



*Legend of the
Five Rings™*

WAY OF THE PIPPA



ORIENTAL ADVENTURES



WAY OF THE NINJA

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AEG FORMALLY APOLOGIZES TO SCOTT GEARIN, WHO WAS
NOT CREDITED FOR HIS WORK ON WAY OF THE SHUGENJA.
SORRY ABOUT THAT, SCOTT!

To use the d20 System™ portions of this book, a Dungeon Master also needs the *Player's Handbook*™, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*™, and *Oriental Adventures*. A player needs only the *Player's Handbook*™ and *Oriental Adventures*.

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WAY OF THE NINJA

Moonlight fell upon the ancient stones of the Kaiu Wall, casting shadows into the deep grooves weather and time had worn. Absolute blackness rested in the spaces where Hiruma archers and Kaiu siege-masters had stood only weeks before, ready to rain death down upon advancing armies of the Shadowlands time and again.

Men still patrolled these stones and stood upon this great Wall, but they were no longer the guardians of the Empire. Where the warriors of the Crab had stood for centuries now walked the Lost. Men and women who had been corrupted by the foul Taint of the Shadowlands, but not made mad by its power. At least not mad in the usual sense; they maintained a will and intellect of their own, though the only lord they hailed now was the Lord of the Shadowlands. They stood as the Crab had stood before, but their eyes looked a different direction — to the north and the west. They guarded the Shadowlands from the Empire.

These Lost were more disciplined than Shosuro Yudoka had ever seen uncorrupted men. They were samurai. Yudoka did not know what he found more frightening, the raving hordes of Tainted beasts he faced in his youth, or this new Horde, so like the people of Rokugan yet so undeniably sinister... As the ninja watched carefully from the darkness, the new guardians of the Kaiu Wall hardly moved, except to march from one post to another. The aging Scorpion was almost unnerved by the precise order of the Tainted army as they passed his hiding place on their patrol time and again.

Almost.

Yudoka had not meant to spend a single evening in the lands of the Crab, much less the past week. He cared little for the Hida and their unending war with the Shadowlands, except where it concerned his kin and clan. Now it did. For years, he had dedicated his life to hunting the last of the Goju and Ninube — fallen ninja who had escaped when the Lying Darkness was destroyed. Many of the things that fell beneath his spear had been creatures of the Taint who stood beside the Goju and Ninube. The fallen ninja had found a new home in the Shadowlands. Many of them now dwelled in that twisted land, serving the mysterious creature who now styled himself the Lord of the Shadowlands. The faces that they had once lost to the Darkness had been returned by the power of the Shadow Dragon, though their eyes now gleamed with the power of Jigoku.

Shosuro Yudoka had only heard "Daigotsu" as an oath from the Goju as they died before him, but it told him the name of the one they had come to serve. The first of Daigotsu's pet ninja came for him the day after the Scorpion had thought he had destroyed the last of the minions of the Lying Darkness. In his ignorance, the Shosuro lord had almost found his death when the killers came for him.

The Goju had made a great error in failing to kill him. Now Yudoka would not rest until the last of them were destroyed. Even old age could not halt his vendetta. Every Goju would die, and when his deed was done, he would allow death to take his hand and drag him into the bloody fields of the Realm of Slaughter. Yudoka smiled. It would be a life well lived, a life with no regrets. All Scorpion dreamed of such a life.

Two shadows passed Yudoka, and he instinctively stopped his breath. Even his heartbeat slowed; many Goju would be alerted by such a thunderous clatter. Another patrol. Another two of the Lost who never saw him. Yudoka knew he was still the hunted, but he was a hunter as well, and the prey he had sought had led him here.

But why?

Growing tired of waiting, Yudoka stepped silently away from his hiding place. The top of the Kaiu Wall was surrounded on either side by twenty-foot barriers, but there were plenty of gaps for archers and siege engines to fire on those below. Yudoka slipped through one of those gaps now, climbing to the outside surface of the Wall. He clutched the ancient stone with the iron climbing claws that protruded from the backs of his gloves and the toes of his boots. He held his body horizontally along the stone, two hundred feet above the Shadowlands. His aged muscles screamed at the abuse; he ignored them. Before Yudoka could move further along the wall, he heard a familiar laugh.

"Congratulations, Yudoka-sama," the voice rasped in his ear. "You have found me."

Before Yudoka could react, a solid blow took him in the side. He fell; in moments the unforgiving earth would crush him into paste. He glanced up to see the smug grin of the Goju he had been hunting. She crouched atop the Wall and smiled victoriously. Yudoka knew her, as he knew them all. "Nishiko," Yudoka spat. Once a Shosuro ninja, one of Yudoka's comrades. Nishiko had experimented with the Darkness, hoping to learn a way for her Shosuro brethren to fight against it. She had been corrupted by its power, joining the ranks of Shadow. Now she served Daigotsu as one of the Goju. She had not aged a day in thirty years; she was younger and stronger than Yudoka.

But Yudoka was prepared.

Yudoka stopped falling in midair with a snap, thirty feet from where he had clung. Nishiko looked confused. Yudoka relished her expression and threw three shuriken at her face. One cut her cheek; the others missed as she ducked away. She was distracted, and that was enough. Without a sound, Shosuro Yudoka ran up the side of the Kaiu Wall.

Or so it would have seemed to an observer, had there been any. Most would not have noticed how swiftly Yudoka worked the belt of gears and levers hidden beneath his heavy cloak, winding the nearly invisible thread secured to the Kaiu Watchtower by a single dollop of adhesive. The belt was of Kaiu design; the unbreakable thread was a minor Crane fetish; the adhesive, Dragon alchemy. The rest was Shosuro ingenuity and a lifetime of training. The old ninja cart-wheeled through a thin gap in the Wall, landing on its surface before Shosuro Nishiko. With a flick of his wrist, a long double-bladed spear appeared in one hand, the unique weapon Yudoka called "Pincers and Tail."

Yudoka had always believed that preparation and talent, when properly applied, could appear to work miracles. When he saw the look of fear in Nishiko's eyes he knew that was one lesson she had not yet learned.

"How?" she asked.

Yudoka said nothing, but only emitted a long, low hissing sound from behind his mask.

Nishiko glanced left and right. The guards were nowhere to be seen. A second figure stepped from the shadows, a much younger man in loose black clothing and a simple black mask — Yudoka's invisible accomplice, Bayushi Tai. He held a dagger of jade in one hand, poised to strike. Black blood dripped from its tip. In attempting to ambush Shosuro Yudoka, she had only revealed herself.

"Master?" Tai whispered, taking a step forward.

Yudoka only shook his head. Tai was not ready for Nishiko. Not yet. The younger ninja nodded and vanished once more.

"I will kill him and then I will kill you, old man," Nishiko said with a sneer, drawing her ninja-to with the very speed of the wind.

Yudoka said nothing, only shrugging in acceptance.

Nishiko leapt at the old ninja, as if seeking to push him over the edge of the Wall. With a practiced motion, Yudoka spun his spear. He brought it over his head in a wide arc, snapping Nishiko's weapon in

half and stabbing at her with the opposite end. Nishiko grunted as the crystal edge cut her wrist, but swiftly drew a long dagger from her sleeve. Now inside the reach of Yudoka's weapon, she slashed at his throat.

Yudoka exhaled sharply, and a cloud of roiling white mist exploded from the grated mouth of his mask. Nishiko screamed and flipped backwards, barely avoiding another blow from Yudoka's blade as the poison blinded her. She turned and landed nimbly on her feet, rubbing her eyes with one hand and holding her knife defensively with the other.

"The Kuni make a fine tea from lotus and powdered jade," Yudoka said, his mouth now empty. "In recent years, they have devised a brew using crystal as well. It seems you Goju have no taste for it." Yudoka spun his staff in a slow whirl and advanced on the fallen shadow ninja.

Nishiko took several steps backwards, staggering against the far edge of the wall, still half-blind from the crystal. "A Shosuro never abandons a target," she said, her voice heavy with disgust. "Surely you remember that from our training." Lights moved further down the Wall. "They have seen you, Yudoka. I think it is time for you to run, unless you think that the child can kill an entire patrol of Daigotsu's samurai."

"Our business will be finished before they arrive," Yudoka replied calmly, batting an obsidian-tipped arrow from the air as if it were an insect.

Nishiko's eyes narrowed. Without hesitation, she took two quick steps toward Yudoka, and he crouched into a defensive position. Instead of attacking, she made a great leap over him. Her strength was aided by the power of the Goju, and she landed far behind him, on the thin ridge atop the wall. With a smirk, Nishiko turned and ran from the Shosuro toward one of the large watchtowers.

Yudoka cursed. Taking several steps back, he ran toward the wall. Planting his staff firmly, he leapt into the air. His foot found purchase on an uneven brick ten feet above the ground, nearly invisible in the darkness. A second jump and his fingers found purchase on the top of the barrier. An instant later, and Yudoka was running along the foot-wide path at the very height of the Kaiu Wall as well, holding his staff horizontally for balance. She had gained a few moments with her prodigious leap, but that was all.

From below, the Lost fired their arrows at Yudoka. He ignored them; most missed. Some struck his thick cloak, lodging harmlessly in the straw beneath the silk. Yudoka heard the shatter of broken glass below and saw a cloud of smoke roll over the archers. Tai. The boy had risked much in moving so close to a dozen armed Lost. Yudoka hoped he would escape safely, and continued chasing Nishiko. The two vaulted the gaps in the Wall toward a tower where even more archers waited.

Yudoka frowned beneath his porcelain mask. She was definitely not making this easy.

Nishiko leapt again, landing on the side of the watchtower like a fly, and began to scale the wall. Yudoka paused at the base, spinning his staff to deflect the first barrage of arrows. Snatching an egg-shaped grenade from the depths of his cloak, he hurled it over the top of the tower. The guards within shouted as the smoke obscured their aim. Yudoka did not waste a moment, climbing the wall with only his feet and one hand, holding his spear ready in the other. He noted the nearest archer as he climbed. Leaping over the side of the tower, he snatched the collar of that man's armor with his claws, dragging him into the path of Nishiko's dagger. The Lost screamed as his blood spurted on the gray stone. Yudoka spun his spear with a fierce cry, opening the stomachs of the remaining four archers before they realized he was there. The smoke from the nageteppe cleared, revealing Nishiko standing opposite him, breathing heavily and scowling as she faced him with her bloody tanto ready. Glancing back, she seemed

to realize that she now stood with her back to the Shadowlands. To return to the lower wall, she would have to go through Yudoka.

"Well?" Yudoka said.

Nishiko looked over the edge; the surface below was lost in mist. "Jumping," Yudoka said as he advanced, "is useless."

"No," Nishiko countered, taking a slow step back, so that one of her feet dangled over the stone. "Only for the weak."

Nishiko fell backwards, vanishing into the mist without so much as a scream.

Yudoka ran to where the Tainted ninja had stood a moment before, and looked down over the edge of the Wall. He saw nothing. The hunt would continue.

Shouts and another volley of arrows sailing through the air returned Yudoka's attention to the situation at hand. He was cornered on a Kaiu Wall controlled by an organized army of Shadowlands soldiers. Tai was alone below, or perhaps dead.

Fortunately, he still had a few tricks left.

Yudoka leapt into the night sky, plummeting into the mist.

NINJA FAMILIES

The momentous events of history have allowed numerous small ninja factions to simply fall through the cracks into total obscurity. Although they lack the power and influence of the major ninja factions, these small groups typically excel at their chosen specialties.

Each of these tiny families, for lack of a better word, has a listing of schools. These are nearest to the ninja's operations, and those whom they have infiltrated to some small degree. Although these ninja possess no official mechanics of their own beyond their family benefit, they can attend these schools under assumed identities, many of which require years or decades of work to establish.

WHAT IS A NINJA?

"There are too many shadows to hide in, too many faces to imitate. Only the paranoid are truly safe."

— Yogo Tjeki, sensei of the Hidden Moon Dojo

The term "ninja" evokes the image of a black-clad person leaping across rooftops, killing from the shadows, and performing stealthy and dishonorable acts. This estimation is to some degree correct, though incomplete. Many men and women serve their daimyo with acts of stealth, though they would be insulted to be labeled "ninja." For the purposes of understanding much of the material in this book, a separation of the ninja character class and the term "ninja" is necessary. Not all who are "ninja" call themselves by that name.

The word "ninja" in Rokugani folklore usually refers to honorless men who command supernatural powers through dark pacts. They are base assassins who have no regard for honor or morality and serve wicked masters for mysterious ends. A ninja thrives on murder, and is lower in most people's estimation than even eta. To call someone a "ninja" is to call them all of the above, so it is no wonder that even those who practice stealth and sabotage disdain the title. The connotations within Rokugani society are dreadful.

PLAYING A NINJA

The “ninja” of popular Rokugani legend do not, for the most part, exist. Ironically, much of the myth and legend surrounding ninja was created by the ninja themselves to make themselves more impressive. A baby-eating demon worshiper is far more fearsome a foe than a martial artist in black pajamas; most would rather flee than face such an opponent. Fear of the unknown made the ninja's job easier.

As the legends of ninja grew, they spread even to the ears of the bizarre entity known, among other names, as the Lying Darkness. When the Darkness rose to power, it granted its pawns abilities that reflected those described in the legends of demon-ninja. These creatures still exist today (though the Darkness itself has been banished from Rokugan) and are as much an enemy to true ninja clans as they are to the rest of Rokugan.

True ninja come in many forms. A Daidoji harrier would be quite surprised how similar his training, methods, and duties are to those of a Shosuro assassin. Hiruma scouts constantly prowl the depths of the Shadowlands unseen, striking at their targets from the shadows. These, as well as others who rely upon stealth, can be grouped by the loose definition “ninja.”

Just don't let the Daidoji hear you call them that.

“Ninja? There are no ninja among the Scorpion. I am a samurai, like yourself. I carry the swords forged by my great-grandfather. I was the finest swordsman at Honor's Lesson Dojo, and finished second at the Topaz Championship. Not all legends are true, my friend. More tea, Akahito-san?”

— Bayushi Paneki, in conversation with Shinjo Akahito, two hours before the latter's death via heart attack

Despite the extensive measures most ninja take to conceal their existence, a surprising number of ninja player characters attempt to survive openly as ninja — assassins, saboteurs, liars, and thieves who make little pretense about being anything other than what they are. Of course, this raises the question: why is this sort of character in a party? If the characters are a band of reprehensible villains, the question is moot, but chances are your party is not.

The presence of ninja within a party can stretch the boundaries of plausibility. Honorable characters may find themselves acting wildly out of character, tolerating the ninja for the sake of party unity. This is a terrible option for all concerned, and can be avoided with a bit of forethought by both player and GM (while providing a nice bit of back story for your ninja character at the same time).

Keep in mind that just because the other players know that you have “ninja” written on your character sheet doesn't mean that their characters know. With a group of mature players, and a bit of caution, you should be able to avoid most problems.

Most common among ninja who travel in groups is the spy. On the surface, the character is an emissary of his lord just like the rest of the characters, willing to contribute what he can to the group to ensure success. Beyond that, he is a clever and helpful soul with an uncanny knack for disappearing unpredictably, turning up later with information the more honorable party members never uncover on their own. Taking the common example of a party of Emerald Magistrates: a ninja in such a party might pose as a yoriki (magistrate's assistant) slipping off on his own to do work that the magistrate cannot be bothered to do, and spying on the party's enemies while doing so. It's not uncommon for powerful daimyo to secure such social positions for their underlings, even the ninja.



Other times, the ninja is a special yojimbo, protecting his charge from threats that a simple bushi could never see or handle. Such a ninja is trained in his art because his lord understands a basic truth — the best way to guard against ninja is with ninja. The yojimbo ninja can also serve in a way a bushi could not by preemptively assassinating potential threats.

In extreme situations, perhaps the ninja has been assigned to assassinate a member of the party, or to frame the party for another target's death. This can be an interesting arrangement for a one-off game, but hardly the best idea for a ninja in a long-term campaign. In any case, the ninja must exert extreme care that his true profession is never revealed in the execution of his duties. This is even more of a problem when traveling in a party, as he will be under the constant (if unintentional) scrutiny of the other party members.

HISTORY OF THE NINJA

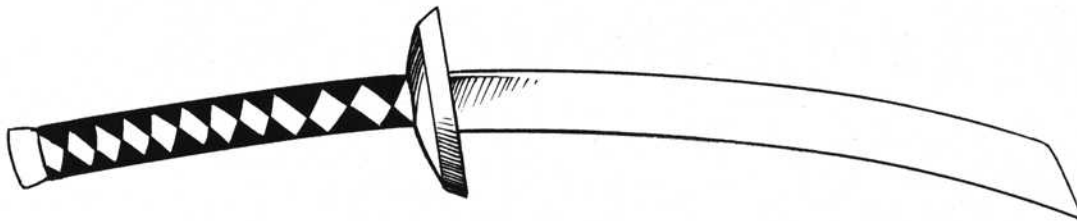
The legend of the ninja, a shadow warrior who strikes from darkness to cause instant, painful death, is almost as old as the Empire itself. In the aftermath of the war with Fu Leng, the peasantry was particularly fearful that the hideous monstrosities of the Shadowlands would return. They cowered in their homes at night, unsure if the samurai of the Empire could protect them from the unknown threats that filled the night. Although in time the presence of the Great Clans calmed the fears of the heimin, it is during this time that many legends and myths that the peasants have believed for centuries first came into being. The first years of Rokugan is when the lower classes came to fear the shadows.

In truth, there was reason to fear the darkness.

Ninja have existed almost as long as the Empire itself. They have remained largely unseen, hidden from the enemies that surround them. They have deliberately spread the rumors that ninja are masters of foul magic and demonic practices. In this way, they have ensured that they are feared by all who encounter them. It makes their duties far simpler.

THE DAWN OF THE NINJA

The first ninja came into existence at the behest of a strange patron: the first Hantei. During the War Against Fu Leng, the Hantei recognized that it would be difficult to maintain a working knowledge of the clans' activities, yet knew that it was essential that he do just that if he were to rule successfully. To this end, he gave his brother Bayushi a single order: "Watch." Bayushi did so gladly, creating a sect of his own Scorpion Clan devoted solely to the covert observation of the other clans. The Hantei never asked for the details of Bayushi's operations, for it was quite clear that sometimes these informants had to lower themselves to less than honorable tactics to accomplish their missions. During the difficult times of the War Against Fu Leng, only results were important.



THE HATERU NINJA FAMILY

Descendants of Ide Hateru, sworn servant of Ide, the Hateru are second only to the former ninja of the Scorpion Clan in the length and depth of their operations. When the Lion claimed the Ki-Rin lands from the remnants of that clan, the Hateru migrated north to the outskirts of the Dragon holdings, where they remain to this day. Their small size and unassuming nature makes it easier for them to masquerade as Dragon samurai.

Perhaps the greatest irony of the Hateru is that they have successfully infiltrated the Kitsuki family, some of the greatest adversaries of other ninja throughout the Empire. The reason is simple: the Hateru have been involved with the school since the days of Agasha Kitsuki himself. They use his family to gather intelligence from across Rokugan.

D20 SYSTEM™

Class Skill: Gather Information; other family information is the same as the Kitsuki.

LSR RPG 2E:

Benefit: +1 Intelligence

Schools: Kitsuki Magistrate, Mirumoto Bushi

Even after the War ended, Bayushi's ninja continued to serve the Emperor's interests. As time progressed, the ninja began not only gathering information, but also preventing undesirable situations from arising in the first place. They became more proactive, interfering in the events that they were created to observe. During the reign of Hantei X, events came to a head. The Otomo family, jealous of the Bayushi's influence, saw to it that rumors of the ninja's corrupt and dishonorable deeds reached the ears of the Emperor.

Incensed at the notion of atrocities committed in his name, the Hantei called the daimyo of the Scorpion, Bayushi Hajioki, before him. He commanded the Champion to bring the ninja of the Scorpion before the Emerald Champion for questioning. Hajioki's own brother, Bayushi Aramoro, came forward with many of his followers. All were found guilty of practicing corrupted magic, and were executed. The Hantei considered the matter concluded.

Of course, only a fraction of the Scorpion's ninja network had come forward. The rest simply went into hiding. They divorced themselves from the Scorpion Clan utterly so as to avoid incriminating their brothers by their actions. These rogue ninja splintered into a dozen different secret organizations, joined the Kolat, or formed bandit groups. In the meantime, the Scorpion have quietly rebuilt their ninja orders. After all, the Hantei never rescinded his original command — the Scorpion must continue to "watch."

THE SESAI NINJA FAMILY

The Phoenix Clan, while obviously renowned for its formidable magic, is not known for military might. Centuries ago, a formidable warrior named Shiba Sesai served as a yojimbo to the Elemental Masters. In his travels, he realized that the Isawa, whom the Shiba had sworn to protect, were at constant risk from those jealous of their power. Should anything befall the Isawa, the Shiba would be defenseless against the superior military might of the other Great Clans.

Sesai began training his children, nephews, and nieces to protect the Isawa at all costs, even at the cost of the Shiba's honor. In the years since, his descendants have established a tradition of serving the Isawa by preemptively eliminating threats to their power. The Council of Masters and the Shiba daimyo have no knowledge of the Sesai or their activities.

D20 SYSTEM:

Move Silently; other family information is the same as the Shiba.

LSR RPG 2E:

Benefit: +1 Agility

Schools: Shiba Bushi, Shiba Yojimbo

Some renegade ninja came to follow one of Aramoro's comrades, a ninja known as Goju. Goju was a troubled soul, long plagued by terrible dreams in which the entire world was consumed by shadow. Though he did not realize it at the time, these dreams were in fact the seductive touch of the Lying Darkness, an entity which saw much potential in the fledgling ninja cults and wished to convert them to its own service. After being cast out of the Scorpion, Goju succumbed to the power offered by the Darkness, becoming the first of its minions. In time, Goju came to have difficulty differentiating himself from the Shadow. The two were one; both had always existed, and always would exist.

Another of the first organizations that followed the practices peasants ascribed to ninja was, oddly enough, a tiny subset of the peaceful Ide family. When Shinjo led the Ki-Rin out of Rokugan, she left a small number of her followers behind to oversee their lands. Ide, a wise and gentle man, had a falling out with some of the leaders of the band Shinjo left behind, however, and was leery of what might take place while the Ki-Rin were abroad. After the Ki-Rin left Rokugan, Ide sent a small number of his followers back to the Empire and ordered them to remain hidden and gather information on the other clans so that when Shinjo's people returned, they would know all that had happened in their absence.

The followers of Ide did as they were instructed and remained hidden from the Empire at large, even from their kinsmen who eventually became the Fox Clan. In fact, while the Unicorn historians have been able to establish that the sect was active in the Ki-Rin provinces for some time after the clan's departure, there is no trace of their existence after the Lion took those same provinces as their own. If the group still exists, then their current location, operation, and agenda are unknown.

Although these groups were the first of the ninja, they were by no means the only ones. Virtually every clan and family embraced the use of stealth and deception as time progressed, though few could rival the proficiency and success of those who came before them. In time, the widely-dismissed legend of the ninja became a very real aspect of the Empire.

ONE THOUSAND YEARS OF PEACE

The centuries between the Day of Thunder and the onset of the Clan War were hardly peaceful. The war between the Crab and the Crane over the secession of the Yasuki family early in the history of the Empire established a precedent for centuries of small wars and border skirmishes. It was a beneficial period for covert activities, for minor wars between the clans and the diversion of their attention to the battlefields made it much simpler to move through the shadows unseen.

The agendas of individual ninja factions during this time period were easier to pursue. When the attention of the clans is focused on one another and the petty grudges between them, then stealth is not considered as often. Ironically, two of the most honorable clans in the Empire, the Crane and Lion, were consistently the victims of various opposed ninja factions. The Otomo and Scorpion were particularly effective in this regard, and in fact this period of history is widely regarded as the heyday of the Scorpion's covert branches.

THE SCORPION CLAN COUP

Perhaps the single largest example of the effectiveness of stealth and deception, the failed Scorpion coup in 1125 was the largest ninja undertaking in the Empire's history. Scorpion Champion Bayushi Shoji made great use of his ninja operatives in securing Otosan Uchi. Hundreds of disguised Scorpion secreted themselves throughout the city, poised to strike on command. When the signal came, the Scorpion ninja acted as one and seized control of the largest city in Rokugan within a few hours. Thousands died upon their blades. The Empire shook at their prowess.

Ultimately, it could not last. The united armies of the Great Clans were far too powerful, and the Scorpion Clan was crushed utterly. To all other ninja factions in Rokugan, it was simply a reminder of their most sacred belief: to be discovered is to have failed.

The final irony of the Scorpion coup is that the Empire believed the Scorpion ninja to have been killed, but the true ninja among them were the ones who escaped the purge. Bayushi Aramoro — a ninja ironically named after the original ninja brother of the Scorpion Champion — not only survived, but acquired the prestigious position of Empress Kachiko's bodyguard.

THE CLAN WAR

The Clan War was a tumultuous period in Rokugan's history, perhaps the greatest conflict the Empire has ever seen or will see again. With the clans plunged into chaos, the ninja factions were free to pursue whatever ends they wished with little thought of repercussions. The Scorpion ninja who survived their clan's purge exacted a terrible vengeance on those who wronged them. The Kolat attempted to thwart both the Lying Darkness and the descendants of the Kami who ruled the Great Clans. Many smaller factions, such as the Kaeru family of the City of the Rich Frog and the Scales of the Carp ronin, desperately tried to secure their own power bases and ride out the storm.

Times of war can often cause normally prohibited practices to seem far more acceptable. The dire state of the Empire during the Clan War caused many clans to re-evaluate exactly to what extent dishonorable practices could be allowed. Assassination was a legitimate concern for many daimyo during the war, and it was generally considered beneficial to have protectors who were familiar with the more unconventional practices of would-be assassins. The Crane and Scorpion clans assigned bodyguards trained in the arts of stealth and assassination to some of their closest allies. Those allies never suspected that their own bodyguards were far more dangerous than any potential assassins.

The coronation of Toturi as the Emperor of Rokugan at the culmination of the Clan War was a boon for many ninja factions. The Black Lion's army of ronin had grown throughout the war, and had come to contain many plants from the different groups in the event that Toturi became a powerful man. Few had dared to hope he might reach the throne itself, but those with a talent for foresight had positioned themselves to have operatives highly placed within the Imperial Guard of Otosan Uchi, an act not possible since the disastrous Scorpion coup some years earlier.

THE WAR AGAINST THE SHADOW

The years following the Clan War were perhaps the most pivotal in all of Rokugan's history for those whom others might call "ninja." By this point, the Lying Darkness (also known as the Shadow) had absorbed many covert groups as well as many prominent samurai as it began to grow in power. The increasing paranoia and incessant fighting among the clans during this time period made it more dangerous for the various ninja factions. Any group drawing attention to itself risked becoming the target of the Shadow's lust to unmake the world, and many were absorbed as time progressed.

Strangely enough, the ninja of the Kolat were among the most active during this period, dedicated as that group was to the Shadow's destruction. Kolat agents worked feverishly to lead the clans to the knowledge they required to understand their foe while simultaneously avoiding detection.

During the march of the united clans to Voltturnum, various ninja factions allied themselves with the clan armies in the interest of the Empire's continued survival. The samurai of the clans, of course, did not realize who these nameless wave men who joined them were, nor did they associate them with the occasional glimpses of black-clad assassins cutting down oni and shadow-spawn with ruthless efficiency. As horrible as the losses the armies suffered during their march were, they could have been far worse if not for the harassment of the enemy by different groups of covert operatives.



At the end of this war, the Lying Darkness was defeated, its position in the universe usurped by the Shadow Dragon. The Goju and Ninube families became independent from the Darkness once more, though the scattered few who survived found themselves alone in the Shadowlands. (These events, as well as the fate of the Goju, are explained in more detail in Chapter Three.)

THE WAR OF SPIRITS

The War of Spirits was a tumultuous time for the ninja factions of Rokugan. Following the Battle at Oblivion's Gate and the destruction of the Lying Darkness, they withdrew to rebuild and recoup their losses, only to find that some of their number had returned from the spirit realms alongside the armies of Hantei XVI. Leery of influence from outside sources, the groups almost universally rejected the return of these former members, violently in many cases. Even as the Empire as a whole was plunged into yet another war, the ninja of Rokugan fought their own war in the shadows... against their own kind.

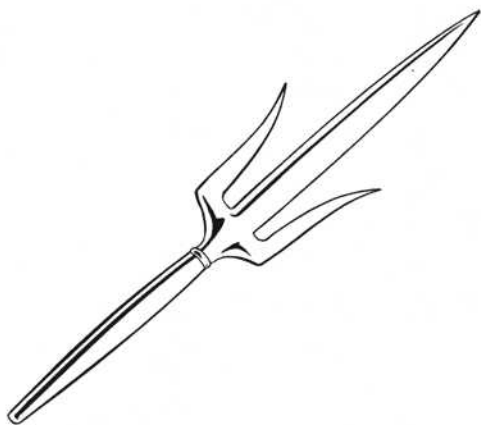
It was the Kolat once again who were most active during this era. Ironically, they came to the aid of the Empire once more. The return of one with the blood of the Kami to the throne of Rokugan was anathema to that group's core beliefs, and they were ruthless in their harassment of the Steel Chrysanthemum's forces.

THE FOUR WINDS ERA

In modern Rokugan, the status of ninja has come strangely full circle. Once again, they are thought of as largely myth rather than reality, as many believe their kind was purged from the Empire with the death of the Lying Darkness. Of course, reports of such activities are less likely to be taken as mere peasant superstition since the Shadow was exposed and destroyed, and in fact such reports are more likely to be investigated by Imperial magistrates given the knowledge that some of the Shadow's former minions are still at large.

The Scorpion Clan and the Kolat continue to retain the most active ninja factions, though those long-standing groups that avoided detection by the Lying Darkness continue their operations as they have for centuries. Even as war threatens to envelop the Empire once more, the attention of the clans is drawn toward the field of battle and away from the shadows in their own homes.

The night belongs to the ninja once more.



NINJA AND THE EMPIRE

"The ninja? A myth, I would hope. Otherwise, I would be ashamed of what manner of filth the children of gods can become."

— Asako Misao

Everyone has heard of ninja: stalking assassins, creatures of foul magic, or craven madmen driven to insanity by the weight of dark secrets. There are perhaps as many myths and ideas about what ninja are as there are actual ninja in the Empire. Depending on where you were raised, who you associate with, and what manner of truth you seek, ninja could be a child's story, a supernatural threat to the security of all Rokugan, or half of your own blood kin.

THE CRAB

As would be expected, the Crab pay little heed to wild stories of shadowy assassins leaping from rooftop to rooftop and spitting little darts out of tubes and whatnot; their everyday life is strange enough without such tales. The Crab value strength, not deception (with the notable exception of the Hiruma). Among the Crab, there are few vivid tales of ninja, though most involve open mockery of the Scorpion Clan. It is a rare Crab that can honestly claim to have seen a ninja.

THE CRANE

The whole idea of ninja is completely abhorrent to the Crane. Ninja are honorless assassins, and make a mockery of the civilized art of the blade. The Crane take a personal dislike to the ninja as well — it is not unheard of for a cunning Doji to meet a mysterious death shortly after undoing the plot of a Scorpion diplomat. Many Crane dismiss the very idea of ninja as superstition; after all, was the Darkness not defeated by the glorious and powerful heroes of the Empire a generation ago?

As far as ninja within the clan are concerned, calling a Daidoji "ninja" is suicidal. Even trying to compare their ambush tactics and guerrilla warfare to ninja is dangerous. The Daidoji would certainly never stoop as low as to employ assassination as a political tool.

THE DRAGON

Of course, the Dragon know nearly everything there is to know about the history of the ninja, how the ninja have developed over time, and what the true relations between ninja, the Lying Darkness, and the Scorpion are. While the Kitsuki are regarded as knowledgeable ninja-hunters within the clan (outsiders tend to see the Kitsuki as eccentric geniuses when the topic of ninja comes up), the truth is that they're working on minute details of the bigger picture. The Mirumoto, Togashi, and Tamori families do not employ ninja in any large scale, nor do they find the arts of the shadow assassins worth their time.

To the Kitsuki, however, there is no real harm in studying the enemy in great detail, perhaps enough detail that one could conceivably learn how to beat the ninja at their own game. Though it is hardly common, it is not unheard of for a Kitsuki to adopt the skills and techniques of a ninja to better understand their opponent.

THE KOGA NINJA FAMILY

During the early days of the Empire, before the advent of the Emerald Magistrates, peasants were sometimes terribly abused by the samurai who oversaw their taxation. In the village of Koga, the overseer was particularly cruel. His excesses were borne in silence, but when he defiled the village hetman's daughter, several of the village men attacked and slew him while he was drunk. When other samurai came, the villagers blamed the death on mysterious shadow warriors who struck in the night.

Since that time, the village of Koga has been destroyed, lost during the Clan War. The so-called Koga ninja, however, had long since abandoned the village as the base of their operations. They have spread throughout Rokugan, protecting the lower classes from the predations of the samurai class. Ironically, many of the worst offenders in this respect are ronin, whom the Koga can infiltrate easily.

D20 SYSTEM™

Favored Class: Ninja
Starting Honor: 1
Class Skill: Bluff
Starting Outfit: Masterwork ninja-to, seven masterwork shuriken

LSR RPG 2E:

Benefit: +1 Awareness
Schools: Any ronin otokodate

THE LION

Oddly, the Lion have a mixed outlook on the ninja. While the clan as a whole shuns the whole idea, many Akodo and Ikoma leaders understand the value of a well-trained spy in time of war. Sun Tao's and Akodo's treatises on warfare encourage the use of such agents. However, the idea of assassination, poison, and sabotage on a grand scale is utterly repulsive to the Lion. Like many clans, the Lion see ninja largely as a myth and rumor sometimes substantiated by the more dangerous factions of the Scorpion Clan. Guards who attempt to blame their shortcomings on the wiles of ninja find their pleas falling on deaf ears.

Perhaps the closest the Lion come to having ninja in their own ranks are the Spymasters of the Ikoma, and the occasional specialized scout trained by the Akodo or Ikoma. The Matsu have nothing to do with any sort of stealth or subterfuge (though they gladly make use of information obtained by Ikoma agents) and the Kitsu tend to keep themselves removed from the field of battle.

THE MANTIS

The Mantis consider ninja to be somewhat misunderstood. Why are they so much worse than bushi, or even shugenja? Like the others, the ninja has his duty to perform, and he can be a valuable retainer to a wise daimyo. The Mantis do not bother to ask themselves if ninja are real, since many of their own sailors and smugglers are as adept as any Shosuro assassin. If anything, the myths of ninja should raise caution, not be ignored. Awareness of ninja makes people paranoid, and both legitimate traders and pirates among the Mantis hate dealing with paranoid people.

The ninja of the Mantis aren't assassins as often they are specialists. The ninja of the Yoritomo tend to focus more on the arts of stealth, guile, and sabotage than true assassination. Of course, in their role as mercenaries the Mantis have a good handful of silent killers among their ranks as well.

THE PHOENIX

The Phoenix are unsure what exactly to think of reports of ninja. As scholars, they understand such myths always have some kernel of truth, and they certainly recall the terrible dangers that rocked the Empire during the War Against the Shadow. However, the alleged acts of many ninja are far beyond the realm of magic as the Phoenix understand it, which makes the tales somewhat hard to swallow. Add to this the fact that the greatest hero of the Phoenix, Master of Fire Isawa Hochiu, was the one responsible for destroying Goju Adorai, and one comes to understand the Phoenix clan's reluctance to pay heed to wild tales of demon-ninja. For the most part, the Phoenix relegate the idea of ninja to the realm of other peasant fancies.

While the Phoenix can claim almost no ninja within their ranks, they have earned the special ire of ninja throughout the Empire. Phoenix magic is one of the most powerful forces in Rokugan, and a ninja trained to avoid the arrows and swords of bushi can find himself utterly helpless as the kami visit their wrath upon him. The Goju family in particular have a great desire for vengeance against the Phoenix, to repay Hochiu's defeat of Goju Adorai.

THE SCORPION

Ninja? Do you mean assassins, butei, saboteurs, or Tejjina? The leaders of the Scorpion are not only aware that ninja exist in Rokugan, they have several varieties at their disposal. The Scorpion Clan is perhaps the only clan in the Empire to make everyday use of ninja, right down to using them as messengers, bodyguards, and occasionally even magistrates. Of course, even within the Clan of Secrets few know the entire story, and many Scorpion do not know that ninja are real. Of course, the Scorpion who truly and deeply believes ninja are completely fictional is very rare indeed.

Since they see themselves as the "original ninja," the Scorpion tend to be jealous of any other power group that makes use of ninja. Scorpion ninja are completely authorized to dispatch competing orders.

THE UNICORN

Perhaps the most curious thing about the Unicorn is that, despite their reputation for fierceness in battle, their intentional distance from much of Rokugani culture often leads to a strange innocence regarding matters other clans take for granted. For example, many among the Moto wonder: why do so many despise ninja? Certainly the Lying Darkness was a force to be shunned, but there is nothing inherently evil in caution. Sabotage and espionage have their place in battle — if the enemy is foolish enough to succumb to such tactics then he does not deserve to triumph. While Unicorn do not go to any great effort to train ninja, their scouts are trained to take advantage of any opportunities presented by a foolish enemy. However, even the Unicorn draw the line at poison and assassination. Despite the influence of gaijin culture, Unicorn sense of honor is still strong enough to resist rationalizing such actions.

NINJA IN SERVICE

"You told me to stop the Lion, my lord. I stopped them. Do you truly want the details?"

— Daidoji Uji, in conference with Doji Satsume shortly before his promotion to Daidoji family daimyo.

Even the most noble and honorable clans contain members who serve in the aspect of ninja in one way or another, although vanishingly few consider themselves ninja. Unlike ninja unaffiliated with a clan (who often work for the highest bidder), clan ninja are usually as loyal and devoted to their lord as any samurai. This section describes those members of the clans whose duties and training most resemble the path of the ninja (and thus would be most likely to have levels of the ninja character class in the d20 system).

Among the Crab, the Hiruma are the most like ninja. They are stalkers and shadow-assassins, though they almost seldom turn their skills against non-Tainted foes. The Hiruma practice their skills openly, and are not harassed for their reliance upon techniques usually considered dishonorable. Their targets, after all, are the ancient foes of the Empire within the Shadowlands.

In the Crane Clan, the Daidoji family is amply populated with ninja. This is primarily due to their famed guerrilla tactics. Daidoji are willing to sacrifice their honor in order to further the goals and needs of the Crane Clan, and their clan respects them for it. Rarely do the Daidoji resort to assassination, though they have been known to secure camouflaged archery positions and snipe officers from a distance during large battles.

The arts of stealth are rare but not unknown among the Dragon. As the Dragon are a clan of surprises, it is perhaps no surprise that the two most unlikely families tend to migrate (rarely) to the ways of stealth and trickery — the Hitomi and the Kitsuki. The kikage zumi of the Hitomi family often practice the arts of stealth and dishonorable combat to better serve the mysterious commands of their Celestial mistress. Shunned and feared by most of the Empire, the rare kikage zumi who wanders from Dragon lands often finds it necessary to perform a silent escape. The Kitsuki family, long-time foes of ninja, have found that an enemy is more easily understood by practicing his ways. Though they would never employ poison and assassination for their own ends, many Kitsuki have such skills and have been called upon to use them in hunting ninja.

To the Lion, deception in warfare has ancestral approval — Akodo and Sun Tao both heartily approve of deceptive tactics, though most Lion are hesitant to extend this to personal deception through the use of assassins and saboteurs. However, scouts or spies trained in the arts of stealth are quite popular among the Lion. The Lion do not hesitate to make use of these agents in peacetime, most often as a means of mapping out an enemy's defenses in case of war. The Ikoma are particularly adept at such endeavors, a fact that many attribute to the legacy of the first Ikoma, Akodo's personal spymaster. It should be noted that most Lion do not consider the use of scouts and spies in peacetime dishonorable — the role of their clan is that of the Emperor's army. The Emperor's soldiers must be prepared for any attack, even one from within.

THE WINDS OF THE STORM NINJA FAMILY

United not by blood but by philosophy, the group known as the Winds of the Storm is a sect of the Yoritomo family unfailingly loyal to their new champion, Yoritomo Kitao. These men and women have served with her since long before Aramasu's death, and they are loyal to her unto death.

Kitao deploys the Winds to perform unsavory errands for her throughout the Empire. She has recently sent the majority of them all across Rokugan in search of some mysterious artifact or individual. Her motivations remain a mystery.

D20 SYSTEM™

Class Skill: Spot, other family information is the same as the Yoritomo.

Benefit: You gain Know the School as a bonus feat (even if you do not meet the normal prerequisite), but with special restrictions. This feat applies only to those who have trained in your own dojo.

LSR 276 2E:

Benefit: +1 Reflexes

Schools: Tsuruchi Archer, Yoritomo Bushi

The clan of the Mantis has always preferred raw pragmatism to bushido, and their recent ascension to the role of a Great Clan has only encouraged this outlook. The skills of the ninja are not uncommon in the Mantis, though such individuals are always watched carefully for signs of betrayal. Mantis who display talent with stealth and subtlety often serve as the clan's emissaries. The Mantis understand that Rokugani customs are not to be openly ignored, and go to great lengths to ensure their more dishonorable actions are concealed, or at least not traceable to any Mantis of great importance.

The Phoenix have never had much need for such skills as a ninja would possess; the power of the kami pervades their every action. What need does a clan have for a spy when their members can scry upon events hundreds of miles away? Those with the abilities of a ninja among the Phoenix serve in the capacity of military scouts and guerrilla soldiers among the Shiba. As Shiba soldiers often find themselves outnumbered against the armies of the other clans, they must seek whatever advantages they can. Though not as talented as the Daidoji, the Shiba are often full of surprises.

The most famous ninja are of course found within the only clan that (occasionally) openly admits to training ninja — the Scorpion. Assassins, spies, saboteurs, and shadow warriors: the Scorpion use every nuance of the ninja's shady reputation to their advantage. Though after the War Against the Shadow, the Scorpion "revealed" the fact that they had trained ninja since their founding, this truth had seldom been in any doubt. Likewise, few competent daimyo truly believe the Scorpion's claims that they have ceased to sponsor the training of such dishonorable agents.

Those who can be called "ninja" within the ranks of the Unicorn fill the roles of scouts and ambush warriors. The Unicorn are far less hesitant than most clans to embrace unconventional tactics. The greatest number of Unicorn spies, saboteurs, and scouts are drawn from the ranks of the Shinjo family — a family that is currently considered "dirty" even by its own clan. The Unicorn frown strongly upon the concepts of poison and assassination, but are willing to employ them when left with no other option. After centuries of dealing with the deadly Assassin's Guild of Medinaat-al-Salaam, the Moto know exactly how efficient such tactics can be.

CUSTOMS OF THE NINJA

"Without some form of honor as a guide, men become wild dogs. Of course, those who follow bushido are just well-trained dogs."

— Tsuruchi Okame, Tsuruchi bounty hunter

THE THREE OATHS

Though ninja tend to be secretive, their ancient dojo are as rich in tradition as any other Rokugani institution. The orders of ninja, especially those found among the Scorpion and Kolat, have extremely detailed and regimented traditions dating back centuries. Though these traditions vary greatly from group to group, a few elements remain constant.

Those who defy the laws of the Empire walk a careful path. Someone who breaks the law on his own cannot last long in a society built upon the graces of order and custom — an order and custom that has no place for people like the ninja. They must combine in groups, most often under the protection and employ of a daimyo.

Though their names and colors may be different, the various secret orders who practice the arts of stealth and assassination face similar difficulties without imposing some form of order upon their membership. Because of this, the tradition of the Three Oaths began long ago with the Scorpion. All ninja who serve a master understand these oaths and obey them as a matter of survival.

Of course, these Oaths are not a written document. This code is an unwritten oath that the Scorpion ninja created, and which spread to other orders of ninja who wished to be as successful as they were. In some cases, the oaths were developed spontaneously by independent groups, as the wisdom they represent is hardly unique to the Scorpion.

THE FIRST OATH: SECRECY

It should go without saying that the profession of the ninja is one best left unknown to the Empire at large. Rumor and superstition paint ninja as corrupt and evil spawn of the Shadowlands, tricksters from the dark path of the Lying Darkness, and honorless dogs who would slit your throat for nothing more than a handful of koku.

These rumors are an immense help to the "common" ninja, inspiring fear and awe that can be used to his advantage. Any attempt to contest or dispel these beliefs is both futile and counter-productive, not to mention foolish. Someone trying to convince others that "perhaps ninja really aren't so bad after

all" will be viewed with amusement at best and possibly dismissed as a complete madman (and may be hunted by other ninja seeking a grisly public example to reinforce their fearsome image).

A ninja is expected to have a public face to cover his less-than-honorable activities. The alternative is to remain separate from the public entirely (a drastic measure taken by some independent orders and the Lotus Sect of the Kolat). Ninja tend to be either extremely noteworthy in their public persona or completely obscure. No one would bother to accuse some nameless, faceless Ikoma samurai of underhanded deeds when there are plenty of more logical suspects with known motivations. By the same token, investigators consider the least likely person to be a ninja to be someone who seems constantly busy and involved with countless activities (which can be quietly passed off to trusted lesser functionaries when the ninja needs to ply his trade).

Secrecy often extends to members of a ninja's own clan, who must never know what the ninja does in his "spare time" or what the "routine trip to the Yasuki province" involves. For many ninja, this is probably the hardest of the Oaths to maintain. Though a Daidoji saboteur is used to deceiving his enemies, lying to his friends is a distasteful task. More frequently, such ninja avoid the truth rather than lying outright. The Daidoji family are notoriously evasive when discussing the details of their exploits with others. Some Crane have come to call people who talk in such a manner "iron-tongued," after the Daidoji's "Iron Crane" reputation.

Secrecy is critical for the survival of any ninja organization. These groups thrive on anonymity and must frequently commit terrible crimes. Most field-operative ninja are told only what they must know to complete a mission successfully, and know little that could threaten the rest of the order. In addition, many ninja dojo train their students to be highly resistant to torture. Some even equip their students with doses of poison hidden in their teeth, hair, or in other places captors are unlikely to search. These provide an easy means of suicide if escape is impossible and the secrets of the dojo are in danger of exposure. Like samurai, ninja are trained not to fear death and most will gladly sacrifice themselves for their brethren.

THE SECOND OATH: LOYALTY

For a ninja brotherhood to persist for more than a generation, loyalty to one's fellow ninja is essential. Fear and hatred of ninja is deeply ingrained in Rokugani culture; if a ninja cannot rely upon his brethren then he is alone, and truly doomed. Ninja sensei enforce a sense of loyalty in their students even more harshly than many samurai sensei. The ninja know that in the shadowy, immoral world in which they dwell it is easy to lose sight of what is truly important. A ninja must be intensely focused and loyal if he and his brethren are to survive.

Ninja are also expected to be unquestionably loyal to their lords. In the case of clan ninja, this means that the ninja serves the family or clan daimyo to the utmost of his abilities. In many cases this applies even if that person is unaware of the ninja's existence. Some ninja would argue that their honor is more severely tested than a samurai's, for a ninja is willing to set aside his own honor and glory to protect his lord's interests.

A ninja's activities must remain utterly secret. The betrayal of a single ninja can ruin entire families. The knowledge that a daimyo of any status employed the services of a ninja (directly or indirectly) is a serious crime indeed. Commissioning an assassination is the same as committing a murder. Using spies against any member of the Imperial Family — even a lowly Miya herald — is an act of treason! For these reasons, the loyalty of a ninja to his lord is critical, perhaps even more critical than the loyalty of a samurai.

A ninja's loyalty is equal parts fealty and necessity. More often than not, a ninja in service is as honestly loyal to his superior as a bushi or shugenja, albeit far less honorable. Some daimyo maintain secret orders of ninja for generations, hiding the order away in a forgotten vassal family. Perhaps hundreds of years ago, the lord's ancestor came to employ the ninja's great-great-great-great grandfather, and the arrangement has passed down the generations like any other oath of fealty.

The more practical side of this is that if you have been trained as a ninja, you must serve the one who trained you. How would you find another to serve? A daimyo is far more willing to entertain the notion of inducting a new bushi or shugenja within his ranks — not so for ninja. How does one offer a daimyo his services as a ninja without risking his life? Why would a daimyo want a ninja who was not trustworthy enough to serve his original lord? A ninja who cannot be trusted is a dead ninja, pure and simple.

With this in mind, ninja are generally no less or more loyal to their lord than any of his other retainers. In this respect, and probably this respect only, ninja are most like any other given character in Rokugan. They simply have more to lose than most others.

