

Legend of the Five Rings



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Five Rings*

# THE BOOK OF WATER







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WRITTEN BY: *Robert Hobart, Shawn Carman, Seth Mason, Robert Denton, Ryan Reese, Maxime Lemaire, Marie Brennan, Kevin Blake, Daniel Briscoe, Chris Hand, Monjomi Osso*

EDITED BY: *Robert Hobart*

ART DIRECTOR: *Robert Hobart*

COVER DESIGN: *Robert Denton*

COVER ART: *Matt Zeilinger*

LAYOUT: *Robert Denton*

ORIGINAL GRAPHIC DESIGN: *Edge Entertainment*

ARTISTS: *A.C. Swedberg, Alayna Lemmer, Alex Tooth, Andy Hepworth, Beth Trott, Brent Chumley, Carlos NCT, Charles Urbach, Chris Ostrowski, Chris Pritchard, Conceptopolis, Corene Werhane, David Horne, Drew Baker, Edwin David, Felipe Gaona, Florian Stitz, Franz Vohwinkel, Gemma Tegelaers, Glen Osterberger, Gong Studios, Heather V. Kreiter, Hector Herrera, Isuardi Therianto, Janine Johnston, Jason Behnke, Jason Engle, Jason Juta, Jazz Siy, Jeff Hill, John Donahue, Joshua Pinkas, Lake Hurwitz, Manuel Calderon, Mark Poole, Matthew S. Armstrong, Matthew Starbuck, Matt Zeilinger, Mateusz Ozminski, Maximilian Degen, Michael Kaluta, Nikolay Stoyanov, Patrick Reinemann, Richard Garcia, Sergio Camarena, Shen Fei, Steve Argyle, Tony Foti, William O'Connor*

PRODUCTION MANAGER: *David Lepore*

SENIOR BRAND MANAGER: *Todd Rowland*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: *John Zinser*

DESIGN TEAM: *Shawn Carman, Robert Hobart*

HEAD PLAYTESTER: *Brian Bates*

PLAYTESTERS: *Team 1 (Dave Smith, Patrick Chen, Aien Elmi, Jason Kang, Ki Chang Kim, Roger Liang, Arthur Nguyen); Team 4 (Becca Hobart, Kevin Blake, Todd Stites, Daniel Briscoe); Team 6 (Timar Long, Erykah Fasset, Chad Kirby, Mike Brodu, Maxime Lemaire, Ray Rupp); Team 7 (Jason Shafer, Nathan Shafer, Matt Strout, Liza Strout, Joe White, Terry Moore, Eric Newlin); Team 8 (Edward Reynolds, Breboullet Mathieu, David Whitney, Richard Whitney, Stuart Biggs, Robert Knight); Team 8b (Michael Hill, Shane Pheeny, Chaedy Ritherdon, Tarl Cowly); Team 8c (Thomas Atwood, Ryan Castilla, Henry Joiner, Brandon Woodmen); Team 17 (Tom Lewis, Jamie Kipp, Gavin O'Hearn, Shawn MacLean, John Taylor); Team 18 (Dave Laderoute, Mike Clark, Chris Talarico, Chris Masdea, Lee Vollum, Richard Hewitt, Bill Hrenchuck); Team 19 (Charles Caswell, Vincent Stantion, Eddie Sweeden, Chuck Sweeden, Justin Cross, Fox Whitworth); Team 20 (Matt Tyler, Timothy Hill, Stephen Mumford, Matthew Linkswiler, Paul Casagrande, Robert Zapf); Team 21 (James Freeman-Harris, Sarah Koz, David Wright, James Mosingo); Team 22 (Scott Shepard, Dawn Dalton, Andrew Doud, Justin Davidson, Jon Huskey, Trista Lillis); Team 23 (James Wagner, Kevin Pason, Ryan Bataglia, Chris Foster, Jim Friedman, Jason Whiston, Phil Jenicek, Dan Sulin, Izzy Lombardi-Friedman); Team 24 (Tony Love, Cassandra Mullin, Brian Ticken, Kimberly Wajer-Scott, Phillip Scott, Nicholas Love, Jerry Fleenor, Patrick Williams) Jim Friedman, Izzy Friedman, Jay Becknell, Mandy Spice*

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# INTRODUCTION



*With a loud splash Hiroshi's kama fell into the lake. Dazed, he caught only a glint of blade-reflected sunlight before the water swallowed it up.*

*Immediately he lowered his guard, cursing inwardly. After a moment he bowed to his opponent. "You win," he said softly. "Brother."*

*The older man smirked in reply.*

*The two stood on the deck of a river-style kobune, drifting gently downstream with the current. The sun was setting, painting the waters in rich blues and purples. The mon of the Yoritomo family, painted gaudily across the boat's single large sail, reflected hazily in the water. Hiroshi stared at it glumly, his mind still seeing his weapon as it dropped beneath the surface.*

*"Why did you resist the strike?" his older brother asked. He was spinning his kama idly in one hand, not even looking at it.*

*Hiroshi scowled. "I feared that I was going to lose my weap-"*

*The smirk became a grin.*

*Hiroshi broke off and rolled his eyes. "It was instinctual," he finally admitted.*

*His brother dropped the grin and nodded, then looked out toward the horizon. "Yet resistance ensured that very outcome," he said quietly. "It is in your nature to resist, little brother, that is true. I suppose you will have to change your nature."*

*Hiroshi grimaced rebelliously as he went to stand beside his older sibling. "Sensei says I will simply have to become stronger. If I was stronger, it would be your kama that would need to be fished from the river."*

*His brother cocked a brow. "Stronger, you say? Hm." He rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Suppose you were stronger. Three times as strong. Stronger even than Yoritomo-no-kami was." He paused, relishing Hiroshi's brief look of starry-eyed wonder. "If you struck the ship's mast with all that strength, would it break?"*

*"Hail!" Hiroshi nodded.*

*"Indeed it would. Suppose you struck a stone with all that strength. Would it break as well?"*

*"Hail!"*

*"And a rod of iron?"*

*"With enough strength?" Hiroshi laughed. "Of course! Even a rod of iron would break if struck! Anyone can see that!"*

*The adult man smiled, then pointed a finger over the rail. "And what if you struck the river? Could you break it?"*

*Hiroshi said nothing.*

*"That's right. The water would not break. It would absorb the blow and consume your fist. Then it would continue flowing. Nothing would stop the river." He smiled again. "Now, which would you rather be?"*

*After a moment Hiroshi nodded, grudgingly. "I suppose I have a long way to go," he whispered. "A long way before I am worthy of grandfather's blade."*

*His older sibling laid an affectionate hand on his shoulder. "Your gempukku is some time yet. You still have time to learn."*





# What Is This Book?

This book, like its predecessors in the Elemental series, views the Empire through the prism of a specific Element – in this case, the Element of Water, examining how it influences everything from fighting styles to social interaction to magic and mysticism. The chapters in this sourcebook comprise the following:

## CHAPTER ONE: TIDES OF WAR

This chapter deals with the elements of combat that are associated with Water and the principles and themes of Water – movement, anticipation, and flexibility. Specifically, it offers a discussion of chain weapons, staves, and peasant weapons, and the various martial traditions associated with them. There is also an in-depth discussion of the history and practice of Mizu-do, the martial art most closely associated with Water. Finally, the chapter discusses the history and nature of naval warfare in Rokugan.

## CHAPTER TWO: TIDES OF MAGIC

Rokugani magic is intimately connected to the Elements and their divergent nature. This chapter discusses those shugenja in Rokugan who pay special attention to the Element of Water, and also includes an extensive review of the use and value of the major Water spells. There is also a detailed discussion of the Water kami themselves, their nature and behavior, and their interactions with the other Elements. Finally, the chapter contains a discussion of Rokugani medicine, both mundane and magical.

## CHAPTER THREE: TIDES OF PEACE

Courtly life is usually dominated by Air, but those who pursue the ways of commerce or who have natural talent for perceiving the shifting movements and strategies of those around them can draw on the strength of Water instead. This chapter discusses the Water-based courtly methods of various clans and factions in the Empire, notably the Yasuki and Kitsuki. It also offers detailed descriptions of prominent castles in the Empire whose courts are Water-dominated and a discussion of the art of divination and its influence on social activity and politics.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE TIDES WITHIN

This chapter examines those orders of the Brotherhood of Shinsei whose teachings and methods are oriented most strongly toward the Element of Water, including some lesser-known monastic orders not previously depicted in the L5R 4th Edition RPG. The chapter also includes a discussion of the common usages of the major Water Kiho and an in-depth examination of the legendary Keeper of Water.

## CHAPTER FIVE: A WORLD OF WATER

This chapter deals with a host of different aspects of Water in the lives of the Rokugani, both mundane and supernatural. Topics include the bodies of water in and around Rokugan, natural disasters associated with Water, Water-oriented arts and crafts such as fishing and sake-

brewing, *nemuranai* (magical artifacts) of Water, and natural and otherworldly beings connected to the Element.

## CHAPTER SIX: THE ETERNAL DANGER ISLANDS

Just as in the other books in the Elemental series, this chapter is designed to present a stand-alone campaign setting that can easily be set in any era in Rokugan's history, allowing the GM maximum flexibility in making use of it. In this case, a remote and sinister archipelago is opened up to the Empire by the sudden emergence of a land-bridge, and the clans set out to explore and exploit this new land under the uneasy supervision of an Imperial official.

## APPENDIX: NEW MECHANICS

The Appendix includes a variety of new mechanics based on the preceding six chapters, including many new Paths, new Monk Orders, an array of new Water spells and Water Kiho, and stats for several new Water-oriented creatures.

# Symbolism of Water

Water holds a special place in Rokugani philosophy since it lends itself well to the metaphors and imagery many teachers generally use to enlighten and instruct others. Unlike other Elements, Water's varied and deep nature is obvious. While a sensei might have to spend a great deal of time teaching his students about the great mysteries to be found in Earth, Water is clearly an Element of untold depths and diverse strengths. Additionally, the philosophies of Water dominate most texts written on the arts of warfare and combat, making it an Element every samurai must try to understand on some level.

As mentioned in the L5R 4th Edition Core rulebook, the Element of Water represents change and alteration. Additionally, water is representative of purification and healing, of physical strength, and of movement and perception – the latter category encompassing divination.

## CHANGE

While Fire is the Element of change through destruction, Water is the Element of change through movement and through alteration of what already exists. The Empire of Rokugan is a place of strict traditions, with appointed places for all things, but even in such a society the reality of change cannot be avoided. A samurai raised as a bushi may show a talent for speaking with the kami, or a veteran soldier wounded in battle may no longer be fit to fight on the front lines. Through the study of Elemental Water, a wise man sees it is not the Empire that must change to accommodate these new situations – rather, such changes simply mean the person or thing in question now occupies a different place in the Celestial Order. Children grow into adults, summer gives way to fall, and war eventually gives way to peace. Tradition is important, but only a fool believes nothing can change.







This aspect of Elemental Water is possibly one of its greatest lessons but also the most difficult to learn: the world changes, and learning never ends. Between tradition and change, the enlightened soul finds a way to accommodate both but never clings too strongly to what is. Mastering this concept serves a samurai well in both the long and short term, for the battlefields of both war and court can change in an instant, while families and alliances change slowly over decades. The samurai who embraces Water understands how to navigate these ever-changing currents where others may drown.

## PURIFICATION AND HEALING

The elements of Water and Earth share a similar place in the philosophy of Rokugan: both are representations of purity. However, Earth is the Element of protection, of punishing that which is impure, while Water cleanses from within, turning that which was fouled whole again. This does not just apply to things like poison, disease, or the Taint, but also to that which has been made incomplete through wounds or other physical damage. Water is associated with life and movement, aspects of all living beings, and thus where philosophies of Earth might be invoked when discussing how to repair a physical structure, the art of healing living things is the province of Elemental Water.

This aspect of Elemental Water shows how to flush out that which is “wrong” in any way. A student of Water learns how to expel negative influences – whether from

mundane, spiritual, or more exotic sources. Water cleanses and washes away, restoring what should be and mending that which was harmed. This aspect is also tied strongly to the concept of life itself, for without flowing, healthy water (in both the Elemental and mundane sense) living things wither and die.

## PERCEPTION

Water is not simply the Element of change, but also of seeing and understanding that change. The world is constantly evolving and new dangers or opportunities present themselves whether they are noticed or not. Those who are in tune with the nature of Water are able to understand differences of any scale and then respond to them. Any skilled swordsman knows that learning how to react to an attack is pointless if you never saw it coming. This philosophy does not apply solely to combat, however – being able to perceive subtle changes in political climates, read the attitudes of others, or pick up hidden clues others might miss are all valuable skills.

This aspect of Elemental Water teaches that changes are not always obvious and do not wait to be acknowledged. The storm comes whether you have prepared for it or not, and those who perceive changes must be able to understand them on many different levels. Like the sea itself, the nature of change is vast and deep, hiding layers of motion and dynamic action under a veneer of calm. Conversely, the storm and fury of something on the surface could mask an underlying serenity others would miss.





## MOVEMENT

The Element of Water has always been associated with movement for obvious reasons. Water itself is very rarely still in Rokugan – there are few lakes or ponds, but many rivers, streams, and oceanside coasts. In farming, vast rice paddies are formed by using the movement of water to the advantage of man. Even then, the farmers must tend these paddies carefully, for water does not wish to be still. Without vigilant care, the water will break down its barriers and flow however it wishes. It is worth noting that Water is considered the Element of natural movement, of flowing, graceful motion that seems to carry a purpose or will. Streams do not just flow wherever they want; they move in tune with the world around them, creating a beneficial harmony.

In this way, Water teaches us that while many see harmony in stillness, movement can be a form of harmony as well. Strength and motion are one in the same, and when one is blocked so is the other... which can lead to terrible results. Water travels where it will, and to attempt to contain its force can only invite trouble. It is always wiser to attempt to move in harmony with the world, like the river, and find an advantage in such movement rather than attempting to stand against the tide.

## DIVINATION

From long before the Empire, the Element of Water has been used to bring mortals closer to the supernatural vision of the Heavens. The reflective surfaces of Water are often used as a focus for shugenja attempting to commune with the spirits and beseech their aid. As noted previously, water is known to hold great depths, and in these depths can be found many truths and subtle connections between different aspects of the world. After all, Water is not just found in rivers and seas; it is a moving, living force that suffuses all living things and creates ties imperceptible to the mundane eye.

This principle of Water shows that the movement and energy of the living world connects all things together, much like the more mysterious connections of the Void. Currents and tides of all kinds – emotional and spiritual links, authority, ownership, indebtedness – move through the universe, binding everything together. These tides can ebb and flow as the world changes and people or events evolve, but understanding such bonds can open a mortal's mind to infinite possibilities and understanding.



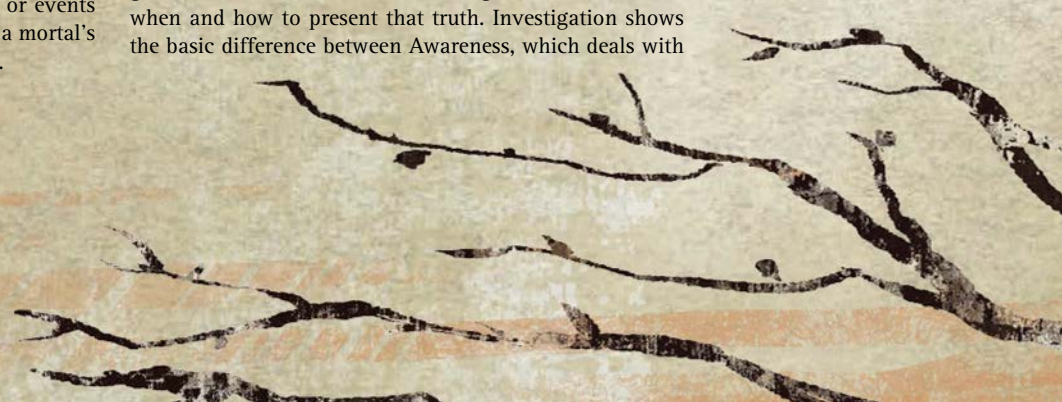
## Water & Skills

The Element of Water is connected to characters' physical strength and to their ability to perceive changes in the world around them. While there are a great many uses for these talents in the life of any samurai, few Skills rely directly on them for efficacy. However, there are times where brute strength can be more valuable than physical coordination, and the ability to note what others might not can occasionally be worth far more than native charm or education.

### High Skills

Strength has little to do with any of the more refined arts of the Empire. Typically, these skills promote social grace or intellect over all else... but there are times where a keen eye can do what a sharp mind would not.

**Investigation:** While Bushido emphasizes truth, other societal norms teach that sometimes a polite lie is an acceptable alternative. Due to this, the art of Investigation is at once honored and despised, since the ability to detect and discern the truth of someone's words does not necessarily go hand-in-hand with the social grace to understand when and how to present that truth. Investigation shows the basic difference between Awareness, which deals with







social and emotional observations, and Perception, which represents the basic ability to note and understand factual information. While these two Traits (and Elements) often work in harmony, each needs the other to balance it.

On the other hand, the use of Investigation to find hidden things or concealed people is far less likely to cause social issues for samurai. This Skill does not necessarily always rely directly on the physical senses, but can also invoke an unnamed “feeling” or instinct, the sense that something is out of place or that there is another person nearby. Scholars theorize this is the person’s Elemental Water showing an affinity for the Water in other people or objects, although this cannot be verified.

**Divination:** As noted in the *Book of Fire*, the art of divination is largely predicated on the ability to correctly read and interpret various signs from the universe. The behavior of animals and the heavenly bodies are parts of this pattern, as are the arrangement of special tools: coins, sticks, leaves, gems, and other such items can be blessed and used by those who understand the proper rituals. While divination in this sense is a matter of knowing the right signs and being able to glean the correct message from them, it is worth noting that this is not always a function of raw memorization or training.

Signs can be misread or go unnoticed by those who have a poor sense of what they are looking for (or at). Thus, Perception can be substituted for Intelligence in some situations where a character is attempting to use Divination in a manner where the signs may simply be difficult to note – patterns of clouds, the changing of the wind, or subtle differences from one casting of *kawaru* coins to the next. After all, divination is not just the ability to read signs but to see them and note what appears to be moving with or against the pattern of the Celestial Order.

**Games:** This is another skill generally governed by Intelligence, but many games are equal parts knowing the rules, knowing your opponent, and not missing various cues or details over the course of the game itself. A good player may excel in one of these categories, but over the course of a lengthy game, opportunities to employ each of these tools will present themselves. Thus, depending on the game, a GM or player might use Perception for the Games roll in the appropriate situations.

The game of Go, for example, rewards players in equal parts for understanding possibilities and for obscuring potential future plays from other opponents. If a player is attempting to stall or lengthen a game, or is attempting to study another player’s strategy (perhaps to play them again with an advantage), this may require a Perception roll. Attempting to confound another player may also be part of this strategy, leading to a series of Contested Rolls involving the opponent’s Investigation (similar to trying to deceive someone with Sincerity, Sleight of Hand, or Stealth). In an honorable way, of course.

Other games may not normally require Perception, but will reward the more perceptive player when an opponent is attempting to actually cheat them. After all, a character with a strong Investigation Skill may not have the knowledge of the game required to perceive how an opponent could cheat with small stones, dice, or gambling tokens. With the appropriate Skill and a high Perception, such cheating becomes much less likely.

## Bugei Skills

Obviously, a samurai’s strength is a matter of importance for many reasons. Even samurai who are not called to personally fight their lord’s foes can suffer greatly when they lose contests of strength or otherwise appear weak or physically ineffectual. While a diplomat or scribe is hardly expected to bring down his opponents with physical force, those who embarrass themselves physically tend to find their reputations diminishing anyway.

**Athletics:** General fitness and physical aptitude goes a long way for most samurai, since – as noted above – enemies and allies alike react poorly to evidence of physical shortcomings. The Athletics Skill covers a great many uses of physical prowess not specifically covered by other Skills. Most of the uses (and Emphases) of the Skill deal with feats that require raw strength rather than coordination – pulling oneself over ledges, running, hurling objects across a distance, and so on. Those in tune with Elemental Water find these movement-based activities easier, as their momentum assists them in both distance traveled and the force they can put behind their action, much like a rushing river.

GMs and players alike should keep in mind that while Throwing is an Agility-based use of the Athletics Skill, sometimes it is more important that something be thrown far rather than accurately. Large objects like heavy rocks or furniture must sometimes just be hurled away, and a Strength-based Athletics check can be used to show how the character is not just using raw force but also applying it correctly to get maximum results. In these cases, the roll can also be used as an attack, but the desired results are often difficult to achieve. Unlike quickly grasping and throwing a dagger or small object, the process of picking up, readying, and hurling something large gives an enemy a great deal of time to anticipate and evade the attack. The GM may choose to apply special penalties to these sorts of attacks to reflect this reality.

**Battle:** As noted in the L5R 4th Edition Core book, studying the tactics and nuances of war is considered one of the highest pursuits for any samurai. War is the province of all samurai, regardless of where or how they serve, and a samurai who shows no understanding of battle is generally considered a poor samurai indeed. It is worth noting that even if a character has no realistic chance of ever seeing a true battlefield in his lifetime, courts and other social interactions are often punctuated with debates and discussions on such conflicts. Where a bushi might seem strange (or even out of place) for



understanding trade or politics, no samurai is shamed for having some understanding of the topic of making war.

One of the reasons Battle is considered such a noble pursuit is because the art of war itself involves understanding complex problems and deep philosophical concepts, even if they are not necessarily presented as such. The most brutish, uncultured Crab samurai can have common ground with a Phoenix scholar if they discuss the nature of a samurai in conflict and how to deal with the changing tides of battle. To the Crab, it may simply be an obvious discussion of movement, troop supply, and morale. To the Phoenix, it may be an exchange about the way mortals behave, how nature and man move in harmony. But in both cases they are discussing the same thing. Also in both cases, it is important to understand that basic knowledge and memorization does not go very far – it is the commander in the field who is able to note and adapt to changes when they happen. Such a clever and perceptive mind is prized for its ability to adapt to any number of battlefields and conflicts, whether in war or politics.

**Hunting:** Given the honored place of warfare in Rokugani society, it should be no surprise that the sport of hunting is given similar respect. Though every samurai understands he must be ready to give his life in war to avenge insults or pursue the Emperor's justice, even the most warlike families understand that the Empire disdains those who start conflicts needlessly. The art of hunting, then, serves as an option for a warrior to display his prowess without having to engage human enemies in lethal combat. Hunting expeditions can become matters of great social import, allowing a samurai to impress a potential ally or intimidate a foe, to socialize with friends, or to compare skills against another member of the nobility without threatening either of their lives... usually. (Some hunts do end in injury or even death for one or more of the hunters. Depending on the prey and circumstances involved, this can either be a great shame or a matter of glory and honor.)

The art of hunting shares many qualities with the Battle skill: being able to ascertain advantages and details in a field, note changes in the enemy's movements or options, and adapt to circumstances as they arise. However, the Survival Emphasis carries a more practical use for samurai who find themselves far from civilization. Indeed, without the expertise of a skilled hunter those lost in the wilderness can die in a matter of days, if not hours.

**Weapons:** Samurai are expected to act as the pinnacle of training and education, as the scions of noble houses that they are. Part of this expectation includes the ability to use the weapons they are trained in with elegance and skill instead of making wild, clumsy strikes. Due to this, weapon skills generally use the Agility trait, representing attacks made with controlled techniques rather than a release of brute strength. Despite that, there are times when the correct choice is simply gripping one's weapon firmly and putting as much force behind a strike as possible, like a forceful wave crashing against the cliffs. This is best reserved for times when there is little chance

to miss an enemy and inflicting maximum damage is the key to success.

While this manner of attack can be represented by making Raises for damage, GMs or players may also opt to use their Strength Trait for attacking in certain situations. Also, while situations involving armor are already considered when making normal attack rolls, attempting to shatter a stone or a piece of metal is often a matter of simply hitting it hard enough.

## Merchant Skills

Utilizing the various Merchant Skills can be a matter of grace and intelligence, but it can also come down to a character's ability to power through certain situations and avoid flaws in his crafts... or his negotiations. In these cases, a high Water often serves someone with "practical" concerns quite well.

**Craft:** One of the reasons Craft skills are tied to commerce but are not seen as unseemly for the samurai caste to practice is the fact that they can produce items of obvious quality and beauty. In most situations, this is a matter of practice and patience, but there are times when a steady hand is less important than simply a strong hand. Certain large crafts are simply not feasible if one lacks the raw strength to move elements into place... while still knowing exactly where that place is. Without the proper tools that grant leverage or the ability to keep a firm grip on some part of the object, a crafter may instead have to substitute Strength for another Trait.

Similarly, understanding how to make a thing is often useless when the artisan is unable to see the finer details of the design or notice flaws as they happen. Perception rolls using the relevant Craft Emphasis might be necessary to properly make an item that requires extremely detailed and small-scale work. This may also be the case when the character is attempting to make something he has not made before, either emulating another design or experimenting in some way. In such situations, a Craft/Perception roll might be necessary for the artisan to understand if he is making the item as intended or not.

**Commerce:** One of the main reasons samurai frown upon the crude exchange of money is due to the fact that it invites greed, placing wealth above loyalty and honor. While this is not always the case, anyone who has dealt with money at all must remain keenly aware of this fact lest they be taken advantage of. Perception plays a potential role here, similar to that of Investigation but in an extremely specialized way – attempting to discern how and why another is trying to deceive or bluff them in regards to a transaction of some kind.

Using the Commerce Skill with Perception could also allow a character to see the connections between particular cues and facts in a way only a merchant would notice. Those not specifically versed in commercial topics might miss significant facts when attempting to make sense of a pattern or look for vital information.







**Sailing:** Life at sea – or even as a simple riverboat pilot – can be extremely unforgiving for those who are not able to cope, physically or mentally, with sudden problems. Even the Mantis, as advanced as they are in their handling of ships, are often at the mercy of an unpredictable sea and must have the ability to perceive changes and adjust to them quickly. Sailing is sometimes described as an art one never actually stops learning about, day after day; the possible problems and unexpected situations a ship's captain can encounter from the myriad properties of the sea, weather, and ship are effectively endless.

Due to this, Perception and Strength both play important roles when using the Sailing skill, especially in less than ideal conditions. Using the Sailing Skill with Water Traits often represents the character coping with hazards, whereas the standard uses are more likely attempts to avoid them in the first place. Attempting to tie down something on a ship heeling through a storm or keeping a boat on course against a powerful current are more likely to be a function of Strength than Intelligence or Agility. Perception with the Sailing skill can help notice and avoid unexpected problems as they evolve (or if the character's Sailing/Intelligence roll failed to prepare them for the eventuality).

## Low Skills

The use of Low Skills can sometimes be obstructed by a canny opponent with Investigation and/or a high Perception. Those who wish to not be caught in their dishonorable behavior try to both make their behavior more difficult to notice and also to identify accurately even when it is discovered.

**Forgery:** Because calligraphy and art in Rokugan are made from highly stylized imagery, forging and copying documents or other works often requires patience and coordination more than raw skill. However, there are times where the fake is so detailed or complex that the forger may wish to make a Forgery/Perception roll simply to make sure he did not miss some minor detail.

In some cases, a character attempting to make a forgery may take time to observe and study the target of the work. Observing a piece of art for several hours each day, or having a letter in hand to look over repeatedly, allows the forger a better chance to create a convincing fake. In these cases, the GM may allow the character to make a Forgery/Perception roll once a day, after a reasonable amount of study, to gain a bonus or even a Free Raise on the final forging attempt. Such benefits should be kept under control, however... there is only so much help one can gain from observation.

**Temptation:** Temptation is a Low Skill with an unusual place in Rokugani society. Favors are traded constantly in the courts as a matter of course, but Temptation represents a somewhat underhanded or dishonorable attempt to sway someone's mind with something they should not be seeking... or offering something in a way they should not accept.

Temptation can be used with Perception as a way to find out what does and does not interest the target. Much like using the Interrogation Emphasis of Investigation, a character can potentially use a Temptation/Perception roll to note how another character responds to particular subjects or insinuations. This may not necessarily be dishonorable behavior if the character is not actually offering the temptation; instead, this is more fact-finding than anything else, a valuable tool when dealing with allies and enemies alike. When attempting to use the Temptation skill in this manner, a severe failure of the Contested Roll may reveal what the character is trying to do (GM's option). Since no one appreciates being toyed with in such a manner, caution is advised when playing games like this, whether in court or elsewhere.

## Water Advantages & Disadvantages

A person's Elemental Water affects his ability to perceive change, apply force and motion correctly, and also creates a sense of harmony with the way things shift and move in the world around them. Those who suffer from a low Water are not immediately recognizable, but they often seem to just not *fit* in many situations in ways that are difficult to describe.

### Advantages

**Absolute Direction:** Just as rivers move in a particular direction and trees grow in a pattern, a person with strong Water will often just know which way to go while others may be lost. His internal Elements are aligned well with the movement of the world, giving him at least a vague sense of direction. In some cases, this connection may be so strong that a GM might allow the character to have hints or feelings about the direction of a particular natural or supernatural Elemental phenomenon. However, it is important to understand the character has a connection to the natural harmony of the world, which is why the Advantage does not function in the Shadowlands. A GM could also rule the Advantage does not work in other unnatural regions, telling the character they feel uneasy or "disconnected" from things in some way.

**Balance:** Like the mirror-smooth surface of a placid lake, characters with a balanced Water are difficult to rouse to anger or to have their emotions otherwise provoked. When someone drops a rock into a still pond, minor ripples may appear... only to vanish without any trace. Likewise, characters with this Advantage tend to remain serene no matter what provocations they face, whereas characters with a high Earth are stoic. Water accepts and adapts to change, not resisting it. Even when someone with such balanced Water does succumb to emotions, his inner harmony often allows him to cope with the situation in an elegant and reserved manner.





**Daredevil:** Sometimes, a person's strong Water asserts itself in a way others might call foolhardy. This Advantage represents the ever-moving Element constantly spurring the character onward to feats of physical strength and great daring. This does not necessarily mean the character is foolish or impulsive, only that he finds such activities natural and exhilarating where others might be intimidated by the idea of attempting the feats. The character finds physical exertion in some dynamic manner almost a form of meditation, achieving moments of connection to the universe he simply cannot describe.

**Luck:** There are small moments where what could happen and what does happen can be perceived simultaneously by those with a strong Water, almost like a connection to the ephemeral Void. Those who move in harmony with the world and can see many possibilities at once have an unconscious ability to see and choose possibilities in flashes of insight denied to others. The Luck Advantage deals with the character's own abilities (represented by die-rolls), not with the external forces of the universe, and thus shows the character seeing future possibilities and making minor corrections when they note a better possibility they can grasp in that moment. The character may or may not truly understand this, either embracing his "luck" or growing irritated with how others downplay his insight as though it is something outside his control.

**Quick:** Speed, agility, coordination, and other small feats of physical speed come naturally to a character with this Advantage due to his unfettered Elemental Water. The Quick Advantage represents a bond between the two Traits in this Ring: Perception allows the character to observe the movements of foes and then Strength lets him spring into action at just the right moment to interrupt them and act first.

**Quick Healer:** Stamina is a Trait associated with the Earth Ring, but a living being's ability to recuperate from damage is also closely connected to the Element of Water. Living things require this Element to regrow their wounds, purify toxins from their bodies, and so forth; their Water helps speed the restoration of the structure held together by their Earth. Characters with this Advantage have a deep connection to the Element even if their Water Ring itself is low. Their Elemental Water is simply more efficient than that found in other living things, allowing them to restore themselves much faster. (It is worth noting that this has little to do with the character's ability to withstand or cope with damage.)

**Read Lips:** This is an unusual Advantage, since it represents not just an ability to reason out what someone is saying by the movement of their lips, but also to understand meaning and intent as well. It does not matter how well the observed person enunciates because the character's Elemental Water assists in making observations and deductions. As with other Advantages, the character's connection to the Element allows him to notice things others might miss. Indeed, in cases where a character cannot see the target's lips move but is given other visual cues (such as eye movement, facial expressions, and the like) the GM may still allow a roll with this Advantage, albeit with appropriate penalties.

**Tactician:** As noted previously, the concepts and philosophy of warfare are inextricably linked with the Traits governed by the Water Ring. Those with an unusually strong Water are often capable of insights and inspirations on the battlefield that others cannot grasp. This holds true for both the general and the soldier in the field – both are able to spot opportunities, those they can seize immediately and those that will present themselves in the near future due to an ongoing series of events. This Advantage allows characters to perceive patterns and changes in mass movement, so a GM may also allow certain observations or benefits when the character is dealing with crowds in non-battle settings, at his discretion.

**Wary:** A heightened Water can sometimes lead to a never-ending feeling of alertness, making a character nearly impossible to surprise or even catch off-guard. This is not to say the character is paranoid or constantly trying to look for danger in every corner (though he could be), but rather that his senses are heightened and catch what others do not. A character with the Wary Advantage notices constant, minor changes in things around him, and thus is probably much more able to tune out distractions like the press and constant din of a crowd where someone might simply feel overwhelmed by the amount of sensory input.

**Way of the Land:** Similar to the Absolute Direction Advantage, this Advantage represents a rare innate connection between the character's Elemental Water and the makeup of the world around him. A normal person can spend his lifetime in a region of the Empire and still not have a strong sense of where he is in relation to other parts of that same region; he can easily manage to get lost once he is a little away from his usual area. Characters with Way of the Land, however, do not simply have their home territory memorized, but rather they understand on a fundamental level the relationships between various locations. The character will probably also understand the reasons why particular features (natural or manmade) are located where they are.





## Disadvantages

**Ascetic:** Something in the character's Elemental Water simply resists change on a subtle level. Eschewing material goods and avoiding fame or glory may or may not be due to the character's simple needs, but regardless of need the character has a preference for the simple, the mundane, the comforting, and the routine. This is not a mental disorder, the character simply prefers to keep himself and the things around him consistent from day to day. The character will accept accolades and gifts, but will generally downplay or ignore them after the fact, wishing to retain his quiet and simple life. Without proclaiming his new fame or outfitting himself in the clothes and other trappings of a higher station, renown simply slides off him like rain on a stone.

**Bad Eyesight:** Either due to accident of birth or a permanent wound, the character's ability to perceive the world suffers greatly. Characters born with poor eyesight have a weaker Water that can be noticed by those attuned to such things. The Element is simply not fully formed in this person, causing a weakness in the eyes and a general decline in the perceptions others take for granted. On the other hand, those who suffer this Disadvantage due to an injury of some kind do not usually have any sort of damaged Water Element, but they may later find their natural balance or attunement to that Element slowly degrading over time.

**Bad Fortune:** Just as a healthy, strong Elemental Water represents the ability to move in harmony with the natural forces of the Universe, a weak or unbalanced Water causes a friction against the universe that can be slight... or dramatic. Typically, this Bad Fortune expresses itself in minor ways that have small impacts on the character's life, but in some cases it can be truly severe. In all instances, though, these problems can be traced back to a simple disharmony with the world. Curses, disfigurements, poor fortune, or simply being unable to live through a day without feeling rejected or out of sorts... all these things stem from this basic problem.

Those who are aware of the character's Disadvantage may react in different ways depending on how it presents itself. If the problem becomes a consistent issue, they may dissociate themselves from the character lest his disharmony spread to include them as well.

**Blind:** Much as with the Bad Eyesight Disadvantage, this Disadvantage may represent either a lack of Water from birth or a later debilitating injury. Unlike Bad Eyesight, though, the Blind Disadvantage represents a far more severe disharmony in the character's Water than is immediately obvious. Without the ability to see and move in the world like normal people, the character finds himself constantly tripping, bumping into things, or moving cautiously as if the entirety of the physical world is rejecting him. While some eventually develop methods of coping, either supernatural or mundane, a lifetime of dealing with this feeling usually ends up putting the

character further at odds with his Elemental Water – and even his Void in some cases. The Elemental imbalances in these cases are obvious to any who can observe such things.

**Doubt:** A weak Water can express itself in many ways, but those with the Doubt Disadvantage suffer from one of the most subtly devastating symptoms – an overriding feeling of inadequacy and rejection of their own natural abilities. Every time the character attempts to perform the chosen Skill, the failure is not simply a matter of poor training or even lack of talent. Rather, the character always believes he is doing something wrong, and constantly second guesses himself or resigns himself to performing at a level below his actual potential. The mis-alignment of his Elemental Water creates a friction between the mind, body, and soul, keeping him perpetually convinced of this shortcoming. While it is possible to eventually overcome this Disadvantage through experience or insight, such attainment needs to be extraordinary indeed to correct such a disharmony within the self.

**Gullible:** The Water Ring governs Perception, which includes a character's ability to note changes in people and things around them... and this character's weak Water makes such Perception flawed in a very particular manner. Canny (or jaded) individuals often find the question of who to trust a paramount concern, and withhold such trust until others prove themselves. The character with this Disadvantage, however, is simply very poor at reading verbal and nonverbal cues that other people understand naturally. This attitude can express itself as an overall naïve outlook on life (especially if the character has never had to face the consequences of his gullibility), or the character may simply be bad at recognizing lies and deceit.

**Lame:** This Disadvantage represents a problem in both the character's Water and Earth, an imbalance between the two where Elemental Water is lacking or weakened in some way. Without a balance between these two Elements, a living thing is too rigid, lacking in life and vitality. This particular Disadvantage arises from that imbalance striking a specific part of the character's body rather than being an overall condition. The limb may be merely sluggish or painful, or it may be almost completely nonfunctional, stiffened at the joints or desperately weak. Regardless, the character faces constant difficulty in simple tasks like sitting, climbing stairs, and so forth... and must try not to let his awkwardness bring him dishonor or shame.

**Obtuse:** A dark reflection of the Balance Advantage, different from simply not noticing the details, this Disadvantage speaks to a disconnect between the character's perceptions and the surrounding reality. The character's emotions are simply unaffected by outside forces – with the exception, perhaps, of disdain. There are many ways for a character to cope with this Disadvantage; while it is coarse and crude to constantly belittle or complain about art or those who appreciate it, those who have no time for such subjects are also unlikely to feel the need to hide their opinion if it is asked for. On the other hand, some characters might feel a great deal of shame or regret at being unable to appreciate poetry or art.





**Phobia:** There are many philosophies about courage, but very few samurai wish to discuss a topic as shameful as unreasoning fear. Fear is something a samurai should always overcome, and to fail in this is to dishonor oneself and one's lord. The Phobia Disadvantage not only represents the character's inability to confront his fear, but also shows the character's Elemental Water is somehow imbalanced against the natural world, constantly overcoming the character's good sense when confronted with the fearful object or situation. A phobia is not a condition to be taken lightly, for such fear is exceptionally difficult to hide once it has set in, and those who witness the samurai acting from uncontrollable fear will soon lose all respect for him. More than one samurai's life has been ruined by succumbing to a phobia in public.

**Unlucky:** The unfortunate counterpoint of the Luck Advantage, the Unlucky Disadvantage creates similar scenarios: characters gain glimpses and flashes of insight at a deciding moment and can choose an alternative... but they usually choose poorly. Characters who have this Disadvantage have little hope of second-guessing their initial judgment, since such a choice often becomes the reason they picked wrong. In other words, by doubting their first instinct, they forfeit the better solution. Characters with bad luck can gain a terrible reputation if their "condition" is noted by others. Samurai and peasant alike tend to avoid those who suffer from such poor fortunes, believing the character to be cursed and fearing it may somehow be contagious.

## The Attack Stance

The philosophy of Elemental Water dominates nearly every thought and instruction on the topic of warfare. One need only witness the chaos of combat – whether in a small skirmish or on a grand scale – to understand why. Earth can be difficult to break, but is often too inflexible. Air and Fire have no physical substance and can be stymied by strong barriers. Water, however, can constantly shift as different needs and crises emerge. Water is at once formless and strong, able to move and adapt while retaining its potential for impact. Thus it is the Element most ideally suited to the world of battle.

For the same reasons, the basic Attack Stance represents the most common type of combat posture adopted by samurai warriors. While it does not favor any particular kind of attack or defense, it allows the combatant to choose from the widest array of options as the situation evolves. All of the major bushi schools of the Empire came to this same conclusion for different reasons, and thus Water is the baseline from which all other philosophies of combat derive. The Attack Stance reflects this.

The Crab, despite their dedication to the combat philosophies of Earth, understand there is more to fighting than merely standing still and enduring blows. Where other schools may mock the Hida for learning to take a beating rather than avoid it, few can argue with the fact that giving a Hida bushi the chance to counterattack is usually a fatal mistake. The fluidity of such a policy – endure, then strike – cannot be enacted solely from the



Full Defense Stance. Also, more utilitarian combatants such as the Hiruma and Toritaka are more likely to simply adopt the Attack Stance due to the wide options they need to stay ahead of their opponents.

To the Crane, swordsmanship is taught as both a rigid art form and as a great blank canvas for their artistry. Given the many tools and techniques of the Kakita, a Crane most often stays in the Attack Stance to make use of all of them. The superior swordsman is not just the one who has been given proper training, but also the one who knows how to outmaneuver and outsmart an enemy. In most other Stances the Crane's options in combat are limited, a constraint to place on others rather than oneself. Only the Center Stance has more significance to the Crane than the Attack Stance, and only the most experienced Kakita can make use of it properly.

Unsurprisingly, the Dragon do not place a particular emphasis on the philosophy of Water and combat, seeing it as simply one of the five Elements to be called on (in this they are the same in all endeavors, not just combat). Mirumoto bushi are as likely to adopt the Attack stance as any other, for they seek always to confuse their opponents and disrupt their patterns. However, most Dragon sensei and bushi do agree that the stance of Water is the best answer for those times when they have not yet determined their enemy's disposition.

Lion bushi are known both for their ferocity and their self-control; the Matsu and Akodo represent these two facets that, when combined, bring ruin to the clan's enemies. The Matsu favor the Stance of Fire, the Full Attack Stance, but even they understand that only a foolish bushi hurls himself blindly at a foe. The Matsu and Akodo agree that preparation, vigilance, and knowing when to strike serve a warrior far better than mere mindless aggression. While the Matsu favor brutal attacks, they will often adopt the Attack Stance in those situations where simple fury cannot overcome an enemy. Those who believe the Matsu will only charge recklessly often find themselves surprised – and dead.







The Mantis, crafty and unpredictable opponents, enjoy the freedom the Attack Stance gives them. Much of the clan's overall philosophy draws from the Element of Water, and combat is no different. The Yoritomo school itself teaches rolling, spinning attacks meant to emulate the waves and tides of the sea, and the Attack Stance fits this method well. The Tsuruchi also teach a great deal of Water-like philosophy in their school, learning to find a balance between instinctive strikes and moving in harmony to find the right time to fire a perfect shot. While the other Stances might have their place, Water is where the Mantis bushi truly feels at home.

Phoenix bushi tend to adopt the more defensive Stances in combat; they are typically taught to protect life, focusing on guarding their allies rather than on killing the foe – showing dedication to the clan's pacifistic ideals. However, the Attack Stance offers a great many benefits for those times when a Phoenix is roused to strike back effectively without exposing himself to undue harm. Shiba bushi not currently protecting a charge often prefer the Stance of Water simply because the aggressive Full Attack Stance does not mesh well with their calm and controlled nature.

Scorpion warriors are generally known for one unifying trait – they are aggressively frustrating to fight against. Bushi trained by the clan often toy with an opponent for various reasons: to delay, humiliate, distract, or discern weaknesses before moving in for the kill. Since it is difficult to properly irritate an opponent if one is too easy to hit or unable to threaten an effective attack, the Stance of Water is often their preferred choice. A Scorpion bushi (or an assassin taking advantage of an unaware opponent) may sometimes switch to the Full Attack Stance to keep an opponent guessing, but until the enemy is sufficiently disabled the Stance of Water remains the best option.

The Unicorn Clan finds the philosophy of Water in combat to its liking in a manner similar to the Mantis. A Unicorn bushi of any school finds restrictions on movement and freedom distasteful, and thus they tend prefer the Attack Stance for the majority of both their practice and their actions in combat. While the Moto and Utaku may favor Full Attack at certain points, they are taught what they are giving up for such an aggressive move – showing the Stance of Water as the baseline.

a new *nemuranai*. However, it is also possible for a character to create a new Path or even an entire new Basic School or Advanced School. (It should be noted that these last options are most often accomplished by multiple prodigies over years, generations, or even centuries – the GM should be wary of letting a PC achieve more than even the founding Kami!) Alternatively, some GMs may wish to add their own Paths or Schools to their campaign in order to give it a distinctive flavor or to evoke an aspect of the setting which they feel is under-represented in the existing L5R rules.

No matter the reason, each new mechanic should be eased into the game with careful thought to both mechanical balance and setting flavor. This section presents some basic guidelines for creating new mechanics themed around the Element of Water.

## ASPECTS OF NEW WATER SPELLS

Water kami are spirits of strength, perception, movement, and healing, and thus should inspire spells that focus on these aspects of magic. Water spells can offer knowledge, but do so through enhancing perception or granting mystical insight rather than through directly enhancing the intellect. They grant versatility by allowing faster movement or travel across the waves. This adaptable nature of Water also extends to dealing with the physical arena through changes in raw strength, healing of injuries, and similar effects. Thus, any spell which creates these sorts of effects should default to the Element of Water.

One of the most fundamental uses of Water spells is the manipulation of the self. Water kami can grant the ability to stave off the body's needs (as with Power of the Ocean removing the need to eat, drink, or sleep). They can allow for the transference of spiritual energies as well (such as with Sympathetic Energies); this effect could also allow sharing of knowledge, such as Skills, Advantages, or Disadvantages.

Divination – whether of items, people, or events – is an aspect of Water's association with Perception, although this aspect also shows some overlap with Void and Air magic. One way to curb this overlap and maintain purity of Elemental themes is to require any new Water-based divination spell to focus on visual information (just as Communing with the Water kami results in visual images without auditory elements). A Water shugenja can look into a pool of crystal-clear liquid and witness a distant event or divine the location of an item, but he should not be allowed to hear or smell anything. Spells of this nature should always focus on the caster's ability to visually perceive the world.

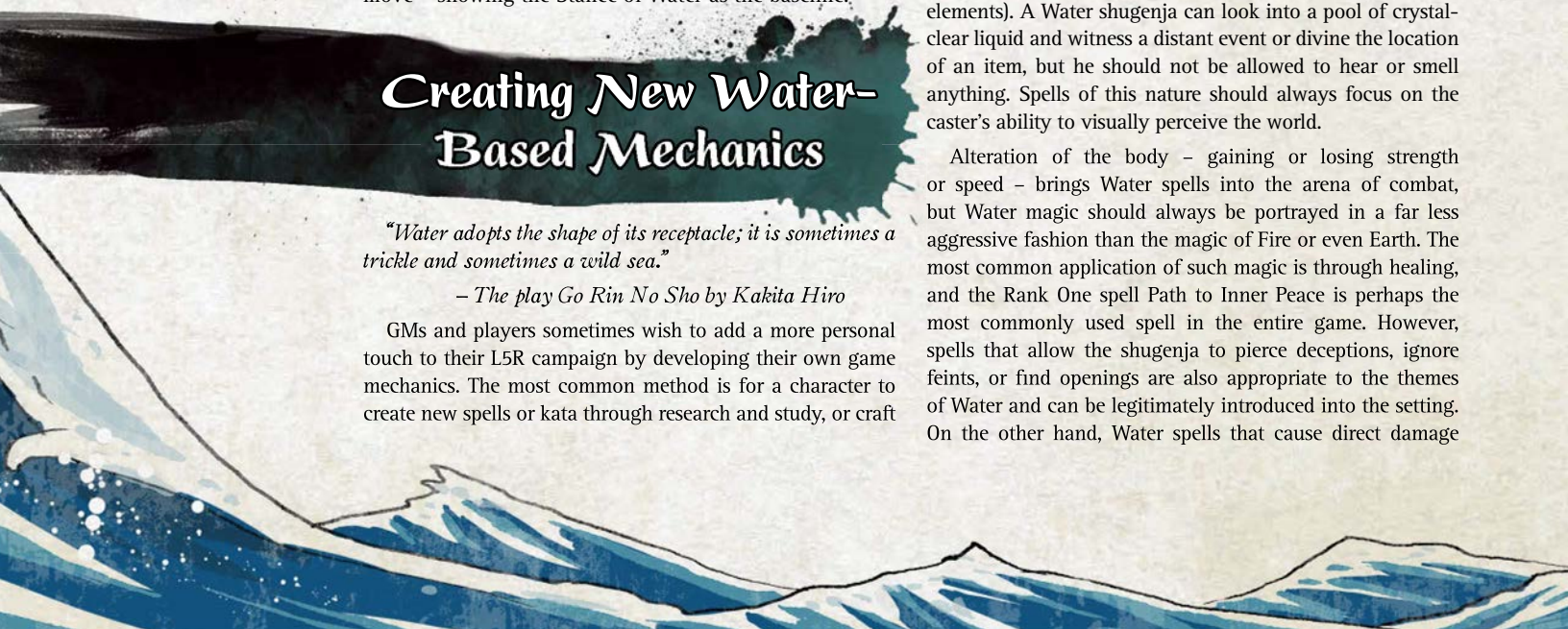
Alteration of the body – gaining or losing strength or speed – brings Water spells into the arena of combat, but Water magic should always be portrayed in a far less aggressive fashion than the magic of Fire or even Earth. The most common application of such magic is through healing, and the Rank One spell Path to Inner Peace is perhaps the most commonly used spell in the entire game. However, spells that allow the shugenja to pierce deceptions, ignore feints, or find openings are also appropriate to the themes of Water and can be legitimately introduced into the setting. On the other hand, Water spells that cause direct damage

## Creating New Water-Based Mechanics

*"Water adopts the shape of its receptacle; it is sometimes a trickle and sometimes a wild sea."*

– The play *Go Rin No Sho* by Kakita Hiro

GMs and players sometimes wish to add a more personal touch to their L5R campaign by developing their own game mechanics. The most common method is for a character to create new spells or kata through research and study, or craft







are very rare and are usually tied to the direct manipulation of physical water. Any Water spells which allow for overt damage should be depicted at much higher Mastery Levels than spells of this sort from Fire or even Earth. Suitengu's Embrace is an obvious example – allowing the caster to fill the target's lungs with sea water – and it is Mastery Level 5, not to mention that it allows for defense against the spell through the use of Stamina rolls.

Lastly, an aspect of Water spells that should not be overlooked is their overlap with Air spells in the domain of weather. Water spells of this sort focus on precipitation rather than on evoking winds or lightning, but can nonetheless be potent. Additionally, shugenja can utilize the power of seas, rivers, and lakes by shifting the tides or otherwise manipulating their conditions.

## ASPECTS OF WATER NEMURANAI

Vessels containing awakened Water spirits possess a wide range of powers, not surprising given the flexible nature of the Element itself. Aside from the basic power of enhancing Water-based Traits, such items can increase the bearer's speed or personal combat capability; they can heal, pierce illusions, or grant dizzying visions at a whim. Clothing, *tessen*, *mempo*, and Water-oriented weapons or items are the most suitable vessels for these unpredictable kami. A *mempo* that allows a samurai to breathe underwater, or a pair of *hakama* that grant the user an additional Simple Move Action once per day are both appropriate examples.

Minor *nemuranai* of Water fit no uniform physical description, though they are usually items that require a person to carry them or otherwise remain in personal contact in order to function. Like other *nemuranai*, these items awaken in response to the prowess of the user or through loving care over many generations. Items that aid a character's rolls (such as Strength, Perception, or Skills based on those Traits) will be in a form associated with the benefit. For example, a sailor's *haori* might grant benefits to Sailing Skill rolls.

Water spirits will often awaken in weapons, since the Battle skill relies heavily upon the Element, but they restrict themselves to specific types. War fans might offer glimpses of the immediate future on a battlefield, for example, while a staff might shift its weight mid-strike to grant bonuses to damage or a chain weapon might move on its own to ensnare foes.

## WATER KATA

Kata of Water are usually developed by martial schools that have a Strength bonus or that specialize in sheer physical power or maneuverability. If a bushi character develops a new Water kata, the player and GM should keep in mind that the combat principles of Water focus on pure strength, maneuver, and speed rather than endurance, subtlety, or precision. Water Kata could add to a bushi's speed (perhaps by awarding additional Move Actions), increase raw damage output, or assist in bypassing feints and deception (through Perception checks or similar). Water Kata that deal with specific weapons customarily focus on staffs, chain weapons, war fans, or improvised weapons.

## NEW WATER SCHOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

As a rule, Water-oriented Schools and Techniques grant Strength or Perception Trait bonuses as part of their starting package (and a Water Affinity for shugenja). Water-themed Alternate Paths are most often connected to such schools. Customarily, a Water bushi school may include any school that focuses on brute-force application of damage, on maneuverability upon the battlefield, or on the recognition of deception using physical or non-emotional clues.

Bushi schools centered on Water should focus on at least one of the following: skills that involve Strength or Perception, attacks that increase the potential for damage, attacks that bypass the defenses of an opponent through perceiving their weaknesses, styles that allow for shifting maneuverability to increase defenses and TN, or styles that entirely focus on the realm of Mass Battle and its outcomes. The Element of Water is heavily associated with Mass Battle and Techniques centered on such grand combat could combine any of the aforementioned styles with the Mass Battle Table. The weapons associated with such schools tend to be very specific in use (the War Fan for a Battle related school, for example) and many of them include Jujutsu as a School Skill.

Considering the useful nature of Investigation (a Perception-based skill), there are remarkably few Courtier Schools based around the Element of Water. Those that do focus in this direction (most notably the Kitsuki) center their efforts on the Perception Trait. They navigate society by becoming aware of their opponent's weaknesses through outward physical signs rather than attempting to discern underlying emotions or needs. A bit of dust on a kimono can reveal a hidden tryst with an Asako librarian; the shifting, uncomfortable way a Kakita responds to her Ikoma counterpart reveals she has something to hide. Thus, Techniques based on Water (and through it, Perception) can make it difficult to lie to a courtier or make it easier for the courtier to determine interesting facts about his enemies without engaging them directly in conversation.

Water-based Shugenja schools tend to focus on one of the types of Water magic listed in Chapter Two (divination, movement, healing, etc). However, they can also focus on the Element of Water itself by building a Technique around the behavior of physical water or of the weather. Additionally, allowing the shugenja to expend a spell-slot to simulate a spell-like ability from the Water spell list is common and acceptable.

Monk schools can vary widely depending on the flavor and backstory of the particular monastic Order; thus, they are the hardest to classify by Element. In general, the best approach with monastic Schools is to examine the Order's history and decide if it is focused more towards combat, diplomacy, or mysticism. Then apply one of the above concepts (Water-based bushi, courtier, or shugenja) to the Technique. For flavor, always remember the ever-shifting nature of Water as a guide when creating a Technique. It should be remembered that all monks gain new kiho as they progress in School Rank, so a Technique that seems balanced and reasonable at first may become over-powered as the monk gains experience.











# THE TIDES OF WAR

Donu sat on the deck of the ship and crossed his legs. He smiled at the young peasant sitting on a small crate in front of him, then ran his hand over his tanned scalp. Settling his saffron robes over his legs, he spoke quietly. "Yes, Jiro-kun, I have been to the 'old Empire,' as you call it. Why do you ask?"

The peasant youth shifted his weight slightly and then groped for the train of thought he had begun. "Well, monk-sama... my friends back home... um, I mean back in the Colonies, where I was born, they say the people in the old Empire are very, um, boring, that they follow every tradition and rule exactly and that if you don't know them all..." He leaned close to the monk. "The samurai will execute you, or worse."

The monk smiled, then laughed aloud, for a moment looking far younger than his forty-six years. "I assure you, Jiro-kun, your friends were merely having a little fun at your expense. The people of Rokugan are just like the people you grew up with. Peasants in the Colonies and peasants in the 'old Empire' have the same problems, but they all smile and laugh, get married," the monk winked at the youth, who flushed, "have children, plant crops, and live their lives. You have nothing to fear from your new home."

The monk reached over and took up his staff, using it to lever himself back to his feet on the shifting deck. "I spend time in both the Colonies and Rokugan, and I can tell you—"

He broke off as a scream cut through the air.

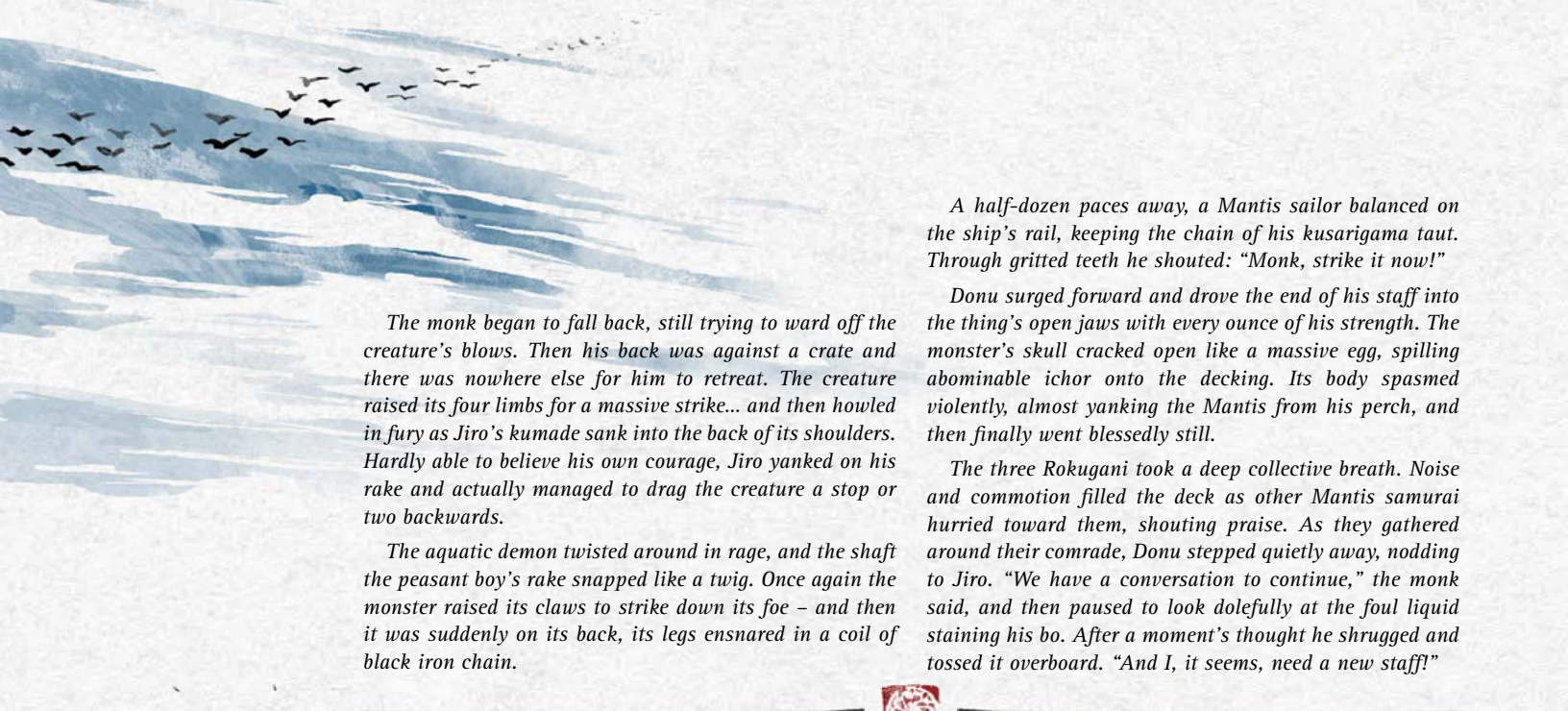
A second scream erupted and Donu hurried toward the noise, seemingly forgetting Jiro completely. The peasant hesitated a moment, gulping nervously, then trotted after the monk, threading his way between the piles of cargo on the deck. He found himself passing other peasants who were running frantically in the opposite direction.

Jiro rounded a stack of crates and stopped dead, his mouth gaping. A bizarre creature, seven feet tall and soaking wet, stood on the deck; a Mantis sailor lay at its feet, torn open, his blood and viscera mingling on the seawater the monster had brought aboard. The demon – Jiro could not think of it as anything else – had the general shape of a man, but with four wickedly clawed arms and a mouth full of jagged teeth. A single deep green eye, seemingly tracking everything at once, was mounted on a quivering tendril that sprang from the center of its forehead.

While the peasant was still paralyzed with fear, Donu stepped forward, his staff spinning. "Abomination, leave this ship!" he shouted and struck at the creature. The blow seemed to take the creature by surprise – perhaps, Jiro thought wildly, it simply could not believe someone dared attack it – and it rocked back a step, although it did not appear to have actually been harmed. Before Donu could strike again, the creature recovered and lunged at the monk. The monk's staff whirled, smoothly transitioning from offense to defense, deflecting blow after blow. But finally one massive claw slipped through and scored along the monk's arm. The sleeve of his robe flapped wildly, splattered with blood.







The monk began to fall back, still trying to ward off the creature's blows. Then his back was against a crate and there was nowhere else for him to retreat. The creature raised its four limbs for a massive strike... and then howled in fury as Jiro's kumade sank into the back of its shoulders. Hardly able to believe his own courage, Jiro yanked on his rake and actually managed to drag the creature a stop or two backwards.

The aquatic demon twisted around in rage, and the shaft the peasant boy's rake snapped like a twig. Once again the monster raised its claws to strike down its foe – and then it was suddenly on its back, its legs ensnared in a coil of black iron chain.

A half-dozen paces away, a Mantis sailor balanced on the ship's rail, keeping the chain of his kusarigama taut. Through gritted teeth he shouted: "Monk, strike it now!"

Donu surged forward and drove the end of his staff into the thing's open jaws with every ounce of his strength. The monster's skull cracked open like a massive egg, spilling abominable ichor onto the decking. Its body spasmed violently, almost yanking the Mantis from his perch, and then finally went blessedly still.

The three Rokugani took a deep collective breath. Noise and commotion filled the deck as other Mantis samurai hurried toward them, shouting praise. As they gathered around their comrade, Donu stepped quietly away, nodding to Jiro. "We have a conversation to continue," the monk said, and then paused to look dolefully at the foul liquid staining his bo. After a moment's thought he shrugged and tossed it overboard. "And I, it seems, need a new staff!"



## The Martial Paths of Water

## Steel Flowing as Water: Chain Weapons

In combat, the way of Fire is aggression and the way of Air is speed, both seeking to strike down the foe as swiftly and lethally as possible. The way of Earth is endurance, outlasting the foe and then taking them down with a single mighty blow. But the way of Water is simple and flexible, focused as much on defense as on offense, and often favors unpretentious weapons. A master of Water's approach to battle relies on flowing movement to evade his foes and to slip past their defenses, and prefers to disable his foes rather than to slay them outright. It is not a coincidence that Mizu-do, the most peaceful and non-violent of martial arts, is known as the Way of Water. Nor is it an accident that monks, whose approach to battle in many ways epitomizes the Water approach, favor the weapons which match the style of Water.

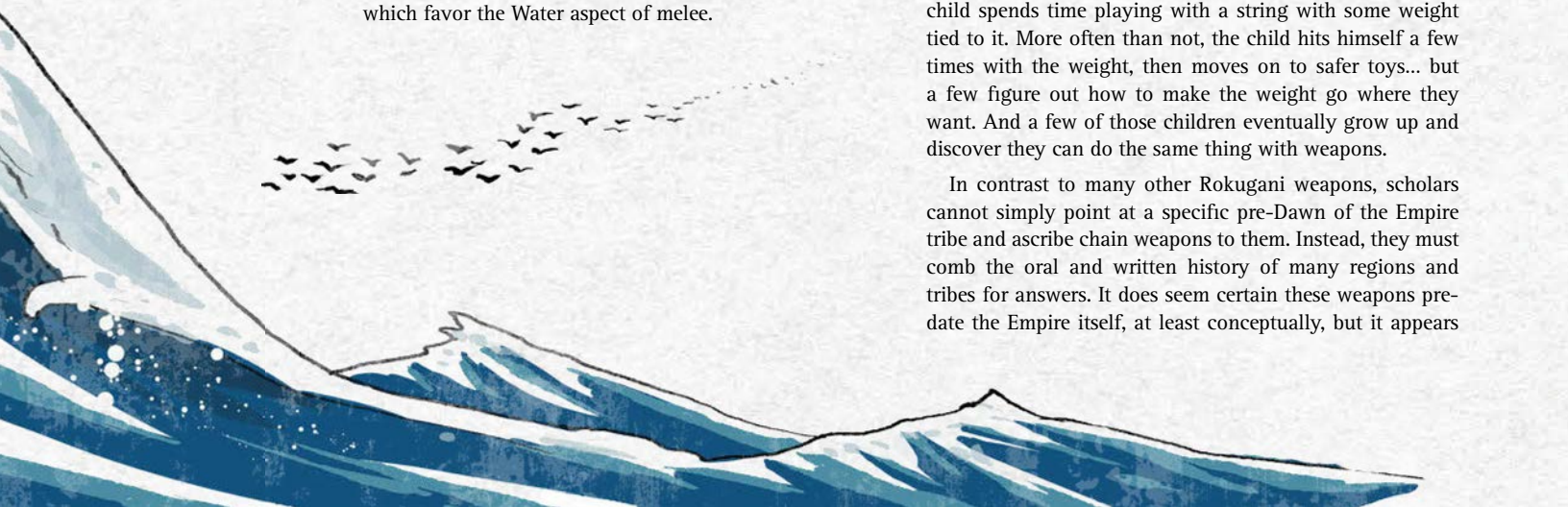
Of course, Water is also the Element of the sea, and thus the Element most associated with naval combat. Here too, it is not a coincidence that the samurai of the Mantis Clan – the clan most strongly associated with naval warfare – are also some of the more impressive masters of those weapons which favor the Water aspect of melee.

In the Rokugani arsenal there are few weapons as versatile and deadly – or as difficult to learn to use – as chain weapons. Samurai often discuss the philosophy of swordsmanship and the decades (or even lifetime) it takes to be considered fully proficient with a katana, but in truth those students who aspire to master chain weapons have a more difficult road ahead of them. It does not take very long for a student of the sword to at least be able to perform the basic kata, but by the time a sword student has learned the basic skills, the student of chain weapons is just beginning to keep himself from tripping over his own weapon and avoid hitting himself with it.

A chain weapon is any weapon that incorporates a chain or rope into its design. There is always some sort of weight attached to the ends of the weapon, both to help the wielder keep control of it in combat and to give him something with which to strike his foe. This weight is typically a simple iron knob or a weighted spike, but in some cases one of the weights will be replaced with a weapon in its own right – such as with the kusarigama, which mounts a kama on one end of the chain.

Chain weapons, for all their exotic nature, originate in simplicity, much like other Water-oriented weapons. Every child spends time playing with a string with some weight tied to it. More often than not, the child hits himself a few times with the weight, then moves on to safer toys... but a few figure out how to make the weight go where they want. And a few of those children eventually grow up and discover they can do the same thing with weapons.

In contrast to many other Rokugani weapons, scholars cannot simply point at a specific pre-Dawn of the Empire tribe and ascribe chain weapons to them. Instead, they must comb the oral and written history of many regions and tribes for answers. It does seem certain these weapons pre-date the Empire itself, at least conceptually, but it appears





in their earliest forms they were just rocks tied to ropes. Later, as civilization emerged, enterprising warriors realized that chains struck harder and were more difficult to cut or break than ropes, and the modern chain weapon emerged. The earliest recorded examples of true chain weapons are believed to date from the First War (some stories claim Shosuro used one), and all histories agree that Hida Kaimetsu-Uo, the founder of the Mantis Clan, was the first warrior to earn notoriety with the kusarigama. Still, an overall history of chain weapons in Rokugan is elusive, since each type of weapon seems to have been created in different circumstances, in different eras of history, and by people from different classes of society. Some were created by different people in different parts of the Empire nearly simultaneously, but did not gain wide acceptance or acknowledgment until years or decades later. Ultimately, there are as many different types of chain weapons as there are origin stories for each. Descriptions and possible origins for the most common types of chain weapons are presented here.

## THE KUSARIGAMA

The Mantis Clan earns notoriety from the rest of the Empire for many things, not least of which is their habit of fighting with peasant weapons. The Mantis point to the close quarters they must face aboard ship to justify their use of peasant weapons, since the size and weight of conventional “samurai” weapons makes them difficult to use in such conditions – not to mention the risk of shame and dishonor if an ancestral katana is lost overboard.

One of the Mantis Clan’s favorite weapons is the kama (discussed later in this chapter) – indeed, it is so iconic for them that they have revered *nemuranai* kama passed down from their ancestors, and many of their daimyo are known to have ornate versions of this peasant tool crafted for themselves. Thus it is unsurprising that the kusarigama, a weapon that is essentially a kama with a considerable length of iron chain (often as much as twelve feet or more) attached to the end of its haft, is ascribed to Kaimetsu-Uo, the founder of the Mantis Clan. There are some scholars among the other clans who believe the kusarigama was originally created by an enterprising farmer who thought if he attached his kama to the end of a rope he could harvest his fields faster, but the sheer difficulty of getting such a scheme to work – along with the time that it would take for the farmer to learn to do so without cutting off his own limbs along the way – makes such a story very unlikely, and the Mantis consider it a laughable fiction.

## THE DIFFICULTY OF LEARNING CHAIN WEAPONS

Have you ever tried to push a rope? That question exemplifies why chain weapons are so difficult to learn to use at all, let alone to master. It takes years for a student to learn to reliably predict and manipulate the path of the weight at the end of the chain. He must learn to bend the killing end of the weapon around obstacles, to avoid letting it hit him by accident, and to deal quickly and effectively with snags and tangles. Learning a chain weapon entails a considerably greater variety of skills than a sword, let alone a tetsubo.

Students who undertake to learn chain weapons begin their lesson by learning the most basic skill of all: how not to hit themselves with the weapon. They are initially taught with light chains tipped with padded weights, and thus most students spend their first year or two sporting innumerable small round bruises from these training weapons. Only once they can reliably avoid hurting themselves do they begin to learn to send the weighted end out at targets... which leads to fresh bruises as the rebounding weights do not necessarily return where the student expects them to. Only after long practice and mastery is a student allowed to use the actual weapon. It is notable that chain weapons are among the few which sometimes accidentally kill their students, and even the successful learners will occasionally lose fingers or toes. No chain weapon student finishes his training without at least a few scars.





The Mantis Clan's story of their founder's creation of the kusarigama is light-hearted, like many of their tales. Supposedly, when Kaimetsu-Uo and his followers left the Crab Clan and sailed away from the mainland, they filled their idle time on shipboard with various informal athletic contests. One particular contest was a test of agility and skill in which targets would be hung from various locations all over the ship's deck; two sailors would compete to see which of them could cut down more of the targets with their kama while climbing, leaping, and running all over the deck of the ship with their kama. Kaimetsu-Uo, who hated to lose any contest, decided he would not have to climb so much if he could get his kama to reach the higher targets, so he tied a length of thin rope to his weapon and threw it at the targets. Soon enough he replaced the rope with a chain, and eventually other Mantis sailors copied his weapon... and the kusarigama was born. By time of his death, the weapon was already the same design as the one in modern usage.

Kusarigama are concealable, but not as much so as some of the other types of chain weapons. They are used most often by Mantis samurai, though some ninja groups employ them as well, along with certain ronin and even some peasants of a martial disposition. Kusarigama are the most lethal of the common chain weapon designs, which helps explain their popularity with the Mantis.

## THE KYOKETSU-SHOGI

Chain weapons are not usually considered to be honorable. Though they can sometimes have honorable uses in the hands of a samurai, many of them were created to be used for clandestine purposes. So it is with the kyoketsu-shogi. Basically this weapon is a hook – or sometimes a curved weight – at the end of a silken rope or a thin, lightweight chain. It is designed primarily to help its user climb over obstacles such as walls, and actually functions fairly poorly as a weapon. Many modern kyoketsu-shogi are essentially little more than a combined grappling hook and climbing rope.

The origins of the kyoketsu-shogi are shrouded in mystery, as are the origins of many of the tools of the ninja's trade, but it is believed that a tool very much like the modern kyoketsu-shogi was invented soon after the residents of the lands which would become Rokugan first invented strong defensive fortifications.

Those who use these weapons often wrap the rope or chain around themselves beneath their obi, hiding it where it can be accessed later as needed. Since those who use this device consider stealth to be important, they usually make it with silken rope, since it is both quieter than a chain and easier to conceal. However, there are versions of the kyoketsu-shogi which do use chains, usually employed for





scaling castle walls during sieges or surmounting battlefield fortifications. True aficionados of the kyoketsu-shogi use many different types of hooks and weights, switching them out according to what sort of obstacle they are scaling. Climbing a wooden palisade might require a different sort of hook than scaling a castle's spiked curtain wall.

Kyoketsu-shogi are primarily tools rather than weapons. The climbing hooks are generally not well-balanced for combat, and silken rope does not stand up well to the blade of a katana. Even the chain ones are used as a weapon only as a last resort.

## THE MANRIKIKUSARI

Manrikikusari are the simplest of all chain weapons: simply a chain with weights or perhaps spikes at either end. Typically they are much shorter than a kusarigama, often measuring no more than four feet in length, and never more than six feet. Small ones as short as two or three feet long as sometimes used. A warrior fights with a manrikikusari by spinning the weight on one end and then releasing it to strike the foe, holding the other end to retrieve the chain after the strike. True masters can spin the weights on both ends at the same time, a truly dizzying display of martial artistry.

The origins of the manrikikusari, like those of the kyoketsu-shogi, are mysterious, and most scholars agree that almost anyone could have created the first one. Many children still play with what might be considered a prototype for the weapon. However, the first recorded usage of a manrikikusari in Rokugan's histories is in the hands of Shosuro, who used it for certain types of specialized missions (although her favored and preferred weapon was always the knife).

Like the kyoketsu-shogi, the manrikikusari is generally considered a stealth weapon and hence a dishonorable one. Much like the kyoketsu-shogi, they can be wrapped around a person's waist or coiled in a pouch unseen until they are needed. There are also versions of the weapon which are larger and less stealthy. The Crab Clan, for example, sometimes uses a version of the weapon with a longer, heavier chain and cylindrical steel weights at either end. On the flip side, ninja are known to sometimes employ stealthier versions of the weapon with silken rope in place of chain, relying entirely on the weights to deliver blows.

## THE LONGXU HOOK (DRAGON BEARD HOOK)

The so-called dragon beard hook is another example of a "chain" weapon that is usually attached to a length of rope rather than a chain as such. It is a steel hook about 12 inches long, with a ring for the rope at its base and its two curved serrated blades designed to tangle in an opponent's clothing. There are often barbed protrusions along the sides of the hook in order to make it even more difficult to remove from clothing. The longxu hook usually uses about thirty feet of rope, making it the longest reaching of these weapons.

In contrast to the other chain weapons, which are favored by ninja and other covert operatives, the dragon beard hook is generally a magistrate's weapon, designed to aid magistrates in capturing fleeing criminals without harming them...

too much. The magistrate spins the hook around and hurls it at the criminal, where it tangles in his clothing (and often digs into the flesh of his body), allowing the magistrate to reel him in at his leisure.

Scholars believe the dragon beard hook was originally created in the lands of the Crane Clan by a Doji magistrate who wanted to find a way to bring fleeing criminals to justice without filling them full of arrows or spears. Some theories suggest he may have been inspired by investigations into ninja activity, devising the weapon in a deliberate response to covert usage of other chain weaponry.

While the longxu hook is very effective in its intended purpose, it also makes a reasonably useful weapon at close range if one is properly trained in its usage, and it can function much like a kusarigama in a pinch.

## THE ROPE DART

Another ninja weapon and a fairly obscure one, a rope dart is meant to be used at range to deliver an attack with a poisoned dart and then retrieve it safely. The wielder twirls the heavy dart and then releases it at his foe, pulling it back afterward. The rope is usually between ten and sixteen feet long. Unlike a manrikikusari, a rope dart has a weight at only one end – the dart – and always uses rope rather than chain. This makes it quick and versatile, but lacking in durability.

Those few who have studied it believe the simple but effective rope dart is probably a predecessor to all other chain weapons. Of course, as with all chain weapons, using one effectively is anything but simple. A wielder does not have the shaft of a weapon to grip, nor the ability to use a chain to deflect enemy blows, and the dart itself is too light weight to penetrate heavy armor.







## Masters of Chain Weapons

There are very few places in the Empire where the sensei teach students to fight with chain weapons to the exclusion of all else. There are, however, instructors who teach the art of fighting with chain weapons in a number of the larger clan dojo. While chain weapons are rarely considered honorable, this does not stop the more pragmatic clans from using them, and even some honorable samurai admire the fluid motions and graceful action of chain weapons on the battlefield. There are also a few small groups within the Mantis and Scorpion Clans who specialize in these weapons.

### THE CRAB CLAN

The scouts among the Hiruma often learn to fight with chain weapons. They have the advantage of being both weapons and tools, and anything that can be used in multiple ways is of great value when operating deep within the Shadowlands without support. Some of the Crab who defend the border also use larger versions of the standard chain weapons to maintain distance from their foes and allow them to use entangling tactics – very useful with enemies who may be difficult to slay directly. There is traditionally a master of all chain weapons in the dojo which trains the Hiruma, as well as a few

teachers at the Hida dojo in Kyuden Hida and Sunda Mizu Mura.

### THE CRANE CLAN

Among the Crane very few outside of the Daidoji family learn to fight with chain weapons. While the way that a samurai moves while wielding a chain weapon can be seen as almost resembling a dance, the fact that the weapons are generally considered dishonorable drives most Crane away from learning to use them. There are a few, a very few, artisans who study the way of chain weapons for purely artistic purposes – such Crane are more likely to be found in a Kabuki acting troupe than to ever appear on the battlefield. However, the more pragmatic and covert elements of the Daidoji do employ chain weapons, and there is traditionally a master sensei of chain weapons in the Daidoji dojo. The Daidoji

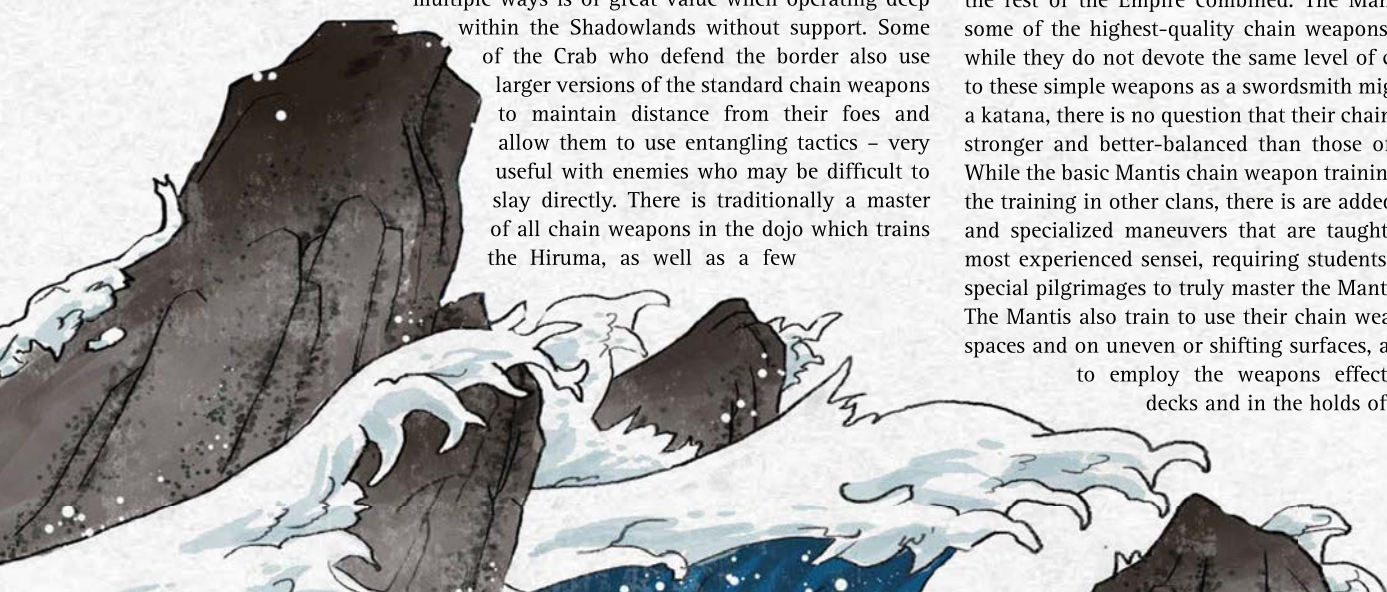
prefer to use manrikikusari and kyoketsu-shogi over the other types of chain weapons.

### THE DRAGON CLAN

Dragon Clan training in chain weapons is generally limited to magistrates who learn to use the dragon beard hook. Some of the Togashi do learn to use chain weapons as a sort of physical meditation, using the flowing motions as a focus for their spirits, and wandering tattooed men are known to employ almost any sort of weapon when they see the need. Training is usually informal and personal, although the Kitsuki family does maintain a very limited amount of formal education to study the dragon beard hook.

### THE MANTIS CLAN

The Mantis love chain weapons, especially the kusarigama, and there are probably more sensei specializing in chain weapons among the Mantis than in the rest of the Empire combined. The Mantis also craft some of the highest-quality chain weapons in Rokugan; while they do not devote the same level of craftsmanship to these simple weapons as a swordsmith might commit to a katana, there is no question that their chain weapons are stronger and better-balanced than those of other clans. While the basic Mantis chain weapon training is similar to the training in other clans, there is added components and specialized maneuvers that are taught only by the most experienced sensei, requiring students to undertake special pilgrimages to truly master the Mantis techniques. The Mantis also train to use their chain weapons in tight spaces and on uneven or shifting surfaces, allowing them to employ the weapons effectively on the decks and in the holds of their ships.





## THE SCORPION CLAN

The Bayushi school largely ignores chain weapons, but – as one might expect – the Shosuro find plenty of uses for them. Chain weapons are taught in the shinobi organizations, and in addition there is a more peculiar type of chain fighting taught at the Shosuro Acting Academy. This approach utilizes chain weapons and the accompanying fighting forms as a form of dance, a more refined and complex version of the chain-dancing sometimes explored by the Crane. There are performances in Scorpion lands where actors will dance on stage while spinning and twirling a decorative chain weapon (often hung with colorful streamers), actor and “weapon” flowing like water across the stage in perfect harmony. And if this dance can also be used to conceal an assassination weapon... so much the better.

## THE BROTHERHOOD OF SHINSEI

Many monk orders utilize martial training as a form of physical meditation, and a few (most notably the Temple of Osano-Wo) embrace the ways of battle. Monks generally avoid samurai weapons, but some of them do utilize chain weapons. In particular, the more contemplative orders have found that mastering the intricate and unpredictable motions of chain weapons can help focus their bodies and minds. On rare occasions these monks will act as sensei for samurai who wishes to master chain weapons.

## Wood Moving Like Water: Staves

The simplest and least expensive weapon in the Rokugani arsenal is the wooden staff. Staves require no expensive metal pieces or fancy silken wrapping. They are plentiful and easy to make, since all one need do is cut a suitable piece of wood or bamboo. Staves are also surprisingly effective weapons. A master of the bo staff or the nunchaku moves with an almost hypnotic unity with his weapon, such that it seems impossible to tell where the warrior ends and the staff begins. Moreover, staves can be effective for defensive actions as well as attacking, and in skilled hands a staff can be as effective as a sword or spear. There are more than a few stories of a single monk holding off a dozen bandits armed with swords and spears, using nothing more than his simple bamboo staff.

The history of the staff is as old as the history of humans in Rokugan. The first time someone picked up a piece of wood and hit someone else with it, the staff was born. Obviously the art of crafting and fighting with staves has progressed through the centuries, but it all began with that simple piece of wood. And while samurai have long since chosen swords and other metal weapons as their preferred armaments, there have always been those among the Rokugani who prefer staves. After all, they are flexible items, able to support an old man's walk, to serve as a tent-pole when shelter is needed, or even help an athletic traveler vault over obstacles. Staves also can serve as a generally nonlethal way of subduing criminals. They even have roles in some religious ceremonies and rituals. Legend claims that

## FLAGS AND STREAMERS

Artists who use chain weapons on stage always add colorful flags, streamers, or even feathers to make their performance more visually spectacular. However, samurai who use these weapons in combat also sometimes decorate them in this way. The streamers distract the eye of the opponent and can even conceal the location of the blade on a kusarigama. The Mantis have also been known to tie bells or strings of sparkling shells on the weighted end of their kusarigama for the same distraction purposes.



before the Empire there was at least one tribe that eschewed every type of weapon... except the simple staff.

Staves began to lose prominence as serious battlefield weapons when the early Rokugani developed armor. By the time of the First War, most warriors did not use staves, and once the Empire settled into peace afterward they were all but completely abandoned by the samurai caste. Peasants, however, continued to use them widely, especially since the samurai rarely actually considered staves to be weapons and thus did not consider them to be violations of Imperial law. Staves also remained the most popular weapon used by the monks of the Brotherhood, who favored them since they were primarily defensive and were also useful tools for travelers.

There are actually many different kinds of weapons that can all be classified as staves. All of them, however, share the basic properties that they are made primarily out of wood or bamboo, and the wooden sections are the primary striking surfaces. This sets them apart from spears and polearms, which have wooden hafts but rely on their metal heads to inflict damage.







## THE BO STAFF

By far the most well-known of the staves, the bo staff is simply a piece of wood about as long as a man is tall. Early bo staves were merely cut from the local forest, shaved clean of bark, and allowed to dry a little before use. However, knowledge advanced over time, and modern bo staves are usually planed and sanded to a uniform width along the entire length of the staff. Some martial artists wrap sections of the staff in silk or other types of cloth in order to create places where their grip is more solid, which can also be useful when employing the staff for assistance in climbing or on long walks. In a few instances, martial monks will band their staves with metal strengthen them and allow them to hit more solidly; however, this is rare, and the vast majority of bo staves are unadorned.

Historically, different groups in Rokugan have used bo staves of varying lengths and materials, but these factors are generally uniform within a specific group. One group might prefer staves which are longer than a man is tall, while another may prefer their staves to come up to a man's chin instead. One group might craft their staves from maple while another might use thumb-thick bamboo. Outside of these cultural choices, however, the bo staff remains a uniform item everywhere.

## THE JO STAFF

The jo staff is essentially the bo staff's little sibling. Where bo staves tend to be over five feet in length, jo staves are usually around three feet long, and often slightly shorter. Like the bo staff, the jo staff is a multi-purpose item – it is used when playing taiko drums, the massive and powerful drums which thunder at religious festivals and relay orders on the battlefield. Since it is used for striking drums, the jo staff is easily wielded with one hand, and they are often carried in a pair – one used in each hand. They are easily used for fighting in confined spaces (unlike bo staves) and are also much easier to conceal – making them a favored weapon of street toughs, gang enforcers, and other such criminal types. All they need do is slip the jo into their sleeves or under their waistbands.

Much like the bo, the jo originated in the simplest way: as tree branches of uniform width along their length. (Branches which are significantly wider at one end are considered clubs, though in game-mechanic terms there is no difference between the two types of weapons.) Jo staves used for martial arts are generally planed and sanded down to be smooth and fully uniform for their entire length, much like bo staves.





Some scholars believe the first people to use jo staves as a serious weapon were in fact drummers who beat their taiko drums to relay orders on the battlefield. When attacked in battle, the drummers used their drum-sticks to defend themselves as best they could, and some of them eventually became quite adept with their short lengths of wood. Other historians dismiss this as an overly elaborate explanation for a weapon which is, after all, merely a modest refinement of the primitive club.

Like bo staves, jo staves are crafted from a single piece of wood, often a thicker or heavier piece than for a bo staff because of their smaller size. Some users, especially taiko drummers, decorate their staves with paint or by tying colorful cloth or feathers to them. It is quite rare for jo staves to be banded with metal, but they are sometimes made from bamboo instead of hardwoods.

## THE TONFA

While tonfa are generally considered peasant weapons, in their design they truly belong to the staves category of weapons. Tonfa are interesting – and perhaps unique – in that they were originally nothing more than a tool. Originally, tonfa were the handles of millstones, and their design still reflects this – they consist of a shaft the length of a man’s forearm and a handle that juts out perpendicular to the shaft.

Much like how sailors in Western societies used the belaying pins from their ships as clubs, peasants in Rokugan long ago began to use tonfa as weapons when necessary. Most likely, this began when a miller pulled the handle off his millstone to fend off a wild animal – or perhaps a bandit. However many times this may have happened, the tonfa remained primarily a tool for millers for many years, only gradually spreading into the hands of the rest of the peasantry. Eventually, a few samurai – most notably magistrates – took note of these improvised weapons, noticing especially that the tonfa protected the wielder’s forearm, making it both an offensive and a defensive weapon. Some magistrates actually make use of this weapon, although the jitte is their preferred choice. Some Mantis have also embraced the tonfa for much the same reason as they use other such weapons – small size and ease of replacement.

Tonfa are made of wood, regardless of whether they are actually crafted as weapons or are literally the handles of millstones. A few Mantis samurai have tonfa crafted of other materials, such as stronger wood or metal banding, or decorated with clan symbols.

## THE MACHI-KANSHISHA

Easily the rarest and most peculiar member of the staves family, the machi-kanshisha is a very large metal smoking pipe. They essentially function as specialized jo staves, and are used solely by the ronin magistrates of the City of the Rich Frog – who indeed take their own organization’s name from the weapons.



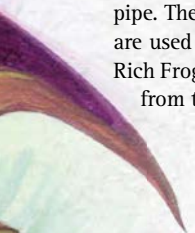
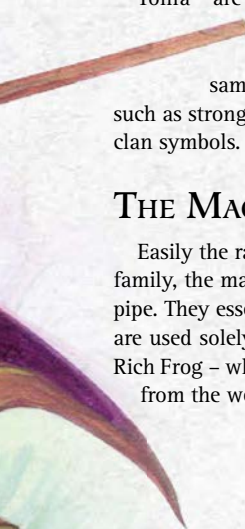
A machi-kanshisha is a three-foot long steel smoking pipe, and is in fact used to smoke as well as to subdue criminals. The curved shape of the pipe makes it fairly easy for a magistrate to use it to stun an opponent with a sharp blow to the head. Very few people outside of the Kaeru ronin family use these pipes, though in the late twelfth century they do spread to a few locations in the Colonies where Kaeru and others from the City of the Rich Frog have settled.

## THE SANG KAUW

The Sang Kauw is an uncommon staff weapon (though not as obscure as the machi-kanshisha) that in many ways shares the traits of a spear. Though in modern Rokugan the Sang Kauw is generally only used by those who study unconventional weaponry, in ancient times they were the primary weapon of several tribes. The weapon has survived into modern times mainly as a curiosity.

Sang Kauw come in two forms. Both begin with a shaft of wood between three and four feet in length, with a steel spear-tip at either end. It is what is attached to the center of the shaft that determines which type of Sang Kauw it is: some are equipped with an outward-facing crescent blade, while the others have a small shield-shaped piece of steel attached to the shaft. Each has different benefits in combat, both offensively and defensively.

There are very few masters of Sang Kauw combat in the Empire. The majority of those who do employ the weapon are found in the Scorpion lands, most likely due to the fact that those lands were home to most of the ancient tribes who revered the weapon. A few of the more martially-oriented orders of monks are also known to train with the weapon.







## Masters of Staves

While staves are not generally considered a true “weapon” among most samurai in Rokugan, there are still some who study them, and there are a few sensei sprinkled around the Empire who teach their students how to fight with staves, either a single type or all of them.

### THE CRAB CLAN

Because staves are not very good at penetrating armor – or the thick hides of the monsters which the Crab Clan faces on a regular basis – few members of the Crab learn to fight with them. There is, however, a small group of Crab who learn to fight with jo staves: the clan’s taiko drummers. The Crab armies must operate over large distances and communicate quickly and clearly on the battlefield, especially after the construction of the Kaiu Wall, and taiko drums are quite useful for such communication. The

drummers who pound out signals to their comrades are taught to use their sticks as a weapon of last resort. Though most of the drummers carry other weapons as well, the Crab think it is foolish to ignore any weapon which is readily available.

### THE DRAGON CLAN

Most of the Dragon Clan eschews the use of staves, aside from a few of their magistrates. The Togashi, however, embrace the use of staves wholeheartedly. Aside from the Brotherhood of Shinsei, there are probably more sensei teaching staff combat among the Togashi than anywhere else in the Empire.

### THE MANTIS CLAN

The Mantis, true to their unconventional nature, use staves and peasant weapons without compunction. The bo and jo staff are not popular with the Mantis, but many of the Yoritomo learn how to fight with the tonfa, and to a lesser extent they also study the nunchaku.

### THE PHOENIX CLAN

Within the Phoenix Clan, there is one group that trains regularly with staves: the shugenja who embrace the Element of Water. Water shugenja feel a connection with staves because they are the type of weapon which contains the most Elemental Water, bound into the wood, and thus the staff resonates with the spirits they commune with every day. Some of the Asako Henshin travel the Empire in the guise of normal monks, and they embrace bo staves as both tools and defensive weapons. Thus, both the Isawa and the Asako have sensei who are experts in the use of the bo staff, and usually the jo stick as well.

### THE NUNCHAKU

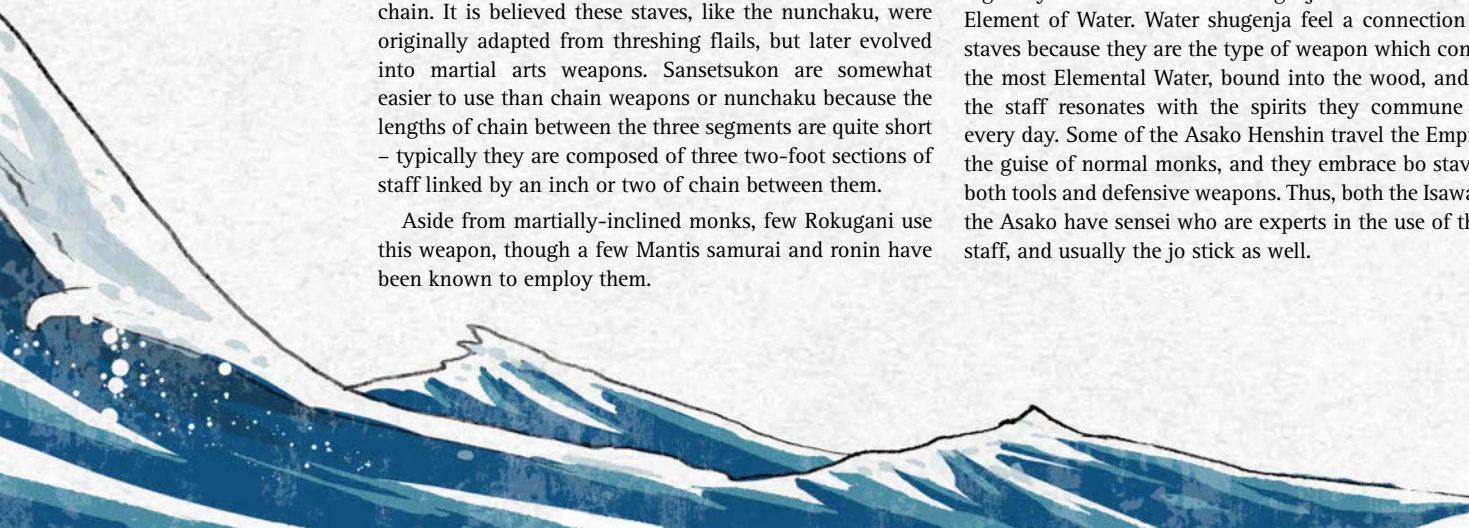
Nunchaku are simple weapons but are notoriously difficult to use. They were originally adapted from flails used to thresh grain, though the modern nunchaku used in combat differs quite a bit from those flails in both form and function. Nunchaku comprise a pair of two-foot lengths of wood attached to one another by a short length of chain (usually one foot long). Some Mantis craft their nunchaku from steel, but this is quite rare, and the weapons are almost always made from wood.

Training with nunchaku is as difficult as training with a chain weapon, and novice users are quite likely to hurt themselves rather than their opponents. Thus, while it is technically considered a “peasant weapon” due to its origins, it is very rare indeed for a peasant to actually master the nunchaku. The Mantis are far more likely to use the weapon than the peasants. However, many orders of monks do train with nunchaku, both for martial purposes and as a form of physical meditation.

### THE THREE-SECTION STAFF (SANSETSUKON)

The sansetsukon is a bo staff that has been split into three sections, then connected back together with a few links of chain. It is believed these staves, like the nunchaku, were originally adapted from threshing flails, but later evolved into martial arts weapons. Sansetsukon are somewhat easier to use than chain weapons or nunchaku because the lengths of chain between the three segments are quite short – typically they are composed of three two-foot sections of staff linked by an inch or two of chain between them.

Aside from martially-inclined monks, few Rokugani use this weapon, though a few Mantis samurai and ronin have been known to employ them.





## RONIN

Basic staves are generally inexpensive and easily replaced, making them an excellent weapon for penniless ronin who worry about damaging or losing their swords. Many ronin learn to master the bo staff, jo staff, or tonfa for this reason. There are a few ronin sensei scattered around the Empire who are willing to teach other ronin the use of these weapons, usually for a reasonable fee.

The Kaeru ronin family in the City of the Rich Frog learn to use the machi-kanshisha from childhood onward, and the city contains virtually the only sensei in Rokugan who can teach the use of the weapon properly.

## THE BROTHERHOOD OF SHINSEI

The fact that staves can be used as tools as well as weapons makes them ideal for traveling monks, and indeed many Rokugani see the bo staff as being just as much a symbol of the monastic vocation as a saffron robe or prayer beads. Most orders of monks, even those who are pacifistic, teach at least basic defensive techniques for the bo staff. Other orders have expert sensei who teach advanced fighting techniques.

