their clan died to save. After





all, they are not legally a clan anymore. The practice of such techniques may suggest that they still dare to view themselves as a clan, even though the Emperor does not.

This may not be the truth, but it is a terrible crime indeed. Students who wish to begin play with the Hare bushi school must have once been Hare samurai, and automatically gain the disadvantages: Social Disadvantage: Ronin and the Sworn Enemy (Kolot) flaws, for no points.

Because the family name 'Usagi' is not recognized by the Emperor's court, there is no family bonus for the Usagi.

USAGI BUSHI SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Agility

Skills: Athletics, Defense, Kenjutsu, Jujutsu, Hunting, Lore: Maho (particularly Iuchiban or the Bloodspeakers), any one High or Bugei Skill.

Beginning Honor: 2, plus 0 boxes

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Leap of the Hare

At this rank, the bushi begins to incorporate astounding feats of agility and athletics into his normal combat routine. Any maneuver that requires a leap or jump has its TN reduced by 10. The Hare could use this technique to leap into a fray and lower the TN of his first attack, but such a daring maneuver would certainly be considered a Full Attack. Once close combat has been joined this technique is difficult to use offensively unless the local terrain is very uneven, allowing for jumping and capering about. If the character uses this technique when going on Full Defense (leaping and cartwheeling frantically) they may add an additional +5 to their TN to be hit.

Rank 2: Speed of the Hare

The Hare bushi who has attained this level of skill now possesses the quick wits and swift reflexes of the animal from which his clan takes their name. The bushi need not declare his intended action in a round combat until all other combatants have declared theirs. (If multiple Hares are in the same combat, resolve among them as normal.)

Rank 3: Kick of the Hare

The Hare that has attained this rank learns the Usagi's most bizarre but powerful technique. He gains an additional attack every round, but this

attack must be an unarmed punch or kick. Optionally, the character may declare a "Hop." The hop requires the bushi to kick an opponent, making one raise. If successful, the bushi performs a snap kick (normal damage) and springs off of his opponent into the air. The character may then immediately perform his second attack, during which he may use his Rank One technique without necessarily declaring Full Attack. If the Hop is successful, this second attack may be directed at any opponent within six feet, or even at the opponent who was originally kicked.



Because the Hare were so recently destroyed, some samurai bearing the blood of the Usagi still roam the borders of the Empire. Though they no longer have a Clan, they cling to their old ways and try to live as honorable a life as they can. The life of a ronin is hard, but the survivors of the ruined Hare have no choice. Those who were not allowed to commit *seppuku* - or who have some other reason for their survival - still seek to redeem themselves, and bring honor to the house that was destroyed by fortune.

(USAGI) OZAKI

Rank 3 Usagi Bushi

EARTH 3

WATER 2 Perception 3

FIRE 3 Agility 4

AIR 5

VOID 2

Honor: 1.2

Glory: 0

Advantages: Ancestor: Usagi, Daredevil, Inheritance (Ancestral Sword of the Hare Clan), Perfect Balance, Quick



Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Criminal), Dark Secret (knows the truth), Driven (to find sister, to avenge father and clan), Haunted (father), Missing Eye

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle 2, Defense 3, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 2, Jujutsu 4, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: Iuchiban and the Bloodspeakers 3, Lore: Kolat 1, Stealth 2

Ozaki's weathered features map the terrible ordeal he has been through. A stained bandage covers the left side of the young bushi's face, concealing his lost eye. His hair is long and unkempt, spilling freely over his shoulders when not concealed beneath a deep hood. Ozaki is a small, quiet man, barely noticeable in a crowd. He walks quickly and keeps to himself, always clutching a katana wrapped in rice paper close to his chest. He never stays in one place for long, and does not make friends easily. He cannot afford to, for he is a wanted man.

Ozaki may be the only man who knows the truth. He knows why his sister disappeared. He knows why his clan was destroyed. He knows that an evil festers in the heart of the Empire, unknown to anyone but himself. Weeks before the siege, a chance encounter in Ryoko Owari led him to stumble over a scroll written in a strange code. With his sister's help, he was able to decipher a portion of it. The scroll hinted at a strange conspiracy, planning the murder of a magistrate in a distant city. Ozaki had discounted the scroll as nonsense at first, until Tomaru's army arrived at the gates of the castle demanding the return of his "property."

