



Legend of the Five Rings



ART OF THE DUEL
THIRD EDITION



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WRITERS: SHAWN CARMAN
RICHARD FARRESE
DOUGLAS SUN
BRIAN YOON

EDITOR: DOUGLAS SUN

LINE DEVELOPER: DOUGLAS SUN

ART DIRECTOR: KEN CARPENTER

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS: NATE BARNES
RODNEY SAENZ

COVER ARTIST: HUGH JAMISON

INTERIOR ARTISTS: CHRISTOPHER APPEL, STEVE ARGYLE, MATTHEW S. ARMSTRONG, DREW BAKER, BEET, JEFF CARLISLE, MIGUEL COIMBRA, EDWIN DAVID, ADAM DENTON, THOMAS DENMARK, JOHN DONAHUE, RANDY ELLIOT, JASON ENGLE, AL EREMIN, CARL FRANK, ANTHONY FRANCISCO, ANTHONY GRABSKI, JOACHIM GMOSE, QUINTON HOOVER, DAVID HUDNUT, LLYN HUNTER, MIKE JACKSON, HUGH JAMIESON, JAIME JONES, VERONICA JONES, APRIL LEE, CHUCK LUKACS, MICHAEL KALUTA, MICHAEL KOMARCK, THOMAS MANNING, BRITT MARTIN, MALCOLM MCCLINTON, TONY MOSELEY, LEE MOYER, WILLIAM O'CONNOR, ERIC POLAK, JIM PAVELEC, JASON REEVES, KARL RICHARDSON, RON SPENCER, BRAD WILLIAMS

BRAND MANAGER: TODD ROWLAND

PRODUCTION MANAGER: KEN CARPENTER

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: JOHN ZINSER

PLAYTESTERS:

Lynn Ahlgren, Becky Anderson, Alexander Andersson, Brian Bates, Kathryn Bayne, Mike Bilter, Dan Bower, Travis Brandt, Jeremy Bullens, Jed Carleton, Brett Carlos, Patrick Chen, Darrin Clough, John Davis, T. L. DiMarr, Aien Elmi, Matt Faulkner, Charles Fox, Angela Harris, Jim Harris, Paul Hartmann, Kelly Hoelsing, Kim Hosmer, Heath Hunt, Ashley Jestico, Stephen Johnstone, Mike Jonas, Alex Jones, Jason Kang, Ki Chang Kim, Eric King, Chris Kochs, Scott Krone, Kit LaHaise, Shale LeBlang, Tom Lewis, Roger Liang, Francois Martineau, Seth Mason, Steven Mileham, Catlin Mills, Cory Mills, Dan Moenster, Arthur Nguyen, Benjamin L. Noble, John Olson, John O'Neil, Molly Poole, Catherine Prickett, Jason Schafer, Nathan Shafer, David Smith, Liza Strout, Matt Strout, Mark Turner, Joe White, Matt Wright

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CHAPTER ONE:

THE ART OF THE DUEL



The sun rose on Pale Oak Castle, creeping over the distant treetops to the east. The light was warm, but did little to dispel the chill throughout the area. It was always cool in this region of the Asako holdings, regardless of the season. Shiba Emiri had only been here a few short weeks, but already she loved the place for the crispness in the morning air. It invigorated her, and she loved to rise with the sun to enjoy it to the fullest. This morning, however, there was precious little enjoyment to be had.

The young Phoenix samurai-ko rose from where she knelt in the shrine. It was merely one of many shrines that dotted the majestic landscape around Pale Oak Castle. She had been there for several hours, having awakened long before the dawn in order to prepare herself for today's ordeal.

Today, she might die.

Truthfully, Emiri did not really fear death. She had seen so much pain and suffering in her relatively short lifetime that she imagined the release of death might be a welcome release from her journey. No, it was not fear of death, but failure that plagued her. Failure was the most heinous sin imaginable, and she had borne its burden for far too long as it was.

"Emiri-san," a quiet voice said. "You must not dwell in the past."

Emiri glanced at the calm, even features of the monk she had come to know, in her time at the castle. "A simple thing to say, Sutubo-san," she said. "It is not quite so simple to live."

"You did not fall in the Rain of Blood," Sutubo said softly. "You did not fail your charge. You protected him from everything but himself. Against the darkness in his spirit, your blade stood no chance. The fault was never yours."

Emiri nodded. Three years ago, she had been a yojimbo assigned to the shugenja called Isawa Nodotai. He had been her friend as well as her charge, and she thought she had truly known him. When an ancient ritual by the most powerful blood sorcerer in history created a mystical rain of blood, however, she had seen the true Nodotai emerge. The rain had corrupted his spirit, bringing forth every evil thought and urge he possessed. He went on a rampage, as did many others, and the City of Remembrance had nearly burned to the ground. She had been his yojimbo, and in her mind, she had failed. She had spent the intervening years in a monastery, attempting to come to terms with what had happened.

"Focus only on today," the monk insisted. "Tell me what will happen."

"Very well," Emiri said. "Today, I will champion an Asako courtier in the matter of his dispute with a member of the Scorpion am-bassador's delegation. I will duel the offended party's champion to determine who is in the right."

Sutubo chuckled. "I was a peasant, a lifetime ago. I must admit that after decades of introspection, the concept of dueling is still quite foreign to me. How does it serve to resolve disputes, again?"

"It is an exercise in purity," Emiri explained, as if reciting a text her sensei had ordered her to memorize. "Purity of spirit, purity of body, and purity of purpose. A pure spirit and body steels a samurai for his task. Purity of purpose invites the ancestors to lend him strength, that he might prove the honor of his Family and Clan. It has been thus since the Kami descended."

"Far be it from me to question the Kami," the monk said. "Tell me of your opponent."

Emiri frowned. "I know little of him. His name is Bayushi Yumita, although in some circles he is simply called the Black Scorpion because of his armor. It is black, without adornment, and polished so that it almost looks like a mirror. He never speaks unless directly questioned by someone of superior rank. It is said that he has slain over a dozen duelists."

"Is the duel to the death?"

"Certainly not," she said. "The duel is to first blood. I admit, however, that I am uncertain as to the reliability of Yumita with regard to such restrictions. Will he kill me? He might attempt it. But I do not fear death."

"You fear failure." Subuto apparently could read her every thought.

"I fear the strife that will come between the Phoenix and Scorpion if I fail," she admitted. "If Yumita is victorious, and if he takes my life as I suspect he desires, there will be great difficulty between our Clans. We cannot endure another conflict so soon after the war with the Mantis."

Subuto pondered her words. "Would the Scorpion wish such a conflict?"



"Who can say with the Scorpion?" she asked. "There is no way to be certain."

"Then there is but a single outcome."

"And what is that?"

"You must win," Subuto said plainly. "Your steel must win the day."

Emiri raised an eyebrow. "Is that all? How silly I've been."

The morning sun was still on its path to the center of the sky center when the two opponents faced one another in the courtyard of Pale Oak Castle. Suddenly, Emiri felt her mind clear after her meditations and her conversation with the monk. She remembered her duty, and focused on that. The memories that had haunted her but a short time ago had left. She had learned from them, and put them behind her — for good this time, she hoped.

Bayushi Yumita, the Black Scorpion, took his stance across from her. As she had expected, he said nothing. His armor gleamed in the morning sun, bright enough to blind her (an intentional effect, of course), and so she focused on his shadow instead. His every move revealed itself to her as she watched the shadow creep across the ground. Every breath he took, every tiny movement was hers to see. And so when he made his mistake, when he altered his stance almost imperceptibly to create an opening, she was ready.

Shiba Emiri drew her blade and struck with a pure spirit, mind, and purpose.

Introduction: "Set..."

There are few activities that capture as many facets of what it means to be a samurai in Rokugan as does dueling. It is a test of moral and physical courage, for in a weapon duel your life — or at least your well-being — rides on victory or defeat. It is a test of personal honor, for not only are duels commonly fought to defend one's good name, but that good name also stands to

gain or lose by how you conduct yourself in the course of defending it. It can be a test of loyalty and service to Family, Clan and Emperor, for in many cases their fortunes and reputation, too, ride on a duelist's blade. It is also a test of skill, for every form of dueling involves an endeavor that at least some samurai find worthy of pursuit, something for which he trains long and hard for years to perfect, from his youth to — in some cases — the very last moments of his life.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to define dueling in Rokugan too closely. Mention dueling to most Rokugani, and the first thing that comes to mind is a fight with the katana, whether the kenjutsu duels with which Lion bushi seek to control the battlefield, or lightning-quick and deadly iaijutsu duels, of which the most famous is still the confrontation between Kakita and Mirumoto Hojatsu at the dawn of the Empire. But such is the emphasis that Rokugani samurai place on personal contests of will, skill and nerve that a wide range of activities, as practiced by the samurai class, can be described as serving the same purpose.

Shugenja have long had the tradition of dueling through their special skill for channeling the power of the kami. Called taryujiai, it is said to have originated among the Phoenix Clan. It exists in two generally accepted forms, one in which the duelists attack each other directly and another in which they fight through avatars of Elemental energy that they create for themselves.

Courtiers practice neither the art of swordsmanship nor communion with the kami, but personal contests that serve a function so similar to that of dueling that they might as well be called duels are an aspect of their life, as well. While some courtiers have yojimbo to deflect any attempt to challenge them on unfavorable terms (and the more important he is, the more likely he is to have a bodyguard assigned to him), most also like to settle their own scores when they can, through contests of artisanship or performing skill, or skill at games.



On top of that, there are also a variety of miscellaneous forms of competition that do not really fit any of these classifications. Some are unique to a certain Clan or Family, like the kobune boat races of the Mantis, or even to certain Schools, like the wilderness survival challenges to which Dragon ise zumi subject themselves. This book covers all of them, for all are in their own way part of a great Rokugani tradition and integral parts of a samurai's life.

"Focus..."

Later in this chapter, you will find revised rules mechanics for iaijutsu, that amplify and clarify exactly what happens in an iaijutsu duel. You will also find rules for taryu-jiai, or shugenja duels, as well as a variety of less overtly violent activities that can be treated as personal contests, such as games and tests of oratory and artisanship.

Later chapters cover non-human intelligent races and their relationship to the art of the duel, including the dueling customs of the naga and nezumi, and expanded rules for kenku sword master sensei and training under them specifically in iaijutsu; descriptions of famous and otherwise remarkable dueling weapons; and also suggestions for making formalized single combat a more prominent part of the mass battle experience. The appendices describe two important tournaments in which samurai can show off their prowess through various forms of dueling and

personal competition, the legendary Test of the Emerald Championship and the Tournament of the Minor Clans. They include rules mechanics for resolving each tournament's various tests, a description of the ambience of each, and adventure hooks for incorporating them into a campaign.

In between, you will find a wealth of material covering the Rokugani art of the duel from the perspective of each Great Clan, as well as the the Imperial Families, Minor Clans and Ronin, and the role of dueling in the warped version of samurai culture emerging in the Shadowlands among The Lost. Each of these chapters covers one faction, or set of factions. Each includes discussions of a that faction's philosophy of dueling, unique and characteristic forms of dueling and personal competition, institutions involved in teaching skills used in dueling, typical (or atypical) sensei, and a variety of new mechanics: Schools, Advanced Schools, Paths, Kata and more. These chapters touch upon not only the classic Kakita and Mirumoto iaijutsu styles, but also traditions and practices as diverse as Phoenix naginata duels, Tsuruchi archery contests, Unicorn competitions of horsemanship skill, Crab and Badger sumai wrestlers, Ikoma storytelling contests, Doji courtiers who cultivate debating skills — even Crab Clan drinking games. All of these conventions, both famous and obscure, capture the various ways in which the samurai of Rokugan challenge each other in the name of honor, and have raised those challenges through the ages of to the level of art.



Welcome, then, to The Art of the Duel. Now it is time to —
 “STRIKE!”

Dueling in Rokugan: A Timeline

Pre-History:

The Coronation of Hantei I

After arriving in the mortal realm, seven Kami participate in a tournament to determine who will lead them. This establishes a precedent for personal competition that influences all the Kami and many who come to follow them in subsequent years.

Pre-History:

Lord Akodo and Lady Doji

Taking cues from their brother Hantei, both Akodo and Lady Doji use personal competition to influence the shape and character of Rokugani society at this early stage of its development. Akodo requires all who wish to follow him to duel him. He never loses, but he accepts those who demonstrate great skill and character during their duel. At the same time, Lady Doji codifies the rules by which her brother's society shall function, and her work enshrines much the same ideals as Akodo, though in different areas of endeavor. Competitions of oratory and artisanship feature prominently in Doji's plans, and the notion of a formal duel to resolve disputes rapidly gains popularity among the other Kami.

Pre-History:

The First Emerald Championship

The Emperor decrees that he wishes a personal champion to serve and protect him from potential harm, and that only the finest warrior in the land will suffice. Many Kami send their finest vassals, and many unaffiliated human warriors attend as well. In the end, it is the simple swordsman Kakita who defeats Lady Matsu and becomes the Emperor's personal champion, a position soon entitled Emerald Champion.

Kakita duels Mirumoto Hojatsu:

Date unknown

Different historical records place this confrontation on at least two different dates, and so it remains uncertain exactly when it took place. Regardless, the ongoing philosophical battle between students of the Kakita and Mirumoto styles soured over time and eventually led to a military confrontation. The battle came to a head when the two commanders, Mirumoto's son Hojatsu and the aging Kakita himself, took up their iaijutsu stance across from one another. Kakita's first blow killed Hojatsu, and Hojatsu's gravely wounded Kakita. Honored by his enemy's valor, Kakita took up Hojatsu's fallen blade and fell upon it, ordering it to finish its master's will. Both armies were so grieved by their lords' deaths that the battle ended immediately.

The First Tournament of Thunder: Year 675

The Order of Thunder, a monastic order devoted to worshipping the Fortune of Fire and Thunder, Osano-Wo, seeks out the finest warriors throughout the Empire and invites them to compete in a unique tournament. This tournament relies exclusively on unarmed combat, and ostensibly rewards the winner with the direct blessing of Osano-Wo himself. Over a hundred competitors participate, and in the end it is a monk of Bishamon, Fortune of Strength, who emerges victorious. The tournament is not held again until decades later, after the monk's death.

Test of the Jade Champion: Year 1131

After centuries of disuse, the Imperial Families resurrect the position of Jade Champion in an attempt to restore order to the Empire. Every Great Clan is represented at the competition, but the final match comes down to Iuchi Karasu of the Unicorn and Kitsu Okura of the Lion. Okura is victorious, although his victory is plagued with rumors of his alliance with dark forces. Nevertheless, he is declared the victor and becomes the first in a new line of Jade Champions to serve the Empire.

Gift of the Emperor: Year 1132

Emperor Toturi I holds a grand tournament to see which Clan shall be awarded stewardship of the vacant Scorpion provinces, the Scorpion Clan having been exiled from the Empire for their assumed involvement in the Emperor's kidnapping two years before. The Great Clans are all allowed to field a single contestant in the tournament, and it is the Dragon entry, a masked ronin, who is victorious. The ronin removes his mask and reveals himself to be Bayushi Aramoro, brother by marriage of the Scorpion Champion. Aramoro requests that, as a condition of his victory, the Scorpion lands be returned to them and they retake their place. Toturi I agrees, and the Scorpion are returned to Great Clan status.