## Dirty Water: Peasant Weapons

*Glorb rubbed his filthy hands together in glee. He and the rest of his tribe had snuck past the scary gray men while they were busy fighting some ogres and trolls. Big dumb ogres were only good for fighting the gray men! Now they were past and into the soft lands full of sweet meat, the lands full of weak people to munch on and make scream.*

*Glorb smacked his tribemate, Lorp, on the head. "You, dummy, go front. Find tasties." Lorp frowned but did as he was told, loping forward on his stubby goblin legs.*

*Glorb leaned back, drooling slightly as he dreamed of cracking the skulls of soft humans and slurping up their entrails like noodles. Much better than noodles, actually – noodles didn't wriggle.*

*Lorp returned, excited. "Glorb, there a village, we can eat good."*

*Glorb smiled. "We go get soft humans," he declared, then hit Lorp again on general principles. The dozen other goblins nodded, grinning and scratching themselves, and the whole band slunk forward.*

*The goblins skulked toward the village. They could see that it was surrounded by brown fields of tall grass, a few peasants working in the fields and others carrying bundles of the grass around within the village itself. Glorb could not help rubbing his hands together some more, smacking his lips. He could almost taste the humans already. At a final nod he and his comrades slithered forward through the tall grasses, closing in on the humans working in the fields.*

## A CAMPAIGN WITHOUT ARMOR

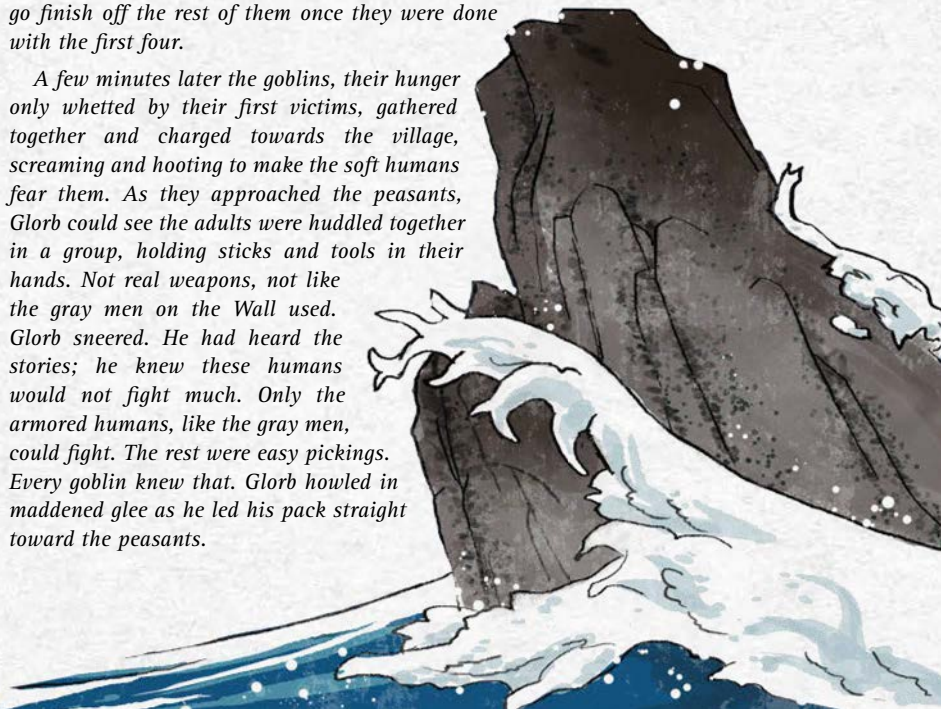
One of the reasons samurai do not generally use staves is the fact that staves do not fare well against a foe wearing armor. However, it is worth remembering that few samurai in Rokugan wear armor outside of training or in open battle. Ambushes while travelling on the roads, fights in the middle of a city, and anything that happens in a castle or court is likely to involve unarmored samurai. In such battles, staves are actually quite effective weapons. It is not an accident that monks who master the staff are accorded significant respect.

Alternatively, the GM may wish to explore the possibilities of a campaign where the Empire is overwhelmingly peaceful and armor is never worn, kept always on its ceremonial stands at home. (For example, a campaign set in Rokugan during most of the tenth or eleventh centuries could easily fit this model.) In a world where war is theoretical, even castle guards may not wear armor... and the influence and popularity of staves will grow significantly. As a quasi-historical comparison, consider the world of Tokugawa Shogunate Japan, where an enforced peace led to warriors seeking perfection in different martial arts without regard for their practicality on the battlefield. Stories about the great warrior Musashi, for example, speak of him fighting duels with a warrior who specialized in the kusarigama and with a monk who was revered as the master of the bo staff.



*Three humans were taken down before they even knew what was happening, but the fourth managed to shout as two goblins dragged him down. A moment later a loud gong began to ring within the village, the great noise echoing around the valley. The people began to move around quickly and purposefully. For a moment Glorb did not really notice – he was busy sucking the delicious fluid out of an eyeball. The rest of the villagers had all fled out of the fields, but that was all right – the goblins could go finish off the rest of them once they were done with the first four.*

*A few minutes later the goblins, their hunger only whetted by their first victims, gathered together and charged towards the village, screaming and hooting to make the soft humans fear them. As they approached the peasants, Glorb could see the adults were huddled together in a group, holding sticks and tools in their hands. Not real weapons, not like the gray men on the Wall used. Glorb sneered. He had heard the stories; he knew these humans would not fight much. Only the armored humans, like the gray men, could fight. The rest were easy pickings. Every goblin knew that. Glorb howled in maddened glee as he led his pack straight toward the peasants.*







*And the peasant began to kill them.*

*They did not panic or run. They struck out efficiently and steadily with their stupid sticks and tools, and goblins died. They stabbed the green creatures with pitchforks, sliced at them with kama. A few bashed goblins over the head with carpenter's hammers or threshing flails.*

*In just a few moments, Glorb was the only goblin left alive. He stood confused, mouth gaping, as a young girl charged at him with the pointed end of a rake.*

*"She look tasty," he thought, and then he died.*

The idea of "peasant weapons" is one peculiar to Rokugani culture, and one which seemingly creates an inherent contradiction. After all, according to the Empire's social and cultural ideals, peasants – save those who serve as ashigaru or *doshin* – should never want or need weapons. Unfortunately, Rokugan is not perfect, no matter what the poets and historians may claim. Bandits, Shadowlands creatures, criminal gangs, and peasant rebellions all result in commoners being forced to take up arms. When peasants must fight, they cannot fight with anything the samurai caste considers to be weapons; Imperial edict prohibits peasants from using such things. Instead, they are forced to adapt the tools of their mundane trades into weapons for the defense of their homes and lives.

Thus, most weapons which are considered "peasant weapons" are adapted from farming implements (many of which are dangerous in their own right). They are crafted to stand up to the abuse they suffer through season after season of work, but are not necessarily designed to endure the completely different rigors of battle. A kama, for example, is crafted to cut wheat over and over again, year after year – but is not built to slice through bone and sinew. Because of this, most peasant weapons have a very finite lifespan and must be frequently repaired or replaced.

The earliest peasant weapons were simply the tools the peasants used to perform their tasks, whether these were flails used to thresh grain (which evolved into the *nunchaku*), the blades used to cut grain and hay (later refined into the *kama*), or the handle of a millstone (which became the *tonfa*). Early cultures each had their own tools

and thus their own weapons when those tools were used as such. As the centuries passed, the tools of Rokugani peasants trade became standardized... and so did the weapons they became. A modern *kama* in the south of Rokugan is very similar to a *kama* in the north, where in the ancient past they would have been similar in function but not in form.

"Peasant weapons" may be found in many of the major classes of weaponry in Rokugan. There are "peasant weapons" that are classified as spears, staves, knives, or even swords. However, regardless of what category they fall into, peasant weapons are generally regarded as inappropriate or dishonorable for samurai to use (the Mantis being the great exception to this principle).

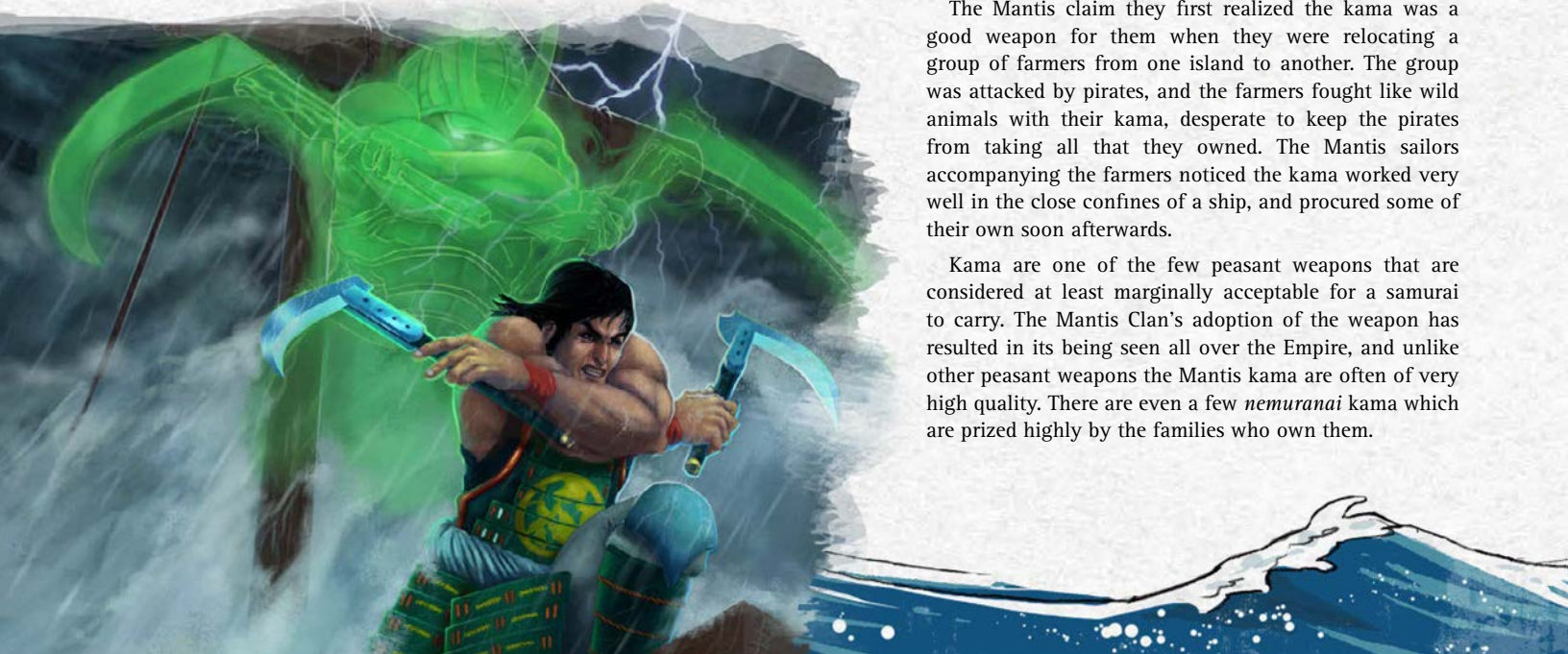
## THE KAMA

*Kama* were originally tools used to harvest grain, and they are still used as such in the modern Empire. They were originally very similar to Western sickles, but over time their design has been altered slightly to make them easier to use as weapons. The *kama* has become one of the most respected (or perhaps, more accurately, the least despised) of the peasant weapons, due to the fact that the Yoritomo family of the Mantis have essentially adopted them as their official weapon. Even the Clan Champion of the Mantis generally carries a matched set of *kama*.

Many different stories tell how the *kama* rose to prominence as a weapon, and since these stories are found mainly among the peasants, only a few samurai folklorists have bothered to collect them. One of the more popular such tales involves a small farming community in the lands of the Lion. A peddler was travelling on the road by the village, and at sunset he was accosted by a pair of ronin bandits. When he cried for help, a half-dozen peasants seemed to materialize out of the grain fields. They had been working all day and were covered in sweat and grime, but each held a *kama* in his hand. They easily defeated the ronin, although the stories vary as to what happened next – some claim the peasants subdued the bandits and gave them to the local magistrate, while others say the bandits were slain and cast into a ditch.

The Mantis claim they first realized the *kama* was a good weapon for them when they were relocating a group of farmers from one island to another. The group was attacked by pirates, and the farmers fought like wild animals with their *kama*, desperate to keep the pirates from taking all that they owned. The Mantis sailors accompanying the farmers noticed the *kama* worked very well in the close confines of a ship, and procured some of their own soon afterwards.

*Kama* are one of the few peasant weapons that are considered at least marginally acceptable for a samurai to carry. The Mantis Clan's adoption of the weapon has resulted in its being seen all over the Empire, and unlike other peasant weapons the Mantis *kama* are often of very high quality. There are even a few *nemuranai* *kama* which are prized highly by the families who own them.





## THE PARANGU

A parangu is essentially a Rokugani machete. While parangu do superficially resemble swords, they are not crafted with anything close to the same attention, quality, or craftsmanship, and most Rokugani samurai are insulted by the idea that such weapons can be considered swords at all. Parangu are crafted from simple unfolded steel, joined to a wooden handle; their primary role is simply to cut through thick vegetation and underbrush. They are fairly brittle and not really suited for any sort of extended conflict, but they are still long blades made of steel – making them effective weapons when a peasant needs one in an emergency. Unlike some other peasant weapons, the parangu is unchanged from the form it originally had; for obvious reasons, no alterations were necessary to make the tool into a weapon.

Peasant must take care in how they carry and use their parangu, since the weapon's close outward resemblance to proper samurai swords can cause problems. For example, peasant children sometimes dream impossible dreams, "practicing" with their parangu while imagining themselves as samurai cutting down hordes of enemies; a samurai who witnesses such play can easily decide the peasant is reaching too far above his station, and react accordingly.

Mantis Clan samurai do sometimes make use of parangu, although not nearly as often as they do with tonfa or kama. The weapon is particularly popular among the Tsuruchi bounty hunters, who use it as both a tool and a back-up weapon for when their bows are unavailable.

## THE KUMADE

The kumade is a peasant weapon which is truly only used by peasants. It is certainly not glamorous enough (or small enough) for a Mantis to want to use it, and other samurai – even the poorest ronin – have no use for such a large and awkward tool. Kumade are essentially steel-tipped rakes, consisting of a wooden shaft with a sharpened metal point on one end and a series of metal hooks at the other end. The hooks are used to pull weeds and roots from the ground, while the pointed end is used to break up clods of earth and other such obstructions. These tools are fairly fragile when used for purposes other than the one they were created for, but because of the sharpened tips they are certainly useable as weapons if required.

There is a tale of a peasant who lived in a village in the mountains. One day he was out clearing a field, preparing to plant that year's crops, when a starving bear emerged from the nearby woods. Instead of running, the peasant took up his kumade and planted the rake end in the ground, aiming the pointed end at the bear. The bear impaled itself on the makeshift weapon, and while the rake broke instantly it still killed the bear. Peasants like to tell this story, especially in places where wild animals are a common threat to people or livestock.



## THE SAI AND JITTE

Both of these weapons have their roots in tools which the peasants used to measure the length of rice stalks, but both evolved into weapons which have gained acceptance as tools for samurai magistrates. The weapons are effective at disarming opponents without killing them, a useful trait for magistrates who must maintain the peace and try to avoid political incidents. Originally, these weapons were crafted from wood, but after they came into common use among samurai they switched to being made from steel.

### PEASANT WEAPON QUALITY

Compared to the weapons crafted specifically for samurai to use in battle, peasant weapons are generally of much lower quality. Many of the peasant weapons in the L5R 4th Edition Core rulebook include rules to represent this. For peasant weapons which do not already have such an entry in the core rulebook, a good rule of thumb is that the weapon will break if it does more than 20 points of damage in a single attack.

This is not to say that peasant weapons are all fragile or shoddily made. Many of them, especially those crafted from metal, can last for many years or even decades of hard use at their intended tasks. Peasant blacksmiths take as much pride in their craftsmanship as any other Rokugani, after all. Moreover, they could if necessary craft peasant weapons with much more resilient components. Even a parangu can hold up better if it is crafted from higher-quality steel. The GM should feel free to modify or ignore the rules for peasant weapons breaking if the circumstances seem appropriate.







## TOOLS AS WEAPONS

There are many other peasant tools which could potentially be employed as weapons if necessary – far too many to fully detail in this book. For example, carpenters and wood-cutters use axes of many different sizes, some of which might be considered equivalent to an ono or masakari. Smiths and carpenters use hammers, ranging in size from small clubs to massive mallets as big as a dai tsuchi.

In any situation where a tool might be used as a weapon, the GM can usually improvise by finding a “standard” Rokugani weapon which is reasonably close to the tool in question, and using the corresponding DR and Skill. Note, however, that these improvised weapons are likely to be awkward and unbalanced when compared to the normal weaponry used with the same Skill, so the GM may wish to apply penalties unless the character is from a School which studies peasant weapons or improvised weaponry.



## THE TONFA AND NUNCHAKU

As noted in this chapter’s earlier sections, the tonfa and nunchaku both originated as peasant tools – the tonfa as the handle of a millstone, the nunchaku as a threshing flail – but they have evolved far enough away from their origins to be considered peasant weapons only by social convention. It is quite rare in modern Rokugan to find a commoner wielding either of these weapons, especially the nunchaku.

## THE PITCHFORK

Pitchforks are peasant tools used for moving hay and straw, and are comprised of a four- to five-foot wooden shaft tipped with two or three sharpened prongs. Often the prongs are also wood, although well-to-do peasants will sometimes use iron or even steel prongs. Peasants

will sometimes use pitchforks as makeshift spears to defend their lands, livestock, and lives. Unlike other peasant weapons, pitchforks are both very large and very obviously mere tools, so samurai ignore them and even the Mantis do not use them as weapons – although a *doshin* or *ashigaru* might use one if necessary.

## THE TORCH

Despite the classic perception that Rokugan at night is lit entirely by paper lanterns, many of the peasantry use torches when they must step outside of their homes in the dark. Rokugani torches are usually crafted from wood or bamboo, with cloth or some other such flammable material wrapped around one end and soaked in pitch or a similar slow-burning substance. Torches are obviously not designed as weapons, but more than one terrified peasant has used one as such when confronted with sudden danger in the night. Mechanically, a torch is essentially a jo staff with fire on one end. Most samurai utilize paper lanterns whenever they need light, and thus never employ torches as weapons; however, the Crab often use torches for light when they are guarding the border with the Shadowlands, being unwilling to rely on fragile paper lanterns in such dangerous circumstances.

## Masters of Peasant Weapons

Most of the people who are forced to fight with peasant weapons are not truly trained in them. These are usually weapons of opportunity, often used only once or twice and then discarded. However, there are a few rare exceptions, a few places in the Empire where a samurai may specifically train in the use of peasant tools as weapons.

Obviously, though, the most frequent users of these weapons are the peasants themselves, and in some regions they use them quite often. If a province is harried by bandits, dangerous wild animals, or Shadowlands monsters, the local peasants may actually become quite proficient in using their tools as weapons – especially if the local samurai lord looks the other way. In point

of fact, some villages have created their own regular training exercises, almost like basic kata for their favored weapons.

Such villages are rare, of course, since samurai tend to get uneasy when the peasants become this organized. More commonly, the samurai will assign a few trusted *doshin* to guard villages in dangerous areas.

## THE CRAB CLAN

One of the (many) things that scandalizes the other clans about the Crab Clan is their dedication to making certain their peasants can defend themselves. Because the border with the Shadowlands is not





a single impermeable line, even after the construction of the Kaiu Wall, Shadowlands creatures do sometimes make it into the lands of the Crab and menace the peasants. The clan maintains an extremely effective system for relaying news of such attacks to the nearest garrison, but until Crab samurai can arrive the peasants must defend themselves.

There are a few Crab sensei who specifically train their students in how to fight with the tools most peasants have at hand. Some outsiders claim these sensei also train the peasants themselves, although this may be only a rumor spread by those who find Crab policy distasteful. Regardless, the peasants in Crab lands train regularly with their weapons and take their studies very seriously indeed.



## THE MANTIS CLAN

The Mantis have taken the simple act of fighting with peasant weapons and elevated it to a true martial art. They have developed kata and training regimes especially suited to the unique weapons they chose to adopt as their own. Much like the tribesmen who lived in the lands of the Empire before the Kami fell, they created a tradition of martial excellence from scratch. Nowhere else in the Empire is the study of peasant weapons (especially the kama) treated with the respect accorded it by the Mantis, and surely none are more skilled in it than they.

Most Mantis sensei (and all Yoritomo sensei) teach at least rudimentary skills with one or more peasant weapons, especially the kama. The Mantis are taught that though these weapons were once tools crafted to bring life to the Empire, now they are a samurai's tools, bringing death to the Empire's enemies.

## THE SCORPION CLAN

Although the Scorpion Clan as a whole looks on peasant weapons with disdain, some of the Shosuro train in the use of these weapons to help with infiltration missions and to ensure they can always be armed, no matter where they might be.

## RONIN

Many ronin in the Empire have no swords to mark them as such. After all, if a ronin parent has several children, only one child can inherit the family daisho, and a wave-man probably cannot afford to purchase more swords for his other children. Also, it is not uncommon for a ronin to lose his blades, or to be left without them because old and ill-cared-for steel finally shatters. Thus, many ronin take up the study of peasant weapons by necessity, training with weapons they can easily afford and easily replace.

### PEASANT WEAPONS AND PEASANT REBELLIONS

There are times when the lives of the peasants become so intolerable that they feel they have no choice but to rise in revolt, no matter how hopeless such a revolt may seem. Indeed, they often do so with the full knowledge that their revolt will fail. (See the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Emerald Empire*, page 241, for a more detailed discussion of peasant revolts.)

When a revolt occurs, the weapons of the peasants may sometimes become more than they usually are. Blacksmiths may tip pitchforks with steel, or strengthen tonfa with iron bands. The peasants may drill together with kumade, learning to stop a cavalry charge with their rakes. Most farmers will start carrying kama or parangu with them at all times. If a rebellion lasts for a long time (such as the so-called People's Legion that formed during the Great Famine), actual fighting styles may start to emerge as the handfuls of veterans truly learn how to use their weapons effectively. With enough time these styles could even develop into Paths or Schools like those of the samurai. Indeed, this started to happen with the People's Legion, although it did not last long enough to develop more than one Technique.

Some GMs may wish to explore a world in which a large part of the Empire remains in rebellion for many years. This could give rise to armies of highly trained peasants, wielding weapons which would now stand alongside yari and katana for effectiveness and lethality.





# Mizu-Do: The Martial Art of Water

*"The strength of our enemy belongs to the universe, and therefore to us." – Kakita Merao*

Rokugan is a land rich with martial arts traditions. Most, if not all, are derived from the techniques developed by Togashi Kaze under the reign of the third Hantei. Many Rokugani have forgotten the peaceful goals and principles Kaze held in life, his abstinence from violence and his goal of preserving peace, in their pursuit of deadlier and more effective fighting arts. However, Mizu-do – the martial art of Water – not only recalls those principles, it embraces them fully. Mizu-do is a martial art of peace, a form of jujutsu that paradoxically seeks to protect not only the practitioner but also the opponent.

## THE ORIGINS OF MIZU-DO

*"The softest thing in the world overcomes the hardest; a thing without substance enters where there is no room. The stiff and unbending is the disciple of death. The gentle and yielding is the disciple of life." – Kakita Merao*

The martial art of Water has humble origins, origins by which it is often unfairly judged. Early in the Empire's history, it became a preferred taste of the courtly elite to enjoy theatrical performances featuring depictions of fights and duels. At first these scenes of conflict were highly stylized and avoided any sort of on-stage violence, but over time tastes changed and there was a demand for a more "realistic" depiction of such things. Eventually, it became necessary for actors to be familiar with rudimentary fighting techniques so they could depict them on stage.

In order to keep such action scenes vibrant and lively, performers in the Kakita family developed specific motions and dances that could be choreographed to imitate actual

fighting. They developed ways to topple and throw one another without harming any of the participants. In this way a fight could be more realistically depicted without any risk of serious injury. Such actions relied as much on the defender as on the attacker, since each participant had to anticipate the movements of the other. Exaggerated moves appeared to connect and topple opponents, and dramatic scenes of violence unfolded in a beautiful and almost otherworldly fashion. The foundations of these performances were specific sets of kata, practiced just like any true martial art, demanding precision, strength, balance, and excellent timing. The daily regimen of Kakita actors and performers came to include the practice of these "fighting" moves and forms, as well as learning how to sustain blows and falls without harm. But these forms, as sophisticated as they became, were not yet Mizu-do.

Generations after these foundations were laid, an actor named Kakita Merao came into prominence within the Empire's courtly circles. Merao became an actor after an early career as a bushi; he sustained an injury during a minor border skirmish, and from that day forward found it difficult to grasp a sword. Knowing he would never again be able to serve as a true warrior, his dueling technique forever undermined, Merao instead began to focus on his other talents and became an actor. His familiarity with combat allowed him to portray it more convincingly on stage, and he soon became known for his lead roles in plays that glorified famous battles and duels.

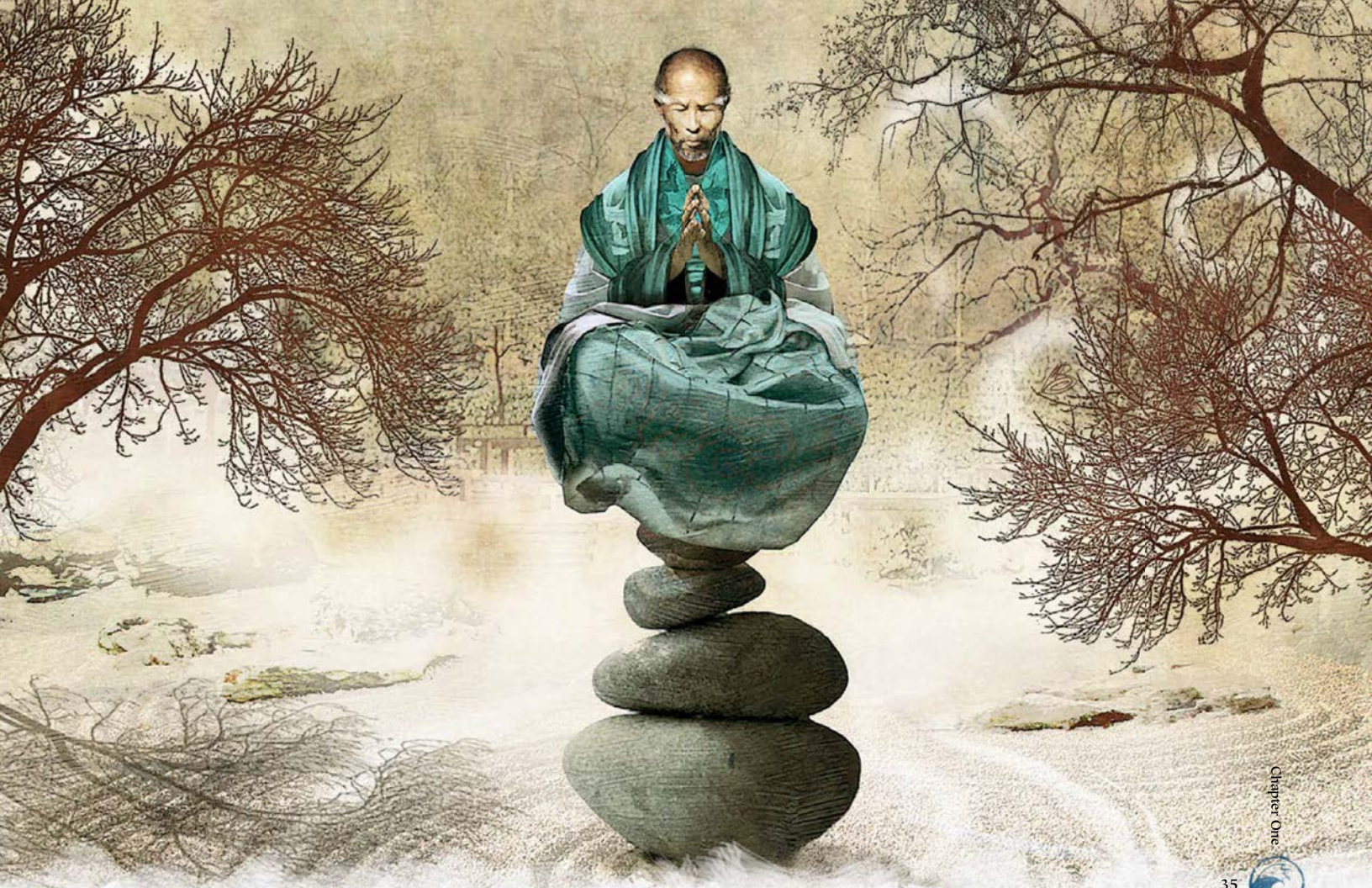
It was also during this time that Merao began to intensively study the Tao, and as a result he came to appreciate his own peaceful lifestyle over his former warrior's life. When he was twenty-six, he undertook a spiritual journey to a sacred waterfall and had a self-described "spiritual awakening" that made him realize every creature's right to life. In his memoirs he later wrote:

*"Before I arrived at the waterfall, I was beset by two bandits. I had no choice but to fight them with my bare hands. As my instincts took over, I became aware of a unity between the kata I'd practiced as a swordsman and the movements I practiced as an actor. This awakening guided me to victory. But I did not kill my attackers. I saw they were merely desperate and hungry men, and I was overwhelmed by compassion. I left them by the road and moved on.*

*"As I sat beneath the waterfall, I meditated on what had happened. I held two armed men's lives in hands that bore no weapon; never had I felt more powerful. And yet I also felt a great peace, and there was no desire to pursue violence in my heart. I realized then that the source of martial power was not the contempt for life, but the appreciation of it. In my years as a swordsman I had been mistaken in the purpose of the warrior. To kill or destroy, to injure, to cause suffering; this is the worst thing a human being can do. The true way of the warrior is to prevent slaughter. A sword is most desired when it is sheathed."*







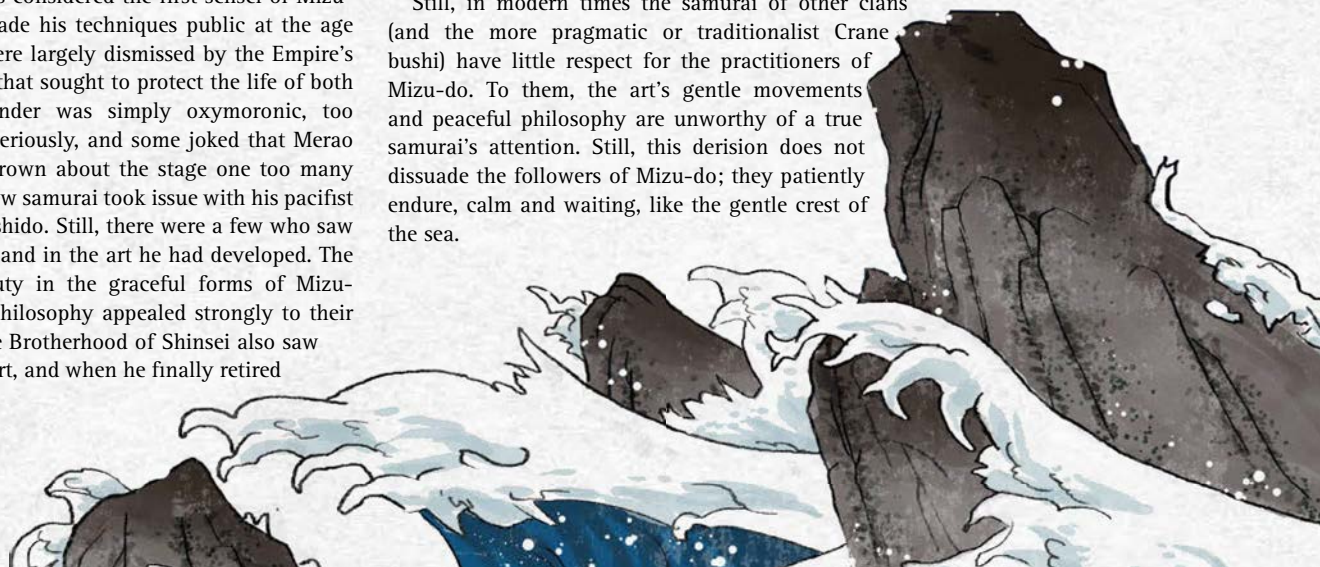
Merao returned to his acting troupe a changed man. His fame had made him the troupe's leader, and he began to formalize the kata the actors practiced to depict their fights. With the aid of dedicated disciples, Merao came to realize an actor's momentum could be harnessed to aid in his throws. From this came a further series of epiphanies as Merao saw the potential application of his techniques towards self-defense. He spent the remainder of his life refining these techniques into a school of martial arts, one that required no weapons and no strength training, a means of subduing attackers without robbing them of their right to live. What was once a mere stage art used to present false fights without injury became a fully-realized form of self-defense. Merao called his art "Mizu-do," the Way of Water.

Although Merao is considered the first sensei of Mizu-do, when he first made his techniques public at the age of forty-five they were largely dismissed by the Empire's bushi. A martial art that sought to protect the life of both aggressor and defender was simply oxymoronic, too absurd to be taken seriously, and some joked that Merao himself had been thrown about the stage one too many times. More than a few samurai took issue with his pacifist claims regarding Bushido. Still, there were a few who saw value in his outlook and in the art he had developed. The Asahina found beauty in the graceful forms of Mizu-do, and the style's philosophy appealed strongly to their pacifistic nature. The Brotherhood of Shinsei also saw wisdom in Merao's art, and when he finally retired

in the year 456 they welcomed him into their ranks, eager to glean his insights. Before his death Merao garnered a dedicated following of students who would further refine his techniques, building upon what he had discovered.

All of this notwithstanding, most of the Empire considered Mizu-do little more than a joke for many years after it was created. It was not until a Mizu-do student won a significant jiu-jutsu tournament over an opponent twice his size that the art form began to be taken seriously. Among those who noticed the validity of the art were the magistrates of the Doji family, who were seeking ways to subdue suspects without causing undue harm. With time, Mizu-do was grudgingly acknowledged as a true martial art by the samurai of the Empire, and many Crane bushi began to study it.

Still, in modern times the samurai of other clans (and the more pragmatic or traditionalist Crane bushi) have little respect for the practitioners of Mizu-do. To them, the art's gentle movements and peaceful philosophy are unworthy of a true samurai's attention. Still, this derision does not dissuade the followers of Mizu-do; they patiently endure, calm and waiting, like the gentle crest of the sea.





## Mizu-Do Practices

*"When I must strike someone, I strike them with the largest weapon I can find: the ground." – Kakita Merao*

Mizu-do is an art quite unlike other martial arts. It is derived both from the dances of Kabuki actors and the movements and strikes of kenjutsu. It teaches graceful, flowing movements and a calm, peaceful mind. It emphasizes flexibility over strength, mobility over size, stamina over endurance. It teaches how to minimize the damage of a blow as well as how to avoid it; to pull when pushed and to push when pulled. It can be performed while either standing or sitting, while at attention or when taken completely by surprise. The so-called "dance" of the Mizu-do master is likened to the crashing of a wave; it is sudden and unstoppable, leaving its victims helplessly thrown, but then immediately withdraws and is peaceful again.

Because the art derives so many of its movements and forms from kenjutsu maneuvers, the basics are fairly easy for the average bushi to understand. However, Mizu-do does not incorporate the use of weapons into its regimen. The martial artist uses only his hands to strike his enemies, and even then the goal is not to punch or chop but to divert, grab, and throw. Neither does the art use kicks; the legs are used for sweeping and tripping, for rolling and turning an enemy's momentum against him. The goal is not to kill or even to seriously injure; it is to stop a fight immediately without causing lasting harm to anyone.

To this end, Mizu-do instead focuses on holds and throws. The Mizu-do artist catches his opponents in joint-locks that immobilize him, sometimes even holding him there for hours. By applying joint holds, even the smallest

magistrate can restrain and arrest someone twice his size. A joint-lock uses the attacker's strength against him; the more he struggles, the more force he uses, the more painful the joint-lock becomes. This strategy is also supported by the art's emphasis on throwing. Throws in Mizu-do are accomplished not by brute strength but by using the opponent's momentum to fling him off-balance. Trips, pulls, and rolls are used to throw attackers who are much bigger and stronger than the defender. A true master of Mizu-do can use even the slightest momentum to hurl an opponent to the ground, then immediately follow-up with a disabling joint-lock. Struggling against certain Mizu-do joint-locks can actually cause serious injury, but this is the consequence of trying to break free and not the malice of the Mizu-do master.

Another distinguishing feature of Mizu-do is the ability to fight multiple opponents. A master of Mizu-do can defeat several enemies with only one throw, maximizing his own movements while minimizing the success of his attackers. Water does not care how many may enter its embrace – it engulfs and subdues them all.

At its heart Mizu-do is about control. Control over one's own body and center of gravity, control over an opponent's momentum and strength... and control over one's mind and primal emotions. Even when avoiding a strike or throwing an enemy, the Mizu-do student is always serene.

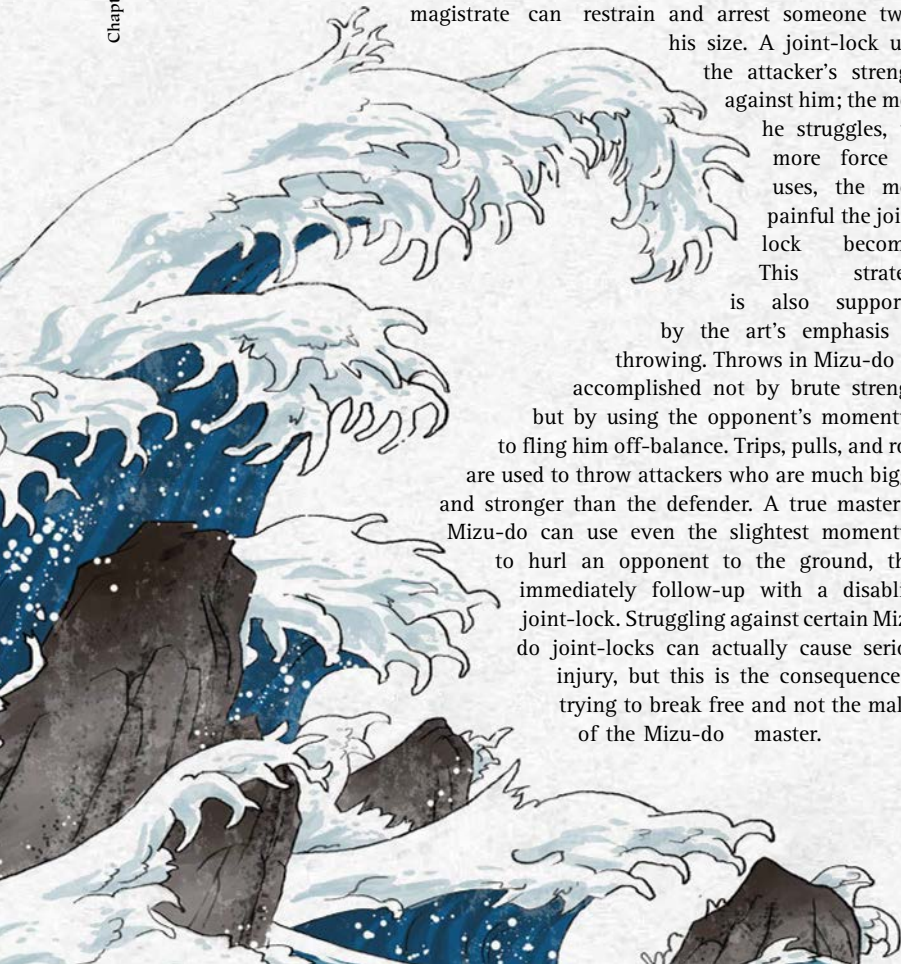
## MIZU-DO TRAINING

The training regimen for Mizu-do is basically similar to that of other jujutsu schools, yet different in a number of subtle ways. The student begins with strict fitness training, but there is little emphasis on increasing strength itself. Instead, students are taught exercises that improve flexibility and are conditioned to relax when struck or thrown instead of resisting the strike. Muscle groups are not isolated and trained as they are in Kobo or *sumai*; instead, the entire body is trained as one single entity, improving coordination, centering, controlled breathing, and precision. Thus students do not bulk up or grow overly muscular, becoming instead slim and flexible.

The actual training of Mizu-do kata heavily mirrors that of traditional kenjutsu. It lays emphasis on pre-arranged forms and movements, which are repeated many times to engrain them in the student's mind and muscle-memory. Because Mizu-do teaches one to defend against an attack (as opposed to actually initiating attacks), every kata operates from the assumption that the practitioner is being assailed. In the dojo, students are paired and made to practice the techniques of throws and holds on each other. One student will adopt the role of the attacker while the other attempts to utilize the technique, and then they switch.

Because of this, the very first thing students are taught is how to land when thrown. They are taught to roll when thrown and to receive strikes safely. This is considered just as important as learning the defensive techniques, and indeed is somewhat unique to Mizu-do. Most other martial arts assume one does not want to be struck at all, and therefore do not teach how to sustain a blow, but in Mizu-do it is considered good practice to learn how to remain calm and flexible in the wake of a successful enemy strike. Advanced students begin their kata from disadvantaged positions, learning how to "reverse their fortunes" to regain balance and recover the advantage when taken off-guard.

Of Rokugan's jujutsu traditions, Mizu-do teaches the fewest forms: there are only sixteen basic techniques to the art. However, the applications for these sixteen techniques number in the thousands. A single technique can be implemented over a hundred different ways, differentiated by circumstances, where the technique is applied, the positions of the fighters, and many other conditions. Students are therefore taught to focus only on the basics, the one path that leads to all other paths.





## MIZU-DO COMPETITIONS

In the view of most bushi, Mizu-do is better suited to competition and sport than to actual combat. Like *sumai*, it thrives when practiced under structured rules and guidelines. While Mizu-do teaches not to seek violence or glory in combat, participation in good-natured tournaments – where the only goal is personal improvement and martial awakening – does not directly contradict those teachings. Even so, such competitions are rare due to the art's relatively low number of practitioners and the esoteric nature of its practitioners. Mizu-do competitions rise somewhat in popularity during the late eleventh century, becoming a common feature of Imperial and Crane Winter Courts. This continues until the Clan Wars era, when the horrors of that conflict lead to a sharp drop in the more pacifistic martial arts.

For the most part, Mizu-do competitions mirror the structure of *sumai* tournaments: competitors enter a ring and face one another. They begin their match in close quarters, with their right arms extended and wrists in contact, while the left arm remains behind the back. The goal of the match is to throw or topple the opponent; however, neither participant may willingly move from his place. As a result, the competition becomes a matter of "feeling out the opponent," anticipating the proper moment to grab and initiate a throw. Reversals are common, as a pulled opponent quickly converts this momentum into his own push, throwing the other off-balance and then capitalizing. At high-level competition these matches often boil down to two opponents staring at one-another, unmoving and inches apart, until suddenly one man is on the floor, the other barely appearing to have moved at all.

There are no trophies or awards in Mizu-do competitions. To accept one would be to glorify combat, which goes against the art's teachings. Instead, the winner usually has his name added to an ancient scroll containing the names of all previous champions of the tournament. These scrolls are displayed in prominent areas of the sponsoring dojo, and to have one's name listed beside those of accomplished previous masters is considered a great honor.

## MIZU-DO TRADITIONS

*"My apologies. It must feel shameful to have lost to a mere courtier."*

– *Kakita Kae*

Mizu-do is criticized by most bushi in the Empire for being an impractical martial art due to its emphasis on non-harm. It is considered too "soft" for any real use in battle. The prevailing martial philosophy in the Empire promotes aggressiveness, not hesitance. In war death is inevitable, and to avoid killing puts those under the samurai's protection at great risk. The reality of war has no room for lofty impractical ideals, and to shirk from one's duty is always shameful. To allow an enemy to live is irresponsible and dishonorable, shaming both you and your opponent.

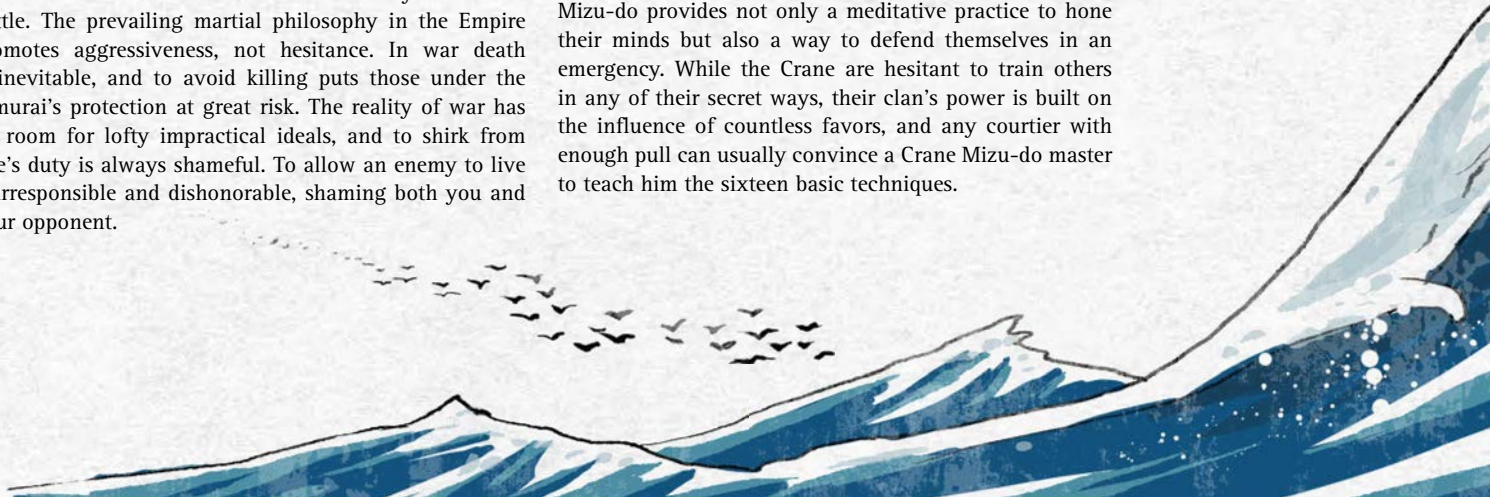
Even so, there are some in the Empire who see value in the art of Mizu-do. There are times when a samurai's duty requires him to subdue but not kill, and an art that allows this can be quite useful. Monks, and sometimes even samurai, take vows of pacifism but must still find ways to defend themselves against those honorless dogs who might harm them. Still others must operate in places where weapons are not allowed, and the ability to hurl an attacker and then claim innocence in the face of threatened repercussion has significant value.

All Kakita-trained actors know a few Mizu-do kata in order to reproduce fighting scenes on stage, making exaggerated movements to hurl one another around while rolling with and accepting each attack without sustaining injury. Some actors also engage in Mizu-do kata before oratory performances to help themselves relax and compose their thoughts.

One of the first organizations to incorporate Mizu-do techniques was the Doji Magistrates. In the course of their duties, magistrates must arrest suspects, subdue drunken brawlers, and sometimes crack a few heads to make a point. They must also be prepared to fight off ambushes or unexpected attacks, even while seated or lying in bed. Moreover, their duties often lead them indoors or into heavily-populated places, so even if they are not surprised by an attack, drawing a katana is not always an option. To deal with these problems, Doji Magistrates learn specific Mizu-do techniques as part of their school training. While they only learn the most practical aspects of the art (represented by the Rank Two Technique of the Doji Magistrate school, found on page 170 of the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Emerald Empire*), some of them come to appreciate the art for its own sake and pursue it further in their spare time.

Perhaps those who hold Mizu-do in the highest esteem are those who have already vowed to avoid violence. The Asahina especially are committed to their pacifistic ways, and it is not unheard-of for a Crane shugenja to practice the art – both as a way of better understanding the kami of Water and as a form of meditation. The Brotherhood of Shinsei's members practice many different esoteric forms of martial arts, including Mizu-do – it is not in their nature to reject a proven martial art even if samurai do not care for it.

It might surprise the average samurai to discover that Mizu-do is commonly practiced by many courtiers, including some from other clans. Because of their duties, courtiers are rarely armed or even trained in weapons. Mizu-do provides not only a meditative practice to hone their minds but also a way to defend themselves in an emergency. While the Crane are hesitant to train others in any of their secret ways, their clan's power is built on the influence of countless favors, and any courtier with enough pull can usually convince a Crane Mizu-do master to teach him the sixteen basic techniques.





## Waves of War: A Brief History of Rokugani Naval Combat

Rokugani ships have shown very little innovation for much of the Empire's history. There are a number of reasons for this, including the simple fact that Rokugan is mostly landlocked, but probably the largest factor was the events of the Battle of White Stag and its aftermath. Prior to that era, there was some development of ship designs, although the relative infrequency of naval warfare limited this – war, after all, being the great parent of innovation. During the first third of the Empire's history there were no major naval battles at all; the only purpose of ships in this early warfare was to transport samurai down rivers and along the coastline. Warships tended to be large, flat vessels whose sole purpose was to transport lots of troops, and any naval action which did take place centered on trying to capture the opponent's vessels through boarding actions.

All this changed after the Battle of White Stag and its naval counterpart, the Battle of the Raging Seas. For the first time the Rokugani saw the full capabilities of a battle-ready navy, and found it alien and frightening, deeply impacting their attitudes toward naval warfare. The battle was considered barbaric and disgusting, an affront against those of the *kuge* forced to engage in it. The Mantis, whose fleet had done the largest share of the fighting against the gaijin fleet, were seen as correspondingly barbaric and repellent. As far as the Great Clan samurai were concerned, the Mantis were engaged in commoners' work, making them little better than *heimin* themselves.

In the wake of White Stag, the Empire recoiled from the outside world. Travel to lands beyond the Empire was restricted, the borders of the Empire were closed to outsiders, and all contact with gaijin was forbidden. Moreover, the Emperor declared shipbuilding to be a "perfected art" with no need for any further innovation – and especially no need to emulate the bizarre gaijin ships. This association of seafaring and naval battle with barbaric practices remained in place for centuries afterward, and caused the Mantis to suffer significantly in reputation. Indeed, this prejudice would not truly begin to decline until Emperor Toturi I named the Mantis a Great Clan after the conclusion of the Clan Wars.

Due to the Imperial proclamation, ship design stagnated in the centuries after White Stag, and the predominant design remained the rather unwieldy vessel known as the *kobune*. Sea battles took place close to the coast or on the Empire's rivers and lakes. Deep-sea travel and fishing were the sole domain of the Mantis and the rest of the Empire ignored such things. All of this kept Rokugani naval strategy as simple and undeveloped as their seafaring technology.

The Mantis, of course, were the exception. They covertly adopted a number of specific design improvements from the gaijin ships they encountered, creating more seaworthy vessels while keeping the outward appearance of their ships largely unchanged. This contributed to the formidable reputation of their fleets in naval combat, and the rest of the Empire generally avoided conflict with the Mantis at sea, but the true nature of Mantis innovations remained hidden from Rokugan. Even the Mantis civil war during the Four Winds era, fought mostly at sea and considered the first major naval conflict in the Empire's history, was an internal struggle all but invisible to the rest of the Empire.

### Rokugani Naval Strategy

Due to the historical circumstances following the Battle of White Stag, Rokugani naval strategy remains in its infancy even in the twelfth century. The Rokugani mindset towards naval battles is quite different than that of Western seafaring nations. For centuries, Rokugani generals see naval battles as conflicts between the crews of the ships rather than between the ships themselves. After all, ships are merely floating fortresses, and a battle is fought by soldiers, not fortifications. This perspective significantly influences naval tactics throughout Rokugan's history. When a rare battle





on the water does take place, the purpose of the ships is seen as carrying troops into melee, an attitude unchanged from the Empire's earliest centuries. Thus, the primary naval tactic is to approach enemy vessels, shower them with arrows, and then board them for a decisive melee battle. Naval battles basically become a clumsy, waterborne version of land warfare, with the capturing of enemy "territory" being accomplished through the defeat of a ship's crew and the commandeering of their vessel.

Only the Mantis see things differently. The clan's rulers – the family descended from Kaimetsu-Uo that eventually earns the name of Gusai – early on came to see their ships not as fortresses but as the seagoing equivalent of large steeds for their soldiers. Just as bushi trained their steeds for combat, so too could a ship be coaxed to participate in fighting a battle. This approach was unorthodox and poorly understood by outsiders, even when they came to blows with the Mantis at sea. Few generals could comprehend that the Mantis were utilizing the full potential of their ships to battle their enemies, instead of simply charging forward with the intent to board. This was the single most important reason why the Mantis dominated combat at sea for so many centuries in spite of their limited numbers and resources. It was not until the reign of Toturi I that the Mantis' naval tactics were even somewhat deemed 'legitimate' in the eyes of the Empire, and decades more before the other clans would finally begin to grasp the concepts the Mantis had embraced centuries before.

## ROKUGANI WARSHIPS

There are no actual Rokugani "battleships" in the Western sense of the word. Much of the technology required to make battle-worthy naval vessels is wholly forbidden by Imperial Edict (such as fore-and-aft rigs for better maneuverability, ships built on keels to allow greater resilience, and of course cannon). The general samurai mindset toward naval warfare also impeded the development of true warships.

Even so, there is at least the concept of such vessels within the Empire. A ship is considered a "warship" if it is able to carry at least a squadron of troops in addition to the normal crew, or if it mounts its own weapons capable of launching attacks (e.g. siege weapons). If ships are merely seaborne castles in the eyes of the typical Rokugani general, then the warship is the equivalent of a shiro, a castle built for defense. Such warships are typically normal kobune that have been modified to accommodate archers and protect troops on the deck. However, with the exception of the notorious Crab iron-plated "turtle ships," Rokugani warships do not mount rams and do not employ ramming tactics – the design and construction of kobune makes it impossible for them to survive such violent collisions.

The Rokugani do not assign separate names or classifications to warships, and naval generals regard each of their boats case-by-case to determine their battle worthiness. Thus, both a kobune and a sengokobune might be considered a warship depending on their outfit, modifications, and crew.

## NAVAL TECHNOLOGY AND WARFARE IN THE IWEKO DYNASTY

During the Destroyer War in the reign of Empress Iweko I, the Mantis undertook an expedition to the Ivory Kingdoms. There they found a forgotten colony, established by earlier Mantis explorers during the Four Winds era. Among other discoveries, they learned the colonists had constructed a new class of ship. The Mantis named these new vessels the atakebune.

The atakebune actually incorporated a keel into their design, allowing them to be several times larger than even the most well-designed Mantis vessels then in use. This was the most significant seafaring discovery in the history of the Empire, and it was entirely in the hands of the Mantis. It was the discovery and subsequent development of the atakebune that allowed the Mantis Clan to establish regular and fairly safe naval commerce between the Colonies and the Empire. However, because of the tremendous resources required for their construction, the numbers of atakebune have increased only very slowly since their discovery.

The first true large-scale naval conflict between multiple clans also took place during the reign of Iweko I, specifically in the year 1198. An escalated trade dispute between the Mantis and Crane led to all-out warfare in the waters of the Colonies. While the Mantis had come to blows with other clans in earlier eras, none had ever dared to face them at sea due to their clear advantages there. In this conflict, however, the Crane directly challenged Mantis naval superiority and made major strides in seafaring technology, coming very close to replicating the Mantis' atakebune designs with ships like the *Doji's Virtue*. Crane generals – mainly Daidoji – also studied Mantis naval strategies and by exploiting this knowledge actually managed to defeat the Mantis in several key naval battles, something wholly unheard-of prior to this time.

However, even with these impressive victories the Crane ultimately failed to overcome the Mantis Clan's overall naval superiority, mainly because their crews and captains lacked the expertise of the Mantis' sailors. The conflict eventually ended in an uneasy peace, with clans suffering massive casualties and losing the greater share of their respective navies. The dispute seemed unresolved, and both clans threw themselves into rebuilding their fleets and preparing for a potential follow-up conflict. The conflict's implications for the rest of the Empire – especially the establishment of real change in naval design for clans outside of the Mantis – remains to be seen.





## Piracy

Pirate bands known as *wako* are a long-standing problem in the Empire. Due to Rokugan's lack of a single unified navy, combined with the general disinterest in seafaring, it is very difficult to stop pirate bands from raiding the coast. There is no naval aspect to Imperial authorities like the Emerald Magistrates, so the open sea is culturally associated with lawlessness – an attitude which is not helped by the occasional Mantis indulgences in piracy. Most Rokugani believe each Great Clan is responsible for protecting its own shipments. If a shipment goes missing due to piracy, the Great Clans are often hesitant to admit it lest they lose face for their failure. They simply apologize for the delay and send another (better-guarded) ship.

Most *wako* are ronin bands with seafaring experience and a ship or two. They are no different from bandits, living in isolated coves and ambushing unsuspecting merchant vessels. Sometimes groups of very poor *heimin* driven by desperation will also engage in piracy, but this is rare.

Pirate vessels are usually either stolen or built piecemeal from wrecks. Very few *wako* ships are built from scratch by the *wako* themselves, since building a ship requires both tremendous resources and considerable skill. However, there have been exceptions, famous pirates with mysterious patrons who piloted ships made specifically for piracy. For a *wako* band to commandeer a clan's ship is of course a great shame to the clan, and many samurai captains will set fire to their ships and perish in the flames rather than allow their vessels to fall into the hands of pirates.

Piracy became far riskier during and after the Toturi dynasty. As a part of its new Charter as a Great Clan, the Mantis Clan is tasked with keeping the seas safe and orderly. (This has a certain irony since in prior centuries it was often the Mantis who made those same seas so dangerous for others.) After this proclamation the Mantis largely embrace this duty, and the Third Storm hunts down *wako* wherever they might be hiding.

## Notable Rokugani Navies

Due to the landlocked nature of much of the Empire's territory, relatively few clans can boast of possessing navies. Moreover, those who do possess navies usually do not actually commission purpose-built warships but simply outfit their trade vessels for war as the need arises. Most or all clans have access to rivers and build ships for trade and travel up and down these passages, but these vessels are usually not counted as an official "fleet." Even so, there are a few notable naval forces in the harbors of the Great and Minor Clans.

## THE CRAB CLAN

The military navy of the Crab Clan is usually the second-largest in the Empire, inferior only to that of the Mantis. In fact, for most of the Empire's history the Crab are considered to have the greatest fleet; after all, as a Minor Clan, the Mantis cannot possibly be considered to be superior to the Crab. Although this attitude caused more than one Mantis captain to bristle with outrage, in the history of the Empire the Crab and Mantis navies have never actually come to blows. (Of course, in the twelfth century there is no longer any question as to which is the larger navy, but even in the shadow of the Mantis, the Crab fleet is still quite fearsome.)

The Crab developed a navy out of necessity. The threats in the Sea of Shadows require constant vigilance, and just as the duty of the Crab army is to protect the Empire from the Shadowlands horde, the Crab fleet stands ready to defend the Empire's shores from the sea-going forces of Jigoku. The Crab naval forces are shaped almost entirely by this duty, deploying unorthodox vessels like the *koutetsukan* "turtle ships" to fight seaborne Shadowlands horrors. The Crab fleet is located almost entirely in Earthquake Fish Bay, with a few *sengokobune* patrolling outside the bay to watch for intruders by sea.

The Crab navy has only been set against human opponents a handful of times in Rokugan's history, and never against a major opponent like the Mantis. They have clashes with the Crane a few times, but not on a large scale.

## THE CRANE CLAN

As the clan with the most coastline territory by far (indeed far more than the Mantis), the Crane boast a rather impressive fleet of vessels. Indeed, it was considered the Empire's largest in Rokugan's early history, and later was regarded as second only to the Crab. Few clans could afford the great expense of maintaining a working navy, but the deep Crane coffers made such things easily possible, and for a long time they boasted the grandest vessels and the safest coastal borders.

However, this strength is not quite what it appears. Almost two-thirds of the Crane fleet is actually comprised of trade and merchant vessels. Many others are simply "pleasure ships" meant for entertaining guests rather than for waging war. Indeed, for most of history very few Crane ships could actually be called warships. Those which could be considered war vessels generally fell into the *sengokobune* category (albeit without lateen sails) and were often purchased from the Mantis Clan rather than built in Crane shipyards. None of this was a problem for the clan, since the Crane never faced a full-scale naval war for the Empire's first eleven centuries, and the occasional pirates or raiders could be either paid off or dealt with by hiring the Mantis to hunt them down. Since the Crane fleet is focused primarily on trade, it should be no surprise that it is managed by the Daidoji family. Through much of the Empire's history, the Daidoji focus their military naval efforts into riverside boats and barges, utilizing the Empire's waterways to help protect the clan from invaders.



It is not until the Crane–Mantis war in the twelfth century (see earlier sidebar) that they begin to actually concentrate on building up the clan’s military presence at sea.

## THE MANTIS CLAN

The greatest naval force in the Empire, a status wholly undisputed once they attain Great Clan status, the Mantis are the benchmark by which all other fleets are measured. Where the rest of the Empire considers naval tactics to be supplementary at best, the Mantis fully embrace them and build a fleet unmatched in both numbers and capability, the most feared fleet in Rokugan. Even when they are a Minor Clan, none can match their prowess at sea.

This superiority is due to many factors. For one, while the rest of the clans have traditional standing armies with military ranks, the Mantis Clan’s military is organized entirely on a naval system. They have crews in place of squadrons and captains in place of commanders. Thus, even though the Mantis are much smaller than the other Great Clans, because the entire clan is part of their naval forces they can easily field the largest navy of any clan.

The Mantis navy is divided into large units called “Storms.” Before the twelfth century, the Mantis boast three Storms; a fourth is constructed during the secret conflict between the Mantis and the Ivory Kingdoms in the Four Winds era. Each Storm consists of at least twelve Fleets of 30 ships each. Typically, a single Mantis Fleet will consist of 26 kobune, one sengokobune to serve as the flagship, and at least three barges outfitted for war. Scattered within these numbers will be various unconventional ships of special design, usually labeled simply as sengokobune by outsiders.

After the Clan Wars, the Mantis begin copying the Crab’s koutetsukan designs, although they protect them with treated wood planks instead of iron plates. These “wooden turtles” are sometimes deployed as a Storm’s command ship, although the discovery of the atakebune in the later twelfth century largely displaces them in that role.

The four Storms serve a number of different functions. The First Storm, traditionally commanded by the Mantis Clan Champion, is the oldest naval force in the Empire. It is the most defensive of the Storms, tasked with the protection of the Islands of Silk and Spice. The Second Storm is tasked with patrolling the seas between the mainland and the islands of the Mantis. The Third Storm is the most proactive of the Storms, tasked with fulfilling the Mantis Clan Charter and upholding their duty to the Empire. Generally, this means they maintain order on the seas, seeking out pirate groups and “mediating” sea conflicts... though in some eras, it means they act as pirates themselves. The Fourth Storm, once it is created, is tasked with protecting Mantis interests in the Colonies.

The Mantis are actually loath to go to war with their naval forces unless it is necessary. This does not mean they shrink away from battle, nor that they are above hiring their forces out as mercenaries. Few indeed would dare

call the Mantis “pacifist.” Rather, it is simply because they are profiteers from the trade of war; actually conducting a full-fledged war is bad for business, as the network of alliances cuts away their potential business partners and their coffers are emptied to maintain the military effort. As such, the Mantis prefer to wage full-scale war only when it is unavoidable. Of course, when this does become the case, the Mantis set all other things aside and commit fully to the effort.

The Mantis have only mobilized their full fleets four times in the Empire’s history. The first was during the era of White Stag, when the Mantis fleet fought the gaijin in the Battle of the Raging Sea. The second was during the Clan War, under the champion Yoritomo. (Before the time of the legendary Son of Storms, the Mantis had never actually waged full-scale war on another clan, much less taken a proactive role in the conflicts of the land-bound Empire.) The third time was the so-called War of Fire and Thunder, when the Phoenix slighted the honor of the Mantis before the Empire. The fourth and most recent is the Crane–Mantis war at the end of the twelfth century. The Mantis have never actually lost a war where their naval power was applied, a statement no other clan can make... although the margin of victory against the gaijin and the Crane was narrow in each case.

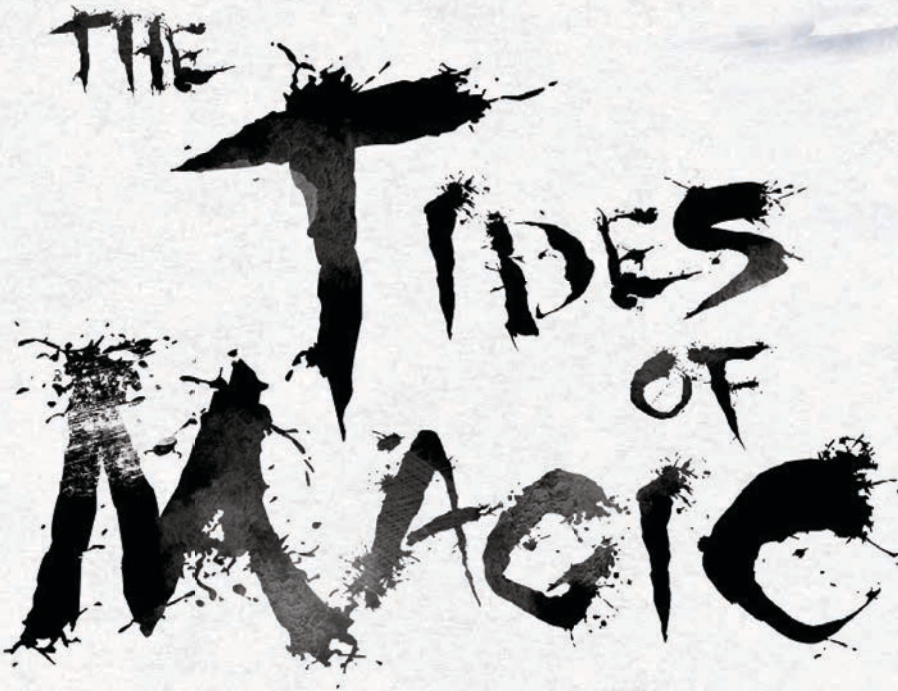
In truth, the real power of the Mantis fleet does not lie with its ships, despite their great numbers. In fact, with the exception of the twelfth-century atakebune, Mantis vessels are not all that much more powerful than other clans’ ships. They are known for being better quality, but the differences in their design are mostly subtle and hidden. Rather, the true power of the Mantis fleet lies in their samurai; their insight and expertise in sailing and the ways of naval combat, which allow them to coax more from their vessels than other clans could possibly hope for. It is the samurai of the Mantis that have made the Four Storms the most feared naval power in the Emerald Empire.











# THE TIDES OF MAGIC

Kitsune Gennosuke paced across the room, his patience long since exhausted. Outside, the rumbling of thunder echoed loudly, and Gennosuke could have sworn he felt the floor tremble, so close was the impact. The only other person present in the room, a shugenja-ko named Moshi Tsujiko, was perfectly calm and apparently in deep meditation, only further aggravating him.

"How long have we been waiting?" Gennosuke finally demanded, breaking the silence. It was more than slightly rude to interrupt another's meditation, but if he did not speak soon he felt he would go mad. "I mean, what are we even here for in the first place?"

Tsujiko opened her eyes, though her expression and posture remained the same. She was slightly younger than Gennosuke, fifteen at the oldest, although she wore a wakizashi to mark her as an adult. "To learn the ways of Water," she answered.

"I can cast Water spells," Gennosuke snapped, realizing he probably sounded more arrogant than he intended. "Can't you?"

"Yes, I can," Tsujiko answered peacefully. "I passed my gempukku with the highest praise from my sensei."

"Of course, so did I," Gennosuke answered hurriedly. The coming-of-age ceremony had been the proudest moment of his life, but now it seemed as though it had happened a long time ago. On this small island so far from home, part of Gennosuke was starting to feel like a child again. "Why were we sent here, instead of being rewarded for our skills with a prestigious position? Do they think we need further training?"

"Perhaps this is a test of some sort?" Tsujiko offered, her eyes now finally on her pacing companion.

Just then, the room's double door slid open. Wind and rain engulfed the room, soaking the polished floor in seconds, filling the air with a mist of water droplets. Standing at the threshold was a third shugenja, older by far than the two youngsters. Although his face was partly obscured by a cowl, Gennosuke saw him smile, an expression he found more worrying than reassuring.

"My name is Yoritomo Tasei. Follow me." The older man turned and left as abruptly as he had entered, leaving the door wide open. Exchanging a brief look of concern, Gennosuke and Tsujiko followed him. Gennosuke's first step landed on slippery rocks where he had expected a path, and he would have fallen had not Tsujiko caught him by the arm. The storm had darkened the skies, and the battering rain obscured vision, but Gennosuke quickly realized they had come to the edge of the island, with only a few yards of craggy shore separating them from the crashing waves. It was by far the worst storm Gennosuke had ever seen.

"Congratulations," Tasei said. He stood a few paces away from them, perfectly still despite the wind, rain, waves, and uneven ground. "You've been recommended by your sensei to attend further training at Tempest Island. Here you will learn what it truly means to be a shugenja of the Mantis. Your first lesson begins now – you will stand outside with me, until this tempest has passed."







Gennosuke blinked, incredulous. It was hard to even stand still for more than an instant, and his clothes were already drenched. He wanted to scream in protest, but Tsujiko spoke before he could open his mouth.

“Yoritomo-sensei,” she said, her soft voice almost lost in the storm. “May I ask which prayer we will be learning today to help us withstand this storm?”

Tasei laughed, a sound not that different from the thunder echoing overhead as lightning split the sky once more. “None,” he boomed. “In fact, you are forbidden to cast any spells until the lesson is complete! After all, in truth you know nothing of Water. How can you pretend to know about the Elements without first truly experiencing them?”

Tsujiko nodded, her face perhaps a little pale as she adjusted her long robes to try to avoid tripping on them. As a wave larger than the others crashed into the cliff below them, spraying them with salty water, Gennosuke realized his new sensei was right. He knew nothing of Water.

Most shugenja across the Empire are at least somewhat familiar with Water spells, even if they are trained in a school which holds Water in low regard. Water magic has a special place in the minds of most Rokugani, for Water is the element the most commonly associated with healing, one of the most beneficent roles for shugenja in the Empire. However, Water is also the Element of movement (including the maneuvers of the battlefield) and of divination; while these aspects of Water are far less well-known among the common folk, they are often far more interesting to the shugenja who study them. Thus, while there are only a couple of shugenja schools who rank Water first in their studies, there are a wide range of shugenja orders which make at least some study of this versatile Element.

## Water as the Element of Healing

Water is associated with both purification (physical and spiritual) and with nurturing growth, making it the Element most conducive to healing magic. In fact, the practice is so common that many Rokugani see shugenja as healers as much as priests. Indeed, a Water shugenja's power to preserve life incites great wonder in the eyes of commoners and samurai alike. Given the value of restoring an injured bushi to health, it should be no surprise that most shugenja make at least some study of magical healing, but some families and groups have focused on this magical knowledge for centuries, resulting in greater mastery of the healing arts.

## The Isawa Family

*“Why must there always be war? Why can man not turn away from conflict and embrace our place in the universe? So long as war exists, the Phoenix must stand ready.”* – Isawa Tanaka

The source of the Isawa family's power is a common topic of debate in Rokugan's mystical circles. Whether it is the ancestral guidance of the founder of the family, the troves of knowledge they have acquired since the dawn of the Empire, the access to the otherworldly woods of the Isawa Mori, or careful management of their bloodline to foster the birth of powerful shugenja, none can say for sure. What cannot be denied is that the Isawa show their power equally across all Elements. While a particular school from another clan might be gifted in the Element of Water and specialize in a particular aspect of it, all shugenja of the Isawa family are familiar with it, and those who favor it above the other Elements display a raw power dwarfing the efforts of other schools.

In the Isawa family it is normal for all children to be tested for magical proficiency as early as birth, and sometimes the Element they favor is already apparent. Regardless, it is easy to spot children who will do well in Water magic. They tend to be quiet and contemplative, with great attention for detail and keen adaptive faculties. Those who tend to be labeled as “dreamers” often have a natural faculty with Water magic, for their minds are open to the silent call of the Water kami. Such behaviors tend to become more marked in later life, as constant contact with the Water kami and exposure to more powerful spirits reinforce these natural tendencies. Only rarely in the history of the Phoenix has a Master of Water led the Elemental Council, for it is their nature to observe rather than to be proactive. However, once they are truly provoked their fury is potent and inexorable, like the unstoppable progress of a tsunami or a flood.

Although the Isawa are proficient in all aspects of Water magic, healing holds a special role in their eyes. As strong proponents of pacifism, they see the ability to use magic for healing rather than violence as a gift of the Heavens, one which should not be wasted. While all Isawa shugenja study the mundane arts of medicine during their formative years, those with an affinity for the Element of Water often go further, learning as much as they can about the functioning of the human body in order to supplement their magical healing powers. This combination of scholarly and mystical knowledge makes an Isawa Water shugenja worth a dozen more mundane healers, and they are heavily sought after in times of plague, catastrophe, or conflict. This represents a significant political favor for the Phoenix to offer, since their pacifistic attitudes otherwise give them little leverage in time of war. Furthermore, this allows them to spread their philosophy of pacifism outside their borders. And of course the act of healing in itself is a way of practicing pacifism, saving lives rather than causing additional pain. It is rare for an Isawa to refuse anybody the chance to be healed; even dire enemies are



frequently offered assistance once a conflict is over. When healing is not possible anymore – a rare occurrence, given the expertise of the Phoenix – the Isawa shugenja make sure the departure is as dignified and painless as possible, and offer prayers for a swift passage into the afterlife and reincarnation. Possessed of an adamant confidence in the Celestial Order, the Isawa are often unflappable in the face of death, making them a comforting presence in the last moments. Even the most grizzled warriors can falter in the face of their own imminent death, and can draw strength from a peaceful and serene Phoenix priest.

As befits the clan with the largest number of shugenja in the Empire, the Phoenix have many sub-orders within their shugenja schools. Indeed, it sometimes feels to outsiders as if every single Phoenix shugenja is a specialist in some particular field. It is safe to assume that every possible aspect of Water magic has been studied by at least one Isawa, often with a small group of fellow shugenja to assist.

The most famous of these groups are the Tensai, the prodigious adepts of single Elements, from whose ranks the Elemental Masters are most often chosen. The Tensai of Water are trained near Kyuden Isawa, next to a peaceful lake just past the edge of the Isawa Mori forest. The quietness of the place is essential to achieve communion with the ever-silent spirits of Water, and over the generations the lake has gradually acquired a magical nature, so much so that it is not uncommon for the Ryu of Water to stop there when they visit the mortal world.

For those rare Phoenix shugenja inclined to represent their clan on the battlefield, the unit of the Elemental Guard known as the Tsunami Legion presents the opportunity to use Water magic not only for healing the troops but also to transport them across large distances and at great speeds. The speed of the unit is legendary, and it is commonly the first to be deployed when the Phoenix need to strike quickly or must operate far from their strongholds.

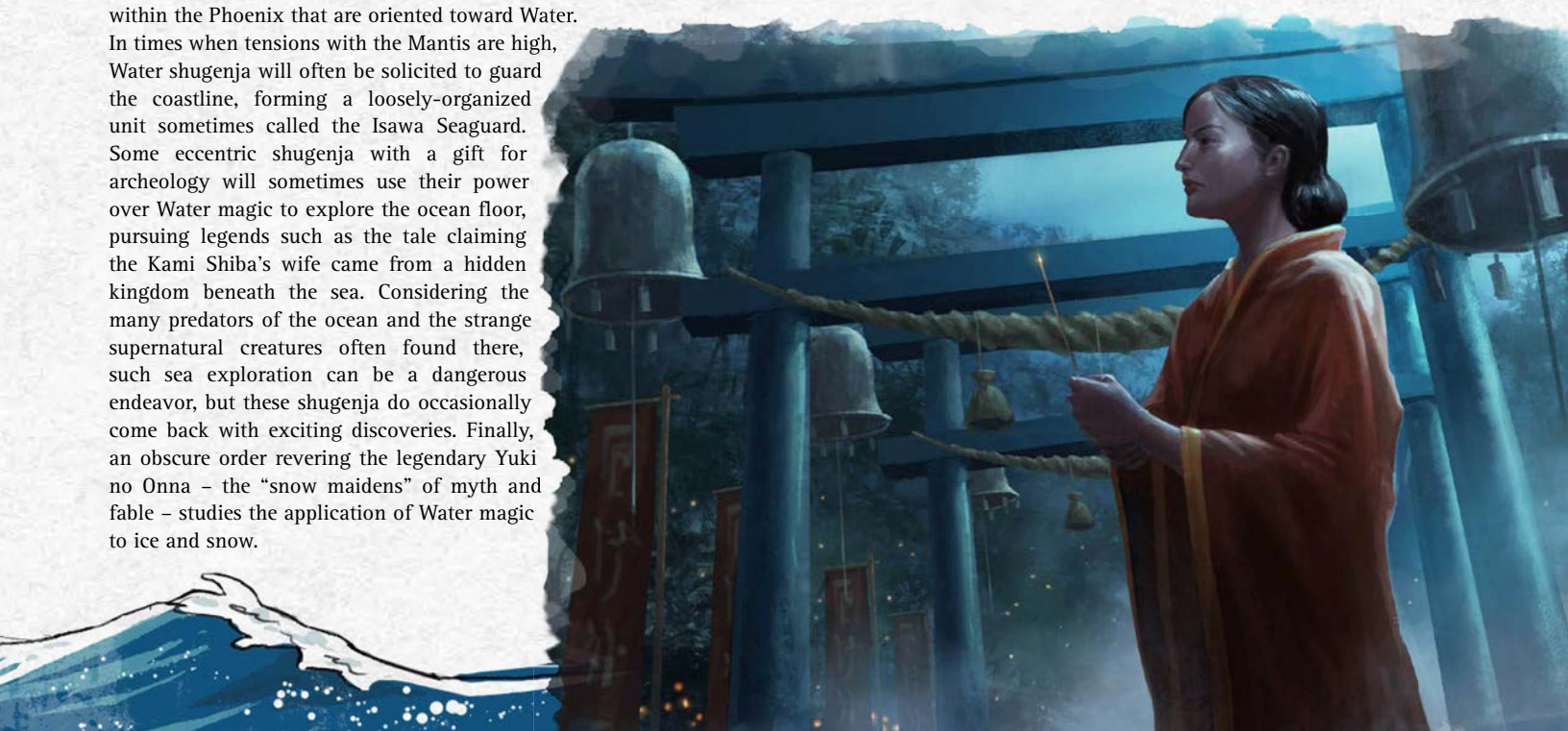
There are also many smaller groups and individuals within the Phoenix that are oriented toward Water. In times when tensions with the Mantis are high, Water shugenja will often be solicited to guard the coastline, forming a loosely-organized unit sometimes called the Isawa Seaguard. Some eccentric shugenja with a gift for archeology will sometimes use their power over Water magic to explore the ocean floor, pursuing legends such as the tale claiming the Kami Shiba's wife came from a hidden kingdom beneath the sea. Considering the many predators of the ocean and the strange supernatural creatures often found there, such sea exploration can be a dangerous endeavor, but these shugenja do occasionally come back with exciting discoveries. Finally, an obscure order revering the legendary Yuki no Onna – the “snow maidens” of myth and fable – studies the application of Water magic to ice and snow.

## THE ACOLYTES OF SNOW

With the possible exception of the Agasha and Tamori families, Rokugani shugenja understand the Elements by way of religion rather than anything which might be recognized as “science.” However, all Rokugani do agree that snow and ice are just different forms of the Element of Water. Only a few spells are known to make use of that aspect of Water, although some shugenja have experimented with the effects of cold to alleviate pain. Most shugenja are able to summon snow with a little effort by praying to the Water kami, but this is seen as little more than a pleasant curiosity.

One particular spirit creature is often associated with ice, cold, and snow: the legendary Yuki no Onna, or “snow maidens.” (See the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Imperial Histories 2*, page 270, for game-mechanic details on snow maidens.) Their origin is uncertain and many theories exist to explain their singular nature. Some believe they are a particular kind of returned ghost, the spirits of young women who died in the snow, while others believe they possess no human qualities beyond their appearance and are actually creatures from another Spirit Realm. Scholars have speculated as to their possible realm of origin, with theories ranging from Sakkaku (due to their capricious nature) to Tengoku (given their awe-inspiring magical powers), or even a possibly unknown realm of ice and snow. Regardless, their existence seems tied to the very nature of cold, a unique magical connection. Snow strengthens the creatures and they are able to summon it and to kill with an icy touch, while fire will quickly destroy them.

The singular nature of the snow maidens attracted the attention of Isawa Shojiro, a shugenja in the early years of the third century. He grew up fascinated by the stories of the Yuki no Onna and – despite having never actually met one himself – sought to emulate their powers. While the innate powers of the snow maidens often seem more akin to Air, Shojiro's talent was in Water magic, so he chose







to focus on summoning and controlling ice and snow in place of the normal liquid aspect of Water. His studies eventually enabled him to develop greater flexibility within the known possibilities of Water magic, so the Isawa school allowed him to continue his experiments despite their odd nature. In turn, he shared his knowledge with a small group of students, and the Acolytes of Snow were born.

Those who continue Shojiro's studies in the ways of ice and snow magic usually fall into one of two types: either curious Water shugenja who want to explore the colder aspects of the Element, or romantics who have grown enamored of the legends surrounding the snow maidens and thus wish to somehow emulate or contact them. Regardless, both groups continue working on developing ice magic. Although recruited primarily from the ranks of the Isawa Shugenja school, the Acolytes of Snow have been known to admit a few students of other traditions over the years. The Iuchi family, for example, has expressed curiosity in their practices, and the Agasha family's viewpoint that all Elements are truly one meshes well with the group's work. Quite a few students have also come from the Asahina family, whose Air magic already allows them to affect the weather to some degree, and who revere such romantic and tragic symbols as the snow maidens.

Interestingly, it is said Shojiro himself never managed to meet a Yuki no Onna during his lifetime, but other Acolytes have done so and – when they managed to return – brought back additional insight in the nature of the snow spirits' magic, helping to further develop their technique. Rumors of snow maiden activity will always attract the attention of the Acolytes, but they approach the spirits with caution, for they know the Yuki no Onna can be mercurial and cruel. (All Acolytes are familiar with ways of preventing and treating frostbite and other injuries and illnesses caused by intense cold.) An Acolyte will always make sure he is ready to face death before venturing to meet one of the Yuki no Onna, risking all for the prospect of magical insight, passionate romance, or merely alleviating the effects of cold weather. Naturally, Acolytes are extremely devout and respectful in their approach – in fact, it would not be inaccurate to say they worship the strange spirits, something which causes friction with more traditional shugenja orders.

## The Asako Family

*“Seek the ever-changing mysteries of water, and find yourself.”*

– Asako Chukage

The Asako family was founded by a priestess and healer of considerable skill who soothed the pain of the armies fighting in the First War against the armies of Fu Leng. In recognition of Lady Asako's nature, many Asako take up the study of healing both to honor her memory and to serve the Empire. The typical Asako samurai is both contemplative and inquisitive, qualities which serve them well when attempting to master Water magic. As a result, some of the greatest healers in Rokugan have come from the Asako family. During times of great plagues in Rokugan, such as the Great Famine of the seventh century or the Clan Wars and Destroyer War of the twelfth century, the Asako often are at the forefront of the efforts to find a cure, collaborating with the rest of the Empire when necessary. This knowledge of healing is part of what has made Kyuden Asako a popular courtly destination, for the crippled and the sick often travel there to seek the counsel of the great Phoenix healers. Since the Isawa prefer to retain their family's privacy, they have no issue with this tradition, and the flow of visitors to the Asako lands continues uninterrupted even in many dire and war-torn eras.

A unique aspect of the Asako healers is that they are not solely comprised of shugenja. In fact, the two internal traditions of the Asako family – the courtiers known as Loremasters and the secretive Henshin order – both have extensive knowledge in the arts of medicine. The Loremasters, while lacking any magical abilities, can call upon the accumulated knowledge of their extensive libraries, and their knowledge of exotic diseases or obscure cures can often be vital where magic may fail. The Henshin are experts in the nature of the Elements both within and without, giving them a unique insight in the nature of the human body and the flow of its energies – although they usually refrain from revealing the true nature of their powers to others. Regardless, the combined strengths of their different traditions means there are few illnesses the Asako cannot treat. Of course, this capability can sometimes come across as arrogance, and healers from other clans will only reluctantly call on the help of the Asako, knowing all too well they may be subjected to patronizing lectures on their own lack of expertise.

## The Kuni Family

*“I will keep you pure, and you will keep them safe. We are the Crab, and we shall endure the trials to come.”*

– Kuni Iyedo

The Crab are one of the clans with the greatest knowledge of healing, but unlike the Phoenix, this does not result from any lofty intentions of preserving life or fostering peace. Rather, it has grown of necessity from their role as defenders of the Empire, in a constant state of war since their inception. Even when Rokugan is officially at peace, the Crab suffer thousands of wounded soldiers every year and must treat them as efficiently as possible, since every man is needed. Moreover, Crab soldiers often





suffer wounds unlike those found elsewhere in Rokugan. While a healer in the Lion lands might see little other than cuts or broken bones, a Crab healer may encounter burns (from both fire and acid), frostbite, parasitic infestations, boiling blood, bizarre internal wounds, and many other such gruesome conditions. These sorts of wounds are sadly not uncommon for those who face the horrors of Jigoku on a regular basis.

These challenges have led the Crab to develop many unique treatments unseen in the rest of Rokugan. Many Crab warriors and scouts pick up the basics of medicine so as to be able to provide immediate aid to their brethren, but the Kuni are the true masters of healing in the clan, and it is the Kuni who treat all of the most unusual and grievous wounds. While there are not enough Kuni to see to every single bushi after every battle – far from it, in fact – their guidance and support is crucial in keeping the bodies and souls of the Crab secure. The Kuni do make some study of Water magic for this purpose, but supplement it extensively with their knowledge of anatomy, which is unmatched anywhere else in Rokugan. Of course, this knowledge is itself a source of controversy and perceived dishonor, for the Kuni family has practiced dissection for centuries, on both human and inhuman corpses. Indeed, the Kuni even have studied the treatment of non-human creatures such as the Nezumi and, in the twelfth century, the Naga. The Kuni are also in charge of maintaining their clan's spiritual purity, and since the symptoms of the Taint can often masquerade as wounds or disease, a grounding in medicine can be essential to recognizing the presence of spiritual infection.

## THE KUNI BATTLE-HEALERS

Some Kuni accompany the soldiers of the Crab into battle or even during patrols of the Shadowlands in order to provide both magical support and, when necessary, healing. Some have claimed the tradition of these so-called Kuni Battle Healers arose in imitation of the ronin Order of Isashi (which has similar practices and maintains extensive contact with the Crab), but in fact the Battle-Healers can trace their activities and methods all the way back to the second century. In contrast to other healing groups, the Battle-Healers also fight alongside the bushi of the Crab, striking with both magic and weapons against the creatures of the Shadowlands whenever they are not taking care of the wounded. The Battle-Healers also make a special focus on preventing the spread of the Taint. Even a small amount of Tainted blood or matter getting into a wound can be enough to turn stalwart Crab warriors against their kin, so the Kuni work especially hard to prevent such contamination, through both magic and medical practices.

When all else fails, a Battle-Healer will not hesitate to strike down a former comrade who has succumbed to the power of Jigoku. This unfortunate but necessary practice has made the Kuni both respected and feared in their own clan, and most Crab samurai give a wide berth to the Kuni even as they fight fiercely to defend them against outsiders. Nonetheless the Battle-Healers continue in their thankless tasks, knowing they have saved many Crab lives over the years – and even more Crab souls.

# Water as the Element of Movement

Water flows. From the smallest drop of rain to the crashing waves of the Amaterasu Umi, the Rokugani have always seen in Water a powerful aspect of movement, and the kami seem to readily agree with them. Shugenja proficient in Water magic can use the kami to speed up the movement of their allies, making them popular on the battlefield – in contrast with the more peaceful side of Water represented by healing. Indeed, some of the most martial shugenja schools in the Empire focus on the Element of Water for this very reason.

## The Iuchi Family

*"Respect their power. Fear their speed."*

– Ikoma Fujimaro

As with many other aspects of the Unicorn Clan, the Iuchi family's traditions differ from those of the rest of Rokugan, and nowhere is this more visible than when it comes to magic. When the Ki-Rin Clan departed from Rokugan in the first century, Iuchi was a talented but still inexperienced practitioner of Elemental magic, with little to guide him other than the Tao of Shinsei and some brief studies with Isawa. (The importance of Isawa's teachings is often debated, for the Unicorn refuse to give the Phoenix more credit than absolutely necessary.) Due to the clan leaving Rokugan so soon after its inception, Iuchi's studies of magic evolved independently from the rest of the Empire. His descendants carried this divergence even farther, developing unique practices which they brought back to Rokugan nearly eight centuries later.

In a clan always on the move, Water magic quickly became a favorite for Iuchi's students, helping them surmount many obstacles during their wanderings through the gaijin lands. Although the Iuchi were not particularly martial in their nature, every member of the clan had to pull his own weight if the Unicorn were to survive, and Iuchi travel magic saved countless lives over the centuries. By the time the clan returned to Rokugan, the Iuchi mastery of Water's aspect of motion and travel had become fully integrated into their military practices.

One of the first things a young Iuchi shugenja student learns is the importance of secrecy. When the Unicorn returned to Rokugan they were unprepared for the level of intrigue and politicking among the other clans. In one particularly stinging incident, a Scorpion shugenja tricked one of the Iuchi into revealing several of their secret spells in front of other samurai, spreading their knowledge to all the other clans. Since then the Unicorn have been much more reluctant to share any part of their training, techniques, or spells with others – especially the treacherous Scorpion. Beyond this, there is also the problem that many of the Iuchi practices integrate gaijin knowledge, a source







of pride to them but regarded as shameful by the rest of the Empire. Sometimes this gaijin influence is a spell the Unicorn adapted from the other magical traditions, such as the sahir of the Burning Sands. In other instances it encompasses entire new ways of casting spells, such as the notorious Meishodo amulets. Beyond these most prominent examples, it is not uncommon for the Iuchi to integrate smaller bits of gaijin magic into their own. For example, they might include words of a foreign language in their prayers to the kami, or write their incantations in a different script than the one used in Rokugan. While these practices make it harder for their secrets to be stolen, it also raises suspicion among traditional shugenja families, and groups like the Phoenix Inquisitors have frequently investigated the Iuchi – although they have never actually been condemned by such investigations. Oddly, in some ways Iuchi magic is actually more traditional than that of the Empire, since the family was not exposed to many later magical developments in Rokugan. So while their chants might include words in strange languages, equally as often they are just prayers to the Seven Fortunes in a dialect so old it is barely recognized anymore.

The Unicorn tend to be quite inquisitive, a quality which serves them well with the kami of Water. However, the Iuchi also teach their students that the ability to cast spells brings with it a responsibility towards oneself and one's peers, something the family has been all too aware of ever since a magical avalanche to destroy the monstrous rocs cut the clan off from the direct way back to Rokugan. This combination of curiosity and prudence has allowed the Iuchi to develop several unique forms of magic over the years. One of the most impressive and popular is the secret technique of the Iuchi Travelers, a group of

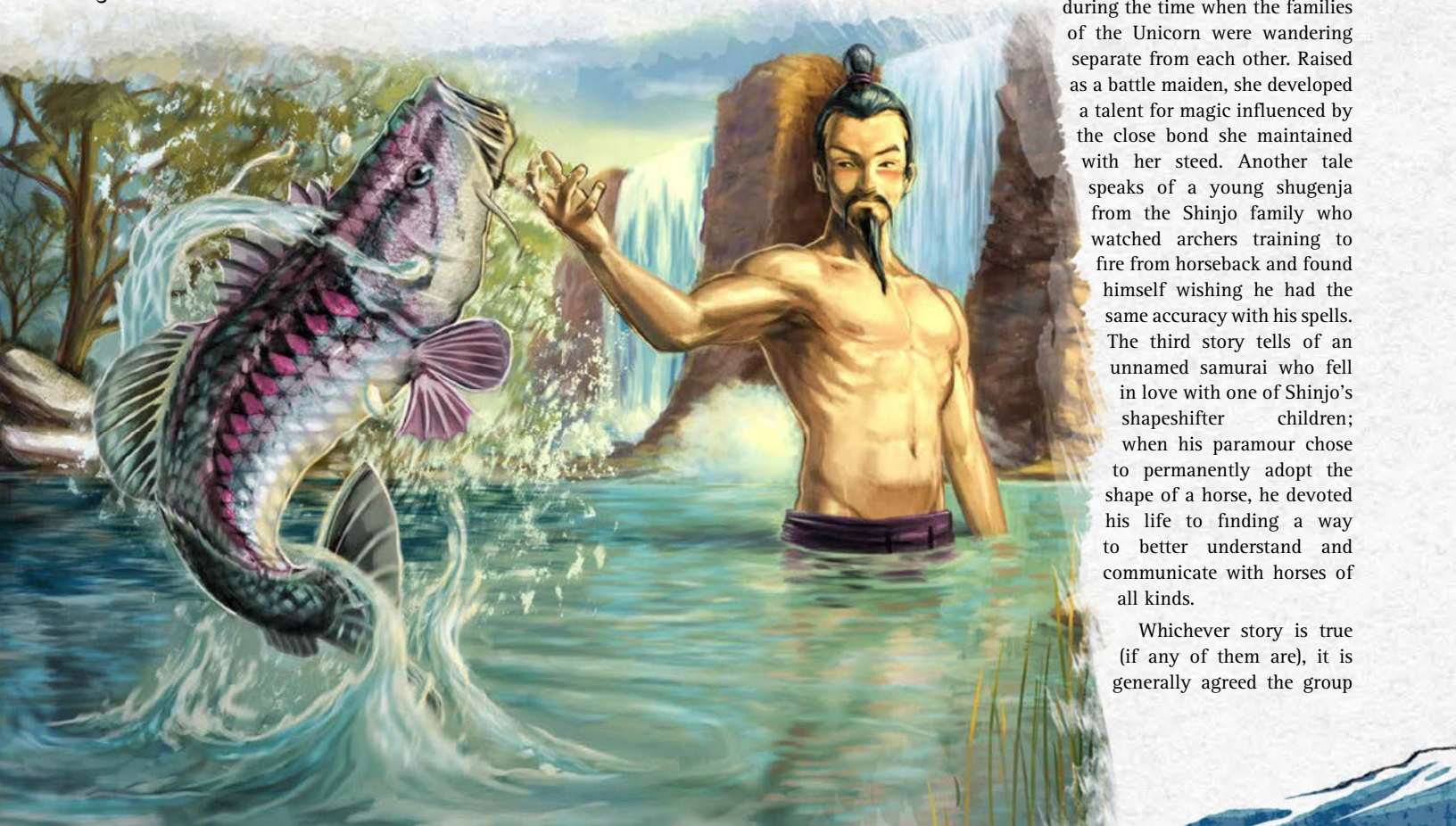
shugenja who truly embrace the nomadic traditions of their clan. Their ability to instantly transport themselves across vast distances is one of the clan's best-guarded secrets, and the origins of this technique are shrouded in mystery. Some say it results from an ancient bargain made with a gaijin creature, while others believe the Unicorn discovered access to a place akin to a spirit realm where the Elements do not exist, allowing them to slip in and out of reality. Many clans would like to know more, but the Unicorn jealously guard the Travelers' secret, and it is possible they are not themselves fully aware of the source and implications of the technique – it began as oral knowledge passed from one generation to the next, each retelling filled with legends and embellishments.

The Iuchi are accustomed to casting spells from horseback, a very unusual practice in Rokugan, and they often develop a close bond with their mounts, a bond strengthened with magic. As noted above, many Iuchi shugenja work with the armies of the Unicorn, and these spellcasters adapt their techniques to the battlefield, supporting the mobility of their fellow soldiers and sometimes learning to use weapons themselves. After the Unicorn armies are re-organized in the twelfth century, most of these battle shugenja join the Baraunghar, the smallest but fastest of the three new armies, and the Iuchi travel magic plays a key role in military campaigns during the Race for the Throne and the Destroyer War.

## THE IUCHI HORSE LORDS

There are three different stories about the origins of the group known as the Iuchi Horse Lords, passed down orally through various family lines. One story tells of a female shugenja born to the Otaku during the time when the families of the Unicorn were wandering separate from each other. Raised as a battle maiden, she developed a talent for magic influenced by the close bond she maintained with her steed. Another tale speaks of a young shugenja from the Shinjo family who watched archers training to fire from horseback and found himself wishing he had the same accuracy with his spells. The third story tells of an unnamed samurai who fell in love with one of Shinjo's shapeshifter children; when his paramour chose to permanently adopt the shape of a horse, he devoted his life to finding a way to better understand and communicate with horses of all kinds.

Whichever story is true (if any of them are), it is generally agreed the group





which would come to be known as the Iuchi Horse Lords originated during the time the Unicorn Clan spent outside the Empire, roaming across vast distances and meeting with foreign cultures. By the time the clan came back to Rokugan, the Horse Lords were well established as a small but effective order of shugenja, famous for their prowess on horseback with both spells and weapons. They did not claim the title of “horse lords” for themselves – rather, the rest of the clan dubbed them as such in admiration for their prowess. Although the order is open to any Unicorn with magical skill, it is usually dominated by Iuchi shugenja – not surprising given how they form the majority of the clan’s spell-casters.

While most Iuchi shugenja learn to ride as well as any member of the Unicorn Clan, it takes a special kind of dedication to become a Horse Lord. Shugenja wishing to join the group must display not only magical and spiritual talent but also tremendous physical condition. Furthermore, they must develop a very close bond with their own steed, not unlike that shown by the Utaku battle maidens. But while the Utaku samurai-ko must rely on empathy and instinct to know what their horse feels, the Horse Lords can communicate directly with their steeds through the spell known as Nature’s Touch, which is ubiquitous in their group.

A shugenja who shows the skill to be a Horse Lord is accepted as an apprentice by a senior member of the group, who takes him on extended trips while teaching him the group’s history and its ways of casting spells from horseback. The art of spellcasting demands tremendous focus, including precise chants which must be performed flawlessly to gain the assistance of the kami, and doing this on a galloping horse is no simple feat. The master-student pair spends a long time together with no one but their own steeds for company, and the student learns to develop the bond with his mount through extended meditation and prayers to the Fortune of Horses, Namaku. Once the master judges his pupil ready, a celebration is held on the plains, joined by any nearby Horse Lords – given how fast and far they can ride, such events are always well-attended. After that the new Horse Lord is free to serve the Unicorn as he sees fit, whether working as an itinerant priest, watching over a herd like the Utaku stable-masters, or serving in the armies of the Unicorn. The only long-term commitment required of a Horse Lord is a vow of mutual assistance, along with an oath of eternal dedication to his steed and to the ways of horseback magic. A true Horse Lord will never stop challenging himself, both spiritually and physically, pushing the limits of what he can accomplish when mounted.

On rare occasions the entire group has ridden together, usually because the whole clan is in danger. The gathered Horse Lords can be a formidable cavalry unit in a clan renowned for them. The only thing which can stop a Horse Lord is the death of his steed, for the close bond is almost impossible to recreate with a new mount. However, the Horse Lords are also quite skilled in the care and magical support of their horses, and their steeds often reach incredible ages, becoming as aged and gray as their masters but remaining hale until the end.

## THE HORSE LORDS AND THE BARAUNGHAR

In the twelfth century when control of the Unicorn Clan passes from the Shinjo to the Moto family, the new leader Moto Gaheris reorganizes the clan armies and abandons the traditional model previously held. One of the three new armies is the Baraunghar, a small but extremely mobile force assisted by a large number of Iuchi shugenja. Many Horse Lords join the new army, as their techniques make them extremely skilled at supporting its mobility. Much like the rest of the Iuchi shugenja, the Horse Lords have no particular enthusiasm for war, but they do not shrink from it. As a result, many outsiders come to identify the Horse Lords with the Baraunghar shugenja, and while the two groups are not actually the same, there is in fact considerable overlap between them. Those who belong to one group but not the other rarely bother correcting mistakes regarding their affiliation.



## The Kitsu Family

*“There is nothing more important than protecting our past for the sake of the future.” – Kitsu Fukui*

The Kitsu family is not a large one, even when compared to other shugenja families, and is outright dwarfed by the immense legions of soldiers who serve the Lion Clan. On occasion this has led others to dismiss it as a minor or unimportant element of the Lion Clan, but in fact the Kitsu duties are key to the spiritual health of the sons and daughters of Akodo, and have been since the dawn of the Empire. The founders of the family were the last of the actual Kitsu, lion-men who were heirs to a lost civilization which knew how to travel across the Spirit Realms. They practiced a form of magic unique to their race; however, as the last of them married into humanity and their human family slowly grew, the samurai who bore the name of Kitsu slowly adopted the ways of Rokugan’s other shugenja.

