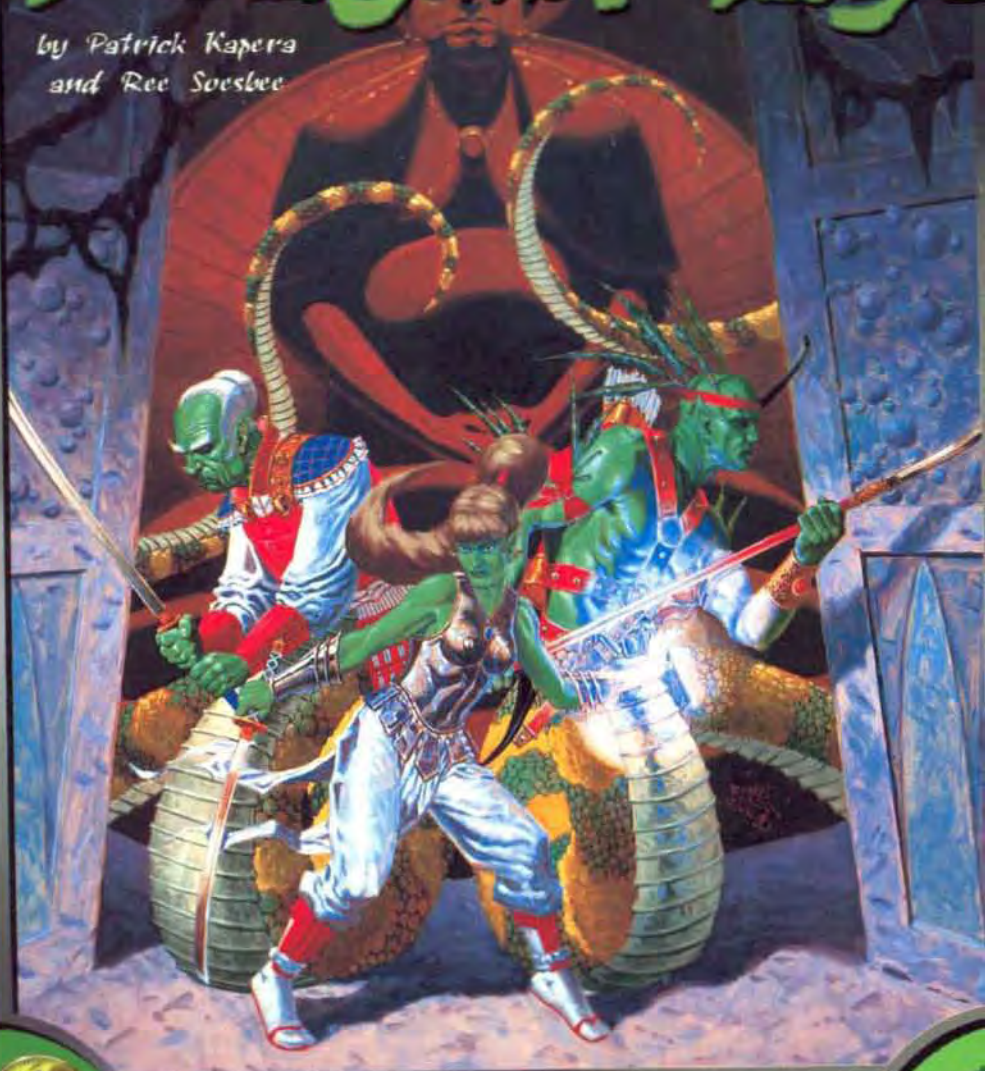




The Way of the Clans: Book Eight

The Way of the Naga™

*by Patrick Kapera
and Ree Soesbee*



Legend of the Five Rings





Legend of the Five Rings

The Way of the Naga



*“The only truth you find in distant lands is the truth
you carry with you.”*

– The Qatol



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Kevin Wilson gave Chapter 3 the abomination it needed.

Ken Carpenter marshalled the army in Appendix VI, and kicked our collective tails with it.

Jim scouted out the Shinomen Forest and told us what he found.

Cris Dornaus drew a map of Nirukti's buildings, and then told us who lived there.

Tess Zachary, who sent me the Naga, long-distance, just so I wouldn't have to retype. Also, for running the single greatest LARP events in the world, and for letting Naga play at GenCon, even if we didn't have any rules yet.

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The Sources of War

"The voice of the people is the Voice of Atman"
- Qatol

My name is unimportant.

I am the Kazaq, and that is all I am. I am a Speaker of the Akasha, and I am the one to tell this tale. I am an Asp, of the bloodline of the ancient city of Siska. I have seen mountains move, and the lands burn from the tears of the Atman. The forests which cover the land were wide then, streaming from mountain to sea and from hill through valley.

That was the time of our people, before the Breaking of the One Stone, when we were as gold upon the land, and lived as one. It was the days before coming of the Akasha when the Bright Eye and the Pale walked upon the land. Of those days, I will tell this tale.



There once was a Naga known to his people as the Svarbhanu, first among his race. He was of those who stepped from the Stone when it fell from the heavens, and his voice was as thunder to the wind.

The Svarbhanu was a powerful warrior, blessed with the gift of the Pale Eye and given hair of gold and eyes like the summer corn. Svarbhanu's scales were made of gold, and his fingers shone in the Bright Eye's gaze as if they were pieces of the sky. He was born on the first

day that the Pale Eye opened, and it is said that his upturned face was the first sight the Atman's Pale Eye saw. For a day, he rejoiced in the Breaking of the Stone, and the birth of the people, watching as one by one they came forth from the shattered black remnants of the Heavenly Core. And they were all as one, all alike, beneath the Atman's Eyes.

The mighty Svarbhanu, Golden One, was not born of egg nor shell, but birthed of the Atman himself; a thought brought to life and given form within the Black Stone that was our maker. In the mind of the Atman, he was born, and on the land he was placed, to live within the glory of the Atman's presence. His people were few, carved from the Black Stone itself, and their scales shone in radiance above all others, gold and silver beneath the Bright Eye's sight.

But this was not enough for Svarbhanu. He saw his people emerge from the Shell of the Stone, and he saw them turn one upon the other, and fight with spear and bow. In those days, all Naga were as one and there were no divisions - there were no Asp, no Constrictor or Cobra, no Chameleon and Greensnake. All Naga were one body, and their scales were not green as ours are today, but as gold as the summer sky and as bright as dew upon the mountain. Yet though they were of one people, the Golden Ones fought. Their arguments grew to flames, many died, and the land was divided among them.

Around the People, the Atman's Bright Eye brought forth the wonders of the ocean and the land. From the pores of the earth, creatures sprang and bowed their heads before Svarbhanu and his brood, acknowledging them as the true children of the Atman. Yet, still, the People fought, for the smallest differences were as great stones to their eyes.

Svarbhanu was not content, and let out a great cry. "Atman," he said, "You have shown me many things, and for all these I am grateful. The world prospers, and the people of the Naga live among the land and build cities of great power. But what among them makes them destroy one another?" And the Svarbhanu's children died, and the serpents of gold fell one by one, to the spears of the Five Cities.

The Svarbhanu healed the land, and still the People fought. He offered gifts of silver and gold, beauty and honor, but still, the battles continued. At last, the Svarbhanu turned away, for nothing he could do would stop the fighting. Still the

People fought one another, and the wars continued. Darkness fell, and the people grew weary, and all the green land of Atman was covered in rivers of blood.

The Svarbhanu sorrowed, for the Bright Eye did not answer. The people continued to fight, and among them, the Svarbhanu's own son, a beautiful child and first among the new race of golden serpents. He was his father's delight, and a swift warrior. Yet, one day, among the fighting of the people, an arrow struck his heart, and burst his soul. The son of Svarbhanu, leader of the Golden Ones, died on the plain of dust and woe.



This angered Svarbhanu beyond thought. He went to the field, and raised his son from the ground, washing his hands with sweet oil and cleaning his son's wound with his own hair. When the body was prepared, the Svarbhanu carried him from that place, to the top of the highest hill above the forest. There he looked down on the fires of the Naga armies, all as one in the gold and beauty of the one race of serpents. The plains beneath him shone with the beauty of their carved yellow features, but the rivers swam with their blood.

And there, he called to the night, and demanded an answer. He watched for the Pale Eye of Atman to awaken, and when it did, he called out his question to the Pale Eye's mercy.

"Look," he cried, "upon the world you have created. My kind make war, one upon the other, and our children are slain on the field. I call to you, Dark Eye of the Atman, and I ask why this is allowed to be." He held aloft the body of his son, slain in battle. "What are the sources of this plague called 'War', and how can I destroy them?"

The Pale Eye, crafty and wise, looked down upon the Svarbhanu and his people and answered. "My child, there are five things which are the source of War, and each of them has been blessed by Atman. One is pride, another wealth, another fights for land. The fourth is freedom, which all creatures of Atman know, and the

fifth... ah, the fifth, Svarbhanu," the Pale Eye said, "is to preserve one's own life."

Svarbhanu shook his head. "These are not enough, great Atman. The dead must be appeased." He placed his golden child upon a hilltop beneath the Pale Eye, and he spoke over the blood of his son.

"This thing called War must not be allowed to continue. I ask that you remove the sources of war."

The Pale Eye sighed, and considered the matter. "You know not what you ask, child of the People. Once made, this thing cannot be unmade so easily."

"Yet I do ask it, in the name of the First Blood shed upon this land, and for the tears of the Atman, mother and father to the People."

"I will do as you ask," said the Pale Eye, and the Atman's hand raised above all the lands, "But I will only remove four of war's five sources. Do what you will with the last."

With that, the Pale Eye spirited away, and the Svarbhanu was left alone on the hilltop with the dead body of his son.

Below him, the People halted in their fray. Their weapons fell to the ground, and the world ceased its turning. Blood stopped falling from wounds, and all the land was at peace. But the peace that was, there had never been before. No voice ventured even a single word in anger, no Naga raised a hand against injustice or slavery. One Vedic became the foremost of the People, grinding all others down beneath his fangs, and all the others allowed it. Their pride was gone, and their desire to be free men had vanished as surely as the tide upon the shore. There was no strife, and all wealth turned on one Naga's touch, to give or to receive as he commanded.

With the power he had taken, the High Lord ruled all the land of the People, from high Shakahnan mountain to the lowlands of Balil. All the Golden Naga of Svarbhanu, the Chosen of the Bright Eye, were called to service and placed in chains.

The People, enslaved, began to die.





When he could stand it no more, Svarbhanu traveled again to the hilltop of the Atman, and called once more to the Pale Eye.

"This cannot continue," the Svarbhanu cried. "My people starve and die under the command of an unjust Lord. He holds all gold and all title, and the lands he owns are plundered and destroyed, their green fields torn to sod and ruin.

"We are given peace, but it is peace at the cost of our pride and our honor - at the cost of our children, and ourselves. You promised, Pale Eye," he said, "to take away the demons of War and give us peace, but what you have given is only butchery of another sort."

And the Svarbhanu tore his hair, and he beat upon his heart until the Pale Eye stepped once more from the heavens and came to his side.

"This," said the Pale Eye, and the heavens thundered, "is the world you wished. All things have been done as you asked, and your people live now in the world you would have made for them. I have taken strife and anger, I have taken away possessions and pride - your world is your own, Svarbhanu, made as your will decreed. If you would have back the four sources of War which I took from you, Svarbhanu, you must purchase it for your people."

"Here," the Atman lifted a hand, "is the pride that left your people when you called down the power of my Eye. For this, I shall take your payment in the form of self. Your people must be individuals before they can be proud of what they have done."

And Svarbhanu looked down upon his people, and he saw their shapes twist and change, and each face became different from the face which looked upon it, and their shapes were moved until not one was as his brother. And thus were the Naga Sundered, and the Bloodlines born.

"And in this hand," said the many-faced Atman, "lies the wealth, and greed, that I took from your people at your command." He raised the cup high, and it filled the world. "To repay its cost, I will take the gold from your scales," said the Pale Eye of Atman, "and fill the Heavens with your wealth, that you may see it always but never acquire what you have lost. With this, you will know that there is more than silver and riches, and seek to attain the gold of Nirvana and the silver of Atman's teachings."

Beneath them, the scales of the People lost their golden shine, and their radiance faded into dust. They became as the earth, gilded with the

green of grass and leaves, and the brown of dirt and forest. And so, the Naga shone no more in gold and silver, but were forced to seek out glittering gems with which to make offerings to the Atman.

"The third woe that I will give to you shall stand beneath your bodies, and the land itself shall come forth in reckoning." As the Atman spoke, the Svarbhanu saw the great forests heave, and the world cracked. Mountains rose, and oceans moved, and the borders of great Shishomen forest shrank behind flat, featureless plains.

As the heavens grew grey with the weight of day behind it, the Atman's Pale Eye looked once more on Svarbhanu and his people. "The fourth price you must pay is a heavy one, but you must bear it, or your people will live forever as servants to another. The cost of freedom is unity, for only when another Naga's life is as important to him as his own can you be truly free. For this, you will have no sons, and no daughters, and the ties of blood between you shall all be as one."

The Svarbhanu saw the people standing around the egg-beds, and he saw the Children of the Cities come forth with eyes of wide wonder, and he knew that it was good.

"The fifth, Svarbhanu," the Pale Eye said, "was the sanctity of life, and that source I never took from you. Yet it is right that you be rewarded for your wisdom - had I taken it, your kind would surely have perished, and no Naga would move upon the firmament, nor swim through the sea.

"That fifth thing which I did not take - life - I shall give you a hundred fold. Let the life of one Naga be the life of all, and let the world which you embrace, embrace you as well."



That was the day when the Akasha was born, from the Bright Eye's gift of Wisdom and the Pale Eye's gift of War.

But through all the lands of the Naga and their children, may they forever be plentiful, never did a Golden Serpent come again, and all the people who have descended from Svarbhanu and the

One Stone have been as green as earth, or brown as dust. Their scales have turned to yellow, and as black as the night sky, but never did they turn to gold. The firstborn children of Svarbhanu are lost to us, and their lives are no more than dust.

But their legend will live on through the Akasha and the Vedic of Bright and of Pale who speak its will.

May we look upon their brightness, and into the eyes of the Atman, the imperishable light, forever.



Welcome to the eighth book of our *Way of the Clans* series. *Way of the Naga* is designed to help Game Masters understand the mystery and ancient secrets of Rokugan's non-human past. Many view the Naga with a strange mix of fear and hatred, misunderstanding their intentions and abhorring their strange features and lore. Some even whisper that the Naga came before the Time of the Kami, and seek to return the world to a pure – non-Imperial – state.

The truth about the Naga is that they were once a powerful race, and one which ruled the whole of the land now claimed by the Empire. During the Time of their Great Sleep, their cities fell to ruin, and their legend died. Now, as the Empire is threatened by the Evil of the Shadowlands, the Naga have returned from myth to fight alongside the brave samurai of Rokugan.

Way of the Naga is not the final word on the ancient Naga, but rather presents cultural and historical information which your Game Master may find useful for his or her own campaign. As usual, the Game Master has final word on the Naga, from determining their spells and abilities to a complete exclusion of the race from the campaign. You may find that the Naga in your realm are different from those presented here, and that the answers to the ancient legends lie within another set of ruins... or behind a serpent's mysterious golden eyes.

In this book, you'll find the stories and histories of the Naga, dating from the time before the Kami fell from the Heavens. You will take a

glimpse into the world as it was before the Time of the Fall, and perhaps learn about the truth of humanity's myths, all from a source as old as time itself.

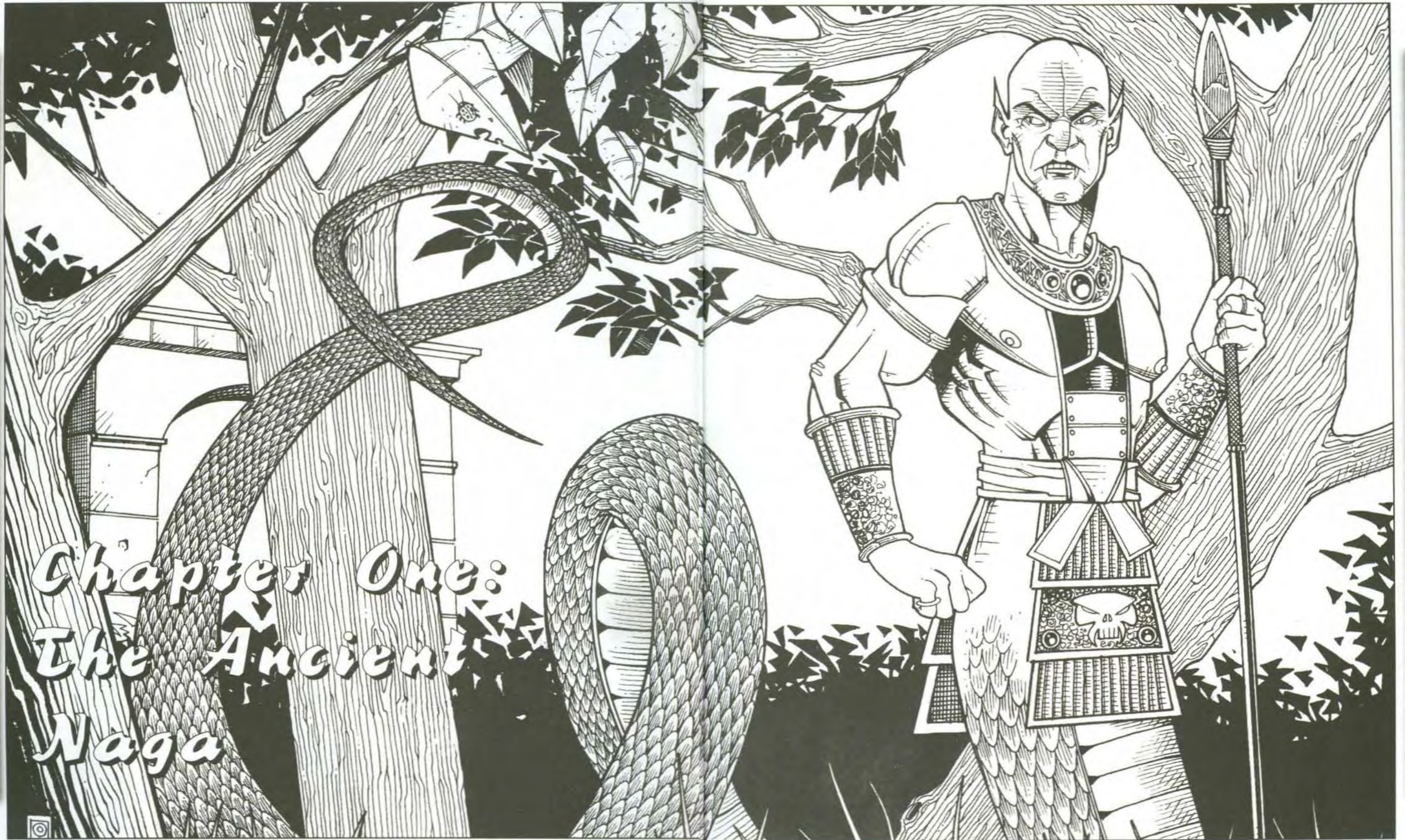
You'll see ancient cities, and recover them from ruins as you stretch from the sleep of a thousand years, and you'll understand the driving force behind the Naga Akasha – the Mind of Minds that holds all the souls of the Naga race, born and unborn. All the rules and guidelines you'll need to make your own unique Naga characters are included in this book, as well as new skills, advantages and disadvantages, and the *Great Lessons*, or schools, of the Naga Race. Plus, we've included information on how to run an all-Naga campaign, based either before or after the fall of the Kami, and how to integrate the occasional awakened Naga in historical Rokugan campaigns.

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

And, somewhere within all the astonishing change, the strange and terrifying world into which these simple Scouts awakened, something terrible lay in wait. The Akasha stirs, sending a clarion call to its people, whispering of darkness and the Foul.

Within the great forest, the Naga people rise, grasping their ancient spears and holding aloft banners unseen for a ten centuries. Are you prepared to awaken from the dreams of a thousand years ago?





*Chapter One:
The Ancient
Naga*



NAGA AND THE RPG

The Naga race is very distinct from the 'normal' samurai of Rokugan, but you will soon discover they are not so different from the humans they revile.

Although the bloodlines and other information is different, the Naga are completely compatible with the L5R RPG system, including their abilities, skills and experience/insight levels.

Remember, your GM can choose not to use the Naga in his campaign. That's entirely his right. But if he does, you'll find them completely compatible, right down to the very last scale.



For over a thousand years, the Naga were considered myth, simple stories and allegories written by some ancient librarian, to teach lessons or to entertain.

Never in the history of the Empire has a Naga been seen, though stories of ruined cities and ancient magics surfaced from time to time. The following treatises were written by members of the Empire, detailing the myth - the legend - of the ancient Naga. Although as far as the Emerald Empire is concerned, the Naga do not exist, there are still strange stories and tales of the Shinomen Forest, and even the bravest samurai do not venture into the depths of that haunted land.

Pay close attention to the lessons these stories teach, but remember: within every legend is a grain of truth, and behind every forest's veiled grove stands a mystery waiting to be awakened...

SCROLL XXIV, OF THE SECOND YEAR OF THE HORSE, IN THE REIGN OF HANTEI KUSADA, THE SIXTH OF HIS LINE

...These scrolls hang heavy in the Ikoma libraries, and there are those who say they can still hear the rumbles of the earth, far to the south, where our Lord Akodo died. This year, we have been blessed with many rains, and the plains of the Lion have been swept clear through flood and high waters.

And though the waters have brought peace to our land, and stopped the bandits who raid to the east, it has also brought a strange twist of fortune that I feel compelled to relate. These scrolls, the high Histories of the Lion, must be maintained with all information, however ludicrous the supposition involved.

During the rains, a group of peasants camped in a small pass on the far side of the Spine of the World mountains, near the lip of the Shinomen forest. The cave opening they described was small, barely enough to give them shelter from the storm, yet the cave itself was large and open. Inside the mouth of the cave, they built a small fire from bundled sticks they carried in their packs.

When the peasants returned, they spoke of strange carvings in the cave, painted with fading colors and odd symbols. The peasants, illiterate as they are, could not relate the precise symbols they had seen, and so we do not know what kanji graced that cave's walls. Perhaps if we did, the peasants' story would be more believable.

Still, the heimin spoke of serpent-men, whose great tails covered the cave's ceiling and walls, interrupted by images of kneeling women with greenish skin. From their crude sketches (continued in scroll XXV, within this series) we have ascertained that the emblem of the Sun Mother was carved into the top of the ceiling, covered in gold and pearl. A similar emblem of the moon pictured in glossy obsidian lay carved into the floor.

Frightened, the peasants speak of huddling near the cave's mouth, and only slowly, as the fire grew bright, did they overcome their fear. Their recollections have been compiled as best as possible, and are presented here for the records of the Lion.

The serpents on the walls were long, twisted, and had the faces of men. They carried spears of strange make, and odd armor which seemed made of gold and ringed chains. Their green-skinned faces were alien to us, with ugly round eyes and pointed teeth, and their leader - so described because he was the largest of the figures, and closest to the Sun-emblem - had a spear made entirely of pearl.

I refer interested parties to scrolls XVI - XVII, of the Third Year of the Rooster, in the reign of Hantei Ningi, the third of his line, and to scrolls III through VI, of the Celebration of Iris Flowers, under that same Emperor's glorious reign. Within those texts, similar patterns of carvings and kanji (letters which appear to be one single, twisted line) are referenced. It is possible that the figures on the wall of this cave and the creatures painted in the ruined city discovered in the first set of scrolls are connected. Certainly close observation of the peasants' scrawlings reveals the similarities

between the pictures in the cave and those in the ruined city near the Shrine of Osano-Wo. These modern peasants have no knowledge of the ancient scrolls, and those who saw the odd occurrences of the Celebration of Iris Flowers could not have been within miles of the cave (that particular festival took place in the northernmost Crab lands). How, then, can these three incidents be reconciled?

The matter was taken up by a Lion Historian, one Ikoma Hatsute, to a traveling Asako Fujiyari, and the Phoenix's answer was enlightening. It seems that we have a cult within our Empire, one which has given up the worship of our great Kami in order to revere the lowliest of creatures – serpents of the field. It seems likely that they place themselves even above the Moon and Sun, great Lord and Lady of the Celestial Heavens, for all the images carved into the city ruins and on the cave walls are of serpents between the two Gods.

It may be, explained the revered Phoenix magistrate, that these places predate the Empire, much in the way that the legends of Isawa's City predate the Kami's fall. It is known to us that primitive Rokugani wandered, alone and without guidance, during these times. It is not unreasonable to think that these beast-men could be a primitive attempt to discern the nature of the universe. Cut off from the Kami's wisdom, primitive man will believe any superstition. In

that case, it is likely that with the fall of the Kami, these places were abandoned.

It is certain that these images are allegorical, for what man was ever born, in the Kami's earth, who had the body of a serpent? Unless the tales on the walls of the cave spoke of Oni (which my Phoenix friend assured me they did not), the figures carved into the walls of the mysterious cave have a deeper meaning than their physical form.

Perhaps the 'snake imagery' refers to a precursor of the Scorpion, a people who had hardened their hearts to be almost serpentine in their dealings with the other primitive tribes. They could have been mistrusted, or seen as reviled, and embraced the imagery as their own. In this manner, they could be seen as 'standing between the Sun and the Moon' in imagery, because they had turned their backs on both Gods.

Still, the mystery is unknown. Who were these tribesmen, and to what end did they come? Where are the histories of these strange people, if they joined one of the Great Clans at the Time of the Kami's Fall?

The answer may never be known to the Emerald Empire. In the Emperor's Name, and for the Glory of Rokugan,

– *Ikoma Gakki, Second historian of the High Histories of the Lion*



THE TALE OF THE SERPENT

There is one thing you must understand, brave samurai, as you read this text. The Naga are not human – and they have never been.

The culture of the Naga race is not based on the Asian civilization of Rokugan. They have no place in the Empire, no status, and no revered Kami.

They are outsiders.

The Naga culture is a blend of their ancient histories and memories, and the new information that has been brought to them by scouts investigating the land of the Emerald Empire.

Their ways are not the ways of *Bushido*.

They are not the stories of samurai – although the Empire's influence has begun to permeate Naga culture to an incredible degree, even after only a few years of wakefulness (for the scouts – others have been awake even less time!).

Read carefully, and you will see a view of the Emerald Empire as it has never been seen before.

From the outside.



THE CLANS

What do the Rokugani clans think of the Naga? Strangely enough, they are (for the most part) unified in their confusion, disgust and fear of the great creatures of the Shinomen.

For a thousand years, the Naga culture was a myth. They were legends, stories to scare children, told by grandmothers over a warm winter's fire. Legends aren't supposed to come true.

Only the Dragons (and Toturi, the Black Ronin) have come forward publicly to speak to the strange creatures. Other clans see the return of the Naga as another sign of the destruction of the Empire caused by the plague which has struck down the Last Hantei.

In those few place of the Empire that have actually seen the Naga, the reactions are mixed: fear, worship, and awe.

The Naga speak Rokugani languages very poorly, and only Mirumoto Daini has mastered any grasp of their language. It is unknown why the Naga have awakened at this time, but if they prove to be a threat, the Great Clans will no doubt destroy them before they can bring harm to the Empire.

After all, they're only snakes. Right?

WORDS ON SCROLL, DISCOVERED NEAR THE RUINS OF AN ANCIENT CITY, WITHIN THE SHINOMEN.

Mother,

It is the tenth night of the Horse, and I am weary. For seven days, the armies marched across the Scorpion plains, and when they fought against the Lion, we were destroyed. I saw my younger brother - Ishiku - fall, his body speared by Lion pikes.

Perhaps we underestimated their ferocity, in baiting them with our poisoned tricks. They cut us down, one by one, though our numbers were three times as great as theirs. They slaughtered us. I saw the Bayushi fall, pierced by knives and swords. I failed, mother.

I fled, and I deserve to lie in Traitor's grove.

I have fled to the great forest, screaming. The groves are silent. I have let the Shosuro armies march on without me, to face the scourge of the Lion. Soon, like poor Ishiku, they will all be dead, and the Shosuro lands will rest in the Lion's clawed fist...

...It has been seven days, and the forest is all around me. The kami twist the trees, bending the woodland and changing the path. Three times, I have followed the stream, and three times, I have found the same shattered rock, by the river. Madness. Nothing, nothing.

I have heard them moving in the woods, the spirits of the Shinomen. My men are lost - I thought I had found one, but it was only an empty skeleton of armor, with a grinning skull beneath. The mon was from my father's time...

...There is nothing I can do, and so I follow them. The spirits call. Perhaps they will lead me to Traitor's Grove, and perhaps I will die there, a Yogo, alone. Nothing, nothing. I have little food, less water, and my father's sword is heavy at my side. Three days ago, I



left my armor near a large rock as I bathed in a small pool. When I returned, it was gone, and the trees would not answer my shouts for aid. I am alone, lost, and I do not even fear the Lions anymore...

...A palace. A palace in the forest...

...I can stay, and I am glad. The visions of my comrades do not haunt me here, and the screams of the fallen Shosuro do not tear apart my dreams. This place is cold, and quiet, and I can hear the thoughts of the trees, whispering. It is cold here.

I am alone, but not alone.

I see them, coming through the trees. I have invaded the land of the spirits, and they stand before me now, watching as I write this. Their bodies - serpents - are monstrous, and their hands grip spears of pure pearl.

I will sleep, they say, for a thousand years...

THE JOURNAL OF SHINJO FUJIMAKA LAST ENTRY

My Lord Yokatsu-sama,

It is with great sadness that I inform you of my wrongdoings. I have betrayed my House, my name, and my responsibility as a son of Shinjo.

I must explain what I have found before I can explain what I have done; for fear that my words may sting with dishonor and shame rather than the true glory of the sights that I have seen. By the Emperor's command, Ikoma Goheshu and I traveled through a section of the Shinomen forest, virgin and unexplored. It was our duty to map the territory, as no man has ever done. To the North - I am sure it was North, my lord - we found a series of tracks in the mud. Tiny markings lay scattered through the ground, as if a rat or squirrel had been pushed through the earth.

Upon closer inspection, I was sure it was not mud at all. It was not soft or wet as if newly formed from rain or dew, but rather, was like a clay - still drying and hardening but never growing solid. Compact and firm, but not brittle.

I noticed the trees nearby were hanging and drooping, their limbs pulled to the ground as if weary from the weight of years. What would have been tall, powerful oaks anywhere else were little more than broken wooden toys. It appeared as if they could not even support their own weight,

and the leaves were a strange purple-red with sticky sap.

Even the sun appeared dimmer and calmer here. It was as if all the lights of the world had gone out and the soil itself had gone to sleep. We camped when it became too dark to search any further. That night my dreams were filled with the images of snakes burrowing up from the clay and swallowing me whole. I knew that I would need to sleep with my kimono inside out the next night if I was to avoid the nightmares.

We woke, and had walked an hour down the path. Suddenly, a place rose around us, covered by creeping vines and twisted trees unlike anything else in the land. A glade of mosses covered thick stone arches, construction the likes of which I have never seen before. I'm not sure how we could have missed this place when we chose our campsite the night before, but it was obvious that we had stepped into something alien; something previously unknown. Our maps indicated that a barren knoll should exist where we stood, but the ring of trees, the stone altars (I can call them nothing else), and foreign markings all indicated otherwise. I was determined to know more, but before I could step into the labyrinth of foliage and stone, Goheshu said one word.

"No."

I stopped. "We must explore. We must study this." I could feel the excitement overcoming me. My lord, please understand the lure of the place - the mystery of it all. I must regret that I embraced the change, the frontier set before me, knowing for the first time what our Ki-Rin ancestors must have felt when they crossed the great mountain and climbed into a new world. Here I was, before a great stone tomb - a castle, a sanctuary, what else...?

I refused to allow a scribe to dictate a bushi's actions. It was not his place to stop me. Quickly, I began to sketch out the ruins, drawing the strange markings, the connected writing and the odd forms.

Seeing me step forward beneath the great stone arch, he said again, "No." His voice was ice and steel.

Angered, I looked up from my work. "What do you fear?"

He looked at me with angry eyes; tired and fearful eyes, as if I were a child. "These markings, these places. They are not on the Imperial Map." He paused as if I should know what that meant.





But he must have seen the look of desire in my eyes. "These ruins do not exist," he said. "They are an illusion. I will not allow you to map a trick!" He spit the last words from his mouth as if I were some sycophantic liege asking him for a few koku to water my horse. My heart filled with fury. How dare he deny this!

"No? Like a dog, you say no and bark and spit at me." He could sense my anger rising. I knew he could. He must have seen my hand reach for my sword, but he did not step down. Rather than being concerned or afraid, this twice-plagued man was smiling at me. He was mocking me; testing me. His eyes were filled with excitement, robbing me of the precious enthusiasm I held just moments prior.

"I will not be distracted from my labor by a barbarian's foolishness." He took the paper, covered with its sketches and notes, and crumpled them in his hands, tearing them to ribbons and leaving them to the wind.

As he did, Goheshu smiled, stared deep at me, and then turned to leave the ruins behind. He turned his back on the mystery of this place, refused to see the stone arches that stood, proud and ancient, and he ignored the challenge they set forth - all in the name of the Emperor's foolish maps.

"Come along, Shinjo," he commanded, looking back at me. His left hand traced the perfect folds of his kimono while his eyes never left mine. And I could see in his eyes that this Ikoma-thing, this barbaric creature - who dared call me uncivilized! - was laughing. He was laughing at me.

I could feel a thousand spirits of serpents moving beneath my feet, urging me to leap, to strike, to destroy those who would dare mock them.

I acted.

It was savage. Untamed. I fought as if years of practice and discipline had faded away, and were replaced by a child's tantrum. My blade and my face were covered in the blood of the spiteful, useless wretch. My hands trembled at my side, my grip never fading. I stood for an hour or more before I stumbled and fell to one knee. It was night before I stopped fighting, chopping trees, creatures, anything. My anger overwhelmed me with the force of another mind - but I cannot justify my actions with the holy madness of the Fortunes. I am sane.

My dreams, my nightmares still haunt me. They draw me in at night with images of his face.

I do not know what that place was, but I cannot find it again. I have walked until my feet bled, and nothing has shown me the way.

And I, proud son of Shinjo, I have slain the Imperial Historian, Ikoma Goheshu, for nothing more than his wish to protect me from the demons of these woods.

This is my shame. I ask for your forgiveness for what I do. My *seppuku* does not make right anything but my own conscience.

Shinjo Fujimaka, the second day of the Goat, One Hundred Ten years after the Return.

LETTER FROM TORITAKA TSIMARI TO HIDA TSURU, REGARDING THE FALL OF HEBIKI VILLAGE.

Noble Samurai, son of the Hida line, descendant of the virtues of heaven, I plead that you remember my small clan when you read this missive, and that you know that we, the proud Falcon, have forever been brothers to the Crab.

Yet, this past year, strange things have plagued our lands. Oni with no Taint have driven the peasants from our villages and turned our rice fields into waste. The river itself has changed its course, and the forest of the Shinomen, always our ally, has turned against our hunters. There is no game, no rice, and no water.

The Falcon flee the village of Hebiki, pleading with our samurai to drive off the raiders, destroy the Oni, and purify the land. Yet when we march to the edge of the forest, the land is empty. Our shugenja - trained in the schools of your own *tsukai-tsagasu* - can find no trace of Taint, no infestation of the Shadowlands. If these Oni have escaped from the far southern lands, then they have found a way to hide from even your most cautious scouts.

I, myself, have seen their darkened forms as they move through the woods - evil creatures, with eyes like burning fire. Your night-time stories of Oni in the darkness of the Shadowlands, old friend, has not done them justice. I had expected them to be twenty feet high with breath of flames, but these creatures can spear me with a bow at a hundred paces - they kill before we can even see their movements. I cannot imagine how the Hiruma match their silence, their swift vanishing and their viciousness.

I camped with my men, near empty Heibiki Village, and in the night, I saw the Oni come forth



from the forest. They were strange creatures, lit only by firelight and Onnotangu's cold glow. I swear on the soul of my ancestor, they stood twelve feet high, and their massive tails slid behind them as if they carried the weight of ten dead men. Their foul stench – of snakes and meat-eaters – corrupted the very air around us, and their hisses were obviously war-cries, testing the strength of our souls.

Perhaps your *tsukai-tsagasu* know more of these beasts than we. They were long, as I have said, and they had the faces of men. Yet behind them, the tails of serpents moved, and their skin was covered in scales of green and sickly yellow. Their eyes, my men say, were cold and golden, slitted like an animal's, and their teeth were covered in poison. They moved without sound – their massive bulk twisting and churning the ground beneath them, pushing aside the forests' loam. In their hands they held bows, bows such as I have never seen before. They were curved and long, their arrows tipped with bloody resin. I swear that many of them were naked, but some few wore a strange armor made of golden plates and rings, strapped together with the dead flesh of men – or perhaps animals, such as the Unicorn use. I cannot say.

They moved with a serpent's slide, hefting their misshapen bodies through that haunted wood with ease. I swear, the fortunes followed us that we were not crushed in their massive coils.

The Dark God must have foreseen that their bestial appearance would strike fear into our hearts, and I could hear his bubbling laughter as I drew my grandmother's sword.

When they came toward us, our horses began to scream in fear. The beasts broke their ropes, and fled through the trees. It was to be our salvation, for the creatures turned to the horses and began to pierce them with arrows. We, the brave men of the Falcon, charged the terrible Oni, driving our spears into their coils, beneath their scales, and cutting at their foul armor with our katana. Even the ashigaru, terrified beyond through, fought with bravery in the face of Fu Leng's abominations.

The battle was short, but fierce, and twenty men of the Hebiki village died to protect their land. Three of the great beasts, as well, fell before our onslaught. Yet seven more escaped, their *nemuranai* bows striking with magical accuracy, slaughtering the peasants as they stood to protect their homes.

I cannot tell you what the creatures were, or why the Dark One has chosen to plague the Clan of the Falcon. I know that your scouts are brave, and wise, and that your wall still stands firm – yet how did these Oni escape the Shadowlands? Were they always in the valleys of the massive Shinomen, or are they recently come, called by some bloody *maho-tsukai* who lives in the bandit ruins within the forests' walls?

I cannot say more, for I lie in the ward of Kyuden Toritaka, wounded by the arrows of the vicious beasts. I only pray to the Seven Fortunes that I have not fallen to the infestation of the Taint itself.

I call to you, our cousins and the defenders of the land against invaders such as these, to rise up with us and lend us your swords. Aid us to purge these Oni from the Shinomen, and restore the villagers to their homes.

If you do not come, I fear the beasts will destroy us all.

REEP'TICHIVK'S STICK

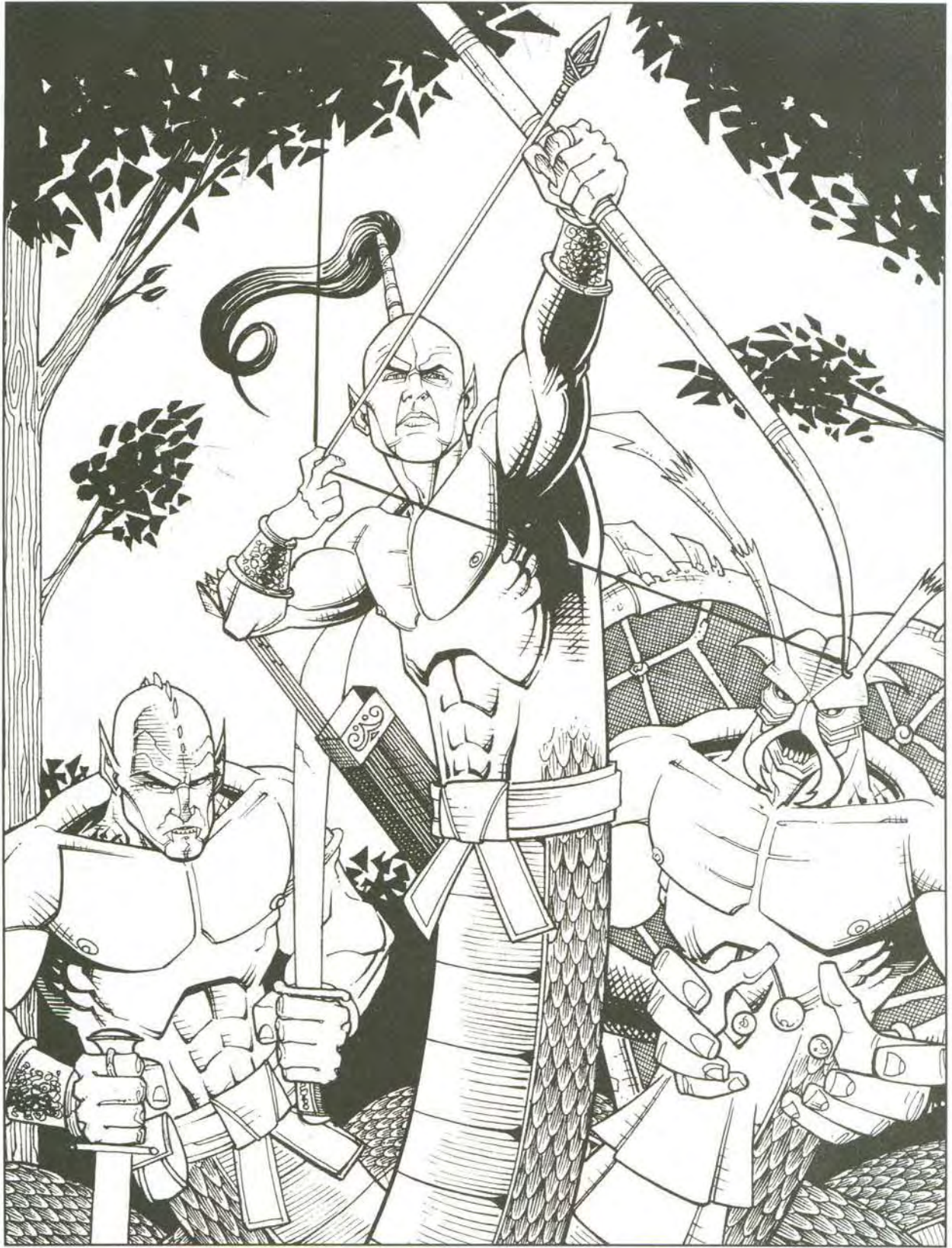
The Nezumi of Rokugan – Ratlings – communicate by chewing and carving stories onto sticks, and then sending them to one another via stream, pigeon, or traveling tribe. This 'message' was transcribed by Hida Sukune, and is included here more for curiosity than as an inclusion to historic fact.

Snakes come from the north, big-big snakes with large tails, like from the Terrible Day. I see them, they come-come.

You who say there no more Shtic'tekv snake-snake, you all wrong. Tell the children, snakes come back, like so promise-promise Great Knackikchuk when the Fire Fell From the Sky. We know they come, and now-now, they *are*. We run-run fast, but not know if others safe-safe. I tell you before they get me. Good-better that way.

Walk quiet, walk slow-soft, keep your tail hidden. Snakes sleep long-long, and the Terrible Day they remember. Fire and Heavens fall on us again, the Snakes now-now close. Food for snake, we will be, if they see us walk-walk in their places.

Hide-hide now, let them no more find us.



Chapter Two



The History of the Naga



THE TIMELINE

The timeline of the Naga people is indistinct, worn away over a thousand years (or more) of sleep. Although the Naga say they have slept for 'A thousand years,' no scholar has been able to prove the exact length of their quiescence. It may have been a thousand years, or a hundred thousand.

The Naga in your campaign may have been awake, and aware, when the Kami fell from the sky. Certainly, Naga legends refer to this event, and many scholars claim that the coming of the Kami was the trigger for the Thousand Years of Sleep.

However, the Naga cannot seem to align the stars with their logical places. During their sleep, the Celestial Heavens changed so radically that their advanced astronomy is all but useless.

In your campaign, the Naga may be much, much older than they seem.

History and Background

"One day, the Goddess took a stone from the ground, and hid it in her obi. She invited the God into her great palace in the clouds and made a feast in his honor. During the splendid repast, she gave the God great quantities of wine and bread to lull him into sleep and drunkenness. As he lay unaware, she fed to him the stone she had plucked from the earth, and it settled into his thick belly.

"The next morning, the two Great Ones began to cross the sky as they had many times before. But the stone in the belly of the God weighed him down and made him slow. He cried out to the Goddess, 'Help me, for I am falling behind you!' But the Goddess only laughed, and sailed across the sky away from him. Soon, the night came, and he was alone with the stars.

"From far away he heard the voice of the Goddess, promising to return to him if he would grant her wish. So he took from the sky many bright stars, and he strung them together into a chain of jewels. Then he called to the Goddess to return to him. When she saw that he had granted her wish, she did come, and he said, 'I still cannot follow you out of the night, for I am weighted as if my shoulders bore a load of lead and stone!'"

"The Goddess, caring only for her jewels, told him that she could cure him of the strange weight. As he offered the jewels to her, she pulled out his own wakizashi, slit him across the gullet, and the stone fell free. In his pain, the God let go the necklace of jewels and they scattered across the sky, forming the great Sky Road which hangs above Rokugan. The God never recovered from his wicked wound, and to this day he chases her across the sky, he slowly and at night and she

swift as the day, beaming her bright joy upon the lands."

"Yes, but what has this child's tale to do with the Naga people who are about to invade Rokugan?" Ujiaki interrupted, muttering sourly from his post behind them, "This talk wastes time, Lady Matsu, and the Ronin still marches to the plains of Osari!" He scowled blackly, and Shizue quickly continued.

"The stone which was in the body of the God, you see, had been under the mud of the earth, and inside that piece of obsidian lay a small Greensnake, sleeping in the hardened rock. Within the body of the God, the greensnake grew. The power of the God changed the snake, and it began to think beyond the chaos of animals. When the stone was freed from the God's belly, it fell upon the earth and shattered into a thousand pieces; each piece became a Naga, each part of the other, each broken from the same block. The snake trapped inside the stone became their first Champion, and he named himself 'Qamar.' It is said that he taught his people to build cities and libraries, and that he taught them the way of the shugenja. And because they came from one stone, they remained one people."

— The Stories of Doji Shizue

The Temples of the Naga

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

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

'gods', they thought of them as portals to the Akasha, necessary in order to understand the balance of all things.

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

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

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


PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Most Naga have a strange appearance, a human torso, head and arms on a long, serpentine tail. Some Naga, however, look more serpentine, having mutated from the usual form. These mutations are more common in Naga shugenja, particularly the Cobra bloodline, whose eggs are placed near magical pearls until they hatch. In fact, some members of the Cobra whose changes are particularly severe

do not have a humanoid aspect to their heads and chests. These Naga instead have scaled torsos and slitted eyes, strange, snake-like faces, scaled hoods at the back of their necks and shoulders, and other aberrations.

To the Naga, such features cause the Cobra to be somewhat repulsive and distinctive, but the Cobra bear their mutations with honor and pride. Once in a generation, a true Abomination is born – a Naga whose appearance is so abhorrent to the Naga that they are forced to shun the child. Most of these Abominations die out rapidly, and all are born sterile. In many cases, severely mutated children are left in the forest after birth, shunned by the race. The Naga will not raise a hand against their own kind, and so instead of killing the child, they give them a slim chance to live on their own. The dangers of the forest slay many of these children, but the few who survive to adulthood can earn their place and rejoin the Naga.





WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH THIS SNAKE?

Not all Gamemasters will want to integrate the Naga - serpent-creatures with a distinctly non-Asian culture - into their Rokugani campaign.

At the same time, the Naga provide a wonderful counterpoint to the Asian drama which is the heart of Rokugan. In many ways, Legend of the Five Rings is not a game of exploration - the clans know one another well, and political and physical boundaries are clearly defined.

The Naga take that neatly plotted Empire and throw it on its ear.

Virtue and honor are not tested in a vacuum. Only when a samurai's oath and understanding of the world is presented with something truly foreign can it be said that he was 'honorable' or 'virtuous'.

An untested virtue is no virtue at all.

The Naga test Rokugani society and culture by presenting a new way of thinking - one so alien it is almost incomprehensible.

The clash of these two cultures, if properly and carefully handled by the GM, can more fully define Rokugan, rather than tear it apart.

A typical Naga's tail is usually from 10-20 feet long, depending on their bloodline. Constrictors, for example, are larger and more weighty than most other bloodlines, while Greensnakes tend to be smaller and more agile. The approximate weight of a Naga is 40 pounds per foot of length, including the torso. Thus, a 15 foot long Naga (a typical size) would weigh approximately 600 pounds. If a Naga is 10 feet long, this means the body/torso of the Naga stands 4 feet high, with a 6 foot "tail" along the ground (a rather small specimen), while a 20 foot Naga would stand 6 feet high, with a 14 foot "tail" along the ground. Naga can rear to a greater height (up to two-thirds of their total length) with preparation (coiling), but cannot walk or travel while coiled and rearing.

A Naga's movement, consists of sliding, both coiling and flexing their tail muscles, at the same pace and endurance as a typical human can walk, but difficult terrain means less to the tremendous tail of a Naga, as does water. Naga can travel at normal human pace over any terrain. They do, however, leave an obvious trail unless trained to cover their path.

Some Naga are amphibious. An amphibious Naga has the mutation which allows them to breathe water - some cannot leave the water, others can leave it for short times, while still others are creatures of the land, with minimal ability to breathe water for short periods of time. This is one of the most common abominations, and is rarely discriminated against. A Naga with this mutation

is usually recognizable by small gills on their neck or upper torso.

