

Akodo Shigetoshi, Daimyo of the Akodo

Akodo Shigetoshi first came to the notice of Akodo Ginawa when he was a classmate alongside a talented young warrior who would one day take the name Akodo Ijiasu. The two young Lion were among the finest in their class, and Shigetoshi, who was several years younger, constantly competed with the older and more gifted Ijiasu. Despite that he never surpassed Ijiasu, Shigetoshi never grew bitter and never allowed his competitive spirit to be diminished. Indeed, the two young warriors shared a bond in that both were the sons of former Akodo who had returned to the family once it was reformed under Akodo Ginawa's rule. Shigetoshi was the son of legendary sensei Akodo Quehao, who returned through Oblivion's Gate to defend the Empire once more.

Following his gempukku, Shigetoshi received a prestigious appointment serving at Toshi Ranbo. There, he was involved in many years' worth of constant border skirmishes between the Lion and Crane, rising through the ranks to become a seasoned young officer with more battle experience than many twice his age. By the time Doji Kurohito surrendered the city willingly to Matsu Nimuro, Shigetoshi was already well known to the Lion Champion and his daimyo. Soon afterwards, Shigetoshi joined the ranks of an elite few Lion serving as tactical advisors to Akodo Ginawa, and often to the Lion Champion as well.

Despite his many successes, Shigetoshi was completely unprepared when Ginawa, who had never married or had children, chose him as his heir. The young officer protested, insisting that he was not worthy of such an appointment, but Ginawa would hear none of it. Among the ranks of Ginawa's most trusted advisors, he claimed, Ijiasu was too brash, Tadenori too reserved, and Kaneka too politically complicated. Shigetoshi, however, was the perfect embodiment of all that the Akodo valued. His prestigious lineage was the final factor. In the face of Ginawa's insistence and unwavering confidence in him, Shigetoshi accepted the honor and ascended to the position of Akodo family daimyo when Ginawa chose to retire.

In recent months, Shigetoshi has become more and more concerned with the lingering effects of his family's possession by the Lying Darkness decades ago. With so much of Lion philosophy surrounding history and tradition, the fact that many elder Akodo have no recollection of their past has created a rift that separates the Akodo from the other families. An entire generation of Akodo has been born and raised with their parents unable to share with them the tales of their ancestors, or even without any knowledge of who their true ancestors are. Shigetoshi fears that this emptiness may lead to further manipulation of his family in the future from entities such as the Shadow Dragon or other sinister forces.

Akodo Shigetoshi, Daimyo of the Akodo

Air: 3

Reflexes 4

Earth: 4

Fire: 3

Agility 4

Water: 5

Void: 4

School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 5/Akodo War College 1

Glory: 6.9

Status: 7.6

Honor: 3.7

Advantages: Bland, Leadership, Social Position, Tactician

Disadvantages: Antisocial (2 points), Driven (discover the Akodo's link to the Lying Darkness)

Kata: Gentle Blade of Winter, Matsu's Vengeance, The Soul's Roar

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle (Mass Combat) 7, Defense 4, Etiquette (Sincerity) 3, Games: Go 5, Games: Shogi 4, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 4, Iaijutsu 4, Instruction 3, Know the School: Kakita Bushi 4, Jujitsu 4, Kenjutsu (Katana, No-dachi) 6, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: History 5, Spears 3, Storytelling (Bragging) 3, War Fan 4

Yoritomo Katoa, Displaced Opportunist

Most samurai in the Empire would consider an appointment to the Imperial Court to be an honor of incredible proportions. If one were to ask him, Yoritomo Katoa would likely admit that he considers himself extremely unlucky to have arrived in his current circumstances, and would give a great deal to be free of them. Those few who know him believe he has brought his hardship upon himself.

Great things were never expected of Katoa. As a young student at the dojo where he was trained, he was easily distracted and prone to causing trouble among the other students. In a Mantis dojo, truly impressive amounts of poor behavior were required to gain the attention of the sensei, yet each sensei learned to keep an eye on young Katoa. His mother died when he was a child, and his father was often away at sea, so Katoa's formative years were spent among the sailors at the busiest ports on the Islands of Silk and Spice. By the time he began studies for his gempukku, Katoa was an experienced gambler and had acquired a taste for sake.

For years after his gempukku, Katoa served aboard one ship after another, never remaining on any one crew for any length of time. Mantis captains were not interested in having the troublemaker on board, and he was more interested in drinking and gambling in port than the long, boring days at sea. It seemed obvious to those who knew him that Katoa would drift through life as a failure until he drank himself into an early grave. That might well have been his fate, if he had not happened to meet Yoritomo Kitao, captain of the Bitter Flower.

Kitao saw potential in Katoa, and introduced him to a far more exciting life at sea than the mundane shipping and patrol runs he had previously experienced. Piracy was Kitao's trade, and she found a willing and eager student in Katoa. The thrill of it was intoxicating, and Katoa soon became one of Kitao's chief lieutenants. When she orchestrated the assassination of Yoritomo Aramasu, Katoa was one of the few who knew the truth. Following the revelation of Yoritomo Kumiko as the Daughter of Storms, and the subsequent schism it caused among the Mantis, Katoa remained a loyal supporter of Kitao. For a time, he commanded a ship she granted him, but eventually he came to serve her as a representative at the Empire's busiest ports, moving up and down the coast and maintaining her alliances with all manner of unsavory sorts. It was not a duty he relished, but he was at least afforded the chance to enjoy gambling once again.

When the Miya reconvened the Imperial Court, Katoa intercepted a herald bearing a message for the Mantis Champion. He read the invitation to court and chose to attend as Kitao's representative. Unfortunately for the former

pirate, upon his arrival he learned that Kitao had been defeated and Kumiko was now the Mantis Champion, recognized by the new Emperor, Toturi III. Katoa was both furious and fearful, expecting each day to be hauled out of the court and returned home for punishment. Instead, he was informed by Yoritomo Yoyonagi that Kumiko had permanently assigned him to the Imperial Court.

The past seven years have been the most miserably of Katoa's life. He knows that outright betrayal of Kumiko will result in a fate far worse than death, and so he puts forth a token effort to represent the clan. To most, he is the worst possible Mantis stereotype, and no one fully understands why Kumiko permits him to remain. In time, Katoa has come to realize that even if he were to return to the Mantis islands for good, the piracy he once enjoyed is no more, co-opted completely by Kumiko and those loyal to her. Without the thrill of hunting his prey across the seas, Katoa believes, he may as well remain in Toshi Ranbo. There are, after all, many wonderful gambling houses, and he has the opportunity to serve as a constant foil for those samurai who believe they are his superior. It is not a happy existence, but as long as others are more miserable than he is, Katoa does not need to be happy.