Some might be surprised at first to learn the shugenja of the aggressive and warlike Lion Clan favor the Element of Water. However, the Lion have studied strategy for centuries, and they know a master general must be like Water: flowing around his enemies, adapting to any new circumstance, quiet and inscrutable before battle, then striking with raging force when the time comes. Most Kitsu shugenja study military strategy to at least some extent, and many of them have mastered spells to assist their brethren on the battlefield. The impact is not as strong as in other clans who use magic more extensively on the battlefield, such as the Unicorn or Phoenix, but this is in part due simply to the small numbers of the Kitsu and the vast size of the Lion armies. Still, soldiers of the Lion know that fighting alongside the Kitsu is a







It is not uncommon for a Kitsu to refer the Unicorn as the Ki-Rin Clan, for example. This is now out of ignorance but rather because the Kitsu refuse to dishonor their ancestors by changing their words, and thus continue using the same terms while silently acknowledging the changes. This also applies to spellcasting practices, where Kitsu scrolls will often use words and characters that have fallen out of use with the rest of the Empire long since, or refer to spells by an original name which has been abandoned elsewhere. For example, while the common Air spell *By the Light of the Moon* changes its name twice in the twelfth century in response to changes in the Celestial realm, the Kitsu still call it by its original name – *By the Light of Lord Moon* – even during the reign of Hitomi as the Moon. The Kitsu do not try to impose their views on these

matters, but remain adamant in their customs in order to nurture the links they maintain to their forefathers.

On the battlefield Kitsu shugenja often provide guidance to their fellow Lion, both before and after combat, steeling their resolve and clearing their minds of doubt by reminding them of those who have come before and of the rewards which await honorable souls in Yomi. They frequently perform rites of purification and healing after large scale confrontations, and Water magic is especially useful for such functions. Even more importantly, they conduct the funerary rites of all Lion samurai, lengthy and solemn affairs involving recitation of the deeds and ancestors of the deceased.

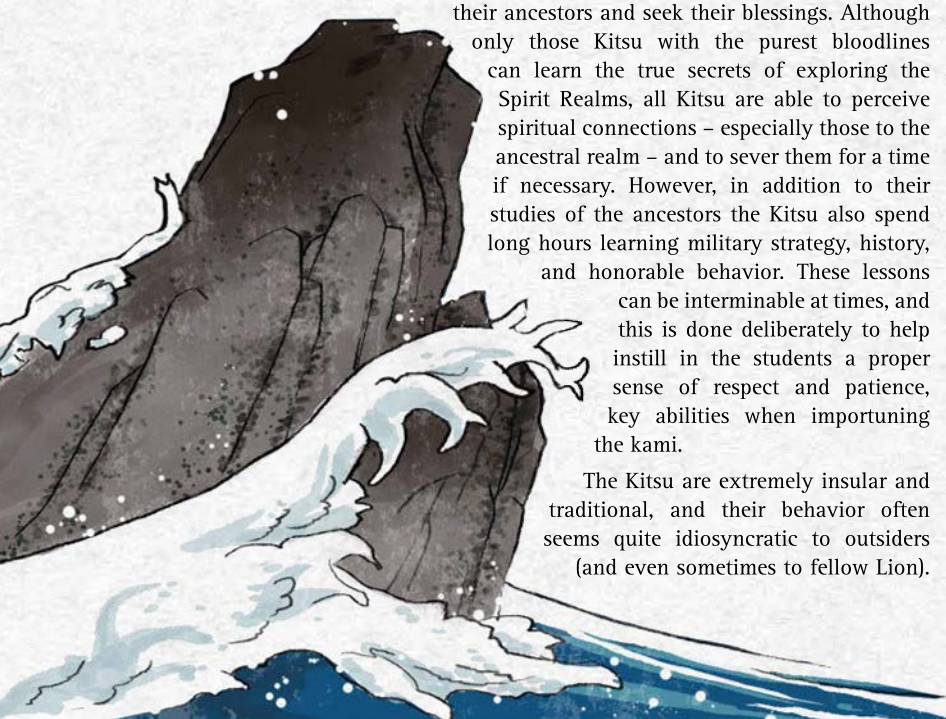
The most celebrated order of the Kitsu family is the small group known as the *sodan-senzo*, the true heirs of the Kitsu bloodline who can call on their heritage to walk across the Spirit Realms. Being a *sodan-senzo* is a matter of both talent and of birth; while only those from the strongest bloodlines have the potential to become one, they must also have a solid grasp of Water magic, extensive knowledge of the Spirit Realms, and prodigious self-control. The daimyo of the Kitsu is usually a *sodan-senzo*, and the group tends to control all the higher posts in the family. Due to their frequent contact with the ancestors, the *sodan-senzo* are the epitome of Lion tradition and often come across like refugees from an earlier era, speaking in archaic dialects and ignoring modern political developments. A few Kitsu – notably those hailing from the tiny Ise vassal family – also use their spiritual connections to protect the populace from ghosts and creatures from the Spirit Realms, in a manner not dissimilar from the Toritaka Exorcists (who they have been known to collaborate with).

In the late twelfth century, some Kitsu develop the ability to summon their ancestors into physical form to fight by their side on the battlefield. This is extremely rare and the shugenja with this talent, known as the Spirit

guarantee of receiving the blessings of the ancestors, and this confidence makes them even more dangerous foes, driven to greater acts of heroism whenever the gaze of a Kitsu shugenja rests upon them. Contrary to what some might think, Lion officers never dismiss the importance of a unit of shugenja on the battlefield, and often have a Kitsu shugenja on their personal staff to provide the guidance of the ancestors and to advise on how magic may affect the battlefield. Together, all these factors give the Kitsu family a tremendous amount of influence relative to their modest numbers and relative obscurity within the greater Empire.

At the core of every Kitsu shugenja's training is reverence for the ancestors of the Lion Clan. Far more than the Fortunes (let alone the Tao, which the Lion Clan largely ignores), the Kitsu praise the spirits of samurai past, learning the proper rituals and prayers to revere their ancestors and seek their blessings. Although only those Kitsu with the purest bloodlines can learn the true secrets of exploring the Spirit Realms, all Kitsu are able to perceive spiritual connections – especially those to the ancestral realm – and to sever them for a time if necessary. However, in addition to their studies of the ancestors the Kitsu also spend long hours learning military strategy, history, and honorable behavior. These lessons can be interminable at times, and this is done deliberately to help instill in the students a proper sense of respect and patience, key abilities when importuning the kami.

The Kitsu are extremely insular and traditional, and their behavior often seems quite idiosyncratic to outsiders (and even sometimes to fellow Lion).





Legion, are viewed as an oddity – although their gifts allow them to have a strong impact on the battlefield and make them quite popular among the Lion soldiers.

Although the Kitsu are not a militant family overall, their connection to the Lion Clan's traditions of war and conflict cannot be denied. Some within their ranks have always preferred to take matters of war into their own hands rather than leaving everything to the soldiers. The group known as Bishamon's Chosen pursues advanced strategy training and learns how to use magical abilities to strengthen both one's own sword-arm and the skills of fighting comrades; many of the Battle spells used by the Kitsu were created by this group. Their martial training tends to produce very physically strong shugenja, which further helps them to master the ways of Water magic. Bishamon's Chosen are also notable among the Lion for being closely associated with a Fortune rather than focusing mainly on ancestral worship, and they incorporate many devotions to the Fortune of Strength in their practices, including rites borrowed from the Brotherhood of Shinsei.

## THE DISCIPLES OF THE RIVER

When the Kitsu family reached its fourth generation, it became apparent that many of them would not be able to become sodan-senzo in the manner of the family's founders. Kitsu Sonosuke was such a man: the great-grandson of one of the five founders of his family, he was a model student and honorable to a fault, yet his blood had become too thin to call upon the special abilities of the Kitsu, barring any hope of him ever becoming a sodan-senzo. Considered a failure (and a dire portent for the future of the family), Sonosuke was shunned, left to tend to a minor temple to the local spirits near the Drowned Merchant River. While others might have given up and resigned themselves to a life of obscurity, Sonosuke performed his unimportant duties honorably, carefully tending to his shrine and conducting religious ceremonies for the small local population. With little hope of further developing his ancestral magic, Sonosuke chose instead to keep training in Elemental spell casting, communing at length with the spirits of the nearby river, learning to harness their strength and to attain physical and spiritual purity through them. He was soon beloved by the local peasantry for his diligent labors, but remained all but unknown to other Kitsu samurai; even the area where he lived was rarely if ever visited by the rest of the family.

It was only when a force of ronin attempted to cross the river into Lion territory that Sonosuke came to notice. Enraged by the incursion, he summoned the waters of the river to rise and crush the trespassers, leaving none alive. By chance a samurai of the Akodo family witnessed the event, and he praised the merits of this exceptional shugenja to the Kitsu daimyo, who was surprised to learn it was Sonosuke who had so successfully defended their borders. Had the Akodo not been present, Sonosuke would probably have lived out his life in obscurity. Instead, he was praised for his service and commanded to teach his methods to others in the younger generation of Kitsu shugenja who had little talent for the Spirit Realms but aptitude in Water magic.

Sonosuke eventually passed on to Yomi, but his students maintained his legacy and came to be known as the Disciples of the River. The name was derived from the words of Sonosuke himself, who always insisted he had no power and had merely borrowed the power of the kami of the Drowned Merchant River. The Disciples recruit those in the Kitsu family who are talented shugenja but lack the pure bloodlines to become Sodan-Senzo or the militant spirit to join Bishamon's Chosen. They maintain a small series of temples in the Kitsu provinces, most of them near the Drowned Merchant River or one of its tributaries. The Disciples are dedicated Water shugenja but lack immediate access to the sea; like their founder, they find the rivers and their resident spirits to be inspiring sources of wisdom. Rivers crisscross the Empire, bringing life wherever they go, but also inflicting death when the spirits are angry and the rivers flood. The large plains of the Lion Clan, irrigated by many minor rivers, provide plenty of opportunities for the Disciples to experiment with Water magic. While some emulate Sonosuke by tending to a single temple throughout their lives, other Disciples go on pilgrimages to travel along the entire course of a particular river or to visit reach other rivers far from their own territory. Their magic serves the Lion in numerous ways, from simple assistance in irrigating the local rice paddies to defending the clan's northern border, as well as quickly transporting troops or supplies along waterways during wartime. There is no single task the Disciples focus on above others; rather, their goal is to master Water magic as extensively as possible so the Kitsu are strong even when their ancestral abilities might be lacking. The leaders of the Kitsu family regard the Disciples as eccentric but well-meaning and honorable samurai, and have allowed them considerable leeway to continue their experiments – which, after all, have proven beneficial to the clan. The Disciples do venerate their ancestors with great devotion, true to their Kitsu heritage, and Sonosuke himself is singled out for special reverence. But their true guides are the kami of the Water and the spirits of the Empire's rivers great and small.





## The Yoritomo Family

*“My speech is crude, my bearing common, and my schooling lacking. I do not know of the glorious histories of the Empire, nor can I speak with eloquence of its culture. But the Thunder Dragon has spoken to me, and that alone makes me your peer.” – Yoritomo Gazuke*

Many are surprised to learn the Yoritomo family has shugenja within its ranks, since it is known mainly as a family of warriors and, to a lesser extent, courtiers. While outsiders sometimes claim this diversity of study dilutes the family’s strength, the Yoritomo remember all too well the days when they stood on their own and could not call on other families for assistance. They take pride in being able to fulfill all three of the main roles for samurai in the Rokugani society. Furthermore, over the centuries they have become one of the wealthiest samurai families in the Empire, giving them the resources to be able to support three such different schools.

Yoritomo shugenja first appeared in the days of the clan’s inception, as one of Kaimetsu-Uo’s daughters, a girl named Fumiko, possessed the rare gift of magic and several of her children inherited it from her. Over time, several other shugenja were recruited into the Mantis Clan or were born of Fumiko’s bloodline, and they gradually pooled their resources and talent together to support their studies. Well before the Mantis became a Great Clan, the Yoritomo Shugenja School developed a dojo and formalized training regimen. However, the school did not attain its full potential

until after the Moshi joined the Mantis Clan in the early twelfth century. The Moshi, with their much more advanced shugenja tradition, were able to greatly improve the Mantis curriculum, and the Yoritomo school became an option for men of the Moshi family who had previously been prevented from studying as shugenja (since the Moshi school admitted only women). The Yoritomo school bloomed and greatly expanded its temples and libraries; outsiders were often surprised at the size of the family’s spell scroll libraries, which include several rare or secret spells unique to the clan.

A further change in the development of the Yoritomo Shugenja School occurred when Yoritomo himself ascended to the status of Kami after the Thunder Dragon conferred her powers onto him. The price for this was the expulsion of the Thunder Dragon from Heaven, and she fell to Ningen-do. The Mantis quickly moved to protect the Dragon in the mortal realm, gaining her patronage for their magical studies, and they also gained a Kami to call upon to empower their spells. While the Yoritomo remained the smallest of the three shugenja schools in the modern Mantis Clan (smaller even than the Kitsune), their power could no longer be ignored by the rest of the Empire.

Despite these upheavals, the core of the Yoritomo Shugenja School has been the same throughout its history, from the earliest days to the end of the twelfth century. The sea is the prime topic of study for the apprentices, and all temples of the School are located in the Islands of Silk and Spice even after the Mantis acquire holdings on the mainland. The students are recruited primarily among those born on the islands, and thus have a natural understanding of the movements of water and the moody nature of the ocean which serves them well in their studies.

Yoritomo shugenja use instinct as much as knowledge when dealing with the kami, and avoid much of the ritual and





structure affected by other schools, which they see as useless frills. A large part of their training includes exposure to the raw natural Elements, most frequently by enduring the intense tropical storms found in the islands. Novice students are forbidden to cast spells so they can experience the undiluted power of the Elements and learn to respect it. Only later are they taught the prayers which will allow them to withstand and control the elements, eventually learning to master the weather as easily as another samurai draws a sword or recites a poem. Training can be quite grueling, and includes extensive physical and martial study – after all, the Yoritomo have contempt for one who cannot defend himself. This is not to say scholarly pursuits are abandoned, though – the Yoritomo shugenja study the various Fortunes of the storms and seas, such as Osano-Wo, Isora, Suitengu, Kaze-no-Kami and many others.

The Water magic of the Yoritomo is mostly based on direct manipulation of the Element itself, summoning torrents and waves to crush their enemies or protect their own ships. True to the nature of their clan, they favor intimidating displays of ostentatious power, which has led many other shugenja to dismiss them as crude and impious. Crude they may be, but the Yoritomo are hardly impious; life at sea has made Mantis samurai extremely devout and superstitious, anxious to attract the favor of the spirits and Fortunes in order to survive the many dangers of nautical travels, and Yoritomo shugenja provide spiritual guidance and protection to their fellow sailors. They also possess a special connection to Thunder, owing to the patronage of Osano-Wo (strengthened in the late twelfth century by the Thunder Dragon and Yoritomo himself). Among other things, this means they are a Water school which is also skilled in Fire magic, an extremely rare dichotomy that surprises and unsettles the more traditional schools.

Although they are a small group even in the twelfth century, the Yoritomo shugenja have still managed to produce a couple of specialized groups, possibly due to the innate Mantis drive to succeed and leave one's mark upon the Empire. Chief among these groups are the Mantis Navigators, shugenja who ride aboard the most important of Mantis ships to protect them from the weather and guide them safely to their destinations. The prowess of these shugenja is a major contributor to the safety and success of the Mantis shipping routes, and they are treated with great reverence by the crews of their ships, often being seen as second in rank only to the captain. Although the Yoritomo shugenja pioneered this technique, after the Moshi joined the Mantis Clan many members of that family also became Navigators. (In theory a Kitsune shugenja could also become a Navigator, although this seems unlikely given their natural affinity for Earth magic.)

After Yoritomo becomes a Kami and the Thunder Dragon comes to dwell in Ningen-Do, some Mantis shugenja among both the Moshi and the Yoritomo develop an unusual connection with Thunder through their devotions. They form a group called the Acolytes of Thunder, dedicated to protecting the Thunder Dragon. Emboldened by the spirit of the Dragon who is the patron of heroes, these Acolytes tend to be an aggressive and audacious bunch, ready to defend their clan with lightning and tsunamis.



## THE STORM RIDERS

*“Impressive, but crude. If only their talent had been born into a true Great Clan.” —Isawa Sachi*

While all Yoritomo shugenja wield power over the weather and the sea, some transcend the limits of their fellows to become something more. Those who are known as Storm Riders experience a peculiar surge in power, an epiphany of sorts in which their understanding of the Elements – especially of the sea and storms, and all things related to them – ascends to a new level. This is not a guaranteed process, and indeed some masters of the Yoritomo Shugenja School have studied for their entire lives without ever becoming a Storm Rider. Such a failure carries no shame within the Mantis, for they know that to be a Storm Rider is a calling that cannot be forced.

The chosen few who attain this insight no longer need to call on the storm, for they become the storm. The kami answer their prayers instinctively, and the Elemental energy coursing through their veins allows them to call on the power of Water and Thunder naturally, without the need for elaborate rituals and memorized prayers. In a clan known for its bravado and boasts, the claims made about the Storm Riders seem to paint them as almost inhuman, as forces of nature capable of monstrous feats. Whether true or not, most Mantis samurai readily believe these claims, and Storm Riders are popular topics for stories in port taverns. Given their astonishing levels of personal power, it is not surprising that the Storm Riders often travel on their own, accomplishing the will of their lords single-handedly. Indeed, the most potent of them often do away with boats altogether, trusting the power of the Elements to carry them to their destination. They are usually given great latitude but also used with discretion, since their numbers are quite small and they represent one of the greatest weapons in the clan's arsenal. Occasionally, the Storm Riders will be attached to the Mantis military forces, usually in naval engagements. This is often to make a statement to the enemy, since a single Storm Rider is usually enough to sink the largest enemy ships. They are also assigned to protect those shipments of utmost importance to guarantee they will reach their





destinations. However, even in these situations the Storm Riders generally remain independent, and only have to heed a captain's orders if they wish to do so. The flip side of this is that since the Storm Riders are highly regarded, their counsel is frequently sought on important issues, and the Mantis Clan Champion usually has at least one Storm Rider in his personal entourage.

When not otherwise occupied, the Storm Riders spend much of their time exploring the sea and visiting the many shrines and temples of the Mantis. They maintain a loose organization among themselves, based mainly on respect and personal power, and sometimes gather to share discoveries or discuss major issues regarding the sea or the Mantis Clan. Those meetings are often held in very hard to reach locations, adding to the mystique of this most secretive of orders.

Other shugenja, particularly those in the Phoenix Clan, tend to view the Storm Riders as an aberration whose power makes no sense, a chaotic mixture of Water and Fire and Air, seemingly without a specific source. The Mantis Clan has had Storm Riders for centuries, and claims their presence is yet another blessing from Osano-Wo, Fortune of Fire and Thunder and the father of their clan founder. This theory seems to be supported by the fact that in the twelfth century a number of Moshi shugenja also become Storm Riders. Indeed, training in the Yoritomo Shugenja

School does not seem

to be absolutely necessary for a shugenja to become a Storm Rider, although it is rare for a shugenja outside that school to attain the proficiency in Water magic required to even become one.

Some less flattering rumors about the Storm Riders mention a possible gaijin origin for their magic, pointing to the rumors of contact between the Mantis Clan and the Ivory Kingdoms. Those theories are usually kept private, however, since it is unwise to anger a Storm Rider.

## THE OROCHI RIDERS

*"It takes time to train the riders, but the Orochi are born ready for battle."* — Yoritomo Kaigen

The controversial group known as the Orochi Riders began in the late twelfth century when a pair of Mantis Clan samurai, Tsuruchi Ki and Moshi Minami, found themselves accidentally trapped in Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief. In order to escape from this strange world full of mischievous trickster spirits, they negotiated an alliance with the only serious creatures in the Realm: the gigantic sea serpents known as Orochi. Some Orochi had previously managed to escape into the mortal realm, and in fact the Mantis Clan was somewhat familiar with the creatures from the extreme hazards they posed to seafarers. However, the majority of the Orochi remained trapped in the Realm of Mischief, their place of origin, and they resented having to endure the realm's madness and the endless pranks from its other inhabitants. Minami and Ki offered to help the Orochi escape from Sakkaku in exchange for their assistance in the mortal world. As proof of the offer, Minami devised a spell that bound the Orochi leader, Tsurayuki, to the soul of Tsuruchi Ki; this allowed Tsurayuki to cross the boundaries of the spirit realms and manifest in Ningen-do. The Orochi were delighted with this and agreed to the alliance, helping the two samurai escape back to Rokugan. There, they immediately told their leaders about their experience; Minami and the Yoritomo shugenja together developed a more reliable form of her ritual, and soon the Mantis were able to bring several more Orochi into the mortal world. Thus were the Orochi Riders born.

At first the Orochi Riders were only deployed in a few specific instances, mostly against isolated pirates, but soon after the Mantis Clan found itself at war against the Phoenix. The Mantis leadership decided their new weapon was exactly what they needed to prevail in this conflict. Orochi Riders took a significant toll on Phoenix troops and lands, and the Empire was shocked to discover the power of the Mantis Clan's new allies. Several prominent Phoenix denounced the Orochi Riders as dangerous or even blasphemous, playing with forces they could not control. After the war ended, however, the Mantis decided





it might be best to keep the Orochi Riders out of the public eye lest they attract too much negative attention and controversy. Soon after, Tsurayuki escaped his bond to Tsuruchi Ki and unleashed a ferocious rampage against the Mantis he had previously served, sinking several of their ships. The Riders were temporarily decommissioned until such a time as they could be made safe for use again. It took several years of refining the bargains and spells involved in Minami's original ritual before the Mantis agreed that the Orochi Riders were safe to unleash once again. Unfortunately, since they had made the physical and spiritual requirements more stringent the numbers of Riders were far lower, making them impossible to deploy on a large scale.

A prospective Orochi Rider must show great strength of will, inner calm, and a strong connection to the element of Water in order to forge a reliable bond to the powerful creatures, and few students satisfy the high standards of the Riders' sensei. Interestingly, the Riders are open to both bushi and shugenja, although shugenja are generally much more successful in the role; their prior training makes them better suited to the mental and spiritual challenges they face during their training. Once a student is considered to have attained the proper skill and strength of character, he is taken into Sakkaku by at least two other experienced Riders, who help the samurai find his new Orochi ally. The bond is never forced onto the creatures, since they are intelligent beings in their own right, and on some occasions they reject the student – in which case he will never become an Orochi Rider. But if a successful match is found, the two are spiritually linked through an elaborate ritual which relies chiefly on the kami of Water. Once forged, the bond ensures that where one goes, the other can follow. The Orochi is not permanently attached to the Rider, however, and can remain in Sakkaku when not called upon. In fact, since the incident with Tsurayuki it has been made clear to the creatures that they will not be allowed to ever roam free if they hurt the Mantis, so their best hope for remaining in the mortal realm is to serve their Rider appropriately.

The Orochi Riders are a highly individualistic group, and their practices vary widely from one to another. Many are explorers or travelers of some sort, since one of the most obvious advantages of riding an Orochi is the fantastic speed at which it can travel (especially in the water). Orochi are feared by other shugenja, for they are naturally resistant to magic, which combines with their physical strength to make them exceptionally dangerous opponents. In many ways, the Orochi Riders are a symbol of freedom and power for the Mantis Clan, proof they can use any tools to protect their lands and force others to grant them the respect they demand.

It may be noted that the Orochi Riders' combination of considerable power and a similar name has sometimes led to their being confused with the much older group known as the Storm Riders (described above). While a rare few shugenja have belonged to both groups, they are otherwise wholly separate orders.

## Water as the Element of Divination

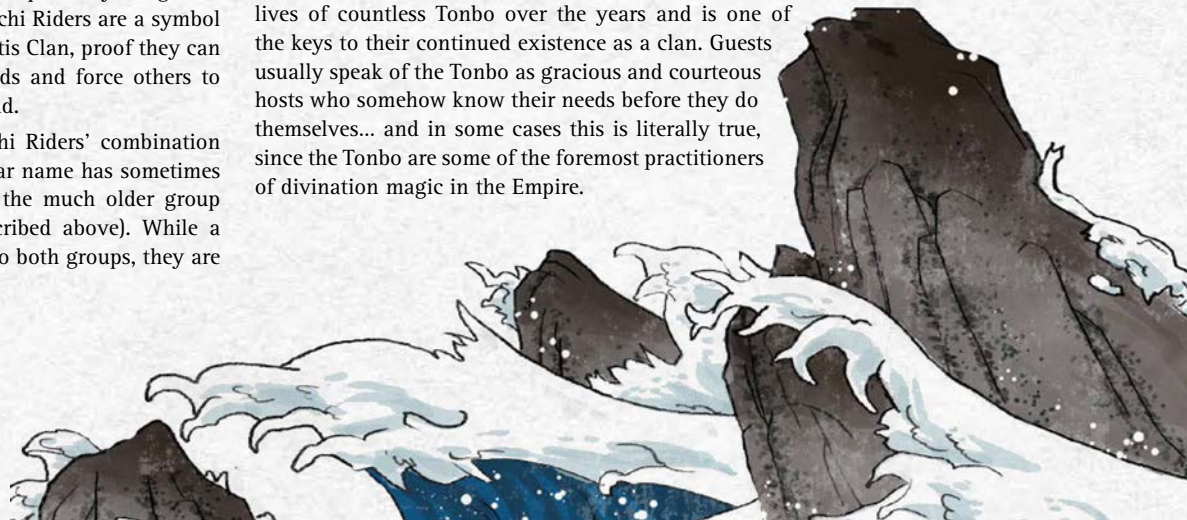
*"All the secrets of this world and beyond, if only one has the courage to look."* – Chuda Ruri

Water is the Element of perception and clarity. As such, shugenja have found it to be the key Element in developing magic to enhance the art of divination. While this use of Water is much less common than healing or movement spells, divination spells are still an important part of Water magic, and a few groups in the Empire focus on them.

## The Tonbo Family

*"I see windows into tomorrow."* —Tonbo Imuyama

The history of the Dragonfly Clan is one of alternating conflict and rebuilding, and the small Tonbo family has faced destruction more than once. Due to the unusual circumstances of its founding (described in Chapter One of the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Secrets of the Empire*), the Dragonfly have labored throughout its history under the enmity of the Lion Clan. However, the Dragonfly Clan's devotion to pacifism, its magical abilities, and the support of the Dragon Clan has allowed it to survive through the ages. Water magic became the Tonbo preference both because it was the favored Element of the clan founder and because it was philosophically sympathetic, being generally defensive and non-violent in nature. Tonbo shugenja often train in the wilderness in order to better commune with the spirits and to find their own inner peace, but they also undergo extensive lessons in etiquette, politics, and rhetoric in order to deal properly with the many guests in their lands. The Tonbo shugenja know all too well that a single diplomatic error could endanger their entire clan, especially with the Lion always eager to settle their old score. Tonbo learn to remain detached, balanced, and submissive (at least in appearance) at all times. This has led them to develop a unique technique allowing them to use the guidance of the kami when talking with others, using the clarity of Water to make sure they pick up on subtle social cues and avoid possible offenses. While it may seem unimpressive when compared to other schools' abilities, this technique has saved the lives of countless Tonbo over the years and is one of the keys to their continued existence as a clan. Guests usually speak of the Tonbo as gracious and courteous hosts who somehow know their needs before they do themselves... and in some cases this is literally true, since the Tonbo are some of the foremost practitioners of divination magic in the Empire.





The origins of this focus on divination are hard to pinpoint, since the early days of the clan were chaotic, but it most likely drew from the traditions of the Isawa (Tonbo Maroko, wife of the clan's founder, hailed from the Isawa). The specific Tonbo tradition solidified in later generations, as the Dragonfly searched for a way to predict attacks from the resentful Lion. The clan dedicated as many resources as possible to such studies, supporting the effort with favors from the Phoenix and the Dragon. As a result, the Tonbo are all at least slightly trained in divination magic, and a few of them show a powerful gift for it. They study the art methodically and extensively, and as a result tend to be more skilled than most other shugenja in interpreting the strange visions of the Water kami. This skill has served them well during the course of their history, and on at least one occasion saved the clan from outright destruction.

While this practice of divination is part of what gives the Tonbo family its famous serenity, it has attracted criticism from those in the Empire who believe divination magic should be used sparingly at best, since it gives mortals knowledge that should belong to the Fortunes only. This criticism is especially acute given that the Dragonfly are merely a Minor Clan, which makes their extensive practice of divination seem like spiritual arrogance. The Dragonfly calmly reject such arguments, pointing out they lack the power and influence to make their visions a danger to

anyone. They also enjoy the support of the Phoenix, who see the Tonbo's prowess as an offshoot of their own, and as such do not discourage it. Still, the Dragonfly are usually careful to keep the contents of their visions to themselves so as to avoid drawing too much hostility from those who disapprove of their ways.

## THE PHOENIX KAWARU SAGES

*"Some call it peasant magic, but one who reads the coins well may learn much about his future."*

*– Naka Tokei, Grandmaster of the Elements*

While Water magic itself is the most common way to divine knowledge about the present or the future, other methods do exist. One of the most common, known as *Kawaru*, was created in the third century by a Phoenix shugenja named Isawa Teruyo. A powerful Water shugenja, Teruyo was frequently able to read the future through his magic, but found the process dangerous, exhausting, and imprecise. While meditating on a way to refine his art, he received a vision – supposedly from Fukurokujin, the Fortune of Wisdom. In this vision Teruyo first saw the elementary symbols known as the hexagrams, which could be used to tell somebody's future and guide them on their path. Afterward Teruyo wrote down a list of sixty-four hexagrams, together with their basic meanings; he named this text *Kawaru*, or *The Book of Changes*.





Teruyo showed how one could use coins, stones, or yarrow sticks inscribed with the hexagrams to create patterns and thereby find a guiding principle to answer a question. For example, a divination might gain an answer like “Contemplation” or “Innocence.” The Empire’s reception of *Kawaru* divination was somewhat lukewarm: although Isawa Teruyo was a respected shugenja and had the same reputation for power and wisdom as other Phoenix, the fact that *Kawaru* could be used without any magical talent led many to doubt its value, particularly after a few cases where *Kawaru* diviners failed to answer questions accurately. Teruyo remained adamant in his beliefs, however, claiming his text was flawless since it had come directly from the Fortune of Wisdom. He insisted any mistakes were due to a lack of moral or spiritual purity on the diviner’s part, which led to interference from evil spirits. Accordingly, he created a ritual of purification to use prior to any attempted divination, and advocated restricting the practice of *Kawaru* to devoted religious people. Ultimately, *Kawaru* came to be used to a limited degree by samurai, but was fully embraced by the peasants and gave rise to the role of the *itako*, wise *heimin* women who offer spiritual advice and divination to their fellow villagers.

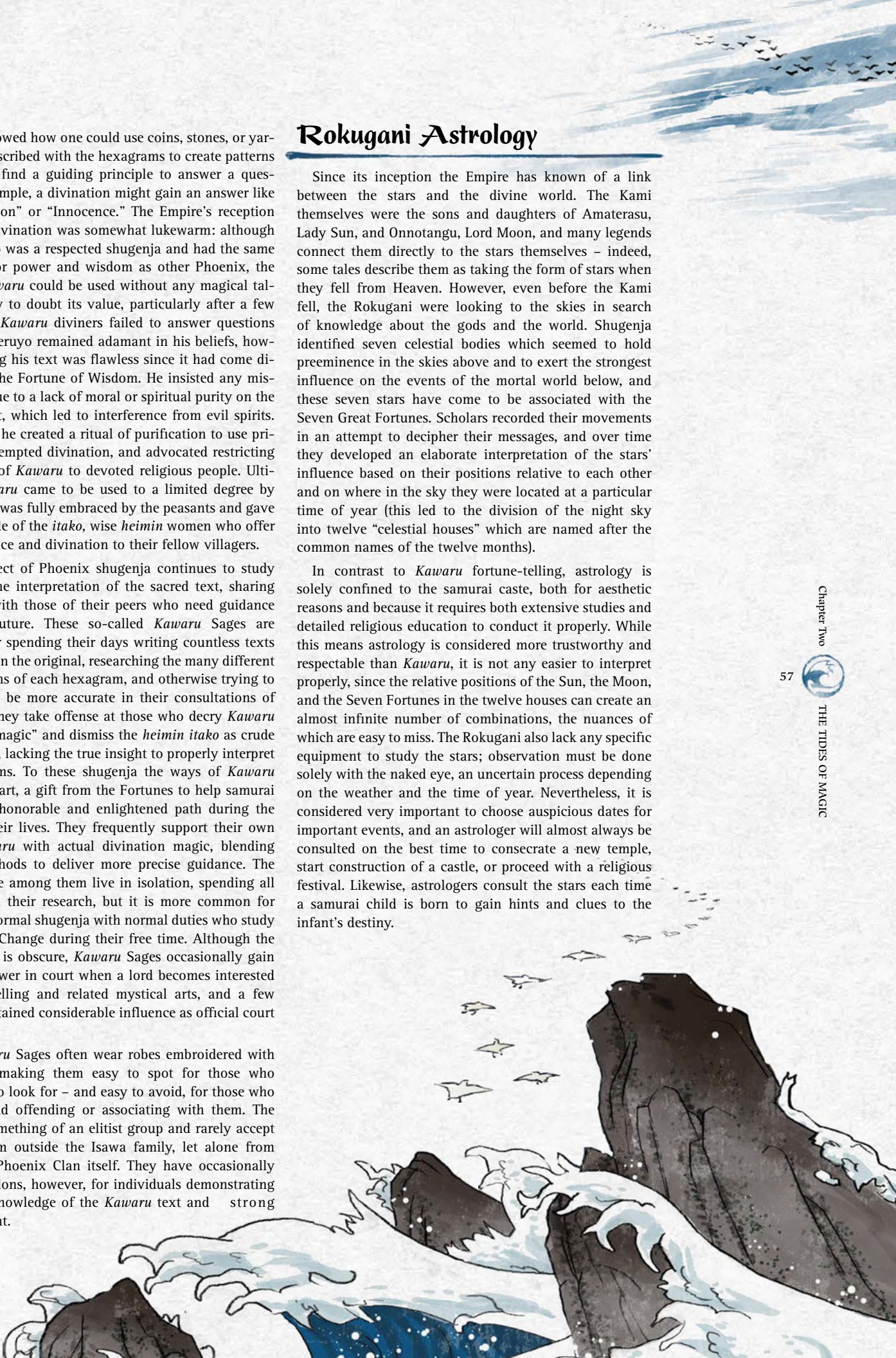
A small sect of Phoenix shugenja continues to study and refine the interpretation of the sacred text, sharing their skills with those of their peers who need guidance about the future. These so-called *Kawaru* Sages are notorious for spending their days writing countless texts elaborating on the original, researching the many different interpretations of each hexagram, and otherwise trying to find ways to be more accurate in their consultations of the future. They take offense at those who decry *Kawaru* as “peasant magic” and dismiss the *heimin itako* as crude but harmless, lacking the true insight to properly interpret the hexagrams. To these shugenja the ways of *Kawaru* are a sacred art, a gift from the Fortunes to help samurai keep on an honorable and enlightened path during the course of their lives. They frequently support their own use of *Kawaru* with actual divination magic, blending the two methods to deliver more precise guidance. The most extreme among them live in isolation, spending all their days in their research, but it is more common for them to be normal shugenja with normal duties who study the Book of Change during their free time. Although the organization is obscure, *Kawaru* Sages occasionally gain fame and power in court when a lord becomes interested in fortune-telling and related mystical arts, and a few have even attained considerable influence as official court diviners.

The *Kawaru* Sages often wear robes embroidered with hexagrams, making them easy to spot for those who know what to look for – and easy to avoid, for those who wish to avoid offending or associating with them. The Sages are something of an elitist group and rarely accept students from outside the Isawa family, let alone from outside the Phoenix Clan itself. They have occasionally made exceptions, however, for individuals demonstrating both great knowledge of the *Kawaru* text and strong magical talent.

## Rokugani Astrology

Since its inception the Empire has known of a link between the stars and the divine world. The Kami themselves were the sons and daughters of Amaterasu, Lady Sun, and Onnotangu, Lord Moon, and many legends connect them directly to the stars themselves – indeed, some tales describe them as taking the form of stars when they fell from Heaven. However, even before the Kami fell, the Rokugani were looking to the skies in search of knowledge about the gods and the world. Shugenja identified seven celestial bodies which seemed to hold preeminence in the skies above and to exert the strongest influence on the events of the mortal world below, and these seven stars have come to be associated with the Seven Great Fortunes. Scholars recorded their movements in an attempt to decipher their messages, and over time they developed an elaborate interpretation of the stars’ influence based on their positions relative to each other and on where in the sky they were located at a particular time of year (this led to the division of the night sky into twelve “celestial houses” which are named after the common names of the twelve months).

In contrast to *Kawaru* fortune-telling, astrology is solely confined to the samurai caste, both for aesthetic reasons and because it requires both extensive studies and detailed religious education to conduct it properly. While this means astrology is considered more trustworthy and respectable than *Kawaru*, it is not any easier to interpret properly, since the relative positions of the Sun, the Moon, and the Seven Fortunes in the twelve houses can create an almost infinite number of combinations, the nuances of which are easy to miss. The Rokugani also lack any specific equipment to study the stars; observation must be done solely with the naked eye, an uncertain process depending on the weather and the time of year. Nevertheless, it is considered very important to choose auspicious dates for important events, and an astrologer will almost always be consulted on the best time to consecrate a new temple, start construction of a castle, or proceed with a religious festival. Likewise, astrologers consult the stars each time a samurai child is born to gain hints and clues to the infant’s destiny.





## PEASANT DIVINATION

Heimin have as much desire as samurai to know what the future holds for them, but they often lack the literacy and training necessary to practice astrology or the money to pay for an astrologer's services. The other common form of divination, *kawaru*, was embraced by the peasant caste and is still used by the itako fortune-tellers, but there are also many other types of fortune-telling found among the common people. A few of the more widespread are listed here.

*Dan-eki* – To assist them in making decisions, many heimin will throw dice or coins in a simpler system than *kawaru*. These are used in sets of three, with odd numbers or the obverse (script) side indicating a positive answer, and even numbers or the reverse side indicating a negative one. Three of one or the other is strong guidance, while a mixture is less clear. This method, while ubiquitous among heimin, is unsuitable for more nuanced questions; it can only answer “yes” or “no.”

*Dice divination* – Another method involving dice requires the diviner to throw two dice and total the result. A result of two indicates excellent good fortune; three means incipient change; four is an unexpected but beneficial event; five is victory; six is love; seven encourages the questioner to trust his instincts; eight is long-term success through work; nine is cooperation with a partner; ten is good fortune; eleven recommends using one's own talents to solve the problem at hand; and twelve advises a change of course and preparation for something new.

*Geta-uranai* – A common superstition among heimin says that one can predict the weather by kicking a sandal up into the air and seeing how it lands. If it comes right-side-up, the weather will be fair; if on its side, cloudy; if upside-down, there will be rain. (Cats washing their faces also portend rain.)

*Omikuji* – Samurai and heimin alike will make small donations to a temple or shrine and then draw a random lot from a box. This slip of paper usually includes a general blessing followed by more specific advice on matters ranging from marriage to business to travel. If the fortune is a poor one, the recipient may fold it up and tie it to a tree or a wooden framework in the shrine, encouraging the bad luck to wait there instead of coming with them. At the New Year, literate ronin in need of coin sometimes hire themselves out to read these fortunes for those who cannot.

*Omens* – Hints of the future can be read in a thousand small aspects of daily life. White animals indicate good fortune, especially tortoises, deer, and birds. Multicolored cloud formations are also auspicious, as is the stalk of a leaf standing upright in one's tea. If a butterfly enters the guest room of a house, a loved one is coming to visit; large numbers of butterflies together, however, are a bad omen, since they represent the spirits of those who will die in battle. Broken items such as dishes or sandal thongs are inauspicious. Spiders may be a good omen or a bad one, depending on timing; in the morning, they indicate good luck, while in the evening it is the reverse.

## THE SEPPUN ASTROLOGERS

Of all the Rokugani families with shugenja traditions, the Seppun are usually acknowledged as having the strongest grasp on astrology – not surprising given their heritage as the first and most devoted followers of the Kami. The family founder, Seppun herself, was a pious priestess who walked by the side of the first Emperor and had tremendous knowledge of the divine realm and its celestial manifestations. Her family has maintained this tradition ever since.

Seppun shugenja watch the night skies with unwavering attention, constantly seeking portents in order to better protect the Emperor and the Empire. This can sometimes become a burden, since they can gain knowledge which must be kept secret in order to prevent panic among the population at large. On the other hand, due to their respected position of authority, the Seppun astrologers' interpretation of celestial events and portents is usually agreed to be the correct one if conflicts of opinion arise. This makes it easier for them to control what is known or believed by the people. On some occasions, however, the Seppun astrologers' caution has led to disaster. For example, dire portents were ignored at the birth of Hantei Okucho, who later became the tyrannical Emperor Hantei XVI.

When necessary, the Seppun discreetly advise the Emperor of significant predictions and portents, although it is up to the Emperor whether this advice is heeded or not. Like the *Kawaru* Sages, the Seppun supplement their astrological knowledge whenever possible with divination magic (although they would be greatly insulted to be compared to the practitioners of *Kawaru*). Some of the Seppun travel the Empire at large, seeking out the best places to observe the skies, or consulting the archives of local temples to help decipher a specific celestial event. As members of the Imperial families, they are always treated with courtesy... but also with no small amount of dread, since an astrologer's predictions can sometimes be grave indeed.

## Notable Uses of Water Spells

This section, like those in previous books of the Elemental series, describes the more common uses and social implications of the well-known Water spells of Rokugan. GMs and players can use this section as a guide to how these spells should be depicted in play, especially when they are used by NPCs.

### BO OF WATER

One of the four Elemental Weapon spells, this one tends to be favored by families with either a strong monastic tradition (due to the association of staves with monks) or with pacifistic tendencies, given



its relatively low lethality and its effectiveness at knocking down opponents without killing them. The Asako family, which meets both criteria, is particularly fond of the spell, and shugenja from that family often learn it even if Water is not their favored Element.

### CLARITY OF PURPOSE

A simple but useful spell, Clarity of Purpose uses a mild divination effect to give a shugenja and his allies a small edge in battle, allowing them to react more effectively to the moves of their opponents. Given the lethality of Rokugani combat and the emphasis of many schools on a quick and final strike, such an edge is many times all that is needed to prevail, and thus this spell is used widely among martial shugenja families, even those who do not specialize in Water.

### EBBING STRENGTH

While Water is an Element closely associated with travel and physical movement, it can also represent a more abstract form of motion, and this spell is a good example. By lending his physical strength to someone else, the shugenja allows the target to accomplish great feats, sometimes beyond the realms of what could be thought as humanly possible. Yojimbo of the Phoenix Clan are frequent recipients of this spell, which has done much to further develop their reputations as fierce protectors of the Isawa.

### PATH TO INNER PEACE

One of the most common spells in the entire Empire, this blessing calls on the energies of Water in the target individual to speed the recovery process, healing his wounds faster than any medicine could. Because the spell draws on the target's own natural healing process, strengthening it with a flow of healing chi, it cannot regrow lost limbs or otherwise replace missing or ruined body parts; it can also leave significant scarring even from a fully healed injury. It will, however, treat cuts, bruises, and other such injuries quite effectively, stops bleeding, and prevents infections. Most clans expect their shugenja to learn this spell as a matter of course, and only in schools where Water is the weakest Element (such as the Agasha school) is this spell less than universal. It is also one of the rare spells which is shared relatively freely from one clan or school to another, since many shugenja see the ability to save a life as having a value above clan rivalries. This attitude only makes the spell even more ubiquitous.

Path to Inner Peace has played an important role in shaping the way shugenja are perceived in Rokugan, and particularly in how healing is perceived by the higher castes. Many shugenja make it part of their daily duties to help the injured, bestowing this spell on as many people as possible. This is also why small contingents of shugenja usually follow any army, even if they are pacifists who do not take the field themselves, since their services as healers will be required after every battle. Of course, those of higher status are usually treated first, and ordinary soldiers must often rely on mundane assistance due to the limits on magical aid. For this very reason, many shugenja



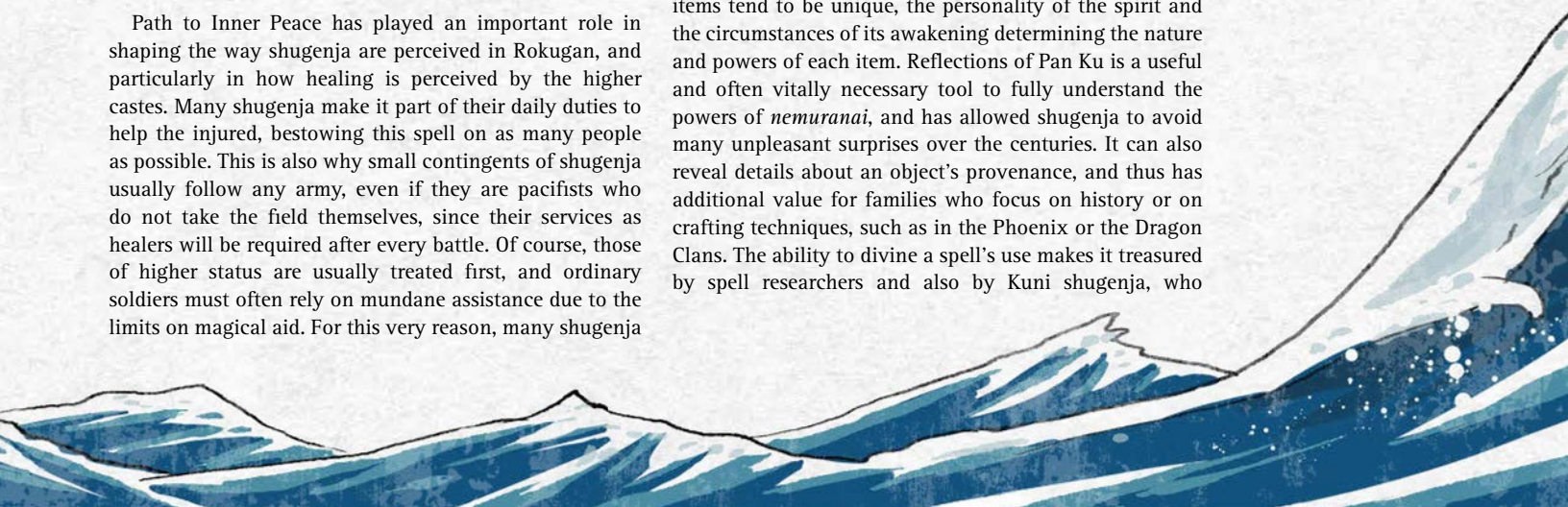
– especially the Phoenix and the Kuni – study the ways of physical medicine in order to complement their Water spells. This further reinforces the widespread perception of healing is seen as a primary aspect of the shugenja's duty and a key aspect of their nature as pacifists. The dedication of the Phoenix in particular to the dual arts of peace and healing has made this perception widespread in Rokugan.

Sadly, since even the most proficient Water shugenja can only cast this spell a few times a day, they rarely have any energy left to treat the wounds of the peasantry, particularly since the numbers of *heimin* dwarf those of samurai. Nor would they necessarily want to help such folk; since the *heimin* are lower in the Celestial Order than samurai, many shugenja see it as inappropriate to use the power of the kami to heal such people, who should bear their pains in silence and await rebirth into a higher station. Of course, there are also shugenja who make a point of helping the common people whenever they can, especially in the Unicorn and Mantis Clans.

Regardless, the power of this spell is widely known in Rokugan, and common folk hold shugenja in reverence as much for this magic as for their status as holy men. Peasants are generally not aware of the difference between a spell and a common prayer, and will readily accept a simple blessing or charm as a treatment for their hurts... a misperception which has been exploited by the unscrupulous more than once.

### REFLECTIONS OF PAN KU

In Rokugan, magical items are called *nemuranai* – items whose spirit has been awakened through constant use, great deeds, or magical intervention. As a result, such items tend to be unique, the personality of the spirit and the circumstances of its awakening determining the nature and powers of each item. Reflections of Pan Ku is a useful and often vitally necessary tool to fully understand the powers of *nemuranai*, and has allowed shugenja to avoid many unpleasant surprises over the centuries. It can also reveal details about an object's provenance, and thus has additional value for families who focus on history or on crafting techniques, such as in the Phoenix or the Dragon Clans. The ability to divine a spell's use makes it treasured by spell researchers and also by Kuni shugenja, who







## PATH TO INNER PEACE... OLD SCHOOL

*"The wound is too deep for me to aid right now. Instead, I will give you a blessing to wash away the pain."*  
— Isawa Mizuhama

In the original First Edition of the L5R RPG, Path to Inner Peace was quite literally the only healing spell in the game... and even it did not really "heal" in a conventional sense. Instead of stimulating the flesh to knit and repair itself, the spell merely sent a flood of rejuvenating chi through the target's body, allowing him to ignore the pain and trauma of his injuries. Thus, while the spell healed Wounds in a mechanical sense (the Wounds were erased from the character sheet and thus the character no longer was under Wound Penalties to his actions), it did not actually physically repair the injuries themselves. (The L5R supplement Way of Shadow offered a vivid depiction of this effect – a gruesomely injured shugenja casts the spell on himself and is then able to move and fight normally, even though his left arm is still a shredded bloody ruin hanging uselessly at his side.)

In many ways this original depiction of Path to Inner Peace was far better suited to the tone and flavor of Rokugan, but was somewhat confusing from a game-play standpoint – many players and GMs found it difficult to make a mental distinction between the game-effects of Wounds and the in-world reality of physical injuries. For this reason, in the Second Edition of L5R the spell was re-written to behave in a more straightforward fashion, healing injuries directly.

GMs who wish to give their L5R campaign a grittier, more culturally distinct tone may wish to consider restoring the original in-world behavior of Path to Inner Peace. If this is done, it is also recommended the GM completely disallow the use of higher-Mastery healing spells such as Regrow the Wound and Peace of the Kami.



sometimes use the spell to identify maho scrolls without having to take undue risks.

Interestingly, this spell is one of the few common references to the existence of Pan Ku, a mysterious entity sometimes referred to as the Mad Dragon. This obscure entity is believed to be a Celestial Dragon which somehow went insane – perhaps at the dawn of creation itself – and is associated with shapeshifting, deception, and madness. The origins of the spell itself have been lost in time, and it may in fact date back to the dawn of the Empire. Whether the spell attracts the attention of its mysterious namesake

entity is unknown, but the name does cause worry in those who know of the entity's sometimes sinister nature.

### REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

A common and simple invoking of good luck, this spell is sometimes invoked by shugenja as part of a blessing before an important undertaking. Its effects are discreet, so it is a favorite of court shugenja, particularly those who know how to cast spells covertly – such as the Soshi. Frequent use of this spell has led credence to the common belief that shugenja are blessed by the Fortunes, although it has also given rise to stories of those who rely too much on their luck and are ultimately punished for their presumption.

### THE RUSHING WAVE

A simple spell that calls on Water's nature as the Element of movement, this prayer is rarely seen away from the battlefield. Recipients of this spell have occasionally reported being drenched in Water when it is cast, but this is seen as a small price to pay for the reward of quickened action.

### SPEED OF THE WATERFALL

Based on a principle similar to The Rushing Wave, this spell allows the target to move faster... but only so long as he focuses on moving. However, its longer duration makes it more useful outside of battle, for example by allowing individuals to cover a greater distance during a march. Its effects are even more effective on a mount, so the spell is used most commonly among the Unicorn, making their scouts and messengers even faster than they already are.

### SPIRIT OF THE WATER

This spell uses the movement aspect of Water to grant its target a small amount of tactical flexibility in battle, such as quickly closing the distance with a foe, drawing a new weapon or spell-scroll, or protecting an ally while still fighting offensively. It is most frequently employed by those shugenja who work in tandem with yojimbo, such as the Isawa, granting their protector more flexibility in action.

### SYMPATHETIC ENERGIES

The power to transfer the effects of one spell between two people has many creative applications, and most Water shugenja of any skill will learn this prayer. Although the most obvious application is to let the shugenja transfer his own blessings onto his allies, sharing his magical might with everyone, it also has other uses. For example, it can be used to transfer the effects of negative spells like Earth's Stagnation onto allies willing to bear them, or switching a curse to someone who will be less afflicted by it.

### CLOAK OF THE MIYA

This spell takes its name from the straw cloaks commonly worn by the Imperial Heralds of the Miya family. It wraps the shugenja in a cloak of water, protecting him for a short amount of time. Due to its name, this spell is a favorite of the Imperial families, who sometimes use Sympathetic





Energies to transfer it to a charge they are protecting. The few Miya shugenja in existence make it their duty to learn the spell, and it is widely believed one of them originally created it... although no definite records exist on the matter.

### INARI'S BLESSING

This prayer to one of the most popular Lesser Fortunes is very common in the Empire, since rice is the universal food staple and Inari, as its patron, is revered just as universally. The Dragon in particular have used the spell many times to alleviate poor harvests, since their lands often fail to produce enough food to support their population. The Kuni have been known to use the spell to stave off starvation when trapped in the Shadowlands, although they must be careful not to attract kansen who would Taint the food. Although these sorts of practical applications are the most frequent use of the spell, some Crane shugenja with an artistic bent have been known to create incredibly refined dishes through use of the spell, although this is frowned upon as frivolous by those of a more pious bent.

### REFLECTIVE POOL

The most common divination spell, used by many shugenja to check on their homes and families while travelling elsewhere in the Empire. It also allows for a shugenja assigned to a security detail to check on his charge without physically intruding, although some do not appreciate the invasion of privacy which this

represents. Of course, this spell is often used for spying as well, and the Scorpion are quite fond of it. Scorpion shugenja often make sure they are familiar with important locations purely in order to make use of this spell, and the more ruthless among them will sneak in or visit under the cover of magic in order to prepare themselves for later surveillance using this spell. In their own homelands, the Soshi and Yogo make sure they are familiar with every room of their own castles, allowing them to watch everything that happens in their strongholds (and also making those strongholds some of the safest in Rokugan). Of course, most experienced shugenja are aware of this spell and will take countermeasures against it, such as re-arranging rooms to break the feeling of familiarity or Banishing the kami from them to prevent scrying from occurring at all.

### REJUVENATING VAPORS

This spell, a variation on the healing prayers, calls on the flow of Water to purge fatigue rather than repair wounds. It is popular with shugenja who want to make sure their guards and sentries remain alert, and is especially prized in the Crab lands where guards must stand watch for many hours without relief and a moment of inattention can mean death. Of course, this spell is also very popular with shugenja themselves, since they can use it to add to their potential spell-casting for the day. However, over-use of the spell can disrupt one's sleep schedule and make it difficult to keep track of time, creating more difficulties than it solves.







### STAND AGAINST THE WAVES

This spell is similar to Spirit of the Water, but lends its speed to a swordsman's arms rather than his legs, allowing him to strike more quickly in the same span of time. The most frequent usage of the spell is to help an outnumbered swordsman to quickly dispose of multiple opponents, and the spell's name is derived from this usage. Some shugenja suspect many of the great heroes of Rokugan's history were actually under the influence of this spell, tipping the odds in their favor. (Bushi tend to vehemently disagree with such a viewpoint, of course, and duels have been fought over such allegations.)

### THE TIES THAT BIND

Another basic divination spell, this prayer ensures that stealing from a shugenja is usually a bad idea. It is not uncommon for thieves to avoid robbing holy men entirely due to the reputation created by The Ties That Bind.

Some shugenja will familiarize themselves with the prized possessions of their lords in order to be able to use this spell in the event of a crime. Shugenja of the Scorpion Clan are also fond of developing familiarity with small items such as pins or beads and then planting them on chosen individuals in order to magically track their movements.

### WAVE-BORN SPEED

Essentially a variant on The Rushing Wave, Wave-Born Speed accelerates the target's movement for a couple of instants. Much like with the other spell, some recipients have reported being covered in Water once the spell ended. However, since the spell's benefit can sometimes be the difference between life and death, any complaints are generally kept polite.

### WISDOM & CLARITY

This spell is derived from Water's aspect of clarity, and greatly increases the perceptive faculties of the shugenja. It is obviously a favorite among scholarly families, and Asako shugenja are especially fond of it since it can be extremely useful in the vast libraries of their homelands. The rare Ikoma shugenja, and those Kitsu who maintain close ties to the Ikoma, also find the spell useful when perusing the family's large collection of scrolls. Courty shugenja have been known to use the spell while researching before an important debate, ensuring they acquire all the relevant facts ahead of time.

### NEAR TO ICE

This spell is unique in the shugenja healer's arsenal in that it treats pain rather than physical wounds. This can be useful under the right circumstances, such as when someone is debilitated by pain from a spell or a poison. It can also serve to temporarily alleviate someone's suffering until they can receive proper medical treatment. This spell is especially popular among the Acolytes of Snow, who make a point of learning it as soon as they are able to do so.

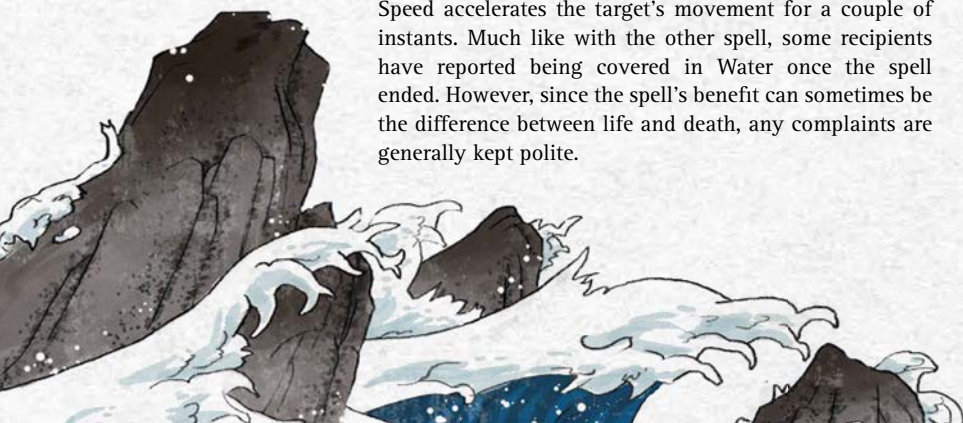
### REGROW THE WOUND

This spell works off the same principles as Path to Inner Peace – a flood of chi energy that stimulates the body to heal more quickly – but at a slower, surer pace; if sufficient time is available, it can ensure essentially full recovery from wounds. However, the greater difficulty in casting it makes it much rarer in the Empire than Path to Inner Peace, and it has not exerted the same social impact on Rokugani society as the other spell.

Although this spell is not widespread, important personages such as daimyo always try to have at least one shugenja who can cast it. The spell has also found use on the battlefield, where it can sustain warriors long past the point where they would otherwise have fallen to their injuries, allowing them to perform great heroic deeds. Some have described this as a disturbing sensation, as their flesh endures more damage than should be humanly possible, but few will reject the spell's aid if it is offered.

### SILENT WATERS

This prayer is a potent tool for any shugenja of sufficient power to cast it, and has been used in countless different ways over the centuries. A very simple and basic use is to combine it with a healing spell, ensuring the shugenja will be immediately healed if he is wounded. Battle shugenja sometimes pair it with a spell like The Fires from Within, to be activated by a single word of command at the critical moment. The spell can also be coupled with Sympathetic Energies to extend such abilities to other willing individuals, greatly increasing its possible uses.





Daimyo, Clan Champions, and members of the Emperor's family almost always have at least one Silent Waters cast on them daily to help protect them from harm and provide contingencies for emergency situations. Since this spell can be cast in tandem with spells of any other Element, some consider it to be almost a form of multi-Elemental magic itself, and it has been avidly studied by scholars and theoreticians as an example of cooperation between kami of different Elements.

### STRIKE OF THE TSUNAMI

Named after the devastating tidal waves which sometimes strike the coastline of Rokugan, this spell is a rare example of Water magic that draws directly on the wrath of the waves, showing the Element is not solely one of healing and peace. It is particularly favored by the Yoritomo shugenja, especially the famous Storm Riders. The prodigious amount of water summoned by the spell can actually be used in other ways than simply to attack – for example, it is an effective if crude way to extinguish fires. However, the spell's inherent brute force prevents more refined usages.

### VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

Notable for being one of the rare spells created by a Minor Clan but nonetheless found throughout Rokugan, Visions of the Future is learned by the majority of Tonbo shugenja, who see it as one of their most precious legacies. The use of the spell is controversial, but the Tonbo are nothing if not used to controversy. Unsurprisingly, the spell is extremely unpopular with the Lion Clan, although this could be due as much to their reverence for tradition as to their distaste for the Dragonfly. Interpreting the visions bestowed by this spell is an art in itself, and shugenja are warned against adhering to their views with too much certitude – the allegorical nature of the images has led to many errors.

### WALKING UPON THE WAVES

A visually impressive spell, the sort which inspires immediate awe in those who witness it, Walking Upon the Waves is (unsurprisingly) most popular among Mantis shugenja, who have used it to save many samurai from drowning. It has also been used to launch surprise attacks, since a few bushi with this spell can easily board an enemy ship or cross a moat, particularly under the cover of night. Unicorn shugenja have been trying to adapt this spell to allow it to work on horses, but so far with little success.

### WATER KAMI'S BLESSING

This spell invokes Water's aspect of clarity to greatly enhance an individual's faculties of perception. The Kitsuki are notably fond of it due to their emphasis on physical

evidence, and try to have it cast on them whenever possible. It can also be of great use on the battlefield, and a Lion general blessed with this spell becomes an even more terrifying opponent, seemingly perceiving his opponent's moves ahead of time. Some have described the clarity of senses brought by this spell as dizzying and even bewildering, and casting it too many times on the same person can lead to headaches or more serious symptoms.

### DOMINION OF SUITENGU

A creation of the Mantis Clan, this spell is still most common among the Yoritomo, who use it to watch over their sea routes and check on their home islands. More ruthless members of the family have also made use of this spell for spying – particularly in support of their mercantile efforts, such as by scrying on the ports of the Crane, Phoenix, and Crab. While knowledge of this spell is not particularly widespread in the rest of the Empire, the Scorpion are fully aware of it and avoid conducting any important business close to natural water – or if they do, they exploit the spell's inability to transmit sound to confuse potential onlookers.

### EBB & FLOW OF BATTLE

Based on the same principle as other movement-oriented Water spells such as Speed of the Waterfall, the prayer known as Ebb & Flow of Battle is much more powerful, allowing an entire group of individuals to surge forward. On the battlefield this can produce devastating attacks or sudden, bewildering retreats, either way disrupting the enemy's strategy. Experienced commanders learn to be wary of this spell in enemy hands, carefully taking it into account when making decisions on the battlefield. This is particularly necessary when facing the Phoenix, whose Tsunami Legion is known to make quite potent use of this spell.







### HEART OF THE WATER DRAGON

Scholars theorize this spell developed out of research into both Path to Inner Peace and Silent Waters, since it obeys similar rules to those spells but is easier to cast on a group. It also bears some similarity to the Kiho known as Ride the Water Dragon, and the more radical historians of magic believe this spell represents a “bridge” between the abilities of shugenja and monks – particularly since it draws its name from the same Celestial entity.

### THE PATH NOT TAKEN

A spell which exemplifies Water’s versatility and especially its ability to work with other Elements, The Path Not Taken is a favorite of shugenja who are particularly strong in one specific element, such as the Tensai of the Phoenix Clan. This spell provides a dramatic way to increase their daily magical output. The Agasha also frequently study this spell, both for its practical use and for the theory behind it, since they are fond of spells which involve several Elements combined. Some shugenja have been known to completely abandon casting spells in one or more Elements, instead using this spell to shift all of their power in those Elements into their preferred one; this approach is seen by more well-rounded shugenja as regrettable and perhaps borderline blasphemous.

### STRIKE OF THE FLOWING WATERS

This spell uses Water’s fluidity to help a warrior’s strike, and is particularly efficient against opponents who are heavily armored or who are under the protection of a lesser defensive spell. It is often used against the soldiers of the Crab and Phoenix Clans, both of whom have come to dread it. Some Crab have denounced the use of the spell as unfair and cowardly, but the Phoenix keep silent on the matter... since they use it themselves on a regular basis.

### SYMBOL OF WATER

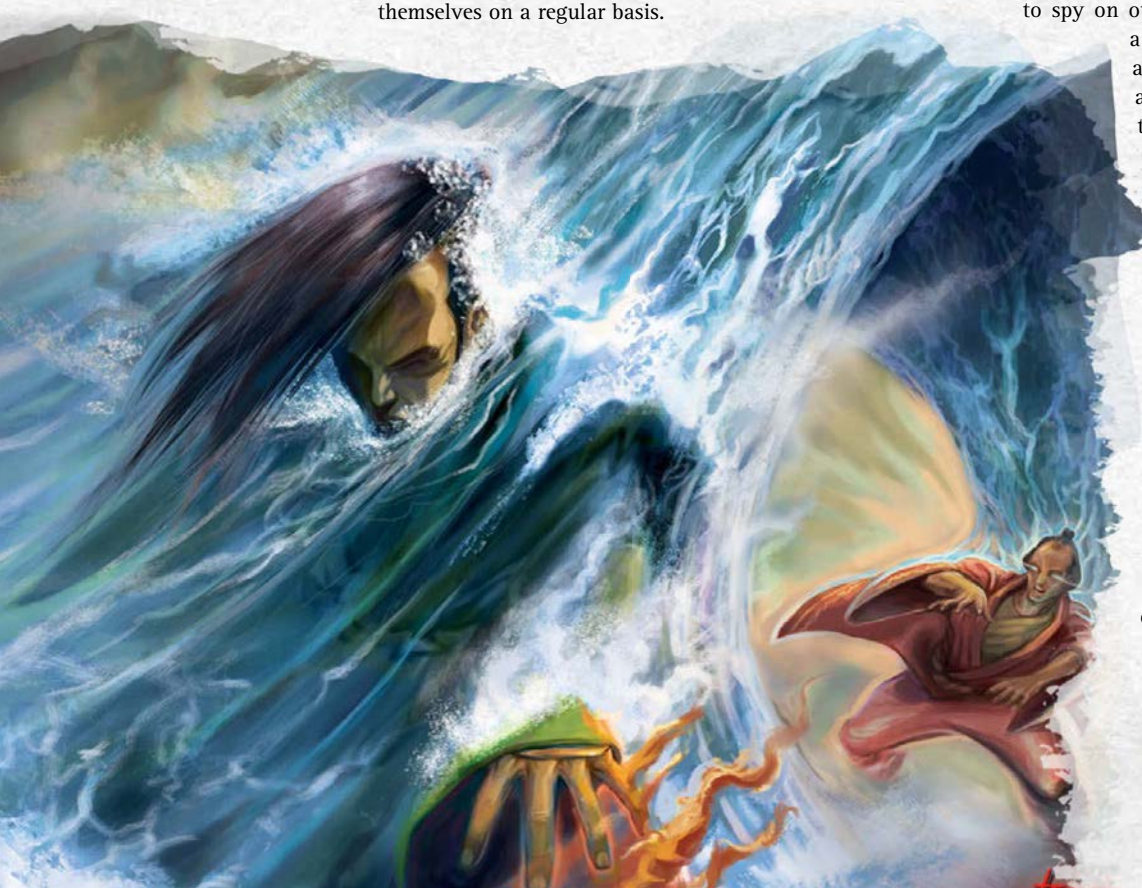
Like all the Symbol spells, Symbol of Water is a favorite of the Yogo family. They particularly enjoy the terror it causes in others, reinforcing the intimidating reputation of the Scorpion Clan. For the same reason, more pacifistic clans are less inclined to use this Symbol. The Crab, while hardly pacifistic, seldom bother to use it, since many creatures of the Shadowlands are immune to feelings of fear. Some shugenja believe many local legends of ghosts and angry spirits are merely the result of discreet use of this spell – the dread it creates has no clear source of origin, and people subject to its effects often try to create their own explanations for what happened to them.

### EVER-CHANGING WAVES

This powerful spell has always been controversial, dividing the Empire’s shugenja. The Iuchi are quite fond of it, and the Kitsune almost always learn it as a way to bridge the differences which separate them from their shapeshifter cousins. In modern times the spell also spreads to the rest of the Mantis families; the Yoritomo are fond of using it to take the appearance of sharks or dolphins, while the Moshi sometimes turn themselves into birds to experience the sensation of natural flying. (Rumors of Mantis shugenja turning themselves into whales have been dismissed as outlandish given the difficulty in shifting into such a large shape, but one is never sure of what is possible where the Storm Riders are involved.) On the other side, the Lion tend to frown on the spell, although a few of them have justified turning themselves into actual lions as a way of honoring the original Kitsune. Most Phoenix shugenja, and almost all Crane and Imperial ones, tend to see the spell as a cheap trick, beneath their dignity. Scorpion priests also publicly decry it, but are not above covertly turning themselves into small animals to spy on others, or venomous snakes to perform a traceless assassination. The Dragon and the Crab have no strong opinion and leave the choice of using the spell to individual shugenja, while shugenja from the Minor Clans or the ranks of ronin usually use any resource they can get their hands on. (Notably, the Komori share the enthusiasm of the Kitsune in turning themselves into their namesake animal.)

### THE FINAL BOND

Essentially a more powerful version of The Ties That Bind, this spell’s range extends to the entire Empire and it can locate individuals rather than just objects, making it an extremely potent divination. The fact that its range is limited to Rokugan has occasionally motivated certain criminals to flee beyond the borders, accepting self-exile rather than face certain death when a shugenja tracks them down.





When Rokugan establishes the Colonies in the former Ivory Kingdoms in the late twelfth century, a few shugenja notice that this spell's range suddenly extends to include those new territories. This suggests the spell's limitation is Celestially ordained rather than merely a constraint of the kami's power. However, the spell is noticeably harder to use close to the Colonies' ill-defined frontier.

### HANDS OF THE TIDES

A favorite of tactically-inclined shugenja, Hands of the Tides has many uses, limited only by the shugenja's creativity. For example, it is not uncommon to use it to switch the positions of archers with other soldiers at a critical moment, allowing the archers to regroup while the other troops charge into melee. It can also be used to cross physical obstacles such as chasms or walls, letting more nimble individuals get across first and then switching them with others. The feeling of being instantly relocated can be confusing, as the target is briefly surrounded by the roaring power of Water; some soldiers train with shugenja to get used to the application of this spell, particularly in the Phoenix and Dragon Clans.

### POWER OF THE OCEAN

Power of the Ocean is a powerful blessing which calls on Water's healing and rejuvenatory nature to keep an individual active and refreshed for several days. It is often cast on high-ranking personages during critical times to ensure they remain at their best. The senior Iuchi also frequently cast it on themselves, especially when required to travel quickly across long distances, skipping breaks for food and sleep. During the wandering years of the Unicorn, this spell was sometimes cast for the simple purpose of conserving food and drink, and it is still occasionally employed this way during dire times such as famines.

When a shugenja combines this spell with Transfer of Energies, he can potentially avoid the negative effects of Power of the Ocean by transferring it before the duration ends. This is a favorite practice among the most high-ranking shugenja of the Phoenix, who will transfer the spell's negative consequences to a willing vassal. However, overusing the spell can have its own price – the Masters of Water in particular have been known to use it so much that they forget to eat, sleep, or drink even when not under its effects.

### SUITENGU'S EMBRACE

This spell is often assumed to have been developed by the Mantis, but its exact origins have been lost to time and in modern times most clans have access to it. Still, it remains rarely used outside of the Mantis Clan, for it inflicts a cruel and merciless death, one akin to torture. Mantis shugenja have little mercy for their enemies, and sometimes use this spell to not merely slay them but also humiliate them with a sordid death. Some of the most ruthless Mantis (and not a few ingenious Scorpion) have



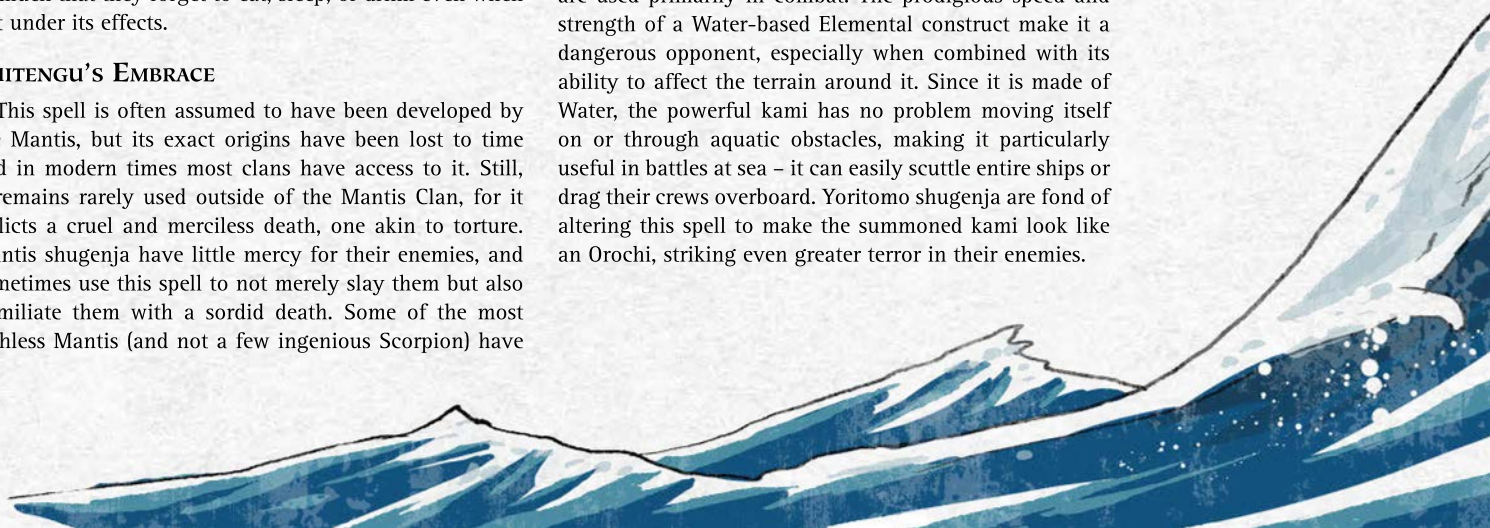
also used this spell to conduct covert assassinations, since it is particularly hard to differentiate its effects from actual drowning. Shugenja from other clans will generally only use the spell against inhuman opponents, who are judged fitting targets for such a cruel fate.

### PEACE OF THE KAMI

The most powerful of all healing spells, Peace of the Kami is able to completely cure the target of all physical ailments, returning the body to its best condition. While purely spiritual afflictions such as the Shadowlands Taint remain outside the scope of this spell, it has shown some success when used against plagues and diseases of supernatural origin, particularly if the caster is especially powerful. This spell's great power makes it very rare, but it is almost always known by the Phoenix Master of Water and other top-tier Phoenix Water shugenja. Its use is a powerful political favor to bestow on others, since there is rarely a shortage of influential lords wishing to be cured from ills or lingering injuries. The spell's rarity makes it unusual for it to be used on the battlefield, but when that does happen, it can bring a samurai back from the very brink of death, granting him a second chance to affect the battle.

### RISE, WATER

A powerful expression of raw Elemental power, this spell and its comparable spells from the other Elements are used primarily in combat. The prodigious speed and strength of a Water-based Elemental construct make it a dangerous opponent, especially when combined with its ability to affect the terrain around it. Since it is made of Water, the powerful kami has no problem moving itself on or through aquatic obstacles, making it particularly useful in battles at sea – it can easily scuttle entire ships or drag their crews overboard. Yoritomo shugenja are fond of altering this spell to make the summoned kami look like an Orochi, striking even greater terror in their enemies.





## Secrets in the Tide: The Nature of Water Kami

In Rokugan, shugenja are the main source of magic, but they are not imbued with any kind of power in themselves. Rather, their power derives from their ability to communicate with the Elemental kami, the spirits in all things. Through prayers and beseeching, shugenja coax the kami into producing spell effects, but this is only possible after long years of training to learn the proper forms and codes. Understanding the different Elemental kami is therefore of prime importance for anyone trying to become a talented spell caster.

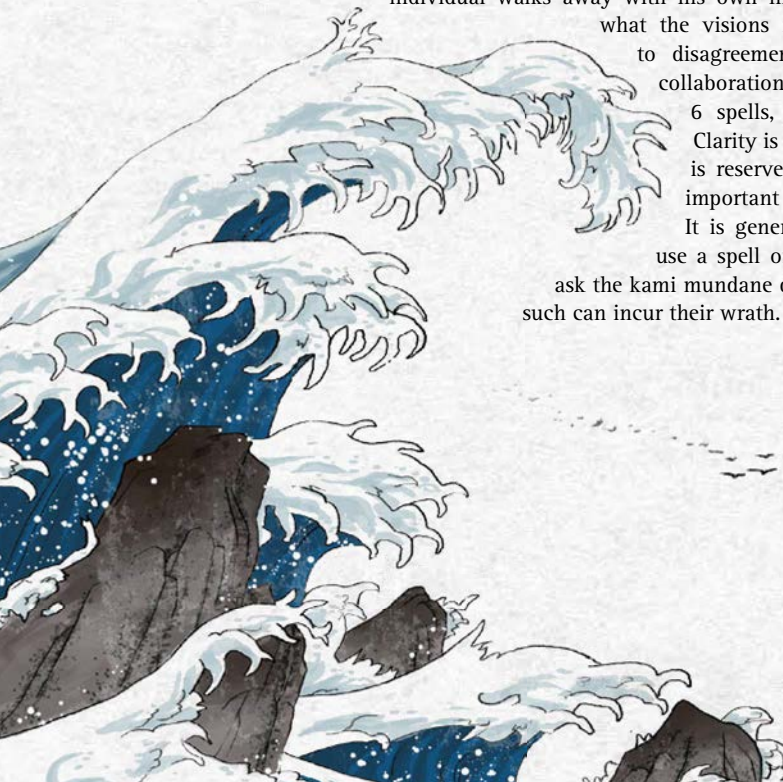
It is difficult to precisely define the Water kami, for more than any others they are defined by their ability to change. Liquid water fits its container, and the Water kami similarly adapt to their environment or change based on whatever mood takes them. They can be peaceful one moment and wrathful the next, often for seemingly no reason. For them, change is enjoyable for its own sake, and they rarely stay in the same state of being for long. This colors their view of the world as well: change, movement, and emotion are likely to attract their attention, while stillness, death, and self-controlled hearts are much less noticeable to them. Water is also a nurturing element, supporting life in all its natural forms, and the Element is strongly present in all plants and animals. The Water kami relish life, especially since it always brings change – growth and motion – with it. Consequently, Water kami focus on living things much more than on physical items (or other Elements). Many Water kami are also well traveled; although they do not travel quite so freely as the unstable Air kami, many of them are in almost constant movement, flowing from mountain tops down to the sea, rising from the bottom of the ocean into the clouds above, and then returning from the skies back to the earth as rain. Thus many of them have seen much of the world over the course of their endless existence, granting them a wisdom which may not be apparent at first, like the depths of a dark lake.

The way the Water kami consider change also affects how they perceive time. Since change is the true nature of things to them, the Water kami tend to see the past and the future as just two different versions of the same moment, combined through the endless transformation of all things. This means their memory is virtually infinite and perfect, yet at the same time they have difficulty distinguishing between time periods beyond the barest concepts of past, present, and future.

Aside from battles, the only prominent use of this spell is in the notorious “avatar duels” in which high-ranking shugenja use their summoned kami to battle each other by proxy. Despite the generally peaceful repute of Water shugenja, in an avatar duel their summoned kami fight as ferociously as any others.

### WATER'S SWEET CLARITY

Divination has never been an exact art in Rokugan. False prophets have been all too common in Rokugan's history, abusing the credulity of the people by pretending to receive visions, or making extravagant claims for the divinatory power of Water. This spell is not perfect, but it does let the caster ask a specific question and gain three clearly separate visions to guide him, making it more flexible and powerful than most other ways of predicting the future. Very importantly, it also allows others to see the same visions, although this often means that each individual walks away with his own interpretation of what the visions meant, leading to disagreement rather than collaboration. Like all Rank 6 spells, Water's Sweet Clarity is rare and its use is reserved for the most important of occasions. It is generally unwise to use a spell of this power to ask the kami mundane questions, since such can incur their wrath.





## Communing With the Water Kami

Attracting the attention of the Water kami is not particularly difficult, since they appreciate mortals for their powerful emotions and their ability to constantly change themselves, each other, and their environment. However, it is harder to keep up with the Water kami after communication has been established, since their mood changes so unpredictably. Many young shugenja are delighted with how easily the Water kami answer their entreaties, only to be crushed by disappointment when the kami take offense at something seemingly innocuous, or simply change their mood and become uncooperative. This can be extremely frustrating, since any attempt to match the Water kami's changing mood is doomed to failure, not mentioning mentally unsettling for the shugenja. Therefore, most Water shugenja favor maintaining a calm and steady manner when dealing with the Water kami, avoiding getting carried away by their changes of emotion. This has the added effect of triggering the kami's curiosity, since a composed face masks the truth of the shugenja's intentions – exactly like the Water kami themselves. Thus, shugenja who spend a lot of time communing with Water kami often become adept at appearing quite relaxed while experiencing very strong internal emotions. This is especially true of the Isawa shugenja, who tend to be particularly affected by the nature of their favored Element.

Another particular feature of the Water kami, which makes communicating with them quite unique, is their total lack of any vocalization. Water kami exchange information solely through the use of images which appear reflected on the kami's outer surface. This trait can be of tremendous use to shugenja, since it can give them a clear picture of past events without the need to interpret the kami's words. However, the images carry no sound or smell, and are shown from the angle of the kami's vantage, all of which can make them very deceptive. What looks like an argument between two samurai might actually be a lovers' dispute or a theatrical performance. Shugenja also have no clear way to know if the Water kami have understood their requests correctly, since the spirits interpret time and place in different ways than humans do.

## Enticing the Water Kami

As incarnations of change, the Water kami rarely ask twice for the same favor, making it quite difficult for a shugenja to reliably entice them into stronger performance. However, they also communicate their desires more readily, using their unique ability to create visual images to give a clear idea of what they want from others. The kami of Water enjoy motion, and frequently ask a shugenja who seeks their favor to facilitate the flow of water in the local environment – this could be anything from removing a branch stuck in a stream to destroying a dam or some other major obstacle. (Indeed, a few historians have suggested that certain geographical features of the Empire, such

### PLACES OF POWER – WATER

Some locations are particularly attuned to a particular Element, resulting in both more kami of that type and more powerful kami. GMs who wish to add more depth and flavor to magic in their campaigns may choose to make it easier to cast Water spells in such locations, reducing the TN of the Spell Casting Roll by 5 (or even more in the case of places that are particularly powerful in Water). For the Water kami, the following locations are especially powerful:

- ☉ The ocean, which contains the most powerful Water kami of all – although the sheer strength of the kami in the ocean can sometimes overwhelm an unprepared spellcaster.
- ☉ Lakes and rivers – often, a river or lake will have an especially potent Water kami which identifies itself with that body of water and takes its name. A shugenja who can commune with such a spirit can potentially learn what is happening throughout that body of water, no matter how large it may be.
- ☉ Places where there is heavy rainfall or water-logged ground (marshes, rice paddies, and so forth).
- ☉ Areas which have been recently flooded or otherwise been inundated with water, although these places gradually lose their potency as time passes.
- ☉ Temples dedicated to Water-aligned Fortunes or entities, such as Suitengu or the Water Dragon.
- ☉ Places that have a strong tradition of being associated with Water, such as a sanctum used by a powerful Water Tensai like Isawa Tomo.



as lakes and rivers seemingly out of place, are the result of immense actions by shugenja who needed the help of the most powerful Water kami.) Since travel is also the purview of Water, pilgrimages can be acceptable offerings to the kami – anything from visiting a distant shrine dedicated to a Water-related Fortune to simply visiting the nearest village one has never seen before. Ronin, called “wave-men” for their rootless existence, are in some ways a symbol of this aspect of Water, although they are rarely aware of this spiritual connection. The bamboo “deer-scarer” water-clocks found in many Rokugani gardens also are symbols of motion and thus pleasing to the Water kami, who may ask for one to be built for their enjoyment. Water kami also appreciate growth and renewal, so acts which favor the flow of life are pleasing to them. Thus, things like eliminating a diseased animal before it infects others, watering plants affected by drought, or bringing food to a famished village could all earn their approval. Also, the Water kami's focus on perception and the senses can also be a way of earning their support – for example, some shugenja have been known to give up using one of







## PHYSICAL STRENGTH VERSUS THE STRENGTH OF WATER

OR, "HOW CAN THAT DIMINUTIVE PRIEST BE AS STRONG AS HIDA KISADA?"

In Rokugan, magic is intimately tied to the nature of the Elements. The more a shugenja's qualities reflect those of a specific Element, the easier time he will have coaxing the kami of that Element to follow his wishes and create spell effects for him. All Elements are expressed in mortals through both a physical and a mental aspect, and this is represented in the Legend of the Five Rings game system by having the Rank of a character's Rings be equal to the lower of its pair of Traits. For Water, these Traits are Perception and Strength. However, the presence of Strength can lead to oddities involving the nature of Water shugenja, whose pure and peaceful natures nonetheless are accompanied by Strength Ranks as high as a Crab *sumai* wrestler. The thought of a modest healer possessing the swollen biceps of a thuggish warrior can be more than a little strange... and indeed, the art of L5R seldom depicts Water shugenja in this way. How then to resolve this discrepancy? Herewith some suggestions:

A character's strength is not necessarily mere muscle. It could just as easily be born from mystical development, a consequence of his Water rather than the source of it. Perhaps the Water kami lend power to the character, allowing him to perform great feats despite his apparent lack of physical strength.

Even if a high Strength is purely physical, it need not be represented solely as massive bulk. A Water shugenja might have a leaner frame but still be quite strong, much like a lightweight boxer from our own world. Scout characters would also fall into this category.

Water is the Element of movement, so a high Strength Trait might reflect how good the character is at applying his strength through movement rather than being a raw physical measurement. Being able to strike swiftly and precisely can produce the same results as striking with brutal force, after all, and reveals an understanding of the ways of Water just as much as physical prowess would do.



their senses for a time in order to impress the Water kami with their devotion.

Water kami are connected to the process of purification, and thus are fond of the correct rites used to restore the spiritual balances of individuals and places. Water is used in many rituals to physically and spiritually cleanse an item or individual – for example, a samurai entering a shrine will always wash his hands and mouth with water to avoid spiritually contaminating the place. (This sort of ritual reaches its greatest extreme after a battle, when samurai who are covered in blood and filth will undergo

rituals of washing and purification to cleanse any spiritual pollution.) Similarly, when a katana is completed or is about to be used for seppuku, it is ritually washed with clear water, purifying the spirit of the blade. Although such rituals are usually not performed by a shugenja (except in the most important cases), they retain important religious meanings all the same. Given all these things, it is easy to see how important the act of purification is to the Water kami, who view it as an aspect of change which restores the balance of the world. A shugenja looking to curry their favor will gain much respect through acts like re-consecrating a temple, washing the dirt away from a shrine, or providing appropriate funerary rites to an abandoned corpse lest it disturb the local spirits. An eccentric Dragon shugenja was once known to consult the Water kami in his steam bath, saying that it was only there he could reach complete purity – a claim which is at least partially supported by the renowned spiritual virtues of Rokugan's natural hot springs.

Needless to say, the Water kami – like all natural Elemental kami – despise the Shadowlands Taint and the malignant kansen spirits which carry it. The Water kami have an especial dislike for the Taint (exceeded only by the hostility of the Earth kami), seeing it as the worst sort of impurity; they will eagerly ask for it to be purged from any area they oversee. The spread of the Taint is one of the few forms of change which Water does not condone, and the Water kami always appreciate those who stop it.

## Water Kami and Other Spirits

Given their curious outlook and malleable nature, the Water kami are very interested in their cousins from the other Elements, and frequently seek contact with them. Of course, this does not mean they understand them any better, since their fundamental behavior and outlook remain entirely different. Rather, the Water kami are simply more enthusiastic about communicating and cooperating with other kami; shugenja believe this is why spells like Silent Waters and The Path not Taken are possible.

Water and Air usually interact well, since they are the two Elements necessary for all forms of life to thrive, and the Air kami's mischievous attitude complements the curiosity of the Water kami. They both appreciate information, but the Air kami are more instinctual in their understanding, while the Water kami are more perceptive. The Air kami are also very talkative, while the Water kami do not speak at all, so while they communicate with each other frequently they do not always actually understand each other – not that this has ever stopped them from trying. Air without Water becomes dry and harsh, the wind of the desert, bringing nothing but dust and death. By contrast, when Air and Water are well balanced, clouds form and rain falls in regular patterns, as the Air kami invite the Water spirits to join them for a time in order to share their secrets. However, if the spirits of the two Elements come into conflict, wind and rain turn into violent storms, devastating the land instead of nurturing



it. It is a delicate and unpredictable balance between the two, and shugenja believe this is why the weather is so difficult to predict.

The relationship between the Earth and Water kami is an asymmetric one. Water spirits appreciate Earth spirits for giving them a semblance of form and shape, without which they would often go nowhere; after all, rivers need mountains and hills in order to flow through the land. Earth kami, on the other hand, find the transformative nature of the Water kami impossible to understand, since it is completely inimical to their own stolid ways. When Water becomes too agitated or eager, it carries Earth with it despite the latter's will, creating mudslides and landslides which reshape the land in dramatic ways. At the same time, without Water the Earth becomes truly fixed, unable to support life such as forests and fields. In the view of most Earth spirits, things are best when the two Elements exist side by side without interacting, although some Earth kami recognize the potential for new strength in change and growth, silently accepting the Water kami necessary for this.

Water and Fire are opposed in their nature and these two types of kami rarely coexist. Water kami have no actual dislike for the Fire kami, but where Water nurtures and changes, Fire simply consumes and destroys. Ironically, when the two Elements contact each other it is usually Fire which disappears, smothered by the overwhelming

strength of Water. Only the strongest fires, such as those from a smithy or a volcano, can resist the touch of Water; when this happens Water turns to vapor, unable to coexist with its fundamental opposite. Water can sometimes benefit from Fire, since in the complete absence of Fire the Water kami lose their energy and turn into the dormant form: ice. Another rare time where Fire actually joins with Water is during thunderstorms, when rain is accompanied by strikes of lightning. Shugenja theorize that Fire is attracted by the storm's conflict between Air and Water, and encourages the battle's intensity and energy by striking through the storm.

## Water and Elemental Imbalances

Shinsei taught Rokugan about the five Elements which comprise everything in the material world. He also taught that balance should be sought in all things, including the Elements both within and without, lest the body and mind become distorted. This is true for people and animals, for living creatures and physical objects; when the Elements are out of balance, ill consequences are sure to follow. Of course, less spiritual people in Rokugan do not always recognize the Elements are the cause of their suffering, but the educated and enlightened know better.







## WATER IMBALANCES IN CREATURES

A lack of Water in an individual can manifest in a number of ways, depending on the person in question and the exact nature of the imbalance. When a Water imbalance affects the mental faculties, the most common effect is a dulling of the senses. The victim sees, hears, smells, and tastes with less acuity than before, losing the ability to process the information around him or to notice changes in the environment. This often leads such a person to lose interest in the world at large, becoming reclusive or apathetic. Such behavior is unfitting for samurai and *heimin* alike, since indolence is always improper. In old age, a decline in Water often leads to a partial or complete loss of sight or hearing, signifying the end of an active life and the approach of retirement and eventual death; few samurai can continue to properly serve their lord when their senses are impaired. The Rokugani see this diminishment as the result of Water slowly departing the dwindling Earth of the body. Animals can be similarly afflicted by old age, quickly falling prey to predators or their environment.

Too much Water in an individual's mind leads to a different effect: he becomes hypersensitive to external stimuli of any sort. This can lead to serious impairment, as such an imbalance can trigger symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, and nausea. (Some healers have also theorized that the condition of epilepsy is due to an excess of Water, as the victim cannot cope with bright light or other strong stimuli.) The low tolerance for noise and other strong sensory stimulation frequently leads the victims to become sullen and skittish, retreating from an active life in order to avoid being constantly exposed to painful experiences. Others misinterpret the sights and sounds

around them as warnings of peril, becoming skittish and easily startled. Animals suffering from similar conditions will often shun any contact with other creatures, and often endanger themselves out of fear, such as by running panicked from a perceived threat only to plummet to their death from a cliff.

Some Rokugani scholars have associated phobias with Water, blaming an excess of the Element for the mind's tendency to perceive a specific animal or situation as frightening regardless of circumstance; needless to say, phobias are heavily stigmatized in Rokugan, which views Fear as one of the Three Sins and Courage as one of the virtues of Bushido. Samurai affected by phobias must endure their suffering as discreetly as possible, lest they be dishonored and ruined by showing fear in public.

An imbalance on the physical side can also be debilitating. Without sufficient Water, an individual becomes slow and lacking in strength. Frail persons are seen as lacking enough Water, unable to move or change anything in their environment, making them ill-suited to the warrior's life. This sort of condition is viewed with particular disdain among the toughest warrior families, such as the Hida, the Ichiro, and the Matsu, whose training emphasizes brute strength and who often consider weakness of body to reflect weakness of character. Another symptom of deficient Water is difficulty running or even walking, and afflictions such as arthritis are believed to arise when Water in the body "dries up" and causes the joints to become rigid. This is also a problem for warriors in schools which teach movement-dependent techniques, such as the Yoritomo or the Usagi, since the required footwork and acrobatics become all but impossible. A lack of speed also makes one into a burden on the battlefield, where soldiers must constantly march and redeploy.

Animals with a lack of physical Water fall prey to predators or fail to catch prey themselves, thus dying quickly. (On the other hand, a lack of Water is a common affliction among the pampered pets of high-Status samurai.)

An excess of physical Water is found in those who cannot control their strength, breaking things when they just want to hold them, hurting those around them by accident. They lack any kind of subtlety and cannot be trusted with anything delicate. Their movements are ungraceful, and they frequently bump into things and people around them, lose their balance, or otherwise exhibit inexplicable clumsiness. Young adults sometimes have these problems, particularly







those who grow tall very quickly, and Rokugani physicians interpret this as the result of their growth in Water surging ahead of their other Elements, creating a temporary imbalance which maturity can correct. Animals in a similar situation are often unusually large specimens of their species and have difficulty handling their own size; their destructive accidents can be problems for local human populations.

## WATER IMBALANCES IN OBJECTS

The Element of Water is present in all liquids, whatever their specific nature or origin; even liquids which contain no “physical” water nonetheless contain the Element at the spiritual level, for without it there can be no flow or movement. Similarly, items which can move or alter their shape also include at least some of the Element of Water – this includes things like windmills, carts, or even clothing (other than armor). Very importantly, the Element of Water also imbues all food and drink, since it is through Water that life is sustained.

Naturally, the absence of Water has dire consequences on all physical objects. They become dry, stiff, and coarse. A kimono lacking Water will feel rough to the skin and will not fold as smoothly as it should. A door without Water will creak and rasp, and require more force to slide open. When food is cooked for too long, Fire drives out the Water, and what is left has little or no taste or nutritional value. Liquids whose Water is weakened turn sluggish, gooey, or outright solid. (The Rokugani understand ice to be a dormant form of Water, where the cold has reduced the activity of the kami to its weakest possible level.) Conversely, a surplus of Water means objects become unstable or impossible to contain. Liquids evaporate as their freedom of movement exceeds the ability of Earth and Air to hold them. Items of clothing with too much Water constantly shift and feel out of place, their nature rebelling against stillness. Items which are supposed to move, like wheels or mills, will do so too quickly and almost assuredly fall over or break as their Water overwhelms their Earth.

When the spirit of an item awakens through extended usage, magic, or other fortuitous events, it becomes a *nemuranai*. However, this also means the spirit of the item has a much more distinct personality, and an Elemental imbalance will affect it far more drastically. Without Water, a *nemuranai* loses its energy, its focus, and its precision. A sword might feel unbalanced, heavier than it should be, making it hard to handle with accuracy in a fight. A sake bottle which is never empty might be difficult to open and produce only low-quality drink. Conversely, an excess of Water might mean the item would move of its own volition for no specific reason. A weapon with too much Water would be almost too easy to swing, leading its wielder to flail about wildly and cause indiscriminate damage. Since Water is the Element of change, an imbalanced *nemuranai*'s abilities might start to change from one day to the next – dangerous if one has to rely on the item regularly.

## SPECIFIC WATER IMBALANCES IN CREATURES

*“The one weak in Water sees things that aren’t, and doesn’t see what is. His senses and mind lie to him, and he acts according to a reality others cannot see. The one too strong in Water sees and hears everything, every single detail. He becomes oblivious to the world at large, focused on minutiae only he can see.”*

– Kuni Mataemon’s *The Twists of False Madness*

This excerpt from Kuni Mataemon’s famous treatise on psychological illness describes the more extreme examples of what happens when Water is either severely lacking or found in great excess when compared to all other Elements. However, more specific effects can occur depending on which particular Element is being overshadowed by Water.

*Water over Air:* These two Elements usually exist in close relationship with each other, both having some influence over a mortal’s physical movement and emotional state. When Water overshadows Air, the individual interprets the moods of others around him incorrectly, seeing without truly feeling. This can lead to paranoia or recklessness, each with dire consequences. Physically, his movements lack the correct tempo and have no precision, making accomplishing such things as kata extremely difficult.

*Water over Fire:* Since Water and Fire are natural opposites, when Water is too strong this tends to directly reduce the individual’s Fire, rendering his movements clumsy and unbalanced. He has the ability to move but not the dexterity to do so properly, and may simply fall over like a toddler taking his first steps. The person’s wits are likewise slowed and he is easily distracted by his environment, frequently losing his train of thought and having to start over again.

*Water over Earth:* Individuals with this imbalance have tremendous strength but no staying power. Although capable of great prowess, they cannot sustain their efforts for more than a short time, and frequently suffer muscle or bone injury when exerting themselves to their maximum. Mentally, they tend to be superstitious and obsessive, seeing significance or danger where others can only see natural occurrences.





## Medicine in Rokugan

The Emerald Empire has studied the ways of medicine since its inception, attempting to find ways to help cure wounds and disease. In fact, this study began even before the Fall of the Kami, as the primitive tribes which predated Rokugan discovered a few simple treatments and remedies through trial and error. For example, they noticed that some foods and herbs improved their health, and each tribe usually had a healer who administered such curatives and shared his or her knowledge with apprentices. Nonetheless, much remained unknown, and many putative “cures” were mere superstition.