The race has an equivalent to the Rokugani *gempukku* ceremonies, a ritual shedding of skin performed when the young Naga is prepared to enter the adult world and take their first name. At this ceremony, Naga are inducted into society and are exposed to an elaborate spell woven with pearl and jade. This ritual makes them forever immune to the Shadowlands Taint, known to the Naga as the 'Dark Gift'.

The civilization of the Naga is unchanging, a static environment which has evolved only minimally, even in the hundreds of years before the Great Sleep. Their civilization is caste-based, defined by bloodline but not limiting the social advances a Naga can achieve (a simple Scout can become the Dashmar, for example, but a Greensnake will never evolve into a Cobra) Because of this, the Rokugani culture is



inscrutable to the Naga. Naga are not used to adapting their beliefs, particularly when the beliefs of others seem to be nonsensical.

All Naga make horses nervous – the smell of serpents causes them to panic, forgetting their training and skittering sideways, or even charging away from the Naga. Because of this, controlling horses in the presence of a Naga – whether in ‘human’ form or not – requires constant attention. The only exception to this rule are trained war-horses. Such horses have been trained to obey their rider’s command, no matter what surrounds them, so they are able to ignore the scent of serpent that lingers around the Naga armies.

The Naga themselves make little use of horses, though some all-female units display remarkable courage and dedication, shedding their tails in order to mount and ride the tremendous furred beasts. These horses have undergone extensive training in order to make them useful to the Naga, and have come to learn that their serpentine masters mean them no harm.



FEMALE NAGA

Playing a female Naga can be an interesting experience and a unique role-playing opportunity. Only female Naga have the ability to alter their physical form, exchanging their tails for humanoid legs. This ability occurs at the onset of puberty, and females can begin using their legs almost immediately. However, constant use of legs means that they are not as good as other Naga with the use of their tail – which becomes somewhat stunted through disuse, and may be shorter than a typical Naga of their size. If this is the case, the female often has trouble with leverage, movement, or other things requiring use of her tail. Also, female Naga must study their skills twice, learning how to use their bodies with and without the leverage provided by their tail. In order to exchange her tail for legs or reverse the process, a Naga must spend five hours in meditation, learning from the Akasha and reuniting their soul with its cause.

LANGUAGE

“Words are to thoughts as arrows to spells – they often fly wild, and rarely reach the point.”

– Shashakar

One difficulty that all awakening Naga face is learning the language of the humans. Humans chatter, where Naga hiss. Humans chirp, where the more civilized tongue uses long syllables and open vowel sounds. Naga do not begin with the skill to speak the Rokugani language, and must learn the language of humans. All Naga can speak the Naga language, a combination of sibilant sounds and long, meaningful pauses coupled with soft motions of the face. It is extremely difficult for humans to learn. The Naga language is also coupled with emotional impact from the shared Akashic link, making it impossible for humans to replicate the sounds – because there are none. Anyone who is not in the Akasha cannot even tell that such an exchange has occurred, and will hear only half-spoken phrases, a word or two, and a great silence.

So do the Naga communicate, and this is why they cannot understand the constant chattering of the humans, or the frequent misunderstandings among humankind. The Naga never misinterpret another Naga’s words, for they are carried mind-to-mind by the Akashic link. A human, on the other hand, speaks for hours – and his men may still misunderstand his words. For the Naga, the human tongue is inefficient, and nearly useless for accurate dialogue.

CULTURAL OVERVIEW

The Naga culture is vastly different from the Empire of Rokugan. There is no *bushido*, no concept of honor as the samurai understand it. The Naga do not revere their ancestors as separate individuals, but rather, revere the concept of all souls as one. Although both cultures believe in reincarnation, the Naga Jakla speak of their own souls as the merged souls of numerous Naga of the past, while the shugenja of Rokugan speak of each soul as an individual, inalienable entity. The differences between the two cultures are vast indeed, and difficult to bridge.

One of the most important things to understand in the Naga culture is their reverence and worship of the Great Akasha, the Eternal Mind which alternately guides and learns from them. The worship of the Akasha is referred to in the Naga tongue as *Sanatana Dharma*, the

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH THIS SNAKE?

(Continued)

It is recommended that a GM limit the number of Naga in the party, unless the GM intends to make the entire campaign based on a full party of Naga PCs.


Naga have many generations of culture and history ingrained into their minds – literally. Their history isn’t something they learned about second-hand; it is something they lived. Their soul still remembers parts of past lives, and through the Akasha, they can experience those memories as if they were the present. They are, literally, a living memory.

Thus, a Naga will not simply ‘adopt’ the culture of Rokugan. Even if an eggling is taken to Kyuden Bayushi and never sees another Naga in its life, the Akasha will still be there to guide it. It will not be capable of simply ‘learning’ Rokugani culture by virtue of being raised by Rokugani people, nor will Rokugani concepts ever come easily to it.

Thus, no Naga, no matter how well traveled, is going to ‘pick up’ a full complement of Rokugani ways in just a few sessions of game-play.

You just can’t take the slither out of the snake.

See Appendix V for more information on this topic.



TAO OF THE NAGA

Like the Rokugani, the Naga follow a code of ethics which dictates their behavior and morality. They also believe in reincarnation and the cyclic Wheel of Existence all beings share. But the Naga are guided by a superior force the Rokugani cannot perceive, let alone understand – the Eternal Mind of the Akasha.

Through the collective mind of the Akasha, all Naga are held accountable for their actions and thoughts. It is impossible for a Naga to circumvent, reinterpret, or ignore the tenets of his race without repercussions so long as he is linked with the rest.

Those that have somehow become separated from the Akasha are both pitied and shunned, and are rapidly removed from the equation.

The Naga believe in karma, just as the Rokugani do. They understand that their roles in this life are a direct result of actions they have performed in lives past, just as thoughts and deeds today will change their future incarnations, for better or worse. Even the most obscene abominations are accepted as part of the Great Wheel of Life; those souls born into deformed bodies as a result of close proximity to pearl-beds have obviously committed serious errors in a previous life to demand such bitter attention.

(Continued)

eternal faith. It is not strictly a religion, but rather is based on the practice of the Great Mind, the code of life. The Naga do not directly worship the Bright Eye and the Pale, but the two form an eternal cycle which the Naga revere.

The Naga word '*dharma*' means 'to hold.' The Great Mind, the Akasha, is the inner law, the code of being which leads from ignorance to Truth. Scriptures, known as shastras, lead to unexplored parts of the Great Mind, and for a Naga, to become one with the Akasha is to understand self-realization.

The grand texts (or memories) within the Akasha's recollection are collectively referred to as the *Smriti* (meaning 'remembered'). The *Smriti* of the Naga are not physical things; they are not scrolls or carvings, nor books or letters. Instead, there is a place within the Naga Akasha where the wisdom of the souls is gathered, and that 'library' is the source of the knowledge and wisdom of the great Constrictor priests. These memories are broadly classified into *shruti* (meaning 'heard'), and *nyaya* (meaning 'logic') based on its origin – whether the information was known or discerned. *Shruti* is considered more authoritative than *nyaya* because the former is obtained directly from the Akasha by the spiritual experiences of the *Vedic* (Naga seers).

There are many different types of memories in the Akasha. These individual memories, or *vedas*, constitute the *Smriti*. *Vedas* can further be broken down into *itihaasas* (epics), *puraana-s* (moral stories), and *agamas* (parables or scriptures).

There are texts written about the Akasha, primarily by an ancient Naga Vedic known as the Burashana (a position which has not been occupied since the Great Sleep, as the former Burashana, a Constrictor, did not awaken from the dream. Her body was found in dust and ashes amid the ruins of a forest temple). These texts, known as *vedangas*, are created to augment the knowledge of those who cannot directly access the Akasha. Those Naga, such as the Greensnakes, who have no deep understanding of the Great Mind, must be taught the passages of their former lives in

another manner, and so the *vedangas* were created.

There are six *vedangas* of major import to the Naga people, and they have each been carved into the wall of one of the six great cities within the Shinomen. Each city is named after its *vedanga*, so that the lesson of the fable can be conveyed to all who live within its walls. These six cities, and the names of the *vedangas*, are Siksa, Iyotisha, Kalpa, Nirukti, Candasa, and Vyakarana. (See *Appendix I*, for more on the six Naga cities).

THE WORSHIP OF THE BRIGHT AND THE PALE

The basis of the Naga religion, if it can be called such, surrounds the Great Mind of the Akasha, and its connection to the Bright Eye and the Pale Eye – the twin avatars of Naga myth and lore. Much of the information in the Akasha asserts that *Atman*, the 'impersonal' God and the universal soul, is the Absolute Truth, and that the Bright and the Pale are the *Atman*'s twin eyes, looking down on creation through first one, and then the other. The Naga believe that the Bright Eye sees all that is good in the world – all the joy and good deeds, while the Pale sees only the bad



side of life, the hatred, the wars and the destruction. The Atman sees all things and can understand the world as it is.

The Naga Atman has multiple roles to play: the creator, the maintainer, and the destroyer all in one. The Constrictor's understanding of the Akasha tells them that at the individual Naga soul (the *jiva-atman*) originates and merges with the pool of the Akasha, and that the Akasha is part of the Atman. The Naga who have attempted to explain this in the human tongue are a bit confusing on this issue, as parts of the Akasha seem to verify that the Atman and the Akasha are one and the same, while other memories seem to imply that the two are individual, but connected. This distinction has been a great source of argument among the Naga jakla, as well as the priests and vedic of the Constrictor bloodline.

GODS OF THE NAGA

Are the Naga monotheistic or polytheistic? This is a difficult distinction, and one the Naga themselves rarely make. The Atman is a single entity, and there are those Naga who believe that the Atman and the Akasha are one mind. If so, and if the Bright Eye and the Pale are two extensions of the Atman, then the Naga are a monotheistic people. However, other symbolism and lessons of the Akasha speak of the Atman, the Pale, the Bright and the Akasha as being completely separate from each other, using the Bright and the Pale as two 'children' or 'extensions' of the Atman, with identities and goals of their own. If this is the case, then the Naga are, very definitely, polytheistic.

PUJA

Puja is the term used to refer to worship, itself. Typically, it is conducted to an idol made of gold, silver, bronze or even clay, representing the Atman, or one of his two eyes. Naga heroes, such as the Qatol and the Shashakar, are also venerated, although less frequently. Those who do not have the materials available to worship the Gods simply turn to the west and humbly bow before the All-Father, the Black Stone of creation. Before the puja, particularly on high holidays, a Naga bathes to signify outer purification, and recites mantras and uses other meditational techniques for inner purification. Even a very simple puja, one which is performed in the morning upon rising, or at night before lying down to sleep employs flowers. The significance

of using flowers, leaves, and other living plants is to allow the beauty and peace of the woodlands to inhabit the Naga soul. *Vaasaana*, the reverence of all living things, is also representative of the mortal soul in separation from the Akasha. Living Naga are said to be in '*vaasaana*.' These flowers (or other appropriate materials) are picked up with the right hand and the fingers are pointed downward so that the flowers fall at the feet of the idol, or in the direction of the Black Stone. When offering the flowers to the Bright Eye or the Pale, the Naga chants: "I am offering to you my senses, attributes, character - but none of them are really mine. Everything is yours beneath the Bright Eye and the Pale." Thus, even a simple puja has a great spiritual meaning which may escape a casual observer.

THE FOREST AND THE LAND

The Naga's extraordinary history is intimately tied to the geography of the land - once a paradise, but now alien and changed. One of the most disturbing things about the Awakening is the vast change of landscape. Where the forest of the Shinomen (a corruption of the Naga word '*Shishomen*', meaning 'homeland') still stands, it covers less than one-third the amount of territory that it once held. The mountains to the north, as well, seem cold and empty, and the fields beyond are bare.

Long ago, the Shinomen Forests were a meeting ground between the tribes of primitive humans to the East (those similar to Isawa's tribe) and the people of the wastelands to the West (now known as the Burning Sands). The Shinomen has always been a paradise, while at the same time its natural isolation and magnetic religions allowed it to adapt to and absorb each of the bloodlines that lived within its shaded groves.

Long ago, the Scorpion clan discovered the ruins of the city Nirukti near the edge of the Shinomen forest. Although the Naga had been asleep for over two hundred years, the city remained beautiful and pristine, covered only in light grasses and moss. The Scorpion, and other members of the Empire, came to study the ruins with a cautious eye. At first, they were afraid of the tremendous serpent-carvings, but soon declared them to be no more than superstitious relics of the tribal era of Rokugan's clans, before the Kami came. At the command of the Eleventh Hantei, they tore down the walls of the city, reducing much of it to bricks and rubble.



TAO OF THE NAGA (CONTINUED)


During their first Shedding, all Naga adopt a set of vows, based upon their role (Great Lesson) within the society. These vows are subjective, and based upon the particular Naga's birth, early history, and Bloodline, but generally follow this pattern:

Vedic: To be the custodian of their spiritual culture, and a friend, philosopher, and guide to all Naga; to maintain serenity and self-control; severity in their beliefs and the presentation of those beliefs to others; purity of mind and spirit; dedication to knowledge, ritual, and the fundamental faith in Akasha; intuition and forethought at all times when administering to the favored children of the Bright and the Pale (i.e., The Naga); utter faith in the religion of the Naga; and to set the example for all others.

Warlords and Scouts: To be the guardians, protectors, and preservers of their race; to prevent internal dissent and domination from outside agencies; to promote heroism, vigor; to practice fortitude in times of war; and generosity and majesty in times of peace.

Jakla: To be the keepers of dangerous knowledge for the Naga; to research what others cannot, so that all may know; to be ever-inquisitive into the proper nature of things; to master the magic of the pearls.

(Continued)



TAO OF THE NAGA (CONTINUED)

In addition to these caste-specific guidelines, there are several edicts which apply to all Naga, regardless of their Bloodline or career:

Purity: Cleanliness of word, thought, and deed. This includes forthrightness, frankness, innocence, self-reliance, courage, faith, honesty, freedom from anger, and service to the race.

Self-Control: Patience. Control over the flesh and the mind. The senses must be restrained, lest the Naga become a slave to wayward desire, and susceptible to anger or delusion. This implies moderation and self-mastery, not self-torture. Sacrifices (see the sidebar on the opposite page) are often used for this purpose.

Truth: Correctness of thought, word, and deed. Steadfastness in knowledge and devotion; study of the linked "scriptures" of the Akasha; compassion to deserving beings.

These edicts are preserved and adjudicated by the Akasha through the Bright and the Pale, which reward the moral and ethical, and punish the wicked, respectively. It is well-known that every actions has a double effect - upon the future of the Naga (his karma) and his present character, and that such actions reinforce further behavior of the same type (for good or ill).

(Continued)

However, many of the stones found their way into Phoenix hands, and the Asako discovered that the civilization that had laid the bricks was far older than the wandering tribes of the Empire. They had a written language and were highly sophisticated. Smaller 'villages' were discovered on the edge of the woodland, much more decayed than the original city. Some of these towns were almost three miles in diameter and contained as many as 10,000 residents - a vast amount, to have been so suddenly and absolutely abandoned. The river which had once flowed through the city was contained in a mile-long canal, far beyond the engineering skills of the Empire at the time.

Rather than investigate this further (and because the woods were considered haunted), the Scorpion withdrew most of their scouting teams. Those who were allowed to remain in the woods overnight were never found again - victims of the great spell of protection laid by the Naga Jakla, though the humans did not know the cause. The forest became "cursed", and even the bravest samurai would not dare to enter its secret vales.

And so it has remained, for seven hundred years thereafter, alone and abandoned - until the Great Sleep ended.

THE FIRST WAR

The first war of the Naga was brought about by the Asp, who came out of the east in great waves. The Asp, always the strongest and most violent of the bloodlines, used their poisons to destroy the lesser bloodlines - the Greensnake and the Chameleon (who escaped to the sea in terror of their fierce cousins). The Asp brought with them strong cultural traditions from their city - traditions that were absorbed by the Naga Akasha and still remain in force today. They spoke and wrote in a highly developed language called *Nagash*, (the language still in use today by the Naga race). *Nagash* was originally used only by the Constrictors, in the first documented translation of the Akashic records. Those records were taken from the lost souls of those who died in the war to stop the conquest of the Asp kingdom. Though warriors and conquerors, the Asp lived alongside the Greensnake and the Constrictor (whom they never fully conquered), establishing a firm caste system and using Greensnake ingenuity and scientific knowledge to developed iron tools and weapons. They eventually settled the Shinomen valley and covered the walls of Siksa in gold.

The great invasion ended when the mighty Qatol drew the forces of the Cobra and the Constrictor to his side, overthrowing the reign of the Asp and freeing the Naga who had been dominated by Shahismael. The tireless, charismatic Qatol sought only to see his people freed and living in harmony, and together with the great constrictor vedic Galishavi, opened the gates of the Akasha to all the people of the Blood. Once the connection between the races of Naga had been established and Shahismael had been captured for his crimes, the Naga civilization began to flourish. When the Qatol could have become Lord of all the Naga, he refused, and allowed the Naga to find their own path and unite the Five Kingdoms (See the story of the Qatol and the Oseuth, page 30-31). United by the memories of countless souls - born and yet unborn - the Akasha led the people to a new age of glory and peace.

HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

The Naga consider the New Year to occur in the Rokugani month of the Horse, during the hottest time of the year. To them, the heat symbolizes the searing of the land, when the first nation of Naga destroyed the Foul that had inhabited the countryside. The Darkness thus destroyed (or so the legend speaks), the Bright Eye wept tears of burning rain for those who had been killed in battle, searing the land with heat and light so that the Foul would have no place to hide. The New Year is celebrated with great bonfires, and the streets of all the Naga cities are lit from dusk to dawn with tremendous amounts of light and torches, remembering the day when the land was burned and purified by the Atman's Bright Eye.

In addition to this, there are many festivals throughout the year, celebrating each of the Twin Eyes, the arrival of spring, and other historic events. Among the most important of these include Vasant Panchami, at the end of the Rokugani month of the Rat. This is a Naga festival "calling spring," at which people wear yellow clothing to symbolize the mustard flower, which announces spring's arrival. The intention of the festival is to banish winter and bring back the warm days - to be rid of the dark, coldness of the Foul and approach the New Year's searing heat. *Holi*, in the Rokugani month of the Hare, occurs soon after. *Holi* is a lively spring festival at which the Naga celebrate life - children and adults alike

smear red and yellow powder on each other and spray one another with colored water. All Naga who are past their Adult Ceremony shed their skin on this day, symbolizing the return to a new life, and leaving the old ways behind, and the skins are saved, to be burned during the Festival of the New Year.

Baisakhi, a festival in the month of the Rooster, is celebrated with temple worship, ritual bathing, and fairs featuring music, dancing, and fireworks. Still, the most revered holiday in the Naga religion is the *Naag Panchami*, in the Rokugani month of the Goat, just after the Naga's celebration of the New Year. This festival is treated with extreme reverence - so much so that the few Rokugani visitors who have been accepted in the Naga cities are asked to leave the Shinomen until the three days of celebration are over. The Naag Panchami festival honors the Black Stone, to which offerings of milk or flowers are made. The festivities center around large stones - symbols of the Black Stone, far to the west - and lamps, fireworks and bonfires light up the sky. Gifts are exchanged at this time and the Naga prepare feasts.

SPIRITUALITY

The Naga 'religion' (if it can rightly be called such) centers around the great Akasha, the soul of the race. Their definition is not a spiritual one, but rather a literal understanding of the reincarnation process which all Naga undergo upon death.

The two 'Eyes' of the Akasha, the Bright and the Pale, are seen as twin balances, one positive and one negative. Between both, the Naga teach, life can prosper. Without one or the other, life will wither away, and the pool of the Akasha will become forever dry. Therefore, the study of the stars, and of the Twin Eyes, is very important to the Naga, though not as the Rokugani people would understand it. The Naga consider themselves to be the protectors of the Eyes as well as the servants of Atman. To them, the Naga are the inheritors of universal wisdom and insight, through the Akashic link.

The Eyes are the windows to the Akasha, the ancient legends whisper. As the Akasha is the Great Mind, the Eternal Soul, so too are the Bright Eye and the Pale Eye in eternal communion with the Akasha itself. They are holy beacons, sacred windows to the very soul of the Naga themselves. To lose either one would be

disastrous, and unbalance the soul of the Naga race. It would be armageddon.



"They say his blood carries the souls of a thousand ancestors..."

- Morito Tokei

The Akasha is the greater 'mind' of the Naga, a sort of 'conscious subconscious' that unifies their actions and their lives. It is the combined wisdom and knowledge of all the souls that have ever been Naga, poured back into the pool of the Akasha at the end of each life. All Naga have an instinctive connection to this consciousness, influencing their every thought and action. Though some Naga are deeply aware of the Akasha, others are influenced it only through subliminal impulse and emotion.

The connection each Naga has to the Akasha is very personal, cultivated through years of reflection and meditation. Some Naga can access the memories of the pooled souls, 'remembering' events of the past or strong emotions. This information is not always perfectly clear, or perfectly accurate - the Akasha only contains the memories and viewpoints of the souls who have touched it. But with the connection to the Akasha, Naga can often remember some forgotten piece of knowledge or lost memory which guides them through their lives.

When a Naga is born, their soul is taken from the Akasha - a collection of thoughts, memories and attitudes which are chosen seemingly at random, a bucket of water from the collective pool. The egg, laid in a nest, matures for up to two years as the child-soul purifies itself and readies itself for a new life. When it is finished, the egg hardens and splits, and the hatchling is born.

TAO OF THE NAGA (CONTINUED)

The Akasha is thought to promote kindly and forthright behavior as presented here. It is a guiding force, the collective souls of all Naga - past, present, and future - subtly aiding those who are unsure of their intentions. None take advantage of this support, instead relying upon their natural instincts to derive everyday decisions. After all, freedom is the foremost doctrine of the Akashic ethic; actions taken by someone else's hand will never help your cause, and may possibly hinder it. You must be free to make your own mistakes if you are also to be free to reap your own rewards.

Few Naga are afraid of failure. The path to Atman is most easily found by imperfect souls, those who have struggled with their faith. They can best appreciate the insight of failure, and apply the experience of learning to their spiritual journey. The purification of one's soul is a destructive cycle, a "cosmic process of elimination" intended to create finite boundaries within which only perfection may exist.

Only by experiencing life, by enduring its mistakes for oneself, may a Naga progress between breaths, Sheddings, and beyond. This is one reason why many Naga venture out into Rokugan and the Ivory Kingdoms, regardless of the inherent dangers.



KHARMA REVISITED

In the Gamemaster's Pack, pages 3-4, we presented the Kharma Rule, intended to aid players and Gamemasters who found the mortality rate of L5R a little too high. Using this rule, you could "carry over" experience from one character to another when the first has died in a glorious, honorable, or distinguished manner.

This rule can be adapted to simulate the reincarnation effect of the Akasha quite easily. To design a Naga PC who is linked to one who has perished, compare the following formula and the statistics of the deceased character. This will determine their new Naga's starting Character Points:

- Each Rank of Akasha above 2 is worth 3 CP.
- Each Rank in the PC's Great Lesson above 1 is worth 4 CP.

These points should be modified as the Gamemaster wishes, according to the needs of his particular campaign. They may be spent to design a fresh character from scratch, albeit one more talented than his last.

Only Akasha (spiritual progression) and Discipline (physical progression, as represented by the old PC's Great Lesson when he died) may affect a new Naga character. To the Akasha, only these attributes matter in one's journey toward Atman.

Young Naga have no memory of their past life (or lives), no ability to recognize faces or events which may have been part of a previous existence. They must be taught language, movement and other skills - a blank slate upon which the society of Naga writes their history.

As a Naga grows, they experience several cycles, each punctuated by a ritual shedding of the skin. These ceremonies often take several days of meditation and struggle, clearing the mind and the body so that a new creature can emerge. During these periods, the young Naga is encouraged to strengthen their connection to the great Akasha, and often begins to remember portions of other days, other lives which were also their own.

It is possible for two living Naga to have a single shared past existence - the souls of the Akasha are fluid, merging and spreading, one into the other, like water in a pond. When you pour a bucket of water into a pond, and then take another bucket out, the water in the bucket is not exactly the same water with which you began - but those fragmented memories may be the core of a new Naga soul.

All Naga have a deep, intimate connection with each other, through their shared souls and through the Akasha. In a very real and spiritual way, all Naga are one with all other Naga, and with the Akasha itself. Their souls reach out to share wisdom and knowledge; they drink from the same well.

The Akasha binds and unifies the race, and gives them a unique sense of purpose and understanding which no other creature can truly comprehend. Humans may learn the language of the Naga; they may even spend years in contemplation of Naga histories, meditation and study of the Naga race; but they will never be as one with the Naga, because their soul is a separate piece, not a thread in the tapestry that makes the Naga whole.

With study and practice, a Naga can even accept thoughts and emotions from other, living members of the race. They can sense hatred, pain, commitment and in some cases, even pass a sub-vocal message along the ties that bind them, using the Akasha's pool as an amplifier for their thoughts. When this occurs, the result is never hidden; but what Naga would wish to hide anything from another member of their race? The idea would be anathema. All Naga trust Naga: never in their race has a Naga betrayed his

people. Never has any Naga rejected the teachings and path of the Akasha. Their very souls forbid it.

The contact which the Akasha brings is not truly telepathic. It is more an empathic communion, a blending of souls for the instant it takes to pass a message, and then nothing more. It is difficult, and few Naga have mastered the ability well enough to pass entire thoughts rather than faint surges of emotion.

Some Naga dedicate their entire lives to the study of the Akasha, accessing the knowledge and memories of souls still within the pool. As they learn more and more, they become more deeply affected by shifts and changes in the Akasha, and in the world around them. Some Naga claim that every living thing is part of the Akasha; others laugh at that, calling it superstitious nonsense. Nevertheless, the Naga are often the first to know when a darkness is coming, or an evil is being loosed upon the land. The 'sensitives' say that the Akasha instinctively feels the balance of all things, and such a disturbance is recognized and passed through all the chords of the Akasha, setting the soul of every Naga (living or part of the Akashic whole) on edge.

Such a thing is occurring now, with the rise of dark powers in the east and to the south. It has only happened once before, during the burning of the Lands, when the Naga race had to set fire to the entire southern half of the lands which are now known as the Empire. Their greatest magic, powerful pearl sorcery, stripped the Akasha from the lands to the south. Ancient legends of the Naga say that Nature's balance was torn away from that place, stripping the goodness from its sickening shell before it could be corrupted and destroyed.

A Naga's ability to contact the Akasha reflects his or her dedication to duty and the tenets of the race. Naga who spend their lives in meditation on the collective consciousness are extremely loyal to the Naga race, and pursue their life knowing that they are a small part of a greater whole, dedicated to playing their part in the Akasha. Note that Naga do not adhere to the Code of Bushido, and therefore have no concept of honor. They do have a very dedicated ideal of duty - duty to their race, their home, and their people. It is that connection which gives them strength.

OUR AWAKENING

In Rokugan, just before the start of the Scorpion Clan Coup, there were few Naga awake

in the lands. Those who had awakened knew only that they were alone in a strange new world, a world whose terrain remained familiar, but whose people were hostile and strange. Naga interactions with humans were difficult because of language and culture barriers, and Naga were often mistaken for kami, or even Oni. Reactions vary, from abject terror to devoted worship, and everything in between. Even after the Clan Wars, Naga are isolated from society, and only through the aid of Mirumoto Daini have the Naga begun to understand the bizarre behavior of their human comrades.

The One Stone

Long ago, our Father fell from the sky, a tear fallen from the eye of the Bright and the Pale...

- Stories of the Akshakir

The ancient Naga creation myth has been discovered on thousands of ruins throughout Rokugan, and indeed, is the only Naga legend which is at all familiar to Rokugani scholars.

Pictograms show a great pale eye in the heavens, and a single tear, falling from the heavens and shattering on the earth. The stone, which still stands (or so the Naga say) was the embodiment of the Akasha. When it broke, it created the Naga people - all cut from one stone, from one soul. The Pale Eye looked down on its brother's tear, and whispered a prayer which was taken up by the People. That prayer became words and language, which set the Naga apart from all the other races of the world.

The Rokugani scholars who have investigated this myth have puzzled over it for long centuries. Some believed that it was the tale of the stone which was eaten by Onnotangu, smuggled to him by his wife in exchange for the body of her youngest son. Although there is nothing in the Naga myths to support such a theory, the Ikoma and Asako historians point out that it does explain why the Naga are sentient, as is humanity itself. Others argue that the stone would have fallen from Lord Moon's belly when the Kami fell to the earth - supposedly on the day

the Great Sleep spread across the Naga cities, centuries after their culture first flourished.

The Naga, of course, do not care what the humans think of their myth. They believe in the Great Stone, and turn their faces toward the west three times per day in worship of the 'Place of Falling', or the Holy City. It is said that a great black stone still rests there, in a city built by the Naga around the crater of its landing. Although the Naga have not been there for a thousand years, they are certain it still exists. They could feel the loss of its presence in the Akasha, they say, if it had vanished or been destroyed.



THE FRACTURED NAGA

The caste system of the Naga was not originally derived from the Akasha, but was a purely utilitarian scheme to divide labor in a practical manner. Each caste (or Great Lesson) among the Naga performs a specific role in the society, a necessary function needed by the whole civilization. Vedics administer ritual and aid spiritual growth. Jakla maintain the magical pearl-beds and delve into the mysteries of abominating magic. Naga Scouts and Warlords each provide a necessary element in the defense of the culture, and stand together in the ranks of the Naga war machine.

But this division has led to at least one significant problem among the Naga - one which none of the founders envisioned, and which threatens the continued prosperity of the entire race. As the Naga age, the divisions between the castes widen, accentuating the gaps between them. Already, observant Naga have noted that certain functions are no longer being attended to, and that the castes are slowly growing apart.

The Vedics are aware of this slow disease within their social structure, but remain confident that ritual and regiment will preclude any serious problems. They hope to prevent a social collapse using the old ways, ignoring the serious reform their people so desperately need...



THE CONNECTION

There are five bloodlines of Naga, yet they are all one true race. As all humans are one, so too are the Naga a single people. However, their connection to the Akasha makes their link all the more real and concrete for them. Without it, the Naga people would not be able to communicate, nor would they be able to thrive.

An ancient Naga legend says that the Akasha may one day run dry, and that no new souls will be created from the great pool. When this happens, the Naga will simply die out, joining their brothers in the Akasha, never to return.

The constrictors look at their empty egg-beds and pray that the legend is not true...

The Bloodland Wars

The earliest Naga records do not list the people of the Akasha as a single, united culture, but rather as five distinct city-states, or independent kingdoms.

Each of the Five Kingdoms was ruled by a single people, and their knowledge of the Akasha was still growing. The bloodlines of the people – Asp, Constrictor, Cobra, Greensnake and Chameleon, dwelt apart and did not gather for festival or for peaceful trade. In those days, the Akasha was young and new-formed, and the souls within it were pure and unlearned. The bloodlines fought great wars and destroyed many lives, killing the People for land or for power.

These bloody times in Naga history are rarely mentioned, but their savagery is well-remembered by the Akasha. Those Naga who have been able to plumb the depths of the Akashic pool speak of a great city of blood, formed by the unreleased souls of that time. Some of them, too brutal to be rejoined with their brothers, are contained within the Akasha for safekeeping until their anger and hatred is dissolved. Centuries in the still waters of contemplation have not yet tamed these rabid souls, and some Naga Vedic dedicate their lives to speaking with the 'Lost Ones', teaching them patience and forgiveness so that they can be released into the Akasha once more.

The kingdoms of the Naga are largely forgotten, but some of the oldest Vedic can contact that ancient time, and have told legends of those ancient days. It is said that each of the Five Kingdoms had a Lord, similar to the daimyo of the many provinces of Rokugan, and that these Lords fought to determine which Bloodline would rule them all. The Asps, leaders of warfare, quickly subjugated the peaceful Greensnake and built a great kingdom from their resources and cities. The Lord of the Asps, a most terrible warleader, was known as the Shahismael. The Shahismael is recorded in legend as a master of battle and the most brutal general of the People.

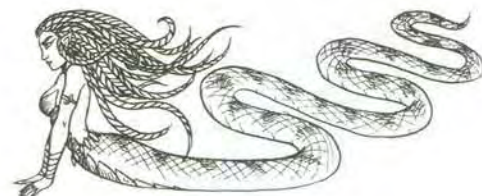
The Shahismael's first lieutenant was an Asp known as the Shahadet. Though still fond of battle and glory, the Shahadet regretted the ferocity and brutality of his Lord, and said to him, "Great One, I hear the screams of the People in my sleep; how can we not be one with them?"

But his words were ignored, and more Cobra were crushed to dust beneath the coils of the Asp.

At last, the Shahadet could stand no more. His leader had gone mad, and the madness was part of the mind of the Asp nation, corrupting everything that had once been glorious and brave. He chose the most crucial moment to strike – a time when the General's mind was consumed with rage. The Shahadet taunted him to the fullness of insanity, drove his mind to rage with descriptions of the bloody battle, and led the Shahismael onto the battlefield, and opened his soul to the the howls of pain and despair which came from their enemy. When Shahismael was one with the Akasha of combat, he turned the souls of other Naga to pulp beneath his savagery. As the armies howled in madness, the Shahadet plunged his spear into Shahismael's back, trusting in the rage-filled Akasha to keep his Lord's attention long enough for the strike to hit home.

He was successful. With his betrayal, the war ended, and the Asp nation was subdued by the magic of the Cobra people. Shahismael's soul was captured by the Constrictor, forever to suffer his madness alone. No more would the Akasha be tainted by his bloody presence.

His soul, the Constrictors say, is at the deepest reach of the Akasha, chained with the souls of those he enslaved and held until he has seen every crime he committed against the people. No Vedic will travel that deep into the Akashic pool of Blood. Though Mirumoto Daini has told the Rokugani scholars that the fable of the Shahismael exists only to explain the dark thoughts and feelings experienced by every Naga, the People do not accept it as myth. To them, the Shahismael still haunts the waters of the Great Akasha, screaming for revenge and blood.





Bloodlines

"Your blood is your soul – it sings within your veins, the music of a thousand lifetimes!"

– An Ashamana on his Name-day

There are five different 'types' of Naga, or bloodlines of the race. Naga are born from eggs, hardened in sacred eggcoves, from the nest of their mother and father's bloodline. Naga eggcoves are tended by all members of the bloodline, and often, the duty to protect these coves is given to Naga warriors just past their ascension to adulthood. The duty is never a tedious one, nor one without respect, for while a group of young Naga are defending the eggcove (however ritualized it may be), the rest of the nest brings them food and weapons, making sure they are rested and able to carry out their duties. Because all eggs from a given bloodline (or all eggs in general, in smaller Naga habitations) are kept in one cove, a Naga might never know who their parents are. This is a respected practice for the Naga, who consider all children to be a public responsibility, as they are a part of the soul of all Naga. In certain cases, a Naga might be aware of his biological parentage, but the Naga consider it highly uncivilized to claim any such 'possession' of a child. Despite this, a few Naga keep careful tabs on their sons and daughters, avoiding mention of heritage but feeling a silent pride in their children's accomplishments.

The Naga bloodlines are similar to the families in traditional Rokugani Clans. They dictate the size and basic physical abilities of a Naga, and in some cases, they provide innate strengths and weaknesses. Some of these types include: Asp (the bruiser tacticians, warlords of the race), Chameleon (able to adapt to their surrounding,

often woodsmen and hunters), Cobra (mutated users of the Naga pearl magic), Constrictor (the duelists and masters of sheer strength), and Greensnake (diplomats, intelligence gatherers and scouts). The children of a Naga have their heritage dictated by the bloodline of their parents, and these distinctions do not mix in any way – the child of an Asp and a Greensnake is always either an Asp or a Greensnake, never a half-Chameleon.

It is important to note that not all members of a Naga bloodline can choose the character classes outlined later in this book. This specifically represents the 'talents' and natures of the individual Naga breeds, and your Gamemaster may choose to alter these rules as he or she sees fit. In our Rokugan, however, an Asp character cannot be a jakla, and a Cobra cannot be a Vedic. The Naga warrior is open to all bloodlines – it is easy to train in the ways of war, but far more difficult to become one with the Akasha.

For hundreds of years before the Kami fell from the Heavens, the great Naga Empire flourished, tending the land and the people of the world. Though it was not a large Empire, nor was its army exceptionally powerful, the Naga flourished and grew in peace.

Now, that has all changed. Although the bloodlines of the Naga remain consistent, their outlook on their world is irrevocably changed. The Greensnakes, once scouts and peaceful diplomats, now must turn their resources to supporting a great war, lest the humans destroy the Naga race forever. The Asp, once dusty generals, relics of a bygone age, are now at the forefront of the Naga awakening, defending their homeland with ferocity and courage.

The Constrictors once served as religious leaders, meditating on the depths of the Akasha – but now, they struggle to survive, desperate to unlock the sleeping mind of the Brahmin before the Emerald Empire sweeps the Naga from the face of the world, forever. They are few, for only a bare handful survived, from what once had been among the greatest of Naga cities, filled with wisdom and understanding.

The dark Cobra must come forth from their web of mystery and share their secrets, trusting in the words of the Dashmar to keep their sleeping city safe. And the Chameleon, once ignored and useless, have at last found a purpose, after hundreds of years as outcasts and scapegoats. As the Naga Age has fallen, their time has come.



SHAHISMAEL

The general of the Bloodland Wars has not been forgotten by his people, and his name is still a whispered curse. When the samurai of Rokugan first heard the Naga speak of him, they were convinced that it was another name for the Dark Lord of the South – Fu Leng.

They are wrong.

The Shahismael is a real creature, singular and unique to the Naga race. He still exists as a separate soul, contained outside of the Akasha by Vedic magic. He has been refused access to the pool of souls, and is forever forbidden to reincarnate. He is mad, and has been alone for more than a thousand years. He may be the most pitiable creature under the celestial heavens – and the most dangerous.

His one quest is to find a way to escape into the Akasha, spreading his madness through the souls of the entire Naga race. If this were to occur, he would lose his identity – but the entire Naga race would be filled with such a bloodlust that it would slaughter itself within a very short time.

There are Vedic who have dedicated themselves to nothing other than restraining its powerful soul – for as long as possible.



THE NAGA LIFECYCLE

When a Naga is first born, he is no more than an egg, born from the clutch of his mother. A Naga lays eggs only three to four times in her lifetime, and of those, fewer than one of the six or so eggs which she will create actually become a child.

Thereafter, the Naga is taken to the House of Children, where he is cared for by nurses, other villagers, and taught his lessons by the Vedic of the town. His childhood is spent in mastering the bow, the lessons of the Vedic, and in understanding the first Smiti of his people. Few young Naga have any ability with the Akasha, although particularly powerful Vedic sometimes have visions, or flashes of uncontrolled memory, as youths.

When the Naga child has his first molting - which typically occurs at around age 14 - they are taken away from the House of Children and given to a Master, to continue in the ways of their Great Lesson.

A Naga is expected to have mastered the first Rank of their Great Lesson before the molting. Those children who are unprepared for the testing when they begin to molt are looked down upon as inferior. They will be given to a poor Master, and rarely learn more than the first skill in their chosen Lesson.

(continued)



The Asp

"If you seek wisdom, ape, you will not find it here. This is not a place of rest, or a time of learning. It is a season of war."

*"I am not your guide. I am your destroyer."
- Balash*

The Asp are the second largest bloodline within the Naga race, only outnumbered among their people by the Greensnakes. They are the workhorses of the Naga, both strong and sturdy. Though they are not gifted with magic or the ability to coerce thoughts from the Akasha, they serve as warleaders, the strength of the Naga race.

In all their time, the Asp have always risen to defend the Naga against their enemies. The Darkness from the south was stopped by the Asp legions when it attempted to destroy their peaceful villages and temples during the First

Burning of the Lands, and it is once more the Asp who have come to the front in the fight against Fu Leng and his dark minions.

One of the first Asp generals was known as the Shahismael, the most powerful warrior of the race. He brought about the first - and bloodiest - war of Naga history. When he was defeated, his soul was captured by the Constrictors, and forbidden the peace of the Akasha.

The Shahismael was defeated by the Qatol, whose bloodline has never been known. The stories of the Qatol are told beneath the harsh glare of the Bright Eye, for he was the soul most favored by its celestial gaze. Qatol was a warrior in a time of peace, a strong soul whose life was destined to cause change and controversy.

It is said that during those past times, the Naga believed themselves to be five separate races, rather than one great Akasha. Qatol saw the Asp destroying the city of the Greensnake, and wished to unite the distant people. He gathered the warriors who would not slaughter their peaceful brothers, and he drove an army combined of all Naga across the jungles of the land, bringing peaceful rulership where the Shahismael sought to conquer and subjugate.

When the Qatol defeated the Shahismael, the Five Bloodlines paused to see what their new conqueror would tell them. He was more powerful than the greatest Naga, and had defeated the Shahismael - whom none of them could master. If he had wished it, he could have condemned the Five Bloodlines to slavery beneath a tyrant's fist.





THE NAGA LIFECYCLE

The first molting is considered the transition from child to adult, and is accompanied by much ceremony, ritual, and tests of the child's skills and personal spirit.

At the final stage of their first molting, the child is opened to the Akasha, and the wellspring of the Naga race is given form within their mind. In many ways, the First Molting of a Naga is the cultural equivalent of a *gempukku* to the Rokugani.

Once a Naga has had their first molt, they will continue to shed their skins approximately once every four years. Until a Naga has shed their skin twice (approximately age 18), they are not allowed to take a mate.

Taking a mate requires agreement on both sides, and a special ceremony blessed by a Vedic. Once it is finished, the two Naga create their own home within the community, and give any eggs produced to the House of Children to begin the cycle again. Naga over the age of 70 typically cannot produce eggs.

Naga live to be approximately 120 years of age, continuing their shedding cycle throughout their lives. Their elderly appear much like human elders, gaining wrinkles, white hair, and other signs of age.

In a grove, the Five met in council for the first time, the armies of the Asp standing ready nearby. They stood behind the Qatol, loyal to his strength after he had destroyed their finest warrior. Their spears had been blooded, and now, with the fall of the Shahismael, they were prepared to begin the war anew.

With their power behind him, the Qatol easily had enough might to crush the others, enough strength among his people to force the race of Naga to fall under his command. The Five stood in the wilderness, prepared to bring this conflict to a bloody end, until the gaze of the Pale Eye fell upon a single young boy named Oseuth, his pale green skin shining beneath the pale light of the heavens. He was a Constrictor, the peaceful champions of just causes, and he stepped forward to challenge the Asp general to a single strike, a test of battle-reflexes for the future of their race.

At first, the Qatol laughed, thinking that the boy's challenge was a mockery of his might. Indeed, the child was tiny beside his massive bulk, and no strength in the land could deny him.

Qatol looked again at the young Naga, and saw the light of the Pale shining through his dark eyes, even as the light of the Bright glistened in his own. Without thought, Qatol extended his hand. "Brother," he nodded, "you are wise in the ways of the Pale. Together, and only beside one another, can we rule."

"No, Qatol," the boy said, "only together can we guide the people. Ours is not the place of rulers, not the purpose of war. For the Naga, there can be only peace." He reached out his child's hand to touch Qatol's calloused one, and when the Warrior of the Pale Eye met the Warrior of the Bright, all Naga across the land were gifted with a singular knowledge. The voices spun and wavered, and visions which were beautiful beyond belief filled their minds.

The Akasha was revealed.

WAR

The Naga believe that war is a natural occurrence, similar to the rise and fall of the tides. This does not imply that the Naga do not abhor bloodshed; they do. Instead, they simply accept that there must be conflict in order for the world to survive, and that no being can live eternally at peace. An ancient Asp once claimed that to surrender justice for peace was not the act of a scholar, but of a coward.

Certainly, of all the Naga bloodlines, the Asp are the most likely to go to war. Although the Naga no longer take up arms against themselves, they have always known enemies. In the ancient times, their lands bordered a great desert across a mountain range, and they waged war against a dark race of black-skinned creatures whose multi-colored wings tore the heavens.

The Naga fought with creatures from the farthest south long before humans recorded the fall of Fu Leng. The ancient trolls, once an intelligent and civilized race, struggled for dominance with the Naga before a great cataclysm (the coming of Osano-Wo) drove the refugees of their race under the sea. Though the Naga are a peaceful people, the Asp have always been the defenders, the warriors and the armies of their people.

If not for the Asp, the Naga would surely have been destroyed during the years of their sleep, for it was they who defended the forests and temple grounds beneath the Cobra's spell. Their eternal vigilance, even through their thousand years of sleep, caused them to be among the first to awaken when the danger from the south began to rise. They have been on the front lines, bearing spears and scimitar, and they will fight until the land is purged of the evil that infests it.

The Asp have sworn it.

Twelve Asp, the strongest warriors among their race, accepted the curse of Eternal Vigilance. Their duty was to remain awake through time, sleeping only lightly, and aware of the cities around them. One by one, if the cities were in danger, they would awaken and defend their sleeping comrades who lay deep beneath the earth.

When the cities were awakened, only four of these warriors had survived. The others, awakened at some time past, had one by one fulfilled the duties of their cause. Once they had awakened and defended their cities, they were trapped in waking watchfulness, unable to return to their sleep. The years passed, and they died of age and lonely sorrow. Their armor and shields were found, rusted and forlorn, by the skeletons at the stairs of the Great temple.

The Akasha records speak of these lost souls as having been loyal, unto death... and beyond.

THE SHAHADET

Long ago, the Shahadet was the right hand of the mighty Asp general, the dark Serpent,



STRANGE VISTAS

The Naga have awakened into a land of bizarre ritual and custom. Where the Rokugani have honed their every action and each tradition over a thousand years, the Naga have had only a short time to make sense of it all. It is foreign, and confuses them greatly.

Mara's notes are widely read by the Lords of the Naga cities, as the Naga try to glean purpose and understanding from the strange dictates of Rokugani society. In the sidebars of the next few pages, you will see several small accounts of Mara's time with the human known as the Daini, as well as her thoughts on the purpose of his actions.

Mara's insights into the nature of Rokugani society may prove useful reading, particularly to a player who wishes to bring a Naga into the Emerald Empire.

But remember, no Naga can 'pick up' on Rokugani culture as if snapping their fingers. The concepts are foreign, and at times repulsive. It is up to the GM and the player to determine what each Naga thinks of their human companions, and how they react to some of their... more distinctive cultural habits.

Shahismael, in the time of the Bloodland wars. Those times were the first (and only) lessons of Naga fighting Naga. Even today, the Akasha recoils from any who would dare to harm their fellows. The One Soul of the Eternal Mind holds that all Naga are one, and when you harm a brother you are harming your own soul.

The Shahadet's purpose changed radically once the Qatol had come to unite the bloodlines of the Naga, and only the Asp bloodline remembers that once it was a position of battle-glory. Once, the Shahadet stood at the forefront of the Shahismael's armies, destroying those who would dare stand against the bloodline of the Asp. Since the times of peace between the peoples of the Naga have come, the Shahadet has become the governor of the Asp city and the leader of his people. No longer is it his duty to lead the most terrible serpent army ever raised – for the time of the Asp has passed, and the armies are destroyed. The Shahadet was appointed master of all the armies of the Naga, but that title is empty of honor, devoid of use. There are no armies for the Naga to fight; no battles to claim glory over the enemy.

Only once, since the time of the Shahismael, has the Shahadet fulfilled his position as General of the combined armies of the Naga. That time is known to all the people of the Blood as the Burning of the Lands, and it is said that the Shahadet's purpose will return one more, when the Star of Fire returns to destroy the Pale Eye in battle.

Prominent Naga Battles

The Naga have always had two true enemies – the Foul, or the "Darkness Between Stars", and the Taint of the Shadowlands. Unknown to the mortals of Rokugan, the Shadowlands existed long before the Kami fell from the heavens – but it was not nearly as powerful or as directed as it became on the Terrible Day. After the Great Day when the sleep came upon the Naga, a greater power came upon the Shadowlands and made it a far greater threat than it had ever been in the Time of Peace. Some say that this power was an extension of the Foul, a thing of the Pale Eye. Others claimed that the Shadowlands has taken

up the Foul's taint, bringing a new darkness to the land.

Either way, the Naga know, it must be destroyed.

The Foul is not the only Enemy that the Naga have known – but it is the greatest. Here are a few of the epic battles of Naga myth and lore, and the stories of the heroes of their race.

THE FIRST BURNING OF THE LANDS

The first war with the Foul still taints the Akasha, and its hideous nothingness hugs the bones of the Eternal Mind as if seeking a way to corrupt and taint it forever.

It is the Foul, the Nameless Darkness, the Lying Splendor of Night. It is the creature which dragged the Bright Eye into the Dark Well, trying to forever banish her light and bring darkness to the world. It is the creature of hideous nothing, of emptiness, the absence of the Akasha, and the Naga are pledged to destroy it. It is antithesis to them, and their first battle with its true face shows the great danger which it posed.

Legends say that the Shadow stole the fire of the Bright Eye and carried it to a great Well, a place where darkness could encompass its light and make the world a place of night. The Naga fought bravely to destroy the Darkness, but without the Light of the Bright Eye, they could not defeat it.

The Naga had among them a woman of such rare beauty and spirit that the Bright Eye shone the brighter in her presence. This woman was called the Ashgara, and she was the chosen of Qatol.

Ashgara's one pleasure was to sit by the river and sing while she wove fans from the green rushes that grew on its banks. She would often sit for hours, weaving and watching the Sun Goddess dance across the sky. One day, while seeking plants for her craft, she traveled farther down the river's bed than she had ever been before. There she found a secluded pool away from the swift-flowing current. Strange rushes grew there, red as blood and soft to touch but stronger than any she had ever seen before. With her sharp knife she cut many of them, and the fans she made that day were the most magnificent that had ever been seen.