The Yasuki Provinces Taken in a Duel: Year 1159

During the conflict between the Crab and Crane Clans over the Yasuki Family lands, the illegitimate son of the late Emperor Toturi I, Akodo Kaneka, arrives and attempts to restore order. Neither Clan recognizes Kaneka's authority, and when his forces attempt to halt the march of a Crane army, the incensed Kakita Daimyo and master sensei Kakita Kaiten challenges Kaneka to a duel. To everyone's shock, Kaneka is victorious, and lays claim to the Yasuki provinces.

Lion vs. Dragon: Year 1165

On the plains north of the City of the Rich Frog, a Lion delegation confronts the Mirumoto general in charge of the Dragon armies and demands that the Dragon remove themselves from the War of the Rich Frog. Mirumoto Kei refuses, and the Lion courtier's yojimbo challenges her to a duel. Kei reluctantly kills Akodo Tsuru in the duel, and then is forced to acquiesce to courtier Ikoma Kyuso's demand that she kill him as well, since she had defeated his champion in the duel. Hostilities between the Lion and Dragon Clans escalate rapidly over the following weeks.



Rosoku's Challenges: Year 1166

The prophet Rosoku, descendant of Shinsei, appears in the Empire and seeks an audience with Emperor Toturi III. Rosoku reveals that mankind follows a treacherous path, and warns that the destiny of man hangs in the balance. In an attempt to aid the Empire in regaining the true path, Rosoku conceals six tomes throughout the Empire. These books are hidden in such a way that those who find them must first demonstrate the qualities of one already on the path to Enlightenment. When word of the books' existence becomes public, thousands of samurai begin scouring the Empire in hope of finding at least one.

Major Tournaments

Rokugan's samurai caste is, by its very nature, very competitive. To fulfill their duties to their lords, samurai must know their strengths and weaknesses, have absolute confidence in their abilities, and constantly struggle to improve their abilities through arduous practice. Toward that end, one of the most eagerly anticipated opportunities for a samurai to display his abilities lies with the various tournaments that accompany each season. While there are dozens of such tournaments, all with varying degrees of notoriety, the most famous are the stuff of legends.

The Emerald Championship

Easily the oldest and most prestigious competition in Rokugan's history, the Emerald Championship is held roughly once each generation, and the victor claims a lifetime appointment as the Emperor's Emerald Champion. The first such tournament was held shortly after the Empire was formed, when the warrior and duelist Kakita emerged from it victorious. He and his successors served as the Emperor's personal champion and yojimbo for centuries until the time of Doji Hatsuo, who developed the system and structure of the Emerald Magistrates that serve as the Champion's eyes and will throughout the Empire.

The Test of the Emerald Championship is extremely important to all of the Clans, as the position of Champion is among the most powerful in the Empire. While there is no formal restriction in place, it is generally accepted that each Great Clan sends no more than three contestants, only one of whom is permitted to advance to the final round, assuming that he or she succeeds through the initial tests. Minor Clans are permitted but a single contestant, and many choose not to enter for fear that they will be unable to offer respectable competition to their Great Clan rivals and thus, embarrass themselves. The Imperial Families are permitted contestants on the same level as the Great Clans, although it is rare for anyone but the Seppun to enter. Ronin are not permitted entry without the sponsorship of an Imperial Family member.

Early rounds of the tournament consist of tests of martial prowess and knowledge of the Emperor's laws. They are used to whittle down the field to a pre-determined number, and the number of tests varies depending upon the total number of contestants in the tournament. The final round, however, consists of an iaijutsu tournament among the participants, which winnows the field down to two remaining contestants. These duels are to first

blood, although historically there have been participants who chose to commit seppuku upon losing, preferring to imagine that the duel was to the death. The two finalists then face off against each other to determine the winner, a moment of high drama that has few equals among the customary events of Rokugani life.

For a more detailed description of the Test of the Emerald Champion, see Appendix 1.

The Jade Championship

The Jade Championship has a checkered past filled with jealousy and dishonor. The position of Jade Champion was created centuries ago as a shugenja counterpart to the Emerald Champion, but the position fell into disuse after only a few generations. This was a direct result of the machinations of a particularly elitist Council of Elemental Masters, who believed that giving a single shugenja an official position of such importance in the Imperial Court undermined both their power and authority. Historical accounts of the position were discovered after the Clan War, and the Imperial Court ordered it revived. Kitsu Okura was the first new Jade Champion, and he patterned the Jade Magistrates and the Jade Legion after the structure of his militaristic family.

The Jade Championship has only been held three times in recent memory. Its structure is more rigid than that of most other prominent tournaments, and consists exclusively of individual duels between shugenja. It is, by tradition, a single-elimination tournament, and as such a great number of duels can be held in a short period of time. Because individual levels of skill and power can vary so greatly between two shugenja of the same Family and training, there are no restrictions on the number of contestants who may enter from any one Clan or Family. As a result, the number of entrants is considerably higher than most other tournaments of its type.

The Topaz Championship

Held annually, the Topaz Championship is the most prestigious gempukku ceremony in Rokugan. Each year, every Clan sends its finest young samurai to the city of Tsuma, in the Crane Lands, to compete for the title of Topaz Champion. The competition closely mirrors the Emerald Championship, but is open to shugenja as well as bushi. Contestants take part in tests of virtually every skill that a samurai should possess, including martial prowess as well as tests of horsemanship, poetry, oratory skills, knowledge of law and history, and various other tasks. Each contest allows the participants to accumulate points toward entrance in the final round. The final round is an iaijutsu tournament, just like at the Emerald Championship. All contestants who make it to this round are considered to have achieved their gempukku, and are offered fealty to their Clan in a massive ceremony after the tournament is over. The winner of the tournament is declared the Topaz Champion for that year. The Champion is often awarded a prestigious post as a magistrate, member of the Imperial Legions, or something similar that combines both honor and responsibility.

The Ruby Championship

Intrinsically linked to the Emerald Championship, the Ruby Championship determines one of the Emerald Champion's closest allies and subordinates. The Ruby Champion is the master sensei of the Emerald Champion's dojo, where the Emerald Magistrates and the Imperial Legionnaires chosen to serve alongside them receive advanced training. In addition to being a master

sensei, however, the Ruby Champion is expected to possess an encyclopedic knowledge of Imperial law, a daunting task indeed considering the constant revisions, additions, and "clarifications" most such laws have undergone over the past millennium. The Ruby Championship is a lifetime appointment, although many past Champions have chosen to retire once they feel their physical abilities are no longer up to the requirements of the job.

Competitors in the Ruby Championship are expected to demonstrate exceptional skill in more than a dozen different weapons, and they must also undergo a grueling hours-long examination to test their knowledge of Imperial law. Those who pass the exacting standards of the judges, who are hand-selected by the

himself the Amethyst Champion, and upon his death the Imperial Families formalized that title, along with the responsibility of maintaining the Crown's safety.

The Amethyst Championship has a unique set of tests placed before contestants each time the tournament is convened. Each is designed to test the entrants' honor to its utmost, and to determine how wise they are in areas of judgment and allocation of resources. Unlike any other Jewel tournament, there is no direct competition between contestants in the Amethyst Championship. Instead, the judges, comprised of the finest minds of the Imperial Families, make the final decision as to who has demonstrated the most virtuous and trustworthy character.

The Tournament of Thunder

Orchestrated by the Order of Thunder, the monks who serve the Fortune Osano-Wo, the Tournament of Thunder is a competition of pure strength and martial prowess. The tournament appears to follow no schedule and have no regular structure other than the whim of the monks of the Order. They invite great warriors from all across the Empire to come and compete for a prize that is simply described as, "The Favor of Osano-Wo." Competition is limited to single-elimination unarmed combat duels between competitors. Using weapons of any sort are grounds for instant disqualification. Shugenja are permitted to participate, but invoking the kami via traditional prayers is also forbidden. The use of Kiho, however, is not restricted, a fact that often gives shugenja and monk contestants an advantage.

The Setsuban Festival

The Setsuban Festival is a holiday celebrated annually throughout the entire Empire. Although large celebrations are common throughout the holdings of all Great Clans, there is one particularly large fete held at the Shrine of the Ki-Rin in the Phoenix Lands, complete with a large taryu-jiai tournament that is well known to shugenja of all Families. The tournament is the largest, regularly scheduled taryu-jiai tournament in Rokugan, and uses the traditional rules of that ancient practice, although to first blood rather than to the death. Shugenja come from all across the Empire to participate, as the prize is a collection of specially prepared scrolls provided by every major shugenja Family and order in the world. Traditionally, the Phoenix dominate this tournament, but it has been won by outsiders frequently enough to ensure that there is never a shortage of competitors.

Iaijutsu: Revised Mechanics

Perhaps no other aspect of Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition generates as many questions as the rules for iaijutsu duels. In the interests of clarity, here is an expanded and more detailed treatment of iaijutsu mechanics. At its conclusion,



Emerald Champion, go on to the final test. In this final round, each competitor is given one week and a small group of completely untrained youths. In this period of time and with these callow youngsters, each contestant must teach them as much as he can to demonstrate his effectiveness as a sensei. The competitor whose students show the most impressive progress is declared the victor, and given the title of Ruby Champion.

The Amethyst Championship

The Amethyst Championship is unquestionably the most unique of the so-called Jewel Tournaments, which include the Emerald, Jade, Ruby, Amethyst, and Topaz Championship tournaments. Like most of them, the Amethyst Champion is a lifetime position. That term is often far shorter, however, owing to the unique, sole responsibility possessed by the Amethyst Champion (and so the tournament tends to take place rather more often than once in a standard generation).

The Amethyst Champion has but a single duty to perform on behalf of the Imperial Families: to maintain possession of and administrate the wealth associated with a gaijin artifact called the Amethyst Crown. This artifact is the source of a powerful curse, for whoever owns it gains enormous wealth so long as it is kept safe. Any who lose it, however, suffer ruinous misfortune for the rest of their lifetime. The first samurai to possess the Crown used its wealth to benefit the people of Rokugan, gaining the attention of the Emperor and his court in the process. This man called

you will also find two variations on the theme of the iaijutsu duel, one that simplifies the mechanical process of resolving duels, and another that allows for the use of bokken rather than katana.

If you would like a more detailed treatment of the standard rules for resolving an iaijutsu duel, consider the following two sample situations. The first example features a duel to the death between two hated enemies:

EXAMPLE 1, DUELIST 1: Akodo Chosai, Rank 2 Akodo Bushi

EXAMPLE 1, DUELIST 2: Bayushi Katsun, Rank 2 Bayushi Bushi

The second example features a less emotionally charged duel between two respected colleagues of the normally competitive Crane and Dragon academies — more of an academic exercise than a blood feud. This example pays special attention to the role that their duel-centered School Techniques play in resolving a duel:

EXAMPLE 2, DUELIST 1: Kakita Tarako, Rank 1 Kakita Bushi

EXAMPLE 2, DUELIST 2: Mirumoto Hoshiken, Rank 1 Mirumoto Bushi

Step One: Challenge

When two samurai begin an iaijutsu duel, the first thing they do is adopt their stances and face one another. This is a crucial moment in the duel, as the two opponents size one another up in an attempt to discern each other's weaknesses. This assessment requires an Awareness/Iaijutsu Roll against a TN of 5. If the roll is successful, that duelist may then choose to learn any

one piece of information about his opponent from the list below. For each increment of 5 by which the duelist's roll exceeds the TN, he can an additional piece of information. The parenthetical notations after each entry show the characteristics of our four example duelists:

- The opponent's Agility (*Chosai 4, Katsun 5; Tarako 3, Hoshiken 4*)
- The opponent's Awareness (*Chosai 2, Katsun 4; Tarako 3, Hoshiken 2*)
- The opponent's current Wound penalty (if any) (*None on any duelist*)
- The opponent's Iaijutsu Skill Rank (*Chosai 3, Katsun 5; Tarako 4, Hoshiken 1*)
- The opponent's Insight Rank (*Chosai 2, Katsun 2; Tarako 1, Hoshiken 1*)
- The opponent's Reflexes (*Chosai 4, Katsun 3; Tarako 4, Hoshiken 3*)
- The opponent's Void Points (*Chosai 4, Katsun 3; Tarako 3, Hoshiken 3*)
- The opponent's Void Ring (*Chosai 3, Katsun 4; Tarako 3, Hoshiken 3*)

Once this mutual assessment is complete, either duelist may choose to declare his opponent the winner without moving forward with the duel. Doing so is considered an admission that one's opponent is the superior duelist, and that the outcome would certainly result in the death of the one conceding. This is considered an honorable action, as there is no shame in bowing



to one of superior ability. If the duel is to the death, however, then the duelist conceding the match is expected to complete this honorable action with seppuku, thereby confirming the result.

EXAMPLE 1: Akodo Chosai and Bayushi Katsun meet on the field of battle at a skirmish near Shamate Pass. They have met once before, and Katsun insulted Chosai's honor. Chosai issues a battleground challenge, and Katsun accepts. They both enter their stances. Chosai rolls 5k2 (Awareness 2, Iaijutsu 3), resulting in a 19. He chooses to learn Katsun's Agility, Void Ring, and Reflexes. Katsun rolls 9k4 (Awareness 4, Iaijutsu 5) and gets 35. He learns all of Chosai's characteristics except for his Void Points.

EXAMPLE 2: Kakita Tarako and Mirumoto Hoshiken prepare for a duel to first blood in order to test their skill. As they adopt their stances, Tarako rolls 7k3 to assess her opponent (Awareness 3, Iaijutsu 4), and Toshiken rolls 6k2 (Awareness 2, Kenjutsu 4; Hoshiken's Rank 1 Technique allows him to substitute his Rank in Kenjutsu for his Rank in Iaijutsu). Tarako rolls a 23, and learns her opponent's Agility, Void Ring, Reflexes, and Iaijutsu. Hoshiken rolls a 20, and learns Tarako's Wound Penalty, Void Ring, Reflexes, and Iaijutsu.

Step Two: Focus

Once the two duelists have assessed one another, they begin waiting for the other to make a mistake. This can be an exceptionally long and trying process, as both duelists focus on one another and wait for the perfect moment to strike. At the beginning of the duel, after the Challenge stage (assuming that no one chooses to concede), each duelist selects which characteristic his opponent will use in the duel: Agility, Reflexes, or Void Ring (this characteristic hereafter referred to as "Choice").

With the Choice Traits selected, the duelist that had a higher roll on the Awareness/Iaijutsu Roll to assess his opponent has the option to go first, although he may choose to pass and instead allow his opponent to go first (in doing so, he also gains 1 point of Honor). If the Awareness/Iaijutsu Roll was tied, the duelists make a second roll to determine who will go first. Whoever goes first must declare Focus or Strike. If a duelist chooses to Focus, he must roll Choice/Iaijutsu against his opponent's current TN to Be Hit. If this roll is successful, the TN to Be Hit of both duelists is increased by 5 and the option to Focus or Strike passes to his opponent. If the roll fails, or if the duelist instead chooses to Strike, then the second stage of the duel has ended, and Stage Three begins.