On the last night of the siege, Ozaki made a promise to his sister. They both knew they had become embroiled in a conspiracy neither of them understood. They both knew that their clan was doomed. They both knew that someone had to carry on the knowledge. Someone had to know. Tucking the scroll in his belt and wrapping the Ancestral Sword of the Hare so it would not be recognized, Ozaki leapt from the walls of the castle disguised in the garb of a simple peasant. His athletic skills and his sister's magic allowed him to land safely. He charged through the melee below, hoping to become lost in the chaos. Ozaki won his freedom, but paid for his escape with an eye. He heard later that his sister had disappeared after the siege. No one knew where she had been taken or even who had taken her. The news pierced his heart like a sliver of ice.

Determined that the secrets within the scroll would lead him to his sister, Ozaki followed the clues Tomoe had deciphered to a village near Mori Kage Toshi. He arrived at the home of the local magistrate to find the old man dying in his bed, the glint of bitter poison on his lips.

"No!" Ozaki cried, running to the man's side. "You cannot tell me that I arrived too late, not after what I have been through. You cannot tell me that they have killed you."

"They did not kill me," the old man said weakly. "I did this to myself, to escape their grasp. They are everywhere." The man's eyes rolled back into his skull.

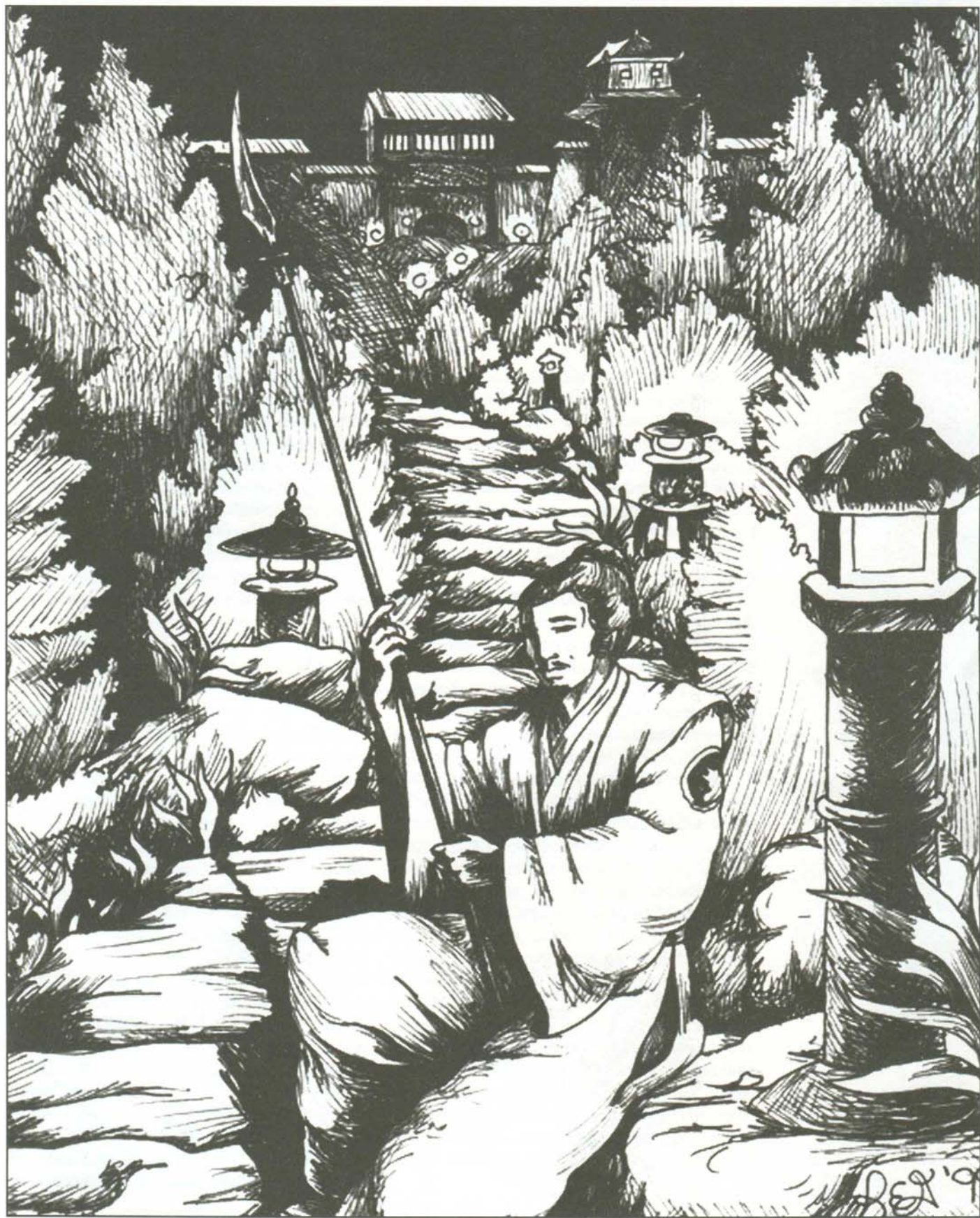
"Who are they?" Ozaki demanded, seizing the old man's shoulders and shaking him roughly. "Who is everywhere? Who has taken my sister?"