The next day, Ashgara returned to the pool to see if she could find more of the rushes. To her amazement, the stalks she had cut the day before



had returned as thick and strong as before! She praised the strange plants and cut them again to make more fine fans. Returning to the spot the next day as well, Ashgara found they had again grown overnight. She decided that the stalks must be magical and resolved to bring them nearer to the village. It was as she dislodged the plant that she found among its roots a strange pearl, as large as a boy's fist. She gazed at the wondrous pearl, marveling at her good fortune, and took the red rushes back to the village to plant by the river near the town.

The next day she went out to the magic rushes and to her surprise, they were brown and dead. Ashgara looked at the dead plants and remembered an old tale that spoke of strange pearls that dragons used for their magic. Too late Ashgara realized what she had found, and turned to go back to her father's house. Before she could flee, however, a great shadow loomed over her from the riverbank. Fearfully, she looked over her shoulder and saw the dragon towering up from the river's waves.

Yu Lung, for that was the dragon's name, grinned at her, showing teeth as long as swordblades. He said that he would grant her one wish in exchange for the return of the pearl. Ashgara thought for a frightened moment, remembering the times she had watched the Sun Goddess dance in the heavens and how much joy the dance brought to her people. Trembling, she asked the dragon to give her the ability to dance like the Sun Goddess. The dragon's eyes narrowed wickedly, and then his mouth opened wide. Mists, thick and heavy, surrounded her.

When Ashgara awoke much later, it was night, and the dragon and his pearl had vanished. She tried to pull herself upright but found that the heavy balance of her tail was gone, and fell again to the soft bank beside the river. Looking down at herself, Ashgara gasped in shock. Her beautiful tail had been stolen, and in its place she had two hideous legs! When the Naga found her, she was weeping by the river, and they carried her to her father, Qatol.

Unsure what to do with her, Qatol placed her in her room under a guard of Naga soldiers. They saw that she was now an abomination, her Akasha stolen by the Dragon's curse. They tried to convince Qatol to throw her into the far southern swamps, but always he refused. Many Jakla tried to reverse the evil spell laid on her, but to no avail, and Ashgara grieved at her misfortune.

Many weeks later a great blight struck the land. The midday suddenly turned to a cold ominous night. Darkness reigned, no Bright Flame appeared in the sky, and the land fell into blackness. With the Sun's absence the denizens of the Shadowlands spread out from the south, bringing death and disease with them to all creatures. The Naga jakla cast many spells, and to their astonishment they discovered the Bright Eye's fire had been captured by the Foul and thrown into the darkness of the Underworld.

At first many brave Asp went to rescue the gentle Sun, but all the warriors that went to the Shadowlands died there. As time passed, the lands fell into devastation and ruin, crops withered, and the Naga people began to starve.

Ashgara grieved for her dying people. She knew there was no future for them unless the Bright Eye's flame was returned to the sky and the Atman would never again see the good in his people's hearts without his Bright Eye. So, she begged the Qatol to let her go to the South, to the Well of Souls, and seek her fate there. Qatol at first refused to allow her, but she begged him, saying that if she should find her death, at least she would die as a Naga, not the twisted freak she had become. With a heavy heart, Qatol was forced to accede to her request. But, as a final gift, he gave her a choice of the few weapons left among their people. Realizing that the Naga needed all their strength to defeat the Oni which wandered the land, she chose only a great obsidian shield which had been carved by Qatol from the very stone that spawned the Naga.

And so, the Ashgara traveled into the Shadowlands. The way was dark and treacherous, and she met many creatures of the Foul who taunted her and tried to lead her into the deadly quicksands. But she outran them on her sturdy legs or hid among the dark waters of the swamp until the twisted, faceless things had passed. Finally, deep in the South, she found the Well of the Underworld.

The lip of the cave was thin, slippery, and covered in thick vines. Ashgara walked slowly across the treacherous ground, her feet holding firmly to rock that would have been as slick as ice to a Naga's tail. When she reached the opening she peered inside and saw there a darkness so absolute that it hurt her eyes to look upon it. She called into the cave but there was no answer. Only a faint gleam in the darkness reassured her that she had found the prison of the Bright Eye. But,

MARA'S JOURNAL


...Today I spoke with the Daini on the curious meeting-rituals of his kind. There are many such rituals, but the Rokugani people think them of exceeding importance. If they are not followed, men are often killed for their incompetence. Although the Daini assures me that this would not be the case for our kind, I am not convinced.

To say hello to a human that you have never met, you must lower the torso of your body toward the ground, tilting your head so that you look them in the eyes. Under no circumstances are you to touch them, for even a simple hand grasp is abhorrent to these people. Speak quietly, and always use the second-name Sama. It is a title properly given to humans whom you have never met.

Once you are on terms with the human, you can use the second name San, which is the familiar form.

If you are wishing to warn a human or make threatening advances, turn your sword upside-down in your belt. I believe the humans feel this to be an insult, as if you are saying 'I do not fear you. I can defeat you, even with the back of my sword.'

Do not touch a human - or their weapon. They are very superstitious, and believe that the touch of a hand makes you 'unclean'.



MARA'S JOURNAL

If you do not like rice, you will not like humans. It is best that you do not sit with them when they eat. They are horribly primitive, spearing their food with two small sticks. Worse yet, they do not cook their food, but allow it to lie, dead and cold, upon their plates. Worst of all - Atman preserve us - they eat eggs.

Despite this disgusting behavior, they have an incredible fear of all things dead. They will not touch dead flesh of any kind, save fish and bird, and they shudder when they see leather or tanned hides. Perhaps they think the soul of the dead creature will climb into their bodies?

Another odd human activity is their desire to drink the juice of spoiled rice. Although this is an obviously rancid substance (the Naga who have tried it claim it churns their stomachs), the humans drink this 'sake' until they are so poisoned that they become delirious.

Nevertheless, they are obsessed with eating. Their greeting translates to 'Have you eaten my rice today?' and their 'koku' (a strange thing they trade when they have nothing else to give), I am told, is based on how much food you hoard. Like the ratlings, hiding and keeping food, and using it as leverage, seems to matter a great deal to the humans.

now, how was she to help her escape? If Ashgara ventured into that darkness, she too would become lost. There was not even wood for a signal fire.

Ashgara was so deep in thought that she did not notice when a powerful Oni arrived to guard the cave. Its huge claws dripped with poison and its gaping mouth drooled vomit and slime. Tiny red eyes deep within its skull pierced her soul to its core. Ashgara was trapped, with only the darkness of the cave behind her. The faceless Foul itself!

Ashgara pleaded for her life and begged to dance for the Foul before he destroyed her. The Ashgara pulled the mirrored shield from her arm and began to dance at the mouth of the cave. Her movements were slow, rhythmic, and precise, the mirror in her hands dull and dark. Posing delicately for the Foul, she thought of her people who had died in the Darkness to the north. She danced a dance of sorrow, remembering the few remaining Naga dying in the palaces to the north. Delicately turning the faintly glimmering mirror in her graceful hands, she kept the Oni's eyes on her movements, and danced until she thought she would die from fright and fatigue. The Oni's claws opened and closed reflexively, awaiting his meal. As his eyes flickered over her, she shuddered behind the softly glowing mirror, extending a slim arm in a delicate gesture of supplication. Drooling in pleasure, it reached out to grasp her as she passed near. Swiftly she passed behind the shining piece of obsidian, evading his grasp in a decorative twirl.

Trembling in fear, she came to the end of the dance, the brightly gleaming mirror still in her hands, and the Oni lunged toward her eagerly...

...only to be stopped by a burst of light from the Bright Eye, who had seen the glow at the mouth of the cave, and followed it to freedom. And as the Bright Eye rejoined with the Atman, it seared the darkness out of the lands, burning them to black pitch, rolling and boiling until the Far South was a sea of darkness. As the Foul fled the land and gathered to the south, a great wail went up from the far lands, a curse upon the Naga. That was the First Burning of the Lands.

Further, as a gift to remember the brave Ashgara, the Atman gave all Naga women the ability to change their tails for legs and dance for him, bringing joy to the Bright Eye. So, to this day, the women of the Naga change from tail to legs as easily as they shed their skins.

THE WAR AGAINST THE ASHALAN

Excerpts From Alone of Days, a Tale of the Nagah Exiles:

After losing their second home in the Ivory Kingdoms (see Sanctuary of the Outcasts, page 118, for more), a number of Naga abominations entered the great waste of the Burning Sands. They hoped to find a new home there - new allies and a new reason to face the coming days. The first culture they encountered was the Ra'Shari, a nomadic gypsy culture whose interest in storytelling and similar origins (the Ra'Shari are also outcasts from their home in the distant City of One Thousand Stories) prompted them to share their plight. This would prove to be their first great mistake in the sands - one which they would not recover from easily.

The Ra'Shari are well known to the Ashalan, a race of immortals rumored to be the creators of the Burning Sands natives. This is a lie; the Ra'Shari and Ashalan were created together at the beginning of time, the first human and non-human races of the area. Their progenitors and the true children of the gods - the Jinn - forged them of the wind and sun and stars as servant races, but they later revolted when the Jinn lashed out at Kaleel (the Moon), Shilah (the Sun), and their distant brethren, the Stars. They taunted Shilah - by then hopelessly insane - into destroying her creations, but overextended their hand and found their idyllic world shattered, nothing but endless dunes as far as the distant mountains and sea on all sides. Magic had been swept from the world in an instant, and the Jinn (whose bodies are composed of elemental energy) were all destroyed or imprisoned.

The Ra'Shari and Ashalan named this globe-scarring event the Day of Wrath, and the actual details of what occurred to the first inhabitants of the Burning Sands has been carefully revised or suppressed, so that it may never happen again. The Ashalan and the Ra'Shari are the only races old enough to know the truth, and both have resolved never to reveal it. But with the arrival of the Naga abominations, that pact was threatened; the Naga told stories of an Age before that of the gods and the Day of Wrath. They spoke of things that predated all the careful myths both races had put in place to protect the fledgling Empires surrounding the City of One Thousand Stories.

They had to be destroyed.



The Ra'Shari diverted from their usual course through the sands, toward the capital of Medinaat al-Salaam – called the City of One Thousand Stories – where Ashalan Blood-Sworn legions laid in wait, prepared to eliminate the Naga before their stories could spread beyond the gypsy caravan. For two months, the caravan traveled the dunes, the Naga seemingly unaware of the deception and quite happy with their new “allies.” But then something unexpected happened. The Naga became slow and lethargic, unable to keep pace with the Ra'Shari wagons. Their scales began to peel away in clumps, the skin beneath unprepared for the harsh touch of Shilah's gaze. Their eyes glazed over and began to seal with mucus. Their bodies began to wither from the inside out, thinning and becoming like hard wire.

Assuming the Naga were reacting badly to the unusual magical properties of the sands, the Ra'Shari sent word ahead to the Ashalan that the threat was to take care of itself. This was the last word the sub-dwellers heard from the gypsies for several weeks. A few Ashalan braved the hateful sands, traveling by night to avoid Shilah's touch (which is normally poison to them), but failed to return. Eventually, the Ashalan gathered a group of their human allies from within Medinaat al-Salaam and headed out en masse to see what had happened to their friends and the dying Naga.

When they arrived, the Ashalan found the remains of an epic battle, one which seemingly erupted from within the Ra'Shari caravan itself. Wagons lay on their sides, burned to husks, and bodies were strewn about and within the dunes like carelessly discarded toys. Among them were the first Ashalan scouts, the life-shadows drained out of their skin and their torsos shredded by immense talons. Within the center of the carnage, were several sets of reptile-skin, ruptured from within as if they were cocoons.

Before any could surmise what had befallen the caravan, the Ashalan and humans were assaulted from beneath the dunes. Several were dragged out of sight before the enemy was even spotted, their wails lost between the endless waves of sand. Slithering atrocities clawed their way up from the depths of the desert, rising within a shower of dust. The moonlight glistened upon their golden scales, forming a halo of ambient light all around the fighting. Within moments, more than half the hundred souls who had come from the city were slaughtered, their bodies ravaged by the enraged Naga.

Something in the sands – perhaps left over from the Day of Wrath itself – had sparked a startling metamorphosis in the snakemen. They were now larger, faster, and more agile. Their necks had grown out and gained frightening mobility, and those who once had tails stumbled about upon newly-formed legs. A single Naga of this sort (to be called “Fire Salamanders” by the natives of the Burning Sands) could engage four or more opponents at once, coordinating their strikes between all of them with uncanny accuracy. And when overwhelmed, they exhibited a new and even more terrifying ability – they spewed forth a consuming fire which fed from the flesh of its victims. Those struck with this appalling fluid were unable to stop it from spreading across their entire forms, even when they dove into the frigid night sands; the fire dissolved their skin to the bone, leaving only a charred skeleton behind, frozen in place as the joints melted together.

None survived the Nagas' vicious counter-attack. The Ashalan back in Medinaat al-Salaam eventually sent an even larger force out into the sands, but found only scattered remains of the caravan, spread over several miles and partially buried beneath the dunes by the desert winds. Among the wreckage, they found one of the shed Naga skins. Stories spread amongst the Ashalan and the remaining Ra'Shari of the terrible demons that had come from the far east, hidden within the bodies of previous victims. Younger races, including the less-enlightened humans of the desert cities, the Senpet, Moto, and others, were warned to beware the Naar Teban (Fire Snakes), whose lies about the Day of Wrath and before were part of a complicated philosophical war with the Ashalan.

The Naga outcasts quickly found themselves once again ostracized from the local populace, feared and reviled because they were different. Worse, they were hunted for their “aggression” against the gypsies. They attempted to leave the desert some months later, but found the lands beyond the western mountains caused them pain in their new forms. Eventually, several of them died, unable to contend with the higher levels of magic in the Senpet Empire. Many years later, when they tried to return to the Ivory Kingdoms, similar problems arose. Trapped within the desert, the Naar Teban have learned to adapt, hiding

THE BLOODLAND WARS

The Bloodland Wars, or the time of Great Strife among the Naga, occurred over two thousand years ago, according to the most reliable Naga historians. The coming of the Shahismael and the Qatol is a tale which is revered by the Naga, and which tells a great deal about their culture's values and beliefs.

The Bloodland Wars, according to the scholars, was named for the great quantity of blood which was spilled by the Asp armies as they marched against the Five Kingdoms.

The blood of the Naga, it is said, was so thick upon the ground that the fields and paths seemed made of it. The bodies of the dead littered the fields in rows like grain, and the bones of those who had died were as trees in a forest.

The land had indeed turned to blood.



THE CHAMELEON CITY

The city of the Chameleon is built far beneath the waves, near the southern coast of the Rokugani Empire. Specifically, it is less than a day's swim (aided by currents) from the coast, and the Chameleon can command an army of over 4000 Naga, supplemented by dolphins and trained sharks (similar to war-dogs). On the hexed Rokugan map (located in *the City of Lies*), the city is located three hexes due south of Yama ue no ho ni Uni Mura, a city in the Crane lands.

Characters will, of course, have great difficulty traveling to the city without magical assistance. Both the pressure and the physical act of breathing beneath the waves will cause difficulty, and the normal samurai simply isn't equipped to handle the challenge. But, then again, that's what heroes do.

from their enemies and living off of various subterranean creatures and water supplies.

Eventually, they know, they will have to return to the civilized parts of the desert, and face their ancient enemies, the Ashalan. Until then, they collect those few Naga abominations who wander into the sands, guiding them into their new forms with care. In this new extended family, the Naar Teban provide the next generation a solace they were never allowed.



"They move without speech, in perfect harmony. I could believe that creatures such as these were cut from a single stone..."

— Hida Tsuru

The Chameleon occupy a curious position within the Naga. Though the Naga have no need for duplicity or stealth among their own kind, in times of war, Chameleons are born in more and more nests. Commonly scouts, their ability to hide and remain unseen is well known throughout the Naga civilization, and has been a great strength in times of strife. Chameleon Naga are slightly longer than their cousins, the Greensnakes, ranging from 13–17 feet in total length. Their bodies are bulkier in proportion, and their tails are thicker and more muscular. Their greatest strength, however, is their ability to alter their body's coloration, allowing them to blend in with their surroundings.

Chameleons are one of the more often mutated species of Naga, though the mutations are rarely severe. Chameleons often are born with the ability to breathe water, either indefinitely or simply for short periods of time. For this reason (among others), the Chameleons are often the keepers of the egg-nests.

Some say that their unusual ability to blend with their surroundings was granted by a long-ago union with the mysterious Ningyo, magical creatures born from the foam of the ocean's waves. Legends and half-understood memories from the Akasha speak of a time when the bloodline of the Chameleon lived entirely beneath the water, sharing their homes with the Ningyo. Their close ties with the Ningyo resulted in Naga children that had inherited the Ningyo's ability to alter their shape. This gift eventually faded until it became the Chameleon's ability to alter the color and texture of their skin, in order to merge with their surroundings and become practically undetectable.

Whether the legend is true or not (and the Naga insist that it is), the Chameleons have always maintained friendly relations with the Ningyo, and they still conduct trade with their underwater companions. Although the passing of a thousand years has caused the Ningyo to all but vanish, the few who remain still remember the Chameleon, and celebrate their awakening with joy.

BENEATH THE OCEAN

The Chameleons have a very specific niche in the Naga culture. Theirs is the way of the waves, the soft flowing of the ocean, and the beckoning lure of pearl. Although many Naga have at least a small potential to create pearl-magic, only the Chameleons have the skill necessary to encourage those pearls to form. They know the secrets of the hidden pearl beds, and they have the wisdom of the greatest pearls ever formed; the Black Pearls, only one created in a generation.

Further, the Chameleons have the ability to shape the ocean itself, drawing upon the tide and the creatures of the sea to assist them. While the Cobras *jakla* insist that this is some magic which the Chameleons refuse to share, the Chameleons say it is simple friendship with the sea itself, and with the spirits of the sea who are their cousins.

The Chameleons have numerous small 'villages' beneath the waves, including their great city, Candasa. The Chameleon city remained in pristine condition during the years of the Great Sleep, maintained by the powers of the Ningyo. Of all the Naga cities, it is the most functional; unfortunately, because not all Naga have the capacity to travel beneath the sea, it is not as useful as it might otherwise become.

Yet, the Ningyo speak of many changes beneath the sea since the ancient time of their

cousins. Most importantly, the ruins of a Chameleon outpost - destroyed, the Ningyo whisper, by a terrible Sea Spider.

meditate and funnel the strength of the Bright Eye into their rest.

The Cobra have always been extremely secretive about their practices, and even the rest of the Naga bloodlines are not entirely sure what rituals and spells are cast upon the beautiful pearls which they draw from the oceans. The Chameleons whisper that the Ningyo bring the Cobra pearls from the sea-beds in the deepest ocean, while the Asp claim that the pearls are the tears of the weeping water-maiden, an ancient white-scaled Cobra who remains hidden at the bottom of the deepest sea-bed.

For the first few years of their lives, all Cobra are able to breathe water, although most of them lose this ability within the early years of their

The Cobra

"In the Eye, there is wisdom. In the mind, there is strength. We will need both to restore the loss of a Thousand Years..."

- Shashakar

The Cobra, hooded masters of Naga pearl magic, are the most unusual of all Naga bloodlines. Only the Cobra have the ability to coax magic from pearls, and no other bloodline can match their ability to bring forth spells and sorcery. However, their prowess has a price. The Cobra are most susceptible to mutations; their egg nests are surrounded by powerful pearls, filled with the magic of the Akasha. Few Cobra live through their hatching; fewer still are able to survive the harsh lives which follow. Though the Cobra are rare, they are very outspoken, guiding the others through force of will and the power of their magic.

The Cobra are said to be among the closest to the Akasha, gaining wisdom from its teachings and drawing power from its memories. Although they do not match the Constrictors for clarity in their meditations, the Cobra are often able to draw forth arcane secrets and lost wisdom from the Akasha's deepest core, fueling the spells they carry with the Bright Eye's wisdom.

The Cobra are intimately connected to the Bright Eye and the Pale, and they work closely with the Chameleon, maintaining secret beds of pearls surrounded by meditating Cobra Jakla (shugenja). In these beds, both Cobra eggs and Cobra pearls are laid to rest, while the Jakla





COBRA'S CHILDREN

When the Asp Kingdom began its assault on the other bloodlines, the Cobra turned to magic, but they were not strong enough.

The Asp conquered the Greensnakes, and then the Constrictors. For the Naga to survive, the Cobra would have to change.

The first eggs given magical pearls in their clutches were a disaster, the children grossly abominated. They died, within a few days. From their deaths, the Cobra learned a secret they have never shared with any of the other Bloodlines, and which even the Akasha does not record.

And the ones who came after - Cobra children who were given the radiance of beneficial pearls to grow by - they were the masters of the Naga magic. Despite mild abominations, they could wield powers unknown to all the other Bloodlines; and they drove back the Asp.

And their blood was shed, on the moment of their birth, dripped into the pools of the Cobra city. When they die, the Cobra souls are drawn by their blood, to rejoin those pools before going to the Akasha.

Each new Cobra egg is washed in those pools with a special ritual, and the souls of the Cobra are reborn - but always in Cobra bodies.

Thus do the Cobra keep their secrets safe.

existence. Their other mutations, however, are not so easily shed. The most distinguishable feature is their hood, a wide flap of skin which can extend as much as fifteen inches to either side and above their head. While all Cobra have this hood, some few also have the ability to retract its wide span, bringing it close to their heads, and making it virtually indistinguishable to all but the most careful viewers.

Others, however, are not so lucky. The most powerful Jakla of all, the current Shashakar, bears signs of heavy mutation - his hood stretches widely, and is ribbed to both sides, while his face appears almost buglike, rather than human and serpentine. His power, however, is uncontested.

PEARL MAGIC

The magic of pearls is unique to the Naga culture, and no human has ever been able to master its intricacies. The Naga say that their magic is learned through communion with the Akasha. If this is true, then it is doubtful that any human will ever learn its secrets.

The Cobra are the unrivaled masters of their magic, and rare is the Naga of another bloodlines who is capable of using their magic. The Cobra alone know where the massive pearl-beds rest, from which they harvest the pearls they use.

Each pearl is imbued with a 'gift' of the Akasha - in the Naga language, the word for 'pearl' is very similar to the word for 'soul'. These jewels are treated with courtesy and humility, as if they were little children. Every pearl is referred to as a 'little brother of the Bright Eye' and the Naga claim that the wisdom of the Bright Eye is part of each spell they cast. In their teachings, they insist that without the blessing of the Bright Eye, any spell is bound to fail. Some, much rarer spells, are the 'children of the Pale Eye.' Such spells are always placed in rare black pearls, and are almost unknown to the body of the Naga populace.

Once in a generation, the pearl beds of the Naga produce a single, massive black pearl. This creation, known as the 'Favored Child of the Pale' is a treasure beyond price for the Naga. Its abilities are only hinted at in their ancient scrolls - and no Cobra seems willing to discuss it - but it seems capable of everything from tremendous violence and destruction to the complete rebirth of life - the instant reincarnation of a soul.

Certainly, its power must be great, to steal from the Akasha itself. The Naga do not mention

it, nor speak of it to outsiders, but within the coral walls of the Cobra temples, it is said that a this generation's Black Pearl has recently been discovered by the Chameleon, and that it whispers of the end of a soul...

PEARL KYUJUTSU

Some Naga eggs are gestated in the Cobra pearl bed egg-pits, but do not have the strength and talent to become jakla. Many of these retain a slight bit of magical prowess, enough to perform rudimentary attacks with the power of a pearl. A Naga with this skill can destroy a pearl to do a ranged attack at up to 50 feet. It is primitive, however, and not well directed, but some Naga use it as a weapon of last resort, crushing the children of the Bright Eye in order to launch a final blow against their enemy. The wounds from such an injury are severe, as burns erupt from the blinding white light which springs from the sanctified Naga pearl.



"Bushido means nothing to them, and it will mean nothing to you when you are caught in the coils of the Constrictor..."

- Mirumoto Daini's Journal

Naga Constrictors are widely feared for their massive strength and crushing entanglement. Any samurai caught in the trailing coils of a Constrictor are doomed, their souls crushed from their bodies with only an ounce of effort from the Naga. However, the Constrictors have been misunderstood by the samurai of Rokugan, though they would not think to correct the samurai's misjudgment.

The Constrictors are few among the Naga race, and many believe them destined for extinction. They are the wise ones, the priests of the Akasha. Their strength comes from their massive bulk, and from their powerful wills, trained through centuries of meditation and communion with the Eternal Akasha. They are strong, but gentle.

The Constrictors are the backbone of the Naga armies, standing behind their brothers and guiding the hands of the Asp generals with compassion and wisdom. When a Naga dies, it is the Constrictor who chants the ancient prayer to send their soul safely back to the pool, and it is the Constrictor who reads the fortunes in the skies, studying the eternal cycle of the heavens as they revolve around the Bright Eye and the Pale.

The Constrictors have raised the art of astronomy to a science, creating strange devices to see far-away things as though they were much closer. They claim that their understanding is not magic, though they use a thin slice of pearl as a lens for their far-looking glasses. Charts of mobile bodies in the sky, and great metal pincers to measure their progress are the prized possessions of a great Constrictor scholar, sometimes valued more than their own life.

The powerful body of the Constrictors is matched only by their great mental prowess, and although they move slowly, they are feared upon the battlefield as much as they are revered in the temples of their home. Due to their close contact with the Akasha, many Constrictors have powerful abilities to sense ripples in the Naga consciousness. While they are not as attuned to communications between living Naga as their brethren, the Cobra, some of the most ancient Constrictors have an amazing ability to draw images of the future and the past from the ripples of the pool of souls. However, there is always a danger to such depths; some Constrictors have sunk their souls so deeply into the pond of the Akasha that they have never returned, remaining in a comatose, somnambulant state until their bodies withered and died from starvation.

Because there are so few Constrictors among the Naga race, the wisdom which they have gained may be lost in but a few generations. Constrictor eggs die and wither in the nests, and few of those born live to see their third Shedding of the Skin. The Naga are unable to determine if this is a natural occurrence, or if some mysterious tragedy has struck the bloodline of the Constrictor. What they do know is that if the

Constrictors are lost, the closest connection with the Akasha will be lost with them. The thought of such an outcome saddens and frightens the Naga, and fosters much concern among their councils. Even the Dashmar himself has set the task before his greatest Cobra shugenja: discover the cause of the Constrictor's plague, and heal the wound before it destroys the bloodline.

The Malekish is the astrologer of the Naga, and has a deep connection with the passage of stars and the turning of seasons. His history begins as a young Constrictor, when he developed the full knowledge of his past life as the last Malekish. He is the youngest of his bloodline, born only shortly before the Thousand Years of Sleep. Perhaps more than any other Naga, he knows that something is wrong in the heavens - the Moon has had a shadow upon it for the last month.

The title of Malekish is not often found among the Naga. It is not a title of importance, and it is not a necessary position. Instead, it is only found during the years of great change, when the stars and the heavens dance and the celestial alignments shudder.



CHILDREN OF THE BRIGHT EYE

The majority of Constrictors have elaborate patterns of scales, similar to the pythons and diamondbacks of desert and jungle lands. The Naga, too, pride themselves on their scales, and many Constrictors voluntarily remove their scales and replace them with small jeweled patterns, which last until their next molting.

Such Vedic priests are the chosen of the Bright Eye, who speak the wisdom of the Atman and give advice to people and ruler alike. Many of the Vedic Priests of the Bright Eye give their life to become teachers, advisors as well as philosophers and guides to the Akasha. They seek to bring peace to their land, and to aid their brothers - of all Bloodlines - to understand the voice of the Akasha.

They are the healers, the guardians of life and peace. This is not to say that the Vedic of the Bright Eye are pacifistic, only that their duties are to help the Naga race live in harmony, and to


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Be warned that humans make fragile things. Their houses are so weak that they cannot bear the weight of a Naga, and their armor shatters under a single blow. They grow most distressed when you break something petty (such as a fan, or someone else's token), but seem to care not at all when they find a destroyed house or wall.

Human towns are filthy. Their roads are mud, and their houses are made of thin wood - or plaited weeds.

They have a caste system, much like our own, but there is no room for advancement. Once you are born into the caste, you remain there forever. Humans are very proud of their parents, and can recite their bloodlines back through a hundred years. And, strangely, all of the humans in one man's lineage tend to have the same first name.

Human afterlife beliefs are strange, as well. They believe that the souls of their dead continue to exist in this world - in their weapons and their houses and gardens. Where our past souls rejoin our Akasha and become one in flesh with us again, the human souls seem too weak to be reborn, and must be content with inhabiting material goods. 'This sword has the soul of my grandfather.'



MARA'S JOURNAL

If a human offers you a gift, tell them how horrible it is. This seems to please them. If they continue, think of the worst thing you can say about it, and say no again. At this point, they become overjoyed, and will practically thrust it upon you. It is best to accept it if they go this far, for they will most probably attack you if you say no too many times.

Humans are ashamed of their feet, and will hide them from anyone they feel is superior. This is done either by sitting on them, or by turning the bottom of the feet away

Be careful how you compliment a human, particularly a female. If you say their bodies are ripe and fruitful, they often become very annoyed. If you ask to see their legs or any other part, they grow angry - even though it is certain that they have no shame, as the people of a single house share one great tub of water for cleansing.

Do not ever assume that a human is telling the truth.

They lie often, about everything from their own importance to their actions at war. The ones with the masks, I am told, actually make fun of the others for lying. Perhaps they will be more willing to tell us the truth.

record the passage of time and souls through the Great Akasha. The Children of the Bright Eye are often seers, gifted with the blessing of prophecy through the Akasha - for both good, and ill. They can recognize past souls which inhabit Naga alive today, and they have the duty to officiate at all religious ceremonies and rituals.

The leader of the Children of the Bright Eye is the Lord Vedic Abalasha, High Priest of the Atman and Voice of the Akasha.

CHILDREN OF THE PALE EYE

Justice and judgment - the system of punishment and law - these are the province of the Vedic of the Pale Eye. A few times in a clutch of Constrictors, a child would be born with no pattern on its scales at all. Covered in darkness, the young Constrictor's hide was unmarred by any mark other than the blackness of the night sky. Their scales will always be so, black and unmarked, and they do not wear jewelry or bright tokens, such as the Vedic of the Bright Eye often do.


Such younglings are known as the Children of the Pale Eye, and they spend their days learning the Law of the Naga, the earthly restrictions, punishments and justice of the Naga. Similar to Emerald Magistrates in Rokugan, it is the duty of the Children of the Pale Eye to be judge, jury and executioner for crimes against the Qatol's Law.

Rather than learning the ways of the Akasha's wisdom, they turn their thoughts to the lessons of the Akasha's past, and are more fluent in the history of their race, the past judgments and records of their race.

The Children of the Pale Eye are not feared in the Naga race, but they are given a wide berth. It is their duty to fulfill the visions of the Atman's Pale Eye - the eye which passes judgment and sees only fault. Their duties, though unpleasant, are needed to keep the peace, and they often travel from city to city, and through villages, helping keep the Qatol's Law throughout the Five Kingdoms.

They are the only Naga known to kill their brothers - and even then, only in the cause of justice. The Akasha guides their hands and their judgments, and they are rarely questioned.

If a Vedic of the Pale Eye is said to have judged in error, the case is brought before the Dethasha, the Pale Eye's Lord Vedic, for judgment. Such rulings are always final.



The Greensnake

The Greensnakes are the smallest and most prolific of the Naga bloodlines. A member of the Greensnake bloodline typically ranges from 10-15 feet in total length, and has a slender physique rather than the thickened muscles of their cousins, the Asp. They tend to be diplomatic and soft-spoken, their minds easily adapting to knowledge and modern thoughts. Possibly because of their connection to the present, the Greensnakes have very little ability to interact with the Akasha itself, often incapable of sending more than the most primitive emotions to the collective Naga consciousness.

Greensnakes are often chosen to be scouts because of their ability to learn languages rapidly, as well as their mental acuity and ability to negotiate and understand new concepts. A member of their bloodline is often chosen as the Dashmar, the great leader of the Naga race, because of their prowess and intelligence.

The Greensnakes, unfortunately, are rarely scholars. Their vast capacity for learning is matched only by their great curiosity, funneling knowledge and information through their minds in a never-ending stream. Perhaps if their link to the Akasha were stronger, the Cobra shugenja murmur, the Akasha would benefit more from their constant, chattering input. Listening to their brethren argue, the Constrictors smile and silence the Cobra. "Be glad they do not have the strength of soul that we do," they chuckle, "Or the Akasha would be filled with the static and questions of a thousand thousand Greensnake souls, all arguing and none listening."

Only the smallest of the Naga brood has been able to master the language of the humans of Rokugan, and the Greensnakes consider it their



duty to bring understanding between the two races. Most recently, they have 'adopted' a human male named the Daini, a strange-looking fellow with pale skin and a thin-featured face. His role in the upcoming conflict is unknown, but the Greensnakes continue to argue that his words should be heard and studied. Beside them, the Chameleons agree, lending their support to the eloquent arguments of their smaller brothers.

One among them, a proud Greensnake named Mara, argues with great passion on the Daini's behalf, encouraging her race to see him as a scholar and student of their ways. She asks for him to be allowed into the sacred temples of the Chameleon and the vast pearl-beds of the Cobra.

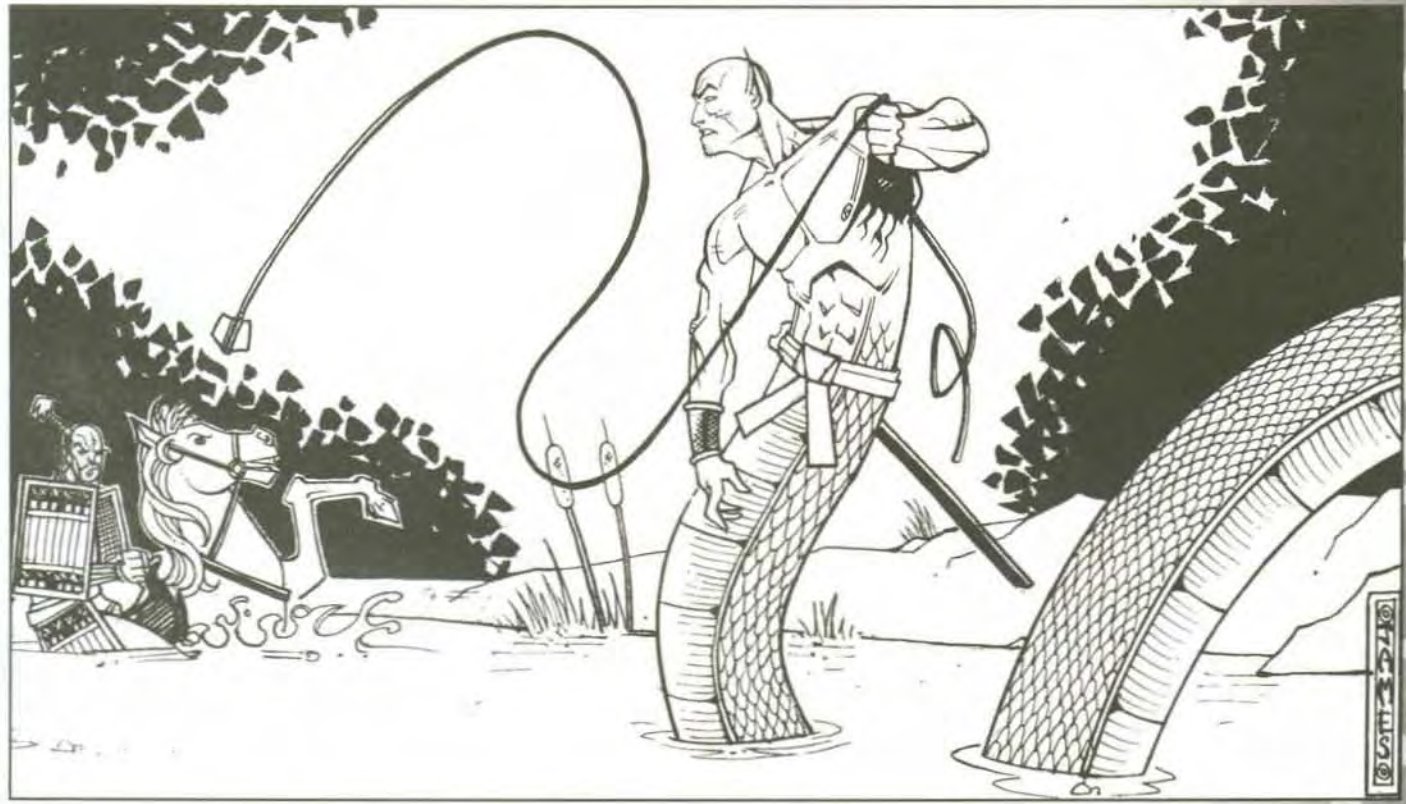
One day soon, the Greensnake arguments may overwhelm the xenophobic tendencies of the other bloodlines, enticing them to open their strict borders to a single traveler. For now, the Asp wait for this 'Daini' to betray the Naga's or prove worthy of this great honor. Only then will they know if their trust in this man has been rewarded with loyalty.

NAGA GREETINGS

The *namaste* is the traditional greeting used by the Naga and perfected by the Greensnake. It

is performed by pressing the palms together (fingers up) below the chin, and saying "Namaste," while sending a message of greeting via the Akasha. To greet superiors or show respect, a slight bow is added. Since the Naga awakened and the scouts were dispatched, both "konnichi-wa" and "kangei" are also acceptable greetings. Out of respect for a female's privacy, Naga males do not usually shake hands with or touch women in formal or informal gatherings. It is polite to use titles such as "shri" for a male, or "shreemati" for a female, in place of the Naga's official name-title. These are often used to show respect or deference, or when the Naga meeting one another do not yet know each other's rank and position within the People. Between affectionate Naga, the appellation "kumari" is used for a female, typically a young love or a child. The Asp still prefer the ancient *salaam* gesture of greeting, performed by raising the right hand toward the forehead, with the index finger pointing to the forehead and the rest of the hand pointing upwards. It is similar to a salute, but is not as rigid or formal, being much more fluid and grand.

Naga rarely speak loudly. With the aid of the Akasha, they have no need to shout to one



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another, but rather can send their messages empathically through the Great Mind. The Rokugani often do not understand this, and consider the Naga's ability to communicate long distances with whispers to be a product of exceptional hearing or eyesight.

Rokugan

The Greensnakes best understand Naga etiquette and protocol, and go to great lengths to teach it to their Rokugani friends. Their fascination with the samurai culture of the Emerald Empire has led them to teach their own culture in exchange for the wonderful glimpses into human lives and actions. Below, is a treatise

on Naga culture from the point of view of a Rokugani samurai. It was written by Mirumoto Daini, a young Dragon samurai who has recently had the honor of traveling with the Dashmar's guard. We think his 'insights' may prove useful to players who wish to affect Naga habits and cultural idiosyncrasies...

CULTURAL INSIGHTS

My Lord Yokuni,

You have asked me to discover how to interact with the Naga serpents, and so I have. The Naga are strange, but I have uncovered some few facts of their odd culture which may benefit our clan. As always, my sword is yours to command...

...If invited to an Naga's home for dinner, bring fruit or sweet candies as a token of





appreciation. Those who do not return a host's hospitality are sorely lacking in manners, and will certainly not be invited to return.

Naga do not ordinarily have children in the house, other than apprentices or traveling students. There are eggbeds, and magnificent "children's houses," in each city. These are capable of supporting each generation of children - and the larger cities may have several such houses. All the Naga in a city are responsible for taking care of the city's children, and it is common courtesy to arrive with many small items that can be passed along to the children.

It is best to be cautious when standing close to a Naga. They can sense one another instinctively, when they are near, and often do not bother to look beside them as they travel. Some few humans have been mistakenly crushed by walking too close to a Naga's tremendous tail, for the Naga in question did not 'sense' their presence, and assumed that the area was empty. When talking to a Naga, an arm's length away is considered the proper distance. If your conversation partner steps back even further, just give them some room, edging backward a little more.

Naga often greet visitors with garlands of flowers, fronds of ferns, or other jewelry made from the plants in the forest. If a samurai is given a garland to hang around their neck, it is important not to leave it on for more than a couple of seconds, and to not show the Naga your virtue by refusing the gift. The Naga prefer to be insulted when they give tokens, and the best thing to do is to accept immediately. However, once you have been given the gift, the polite thing to do is to immediately take it off and carry it the rest of the evening. My best supposition, noble daimyo, is that this shows a guest's humility and tolerance for their strangeness.

If you want to express remorse or honesty, simply grasp your ear and howl. The Naga have an affection for their ears, I believe, and when one is offended, the best apology you can give them is to grasp at your ears and raise a great noise. The Naga seem to believe that you are scaring off evil *kansen*, who have inhabited you and caused you to perform such a terrible action. Whatever their superstition, the method does seem to work.

I stand with the mountain,
Mirumoto Daini



Abominations. In our language, the word implies something to be feared and shunned. To the Naga, it is worse - a soul which has been born improperly. Naga spiritualism dictates that an Abomination is a soul which has 'not completed its tasks', and rushed from the Akasha before being fully purified. It is infected with visions and memories of a life which has been left behind. It should not be allowed to consider itself a 'part' of that life anymore, and must be purified upon the earth, turned out from the Naga race until its soul has lost the haunted memories of its previous existence.

The Naga also believe that physical mutations upon the scales, body or organs of a Naga are caused by a past life which refused to leave one another and join the Akasha - memories which cling to existence and taint the newborn soul. For this reason, Abominations are more prone to 'remembering' their past incarnations and lives, and are taught to suppress such thoughts with meditation, purging them back into the Akasha.

Some Naga are born with minimal mutations in their bloodstream, possibly caused by their parent's exposure to pearl magics, or the Cobra pearls used in many of the egg-pits. These aberrations range from mild facial or torso elongation, scales on their faces or hands, and human-colored, or albino skin; to more severe forms such as serpentine eyes, fins, useless gills, or webbed hands.

If a Naga has a severe mutation, they are most often born sterile. The Naga believe that this is a deliberate act of the Akasha, preventing such creatures from further tainting the race. Naga with massive abominations are always born sterile, and often, die at birth from their genetic

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Today the Daini told me a horrible thing. Although his people are fond of telling half-truths and lying for their masters, their justice relies more on a single man's testimony than all the evidence that can be gathered. Once, a human Vedic declared that a man was to be killed for the death of his daughter - although her body had been found in their lord's house.

The peasants' lord, a 'samurai', spoke against him, and told all concerned that the man had come to his house and killed the daughter. I could see the lie in his eyes, and I knew the man who was to be killed was innocent, but the humans did not care. The man was put to death.

And that is the strangest thing about these 'humans'. They kill their own kind.

Not for punishment, as the Pale Eye's Vedic occasionally must do - although that occurs - but because of the other human's words. Sometimes, when a man has said something, he is asked to die. Other tales this Daini tells me speak of two men fighting to decide who is telling the truth - even when the truth is obvious.

Other times, a man's lord commands him to die, and he cuts open his belly without thought.

I fear, my lord, that we will never understand these barbarians or their customs.



NAMING PRACTICES

Naga go through many names in their lifetimes: first their childhood name, then their adult name, and lastly a list of names of their profession. After choosing a profession, a Naga is rarely known by any name other than their job. A typical Naga might be known as "Shallish" as a child, then pass their Naming ceremony and become an adult, choosing the name "Marisa", and then go into the scout profession. The name for a minor Naga scout, assigned to the southern Shinomen forest might be "Ashaphra," and then they might be promoted from the Ashaphra, through Shazaar, to Isha.

A Naga is always referred to by his or her current name. This means that a Naga might be called the Ashaphra, even by their childhood friends who knew them as Shallish, but as soon as they are promoted to Isha, they are referred to by that name. In the event of two Ashaphra (two characters with the same profession), they would be differentiated by using their professional name and their adult name: Ashaphra Marisa and Ashaphra Qazach.

disfunctions. The Naga are not kindly disposed to abomination children, and tend to treat them poorly. This means the more heavily a Naga is mutated, the more his own people will tend to shun or ignore him. Because, to the Naga, unity of race is more important than an individual's own self, being shunned by a Naga's people is one of the worst things a Naga can endure.

ALONE IN THE SHINOMEN

Naga do not kill their brothers, even those who are obviously deformed and ill-prepared to live. Instead, they put them in the woods, and allow them to prove their worth, or return to the Akasha, to be reborn.

Some of these abominations have traveled far from the peaceful woodlands of the Shinomen, and others have remained, struggling against the dangers of forest and the human world, awaiting the day when they can be re-accepted into the Akasha, back into the consciousness of the Naga.

FIRE SALAMANDERS

There are those Abominations who have traveled west, over the mountains and through the desert to the Burning Sands. These Naga (or Nagah, in the local colloquialism) experience a strange transformation when they first shed their skins across the mountains. Their scales change hue, becoming brighter and more jewel-toned, and any mutations become more severe. These 'Fire Salamanders', as they are called by the wandering tribes of Moto, are still part of the Akasha, but receive strange visions the farther they travel from their Shinomen home.

ASETH

Only one Abomination has been accepted in the recent years since the Awakening. His name is Aseth. He has purged himself of the memories of his past lives, and begin a life of his own, free of their taint. The Vedic have proclaimed that he is worthy of a place among their people, and the Naga have welcomed him home. Aseth has worked long to receive such a welcome, and would fight beyond his soul's limit for his people, if they were threatened.

Aseth stands on the battlefield beside the Qamar and looks for the worthiest opponent on the battlefield among the humans.

That one, their finest, he chooses to fight alone. He has never lost.

Language

Friends, as I write this for posterity, I do so because it behooves me to tell you of the many things I have learned from these fine and honorable creatures that I have learned to consider not only my most valuable friends, but also as teachers about the past of our world. Before man there was the Naga, silent and potent in their empire that ranged from the sea to the farthest reaches of the known world, in which they had dealings with numerous lost peoples, the oldest races of the world.

Much can be learned from the Naga, and perhaps much can we teach them about mankind for they are factionalized at this point; neither trusting nor unwilling - more curious than else. The stronger our bonds with them, the stronger our civilization becomes - and do not the Prophecies of Uikku speak of the "Strangers of old in time of need"? It is quite possible that these Naga are a necessary component in the liberation of the world from the corruption of Fu Leng; truly they know much about the Shadowlands and its inhabitants.

May you be enlightened by this text, as I was when I learned directly from the source.

- Asako Ishikawa, Historian

THE STRUCTURE OF NAMES

It is important here to begin with the Name of particular Naga, for it is with the name that one learns the most about them. They are born and are given a personal, secret, name - its a cultural trait to be so reclusive - this secret name is not uttered by any other than the bearer and perhaps even his immediate family. From birth it becomes clear the nature of the young, whether or not he

or she will become a Shugenja or Warrior, and what rank they shall hold. The name is their title, not just a form of address, but also who they have become. I begin with my close friend Isha, whose secret name even I do not know.

Isha is a hunter and a vanguard – it is in that capacity I first encountered him. And indeed his name (or title, it sometimes becomes difficult to distinguish) means just that...with some modification. Understand that the Naga's language is indeed an alien tongue and is composed of many things that we Rokugani are simply unable to deal with effectively.

The language is syllable-based. Each syllable has a specific meaning. With Isha, one must break it down into its two simple parts: "I-", pronounced as the elongated double "E" sound, refers directly to hunting or something or someone who hunts, or is hunted, or refers to hunting. Although confusing, it becomes second nature later to one who understands: specifically, for us, it means "Hunter." The second syllable is "Sha," which is a measurement of power, distance, or the like. Anything that is "massive" or referred to as "great" or "far-reaching," and perhaps "incredible." Anything "big or large; distant."

Thus we can determine that Isha is, in fact, the pre-eminent Hunter amongst the Naga – as his title/name indicates; and, in fact, he is...if you have the chance my friends, watch his mastery with a bow and you will know what I am talking about.

We now have one name "Isha" as "[The] Great Hunter." Notice specifics here, the use of the definitive article ("the") is used only as a honorific, and then specifically for their Champion, or leader, of whom all I know is that he is called "Qamar," and I have never met him. (Qamar, I am told, means "The One"). From Isha I learned that the prefix-syllable "Qa-" is the honorific in question; therefore, and I must make this assumption, "mar" is an ordinal of the first magnitude (one). Whether or not there is a non-specific use form of the definite article, I cannot, at this time, say for certain.

An admonition: With this simple introduction, it would be impossible to give all the potential definitions for these simple syllables that we have now uncovered; but understand that with just these four syllables many words of the Naga can be not only constructed but also understood—should you listen closely you will notice the syllable "sha" is in many titles/names –

perhaps there are many who claim, or are claimed, to be great.

SYLLABLE STRUCTURE

There are certain syllables that are orientation specific; that is to say, their placement in the name or word is fixed and cannot be moved. Among them is the first syllable of both names we have learned so far: Qamar and Isha.

These syllables, "Qa-" and "I-", respectively, are specific, rare, and fixed. (Perhaps it is fortuitous that I met Isha first of all!) These syllables must remain in the front of the word as the first syllable and are therefore are referred to by me as "prefixes," although not specifically designated as such by the Naga themselves. There are others whose placement must be at the end of a word, and are referred to as "suffixes," again although not specifically named so by the Naga. In the dictionary portion of this treatise I have marked those syllables that are locked in position, so as to not cause confusion.

Such a language/word structure might (for us non-Naga) be difficult to understand, so much so that it could hardly be hoped to begin to dissect their tongue. But there is hope, for there are other markers used to impart meaning – and this our language shares with theirs – body posture and gesture. Since they are undoubtedly "human-like" (if I may use that term), it naturally follows that their posturing would be similar when dealing with, sarcasm, for instance. Luckily for us humans, this is indeed the case.