THE THIRD OATH: DUTY

Like a bushi, a ninja is defined by his duty. Unlike a samurai, a ninja's duty brands him a criminal in the eyes of the Empire. The ninja must place an extraordinary amount of faith in the importance of his duty, ignoring the opinions of others and trusting that his actions are for the best.

Some would say that ninja cannot understand honor, that without a code of bushido to guide and define their actions they are nothing more than uncontrolled animals. This can be true, on occasion; some ninja orders (such as the Goju) are incredibly dangerous. However, most ninja orders exist for a specific reason. They know and understand honor, but they set it aside for the good of their lord. They make the ultimate sacrifice, abandoning everything a samurai cherishes for the good of the one they serve.

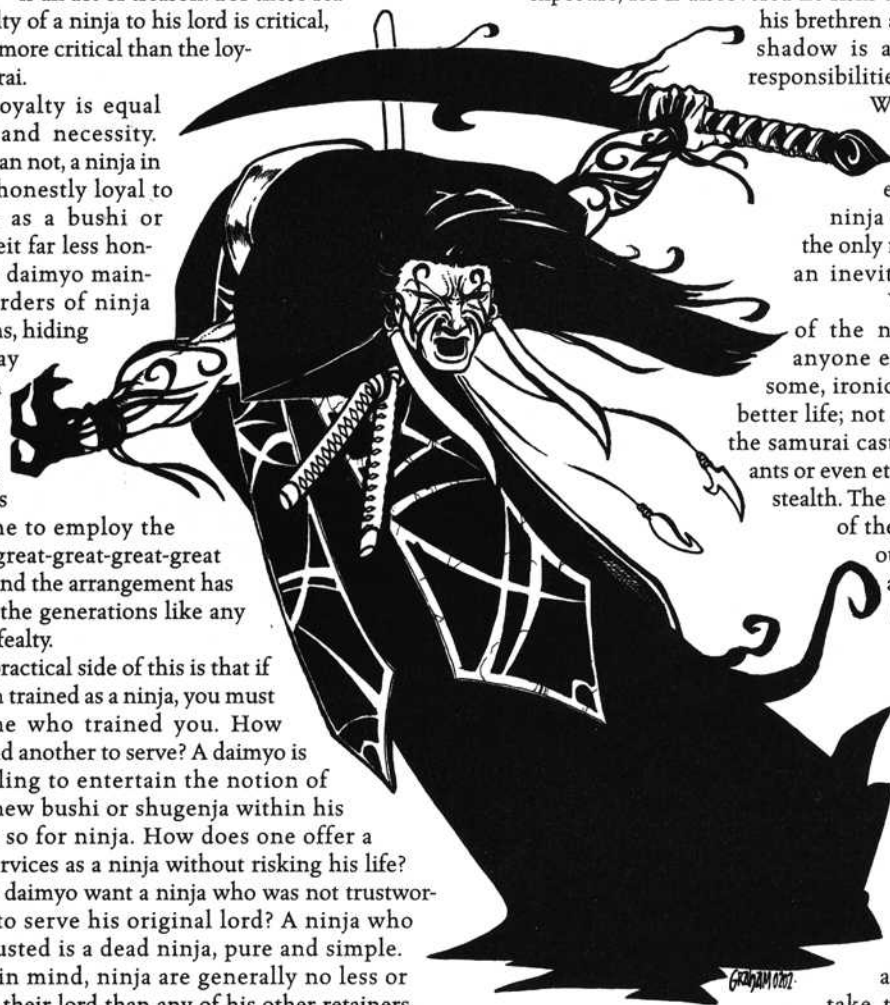
A ninja's dedication to his duty often causes conflict with those outside his clan. Ninja do not make friends and allies easily; the mission is always foremost. Since a ninja's mission often involves dishonorable acts such as espionage, assassination, sabotage, or theft, the ninja seldom risks trusting those outside his order. A ninja must fulfill his mission without exposure, for if discovered he risks terrible retribution upon his brethren and his lord. The path of shadow is a lonely one, and the responsibilities of the ninja are great.

While the bushi knows that a great reward in Yomi awaits him at the end of his journey, the ninja knows at all times that the only reward that awaits him is an inevitable honorless death.

With the terrible weight of the ninja's duty, why does anyone ever become ninja? For some, ironically, it is a chance for a better life; not all ninja are member of the samurai caste. Some ninja are peasants or even eta who display a talent for stealth. The freedom and excitement of the assassin's life certainly outweigh the prospects of a career of farming or dung shoveling.

For other ninja, it is a matter of tradition — the Shosuro and Bayushi family have bloodlines of ninja that extend back for centuries, and take as much pride in their shadow arts as any samurai in his combat skills. For others, the way of the ninja is not a matter of ambition, or pride; some

take to the shadows for no other reason than someone must.



APPRENTICESHIP

Due to the need for secrecy, most ninja orders are very small. Generally, new students are only inducted if a member dies. How new students are chosen varies depending on the dojo. Some, like the Scorpion dojo, follow family lines as proud as any samurai. The children of ninja are raised as ninja, and take up the ninja-to to honor the memory of their ancestors. Others, like the Kolat, have operatives whose sole purpose is to keep an eye open for prospective students. Vagrant children with a talent for theft are likely to catch their eye — they have a knack for survival, no one will miss them, and they often come to regard the dojo as a surrogate family.

There is no formalized gempukku ceremony for ninja. Ninja of the samurai caste, of course, still undergo gempukku, but this has more to do with their social status than their role as a ninja. Instead, the true induction into the order is the

ninja's first mission. During training, young ninja are sometimes allowed to accompany more experienced agents on scouting missions, but they never participate. It is the ninja's first mission that truly gains him equality and acceptance within the order. Either he fails and dies, or he succeeds and becomes a full ninja.

TRAINING

The majority of ninja orders place a heavy emphasis on training. Most ninja dojo have an extensive training area featuring obstacle courses, target dummies, and occasionally even complex reproductions of the actual quarters of important daimyo so that operatives can practice missions well in advance. In contrast with a samurai, ninja have greater periods of inactivity (the lord doesn't always need someone robbed or assassinated), so maintaining one's skills is critical. A single mistake while on a mission might not only cost the ninja his life, but expose the existence of his entire dojo. Those who are unable to perform adequately in training are removed from active missions. Such ninja either aid the sensei in instruction or simply guard the dojo.

WEAPONS

The typical ninja does not regard his weapons with the reverence samurai afford them. A ninja-to is not the repository of the ninja's soul; it is simply a tool for killing. Ninja tend to be more flexible in their choice of weapons, using whatever is best for the mission at hand and mastering a wide variety of weapons.

Favorite ninja weapons are the shuriken (used mostly as a distraction or a vector for poison than a true killing instrument), the ninja-to (ninja sword), and the manriki (weighted chain). Mastery of the manriki is highly regarded among many ninja orders, as it requires some amount of skill. Ninja have devised many bizarre and ingenious variations of the manriki, replacing the weighted ends with various different killing implements. Some of the more bizarre variations (described later in this book) seem as much an exercise in intimidation as an effort to create an effective killing weapon.

RETIREMENT

"One cannot hang from the ceiling forever."

— Shosuro Chian, Master of the Order of Tengen

As spies, honorless assassins, and generally unsavory characters, many wonder if the option of a peaceful retirement is completely lost to the ninja. Of course, the hardest part of this cycle in a ninja's life is actually living long enough to come to the choice — Have I grown useless to my clan? Can I serve no longer? Like bushi and shugenja, eventually there comes a point where the ninja may have lived through a thousand battles, but the flesh begins to fail.

Many ninja do not even bother to contemplate this choice. After spending their lives as murderers, contemplation of the Tao is not an option. Such ninja usually keep serving the clan as advisors and yojimbo to low-risk charges, fading away into obscurity. Naturally, after the exciting life of a ninja this is not the end most wish for.

Not all ninja are resistant to the idea of joining a monastery. Some ninja, in fact, are very spiritual. The life of a retired monk can hold a sense of great completion and fulfillment. In some cases, it becomes a release from the life they led before that they may have never wanted to begin with. Either way, the process of leaving the clan and joining the monastery for a ninja is quite similar to that of a bushi or shugenja. Of course, a retired ninja must be careful to keep the secrets of his order. Some orders may be so resistant to the idea of a ninja joining a rival group (even a peaceful group like the Brotherhood) that they seek to kill their former brother. The leader of the order may even do so by sending the elderly ninja on a mission that seems simple, but is in truth so difficult that there is no hope for survival. A ninja who realizes he is in such a position is advised to use all of his skills to vanish and never return.

Should permission be granted, the ninja's lord arranges for a false history to be presented to the monks. Though most orders of the Brotherhood of Shinsei would gladly accept a repentant ninja into their ranks, the ninja would not want to risk exposing the dojo. Freed from his life of servitude, the ninja may now explore the mysteries of the Tao and enlightenment.

In other cases, the act of retirement becomes part of a larger ruse. Now a figure of the enlightened and beneficent Brotherhood of Shinsei, the ninja has a flawless cover. All the ninja has to do is be in the right place at the right time, and suddenly the ninja finds his target coming to the shrine to pray. In other cases, this cover also allows the ninja to become privy to information that he would otherwise not hear. Important men always keep one or two religious figures nearby, and are comfortable speaking about sensitive matters when only the monks are with them. Monks are excellent listeners.

Without exception, a retired ninja maintains a much closer link to his former associates than a bushi or shugenja. The bonds forged between master and ninja are those not only of duty, but of secrecy and loyalty as well. Wise daimyo keep a constant eye on those who still live and hold their deepest secrets.

ROLES OF THE NINJA

"Just as there are many hues of light, there are many degrees of shadow."

— Mamoru

Ninja are highly trained specialists, experts in the art of infiltration, invisibility, and combat. Though the average ninja is a capable killer, not all ninja are assassins. There are a number of different roles that a ninja can fulfill. The following section describes several of these roles in detail, as well as how they might fit within a player character party.

SPY

The original ninja were created by a single command from the Hantei: "Watch." This established the first and most important role of the ninja — the spy. An agent with the skill to slip behind enemy lines, learn the enemy's secrets, and escape unnoticed is an extremely valuable retainer. There are many more ninja spies than any other sort of ninja. Espionage is a fine way to utilize a ninja's unique skills, and is both less risky and less dishonorable than assassination.

The legendary ronin general Sun Tao praised the use of spies in warfare; when used discreetly they can end a war before the death toll on either side becomes too high. However, the general also urged caution when employing such agents, as spies are inherently untrustworthy. (In some translations of the *Book of Sun Tao*, he seems to condone killing the spy once his work is done. Most Lion scholars believe that this is an inaccurate translation, and the great general would never condone such a horrible act.)

To some degree all clans use spies. Of course, some clans would not publicly admit such a thing, and almost none of them would ever call their spies "ninja." Spies are found most frequently among the Ikoma, Daidoji, and Bayushi families.

Skills Required: Obviously, stealth and observation skills are important for the ninja spy. Many are masters of disguise, allowing them to walk unnoticed in the open among their quarry. The most valued ninja spies have photographic memories, allowing them to recall large amounts of detail regarding enemy intelligence without risking exposure by writing anything down.

Ninja Spy as a PC: A ninja spy in a player character party is most likely in disguise, charged to keep tabs upon an NPC with whom the party has close contact. Alternately, the ninja may be spying on another member of the party itself. Perhaps the ninja's duty is to ascertain his target's true loyalties, or to simply monitor his progress (this could combine well with the ninja guardian role, described later).

If the ninja spy is discovered by his fellow party members, problems may arise. If the spy's target is a suspicious NPC, the party may approve of the spy's activity and continue as before. If the target is a fellow party member, they spy may be in for some very rough (but potentially very interesting) times.

ASSASSIN

To many, the term "ninja" is synonymous with assassin. Though the talents of the ninja are supremely suited for stealthy and efficient killing, ninja assassins are relatively rare compared to the number of ninja spies. The idea of quietly murdering one's enemy is so anathema to the code of bushido that only the most dishonorable or most desperate daimyo employ them.

Ninja assassins have nevertheless become the subject of many a legend. The reason for this is simple. A ninja spy might live his entire career in obscurity; his enemies may never realize that their enemy's ability to predict their every action was the result of a well placed ninja. An assassin always leaves a victim behind. Even those assassins clever or talented enough to make their handiwork appear to stem from natural causes may rouse panic and suspicion with the death of an important enemy.

An added danger for the ninja assassin is from his own daimyo. An assassin who kills for his lord, no matter how honorable the intent, is still a murderer and his daimyo is an accomplice to that murder. To prevent having to pay the cost for the ninja's crimes, a ninja's daimyo may seek to silence the assassin as well. A daimyo who would stoop to utilizing assassins may think very little of disposing of them when the task is done, so a clever ninja should be cautious when dabbling in this line of work.

None of the great samurai families admit to using assassins. The Shosuro have a number of skilled ninja trained in the art of killing, but this is a carefully defended secret of the Scorpion.

Skills Required: Stealth, strength, and combat prowess are all valuable to an assassin, but perhaps their most underestimated resource is patience. Many ninja have hastened their own demises by striking at a target too soon. The best assassins monitor a target well in advance, memorizing their habits and routines, waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike with maximum efficiency and minimum risk.

Ninja Assassin as a PC: This role is difficult for PC ninja for several reasons. First of all, most samurai or shugenja characters would not willingly associate with an assassin (necessitating that the ninja adopt some sort of disguise). Second, assassins normally have a single objective; once their quarry has been slain, their mission is over (as is their time with the party). In either scenario, an assassin seems to have little long-term potential within a party.

However, there is one possibility for an assassin within a party. Perhaps the object of the campaign is to defeat a powerful villain whom the assassin has (by design or coincidence) been charged with killing. Though the ninja may choose to conceal his true identity from the rest of the party, he may be quite eager to ally himself with like-minded individuals. ("The enemy of my enemy is my friend.")

GUARDIAN

Most daimyo have many samurai yojimbo charged with protecting their lord from assassins. However, sometimes it is more useful to have unseen defenders. The best defense against the unique talents of a ninja is, of course, another ninja. Those trained to watch and kill from the shadows are also suited to defending against enemy assassins.

Guardian ninja shadow their lord invisibly, sometimes allowing it to appear as if their charge is entirely unprotected so that the enemy will show his hand. The most talented ninja guardians are never seen or heard, disposing of threats without even disturbing their charges.

Though only the Crane and Scorpion clans consistently train such guardians, they are hardly the only samurai protected by them. A samurai wise enough to ally himself with the Daidoji or Bayushi family may find himself protected by such guardians, whether or not he knows that they are there...

Skills Required: A ninja guardian must have a sharp eye, ever watchful for an attack. The ninja must also be flexible and even-tempered, ready to respond quickly should his charge unknowingly expose them both to danger. The guardian must be even more subtle than the assassin or the spy, for much of the strength of his position stems from the fact that his enemies are unaware of his existence. Should the guardian be too clumsy and expose himself when disposing of a threat, he only inspires future threats to be more cautious.

Ninja Guardian as a PC: Placing a ninja guardian in a party is simple. Choose a friendly NPC important to the party (or perhaps even another player character) and give the ninja the task of keeping that person alive.

A ninja guardian in a party invites a slew of fascinating role-playing opportunities. Will the guardian attempt to conceal his existence from the party, helping them from afar, or will he reveal himself to them? How will the rest of the party react to his presence? This sort of ninja tends to be somewhat more honorable than most (making him easier to work into a mixed party of samurai) but his predilection for subterfuge may still grate on more honorable characters.

THIEF

With their talent in infiltrating hostile areas, ninjas make extremely talented thieves. Few ninjas focus entirely on theft; most ninja thieves are simply spies in the right place at the right time. Ninja thieves are no common burglars — their objectives are generally more important than mere wealth. A ninja thief may be commissioned to steal an enemy's battle plans, shame an enemy family by stealing a valued heirloom, or even to recover a stolen item.

Ninja thieves are common among the Goju family. They frequently dispatch operatives to steal holy relics and other valuables from the Great Clans, often for no reason other than it amuses the Goju to do so.

Skills Required: The requirements to be a ninja thief are generally the same as that of the spy, though thieves are more adept at picking locks and concealing stolen items.

Ninja Thief as a PC: Like the assassin, a thief is difficult to insinuate into a party. Using a recommendation similar to that listed under the assassin is possible, with the ninja's ultimate objective being an object in the main villain's possession rather than the villain himself. Perhaps in time, the ninja may come to sympathize with the other player characters and choose to continue assisting them even if he should accomplish his objective earlier than expected.

SABOTEUR

As with the thief, few ninjas devote their entire careers to sabotage. Usually, a saboteur is a spy or thief presented with the proper opportunity. Some ninja orders (including one among the Bayushi family) train their students extensively in the arts of sabotage. These ninjas are experts in engineering and pyrotechnics as well as stealth. A team of such ninjas can rapidly disable an enemy's fortifications and escape before the damage is discovered.

Skills Required: As the spy, though knowledge of engineering and explosives is frequently useful.

Ninja Saboteur as a PC: These individuals are generally better as enemies of the party. A ninja saboteur tends not to stay in one place for long (sooner or later, the enemy catches on that something is amiss). An alternate possibility is for a ninja saboteur to be assigned a mission that leads him to cross paths with the party on their first adventure. Once this first meeting is established, the GM and players may be able to devise some other reason for the ninja to remain with the party.

NEW MECHANICS

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

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

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

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

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

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

TORITAKA TATSUNE

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

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

NEW MOVES FOR OLD NINJA

Though the schools of the Great Clans are each impressive in their own right, and a character who attains five ranks in a particular school is certainly a foe to be reckoned with, these schools illustrate only the most traditional teachings of the clans. This book introduces a number of options that can add more depth to ninja characters, allowing two students of the same school to turn out quite a bit different from one another at equivalent levels of Insight. Among these options are Single-Technique Schools, New Paths, and Kata.

SINGLE-TECHNIQUE SCHOOLS

These were originally introduced as "Ronin Bands" in *Way of the Wolf* but there is no reason why these schools should be limited to ronin characters. These techniques represent special fighting styles devised by legendary individuals and their followers, or the secret techniques of small bands of independent bushi.

Unlike normal techniques, Single-Technique Schools have entry requirements (such as minimum Rings, Skills, or Honor) and cost a set amount of points (either Character Points or Experience Points) to learn the technique. Once these conditions are met, the character may learn the technique. Characters who wish to learn these techniques do not require the Multiple School or Different School Advantages so long as they meet the technique's requirements.

CREATING A NEW TECHNIQUE

Inevitably, player characters are going to wish to create their own techniques. Though new techniques should be rare, those who wish to create their own Single-Technique Schools should adhere to the following guidelines.

- The character should have Insight Rank two Ranks higher than the Rank of the Technique to be created.
- The primary skill that the technique will use (Kenjutsu, Courtier, etc.) should be at least 7.
- The character must have the Great Destiny Advantage. This sort of thing doesn't happen every day.
- The character must spend a minimum of one year perfecting the technique. No adventuring. Just practice and study in peaceful surroundings.
- The character must be finished with his current school, or must purchase the Multiple Schools advantage.

CREATING A NEW SCHOOL

If a character has accumulated three or more Single Techniques that share three or more similar requirements, these techniques are similar enough that they can be used to create the groundwork of a new School. If two techniques both require a certain attribute, but one has stricter (but non-conflicting) requirements — one requires 2 Honor or higher and the other requires 3 Honor or higher — these techniques are considered similar.

A character who wishes to create a new school must have the Instruction skill at 6 or higher, and must possess the Great Destiny Advantage. He must also spend 50 Experience Points, at which time he is sufficiently inspired that he learns how to combine the disparate techniques into a single style. The GM then chooses a Trait bonus he feels is appropriate for that school (a Trait that is required by one of the Single Techniques is usually a good choice). The school's creator does not gain this Trait bonus, though new characters who attend the school will.

Together, the GM and the school's creator should also determine a starting curriculum of seven skills that all newly created Rank 1 students will learn. Any skills formerly required by the Single Techniques are logical choices, and a skill that is not known by the school's creator cannot be chosen. With the GM's permission, the school's creator may choose for the new school to have six starting skills, with one skill starting at 2, rather than seven starting skills.

The Ranks of the new school's techniques are determined in order of their former point cost, from the lowest to the highest, no matter what order the teacher originally learned them in. For example, consider the Ronin Kuso. He has learned the following techniques: Righteous Fury (7 points), Samurai's Fury (5 points), and Child of Water (15 points), all of which have sufficiently similar requirements to be combined into a school. The resulting school features Samurai's Fury as its Rank 1 Technique, Righteous Fury as Rank 2, and Child of Water as Rank 3.

Characters who attend the new school need spend no points or meet requirements to learn its techniques. However, those who already possess techniques in other schools must purchase the Multiple Schools Advantage as usual to take techniques from the new school, or to branch out to new schools.

NEW PATHS

New Paths are just what their name implies: new ways of combining training styles to achieve a character more diversely talented than a student of a single school. New Paths have a Path of Entry requirement, which states what school and School Rank (not Insight Rank) a character must be in order to be accepted in the Path's dojo. For example, the Hiruma Stalkers New Path only accepts students who have achieved the second rank of the Hiruma Scout School.

Similarly, New Paths have a Path of Egress. This specifies what schools the student may attend after his training in the New Path has been completed and he is ready to advance once more. Usually, this means that the founder of the New Path was originally a student of the mentioned school, and arranged for his students to study there upon their graduation. Note that as long as the character follows both the Path of Entry and the Path of Egress, there is no cost incurred, as the Multiple Schools advantage is not required.

Example: Hiruma Senshi is a Rank 2 Hiruma Scout. He wishes to join the Hiruma Stalkers and is granted leave by his sensei. Upon completion of his studies, Senshi requests permission to study with the Crab Berserkers, one path suggested by his instructors among the Stalkers. Upon achieving Insight Rank 4, Senshi's School Rank will be as follows: Hiruma Scout 2, Hiruma Stalker 1, Crab Berserker 1. This is an acceptable course of study, and Senshi did not need to purchase Multiple Schools at any point.

NEW PATH NOTE

In the d20 System, most new Paths translate as five-level prestige classes.

KATA

Kata are special practice maneuvers. They are typically used as training exercises or a focus for meditation, though some have practical applications in combat as well. Though many of these kata limit one's ability to react spontaneously, they can be very useful in the proper situation.

Learning a new kata requires as much time and energy as learning a new Technique or feat; the GM is encouraged to use his own judgment in determining how long it will take a character to master a new kata.

All kata have a preparation time. If this preparation time is interrupted for longer than a minute, the preparation is ruined and must begin again. Kata have a limited duration, but a kata can be extended for another full duration by spending three Void Points. Kata that end instantly after an attack roll or other stimulus may not be extended this way. A kata's preparation time and duration are the same in both systems.

As kata require very precise, choreographed movements, a character may only be affected by one kata at any given time, unless noted otherwise in the description of a particular kata. There is no limit to the number of kata a character may know.

If a character wishes to cancel a kata currently affecting him, he may do so with a moment's thought, but cannot regain the kata's benefits without undergoing the preparation ritual once more. A character who is rendered unconscious loses all effects of any kata he was using at the time.

In the d20 System™ kata are a unique new ability exclusive to Rokugan. Though they may require certain feats or class abilities before they can be learned, they are not feats nor class abilities, and can be learned by any character who meets the requirements. Learning a new kata requires a significant expenditure of spiritual energy; all kata have a cost (in experience) that must be paid when the kata is learned.

In the L5R RPG 2E System all kata have a Rank requirement. Kata with a School Rank requirement require a level of familiarity with a particular fighting style before they can be learned. Kata with an Insight Rank requirement require no particular fighting discipline, only a certain level of competence to learn the maneuver. These kata can be learned by any character.

Kata also have a cost (in Experience or Character Points) to learn the kata.

(The rules for kata in this book supersede those presented in *Time of the Void*.)

NEW KATA

School Rank: For the purposes of acquiring these kata, all schools detailed in this book are considered “ninja dojo,” as are the following schools and paths: Akodo Forward Sentry, Hiruma Scout, Shinjo Scout, Shosuro Butei, Shosuro Shinobi, Toritaka Bushi, Usagi Bushi.

BLACKENED CARESS

Preparation Time: 40 minutes

Duration: 120 minutes

Without question the deadliest secret of the ninja, this kata is the fabled death touch that peasants often ascribe to the mythical ninja they fear lurk in every shadow. In truth, this kata is possessed by only a handful of the most sinister, depraved individuals throughout Rokugan.

Requirements: Ninja level 14+, must be chaotic, Improved Unarmed Strike, Kiss of the Lotus, Stunning Fist

XP Cost: 1,250

Effect: For the duration of this kata, you may hold nothing in your hands without immediately canceling the effect. You must land a successful unarmed attack against an opponent for this kata to take effect (the strike must land on bare skin). A successful strike requires the opponent to make an

immediate Fortitude save (DC = 10 + your ninja level) or die instantly. The kata ends once an opponent is killed by this effect.

School Rank: Any ninja school 5 (except Ikoma Spymasters, Shinjo Scout, and Usagi Bushi), Insight Rank 6

Cost: 12

Effect: You must make a successful unarmed attack against an opponent to use this kata, and you must touch his flesh. Holding any item in either hand at any point during the duration of this kata cancels its effects. A successful unarmed strike against an opponent's bare flesh forces him to roll his Earth versus your Insight Rank ×5. If he fails, he is killed immediately.

DWELL IN DARKNESS

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Duration: 120 minutes

This exercise combines an alternating series of careful, slow movements, such as creeping cautiously from one spot to the next, and lightning fast, precise movements, such as jumping from a single concealed perch among the trees to another such spot. Upon conclusion of the kata, the ninja has centered himself on moving silently, regardless of his surroundings. This causes a reduction in the strength of the ninja's strikes, as they are focusing on silence rather than strength.

Requirements: Ninja or Rogue level 1+, Hide (4 ranks), Move Silently (4 ranks)

XP Cost: 450

Effect: For the duration of the kata, you gain a +4 competence bonus to all Hide and Move Silently checks, although you suffer –2 to damage rolls for all melee attacks.

School Rank: Any ninja school 2

Cost: 3

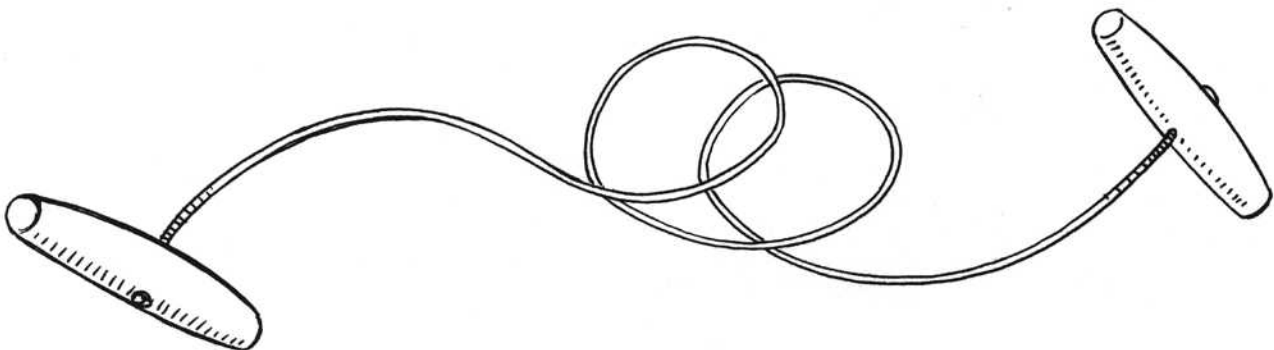
Effect: You roll two extra dice on all Stealth rolls for the duration of the kata. You must subtract 5 from all damage rolls for the duration of the kata.

KISS OF THE LOTUS

Preparation Time: 30 minutes

Duration: 120 minutes

This is one of the more insidious of the common ninja kata. The practitioner conducts a lengthy series of martial arts maneuvers while focusing on anger and other impure emotions. This channels the ninja's negative energy outward so



that a single unarmed strike can temporarily cripple an opponent by disrupting his own energy flow. Rumor has it that this kata was developed by agents of the Kolat to facilitate the kidnapping and replacement of troublesome individuals.

Requirements: Ninja level 3+, Dex 16+, Str 14+, Improved Unarmed Strike

XP Cost: 950

Effect: This kata requires you to use only unarmed attacks; the use of a weapon disrupts the energy flow the kata depends on and instantly cancels the remainder of the duration. You must land a successful unarmed attack on an unarmored portion of your opponent's body (a completely armored opponent would be immune). An opponent who is struck by this attack must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + your Wisdom modifier) or be stunned for one round. If a stunned opponent fails his save against this kata, he is knocked unconscious for one hour. If you take more than ten damage (subdual or actual damage) during the duration of this kata, the kata ends.

School Rank: Any ninja 4

Cost: 5

Effect: This kata requires you to use only unarmed attacks; the use of a weapon disrupts the energy flow the kata depends on and instantly cancels the remainder of the duration. A successful unarmed strike against an opponent (the strike can affect an opponent through clothing, but not armor) results in a serious disruption of that individual's chi. For a period of time equal to your Insight Rank $\times 5$, the opponent suffers Wound penalties as if his Wounds were two ranks higher than they actually are. If this extends an individual's Wound Ranks to Down, Out, or Dead, he is immediately knocked unconscious. The effects last for one hour, and multiple applications are cumulative. If you take more than two ranks of Wounds while using this kata, the kata ends.

POISONED WIND

Preparation Time: 20 minutes

Duration: 120 minutes

This kata takes the form of a period of meditation followed by a series of athletic maneuvers that gradually increase in pace until the ninja is moving with incredible speed. With the ninja so focused on speed and dexterity, however, he fails to cover himself as well as he normally might.

Requirements: Dex 16+, Tumble (6 ranks)

XP Cost: 750

Effect: For the duration of the kata, you gain a +2 enhancement bonus to your initiative, but suffer a -1 penalty to your AC.

School Rank: Any ninja 2

Cost: 4

Effect: You gain +5 to all initiative rolls for the duration of the kata, but suffer -5 to your TN to Be Hit.

DOJO

All ninja attend a dojo, or school, where they learn the way of the ninja. For some, this dojo may be as simple as a shadowy hut where their father taught them the art of silent killing. For others, this dojo may be an ancient hidden fortress where generations of shadow warriors have learned the arts of shinobi. Where a ninja character received his initial training can greatly color that ninja's abilities as well as his perception of the world. With this in mind, many dojo are introduced in this book. If a player creating a ninja wishes for his character to attend a particular dojo described in this book, he may do so with the GM's approval. Attending a major dojo bestows a number of benefits. Individual benefits vary from school to school.

SOCIAL BENEFITS

Social benefits represent a measure of status gained by your association with a major school. These benefits apply only so long as the student continues to attend the dojo. They represent mannerisms and social contacts that are available to members of the dojo. If a student leaves the dojo on bad terms, certain aspects of these social benefits fade. An intricate knowledge of the customs and practice of an individual dojo is required to emulate these benefits, so the success or failure of an impostor hoping to reap these benefits is left to the discretion of the GM.

All dojo give the following Social Benefit:

BROTHERHOOD OF THE SCHOOL

All members of a dojo are familiar with that dojo's customs of greeting, meditation, and exercise. Two fellow students introduced to one another have little trouble recognizing their mutual training, even if they have never met before, and will be kindly disposed toward one another due to their mutual experiences.

Benefit: You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on all Diplomacy and Sense Motive checks with members of your own dojo, or on Spot checks to recognize a fellow student.

If you leave the school on bad terms, the Diplomacy check bonus becomes a penalty instead.

Benefit: You gain a Free Raise on all Awareness and Perception related rolls against members of your own school.

If you leave the school on bad terms, the Free Raise on Awareness-related rolls fades, and all Awareness-related rolls against members of your former school have their TN increased by 5.

TRAINING BENEFITS

Training benefits represent basic fighting abilities learned by attending the Dojo. These benefits reflect the training regimen of that dojo, and thus do not fade even if the character leaves on bad terms. However, should the character take up study at a new dojo, the practices of that dojo may replace those gained at his former dojo, causing certain training benefits to fade.

KNOW THE SCHOOL

D20 SYSTEM™

Feat: Know the School (All Clans Technique)
You have studied the students of another clan in exquisite detail, and know well how to conquer their techniques.

Prerequisite: Knowledge (appropriate clan or family, 2 ranks)

Benefit: When selected, you must choose a Great Clan or Minor Clan as the focus of this feat. You gain a +1 on all Sense Motive checks, Battle checks, Bluff checks, melee attack rolls and melee damage rolls against members of the chosen clan, and a +1 dodge bonus to your AC against melee attacks from members of the clan.

Special: This feat may be chosen multiple times. Each time, it applies to a different clan.

(This Feat was originally presented in *Rokugan*.)

LSR RPG 2E:

Skill: Know the School

A character with this skill picks one school that he has attended or studied with some regularity. The character may add his rank in this skill to all attack rolls against members of that school, and gains his rank in this skill as a bonus to his TN against any attacks by members of that school that use that school's techniques. This is considered a Bugei skill.

(This skill supersedes the version found in *Way of Shinsei*.)

All dojo give the following Training Benefit:

KNOW THE SCHOOL

You are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your own style.

Benefit: You gain Know the School as a bonus feat (even if you do not meet the normal prerequisite), but with special restrictions. This feat applies only to those who have trained in your own dojo.

Benefit: You gain one free rank in the Know the School skill. (See sidebar.)

Gaining a dojo benefit costs nothing; it's part of your character's background and history. While it may seem that a character who chooses a dojo is getting something for nothing, keep in mind that membership in a secret ninja order is a very serious business. Even after graduation, the eyes of the sensei are watching. A ninja is expected to keep the secrets of the order safe, eliminate his enemies, and serve with unfailing loyalty. A student of a major dojo has much to be proud of, but has even farther to fall, for if such a ninja fails his school he may find his own former brethren hunting for him. In addition, the troubles of his school are his own as well; if another member of the dojo goes rogue, the player character may be called upon to stop him.

SENSEI

If a ninja wishes to learn a new technique, naturally he will turn to his sensei to learn it. So who is his sensei? Though most major dojo have numerous instructors, all have at least one sensei, a master of the school's techniques. Each of the dojo described in this book describes a sensei, a master ninja whose duty it is to instruct the students of that school. It is possible that a particular student may have very little contact with his sensei (some of them have a lot of students to instruct) but a ninja is certainly aware of who his sensei is and will have met him a handful of times. In the case of ninja sensei, these sensei are often the leaders of the order, and may personally review the success of the player character's missions from time to time.

With this in mind, each dojo in this book suggests an NPC for use as a sensei (with the exception of the Kolat chapter, which instead presents information on the Ten Masters). These NPCs can fulfill a variety of different roles in your campaign, from teacher, to benefactor, to villain, depending on the campaign. If your campaign involves an extended siege against Lion attacks deep in Crane lands, sensei Daidoji Mihoko might personally coordinate and supply the party on their missions. In a campaign based in Lion lands, Mihoko may instead be a terrible villain, causing no end of trouble for the party by dispatching Daidoji Harriers to stymie their every move.

Keeping in mind the wildly different roles possible for a sensei given the variety of different campaigns possible in a Rokugani setting, full statistics for sensei are not given. Instead, only a suggestion of character School Rank / character class and level are provided so that you may customize all sensei to suit the needs of your campaign. It is improbable that most sensei NPCs will ever be directly involved in combat, whatever the campaign — and a player character who attacks his sensei deserves whatever he gets — so full statistics are rarely required.

NEW FEATS

"The sensei told me that the greatest Shosuro can walk through walls," Tai said. "Can you teach me?"

Yudoka scowled. "It's an awful lot of trouble," he said. "Finding a door is easier."

CRIPPLING BLOW

You can deliver crippling blows to an unprepared enemy.

Prerequisites: Ninja level 9th+, Void Use.

Effect: When making a sneak attack against a flat-footed target, you may spend two Void Points to inflict one point of temporary Dexterity damage for every die of sneak attack damage you inflict. A successful Fortitude save (DC equal to damage dealt) negates.

DARK GUARDIAN

ANCESTOR: MAMORU

You are guided by the spirit of the ninja who used his talents to guard against others of the ninja's path. He was both reviled and admired by other ninja for his determination, skill, and had a habit of foiling even the most clever adversaries at every turn.

Clan: Any

Prerequisite: Ninja level 1+.

Effect: At the beginning of any combat, select one other creature within 30 feet. So long as you are not flanked or flat-footed, this target is not considered flanked or flat-footed either.

DELAYED SNEAK ATTACK

Via precisely aimed strikes, you can delay the effects of damage so that they are not immediately felt or noticed. This feat is usually used in conjunction with weapons that inflict nearly unnoticeable damage, such as shuriken or blowguns, to allow an assassin time to escape before his deed is noticed.

Prerequisites: Sneak attack damage +5d6 or greater, base attack bonus +9 or greater.

Effect: If you choose to use this feat, the extra damage you inflict with a sneak attack is not inflicted until 3d6 rounds after your attack roll is made.

KILLING BLOW

Your sneak attacks strike with such precision that you can bring even the strongest down with one well-placed blow.

Prerequisites: Crippling Blow, Ninja level 9th+, Void Use.

Effect: When you make a successful sneak attack and deal enough damage to bring your opponent down to 5 hit points or less, your victim dies immediately.

LIGHTNING STEALTH

You are able to move with both speed and stealth.

Prerequisites: Hide (6 ranks), Move Silently (6 ranks), Ninja level 3rd+.

Effect: You can move at up to your normal speed with no penalty to Hide or Move Silently checks. You can run or charge with only a -10 penalty to Hide or Move Silently checks.

Normal: At more than one-half and up to your full speed you suffer a -5 penalty to Hide and Move Silently checks. While running or charging you suffer a -20 penalty to Hide and Move Silently checks.

POISON IMMUNITY

You are immune to a specific poison.

Prerequisite: Poison use class ability.

Effect: Select a specific type of poison. You are completely immune to the effects of this poison. In addition, you receive a +2 competence bonus against all other poisons.

Special: You may take this feat multiple times. Each time it applies to a different type of poison. The competence bonus against other poisons does not stack.

NEEDLE STRIKE

You have studied the vital points of the body in order to strike an unprepared opponent in the most threatening places possible.

Prerequisites: Sneak Attack +2d6, base attack bonus +3 or higher, Intelligence 14+.

Effect: When making a full attack action and sneak attacking an opponent, your critical threat range is doubled. For instance, if you are attacking with an aiguchi (which has a normal threat range of 19-20), the sneak attack scores a critical on 17-20. This effect may only be used with slashing and pierc-

ing weapons. If the critical threat range of your weapon has already been doubled for any reason, this effect causes the total threat range of your weapon to instead be tripled.

SHURIKEN MASTERY

You are skilled at throwing shuriken.

Prerequisite: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (shuriken).

Effect: When throwing three shuriken as a single attack, you may select multiple targets (applying the same attack roll to all three targets, but with a -2 penalty to the roll).

When throwing all three shuriken at a single opponent, each shuriken receives a +1 bonus to damage.

Normal: When throwing three shuriken as a single attack, they must all be targeted at the same opponent.

STRIKE OF THE WOLF

You can topple an opponent with a well placed sneak attack.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus of +1 or higher, sneak attack class ability.

Effect: Instead of inflicting extra damage with a sneak attack, you may attempt to topple your opponent instead. Roll your sneak attack damage dice normally. Instead of inflicting damage, your opponent must make a Reflex save (DC 10 + your Dexterity modifier + the number of sneak attack damage dice you would have added to the damage roll). If he fails this save, your opponent falls prone.

An opponent suffers a -4 penalty to his saving throw per size category smaller than you, gains a +4 bonus to his saving throw per size category larger than you, and receives a +4 bonus if he has four legs or is otherwise unusually stable.

Special: This effect is applicable to opponents that would normally not be damaged by a sneak attack due to immunity to critical hits, but not against opponents who are immune to sneak attack due to the uncanny dodge class ability.

STAB AT THE FACE

"Such pretty eyes..." — Bayushi Sunetra

Prerequisites: Weapon Focus (any slashing or piercing weapon), base attack bonus +7 or higher, sneak attack +4d6, Void Use.

Effect: If you make a critical hit against an opponent, you may spend a Void Point to leave him staggered (partial actions only) for a number of rounds equal to the critical multiplier of your weapon (a typical tanto, for example, would stun the target for two rounds). You must use a weapon with which you have taken the Weapon Focus feat to use this feat.

SCHOOL AND DOJO

There is a slight distinction that should be kept in mind between the terms "school" and "dojo." A "school" is a philosophy or style of combat, while a dojo is a physical place where that style is taught. Multiple dojo may share teach the same school, or a single dojo may teach multiple school styles. A character who has attended "the Bayushi Bushi School" may have attended any of a dozen different Scorpion dojo, and a student of "the Dojo of the Red Crane" might be a student of the Bayushi Bushi School or the Bayushi Saboteur School.

STEALTHY CASTING

Your spells can be cast in a subtle way, possibly escaping notice entirely.

Prerequisites: Dexterity 14+, Hide (6 ranks), Move Silently (6 ranks), Spellcraft (6 ranks).

Effect: You may choose to use this feat when casting a spell to avoid others noticing you casting it. You make a Spellcraft check opposed by the Spot or Listen check made by any who might notice you taking such an action. If the spell you are casting has no verbal component, Listen checks may not be used against your Spellcraft check. If the spell you are casting has no somatic component, Spot checks made against your Spellcraft check have a -5 circumstance penalty. If the spell you are casting has neither a somatic or material component, Spot checks may not be used against your Spellcraft check. If you are reading the spell from a scroll (or ofuda), Spot checks made against your Spellcraft check gain a +5 circumstance bonus. Other circumstantial factors may prevent the use of this feat completely, at the DM's option.

STUNNING BLADE

You have learned how to surprise your opponents in a way that keeps them off-balance long enough for you to press your attack.

Prerequisite: Ninja level 1st+.

Effect: When you make a successful sneak attack against your opponent, you may choose to have your sneak attack damage die total set the DC for a Fortitude save. If the victim fails this save, he is stunned for 1d4 rounds. If you choose to use this feat, your sneak attack deals no extra damage.

TWIST THE KNIFE

You can inflict deadly blows to a target's vital organs using a knife.

Prerequisites: Sneak attack +1d6, Weapon Focus (dagger).

Effect: When using a tanto, aiguchi, or dagger (effectively the same sort of weapon) against a humanoid (or monstrous humanoid) opponent, your critical threat range is increased by 1 and the weapon inflicts 1d6 damage instead of 1d4.

VANISH

You can quickly disappear from view.

Prerequisite: Ninja level 6th+.

Effect: You can make a Bluff check to create a diversion to hide as a move-equivalent action. Further, you may perform this action simultaneously with a movement (the two actions count as a single move-equivalent action).

Normal: Creating a diversion to hide is a standard action.

VIGILANT REST IKIHO FEAT

You can fall into an altered state of meditation that allows for complete alertness.

Prerequisites: Inkyo level 1st+, Monk, or Ninja.

Effect: You may make Spot and Listen checks without penalty while asleep, and can awaken as a free action when any living creature moves within five feet.



UNTOUCHABLE

You are adept at dodging missile weapons and other ranged attacks.

Prerequisites: Ninja level 12th+, Tumble (15 ranks).

Benefit: So long as you are not helpless, you are always considered to have total concealment against ranged attacks. Opponents suffer a 50% miss chance when attempting to strike you with such attacks.

NEW LANGUAGE

SIGN LANGUAGE

You can communicate nonverbally with others who know this language. This language is considered a Bonus Language for Daidoji or Kolat characters (who know their own private variants of sign language). Knowledge of Sign Language gives you a +4 circumstance bonus to all Innuendo checks to transmit a message, or to receive a message from someone else who knows sign language.

NEW ADVANTAGES

ANCESTOR: MAMORU

[5 POINTS]

You are guided by the spirit of Mamoru, who was known to honorable men as a vigilant and unequalled guard against the foul play of ninja. You may designate one ally within ten feet that you are guarding, and so long as you are free to act, nothing may attack him as if he were unaware. If someone attempts to ambush you or your charge, you are immediately aware before the attack begins.

LIAR

[4 POINTS]

You are gifted in the arts of deception and creating falsehoods with your words and actions. You gain a Free Raise on your Acting or Sincerity rolls while attempting to deceive another.

NINJA HERITAGE

[4 POINTS]

One, or both, of your parents was an accomplished ninja in the service of your lord and his family. All members of your family (or clan, where appropriate) treat you as if you had one higher Glory rank, as long as they understand your lineage and its worth. You begin the game with one ninja weapon or piece of equipment described in Appendix One.

SIGN LANGUAGE

[2 POINTS, 1 POINT FOR DAIDOJI HARRIERS]

You know a secret language of gestures and body movements. You can use this to communicate silently with others who know the language, if they can see you. You may pay an extra point to purchase a secret sign language known only to a specific group, such as the Daidoji Harriers or a specific Kolat sect, so long as you are a member of that group.

UNCOVERED SPY

[5 POINTS]

You have uncovered the identity of a ninja, and have wisely used this information to your advantage. You have hidden testimony of this truth somewhere else (in a hidden envelope, with the confidence of another, etc.), which will be revealed if you "accidentally" die. Because of this, you are able to call upon favors from both the ninja in question and his compromised daimyo. This is effectively both a Blackmail and Minor Ally advantage rolled into one with a special stipulation — you are dealing with a powerful lord and a ninja who are both constantly attempting to find their way out from under your thumb. Sleep well.

NEW DISADVANTAGES

NINJA HERITAGE

[2 POINTS]

One (or both) of your parents was discovered to be a ninja by the public sometime after your birth. You were allowed to live, though the ninja who sullied your family name was executed. You start the game with a Glory of 0.5. If you roll an Honorable Past result on the Heritage Table, you must roll again. (If you get the same result a second time, you may keep it. Scorpion characters re-roll Dishonorable Past results instead.)

DISHONORED SENSEI

[1 POINTS]

The wise teacher who taught you your ways was dishonored, and then killed when he attempted to reclaim his honor. Your sensei died without honor, and every one of his students is now sneered at by others (who are quick to point out that their dojo would never produce such a failure).



CHAPTER ONE:

THE SCORPION

"I do not understand, sensei," Haikono said quietly, the frustration in his voice barely evident. The young Scorpion tried his best to keep his voice down in the milling scene of the court. His silken mask went a long way toward hiding the complete sense of confusion and anger building up in him.

Next to the younger man, Shosuro Daigo quietly surveyed the room with neutral eyes and a blandly cheerful expression. "What do you not understand, my student?" the older Scorpion asked out of the side of his mouth, never taking his eyes off the movements before him. "Surely if you are still confused about anything, it would reflect poorly on me as a teacher."

Haikono hesitated a moment, unsure if his teacher was putting another meaning in his words or not. The student quickly decided to keep going. "You have begun to give your farewells to the other guests in court, sensei, but we have not done what we have come to do."

Daigo began to lead his student out of the large chamber, and said, "We have given our respects to the daimyo, presented our gifts, and now we will leave." After a pause, he gave Haikono a neutral look, asked, "Have I forgotten something?" and kept walking away.

"Sensei," Haikono hissed quietly, attempting not to sound impertinent but still trying to figure out what was happening, "weren't we... supposed to kill him?"

The old sensei smiled. "Did you not notice that the paint on that netsuke was still wet?" the Daigo asked.

Haikono looked confused. "No poison in that paint could be powerful enough to kill with a touch, and not be noticed by the daimyo's yojimbo..."

"Quite astute," the sensei replied with an impressed nod. "But remember... our esteemed guest bites his nails."

Haikono blinked in awe.

Another moment of silence passed between him, and then the delicate sound of a teacup shattering against a stone floor rang out from the chamber they had just left. Haikono looked back just as the room had grown completely and suddenly silent. The unmistakable sound of a body collapsing to the floor filled the void of silence, followed shortly after by the terrified cry of a woman and the clatter of boots.

The apprentice ninja looked back to his master, who favored him with a pointed look and a raised eyebrow before returning to his walk without a word. "We had best leave now, before things grow... difficult," he said, a satisfied note in his voice.

HIDDEN ROOM DOJO

Classes: Ninja, Rogue, Ninja Spy (Prestige), Shosuro Tejina (Prestige)

Schools: Shosuro Tejina

HISTORY

The shadowy school of the Shosuro Tejina has its roots in two things — the blood of its first students, and the shadows they walked in. When the Lying Darkness revealed its true nature to those Scorpion that thought themselves the masters of the shadows, many within the darker ranks of the clan knew things would have to change.

When the Darkness was defeated at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the lords of the Soshi and Shosuro gathered up and questioned those who had been touched by the Darkness. Those who displayed any erratic behavior or even the vaguest display of Darkness-related abilities were slain. Some non-Scorpion that had been influenced by the Darkness were invited to the Scorpion lands; many died of mysterious causes while visiting the Shosuro. Any who refused the invitation were automatically viewed with suspicion and hunted by the true ninja.