Yoritomo Katoa, Displaced Opportunist

Air: 2

Reflexes 4

Earth: 3

Fire: 3

Water: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Yoritomo Bushi 4

Glory: -2.4 (Infamy)

Status: 3.3

Honor: 1.4

Advantages: Crafty, Heartless, Wary

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Pirate), Greedy

Kata: Strength of Waves, Strike of the Cliff's Edge, Howl of the Son of Storms

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 4, Chain Weapons 3, Commerce 3, Courtier 3, Craft: Sailing 5, Deceit (Intimidation, Lying) 4, Defense 3, Etiquette 2, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Games: Fortunes & Winds 5, Games: Sadane 1, Lore: Imperial Court 3, Peasant Weapons (Kama) 6, Underworld 4

Utaku Tarako, Khol Ambusher

As a youth, Utaku Tarako expected nothing more grandiose than a soldier's life serving among the Utaku Battle Maidens. She never expected to become well known and respected among the Unicorn. She never expected that she would be recognized by samurai she had never met, or that she would attend strategy councils with the Unicorn Clan Champion. Most of all, she never expected that whispers of her exploits in battle all across Rokugan, whispers tinged with fear.

Tarako was the only daughter of Utaku Sannosuke, a scout and member of Rojin's Wanderers, a group of Unicorn that explored the Empire. Tarako's mother died during childbirth, so Sannosuke was left to raise his daughter alone. Without a clue as to how to raise a daughter, he decided to simply care for her without changing his habits. He brought Tarako along on his many journeys across Rokugan and taught her his ways. He instilled in his daughter his wanderlust, his love for nature and an insight into how to survive in the wilderness. As a result, Tarako grew up with the mindset of a Shinjo rather than an Utaku. Tarako loved her time traveling alone with her father and was very disappointed when she had to return to the Unicorn lands to begin studying at the Utaku dojo.

Tarako did not enjoy school. Her life there was completely different from the nomadic lifestyle she had previously enjoyed. She was diligent in her studies, although she kept largely to herself and did not make many friends. After she became a Battle Maiden, she was assigned to an outpost along the Unicorn-Lion border. There she spent many years watching over a small trading town that connected to the City of the Rich Frog, where she remained until the war between the Lion and the Unicorn began. Many refugees from Kaeru Toshi entered her town, causing a dramatic increase in tension and crime. Tarako had her hands full with her increased duties and had little contact with anyone from the front, Unicorn or Lion.

That changed a few months into the Lion-Unicorn war. A group of exhausted Unicorn soldiers rode into the town, wounded from a recent skirmish. They told Tarako that a unit of Lion soldiers was on its way to destroy the town and deny the Unicorn the resources that had been traveling through the village. Tarako decided that the best way to defend the city would be to destroy the Lion before they would arrive. As a child, she had spent three weeks in the area surrounding Kaeru Toshi and remembered all the hidden paths. She led the battered troops into the hills and waited for the Lion's arrival. The Unicorn troops listened to all her commands and advice. Though the Lion force outnumbered the Unicorn more than two to one, Tarako's unit decimated the pursuing soldiers.

The Khan heard of Tarako's victory and added her to the Khol, his personal army. He gave her command of her own unit and decided to test her abilities. He gave her orders to eliminate a Lion commander and scout reports as to where the officer might be located. Tarako performed beyond anyone's expectations. She led her unit past the Lion defenses, defeated the Lion commander, and returned to camp within two days, all based on her superior knowledge of the local terrain. Impressed by her skills, the Khan promoted her immediately. Tarako served admirably during the war, using her knowledge of the terrain as a weapon against the unsuspecting Lion. She was promoted repeatedly, and eventually joined the highest ranking officers of the Khol.

Tarako has learned much from her experiences in the war. As a child, she saw nature's beauty with an innocent eye. As a samurai charged with destroying her enemies, she surveys the land in search of secluded archery positions, or where would be the best place to ready a charge against an unsuspecting enemy.

Tales of Tarako's exploits have grown to such an extent that they border upon folklore. Some say that the Khan has placed under her command a unit of savage Moto who assassinate those who oppose the Unicorn Clan. Her knowledge of the regions of Rokugan, they say, allows her to move her unit anywhere in Rokugan and ambush them. Such outlandish rumors amuse Tarako, though she sometimes wonders if her actions are perverting the spirit of her father's teachings. All she can do is believe that her actions benefit her lord, and believe in the righteousness of the Khan's actions.

Utaku Tarako, Khol Ambusher

Air: 4

Earth: 3

Fire: 3

Water: 4

Strength: 5

Void: 3

School/Rank: Utaku Battle Maiden 4

Glory: 5.2

Status: 5.7

Honor: 2.6

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Way of the Land (All of the Unicorn lands, parts of the Lion lands, parts of the Scorpion lands)

Disadvantages: Antisocial

Kata: Striking as Fire, Thundering the Sky

Skills: Athletics 4, Battle (Skirmish) 6, Etiquette 2, Horsemanship 4,
Hunting 4, Investigation (Search) 4, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu (Horse Archery) 4,
Meditation 4, Stealth (Ambush) 7

Shokansuru, Master of Demons

Centuries ago, a time that the creature called Shokansuru barely remembers, there was a man named Isawa Shokan. Shokan was a devout shugenja and a rigid adherent to the Emperor's laws. He was among the most promising shugenja of his generation, and was one of only a handful to ever claim victory at the Topaz Championship, a gempukku ceremony normally dominated by bushi. As his reward, Shokan became an Emerald Magistrate, a champion of law and order throughout the Empire. It was the greatest gift he had ever received, and he quickly gathered others to serve alongside him. Some were other contestants at the Championship, while others were youths he had met during his studies at the temple. Together, they formed a team that could turn even the Emperor's head with the tales of their successes.

After years of work against the Bloodspeakers, Shokan and his men discovered the trail of Jama Suru, one of Iuchiban's deadliest lieutenants. They tracked him to a tower deep in the Shadowlands, and there they killed him. Two of Shokan's friends died that day, and Suru used a terrible ritual that nearly rote Shokan's soul asunder, but in the end, evil was vanquished, or so it seemed.

Shokan died that day in every way that mattered. Suru's ritual twisted his soul and set him on the path that Suru had once traveled. Shokan stole some maho scrolls from the tower before it was burned, and within a year, he was using maho. His own gift for magic, combined with his extensive knowledge of Bloodspeakers allowed him access to many dark texts, and he quickly mastered several complex rituals designed to summon demons to the mortal realm. He was preparing for his first attempt to do so when his friends discovered his betrayal and attempted to kill him. Wounded, he fled into the Shadowlands.