The first significant improvement to medical treatment came after the Kami fell from the Heavens and started sharing their divine knowledge with those who accepted their rule. Here as in many other fields of study, the Kami’s wisdom brought much improvement. Shiba in particular knew much about the ways in which natural plants could be used to treat or even cure physical ailments. The increased emphasis on hygiene – both Doji and Akodo insisted on the importance of regular bathing to keep the spirit and body clean and pure – also had a dramatic impact on the health and living conditions of the Empire’s citizens. Finally, the Little Teacher – Shinsei

himself – contributed to the advancement of medicine by sharing his understanding of the universe with the Kami. His comprehension of how the five Elements shaped everything in the world gave physicians a better understanding of how the body functioned, and they developed many new treatments based on this knowledge. Since those early years, medicine has improved gradually but significantly, and in modern Rokugan the samurai enjoy generally good health and physical condition. Based on the stories of the Unicorn, it appears Rokugan’s knowledge of medicine is greatly superior to the gaijin as well. However, medical knowledge is by no means perfect, and there are still many afflictions which baffle even the finest Rokugani physician.

The use of herbs and plants, known as *kampo*, is the foundation for most Rokugani medical treatments. Plants are collected and mixed to create various substances – powders, ointments, and drinks – and administered based on the physician’s questioning and examination of the patient. Samurai physicians have extensive writings and records to draw upon when diagnosing their patients and choosing the appropriate medicines. The greatest masters of *kampo* are the Kitsune, who have extensive knowledge of nature and access to many unique substances in the mysterious woods of the Kitsune Mori. Their chief rivals





in expertise are the Asako, who have practiced the art of medicine since the very founding of their family. However, the Shosuro boast the greatest knowledge of both poisons and antidotes, and maintain extensive gardens to serve the Empire's need for curatives (and, of course, to grow their own poisons).

The *heimin* also know of *kampo*, but their knowledge has evolved much less in the centuries since the dawn of the Empire and remains based mainly on simple traditions passed down orally within family lines (typically each village will have a family which practices healing and herbalism). The quality of *heimin* medicine tends to be better in cities, where the physicians have access to greater resources and can make considerable profit from their remedies... but cities also tend to have far more sickness, due to crowding and inferior sanitation.

Aside from *kampo*, another prominent form of medicine is acupuncture, which was pioneered by the Phoenix Clan as they learned about the flow of energies in the human body. Reserved almost entirely to the samurai caste, acupuncture helps treat disorders caused by internal imbalances, such as chronic pain or difficulty sleeping. Also, most physicians know how to treat typical physical injuries, such as setting broken bones or sewing up cuts with silken thread. However, Rokugani medicine is largely non-invasive, making it difficult to treat internal injuries except with spiritual methods like acupuncture.

A notable exception to all these patterns are the shugenja of the Kuni family, who have systematically researched both human and inhuman anatomy for centuries. This has made them the best in the Empire at treating direct physical injuries, and even enables them to perform a crude form of surgery. This is usually only employed in the most dire circumstances, however, since such procedures are extremely painful and dangerous, and generally have a low probability of success. The Kuni are also notable for being the only family to actually research and study the effects of mental illness, and have learned to differentiate between madness caused by the Taint and that caused by other afflictions. Of course, these studies are generally disturbing if not downright repulsive to the majority of Rokugani, making them unlikely to spread outside the Crab Clan.

The impact of magic on the practice of medicine should not be underestimated. The ability of many shugenja to mend wounds in a few moments is a huge advantage to the samurai caste, and wounded soldiers with access to magical treatment can often be fully recovered within a few days of a battle, dramatically improving their ability to serve their lords. However, the number of shugenja is limited, and often such treatment must be reserved for the most important samurai. Naturally, magical healing is almost never available to the common folk, which further deepens the social divide between the *heimin* and their rulers. This contributes to the tendency for commoners to view samurai as almost a different people entirely, since their lords often seem unaffected by illness and able to bounce back from injuries which would cripple or kill a peasant.

Magic has also had a positive effect on mundane medicine, since magical investigation has helped in gaining understanding of how the body functions and thus finding new methods of physical treatment. It is no surprise that shugenja most frequently learn the arts of healing, for the two fields support each other – and indeed are synonymous in the minds of many samurai. This has also given medicine in Rokugan a very religious tone, and it is not uncommon for even mundane curatives to be accompanied by prayers or blessings invoking the appropriate spirits and Fortunes. Shugenja are the ones most often called upon when urgent treatments are needed, and every lord will try to have a shugenja trained in medicine at his court.

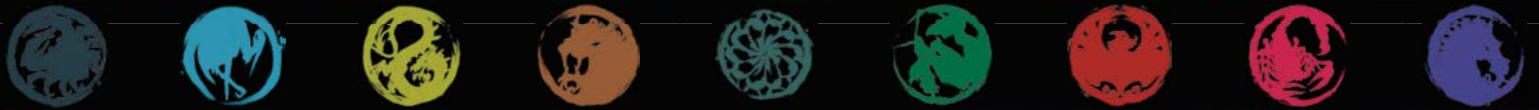




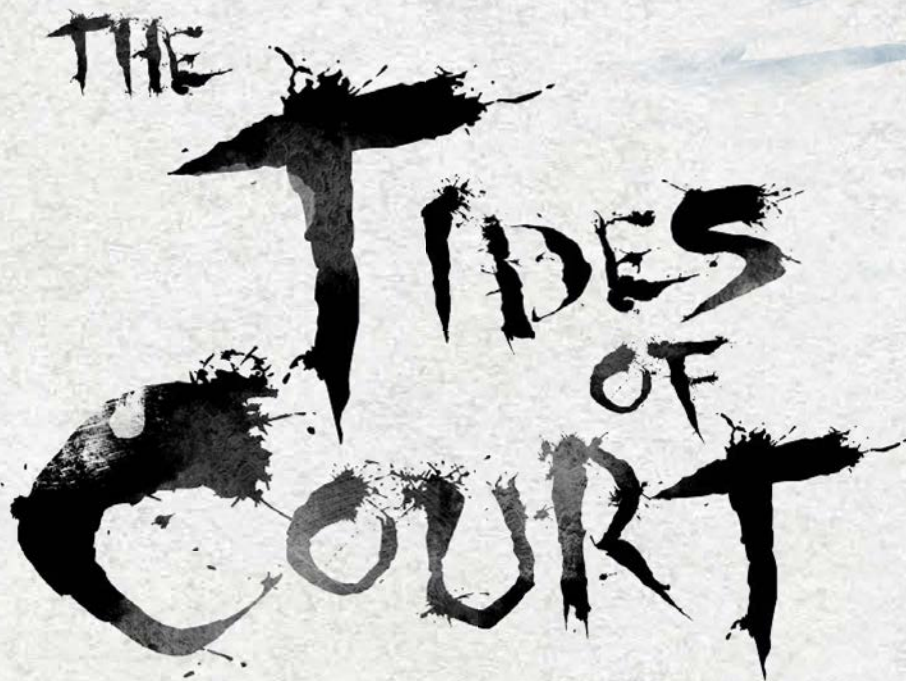


Chapter Three THE TIDES OF COURSE

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# THE TIDES OF COURT

On all sides rang the sounds of coinage, of coins being moved, being arranged, being counted, being shifted from hand to hand. Peasants scurried forward, delivering taxes in the form of bales of rice and other goods. Merchants dug strings of coins from beneath their obi, counting them out with obsequious care. Everyone kept their heads bowed very low, held speech to a minimum under the watchful eyes of the tax collectors and magistrates. The samurai were well-trained but tasked with a duty which the Empire considered a menial task at best and a wretched waste of talent at worst, and this knowledge made them both attentive and harsh. Of course, none would ever presume to complain about their duties in the hearing of the one who watched over it all with a narrow gaze and a thin, reedy smile.

Yoritomo Utemaro, Imperial Treasurer of Rokugan, chuckled softly to himself, running a finger over his chin. His current protégé, a woman of his clan, stood nearby making tabulations on a scroll and triple-checking the reports handed in by the tax collectors.

"It is a beautiful song, wouldn't you agree, Yoritomo-san?" Utemaro said in a quiet tone.

Yoritomo Yashinko sighed inwardly. This was the start of the same conversation they had held several times already.

In truth, she was not resentful of her duties helping ensure the Imperial Treasury was managed properly. She actually enjoyed much of the work she did here, and the lack of constant watching and prying eyes was a pleasant change from the days when she had represented her clan

in the Imperial Winter Court. Rivals were not constantly hovering around her, waiting to judge her for the slightest misstep. And as the Treasurer's second in command she was still able to put her impressive diplomatic talents to good use during negotiations for the processing of taxes and changes in the tax laws. She did not feel in any way unfulfilled.

But these moments when the Treasurer would start to wax eloquent about the beauty of gold in its own right, the glory of how the flow of money fueled the life of the Empire... they were tedious, banal, speaking to a sort of crude material greed she found both inexplicable and repellent.

Not for the first time, she wondered why he had selected her to be his assistant.


"I... agree there is a certain amount of beauty to a house well managed," she said distantly. It was the sort of response she usually offered, neutral and polite. In the back of her mind she was keeping track of how often she had used this particular phrase to start the conversation. This was what, the third time for this approach?

He did love to talk about koku. Unseemly even for one of their clan.

Utemaro laughed, a long laugh that somehow managed to sound tired. "A house well managed is a beautiful thing, yes, my dear," he said, his voice taking on the pontificating tone that was all too familiar to her. "But I meant the feel of the ebb and flow to the court."







Yashinko raised an eyebrow, surprised despite herself. This was the last place she would ever have referred to as a 'court,' even in the hearing of one of those degraded Spider Clan creatures the Empress seemed to favor of late. Still, she held her tongue for a moment, considering how to respond. The Imperial Treasurer was one of the Empress' Chosen, far beyond her own social status. One had to be very careful when broaching a disagreement with such a person, even if one was a favored protégé. Finally she ventured, "Perhaps you would care to explain, my lord?"

"Look upon it all, Yoritomo-san," he said. From the glint in his eye she suspected he knew perfectly well how she disapproved of his attitudes... and did not care in the least. After all, her opinions did not matter so long as she served ably. "Here you can see the constant changes, the fluctuations laid bare. The court itself lives and breathes the air of the kami, but its lifeblood is the wealth of the Empire. As we watch, we can see the shifts and the eddies and the flows. We watch as each year the clans scramble to make good on their promises to fulfill the changes I have put into place. Each year, we can see the shifts in their codes, their laws, how they manage themselves. We watch them respond, finding their own tactful ways to ensure they give to the Empress her due while protecting their own interests. It is an eternal dance, shifting and flowing, like the changing of the tides."

"Some, my lord, might call that chaos."

"The unenlightened might," he agreed, a slight barb in his voice. Doubtless he saw her as one of those unenlightened. Was that what this was all about? Trying to get her to embrace his viewpoint, perhaps so he could entrust her with more of the Treasury's functions? "But I do not see chaos. I see the mutability of all things, the ebb and flow of the tides of men, no different than the ways of the court. Not chaos but simply the reality that all is transient, shifting, flowing. The world cannot remain stable and unchanging forever, and it is foolish to try to test one's strength and wrestle it into place. No, it is our duty to learn the ways of those changing tides and ride upon them."

"An apt metaphor, I suppose," she conceded. "But some might say you were reading too much into a simple thing like the exchange of taxes." And she might be one of those people, Yashinko thought, especially when subjected to his wearisome speeches. It almost made her yearn for a quiet lecture on sculpting from her husband.

"If I might draw upon a monk's perspective for a moment... it is in the most humble of things that we see the pattern of all creation," Utemaro lectured. Before she could make a shocked or affronted sound at that remark – really, to presume to use a monk's piety to speak about finances! – he continued on. "Every year, the negotiations of trade and commerce, the collection and distribution of taxes passes through the key cities in the spring courts. There are entire cities devoted to the purpose along the main trade routes. With every passage and shift of commerce, with every murmur I hear, I can see the tides moving in one direction or another. A famine in the Crab lands, plenty in the lands of the Kitsune, audacity in the ranks of the Lion, everyone's plans for the future. Each of these can be seen in the flow of wealth and trade, seen ahead of time through the shifts they make in each clan's relations and expenses. This can be seen in many places, but here – in the passage of their produce through the hands of the Treasury – we are able to see it much more directly, to know its complete ebb and flow."

The lecture had moved into unfamiliar ground, and Yashinko realized he was waiting for a prompt. Obediently she supplied it. "And the value of this perception?"

"Ultimately, the ability to know that the world will change and shift is meaningless if it cannot be then used to help predict, to prepare, to ease our passage across the seas of the courts." Utemaro sounded almost indecently triumphant. "The ability to see so far in advance... would you not say it would give you much knowledge of the true ways of the court?"

Yashinko blinked, realizing that for the first time her superior had given her something to think about. It made her feel somehow as though she had been defeated. "As usual, my lord, you have a singular wisdom," she managed, bowing her head before returning to her work. Behind her, the Treasurer permitted his smile to expand.





# The Courtly Philosophy of Water

Water is considered to be one of the more prominent and broad-based fields of study within the philosophies of the courtly arts. Although the ways of Water are not considered to be as pre-eminent as the schools of Air, there are few political masters of the Doji or the Shosuro who will easily discount the capacities of one trained in Water's philosophy. Indeed, there are some within the shadowed halls of the courts who are privately convinced the schools of Water are in fact the more effective of the two paths, though they do not say such things too loudly.

Water approaches the entire process of the courtly arts in a unique way. The Element does show some superficial similarity to Air, but where the schools of Air are those who listen to the whispers of the soul, who attune themselves to the flow of the court and dance through it like the wind dances among the bell chimes at a temple, Water is reactive. A practitioner of a Water school seeks to see all there is within the courts, but not necessarily to be one with it. By understanding what is coming, a courtier of Water is able to react with an almost alarming rapidity, to the point where it may seem to the untrained eye as if he actually moved first. Thus while both types of schools approach the path to understanding the court by studying those around them, Air surrounds itself with the court and envelops itself in its practices, while Water remains apart from the political process, separated and prepared to react to it. There are many lengthy debates over whether one approach is more effective – or more respectful of Rokugan's court traditions – than the other.

While the approaches of Earth may seem quite different from those of Water, there are more similarities than one might think beneath the surface. Earth and Water schools are both taught a patience that is seldom seen in the Air and Fire schools. Their approaches depend upon being able to sit back and observe rather than interact, watching others rather than shaping events with their own actions. Thus, the chief difference between the two is not in how they interact with the courts on a basic level but in how they handle a crisis. Where the schools of Earth are practiced in the art of enduring all hardship and remaining true to oneself and one's duties, Water is taught ways to adapt, to flow around any obstructions in the same way as a stream flows around stones in a creek-bed. The Earth path is not reactive but simply tries to maintain its own perspective and position, whereas the Water path is always ready to move beyond its own assumptions and slip into new positions wherever needed.

Fire and Water, as one might expect, bear little in common with each other in any field, including the courts. Fire schools are pro-active, building up counter-measures, plans, and additional resources. The path of Fire is one of resource management, of carefully built stratagems; it looks toward the future and prepares the knowledge necessary to implement its plans. This is the opposite of Water, whose

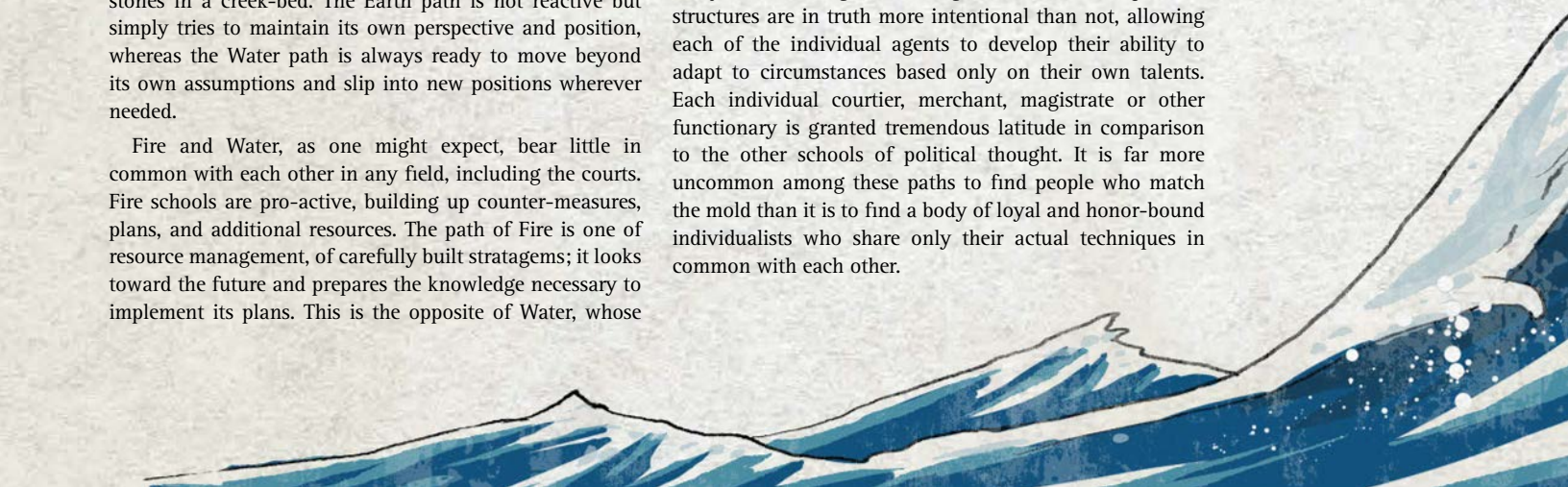
reactive nature focuses on the immediate and not on the long-term. Arguably, the schools of Water are unable to actually perceive the world in the same way those of Fire do. Perhaps the only true commonality between the two approaches is that there is a certain scholastic bent to both of them. But while both of them study, Fire's knowledge comes in the form of lore, academic research, and deep knowledge of what has come before, while Water studies what is going on in its immediate vicinity, what is happening around it in the courts. Exhaustive research into forgotten lore is never the choice of practitioners of the ways of Water.

Ultimately, the Schools of Water rely upon adaptation as their main form of approach to almost all circumstances within the courts. This may not be spoken of as their main teaching (as can be seen when considering the school of the Kitsuki, for example), but it is nonetheless at the core of all Water-based courtly schools. It relies upon a single base assumption that permeates everything within these schools and is completely unavoidable when interacting with them – the one immutable and constant aspect found within Water, and its one true similarity with Fire.

Everything changes.

It seems almost banal how basic an assumption this is, and yet it lies at the heart of both Fire and Water philosophies. Each relies upon this notion that everything is in a near constant state of flux, but each does so in a very different way. Fire is the Element of change, and Fire-based philosophy assumes everything changes because it is enacting these changes by exerting its own plans on the courts. The Paths of Fire rely not only upon the scholarship they share with Water but also upon specialization, seizing complete control over one particular aspect of a courtly setting. Fire builds and creates, then burns down and re-creates. It is the agent by which change occurs, opposed by Earth, which generally seeks to keep tradition constant, and by Air, which seeks not to be consumed in the process of change. But where Fire seeks to create, to destroy, to alter, and to build, Water has no interest in any of these things in themselves. Indeed, practitioners of Water like the Kitsuki and Yasuki are notable for their lack of any large-scale bureaucratic organizations.

Where Fire desires to comprehend all in order to let its plans move forward unhindered, Water takes a very different approach. Each of its individual students must be able to adapt to almost any situation. They must be able to switch their mode of thought whenever the situation demands it, unhindered by the limitations of academic study. The seeming lack of organization in their political structures are in truth more intentional than not, allowing each of the individual agents to develop their ability to adapt to circumstances based only on their own talents. Each individual courtier, merchant, magistrate or other functionary is granted tremendous latitude in comparison to the other schools of political thought. It is far more uncommon among these paths to find people who match the mold than it is to find a body of loyal and honor-bound individualists who share only their actual techniques in common with each other.





Perhaps this individuality is why so many of the other schools tend to scoff at the paths of Water. The idea of nurturing an individual spirit is generally perceived in Rokugan as a source of folly (outside of the Dragon Clan), encouraging selfish ego that interferes in a samurai's proper duties. There is no denying that the followers of Water have the ability to enter almost any political arena and produce the same general effectiveness, regardless of what the issue at hand might be. However, their ability to swiftly adapt to different situations and react to changing circumstances also means they are sometimes seen as lacking the specialized knowledge of the true court master. Most students of Water are firm believers in avoiding being too deeply entrenched in only one field of study, for if they are to perceive and adapt they must be ready to accomplish this in many different areas. The classic Yasuki merchant who plies his trade in almost every port of the Empire, seemingly equally at home in all of them, is the classic example of this approach. Between their unorthodox approaches, their often uncanny perception into what is going on around them, and their ability to act in a wide variety of fields, it is rare to actually see a follower of the courtly path of Water truly surprised. Moreover, they have the advantage of being frequently under-estimated. Most of Water's courtly paths are considered at least a little unorthodox by the standards of the Empire at large – particularly so in the case of the Kitsuki – and the Rokugani are prone to dismissing what they do not understand.

## The Daidoji Family

*"Some deeds are so necessary that success is their redemption."* – Daidoji Kikaze, Family Daimyo

The Daidoji have one of the most unenviable jobs in the Empire: they are tasked with protecting one of the most stubborn, difficult, and troublesome groups of samurai which has ever walked the face of the earth. The Crane are the Empire's icons of honor, purity, perfection, beauty,

and artistry. They are the glorious and noble upholders of Rokugan's culture, a culture built by the wisdom of the kami Doji and Hantei Genji, son of Hantei himself. They directly symbolize and embody all that is worthy of respect in Rokugan. And despite the grumbling of other clans about the Crane Clan's over-inflated sense of pride and importance, none deny that the Crane are the ideal to which every samurai aspires, their beauty the direct symbol of all that the Empire seeks to build and preserve.

As far as the Daidoji are concerned, there is only one problem with this picture: It is all a lie.

This is not to say the Crane's vision can never be achieved. The Kakita make marvelous gestures toward perfection in every generation. The Doji, masters of the courtly path of Air, protect the Empire's culture and share the most glorious and beautiful gardens and palaces with all their guests. The Asahina are among the only true pacifists in the entire Empire. The Crane maintain friendships in every other clan, even those who are their most bitter rivals. Every Crane has allies who owe him their lives, livelihoods, and the future success of their children. If the Doji were to ever demand the repayment of all their favors, they could well bankrupt the rest of Rokugan. All these things are true.

The lie is that all this can be done without ever sullyng honor, without ever being forced to adjust to circumstances or adapt to new situations. The Daidoji know better.

After the departure of the Yasuki in the fourth century, the Daidoji become the Crane family which does what must be done. Sometimes, indeed, they take this principle to an unhealthy extreme (as seen in the Harrier organization). More often, however, this is simply a willingness to stoop to levels the rest of the Crane find offensive. While the Doji listen to the breath of the courts and dance upon its winds, the Daidoji watch their cousins' backs, ready to move in and protect their betters whenever the court turns against the Crane Clan's favor. They supply the resources and information the rest of the clan cannot, and they react swiftly whenever there is a dangerous change in circumstances.

Rare is the true Daidoji courtier, but it is equally rare for any Crane diplomat or lord to lack a Daidoji advisor, preferably one with connections to the family's Trading Council. The Daidoji also are the preferred choice for court yojimbo, guarding the physical bodies of their lords and masters while silently watching the political proceedings. Such men and women are always versed not only in iaijutsu but also in the essentials of the courtly arts. They are required to know a little bit about everything and to maintain both keen eyes and keen ears, ensuring their charges are never caught out by unexpected events. The Daidoji also run the Crane Clan's small but efficient spy network, collecting information from all over the Empire and quietly funneling it to the Doji and Kakita... without ever requiring those individuals to know how it was gained in the first place.

Outside of an actual Daidoji court, it is exceptionally rare to see these individuals taking the lead of negotiations. Even the leaders of the Trading Council, who listen to the winds of commerce with the same attention as their Doji cousins listen to the courts, rely also on the patience and observation of Water. A Daidoji always prefers to be the





silent and easily-ignored aide or guard standing just behind the Doji. Every once in a while, they will offer a subtle gesture, a rolled-up scroll, or a quiet word of advice – and if their charge is wise, such guidance will be heeded. In this way the Daidoji allow their clan to utilize the adaptability of Water without ever admitting it in public. It is a thankless job but one they do not shirk, since without them the Crane Clan pearl might lose its shine forever.

## The Kitsuki Family

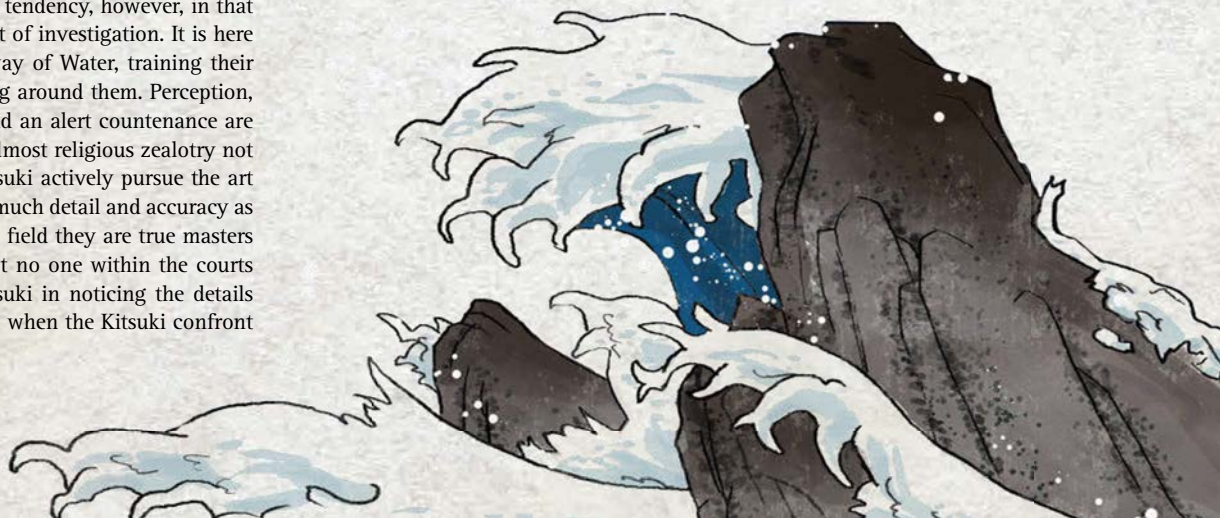
*“The eyes of the Kitsuki see all. No dishonor will blind us, no injustice will remain uncorrected.” – Kitsuki Berii*

While it may be said of the Dragon Clan in general that Fire is its predominant Element, the same cannot truly be said of the Kitsuki family's studies and practices. All of the Dragon embrace study and scholarship almost to the same level as in the Phoenix Clan, but it is a diffused scholarship, the broad-based education of the samurai warrior-poet. Part of this strange lack of focus is derived from the clan's policy not to force any of its members to adhere to a pre-set notion of what a samurai (or a courtier) is meant to be. The Dragon see the pursuit of samurai excellence and religious enlightenment as an individual quest. Pragmatically, the leadership of the clan are aware of where a particular samurai is more valuable, and would not (for example) send an expert on the study of koi ponds and the aesthetics of gardening to discuss gaijin relations with the Unicorn. However, the clan has always left its samurai to their own devices in terms of personal betterment and development, and denies that the role of a samurai is 'one size fits all' as other clans do. This effectively means that individuality is nurtured among the Dragon to an extent that shocks other samurai, and many a Dragon has taken up profoundly strange practices and personal choices to pursue his own understanding of the universe. Of course, the notorious tattooed men are the most perfect exemplification of this tendency, but all Dragon exhibit it to at least some extent. (Indeed, from an outside perspective, perhaps the oddest Dragon are those who possess no oddity whatsoever. These strangely normal individuals are viewed as curiosities and often attract disproportionate attention from others who try to learn where their expected eccentricity actually lies.)

The Kitsuki diverge from this tendency, however, in that all of them are trained in the art of investigation. It is here that the family embraces the way of Water, training their senses to be aware of everything around them. Perception, a keen eye, a studious mind, and an alert countenance are sought by the Kitsuki with an almost religious zealotry not seen in any other clan. The Kitsuki actively pursue the art of perceiving the world with as much detail and accuracy as possible, and indeed within this field they are true masters of the path of Water, for almost no one within the courts of the Empire can best the Kitsuki in noticing the details of the world around them. Thus when the Kitsuki confront

changes in their environment they are among the first to react and do so with far greater effectiveness than even the other practitioners of Water.

Aside from their nigh-obsessive focus on the art of Perception, the Kitsuki generally adhere to the broader Dragon tradition of eclecticism. This actually often serves to their advantage, allowing them to combine the diverse knowledge of broad studies with their intense focuses on scrutiny and investigation. The average Kitsuki diplomat or magistrate is not only skilled at noticing almost everything around him but also is frequently able to draw on his other knowledge to recognize the significance of what he sees. A Kitsuki may not know as much as, say, the Phoenix might on a specific topic, but he can usually recognize the purpose of an action or object, see it well before it is brought into play, and be able to make at least some level of response to its presence. This sort of general ability to respond is why the Kitsuki are often under-estimated outside of their chosen field of investigation. Few within the Empire recognize how quickly the family's representatives can react to almost anything, and many who have tried to surprise a Kitsuki within the courts have found themselves in much deeper trouble than they would ever have expected.







## The Yasuki Family

*"We are not warriors, scouts, engineers or priests. In order to carry our share of the Crab's burden, we must ensure that all our kinsmen have the funds to do as they see necessary, no matter the cost."*  
— Yasuki Tono

The Yasuki are the grand exception to the general rule of Crab politics. In part this derives from the fact that the Yasuki are not originally of Crab stock, but even so their origins with the Crane would not intrinsically suggest theirs should be a path of Water. The "Black Cranes" might be assumed to have all the aspects of the paths of Air, yet nothing could be further from the truth. In many respects, the Yasuki have always stood alone. Their attitudes and perspectives are distinctly their own, and are as ancient and traditional as those found in either of the clans to which they have sworn fealty over the course of history. Perhaps this is why the Yasuki have always had a somewhat rocky and difficult relationship with their overarching masters, both in the Crane and the later Crab. They simply do not fit in with either clan, though they have been loyal vassals to the Crab for centuries.

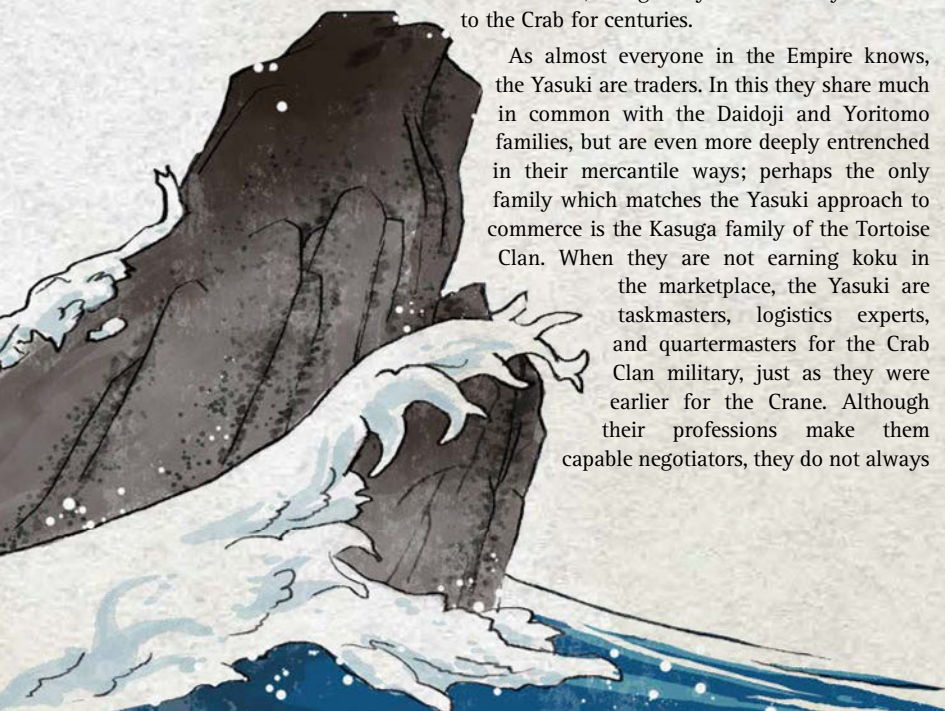
As almost everyone in the Empire knows, the Yasuki are traders. In this they share much in common with the Daidoji and Yoritomo families, but are even more deeply entrenched in their mercantile ways; perhaps the only family which matches the Yasuki approach to commerce is the Kasuga family of the Tortoise Clan. When they are not earning koku in the marketplace, the Yasuki are taskmasters, logistics experts, and quartermasters for the Crab Clan military, just as they were earlier for the Crane. Although their professions make them capable negotiators, they do not always

play the role of courtier due to the ill repute in which they are held by many of the Empire's other families (especially those of the Crane). Shugenja are not unheard of in Yasuki ranks, but their numbers are few even by the standards of other courtly families, and some critics have suggested the Yasuki family's mercantile attitudes drive away the favor of the kami. The Yasuki generally find such insinuations humorous, ignoring such sniping and focusing on keeping gold flowing into Yasuki coffers to feed Crab troops. In the Yasuki view, money speaks far more loudly than mere words.

The Yasuki are a family that epitomizes Water's aspect of flexibility. More than any other family in the Empire, they are masters at the art of adapting to new situations, and this is a large part of how they have survived so long through so many difficulties. They have belonged to two different clans on multiple occasions, have seen two separate civil wars over their leadership, and helped create the Empire's currency and tax codes. In the midst of famines, wars, invasions from the Shadowlands, and countless other disasters, they have always been able to successfully build their markets and peddle their wares. No matter what sort of crisis might arise, the Yasuki always seem to know how to profit from it.

The secret to the Yasuki's success is rooted in how they follow the Path of Water. While most Rokugani see the world as a largely static and unchanging place, the Yasuki regard it as fluid, dynamic, and ever-changing. Even the threat from the Shadowlands is not a constant unchanging thing, but goes through periods of great activity and of relative silence, creating different demands on the clan and its quartermasters. Markets across the Empire shift and change unpredictably, driven by weather, the harvest, local fads, political feuds, wars, and innumerable other factors. The Yasuki learned very early in their history to react quickly to the latest trends, and in the process they developed the one constant in their approach, the core of their philosophy: Everyone wants something.

No Yasuki will ever tell another samurai this to his face, of course, for to do so would be tantamount to saying the samurai embraces the sin of Desire. Even the Scorpion have the decency to not openly admit they traffic in the world of the Three Sins. However, regardless of public wording, the Yasuki live and breathe the world of Desire every single day. They are masters of people-watching, carefully assessing others' wishes and hidden wants. The Kitsuki may be superior at ferreting out the lies of others, the Scorpion may know how to unearth shameful secrets from individual targets, but the Yasuki are second to none in their ability to learn what whole groups and organizations want and need. They can watch an entire roomful of samurai, observing the arguments, facial expressions, and body language of the crowd, and from these hints gain a near-unerring feel for what is plentiful, what is lacking, and how willing and able the samurai are to spend money to get what they want.





Much like the Kitsuki, the Yasuki train in a broad base of knowledge and skills in order to be able to respond to almost any situation quickly and effectively, ensuring they know what is desired and how to get it. Even if an individual Yasuki cannot find what is needful, the whole family works together to make specialists available for any need; within the Yasuki it is not considered in the slightest way shameful to ask assistance from one's superiors. So long as the need is merited by the gain that can be achieved, support is always swift in coming. Thus, while the Yasuki outwardly appear to be a very disorganized family, they actually work together with alarming efficiency, supporting each other readily and avoiding the tendency among other samurai families to see initial failure as shameful or a sign of fundamental weakness. Of course, this symbiotic relationship within the family also makes it even easier for the Yasuki to adapt and react to new situations with ease, both within and without their favored realm of commerce.

## The Yoritomo Family

*"Our ships bring strange luxuries that add luster to the Imperial court and enrich the Imperial tax coffers. That we turn a tidy profit on the deal is simply an added benefit."*  
— Yoritomo Hiromi

The Yoritomo court approach is most often described as one following the pathway of Earth, and it is certainly true that the family embraces the ways of that Element – unbreakable will, stubborn determination, and a willingness to impose their own intentions on those around them. However, while the Mantis Clan certainly embraces this aspect of its Crab ancestry, those Yoritomo who are trained in the ways of the court also show a secondary but significant focus on the path of Water. Indeed, the Yoritomo share a great deal in common with the Yasuki (and even the Kasuga). In many ways these three families collectively represent a particular attitude towards the courts that is found nowhere else, resulting in a particularly bitter rivalry between them. This rivalry is strongest between the Yoritomo and the Kasuga, but none of these three families is ever truly friendly with the others. The simple fact of the matter is that they operate in the same territory – the intersection between commerce and politics – and thus rivalry is inevitable. For the Yoritomo and the Kasuga this rivalry focuses most strongly on the gaijin trade. (This becomes even more acute in the late twelfth century after the founding of the Colonies.) In some ways, this enmity dates all the way back to the era of White Stag and the founding of the Tortoise Clan. It was the Mantis who first sought to welcome the gaijin in hope of political and commercial gain, and the later control of gaijin trade by the Tortoise made them, in Mantis eyes, interlopers. The Mantis spent the subsequent centuries trying to undermine the Tortoise Clan's monopoly, most notably through their covert trade with the Ivory Kingdoms.

Where the Yasuki focus upon the mercantile interests of samurai and the Kasuga deal in the world of the peasantry and *hinin* along with the gaijin trade, in the twelfth century the Yoritomo tap more fully into another human resource the other two families do not exploit: ronin. Wave-men are employed by merchants all across the Empire, but even the wealthy Yasuki do not make as much use of them as the Yoritomo. Indeed, a significant proportion of the Mantis Clan's ranks at the end of the twelfth century are drawn from ronin stock, either by having been formerly ronin themselves or being born to those who rose up from such origins to claim full samurai status within the Yoritomo family. The tradition of recruiting ronin into the fold was begun by Yoritomo himself during the Clan Wars and is upheld to a lesser extent by all subsequent leaders of the clan. The Yasuki can draw on the Crab custom of the Twenty Goblin Winter and their Scales of the Carp organization to aid in recruitment, but as a rule the Crab do induct ronin often – due to issues of worthiness and trust, not to mention competence in fighting Jigoku's armies. For the Mantis, however, ronin are deemed to have just the right sort of skills and just enough trustworthiness for the dubiously-legal tactics the clan often uses.

Much like the Kasuga and Yasuki, the Yoritomo have found that flexibility in approach and circumstantial adaptability are always necessary in matters of trade and, to a lesser but significant extent, politics. Unlike the other families, however, they mingle the teachings of Water with the strong-arm tactics of the path of Earth. These methods are effective when dealing with ronin, especially individual wave-men; they are less useful with covert ronin organizations such as the Weavers, who are difficult to brow-beat into conformity. Overall, however, the skills which Mantis sailors employ in observing the seas and skies, watching for subtle hints and sudden shifts in mood, are also quite effective at dealing with the ways of trade and the vagaries of ronin hirelings. The Yoritomo family's skill at dealing with ronin is a minor niche of expertise that nonetheless has helped to bolster the clan's resources in times of crisis.







## The Kasuga Family

*"The world is vaster by far than most samurai ever realize."*  
 – Kasuga Aizawa

The Tortoise Clan's sole family bears a striking (if superficial) similarity to the Yasuki in most of its behavior and tactics. The one truly notable apparent difference between the two families is the willingness of the Kasuga to sully themselves with things that even the Yasuki would never consider doing. In point of fact, the Kasuga consider this willingness and ability to traffic in and with anything at all to be part of their divinely appointed Imperial duty, a duty placed upon them by the Hantei and later upheld by both the Toturi and the Iweco dynasties. To hesitate or show scruple would be to betray their duty and would call into question the wisdom of the Emperor himself.

This is not to say that individual Yasuki, Shosuro, Yoritomo or even the occasional Daidoji might not be willing to sink into the pits where the Kasuga wallow. There are plenty of instances of such samurai indulging in smuggling and other shameful acts. But such things are the exception, usually undertaken without permission from higher authority, since these families have standards they must uphold and principles they cling to. Even the Yasuki and Shosuro will generally insist there are some things they simply will not do, and publicly shun those caught trafficking in such. The Kasuga, by contrast, recognize no constraints on their commercial activities save raw practicality.

The single biggest distinction of the Kasuga from these other families boils down to who they will associate with. The Kasuga are infinitely more willing than even the Yasuki to associate with peasants, non-people, and even gaijin. While the creation of the Colonies in the twelfth century begins to slightly weaken the rest of the Empire's disassociation from gaijin peoples, no Rokugani will ever stoop to seeing such alien peoples as their equals; even the Unicorn insist on an adoption ritual to make their gaijin members into symbolic "true Rokugani." Only the Kasuga associate with gaijin freely and willingly, without constraint. Furthermore, the Kasuga are the only family in the Empire which freely lives and works alongside peasants and *hinin*. The Yasuki deal with such individuals semi-distantly, through patronages and 'professional' relationships, but the Kasuga join them in the local sake house for drinks, listen to the tales of the year's harvest and discussing the quality of the rice brought in this year. A few Kasuga even go so far as to intermarry with such folk.

Everything that can be said of the Yasuki family's approach to commerce can be said of the Kasuga, but where the Yasuki focus on the needs and wants of samurai, the Kasuga deal in markets which no one else ever sees. This places the Kasuga in a very flexible and adaptable position, but one that at the same time carries significant limitations. Put simply, the Kasuga are experts at dealing with the people that they deal with. They know exactly what the peasantry need, exactly what a gaijin representative wants, and can offer it to them in the language that person will best understand. In this world the Yoritomo and Yasuki can never hope to compete with the Kasuga, and the

Shosuro and Daidoji would never bother considering such an option. However, the moment the Kasuga attempt to deal with anyone of the samurai caste, they find themselves at a huge disadvantage. Thus, while they share the same basic tactics of the Yasuki, they are effectively hedged into a very specific domain in their use.

The upshot of all this is the Kasuga are very well-entrenched in their own particular niche, a niche nobody else wants, but at the same time they are always imperiled. The most lucrative and politically powerful tool they have is their contact with the gaijin peoples. It is the Kasuga, far more than the Yoritomo or the Ide, who have the freedom to traffic with these foreign populations without oversight, yet this special position gives them almost no power in the Empire as a whole... and could be rescinded at any time by the Emperor's command. Moreover, when contact with the gaijin world increases at the end of the twelfth century, the Kasuga face a subtle threat to their identity and purpose. With the establishment and growth of the Colonies, there is a real risk that the Kasuga may become effectively obsolete.

## The Tonbo Family

While most courtly families on the Path of Water are known for their embrace of perception, flexibility, and in many cases commerce, the Tonbo family stands apart. Where adaptation is a valuable tool for other families, to the Tonbo it is a pivotal weapon that is needed simply to survive. The Dragonfly have the unenviable task of serving as the political go-between between the Dragon Clan and the rest of the Empire. Although this sounds like a good situation at first, reality is often far different. In times of peace the Tonbo prosper whenever the Dragon prosper, but in times of conflict the Dragonfly find themselves the first line of defense for the Dragon while often going without any military aid from their northern brethren. More than once, armies have marched through the Dragonfly lands, and the small clan's survival has been placed in doubt many times.

As a result of this rocky history the Dragonfly have learned over the centuries to adapt quickly to anything that comes their way. Perception, investigation, scrutiny, and patience are the courtly weapons of the family, and their diplomats keep close watch on everyone around them, especially the Lion. The Tonbo send court representatives to many of the Great Clans explicitly for the purpose of observing them and reporting back any concerns about possible conflict with the Dragon (or the Dragonfly themselves). Tonbo diplomats are known for being among the most patient, quiet, and unobtrusive people one might meet in the courts, the sorts who are not even noticed unless they actually speak out. The family survives by almost wholly eschewing the pro-active, only striking out when they absolutely must do so for their own survival, and preferring always to know what is coming and react defensively. For the most part this method has worked well, only failing in eras when the threats were simply too great for the clan to avoid; in those situations, the family's other Water aspect – its embrace of divination magic – becomes its next line of defense. (See Chapter Two for discussion of the Tonbo tradition of divination magic.)



## Courtly Organizations of Water

The clans and families who focus on the philosophy of Water tend to create organizations focused more on peripheral aspects of court rather than on the practice of politics itself. The Kitsuki focus on the art of investigation, which is certainly useful at times but is far less likely to turn the entire course of events than the clever manipulations of Air. Similarly, mercantile groups like the Scales of the Carp can be greatly influential in the Empire as a whole but seldom make their presence known within the great courts of Rokugan. And groups such as the Ide Caravan Masters or the Kasuga Smugglers do not truly deal in politics at all, except insofar as all politics is ultimately about the collection and distribution of resources.

### THE MASTERS OF THE COIN

The organization known as “Masters of the Coin” is not a large or well-known one, nor is it based within a single clan. Its existence is not precisely a secret, but its members generally do not make a habit of informing their clan leadership of their activities unless they have no other choice. In large part this is because the nature and goals of the Masters of the Coin makes the organization somewhat problematic during times of war.

The Masters are a collection of like-minded individuals who gathered together after the First Yasuki War. At that time, a particularly influential Yasuki by the name of Garuda waged a bitter personal conflict with a member of the Daidoji named Sakura. She and he struck at each others' economic interests for well over a decade, causing each other considerable losses at times, yet neither was ever able to truly get the best of the other. Finally, Yasuki Garuda managed to convince Daidoji Sakura to meet him at a neutral location within the neighboring Fox lands. There, after nearly a month of tense negotiations, the two agreed to a truce for the remainder of their lives, both having wearied of the low-grade bloodshed and repeated financial losses from their conflict.

In the subsequent decade, both samurai discovered that by carefully positioning their mercantile interests so as not to compete with each other, they were actually acquiring considerably greater wealth for their masters and encountering less opposition to their success. As the two neared retirement, they met again and agreed – despite the old enmity that made them glare at each other across the table – to privately assist each other's interests, and where possible to recruit others into their consortium for the same purpose – so long as this did not cause harm to their clan's interests.

From this unlikely alliance the Masters of the Coin were born. The group's membership has varied greatly over time, but there has always been at least one Yasuki and one Daidoji within its ranks. There is no true 'leader' at its





periodic gatherings, and meetings are always rare, informal, and somewhat clandestine, usually held in unaligned or Minor Clan holdings. Indeed, the Masters are not so much a formal organization as a collection of like-minded figures in the middle ranks of the Empire's economy. Members are seldom drawn from the upper crust of samurai society; this is not an organization for men such as Yasuki Taka or Yoritomo Utemaro. In fact, the Masters of the Coin take pains to try and avoid the notice of such powerful figures. Notwithstanding these efforts toward secrecy, many of Rokugan's leaders are aware of the existence of the Masters of the Coin, but so far the group has not stepped on any toes hard enough for it to be brought down. More often, those who know about it try to make sure someone from their own clan gets admitted.

The goal of the organization is simple: To increase the profits of all the members. Recruits to the Masters of the Coin are selected by the recommendation of standing members, and are usually chosen based on a combination of political connections, a general lack of ethical compunctions toward business practices, loyalty towards one's friends, and skill in commercial and economic activities. Very few honorable or upright souls are ever selected for membership, since the Masters routinely engage in activities such as monopolization and price-fixing, working together to manipulate markets to their own gain.

Despite their antiquity (and ostentatious name) the Masters have always remained very much 'small fish' in the Empire's affairs. They avoid meddling in areas where the Yasuki or Yoritomo families have strong influences, and carefully avoid any conflicts with the Daidoji Trading Council's interests. This caution sometimes costs them profits, but has so far prevented the 'big fish' from putting an end to their activities. And after all, commerce is a topic distasteful to samurai. So long as everyone profits and there is no public scandal, better to not care overmuch.

## THE SCALES OF THE CARP

*"Being concerned with money is considered crass, but no one listens to a poor man. When push comes to shove, wealth creates its own respectability."* – Yasuki Jekku

Based out of the trade city of Sunda Mizu Mura, the Scales of the Carp formed – like the Masters of the Coin – during the centuries after the First Yasuki War. In the wake of that conflict, the Crane resolutely refused to trade with the Yasuki, who had become the Crab Clan's principal mercantile agents. While the occasional Kaiu and Hiruma might be willing to stoop to trafficking in coin, most of the clan was happy to let their new Yasuki comrades handle such matters. With every passing decade, however, this became increasingly problematic due to the Crane







Clan's ongoing refusal to trade with any regularity with the family. This was especially troublesome during years when Shadowlands activity was high and Crab needs correspondingly intense.

The Yasuki solution to this problem showed a great deal about the family's attitude on the subjects of profit, loss, and the need to adapt to new situations. The family enlisted ronin from the city of Sunda Mizu Mura, promising them a generous share of the wealth, to create a *jizumai* (a variant on an *otokodate*, but formed for the purpose of a legally questionable venture) based out of the city's Favorable Tides Inn. These "Scales of the Carp" served as intermediaries for the clan's trade with the Crane, while never actually holding full authority of the Crab despite operating in their lands – making them effectively smugglers. This was deliberate, of course, and the Crab turned a blind eye on the activities of the Scales so long as sufficient profits came out of their activities. The Crane also chose to turn a blind eye, for the Daidoji Trading Council recognized that, honor aside, the two clans could not afford to completely ignore each other. Eventually, the Crane slowly resumed somewhat normal trade relations with the Crab (largely through the Hiruma rather than the Yasuki), but the Scales of the Carp remained far too lucrative to completely disband, and continued through the centuries as the shadowy reflection of the Yasuki family.

The *jizumai* takes a very Water-based approach not just to its business practices, but to life in general. The Scales know they will only continue to exist so long as they are profitable to the Yasuki family, so they adjust their practices, teachings, and associations whenever and wherever they must to maintain their masters' expectations. The Scales operate on a tiered structure, with fledgling members running small-scale operations among the lower castes while those with more experience handle more significant (and profitable) ventures. They are known for being quite cutthroat in their business dealings, but they are not an explicitly violent group. Where other smugglers might wage war with their rivals, the Scales simply notify the Crab authorities of their problems... which soon enough are resolved. When Imperial tax collectors or Emerald Magistrates (or the occasional Crab magistrate with an eye for justice) look into their activities, the Scales simply cut back on their more questionable practices, ensure that appropriate fees are paid to the appropriate people, and behave with ostentatious legality until the Yasuki can divert the pressure through political means. Once the trouble is past, the Scales slip the leash and resume their more clandestine smuggling operations.

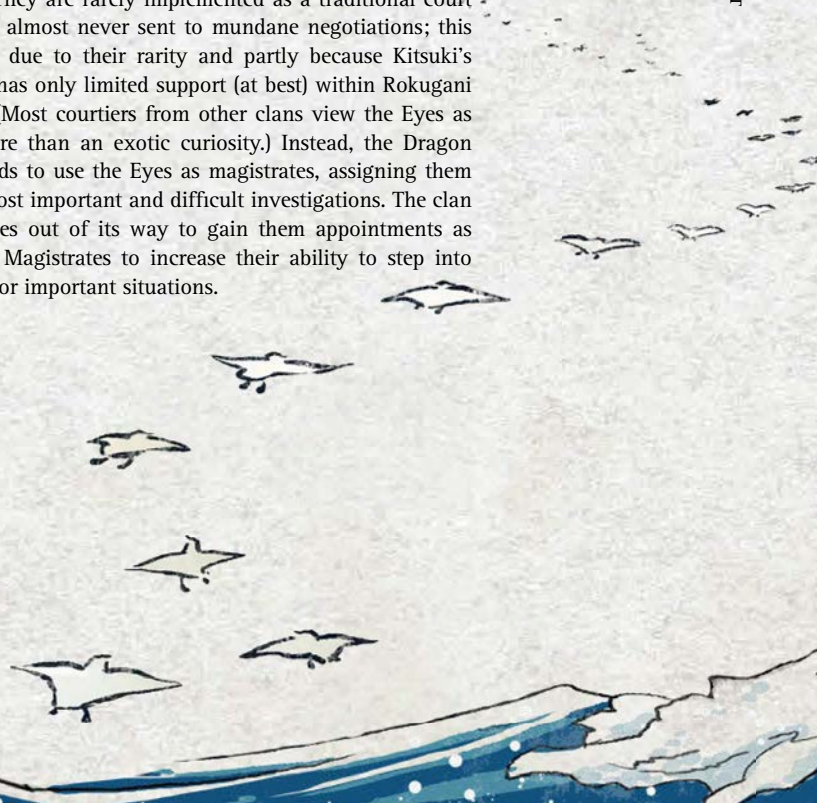
## KITSUKI'S EYE

Among the masters of Agasha Kitsuki's original techniques are a small group within the Kitsuki family known as "Kitsuki's Eye." This dojo was not actually created by the family's founder, but instead was established in subsequent centuries, its technique the result of years of effort by many different members of the Kitsuki family to refine and hone the skills created by their mentor.

The Eye is a straightforward and explicit refinement of the Kitsuki methods. Enrolling in the dojo requires recognition by the broader family of the future pupil's potential and talents in the field of investigation. Only those who have both a very keen ability to pick out minute details and a near-perfect recall of everything they see are selected for membership. These are very exacting criteria, even by the already high standards of the Kitsuki Investigators, so there are only a few members of the Kitsuki's Eye dojo in each generation. This does not trouble the dojo's sensei, who believe teaching their technique to one who does not possess the gifts to fully utilize it is a waste of resources.

In terms of capability, the Eyes are to the average Kitsuki courtier what the average Kitsuki courtier is to the rest of the Empire. Little ever escapes their notice, whether on the field of battle, within the halls of the courts, or in the midst of an investigation. It is rumored they have an almost preternatural sense of their surroundings, making them extremely difficult to confuse or ambush. It is possible this is reputed to be exaggerated, possibly even the result of selective disinformation, but over the generations enough Eyes have survived the blades of assassins to make their reputation seem at least partially merited.

Most members of the Great Clans will probably never see a member of the Eyes in their lifetime... unless they have the misfortune of being involved in a complex or difficult criminal investigation. Normally, one must travel to Shiro Kitsuki to meet one of them, and even then it can be difficult to tell them apart from other Kitsuki samurai. (The Dragon themselves always seem to know the difference, and show the Eyes considerable deference.) As a whole, the clan treats them as powerful weapons to keep in reserve rather than as blades to be bared openly in the courts. When the Eyes are used sparingly their effectiveness is demonstrably greater, and the arrival of one of the Eyes is generally a sign that the Dragon Clan's leadership is taking a situation very seriously indeed. They are rarely implemented as a traditional court tool and almost never sent to mundane negotiations; this is partly due to their rarity and partly because Kitsuki's Method has only limited support (at best) within Rokugani society. (Most courtiers from other clans view the Eyes as little more than an exotic curiosity.) Instead, the Dragon Clan tends to use the Eyes as magistrates, assigning them to the most important and difficult investigations. The clan often goes out of its way to gain them appointments as Emerald Magistrates to increase their ability to step into difficult or important situations.







## IDE CARAVAN MASTERS

*“I tell you, in all my travels, in all my adventures, I have heard no words sweeter than, ‘How much does it cost?’” – Ide Haichang*

The Ide, like the Crane, tend to be group more associated with Air and with the peaceful ways of court. However, one group within their family instead embraces the ways of Water, especially the Element’s themes of travel, flexibility, and adaptation. The Caravan Masters are not a highly organized body, but maintain regular contact amongst themselves, and there are ‘dojo’ of a sort where the Ide share the secrets of their finest traders and merchants. However, the very nature of the Caravan Masters is so constantly mobile that it is difficult for them to ever truly gather as a body in a single physical location. Even their dojo are usually conducted as mobile tutelage of future initiates rather than in actual buildings.

Flexibility is a key for the Caravan Masters, since they deal regularly with the gaijin cultures of the Burning Sands. Language barriers are a constant problem, even for those trained in strange gaijin tongues, for local idioms, changes in dialect, and cultural barriers always make it difficult to communicate properly. Negotiations can move from peaceful to violent in the span of a heartbeat, and an ally from one visit can become an enemy the next time for reasons that no Rokugani can comprehend. Caravan Masters are thus not expected to be masters of manipulation and intrigue; instead, they combine the perception and adaptation of Water with the receptive heart of Air, perceiving the emotions of strangers and picking up those cues intuitively during communication. At the same time, they must also be masters of commerce, able to adjust to shifting markets in far-flung locales. This is a rare combination of personality traits, even within the peaceful and diplomatic Ide; if a courtier lacks these gifts, he does not belong at the head of a caravan. Plenty of other perfectly honorable duties await him elsewhere in the clan.

An individual Caravan Master is more than merely a simple merchant. He controls a variety of trade ventures on behalf of the family, serves as merchant patron to many lesser mercantile operations, and manages the entire community of his caravan (which is in many ways a microcosm of Rokugan). Individual caravans sometimes take years to complete their trade circuits, operating on their own beyond the borders of the Empire, and a Caravan Master must be able to deal with any number of different challenges; failure is unacceptable. Future members of the organization are groomed for years, and only accepted into the ranks with the agreement of the majority of the existing membership. In truth, their training never really ends, for the world in which the Caravan Master operates is always changing.

## THE KASUGA SMUGGLERS

Despite the secret divine mandate that permits the Kasuga family to traffic and trade with the gaijin, the fact remains that most of what the Tortoise deal in is considered to be taboo at best, outright contraband at worst. This means the Kasuga family has always required a certain enterprising spirit when handling the acquisition and distribution of its goods to those portions of Rokugan’s population who are actually interested in having access to such wares. This becomes especially important when dealing with interference from Mantis Clan interests and even the occasional Unicorn Clan activities, since both of those groups tread on Kasuga territory – albeit usually dealing with different gaijin cultures than those favored by the Tortoise.

The Kasuga are highly organized, pragmatic, and enterprising souls. The term “Kasuga Smugglers” was bestowed on them by their detractors in the Great Clans; they accept the name with a certain sense of pride, but never actually refer to themselves as members of such an organization. In truth, their entire clan is a smuggling organization, but no Kasuga would ever admit to this truth where others can hear. They operate on the high seas, in seedy backwater sake houses, in the tunnels beneath Otosan Uchi, anywhere they are secure from others’ eyes. The family are masters of adaptability, experts in dealing with the seedier and less ‘human’ world of the *heimin*, *hinin*, and gaijin. They are trained to remain unobtrusive, moving freely through populations that are more or less beneath samurai notice. Like water flowing through the cracks, they seek out the pathways of least resistance to maneuver their goods through the Empire without drawing attention from the authorities.

The family has also developed a variety of clandestine methods of communication, using coded messages, magical transmissions, and the simple advantage of operating in the lowest rungs of society. Many Kasuga work in plain view and communicate openly, but do so in places where no samurai is likely to pay attention. Quite often they are mistaken for ronin or peasants, and more than one magistrate has sought to investigate the Kasuga smuggling network only to find it impossible to even tell who is a Kasuga and who is not.





# The Courts of Water

There are relatively few courts in Rokugan which are focused on the Path of Water, far less than those focused on Air or even Earth. However, the courts which do embrace Water include the seats of two of the Empire's most prominent diplomatic families, the Yasuki and the Ide, as well as the small but vitally important court of Kyuden Tonbo.

## Yasuki Yashiki

The "Black Crane Estates" are the primary holding of the Yasuki family. Originally, these palatial estates in the Junkin Province belonged to the Crane Clan, having grown from the personal family properties of Yasuki Kiringu. However, after the conclusion of the First Yasuki War, the land and all its holdings were ceded to the Crab Clan, feeding the long-standing animosity between the two clans. Many in the Crane never stop believing these lands are the rightful property of the Crane Clan.

The Estates are beautiful to behold, easily as sumptuous as most of the Crane and Phoenix holdings, rivaling all but Kyuden Doji and Shiro Sano Kakita themselves (a few visitors have suggested they may actually be more impressive than those palaces, but this is unwise to say in a Crane's hearing). Much of the castle's beauty nonetheless shows the pragmatic attitude of the Yasuki family, tending to combine the elegant with the functional. Inarguably one of the least fortified locations in all of the Crab lands, Yasuki Yashiki is nonetheless well defended compared to similar holdings elsewhere in the Empire. Impressive walls and battlements guard the holding from attack, and spires within the estates themselves rise higher than almost any other major palace, giving not only breathtaking views of Earthquake Fish Bay and the Tidal Landbridge, but also the strategic advantage in being able to see enemies while they are still many miles away.

Yasuki Yashiki is one of the key points of contact between the Crab and the rest of the Great Clans (except the Crane, who steadfastly refuse to visit it), and arguably the only location in all Crab Clan lands fit to handle a "proper" Winter Court for the Emperor... but it is still a Crab castle. Most of the guests who will reside here for any length of time are themselves Crab, frequently fresh from the war with the Shadowlands and intending to return to that struggle soon. A castle that was too soft and defenseless would be anathema to them, and the idea of living within walls that were indefensible would drive many to distraction or outright madness. As a result, while beauty is carefully presented throughout the court's holdings, it is never allowed to supersede military necessity.

## THE SHRINES TO DAIKOKU AND YASUKI

Located in the heart of the city, at the very core of the Yashiki itself, this massive shrine pays homage to the twin focuses of the Yasuki family: its history and its wealth. The shrine centers around two massive statues; one depicts the Fortune of Wealth, Daikoku, in his beneficent aspect, gazing upon the other statue – the first Yasuki. It is worth noting that the statue of Yasuki herself is rather different in style from those found in Crane lands, depicting her as a rather stocky and plain-faced woman.

The shrine is one of the largest which honors Daikoku, exceeded in size only by the great temple in Ryoko Owari and the mighty Daikoku Seido itself, located in Unicorn lands. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it receives regular pilgrim traffic throughout the year from almost all the other clans. The Crane, of course, prefer to revere Daikoku elsewhere, and have their own shrines to Yasuki's memory.

## THE HOGOSHA ESTATES

In the mid-twelfth century, during the era of the Four Winds, the Second Yasuki War erupts and Yasuki Yashiki again becomes a focus of conflict between Crane and Crab. The war is ended in part by the intervention of Akodo Kaneka, later Shogun of the Empire, who claims rule over the Yasuki lands and grants a palatial estate within the city to the Hogosha vassal family of the Mantis Clan's ruling Yoritomo line. Although Kaneka later forsook his claim to the Yasuki territories and the Crab finally re-established full control of the Yasuki after the Third Yasuki War, the Hogosha Estates survived. The Crab respected Kaneka and have no wish to purge his legacy, and having ready access to the Hogosha – the most court-oriented family in the Mantis Clan – is quite useful.







## Great Day Castle

Shiro Ide, also known as “Great Day Castle,” stands in the Garanto Province along the outer edge of Unicorn lands, above the Chrysanthemum Petal Lake’s northeastern shore. It is surprisingly far from the Empire’s major trade routes. The nearby pass through the Seikitsu Mountains is wide and could easily accommodate large military forces, but is so far out of the way that none consider it a realistic martial target.

Shiro Ide was the first stronghold the Unicorn built after their return to Rokugan, and is the main location within their lands capable of hosting major court functions. Shiro Shinjo, Shiro Utaku Shoji, and Shiro Moto are all fine palaces in their own right but are not truly considered appropriate for traditional Rokugani courtly functions, let alone an Imperial Winter Court – their foreign influences are simply too strong. Shiro Ide, however, is designed to be a location where guests from other clans may feel completely comfortable.

Shiro Ide is designed to draw upon the beauty of nature in its design, seemingly blending into the rock formations of the mountains behind it and looking down on the mirror-smooth surface of the lake below. It uses the most conventional Rokugani construction of any major Unicorn holding, and its internal layout and design are focused entirely on serving and tending to the needs of guests who may not be familiar or even comfortable with Unicorn practices. Every effort is made to ensure the entertainments expected of a ‘traditional’ Rokugani court and city are available here, regardless of how much expense might be incurred in the process. All of the comforts of home can be found in these halls, and the castle is so far away from any field of potential conflict that it does not even have any significant defenses. Unicorn scouts patrol the surrounding lands and ensure that no bandits or other such threats ever come near the place, adding to the overall air of peace and serenity in the city and its keep. Ultimately, the only really exotic element in Shiro Ide’s court is the Unicorn themselves, whose odd garments and gaijin features sometimes seem a little out of place within their own castle.

Almost all Unicorn diplomacy that is not explicitly military in nature takes place at Shiro Ide, and guests seeking audience with the clan are always directed to this location. The one real disadvantage of the site is that it is so far removed from the rest of Unicorn lands, making it more difficult for visitors from other clans to reach it. Indeed, it is mainly due to this isolation that the Unicorn sometimes develop a reputation for being rather aloof and diffident in their political dealings with other clans.

## CALM HEART DOJO

The primary dojo of the Ide Emissary School is found within this city. Most Ide diplomats cut their teeth in Shiro Ide’s court before being sent out as envoys to other clans’ lands. Here they can absorb both the pacifistic attitudes of their own family and the traditions of the rest of Rokugan, manifested in the castle’s many guests.

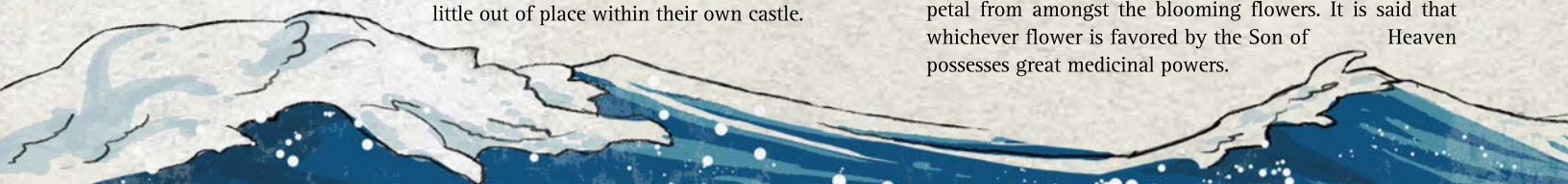
The physical dojo itself lies south of the castle’s walls, right along the shores of the lake. The early years of education often involve extensive meditation upon the placid waters there, helping to teach the students the calm with which they must conduct themselves in all circumstances. Indeed, that imperturbable surface calm is a hallmark of the Ide style, an approach associated as much with Water as it is with Air.

## SHRINE TO UZUME

A curiosity of Shiro Ide is the presence of one of only two known shrines to the obscure Minor Fortune of Dancing, Uzume. (The other such shrine, perhaps unsurprisingly, is found within the Crane lands in the Asahina provinces.) It is not known why the Ide established the shrine in this location shortly after settling their lands. Some claim it was to honor to the memory of the grace and nobility of the Kitsune family in its tending to the memory of the Ki-Rin people. Others snidely suggest it may have been an attempt to subtly undercut the Asahina family’s spiritual authority. Whatever the true reason may be, the two temples share a strong but courteous rivalry over which best honors the Fortune’s memory and nature. As a result, every year’s festival season features large and impressive displays of dancing to venerate Uzume, including both traditional Rokugani dance and more gaijin-themed forms, in the shrine and throughout the city.

## CHRYSANTHEMUM PETAL LAKE

One of the most beautiful inland bodies of water in the Empire, Chrysanthemum Petal Lake is known for the massive blanket of chrysanthemum blossoms that cover its broad surface each year. Legends say the first blossoms were planted here by Emperor Hantei XVII as he mourned the loss of his son, and many later Emperors came here during the Chrysanthemum Festival to meditate at the shores, traditionally ending their visit by plucking a single petal from amongst the blooming flowers. It is said that whichever flower is favored by the Son of Heaven possesses great medicinal powers.





The lake's great natural beauty makes it a favored destination for artists and all those seeking tranquility and soul-easing rest. Its presence is certainly one of the reasons the Ide chose this out-of-the-way location for their castle. While the rest of the Unicorn Clan sometimes uses the castle's remoteness as a reminder of the importance of tolerating their customs in making deals with them, the Ide have always been infinitely more concerned with making sure their guests feel not only welcomed but also refreshed in their company.

## Kyuden Tonbo

Situated in the Shinpi province immediately south of the Dragon Clan's Kitsuki holdings, Kyuden Tonbo has endured a difficult and often violent history – full details of its travails can be found in Chapter One of the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Secrets of the Empire*. The court of Kyuden Tonbo is a modest one whose principle purpose is to host the endless stream of supplicants who wish to visit the Dragon lands. Although the castle has claimed the name of “Kyuden” on the grounds that it could theoretically host an Imperial Winter Court, in truth the Dragonfly Clan has never been able to secure such a privilege for itself. Many times the Tonbo have struggled and saved their koku for years or decades, building up the art and beauty of their city and assembling every political favor they can in hopes of finally persuading the Emperor to grace them with his presence for the winter. As of the end of the twelfth century, such an event has never taken place, a reminder of the perpetual low standing of the Minor Clans in the Empire.

## THE SHRINE TO THUNDER

In the mid-twelfth century, a small shrine is constructed outside the town of Kyuden Tonbo. It is tended with strict and absolute care. Anyone visiting it will find the path is well-worn and not strictly manicured, but also kept free of any weeds or undergrowth. The small shrine itself is seemingly always left unattended yet remains immaculate, an offering always present in the inner chamber, placed each day by monks who go out of their way to never actually be seen there. Ringing of the bell outside of the shrine will not summon any priest, and merely ceremonially informs the kami of a visitor. Nobody within the city will speak of this shrine or acknowledge its existence, and if any locals visit the place they do not speak of doing so.

The shrine is devoted to the Dragon of Thunder... and to a former Clan Champion, Tonbo Toryu. However, it is not a shrine where visitors seek wisdom or guidance – rather, its purpose is appeasement and placation. In truth, the shrine is a source of shame to the Tonbo family, for Tonbo Toryu was once the Oracle of Thunder, then fell and became the Dark Oracle of Void. However, the shrine was originally established to honor the Dragon of Thunder prior to Toryu's fall, and none would dare risk offense to a Celestial Dragon (or, for that matter, offense to a Dark Oracle), to it is tended with great care even though none speak of its purpose openly.

# The Art and Practice of Divination

The magical aspects of divination are discussed in Chapter Two of this book, but the art also has many non-magical aspects and a variety of social and courtly applications and ramifications. The art and practice of divination certainly exhibits a significant intellectual and scholastic aspect through things like detailed study of star charts or comprehensive listings of the combinations of yarrow sticks, but it is not ultimately an art which belongs to the path of Fire. Rather, it is associated most strongly with Water, not least due to the Element's aspects of perception and clarity, as well as the fact that the constantly-changing mortal world requires flexibility and adaptability to recognize and understand the omens it presents. Thus, the true masters of the divination arts are not considered masters due to their breadth of knowledge but rather due to their ability to transcend that knowledge and see the myriad clues in the world around them, clues which one embedded too deeply into scholarly study would miss. Another aspect of Water in divination – and perhaps the most profound aspect of all – is its basis in the principle that everything is interconnected. There is no such thing as coincidence.

The samurai of Rokugan generally dismiss the importance of random chance in their lives. (For that matter, so do the peasants, although they do so in a more pessimistic manner.) Indeed, if there is one universal belief that unites all the social strata of the Empire, it is the conviction that the Elements create connections between all forms and aspects of life. People do not meet by chance; they are ordained to meet by the will of the kami and the workings of fate and destiny. A samurai's sword does not cut down a foe solely because of skill, but also because the other man's destiny was to die that day, just as it was the destiny of the victor to emerge triumphant. Indeed, the only people in Rokugan who reject this belief are the secretive Kolat, whose blasphemous teachings admit that divine influences on the world do exist, but who seek to re-make the world into one which is both perfect and free of divine influence.

In principle, all samurai are trained in the most basic levels of this philosophy, and all shugenja have at least a working knowledge of the spiritual world which underlies it. While individual samurai may not be skilled in interpreting the wonders and omens of the world, they are all aware of the influence of fate and destiny, of the myriad ways the kami both great and small constantly influence the lives of people. Most Rokugani accumulate a large body of customs and superstitious practices based on these constant influences on their everyday lives. These customs become intertwined with more conventional worship practices, leading to all manner of standardized conventions such as clapping hands to inform the kami of a shrine that someone is present to worship, or leaving lanterns in the water during the Bon Festival to guide spirits to the afterlife.







The art of divination takes on several forms, but three types stand out most notably: Omens, Spot Divination, and Astrology.

## Omens

By far the most common of all forms of divination is foretelling from omens. This is a form of divination that even an untrained individual may follow with at least a minimal level of success, and is by far the most common form of divination found in the peasant population. It is the source of the countless superstitions that float among the *heimin* and *hinin*... and sometimes find their way into the lives of samurai as well. (Such superstitions vary widely from clan to clan and often from province to province – listing them would take up a book in itself.)

The process of omen-reading is actually deceptively simple. The person simply sees something out of the ordinary, something unexpected and worthy of note. It is generally thought that if the eye is drawn toward a thing that appears out of the ordinary, it is because the kami are trying to guide the person's senses, pointing out something important which must be noticed and understood. The anomalous object or incident must then be interpreted to determine whether it is a good omen or a bad one, thereby determining whether it foretells an ill future or a beneficent one. It is in such interpretations that the main challenge of omens is found, since not all incidents are clearly positive or negative. Some omens are obvious, of course: a broken stave in a newly-made barrel is clearly a bad omen, while the passage overhead of a bird deemed to be lucky in the local area is clearly a good omen.

Omens are usually seen as making only a general foretelling of the future rather than predicting specific events. Peasant superstitions tie omens into the cycle of peasant life, foretelling good or bad outcomes for things like births, marriages, health, crop harvests, and so forth. Only particularly noteworthy or obviously supernatural events are presumed to foretell something more significant or complex, and samurai are usually involved in the interpretation of these rarer and more serious sorts of omens.

The principle danger with omens is that there is a pronounced tendency to misinterpret them, mainly due to the vast expanse of different superstitions in the Empire. Omens always entail a certain amount of guesswork and this guesswork is influenced by local beliefs, often leading to bad understanding. Two different persons seeing the same event in different parts of the Empire can easily come to diametrically opposite views of its meaning, or fail to realize it is an omen at all.

## Spot Divination

The various basic forms of “forced” divination, such as interpreting the fall of *kawaru* (coins or yarrow sticks) or reading tea leaves, are sometimes collectively referred to as ‘spot divination.’ Whereas omens involve simply observing and interpreting the messages sent by the

universe, spot divination involves taking specific action in order to effectively coerce a foretelling from the spirits. Such practices are widespread among both peasants and samurai; as noted in Chapter Two, the wise-women known as *itako* specialize in performing such divinations for the common folk, while samurai who indulge in spot divination either call on the services of *shugenja*, monks, or scholarly sages to perform readings... or, if they have the knowledge, perform the rituals themselves.

Spot divination operates by extracting meaning from apparent randomness – the fall of coins or sticks into hexagram patterns, or the shape and position of tea-leaf residue after the tea is drained from a cup. These are things that cannot be easily controlled by human intervention, and therefore are presumed to be guided by the kami and to reflect the fundamental patterns of the universe.

Most scholars believe spot divinations are more likely than omens to actually produce an accurate foretelling when they succeed... but are also more likely to produce false readings. The kami are fickle creatures, and since spot divination usually does not placate them through incantation, prayer, or sacrifice, they sometimes confuse or muddle the message. Even the most knowledgeable fortune-tellers are forced to be somewhat vague in their interpretations due to such limitations, and must guard against personal bias and the temptation to “push” the divination in a preferred direction. Needless to say, a corrupt fortune-teller can also exploit this vagueness to dishonorable ends.

## KAWARU

The most prominent form of spot divination is the practice known as *Kawaru*, a collective term used for the various methods of divination based around the hexagram system devised in the third century by Isawa Teruyo. It relies on a set of physical implements, such as coins, polished stones, or yarrow sticks, which are inscribed with the hexagrams and then cast in such a way as to evoke different patterns with the symbols. All the items used must be relatively uniform in their size and shape. Traditionally, a set of coins, sticks, or stones will total sixty-four (one for each hexagram), and are cast ceremonially with an accompanying ritual to ensure spiritual purity. After each casting, individual objects are separated out into piles according to their locations and hexagrams, and this process of casting and sorting is repeated through numerous iterations, the numbers and symbols of each pile gradually establishing an answer to the divination. Ultimately, the result is an oracular saying which is supposed to provide guidance for future actions.

## TEA LEAF READING

The normal method of performing a tea leaf reading is to prepare a cup of ceremonial tea without straining the leaves. The person seeking the divination then drinks the tea down to its dregs, shakes them well, and hands the cup to the diviner. The last fluid is strained off and the positions of the tea leaves themselves are closely observed. The cup used is generally of a very light color and the tea leaves are, of course, dark and mottled, allowing the diviner to discern shapes and symbols in them. It is these symbols that are



interpreted by position, color, and shape. At this point, the practice takes on similarities to omen-reading, becoming very subjective in nature, and the meaning of the tea-leaves is frequently the subject of intense debate.

## Astrology

Easily the most intellectual and scholastic of the traditions associated with divination, astrology is a time-honored practice among samurai, but is also practiced to a limited degree by the peasantry. Most Rokugani, after all, can at least identify their favorite star formations in the night sky.

Astrology operates on the belief that the Fortunes and ancestors who inhabit the Heavens gaze down upon man in the form of stars. Thus, the positions of the stars signify the attention and will of Heaven, and any unexpected phenomena or unusual formations in the night sky are signs of Heaven's will. The positions of the stars at a child's birth show Heaven's intentions for that child, so when a samurai is born, the family always records the relative positions of the stars at that time. Particularly of note for this purpose are the twelve symbolic constellations which the common folk associate with different natural creatures – and which the samurai associate with the Fortunes and the founding Kami. One constellation is considered dominant in each month, but their exact position is equally important for the purposes of divination, as are any specific phenomena in the sky at the time of birth. The order of the constellations corresponds to the order of months on the Rokugani calendar, beginning with the start of spring: Lord Sun/Hare, Lady Moon/Dragon, Hantei/Serpent, Akodo/Horse, Doji/Goat, Shiba/Monkey, Bayushi/Rooster, Shinjo/Dog, Hida/Boar, Togashi/Rat, Fu Leng/Ox, and Ryoshun/Tiger. The differences and connections between the common animal names for the constellations and their "high" samurai names can be a source of controversy; for example, it is generally considered taboo among samurai to refer to the Serpent and the Hantei line in the same sentence. In addition, astrologers generally find ways to maneuver around actually having to say Fu Leng's name, making "The Ox" the common choice for this month and constellation regardless of whether one is samurai or peasant.

Each of these constellations is associated with various personality traits, and their pathways through the Heavens are recorded in four-year segments associated with Air, Earth, Fire, and Water. Air and Water are associated with Yin (receptive energy), while Fire and Earth are associated with Yang (active energy). Also, in addition to months, each calendar year is also associated with one of the constellations as well as with the four-year Elemental segment, so there is a pattern of 48 different years (e.g. Fire-Snake, Water-Ox, and so forth), after which the cycle repeats. Astrologers record all of this information at the time of a samurai's birth, starting with the year in its Element and dominant constellation, followed by the dominant constellation of the month of birth. The astrologer then lists the positions of the twelve constellations in the sky at the time of birth along with any visible Celestial phenomena, both unique ones and

those which are occasional but regularly occurring. Cloud formations and the associated omens are also taken into account. Each of the personality traits associated with each of these different aspects of the astrologer's readings alters the total interpretation.

Beyond merely foretelling a child's nature and destiny, astrology is also the practice of studying the Heavens to look for guidance in whatever may be changed or out of place. Specific infrequent celestial formations are known and associated with well-documented cosmic and earthly events, and after a thousand years this documentation is sufficient to have a clear idea what the meaning is for most such unusual events. Where questions truly abound are when something unexpected or unprecedented happens. Comets coming out of the night sky are the subject of intense debate, for example, as is the appearance of new stars or changes to the color or size of existing ones. While things like color and relative position are assigned certain standard meanings (for example, red is a negative color), these events are always the subject of great curiosity and dissension among scholars. Such strange events, after all, are direct guidance from Tengoku and frequently result in prophetic writings, often of quite eerie accuracy. This aspect of astrology requires a particularly keen eye for detail along with exhaustive knowledge of astrological scholarship; perhaps not surprisingly, the Isawa and the Moshi are the families generally accepted as having the finest grasp of astrology. Oddly, the Ichiro – the warriors of the Badger family – are also known for being skilled in astrology, not because of any scholastic leaning but because their clan's lands are so high in the northern mountains that they have a nearly unimpeded view of the night's sky throughout the year. Many spend a part of their off-duty time gazing up at the Heavens, in part because there is little else to do in Ichiro lands. Thus, every few generations a gifted astrologer will emerge from their tiny clan.

Interestingly, the Kitsuki pay little attention to astrology despite their considerable gifts of perception. They consider the practice to be somewhat banal and overly abstract, and prefer to keep their focus on earthly matters.











# THE TIDES WITHIN

"Some would consider this to be a foolish waste of time," Shiba Onshin said as they picked their way up the rough path.

Asako Sanjiro sighed. He could not take offense at Onshin's words; the man had not said that he considered this journey a waste of time. He had only implied it. And Sanjiro could not bring himself to argue the point – not when he himself had doubts.

He replied only, "There are interesting tales about this place, this order. If what they hold is only a shred of old wisdom, that is more than we have now." He did not remind Onshin of who had sent them here. His companion knew better than to question their lord's own wisdom.

Whatever Onshin might have said in response, it was forestalled by their arrival. The "shrine" was the merest hut, its thatched roof half-rotted and covered in moss. The thought of entering such a lowly place made Sanjiro shudder with distaste. They were under orders to wait as long as it took, but surely it would not be disobedient to wait outside.

He hoped not to wait at all. "Forgive us for intruding," he called out, peering for movement in the hut's dark opening.

Nothing stirred within, but the hairs on the back of his neck rose. He turned and saw a woman standing at the edge of the trees.

She did not look like a monk. Her head was not shaved; her hair was a matted, filthy tangle, stuck through with twigs and dead leaves. A bird might have nested in its depths. Her robe was rough burlap, lacking one sleeve.

Sanjiro might have mistaken her for some servant or eta... except he knew the monks of this order were reputed to never keep servants, not even for the most defiling of tasks.

He offered her the shallowest bow acceptable. "Are you the attendant for this shrine?"

By way of answer she gave a gap-toothed smile. "The birds told me you were coming. Two geese, flying together, but the second one lagging behind. One of you is reluctant."

It needed no revelation to tell her that, not when he and Onshin had been arguing aloud while they approached. Sanjiro hoped her abilities were not limited to cheap trickery. "My lord has sent us here to ask you a question." He hesitated, then forced himself to correct his words. "To ask you for guidance."

She circled around them, barefoot on the hard ground, stepping on sharp stones and pine needles without flinch or complaint. "Coins? Dice? The movement of birds in the sky? There was a trout dead on the riverbank this morning. Do you want to know what it means?" That last was directed at Onshin, as if to bait him.

Onshin, fortunately, knew to hold his tongue.

Sanjiro said, "We have heard that you have... visions."

This time her smile was wider. "Tell me your question. Fix the roof. I will return."

It felt wrong, telling this unwashed madwoman his lord's secret trouble. But she listened with intense concentration, and there was no one else here for her to share the knowledge with. When Sanjiro was done, she walked away without a word.





Onshin asked, "What now?"

Sanjiro sighed and looked back at the ramshackle hut. "We mend the roof. And we wait."

That night they heard strange sounds in the trees, cries that came from no human throat. Onshin did not sleep, but waited with his sword drawn and resting on his knees. Sanjiro slept very little himself, kept awake by his doubts.

In the morning she returned, her eyes bright with exaltation. "Tell your master," she said, "to seek what he has lost where the cranes nest."

## Monastic Orders of Water

The Element of Water is both constant and ever-changing. Within the Brotherhood of Shinsei, the sects which consider themselves to be spiritually aligned with Water are a diverse lot, representing both the physical and spiritual sides of the Element in equal measure. Although these differences sometimes bring the sects into conflict with one another, ultimately they all recognize their shared affinity.

### The Temple of Osano-Wo

In puppet plays across Rokugan, the thuggish monk is a stock figure: a harsh and brutal *sohei* who uses his power to cow the peasantry until brought low by an honorable samurai or a wiser and gentler monk. Although *sohei* may be found in many different orders of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, in the plays these characters are invariably identified as followers of the Temple of Osano-Wo.

Like many stereotypes, this one has some basis in reality. More than any other legitimate Brotherhood sect, the Temple prizes raw strength above all else. And because its brothers and sisters are human, with all the frailties that word implies, some put their strength to selfish ends. But it does no justice to the adherents of the Fortune of Fire and Thunder to assume there is nothing more to them than the caricature seen in puppet plays. The order has a wisdom of its own, one which forms a necessary counterbalance to the more cerebral traditions within the Brotherhood.

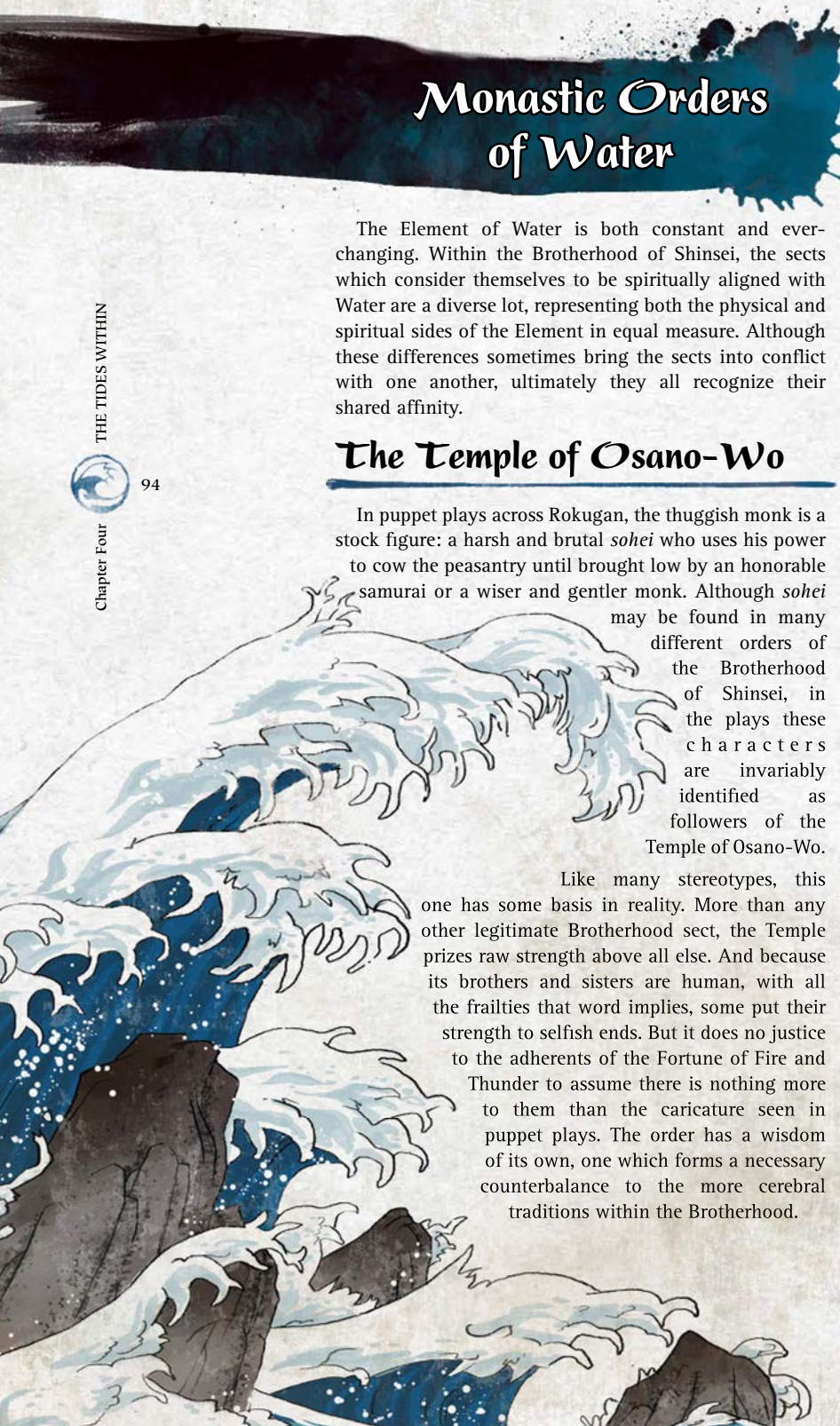
Unlike the ascetic and reclusive orders that seek Enlightenment through contemplation, the Temple of Osano-Wo understands that physical existence is an inescapable component of mortal life. Rather than denying their flesh and attempting to separate themselves from material concerns, they see the mortal body as a gift from the Fortunes. It is the house in which the soul dwells, the vehicle by which it travels, the eyes and ears through which reality may be perceived – and it is a tool, one whose use they seek to perfect. More than their brethren in any other order, followers of Osano-Wo are likely to develop the physical aspects of the Elements within themselves... sometimes to the neglect of their more intangible strengths.

Training in the Temple is brutal, and many who join as novices soon abandon its ways for those of a gentler order. But – in contrast with the philosophy espoused by their offshoot, the Temple of Persistence – the point of these trials is not to develop endurance for its own sake. A monk of Osano-Wo must learn not to fear pain so he may bring his full strength to bear upon the world, holding nothing back. It is not uncommon for a novice to be assigned to punch a barrel full of sand for hours on end, until his hands are bleeding and raw. Monks who have taken their vows bear scars all over their bodies, some of them self-inflicted. Among other things, these scars are reminders of the strength around them: enemies the monk has faced, trials he has endured, and the effects of his own power.

Unsurprisingly, martial Kiho are the abilities these monks most commonly develop. They have the greatest difficulty with karmic Kiho, whose manipulation of the connections between things runs counter to the sect's reliance on the strength of the lone individual.

The Temple pursues the goal of developing strength for a very compelling reason: Hida Osano-Wo himself established his worthiness to become a Fortune through a display of raw power. The secret teachings of the order hold that any mortal man may do the same, even if he is not the son of a Kami and a dragon descended from the Heavens. After all, did Shinsei not teach the Emperor himself about the strength to be found in mortal men? (The Temple is a Fortunist sect, but long involvement with the Brotherhood means it is not ignorant of such Shinseist principles, and it has taken this one very much to heart.)

Despite their devotion to Osano-Wo, the monks who follow his example never pray to their patron as other Rokugani might. It is well-known among them that pleading for Osano-Wo's favor is an exercise in futility; anyone so weak as to ask for such aid is not worthy of his attention. Monks of the Temple do not even make offerings to avert his wrath, for shrinking from the Fortune's anger would imply they are not strong enough to withstand it. Indeed, some in the order's main temple will stand out on the Plains of Thunder during storms, shouting for Osano-Wo to strike them with his full power. The closest they come to conventional prayer – apart from these occasional exhortations – is the chant they use to assure the Fortune they will devote all their efforts to equaling his strength. They do not ask his assistance; they only notify him of their intentions. This chant, always delivered in a loud shout, sounds to outsiders more like an army preparing for war than the pious decorum of most monastic rituals.





Although the Temple's devotion is to Osano-Wo above all, the monks have not forgotten that their patron serves a higher lord. All monasteries of this order include small shrines to Bishamon, the Fortune of Strength, to remind them that the pursuit of power should not be for its own sake, nor even for the hope of transcending human limitation. Bishamon is the great protector of Rokugan, and likewise in life Hida Osano-Wo led the Crab against the Shadowlands to preserve the Empire against that threat. Many of his latter-day followers were Crab samurai in their pre-monastic life, and they have not forgotten their purpose. Even those who hail from other clans, or from among the *heimin*, see themselves in a similar role.

This is why there is another stock figure commonly seen in puppet plays: the fearless *sohei* who will stand against bandits and other threats when all hope seems lost. The guardian at the bridge, the hunter of thieves, the savior who walks into a raging fire and emerges unscathed with a child in his arms -- these, too, are monks of Osano-Wo, and the common people praise their names.

## The Order of Jurojin's Blessing

The close rapport between the Brotherhood of Shinsei and the common people of Rokugan means that monks frequently provide healing to those in need, especially among the lower ranks of the Celestial Order. During the hard years of the Great Famine in the seventh century, the need for such aid was great enough that it ultimately gave rise to an entirely new monastic sect.

The spread of "water fever" was only one of several hardships devastating Rokugan at the time, but it was the one most within reach of a monk's aid. Apart from the decision by the monk Rojin (formerly Akodo Akihisa) to join and lead Asahime's army, the various sects of the Brotherhood largely stood aside from the political and military conflicts of the time. Although they made efforts to appease the Fortunes so as to put an end to the famine itself, these had little effect. Treating the disease, however, could directly save a life, and the Brotherhood valued these victories, no matter how small. At a time when starvation and fear were driving people to abandon even close family members who fell ill, the courage and resilience of monks was a blessing like no other. The Brotherhood's leadership put out an unprecedented call to all corners of the Empire, begging any monk with knowledge of medicine to come and aid those in need.

Larger conflicts, however, almost crushed the nascent order before it could truly take shape... for the monks, true to form, treated all who were ill, even the members of the infamous People's Legion. To samurai this was unforgivable treachery, and more than a few monks died on a clan sword in those years. Were it not for the purging of the Great Famine from the official histories, those who participated in the healing effort might have returned quietly to their former sects rather than face the political consequences of forming a new order born from that disaster. But the Empire's quick and deliberate

forgetting of that era gave them the opportunity to organize themselves more formally so long as they did not speak too loudly of their origins. In modern times even the most dedicated Ikoma and Asako historians rarely know the true beginnings of the Order of Jurojin's Blessing.

Not all who served as healers during the Great Famine joined the new order. In fact, most returned to their own monasteries, content with the good work they had done. A few, however, found their true calling in such service and thereafter devoted themselves to assisting others. The sect was originally a small one, concentrated largely in Phoenix lands and the Asahina provinces of Crane territory, spreading after the ninth century into the territories of the compassionate Unicorn.

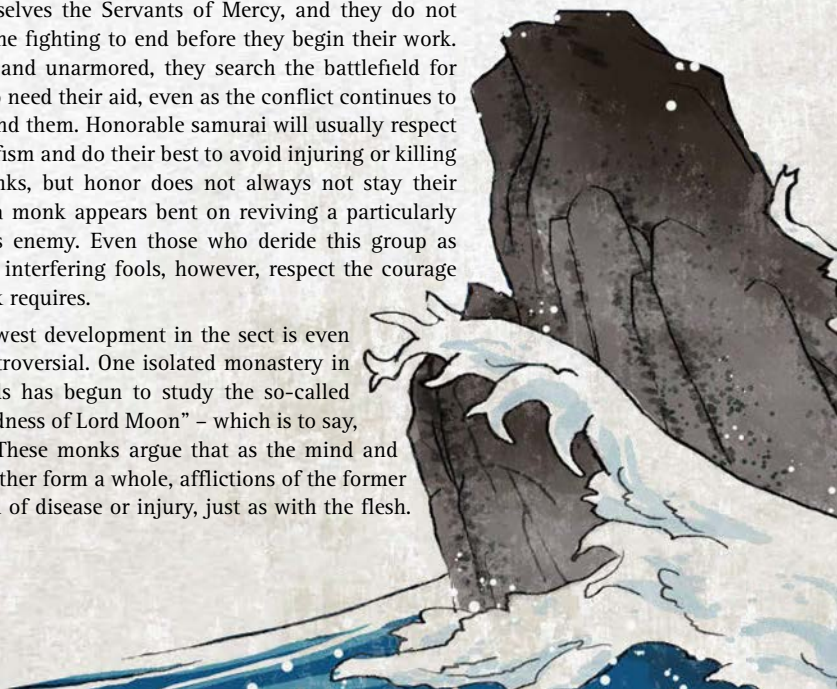
When the Scorpion Clan Coup shattered the peace of Rokugan, the monks of Jurojin's Blessing found themselves needed as never before. Their numbers grew throughout the twelfth century as violent conflicts wracked the Empire and left all too many in need of care. Few in the order celebrated their newfound influence, though -- it came at too high of a price.

Within the order there are two primary traditions. Some, hewing closely to their sect's original purpose, focus their efforts on the treatment of diseases, ranging from short-term afflictions like fevers and chills to more serious or chronic ailments such as tuberculosis. They have assembled enough knowledge and wisdom that in times of plague they are often summoned to the far corners of the Empire to advise the local healers. Even among the samurai there are seldom enough shugenja with the gift of treating illness to keep up with the need for their skills.

The other group devote themselves to healing injuries, whether received in the course of daily life or in battle. Initially this latter movement was seen as a dangerous innovation; after all, the monks who founded the order had explicitly refrained from involving themselves in the wars of the Great Famine. The recurrent strife in Rokugan, however, made this need too great to ignore. By the late twelfth century this second tradition is an accepted part of the order, existing in harmony with the older strand.

A small, radical group within that newer tradition call themselves the Servants of Mercy, and they do not wait for the fighting to end before they begin their work. Unarmed and unarmored, they search the battlefield for those who need their aid, even as the conflict continues to rage around them. Honorable samurai will usually respect their pacifism and do their best to avoid injuring or killing these monks, but honor does not always stay their hands if a monk appears bent on reviving a particularly dangerous enemy. Even those who deride this group as a pack of interfering fools, however, respect the courage their work requires.

The newest development in the sect is even more controversial. One isolated monastery in Kuni lands has begun to study the so-called "false madness of Lord Moon" -- which is to say, insanity. These monks argue that as the mind and body together form a whole, afflictions of the former are a kind of disease or injury, just as with the flesh.





## The Shrine of Heaven's Mirror

Those who wish to be kind say the Shrine of Heaven's Mirror is an interesting throwback to older practices, and a source of solace to *heimin* who often have little else. The uncharitable say this order was founded by a madwoman, and that her lunacy plagues her followers to this day.

In the late ninth century, a peasant woman named Rei was washing her family's clothing in a stream in the Dragon mountains when she found a piece of polished metal in the water. Upon picking it up, she saw in its surface not her own reflection, but images of the Spirit Realms and the creatures therein. Transfigured by this experience, she became a monastic hermit, seeking further visions of the reality outside Ningen-do.

Her village honored her by assembling the resources necessary to build a shrine that could house the small mirror, which Rei identified as a gift from the Heavens. Over subsequent years word spread of her visionary abilities, and the shrine became a place of pilgrimage for those seeking guidance. Because Rei herself was often reluctant to break her meditation to answer questions, some of her visitors took it upon themselves to stay and assist, using whatever forms of divination they knew or could devise. This, of course, added to the fame of the shrine and drew still others to its makeshift gates.

When Rei passed away in the early tenth century, this informal order faced a crisis. Was their reason for existence now gone, or did they have a duty they were bound to uphold? Rather than disband and leave the mirror without a guardian, they petitioned the Brotherhood of Shinsei for admittance. Many in the Brotherhood questioned the supposed divine origins of the mirror, but the shrine

itself had become a noteworthy center for seers, and visitors came from as far away as Phoenix lands to consult with the men and women there. In the end, the group was judged – narrowly – to not be following a False Path, and they were admitted to the Brotherhood as the Shrine of Heaven's Mirror.

The Shrine itself has been rebuilt twice since that day, but is still much as it was before: a simple gate, a large graveled courtyard, a dormitory and refectory for the monks, and a small, dark building that houses the polished metal fragment for which the order is named. The mirror is brought out once a year on the ninth day of the Month of the Tiger, the anniversary of Rei's discovery. This is a local festival not observed elsewhere in the Empire, though curious visitors have come from all over Rokugan to witness and take part. During the festival, any participant may claim the right to look in the mirror. For most it is only a piece of metal, but

Thus far they have met with only the most limited success in their attempts to cure such ailments, and some believe the attempt itself is misguided and operating on false principles. Whether this monastery will grow to become a significant movement within the order, abandon its efforts as a failure, or split off to form its own order remains to be seen.