After the last execution took place, the Soshi shugenja who had coordinated the efforts wrote down everything he had witnessed and vanished. The journal of Soshi Kuriname was handed to Yogo Kakatsu, the first sensei of the Hidden Moon Dojo. Though the Darkness had been defeated, what Soshi Kuriname learned could possibly reawaken it. Though Kakatsu, like all Yogo, carried the Yogo curse, he was not considered a threat. His curse manifested early in life, when the shugenja surrendered his wife to the Bayushi after she was found to be supplying the Crane with sensitive Scorpion magical secrets.

Kakatsu and every member of his small school faked their deaths within the next year, covering themselves in an impenetrable cloak of anonymity and confusion. There is no physical dojo for the school; the number of students is small enough to maintain complete mobility of both the teachers and pupils.

TEJINA

It is a humorous coincidence that the name of the Scorpion's shadow-shugenja is shared by a group of completely unrelated shugenja. The Tejina of the Shiba family are a band of illusionists and performers, completely unrelated to the Shosuro (first described in *Winter Court 3*). The strange coincidence relates to the meaning of the word Tejina: "illusion."

The Shosuro Tejina could not be less concerned that another group uses their name. The Shiba are utterly unaware of the Shosuro Tejina's existence.

TRADITION

Above all, students of the Hidden Moon Dojo are ninja, not traditional shugenja as the Empire sees them. Though they harness the power of kami as shugenja do, they also call upon the power of Nothing, that which once fueled the Lying Darkness. The Hidden Moon ninja are very cautious, always using the kami as go-betweens when manipulating the power of Nothing. The kami not only create a buffer preventing the ninja from becoming corrupted by Nothing, but also serve as an early warning sign, letting the ninja know when he has attempted to draw too much power too quickly. If a Hidden Moon ninja attempts to cast a spell and the kami do not heed his call, he knows that they have just saved his soul.

The Hidden Moon is an invitation-only dojo. As a rule, the only ones outside the school itself that know of its existence are the Clan Champion, the daimyo of the major families of the Scorpion, and the Kuroiban (the Yogo family's anti-maho shugenja, described in the forthcoming *Way of the Shugenja*). Emperor Toturi I was aware of the Hidden Moon Dojo to a degree — Bayushi Yojiro informed his Emperor of the experi-

ments the Shosuro and Soshi were conducting within Scorpion lands, and Toturi reluctantly agreed to the necessity of their studies.

After the masters of the Hidden Moon Dojo approach a prospective student, he is assisted in faking his own death within three months' time and disappears into their ranks for a full year of training. The ninja of the Hidden Moon are expected to be the perfect spies and assassins for the clan, and can have only one loyalty — to their master. Family, friends, and lovers are all removed from the Shosuro Tejina's life.

TRAINING

There is no such thing as someone who is born for the teachings of the Hidden Moon Dojo. The arts of stealth, mysticism, and magic learned in the school are almost completely unnatural, and even the most talented at stealth and subterfuge find themselves surprised at the innovations of Yogo Kakatsu. Only one constant has been found in those able to draw safely upon the power of Nothing — indomitable will. All else can be taught, but willpower must be sought.

In the first year, students are taught advanced techniques of silence and stalking. They study the history of the Lying Darkness and what it was. Mimicry is taught, though not intensively, and the students are encouraged to pursue an art other than the way of the ninja that they can pour themselves into. All of this is to help prevent the influence of Nothing taking hold on the students — creativity focuses the force of one's personality and subverts the very concept of Nothing within one's soul.

The Shosuro Tejina's training focuses on esoteric practices and the way of Tejina, the magic of shadow. Students study the flow of blood and chi throughout the body, so that a skilled Shosuro Tejina can use his own chi as a weapon against weaknesses within the chi of his victim. The magic taught by the masters of the Hidden Moon is not as powerful as that of a typical shugenja, but is effective nonetheless. Tejina teaches the manipulation of other people's minds, both directly (with hypnotism) and indirectly (with illusion).

There is no single ritual of gempukku for students of this dojo. After the initial year of training, worthy students are sent out as agents of the Scorpion. Less-adept students remain at the Hidden Moon (even a secret dojo must obtain its cooks and servants somewhere).

SENSEI

The Hidden Moon Dojo has had only one sensei before the current headmaster, Tjeki. Naturally, the master sensei of this dojo is chosen from the ranks of the students, never from the outside. Kakatsu was a man of unsurpassed cunning and ingenuity. When Kakatsu passed, his position fell to his son, Yogo Tjeki, who has carried on with admirable ability.

YOGO TJEKI

Master Sensei of the Hidden Moon Dojo

[Ninja 6/Shosuro Tejina 10; Shosuro Tejina 5]

Being the son of a legend is never easy, especially in a society where talent and success are considered hereditary. As the only living heir of Yogo Kakatsu, Tjeki has always had greatness expected from him. When he was young, Tjeki understood clearly what the Fortunes had in store for him, and he simply accepted his fate and apprenticed himself to his father's teachings.

Tjeki is a patient and understanding teacher. Many are unsettled by his calm and infinitely impassive nature. The truth is simply that Tjeki's motives are generally exactly what they appear to be. The Yogo sensei has never cared too much for the Scorpion habit of endless plotting and scheming, but allows his duty to take him where it will. He holds no grudges, and thinks only of his responsibility to his clan and the Hidden Moon. Few fear the power of the Yogo Curse consuming Tjeki, for he seems to love nothing.

Rules Notes: Tjeki prefers subterfuge magic, surprise attacks and ambush tactics. His skills, feats, and abilities reflect mobility, a deep understanding of the kami and Shintao, and nearly supernatural stealth. He shares his teachings with any student of the Hidden Moon; if they did not deserve his instruction they would not be there.

SHADOW MAGIC

The greatest of the Scorpion's secrets could imperil the entire Empire. Though the First Goju was defeated and the Lying Darkness unmade at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the power they drew upon still exists. Nothing is a primal force of the universe, and even Hitomi could not remove that balance.

Nothing is no longer the self-aware entity it was when the Empire fought it three decades ago. Though the Shadow Dragon has replaced the Lying Darkness in many ways (see Chapter 3: The Goju) it does not possess the pervasive control of Nothing that the Darkness once did.

The Soshi and the Yogo learned to use the kami to harness the power of Nothing by studying the writings of Soshi Kuriname. Kuriname's findings warned the Scorpion of a boundary that must never be crossed — accessing the deepest parts of Nothing in the way that the Goju once did draws the attention of the Shadow Dragon, a powerful entity that now controls the former Goju. Even the kami cannot protect the Shosuro from such an entity. A Tejina who would draw upon Nothing must be constantly aware of the boundaries he must not cross, and be willing to step away from the power at any time. To this end, the Shosuro Tejina must be strong in spirit and mind. A strong connection to the Void seems to protect a Tejina from the Shadow Dragon's attention.

HIDDEN MOON BENEFITS

Virtually unknown outside of the Soshi, the students of the Hidden Moon Dojo do not enjoy the reputation of their bushi and shugenja brethren. However, such anonymity serves them quite well.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

Though unknown throughout the Empire, the Shosuro Tejina capitalizes on being underestimated.

Benefit: All of your Bluff and Perform checks have a +2 circumstance bonus when made against targets with a higher character level or more Hit Dice.

Benefit: You gain a Free Raise when making a Sincerity or Acting roll against a character with higher Glory.



TRAINING BENEFIT

Students at the Hidden Moon Dojo are taught to find a weakness in their enemies and exploit it without mercy.

Benefit: If a creature attempts to hit you and rolls a natural 1, you gain a +1 insight bonus on your next attack roll against it.

Benefit: Whenever another character makes three or more Raises when attempting to strike you and misses, you gain a Free Raise to attack him the following round.

NOTABLE STUDENTS

SOSHI KUNeko

[Ninja 6/Shosuro Tejina 1; Shosuro Tejina 3]

Kuneko is a relative novice in the ways of Shadow magic, and is perhaps the most reckless student the fledgling Dojo of the Hidden Moon has ever seen. She is brash when she should be cautious and completely disregards the possible dangers she puts her body and soul in with her behavior. Perhaps the only reason she has not been expelled from the school is her amazing talent for the craft, and the masters of the school simply keep her around just to find out how far her power could go.

Kuneko herself remains completely ignorant of her worth to the Yogo and Soshi and is totally unaware how out of line her behavior is. She has been sent on one mission after another as her masters test her, and she is starting to believe herself one of the most valuable agents the Hidden Moon has ever trained. Eventually, however, the sensei of the school will find her limits, and depending on what they find, Kuneko could find her luck quite gone.

Then, the experiment will be at an end.

THE DOJO OF THE RED CRANE

Classes: Rogue, Ninja, Fighter

Schools: Bayushi Saboteur, Bayushi Bushi

HISTORY

Just north of Cherry Blossom Lake in the forest of the Shinomen, one of the largest secrets of the Scorpion Clan quietly trains its students in the way of sabotage and misdirection. Instead of attempting to manipulate rules and honor, these bushi are adept at bringing physical structures crashing down and causing even the most fail-safe battle plains to fall apart like a building of rice paper.

Once a minor school within the much larger Bayushi Bushi Academy, the Dojo of the Red Crane earned its name two hundred years ago when one of the sensei remarked that their students "do to warfare as the Crane have done to the iajutsu duel — force the enemy into an unfair fight." Some time thereafter, when the school was large enough that it needed its own separate dojo, the master sensei of the school remembered this remark and christened the dojo with it.

The location was chosen for many reasons. It was secluded from the prying eyes of the Empire, since few dared to wander into what many thought was a forest haunted by evil spirits of nature. The forest also gave the perfect training ground for improvisation in mass combat, as well as training on guerrilla tactics and explosives (as there was always something to blow up). Finally, the Scorpion knew there was some truth to the myth of malevolent creatures within the forest, and such a setting separated the worthy students from the dead ones.

When the "forest spirits" turned out to be the awakening Naga, the Red Crane Dojo found it difficult to remain within their traditional training grounds and avoided the Naga as much as possible. Soshi and Yogo shugenja were called in to protect the grounds from intruding serpent-men and to create spells of confusion and misdirection to keep them away. So far, the school stands as one of the greatest testaments to Scorpion secrecy, for none outside of the clan know of its location.

During the time of the Clan War and the disappearance of Toturi I, the exiled Scorpion Clan found that the Red Crane Dojo served as a perfect base of operations for those who remained in the Empire. It was during this time that the saboteurs proved their true worth to the clan, and since that time, attendance at the school has nearly doubled. The position of the master sensei of the school has risen from one of negligible influence to one of great power within the clan.

TRADITION

The Dojo of the Red Crane has always kept close ties to both the Bayushi Bushi schools and the Shosuro Ninja Dojo for reasons of practicality. Like the bushi, students of the saboteur academy have their place in warfare, and like the ninja, they are there only to cause chaos and undermine the enemy. To this end, most Red Crane students attend one of these schools for at least a season. This also helps the student understand the capabilities of his cousins, and plan accordingly.

Unlike many in the Empire, the students of the Red Crane Dojo are expected to keep their training confidential, and do nothing to proclaim exactly where they have studied or under whom. Usually, the student behaves as if he were the graduate of one of the Bayushi bushi schools, and acts accordingly in public.

TRAINING

First-year students enter their own private hell once training commences in the spring. Each is handed a white sash to be worn for every session for the first year, and these students are referred to as "uki." The entire purpose of the uki is to act as practice dummies and dead weights as the other students and masters perfect and demonstrate their art. Uki are, for example, forced to walk across mock-up bridges after other students have trapped or sabotaged them in the most inventive ways imaginable. These scenarios are never lethal in themselves, though the history of the school is not altogether free of fatal accidents.

At the start of the next year, the uki hand their sashes to the next year's targets, and their sensei asks them one question — "What have you learned?" It is then that the true training begins. Explosives, architecture, stealth, poisons, and some combat skills are all taught at the school. Eventually, the student is a capable lone agent, able to infiltrate a single building, weaken key defenses, and leave it a ripe target for his comrades. Explosives are part of the curriculum, though such

attention-drawing tactics are to be used only when necessary. The Scorpion would rather that their enemy had no idea their fortifications were about to collapse than see them go up in a brilliant explosion well before the battle begins.

The ritual of the saboteur gempukku is very different from many schools, as it involves only conception and planning. Students are given one of two tasks to perform for their gempukku — the first is to steal a detailed layout of a castle's structure and battle defenses, or create one from a first-hand tour of the building (invited or otherwise). Those who do not get this assignment must take the designs and devise a way to totally nullify any advantage the castle gives its defending forces. These sabotage plans are then reviewed by the masters of the dojo, and students are passed or retained for another year of study as appropriate.

SENSEI

The sensei of the Red Crane dojo is always an accomplished soldier and graduate of the school. The master sensei is promoted from within the school by a meeting among all the sensei of the dojo. As the most analytical of the schools, there is practically no politicking for position or status within the school. The master sensei has always been chosen by a unanimous decision that the council of sensei reaches within a day. Currently, the confident and devious Bayushi Churai heads up the Red Crane Dojo, and has acquitted himself well.

BAYUSHI CHURAI

Master Sensei of the Red Crane Dojo
[Fighter 6/Ninja 10; Bayushi Saboteur 5]

Churai is completely sure he is the most capable master sensei the Dojo of the Red Crane has ever had. He's brilliant, driven, and has studied personally with the Kaiu family, which brings unique insight to siege tactics and castle warfare. When he was chosen from the subordinate sensei to lead the school, he just took it as validation that he was destined for the position.

Of course, there were other reasons for his appointment, not least of which is that the lords of the Scorpion Clan wanted him out of their hair. He is arrogant and selfish, supremely confident of his talent (which is not inconsiderable) and impatient with "lesser men." The masters of the Bayushi blame his time with the Crab for such behavior. The final straw was when he demanded 4,000 koku tribute from the Dragon Clan in the name of their "debt to the Scorpion" after his men saved a minor Dragon patrol from wild zokujin. After being quietly reminded of the true nature and purpose of the Dragon alliance, Churai was shipped off to stay within the walls of the Red Crane Dojo.

Rules Notes: Though he is a master of large-scale warfare and castle warfare, Churai is also a deadly personal combatant. All of his tactics, skills, feats, and abilities rely on pressing an advantage on an opponent from any angle. He would rather completely disable a foe than bring him down by brute force, both of which he is exceptionally good at. He is willing to teach his extraordinary skills to his students, but can be petty or vindictive towards those who challenge his authority.

RED CRANE BENEFITS

Much like their cousins in the Bayushi Courtier Academy, the Bayushi saboteurs are masters of discerning weaknesses and turning them into the Scorpion's gain.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

Bayushi Saboteurs are fond of causing enemies to repeat their mistakes.

Benefit: If another creature makes an opposed Charisma, Intelligence, or Wisdom-based check against you and fails, all such rolls it makes suffer a -2 circumstance penalty for the next hour.

Benefit: If another character makes a contested Intelligence or Awareness roll (or any contested roll that involves a skill based on Intelligence or Awareness) against you and fails, all such rolls that character makes have their TNs raised by 2 for the next hour.

TRAINING BENEFIT

None.

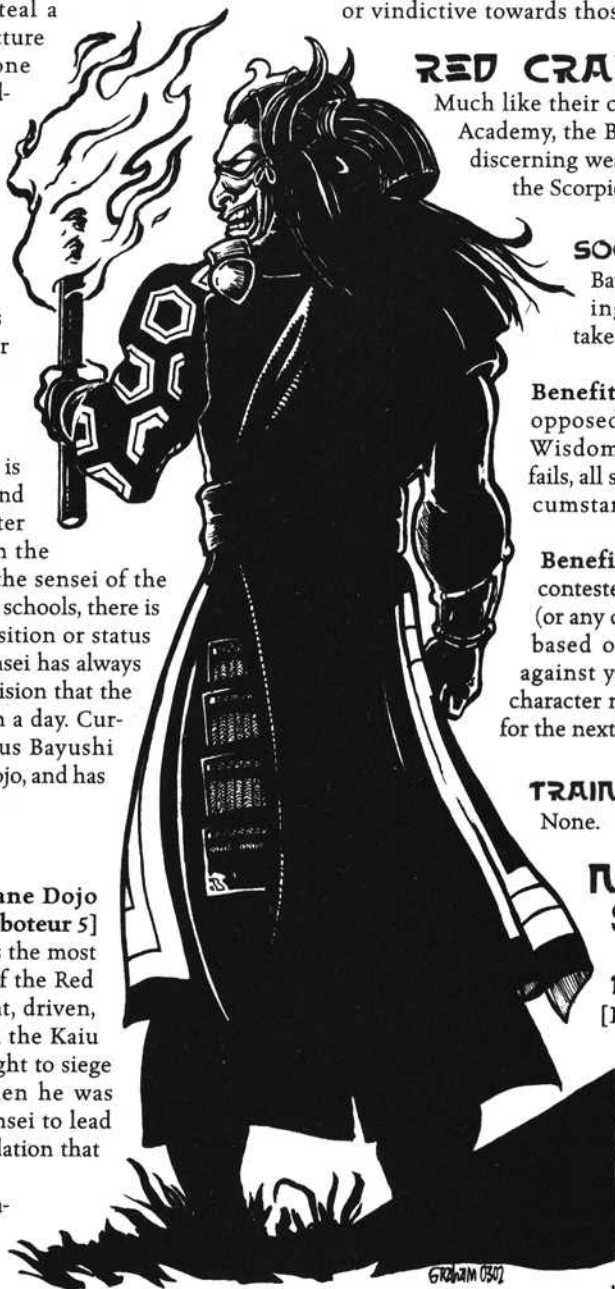
NOTABLE STUDENTS

BAYUSHI TAI

[Fighter 4/Ninja 5; Bayushi Saboteur 3]

Born to a minor vassal family of the Bayushi, Tai's parents were competent but unremarkable veterans of the Scorpion's two exiles. The young ninja was raised on tales of how the entire Empire would destroy the Scorpion if they could, and any misstep by the clan could lead to their end.

Tai is one of the elite of a new generation of Scorpion as the clan now stands strong and powerful once more. They need no longer wait in the shadows, manipulating others to do their dirty work — the Scorpion are once again strong enough to march armies across Rokugan if they so choose. Tai has proven time and again he can perfectly balance subterfuge, guile, and sheer power to put all of his resources to good use. He has recently gotten the attention of Shosuro Yudoka, who has begun to train the talented young man to hunt the Goju. So far, Tai has yet to disappoint his master in any way.



BAYUSHI SUNETRA

[Samurai 8; Bayushi Bushi 2/Folding Leg 1]

If any could be held up as an example of Scorpion beauty, it is the remarkable young bushi Bayushi Sunetra. She is completely cold to those who attempt to woo her, but never bothers to stop suitors from lying down in her path. She uses this where it serves the clan, but for the most part such matters don't interest her at all. Sunetra is a typical Scorpion in that only the great games of court and intrigue matter to her, and she involves herself as much as she can. She realizes that she is hardly the biggest player in the Empire, and takes care not to involve herself in plots that are out of her league.

Though it bores her, Sunetra does not shirk her training with the sword. Her time at court, however, has caught the attention of one of Toturi's children — namely Hantei Naseru. Their mutual attitude toward the politics of the Empire as a great game for their own amusement has made the two allies. Sunetra spends much time in the company of the Anvil now, taking the chance to learn the boundaries of the game from the youngest person ever to master it. Her respect for the Anvil has grown to a level bordering on adoration, and she has begun to wonder if made to choose between loyalty to the clan and loyalty to him which direction she would take.

THE BROTHER'S GIFT DOJO

Classes: Rogue, Ninja, Ninja Spy (Prestige), Shadow Scout (Prestige)

Schools: Shosuro Assassin

HISTORY

The story of Brother's Gift begins with the first Bayushi. When the Kami fell to the earth, Hantei asked a terrible burden of his brother — he must cover his name with dishonor and shame so that he could protect the Empire from within the shadows. Though Bayushi knew this would condemn his followers to scorn so long as there was a Scorpion Clan, he accepted this necessary duty.

From it the ninja were born. Though more often than not, they became the agents of Scorpion vengeance and personal plotting, they were the perfect tools for following Bayushi's path. The greatest of these ninja was a man named Bayushi Aramoro, a legend even during his life. When his cabal was uncovered by agents of Hantei X and accused of employing

maho, he ended his own life (and those of many of his followers) in shame so that the ninja would continue without a perceived connection to the Scorpion.

At the time of the purge, it became clear that the nascent dojo Aramoro had spent his life cultivating would have to move somewhere that no outsiders could find it. The lands of the Shosuro proved ideal, as the ninja school had always had close ties to the family, and the provinces were confusing to outsiders at best. The natural caverns in the Shosuro lands were wonderful for concealment and a useful stage for training.

During the time of the Scorpion's exile, Brother's Gift was an impregnable fortress simply due to the fact that none could ever find the dojo's subterranean training grounds. When the Scorpion were banished to the Burning Sands and the Darkness moved against the Empire in force, the Shosuro and their school became the center of the Scorpion world as it was revealed that Shosuro herself had sold her descendants to the Darkness in exchange for power. Though the school was wiped clean of many of its elders and adepts by the Darkness, the surviving Shosuro have found themselves just as capable without the aid of Nothing.

TRADITION

Though run by the Shosuro family, the Brother's Gift is always under close scrutiny by the leaders of the clan in the Bayushi. The reason for this is twofold. Although the school draws most of its students from the ranks of the Shosuro family, a number of Bayushi also attend the dojo. Also, the Bayushi rely on Shosuro spies and assassins to unfurl many of their plots and schemes. The Bayushi need to be able to trust these agents. To this end, the master sensei of the Shosuro academy constantly reports to the daimyo of the Bayushi, and the position is generally one of endless stress and expectation.

Unlike many in the Empire, the students of the Brother's Gift Dojo are expected to keep their training confidential, and do nothing to proclaim exactly where they have studied or under whom. Usually, the student acts as if he were the graduate of one of the Bayushi bushi schools, and performs accordingly in public.

TRAINING

Perhaps the most harrowing ritual of training in the Empire is the one known as "the Gauntlet," which every aspiring Scorpion ninja must undergo. First year students are expected to perform their tasks with sub-standard tools, and wear only the black robes of the typical ninja. These robes contain no pockets, and the tools a prospective ninja is given are just as likely to break as they are to be of any real use.

TABLE 1-1: THE SHOSURO TEJINA

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells Per Day
						0 1 2 3 4
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	Sneak Attack +1d6	2 - - - -
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3	The Silent Soul	3 0 - - -
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+3		3 1 - - -
4th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Sneak Attack +2d6	3 2 0 - -
5th	+3	+1	+4	+4		3 3 1 - -
6th	+4	+2	+5	+5	Shadows and Air	3 3 1 - -
7th	+5	+2	+5	+5	Sneak Attack +3d6	3 3 2 0 -
8th	+6	+2	+6	+6	An Empty Breeze	3 3 3 1 -
9th	+6	+3	+6	+6	Shadowed Soul	3 3 3 2 -
10th	+7	+3	+7	+7	Sneak Attack +4d6	3 3 3 2 0

TABLE 1-2: SHOSURO TEJINA SPELLS KNOWN

Class	0	1	2	3	4
1st	4	—	—	—	—
2nd	5	2*	—	—	—
3rd	6	3	2*	—	—
4th	6	3	3	—	—
5th	6	4	3	—	—
6th	6	4	4	—	—
7th	6	4	4	2*	—
8th	6	4	4	3	—
9th	6	4	4	3	—
10th	6	4	4	4	2*

* Provided the Shosuro Tejina has sufficient Charisma to have a bonus spell of this level.

The secret of the Gauntlet is that the targets of the young ninja are in on the training. All targets are Scorpion agents in disguise, instructed to greet the ninja with varying levels of alertness. Captured ninja are believed to be killed. (In reality they are severely beaten, then removed from that class and given stricter training.) The secret is maintained by those who have failed and those who have graduated, both out of shame (who wants to admit they died on a mission?) and to maintain the quality of the Gauntlet training.

After the first year, the student is given the true tools of his art. The tools are given to another first year student, burned in a personal ritual of advancement, or sometimes kept as a reminder of the pain of the Gauntlet.

Gempukku is never a ritualized matter in the Brother's Gift dojo. As the ninja becomes more able, he is assigned more important and difficult assignments. A student is never free of the influence of the Shosuro teachers until he becomes one, and he can expect that every failure and success is being watched quite closely.

SENSEI

The sensei of the Shosuro dojo are chosen with a delicate balance in mind. The ninja school does not wish to remove its most seasoned agents from the field, but it cannot allow inexperienced men and women to control the future of the clan. As such, the sensei of the school are generally worthy volunteers. Ninja who live long enough to grow old generally opt for this position, as do those who find that they no longer have the stomach for such work. The Shosuro understand that their way is not one many people can practice for long without regret, and welcome to the ranks of sensei those who understand that their real-world usefulness is at an end. Such people nevertheless do not advance far within the leadership of the school.

SHOSURO ARORU

Master sensei of the Brother's Gift Dojo

[Ninja 15; Shosuro Ninja 5]

The child of two Scorpion who were taken by the Lying Darkness, few believed that the Shosuro masters would allow Aroru to enter the ninja dojo, much less eventually rise to become its master. However, he has proven time and again that his loyalties lie unwaveringly with his clan and family. He was raised by his Bayushi uncle, who understood the boy's talent early on and used his influence to get the young Scorpion into the Shosuro dojo.

Aroru never doubted he would one day become the leader of the Shosuro dojo. He simply sees himself as the most experienced and able among them all, to a point that he would serve the clan better in training others. He is a quiet man, speaking very rarely and only to those who work directly under him or to his superiors. Very few of the students of the Brother's Gift dojo ever meet their shadowy master, as he works almost exclusively through his subordinate sense.

Rules Notes: Aroru is a very "typical" sort of ninja, putting emphasis on speed over strength and guile over confrontation. He is a fierce combatant when he chooses to stand and fight, and has no mercy or hesitation when he has chosen to kill someone. His skills, traits, abilities, and feats all reflect a man who is trained to perform only one task — get close to an enemy by any means and kill him with precision and skill.

BROTHER'S GIFT BENEFITS

Students of the Brother's Gift are known for two things among the Scorpion: lethality and reliability. They are trained so that a single one of them can make a complete difference in the plans of the Scorpion.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

A ninja trained by the Shosuro walks with death in the shadows every day. The attempts of the mundane to intimidate them simply do not impress them.

Benefit: A ninja from Brother's Gift Dojo gains a +2 training bonus to all saves against fear and intimidation.

Benefit: A ninja from Brother's Gift Dojo adds his School Rank to all rolls when attempting to resist Fear or intimidation.

TRAINING BENEFIT

None.

NOTABLE STUDENTS

SHOSURO KOTOMURI

[Ninja 5; Shosuro Ninja 2]

Kotomuri's life would probably have been less interesting if he hadn't been such a good student. The unassuming and humble Shosuro brought a great amount of talent to the dojo of the Shosuro, and his ease with the lessons eventually provoked the wrath of a less able (but far more vengeful) peer. Kotomuri failed a mission sabotaged by his rival, Kirei. For his failure, Kotomuri was given the position of yojimbo to a minor Kitsuki diplomat in honor of the Scorpion's alliance with the Dragon.

So far, Kotomuri has accepted his failure (which he still believes was his own) with dignity, and carries out his duty as best he can. However, his continued success over the past year has led the Shosuro masters to believe they may have judged the ninja too quickly. Kirei, of course, has other plans, and has already started out to finish off his Shosuro rival and the little Kitsuki he travels with.

BAYUSHI ICHIBA

[Ninja 8; Shosuro Ninja 3]

Ichiba knows he was destined to be a great sensei among the Shosuro. He knows this because he is certain he cannot stand life as a ninja much longer. Unfortunately for Ichiba, he was born with a strong sense of honor and compassion, and the best efforts of his parents could not erase these ideals in their son.

As Ichiba grew, he learned to turn his feelings of bushido into a focus on his duty. He has a place in the clan, and that place is in the shadows as a willing agent of murder and lies. Ichiba has no taste for the dishonorable actions which are his duty but, ironically, it is bushido that keeps Ichiba on the path of the ninja. He does what his clan demands without question or argument. For now, he quietly accepts his missions, but he longs for the day he will be able to step out of the shadows of the Empire.

ADVANCED TRAINING

SHOSURO TEJINA (PRESTIGE CLASS)

The graduates of this school are rare, but invaluable to the clan.

Hit Die: d6

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Shosuro Tejina, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Clan: Scorpion.

Honor/Alignment: Any non-lawful, non-honorable.

Base Attack Bonus: +5

Skills: Hide: 10 ranks, Knowledge (Lying Darkness): 6 ranks, Move Silently: 10 ranks, Spellcraft: 6 ranks.

Feats: Void Use, Depths of the Void.

Special: Sneak Attack +1d6 or higher, must be approached by the Hidden Moon Dojo.

CLASS SKILLS

The Shosuro Tejina's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Dex), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Read Lips (Int, exclusive skill), Search (Int), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex), and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the Shosuro Tejina prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Shosuro Tejina are proficient with all simple and martial weapons. They do not gain any proficiency with armor or shields.

Spells: A Shosuro Tejina casts divine spells from the Shosuro Tejina spell list (page 31) according to table 1-1: The Shosuro Tejina and Table 1-2: Shosuro Tejina Spells Known. Tejina cast spells as sorcerers, without needing to prepare specific spells in advance or maintain a spellbook. Shosuro Tejina receive bonus spells for high Charisma, and to cast a spell a Shosuro Tejina must have a Charisma score at least equal to 10 + the level of the spell (Cha 10 for 0-level spells, Cha 11 for 1st-level spells, and so forth). The DC for a saving throw against a Shosuro Tejina's spell is 10 + the spell's level + the Shosuro Tejina's Charisma modifier. In order to cast spells from this class, the Shosuro Tejina must have Void Points remaining equal to the level of the spell. Levels of Tejina stack with other shugenja levels for determining the caster level of shugenja spells, but not for determining shugenja spells per day or total shugenja spells known.

Sneak Attack: This is exactly the same as the rogue Sneak Attack ability (see the *Player's Handbook*).

The Silent Soul: At 2nd level, the Shosuro Tejina's spells have their save DC raised by 4 if the target is flatfooted or unaware he is the target of a spell.

Shadows and Air: Upon reaching 6th level, the Shosuro Tejina adds his Charisma bonus as a dodge bonus to AC.

An Empty Breeze: An 8th-level Shosuro Tejina may spend a Void Point to gain DR of 15/+2 (crystal) for a number of rounds equal to his Shosuro Tejina class level.

Shadowed Soul (Su): A 9th-level Shosuro Tejina gains SR equal to 15 + his Int modifier. In order to affect the Shosuro Tejina with a spell, a spellcaster must overcome this spell resistance by rolling d20 + the spellcaster's level. This is a supernatural ability, and does not apply to the spells of other Tejina.

THE SHOSURO TEJINA

This school can only be accessed by taking the Multiple Schools Advantage, and only students entering or coming from the Soshi Shugenja, Yogo Shugenja or Shosuro Assassin schools may use the Multiple Schools advantage with this school. In the case of Soshi Shugenja, the ranks in this school are used to determine the character's total Insight Rank when casting spells. This school (like the Kuni Witch Hunters) is an exception to the standard rule that shugenja cannot join non-shugenja schools. A character with shugenja ranks who joins this school may not later join a non-shugenja school.

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Shadows and Air

You lose all former elemental Affinities and Deficiencies. You gain Affinity for Nothing and Air spells and a Deficiency for Fire and Earth spells. Characters may not cast Nothing spells unless they have Void Points remaining equal to the level of the spell (these spells do not consume Void Points; they merely require that the caster have Void remaining). The target's Void is considered the "opposing element" for Nothing spells. The Shosuro Tejina also adds his Air Ring to his TN to be hit.

Rank 2: The Silent Soul

If the Shosuro Tejina is casting a spell against a target that is unaware a spell is being cast against him, the Tejina gains a Free Raise to cast the spell.

Rank 3: An Empty Breeze

By focusing his chi, the Shosuro Tejina may become partially intangible at will. The Shosuro Tejina may spend a Void Point to gain a Carapace rating of 5, which is ignored by crystal weapons. This Carapace lasts for a number of rounds equal to twice the Tejina's School Rank.

THE FOLDING LEG

Bayushi Churai has used the teachings of the Kaiu family in ways that the Crab have never imagined by applying them to warfare from a Scorpion perspective. Though his predecessors have taught the value of stealth above all else in one's operations, Churai points out the efficiency of underhanded tactics when face to face with an adversary. He has developed a technique known as "The Folding Leg."

THE FOLDING LEG SCORPION TECHNIQUE FEAT

You understand that sometimes the best way to get past an obstacle is simply to destroy it.

Prerequisites: Base Attack Bonus +8 or higher, Pincers and Tail, Power Attack, Sunder.

Effect: You may spend a Void Point when making an attack to use this feat. If the attack is successful, you may forego damage to choose to do one of the following: direct the attack directly against your opponent's armor, inflicting double damage against it; cause your opponent to be unable to fight on the defensive or cast on the defensive for three rounds; or negate all of your opponent's uses of feats that provide dodge bonuses to Armor class for three rounds.



THE FOLDING LEG NEW PATHS

Path of Entry: Bayushi Bushi 2 or Bayushi Saboteur 2

Path of Egress: Bayushi Bushi 1 or Bayushi Saboteur 1 (whichever school was not previously attended)

Technique: The Scorpion may spend a Void Point when attacking an opponent to attempt to disable his defenses. If the attack is successful, the Scorpion may choose to forgo damage to produce one of the following effects: cause the opponent's armor to bestow a TN bonus of 5 less (until repaired by an armorer, minimum TN bonus of zero); cause the opponent to be completely unable to use Techniques that provide TN to Be Hit bonuses or Techniques that require the Full Defense action for three rounds; or keep the opponent from using his Defense skill effectively (incurring a -2 to the character's Defense Skill rank) for three rounds.

NEW SKILL

One of the most fantastic of the purported "ninja powers" that the shadowy assassins are reputed to have is that of hypnotism. Ninja are said to be able to render a foe completely helpless with nothing more than a look and mysterious movements of the hand. The Shosuro call this movement "kuji-kiri", and it relies on a fierce contest between the chi of the ninja and his opponent. The movement of the hands serves only as a superficial distraction as the ninja attempts to unsettle the mind of his adversary with a nearly magical use of his own inner power. Though hardly as powerful or reliable as true magic, this art is nonetheless a valuable tool for those who wish to disable opponents instead of prolonging a confrontation. Though this art was first developed by the Shosuro, it has since been either stolen or independently uncovered by nearly every other ninja organization in the Empire.

KUJI-KIRI

[Cha; Trained only; Bard, Inkyo, Monk, and Ninja only]

This skill allows you to make distracting hypnotic gestures, confusing and misleading your opponents.

Check: Use of this skill is a full round action that provokes an attack of opportunity. You must be within twenty feet of the target, within clear view of him. The target makes a Will save against a DC set by your Kuji-Kiri check. If you succeed at this check, your opponent can take no action for one round. Any strong outside stimulus (such as someone shouting to him, shaking him, attacking him, or any obvious physical threat) cancels this effect immediately. You may not attempt to use this skill twice on the same target within the span of one hour. You must have both hands free to use this skill. Targets immune to mind-affecting effects are immune to Kuji-Kiri.

KUJI-KIRI

[Ninja Only, Void]

Use of this skill is essentially a contested roll against your opponent's Void. If you are successful, your opponent is dazed for one round for every point your Void Ring is higher than his (minimum one). While the target is dazed, he cannot move (though he can defend himself) and can barely speak coherently so long as he is not subjected to any immediate stress. Such stress would be any attempt to attack him, if an ally "snapped him out of it" by yelling at him or shaking him, or similar situations. The victim is completely aware of the world around him, he just cannot seem to react to it very well while under the effects of this skill. You may not attempt this skill twice on the same person within an hour. You must have both hands free to use this skill.

TEJINA SPELLS

SHOSURO TEJINA SPELLS

Spells marked with an asterisk (*) are new spells described in this book. All other spells are described in the *Player's Handbook*.

0-LEVEL SHOSURO

TEJINA SPELLS

- Dancing Lights.** Figment torches or other lights.
- Daze.** Creature loses next action.
- Ghost Sound.** Figment sounds.
- Mage Hand.** 5-pound telekinesis.
- Mending.** Makes minor repairs on an object.
- Open/Close.** Opens or closes small or light things.
- Reflection of Memory.*** Mask your features to one target.
- Shosuro's Touch.*** Cause an item to become almost ethereal.
- Silent Sound.*** Silence one small item.

1ST-LEVEL SHOSURO

TEJINA SPELLS

- Change Self.** Changes your appearance.
- Charm Person.** Makes one person your friend.
- Darken the Veil of Sleep.*** Ensure a sleeping creature does not awaken for an hour.
- Enlarge.** Object or creature grows +10%/level (max +50%)
- Erase.** Mundane or magical writing vanishes.
- Expeditious Retreat.** Doubles your speed.
- Fierce Shuriken.*** Enchant throwing weapons to pierce damage resistance.
- Hypnotism.** Fascinates 2d4 HD of creatures.
- Jump.** Subject gets +30 on Jump checks.
- Message.** Whispered conversation at a distance.
- Obscuring Mist.** Fog surrounds you.
- Reduce.** Object or creature shrinks 10%/level (max 50%).
- Shadow Touch.*** Nothing's touch causes penalty to all rolls.
- Silent Image.** Creates minor illusion of your design.
- Sleep.** Put 2d4 HD of creatures into a comatose slumber.
- Spider Climb.** Grants ability to walk on walls and ceilings.
- Unseen Hand.*** Touch and manipulate objects at a distance.
- Ventriloquism.** Throws voice for 1 min./level.
- Whispers of Nothingness.*** Bring tangible shadows to you to silence your actions.

2ND-LEVEL SHOSURO

TEJINA SPELLS

- Blur.** Attacks miss subject 20% of the time.
- Darkness.** 20-ft radius of supernatural darkness.
- Darkvision.** See 60 ft. in total darkness.
- Edge of Nothing.*** Increase critical chance by disrupting reality.
- Fog Cloud.** Fog obscures vision.
- Hohei's Curse (Tasha's Uncontrollable Hideous Laughter).** Subject loses actions for 1d3 rounds.
- Hypnotic Pattern.** Fascinates 2d4+1 HD/level of creatures.
- Invisibility.** Subject is invisible for 10 min./level or until it attacks.
- Jealous Fury of Ededei.*** Create a bright flash of light followed by darkness.
- Magic Mouth.** Speaks once when triggered.
- Minor Image.** As *silent image*, plus some sound.
- Mirror Image.** Creates decoy duplicates of you (1d4+1/three levels, max 8)
- Misdirection.** Misleads divinations for one creature or object. See *Invisibility*. Reveals invisible creatures or objects.

3RD-LEVEL SHOSURO

TEJINA SPELLS

- Blink.** You randomly vanish and reappear for 1 round/level.
- Darkness' Blessing.*** Avoid a single attack by briefly transforming into shadow.
- Displacement.** Attacks miss subject 50%.
- Fly.** Subject flies at speed of 90.
- Gaseous Form.** Subject becomes insubstantial and can fly slowly.
- Goju's Touch.*** Gain minor properties of a Darkness Spawn.
- Haste.** Extra partial action and +4 AC.
- Hold Person.** Holds one person helpless; 1 round/level.
- Invisibility Sphere.** Makes everyone within 10 ft. invisible.
- Major Image.** As *silent image*, plus sound, smell, and thermal effects.
- Secret Page.** Changes one page to hide its real content.
- Strengthen the Soul's Shadow.*** Force weaknesses of Darkness Spawn upon subject.
- Shadow Twin.*** Create threatening illusory double of yourself.
- Shrink Item.** Object shrinks to one-twelfth size.
- Silent Step.*** Instant movement between two shadows within 200 feet.
- Suggestion.** Compels subject to follow state course of action.
- Water Breathing.** Subjects can breathe underwater.

4TH-LEVEL SHOSURO

TEJINA SPELLS

- Charm Monster.** Makes monster believe it is your ally.
- Confusion.** Makes subject behave oddly for one round/level.
- Emotion.** Arouses strong emotion in subject.
- Goju's Embrace.*** As *Goju's touch*, but more properties gained.
- Hallucinatory Terrain.** Makes one type of terrain appear like another.
- Illusory Wall.** Wall, floor, or ceiling looks real, but anything can pass through.
- Improved Invisibility.** As *invisibility*, but subject can attack and stay invisible.
- Lesser Geas.** Commands subject of 7 HD or less.
- Phantasmal Killer.** Fearsome illusion kills subject or deals 3d6 damage.

Polymorph Self. You assume a new form.
Shadow Brother.* Create shadowy double that can fight with you.
Shroud of the Shadow Dragon.* Convert an unmoving target into a Goju permanently.
Strike Into Nothing.* As *edge of nothing*, but greater bonuses.

NEW SHOSURO TEJINA SPELLS ID201

DARKEN THE VEIL OF SLEEP

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-affecting] (Air)
Level: Tej 1, Sor/Wiz 1
Components: S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: One sleeping creature
Duration: One hour
Saving Throw: No
Spell Resistance: Yes

With a touch, you cause an already sleeping creature to continue sleeping in a deep sleep. The target will not awaken on his own while this spell lasts, regardless of noise. Another character may awaken him violently by dealing real (not subdual) damage to the sleeping target.

DARKNESS' BLESSING

Transmutation (Shadow)
Level: Tej 3
Components: V
Casting Time: Special
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: Instantaneous

You briefly take the form of shadow — immaterial and intangible. This spell is cast as a free action, but may not be cast in the same round as any other spell (including another *darkness' blessing*). You become shadow for a split second, just long enough to avoid a single attack. The attack automatically misses, even if it was a natural 20. This spell cannot be cast in any area of bright light (including a *daylight* spell) or against an attack by a crystal weapon.

EDGE OF NOTHING

Transmutation (Shadow)
Level: Tej 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 3 rounds

By drawing the energy of Nothing into yourself, you are able to disrupt the patterns of reality in others with your strikes. Your critical threat range improves by one point, and if you roll a natural 19 or 20 when rolling to confirm a critical threat, you and your opponent lose one Void Point each (if you have any to lose) and the opponent takes an extra multiplier of damage (instead of $\times 2$ damage, he would take $\times 3$, etc.).

FIERCE SHURIKEN

Transmutation (Shadow)
Level: Tej 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Up to five shukiren touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless object)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless object)

You enchant up to five thrown weapons to deal significant damage to creatures they would not normally affect. The first attack using one of these enchanted weapons ignores damage reduction, and can be used with the class ability sneak attack even on creatures normally not susceptible to it. After the attack, the weapon becomes nonmagical again.

GOJU'S EMBRACE

Transmutation
Level: Tej 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 hour

You gain all the properties bestowed by *Goju's touch*. In addition, you gain SR of 10 + your Shosuro Tejina level, as well as a +6 Darkness bonus to all Hide and Move Silently checks. While you are under the influence of this spell, you cannot use any Ancestor feats.

GOJU'S TOUCH

Transmutation
Level: Tej 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 round
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 hour

This is a dangerous spell, one that invokes a deeper aspect of Nothing such as the Goju once knew. When you cast this spell, you gain many of the properties of a Darkness Spawn creature. You gain DR 20/+2 (crystal) and night vision, but take double damage from all weapons made from crystal.

HIDDEN HAND

Transmutation (Shadow)
Level: Tej 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: Unseen hands of force
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

This spell allows you to use your hands as if you were actually touching anything within the area of effect. You may reach into someone's pocket as if you were right beside them, or open a shoji screen with your hands from across the room. This spell requires you to actually move your hands in the way you wish to manipulate an object (which also means you can't simply cause something to float toward you, although you could throw it at yourself). What can and cannot be moved is all determined exactly as if you were moving it with your own hands. You may move an item the distance you ordinarily could move it using only your hands without moving your feet, although you can move it, "let go," and then pick it up again. You may lift 15 pounds per level, or shove twice that weight. For the duration of this spell, your hands are insubstantial and cannot hold anything. If you attempt to make a skill check that requires manual dexterity while using this spell, the check has a -4 circumstance penalty.

JEALOUS FURY OF EDEDEI

Evocation [Light, Darkness] (Shadow)
Level: Tej 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Area: 30-ft.-radius emanation
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: See text
Spell Resistance: See text

You bring forth a hungry light with this spell named for Goju Ededei, the legendary 'Thief of Eyes.' This light flashes brightly, dazzling any creature looking into the area unless they make a Reflex save to look away in time. After the flash, the area becomes very dark as the spell consumes any nearby illumination, cutting all vision ranges by 75%. Dazzled creatures cannot see anything at all in the area of effect.

This spell does not function in an area where the illumination is controlled by a spell of 2nd level or higher (such as a *darkness* or *daylight* spell).

REFLECTION OF MEMORY

Illusion (Glamer)
Level: Tej 0
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 10 minutes

This spell alters your form to appear different (as per *change self*) to one creature only. The target may negate the effects with a successful Will save.

SHADOW BROTHER

Illusion (Shadow)
Level: Tej 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 5 ft.
Effect: One semi-real double
Duration: 1 round/level

This spell is similar to *shadow twin*, except the double created is solid and real. The double is created by the shadows in the area (and thus cannot be cast in an area devoid of shadow) and made solid by your focused chi. It possesses all of your skills (at half of your skill ranks), and has a base attack bonus five lower than yours. The double cannot speak, and cannot cast any spells. The Shadow Brother has half of your maximum hit points, cannot be healed, and fades away if it is reduced to 0 HP. Crystal weapons deal double damage to the Brother. The Shadow Brother is otherwise fully under your control and is free to act as you wish it to as long as it remains within fifty feet.

SHADOW TOUCH

Transmutation
Level: Tej 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One creature
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

You force the essence of Nothing to touch the soul of a target, leaving its mark on him for a short while. The target has a -2 penalty to all attack rolls for the duration of this spell as Nothing unsettles his body and soul.

SHADOW TWIN

Illusion (Phantasm)
Level: Tej 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 5 ft.
Effect: One shadow double
Duration: 1 minute/level

This spell creates a complete double of you, standing five feet from your left or right. The double is an image, though the magic of this spell allows you to switch places with your double every round. Because of this, if someone attempts to attack you in combat before you have attacked in the round, you are considered to have 50% concealment. Your first attack each round gains a +2 circumstance bonus as your opponent attempts to defend against you and your shadow.

SHOSURO'S TOUCH

Transmutation
Level: Tej 0
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Object touched
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

You cause one object to become a little less anchored in reality, making it less substantial and solid. This spell affects one non-magical object weighing no more than thirty pounds, which becomes half of its normal weight. Weapons affected by this spell have a -1 penalty to damage, and AC benefits provided by affected armor are reduced by 1. If this spell is cast on an item worn or carried by a creature, the creature makes the saving throw. Unattended items are not allowed a save.

SHROUD OF THE SHADOW DRAGON

MURUBE SECRET SPELL

Transmutation (Shadow, Maho)
Level: Tej 4, Mah 6
Components: V, S, F, XP
Casting Time: 3 hours
Range: Touch
Target: One creature touched
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

With this spell, you call a bit of the Shadow Dragon, the incarnation of darkness, to temporarily inhabit the target. Though the Dragon leaves after only a moment, the target is forever altered. The power of Nothingness remains in a permanent hole in the target's soul. The target is forever after a Goju, one of the demon Ninja servants of Jigoku. The target gains the Darkness Spawn template (see *Creatures of Rokugan*, page 90), and becomes a minion of Jigoku, and an NPC, forever. If the save is successful, the target becomes permanently immune to this spell.

Focus: This spell requires the target to lie motionless under a shroud of cloth made in the Shadowlands throughout the casting.

XP Cost: 1,000, which may be paid by either the caster or the target.

SILENT SOUND

Transmutation
Level: Tej 0
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Object touched
Duration: 10 minutes/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You cast this spell on a single object, no larger than three feet in diameter. The object is completely silenced, and does not cause any sound at all, even from striking other objects. For example, if this spell were cast on an arrow before it is fired,

the arrow would speed silently through the air, and would make absolutely no noise even if it were to strike a stone wall and shatter. If cast on footgear, the wearer gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Stealth checks.