In the Shadowlands, Shokan found the prison of Nikoma no Oni, the ancient oni lord known later as the Maw. He brokered a deal with the beast and offered it a portion of his soul, granting both considerable power in the process. The Maw was freed, and Shokan destroyed the former friend who chased him, absorbing their souls for later use. In a matter of years, he was a legend in the Shadowlands, a master of demons who remained apart from Fu Leng's other minions. He remained alone until Daigotsu approached him and sought his aid in creating the Onisu.

The Onisu were a brilliant innovation that sparked many ideas in Shokan, who now called himself Shokansuru after his hated spiritual father, Jama Suru. He crafted new rituals in the City of the Lost until Iuchiban arrived, when he fled to the south and inadvertently discovered the Forgotten Tomb of Fu Leng. There, he could touch the realm of Jigoku and craft oni

more powerful than any that had existed. His former friends' souls were finally put to good use as he crafted Sentei no Oni, Yojireru no Oni, Munemitsu no Oni, and other monstrous creations. Daigotsu eventually reappeared, and was much pleased with Shokansuru's work. The oni master returned to the City of the Lost and resumed his place among the Dark Lord's court.

All is not well within the Shadowlands. Shokansuru knows more of oni than any living soul, and he senses the discontent brewing within Jigoku. Demons are the true children of Fu Leng, and they grow weary of the presumption displayed by the Lost in usurping the rightful place of demonkind. Shokansuru watches as that simpering fool Omoni is trusted above all others in Daigotsu's court. The oni summoner knows that such prestige should be his, and despises the goblin-man even as he recognizes the great similarities between the two twisted beast-men.

A reign of demons is fast approaching, and when it arrives, it will be Shokansuru who opens the gates of the City of the Lost and allows the chaos to wash over it.

Shokansuru, Master of Demons

Air: 3
 Awareness 5
Earth: 4
Fire: 4
 Intelligence 6
Water: 3
Void: 0
School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja (Earth) 2 / Maho-tsukai 2
Glory: -5.3 (Infamous)
Status: N/A
Honor: 0.0
Shadowlands Taint: 7.5
Advantages: Forbidden Knowledge (Oni summoning, 7 points), Voice
Disadvantages: Benten's Curse, Fascination (Oni), Jealousy (Omoni)
Spells: Blood Rite, Corruption of the Elements, Curse of Stone, Darkness Rising, Drain Soul, Earth's Stagnation, Fear, The Fires from Within, Force of Will, Grasp of Earth, Reduce, Reversal of Fortunes
Shadowlands Powers: Blood Domination, Child of Darkness, Jade Sense, Master of Blood, Master of Demons (Special), Unearthly Regeneration
Skills: Anatomy (Torture) 6, Animal Handling 4, Artisan: Fleshcrafting 7, Calligraphy 2, Deceit 6, Defense 3, Hunting (Wilderness Lore) 3, Lore: Bloodspeakers 2, Knives 4, Lore: History 4, Lore: Oni 9, Lore:

Shadowlands 7, Meditation 4, Spellcraft (Earth Knowledge, Maho) 7, Stealth (Spellcasting) 5, Theology 4

***Master of Demons (Unique Greater Shadowlands Power)**

This powerful ability is unique to Shokansuru, and comes as a result of his shared soul with an Oni Lord. Shokansuru is able to cast the maho spell Summon Oni as if he were a Rank 6 Maho-tsukai. He gains a number of Free Raises on this spell equal to his Insight Rank. Shokansuru has the ability to steal and store the souls of others he kills and use them to grant names to oni summoned by use of Summon Oni. This does not create independent Oni Lords, but rather oni with increased physical or mental abilities. Each oni that Shokansuru creates is unique, and when summoning an oni he may choose to reassign Traits or Skills as he sees fit.

Mirumoto Ryosaki, the Hero's Daughter

Doji Reju does not understand why the Empire considers him a hero. In his mind, he is nothing more than a failure. He lost not one but two charges under his care and lived to tell the tale, and he lost an arm in a failed attempt to defend Kakita Toshiken from the corrupted duelist Megumi. Despite the old samurai's reservations, the Crane have never doubted him. The Dragon have never doubted him. His wife never doubted him. And his daughter, Mirumoto Ryosaki, has never doubted him.

Ryosaki was born late in life, and came as a tremendous surprise to her parents, who believed they had been incapable of having children. By the time Ryosaki was old enough to understand the world around her, her father had returned to the Crane Clan after his servitude to Lady Hitomi, and her mother had accompanied him. The stark, mountain lifestyle that Ryosaki had known was suddenly replaced with opulence and comfort. Her childhood was not pleasant, however, as she was mocked ruthlessly by the Crane children for her accent, her style of dress (which her mother maintained out of Dragon tradition), and a dozen other reasons that changed from day to day. Ryosaki was upset, but even as a child she saw the terrible burden of guilt that her father bore and chose to ignore lesser troubles. How could she burden him further?

When the time came for young Ryosaki to choose where to study, she and her parents both agreed that the Dragon would be the best fit. Ryosaki wished to return to the mountains and find acceptance where there had been none among the Crane, and Reju wished for her to be distanced from him, still convinced as he was of his own failures.

Ryosaki proved to be an excellent student. She had learned to endure hardship, and no task the Dragon set before her was too difficult to deter her. She pushed herself to the limits of her ability, seeking to prove her worth not to the Dragon, who accepted her without reservation, but to herself and to her father. She hoped that one day, her father would see himself through her eyes, not as a failure but as a hero.

After her gempukku, Ryosaki soon earned a position as magistrate for the Mirumoto family. Her duties were not particularly stressful, and the young warrior longed to test her mettle against a worthy foe. That day came with the Rain of Blood. The night before, Ryosaki dreamt of the Lady Hitomi, who showed her a vision of blood and fire consuming a village that was under her care. Upon awakening, Ryosaki traveled there at once, but found nothing amiss. Undaunted, she scoured the village for any sign of something unusual, and discovered a secret cell of Bloodspeakers conducting their foul rituals.

Ryosaki immediately intervened and easily held the upper hand until the Rain began.

With the chaos of the Rain, the Bloodspeakers and the fallen villagers grossly outnumbered Ryosaki. On the brink of being overwhelmed, she fled and gathered the other villagers together, inspiring them to fight alongside her in Hitomi's name. The Bloodspeakers were defeated, and the villagers purged the fallen from their ranks at Ryosaki's command.

Since that day, Ryosaki has become a devout follower of Lady Moon. She bears numerous tattoos, although none are mystical, and attends temple services alongside the Hitomi order. Many Hitomi believe that she is blessed by their Lady, just as her father was before her, but what fate lies before her, none can say.