NUMERICAL STRUCTURE

The Naga numbering system is (naturally) different from ours. Whereas we Rokugani count upwards from zero (0), the Naga count from one (1) – for them the value of zero has no meaning, and no place. "There is never a vacuum," it was once said to me.

Also, whereas we utilize a numbering system based upon powers of ten – that is to say, 0 through 9, and then a continuation of the previous—the Naga count thus:



PROFESSIONS

The Naga Scout is led by the Isha, the recognized authority among the Scouts. Other scouts may attain this title through hard work, devotion and faithfulness to the duty of their profession. Some of the other titles in Scout craft include the Shazaar and the Shalasha, both titles of respect, associated with leadership. A Shalasha might be the leader of a small troop of Naga Scouts, while the Shazaar would lead a troupe of diplomatic scouts, trained to interact with other races and cities.



PEARL OF MIST

When the Naga decided that they would sleep through an age and awaken when the Foul was at its strongest, it was the task of the Cobra Shashakar to weave the spell.

In the Naga city of Vyakarana, a great pearl was brought. It was called the Pearl of Mist, and around it, a thousand Cobra shugenja slept, protecting the spell with their lives – and more. The spell of the Shashakar had an unexpected price. The pearl's power fed hungrily on the souls and the magic of the Jakla. As each year passed, one Cobra died, sacrificing themselves to the hunger of the Pearl.

When the Cobra awoke, their screams were still fresh. Bodies lay, scattered in dust, around the Pearl of Mists. Worse, the entire race seemed to have been affected by the spell. Although the race had been dying slowly, the Great Sleep has accelerated the process a hundredfold. Their their eggbeds empty, the Naga are unable to create more than a handful of children. The most affected are the Constrictors, who have seen no eggs at all.

The Cobra have told no one that the rapid decline is the consequence of the Great Sleep, and allow the others to believe that the lack of children is brought about by the natural continuation of the decline.

Their words are lies.

...one, two, three, three and one (4), three and two (5), three and three (6), three and three and one (7), three and three and two (8), three and three and three (9), ten...

The development of large numbers is quite laborious; after the count of ten the formation of the words changes dramatically. A word to the wise: do not get into a discussion with a Naga that uses any number above ten. Even I have yet to become familiar enough with the Naga to count so high. My suggestion for such a situation should it arise: use the word "many."



Over a thousand years ago – and some would say more – the Naga entered into a deep sleep. The Cobra jakla wove the skein, and the Constrictors whispered to the Akasha until the ripples in the Great Lake were still as glass.

But why did they do this? What caused the Naga to lay aside a civilization of grandeur and glory and pass into the realm of myth?

The answer is simple: death.

For the last generations of their civilization, the Naga have been quietly dying. The decrease is slow, in degrees rather than in drastic waves, but it is still occurring. Fewer Naga children were born, and the Akasha's wisdom seemed sluggish and weary. The Naga, once a proud race that spanned the continent, now fell prey to the end of their era. Within generations, they would be entirely gone, no more than dust and bones, and their precious Akasha would become still and silent forever.

Their greatest enemy – the Foul – would have won.

When the Naga first fought the darkness which threatened the land, they beat it beyond

the borders of their civilization, and they thought it had been destroyed. They were wrong. The Lying Darkness is not so easily defeated, and it simply turned its taint elsewhere.

The Darkness has always known the path to the land of the dead, and in the early years of the Five Naga Kingdoms, it began to populate the other side with dreams and delusions, mists and memories. Some of these memories were stolen from the Akasha, taken from each Naga who died to the servants of Darkness. Gradually, the Shadow learned how to infiltrate the Akasha itself – but only through dreams.

Those dreams have poisoned the Akasha, and have choked the soul of the Naga race. Because of the thread of darkness which permeates the Akasha, the Naga are dying, unable to create children, doomed to become only the memories and ruins of a once-epic nation.

The Constrictors studied the problem, but there was no solution. Although the stars told them that the great battle against the evils to the south would be fought in a thousand years, the Naga would be dead long before that came to pass. They would not have revenge on their ancient enemy, nor would they have the chance to purify the Akasha of its taint.

Worse, the gate to the far side would stand open, and all creatures who passed into the lands of death would be prey to the Foul's torments. There would be no guardian, no guide, and no succor for the land.

In desperation, the Qatol drew together the greatest Naga of each bloodline, asking them what could be done. They journeyed to the south, to give their lives if need be, in order to fight the Foul where it hid beneath the darkness of the Southlands.

Then, an unexpected catastrophe occurred: the sky tore open, and the Heavens began raining stars, burning the mountains and causing the world to break apart.

Eight stars fell to the north, and the sky turned as red as blood. "Go back," said the Qatol to the Shahadet, "and guard our people, for this is the sign of our death." With a salute, the Asp obeyed.

One star fell deep into the south, tearing the land and burying itself deep within the ground. Black coils of smoke and muck spewed from the hole, and the earth to the south was covered in a fine ash that smelled of the grave. The Qatol spoke then to the Constrictor, and said to him. "Return, Qarash, and hide the treasures of the



Naga. Your place is to protect them, for one day they will be needed again." And so, the Chameleon left his side.

In the deep lands of the south, beasts roamed in panic. The High One touched the Lord Vedic, "Our people will soon know fear, and your place is to guide them to peace. Go to them, Abalasha, and tell them of this place. They will fight against it one day." Thus, the Constrictor turned away, and traveled home again.

The Qatol journeyed on, to the gate of the Dead, and stood before the arch into the land of death - a place where no Naga had ever gone. No hint of the Akasha burned beyond that gate, for the souls of the Naga were taken before the land of the dead had claim to them, reborn as new members of their race.

The Qatol stood before that arch, and saw the future of his people, as a tenth star fell from the night sky. It was smaller than its brothers, paler than they, but it landed upon the arch of the world with a thundering roar. And the sky above

them turned grey and the thunder's voice died to a whisper.

When the Qatol saw it, he laughed, and the laugh tore at the fabric of the land of the dead. At last, he turned and dismissed the Cobra back to his people. "Sleep will be our ally - not dead, but not fully alive will we be, until the day comes when we can again fight the Foul." The Cobra lifted her hands, and a great wind blew across the darkened lands. With the sound of her voice and a shattered pearl, she vanished, to take the people into the Great Sleep, as the One had bidden her.

Then, the Qatol turned to his final retainer, and sent this word to us. "Tell them to wait," he said with a knowing smile, "And I will come for them when I have conquered the land of the dead itself. Then, the Foul will face our wrath, and the Akasha will be purified with its death." The Isha bowed, and the Warrior of the Sun vanished into the darkness, reaching his hand toward the Tenth Star as if to guide his path.

The Naga still await his return.

COBRA'S CHILDREN

The other bloodlines are slowly dying as well, and where the eggbeds had been shallow, now they are all but empty. The Cobra pray they can find a way to reverse the spell, but they fear the worst.

Perhaps the Atman would have decreed that the race of Naga die, even without the Spell of Mists, but certainly, the spell has sealed the fate of the Naga people.

Soon, there will be no more Naga, at all.





Chapter Three



Character



CAN I LEARN A NAGA SCHOOL?

A lot of players are probably asking themselves how their samurai can learn the Great Lessons (Techniques) of the Naga Schools. The answer is not an easy one.

The Naga Schools are ancient, and very different from the training of a Rokugani dojo. They are based upon a different philosophy, a different language, and an entirely different culture. Yet the bridges between the two are not uncrossable - with time.

But when the Naga first awoken in the Emerald Empire, they have no love for the "invading" humans.

They don't see them as allies, much less trusted friends. Ask yourself, "Would any self-respecting sensei teach their great-grandfather's secret techniques to a big snake?"

Probably not.

And that's just how the Naga think of humans.

If a Bushi character wishes to purchase the "Multiple Schools" Advantage, and attempt to convince the Qamar to accept him into the Naga Warrior or Scout school, that's up to the Gamemaster. If a player wants his samurai to begin play with a Naga School, we recommend that the GM say "No!" But, if you've got a player with a *really* good story, here's how we recommend you do it:

- 1) Buy the Allies (Naga) Advantage. Make it a BIG Ally (4 Points).

(Continued)

Chapter Three: Character

In this chapter, you will find new creation rules for Naga characters, including new Advantages, Disadvantages, Skills, and Great Lessons, the Naga Equivalent of samurai Techniques. At the end of the chapter are a set of Heritage and Fortune Tables, designed to be used in conjunction with the material here. Abomination characters are asked to roll on them as part of their standard character creation, while others may purchase the right to roll on the Heritage Table or Fortune Table before play.

In Rokugan, just before the start of the Scorpion Clan Coup, there were few Naga awake in the lands. Those who had awakened knew only that they were alone in a strange new world - a world whose mountains remained familiar, but whose people were hostile and strange. Naga interactions with humans were difficult due to cultural and language barriers, and Naga were often mistaken for kami, or even Oni. Reactions varied - from abject terror to devoted worship, and everything in between. Even after the Clan Wars, Naga will be isolated from society, and only through the aid of Mirumoto Daini will they begin to understand the bizarre behavior of their human comrades.

A beginning Naga character might have many reasons for joining a human party. Naga Scouts, for instance, would be interested in discovering all they could about this new race in order to pass the information along to the rest of their people. Warriors might study the mannerisms and fighting styles of their human neighbors, hoping to devise ways to counter them. And the religious beliefs and rituals of Rokugan's shugenja would draw the Vedic from their shrouded groves, where the kami and the Fortunes are not well known.

Character Creation

There are several distinct differences between making a samurai character for the *Legend of the Five Rings RPG* and making a Naga character for the same campaign.

SAMURAI SCHOOLS & TECHNIQUES

Naga cannot learn any of the Schools of Rokugan - samurai, shugenja, or otherwise. Most samurai Techniques are derived from a character's connection with the mystic, making him something more than human (represented by his Insight and current School Rank). Naga have a similar connection with the Akasha, but there is little comparison available between the two; samurai embark on a *personal* quest toward enlightenment, while Naga proceed through life as a *community*.

ROKUGANI MAGIC VS. PEARL MAGIC

Shugenja have little more in common with Jakla (pearl-casters). Where the former are religious in nature, and draw their power from the Elements swirling all around them, Naga Jakla have little time for ceremony or faith, deriving their power from the inherent magic contained within their precious pearl beds. As such, Naga characters are incapable of understanding the spells of Rokugan. Even after character creation, Naga cannot learn or cast any Rokugani spells, though they can operate simple magical items which are merely activated (such as triggered *nemuranai*, or Agasha Mitsugusuri).

Still, magical development tends to follow certain patterns. The Pearl Effects available to Naga Jakla are similar in theme and function to Rokugani Spells (using the same mechanical template), but are very different in application and practice. Please see pages 37-38 and 62-64 for more on Naga Jakla and their pearls.

HONOR AND CASTE RANK

Naga do not adhere to the Code of Bushido, and therefore have no concept of Honor. They do have a very dedicated ideal of duty - duty to their race, their home, and their people. A Naga character begins with a starting Honor of 0, with 0 boxes, which never changes for the duration of their lifespan. No action or event may affect this value throughout the campaign.



Naga do not have a Glory Rank, being unconcerned with reputation or fame. Instead, they have a Caste Rank, which denotes their place within Naga society. (Note that it is possible for a Naga of seemingly lower status – such as a Scout – to have a higher Caste Rank than another of presumably higher status; this is the nature of Naga society, which is based on independent merit, not the *perception* of such, as in Rokugani culture). A Naga's Caste Rank begins at a value of 0 to 4.5, derived by adding the values gained from their Bloodline and Great Lesson (discussed later in this chapter), and represents the following roles or titles in Naga society:

AKASHA, THE VOID RING

Naga characters do not have a Void Ring. This Ring, and all its properties, is replaced by the "Akasha," representing the Naga's link to the Great Consciousness of the Naga people. Akasha Points may be spent as if they were Void Points, and may be regained through rest, the Pearl Carving Skill (see the description later in this chapter), or the Meditation Skill. Tea Ceremony has no effect on Akasha, as it is exclusively devoted to Shintao and Rokugani worshiping practices.

Striving for Atman

In addition to their earthly pursuits, all Naga live according to a set of ethics (described in the sidebars on pages 22 to 25). These differ markedly from the Rokugani Tao, and represent the proper lifestyle a Naga must assume if they wish to become fully one with the Atman, merging with the Akasha forever. This stage of development is fervently sought by all Naga, even though none have been confirmed to ascend in this manner since well before the First Burning of the Lands.

To a player character, this universal goal is represented by the Akasha Ring. The higher the Ring, the closer to Atman the Naga character is. Should the PC ever reach a Rank of 10 in his Akasha Ring, and achieve Rank 5 in their Great Lesson, they will transcend the physical plane of existence at the end of their life, and join the Atman, becoming a legend among the Naga community. (Note that actions taken by the PC from the point at which they acquire these Traits to their death can reduce either attribute, thus condemning the character to another lifetime; PCs interested in achieving this lofty goal should be ever-conscious of their behavior and actions, lest they fall from enlightened grace).

DISCIPLINE

Naga do not have Insight. Instead, they have Discipline, which represents their physical devotion to the ethics of Atman. (In this way, Discipline is the physical counterpart to Akasha.)

Discipline is acquired and totaled in the same manner, and with the same restrictions, as Insight. When a Naga character achieves enough Discipline to advance in his Great Lesson, he must return home and spend a great deal of time with his Vedic, meditating on the Akasha until it chooses to give him the knowledge (read: Lessons) of the next Rank. Sometimes, the

CAN I LEARN A NAGA SCHOOL?

(CONTINUED)

2) The character *must* purchase the Different School Advantage. Further, they must renounce all other allegiances, becoming (effectively) a Clan Ronin. They also earn the Black Sheep Disadvantage (earning them no extra points), to reflect that the samurai has turned his back on his house and his culture.

3) Lastly, the Insight requirements for each School Rank are increased by 10. (It's harder for a samurai to understand and adopt the strange ways of the Naga, and thus, to master their Great Lessons.)

That's pretty expensive, and pretty debilitating. Still, it is possible – with a lot of work from your player, and a really, really good write-up for the character. However, the GM has the final say. If he doesn't want any cross-pollination between samurai and Naga, sorry, you're out of luck.

Whenever a samurai wants to cross the boundary and earn Naga Skills or Lessons, there should be an entertaining and not too implausible story to go along with it. You can't have information and Skills from the Naga just because you want them.

You've got to get Naga Skills the old-fashioned way, samurai.

You have to shed your skin.

NAGA RANKS:

Rank 10: The Qatol (currently vacant).

Rank 8-9: The Dashmar and Qamar.

Rank 7-8: Bloodline Champions (Shahadet, Shashakar, and the Lord Vedics of the Bright and Pale Eyes).

Rank 6-7: The Isha, the Taquar, and the Malekish. Military generals, provincial governors, focal religious figures and great minds.

Rank 5-6: The Sysh, the Shazaar, and the Shalasha. Minor lords and vassals.

Rank 4-5: The Ramash, the Qarash, and the Eshru. Mid-level military lords and political administrators.

Rank 2-4: The Balash and the Shagara. Those without special recognition (yet). Most starting player characters.

Rank 1-2: Mundane workers and favored servants.

Rank 0-1: Untouchables and lower-caste servants.

Rank 0: Abominations and Outcasts.

A PC may begin the game at a higher Caste Rank than their Bloodline and Great Lesson allot, at the following costs:

Raising your Caste Rank by 1 Rank costs 4 CP (or 2 CP for 5 boxes).

Lowering your Caste Rank by 1 Rank grants 2 additional CP for character design (or 1 for 5 boxes).

A PC may not increase or lower their starting Caste Rank by more than one full Rank in either direction.



MISCELLANEOUS RULES FOR NAGA

Naga are different from samurai in many ways. Several of the differences are illustrated mechanically here.

Animals (Horses): Naga and animals (particularly horses) do not get along. Most animals see the Naga as natural predators, and bolt at the first opportunity. Even well-trained mounts, hunting dogs, and carrier birds are unsettled near the snake-men.

When animals and Naga are near one another, they must make Contested Earth rolls. If the Naga wins, the animal runs in fear. If the animal wins, it stands its ground. If neither win, the animal is at -2 dice for all Actions until the conditions change (e.g. additional Naga arrive, or the Naga does something that might startle the beast).

Animals and horses with training may add their Skill dice to the Contest (rolled but not kept).

Female Naga: No roll is required to swap their tail for legs, but the ritual process does take 5 hours. All Skills involving balance or movement must be learned twice - once with the tail and once with legs. Only the appropriate Skill may be used at any time ("Legs" while standing, and "Tail" when slithering.)

(Continued)

Akasha is not satisfied that the Naga has learned what is necessary to advance, and may demand that the character perform quests or rituals, or seek some great knowledge in order to prove their worth. In this way, the Akasha can be as demanding a master as a samurai's Daimyo.

Parallel Naga Skills

Many of the common Skills learned by samurai have an equivalent in Naga society. These Skills operate as printed in previous RPG books, with the exception that - when purchased by a Naga - they refer to Naga culture, not the feudal samurai structure of Rokugan. These Skills include, but are not limited to:

Archery (Naga bowmanship is very different from that taught to most samurai, and is based on Agility rather than Reflexes), Armorer, Calligraphy and Cipher (with the Naga language, an Arabesque script rather than the *kanji* of Rokugan), Dance, Etiquette, History, Law, Painting, Poetry (Naga verse is fluid and long, rather than the complex-but-brief *haiku* and *waka* of the samurai), Theology, and Yarijutsu (referring to the Naga Yari, rather than the samurai techniques).

There are also four parallel Skills available to Naga characters which have the same mechanics as their Rokugani counterparts, but have been renamed for clarity of theme. These are:

Rokugani Skill	Naga Skill
Iaijutsu	Single Strike
Kenjutsu	Swordsmanship
Shintao	Moksha *
Tea Ceremony	Pearl Carving *

* These Skills are further defined later in this chapter.

Banned Character Options

Naga characters, no matter what Bloodline, have certain restrictions in place at character creation. The following options may not be purchased when a Naga character is designed. They may be chosen during play, assuming the Naga is able to find a teacher willing to instruct them, and they are able to dedicate the requisite time to practice and study. Even so, the cost during play for these options is double that for Rokugani characters, representing the difficulty Naga have learning these foreign concepts.

SKILLS

Animal Husbandry (horses and most other non-reptiles react violently to the Naga - see the sidebar to the left for more information), Artisan, Courtier, Craft (Mitsugusuri and Tattooing), Falconry, Horse Archery, Horsemanship (males only; female Naga may learn this Skill normally, having legs and training with a single mount to overcome the beast's innate fear of the Naga), Manipulation, Mimic, Ninjutsu, and Tea Ceremony.

ADVANTAGES

Balance, Bland, Blood of Osano-Wo, Chosen by the Oracles, Death Trance, Different School, Ear of the Emperor, Elemental Attunement, Gentry, Imperial Spouse, and Innate Ability.

Multiple Schools

One special case for Naga Warlords (bushi) occurs when they leave their Great Lesson behind in favor of the path of the samurai. Such a Naga must purchase the Advantage: Multiple Schools during play (at a cost of 10 Experience Points), and forsake all benefits of future training with his own Great Lesson. From that point on, they learn the Techniques of their chosen samurai School only, and will never have the option of returning to their Naga training (the Akasha is a harsh mistress who dislikes infidelity).

The player of such a Naga character must also provide the Gamemaster will ample reasoning for the shift in his character's career. Few Naga have ever been bold enough to leave their own society behind for such an endeavor, and even fewer have convinced a Rokugani sensei to take them on.

Finally, this option may only be taken once in a Naga's career. Once they have found a sensei and satisfied the initial requirements for entry into their new School, they gain its first Rank Technique and starting Trait bonus. Like the Multiple Schools Advantage, a character may only gain this Trait bonus twice (once for their Naga Lesson, and again for the new Rokugani School).

DISADVANTAGES

Curse of the Kami, Deathseeker, Dishonored, Enlightened Madness, Forgotten, Forsaken, Gaijin Name, Idealistic, Momoku, Moto Curse, Never Sat on a Horse, Shadowlands Taint, and the Yogo Curse.

New Skills

At the end of each Skill description is a caste designation (High, Bugei, Merchant, or Low). This is to be used if a Rokugani learns the Skill. The Naga, of course, have no concept of such things; their culture is based on breed and bloodline, not on birthright or glory.

ASTRONOMY (PERCEPTION)

This Skill is derived from the Naga's attentive love of the Celestial Heavens. All Naga are raised to respect the stars in the night sky as distant cousins, who are always watching from their

divine plane far above. They are also thought to be part of the Akasha, observing each Naga's spiritual progress toward Atman.

Thus, watching the skies has become as much a pleasurable pastime as a source of religious verification to the Naga. Entire branches of scholarly thought are devoted to interpreting the myriad things seen in the heavens, and the most advanced methods available are applied to the effort. These include such devices as rudimentary lenses (mainly imported from the wastes beyond the Ivory Kingdoms), near-precise maps, and pincer-like measuring devices.

Note that this Skill differs from Astrology in that it is a direct source and application of information *first*, and an interpretation of such *second*. Astrology deals primarily with discerning omens and divining the future, while Astronomy is principally concerned with documenting the paths and patterns of the stars and planets visible by the Naga. Astronomy is by far the more literal and fact-based of the two Skills, and less prone to subjective opinion. This reduces its appeal to most "classically-minded" Rokugani.

This is a High Skill for Rokugani.

CONCEAL (AWARENESS)

This Skill can only be used in a natural environment, such as forest, mountains, or underwater. It allows the Naga to hide objects or other people within natural surroundings, using



MISCELLANEOUS RULES FOR NAGA (CONTINUED)

High Strike: First presented in *Clan War* (Naga Army Expansion, page 22), this is the Naga ability to coil their massive tail beneath them, heaving their bulk above an obstacle so that they can attack (or see) beyond it.

The maximum height a Naga may attack over is equal to 2/3 of its total length. For instance, Greensnakes (who average 10-15 feet) could see over obstacles 6-10 feet high, while some Constrictors (averaging 25-30 feet) could rise to 20 feet above the ground.

Glancing over such obstacles requires one Action, but no roll. Attacking, however, requires two Raises if attempted on the first Turn the Naga has risen. Each Turn thereafter, the Naga may attack from their lofty position without penalty, but must also make a Strength check vs. a TN of 5 (+5 per Turn he remains coiled).

Working Together: Due to the Akasha, Naga work far more efficiently together than humans do; their linked minds favor unison over disharmony. Instead of choosing a primary character, all Naga make the Action roll; the highest total roll is used. This roll is unmodified by the number of Naga present.



ABOMINATIONS

Abominations are Naga outcasts, separated from Naga civilization due to deformities and mutations suffered in the egg. These mutations vary widely, and may become beneficial to the abomination at times, but they are always a burden.

Most abominations are taken into the Shinomen Forest, where they are left to fend for themselves.

Many with severe or hindering mutations do not survive; many more grow into haggard and angry adults, resentful of their brethren for leaving them alone. A treasured few have proven themselves worthy of reintegration into the Naga culture, and are welcomed back. Though they are never treated with the same respect as pure-born Naga, they rejoin the Akasha, where they might find their next life more fulfilling.

Players should *always* choose whether their character is an abomination.

The mechanics in this chapter have been designed to allow a player to create whatever character he desires, with as few limitations as possible.

Should a player wish to pay the CP to become an abomination, he is accepting the social realities of their plight. He is on his own, without the guidance of his cousins. But he has strengths to draw from; those choosing to gain CP to play less fortunate abominations have a harsh road ahead of them indeed...

the terrain as cover to obscure their location. Tracks may also be hidden using this Skill, though time and effort are required if the character with the Skill is also concealing his own trail.

Use of this Skill is always Contested. The total rolled by the character using the Conceal Skill becomes the TN for others to discover what he has hidden, or successfully follow the tracks he has obscured. This TN is reduced by 5 for those with Way of the Land in the area.

This is a Bugei Skill For Rokugani.

MOKSHA (AKASHA)

This Skill is the Naga equivalent of Shintao, and reflects a Naga's dedication to duty and the tenets of their race. It represents a Naga's understanding of the fundamental beliefs and ethics of their Bloodline, and the Akasha as a whole. Naga who take this Skill are extremely loyal to the Naga race, and pursue their life knowing that they are a small part of a greater whole. Unlike Shintao, Naga Traits may progress beyond Rank 5 without this Skill.

This Skill may not be purchased by non-Naga characters.

NAGA LANGUAGE (INTELLIGENCE)

Naga do not begin with the Skill to speak Rokugani, and must purchase the appropriate Skill to learn the language of humans (see Rokugani Language, later in this chapter). But all Naga can speak Nagash, a combination of sibilant

sounds and long, meaningful pauses, coupled with soft motions of the face.

With a skill of 1 in Nagash, a character may converse with other Naga in simple words and phrases. With a 3, the Naga is considered fluent in their own language, and can converse freely. At Rank 5, a Naga has mastered its language, and is capable of showing off his study and huge vocabulary with ease.

Naga begin the game with Rank 3 in this Skill, which does not add to their Discipline. They may purchase Ranks 4 and 5 during character creation or later in the game at the normal costs.

It is extremely difficult for humans to learn this Skill. They must pay twice the normal cost (in CP at the start of the game or EP later on) to acquire it.

This is a High Skill for Rokugani.

NEW LORES (INTELLIGENCE)

There are several fields of knowledge not commonly available to Rokugani that Naga may be familiar with at the start of the game. These include Naga Civilization, Naga Myth, Naga Ruins, Naga Religion, and Pearl Magic. All rules for standard Lore Skills apply to these specializations.

Rokugani may learn these Skills, but are required to pay twice the normal cost (in CP at the start of the game or EP later on).

These are High Skills for Rokugani.

A final new lore, Rokugani Civilization, is required for Naga to understand humans and



their ways. It is used whenever a Naga seeks to puzzle out some aspect of Rokugani culture. The Rokugani need not purchase this skill; for them, it is considered default.

PEARL CARVING (AKASHA)

The Naga know how to turn a simple pearl into a work of tremendous beauty. More than simply working the pearl with tools and carving knives, the Naga use a series of prayers and meditations to help the pearl attain the form they desire. This Skill works as the Tea Ceremony does for humans, taking one half hour (and requiring a non-enchanted pearl). When performing the ceremony, the Naga may invite any other Naga he (or she) wishes to participate. Each participant then enters a ritual trance, touching the mists of the Akasha and speaking with the spirit of the pearl. The artist carving the pearl may then make a Simple Akasha + Pearl Carving roll; if he is successful, all Naga involved (up to the performer's Skill Rank) regain a single spent Akasha Point (not to increase their Akasha Points beyond their Akasha Ring).

This is a High Skill for Rokugani. Humans gain no benefits from its use, however.

ROKUGANI LANGUAGE (INTELLIGENCE)

One difficulty that all awakening Naga face is learning the language of humans. Humans chitter, where Naga hiss. Humans chirp, where the more civilized tongue uses long syllables and open vowel sounds.

With a skill of 1 in the Rokugani tongue, a Naga may converse with humans in simple words and phrases ("Where are the horses?"). With a 3, the Naga is fluent in the language of humans, and may converse freely ("Excuse me, honorable Kakita-sama, but where are the stables located?"). At Rank 5, a Naga has mastered the human language, and is capable of showing off his study and huge vocabulary with ease ("Excuse my interruption, oh exquisite maiden of the lineage of the Kakita daimyo, but I am in turmoil over the distressing loss of my equine. Could you, with all eloquence, assist me in locating the magistrate?").

Rokugani start the game with Rank 3 in this Skill, which does not add to their Insight. They may purchase Ranks 4 and 5 during character creation or later in the game at the normal costs.

Naga do not begin with this Skill, and must purchase it to speak with humans. It is extremely

difficult for Naga to learn this Skill; they must pay twice the normal cost (in CP at the start of the game or EP later on) to acquire it.

This is a High Skill for Rokugani.

New Advantages

The following Advantages may only be purchased by Naga characters. Except where noted, these are not Abominations.

ABOMINATION (5 POINTS)

There are two ways to design a Naga abomination, one which results in advantageous mutations - such as natural weaponry, keen eyesight, and thermal vision - and another which hinders the character (see Disadvantages, later in this chapter). Purchasing this Advantage grants the character one roll on the Positive Abomination Table (see page 73).

Note that some of the beneficial abomination abilities are particularly effective, and cost additional CP. These are noted on the Positive Abomination Table. Characters may forfeit these abilities to save the requisite CP, and roll again on the table until they come up with something they can afford.

ACUTE SMELL (3 POINTS)

The character a sharper sense of smell than is natural, even for a Naga. They gain 2 dice (rolled, but not kept) for all their Perception-based Skill checks involving their sense of smell, including hunting, tracking, fishing, etc. The target of their check must be within 50 yards per Rank of the character's Perception, or have traveled over the ground that they are surveying within the last twenty-four hours. Rains, excessive foot-traffic through the area, and other factors may raise the TN for such Skill checks, at the GM's discretion.

AMPHIBIOUS (3 POINTS, 2 FOR CHAMELEONS)

The Amphibious Advantage allows a character to remain submerged within a body of water. The character derives the oxygen he needs from the water, and does not need to breathe air while he is submerged.

For this purpose, gills line the neck and upper torso of a character who takes this Advantage. Generally, gills are considered an abomination ability by the Naga (except for Chameleons), who





THE NAAR TEBAN

Abomination characters are assumed to be of one of the standard Bloodlines, left alone among the vales of the Shinomen, when they choose the Abomination Advantage or Disadvantage.

This option is for players who wish to explore more dangerous territory, or raise the power scale of their L5R game. Gamemasters be warned – the Naar Teban are powerful, moreso than nearly any other character in the game, and they present serious and lethal threats to the rest of the party, regardless of the setting and story.

A few Naga abominations have ventured beyond the northern mountains or the Ivory Kingdoms to the west. Beyond, there is an endless sea of dunes, blistered sand left over from a brutal magical apocalypse nearly a thousand years ago.

There is still some magic left in the sands, great power hidden in silent pockets and lost tombs, waiting to be discovered. This magic affects Naga in strange and terrible ways, perverting their bodies and casting nightmarish visions through them and into the Akasha.

Naga who remain near the Burning Sands for too long fall into a deep slumber, their bodies slipping beneath the dunes for several days. During this time, their screams can be heard for hundreds of miles through the Akasha.

(Continued)

look unfavorably on those who have been born with them. Hiding such a mutation from other Naga is difficult, but not impossible. If a character is found to have them, he loses 1 Caste Rank.

FERTILE (4 POINTS)

Since the days of the Great Sleep, fewer and fewer eggs are seen among the Naga, and their population is diminishing rapidly. Some believe that this is a temporary side-effect of the Great Sleep, but others say that the Naga have outlived their time, and are slowly being “weeded out” of the natural order. If the latter is true, then the lack of children may be the first sign of the Naga’s final decline.

Naga who can lay eggs are treated with far more respect than most. Similar to Social Position for Rokugani, a Naga with this Advantage gains 1 full Caste Rank if their condition is known among the other Naga. Also, fellow Naga will strive to keep the character out of harm’s way; Naga Warriors will seek to protect them and Vedics will bless them frequently.

Naga of the Constrictor Bloodline may not purchase this Advantage.

IMMUNE TO FEAR (3 POINTS)

Naga are raised within striking distance of the Shadowlands, and come in contact with the horrible menace of the blighted realms frequently, and from a young age. As such, many of them have developed a “thick skin” against such monstrosities. With this advantage, the Naga may resist the fearful presence of Shadowlands creatures, and is no longer subject to Fear Effects.

Note that this is the Naga equivalent of the Death Trance Advantage. Since Naga have no concept of honor or *chi*, they cannot purchase the Death Trance Advantage. This option replaces it.

PEARL JIVA (5 POINTS PER RANK WITH ABILITY)

Some Naga are raised in the Cobra pearl bed egg-pits, but do not become Jakla. Many of these retain a slight bit of magical prowess, enough to perform rudimentary attacks with the power of a pearl. A Naga with this Advantage may destroy a pearl to perform a Ranged Attack at up to 50 yards.

Resolve this like an Archery Attack (using Agility instead of Reflexes), except that Strength does not affect the potency of the attack. The number of dice rolled and kept for the Damage of

the Attack is based on the Rank of the pearl used (which may not exceed the character’s School Rank with the Advantage). If a character uses a pearl of higher Rank, the effect is reduced to the value he is capable of.

Thus, a character with this Advantage at Rank 2, destroying a Rank 3 pearl, would only have a Damage value of 2k2.

Only one pearl may be used for such an Attack per Action.

Characters purchasing this Advantage gain one Rank 1 pearl at the start of the game. They must find any other pearls they wish to use as “ammunition” during play. Note that pearls of Rank 3, 4, and 5 are near-impossible to find in the wild, and difficult to procure from the Cobra Jakla protecting them. No pearl above Rank 5 has ever been found. For more on the properties and uses of pearls, please see pages 38 and 62-64.

PREHENSILE TAIL (2 POINTS)

Though tails are a frequent source of mutation, some grow to be strong and efficient limbs as well. Characters with this Advantage may use their tail as a fifth limb, picking objects of reasonable weight (no more than five times the character’s Strength in pounds) or manipulating simple tools, levers, pulleys, etc.

Gamemasters are within their rights asking for Dexterity, Strength, or Reflexes rolls if the character attempts something complicated or strenuous with his tail. TNs should be applied as necessary (pushing a poorly-balanced item from the edge of a table might be simple enough for a Strength + Hand-to-Hand check of 5 to succeed, while pilfering a fan from the Emerald Magistrate’s obi might result in a Dexterity + Sleight of Hand check of 30 or more).

VENOM (7 POINTS PER RANK)

No character may purchase more than 3 Ranks in this Advantage, nor may they purchase more than one type of Venom.

Some Naga are able to spit, inject, or spread venom upon their opponents, causing a variety of powerful effects. The precise result of such an Attack is determined by the type of Venom chosen, the Ranks purchased in this Advantage, and the character’s Ranks in an associated Ring (see the table on the next page for more).

Venom

Acid
Blinding Mist
Blood Thickener
Consuming Flame
Contact Poison
Nerve Toxin

Ring Used

Water
Air
Earth
Fire
Earth
Air

Attacking Using Venom

Making an Attack with Venom requires an Agility + Hand-to-Hand check against the opponent's TN to be Hit, with 2 Raises. Attacking within close quarters (inches) eliminates the need for the Raises, so that the TN to be Hit is unmodified.

Additional Raises beyond those required to hit with a Venom Attack may be used to strike a certain location, but do not affect damage in any way.

Venom Damage Values

The Damage Value for each type of Venom is determined by rolling the Venom's Rank (as purchased) + its associate Ring, and keeping a number equal to the Venom's Rank. For instance, a character attacking with Rank 3 Contact Poison and has an Earth Ring of 4 would roll 7k3 Damage when his Venom Attack is successful.

Special Effects

Each type of venom has a specific effect, described in the following paragraphs:

Acid: The Naga regurgitates acidic bile, which he spits upon his enemies. The Damage Value is applied directly to the location hit, and affects the target's Wound Levels normally.

Blinding Mist: The Naga exhales a cloud of vapor toward the target, which burns all bodily orifices. The victim must overcome the Damage Value, rolling and keeping his Earth in dice, or be blinded for a number of Turns equal to the amount by which he missed the Damage Value. If the target is blinded for more than ten Turns, the effect is permanent.

Blood Thickener: The Naga injects his Venom into the target's bloodstream through his incisors. The venom thickens the blood, causing clots and possible paralysis. The Damage Value of this Venom is applied directly. If the victim takes more than three times his Earth in Wounds, he suffers paralysis

for a number of Turns equal to the Damage dice rolled. If he takes more than six times his Earth in Wounds, the victim suffers a stroke, and he loses 2 Ranks in a random Trait.

Consuming Flame: This is a special Venom, available only to the *Naar Teban* of the Burning Sands. It is emitted from a special lung-like organ, and blown upon the target. When it touches organic tissue (including human skin), it begins dissolving it, using the matter as a fuel source. The victim must roll his Earth in dice to overcome the Damage Value. Success reduces the Damage Value by the difference between the rolled total and the Damage Value. Additionally, a success results in no applied Damage for the Turn. Failure



THE NAAR TEBAN (CONTINUED)

When they burst forth again from the dunes, these Naga are changed. Their skin takes on a golden hue and their scales glisten like jewels. They are stronger, faster, and more agile than they were, and gain new and frightening abilities, including the Consuming Flame attack (see page 57). Their tails (if they had tails) are replaced by long and powerful legs, which can propel them high into the air over short distances, or upon their enemies.

But there is a price for such power. The original Naga soul trapped within the Naar Teban's body is tortured in madness and pain, unable to reconcile its new form and its link to the Akasha. Many of these "Fire Salamanders" come to see the Akasha as the source of their pain, and return to Rokugan to hunt down their invisible "adversary."

The pure-born Naga of Rokugan sense the blooming madness and pain of these pitiable creatures through the Akasha. It is like an open sore within the communal mind, bleeding upon everything that senses it. With the Naar Teban so far away, the pain is rarely more than a dull ache, but those that return magnify the sensation. As they enter the Empire, their howling madness rattles through the minds of all Naga within 2 miles until they are silenced.

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THE NAAR TEBAN (CONTINUED)

Characters who choose to play Naar Teban gain the following benefits.

They receive an additional 16 CP for Skills, Advantages, Disadvantages, and Past Lives. The normal character creation restrictions still apply.

They may leap up or forward a number of feet equal to 4 times their Strength Trait. This is considered an Action; they must Raise two times to Attack while leaping, but roll an additional two dice for Damage if they are successful. GMs should devise TNs for difficult or complicated uses of this ability (such as launching onto a high balcony). Also, remember the falling rules if they fail...

Naar Teban have claws which they can use to Attack with. These are natural weapons, and use the Hand-to-Hand Skill when rolling to hit. Their Damage Value is 1k2.

The Fire Salamanders automatically have the Consuming Flame Venom for free (see page 57).

(Continued)

adds an equal amount to the Damage Value, and applies Damage for the Turn. The cycle continues until the Damage Value is reduced below 0 (at which time the fire burns itself out), or the victim dies, his bones fused in place by the intensity of the heat. Skeletons of such victims are occasionally discovered among the ruins of old Naga cities at the base of the Spine of the World Mountains, where early Scouts roamed. They remain standing as they died, reminders of the power of the sands.

Contact Poison: The Naga either emits a mist or exudes a gel (player's choice) which seeps through the pores of the victim upon contact. Each day thereafter, the victim must roll his Earth in dice against the Damage Value generated by the Naga. Success reduces the Damage Value of the poison by the difference between the TN and the rolled total, and results in no applied Damage for that day. Failure adds the same amount to the Damage Value (and applies the Damage to the victim). The cycle continues until the poison's Damage Value is reduced below 0 or the victim dies a slow, agonizing death.

Note that the target's Void may not be affected by this Venom.

Nerve Toxin: This venom is not inherently deadly. It must be injected into the victim's system or sprayed upon their eyes, mouth, or ears (requiring three Raises instead of the standard two). No (standard) physical damage is applied using this Venom. Instead, for every ten points in Damage the Venom applies to the target, a random Trait is reduced by one. A single Trait may be affected by the Venom multiple times during a single Attack, if the Damage Value is high enough and the Trait is rolled again (e.g. a Damage Value of 20 could result in the victim losing 2 Ranks of Willpower). Should any Trait be reduced to 0 by way of this Attack, the victim falls unconscious and permanently loses two Ranks in the Trait that fell below 0. Should this permanently reduce the Trait to 0 or less, the character dies.

Should the character survive, Traits that were not lost permanently return to the victim at the rate of one Rank per day.

Akasha and Void may not be affected by this Venom.

XENOPHOBIC (3 POINTS)

This is a specialized version of the Phobia Disadvantage from the L5R rulebook. The

character is mistrustful of non-Naga, and will go to great lengths to avoid them. He may even become irrational when around them for too long, lashing out or going into deep depression if he cannot escape their presence.

When the Naga character enters combat with beings of another race (humans, Nezumi, goblins, etc.), he gains one die (rolled, but not kept) for all attacks against them. This benefit does not apply to Damage Values, or any other aspect of combat. Also, Naga who take this Advantage lose one rolled die during all social interactions with other Naga.

New Disadvantages

ABOMINATION (5 POINTS)

Where some abominations are born with mutations that can benefit them under certain circumstances, others are not so fortunate. Most abominations suffer from horrible distortions of the natural Naga form, possibly caused by their parent's exposure to pearl magics, or the pearls used in the egg-pits. These mutations range from mild facial or torso elongation, scales on their faces or hands, and human-colored or albino skin, to more severe forms of mutation, including serpentine eyes, fins, useless gills, or webbed hands.

This Disadvantage represents the negative aspects seen among abominations. Taking this Disadvantage grants the character 5 additional CP to spend at creation, at the cost of one roll on the Negative Abomination Table (see page 72). The cost of the Disadvantage is static, and does not increase or decrease regardless of the Point gain listed on the table for the abomination trait acquired.

BAD SIGHT (2 POINTS)

A common ailment among Naga is poor eyesight, from a mild cataract condition to full and permanent blindness. With this Disadvantage, the player character's sight is impaired, and he rolls two fewer dice for all sight-based Perception checks during play.

WATERSNAKE (4 POINTS)

This Naga is less able to survive above water than most of his kin. He must return to the water every 24 hours, or be completely immersed in water (such as a cool bath) for at least an hour per

day. Otherwise, all his TNs are increased by 5 until he fulfills this requirement. Note that the character must be *fully* immersed for the full hour once per day to ignore this penalty.



The Naga bloodlines each have certain benefits and drawbacks, which are responsible for their roles within Naga culture. Where the Asp are warlike, the gentle Greensnake are diplomats and scouts. The cunning Cobra, the mighty Constrictor, and even the stealthy Chameleon each have their own distinct abilities and strengths. Is your Naga character an Asp? A Cobra? A Constrictor? Choose your Bloodline well, for it will certainly affect your character concept - and it is immutable as the blood in your serpent veins.

Asp

The warlike Asp are the soldiers and guardians of the Naga people. Long ago, during the Bloodland Wars, the Asp nearly conquered the other Naga bloodlines, raising a military dictatorship above all the cities of the Naga. They were stopped only by the direct intervention of the Qatol, the Naga's greatest hero, and by the defensive Pearl Effects of the Cobra.

The Asp still believe that - had the Cobra's magic had not interfered - their coup would have been successful. In many ways, they are still arrogant and aggressive, but their loyalty to the Naga people is unquestioned. The Asp make up the body of the Naga armies, and they are most commonly Naga Warriors - the generals and lieutenants in charge of leadership of the armies of the Naga.

Asp are slightly stronger and more bulky than the Cobra, being some 15-20 feet in length and 600 to 800 pounds in weight. They are one of the two medium-sized Naga bloodlines (together with the Cobra).

Starting Caste Rank: 1, plus 5 boxes

Benefit: Wounds for the Asp are figured as if their Earth Ring is one higher.

Bloodline Ability: Choose any Venom (except Consuming Flame) at Rank 1.

Chameleon

The Chameleon are one of two Naga bloodlines which are commonly scouts, as their ability to hide and remain unseen is well known throughout the Naga civilization. Chameleon Naga are slightly longer than Greensnakes, ranging from 13-17 feet in total length, and their bodies are bulkier in proportion (they weigh between 520 and 680 pounds). Chameleon can alter their body's coloring to an extent, allowing them to blend in with their surroundings (see their Bloodline Ability, below).

Starting Caste Rank: 1.0

Benefit: Add their School Rank in dice (rolled, but not kept) to Stealth rolls. A Chameleon character loses this benefit if they take a mutation that affects their skin color.

Bloodline Ability: Choose either the Creature Awareness Inner Gift (see the sidebar on page 66), or the Animal Speech Inner Gift (see *The Way of the Crane*, page 52). In either case, this ability is limited only to aquatic animals, such as sharks, dolphins, and other deep-sea fish.

Note: Though most Chameleon are naturally aquatic in nature, only those characters who choose the Amphibious or Watersnake options (see New Advantages and Disadvantages, earlier in the chapter) and pay or gain the appropriate CP for them, have the associated abilities or drawbacks.

Cobra

The Cobra are the most mysterious bloodline of the Naga. Their magic, strange and unattainable, fascinates the shugenja of the Empire. They are only recently awakened from the Great Sleep, and - as such - are the least familiar with the customs of Rokugan's samurai.



THE NAAR TEBAN

(CONTINUED)

There are drawbacks to being a Fire Salamander as well:

No Fire Salamander may have or use Naga Bloodline Benefits or Abilities, nor Great Lesson Benefits or Techniques.

As long as the Naar Teban remains in Rokugan, he will be attacked by Naga daily. They seek not to eradicate him out, but to eradicate him. The GM should frequently throw large numbers of combat-ready Asp, Scouts, and Jakla at the Naar Teban (and all those who travel with him). Should this prove consistently ineffective, expect the Naga to enlist the aid of the Constrictors...

These Naga hunters will always know where the Naar Teban is, simply by the pain. These will act as a homing beacon, leading wave after wave of Naga to the Fire Salamander. Even typically non-combatant Naga may lash out at the PC, unsure how else to handle the throbbing emotions he is giving off.

Lastly, the Naar Teban is magically bound to the sands which recreated him. Every month he is away from them (i.e. anywhere in the Empire), he must roll his Earth in dice vs. a TN of 10 (+5 for every month he has succeeded) or lose 1 Earth Rank. This cycle continues until he dies or returns home.



It has been very difficult for the Cobra to awaken, as the Pearl Effect they cast upon the Naga over a thousand years ago still lingers with them. Perhaps this is because it was centered on their own city, Vyakarana; nevertheless, there are very few Cobras awake in Rokugan.

The Cobras work very closely with the Chameleon, who guard the precious pearl-beds, the source of most Cobras' magic. They are willful, and tend to be domineering over their smaller brethren, possibly to compensate for their ostracizing mutations.

Cobras are close in size to Asps, though their frames are generally less thick, and more agile. They measure 15-20 feet in length and 600 to 850 pounds in weight.

Starting Caste Rank: 0, plus 5 boxes

Benefit: +1 Awareness

Bloodline Ability: As a result of their close connection with the Akasha, Cobra may choose one Inner Gift for free at the start of the game (see the sidebar on page 66-67 and page 52 of *The Way of the Crane*).

Note: A Cobra character may choose no more than three Rokugani Skills at character creation, and none of those can be Ranked above 1. This includes the Rokugani Language Skill.

Constrictor

The Constrictor bloodline is said to be the oldest, although that claim is often disputed by the Asp, whose naturally superior sensibilities are offended by such claims.

What is certain is that the Constrictors have a closer connection to the Akasha than any of the other Bloodlines. They are typically the priests and religious leaders of the Naga people, and they are the ones who interpret and call forth the memories locked in the deepest recesses of the collective subconscious of the Akasha.

The Constrictors are also the largest and most physically massive of the Naga people, their strength belied only by their typically gentle demeanor. If they had the Asps' battle-prowess and violent temperament, they might be the rulers of all six of the Great Cities, but as they are the speakers for the Akasha, it has never been their way to destroy what could be studied instead. The emptiness of the Constrictor egg-beds is thus one of the greatest tragedies in Naga history. If the problem is not solved, the Constrictors may cease to exist altogether.

Members of this Bloodline are astronomers, Vedic priests, and law-givers. Their purpose in the





Naga Kingdoms is an essential one, as they interpret the stars and swirling pools of the Akasha for the rest, and have guided them through the most tragic decisions their race has ever faced. It was their recommendation to bury the race within the sleepless Akasha for the last thousand years, a decision they are still criticized for today.

Naga Constrictors are easily the largest examples of their kind, measuring 25-30 feet in length and weighing in at between 1000 and 1200 pounds. In desperate times of war, when the odds are stacked against the Naga, Constrictors can be called into service as living siege engines, though this radically conflicts with their moral stance, and is avoided if at all possible.

Starting Caste Rank: 1, plus 5 boxes

Benefit: +1 Strength

Bloodline Ability: Constrictors may attempt to grapple an enemy by coiling their huge tail around them. This requires an Agility + Hand-to-Hand Attack with 2 Raises. Success indicates that the target is wrapped within the coils and must Contest the Constrictor (Strength + Hand-to-Hand vs. the victim's Strength) to break free. The results of this Contest are as follows:

Constrictor Wins: The Constrictor rolls a number of dice equal to his Earth Ring, adding one die (rolled, but not kept) for every Turn the victim has been held (not including the first). The result is applied as Damage to the victim.

Both (or Neither) Win: No Damage is applied, but the victim fails to break free.

Victim Wins: The victim breaks free, and may flee with his next Action.

During this Contest, either combatant may ignore the Contest to Attack his opponent (resulting in an automatic Contest success for the other if they roll for it as their Action). Declaration of each combatant's Action should follow the standard Initiative rules (see page 105 of the L5R Rulebook). The Attack rolls are modified as follows:

Constrictor: While he is grappling a victim, the TN to hit the victim is 10, and cannot be modified by other Skills, Advantages, or Disadvantages.

Victim: While grappled, the victim's Attack dice are reduced by half (rounded down) to Attack the Constrictor.

Note that the Constrictor's Attack may only be performed on creatures horse-sized or smaller.

Size Modifiers: As a result of their bulk, Constrictors multiply their Earth by 3 for each

Wound Level, instead of 2. However, Constrictors roll two less dice when using Stealth or trying to evade an enemy. Also, their TN to be hit is reduced by 5 as they present an oversized target.

Note: Due to the lack of newborn Constrictors, no character of this Bloodline may be a youth (Ashamana), nor can they be of a very young age. Simply put, there are no young Constrictors anymore.