SILENT STEP

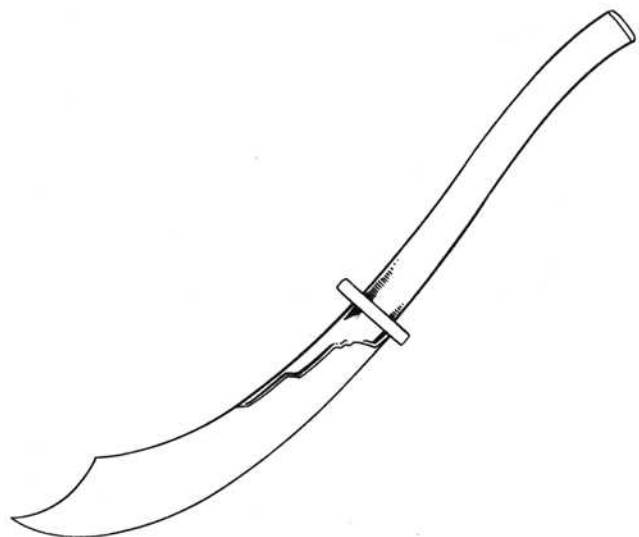
Transmutation [Teleportation]
Level: Tej 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Target: You and touched objects weighing up to 50 lb/level.
Duration: Instantaneous

You must be standing next to a shadow of at least your size or greater to cast this spell. You are transported to another shadow within the spell's range that you could see when you cast the spell.

STRENGTHEN THE SOUL'S SHADOW

Transmutation
Level: Tej 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One creature
Duration: 1 hour
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Like *Goju's touch*, you draw the power of Nothing into a creature, but it is one other than yourself, and you only force the weaknesses of such a power into the target. The target of this spell has all of his Void expenditures doubled (he spends two Void Points any time he attempts to spend one, but gains only the benefits of one Void Point), and loses the ability to use Ancestor feats.



STRIKE INTO NOTHING

Transmutation
Level: Tej 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 rounds/level

This spell gives you the power to strike at an opponent's very essence, not simply doing damage to him physically, but unraveling him completely. Your critical threat range increases by 3 points. If you roll a natural 20, score a critical hit, and have a sneak attack class ability, you deal damage as if you had made a successful sneak attack against your opponent. This applies even if you couldn't normally deal such damage to them, i.e. if they are immune to critical hits, have uncanny dodge, are not flat-footed, etc.

WHISPERS OF NOTHINGNESS

Illusion (Glamour) (Air)
Level: Tej 1, Shu 1
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 minute/level

You call upon the shadows to muffle sound you make. For the duration of the spell, you gain a +10 enhancement bonus to all Move Silently rolls, and any penalties to your Move Silently roll that you accrue for moving are halved.

Shosuro Tejina casting this spell do not need a divine focus.

NEW SHOSURO TEJINA SPELLS [2ND EDITION]

DARKNESS' BLESSING

Mastery Level: 3
Duration: Instantaneous
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Self

The caster briefly takes the form of shadow — immaterial and intangible. This form lasts just long enough to completely avoid a single attack. The attack automatically misses (even if it would otherwise automatically hit, such as an attack with the Tsuruchi Archer's Rank 3 Technique).

DARKEN THE VEIL OF SLEEP

Mastery Level: 1
Duration: 1 hour
Area of Effect: 1 Target
Range: Touch

With a touch, the caster causes an already sleeping creature to continue sleeping in a deep sleep. The target will not awaken on his own while this spell lasts. Another character may awaken him violently by dealing one Wound Rank of damage.

EDGE OF NOTHING

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

By drawing the energy of Nothing into himself, the shugenja is able to disrupt the patterns of reality in others with his strikes. While this spell is in effect, he rerolls 9s for attack and damage rolls as if they were 10s. If the shugenja rolls a 10 twice (or more) on the same damage die, he and the opponent both lose one Void Point, if they have Void Points remaining. Inanimate objects damaged by the caster while under the effects of this spell are destroyed as usual, though they seem to be melted or dissolved around the fractured areas instead of simply broken.

FIERCE SHURIKEN

Mastery Level: 1
Duration: 3 minutes
Area of Effect: Up to five thrown weapons
Range: Touch

The caster enchants up to five thrown weapons (commonly shuriken, but any weapon may be so enchanted) to significantly damage creatures they would not normally affect. Each weapon's next attack ignores Carapace, Invulnerability, and any abilities or Techniques that would otherwise ignore or reduce the damage it deals.

GOJU'S CHILD

Mastery Level: 5
Duration: 1 hour
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Self

Similar in effect to Goju's Embrace, this spell bestows all the weaknesses and abilities of the spell. In addition, the caster gains the unnatural speed and power of the Darkness spawn. He loses the ability to spend Void Points for the duration of the spell, and his Strength, Stamina, Reflexes, and Agility traits are all considered two higher.

GOJU'S EMBRACE

Mastery Level: 4
Duration: 1 hour
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Self

This spell is similar to Goju's Touch, except more abilities are gained as the shugenja draws a deeper connection to Nothing. He gains all the benefits and weaknesses of Goju's Touch. In addition, all spells targeting him have their TNs raised by 5 + the shugenja's Insight Rank, and he gains two Free Raises on every Stealth roll. While this spell is in effect, the shugenja loses any Ancestor advantages he has.

GOJU'S TOUCH

Mastery Level: 3
Duration: 1 hour
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Self

This is a dangerous spell, one that invokes a deeper aspect of Nothing such as the Goju once knew. When this spell is cast, the shugenja draws upon some of the strengths of someone touched by the Lying Darkness. He gains resistance to damage not dealt by specially blessed or crystal weapons, ignoring the

first 10 Wounds caused by such weapons from each attack. In addition, he has perfect night vision. Crystal weapons or nemuranai, however, deal twice the normal Wounds when they strike him.

HIDDEN HAND

Mastery Level: 3

Duration: 5 minutes

Area of Effect: Forty feet

Range: Self

This spell allows the caster to use his hands as if he were up to forty feet away from where he is actually standing. This means the caster may reach into someone's pocket as if he were right beside them, or open a shoji screen with his hands from across the room. This spell requires the caster actually move his hands in the way he wishes to manipulate an object (which also means he can't simply cause something to fly at him unless he throws it at himself). What can and cannot be moved is all determined exactly as if the caster were moving it with his own hands. The caster may move an item the distance he ordinarily could move it using only his hands without moving his feet, although he can move it, "let go," and then pick it up again. He may lift 30 pounds per School Rank, or shove twice that weight. For the duration of this spell, the caster's hands are insubstantial and cannot hold anything.

JEALOUS FURY OF EDEDEI

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 2 minutes

Area of Effect: 30' radius

Range: 100'

The caster brings forth a hungry light with this spell named for Goju Ededei, the legendary 'Thief of Eyes.' This light flashes brightly, dazzling any creature looking into the area (increasing the TN of any physical activity by 5) that doesn't make a Reflexes roll against a TN of 10. After the flash fades, the area grows dark and cannot be pierced with unaided mortal vision. Only beings that can see in total darkness, such as the Goju, can see through this area.

REFLECTION OF MEMORY

Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 10 minutes

Area of Effect: One target

Range: Forty feet

When this spell is cast, the shugenja chooses one target to affect with it. As long as this spell is active, the target will not remember seeing the caster after he leaves. The target will remember someone, but his memory will draw a blank for the duration that this spell was in effect. Any attempt to figure out the discrepancy ("You know, as soon as Miyoko disappeared, I remember someone being in the room, but I don't know who it was...") by the target will be met with utter failure, no matter how obvious the connection. Others, however, will probably easily notice the connection if it is mentioned.

SHADOW BROTHER

Mastery Level: 5

Duration: 5 rounds

Area of Effect: One image

Range: Two feet

This spell causes a complete duplicate of the shugenja to spring into existence from the surrounding shadows (and thus cannot be cast where there are no shadows present). This double is solid and very real, possessing all of the caster's skills, but at half of his ranks (rounded down) and half his total Wounds. The double cannot speak. The caster may direct this double to attack the same target he is attacking each round, or take any action he would be able to take. The Shadow Brother does not suffer wound penalties, but is destroyed if it suffers enough wounds that it would take to bring the caster to the Down level. Crystal weapons deal twice the normal amount of wounds to the Brother, and if any damage die is re-rolled twice (two tens are rolled on the same die) when damaging the Brother, it is destroyed.

SHADOW TWIN

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: 10 rounds

Area of Effect: One image

Range: Two feet

This spell creates a double of the caster, standing two feet to his left or right. The double is an image, though the magic of the spell allows the caster to switch places with the double every round. Because of this, if someone attempts to strike the caster in combat before he has struck in the round, they have a chance of hitting the wrong target. The shugenja's TN to Be Hit is raised by 15 as long as he has not struck in the round, and is still raised by 5 afterward. He also gains a Free Raise when attacking, as opponents attempt to defend against both the shugenja and his double.

SHADOW TOUCH

Mastery Level: 2

Duration: 2 rounds

Area of Effect: One target

Range: 30 feet

The shugenja forces the essence of the Nothing to touch the soul of a target, leaving its mark on him for a short while. The target of this spell rolls one fewer die on all skill rolls (minimum one) as the disturbing force of the spell unsettles his body and soul.

SHOSURO'S TOUCH

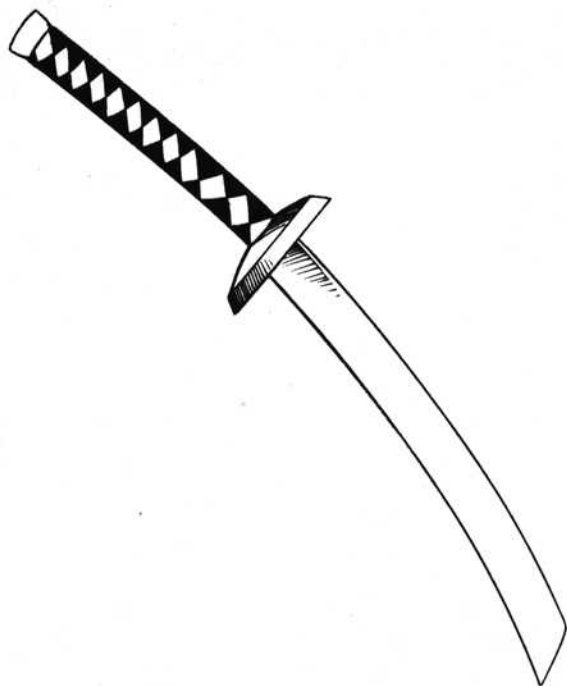
Mastery Level: 1

Duration: 1 minute

Area of Effect: One object

Range: Ten feet

The caster causes one object to become less "anchored" in reality, making it somewhat less substantial and solid. This spell may be cast on an object up to four cubic feet in size (or equivalent; almost all weapons and armor fall into this category) which becomes half of its normal weight, and becomes harder to grasp as it becomes less "real." If cast on a weapon or armor, this spell has its TN to cast raised as if it were cast at the person holding/wearing it. Weapons roll and keep one fewer die when rolling for damage (minimum one), and armor loses 5 of its TN bonus when affected by this spell (minimum TN bonus of +0).



**SHROUD OF THE SHADOW DRAGON
(MURUBE SECRET SPELL)**

Mastery Level: 5
Duration: Instantaneous
Area of Effect: 1 Target
Range: Touch

With this spell, a bit of the Shadow Dragon, the incarnation of darkness, is called to temporarily inhabit the target. Though the Dragon leaves after only a moment, the target is forever altered. The power of Nothingness remains in a permanent hole in the target's soul. The target is forever after a Goju, one of the demon Ninja servants of Jigoku. He immediately gains two Shadow Points, and can acquire more as usual.

This spell takes three hours to cast. Casting this spell requires the target to lie motionless for the duration under a shroud of cloth that was made in the Shadowlands. At the end of that time, the target is allowed a contested roll to resist: the caster rolls a number of dice equal to his School Rank plus Shadow Points, keeping School Rank, against the target's Earth plus Honor, keeping Earth. If the contested roll is successful, the target becomes permanently immune to this spell.

This spell may also be cast as a Maho spell of Mastery Rank 6. Immunity to this spell may be bought as an Advantage: it costs one point and is called "Breath of Purity".

SILENT SOUND

Mastery Level: 1
Duration: 10 minutes
Area of Effect: Special
Range: Ten feet

This spell is cast on a single object, no larger than three feet in diameter. It prevents the object from creating any sound, including sound caused by it moving against other surfaces. If this spell were cast on an arrow before it was fired, it would speed silently through the air, and make absolutely no noise if it struck a stone wall and snapped. If the spell is cast on a person's footgear or equivalent, the target rolls (but does not keep) one extra die on Stealth rolls.

SILENT STEP

Mastery Level: 3
Duration: Instantaneous
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Self

The shugenja must be standing next to a shadow of at least his size or greater when he casts this spell. The spell transports him from the shadow to another within 200 feet that he could see when he cast the spell.

STRENGTHEN THE SOUL'S SHADOW

Mastery Level: 4
Duration: 1 hour
Area of Effect: One target
Range: 10 feet

This insidious spell is similar to the spell Goju's Embrace, except it forces the caress of Nothing upon an unwilling target. The target of this spell loses two extra Void each time he spends a Void Point, and does not gain any benefits from Ancestors. (A target with fewer than three Void Points may spend Void Points normally, but loses all his remaining Void Points when he does so.)

STRIKE INTO NOTHING

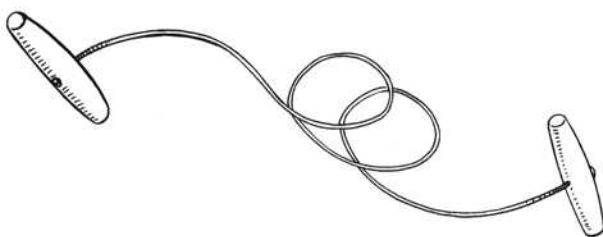
Mastery Level: 5
Duration: 3 rounds
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Self

This spell allows the caster to strike at the very fiber of a victim's existence, causing unnatural wounds and severe damage as he doesn't simply wound them — he unmakes them. All of his 8s and 9s rolled for attack or damage reroll as if they were 10s. In addition, if he rolls 10 three times on the same die against an opponent when rolling for damage, the opponent immediately drops to the "Down" wound level, and the attack deals no further damage. The caster must spend all of his available Void Points to cast this spell, minimum 5.

WHISPERS OF NOTHINGNESS

Mastery Level: 1
Duration: 5 minutes per School Rank
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Self

The caster draws the shadows tightly around himself, muffling the sound that he makes. The caster rolls and keeps extra dice equal to his Air Ring plus his School Rank on all his Stealth rolls, and is not limited by his Void in the number of Raises he may make with the Stealth skill.



CHAPTER TWO:

THE KOLAT

"What do you know of the Kolat, sensei?" young Ryoko demanded.

Kitsuki Kamoto sighed, glancing up from his calligraphy with an annoyed frown. "Can this not wait until the morning, Ryoko-chan?" the old man asked. "This has been a most tiring day."

"I apologize if I seem eager, sensei," the young woman replied, kneeling near her teacher's desk and bowing her head respectfully. "It is just that our own records on them seem so meager, and yet it is repeatedly stressed how dangerous they once were."

"The key word is once," Kamoto smiled, setting his brush aside. "The Kolat were destroyed decades ago, wiped out by the Lying Darkness and by Shinjo herself. They are no longer a threat."

"But can we be so sure?" Ryoko asked, raising an eyebrow. "They were a centuries-old conspiracy, extending to the hearts of the Great Clans. The Unicorn Champion himself is said to have been one of the Ten Masters, as was the revered sensei of the Akodo."

Kamoto sighed, favoring his curious young student with his best long-suffering smile. "What are you getting at, Ryoko?" he asked. "Are you suggesting that the very real dangers we face from the Yobanjin, the bandit-lord Hayato, and the armies of the Phoenix Clan are not enough? That we must dredge up shadows from the past to threaten us as well?"

"Not at all, sensei," Ryoko said, frowning slightly. "However, I believe that it pays to be cautious. Shinjo shattered the Kolat, but none of the Masters were ever captured. Is it not possible they could have escaped and rebuilt their organization anew? They escaped the Empire's attention for centuries before. Why could they not do so again?"

Makoto sighed again. "I admit, it is possible. The Kolat may come to be a threat to the Empire again one day. However, without any evidence of their existence, it is impossible to find any potential agents, and thus a waste of our time and resources to investigate them."

"The records of the Shinjo list many suspected agents who were never found and arrested," Ryoko replied. "After three decades the trail may be cold, but perhaps—"

"Ryoko!" Makoto said sternly. "Our family, our clan, has more pressing problems than the Kolat. I would appreciate it if you did not mention them again."

Ryoko looked crestfallen. "Yes, sensei," she said, bowing her head. "Is that all?" Makoto asked.

"Yes, sensei," she repeated, rising and bowing a final time. "I am sorry to have interrupted you." She turned and exited the chamber.

Makoto quietly watched her leave, his face inscrutable. When the door closed behind her, he set his calligraphy aside and drew a fresh sheet of paper. His brush strokes were quick, precise. The kanji they left behind did not match any characters used in the courts of Rokugan.

"That one may become a problem soon," the old sensei mumbled to himself, "or perhaps an asset..."

THE KOLAT

The history and organization of the Kolat are described in *Rokugan* and *The Merchant's Guide to Rokugan*. The information presented in this section is more recent and goes into somewhat deeper detail; therefore the information here supersedes that presented in those books.

HISTORY

Founded by survivors of the human tribes who resented the domination and rule of the Kami, the Kolar's ultimate goal is one of power. They have labored for centuries to maneu-

ver their agents into positions of influence within the structure of Rokugani society. Their ultimate goal is to cast aside the political structure left behind by the Kami, replacing it with a society where the reins of power are placed in the hands of those with the skill and power to grasp them.

While from a certain point of view the Kolat's ends may seem noble, their methods are ruthless in the extreme. The Kolat believe in power at any cost, and do not hesitate to extort, assassinate, or brainwash to attain their goals.

After the crippling attacks by the Lying Darkness and Shinjo thirty years ago, many critical agents were left isolated, in danger of exposure. The Kolat were disorganized, in desperate need of resources. Kolat Master Doji Akae swiftly solved the problem through skillful application of his personal fortune. A few bribes allowed endangered agents to be reassigned to less hostile areas without jeopardizing their cover; resources were discreetly accumulated that would allow the Hidden Temple's operations to continue, albeit on a smaller scale than before.

Though the Kolat have always been organized, they have now recognized a need for clearer delineation in the duties of the Masters. The Kolat are now divided into ten separate and independent sects, each of which is led by a Master referred to only by the name of his sect. ("Master Tiger," for example, leads the Tiger Sect.) While each of these sects are still allied with the Kolat as a whole, the members of each usually operate without knowledge of the others. In time of need, an entire sect could potentially break off and vanish with no connection to the whole, giving the Kolat a chance to regroup and rebuild. So long as a single sect survives, the Kolat can one day return.

In recent times a rift has arisen, dividing the Ten Masters (also referred to as The Ten) into factions of "traditional" and "modern" Kolat. The traditional Kolat believe that the organization has lost sight of its original purpose and become complacent, parasites rather than conquerors. These Kolat believe that a demonstration must be made against their enemies, a decisive gesture that will prove the weakness of the samurai caste system. The specific details of this operation are still a well-kept secret of the traditional Masters, who are waiting to reveal their plan until they command a majority among The Ten.

The modern Kolat feel that the organization's original purpose no longer applies. The Kami are no more; their traditions have already begun to degrade. A Hantei no longer sits upon the throne. A Great Clan with only an indirect relation to the Kami — the Mantis — now exists. Even the Sun and Moon have been replaced by mortals. The agents of the Kolat now sit unnoticed in positions of power among the samurai of Rokugan. Why continue to struggle to attain the Kolat's goals? These modern Kolat believe they have *already* attained their goals, and only the maintenance of their power is a concern. They have even begun to view the use of sleepers with some distaste. How can the Kolat claim to be freeing Rokugan from the Kami's chains when they only replace them with chains of their own?

The Tiger, Cloud, Lotus, and Dream Masters are traditional Kolat, with Master Cloud the most vocal member of the group. The Steel, Coin, Silk, and Chrysanthemum Masters all adhere to the modern philosophy. Master Steel seems to be the primary advocate, and is the only Master with the power and influence to oppose Cloud. The traditional Kolat have a tremendous amount of support within the order, but the modern sects provide security and wealth for the entire order,



so as of yet neither has an advantage in the dispute. Neither Master Jade nor Master Roc seem interested in this ongoing debate. Both are far too concerned with their own responsibilities to become involved.

TRADITIONS

The Kolat are interested in one thing: power. Anything that gives them influence over others is of interest to them. Their numbers are not large (there are perhaps only two thousand agents in all of Rokugan) but they are very well distributed in positions of importance.

The Kolat have traditionally planned in the long term, with some operations taking entire generations to come to fruition. For example, they will blackmail not only an individual, but his descendants as well, threatening to heap dishonor upon the entire family line. Over time, their tactics can bend entire families to their will (as they once did with the Shinjo).

Unfortunately, the War Against the Shadow and the return of Shinjo dismantled many of the Kolat's long-term plans, forcing them to begin anew. Modern Kolat operations are generally small and subtle, working toward the day when they can manipulate entire families once more. Spying on an important diplomat, assassinating a magistrate too close to the truth, or kidnapping a relatively unimportant person who has potential for later advancement (the best candidates for transformation into sleepers) are all common Kolat activities. They also participate in a number of illegal activities, anonymously hiring out their agents as spies, assassins or informants to generate wealth to support the order.

Though the Kolat's long-term objective remains the same, their methods and organization have changed somewhat in recent decades. Their near-destruction taught them the value of increased secrecy. The survival of the Ten Masters is of critical importance, even at the expense of the Kolat's efficiency as a whole. So long as the Masters survive, the rest can always be rebuilt.

Although the ten Kolat sects all work toward the goals of the whole, each has its own duties and responsibilities. This allows each sect to keep its operations and membership secret from the others, while reducing the risk of interfering with one another's operations. If a particular sect violates the secrecy of the Kolat, the other sects can allow it to be destroyed by their enemies with little risk of their own exposure.

KOLAT AND DOJO

Though many of the Kolat's most important agents receive training at the Hidden Temple, the order does not truly have a single dojo. Kolat training tends to be spontaneous and disorganized, with those that require training being taught what they need to know when they need it. As a result, each of these sects are given social or training benefits as if they were dojo. A character may not be a member of more than one sect. However, due to the secretive nature of the Kolat, a Kolat agent may be a member of the sect and some other clan dojo.

GM permission is always required before making a Kolat player character.

The identity of the Ten Masters is the best kept secret of the Kolat. A particular Master's identity is sometimes a secret even from the other Masters. Sometimes, only the Master who names a new candidate for a position among The Ten knows a new Master's identity. The oldest members of the Masters, those who know the identities of multiple other Masters, wield an extraordinary amount of power. However, they are also watched warily by their brethren, for they hold many dangerous secrets.

When meeting with any but their most trusted servants, the Ten Masters wear flowing black robes so that even their gender will be difficult to determine. All wear golden masks marked with the symbol of their sect. These masks are magically enhanced to distort the voice of their wearer and glow gently in the presence of the Oni's Eye or an Oni's Tear. If worn by anyone other than a legitimate Master, the mask becomes red-hot, causing excruciating pain and burning the flesh.

A Master who learns that his identity has been discovered is expected to deal with the matter discreetly. If the other Masters feel that one of their brethren is not taking adequate measures to protect the order's secrets, they will dispose of their incompetent brother. A Master who can hide his true identity even from his fellow Kolat is not only safe from detection by outsiders, but also safe from the paranoid accusations of his fellow Masters.

When a position in the Ten Masters is left open (by the death of an existing Master), each of the remaining Masters may nominate an anonymous individual as a replacement. (This process prevents any one sect from gaining too much power, as its leader will eventually be chosen by a rival sect's Master.) All candidates are tested rigorously by each of the standing Masters. The candidate who performs most adequately (and survives) becomes a new Master, and is attuned to his golden mask in a special ceremony in the presence of the Oni's Eye.

Unfortunately, while increased secrecy gives the Kolat excellent security, it also harms their performance in the short term. As only the Masters generally have communication with other sects, it can often take a great deal of time for an agent to call upon aid from another sect, even with the use of Oni's Tears. Enemies of the Kolat can put the lethargic reaction of the Kolat to good use, either escaping or destroying a Kolat operation before reinforcements can arrive.

Potential enemies should be warned. Individually, the sects of the Kolat may appear weak and divisive, but in unison their power is quite impressive. The sects may bicker and undermine each other, but all recognize that the security of the organization is of the utmost importance, and will stand together to crush any outside threats. A well prepared Kolat is the most dangerous kind.

ORGANIZATION

Every agent of the Kolat is referred to by their superiors as a "Servant." Each Servant is under the command of an oyabun, who is in turn under the command of a specific Master. Each Master has his own methods of identifying himself to his servants while concealing his own identity.

Though the Kolat have always been highly organized, their recent restructuring has left a need for a clearer delineation in the duties of the Masters. Each Master now leads a separate sect of the Kolat. While each of these sects may function as a whole, the members of each usually operate independently from one another. In time of need, a sect can break off and vanish with no connection to the whole, giving the Kolat a chance to regroup and rebuild.

The danger of a sect going rogue is recognized by The Ten. For the moment they believe that their thorough screening process of potential Masters, combined with the threat of utter destruction from the nine other sects, is enough to discourage rebellion. Thus far, this has proven to be true.

The following are the sects of the Kolat and their duties. Though the identities of the Kolat Masters are known only to a handful, nine of them are revealed here for use in your campaign (so if you prefer to be surprised, you may not wish to read on).

CHRYSANTHEMUM SECT

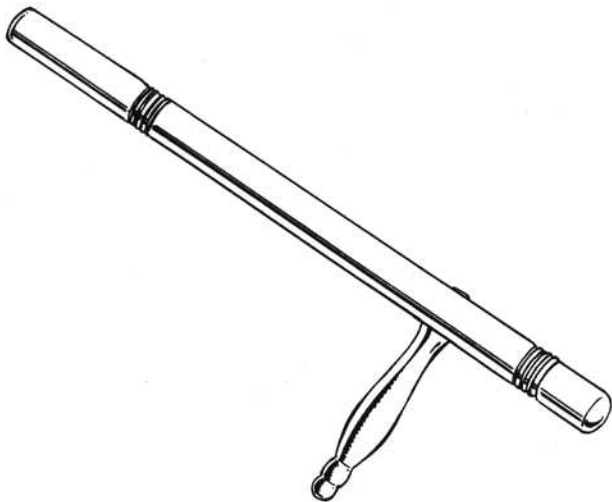
Purpose: Monitor the Imperial City.

The capital city of Otosan Uchi is a hotbed of political activity, and as such an entire sect of the Kolat has been dedicated to operations there. Chrysanthemum servants are very versatile, featuring assassins, spies, informants, and other occupations normally reserved for other sects. The Chrysanthemum are designed to operate with little assistance from others, but their area of expertise is limited to the Imperial City. Nothing occurs there that is beyond their knowledge.

The lives of Chrysanthemum Kolat are always at risk, for the presence of the Emperor's vigilant Miharu and Hidden Guard shugenja make the possibility of exposure great. This is another reason Otosan Uchi has its own sect: should the operations of the Chrysanthemum become exposed, the Kolat can simply abandon it entirely.

Master Chrysanthemum is aware that his sect is dispensable, and tolerates absolutely no insubordination among his servants. Those who fail are punished harshly. All Chrysanthemum Kolat carry a small dose of poison on their persons at all time, with instructions to take it if someone attempts to interrogate them and escape is impossible.

The members of the sect must be doubly careful to maintain their secrecy; they identify themselves through hand gestures, as well as a written code further encrypted by specialized spells created by Kolat shugenja.



The current Master Chrysanthemum is Ikoma Tsai, a young shugenja of the Lion Clan who tends the Imperial Libraries. His ongoing feud with Morito (Master Steel) is a ploy designed to draw attention from their secret alliance. He takes moderate precautions in concealing his identity from the other Masters, though Steel, Coin, Cloud, and Tiger all know who he truly is.

Rules Notes: Members of this sect can be of any background, school, or class so long as they reside within Otosan Uchi.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

Chrysanthemum Kolat are carefully trained for operations in the Imperial City. The benefits provided apply only on interactions within Otosan Uchi, or with those who spend most of their time in Otosan Uchi. These benefits also apply at the Emperor's Winter Court.

Benefit: You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on all Charisma and Wisdom related skill checks.

Benefit: You gain a free Raise on all social skill rolls.

TRAINING BENEFIT

None.

CLOUD SECT

Purpose: Preserve the knowledge of the Kolat and distribute it to all sects.

The Cloud Sect maintains the Hidden Temple's extensive archives, the fruits of a thousand years of espionage, blackmail, and brainwashing. They are experts on all matters pertaining to magic and religion (which to Rokugani are one and the same). Most Kolat shugenja are members of this sect, or are expected to share any magical secrets they possess with the Cloud's extensive archives. Shugenja of the Cloud Sect are quick to point out that the Kolat's goal is not to destroy the gods and kami — these beings have a place and purpose in the universe, after all. The Kolat's true objective is merely to prove that mankind's place is equally important.

Not all servants of the Cloud Sect are confined to the Hidden Temple's archives. Some are simply experts in unique fields (such as medicine, poisons, or history) who live at large in the Empire so that they can continue to sharpen their minds. When needed, these agents are dispatched to advise and collaborate with agents of other sects in the field. The Cloud Sect always expects access to all information gained on any mission its servants participate in. As the Cloud Sect are the least secretive of all organizations, willing and ready to share information with other sects, they are watched closely by the Tiger. Cloud agents risk exposure frequently, and their curiosity often leads to trouble.

Master Cloud identifies and communicates with his servants through the use of unique spells created for this purpose. Most Cloud Sect Kolat have never seen Master Cloud in person.

The current Master Cloud is the oldest of the known Ten Masters, Isawa Korekado. He is the only member of the Ten to have been a Master during the Clan Wars, and has revealed his identity to all members of The Ten. Due to near-constant exposure to the Oni's Eye, Master Cloud seems to age very slowly. While some of the Masters are disturbed by this (what other powers could the Eye have of which they are not aware?) others feel that Korekado is living proof that the path of the Kolat is one that bestows godlike power upon the individual.

Rules Notes: Most members of the Cloud Sect are shugenja.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

None.

TRAINING BENEFIT

The purpose of the Cloud sect is to gather knowledge; as a result Cloud Kolat have an extraordinary ability to retain information.

Benefit: You may make an Intelligence check (DC 15) to recall in perfect detail any information to which you have been exposed.

Benefit: You may purchase the Precise Memory Advantage for one Character Point or Experience Point.

COIN SECT

Purpose: Accumulate wealth.

The Coin Sect's goals are the most controversial within the order. Though the Kolat's ultimate goal is to replace the samurai political system, most members retain many of the values of their samurai brethren, including a disdain for the pursuit of wealth. Nonetheless the Coin Sect are a powerful group, for without their existence the Kolat would have crumbled after the War Against the Lying Darkness. When the Kolat were reorganized, Doji Akae became the first Master of the Coin Sect as a reward for his quick thinking and management of the remnants of the order. These Kolat are often referred to as "petty gangsters" by their critics among the other sects. The Coin seem vaguely amused by this.

The Coin Sect feels that those with wealth naturally hold power over those who do not. By making the acquisition of wealth possible even for those not of the samurai caste, samurai will eventually become nothing more than figureheads. This is the ultimate goal of the Coin Kolat, and though the process is much more elaborate than the more radical members of other sects, it is also much safer.

Members of the Coin Sect are taught an elaborate system of signs and countersigns by which they recognize and identify one another. This secret language is frequently updated and altered by Master Coin. This prevents the possibility of a rogue agent exposing the secret language, and the constant memorization of subtle signals keeps the minds of Coin servants sharp.

The current Master Coin is Moshi Shanegon. His identity is known only to Master Steel (who nominated him for his position), Master Chrysanthemum, and Master Tiger. Though his sect is quite powerful, Coin is an ineffective leader often distracted by the luxuries his position affords him. He frequently turns to Master Steel and Master Chrysanthemum for advice, which they eagerly provide. As a result, these sects are closely allied, with some Masters wondering if Master Steel's guile has allowed him to effectively become the Master of two sects.

Rules Notes: Members of this sect can be from any sort of background, though in either system many of the most effective agents are courtiers.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

Coin Kolat are adept at the art of the deal, especially where interactions with underworld sources are concerned. With access to a large urban area and at least an hour to search the local haunts, an agent of this sect never can find a potential henchman (informant, thug, or killer for hire). Though these individuals are unlikely to be affiliated with the Kolat, they can be motivated with the proper application of koku. If more than one henchman is required, the first may be hired to go out and bring back friends.

The statistics of henchmen is left to the GM's discretion. Keep in mind that loyalty is not guaranteed, so placing too much trust in henchmen can be somewhat risky.

Benefit: You may make a Gather Information check (DC 15) to find a henchman. (These henchmen are usually members of NPC classes such as warriors or experts.)

Benefit: You may make an Intelligence / Kuenai roll (vs. TN 10) to find a henchman. (These henchmen are usually untrained in any school.)

TRAINING BENEFIT

None.

DREAM SECT

Purpose: To hone the power of the mind as a weapon.

The Dream Sect are the strangest of all Kolat sects. They have mastery of the order's most powerful weapons — sleepers. The Dream Sect has perfected the art of brainwashing, altering, restructuring, or completely removing a target's memories and personality. They use a strange combination of torture and magic, a process even many Kolat find horrifying.

Dream Sect servants are seldom risked in field operations. Instead, other sects request the use of the Dream Sect sleepers by contacting their own Masters, who then contact Master Dream. The Dream Sect informs the agents of a time and place where the subject can be deposited, then send their own agents to bring the subject back to a secure area where treatment can begin.

Dream's servants all have mental conditioning that allows Master Dream to identify them without fail. He simply implants certain subconscious responses into all of his servants, and identifies a legitimate servant by the appropriate response.

The current Master Dream is Kuni Nakiro, a Crab shugenja who was once apprenticed to the infamous Kuni Yori. Nakiro's connections to that fallen shugenja have effectively destroyed any chance at legitimate advancement among his clan, but Nakiro does not seem to mind. His Crab brethren have come to accept that he is a reclusive, solitary individual and think nothing of the many days he spends sequestered in the laboratories of his private castle.

In an unusual turn of events, Nakiro was chosen by his own predecessor, Kuni Shimura, on his deathbed. As a result, Master Dream's identity is known only by Master Cloud — Shimura's former associate — and Master Tiger.

Rules Notes: Members of this sect are typically ninja or shugenja specialized in inflicting pain and influencing others' minds.

Rules Notes: Members of this sect are typically either shugenja or students of the Kolat Assassin school, with an emphasis on the Torture skill.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

None.

TRAINING BENEFIT

Dream Kolat are masters of the creation of sleepers, unwitting agents of the order.

Benefit: If you are a member of the Kolat agent prestige class, you may attempt to program a sleeper (as if you had the prestige class' Program Sleeper ability) even if you are not yet 10th level. You must have the aid of other Kolat agents, and your total levels in the prestige class must be ten or more. If the total levels of participating agents is greater than ten, the DC of the Will save to resist the effects is increased by one for each additional level. No more than six agents can work on a single subject at a time.

Benefit: You gain Free Raises equal to your Insight Rank on all Torture skill rolls, so long as your ends are to reprogram someone to become an agent of the Kolat.

JADE SECT

Purpose: Destroy the Shadowlands and the Lying Darkness.

The Kolat have their own designs for Rokugan, and the corruptive influence of the Lying Darkness and the Shadowlands are not part of their plan. Jade sect agents find and destroy those who have been corrupted by either force. The smallest of the sects, Jade Kolat can rarely afford to risk themselves in direct conflict. They tend to avoid powerful and obvious threats such as goblin armies, marauding Tsuno, or Shadow Beasts. Their specialty is in eliminating subtle threats, such as maho-tsukai, ninja shapeshifters, and pekkle no oni. Many times, they simply determine the identity of such threats, and then anonymously tip others who can effectively deal with them (such as Emerald Magistrates, Witch Hunters, or Inquisitors).

The current Master Jade's identity is known only to Master Cloud and Master Tiger. Once, he was Yasuki Taka, the daimyo of the Yasuki. During the War Against the Shadow, he was consumed by the Lying Darkness and believed dead. However, quick interment in a specially prepared crystal chamber beneath the Hidden Temple preserved Taka's soul, if not his memories. Master Jade now commands the power of a Shadow spawn, but maintains free will. Though his dependence upon his crystal chamber prevents Master Jade from leaving the Hidden Temple for extended periods, his intimate knowledge of the Lying Darkness has made him an incredibly effective weapon against the Kolat's hidden enemies. Master Jade takes no precautions to hide his identity from the other Masters, though only Tiger, Cloud, and Dream know the full details of how he came to be what he is.

Rules Notes: There is no typical Jade Kolat. Any individual with some talent in finding and destroying hidden minions of the Darkness or the Shadowlands is welcome.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

None.

TRAINING BENEFIT

The Jade Sect are trained to resist the powers of the Shadowlands and Lying Darkness.

Benefit: You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on all saving throws vs. maho or shinobi magic.

Benefit: The TN of any maho or Shinobi magic effect targeting you increased by 5.

LOTUS SECT

Purpose: Assassinate the enemies of the Kolat.

The Lotus sect work closely with the Silken Sect, acting upon the information obtained by their brethren. Lotus operatives do not interact with outsiders (except when slaying them) but spend most of their time in remote, hidden monasteries. These locations are always lavishly decorated and provided with every luxury to maintain the assassins' morale, but are intentionally distant from populated areas.

The Lotus philosophy is that a skilled assassin must have no friends, family, or political connections other than his comrades-in-arms. Thus, when the time comes to kill he will not be hampered by emotion. Their methods seem to be effective — there is nothing a target can do to dissuade a Lotus death squad. They cannot be bribed, seduced, or reasoned with. The only hope is to flee or kill the assassins outright.

Master Lotus contacts his agents directly, reasoning (quite logically) that any who could gain access to a Lotus monastery without being slain by the inhabitants must be a legitimate agent.

The identity of Master Lotus is known only to Master Cloud (who nominated her for her position), and to Master Tiger, who seems quite adept at discovering the other Masters' secrets. She is Shosuro Nyoko, a cousin of Bayushi Paneki who was once an assassin for the Scorpion Clan. When she was promoted to Master, she faked her own death and retreated to live in the Hidden Temple so that she could focus her attention upon her new duties.

Rules Notes: Members of this sect are typically rogues, ninja, or fighters. Their skills focus upon stealthy and rapid assassination.

Rules Notes: Members of this sect are typically members of the Kolat Assassin school described in this book.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

None.

TRAINING BENEFIT

The Lotus sect are among the most intimidating assassins in all of Rokugan, and are the most skilled students of the Kolat Assassin school.

Benefit: The base attack and skill requirements of the Kolat Assassin prestige class are reduced by two.

Benefit: Your Insight is considered 5 points higher for gaining Ranks in the Kolat Assassin School.

WHO IS MASTER TIGER?

In this section we've made some effort to unveil many of the mysteries of the Kolat (including the identities of the new Masters) so that they could be easily used in your campaign. However, we have chosen to leave the identity of Master Tiger purposefully vague.

Why? So that you can answer that question on your own.

Though we have our own ideas about who Master Tiger is, his true identity will never be revealed in any official source. The GM can feel free to make Master Tiger whoever he wants him or her to be, and leave the PCs free to unravel the mystery in a manner of their own choosing without worrying about Official Truth getting in the way.

Have fun...

ROC SECT

Purpose: Protect the Kolat's interests in foreign lands.

The Roc sect, also known as the Qolat, maintains an extensive network of agents in foreign lands. Their duty is to be ever vigilant for any opportunities that can be provided through the use of gaijin technology, magic, or mercenaries. As they are far removed from the watchful Oni's Eye, the Roc Kolat must be extremely independent. Should trouble arise, they are effectively isolated from reinforcements. Only the most trusted agents may join this sect, for a Roc Kolat could easily go rogue and be beyond even his Master's reach.

The current Master Roc is Ruqayah, the half-Rokugani daughter of two former Kolat Masters. The youngest of The Ten, she is the only Kolat Master who currently dwells beyond the borders of Rokugan. Though the Hidden Temple has not seen her in over six years, her talent with gaijin magic allows her to maintain contact with The Ten. Her identity is known to Master Cloud and Master Jade, both of whom knew her as a child, and to Master Tiger.

Rules Notes: Members of the Roc sect are extremely versatile, and can be from any school or class. Many Roc Kolat are not even Rokugani.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

The Roc are well versed in the cultures of distant lands, and are more open to the influence of cultures outside of Rokugan.

Benefit: You gain a +2 circumstance bonus on all Charisma checks with non-Rokugani.

Benefit: You gain a Free Raise on all social interactions with non-Rokugani.

TRAINING BENEFIT

None.

SILKEN SECT

Purpose: Gather information useful to the Kolat.

The Silken Sect have operatives in every large city in Rokugan, usually geisha, courtesans, artisans, or low-ranking courtiers. It is the duty of this sect only to gather information, not act upon it. Many of these agents have spent lifetimes

building cover identities, and cannot afford to risk them on foolish assassination or theft missions. Such is the duty of other sects. They work particularly closely with the Cloud sect, reporting information so that the Cloud Kolat can dutifully record it.

Silken Sect servants have perhaps the most dangerous position of any Kolat agents, as they constantly risk exposure in the field. Tiger Sect servants are always wary of Silken Kolat — not only are Silken Kolat notoriously curious, but their frequent association with outsiders sometimes leads them to develop unproductive relationships and sympathies.

The identity of Master Silk is known only to Master Cloud, the Master who nominated her. She is the only Master whose identity is not known to Master Tiger (a secret he would like very much to learn). She is Kakita Kyruko (described in the *Rokugan* sourcebook). An enemy of the Kolat in her younger days, she was persuaded to join when Cloud offered her magical powders that would preserve her youth. Cynical and vain, she accepted the offer and is now one of Master Cloud's strongest supporters among The Ten.

Rules Notes: Members of this sect are typically rogues or courtiers with an emphasis on Charisma-based skills.

Rules Notes: Members of this sect are typically courtiers, artisans, or peasants who, though highly skilled, have attended no formal school.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

The Silken Sect are information sponges, capable of detecting secrets and important information within even the most innocuous gossip. (This benefit does not function when seeking information on a specific topic, only when casting randomly for interesting information.)

Benefit: You may add your Charisma bonus twice when making Gather Information checks.

Benefit: You may add your Awareness to all Gossip skill rolls.

TRAINING BENEFIT

None.

STEEL SECT

Purpose: Protect the Hidden Temple.

It is the Steel Sect's duty to maintain the security of the most private headquarters of the Ten Masters. The Steel Sect is the private army of the Kolat, which patrols the mountain borders and silences any who wander too near. Though their duty is simpler than that of many of the other sects, their importance cannot be denied. Obviously, the Steel Sect has the largest presence in the territory surrounding the Temple itself, granting Master Steel a certain amount of weight in any power struggles among The Ten.

Like Master Lotus, Master Steel always contacts his agents directly. All servants of the Steel Sect are known and trusted by their Master, and by each other.

The current Master Steel was chosen by former Master Ikoma Soko shortly before her death. Though his identity was unknown to any members of the council, he chose to reveal his identity to the other Masters so that his sect could operate more effectively in preserving their safety. Master Steel is



none other than Morito, daimyo of the Ox Clan who dwell near the Hidden Temple. All members of the Steel Sect are either members of the Ox Clan or ronin who live in the area with Morito's permission.

The skill with which Master Steel has preserved the security of the Hidden Temple, even during the chaotic War of Spirits and the conflict between Phoenix and Dragon, has won him a great deal of respect from the other Masters, even those who vehemently disagree with his philosophies.

Rules Notes: Members of this sect are typically berserkers, fighters, rangers, or samurai. They tend to be solid, well rounded warriors.

Rules Notes: Members of this sect are typically Ox Clan or ronin bushi.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

None.

TRAINING BENEFIT

The Steel Sect are the vigilant guardians of the Hidden Temple. When standing together, nothing escapes their notice. This benefit applies only in the mountains surrounding the Temple, the temple itself, or in Ox Clan territory.

Benefit: You are never surprised or flat-footed in combat if any other Steel Sect Kolat within 30 feet is not surprised or flat-footed.

Benefit: You gain a Free Raise on all Perception rolls to avoid ambush for every other Steel Sect Kolat within thirty feet.

TIGER SECT

Purpose: Maintain the secrecy of the order at all costs. Tiger Sect is charged with keeping the veil of secrecy drawn over the Kolat. The Tiger have access to the Kolat's most powerful information gathering resources (including the Oni's Eye) and are quite adept at ferreting out the secrets of other sects. The Sect of the Tiger is generally feared by the other sects, but they are too useful to be shunned outright. The other Kolat know that they can reliably communicate with reclusive sects through the Tiger, or ask them for information on rival operatives.

Master Tiger communicates with his servants through a written code so incredibly complex that many assume that it must be of magical origin. In truth, it is not. Tiger is familiar with magic but prefers not to rely upon it.

The identity of Master Tiger is known to none of the other Masters. Many theories exist as to who he (or she) may be, but the only name by which he is known is Master Tiger.

Rules Notes: Members of this sect come from a wide range of backgrounds, with extremely diverse skills. There is no "typical" Tiger Kolat in either system.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

The Tiger Sect are feared among the Kolat. It is well known that none can keep a secret from one of their number for long.

Benefit: You gain a bonus equal to your level on all opposed social skill rolls with other Kolat.

Benefit: You gain Free Raises equal to your School Rank on any opposed social skill rolls with other Kolat.

TRAINING BENEFIT

None.

ADVANCED TRAINING

KOLAT ASSASSIN (PRESTIGE CLASS)

The Kolat maintain interests in many organizations and locations throughout the Empire, including the ronin Weavers, the Brotherhood of Shinsei, and the City of the Rich Frog. However, their most deadly assassins are those that they retain for themselves — trained specially in the Hidden Temple. Most of their number become members of the Lotus Sect, though every sect retains a few agents skilled in the art of killing. These cold and grim individuals are described as "artists of death" by their fellow agents. Deadly on their own, these assassins often work in teams of three or more.

Hit Die: d6.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Kolat assassin, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +5

Alignment: Any non-good.

Honor: Any non-honorable.

Skills: Hide: 8 ranks, Move Silently: 8 ranks.

Feats: Lightning Stealth, Twist the Knife.

Special: Must be a member of the Kolat, and the Kolat must offer to train the character as an assassin.

CLASS SKILLS

The Kolat assassin's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Disable

Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Pick Pocket (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), and Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the Kolat assassin prestige class.

Sneak Attack (Ex): This ability is identical to the ninja class ability of the same name. Sneak attack damage gained from the abilities of any other class stacks with sneak attack damage gained from this class. The bonus to damage starts at +1d6 at 1st level, and increases by +1d6 every other level thereafter.

Tiger's Claw (Ex): At 2nd level, the Kolat assassin is better able to take advantage of an opponent's momentary weakness. The assassin gains an extra partial action each round that may only be used for a melee attack against an opponent denied his Dexterity bonus to AC. This partial action may be taken either before or after the assassin's normal action.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): At 3rd level, the Kolat assassin gains the Uncanny Dodge class ability. This ability is identical to the rogue and ninja class ability of the same name. Levels of any other class with the Uncanny Dodge class ability stack with levels of Kolat assassin for determining the full extent of those abilities.

Evasion (Ex): At 4th level, the Kolat assassin gains evasion: if exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, he takes no damage with a successful saving throw. Evasion can only be used if the Kolat assassin is wearing light armor or no armor.

Steal the Light (Ex): At 8th level, the Kolat assassin learns this impressive technique. By imposing a -4 penalty to a single attack or damage roll, the assassin may direct a special attack against an opponent's vital points. If successful, the target is struck blind, deaf, or mute (assassin's choice) for a number of minutes equal to the assassin's Strength modifier. This may be performed only in conjunction with a sneak attack. This ability works only on humanoids.

Cast a Deep Shadow (Ex): At 10th level, the Kolat assassin may make an attack of opportunity against any opponent who successfully spots him when he is attempting to hide. This ability may be used once per round. This attack of opportunity may even be made with a ranged weapon, so long as the target is within thirty feet. The target is considered flat-footed if he was not previously aware of the assassin's location.

TABLE 2-1: THE KOLAT ASSASSIN

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+0	+2	+2	Sneak Attack +1d6
2nd	+2	+0	+3	+3	Tiger's Claw
3rd	+3	+1	+3	+3	Sneak Attack +2d6, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC)
4th	+4	+1	+4	+4	Evasion
5th	+5	+1	+4	+4	Sneak Attack +3d6
6th	+6	+2	+5	+5	Uncanny Dodge (can't be flanked)
7th	+7	+2	+5	+5	Sneak Attack +4d6
8th	+8	+2	+6	+6	Steal the Light
9th	+9	+3	+6	+6	Sneak Attack +5d6
10th	+10	+3	+7	+7	Cast a Deep Shadow

KOLAT ASSASSIN (NEW PATH)

The following two techniques are often employed by the Kolat Assassins. The most deadly Kolat Assassins know both of them.