A duelist may only Focus a number of times equal to his Void Ring, although spending a Void Point allows him to make an additional Focus roll above his normal limit. If he has focused this number of times (and is out of Void Points or is unwilling to spend them) when his turn to Focus/Strike comes again, he has no choice but to declare Strike.

EXAMPLE 1: The matter between Chosai and Katsun is one of honor, and neither is willing to back down. Chosai has chosen Reflexes as the characteristic Katsun will use during this stage, and Katsun has in turn chosen Void for Chosai. Katsun rolled higher on his Awareness/Iaijutsu Roll, and he chooses to Focus. Both men are wearing light armor, so their TN to Be Hit begins at 10. Katsun rolls 8k3 (Reflexes/Iaijutsu) against a TN of 10 and succeeds, thus raising both men's TN to Be Hit to 15. Chosai

also Focuses, rolling 6k3 (Void/Iaijutsu) against TN 15 and succeeds. Katsun and Chosai both Focus successfully a second and third time, bringing their mutual TN to Be Hit to 35. With three Focuses, Chosai is forced to spend a Void Point to Focus a fourth time, and he succeeds, increasing the TN to Be Hit to 40. Katsun Focuses again without need of a Void Point because of his higher Void Ring, and Chosai spends another point for a fifth Focus. Both succeed, and now the TN to Be Hit for both of them is 50. Katsun, confident that Chosai will have difficulty hitting such a high TN, chooses not to spend any Void Points and instead declares Strike.

EXAMPLE 2: Neither Tarako nor Hoshiken chooses to decline the duel. Tarako decides that Hoshiken will use his Void for the duel, and Hoshiken chooses Tarako's Agility. Since Tarako had the higher Awareness/Iaijutsu Roll, she has the option to Focus or Strike first. She chooses to Focus, and rolls 7k3 (Agility/Iaijutsu). She succeeds, and the TN to Be Hit of both duelists increases to 10 (their TN to Be Hit starting at 5, since neither are wearing armor).

Hoshiken's also uses his first Focus/Strike option to Focus, and his roll of 7k3 (Void/Kenjutsu) beats Tarako's TN to Be Hit of 10, so both the TN to Be Hit of both duelists increases to 15. In total, Tarako and Hoshiken both Focus three times each, the maximum number allowable because they each have Void 3. When it comes Tarako's turn again, she is allowed a fourth Focus because she possesses the Mastery Ability for Iaijutsu Rank 3, which grants her one additional Focus. She makes the roll and narrowly beats the 35 to raise both their TN to Be Hit to 40. Hoshiken is out of free chances to Focus, although he could spend a Void Point to Focus again. If he does so, however, he risks the TN to Be Hit reaching such a high level that both duelists risk missing and shaming their Schools. Comfortable with the idea of being defeated by an honorable opponent, he declares Strike and hopes that Tarako will miss and give him the chance to land the winning blow.

The Dueling TN

Most players work hard to get their character's TN to Be Hit as high as possible. Katana are very dangerous weapons, after all, and even with heavy armor, it's not that difficult for characters to suffer lethal damage in this game. In dueling, however, a character's TN to Be Hit is typically lower, at least at the beginning. When a duel begins, the duelists are standing perfectly still, making no attempt to protect themselves, and frequently even remove their armor for greater freedom of movement. Thus, their TN to Be Hit is reduced to 5 plus any bonuses for armor. Static modifiers, bonuses to TN to Be Hit from things like Techniques, Advantages, active Kata, do not apply to duels unless specifically stated otherwise, as with several of the Kakita and Mirumoto Techniques. Obviously, a duelist's TN to Be Hit increases through Focusing, as described in Step Two, but beyond that striking your opponent is not terribly difficult.

Step Three: Strike

When one duelist fails to make his Choice/Iaijutsu Roll or declares Strike, whether because he cannot Focus any more or because he fears that the TN to Be Hit of his opponent will reach an unbeatable level, he declares Strike. When a duelist declares Strike, he is telling his opponent to hit him. The opponent immediately rolls Choice/Iaijutsu against his opponent's TN to Be Hit, including all increases as a result of Focusing. When striking, a duelist gains a Free Raise to his attack roll for every successful Focus he made during Step Two. Attack rolls made during this stage use Reflexes/Iaijutsu.

EXAMPLE 1: Katsun has declared Strike, and Chosai prepares to make his Reflexes/Iaijutsu Roll. He is rolling 6k3, but spends a Void Point to increase it to 7k4, leaving him with only a single Void Point. He gains a Free Raise for each time he Focused, giving him +25 on his roll. Unfortunately, he rolls poorly and only gets a 23, bringing his total to 48. Akodo Chosai has missed! Once Chosai's Strike is resolved, it is Katsun's turn. He did not receive any Wounds from Chosai's Strike, so he has no Wound penalty. He rolls 8k3 for his Reflexes/Iaijutsu roll, but he spends a Void Point to increase that to 9k4, and receives +20 to his roll for his four successful Focuses. He rolls a total of 37, bringing his Strike up to 57, sufficient to hit Chosai. He rolls 6k2 for damage (Strength 3, 3k2 katana) and gets 23, inflicting 23 Wounds to Chosai.

EXAMPLE 2: Tarako is now ready to make her Strike. With all the Focusing that has taken place, the TN to Be Hit for her opponent is now 40 (5 +15 from Hoshiken's Focuses and +20 from Tarako's Focuses). Tarako uses her four Free Raises to gain +5 per Raise on the roll. She rolls 8k4 (Reflexes/Iaijutsu), getting a result of 28. After the bonus from her Free Raises, this is increased to 48, which exceeds Hoshiken's TN to Be Hit. She has struck her opponent and drawn first blood. She rolls 5k2 for damage (Strength 2, 3k2 katana) and keeps low dice (since this is a relatively friendly duel), inflicting only 3 Wounds.

Step Four: Resolution

In a duel to first blood, if the first duelist to Strike hits his opponent, the duel is over. If the duel is to the death, then Wounds from the first duelist's Strike are applied before allowing his opponent to Strike, assuming the first duelist succeeds. Either way, the second duelist strikes immediately afterward, regardless of whether the first duelist's strike is successful. If both duelists survive the first strike in a duel to the death, they may each spend up to their maximum number of Void Points to inflict a number of additional Wounds to their opponent equal to 1k1 of Wounds per Void Point spent. This may also be done after the initial Strike in a duel to first blood, but will incur considerable Honor loss as a result (-1 Rank per Void Point spent, regardless of the offender's current Honor Rank). If they are both still alive, then the duel becomes a skirmish and the combat continues as normal, without the special dueling rules, and both duelists immediately roll for Initiative.

There are occasions when, in a duel to the death, both duelists die after the first strike, usually due to the expenditure of Void Points causing additional damage. This scenario is known as a "karmic strike," and is considered a manifestation of destiny.

Any duel, regardless of what type, that results in both duelists failing their Strike rolls is considered a mutual failure and is a source of great shame for both participants.

EXAMPLE 1: Both Chosai and Katsun survived the initial strike of their duel to the death. Both immediately spend all their remaining Void Points to inflict damage to their opponent. Chosai has but a single Void Point remaining, and it inflicts 8 Wounds on Katsun. Katsun has 2 Void Points remaining, and he uses them to inflict 16 Wounds, bringing Chosai's total Wounds up to 39. With both men still standing, albeit quite wounded in Chosai's case, the duel becomes a skirmish and both men roll for Initiative.

EXAMPLE 2: Hoshiken smiles and congratulates Tarako. After a moment to bind up Hoshiken's light wound, they go for tea!

What Can I Do in A Duel? Honestly? Not very much.

Formal dueling in Rokugan is very rigid and ritualistic, designed to pit two opponents against one another in a situation where only skill matters. Technique and Kata are allowable. Combat maneuvers are not. This includes Disarm, Feint, Knockdown, Called Shot, Extra Attack, and Guard. Increased Damage is allowable. Augmentation of one's natural abilities by use of a spell or Kiho is considered extremely dishonorable for non-shugenja, and highly questionable even for shugenja.

Variant: Iaijutsu Simplified

If you prefer, you may simplify the resolution of an iaijutsu duel. In this variant, two duelists assume the Full Defense posture and face one another in their dueling stance. Both duelists use the Focus Maneuver, as described in the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition* core rulebook, p. 167. During any round, one duelist may declare that he is striking. Both duelists must then make an Initiative Roll, as they attempt to strike their opponent. Unlike the normal rules for using the Focus Maneuver, however, striking second in this situation does not cause a duelist to forfeit the benefits of having used Focus because of his opponent's movement.

Variant: Using Bokken

It is not at all uncommon for those who are just learning the basics of swordsmanship to use practice weapons made of solid hardwood rather than katana. After all, a sword in the hands of the callow and untrained can easily prove dangerous in ways that the wielder does not intend. A bokken can inflict a deep and painful bruise, and even crack bone if wielded with enough force and skill, but except in exceedingly unlucky cases, a single blow from a bokken will not prove fatal.

Therefore, many sensei allow their students to train with bokken — particularly their beginning students. Introductory training in iaijutsu is often conducted with bokken instead of katana, and it is not at all uncommon for duelists to practice in the dojo with bokken, for there is little point in drawing blood when performing drills. So although the katana remains the only honorable weapon of choice for iaijutsu duels fought in earnest (and, as

noted above, skilled duelists understand how to pull back their blows if they do not intend to seriously hurt their opponent), it is worth noting the existence of bokken as dueling weapon.

Treat bokken as a katana in all respects except that it is made of wood, not metal, and its DR is 0k1.

Taryu-jiai

Duels between bushi are common throughout history, and are a popular part of Rokugani culture. They are the focus of countless plays, stories, and even childhood games. But while such engagements are by far the most popular in terms of their representation in both high and popular culture, they are by no means the only ones that appear. The ancient practice of shugenja dueling, or taryu-jiai, is much more obscure to the average Rokugani, but even still, the picture of a magical duel between shugenja is such an evocative image that many playwrights and budding authors enjoy using it as a climax to their epic works.

Taryu-jiai has existed nearly as long as the Empire itself. Its origins are uncertain, as it was not widely practiced for several centuries before coming to the fore during the Setsuban Festival in the Phoenix Lands. There are conflicting theories on the

origins of this tradition, although the most popular is that it was the system by which the ancient tribe of Isawa resolved disputes. Others believe it is some form of ritual combat originally used by the Kitsu in order to maintain the same level of martial prowess used by their Akodo and Matsu cousins.

Regardless of its origins, the tradition of taryu-jiai takes two basic forms. The oldest form is the one most closely adhered to by traditional-minded shugenja Families. In this version, two shugenja face one another in a specially prepared arena and assault one another with pure elemental forces until one is declared the winner. Like its martial counterpart iaijutsu, this frequently lasts until first blood, although history does contain instances of taryu-jiai duels to the death. The irony is that traditionalist shugenja are supposed to be men of peace, and yet they seem to prefer the more brutal version of the ritual. Regardless, this incarnation of taryu-jiai is a measure of sheer power and little else.

The more popular, and perhaps more socially acceptable, version of taryu-jiai places more emphasis on the skill with which one harnesses the power of the kami. In this form, the duel takes place between magically created avatars — personal champions crafted by the shugenja from the Elements themselves for the purpose of combating their opponent's avatar. The command an individual has over the Elements determines the durability of these constructs, but their finesse determines their ability to manipulate it in combat. This option is much more popular than blood duels, not only because it measures a shugenja's prowess across two axes rather than one, but also because it results



in no harm to either party. Many shugenja Families therefore consider it to be a far more appropriate means of resolving disputes than the older form of taryu-jiai.

Mechanics: Traditional Taryu-jiai

Like iaijutsu, taryu-jiai begins with two opponents facing one another in preparation for ritual combat. In a formal duel, this is arranged well in advance and allows for both participants to spend considerable time in meditation before entering a specially prepared ritual circle that is designed to appeal to the kami that will be invoked during the duel. Obviously, impromptu duels do not have these considerations, although a large circle is usually drawn wherever the duel will take place, regardless of circumstances. The steps taken in a traditional taryu-jiai duel are as follows:

STEP 1: Assessment. In a fashion similar to an iaijutsu duel, two shugenja opponents can take stock of one another and evaluate their relative strengths and weaknesses. As in other duels, either shugenja may immediately concede a duel after assessing his opponent and determining his opponent to be the superior contestant. This is considered an honorable act and results in no loss of face, although there may still be ramifications from losing the duel. During the Assessment stage of the duel, both shugenja make an Awareness/Spellcraft Roll against a TN of 5. If the roll is successful, the shugenja may learn one of the following things about his opponent, as well as 1 additional piece of information per successful Raise declared on the Awareness/Spellcraft Roll:

- The opponent's Insight Rank (only in total Shugenja School Ranks)
- The opponent's Affinity (choose first gained if multiple are possessed)
- The opponent's Deficiency (as above)
- The opponent's highest Ring
- The opponent's lowest Ring
- Any specified Ring of the opponent, including Void
- The opponent's remaining Void Points
- The opponent's rank in Spellcraft
- The opponent's rank in Meditation

STEP 2: Declaration. Immediately before the duel begins, each shugenja determines what Element he will use for his effects. The entire duel will depend exclusively on the Ring associated with this Element, so its selection is crucial. When harnessing the raw elemental magic used in these duels, each shugenja makes a Ring/Rank Roll, with only their shugenja School Ranks counting in this instance. The TN for these rolls is the opponent's selected Ring x 5. The TN is increased by 5 if the opponent has an Affinity for the Ring he is using, and for every Free Raise he has that applies to spells of that Element. If the Element the opponent is using is the opposing element of the Ring selected by the duelist, the TN is increased by an additional 5.

STEP 3: Resolution. When all declarations complete, both duelists make their roll and compare the results to the TN. The amount by which the roll exceeds the TN is applied to the opponent in Wounds. The duelist who inflicts the most Wounds upon his opponent is considered the victor unless the duel is to the death, in which case it must continue with mutual rolls until one duelist is dead. Failing to meet the TN causes a significant backlash of elemental energy, resulting in the shugenja in question suffering a number of Wounds equal to the difference between his roll and the TN. If both duelists fail to meet their TNs, they

both suffer damage equal to the difference and are shunned by the kami, preventing any use of spells of their declared Element for 1 day per 5 Wounds suffered as a result.

EXAMPLE: Tamori Tarako, a Rank 3 Tamori Shugenja, is preparing to duel an opponent, a Rank 3 Isawa Shugenja. Tarako has Earth 3, Awareness 3, Spellcraft 5, and an Affinity for Earth. She rolls 8k3 for her assessment, declaring 3 Raises and succeeding. She learns that her opponent as an Affinity for Fire, a Fire Ring of 4, an Earth Ring of 2, and is a Rank 3 shugenja. She declares that she will use Earth during the duel, and her opponent declares that he will use Fire.