Greensnake

The Greensnakes are the smallest, most diplomatic Bloodline within the Naga civilization. They are often chosen to be Scouts because of their ability to negotiate and understand strangers, and frequently have abilities which reflect this. The Dashmar is almost always a Greensnake.

Of all the Bloodlines, Greensnakes most often venture outside the Shinomen Forest, and encounter non-Naga races. They have the most experience with those outside the Akasha. They alone have been charged with collecting and distributing knowledge and tactical information about humans, zokujin, and other foreign races.

Greensnakes are the smallest of the Naga, ranging from only 10-15 feet in total length, and weighing between 400 and 600 pounds. Their physiques are slender, and they can move quickly.

Starting Caste Rank: 2, plus 5 boxes

Benefit: +1 Intelligence or +1 Awareness (player's choice)

Bloodline Ability: From hatching, Greensnakes are introduced to the ways of others - especially the Rokugani, whom they interact with regularly on behalf of the Naga nation. As a result, each Greensnake character gains an additional 10 CP at creation, which they may spend exclusively on foreign Skills, Lores, and non-restricted Advantages and Disadvantages (as presented on the Banned list earlier in this chapter).

Further, for each adventure they complete in which they had prolonged contact with a foreign race, studied a foreign race, or were in a foreign locale, Greensnakes gain 1-3 bonus Experience Points, which they can use exclusively to purchase Skills and non-restricted options learned from that race (i.e., the character must have observed the skill in use sometime during the adventure).



NAGA SCOUT OUTFIT

Naga Scouts receive the following as their opening outfit (all of Average quality, save the bow, which is of Fine quality):

Bow (Yumi), 40 arrows of any type, Clothing (silk robes or gilded leather), Spear, (use Naginata stats), Hunting Knife (use Tanto stats), Traveling Pack, 4 (non-enchanted) pearls



Caste Rank Modifier: +1 Rank

Benefit: 1 Free Raise per School Rank using all Pearl Magic (see below)

SKILLS

Calligraphy (Naga), Lore (Pearl Magic), Meditation, Moksha, Pearl Carving, any 2 other Skills

BEGINNING PEARLS

3 pearls in each of the Jakla's two highest Rings (not counting Akasha), 2 pearls in his third highest Ring, and 1 in his lowest Ring. In the case of equal Rings (for instance, all of his starting Rings are Rank 2), the player assigns his pearls according to the model above. All starting Jakla begin the game with 9 pearls, spread between the four Rings as shown above (3-3-2-1).

Pearl Casting

Just as shugenja of Rokugan have three steps to their spell-casting process, Naga endure three stages of pearl-casting to make the mental image of their spell effect a reality. The Naga do not Sense, Commune, or Summon Elements while casting spells, however, instead drawing the power to fuel the effect from the Akasha itself. In this way, the Akasha replaces the *kami* and other spirits of the Rokugani pantheon.

Pearl-casting remains an equally difficult procedure for the Naga, who are drained (physically and spiritually) by the experience, just as their shugenja counterparts are by the release of elemental energies through their bodies. This side-effect of pearl-casting grows with the strength of the spell effect as well, just as with

Rokugani spells. Naga magic is similar in function, but very different in theme, as the following descriptions of their spell-casting process shows.

STEP ONE: CARVING

All Naga Pearl Effects derive their power from the Akasha. As the Akashic link is a seemingly limitless source of power which acts and reacts at the speed of thought, it must be contained to be controllable and effective. First, the Jakla must limit the image he wishes to making reality within his own mind, containing the idea as one simple thought. This thought becomes the heart of the Pearl Effect through the remainder of its casting, refined as the Jakla hones his vision.

This can be a difficult procedure, even for the most trained Jakla. The mind is a naturally curious thing, and is wont to explore beyond the boundaries one places upon the imagination. Jakla practice for years to focus their minds, clearing away all other thoughts but that of their desired effect. Outside stimuli are especially threatening to such concentration, and a simple act (such as tapping a meditating Jakla on the shoulder) can ruin hours of careful preparation.

Roleplay-intensive campaigns may demand that the player of a Jakla describe his Pearl Effect to the Gamemaster and/or other players at this stage of pearl casting. Though this is not necessary (and has no effect on the mechanics for releasing the spell effect), it can certainly add flavor to the game.

STEP TWO: BLENDING

This is the most dangerous stage of pearl-casting, where the Naga Jakla is most in danger of losing themselves to the Pearl Effect, or losing control of the vision they have plucked from the Akasha.

The Jakla must inject it with a kernel of sentience, one small hint of soul to guide it once it is released into the physical world. This requires that the Jakla sacrifice a small part of themselves (an idea, a random thought, or even a dream), which he mixes into the spell effect, making it real and whole.

This blending of the Jakla's soul with a part of the Akasha to create Pearl Effects is the cause for much of their introspection, their soul-searching. Jakla are always encouraged to seek out new parts of themselves, continually refreshing their precious soul for future effects (and so that they

will be whole once they return to the Akashic link).

STEP THREE: GUIDING

The final step of pearl-casting has little to do with the Jakla himself. He releases the Effect through the pearl, and it is guided to its destination and final form by the piece of Naga soul fused within it. When the Pearl Effect is complete, the piece of the Naga's soul, along with the component parts of the Akasha used to power the effect, slips away; in time, they will rejoin the Akashic link.

Pearl effects are imperfect. When describing the result of a pearl-casting, the GM should use the model the player has provided him during Step One, modifying the physical result in the game setting by the conditions, surroundings, target (and his actions), how well the Jakla rolled against his TN, and other factors of his choice. Pearl Effects should rarely manifest in precisely the way the player expects unless he succeeds by a wide margin, though GMs should always apply the intended mechanical result if he is successful against his modified TN. Embellishments and fantastic descriptions by both the player and GM add flavor to the game and enhance the storytelling potential for the scene.

JAKLA VS. SHUGENJA

As shown above, Naga Jakla are not like the shugenja of Rokugan. Their magic is not based on

religion, faith, or connection with the elements. It is based upon the strength of their communal mind, and the power that may be drawn from it when a Naga is trained to hone his imagination.

Pearls act as a focus for this process, like a lens magnifying light and heat. If the pearl is flawless and used in just the right way, the power of the Akasha will expand and explode into the real world with the fury and force of a thousand Naga minds acting in unison. Weak, fractured, or imperfect pearls can result in flawed effects, or none at all. Jakla elders tell of dangerous rituals that threaten the Akasha when cast through imperfect pearls, or when attempted by those of little training, but no Naga outside their number has felt such a rift within the Akashic link. Perhaps the elders have concocted these tales as a means of improving their students' attention.

CASTING PEARL MAGIC

Effects (Spells) are cast through pearls using the same mechanics as for Rokugani Spells (*L5R* Rulebook, page 142-144), but there are no scrolls to read. The same time period is spent envisioning and focusing the effect instead.

All other rules for spell-casting in *L5R* are used for Pearl Magic, including dice conventions, TNs, the limit of Spells that may be attempted in each Element each day, manipulation of Spells and Casting Time, Damage, Rituals, and Concentration Levels.



NAGA WARRIOR OUTFIT

Naga Warriors receive the following as their opening outfit (all of Average quality, save the bow, which is of Fine quality):

Any primary weapon of their choice, Clothing (silk robes or gilded leather), Spear (use Naginata stats), Hunting Knife (use Tanto stats), Traveling Pack, 3 (non-enchanted) pearls





NAGA JAKLA OUTFIT

Naga Jakla (the shugenja of their race) receive as their opening outfit (all of Average quality, save the bow, which is of Fine quality):

Bow (Yumi), 40 arrows of any type, Clothing (silk robes or gilded leather), Spear, (use Naginata stats), Hunting Knife (use Tanto stats), Traveling Pack, 4 (non-enchanted) pearls

STARTING JAKLA PEARL EFFECTS (SPELLS)

Naga Jakla begin with a number of Pearl Effects equal to the number of pearls they begin with (see *Beginning Pearls*, page 62). Jakla may choose any Spell Effect available to standard Rokugani shugenja, with the same restrictions (i.e. they cannot begin the game with Spells from *Walking the Way*, or any that are listed as "restricted"). Also, they may not choose from the Named Pearls presented in this book; such pearls are legendary, and should *only* be acquired through careful adventuring and play, not chosen at the start of a Jakla's career.

Note that Naga Pearl Effects are not "mastered." There is no such thing as an "Innate" Pearl Ability. Within the Akashic link, *all* pearl Effects are innate – they merely need to be *focused*. On the other hand, all Naga Pearl Effects require pearls to cast; there are no abilities which can be drawn upon without pearls.

SPELLS AND DESCRIPTIONS

Spell descriptions for Pearl Effects are similar to those for Rokugani scroll magic, with one exception – they have no Mastery Level. Instead, they have a requisite Pearl Rank (which, in the case of Rokugani Spell descriptions used by Naga, is equal to half of the Mastery Level, rounded up). The pearl used to focus this effect must be of this Rank or higher for the spell to succeed. Otherwise, the Spell casting fails and the pearl is destroyed. Other side-effects are possible as well, depending on the circumstances, power of the spell effect, and how well the Jakla rolled. GMs should apply non-lethal, negative side-effects to such faulty spell-casting at their discretion.

There are three Rokugani Spells which have no Naga equivalent – Sense, Commune, and Summon. Naga are scarcely aware of the Elements, and cannot see or communicate with kami.

PEARLS AND THEIR ABILITIES

Pearls, being part of the natural world, have an Element which they are attuned to. This is used to determine which Pearl Effects may be cast through them. (When casting the Naga equivalent of *Wind-Borne Slumbers*, for instance, an Air-attuned pearl must be used to focus the Akasha; *Earthquake* would require an Earth pearl, etc.)

A pearl used to focus a Pearl Effect is reusable, just like a scroll, unless the spell description states that the scroll (pearl) is destroyed in the process.

Pearls are limited in number, and guarded closely by the Chameleon and Cobra. Though every aspiring Jakla is provided with a small number of low-Ranking pearls at the start of their career, it is far more difficult to acquire those of Ranks 3, 4, and 5.

Please see Appendix IV for more on pearls, the format for Naga Spells, and a list of special Pearl Effects available only to Naga Jakla.

CHOOSING PEARLS AT CHARACTER CREATION

Characters automatically have one pearl for each Element they have an Effect in, up to Rank 3 (determined by the highest Rank required to cast their initial complement of Spells in each Element). For instance, if a starting Jakla had three Earth Effects, with Pearl Ranks of 1, 2, and 3, respectively, they would start the game with one Rank 3 pearl.

If the character desires additional pearls at the start of the game (because one or more of their Spell Effects destroys the pearl used to focus it, for example), they may purchase them at a cost of the pearl's Rank in CP. No Naga may start the game with Rank 4 or 5 pearls; these must be earned through roleplaying.

ACQUIRING PEARL EFFECTS DURING PLAY

When a Jakla gains a new School Rank, it is common practice for the elders to gift him with one Pearl Effect (Spell) of the new Rank, along with a pearl capable of casting it (if they do not already have one). Occasionally, heroic or selfless acts for the good of the community that the character has performed earn him another Spell from the new Rank, but such cases are rare; generally, PCs will have to go out into the world and experience life to gain magic.

Between adventures, a player may petition the Gamemaster for his character to acquire a new Pearl Effect. This requires that he have a plausible source for the Effect, and ample time to study its structure in order to mimic it. This process requires a number of days equal to the Pearl Rank of the Spell; also, the character must spend a number of Experience Points equal to twice the Spell's Pearl Rank.

Jakla elders can overrule a character's petition for new training (if they are aware of it, which is likely, as they monitor the progress of their students through the Akasha). Gamemasters who do not wish certain Spells in the game can intervene at this level.

Also, obtaining a new Pearl Effect does not ensure that a character can cast it. A suitable pearl must still be found or acquired, which requires additional requests or adventuring. Generally, acquiring pearls of Ranks 3–5 should be the focus of an adventure, or cost the player character at least three to four times the Pearl's Rank in Experience Points.



Note: This version of the Naga Scout Lesson differs from previous versions. It has been modified to maintain play-balance within the Naga castes.

Caste Rank Modifier: + 5 Boxes

Benefit: +1 Perception

SKILLS

Archery (Naga) 2, Conceal, Hunting, Moksha, any two High or Bugei Skills

GREAT LESSONS

Rank 1: The Isha's Gift

At this Rank, the Naga Scout has honed his vision to a level where he can see well in the dark, even making out the faint presence of individuals in near-darkness. The Naga Scout has trained his sensitive eyes to see a broader spectrum of light than humans are able to, and he can register an individual's presence even in the faintest of starlight. Assuming any degree of ambient light, the Naga can see as clearly as if in full daylight.

Rank 2: Know Your Enemy

At this Rank, the Naga can sense the impurity of the Shadowlands Taint within a creature or item. The Scout makes a blind roll, Perception + Shadowlands Lore vs. a TN of 30 minus 5 times the creature or item's Taint Rank. Success will determine if the creature or item has the Taint, and whether the Taint is innate or gathered through use of *maho* or other dark means. The range of this effect equals the Naga's School Rank times his body length, but the individual or item in question must be in line-of-sight.

Rank 3: Blackened Sky

The Scout may make two Attacks per round with their bow. The arrows are launched one after

the other; the attack is handled just as a bushi making two Kenjutsu Attacks per round.

Rank 4: Wisdom the Wind Brings

At this Rank, the Scout's perception is so heightened that they are aware of all life nearby. The Scout is fully conscious of all living things that have an Awareness of 2 or higher, within ten times his School Rank + Perception in yards.

This ability supercedes barriers, natural or otherwise. The Naga Scout can sense all such beings at all times, even if there are trees, stone walls, or other barriers in the way. The Scout need not concentrate, and may perform other (complicated) actions while using this ability.

The Scout may follow the movements of these beings, aim arrows at them, or attempt to discover their identities (in general terms, such as to determine their general race).

Should the Scout wish to attack one of these beings, he may choose the location the attack is directed at, without Raising for the Called Shot. Note that the Scout must still have a logical chance of actually hitting the being and chosen location from his position (i.e. he cannot fire through stone, trees, or other barriers, but can fire through light foliage or rice paper walls).

Further, the Naga can concentrate to gain additional information about and target specific non-sentient animals and plants (such as birds, vines, fish, insects, and other living things with 1 or less Awareness). This requires an Action and the use of an Akasha Point. While concentrating, the character may still move and speak, or attack the animals or plants, applying the same restrictions as above.

Rank 5: The Outer Mind

The Scout may now control animals with less than Awareness 2, or "piggy-back" their senses with those of more sentient creatures (having an Awareness of 2 or higher). This requires the use of one Akasha Point, and a Contested Willpower roll against the creature targeted. If a creature the Scout is linked to is harmed, he loses 1 Akasha Point or suffers one die of Wounds. If the creature is killed, he loses 2 Akasha Points, or suffers 2 dice of Wounds.

While "piggy-backing" their senses onto those of another, the Scout sees, smells, tastes, hears, and feels everything the target creature does, but has no control over where it goes or what it does.

NAGA VEDIC

Naga Vedic (the priests of their race) receive as their opening outfit (all of Average quality):

Clothing (silk robes or gilded leather), Hunting Knife (use Tanto stats), Traveling Pack, 4 (non-enchanted) pearls





**NEW INNER GIFTS
(6 POINTS EACH,
5 FOR NAGA)**

Due to their connection with the Akasha, Naga have an unnaturally high occurrence of Inner Gifts within their Bloodlines. The communal mind of the Naga has unlocked many previously undiscovered talents now available to characters in *L5R*.

The following Inner Gifts may be chosen by any character of any Bloodline or Clan, at the costs listed above.

Note that Naga may also choose Inner Gifts from other *L5R* books, with the exception of those that violate their mindset or which are countered by other conditions (such as Animal Speech).

Calm Mind: This effect requires no roll, simply a mental command and a single Action. Only one target may be affected. Otherwise, it produces the same effect as the Spell of the same name (*L5R RPG*, page 150).

Creature Awareness: Using this Gift, the character is aware of all living things with an Awareness of 2 or more within (his own Awareness x10) in feet. Obstacles, organic or not, are ignored for the purposes of this ability.

(Continued)



The Vedic is a combination of spiritual guide and enforcer of law unique to Naga culture. There are two divisions, both of which use the Benefits and Lessons listed here. The first are the Children of the Bright Eye, the religious leaders of the Naga people. This monk-like caste is responsible for all ritual within the culture, maintaining harmony and offering sagely advice to the rulers, military leaders, and greater minds they serve. Well-versed in reading the heavens, they are most often teachers, advisors, and philosophers among the Naga.

The Children of the Pale Eye are the martial and social judges of the Naga. They patrol the Shinomen Forest, ascertaining the guilt of criminals and punishing them on the spot. They have authority to administer justice within Naga lands as they see fit. Only those of higher Caste Rank may challenge their decisions, at which time another Child (of equal or higher Rank to both involved parties) becomes the arbiter.

There are three stages that a Vedic must undertake during his training. The first is that of inner enlightenment. The Naga becomes aware of his own strengths and weaknesses, and how to exploit or protect them. He progresses from student to teacher during this period. The second phase of their development is that of law – identifying criminals and misfits and meeting out justice. The final stage for Vedics is infinite, as it is his journey deeper into the Akasha and receives the greatest gift of all – the ability to tap directly into its murky recesses.

Caste Rank Modifier: +1 Rank

Benefit: +1 Intelligence or +1 Awareness (player's call)

SKILLS

Advanced Medicine, Astronomy, Calligraphy (Naga), Law (Naga), Meditation, Theology (Naga), and any 1 Lore (usually Naga-based)

GREAT LESSONS

Rank One: Willful Harmony

Vedics are trained to be as adaptable as possible, learning from and improving upon the ways of others. This Lesson stresses the importance of willful harmony – *choosing* your own path in the world instead of being given one. All Naga Vedic are considered to have Rank 1 in all High Skills if they do not already have them. These “free” Ranks have no effect on the character's Discipline.

Rank Two: The Inner Mind

All Naga Vedic are trained to be one with the Akasha, able to derive power from within themselves. This is the first step in this long path, one which culminates somewhere beyond their Rank Five Lesson (see below). Characters of this Rank receive one free Inner Gift, which they may begin using immediately.

Rank Three: The Mantle Within

Now, Vedics become spiritual icons within the Naga culture, able to physically support other Naga around them. At the start of each adventure, the Vedic gains an additional number of “Vedic Points” equal to their Akasha Ring. These are special Akasha Points, which may be spent at any time to enhance the rolls of friendly Naga. Any number of these Vedic Points may be spent on a single Action, but they do not refresh until the start of the next adventure. The Vedic may not use these Points for his own Actions. Non-Naga may not benefit from this Lesson, as the Vedic is literally manipulating the linked mind of the Naga to perform it.

Rank Four: Earthly Concerns

This is the turning point in a Naga Vedic's career, when he is at the cusp of self-discovery. From this point on, Vedics must face life as a pilgrimage, without the benefit of close supervision. They are free to walk the earth as they please, only returning to discuss their journey with their master and receive his blessing (when he is ready for Ranks 4 and 5). Characters of this Rank are able to sacrifice their own attributes to “heal” those of others. They may spend one Akasha Point to return one Wound Level to another, or suffer one Wound Level themselves to return one Akasha Point to another.

This ability requires one Action to complete, during which time only one exchange may occur (1 for 1 maximum, of either transaction, but not both). The character must be within line-of-sight to affect other Naga in this manner, or able to touch the target if he is not Naga.

Rank Five: This Body is a Shell

Finally, the Vedic begins his endless journey toward Atman, delving into the most remote regions of the Akasha. Once per day, the character may choose a Rank 1–4 Lesson from any of the other Naga Schools to use as his own. The character must spend one Akasha Point and succeed with an Awareness + Akasha check vs. a TN of the (chosen Lesson's School Rank x5) to acquire the Lesson. Failure means that the character does not acquire any additional ability for the current day; he will have another chance after he has slept for at least eight hours. The effects of this Lesson last one full day (24 hours) from the time they are acquired. You may not activate this Lesson while you are currently benefiting from it.



Caste Rank Modifier: +5 boxes

Benefit: +1 Stamina, Agility, or Reflexes (player's call)

SKILLS

Archery (Naga), Athletics, Battle, Defense, Hand-to-Hand, Swordsmanship, Yarijutsu (Naga)

GREAT LESSONS

Rank 1: Drawing From the Deep

The first thing taught to all Naga Warriors is how to balance their fighting style. "Nothing is more important than being able to adapt to your situation, and respond in kind," the Greater

Warriors recite. Characters at this Rank may add the value of their Akasha Ring to all Attack and Damage rolls. For instance, a character with an Akasha of 2 who rolled a 13 to attack would have a modified total of 15. The same character with a Damage Value of 19 would apply 21 Wounds.

Rank 2: The Tides of War

Early in his career, a Naga Warrior is introduced to the open battlefield, where the Fortunes are reckless and the Akasha reminds one of his failings. Characters graduating into this School Rank may add or subtract their School Rank to any total generated in mass combat or on the Battle Table (page 115 of the L5R Rulebook). It does not matter where the character is located in the battle, nor what part of the fighting he is in (Engaged, Reserves, etc.). Note that this ability is *in addition to* the Tactician Skill, if the Naga also has it.

Rank 3: This Blood Shall Guide Me

Naga of this Rank are able to draw from the spiritual strength of the Akasha to aid them on the field of battle. They may perform 2 Attacks each Turn.

Rank 4: The Pillar of Blood

The Akasha supports the Naga just as they support and nurture their connection with it. Often, warriors of the Naga are able to derive near-superhuman strength from the collective soul of all who have come before, all who live today, and all those yet to come. At this Rank, the character is able to ignore a number of Wound Levels equal to his Akasha, for a number of Turns equal to his Akasha.

Rank 5: The Bonds Between Us

Finally, a Naga Warrior of this caliber has become one with the Akasha, and proved himself to his living kindred and those who have already fallen. He is the living embodiment of physical perfection, and must now embark upon his spiritual journey toward Atman. At the start of a battle, the character gains one Akasha Point for each other Naga within sight of him. The character may spend a number of these bonus Akasha Points equal to their Akasha Ring on a single Action, without limit. Additionally, each other Naga present gains one Akasha point as long as they stand beside the character (maximum 1). However, the character also takes one Wound Point each time one of his fellow Naga is injured. This effect lasts until the Naga disperse or until the next dawn, whichever comes first.



NEW INNER GIFTS (CONTINUED)

Danger Sense: The character with this Inner Gift cannot be ambushed, regardless of the circumstances or the Skills of his opponents. He will always be aware of the coming attack, and – at the very least – be able to roll for Initiative.

Shared Senses: The character is able to link his five senses with those of one other person or Naga (humans may only use this ability with humans, and Naga only with other Naga). This effect lasts for one hour, and may only be used once between cycles of sleep.

Spatial Awareness: The character is always familiar with the surrounding terrain (out to his Perception x150 feet), even when blinded.

The Path to Atman

Every Naga's journey toward Atman is different. During character creation, each Naga player may roll upon these tables once without cost. Up to two additional rolls can be made, at a cost of three Character Points each. Be warned, however! For while the Ancient Naga are perhaps the most powerful new players on the fields of Rokugan, they are also the most threatened...

Begin at Heritage Table 1.

HERITAGE TABLE 1: THE ANCIENT NAGA

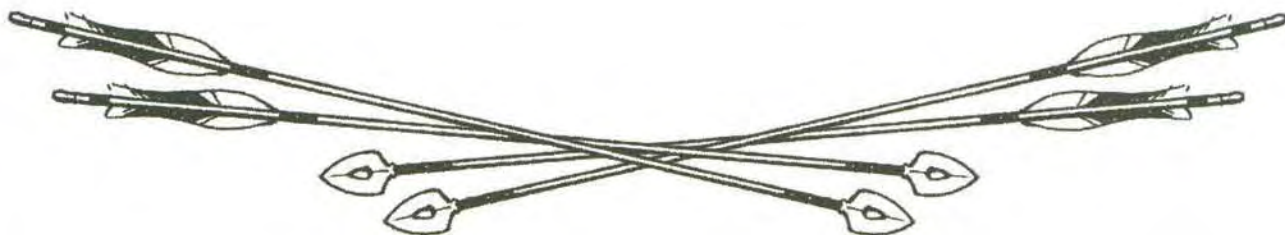
ROLL	RESULT
1-2:	Ethical Ancestor. Roll on Heritage Table 2.
3-4:	Undistinguished History. No benefits or penalties.
5-6:	Unethical Ancestor. Roll on Heritage Table 3.
7-9:	What Must Be Done. Roll on Heritage Table 4.
0:	Akashic Memory. Roll on Heritage Table 5.

HERITAGE TABLE 2: ETHICAL ANCESTOR

ROLL	RESULT
1:	Discovery. After your birth, you were drawn to a hidden grove within the Shinomen Forest, where you found the remains of a Naga Asp who had accepted the Curse of Eternal Vigilance. Knowing the corpse to be your own in a past life, you felt no compunction claiming its weapon - a Fine Quality Scimitar (3k3 Damage Rating).
2:	Resourceful. You were a Scout in a former life who helped to direct friendly forces during the First Burning of the Lands. Gain 5 Caste Points or one Rank in the Leadership Skill (PC's choice).
3:	Honored Ally. One of your former lives was an expert in the Single Strike, and attracted the interest of several Kakita masters. Before they departed the Naga lands, they gifted him with one of their famed swords. Gain the Kakita Blade Advantage (<i>The Way of the Crane</i> , page 52). The weapon is ancient (forged at the dawn of the Empire), and priceless.

HERITAGE TABLE 2: (CONTINUED)

ROLL	RESULT
4:	Purity. One of your Past Lives pledged himself to return a precious and unique pearl that was stolen from the Outcasts living in the Ivory Kingdoms. Only after it was replaced beside the scales of three abominations did he release his final breath. Gain the Irreproachable Advantage and 5 boxes of Caste.
5:	Self-Control. The discipline of one of your Past Lives echoes through you. Gain the Acute Senses Advantage or two Ranks in the Pearl Carving Skill (PC's choice).
6:	Truth. The secrets of the Akasha were your passion in a Past Life. Legend states that several of its most guarded secrets were yours before your unfortunate death. Gain one Inner Gift of your choice.
7:	Observant. You were a highly-regarded Scout in a former life. Gain one Scout Past Life Duty for free or gain two Ranks in one Scout starting Skill (PC's choice).
8:	Custodian. You were a highly-regarded Vedic in a former life. Gain one Vedic Past Life Duty for free or gain two Ranks in one Vedic starting Skill (PC's choice).
9:	Guardian. You were a highly-regarded Warrior in a former life. Gain one Warrior Past Life Duty for free or gain two Ranks in one Warrior starting Skill (PC's choice).
0:	Inquisitor. You were a highly-regarded Jakla in a former life. Gain one Jakla Past Life Duty for free or gain two Ranks in one Jakla starting Skill (PC's choice).



HERITAGE TABLE 3: UNETHICAL ANCESTOR

ROLL	RESULT
1:	Redemption! The memories of a Past Life haunt you today. From the eyes of your Past Life, you witnessed the murder of a Vedic striving for peace between your race and the humans. That Vedic was your father, and you can still feel the snap of his neck between your fingers. Though the killer is gone, you can still carry on your father's work... Gain the Higher Purpose (Peace With Rokugan) Advantage.
2:	Pearl Rage! One of your Past Lives was a Jakla who dabbled with merging pearls with one's Akasha, hopefully improving both. You gain the Pearl Jiva Advantage at Rank 3, but it is uncontrollable. When you are within 20 yards of a pearl (Rank 3 or less), the pearl is immediately dissolved to produce an Attack vs. a random target in your line of sight. If more than one pearl is within the radius, they dissolve one per Turn, beginning with those of the highest Rank.
3:	Traitor! One of your Past Lives betrayed the Naga against their enemies. Begin the game with the Black Sheep Disadvantage. You gain no CP for this Disadvantage.
4:	Recluse! One of your Past Lives failed to prove himself during the Bloodland Wars, and was remanded to the Vedics for a life of demanding absolution. Gain the Ascetic Disadvantage, but also gain one Minor Ally among the Vedics. Warriors and Scouts lose 1 Caste Rank. Vedics and Jakla are unaffected.
5:	Prejudice! You have been hatched from a long line of bias against all but your own kind. Gain the Antisocial Disadvantage or the Xenophobic Advantage (PC's choice). You gain no CP for this Disadvantage.
6:	Temper! One of more of your Past Lives had a reputation for being easy to anger, failing in their duty to the Akasha. Gain the Contrary Disadvantage. You gain no CP for this Disadvantage.
7:	Murderer! A Past Life engaged in blood feuds against the Rokugani, the Nezumi, and others, and you are sicked by his actions. Gain the Soft-Hearted Disadvantage. You gain no CP for this Disadvantage.
8:	Broken! The mind of one of your Past Lives was shattered in a terrible encounter with an Oni that fed from intellect. Gain the Frail Mind Disadvantage. You gain no CP for this Disadvantage.
9:	Outcast! One of your Past Lives committed a grievous crime against the Naga nation, and now you must atone for his mistakes. At the start of the game, you are an Outcast (like an abomination, striving to prove yourself worthy of returning to the Naga). You will have a Caste Rank of 0, and may not progress past the first Lesson in your School until you fulfill a great quest of the GM's devising.
0:	Ancient Horror! Something was left within the Shinomen Forest in the moments before the Great Sleep, buried beneath a tree root. It is a shone shard, a piece of the great creation slab that all Naga were born from - one that never shifted to flesh. Hidden in its heart, however, there is some life, beating slowly until it wakes. You remember where the stone is buried; will you brave seeing it again? Gain the Dark Secret Disadvantage. You gain no CP for this Disadvantage.

HERITAGE TABLE 4: WHAT MUST BE DONE

ROLL	RESULT
1:	Explorer. One or more of your Past Lives spent significant time in Rokugan, learning of their culture. Gain 5 CP worth of Rokugani Skills, but reduce your starting Caste Rank by 5 Points.
2:	Duelist. One or more of your Past Lives were accomplished swordsmen. Gain two Ranks in the Single Strike Skill, along with the Brash Disadvantage. You gain no CP for this Advantage.
3:	Blasphemer. You found ancient Naga scriptures documenting the skies. Gain 2 Ranks in the Astronomy Skill. Unfortunately, they are heretical. Lose one full Rank of Caste.
4:	Protected. You were born fertile. Gain the Fertile Advantage. But while this provides you with great benefits, you are sheltered by others in your Bloodline, who seek to protect you from potential harm in the world.
5:	Night Terrors. One or more of your Past Lives traveled with the Rokugani to the north of the Shadowlands for several months. While your experiences there have hardened you to Fu Leng's corruption (gain the Immune to Fear Advantage), the Past Life and all his companions were slaughtered without remorse by a band of Nezumi brigands (gain a 2-Point Phobia vs. Nezumi).
6:	Adopted. As a hatchling, you were found by a curious Kuni Witch Hunter. But when he found you were intelligent and responsive instead of violent and dangerous, he secretly raised you as his own. Today, you are grudgingly accepted among the Kuni along the Carpenter Wall. Gain the Adopted Blood Disadvantage. You may also spend as many of your starting CP on Rokugani Skills as you like. You gain no additional CP to spend, however.
7:	Reckless Love. One of your Past Lives was a famed suitor who eventually fell in love with the Isha of their time, only to break his heart when a war with the Nezumi lured her away. Gain the Dangerous Beauty Advantage and the Bente's Curse Disadvantage, both of which are only applicable with other Naga. You gain no CP for this Disadvantage.
8:	Parental Link. You are one of the few Naga born fertile, and have already laid an egg for the culture which has hatched. The infant Naga is cared for by the community, but you share a special bond with it - more like a close first cousin or twin brother than a responsibility. Gain the Fertile Advantage and the Dependent Disadvantage (PC and GM determine its age). You gain no CP for this Disadvantage.
9:	Martyr. One of your Past Lives held the pass at the Crossroads, giving his life but inspiring the Naga armies to form a veritable wall against the Outcasts. Gain a full Caste Rank, along with the Overconfident Disadvantage. You gain no CP from this Disadvantage.
0:	Greatness Lost. In one of your Past Lives, you were the Qamar. Gain 2 Ranks in any martial or military Skills (weapons, Defense, Battle, etc.). Unfortunately, you have fallen short of this lofty position in this life. You strive to uphold your former Caste Rank, but are hard-pressed by the meddling voices of others. Gain the Overconfident Disadvantage, but no CP for it. Also, a number of military commanders deride you for your "fall from greatness" ("Why can't you be more like you were...?").

HERITAGE TABLE 5: AKASHIC MEMORY

ROLL	RESULT
------	--------

1:	Incredible visions of Atman visited you just before your last life ended. Gain 1 Rank in the Moksha Skill.
----	--

2:	It is said that you have an uncertain future. The Vedics have seen into your future through the Akasha, but are unwilling to discuss what they have seen. The player may pick an emotion that the Vedics reveal to the PC as his only "insight" from the encounter. Eventually, the character will fulfill this emotion - whether he feels it himself or is responsible for it in someone else.
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3:	Memories of the capture and torture of countless Naga by shadowy assailants haunt your dreams. Gain the Xenophobic Advantage.
----	---

4:	Your current social status within the Naga culture pales when compared to the marvelous heights you rose to in former lives. Gain two Points in the Greed Disadvantage. You gain no CP for this Disadvantage.
----	---

5:	One of your Past Lives was among the most prolific philosophers of the ancient Naga, but he was also known as a incessant interloper. Gain 2 Ranks in Lore (Akasha) and the Meddler Disadvantage. You gain no CP for this Disadvantage.
----	---

6:	The weight of your Past Lives' commitments is heavy upon your brow. Gain two 2-Point Obligations. You gain no CP for these Disadvantages.
----	---

7:	You are closely connected with a Past Life, remembering much of his exploits and emotions. You may purchase any single Past Life at half normal cost.
----	---

8:	You remember your spectacular victories as a Warrior or a Scout in a previous life. Gain 2 Ranks in any one Warrior or Scout starting Skill.
----	--

9:	The grand discoveries you made as a Vedic in a previous life are still discussed by the Masters today. Gain 2 Ranks in any one Vedic starting Skill.
----	--

0:	In a previous life, you gathered over thirty Jakla together in a mass ritual that awakened new layers of the Akasha formerly undreamed of. Gain 2 Ranks in any one Jakla starting Skill.
----	--



Naga Karma Tables

GOOD KARMA TABLE

ROLL	RESULT
1:	The character was abominated at birth or mutated during his First Shedding. Roll on the Positive Abomination Table.
2:	You have recently awakened, along with one of the Scorpion scouts who was studying you when he fell asleep – several hundred years ago. Gain a Minor Ally, which you can design a servant character (20 CP).
3:	One of the Vedics watching the skies at your birth claims that the “heavens opened to reveal Atman” when you took your first breath. He gifted you with the item he used to witness the event – a telescope.
4:	Your mother was a Greensnake well-known to the outlying lords of Rokugan. You may purchase the Multiple Schools Advantage at any time in your career for half cost.
5:	You are enormous. Gain the Large Advantage and 1 die (exploding) of length (in feet).
6:	Your birth was celebrated by the other Naga Bloodlines. Gain one item of Fine Quality appropriate for a Bloodline other than your own (Cobras might give a pearl, Constrictors a weapon or one of their sheddings to be forged into armor, etc.)
7:	The pearl-carvers witnessed your birth through a special pearl found within the beds of Candas. When you survived your First Shedding, the pearl was given to you. The pearl is valuable, and may be used to channel Effects of one Rank higher than its natural level (3), effectively making it a Rank 4 pearl.
8:	You have found your perfect mate. Within the Akasha, you share a love than no Rokugani can understand. Design the mate as another character (20 CP) which the GM has access to as an NPC. When protecting your mate, roll and keep 2 extra dice. But don't forget – they are as much a liability as a benefit; you never know when they will be threatened, or by whom...
9:	The Akasha favors you. Gain 1 Rank in Luck.
0:	No good fortune... yet! Pester your Gamemaster regularly to bestow it upon you in play.

BAD KARMA TABLE

ROLL	RESULT
1:	The character was abominated at birth or mutated during his First Shedding. Roll on the Negative Abomination Table.
2:	Your parents were of different Bloodlines. One was angered when you were born of the Bloodline of the other, murdered its mate, and now hunts you. Gain a 4-Point Sworn Enemy.
3:	During the Naag Panchami, you experienced a wash of emotion through the Akasha, seemingly emitted from a sliver of the Black Stone in the Place of Falling. Ever since, you have been hypersensitive to the Naar Teban, feeling their agony two nations away. Should you ever encounter one, you will suffer physical pain – a 1k1 Damage Value – each day that it remains in Rokugan. Good hunting!
4:	You were the subject of a cruel and careless experiment by a <i>maho</i> -wielding shugenja, who purposefully delayed your hatching within a powerful pearl-bed. Roll three times on the Negative Abomination Table, but gain the Heart of Vengeance Advantage against <i>maho</i> -users.
5:	You are diminutive. Gain the Small Disadvantage and lose 1 die of length (in feet). You gain no CP for this Disadvantage.
6:	Your birth was largely ignored by the other Naga Bloodlines. Your Starting Outfit is reduced by 2 items (PC's choice).
7:	You have always been easy to fool. Gain the Gullible Disadvantage. You gain no CP for this Disadvantage.
8:	The egg-bed where you hatched became the nest for a parasitic scavenger-eel which fed from your egg's shell and fluid. You were born stunted as a result, and have never fully recovered. Gain the Bad Health Disadvantage.
9:	The Akasha frowns upon you. Gain 1 Rank in Unluck. You gain no CP for this Disadvantage.
0:	No bad fortune... yet! Don't worry, though – an equitable GM would never take advantage of such an opportunity.



Abomination Tables

You've arrived here in one of two ways. Either you took the Abomination Advantage or Disadvantage (which cost or gained you CP), or were directed here from one of the Heritage or Fortune Tables. Wherever you arrived from listed the number of rolls you get. Each roll reduces your starting Caste Rank by 1 full Rank (10 Points).

NEGATIVE ABOMINATION TABLE

Roll Result

- 01-05:** Roll again on this table or GM chooses abomination aspect.
- 06-50:** **Minor abomination:** No mechanical effects.
1: Mild facial elongation.
2: Scales on face or hands.
3: Human-colored skin.
4: Unusual skin-tone (blue-black or grey).
5: Fins.
6: Useless gills.
7: Webbed hands.
8: Ridged or spiked back.
9: Extra joints in fingers or toes.
0: Odd odor that follows the character.
- 51-52:** No arms – just a tail (serpentine)
- 53-56:** Bright or fractured scale pattern (easy to see)
- 57-60:** Odd or discolored (unacceptable or taboo) scale patterns – Outcast
- 61-63:** Non-retractable hood
- 64-66:** No teeth or failed digestive tract; sensitive diet
- 67-69:** Weak or stumpy tail
- 70-72:** Extra limb (useless)
- 73-75:** Non-Naga characteristic (Nezumi, Ningyo, etc.), such as paws or fur
- 76-79:** **Reduced Senses:**
1: No Sense of Taste (taste-based Perception checks disallowed)
2: No Sense of Smell – Roll Again;
1-2: PC is missing nose (odor-based Perception checks disallowed)
3-4: Cataract; Weak Eyes (–2 dice to all Perception checks based on vision)
5-6: Colorblind (as the Disadvantage)
7: Blind (vision Perception checks disallowed)
8: Inner Ear Problem (–2 dice to all checks involving balance)
9: Deaf – Roll Again; 1-2: PC is missing ears (sound-based Perception checks disallowed)
0: Mute – Roll Again; 1-2: PC is missing tongue (cannot speak)
- 80-83:** Watersnake (as the Disadvantage)

- 84-86:** Constantly shedding; sensitive skin in spots (pick a location; when hit in that location, take 1 additional die of Damage)
- 87-89:** Less fingers than normal
- 90-92:** No thumbs on one or both hands – Roll Again;
1-2: both hands
- 93-94:** **Extreme Serpentine Feature:**
1: Snout
2-3: Forked or extra-long tongue
4-5: Serpentine eyes
6-7: Ridged brow
8-9: Pointed ears (commonly flattened against skull)
0: No hair (head or body)
- 95-98:** **Massive Physical Abnormality:**
1: Reduced Agility (–1 to Trait)
2: Reduced Reflexes (–1 to Trait)
3: Reduced Stamina (–1 to Trait)
4: Reduced Strength (–1 to Trait)
5: Reduced Endurance (Wound Levels are always one worse than current Damage taken)
6: Albino (take 1 die of Damage every ten minutes in open sunlight)
7: Atrophied limb
8: Two heads (only one can communicate)
9: Deformed – horribly mangled, like Shashakar (Social Disadvantage) – Roll Again; 1-2: add one Rank to Disadvantage and worsen deformity (GM's discretion), then roll again, repeating the cycle
0: Cannot shed (Earth reduced by one during each Shedding after the game begins; see sidebar on page 31 for details.)
- 99-00:** Roll once more on this table + Fertile (redeemed, but feared, in Naga society). No Caste Rank loss.



POSITIVE ABOMINATION TABLE

Each entry has a CP Cost to the right. This is the additional cost you must pay to take this abomination and its benefits. If you cannot afford this cost, roll again until you generate one that you can.

Roll	Result	CP Cost
01-05:	Roll again on this table or GM choice.	0
06-50:	Minor abomination: No mechanical effects.	
	1: Mild facial elongation.	0
	2: Scales on face or hands.	0
	3: Human-colored skin.	0
	4: Unusual skin-tone (blue-black or grey).	0
	5: Fins.	0
	6: Useless gills.	0
	7: Webbed hands.	0
	8: Ridged or spiked back.	0
	9: Extra joints in fingers or toes.	0
	0: Odd odor that follows the character.	0
51-54:	Retractable Hood	0
55-59:	More fingers than normal	0
60-63:	Warm-Blooded	0
64-69:	Prehensile Tail (as the Advantage)	1
70-74:	Scale pattern is one that Naga respect or worship (+2 rolled dice to all Social checks with other Naga)	2
75-77:	Suction cup fingers and/or toes (can climb sheer surfaces; STR in feet per Turn)	2
78-80:	Film covering eyes (prevents blindness from lightning or bright flashes)	2
81-85:	Enhanced Senses:	
	1: Keen Sense of Taste (+2 rolled dice to all Perception checks involving Taste)	2
	2: Keen Hearing (+2 rolled dice to all Perception checks involving Sound)	3
	3-4: Keen Sense of Smell (as the "Acute Smell" Advantage)	3
	5-6: Keen Eyesight (+2 rolled dice to all Perception checks involving Vision)	3
	7: Night Vision (can see in dim light, dusk, or night without impediment)	3
	8: Thermal Vision (can perceive heat signatures within PER x50 in yards)	3
	9: Spatial Awareness (equilibrium; like the Inner Gift)	3
	0: Precise Eye-Hand Coordination (+1 rolled die for all Attacks, Defense, or other Actions involving eye-hand coordination)	4
84-85:	Amphibious (as the Advantage)	3

86-87:	Different Bloodline Ability (PC chooses one of the other Naga Bloodline Abilities, trading it with their own)	4
88-89:	Extra Limb (the character has another arm or leg, which he can use like the first two)	4
90-94:	Physical "Enhancement:"	
	1: Preternatural Endurance (as Strength of the Earth 2)	2
	2: Swift (+2 to Initiative total)	3
	3: Leaping Ability (as the Naar Teban's leaping ability - see page 58)	4
	4: "Webbed" Torso (may "glide" 1 feet in any direction for every 10 feet fallen, and takes no damage when touching down)	4
	5: Preternatural Agility (+1 to Trait)	5
	6: Preternatural Reflexes (+1 to Trait)	5
	7: Preternatural Stamina (+1 to Trait)	5
	8: Preternatural Strength (+1 to Trait)	5
	9: Natural Armor (+5 to TN to be Hit, all locations)	5
	0: Severed limbs (except head) regenerate over (8-Earth) days	5
95-98:	Natural Weaponry: Use Agility + Hand-to-Hand for all Attacks using Natural Weaponry unless otherwise stated.	
	1-2: Fangs (1k1 Damage, success with 2 Raises indicates a grapple)	3
	3-4: Claws (1k2 Damage)	3
	5: Horns (1k1, +1 rolled die per 10 yards of straight-line charging before Attack)	3
	6: Scythe-like bones through elbow skin (1k2 rear Attack)	3
	7: Razor-sharp scales (anyone who grapples the Naga takes his own Strength in Damage)	4
	8: Rattler tail (3k3 Damage Value; Strength is not added)	4
	9: Pearl Kyujutsu (Rank 1)	4
	0: Venom (Rank 1):	
	1: Acid	5
	2-3: Blinding Mist	5
	4-5: Blood Thickener	5
	6-7: Contact Poison	5
	8-9: Nerve Toxin	5
	0: Roll again, adding one Rank to Venom (maximum 2)	+5
99:	Roll once more on this table + Fertile (redeemed, but feared, in Naga society)	6
00:	The character was an Outcast who traveled to the Burning Sands. Now a fire salamander, he has returned to Rokugan for a reason determined by the GM and player	7



Chapter Four



*Who's Who
Among the Naga*



PAST LIVES

Technically, all Naga have the connection to the Akasha necessary to 'remember' many aspects of their past lives, but those who spend the points have a deep memory of their particular incarnation, and may draw upon its lessons to guide their actions in this life.

Duties of the Blood

All along the sidebars of this chapter, you will find descriptions of ancient Naga Duties. These Duties cover many aspects of Naga life, from the position of revered Vedic to that of a soldier in the Naga armies – a Warrior for the Blood.

Naga characters (at the time of character creation) may purchase these Duties as Past Lives by spending the listed number of Character Points. Past Lives may not be purchased during play, or with Experience Points.

When purchasing a Duty as a Past Life, the player should devise the name and basic background for the specific Naga he is linked with. For instance, he might take the Warrior Duty and say that part of his Akasha was once carried within the body of Berash, a field soldier responsible for leading piercing charges into enemy lines. This would be enough to influence his own character design, who might in turn have an uncanny level of ability during times of war.

(Continued)

Chapter Four: Who's Who Among the Naga

*No death does the Vedic see,
Nor illness, nor sorrow,
The Vedic sees the All,
Attains the Akasha entirely.*

– Ancient Naga Riddle-Poem

All Naga have a deep, intimate connection with one another, through their shared souls and through the Akasha. In a very real and spiritual way, all Naga are one with all other Naga, and with the Akasha itself. Their souls reach out to share wisdom and knowledge; they drink from the same well.

The Akasha binds and unifies the race, and gives the Naga a unique sense of purpose and understanding which no other creature can truly comprehend. Though the humans may learn the language of the Naga, they may even spend years in contemplation of Naga histories, meditation and study of the Naga race; they will never be as one with the Naga, because their soul is separate, not a part of the pool that makes the Naga whole.

Deep in the heart of the Shinomen forest, long before the time of humans and the Children of the Sun, the race of Naga thrived. Their cities were built within the sheltering boughs of the forests, and the Naga raised great magics in order to protect their cities and villages. The stars hung in their ordered sky, and twin globes, the Eyes of the Akasha, revolved in their paths above the woodland. The Naga named them the Bright Eye and the Pale Eye, the Sun and Moon. While they did not consider the Bright Eye and the Pale to be gods, they thought of them as portals to the Akasha, necessary in order to understand the balance of all things.

These are the stories of the Naga people. Through them, their ancestors speak – more so, even, than those of the samurai of Rokugan. Where the bushi speak of guidance, only the Naga can say that the hand of their ancestor is the hand of his son.

They are those who have come before. Each heartbeat is the sound of the entire race of Naga, and each one stands as a thousand others have stood, before. They are, indeed, carved from one stone.

The Asp

THE BALASH

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Strength 4

Fire: 3

Agility 4

Air: 2

Reflexes 4

Akasha: 2

School/Great Lesson: Asp Warrior 2

Caste Rank: 3.6

Advantages: Acute Smell, Heart of Vengeance (Humans), Immune to Fear, Strength of the Earth 1, Venom (Blood Coagulant) 2, Way of the Land (Naga Ruins, Shinomen Forest), Xenophobic

Disadvantages: Brash, Cruel, Driven ("Kill all the humans!"), Heartless

Skills: Archery (Naga) 3, Athletics 3, Battle 2, Conceal 2, Defense 2, Hand-to-Hand 2, Hunting 3, Lore (Naga Ruins) 2, Lore (Rokugani Culture) 1, Moksha 3, Rokugani Language 1, Stealth 2, Swordsmanship 3, Wrestling 1, Yarijutsu (Naga) 1

The Balash.

If any among the Naga race wish to see the world destroyed in fire and ash, it is he. The hatred he bears for the humans is deep, burning like cinders in his orange eyes. They have destroyed the world.

They have let the Shadowlands fester, and even now, when it threatens to destroy them all, they will not cease their petty bickering to fight it.

If the Balash had his way, the Shadowlands would swallow them all, and then be purged with flame.

Born in the forests of the deepest wood, Balash's egg-mates feared him from the day he tore the shell of his egg. He is not silent in his

views, but lashes out with his bow and his anger, ready to slaughter those who have so changed his green and growing world.

The Balash was once a simple Ashamana, angry inside and separated from the Akasha because of the imbalance in his emotions. Though the Constrictors tried to help him, they could not pierce the veil of uncaring that the child had sealed around himself. He served with the other Asp children, learning the ways of war, drawing on the Akasha just enough to receive his commands and hear the intent of his leaders.

When the Balash was still very young, the Constrictors in the Asp city of Siska took a special notice of the child. This Asp Ashamana did not come to the rituals; he did not celebrate the feasts and holidays. He would not speak with others, save on the topic of warcraft, and he spent his every day in labor and study to perfect his fighting skills.