TIGER'S CLAW

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Insight Rank 3 (You must have 176 Insight to learn this Technique.)

Path of Egress: Any School 1

Technique: You may make an extra attack each round against any opponent who is unaware of your presence (including if you are concealed by magic, darkness, or thick smoke). You gain a Free Raise on all attack rolls against an unaware target.

STEAL THE LIGHT

Technique Rank: 4

Path of Entry: Insight Rank 4 (You must have 201 Insight to learn this Technique.)

Path of Egress: Any School 1

Technique: This special attack relies upon precise nerve-strikes learned in lands beyond the borders of Rokugan. You may make two Raises on an attack roll to make an attack that keeps only one die of damage but also leaves the target either blind, deaf, or mute for a number of minutes equal to your Water Ring. This technique works only on humans.

THE ONI'S EYE

The Oni's Eye is the most powerful magical artifact in the Kolat's possession. It remains within its special chamber in the Hidden Temple at all times. The Eye — a glowing white stone the size of a small pony — is believed to be of zokujin make, though its powers are far beyond the simple shamans of that race. The Oni's Eye is somehow connected with the spirits of the earth, and can be used to spy upon nearly any location in Rokugan where those spirits are present.

The Oni's Eye may not be used to spy upon any area heavily corrupted by the Shadowlands Taint (the spirits are pained to be in such places and create illusions to deceive the viewer rather than show him such locations). The Eye cannot see beyond the borders of Rokugan, nor can it see anything more than thirty feet away from solid ground.

Additionally, the Eye seems to be of little use against those who carry the blood of spirits returned from Toshigoku and Yomi. Such individuals are silent and invisible, though the Eye can still spy upon those with whom they are speaking. The Kolat discovered it was utterly ineffective in spying on Toturi after his return, or on Hantei XVI. It is equally ineffective in spying upon the Four Winds (with the exception of Akodo Kaneka, who carries no spirit blood).

By making a Scry check vs. DC 20, the user can scry upon any location in Rokugan. The DC is increased by 10 for any location the viewer has not personally visited, and by 5 in an area warded against magical scrying.

The Oni's Eye is an intelligent item with an Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma of 20 and 20 Ego. It makes no effort to communicate with any of its users, though it attempts to impose its Ego upon those who gaze upon it, encouraging them to continue viewing its depths and slowly addicting them to its power.

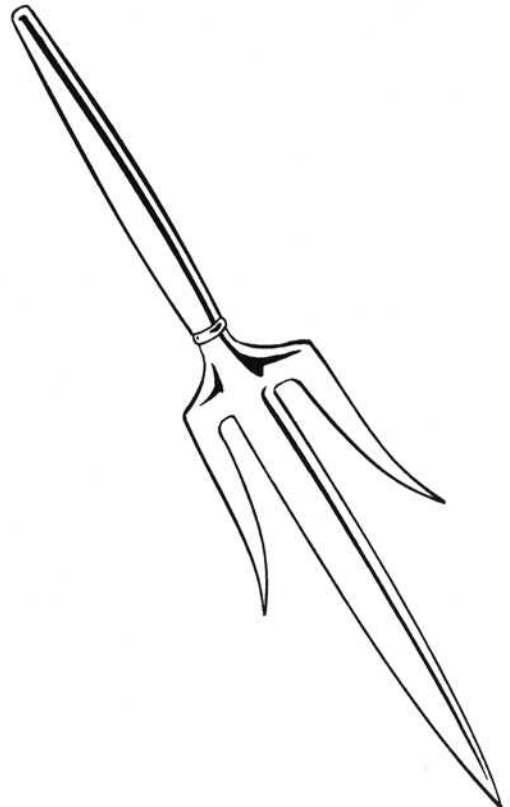
By making an Intelligence roll vs. TN 25, the user of the Eye can view any location in Rokugan. The TN is increased by 15 for any location the viewer has not personally visited. Even viewing an area warded against magical scrying is possible, but the DC is increased by 10.

For each month a user gazes into the Oni's Eye (for at least an hour every day) the DC to use it is decreased by 1. However, after a month of use, the user must make Willpower rolls vs. TN 5, increasing by 1 for each week thereafter, or become addicted to using the eye. These users become ill-tempered and irrational if they are unable to gaze upon the eye for at least an hour a day. Ceasing to use the Eye decreases the TN of the Willpower rolls (and increases the TN needed to use the Eye successfully) by 1 for each two months.

ONI'S TEARS

Every month on the night of the full moon the Oni's Eye produces 1–10 Oni's Tears. These tears last for roughly a year, then crumble into dust. A viewer of the Oni's Eye can always scry upon a holder of a Tear with no chance of failure (so long as the holder of the Tear is not in a location the Eye cannot view). Further, the Eye's viewer and the holder of the Tear may communicate telepathically at any range (again, so long as the Eye is not blocked).

The Roc Sect (the Qolat) have learned special magics that allow them to enhance an Oni's Tear so that it will last longer and can be viewed outside of Rokugan. These tears last up to ten years away from the Hidden Temple, but must be attuned to specific users.



CHAPTER THREE:

THE GOJU



"Akuro..." the voice whispered.

The young peasant girl shivered. Pulling her thin kimono tighter about her shoulders she moved more quickly down the darkened road. She prayed to every Fortune she could think of that she had not heard the voice, but she knew in her heart that she had.

"Akuro..." it said again. "Why do you run from me?"

The shadows in the road before her quivered, resolving into the shape of a tall man. His face was pale and handsome, long hair hanging loose halfway down his back. His clothing was the color of the night, crisscrossed with studded straps of dark leather. He held a black-gloved hand toward her. "Akuro," he said again.

"Go away!" she said.

"Akuro," he repeated; as he advanced toward her she noticed his eyes were pools of darkness. "I have done what you asked. You called, and I came."

"No!" Akuro shrieked, backing away from the strange man. "I never called you!"

The man paused for a moment, mouth curling in a puzzled frown. "That is not true," he replied. "You prayed to the Fortunes. Every night for seven nights you prayed for the death of Hida Yoshiteru. The Fortunes do not grant such selfish requests... but we were listening."

Akuro stumbled and fell as she backed away from the man. Her mouth opened in horror. "You!" she shrieked. "You killed the magistrate! The village protector!"

The man shook his head. "No. You killed him. I was merely the blade in your hand. The Fortunes abandoned you, Akuro, but the Goju are always listening."

"Goju," she whimpered. "Demons!"

"One man's demon is another's god," the man said, his tone suddenly sharp and irritated. "By our actions, Hida Yoshiteru will never again shame the innocent maidens of your village. Tell me, Akuro-chan, that you honestly did not want this."

Akuro said nothing, but only stared up at the Goju in terror.

"As I thought," the man replied. "Then, little Akuro, it is time to pay the price for our services." The Goju extended one hand toward the prone woman. A cloud of inky darkness rolled from his outstretched fingers to consume her.

Akuro barely had time to scream.

THE HOUSE OF GOJU

Classes: Ninja

Schools: Goju Ninja

HISTORY

The entity known as the Lying Darkness was strange and unique. When the universe was created, the gods did not name it, leaving it somehow incomplete. It drew power from nothingness, oozing through the shadows and dark places of the world in a quest to unmake everything, to make all else as formless and unknowable as itself.

SHADOW-CORRUPTION AFTER OBLIVION'S GATE

After the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, all minions of the Shadow are either cleansed, destroyed, or dominated by the Shadowlands. The role once filled by the Lying Darkness has been subverted by the Shadow Dragon. As the Shadowlands Taint is much easier to detect than the touch of Nothing, the Shadow Dragon protects the Goju and Ninube from the Taint. Its Taint-free Goju assassins and shapeshifters can therefore travel undetected throughout the Empire. Daigotsu has no fear of these non-Tainted agents turning against him. The minions of Nothing can never escape the ever-watchful eye of the Shadow Dragon; rebellious Goju become dead Goju.

After the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, minions of the Lying Darkness do not contract the Shadowlands Taint (and thus cannot practice maho), and cannot have the Shadowlands subtype. The exception to this rule, of course, are the Shadow Beasts, potent combinations of the powers of Taint and Nothing.

The Darkness was fascinated by Rokugan's ninja — swift, efficient killers who used shadows and fear as weapons. Among the first humans to be corrupted by the Darkness was Goju, a protégé of the great fifth-century ninja Bayushi Aramoro. When the order of ninja was ordered disbanded and executed by Hantei X, Goju and his followers fled the Imperial Magistrates, and found the Lying Darkness waiting for them. Eager to recruit minions who could act directly in the mortal world, the Darkness offered them the power they required to escape. The Goju became strange, shapeshifting creatures who commanded the shadows.

The first demon-ninja were born.

The Goju and their sister shugenja family, the Ninube, slowly increased their activities during the time of the Clan War. The bizarre powers they displayed were so fearsome that the superstitious people of Rokugan began to believe that all ninja were strange creatures of shadow. This worked to the Lying Darkness' advantage, which could extend its grasp to the heart of the Empire while remaining an unnamed, unknown force. All of its deeds were blamed on "ninja," though no one truly knew who these "ninja" were. It was perfect.

Unfortunately, the Darkness overextended itself when it attempted to use the power of the Obsidian Hand to corrupt the Dragon Thunder, Hitomi. Hitomi was too strong, and instead of falling to its tempting caress she began a crusade against the cryptic entity. She struck down Onnotangu, the Darkness' greatest ally, and replaced him as Lady Moon. Wielding the power of a god, she could correct the mistake made so long ago and give the Lying Darkness a name.

Bereft of the very lack of identity that gave it its power, the Lying Darkness was crushed. The creature that once had the power to threaten all of existence was now, ironically, nothing. Yet even though the darkness was defeated, many of its minions survived. The Goju and Ninube ("ninja" who were allowed to maintain a fraction of their own independence) were released from the Darkness' control at the Battle of Oblivion's gate.

After centuries of serving a near-omnipotent entity, the Goju were uncertain how to react to their defeat. Trapped deep in the Shadowlands, those who had once served the Darkness were desperate for new leadership. The former Dragon of Air, corrupted during the battle, found itself strangely drawn to the leaderless shadow-spawn. Unable to return to the Celestial Heavens, this creature became the Shadow Dragon. It has served ever since as the link between the Taint of Jigoku and the power of Nothing, binding those who once served the Lying Darkness to the Shadowlands. It appears sometimes to those who bear the Goju or Ninube name, guiding them to souls who can be easily corrupted.

Most of the Goju dwell deep in the Shadowlands, in the macabre City of the Lost constructed by Daigotsu's Tainted subjects. The new Lord of the Shadowlands has appointed the Goju family his personal enforcers and assassins. In the House of Goju, an enormous dojo at the heart of the city they train a new generation of demonic assassins.

TRADITION

Though the House of Goju has only existed for a short time, the Goju family has a long, if strange, tradition. Unlike other families, the Goju do not pass on their name through child-birth or marriage. In fact, their strong connection to the power of Nothing — the very antithesis of creation — leaves them unable to procreate. Instead, they pass their name on to those they can twist towards selfishness and evil, bringing them into the fold. The weak and selfish souls that the Goju collect in their travels are returned to the house of Goju. Their bodies are altered and strengthened by the power of Nothing, and they undergo training as ninja.

Under the sinister guidance of the Shadow Dragon, the Goju fly through the shadows of Rokugan. They seek those tempted by selfish or violent desires and fulfill their wishes, usually by delivering vengeance, pain and death to as many people as possible. When the deed is done, the Goju demand payment for their services. The demon-ninja only accept one payment — the surrender of one's soul to the Goju.

The demon-ninja have been careful so far, preying only upon remote villages or secluded monasteries. They do not wish to expose their continued existence to their traditional enemies — the Kolat and the Kitsuki family. With every successful "mission," the Goju grow in number.

The Goju are wholly loyal to Daigotsu, the Lord of the Shadowlands. In addition to their ongoing quest to increase their numbers, they also serve as his assassins. More than one vigilant Scorpion magistrate officer or nosy Hiruma scout has vanished in the night due to Goju assassins. The Shadow Dragon has lobbied Daigotsu to dispatch the four most talented Goju on missions to assassinate the Four Winds. Daigotsu has forbidden this mission for now. He is not prepared to risk revealing the existence of the Goju on such a dramatic assignment. Also, despite the threat they pose, Daigotsu is concerned that murdering Toturi's heirs may actually unite the Empire. Keeping them as they are — divided and turning the Empire against itself — is far more useful to the Lord of the Shadowlands.

REFERENCE

Many creatures, templates, and prestige classes mentioned in this section are described in detail in *Creatures of Rokugan*, including the Ninja Shapeshifter, Shadow Beast, Darkness Spawn Template, and Shadow-Walker prestige class.

TRAINING

Though the Goju command impressive powers, the downfall of the Lying Darkness has taught them that one cannot always rely upon the supernatural. As a result, the training of the Goju is a potent combination of conventional ninjutsu training and mastery of the power of Nothing.

Once someone has joined the Goju, their past needs and desires are only dimly remembered. They exist only to serve the Goju, and to bring others into the fold. As every student of the Goju devotes his entire existence to excellence, there is no need for praise or punishment in the dojo. Students who show promise advance swiftly. Those who do not are consumed by the Shadow Dragon. Like much of the City of the Lost, the House of Goju is cold, efficient, and brutal.

The full details on how one becomes a Goju (and what becomes of them afterward) are described in the Advanced Training section (page 54).

SENSEI

Until the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the Goju had no need of sensei. The Lying Darkness taught them all that they needed to know. With their increased independence, the Goju have come to rely upon more mundane methods of teaching the next generation. The current sensei of the House of Goju has served since shortly after the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, and was chosen by the Shadow Dragon itself. Should the Goju ever require a new sensei, it stands to reason that he or she would be chosen by the Shadow Dragon as well.

GOJU SHINGO

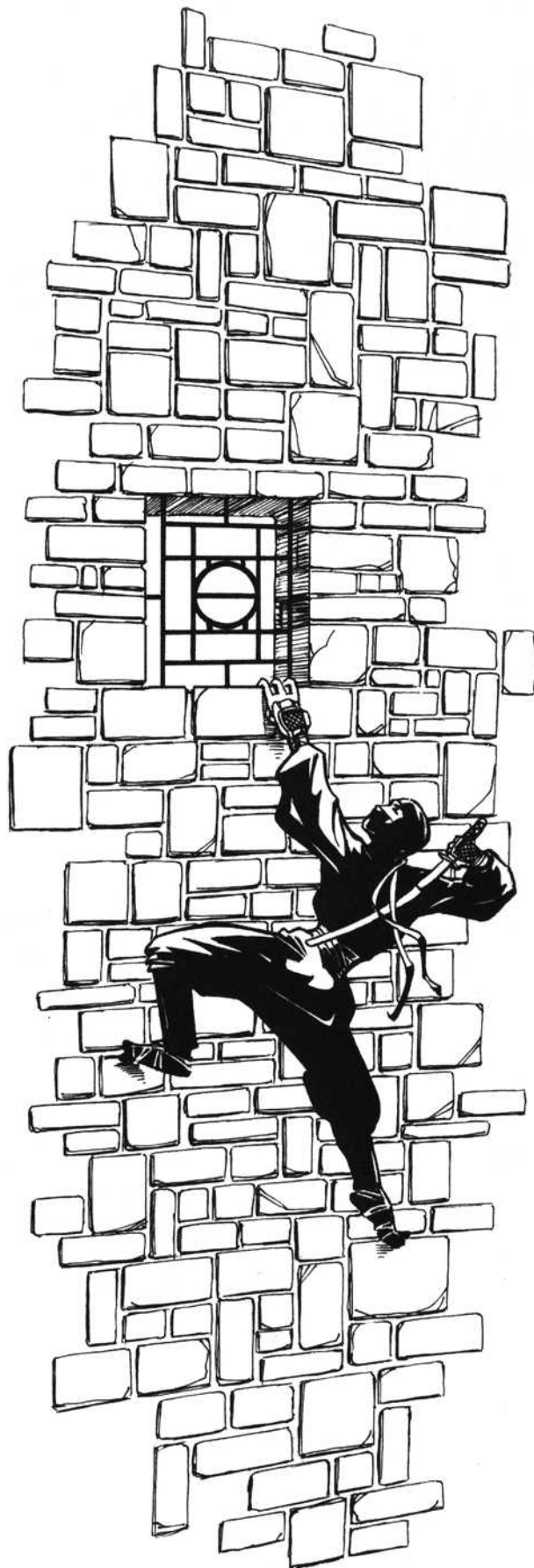
Master Sensei, House of Goju [Samurai 5/Ninja 3/Shadow-Walker 10, Darkness Spawn Template; Shiba Bushi 2/Goju Ninja 5]

Once, long ago, the sensei of the House of Goju was Shiba Shingo, a samurai of minor note in the Phoenix Clan. Though fairly talented, Shingo's relatively low birth prevented him from advancing far in the ranks of the Phoenix army. Though he was mildly resentful of the fact, Shingo did his duty and served his clan. During the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, Shingo's unit was overwhelmed by the spawn of the Lying Darkness. While his brothers-in-arms were rent limb from limb by the shadows, Shingo fought off his attackers, barricading himself in a cave on the outskirts of Voltturnum. Shingo's fellow Phoenix assumed he had been killed, and left him behind in the Shadowlands when the battle was over.

For seven days, Shingo held his ground against the vicious oni and bloodthirsty shadow-spawn that surrounded him. Feverish and exhausted, he refused to surrender. Finally, the Shadow Dragon itself came to Shingo and fanned the fires of bitterness deep within the young Phoenix's soul. Where force of arms could not conquer Shingo, the Dragon's wiles did. Shiba Shingo never emerged from that cave, but Goju Shingo did. Recreated by the power of nothing, the corrupted samurai became the first sensei of the new Goju.

Goju Shingo seldom speaks when instructing his students; he teaches his students by example. All who enter the House of Goju know that Shingo carries the favor of the Shadow Dragon, and know well what happens to those who fail to live up to his standards.

Rules Notes: Shingo's abilities concentrate on stealth, distraction, and assassination. He has a handful of feats and skills related to his youth as a Phoenix



HOUSE OF GOJU BENEFITS

Training in the House of Goju is relentless. The demon-ninja learn how to strike swiftly, vanish into the shadows, manipulate the power of Nothing, and corrupt the hearts of the weak and foolish. These dark assassins execute the will of the Dark Lord and the mysterious Shadow Dragon. In the City of the Lost, they are feared and respected.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

Those who train at the House of Goju seem to be the Shadow Dragon's special favorites. Once per week, a student of this dojo may enter a state of meditation, attempting to call upon the guidance of the dragon itself. In either game system, the effects are the same: the Shadow Dragon has a fifty percent chance of answering. If it does, its advice tends to be cryptic and obscure, but always useful if interpreted correctly.

TRAINING BENEFIT

None.

NOTABLE STUDENTS

GOJU OHARU

[Ninja 5; Goju Ninja 2]

A year ago, Oharu was a simple geisha living in the city of Ryoko Owari. One night a dark-clad figure appeared from the shadows and slaughtered her abusive master. In return, she was forced to join the House of Goju. Oharu's mind is quick and agile, and she has quickly become one of the House's most promising assassins. Privately, she revels in her power. In her former life, she was looked upon as mere window dressing, a low-born entertainer not worthy of respect. Now she is powerful, a creature to be feared. Soon, the Shadow Dragon plans to send Oharu back to Ryoko Owari. The Scorpion city is a perfect breeding ground for the selfish, easily corruptible souls the Goju seek. Since Oharu knows Ryoko Owari so well, the Shadow Dragon hopes that the Goju will be able to gain a solid foothold within the city.

GOJU KYODEN

[Fighter 6/Ninja 9, Darkness Spawn Template; Daigotsu's Legion 2/Goju Ninja 3]

It is not known exactly who or what Kyoden was before the Goju discovered him. He never speaks, but merely follows silently in the shadows of Daigotsu, serving as the Dark Lord's yojimbo. With his typical twisted humor, Daigotsu has come to call Kyoden his "Obsidian Champion." He even crafted the silent warrior a fine suit of armor made of matte black metal, a parody of the Emerald Champion's famous armor. Kyoden has trained with both Goju Shingo and Mirumoto Taki, and is a master swordsman as well as an assassin. He is a careful mix of stealth and power, the perfect guardian for the Lord of the Shadowlands.

ADVANCED TRAINING

GOJU STALKER (PRESTIGE CLASS)

The Goju stalkers are a special sect of the Goju ninja, those whose skills are specialized in seeking out souls who can be easily corrupted and consumed. A member of this prestige class can make an incredibly dangerous recurring villain for a party, twisting even friends and relatives into minions of Goju.

Note: In the 2nd Edition system, the abilities of the Goju stalker are represented by various new Darkness-related powers.

Hit Die: d6.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Goju stalker, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +5

Skills: Bluff 8 ranks, Concentration 8 ranks, Hide 8 ranks, Sense Motive 8 ranks.

Feats: Iron Will.

Special: The character must be a Goju.

TABLE 3-1: THE GOJU STALKER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+2	Treachery's Reward (detect thoughts), Voice of the Shadows
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+3	Sneak Attack +1d6
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+3	Treachery's Reward (skill checks)
4th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC)
5th	+3	+1	+4	+4	Treachery's Reward (dodge bonus, movement bonus)
6th	+4	+2	+5	+5	Sneak Attack +2d6
7th	+5	+2	+5	+5	Uncanny Dodge (can't be flanked)
8th	+6	+2	+6	+6	Treachery's Reward (charm, invisibility)
9th	+6	+3	+6	+6	Treachery's Reward (dream, spell resistance)
10th	+7	+3	+7	+7	Treachery's Reward (domination, Goju transformation), Sneak Attack +3d6

CLASS SKILLS

The Goju Stalker's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Pick Pocket (Dex), Poison (Int), Read Lips (Int), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex), and Use Rope (Dex). (The Poison skill is described in *Rokugan*.)

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the Goju stalker prestige class.

Treachery's Reward (Su): The stalker's most deadly power is the ability to slowly insinuate himself into the life of a potentially corrupt person, fulfilling his sinful desires and slowly drawing him into the Goju.

The stalker's goal is to see that the illegal, immoral, or dishonorable desires of a subject are fulfilled, either by himself or another Goju. His powers and abilities not only assist him in determining what these desires may be, but grant him certain advantages over a subject if such desires have been fulfilled. Treachery's Reward abilities refer to a target whose selfish desires have been fulfilled as a "victim." The amount of time a target remains a victim (and thus affected by the stalker's abilities) depends upon the seriousness of the crime performed by the Goju.

A minor criminal act (vandalism, theft of an inexpensive object, slander) makes a target a victim for a number of hours equal to the stalker's level.

A moderate criminal act (arranging an adulterous affair, assault, theft of a moderately valuable object) makes a target a victim for a number of days equal to the stalker's level.

A major criminal act (murder, arson, theft of an extremely valuable object) makes a target a victim for a number of weeks equal to the stalker's level. (Such a victim can be inducted into the Goju if brought back to the House of Goju, where the Shadow Dragon's power is strong.)

A very serious criminal act (multiple murders, causing the dishonor and seppuku of an innocent samurai, betrayal of one's lord, destroying a beloved and irreplaceable ancestral heirloom) makes the target a victim for a number of years equal to the stalker's level. (Such a victim can be easily inducted into the Goju, by the Shadow Dragon or even by a high level stalker.)

All spell-like abilities gained by treachery's reward are cast as a sorcerer of the stalker's class level.

THE POWER OF NOTHING

Shugenja draw their power from a communion with the elements. Maho-tsukai focus upon the corruption of those elements. The Lying Darkness somehow drew its power from the absence of the elements, the power of Nothing. Though the Darkness itself is no more, the Goju have learned to wield the power of Nothing. With the aid of the Shadow Dragon, they have maintained their connection to this strange and inexplicable pseudo-elemental force, and retain their sinister shadow-magic.

THE GOJU FAMILY

The Goju are not an official family recognized by the Emperor, but they are recognized by Daigotsu and the society of the Lost. They are a strange family, made entirely of those who have been corrupted by Nothing. Those who become minions of the Goju lose the benefits of their former families, to be replaced with the benefits listed below.

A character who is adopted into the Goju family immediately becomes an NPC minion of the Shadow Dragon.

D20 SYSTEM:

Favored Class: Ninja.

Starting Honor: 0.

Class Skill: Hide.

Starting Outfit: Masterwork ninja-to, six masterwork shuriken.

Bonus Languages: Bakemono, Ogre, Oni.

Special: All members of this family gain the Lying Darkness subtype.

Note: Starting outfit and bonus languages apply only to characters who begin play as Goju. If the class skill of a Goju's former family is no longer a class skill, excess levels above the normal maximum are not lost. If the change of a Goju's favored class to ninja creates an experience penalty, this penalty applies only to future experience gains.

LSR RPG 2E SYSTEM:

Goju Family Bonus: Though the Goju tend to choose weak-willed souls to join their ranks, the infusion of dark powers within them creates an indomitable spirit. +1 Willpower.

At 1st level, the stalker gains the ability to look into the hearts of potential victims. He may cast *detect thoughts* as a spell-like ability. This ability may be used once per day per level gained in this class. Victims of the stalker automatically fail their Will save to resist this ability. In addition, the stalker can always follow one of his victims by making an Intuit Direction check (DC 15).

At 3rd level, the Goju gains a permanent +8 bonus on Bluff, Disguise, Sense Motive, and Diplomacy checks against victims.

At 5th level, the stalker gains a dodge bonus to AC equal to his class level against any attacks made by a victim. If in pursuit of a victim, the stalker's speed increases to match that of his victim (even if the victim's speed is enhanced by magic or a steed).

At 8th level, the stalker can cast *charm person* once per day per class level on any of his victims, as a spell-like ability. He may also cast a special version of *improved invisibility* at will as a spell-like ability, making himself invisible only to his victims.

At 9th level the stalker gains spell resistance 25 against any magical effects generated by one of his victims. He may also cast either *dream* or *nightmare*, once per day as a spell-like ability, targeting one of his victims. If the victim fails his Will save against either of these effects, he permanently gains one Shadow Point.

At 10th level, the stalker may cast *domination*, once per day, as a spell-like ability, targeting one of his victims. In addition, a 10th level Goju no longer needs the presence of the Shadow Dragon to recruit new Goju. If the stalker has performed a very serious criminal act for a victim (see above) and the victim is held helpless, the stalker can force his victim to make a Will save (DC 10 + the stalker's Charisma modifier) or accumulate one Shadow Point. This DC increases by 2 for each consecutive hour, whether or not the victim makes his Will saves successfully. If interrupted for more than one round at any point during this period, the process is ruined and must begin again.

Voice of the Shadows (Su): While the stalker is a potent combatant, he tends to leave the more grisly details of his duties to other Goju. At 1st level, he gains the ability to automatically sense the presence of any other Goju or minions of the Shadow Dragon within one mile. He may communicate telepathically with any such creatures within 100 feet.

Sneak Attack (Ex): This ability is identical to the ninja class ability of the same name. Sneak attack damage gained from the abilities of any other class stack with sneak attack damage gained from this class. The bonus to damage starts at +1d6 at 2nd level, and increases by +1d6 every two levels thereafter.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): At 3rd level, the Goju stalker gains the Uncanny Dodge class ability. This ability is identical to the rogue and ninja class ability of the same name. Levels of any other class with the Uncanny Dodge class ability stack with levels of Goju stalker for determining the full extent of those abilities.

GOJU NINJA SCHOOL

The techniques of the Goju school were created many centuries ago, passed down by the minions of the Lying Darkness. In modern times, these techniques have been adapted and improved. Though some of these techniques are quite extraordinary, none of them rely upon the Goju's supernatural powers.

REQUIREMENTS

Benefit: +1 Agility

Skills: Athletics, Hunting, Ninja-to, Poison, Stealth 2, any Bugei Skill

Beginning Honor: 0

Starting Outfit: 6 shuriken or tsubute, 50' rope and grapple, black gi, ninja-to, tanto, traveling pack, three ninja tools or weapons of choice.

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: The Art of Distraction

When declaring your action at the beginning of any combat round, you may choose to use the Art of Distraction. For the duration of that round, you gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit, but all of your own TNs are increased by the same amount. The amount of this bonus/penalty can be any amount up to your School Rank x5.



GRAHAM 0202

Rank 2: Merciless Blade

You have learned to rapidly take advantage of a weaker opponent. Against a blind or unaware enemy you may make an extra attack if you declare the Full Attack action. You may not gain more than one extra attack per round in this manner.

Rank 3: Shadows Melt

At this level of skill, your mastery of stealth is so great that you may hide even from those who are aware of you. If your initiative is at least 5 higher than your enemy's, you may make a raw Agility roll vs. a TN of your opponent's Perception $\times 5$. (If multiple enemies are watching you, use the highest Perception of the group). If this roll is successful, you seem to disappear. In truth, you merely distract your opponents and quickly hide somewhere in the area. You may make Stealth rolls normally to avoid future detection. If there is no serviceable hiding place nearby, this Technique is useless. If you have a nagepppo (smoke bomb) in hand and drop it to cover your escape you gain +10 to your Agility roll when using this technique. Use of this Technique counts as your action for the round, so you may not also declare an Attack, Full Attack, or Full Defense.

Rank 4: Sword of the Moon

You have learned to integrate the Goju's cruel subtlety into every action. You may add your Stealth skill to all attack and damage roll totals. Against a blind or unaware opponent, you may add your Stealth skill to your damage roll totals twice.

Rank 5: Final Darkness

You have learned the final lesson of the Goju school; through rapid movement you can become a blur of motion, taking advantage of any failure by an opponent. Any time an enemy attacks you and misses, you gain an immediate melee attack against him. You may not use this technique more times per round than your Agility trait. If you use this technique while on Full Defense, your TN's are increased by 15. You may not move or hide while using this technique, but must stand in one place, spinning about like a whirlwind.

BECOMING A GOJU

Before the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, there were many degrees of Shadow Corruption. In a manner extraordinarily similar to the Shadowlands Taint, victims of darkness were slowly corrupted, accruing symptoms and falling to the evil power of Shadow. After the Lying Darkness was named, the Shadow Dragon continued this method of subverting new minions. However, gradual corruption is not necessary. The easiest way for a new Goju to be created is by the Shadow Dragon itself. If an extremely selfish, evil, and dishonorable person is brought into the presence of the Shadow Dragon, the Dragon can recreate that individual as a Goju. The Shadow Dragon is only known to physically enter the mortal world in the House of Goju, deep within the Shadowlands.

In the d20 System,TM Shadow Points work just like the Shadowlands Taint described in *Rokugan*. Only the method by which Shadow Points are accumulated is different (they may be granted voluntarily by certain feats, or involuntarily by the Shadow Dragon or a Goju Stalker). A creature with even one Shadow Point gains the Lying Darkness subtype.

Creatures with the Lying Darkness subtype (described in *Creatures of Rokugan*) have minimum Shadow Points as follows. All Shadow Points are cumulative (thus a Darkness Spawn in the Shadow Walker prestige class would gain Shadow Points from both).

Ninja Shapeshifter: 4

Shadow Beast: 4

Darkness Spawn: +2

Shadow Walker prestige class: 1 point per class level

GAINING ADDITIONAL SHADOW POINTS

Prior to the War Against the Shadow, Shadow Points could infect and corrupt a host in a manner very similar to Shadowlands Points. At present, typically only the Goju have Shadow Points in abundance. However, those targeted for recruitment by a Goju may be at risk for accumulating Shadow Points.

Once a character's Shadow Points exceed his highest ability score modifier or his maximum Void Points (whichever is higher) that character permanently becomes a member of the Goju family, losing all former family bonuses.

SHADOW POINTS

If a character's Shadow Points ever exceed his Void, he immediately becomes a Goju, losing all former family benefits and gaining all family benefits of the Goju family. The power of Nothing still continues to influence a character's actions as described in the *Game Master's Guide*, though it is now the Shadow Dragon and not the Lying Darkness that is responsible for the temptation. In addition, the minions of Goju are no longer the faceless creatures they were under the Lying Darkness' yoke. Their appearance takes on a more demonic aspect under the sinister dragon's guidance.

POWERS OF DARKNESS

The following abilities are available to all Goju or Ninube characters who meet the listed requirements. These abilities are all kata, though they are treated as magic for the purposes of any effect which hampers or cancels magic. (In the d20 System,TM all are considered supernatural abilities.)

SHADOW LEAP

Preparation Time: 10

Duration: 120 minutes

This kata greatly increases your speed and agility while in areas of darkness. Unfortunately, you are greatly hampered by areas of bright sunlight.

Requirements: Ninja level 1st+, Goju family only.

XP Cost: 30

Effect: Your base movement increases by 10 ft. and you gain a +4 enhancement bonus on all Jump, Climb, Balance, and Tumble checks. While in areas of bright sunlight, the effects of this kata are canceled, your movement is halved, you cannot run or charge, and you suffer a -2 penalty to all attack rolls, swing throws, and ability of skill checks.

Rank: Goju Ninja 1, 1+ Shadow Points.

Cost: 2

Effect: Your movement is increased as if your Water were two higher for the duration of this kata, and you roll and keep two additional dice on all Athletics and Climbing checks. In areas of bright sunlight, these effects are canceled, your movement is halved, you cannot run, and you roll one fewer die for all actions.

SHADOW WAVE

Preparation Time: 10

Duration: 120 minutes

At any time during the duration of this kata, you may activate its effects. It causes a cloud of darkness and shadow to roil around you in a thirty-foot radius, hampering all vision but your own. The kata may be activated only once per preparation.

Requirements: Ninja level 8th+, 3+ Shadow Points.

XP Cost: 500

Effect: Everybody within the cloud is blinded except for you and anyone who knows this kata. The cloud lasts for 5 rounds.

Rank: Goju Ninja 3, 3+ Shadow Points

Cost: 3

Effect: Everybody within the cloud is blinded (+15 to all TNs relying upon vision) except for you and anybody who knows this kata. The cloud lasts for five rounds.

SHADOW SEDUCTION

Preparation Time: 10

Duration: 120 minutes

When this kata is prepared, you must select a specific target for it, and perform an act of murder or worse at the target's behest. The Shadow Dragon needs not have personally performed a sinister act to use this kata, so long as one of its Goju minions perpetrated the act in its name.

Requirements: Base attack bonus +15 or higher, 5+ Shadow Points.

XP Cost: 1,000

Effect: The target must make a Will save (DC 15 + your Charisma modifier) or immediately become Goju.

Rank: Goju Ninja 5, 5+ Shadow Points.

Cost: 4

Effect: The target must make an opposed Willpower roll with you or gain one Shadow Point and become a member of the Goju family.

SHADOW CONSUMPTION

Preparation Time: 30

Duration: Special

You draw a willing target deeper into shadow, increasing his control of the power of Nothing. The subject must be present with you for the duration of the preparation time.

Requirements: Base attack bonus 15+, must have Darkness Spawn template.

XP Cost: 3,000

Effect: If the subject is already a Goju, he either adopts the Darkness Spawn template or his race is changed to Ninja Shapeshifter, your choice. (See *Creatures of Rokugan* for details.)

Rank: Insight Rank 6, with at least 5 ranks of Goju Ninja, 6+ Shadow Points.

Cost: 7

Effect: If the subject has at least one Shadow Point, his Shadow Points are increased by one or two (your choice), permanently.



CHAPTER FOUR:

MINOR NINJA DOJO



Shinjo Tokitsu arrived home late in the evening. It had been a long, hard ride, but he had reached his home in Otosan Uchi in record time, and he was very glad to be home. The things he had seen in the Phoenix port city had unnerved and offended him, and he needed to find his center again before he could meet with the Emerald Champion in the morning.

Tokitsu left his steed to be tended to by the servants and went inside. His servant Eju took one look at him and wordlessly began to prepare tea. While he bathed, the aged peasant set out a simple dinner of tea and fish, seasoned exactly as Tokitsu desired it. The bath and the meal rejuvenated the magistrate, and he felt like himself for the first time in weeks.

"Eju," Tokitsu called once he had finished his dinner. "Bring my calligraphy set. I must write to the Emerald Champion at once."

"Of course, master," Eju said simply. He quickly brought the parchment and ink from the study. "I hope that all is well."

Tokitsu smiled. "Your concern is appreciated as always, old friend, but it is not I who should be troubled. No, it is those wretched souls in the Phoenix lands who should be concerned, for soon they will find themselves condemned to die for their crimes, and their treason ensures that they will find no peace in the next world."

"Forgive me, master," Eju bowed as he spoke. "It was not my intent to intrude on your affairs."

"No, of course not, Eju. Nor was it my intent to burden you with my tale. It is just that in all my years of service with the Emerald Magistrates, I have never seen such blatant contempt for the Emperor's laws as I saw a mere ten days ago. It has shaken me, and I fear I have not yet recovered." Tokitsu stood. "I think it best if I retire for the evening. Awaken me early, Eju, for I will need to reach the Champion before the day is late."

"As you wish, master," Eju said. He watched Tokitsu retire to his room, then began cleaning the table.

News of Shinjo Tokitsu's death reached the Emerald Champion the next morning. The magistrate had been killed in his sleep by a single knife strike. There was much surprise at this, for Tokitsu was renowned for his keen perception: he had foiled numerous assassination attempts in previous years and was known to be a light sleeper. His last mission, an investigation into rumors of gaijin artifacts in the Phoenix lands, had been completed, and the Emerald Champion had received a report disavowing the presence of any such artifacts and attributing the entire affair to peasant superstition. Shinjo Tokitsu was given a hero's funeral.

Kasuga Eju had not enjoyed his task. He had been masquerading as Tokitsu's servant for years and had become genuinely fond of him. Unfortunately, the magistrate discovered too much about the Tortoise Clan's activities in the Phoenix lands, and had to be silenced. The poison was painless, at least. Tokitsu had died in his sleep. The knife wound had simply been a screen to cover the truth.

With his possessions in tow, Eju left Tokitsu's estate to begin a new mission for his clan that would take him somewhere in the Mantis islands. He was looking forward to the sea air once more.

Throughout the Empire, numerous small groups operate in secret, moving in the shadows unnoticed by the Great Clans. They exploit the niches of society that are beneath a proper samurai's notice — peasants, monks, and eta — in order to escape the scrutiny of the very clans that despise them. Only with the protection and secrecy of darkness and silence can they continue to exist.

For the most part, each of these groups exists with little or no knowledge of others like them. Each serves a very specialized purpose that does not lend itself to the discovery of other denizens of the shadow unless they come into direct conflict, which is rare if not unheard of.

Each of the following groups exists in a single location with a limited or very specialized range of influence. For the most part, they are uninvolved with the affairs of the Empire at large, focusing either on the observation of specific targets, such as the Order of Tengen, or the enforcement of a very specific agenda, such as the Scales of the Carp.

THE HOUSE OF THE GOLDEN FROG

"The Great Clans call us filthy ronin. They say we are honorless wave men who sully our hands with mercantile interests. How strange, then, that when they are torn asunder by war, we continue to prosper."

— Kaeru Kenko, sensei of the Machi-Kanshisha

Classes: Assassin (Prestige), Fighter, Ninja, Rogue

Schools: Clouded Mind (otokodate), Poisoned Frog (otokodate), Smoke and Mirrors (otokodate)

HISTORY

Legend has it that the prosperous City of the Rich Frog was founded by a mischievous spirit-frog from Chikushudo, the realm of animals. Historians scoff at such a notion on the rare occasions when they bother to acknowledge the city at all, insisting that the tale is nothing more than a colorful and apocryphal story told to lend an air of mystery to an otherwise dismal township of ronin. Those with more objectivity, however, note that the Kaeru family has succeeded over the centuries not only because of their quick wit and ruthlessness, but also thanks to a seemingly endless supply of good fortune.

The exact date of the founding of the Machi-Kanshisha, enforcement arm of the Kaeru "family," is unknown. The group was founded ostensibly as a means for the Kaeru to police the City of the Rich Frog and enforce their laws; it has never been a secret that prosperous cities without strict regulation of their population tend to be absorbed by the clans "for the city's own good." It was a successful gambit: the City of the Rich Frog is one of the largest and most orderly cities outside the borders of clan holdings in the Empire.

The House of the Golden Frog is very nearly as old as the order of the Machi-Kanshisha itself. A few short years after the order's founding, the ruling members of the Kaeru realized that by placing hand-picked operatives within the Machi-Kanshisha, they could conceal their own covert operatives within a legitimate authoritative body that was perceived as honorable and just. This was exactly the sort of cover that would afford the Kaeru's minions complete secrecy and autonomy.

The Kaeru quickly constructed a small number of dojo throughout the city and assigned each member of the Machi-Kanshisha to one of them. One of the smallest and least obtrusive of these, the House of the Golden Frog, was designated as the training grounds for the Kaeru's secret operatives.

During the course of the Kaeru's lordship over the City of the Rich Frog, this particular branch of the Machi-Kanshisha has performed the unpleasant tasks necessary to ensure the Kaeru remain in power and prosperous. These ronin are extremely efficient, extremely loyal, and extremely well paid. Although the Kaeru prefer to keep their operatives private, they occasionally undertake missions on behalf of other parties. The Kaeru always represent themselves as having contacts with groups that can perform these tasks, never actually revealing that the group in question is a subset of their own family.

TRADITION

The foremost tradition of the House of the Golden Frog is secrecy. Though its students may live, fight, and die alongside other members of the Machi-Kanshisha, they are not truly members of that organization: they are the secret hand of the Kaeru family, and nothing more. To prove their loyalty to the Kaeru above all else, each member of the House of the Golden Frog must steal something from one other member of the Machi-Kanshisha somewhere in the city. Any who are caught are disavowed by the dojo, which only tests the member in question's loyalty to the Kaeru. Those who remain silent are rescued from whatever punishment they face and sent to serve the family's interests elsewhere in the Empire. Captures members who are considered a risk for divulging sensitive information usually die in captivity, although the cause is always accidental.

TRAINING

The training at the House of the Golden Frog mirrors the training at the other dojo of the Machi-Kanshisha. The concealment of the Kaeru's operatives is a fruitless endeavor unless they are indistinguishable from their brothers in arms. As such, they are trained in various forms of combat, both lethal and non-lethal, with a particular focus on the group's signature weaponry: the bo and the long steel pipe from which the Machi-Kanshisha take their name. They are also learn diplomatic and strongarm tactics, to better deal with troublesome merchants or those who make trouble for the Kaeru.

It is the secondary training of the House of the Golden Frog that marks this branch of the Machi-Kanshisha. The arts of moving without detection, of entering and leaving a building with no trace, and of killing without leaving any sign of violence are all taught to the recruits, who, if history is any indicator, are willing and enthusiastic students.

SENSEI

Unlike the majority of the Machi-Kanshisha, those ronin instructed at the House of the Golden Frog are taught by actual members of the Kaeru family. This is not public knowledge, and there is always a ronin who serves as a figurehead sensei so that the rest of the Machi-Kanshisha will not realize that those being trained at the House of the Golden Frog are any different from the rest of their number.

KAERU KENKO

Sensei of the Machi-Kanshisha [Ninja 7/Fighter 6; The Poisoned Frog, Insight Rank 3]

A widely recognized member of the Machi-Kanshisha, Kaeru Kenko is known throughout the City of the Rich Frog as a gruff and straightforward individual who is an effective peacekeeper. No one who has ever met Kenko would suspect for a moment that he is a master of stealth and deception.

Kenko has the final word on which ronin are selected to be trained at his dojo, and observes new recruits for several weeks before deciding which ones are suitable. He chooses only those who are honorable enough to perform the services for which they are paid, yet not so honorable that they object to the occasionally unsavory nature of the missions they perform.

Rules Notes: Kenko has very high levels of Bluff and Intimidate, with which he maintains his façade as an unpleasant but honorable authority figure. Unknown to most, he also has a variety of stealth related abilities that serve him well in his dual capacity as the sensei of the Kaeru enforcers.

ADVANCED RONIN TRAINING

THE POISONED FROG IRON PIPE TECHNIQUE FEAT

You have learned the secret of striking a debilitating wound that causes great pain and distracts those who suffer it. By clouting an unsuspecting opponent with your iron pipe, you can end fights before they begin.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +6, Dex 13+, Weapon Focus (machi-kanshisha pipe).

Effect: For every five points by which your attack roll exceeds a flat-footed opponent's AC, he suffers a -1 penalty to all attack rolls for the next three rounds. Your attack must be made with a machi-kanshisha pipe and must inflict at least 1 point of damage in order for this penalty to take effect.

THE POISONED FROG IRON PIPE TECHNIQUE FEAT

Type: Otokodate (Machi-Kanshisha)

Required Traits: Agility 3

Required Skills: Commerce 2, Intimidation or Sincerity 3, Stealth 3

Other Requirements: Obligation (Kaeru family), Patron (Kaeru family)

Location: City of the Rich Frog

Technique: The Poisoned Frog (4 points) — The students of the Golden Frog are taught to strike from the shadows, exploiting their enemy's weaknesses to devastating effect. Whenever the bushi attacks a foe that does not realize he is there (and therefore has a TN to be hit of 5 + armor), he can inflict a painful wound that distracts the foe. For every successful raise the bushi makes on the attack roll, his foe suffers a -5 penalty to all attack rolls for one round. This attack must be made with a machi-kanshisha pipe, and must inflict at least 1 Wound to take effect.

TEMPLE OF THE ORDER OF TENGEN

"The Imperial families are the foundation upon which the Empire is built. They are the hands and the will of the Emperor himself. And we, in turn, are their eyes and their ears. It is the information we gather in their names that ultimately brings order to Rokugan."

— Shosuro Chian, head of the Order of Tengen

Classes: Monk, Ninja

Schools: Shinden Tengen (Monk Temple)

HISTORY

Virtually every city, village, or township throughout the Empire has at least one shrine. The citizens of Rokugan are a pious people who know full well the penalties for blasphemy or neglect toward the Celestial Heavens. Monks are so common, in fact, that few truly notice them. Although respected and admired, monks are nearly as invisible in Rokugan as are members of the eta class.

When a new shrine or temple is constructed in a village, it is reason for celebration. Accordingly, when the populace of Mizen Mura discovered that a shrine to Tengen, the Fortune of Writing and Literature, was being constructed within their town, they were very pleased. A village can never have the favor of too many Fortunes, after all. They assisted in its construction and made all the proper offerings to Tengen, and once the shrine was finished they promptly forgot about it, as the vast majority of them were and remain illiterate.

This was exactly the point of the shrine's construction. Shosuro Chian, a former agent of the Scorpion Clan who retired after the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, acquired the funds to construct the shrine from the Otomo family, who asked for his assistance in creating a group to gather information on their behalf. He specifically chose Tengen as the subject of the shrine's worship because few peasants regularly paid homage to the Fortune. Chian wanted the shrine to honor an obscure Fortune, because that way he would have fewer visitors. Inconvenient crowds of worshipers might notice the shrine's true purpose: espionage.

As soon as the shrine was complete, Chian left it in the care of a few trusted brothers and went on an journey, visiting shrines throughout the Imperial and unaligned lands. In each location, he looked for the same qualities in the monks he found: lingering loyalty to the Imperial families, unshakable faith in the Celestial Order, and a willingness to sacrifice oneself for the greater good. Whenever Chian found a monk with these traits, he brought him into his fold and relocated the monk to Shinden Tengen.

When he had an appropriate number of followers, Chian revealed to his monks the nature of their mission. Some were taken aback, but none balked and all eventually capitulated. Chian trained his men in the physical aspects of stealth and infiltration, and together they devoted the gifts they had developed during their time with the Brotherhood of Shinsei to Chian's cause. Chian christened his new sect the Order of Tengen.

What many do not realize is that Chian did not select the patron of his shrine arbitrarily. The monks revere Tengen as they encode their findings with incredibly complex ciphers for correspondence with the Otomo, and they compose elaborate plays that conceal their findings for their records.

TRADITION

As a monastic sect, the Order of Tengen follows monastic traditions into which they seamlessly insert their own agenda. In their role as monks of Tengen, for example, members of the Order travel all across the Empire to observe and record the works of playwrights everywhere. Naturally, they simultaneously gather intelligence for their own purposes, but their interest in new plays and works of literature is genuine. The monks even spread these new works of literature abroad, and conceal within them sensitive information for correspondence and archiving purposes.

Meditation and study of the Tao are as essential to training at Shinden Tengen as in any monastery in Rokugan. Granted, the philosophical ramifications of these practices has been altered somewhat by the indoctrination at the shrine, but the secrets of the monastery's training can only be unleashed through proper elemental attunement.