The old magistrate's eyes focused for a single moment, and his voice shuddered with fear as he spoke a single word. "*Kolat.*" The old man breathed his last.

Ozaki quickly searched the old man's house, looking for whatever records of this 'kolat' that he may have had. He found very little, only that the man seemed to be very close tabs on the activity of the local Yasuki traders. Before Ozaki could complete his search, a glass sphere crashed through the window spilling flaming oil across the floor of the magistrate's house. The young Hare was forced to flee once more. The next day, he discovered that a party of Emerald Magistrates were searching for him. Witnesses had provided his description to authorities as the culprit behind the fire and the local magistrate's death. Ozaki left Mori Kage that night at a dead run, and never looked back. Now he heads vaguely in the direction of Crab lands, wondering if the Yasuki might hold the next clue. He still carries the scroll, though he has been unable to decipher any more of it without his sister's help. He doesn't know where to go, really. He doesn't know who to turn to. He doesn't trust anyone. He doesn't know if his sister is still alive, or what the "kolat" may have done to her since her disappearance.

But he will never stop looking for the answer.







The Way of the Snake

Early in the history of the Emerald Empire, the plains between the lands of the Dragon and the Phoenix were home to a hard-working and industrious people. The men and women of the Snake Clan willingly worked the land in service to the Son of Heaven. Throughout Rokugan, they were acknowledged as true servants of the Hantei.

Today the Snake Clan no longer exists, all but their memory vanished forever.

When the Kuni *tsukai-sagasu* wish to instill in their students the fate that must befall all who consort with the Dark One, they speak of the Snake Clan. These loyal and virtuous samurai were destroyed not by oni or corrupt shugenja, but by their failure to destroy *maho* when it appeared. And the seeds of this destruction were sown by the clan's founder, as loyal and devoted a servant of the Emperor as any in Rokugan.

ISAWA CHUDA

The story of the Fall of the Snake Clan begins with a young Phoenix-born shugenja named Isawa Chuda. Chuda was an unassuming child born to a well-respected Imperial magistrate. As a child he amounted to little, dreaming, as all Phoenix children do, of sitting upon the Council of the Elemental Masters. Shortly before his *gempukku* ceremony, Chuda and his mother received word that his father, Isawa Teruzumi, had been slain by bandits. Ashiko, Chuda's mother, was heartbroken. She survived only long enough to see Chuda's *gempukku* ceremony before joining her beloved husband in death.

After his mother's funeral, Chuda discovered a series of scrolls that had belonged to his father.

Believing the scrolls to be accounts of his father's investigations, Chuda opened them.

To his horror, Chuda found within the journals an account of his father's studies of *maho*. Teruzumi had been fascinated by the power of the *maho-tsukai* and *maho-bujin* he faced and had sworn to wield that power for himself. Later entries suggested that Phoenix inquisitors had discovered Teruzumi's duplicity and that he was preparing to fake his own death.