The Vedic did all that they could to understand the child's anger, and to staunch or stem it, but there was nothing they could do. No ritual seemed to aid the child, and only in the heat of battle did he seem at peace.

Then, at last the High Vedic of the Pale Eye came to see the child on the day before the Ashamana was to finish his first molt, and gain his adult position and name.

"The problem is clear," the Vedic said after a brief discussion with the child. "Each of us has a soul formed of past memories, past lives and past glories. This poor youngling has been given a soul filled with only the memories of battle and glory - a time when the Naga were a more warlike race. He has no thought of happier times, for his soul is not filled with them. To give him peace, you must find him a war."

The Vedic's words were true, and the Asp of Siska despaired ever finding the boy a place in their society. Then, one of the Cobra Jakla had a vision, a dream

spawned from the dark edge of the southlands. There was to be a great war, and those who slept a thousand years would arise to fight it.

The new Balash was among the first to step forward to embrace the Great Sleep. His angry soul called to him, and the prospect of war fascinated the child. It was, after all, the destiny he was created by the Akasha to fulfill.

However, the Balash did not expect the enemies he was to face upon his awakening. These ape-men, these small creatures, had so changed the world that it was hardly worth fighting for. The Balash had spent a thousand years awaiting his destiny - to lead the Warlords, and to bring his people a chance at peace and prosperity once more. And now, with no land to call their own, and a race of screeching apes festering all around them, even if the Balash was successful, his battle would be for nothing.

He has not come to terms with the fact that the Naga race is dying, and in some deep part of his soul, he believes that the troubles which plague



PAST LIVES (CONTINUED)

Named Personalities

Like standard Rokugani Ancestors, Naga characters may also purchase named heroes as one of their Past Lives. These Personalities do not have to be of the same Bloodline as the character since all Naga share thoughts, memories, talents, and emotions through the Akasha.

The cost of named Naga Personalities, as well as the abilities they impart to PCs, are of substantially higher caliber than the Duties mentioned to the left. Player characters linked to such heroes have a notable lineage within the communal Naga ancestry, and are, on the whole, treated with much more respect than their lesser known cousins.

Rokugani characters may never purchase Naga Duties or Personalities as Past Lives.



NAGA SCOUT (4 POINTS EACH)

Naga trained to perceive everything around them – well beyond the limits of humanity, and even beyond most others of their own Blood – Scouts are the first line of defense against threats from the outside world. They are also the first line of offense when Naga armies march upon foreign territories, where their knowledge of the enemy and their terrain may be limited.

For each Naga Scout taken as a Past Life, the player character may roll (but not keep) one additional die when using a Scout Lesson or making a Perception check. Though multiple Scouts may be taken as Past Lives, only three may apply this cumulative effect to the character (i.e. the character may never derive more than 3 additional rolled dice from this Duty).

the Naga egg-beds have been created by the humans. He is filled with rage – rage against the Shadowlands, rage against the bickering Greensnake and Cobra who deny him the right to slaughter the humans who stand between the southlands and the Naga, and rage at the future. For even if he is successful, he snarls, he has only been successful in saving the world for these “creatures.” Better, perhaps, to let the land die, if these apelike humans are sure to die with it.

Only his obedience to the Akasha holds him back, and it is a tenuous thread. One day, he will call upon it to hold back his arrow, and it will not stay his hand.

He is a tall Asp, thin for his age and deadly poison to his enemies. He has “mistaken” more than one human unit for Shadowlands undead, and his arrows mercilessly ravage the human lines. “They are a plague upon our lands,” he hisses, “And sometimes, you must cut away the living flesh... to amputate the disease.”

THE QAMAR

- Earth: 5
- Water: 4
- Fire: 4
- Agility 5
- Air: 4
- Reflexes 6
- Akasha: 5
- School/Great Lesson: Asp Warrior 5
- Caste Rank: 8.3
- Advantages: Great Destiny (Return the Naga to Former Glory), Higher Purpose (Destroy Shadowlands), Immune to Fear, Large, Leadership, Strength of the Earth 1, Venom (Acid) 3
- Disadvantages: Proud, Spoiled, Vanity
- Skills: Archery (Naga) 2, Athletics 2, Battle 3, Conceal 2, Defense 2, Etiquette 3, Hand-to-Hand 3, Hunting 1, Intimidation 2, Lore (Naga Civilization) 4, Lore (Naga Myth) 2, Lore (Naga Religion) 2, Lore (Rokugani Culture) 3, Meditation 3, Moksha 4, Naga Language 4, Rokugani

Language 2, Single Strike 2, Sincerity 3, Stealth 2, Swordsmanship 4, Wrestling 1, Yarijutsu (Naga) 1

The Naga title “Qamar” is reserved for the strongest military leader among the Five Bloodlines, the greatest hero among the Naga people. The current Qamar is of the Asp bloodline, a soldier and a scholar. He serves the Naga people with ferocity and with intelligence, keeping their efforts unified on the field of war.

The current Qamar has earned his position through prowess and through guile. He is as much a politician as he is a warrior, and his numerous victories in battle against the trolls proved that his sword and tactical ability matches that of any of his predecessors.

Long ago, there was a single leader of the Naga race: the Qatol. Beneath him, there was a Lord of War, and a Lord of Peace: the Qamar and the Dashmar.

In past generations, before the days of the Great Sleep, the Qamar’s duty was to lead the combined armies of the Naga, and to follow in the path of his predecessors by destroying the



ASHAMANA

All Naga begin their lives within an egg, warmed and cultured by the temple priests. Although the birth of eggs are rare in these new times, the cycle of a Naga's life has not changed. First, they are an Ashamana, distinguished only by their 'egg-name'. Then, once they have shed their first skin, they choose the path of their lives, led by visions and meditation. From the Ashamana come the Balash, the Isha, and even the mighty Qamar. Only Bloodline defines the Naga 'caste' system; the rest is organized by skill and temperament. A common Ashamana is described below, prepared to shed his skin and join his brothers in service to the Akasha:

He is still young, only freshly hatched from the egg, but already trained and strong. Your skills are beginning to be useful to the Naga race. One day, he will be given his first position and his first true name. Until then, he must prove his strength, his cunning and his skill to the rest of his people. When they believe you are ready, you will be raised to the level of the others, and given a position of honor. He watches carefully as the other Naga deal with the Human Empire.

Any contact with the humans makes him shy and frightened.

Once, there were thousands of Ashamana, learning the ways of the Akasha and carrying on the duties of the Bloodlines. Now, since the Awakening, the Naga have had few children - and the Constrictors seem to be unable to produce more of their race. It is a sad time, and many say that it is the End of all Times.

Some even say the Naga should have slept forever.

The Ashamana is desperate to prove his place in the world: a young Naga, striving to regain past glories and learn about a world which existed a thousand years ago, before the time of the Great Sleep.

enemies of the Naga: the trolls, who lived in the south, over the range of mountains which the Naga called the "Pillar of the Sky", and the Ratling tribes - then united and strong, very different from the scattered nomads they are today.

But then, the Qatol left the people - and some believed he had been destroyed by the Foul, despite the fact that the Akasha did not record his death. The Qamar had to lay aside the weapons of battle, and take up the instruments of leadership. And so, with the passage of generations, the Qamar has become as much a statesman as a general.

The current Qamar wears his weapon to the palace of the Naga, and refuses to brook any interference in his chosen path. He deliberates before each decision, but once committed, he is unswervable. He inherited his position from the only Constrictor ever to hold the title of Qamar, and the change was drastic - from introspection to active leadership, the current Qamar has given his people new means of engineering building aqueducts, and other wonders. He is seen as a visionary, and there are those who would offer him the title of Qatol, if they believed that he would accept it.

But deep within the Qamar, there is a secret fear. He has seen he future in an Akashic vision,

and he knows that the Naga are dying. The great forest they fill, he has seen destroyed and in flames. Every decision he has made has been forced on him by circumstance, and he has been made bitter. When the Great Sleep was cast upon the Naga people, it was the Qamar who soothed their fears with speeches of glory and visions of triumph.

But he did not believe his own words.

He had intended to die as a guardian to his people, over the years of his great sleep, but even in that he was thwarted. The spell of the Cobra crept through his dreams, and his sleep was long.

He awakened from time to time and roamed the empty forests of his people, seeing them in flames and torn apart by the strange ape-men who came after they had gone.

He listened to their language, and learned their ways. He came to understand that they were not the abhorrent creatures he had thought, but he never forgave them their future: the destruction of his people. He would awaken, fifty years later, and see the old men that the children had become, and when he woke again, he looked upon their graves.

Later, when the rest of the Naga awakened, the lands of the Emerald Empire were a mystery to them. The Qamar refused to have any dealings

DUTY: WARRIOR (5 POINTS EACH)

The Warriors of the Naga are the powerful backbone of the serpent fighting forces, able to understand and pass their general's commands with a swift ripple of the Akasha. Their swift strikes with spear and scimitar tear through samurai armies with force and dedication, and you have only to look into their green eyes to know that they would readily die for their people.

Most Warriors are of the Asp Bloodline, but it is not unknown to see Constrictors and Chameleons in this position as well. They are the soldiers among their people, prepared and trained for a singular duty since birth.

For each Naga Warrior taken as a Past Life, the player character may roll (but not keep) one additional die when using a Great Lesson to Attack. This bonus does not apply to standard Attack options or other combat Actions that do not involve a Great Lesson. Though multiple Warriors may be taken as Past Lives, only three may apply this cumulative effect (i.e. the character may never derive more than 3 additional rolled dice from this Duty).





DUTY: VEDIC

(4 POINTS EACH)

There are two types of Vedic that may be chosen as a Past Life. When buying a Vedic Duty as a Past Life, the PC must decide which type his character was linked to as the Past Life. He only gains the benefit for that type, not both.

Child of the Bright

As the priests, guides, and scholars of the Naga, they fulfill a wide number of roles within their society.

They guide the populace along the path to Atman, and teach and administer the rituals of old.

Characters choosing a Child of the Bright as one of their Past Lives gain one additional die (rolled, not kept) when using a Vedic Lesson or making a roll involving the Akasha Trait.

Child of the Pale

The magistrates of the Naga, they have developed a great many resources to draw upon in their work.

Characters choosing a Child of the Pale as one of their Past Lives gain one additional die (rolled, not kept) when using a Vedic Lesson or using the Research or Investigation Skills.

Though multiple Vedics may be bought, only three may apply a cumulative effect to the character (i.e. the character may never derive more than 3 additional rolled dice from either Vedic Duty).

with the strange, furred creatures known as huu-mans, but did not tell his people what he had learned. Yet as he has grown more comfortable with his solitude, the Qamar's attitude has begun toward tolerance. Praying to the Atman, the Qamar has not declared war upon the humans – only a constant vigilance.

He looks into the eyes of the human generals, and he remembers their grandparents, who walked hand in hand within his forest.

In many ways, the Qamar has a traditional mind, his thoughts filled with memories of the glories of the Naga civilization so long ago. Though the strangeness of the land unsettles him and the foul odor of the Shadowlands permeates the world around him, he has every intention of seeing the Shadowlands destroyed.

The humans may be the inheritors of the lands the Naga once owned, but they are not ready for it. The bitterness which rises in his soul is tempered by his drive to make the humans ready – ready to inherit the vast history which dies with the Naga Empire.

THE SHAHADET

Earth: 4

Water: 3

Strength 5

Fire: 3

Agility 5

Air: 3

Reflexes 5

Akasha: 3

School/Great Lesson: Asp Warrior 4

Caste Rank: 7.1

Advantages: Acute Smell, Combat Reflexes, Immune to Fear, Large, Leadership, Precise Memory, Quick, Quick Healer, Strength of the Earth 2, Venom (Contact Poison) 2, Xenophobic

Disadvantages: Sworn Enemy (Tausha), Insensitive



Skills: Archery (Naga) 3, Athletics 2, Battle 4, Conceal 3, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 3, Hunting 2, Intimidation 2, Lore (Naga Civilization) 3, Lore (Rokugani Culture) 1, Meditation 2, Moksha 2, Rokugani Language 1, Single Strike 2, Sincerity 3, Stealth 3, Swordsmanship 3, Yarijutsu (Naga) 3

Prior to the the Great Sleep of the Naga, the Shahadet was seen as an 'honorary' title, the accolade given to the strongest single warrior in the Asp Bloodline. His duties were to rule the city of Siska and its Asp inhabitants. He was to keep the land safe, to insure that no foreign enemy – the Trolls or the Ratlings – invaded the lands which were sacred to the Naga. Further, the Shahadet was to maintain a standing army, and be prepared to defend the Naga homeland against all enemies.

Unlike the Qamar, whose authority extended over all the Bloodlines, the Shahadet's purpose (to defend the Naga Empire and destroy its enemies) seemed rather archaic. Shortly before the Great Sleep, that venerated old Naga died a peaceful

death – the kind which the Asps find incredibly distasteful. He was found, cold and empty, on his bed in the dawning sun.

The battles for the right to his succession were glorious. Asps came from miles deep in the forest, bringing their courage and their weapons of war. The festival lasted for nearly two months, as each Asp declared his right to contest, and was accepted in challenge after challenge by his fellows. At each test, Shahadet was asked if he wished to kill his opponent, in the ancient Asp tradition, and always, he refused.

But, at last, only two remained. They fought, and one won. He held his sword at the throat of his opponent, and she cursed him. “Kill me,” she hissed before the others gathered around, “for I cannot follow a coward.”

One took the title of Shahadet, the other became the Tausha – and a great hatred came between them that even the Akasha could not overcome.

The current Shahadet is a stern leader, unwilling to compromise, who sees the world in shades of black and white. For an Asp, his connection to the Akasha is remarkable, allowing him to perform tremendous feats of strategy through his intimate connection with his legions. They understand his will as if it were their own, and they listen to his commands with pride and honor.

The Tausha, who should be his right hand and lieutenant, is his greatest foe. She tries at every attempt to undermine his control, to destroy his authority, and to place him in the greatest danger. Now that the Naga have gone to war – however undeclared – against the humans, the Shahadet fears she will betray him, in order to usurp his place among the armies.

All of this, he could understand – but for the fact that she is his mate and his beloved.

He marches east, on Rokugan, and sees the masked humans scatter before his armies, but the victories give him no joy. Most recently, the Tausha has gone north to Kyuden Bayushi, to make deals with the humans called ‘Scorpion’. He wishes her well, and in his deepest heart, hopes that the honor he has seen in the human Empire will teach her the way to forgive him.

He is solemn, much concerned with the trappings of conflict and the reality of war. He is not in any way a coward, and more than once, his willingness to accept a personal battle has caused him to fight against opponents who were his

match. Still, his dedication and courage inspires those who follow him a tremendous loyalty; they would as soon betray their Lord as destroy themselves.

All save one woman, and the elite legion that obeys her every command.

The Chameleon

THE QARASH

Earth: 3

Water: 5

Fire: 3

Air: 2

Akasha: 3

School/Great Lesson: Chameleon Scout 2

Caste Rank: 4.2

Advantages: Amphibious, Higher Purpose (Unite Naga and Rokugani Cultures), Luck (6 Points), Way of the Land (Scorpion Territories)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Independent), Fascination (Rokugani Culture), Gullible

Skills: Archery (Naga) 3, Archery (Rokugani) 1, Athletics 2, Conceal 2, Defense 1, Heraldry 1, Hunting 3, Investigation 1, Lore (Bushido) 2, Lore (Rokugani Civilization) 2, Moksha 1, Naga Language 3, Rokugani Language 2, Shintao 1, Stealth 2, Swordsmanship 1

The Qarash is a lower title within the structure of the Isha's command, a lieutenant of Scouts and protector of the armies.

He was one of the Scouts to first awaken, and the stories of the strange things he has seen have been a linchpin for the Naga's tentative understanding of their Rokugani neighbors. Although the Qarash has been more cautious in his investigations than the Shazaar, his observations have been no less important.

For nearly a year, the Qarash has been awake, and he is fascinated by the strange culture and wonderful inventions of the humans known as “samurai.” He has taken one of their bows in an attempt to understand their ways, and although his skill with it does not match his accuracy with Naga weapons, he is eager to learn.

He serves on the eastern edge of the Shinomen, near the Nirukti ruins (where he found the bow after a fleeing, screaming group of ronin bandits mistook his friendly advances to be the first attack of some horrible Oni from the forest; they were kind enough to leave behind all their

DUTY: JAKLA

(3 POINTS EACH)

Naga pearl-carvers are the foremost spellcasters of the Cobra Bloodline, dedicated to defending their homeland and eradicating the Shadowlands threat once and for all. Their powerful connection to the Akasha is supplemented by their tremendous ability to focus and infuse it with a small piece of themselves before hurling it at their foes.

When they have need, they can summon the force of their spirits, sending a desperate wave through the Akasha pleading for its blessing upon their troops. With this gift, they offer to their unit a powerful advantage, making them of one mind, one soul.

One will.

For each Naga Jakla taken as a Past Life, the player character may cast one additional Pearl Effect in an Element of their choice. For instance, a character with a Fire Ring of 3 would be able to cast four Fire-based Spells if he chose this Past Life once. Taking the duty again could increase this number to five, or raise the number of Spells available in another Element.

Though multiple Jakla may be taken as Past Lives, only five may have this cumulative effect (i.e. the character may never derive more than 5 additional Pearl Effects per day from this Past Life).





DUTY: HERO OF THE BLOODLAND WARS

(5 POINTS EACH)

When the Naga race was torn apart by violence, every Bloodline was affected.

From the peaceful Chameleon to the savage

Asp, every race had opportunity for heroism - or for villainy.

This Duty is one of the former, filled with glory and knowledge of the rightful struggle. Regardless of whether history tells that the Asp were wrong to subjugate their brothers, the Greensnake, there were many on both sides who fought the battle with virtue.

A character who chooses to have been a hero of these wars as a Past Life has a solid sense of virtue, instilled by the unification of the entire Naga race.

They have an easier time understanding the path of duty and faith in the Atman than others do, and they seem more at peace with their past actions. This filters through the memory of their Akashic soul, into their present reincarnation.

Player characters with this Duty gain 1 extra Point of Caste every time they earn Caste. Also, all Caste losses are reduced by 1 (minimum 0).

Though multiple Heroes may be bought, only three may apply a cumulative effect to the character (i.e. the character may never apply a modifier of more than 3 to Caste gains or losses from this Duty).



equipment). Each morning, he practices with it, and works on duplicating the strange arrows which he found in the humans' quivers.

Each new day near the samurai border gives the eager Chameleon more opportunities to learn and more incredible sights to see. He has journeyed (under cover of darkness) north toward the Scorpion lands, and has seen the high walls of Shiro no Shosuro.

From sparkling palaces on wide plains to waving banners and bold laughter, everything about the human creatures fascinates him.

In his deepest heart, the Qarash believes that he is a visionary, on the edge of coming to an understanding of the samurai and their "Bushido."

Perhaps he is. Already, he has heard of a mystic creature known as the "Oracle of Earth", and he is planning a trip to this strange creature's domain. If the creature is as powerful as it is thought to be by the samurai, perhaps it will have some way for the Qarash to hide his identity and walk among the samurai as a brother.

Qarash hasn't told his superiors of this wish - only that he believes the investigation of this

creature known as the "Oracle" is critical, and that his mission may be extremely dangerous.

Certainly, the Qarash's knowledge has brought the Naga a large step closer to an alliance with the humans; an alliance which the Qarash desperately hopes to see accomplished. Even if the Oracle will not help him, he is certain that it will have some advice as to how the Qarash can learn more about the samurai.

If only they would stop screaming and fleeing, then perhaps they would understand that the Qarash only wishes to be companions in a world where allies are a greater treasure than gold.

Perhaps one day, they will understand.

The Cobra

THE SHASHAKAR

Earth: 5

Water: 4

Fire: 4

Intelligence 5

Air: 5

Akasha: 9

School/Great Lesson: Cobra Jakla 5

Caste Rank: 76

Advantages: Abomination (see below)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Insanity), Dark Secret (The Great Sleep's outcome)

Skills: Calligraphy (Naga) 3, Conceal 5, Lore (Naga Civilization) 4, Lore (Naga Myth) 4, Lore (Pearl Magic) 5, Meditation 5, Moksha 5, Pearl Carving 5, Traps 4

Pearls: Hundreds (including several dozen of each Rank at any given time)

Pearl Effects: All known Spell Effects, including those in *Walking the Way*, as well as any of the Named Pearls listed in Appendix IV that the GM requires him to have.



Enigmatic and reclusive, the Shashakar speaks for all the Cobra Jakla, and serves as the leader of the mysterious Cobra city, Vyakarana. His powers of spellcraft amaze even the oldest Constrictors, and the accuracy of his intuition is unmatched.

The Shashakar is the keeper of the greatest secrets of the silent Cobra, the master of Vyakarana's twisting streets and illusions. The Akasha is strong in his soul, and the memories of past Shashakar roll in his mind. He has forever been the Shashakar, reborn, to serve in the position.

The Shashakar has three treasures which make him powerful; an ancient black pearl, a spear formed from the tears of the Bright Eye, and the key to an ancient cave deep within the chambers of Vyakarana, where a massive creature lives entrapped by the magic of the Cobra, long ago.

Between these, and his magic, he could easily destroy the human Empire that has overcome his lands. But for one thing: the Shashakar is quite insane. In all the generations his soul has been reborn through the Well of the Cobra (see sidebar page 38) and not the eternal mind of the Akasha, the Shashakar has become inbred, isolated, and unable to see the whole of the world.

The Shashakar's aides, smaller and younger Cobra who guide their master through the streets of Vyakarana, whisper warningly of the fractures that lace the mind of the ancient soul. They know that the soul of the Shashakar is in need of the wellspring of the Akasha, to wash away the taint of ancient wrongs, and to replenish the will of the soul, the sanity which has been stolen by his continual cycle of rebirth, from one body to the next, controlled by the magic of the Cobra.

But they also know that if the soul were to be released into the Akasha, all the Naga would know of the blasphemies and atrocities which the Cobra have performed in the name of their race. The Naga would

discover the thousands of Cobra who died so that the Great Sleep could be continued, and they will discover the greatest secret of all: it was the Great Sleep which has brought about the sterilization of the Naga race, stolen their eggs, and killed their future.

In casting a spell to keep them alive for a thousand years, the Cobra destroyed their own future. The weight of that burden has broken the mind of the Shashakar, irrevocably condemning him to madness and confusion.

Still, the Shashakar is the greatest Jakla alive today, perhaps the greatest Jakla ever known. Though his mind is broken, his servants bring him the tools and guide him through the rituals, praying that his sanity will return. The other races believe that he is slow to awaken, and that the strange and abhorrent magics which come from his spells are simply anomalies. It is the duty of all the Cobra who serve the Shashakar directly to keep this belief alive.

For now, his silence is mistaken by the other races as a sign of stoic lack of passion; they do not



VILLAIN OF THE BLOODLAND WARS (-3 POINTS EACH)

However, from the struggles of war, also come the souls of villains.

This Duty is one of villainy. Filled with hatred, bigotry, and anger, the Naga who shares the memories of this soul is forever plagued by his past.

There were many - on both sides - who chose to abandon their brotherhood and struggle against unification.

A character who chooses to have been a villain of the Bloodland wars has nightmarish memories of the atrocities which were performed during times of war - made all the more painful by the awakening of the Akasha, and the knowledge that the Naga people are one.

A character with this past life has a difficult time subjugating the anger and pain of his former life, and trusting in the Atman. They will never be at peace with their past.

Player characters with this Duty gain 1 less Point of Caste every time they earn Caste (minimum 0). Also, all Caste losses are increased by 1.

Though multiple Villains may be bought, only three may apply a cumulative effect to the character (i.e. the character may never apply a modifier of more than 3 to Caste gains or losses from this Duty).



understand that his is struggling to resolve the ancient memories of the past. It is all they can do.

He is capable of magic both great and small, but his mind is clouded. He speaks to Naga long dead and cannot keep the present separate from the past. Worse, he has begun to speak of even stranger things, and those around him believe that his memory of past and present is gaining something new: knowledge of the future.

At times, he is lucid, and when those moments come, he is the strongest Jakla on the continent. The oceans boil at his command, and the peals of the Naga gleam with clarity and strength.

But then, the moment is lost, and he shouts for the children killed by the Great Sleep, knowing that he will never rest with their blood on his hands.

The current Shashakar is one of the most obviously abominated members of the Cobra race. Where the Ashlim and others are simply affected by minor, cosmetic changes, the current Shashakar has a tremendous, unretractable hood, faceted eyes, and great catfish-like mandibles.



When he speaks, he uses the power of the telepathic Akasha, for his mouth is nearly unable to create words and form speech. His city lies in the deep forest, surrounded by traps and enchantments as well as the thick mists of the Three Waterfalls.

One day, perhaps he will be sane enough to attempt to undo the effects of the Great Sleep. Until then, the Cobra jakla keep careful watch on their eggs, fearing that one day the pits of Vyakarana will suffer the same fate as the others. And as the eggs of the Naga race begin to dwindle, their fears are realized. Only their foresight will ensure that some Naga are born long after the race has ended.

The Cobra will live forever.

THE TAQUAR

Earth: 3

Water: 4

Fire: 3

Intelligence 4

Air: 3

Awareness 4

Akasha: 4

School/Great Lesson: Cobra Jakla 3

Caste Rank: 5.3

Advantages: None

Disadvantages: Bad Fortune (Nightmares), Soft-Hearted

Skills: Advanced Medicine 3, Calligraphy (Naga) 2, Lore (Naga Civilization) 4, Lore (Naga Religion) 3, Lore (Pearl Magic) 3, Meditation 4, Moksha 3, Pearl Carving 2

Pearls: 6 Water, 4 Earth, 3 Air, 3 Fire

Pearl Effects: Blessings of Purity, Calm Mind, Path to Inner Peace, Reflective Pool, Know the Shadows, Echoes on the Wind, Essence of Air, Tempest of Air, Wind-Borne Slumbers, Sharing the Strength of Many, Evil Ward

The Taquar is expected to be many things – the defender of the Cobra egg-clutches, and the stalwart protector of the young. His magic should be tuned to being a guardian of the ancient places, not to destruction and war. In all the battles of their ancient Empire, the Taquar has never been called away from the great cities. Never been forced into war.

But now, with their resources so perilously low and few eggs being clutched within their sacred halls, each Cobra jakla has a greater duty: to defend the Five Bloodlines. With a heavy heart,

the Taquar has come from the safety of Vyakarana's immortal halls.

The Taquar is one of the Naga of Vyakarana, keeper of Cobra secrets. Though his position is not a prestigious one, he is a proud serpent, willing to do his duty and prove his worth. He has never struggled for advancement, nor sought a different task than the one given to him upon his molting. He knows only the ways of the Cobra, and has never left his city's walls. They are his life; his soul and duty. Until the Great Sleep and the Awakening, there was nothing else for the Taquar.

But now, with the death of so many Cobra during the years of the Great Sleep, he is called to a different service. It could not have been foreseen how long the Sleep would last, or its grave consequences.

He remembers the dreams which came with the Sleep; seeing his friends turn to dust, one by one, as the years passed them by. He saw the great pearl, luminescent with all the colors of the universe, feeding hungrily on the bodies and the magic of the Jakla in order to maintain the Shashakar's spell. And each time the Cobra broke before the bonds of the spell, sacrificing themselves fully, he feared that he would be the next Jakla to fall to the hunger of the Pearl. Yet, each time another was called awake by the Pearl, brought before its shining globe to face another span of years.

When he awoke, their screams were still fresh upon his mind.

But now there is no need for him to stay by the egg-pits. There are few children, and the Shashakar is denying all requests for new Cobra to be born. "They will be needed in the future," the Shashakar and his servants say. "We must not waste them, or the Cobra will die with the other bloodlines. That must never happen. So the Taquar, eggkeeper, is no longer needed.

The Naga who fulfills the position has been sent to use his healing magics alongside warrior Asps and treacherous Greensnakes. He is terrified of this new life, and he is frightened to leave the sheltering walls and enchantments of Vyakarana. In short, he is a coward.

Yet, he must go or be denied rebirth as a Cobra in his next life. If he fails, or does not do his duty, the Cobra will not call back his soul, and he will be lost into the swirling pools of the Akasha, fractured and forgotten.

He has been in three battles, and each time, he has hidden himself with his magic. He's seen

Naga die, and he has known that his magic could have saved them. But still, he hid behind trees and bushes, hidden in shadows and too frightened to act.

Their deaths are his fault, but he hides his shame behind arrogance and disdain. But one day, he will not be able to hide any more, and the truth of his cowardice will be discovered. He is lauded for heroism, as he has repeatedly been the sole survivor of numerous samurai attacks on the Shahadet's armies, and he has been given a respected place within the legions of the Naga Warlords as a personal aide and Jakla.

With the Shadowlands armies approaching, he stands beside the Warlords and prays to the Bright Eye that they will never discover his true nature.

Until then, the Taquar will continue to seek a place where he can withdraw from the fighting, hiding himself until the danger is over. He has never been discovered doing so; he does not know what he would do, if he were.

The Constrictor

THE RADAKAST

Earth: 5

Water: 4

Perception 5

Fire: 4

Agility 5

Air: 3

Reflexes 4

Akasha: 6

School/Great Lesson: Naga Vedic 5


Caste Rank: 7.1

Advantages: Immune to Fear, Great Destiny (Become the Voice of the Akasha), Large

Disadvantages: Driven (Destroy the Shadowlands), Haunted (by the Yasseth)

Skills: Advanced Medicine 2, Archery (Naga) 5, Astronomy 3, Calligraphy (Naga) 1, Hunting 5, Law (Naga) 4, Lore (Shadowlands) 3, Meditation 3, Swordsmanship 5, Theology (Naga) 3

The Radakast is a young Constrictor, possibly the last one born in an age. The beds of the Constrictor people were the first to empty, and their people have had no children since a decade before the Great Sleep. Their line is dying, and with it, all the history and record of the Akasha. The Constrictors are the greatest source of wisdom and forethought in the Naga race, giving



PAST LIFE: COBRA SOULBINDER (5 POINTS)

This Past Life may only be taken by Cobra Bloodline characters.


The Cobra know the secrets of maintaining their bloodline away from the body of the Akasha while still participating in the Naga communal mind. While the methods practiced at the Well of Souls in Vyakarana are not flawless, there are those Cobra souls who have been reborn as Cobra through a number of consecutive lives.

These special Naga, called 'soulbinders', receive the finest eggs to reincarnate within, and therefore have better control over their physical forms. But the constant separation of their souls from the body of the Akasha impaired their use of its powers - and affected their sanity as well.

PCs with this Duty as one of their Past Lives choose one physical Trait (Strength, Stamina, Agility, or Reflexes), which is raised by 1. But all Spell TNs using the Ring of that Trait are increased by 5.

Though multiple Soulbinders may be bought, only four may apply a cumulative effect to the character (i.e. the character is limited to 4 Trait Ranks and +20 to Spell TNs - total - from this Duty).

The starting Trait limit of 4 is ignored for the purposes of this ability.



PAST LIFE: OSEUTH
(6 POINTS)

Few Naga know what it is to be alone, but the Oseuth does. He is the Warrior of the Pale Eye, a thing of legend, intimately connected with the being known as the Pale Eye of Atman - and distinct from the Akasha.

The Oseuth is destined to be fully reborn - and, the legends say, soon. In a way, this means all characters who choose the past life of the Oseuth also gain the knowledge of their dark fate - to die so that the Oseuth can be united and reborn.

However, this terrible omen is balanced by the power and intuition of the legendary Oseuth. Although he is 'distinct' from the Akasha, he is a part of it, but has the knowledge gained by seeing it from a different perspective. The Oseuth is also particularly blessed when under the gaze of the Pale Eye, his benefactor and guide.

PCs choosing this Personality as one of their Past Lives gain one Rank of Magic Resistance (useful against Rokugani Elemental Magic only, not Pearl Magic or Ishiken Void Magic) for each Rank they have in their Akasha Ring.

their resources and their knowledge freely to all the people of the Qatol.

Yet, with the decline of their people to the Foul, there are fewer and fewer Constrictors. They serve in the temples, but many of the hallways are empty, and even the great lights of the observatories of Iyotisha are pale and few.

During his youth, the current Radakast served in the temples of his people, learning the ways of the Akasha and gaining strength of will and of muscle. It was often his duty to guard the walls of Iyotisha, and he stood there for days and nights in a row, watching the stars dance, bringing the light of the Atman to the world.

He became the Radakast (literally, "Star Slayer") many years after his molting. Originally, the young Ashamana chose to be a hunter, to keep his people's larders filled with meat. He was one of the finest hunters of the age, able to track deer and Ratling alike, despite tunnels, rivers, or other obstacles. He could find them no matter where they hid, and his gathering of meat for the day was always the greatest portion of the hunter's kills.

His skills were discovered by the Pale Eye's Vedic, the keepers of Law, and they called him to

their aid. Instead of hunting for food or for trade-goods, he became a hunter of bandits, of Naga who had turned against their people, or who had fled the justice of Atman.

It was in the pursuit of one such Naga that the Naga earned his title of Radakast, and his new position as a member of the Pale Eye's Vedic, despite his birth as a Constrictor of the Bright Eye.

As the judgment-keepers of the Pale Eye levied their case against a powerful Cobra Jakla known as the Yasseth, the Radakast was called to the city of Vyakarana to aid in their pursuit. The lands around Vyakarana are covered in enchantments and webs of illusion that not even the Cobra can pierce, and the young constrictor's skills were sorely tested. Nevertheless, this Cobra was accused of the murder of the ten children of an egg-pit, and he who would become Radakast was determined to see him brought to justice.

The Cobra led them on a bitter chase, and when they finally tracked him down, it was within a great abyss made of illusion and darkness. The Vedic of the Pale Eye fought bravely, their blackened *ghirka-kukhrie* (swords) gleaming dully beneath the light of a distant moon. Yet, one by one, they were overcome by the Jakla's insane magic, their weapons torn away, their bodies captured or crushed by webs of starlight.

At last, they saw him, standing atop a hill of shadow, his abominated face spitting venom and fanged horror. He gleamed with the gathered light of the Pale Eye, and his magic tore at the breath of the Atman himself.

The Radakast leapt forward to assail the Jakla in single combat, and through strength of arms and absolute fearlessness, he was successful. The Jakla fell from his mountain top with a flaming gleam like that of a star, ousted from the web of the Celestial Heavens, and the Lord Vedic of the Pale Eye declared the Radakast's new name, in gratitude.





It has become a position of honor, the guardian and warrior of the Bright Eye, who serves alongside his brothers in the Pale. He still tracks down those who escape judgment, but now his skills have been of more use to the Qamar's armies, finding the creatures of the Foul where they live and breed. The Radakast has had to put aside his personal prejudices and feelings as his job has grown, becoming used to the heavy burden of responsibility, even in the face of his declining Bloodline.

He serves as the Qamar's voice of reason, an advisor to the armies of the Naga, speaking the words of the Akasha itself.

It is said that to anger a Constrictor is to invite the wrath of the stars, and perhaps the current Radakast knows more of the truth of that proverb than the other members of his bloodline. Each night, he hears the bloody Jakla's voice screaming for his blood. The Cobra, he knows, hear it as well, and curse him for his tenaciousness. The Radakast knows that if he should ever fall to the Taint of the Foul, the Jakla he defeated so long ago will be there. Yasseth will take his soul to eternal torment, far beyond the blessed voice of the Akasha. It is a nightmare he has learned to endure.

In this time of war, he has been forced to fight and destroy many of those he might have once sought as allies - the descendants of the Nezumi, among others. He spends a great deal of time looking down on the combat, letting the Akasha guide him. In his mind rings the voices of a thousand souls, and the Radakast knows that the only way to silence them is to understand their requests.

The Greensnakes

THE DASHMAR

Earth: 3

Water: 4

Fire: 4

Intelligence 5

Air: 4

Awareness 5

Akasha: 5

School/Great Lesson: Greensnake Vedic 5

Caste Rank: 8.9

Advantages: Higher Purpose (Stop the War With the Humans), Voice

Disadvantages: None

Skills: Advanced Medicine 3, Astronomy 1, Calligraphy (Naga) 2, Etiquette 5, Law (Naga) 4, Lore (Naga Ruins) 4, Lore (Rokugani Culture) 3, Meditation 2, Oratory 4, Rokugani Language 3, Swordsmanship 2, Theology (Naga) 3

Aged and weary, the Dashmar is a Naga of long years and many burdens. He is the Lord of Nirukti, the city long ago destroyed by humans, during the Great Sleep. He is the Master of its ruin, the inheritor of its pillaged temples and devastated palace. His word is law - law over tangling vines and torporous sleep.

He has no city to pass on to his successor.

Though the Greensnakes have begun to rebuild the crumbling ruins, their efforts are in vain. No single wall of the city remains, but has been desecrated and covered in the filth of years. Where the humans invaded, stealing away the city's glory and magic, the Great Sleep did not cover his city. And, as a result, where the enchantment failed, the Greensnake suffered. Thousands of their people, sleeping beneath Nirukti, died in the course of the silent centuries. Their bodies are lost, crumbled into dust. Rebuilding will take decades.

As a Lord without a home, the Dashmar has been given the task of using his people's unique abilities and insight to contact - and hopefully for a treaty with - the humans and their 'Emperor'. It is a nearly impossible task. It is a duty which the Asps watch with eager condescension, hoping that the Greensnake Lord will fail, and war with the humans will begin on an epic scale.

In this way, the Dashmar's duties are the linchpin of the Naga war: if he fails, the Asp's eagerness for battle will waste their armies against a human foe, instead of the darkness of the Foul that waits in the far south. If the Dashmar cannot stop the war between his people and the samurai of Rokugan, he has all but condemned both peoples to doom at the hands of the Pale Eye's Shadow.

The Dashmar is forced to accept and cajole the humans, the very race which destroyed the ancient and beloved city of his people. He has been asked to put aside his anger and his sorrow at the death of the many Greensnakes beneath Nirukti's soil. They tore apart his home, shattered his city, and by their actions, slaughtered thousands of his people.

Yet he must travel to the court of this great Emperor, and beg him to listen to reason.

PAST LIFE: THE QATOL'S LEGION

(1-5 POINTS)

The serpents of Qatol's Legion took an oath when they gathered, that they would forever serve the Qatol, no matter what life they lead. All those linked through the Akasha with one of the Qatol's original five servants instinctively remember this oath, and if the Qatol calls, they will serve without question.

Members of this elite force know that Qatol may return at any time, arising from centuries of silence to issue a command. As when Qatol ordered the Great Sleep, they obey - even if the command is suicidal. They have no choice; their souls demand it.

Characters purchasing this Duty as a Past Life gain a long-term quest. They can make suggestions to the GM as to what the quest is, and what the conditions are for completing it, but the GM has final say. Examples of such quests include:

- Rebuilding Nirukti
- Finding a lost Naga artifact or relic
- Destroying the Ratlings of the Chewed Fish tribe.

Such quests should be difficult, but not impossible to attain, and should take several full adventures to complete.

When the PC successfully finishes the quest, he gains a number of XP equal to twice his investment in this Duty. This Duty may only be purchased once.

**PAST LIFE:
BHAKARASH
(7 POINTS)**

The First Cobra was known as the Bhakarash, a female who was strong with the spirit of the Bright Eye. Some legends say that she was the wife of the Qatol, but others call her "sister" to the legendary peacemaker.

The Naga do not ask, and the Akasha does not choose to reveal their true relationship. Instead, the Bhakarash's tale is told simply, and her final wish – for secrecy – has been respected through the ages.

The Bhakarash was a strong ruler, and she taught the Cobra their magic, stolen from the pearls in the sea. She is revered for tricking the Atman's Bright Eye into crying. Those tears, it is said, fell across the ocean and became pearls.

But even the Bhakarash could not cause the Pale Eye to weep, and so the dark tears which scatter the ocean are far more rare, stolen from the Pale Eye while it slept during the heat of the Atman's day.

Without her clever tricks, the Naga would have no magic – and there would be no pearls in the ocean.

Pearls handled by PCs who have chosen Bhakarash as one of their Past Lives are considered to be one Rank higher when used for effects generated by the PC.

Such effects include pearl magic, Pearl Jiva, and other effects listed in this book.

Rank 5 pearls are unaffected by this ability.

Age shows on every pore of the Dashmar's face, and his weariness is evident in the Akasha for many yards around him. He is a strong serpent, once filled with joy and wisdom, but now he is a shell of what he once was. He is dedicated to bringing peace between the two people – and there are those who whisper that if he fails, the sorrow will cause his heart to break and send him to his final rest.

The Dashmar moves slowly, deliberately, always as if he carries some great spectral burden upon his stooped shoulders. When he speaks, his voice is resonant, yet sorrowful, dispensing wisdom and intelligence with a weary tone.

THE ISHA

Earth: 4
Willpower 5

Water: 4
Perception 5

Fire: 4
Agility 6

Air: 3
Reflexes 5

Akasha: 3
School/Great Lesson: Greensnake Scout 4
Caste Rank: 6.7

Advantages: Acute Smell, Combat Reflexes, Fertile, Great Destiny (To be the next Qamar), Large, Quick, Way of the Land (Naga Ruins, Shinomen Forest, Unicorn Territories)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Young), Fascination (Rokugani), Soft-Hearted

Skills: Archery (Naga) 5, Athletics 3, Battle 3, Conceal 4, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 3, Hunting 4, Investigation 3, Meditation 2, Moksha 2, Single Strike 2, Stealth 3, Swordsmanship 4, Yarijutsu (Naga) 3

The position of Isha confers great responsibility, and the current Isha is far too young (in the eyes of the Constrictors) for his duties. The lead Scout in the land, this bold Greensnake has been chosen to defend the forests



and seek information about the armies of the Shadowlands (and the Empire), and any who would seek to harm the Dashmar or his retinue.

The current Isha made his way through the Naga castes with a lighthearted laugh. He doesn't concentrate on politics, war, or other "frivolous" things. For the Isha, the object of life is to do your duty – and have as good a time as possible.

He's a bright, cheerful Naga whose demeanor only turns serious when his duty is questioned. It is whispered that a tenth of the eggs in the Greensnake clutches are of his line, and that there is not a female in the Akasha who would not follow his smile.

But he isn't the sort to enjoy his conquests of love. One moment, the Isha is smiling at a female, and the next, he's off on the track of some huntsman, a human lost in the Shinomen or an Imperial scout come to meet with the Dashmar.

The Greensnake people have gone through many trials; since the death of their great city they have become paupers, homeless and hopeless. The Isha gives his people back some of the joy they have lost, showing them ways to

continue their lives despite the troubles that surround them.

He has become a hero to his people, a dashing figure of derring-do that hearkens back to the days when Nirukti was the jewel of the Akasha. Though others have allowed the world to bring them to despair, the Isha has forbidden tears, and when he sees the ruins of the city, he speaks only of the things which will be built on the ruins of the old - homes that, to hear him speak, will make the old ones appear as hovels.

Unlike the serious Qamar and stalwart Shahadet, the Isha seems almost capricious, filled with humor and wry amusement at the state of the world since their awakening. Though many of the older Naga criticize his ways, the Isha has time and again proved his worth; once single-handedly destroying an ambush of skeletal warriors in order to protect the Dashmar.

Yet, beneath the flashing grin and swift arrows, the Isha never forgets his duty. He remains a stalwart companion to the Dashmar, a brave soldier at the forefront of the Naga armies, and a dedicated leader of his troop of archers.

The other bloodlines struggle to cope with the new world; they fight against it, they argue for its destruction, or they seek to capitulate to its encompassing strangeness. Not the Isha. His is the path of self-protection and growth: he ignores the new land so that he can help the Naga grow. Once Nirukti has been restored, perhaps then there will be time for the Naga to learn of humans and their ways.

Others say he would ignore the threat that the humans bring in his dreams of rebuilding Nirukti. The criticisms of his people cut Isha more deeply than he will ever admit. He maintains his bright smile, knowing that it is only the bitter times which cause the words to be said, but with each cut, he loses a little of his heroism. He wishes only to see his people survive. Although the Greensnake eggclutches are not suffering as much as others from the slow decline of the other bloodlines, he fears that this is the time of endings.

"Pain doesn't mean that your last days must be spent in wishing and mourning," he argues. "Spend them, instead, by *living*."

The Isha is large for a Greensnake, his green scales darkened by twilight hours on watch. He is a good-looking serpent, his hair affixed in the way of the Rokugani people (which gives him an 'exotic' look, he smiles), and his bow always

ready at his side. He is a jester, a voice in the Shinomen Forest that issues a wry warning before vanishing away altogether.

THE MARA

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Perception 4

Fire: 3

Air: 2

Akasha: 3

School/Great Lesson: Greensnake Scout 3

Caste Rank: 4.6

Advantages: Fertile, Immune to Fear, Venom (Blood Coagulant) 1, Xenophobic

Disadvantages: Insensitive

Skills: Archery (Naga, Legs) 1, Archery (Naga, Tail) 2, Athletics (Legs) 2, Athletics (Tail) 1, Conceal (Tail) 2, Defense (Legs) 1, Defense (Tail) 2, Etiquette (Rokugani) 3, Hand-to-Hand (Legs) 1, Hand-to-Hand (Tail) 1, Horsemanship 1, Hunting (Legs) 1, Hunting (Tail) 2, Investigation 2, Lore (Bushido) 1, Lore (Naga Civilization) 3, Lore (Naga Myth) 2, Lore (Naga Religion) 2, Lore (Naga Ruins) 1, Lore (Pearl Magic) 1, Lore (Rokugani



Civilization) 2, Meditation 3, Moksha 2, Pearl Carving 2, Rokugani Language 2, Stealth (Tail) 2, Swordsmanship (Legs) 2, Swordsmanship (Tail) 1, Yarijutsu (Naga, Tail) 1

Most Naga do not know their true parentage, but Mara does. Though she was born within a clutch of eggs deep beneath their greatest city, she remembers the day of her first breath, and the defiantly proud echo in the Dashmar's eyes when he saw her crawl from the shards of shell.

Mara knows that the Dashmar is her father, but does not speak of it. It is a secret between the two of them, guarded and hidden. In the meantime, she has learned the skills of a warrior from her time among the Asp, but always retains her dedication to her Greensnake heritage.

Through her Ashamana years, she learned the ways of a diplomat. As a courtier to the Asp and the Constrictor, she learned much of their ways, as well as those of her native Greensnake Bloodline. She has served as emissary and advisor to the Shahadet, the Vedic of Iyotisha, and

even to the secretive Ashlim, when she was sent by the Dashmar to gain the Cobra's assistance.

She was in the city of Byakarana when the Great Sleep was cast, and that is why she did not die with the rest of her young clutch of Ashamana; those who slept within the walls of doomed Nirukti were destroyed by time and the incursions of humans and other, more foul creatures. All of the other children of Nirukti have been lost, her fellows and her friends. While her heart is filled with the suspicion that the Cobra called her to their city's walls knowing that the Sleep would find her there, she does not know if their forethought was an act of kindness, or a sign that they knew of the horrible future for those who remained in Nirukti. Either way, she does not trust the Cobra, or the spells that they cast "for the good of the Akasha."

Other Naga females are content to live their lives within the city, covering their faces with the veil of marriage and giving themselves to the pursuit of monetary wealth and prestige. Mara has seen the samurai-ko of the "Unicorn" Clan of Rokugan, how their horses run and their katana catch the sunlight. Those women, Mara believes, are the future of her people, as well.

Mara knows that she can perform tasks impossible for the ordinary Naga male. Her legs - when she chooses to have them - are strong, and made for running and riding. She hears the tales of the Ashmara, daughter of Qatol, and she sees her own place in the Akasha. It was for this reason that she chose her title ("Mara" is the name of a simple ambassador) and has made it her duty to devote her life to her people.

Yet, to do that, she cannot remain hidden within the cities of the other bloodlines. Mara has been told to remain with the Constrictors, to stay where she will be safe. The Dashmar himself has assigned her duties which will keep her in the Shinomen - keep her "busy" - for the duration of the impending war.

She's already assigned them to her handmaidens. Let them do the routine work of trade and feeding the children in the Children's House. They are proud to serve her, knowing that the Mara has other things to do.

She has spent much time with the Shazaar and her Scouts, learning the tongue of the samurai, and now Mara can speak to them with ease.

Her father's greatest mistake was to make her the Naga in charge of the ambassador known as





the Daini. Though he intended the human to be a challenge which would give Mara very little time for other pursuits, the Dashmar has unwittingly given her the one thing she needs to complete her quest: access to the knowledge and resources of Rokugan.

Where her father seeks treaties and signatures, Mara is considering an alliance of a different – and more permanent – sort. She spends all of her days with the Daini, showing him the ways of her people, teaching him the rudimentary words in the Naga tongue (although he cannot speak it with the ease of the Akasha, he can communicate basic ideas). In exchange, the Daini has drawn her a map of the Empire, telling her tales of its people and culture. He has even begun to teach her how to ride the strange “horses” that the Battle-Maidens rode. Although hers is a small, plump Rokugani pony, she sees the usefulness of such beasts, and vows to learn more.

She smiles at the Daini, and knows the way he looks into her eyes. The man, strange as he is, is falling in love with her. At first, she had planned to use him, to learn from him and then turn his learning toward rebuilding her own people, but now she stops to return his gaze.

She is not falling in love with him. Of that she is sure. Her heart would tell her, and the Akasha would surely forbid it. Wouldn't it? The union of two such distant spirits would surely be as forbidden as the meeting of the Atman's eyes. But when he smiles at her laughter as the pony canters through the forest, she is not so sure of her own feelings. The distance between them is great, but the Akasha is greater.

Where it goes, she will follow.