TRAINING

Shinden Tengen trains its monks in exactly the same way as countless other shrines and monasteries across the face of Rokugan. New members perform exercises that build mental and physical fortitude. Philosophy is an important part of the training, and is the first place initiates are exposed to the temple's dogma. Fortunately, the Order is careful in its selection of members, and Chian rarely invites individuals that are not already predisposed toward the temple's message.

The brothers of Shinden Tengen are trained in meditation and contemplation, as their ultimate goal is to achieve enlightenment. They are taught that all balance and harmony in the world stems from the Celestial Order, and that only by aiding in its maintenance can they truly experience enlightenment. Toward this end, the brothers of the Order of Tengen learn oratory, so they can engage in manipulative philosophical discussions. These exchanges inevitably humble their opponents by reminding them of their subservience to the Emperor and his family.

Finally, the brothers are trained in stealth and deception. Although dishonorable, these talents serve the greater good because they allow the Order to gather information that the Imperial families can use to better maintain the sacred Celestial Order. A dishonor committed in the name of establishing a sacred, heavenly harmony is a burden the monks of Shinden Tengen are willing to bear without complaint.

SENSEI

The Order of Tengen was organized largely by the genius of Shosuro Chian, and he has served as its chief sensei for the entire duration of the organization's existence. Inevitably, he will have to step down as age begins to dull his faculties. When that time comes, he will select a new sensei from among his students. For now, however, he shows no signs of losing his edge and indeed few signs of aging at all.

SHOSURO CHIAN

Head of the Order of Tengen [Monk 4/Ninja 12; Shosuro Butei 5, Shinden Tengen]

Shosuro Chian once loyally served his clan and family as a shadow warrior of the highest order. His service came with a price, however, and he very nearly lost his soul to the Lying Darkness. It was only that entity's destruction at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate that spared him such a fate. In the aftermath of that battle, Chian was weakened both in body and spirit, and sought solace in the life of a monk until approached about the possibility of creating the Order of Tengen.

Chian has single-handedly made this notion a reality, arranging for the construction of a new shrine to serve as their headquarters and hand-picking the individuals who would become his agents. He is the life and soul of the Order, and the monks look to him for leadership and guidance. Chian does not necessarily believe in the philosophy with which he indoctrinates his brothers, but he relishes the challenge that the Order's mission represents. The challenge is all that is important to Shosuro Chian.

Rules Notes: Chian has a large number of stealth related abilities, including extremely high levels of Gather Information and Move Silently. During his years as a monk, he has also learned a wide variety of kiho and other Void-related feats and abilities.



ADVANCED TENGEN TRAINING

EYES OF THE WIND [KIHO TECHNIQUE FEAT]

You may merge your senses with the wind, magnifying your perception to superhuman levels.

Prerequisites: Concentration (8 ranks), Cleansing Spirit, Depths of the Void, Void Use.

Effect: By spending a Void Point, you may extend the range of your sight and hearing to one mile. You must make a Concentration check (DC 25) to focus your senses on any one point within that range.

WHISPERS ON THE WIND

KIHO TECHNIQUE FEAT

You may influence others through the kami, making them more susceptible to your social overtures.

Prerequisites: Monk, inkyo, or shugenja level 8+, Concentration (6 ranks), Depths of the Void, Void Use.

Effect: By spending a Void Point, you gain a +10 enhancement bonus to all Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks for 20 minutes.

SHINDEN TENGEN

Starting Honor: 1, plus 5 boxes

Skills: Courtier, Etiquette, Investigation, Meditation, Shintao, Stealth, any one skill.

Benefit: Monks of Shinden Tengen may learn and use kiho as if their Air ring were two ranks higher.

EYES OF THE WIND (NEW KIHO)

Type: Aiki

Mastery: 6

The monks of the Order of Tengen realize that their greatest weapons are their own senses. With proper training, their powers of perception can exceed those of ordinary men. With the expenditure of a Void Point and a successful Void/Meditation roll (TN 15), the monk may lapse into a trance and merge his senses with the wind itself. The monk may project his senses to any point within a number of miles equal to his Air ring. From this point, the monk may see and hear anything that would normally be visible or audible to normal human senses. The monk must make another Void/Meditation roll after five minutes to maintain the trance, and every five minutes after that. The TN increases by 5 on every roll after the first.

A dangerous drawback to Eyes of the Wind is that a monk's traveling senses are particularly susceptible to magic. Any damage-causing spell cast within range of the monk's senses has a 50% chance of affecting him as well as the spell's other targets. Magical wards (including Evil Ward) and protection against magical scrying foil the effects of this kiho.

WHISPERS ON THE WIND (NEW KIHO)

Type: Aiki

Mastery: 6

The heightened state of awareness possessed by many monks allows them to subtly influence the elemental kami around them. The creative monks of the Order of Tengen sometimes convince the air kami to subconsciously influence others' perception of the monks. The subtle whisperings of the kami make others view the monk favorably, and become far more likely to trust the monk's word. By spending a Void Point, the monk may roll four additional dice for any Sincerity or Courtier rolls. This effect lasts for approximately 20 minutes.

FAVORABLE TIDES INN

(HEADQUARTERS OF THE SCALES OF THE CARP)

"The war between the Crab and Crane is irrelevant. It is the Crab who have protected us, equipped us, guided us and rewarded us all these years. It is the Crab whom we have served, and whom we shall continue to serve."

— Yasuki Jinn-Kuen, in consultation with Hida Shara.

"Yasuki Hachi is the daimyo of the Yasuki according to Imperial decree. The Scales of the Carp have always served the Yasuki. If the Clan War and War of Spirits did not change this, neither will the Yasuki War."

— Yasuki Jinn-Kuen, in consultation with Doji Kazo later that same day.

Classes: Courtier, Expert, Rogue

Schools: The Carp Smiles (otokodate), The Silent Current (otokodate), Yasuki Merchant

HISTORY

Prior to the defection of the Yasuki family from the Crane Clan to the Crab in the fourth century, the Crab were notoriously difficult to trade with. The Hida were gruff, unpleasant, and impatient, the Kaiu were too interested in the quality and construction of every single item they traded, the Kuni were too unnerving, and the Hiruma too unwilling to forsake their duties for base mercantile interests. When the Yasuki joined, their charismatic and disarming merchants soon became the trade representatives of the Crab. It was an equitable arrangement for all parties concerned.

As might be expected, the war over their secession made the Yasuki unwelcome in Crane lands. This was unfortunate for the Crab, because trade with more distant clans was considerably more expensive. A particularly wily trader among the Yasuki noticed, however, that while the Crane did not appreciate ronin very much, they still traded with them in their ports, albeit at a disadvantage. If the Crab were not wanted in Crane lands, perhaps ronin traders might secretly conduct trade on their behalf.

The Yasuki first met with a selection of devious ronin smugglers at the Favorable Tides Inn in Sunda Mizu Mura a few decades after the first Yasuki War. The ronin were skeptical at first, but the charismatic Yasuki and their large sums of koku quickly dispelled all fear. Within months, Crane goods were finding their way into Crab ports at slightly elevated prices that were still well beneath the cost to ship the same cargo south from the Phoenix lands.

In the intervening centuries, the Scales of the Carp have expanded their operations somewhat, but until recently their mission has remained the same: trade with the Crane to benefit the Crab. With the confusion over the line of succession in the Yasuki family, however, the ultimate loyalties of the Scales of the Carp have become decidedly murkier. The current patron of the Scales, a particularly devious individual named Yasuki Jinn-Kuen, has decided to play both sides against the middle until the war is resolved. At that point, the group will determine which side offers them the most profitable arrangement and make their decision accordingly.

TRADITION

Even for an association of ronin merchants, the Scales of the Carp are strangely without tradition. They may embrace a practice for years, then abandon as soon as it becomes unprofitable. Nothing is sacred to them save the allure of wealth, and if they can be said to have any single driving tradition, it would be to always exploit others to the fullest extent possible for the benefit of the group.

TRAINING

The training of a member of the Scales is very much a hands-on experience. Potential members, once screened for suitability, are required to masquerade as the assistants of current members or even as peasant laborers in an existing member's entourage. This allows them to observe first-hand the practices and methods of the organization without putting the group at risk. After all, if the Great Clans find a ronin merchant barely worth noticing, how much attention will his servants draw?

Experienced members of the Scales of the Carp who are not yet ready to negotiate on their own instead gather intelligence. These operatives spy on the Crane and any other potential trading partners. In recent years, they have also been involved in sabotage efforts of clan forces, although to a lesser extent because of their desire to avoid attention.

SENSEI

The title "sensei" is a bit of misnomer with regard to the Scales of the Carp, as they are not particularly militant. The group's leader makes the difficult choices regarding trade, negotiation, the economics of the group, and the sabotage of foes' assets. It is the role of the leader to lead by example.

YASUKI JINN-KUEN

Patron of the Scales of the Carp [Courtier 4/Rogue 8/Mastermind 3; Yasuki Merchant 4, The Carp Smiles, The Silent Current, Insight Rank 6]

Jinn-Kuen distinguished himself as a shrewd and manipulative businessman at a very young age. His skills attracted the attention of several important people, and within five years of his gempukku he had been earmarked by the Yasuki family as a potential head of the Scales of the Carp... and by the Coin Sect of the Kolat as a possible member. Less than two years later, he was a member of both organizations.

The Yasuki War has given Jinn-Kuen license to implement some of the more ruthless practices he has long held in check. By manipulating the Yasuki in both clans, he has increased the group's income tenfold while simultaneously making both the Crab and the Crane more dependent upon the Scales for their trading needs.

Rules Notes: Jinn-Kuen is extremely manipulative, tactful, and devious. He is quite charismatic and has very high ranks in most Charisma-based skills.



ADVANCED CARP TRAINING

THE SILENT CURRENT IRONM TECHNIQUE FEAT

You can assess a foe's personality and weaknesses from a simple business negotiation.

Prerequisite: Base attack bonus +4 or higher, Profession (merchant) (4 ranks), Sense Motive (6 ranks), Spot (8 ranks)

Effect: With a successful Spot check (DC 10 + the opponent's total level) versus an opponent with whom you have spoken for at least five minutes, you can gain keen insight into their weaknesses, conferring a one-time +4 insight bonus to any future skill check versus the same opponent. You may choose instead to gain a +2 insight bonus to your next attack against that opponent.

THE SILENT CURRENT IRONM TECHNIQUE

Type: Otokodate (Scales of the Carp)

Required Traits: Awareness 3

Required Skills: Commerce 4

Other Requirements: Obligation (Scales of the Carp)

Location: Sunda Mizu Mura

Technique: The Silent Current (3 points) — The merchants of the Scales of the Carp are extremely observant and can gain valuable information from others simply by interacting with them during a business deal. Whenever one of the Scales conducts business with an opponent, he may make a contested Commerce/Awareness roll. For every three points by which the Scales merchant beats his opponent, he gains one Free Raise to be used on any future Commerce, Intimidation, Stealth, or attack roll made against that target or those who serve him (such as yojimbo, subordinate merchants, or peasant workers). These Raises must be used within a week's time or they are lost, and the Scales merchant may not accumulate more Free Raises than twice his Void.

THE HIDDEN DAGGER DOJO OF THE TORTOISE CLAN

"There are tasks that the Emperor must have performed that cannot be allowed to sully his name. It is our privilege to perform these duties for him. Our honor must be sacrificed so that his remains unblemished."

— Tortoise daimyo Kasuga Taigen

Classes: Fighter, Ninja, Rogue

Schools: Tortoise Bushi School

HISTORY

The origins of the Tortoise Clan are shrouded in mystery. After the devastating events of the Battle at White Stag, the Emperor banished all gaijin from the Empire on penalty of death. The remaining gaijin forces in Otsan Uchi were to be

IRON RICH DOJO
CURRENT FORM

executed for the enormity of their crimes. A controversial shugenja called Agasha Kasuga intervened, however, and transported the gaijin refugees north beyond the Empire's borders with the help of several Yasuki sea merchants whose craft he commandeered.

Outraged, the Imperial Court called for Kasuga's blood, and the Emperor himself issued an order for Kasuga's execution. Upon his return, Kasuga willingly surrendered to the Emerald Magistrates and requested only that a scroll be sent to the Emperor. Because of the nature of the situation, the magistrates inspected the scroll for any danger and, finding none, made the Emperor aware of its presence. In his wisdom, the Emperor wished to see it.

The full contents of that scroll remain unknown, but it must have at least contained a request from Kasuga for a private audience with the Emperor. It was a bold, audacious request, but one that was granted. The two met in secrecy for several hours, and when Kasuga emerged, he had been granted leave to form the Tortoise Clan in the city of the Emperor himself.

Naturally, many in the Empire were stunned by this development. Agasha Kasuga had gone from the brink of execution to the head of a new Minor Clan in a matter of hours. Countless samurai followed Kasuga's progress as he began forming the core of his clan. When it was discovered that Kasuga gathered as many peasants to his banner as samurai, most decided he was either a fool or a madman and promptly chose to ignore the existence of the Tortoise altogether. It has remained so during the centuries since that time, and shows little sign of changing.

This is exactly as Agasha Kasuga intended. He alone recognized the ongoing threat that the gaijin represented, and the horrible price Rokugan's ignorance of their ways had exacted. By delivering the gaijin from certain death, Kasuga forged inroads into their society that he could use at a later date. He gathered a sizable amount of information during his short stay there and presented it to the Emperor, including the information that there existed societies north of Rokugan that could conceivably pose a threat to the Empire's stability. Kasuga proposed to create a group that served the Emperor by maintaining contact with these gaijin, gathering information on them and spreading disinformation about Rokugan whenever possible. Should another conflict such as White Stag erupt in the future, the Empire would be prepared.

The Tortoise Clan has served the Empire for centuries, quietly performing the unsavory and dishonorable tasks that are nonetheless vital for the ongoing security of Rokugan. They are overlooked and unappreciated by the samurai of the Empire, which only makes it easier for the Tortoise to perform their duties unseen. The transfer of power from the Hantei dynasty to that of Toturi was a relatively peaceful one, for Toturi was quick to recognize the tactical benefit of reconnais-

sance. Since his death, the Tortoise have thrown their lot in with Hantei Naseru, as he seems most likely to support the purpose and philosophy of the Tortoise Clan.

The Hidden Dagger dojo is concealed within the tunnels beneath Otosan Uchi, where it was created in the decades following the clan's creation. It has never been discovered in all the centuries it has been there, and it both serves to train Tortoise samurai and conceal their contraband.

TRADITION

The Tortoise have but one immutable tradition: no one outside the clan, save the Emperor, must ever know of their true purpose. This is not to preserve the honor of the Tortoise Clan, for they have little use for honor. Were anyone to learn of the acts they commit in the name of the Emperor, however, not even the seppuku of the entire clan could make up for the stain upon his name. Because of this, even well-intentioned Emerald Magistrates have been quietly and discreetly eliminated to preserve the honor of the throne.

Although not a tradition of the dojo itself, it is customary for the daimyo of the Tortoise to present himself to each new Emperor during the first week of his coronation. The daimyo explains the clan's true purpose to the new Emperor in private, revealing the wealth of information the clan has gathered on the various gaijin societies with whom they interact. Each time, the daimyo offers his seppuku to the Emperor to atone for the clan's violation of Imperial law. The offer is rarely accepted, and the Tortoise Clan has never been publicly rebuked for performing their duty to their Emperor.

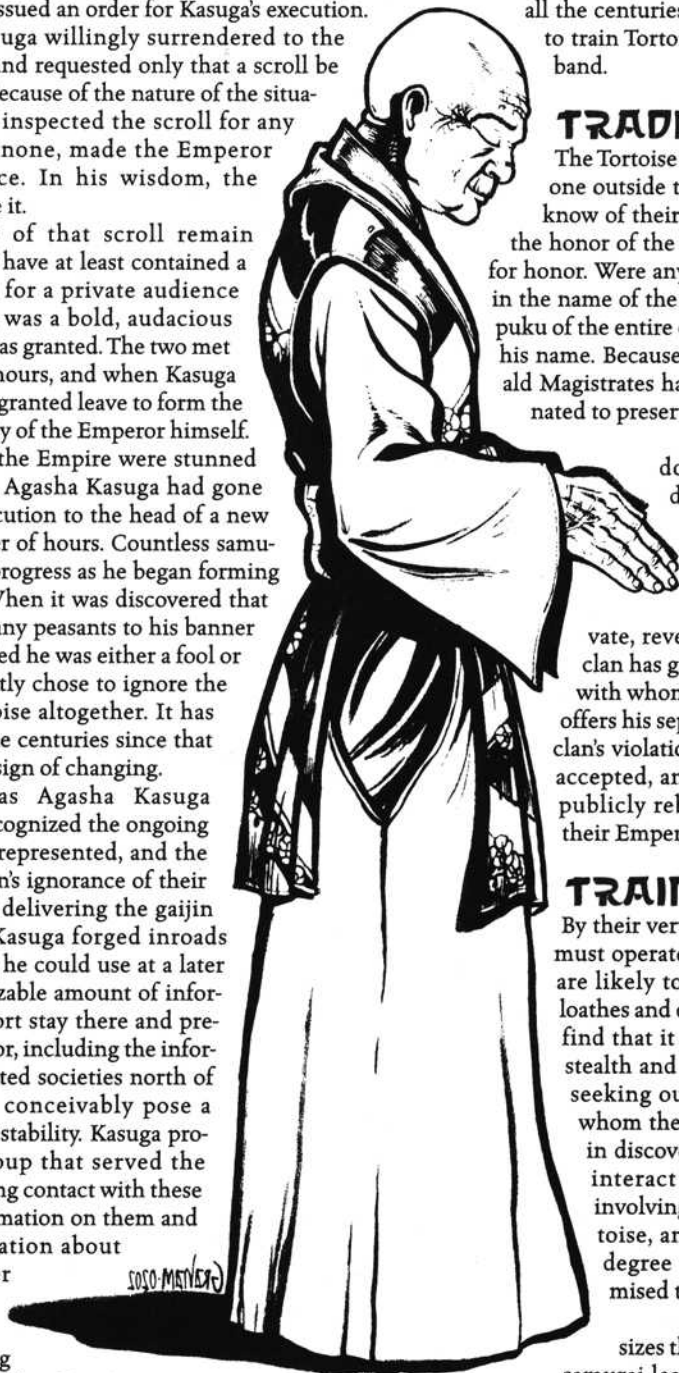
TRAINING

By their very nature, samurai of the Tortoise Clan must operate covertly. Any who attract attention are likely to incur the wrath of an Empire that loathes and despises them. As a result, the Tortoise find that it benefits them to train in the arts of stealth and deception. This is of use not only in seeking out information from the gaijin with whom the Tortoise frequently interact, but also in discovering to what extent the Great Clans interact with those same gaijin. Anything involving outsiders is the province of the Tortoise, and few among the clans suspect the degree to which the Tortoise have compromised their security.

The Hidden Dagger Dojo emphasizes the art of hiding in plain sight. Tortoise samurai learn to be invisible to others by their clothes, weapons, actions and demeanor. When overlooked by others, they can operate in total secrecy.

SENSEI

Whenever a new sensei of the Hidden Dagger Dojo must be selected, the duty falls to the clan daimyo rather than the outgoing sensei. The daimyo is always intimately involved in every aspect of the clan's activities and is therefore in the best position to select the most qualified candidate from the ranks.



KASUGA SHIRIKO

Sensei of the Hidden Dagger Dojo [Ninja 12/Rogue 4; Tortoise Bushi 4]

Shiriko is the elder sister of Kasuga Taigen, daimyo of the Tortoise Clan. She chose to forgo her birthright as daimyo in order to continue serving the clan in the field, where she relishes her role as a master of espionage against the Great Clans. She only agreed to become the sensei of the Hidden Dagger so that she might pass on her skill to others. She still undertakes delicate missions at the request of her brother, but only those that she feels will challenge her.

Rules Notes: Shiriko's abilities are geared toward being able to operate stealthily and strike without warning. If she gains the upper hand with an opponent who does not see her approaching, they rarely survive the experience. Shiriko also has a surprising array of diplomatic skills as well, trained as she is to deal with gaijin if such a thing proves necessary.

ADVANCED TORTOISE TRAINING

THE WAY OF THE TORTOISE

TORTOISE TECHNIQUE FEAT

You have been trained in the use of peasant weaponry, an unexpected threat that many of your opponents will not be prepared to face.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +1 or higher, Dex 14+

Effect: Choose a specific weapon from the following list when this feat is selected: jitte, kama, nunchaku, sai, jo, tonfa, or bo. When utilizing your chosen peasant weapon, you gain a +2 competence bonus to Initiative checks and +1 competence bonus to attack rolls.

Special: This feat counts as Weapon Focus for the purposes of feat prerequisites. You may take this feat multiple times. Each time it applies to a different weapon.

SHELL OF THE TORTOISE

TORTOISE TECHNIQUE FEAT

You serve the Emperor, making it difficult for honorable opponents to bring themselves to attack you.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +6 or higher, Honor of 1 or higher

Effect: Opponents who are honorable (with an honor of 3 or higher) cannot attack you without a successful Will save (DC 10 + their honor \times 2). They may still attempt to grapple or subdue you, but they may not cause you any non-subdual damage. If you attack first, this benefit does not apply.

TRUTH OF AGES

TORTOISE TECHNIQUE FEAT

You have learned that by sacrificing your personal honor, you bring glory and honor to the name of the Emperor himself.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +8 or higher, Way of the Tortoise, Void Use

Effect: You may sacrifice an Honor point (see *Rokugan*, page 62) in order to gain a +2 competence bonus to any one skill check, saving throw, or attack roll. Up to two Honor

points may be sacrificed per round in this manner. You may spend Void Points on the same roll to further increase the result in the normal manner.

THE TORTOISE BUSHI SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Perception

Honor: 1, plus 5 boxes

Skills: Athletics, Defense, Jiujutsu, Nofujutsu, any 3 Merchant or Low skills.

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Fortune's Favor

Tortoise samurai have learned from their association with the lower classes. Even though they bear the daisho, they are dangerously effective with the weapons of the heimin. At the time the bushi learns this technique, he chooses one peasant weapon as his primary weapon. When attacking, his weapon skill with his primary weapon is considered to be two ranks higher than it actually is.

Rank 2: The Path of One

Tortoise samurai understand that honor must sometimes be sacrificed along the path to enlightenment. The bushi may sacrifice a point of Honor in order to gain an additional die (rolled, not kept) for any use of a non-High skill. A number of Honor points equal to his School Rank may be sacrificed in this manner per roll. These extra dice must be used immediately.

Rank 3: The Shell of the Tortoise

Though few understand it, the Tortoise have the blessing of the Emperor and must be respected. When any opponent of Honor 2 or higher attacks the bushi, the attacker must add twice his own Honor to the Tortoise's TN to Be Hit.

Rank 4: Hide in Plain Sight

Unseen and overlooked, the Tortoise may often catch their prey unaware and attack with surprising ferocity. The Tortoise may now make two attacks per round.

Rank 5: The Truth of Ages

The Tortoise has learned the ultimate lesson: only the honor of the Emperor matters. When performing any action that would normally cause a loss of Honor, the bushi may sacrifice an Honor point to add 2k1 to the roll. This bonus is cumulative with the expenditure of any Void Points. He does not lose further Honor for this action, and he may not make a Test of Honor to prevent the loss of Honor.

OTHER GROUPS

The Empire of Rokugan is a vast land with a varied and industrious people. In the shadows of this great society, dozens of small groups could be qualified by their actions as ninja. Most are so small that they will never play a role in the history of the Empire, being relegated instead to the affairs of their local area and enforcing their own limited agendas. From the fire-fighter gangs of Ryoko Owari Toshi who disguise themselves as ninja to mask their crimes, to the tiny sect of ronin formerly of the Shinjo family in the Unicorn lands who do everything possible to subtly undermine the authority of the Moto, these groups can easily become the foil of any honorable samurai or the allies of a dishonorable one.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THE ART OF SILENCE



Hida Toshiro fidgeted restlessly in the cool night breeze. Of all the military posts to hold during a time of war, this had to be the least satisfying. Guarding a supply station along the military route was no place for a true warrior. Toshiro should be on the front lines, cutting down the Crane like the true Crab he was. As it was, he had not so much as drawn his blade except during his daily kata. It was infuriating.

Somewhere off in the distance, Toshiro heard a rustling in the bushes. He grimaced in irritation, then stalked off into the brush near the edge of the torchlight to have a look. It was nothing, of course, just as it had been the last dozen times he had checked a strange noise. The movement of the Crab armies had disturbed the local wildlife for weeks on end, and the night was often full of the sounds of their movement and panicked cries.

As Toshiro rustled ineffectively through the rough underbrush, he failed to notice a phantom samurai hanging from the tree over a dozen feet above his head. The navy blue gi it wore made it all but invisible where it hung, completely still and silent, from the tree's highest branches. The Crab far beneath him grunted inarticulately and turned to go back to camp.

It was time.

The phantom released its hold on the upper limbs, dropping through the space between its perch and the ground deftly. It twisted to land on its feet with only the slightest noise, the same noise a breeze might make scraping through the loose dirt of a lightly traveled road.

The sound caused the Crab to slow and begin to turn, his hand on his weapon. It seemed he was a true warrior after all, to have heard such a slight noise and recognize the danger it signified. It mattered little. By the time the Hida had finished turning, the phantom had closed the distance between them and drawn its blade. A quick, deep strike cut through the Crab's armor, traveling

upward to his skull. He died with a look of surprise and annoyance.

Even as the Hida fell, a second Crab warrior exited his simple hut with sleep-filled eyes. It was not yet time for the changing of the watch, so this one must have needed to answer the call of nature. In the few seconds it took him to realize what he was seeing in the torchlight, the phantom had drawn and hurled its wakizashi across the space between them. It embedded itself deep in the Crab's throat. He tried to call for help, but could only choke feebly and spit blood as he fell. When his body struck the ground, there was nothing but stillness throughout the camp. Retrieving his wakizashi, the phantom moved deeper into the hastily constructed village, each step measured and totally silent. As it moved, it drew several long sticks of powder packed in rice paper from its obi.

A week later, the Crab generals on the front lines received word that one of their supply depots had burned to the ground. No fighting had been reported, although the Katu investigating the scene reported that the fire seemed to have started with the use of gunpowder incendiaries, a blatant violation of Imperial law.

The Daidoji proffered their most sincere apologies at the unfortunate incident, and expressed their regrets that the Crab would be unable to face them on the glorious field of battle. They even offered to help the Crab find the saboteurs, as a measure of fostering peace between them.

There are those in Rokugan whose practices would mark them as ninja to an objective observer, but who would be greatly offended at such a term. They consider themselves the servants of their clans, men and women who sacrifice their personal honor in the name of the greater good. Stealth, espionage, assassination, and deception are their stock in trade.

Every Great Clan has members who employ stealth tactics, but some of these samurai have so specialized in covert engagements that they do little else. The Scorpion Clan, of course, is well known for its underhanded operatives. Other clans consider themselves above such tactics, but most of their samurai do not know of or wish to acknowledge their more shadowy servants.

MOUNTAIN'S SHADOW DOJO

(DOJO OF THE DAIDOJI HARRIERS)

"I would sooner face a weakened foe than one at full strength. It is not a matter of honor, merely one of pragmatism. The Crane's armies are outnumbered by those of our enemies. Every Crane soldier whose life is spared by Daidoji tactics is one more to face the next foe."

— Doji Kurohito, Champion of the Crane

Classes: Fighter, Ninja, Rogue

Schools: Daidoji Harrier, Daidoji Yojimbo

HISTORY

According to the records of the Crane Clan, a castle christened Shiro Giji was built in the provinces of the Daidoji family in the year 329 by the renowned architect Kaiu Anou of the Crab. Shiro Giji was to be a center of culture for the Daidoji as well as a storehouse to equip the Crane armies. As such, it was designed with multiple sub-levels that extended deep underground, a rare and very expensive practice that the Crane normally eschewed. Shiro Giji hosted several small Winter Court celebrations on behalf of the Crane, but its promise was tragically cut short when it was gutted by fire and burned to the ground a mere ten months after its construction. A fanatical ronin, formerly a Lion, was executed for this horrendous crime. A shrine to Lady Doji was built upon the ruins in memory of the humble samurai who lost their lives trying to douse the flames.

This is, of course, not the entire truth. Shiro Giji did burn to the ground, and a ronin was executed for arson, but these events were placed into motion even before construction of the castle began. While the fires blazed, over a dozen Asahina shugenja concealed themselves in the castle's sub-levels, using powerful magic to ensure the blaze did not extend to the multiple basements and summoning air spirits to prevent the suffocation of those trapped within. After the fire had died, the Daidoji publicly condemned the act. The ronin whom they executed was in truth innocent of the arson, but happened to be in Daidoji lands without proper paperwork. No Crane died within the fire, all having been warned well in advance to seek refuge in the underground levels. The shrine constructed on Shiro Giji's ashes had several secret entrances to the lower levels. The Daidoji who supposedly died in the fire were all soldiers without families, who relocated to the underground castle to help supply and furnish a hidden stronghold for the Crane.

Now completely hidden from the Empire, the Daidoji began to train their most valuable and trusted agents: the soldiers trained to weaken, harass, and demoralize enemy forces prior to their engagement with the main body of the Crane army. These troops have come to be known as the Harriers. Over the centuries, everyone outside the Crane, and many outside the Daidoji family, have forgotten that Shiro Giji ever existed. The creation and destruction of the castle is a mere footnote in the archives of history. Although many are aware of the strange tactics of the elite Daidoji forces, only a handful of high-ranking Crane know where the Daidoji train these troops. Most erroneously believe this force simply to be an extension of the Daidoji armies themselves, with a penchant for stealth and an eagerness to attempt peculiar tactics. They are gravely mistaken. The methods of the Daidoji Harriers are a precise science, perfected in the subterranean castle dojo.

Although the students of Mountain's Shadow Dojo have been employed in conflicts throughout Rokugan's history, they were never more necessary than during the Clan War. Daidoji Harriers sabotaged the armies of the Lion and Crab, as well as the Shadowlands forces following the banner of the False Hoturi. If it had not been for the Daidoji, it is quite possible these forces could have moved through Crane lands unimpeded, resulting in the clan's utter destruction before the Clan War was concluded. Even with their aid, the Crane took heavy losses.

The years following the Clan War saw a continued reliance upon the Daidoji. They were instrumental in the survival of the family during the brief but violent civil war between the Doji and the Daidoji families, they supplied considerable manpower for the clans' united march to the city of Voltur-num deep inside the Shadowlands, and they protected the Crane lands from the worst depredations of the Steel Chrysanthemum's troops during the War of Spirits. The Daidoji are the military arm of the Crane Clan, and the students of Mountain's Shadow Dojo are the advance guard of the Daidoji.

Physically, the Mountain's Shadow Dojo appears to be a simple shrine to Lady Doji and various Crane ancestors. The handful of monks who tend to the shrine are exclusively retired Daidoji who have chosen to maintain the ongoing façade of their dojo. Whenever the Crane Champion has need of the Harriers (assuming that it is not an obvious threat which they have already identified), he or one of his personal attendants travels to the shrine to pray. Upon his departure, he leaves a single cherry blossom on the shrine's altar. The altar contains a large map of the Crane lands, ostensibly to honor the many ancestors from across the provinces — but whenever the blossom is placed, the Harriers are needed.

WHERE IS SHIRO GIJI?

On the map of the Empire (found in both *Rokugan* and the 2nd Edition *Game Master's Guide*), Shiro Giji is located in the foothills just west of Prosperous Plains City (CN5). To all outward appearances it is nothing more than a simple shrine, though a clever eye may note its defensible position. The monks point out that this is only natural, since the shrine was built on the ruins of an important military outpost.

TRADITION

The only consistent characteristic of the Mountain's Shadow Dojo is that the practices there are virtually the opposite of those taught in other Crane dojo. Where the Doji teach the virtues of purely honorable warfare, the sensei here season their lessons in bushido with more direct solutions. Where the Kakita teach the purity of single combat, the sensei at Mountain's Shadow teach their students to kill multiple foes quickly and silently. Where the Asahina preach peace, the Mountain's Shadow sensei prepare only for war.

Students of Mountain's Shadow are taught to avoid capture at any cost. They are, of course, well aware that their numbers are few and that their continued service to the clan is of paramount importance; however, if faced with certain capture, they will fight until death, or take their own lives rather than be questioned.

The Harriers have a secret language of hand signals and body movements that they use to communicate with one another in the field. They also use these gestures to identify fellow members of the group, for the school allows the Harriers to wear no obvious marks that denote the school's existence.

TRAINING

Students of Mountain's Shadow Dojo first learn the art of stealth. It is not something that comes easily to the mind of a samurai, but those who arrive there for study are hand-picked for, among other things, a willingness to embrace nontraditional practices. Stealth is the foundation of their training, because by their very nature they are a small group facing vastly superior numbers. If they are detected, they will be defeated.

Once students have mastered stealth, they begin a rigorous training regime that develops their ability to strike precisely. This allows them to target vital nerve clusters, holes in armor, or vulnerable spots such as the throat or arteries. Students of the Mountain's Shadow learn to kill with a single strike, for energy and time spent finishing an opponent with a second strike could have been used to fell another foe.

Students of Mountain's Shadow are also trained in the arts of sabotage, allowing them to disable siege engines or destroy large amounts of enemy supply in a short time. They undergo some instruction in the use of gaijin pepper (gunpowder) as well, though the Daidoji are always careful about when and how they employ this dangerous and highly illegal substance.

SENSEI

The chief sensei of Mountain's Shadow Dojo is one of the most powerful and influential members of the Daidoji family. When not fulfilling his duties at the dojo, the sensei is usually found at the side of the Daidoji daimyo, often presenting himself as a simple, low-ranking yojimbo. As a result, the sensei is in a position to assess potential foes without attracting undue attention.

DAIDOJI MIHOKO

Master Sensei of Mountain's Shadow Dojo
[Fighter 10/Ninja 7; Daidoji Harrier 5/Daidoji Yojimbo 1]

Now an aging warrior, Daidoji Mihoko was little more than a child when she first came to Mountain's Shadow. Mihoko reached her gem-pukku during the worst period of the War of Spirits. Pressed into service in a scouting party, she was the only survivor, presumed dead and left on the battlefield. Miraculously, she overcame her injuries and not only made her way back to her troops, but somehow managed to eliminate the entire spirit patrol that had killed her party, stalking them over the course of several days. She was instantly recruited for the Mountain's Shadow dojo by the Daidoji daimyo herself.

Mihoko has assumed the position as sensei through pure dedication and a phenomenal success rate. She has never failed in a mission, often exceeding the parameters of her task, and has the distinction of having never lost an operative under her command while in the field.

Rules Notes: Daidoji Mihoko obviously has significant modifiers for stealth skills. She also has an emphasis on feats and abilities that will allow her to increase the damage she deals when using sneak attack, and a nuanced mastery of sabotage.

MOUNTAIN'S SHADOW DOJO BENEFITS

The existence of the Mountain's Shadow dojo is unknown outside the Crane Clan. Outsiders therefore treat students of the school as they would any other Crane soldier. Few have any inkling of the threat they face when speaking to one of the Daidoji Harriers.



SOCIAL BENEFIT

None.

TRAINING BENEFIT

The Harriers learn that the first strike, if aimed correctly, can be the last strike of the battle.

Benefit: During the first round of combat only, you gain an additional +1 competence bonus to all attack rolls against flat-footed opponents.

Benefit: During the first round of combat, you gain a Free Raise against any foe who is unaware of your attack (TN 5 + armor).

NOTABLE STUDENTS

DAIDOJI ENAI

[Fighter 6/Ninja 4; Daidoji Harrier 3]

Enai is a member of the Harriers attached to the primary Crane armies. There, he advises the generals in the field on appropriate tactics against the Crab while gathering information for his brothers at Mountain's Shadow. The Harriers have managed several extremely successful strikes against the Crab forces due to information he has supplied, and many at the dojo whisper that one day he may be the master sensei.

Unknown to anyone, however, Enai is subtly trying to manipulate events in the war so that he will have the opportunity to be reassigned to a location where he might face his nemesis, Hida Kuoshi, in battle. Enai is a skilled duelist and is quite certain that if he can only have the opportunity, he can end his hated enemy's life once and for all. He has not yet begun to place his personal concerns against those of the clan, but with every day his anger toward Kuoshi builds.

ADVANCED DAIDOJI TRAINING

THE DAIDOJI HARRIERS

In each generation of Daidoji, a small handful of students are identified by their sensei as possessing the skills and resolve necessary to become a Harrier, the elite advance unit of the Daidoji family. These individuals are trained in the arts of stealth and ambush and in the methods of poison and striking to cripple a foe. In times of peace, the Harriers are used sparingly against bandits and troublesome incursions by enemy patrols. In times of war, however, they truly come into their own. Enemy sentries are killed in the night by unseen foes. Officers are cut down without warning. Cleverly disguised traps decimate entire patrols. Supplies are spoiled by animal carcasses or fire. These calamities can cost armies on the march days or even entire weeks, giving the Crane ample time to prepare their defenses.

IRON FEATHER

ICRANE TECHNIQUE FEAT

You can move through the night virtually undetected.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +6 or higher, Dex 16+, Skill Focus (Move Silently).

Effect: You gain a +4 competence bonus to all Hide and Move Silently checks, and gain +2 to any saves versus any divination spells or magic that would reveal your location or identity.

SILENT TALON

ICRANE TECHNIQUE FEAT

You can cut down foes with brutal efficiency when you catch them unaware.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +5 or higher, Dex 14+, Str 16+, Weapon Focus (any melee weapon).

Effect: You triple your Strength modifier for damage when you attack a flat-footed foe with a melee weapon for which you have the Weapon Focus feat. Use of this feat requires the full attack action.

UNFORGIVING STEEL

ICRANE TECHNIQUE FEAT

You can take ruthless advantage of a foe that attacks you unsuccessfully.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +8 or higher, Way of the Crane, Void Use, Weapon Focus (any melee weapon)

Effect: If an opponent attacks you and misses the roll by more than 5 points, you may immediately make an attack of opportunity against that opponent equal to your highest attack modifier. You may do this only once per round, and only if you have a weapon in hand for which you have selected the Weapon Focus feat.

DAIDOJI HARRIER SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Agility

Honor: 1, plus 5 boxes

Skills: Athletics, Battle, Hunting, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Stealth, any one skill.

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Iron Feather

A Harrier strikes from the shadows, catching his prey unaware and cutting them down before they can respond to him. When attacking a foe unaware of his presence, the Harrier rolls (but does not keep) additional damage dice equal to his School Rank.

Rank 2: Silent Talon

A Harrier's speed is his strength, and wrapping himself in protective armor only dulls his edge. When wearing no armor, the Harrier adds his School Rank and his rank in Athletics to his TN to Be Hit at all times.

Rank 3: Unforgiving Steel

The lightning reaction of the Harrier allows him to exploit any weakness in others, taking full, merciless advantage of their mistakes. Whenever an opponent attacks the Harrier and misses, he may add +5 to his initiative for the next round and +10 to his next attack roll versus that opponent.

THE ART OF STEALTH

Rank 4: Twin Strikes in Darkness

Speed, precision, efficiency... these are the marks of the Harrier. He may now make two attacks per round.

Rank 5: Move Like Shadows

A trained Harrier possesses incredible dexterity. On any opposed roll involving Stealth or Athletics, he gains a number of free Raises equal to the difference between his ranks in that skill and the rank of the person opposing him. For example, an observer with no ranks in Stealth attempts to locate a Harrier who has 10 ranks in Stealth with an Investigation check. The Harrier gains 10 Free Raises on his roll (which can be used to gain a +5 to the roll per Raise), even though the observer is not using the Stealth skill to locate him.

FIRST STRIKE DOJO

DOJO OF THE HIRUMA FAMILY

"You must ask why the Hiruma are so silent? They have nothing to say to us. The dangerous wasteland where they live makes the most deadly patch of the Carpenter look like the Gardens of Otsan Uchi in contrast. They look upon their Crab brothers as we would look upon the pampered Crane courtier. And yet, they protect us. Fortunes will-ing, they always will."

— Hida Kuroda, Champion of the Crab

Classes: Berserker, Fighter, Ninja

Schools: Berserker, Hiruma Scout, Hiruma Stalker (New Path)

HISTORY

The First Strike Dojo, while one of the newest fighting schools of the Crab Clan, came into being as a result of the traumatic events in the Crab lands over 400 years ago, when the Hiruma provinces fell to the armies of the Oni Lord known as the Maw. In that assault, the Hiruma lost their lands, their pride, their unique fighting school, and (some say) even their honor. Many in the Empire felt sure the family would perish.

They did not. Vengeful legions of the family's finest warriors exacted a horrible revenge on the Maw after the construction of the Great Carpenter Wall. Their knowledge of the lands that now lay south of the wall inside the Shadowlands was vital to the defeat of the Maw and the reestablishing of the Crab Clan's borders. While sympathetic, the other families of the Crab could not allow the Hiruma to wallow in their misery; the clan had suffered too severe a setback to lose their staunchest defenders. Despite their losses and their anguish, the Hiruma persevered.

In time, their role changed. Once bodyguards and soldiers, they became known for their intimate knowledge of the northern Shadowlands, their familial homeland, and became indispensable scouts, gathering intelligence on their hated enemies. They accepted the horrible risks of operating in the Shadowlands without complaint or fear. When the Unicorn returned, the Hiruma were invited to train alongside the Shinjo family's finest scouts. The Hiruma accepted this offer, forming a bond between the two families that persists to this day.

In the year 1130, the Hiruma lands were finally reclaimed from the Shadowlands through the valor of Hida Yakamo and his valiant armies, assisted by the tribes of the Nezumi and the soldiers of the Lion Clan. The Tainted lands of the Hiruma were purged of corruption by Kuni and Naga shugenja, though they remain barren and lifeless. Since that time, the Hiruma have maintained their hold on the lands with surprisingly few losses to Shadowlands creatures. Even when the forces of Daigotsu recently captured a portion of the Great Wall, the Hiruma lands remain firmly in control of the Crab (due in no small part to the timely arrival of a band of Daidoji Harriers). Now, however, the Hiruma find themselves beset literally on all sides as Daigotsu's legions loom to the north and the other forces of darkness wait silently on all sides.

TRADITION

Sadly, the ancestral style of the first Hiruma Bushi School remains lost, and few still hope that the ancient secrets will ever be recovered. True to their nature, the Hiruma have not let this stop them. They have established a new dojo, devoted to offense rather than defense, to strike out against the foes surrounding them rather than waiting passively to be attacked.

The First Strike Dojo is considered very successful. Since its inception, the scale and frequency of assaults on Shiro Hiruma by Shadowlands forces has reduced considerably. Unfortunately, one of the side effects is a high mortality rate; many soldiers trained at this dojo die in battle with the Shadowlands. The Hiruma lament the loss, but recognize that it is their duty and their privilege to die in service to their family and clan.

The most valued tradition of the First Strike Dojo is one of vengeance. The Shadowlands stole and corrupted the ancestral lands of the Hiruma, denying the family its birthright for centuries. The Hiruma students of the First Strike will consider this wrong avenged only when the foul corruption of the Shadowlands has been expunged forever.

The First Strike is very restrictive in accepting students who have not yet reached their gempukku, preferring instead to take on only those students who have already begun their training at other family dojo. Children of former students, however, as well as young samurai who show particular promise in the dojo's area of expertise, are accepted in limited numbers. When a class has reached the time of its gempukku, it is split into groups. The students in each group receive their daisho and go into the Shadowlands to track, locate, and kill a particular kind of creature. The type of creature assigned depends upon the talents of the students in question.

TRAINING

The skill emphasized above all else at the First Strike Dojo is knowledge of the Shadowlands and its denizens. The mission of the First Strike is to deal a mortal blow to those who threaten Shiro Hiruma, so its students must know their enemy.

Once students understand their enemies, they are then trained to exploit their weaknesses. They learn how to dispatch smaller species with a single strike, and ways to circumvent the protective carapaces of many oni and other large prey. Perhaps most importantly, the sensei show how to analyze and adapt to new and unknown targets. The nature of the Shadowlands is such that no one can ever understand the entirety of its inhabitants, and being able to adjust to different threats is absolutely vital to the survival of the students of First Strike.

SENSEI

Sensei of the First Strike Dojo are chosen on the basis of a single factor: success. There have been only a few sensei during the dojo's short existence, primarily because there have been occasions when a threat arose that only the sensei could deal with appropriately. Sometimes the sensei did not return from their missions. In every case, the sensei was successful, and the threat defeated despite his death. It falls to the Hiruma family daimyo to appoint a replacement; usually he promotes one of the school's sensei, but the current tenureholder proves this not always to be the case.

HIRUMA TODORI

Master Sensei of First Strike Dojo [Ranger 7/Ninja 6/Hiruma Stalker 5; Hiruma Scout 2/Hiruma Stalker 1/Berserker 2]

Until his appointment as sensei, Todori was not a student of the First Strike Dojo. He is a student of the branch of the Hiruma school located within Unicorn lands, and has spent most of his life serving on the Kaiu Wall. He was selected to oversee First Strike because of his exceptional success as a scout. Todori often enters the Shadowlands to gather information on enemy targets, then returns ahead of schedule after having eliminated those targets outright. When the previous sensei of the dojo was killed destroying a particularly vicious and powerful oni, family daimyo Hiruma Masagaro instantly selected Todori as his replacement.

Rules Notes: Todori is a silent and efficient warrior. His attack modifiers are extremely high, the result of the many feats and abilities he has taken in order to maximize his precise strikes against Shadowlands foes.

FIRST STRIKE BENEFITS

Although their training is exclusively martial, the students of the First Strike are well known throughout Rokugan. They are respected not only for their valor and service to the Empire, but also for their skill.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

The students of the First Strike are renowned for their bravery and selflessness in the face of insurmountable odds.

Benefit: You gain a +4 circumstance bonus to all Diplomacy checks with individuals with an Honor of 3 or higher.

Benefit: You gain a Free Raise during social interactions with individuals with an Honor of 3 or higher or who possess at least one rank in Lore (Shadowlands).

TRAINING BENEFIT

The stalkers know that stealth is the key to hunting Shadowlands beasts, and they are the unquestioned masters of stealth tactics against their inhuman foes.

Benefit: You may double your Strength modifier for damage purposes against any creature with the Shadowlands subtype or person with any degree of the Shadowlands Taint.

Benefit: You add half your rank in Stealth (rounded up) to damage rolls when attacking Shadowlands creatures or any creature possessing the Taint.

NOTABLE STUDENTS

HIRUMA NICHU

[Ranger 4/Fighter 4; Hiruma Bushi 2/Hiruma Stalker 1]

Although a student of the First Strike Dojo, Nichu often finds himself in service upon the Great Wall. He is skilled in stealth and the elimination of targets in the Shadowlands, thanks to his training, but his superiors have discovered that his exceptional powers of perception serve the clan far better atop the Wall. Nichu is not particularly pleased with this arrangement. He is a warrior, trained to hunt and kill, yet he spends his days sitting atop a wall and notifying others of the enemy's presence.

Nichu recently gained the attention of his superiors once again when he alerted the Crab troops that Daigotsu's forces had circumvented the Great Wall. Though grievously injured in the battle, he is now recovering. The sensei of the First Strike have plans for Nichu once he heals, although whether it will be a more active role than his previous station he does not know.

ADVANCED HIRUMA TRAINING

THE HIRUMA STALKERS (PRESTIGE CLASS)

The reclamation of the Hiruma lands after the Clan War gave the Crab Clan a vital foothold in the Shadowlands. With the assistance of the Kuni family, the Hiruma purged the Taint from their lands, although the process caused them to become as barren as the expansive Kuni Wastes. Having reclaimed their lands at last, the Hiruma turned their attention to defending them and punishing the creatures who occupied them for so long.

TABLE 5-1: THE HIRUMA STALKER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Hiruma's Vengeance, Piercing Strike/+1
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Taint Resistance +4
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Discriminating Cut, Piercing Strike/+3
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Taint Resistance +8
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Hiruma's Strength, Piercing Strike/+5

With the proximity of the Hiruma lands to the heart of the Shadowlands, it became necessary for the Hiruma scouts to redouble their efforts. Threats that could clearly be identified were eliminated when possible, and defenses were prepared against the rest. Over time, a new sect of the scouts developed: veterans skilled at infiltrating the Shadowlands forces and assassinating particularly crafty or powerful creatures before they threatened Shiro Hiruma.

The Hiruma Stalkers, as this group has come to be known, have also been deployed against human targets at times. It is an unsavory task, but the Stalkers view their targets as just another threat to the safety of the Crab.