Chuda realized that his father had fallen to the dark arts and that his Phoenix brethren had slain him to preserve the honor of the family and the clan. He vowed that just as his parents had been destroyed by *maho*, so he would destroy all that were touched by its sinister taint. He pored over his father's journals, learning all he could about the dark magic before destroying the scrolls.

Over the years Chuda rose to the rank of family, clan and eventually Imperial magistrate. He scoured the far reaches of the Empire, ferreting out cults, *maho-tsukai* and other threats to the throne. With each victory he learned more about his enemies. The Phoenix and even the Crab regarded him as an authority on *maho*, and he even responded to the subtle requests of other clans for his aid in identifying and expunging corrupted sorcerers.

While exterminating a cult in the outskirts of Shinomen Mori, Chuda found evidence that a member of the Imperial Guard had been corrupted by the cult's foul magic. He rode feverishly towards Otosan Uchi, stopping only to change horses. His arrival was barely in time to thwart the assassination attempt on the life of the Emperor, and he was sorely wounded in the skirmish.

The Emperor was horrified that an assassination attempt had come so close to fruition. He gazed favorably on the shugenja who had discovered and aborted this threat to his life. When asked by the Hantei what reward he would have, Chuda replied, "I am your serpent, Son of Heaven. I creep into the hidden places and strike down your enemies. My duty is all I require."

"Go then," replied the Hantei, "and teach others your venomous ways. I would wish that there were more samurai such as you, hiding beneath each tree and stone in my lands."

THE FOUNDING OF THE SNAKE

Chuda left behind his Isawa name, and took the loyal yoriki who had sworn their lives to him.

Together with his bride, a young Kuni named Reiko, he built his home in the Dragon Heart Plain. While nursing his wounds, he and Reiko had a son. Chuda taught his son Yoharu many of his ways, the most important of which was the need for discretion. If it was known that the Snake Clan were being trained to hunt *maho-tsukai*, then their enemies would take care in covering their tracks. To the rest of the Empire, the Snake Clan must seem no more than simple men and women working the land in service to their Emperor.

In time, Chuda felt the need to hunt again. Leaving the teaching of his son and students to his wife, also a capable shugenja, he struck out again to destroy threats to his beloved Rokugan. Over the next decade, Chuda fought and destroyed numerous villains. In one of his greatest battles, he was nearly slain by a corrupt Kitsu who cursed Chuda, saying, "The darkness you forgive will lead to your family's destruction." Chuda returned home and stayed for a full year, weighing the implications of the *maho-tsukai's* words.

When nearing the age of retirement, Chuda journeyed home from the lands of the Crane to enjoy his twilight years with his family. Upon his arrival on the Dragon Heart Plain, he found death and destruction. Instantly he recognized the mark of a *maho* cult he believed destroyed decades ago. The attack had been repelled, but the palace had been breached. With terror in his heart, Chuda rushed to his family's quarters. He arrived just in time to see his wife strike the last assassin dead with a powerful spell.

A *maho* spell.

Chuda could only stare in horror at his wife and son, neither of whom seemed to recognize the ramifications of his wife's treasonous act. After long moments, Chuda whispered one final sentence.

"You have betrayed us all."

He turned and left the palace. He rode south, shaved his head and joined a monastery in the lands of the Lion. He died shortly thereafter without ever having spoken another word.

HISTORY

With Chuda's death, control of the Snake Clan passed to his son Yoharu and his aging wife Reiko. Reiko, like her husband, had access to extensive knowledge of the black art and had chosen to draw upon it in a moment of exhaustion to save her son. Fascinated, she

continued her research into corrupt magic while her son tended to the affairs of the clan. Although *maho* was not taught to the students of the Snake, they were made aware of it, its powers and its weaknesses.


Chuda Yoharu's reign as daimyo of the Snake was long and uneventful. The Snake Clan came to be recognized as honorable and skilled shugenja. Several Snakes served their Emperor as *yoriki* to Imperial magistrates, though none ever gained the glory of their founder. When possible, these magistrates would return confiscated *maho-tsukai* materials to be studied at Shiro Chuda.