During the duel, Tarako rolls 6k4 (her Earth/School Rank) against a TN of 25 (her opponent's Fire x 5, plus an additional 5 because he is using an Element for which he has an Affinity). Her opponent rolls 7k4 against Tarako's TN of 20. Tarako rolls exceptionally well, and achieves a result of 31. Her opponent, on the other hand, rolls quite poorly and obtains a result of only 24. Accordingly, Tarako suffers 4 Wounds (the amount by which her opponent exceeded her TN), and inflicts 6 Wounds on her opponent (the amount by which she exceeded her opponent's TN). Since Tarako exceeded her TN by a greater amount, she is declared the victor. If the duel had been to the death, it would have continued with both duelists rolling again.

Mechanics: Avatar Variant

As described above, this popular variant of taryu-jiai consists of the duelists creating personal avatars from the raw Elements and pitting them against one another. This prevents any real injury to either party, which many pacifistic shugenja find much more in keeping with their role as priests.

The Assessment stage of a duel of this type is identical to that of a traditional taryu-jiai blood duel. During the Declaration phase, however, each duelist summons an Elemental avatar using the Ring they declared as their focus for the duel. These avatars traditionally take humanoid form, most commonly that of a bushi, but some duelists prefer crafting more exotic forms in an attempt to intimidate their opponent.

Taryu-jiai avatars are unique creatures created from manifested kami. Mechanically, they possess all Rings at 1 Rank, except for the Ring of the declared Element from which they are created, in which they have 2 Ranks. Additionally, the avatar has a number of Ring Ranks equal to the duelist's declared Ring, which may be distributed among the avatar's Rings at the duelist's discretion. References to Ring use in the duel mechanics from this point on refer to the avatar's Ring rather than the duelist's.

Raises made on any rolls made by the avatar are limited by the avatar's Void Ring. All attack rolls made use Ring/Spellcraft, and the avatar is considered to have a Rank in the Defense Skill equal to its summoner's rank in Meditation. Avatars have a number of Wounds per Wound Rank equal to their summoner's Insight Rank (in Shugenja Schools only) x the avatar's Earth Ring. Typically, taryu-jiai duels of this type continue until one duelist concedes or one avatar destroys its counterpart.

EXAMPLE: Isawa Notaku is a Rank 2 Isawa Shugenja with an Affinity for Fire. He possesses Fire 4, Awareness 3, Spellcraft 5, and Meditation 4. When assessing his opponent, he rolls 8k3 and makes a rather conservative 2 Raises. Succeeding on this roll, he learns the following about his opponent: She has an Affinity for

Water spells, Water is her highest Ring, and she has 4 Ranks in Spellcraft. Armed with this information, Notaku declares Fire as his element for the duel.

When summoning his avatar, Notaku distributes his 4 additional Ranks of Rings (from his Fire Ring of 4) so that his avatar is equipped as follows: Air 1, Earth 2, Fire 3, Water 1, Void 2. The avatar will roll 8k3 to attack (its Fire and Notaku's Spellcraft). It will roll 7k3 to use the Full Defense posture (its Agility and Notaku's Meditation). It has a TN to Be Hit of 5 (Its Reflexes x 5), possesses 4 Wounds per Wound Rank (Notaku's Rank of 2 and the avatar's Earth 2), and is capable of making up to 2 Raises on any roll (the avatar's Void 2).

NEW ADVANTAGE: KAMI'S SIGHT (4 POINTS)

You have a particularly keen eye for sizing up others and their interaction with the kami. Whenever you are assessing an opponent before a taryu-jiai duel, you automatically gain 1 additional piece of information without having to make a Raise. Even if you fail the roll, you always gain at least 1 piece of information. This Advantage costs 1 fewer point for Phoenix characters.

NEW ADVANTAGE: POWER OF THE ELEMENTS (INHERENT, 6 POINTS)

You have a particular affinity for channeling the raw, unfocused power of the Elements. You gain 1 Free Raise when casting Summon utilizing an Element of your choice (chosen when this Advantage is taken). This ability manifests itself primarily when wielding the Elements to form avatars for taryu-jiai duels. When participating in such a duel, you add +1k0 to your attack rolls made in traditional duels, and gain 1 additional Rank to spend on an avatar's Rings when crafting an avatar for the avatar variant taryu-jiai dueling rules. This advantage costs 2 fewer points for Phoenix characters.

The Way of the Courtier: Non-Bugei Form of Dueling

To most Rokugani, the art of the duel is synonymous with the formalized swordplay of iaijutsu or the mysterious rituals of taryu-jiai. But in spite of their popularity among the samurai class, these forms of confrontation do not describe all of the means by which affairs of honor are settled. Those who cannot channel the kami and who have chosen a path different from that of the warrior have, over the ages, developed their own ways of challenging each other. Many of these are extensions of the functions and pastimes of the court, and anyone who chooses the courtier's path would do well to develop proficiency in at least one of these relatively subtle expressions of a samurai's honor.

These "courtly" forms of dueling fall into two general categories: those that require some type of judging in order to determine the outcome, and those that do not. The former includes oratory, the contest of wit known as sadane, and just about any form of artistic performance or artisanship. Of the last, the most popular are composition of poetry, flower arranging (ikebana) and painting. The latter category includes the games go and shogi, sumai

wrestling and the sport of kemari. In those cases, the help of a judge may be solicited to make sure that the rules of the contest are respected, but those same rules will make it clear who wins and who loses.

Mechanics: Adjudicated Contests

The ingenuity of Rokugani courtiers has made pursuits that were never meant to be competitive into means of pitting one samurai against another. A witty turn of phrase, an elegant poem, an attractive floral arrangement — all of these things may be admired in and of themselves, without reference to others of their kind. Beauty resides in the eye or ear of the beholder. So determining that the work of one is superior to the work of another requires someone to make that judgment.

When a samurai's honor is at stake, the choice of judge becomes all-important. Once a duel of courtly skill is proposed and accepted, the first priority for both contestants is to find a referee, a mutually acceptable third party whose decisions will bind both of them. The ideal judge is someone whom both duelists regard as an elder and someone of impeccable character (i.e., someone who has an Honor Rank of no less than 3, preferably 4 or 5). That he should have some expertise in the discipline in question is preferable, but not necessary. Of course, one may argue that no human referee can ever be perfectly neutral and objective in his judgments; and that is a fair point, but ultimately it is up to the GM to determine how and to what extent this should affect the resolution of the duel.

There are essentially three different ways of resolving an adjudicated contest. The trickiest — but potentially most interesting — is to use pure roleplaying, with the GM adjudicating if the duel is between two player characters, or a third party adjudicating and the GM playing an NPC contestant. Depending on the talents and proclivities of one's players (as well as the activity being simulated), this may not be a suitable option, however.

The simplest way is to reduce the contest to a single Contested Skill Roll, with the judge present just as a matter of form. However, if you as GM wish to give the judge a more consequential role in determining the outcome — perhaps he is an interesting NPC, or you just want to throw your players for a loop — consider his relationship to the dueling characters and how that might subconsciously affect his judgment. Would Clan affiliation predispose him for or against one duelist or the other? Does he have a personal connection to one or the other, either friendship or enmity? Does he favor or disfavor a certain style or school of the activity in which the duelists are engaging, and how would that affect his judgment, as much as he tries to be fair? And so on. Consider all such possible factors, and express them as a modifier to one contestant's roll.

Oratory

Contests of public speaking are a direct extension of one of the courtier's most important functions: pleading his Lord's case at court, before a high official or even the Emperor himself. Sometimes courtiers must directly debate a representative of a rival Clan, with the weight of Imperial favor at stake. Courtiers with pure silver in their tongues have every right to take pride in their skill, and it is a short step from matching wits with a rival in an

official setting to challenging each other simply to prove who is the greater master of oratory.

Formalized oratory contests center on a particular subject to which the contestants agree in advance. Historical and philosophical topics tend to be popular, as they have weight without being controversial in terms of contemporary politics, but these duels also serve as ways for courtiers to resolve any argument, weighty or trivial, into which they get themselves.

The duel itself breaks down into three rounds. In the first, each contestant argues his side of the proposition. In the second, each attempts to counter the other's argument; unless the opponents agree to share notes beforehand, this round tests one's ability to think quickly. In the third, each contestant restates his basic thesis, modifying it to address objections raised in the second round.

Judges are expected to grade the opponents on both substance and style. As GM, if you want to draw out the resolution of an oratory duel, you may resolve each round as a separate Contested Storytelling (Oratory) Roll, with the winner of best of the 3 rolls winning the overall duel.

Sadane

Sadane is a popular pastime at Winter Court, especially among the younger courtiers who consider themselves wits and intellectuals. It is a test of quick thinking and analytical depth, in which the contestants take turns expressing criticisms of a mutually agreed-upon object: a painting, a poem or treatise, or even the qualities (or lack thereof) of a person — usually an historical personage, just to be safe that no one will say something to be regretted later, but not always. Each point must be a new contribution to the argument, not a restatement of something already said. The first contestant to be caught at a loss loses the match, although adjudicated sadane contests allow the judge to give credit for style of expression. Resolve a bout of sadane as an Contested Games: Sadane Roll. If a judge is involved, factor in an appropriate modifier. Or, if you wish to draw out the resolution of the contest, have each player take turns making their Skill Roll against a TN appropriate to the difficulty of finding fault with the object of derision. The first one to fail loses the bout.

A more social variation of sadane involves pitting teams of two against each other. To resolve such a bout simply and quickly, have each side make an Contested Cooperative Skill Test against the other. For spectators, watching each team member strain to avoid letting down his partner, as well as think of something original to say, only adds to their enjoyment.

An even more social version of sadane uses the contest as a drinking game. This requires adjudication of a sort, preferably by a group of one's peers. It is not enough in this variation to simply make an original criticism according to the topic at hand; you are judged stringently by your audience on the quality of your contribution. If they judge it weak in substance or expression, you must drink a quantity of sake appropriate to how far you have fallen short in their estimation. Once a contestant reaches a tipping point of inebriation, the contest tends to go downhill very quickly, with victory and defeat either becoming very obvious, or entirely irrelevant.

Artisan and Performance Skills

It is not at all unusual for Rokugani nobles to challenge each other based on demonstrated skill at a performing art, or a particular artisan discipline. These challenges comprehend a wide variety of activities, from singing, playing the koto and reciting dramatic monologues, to composing poetry and art of flower arranging. The storytelling contests for which Ikoma Omoidasu are known (see sidebar "Ikoma Hitotsu and Ikoma Hari," p. 68) are an excellent example of this. What they all share in common, however, is the need for a judge to settle the matter of who is best, and the need to establish firm criteria for judgment through agreeing on what will be performed or made.

Comparing dissimilar things — apples to oranges, as it were — is a difficult business, so setting ground rules is important to proper adjudication. If the challenge is one of musical performance, then both opponents should agree to perform the same song. If the challenge is one of writing poetry, then they should both compose in the same form. If one of calligraphy, then both must agree to write the same characters in the same order. And so on. A wise judge will insist on having as many commonalities as possible, thus giving him more points on which to make a sound comparative judgment. It is not unusual for an adjudicator to insist on refinements and addenda to the duelists' initial agreement, for his own sake more than for theirs.

Mechanics: Pure Competitions

Still other forms of competition do not require the services of a judge — except to prevent cheating, and suspecting before the fact that your opponent will behave without honor is such an insult that it by itself must be answered with a duel. Instead, these forms are themselves games or sports with rules that are sufficiently structured to determine victory and defeat without any subjective decision making.

In the case of games such as go or shogi, it may prove interesting to resolve them through roleplaying — that is, having the players involved (or the player and the GM, if an NPC is involved) play an actual game to determine which character wins. Otherwise, a simple Contested Skill Roll will suffice.

However, if you wish to add more drama and flavor to the process, you may use the following rules, which consider the benefits of reading one's opponent and treat these forms of competition with something approaching the gravity of an iaijutsu or taryu-jiai duel:

Before the match begins, allow the opponents to size up each other. Each makes a Raw Perception Roll against a TN of 20. For each increment of 5 (rounded down) by which he exceeds the TN, a duelist may learn the value of one of his opponent's Rings, or any one Trait appropriate to the competition (see discussions of individual types of contests, below). Each opponent must then choose one of his opponent's Rings or appropriate Traits.

To resolve the contest, each contestant makes an Contested Skill Roll of the type appropriate to the competition, with the Ring or Trait chosen by his opponent serving as the Trait. High roll wins.

A Game of Go

Let us say that Doji Aiko formally challenges Ikoma Shinji at go. Both have 3 Ranks in Games: Go, so they are players of equal skill. Come the time of the match, Aiko chooses Shinji's Air Ring (2 Ranks), while Shinji, unfortunately for him, chooses Aiko's Intelligence (4 Ranks). Shinji therefore rolls 5k2 (his Skill + the "Trait" Aiko chose for him, keeping dice equal to the "Trait"). Aiko rolls 7k4 (her Skill + the "Trait" that Shinji chose for her, keeping dice equal to the "Trait"), thus giving her a substantial advantage.

Mechanics: Sumai

Sumai (also known as sumo) is a favorite spectator sport at court, and successful sumai wrestlers can become minor celebrities based solely on their exploits in the ring. Part of its popularity is attributable to the elaborate rituals that attend it, as the wrestlers undergo purification and deep meditation before they begin a bout; sumai admirers savor the spectacle of these rituals as much as they do the actual wrestling. The sumai matches themselves are quite short, as it usually does not take long for one of the contestants to shove the other outside of the small ring using the limited and rather stylized wrestling techniques that the sport permits.

Sumai wrestlers are classified by four levels of expertise: juro (the lowest), maegashira, sanyaku and yokozuna (the most skilled). Wrestlers may only take on an opponent of the same

class, and at Winter Court only bouts between yokozuna are allowed. Sumai has always been particularly popular at the Imperial Court, and by tradition the Emperor sponsors regular tournaments between two teams of seventeen hand-picked wrestlers. The leader of the winning team receives a masterwork bow as a prize, and is invited to perform the complex ritual of ceremonial songs and dances known as bugaku before the court.

To resolve a sumai bout, treat it as a skirmish, in which the aim is to successfully Grapple with your opponent, rather than inflict Wound damage on him. The first contestant who can maintain a Grapple for 3 rounds with his opponent held is the victor.

Mechanics: Games

Go and shogi are the two most popular games of strategy played by the Rokugani nobility. Both are particular favorites of the Lion Clan, who see them as necessary exercises in strategic and tactical thinking as well as a pastime, and the Lion sponsor formal tournaments on a regular basis. However, other Clans — particularly the Crane — have taken to both games as courtly pastimes rather than military officer training, and they are also popular ways for courtiers to settle matters of honor. For more about go and shogi, see *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition* core rulebook, pp. 31-2.

To resolve a game of go or shogi, use the appropriate Games Skill as the relevant Skill. Use Awareness, Intelligence and Perception as the relevant Traits.