Hit Die: d8

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Hiruma Stalker, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Clan: Crab

Base Attack Bonus: +8 or higher

Skills: Knowledge (Shadowlands) 8 ranks, Move Silently 6 ranks

Feats: Power Attack, Skill Focus (Move Silently)

CLASS SKILLS

The Hiruma Stalker's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Jump (Str), Hide (Dex), Knowledge (Shadowlands) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Spot (Wis), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the Hiruma stalker class.

Hiruma's Vengeance: The training of a stalker prepares him to face virtually any spawn of the Shadowlands. The stalker gains a +1 competence bonus to all attacks made against a creature with the Shadowlands subtype or against an individual who possesses the Shadowlands Taint at any level.

Piercing Strike: Through training and practice, the stalker can overcome the defenses of many Shadowlands creatures. Beginning at 1st level, if the stalker can attack any creature with the Shadowlands subtype while they are flat-footed or flanked, he may ignore damage resistance as if he were wielding a +1 jade or crystal weapon. At 3rd level, he attacks as if wielding a +3 jade or crystal weapon. At 5th level, he attacks as if wielding a +5 jade or crystal weapon.

Taint Resistance: Because of their centuries of experience with missions in the Shadowlands, some members of the Hiruma family have developed an almost supernatural ability to resist the Taint. Beginning at 2nd level, the stalker gains a +4 bonus to all Fortitude saves to resist gaining the Shadowlands Taint. This bonus increases to +8 at the 4th level. A character with this ability cannot cast maho.

Discriminating Cut: Just as they are trained to circumvent the armor of Shadowlands beasts, Hiruma stalkers can also exploit the weaknesses in traditional armor. Once per round, the stalker can negate any one armor or shield bonus of up to +4, but receives a -2 penalty to his own AC while doing so. Armor bonuses greater than +4 are unaffected by this ability; the armor is simply too well made for the stalker to find a weakness.

Hiruma's Strength: The strength of a stalker's conviction is such that the corrupt find him difficult to affect at all. The stalker receives a +4 bonus to any save versus a maho spell or the spell-like abilities of any creature with the Shadowlands subtype.

HIRUMA STALKERS (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Hiruma Scout 2

Path of Egress: Berserker 1 or Hiruma Scout 3

Technique: Piercing Strike — The Hiruma stalkers are hunters of deadly proficiency, taught to find the weaknesses in virtually any target. If the stalker strikes a foe that is unaware of his presence (and thus has a TN of 5 + armor), he ignores all armor (including Carapace) for his first strike. In addition, when the Stalker makes a melee attack, his target's Carapace rating is reduced by the Stalker's Insight Rank.



HONOR'S SACRIFICE DOJO

DOJO OF THE IKOMA SPYMASTERS

"The Lion Clan has never participated in such base pursuits as espionage. If our generals seem aware of your actions in advance, surely it must be because your own tactics are elementary and incompetent."

— Ikoma Sume, spymaster of the Ikoma family

Classes: Courtier, Ninja, Samurai

Schools: Ikoma Omoidasu, Ikoma Spymaster, Ikoma Tactician

HISTORY

Honor's Sacrifice Dojo came into being during the years following the original Crab-Crane War, the first major civil war in Rokugan's history. Even at that early period in the Empire's history, there was hostility between the Lion and Crane. Unfortunately, the Lion did not realize that their enemies were embroiled in a war with the Crab until the conflict was almost over, costing them a valuable opportunity to exploit the Crane's weakness.

In the wake of the Akodo and Matsu families' anger at missing a chance to take advantage of the Crane, a few Ikoma who subscribed to their disreputable founder's philosophy recognized a need to know about the other clans' activities. These scattered individuals had already been gathering information on some of the clan's enemies, but they decided that the welfare of the Lion Clan demanded a more effective means of doing so. Like all Lion, when faced with a problem they turned to tradition to find a way to deal with it. They looked to the teachings of the first Ikoma, Akodo's master spy.

To this end, the Ikoma established a new dojo to enhance their information gathering abilities. They turned to a structure already being built in their lands, a large school built to honor of the death of one of their most prestigious samurai. A young Ikoma samurai had killed a Kakita samurai in an illegal duel after discovering the Crane's plot to assassinate the Lion Champion. Unfortunately, with no testimony to substantiate his claim, the Lion was executed for murder. In protest of the unjust execution, the samurai's brother — a high-ranking Legionnaire and the victor of the Topaz Championship — committed seppuku. The dojo was built in honor of the samurai's brother, who ironically might not have died had the Ikoma been more capable of ferreting out information about the schemes of their enemies. The dojo was christened Honor's Sacrifice.

Seizing upon the name of the dojo as the perfect symbol of their service to the clan, the secretive branch of the Ikoma utilized all their resources to have the dojo staffed by members of their sect who could impart their philosophy to others. Within the first few years of its establishment, the Honor's Sacrifice dojo was firmly under the control of the darker side of the Ikoma family. By combining and refining their own individual talents, the sensei of the dojo eventually managed to create their own unique style, one that combined sub-

versive social practices with dangerous and analytical combat methods. They recruited the sharpest of the Ikoma bards and historians to serve their cause.

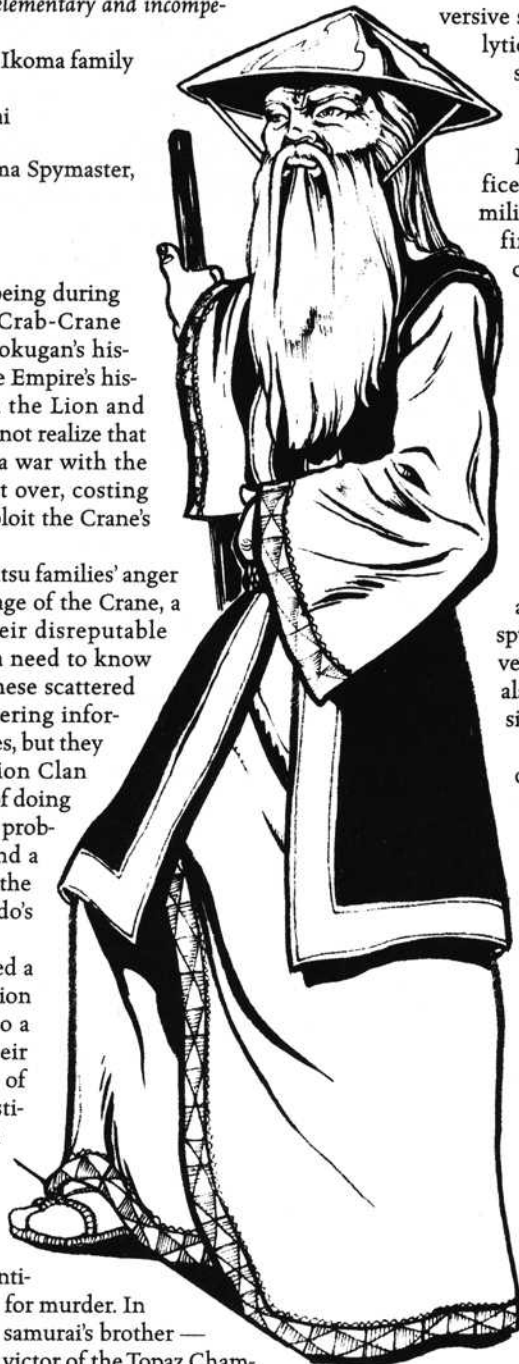
In the conflict-filled history of Rokugan, the students of Honor's Sacrifice have been extremely active. The more militant Lion families, while ignorant of the finer points of the dojo's activities, have come to value the information it provides. The sensei of Honor's Sacrifice are careful to conceal the murkier details of their operatives' missions behind information obtained honorably by skilled scouts and clever courtiers.

During the Clan War, operatives of Honor's Sacrifice served as the diplomats of the clan. They visited strongholds of every clan in the Empire, ostensibly as ambassadors to prevent the further escalation of war. In reality, the ambassadors were members of the Ikoma spymasters. Although they did want to prevent war from enveloping the Empire, they also gathered as much information as possible from their hosts.

The most active time for the students and sensei of Honor's Sacrifice was undoubtedly the period immediately following the Clan War. The constantly changing political struggles between the clans, combined with the dishonorable activity on the part of Kitsu Okura, the Jade Champion of the Empire, kept the Ikoma in a constant state of flux. They gathered information and compiled plans of attack against virtually every military force in the Empire, including their own.

Currently, the Ikoma of Honor's Sacrifice are occupied with two separate missions. First and foremost, they have been charged with rebuilding the massive volumes of information lost when the Lying Darkness vandalized the Ikoma Histories. Second, they have been commanded to obtain information on the inhuman Tsuno who have been plaguing the

Lion lands. Thus far, they have recovered nothing of any importance, a fact which frustrates them enormously. Very recently, they have also begun compiling information on their former allies the Phoenix, given the bizarre behavior attributed to Shiba Aikune and the rumors of the power of something called Isawa's Last Wish.



TRADITION

As befitting the dojo's name, the primary tradition of Honor's Sacrifice is one of sacrifice. The students there first sacrifice their beliefs, abandoning many of the notions of bushido they hold dear. They sacrifice their homes, being sent to live among strangers who view them with hostility and suspicion. And sometimes they are asked to sacrifice their lives. On the rare occasions that a spymaster's plot is exposed, he is prepared to absorb all of the blame, sparing his family and clan as much dishonor as possible. The spymasters do this with the full knowledge that their names will be stricken from the clan records, as if they were never born.

The students of Honor's Sacrifice learn the fighting skills appropriate for a Lion. They are also taught the art of moving unseen, so that if their other talents should fail them, they can strike from the shadows to cut their losses.

TRAINING

The first lesson of Honor's Sacrifice is to hide in plain sight. Ikoma spymasters are charismatic and pleasant, making friends easily and moving smoothly through the upper crust of society. Scattered among the legitimate Ikoma diplomats, who tend to be very stern and difficult to deal with, the spymasters are charming and amiable. By being agreeable, the spymasters make themselves more approachable by others, establishing the bond they need to extract information. Toward this end, all spymasters learn the arts of conversation, sincerity, etiquette and manipulation.

Honor's Sacrifice is also home to branches of the Ikoma family's renowned bard and tactician schools. The cadre of Ikoma responsible for the education of the spymasters are very careful not to influence the training of these other young samurai, for doing so might bring attention to the dojo. Fortunately, this arrangement allows the spymasters to participate in the lessons on history and tactics that the other schools conduct, which augments their natural training and makes students of Honor's Sacrifice incredibly versatile and flexible.

SENSEI

Traditionally, the sensei of Honor's Sacrifice has been an unassuming Ikoma. It was decided centuries ago that although venerable Ikoma historians know that not every agent of Honor's Sacrifice is entirely honorable, they should remain ignorant about the necessary details of their operations. Following the Clan War, however, the leadership of the family fell to a young Ikoma Sume, also a promising student at Honor's Sacrifice. Within a few years, it became obvious that he would one day lead both the family and the school, and that has in fact come to pass.

IKOMA SUME

Master Sensei of Honor's Sacrifice

[Courtier 7/Samurai 9; Ikoma Spymaster 5/Ikoma Omoidasu 2]

Ikoma Sume is both the master sensei of Honor's Sacrifice and the family daimyo of the Ikoma family. He is widely regarded in the courts of the Empire as a sparkling conversationalist and a talented bard with an allegorical tale for every occasion. Most courtiers regard him as generally harmless. Few realize that his witty social demeanor hides a brilliant tactical mind and incredible powers of persuasion. With every casual conversation, Sume maneuvers his resources into positions of power.

Rules Notes: In his youth, Sume was a skilled and stealthy spy, though his advanced age now limits his physical abilities. Sume excels in deceit and manipulation, though he prefers the truth when possible. He is extremely charismatic and has a large number of skills and feats that augment his natural charm. He also commands great personal loyalty both from the students of Honor's Sacrifice and the more legitimate operatives of the Ikoma family.

HONOR'S SACRIFICE BENEFITS

Honor's Sacrifice gives its students less martial training than any other Lion Clan dojo. As such, its students receive few combat-specific abilities, but their training in the social arena is unparalleled among the Lion. Many find their shrewd tactics completely unexpected.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

The Spymasters recognize the strengths and weaknesses of bushido and can use those aspects to their advantage when dealing with others.

Benefit: You gain a +4 insight bonus to Bluff checks with individuals who have more or less honor than you.

Benefit: When interacting socially with individuals of higher Honor Rank, you gain a number of Free Raises equal to the difference in your respective Honor Ranks.

TRAINING BENEFIT

None.

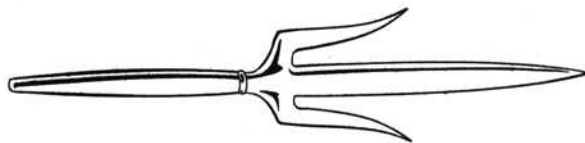
NOTABLE STUDENTS

MIYA HATORI

[Courtier 10/Ikoma Spymaster 4; Ikoma Spymaster 2/Miya Shisha 3]

Once one of the most adventurous and wily magistrates in the generally peaceful Ikoma family, Hatori is at once one of the Ikoma's greatest traitors and heroes. Outcast from the Ikoma for his loyalty to Toturi the Black during the Clan War and during the time of the War Against the Shadow, Hatori found himself welcomed and respected among the Miya.

The Ikoma still bear a grudge against the aging playwright, but now that the wars have settled and Hatori has become an influential member of an Imperial house they wonder if it would be wiser to smooth their relations with him. This idea has been dampened somewhat by the fact that Hatori took on the task of cataloging the history of the Empire after the Darkness destroyed the Ikoma Libraries, and keeps many volumes of the great Imperial Histories secure in his own kyuden.



ADVANCED IKOMA TRAINING

IKOMA SPYMASTER SCHOOL

Benefit: +1 Awareness

Honor: 1, plus 5 boxes

Skills: Courtier, Etiquette, Investigation 2, Sincerity, Stealth, any one skill.

THE IKOMA SPYMASTERS

The first Ikoma was not particularly honorable. He was a simple man who dealt with violence and intrigue with equal aplomb. His strength was in his wisdom, his practicality, and his ability to learn from mistakes. The great kami Akodo One-Eye valued Ikoma above all others save Matsu, knowing that such a man was necessary for the Lion Clan to prosper in the face of its enemies.

In the long centuries since the Lion Clan's founding, a few of Ikoma's descendants have continued the practice of their founder, using practical subversive tactics to undermine their foes and gather vital military information. That these practices are dishonorable is of little concern to these men and women; after all, they have an oath to their family's founder to defend and protect the Lion Clan with every means at their disposal, and they do not take their vow lightly.

THE LION CANNOT FAIL LION TECHNIQUE FEAT

You have mastered the precepts in which you were trained by your clan.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +1 or higher, Taking the Measure.

Effect: Select any three class skills available to samurai. You gain a +2 bonus to your skill checks with those skills.

TAKING THE MEASURE LION TECHNIQUE FEAT

You may size up opponents' stances, finding holes in their defenses with ease.

Prerequisite: Spot (2 ranks).

Effect: You may, as a move-equivalent action, make a Spot check (DC = your opponent's AC). If successful, you may add +2 to your next attack roll versus that opponent. If you have a base attack bonus of +1 or higher, you may use this technique while taking any other move-equivalent action.

PERCEPTION BECOMES VICTORY

LION TECHNIQUE FEAT

Your keen perception affords you opportunities in combat that others overlook.

Prerequisites: Base attack bonus +10 or higher, Spot (8 ranks), The Final Lesson (see *Rokugan*).

Effect: As a move-equivalent action, you may make a Spot check (DC = 10 + your opponent's Reflex save bonus). If successful, you may name an action you think your opponent might take. If he takes this action at any time during the combat, you may make an attack of opportunity against him. If you name an action that normally invites an attack of opportunity, you may make two attacks, so long as you have Combat Reflexes or some other ability that allows multiple attacks of opportunity per round.

TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Taking the Measure

By succeeding at a contested Awareness roll versus an opponent, the Spymaster gains a Free Raise for any social or combat roll against that same opponent. For every five points by which his roll exceeds his opponent's, the Spymaster gains an additional Free Raise for any attack or social roll against that opponent, up to a maximum number equal to his School Rank plus two. Once this technique has been used successfully against an opponent, it cannot be used again for another week. The bonuses last for all encounters which occur during this time.

Rank 2: The Lion Cannot Fail

The Ikoma are taught to focus on their strengths, becoming deathly proficient in the tools of their trade. The Spymaster may select any one of his starting school skills (not a weapon skill). Whenever making a roll with that skill, he adds 3k1 to the roll.

Rank 3: Perception Becomes Victory

Careful analysis of an enemy can lead to the insight necessary to defeat him. The Spymaster may make a Perception/Investigation roll at the beginning of combat (TN of the opponent's Insight Rank $\times 5$). If it is successful, the Spymaster may make an additional attack per round against this opponent each round for the duration of the combat.

Rank 4: Words, Not Steel

Spymasters form close bonds with their enemies and temporarily earn the complete confidence usually reserved for allies. By making an opposed Awareness roll and speaking to an opponent for at least one round, the Spymaster can force the target to reveal one piece of information that he otherwise would not have mentioned. This information will not necessarily be an item of the Spymaster's choice, but it will relate somehow to the topic of discussion. If the target has any degree of common sense, he will quickly realize his mistake, so caution is recommended when using this technique.

Rank 5: Command the Weak Mind

By misleading opponents with subtle gestures and chiding them verbally during combat, a Spymaster can cause his enemies to react the way he wants them to. If the Spymaster has a higher initiative score than his opponent, he may spend two Void Points and make an opposed Willpower roll with the target. If the Spymaster is successful, the target reacts in a manner of the Spymaster's choosing, taking one of the following actions: standard attack, full attack, or full defense. The target will believe that his action was the most logical at the time, though he may quickly realize that he was duped.

THE PART OF SAMURAI CHARACTER

CHAPTER SIX:

ENEMIES OF THE
 NINJA

Kitsuki Kenchin leaned heavily on his cane as he knelt over the body. The entire building was silent in the darkness, and the dim light of Lady Moon peered through the thin windows of the old warehouse. The young Kitsuki dared not light a lamp, lest he draw the attention of anything else in the abandoned building.

In the soft glow, Kenchin could make out a single thin red line across the victim's neck. No blood trickled from the mark onto the unfortunate Ide's purple silk kimono. Kenchin placed his hand on the Ide's neck; the touch of dead flesh disgusted him, but at the moment knowledge was more important than purity. After this matter was dealt with, he could say his prayers at the temple down the road. To his surprise, he still felt soft warmth radiating from the skin. The man could not have died more than an hour before.

Standing quickly, Kenchin let his hand rest on the hilt of his sword. There had been no evidence of anyone else leaving or entering the building for almost a day. Someone had planted the body here for him to find.

"Little Dragon," said a voice from the darkness, "I fear you have led yourself into a trap."

Kenchin's trained senses caught the sound of movement before the shuriken were even thrown. With a graceful ease, he stepped to the side. Two metal stars, doubtless poisoned, cut through the air where he had stood just a moment before. He had slid aside far more quickly than a crippled man should have been able to move.

Without hesitation, Kenchin split his cane into two long knives, throwing one just to the right of where the attack had originated, and was rewarded with a pained grunt and the soft sound of steel entering flesh. "No, ninja," the Dragon replied, readying his katana for combat, "I am not the one who is trapped."

Not all are intimidated by stories of those who walk the shadows. Some are inexorably drawn to the accounts of ninja, finding riddles in such tales and working as hard as they can to unravel the mystery. Others carry the battle directly to the darkness, refusing to allow fear and paranoia overcome them. Some, such as magistrates, are simply destined to stand against the ninja by virtue of their rank and position, while still others hunt the ninja to destroy potential rivals.

Whatever the reason, the ninja are hardly without their foes in Rokugan.

LEAVES OF THE
 TREE DOJO

"Foolish Kolat. Did you think you were the only one who walked these paths?"

— Usagi Ozaki, Hare Clan Champion

Classes: Ninja, Rogue, Fighter, Ranger

Schools: Fool's Harvest, Canopy of Knives

HISTORY

The band once known as the Forest-Killers has lasted much longer than many other ronin brotherhoods; perhaps only the Eyes of Nanashi have a longer history than the Killers. The Forest-Killers began with a ronin named Miroto, an outcast Hiruma who was stripped of his name for his cruelty and the embarrassment he brought upon his clan during a certain meeting with the Lion. Humiliated and exiled, Miroto eventually made a home in the unquiet Shinomen Forest, which reminded him in many ways of the Shadowlands.

Eventually Miroto drew other disenfranchised and unsatisfied ronin to his banner, and they became a moderately successful bandit troop. They claimed the lives and possessions of any who entered their part of the Shinomen, and repeatedly raided nearby villages. The group eventually even constructed a makeshift fortress in the woods.

After many years, the bandit lord Miroto was murdered by another ronin aspiring to rule his own little ronin empire. The man known as Yugoro took control of the Forest-Killers and made them one of his many subordinate ronin bands. The Killers prospered under the leadership of the cunning and nearly untraceable Yugoro until his mysterious death.

For a short while, the group was led by the volatile ronin known as Mikaru. He had no interest in furthering the goals of the Killers, simply using them as a tool to exact revenge on the Naga, specifically the one called the Balash. Though it took many years, Mikaru retired from the life of a bandit with his vengeance complete, wearing a new sash tanned from the Balash's hide.

Leaderless for almost a generation, the Killers began to fade into obscurity. Recently, the intimidating man called Kuso has taken over the brotherhood through a combination of force and charisma. Kuso has already displayed his talent as a leader, bringing the Forest Killers lucrative jobs as hired assassins rather than petty bandits. So long as the once-empty coffers of the Forest-Killer tower remain full, they would follow their new leader into Jigoku.

Unless, of course, they discovered his true allegiance.

TRADITION

As a brotherhood of honorless and seedy ronin, there is not much in the way of "tradition" in the Forest-Killers. They have had no real associations with other groups until recently, and that unknowingly. Their new leader, Kuso, is secretly the ronin Kenjiro, a prominent member of the Eyes of Nanashi. The Eyes have Kenjiro send the Killers to quietly dispatch any ronin who are causing problems, but cannot be eliminated in an honorable manner. As the actions of one notorious ronin could reflect on them all, the Eyes are especially prejudiced against bandit leaders and other noteworthy stains on the reputation of ronin. It is ironic indeed that the Eyes have come to use masterless assassins in order to prove that ronin are not necessarily evil, but they believe it is an acceptable risk. Kenjiro has proven to be an honorable man, trustworthy even in the midst of greedy and ambitious bandits, so there have been no problems yet.

TRAINING

Those who wish to join the Forest-Killers are accepted into the brotherhood almost without question. As the group is full of skilled hunters and assassins, they have no qualms about swiftly silencing those who abandon them or cannot pull their weight. This sort of paranoia is one reason many ronin

stay with the brotherhood quietly and without any obvious rebellion. The money is another. Though not as wealthy as a Minor Clan, the Forest-Killers are far from poor wave-men.

Forest-Killer training is basic and ruthless. Forest-Killers are professional killers with no restraints from bushido or clan and family politics. Unlike the Shosuro Assassins or Wasp Bounty Hunters, the Forest-Killer's lack of political affiliation prevents those who would hunt them from finding motive and reason for their killings. To this end, the arts of stealth and silence become paramount, followed closely by swordplay and other martial skills needed to dispatch a target swiftly and easily.

Training always begins in the forest of the Shinomen, in an area the Killers have carved out for themselves from abandoned Naga ruins conquered during Mikaru's day. Once the student has grasped the arts of wilderness lore, he learns how to move quietly and operate in more urban environments. Unlike many dojo, the period of training usually lasts less than a year, as the Forest-Killers are expected to learn much of their craft "on the job". Forest-Killers who are captured on the job are notoriously difficult to question; they know if they reveal too much the rest of the brotherhood will merely disappear further into the Shinomen and then return to silence the traitor when the coast is clear.

SENSEI

There is no formal arrangement of study in the Forest-Killers. There are simply more experienced members and those who are less so. One or two of the elder members generally shoulder the responsibility of training a new recruit, or Kuso himself assigns such a mentor. A change in the reins of power among the Forest-Killers is always a unique event, and follows no set course.

KUSO

Master sensei of the Forest-Killers [Fighter 6/Ninja 6; Insight Rank 4 — Righteous Fury, Fool's Harvest, Canopy of Knives]

Kenjiro was raised as an odd sort of ronin. Born into the life of a masterless samurai, the young man nonetheless found himself in service to an idea, and a group. The Eyes of Nanashi have always been Kenjiro's family, and he has worked under their tutelage for nearly his whole life. The idea that ronin could rise above the suspicion and disgust of the Empire was instilled in him at an early age, and he constantly worked hard to uphold such a philosophy.

When Kenjiro's parents were killed in the line of duty, his faith was not shaken. Kenjiro suffered heartache and loss in the name of his loyalty to the Eyes of Nanashi, and every night he slept on a dirty mat in a cold stone chamber. Though he did not understand why, a burning resentment built up in his chest over the years, until it came out in one defining moment.

While riding alone from one of his patrols, Kenjiro came upon a small group of bandits attacking a Crane caravan. The bandits were clever and well organized, but the caravan's defenders were also skilled. When the bandits and Crane noticed Kenjiro, he saw the naked hatred on the faces of the Crane guards, and the hope from the bandits that another ronin had come to join their fight. He saw the spilled silk and koku upon the ground, and realized that no matter how hard he worked, he would never be accepted, and would always sleep in the cold, filthy room he called home.

Less than a minute later, Kenjiro wiped Crane blood from the sword that had taken the lives of countless honorless bandits, and fled to the woods with his new comrades and their loot.

What he found were the remnants of the once-feared Forest-Killers, a ronin group the Eyes had been hunting for a generation. The cunning Kenjiro struck a bargain with the leaderless group. He understood the untapped potential of the bandits, and would organize them in such a manner that they would never have to hunt money again; it would come to them. He returned to the Eyes, and described his plan. Under Kenjiro's leadership as "Kuso," the Forest-Killers would do the "dirty work" of the Eyes for a small fee. Kenjiro pledged he would stay with the Killers to keep an eye on them, and ensure that they would never betray the ideals of Nanashi. As he was a respected and trusted member, none opposed Kenjiro's proposal.

Of course, Kenjiro never bothered to mention that the Eyes wouldn't be their only clients, but in his mind that's a minor detail. If their work for the Eyes just happened to help them eliminate potential rival groups of bandits, smugglers, and ninja, so be it. Thus far, none of the former bandits can complain. Kuso has played the most powerful ronin groups in Rokugan against each other without any mistakes, to the benefit of both groups. He is as masterful a leader as Yugoro ever was, perhaps more so.

Rules Notes: Kuso was once a proud samurai, but has since turned his talents toward one goal — wealth. He is a killer, using his ronin subordinates along with his own formidable skill to gather the wealth and comfort he would have never otherwise had. All of Kuso's skills, feats, abilities, and traits reflect a man who is both agile in body and mind, capable of ruthless attacks and complete lethality.

LEAVES OF THE TREE BENEFITS

Bushi trained by the Forest-Killers have learned that in the Empire, a man can survive with nothing else but a swift blade.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

None.

TRAINING BENEFIT

Benefit: The student of the Forest-Killers gains a +1 bonus to Initiative checks.

Benefit: The student of the Forest-Killers gains a bonus to his initiative score equal to one-half of his Stealth skill (rounded down).

OPEN EYE DOJO

Classes: Samurai, Courtier, Emerald Magistrate (Prestige), Kitsuki Investigator (Prestige)

Schools: Kitsuki Magistrate, Kitsuki Investigator

HISTORY

As one of the youngest families in the Empire, the Kitsuki cannot claim as long and glorious a history as most schools in Rokugan. Instead, the small family prides itself on the fact that they have come a long way in such a short time and is the equal of many families with deeper roots.

This also holds true for their major school, the Open Eye Dojo. Though mocked by many, the Kitsuki have developed sciences that the other clans would never have imagined possible. The family's founder, the famous Agasha Kitsuki, ensured that his methods would not be lost with his death, and made it his first order of business as daimyo to construct an adequate dojo for his descendants.

What emerged was a plain-looking structure to the north of the family estate near the edge of the Dragon provinces. Agasha Kitsuki knew his family would have to

learn the ways of the sword to defend themselves, but they were hardly regular bushi. The

young daimyo called on his Agasha relatives, who assisted by furnishing both laboratory necessities and meditation chambers. As

the dojo's founder

cherished keen vision,

both literally and figuratively,

the school was named

the Dojo of the Open Eye shortly after it was completed. Unfortunately, Agasha Kitsuki himself never lived to see the completion of his life's work.

TRADITION

While the Kitsuki never intended to become the political arm of the Dragon, their talents and skills inevitably put them in that position. Though the Mirumoto and Agasha could both be cordial, the Kitsuki's practically supernatural perception of human emotion and political intrigue placed them at the fore of the Dragon's diplomatic efforts. For this reason, the Kitsuki



attempt to keep on good terms with the other major courtier families of the Empire, and many young Kitsuki spend a season or two in the lands of the Doji, Ide, or even the Bayushi.

Their constant search for truth has put them at odds with other families in the Empire, most notably the Shosuro and the Yoritomo. The Mantis have learned that their less-honorable dealings (now on a much larger scale than when they were a Minor Clan less than a century ago) attract the attention of the Kitsuki like moths to a flame. Relations between the schools of the Kitsuki and the Mantis are always strained at best, as the Kitsuki are constantly watchful of the Mantis' activities. The Mantis, in return, are wary of the Kitsuki's attention.

The search for truth inevitably causes the Kitsuki to cross paths with ninja. Because of the, the Scorpion are frequently at odds with the small Dragon family. Though the Dragon and Scorpion are currently political allies, this has not kept the family of investigators from continuing their investigations, which often lead them to the Scorpion. The Kitsuki know quite well that the Shosuro never stopped training ninja. Ironically, the Kitsuki are one of the few families in the Empire who realize that the Scorpion would have no reason to have stopped. Most believe that the Scorpion have "learned their lesson" and no longer dabble in the dark powers of the ninja. The Kitsuki know enough about ninja to separate ninja myth from legend, and know full well that there are no dark powers to dabble in. The Scorpion could (and would) continue to train ninja without any danger of corruption by the Lying Darkness.

Even when the Scorpion did employ ninja who drew upon the Darkness in some manner, those agents were exceedingly rare. In fact, until the War Against the Shadow, the Shadowspawn ninja tended to be less dangerous than normal ninja. Shadowspawn ninja often went out of control, killing at random and quickly being absorbed by the Darkness, while a normal human ninja could continue killing for decades and leave few clues leading to his capture. If anything, the defeat of the Lying Darkness has made the Kitsuki's eternal hunt more difficult.

The Scorpion know of the Kitsuki's attention, but it does not worry them. Between that Scorpion's current political dominance and their alliance with the Dragon, they are often able to manipulate events so that the most effective Kitsuki magistrates are assigned elsewhere well before their agents go into action, much to the frustration of the Kitsuki.

TRAINING

The very first thing an initiate of the Kitsuki learns is how to meditate. The family is famous for samurai who can simply close their eyes and recall every detail in a scene they saw hours ago. The Kitsuki record their lives in daily journals which become as sacred as katana to the students. These detailed journals are priceless windows on events that occurred days, weeks, or even years ago. It is through these journals that the Kitsuki masters teach the second lesson — no detail is too small. When traveling the Empire, many magistrates have found that these journals held some minute fact from months ago that solved a troubling puzzle in the present.

Of course, these journals are often a weakness of the Kitsuki as well. More than one ninja has found it useful to steal a Kitsuki's journal, root out the magistrate's most notable failing, weakness, or immoral act, and blackmail the Kitsuki into submission. The family urges caution in the level of detail recorded.

EVIDENCE AND TESTIMONY

Preference of testimony over evidence is one often misunderstood part of Rokugan's society. The people of Rokugan are not completely ignorant of the importance of evidence; if a daimyo's hated brother is absent during the time of his murder and appears later with blood on his hands and fingernail gouges on his face, he's going to be in a great deal of trouble even if no one saw the murder. However, such cases are rare.

Most of the time, evidence is easy to fake. Magistrates cannot dust for fingerprints, and they cannot analyze DNA evidence. Rokugan simply does not have the level of science needed to analyze most evidence properly. Magic is not a reliable substitute for science, as the spirits can often be confused or uninterested in the mortal world. Only the Kitsuki are anywhere close to developing a science of forensic investigation, and even they admit that the eyewitness testimony of a noble samurai is better.

Generally, Kitsuki only use forensic evidence to lead them to testimony that will reveal the truth.

Since they are expected to root out criminals and other colorful characters, Kitsuki students must become competent with the use of the sword. Despite the clan's traditions, few Kitsuki can spare the time and effort to learn how to fight with two swords at once like their Mirumoto cousins. A Kitsuki also learns enough of the art of iaijutsu enough to acquit himself honorably in a duel. This is important, as sometimes a duel is the only way to settle a dispute.

Lessons on how to find evidence in the most unusual places are another part of basic Kitsuki training. Analyzing vague clues and following them to conclusive evidence of guilt is a constantly developing art, and the Kitsuki are at the forefront of it. As many ninja tend to use similar tools and techniques on successive missions, Kitsuki learn to look for patterns. Over time, they can learn a ninja's typical pattern. Many unnamed ninja have been granted code names (often floral ones) in the case files of the Kitsuki: the early exploits of the ninja master Shosuro Yudoka, for example, were classified under a case file named "Buttercup."

Because the family is small, students prepared for their gempukku spend a season in Winter Court with an elder of the family. If the elder deems the fledgling Kitsuki to have handled himself well enough, the student goes through ritual testing in the spring that involves a walk to the center of the gardens near Togashi castle. The confusing maze is famous throughout the clan, and many find it impossible to find the center of the maze on the same day they enter. A wise Kitsuki brings rations and a bottle of water.

SENSEI

As could be expected from such a relatively small family, the sensei of the Kitsuki dojo are few. They are generally hand-picked by the master sensei of the dojo and the Kitsuki family daimyo when a new one must be named. Many of the Kitsuki sensei are old or physically handicapped in some way, unable to continue the pursuit of justice as well as they could in their youth, but still wise enough to teach and lead the next generation. When a master sensei must be chosen he is usually picked from the ranks of the lesser sensei by anonymous vote.

KITSUKI KIYOKO

Master sensei of the Open Eye Dojo
[Samurai 4/Courtier 11; Kitsuki Magistrate 5]

Kiyoko has always been a rather cynical woman. Her long career as a diplomat caused her to develop a fervent dislike for politics, despite her skill at it. Her recent appointment as the master of Open Eye has given her a welcome excuse to retreat to the seclusion of the dojo. Kiyoko's ability to understand the motives and thoughts of others began at an early age. When her parents would try to soothe her with bedtime stories about demons and heroes, Kiyoko would stop them frequently and point out the inconsistencies in the tales. Though her parents were amused and impressed, Kiyoko's active mind led her to many sleepless nights.

When the time came for her to join the ranks of the Kitsuki Magistrates, Kiyoko was one of the most talented students the school had ever seen. She was able to flawlessly reconstruct whole plots and profiles of behavior from single scraps of evidence and testimony. The number of separate ninja she named and profiled was so extensive it came to resemble a botanical textbook (given the Kitsuki's penchant for naming anonymous ninja after flowers). Her few early mistakes were a natural part of learning, but she never made the same mistake twice. Frequently, she caught her own mistakes and corrected them before her sensei and comrades even noticed them.

The only time in recent memory Kiyoko has been surprised is when she was voted sensei of the Kitsuki dojo. She had expected to languish in the courts of Rokugan for many more years before finding such salvation.

Rules Notes: Kiyoko has one of the sharpest intellects in the Empire. She has matched wits with the likes of Bayushi Kaukatsu, Ide Tadaji, and Matsu Nimuro, so she is seldom intimidated by a mere student. Her skills reflect a mastery of court life and a deep understanding of the human mind. She enjoys teaching very much, and shares her skills readily, though she has a reputation as a harsh taskmaster with little tolerance for stupidity.

OPEN EYE BENEFITS

The Kitsuki are regarded as the most perceptive and intuitive men and women in the Empire, a fact that even many honorable people find unnerving. The mere sight of a Kitsuki sets one's mind to racing, wondering which transgressions they know about.

SOCIAL BENEFIT

Trained to notice the irregular in objects and people, the Kitsuki are hard to convince of a falsehood.

Benefit: Any attempt to use Bluff or Diplomacy to tell a lie in the Kitsuki's presence has its DC raised by 2.

Benefit: The TN for Sincerity rolls when attempting to lie to the Kitsuki is raised by the Kitsuki's School Rank

TRAINING BENEFIT

Even in the most stressful situations, the training of the Kitsuki forces his mind to remain focused and agile.

Benefit: The Kitsuki gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Spot checks made during combat.

Benefit: The Kitsuki may add his School Rank to Perception rolls made in combat.

NOTABLE STUDENTS

KITSUKI REMATA

[Samurai 6/Kitsuki Investigator 3; Kitsuki Investigator 3]

Hantei Naseru has always surrounded himself with extremely competent advisors and retainers, so when Kitsuki Remata was asked by the Anvil to personally oversee an investigation for him, she was deeply honored. The subject was a strange one — an investigation into Akodo Kaneka's lineage — but the Kitsuki was honored to obey.

What Remata found, however, was a path that many others would not have recognized — a clear trail through the genealogy of the Empire to a single conclusion. These findings, which Remata was duty-bound to report, directly involved Kaneka in the Crab-Crane war. Remata, however, was not satisfied. If the answer is too easy, there must be more to the question. Now the Kitsuki finds herself hunting for answers that could draw her into the conflict between the Four Winds themselves.

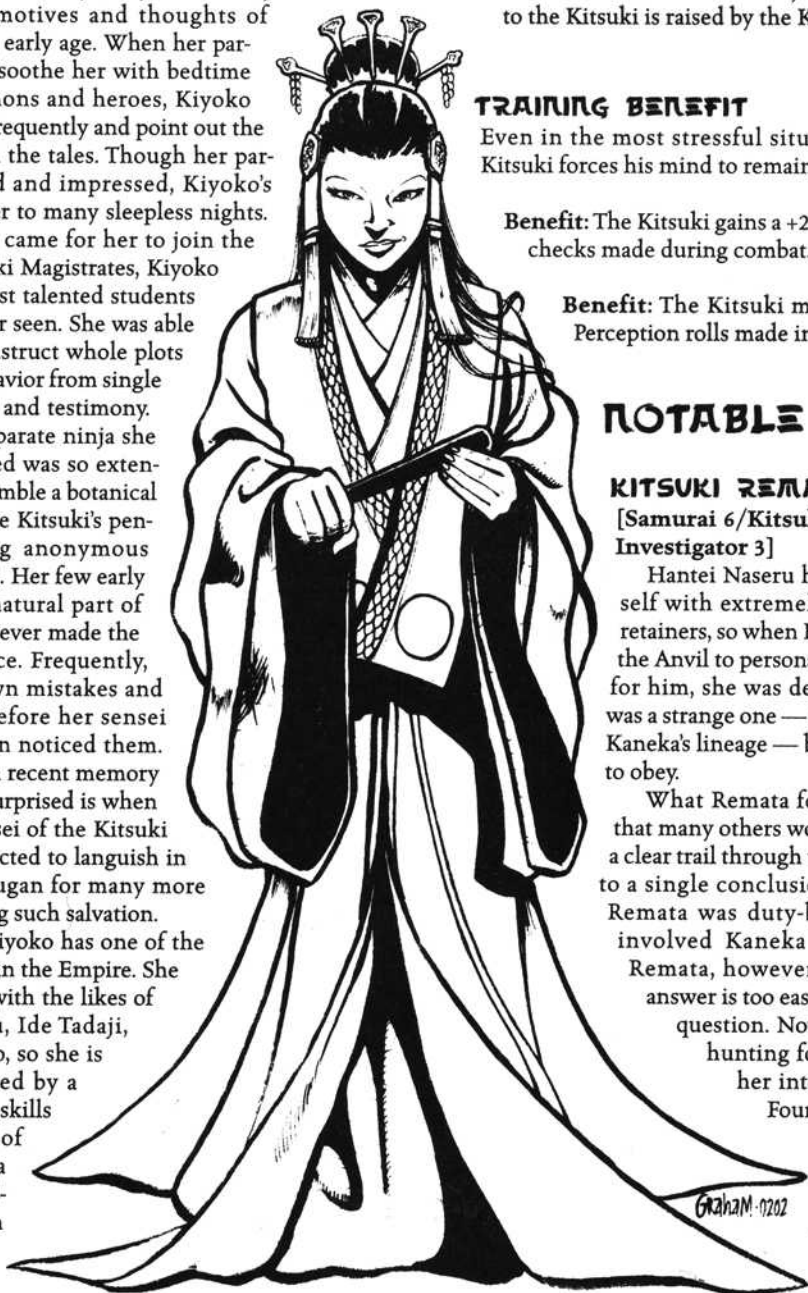
SHOSURO

RYOBU

[Ninja 3/Courtier 3; Kitsuki Magistrate 2]

The clever and charismatic magistrate known as

Kitsuki Keno is actually Shosuro Ryobu, a spy and infiltrator sent by the Shosuro several years ago. Ryobu's mission was relatively routine — spy on the Kitsuki for three years and return with as much information as possible. That time is up, but Ryobu is not eager to return to his shadowy masters. His time in the Dragon lands has instilled him with a novel sense of completion, and he has foolishly given his heart to a Mirumoto samurai-ko (though she does not know the truth about her paramour).



Ryobu knows his feelings are getting out of hand. He has already had to silence two geisha after he drunkenly bemoaned himself as a "useless and pathetic servant of the Scorpion" in front of them. As time slips away, Ryobu finds himself desperately searching for any way to prevent his inevitable return to his clan.

ADVANCED KITSUKI TRAINING

THE KITSUKI INVESTIGATORS (PRESTIGE CLASS)

Known for their keen minds, the Kitsuki have made many enemies during their relatively short existence. The magistrates and samurai of the Kitsuki family are hesitant to abandon the trail of a crime or mystery without finding the truth. The ninja of the Shosuro joke that "The only bribe a Kitsuki will accept is his still-beating heart, and even then be careful."

The Kitsuki count any organized brotherhoods of assassins as their enemies, including the Kolat, the Shosuro, and the infamous Goju. (In the case of the Shosuro, the Kitsuki are aware that the family has connections to ninja, though they always find it quite difficult to connect the exploits of one ninja to the family itself.) The ways of the ninja are subtle and complex, and many Kitsuki find it invaluable to learn some of the methods of their enemy to better understand them.

To this end, the Kitsuki have developed a special breed of magistrate called the investigator, whose duty it is to track the exploits of ninja. These individuals must shoulder the more dangerous tasks of enforcing the Emperor's Law. Their studies are more martial than those of their magistrate brethren. Though the school has only been active for a short while, the few students of this path have proven to be a great asset to the clan and Rokugan as a whole.

Hit Die: d8.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a Kitsuki Investigator, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Clan: Dragon

Honor/Alignment: Lawful, non-evil, honorable

Base Attack Bonus: +5

Skills: Bluff (4 Ranks), Sense Motive (4 Ranks), Gather Information (4 Ranks), Spot (6 Ranks), Listen (6 Ranks)

Feats: Alertness, Void Use, Versatile

CLASS SKILLS

The Kitsuki Investigator's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Iaijutsu Focus (Cha), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (All skills, taken individually), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Read Lips (Int, exclusive skill), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Use Rope (Dex). (The Iaijutsu Focus skill is described in *Oriental Adventures*.)

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the Kitsuki Investigator prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Kitsuki investigators are proficient with all simple and martial weapons. They do not gain any proficiency with armor or shields.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): The investigator has the extraordinary ability to react to danger before his senses would normally allow him to do so. He retains his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) even if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. He still loses his Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.

At 4th level, the Kitsuki can no longer be flanked; he can react to opponents on either side of him as easily as he can react to a single attacker. This defense denies other creatures the ability to use flank attacks to sneak attack him. Characters four or more levels higher than the investigator can still flank him for sneak attacks.

If the investigator has any levels of another class that offers the uncanny dodge class ability, levels in this class stack with levels of those other classes for determining the full extent of that ability.

TABLE 6-1: THE KITSUKI INVESTIGATOR

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+0	+2	+2	Uncanny Dodge (flat-footed), Open Eyes (free action)
2nd	+2	+0	+3	+3	The Eyes See the Heart
3rd	+3	+1	+3	+3	Learn the Enemy
4th	+4	+1	+4	+4	Uncanny Dodge (flanking)
5th	+5	+1	+4	+4	Ichi Miru, Open Eyes (Wis bonus)
6th	+6	+2	+5	+5	Know the Enemy
7th	+7	+2	+5	+5	Halt the Enemy
8th	+8	+2	+6	+6	Open Eyes (take 10)
9th	+9	+3	+6	+6	Defy the Enemy
10th	+10	+3	+7	+7	Master the Enemy

Open Eyes: Though he is a well-trained fighter, the investigator knows he must rely on his wits to survive many of the situations the pursuit of the Emperor's Justice takes him. At 1st level, the investigator may use the Spot, Sense Motive, and Listen skills as a free action, and the bonus provided by Void Points spent on these skills is doubled.

By 5th level, the investigator has learned the art of observation so well that he hardly ever misses the important details. The investigator adds twice his Wisdom bonus to Spot, Sense Motive, and Listen skill checks.

The 8th level Kitsuki investigator is so observant that he automatically takes 10 on all Spot, Sense Motive, and Listen checks. In addition, if the Kitsuki takes 20 on a Spot or Listen check, it takes half the usual time, and he is considered to have "rolled" 25 instead of 20.

The Eyes See the Heart (Ex): By 2nd level, the investigator has developed a keen awareness for falsehood. Anyone attempting to lie in the Kitsuki's presence must make a Will save (DC 10 + the investigator's Wisdom modifier). If this save fails, the investigator immediately knows that the subject is lying. This is an extraordinary ability.

Learn the Enemy: The Kitsuki teach their students the basics of swordplay, but otherwise to simply learn how to fight from their opponents. With practiced patience and observance, the Kitsuki quickly adapts to weaknesses in his opponent's technique. At 3rd level and above, the investigator adds his Intelligence modifier to his AC while in medium or lighter armor.

Know the Enemy: At 6th level and above, the Kitsuki's timing is such that he can step into the vulnerable areas of an opponent just after he is attacked. If the investigator attacks an opponent that attacked him earlier in the same round, he may make his first attack that round against his opponent as if the opponent were flat-footed.

Halt the Enemy: Once the investigator reaches 7th level, he becomes a nearly impassable barrier to his foes. When fighting defensively, the Kitsuki may make one extra attack of opportunity against any opponent.

Defy the Enemy: At 9th level and above, the Kitsuki investigator may spend a Void Point once per round to gain an extra attack at his highest base attack bonus against an opponent with a lower Wisdom. The Kitsuki does not know in advance whether or not this ability can be used until he spends the Void Point; if his target's Wisdom is equal or greater, the Void Point is wasted.

Master the Enemy (Ex): Once the Kitsuki has mastered his art, he is an irrefragable figure of honor and obvious ability. At 10th level, at the start of a combat round, the investigator may spend a Void Point and force a single opponent to make a Will save at a DC equal to 10 plus the investigator's Charisma modifier and his Honor rank. The target may use his own Honor as a bonus to this save. If the target fails his save, he is staggered for a number of rounds equal to the Kitsuki's Charisma modifier.



TECHNIQUES

Rank 1: Learn the Enemy

The investigator is taught two things: the actions of the dishonorable are eventually their own undoing, and that those same actions can also be the undoing of the unwary. Students of the Investigator school study their opponents, and fight when they must. The samurai adds his Perception rank to all of his attack roll totals and to his TN to Be Hit.

Rank 2: Know the Enemy

As the investigator grows in his knowledge of the world, he becomes more able to notice tiny details and exploit them to his advantage. At this rank, the investigator gains a Free Raise on all Perception and Awareness rolls. In addition, if the bushi attacks an opponent who has made an attack against him earlier in the same round, he gains a Free Raise on that roll.

Rank 3: Halt the Enemy

One of the trademarks of this neophyte school is the patience of the investigator, who defends calmly as his opponents struggle to touch him. When the Investigator uses Full Defense, opponents attempting to strike him drop all dice lower than his Perception rank. During an iaijutsu duel, the investigator's Void Ring is considered to be equal to his Void + his Awareness (this does not grant extra Void Points, but does allow additional opportunities to Focus and Raise).

Rank 4: Defy the Enemy

The Kitsuki know they will never rid the Empire of injustice by sheer numbers. They must be smarter and quicker than their adversaries, trusting in the strength of honor to carry them. At the start of each round, the Investigator may make an opposed Perception check against a single opponent. If the Kitsuki wins the roll, he may attack that opponent twice; the second attack is made against a TN of 5 + the opponent's armor bonus.