In time Yoharu's son Choro ascended to become daimyo of the clan. His reign outlasted even his father's, although during his years in Shiro Chuda he removed the Snake Clan from public eye even further in order to increase the effectiveness of their hunters. As he matured in years, Choro was struck with an extremely debilitating and unidentified disease that resisted all medicines and healing magics. For years he languished in his chambers, unable to rise. This malaise may have been the result of an experiment with *maho*, but no one knew for certain.

DARK TEMPTATION

While Choro suffered incredible torment, his son Tamihei oversaw the dealings of the clan. A young man barely past his *gempukku*, Tamihei was quickly overwhelmed by his responsibilities and desperately tried to hold his tiny clan together. One night while poring over tax reports, Tamihei whispered an anonymous prayer that his family might be saved. Perhaps he wished for his father to recover, or perhaps that his clan might become wealthy and powerful. Whatever the wish, it was made in frustration and exhaustion. When an unknowing *eta* entered the room to empty the waste containers, Tamihei snarled in frustration and cut him down with his family's wakizashi.





THE FIVE NIGHTS OF SHAME

The story of the Fall of the Snake Clan is told somewhat differently in the public courts of the Empire. Influenced by the Phoenix, and justified by their power in the Imperial Court, the matter has been declared 'finished' by the Sons of Hantei. For those who wish to read the entire tale, see the description given in *Way of the Phoenix*.

A summary of that story is reprinted below.

Long ago the heights of the Dragon Heart Plain were filled with a prosperous folk. But to this family of noble men came disaster.

For many years, the Shuten Doji came calling at the castle on the first evening of each month, screaming its fury and begging the family to heed its pleas. One dark night, the young son of the daimyo was unable to resist its siren call. Once he had gone to its side, the hauntings seemed to stop - for a time.

Seven days after his father's pyre had been lit, the son ascended to rule his clan. However, there was a darkness in his soul. He had been taught foul secrets by the Shuten Doji, and thought to seize immortality through *maho*.

That night, in his dreams, a powerful spirit visited Tamihei. The dark spirit whispered promises of wealth and power. It even offered to restore his father's strength, if only Tamihei would complete his prayer for power and allow it to leave the spirit world for his. Tamihei refused, but the spirit persisted, visiting him nightly for seven long years.

One night, the dying Choro summoned his son to his chamber. Tamihei, daimyo in all but name, winced at the sight of his emaciated father, skeletal from years of prolonged illness. Choro begged his son to grant him peace, even if it meant death.

Torn between duty and love, Tamihei wandered through Shiro Chuda contemplating what action to take. Wandering through his long-dead grandfather's chambers, he came across a cache of scrolls that had belonged to his great-grandmother, Chuda Reiko.

Just as his ancestor had done so many years before him, Tamihei discovered a collection of *maho* spells that Reiko had been studying at the time of her death. Realizing his family's long-time connection with corrupt magic, Tamihei finally breathed the last of his dark prayer, allowing the trapped spirit access to this world.

Within days, the Shuten Doji controlled every living being within the land of the Snake Clan. (Another account of the seduction of Chuda Tamihei can be found in *Bearers of Jade*.)

THE FIVE NIGHTS OF SHAME

When the Council of Elemental Masters of the Phoenix Clan learned what had happened, the Phoenix forces descended upon the lands of the Snake Clan with vehemence. Many were lost before the Masters learned the secrets of fighting the Shuten Doji, but in the end there could be only one result: every man, woman and child within the lands of the Snake was killed. Every building was burnt to the ground. Even the livestock and wildlife were purged so that there could be no chance the spirit could escape in another form. The ultimate fate of the spirit is unknown. A competent magistrate, Isawa Tsuneo, was given the

task of determining the Shuten Doji's fate, but he disappeared and was never seen again.

Where there had been life and prosperity only one week before, there remained only death and destruction. This is the lesson of the Snake.