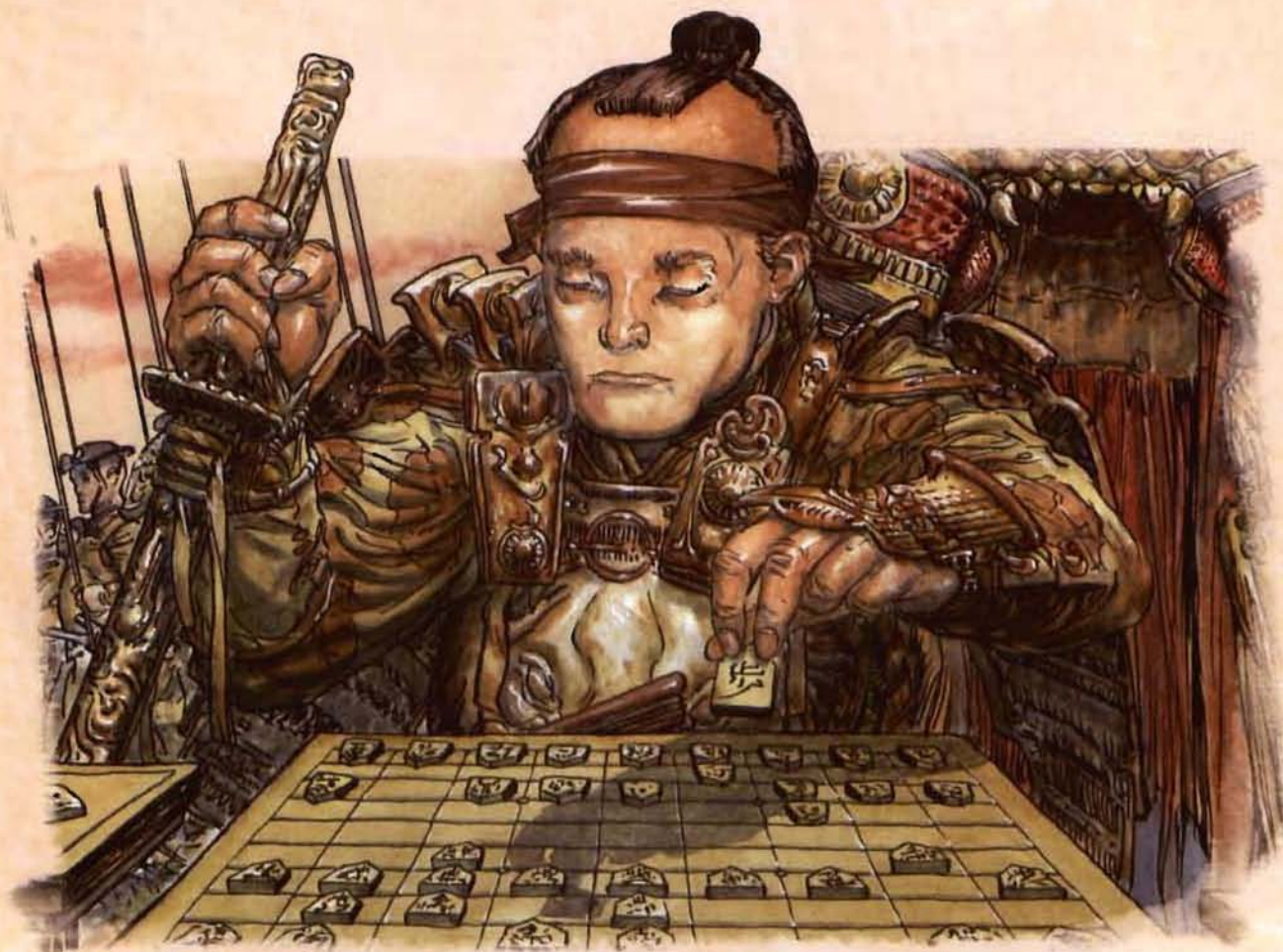
Mechanics: Kemari

Kemari is a popular sport among courtiers, but is played exclusively at Winter Court. It is a relatively recent innovation, introduced to Rokugan by the Shinjo Family in the early 12th Century. Kemari uses a large leather ball, which the players may not touch with their hands. The players stand in a circle and kick the ball to one another, attempting to keep the ball from touching the ground. If you allow the ball to touch the ground, you are eliminated from the game. But if the ball comes within your reach, you must make a try for it; there is no shirking in order to make the excuse that you didn't actually fail to keep the ball in the air because you never tried. The last player left wins.

Without a doubt, the strangest aspect of kemari is that it is played in full courtly dress, with players wearing silk kimonos and (for the men) peaked black caps. Those devoted to the sport often say that the task of maintaining one's dignity during a game is a challenge every bit as strenuous as keeping the ball in the air — and therefore, that the game is an apt metaphor for the tensions inherent in the life of a samurai.

Because it is a multiplayer game in which the players are gradually eliminated, kemari is resolved somewhat differently from the other contests described here. A randomly determined player begins the game by making an Athletics (Kemari) Roll against a TN of 15. If he fails, he is eliminated, and another randomly selected player restarts the game. If he succeeds, however, he remains in the game and chooses another player, who must then make the same roll with the same consequences. Play proceeds in this manner until only one player is left. If you as GM wish to speed up the resolution process, increase the TN as the game goes on to reflect the effects of fatigue and loss of balance.

Kemari is also a fairly popular form of dueling among the younger and sportier courtiers who do not wish to shed blood. In this two-player form of the sport, the contestants simply kick the ball back and forth until one of them lets the ball drop to the ground. In this case, you as GM may either resolve the match simply, as a single Contested Athletics (Kemari) Roll. Or you may have the opponents take turns making Athletics (Kemari) Rolls against a TN of 15 until one fails.



CHAPTER TWO:

DUELING:
WAY OF THE CRAB**Philosophy**

If nothing else, the Crab are a Clan of practical warriors. They scoff at the notion that dueling, such as the Crane or the Dragon practice it and honor it, is anything more than a vanity. Fighting should be saved for one's true enemies, and a bushi's skills are made for killing, not settling petty arguments. Scars are badges of honor on a Crab warrior, but only if gained in battle against the foul things of the Shadowland or the Clan's other foes. And most important of all, a duel to the death between two Crab is the worst kind of folly imaginable, as a samurai who dies this way is one who cannot go to the Kaiu Wall at those times when every man is needed there. A fight to the death between two Crab seals the fate of winner and loser alike, as the winner will be ostracized, perhaps even disowned and exiled as punishment.

That is not to say that they are completely uninterested in one-on-one competition or confrontation. Every Crab Family trains at least a few iaijutsu specialists, in case disputes with other Clans require that they defend their honor. Within the Clan, disputes that would otherwise occasion iaijutsu duels are settled with *tetsubo-suru* — duels fought with *tetsubo*, or any of the other blunt weapons that the Crab favor. The weapons are wrapped in wool or heavy cloth to pad blunt spikes and other piercing surfaces, and to prevent the possibility of lethal damage. The combatants generally fight until one submits, or is knocked off his feet.

The Crab also relish any test of strength that may be configured as a duel. Many young Crab samurai train intensively in the art of unarmed fighting, taught that grapples and holds are their last chance for survival in combat. If you are trapped deep in enemy territory, after all, you must be able to defend yourself with every available resource. If others dismiss it as brawling, so be it. From training in jujitsu, it is a short step to using it as a form of competition and one-on-one confrontation. These duels generally involve grappling and throwing, reflecting the styles of jujitsu most commonly taught in Crab dojo. Here one wins by throwing the opponent so that he leaves his feet, or when the opponent submits. These wrestling duels are sometimes fought to best two of three throws. They are widely considered sufficient to settle matters of honor within the Clan.

Crab samurai also challenge each other to simple athletic contests, either to settle minor disputes, or even purely for sport. Foot races — both sprints and long-distance — and climbing races are the most popular. Weight lifting is also popular; in these contests, the opponents take turns trying to lift heavier and heavier weights until one cannot match the other.

Crab *shugenja* — the notorious Kuni — show relatively little interest in their standard dueling form, *taryu-jiai*, either, whether amongst each other or against *shugenja* from other Clans. Their garish appearance, more suited for the kabuki stage than the dueling arena, tends to put off potential opponents, as does the Family's reputation for mystery and madness. Kuni *shugenja* are just too unpredictable to goad into a ritualized fight because you never know what will happen. For their part, a few Kuni make a half-hearted study of the art of *taryu-jiai*, but most consider it a pursuit that lacks seriousness compared to ferreting out the Taint within the Empire and studying the beasts of the Shadowlands.

As one might expect, Crab samurai show even less interest in courtly forms of competition. Most regard games as no more than pastimes. They view anyone who practices oratory with suspicion, for oni cannot be defeated with fine words. A Crab samurai who cultivated skill at poetry or flower arranging would receive enough ridicule to drive him for cover.

Oddly enough, the Crab's prowess as fighters has allowed them one avenue to prominence at court at which no other Clan can match them. *Sumai* is a popular attraction throughout Rokugan, but particularly among diplomats, courtiers and other refined types who serve the Emperor and the Great Clans away from the battlefield. Most Emperors have made *sumai* tournaments one of the highlights of Winter Court (see *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition* core rulebook, p. 32), and these tournaments can turn champion wrestlers into minor celebrities.

Crab samurai, given their extensive training in unarmed combat, seem to find it relatively easy to master this highly refined and stylized form of wrestling, and over the generations the Clan has cultivated it as something of a specialty. Outside of the Yasuki courtiers and their skills, it's their best — some would say

their only — chance to gain glory in a courtly setting. Crab bushi who retire without disability have been known to specialize in representing the Clan as sumai wrestlers, or at the least to become sensei of the art. In fact, it is not entirely unknown for a Crab Champion to discreetly pluck a young bushi said to have promise from duty at the Kaiu Wall and put him on sumai as a career path, feeling that he can best serve his Clan by upholding their prestige in the eyes of the Emperor. While no one has ever made an exact count, the impression certainly exists that a plurality (if not the majority) of prominent sumai practitioners in Rokugani history have come from the Crab Clan.

Finally, one cannot let the subject pass without mentioning the Crab's notorious fondness for drinking contests. Wedding feasts make excellent excuses for Crab, samurai and heimin alike, to try to drink each other under the table. In fact, Hida Yakigami passed into Clan lore by no less (or greater) a feat than winning the drinking contest at Hida-O-ushi's wedding banquet. But really, any occasion will serve.

Most commonly, these contests take the following form: Revelers seated around the table take turns drinking out of a huge cup of sake or some other liquor. They must drink for a specified amount of time, marked by the others beating on the table in unison or singing a song, before passing the cup. Sometimes, the interval increases as the contest goes on — ten beats instead of

five, or two songs instead of one. Anyone who passes out, cannot hold himself upright, gets sick, or is otherwise unable to drink for the specified period is eliminated from the bout. If the competition is taken seriously, a judge may be appointed to stay sober and observe the drinkers to ensure that they don't cheat by taking small sips or merely pretending to imbibe. The last competitor remaining wins.

The Crab recognize one-on-one drinking contests as accepted forms of dueling. These require two judges, one to mark time for each contestant, and one to ensure against cheating.

Crab Institutions

As the Crab are an eminently practical Clan, one thing that may be said of their training institutions is that inside their walls, those who know by doing pass along their hard-won experience to those who will take their place in the Clan's ranks.



Grip of Earth Dojo

The popularity of wrestling in the Crab Clan descends in many ways from Hida himself, whose prodigious strength was one of his great defining characteristics, and who did not hesitate to use it in its purest and rawest form. Hida did not need a weapon to fight even the most terrible of foes; a popular Crab legend has it that he once killed an oni by tearing it apart with his teeth and bare hands. This story is engraved on a large stone tablet standing at the front entrance of the Grip of Earth Dojo, serving as their creed, their motto and their inspiration. In giving wrestling the full dignity of an art and a proper combat form, the sensei of the Grip of Earth believe that they are carrying on the legacy of the founder of their Clan in a pure and unalloyed form.

The dojo was founded as a branch of the Hida Bushi School, and in purely administrative terms, it remains so to this day. It is still located in the shadow of Kyuden Hida, next to a Hida Bushi dojo. Its original sensei were tried and true Crab warriors, all veterans of hard fighting along the Kaiu Wall and beyond it. They believed that their fellows should receive more intensive training in unarmed combat than they were getting in conventional Hida dojo. All of them had, at one time or another, been forced to fight the foul things of the Shadowlands without a weapon to hand, so they had the impetus of personal experience behind them. The legend of Hida killing an oni with his bare hands added force to their conviction, and the existing popularity of wrestling for sport and honor among Crab bushi made it fairly easy for them to attract students.

The Grip of Earth's original curriculum was limited in scope. The dojo offered a short course of instruction, limited to demonstrations of techniques and harrowing lectures by the sensei describing their own encounters with the enemy beyond the Wall. Over the generations, however, their successors developed their own particular style of unarmed combat, which became popular enough so that it is now more or less synonymous with what the Crab think of as wrestling. It is a style that emphasizes throws (to gain the initiative on your opponent) and holds (to immobilize your opponent, and as platforms from which to inflict damage). It does not emphasize speed in footwork so much as quickness and strength in the upper body. One does not dodge an opponent's grapples so much as deflect or break them. The kata of the Hida Wrestling School emphasize either furious attacks that deliver a flurry of feints and grapples primarily through upper body movement, or defensive techniques meant to render you as impervious as stone, so that whatever your opponent does, it will wash over you as would water or air. In all cases, the lower body remains relatively still, a center of immovable strength. This, of course, reflects the true nature of the Crab warrior and capitalizes on his fundamental connection with Earth.

Needless to say, the dojo's course of instruction has grown more complex over the generations as well. Although the Grip of Earth still shows deference to the dojo of the Hida Bushi School, and remain technically subordinate to it, they offer a comprehensive course of instruction that provides young samurai with a basic education that can serve as a fully-fledged alternative to the conventional Hida Bushi education. It is commonly recognized as a School of its own, like, but not exactly the same as the Hida Bushi School.

Even so, the sensei of the Grip of Earth have always considered themselves Hida Bushi first and foremost, even as their dojo has developed a distinct identity of its own. They teach wrestling as an art and a proper style of combat, but they also teach weapon practice, just like any Hida Bushi School dojo. No samurai who comes out of the Hida Wrestling School lacks for training in the tetsubo — or the katana, for that matter. Students of the Grip of Earth differ from their Hida Bushi peers mainly in the extent to which they train in this particular style of jujitsu — although it is an extensive and very important difference.

Almost all of the dojo's sensei are veterans of the Crab's wars, either facing the enemy along the Wall or raiding and patrolling beyond it. Debilitating injuries forced some from active duty, while others received an appointment to the Grip of Earth as a reward for distinguished service. When a new instructor is needed and no obvious candidate presents himself, the dojo may declare its own equivalent of a Twenty Goblin Winter, in which the first current or former student of the Hida Wrestling School (all sensei are former students) to bring twenty bakemono heads to the Grip of Earth will succeed to the open position. They are as hard and tough as Hida warriors come, and they enjoy warning their students that they will not go any easier on them than would an oni in a close quarters fight. They understand all too well that tenacity and skill are all that will keep you alive in unarmed combat.