Mirumoto Ryosaki, the Hero's Daughter

Air: 3

Earth: 2

Stamina 3

Fire: 3

Water: 2

Perception 3

Void: 3

School/Rank: Mirumoto Bushi 2

Glory: 3.1

Status: 2.7

Honor: 2.4

Advantages: Allies (Crane, 2/2 points), Great Destiny, Quick

Disadvantages: Unlucky (3 points)

Kata: The Empire Rests on Its Edge, Striking as Fire, Victory of the Wind

Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 3, Jiujitsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Shugenja 2, Meditation 3, Staves (Bo) 3, Theology 2

Kitsune Ryukan, Fox Clan Champion

Ten years ago, few among the Fox would ever have believed that Kitsune Ryukan would ever amount to more than a young troublemaker, although Ryukan would have surely said that he was destined for greatness. Now, the entire Fox Clan supports their Champion and honors him in all things, but Ryukan believes he is a failure because his cousin's death, and longs for nothing so much as the simple joys he knew in his youth.

Ryukan was born without the ability to speak to the kami. This was most unexpected, as he was born to parents that both shared a tremendous bond not only with the elements, but also with the kitsune spirits that dwelled within Kitsune Mori. Ryukan could not hear the spirits' whispers, but he knew they were there. Even as a youth, he spent most of his time deep within Kitsune Mori, exploring the darkest shadows and communing in his own ways with the spirits there. Gradually, his family realized that Ryukan followed his own path, and among the Fox such things were not a reason for condemnation. In time, the young man was fostered to the Crab to study alongside the spiritual Toritaka, who found a willing and eager student in the young Ryukan.

Among the Toritaka, Ryukan discovered the truths behind many things he had previously understood only on an instinctual basis. He learned of the spirits that he had known since childhood, and the spirit realms from which they came. When he returned to Kitsune Mori, Ryukan disappeared into the forest and remained gone for days on end, returning to his home to speak to his family and to accept any new responsibilities that awaited him. When those were completed, however, he returned to the forest. In a short period of time, the young man became the Fox Clan's greatest hunter and tracker, and the greatest expert on the mysteries within Kitsune Mori. Not even Ryukan's cousin, the Fox Champion and the clan's greatest shugenja, Kitsune Ryosei, could match his knowledge.

When Ryosei disappeared into the Shadowlands seeking her father a few months before Daigotsu attacked Otosan Uchi, she left explicit instructions that Ryukan was to assume her position in her absence. Though none would speak out against Ryosei's choice, many doubted the Ryukan would be capable of such a responsibility. Many, including Ryukan, believed that her parting orders were nothing more than a means to prevent the young man from chasing her into the Shadowlands. A command from his Champion was the only thing that Ryukan would never dare ignore. When Ryosei returned a few months later, the Fox Clan breathed a collective sigh of relief. The relief was short lived, however, as Ryosei adjourned to a temple and instructed Ryukan to administrate the clan's affairs in her name. She remained Champion, but the burden of her responsibility fell upon Ryukan.

Responsibility has transformed Ryukan. His duties are to oversee the Kitsune Mori in the Emperor's name, and to ensure the continued welfare of his clan. Before Ryosei even returned from the Shadowlands, Ryukan realized that these duties and his love for the forest were one in the same. Everything that is sacred about his beloved Kitsune Mori stems from his people and their connection to the kitsune spirits that dwell within it. Did the fox spirits encourage Ryosei to choose him as her successor? Ryukan does not know, but he knows that he must protect them with his life, and if necessary with the lives of his people. The kitsune and the Fox Clan are one in the same, and he will die before he allows anyone or anything to disturb them.

Only one specter haunts Ryukan: the death of his cousin Ryosei. She was found dead in the temple, seemingly of old age, but Ryukan knows better. Ryosei was too full of life, too close to the spirits, to simply pass away in some edifice of cold stone. If her time had come naturally, she would have walked into Kitsune Mori and none would ever have heard from her again. At night, as the sun dips below the horizon, Ryukan stares into the deepening shadows that the mountains cast around Kitsune Mori and wonders.

If there is a threat that he cannot see, how can he protect the Fox Clan from it?

Kitsune Ryukan, Fox Clan Champion

Air: 3

Earth: 3

Stamina 5

Fire: 4

Water: 2

Perception 4

Void: 4

School/Rank: Toritaka Bushi 3 / Woodland Tracker 1

Glory: 4.1

Status: 7.6

Honor: 3.3

Advantages: Multiple Schools, Social Position (Fox Clan Champion), Way of the Land (Kitsune Mori)

Disadvantages: Brash, Obligation (Fox Clan, 4 points)

Kata: Striking as Earth, Striking as Water, Victory of the Wind

Skills: Animal Handling (Falcons) 3, Athletics 4, Battle 2, Courtier 3, Defense 3, Etiquette 4, Hunting (Survival, Tracking, Wilderness Lore) 7, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Spirit Realms 3, Meditation 3, Spears 2, Stealth 4, Theology (Fortunes, Shintao) 2

The Toritaka Bushi School will be updated on the L5R RPG website as part of the School Update Project. The Woodland Tracker Path appears in the forthcoming sourcebook, *The Four Winds: The Toturi Dynasty from Gold to Lotus Edition*. To tide you over, here's a preview of the Woodland Tracker Path.

Technique: *The Hidden Path* – Many among the Minor Clans are intimately familiar with the wilderness throughout the Empire, and their experience within the wilderness serves them well in many capacities. The tracker rolls additional die equal to his Insight Rank on all Hunting and Stealth rolls.

Isawa Ochiai, Master of Fire

The Phoenix Masters of Fire have a checkered past in recent decades. The previous two Masters, Isawa Tsuke and his son Isawa Hochiu, both suffered from madness that led them to shame themselves, their family, and their clan. Fortunately, the dark fate of Isawa Tsuke came during a time when many great heroes fell to darkness, and thus the clan's shame was mitigated. Hochiu's descent into madness remains largely private, known only to a handful of Phoenix and Dragon. When the other Elemental Masters sought Hochiu's replacement, however, it is no surprise that they sought someone who would not repeat the mistakes of history.

Isawa Ochiai is the younger sister of Isawa Nakamuro, the current Master of Air. Both siblings were gifted with the kami, although neither was considered particularly powerful during their youth. Nakamuro managed to acquire a position studying with Agasha Gennai, but Ochiai had no interest in such things. She pursued the path of an artisan, delighting in painting, dancing, and all manner of creative endeavors. Her youth and beauty seemed timeless, bringing her a great deal of attention from suitors. With their parents deceased, however, Ochiai's brother preferred to allow his sister to choose her marriage, rather than attempt to better their station by forcing her into a loveless union. Hers was a free spirit, and Nakamuro could not bear to see her shackled.