Mara knows that her skills will be adopted into the Akasha one day, and so she learns diligently, absorbing every word the Daini speaks and asking him numerous times to tell her the tales and ways of his people. She sees the pride on his face as he talks, understands his own interest in her stories, and spends many hours exchanging tales, conversing of culture and of lore. These are the fondest memories of her short life – and when she thinks of the wasted and empty egg-beds of her people, she wonders how many of them will benefit from her learning when her own soul joins the Akashic pool.

But, of them all, her fond memories of the Daini's face and laughing voice are her own, protected by her heart and a single bright pearl

which the Shashakar gave her long ago in Vyakarana...

THE SHABURA

Earth: 4

Water: 3

Strength 6

Fire: 3

Agility 4

Air: 4

Akasha: 3

School/Great Lesson: Greensnake Warrior 3

Caste Rank: 5.5

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Heart of Vengeance (Shadowlands), Immune to Fear, Large, Leadership, Quick, Strength of the Earth 2

Disadvantages: Driven (to Destroy the Foul), Insensitive

Skills: Archery (Naga) 4, Athletics 2, Battle 3, Conceal 2, Defense 4, Hand-to-Hand 2, Hunting 3, Moksha 3, Single Strike 3, Stealth 3, Swordsmanship 4, Yarijutsu (Naga) 3

Cold and callous, Shabura stands alone, an enigma to the other Greensnakes of her Bloodline. Although she was once filled with laughter and childish joy, her life was changed forever by the arrival of the Foul.

When she was still new from the Egg, her entire clutch was destroyed by a strange creature that smelled of Taint and Shadow. Only Shabura escaped, and it is said that as a youngling she used the dead tails of her own clutchmates to strangle the creature. She was found, long after the bodies of the protectors of the clutch had fallen, still beneath the body of the twisted beast. Her hands were tightly clutched about its crushed throat, as if afraid to let go.

As a young Naga, Shabura continued to perform strange feats of strength, far beyond those which should have been possible for a child her age. Although many of these stories have been put off as nothing more than fanciful exaggeration, the Shabura's gift, called her 'heritage', has always seemed more of the Celestial Heavens than of the Shinomen.

She was raised as the only child in a small Greensnake village outside Nirukti. As she grew, her strength grew as well, and her name began to spread into legend. When a great storm crushed the house of her tutors, the Ashamana who would be Shabura is said to have lifted the foundation-rock of the dwelling, freeing them from the stones

KNOWING THE PAST

It is a great boon to be able to recall the past, but it is also a burden. All Naga who purchase Past Lives must be prepared to accept the force of memories which are not their own, pressing down on them and controlling their actions, as their past incarnation struggles to control the new existence.

When a player suggests a past life not covered in this book, the Gamemaster should recommend a non-specific character type (Duty), rather than an individual soul (Personality). Duties are far more common, and Naga souls who have remained for any time in the Akasha quickly lose their individuality.

PAST LIFE: SYBA

(7 POINTS)

During the ancient days, when the Five Cities still warred upon each other, reports arrived that one of the Foul was heading towards the lands of the Naga. The Greensnake sent out a scouting party to investigate. Long was their journey until they reached the borders of the Shadowlands, and saw in the distance a mountain moving towards them. "Quickly," hissed one Scout "go warn our brethren. I shall hold off this beast as long as I have breath!"

Although the beast was within eyesight, it was so huge that two days passed before it was within striking distance of the Scout's bow. Risking death - or worse - she waited in the highest bough of a blighted tree for the mountainous beast to approach. When it finally thundered into range, she saw that it was covered with thousands upon thousands of man-sized creatures, thus providing it with armor.

For every one she slew, another would take its place...

(Continued)

of the house before they could be crushed by their weight.

As a youth, she defeated a titanic mountain bear, holding it aloft above the ground as her companions fled to safety. She ignored the great rents which the bear gouged in her face and shoulders, and crushed the life from the beast with a hug of her own. Its skin still hangs in the bedchamber of her dwelling, and she says it is a reminder of the days of her childhood, before life grew "serious."

And once more, after the awakening came and the Naga people rose from their Great Sleep, the Shabura's great strength saved the life of the Shahadet, her commander. An army of Shadowlands beasts came from the south, invading the forest. The Shahadet and his legion were summoned to fight the creatures, and their arrows and spears proved of little use against the might of one powerful Ogre which led the smaller goblins and mujina. The battle raged on in the cliffs and valleys which surround Iyotisha, and the terrain served the huge Ogre far better than the less-agile Naga who pursued it. At last, the Shadowlands creatures were trapped at the edge of a high cliff, with no place to go save through the advancing Naga legion.

As the others fought bravely against the lesser creatures, the Yushath, lieutenant of her squad, rushed toward the Ogre. With a shout to the Bright Eye, he plunged his spear into its chest - but the point of the weapon shattered and the Ogre was unharmed. As the creature lifted its sword to drive the point into the Yusash's bone and flesh, the Shabura charged.

Her attack was unexpected, and the strength was such that both the Shabura and the huge ogre both plunged from the edge of the cliff, hurtling toward their death far below. The Shabura displayed not only heroism but the titanic strength needed to push a thousand-pound Ogre back ten feet and over a steep cliff.



Yet, when her companions reached the bottom of the large rockfall, the Ogre's bulk lay crushed upon the rocks, but the Shabura was still alive.

She recovered from her wounds and returned to duty with the legion, receiving many glories for her bravery and her strength of body and will.

She is not a loud individual, preferring solitude to the glory of revels, and her quiet eyes speak of her dedication to defeat the Shadowlands foe. If the Naga are to be successful in driving back the Foul, she must have strength of mind and purpose, as well as strength of arm.

The Abomination

ASETH

Earth: 4

Stamina 5

Water: 4

Fire: 4

Agility 6

Air: 3

Reflexes 5

Akasha: 2

School/Great Lesson: Cobra Warrior 4

Caste Rank: 2.5

Advantages: Abomination (5), Combat Reflexes, Immune to Fear, Large, Quick, Strength of the Earth 1, Xenophobic

Disadvantages: Bad Sight, Compulsion (To 'prove himself'), Driven (to face Hida Kisada)

Skills: Archery (Naga) 2, Athletics 4, Battle 2, Conceal 3, Defense 3, Hand-to-Hand 3, Hunting 3, Investigation 2, Moksha 1, Single Strike 4, Swordsmanship 5, Survival 5, Wrestling 2, Yarijutsu (Naga) 5

The life of a true abomination in Naga society is a difficult one. Although the race has accepted them back into the fold, they are treated with disdain and sometimes outright dislike.

Aseth's life has never been easy. Born without a tail, he stands on two sturdy legs – a mockery of the Naga. Even worse, he has the head of a great serpent, unlike the expressive human-like features of the others. Perhaps if he had been female, he would have been more readily accepted, but as it is, Aseth was cast out of the Naga and forced to survive on his own for the first fifteen years of his life.

The Naga believe that an Abomination is plagued by the taint of past lives, unable to move on and become someone new – and that this struggle against the “new form” accounts for their severe mutations. After fifteen years of isolation, hunting with his hands and surviving on wits alone, the Vedic have proclaimed that Aseth is to be welcomed home.

But Aseth still feels that he must prove himself to his people, to force them to accept him. He is an outcast, even within the walls of the Naga cities. He has studied the ancient tales of the Naga, and he has found a secret. The story of an ancient abomination, welcomed as a hero by his people.

Aseth is convinced that this soul exists within him, and he is determined to awaken it from its Akashic sleep. He has

spoken with the Cobra, who have given him a talisman of great power: if he can awaken this soul, his form will at last be at peace, and will change into the shape of his people, with tail instead of legs. But to do so, he must face down, and kill, a mighty warrior in single combat.

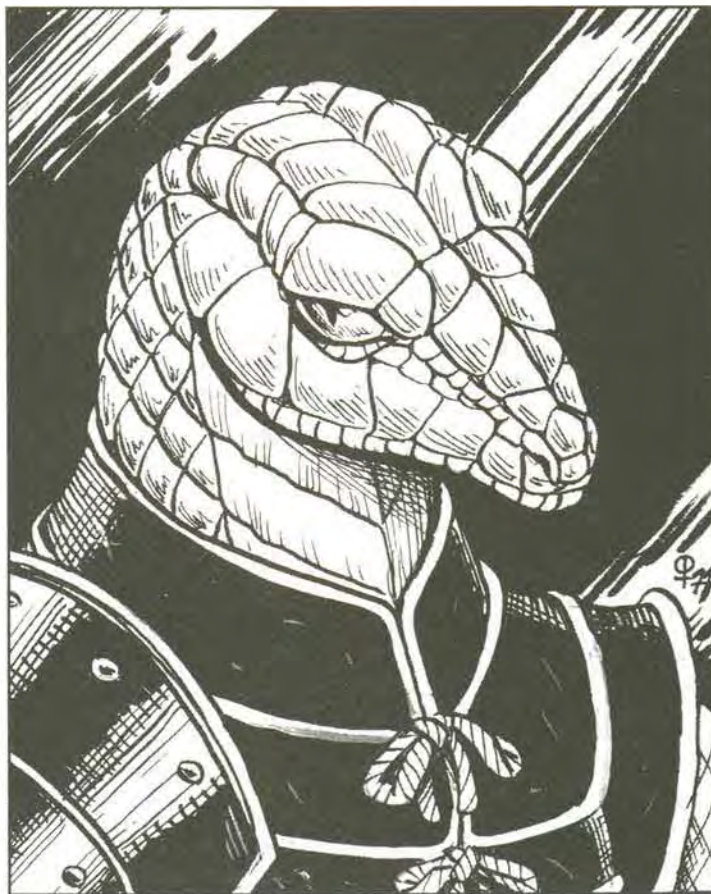
In order to become a legend, he must first defeat one.

The beasts of the Shadowlands hold little challenge: their deaths are not enough to awaken his soul. He must challenge one of the humans – a Champion, the strongest among them – and he must win. Aseth stands on the battlefield beside the Qamar and looks for the worthiest opponent on the battlefield among the humans. That one, their finest, he chooses to fight alone.

He has never lost, but the challenges have not brought about the change within him that the tales and sorcery of the Cobra suggest.

But lately, Aseth has heard another name: one that makes his soul eager for battle and may be exactly what he needs to awaken the talisman and free his tortured form.

That name is Hida Kisada.



PAST LIFE: SYBA

Without hesitation, she propelled herself from the tree, into the multitudes of creatures which clung to their monstrous sibling. Quickly, she ascended towards its head, unafraid of the creatures all around her. Her swiftness was unparalleled. She skillfully dodged the clinging creatures that tried to thwart her, and soon reached its cavernous mouth, the chasm leading to its heart. Scarcely pausing, she plunged into its horrible depths, drawing her bow as she descended down the Foul beast's throat...

A day later, the earth shook as if a mountain had fallen from the sky, and the Naga mourned the loss of a noble Warrior. Since then, tales have been told of the Naga known as Syba – the “Mountain Killer.”

PCs choosing Syba as one of their Past Lives gain the Combat Reflexes Advantage. Also, they receive 2 Free Raises when performing risky or seemingly impossible feats. They also start the game with the Disadvantage: Weakness (Intelligence).



Chapter Five



***Sample Naga
Characters***

Greensnake Bowman

Rokugan.

Since the moment you Awakened, you have heard the name in your dreams. It is a place of mystery and strangeness, and everything you see that comes from the Emerald Empire only makes you long for it more.

The people are pale and strange, their thin legs jolting along the ground. Other archers laugh at the little apes. They call them 'bags of arrows', in reference to the many who have died fighting against your people. You do not laugh.

Once, when the battle was finished, you found a samurai still alive. Your arrow had not struck true, and the man's chest heaved with the effort of breath. When the others were gone, you lifted the samurai from the ground and carried him to your home in the forest.

For three weeks, you tended his wounds and cared for his sickness. You had to cut away his strange armor - the ties and joints were confusing, and you spent many nights in ceaseless labor, trying to repair the damage you had done. He watched you from the hammock slung cautiously from the thatched roof. Although you could not communicate, you felt he understood. You regretted harming him, but your people refused to listen to the words of the scouts, and the Asp demanded battle.

After a week, the man was strong enough to speak, and you tried to communicate your fascination, your regret. He chattered aimlessly, his mind unable to communicate through the Akasha. You listened, studied, did everything you could for him.

You even learned a few words in his language - honor, Kakita, war - and another word. Daimyo. The man was obsessed with his 'Daimyo', and spoke of the man's death often - but you could not understand the meaning.

Two more weeks passed, and the man could stand.

You aided him from his hammock, and he thanked you without words. You could sense his regret as you handed him his weapons, but you flattered yourself that you had forged an

understanding with the man. He would not harm you. That he could lead you into his land, and teach you his ways.

When he drove his sword into his belly, you could do nothing but stare in shock and fear.

The image has haunted you ever since.

You have taken his sword, and sworn to return it to his brethren, whoever they are. Wherever they are. Perhaps they can tell you what has occurred.





Legend of the Five Rings

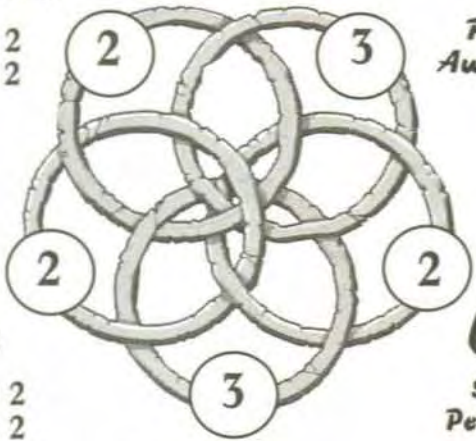
Name: Greensnake Bowman **Bloodline:** Greensnake **Profession:** Scout

Fire
Agility: 2
Intelligence: 2

Air
Reflexes: 3
Awareness: 3

Earth
Stamina: 2
Willpower: 2

Water
Strength: 2
Perception: 3



Akasha
Akasha Points Spent:

Primary Weapon
Bow

Primary Armor
None

TN to be Hit
(Reflexes x 5 + Armor)
15

Skills

Archery	3
Athletics	2
Conceal	2
Hunting	2
Lore (Naga Myth)	2
Lore (Naga Religion)	2
Lore (Naga Ruins)	2
Lore (Rokugani Culture)	1
Moksha	2
Pearl Carving	1
Swordsmanship	2

Insight: 141

Great Lessons

- _____ The Isha's Gift
- _____
- _____
- _____

School: Naga Scout **Rank:** 1

Wounds

4	-0
4	-1
4	-2
4	-3
4	-4
4	Down
4	Out
4	Dead

Advantages/ Disadvantages

- _____ Fascination (Rokugan)
- _____ Great Destiny
- _____ Gullible
- _____ Higher Purpose (Return the Sword)
- _____
- _____

Caste Rank: 3
□□□□□□□□□□

Honor: 0

Experience Points:

Cobra Shadowlands Hunter

"Come closer, child.

"You can hear it speaking, can't you?" The old one's voice was thick and her breath smelled of Foul. The other children had left you behind, returning through the Great Forest, back to the children's house. They left you, crying, unable to follow them. You were small, weak and weary from the day's play. Now they were gone, and you wandered aimlessly, calling their names in the Akasha.

Until, lost and alone, you stumbled into this forgotten cave.

"Sometimes, eggs break..." she whispered, coming closer, "And the darkness gets in through the cracks." She held up a large pearl, and the crack in its bright shell began to bleed.

She kept you there for three days, without food or water, her voice breaking through the bonds of the Akasha, trying to steal your soul. Somehow, you resisted, and when the Constrictors came for you, she was burned, her tail thrashing back and forth, screaming beneath black flames.

The vedic took you to the Ashlim, and he pronounced you clean of Taint. The Foul was not one with your soul, and you were free to commune with the Akasha. But the experience had forever changed you. You could still hear the old one's voice as it whispered, though others could not. In the corner of your eye, you can see the black flames moving around you. The soul of the nameless Cobra haunts you, and you cannot be free of her.

You have dedicated your life to magic, prying the secrets from pearls with a firm hand. Others call you ruthless, but you know that there is a secret, deep beneath the shell of the little brothers of the Atman. There is a way to defeat the Foul, if only they would speak...

... and if you fail, the old one whispers, then the darkness will seep in through *your* shell, and it will have you.

Since your first molting, you have been a student of magic. You aided with the Great Sleep, and you remember the face of the Qatol, when he left his people. Every moment since you have awakened, you can feel the darkness in the south,

calling... calling. Each pearl you carry whispers of it, and when you cast your spells, their shells shatter with the force of stars, falling from the heaven. This is the work of the Foul, the work of the old one who has cursed you. They are one and the same.

You will do anything to destroy them.





Legend of the Five Rings

Name:
Cobra Jakla

Bloodline:
Cobra

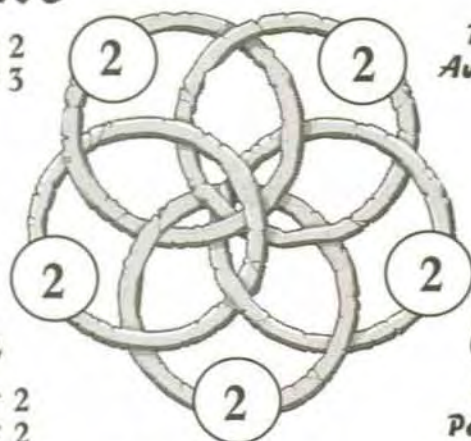
Profession:
Jakla

Fire

Agility: 2
Intelligence: 3

Air

Reflexes: 2
Awareness: 3



Earth

Stamina: 2
Willpower: 2

Water

Strength: 2
Perception: 3

Akasha

Akasha Points Spent:

Insight: 117

Spells

Evil Ward, Immortal Steel, Jade Strike, The Path to Inner Peace, Tomb of Jade, Wings of Fire

Rank 1 Water Pearl, Rank 2 Fire Pearl, Rank 3 Earth Pearl

Primary Weapon

Bow

Primary Armor

None

TN to be Hit

(Reflexes x 5 + Armor)

10

Skills

Calligraphy (Naga)	2
Lore (Pearl Magic)	3
Lore (Shadow)	1
Lore (Shadowlands)	1
Meditation	2
Moksha	2
Pearl Carving	2
Theology (Naga)	2
Tantojutsu	2

Wounds

4	-0
4	-1
4	-2
4	-3
4	-4
4	Down
4	Out
4	Dead

School: Naga Jakla

Rank: 1

Advantages/ Disadvantages

Haunted (4 Points)
Immune to Fear
Inner Gift
(Danger Sense)

Caste Rank: 1



Honor: 0

Experience Points:

Constrictor Spirit Warrior

You were born with no pattern on your scales – only the blackness of night, the sign of the Children of the Pale Eye. You were the only one in your eggclutch so marked, and so your life began as it will most likely end – alone.

The Pale Eye has guided your destiny, and you grew to adulthood beneath the auspices of Law and Judgment. The Akasha did not speak to you as it spoke to others. To you, it was less a guide, and more a jury. When you were faced with someone who had broken the Qatol's Law, you turned to it for judgment. Beyond that, you have never truly felt at home with the Great Mind of your race.

You have visited each of the Naga cities, in turn, when your people were at their prime. You remember the great council chambers where the people would speak, the evidence and banter of the legal council. You remember the joy you felt, when a criminal was given justice, and the solemn honor when you could declare an innocent soul free.

It was your life.

Now, with the Great Sleep and the Awakening, the Naga race faces its greatest challenges. The cities stand in ruins, the chambers of Law have fallen to dust.

The 'samurai,' primitive ape men who have usurped miles of land, destroyed the forest, and burned the relics of the ancient days, must be punished. But first, according to Naga law and tradition, enough evidence must be compiled. A soul must be named as the culprit, and then that soul must be brought before the Pale Eye's Lord High Vedic for punishment.

And that is a task worthy of your great skill and dedication. You have learned lessons from the Asp: how to hide your true purpose beneath the spirit of the Akasha; how to become a warrior in the fight against the dark southern lands. These things will cover your true purpose: to destroy the humans who have ruined all that your society once held up to the Atman's Twin Eyes.

Find out the secrets of the humans. Become their friend, learn their tongue and their customs. Then bring them to the Lord High Vedic, and have them condemned for their crimes. Then the Asp can war upon them all.





Legend of the Five Rings

Name: Constrictor Spirit-Warrior
Bloodline: Constrictor

Profession: Vedic

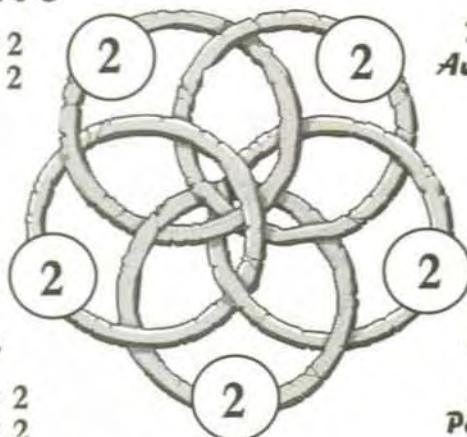
Primary Weapon
Bow

Primary Armor
Light

TN to be Hit
(Reflexes x 5 + Armor)
10

Fire

Agility: 2
Intelligence: 2



Air

Reflexes: 2
Awareness: 3

Earth

Stamina: 2
Willpower: 2

Water

Strength: 3
Perception: 2

Akasha

Akasha Points Spent:

Skills

Advanced Medicine	2
Archery	2
Astronomy	2
Calligraphy (Naga)	2
Knife	2
Law (Naga)	3
Lore (Naga Myth)	2
Lore (Rokugani Culture)	2
Meditation	2
Rokugani Language	2
Theology (Naga)	2

Insight: 123

Great Lessons

Willful Harmony

Wounds

6	-0
6	-1
6	-2
6	-3
6	-4
6	Down
6	Out
6	Dead

School: Naga Vedic

Rank: 1

Advantages/ Disadvantages

Driven
Immune to Fear
Prehensile Tail

Caste Rank: 2



Honor: 0

Experience Points:

Chameleon Emissary

It is a foreign world into which you have awakened: a strange world of marvels and horrors, and you have been told to go and speak to its High Lord.

The humans have told you that their Empire is ruled by a great lord known as the Hantei, and that his magnificent palace lies to the far north, over the mountains, by the seashore. The elders of Candar, the city beneath the sea, have sent you on a mission to speak to this 'Emperor' and convince him that the threat to the south - the Foul and its Tainted minions - must be destroyed at any cost. You have been given a treaty of peace and alliance, and you must return home with the signature of this human Emperor.

If you do not, the Naga will be forced to turn its back on the enemy in the south in order to fight an enemy in the north. The war will be lost, either way.

That must not happen; you can feel it in the bottom of your soul. This Emperor must be made to see reason, to listen to the needs of the Akasha, and to turn his armies to fight against the Foul in the south. You know that there are already madmen in the lands - humans who have given their souls to this bloody magic known as *maho*. They must be avoided, or better yet, defeated and brought to the feet of the Emperor.

Perhaps if he sees the darkness in their eyes, he will realize the danger that is coming. The Second Burning of the Land, the time of strife against the Darkness, is coming. These petty wars against the south are only the beginning. One day, the Foul will raise its head, and the Shadowlands will obey.

The humans call the Foul by many names: The Dark One. The Lying Darkness. Fu Leng. The Ninth Kami.

It is all of this, and more.

Tell the humans whatever they wish to hear. Promise them supplies, armies, weapons and spells of destruction and warfare - but force them to take you to their Emperor. No matter what you have agreed before, when he is told the truth, he will

understand why you had to lie. The political games these humans play are beyond you, but you must learn to smile as if you understand. It is the only way for the world to survive the Second Burning.

The Emperor, this man they call the 39th Hantei, must be made to believe. His armies must turn south, and his people must unite. The soul of the human Akasha must be found, and it must be convinced that the Naga mean no harm to their people. Only then can the Foul be stopped, and in time perhaps, destroyed.

But if you fail, the Shinomen will be besieged, and your people will be slaughtered by these small, monkey-like people with their strange 'honor' and their twisted virtues.

If you cannot survive among them, your people will die.





Legend of the Five Rings

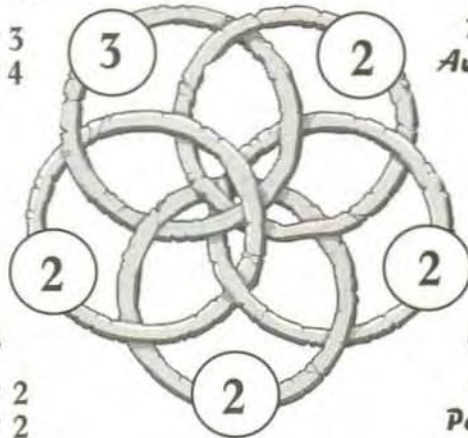
Name:
Chameleon Emissary

Bloodline:
Chameleon

Profession:
Warrior

Fire

Agility: 3
Intelligence: 4



Air

Reflexes: 2
Awareness: 2

Earth

Stamina: 2
Willpower: 2

Water

Strength: 2
Perception: 2

Akasha

Akasha Points Spent:

Insight: 124

Great Lessons

Drawing From the Deep

Primary Weapon

Sword 2k2

Primary Armor

Light

TN to be Hit

(Reflexes x 5 + Armor)

10

(15 with armor)

Skills

Archery	2
Athletics	2
Battle	1
Defense	2
Hand-to-Hand	1
Lore	
(Rokugani Culture)	1
Rokugani Language	2
Swordsmanship	2
Spear (Yarijutsu)	1

Wounds

4	-0
4	-1
4	-2
4	-3
4	-4
4	Down
4	Out
4	Dead

School: Naga Warrior

Rank: 1

Advantages/ Disadvantages

Inner Gift
(Creature Awareness)

Caste Rank: 1



Honor: 0

Experience Points:

Asp Abomination

Three seasons old, you captured a mountain lynx and crushed it to death in your coils. The taste of the meat was sweet and fulfilling, and your warrior nature claimed its life easily.

Although you were an Asp, born in the eggbeds of Siska's most prestigious district, you were an abomination to your people. Your hair clung to your face with the heads of snakes, and your skin was pale and white. Your fingers curled into sharp claws instead of soft points, and your voice sounds like the roar of an ocean wave.

You lived in the Shinomen, alone, from the time you could rear your body from the ground. The Akasha was your guide and your friend, showing you the ways of your people and helping you to live, day by day. You learned how to use your 'legs' from the time of your first molt, and you have scampered among the rocks of the mountains to the north of the Shinomen, using your small size and quickness to shield you from mountain predators.

Just before the Great Sleep, you returned to Siska, guided by the friendly voices of the Akasha that urged you home. You expected hatred and fear, but you were greeted by an aged Asp Warlord, who took you into his care with a smile.

You had come home.

The Balourash taught you weapons and military strategy, everything you would need to fight a great battle against overwhelming odds. He showed you the lore of your people, and opened your mind to the memories of battles long ago fought by the Asp. He taught you of the Atman, and the Pale Eye which guides your spear, and he showed you the sacred places of your bloodline.

When the Great Sleep came, he remained awake, to guard the great city against those who would disturb your sleep. "I am old, child, and weary. I am better here, to guard you."

You never saw him again, but when you woke and found the humans who had stolen the world from your people, you understood the purpose of his lessons.

Leading a group of female Asp on a mission to the north, you returned with the first horses ever captured by the Naga. They were tall and willful, and deathly afraid. With your casual stubbornness, you have vowed to tame them. The word 'Otaku' means nothing to you, and you do not know why the Daini regards the captive beasts with such fear.

You will travel to the human lands, to gain the items you need to make these horses obey – and you will learn to ride them. No matter what the samurai say.

In fact, you have heard of a bloodline to the far north, called the 'Unicorn'. Perhaps they can help you command your new prize...





Legend of the Five Rings

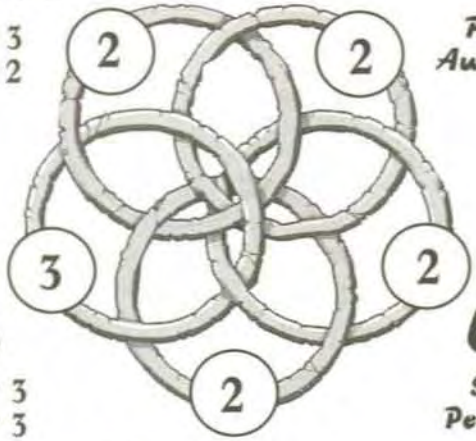
Name:
Asp Abomination

Bloodline:
Asp

Profession:
Warrior

Fire
Agility: 3
Intelligence: 2

Air
Reflexes: 2
Awareness: 2



Earth
Stamina: 3
Willpower: 3

Water
Strength: 2
Perception: 2

Akasha
Akasha Points Spent:

Primary Weapon
Yari 4k2

Primary Armor
None

TN to be Hit
(Reflexes x 5 + Armor)
10

Skills

Archery	1
Athletics	2
Battle	3
Defense	1
Hand-to-Hand	3
Swordsmanship	1

Great Lessons

Insight: 121

_____ Drawing From the Deep

School: Naga Warrior **Rank:** 1

Wounds

8	-0
8	-1
8	-2
8	-3
8	-4
8	Down
8	Out
8	Dead

Advantages/ Disadvantages

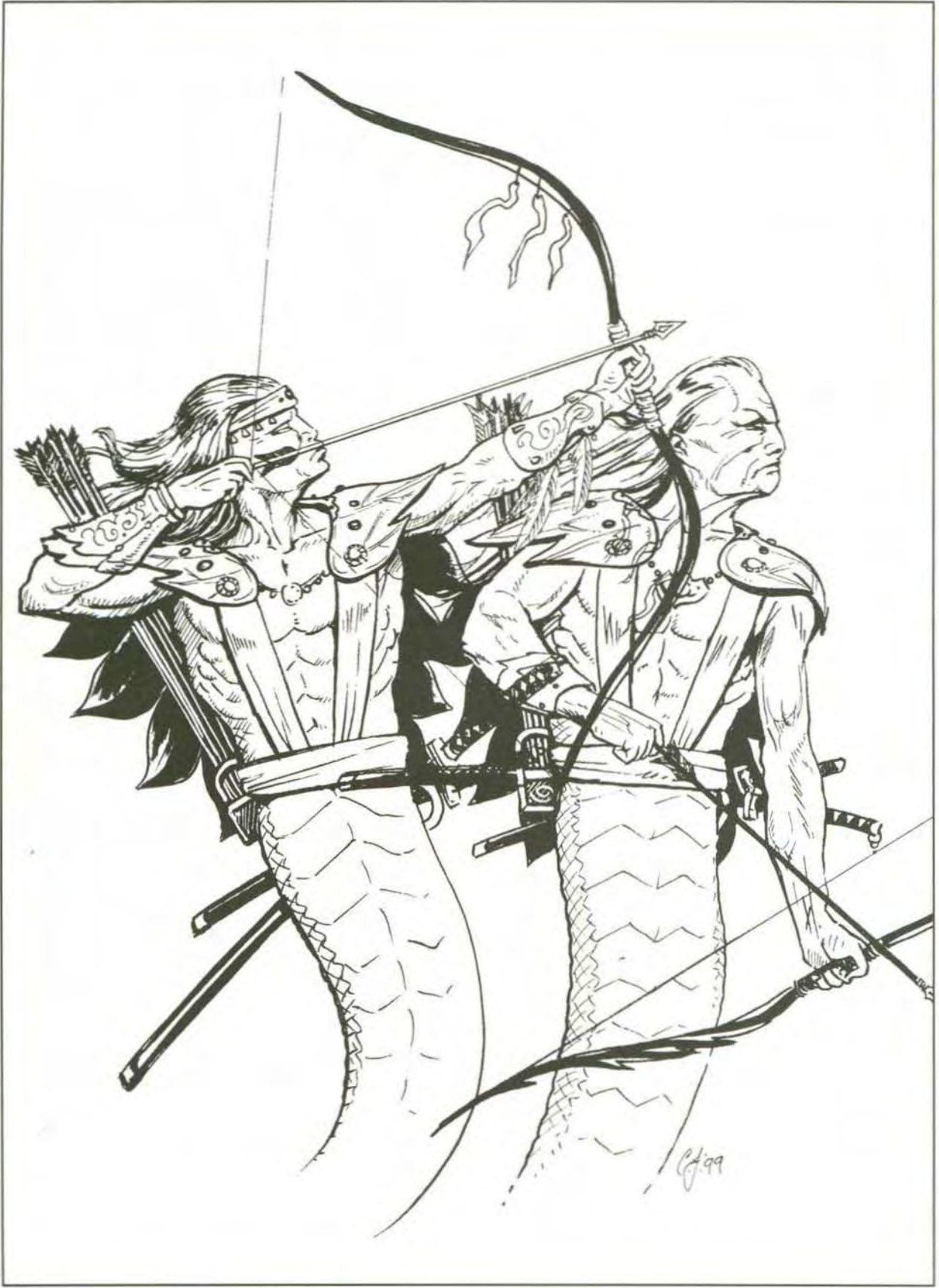
Abomination (advantage)
 Venom (Blood
 Coagulant, Rank
 One)

Caste Rank: 2

□□□□□□□□□□


Honor: 0

Experience Points:



Appendices






THE NAGA HIERARCHY

With the Akasha flowing around and within everything that exists, one would think that every Naga would know his place at all times. All of them would inherently understand which Naga were of higher Caste Rank, and follow their lead without question. But the Akasha is imperfect for the purposes of communication, often relying upon shared emotions or even abstract imagery to transfer an idea from one Naga to another. Also, the Naga are, first and foremost, a practical race – one more concerned with functionality than the social ladder.

Consequently, a system for determining who is in charge among a group of Naga has been developed, simplifying the issue. The foremost Naga is always one who is most capable of handling the current situation (in war, for example, a Warrior is always in charge; when dealing with magic, it is always a Jakla; and matters of the spirit fall to a Vedic). Scouts, who usually work alone or with other Scouts, rarely consider this distinction.



Appendix I: The Shinomen

There are six *vedangas*, or ideals, of major import to the Naga people. These vedangas are: joy (Nirukti), astronomy (Iyotisha), magic (Vyakarana), courage (Siksa), freedom (Candas) and rebirth (Kalpa). Each of the great vedangas are carved into the wall of one of the six Naga cities. Four of those cities lie within the Shinomen, one rests deep beneath the ocean waves, and the sixth is buried in the northern mountains, somewhere to the west of Shiro Ide. Each of their ancient cities are named after one of the vedanga, so that the virtue can be conveyed to all who live within its walls. Five of these cities are home to the five Naga bloodlines, while the sixth, Kalpa, was built by the hand of the Qatol on the day when the Five Kingdoms ceased the Bloodland war and declared peace. Kalpa, now lost to the mountains and the ravages of time, remains aloof from the divisions of birth and blood, and was once considered the homeland of the entire Naga race.

CANDAS

City of freedom, the homeland of the Chameleon bloodline, Candas has maintained the glory and beauty of its former age more readily than other Naga cities. Yet, as it lies deep beneath the waves of Rokugan's warm southern ocean, the Emerald Empire may never see its wonders.

The city's structure and buildings are unblemished, maintained by the ningyo while the Naga were asleep. It is their city, now, as well, and the gold and jewels which lie in its vaults are for the appreciation of both races.

Candas is a wealthy city, without doubt, both in gold and in art. There are those who would pay great sums for a method of traveling to this city – and escaping with its rich treasures.

IYOTISHA

Iyotisha (the name for the Naga reverence of astrology) is the city of Astronomers, once home to the Constrictors and their massive children. The city of Iyotisha did not survive the thousand years of sleep well, but unlike Nirukti, it remained hidden deep within the western valleys of the Shinomen. Its walls, while broken, still whisper the lessons of the Akasha, and the temple of the Vedic priests remains whole. There, the few remaining Constrictors struggle to reawaken the Akasha, so that their purpose can be known. They seek to understand the strange world around them through communion and meditation, hoping that their path will become clear as the Great Mind unfolds into awareness.

KALPA

The greatest city of all is not currently within the boundaries of the Naga homeland. Long ago, the Shinomen forest covered far more land than it does today, and its borders encompassed the mountains to the north and south. Somewhere to the far north, the city of rebirth lies buried beneath the rubble of earthquakes and the passage of time. Kalpa has been called 'the wonder of the land', and supposedly contains the Temple of the Bright Eye, (the Mahal) burial place of the ancient Qatol. The spirit of the Qatol, leader of his people and the first Naga within the Akasha, remains within his city, protecting it and offering his wisdom to all that come before him.

The city of Kalpa was once the homeland of all the Naga bloodlines, and was a place of peace and understanding even before the terrible Bloodland Wars. It is said that no Naga has ever shed blood there, and that no spirit could be troubled within the walls of the Great Mahal. Yet after the Naga have awakened from the great sleep, no word has come from the Naga within the northernmost city, and the race considers them dead. Many of their souls have been found in the Akasha, speaking disjointedly of earthquakes, fire and war, but no lesson has been brought forth by the Constrictor Vedic to explain the loss of Kalpa's lore.

SIKSA

The wall surrounding the city of the Asps tells a tale of fire and courage, and is located within the lower portions of the Naga forests, near the lake known as Sumda Mizu Mura. It still stands, in golden splendor, though its walls are encased

in moss and the mighty plain has turned into a valley within the forest's depths. The Shahadet makes his home here, governing the land of the Asp with firmness and ruthless justice.

Within Siska's walls lies the source of the River of the Sky, and the place where the great general of the Bloodland Wars was at last captured by the spell of the Cobra Jakla and the betrayal of the Shahadet. Once per year, the Shahadet and his personal legion travel beneath Siska, to bather in the waters at the source of the Holy River. There, they commune with the warriors of the past and face their fears in combat on a vision quest.

Whenever a new Asp is inducted into Shahadet's legion, he is bathed in the river by his comrades, who tell him of his faults, and how to overcome them. Once he has been bathed, he is left alone in the waters to meditate upon his place in the Akasha.

It is said that while there, the Warlord will see a vision of the place and manner of his own death, that he may reconcile his soul to its passing, and thus, never again know fear.

VYAKARANA

Vyakarana, called by some the 'City of Magic', lies deep in the mists of the Shinomen, in a valley that is enshrouded on three sides by magnificent waterfalls. There is no wall to the city, and the Cobra who live there say there are no bridges across the three mighty rivers. Even other Naga consider it to be a place filled with ghosts and memories, and some Constrictors whisper that the mists do not come from the waterfalls, but from the Akasha's nearness.

The city is covered in webs of magic that even the Cobra cannot unwrap, hidden by their arts amid a warm, jungle environment. Few have been there, and those who have say that the city of Vyakarana still sleeps. Certainly, the oldest of the Cobra have not yet awakened, leaving their eggbeds cold and their fires low. Those who have, including the great Shahakar, protect the sleepers with their spells - and their lives.

There is a hidden legend among the children of Cobra, that each Cobra soul will eternally be reborn only within its bloodline. Here, in this city, are the wellsprings of that myth. Great wells of water, deep and fathomless, are said to hold drops of blood from all Cobras born, so that when their body dies, their soul will return to those wells, to the drops of blood which they left behind. The Cobra bathe each birthed egg in these wells,



enchanting them to receive the wealth of souls which await them there - and ensuring that the Cobra remain within their own kind. This enchantment, and the 'inbreeding' of Cobra souls, undoubtedly causes the Cobra to have a greater likelihood of abominations, as they are not freed of their past lives through the body of the Akasha, but only through a stream of the Akashic flow.

But this much, the other bloodlines do not know: the legends are at least partially true. The wells exist, hidden behind vines and the shrouding mists of the three towering waterfalls. Each Cobra bleeds seven drops of their blood into the wells during their first molting, before the Cobra allow them to leave the city of Vyakarana. These drops are enchanted with a powerful spell, and then released into the wellspring proper. The souls of those who return are reborn within the Akasha - but safe from expanding within the eternal souls of the Naga race.


Of course, this method is not entirely accurate, and the souls of the Cobra occasionally grace the eggs of other bloodlines. Yet it is a holy ritual to the Cobra, who believe that it has allowed them to maintain the deepest secrets of their bloodline for centuries, apart from the other races of Naga.

NIRUKTI

The youngest of the six cities (by Naga standards) is the vale of Nirukti. It lies very near the Asp homeland, within sight of Siska's golden walls. The Greensnake once lived within its passages and winding roads, and a great river twisted through the trees, crafted to spill through the homes and gardens of the Naga, and bring cool water in all seasons of the year. However,

THE NAGA HIERARCHY (CONTINUED)

Within a number of Naga whose function is needed most, Akasha determines the chain of command. Mechanically, this means that a Naga of the appropriate School with the highest Akasha Ring would lead, while others would follow or lead subordinates according to their own Akasha Ring. Ties at this level are always broken by a character's Discipline.



NAGA ARMY COMPOSITION

Under most circumstances – and especially when moving – Naga forces are divided into cells of 5-10 Warriors, Vedic, and Jakla. These cells form loose ranks, marching some 200 feet apart from one another, with additional ranks some 500 feet behind. Naga cells always form a “V” shape, pointed toward the direction of their march. Generals are usually placed toward the center of a rank, while their subordinate commanders are among the cells farthest to either side.

Naga command structures are formed in increments of 5. A cell is led by a *dukhva* (“Corporal”). Five cells – and their *dukhva* – are led by a *sparsa* (“Sergeant”). The forces of these five *sparsa* are in turn commanded by a *prayatna* (“Captain”), whose sum force equals between 155 and 310 Naga (depending on the size of the cells involved). *Prayatna* are commanded by the Warrior with the highest Akasha, according to standard set in “Naga Hierarchy”, pages 108-109. This Naga could be an Isha, or a Balash, or of another named position.

gentle Nirukti, City of Joy, did not survive the ravages of time. It lies now, ruined and destroyed, the favorite expedition place of brave samurai who dare the forest. Because Nirukti lies near the Shinomen’s edge, the city has been picked clean. All the beautiful sculptures have been destroyed, defaced, or removed, and the once-proud buildings are fallen to ruin and decay. Spots where fires have burned mar the stone streets of the Greensnake city, and corpses of bandits litter the ancient temple. Even the Akasha stays away from the city, warning of angry souls who refuse to abandon its fallen walls. The Greensnake prefer to live among their cousins rather than journey to Nirukti, and their fear seems justified. The Great Temple of Nirukti is corrupted, smelling of Taint and Foul, and guarded by the blackened statue of the Qatol. The statue, once gold and silver in reverence, is now broken at the waist – as if he had fallen in battle – and has become permanently stained as black as night.

The Nirukti Ruins

Because Nirukti has been the most prominent source of information about the Naga for the thousand years of the Great Sleep, many humans have visited the site. Its broken walls and ravaged buildings have been thoroughly mapped, and every inch of its territory has been charted. The city itself is still evocative of Naga architecture and provincial development, although the other four major cities held by the awakening Naga are in far better repair than the city of the Greensnake bloodline. Below, we present the observations (correct and otherwise) of Rokugan’s greatest archaeologists and explorers – along with the actual purpose of the buildings they are investigating. Imagine their surprise when their carefully cultivated research was refuted – by the maker of the ancient city, himself! See page 124 for the map of the Nirukti Ruins.

I. OBSERVATORY

This building seems cut off at the top; perhaps it contained a shrine, or other sacred place, consecrated to the sky. Or, as it is almost certain that the Naga were creatures of the forest, perhaps this building contained the structures needed to travel from treetop to treetop, as the snakes of the forest do...

– Asako Bakuji

The tower at the center of this building once loomed up through the treetops to afford an unobstructed view of the sky. At the top of the gently sloping tower was a small flat platform on which vedic rituals to the Bright and Pale Eyes were performed. Further, the many windows and spiraling balconies of the tower once contained devices for charting the movements of the orbs in the Celestial Heavens, to better plan the planting and harvest.

Only two thirds of the tower stands now, and the thin ramp that spirals up the outside is marred by dangerous gaps. Within the tower are many small chambers where the Constrictor astronomer and vedic lived, and the building that surrounds the tower once housed a small school for devotees of the Bright Eye who had chosen to follow the path of the astronomer rather than focusing on the more traditional religious studies of Naga vedic.

2. PALACE

A grand building, most likely a palace to their Emperor, or a shrine to the Seven Fortunes – or whatever gods these creatures worshiped. The walls were once formed of gold, no doubt, before some bandit stole the wealth, and may have been enchanted at some time. My Kitsu companion senses no spirits here; the place is not haunted by the dead. I am more willing to believe that this place was an audience-hall for some great daimyo, rather than a place of worship, as there are no statues of primitive gods in evidence.

– Ikoma Mudokimi

The ramps which mark either side of the entrance are in obvious deference to the curve of the Elements – it takes a well-grown samurai five paces to march up either of the ramps, five being the number of elements in the Celestial Heavens. These Naga were certainly aware of the paths to Enlightenment; whether or not Shinsei ever visited their culture has yet to be determined.

– Agasha Raigede

Mostly hollowed out, its interior fallen to ruin and its flanking domes crumbled, the palace is now a haven for bandit hordes. Every once in awhile, troops from the Scorpion or Crab lands come in and roust the bandits out of the ruins, capturing or forcing them to flee. Because of all the battles, the walls of the palace are scarred and chipped away, leading to the popular myth that

the entire palace was once made of gold; that something valuable once adorned the walls as well and was roughly torn away.

The central dome of the palace (the only place which *was* once covered by thin sheets of gold) is still intact, though tiles have fallen here and there and the gold that once encased it has long been pillaged. The roof is made of thin, shaped stone tiles which were tightly fitted together, and adorned with gold and softly colored inks.

Two large ramps lead from the flanking entrances, the winding paths swooping down to form twin bridges over the reflecting pool in front of the palace. These paths, and the twining snake figure over the main archway, symbolize the peace and harmony that the Greensnakes valued so highly. The Naga built them, of course, because they are unable to climb stairs; the Naga culture never invented stairs. Each is approximately large enough for one Naga to enter, the length allowing a typical Greensnake to lift his entire bulk off the ground before his body entered the palace.

Today, the left bridge has partially sunk and the crystal obelisks that once stood before the main entrance have toppled. Firepits mar the outer grounds, as well as much of the front and inner hallways, and many of the rooms have been thoroughly destroyed by siege and battle.

3. LIBRARY

An abominable place; one of torture and punishment. It seems the Naga were not as civilized a culture as we, and left their criminals to die from hunger and disease.

No less than twenty tall spikes stand within this building, each capable of holding three men aloft upon their bulk. Chains hang from several sections of the tall steel poles, holding remains of what can only be manacles or other torture devices.

There is an upper balcony, as well, where the judge no doubt would read the sentence of condemnation to his victims. A cache of shredded metal lies in one corner of the room; whether implements of the cruelties of this place, or otherwise, I cannot say.

– Kakita Hajime

A place of hideous sacrifices to primitive gods. A foul and tainted chamber. I will say no more.”

– Hiruma Ujaken

This building once housed a wealth of ancient scrolls that recorded Naga culture, knowledge and daily life. Although the Naga trusted the Akashic record to maintain the important facts of their history and memory, the library (unique in Naga lands) served as a substitute for the Greensnakes, whose souls are not as close to the Akasha's lore.

Of course, these treasures have long since been lost to time, fire, the elements and robbery. All that remain within are spiraling steel spikes, which once held stone shelves on thick chains. The rows of empty scroll racks would be placed upon the stone shelves, both near to the ground and high above it – a Naga could simply lift his height upon the bulk of his tail, reaching for a shelf far above a human's normal grasp. Only the





NAGA TACTICS

Naga rely heavily upon their Scouts and the power of the Akasha during times of war. Their tactics revolve around the exploitation of these two resources, focusing upon advance warning of an enemy's approach and near-instant lines of communication between their troops. Naga Scouts are always sent out in all compass directions from a Naga force, so that enemy units cannot sneak up on them from an unexpected direction, and to warn of approaching enemies in time for the Naga to swivel and meet them facing the proper direction.

At the outset of an engagement, the outermost cells of a Naga force split away from the main body and attempt to flank the enemy, while the center unit(s) - generally commanded by the highest-Akasha Warrior on the field - approach defensively. This center unit is used as a decoy to lure the enemy forward toward the rest of the Naga forces. When the enemy is close to touching the command cell, it slowly withdraws, drawing the enemy between widening ranks of Naga.

chains and twisting steel poles remain, skeletons within the large chambers of the library.

The upper balcony that once served as a reading room has now been broken open to the air above the main chamber of the library. An attached wing at the back once housed scribes and scholars.

Some say a secret chamber lies within the library, where the Naga stored their most treasured texts, but no one has yet discovered such a place.

4. TEMPLE

The huge doors of this building show an obvious reverence to the kami. They were made so large in proportion to the other buildings of the city because the Naga were a deeply spiritual race.

- Asako Bakuji

Now mostly ruined, this was once a temple to the Akasha, where the Naga went to meditate, celebrate and perform religious rituals.

Because this temple was the home of the visiting Constrictor, and the lone High Vedic of the city, the doors to the building were significantly larger than in the other (more Greensnake-oriented) buildings of the city. The aperture is over twice as wide as in other parts of the city, second only to the doors of the observatory (also a place where the Constrictors in the city chose to stay).

Although there were some few Greensnakes who became vedic, the primary religious leaders of the city (as in all cities of the Naga Kingdoms) were of the Constrictor bloodline.

5. HOUSES

...a number of small, round huts not unlike the peasant villages of our own culture. The Naga seem to have been a very stratified race. Their peasants lived to the south of the body of the city, and their nobles and samurai lived within the larger buildings - the arched 'palace' and the thicker stone pagodas. Yet, there is no sign of eta habitations - or, as my companion rightly points out, these were of poor construction, and have been worn away completely by the passage of time.

- Kakita Hajime

The only question, then, is why did the Naga choose to build their houses from stone, rather

than wood, which is abundant? Their homes must have been warm, indeed, from the heat stifled within their huts and houses. Or perhaps the weather of the land was not the same at the time, tending toward colder climates such as are found in the Phoenix and Dragon lands.