Ironically, many followers of Jurojin's Blessing are themselves not whole in body. The order gives shelter to many disfigured and crippled *heimin*; over the centuries, it has become common for infants born with physical afflictions to be abandoned at the gates of the order's monasteries. They also recruit samurai too badly scarred in battle to carry on with their duties. Although these would seem to be the people least blessed by Jurojin, the order believes such individuals, having suffered so grievously, are the most capable of understanding and alleviating the suffering of others.

Monks of this order make extensive use of Water and Air Kiho, both to aid others and to protect themselves in dangerous situations. (Even those who walk onto battlefields take what precautions they can; they are not eager to die.) Some have made a particular study of Void Kiho as well, seeking to free those they aid from the innate weaknesses that plague them. All are highly skilled at medicine, regardless of which path they follow within the order's teachings.





some fall into ecstatic visions as Rei herself did, and many of those who are so affected afterward join the order. The order's membership includes an unusually high number of women, probably due to the lingering influence of its founder.

Outside observers usually attribute this experience not to the mirror itself, which they deny is a relic of the Heavens, but to the practices of the monks. Adherents of Heaven's Mirror seek to extend their perceptions beyond the ordinary reality of Ningen-do. To this end, they cultivate the ability to enter a trance state which they believe makes them more receptive to the guidance of the Fortunes, spirits, and other outside forces. They will deprive themselves of sleep for days on end, drink alcohol to the point of delirium, dance with wild and exhausting abandon, and consume hallucinogenic plants such as datura, often risking death in the process. The Festival of the Mirror, called Kagami Matsuri, is a shocking event to most Rokugani samurai, as participants throw off their usual decorum in the hope of glimpsing something beyond their daily existence. However, many members of the Shrine feel it is unwise to share their wild practices with outsiders, as the uninitiated lack the insight necessary to weather such trials and learn from their experiences. Some who try even fall prey to kansen, bringing great shame upon the Shrine.

The order has grown enough to have influence in a few other lands, and monks from these minor outposts are generally more restrained in their behavior. While individuals may still go to great extremes, they do not encourage similar behavior in those around them. Also, monks in these more distant outposts are less eager to make public spectacles of themselves. When one of their number seeks a vision, he will go apart from others – usually into the wilderness, though if that is not available, he may close himself into a box or some other confined space. Only after he has seen the answer and recovered from the effort will he return and share what he has learned.

Followers of this path are usually ascetic and largely solitary; apart from the Shrine itself, a “monastery” of the order is likely to be a mountain or forest in which a handful of monks reside, with a small building – often little more than a shack – where supplicants can wait or leave a note with the question for which they desire guidance. A monk may pass through a city on his way to another place, but will never reside there; he requires isolation from human concerns to open his mind to the spirits.

Scholars among the Temples of the Thousand Fortunes say the Shrine is a revival of practices not seen since the Fall of the Kami. Prior to the establishment of the Empire, Rokugani religious traditions included many kinds of primitive shamanism in which priests would attempt to commune with the Fortunes and the kami through trance states. These methods rapidly died out after the establishment of the Isawa shugenja tradition, which proved to be a far more effective approach. The existence and slow growth of the Shrine of Heaven's Mirror, however, suggests there is still a modest need for such activity even in more enlightened times. Shugenja are few in number, and monks of other orders do not always possess the spiritual receptiveness necessary to pass on messages from the Spirit Realms.

This, of course, is the charitable view. Many within the Brotherhood – and the vast majority outside of it – see the Shrine and its followers as misguided at best, a pack of charlatans at worst. This view is not helped by the fact that monks of this order practice every sort of divination – not only socially respected forms such as astrology and kawaru, but also a hundred kinds of omen-reading, most of them derived from peasant beliefs. The efficacy of such things is much in doubt, though this does not stop *heimin* and even samurai from consulting them when necessary.

The Shrine's major saving grace is that its members move swiftly against any member of their order found to be succumbing to corruption, whether spiritual or material. A common failing is for a monk to succumb to greed and begin enriching himself through “donations” solicited from credulous visitors. A true seer, the order insists, has no need of wealth, for it only binds him to this world and blinds him to the guidance of the spirits.

## The Way of the Wandering Seed

In the fifth century, the great Crane lord Doji Chizoemon grew old and weary of his duties, and sought to finish out his life in the Brotherhood of Shinsei. He instructed one of his vassals, Doji Honnosuke, to visit monasteries of the various orders and evaluate their beliefs and practices, then return and report on which one was best for his lord's retirement.

Honnosuke did not return until five years later. Like the ronin sage Sun Tao, he had journeyed from one end of the Empire to the other, spending time in countless monasteries ranging from tiny shrines to the greatest temples in Rokugan. He bowed low before his lord, who demanded – with no little impatience – to know what Honnosuke had discovered.

“My lord,” his vassal said, “what I discovered in my destinations is nothing compared to what I discovered in the journey. I have seen more of the Empire than I could have believed possible, from frozen mountains to burning plains, from the borders of gaijin lands to the borders of the sea, from the highest ranks of the Celestial Order to the lowest wretches in existence. I have experienced a thousand things new to me, and ten thousand more that I saw with new eyes. If there is enlightenment to be found, my lord, it is not to be found in any one place; it lies in all of them together.”

Moved by his vassal's words, Chizoemon called immediately for a razor. Together he and Honnosuke shaved their heads, and under the names Shouyo and Makase they took to the road once more.

The Way of the Wandering Seed existed for many years before gaining recognition from the Brotherhood. To this day, some argue against its official status, for the sect maintains no monasteries, has no leadership or hierarchy, and indeed possesses very little in the way of formal teachings. Even the name reflects its loose nature: it is a Way, not a shrine or a temple or an order. Some ask whether its followers presume to consider their philosophy







the equal of the Tao itself. The monks invariably answer there are many Ways in the world, and all true Ways lead to the Tao.

Unlike the Barefoot Brethren, who share their footloose habits, the Wandering Seeds do not journey with any immediate purpose. One of their few teachings holds that every monk of the Way should seek to visit every province in every clan's territory, but beyond that general goal they travel as the wind and water take them. If their steps lead them back to places seen before, it is a sign they have not learned all the lessons of those places. If a washed-out bridge or a hostile army blocks the monk's path, he simply turns in a new direction, eager to see what he might find there. In a city or village, he seeks out samurai lords and the lowest eta with equal interest; in the wilderness, he spends time with animals, learning what they have to teach.

Those who commonly divide Brotherhood orders into "ascetic" and "worldly" categories often find the Wandering Seeds perplexing. Although the monks travel the Empire rather than meditating in an out-of-the-way shrine, they show no attachment to worldly things. One day a monk may accept the most lavish meal a benefactor chooses to bestow upon him – complete with sake or plum wine – while the next he will refuse anything but water. The quest for the full diversity of the world's experiences, without settling on any one path, means their demeanor and habits can shift with very little warning.

Joining the sect requires little more than shaving one's head, acquiring a suitable robe and walking stick, and setting off down the road. Because of this, the Wandering Seeds often face a problem with impostors, who try to use the respect accorded to monks and the unpredictability of

this particular order to get away with outrageous or even abusive behavior. The legitimate Wandering Seed monks are merciless toward those they feel are trying to leverage or mis-use the name of their Way without genuinely caring for its tenets. A true follower will accept whatever trials are inflicted by his brethren; those who refuse are mere pretenders, and are treated as such.

The ideal for embarking on the Way is to join with another monk already on his own journey, just as Shouyo and Makase did. Although some refer to these pairs as masters and apprentices, the Seeds themselves refuse the description. There is no mastery in their order: as soon as a person takes up the name, he becomes the equal of his fellow travelers. Those who go about together are simply companions, as their founders were. Some pairs stay together for years or even decades; others part when the time seems right, perhaps acquiring new companions who seek to walk the Way, or joining for a while with a brother or sister already on the path.

The Wandering Seeds share their experiences freely with any who ask, though always with the caution that no two men can ever see the same thing. Each person's perceptions and understanding will inevitably differ. Nonetheless, hearing the tales of others is an experience in its own right and therefore not to be scorned. Some become skilled storytellers, trading their performances for the food, drink, and passage necessary to continue their journeys.

The more esoteric practices of the order focus on karmic and mystical Kiho, in order to share in and change the lives of those around them. In general, however, the monks' skills are extremely variable and unpredictable; those who assume they know what to expect from a Wandering Seed because they have met one before are often surprised.



# The Strength of Water

Although Water is the Ring of strength, few of its Kiho rely on raw power. Instead they focus on Water's flow: bolstering it, hindering it, manipulating its direction and purpose to a variety of ends. Unlike some of the other Elements, Water is fairly evenly balanced between the different types of Kiho, without favoring any one kind.

## Internal Kiho

It can be dangerous for a monk to interfere too extensively with the Water within his own body. Because Water is the Element of movement, an incautious monk risks crippling himself in ways not easily repaired. Used properly, however, internal Water Kiho are as powerful as the Ring they draw on.

### PARTAKING THE WAVES

Water is unharmed by even the mightiest blow. Unlike Earth, however – the Element most often associated with Reduction – Water does not resist damage. It simply moves aside, then flows back to fill the space once occupied by the attacker.

With this Kiho, a monk learns to manifest this lack of resistance within his own body. He bends with the blow, avoiding harm by giving way to it. Submission of this kind is not easily learned, and many struggle to accept the force directed toward them. Furthermore, there are limits to how far one can bend. The body is composed of all the Elements together, not Water alone, and so even the most enlightened monk can only partially protect himself by such means.

## Kharmic Kiho

Two quantities of water, when poured together, meld into an indistinguishable whole. Kharmic Water Kiho operate on the same principle, melding the monk's Water with that of another and then drawing on that connection to achieve their effect.

### AS THE BREAKERS

*"Be as the water, and your strength will ebb and flow. Be as the stone, and your perseverance knows no limit."*

– Master Suana

This *atemi* strike – usually delivered to a nerve cluster in the arms or the legs – creates turbulence within the victim's Water so his movements cannot flow easily. Those affected by this Kiho become sluggish or disoriented, their limbs moving slowly or in undesirable directions. Monks out in the world often use this technique against brash young bushi, reminding them that their swords cannot solve all problems.

The strength of Water is not to be underestimated, though: it will soon return to its accustomed paths, with such force that it cannot be diverted again for some time. Because of this, wise monks employ this Kiho with caution.

## RIDE THE WATER DRAGON

Although the Dragon of Water is not known for its kindness toward humans, it does personify the power of healing. A monk who successfully aligns his own chi with the Water Dragon channels that power through his own body, knitting wounds with remarkable speed. When used in conjunction with Partaking the Waves (or the Earth Kiho called Embrace the Stone), this technique allows a monk to achieve feats of supernatural endurance, such as walking barefoot on hot coals. What little injury he suffers will heal almost before it forms.

The simplicity of this Kiho is a source of fruitful debate for scholars in the Brotherhood. Some have proposed that the ease of learning it indicates the Water Dragon is not as indifferent to human well-being as it ordinarily appears.







## Martial Kiho

Kiho of this kind are often *atemi* strikes, bringing together the strength and precision of Water in perfect harmony. Such an attack interferes with the flow of chi, with results ranging from the beneficial to the terrifyingly destructive.

### CHI PROTECTION

Most *atemi* strikes are used as attacks against the target, bringing crippling pain or disability. This Kiho, however, uses the same underlying principles to a very different end. By striking the correct nerve cluster, the monk can redirect the target's chi to where it is needed, bringing the healing potential of Water to bear on an injury. Open wounds sometimes bleed alarmingly after such a strike – an effect that can bring accusations of maho – but soon the flesh begins to knit itself closed. Even the most grievous cut may heal with barely a scar when assisted by this Kiho.

### FREEZING THE LIFEBLOOD

*“A strong man cannot stand a shattered soul.”*  
– Hoshi Kaelung

The polar opposite of Chi Protection, this Kiho brings the flow of chi to a near-total halt. A correctly-placed strike ripples from the point of impact to all the key points within the body, paralyzing the muscles and even stopping the target's heart for several agonizing moments. Indeed, some who have been on the receiving end of such a strike say they were dead for the duration of the effect. Afterward they rush to purify themselves – or sometimes take more extreme measures to remove their defilement from the world.

Many consider it fortunate that this is among the most difficult Kiho to master, as it could be disastrous in the hands of those without the wisdom to use it with restraint.

## Mystical Kiho

These are among the most common Water Kiho, and also the most visually spectacular. Just as a cup of water will tremble at the slightest vibration, so too can a monk call on the Water in the world to answer him.

### BUOYED BY THE KAMI

*“There is no more glorious experience in life!”*  
– Guso, monk of the Wandering Seed

Some things float, and others sink. This simple truth has confounded many a novice monk, floundering waist-deep in a lake while attempting to learn one of the most basic Kiho. Mastering it requires aligning one's Water with the water underfoot to ensure the monk will float. Once this is achieved, it provides a useful way to impress observers; for this reason, young monks are often chided for using it frivolously. The few shugenja who have learned its ways, however, have been known to use this Kiho during naval battles, or in crossing rivers and moats, so as to better position themselves for casting spells.

### SLAP THE WAVES

*“Use rhythms that your opponents do not expect, producing formless rhythms from rhythms of wisdom.”*  
– Master Suana

Anyone who has passed a summer in Crab or southern Crane lands, or on the Islands of Silk and Spice, can attest to the fact that there is water in the air. The hand-clap and kiai necessary to activate this Kiho fling the monk's chi outward in an explosive burst, sending a shock through the surrounding Water. The effect is like being struck in the face with a crashing wave, unless the target's own Water can flow with the force of the attack.

Apart from the offensive effects of this Kiho, monks have also been known to use it as a warning signal for allies, or even as a means of intimidating enemies who are out of range. The sound carries well beyond the effect of the attack itself.

### WAVES IN ALL THINGS

Even stone contains within itself a minuscule trace of Water. This Kiho allows the monk to bring that trace briefly to life, causing the very ground beneath his target's feet to ripple as if it were liquid. Nor does the effect stop there; his strike is carried through the ground into the target's body, with painful consequences.

Some strongly ascetic monks have decried the use of this Kiho due to the disruption it causes in the natural world. Where the force of the blow travels between the monk and his target the ground is often torn, even to the point of splitting rocks. For those who need to defend themselves or others, however, the technique is more than worth the cost.









## The Keeper of Water

In the year 1166 a descendent of Shinsei named Rosoku issued six challenges to the Empire. The victors of these challenges became the Empire's first Elemental Keepers. The saga of these challenges is chronicled in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Emerald Empire*, page 75. Rosoku issued one challenge for each Element, and declared the winner of each challenge would uncover a tome containing the wisdom of that Element. The challenge of Water proclaimed: "The general who can lead his armies from one end of the Empire to the other in a single night shall keep the Book of Water." The victor of this challenge, and the first Keeper of Water, was named Doji Jun'ai.

Jun'ai was a compassionate but fierce warrior, empathic and reflective, exemplary among the Doji. Even as she excelled in the arts of the warrior, she was also a gentle soul with a scholar's mind. She rose through the ranks at a remarkable speed, becoming a *taisa* while still quite young, yet despite so many accomplishments and accolades she still felt something missing in her life, a hollow inside that could not be filled.

The only time she felt complete was when she was in the presence of a young man named Tsuken. Meeting him for the first time at a courtly event, Jun'ai quickly grew close to the fiery, passionate duelist, and for a time the two carried on a romantic affair. Over time Jun'ai noticed that Tsuken too felt a great inexplicable

emptiness inside. She wanted to help the young man and arranged for him to join her forces in the field, but Tsuken became even more withdrawn than before, and Jun'ai began to regret what she had done. She felt torn between her duties and her longing to be with Tsuken. In spite of their intense feelings they could not seem to find harmony with each other, and Jun'ai began to abandon any notion of a shared future.

At this time there was war between the Mantis and Phoenix. Tsuken was assigned to protect the life of a Crane ambassador to the Phoenix, and Jun'ai accepted she might never see the young man again. Destiny had other plans, however. Within days, Tsuken reappeared before her with a shocking tale. He had survived an ambush from Mantis forces and now sought to fulfill his promise to his dying charge: protect the Phoenix village of Fujita Mura. Tsuken pleaded with Jun'ai to help him defend the village. With her troops they could buy enough time to have the villagers evacuated. Once more she was torn between duty and love; she wanted to help him, but had standing orders from her superiors that the Crane honor guard under her command was to stay out of the conflict. Ultimately she could not disobey and turned him away. Consumed with fiery determination, Tsuken declared he would defend the village by himself.

Jun'ai, still torn, realized she could help in another way. Perhaps the honor guard she commanded could not interfere in the Mantis-Phoenix conflict, but other samurai had no such constraints. She sought out other samurai who were not under her direct command, managing to sway many of them with her compassion and the strength of her conviction. Together she and this handful of volunteers headed to defend Fujita Mura. Soon farmers and craftsmen were joining her march, along with other samurai from many different clans as word of her intentions spread.

By the time she arrived at the village, Tsuken had killed the Mantis commander in a duel but had suffered a serious wound in return. The Mantis troops were camped just beyond the village border awaiting further instructions. When the Mantis saw Jun'ai's approaching force, they thought better of attempting to take what had originally been an easy target, and decided to move on.

Shortly after this, while she sought Tsuken in the village, Jun'ai found the Book of Water.





Scholars have noted that all of the Keepers fulfilled their challenges in unusual and indirect ways. Certainly this was true in Jun'ai's case. In a few hours she had rallied samurai from numerous clans beneath her banner, including warriors from the far end of Rokugan, and they had reached the village just before sunrise. Symbolically, she had indeed led an army across the Empire.

When next Jun'ai and Tsuken met, she smiled at him, for he had found the Book of Fire and their fates had both been changed. As mere samurai they had been forced to hide their feelings from the world. As Elemental Keepers, they could openly live for each other.

As Keeper of Water, Jun'ai is serene and patient, even more so than the Keeper of Earth. It takes her some time to adjust to her new role, since she is used to issuing orders instead of working among equals. Jun'ai is extremely perceptive of the world around her, difficult to surprise and wise beyond her years. There is also a newfound jovial tone to her voice, a new sparkle in her eyes. Although some whispered this is the mark of enlightenment, in truth it is simply her true self finally revealed to the world.

## The Book of Water

Like the other Books of the Elements, the Book of Water is ultimately nothing more than a mundane book of wisdom. There is no magic to its words, nothing otherworldly about its pages. It is an esoteric work, a treatise on a variety of topics including the mythology of Rokugan, scholarly pursuits, and vague philosophies of impermanence and change. However, the book goes much deeper than its words would first suggest.

The Book of Water speaks of change and challenges, but also addresses the meaning of the self. It claims the self is always changing, from moment to moment, influenced constantly by outside forces. Every act affects it, like ripples in a pool of water. The book proposes bringing stillness to this pool so that it might reflect the world as it truly is. As such, it is a deeply personal book, concerning itself less with the world outside and more with the individual reading it.

Jun'ai amends the Book of Water perhaps more than any other Keeper. Her additions offer perspectives on the stories contained within the Book and examine the transience of the self from a scholarly perspective. In the pages she writes entirely herself, she offers an empirical look at the construction of self and presents a compelling argument on how negative emotions affect the external world. She condones training oneself to rise above the impulses of one's own emotions, opening one's mind to the lessons of history and one's own senses.

The Book of Water grants no supernatural abilities or powers to the reader. Like all the Books it is simply a thought-provoking work of philosophy.

Its teachings can help readers awaken their potential in the ways of Water, but such awakened potential is not bestowed by the Book; it always existed within the reader and was merely brought to the surface

In mechanical terms, the owner of the Book of Water gains a +1k1 bonus to all Water rolls, Perception rolls, and Strength rolls, including Skill rolls that use these Traits. This bonus increases to +2k1 while Contesting any roll using either Perception or Strength. However, if the Book of Water is not consulted and its contents not meditated upon at least once every two days, these bonuses are lost. The Keeper of Water receives these bonuses at all times, regardless of how often he/she consults the text. In addition, the Keeper receives beneficial effects from the respect and admiration of Water kami, as determined by the GM. Possible effects include the ability to Commune with the Water kami (as per the spell) and to heal others as though casting Path to Inner Peace.

## PASSAGES FROM THE BOOK OF WATER

"The mind of the master is as water, ever adopting the shape of its container."

"Be ever moving. Do not settle. Running water is never stale."

"When something is lost, do not attempt to regather it. It is difficult to grasp spilled water."

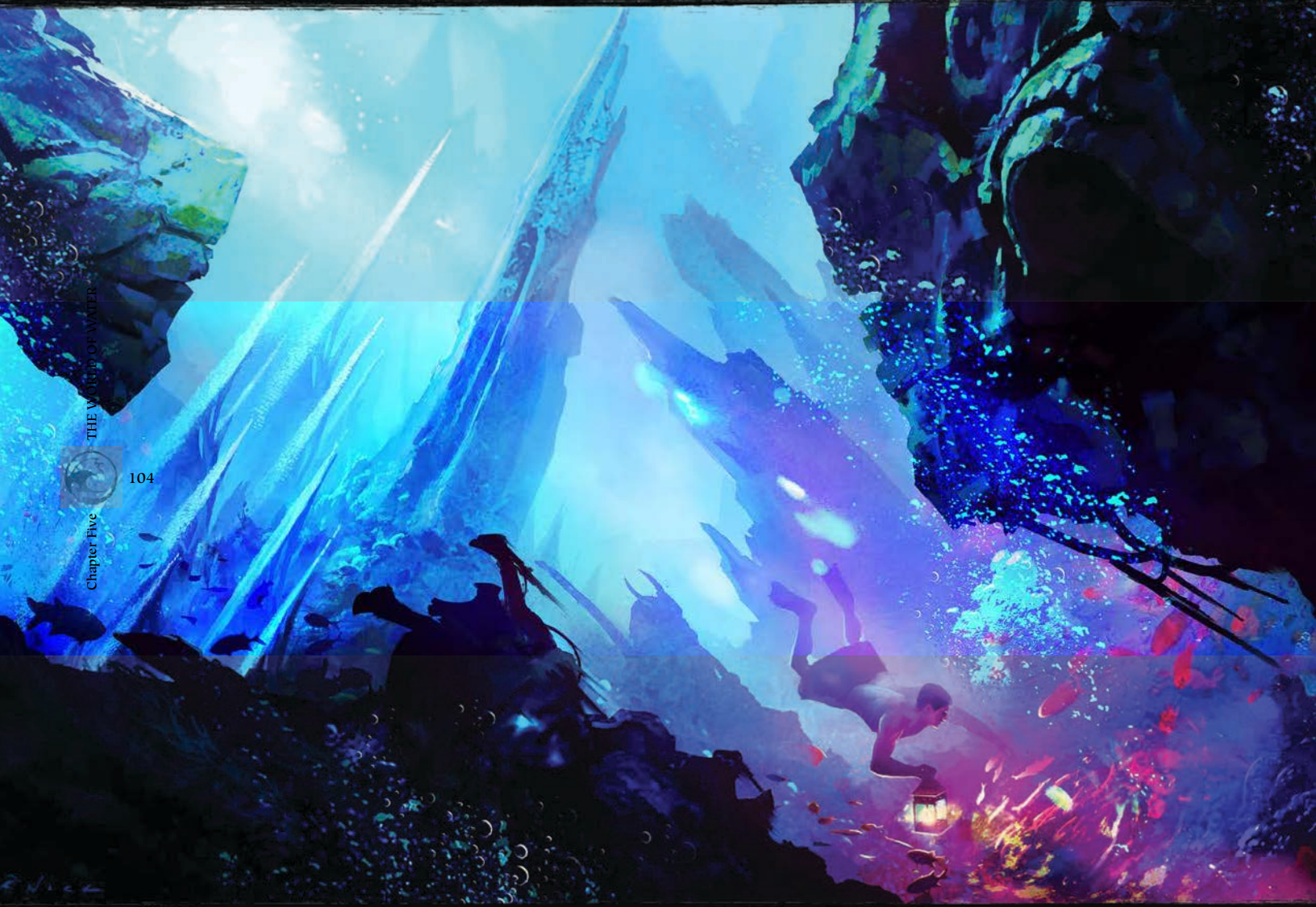
"Never act without cause. The pond is ever-still and peaceful, yet it reacts immediately when struck. It is instantaneous in its reaction, not moving a moment beforehand. It cannot be harmed, it consumes what strikes it. The water is patient."

"The moon shines in every pool, in every pool shines one moon."

"It is always better to be formless. Water is flexible and yielding, yet none can withstand the crashing wave, for they have no way to change it. So the flexible overcomes the adamant, the yielding overcomes the forceful, and the impermanent overcomes the unchanging."









# THE WORLD OF WATER



*Doji Kanashimi felt her way amid treacherous rocks, knowing she would fall.*

*All around her the sea crashed against the rocky shore. Overhead, lightning chased the thunder. The bellowing echo of Osano-Wo's fury shook her to her bones. The pelting rain stung her eyes and forced the young samurai-ko to advance by feel as much as by sight. Kanashimi could feel the weight of her drenched clothing dragging through the yanking waves. A metaphor, she thought, for the tug of Sin against her soul.*

*She would die out here amid these rocks, seeking absolution. The roiling fury of storm clouds would cover any scream she made. The powerful tide would pull her body beneath the waves. No sign of the failure that had once called herself a samurai of the Crane would remain. No sign of her Sins would remain.*

*A lightning flash lit up the dark sky and for the briefest of moments Kanashimi could see her destination. She wiped her face, trying to clean off the soaking rain and blurring tears. She must not allow her sorrow to make her fail at this final task.*

*Water everywhere, water cloaking her, covering her, drowning her, betraying her emotions. It refused to let her lie to herself, made the inner failure plain for any to see.*

*Kanashimi worked her way from one rock to the next, forcing her way through the rushing tide. The waves rolled over her, slammed her body into the rocks as if to show her*

*how little and weak she was compared to the incontestable nature of the ocean. Showing her how karma would always find her and she would always be punished for her failures, no matter where she went.*

*Another flash of lightning followed by booming thunder. The light revealed her goal, the Lady's Rest. Only a few dozen feet left to go; she could make it. She needed to make it. She needed to join the Lady Doji at her shrine before she could be taken into Suitengu's embrace.*

*At the dawn of the Empire, when Doji had found herself alone and suffused with final sorrow, she had come to these rocks. Upon that very stone Doji had given herself to the ocean's waves. Now Doji Kanashimi would do the same... though her regret was far less honorable.*

*Kanashimi had committed each of the Three Sins in abundance. Desire toward the husband of her daimyo – love like a spoiled fruit, locked away for none to see, poisoned by the stealth of late-night visits. Regret for her actions and her inaction, for she could not tell her daimyo, she could not speak her love without spreading the shame further.*

*And Fear, choking Fear that she would be found out, even now as she walked between the rocks.*







*What if the ocean was not enough? What if the cleansing power of Water and the wrath of the Fortune of Fire and Thunder did not answer her plea? Would Suitengu, Lord of the Sea, feel the pain within her soul and forgive her as he embraced her with salty death? Or would she be ignored, left to live with her regret?*

*A sound shook Kanashimi from her daze. The noise was far away, not from the shore and its treacherous world of lies and failures. It came from the storm-wracked sea. It was...beautiful, that sound, like a sonorous horn from beneath the ocean's waves.*

*Kujira song! She had heard the rumor of a pod of "blackfish" in these waters. They must be close for their singing to be audible over the storm. Some said the kujira were the voice of Suitengu himself, the voice of his serene aspect.*

*Listening to that sound, for the first time in many months Kanashimi felt at peace. True peace.*

*She could see the shrine to Doji, mere yards from her position, but she could not move. The sound was so pure,*

*beauty incarnate, and it paralyzed her. Suitengu and the sea, the embodiment of Water itself, speaking to her as if in a dream. She thought she could hear words, words spinning through the music.*

*"You do not have to suffer your pain forever. What pain life gives, karma shall take away. The sea is renewal, and the soul is eternal. Accept the sea and be reborn."*

*Doji Kanashimi, tears of joy streaming down her cheeks, felt the crushing weight of rain and waves pull her free from the rocks. Within the joyous roar of the ocean's waves the young Crane felt the crushing weight of Sin release its hold. The hand of Suitengu pulled away her pain.*

*Days later, a monk arrived to tend to the shrine at the Lady's Rest. He had heard rumors of a grief-stricken young Crane, and he expected to find a sign of her, perhaps a note or her daisho left carefully behind. It would not be the first time a Crane samurai's life had ended in that way. But he found nothing.*

*Atop the Lady's Rest, he looked out across the ocean's depths and heard the song, soft as a trickle of water upon the skin.*





# The Natural World of Water

*“Water is fluid, soft, and yielding. Yet water will wear away rock which is rigid and unyielding. As a rule, whatever is fluid, soft, and unyielding will overcome whatever is rigid and hard. A paradox: what is soft is strong.”*  
– Sun Tao

Water is incontestable flexibility. It is change and transformation. Water is patient but capable of acting with swift and tremendous force. Where Earth is immovable Will, Water wears Earth down with time and constant motion. Where Air is dynamic and full of vibrant energy, Water is capable of life in seeming stasis – though permanent stillness is rare. Where Fire is monstrous in its destruction, necessary in its fiery catalyst, Water is soothingly putting out the flame. Air, Earth, and Fire each serve in the balance of harmony between the soul and the Heavens, while Water is the ever-flowing lifeblood of creation.

Water is a factor in all philosophies of war, politics, and religion. It is beautiful in its bounty and terrible in its lack. Life requires Water, and civilization thrives near its major sources. Those that do not must find a ready way to supply it. Rice and wheat drink it up. Its imbalance has started wars. Armies float along it, stymied when it dries up. There are no animals – and few spiritual creatures with physical form – capable of living long without the Element of change.

## The Sea (Umi)

*“The cure for anything is salt water: sweat, tears, or the sea.”*  
– Fisherman’s proverb

The sea is the ultimate source of Water in the physical world. Only the greatest of Water kami who are bound to a lake or landlocked river have not been a part of the ever-changing cycle of the ocean at some point in their existence. For most of history the Rokugani call the great sea off the coast of their country the Umi Amaterasu; during the chaotic Celestial shifts of the twelfth century, it is called at times the Umi Yakamo or “Yakamo’s Heart” and later, after the ascension of the Jade Sun, the Umi Hisui Yoake, “Sea of the Jade Dawn.”

Rokugan’s coastline is a source of magnificent power, temporal and spiritual. Crane and Mantis commerce relies upon swift negotiation of the waterways. Hundreds of fishing villages dot the shoreline, each with fervent prayers for the grand ocean and its innumerable kami. The Crab, Mantis, and Phoenix each navigate the depths, and the Mantis owe their mighty sea power to its existence. The sea provides the Empire with food, its travelers with swift speed, its merchants with profit, and its samurai with rapid transport for war. It is home to hidden Naga cities, colonies of Ningyo, to Fortunes and beings of unimaginable power who dwell deep beneath its surface. Even the most landlocked artisan is inspired by its beauty.

On a smaller scale, there are numerous notable bays and inlets within the O-Umi. Most notable is Earthquake Fish Bay in the Crab provinces. Its waters are always warm because of volcanic activity, and three times in the history of Rokugan a strong earthquake has resulted in an abundance of fish rising to the shores of the bay. Each time the omens have signified ominous portents, and they have never been wrong. In the short run the blessing of fish is welcomed, but always with a cautious eye on the future.

The Wan Sano Kin Taito (Bay of the Golden Sun) of Otosan Uchi is the most important bay in the Empire for most of its twelve-century history, while farther south near Kyuden Doji rests Maigo no Musume Wan (Lost Daughter Bay), where the first Hantei found his bride Mioko in a cave. Within the Islands of Spice and Silk can be found Wan no Asaguroi Mizu, the Bay of Dark Water, which lies atop the lost remains of an underwater Naga city. Few sailors fail to throw rice overboard when crossing it for fear of upsetting the restless spirits below.

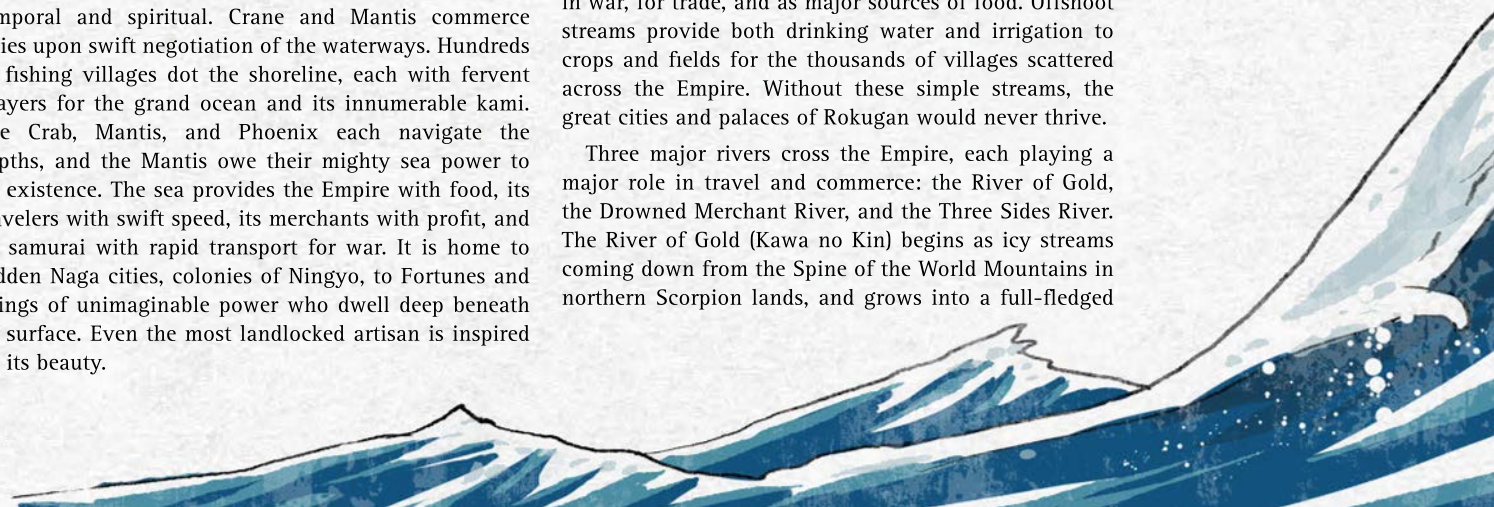
Finally, in the far south is the corrupted Sea of Shadows, a region of the ocean Tainted by the touch of Jigoku, a place no sane man will enter. The darkest oceanic creatures of the Shadowlands rise up from its depths, and it is even rumored the Dark Oracle of Water makes this sea its home. In the twelfth century, the Crab discover a single uncorrupted lane through the Sea of Shadows. Called the Osaku Route, it is believed to have been created by Osano-Wo to protect a shrine to his name.

The significance of the Sea of Amaterasu to Rokugan is impossible to overstate. It is a source of both danger and opportunity, the primary source of seafood for the Empire, and a major route for commerce along the coastline. The malignant gaijin of Merenae and Thrane came from across the sea, but it also became the route for the Empire to reach its new Colonies at the end of the twelfth century. An entire clan, the Mantis, depends on the sea for its power and influence, and other clans challenge them for their position as “masters of the seas.” The importance of the sea is unlikely to diminish any time in the future.

## Rivers (Kawa)

If the ocean is the beating heart of Water, then rivers are the veins and arteries. Like the ocean, the river waterways of Rokugan are used for travel, for movement in war, for trade, and as major sources of food. Offshoot streams provide both drinking water and irrigation to crops and fields for the thousands of villages scattered across the Empire. Without these simple streams, the great cities and palaces of Rokugan would never thrive.

Three major rivers cross the Empire, each playing a major role in travel and commerce: the River of Gold, the Drowned Merchant River, and the Three Sides River. The River of Gold (Kawa no Kin) begins as icy streams coming down from the Spine of the World Mountains in northern Scorpion lands, and grows into a full-fledged







river which runs along the entire western border of the Scorpion provinces. It is the major trade route for that clan's territory, and the primary source of travel from the Scorpion lands out to the sea, for beyond their territory it spills through the Yasuki provinces and empties into Earthquake Fish Bay. Unfortunately, because the River of Gold is such a prominent source of trade, it also attracts some of the heaviest populations of river-pirates. Piracy along the waterway is sometimes so prevalent that those living at the water's edge must utilize more expensive overland routes rather than ensure the risk.

The Drowned Merchant River (Oboreshinu Boekisho Kawa) begins its life at the Iron Rings Cascade, a great waterfall in the mountains between Dragon and Phoenix territory, and flows east to west. The minor Dragonfly clan controls a portion of its northern banks, while in other regions it serves as the border between the Lion and Dragon Clans. The river's name derives from a story of a murdered merchant who drowned in the river along with his family, only to return as vengeful spirits exacting vengeance upon their attackers. Indeed, the superstitious are wary of travelling its banks for fear of upsetting these lingering angry ghosts, and some travelers claim the ghosts rise to the surface during floods and storms.

The Three Sides River (Kawa Mitsu Kishi) takes its name from three boulders called Radeki, Gensei, and Tenero, which can only be seen in summer droughts when the river is at its lowest. It originates in the north of the Empire where multiple other smaller rivers join with the Drowned Merchant River. From there, the unified waters become the Three Sides River and flow south along the edge of the

Seikitsu Mountains, later separating the Lake of Sorrows to the north and the Red Lake to the south before spilling out to the sea. This river is been the single most contested body of water in the Empire, serving as a frequent battleground between the Crane, Lion, and Scorpion Clans. The battle that gives the river its name, however, was waged by the Lion and Phoenix. After the conflict was over, the victorious Phoenix named the three notable boulders in the drought-lowered riverbed after the three Lion officers who had led the failed charge against them.

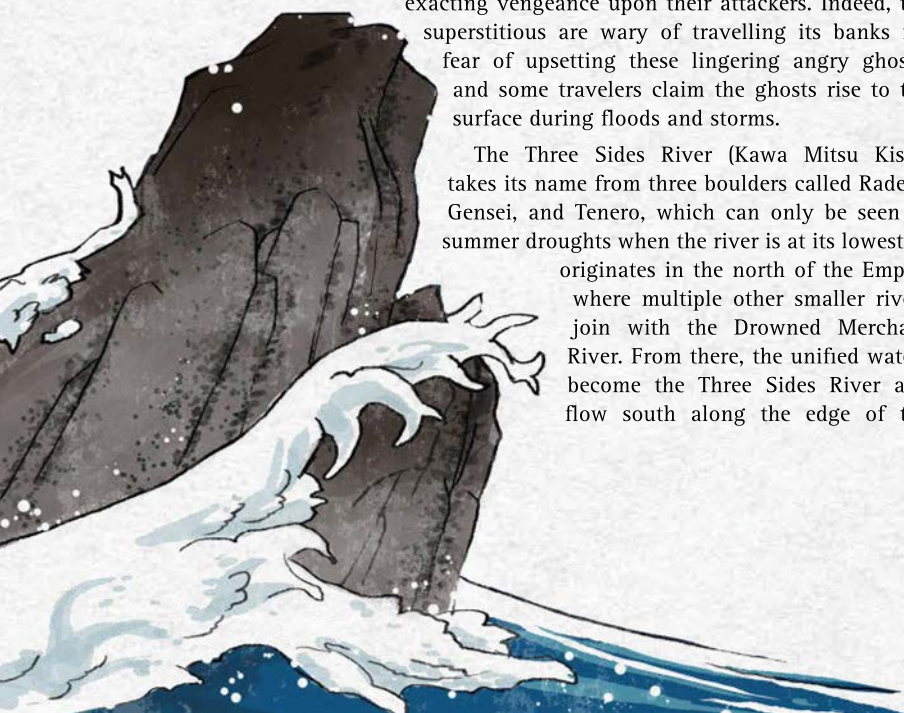
The flora and fauna of these three rivers are as diverse as the lands through which they travel. Rice and wheat grow plentifully along the banks and connecting streams of all three, but opium poppies are found only along the River of Gold. A huge variety of fish and eel inhabit the waters, supplying food to countless villages and cities.

There are dozens of other rivers in Rokugan which are noteworthy enough to be named on the Empire's maps. Some of these connect to the main three, such as the River of White Gold which connects to the River of Gold south of Scorpion lands. Others flow alone, such as the smaller rivers found in Phoenix and Crane lands.

No rivers in Rokugan are so notorious as the three sinister waterways found in the far south: the River of the Last Stand, the Black Finger River, and the River of the Dark Moon. The River of the Last Stand, Kawa Sano Saigo no Kamae, runs along the very border of the Shadowlands. Once called the Seigo River, in the eighth century it became the frontline of the Crab Clan's last defense against the armies of the Maw, and its name was changed afterward. In the river's upper reaches it splits in two; one of these branches is known as the Black Finger River (Kuroi Yubi Kawa) while the other is the River of the Dark Moon (Kawa Kurai Tsuki). The Black Finger River is a place of dark and stagnant death, inhabited by twisted Water kansen and unwholesome Tainted "life." It flows from deep within the Shadowlands, originating at the so-called Forbidden Lake. The lake's waters are so murky that the moon's reflection appears blood red, and no creature fallen in these dark waters ever crawls out the same. Crab samurai sometimes call this river the River of No Return, saying that to cross it is tantamount to giving your soul to Jigoku - either the Taint or the monsters of the Shadowlands will take you before you can ever return. The Dark Moon River is closer to Rokugan and its repute is less dire, but it is still notorious for deadly plants and unusual caves along its banks.

## Lakes (Mizu-Umi)

The lakes of Rokugan are unique jewels, each with its own story of purpose and power. Most serve as sources of fresh water and irrigation for local farms, but some are left pristine and untouched, either for aesthetic or spiritual reasons.







Dragon Lake (Mizu-Umi Ryo) is found in the center of the Shinjo provinces in Unicorn territory. Cool and temperate, rarely freezing even in the harshest winter; its waters are used by fishermen and farmers alike. Some believe a Naga city rests at its bottom, and the Kuni family claims its water has special properties – they collect it for a jade salve which helps prevent the Taint from growing in wounds. The lake's name is derived from a massive shrine to the Water Dragon on its south side, a shrine which dates back to the first century. Supposedly, when the Thunder Dragon fell in love with Hida, the Water Dragon feared it might do the same and lose its power to mortals, so it hid its heart at the bottom of this lake. Whether this is true or not, the Kuni are quite sure the lake's water has been blessed by the Water Dragon.

Also in Unicorn lands is White Shore Lake (Shiroi Kishi Mizu-Umi), said to be the largest lake in the Empire. Named for the beautiful white sands of its shores, the lake is a hub of fishing and trading. Legends claim it houses a clan of Ningyo and a protective Orochi, although this has never been confirmed.

Further south, the Three Sides River passes between two great lakes, the Red Lake (Aka Mizu-Umi) and the Lake of Sorrows (Mizu-umi no Fuko). Red Lake, once known as the Lake of *Shining* Glass, derives its name from a ferocious battle known as the Battle of the Hour of the Wolf, a battle in which so many died that the waters ran thick and red with blood for months afterward. On the battle's anniversary the lake turns red once more and blood washes upon the shore. Red Lake is home to many wandering spirits of the dead who traverse its surface and shoreline. The Lake of Sorrows is also a lake with a grim heritage, for it is believed to be home to the thousands of souls from the many battles in Beiden Pass whose bodies never received proper funeral rites. Small shrines dot the lakeshore, offering homage to those not remembered, and peasants claim that on dark nights the dead rise from the waters as waterlogged rotting corpses, seeking the blood of the living.

More cheerful and aesthetically pleasing prospects may be found at Chrysanthemum Petal Lake (Mizu-Umi Kiru Hanabira) and the Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow (Mizu-umi no Sakura Yuki). The Imperial histories say Emperor Hantei XVII planted the chrysanthemum trees lining the shore of Mizu-Umi Kiru Hanabira to mourn the death of his son. Whether this is true or not, by tradition each year the Emperor pays a visit to the lake. Also, during the Chrysanthemum Festival silent prayers are offered at the lake's shore, after which a single pure-white flower petal is lifted from the surface. This petal is said to heal any wound for those of Imperial blood.

The Lake of Cherry Blossom Snow is an icy lake in the Toritaka lands, near the haunted Shinomen Forest. It originates from a waterfall and is surrounded by cherry trees. In spring the cherry blossoms cover the lake's surface, resembling a blanket of snow. Many visitors meditate under the trees as the blossoms fall, and it is said that to be under the last fallen bloom is to be marked as the purest person in the Empire.

Lastly, there is one lake in Rokugan which is unknown to anyone outside of its caretakers. Beneath Kyuden Bayushi, in a tremendous cavern reached by secret passageways from the Scorpion Champion's personal chambers, lies the so-called Sleeping Lake. Its waters are crystal blue and drinking them is said to cause a deep trance, after which the drinker awakens with visions of the past and future. For a thousand years the Scorpion watched over this lake, for it was said that Bayushi himself would appear above its surface, searching for his lost lover Shosuro. Some Scorpion shugenja believe the lake contained a portal to Meido, the Realm of the Dead, although this was never proven.

## The Anger of Water: Drought, Flooding, Tsunami, and Taifun

When Water becomes imbalanced within a region of the Empire, the results are tragic to behold. Drought and flooding, tsunami and the storms known as taifun are all regular occurrences in the history of Rokugan. Drought and flooding can affect the entire Empire by ruining the harvest, triggering famine; floods can also be ruinous to towns and villages located near rivers or lakes. Tsunami and taifun have more localized effects, but their impact on seaside cities and palaces can be devastating. The impact of even a minor disaster of Water can be felt all across the land, as surely as an army on the march.

In the Rokugani view, there is no such thing as a “natural” disaster. Thus, any Water-based disasters have a spiritual cause, either in an imbalance of the Elements themselves or due to the anger of a Fortune or other supernatural being. Suitengu, for example, will ravage the coastline with a fury unmatched by even the disaster of war if he is not shown the proper respect. A lake spirit which grows angry withdraws its blessing, and soon fish die, the water pollutes, and famine ensues. Every river and lake has its own spirit, effectively a minor







Fortune, and if their waters are polluted with the blood of war they retaliate in various ways, such as by spewing forth sudden floods. In fact, the most dangerous of all Water-based catastrophes, the super-taifun known as the kamikaze (divine wind), is often a physical manifestation of the wrath of Osano-Wo himself. Entire clans perform prayers and offerings to avert such anger.

Drought and flooding are the two most common symptoms of an imbalance of Water in the local Elements. Drought occurs quite often during the summer in lands which are far from any major body of water; it is most common in the landlocked regions of the northern Crab lands, the western Unicorn territories, and the foothills of the Dragon. If war comes, samurai on the march will drink up the remaining reserves of water, leaving the *heimin* and the crops to suffer. Usually, this imbalance is resolved in autumn when rains come and the parched land is restored... but in some cases the imbalance persists, the land becomes desiccated, and the populace dies by the thousands. Nothing can be planted in a drought, armies cannot move, commerce does not function.

In the absence of drought, snowmelt and rain fill the rivers in the spring and more rain falls in the autumn,

replenishing the land and filling the waterways. However, an Elemental imbalance can also lead to too much snow or rain, the rivers overflowing and the lakes rising as the land becomes drenched and inundated. Crops choke in the abundance of what they once found necessary. Roads turn to impassable mud and bridges wash out, paralyzing the movements of commerce and war alike. There is at least one known instance of such flooding contributing to a major disaster in the Empire: in the year 661, abundant snowmelt caused unprecedented flooding in the lowlands of the Crane, Lion, and Scorpion. Famine spread across much of the Empire, exacerbated by trade conflicts, and starving peasant refugees fled their lands in mass migrations. Floodwaters inundated many regions and then turned stagnant, breeding a disease called Water Fever that killed thousands. The result was a peasant revolt unmatched in the Empire's history.

Taifun and tsunami are actually more common than floods or droughts, but are not as widely noticed due to being limited to the coast. The taifun, or hurricane, begins far off the shore where only the Mantis witness its origins. Cold northern winds collide with warm southern air and spiral into a sweeping mass, the interaction of the unbalanced Air spirits drawing up Water – and with it, energy – from the surface of the sea. At the center of the storm is an immense eye referred to as “Suitengu’s Port,” where the primal Fortune of the Sea looks down upon the ensuing chaos. When the taifun reaches the shore, a cacophony of hammering waves and howling winds, harbors are flooded and coastal lands washed clean, ports torn asunder, ships sent to the bottom... and just like that, the horror ends as the spirits become calm and the storm fades away. Indeed, the only solace from the destructive taifun is that its wrath is short-lived once it reaches the stable and secure Earth. Generally, taifun begin in the far south at the edge of the Sea of Shadows, then sweep up the coast and unleash their destruction before petering out somewhere in the middle of Crane lands.

Tsunami are the rarest and most short-lived of the horrors unleashed by unbalanced or wrathful Water, but they are also among the worst. They begin far out at sea and often seem to come in conjunction with great tremors or earthquakes which are felt on land, suggesting the wrath of the Water may be related to similar anger in the spirits of Earth. Regardless, a huge displacement of water occurs and a massive wave arises, gathering height and strength as it closes with the shore. The inexorable march of the tsunami can sometimes be spotted while it is still far out to sea, and the lucky can take heed and flee for higher ground. Once the wave strikes land, it scours away the works of man as though they never were. Those who are caught in its mighty embrace seldom survive to tell the tale. Tsunami are rare everywhere, but when they do occur they are typically most damaging to the Empire's southern and central coastlines. The high rocky cliffs of the northern coast usually prevent tsunami from causing significant damage. The Mantis Isles are also vulnerable to tsunami, but since the great waves usually come from the depths of the Umi Amaterasu, the Mantis build many of their holdings on the mainland-facing coasts where they are less likely to be inundated.





# Water in the World of Men

*“The sea lives in every one of us.” – Mantis proverb*

Although Water’s wrath is capable of causing great destruction, it is also central to the lives of everyone in Rokugan. There are many aspects of life in the Empire which are tied directly to Water, especially sailing and shipbuilding.

## Rokugani Seacraft

There are many ways in which the Rokugani truly excel as a culture, but mastery of the seas is not one of them. Gaijin nations like Thrane and Maranae have developed vastly superior nautical technologies compared to Rokugan, and consider the seas as part of their domain. As noted in Chapter One, the Rokugani have found little reason to travel the seas beyond their eastern shores, a hesitance reinforced by both the harsh storms of the Umi Amaterasu and their disastrous contact with the gaijin in the era of the Battle of White Stag. After that incident the Emperors prohibited contact between Rokugan and proclaimed shipbuilding to be a “perfected art” with no need for further development. Technologies such as the triangular fore-and-aft rigged sail, one of the features which allowed gaijin ships to easily traverse the far seas, were thus effectively forbidden by Imperial Edict. This ensured that Rokugani shipbuilding would never match the quality of their other arts. For the most part their ships were and remain mere coastal vessels, incapable of long ocean journeys.

The Mantis Clan is in many respects the exception to this pattern. Thanks to the clan’s innate seafaring nature and later to innovations devised by the famous Mantis shipbuilder Watanabe, the Mantis developed boats capable of much longer seafaring journeys – while avoiding openly flouting the Emperor’s edict. In the reign of Toturi I, the edicts that restricted ship construction are finally relaxed somewhat, and in the second half of the twelfth century the Mantis designs slowly spread to the navies of other clans. In the late twelfth century, the Imperial constraint on ocean-going travel finally breaks down completely when Rokugan lays claim to the Colonies (the former Ivory Kingdoms), and this grants immense clout to the Mantis and their unrivaled skill in seafaring and shipbuilding. Even so, excursions into the unknown depths of the sea remain extremely rare, and survivors of such expeditions are rarer still. The deep ocean is just too dangerous for Rokugani vessels; even the best Mantis ships are hard-pressed to survive. To virtually all Rokugani, travel out to the deep seas is suicidal.

## THE TORTOISE FLEET

There is one other clan besides the Mantis which has pursued the development and evolution of sea-going ships. The tiny Minor Clan known as the Tortoise is tasked by the Emperor with watching over the distant lands of the Merenae and the Thrane, ensuring those gaijin cannot return to trouble Rokugan – or if they do return, it will not be without warning.

The Tortoise, alone among all clans in Rokugan, have always had official (if covert) Imperial permission to travel across the ocean and visit foreign lands. Consequently, they incorporated gaijin design elements into their ships from the very beginning of their history. Tortoise vessels that operate in Rokugani waters appear to be normal kobune (albeit with better interior design features), but the ships which sail out to gaijin lands are essentially gaijin in design and function, with only a superficial resemblance to the Empire’s traditional vessel. For example, they are built on keels, have pointed bows to cut through the water, and use multiple sails in several different shapes. They also employ a number of gaijin navigation techniques unknown to the rest of the Empire, even the Mantis.

Of course, the Tortoise are always careful to not allow these ships or techniques into public view. Even after the loosening of the Imperial Edict on shipbuilding in the twelfth century, the small but potent Tortoise fleet remains a secret to the rest of the Empire.





## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF ROKUGANI SHIPS

Rokugani boats are among the most recognizable in the known world... or they would be, if the Rokugani ever sailed to the rest of the world.

The boats of the Emerald Empire are known for having a relatively high stern, while the bottom of the ship is flat with no keel. Most Rokugani ships incorporate large stern-mounted rudders known as “fish-tails” to steer and to help keep the boat stable in the waters. This rudder is typically massive, often requiring two or even three sailors to control it in larger vessels. The hull consists of wooden planks that are arranged edge on, not overlapping, and is usually horseshoe-shaped and rather boxy.

Rokugani sails are traditionally square-shaped, made from bark-skin or coarse canvas. This unique construction makes them more affordable and stable than one-piece sails. Their most distinguishing feature is that the sails are segmented; wooden laths called “battens” run horizontally throughout the sail, strengthening the fragile bark-skin... at the cost of speed. While these sails are technologically inferior to the western-style rigs of the Thrane and Merenae, they do have certain benefits. They require fewer crew to operate effectively and allow better maneuvering in light wind. The sail is more stable in low wind, requiring less effort from the crew, and also much quieter than the flogging sails of gaijin rigs (which grants benefits to the less scrupulous). These sails are

actually ideal for short island-hopping trips and reefing maneuvers.

A basic limitation of Rokugani ships is the lack of the gaijin fore-and-aft rig – that is, sails that are set along the line of the keel. This rig allows a gaijin ship to sail in any direction no matter which way the wind might be blowing. By contrast, Rokugani ships have only their single square-shaped sail that runs horizontally across the hull. Since this makes sailing against the wind impossible, all Rokugani ships make some use of oars as well as sails. However, they are not galleys – that is, they do not rely on full bow-to-stern banks of oars. Many samurai are strongly averse to the act of rowing; rowing is peasant work, manual labor, unsuitable for those of the *buke*. Thus, most ships – even warships – must have mixed crews, with commoners performing the rowing and other labor while samurai handle the skilled tasks of sailing and fighting. (The Mantis are a partial exception – many Mantis sailors work right alongside their commoner shipmates, and most Yoritomo bushi have served as rowers.)

Most large boats incorporate a shrine into their design, often located near the stern of the ship. This is considered an especially important feature for large ships that undertake long journeys or sail out of sight of land. The shrine is a place where the crew can find solace amid the dangerous and frightening conditions of sea travel, a place where homage can be paid to the powerful forces of the sea which keep sailors at their mercy.





## SAILING AND NAVIGATION

Due to the insular nature of the Rokugani people, seafaring and navigation are considered near-mystical arts to the average samurai. Typically, ship captains do not plot new courses across unexplored seas; they follow the courses and instructions laid down centuries prior by bolder ancestors. They stay close to the shoreline, never venturing too far into the deep ocean. If they must go into the open waters, they will “island-hop,” taking the shortest possible journeys between points of land. Given the limitations of Rokugani ships, the notoriously stormy waters of the Amaterasu Umi, and the lurking threat of horrors beneath the sea, breaking from established sea lanes invites disaster – not to mention mutiny. Only the Mantis dare to venture into the farther reaches of the sea, and even then only briefly.

Rokugani navigation is often a matter of recognizing landmarks and making educated guesses; there is a troubling lack of navigation techniques that do not ultimately rely on gut instinct. The Rokugani do not generally navigate by the stars, for instance; while they have many skilled diviners who rely on astronomy for auguries and horoscopes, there are very few who use this sacred knowledge for sea travel. Those shugenja who do are sometimes scorned for this “common” and hence inappropriate application of their techniques.

Captains do sometimes rely on navigation scrolls called “*koukainisshi*.” These list detailed instructions and estimated distances between known landmarks, but do not contain anything which a gaijin would consider “true” navigational information.

Ultimately, because the Rokugani rarely venture far out to sea there is little need for more sophisticated navigation techniques. The main exception is (as always) the Mantis, who take many risks in their attempts to traverse unexplored seas and locate new opportunities. The Mantis sometimes make use of a tool known as a “direction finder,” a lodestone rod suspended in a bowl of water that points always to the south. This device, found only on the largest and most seaworthy of Mantis vessels, was developed from a gift the Mantis received from the gaijin in the age of White Stag. Supposedly, the original device was given to Gusai Mori by the *Merenae* ambassadors and still rests on display in Kyuden Gotei. A curiosity to visitors, few ever learn of its true use.

## ROKUGANI SHIP CONSTRUCTION

Rokugani shipbuilding originated with simple dugouts and rafts, used for fishing and traversing the nascent Empire’s many rivers and streams. As time passed, people grew bolder, beginning to travel along the coast, across lakes, and in some cases toward islands that were just visible on the horizon. Small simple vessels grew steadily larger, their shapes slowly changing to better accommodate their usage.

The first true ships were made from thick planks of untreated timber. These were poor material for ships, quickly rotting when exposed to the sea. However, this was not seen as a serious issue since these boats were not intended for long voyages. Only those whose livelihoods

depended on spending longer times at sea sought out ways to improve the materials and construction of ships. The Mantis developed many improvements, including methods of curing timber to make the hull last longer and using pitch to seal the seams between planks. These technologies allowed boats to be made larger and to travel further. Eventually, many of these improvements came into the hands of the other clans, but the Mantis remained the premier ship-builders of the Empire. Indeed, many clans prefer to purchase ships from Mantis ship-builders rather than build their own.

The construction of a Rokugani boat is a very labor-intensive endeavor. Every piece must be hand-carved by a skilled artisan before being fitted together by laborers under the supervision of an experienced shipwright. Rokugani boats do not feature a keel (a single piece of wood running from the bow to the stern). Rather, a Rokugani vessel is essentially a floating box. The hull is made from cedar planks which are affixed to the bulkheads with flat copper nails. They are laid edge-to-edge, meaning the seams are liable to leak in rough seas and easily burst under impact. Larger beams in the bulkheads and mast are made of cypress, and the ship’s deck is made from fire-bent pine planks. The huge rudder is traditionally made from a single piece of wood, usually pine or elm. Every piece is fitted precisely so that the seams are nearly invisible, and the Rokugani rely on the ocean waters to swell the boards tight.

Once introduced to water, these vessels can never return to land – if they leave the water, the wood dries up, shrinks, and the boat falls apart.

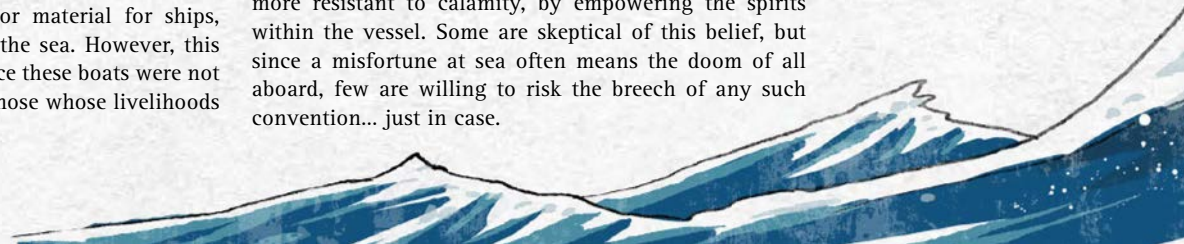
## SHIP NAMING CONVENTIONS

In our own world, ships are commonly named after heroes, places, or famous leaders. This is not so in Rokugan. Indeed, naming a ship after a living person would be considered vain and presumptuous. Instead, ships are commonly named after Fortunes, famous ancestors, or natural phenomena.

A commonly accepted convention is to give a ship a two-word name. The first word is the name of an honored ancestor. The second word is an admirable quality that is both desired in the ship and is said to have been possessed by that ancestor. Examples of this convention include the Mantis vessel Aramasu’s Legacy and the Crane vessel Hachi’s Revenge.

Another widespread convention for naming ships is to give a name that refers to an object or phenomena that possesses a quality desired in the ship. This will hopefully prevent the ship from attracting the attentions of unwanted or hostile spirits. Examples of these ships include the Silent Bell, the Fortune’s Coin, and the Deathless.

The kanji which make up the name of the ship must ideally contain a fortuitous number of brushstrokes; this separates a strong name from a weak one. Many believe a strong name will make a ship physically stronger, more resistant to calamity, by empowering the spirits within the vessel. Some are skeptical of this belief, but since a misfortune at sea often means the doom of all aboard, few are willing to risk the breach of any such convention... just in case.







The act of naming a ship also follows its own specific customs. In the case of clan ships, the name is chosen by whoever commissioned the vessel, most commonly a samurai of high rank such as a *hatamoto* or a provincial daimyo. The name is then submitted to the family daimyo, who has the option of providing a different name if he or she feels it proper. The Clan Champion can also intercede to change a ship's name, and is the only one who can freely do so after the vessel has been launched. (For anyone else to do this is considered bad luck.)

Ships in service with the Imperial house are typically donated by one or another of the Great Clans. In these cases, the vessel in question retains its original name, but the Emperor (and in later centuries the Shogun) has the right to re-name a vessel entering Imperial service. Occasionally the Emerald Champion or the Shogun may commission ships directly for Imperial service, naming them as well, although these names must be approved by the Imperial Chancellor or the Emperor himself, depending on circumstances.

## LAUNCHING CONVENTIONS

The launching of a new vessel is traditionally a sacred event. The ship and its dock are blessed by a shugenja, who praises the kami of water and wind and beseeches Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea, for his blessing. Every seafaring clan has its own special ceremonies for a ship's launching, but the most common involve a sacred dance and a song played on the *shakuhachi* flute.

On the day of launch, colorful flags are hung from the ship's masts to attract benevolent spirits and Fortunes. Red is the preferred color, being the most likely to attract good attention. The vessel is affixed to the dock by a long rope, and at the end of the launching ceremony, a special axe called a *ginsei-ono* is used to sever the rope and release the ship. The *ginsei-ono* is a small axe with a silver blade and is made specifically for this purpose. (The silver in the head of the axe is supposed to bring good fortune to any sailors who serve on the vessel.) Once the rope is cut, the axe is presented to the ship's captain as a gift and becomes his badge of station.

As the ship leaves the dock, handfuls of rice scattered overboard as offerings to the spirits of the sea. It is hoped the more malicious types of sea spirits, which are believed to cling to docks, will be distracted or appeased by these offerings, allowing the ship to travel without being followed by them. After the ship is launched, the shugenja may ask for the blessings of Isora, the Fortune of the Seashore, so the crew can find their way back home again. For weeks after the ship has left the docks, devotees to Isora will light bonfires along the shoreline, both to show proper deference to the Fortune and to provide a signal to sailors returning home.

## TYPES OF ROKUGANI BOATS AND SHIPS

In Rokugani ships are not grouped by class or function, as they are in other more seafaring cultures. Instead they are simply grouped by the basic model of the ship.

**Kobune:** After the second century the kobune becomes the most common sea vessel in the Empire, and it is what most Rokugani think of when they think of a ship. Kobune are relatively small vessels, usually only 75' in length with a six-foot draft. They have a long hull with the usual raised stern (it has a small cabin). Kobune used as warships also feature a quarterdeck for archers at the stern and perhaps the bow as well, depending on the ship's size. As with nearly all Rokugani vessels, the bottom is flat with no keel. A kobune has a crew of about twenty.

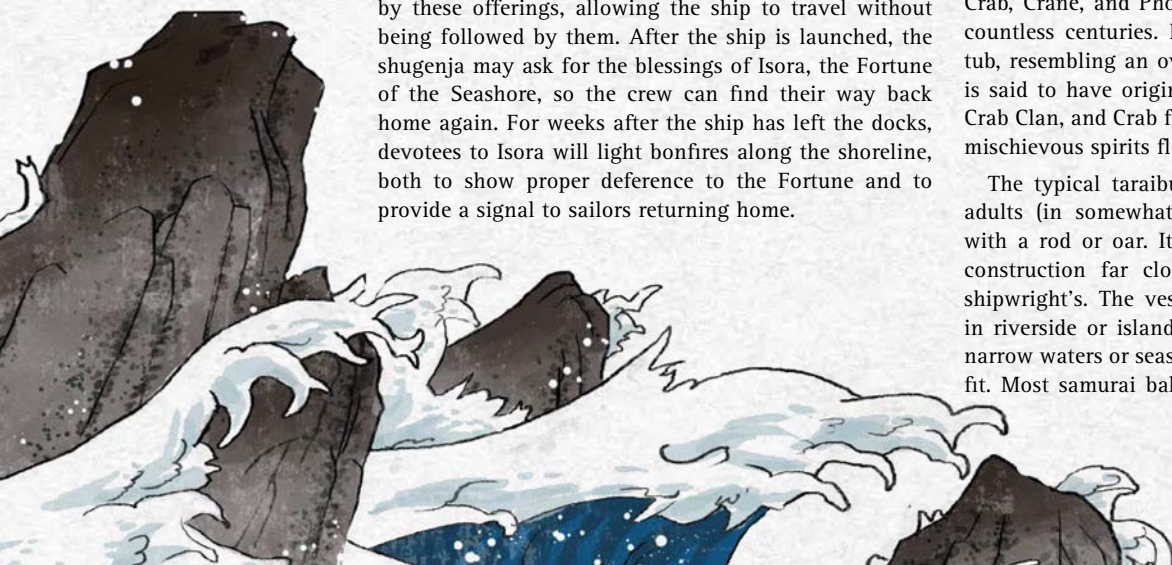
Due to their design, kobune must be built extremely well in order to be seaworthy. Because there is little structural armature, only a few bulkheads, they fare poorly in strong waves or storms, but excel in rivers and lakes where the waters tend to be more manageable. Some river kobune are deployed without sails, relying solely on oarsman to maneuver the ship. They can survive in coastal waters, but only the truly insane would try to take a kobune far out into the open sea.

**Sampan:** The most common of all riverboats, the humble sampan is a common sight on all of Rokugan's waterways and in its bays. A sampan is typically only twenty feet in length, with a flat-bottomed hull and a small covered shelter for the crew. It is usually constructed from three main planks of wood that are bent by heat and fitted together. It is possible for one or two people to live in the hut built into the sampan, making it a houseboat of sorts, and this is not uncommon among fishermen. Low-end merchants also use these boats frequently.

There are two common styles of sampan. The *kamo-sampan*, or "duck" style, has a raised square prow (the "bill") and is suitable for river travel. The *niwatori-sampan*, or "chicken" style, has a pointed prow (the "beak") and a somewhat curved bottom, and is used along the Empire's rocky coastlines.

**Taraibune:** The unusually-shaped taraibune is typically used as a fishing vessel by *heimin* coastal fishermen. Thus it is a common sight in the fishing villages of the Crab, Crane, and Phoenix, where it has been in use for countless centuries. It is essentially a massive floating tub, resembling an oversized wooden barrel. The design is said to have originated in the coastal villages of the Crab Clan, and Crab folktales often depict tanuki or other mischievous spirits floating down the river in barrels.

The typical taraibune is large enough to hold three adults (in somewhat tight quarters), and is propelled with a rod or oar. It is shallow-decked and simple, its construction far closer to the cooper's art than the shipwright's. The vessels are used for simple transport in riverside or island villages, as well as for fishing in narrow waters or seaside caves where a true boat will not fit. Most samurai balk at the sight of such vessels and





will not set foot in one, but in many ways they are just as reliable as the most splendid kobune.

**Yakatabune:** Named after the tilted roof that runs for two-thirds of its length, the yakatabune is the Empire's equivalent of a luxury vessel. It is built similarly to a kobune, but where the kobune is intended for travel and trade, the yakatabune is built to entertain guests. Yakatabune have no mast or sails, relying entirely on oars or poles to move. The tiled roof protects the occupants from sun or rain, and the interior floor of the shelter is lined with tatami mats; typically, there will be a variety of low tables and cushions for the enjoyment of lounging guests. Larger ships may even incorporate a coal-pit for cooking or a sashimi *station* for preparing freshly caught fish. Thus, the inside of a yakatabune resembles an upper-class entertaining room, and they are regarded as delightful locations for private gatherings, with plenty of sake, good food, and geisha. Colored lanterns are commonly hung from the roof, further enhancing the air of festivity. These boats are prized by their rich owners as proof of high prestige and wealth.

**Merchant Barge:** The massive barges of the merchant class are commonly compared to turtles, and for good reason. Merchant barges resemble massive broad-bellied sampans, but the shelters on their decks are round and resemble half-barrels. Barges can range from 40 to 120 feet long, depending on the wealth of the merchant. Typically, a merchant will live aboard his vessel, docking it to sell his goods. Barges are propelled by very large square sails, supplemented with poles or oars, and move laboriously slowly. They are used primarily in rivers and lakes, and venture only cautiously and occasionally into coastal seawaters.

Merchants can be eccentric, and so are their barges. It is not uncommon for a merchant barge to break from the conventional designs outlined above. Indeed, some barges are no better than makeshift rafts, intended to be dismantled and chopped up for lumber or firewood once their cargo is sold.

**Koutetsukan:** One of the most fearsome vessels the Empire can muster, the koutetsukan is a legend of the Crab navy. Invented by Kaiu Sunshin as a weapon against the sea-borne horrors of the Shadowlands, the koutetsukan ("Iron Turtle") is a technological marvel: the only Rokugani ironclad. The ship is usually about 80 feet wide and almost completely enclosed, and is capable of carrying a crew of one hundred samurai. It boasts a hull armored with iron plates, a low rounded roof covered in spikes to discourage boarding, jade-tipped rams (it is the only Rokugani ship design that mounts a ram), and a "dragon's maw" on the bow capable of projecting smoke or hot tar. The ship is propelled by huge segmented sails, with oars as a back-up.

Against other Rokugani navies the Crab use the koutetsukan as an assault ship. The typical strategy is to approach the enemy command ship and ram it, repeatedly if possible, until it is

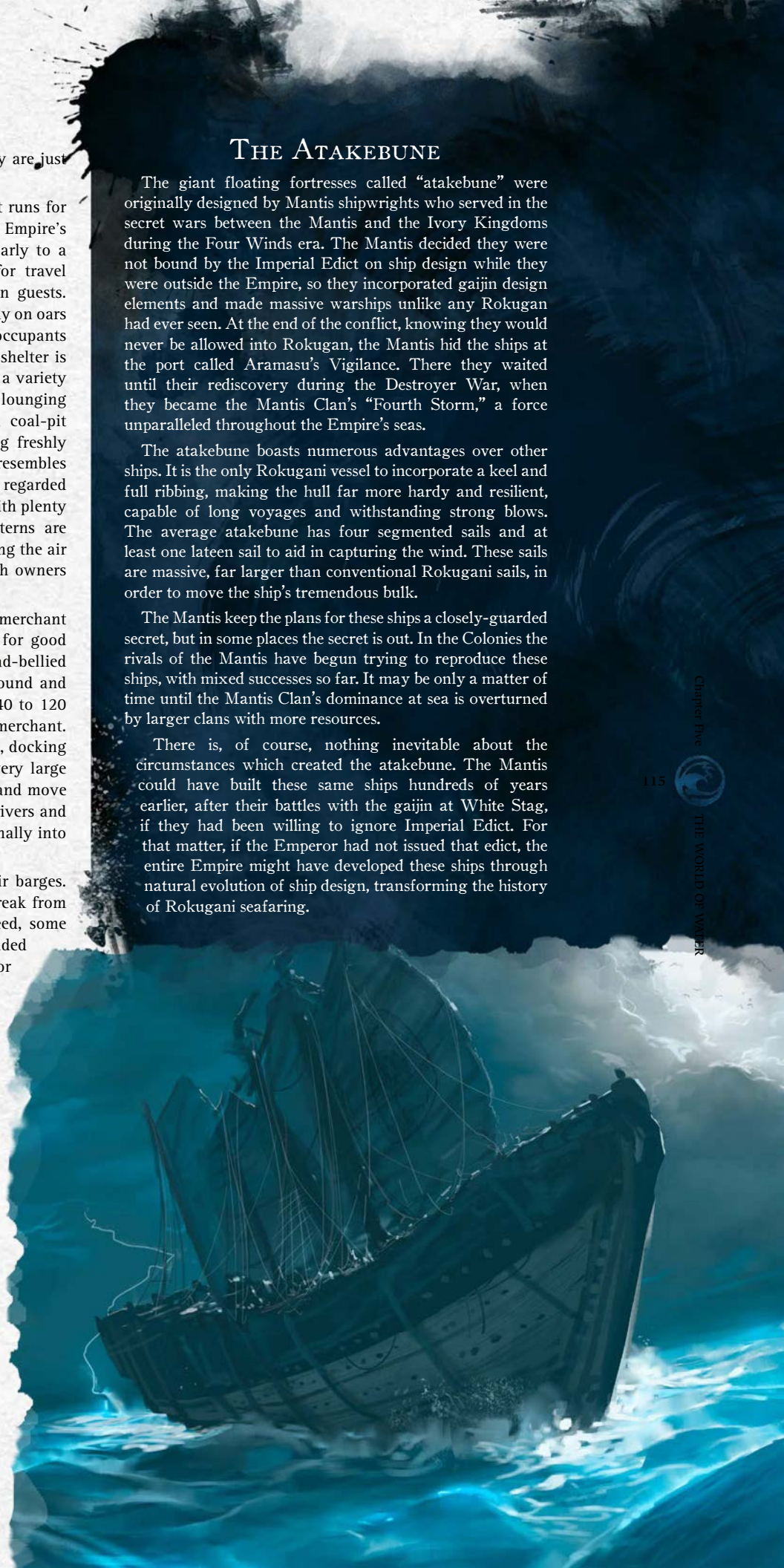
## THE ATAKEBUNE

The giant floating fortresses called "atakebune" were originally designed by Mantis shipwrights who served in the secret wars between the Mantis and the Ivory Kingdoms during the Four Winds era. The Mantis decided they were not bound by the Imperial Edict on ship design while they were outside the Empire, so they incorporated gaijin design elements and made massive warships unlike any Rokugan had ever seen. At the end of the conflict, knowing they would never be allowed into Rokugan, the Mantis hid the ships at the port called Aramasu's Vigilance. There they waited until their rediscovery during the Destroyer War, when they became the Mantis Clan's "Fourth Storm," a force unparalleled throughout the Empire's seas.

The atakebune boasts numerous advantages over other ships. It is the only Rokugani vessel to incorporate a keel and full ribbing, making the hull far more hardy and resilient, capable of long voyages and withstanding strong blows. The average atakebune has four segmented sails and at least one lateen sail to aid in capturing the wind. These sails are massive, far larger than conventional Rokugani sails, in order to move the ship's tremendous bulk.

The Mantis keep the plans for these ships a closely-guarded secret, but in some places the secret is out. In the Colonies the rivals of the Mantis have begun trying to reproduce these ships, with mixed successes so far. It may be only a matter of time until the Mantis Clan's dominance at sea is overturned by larger clans with more resources.

There is, of course, nothing inevitable about the circumstances which created the atakebune. The Mantis could have built these same ships hundreds of years earlier, after their battles with the gaijin at White Stag, if they had been willing to ignore Imperial Edict. For that matter, if the Emperor had not issued that edict, the entire Empire might have developed these ships through natural evolution of ship design, transforming the history of Rokugani seafaring.







reducing to shattered timbers. However, the great weight of the Iron Turtle ships makes them prone to capsizing in rough waters, and this inherent unseaworthiness has resulted in a mixed record in sea battles. Many samurai scoff at the so-called “turning turtle,” and some quietly assert the iron it takes to build such things would be better spent on swords and armor.

Ironically, it was not until the Crab began making wooden versions of the *koutesukan* in the later twelfth century that it began to see greater successes against enemy navies. Instead of using iron, these ships layered their hulls with thick wooden plates while still retaining the iron spikes. The resulting vessel was still impressively difficult to board and offered its crew significant protection, while improving its maneuverability and resistance to capsizing. Unfortunately, the vessel became vulnerable to flame, but even so it was more successful against human opponents than its predecessor.

**Sengokobune:** Invented by the famous Mantis shipbuilder Watanabe at the end of the eleventh century, the *sengokobune* was created to overshadow the *kobune* in size, speed, and reliability. Boasting a length of 90 feet, a crew of forty, internal braces for the hull, and lateen sails (a technical violation of Imperial Edict), *sengokobune* are the only ships in the Empire capable of long sea voyages. The Mantis kept these ships hidden among the Isles of Silk and Spice for many decades before ruthlessly exploiting them during the Clan Wars.

After the Clan Wars, the edicts on ship-building were relaxed somewhat and clans outside the Mantis began to acquire *sengokobune* – at first by purchasing them from the Mantis at a heavy price, although the knowledge of how to build them slowly propagated.

By the end of the twelfth century, the term “*sengokobune*” refers to any large and well-built ship capable of undertaking longer sea voyages.

Although the *sengokobune* are superior ships to the standard *kobune*, they are not without their flaws. The hull is reinforced and is affixed much more firmly to the frame than in older designs, but it is still relatively fragile, making extended trips at sea risky. And like all other ships, if a *sengokobune* is removed from water it dries out and falls apart.

## THE TYPICAL KOBUNE CREW

The crew of a *kobune* is usually about twenty individuals. *Rokugani* crews have fewer officer roles than foreign vessels, and just as on the land there is a strict social order. At the top is the captain, whose authority is unquestionable while the ship is at sea. The captain is the lord of the ship, and on a *kobune* or larger vessel he is always a samurai. Often the captain will also be the ship’s navigator, although this is sometimes a separate role.

The first mate is the captain’s right-hand officer, performing a role similar to a lord’s *karo* in a castle. He is in charge of the ship’s cargo, serves as watchstander when the captain is off duty, and assigns duties to the members of the crew.

There are various other important crew members who rank higher than a mere deck-hand but lower than the first mate. For instance, the Mantis find it very useful to include a *shugenja* in their crew whenever possible. *Shugenja* are able to appease sea spirits, gain the favor of the wind, and ease the nerves of the crew, while also

acting in an advisory role for the captain – in effect becoming the “second mate” of

the ship. Depending on the ship, a number of other shipboard occupations may be granted significance in the ranks, such as a dedicated navigator or, in large mercantile operations, a purser.

The rest of the crew will be the deck-hands, and include both samurai and *heimin*. The proportion of samurai to commoners varies depending on the ship and the clan – merchant ships generally have a crew of almost all commoners, while the crews of dedicated military vessels are mostly samurai. Naturally, the samurai always rank higher than *heimin*.





## SAILING AND LIFE AT SEA

Samurai do not scoff at the life of a sailor. Fishing may be a commoner's profession, and the toil of rowing may be too dirty for a samurai's hands, but even in the face of these truths a samurai does not readily disrespect a sailor regardless of station. This is because the sailor's life, like that of the samurai, takes place eternally in death's shadow. There are few professions more dangerous than that of a man at sea.

A sailor's status can be as low as a *heimin* or as high as a samurai. Rank often determines the nature of the work at hand; *heimin* sailors handle the more mundane or menial tasks, while the more intellectual and important duties are entrusted to samurai. Officers are always samurai, although sometimes a Captain's first mate will be a trusted ashigaru. However, samurai who serve as sailors are almost never from the *kuge* class (except in the Mantis Clan). They are far more likely to be *buke*, men and women from the lower levels of the warrior caste. This is why captaining a ship often appeals to a lower-borne samurai; in the Empire's castles and cities, he may be a lowly *buke*, but on his ship he is lord and master.

Sailors are, generally speaking, harsh and hardy folk. A life at sea is demanding in ways samurai on land can never understand. Even the shortest voyage is a gamble, a constant effort of damage control, a continual struggle to wrest life from the sea's wrathful embrace. Sails become torn by ocean winds, ropes become brittle from sun and salt water. Food supplies must be constantly refilled from nets dragged in the ocean. If a seam breaks – all too common in Rokugani ship design – water must be constantly bailed out of the hold. If a storm comes, sailing truly becomes a struggle of man against nature; the slightest mistake will end life as surely as a kama shears rice.

The constant peril and demands of a life at sea make these men and women hard, flexible, and superstitious. They laugh loudly, tell bawdy jokes, drink sake, and gamble... then return to the waves to stare death in the face, unflinching. At sea it can sometimes be difficult to tell samurai from *heimin*. The conditions of a ship demand certain accommodations, and propriety tends to fall aside in favor of survival. Sailors almost never wear the silk kimono and other garments favored on the mainland; the silks would stain and rot in the ocean breeze and tear in the strong winds. Instead, sailors wear simple *gi* and *hakama*, or even just loincloths when the humid air of the sea is too hot for comfort. They sometimes wrap their heads in burlap cloth to ward off sunstroke. Where landbound samurai try to stay out of the sun to keep their skin a pleasingly pale shade, sailors are all tanned and roughened by sun and wind. The captain is no different, and visitors often find officers visually indistinguishable from the rest of the crew.

It should go without saying, but samurai aboard a ship almost never wear armor. The salty sea air is very bad for armor, and it impedes movement on board and makes swimming more difficult if one falls overboard. In the same vein, larger weapons like katana and yari are

## SAILING SUPERSTITIONS

Sailors are a superstitious sort, an attitude encouraged by their dangerous lifestyle. Even the most rational sailor takes no needless risks on the open sea, and every sailor knows the spirits of water and wind must be constantly propitiated lest their anger prove lethal. Many superstitions have developed into sailing customs across the Emerald Empire. A few of the more prominent:

- ☉ When boats are first launched or leave port on a new voyage, offerings are tossed overboard to appease the spirits. Rice is the most common offering, and is believed to distract spirits of bad luck so they do not follow the ship. More elaborate offerings are tied to particular Fortunes or beliefs. For example, bits of coral are tossed into the sea to appease Ryujin, the king of the Orochi.
- ☉ Sailors believe whistling while on deck will make the kami of air think they are being challenged, causing the winds to blow stronger. At times this is bad luck, as a foolish sailor might “whistle up a storm.” On the other hand, when there is no wind at all sailors will whistle for good luck.
- ☉ Eggs are bad luck to fishermen. It is said that if there are eggs on board a ship it will not catch a single fish.
- ☉ A butterfly that lands on the mast is good fortune. But if there are many, it is a bad omen.
- ☉ A sailor should never strike his boat in anger or it will remember this disrespect and sink.
- ☉ Changing a boat's name is generally considered bad luck, especially after it has left the shore. It is better to dismantle the boat and build a new one than to rename an existing one. Even a stolen boat's name cannot be changed lest it take offense and seek revenge on its new owners.



generally impractical aboard a ship, and sailors prefer smaller weapons with multiple uses such as kama and masakari.

Due to the danger of fire on wooden ships, few captains allow their crew to cook their food, and a sailor's diet is mostly preserved or raw. Ships leave dock with loads of pre-cooked rice balls wrapped in dried seaweed, and these form the basic staple of a sailor's diet. The ships also carry pickled vegetables, dried seaweed, and small amounts of fresh fruit (kumquats are a favored inclusion for Mantis ships). In addition to this, sailors constantly seek fresh seafood to diversify their diet. Many ships drag nets behind them as they sail, hoping to catch fish or crustaceans. These fish are either served raw as sashimi or are chemically cooked in vinegar and kumquat juice. The sailor's diet is often deficient, and combined with the limited supplies this places yet another restraint on long voyages at sea.







## THE ORIGINS OF SAKE

The modern Empire commonly credits the discovery of sake to Lord Hida, the Kami who founded the Crab Clan. Legends attribute the creation of the drink to him, and some of the oldest sake recipes are in the possession of the Hida and Hiruma families.

However, there is little historical evidence to support this claim. In fact, there are records of a beverage very similar to sake that predate the founding of the Empire itself. The Tribe of Isawa, the most advanced of the ancient tribes that existed before Rokugan, brewed a form of rice wine that they used in festivals and religious ceremonies. This drink was very important to their veneration of the kami and ancestral spirits, and brewing it was one of the priests' most sacred duties. No one else had the right to do so, and the priest alone oversaw the cultivation of the sacred koji mold, guarding and blessing the caves where it grew. The recipe of this rice wine was passed down from one priest to another much like their sacred prayers. However, this ancient drink was not yet known by the name of "sake."

Sake scholars and aficionados claim that Lord Hida learned of the brew from his brother Shiba, who visited the Tribe of Isawa before the formation of the Phoenix Clan. They postulate that Hida may have participated in the Isawa sacred ceremonies and grew fond of the drink. Hida was known as much for his resourcefulness as for his strength, so perhaps he took a personal interest in the drink, locating his own cave fungus to start a koji mold, and eventually refining the tribe's primitive beverage into what is now recognized as "sake." The Phoenix support this theory of sake's origins wholeheartedly since it pays a proper respect to the Tribe of Isawa for the creation of the original drink and re-asserts the sacredness of the brew's origins. Even so, only the boldest Phoenix would ever assert this theory in front of a Crab samurai, especially a drunk one.

Sake has always been important to festivals and sacred rites, lending credence to the scholar's claims that sacramental rice wine predated the Empire. In the dawn of the Empire shallow dishes of rice wine were among most common offerings to the Fortunes, and these were later incorporated into Shinseist offerings as well. In fact, sake was originally only consumed during festivals and temple ceremonies, and early sake breweries were exclusively built on temple grounds. In many ways these connotations of sacredness remain in the modern Empire, even though sake is no longer reserved just for religious usage. The social conventions regarding the drinking and manufacture of sake began relaxing during the reign of the third Hantei, due in part to the Emperor's own tastes and in part to the evolving roles of the priesthood in the Empire.

In modern times, sake is no longer made by priests, but brewing is still considered to be a sacred art akin to the forging of katana. Sake is made in breweries by

## The Art of Sake Brewing

Sake is perhaps the Empire's most important beverage, both culturally and economically. There is no province where sake is not consumed, no Great Clan that does not boast at least one brewery. Sake is appreciated by noble and *heimin* alike, drunk by both *buke* and *kuge*, by *saigo* and *goshi*, by the *bonge* and – when they can afford it – even the *hinin*. Its creation is an art, esteemed by many over even poetry, brush, or song. If there were anything that could unite the haughty courtiers of the Crane and the brutish warriors of the Crab, the cold manhunters of the Mantis and the pacifistic holy men of the Phoenix, it would be the appreciation of sake, Rokugan's sacred beverage.

Sake is an alcoholic drink made from fermented rice, and is sometimes called "rice-wine." Although it is referred to in this way, technically sake is much closer to beer than to wine, being made from a grain and not a fruit. (The Rokugani do also make wine from plums.) However, the Rokugani do not recognize this as a meaningful distinction between alcoholic beverages.

The brewing of sake is one of Rokugan's biggest industries, supported by both constant high demand and ancient tradition. Controlling even one brewery of significance can greatly increase a family's prestige and influence, and among rivals such ownership is hotly contested. Different "brands" of sake often engage in fierce competitions to control more of the market. Physically, sake is made by brewing a mash of polished rice, mold, and yeast, then straining and filtering the

brew to extract the sake. The drink is matured in cypress barrels and then stored in small ceramic bottles.





skilled workers, then bottled and sold in the Empire's myriad inns, tea-houses, and sake-houses. Every brewery boasts different recipes, processes, and tastes; sake connoisseurs devise classifications and rankings for specific brews, and a handful of sake works boast Empire-wide reputations. To be a favorite of the Imperial family or a Clan Champion is especially prestigious, as samurai throughout the Empire rush to embrace the preferred brew of their honored leaders.

In addition to this, many *heimin* brew their own sake at home. This produces a far less refined drink called "*doburoku*," which – while somewhat similar to brewery sake – has many impurities to its flavor and a far shorter shelf life. However, it is a far more affordable drink. Most samurai never touch it, although ronin cannot always be choosy.

## SAKE TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS

There is no legal regulation of sake in the Empire, so its production, naming, and serving are governed by tradition and social convention. Local drinking customs vary widely, but there are broad customs regarding the serving of sake that are observed throughout the Empire with little variance.

Sake is typically served at the start of a meal. The most traditional drinking vessel is the *sakazuki*, a shallow flat-bottomed saucer used in religious ceremonies and to make offerings. However, due to the small volume of sake this vessel holds, it is considered unseemly to drink from it except during festivals and celebrations. In modern times, the preferred cup is the *choko*, a small ceramic cup around the size of a modern shot-glass. It is considered civilized to drink from smaller vessels, rather than tea cups or larger bowls, since this outwardly shows moderation and avoids excess. (Of course, this seeming self-control means little when a samurai takes drinks over and over again.)

High-quality sake is best when chilled, since this helps bring out the crispness and purity of the flavor. However, only a handful of establishments are capable of serving sake in this way, and the best most places can do is store their good sake in cool places and serve it just below room temperature. The most common way of serving sake, especially cheaper or lower-quality sake, is warm. This is accomplished by pouring the sake into a ceramic jug which is then submerged in simmering water until the sake is hot. Warming sake causes some of the aroma and the more delicate flavors to be lost, but it also masks the harshness and impurities of the more widespread inferior brews.

In Rokugan it is accepted that one should never pour one's own serving of sake, since this is considered gluttonous. Instead, one should always pour sake for the guest seated to one's right – or, alternatively, accept the service of a designated sake pourer such as a geisha. It is also poor manners to drink sake before all cups are full and the host gives a customary toast. One should never gulp sake, which

## “HOW LORD HIDA INVENTED SAKE”

Although historical records and evidence suggest Lord Hida merely refined a drink that originated with the Tribe of Isawa, such is not the sake origin story that is popularly accepted throughout the Empire. Instead, most samurai recount the story of how Lord Hida created the drink at the dawn of the Empire. Even those who know the historical truth admit that they prefer this story.

As the tale goes, during his travels before the First War, Lord Hida encountered a rose-marble palace overlooking the southernmost ocean shore. In those days many primitive tribes roamed the lands Hida had claimed and they were slowly uniting under his banner. The woman who would eventually become his wife, a woman named Masiko, told him this palace once belonged to her family, but now it was ruled by a hungry orochi and the tribes fearfully sacrificed young girls to appease it.

Lord Hida desired order in his lands, and he would not stand for a renegade orochi eating the daughters of his subjects. He gathered his most clever servants, Hiruma and Kuni among them, and hatched a plan to defeat the beast. He knew orochi hailed from the Realm of Mischief, and recalled a drink that his parents, the gods Amaterasu and Onnotangu, would drink in the Heavenly Court when he was a child. The drink was a rice wine that originated from Sakkaku, a potion that intoxicated the mind and befuddled the senses. He and his followers immediately set to the task of recreating this brew.

When the day came for another sacrifice, Lord Hida went to the palace. On a balcony that overlooked the sea, he laid a great barrel of the Sakkaku-wine, then hid within the halls of the palace. When the sun finally set, the orochi came and stretched out its long neck, plunging its head into the barrel and beginning to drink. At that moment Hida leapt from his hiding place, severing the orochi's neck before its idled senses could detect him.

Legends claim Hida took the palace as his own, naming it “*Kyuden Masiko*” in honor of the woman who captured his heart. Once a year on the anniversary of the slaying of the orochi, Hida's followers would brew another massive batch of the Sakkaku-wine – “*sake*” for short – to celebrate their Kami's victory. The day this brewing began was at the apex of autumn, the same day that brewmasters throughout the Empire begin their own work in modern times.



## TYPES OF Sake

There are more varieties of sake than there are recognized breweries. The creation of sake is flexible and in many ways forgiving, which encourages experimentation by the toji (brewmasters). Numerous factors in brewing produce differences in taste, color, and texture – everything from the source and quality of the water to the kind of mold used to produce fermentation, the quality and kind of rice used, and even the process itself. In addition to the standard popular varieties, most breweries offer their own “signature” sake made under the scrutiny of their toji to represent the entire brewery.

Formally organizing these sake types is a challenge even for the connoisseur, especially since no official criteria exist. However, the following types represent the most common categories found in the Empire.

**SEISHU:** The standard by which sake is judged. “Seishu” is a general term that refers to a “clear” alcoholic beverage. Seishu is both strained and filtered, diluted with water to lower the alcohol content, and matured for three months in cypress barrels. Any unfiltered or cloudy sake does not qualify as seishu.

**KUROSHU:** Sake made from unpolished brown or wild rice. These two factors result in a much stronger, rougher brew that many consider too strong. It can be a challenge to drink, and depending on circumstance, serving it can be a subtle insult.

**GENSHU:** Undiluted sake with no water added after brewing. Genshu is much stronger than normal sake. Many Crab breweries, including those that make the famous Friendly Traveler Sake, make genshu as their signature drink.

**KOSHU:** Aged sake. The typical sake batch is matured for about three months, but no more – the sake will typically sour

and “rust” if it is aged too long. However, koshu is made with a special process that makes it more resilient to aging. Koshu is often transferred from the original cypress barrels and aged further in different barrels that impart hints of other flavors to the final product. Koshu takes on an amber hue as it ages and tends to be more complex in flavor than other types.

**TOSO-SHU:** Medicinal sake. Medicinal spices and herbs are soaked in high-quality sake and then strained, resulting in a spicy, sweet, and robust drink. It is believed toso-shu is good for the health and chases away bad spirits. It is traditionally drunk only during the annual New Year’s festival.

**AMAZAKE:** Believed by scholars to be the closest surviving beverage to the original drink sacred to the Tribe of Isawa, amazake is made from a less-coarse rice which is quickly fermented until it is sweet and nearly non-alcoholic. Served warm with ginger, it is a sugary, mist-like drink that is popular in winter while awaiting the spring’s sake “harvest.”

In addition to these types, sake can be categorized by how it is filtered, how it is matured, if there are additives that impart flavor, and which flavor notes are most prevalent. It can also be categorized by how the rice is refined; this method is considered the best rule-of-thumb to determine quality. Ginjo sake is made from rice where at least 40% of the outer grain has been milled (or “polished”) away. This is considered to be the best. To serve anything less than ginjo sake to an Imperial is an insult. Junmai is sake made from pure rice wine with nothing added, the Rokugani equivalent of single-malt. (As might be presumed, “Junmai-Ginjo” is the absolute best quality of Rokugani sake.) Honjozo is sake made from rice where less than 40% of the outer grain has been polished away, and pure distilled alcohol is added to the drink. While considered inferior to ginjo (and by definition unable to be junmai), honjozo is much lighter in flavor and easier to drink, making it the preferred beverage during a meal. Anything made at less than these standards is futsuushu sake, which is lower quality and generally considered unsuitable for samurai.







is also considered gluttonous. Instead, sake is sipped, savoring the crisp flavors. The exception to this rule is if the host finishes his toast with a hearty shout of “kanpai,” which means “finish it!”

There is an additional custom exclusive to urban samurai in the cities and palaces: if there is an empty cup on the table, it is customary to fill it again. If one has had enough to drink, this is signified by leaving the cup full instead of drinking it. This custom has caused more than one rural samurai embarrassment; worried that it would be impolite to waste sake, he continues to drink cup after cup until he is completely intoxicated.

With the noted exception of drinking at festivals – where drunkenness is considered acceptable – it is considered the mark of an undisciplined samurai to drink until intoxicated. Drinking enough to ensure merriment is appropriate, but no more. Even so, a samurai who drinks too much is typically excused for his behavior so long as it brings no shame to his lord. After all, when a man is drunk he cannot be expected to maintain his on (face). The appropriate response to a drunk samurai’s words and behavior is to politely ignore them, a practice which is called “mokusatsu” – to kill with silence.

Although modern Rokugani drink sake mainly recreationally or at social gatherings, they also still follow the ancient practice of consuming sake during important rituals and as part of offerings to the Fortunes. Sacramental sake, known as “omiki,” is kept in large supply at temples for just such occasions. It is believed offerings of sake before the proper Fortunes can ensure a good harvest, and it is customary for breweries to gift a barrel of their finest brew to the local temple specifically for this purpose. The oldest temples still have their own breweries, a reminder of sake-brewing’s ancient legacy as a duty of shugenja. Typically, omiki is served freely and fresh from the barrel, which is broken open with ceremonial wooden mallets. Shugenja often bless the sake served at weddings, holidays, and other ceremonies, and a supposedly medicinal type of sake called toso-shu is served at the New Year’s Festival.

Sake is commonly sold by the *masu*, a large wooden box sealed with wax. A *masu* contains enough for one full “serving” of sake. However, wealthier samurai more often purchase sake by the bottle. Ceramic is the preferred material, painted or adorned with a paper label explaining its contents. Glass is typically not used as a container due to both weight and expense. Also, light passing through a glass bottle can damage the flavor of the sake, although this is not widely known in Rokugan.

## SAKE BREWING: LIFE IN THE BREWERY

Sake brewing is an ancient art, venerated by samurai and *heimin* alike. It is said that it takes three groups to make sake; samurai, *heimin*, and the Fortunes – a sort of metaphor for the Celestial Order. The samurai accept the blessings of the Fortunes in the form of a bountiful rice harvest, while directing the *heimin* beneath them and overseeing the sake’s creation. And after it is done, they must protect the bounty they have produced.

Sake is traditionally brewed in winter. The process begins in the fall and carries on through the cold winter months, with the final product reaching completion by the spring’s thawing. Farmers and villagers usually have no source of income during the winter, since nothing can be grown then, so a brewery which offers employment during the cold months is a sign of prosperity in a village. When autumn comes and the harvest is complete, farmers will seek temporary employment with the brewery as laborers; these workers are known as *kurabito* (“brewery-people”). Communal life in the warm brewery is usually preferred to a cold winter elsewhere, and generous *toji* (brewmasters) allow workers to bring their families with them. Veteran workers are prized and sometimes given more important roles than simple milling and mashing. The work lasts until the first rains of spring, when the brewery has made enough sake for the year and shuts down until the next autumn. The workers return to their farms and the cycle of the year begins anew.

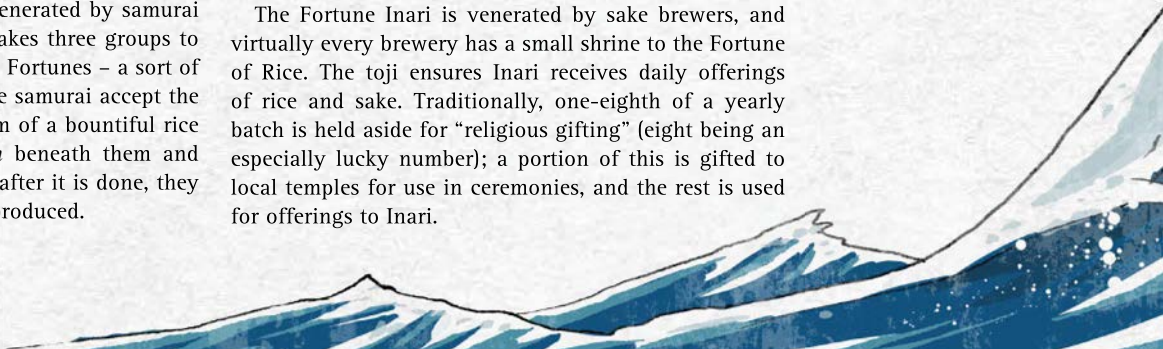
Because breweries are essentially self-contained communities during the winter, a strict social order forms while the work is being done. At the top of the brewery’s structure is the *toji*, the brew-master that owns and operates the brewery. It is a highly esteemed position that has its origins in the traditions of ancient shugenja. Originally, only priests could be *toji*; in modern days the *toji* are typically either samurai or trusted and respected commoners.