At the same time, however, the sensei have learned that they cannot deflect their students' interest in wrestling as a ritualistic form of fighting, and they teach techniques appropriate to submission fights rather than combat to the death. They also encourage mock wrestling duels between their students, knowing that interest in ritualistic combat as affairs of honor is (especially among the younger students) an excellent motivation for learning fighting techniques and philosophy in general. They also understand the extent to which wrestling duels take place outside the world of the dojo, and they know that shame would fall upon them if one of their students lost. The curriculum also includes a nod to basic techniques and rituals of sumai, and students who show promise in this courtly form of wrestling are eventually passed along to the Stone Tower Dojo in Toshi Ranbo.

For their part, students come to the Grip of Earth for much the same reason as they enter any Hida Bushi dojo — to learn the Way of the Crab Warrior and battle the Clan's enemies. The only difference is that the Grip of Earth draws those young Crab samurai who are particularly taken with the ancient stories of their great ancestor's ability to fight with his bare hands, their youthful enthusiasm carrying them onto this slightly unconventional path. But the techniques developed and taught here have also caught the attention of the Hiruma scouts, who understand better than most Crab bushi the importance of knowing a full range of combat techniques. As a scout, one never knows the extremities one might have to face, deep in enemy territory without support close at hand. And so it is not unusual for Hiruma scouts to come to the dojo for a brief course of study, intent on learning techniques that they can combine with their training in stealth and hunting.

Once they have completed their basic education in the Hida Wrestler School, most Grip of Earth students go off to fairly conventional careers as Crab bushi. In spite of the unusual path that they have tread, they are Crab warriors through and through

— perhaps even more so than most, for they have learned how to fight the Clan's enemies in the most primal and demanding of ways, and they have trained more than most in one of the Clan's preferred methods of dueling.

Stone Tower Dojo

The Stone Tower is truly an unusual institution among Crab dojo. It is the Clan's own sumai academy, taking its name from one of the dojo's maxims: that to succeed at this ritualistic form of wrestling, one must be as immovable as a tower of stone. But aside from that fundamental belief in the power of Earth, there is relatively little that would mark this as a Crab training hall.

For one thing, it isn't located in the Crab Lands, near the traditional sources of manpower and resources that the Hida and the Hiruma tap in training their warriors. Instead, the Stone Tower has always been located in the Imperial City, taking advantage of the sport's traditional popularity with the Imperial Court. As such, it has been a rare outpost of Crab influence in a place where one of their great weaknesses — the courtier's art — has paramount importance. Founded in Otosan Uchi, the original Stone Tower Dojo was abandoned shortly before Daigotsu's horde devastated the city, and it only recently reestablished itself in Toshi Ranbo.

For another, effective training in sumai requires applying dabs of refinement to the raw fury that conventional Hida bushi training brings out of its students. If you were to pull a Crab warrior right from a fight on the Kaiu Wall and drop him into the Stone Tower Dojo, he might not recognize the sensei and students as his compatriots at all. Not only is the ambience more decorous and aesthetically pleasing than what he is used to (a concession to courtly taste), but the fighting techniques taught there are strictly limited by the rules of sumai. Hida wrestling training teaches that ultimately, no hold is barred when you are fighting for your life, but that is not the case with sumai. The students here are also taught deportment and the rituals that attend the sport, all of which a rough and tumble warrior would find ridiculous. Being a sumai and wrestling for audiences of courtiers means that one needs to learn something of the courtier's art, something with which Crab warriors generally do not bother.

What a typical Crab bushi would recognize about the training offered here is its stress on the importance of physical and spiritual strength — the power of the body and the power of the will, both drawing on the fundamental nature of Earth. For the irony of sumai — and an important reason why the Crab are so good at it — is that precisely because of the restrictions that it places on how one may attack an opponent, innate qualities have a way of coming to the fore and determining victory. This assumes, of course, parity in levels of training in technique, and the Stone Tower insures that their sumai wrestlers are at least as well trained technically as those of any other dojo (only Badger Clan sumai rival those of the Crab in this regard). Their decisive edge, the sensei here believe, is the innate strength of Earth that is the birthright of all children of Hida, and the philosophical aspect of their teaching stresses the importance of connecting with and manifesting that force inside the sumai ring.

It is no surprise, therefore, that the Stone Tower has produced more successful sumai wrestlers than any other dojo in the Empire. Thanks to its long record of success, the Stone Tower has become something of an institution in the Imperial City, well-known to devotees of the sport. Emperors and high court officials particularly fond of sumai have paid courtesy calls, which sensei

and students alike find gratifying, as the Crab have few other easy routes of entrance into the circles of courtly society. Memorial tablets commemorating Imperial visits line one wall of the training hall as a reminder of the stakes for which wrestlers compete at this level. Champion wrestlers compete for their own glory and keep their prizes as their personal property, but some Stone Tower students have bequeathed or donated their trophies out of gratitude to their sensei, and they fill another wall of the training hall. Among them are the masterwork bows given by the Emperor to champions of Imperial Court-sponsored tournaments.

The sensei here are all either active or retired sumai wrestlers, as one would expect. Some are yokozuna with many victories racked up, but others are wrestlers who found their careers stalled at lower levels for some reason, and have devoted themselves fully to teaching instead. Their students are also a pretty uniform lot. Almost all of them have some sort of Hida warrior training, either from the Hida Bushi School, but more commonly, from the Hida Wrestler School. Most of them are hardened veterans of Crab military service, and the adjustment from life in a Kaiu Wall garrison to life amidst the splendor of the Imperial City comes as quite a shock to many at first. However, candidates for the Hida Sumai School are screened to ensure that they have at least a modest grasp of etiquette, to reduce the risk of culture shock.

There are also a few scattered exceptions among the students; Hiruma scouts with a sufficient level of jujitsu skill will also be considered for admission. If they have studied wrestling at the Grip of Earth Dojo, then their way in will be easier, as their ties with the Stone Tower are quite strong — the sensei of the former remembering students who went on to become sensei at the latter. Because of their ancient kinship with the Crab, sumai from the Badger Clan are sometimes accepted here. Every now and then, the Stone Tower even receives applications from Yasuki with a bit of jujitsu skill who fancy themselves wrestlers; the sensei do not take such fellows very seriously, but once in a great while they find one who can actually prove his qualifications to study with them.

The dojo believes that its students should leaven their training with practical experience as much as possible, and the sensei encourage them to compete in tournaments as well as private challenges. Less experienced students, especially those who have not passed the rank of junyo, are sent out to tournaments at provincial courts for seasoning. The Stone Tower prefers to save its best for Imperial tournaments (and of course, the Winter Court Imperial tournaments feature yokozuna only, in any event). Having spent much time in the capital, they understand the political dimension of sumai quite well, and are keenly aware that their wrestlers serve as ambassadors of the Crab Clan as much as any diplomat. Furthermore, they understand that victory will uphold the standing of the Clan in the eyes of the Court personages who enjoy watching the sport, while defeat will deflate it.

In fact, this political dimension of sumai and the Stone Tower Dojo's mission is a potential source of controversy within the Clan, though one that the sensei and the leaders of the Crab have been able to avoid for the most part. Every Crab bushi fights, and the lives of some are relatively short and brutal. Some earn an honorable retirement from active duty, and the peers of those who go on to the life of a sumai wrestler after much hard service do not begrudge them their new life of relatively luxury. And yet a few — young warriors who have the makings of a superior su-

mai wrestler — are plucked from duty on the Wall and sent off for specialized training, first at the Grip of Earth, and then at the Stone Tower. The rank and file samurai understand that this is done for the good of the Clan, which by its nature has fewer tools for gaining influence at court than many of its rivals, and must make good use of those it has. But that doesn't prevent some grumbling about samurai who have the good luck to gain official sanction for shirking their duty while others take care of the fighting and dying part of being a Crab warrior.

First Strike Dojo

Shiro Hiruma is hardly the most serene place in the Crab Lands, and because of that the First Strike Dojo is unlike any training hall in the Empire. To say that the students here receive a practical education is an understatement verging on a dark joke. Stuck out beyond the safety of the Kaiu Wall, combat against the monsters of the Shadowlands is a daily fact of life for them and their sensei. The Master of the dojo is Hiruma Hotaru, a warrior of undeniable skill, but fell and brooding from the day that twenty of his students were slain by an oni because fear kept him from exercising proper leadership in battle.

Because of the unusual strains that their physical situation places on the entire institution, Master Hotaru has always been reluctant to grant leave to students who wish to study for a time at the Grip of Earth Dojo and learn some of the techniques of the Hida Wrestler School. Also, the extent to which his failure to protect those under his command haunts him makes him reluctant at some level to part with the students whose education and well-being are his responsibility. He understands the utility of the training they will receive at the Grip of Earth, but every student

who asks for a leave of absence is a source of anxiety. And in fact, some who leave never come back, and not just because of the hazards of traveling from and to Hiruma Lands; Hiruma scouts have been known to become so enamored of wrestling at the Grip of Earth that they follow that path instead.

Master Hotaru has therefore tried to effect a compromise between his worries and the wishes of some of his students. He has approached the Grip of Earth on a number of occasions, hoping to pry loose at least one of their sensei who will come to the First Strike (temporarily at least) and teach there. He has never succeeded in this, however, and he is beginning to suspect that the Grip of Earth sensei are too cowardly to live among and fight beside his bushi in the heart of the Hiruma Lands.

Unbreakable Blade Dojo

Located in a quiet spot in the hills between Yasuki Hanko and the Watchtower of the West, this branch of the Hida Bushi School provides advanced training in iaijutsu, a discipline not particularly popular among Crab bushi. But despite this lack of general enthusiasm, the leadership of the Clan have usually understood the need to have skilled iaijutsu duelists available in response to the relative popularity of the practice among the other Clans — especially the hated Crane. In fact, it is generally assumed that the Hida Bushi School located the dojo here on purpose, just to the south of the Crane Lands, as a constant reminder to its small cadre of students of exactly how they may be called upon to represent the Crab Clan. And so Crab Champions have historically nurtured and supported the Unbreakable Blade, refusing to short the sensei any resources they feel they need to train the defenders of the Crab.



The Unbreakable Blade employs a handful of sensei, all of them by definition rather odd ducks among Crab warriors in that they have taken great pains to practice the art of the sword rather than the blunt, heavy weapons that the Hida have always favored. They are a highly self-selected group, and tend therefore to bond closely with each other and with their students. Lacking much cultural support for their interest in iaijutsu, they have generally turned to indirect methods to study the art and enhance their knowledge.

Some have kept company with bushi from other Clans who had studied iaijutsu and picked up bits of understanding from them. Perhaps they served together on the Kaiu Wall, or adventured together. Historically, Unbroken Blade sensei have also come from the ranks of political hostages returned to Crab Lands, or from those who fraternized with hostages kept by Crab Families. Other sensei are Hida bushi who are veterans of skirmishes with the Crane and/or the Dragon, and have had the opportunity to observe Kakita and Mirumoto-trained warriors up close. Yet others are Hida bushi with a strong philosophical bent, who have simply absorbed every text on iaijutsu technique upon which they could lay their hands. What they all share is an uncommon interest in the art of swordsmanship, and a belief that even as the Wall faces the great enemy to the South, the Crab cannot turn their back on their potential enemies among the Great Clans to the North.

The Unbreakable Blade draws students who are more or less of the same mind as their sensei, and who often come from similar backgrounds. Some are nonconformists who simply wish for a different path of service to their Clan, while others bear such ill-will toward the Crane that they desire nothing more than to meet them in a test of warrior's honor on something more like equal terms. The dojo also receives students who have been granted leave from service on the Wall, usually as a precaution before they succumb to the Taint or the stresses of garrison duty. Those in that final category may not last very long at the dojo, as the intense focus and discipline involved in iaijutsu training isn't exactly restful, even though it compares favorably to staring down the Shadowlands horde. What all of the students have in common (besides their interest in the art of the sword) is considerable experience as bushi, for the dojo only offers advanced training.

The instruction offered by the Unbreakable Blade sensei is anything but a pale imitation of Kakita dueling techniques. The true secrets of the Kakita and the Mirumoto remain within their respective dojo, and no amount of observation can truly enable one to reverse-engineer them. The Unbreakable Blade gave up on trying to do so long ago. Instead, the instructors down through the years have developed their own techniques, which draw on the Crab's instinctive connection with Earth. They have tried, with some degree of success, to develop a Tao of iaijutsu that centers on strength and force of will instead of the lightning



speed that characterizes, say, the Kakita style. A Hida Defender is taught to think of himself as an immovable object, a block of stone against which an opponent's blow will break, if it strikes at all. A student of iaijutsu might well note that this philosophy has limited value in a duel to first blood, where even a minor wound inflicted will grant victory as it long as it is the first blow landed. Nevertheless, the Unbreakable Blade has had more success with this approach than one might think.

The Unbreakable Blade sensei also offer instruction in tetsubo-suru, and it has become a famous specialty of theirs. It began as something of an afterthought, and the sensei would prefer that it remain so. In the dojo's early days, some of the students, eager to take a break from the unfamiliar art of iaijutsu that they had been persuaded to learn, fought duels with each other using heavily padded tetsubo for sport after their lessons for the day were done. They found it oddly comforting to practice in a form of ritual combat with which they were much more experienced.

The sensei spotted this and at first sought to discourage them; they were here to learn swordsmanship at an advanced level, which required to a certain extent breaking familiar practices and ways of thinking. But they quickly realized that they would never be altogether successful in this. So instead, they got together and developed ways to combine some of the techniques and mindset of iaijutsu into tetsubo-suru. This approach worked exceedingly well, not only in keeping the students happy, but also in providing a familiar avenue by which they could approach the advanced techniques of an otherwise unfamiliar form of dueling.

Over the course of years, the innovations developed and codified by those sensei became a minor course of instruction in and of themselves, and one that drew interest from Crab warriors who couldn't care less about using it as a springboard into advanced iaijutsu training. Reluctant at first to indulge those students and distract itself from its original purpose, the dojo initially refused to take in anyone who was not sincerely interested in iaijutsu. Eventually, however, the sensei wearied of turning away the endless stream of interested bushi looking to give themselves an edge in this popular form of ritual combat, and decided to humor them, albeit to a limited extent. Today, the course of study in tetsubo-suru remains brief and to the point, and students who show little sincere interest in advanced swordsmanship are promptly ushered out the door. Still, this transient student population well outnumber the hard-core iaijutsu students in which the dojo places more of its stock and trade.

Lately, however, Daigotsu's organization of The Lost into a dark imitation of samurai society have caught the attention of the Unbroken Blade sensei and their supporters within the Clan, and they suggest that the dojo may have a role to play in the battles beyond the Wall as well as behind it. Rumors that the Dark Lord has created his own dueling academy, in mockery of the Kakita Academy, gives rise to concerns that Crab warriors may soon face Shadowlands champions skilled in iaijutsu techniques and expert in how to use Bushido to manipulate them into duels in which they will be forced to fight at a disadvantage. If that happens, then the Crab will need more warriors with the kind of training that the Unbroken Blade provides.