TERRITORY

The lands once held by the Snake Clan remain unaligned today. It is believed by some that the land is cursed, and many avoid it. The Dragon Heart Plain rests comfortably between the lands of the Dragon Clan and the lands of the Phoenix Clan. Just southeast of the plains is the Shrine of the Ki-Rin, where the Phoenix sighted the majestic creature upon the return of the Unicorn Clan to Rokugan. Many believe that such a sighting so close to the Dragon Heart Plain is proof that the land has recovered from the taint it suffered from the Shuten Doji's corrupting presence.

At the height of the Snake Clan's power, there were two villages under their control. The larger surrounded Shiro Chuda and the clan's shugenja school, while the smaller village developed to the



south. This southern village was the center of the Snake Clan's commerce, as they forged a road south all the way to the northern lands of the Crane. This road fell into disuse and quickly disappeared in the years following the clan's destruction.

Even in recent times, Phoenix inquisitors are occasionally dispatched to the Dragon Heart Plain to investigate reports of strange, glowing lights in the darkness. Although nothing has ever been found, strange artifacts are sometimes found in the trappings of *maho-tsukai* that bear the markings of the Snake Clan. Are these long-overlooked remnants of the dead sorcerers, or does someone still keep their ways alive?

CHUDA SHUGENJA SCHOOL

The secrets of the Snake Clan shugenja have been lost to time for all but the Phoenix, whose inquisitors have detailed records of the horrors found there. Despite Isawa Chuda's best intentions, the study of *maho* eventually became the practice of *maho*. Rumors persist among certain Phoenix circles of the nightmare that awaited the Shiba forces when they descended into the catacombs beneath Shiro Chuda: bandits and eta tortured with grotesque spells and disfigurements, tables containing hideous dissections, and the remains of rituals that suggested practices beyond imagining. The first Phoenix warrior to arrive in these chambers is said to have instantly gone mad, clawing his eyes out and shrieking that he could never again see beauty.

The teachings of the Chuda sensei, while corrupt and Tainted, were horribly effective. Even under the sway of the Shuten Doji, the dark shugenja's spells took a brutal toll on the first waves of Phoenix samurai. Accounts suggest that they could secrete a burning poison from their hands and mouths that brought instant, screaming death. The sensei of the school opened his wrists with his wakizashi during the battle and venomous snakes poured out to strike down the Phoenix.

In the end, of course, the Snake had no real hope of survival against the Phoenix. The Shiba were too focused on their grisly duty, the Isawa too proficient in the ways of the *kami* to be defeated. The foul teachings of the Snake Clan were purged from the Empire by the righteous flame of the Asako inquisitors.



Although the Snake have been destroyed, some of their teachings and a few of their students may still remain in the Empire. Those who study the magic and skills of the Snake must be warned: to do so is to invite the spirit of the Shuten Doji to enter your life, and eventually, to destroy you.

This is an excellent school for NPC *maho*-using shugenja, and possibly for PC users under their GM's guidance. However, even though the Snake teachings remain alive, no members of the original family are known to be still alive. Thus, there is no Chuda family bonus, nor are there any samurai publicly claiming to be of the Chuda. To do so would be to invite certain death at the hands of the Phoenix Elemental Masters.

Because the family name 'Chuda' is not recognized by the Emperor's court, there is no family bonus for the few surviving blood members of the Snake Clan.

CHUDA SHUGENJA SCHOOL

Let their eyes slide from you without knowing your face. You shall be seen, yet remain unseen. Only then may your strike bring certain death.

— Chuda Yoharu

The Snake Clan approached magic very differently from other clans. Virtually every spell developed by the Chuda shugenja school was destroyed in the purge. However, some of the original creations of Isawa Chuda remain in Phoenix possession. Although they are very tightly controlled due to their controversial nature, they are available to well-connected shugenja who know to ask.



THE FIVE NIGHTS OF SHAME (CONTINUED)

Only through the intervention of the Fortunes were the Phoenix able to uncover his plot. Within days, the Shiba acted. The forces of the Phoenix Clan descended upon the village like a wave of flame from the heavens. Elemental magic met blood sorcery while Shiba blades felled every living soul.

In five days, no man, woman, or child of the Snake Clan lived. From the south, the rest of the Empire looked on the slaughter with horror and outrage, and a missive from Hantei himself was sent to the Phoenix, demanding that they explain their actions.