The *toji* is solely responsible for the quality of a given year’s brewing. He alone knows the ancient recipes, the cultivation of the *koji* mold is his responsibility, and he oversees everything that happens in the brewery. The *toji* gives prayers to the *kami* three times a day to ensure a good batch, and when the work is finished he provides the pay for every laborer. In essence the *toji* is the lord of the brewery. Because he hand-chooses every member of the winter’s *kurabito*, and because many farmers are dependent on his work for winter income, the *toji* enjoys considerable influence throughout the community.

Beneath the *toji* is his second-in-command, the *kashira*, a position that is also usually held by either a samurai or the most trusted of commoner retainers. Sometimes the *kashira* is also the *toji*’s apprentice. Especially large breweries will have multiple *kashira*, but no more than three – more is considered unlucky. The *kashira* handles the day-to-day work of producing the sake, including the management of resources, assignments of labor, and distribution of the completed product.

Life in the sake brewery is filled with hard work, but is also rewarding. Because brewing demands constant labor to create an adequate yield, most breweries have their own lodging and allow communal living, and the *toji* is expected to see to the welfare of all under his roof.

The Fortune Inari is venerated by sake brewers, and virtually every brewery has a small shrine to the Fortune of Rice. The *toji* ensures Inari receives daily offerings of rice and sake. Traditionally, one-eighth of a yearly batch is held aside for “religious gifting” (eight being an especially lucky number); a portion of this is gifted to local temples for use in ceremonies, and the rest is used for offerings to Inari.







## MAKING SAKE

The rice used for making sake is not suitable for eating, for it is larger and coarser than edible rice. (Edible rice results in a poor mash and thus is not used.) There are many different kinds of sake rice, and most breweries use their own unique “signature” combination; in some cases, the grain is locally-grown and jealously guarded. The entire grain can be used to make sake, but the exterior is filled with impurities, so the best sake uses only the starchy core of the rice. Thus, every grain must be milled or polished before use.

Equally important to the finished sake is the water used to make it. Impure water will impart poor flavors. The highest-quality sake uses only pure spring water, and certain springs are known for the special flavors they impart in their product.

The third important ingredient is the koji mold. It is a fungus that grows on rice but can also be found on cave mushrooms. Almost every brewery has a specific source for their koji mold; ancestral caves, which are enshrined to bless the mold, are the most common source.

The koji mold is very important to Rokugani cuisine and is used to make many fermented dishes. In fact, the same mold used to make sake is also used to make soy sauce, miso, vinegar, and pickled vegetables, and many sake breweries also make and sell those foods. In fact, Friendly Traveler Village is the Empire’s largest manufacturer of soy sauce in addition to high-quality sake.

After the rice is polished, it is placed in a damp location and allowed to rest, then steeped in water until it is soft. The rice is then steamed in small batches, very carefully, so it will not ferment too quickly. After steaming it is placed in a warm, moist, dark place and the koji mold is added. It is then allowed to rest for one month. The resulting fermented rice becomes a mash. This is the most

important part of the brewing process, since the quality of the mash can make or break the final product.

After the mash is finished fermenting, it is made into a paste with thick paddles, then “pressed” with mallets to separate the liquid from the solid waste. The liquid is saved for the next part of the process, while the solids – known as “*kasu*” – are either discarded, preserved for “starting” the next year’s mash, or sold as livestock feed. Some breweries will use *kasu* to make a type of pickles called *tsukemono*.

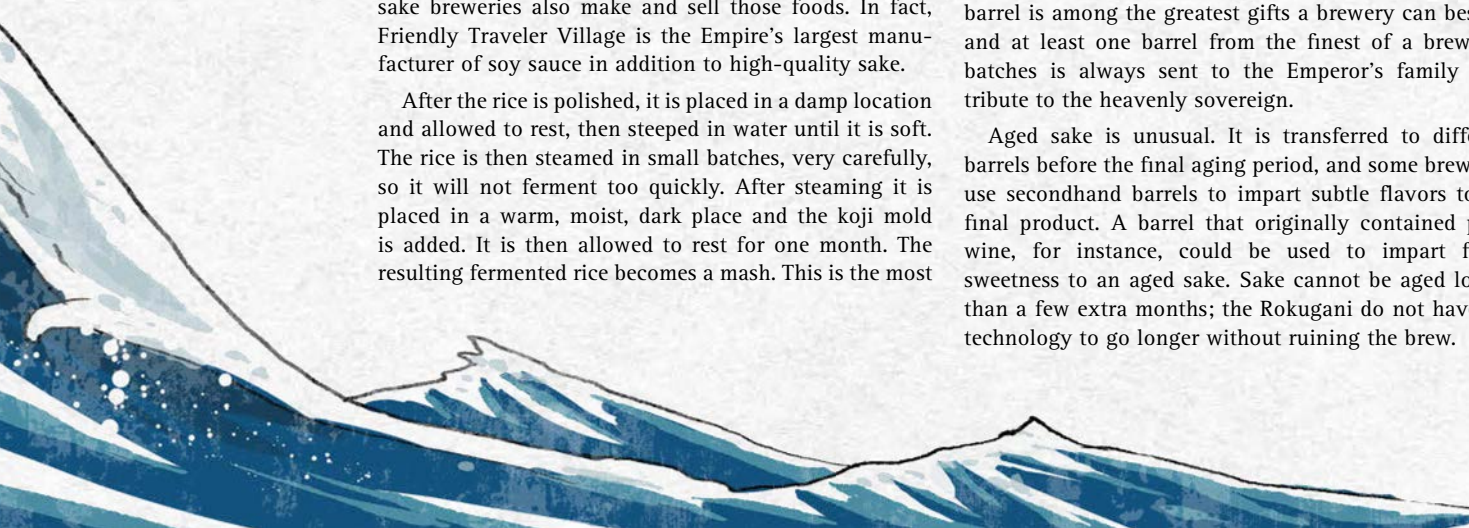
The strained liquid is then filtered by any one of many processes. Most typically it is filtered at least twice, although it can be filtered up to five or six times depending on the brewery.

The technology to completely remove all rice sediment does not exist in Rokugan, but the best sake has very little rice debris in the bottle. At this point, breweries can add anything they like to the sake; usually, water is added to dilute the alcohol and improve the smoothness, but sometimes fruit juices or a neutral grain alcohol are also added, depending on what is desired as a final product.

The brew is then placed into barrels to mature for the remainder of the season, usually about three months. It can actually be drunk at this point (this is known as *shiboriate*, “new sake”), but this is generally not preferred as it has a rough taste. The sake become smoother as it matures. Traditionally, cypress barrels are used for this maturing process, since the cypress imparts a woody spiciness to the brew that is considered desirable. While other barrels are sometimes used for specific brews, the cypress-note is considered a sign of quality. Old cypress barrels are prized possessions; breweries will sometimes purchase old barrels from rivals, at considerable expense.

When the sake is done maturing, it is drained from the barrel and bottled or sealed within massive jugs. These are then distributed by whatever means are appropriate. Famous breweries will have standing orders from reputable businesses throughout the Empire. Especially wealthy individuals will also sometimes order their own supplies directly from breweries. Temples receive gifts of sake for ceremonial use. Sake that is still within the barrel is among the greatest gifts a brewery can bestow, and at least one barrel from the finest of a brewery’s batches is always sent to the Emperor’s family as a tribute to the heavenly sovereign.

Aged sake is unusual. It is transferred to different barrels before the final aging period, and some breweries use secondhand barrels to impart subtle flavors to the final product. A barrel that originally contained plum wine, for instance, could be used to impart fruity sweetness to an aged sake. Sake cannot be aged longer than a few extra months; the Rokugani do not have the technology to go longer without ruining the brew.





## FAMOUS BREWS

Although there are many breweries throughout the Empire, a handful have distinguished themselves and become recognizable outside their home provinces. In some cases, a particular type of sake will become so famous that it is demanded throughout Rokugan; these breweries often have to expand to meet the new demand placed upon them, and their sake becomes both prized and pricy. Imperial recognition is one of the fastest ways to become recognized in this way; a sake that is a favorite of the Emperor is immediately desired by every samurai, and to have a yearly standing order from the Imperial Court is one of the greatest endorsements possible.

The following is a list of recognized sake prized throughout the Empire. They are considered to be the best in Rokugan, bringing much prestige to their villages and clans.

**CHERRY BLOSSOM SNOW:** The prized sake of the brewery within Sakura no Yuki Mura, Cherry Blossom Snow is famous for its crystalline clarity and cherry scent. It is one of the most prized of all sake brews, and the technique for imparting the subtle scent and flavor of cherry in such a pure sake is a carefully guarded secret. In the twelfth century it gains further fame as the favorite sake of Toturi Sezar.

During the Third Yasuki War, the village containing this brewery finds itself in disputed territory between the armies of the Crane and Crab Clans. Before the battle takes place, both sides agree not to damage the brewery, since its loss would be an unmitigated tragedy. However, after the Crab win the battle the Crane send Daidoji scouts to slay the brewery's toji and workers, effectively destroying the secrets of its recipe.

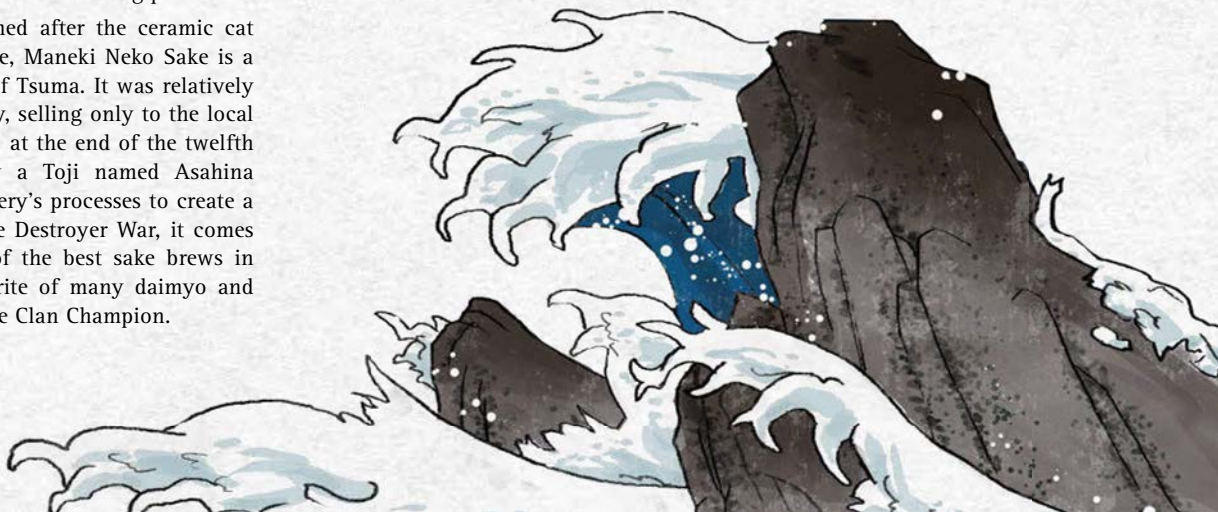
**FRIENDLY-TRAVELER SAKE:** Friendly-Traveler Sake is considered by most to be the greatest sake in the Empire (and certainly the most popular), the "gold standard" by which all other sake is judged. The name actually refers to any one of twelve different sake brews, all originating from the multiple breweries of Friendly Traveler Village in the Yasuki provinces. Among the varieties produced there is "*Daiginzyoo-syu*," a sake that is ordered yearly by the Imperial families for its quality. Friendly-Traveler Village is extremely protective of its sake works, since the entire town owes its prosperity to their success. Only the Yasuki daimyo, the monks of the town's temple to Daikoku, and the Friendly-Traveler *kurobito* are allowed within the sake works to observe the brewing process.

**MANEKI NEKO SAKE:** Named after the ceramic cat placed at the brewery entrance, Maneki Neko Sake is a sake produced in the village of Tsuma. It was relatively obscure for much of its history, selling only to the local inns and tea-houses. However, at the end of the twelfth century it is popularized by a Toji named Asahina Konomi, who refines the brewery's processes to create a purer, stronger brew. After the Destroyer War, it comes to be considered to be one of the best sake brews in the Empire, becoming a favorite of many daimyo and dignitaries, including the Crane Clan Champion.

## FILTERING SAKE

In order to be considered true sake, the beverage must always be filtered. While this is not formally supported by law, connoisseurs generally agree that unfiltered sake (known as nigori-sake) is not truly sake at all. This is mostly the result of social stigma; because sake that is unfiltered (or "dirty") is cheaper, it is consumed by ronin and *heimin*, and is therefore unfit for samurai. However, it is also true that the flavor profile, mouth-feel, and appearance of unfiltered sake is very different from that of filtered sake, and so there is some merit to this distinction. Although some appreciate the sweetness and fruity nose of nigori-sake, and thus disagree with the stigma, few are willing to call the judgment (or honor) of Imperial sake-tasters into question. Some sake brewers and connoisseurs will take offense at any comparison at all between the two, and so when ordering unfiltered sake it is wise to refer to it as "doburoku" (or "home-style") instead of "nigori-sake."

The actual filtering of sake is something of a challenge due to Rokugani dietary aversions. In the industry's infancy, the mash was separated from the sake by pressing and then the lees were separated by filtering through a layer of ash made from animal bones. However, this was later declared an impure method by the priesthood and abandoned by all but the most unscrupulous breweries. Most sake in the Empire is still filtered through ash, but instead of bones, wood-ash is used to maintain the sake's spiritual purity. A longer, more costly method is to filter the sake using burlap sacks suspended over barrels, gradually catching the slow-dripping product. The liquid drips out over the course of days, and the lees are left behind in the sack and discarded. Sake filtered in this way is known as "*shizuka*" or "drip-sake," and is preferred among the courtly elite. Sacramental sake, known as "omiki," can only be *shizuka* – carbon-filtered sake is considered unsuitable for the ceremonies performed by shugenja.





## Creatures and Otherworldly Beings of Water

*“The three great sounds of nature are the rain softly pelting the rooftops, the wind in a primeval wood, and the rhythmic wave lapping upon the shore.”*

– Yoritomo Ninsei, Governor of Broken Wave City

There are both natural and supernatural creatures associated with each of the Five Elements. In the case of Water, all fish and other aquatic animals are closely associated with the Element, along with amphibious creatures as well. Otherworldly creatures include the Elemental Dragon of Water and various lesser Fortunes, the Ryu of Water, legendary supernatural creatures, and many lesser spirits and beings. There are also, of course, certain entities of Jigoku which are associated with Water.

## Denizens of the Heavens

### THE ELEMENTAL DRAGON OF WATER

The Water Dragon is the embodiment of dynamic movement, transformation, and the tides of war. It is mercurial in its reactions to mortals, frequently showing complete disinterest but then – acting on what seems inexplicable whim – becoming perilously active toward mortal beings who arouse its curiosity. For example, it is common to blame the Water Dragon’s disinterest for the powerful storms and tsunami that ravage Rokugan’s coast, and it is believed that when the legendary Great Sea Spider was released from under the ocean it was the Water Dragon that directed the beast towards the shore,

ensuring that humanity had to face its mistakes rather than be coddled and protected. On the other hand, the Water Dragon also protected the geisha Hatsuko who later gave birth to the hero Akodo Kaneka; without the Dragon’s intervention, he would never have survived his childhood.

### SUITENGU, FORTUNE OF THE SEA

The Fortune of the Sea is the preeminent servant of the Water Dragon in the Celestial hierarchy. Suitengu is one of the true ancient Fortunes, existing beyond human memory, and is neither kind nor merciful. Mortals offer prayers, make sacrifices, and build shrines all in an effort to diminish his wrath. Those familiar with the sea understand that the waters Suitengu rules will always be merciless in the extreme. Strangely, despite Suitengu’s association with the shifting nature of Water, he is one of the only primal Fortunes to always manifest in exactly the same fashion: he always appears as a non-descript male samurai, hair whipping wild in the wind, an unpredictable wrath gleaming in his eyes. Isora, Fortune of the Seashore, is his eternal spouse in the Heavens.

### HARUHIKO AND HAMANARI

Fish are a staple in the diet of the Rokugani, so it is unsurprising that two of the more well-known lesser Fortunes are Hamanari, Fortune of Fish and Generous Meals, and Haruhiko, patron Fortune of Fishermen. Shrines to Hamanari are found at the edges of riverbanks and bridges. A popular comedic figure in peasant culture is the lazy fisherman providing lip service to the Fortune while whiling away his time at the water’s edge. Haruhiko is one of the very few non-samurai to be elevated to the Celestial Heavens by the Emperor. Supposedly, he was a humble fisherman who offered his meager catch to a stranger (the Emperor in disguise) and was rewarded for his generosity after his death.

However, during Fu Leng’s invasion of the Heavens in the Four Winds era, Haruhiko falls to the Dark God’s depredations.

### HACHIMAN, FORTUNE OF BATTLE

Not all Fortunes associated with Water are directly concerned with the physical Element itself. Hachiman fits into the category of a Water Fortune in a more spiritual manner, for he reflects the ebb and flow of battle, the necessity for strength and the vital importance of perceiving the shifting tides of war. It is not uncommon for samurai to have visions of the Fortune at large battles, particularly those located near a major body of water. Aka Mizu-Umi (Red Lake) in particular hosts numerous sightings of the Fortune of Battle, his head bowed in remembrance of the thousands of fallen who contributed to the water’s bloody hue.





## OTHER FORTUNES OF WATER

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There are many Fortunes whose power responds to multiple Elements, overlapping Water with Air, Earth, or even Fire. For example, Osano-Wo, Fortune of Fire and Thunder, is most closely associated with Fire but utilizes Water to create his vast storms, assaulting the mortal realm with torrential downpours, filling up rivers and lakes and flooding the lands. Isora, Fortune of the Seashore, is worshipped as spouse of Suitengu, and prayers are offered for her aid in holding back the great tsunami of her husband. Kuroshin, Fortune of Agriculture, is a Fortune of Earth but fills the rice paddies with his blessing of Water, and buckets of water are poured out in his name during the planting season. Jotei, Fortune of the Morning Dew, delivers his subtle kiss of Water to the flora of the Empire each day. And finally Hiderigami, the Fortune of Drought, is sometimes beseeched for mercy with an offering of a heavy bowl full of the purest water, poured upon the dusty earth as a prayer for her mercy.

## RYU OF WATER

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Ryu are the dragon spirits of Tengoku, functioning as extensions of the Elemental Dragons. Mechanical information about them may be found in the L5R 4th Edition book *Enemies of the Empire*. Unless acting on behalf of their master, the Ryu of the Water Dragon are notoriously indifferent to the plights of mankind. They are the embodiment of movement and spend much of their time flowing through rivers, down great waterfalls, beneath the bottomless depths of the oceans, or riding upon great tsunami. Water Ryu are the most likely to shift their form, but they always maintain a shimmering iridescence in their scales, reflecting back all the colors of the world. It is not unusual for a Ryu of Water to be seen observing the site of a major battle taking place near a significant body of water. They attend on Hachiman, Fortune of Battle, and are often seen twisting and writhing around him as he observes the terrible destruction of man.

## Supernatural Beings Associated with Water

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### KAPPA

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Kappa, or “river-children,” are malicious prankster spirit from Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief. They reside in lakes, streams, and rivers, where they watch for mortal travelers and delight in playing deadly jokes. Kappa are child-sized humanoids with great turtle-shells upon their backs and a bowl seemingly carved into the tops of their heads. The bowl is filled with a mystical water, and if it is drained the kappa becomes weak. Kappa are malicious, but also have a peculiar reputation for absolute honesty; they will go to great lengths to honor any debt or favor obtained from them, though the rigorous process of achieving such a blessing often ends in death. Kappa favor riddles for their jokes. A favored approach is to ambush or trap a samurai near the water’s edge, then

challenge the victim to a game of riddles. If the samurai fails the kappa feasts upon his blood, leaving the body to rot. Kappa are immune to the touch of Jigoku; some of them claim their ancient king tricked the Dark Kami Fu Leng into giving up the secrets of curing the Taint.

### NINGYO

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Supposedly, the Five Ancient Races inhabited the world long before humanity came into being. Scholars claim each race represented one of the five Elements of the world, and the Ningyo certainly fit their category of Water through and through, from their mermaid-like appearance to their underwater cities. Once intelligent and powerful, the Ningyo have suffered great misery since the fall of the ancient Five Races civilization, the pain of their existence dulled only by their alliance with the powerful Orochi. Further information on the history and nature of the Ningyo may be found in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Enemies of the Empire*, pages 181-183.

### OROCHI

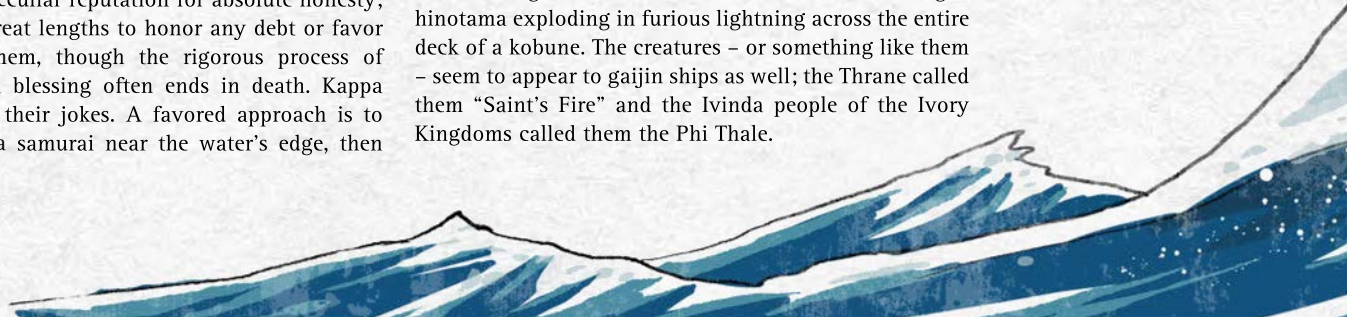
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Orochi are the monsters on the maps of superstitious sailors. Great serpentine beasts that grow up to seventy feet in length, they hail from the watery depths of Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief. Unfortunately for the Orochi, they are humorless beings who despise trickery more than even the hated Taint of Jigoku. However, they are also creatures of alliance. Long ago, the Orochi king Ryujin made an alliance with the Ningyo race that rescued the Ningyo from annihilation. In modern times an Orochi named Tsurayuki made an alliance with the Mantis Clan, as described in Chapter Two of this book. Unfortunately, there are also many wild Orochi in the depths of the Umi Amaterasu and others within the bounds of Sakkaku itself. The L5R 4th Edition supplement *Enemies of the Empire* has more information about the Orochi on pages 252-253.

### HINOTAMA

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Hinotama are a complex amalgam of Water, Fire, and Air kami that occur during the most tumultuous sea-storms. Hinotama begin as simple water creatures from Sakkaku, minor spirits of the ever-shifting waters. Attracted to temporary portals that occur during violent oceanic storms, the hinotama combine their water with the essences of Fire and Air to create a playful but wicked spirit. The hinotama are drawn to metallic objects, especially the blades of samurai. They manifest as balls of purple or blue light, dancing along the body of the metal’s owner. They can spread terrifyingly across an entire ship during a storm, driving the sailors to panic. Entire crews have sometimes dived overboard to escape the hinotama, which the spirits consider a great jest. Unsurprisingly, sailors consider the arrival of the creatures a great ill omen, and there are tales of enraged hinotama exploding in furious lightning across the entire deck of a kobune. The creatures – or something like them – seem to appear to gaijin ships as well; the Thrane called them “Saint’s Fire” and the Ivinda people of the Ivory Kingdoms called them the Phi Thale.







### NURE-ONNA, THE WET WOMAN

The so-called “Wet Woman,” is a unique immortal creature sometimes mistaken for a Naga, a bog hag, or even a malign yokai spirit. Her origins are uncertain, but the Kuni believe she has ties to both Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief, and Gaki-Do, the Realm of the Hungry Dead. Some of them have boldly posited that she was alive before the Fall of the Kami and the creation of the Empire. Supposedly, she was once a beautiful woman with numerous suitors, unable to have even the briefest moment alone. Eventually she found herself pregnant by an especially convincing suitor, but the baby died early and the man abandoned her to her grief, which transformed her into what she is now. When the Wet Woman is encountered she appears as a beautiful but melancholy girl washing her long inky-black hair at the shore of a river, lake, or the ocean. However, if she is bothered – especially by a man – she transforms into the body of a huge snake with a woman’s head and crushes the interloper for his temerity. Sometimes the Nure-Onna is seen with a small “baby” that is actually a konak jiji, a devious pekkle spirit which can become impossibly heavy; further information on the Konak Jiji can be found in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Enemies of the Empire*, page 251.

## Tainted Creatures of Water

Unfortunately for the people of Rokugan there are an abundance of water-based creatures with the Shadowlands Taint, offering dark representations of every aspect of Water from travel to transfiguration.

### SKULL TIDE

The most notorious Tainted sea creature is undoubtedly the Skull Tide Gaki, a plague of cackling skulls that devours entire ships while the souls of the victims become part of the Tide, swelling its size and strength.

### SWAMP GOBLINS

An offshoot of the traditional *bakemono*, swamp goblins reside deep in the marshes of the Shadowlands, unable to survive outside of the wet terrain. They are amphibious, with both lungs and gills, and have a scaly skin covered in slime. In contrast to the vicious aggression of normal goblins, swamp goblins prefer to avoid combat, but are driven by an insatiable curiosity that leads to inevitable conflict.

### SANSHU DENKI

Combining the strength of Water with its aspect of transformation, the “muck monster” is a swamp-dwelling creature able to hide amid mud or dirty water. Sanshu denki have gaping maws filled with crocodile teeth, capable of devouring a horse and rider whole. Even worse, their skin that emits a paralyzing shock.

### BOG HAG

The dreaded bog hag is perhaps the most well-known “shapeshifter” creature in or out of the Shadowlands. It can wear the skin of its victims, taking on a perfect match to their appearance until the skin begins to rot away. The most powerful of bog hags have been known to keep an entire “wardrobe” of skins, preserved with secret maho spells.

### SEA TROLLS

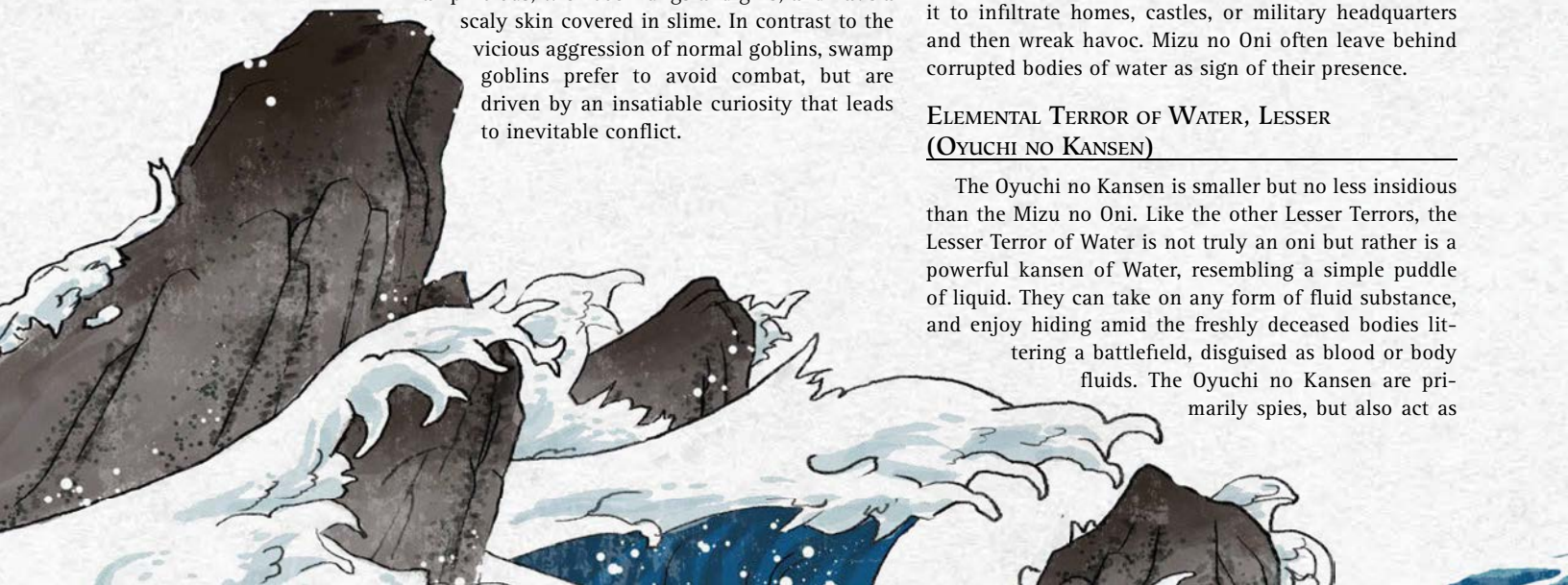
The umibozu are a perverted aquatic version of the Fire-based troll race that dwells in the Tainted waters of the Sea of Shadows. They are near-mindless beasts with slimy skin and a probing, deadly tongue. They are powerful enough to attack a kobune from below, breaching the hull with their claws and pulling sailors to their doom one by one. Rarely, an unformed oni will take particular interest in an umibozu and merge with it to create an O-Umi-Bozu, a giant sea beast capable of ravaging an entire fleet or coastal town.

### ELEMENTAL TERROR OF WATER, GREATER (MIZU NO ONI)

The Elemental Terrors are created by the Dark Oracles in the twelfth century, and normally reside deep in the Shadowlands in a dead volcano called the Womb of Terror. The Greater Terror of Water is known as Mizu no Oni, and takes the form of a polluted body of liquid – oily, sticky and vile. It is a silent assassin known to hide in large bodies of water, waiting to attack and singling out targets of high importance with little defensive capability. It can shapeshift into any creature it has engulfed, so a favored tactic is to lure a samurai into water – for swimming or bathing, typically – and then take the victim’s place. While in the form of its victims the Mizu no Oni retains their memories and speech, allowing it to infiltrate homes, castles, or military headquarters and then wreak havoc. Mizu no Oni often leave behind corrupted bodies of water as sign of their presence.

### ELEMENTAL TERROR OF WATER, LESSER (OYUCHI NO KANSEN)

The Oyuchi no Kansen is smaller but no less insidious than the Mizu no Oni. Like the other Lesser Terrors, the Lesser Terror of Water is not truly an oni but rather is a powerful kansen of Water, resembling a simple puddle of liquid. They can take on any form of fluid substance, and enjoy hiding amid the freshly deceased bodies littering a battlefield, disguised as blood or body fluids. The Oyuchi no Kansen are primarily spies, but also act as





assassins of weaker targets. While they cannot shift into their victim's forms in the manner of the Mizu no Oni, they can take the form of any mundane liquid, hiding as the contents of a bottle of sake shared among soldiers, a bucket of water passed through a village, or even simply shifting as a puddle of "blood" between each mysteriously slain victim. If they serve the Dark Oracle of Water well enough, Oyuchi no Kansen are granted the power to become a true Mizu no Oni.

## Mundane Creatures of Water

### EELS (UNAGI AND ANAGO)

The majority of eels begin life as small yellowish freshwater creatures called unagi, residing in shallow streams and rivers. Over time, unagi grow, their color changes to silver, and they migrate out to sea to become saltwater fish known as anago. They can swim hundreds of miles without feeding and range in size from half a foot in length and less than a pound in weight to over 13 feet in length and over 50 pounds. Eels are a common food source for those who live near their habitats, but are considered a delicacy in landlocked regions. They feed upon other fish and even the largest specimens rarely attack humanity. Eel skin is sometimes tanned into leather (after suitable purification), and their blood is a deadly toxin which is sometimes employed by the unscrupulous. Mantis sailors visiting foreign waters (or the Colonies at the end of the twelfth century) have reported a new type of unagi, as large as the biggest Rokugani eel, which they call a den unagi because of its unusual and dangerous ability to discharge a powerful jolt of lightning when harassed.

### HEIKEGANI

The so-called "Samurai Crab" are a unique species of crab native to the southernmost coastal regions of Rokugan. They are remarkable both for their large size and for the unusual patterns on their backs: a design resembling the angry face of a samurai. The superstitious believe these crabs are reincarnated souls or perhaps corporeal unquiet spirits from Toshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter. This belief stems from the fact that the heikegani did not start appearing until after the small but tragic Battle of Dannoura. Two young men, twins from the Yasuki family, grew apart in the years after the First Yasuki War. Yasuki Heike had remained with the Crane and was fostered into the Daidoji, but in his heart he kept his original family name. His brother Yasuki Taira joined the Crab and was given command of the coastal village of Dannoura, charged with protection of its fertile fishing waters. No one is certain what prompted the battle between brothers, but the result was the death of both along with hundreds of their loyal men, while Dannoura burned to the ground. To this day it is considered unlucky to eat the plentiful heikegani from

the region, for to do so is to invite the sin of familial betrayal into one's heart.

### STING RAY

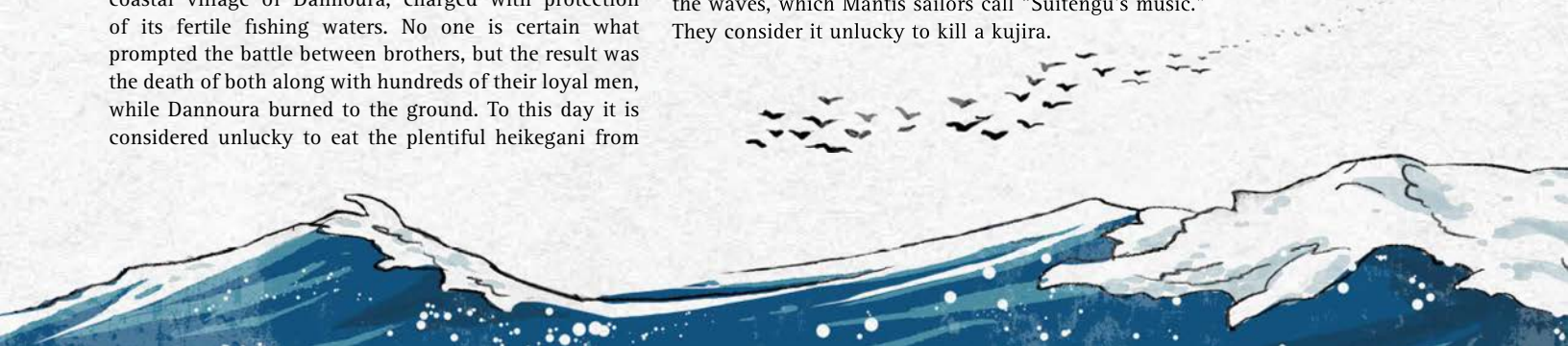
The kosen o sasu is a beautiful manta known in the Isles of Spice and Silk for its exotic tastes... and its deadly stinger. Although it is not an inherently aggressive animal, its stinger makes it dangerous to hunt.

### TURTLE AND TORTOISE (KAME AND RIKUGAME)

The turtle (kame) and tortoise (rikugame) are cousins of sea and land, though both creatures spend a portion of their time within the water. Both are relatively small, though specimens of each have been known to grow to the size of a pony. The kame, or turtle, swims in rivers and lakes but spends the majority of its time upon the shore. The rikugame, or land turtle, is a favored creature of both Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea, and Jurojin, Fortune of Longevity – it can live over a century and is considered a symbol of luck, longevity, and support. Artisans often display tortoises in netsuke with hexagonal shapes, sometimes with dizzying arrays of smaller hexagons hidden within the art-form. Of particular note in Rokugani culture is the minogame or "straw raincoat turtle," named thusly because its tail resembles a farmer's straw coat. The minogame is said to be able to live for thousands of years, and the creature grows to massive size, collecting seaweed upon its tail as time passes. The most famous minogame in Rokugani culture comes from a peasant play in which a man named Taro rescues a young princess from tormentors while she is in the guise of a tortoise. In return, a minogame sent from the hidden Sea Palace of Suitengu comes ashore to escort the peasant deep beneath the Umi Amaterasu for the Fortune to bestow him with favor. When Taro returns to shore he finds that over 300 years have passed, but the minogame has not aged a day.

### WHALES (KUJIRA)

Whales are often referred to as the favored creature of Suitengu because of their enormous size and power. While kujira vary greatly in size and description, the two most common types are the blue whales and the "blackfish" or killer whale. Blue whales are enormous creatures, possibly the largest to ever live, with lengths up to 100 feet and weights exceeding 190 tons. The blackfish are much smaller, though still larger than the average sampan at roughly 30 feet in length and over 10 tons. Their dorsal fins are taller than a man. Noted for their black and white coloring and habit of travelling in large pods, blackfish hunt other sea creatures, often killing their larger blue whale cousins. Both types of whales emit a strange music, audible to those on the surface of the waves, which Mantis sailors call "Suitengu's music." They consider it unlucky to kill a kujira.





# Nemuranai of Water

## A Legendary Creature of Water: Yamato no Orochi

In Rokugan, tales of supernatural creatures and spirits are often spawned from a kernel of truth. Tales of lost cities beneath the waves may be born from the homes of the Naga or the ancient Ningyo race. Mysterious women capable of wearing the skins of their victims are, in fact, Bog Hags... or worse. But not all legends are known to be true. Some are simply legends, tales passed down from one generation to the next without any samurai being sure if they are real or not. Do these things exist in Rokugan? They could – this is a world of magic, after all. It is up to the GM to decide.

Yamato no Orochi appears in a number of ancient Rokugani legends, including stories about Hida and about Osano-Wo. Supposedly it is the “Eight-Forked Serpent,” an immense creature with eight heads and eight tails, rumored to be the first creation of Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea. Some tales claim Suitengu was initially angry at the rule of the Kami and set Yamato no Orochi to terrorize the open seas, preventing all travel up and down the coast. Osano-Wo battled the deadly creature, subduing it and sending it deep beneath the waves... hopefully never to return. Some versions of the story about Hida inventing sake also credit the Yamato no Orochi with being the monster which Hida befuddled with drink, and a few versions of the tale even claim Hida’s future bride Masiko was to be sacrificed to the monster.

*Nemuranai* of Water include some of the most famous artifacts in the Empire, but also some of the most difficult to acquire. Water is the Element of movement, and awakened items containing large numbers of Water spirits seem to be unwilling to linger in one place for long. This same aspect of movement and energy also contributes to Water *nemuranai* being among those most likely to be awakened by heroic action rather than by long veneration or a shugenja’s spiritual attention. Water *nemuranai* are also among the most diverse of magical artifacts in the Empire, including weapons, musical instruments, and a variety of singular items. The Asahina theorize this oddity is because the Water kami, like physical water itself, conform to any container.

### AGASHA’S MIRROR

Agasha’s Mirror seems to have originated as a simple hand mirror used by Lady Agasha in some of her early experiments in understanding the Elements. It is not known when or how it awakened to become a *nemuranai*, although some legends suggest its powers had already begun to appear during her lifetime. Regardless, the item was passed down through generations of the Agasha family. In the twelfth century, it accompanies the majority of the Agasha when they defect to the Phoenix Clan in the year 1131, and remains in the Phoenix Clan thereafter. The item has never been duplicated and seems to a unique creation.

Agasha’s Mirror has only a single ability, but it is an astonishing one: it reveals the Elemental composition of any item, spell, or being. The user can instantly see all the Elements which comprise an object, perceiving them as layers of color and texture. If it is used in this way for an extended period (at least an hour), the user can perceive the actual Elemental kami in the area. At the GM’s option, using this item can also grant a +2k0 bonus to Investigation rolls.

### BAG OF NECESSITY

The Bag of Necessity is one of the oddest *nemuranai* in the Empire. Many stories surround its origins, but the most common version claims it originally belonged to a merchant patron named Yasuki Hohiro and its powers awakened while it was in his possession. Whether this is true or not, the item has been passed down through the line of





Yasuki daimyo for centuries, and is considered one of the most valued possessions of the Yasuki family.

The Bag of Necessity appears to be a simple cloth bag, tied with blue silk cords which are as pristine as the day they were made. It fits comfortably under an obi or inside a traveling pack, and on all inspections has the appearance of any other simple traveler's bag, its only notable feature being embroidered symbols of good fortune sewn into its fabric. However, if a member of the Yasuki family reaches into it, it will give them whatever they need at that moment. This is most typically koku, but it can also be food, precious metals, ingots of ore, a small weapon, or anything else that might fit into a normal traveling bag and that will meet the immediate needs of the Yasuki. Most commonly, the Yasuki use it to fulfill the urgent requirements of their most important customers – Yasuki Taka, the notorious family daimyo from the Clan Wars era, used it quite extensively for these sorts of things.

## THE DRUM OF WATER

The Drum of Water appears simple, almost like a child's toy. It is a handheld drum with strings on either side made of silk and ending in smooth balls usually made of wood. When it is spun on its handle, the wooden balls strike the drum, producing a rapid noise. Despite this simple appearance, this *nemuranai* is quite effective on the battlefield. In contrast to many *nemuranai*, these drums are not unique. They were originally created by the shugenja of the Luchi family, and have since spread in a more limited way to other clans.

A Drum of Water is a perfectly functional musical instrument, but its magical ability can only be triggered once per day by a shugenja speaking the appropriate prayers before playing it. Once the Drum is activated, the Water kami within magnify the sounds it produces, causing them to reverberate throughout a tremendous area. All allies within 50' of the Drum can move as if their Water is twice its normal Rank. This effect lasts a number of rounds equal to the drum-player's Insight Rank.

## THE FAN OF COMMAND

Supposedly, the item called the Fan of Command was originally discovered by a merchant traveling through the Seikitsu mountains, and some stories claim the first person to use it was Akodo himself. Its origin is unknown and it has been used by many different people in the centuries since its discovery, especially ronin. In the twelfth century, Togashi Yokuni gives the Fan to Toturi the Black, who uses it to command his ronin army. Its subsequent fate is unknown.

The Fan of Command is a red-lacquered gansen (war-fan) with fifteen steel branches separating the lacquered vanes. The kanji for "Forever" is painted on one side.

Wielding the Fan of Command grants the bearer the Tactician Advantage. If he already has that Advantage, it awards the Leadership Advantage instead... and if he already has both, it awards the Great Destiny Advantage. If, improbably, the wielder already has all three Advantages (as Toturi did), it awards a +3k3 bonus to all Battle Skill rolls.

## CROSS-CULTURAL LEGENDS: OROCHI OR SHESHA?

In the late twelfth century, Rokugan lays claim to the Colonies – the former Ivory Kingdoms. Asako Hiirono, a scholar of the native Ivinda myths and legends, finds a connection between their stories of a creature called the Shesha and the Rokugani myth of Yamata no Orochi, and comes to believe the two beings are one and the same. In the Ivory Kingdoms, the Shesha is a primal being of creation, a massive entity floating through the Heavens bearing on its back the sleeping form of the god Vishnu. The Shesha is said to have five, seven, or perhaps even a thousand cobra-like heads, and holds all of the Heavens in its unfurled hoods. Where it travels all of creation sings the glory of Vishnu.

Is this legend actually the same as the Yamato no Orochi or merely an interesting example of cultural parallels? Only the GM can decide.



## THE GUNSEN OF WATER

In the days following the Scorpion Clan Coup, the Oracles of Light struggled to find a way to intervene in Ningen-do and counterbalance the impact of the Elemental Terrors, creatures of evil crafted by the Dark Oracles themselves. As the Clan War accelerated and Rokugan was thrown into chaos, the Oracles contacted two great artisans, Iuchi Yogosha and Asako Shingon. The pair of them spent months crafting a set of five potent *nemuranai*, one for each Element; the completion of their task, the creation of a mempo made of the Void itself, required them to sacrifice their lives. Their creations, the five Elemental *nemuranai*, would last forever.

The Gansen of Water is the third *nemuranai* crafted by Shingon and Yogosha. It resembles a large heavy war fan, its vanes colored a blue as deep and dark as the ocean's depths. Yogosha carved it with patterns of waves frothing in a storm, representing the wrathful element of Water. After the deaths of the smiths, the Oracles gave the five *nemuranai* to their chosen wielders, and the Gansen of Water went to Bayushi Goshiu, the last Scorpion in the Imperial Court of Hantei XXXIX. In Goshiu's hands the Gansen changed and shifted, becoming a light courtier's fan with water itself forming the leaves between each vane of the fan.

Goshiu arranged for the item to be used to destroy one of the Elemental Terrors of Fire. Some tales claim it also enhanced his powers in court. However, when Hantei XXXIX revealed himself as the vessel of Fu Leng, Goshiu was imprisoned and stripped of his possessions, including the Gansen of Water. There are no official records of the







broken off and fallen to Ningen-do. With the aid of a Mantis priestess, the shugenja used the mystical craft to travel the realms and bring the spirit of Yoritomo to the gates of the Celestial Heavens. Without it, Yoritomo would never have been able to take his place as a Kami alongside the ancient founders of the other Great Clans.

The Heavenly Kobune of Suitengu assures safe travel. When it is carried on a ship of any size, it ensures the winds will blow favorably, the sea will be calm, and creatures of the ocean will not attack. Any such ship will always arrive safely at its port so long as the Heavenly Kobune is on board. Truly wise and powerful shugenja can accomplish much more with the Heavenly Kobune, for as an object of Celestial power it is capable of transforming into a full-sized ship that can travel into the Spirit Realms, even to the very gates of Tengoku. Only a few shugenja have been able to learn how this is done, however, and even they do not fully understand what they accomplished. As an item of the Celestial Heavens, it cannot be corrupted by the Taint, and it extends this protection to any person traveling on it.

Gunsen's fate afterward, though the Miya have attempted to track it along with the other Elemental *nemuranai*. There are accounts of Lion generals bearing a tessen matching its description in battles at Toshi Ranbo wo Shien Shite Regisahao, of an Ide courtier using something much like the Gunsen in a small provincial court, and stories of the Wind, Kaneka, wielding it during the fall of Otsan Uchi. However, none of these incidents have been definitively confirmed as reappearances of the Gunsen of Water.

Mechanically, in combat the Gunsen of Water is a tessen with a DR of 1k3, while in social settings it changes its shape and appearance to an appropriate court fan. In its combat form the Gunsen also increases your Armor TN by an amount equal to twice your Water. You are instantly aware if you are targeted by a Water spell and you may choose to add +20 to the TN of the Spell Casting roll. Finally, you gain a +1k1 bonus to all Battle and War-Fan Skill Rolls.

## THE HEAVENLY KOBUNE OF SUITENGU

The origins of the artifact known as the Heavenly Kobune of Suitengu are wrapped in mystery. Some legends do speak of a vessel used by the Fortune of the Seas to travel between realms, a jade kobune whose journeys never fail, but these tales are exceedingly obscure. The Heavenly Kobune entered Rokugan's history in the twelfth century during a battle at the fabled Tomb of the Seven Thunders. Several unique artifacts were recovered from the Tomb by various samurai who had come there to defend the life of Emperor Toturi III. Moto Chen, a samurai of the Unicorn, discovered a jade ship small enough to fit in a man's palm yet crafted with intricate and perfect detail. Tiny sails that seemed to constantly blow in the wind, gold boarding ramps and fittings, in every way the tiny craft seemed like the expert work of a shipwright rendered into impossibly small detail. He brought the item back to Unicorn lands, where one of the clan's shugenja finally decided it must be a fragment of Suitengu's legendary vessel, somehow

## THE HUNTER'S KABUTO

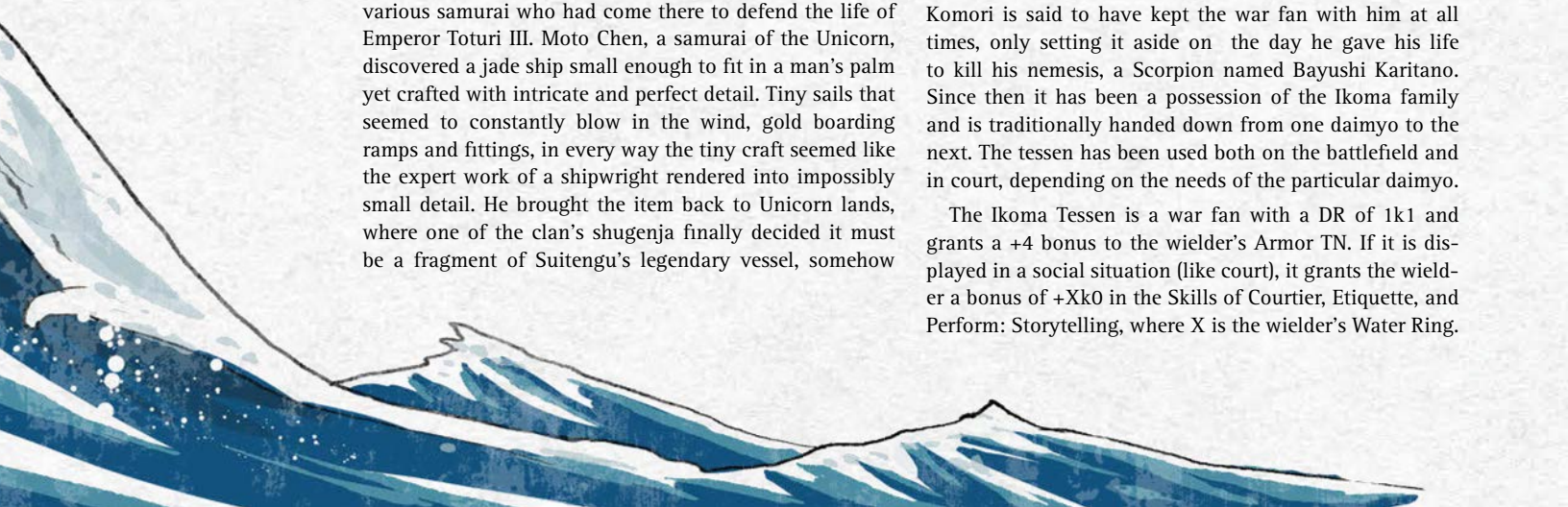
Samurai of all the Great Clans enjoy the sport of hunting, but the Unicorn are particularly fond of it, perhaps because they relied on it for survival during the eight centuries that they wandered outside the Empire. Some years after the clan returned to Rokugan, the Iuchi family created this helm as a gift to a new Clan Champion who was known to particularly enjoy the sport of hunting. The helm is made of iron and mounts stag's antlers atop its brow, a feature which other clans would find disgusting but which does not trouble the Unicorn. The helm is imbued with Water kami who bestow their gifts of clarity and perception to whoever wears it.

In game mechanical terms, the Hunter's Kabuto adds +1 Rank to its wearer's Perception Trait, and grants a +1k0 bonus to the Hunting Skill.

## THE IKOMA TESSEN

It is believed the Ikoma Tessen was originally given to Ikoma's son Komori by Akodo as a wedding gift. Supposedly, Akodo tore the tessen from the sky itself, but notwithstanding this tale it appears as an ordinary if high-quality war-fan. It is made from fine sandalwood and decorated with kanji and the mon of the Lion. Ikoma Komori is said to have kept the war fan with him at all times, only setting it aside on the day he gave his life to kill his nemesis, a Scorpion named Bayushi Karitano. Since then it has been a possession of the Ikoma family and is traditionally handed down from one daimyo to the next. The tessen has been used both on the battlefield and in court, depending on the needs of the particular daimyo.

The Ikoma Tessen is a war fan with a DR of 1k1 and grants a +4 bonus to the wielder's Armor TN. If it is displayed in a social situation (like court), it grants the wielder a bonus of +Xk0 in the Skills of Courtier, Etiquette, and Perform: Storytelling, where X is the wielder's Water Ring.







## THE JADE MIRROR

The Jade Mirror, like the Heavenly Kobune, is discovered during the mid-twelfth century in the Tomb of the Seven Thunders deep within the Shadowlands. The Dragon Clan hero Mirumoto Rosanjin finds the Mirror shortly before his death, and other Dragon samurai carry it back to the Empire. The Mirror becomes a possession of the Dragon Clan and is studied intensively by the Kitsuki and Tamori family. Over time, they learn the Mirror bestows tremendous powers of clarity and perception, able to reflect the very soul of any who gaze into it. Eventually the tattooed men of the Togashi take the Mirror into their possession, recognizing its powers can be used to fight the power of the Shadowlands.

When someone looks into the Jade Mirror, their reflection takes on exaggerated features which unerringly represent their true nature. Honorable samurai appear stronger, taller, and more handsome or beautiful, regardless of their actual physical condition. Selfish or weak-souled persons appear smaller, uglier, less physically fit or even diseased. Tainted persons, of course, appear outright demonic. As a general rule, anyone who sees another person's reflection in the Mirror will instantly learn if that person has any Dark Secrets, although the exact nature of the secrets are not revealed.

The Mirror is made of blessed jade and imbued with the most powerful of Water and Earth spirits. Kansen cannot abide its presence, and any maho spells cast within 100' of the Mirror have their Spell Casting TN's increased by +40.

## KITSUKI'S COIN

The founder of the Kitsuki family, Agasha Kitsuki, was actually a shugenja by training, but his skills with the kami were at best mediocre. Although he studied the alchemical knowledge of his family, he found it difficult to create even the more mundane potions and alchemical substances. He had only one success during his time as a shugenja, and the item he created – a simple coin – was deemed useless by the rest of the family. Later, the coin became an inheritance of his new family – and the Kitsuki family, unlike the Agasha, saw considerable value in this simple *nemuranai*.

Kitsuki's Coin has only one effect: if someone carries or holds it, any time that person attempts to lie (or even just to obfuscate the truth), the coin creates a faint red aura which is visually perceptible to anyone else. The owner actually cannot see this, but all others can do so.

## MERCHANT COINS OF THE YASUKI

The so-called Merchant Coins of the Yasuki are an ancient set of 24 copper coins from the dawn of the Empire. They are said to have been a gift of the Yasuki family to the Crane Clan after they first joined the clan, although some scholars question this since the coins have the appearance of those from much later in Rokugan's history. The coins have the general shape of a koku; the backs of the coins have standard symbols of the Fortunes and the mark of being minted by the Crane Clan, but the fronts have depictions of the twelve creatures who represent the hours of the Rokugani day in the common measure. The original set of 24 coins had two of each creature: hare, dragon, serpent, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog, boar, rat, ox, and tiger.

Supposedly, anyone who carries one or more of these coins will be extremely fortunate in all commercial and political dealings during the hours of the day associated with the coin's particular iconic creature. Over the centuries many of the coins are lost or destroyed, especially during the commercial (and occasionally violent) conflicts between the Daidoji and the Yasuki. However, in the twelfth century the Doji family still possesses one full set of twelve. It is believed at least some of the coins have wound up back with the Yasuki family, and in the Clan Wars era it was rumored that daimyo Yasuki Taka possessed two of them. (Some friends and rivals noticed he conducted most of his deals in the early afternoon and just before sunset, in the hours of the goat and the dog.)

Anyone who physically touches a Merchant Coin of the Yasuki with bare skin (e.g. holding it in the hand or wearing it as an amulet on the chest, for example) gains a +2k2 bonus to any Commerce or Courtier Skill Roll involving commercial agreements.







However, the coins only have this effect during the hour of the day to which their symbol corresponds. The rest of the time the coins grant only a +1k0 bonus to the appropriate Skill Rolls.

## RIOSHIDA'S KUSARIGAMA

Gusai Rioshida was the last member of the Gusai family to serve as Clan Champion of the Mantis. Intent on building on the success his father and grandfather, he hatched an incredible plot designed to ensure the Mantis would finally ascend to the position of a Great Clan: kidnapping the eldest son of Emperor Hantei XI. Unfortunately, the plan proved as unwise as it was bold, and soon word reached the Mantis that all the clans of Rokugan, Great and Minor alike, were making common cause against the sons of Kaimetsu-uo. When reports came of a massive Crane fleet carrying the assembled might of Rokugan to the Mantis islands, Rioshida was slain by a man named Yohihotsu, who presented both the Emperor's son and Rioshida's head to the Empire's armies. In recognition of his act of service to the Emerald Throne, Yohihotsu was made Champion of the Mantis Clan and the Gusai line was abolished, its living members slain as traitors or forced to commit seppuku. Their shame would stain the clan for six hundred years.

Rioshida's signature weapon was a kusarigama. On the orders of Yohihotsu it was preserved in a small shrine deep in the jungles of the Mantis islands, far away from any road. The shrine is protected by members of the Order of Osano-Wo whose task is to ensure the accursed legacy of Rioshida will never again threaten the Mantis Clan's destiny.

Rioshida's Kusarigama functions as a normal weapon of its type but like many *nemuranai* it has the power to harm

Invulnerable foes. Moreover, the spirits of the weapon are infused with Rioshida's dangerous ambition. When it is used against a foe whose Status Rank is higher than its wielder's Rank, the kusarigama adds +Xk0 to its attack rolls, where X the difference in Status Ranks.

## THE YOGO JITTE

This weapon is the "badge of office" for the head of the Kuroiban, the secretive organization within the Scorpion Clan that hunts down maho-tsukai. The original weapon was crafted by the founder of the Kuroiban, but supposedly a number of copies have been made over the centuries, generally displaying similar qualities to the original. The Yogo Jitte is made of wood rather than steel, but otherwise resembles a normal jitte such as a magistrate might carry.

In the hands of most samurai a Yogo Jitte functions like any mundane jitte, but if it is carried by a shugenja the spirits within the weapon – primarily spirits of Water and Air – stir to life. When fully awakened, the weapon is able to harm Invulnerable foes and awards a +1k1 bonus to attack and damage rolls. Moreover, the bearer may store a spell within the jitte, much like the effect created with the spell Silent Waters; the stored spell can be released with a Simple Action

## YORITOMO'S KAMA

The warrior Yoritomo, who finally achieved Great Clan status for the Mantis Clan, fought by preference with a pair of ordinary kama. The Son of Storms was rarely seen without these kama, and while he was an excellent swordsman he always preferred to fight with them. Over time, the strength of Yoritomo's legend and his many heroic deeds awakened the spirits within the weapons, especially the Water kami. The weapons were passed on to Yoritomo's adopted son Aramasu (who never felt worthy of them) and then to Yoritomo's true-born daughter Kumiko, who used them to destroy the onisu Settozai as well as many other great deeds. After her death, the kama were lost at sea, but two generations later they were discovered again in the distant Ivory Kingdoms, carried by Aramasu's half-gaijin son.

Yoritomo's Kama respond only to those of the Mantis Clan, and behave like mundane kama when carried by anyone else. If a Mantis wields them, they are capable of harming Invulnerable creatures, grant a +1k1 bonus to attack rolls, and negate any penalties for using two weapons at once.

In the hands of a blood descendant of Yoritomo himself, the kami within these weapons awaken to their true power. Their DR increases to 3k3, and if they inflict more than 30 Wounds with a single damage roll the target must make an Earth Roll at TN 20 or die instantly, regardless of remaining Wounds. Moreover, if the wielder loses or drops one of the kama, so long as he is within 20' it will leap into his hand as a Free Action.





## The Gifts of Water Hammer City

Water Hammer City (Suigeki Toshi) is home to one of the more notable forges in the Empire. Although not so well known as the forges of the Kaiu or the Tamori, it is still revered for the skill of its artisans and the frequency with which their creations awaken as *nemuranai*. Located deep within the Earth-dominated lands of the Dragon Clan, Suigeki Toshi is so named due to the incongruous presence of powerful Water kami, including a legendary object which the inhabitants believe to be nothing less than a scale from the body of the Water Dragon itself. Every home in Water Hammer City bears a shrine to the Water kami, usually a small fountain or a bowl kept always full, and the city's craftsmen and blacksmiths maintain more elaborate shrines in their workshops. For more details on Water Hammer City, see the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Strongholds of the Empire*.

When the monk Haru established the Great Forge of Water Hammer City, he invited all the clans to send artisans to create items in the forge, gifts venerating the Water Dragon. This, Haru believed, would consecrate the shrine far better than any of his own prayers. All of the clans save the Scorpion answered this call. Most of these completed gifts now reside within the Great Forge, each of them awakened by the power of the Water Dragon, each a powerful *nemuranai* in its own right.

### KAIU OTOGE'S SPARROW

Kaiu Otoge was the younger brother of the Kaiu family daimyo. He did not regret his lack of station, for he lacked his family's predilection for warfare and was not skilled as a general or siege-master. He was, however, indisputably a great smith, and his works were sought by many. Crab bushi swore by Otoge's steel, claiming his weapons could not break. Despite such skill, however, Otoge longed to devise other things than just tools of war. Whenever possible he explored artistic crafts, from new musical instruments to ironwork statues. When he was offered the chance to practice his skills on the forge at Water Hammer City, Otoge leaped at the chance. "A forge can't be complete until a Kaiu works it," he said as he departed for the Dragon lands.

When Otoge arrived at the forge, he was a surprise to Haru and his apprentices, who had expected a dour and militant Crab rather than a cheerful man who rejoiced in the work before him. Otoge's intricate designs and hand-forged gears amazed those who observed him. His creation, once it was finished, superficially resembled the music boxes his family was known for. Shaped into the form of a sparrow, it produced melodious tones almost on command. Otoge presented it to Haru and then quietly returned to the Crab lands and his grim duties in his clan's eternal war.

Soon after, a Kuni Witch Hunter visited Water Hammer City and uncovered an infiltration by a maho cult trying to steal the supposed Water Dragon's scale. The cult

was taken completely by surprise and wiped out, never understanding how they had been discovered. For his part, the Witch Hunter never explained his success – but others recalled the unexpected behavior of Otoge's creation during the investigation.

Otoge's Sparrow is a palm-sized metal sparrow with an internal mechanism allowing it to flap its wings and "sing" with a chiming bell-note. When not in use it rests with its wings at its side, mouth and eyes closed. However, when a creature with the Shadowlands Taint comes within ten feet, the sparrow will animate and sing on its own, without mortal intervention.

### THUNDER'S TAIKO

Asahina Kimita, a young prodigy of the Asahina family, was the Crane artisan sent to Water Hammer City. She had not yet won much renown for herself, but her sensei saw her immense potential and trusted her to represent them at the Great Forge. Kimita spent her time in Water Hammer City watching and studying the other smiths and speaking with Haru himself about his techniques. For weeks, the Crane observed, until Haru himself began to wonder what she might do or if she would do anything. Finally, months after she arrived, Kimita asked to work the forge alone.

For a month, Kimita labored in solitude. She sent for blessed wood from the forests near Shinden Asahina, shipped with difficulty to the remote lands of Water Hammer City. She spent weeks shaping the wood to her needs, then finally used the forge itself to create the tacks holding the drum together. Some of Haru's students complained at the perceived misuse of their blessed forge, but Haru himself chided them for their disrespect. For her part, Kimita ignored everything and everyone outside of her work.

At the end of thirty-one days, Kimita presented her completed work: a massive taiko drum, powerful enough to be heard all the way across the city. She showed it first to Haru, who laughed and asked her what her inspiration was. "The rhythm of your hammers was all the inspiration I needed," the Crane replied.

The Thunder's Taiko resonates like a peal of thunder when it is played, its sound reverberating through the body and soul. It is used for many rituals and festivals in Water Hammer City. When an artisan performs music on the Thunder's Taiko, he gains a bonus of Xk0 to his Perform Skill roll, where X is his Water Rank. Moreover, the drum's powerful notes can inspire others who hear them. Anyone listening to the Thunder's Taiko may add the same bonus to their own Artisan or Perform Skill rolls.

### THE MASTER'S GO SET

Matsu Watako was a famous gunso of the Lion legions; although she never attended the Akodo school, her tactical acumen on the field matched that of the best Akodo students, and on many occasions she baited larger enemy forces with more experienced commanders into lethal traps. However, she was known as a skillful Go player and a talented woodcarver, spending her off-duty







hours creating small but astonishingly beautiful sculptures and netsuke. When the Lion Clan Champion had to send someone to Water Hammer City, he chose Watako, trusting in her honor and skill. In fact, Watako was the first of the guests to arrive, and presented herself formally to Haru. When the master smith asked what she would make, the Lion replied "Only that which is honorable."

At first Watako did not know what she could create that would be fitting for Water Hammer City, and she spent much of her time playing Go, often in the Great Forge itself. Samurai from the surrounding regions traveled to challenge the Lion, but she won every game. (Lion legend claims Togashi Hoshi himself challenged her, and their game lasted for three days before Watako emerged victorious. The Dragon, however, do not have records of this event.)

After a year in the Dragon lands, Watako carved two bowls from perfect mahogany. These held the Go pieces, black and white, she had used in her time there, and it was this Go set which she presented to her hosts when she thanked them for their hospitality and left to return to Lion lands.

The Master's Go Set is a superb quality set which has been imbued with Matsu Watako's skills in battle and also with her sense of honor. Any samurai can share her gifts by using the set to play a game of Go, but each person can only receive this blessing once. After playing the game, the individual gains a bonus to the total of his Battle (Mass Combat) rolls for the next month. This bonus is equal to the combined total of the character's Honor Rank and Water Ring.

## AMULET OF AMATERASU

The tale of Moshi Jukio is a long and sad one. By the time of the founding of Water Hammer City, the loss of her daughter and the death of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu had twisted the once-serene Champion of the Centipede into a bitter old woman. When Haru (who had once been a Mantis samurai before he heard the call of the Togashi order), sent out his invitations, the Mantis Clan Champion sent Jukio as the clan's representative. This caused no small amount of controversy, since many wondered what manner of "gift" a troubled soul like Jukio could create.

When Jukio arrived in Water Hammer City, she asked to be left alone in the Great Forge. There she worked night and day for a week. Some of Haru's students whispered she was pouring all of her hate

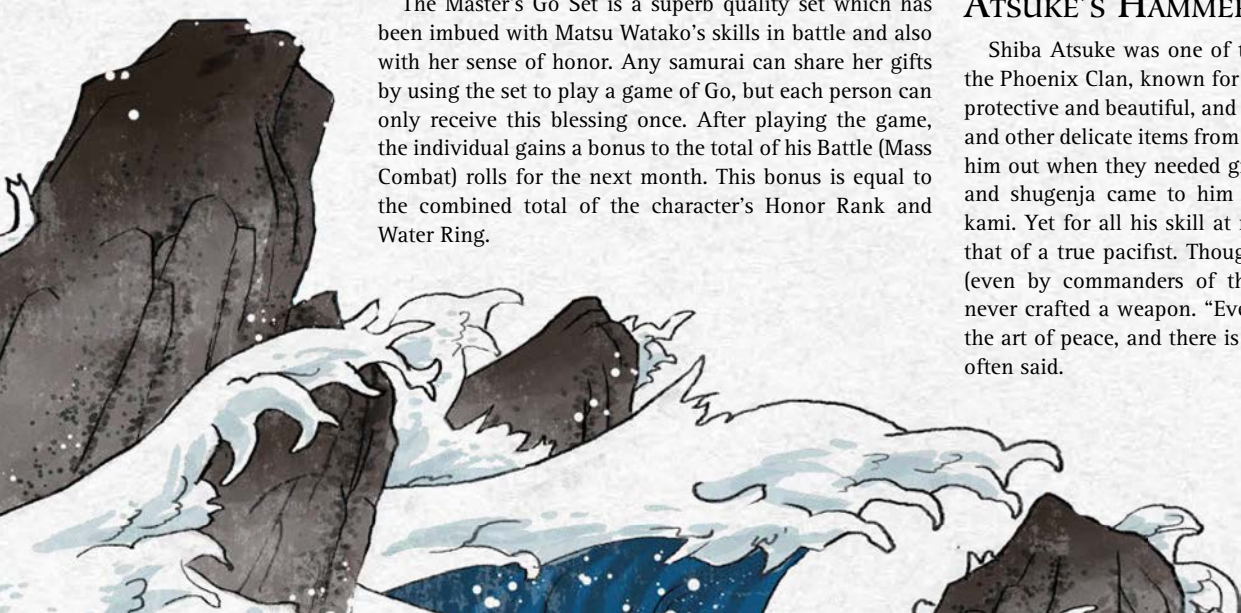
and anger at the Mantis and the mortal world into the Forge, corrupting it. They pleaded with Haru to let them stop whatever mad plan the Moshi daimyo was enacting, but Haru only replied: "There are few I can trust more than a priestess of Amaterasu."

Jukio emerged at noon on the seventh day, the new Sun Yakamo high in the sky. Tired, shaky, and visibly in ill health, she carried in her hands an amulet of the Lady Amaterasu herself, and it shone with a brilliant pure light. This was one of Jukio's last acts in her life, and later generations of Mantis believe it was an act of contrition for her earlier bitterness. Whatever the case, the power of the Amulet of Amaterasu cannot be denied.

The Amulet's power can only be felt while the Sun is in the sky, and it must be worn by one who has an Honor of at least 6.0 for the spirits within to awaken. However, once it is active no creature of Jigoku and no kansen spirit can voluntarily come within a dozen paces of the one wearing the Amulet. Needless to say, those who are marked by the Taint or the Nothing cannot voluntarily touch the amulet, though it does them no direct harm.

## ATSUKE'S HAMMER

Shiba Atsuke was one of the more gifted craftsmen in the Phoenix Clan, known for making armor that was both protective and beautiful, and for crafting feathers, flowers, and other delicate items from purest steel. Courtiers sought him out when they needed gifts to present to other clans, and shugenja came to him for mighty offerings to the kami. Yet for all his skill at making armor, his heart was that of a true pacifist. Though he was asked many times (even by commanders of the Phoenix legions), Atsuke never crafted a weapon. "Every weapon created damages the art of peace, and there is no greater art than that," he often said.





When Atsuke came to the Great Forge of Water Hammer City, he did not create any mighty armor or perfect sculpture. Instead, he made the humblest of items: a simple blacksmith's hammer. The hammer was perfectly balanced and always seemed to apply just the right amount of force, no matter whether it was striking iron, steel, copper, gold, or stone. Haru was so impressed by the item that after Atsuke's death he gifted the hammer back to the Phoenix Clan, declaring the artisan's goals of beauty and peace could be best pursued by his own clan.

Atsuke's Hammer adds +2k0 to all Craft and Artisan Skill rolls that involve the creation of armor or of artistic objects. If it is instead used to craft a weapon, it inflicts a -2k0 penalty instead. If Atsuke's Hammer is ever used as a weapon to strike a living creature, it will shatter and be destroyed forever.

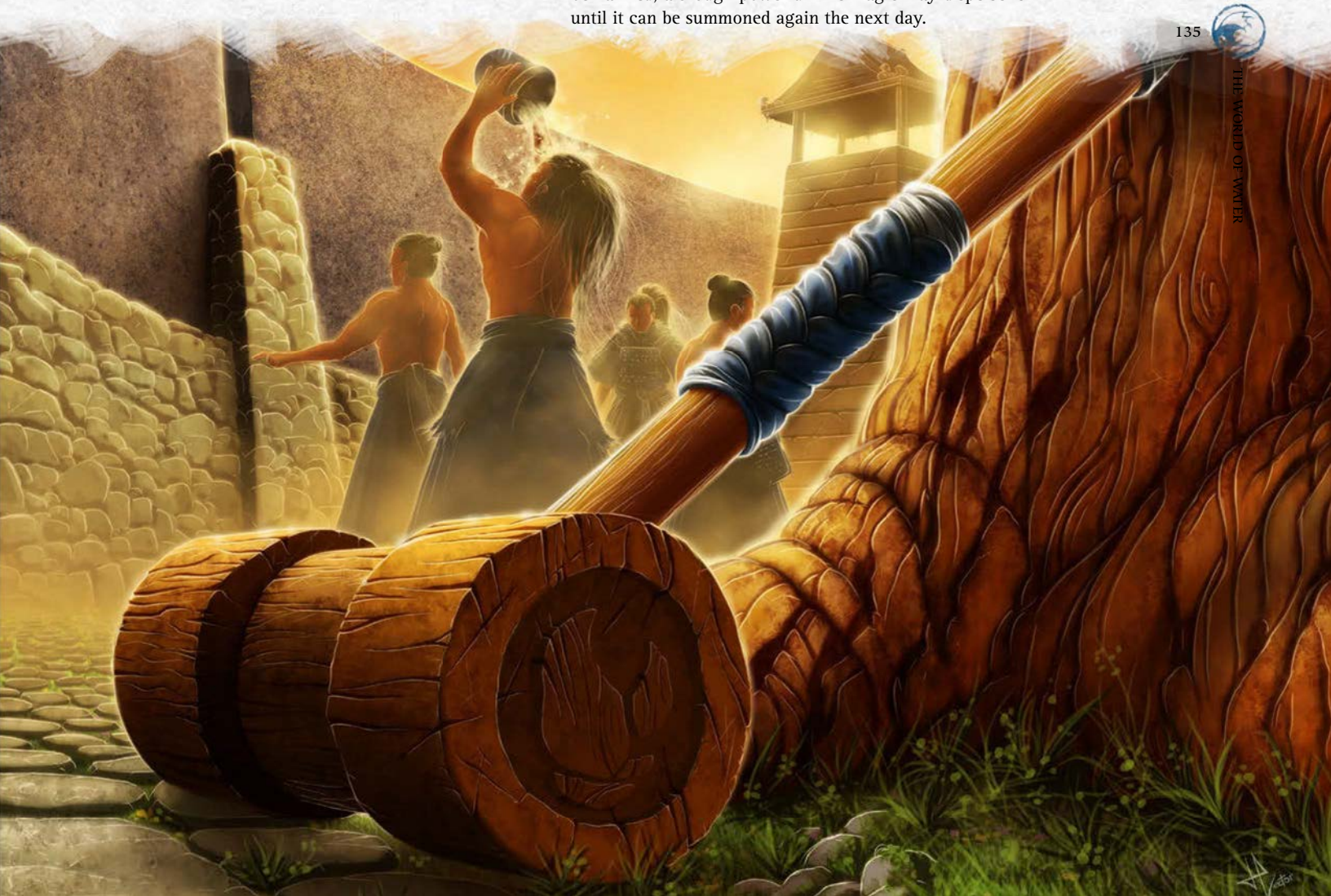
## THE SADDLE OF WATER

When Haru's call arrived in the Unicorn lands, a young shugenja named Moto Vordu asked the Great Khan to let him answer. Vordu, a veteran of the Spirit Wars, was an avid student of Rokugani *nemuranai* and sought ways to merge the seemingly divergent philosophies behind them with the gaijin magic of the Iuchi family. Sadly, in later years he would explore the legendary City of Night, and his curiosity would ultimately drive him to madness and death.

Young Vordu brought his curiosity to the Great Forge. By the time he arrived, most of the other clan guests were already present and in some cases had begun creating their items. Vordu watched all of them, taking copious notes and sending many letters back to his sensei in the Iuchi School. Finally, having attained a great understanding of the mystical nature of the Great Forge, he set out to create an item of his own.

Vordu crafted a saddle from leather, but he knew enough of Rokugan to keep the unclean substance away from the Forge. Instead he used the Forge to create metal buckles and white silver stirrups; these he forged slowly and carefully, carving them with images of running horses and chanting prayers in the strange gaijin cadences of the Unicorn Clan. When he was finished, he had a saddle quite unlike any other. The metal in the saddle seemed to shimmer and shift when observed, like water flowing freely, and the images of horses seemed to move at the gallop.

The Saddle of Water is a saddle that has the power to summon forth a powerful Water kami in the shape of a horse. This can be done once per day, simply by lifting the saddle up and willing the steed to appear. Once evoked, the watery horse will remain for a number of hours equal to the Water of its rider. It can carry up to two riders (one of whom must be the owner of the Saddle) and moves as though it has Water 5 and Swift 2, but is otherwise unable to interact with the world. It can neither attack nor be harmed, although powerful Fire magic may disperse it until it can be summoned again the next day.









# THE ETERNAL DANGER ISLANDS

*In the pre-dawn light an oddly scented flower bloomed. A dozen finger-length petals, soft and white, blossomed from its golden center. The smell was not unpleasant to Moto Kesshite, but the hunter knew others would call it "pungent." However, something about the bloom captivated him. He could feel the kami within the little flower trying to speak, and he strained hard to listen, opening his soul to the spirits' language as he had learned in the Iuchi lands.*

*"A rare breed, Kesshite-san," the didactic voice of Asako Hiromi interrupted.*

*Kesshite's focus shattered. He shut his eyes tight for a moment. When they opened again, their colors swirling slightly, the beauty of the flower had become mundane once more.*

*Now, he could only see the blood.*

*"The peasants call it 'beauty under the moon' because it only blooms at night, withering after dawn," Hiromi said. "So it will not last too long, I'm afraid. There is a tale – apocryphal of course – that Shinsei spent an evening at the edge of the Shinomen Mori and was gifted with this flower by a spirit from the woods. None are certain what lesson the Little Teacher offers with this tale, but..." The Phoenix shugenja trailed off. She had seen the look on the Unicorn's face. "My apologies. Perhaps we should focus on the massacre?"*

*"Perhaps." The Unicorn walked backward a few paces and the Phoenix woman followed him, stepping cautiously to keep the blood from staining her robes.*

*The flower had only a single tiny drop of blood on one of its petals, but there was far more around it. The blood came from a man pinned to the tree above it, a spear driven through his chest. To the left and right half a dozen more men lay scattered and broken. Massacre was an appropriate label.*

*"The peasants say these woods are haunted by spirits of Chikushudo, the Realm of Animals. Do you think that one of them could have done such a thing?" Hiromi's voice was doubtful, as if she already knew the answer.*

*"Unlikely," Kesshite growled, putting a wealth of disdain into the single word. After a moment he elaborated, "Animal spirits rarely use the steel of men." He gestured at the broken bodies, each with a weapon from another embedded in its flesh. To the untrained eye it might almost look as if these men had killed each other, but the hunter knew the truth. A man with a crushed pelvis, another with a snapped spine, two with long talon marks across their throats, and the one in the tree – a second larger wound in his belly. The attacker was almost certainly not human, but he was certain it was no spirit of the woods.*

*"Oh no..." Hiromi's murmur of dismay drew Kesshite's gaze. A crowd was gathering behind the two samurai. Not surprising, really; peasant woodsmen had come racing into the City of the Prosperous Dawn that morning, screaming of dead bodies in the trees, drawing all manner of attention. Now the rumormongers and the morbidly curious had come to see what had terrified the peasants. Kesshite sneered inwardly at the disgusting display.*







Then he saw what had actually drawn the Phoenix's attention, and felt himself cringe a little as he saw the mon of the Imperial administrator herself. Miya Onako rode in a palanquin, waving a large fan despite the cool breeze from the coast. Behind her trailed half the court of Shiro no Raiden, more gossips hoping to add spice to their boring days. Kesshite took special notice of two men walking a few paces to the Miya's right. The Scorpion ambassador, Shosuro Atari, was speaking vehemently behind an upraised fan to his companion, Matsu Tadaka, commander of the city guard. An unlikely alliance, Kesshite thought, but hopefully none of my concern.

"Moto Kesshite-san!" The administrator's voice rang out in a commanding tone, putting a halt to the snippets of conversation around her. The palanquin lowered to the ground and she stepped quickly onto the grass, then strode directly up to the brutal scene. She was silent for a moment, taking in the details, and then looked up at the Unicorn. Her jaw was clenched, her muscles taut, as if a hunting cat ready to spring.

"You have examined the scene, no doubt." The Miya spoke quietly, but with heat. "This has to stop, Moto Kesshite-san. I tire of members of my court falling prey to such calamities so close to the protection of my walls. You will discover the culprit." Onako turned, pointing her fan directly at her Lion commander. "Matsu Tadaka-san, you will conscript ashigaru to aid the Unicorn in his investigation and strengthen the defenses close to these woods. This will not happen again."

As if it were that easy, Kesshite thought.

The administrator walked back to her palanquin, leaving behind a swarm of useless courtiers who spent long minutes discussing the scene.

Kesshite looked to Hiromi, who shrugged, and they turned back to the dead men. Above, thunder rolled across the sky and a single foretelling raindrop landed on the Moto's skin. He smiled, knowing Suitengu had blessed him with the imminent removal of the pitiful courtiers, even if they did not yet know it.

"You shouldn't smile so, Kesshite-san. The effect is... unsettling." Hiromi turned away from the hunter and leaned in to examine one of the bodies. "Hm. This one ap-

pears to have a marking across his torso, written in blood. His own blood, I suppose, or it could be one of the others."

Kesshite looked down, frowning. He did not recognize the strange kanji, but he knew he did not need to ask – the scholar would supply his answer soon enough.

And indeed she did. "A warning, I believe. Written in the ancient tongue found on the ruins in the Shinomen Mori. How very strange."

Kesshite straightened and looked once more into the heart of the forest. The woods were not "cursed" as the heimin believed, but he knew from experience that the walls between Ningen-Do and the Spirit Realms were thin in the heart of the forest. Perhaps a malicious spirit had assaulted these men... but he did not think so. The whole thing felt staged, unnatural, even without the mysterious kanji.

The Asako suddenly cried out. "Kesshite-san! This man lives!" The fallen samurai coughed, spraying a film of blood on the Phoenix shugenja-ko's robes. Kesshite ignored it and knelt, laying his hands on the man's torso and murmuring a prayer to the Water kami. He knew them to be strong here, if not always obedient. This time they obeyed, and the man shivered as the flow of healing energy knitted his flesh together.

While he was casting the spell Moto Kesshite could feel a deeper awareness for the world around him. He saw the dead men not as mere flesh but as bodies transforming from one state of being to another. Their souls had departed, their attacker had changed them, and they now belonged to a different realm. He could also see the impending storm, the Water kami rising into the sky, mingling with Air to form an impending taifun. The kami sang of danger, of the vibrant hum of power yet to be spent.

As his prayer finished, Moto Kesshite looked up, once more searching the dark wood with his gaze. Behind him the morning sun briefly broke through the clouds, its rays bathing the bloody scene. Then thunder boomed again and a drenching torrent poured down on the impromptu court. Moto Kesshite felt himself smile inwardly at the frantic gabbling among the courtiers.

Asako Hiromi sighed. "Ah... the flower wilts."

The Unicorn hunter ignored her, still staring into the forest. Somehow he knew. In that rain-shrouded darkness, just beyond his sight, a fellow hunter was gazing back, intent on its prey.





# The History of the Eternal Danger Islands

The small archipelago the Rokugani would eventually come to call the Eternal Danger Islands was at one point not islands at all. At the dawn of creation, when the Five Ancient Races walked the world and the Elements were pure and untouched, there were places where the concentration of kami was so powerful, so strong, that they changed and reshaped the very reality around them, taking what had been created and making it anew into different natural phenomena. The Fire kami found places where they could erupt and flow with the freedom they so often sought, creating wonders such as Tamori's Furnace. The Air kami danced and moved around the world, creating calming breezes and massive hurricanes alike, winds as soft as a flower *petal* and strong enough to shatter mountains. The Earth kami brought forth hills and mountains. And the Water kami, full of life and serene motion, sought to infuse the world with their healing and calm nature.

Some of the Water kami wished for a place which embodied their nature most completely. Eventually they and the Earth kami together brought forth a massive piece of land from the very ocean itself, a process which took place over so long a time as to be almost unimaginable to mortals. Slowly, as the world grew older, a rich, fertile, and peaceful land arose like a jewel from the depths of the world. The great island was everything the kami of the sea wanted – a place of vibrant and beautiful landmarks, of Water and Earth and Air in harmony, a testament to calming beauty and peaceful serenity.

However, one of the aspects of Elemental creations like this island or Tamori's Furnace is that they are infused through and through with the overwhelming power of the kami most closely associated to them. Thus the immense essence of Fire in Tamori's Furnace makes it capable of destroying magical artifacts that are otherwise indestructible. Likewise, the massive island the Water kami brought forth from the sea was infused with magical energy that reflected the healing and calming nature of those kami. Within just a few years, lush vegetation sprouted up everywhere on the island, and all manner of wildlife thrived in profusion. The jewel of the ocean evinced life like

nowhere else in the world. In fact, the Water kami were so strong on the island that the plants and animals there aged much slower, grew much larger, and lived far longer than in any other place in the world.

And so perhaps it was only a matter of time before the island drew the attention of those races who lived before mankind.

## THE NAGA'S EXPANSION

Ages before the tears of Lady Sun and the blood of Lord Moon gave rise to humanity, there were other races and empires that lived in the world – and one of these races was the Naga. They were just entering a golden age for their race, having built a great empire and dedicated themselves to studying and understanding the world. Although they also had a proud martial tradition, in those times they faced few real threats, and lived fulfilling and relatively peaceful lives. It was the eldest of the Naga Jakla – the pearl sorcerers – who first felt the strange but serene waves of energy from the distant island. Intrigued, he directed his people to investigate, and a small group of Naga set out toward the island.

The moment the Naga set foot on the island, all of them could sense the powerful presence of the spirits of the ocean. They quickly recognized the healing powers of the spirits and the abundant life they poured into every living thing there. Those who bore scars from accidents or previous battles found them slowly beginning to disappear, those who were feeling the advance of age felt new life being breathed into them. Within days, countless Naga were traveling to the island to establish a permanent settlement, and the Naga leadership decided the island would be home







to their greatest and most important city. Ultimately, the discovery and settlement of this island became one of the highest points in Naga history, representing their first interaction with something so magically potent and awe-inspiring. The era saw tremendous growth in their studies of the world, especially those focused on magic. However, they did not understand everything they found – for example, the Naga did not comprehend much about the Spirit Realms, and thus did not realize the island’s intense spiritual energy also made the barriers to the other Spirit Realms quite thin. This often led to many odd phenomena, such as animals on the island exhibiting self-aware qualities due to the proximity of Chikushudo; the Naga were fascinated by these effects but could not explain them.

Within a decade of their discovery the Naga built a great and beautiful city in the heart of the island, with many smaller settlements throughout the rest of the land. Traffic to and from the island was constant, for even the great seas around it were always calm and serene. The city – whose name, alas, is long since forgotten – served as a second capital for the Naga empire. Often the older and more experienced members of the Naga race would travel to the island in order to feel its revitalizing powers and restore their own energy and vitality.

In this era the Naga had little interaction with other sentient creatures, for man did not yet exist and the Five Ancient Races had already largely abandoned the mortal world. However, the Naga were not the only force which had taken note of the island... nor would they be the last.

## THE BLACK TEARDROP

One day, many years after the settlement of the island, a group of Naga discovered a strange artifact deep in the forest. It was a black stone in the shape of a teardrop, seemingly perfect and bereft of impurities, shining with

a subtle inner light. The Naga were fascinated by this artifact – even more so when a voice began to emerge from within it, a voice which spoke directly to the Akasha, the Naga collective soul. The stone’s voice seemed fearful and hesitant, almost childlike, asking why the world was so big, why there were so many things, and how it could ever possibly know what to do with everything.

The Naga were intrigued by the strange voice, but also hesitant. No being had ever before communed directly with the Akasha, and some of the Naga mystics and scholars argued the voice was sinister and dangerous. However, the Naga in those times were in some ways a naïve race; having already set aside their own ancient internal conflicts, they believed the rest of the world should be able to attain equal peace and enlightenment. Many of them sympathized with the scared and childlike being speaking from within the black stone, seeing in it a resemblance to their own ancient selves. And when the voice reached out to the Akasha again, the Akasha answered.

For a time, the voice seemed happy to speak with the souls of the Naga. It asked many questions, yet never gave itself a name. Still, the Naga were delighted to have this contact with another soul, and many came to revere the artifact as a friend of their race. They had finally met something in the world like the Akasha itself, something they could learn from. The artifact claimed it had been there when the world was created and had watched as things were given shape and name. It had watched when the Water kami raised the island from the sea and infused it with their power. It was frightened by the vast extent and complex shape of the world, yet at the same time craved to learn more and more about it. It did not know where it came from, could not explain how it knew the things it did, and even at its happiest it was filled with an underlying fear and confusion. Nonetheless, the Akasha continued to commune with the artifact, answering its questions and explaining the world to it, revealing the ways in which the Naga race were all connected through their collective souls.

Then, one day, the Naga found they could not touch the soul of the eldest Vedic in the city. He was no longer part of their consciousness, and they could not touch him even within the deepest realms of the Akasha. Somehow he had been torn away from the rest of the Naga race, not just physically but spiritually.

And when the teardrop stone spoke again, it did not speak in the childlike voice from before. It spoke, instead, in a voice which seemed an eerie mockery of the lost Vedic’s own soul: “Now we understand.”

So began the Naga’s first encounter with the Foul... for the teardrop stone was a creation of the formless primal entity which Rokugan knows as the Lying Darkness, the Nothing.

When the Akasha realized what had happened, all the Naga were filled with horror and revulsion. The power within the





stone artifact had stolen the Vedic's soul, severed it from the Akasha completely, effectively destroying him forever – and with him, a small piece of the entire Naga race. The scream of agony and pain and hatred that rippled through the entire Naga race shook the world. The Nothing felt that rage and recognized that now the Akasha would seek to kill it, kill it for taking something the Akasha believed its own, kill it for being different than the Naga and the Akasha.

But the Nothing, in its brief time finally exploring the world, had already learned much. And it would not allow itself to be killed by such lesser creatures.

## THE WAR WITH THE DARKNESS

The Nothing immediately began to consume other souls from the Akasha, even as the Akasha reached out to every Naga on the island to come together and vanquish the black teardrop. The Nothing tried to consume the entirety of the Akasha, to take control of all of the Naga race and consume all their knowledge and identity. The Akasha resisted, fighting back with the strength of all the minds and souls of every Naga in the world, and as it fought it sent a single message to every Naga connected to it:

“Kill.”

The Naga of the island swarmed into the heart of the city, weapons and pearls in hand, ready to smite the Nothing from their home. But when they arrived they saw something which, for the first time in their history, made them truly feel fear. Even though the sky was clear and the sun shone brightly on the island, the city had turned dark, as if it were covered by a cloud. The shadows danced and moved as if they had lives of their own. The Naga charged into the city nonetheless, encountering horrors they had never seen before. Their fallen brothers fought against them, their once-proud faces turned flat and empty. The shadows themselves lashed out at the Naga, fighting against them, holding them down as the creatures who were once their own brothers and sisters slew them. Not a single Naga who charged into the city that day survived – all were killed, or worse, consumed by the Nothing. Within a day the darkness and shadows on the island began to spread. The Naga continued to fight against the encroaching power of the Nothing, and they won some small victories, but it was not enough, for the Nothing learned their new tactics and strategies from those it consumed. This was an enemy the Naga had never faced before, and for a long time they could not figure out how to defeat it.

Finally the Naga realized the only chance for victory was to destroy every trace of the Nothing on the island, purging it like an infection. While any remnant of the Foul remained the entirety of the Akasha and all beings contained within would be vulnerable. However, the Naga also realized that in order to remove the Foul they would also have to destroy much of what made the island a paragon of perfection in the first place. They would have to rip asunder their greatest joy in order to salvage their very existence.

## THE NOTHING'S TEARDROP

The L5R 4th Edition supplement *Enemies of the Empire* recounts in Chapter Seven how the Nothing hid from the rest of the universe when the Sun and Moon named all things in the world. The Nothing had created the world through its own sins of Fear, Desire, and Regret, and now it found itself alone in the universe it had inadvertently birthed. Over time, it became jealous of reality and would eventually seek to unmake the world, returning everything to the formless, timeless void where it had once dwelt alone.

What is not known is that it took time – unimaginable gulfs of time – for this jealousy and fear and regret to build within the Nothing until it would take action. For countless aeons it was simply alone and afraid. It did not understand the new world it found itself in and had no idea how to change that. It did not understand the meaning of time or the possibility of death. It did not understand the presence of other beings, did not know what they might do to it or what it could do to them. After a long time grappling with these questions and fears, the Nothing finally began to explore the world... and encountered the Naga. The Naga were everything the Nothing felt it was not, and it yearned to learn from them, to discover how they mastered a world it did not understand. So it cried a single tear and let it fall into physical being – a tear of pure black stone, perfectly shaped. It fell near a Naga city and waited patiently for someone to find it.

When the Nothing's tear encountered the Akasha, it was both terrified and fascinated, for the Akasha seemed to be much like itself. It reached out to the Akasha and learned from it, sating its desire for understanding... but the more it learned, the more jealous and fearful it became. It could not comprehend why the Naga did not seem to possess the only emotions it had – fear, regret, and desire. The Akasha was devoid of all of these. In the end, the Nothing's desire for more knowledge and its fear of what it was discovering led it to consume the soul and identity of the elder Vedic who spoke with it most often. For the first time, the Nothing consumed the name and identity of another, and realized it could do the same to all others. This discovery filled it with a terrible joy, but also a greater fear than ever – for it realized the rest of the Akasha would now be its enemy.







Although the Naga race understood this truth, the great spirits of Water and Earth which had created the island did not accept it so easily. When the Naga began to evacuate the island, the spirits worried. They understood a calamity had afflicted the Naga, but did not comprehend why or how it had happened, for the Nothing was beyond their comprehension. It was not until the Naga Jakla began to call on their great pearl magic and twist the spirits forcibly to their will that the kami truly understood the plan. The Earth, despite its stoic and unshakable nature, found itself roiled and shaken in wrath. The Water found its aspect forcibly shifted from health and calm renewal to strength, transformation, and change. The kami were forced to viciously destroy the sublime creation they had offered up to the mortal world.

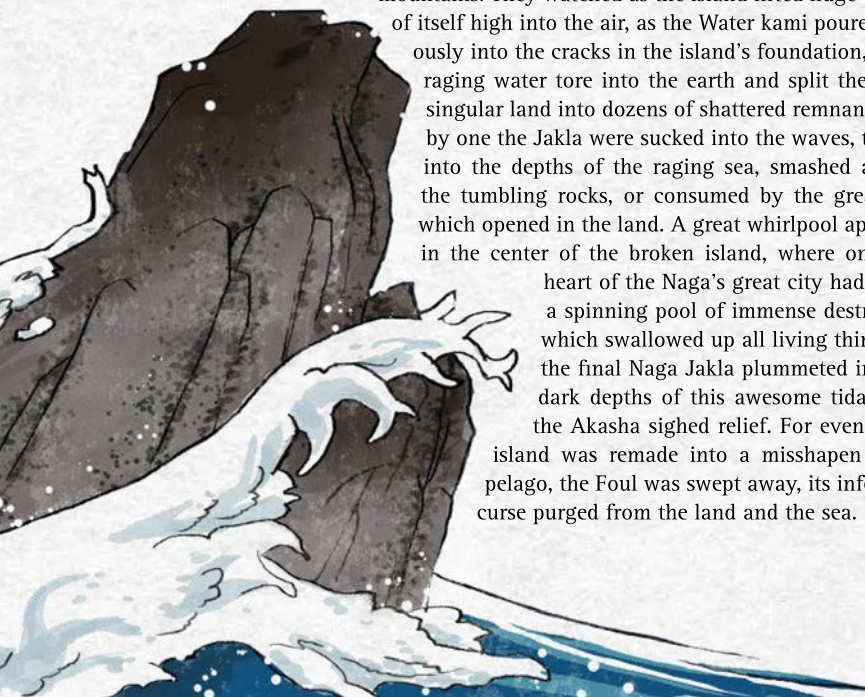
The Naga Jakla knew that in order to achieve this, some of them had to remain on the island as it tore itself asunder, to focus their power and continue to force the kami to their will. They did so willingly, knowing their souls would rejoin the Akasha, and they watched as earthquakes shattered perfect plains and ripped up beautiful mountains. They watched as the island lifted huge chunks of itself high into the air, as the Water kami poured furiously into the cracks in the island's foundation, as the raging water tore into the earth and split the once-singular land into dozens of shattered remnants. One by one the Jakla were sucked into the waves, thrown into the depths of the raging sea, smashed against the tumbling rocks, or consumed by the great rifts which opened in the land. A great whirlpool appeared in the center of the broken island, where once the heart of the Naga's great city had stood: a spinning pool of immense destruction which swallowed up all living things. As the final Naga Jakla plummeted into the dark depths of this awesome tidal pool, the Akasha sighed relief. For even as the island was remade into a misshapen archipelago, the Foul was swept away, its infectious curse purged from the land and the sea.

The great cataclysm had another effect, one the Naga did not recognize at the time. The immense spiritual and physical energies set loose by the Jakla briefly tore open the barriers to the Spirit Realms, breaching the thin veils between worlds. Into Ningen-Do came all manner of spiritual creatures, and while many of them perished in the destruction of the island, many more survived to dwell on the archipelago afterward.

## THE BRIDGE RISES

The kami of Earth are slow and contemplative, but also are of all kami the most closely associated with spiritual purity. Though they did not comprehend the nature of the Foul, they knew something had gone terribly wrong, and they knew that after the great cataclysm this wrong had been purged. The spirits understood that the transformation of their island, the alteration of the once solid blessing from the very ocean floor into scattered broken parts, was ultimately necessary. And understanding, the Earth responded. It began to reweave the bonds of stone and soil through and beneath the new archipelago. In time, the enraged and distraught Water kami grew calm once more, as they always do, and once again sought harmony and healing; they joined the Earth kami in seeking a way to put right what once was whole. Pieces of the broken islands began to reform beneath the tumultuous waves of the massive whirlpool. They grew together, forging connections from deep beneath the surface to the edges of the islands. Thus, ever so slowly, did the spirits of Earth and Water form the structure now called the Bridge.

The Bridge existed for centuries, hidden beneath the ocean while humanity arose and the Empire of Rokugan came into being. Finally, the energies of Earth and Water reached a peak, a climax that brought abrupt completion to countless generations of work. The Bridge rose, climbing from the ocean with the remorseless power of a tidal wave, breaching the surface with such force that destructive tsunami rushed to the Empire's shore. To the awed mortals on Rokugan's mainland, it was as if the Bridge had risen unexplained, as though born instantly from the spirits. They ascribed the incident to the will of Heaven. Perhaps this is not wrong; perhaps the guiding hand of Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea, or another such Heavenly being commanded the kami to finish their slow inexorable climb to the surface. No matter the reason, Fortune's Favor Bridge – as the Rokugani came to call it – connected the islands to the mainland of Rokugan. The Imperial families understood immediately the potential of the archipelago and appointed one of their own to supervise the new lands, ensuring no one clan would lay sole claim to the new resource. And since then, humanity has spread across the islands like new grass, all but unaware that the ground on which they tread was once graced by a far more ancient race.





## The Eternal Danger Islands (Eien no Kiken Shouto)

The archipelago known as the Eternal Danger Islands lies near the southern coast of the Crane lands, far from Otosan Uchi and many leagues north of Earthquake Fish Bay. The islands gain their name in the Empire's early centuries, when it seemed no ship could visit them and return intact; every vessel which tried was consumed by great whirlpools of unprecedented strength and savage unpredictability. The island chain was distantly visible from the mainland, yet seemingly forever beyond the reach of even the boldest sailors. Not even the Mantis, self-proclaimed masters of sailing, could reach its shores safely. Indeed, merely sailing near it would often spell doom for adventurous crews. Unsurprisingly, the Ikoma Histories contain almost nothing on the topic of the Eternal Danger Islands. There are a few records of crews lost to the strange seas around the islands, and a few ancient Imperial Cartography maps of the nearby waters, but nothing else of note.