Ironically, it was Ochiai's pursuit of the arts that eventually led to her ascension to the position of Master of Fire. In focusing on her art, Ochiai found that she had a gift for incredible detail. While her magic was not as powerful as others, she tempered her power with precision. When others could reduce a tree to ash in a heartbeat, she could target and incinerate individual leaves without so much as scorching those next to them. Even the Isawa's greatest sensei, Isawa Sachi, could not help to be impressed with her abilities. When the time came to find a new Master of Fire, it was Shiba Ningen who suggested Ochiai, much to Nakamuro's surprise. There was some deliberation, but in the end not even Isawa Taeruko could deny her worth. With her gift for fire magic so well tempered by her skill, the Council believed, there would be no further shame heaped upon the Master of Fire's position.

Ochiai's tenure as Master of Fire has been an unusual one. She accepted the position shortly after a Crane was made the Council's leader, a fact that some Isawa find upalatable, even if Doji Akiko is the daughter of Isawa. Isawa Taeruko's death was a tremendous blow to the Council, but the appointment of Isawa Sachi brought new hope to the family, beloved as the old sensei was by hundreds of former students. Akiko and Sachi quickly formed a bond based on their similar political philosophies, and while Nakamuro and

Ningen do not necessarily oppose the others, they often find themselves led down a different path. Thus, Ochiai frequently finds herself in a position to serve as the swing vote for the Council, a position that she finds simultaneously enjoyable and uncomfortable. A devout pacifist, Ochiai sided with her brother in an attempt to forestall violence with the Mantis, but Ningen sided with Akiko and Sachi, and war was the result.

The Mantis war has placed Ochiai in a difficult position. She gladly uses her magic to protect and defend her people, but she will not harm others, even in war. As the conflict escalates, Ochiai has ventured to the City of Remembrance in hopes of finding some common ground with the dragon spirits that dwell there. Perhaps with their aid, the war can be ended without further loss of life.

Isawa Ochiai, Master of Fire

Air: 3

Earth: 3

Willpower 5

Fire: 5

Intelligence 6

Water: 3

Void: 4

School/Rank: Isawa Tensai (Fire) 5

Glory: 6.6

Status: 7.2

Honor: 2.8

Advantages: Blessing of the Elements (Fire), Friend of the Elements (Fire), Fukurokujin's Blessing, Quick

Disadvantages: Meddler, Soft-hearted, Small

Spells: As Master of Fire, Ochiai has access to the Phoenix Clan's vast libraries of spell scrolls. She may be assumed to have any elemental spells found within the core rulebook (those she is capable of casting, at least), and many other Fire spells beyond that.

Kiho: Channel the Fire Dragon, Purity of Shinsei

Skills: Artisan: Painting 4, Athletics 3, Calligraphy 4, Courtier 5, Defense 3, Etiquette (Sincerity) 6, Lore: History 4, Horsemanship 3, Meditation 5, Performance: Dance 4, Spellcraft (Fire) 6, Staves 2, Tea Ceremony 3, Theology (Fortunes, Shintao) 5

Hitomi Suguhara, Commander of the Tenth Legion

Like most members of his order, Hitomi Suguhara was once something else. Strangely, he can remember very little of that time. He remembers that he was lost, desperate and morose over his station in life, and that the first true moment of clarity he ever experienced was when the tattoo signifying Lady Moon's blessing first appeared. On that day, a dismal, unhappy, weakling of a man departed for the High House of Light. By the time Hitomi Suguhara arrived at the palace, there was nothing of that man left, not even a memory. Where that man had been weak and uncertain, Suguhara was strong and resolute. He was the very model of a loyal Hitomi, and was accepted with open arms.

In the months that followed his acceptance, Suguhara quickly developed a reputation as a relentless warrior. He adapted quickly to the martial arts practiced by the tattooed men, and advanced through their ranks rapidly. His precision and strength were such that few could oppose him. In short order, he became a sensei of sorts, teaching other members of the Hitomi order to call upon Lady Moon for inspiration, seeking strength from within to seek enlightenment by overcoming adversity. It is likely that Suguhara would have continued in this manner indefinitely if not for the untimely arrival of an honored guest of the Dragon, the man the Emperor Toturi had once named Defender of the Empire, Bayushi Paneki.

Paneki held a position as a ranking officer in the First Legion, an advisor to the Emperor's daughter Toturi Tsudao. Paneki sought the counsel of Togashi Satsu in a matter relevant to the Legion, and seemed surprised to see Suguhara. He called the monk by a different name, a name that Suguhara had chosen to forget. For the first time since his arrival, he felt a wave of doubt. In a moment of panic, the monk leapt over the balcony where he had been practicing his kata and disappeared into the foothills below, fleeing from a memory.

Suguhara remained hidden for days, his mind racing. His abandonment of his previous life had been so utterly complete that he could no longer remember it, even if he wished to do so. Why did the idea of confronting it frighten him so? Suguhara was overcome with self-loathing at his weakness, for it was the antithesis of everything he had come to value during his time among the Dragon. Finally, he rose from his place of hiding and returned to the High House of Light, determined to overcome this obstacle as he had all others.

Paneki was waiting for him. The Scorpion apologized with a genuine smile, explaining that he had clearly mistaken Suguhara for someone else, someone that had died a number of years before. The resemblance, he

explained, was quite remarkable, but he had not intended to cause his honored ally among the Dragon discomfort by succumbing to a moment of melodramatic weakness. He asked Suguhara's forgiveness, and the monk readily gave it. It was only then that Paneki informed the monk that Hitomi Kagetora had granted his request to have Suguhara come and teach unarmed combat to his soldiers in the Legion.

Suguhara's students among the Legions were far less adaptable than the monks he had previously instructed. They were unwilling to forego their previous knowledge to embrace his teachings, but he found their reluctance exhilarating. Suguhara's leadership qualities blossomed under the challenge of teaching such men. During his instruction to key members of the Tenth Legion, Suguhara and the others came under attack by a vicious cell of Bloodspeakers flush with power in the wake of Iuchiban's return to the Empire. The Legion's commander and most of his command staff were killed, and Suguhara took command out of sheer necessity. When the other commanders learned of what had happened, the personal recommendation of Bayushi Paneki was sufficient for Suguhara to be awarded command of the Legion. The appointment of a monk to such a position was unheard of, but Suguhara quickly proved that the decision was well-made. His Legion is among the most disciplined, adaptable in the Emperor's service, and is frequently called upon by First Legion commander Toturi Miyako when she had a difficult duty that must be performed quickly and precisely.