- Ikoma Mudokimi

A few simple rings of stone are all that is left of the small, round houses that served as family homes. Once large enough to hold as many as three Naga (typically, a male and female mated couple, and one apprentice from the Children's House). Now, the circular walls and leaning stone rooftops which remain serve as shelter for passing travelers. Cold fire pits and other refuse can be found within most of them, and parts of their wall have been carried away by peasants who wished to place a 'Naga stone' within their own house for good luck. Of course, that meant that a large amount of the loose or small stones have been carried away. This tradition flourished during the time of the seventeenth Hantei, and was a considerable reason for the degradation of the buildings in the city of Nirukti.

The remains of a wide cobbled plaza are here as well, the buckled tiles betraying a pattern of sinuous shapes and spirals. Once, the stones were colored with paint or other dye, but now they are muted and scratched, and most of their colors are indistinct and worn away.

6. OBELISKS

If only we could read the strangely connected kanji on these stone monoliths, we might be able to learn more of their odd culture...

- Ikoma Mudokimi

Long ago, four stone obelisks marked the entrance to the city of Nirukti, and four more marked the beginning of the path that leads to the palace. Only two remain by the road (one of which is toppled); and the fractured lengths of two more stand at the gate to the palace.

Peasant superstition says that one of the monoliths was taken by Togashi long ago and now stands in a place of honor in the Dragon Clan Mountains as a tribute to the lost race. What became of the other missing stones is a mystery. The stones that remain bear intricate carvings and Naga script that welcomes visitors, and also warns them that breaking the code of the Qatol's Law will not be tolerated.

7. BATHING POOL

A pool for fresh water, circulated by handmaidens and peasants within the city. The source of the water is certainly the nearby river, from which water was carried in buckets or (if the race was cruder), skins."

– Hiruma Ujaken

This pool, lined with decorated stones, once served as a bathing place for the Naga. Large, flat rocks on the banks and within the pool provided places to relax in the sun and meditate.

The pool once had its own water source, now dried up and blocked by the shifting of the land. While the pool is obviously shallow and the water which remains is clear, human swimmers have reported feeling 'scaly shapes' twining around their legs. No one has ever been harmed, but the unsettling sensations have kept most people from bathing in the small pool.

8. HATCHING HALL

Once a glorious estate, the building has become little more than a pit for refuse and filth. Eta must be brought to clean it; it cannot be studied as it is.

– Kakita Hajime

Now mostly fallen, this building was once the place where eggs were placed in eggclutches, tended by Greensnake attendants until they hatched. The hatching pit is now lined with mulch and has been sullied by humans who have seen fit to use it as a refuse pit. To either side of the central bowl, wide troughs line the walls, where fires once burned at all hours of the day, keeping the pit warm with their glowing coals.

9. PAVILION

It is a wide, ceremonial ground upon which rituals for the harvest, and announcements of public law were made. It is possible that judgments were proclaimed on this mound before the prisoners were taken to the Torture Chambers. The Naga people were certainly ruled by a single leader, who used this as his personal pavilion or dais. Possibly, as with some of the peoples recorded in the Burning Sands, the Naga believed that their leader was an immortal; a God himself, rather than the child of a god made mortal.

– Asako Bakuji

Once a place where public announcements and speeches were made, this open structure of a dome atop ten pillars is remarkably intact. The dome is decorated with complex patterns of colorful mosaic and acts as an echo chamber, amplifying any sounds made within. Most humans find this unsettling, and report that ghostly hissing sounds often answer echoed voices. Legend has it that a blessed pearl is buried beneath it, preserving it from the ravages of time, but the eerie aura of the place has prevented anyone from attempting an excavation.

10. CENTRAL PLAZA

Their use of jade in construction shows that the threat of the Shadowlands was known even to this culture; they could not have been lost so very long ago. These must have been built no more than the few years between the fall of the Kami, and the rise of the Empire.

– Hiruma Ujaken

The large tiled disc here bears worn carvings that depict the Greensnakes' dedication to peace and diplomacy. Precious gems once adorned the carving, but have since been pried up and stolen. Four arches and four obelisks surround the plaza. The south arch has toppled, but the other three remain mostly intact.

All of the obelisks bear signs of ruin and southwestern one has cracked in half. Within the obelisk is a core of pure jade. When it was whole, the plaza served as a place of judgment and punishment. The four jade-cored towers formed a powerful magic circle which revealed evil. Now, trespassers eager to renew their supply of jade have chipped much of the broken obelisk away.

11. MARKETPLACE

"...perhaps they were not so different from us after all. I wonder what they would say, these once-great creatures of myth, if their dead voices could reach out to us, and speak of their last days.

Perhaps one day, through years of research and study, we shall know."

– Asako Bakuji

These remains are what are left of the trading district, which extends beyond the edge of the map to the west. These buildings were where craftsmen made and sold their goods. Pottery, tools, jewelry and other sturdy items are still found in these ruins on occasion.

NAGA TACTICS

(CONTINUED)

Hopefully, by the time the enemy force closes on the command cell, they have unknowingly passed the first rank, which pounces on them from the sides (possibly supplemented by the outlying cells, which may have completed their flanking moves). At this point, the enemy forces must fight a three-sided battle, and most will either rout or be overrun.

The Naga standards of spreading their cells over great distances and fighting defensively work exceptionally well over rough terrain, and allow them to successfully engage armies much larger than their own. The most discernible flaw in their stratagem lies in their reliance on Scouts. Should a force lose its Scouts, its tactical superiority would be shattered.





Appendix II: Hidden Places

There are places within the depths of the Shinomen Forest that are unknown - some even to the Naga who have now returned to live there. Some of these isolated spots have been created over the last thousand years, while others have existed for as long as the forest has stood; a mystery to the Naga, as well as to the Emerald Empire.

Many of these places are enchanted, either of their own means, or affected by strange ripples of

the first Jakla's Eternal Spell. There is no way to know which of these myths and legends (if any) are true, and which are the stories of fools. Nevertheless, these are the tales told about the deep forest. These are the place even the Naga do not go.

FIRE POOL OF PURITY

*In a remote forest lies a still, empty cave
Devoid of a soul.*

*In a remote cave, flickers the endless lights
Of suffering.*

*In a single, lonely pool by the riverside
Burn the Fires of Purity.*

- Mirumoto Kojuri

Deep within the boundaries of the Forest of Shinomen, a strange phenomenon awaits. It is called the 'Fire Pool of Purity' by those who claim to have visited its shores, and it is thought to lie in the rocky shoals of the river which bisects the great forest.

It is a place, they say, of purity and enlightenment, where Shinsei once rested and drank. Since that day, the pool has shone with an



unnatural light – a flame, some say, that does not burn.

However, those souls who have attempted to go to the healing pool and draw out its magic are often unable to complete their journeys. Skeletons litter the marsh, and the river itself twists through caverns and areas impossible to follow: it is not a trustworthy guide to the Pool of Purity.

But those who have successfully foraged through the Shinomen, conquered its deep magic and fought their way through the beasts and dangers of the marsh say that to bathe in the pool will destroy all trace of Shadowlands Taint from those who are pure of heart.

Its healing capacities, too, are recorded in the High Histories of the Lion. A group of Lion scouts, led by Ikoma Bakenin, once traveled through the forest to the pool, and only Bakenin returned. He came back wounded, weary and near-death, carrying a single container of the precious water.

With it, he was able to heal his Lord from the poison of a *tsanuri*, the snake whose deadly bite has no cure. His lord, it is said, sprang from his sickbed with the strength of a hundred men, and carried his own steed through the gates of Ikoma palace, as his men cheered his recovery.

This story may be apocryphal, but there are those who say that the Ikoma still have a small amount of the water from the Fire Pool, and that the sacred magic which gives the water its properties cannot be denied.

THE WATERFALLS OF SHINSEI

The River of the Sky weaves through the forest of the Shinomen in great, wide trails, often becoming lost in its own coils. In some places, it vanishes below the ground, only to reappear several miles later in another desolate section of the great forest. Long ago, a venerable Lord Vedic of the Bright Eye blessed it with a powerful enchantment that would forever keep its holy waters pure. Even today, the silvery river shines with a gleam unlike any other in the Emerald Empire.

In one place, to the far north of the forest, the river's glory is truly evident. Cascading over a series of rocks and down into a clear, majestic pond, it is called by the Unicorn wanderers who first discovered it 'the Road to the Sky'. There, the beautiful, lush river falls nearly 100 feet from the cliffside into a small, forested dell, its spray turning the area into a curtain of shimmering glass. The clear quartz crystal in the surrounding

rocks echo the sunlight, and for a few hours each day, the dell is a place of rainbows and mists.

Although no magical phenomenon has ever been recorded at the falls, many say that it is a place of mystery and wonder. Many samurai-ko, in particular, make the journey to this magnificent spot, to dedicate their soul to the bonds of fealty, and to purify themselves in the gently falling water.

GATES OF PERSISTENCE

Just within the forest, near the southern hillocks of the Crab lands, a magnificent torii shrine was built. The legend of the gate centers around a poor man and his only son.

During the third century of the Empire's founding, a poor samurai named Kaiu Sudaro lived in the lands of the Kaiu. He was no true samurai, and had been reduced to the life of a stonemason in order to feed his family. Sudaro only had one son to lighten the burden of his days, but that child was his greatest joy. A great Scorpion Lord came to Sudaro, and demanded that the man carve a torii arch to place at the gate to Scorpion lands, that travelers might recognize that they were passing into the territory of the Bayushi, and know fear. Sudaro did so, but when the Lord came to collect his monument, he noted a single flaw in the stone. So enraged was he that the Bayushi destroyed the arch, shattering it into a hundred pieces. He took Sudaro's six-year-old son as well, claiming that the boy's life was just payment for the parent's failure. They rode to the north, and Sudaro followed them.

When the Scorpions entered the forest of Shinomen, the boy cried out in fear. As a jest, the Bayushi tied the child to a tree during the night, daring the forest to take the boy.

The next morning, Sudaro arrived, and found the remains of the encampment. The Bayushi were dead. Fearing for his son's life, Sudaro called to the boy, and was answered.

The child told a strange tale of serpent-men and how they had rescued him from the Scorpion. They had vanished into the wood, the boy said, as soon as he recognized his father's voice.

Knowing the stories of the Naga, Kaiu Sudaro vowed to thank them for his son's life. Over the next four years, he carried a single block of stone from the mountains of the Kaiu all the way to the Shinomen. The boulder was so heavy that it would have taken three horses to drag it, but Kaiu Sudaro dedicated his life to moving it alone.



EIGHT WORLDS SORROW PATH

Behind the bare, northern edge of the Shinomen forest lie two small villages on the edge of Falcon territory – Kuguro-Mushari and Tsuyoi Kokoro Mura (Strong Spirit Village). A small path within the forest connects the two villages, covered in low-hanging limbs and twisted, dangling vines.

Although the path is only wide enough for one person to walk along, it digs a deep furrow into the earth, like a shallow canal. For centuries, peasants have used the "road" to walk from one village to the other. In winter, it fills with snow and in the fall, rain. For two hundred years, samurai have never come to visit the villages because the paths are so difficult to travel, and none of the peasant have cause to leave.

No one knows how long these villages have stood or how long they shall remain before they are discovered, annexed, and exploited. Although they technically lie within the Falcon's territory, the villages remain alone, forgotten and ignored by the world around them.



THE CROW'S TONGUE

At the edge of a short, fat stream (possibly a lost branch of the River of the Sky), there is a marshy pond known as the Crow's

Tongue. Nearby lies a strangely beautiful swamp, filled with salt-marshes and swamp trees. Uprooted vegetation, fireflies, lilies, snakes, and every form of wild life breathe together in that place, and the world seems to teem with harmony.

The Crow's Tongue swamp is oval-shaped, and many believe that the spirit of Shinsei's dark crow has blessed the creatures of the swamp, causing them to remain peaceful. Stories tell how Shinsei's crow dipped its beak into the river on the day when Shinsei left Rokugan, and that the tears of the crow salted the water forever. Ever since, the swamp has been a calm, picturesque escape from the travails of Rokugan.

Of course, there are peasants who believe that Shinsei's crow still lives in the marsh, and that the tears it sheds for its lost master will cause the salty water to remain bitter until the day Shinsei returns.

When Sudaro's journey was complete, the stone stood approximately a half-mile within the forest's edge. Kaiu Sudaro and his son caused it to be raised upon its edge, and they shaped it into a great torii arch. The arch stood, flawless and magnificent, built to bless all those that passed through its gate.

It still stands today, barely visible on the edge of the forest closest to the Kaiu lands. Etched into the stone are the kanji, "Nothing, Tomorrow, Forever, Today." Monks come during the year to mediate upon the Torii and pray to Sudaro, whom Hantei the 21st raised to the status of Mikokami, the Lesser Fortune of Persistence.

The great arch appears as perfect today as they did 600 years ago, and some say that a traveler who spends the night beneath its massive arch will dream of Naga and of Sudaro.

FURUERU CHINOMIGO, THE TREE OF WISDOM BEYOND TIME

To the south of the ruins of the Naga city of Nirukti lies a single mahogany tree. It rests amid a ring of maple and oak trees and seems foreign to its surroundings. A fable tells that a man walked into the wood and wished for wisdom. Wisdom beyond time. He begged the air spirits to show him the meaning of everything. The air told him to ask the fire; the fire told him to ask the water; the water told him to ask the earth.

Finally, he prayed to the earth.

The spirits of the earth ignored him at first. Again he prayed. "Please, great earth. Show me your wisdom. Show me all of your secrets." He asked the earth to show him wisdom. Each day for a month, he would pray to the earth and each day the earth would lie still and ignore him. Finally, tired of his words and angry that the air, fire, and water had been asked first, the earth turned his flesh to wood and cursed his skin slick and black. His feet became roots and his hair brañch.

"Now you will know the wisdom beyond time. Meditate upon your insincerity. Think upon your arrogance. The earth is not yours to command. It was born before you, and it will exist long after you have turned to dust and become one with the stones beneath your feet."

Today, children are told this story so that they will learn to care for the earth, to respect the soil and the gifts that it offers.

THE SIGHING MOON MURDERS

Almost two hundred and thirty years ago a noblewoman named Miya Ebekko and her two assistants were murdered in the depths of the Shinomen forest. The bodies were found weeks later, defiled and half-buried.

The stories of their murderer are conflicting and no testimony has ever been brought forward to identify the culprit. The women were traveling from the Falcon Lands to the Crane Provinces, and had decided to take a shortcut through the Shinomen's many paths and glades.

The most likely tale of their death involves a ronin named Gugaku, who is said to have murdered them for the six golden koku they carried in their shawls. Maddened, he hacked and butchered them to cover his trail, leaving a bloody legacy behind.

Others say a maddened beast attacked the women, or some ancient Naga trap was sprung by their unwitting footsteps. Those tales are far kinder.

This much was confirmed: when the bodies were found two weeks later, the earth was stained red and it took the eta several days to collect the many fragments of bone and flesh.

The three ladies were burned in a ceremony that befit their position in life. The funeral was held in the gardens of Otsan Uchi. There are those who say that the fire did not burn until a spring of wood from the Shinomen was placed atop the pyre. The tragedy was so great, it is rumored, that even the Emperor wept.

The locals, primarily the peasants of the Falcon and the Scorpion Clan, say that the place where Miya Ebekko and her handmaidens were murdered is haunted. The trees refuse to grow, the muddy stain remains, and even during the day the place looks dark and foreboding. No samurai travel there, and those who must pass through the area do so during the day's brightest light, taking care not to step on the stains in the grass and upon the muddy ground.

To do so, it is said, will bring great misfortune.

FOUR BRIDGES GLADE

Along a broken cobblestone road in the center of the forest stands a cliffside dell. Almost certainly a product of Naga architecture (and, recently, the appearance of Naga in the dell has confirmed this), four tremendous bridges cross over the sheer cliffs, giving access to the lush forest of the otherwise secluded vale. The glade

stands nearly fifty feet above the waters of the River of the sky, above sheer crevasses, where the waters swirl far below. The bridges were carved from intricately worked quartz crystal of many colors, creating a unique faceted, nearly-translucent stone. For many hundreds of years, the building of the bridges and the beauty of the empty glade was attributed to Isawa or his children, but the craftsmanship of the crystal is beyond anything created by human hands. Still, the glade they give access to is empty, devoid of any monument or other creation. The glade on the broken patch of stone has no real significance or meaning.

Yet despite this, the Four Bridges are an important and timeless monument. The Naga say that they were built by a single vedic of the Pale Eye so long ago that even the Akasha has forgotten; the four bridges represent the four elements, each as a path through which the Akasha can be found. The empty glade signifies the emptiness of the soul once it has entered the Akasha – a symbol that the result of a journey is not as sacred as the passage to each discovery.

In the time of man, the bridges have come to symbolize something else, yet similar to the message which the ancient Naga architect attempted to convey. Each bridge is denoted by a pure white stone marker, portraying a kanji of the four elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Air). To his credit, each bridge points perfectly in its respective direction (East, North, West, South), and it is not surprising that ancient monks thought the bridges designed to celebrate that purpose.

In a ritual designed to achieve further enlightenment, monks that master an element are invited by their temple to walk over the

appropriate bridge and cross into the glade. Once there, they meditate for a full day and walk back across the same bridge. This act has become an important ritual to the monks of Reihado Shinsei (Shinsei's principal shrine), within the Shinomen Forest. For five centuries, it has signified to the world that the monk is a Master of his discipline.

LOST HEAVEN SHRINE

There is a children's tale about the death-place of Shinsei. It is rumored, particularly by the practical and rough-spoken Crab, that Shinsei did not simply 'walk off into the mountains', but rather entered the depths of the Shinomen forest to find a place to die. When Shinsei could no longer walk, he fell upon the mossy ground in the deepest part of the forest, died, and disappeared. It is legend that a magical shrine appeared on the place where Shinsei fell, and some samurai (particularly Hida and Hiruma) have journeyed to find it.

Other tales say that the small shrine exists, but that it is not Shinsei who is buried there. Rather, it is the burial site of a great, nameless Ronin – possibly Shinsei's first son – who is buried there. There are many versions of the myth; it is a children's story, after all.

In every version, however, the story ends with a traveler asking the way to the Lost Heaven Shrine, and a monk by the side of the forest answering only, "When the path ends, that is where you will find it"

No one knows if the Lost Heaven Shrine has ever truly been found, or if those who claim to have seen it are merely exaggerating their own prowess. But many of the tales are similar: it is a single white stone in the forest, larger than man, which stares alone into the trees; where an empty bowl lies on the ground, and where moss and small grasses surround the stone. In the stone, it is said, lies the indentation of a katana, as if it were there when the stone formed from the depths of the earth.

ESTUARIES OF THE SNAKE

Deep in the forest, where only explorers and monks have traveled, lies a small series of creeks and brooks that cut into the moist soil. Splitting in every direction, the waterways dig a beautiful, random pattern into the earth.

The streams have become known as the Estuaries of the Snake because of their coiling and labyrinthine nature. There are over 100 forks





THE CULT OF THE DESTROYER

Abominations are still periodically drawn into the Ivory Kingdoms, to the Sanctuary of the Outcasts, where they commune with Shiva the Destroyer (q.v.) and are forever lost to their cousins. They remain a part of the Akasha, their distant siren call forming the tether that many follow, but their return to the Akasha is rarely welcome.

Shiva's ways, regardless of her intent, are anathema to the Naga. She endorses freedom without limit in physical experience, where the Naga philosophies cite caution and moderation. And worse, her mission of rejuvenating the world through mass upheaval ignores or undermines many of their founding principles.

Like the Naar Teban, the Naga are unwilling to follow their cousins into the foreign lands to save them. Instead, they are content to warn new abominations of the hazards of following the attractive visions through the Akasha, hoping that the Cult of the Destroyer will someday fester away.

(Continued)

and branches that make up the Estuaries, and no one could ever name (or travel) them all.

The local peasants and woodsmen draw water from the fresh streams, and some have been known to get lost trying to track their way back out of the "maze." It is rumored that one estuary leads to a lost temple and another is filled with water that keeps the drinker young forever.

It is certain, however, that anyone who travels down the Estuaries will become lost, and may die trying to find his way out of the maze of water.



There are many civilizations beyond the borders of the isolationist Emerald Empire. One such place exists to the west of the Shinomen and the Shadowlands, where few Rokugani outside the barbaric Unicorn have dared to travel. A collection of independent provinces ruled by often warring tribes, the area has come to be known by outsiders as the Ivory Kingdoms.

This area is mainly dense jungles with scattered centers of dense population, splintered by savage rivers and extreme terrain features (cliff faces and majestic waterfalls measuring hundreds of feet in height, alongside impossibly old ruins formed of immense stone slabs, buried beneath centuries of peat moss and sediment).

The Ivory Kingdoms has few established borders (excepting the obvious natural boundaries at its far edges - the Spine of the World mountains along its northern edge, the ocean to the south, desert to the west, and the Shadowlands and Shinomen to the east). The groups who live here are devoted to a wide pantheon of often conflicting deities. Their faith

often borders on tribal fanaticism, resulting in frequent and bloody conflicts.

One such group has established its home territory within a ruined citadel. The original inhabitants of the area have long since passed on or migrated away, leaving its cavernous halls to whomever would assume their role as the deific vessels of their ancient goddess, Shiva.

She is known as the Destroyer among the tribes who remember her flock. Having three faces (one for each cycle - life, death, and rebirth), three eyes, and four arms, her visage is both terrifying and strangely reassuring. Her followers - easily discernible by the self-inflicted wounds upon their faces, necks, and limbs - are met with much the same reaction.

Though her original cult is no more, Shiva lives on today in a new breed. Abominations seeking new resources to exploit in their quest for redemption have descended upon the Ivory Kingdoms. In Shiva, they have found what they think may be the ideal route back into the good graces of the Akasha and their distant cousins. For she is the goddess of rebirth, a physical manifestation of their own Eternal Mind...

The Sanctuary of Outcasts was formed by a lone visionary named Kashal, whose rage at his deformities led him to undertake a vision-quest. Through addled senses, he released himself to the strange sensations that flooded through the Akasha around him. He let them guide his path as he vanished into the west, never to be seen among his race again.

The other Naga could still sense his presence if they focused. He was far away, within a vast cloud that obscured his face and features. They knew he lived, but little more. Only the abominations could see beyond this cloud; they could feel the change in him, sense him growing stronger by the day.

Over the next generation, Naga abominations were drawn to this mysterious figure, lost somewhere beyond the Shadowlands. Alone or in small groups, many followed him, picking at his wounded trail through the Akasha like a long line of breadcrumbs. Until they found the ruins...

As stated above, the place that Kashal had discovered was a long-abandoned temple to the Ivory Kingdoms Goddess of Rebirth, Shiva. Just as Kashal before them, the goddess appeared to the new arrivals, promising them rebirth in exchange for service. Recognizing a common bond between the the Destroyer and their own Akasha, most

happily agreed. The rest were quickly dispatched by her new disciples. Shiva assured them that this action was for the best, and that the primitive souls of the fallen Naga would return to the Akasha for another cycle.

Today, the Cult of the Destroyer remains a powerful predatory force within the Ivory Kingdoms. They indulge in self-mutilation and wage Shiva's wars, hoping she will bless them with a normal life once their service to her is complete.



As introduced in Chapter Three, Naga Jakla derive their magical power from pearls they harvest from the sea-beds guarded by the Chameleon. These pearls are often also harvested by Rokugani divers seeking them for their beauty, but until recently, few humans would have realized the awesome power they contain...

TYPES OF PEARLS

There are four general types of pearls in Rokugan. The first are mundane baubles – pretty, but powerless. These are often left behind by the Cobra and Chameleon to provide humans with a satisfying boon when they are found. They range in size from the smallest pebble to roughly an inch in diameter, and are prized accordingly. Pearls of more than one koku in worth are rarely priced; they are acquired, stolen, or given as gifts to treasured lovers.

Channeling Pearls

The second type is the “standard” pearl used by Naga Jakla. They rarely look any different from standard pearls (like those above), but Jakla

are trained to differentiate them, sensing a slight glow from within their smooth surface.

Pearls of this type are Ranked 1–5, and act as vessels for Elemental Spell Effects up to their Rank. To determine which effects can be channeled through a particular pearl, double the Rank. Any Spell in the game (of the correct Element) whose Mastery Level is equal to or lower than this value may be channeled through the pearl.

For example, a Jakla acquires a Rank 2 Earth pearl. He may cast “Calling the Elements” [Mastery Level 4] through it, but may not use it for “Benevolent Protection of Shinsei” [Mastery Level 7].

Casting Spells through such pearls acts just as casting spells using scrolls. So long as the Jakla has had a chance to study an effect, he may attempt it. Note that attempting to cast a Spell he has never witnessed in action increases its TN by 10.

As would be expected, pearls may not be used for Spells outside their Element. Earth pearls, for instance, cannot be used for Air Spells.

There are no Void or Akasha pearls. The Elemental attunement of a pearl is designated by the component Element which it is most comprised from. Only one pearl has ever been discovered which can channel Spells of more than one Element (see *The White Pearl*, page 120).

Channeling Pearls may be used as many times as the Jakla wishes, but lose a Rank of channeling power each month, or when an Akasha Point is used to cast a Spell Effect through them. This effect is cumulative; when the pearl is reduced to Rank 0, it is destroyed.

Spell-Specific Pearls

Pearls are sometimes attuned to a specific Spell Effect instead of an Element. Such pearls can be the result of natural selection, though this is very rare. More frequently, powerful Jakla have modified a Channeling Pearl to cast a Spell in a particular way (increasing its duration, range, damage, etc.).

These pearls are also Ranked 1–5, and gain one Free Raise per Rank for the Spell Effect they are attuned to. These Raises can be used to modify any parts of the Spell listed in the “Raises” line of its entry.



THE CULT OF THE DESTROYER (CONTINUED)

Meanwhile, the cult thrives within its secluded locale. Chief among their practices are ritual scarring (on the face, torso, and arms, where salves can easily be applied to “sculpt” their final appearance) and fulfilling the wishes of their savior, Shiva.

They perceive the goddess to be one with the Akasha, a walking manifestation of Atman, an avatar of perfection. She is what they strive to be, and must therefore be perfect in word as much as in spirit. The abominations follow her command to the letter, engaging in one scarcely understood campaign after another, cleansing the world for a fresh start.

Since the formation of the Cult of the Destroyer, two neighboring tribes have been judged unfit by the goddess. The cities of both lie in ruins today. Their peoples have been returned to the ashes from which they were born. Perhaps one day they will reemerge, stronger and more prepared to handle the rigors of the world...



UNIQUE PEARLS

There are several unique pearls that have cropped up over the centuries which have been snatched up by competent Cobra or greedy Rokugani. Two examples of these treasures and their abilities are given here.

The White Pearl

Only one White Pearl has ever been found. Its albino surface and shadowy center are enchanting, often eliciting extreme emotions.

The White Pearl acts as a receptacle for spells of all elements. It can contain one spell within it indefinitely, until a Jakla wishes to use the effect. To infuse the spell into the pearl, the Jakla must roll his School Rank + Element with the chosen spell vs. (the Mastery Level of the chosen Spell x5). This process requires one full hour. To release the spell effect later, the Jakla must roll against the Spell's normal TN.

The Pearls of Earth

Only five of these blue-gray pearls have ever been found. Each is Ranked from 1 to 5, respectively. When a defender in combat is carrying one of these, and he is not under the effects of any other pearls or spells, he may roll a number of dice equal to the Rank of the pearl against the total number of Wounds taken.

Success results in the defender ignoring all of the Wounds. Otherwise, he takes all of the Wounds immediately.

No Spells other than the one the pearl is attuned to may be cast using this kind of pearl.

These pearls are never found randomly or given frivolously. They are created by the highest level Jakla during extremely rare magical conjunctions. Gamemasters should include these pearls at their discretion.

Named Pearls

These pearls are legendary, fabled, or otherwise obscure, and have specific, predetermined effects that may be cast by Jakla of sufficient ability. Several examples of named pearls follow.

The Pearl of Movement

Base TN: 25 [Use Air Ring to roll]

Casting Time: 4 Actions

Duration: 1 Turn

Mastery: N/A

Concentration: None

Raises: Duration

Effect: Doubles the target's Reflexes for purposes of Initiative. The Duration may be increased by one Action per successful Raise.

The Pearl of Strength

Base TN: 15 [Use Earth Ring to roll]

Casting Time: 3 Actions

Duration: 10 Turns

Mastery: N/A

Concentration: Focused

Raises: Duration, Concentration

Effect: The target's Earth Ring is considered one higher for the purposes of figuring Wounds. The target suffers the full effects of any Wounds taken when the Spell wears off. Each Raise can reduce the Duration by 1 Turn or Concentration by one level (minimum Casual).

The Pearl of Air

Base TN: 10 [Use Air Ring to roll]

Casting Time: 5 Actions

Duration: 1 Hour

Mastery: N/A

Concentration: Focused

Raises: Casting Time, Duration, Effect

Effect: Adds 5 to the TN of all Spells cast upon the target (plus 5 for every Raise devoted to Effect). Each additional Raise can reduce the Casting Time by 1 (minimum 1 Action) or increase the Duration by 10 minutes.

The Pearl of Water

Base TN: 5 [Use Water Ring to roll]

Casting Time: 1 Action

Duration: 1/2 Hour

Mastery: N/A

Concentration: None

Raises: Duration

Effect: Allows the target to breathe underwater as if he had gills. Each Raise increases the Duration by 1/2 Hour.

The Pearl of Wisdom

Base TN: 10 [Use Fire Ring to roll]

Casting Time: 3 Actions

Duration: 10 Turns

Mastery: N/A

Concentration: Full

Raises: Duration, Effect

Effect: Adds 2 Ranks to any one Lore Skill, Research, or Investigation (or grants the Skill at Rank 2). Each Raise can increase this effect by 1 Rank or increase the Duration by 5 Turns.

The Pearl of Combat

Base TN: 15 [Use Fire Ring to roll]

Casting Time: 3 Actions

Duration: 1 Turn

Mastery: N/A

Concentration: Casual

Raises: Duration

Effect: Adds 2 dice (rolled, not kept) when the target is Attacking. When conducting a Full Attack, the effect becomes 1 die (rolled and kept). The Duration is increased by 1 Turn for every two Raises.

The Pearl of Defense

Base TN: 15 [Use Air Ring to roll]

Casting Time: 3 Actions

Duration: 1 Turn

Mastery: N/A

Concentration: Casual

Raises: Duration

Effect: Adds 5 to the target's TN to be Hit. When conducting a Full Defense, the effect becomes 1 die (rolled and kept) added to the total target's defensive value. The Duration is increased by 1 Turn for every two Raises.

Appendix V: Gamemastering the Naga

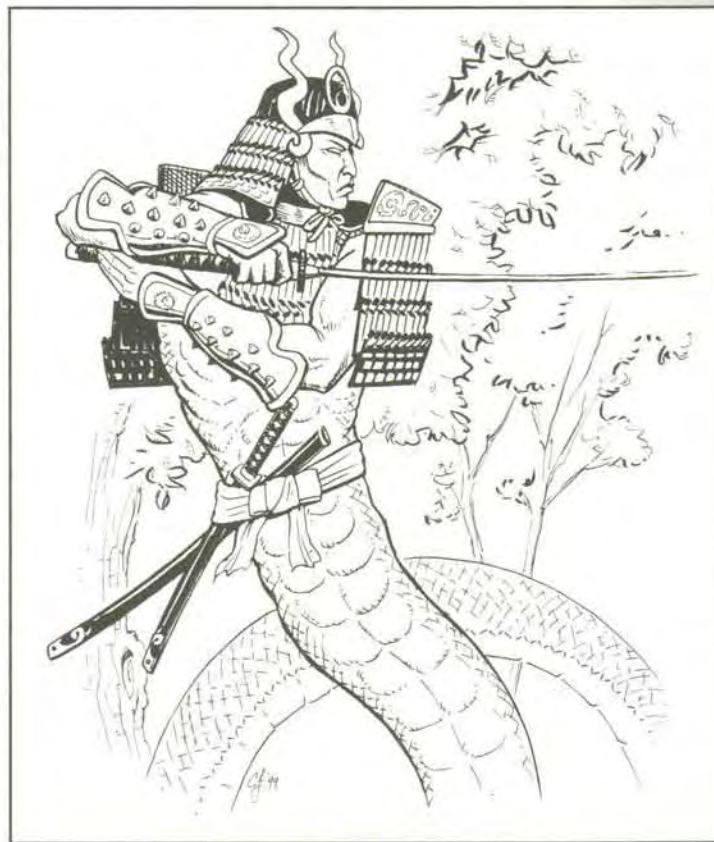
Playing a Naga in the Emerald Empire is essentially playing a stranger in a strange land. When the Great Sleep came, humans didn't exist; not a single one walked the earth. Now, they're everywhere, swarming over the entire countryside. They have built a civilization as vast as it is alien and regard the Naga as freakish invaders in their territory. With the haze of the Great Sleep still fresh, a Naga PC must make sense of this upheaval while trying to forge a bond between her civilization and theirs.

As stated earlier, the Naga have a tremendously difficult time understanding Rokugani. Besides the physical and cultural differences, the two species have a fundamentally different outlook on life. The Naga share a collective soul, forming bonds of empathy and trust between them that can never be broken. Human beings have nothing like that, a fact which eternally confounds their scaly counterparts. Imagine meeting a group of people born without hearing, who have no idea that sound even exists and don't understand that other people have a sense that they lack. Now imagine trying to explain the music of birdsong or a babbling mountain spring to them. That's what the Naga are attempting with humanity.

In some ways, it's even worse than that. Humans are separate from the great collective soul of Atman; from a Naga's point of view, they have no souls. A Naga sees no difference between a Rokugani, a Ratling, and the woodland creatures that roam the Shinomen; all of them are cut off from the Akasha and therefore lesser beings. Yet humanity has clearly risen higher than any other "animal." They have a complicated society with art, culture and engineering triumphs

that rival the Naga's in scale. They have sophisticated interrelations and a complex understanding of the universe around them. How can beings with no souls possibly achieve so much?

Against these pressing questions, the Naga must weigh the impending threat of the Second Burning. They would love to take the time to study the humans before emerging from their lairs. With years or even decades to spare, they could quietly observe them, learning how their interactions work and why they behave so erratically. Then when the time was right, they could establish a rapport with them and try to reach some sort of mutual understanding. Unfortunately, they don't have that luxury. The Foul is rising, and they must prepare themselves or be immediately destroyed. In the midst of that, the ape-men are a nuisance at best, a threat at worst. They cannot understand them, or convey the nature of the threat in a way they can perceive. The Rokugani would make invaluable allies, but don't seem capable of learning what the Naga know. They cannot fight both the Foul and the humans, and they cannot concentrate on their



task while relations with the Rokugani remain so unknown. Therefore the humans must be made to understand – right now – or else all may be lost. In this environment, bridging the enormous gap between them is almost futile.

A prospective Naga player must bear all of this in mind before entering a campaign. His or her



character is has immediate concerns balanced out by an intense curiosity (or some cases revulsion) for this new race of beings. The urge to understand humanity must be countered by the need to preserve the Naga, and to prepare for the return of the Foul. At the same time, he's establishing relations with a new group of individuals – creatures unlike anything he's ever seen before. As strange and different as they may be, he may begin seeing admirable qualities in them, and even if he doesn't he's still got to play it cool. In short, playing a Naga is nothing at all like playing a samurai – or any other human being, for that matter.

It is vital for every Naga player to divorce himself from Rokugan's culture. After playing L5R for awhile, most players have the nuances of life in the Emerald Empire down pat. They'll have to throw all that out if they want to play a snake man. Naga don't understand Rokugan and they never will. They don't know why someone would kill himself at another man's orders, they can't understand the complex social patterns of the

Emperor's Court, and they don't know why humans can't simply feel each other's emotions the way Naga can. While they can learn a great deal by observing and asking questions, they can't grasp the fundamental underpinnings of Rokugani life. They're literally incapable of it.

Naga players need to remember this during the game. The player know why a Lion samurai won't speak to the peasants or why a Scorpion courtier lies to the Crane, but the Naga she's playing won't. Everything is new, everything is different. And no matter how many times the humans explain it, nothing they do has any kind of logic at all. The Naga PC's actions should reflect that. If she inadvertently offends a Crab samurai, for example, she wouldn't accept his duel; not out of cowardice or the desire to offend, but out of simple ethics. To her, it's unnecessary bloodshed that can be prevented through other means. She might apologize, or attempt to make it up to him in some way, but a duel? He's clearly mad.

Such incidents follow the Naga throughout the campaign, confronting him or her wherever a cultural clash occurs. It doesn't mean that he or she is constantly misunderstanding things (Naga are quite intelligent, after all, and learn from their mistakes). But their values are different, and they will react accordingly. Naga can follow Rokugan's rules; they just won't understand them.

A LONE NAGA IN A HUMAN PARTY

Usually no more than one or two players will be interested in running a Naga. This is fairly easy to accommodate; the Naga race simply becomes a de facto "clan" to which the PC belongs. He takes orders from a superior, obeys the edicts of his people, and has a set loyalty to a group besides the adventuring party. In this case, the "group" isn't a clan of samurai, but an entire race of beings.

The key difference, of course, is that the Naga are strangers. They have only recently awakened from their thousand-year sleep, and have yet to venture into the world *en masse*. Lone Naga PCs have ventured forth from their homes in order to achieve some goal – either to warn the Empire of Fu Leng's rising power, or to learn about human culture for the rest of Naga society. Some are even hostile to the Empire, securing information that may help the Naga in a coming conflict. Whatever the reason, the character has been sent out into Rokugan with a specific purpose in mind. He cannot depend on fellow "clan members" to help

him, and the Empire doesn't recognize any authority he may have (although things may be different within the confines of the Shinomen).

Instead, he has his fellow PCs. A group of friendly humans to help him through any misunderstandings and speak on his behalf would be just the thing he needs to fulfill his mission. The other characters become his support group, helping him through the new Empire he finds himself in. In exchange, they gain an ally in this mysterious race – and perhaps even more.

The GM should probably set up an adventure based around the Naga's first meeting with the rest of the party, and the circumstances that would allow some trust to form between them. Once that has been established, the campaign can quickly settle into a typical L5R scenario. The Naga PC may have different philosophies than the others (as well as different goals and different masters), but can still serve as a valued addition to the party. As long as the Naga player keeps his character's unique background in mind, things should progress normally.

AN ENTIRE PARTY OF NAGA

The challenge of playing a group composed solely of Naga can be enticing to L5R players looking for something different. In this case, the characters are all outsiders in Rokugan – an advance party sent to learn what they can about the hairless apes that now walk the world. They now have the chance to look at Rokugan from a true outsider's eyes.

All players must be thoroughly familiar with the Naga philosophy before beginning such a campaign. Naga culture is as complex and different from ours as Rokugan's is – in some ways more. Every player should know it by heart, for Naga culture will play a much larger role in the campaign. Once that has been established, give the party certain long-term goals, similar to the ones outlined in the "lone Naga" scenario above. With their mission(s) in mind, they can proceed with some sort of focus to guide them.

Party unity amid such a group should be unbreakable: like playing a party full of Lion or Scorpion, only moreso. They may bicker among each other – the Asp fighting with the Greensnake, the Constrictor arguing with the Cobra – but they are all bound by a common consciousness that transcends their individuality. Naga don't kill Naga. Ever. And at the end of the day, they will die rather than see one another

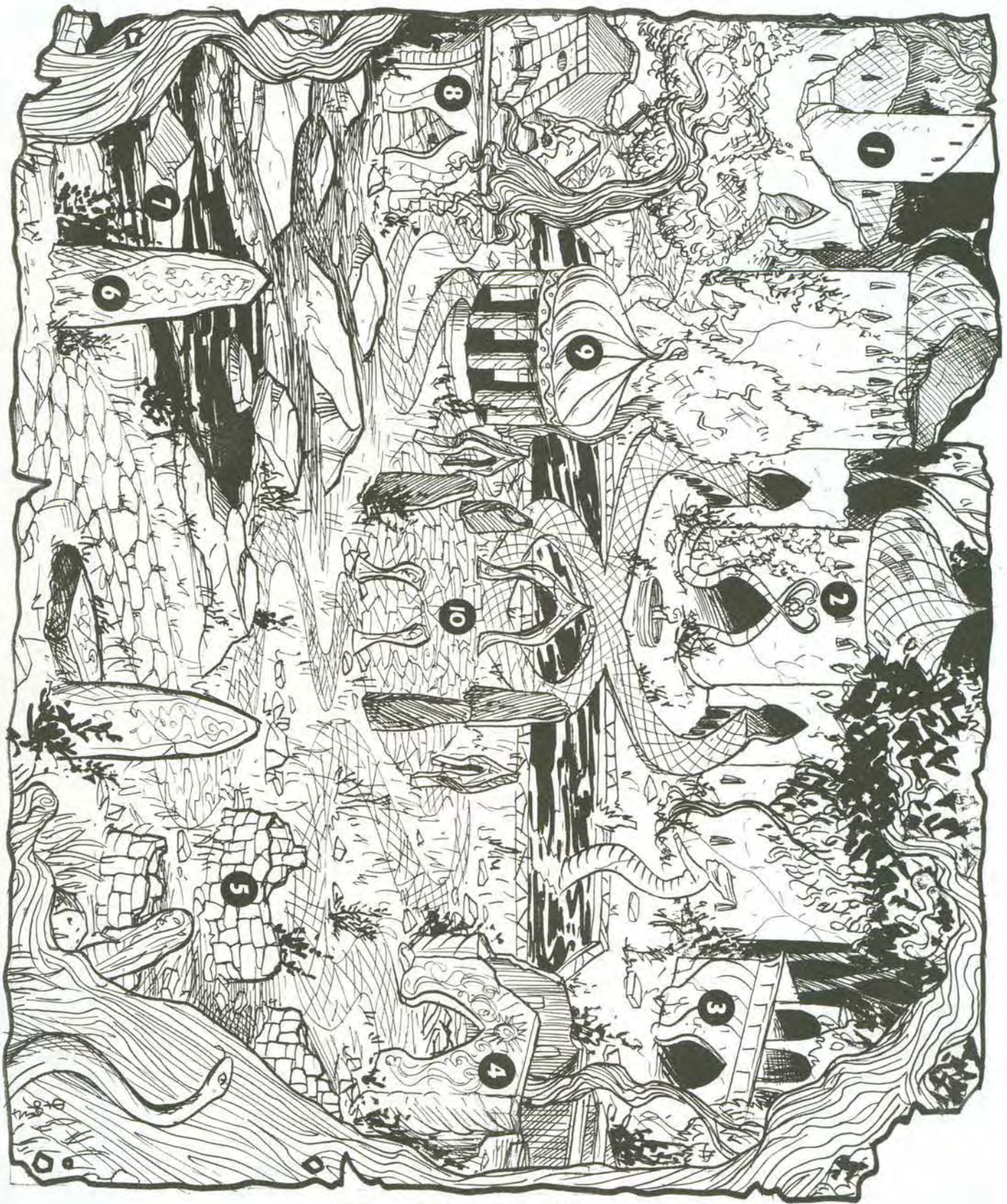
come to harm. Add to that the fact that they're now in a foreign country, surrounded by creatures they barely comprehend. If they cannot depend on each other, they will surely perish.

Such unity tends to follow the pattern of other role-playing games, where the characters are loyal to each other first and the rest of the world later. While they can return to the Shinomen if they must, there are few other Naga about, and most humans have no idea how to deal with them. Therefore, they're going to tend to watch each other's backs more, and depend more upon fellow PCs than a given clan or daimyo. While this removes some of the political elements of L5R, it can make the players feel more comfortable, and also give them a chance to approach Rokugan's Byzantine society from a whole new perspective.

Don't feel as if you have to ban standard Rokugani PCs from this scenario. A Naga party may have one or two humans sprinkled into the mix if some players are still interested in samurai. If this is the case, the human(s) probably serve as guides or diplomats, helping these new creatures understand the world around them. They might also venture into the Shinomen to learn more about them, much like Mirumoto Daini has. In some ways, it's a reversed version of the "lone Naga" scenario.

Naga-based campaigns should probably involve larger issues than human-based ones. The Naga are concerned with the return of the Foul, and with understanding the new human culture around them. Adventures should be based around those themes. They would not be interested in more subtle Rokugan interactions, such as hunting down bandits or mediating a dispute over a border province. Such scenarios are of no concern to the Naga; they have more important things to worry about. (Of course, they can still become entangled in a human matter through the machinations of some scheme. But even then the Naga have options.) On the other hand, an expedition into the Shadowlands to recover a lost artifact, or a journey into the Dragon lands to consult Togashi Yokuni would be right up a Naga party's alley. By looking at their purpose in the long term – the prophecy of the Second Burning, a permanent relationship with the humans – the GM can craft an epic story while staying true to the Naga philosophy. A campaign such as this puts Rokugan in a new perspective, and might be just the thing a jaded group needs to rejuvenate their excitement for the Emerald Empire.





The Nirukti Ruins

Appendix VI: Shahadet's Legion

A Clan War Naga Army by Ken Carpenter

Koku	Personality/Unit/Item/Spell
120	Naga Shugenja
40	Pearl of Combat
30	Pearl of Movement
30	Pearl of Earth
18	Essence of Earth
15	Counterspell
253 Unit Cost	
120	Naga Shugenja
40	Pearl of Defense
25	Pearl of Air
18	Gust of Wind
15	Wind Borne Speed
20	Stagnant Air
238 Unit Cost	
112	Naga Warlord
325	Temple Guardians x 13
437 Unit Cost	
112	Naga Warlord
240	Naga Bushi x 16
352 Unit Cost	
112	Naga Warlord
240	Naga Bushi x 16
352 Unit Cost	
180	Naga Bowmen x 9
180	Naga Bowmen x 9
1992 Total Cost	

Tactical Deck (30 Cards)

- 3 x Another Time
- 3 x Burst of Speed
- 3 x Charge
- 3 x Defensive Position
- 3 x Frenzy
- 3 x Grim Determination
- 3 x Know the Terrain
- 3 x A Time for Heroes
- 3 x Tall Grass
- 3 x Advantage of Cover

ARMY TACTICS

This army negates the Ranged Attack advantage of opposing armies by pushing forward with combat units using Essence of Earth, Tall Grass, and Advantage of Cover to make them difficult to hit (the enemy should be looking at very high TNs at all times). Use Know the Terrain to approach behind as much cover as possible for as many units as possible (combat or ranged).

Once engaged, the Pearl of Defense and the Pearl of Earth will make a Naga unit hard to hurt in Close Combat. The Naga Warlord's special order will increase the offensive ability, and A Time for Heroes will allow the Warlord to use his special order more than once per battle.

Combat units should engage with a frontage of 6 and a depth of 3, using high strike at all times unless the enemy has a narrow frontage and the overlap/rank advantage bonus would be greater than the high strike.

The Naga Bowmen units should approach enemy units, firing when opportunity permits, until in good cover or until within close range. The units can then make use of the Pearl of Combat and Blessing of the Akasha to gain combat bonuses (the combination gives the Bowmen a total of +2 ATT and +2 DAM, including their normal +1 DAM). Use strong firepower to protect your combat units' flanks.

Once an enemy unit is engaged, use Wind Borne Speed and the Pearl of Movement to get another Naga unit into the enemy's flank, causing the enemy problems. Break the unit as quickly as possible and then move to the next. Use the Pearl of Movement and Wind Borne Speed to prevent an enemy flanking attack.

CLAN WAR: NAGA STRATEGY

Naga armies function differently than any of the other armies in *Clan War*. Culturally, the Naga are very interdependent, which holds true of their units during military actions.

If you ignore the interdependence of the Naga, your army will lack cohesiveness and fall prey to more straight-forward armies.

By taking that interdependence into account as you build, the Naga become an extremely versatile army. The Naga Shugenja enable the Naga to project power to any conflict on the table, while the Warlords decide when their unit and army will most benefit from their ability.

With careful construction of your Tactical Deck, the Warlords can use their abilities numerous times during the battle, providing crucial modifiers when an advantage is needed.



Legend of the Five Rings

Name: _____ Bloodline: _____ Profession: _____

Fire

Agility:
Intelligence:

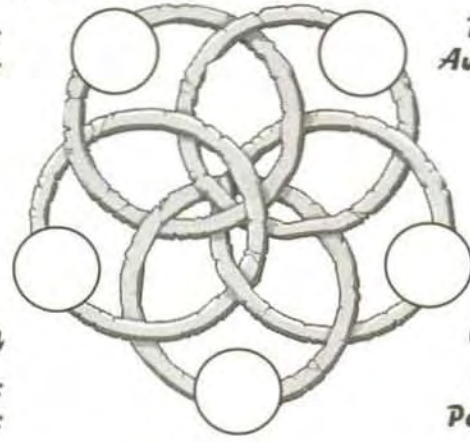
Air

Reflexes:
Awareness:

Primary Weapon

Primary Armor

TN to be Hit
(Reflexes x 5 + Armor)



Earth

Stamina:
Willpower:

Water

Strength:
Perception:

Skills

Akasha

Akasha Points Spent: _____

Insight: _____

Great Lessons/Spells

Wounds

____ -0
____ -1
____ -2
____ -3
____ -4
____ Down
____ Out
____ Dead

School: _____ Rank: _____

Advantages/
Disadvantages

Caste Rank:

Honor: 0

Experience Points:



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years ago, the Five
Kingdoms of the Naga closed their
eyes and dreamed of a distant future...
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Bloodlines and of legends has begun anew. Prepare
to unveil the hidden secrets of the Akasha.
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