Everything changes dramatically with the sudden appearance of the formation called Fortune's Favor Bridge. Without any explanation, a massive earthen ridge emerges from the water, piercing the island's whirlpools and for the first time providing the Rokugani with a safe way into the archipelago. The bridge's sudden appearance and immense size are unlike anything seen before, and most Rokugani attribute its appearance to the will of the Celestial Heavens.

Explorers soon cross the bridge and learn the Eternal Danger Islands form a ring, surrounding a whirlpool larger and more ferocious than any of those which formerly blocked ships from approaching the archipelago. The many islands in the ring vary greatly in shape and size, the largest of them approaching the size of the Mantis Clan's Island of Silk while the smallest are barely the size of a peasant's farm. There are dozens and dozens of these islands, with small rocks and spires dotting the waters in between. Each piece of land visited so far has displayed strange phenomena, perhaps influences from the Spirit Realms, and a few seem to be completely hostile to human life. However, many of them have proven to house treasures of great value: deposits of precious metals, mighty pearl-beds, rare woods and spices. Even more remarkable, some islands contain artifacts from ancient pre-human times, hints at a world from before the fall of the Kami to Ningen-do.

The Fortune's Favor land-bridge connects the largest island to the Empire's mainland, and it is on this island – named Hantei's Point – that the Rokugani have built their sole major settlement, the City of Prosperous Dawn (Hannei Yoake Toshi). Despite the many dangers posed by the rest of the archipelago, all the clans of Rokugan are eager to explore the new land and exploit its boundless resources. The Imperial administrator attempts to guide

### USING THE ETERNAL DANGER ISLANDS IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Like the campaign settings in the other books of the Elemental series, the Eternal Danger Islands are designed as a “generic” locale that can be placed into almost any L5R campaign. Although the physical location of the archipelago is specifically defined (the southern Crane coast), its history means no clan holds possession over it and thus it can be used regardless of the clan composition in the GM's group. Also, the setting specifically avoids defining which Imperial dynasty is in power, so the GM can set it in any era from the reign of Hantei Genji to the most recent events in the CCG timeline. Although the NPCs presented later in the chapter are drawn from all clans, the GM can easily drop those (such as the Unicorn or the Spider) which are not suitable for his campaign.

In order to accommodate a multi-clan campaign in a variety of eras, the Eternal Danger Islands are depicted as being run by an Imperial administrator chosen by the Emperor. This creates a situation in which samurai from all the clans can work more or less in harmony to explore the islands. However, a GM who prefers a more conflict-driven campaign can certainly skip the Imperial authority and depict a war for control of the Islands.



and contain these impulses (and to restrict the inter-clan rivalries which might otherwise lead to war), and the prospect of winning glory in Imperial service draws many ambitious young samurai to help explore the archipelago.







To be an explorer of these islands is a dangerous life, for peril lies in every forest and on every rocky outcrop. Nevertheless, so great are the potential rewards that expeditions deep into the islands are launched almost daily. Many do not return from these missions; the archipelago may now be accessible, but it still earns its name as the Eternal Danger Islands.

## Notable Locations on the Eternal Danger Islands

This section is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to every location on the Eternal Danger Islands. Rather, it highlights the more prominent known locales, providing a jumping-off point for GMs to add their own islands, secrets, and threats to the setting.

### The Fortune's Favor Bridge

The mysterious land-bridge connecting the Eternal Danger Islands to Rokugan appeared suddenly a few years ago. The earthen bridge stretches for more than a mile, defying the occasional storms which lash its sides, and provides safe and stable transport from Rokugan to the island called Hantei's Point. Since its emergence from the sea, the Rokugani have lined the bridge with statues and shrines to the Thousand Fortunes, offering praise to the divine beings that presumably brought forth the bridge and all its opportunities. No one has actually presumed to name the bridge after any specific Fortune, although there is universal consensus is that only a being of such immeasurable power could have done something so impressive.

The bridge is wide enough for half a dozen wagons to travel safely abreast. Beyond that width it slopes downward toward the water, so most travelers cluster toward the center, staying far from the raging waves below.

### The Island of Hantei's Point

Hantei's Point is one of the largest islands in the archipelago, and the only one directly connected to the mainland via Fortune's Favor Bridge. They quickly established a settlement, bringing in *heimin* to construct what became Hannei Yoake Toshi, the City of the Prosperous Dawn. The city lies in the center of seven forested hills which ring the core of the island, and land has been cleared around it for farms and rice paddies. However, soon after the construction of the settlement the outlying farms came under attack by jungle creatures resembling hungry, aggressive tigers. The samurai undertook a campaign to hunt down and exterminate the creatures, and while they claimed success the farmers still whisper that some of the creatures are lurking within the trees. More recently, the farmers have begun speaking of a monster stalking the forest and attacking farmhouses at night. Supposedly it is a creature taller than three men which cannot be killed, but so far so samurai has found a trace of such a monster. Still, those

farmers farthest from the city put up fetishes at night in an attempt to ward off the creature.

Setting such rumors aside, there is no denying that life on Hantei's Point seems plagued by ill fortune and strange occurrences. Crops wither before their time, the ground is hard to till, and rice paddies dry out despite copious rain. Small wonder the *heimin* call the island Suitengu's Curse.

Explorers have discovered ruins of the ancient Naga in the far reaches of the island. Most of these are wholly destroyed, barely worthy of being called ruins, their true nature only apparent from a few of the more intact stone fragments. That there are remnants of the Naga so far from the Shinomen Forest is a source of great mystery to Rokugani scholars, who periodically organize new expeditions to examine the ancient stones. (Of course, depending on what era the campaign uses, the Rokugani may not even know about the Naga – in which case the ruins are completely mysterious, their provenance unknown.)

The City of the Prosperous Dawn began as a small four-story keep on a cleared plain abutting and overlooking the Fortune's Favor Bridge. Due to the very rapid speed with which the keep was constructed, the first Imperial administrator named it Shiro no Raiden, the Castle of Lightning. The surrounding settlement began to grow up even as the keep was being built, and within a few years boasted over a thousand inhabitants – a mere town compared to the great Rokugani metropolises like Ryoko Owari, but by far the largest settlement in the Islands.

### THE CITY: SHIRO NO RAIDEN

Shiro no Raiden is the oldest standing structure in the city, but it has never been fully completed. Though its main keep is finished, the supporting structures and walls are only about half-done. The skeletons of barracks stand open to the elements, a ditch for a moat is incomplete. Delays and disasters have repeatedly forestalled the completion of the structure, with ill luck and fatal accidents afflicting both the *heimin* work crews and the samurai architects and supervisors. The troubled project is a stark example of the general trouble the Rokugani face in their efforts to claim these islands.

Opinions differ as to why the project has faced so much difficulty since the completion of the central keep. The Doji architects blame *heimin* laziness and superstition, while the *heimin*, for their part, think the project cursed. Some priests believe the island's spirits oppose intruders and the keep, as the part of the castle closest to Heaven, is the only part of the building resistant to this natural opposition. Thus, they assert that the final completion of Shiro no Raiden will signal the conquest of this strange land by the ways of Rokugan.

Despite its incomplete structures, Shiro no Raiden serves as the capital for the Imperial administrator of the islands, Miya Onako. The first floor of the castle is reserved for guests and holds a large audience chamber where Onako receives new arrivals. (Onako's nature has led some to call this the Demon's Courtroom, but this title is not spoken in her presence.) The second floor houses the leaders of the various clan delegations, along with other important staff. Housing for hostile clans is separated to avoid



confrontations, while allied clans are located close to each other. The third floor holds the offices of the Imperial explorers and is the center of the Imperial bureaucracy on the Islands. The highest floor is Miya Onako's personal quarters, where she receives guests of high renown (or those she has shown favor, like Togashi Tajiri).

## THE CITY: CELESTIAL DISTRICT

The Celestial District is a small yet vital part of Hannei Yoake Toshi. Here the priests of the clans and the monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei gather around a few temples and shrines, serving the spiritual needs of the city. Storms seem to damage the shrines with distressing frequency, and it is not uncommon to see priests laboring alongside monks and *heimin* to repair and maintain the sacred structures. The main square in the district boasts a large statue of Shinsei; this was originally carved from native wood, but a storm tore it from the ground and flung it into the sea. It was replaced by a statue carved from marble, but it cracked during a small earthquake. These incidents caused grave concern to the city's religious leaders, who feared they presaged some greater calamity, but they chose to install a third statue of the Little Teacher – this one made of sacred jade. So far, it has suffered no calamity.

Thus far, no one has an explanation for the strange ill fortune which often falls on the shrines in Hannei Yoake Toshi. (It is notable that the many shrines on the land-bridge do not suffer comparable problems.) However, the senior Brotherhood monks have begun to suspect that something in the islands is opposing the Rokugani on a more than physical level; human spirituality is being rejected by the land itself. To these monks, the struggle to explore and civilize the Eternal Danger Islands is nothing less than a divine mission to spread the power of Shintao.

## THE CITY: THE INN OF LAST LIGHT

The Inn of Last Light is the largest business in Hannei Yoake Toshi, a central gathering place for the residents, and the favorite staging site for explorers preparing to set out for the Islands' unexplored locales. Its spacious rooms allow for easy private meetings while its wide common area is well suited to parties, storytelling, bragging, and other such social activities where samurai relax and sake flows freely. It is also a center of illicit activity where smugglers gather to meet covertly with their customers. Finally, it is a center for sharing rumors, stories, and legends, a place where veteran explorers share the tales of all they have seen with anyone who wants to listen (and pay for their drink).

The Inn of Last Light is run by an old ronin named Takumi. His face is lined and his hair is graying, but he has a cheerful and friendly air. Takumi had an adventurous life on the mainland of Rokugan in his younger days, and he is no stranger to the difficulties of a

travelling life or the dangers of exploring strange lands. Although clan samurai do not always realize it, Takumi is one of the best friends and allies a new arrival can have.

Takumi's inn is named after its exterior lantern, which by tradition is always the last light in the town to be extinguished each night. Takumi likes to tell a story about how his light saved a group of lost explorers who found their way back out of the jungle by following its beacon. However, some local villagers tell stories of a darker hue about this lantern. They claim Takumi left the mainland after his daughter was lost to some terrible ghost, and he lights the lantern in the hope that she will find her way home to him.

## THE CITY: THE THOUSAND LEAVES

The Thousand Leaves Tea House is one of the few genuinely civilized establishments in Hannei Yoake Toshi, an island of calm in an ocean of bustle, fear, and constant labor. It is run by an old Crane named Doji Akeru and contains many fine works of art to complement its excellent selection of tea. Explorers sometimes bring back prospective tea leaves from their excursions into the islands, gaining small favors in return. These leaves allow Akeru to create teas never tasted in Rokugan – and needless to say, the rarer the leaf, the more expensive the tea.

Miya Onako herself is known to frequent the Thousand Leaves. She prefers a strong green tea, somewhat haughtily titled Dawn of the Empire, made from leaves gathered on Hantei's Point. It is rumored the samurai who found those tea leaves now has a personal room in Shiro no Raiden, though this may be a mere tale since the name of the samurai changes with each recounting.

There is more to Doji Akeru than first appears. The charming old man is actually an agent of the Kolat conspiracy, here to advance their goals on the Eternal Danger Islands.





## IMPOSSIBLE ISLANDS?

The Eternal Danger Islands have many odd and mystical features, created both by the unleashing of so many angry kami and by the infusion of influences from the Spirit Realms. However, for the most part these oddities remain within the domain of Rokugan's normal reality – “normal” as defined in a world where the Elemental spirits are alive and sentient.

Some GMs, however, may wish to expand the strangeness of the Islands into the domain of the legendary or the impossible. After all, this is a place where the natural world was torn asunder by both ancient pre-human magic, invasions from the Spirit Realms, and the power of the Lying Darkness. Why should the “rules” of Rokugan's world apply here? Why not challenge samurai with not just the strange but the impossible? This approach can work especially well in a “high magic” campaign, such as the Togashi Dynasty setting in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Imperial Histories 2*.

For instance, consider the idea of Ue no Shima, or “Above Island” – an island floating hundreds of feet in the air, suspended by unknown forces. A crystal clear waterfall pours off one side of the island, while on the other side a stream of water flows up from the ocean to the island overhead. Needless to say, no ship can successfully navigate these unnatural currents, so the only way to explore the island will be for shugenja to use Air magic to carry themselves and their comrades up to it. Although there is no confirmed story of a shugenja doing this successfully, many rumors circulate of what may be found on Ue no Shima, ranging from Ryu of the Air to an ancient tribe of Kenku mystics. Other stories claim the island is connected directly to the realm of the dead, and visitors may speak directly with their ancestors or the Fortunes themselves.

As another example, consider the Heart of Kusatte Iru. Located far from the shores of Hantei's Point, it is called an “island” by Rokugani cartographers and scholars for lack of anything else to call it. It is shaken by regular earthquakes and surrounded by constant waves, spreading out in relentless circular patterns that eventually merge with the great whirlpool. A steel-hearted Crane captain named Daidoji Mashige finally managed to sail his kobune close enough to see the place. He claimed it took the form of several small islands which did not seem to be attached to the sea floor, instead floating on the surface of the sea... and which rhythmically came together and then apart, their smashing impacts creating the tremors and waves which bedeviled the region. Mashige said the movement reminded him of nothing else than a beating heart, as though the world's own heartbeat were pounding out into the sea. This impossible “island” was named the Heart of Kusatte Iru after the legendary sleeping oni who will supposedly end the world if he ever wakes.

## The Bay of Promise

South of Hannei Yoake Toshi lies the Bay of Promise, a sheltered body of water large enough to accommodate several ships at once. The bay is the only place on the Islands which can be safely reached by sea, apparently due to the rise of the land-bridge changing the patterns of storms and whirlpools that formerly blocked all approaches. The bay is also blessed with abundant fish and is the main source of seafood for the nearby city.

Although the Bay of Promise is a thriving port, it is not immune to the strange ill-fortune which so often visits the Islands. Storms have sunk the ships and destroyed the piers more than once, and the Mantis who maintain the port are sometimes driven to near-dementia by the massive labor of keeping the place open and functioning. Still, the wealth of the Islands makes this effort well worth its reward.

## The Screaming Springs

Located in a remote corner of the island of Hantei's Point, this series of hot springs is outwardly quite attractive, and early settlers often used them to bathe or relax. However, over time the springs have become far less popular, to the point where few samurai dare to visit them at all. Most of those who visit seem to hear the distant din of screams, as if samurai and ashigaru are being cut down in violent and tumultuous battle. Occasionally, the water of the pools actually turns crimson, as if drenched with blood.

Unbeknownst to most, this region is dangerously close to Toshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter. The endless rage and bloodlust of that Spirit Realm sometimes leaks through the veil, exerting a malign influence on what otherwise might be one of the island's most attractive locales.

## Umi-Bozu's Teeth

Umi-Bozu's Teeth is the name given to the vast whirlpool found in the center of the archipelago. It is by all accounts the largest and strongest such whirlpool ever discovered; the outer fringes of it smash most kobune to splinters, and even the toughest Mantis-made sengokobune can barely navigate the edges under terrible stress. The Mantis describe the experience as akin to fighting a hurricane and tsunami at the same time. The whirlpool's name is taken from the terrible legendary sea-trolls, and some ships' captains claim to have seen these fearsome creatures in the whirlpool. Whether this is true or not, it is undeniable that the whirlpool is one of the fiercest examples of Water's power ever found, and no ship has ever been able to survive it.

Despite the whirlpool's repute, some ship captains have foolishly sought to cross the whirlpool and see what can be found at its center. None have ever returned. The last captain to attempt this was a man named Yoritomo Hoshin, a rumored pirate whose sengokobune, Tengoku's



Favor, was crewed by some of the most experienced sailors in the Mantis fleet. Determined to find what lay at the center of Umi-Bozu's Teeth and claim it for Rokugan, Hoshin sailed into the maelstrom... never to be seen again.

## Hitokori no Shima

The Island of Fire and Ice is perhaps the strangest island in the entire archipelago. Thought at first a strange illusion by the Crane sailors whom discovered it, the island appears to be covered on one side by a raging inferno, on the other side by a snow-shrouded ice field. These two opposing forces meet in the center of the island, wracking it with catastrophic storms. Needless to say, only the bravest and the most foolish have landed on Hitokori no Shima. Those who did so and survived report an otherworldly place of erupting lava vents, howling winds, and half-buried alien structures. Shugenja who have studied the island believe its conditions are created by a huge number of intensely angry Fire, Water, and Air spirits, perhaps further influenced by energies from one or more of the Spirit Realms.

## Naga's Rest

The island of the Naga's Rest is the closest reachable landing to Hantei's Point. The seas between the two islands are fairly calm, allowing for safe navigation. The island is covered with dense trees, some reaching so high into the sky that they can be seen from leagues away. Explorers have entered the forest and report it is full of small streams and brooks, effervescent glades, and pools of the clearest crystal water. Unfortunately, it is also full of troublesome and dangerous spirit creatures, most notable the Kappa, which are present in significant numbers. Some explorers have also reported encounters with Mujina, and there are even a few rumors of Kenku flying above the tree tops. These sightings have lead some shugenja to theorize the island has a connection to the realm of Sakkaku, though this has not been proven.

The deepest part of Naga's Rest remains unexplored – and more than one scouting party has failed to return. However, it is known that a great concentration of Naga ruins lies deep in the forest. A sense of unease and even madness lurks around these ruins, and many scouts believe them cursed. (For more information on Naga's Rest, see the entry on Adkarst later in this chapter.)



### OTHER ISLANDS

The list of islands in this section is hardly exhaustive – indeed it barely scratches the surface of what may be found in the Eternal Danger Islands. GMs and players should treat these islands as inspiration to develop their own ideas. The Eternal Danger Islands are full of strange mysteries, supernatural creatures, and nigh-impossible scenarios, shrouded in legends and fraught with inexplicable perils. Their ultimate fate is for the GM and players to determine.

Some GM may wish to actively collaborate with the players in expanding the world of the Eternal Danger Islands. Have them encounter an unknown island and describe it; encourage them to draw maps or otherwise use their creative talents to populate the island with mysteries and adventures... after which the GM can add in his own ideas. Perhaps on one island a PC with the Haunted Disadvantage has his ancestor physically appear before him and the rest of the group. Perhaps a particularly lucky samurai is able to guide ships to new areas unreachable by others. Perhaps a samurai uncovers the nemuranai his clan is seeking, but it has been marked by the strange spirits of the islands. The possibilities are limitless.





# The Clans and the Eternal Danger Islands

Each of the Great Clans has interests, sometimes competing interests, in the Islands. Though all the clans are nominally working under the guidance of Miya Onako, in practice each clan's unique nature often leads them into conflict. The few Imperials in the islands are constantly working to ensure none of these conflicts grow large enough to threaten the overall work of taming and civilizing the place... but they are not always successful.

## THE CRAB CLAN

The Crab are always in need of resources for their eternal war against the Shadowlands. They have been drawn to the Eternal Danger Islands both by this general need for new wealth... and by the threat which they fear the islands may pose. A land suffused with creatures of the Spirit Realms is not a land which can be allowed to go unwatched, lest Gaki or Oni break free to threaten everyone. The clan dispatched Kuni Toragu, a Witch Hunter of great skill and experience, to investigate the islands and learn how their threats may be contained. Unfortunately, Toragu has died at the hands of unknown forces and his replacement, a young woman named Kuni Zanayo, does not command the same respect from the Hida and Hiruma on the Islands. The Hiruma and Hida are each calling for one of their own to replace Zanayo as the leader of the Crab contingent. (For more on the Crab, see the entry for Kuni Zanayo later in this chapter.)

## THE CRANE CLAN

The Crane were greatly disturbed by the sudden appearance of Fortune's Favor Bridge off their coastline, initially seeing as more of a potential threat than an opportunity. Although they have since come to see the possibilities of the Islands, much of their initial unease remains. Still, they cannot afford to let the other clans gain too much influence with Miya Onako, who represents the Imperial authority which the Crane rely on throughout Rokugan. Accordingly, experienced Daidoji scouts have been sent to work alongside Imperial Miya Cartographers to explore and catalog the Islands. The diplomats of the Crane reinforce Onako's administration of Hannei Yoake Toshi, and students of the Kakita Artisan Academy have arrived to help spread the Emerald Empire's culture and civilization onto the untamed islands. Asahina shugenja study the mysteries of the Islands' spiritual forces, and ships of the Daidoji Trading Council carry goods out of the Bay of Promise to the ports of the Empire. In fact, the Crane have arranged for the Trading Council to be the final arbiter on what resources from the Islands are allowed back to Rokugan – an achievement which has inspired much resentment from the Crab and the Mantis. Although most items are carefully cataloged before being sent to the mainland, it is not uncommon for valuable or unique objects to make their way to Crane lands on private ships.

## THE DRAGON CLAN

None know why the Dragon have sent such a sizable force to the Islands. The delegation includes hundreds of Mirumoto bushi, over two dozen shugenja, and even a few of the tattooed men, the whole group led by a warrior named Mirumoto Tsunake. The Dragon have set up their own camp outside of Hannei Yoake Toshi, and while nominally under Imperial command they seem to follow their own path. Indeed, it is not uncommon for teams of scouts exploring new islands to find lone Dragon samurai there ahead of them.

The Dragon, true to their nature, have never explained their purposes on the Islands, but it is generally believed among the other clans that the Dragon are searching for some ancient artifact or secret. Persistent rumors – generally blamed on the Scorpion – claim a relic of an ancient Dragon Clan Champion lies somewhere on the islands.

Mirumoto Tsunake is a quiet and contemplative man who is not well-known to the Empire as a whole, although the Crane know him as one of the most dangerous duelists in the Empire, and the Lion respect his skills as a general. However, he is not a true leader of men, lacking the fire and charisma to inspire soldiers or sway the course of destiny. In truth, he would probably have been better suited to a life of scholarly contemplation than to service as a bushi, but he followed the path laid out for him by fate.







## THE LION CLAN

Ikoma Takei leads the contingent of the Lion to the Eternal Danger Islands, and some Lion troops have also been assigned to the service of Miya Onako by canny Lion courtiers. The Imperial administrator uses the Lion primarily as scouts to explore the Islands, since there is little need for massed battles here. Takei's deputy Matsu Tadaka leads the Lion forces assigned to the Miya's service.

Ikoma Takei spends much of his own time in unexplored areas of the islands, confronting the various dangers found there. The experience of the Ikoma scouts has been invaluable as explorers push farther into the islands, earning many favors for the Lion Clan, but Takei *retains* private doubts about the entire enterprise. He thinks the islands are unnatural places, not meant for human eyes let alone human habitation. Each new discovery, no matter how splendid, brings with it a high price in the lives of loyal and honorable samurai who could better serve the Empire elsewhere. Still, he is Lion; his course is clear and his duty honorable, so he bites his tongue and protects his men as best he can.

## THE MANTIS CLAN

In the Mantis view, everything in or on the ocean is their property, and they believe the Eternal Danger Islands should be there. The Imperial claim to administration of the archipelago has caused them great consternation. The Mantis Clan Champion has appointed Yoritomo Zukaro to lead the clan's operations in the islands. Zukaro is expected to use the expertise of Mantis sailors, explorers, and navigators to extract the maximum concessions from the other clans and gain the maximum benefit for the Mantis themselves. And if possible, he is also to undermine the rule of Miya Onako in order to convince the Emperor to grant control of the islands to the Mantis Clan.

Yoritomo Zukaro is a zealously loyal samurai and embraces his duty here to the fullest. He constantly urges ever more dangerous missions for the Mantis sailors, pushing them to go to islands the other clans dare not approach. The Mantis are the masters of the sea and everything in it, he declares, and they will prove it to the rest of Rokugan regardless of the cost. Zukaro believes in due time he will be the duly appointed Governor of the Eternal Danger Islands, and he is willing to do almost anything to attain that destiny.

## THE PHOENIX CLAN

The Phoenix Elemental Council is naturally fascinated by the Eternal Danger Islands, which clearly are home to many mysteries and spiritual powers. The kami of the Eternal Danger Islands behave in ways different from those in mainland Rokugan, with Water kami in particular behaving oddly and responding more slowly to prayers than they do in Rokugan proper. The Council is not about to let these puzzles go unexplored.

Asako Hiiromi leads the Phoenix in their quest to uncover the Islands' ancient secrets. Hiiromi is notoriously

fond of puzzles and riddles, and her expertise in strange, off-beat, and arcane lore clearly makes her the best qualified choice to command the clan's efforts here. She is accompanied by several senior Asako scholars who obsessively catalog the discoveries made in the islands in an effort to build a larger understanding of the place. A small contingent of Shiba yojimbo and Isawa shugenja are also present, and their primary duty is to aid the Asako in the collection of dangerous artifacts. So organized and knowledgeable are the Phoenix that Miya Onako herself does not question them; in fact the Imperial Administrator often consults them on spiritual matters.

The Phoenix believe there is massive spiritual imbalance in the Eternal Danger Islands, an imbalance that may be damaging to the Spirit Realms themselves. It is no secret that spirits walk the earth on some islands and that the kami behave erratically and inexplicably. The Phoenix believe their duty lies in uncovering the true source of these problems, the threat at the heart of the Eternal Danger Islands. They will allow no interference in this task, especially from those clans who would doubtless use the Islands' power for selfish gain.

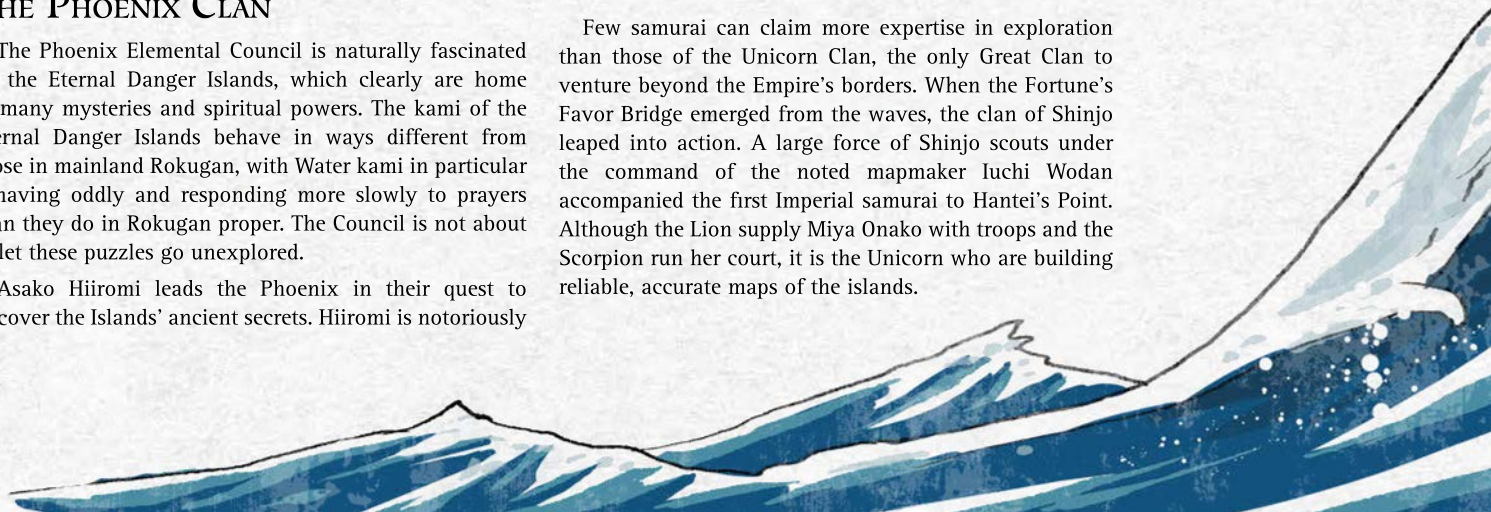
## THE SCORPION CLAN

The recovery and control of dangerous *nemuranai* is one of many duties the Scorpion take onto themselves, and from their view the Eternal Danger Islands are a severely destabilizing source of such items. More than one ancient artifact, clearly of pre-human origins, has already been found, and the Scorpion are intent on preventing such things from spreading unchecked through the Empire. Their delegation to the Islands is tasked specifically with retrieving and securing as many of these objects as possible. Officially, of course, the forces of the Scorpion are subservient to the needs of the Imperial administrator. Their bushi often serve as advanced scouts to supplement the Lion forces, while Scorpion courtiers are part of the Islands' administration; thus, explorers must often meet with a Scorpion to obtain the permits to travel to other islands. This is of course by design.

The Scorpion are officially led by Shosuro Atari, a skillful courtier who constantly maintains the Scorpion Clan's presence in the modest court on Hantei's Point. In fact, the Scorpion are probably the strongest political power on the Islands other than Miya Onako herself.

## THE UNICORN CLAN

Few samurai can claim more expertise in exploration than those of the Unicorn Clan, the only Great Clan to venture beyond the Empire's borders. When the Fortune's Favor Bridge emerged from the waves, the clan of Shinjo leaped into action. A large force of Shinjo scouts under the command of the noted mapmaker Iuchi Wodan accompanied the first Imperial samurai to Hantei's Point. Although the Lion supply Miya Onako with troops and the Scorpion run her court, it is the Unicorn who are building reliable, accurate maps of the islands.







## THE SPIDER CLAN ON THE ISLANDS

Most L5R campaigns do not take place within the limited window of time in which the Spider Clan is part of Rokugan. However, a GM who is running a campaign set in the late twelfth century can incorporate the Spider into the Eternal Danger Islands easily enough.

Once the Spider Clan is recognized by the Empress, most of its samurai are dispatched to the Colonies, obeying the command to “Go forth and conquer in my name.” However, the same command can also justify the dispatching of a small Spider contingent to the Eternal Danger Islands. They are under the command of Daigotsu Gouki, a fierce samurai who embraces Shourido to the fullest. He displays contempt for his current assignment, believing it is far below his station and experience. Gouki hungers to travel to the Colonies and the more worthy challenges that await him there.

Miya Onako typically holds the Spider forces in reserve, for their ferocity and bloodthirst make them difficult to control. However, when they do take action their effectiveness is without question. The Spider have no larger goal on the Eternal Danger Islands, merely seeking the chance for battle. Gouki pushes his samurai to undertake the most difficult martial challenges the islands have to offer.



The skill and experience of the Unicorn scouts has proven worthy time and again, and their scouts suffer the lowest casualties when exploring. The clan hopes this service will eventually grant them a dominant position in governance of the Islands, although they are aware that other groups – notably the Mantis – have the same ambitions.

## THE SHADOWLANDS AND THE ISLANDS

Some Kuni have drawn parallels between the mysterious and dangerous phenomena of the Eternal Danger Islands and the Sea of Shadows. They believe the giant whirlpool in the center of the Islands conceals an ancient portal to Jigoku. None can deny that Tainted monsters have sometimes appeared in the Eternal Danger Islands. There are reports of sea-troll packs in Umi-Bozu’s Teeth, and

of predatory gaki on several of the islands. Other less identifiable beasts have been sighted as well. However, the Kuni hypothesis is regarded as dubious by most other samurai, and the Phoenix claim the presence of Tainted creatures is due to spiritual imbalances rather than some great Second Festering Pit hidden beneath the waves.

## THE NOTHING AND THE ISLANDS

The Lying Darkness is part of Rokugan for over a thousand years, lurking constantly in the background of history. Any campaign set in or prior to the Hidden Emperor era may involve the machinations of the Nothing.

The Lying Darkness knows the place men call the Eternal Danger Islands, for it is here the Nothing first sought to begin consuming the world, and here it first faced defeat at the hands of the Naga. Here the Naga learned of the Foul and would forevermore battle against it.

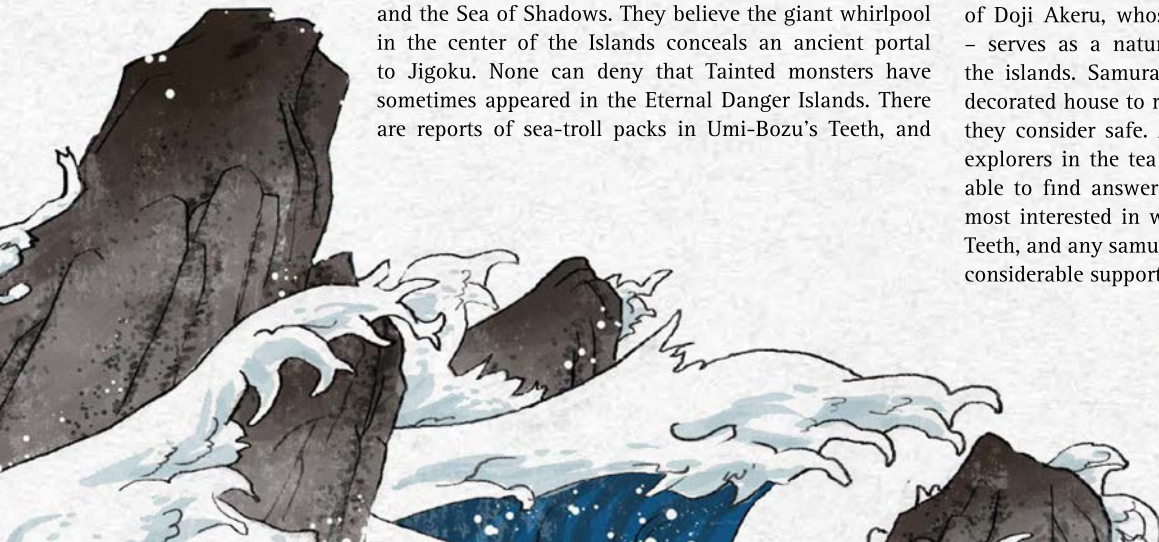
The islands have changed in the millennia since the Nothing’s black teardrop first came here, and it is intrigued by the changes. The boundaries between the Spirit Realms, the very walls that prop up creation itself, have become thin in the islands. They are like small cracks in the world, cracks the Darkness will take every step to widen.

The Nothing’s chief agent in the Eternal Danger Islands is a childlike shapeshifter called Ninube Hotaru. Hotaru was born the daughter of a ronin and a geisha... a geisha whose soul was already lost to the Darkness. The mother’s corruption was passed to the daughter, and the Nothing claimed its new servant at the tender age of eight. Ironically, Hotaru’s father lives on the Islands as well, managing the Inn of the Last Light.

## THE KOLAT AND THE ISLANDS

For most of history the Kolat conspiracy has seen little reason to investigate the Eternal Danger Islands. The place was a mere curiosity, effectively inaccessible to humanity, and wholly without value to the Ten Masters’ goals. The emergence of the Fortune’s Favor land-bridge changed all of that. The Kolat believe the bridge’s appearance to be nothing less than a direct intervention of the Celestial Heavens in the realm of Man. They are furious as this vulgar display of power, but also deeply interested in why the Heavens would open up these dangerous and enigmatic islands to mankind.

The job of answering that question is in the hands of Doji Akeru, whose tea house – the Thousand Leaves – serves as a natural nerve-center for the samurai on the islands. Samurai come to his artfully designed and decorated house to relax, and they speak freely in a place they consider safe. Akeru constantly seeks out potential explorers in the tea house, recruiting those who may be able to find answers to his masters’ questions. Akeru is most interested in what lies at the center of Umi-Bozu’s Teeth, and any samurai willing to explore it will garner his considerable support for the endeavor.





# Notable Personalities on the Islands

The following section lists a number of the more prominent NPCs to be found in the Eternal Danger Islands. The GM can use these characters as allies who recruit the PCs into adventures, as villains who oppose their efforts, or simply as interesting personalities to provide role-playing depth to the campaign.

## CRAB CLAN: KUNI ZANAYO, HESITANT LEADER

When the Crab first learned of the Eternal Danger Islands and its strong connections to the Spirit Realms, they took the matter very seriously. Fearing intrusion from Gaki-Do, Toshigoku, or even Jigoku itself, the Kuni daimyo dispatched Kuni Toragu to the islands to represent Crab interests. Toragu was an experienced Witch Hunter known Empire-wide for his stalwart defense against the Shadowlands; he had uncovered more dark plots and destroyed more maho-tsukai than any other living Witch Hunter.

Three days after arriving at the City of the Prosperous Dawn, Kuni Toragu was found dead in his room. Only his apprentice, Kuni Zanayo, knows the truth of what happened.

Zanayo was Toragu's dedicated student, learning on the job in keeping with tsukai-sagasu tradition. To outsiders she often seemed little more than a slip of a girl with bad eyes and a soft voice, a reluctant shadow in Toragu's wake, but the old witch-hunter did not choose his apprentice lightly. Toragu was a man of vision, capable of seeing the finished sculpture in a blank stone. He knew Zanayo could become a fine work indeed.

As a young girl, Zanayo lived in a remote village in the Kuni lands. One night she awoke from a terrible nightmare of a thousand zombies crawling forth from the well in the center of the town. Even as she sat up in bed, panting with fear, she could still smell the stench of death and the blood of the dying, could still hear their endless screams. And then she heard something else: whispered voices not far from her window, shadowy men creeping up on the very well she had dreamed about.

Alone and armed only with her fists, Zanayo ventured into the night. She saw the three men begin a foul ritual over the well, and with a scream of rage and terror she awakened the town. The *heimin* guards were able to drive off the maho-tsukai, but not before one of them struck Zanayo down with his foul magic. She was left partially blind by the maho spell, but her brave actions made her a hero among the villagers. Word of her deeds reached the Witch Hunters, and when Toragu visited he realized the girl's dream had not been a mere accident. She had a spiritual gift, perhaps a connection to the Oracle of Water.

Zanayo's dreams often came true, though usually in a far less literal fashion than she might wish.

The night Kuni Toragu was found dead, no mark upon his flesh, Zanayo dreamt of twin shadows writhing down the halls. One bore a face with no features, and it fell upon the old Witch Hunter, smothering him as he slept. The other wore a mask, a mask with demons screaming in pain across its face, and it stared directly at Zanayo until she woke screaming. Zanayo can feel a connection to this mysterious assassin; she knows she must find him and enact vengeance for her master's death. The Kuni have placed her in charge of the investigation and have promised to send reinforcements as soon as they are able.

In the meantime, Kuni Zanayo now finds herself the hesitant leader of the small Crab contingent in the City of the Prosperous Dawn. She strives daily to serve her clan in the best manner she can, but feels each failure like a knife in the ribs. Many of the other Crab on the Islands have begun to openly criticize her, calling for her to be replaced with a Hida or Hiruma. Moreover, it seems that her arrival upon the Islands of Eternal Danger has turned her spark of prophecy into an inferno. Each night since Toragu's death she has had a dream. Not all have come true, but enough have done so that she believes the rest are merely beyond the reach of her knowledge. Still, she perseveres, hoping for one specific vision – a clear image of Toragu's killer, her knife buried deep in his chest.

### KUNI ZANAYO, HESITANT LEADER

AIR: 2    EARTH: 3    FIRE: 3    WATER: 2    VOID: 3  
AWARENESS: 3  
Honor: 5.9    Status: 4.0    Glory: 1.3

School/Rank: Kuni Witch-Hunter 1

Skills: Divination 3, Investigation (Notice) 3, Jiu-jutsu 2, Kenjutsu 1, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Lore: Maho 3, Meditation 2

Advantages: Hero of the People, Inner Gift (Lesser Prophecy), Wary

Disadvantages: Bad Eyesight, Doubt (Investigation)







## WHO KILLED KUNI TORAGU?

The identity of Toragu's killer has been deliberately left obscure in order to offer the GM maximum flexibility in developing a story around it. Obviously, given the nature of Zanayo's dream, the killer may have been one of the Goju, the shapeshifting servants of the Lying Darkness. However, Zanayo's dreams are not literal, so the assassin could just as easily have been a maho-tsukai, an agent of the Shadowlands or the Spider Clan (Daigotsu Toshiro works nicely), a spirit creature, or a ninja from a rival clan. The motivation for the killing will naturally vary depending on who performed it – Toshiro would do so out of the ongoing enmity between Spider and Crab, while the Lying Darkness might have been trying to corrupt Toragu and then murdered him when he resisted. The GM can choose whichever killer and whichever plot works best for the campaign.



### CRAB ATTENDANTS

The Crab are uninterested in Hannei Yoake Toshi except in regards to its spiritual connections; they sent Kuni Toragu because of the islands' connection with dangerous Spirit Realms such as Gaki-do. Since his murder, the Kuni have promised to send reinforcements but so far they have not been able to fulfill this. Zanayo has access to few minor attendants and functionaries in the city, mostly Yasuki merchants, but no real control over them.

The most prominent Crab military leader on the Islands is Hiruma Shotaku (Hida Pragmatist 4), an experienced warrior of known brutality with a reputation for killing his enemies by turning their blades against them. He regards Zanayo with ill-concealed contempt and makes no bones about his view that he would be a better leader by far.

### CRANE CLAN: DOJI UESHIBA, FORLORN INVESTIGATOR

Doji Ueshiba is a tall rail-thin man with sharp features that remind many of the beak of his clan's namesake. During his formative years he acquired the nickname "The Kenku" and wore it as a badge of pride, refusing to be dishonored by the comparison. His sensei at the Kakita Academy believed Ueshiba, who could trace his lineage directly to clan founder Lady Doji, possessed the drive and skill to become a renowned iajutsu master. The young man was on a path to do just that... until he met Soshi Moriheiko.

Moriheiko was the daughter of a well-known Soshi magistrate and a descendant of Soshi Saibankan, the great judge who helped formulate the system of Imperial law. She was also a beautiful young girl, a blossoming flower

full of laughter and life. Ueshiba met her when her father visited the Kakita Academy and instantly fell in love. The couple spent days in the fantastic gardens of the Kakita palace, talking of trivialities and of the future. Less than an hour after her departure, Ueshiba begged his own father to change his path. He no longer wished to become a duelist but instead to train with the Doji Magistrates. He did not at first reveal his underlying motivation – he wished to travel the same road as his newfound love – and his father reluctantly agreed.

The romantic endeavors between the young lovers reached epic proportions during their first Winter Court together. They played a game of letters and poems read before the court, declaring mutual adoration and lifelong loyalty. Their efforts so entertained the clan's guests that they were rewarded with the blessings of the matchmakers and soon wed (much to the disappointment of Ueshiba's father, who had hoped for a more politically advantageous match). Of course, such a combination of love and marriage is immensely rare in Rokugan, and their happiness was doomed not to last.

Ueshiba was known for his unwillingness to lie for any reason – a rigid code he had developed before he ever met his true love. Five nights after his wedding day, Ueshiba witnessed what he believed was his own wife, dressed all in black, sneaking through the castle. He followed her, curious but not yet alarmed... until he saw the open doors of his daimyo's sleeping chambers.

A few days later, before the assembled court, Ueshiba was asked directly if he had seen his wife entering the daimyo's chambers before the murder. Ueshiba could not bring himself to lie, not even for the woman he loved above all else, and without a single tear he told what he had seen. Moriheiko was condemned to death.

In the years since, Ueshiba's rigid honor has earned him many accolades and he eventually won an appointment as an Emerald Magistrate. But it was all a sham; beneath his stoic exterior he was in agony, tormented constantly by the memory of his love and his own culpability in her death. While overseeing an investigation at Kyuden Isawa, Ueshiba was introduced to opium, and he found that while the drug dulled his mind, it also allowed him to temporarily forget his love, forget his pain... forget everything.

Ueshiba is in the City of the Prosperous Dawn because his superiors wanted him out of the way, sent to a place where he was unlikely to do significant harm. When he arrived, Miya Onako told him she knew of his shameful addiction. She would keep it quiet if the Doji would support her in all political endeavors. Ueshiba, now past caring about real honor, welcomed the ability to shrug off responsibility. He has settled into the Miya's court as a willing puppet.

Ueshiba's appearance has changed greatly from his promising youth. He looms over all but the largest samurai with his thin shadow, his face pale and dark rings under his eyes. He has lost weight, making his sharp features look even more harsh. His ice-blue eyes often seem distant and hazy, and anyone who looks closely will notice he always carries a small mask of red cloth tucked into his obi.



## DOJI UESHIBA, FORLORN INVESTIGATOR

AIR: 5 EARTH: 3 FIRE: 3 WATER: 3 VOID: 4

AGILITY: 4 PERCEPTION: 4

Honor: 3.1 (5.1) Status: 4.7 Glory: 3.9

*School/Rank: Doji Magistrate 4, Emerald Magistrate*

*Skills: Artisan: Poetry 2, Courtier 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 2, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 6, Jiu-jutsu 5, Kenjutsu 3, Knives (Jitte) 3, Lore: Law 4, Polearms (Sasumata) 5, Sincerity (Honesty) 3*

*Advantages: Ancestor (Doji), Perceived Honor (2 Ranks), Social Position (Emerald Magistrate)*

*Disadvantages: Can't Lie, Compulsion (Opium, 4), Lost Love (wife), Obligation (Miya Onako, 3)*

## CRANE ATTENDANTS

Technically, Doji Ueshiba is the head of the Crane delegation on the Islands of Eternal Danger, but as with many of his other duties Ueshiba has shrugged this off. The other senior Crane diplomat present is Kakita Dozo (Kakita Artisan 3), a canny merchant and experienced architect. Dozo oversees the construction of most of the new buildings on the islands and has won significant wealth for his clan. Dozo sees Ueshiba as a necessary evil, and when possible uses the Emerald Magistrate's position to push the Crane agenda.

In true Crane fashion, the remaining Crane attendants each seek to enhance their own realm of influence in as many ways as possible. They are one of the larger groups of samurai on the islands and use this advantage to constantly build their network of allies while opposing the influence of the Scorpion. Doji Akeru (Doji Courtier 4) leads these efforts in obtaining friends from his Thousand Leaves tea house, and is likely the most well-known personality on the islands. Unfortunately, as noted earlier, his true loyalties do not lie with his clan.

## DRAGON CLAN: TOGASHI TAJIRI, PUZZLING MADMAN

Togashi Tajiri is a raving lunatic wrapped in the charming demeanor of a quaint, if quirky, tattooed man. Like many from the Togashi order, Tajiri is not native to the Dragon Clan, but unlike his brothers Tajiri does not remember where he came from or why he left. He is a puzzle, even to himself, a situation which would not concern him were it not for the more alarming certainty that he is being hunted.

Years ago, a man wearing a Scorpion mask walked up a pathway toward the mountain of the Togashi. Bayushi Omoigashi was covered in blood, missing fingers from his right hand, and muttering over and over a single phrase: "Ikeya-kun, how could I have done this to you." He was found by a sensei of the ise zumi and brought to the High House of Light to join their order. Over the years, the man who would become Tajiri suffered many extreme bouts of madness. When he received his first tattoo, it was a Scor-

pion draped across his face, and at that moment Tajiri's mind snapped back to the lost memory and he became aware of his past... or at least of a version of the past.

The Togashi know Tajiri's spiritual well-being is disturbed, unbalanced. They understand the mystical blood in his tattoos has caused an even stronger break with reality for the former Scorpion. But they do not understand the full truth.

Bayushi Omoigashi murdered his closest friend, a young samurai named Ikeya, in cold blood. He was ordered to do so by his master, to prove his loyalty to the clan, and he executed the task without fail... but his soul could not withstand the horror of the deed. Omoigashi turned upon his master's guards, killing five, then fled to the far north. Today, Tajiri remains unaware of this truth. Instead, when his enlightened madness takes over and his Scorpion tattoo writhes tight across his face, he loses himself in the past... but when he awakens, he remembers only that he is being hunted by a dark man, an evil man, a man demanding his death. Tajiri believes he is haunted by an assassin, perhaps a supernatural being, perhaps a mundane killer seeking his life for the sake of memories he cannot obtain. Regardless, Tajiri remains always on the move, always flowing from one location to another like a river without a purpose.

On the outside, Tajiri is normally calm and affable, a skilled investigator of puzzles and mysteries. But on the inside, his mind snaps from shadow to shadow at every whisper, every rumor, knowing the past is soon to catch up to him.

In the City of the Prosperous Dawn, Tajiri has become something of a fascination for the Imperial administrator, Miya Onako. Because of his uncanny knack for finding answers to the most confusing of puzzles, Tajiri has earned her respect and she has even come to rely on him in some ways. Although Onako never openly disrespects the actual Dragon commander, Mirumoto Tsunake, she makes it clear she prefers to deal with her "pet Togashi" on matters of importance. For his part, Tajiri is simply happy to have a constant supply of mysteries to keep his mind distracted from the wicked chains of the past.

## TOGASHI TAJIRI, PUZZLING MADMAN

AIR: 3 EARTH: 3 FIRE: 3 WATER: 4 VOID: 4

INTELLIGENCE: 4

Honor: 4.4 Status: 2.0 Glory: 4.3

*School/Rank: Togashi Ise Zumi 2 / Togashi Defender 1 (Insight Rank 3)*

*Skills: Artisan: Sculpting 2, Meditation 3, Lore: Puzzles 3, Investigation (Notice, Search) 5, Athletics 3, Defense 3, Jiu-jutsu (Atemi) 6, Stealth (Sneaking) 3*

*Advantages: Friend of the Brotherhood, Hands of Stone*

*Disadvantages: Ascetic, Enlightened Madness (6, Scorpion Tattoo)*

*Tattoos: Scorpion, Spider, Wind*

*Kiho: As the Breakers, Way of the Willow*







## DRAGON ATTENDANTS

The official commander of the Dragon contingent, Mirumoto Tsunake, is a skilled bushi and a master of Niten, but lacks the charisma to inspire his followers. He is loyal to the Miya administrator and serves willingly at the behest of her chief military officer, Matsu Tadaka. Tsunake's uninspiring leadership combined with Miya Onako's preference for the ise zumi Togashi Tajiri has caused a rift among the Dragon troops. Some consider themselves steadfast followers of Tsunake and refuse to betray his trust, while others have succumbed to the twin lures of political influence and spiritual authority to follow Tajiri's example. The rift is not dangerous as of yet, but enemies of the Dragon would doubtless wish to see it grow.

## LION CLAN: MATSU TADAKA, ZEALOUS ENFORCER

On the day of his gempukku, Matsu Tadaka recited the entire litany of his ancestors. None made him prouder to name that day than the hero Matsu Itagi, the Lion Champion who tried to march to the Festering Pit of Fu Leng itself. Although Itagi failed to achieve his goal, Tadaka views his proclamation and bold sense of heroism as the perfect expressions of Lion honor and Lion glory. Tadaka knows he is destined to follow in his ancestor's footsteps and become a great hero of the clan. He knows this because his sensei tells him he is a paragon of traditional Matsu warfare. He knows this because his skill with a blade is matched only by his own personal strength. And above all, Tadaka knows this because he heard his destiny spoken aloud.

When Tadaka was still a mere boy, his mother was a soldier of the elite Lion's Pride unit, greatly respected for her devotion to duty. One day, their family was visited by a student of the Kitsu daimyo, a sodan-senzo capable of speaking with the ancestors and seeing the potential futures of samurai. One evening, after his family had retired to speak privately with their guest, Tadaka crept up to listen in on the secret meeting. He heard the shugenja say, "the boy is destined for a future of dangerous

prominence; his destiny is written in the stars." Just then a servant noticed and chased away the eavesdropping boy. The next morning Tadaka was sternly reprimanded and harshly punished for his disobedience and breach of etiquette, but he bore it all without complaint – for now he knew he would become a hero.

Unfortunately for Tadaka, life did not hand him a destiny on a silver platter. Growing up, he became a paragon of strength and mastered the blade with a skill years beyond his age, but every deed he performed, every honor he earned was overshadowed by a deep seething rage that dwelt just below the surface of his carefully crafted *On*. Tadaka feels this boiling rage as a rising tsunami threatening to crash upon the shore of his opponents. On more than one occasion he released this torrent upon a foe and utterly destroyed his enemy. Tadaka's sensei and parents have long instructed him to always keep his temper under control – his mother in particular showing great worry at his anger. Tadaka listens to them as best he can, and uses Bushido as his bulwark against his anger. He strives to put virtue above all else, for that is what a hero would do.

What Tadaka does not know is that the Kitsu did not foresee a destiny of heroism. Instead he came to warn the parents of a shadowed path that threatened to draw their child into darkness. Tadaka's parents have done everything they can to ensure he considers Bushido and honor paramount, even going so far as to volunteer their son for duty in the City of the Prosperous Dawn. Tadaka is here to oversee the Lion attendants at Miya Onako's court and to command the small squadron of soldiers assigned to Imperial duty.

Miya Onako has quickly grown to like the aggressive young Lion. Tadaka's temper combined with his strict adherence to Bushido makes him the perfect bludgeon with which to punish those who defy Imperial authority. Tadaka considers service to the Miya a great honor, but he cannot help feeling some concern at the violence always lurking in his heart and the dark joy he feels when he allows it release. The anger seems to have gotten worse since his arrival here, and the only time Tadaka feels truly at peace on the Islands is when he visits the strange place known as the Screaming Springs. Tadaka never hears the screams which trouble other visitors there. To the Matsu, the pools are a place of quiet serenity, the power of Toshigoku whispering like a siren's call.

### MATSU TADAKA, ZEALOUS ENFORCER

|             |            |             |             |            |
|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| AIR: 2      | EARTH: 3   | FIRE: 3     | WATER: 4    | VOID: 3    |
| REFLEXES: 3 | AGILITY: 4 |             | STRENGTH: 5 |            |
| Honor: 7.2  |            | Status: 4.6 |             | Glory: 3.8 |

*School/Rank: Matsu Bushi 3*

*Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 3, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 4, Jiujutsu 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: History 2, Lore: Heraldry 3*

*Advantages: Ally (Miya Onako), Large, Quick, Virtuous*  
*Disadvantages: Brash, Dark Fate, Cursed by the Realm (Toshigoku)*





## LION ATTENDANTS

As the Right Hand of the Imperial house, the Lion contingent at Hannei Yoake Toshi serves as the administrator's muscle – a military force to guard the city and to engage any dangerous enemies the scouts and explorers cannot defeat. Ikoma Takei (Ikoma Scout 5) is the official head of the Lion contingent, but has found his authority somewhat usurped by Onako's favor toward Matsu Tadaka. Along with Takei and Tadaka, dozens of Matsu bushi and more than a few Ikoma and Akodo samurai are on Hantei's Point. Tadaka's mother also arranged for Kitsu Asageko (Kitsu Shugenja 3) to be sent to the Islands to "advise" her son. The Kitsu priestess is supposed to secretly watch over Tadaka for signs of his angry nature growing out of control.

Unfortunately, she has become fascinated by the alien nature of the Eternal Danger Islands and their connection to the Spirit Realms, and her vigilant watch is slipping.

## MANTIS CLAN: YORITOMO HARUKO, JEALOUS OPPORTUNIST

The Mantis leader, Yoritomo Zukaro, has made it clear to the Imperial administrator there is no love lost between their factions. While Zukaro observes the proper formalities in public, he goes to extreme efforts in order to undermine the Imperial Administrator. Unleashing Yoritomo Haruko is the latest in a long series of plans to take control of the Eternal Danger Islands.

Haruko is a wild woman who outwardly epitomizes every negative stereotype the other Great Clans have toward the Mantis. She is brusque and bold, loud as a drunken Crab, and refuses to back down from any confrontation. Before entering the service of Zukaro she was the captain of *Suitengu's Spear* and engaged in numerous acts of piracy against other clans. Zukaro, quite aware of both her skills and her infamous nature, called Haruko to the City of the Prosperous Dawn with the promise of wealth and fame.

For all her ill reputation, Haruko is a loyal Mantis samurai who takes on the causes of her betters with verve and zeal. She had never even heard before of the Islands of Eternal Danger, but within days of her arrival Zukaro's purpose was her own. So heartfelt was she that she began to openly criticize Miya Onako for presumed failings and unfair control of what should be a Mantis possession. She sailed the *Spear* all through the archipelago, seeking any sort of advantage which might help her clan to seize control.

What Haruko discovered has endangered her soul. On one particularly dangerous expedition she led a landing party to one of the most remote of islands in the chain. She was cut off from her crew when a gang of mujina spewed forth from a portal to Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief,



and ambushed the group. Haruko stumbled through the jungle for hours before falling into a deep stagnant pool... and into the tremendous and unrelenting coils of the Naga Abomination called the Adkarst.

Perhaps something in Haruko's eyes halted the great beast. Perhaps it was her lightning response – two kama ripping deep into the reptilian flesh. No matter the reason, it released her, and after a moment Haruko recognized the powerful Naga for what it was, and the Stillborn Pools as a place sacred to the beast. She convinced the Adkarst that the Mantis Clan could help him in his purpose, pledging the clan to the protection of the Stillborn Pool and the removal of other humans upon his lands. In return, she asked for the Adkarst to secretly aid her clan against the others.

Days later, Haruko strode onto the beach where her men had made camp. When the overjoyed crew asked where she had been, Haruko belly-laughed and threw her arms into the air. "We are the Great Taifun, and now, my friends, we have the power to unleash our fury!"

### YORITOMO HARUKO, JEALOUS OPPORTUNIST

AIR: 3    EARTH: 3    FIRE: 3    WATER: 3    VOID: 2  
STRENGTH: 4

Honor: 2.9    Status: 2.0    Glory: 3.1    Infamy: 1.7

School/Rank: Yoritomo Bushi 2

Skills: Athletics 3, Commerce (Appraisal) 3, Defense 2, Jiu-jutsu (Improvised Weapons) 2, Kenjutsu 3, Knives (Kama) 4, Sailing 3, Sincerity (Deceit) 4, Stealth 2

Advantages: Ally (The Adkarst, 4/1), Daikoku's Blessing, Sacred Weapon (Storm Kama)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (aiding the Adkarst), Jealous (Miya Onako)

Kata: Son of Storms







### MANTIS ATTENDANTS

Much to the annoyance of the Imperial administrator, the Mantis Clan maintains one of the largest Great Clan presences on the Islands of Eternal Danger. Led by the gruff and aggressive Yoritomo Zukaro (Yoritomo Courtier 4), the Mantis seek out every avenue that might lead to dominance of the archipelago. Zukaro's well-known desire is to become Governor and annex the City of the Prosperous Dawn as a Mantis holding.

Notables of the Mantis contingent also include Yoritomo Hideyoshi (Yoritomo Shugenja 3) and Kitsune Gushimi (Tsuruchi Archer 3/Kitsune Ranger Path). Hideyoshi is a young adept of Water with an intense interest – some might say an unhealthy obsession – in the harsh weather of the sea around the archipelago. Gushimi is in charge of the Kitsune and Tsuruchi scouts who explore the islands, scouring the archipelago under the guise of mapmaking while secretly obtaining wealth and information for the clan.

### PHOENIX CLAN: ASAKO HIIROMI, MYSTICAL HISTORIAN

Asako Hiiromi is a prodigy of scholarship; she has been on the Eternal Danger Islands less than a year and already is considered the foremost expert on the strange qualities of the archipelago. Hiiromi's likable nature, her genuine interest in nearly every topic of study, and her willingness to make friends with anyone have combined to make her an unlikely nexus in the politics of Miya Onako's

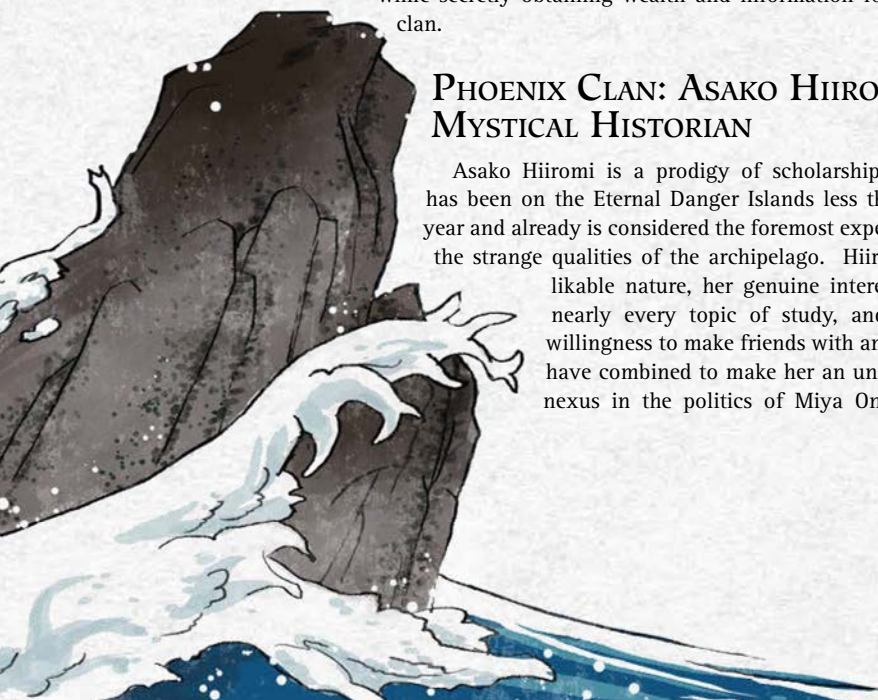
court. It seems everyone can find a reason to hold a conversation with the talented scholar. She has made so many allies and friends that some courtiers are shocked to learn she was not trained among the Doji. In fact, Hiiromi is a shugenja, a priestess of the kami of Air, not especially talented but with a sense of childlike wonder that in her youth made the kami respond to her requests with an eagerness usually reserved for Isawa Tensai.

Hiiromi's destiny changed when she journeyed to the courts of the Unicorn as part of a Phoenix diplomatic delegation. Hiiromi spent much time with the Ide courtiers, and quickly came to admire the Ide approach to the path of peace. The Clan of the Wind drew her interest like no other subject ever had, and she spent her entire visit learning about them as much as she could.

On her final night, an old Ide sensei spoke to her in private. He told Hiiromi she should consider her burgeoning social talents as a gift to be embraced, and urged her to find a way to leave her shugenja training behind and embrace the path of court. He even offered to let her enroll in the Ide School if her sensei could be persuaded to accept such a radical step. Overwhelmed by the high praise, Hiiromi attempted to respond to this generosity in the proper way... but discovered instead her curse. The stress of the situation triggered an epileptic seizure. The Isawa delegation was deeply embarrassed and Hiiromi was sent home forthwith.

Hiiromi was dismayed by what she felt was her own failure. Despite the Ide's repeated invitations for her to become an ambassador to their clan, her sensei sought instead to distance the young Asako from the perceived source of her weakness. When word of the mysterious new islands off the coast of Crane lands reached the Phoenix, Hiiromi was immediately chosen to head the Phoenix delegation. The assignment would test her balance and hopefully focus her on a duty far from the gaijin-influenced Unicorn.

Asako Hiiromi is a dainty woman, often mistaken for being years younger than her true age. She has a tendency to wear deep crimson robes with designs that flare upwards around a high collar. She also sometimes shows respect for her friends in the Unicorn by dressing in foreign fashions, even occasionally wearing furs – to the shame of her fellow Phoenix. Hiiromi sees the Eternal Danger Islands as a means to an end; she hopes her success in representing the Phoenix will allow her to choose her next assignment. She longs to return to the vast open plains, to hear again the sounds of thunderous hooves and smell the exotic gaijin incense. For now, though, she takes her duties on these islands.





## ASAKO HIIROMI, MYSTICAL HISTORIAN

AIR: 4 EARTH: 2 FIRE: 3 WATER: 3 VOID: 4

INTELLIGENCE: 4

Honor: 6.2

Status: 3.0

Glory: 2.7

*School/Rank: Isawa Shugenja (Air) 3*

*Skills: Calligraphy (Cipher) 1, Courtier 3, Etiquette (Courtesy) 4, Lore: Unicorn 5, Lore: History 3, Lore: Theology (Fortunes) 2, Lore: Islands of Eternal Danger 3, Medicine (Antidotes) 3, Meditation 2, Sincerity 3, Spellcraft 2*

*Advantages: Darling of the Court (City of the Prosperous Dawn), Sage*

*Disadvantages: Epilepsy, Fascination (Unicorn)*

*Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Legacy of Kaze-no-Kami, Token of Memory, Benten's Touch, Jurojin's Balm, Extinguish, Path to Inner Peace, Reflections of P'an Ku (Note: Hiiromi likely has one or more of these spells memorized; exact specifications are up to the GM to decide)*

## PHOENIX ATTENDANTS

The Phoenix delegation to Miya Onako's court came to the Islands for the dual purposes of gaining knowledge and investigating the supernatural. (The Phoenix histories briefly mention an island chain similar to the Eternal Danger Islands, but unfortunately the mention is barely a footnote. lacking any detail.) The Phoenix seek to gain a political foothold with Miya Onako in order to gain access to the immense trove of explorers' knowledge which the Imperial administrator keeps to herself.

Although Hiiromi officially leads the delegation, the Isawa dominate it, led by a student of the Elemental Master of Void. Isawa Saku is an Ishiken (Isawa Shugenja 3) who is unfortunately burdened with a powerful and dangerous connection to Gaki-do (Cursed by the Realm). The small number of Phoenix bushi are led by Shiba Aizo, a stoic sensei from the Order of Chikai (Shiba Bushi 5/Shiba Yojimbo Path/Order of Chikai Path) who is verging on retirement. Aizo is training his replacement, Shiba Sabato, hoping the young man may one day serve as yojimbo to the next Master of Void.

## SCORPION CLAN: SHOSURO ATARI, VINDICTIVE STORYTELLER

In the game of Go, the word *atari* is used to inform a student that a stone is about to be captured. However, to any skilled player the utterance of such a word is considered rude at best, and more likely an insult demanding retribution. On the day of his gempukku, a young Scorpion courtier from the Shosuro family chose Atari as his name, and this choice sums up his personality admirably.

Not truly a prodigy, Atari makes up for a lack of special gifts with a clear, precise, and vindictive mind, capable of remembering even the vaguest or most minor of insults. His skill with wordplay, his interest in the arts, and his twisted mind together allowed him to excel in the virulent world of the Bayushi Courtier dojo; he also acquired some small reputation as a talented storyteller. However, it was not until the young Shosuro attended his first Winter Court that his true skills shone through. Atari had mastered a particular skill in the game of Go that meshed perfectly with his duty in the world of the courts: losing.

To say that Shosuro Atari is a skilled loser would be accurate, at least on the surface. In fact, his record at the Go table is dismal, a harsh truth he is willing to share with anyone interested in listening. But Atari never walks away from a game without having gained something, be it simple information, minor blackmail, or an understanding of an opponent's deepest desire or darkest secret. Atari uses the long hours spent losing stone after stone to pick away at his target's emotional and psychological defenses. Tales of his peculiar talent spread rapidly among the more powerful courtiers, but they found it difficult to avoid playing him; Atari soon mastered the art of offering a game in such a fashion that a refusal would be a personal insult – and Atari was also developing an infamous repute for answering even a minor insult with the harshest response possible, often helped along by a Scorpion duelist.

Even a master oversteps himself from time to time. At the Winter Court of the Ikoma daimyo, Atari's reputation drew the anger of the host's cousin, Ikoma Zai. He sought to defend his family's honor with a game in which he would defeat the Shosuro in an honorable fashion. Hours of play followed, with Atari using his influence to draw in as much of the court as he could to watch. Before them all he lost to the youthful Ikoma in a brazen fashion that mocked the host of the Ikoma court. Atari gained information, ridiculed Ikoma Zai... and was promptly rewarded for his success with the full retribution of the Ikoma lord. He was reassigned to the remote and obscure "court" of Miya Onako in the Eternal Danger Islands.

Life in the City of the Prosperous Dawn is miserably boring. There are no courtiers here who can offer proper opposition, no Go players to taunt and manipulate. With no meaningful challenges, in just a few months Atari has made himself head of the Scorpion delegation and earned the enmity of most of the court, but due to his vindictive nature even the few Imperial courtiers give him a wide berth, leaving him restless and bored. Atari views his exile here as unbecoming one of his skill and seeks daily to find a way to gain back the good graces of his sensei and lord.

For all his venom, Atari is a loyal Scorpion, and his unpopularity here is not without purpose. It focuses attention on the young courtier instead of the rest of the Scorpion delegation. Under a meshwork mask in the shape of a dragonfly, Atari plays the part of the "evil villain" to the fullest extent, drawing attention and – occasionally – getting some enjoyment in the process.







## ATARI'S GO TABLE

Shosuro Atari is a descendant of a renowned Scorpion courtier who was once granted use of one of the famous Meiwaku Fans (more information on these items is found in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *The Book of Air*, page 126). However, a plot by a masterful Ide diplomat ended with the nemuranai destroyed, and Atari's ancestor suffered a great loss of face. The pieces of the broken fan were held in remembrance of the price of failure. As a boy Atari grew to hate this symbol and spent considerable effort to locate a Soshi shugenja who would aid him in redeeming the fan's loss.

So was born Atari's Go table. The broken wood of the fan edges the board, and the fan's silken cloth lines the bowls holding each player's stones. The Soshi shugenja was able to recapture some semblance of the kami's power, albeit in a reduced fashion. If an opponent willingly accepts an invitation to a game of Go at the board, the owner may – once during the game – spend a Void point to cloud the opponent's mind. This causes the victim to suffer a -2k0 penalty to his next roll (typically an Investigation or Games: Go roll) to discern deceit, misdirection, or similar tactics.



### SHOSURO ATARI, VINDICTIVE STORYTELLER

AIR: 3    EARTH: 2    FIRE: 3    WATER: 3    VOID: 4

AWARENESS: 5    WILLPOWER: 3    INTELLIGENCE: 4    PERCEPTION: 4

Honor: 2.5    Status: 3.0    Glory: 2.1    Infamy: 3.7

*School/Rank: Bayushi Courtier 3*

*Skills: Calligraphy 2, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation) 5, Etiquette (Conversation) 4, Investigation (Interrogation) 4, Sincerity (Deceit) 4, Tea Ceremony 2, Perform: Storytelling 2, Games: Go (Losing) 5, Temptation (Bribery) 3; Intimidation 3*

*Advantages: Blackmail (many), Clear Thinker, Heartless, Precise Memory*

*Disadvantages: Driven (Punish Insults), Infamous (Vindictive)*

### SCORPION ATTENDANTS

The Scorpion initially sent a sizeable military force to the City of the Prosperous Dawn as a favor to the Imperial families. This angered both the Lion and Dragon, who had sent forces for the same purpose, but tensions have subsided over time. The Scorpion operate primarily out of view from the rest of the island, searching for magical artifacts and sometimes stealing such items from the other clans' explorers. Although Atari is the public leader of the Scorpion and has proven quite successful in placing Scorpion agents within the Imperial administration, the true head of the delegation is Yogo Zohime (Yogo Shugenja 4). She leads the efforts to hunt down and secure relics and magical treasures from the Eternal Danger Islands.

## UNICORN CLAN: MOTO KESSHITE, DISPLACED HUNTER

Among the Iuchi shugenja, it is whispered that Moto Kesshite's mother was a disgrace to her school, her family, and her clan... but none mention these words where Moto Kesshite can hear them. In truth, Kesshite's mother suffered from the wanderlust that besets many Unicorn samurai. She excelled in the arts of travel magic and journeyed constantly from village to village, offering words and prayers for villagers and samurai alike. Six years before her death, she returned home from one of her extended journeys with a newborn child. She refused to answer any questions about the father, saying only, "His blood is for my child, his name for no other."

A few years later, when Kesshite was barely five, his mother was killed while on one of her never-ending journeys. The young boy was distraught and ran away from home, losing himself in the vast plains of his clan. Days later he was found nestled in the kennels of a Moto bushi's war dogs – the creatures had found him unconscious and dragged him back to their home. The Moto samurai who found the boy lived alone; he was a hunter and scout for the clan and preferred solitude to the rigors of society. He adopted the boy and began teaching him his ways. Years passed while the young Moto learned the ways of the hunt, trained with the dogs, and came to understand the beauty of nature. Kesshite developed a talent with almost all animals, and often showed them far more affection than he ever did toward other human beings.

Kesshite's innate talent for the kami manifested itself while on a dangerous hunt for wild boar at the edges of the Mori Shinomen. His adopted father was attacked by a massive boar, a creature obviously touched by the power of the Realm of Animals, Chikushudo. Kesshite could not accept another parent's death, and he leapt in front of the animal, shouting for it to stop. At that moment he felt a flow of power from the creature into himself, and heard the whisper of the kami translating his words. The boar turned and left. Afterward, Kesshite's adoptive father noted a strange shift in the boy's eyes – their color had altered and continued to do so, changing with the boy's mood.

Moto Kesshite trained in the ways of the spirits with the Iuchi, but his education was burdened by their knowledge of his mother. They whispered that her wildness had been passed on to him, that he would disgrace his family as she had. Kesshite set himself apart, continuing his training with animals and hunting. He learned to wield the ono and performed kata with a massive axe each day after his training with the shugenja had ended. Although his behavior alienated almost everyone around him, he became a favorite of one particular sensei, a renowned mapmaker and traveler named Iuchi Wodan. When the call came for the Unicorn to send samurai to the Eternal Danger Islands, Wodan asked Kesshite to come along.

Moto Kesshite is a natural shugenja with a strong affinity for the kami of Water. In the Miya's city he specializes in studying the peculiar nature of the animals which live on the Eternal Danger Islands. He is often seen with his prized war dogs, gifts from his adopted father, and he spends much of his time far away from proper



## SPIDER CLAN: DAIGOTSU TOSHIRO, TREACHEROUS SCOUT

As noted earlier in this chapter, the Spider will not be present in most L5R campaigns. However, if the GM is running a game in which the Spider exist, the clan's delegation includes a singularly unpleasant individual named Daigotsu Toshiro.

Toshiro believes the Imperial Decree declaring all Tainted Spider banished from the bounds of Rokugan does not extend to the Eternal Danger Islands. Despite the presence of an Imperial administrator and delegations from each of the Great Clans, Toshiro sees the islands as wild lands ripe for the taking, and came here on his own initiative to pursue that goal.

Toshiro joined the Spider Clan years ago, driven by resentment against the power of the Great Clans. He accepted the Shadowlands Taint willingly, believing its power would let him control his own fate in defiance of those hated samurai. Unfortunately, he soon showed too many overt signs of his corruption and was arrested and condemned to death. That night, while he awaited execution in a stone cell, a creature calling itself Goju Mumei arrived. It murdered Toshiro's jailors and set him free – but at the price of swearing loyalty to the Shadow Dragon, the sinister “ally” of the Spider Clan which pursued its own agenda.

Toshiro's Taint and his connection to the Shadow Dragon have given him many gifts. His generally bland physical appearance has spread inwardly to his soul, causing him to become a metaphysical grounding rod for magical influence. He is highly resistant to most forms of magic and capable of metabolizing his Taint, concealing all evidence of it from outsiders given proper time and preparation. However, when the Taint is not suppressed, Toshiro's eyes glow a vivid lightning blue whenever he is in darkness. When necessary he covers them with a wicked full-face mask stolen from a murdered Bayushi, a mask depicting an oni screaming in agonizing pain.

Toshiro spends most of his time in the wild islands, roaming free with his Taint exposed. On the few occasions when he visits the city, he maintains proper meditative techniques to conceal his corruption, allowing him to operate freely as a samurai and a delegate of the Spider Clan. Toshiro intends to corrupt the whole island of Hantei's Point, using his powers to inflict the Taint on both men and animals. In his greatest success so far, Toshiro encountered a powerful Water kami in a majestic whirlpool and corrupted it into an Oyuchi no Kansen, a Lesser Elemental Terror of Water. He has recently become aware of the Adkarst, and hopes to find a way of corrupting that creature as well.

Daigotsu Gouki is aware of Toshiro and is distrustful of the man. Gouki believes Toshiro to be a weak man who gave in to the Shadowlands Taint to hide his weakness. He believes it is only a matter of time before Toshiro decides to betray him; when that day comes, Gouki will show the little pup what it truly means to be a Spider.

### DAIGOTSU TOSHIRO, TREACHEROUS SCOUT

|             |             |            |                        |         |
|-------------|-------------|------------|------------------------|---------|
| AIR: 2      | EARTH: 3    | FIRE: 3    | WATER: 4               | VOID: 2 |
| REFLEXES: 3 | STAMINA: 4  |            |                        |         |
| Honor: 0.0  | Status: 2.0 | Glory: 1.8 | Shadowlands Taint: 3.3 |         |

*Shadow Corruption: 1.0*

*School/Rank: Daigotsu Bushi 2*

*Skills: Hunting (Trailblazing) 5, Intimidation 2, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana, No-Dachi) 4, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Meditation 3, Perform: Flute 2, Stealth 4*

*Advantages: Bland, Dark Paragon (Will), Magic Resistance (4)*

*Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Taint), Disbeliever, Shadowlands Taint*

*Shadowlands Powers: Above the Elements, Beside the Darkness, Drawing Out the Darkness*

*Shadowlands Mutations: Demonic Eyes*







society. He has been known to spend many days travelling the islands in the shape of different animals, utilizing the spell Ever-Changing Waves. Kesshite feels a connection to the Islands, and believes he is in harmony with the powerful energies of constant change which suffuse them.

### MOTO KESSHITE, DISPLACED HUNTER

AIR: 4    EARTH: 3    FIRE: 3    WATER: 5    VOID: 3

Honor: 4.6    Status: 1.5    Glory: 2.8

*School/Rank: Iuchi Shugenja 3/Iuchi Traveler*

*Skills: Animal Handling 5, Battle 3, Calligraphy (Cipher) 2, Etiquette 3, Heavy Weapons (Ono) 4, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 4, Lore: Spirit Realms 3, Lore: Theology 2, Meditation 3, Spellcraft 2*

*Advantages: Elemental Blessing (Water), Inheritance (Moto War Dogs), Touch of the Spirit Realms: Chikushudo*

*Disadvantages: Disturbing Countenance (Polychromatic Eyes), Soft-Hearted (Animals)*

### UNICORN ATTENDANTS

Iuchi Wodan (Meishodo Shugenja 3) is the head of the Unicorn in Miya Onako's court. Wodan spends most of his time making maps from the scouting reports of the Unicorn, Mantis, and Crab samurai exploring the islands. Moto Kesshite is an invaluable source of information, often granting special insights into locations others are barely aware even exist.

The Unicorn presence in the City of the Prosperous Dawn is small, and they rarely interact with the politics of the city. Their main effort is committed to scouting and exploring.

### THE MINOR CLANS

The Minor Clan presence in the City of the Prosperous Dawn is minimal. Only the Tortoise and (in earlier eras) the Fox and the Falcon have any meaningful representation. The Tortoise are here to develop smuggling connections and to watch for any signs of gaijin influence. The Falcon are here to investigate reports of spirits and ghosts, while the Fox are here to learn about the rumors of powerful animal spirits.

Most of the minor clans have neither the interest nor manpower to send representatives to the islands. The Sparrow cannot afford to send anyone here, regardless of what era it might be, while the Dragonfly and the Badger are wholly occupied with their own duties. The Monkey (in eras where they exist) are simply not interested.

If the GM is running a campaign in the latter half of the twelfth century, the Bat Clan will have a single samurai present, Komori Oreshi. He has been sent with the express command to find out as much as possible about the Islands' connection to Chikushudo. So far he has not discovered Moto Kesshite's connection to that realm, but would certainly be interested to learn that secret.

### IMPERIAL FAMILIES: MIYA ONAKO, IMPERIAL ADMINISTRATOR

The Imperial administrator of the Eternal Danger Islands (and thus the ruler of the City of the Prosperous Dawn) is the child of a rare match between two Imperial families: the Miya and the Otomo. Imperial matchmakers traditionally seek marriage arrangements with the Great Clans in order to extend their social network as far as possible. In fact, Miya Onako's own mother Otomo Norezaiko was a highly respected nakodo whose ability to match relative unknowns in advantageous marriages was uncanny. In true Otomo fashion, Norezaiko was also known for her controlling and manipulative nature; it was said she never failed to create successful matches so long as she was respected... but if anyone crossed her, they would find themselves in marriages that were politically favorable but personally horrific, without the slightest chance of happiness. Norezaiko arranged her own marriage to a meek widower of the Miya family, Miya Bugen, a wealthy and respectable sensei with ties to Crane nobility.

The product of this union is a prodigy of the court who has followed in the footsteps of both her parents. She excelled in the Miya Herald School, but her sensei understood she did so out of duty to her father. She was not naturally talented in the ways of peaceful diplomacy, and only her overwhelming desire not to shame her family allowed her to master the Herald techniques. In fact, her harsh and domineering demeanor – clearly an inheritance from her mother – caused her to simultaneously gain the attention of the Imperial Scions and to fall out of favor with the Heralds. Her mother's last act prior to retiring was to utilize her husband's vast wealth and her own political influence to gain Onako acceptance to the elite dojo of the Scions.

Although this change fit her personality like a well-tailored kimono, it made Onako a pariah within her own family. With her parents now dead or retired, Onako was on her own and could no longer counter the influence of those who disapproved of her. Rather than wait for her rivals to ruin her career, the young woman took the initiative: she arranged to be sent as Imperial administrator to the new city of Hannei Yoake Toshi.

Onako sees her position on the Eternal Danger Islands as somewhat beneath her true capability, but it is also a position where a talented and ambitious courtier can win great success and influence. She tenaciously holds on to the ideals of her mother and refuses to allow any setback to diminish her reputation or success. Onako favors aggressive, decisive action and promotes daring exploration of the Islands' mysteries. She has issued a proclamation that all new discoveries made within her jurisdiction must be brought to her for examination prior to being sent out of the city, a command which has made her deeply unpopular with many clan delegations – although none dare to openly disobey. She also seeks to control the ebb and flow of all political power within her domain, and in this regard she finds the embarrassing continued failure to complete her main castle, Shiro Raiden, wholly unacceptable. She



has been using her influence to encourage investigations into the supposed “curse” on the castle’s construction.

Ultimately, Onako desires a perfectly controlled environment and will stop at almost nothing to achieve it. She looks on clan samurai as beneath her but sometimes useful for her purposes, and often clashes with the Mantis and Crab delegations in her court, especially the more experienced ones who look down on her for her relative youth. She has taken a liking to Matsu Tadaka because of his strict adherence to Bushido and apparent willingness to enforce Imperial law in whatever extreme fashion she might command. She has appointed him as head of the city’s garrison and as her Right Hand, enforcer of Imperial justice. Somewhat perversely, she has also developed a liking for Togashi Tajiri, whose odd behavior and knack for puzzle-solving fascinate her.

### MIYA ONAKO, IMPERIAL ADMINISTRATOR

AIR: 4    EARTH: 3    FIRE: 3    WATER: 3    VOID: 4  
AWARENESS: 5    WILLPOWER: 4    PERCEPTION: 4  
Honor: 5.8    Status: 5.0    Glory: 3.2

*School/Rank: Miya Herald 3 / Imperial Scion 1 (Insight Rank 4)*

*Skills: Courtier (Manipulation, Rhetoric) 6, Defense 2, Etiquette (Courtesy) 4, Horsemanship 2, Investigation (Interrogation) 3, Intimidation (Control) 4, Lore: Heraldry 3, Sincerity 3*

*Advantages: Social Position (Imperial Administrator of the Eternal Danger Islands), Wealthy*

*Disadvantages: Black Sheep, Failure of Bushido (Courtesy), Small*

### IMPERIAL ATTENDANTS

A surprisingly large contingent of minor Imperial functionaries has accompanied Miya Onako to the City of the Prosperous Dawn. Many are her own personal vassals, but others seek to benefit from the Imperial administrator’s influence, family connections, or wealth. In addition, the Otomo and Miya families have each chosen to use the Eternal Danger Islands as a dumping ground for unsuccessful members of their families. This has created a strange mix of skilled samurai and bitter failures in the administrator’s service. Perhaps it is not surprising that so many Scorpion have found their way into the city’s bureaucracy.

## BROTHERHOOD OF SHINSEI: BROTHER DAISETSU

The Fortunist monk known as Daisetsu is a man of great certainty, always aware of his prowess and constantly striving to make others aware of it as well. This, in fact, was the sort of man he was in his previous life as well. He was once Akodo Yugon, a skilled Lion commander. Shortly after ascending in rank from a field officer to become a shireikan to a general, Yugon was asked his opinion on the current state of the Lion military. The question was

meant as a polite bit of conversation, but Yugon gave a critical, *detailed*, and extremely long answer. He believed his clan had committed a grave strategic error in failing to maintain a standing navy, and argued the Lion should regularly engage the Mantis in naval warfare in order to hone their ability. Failure to do so would certainly result in future defeat and humiliation.

It was not so much Yugon’s words as the frequency, certainty, and disdain with which he uttered them that earned the wrath of his superiors. When it was suggested he remain silent, he instead petitioned the Akodo family daimyo to make his case. He was rewarded for his behavior with a forced early retirement.

At first Yugon grieved, thinking he had failed his clan... or vice versa. But he was still an honorable man who believed duty to the clan was the ultimate virtue of any samurai. He embraced his newfound ascetic vows, determined to improve the standing of the Temple of the Thousand Fortunes above that of every other faction of the Brotherhood. He set out for the nearest temple to the order, but when he arrived there it took all of a day for the Abbot to tell him that his primary flaw was pride. Indeed, the old monk went on at great length about the blinding nature of pride for a too-self-certain samurai. “A man of your skill is easily blinded by his gifts, and fails to see that humility and the guidance of others are necessary in all things.” Yugon kindly thanked the old brother for his words and left, never to return.

Rather than give up, the monk now called Daisetsu decided to address the perceived weakness of his former clan and traveled to the seacoast, where he joined a temple to Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea, to better understand the aquatic battleground. Of course, this continued loyalty to his old life is considered inappropriate by many monks, and Daisetsu often faces harsh criticism for his lack of enlightened ways. Naturally, he rejects all such critiques, secure in the correctness of his own position.

Daisetsu considers the Eternal Danger Islands to properly belong to Suitengu and not to any clan, even his own. His belief is so heartfelt that he took up sculpting in order to create a lasting shrine to the Fortune of the Sea. And perhaps he is right, for when all the other shrines upon Hantei’s Point suffer accidents or crumble in storms, Daisetsu’s statue alone stands firm. His creation looms on a rocky shore facing the crashing waves, and while it has so far proven inviolate, Daisetsu still visits regularly to maintain it.

Daisetsu enjoys somewhat of a following in the population of the Eternal Danger Islands. His confident and verbose nature means anyone even remotely interested in the Brotherhood is at the very least aware of his presence. He has also gained some measure of fame recently by utilizing his limited spiritual connections to walk upon the very waters of the great whirlpool in the center of the archipelago. He did not go very far, but he intends to return and one day seek the center of the whirlpool. On that day, he proclaims, Suitengu’s true will shall become known.







### BROTHER DAISETSU, SELF-ASSURED MONK

|             |          |             |            |         |
|-------------|----------|-------------|------------|---------|
| AIR: 3      | EARTH: 4 | FIRE: 3     | WATER: 4   | VOID: 4 |
| REFLEXES: 4 |          | AGILITY: 4  |            |         |
| Honor: 6.5  |          | Status: 1.0 | Glory: 2.4 |         |

*School/Rank: Akodo Bushi 3/Temple of the Thousand Fortunes 1*

*Skills: Artisan: Sculpture 2, Athletics (Swimming) 3, Battle (Mass Combat) 5, Defense 4, Jujutsu (Grappling) 4, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: History 2, Lore: Theology (Fortunes) 4, Lore: War 5, Meditation 3, Sincerity 2*

*Advantages: Leadership, Paragon (Duty)*

*Disadvantages: Contrary, Forced Retirement, Overconfident*

*Kiho: Buoyed by the Kami, Partaking the Waves, Ride the Water Dragon*

### MONKS OF THE ETERNAL DANGER ISLANDS

The Brotherhood of Shinsei does not maintain much presence on the Eternal Danger Islands, but due to the perceived “curse” that afflicts shrines and temples on the islands, that presence is beginning to grow. Fortunist orders dominate, with Suitengu (Fortune of the Sea), Osano-Wo (Fortune of Fire and Thunder), and Isora (Fortune of the Seashore) the most prominent, although small shrines to nearly every Fortune can be found if one looks hard enough.

There is no specific goal embraced by the various monks except a determination to uncover the cause of the island’s “curse.” Furugan (Insight Rank 5), Abbot of the Fortunist followers of Kaimetsu-Uo, believes the Mantis should annex the island and that the curse has been imposed by the Fortune of the Sea in punishment for this failure. Raibotsu (Insight Rank 3), Abbot of the Order of Osano-Wo, believes the island is meant to be cursed; they are a spiritual testing ground, and only through suffering and pain will the pure of soul be enlightened. Gamaishuko (Insight Rank 6) is the leader of the Shintao monks and Abbot of the local Order of Heroes temple; she believes there is a mortal blight on the archipelago which will only be lifted when a proper hero locates the cause and destroys it utterly.

### RONIN: AIREIKO, AFFABLE MERCENARY

The life of a wave-man is driven by the ever-changing landscape of war, causing most ronin to constantly be on the lookout for a new opportunity, rarely setting down roots in one location. The woman known as Aireiko would not have it any other way. She was born the illegitimate daughter of a Yasuki samurai-ko who was seduced by a handsome worker at the sake brewery of Friendly Traveler Village. Utterly shamed by her dishonor, the woman committed *jigai* soon after she gave birth to her daughter, leaving the infant Aireiko with only a *daisho* to remember her by. However, this tragic past does not seem to bother the ronin woman. In fact, if she is asked about her past she will launch into a ribald tale of how a fat commoner managed to win the heart of a samurai woman.

Aireiko has always been a likeable woman, some say touched by Benten herself. She took up a wandering life as soon as she was old enough to wield her blade. Although she has spent all the years since travelling from village to village, Aireiko claims she has never met a stranger, and her carefree attitude garners trust and wins friends. Her skill with the blade eventually earned her the respect of the Disciples of Sun Tao, and she stayed with the *otokodate* for some time, learning the ways of *iaijutsu*. However, something in her heart refused to let her stay in one place for too long.

Aireiko makes her living primarily off her skill with the blade, but more recently her burgeoning talents have attracted more discerning patrons. She seems to flow through a battlefield like water down a hill, always finding the heart of each fight and positioning herself to earn great glory and respect. Aireiko refuses to acknowledge any great talent, instead crediting simple luck with her success on the field.

Wanderlust led Aireiko to the City of the Prosperous Dawn. Growing tired of being a hired sword, she thought the exotic islands might offer something fresh, something new. Within days of her arrival she encountered a man like no other she had ever met, and she has remained ever since, waiting for her rare meetings with him. Her apparent desire for Moto Kesshite baffles and infuriates the ronin men in the City of the Prosperous Dawn, and when they demand to know how she could be attracted to such a bizarre person she replies only that there is something about his connection with nature, with the spirits of Water and Earth around him, that draws her interest. (For his part, Kesshite has no idea she is even interested in him romantically at all.) So for now Aireiko’s wanderlust remains sated.





## AIREIKO, AFFABLE MERCENARY

|             |             |               |          |         |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|----------|---------|
| AIR: 3      | EARTH: 3    | FIRE: 2       | WATER: 3 | VOID: 3 |
| REFLEXES: 4 | AGILITY: 4  | PERCEPTION: 4 |          |         |
| Honor: 4.8  | Status: 0.0 | Glory: 3.4    |          |         |

*Insight Rank: 2*

*Ronin Path: Disciple of Sun Tao*

*Skills: Athletics 2, Battle 5, Defense 3, Etiquette (Conversation) 2, Games: Go 2, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu (Focus) 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Kyujutsu 2, Sincerity (Honesty) 3*

*Advantages: Bente's Blessing, Tactician*

*Disadvantages: Compulsion (4 pts, Wanderlust), True Love (Moto Kesshite), Social Disadvantage (Ronin)*

## NAGA: THE ADKARST, RIGHTEOUS ABOMINATION

Eien no Chiken Shouto (the Eternal Danger Islands) are a strange new place for the samurai who have come there. They are a place of fear and opportunity, where every day is a mixture of uncertainty and anticipation. What lies across the next tidal pool? What danger will surface on the next unexplored island?

For the being known as the Adkarst, the Islands are simply home, a home it will protect by destroying all intruders into its domain.

The Adkarst is a Naga Abomination, once of the Constrictor race. In his youth thousands of years ago the Islands were a single island, home to a great Naga city, and the Adkarst was destined to be a protector of his race's most precious resource: the special pools which house the eggs, the Naga's future. In those days the Adkarst was beautiful, a vast Naga covered in vibrant green scales with a yellow underbelly. His presence within the Akasha echoed with intense purpose and joy, a clarion call to his fellows, a rallying cry for others to follow. Despite being born with the slight mutation of naturally shifting scales, the Adkarst rose in Caste quickly and became the head Guardian of the Pools. The power he attained in his new position fit the Adkarst well. He was neither arrogant nor domineering, and conducted his station with the devotion and stoic grandeur befitting a member of the Constrictor race.

That past, however, is not something the Adkarst remembers well. What tragedy befell the ancient Naga city is beyond the knowledge of samurai, and unfortunately the memory also dwells in the Akasha beyond the broken mind of the Adkarst. What it does know is that at some ancient time a disaster, curse, or a spell gone horribly wrong cut off the Naga city from the mainland and trapped it in a continuous storm of destruction. During this time of strife the Adkarst hid deep within the egg pools he was sworn to protect. Years passed in a hazy half-sleep fraught with nightmarish dreams and screams of agony. When the Adkarst finally arose from his slumber, the world had changed, the city was in ruins, and all the rest

of his people had long since perished or fled. He alone survived, the lone protector of what he believed to be the last egg pool of his race. Even worse, the Adkarst sensed a shift in his demeanor, his appearance, and most importantly his connection with the Akasha. He had lost the ability to sense the other members of his race. He had become Abomination.

The Adkarst's body grew massive, over forty feet in length, and took on an unholy blackened hue, the once beautiful yellow underbelly now a sickening striped orange. The final transformation occurred after the Adkarst built up the courage to fully investigate his surroundings and realized the Naga eggs he guarded had long since died. Whatever ruinous force had cut him off from his brethren in the Akasha had severed the link to the eggs, as well, rendering them stillborn. The Adkarst's mind snapped, unable to deal with the depth of this tragedy. In his madness he convinced himself that the Stillborn Pool was still as it once was, still thriving and alive, still requiring his protection. His mind invented voices of the stillborn Naga, replacing the Akasha he could no longer hear. He began hunting through the surrounding territory, wreaking havoc on every other creature in the area, waging a never-ending guerrilla war on all those his maddened mind saw as enemies of his precious eggs.

Now the islands are being overrun by a new horde of strange creatures: humans. These foes are too numerous to merely exterminate, so the Adkarst has shifted its tactics to distraction and maneuver. The insane Naga uses his knowledge of the Islands to cause friction between the newly arrived people of Rokugan and the native creatures and spirits. Most recently, he has forged an unlikely alliance with one human, a female calling itself Yoritomo Haruko. The Naga hopes to use her as a stalking horse to distract and slay the other humans. If she betrays him, the Adkarst will destroy her - he will stop at nothing to protect his eggs.







## THE ADKARST, RIGHTEOUS ABOMINATION

|             |            |             |          |            |
|-------------|------------|-------------|----------|------------|
| AIR: 3      | EARTH: 4   | FIRE: 4     | WATER: 6 | AKASHA: 5  |
| REFLEXES: 6 | AGILITY: 5 |             |          |            |
| Honor: 6.5  |            | Status: 1.0 |          | Glory: 2.4 |

*Caste (Status): 0.0*

*Initiative: 10k5*

*Attack: Naga Spear 10k7+6 (Simple)*

*Damage: 10k2*

*Armor: 35 (Light Armor)*

*Reduction: 3 (Light Armor) – 8 for 3 Combat Rounds, once per skirmish*

*Wounds: Human-type Wound Ranks*

*School/Rank: Naga Warrior 5*

*Skills: Athletics (Swimming) 5, Battle (Skirmish) 4, Defense 5, Hunting 4, Investigation (Notice) 4, Kenjutsu (Naga Scimitar) 6, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: The Islands of Eternal Danger 4, Meditation 1, Spears (Naga Spear) 7*

*Advantages: Amphibious, Enhancing Mutation (Camouflaging Scales), Higher Purpose (Protect the Stillborn Pool), Large, Way of the Land (The Islands)*

*Disadvantages: Adrift from the Akasha, Antisocial 4, Disturbing Countenance, Haunted (Hears voices of the stillborn eggs)*

Note: Full information about Naga mechanics can be found in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Enemies of the Empire*, pages 69-93.

## THE STILLBORN POOL

The Adkarst has only once ever called the Stillborn Pool by that name – before his mind snapped and he deluded himself into believing it was still alive and vibrant, the last remaining hope for his race. The Stillborn Pool is located deep within the heart of the Naga island in a re-

gion with a strong connection to Chikushudo, the Realm of Animals. The forest around the Pool is overgrown and wild, full of creatures of both Ningen-Do and other Spirit Realms; it is also full of deadly traps and distractions constructed by the Adkarst, each designed to lead even the most careful hunters away from the Stillborn Pool if not kill them outright.

The pool contains the remains of over a hundred Naga eggs, ranging in size from small pebbles to spheres the size of a human head. Centuries after they died, the eggs have been transformed by the spiritual energies of the Islands into huge pearls, perfectly shaped and of unimaginable worth. Any samurai who could retrieve these former eggs would attain wealth beyond mortal dreams – if he could survive the vengeance of the Adkarst.

# Adventures in the Eternal Danger Islands

The Eternal Danger Islands are a place rife with possibilities for L5R adventures. This section provides an array of campaign outlines and adventure seeds which can fit into the Islands' environment and themes. Some of these ideas are specific to the Islands, while others are more "neutral" and can be easily modified to fit into other locales. GMs should feel free to change the scenarios and modify details such as clan, faction, or gender to fit their own campaign's needs.

Campaign Seeds are designed to serve as the basis for longer multi-session adventures, while Adventure Seeds can be accomplished in one or two gaming sessions. All of the Seeds follow the traditional L5R "Challenge-Focus-Strike" format: the Challenge introduces the basic problem, the Focus expands upon that problem and adds details such as an unexpected twist or further complications, and finally the Strike discusses ways the situation might be resolved.

## Campaign Seed: Whispering Pearls

This campaign seed builds on the activities of the Adkarst, the insane Naga Abomination living in the Eternal Danger Islands – see his description in the previous section for details of his activities and motivations.

## CHALLENGE

The Imperial administrator, Miya Onako, has issued a proscription declaring that any and all relics, wealth, or other discoveries found in the archipelago be first routed through her offices before leaving for mainland Rokugan. Recently, a merchant caravan was discovered attempting to leave the City of the Prosperous Dawn.





In violation of her edict, the caravan was concealing a perfect white pearl the size of a samurai's fist. Onako's guards confiscated the item and it now resides in Shiro no Raiden. Onako is furious that anyone would attempt to violate her decree, and wants the culprit hunted down; in the meantime she must decide to do with the pearl, an immensely valuable item. For the moment it is under the protection of a group of reliable samurai (preferably at least one or more of the PCs, though Matsu Tadaka will assuredly be involved as well). One of more of the PCs will also be assigned to investigate the smugglers and learn who is behind them.

## Focus

The City of the Prosperous Dawn is full of greedy and enterprising souls, samurai and *heimin* alike, all seeking the origin of the massive pearl. Many individuals and groups begin scouring the islands, some in secret and others openly – when asked, they naturally affirm they will present any discoveries to Miya Onako. Courtiers are also calling in their favors to try to locate the original source and identify who hired the smugglers. Naturally, the smugglers' patron – who obviously wishes to stay hidden – is trying just as hard to avoid being identified.

Even as this frenzy of investigation gets underway, mysterious deaths begin to occur around the City of the Prosperous Dawn. Individuals from all levels of society are disappearing, only to be found dead with evidence of having been brutally tortured. In some cases the corpses are completely crushed as though by a great weight, while in other cases they are flayed and stabbed numerous times by a long blade.