Rank 5: Master the Enemy

When the investigator reaches the pinnacle of his school, he realizes that the weak-willed and honorless cannot oppose him. At the start of a combat round or iaijutsu duel, the samurai may choose to spend a Void Point and make an opposed Perception roll against an opponent. If the Kitsuki wins the roll, his opponent's TN is reduced to 5 for the rest of the round, and the opponent can only choose to make an attack (not a full attack) for his action. The opponent may not make any movement besides shuffling his feet as the cunning and perceptive Dragon overpowers him, seemingly able to predict every move made.

THE KITSUKI INVESTIGATOR SCHOOL

Benefit: + 1 Perception

Skills: Defense, Etiquette, Intimidation, Kenjutsu, Nazodo, Law, any one High or Bugei skill.

Starting Outfit: Katana, wakizashi, light armor, traveling pack, iron box, 3 koku.



OTHER GROUPS

Beyond the two groups described here, there are several other factions that have already been detailed that constantly find themselves at odds with the ninja of the Empire.

MAGISTRATES

Naturally, since assassination is a criminal act, the Emerald Magistrates eventually find themselves up against the ninja. More often than not, the Magistrates are completely unaware that their quarry is a ninja when the situation arises. Most Magistrates consider ninja to be sheer superstition. This is due not to ignorance, but experience. The number of “ninja” cases a magistrate encounters that turn out to be a drunken samurai, a daimyo who has abused his power once again, or even a peasant who disguised himself as a ninja to gain vengeance are far more frequent than actual encounters with a secret order of assassins. Emerald Magistrates sometimes joke among themselves that one of their peers was “off chasing ninja again” if he comes up empty-handed in an investigation.

This dismissive attitude towards the shadow assassins is less prevalent within the Emerald Magistrates — the most elite of the Empire’s law enforcement officers. Magistrates from the Kitsuki and Seppun families are especially loath to dismiss reports of ninja. The Kitsuki are described in detail earlier in this chapter. The Seppun consider any possible threat to the safety of the Empire (and thus the Emperor) with serious suspicion. As the Seppun tend to be among the higher-ranking Magistrates, nobody makes jokes about “chasing ninja” in their presence.

Ninja take magistrates seriously, and most orders have complex techniques they utilize to confuse, bribe, or circumvent magistrates. In the rare event there is some trace of ninja activity left behind for the magistrates to follow, it usually leads them to a scapegoat samurai or peasant, or the Magistrates simply ignore the clue. This can lead to ninja doing overconfident and foolish things, relying on the fact that the Emerald Magistrates simply will never believe a ninja was there. This, of course, can lead to a lot of dead ninja.

THE TSURUCHI BOUNTY HUNTERS

The Bounty Hunters of the Tsuruchi are a threat to ninja simply because they are very, very similar. Though they are not truly ninja, the Hunters follow the adage "the best way to hunt a ninja is with another ninja." The Tsuruchi are patient, unwavering, and merciless in the pursuit of their duty, which sometimes puts them on the trail of ninja. When this happens, the chase can take years, but there is no guarantee the ninja will ever be safe from the Tsuruchi's reach. These hunters are patient, determined, and utterly relentless. Though the Bounty Hunters do not always fulfill their contracts when a ninja comes into the equation, they are successful enough to warrant particular caution from those who walk the path of shadows.

As for the Tsuruchi, they are practical enough to see through the superstition to the truth about ninja. They nevertheless consider these targets just as dangerous as their reputation paints them. The former Wasp generally find themselves hunting ninja of a more mortal variety, and mortals make mistakes. Many Bounty Hunters enjoy the challenge of tracking down men and women who make it their job to remain unknown and untraceable. Among the Tsuruchi, there is no shame in losing a contract if it is generally accepted the target was a trained ninja. Fulfillment of such a contract then becomes much more notable.

The Tsuruchi pose less of a threat to the ninja than the Kitsuki only because the Tsuruchi only give chase if paid to do so, whereas Kitsuki hunt ninja just on principle. To this end, the ninja have made a habit of exterminating any who would draw the attention of the Bounty Hunters down upon them.

THE SHADOW HUNTER (PRESTIGE CLASS)

At first I thought the thing was human. I was annoyed more than scared, for no one was supposed to have access to my private chambers. I spoke sharply to what I thought was my own servant, only to have it turn to face me and smile. There was nothing where Banshiro's face should have been except that cold, horrible smile. It drew a long knife from his robes, and advanced with an eager smile.

I must admit that I panicked somewhat. As I drew my katana from its stand, I reached out and grabbed a small statuette from my desk. I hurled it at the beast, but it seemed to ripple with movement; my missile simply passed through it with no effect. As it grew closer I struck at it with my grandfather's blade, but it dodged my attacks as if its form were water. It reached out for me, and where it touched my arm I felt nothing but cold.

And just as soon as it began, it was over. There was a blur of motion to my right, a streak of black and crimson. Then the beast screamed. It was a horrible sound, one I pray to the Fortunes each night that I will one day forget. There was a sound of tearing silk and the creature seemed to simply... ceased to be. There was only a blackened mark upon the floor where it had stood.

My savior stood silently for several moments, regarding the mark on the floor with obvious disdain. He spat upon it, then fixed me with an unnerving stare. "You are a lucky man, Phoenix."

"What was that thing?" I asked.

"The answer is complex," he replied. "But that is how the Scorpion deal with their traitors."

And then he was gone.

There are those among the Scorpion who remember the service that their ancestors performed in the name of the Emperor. They remember Bayushi Aramoro and his servants as loyal and devoted servants of the Empire rather than faceless abominations. They remember the utter consumption of their kinsmen by the Lying Darkness. They cannot rest until the dishonor is purged.

Most shadow hunters are Scorpion related to those lost to the power of the Lying Darkness. These hardy men and women knew full well what threatened the Empire at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. They have vowed that the surviving minions of that foul entity will harm no one else. None shall suffer as they have while they live.

Shadow hunters tend to come from the ninja and rogue classes purely because they are the most adept at hunting the stealthy Goju and Ninube. They are generally solitary, although they can and do work with others if the groups' goals mesh well with their own.

Hit Die: d8.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become a shadow hunter, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +7 or higher

Skills: Move Silently (10 ranks), Spot (10 ranks)

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes

Special: Sneak attack +4d6 or higher

CLASS SKILLS

The shadow hunter's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Lying Darkness) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

TABLE 6-2: THE SHADOW HUNTER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+0	+2	+2	Shadow's Scourge, Covert (+2), Track
2nd	+2	+0	+3	+3	Righteous Strike 3/day, Sneak Attack +1d6
3rd	+3	+1	+3	+3	Indomitable Will (+2)
4th	+4	+1	+4	+4	Scent of the Prey (presence)
5th	+5	+1	+4	+4	Sneak Attack +2d6, Covert (+4)
6th	+6	+2	+5	+5	Indomitable Will (+4)
7th	+7	+2	+5	+5	Righteous Strike level/day
8th	+8	+2	+6	+6	Sneak Attack +3d6
9th	+9	+3	+6	+6	Indomitable Will (+6)
10th	+10	+3	+7	+7	Scent of the Prey (location), Covert (+6)

CLASS FEATURES

Shadow's Scourge: The hunter has learned to fight his chosen foe with great effectiveness. Against any creature with the Lying Darkness subtype, the hunter gains a +1 enhancement bonus on all attack and damage rolls. This bonus extends to any weapon (ranged or melee) used by the shadow hunter.

Covert: In stalking the shadows, the hunter has learned their stealthy ways. Beginning at the 1st level, the hunter gains a +2 competence bonus to all Hide and Move Silently checks. This bonus increases to +4 at 5th level and to +6 at 10th level.

Track: The shadow hunter gains this feat for free at first level. When tracking any creature with the Lying Darkness subtype, he gains a +10 bonus to his Wilderness Lore checks.

Righteous Strike: The hunter knows his enemies well, and can exploit their spiritual weaknesses even if he lacks the materials normally necessary to do so. Beginning at 2nd level, the hunter may declare a righteous strike against his opponent. This attack gains an attack bonus equal to the shadow hunter's Charisma modifier and a damage bonus equal to the shadow hunter's level. In addition, this attack ignores the damage resistance of all creatures with the Lying Darkness subtype. If a righteous strike is declared against a target without the Lying Darkness subtype, it has no effect, but that use of the ability is still expended. At 2nd level, this ability may be used three times per day. Beginning at 7th level, this may be done a number of times per day equal to the hunter's level in this class.

Sneak Attack: This ability is identical to the ninja ability of the same name. The shadow hunter gains sneak attack bonuses at 2nd, 5th, and 8th levels. This sneak attack bonus stacks with any similar effects from previous class levels.

Indomitable Will: To hunt the shadows, one must possess total resolve and an unrelenting passion for the eradication of the darkness. Beginning at the 3rd level, the hunter gains a +2 enhancement bonus to any save versus mind-affecting effects of any sort. This bonus increases to +4 at the 6th level and to +6 at the 9th level.

Scent of the Prey: The minions of the darkness are creatures of pure chaos, and the shadow hunter is attuned to their foul presence. Beginning at the 4th level, the hunter can detect the presence (but not the location) of any creatures with the Lying Darkness subtype within one hundred feet at will. At the 10th level, the specific location of all such creatures is revealed as well.



APPENDIX ONE:

EQUIPMENT OF THE NINJA

"Do you really need all of this?" Tai asked, looking at the many chains, blades, and throwing spikes. Yudoka gave him a harsh look. "In the end, boy, you will wish you had brought more."

— Conversation overheard during Bayushi Tai's first visit to the hidden arsenal of the Shosuro family.

While ninja can use the equipment found in *Rokugan*, they often choose to employ their own unique tools, designed for specific essential functions. As a rule, this equipment is inexpensive, easy to produce, and expendable. It is designed so that others who might come across it will be unsure of exactly what they have found, making it easier to obscure the presence of the ninja. Unfortunately, the simple construction of most of this equipment makes generally inferior in quality to the weapons and equipment normally used by samurai. A ninja-to, for example, will almost certainly shatter if matched against a katana. (A masterwork ninja-to is of course an exception, but ninja discard or destroy their weapons with such frequency that they rarely take the care and expense to create a masterwork blade.)

NEW ARMOR

Armored Gi: A variation on the simple black gi of the ninja, this garment has two-inch sections of metal woven into the cloth covering the torso, arms, upper legs, and hood. This affords the ninja limited protection without compromising mobility or stealth.

Kote: An adaptation of samurai armor, the kote is essentially a bracer strapped onto the forearm. The kote has many pockets that can contain small items such as shuriken, blowgun projectiles, or even a small throwing blade.

NEW EQUIPMENT

Breathing Tube: A simple length of bamboo or hollowed-out reed which the ninja can breathe through while underwater.

Gando: This small metal cup is meant to be attached to the top of a candle, directing the light upward and preventing it from spilling out into the surrounding area. This allows a ninja to carry a light source while shielding it from unfriendly eyes.

Kasugai: These are large iron bars with small spikes on each end that jut out perpendicular to the bar itself. These can be quickly driven into doors, anchoring them to the framework around the door itself and preventing any entry.

Mizu Gumo: Without question one of the strangest of the ninjas tools, this is a series of air bladders connected by a net. Deflated, the entire package is quite small. When necessary, the bladders can be quickly inflated to allow a single person to stand upon the net and move silently across a body of water. Frequently used in conjunction with the shinobi-kai for infiltration via waterways.

Musubi-bashigo: This ladder is crafted from a single length of rope and has loops tied into it every few feet. Ninja can use this to hang imboes along a wall for lengthy periods of time to avoid detection.

Nage-teppo: These eggshell grenades are filled with strange mixes of powder so that when shattered they create either a blinding explosion or a thick cloud of black smoke to cover the ninja's escape. Nage-teppo are extremely fragile and those carrying them run the risk of having them break open if they are not extremely cautious with their storage.

Ninja Saya: Far from just a sheath for the ninja-to, the saya of a ninja can serve a wide variety of purposes. The most common ninja saya is substantially longer than the blade it carries, with a detachable end that contains blinding powder to be thrown in an enemy's eyes. Some saya have a breathing hole on the end so that they may be used as breathing tubes, while others contain a second, smaller blade in the false end that can be thrown with a flick of the wrist. (Tables A-3 and A-4 have d20 System™ and 2nd Edition rules, respectively, for the latter kind of saya. No save is, of course, necessary against a breathing tube.)

Noroshi Zutsu: A careful mixture of ash and sulfur, this foul powder can be compressed into a ball and loaded into a machi-kanshisha pipe to be blown or thrown in an opponent's face, causing blinding and choking.

Shinobi-kai: At first glance a simple staff, this length of bamboo can extend a number of flattened metal pieces from one end to create a crude oar. This is used in conjunction with the mizu gumo to allow a ninja to silently glide across a body of water and approach a target from an unsuspected vector.

Tsugi Bune: Another particularly unusual innovation, the tsugi bune is a boat large enough to hold four people at once. The ninja can quickly break the boat down into four sections, each easily carried by a single person. The broken-down sections look just like simple storage crates and can be concealed in plain sight until the ninja have need of them again.

NEW WEAPONS

Bakuhatsugama: This weapon is identical to the kusarigama (see below), except that the weight on the end of the chain is replaced with a fragile container that bursts on impact. This container may contain any number of different substances, ranging from contact poison to explosives to blinding powders such as metsubushi.

TABLE A-1: WEAPONS IN THE D20 SYSTEM™

Martial Weapons — Melee						
Weapon	Cost	Dam.	Crit	Range	Wgt.	Type
Tiny						
Shobo	5 bu	1d4	× 2	—	1 lb	Bludgeoning
Small						
Spine Dagger	8 bu	1d4	× 3	—	2 lb	Piercing
Medium						
Ninja-to	5 koku	1d6	19–20/× 2	—	4 lb	Slashing
Martial Weapons — Melee						
Tiny						
Neko-te	5 z	1	—	—	—	Piercing
Small						
Flute Knife	3 bu	1d4	× 2	10 ft.	1 lb	Piercing
Medium						
Bakuhatsugama†	6 koku	1d6	× 2	—	5 lb	Blud/Slash
Chigi-riki	5 koku	1d8	× 2	—	7 lb	Bludgeoning
Kagi-nawa	9 bu	1d4	× 2	—	2 lb	Slashing
Kusarigama†	5 koku	1d6	× 2	—	5 lb	Blud/Slash
Kyoketsu-shoge	5 koku	1d6	× 3	—	5 lb	Blud/Slash
Mamukigama†	12 koku	1d6	× 2	—	6 lb	Blud/Slash
Manrikikusari†	6 koku	2d4	× 2	—	6 lb	Bludgeoning
Large						
Kamayari†	2 koku	1d10	× 2	10 ft.	3 lb	Piercing
Shikomi-zue (blade)†	1 koku	1d8	× 3	10 ft.	2 lb	Piercing
Shikomi-zue (Chain)†	3 koku	1d8	× 2	—	4 lb	Bludgeoning
Shikomi-zue (Hook)†	4 koku	1d10	× 2	—	6 lb	Blud/Slash
Exotic Weapons — Ranged						
Tiny						
Shuriken	1 koku	1	× 2	10 ft.	1/20 lb	Piercing
Tsubute	1 koku	1	× 2	10 ft.	0.5 lb	Bludgeoning
Medium-size						
Blowgun	8 bu	1	× 2	10 ft.	1 lb	Piercing
Toami Jutsu	10 koku	*	*	10 ft.	10 lb	*
Large						
Telescoping Blowgun	1 koku	1d4	× 2	20 ft.	3 lb	Piercing

† Denotes a reach weapon

* See the description of this weapon for special rules.



Blowgun: Most ninja blowguns are simply lengths of bamboo with a notch on one end for aiming. Blowguns inflict very little damage and a wound from one can be mistaken for something innocuous, such as an insect bite. Blowgun projectiles are often used to deliver poison to a subject.

Chigi-riki: Similar to the morning star, this weapon is a length of bamboo with a chain attached to one end. On the other end of the chain is a second, shorter length of bamboo with spikes driven through it horizontally. It is effective in penetrating light armor.

Flute Knife: This innocent-seeming flute or short staff actually contains a single slender knife that can be launched at a target with a simple flick of the wrist.

Kagi-nawa: One of the more utilitarian pieces of ninja equipment, this is a simple multi-pronged hook attached to a length of rope. Although often used as a weapon, it is equally useful as a grappling hook for ascending sheer walls.

Kamayari: A simple weapon with a basic adaptation, the kamayari is a spear with hooked prongs on the tip. The prongs can catch and rend an opponent after wounding him with the initial strike.

Kusarigama: A classic ninja weapon with many variants, the kusarigama is essentially a kama or sickle with a length of chain attached to the base of the handle. This chain can vary in length but is usually at least 4 to 6 feet long with a weight attached to the end. The weight can be used for bludgeoning an opponent, or the chain can be used to entangle. Variants of the kusarigama include the bakuhatsugama, mamukigama, and the manrikikusari.

Kyoketsu-shoge: A length of rope with either a hook or a double-edged dagger attached to one end and an iron ring attached to the other.

Mamukigama: Ingenious and insidious at once, this weapon is identical to the kusarigama except for the live, poisonous snake tethered to the chain near the weighted end. Obviously, this allows the ninja to poison opponents struck with the weighted end without leaving any trace of foul play. Only the most skilled (or daring) ninja use this rare weapon.

Manrikikusari: A simple chain with weighted iron handles at either end, the manrikikusari can bludgeon or entangle an enemy.

TABLE A-2: ARMOR IN THE D20 SYSTEM™

Armor	Cost	Armor Bonus	Max Dex Bonus	Armor	Weight Check Penalty
Light Armor					
Kote	4 koku	+1	—	0	2 lb
Medium Armor					
Armored Gi	50 koku	+2	+6	0	10 lb

Note: All ninja armor can be concealed beneath normal clothing with a simple Disguise check (DC 10).

Neko-te: These tiny weapons are essentially metal thimbles, each with a small needle jutting out. They are worn on the fingertips and do very little damage, but can often be used to introduce poison into a target's bloodstream.

Ninja-to: The most common weapon of the ninja, the ninja-to is a simple short sword, approximately the same length as a wakizashi, that is straight rather than curved. Ninja-to are typically crafted from scrap or cast-off steel, and are not forged as meticulously as a samurai's swords. This makes them faster and easier to produce, but less sturdy than the blades of a daisho. Still, they can cut down a man just as easily and can, if the wielder is skilled, penetrate armor.

Shikomi-zue (Blade): A bo (quarterstaff) with a concealed blade in one end that can be extended with a flick of the wrist, essentially transforming the weapon from a staff to a spear.

Shikomi-zue (Chain): A bo (quarterstaff) with a length of chain concealed within it. The chain can be extended from one end, essentially transforming the weapon from a staff to a crude flail.

Shikomi-zue (Chain and hook): A bo (quarterstaff) with concealed lengths of chain that can be extended from both ends, one of which ends with a hook or blade.

Shinobi-shuko / Shinobi ashiko: These utilitarian weapons are gloves and sandals, respectively, with large metal claws attached. They are intended for use in climbing and combat, and they perform well in each category.

Shuriken: These simple weapons are star-shaped metal discs that are thrown at a target. They normally do very little damage, but in trained hands can inflict wounds in vital spots. Shuriken are also used as a poison delivery system.

Shobo: A very short metal shaft with rings of iron attached to it. This weapon fits neatly into the hand and increases the potency of a ninja's unarmed attacks.

Spine Dagger: A small handle approximately the size of a fist, with a long protruding blade.

Telescoping Blowgun: A collapsible blowgun, appearing to be a simple cane when in its disguised form.

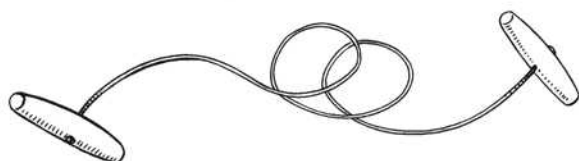
Toami Jutsu: Another innocuous piece of equipment adapted by the ninja for their own purposes, the toami jutsu is a simple fishing net with weights attached to the ends. It is used to entangle and incapacitate opponents while the ninja perform their grisly duties.

Tsubute: Stone throwing missiles very similar to shuriken, only with blunted edges. Tsubute are designed to knock an enemy unconscious or distract him rather than cause any serious damage.

NEW EQUIPMENT RULES

Bakuhatsugama: The jar used as a weight on this kusarigama can be loaded with any of the various alchemy reagents. Upon a successful attack roll, the jar at the end breaks, spilling the contents on the target. Afterward, the weapon becomes a normal kusarigama with a -2 circumstance penalty to attack rolls until the weight is replaced (either with another jar or a normal weight). Proficiency with the kusarigama also provides proficiency with this weapon.

Chigi-riki: Because the chigi-riki can wrap around an enemy's limbs, you can make trip attacks with it. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the chigi-riki to avoid being tripped. When using a chigi-riki, you gain a +2 bonus on your opposed attack roll when attempting to disarm an opponent (including the roll to keep from being disarmed if you fail to disarm your opponent).



NINJA WEAPONRY

Ninja characters are proficient with all weapons listed here, save those marked with an asterisk (*). These weapons must be learned using the Exotic Weapon proficiency.

TABLE A-3: EQUIPMENT IN THE D20 SYSTEM™

Item	Cost	Weight	Notes
Breathing Tube	4 bu	1 lb.	—
Gando	8 koku	—	Illuminates 10 ft. radius when opened, 1 ft. radius when closed, Spot check (DC 20) to notice light when closed
Kasugai	1 bu	6 lb.	Bars door, adds +5 to DC to open door. Full round action to hammer into place
Mizu Gumo	50 koku	1 lb.	When inflated, adds +10 to Swim checks
Musubi-bashigo	8 bu	8 lb.	30 ft. length, adds +2 to all Climb checks
Nage-teppo (4)	20 koku	—	Fort save (DC 20) or blinded for 2 rounds, Alchemy (DC 20) to craft
Ninja Saya	1 koku	2 lb.	Fort save (DC 15) or blinded for 6 rounds, Alchemy (DC 20) to craft
Noroshi Zutsu (3 doses)	12 koku	—	Fort save (DC 25) or blinded for 6 rounds, Alchemy (DC 20) to craft
Shinobi-kai	8 bu	4 lb.	Adds +4 to Swim checks when used with mizu gumo
Tsugi Bune	10 koku	80 lb.	Accommodates up to 4 with Medium load, can be disassembled into four equal pieces weighing 20 lb. each

TABLE A-4: WEAPONS, ARMOR, & EQUIPMENT IN 2ND EDITION

Melee Weapons	DR	Notes
Bakuhatsugama	1k1	Willpower roll (TN 20) or be blinded when struck with the powder in weighted end. Can be used to entangle
Chigi-riki	1k2	Ignores light armor
Flute Knife	1k1	May be thrown using Athletics, DR 2k1, same initiative bonus as tanto during first round of combat
Kagi-nawa	0k1	Provides two Free Raises on Climbing rolls
Kamayari	2k2	Wielder may sacrifice his action in the next round to add 1k1 to damage upon a successful attack
Kusarigama	1k2	Can be used to entangle
Kyoketsu-shoge	1k2	Can be used to entangle
Mamukigama	1k1	Can be used to entangle. Venom damage depends upon breed of snake, typically 2k2 per round until treated. Each attack with this weapon requires two Raises. If the wielder succeeds in hitting the original TN (without Raises) but misses his opponent, he is bitten by the snake
Manrikikusari	0k1	Can be used to entangle
Neko-te	0k1	Do not re-roll 10s on damage rolls
Ninja-to	2k2	—
Shikomi-zue (Blade)	2k2	May be thrown using Athletics
Shikomi-zue (Chain)	2k1	Can be used to entangle
Shikomi-zue (Chain and hook)	1k2	Can be used to entangle
Shinobi-shuko/Shinobi ashiko	0k2	Provide two Free Raises on Climbing rolls
Shobo	1k1	Used to increase damage of unarmed attacks
Spine Dagger	1k2	If target is unaware of the attack, then this weapon ignores all armor and inflicts +1k2 damage
Toami Jutsu	—	Can be used to entangle. TN for Agility roll to escape is 30 (rather than standard 25)
Ranged Weapons	DR	Notes
Blowgun	1k1	+5 to TN versus unarmored opponents, +10 versus armored opponents Maximum range of 100 feet
Shuriken	1k1	Do not reroll 10s on damage
Telescoping Blowgun	1k1	As blowgun, maximum range 150 feet
Tsubute	1k1	Do not reroll 10s on damage
Armor		Notes
Armored Gi		+5 to TN on covered areas
Kote		+5 to TN versus called shots to the arm
Equipment		Notes
Kasugai		Doors barred with kasugai require a cumulative Strength roll of 35 to break down
Mizu Gumo		Provide 3 dice for all Swimming rolls
Musubi-bashigo		Provides two Free Raises for all Climbing rolls
Nage-teppo		Forces Stamina roll (TN 20) or be blinded for six rounds
Ninja Saya		Forces Stamina roll (TN 15) or be blinded for six rounds
Noroshi Zutsu		Forces Stamina roll (TN 25) or be blinded for six rounds

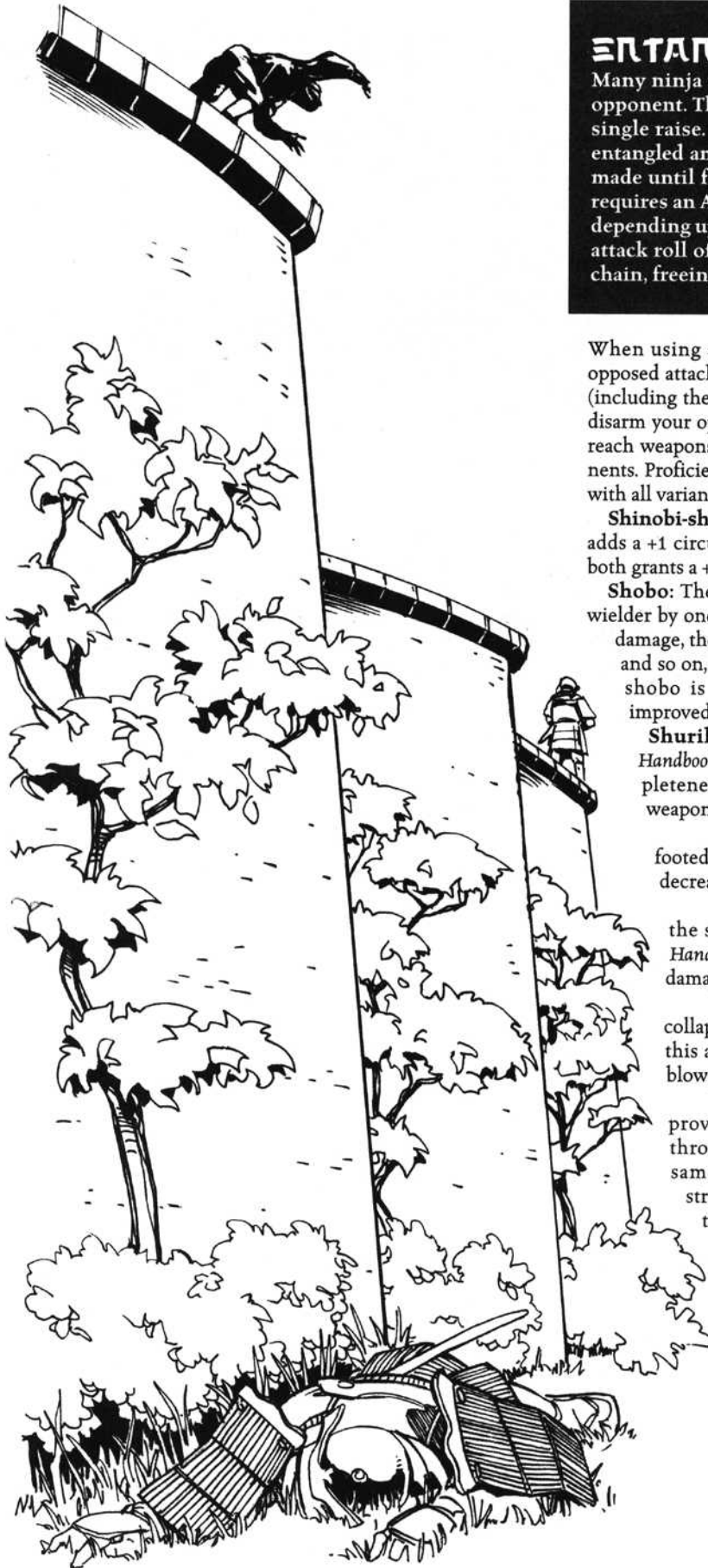
Mamukigama: Succeeding in a touch attack against a target allows the snake at the end of the chain to make an attack against the target at a +10 attack bonus. If you miss your opponent, you must make a Reflex save (DC is your attack roll + 4) or the snake attacks you instead. Proficiency with the manrikikusari allows you to use this weapon with a -2 penalty. Using this weapon without penalty requires a separate Exotic Weapon Proficiency feat.

Manrikikusari: Because the manrikikusari can wrap around an enemy's leg or other limb, you can make trip attacks with it. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the manrikikusari to avoid being tripped. When using a manrikikusari, you gain a +2 bonus on your opposed attack roll when attempting to disarm an opponent (including

the roll to keep from being disarmed if you fail to disarm your opponent). These abilities apply to all manrikikusari variants, including the bakuhatsugama, kusarigama, kyoketsu-shoge, and mamukigama. Proficiency with the manrikikusari also provides proficiency with all variants (except the mamukigama).

Neko-te: Wearing this weapon adds a +2 circumstance bonus to all Climb checks.

Shikomi-Zue: With the chain retracted, this weapon's statistics are identical to the quarterstaff. Extending the chain is equivalent to drawing a weapon. Because the shikomi-zue can wrap around an enemy's leg or other limb, you can make trip attacks with it. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the shikomi-zue to avoid being tripped.



ENTANGLING

Many ninja weapons have the ability to entangle an opponent. This requires a standard attack roll with a single raise. If successful, the opponent has become entangled and must double the TN for all attack rolls made until freed. Freeing oneself from entanglement requires an Agility roll versus a TN of 25 (this can vary depending upon the weapon used; see table below). An attack roll of 20 with a katana automatically breaks a chain, freeing anyone entangled within it.

When using a shikomi-zue, you gain a +2 bonus on your opposed attack roll when attempting to disarm an opponent (including the roll to keep from being disarmed if you fail to disarm your opponent). All variations of the shikomi-zue are reach weapons, but can also be used to attack adjacent opponents. Proficiency with the shikomi-zue provides proficiency with all variants.

Shinobi-shuko / Shinobi ashiko: Wearing either of these adds a +1 circumstance bonus to all Climb checks. Wearing both grants a +2 circumstance bonus.

Shobo: The shobo increases the unarmed damage of its wielder by one step. If the wielder's unarmed attacks do 1d3 damage, the shobo increases them to 1d4; from 1d4 to 1d6; and so on, to a maximum of 1d20. A character wielding a shobo is not considered armed unless he has the improved unarmed strike feat.

Shuriken: This weapon is described in the *Player's Handbook*, but appears on this table for the sake of completeness. See that volume for details regarding this weapon.

Spine Dagger: If wielded against a flat-footed opponent, armor or natural armor bonuses are decreased by 2.

Toami Jutsu: This weapon can be used in all the same ways as a net (described in the *Player's Handbook*), except that the entangled target takes 1 damage each round from the barbs.

Telescoping Blowgun: This weapon can be collapsed to an easily concealed one foot long tube; this action is equivalent to drawing a weapon. The blowgun cannot be fired when collapsed.

Tsubute: Proficiency with the shuriken also provides proficiency with the tsubute. You can throw up to three shuriken per attack (all at the same target). You may apply up to 1 point of strength modifier to damage with a tsubute, but they cannot carry poison (since they are bludgeoning weapons). All feats in this book which apply to shuriken also apply to tsubute.

APPENDIX TWO:

SHADOW
WARRIOR SECRETS

This section refers to the d20 versions of skills where applicable. Second Edition players may wish to refer to the list of equivalent skills on page 210 of Rokugan (available for download at sr.alderac.com).

Everybody in Rokugan knows about ninja, but most regard them as mythical. For the true ninja, whether they embrace that term or not, this status is a great boon. Only ignorance can protect them, for if the Empire were to learn that they actually exist, fear, prejudice and honor would demand their complete destruction. The following is a selection of strategies that ninja have found useful to their continued survival. Those wishing to play ninja characters may want to take careful note.

REMAIN HIDDEN

This is the first and most inviolate rule of the ninja: do not allow others to learn of your existence. To be discovered as a ninja is to face immediate death; if not at the hands of your many enemies, then at the hands of your own colleagues. Ultimately, no sect can afford to risk revelation of their secrets, and an exposed ninja is often eliminated for the benefit of the group. Individual members recognize this, and accept it as part of their duty.

When on a mission, this rule is best served by practicality. Unlike samurai, ninja recognize that serving the cause to the point of death is not a beneficial arrangement. If their objective cannot be reached, they retreat into the shadows. If capture is imminent, they take great risks that result in either escape or a spectacular death that strikes fear into their enemies (perhaps taking a few of them along). Cor-

nered ninja have hurled themselves from cliffs or dashed into burning buildings, preventing capture and impressing upon their foes their fearless nature. Ninja with mastery of explosives have even dashed into groups of samurai while carrying kegs of gaijin pepper, destroying themselves and their opponents in a final brilliant blast of defiance.

Of course these are drastic examples, and most ninja find it far more practical to not be discovered in the first place.

MAINTAIN A COVER IDENTITY

Any time that an assassination or crime of stealth has been committed, a stranger is inevitably questioned first — the anonymous traveler or the scruffy ronin. Why is this? What makes a wave man or foreigner stand out to those in authority? The ninja knows the reason: the most suspicious faces are those with no established connection to the community. A farmer who has worked the land for decades or a sentry who stands guard in his lord's manor every night without fail will never be suspected. They are familiar, and familiarity breeds complacency.

The strength of the ninja is versatility. To blend in and become invisible, they must possess the skills necessary to become an integral and functional part of the society in which they live. The true secret of stealth is to hide in plain sight, and the ninja know this to be one of life's most important and immutable rules. The only difficulty inherent in such an undertaking is balance — a ninja must become part of a community, but not become so attached to it that he is unable to execute his necessary duties, even if those duties include espionage, sabotage, or assassination.



ALWAYS BE PREPARED FOR DISCOVERY

The ninja takes great pains never to be discovered, but is prepared should his precautions fail. Ninja weaponry is designed to appear harmless, and can be concealed among common farming implements, crafting tools, or even the scraps of metal commonly found at a smithy. The more exotic trappings of their profession, such as poison, are hidden so securely that they can only be found by a detailed and deliberate search. Some ninja even prefer to keep poisonous animals on hand to gather fresh venom for each use, lessening any risk of an opponent discovering the tools of their trade. (The animal will likely deal with anyone who searches too thoroughly, and most ninja scout out a few places where inconvenient bodies can be hidden.)

Despite these precautions, ninja must ever be ready for discovery. They are always prepared to make their escape, always prepared to disappear into the night as if they had never been. Even in their own homes, with their own families, they have a dozen plans ready should magistrates appear. There can be no rest for the ninja, for the Empire is a hostile environment indeed.

BE PREPARED FOR YOUR MISSION

Failure is unacceptable to the ninja. Even if the ninja survives a failed mission, failure damages the useful aura of mystique and supernatural invincibility. While skill is the most important element of a successful mission, the proper equipment can make the difference between success and failure for a skilled and motivated ninja.

Weapons: The weapons carried on a mission depend on the mission itself. For stealthy infiltration, such as a quiet assassination or an attempt to extract an object, the variety of manriki chain weapons would be inappropriate. On the other hand, missions where combat against multiple opponents is expected demand the presence of chain weapons, which keep enemies at a distance to be dealt with in a manner of the ninja's choosing.

There are a variety of highly specialized ninja weapons. Thrown weapons such as the shuriken or ranged weapons such as the blowgun can be effective if treated with poisons, but only against unarmored opponents. Armored opponents require weapons such as the spine dagger, ninja-to, or even well placed caltrops.

Armor: Armor is a mixed blessing. On one hand, it can save the ninja's lives from attacks that might otherwise cut them down and cause their mission to fail. On the other hand, it can weigh them down, blunting the athletic and stealth skills that a ninja depends upon for their operations. The decision is never simple. Those ninja who dare to wear armor usually wear only the bare minimum of protection so that it will not interfere with their silent movements.

Equipment: Ninja equipment is a mixture of the bizarre and the highly specialized. Most of it is specifically designed to assist in the stealthy completion of a wide variety of mission objectives, but narrowly-focused devices such as the kasugai are sometimes invaluable. When the ninja wish to incapacitate rather than kill, their various alchemical mixtures come into play. When death is the desired outcome, however, they have a wide variety of poisons and specialized weapons to draw upon. An experienced ninja keeps a diverse arsenal so that he will be prepared for anything that the mission may demand.

SKILLS

One of the strengths of the ninja class is the wide variety of skills available. Among the most important are skills which allow quiet movement. Stealth is the very essence of the ninja, and one who is discovered loses an enormous advantage. Being noticed not only jeopardizes the mission but also robs the ninja of his primary offensive advantage, the sneak attack.

Bluff is another important ninja skill, as they are creatures of deception in a rigidly honorable society. Covering one's tracks with a believable and convincing untruth is absolutely vital to the success of any ninja. A ninja can also employ Diplomacy or Intimidate in order to forestall investigation in the first place.

Spot and Escape Artist can aid the ninja in discovering potential problems before the present themselves or extricating themselves from them once they have manifested. Both are useful in the completion of missions, as Spot can come into play on the infiltration portion of a covert assignment, and Escape Artist can be vital to successful extrication from the same mission. Similarly, Disable Device and Open Lock can help overcome the obstacles that inevitably separate the ninja from his quarry.

Forgery, while not as important as some of the previously discussed skills, is another useful ability for a ninja. Missions often require travel away from one's home, and in Rokugan unauthorized travel is looked upon with grave suspicion. The ability to forge travel papers, which can also serve as a means of identifying oneself, is extremely beneficial for any individual with less than honorable goals in mind.

Ninja have fewer skill points to spend than rogues, so they should find a niche and specialize in it. Either be the ninja who opens doors and disables traps, or be the ninja who picks pockets and charms the gullible guard. Trying to be both may stretch the abilities of the class too thin, leaving the ninja incapable of either function.

FEATS

Ninja gain several feats as a part of their normal advancement process, including Blind Fight, Dodge, and Deflect Arrows. All of these are of use to the ninja in the normal execution of their duties, but there are a number of other feats that can serve them well in their role as a spy, assassin, and all-around ne'er-do-well. Naturally the ninja-specific feats listed in this book complement the class's abilities, but there are a number of other feats to keep in mind.

Exotic Weapon Proficiency: With the ninja's high base attack, this feat is available at 1st level. Proficient ninja can gain access to some of the more exotic ninja weapons described in this book, leaving an unprepared opponent uncertain how to deal with the threat.

Improved Critical: The nature of assassination is such that this feat is almost indispensable to ninja operatives. Ninja tend to favor daggers and swords that have respectable critical ranges already, so this feat makes their arsenal even more deadly. Combined with sneak attack (and, with good fortune, a keen weapon), a ninja can strike down an unsuspecting target in a single blow if he is canny in his approach.

Mobility & Spring Attack: Because of their class ability that duplicates the effects of Dodge, ninja are able to take these feats at a much earlier level than most other classes.

With access to Tumble as a class skill, Mobility is not as useful as it is to other classes, but it is easily worth the expenditure of a feat to obtain Spring Attack. A ninja with access to the Shadow Run class ability and Spring Attack can control the range of the combat, staying out of his enemy's reach and striking at his leisure.

Point Blank Shot and Rapid Fire: Because of the dependable nature of the preferred ranged weapons of the ninja class (the blowgun, shuriken, and tsubute), those who plan on using them with any frequency might consider this feat as a means of increasing their proficiency. A ninja with Rapid Fire can hurl an impressive six shuriken per round (albeit at only two targets).

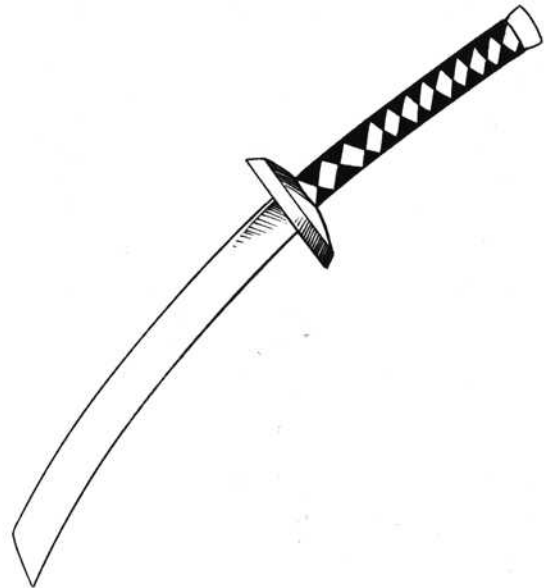
Power Attack: Properly skilled and equipped ninja can enjoy a substantial attack bonus. This feat can compensate for the low damage ratings of most ninja weapons.

Quick Draw: Due to the ninja's high base attack bonus, this is another feat this class can obtain sooner than the rogue. With the extensive arsenal many ninja utilize, this feat can be useful for cycling through multiple weapons to the one most immediately useful.

Versatile: Although ninja possess a wide variety of skills, this feat can be of great use to them in creating and maintaining a cover to disguise their true identities and motivations.

Weapon Finesse: Many of the preferred weapons of the ninja are small, and thus can benefit from the use of this feat. A simple poisoned dagger, for example, coupled with Weapon Finesse and Sneak Attack, can quickly bring a large and hardy opponent to his knees. This feat is accessible at 1st level, allowing the ninja to use a high die result for his Dexterity and place less emphasis on Strength. The only drawback is the reliance on a single melee weapon, which may harm the ninja's flexibility in the long run.

Weapon Focus: Ninja are at their best in combat with a single opponent. This is yet another feat ninja may take sooner than their rogue brethren, which can help the ninja make certain that every strike counts and end the battle sooner.



NEWS OF THE EMPIRE

Those of you who were first introduced to the world of Rokugan through the d20 sourcebook, *Rokugan*, may notice a few references to events that have taken place since the history described in that book. The world of Rokugan is a living, breathing, ever-changing place where major events occur all the time. This section is intended to bring you up-to-date on events that have happened in the Empire since the release of *Rokugan*, especially those centering on the recent L5R CCG expansion, *Dark Allies*,™ and appearing in weekly fiction on the Alderac Entertainment Group, Inc. website. (This fiction can be found at <URL:<http://l5r.alderac.com/fiction/>>.)

Believing the Elemental Masters to be dead, Shiba Aikune has reluctantly assumed leadership of the Phoenix Clan. Using Isawa's Last Wish, he has increased the magical power of many other Phoenix, mostly members of the Asako family who seem intrigued by the power of the artifact.

Lion Champion Matsu Nimuro had dispatched Lion troops to aid the Phoenix. Shortly before the Masters disappeared, the Tsuno began to ravage the southern Lion lands, and Nimuro pulled these troops back home. Had it not been for the discovery of the Last Wish, Aikune believes, the Phoenix would have been defeated utterly by the Dragon. Angered by the perceived betrayal of the Lion, Aikune accuses the remaining Lion reserves of cowardice and betrayal. Tempers rise, and Matsu Shinya draws his sword on Shiba Aikune. Aikune eradicates Shinya with the power of the Last Wish, and the other Lion attack the Phoenix in retribution. Unprepared for the power of the Last Wish, the few Lion survivors are beaten back and must retreat into the mountains of the Phoenix.

Having been revealed as the true heir to the Yasuki lands, Akodo Kaneka travels to the Crane lands to claim his birthright. He does not, however, take the Yasuki name, claiming instead that he has come merely to impose peace between the Crab and Crane. Kaneka also reveals his alliance with the Unicorn and Mantis clans, both of whom support his presence in Yasuki Yashiki. He orders the Crane to vacate Yasuki lands immediately, but permits the Crab to continue to use the lands' resources so long as they accept his claim. The Crab acquiesce, but a surprise attack from Mantis troops seals off a large portion of the Crane army from retreat. Kakita Kaiten, master of the Kakita Dueling Academy, challenges Kaneka to a duel for the safe passage of his kinsmen. Most believe the Bastard cannot possibly defeat the Grand Master, but in a surprising display of swordsmanship Kaneka cuts the Crane down.

At the same time, Kaneka's Unicorn and Mantis allies immediately blockade trade routes throughout the Empire. The Unicorn stop all traffic through the Seikitsu Pass that does not offer tribute to Kaneka, and the Mantis do likewise for those shipping cargo along Rokugan's coast. Those who pay the tribute give Kaneka much-needed resources for his military campaign. Those who refuse are turned back or destroyed outright.

Hida Kuon, de facto Champion of the Crab after the disappearance of his brother Kuroda, receives a strange summons to the fallen towers of the Kaiu Wall from a Tainted minion of Daigotsu. He is told that the Dark Lord wishes to sue for peace, and offers Kuon the untainted body of his brother in return. Suspicious, but desperate to learn more about his clan's strange new enemy, Kuon agrees to the meeting, taking only a handful of his strongest warriors. During the meeting, it is never apparent whether Daigotsu actually has possession of Kuroda's remains, and Kuon's temper soon flares. The Crab retreat, fighting their way through the armies of the Dark Lord.

Upon his return, Kuon's military advisors chide him for foolishly risking his life to no good purpose. Kuon silences them by revealing the sketches taken by his Hiruma scouts while they were within the conquered areas of the Wall. With the knowledge they have gained, Kuon believes he can successfully stage a counterattack against the Horde.

The unsettling question remains: why did Daigotsu offer peace in the first place? Was the offer sincere or was this merely one more trick of the insidious Shadowlands?

Moto Gaheris, legendary Khan of the Unicorn, dies shortly after falling from his horse during a battle with an ogre. His grandson, Moto Chagatai, fearful that an ancient curse upon the Moto family may threaten his grandfather's soul, uses Naga magic to follow Gaheris into the Realm of Slaughter. There, Chagatai, Gaheris, and Unicorn general Moto Chen face the forgotten gods of the Moto, the Shi-Tien Yin-Wang, and their servant, the soul of Moto Tsume. To save Gaheris' soul from damnation, Chagatai makes a pact with the ancient spirits: he will erect a shrine to their memory in Rokugan in exchange for abandoning their vendetta against the Moto. Eager to be worshiped once more, the Shi-Tien Yin-Wang agree. Gaheris' soul passes on to Yomi. Chagatai and Chen return to the mortal world, burdened by the decision they have made.

The members of the Imperial Court, notably the leaders of the Otomo family, declare that they will appoint an Imperial Chancellor to serve as a go-between among the Four Winds, hoping that such an individual can help foster peace. The Great Clans compete fiercely for the honor of such a position, but in the end it is the Scorpion who are chosen to appoint the Chancellor. Unsurprisingly, the clan's choice is Bayushi Kaukatsu, mastermind of politics and a respected member of the court. Kaukatsu finds an unexpected rival and potential ally in Ikoma Sume, daimyo of the Ikoma. Together, the two plot a potential alliance between the Ikoma and Bayushi families, beginning with the marriage of Sume's nephew Ikoma Otemi and Kaukatsu's student Shosuro Yasuko.



"NINJA ARE NOTHING MORE THAN PEASANT SUPERSTITION AND AN EXCUSE FOR INCOMPETENT BODYGUARDS. THERE ARE NO NINJA, AND I WILL HEAR NOTHING MORE ON THE MATTER."

— AKODO KAGE, FIVE YEARS BEFORE HIS EXPOSURE AS A KOLAT MASTER

They are the masters of shinobi, the shadow arts: spies, saboteurs, and assassins who can appear and disappear with a thought. Most regard ninja as figures of myth, created to frighten the simple-minded and remind samurai why they should hold tightly to honor and bushido. Many would be surprised to discover how real ninja truly are.

For those who hunt the shadows, or those who seek to enter them, this book can be your guide. Open it, and learn their secrets.

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Game Masters running the Second Edition L5R RPG will need a copy of the *Legend of the Five Rings Game Master's Guide™* and the *Player's Guide™*. Players need only the *Player's Guide*.

Dungeon Masters running *d20 System™* games will need a copy of the *Player's Handbook™*, the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide™*, *Oriental Adventures™*, and *Rokugan™*. Players will need only a *Player's Handbook™*.

The path of shadow is waiting for you...



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