Hitomi Suguhara, Commander of the Tenth Legion

Air: 4

Earth: 3

Stamina 6

Fire: 3

Agility 5

Water: 3

Void: 4

School/Rank: Tattooed Man (Kikage Zumi) 4

Glory: 6.1

Status: N/A (6.3)

Honor: 2.7

Advantages: Bishamon's Blessing, Death Trance

Disadvantages: Overconfident

Tattoos: Bat, Blaze, Carp, Snake, Spider

Kiho: Self No Self, Way of the Willow

Skills: Artisan: Sculpting 3, Athletics 6, Battle 4, Instruction 5, Jiujutsu 7, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 3, Meditation (Void Recovery) 4, Tea Ceremony 3, Theology (Fortunes, Shintao) 4

Note: Suguhara is exempt from the normal rules regarding monks and Status. Despite that he is technically a monk, his position as commander of the Tenth Imperial Legion supercedes normal social conventions and causes others to treat him with the same Status afforded to others of such rank.

New Tattoos

Hitomi Suguhara has many tattoos, both mystical and mundane. He has a number of tattoos that are not described in the Third Edition rulebook, including the following:

Carp

The carp is a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, and those tattooed men who bear its tattoo embody those traits. This tattoo is always on. A number of times per day equal to your Insight Rank, you may immediately re-roll any roll.

Scarab

The scarab is an insect found across the Burning Sands, although a handful were brought back by the Scorpion after that clan's banishment there. In the Burning Sands, the scarab is seen as a symbol of the ruthless sun, a sinister entity there but a revered deity in Rokugan. You may spend a Void Point to activate the Scarab tattoo, which remains active for a number of rounds equal to your Insight Rank. While the tattoo is active, you are immune to damage from any non-magical fire or heat, and any fire spell targeting you has its TN increased by your Insight Rank x5.

Snake

The Snake tattoo is among the most dangerous and sinister of all ise zumi tattoos, and usually only manifests on those who have the strength of will to keep such power in check. After making a successful unarmed attack that strikes bare flesh, you may choose not to roll damage and spend a Void Point. Doing so immediately afflicts your target as if he had been afflicted with snake venom (see Third Edition, page 162). Rolls to resist or heal this affliction have their TN increased by twice your Insight Rank. You may spend a second Void Point to immediately end the effects of this poison in a victim. Allowing a victim of this attack to die is grounds for being cast out of the tattooed orders.

Hida Isamu, Son of the Stone Crab

There are few men in Rokugan who exemplify all that it means to be Crab so much as Hida Isamu. During his short life he has seen the greatest and worst that life has to offer, and though he came close to losing everything, he has begun to become an even greater man than his legendary father.

Isamu's father was Hida Tsuneo, the man history remembers as the Stone Crab. Tsuneo was legendary in his own time for a number of reasons, including his tremendous sense of honor and his incredible prowess on the battlefield. Unfortunately, what history remembers most is that Tsuneo was unfailingly loyal to his Emperor, the maniacal Hantei XVI, also known as the Steel Chrysanthemum. Under the Chrysanthemum's direction, Tsuneo committed terrible atrocities that filled his soul with shame, but his honor would not allow him to disobey his Emperor. When the Chrysanthemum's son and his loyal Imperial supporters overthrew the Hantei, Tsuneo followed his lord in death after killing many of his assassins.

Death was not an escape, however. Tsuneo followed his Emperor to Toshigoku and later through Oblivion's Gate to plague the Empire once more. During the War of Spirits, he found comfort in the arms of a peasant woman, much in the same manner as his ancestor Osano-wo once had. By the time Isamu was born, Tsuneo had perished in the collapse of Beiden Pass. Isamu grew up hearing tales of his father, and upon reaching the proper age his mother gave him all that she had of his father: a stone crest of two crab claws holding an emerald.

Isamu took up life as a ronin for years, quickly earning several loyal followers with his determination. When a 20 Goblin Winter was declared in Crab lands, Isamu and his men ventured into the Shadowlands and recovered one of the greatest bounties any such contest had ever seen: enough goblin heads for Isamu's entire band of twenty men to gain fealty to the Crab. It was only once Hida Kuon had accepted their loyalty did Isamu reveal his heritage, much to the surprise of those assembled. Isamu's brash nature did little to endear him to the Crab Champion, however, and Kuon instantly recognized the young man's impulsive nature as dangerous.

It was not long before Isamu's worth would be tested. When the tattooed madman Kokujiin offered the Crab the location of Tsuburu no Oni, one of the legendary Oni Lords, Isamu volunteered to hunt the beast. Isamu insisted that Kuon was too valuable to risk, and that if it were a trap, the loss of a young warrior like himself would not hurt the clan. Kuon reluctantly agreed, sending his trusted advisor Hida Rohiteki to watch over Isamu. The young man was victorious, and slew the Oni Lord, but lost all his men save for Rohiteki in the process. Moments later, the Rain of Blood caught both Crab in open ground, with no shelter to be had. The burning rain brought out all of Isamu's arrogance and ambition, and Rohiteki realized that he was on the brink of corruption. Unwilling to allow such a man to become an enemy, the elderly shugenja shielded Isamu from the harshest effects of the Rain, but in doing so left her soul bare, and was claimed by the dark magic held within the storm.

Isamu returned to his Champion in disgrace, but was surprised to find Kuon placed no blame upon him. For the first time, Isamu understood the pain, rage, and strength of will Kuon possessed, having seen so many of his loved ones fall. Bowing to the greater man, Isamu pledged his life and loyalty to Kuon as surely as his father had done, although to a lord truly worth of such fealty. Since that time, Isamu has abandoned the notion of achieving the glory his father failed to gather during his lifetime, and instead focuses on serving the Crab and his Champion to the best of his ability. Ironically, it is only now that many see in Isamu

the same traits that were squandered in his father, sullied and disgraced by the despot Hantei XVI. As great as Hida Tsuneo could have been, many now believe that Hida Isamu will be even greater.

Hida Isamu, Son of the Stone Crab

Air: 2

Reflexes 3

Earth: 4

Fire: 2

Agility 3

Water: 3

Strength 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Hida Bushi 2, Ronin Warrior 1

Glory: 3.2

Status: 1.8

Honor: 2.1

Advantages: Inheritance (Tsuneo's Crest, Lore: Heraldry, Free Raise on all Awareness rolls made with other Crab), Multiple Schools (Accepted into Hida Bushi after training as a ronin), Strength of the Earth (4 points)

Disadvantages: Brash, Overconfident

Kata: Shell of Stone, Stance on the Wall, Striking as Earth

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle (Enemy: Shadowlands) 4, Deceit (Intimidation) 3, Defense 4, Heavy Weapons (Dai Tsuchi, Tetsubo) 5, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Investigation (Notice) 4, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Stealth (Sneaking) 3

Doji Saori, Blade of the Courts

Doji Saori is a well-known figure among the less prominent courts of Rokugan. Among the Emperor's court and the court of Clan Champions, she is merely one of many powerful courtiers and advisors. Among lesser courts, however, she is known as a great mediator and officiator, and is always in high demand.