## STRIKE

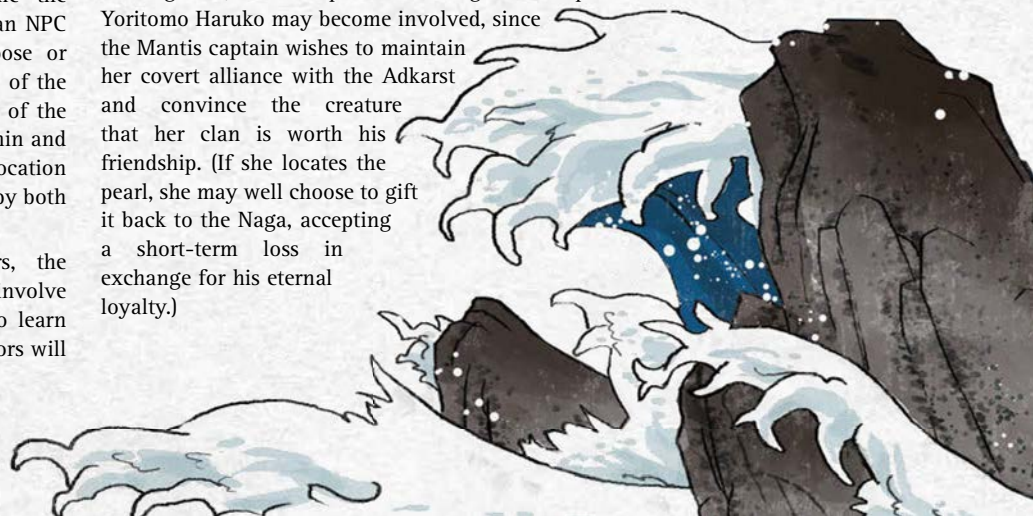
A ronin discovered the Stillborn Pool while the Adkarst was absent and brought a pearl back to an NPC with mercantile connections (the GM may choose or create an appropriate NPC according to the needs of the campaign). Unfortunately, the ronin was the first of the murder victims. The NPC is trying to hire more ronin and explorers to track down the Stillborn Pool, whose location is uncertain, while also living in fear of discovery by both Imperial authorities and the mysterious murderer.

For PCs who are magistrates or courtiers, the investigation into the smuggling incident will involve them with a tangle of rival factions all trying to learn the secret of the pearl's origin. Blackmail and favors will

be traded feverishly, and depending on who discovers the NPC first, he or she may be blackmailed, tortured, turned over to the Imperials, or simply killed. If the PCs find out the NPC's secret, they will have many options – they can blackmail the NPC, trade the information to other NPCs for favors, use it to elevate their own standing with Miya Onako, or smuggle the NPC out of the city and thereby gain a lifelong debt.

The murders are of course being committed by the Adkarst, which is seeking both retribution and a way to retrieve the pearl (which it sees as an egg) without being discovered. Although he finds humans disgusting animals, he is cunning enough to realize he needs allies to find a way into the castle (or wherever else the pearl ends up being secured) without being discovered and slain. If he cannot find allies, he will continue a campaign of terror in the hope of forcing the humans to return the pearl. He may also try to manipulate other natural or supernatural creatures on the islands into attacking the City of the Prosperous Dawn, creating a crisis which would allow him to slip into the city and retrieve the pearl.

In order to solve the murders, the PCs will have to figure out the attacker is nonhuman and track the Adkarst back to the Stillborn Pools. Along the way the Adkarst will try to ambush, trick, and otherwise hinder the investigation, either in person or using allies or patsies. Yoritomo Haruko may become involved, since the Mantis captain wishes to maintain her covert alliance with the Adkarst and convince the creature that her clan is worth his friendship. (If she locates the pearl, she may well choose to gift it back to the Naga, accepting a short-term loss in exchange for his eternal loyalty.)







For maximum effect, the situation can climax with creatures controlled or influenced by the Adkarst gathering for a full-scale assault on the City of the Prosperous Dawn. Will the Mantis go so far as aid the Naga Abomination against their own kind? Also, if the PCs have learned the truth about the Adkarst and his motivations, slaying him outright may be ethically troubling to them – although rigidly traditional samurai like Lion or Crane should have little compunction at slaying an inhuman foe regardless of its motives.

Finally, if the PCs choose to return the pearl to the Abomination themselves, a whole new series of adventures could emerge as they begin to truly discover the history and nature of the Eternal Danger Islands from a source with exceptional (if distorted) knowledge of the past.

## Campaign Seed: When the Teibou Breaks

This story hook can potentially be resolved over the course of only a couple of game sessions, but is better suited to a large-scale campaign, perhaps a backdrop to a complex situation with many different crises. This is a Disaster-themed conflict (as described in the L5R 4th Edition Core rulebook's discussion of Dramatic Situations) which focuses on the plight and despair of the populace. Although such stories can produce powerful themes, they are also liable to invoke emotions of sorrow and regret which some players will find unpleasant; the GM should make sure the players are willing to embrace such a story before inflicting it on them.

## CHALLENGE

Recently there has been conflict brewing between two minor lords administering differing areas of the island of Hantei's Point. The lords may be of the same clan or different ones, depending on the GM's preference and the party's clan composition. The lords have engaged in small-scale skirmishes, duels, and political battles, all threatening to spill over into a major war which would severely disrupt Rokugan's attempt to claim the Eternal Danger Islands.

During a skirmish on the border between the two regions, a temple to Osano-Wo, Fortune of Fire and Thunder, is badly damaged. Neither side will own up to the destruction of the temple, instead blaming the "curse" which afflicts so many religious holdings on the Islands. Consequently, both lords refuse to take responsibility for the expense of repairs.

## FOCUS

Torrential rains plague the islands for weeks after the damage to the temple. A nearby stream, a major source of water for the rice paddies, begins to rise and threatens to break the teibou (levee) holding back its waters. The flooding will not directly damage the homes of the competing lords, but if left unchecked it will overwhelm the villages and fields. The lords still refuse to take the blame for damages and the rains grow stronger, flooding appearing imminent.

## STRIKE

At this point the GM has many options. The PCs can try and evacuate the farming villages to higher ground. The best locations to take them to would be the lords' holdings (which would require convincing the lords to allow the refugees sanctuary) or the City of the Prosperous Dawn (which will require finding food and housing for them in an already crowded settlement).

The PCs may be assigned by Miya Onako to bring an end to the conflict. To do this peacefully the PCs must convince the two lords not only to cease fighting but to come together to





rebuild the temple to appease Osano-Wo. Of course, the GM can always choose to rule that Osano-Wo is not so easily soothed, or that the flooding actually has some other cause altogether, but if the PCs do accomplish a peacemaking effort they should receive some manner of reward regardless.

The PCs may also attempt to end the conflict through more direct or violent means: a duel, an assassination, or even leading out Miya Onako's troops to crush both fractious lords for their foolishness. And if all efforts fail (or the PCs stall or do nothing), the teibou breaks and the lands are swept into ruin, with hundreds of desperate *heimin* looking to the PCs for salvation.

## Adventure Seed: "Check"

This seed works best if one or more of the PCs is closely associated with Moto Kesshite and/or the ronin Aireiko.

### CHALLENGE

The Scorpion courtier Shosuro Atari sits down for an extended game of Go with Aireiko. Initially his intention is to defeat her, since she is renowned for her abilities upon the battlefield and a victory would raise his standing. However, as they play Atari learns a secret the ronin is hiding from everyone: she is madly in love with the Unicorn, Moto Kesshite.

Atari wishes to sow discord between the Imperial administrator and the Unicorn, and sees a way to use Aireiko's foolish passion to his own ends. He threatens to reveal her secret unless she performs a specific service for him: hunt down a variety of exotic animals and dedicate the trophies to Miya Onako. Of course, by doing this she will be outraging Moto Kesshite, whose compassion for animals is well known.

### Focus

Aireiko soon begins returning from the remote regions of the Eternal Danger Islands with impressive trophies from various wild animals – most spectacularly, the head of a massive stag that clearly shows the touch of Chikushudo. Many in the City of the Prosperous Dawn laud her skill, but Moto Kesshite grows more angry with each kill – not only with her, but also with Miya Onako for accepting the trophies. For her part, Aireiko seems hesitant and almost ashamed about her newfound glory.

### STRIKE

Gossip may reach the PCs of the nature of Atari's gambit, they may be able to figure it out for themselves, or they may persuade Aireiko to confide the truth. If the PCs disrupt the scheme, they will incur the wrath of the vindictive Scorpion, but if the PCs allow the plot to unfold it will at the very least result in a tragic duel between Aireiko and Kesshite. There is little to be gained by saving

Aireiko, but potentially great reward for preventing a rift between the Imperial administrator and the entire Unicorn contingent.

The GM may add further spice to the situation if Atari knows the PCs have discovered his plot. If they fail to act and the worst occurs, Atari will have blackmail material to be used against the PCs, setting up another cycle of misery at his hands.

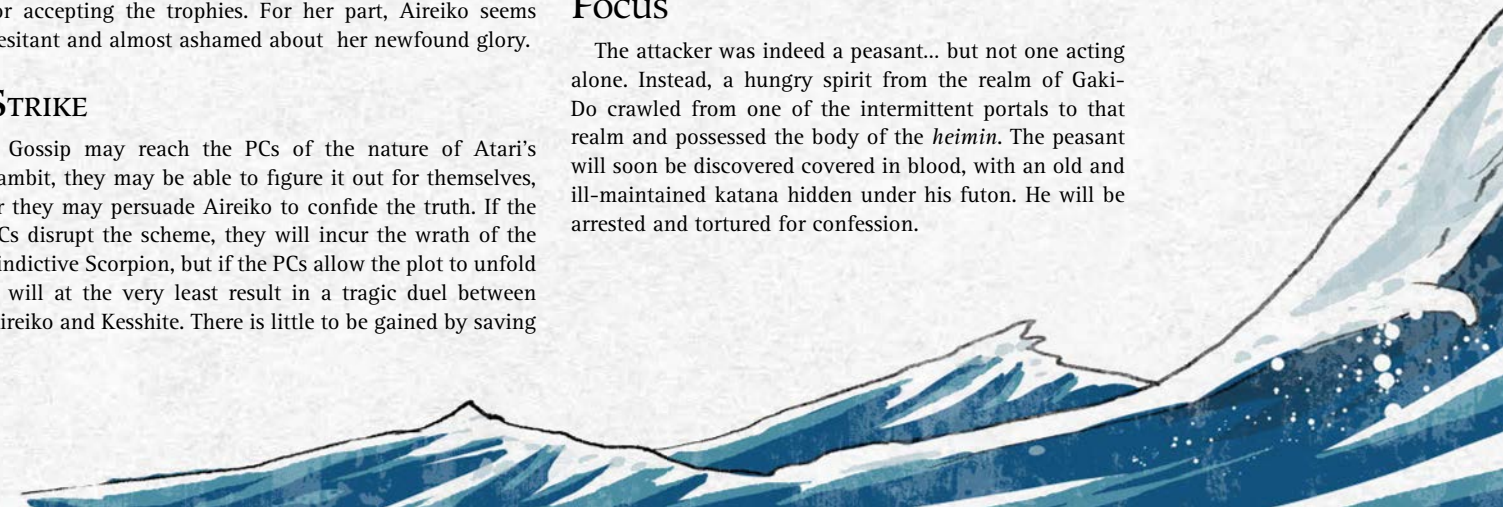
## Adventure Seed: Ancestral Dishonor

### CHALLENGE

A minor attendant of the court is found dead along the shore of Hantei's Point. Her head was hacked from her shoulders by the crudest of cuts, the attacker obviously unskilled. The tracks of bare feet are found not far from the shoreline, leading inland toward a small village of *heimin* near Shiro no Raiden. The Imperial administrator opens an investigation, and there is general expectation that the matter will soon be resolved with the punishment of the peasant responsible.

### Focus

The attacker was indeed a peasant... but not one acting alone. Instead, a hungry spirit from the realm of Gaki-Do crawled from one of the intermittent portals to that realm and possessed the body of the *heimin*. The peasant will soon be discovered covered in blood, with an old and ill-maintained katana hidden under his futon. He will be arrested and tortured for confession.







However, someone (preferably a PC with Haunted or a similar Disadvantage) sees the old blade and recognizes the markings: it belonged to an ancestor from hundreds of years ago. The ancestor was a well-known samurai who vanished while visiting the Crane coastline. Many thought him unjustly slain by the Crane, and a minor battle resulted.

## STRIKE

Do the PCs realize the peasant was somehow possessed by the ancestor? Even worse, do they realize this means the supposedly noble and famous ancestor was condemned to Gaki-Do? This should create multiple conundrums for the PCs. The peasant was not responsible for his actions, but to reveal why this is so will be to condemn their own ancestor for dishonor. Do they speak up or remain silent while the peasant is tortured and executed?

A further complication is that the Gaki spirit is still on the loose. Whether or not the peasant is spared, a similar attack will soon take place in the same spot. What is driving the ancestor to act out this crime over and over again? The GM can develop any of several different explanations, depending on the PCs' own motivations and characters. Alternatively, the murders may begin to spread as more Gaki come through into Ningen-Do, forcing the PCs to seek out the spirit portal and try to close it.

## Adventure Seed: Tadaka's Wrath

Although this adventure hook is built around Matsu Tadaka, with a few simple modifications it can take place anywhere with any group of NPCs.

## CHALLENGE

A peaceful visit to the Inn of the Last Light becomes fractious when a ronin and a clan samurai (preferably tie to a PC's clan) get into a loud discussion about the policies of the Imperial administrator. They do not seem to notice that Matsu Tadaka, her chosen enforcer, is also at the inn. Finally the drunken ronin loudly proclaims, "The woman should be uprooted, torn out like the weed she is and tossed into the sea. Someone like you or I could serve better than that idiot!" The clan samurai, unfortunately, agrees with this outrageous sentiment.

At that point, Matsu Tadaka rises, gets his swords, and without a word removes the heads from both the samurai. Spraying blood covers the tables, servants, and walls. The *heimin* servants scream in horror while Tadaka wipes his blade, saying into the air, "None shall dishonor the Imperial administrator. To do so is to mock Heaven itself." Unless someone stops him, he leaves without another word.





## Focus

The GM can allow the PCs to make Perception rolls to notice a peculiar gleam in the Lion samurai's eyes. While his words speak of duty, the flaw in his On betrays the truth: he found joy in this savage killing. After the killing, Tadaka will travel to the Screaming Springs to meditate... and listen to the harsh sounds of the dying. Afterward he returns to duty, seemingly at peace, his face expressionless as stone.

For her part, Miya Onako offers only the most minimal chastisement to Tadaka. Although she states publicly that such brutality is unnecessary, her silent approval is obvious to all in the court.

## STRIKE

Will the PCs step in and challenge Matsu Tadaka for his savagery? Perhaps the clan samurai (or the ronin) was a friend or associate of theirs. Is that a gleam of anger they see in his eyes days later? Will they be the next to be shown the "will of the Administrator" via the Lion enforcer? What is the connection to the Screaming Springs? Will the PCs discover the spirit portal to Toshigoku and if so what will they do with the information? Do they try to redeem the Matsu, or use the information against him – and perhaps against Miya Onako as well?

## Adventure Seed: I Can't Stop

### CHALLENGE

One of the PCs receives a visitation from what seems to be the Oracle of Water. (There are many rumors that the Oracle of Water may be found on the Eternal Danger Islands, but the GM can run this scenario in other locales just as easily given the mercurial nature of the Oracles.) After a dream or a vision while meditating, the PCs finds a secret grove filled with the scent of orchids. In the center lies a crystalline pool of the purest water, and just below the surface of the water is the shimmering outline of a woman. Presumably this is the Oracle of Water, and she tells a tale about the PC's future. She predicts no action he takes henceforth will ever be discovered by another. Nothing dishonorable, but also nothing great and glorious will be remembered. Even the Heavens themselves will be blind to the future of the PC. (This works especially well if the PC has the Disbeliever Disadvantage.) Moreover, she also predicts the PC has but one year of life remaining.

## Focus

Not long after the visitation, the character discovers his or her immediate family is at risk of losing its status, wealth, and power. When the PC dies there will be no one left to salvage any hope of redemption for the family.

At this point, a sudden hope appears: a dishonorable NPC (Yoritomo Haruko, Shosuro Atari, and Daigotsu Toshiro are all good choices) offers the character a helping hand. If the character is willing to sacrifice a little of his honor the NPC will be able to protect the status of the character's family. Once the PC dies, the NPC will step in to ensure that the PC's family is saved.

## STRIKE

If the PC takes the bait he will become wrapped up in plot after plot on behalf of the NPC. These should start off small. Perhaps the PC is required to stall another samurai from reaching an appointment on time. Then the PC is asked to lure an NPC into getting drunk and dishonoring himself in public. Eventually, the PC will be asked to challenge someone to a duel or even outright murder them.

Obviously, the whole thing is a trick by the villainous NPC. If the player character cannot figure this out on his own, perhaps another member of the court also has "visions of the Oracle" and then begins acting in a similarly dishonorable fashion. If the PCs realize their comrade is the victim of an elaborate hoax, how do they proceed? Conversely, what if the PC comes to enjoy his new dishonorable way of life and wishes to continue it regardless?

Alternatively, perhaps the vision was true and the mysterious woman really was the Oracle of Water... the Dark Oracle of Water. In that case, the "prophecy" is perhaps a self-fulfilling one, a lie that sends the PC down the road to damnation. How do the PCs rescue him from this self-destructive spiral?







## Adventure Seed: Cursed Transformation

This scenario seed works best with PCs who have shown great disdain for the *heimin* or *hinin* castes, or who have a Disadvantage that focuses on disliking or not caring for such groups.

### CHALLENGE

The PC encounters a bumbling *eta* who is not where he is supposed to be. Even as the character is forced to note the *eta*'s presence and feel disdain or dislike, the *eta* trips and spills the refuse he is carrying all over the PC. He immediately falls to the ground in abject horror, perhaps whispering a plea for his life. Does the PCs kill the *eta*, punish him, abuse him?

### FOCUS

The next morning the PC (or perhaps the entire party) awakens out of place and out of body. He is now an *eta*, located in an *eta*'s hut at the local *hinin* community. For added spice, the PC may be inhabiting the body of an *eta* who is not even respected within his own community – a drunkard or a lazy worker. How does the PC react to this bizarre situation? As a further complication, perhaps the PC still has his swords – but an *eta* who is seen carrying such an item is instantly condemned to death. The GM should have the PC interact with previously known individuals – peasants, merchants, and samurai – to experience the Celestial Order from its bottom rung.

As a further complication, perhaps the PC has a time-sensitive task (such as delivering a message) which must be fulfilled. Does he try to carry it out in his *eta* body?

### STRIKE

Obviously, someone has transformed the PC. Who is responsible? On the Eternal Danger Islands, the obvious answer is a being from Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief. Perhaps a *mujina* of exceptional power decided to play a prank on the PC, or perhaps a Kenku witnessed the PC's interaction with the *eta* and decided to teach him a lesson.

For a more sinister explanation, perhaps the original *eta* was a member of a maho cult such as the Bloodspeakers, and the other cultists are punishing the PC with a blood-magic curse or some sort of *nemuranai*.

Regardless, there should at least be some possibility for the PC to escape his situation. If the culprit is a creature of Mischief, it will reveal itself at some point either to gloat or to explain its intentions, telling the PC what he must do to return to normal. If maho is the cause, the PC will eventually be confronted by the cultists, who offer a simple choice: join them and regain his true form, or refuse and live as an *eta* forever.

## Adventure Seed: The Book of War

### CHALLENGE

Miya Onako sends the PCs to an outlying village on Hantei's Point to collect taxes (paid in kind as rice and other goods). The villagers have been skimping and Onako wants the problem resolved at once. When the PCs arrive, they discover the village does not have the required taxes, but the shortfall does have an explanation: they have been attacked by a ronin gang claiming to be members of the Disciples of Sun Tao. There is indeed evidence of a recent bandit attack; however, suspicious the PCs may notice a certain caginess among the peasants.

### FOCUS

The village's harvest has been poor – not at all uncommon on the Eternal Danger Islands – and the farmers have lived for some time in fear of the tax season. However, some weeks ago the villagers found a dead samurai along the roadway, mauled as if by a dangerous animal. The ronin had a book on his person, an extremely valuable book: an antique copy of the Book of Sun Tao. The village headman is literate enough to recognize that the scroll was valuable, and decided they should sell the book and use the money to pay their upcoming taxes, sparing themselves from hunger over the winter.





Unfortunately, when the peasants began seeking a merchant to purchase the book, they inadvertently notified the rest of the ronin that their missing book was in the village. The ronin came to the village and demanded the book, but in response the villagers resisted, ultimately chasing the ronin out with the combination of numbers and peasant weapons.

## STRIKE

At the moment, the ronin are gathering their friends and allies, plotting to return in a larger group and retrieve their book by force. (At the GM's option, one of their reinforcements might be the ronin Aireiko.) The villagers, for their part, are terrified of a return attack but also afraid to tell the PCs what really happened lest they be condemned for robbing a samurai – a crime which would forfeit all their lives. Regardless, the village does not have the resources to pay its taxes without starving over the winter.

There are a number of ways this can play out. If the PCs find out about the book (perhaps from the merchant the peasants approached, or perhaps by convincing some of the villagers to tell the truth) they must decide whether to punish the villagers for their theft and whether to take the book for taxes, keep it for themselves, or give it back to the ronin. How do they deal with the ronin band? Do they defend the village – it is Miya Onako's property, after all – or abandon it to its fate? If they do not return the book, the ronin may track them back to the City of the Prosperous Dawn, leading to further potential conflicts.

The book itself may or may not be an authentic copy of the Book of Sun Tao. If it is authentic, it is truly priceless and may even have the properties of a *nemuranai*.

## Adventure Seed: A Monk By the River

### CHALLENGE

The PCs are caught by a sudden rainstorm (most likely during spring and fall, although weather on the Eternal Danger Islands is unpredictable at the best of times) while they are traveling between different locations on Hantei's Point. They may be delivering a message, escorting a dignitary, or any other sort of mission the GM can devise. Regardless, after a lengthy delay caused by the storm, the PCs finally are able to resume their journey only to discover water barring their way. The local stream has burst its banks and the closest bridge has washed away.



A single monk is sitting on a stone at the edge of the water. The man has a crude frog tattooed on his cheek and a small but very active scorpion crawling around beside him on the boulder, apparently unwilling to venture onto the soggy ground below. The monk's eyes are a vivid blue mixed with green, like the ocean in storm.

## Focus

The monk is mysterious in his words, speaking in twisted phrases that turn back questions upon the questioner. Eventually, he suggests he can help the PCs cross the river and continue their journey... if they answer his riddle.

## STRIKE

The monk is whoever or whatever the GM might wish. Perhaps he is a Scorpion running a deception in order to draw out the secrets of the PCs. Perhaps he truly is a monk of the Brotherhood, seeking enlightenment from the words of strangers.

Or perhaps he is a creature of Chikushudo, a kaeru (frog spirit) who has recently come to the mortal realm and learned about the famous parable of the Scorpion and the Frog. The kaeru spirit is deeply disturbed by a mortal fable depicting one of his cousins dying so ingloriously for what seems to be no real reason – after all, what is the point of proving that scorpions cannot be trusted? If the PCs trivialize his concerns, he will become angry and perhaps violent, but if they offer wise answers he will be pleased and fulfill his pledge to help them cross the river. If the PCs are able to truly help him understand the parable at a deep level, the kaeru might even offer them a boon of some sort.















# NEW MECHANICS

## Chapter One: Tides of War

### New Weapons

These weapons are more obscure and esoteric than their counterparts from the L5R 4th Edition Core rulebook, and will most likely come into play with specialized characters in a campaign built around monks or ninja.

#### DRAGON BEARD HOOK (LONGXU HOOK)

- ☉ Keyword: Large
- ☉ Skill: Chain Weapons
- ☉ DR: 1k2
- ☉ Special Rules: The dragon beard hook may be used to initiate and maintain a grapple at a distance of up to 30 feet.
- ☉ Price: 4 koku

#### ROPE DART

- ☉ Keyword: Large, Ninja
- ☉ Skill: Chain Weapons
- ☉ DR: 1k1
- ☉ Special Rules: Rope darts may be used to initiate and maintain a grapple at a distance of up to 15 feet.
- ☉ Price: 5 bu

#### THREE-SECTION STAFF

- ☉ Keywords: Large, Monk, Ninja
- ☉ Skill: Staves
- ☉ DR: 2k2
- ☉ Price: 1 koku

#### PITCHFORK

- ☉ Keywords: Peasant, Large
- ☉ Skill: Staves
- ☉ DR: 1k2
- ☉ Special Rules: If a pitchfork inflicts more than 20 Wounds with a single attack, it breaks.
- ☉ Price: 3 bu

#### TORCH

- ☉ Keywords: Peasant, Improvised
- ☉ Skill: Jiujutsu (Improvised Weapons)
- ☉ DR: 0k1
- ☉ Special Rules: Enemies hit with a torch must roll Reflexes at TN 10 to avoid catching on fire. Foes who are set on fire take 1k1 fire damage during the Reactions Stage of each Round until they extinguish the fire (such as by jumping into water, or taking a Complex Action to smother the flames).
- ☉ Price: 1 bu

### Player's Option: Dramatic Chain and Staff Action

L5R combat is usually focused on the weapons associated with the samurai – the sword, naginata, and bow. However, Asian action cinema often depicts chain weapons and staves in a highly dramatic fashion which emphasizes their capacities for unpredictable movements, striking opponents at range, and tripping, throwing, entangling or otherwise taking out those opponents.

GMs who wish to add more depth to these underutilized weapons can encourage this by offering their players more options with Raises and Maneuvers. A few examples follow:

In the L5R Core rules, certain weapons can be used to perform Grapples. GMs who wish to add more options to chain weapons can allow them to be used for this purpose as well, or even allow players to call Raises on chain weapon attacks to add +1k0 bonuses to their subsequent Contested Rolls to control such Grapples.





The Three-Section-Staff is an exotic-looking weapon but one with no special properties of its own. GMs who wish to add flavor to this weapon can allow characters who are highly skilled in staff combat (Staves Skill Rank of 5 or higher) to gain a defensive bonus while using the three-section-staff (such as a +5 bonus to Armor TN), to gain a Free Raise on performing Knockdown attacks with the weapon, or even to gain a bonus for getting past Reduction (due to the staff's ability to whip around a foe's body and thus strike at vulnerable areas).

Both chain weapons and the longer sorts of staves are often depicted as granting the advantage of reach – allowing a warrior to strike his foes before they can reach him, or to hold enemies at bay with a whirling defensive pattern. The effects of “reach” can be represented by granting a skilled character an Initiative bonus when fighting opponents with Medium or Small weapons. The defensive effects of these weapons can be represented by allowing a well-skilled character (Skill Rank of at least 3, or more likely 5+) to gain extra bonuses when using the Defense or Full Defense Stances.

Another frequent depiction in Asian cinema is the use of these weapons to strike many opponents with a single whirling, spinning attack. Although the GM can represent this by allowing a skilled character to get Free Raises on the Extra Attack Maneuver, a more interesting option might be to allow the character to reduce the damage of his weapon (dropping unkept or even kept dice) to be able to strike multiple opponents with a single attack. This works especially well if the foes are lower Insight Rank samurai, peasant rebels, goblins, or similar “minions” who cannot match the character's skills.

Finally, a character might use a chain weapon to pin down an opponent, such as by wrapping the chain around an arm or leg and then wrapping the other end around a tree, pillar, or fence. These can be represented by the character taking Raises to reduce his opponent's mobility, which the GM can then represent by lowering the victim's effective Water Ring for movement purposes.

## New Alternate Paths

### MANTIS CLAN: STUDENT OF THE CLIFF'S EDGE

The Mantis love chain weapons, especially the *kusarigama* – which was wielded by none other than their clan founder, Kaimetsu-Uo. Basic Mantis chain weapon training is similar to the training in other clans, but the clan's most advanced chain-weapon fighters train in the Cliff's Edge Dojo, learning specialized maneuvers taught only by the most experienced sensei. Many students undertake special pilgrimages to be able to truly master the Mantis techniques.

#### NEW ALTERNATE PATH: CLIFF'S EDGE STUDENT [BUSHI]

- Rank: 3 or 4
- Replaces: Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter 3, Yoritomo Bushi 4
- Requires: Agility 4, Chain Weapons 5





### TECHNIQUE: HOWL OF THE CLIFF'S EDGE

The Mantis who train at Cliff's Edge Dojo are particularly fond of using the kusarigama to trip, disarm, and otherwise disable their foes. When using a kusarigama to make a Knockdown or Disarm maneuver, you gain a +2k1 bonus to your attack roll. You may call three Raises on an attack with a kusarigama to Entangle an opponent up to 15' away (as per the Entangled condition in the L5R 4th Edition Core rulebook, page 89). The condition lasts until you voluntarily release the foe (as a Free Action), or the foe succeeds in a Contested Strength Roll against you (as a Simple Action).

### SCORPION CLAN: THE SCORPION'S TAIL

Chain weapons are taught in the Scorpion Clan's shinobi organizations, and in addition there is a showier type of chain fighting taught at the Shosuro Acting Academy which is designed to appear as a form of dance.

Those few Scorpion bushi and assassins who actually specialize in chain weapons above other types of armament train in the small dojo which calls itself the Scorpion's Tail. Their style specializes in the kusarigama, using it as both an infiltration tool and as a vicious weapon. They especially appreciate its ability to disable and even cripple opponents at a distance.

### NEW ALTERNATE PATH: THE SCORPION'S TAIL [BUSHI/NINJA]

- Rank: 3 or 4
- Replaces: Bayushi Bushi 3, Shosuro Infiltrator 4
- Requires: Athletics 4, Chain Weapons 4

### TECHNIQUE: THE TAIL'S REACH

The Scorpion's Tail dojo teaches students several effective ways to employ the kusarigama and its brethren. If you use any chain weapon as a climbing tool, you gain a +1k1 bonus to any Athletics rolls made for that purpose. You may attack with a kusarigama at a distance of up to 15' from your target. Also, any time you attack with a kusarigama, you may call three Raises on the attack to inflict the Lame Disadvantage on your opponent – the Disadvantage lasts until the Wounds from the attack are healed.

## New Kata:

### WAVES UPON THE BREAKERS

The first essential truth of the Steel Kata series is that the ancestors of both families believed the way of the sword was reflected in every aspect of life. Those who master this kata come to understand a true warrior can balance all things on the edge of a pure blade.

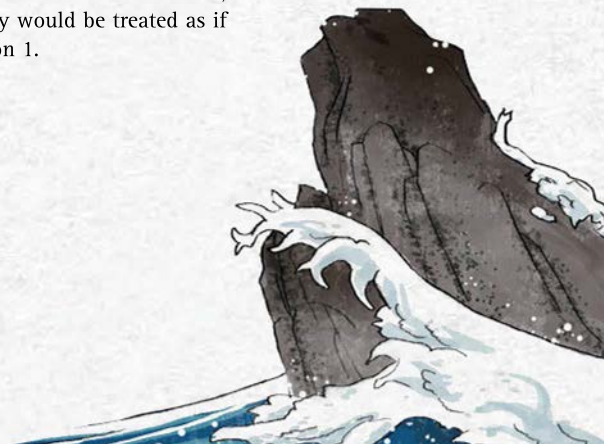
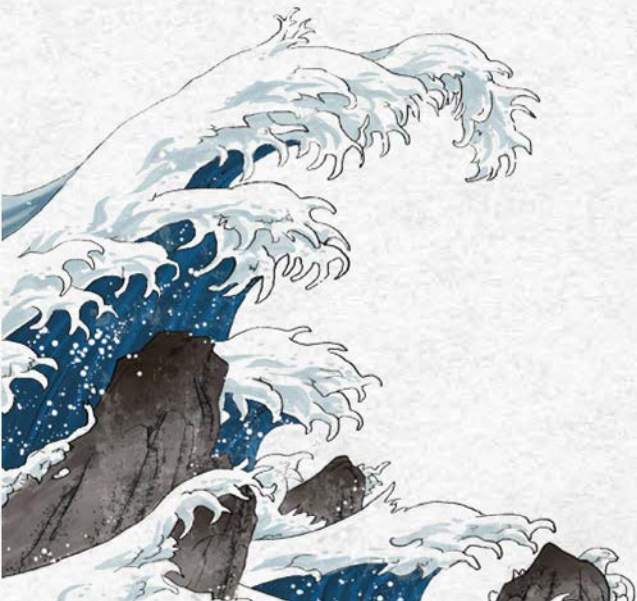
- Ring/Mastery: Water 3
- Schools: Akodo Bushi, Kakita Bushi, Shinjo Bushi
- Effect: This kata channels a samurai's chi such that it enhances their natural strength and focus and brings it to bear on the battlefield. When this kata is active and you are wielding a weapon in which you have at least three skill ranks, your damage is increased by +1k0.

### LEAVES IN THE STREAM

- Ring/Mastery: Water 3
- Schools: Bayushi Bushi, Hiruma Bushi, Mirumoto Bushi, Shiba Bushi
- Effect: This kata teaches the samurai to embrace the flowing speed of water, allowing him to move significantly faster across the battlefield. While this kata is active, you may reduce your Armor TN by up to 5 x your Water (but cannot reduce it below 5). In return, you may increase your maximum possible movement distance for the Round by the same amount.

### POWER OF THE TSUNAMI

- Ring/Mastery: Water 4
- Schools: Daigotsu Bushi, Hida Bushi, Moto Bushi
- Effect: While this kata is active, once per Round when attacking an opponent you may ignore an amount of Reduction equal to your Water Ring. For example, if you possess Water 4 and attack an opponent with Reduction 5 while this kata is active, once per Round that enemy would be treated as if he only possessed Reduction 1.





## The Way of Mizu-do

Mizu-do is a Crane martial art, originally developed from stage performance. It is a defensive and “soft” that focuses on using the enemy’s strength against him. It relies on locks and throws that neutralize an enemy and end the fight swiftly, all while protecting the foe from any permanent injury. The form is quite popular among the Crane and in the Brotherhood of Shinsei, but bushi – especially Crab and Lion bushi – tend to look down on Mizu-do as impractical and pretentious. The form is unusually popular among certain groups of courtiers, who see it as a way to defend themselves without the crude violence of weapons.

Courtiers from other clans, especially from the Unicorn and Phoenix, sometimes exchange favors to be able to train in Mizu-do. If the GM wishes to incorporate this into the campaign, this Path should be made available to any courtier school, subject to suitable negotiations to arrange the training.

### NEW ALTERNATE PATH: STUDENT OF MIZU-DO [MONK/ARTISAN]

- Technique Rank: 3
- Replaces: Any non-martial Brotherhood Monk 3, Doji Courtier 3, Kakita Artisan 3, Asahina Shugenja 3
- Requires: Jujutsu (Mizu-do) 4, Water 3, access to a Mizu-do sensei

### TECHNIQUE: THE WAY OF WATER

Masters of Mizu-do techniques are able to avoid nearly any strike, subduing their attackers by using their own strength against them. When performing a Grapple, you use your opponent’s Strength Rank in place of your own. While you are in the Defense or Full Defense stance, when a melee attack misses you, you may immediately take a Free Action to spend a Void Point and make a Jujutsu (Mizu-do) / Strength roll against a TN of the opponent’s attack roll, but using the opponent’s Strength Rank in place of your own. If you succeed in this roll, you may either immediately Throw the opponent (as per the option in Grappling) or immediately take control of a Grapple against the opponent.

## Chapter Two: Tides of Magic

### NEW ADVANTAGE: BATTLE HEALING [MYSTICAL] (5 POINTS)

Some of the most ardent and militant shugenja of the Empire, including the Kuni family and Bishamon’s Chosen among the Kitsu, understand that the essence of all Elements can be used to suffuse the broken flesh of an honorable warrior and make it whole. Water is superior for such things, of course, but the other Elements can suffice when necessary. Once per day per person, you may expend one Water spell slot or two spell slots in any other Element(s) to heal one Wound Rank of a Rokugani you are touching.

### New Shugenja Paths

#### LION CLAN: DISCIPLES OF THE RIVER

Founded by Kitsu Sonosuke, the Disciples recruit those in the Kitsu family who are talented shugenja but lack the pure bloodlines to become Sodan-Senzo or the militant spirit to join Bishamon’s Chosen. They devote themselves to venerating the spirits of the Empire’s rivers, great and small, and their power serves the Lion Clan in many ways, from irrigating local rice paddies to defending the clan’s northern border or moving troops and supplies safely along waterways. The Disciples are seen as eccentric but well-meaning and honorable by the rest of their clan.

#### NEW ALTERNATE PATH: THE DISCIPLES OF THE RIVER [SHUGENJA]

- Rank: 3
- Replaces: Kitsu Shugenja 3
- Requirements: Way of the Land Advantage for an area with a river.

#### TECHNIQUE: SERVANT OF THE RIVER

The Disciples of the River take the concept of Water magic much more literally than do most of the Kitsu family. Their approach is more like that of a Phoenix, although none would ever admit such (and they would be insulted by the comparison). When casting a Water spell while standing within one hundred feet of a naturally occurring river, you gain one Free Raise on that spell.





## PHOENIX CLAN: ACOLYTES OF SNOW

Founded by a third-century Isawa shugenja who was fascinated by the legends of the Yuki no Onna (Snow Maiden), the Acolytes develop magic built around snow and ice, modifying spells from Water and other Elements to fit their needs.

### NEW ALTERNATE PATH: THE ACOLYTES OF SNOW [SHUGENJA]

- ☉ **Technique Rank:** 2 or 3
- ☉ **Replaces:** Isawa Shugenja 2, any other Phoenix Shugenja 3
- ☉ **Requirements:** Lore: Yuki no Onna 3 or Water Affinity

#### TECHNIQUE: THE MAIDEN'S ICY GRASP

The Acolytes of Snow recognize that the icy touch of the Snow Maiden allows Water to mirror the strength and power of Earth. You may cast the following Earth spells as Water spells: **Armor of Earth, Armor of the Emperor, Be the Mountain, Bonds of Ningen-do, Earth's Stagnation, Grasp of Earth, Major Binding, Minor Binding, and Wall of Earth.** The spells create their physical effects from ice instead of from earth or stone, and the Acolytes usually rename these spells to incorporate "Ice" into their titles.

## PHOENIX AND DRAGONFLY CLANS: KAWARU SAGES

This small sect of shugenja studies and refines the ancient kawaru texts and methods, offering guidance and divination to all who might need it. To these shugenja the ways of kawaru are a sacred art, a gift from the Fortunes, and they often blend the kawaru methods with actual divination magic to get more precise results. They like to wear robes embroidered with the kawaru hexagrams. Kawaru Sages occasionally gain fame as court diviners, although they more often toil in obscurity.

### NEW ALTERNATE PATH: KAWARU SAGES [SHUGENJA]

- ☉ **Technique Rank:** 2
- ☉ **Replaces:** Any Phoenix shugenja 2, Tonbo Shugenja 2
- ☉ **Requirements:** Divination (Kawaru) 3

#### TECHNIQUE: THE VEIL OF THE FUTURE

The Kawaru Sages have mastered the art of reading the sixty-four hexagrams of kawaru in order to divine what will happen in the near future, enhancing their forecasts with the aid of the kami of Water. At the beginning of each day, you may spend one hour in meditation and make a Divination Skill Roll, at a basic TN of 15. If successful, you gain a +1k0 bonus die, and you may Raise on the roll to gain addition bonus dice up to your Water Ring. You may spend these +1k0 bonus dice on any Spell Casting Rolls made during the rest of the day. Unused dice are lost at nightfall.



## IMPERIAL FAMILIES: THE SEPPUN ASTROLOGERS

Astrology is very important to all of the Imperial families, with the Otomo employing it in court while the Seppun study it for its spiritual and divinatory purposes. The Seppun Astrologers watch the night skies constantly, seeking portents to better protect the Emperor and the Empire. Like the Kawaru Sages, the Seppun supplement their astrological knowledge whenever possible with divination magic (although they would be greatly insulted to be compared to the practitioners of kawaru).

### NEW ALTERNATE PATH: SEPPUN ASTROLOGERS [SHUGENJA]

- ☉ **Technique Rank:** 4
- ☉ **Replaces:** Seppun Shugenja 4
- ☉ **Requirements:** Astrology 4, Divination (Omens) 5

#### TECHNIQUE: WISDOM OF THE HEAVENS

The sage-priests of the Seppun Astrologers are capable of finding great wisdom in the alignments of the Celestial Heavens, and their recognition of previously unnoticed patterns can bring joy... or doom... to the mortal world. Once per month, you may clarify a person's place in the great tapestry of fate and thereby confer one Spiritual Advantage or Spiritual Disadvantage on that person. (This is a ritual effect and cannot be performed during a skirmish.) This effect lasts for one month or until you use this Technique on a different person, whichever comes first. If you are attempting to confer a Disadvantage, you must also succeed at a Contested Void Roll against the target.

**GM's Notes:** Wise GMs will recognize there is much potential for abuse in this Technique. In general, the GM should exercise a veto on any Advantage or Disadvantage that does not make sense. In particular, this Technique should never be allowed to bestow Ancestors or to inflict truly heinous Disadvantages such as Momoku or the Shadowlands Taint. (Alternatively, the GM may allow the Astrologer to inflict more powerful Disadvantages, but require Raises on the Contested Void Roll.)







## New Water Spells

### PURIFICATION OF THE KAMI

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 1
- ☉ Range: Touch
- ☉ Area of Effect: Body of water up to 500 feet in radius
- ☉ Duration: Permanent
- ☉ Raises: Area of Effect (+500 feet radius per Raise)

This prayer invokes the purity and cleansing strength of the Water kami to purge filth and contamination from a body of water such as a pond, a moat, or some of a stream or river. The caster touches the water as part of the casting ritual, and the purification ripples out from that point in waves of glowing light. This spell renders all the water within the area of effect wholly pure and safe to drink, removing all dirt, disease, and toxins. (However, it cannot purge the Taint.) The purification is a one-off event and cannot prevent dirt or poison from returning to the water later.

This spell can also be cast on water inside a single container (such as a bucket, barrel, or bottle). If the spell is cast on an alcoholic beverage (such as sake, shochu, or plum wine) it will purge the drink's flavor and alcohol content, leaving it as pure water.

### THE SWELL OF THE STORM

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 1 (Defense)
- ☉ Range: 25'
- ☉ Area of Effect: One target creature
- ☉ Duration: Instantaneous
- ☉ Raises: Range (+10' per Raise), Area of Effect (+1 target per two Raises), Special (+1k0 on the Contested Roll per Raise)

This spell evokes a sudden blast of water that strikes with the heavy, irresistible power of the tide. The water is summoned into existence, flying out from the caster in a heavy mass and striking the target with gentle but night-irresistible power. The target must make a Contested Roll of his Strength against the caster's Water – failure means Knockdown (the target is knocked Prone). The spell will also extinguish any open flames the targets are carrying (torches, lanterns, candles, etc).

This spell can affect Huge creatures, although the GM may wish to award them a bonus on their Contested Roll to reflect the greater difficulty of knocking down such large targets.

### SUITENGU'S CURSE

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 1
- ☉ Range: 20'
- ☉ Area of Effect: One target creature
- ☉ Duration: 10 Rounds
- ☉ Raises: Range (+10' per Raise), Duration (+3 Rounds per Raise)

This prayer invokes Suitengu, the Fortune of the Sea, to drag down the target with the weight of his sullen wrath. The target feels a great weight on all his limbs, as though he is trying to swim in heavy seas. Mechanically, Suitengu's hostility lowers the target's Reflexes Rank by 1 and causes him to move as though his Water is 1 Rank lower for the duration of the spell.

### STRENGTH OF THE TSUNAMI

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 2
- ☉ Range: Touch
- ☉ Area of Effect: Caster
- ☉ Duration: 3 Rounds
- ☉ Raises: Area of Effect (cast on someone else for two Raises), Duration (+1 Round per Raise)

This spell calls on Water's affinity to physical strength. The surge of Water kami through the body briefly enhances the muscles, allowing the targeted person to perform prodigious feats. For the duration of the spell, the target's Strength Rank is increased by an amount equal to half the caster's Water Ring (rounded down). This cannot raise the Strength Rank higher than 9.

### SURGING SOUL

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 2 (Battle)
- ☉ Range: 10'
- ☉ Area of Effect: One target person
- ☉ Duration: 3 Rounds
- ☉ Raises: Range (+10' per Raise), Duration (+1 Round per two Raises)

In contrast to the more peaceful and healing aspects of Water, this prayer evokes the power of Water on the attack, unleashing a surge of chi through the target's limbs to empower his strikes. However, the massive surge of Water kami through the body also makes it difficult for the target to remain still. The recipient of this prayer enjoys a +1k1 bonus to all





Attack rolls, but cannot enter or benefit from the Center Stance and must take at least one Move Action every Round for the duration of the spell. Surging Soul is greatly favored among war-shugenja such as the martial wing of the Kitsu, the Tamori, the Kuni, and the Iuchi, but finds less acceptance in families like the Asahina and the Isawa.

## YUKI'S TOUCH

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 2 (Travel)
- ☉ Range: Touch
- ☉ Area of Effect: Body of water 100' radius from caster
- ☉ Duration: Instantaneous
- ☉ Raises: Area of Effect (+50' radius per Raise)

This spell, named after the legendary spirit known as the Yuki no Onna, persuades the Water spirits in a stream, river, or lake to expel all Fire from their presence, causing the water to instantly freeze. A single natural body of water freezes solid out to a distance of 100' from the caster. Although this has uses in combat, the most frequent employment of the spell is to allow travelers or soldiers to cross water barriers. Any persons or creatures within the water will be trapped, and if they are under the surface they will suffocate (treat as Drowning). Breaking free of the ice will require a Contested Roll of Strength against the caster's Water. The ice will melt normally.

## HEAVEN'S TEARS

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 2 (Crystal)
- ☉ Range: Centered on caster
- ☉ Area of Effect: 30' radius around caster
- ☉ Duration: 2 Rounds
- ☉ Raises: Area of Effect (+5' radius per Raise), Duration (+1 Round for two Raises, may only be done once)

This prayer evokes the sorrow of the Heavens, unleashing a brief deluge of rain which is endowed with the spiritual purity of the Sun. The spell summons divine rain from the sky, and thus can only be used effectively outdoors – it cannot cause rain to fall indoors or underground. Those of pure soul (no Taint or Shadow corruption, Honor Rank 4.0 or better) who are bathed in Heaven's Tears are healed each Round by a number of Wounds equal to the caster's Water. Conversely, those with Taint or Shadow corruption suffer 1k1 Wounds for each Round they are exposed to the Tears.

## ENDLESS DELUGE

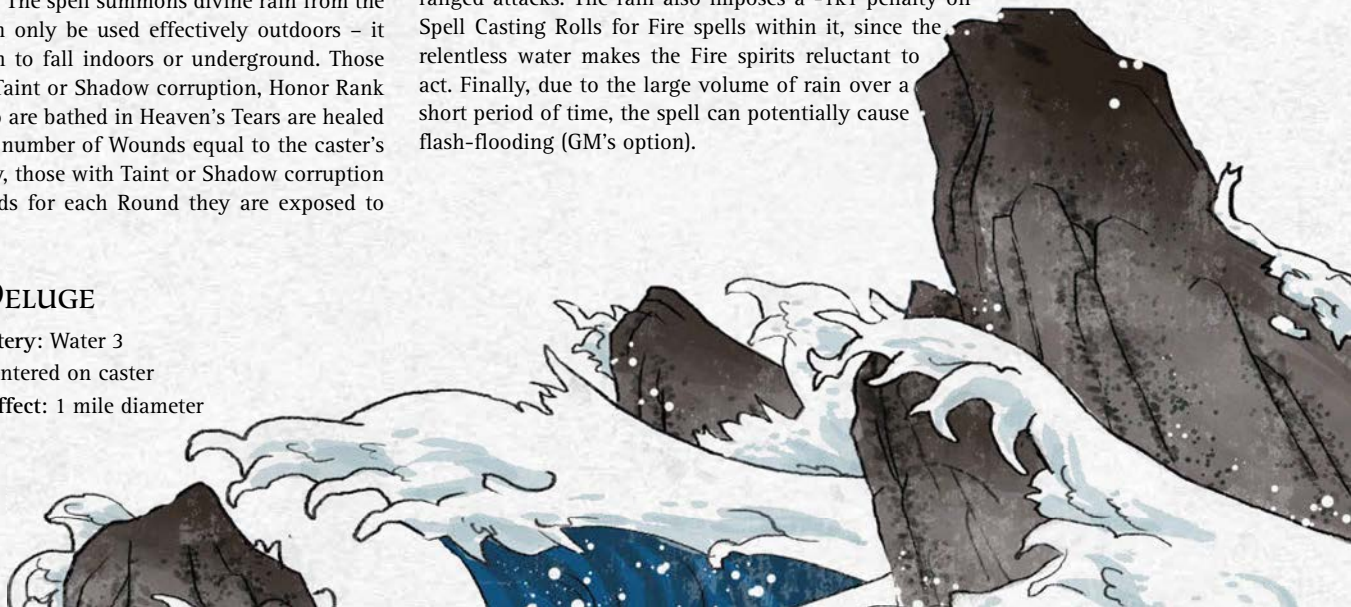
- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 3
- ☉ Range: Centered on caster
- ☉ Area of Effect: 1 mile diameter



- ☉ Duration: 12 hours
- ☉ Raises: Area of Effect (+1 mile per two Raises), Duration (+6 hours per Raise)

This spell calls on the Water spirits in the sky to congregate and descend to the earth, unleashing a massive rainstorm. Casting this spell is a ritual requiring at least ten minutes; at the GM's option, casting this spell in an especially dry region, or during a drought, may require more casting time or require Raises to succeed. Rainclouds gather while the spell is being cast, and once it is completed the clouds open up and rain begins pouring down, continuing without cease for many hours.

The chief value of this spell is to extinguish fires (even large conflagrations such as forest fires will be doused within a half hour or so) and to abate the effects of drought. However, the relentless pouring rain also obscures visibility and slickens objects, imposing a -1k0 penalty on all physical actions and a -2k0 penalty on ranged attacks. The rain also imposes a -1k1 penalty on Spell Casting Rolls for Fire spells within it, since the relentless water makes the Fire spirits reluctant to act. Finally, due to the large volume of rain over a short period of time, the spell can potentially cause flash-flooding (GM's option).







## THE INNER OCEAN

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 3
- ☉ Range: 50'
- ☉ Area of Effect: One willing person
- ☉ Duration: 5 minutes
- ☉ Raises: Range (+20' per Raise), Duration (+1 Minute per Raise)

This spell evokes the target's inner Water to the ultimate degree, strengthening it to the point where it completely overwhelms the target's other Elements. The target – who may be the caster – is physically transformed into pure clear water, along with anything he might be wearing or carrying at the moment the spell is cast. This state persists until the spell expires, and while the target is water he cannot speak, attack, cast spells, or directly manipulate physical objects. However, he can move more quickly (performing Move Actions as though he has +1 Rank in his Water Ring), can indirectly manipulate objects by pushing against them, and can flow his liquid body through narrow openings. (The target's physical mass does not change, so he cannot squeeze himself into a small box or otherwise evade the constraints of his size.) The target is effectively immune to most physical harm, but Fire spells can damage him, as can truly intense heat such as a burning castle or a lava flow. At the GM's option, certain types of physical events – such as being scattered or partially soaked up with towels – might also harm the transformed person.

Once the spell's duration ends, the target's Elements rebalance and he returns to normal.

## SANCTUARY OF THE WAVES

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 3 (Defense)
- ☉ Range: 50'
- ☉ Area of Effect: One target person
- ☉ Duration: 10 Rounds
- ☉ Raises: Duration (+3 Rounds per Raise), Area of Effect (+1 person per Raise)

*“The sea is a thing of great destructive power, but also great mercy and salvation.” - Asako Chukage*

This spell calls on the power of Water to protect and hide the chosen targets (who must be willing, and can include the caster). The spell can only be cast within range of a large quantity of water in a natural environment – e.g. a pond, stream, or something larger. When the spell is cast, the water lunges out, scoops up the targets, and draws them into the water, concealing them beneath its surface. The targets have enough air to breathe for the duration of the spell, but no longer. The surrounding barrier of water completely protects the targets, but also completely blocks them from any sort of attack against those outside – indeed, they will not even be able to see what is happening above the water unless they can roll Perception at TN 20 to make out the blurry images.

Once the spell's duration expires, the water releases the targets where they are – they must swim to the surface on their own.

## TYPHOON'S SURGE

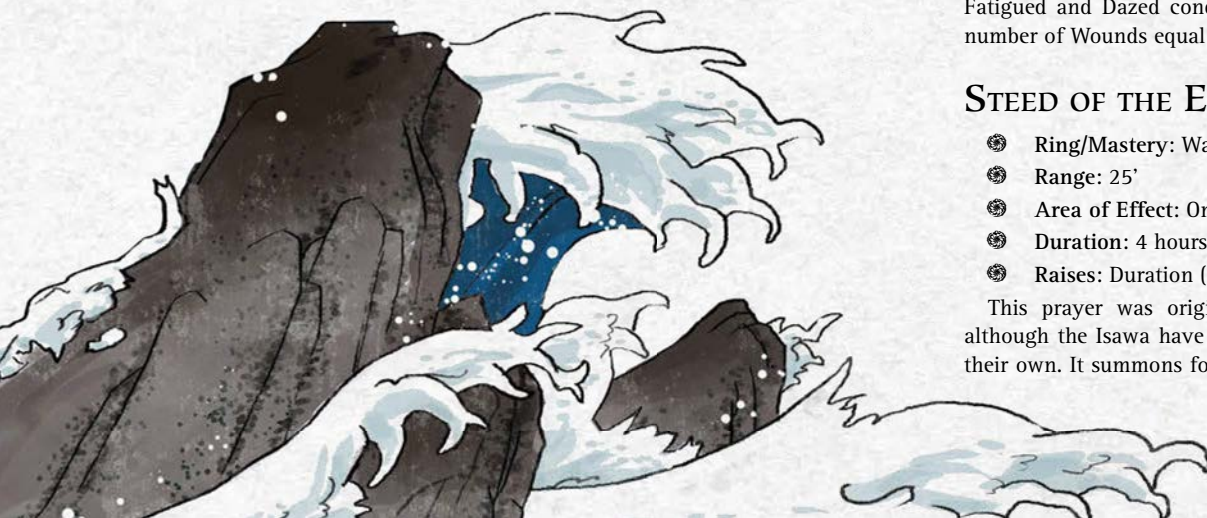
- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 3
- ☉ Range: 50'
- ☉ Area of Effect: One or more target allies
- ☉ Duration: Instantaneous
- ☉ Raises: Range (+10' per Raise), Area of Effect (+1 Target beyond caster's Water per two Raises)

This spell, sometimes called by the more mundane name “Renewed Energy,” is a variation on the more commonly-used prayer Rejuvenating Vapors. The spell targets a number of allies within range up to the caster's Water Rank (additional targets beyond the caster's Water may be taken with Raises). All of the targets experience a sudden and powerful surge of energy as the spell floods them with invigorating chi. They are freed from the effects of the Fatigued and Dazed conditions, and each target heals a number of Wounds equal to the caster's Water Rank.

## STEED OF THE EBBING TIDES

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 4 (Travel)
- ☉ Range: 25'
- ☉ Area of Effect: One summoned steed
- ☉ Duration: 4 hours
- ☉ Raises: Duration (+2 hours per Raise)

This prayer was originally developed by the Iuchi, although the Isawa have since devised a similar spell on their own. It summons forth a number of powerful Water





kami, who take the physical form of a watery, translucent horse. The Steed will bear the caster (or one other person designated by the caster at the time the Steed is first summoned) in the same manner of a normal horse, can be controlled with Horsemanship in the normal way, and will fight selflessly in its rider's defense; for game purposes, the Steed is considered to have the same mechanical statistics as an Utaku Warhorse, but also has Reduction 15. It is untiring for as long as it remains in existence. Once the spell expires, the Steed collapses into normal water – which can be an unpleasant surprise if someone is still mounted on it.

## MASTER OF THE ROLLING RIVER

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 4 (Battle)
- ☉ Range: 100'
- ☉ Area of Effect: Up to 25 allies in one group
- ☉ Duration: 5 minutes
- ☉ Raises: Range (+50' per Raise), Duration (+1 minute per Raise), Special (affect non-samurai, see description)

This spell was originally devised by battle shugenja of the Kitsu and Luchi families, and remains a favorite among them. It infuses a military unit with the flowing speed and relentless strength of Water, allowing the soldiers to move more quickly and strike more powerfully on the battlefield. The caster chooses one group of allies (up to roughly a squadron) to receive this blessing; all troops in that unit may move as though their Water is 1 Rank higher and are considered to have a Strength 1 Rank higher for the duration of the spell.

This spell normally only benefits samurai, but a skilled caster can extend the blessing to cover other allies. Two Raises will allow the spell to affect non-samurai humans (e.g. ashigaru), while four Raises will allow it to affect non-human allies such as Naga or Ratlings.

This spell may also be used to affect Mass Battle scenarios. Each casting of the spell during a Mass Battle awards a bonus equal to the caster's Water Ring to the total of the commanding general's next Battle Skill roll to determine winning or losing.

## SEED OF QANAN

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 4
- ☉ Range: Touch
- ☉ Area of Effect: Any two people
- ☉ Duration: 5 Rounds
- ☉ Raises: Duration (+2 Rounds per Raise)

A Unicorn secret spell based on gaijin magic, this spell uses the Water kami's control over internal energy to briefly create a temporary connection between two people, merging their chi and allowing them to call on each others' knowledge and skill. The targets must be touched simultaneously by the caster to establish the initial link of Water kami, and must remain within 50' of each other for the link to continue functioning – if this distance is exceeded, the spell immediately ends.

In game terms, the linked people are able to use each others' Skills, employing whichever Skill Rank is higher for a given task. However, they do not gain the benefits of Mastery Abilities.

## THE EMPEROR'S ROAD

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 4 (Travel, Imperial)
- ☉ Range: Touch
- ☉ Area of Effect: One Imperial road up to ten miles in length
- ☉ Duration: 8 hours
- ☉ Raises: Area of Effect (+1 mile per Raise)

This spell was originally devised by the Seppun for the purpose of easing and supporting the Emperor's journeys to and from the annual Imperial Winter Court. Since then the spell has been applied more widely, but is still quite rare outside of the Seppun family. The spell creates a powerful aura of friendly Water spirits along a specific Imperial road, easing travel along its length. The road is cleared of all minor obstacles and irregularities (a major physical obstacle such as a fallen tree or a rockslide will not be affected), and the Water spirits cause honorable travelers who are loyal to the Emperor to move as though their Water is 2 Ranks higher so long as they remain on the road. Moreover, the blessing infuses these travelers and their mounts with the energy of Water, causing them not to become Fatigued due to travel so long as they remain on the road.

## WITHIN THE WAVES

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 4 (Travel)
- ☉ Range: Self
- ☉ Area of Effect: 10' diameter sphere
- ☉ Duration: One hour
- ☉ Raises: Duration (+1/2 hour per Raise), Special (add an additional person within the bubble for three Raises)

This spell was originally devised by Isawa shugenja trying to locate the legendary undersea kingdom which







was supposedly the home of Shiba's wife. Although they never succeeded in that goal, the spell they created has seen considerable use in the centuries since. Within the Waves persuades the Water kami to hold themselves away from the caster in a spherical formation, thereby forming an air bubble around him. The caster can move the bubble by concentrating, allowing him to explore freely beneath the surface of a river, lake, or even the ocean. (Such movement is at the normal speed based on the caster's Water.) Other persons can enter and leave the bubble by swimming, and a skilled caster can carry a few passengers along within the bubble's center. When the spell's duration expires, the Water kami push the bubble to the surface.

## CHI REVERSAL

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 5
- ☉ Range: 20'
- ☉ Area of Effect: One target person/creature
- ☉ Duration: 1 hour
- ☉ Raises: Range (+20' per Raise), Duration (+1/2 hour per Raise), Special (one additional pair of Traits per two Raises)

This prayer invokes Water's connection to the flow of Chi through the body, taking control of that flow in order to alter the target's balance of energy. One "pair" of the target's mental and physical Traits from the same Element (chosen by the caster) have their Ranks flipped for the duration of the spell. Thus, if the caster chose to flip a target's Fire Traits, an Intelligence of 2 and Agility of 4 would become an Intelligence of 4 and an Agility of 2 for the duration of the spell. The caster may Raise to affect additional pairs of Traits.

## OPEN THE WAVES

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 5 (Battle)
- ☉ Range: 300'
- ☉ Area of Effect: Trench up to 30' wide and deep and up to 300' long
- ☉ Duration: 15 minutes
- ☉ Raises: Area of Effect (increase width or depth of trench by 5' per Raise), Duration (+5 minutes per Raise)

This spell calls on the Water kami to hold themselves apart, creating a "trench" through a body of water to allow the passage of men, animals, or even wagons and war machines. The spell is employed primarily by martial shugenja who need to help their clan's armies to cross river obstacles, but has also been used for more benign purposes, such as helping peasants to escape floods. The spell's chief limitation is that it cannot always clear the water all the way to the bottom – there is only so much that can be asked of the kami.

## WHIRLPOOL

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 5 (Thunder)
- ☉ Range: 1 mile
- ☉ Area of Effect: Whirlpool 200' in radius
- ☉ Duration: 10 minutes
- ☉ Raises: Area of Effect (+25' radius per Raise), Duration (+2 minutes per Raise)

This prayer is a favorite among the Yoritomo, who are credited with first creating it. It can only be cast near or on a large body of open water – a lake or sea. The spell excites the Water kami into a tremendous rage, causing them to create a huge and powerful whirlpool that will suck down any ships or swimmers in the vicinity. Any swimmer caught within the area of effect will be in danger of being sucked under, requiring a roll of Athletics (Swimming) / Strength at TN 30 each Round to avoid this. A ship within the area of effect will likewise be in danger, and the ship's captain must roll Navigation / Intelligence at TN 30 every minute to keep the vessel from being sucked under.

Once under water, all victims will be subject to Drowning, and can only reach the surface again by rolling Athletics (Swimming) / Strength at TN 40.

## OPENING THE VEIL

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 6 (Travel)
- ☉ Range: 10'
- ☉ Area of Effect: One spirit portal
- ☉ Duration: 1 hour
- ☉ Raises: Duration (+10 minutes per Raise), Special (reach Sakkaku or Yume-do for one Raise, Gaki-do or Toshigoku for two Raises, Yomi for four Raises)

This prayer, a spell known only to the Kitsu and Isawa, invokes the Travel aspect of Water to open a temporary portal into the Spirit Realms. The spell can normally only access the realms of Meido or Chikushudo, but extremely powerful casters can sometimes access Yomi, Sakkaku, Toshigoku, Yume-do, or Gaki-do. The portal lasts only a short time, so passage through it is fraught with risk. Also, this spell cannot work in any area which has been warded against the influences of the Spirit Realms (GM's discretion).

## BREATH OF MIST

- ☉ Ring/Mastery: Water 6 (Defense)
- ☉ Range: 1/2 mile
- ☉ Area of Effect: A circular area 200' in radius
- ☉ Duration: 30 minutes
- ☉ Raises: Area of Effect (+25' radius per Raise), Duration (+10 minutes per Raise)

This spell is especially popular among the more pacifistic types of shugenja, since it provides a way to avert a battle without actual violence. The spell evokes the full power of hundreds of Water kami to reduce the ground to a half-liquid mire while, at the same time, filling the air with water vapor to obscure vision. Entire armies have been rendered effectively helpless by this spell, unable to move or to strike out at their foes.



In game terms, the spell turns all the ground within the area of effect into Difficult terrain. The fog reduces normal visibility to 10'. Between 10' and 30', characters can discern vague outlines - this imposes a +15 TN penalty on any ranged attacks. Beyond 30' all characters are effectively Blind.

## Chapter Three: Tides of Court

### New Alternate Paths

#### CRANE CLAN: THE DAIDOJI SPYMASTERS

The Daidoji family handles many dishonorable activities which the rest of the Crane cannot sully their hands with, and one of those activities is running the information networks which keep the clan aware of rival and enemy plans. Those experienced Daidoji who exhibit the proper mixture of pragmatism and loyalty, along with the ability to avoid attention, are sometimes recruited to be Spymasters, running these networks and funneling the resulting information to the Doji and Kakita.

#### NEW ALTERNATE PATH: DAIDOJI SPYMASTER [COURTIER/NINJA]

- Technique Rank: 3
- Replaces: Daidoji Iron Warrior 3, Daidoji Scout 3, Doji Courtier 3
- Requirements: Crafty Advantage, or an Honor Rank of 4.0 or less. Must be a member of the Daidoji family.

#### TECHNIQUE: TRUTH IN SHADOWS

You gain the Spy Network Advantage for no points; if you already possess this Advantage, you may use it twice as often. You gain a +2k0 bonus to Stealth, Investigation, and Temptation rolls. When you use Low Skills or otherwise perform moderately dishonorable actions on behalf of the Crane Clan, you lose half the normal amount of Honor, rounded up (you still lose normal amounts of Honor for actions which are not for the Crane and for truly heinous actions like murder, betrayal, or blasphemy).

### THE SPY NETWORK ADVANTAGE

The Spy Network Advantage was first introduced in the L5R 4th Edition supplement *Enemies of the Empire*. However, not all players will have access to that book, so to facilitate the Daidoji Spymaster Path, we are reprinting Spy Network here:

#### SPY NETWORK [SOCIAL] (8 POINTS)

You have access to an intelligence network that can provide you with a variety of covert information. Once per session if you can contact your spy network you can acquire a piece of useful information which would otherwise be unavailable. The GM has the final say on what you learn, but it will always be something useful to your current endeavors. This Advantage cannot be used in environments where it would be impossible to make contact with your spy network (e.g. wandering the desert, exploring the Shadowlands or the Shinomen Mori, etc).

Daidoji family characters may purchase this Advantage for 7 points, Scorpion characters may purchase it for 6 points, and Kolat characters may purchase it for 5 points.





## DRAGON CLAN: KITSUKI'S EYE

The men and women of Kitsuki's Eye are the true elite of the Kitsuki family, and only those who have both a very keen ability to pick out minute details and a near-perfect recall of everything they see are selected for membership. It is said the Eyes are to the average Kitsuki courtier what the average Kitsuki courtier is to the rest of the Empire.

### NEW ALTERNATE PATH: KITSUKI'S EYE [COURTIER]

- Technique Rank: 6
- Replaces: N/A
- Requirements: Must attain Rank 5 in the Kitsuki Investigator School and be recruited into the Eye by its sensei.

### TECHNIQUE: THE EYE SEES ALL

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Your ability to perceive details and recognize their significance has been refined to the point of seeming preternatural. Any time you enter an area (room, courtyard, garden, etc), you may spend a Void Point and take a minute to observe the area, after which you make a Perception Roll at TN 25. With a success, you spot any tracks, handprints, out-of-place items, or other such visual clues in the area. You may call a Raise on the roll to gain additional clues (GM's choice as to what they are) from other senses, such as hearing and scent (one Raise per sense). You may call two Raises to know if there is anything physically hidden in the area (although you will not know exactly where it is).

You are also extremely difficult to surprise. You gain a bonus of +2k2 to any rolls made to avoid being surprised.

## RONIN: THE SCALES OF THE CARP

The Scales of the Carp is a ronin smuggling organization run by the Yasuki family; its purpose is to conduct trade with the Crane, who otherwise largely cut off all mercantile contact with the Crab. Although the trade barriers between Crane and Crab diminished over time, the Yasuki found the Scales too useful not to keep around, especially for dealing with illicit trade that might otherwise sully their own hands.

### NEW RONIN PATH: SCALES OF THE CARP [COURTIER]

- Technique Rank: 3
- Requirements: Commerce 4, Lore: Underworld 3, and must be recruited into the Scales by existing members

### TECHNIQUE: SWIMMING BENEATH THE WAVES

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The Scales of the Carp operate beneath the level where most samurai take notice, and are adept at convincing the authorities – especially those on either side of the Crab-Crane border – to ignore their activities. You gain a +1k0 bonus to all Temptation (Bribery) rolls. If the roll is against a Crab or Crane samurai, the bonus is +1k1 instead, and if the samurai agrees to the bribe you may (with the GM's permission) spend a Void Point to gain him as an Ally with 1 point of Devotion. He will remain an Ally permanently unless you betray him or otherwise break the alliance.





# Chapter Four: The Tides Within

## New Monk Schools and Paths

### THE ORDER OF JUROJIN'S BLESSING

The Order of Jurojin's Blessing was founded during the Great Famine and is dedicated to helping the sick, regardless of caste or other obstacle. Some members of the Order also study the treatment of physical injuries, and in later centuries a few members of the Order even begin to specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of madness.

#### NEW BASIC SCHOOL:

#### THE ORDER OF JUROJIN'S BLESSING [MONK]

- Devotion: Fortunist
- Benefit: +1 Intelligence
- Honor: 5.5
- Skills: Athletics, Jujutsu, Lore: Anatomy (Disease), Medicine (Disease, Herbalism), Meditation, Staves, any one Skill.

#### TECHNIQUE: BLESSINGS OF LONGEVITY

You gain a +1k1 bonus to all Medicine rolls made for the purpose of treating disease or infection, and a +1k0 bonus to all Medicine rolls made for the purpose of treating Wounds. You may also attempt to treat natural (non-Taint-induced) insanity with a Medicine roll, although it is the GM's option whether your treatment actually has any effect.

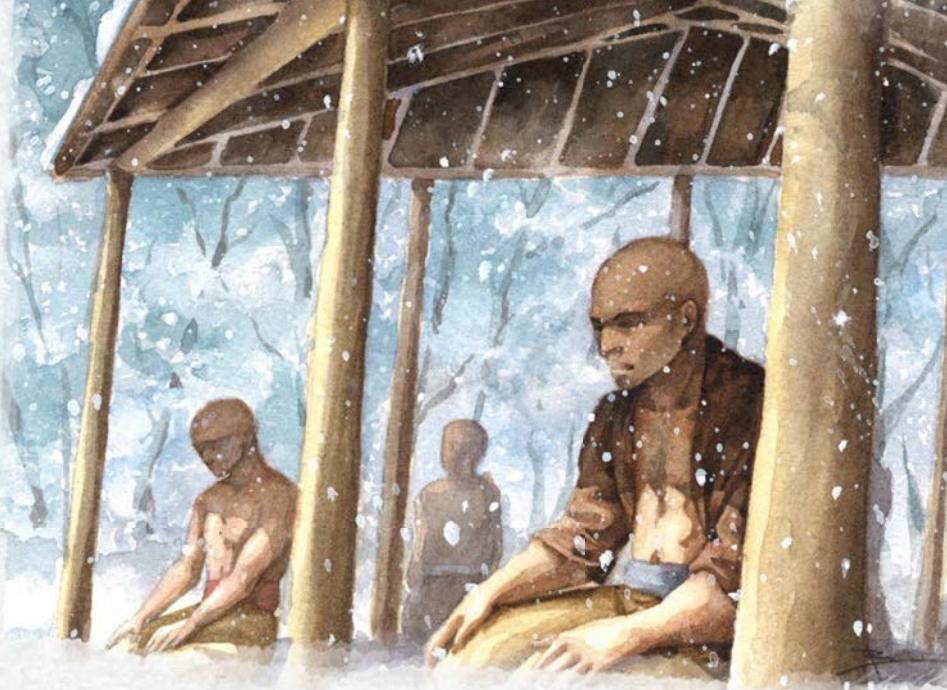
### THE SERVANTS OF MERCY

The Servants of Mercy (sometimes called the Order of Mercy instead) are a radical off-shoot of the Order of Jurojin's Blessing who believe not only in treating the injured but in doing so on the actual field of battle. They venerate Jizo, the Fortune of Mercy, rather than Jurojin. In contrast to the Order of Jurojin's Blessing, the monks of the Order of Mercy are absolute pacifists and treat all wounded with equal care, regardless of clan, faction, social rank, or even species – the only victims they will not aid are those who serve Jigoku.

#### NEW ALTERNATE PATH:

#### THE SERVANTS OF MERCY [MONK]

- Devotion: Fortunist (Jizo)
- Technique Rank: 4
- Replaces: Order of Jurojin's Blessing 4, any pacifistic Brotherhood School at Rank 4
- Requires: Medicine (Wound Treatment) 5, oath of absolute pacifism



#### TECHNIQUE: MERCY'S TOUCH

So long as you remain absolutely pacifistic and aid all victims with equal care, your Medicine rolls heal an additional +2k1 Wounds. If you ever forsake the path of absolute pacifism (that is, if you ever voluntarily engage in violence against another creature) you lose this benefit forever.

You may not learn any Kiho this Rank.

### THE SHRINE OF HEAVEN'S MIRROR

Adherents of the Shrine of Heaven's Mirror seek to extend their perceptions beyond the ordinary reality of Ningen-do. To this end, they cultivate the ability to enter a trance-state to become more receptive to the guidance of the Fortunes, spirits, and other outside forces. They will deprive themselves of sleep for days on end, drink alcohol to the point of delirium, dance with wild and exhausting abandon, and consume hallucinogenic plants. In return, they gain unusual insight into all forms of divination, especially the interpretation of omens.

#### NEW BASIC SCHOOL: THE SHRINE OF HEAVEN'S MIRROR [MONK]

- Devotion: Fortunist
- Benefit: +1 Perception
- Honor: 3.5
- Skills: Athletics, Divination (Omens), Jujutsu, Lore: Omens, Meditation, any two Skills.
- Special: You must be Ascetic and follow the peculiar practices of the Heaven's Mirror sect, regardless of the social consequences of doing so. Failing to embrace these practices will result in your losing the benefits of your School Technique, and may also result in expulsion from this sect.





## OMENS IN THE GAME

In a highly religious and superstitious society like Rokugan, any dramatic or unusual natural event can be seen as an omen. A particularly common sort of omen involves animals behaving in a way that is out of character for them – for example, a bird known to be shy of humanity suddenly perching on a samurai's shoulder, or a fox carrying a live mouse on its back. Weather and other natural phenomena can also exhibit omen behavior, such as rain falling in front of a house but not behind it, or wind stirring fallen leaves into a recognizable pattern. Any typical Rokugani will recognize these sorts of incidents as “omens,” although only those who have extensively studied divination can interpret them with any hope of success.

Creative GMs can construct all manner of unusual situations of this sort, presenting them to the players for interpretation with the Divination Skill. Depending on how skilled the players are with Divination, they might gain only a vague result (“bad fortune is coming”) or something more specific – it is recommended the GM create several “levels” of interpretation, each more accurate and informative than the last, so as to reward skillful characters.

However, not all omens are so obvious. Truly skilled masters of omens and divination, such as the Heaven's Mirror sect, can see meaning and significance in almost any natural event – the shape of clouds in the sky, a bird taking flight, the pattern of rainfall on a pond. However, for a player running such a character, this creates a further problem: how does he know what is an omen and what is not? How often does he get to make Divination rolls?

One option here is simply for the GM to tell the player when there's an omen to be interpreted. However, this denies the player much of the fun of playing a character who interprets omens. Another choice is to let the player role Lore: Omens each time a potential omen takes place (with a successful Skill Roll indicating there is a “real” omen to interpret); however, this will tend to bog the game down in a lot of extra Skill Rolls. Finally, a collaborative approach might be to have the GM and the player take turns choosing events to be omens – this lets the player have some control over his own character's approach to the world, but gives the GM the ability to “slow things down” and keep the game from devolving into endless Divination rolls.



## TECHNIQUE: GAZE INTO THE MIRROR

The peculiar practices of Heaven's Mirror monks grant them insights denied to other mortals. You gain a bonus of +1k0 to all Divination Skill rolls. If the roll involves interpretation of an omen, the bonus is +1k1 instead. Once per day, you may spend a Void Point to interpret an omen with absolute accuracy, with no need for a Skill roll to do so. (Of course, the GM still has discretion as to what the correct interpretation of the omen might be.)

## New Water Kiho: Staff Kiho

The bo staff is in many ways an iconic weapon for the Brotherhood of Shinsei, popular not only for its unpretentious simplicity but also for its defensive nature and the flowing, almost meditative movements it employs in combat. As a result, some monks – especially those who are strong in the Element of Water, whose own flowing nature and “soft strength” attunes it closely to staves – have devised kiho which focus their chi through their staves instead of through unarmed blows or atemi strikes.

“Staff Kiho” can only be used by a monk who is wielding a bo staff or a three-section staff – smaller staves such as jo staffs and tonfa do not encourage the sweeping, flowing, whirling movements that are required to focus one's Water chi through the weapon.

## MUSUBI

- Mastery: Water 5
- Type: Internal (Staff)

This kiho invokes the flowing strength and motion of Water to protect the monk. While the kiho is active, the monk moves his staff in a constant whirlwind of motion, swift and relentless yet also graceful and without pause or pattern, guided only by the innate perception of Water. Enemy attacks are deflected away by these motions, suppressed and turned aside by the flow of Water's power. So long as the Kiho is active and the monk is holding and moving his staff (for mechanical purposes moving the staff in this way is considered a Free Action), the monk adds the combined total of his Water Ring and his Staves Skill Rank to his Armor TN.

Furthermore, if the monk devotes more of his time and effort to the whirling and flowing motions of the staff, his defense becomes correspondingly more potent; for each Simple Action in the same Round the monk uses to enhance the Kiho, he may increase his Armor TN by his Water Ring again for that Round. (This additional Armor TN bonus ends at the beginning of the monk's next Turn.)



## DHARMA TECHNIQUE

- Mastery: Water 7
- Type: Martial (staff)

A more advanced form of Musubi, this Kiho calls on Water's defensive powers to protect the monk not only physically but also spiritually. Much like Musubi, this Kiho requires the monk to have a staff and maintain it in motion; however, this Kiho requires the monk to expend a Simple Action on the staff's movement each Round in order to provide a sufficient focus for his chi.

While this Kiho is in effect, the monk has the ability to deflect kami with the Water chi which he focuses through the staff. In game terms, when a spell specifically targets the monk (not an area-effect spell), the monk may make a Contested Roll of his Staves/Water against the shugenja's Spell Casting roll. If the monk wins the roll, his chi disrupts the spell and disperses it, negating its effects against him. (If the spell is targeting multiple people, the other targets are not protected by the Kiho.) The monk may do this a number of times per skirmish equal to his Water Ring.

At the GM's option, this Kiho may also be able to defend against maho spells, using the pure Water chi to disrupt the kansen. However, the monk must make 3 Raises on the Contested Roll in order to succeed.

## TASAI-DO

- Mastery: Water 6
- Type: Martial (Staff, Atemi)

This Kiho focuses the monk's Water chi offensively, channeling it through his staff in order to overwhelm his opponent. It is activated with an attack in the same manner as an atemi Kiho, but using a staff attack instead of an unarmed attack. After striking his opponent (typically in a chi-focusing location like the head, chest, or stomach), the monk unleashes his chi through the staff and makes a Contested Roll of his Water against the target's Earth. With a success, the target is Stunned.

## New Tattoo: The Wave Tattoo

This tattoo invokes the mighty power of the tsunami to resist enemy force and drive your opponents to their knees. While this tattoo is active, you gain a +Xk0 bonus (where X is your Insight Rank) to the Contested Strength Roll used to determine the success of a Knockdown maneuver you perform with an unarmed attack. You also gain an identical bonus to resist all enemy Knockdown attempts, regardless of whether they are made unarmed or with weapons.







## MONK WEAPONS

Certain weapons are widely used and respected in the Brotherhood of Shinsei, much in the same way that swords and naginata are widely used among samurai. The following weapons are considered to have the “Monk” trait for the purpose of mechanical effects such as School Techniques.

- ☉ Bo Staff
- ☉ Jo Staff
- ☉ Sang Kuaw
- ☉ Three-Section Staff
- ☉ Tonfa
- ☉ Nunchaku
- ☉ Bisento



# Chapter Five: The World of Water

## New Supernatural Creatures

### HINOTAMA

Hinotama are water creatures from Sakkaku that pass through temporary spirit portals during violent oceanic storms, combining their water with the essences of Fire and Air to create a playful but wicked spirit. They are drawn to metallic objects, especially the blades of samurai, and manifest as balls of purple or blue light. Entire crews have sometimes dived overboard to escape Hinotama, and sailors consider them to be ill-omened. There are tales of enraged Hinotama exploding in furious lightning across the entire deck of a ship.

AIR: 2      EARTH: 0      FIRE: 2      WATER: 2  
REFLEXES: 4      WILLPOWER: 3      PERCEPTION: 4

Initiative: 4k4

Damage: Touch 3k2 and Stun

Reduction: N/A

Attack: Touch 4k2 (Complex, ignores armor)

Armor TN: 25

Wounds: 40: Dead (a Hinotama cannot actually be killed, but 40 Wounds will cause it to be dispersed and rendered harmless)

### Special Abilities:

- ☉ Fear 3
- ☉ Elemental Immunities: Due to their nature as a combination of Elemental spirits, Hinotama are wholly immune to Fire, Air, and Water magic.
- ☉ Insubstantial: The Hinotama is essentially a floating ball of Elemental energy, and as such can freely pass through material objects. Its Touch attack ignores all armor on the target.
- ☉ Magic Resistance: The Hinotama has two Ranks of Magic Resistance to Earth and Void magic.
- ☉ Spirit
- ☉ Stunning Jolt: Anyone who is touched by a Hinotama suffers a violent electrical jolt. The character must roll Stamina at TN 20; success means he is Dazed, while failure means he is Stunned.
- ☉ Swift 4 (the Hinotama floats through the air).

### NURE-ONNA (THE WET WOMAN)

The so-called “Wet Woman” is a unique immortal creature with ties to Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief, and Gaki-Do, the Realm of the Hungry Dead. Supposedly once a beautiful woman with numerous suitors, she was later abandoned by the man who fathered her child. She appears as a beautiful but melancholy girl, usually encountered while washing her long inky-black hair at the shore of a river, lake, or the ocean. If she is troubled by anyone, especially a man, she transforms into a huge snake with a woman’s head. The Nure-Onna is sometimes encountered with a small “baby” that is actually a konak jiji (see *Enemies of the Empire*, page 251).

AIR: 3      EARTH: 3      FIRE: 2      WATER: 3  
AWARENESS: 4      AGILITY: 4      STRENGTH: 4

Initiative: 4k3

Attack: Constriction Grapple 8k4 (Simple)

Damage: Constrict 4k2

Armor TN: 30 (20 in human form)

Reduction: 10 (In serpent form only)

Wounds: 24: +5; 48: +10; 72: Dead

Skills: Acting 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 2, Jiujutsu 4

### Special Abilities:

- ☉ Fear 4 (in serpent form only)
- ☉ Constricting Attack: In its serpent form, the Wet Woman always attacks by Grappling its chosen foe with its massive serpentine body. It can only Grapple one foe at a time, and typically tries to crush each opponent in turn.
- ☉ Huge (in serpent form only)
- ☉ Shapechanging: The Wet Woman can change from human to serpent form with a Free Action, and from serpent to human form with a Complex Action.
- ☉ Spirit



## New Legendary Creature of Water

### YAMATO NO OROCHI

The mighty “Eight-Forked Serpent,” an immense creature with eight heads and eight tails, appears in a number of ancient Rokugani legends. Supposedly it was the first creation of Suitengu, Fortune of the Sea, and terrorized the open seas in ancient times. Osano-Wo battled the deadly creature, subduing it and sending it deep beneath the waves... hopefully never to return.

AIR: 1      EARTH: 5      FIRE: 2      WATER: 6  
REFLEXES: 6      AGILITY: 5      STRENGTH: 9

*Initiative: 8k6*

*Attack: Bite 8k5 (Free, up to 4 per Round), Torso Bludgeon 10k6 (Complex, see Special Abilities)*

*Damage: Bite 9k4, Bludgeon 9k2*

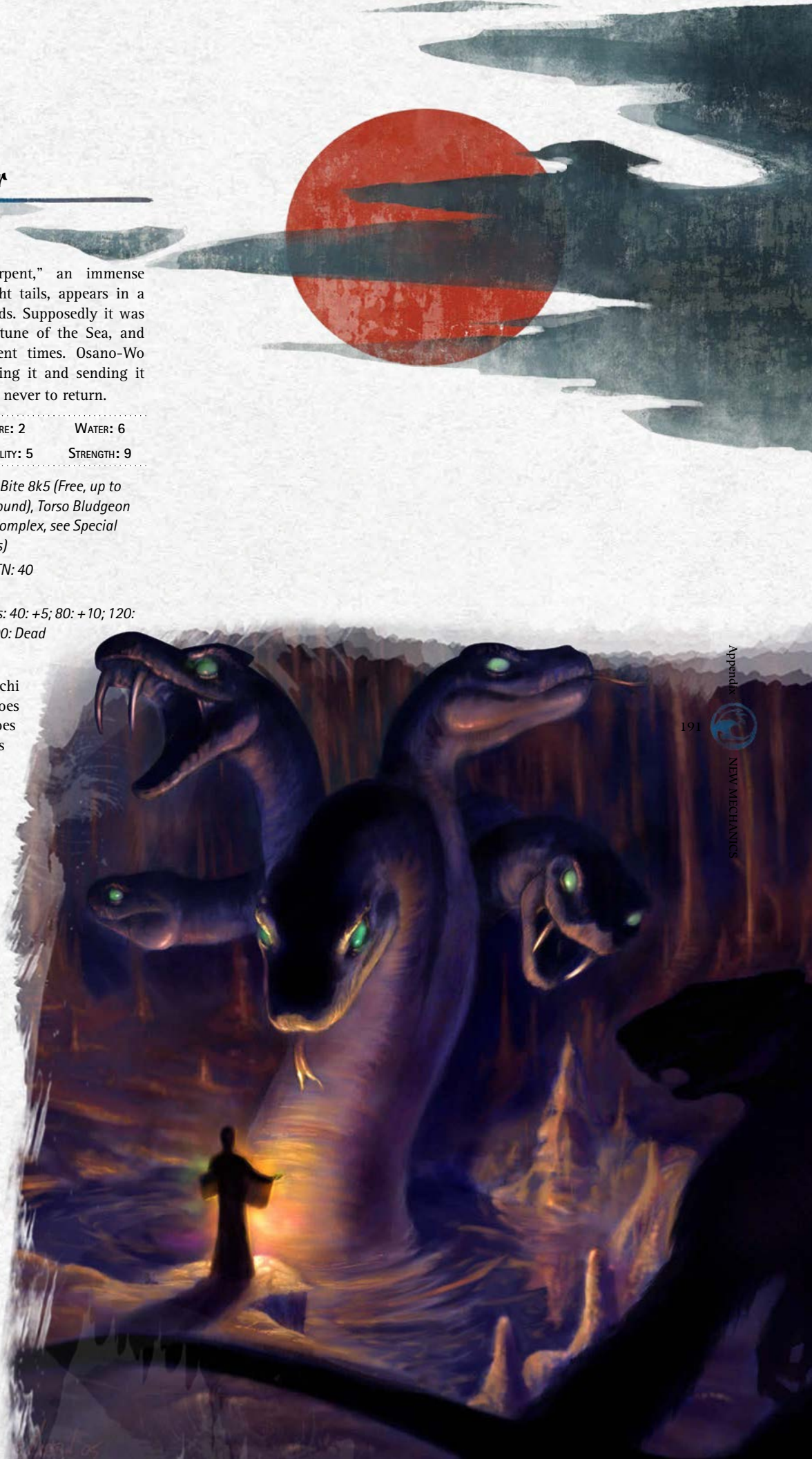
*Armor TN: 40*

*Reduction: 15*

*Wounds: 40: +5; 80: +10; 120: +15; 200: Dead*

#### Special Abilities:

- **Aquatic:** The Yamato no Orochi cannot leave the ocean, does not need to breathe, and does not need to make Athletics rolls to swim.
- **Fear 5**
- **Huge**
- **Multiple Bites:** The Yamato no Orochi’s Bite attack is a Free Action that can be taken up to four times in the same Round.
- **Swift 4** (while swimming)
- **Torso Bludgeon:** The Yamato no Orochi may choose to fall upon its foes with its massive torso. It cannot Bite on the same Turn that it uses this attack. The Torso Bludgeon attack may strike up to six opponents who are within 30’ of each other, and ignores the effects of armor on the targets’ Armor TN.







## New Shadowlands Creatures

### ELEMENTAL TERRORS OF WATER

The Elemental Terrors were created by the Dark Oracles in the twelfth century, and normally reside deep in the Shadowlands in a dead volcano called the Womb of Terror. The Greater and Lesser Terrors of Water can be found anywhere in Rokugan or the Shadowlands. They can be summoned by *maho-tsukai*, but because the Terrors of Water obey only the Dark Oracle of Water, anyone who summons them cannot actually control them.

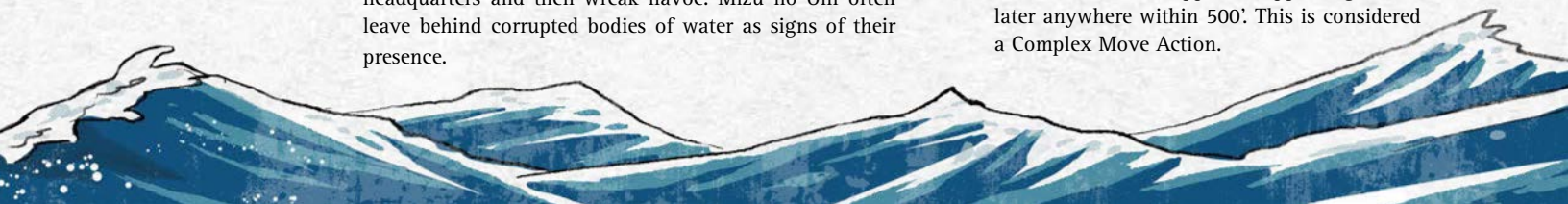
#### GREATER ELEMENTAL TERROR OF WATER (MIZU NO ONI)

The Greater Terror of Water is known as Mizu no Oni, and takes the form of a polluted body of liquid. It favors ambush tactics, hiding in a large body of water and then attacking by surprise. It preferentially singles out opponents of high importance with little defensive capability. Mizu no Oni can shapeshift into any creature it has engulfed, so a favored tactic is to lure a samurai into water and then take the victim's place. While in the form of its victims the Mizu no Oni retains their memories and speech, allowing it to infiltrate homes, castles, or military headquarters and then wreak havoc. Mizu no Oni often leave behind corrupted bodies of water as signs of their presence.

AIR: 4      EARTH: 3      FIRE: 2      WATER: 7  
INTELLIGENCE: 3

*Initiative:* 6k4      *Attack:* Engulf 8k4 (Complex)  
*Damage:* Engulf 7k3      *Armor TN:* 25  
*Reduction:* 15 (10 against jade or crystal, 5 against fire-based attacks)      *Wounds:* 30: +4; 60: +10; 90: +15; 120: Dead  
*Shadowlands Taint Rank:* 6.0  
*Skills:* Acting 4, Stealth 4  
*Special Abilities:*

- ☉ **Aquatic:** The Mizu no Oni moves through water at the same speed as it moves on land, and does not need to make Athletics rolls to swim.
- ☉ **Engulf:** Anyone struck by the oni's Engulf attack is trapped within the oni's watery body until they can win an Opposed Strength Roll (attempting this roll is a Complex Action). They take Engulf damage each Round that they fail to escape.
- ☉ **Fear 4**
- ☉ **Huge**
- ☉ **Instantaneous Movement:** While in its true (non-shapeshifted) form, a Mizu no Oni can collapse in on itself and disappear, reappearing an instant later anywhere within 500'. This is considered a Complex Move Action.





- ☉ **Shapeshifting:** A Mizu no Oni can shapeshift into any creature it has killed with its Engulf attack. This takes a Complex Action. While in the form of its victim it has access to the victim's memories and voice, though not to their Skills. It can change back to its normal liquid shape as a Free Action. It loses the form and memories of its old victim once it Engulfs a new victim.
- ☉ **Superior Invulnerability:** In addition to the normal benefits of Invulnerability, the Mizu no Oni is completely immune to Water magic.
- ☉ **Vulnerable to Fire:** The Mizu no Oni takes an extra +1k0 damage from mundane fire attacks and an extra +1k1 damage from Fire spells.

### LESSER ELEMENTAL TERROR OF WATER (OYUCHI NO KANSEN)

The Oyuchi no Kansen is physically similar to the Mizu no Oni, but smaller. Like other Lesser Terrors, the Lesser Terror of Water is not truly an oni but rather a powerful kansen of Water. It can take on the appearance of any fluid substance such as blood, sake, water, or oil. Oyuchi no Kansen are primarily spies but also act as assassins of weaker targets. They can hide within corpses and sometimes animate those corpses to serve as their "mounts." If they serve the Dark Oracle of Water well enough, Oyuchi no Kansen are granted the power to become a true Mizu no Oni.

AIR: 2      EARTH: 2      FIRE: 1      WATER: 4

INTELLIGENCE: 2

Initiative: 3k2

Attack: Pseudopod 4k2  
(Complex)

Damage: Pseudopod 4k1

Armor TN: 15

Reduction: 5

Wounds: 16: +5; 32: +10; 64:  
Dead

Shadowlands Taint Rank: 3.0

Skills: Stealth 6

Special Abilities:

- ☉ **Aquatic:** The Oyuchi no Kansen moves through water at the same speed as it moves on land, and does not need to make Athletics rolls to swim.
- ☉ **Aquatic Camouflage:** The Oyuchi no Kansen can look exactly like a normal liquid and can also hide almost undetectably within a larger body of water. Detecting it in these circumstances requires a Contested Roll of Investigation (Notice) / Perception against the Lesser Terror's Stealth / Water.
- ☉ **Corpse Animation:** Once per day as a Complex Action the Oyuchi no Kansen can possess and animate a dead body, causing the corpse to function exactly like a zombie (L5R 4th Edition Core Rulebook, page 331). The Lesser Terror is safely hidden within the zombie's torso and cannot be reached or harmed until the zombie is destroyed.
- ☉ **Fear 2**
- ☉ **Magic Resistance:** The Oyuchi no Kansen has three Ranks of Magic Resistance against Water magic.
- ☉ **Vulnerable to Fire:** The Oyuchi no Kansen takes an extra +1k0 damage from mundane fire attacks and an extra +1k1 damage from Fire spells.







## New Mundane Animals

### EEL (DEN UNAGI)

Most eels are not dangerous; they feed upon other fish and even the largest specimens rarely attack humanity. However, Mantis sailors visiting foreign waters (and the Colonies at the end of the twelfth century) have reported a new type of eel, the *den unagi*, with the dangerous ability to discharge a powerful jolt of lightning when harassed.

AIR: 1      EARTH: 2      FIRE: 0      WATER: 2

REFLEXES: 3      AGILITY: 2

*Initiative:* 3k3      *Attack:* Bite 3k2 (Simple)

*Damage:* Bite 2k1      *Armor TN:* 15  
*Wounds:* 5: +5; 10: Dead

#### Special Abilities:

- ☉ **Aquatic:** Eels cannot leave the water, do not need to breathe, and do not need to make Athletics rolls to swim.
- ☉ **Electrical Jolt:** The *den unagi* can unleash a jolt of electricity once per day. Anyone in the water who is within 10' of the eel suffers 2k1 damage and must roll Earth at TN 20 or be Stunned.
- ☉ **Swift** 1

### STING RAY

The *kosen o sasu* is a manta ray found in the waters around the Isles of Spice and Silk. Although it is not an inherently aggressive animal, its stinger makes it dangerous to hunt.

AIR: 1      EARTH: 1      FIRE: 0      WATER: 1

AGILITY: 2      PERCEPTION: 2

*Initiative:* 2k2      *Attack:* Stinger 3k2 (Simple)

*Damage:* Stinger 2k1      *Armor TN:* 10  
*Wounds:* 10: +5; 20: Dead

#### Special Abilities:

- ☉ **Aquatic:** Manta rays cannot leave the water, do not need to breathe, and do not need to make Athletics rolls to swim.
- ☉ **Poison Stinger:** The manta ray's stinger contains a painful and disabling nerve poison. Anyone struck by the stinger is considered to be Dazed.
- ☉ **Swift** 1

### WHALES (KUJIRA)

Whales are considered the favored creature of Suitengu because of their enormous size and power. They vary greatly in size and description, but the two most common types are the giant blue whales and the "blackfish" killer whale. Blue whales have lengths up to 100 feet and weights exceeding 190 tons. Killer whales are smaller, typically 30 feet in length and 10 tons, with dorsal fins taller than a man. Blue whales are peaceful and eat plankton, while killer whales are aggressive predators who hunt other sea creatures (including blue whales).

#### BLUE WHALE

AIR: 2      EARTH: 7      FIRE: 2      WATER: 4

AGILITY: 3

*Initiative:* 2k2      *Attack:* Tail Smash 6k3  
(Complex, see Special Abilities)

*Damage:* Tail Smash 4k4      *Armor TN:* 20  
*Wounds:* 30: +5; 60: +10; 90: Dead

#### Special Abilities:

- ☉ **Aquatic:** Whales cannot leave the water and do not need to make Athletics rolls to swim. They do need to surface to breathe, and can drown if they are forced to remain underwater for an extended period of time.
- ☉ **Huge**
- ☉ **Tail Smash:** A blue whale's Tale Smash attack can strike up to four targets simultaneously if they are within 15' of each other.

#### KILLER WHALE ("BLACKFISH")

AIR: 3      EARTH: 4      FIRE: 2      WATER: 3

AGILITY: 4      PERCEPTION: 4

*Initiative:* 4k3      *Attack:* Bite 6k4 (Simple)

*Damage:* Bite 5k3      *Armor TN:* 25  
*Wounds:* 324: +5; 48: +10; 64: Dead

#### Special Abilities:

- ☉ **Aquatic:** Whales cannot leave the water and do not need to make Athletics rolls to swim. They do need to surface to breathe, and can drown if they are forced to remain underwater for an extended period of time.
- ☉ **Huge**
- ☉ **Swift** 1















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土氣 炎空水





*“The spirit of water ensures that change is constant, and that there is always something new to learn.”*

- ASAKO BEIREI, MASTER OF WATER

Water is the gentlest but also the strongest of the five Elements, able to heal the most brutal injuries but also able to smash whole cities with taifun and tsunami. Water shugenja are among the Empire's most peaceful but also some of the most dangerous to enrage. Water is a source of clarity and vision, empowering divination and assisting magistrates. It is the source of life but also the inspiration of the battlefield general; the Element of motion and movement, but also the essential Element of serenity and peace.

The Book of Water is the fourth in the series of Elemental sourcebooks for the Legend of the Five Rings Role-Playing Game. Each book explores different aspects of Rokugan's world and samurai culture from the standpoint of the chosen Element. This book explores the aspects of Water, from the flowing grace of a warrior fighting with a bo staff to the ruthless tactics of merchants who exploit the flows of travel and coin. Within these pages may be found:

- A discussion of the weapons of Water, including staves, chain weapons, and peasant weapons, as well as Mizu-do (the martial art of Water) and naval warfare.
- The courtly and diplomatic arts of Water, with a particular focus on commerce.
- The power and nature of Water magic, including many new spells of the Element.
- New Water Kiho and Water-oriented monastic schools.
- A new campaign setting, the Eternal Danger Islands, an archipelago filled with both danger and opportunity.
- And much more!



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