Two words were the only response from the Elemental Masters: "Never again."

Never again.



All members of the Chuda Shugenja school are considered to have the Disadvantage: Compulsion (Study Maho) for no earned points. Because this school is intended for NPC characters, assume all members of the Chuda school to be True Ronin, and have the penalties and Outfits appropriate to that background.

Benefit: +1 Perception

Skills: Bard, Calligraphy, Investigation, Kenjutsu, Lore: Maho, Meditation, any other Low Skill.

Beginning Honor: 0, plus 2 boxes



The bitter legacy of the Snake Clan will never be completely destroyed until the war against the Dark One is over and his servants are destroyed. Until that day, the minions of the Shadowlands will continue to remind that people of Rokugan that they too can fall.

There are many different adventures that can take place with the remnants of the Snake Clan as adversaries; for instance, as the characters attempt to discover the truth behind the Snake Clan's destruction - or as they fight to end some *maho-tsukai* who has resurrected some of the lost knowledge of the Chuda. One day, when the Shadowlands have been destroyed, perhaps the Snake can at last rest in peace. But until that day, their tortured spirits and *maho* legacy will continue to plague the Empire, seeking revenge against the Phoenix, and enticing others down the dark path that caused their own fall.

COBRA AND MONGOOSE

Challenge:

The characters are sent by a minor Phoenix lord to investigate the disappearance of one of his tax collectors.

Focus:

The characters journey to Doro Owari Mura, the Road's End Village, where they find the townspeople and their taxes, but no sign of any tax collector. While investigating the desecration of a shrine, the characters are attacked by men from the village who have yellowed skin, fangs, and strange snake-like tattoos on their forearms.

Strike:

On a lengthy hike through the mountains, the village monk disturbed a makeshift tomb that held the remains of Isawa Tsuneo. The noble Phoenix magistrate gave his life to bind the Shuten Doji that corrupted the Snake Clan in the tomb. With the wards broken, the evil spirit corrupted and possessed the monk, who proceeded to corrupt the villagers. The characters must destroy the spirit's host without becoming possessed themselves.

POISONOUS TREASURES

Challenge:

A village in the lands of the character's daimyo has recently lost several peasants to an unknown cause and the local hetman has asked for a magistrate to investigate.

Focus:

Upon arrival, the characters discover that a prominent member of the village has gone berserk and begun stalking and killing other villagers in the night while appearing normal during the day.

Strike:

The peasant in question received a free netsuke from a passing merchant. This netsuke, an amulet depicting a snake coiled around a black stone, drove the man insane. Dealing with him is simple, but what of the merchant responsible? Is this an isolated incident or do other such artifacts exist?



Legend of the Five Rings

Name:

Clan:

Profession:

Fire

Agility:
Intelligence:

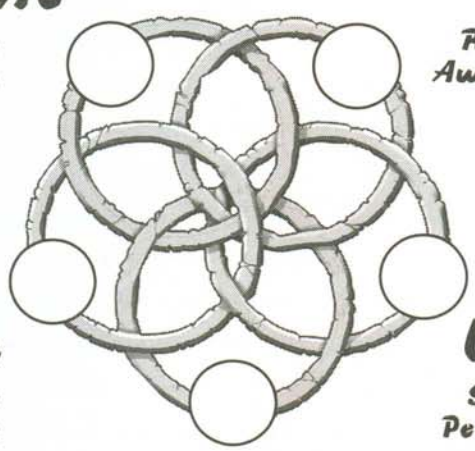
Air

Reflexes:
Awareness:

Primary Weapon

Primary Armor

TN to be Hit
(Reflexes x 5 + Armor)



Earth

Stamina:
Willpower:

Water

Strength:
Perception:

Skills

Void

Void Points Spent:

Techniques/Spells

Insight:

Wounds

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| <input type="checkbox"/> | -1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | -2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | -3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | -4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Down |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dead |

School:

Rank:

Glory:

Honor:

Experience Points:



While the Seven
Houses argue, we fight against
the darkness. As they struggle for
dominance, we take only what has been
denied us. And when the Great Clans have fallen,
the Alliance will rise like the tide,
to claim our destiny.

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