In her youth, Saori displayed aptitude for both the blade and in court. After some deliberation by her parents, it was requested that she be given leave to study with the Kakita. Saori acquitted herself well there, and achieved her gempukku with honor. Only a year after her gempukku, however, Saori was involved in a dueling accident during practice, wherein a reckless opponent wounded her sword arm. The injury would require nearly two years to fully heal, and in the interim Saori was granted leave to attend the Doji Courtier School so that she might still serve her clan. Fortunately, her skill there was equal to her skill with the blade, although she did not enjoy it as much as she did the weight of steel in her hands. To overcome her disappointment, she began studying the laws surrounding duels as well as the reputations of prominent duelists throughout the Empire.

One year ago, Saori was an attendant in the court of Doji Kurohito. Lord Kurohito was often absent on matters important to the clan, and his closest advisors oversaw the Crane's many guests in his stead. On a particularly cool spring morning, a group of guests enjoying the Doji gardens were disrupted by an unpleasant argument between one of the Kakita in attendance and an especially belligerent guest from the Dragon Clan. For a moment, it seemed as though the Dragon's tempestuous nature would explode into violence, but Saori stepped forward and used her knowledge of dueling protocols to defuse the situation and arrange for a proper test of skill to settle the dispute without bloodshed. Saori hastily composed correspondence to the Kakita's daimyo as well as his Dragon counterpart apologizing for conducting the test without their express permission, but resolved the matter to the satisfaction of everyone involved.

Shortly after the Crane court came to an end, Saori was summoned before Kurohito. She expected to be reprimanded, but instead learned that Kurohito had received a letter of gratitude from the Dragon daimyo regarding her intervention. Kurohito praised her cool head and informed her of a request by another court for the Crane to officiate over a dueling tournament. The court was largely insignificant, Kurohito explained, but he could not pass over their request without risking loss of an ally, even if a minor one. Saori immediately offered to deal with the matter for her Champion, who smiled and signaled for an attendant to hand her the papers he had already prepared.

Since that time, Saori has become a common sight in the courts of more martially inclined daimyo throughout the Empire. She is among the most knowledgeable dueling officiators in her family, and often arranges tournaments and demonstrations of skill between aspiring young duelists. She is an excellent judge of skill, and always arranges for opponents to face someone of an equivalent level, ensuring that all matches are fair and interesting to observers. Her track record is not without difficulty, however, as there is a particularly hot-tempered Matsu duelist who blames her for his failure against an opponent, and goes to great lengths to dishonor her in court. For the most part, however, Saori is a well-known and greatly respected official in the dueling subculture so popular throughout Rokugan.

Doji Saori, Blade of the Courts

Air: 4

Earth: 2

Fire: 3

Water: 2

Perception 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: Doji Courtier 2/Kakita Bushi 1

Glory: 2.4

Status: 2.1

Honor: 3.2

Advantages: Allies (2 points/2 points), Multiple Schools, Social Position (Iaijutsu Officiator)

Disadvantages: Meddler, Sworn Enemy (2 points)

Kata: Kakita's First Stance, Watchful Falcon

Skills: Artisan: Ikebana 3, Calligraphy 2, Courtier (Manipulation) 5, Defense 2, Etiquette (Conversation) 5, Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 2, Lore: Dueling 6, Lore: Law 5, Meditation 3, Storytelling (Poetry) 2, Tea Ceremony 2

Bayushi Muhito, Champion of Rei

Bayushi Muhito is one of the most competent students to graduate from the Shosuro Shinobi School in recent memory. He skillfully serves Shosuro Maru's every need as her yojimbo and personal assistant. He never shirks from his duties, no matter how dishonorable they seem. He is the paragon of a Shosuro warrior, the quiet bodyguard, the swift assassin.

Muhito was born the second son of two loyal but unremarkable Bayushi samurai. He was an outgoing, vivacious child. Things came easily to him, and he absorbed knowledge quicker than all his peers. With this ease he enjoyed all parts of life — the morning kata, the hours spent reading a play, and freeing his mind to create poetry. He outperformed his peers and slowly became the arrogant center of a gang of adoring Scorpion children.

During a festival at Kyuden Bayushi shortly after his gempukku, Muhito became embroiled in an unpleasant conflict with a young Lion shugenja. The shugenja's traditional mannerisms and reverence for magic were laughable to Muhito, who had spent little time around shugenja during his young life. The argument came to a head when Muhito publicly berated the Kitsu, claiming that shugenja like him were revered only because fools could not comprehend their magic. In the moments after his boasting, Muhito suddenly realized he had offended his own kinsmen as well as his opponent. When a friend arrived and whispered to Muhito that his opponent was the son of the Lion ambassador, he realized the true enormity of his folly.

The Lion ambassador demanded some sort of restitution from Muhito's family. The Lion exerted considerable pressure, and it seemed that no Scorpion were willing to come to the arrogant young man's aid, until an old Scorpion courtier smiled to Muhito's parents and told them that he would fix the situation. All he desired in return was Muhito's oath of service to serve his niece Shosuro Maru, a young and gifted courtier who could benefit from the aid of someone with Muhito's natural gifts. The crisis was averted, and Muhito was sworn to Maru's service.

Muhito swore to himself that he would never be so foolish again. He dropped his arrogance and his cheerfulness, and a shield of cold courtesy replaced them. He vowed he would never be manipulated again through his feelings. He vowed he would respond with courtesy to any provocation. The young samurai drew his blade and swore to use it in service to Shosuro Maru until such time as he was dead, or until his lord ordered him to serve another.

Maru and Muhito traveled the courts and Muhito did as he swore. He protected Maru as her yojimbo and as her hand in the vast underworld of Rokugan. Two years ago, he followed her bidding and traveled to the court of

Moshi Amika alone. When he arrived he began to stalk Yoritomo Katsu. Katsu had made the mistake of threatening Maru, and Muhito was there to make sure that he would regret that decision.

When his target stopped to watch an iaijutsu demonstration, Muhito suddenly became aware of the dark haired young Crane duelist performing for the court. She exuded grace from her every movement and her kata resembled a dove taking to the wind. Muhito watched her, distracted from his duty, and for a moment forgot where he was. When a Yoritomo guardsman noticed him, Muhito realized his mistake and fled the scene. It was the first time he had ever failed his duty. Though filled with condemnation at his failure, he could not resist learning the name of the duelist, Kakita Korihime.