Kuni Duelist Dojo

The Kuni sensei who teach the art of taryu-jiai have no central location for their school; instead, the few teachers who follow this path live and work in their own scattered dojo, some barely cognizant of the others. Of the Witch Hunter "workshops" that

dot the Kuni Wastes, a few are actually small training halls where Kuni shugenja teach the art of the duel to any of their School's students who care to learn it. This informal approach strikes observers as appropriate to the weird and disquieting nature of the Kuni, but it also follows from the Kuni School's general lack of regard for the art of shugenja dueling. Taryu-jiai as an academic subject receives little institutional support because the leadership of the Kuni School have traditionally regarded it as a pursuit for those who lack the stomach or the wit for studying Rokugan's true enemies.

And yet, within the larger scheme of Rokugani Clan politics, Kuni shugenja duelists are not without their uses. Just because the Kuni don't see the point of taryu-jiai doesn't mean that they will never receive a challenge from someone who feels differently, and when that time comes the honor of the Crab demands some degree of readiness from them. There are Kuni shugenja who understand at some level that taryu-jiai challenges coming from the Imperials and the Unicorn should not surprise them, and even the pacifistic Phoenix see non-lethal duels as a legitimate way of settling differences.

Also, some within the Kuni School have become concerned about Daigotsu's persistent and powerful control within the Shadowlands (The Maw's current uprising against his leadership notwithstanding). The Dark Lord has always sought to mold the Lost into a perverted mirror image of Rokugani society, and all available evidence suggests that dueling, both by magic and martial means, is a part of his vision, as well. If their most important foe is to take up taryu-jiai, then the Kuni will also be forced to take it more seriously.

Crab Sensei

For Crab samurai, teaching is not a career in and of itself; it is something you do once you have fulfilled your primary duty to the Clan, or are no longer fit to pursue it. But that is not to say that they devalue educating their inexperienced samurai, or look down their noses at their sensei. Instead, it is to point out the practicality of the Crab. They believe that because it is important to teach their youths properly, by passing on knowledge gained by hard experience — knowledge that flows into the limbs and hands rather than remaining in the head — their teachers ought to have a real understanding of what it means to serve their Clan. Crab sensei are, as a result, a tough and hard-bitten lot, determined to pass on to the next generation what they have, in many cases, learned through physical suffering and harrowing of the soul.

HIRUMA GOEMON, HIDA WRESTLING SENSEI

Air: 3	Earth: 4	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 3
		Agility: 5		
Honor: 3.2		Status: 2.3		Glory: 3.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Hiruma Scout 3/Hiruma Grappler 1/Hida Wrestler 2

ADVANTAGES: Bishamon's Blessing, Hands of Stone, Strength of the Earth 4

DISADVANTAGES: Lame

KATA: Shell of the Crab, Stance of the Wall, Striking as Fire, Wrath of the Crab

SKILLS: Athletics 4, Defense 3, Hunting 2, Instruction (Jiujitsu) 5, Jiujitsu 7, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Stealth (Sneaking) 2.

In his youth, a certain lack of patience characterized Hiruma Goemon. Eager for action and ambitious for honor and glory, he charged headlong through his samurai training as quickly as he could and plunged into the life and duties of a Hiruma scout. Goemon was by no means a lazy student, but his sensei noted a distinct tendency to rush through his training — to short-cut his studies and assume rather too early that he had mastered a lesson, so that he could move on to the next one. However, his natural gifts were such that he could recover quickly from whatever mistakes he made, even within the dangerous training regimen of his School.

After his gempukku, Goemon served as a scout with the skill and courage expected of him, and without much incident. But he still itched for a way to distinguish himself, to separate himself from the pack and win honor and glory in a truly distinctive manner. After seeing a visiting sensei from the Grip of Earth Dojo give a demonstration of Hida Wrestler School technique, Goemon decided that developing wrestling skill would teach him something he could use to distinguish him from the other Hiruma scouts. So when the sensei returned to Kyuden Hida, Goemon followed him to take up studying at the Grip of Earth.

There, Goemon demonstrated the same combination of natural talent and impatience that he had shown his sensei at Shiro Hiruma. He achieved a level of proficiency in Hida Wrestling techniques sufficient to pass him to higher levels of study, but his mastery was not quite as solid as he thought.

When Goemon decided to leave the dojo and return to Shiro Hiruma, the Grip of Earth sensei let him go, but with some foreboding. Nor were they wrong to feel that way. On his way back to the Hiruma stronghold, he came upon a lone Tainted ogre headed in the direction of the Kalu Wall. Eager to take the ogre captive and bring it to Shiro Hiruma as proof of his newfound skill, Goemon leaped out from ambush and threw himself on the creature to immobilize and disarm it. However, he did not have enough practice in the technique he used to have truly master it; his hand slipped and he could not apply enough force to prevent the ogre from throwing him free. He fell heavily, leaving the ogre time enough to strike a crippling blow to his right leg. Fortunately, a Hiruma scout patrol came upon the conflict just then and killed the ogre with their hankyu, or else Goemon would have paid for his mistake with more than just a lamed leg.

No longer fit for active duty as a Hiruma scout — and much chastened — Goemon returned to the Grip of Earth. His former sensei were much affected with how much his brush with death seemed to have changed him, and agreed to take him back. Thereafter, Goemon applied himself with unprecedented dedication to the art of wrestling. His new appreciation for the value of thorough study and diligent practice aside, he also understood that his handicap made it necessary to make up in cunning and technique what he now lacked in physical ability.

In time, Goemon achieved the distinction among his peers that he had always craved, fighting many successful wrestling duels and sporter matches at the dojo. That he became such a successful wrestler despite his lame leg gained him all the more respect, for only willpower and the strength of Earth could explain it. The Grip of Earth sensei invited him to become one of their own, and there Goemon Hiruma remains, impressing his students with the

importance of careful study and diligent practice — and ready to take to the mat any young Crab impudent enough to believe that they can get away with less than their best effort.

KUNI SAYORI, KUNI TARYU-JIAI SENSEI

Air: 2	Earth: 4	Fire: 4	Water: 2	Void: 3
Awareness: 3		Perception: 3		
Honor: 1.5		Status: 1.5		Glory: 1.5

Shadowlands Taint: 0.9

SCHOOL/RANK: Kuni Shugenja 4/Kuni Duelist 1

ADVANTAGES: Dangerous Beauty, Fukurojin's Blessing, Magic Resistance 4, Perceived Honor 2, Wary

DISADVANTAGES: Brash, Doubt (Calligraphy), Fascination (Taryu-jiai)

SKILLS: Calligraphy 2, Defense 2, Instruction (Taryu-jiai) 5, Kenjutsu 1, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Meditation 3, Spellcraft (Maho) 5, Storytelling 1

SPELLS: Burn the Mind, Commune, Counterspell, Courage of the Seven Thunders, Earth's Protection, Earth's Stagnation, Hurried Steps, Jade Strike, Katana of Fire, Light of Yakamo, Moment of Clarity, Sense, Shatter, Summon, Tail of the Fire Dragon, Tempest of Air, Tetsubo of Earth, The Fury of Osano-Wo, Wisdom and Clarity

Unfortunately, the outlines of Kuni Sayori's story are not terribly uncommon among the Witch Hunters. Placed in frequent (sometimes constant) contact with the Taint as a consequence of her duties, she began to notice, however faint, its telltale symptoms within herself. Fearful that further contact would only guarantee her devolution into madness and enslavement to Jigoku, she immediately removed herself from active service with the Witch Hunters and retired to an isolated house so far out of the way in the Kuni Wastes that it amounts to permanent internal exile. An attractive woman, even with the garish Kuni face paint smeared on her, she knew that she had it in her power to manipulate her male colleagues with her feminine wiles, and she understood the harm that could come from doing so. Her fellow Witch Hunters keep a close eye on her, visiting her regularly as they do all of their number who are infected with the Taint.

But the details of what happened to her are sufficiently interesting to merit attention, as they shed some light not only on the Kuni's attitude toward taryu-jiai, but also on their dangerous role as the Crab who must track and make sense of the dynamics of the Shadowlands threat, which can change alarmingly with every passing year. As far as she can tell, Sayori contracted the Taint while at the Kuni Tower at Shiro Hiruma. There, it became her duty to interrogate a prisoner that the Hiruma scouts brought in one day — a shugenja of The Lost whom they had ambushed.

From that prisoner, she learned (among other things) that The Lost had taken up the practice of shugenja dueling. They did so more or less in imitation of Rokugani samurai — but with the perverse twist that they did so not out of honor, but to settle matters of hierarchy, or disputes relating to the possession of wealth and treasures. Furthermore, duels to the death — a practice no longer common in the Empire — were the rule and not the exception in the Shadowlands, although Daigotsu himself was trying to put a

dampener on the practice as part of molding The Lost into a society in his own image. This news particularly caught Sayori's attention, as she knew that the Kuni had long dismissed taryu-jiai as frivolous compared to the work of defending Rokugan against the Shadowlands. If what she was hearing was true, then taryu-jiai might have to be reconsidered as an aspect of their primary enemy.

Unfortunately, before she could complete her interrogation and write out a full report to send to Shiro Kuni, she began to sense within herself the first stirrings of a sickness that every Witch Hunter dreads but accepts as an occupational hazard. It began with odd dreams and alarming hallucinations, and then a general unwell feeling punctuated by bouts of dizziness and weakness: She was contracting the Taint, no doubt from prolonged contact with the prisoner she had been interrogating.

Sayori promptly left the Hiruma Lands for home, even though she knew full well that the Kuni Lands could never be home to her in quite the same way ever again because of her contamination. After a brief stop at Shiro Kuni to deliver her report, she went out into the Kuni Wastes and settled into an abandoned hermitage, there to wait for the first visit from Witch Hunters who would come to see if she had yet descended into madness.

Somewhat to her surprise, however, the first Kuni samurai to visit her did not bring loathing and suspicion with their supply of Tea of Jade Petals, but rather an offer. Her report, incomplete though it was, had evidently gained the attention of someone high up in the Kuni Court. Consequently, Sayori now had the opportunity (provided her Taint did not worsen, of course) to spend her self-imposed exile as a sensei of the Kuni Shugenja School, teaching what she knew of the art of taryu-jiai to willing students.

She seized the opportunity, eager to be of use to her Clan, as opposed to wasting away in isolation for the rest of her mortal life. What she offers at her small, somewhat improvised dojo is a modest course of training, more or less in conformity with other Kuni School sensei who also teach taryu-jiai. She rarely has more than a few students at a time, largely because of her isolation, but also because the art of shugenja dueling still has yet to gain much popularity within the Crab. Nonetheless, Sayori remains content to serve as best she can, and she will continue to do so as long as the supply of Tea of Jade Petals flows to her from the outside world, and it keeps at bay the madness of Jigoku which will always lurk within her.



New Mechanics

Crab Dueling Mechanics

Tetsubo-suru: Resolve a tetsubo-suru duel as you would an iaijutsu duel, except (of course), that the duelists wield testubo instead of katana. However, because of the heavy padding that is normally applied to the weapons to blunt their force, a duelist who loses all of his Wounds does not die. He does lose the duel by incapacitation, however. He may also submit voluntarily at any time. A duelist who suffers a Knockdown as a result of declared Raises automatically loses.

Wrestling duels: Resolve a Crab wrestling duel as a standard skirmish between the two combatants. In order to throw your opponent, you must first successfully grapple with him. If you begin your turn controlling the Grapple against your opponent, you may attempt to throw him. Resolve a throw attempt as a Contested Strength/Jujitsu Roll. If you succeed by more than 5, you have thrown him cleanly to the ground. On a successful result less than that, he has partially slipped the throw and landed on one knee. In either case, the Grapple is broken.

Athletics competitions: Resolve a foot race as Contested Athletics (Running) Roll. In the case of a long-distance foot race, resolve it as an Contested Earth/Athletics (Running) Roll. Resolve a climbing race as a Contested Athletics (Climbing) Roll.

To resolve weight-lifting duels, have the opponents take turns making a Raw Earth Roll with their Strength as a bonus against a TN determined by the weight that must be lifted. The winner is determined as soon as there is one "round" in which one opponent succeeds, but the other does not.

Drinking contests: Resolve a group drinking contest by having the contestants take turns making a Raw Earth Roll against a TN appropriate to how long they are expected to drink in this round + 1 for each round that has already taken place. A failed roll eliminates that contestant. He is considered incapacitated (i.e., passed out, sick or some combination thereof) for a number of hours equal to 2 + the number of rounds in which he participated.

You may resolve a one-on-one drinking contest quickly by having the two contestants make a single Contested Earth Roll against each other. Or you may do so in rounds, as per the rules given above, in which case the loser is incapacitated for 4 hours + the number of rounds in which he participated (and you may assume that the winner won't be feeling all that well, either).

New School: Hida Wrestler (Bushu)

The Crab Clan train their warriors in the practical details of warfare, the plain mechanics of fighting and killing. In most cases, this involves intense practice in the use of the Clan's trademark weapons, as well as how to remain fast on one's feet even in heavy armor. But some Crab bushu choose to follow a slightly different path, one that specializes in unarmed fighting — particularly the art of crippling or even killing an opponent through aggressive grappling, holds and throws.

However, the Hida Wrestler School is by no means alien to the mainstream of Crab warrior training. Hida Wrestlers do not neglect weapons practice by any means, and when they go into battle, they equip themselves as would any other Crab warrior. Their School is instead an offshoot of standard Hida Bushu School arms practice that has taken on a life of its own over the course of the ages, sustained by tales about the Kami Hida that have long been part of Crab Clan legend. It began with sensei who took a particular interest in how a warrior should handle himself in his last extremity — stripped of his weapons, and forced to fight with his bare hands. As repulsive as it seemed to grab and strike a thing of the Shadowlands with one's bare hands, surely it was better to learn how to do so effectively than surrender oneself to destruction. Crab jujitsu masters who succeeded them expanded on their work, eventually turning this last resort into something of a virtue.

Hida Wrestlers who survive to retirement generally become sensei after their soldiering days end, passing on their knowledge so that their art will flourish for at least another generation. The more gifted among them, however, often enter advanced sumai training (see New Advanced School: Hida Sumai) and find a second career at court, competing in the wrestling tournaments that so delight the courtiers and nobles. In fact, it is not unknown for promising young Crab Wrestlers to be plucked from active duty, even from the Kaiu Wall garrison, for sumai training, in the hope that they will develop into yokozuna who will gain prestige for the Clan.

Wrestlers have always been and will always be a distinct minority among Crab bushu; it is not an overwhelmingly popular career path. However, they do have the respect of their fellow Crab, as their particular brand of jujitsu has become an accepted form of dueling within the Clan.

BENEFIT: +1 Agility

HONOR: 1.5

SKILLS: Athletics, Defense, Jujitsu 2, Lore: Shadowlands, Stealth (Ambush) any Bugei Skill.