A year later, Muhito and Maru traveled to Crossroads Village, a small town near the Lion-Dragon border. There, they and five others fought a pitched battle to save the village from a large force of bandits that threatened to overwhelm it. Among those gathered was Kakita Korihime, and Muhito was sorely wounded in the battle protecting her from harm. In the aftermath, he expected death. Instead, he found the will to live because of Korihime's command. For her, he lived.

Since that time, Muhito has returned to his duties without fail. He does not hesitate, no matter the gruesome nature of his task. Instead, he has a renewed sense of duty. He has fallen to darkness, perhaps, but there are those in the Empire who are worthy of such a sacrifice. If his actions can make the world safer for pure souls like Korihime, then the sacrifice is worth it.

Bayushi Muhito, Champion of Rei

Air: 2

Awareness: 4

Earth: 3

Fire: 3

Agility: 4

Water: 3

Void: 3

School/Rank: Shosuro Shinobi 2/Shosuro Yojimbo

Glory: 1.8

Status: 1.1 (-10)

Honor: 1.6

Advantages: Precise Memory

Disadvantages: Obligation (Shosuro Maru: 4 Points), True Love (Kakita Korihime)

Kata: Cut Under the Mountain, The Tail's Reach

Skills: Athletics 2, Courtier 3, Deceit 3, Defense 4, Etiquette (Sincerity) 5, Iaijutsu 2, Investigation (Notice) 3, Kenjutsu 4, Meditation 2, Ninja Ranged Weapons 2, Poison 2, Sleight of Hand 2, Stealth (Ambush, Shadowing, Sneaking) 6, Storytelling 1, Underworld 3

The Shosuro Yojimbo path is from the upcoming book *The Four Winds: The Toturi Dynasty from Gold to Lotus Edition*.

Technique: Protector From the Shadows —The Shosuro Yojimbo protects his charge from those that lurk in the shadows. For the purposes of this technique, your Shosuro Shinobi School Rank is considered to be one higher. You gain a number of Free Raises equal to your Shosuro Shinobi School Rank to Investigation or Battle rolls to notice hidden threats or traps that might threaten your charge. At the beginning of battle, you may make a contested Awareness/Stealth roll against all opponents to gain an extra Round of action before everyone else. If they are not aware of your presence while performing this roll, you gain a bonus equal to twice your Stealth to the roll.

The Zamalash, Ally of the Tattered Ear

A lifetime ago, the Zamalash was a hunter. He was one of an honored few given the task of supplying the needs of those Naga who called Kalpa, the City of Rebirth, their home. Unlike other Naga cities, Kalpa was hidden in the mountains to the distant north, far beyond the borders of the vast Shinomen Mori. Game was sparse in the northern mountains, but the Zamalash was a gifted hunter, and even in his youth he was a testament to the skill of the Naga hunters. When the Great Sleep came, Zamalash took his place alongside his fellow hunters, preparing to sleep through the ages and rise again to defend Kalpa from the Foul and its many manifestations.

Zamalash's sleep was filled with terrible visions, nightmares of Kalpa's destruction that drifted through the Akasha as earthquakes ravaged the city and human exiles looted the ruins, slaughtering every Naga they could find. Zamalash and his comrades were in a cavern deep beneath the largest temple, however, and they remained undiscovered for centuries, even as the spirits of their fellow Naga tore themselves from the Akasha to wreak bloody vengeance on the humans who had murdered them. In time, the visions faded, and Zamalash's slumber was peaceful again.

When the webs of sleep fell away, Zamalash awakened to find himself face to face with Nezumi, strange creatures that he recognized as livestock and wild prey he had once hunted. These creatures were different, however. They were taller, larger, walked more erect, and burning in their eyes was the light of intelligence. Most recoiled in horror from Zamalash, their primitive instincts demanding that they flee before a predator. One stood his ground, however, and met Zamalash's eyes without fear. The beast pointed to a human, a creature recognized from his hazy dreams, lying dead on the floor. A crude spear was embedded in the man's chest, just as his blade was buried in the coils of a sleeping Naga. The creature had found the sleeping chamber, and had intended to slaughter the Naga. The Nezumi had stopped him. The Nezumi looked into Zamalash's eyes and uttered a crude, hissing sound. It was a butchered Naga word, but one that recognized nonetheless.

“Life.”

The months since his awakening have not been kind to Zamalash. The few survivors he has discovered in Kalpa's ruins will not awaken despite his best efforts. Some sinister aspect of the Great Sleep keeps them tightly in its grasp. The Nezumi fear him, but thanks to their Rememberer, a sort of philosopher or historian, they have accepted Zamalash among their number. He, in turn, is learning of their culture and their language. The Tattered Ear Tribe is what the creatures call themselves, and they discovered Kalpa purely by accident while seeking another tribe called the Broken Shinbone.

Regardless of what quirk of fate brought them to Kalpa, the Tattered Ear saved Zamalash's life, and the lives of those that yet sleep beneath the city. So long as he lives, he will aid the Nezumi, though he can never truly repay the enormity of the debt he owes them.

The Zamalash, Ally of the Tattered Ear

Air: 2

Reflexes 3

Earth: 3

Fire: 3

Water: 3

Perception 4

Akasha: 2

School/Rank: Warrior 2

Glory: N/A

Status: N/A

Honor: N/A

Advantages: Allies (Tattered Ear Tribe, 1 point/4 points), Language (Nezumi), Venom (Venom Spray, 7 points), Way of the Land (Northern Wall Mountains, Shinomen Mori)

Disadvantages: Bad Reputation (Among Naga) (Associates with Nezumi), Obligation (Tattered Ear, 4 points)

Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 1, Defense 3, Dueling 2, Hunting 4, Jiu-jitsu 2, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Nezumi Customs 3, Stealth 3, Swordsmanship 4, Theology (Moksha) 2

Creatures of Rokugan 2.0 [Working Title] Preview:

Naga Warrior School (Pre-editing version)

Rank 1: Drawing from the Deep

Naga warriors are trained to draw upon the vast experience within the Akasha and apply it to their training. You gain a number of Free Raises per day equal to your Akasha. These Free Raises may be used on any School Skill Roll. You may add your Akasha to the total of all attack rolls.

Rank 2: The Tides of War

The serpentine grace of the Naga people is put to great use in a warrior's training, making it difficult for even the most skilled opponent to land a blow. When you are in the Full Defense posture, you have a second chance to avoid successful attacks. If an opponent successfully strikes you, you may make an Agility/Defense roll against a TN equal to his attack roll. If you are successful, the strike misses. You may add your Fire to the total of all Initiative rolls.