OUTFIT: Katana, wakizashi, bow and 20 arrows (any type), heavy armor; one finger of jade, kimono and sandals, traveling pack; 5 koku.

Techniques

RANK 1: THE CLAW STRIKES

All Hida bushi learn how to find the power of Earth within themselves, and Hida Wrestlers are no different. You receive a bonus equal to your Earth Ring to your Jujitsu Rolls; to all rolls related to initiating and maintaining a Grapple; and to the DR of any unarmed attack. Also, you may ignore the TN penalties for wearing heavy armor for all Bugei Skills.

RANK 2: THE MOUNTAIN DOES NOT MOVE

Though a Hida Wrestler's training marks a departure from the way that most Crab bushi follow, he is still a Crab warrior and the extraordinary tenacity for which they are famous is still his by inheritance. Any time you suffer Wounds, you may spend a Void Point to make a Raw Earth Roll against a TN equal to the number of Wounds suffered. You make this roll before the Wounds are inflicted; thus, you do not suffer additional Wound penalties due to the damage. If you succeed, you suffer no Wounds from the injury. When resisting Knockdown, you receive a bonus to your Earth Ring equal to your School Rank.

RANK 3: SNAPPING THE ARM

The Hida Wrestler School teaches the importance of ferocious speed and quickness in unarmed combat, as well as strength and willpower. You may make an additional attack per round, but only if both attacks use your Jujitsu Skill. Also, if you control a Grapple at the beginning of your turn, you may disarm your opponent as a Simple Action.

RANK 4: SIDEWAYS STEP

Training in this particular style of unarmed combat gives you the quickness to avoid your enemy's blows all together, even when wearing heavy armor. When in the Attack posture, you receive a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal your Reflexes + Jujitsu. When you are in the Full Defense posture, this bonus is equal to twice the total of your Reflexes + Jujitsu. These bonuses supplement any bonus you may receive from using the Defense Skill.

RANK 5: THE MOUNTAIN DOES NOT FALL

You may spend a Void Point to ignore all Wound Penalties (including Out) until your next turn. For the remainder of the skirmish, the number of Wounds in each of your Wound Ranks is doubled. You gain another Void Point that may only be used to activate either The Mountain Does Not Move or The Mountain Does Not Fall.

New Advanced School: Crab Sumai (Bushi)

If a Crab bushi, for whatever reason, leaves the Kaiu Wall garrison for a career representing the Clan as a sumai wrestler, he undergoes rigorous training in a Crab dojo dedicated to the sport. Though no Crab warrior worth his salt would ever truly forget his heritage as a pure and relentless fighter, this sumai training complements these qualities with the peculiar techniques (some

of which are unique to Crab sumai masters) and rituals of this sport. In the process, a Crab Sumai develops into a sportsman and an emissary for his Clan, one who is almost as comfortable socializing at court as standing sentry on the Wall.

Despite the fact that sumai wrestlers lead a lifestyle that some Crab bushi consider soft and degenerate, the Clan respects its sumai. They represent the Clan ably in an arena in which it is traditionally rather weak, and they do so by practicing a form of combat (if a highly stylized and ritualized one). But that isn't to say that it represents a cushy retirement from a warrior's life, for a sumai could fall disastrously in his Clan's estimation through bringing dishonor onto the Crab, or even by seeming to enjoy the spoils of courtly celebrity a little too much.

All Crab Sumai compete at the lowest level of the sport and are treated as juryo until they attain 1 Rank in this Advanced School, at which point they become maegashira. Acquiring the Techniques of the Crab Sumai Advanced School simply reflect greater mastery of the sport and, in particular, the teachings of their sensei at the Stone Tower Dojo. Acquiring that experience qualifies you to advance within the ranks of the sport itself.

Requirements:

RINGS/TRAITS: Earth 4, Strength 4

SKILLS: Athletics 4, Etiquette 1, Jujitsu 5, Lore: Bushido 4, Meditation 2

ADVANTAGES: Bishamon's Blessing or Hands of Stone

OTHER: The Crab have traditionally considered their sumai training techniques to be Clan secrets, as their sumai wrestlers put the Clan's prestige on the line whenever they compete in official tournaments. Crab sensei are therefore prohibited — as a general rule — from training wrestlers from outside the Clan. The occasional Badger sumai is allowed to train at the Stone Tower Dojo, but they are the only regular exceptions. Most candidates for this Advanced School have trained in the Hida Wrestling School, but not necessarily all.

Cannot have the Disadvantage *Lame*.

Techniques

RANK 1: MAEGASHIRA

You have acquired sufficient expertise so that you may now compete in sumai tournaments as a maegashira; until this point, no self-respecting Hida sensei would allow you to do so. You may spend a Void Point to gain a +2k1 bonus to any Skill Roll involved in resolving a sumai match. Your skills also stand you in good stead outside of the sumai ring; you gain a +1k0 bonus to any unarmed combat Skill Roll, and you gain 2 Free Raises to any attempt to inflict a Knockdown on an opponent.

RANK 2: SANYAKU

You gain a reputation as a practitioner of sumai sufficient so that you may now compete in tournaments as a sanyaku. You may spend a Void Point to gain a +2k2 bonus to any Skill Roll involved in resolving a sumai match. This replaces the bonus you received as a maegashira. In addition, as a veteran of the ring, you have mastered the sport's peculiar rituals to an extent that heightens your ability to cope with any situation that requires respect for etiquette. You receive a bonus to any Courtier Skill Roll equal to your Intelligence or Perception.

RANK 3: YOKOZUNA

You attain the sumai's wrestler's ultimate rank, that of yokozuna, and may compete in the top tier of tournaments. You have absorbed almost everything that even the formidable Hida sumai masters can teach you. You gain a +1k1 bonus to any Skill Roll involved in resolving a sumai match, and may spend a Void Point to make that a +3k2 bonus. You have achieved a level of fame and respect that eases your way in courtly society, so you receive a bonus to any Courtier Skill Roll equal to your Intelligence + Perception. These replace the bonuses you received as a sanyaku.

Outside of sumai competitions, you receive a +2k0 bonus to any unarmed combat Skill Roll, and you gain 4 Free Raises to any attempt to inflict a Knockdown on an opponent (this replaces the bonus you received as a maegashira).

New Advanced School: Hida Defender (Bushi)

Though Crab bushi prefer dueling with the weapons that are their Clan's trademark, they cannot and do not neglect practice with the katana altogether. The sword remains the samurai's badge of rank, after all — and besides, if a Crab is challenged to a test of iaijutsu by one of another Clan, it pays to be prepared. With that in mind, the Crab make sure to train at least a handful of special-

ists in the katana and iaijutsu. When required, it is their duty to represent the Crab in a sword duel, so that their Clan will not appear vulnerable to the Crane or others who value iaijutsu over more practical pursuits.

Hida Defenders are veteran warriors, taken from the ranks as a reward for distinguished service on the Wall, or perhaps because they have shown an unusual aptitude for, or interest in, the sword. Once they complete this advanced course of training, they may expect a posting much more genteel than Wall duty — perhaps serving as yojimbo to a Daimyo or a Crab ambassador, or even joining the entourage of the Crab Champion. At the very worst, they will hook up with a Yasuki trader as his yojimbo, and such unglamorous assignments are often given to students for a bit of practical experience, and as a break from their studies. Hida Defenders are expected to protect their charges from challenges as well as from brute physical attacks, and of course, to uphold the honor of the Crab among outsiders.

This Advanced School draws candidates in more or less equal numbers from the Hida Bushi and Hiruma Scout Schools.

Requirements:

RINGS/TRAIT: Earth 4, Agility 4, Intelligence 3

SKILLS: Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Lore: Bushido 4

OTHER: Cannot have the Disadvantages Coward or Lame



Techniques

RANK 1: DICTATING TERMS

During the Challenge phase of an iaijutsu duel, you may choose to Focus on your opponent's Willpower instead of his Agility, Reflexes or Void. You may use your Kenjutsu Skill in place of your Iaijutsu Skill for all rolls involved in resolving the duel.

In addition, you may substitute any one Weapon Skill for your Kenjutsu Skill when using a katana.

RANK 2: WARRIOR OF EARTH

In the Strike phase of an iaijutsu duel, you may substitute either your Willpower or Strength for your Reflexes when rolling to resolve the attack. You may also force your opponent to substitute either his Strength or Willpower for his Reflexes when it is his turn to make an attack roll against you.

RANK 3: BECOME AS STONE

In an iaijutsu duel, your TN to Be Hit increases by 5 + your Earth Ring for every successful Focus Roll that you make. Your opponent's TN to Be Hit only increases by 5, as per the standard iaijutsu rules. You may also spend Void Points to negate your opponent's raises, at a rate of 1 Void Point to negate 1 raise, up to one-half of either your remaining Void Points for the day or your Earth Ring, whichever is lower.

New Path: Hiruma Grappler (Bushi)

Some Hiruma Scouts like the idea of incorporating Hida wrestling techniques into their fighting style, especially using unarmed combat techniques that enable them to surprise their opponents in order to subdue or disarm them. These techniques are not terribly useful against oni, who often have natural weapons in unnatural places, but come in handy when ambushing The Lost or bakemono which one does not wish to kill outright.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Hiruma Scout 2

Path of Egress: Hiruma Scout 3 or Hida Wrestler 1

Technique: The Crab's Claw

You receive a bonus to your Initiative Roll equal to your Agility. You also receive a bonus equal to your Earth Ring + Agility to your Jiujitsu Rolls and to all rolls related to initiating and maintaining a Grapple. If you control a Grapple at the beginning of your turn, you may disarm your opponent as a Simple Action.

New Path: Kuni Duelist (Shugenja)

The Kuni do not pay much attention to the art of taryu-jiai. As with their warrior brethren, matters of a samurai's honor are important, but fighting the foul things of the Shadowlands is always foremost in their minds. Nonetheless, some Kuni shugenja study dueling arts and the possible use of maho by arcane opponents. As with their never-ending battle against the Shadowlands, they believe that knowing the heart of their foe is the difference between survival and destruction. However, with intelligence coming from the Shadowlands indicating that The Lost's mockery of Rokugani samurai culture has grown in sophistication to include dueling, the time may be at hand when taryu-jiai may become a more important aspect of knowing the foe.

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Kuni Shugenja 3

Path of Egress: Kuni Shugenja 4

Point of Weakness

In the Assessment stage of a taryu-jiai duel, you may receive 3 additional pieces of information about your opponent per successful Raise declared on the Awareness/Spellcraft Roll, instead of 1. If you declare no Raises, you still receive 1 additional piece of information on a successful Roll. Also, if you are dueling a Tainted opponent, you receive 1 Free Raise for each of your opponent's Taint Ranks, to be used at any point in the dueling process.

New Path: Tetsubo Duelist (Bushi)

Duels fought with padded blunt weapons such as the tetsubo are a more common method of settling disputes within the Crab Clan than classic iaijutsu duels. It is inevitable, therefore, that some of the Clan's bushi would develop this kind of ritualized combat as a minor specialty. They do not revere it as an art, as the Crane do iaijutsu, but masters of this form do incorporate some of the standard techniques and philosophy of iaijutsu into their practice. Every Crab Family has at least a few such warriors in the ranks, to be called upon when the Family needs them.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Hida Bushi 2

Path of Egress: Hida Bushi 3

Technique: The Duelist's Art

You gain a bonus to your Initiative Rolls equal to your Jujitsu Rank. Also, you must choose one weapon from the Heavy Weapon/Axe class in which to specialize. You gain a bonus to Skill Rolls in that weapon equal to your Jujitsu Rank. When fighting a formal duel using any heavy weapon or axe, you gain a number of Free Raises equal to your Earth Ring for the duration of that duel.

New Path: Yasuki Sumai (Courtier)

The path of a tournament sumai wrestler provides an elite group of Crab bushi with their first (and perhaps only) taste of courtly life — whether it is the genteel dignity of a Clan Champion or Daimyo's court, or the splendor of the Imperial Court. Of these, some find within themselves an unexpected talent or proclivity for the courtier's art. These individuals may take some time off from their sumai training to better learn how to handle themselves in a setting where intrigue presents a greater threat than an opponent's Grapple. Some, however, are Crab sumai who fear that they may be reaching the limit of their natural talent, and are angling for a subsequent career as a diplomat or a Yasuki trader. Whatever their motivation, they are always known as Yasuki Sumai, for it is inevitably a Crab Yasuki Courtier who takes him under his wing.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Hida Sumai 2

Path of Egress: Hida Sumai 3 or Yasuki Courtier 1

Technique: Way of the Carp

Yasuki sensei sometimes brag that they can teach anyone the particular blend of charm and pure bluff that gets them through a negotiation. More often than not, it is a brag that they can back up. Any time you are involved in a Contested Social Skill Roll, you gain a Free Raise for every 2 Raises your opponent declares. You gain a bonus equal to your Water Ring to all Courtier, Deceit (Lying) and Etiquette (Bureaucracy) Rolls.

New Kata: Wrath of the Crab

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 60 minutes

The Hida School also teaches an attack kata of their own devising. It uses a flurry of quick feints coming from a variety of directions to set an opponent back on his heels and confuse him about one's exact point and angle of attack. Not only must the opponent track a rapid succession of strikes, but he must also figure out which one will deliver the actual attack. Hida Wrestlers have found that this kata makes it much easier to initiate and control a Grapple.

RANK: Hida Wrestler 2, Hida Bushi 4 or Hiruma Scout 3

COST: 2

SPECIAL: Must have at least 2 Ranks in Jujitsu to use this kata.

EFFECT: You gain a bonus equal to your Willpower + Agility to all Jujitsu Skill Rolls. You also gain 2 Free Raises to every attempt to initiate or control a Grapple. However, you may not use the Full Defense posture at any time.

VOID: You may spend a Void Point to negate the defensive disadvantages of the Full Attack posture for 1 round.

New Kata: Shell of the Crab

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 60 minutes

This wrestling technique is a unique specialty of the Hida School. It teaches effective defense through intense concentration on deflecting the opponent's strikes. It is a style that requires great patience and willpower, as it leaves relatively little room for offense. But it has a history of frustrating opponents and wearing them down, until they make a mistake and leave an opening for an effective counter strike.

RANK: Hida Wrestler 2, Hida Bushi 4 or Hiruma Scout 3

COST: 2

SPECIAL: Must have at least 3 Ranks in Jujitsu to use this kata.

EFFECT: You gain a bonus equal to your Willpower + Reflexes to your TN to Be Hit against any Jujitsu or other unarmed attack roll. If you did not move in your previous turn, you also gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal to your Reflexes against any ranged attack. However, you may not use the Full Attack posture at any time, and you may never attack more than once per turn.

VOID: You may spend a Void Point to gain a bonus equal to your Earth Ring + Agility to your next Jujitsu attack. You gain the same bonus to the DR if the attack succeeds.

CHAPTER THREE:

DUELING:
WAY OF THE CRANE

Philosophy

Thanks in large part to generations of Kakita-trained iaijutsu specialists, whose skill with the sword has become legend, no Great Clan is more closely associated with the art of the duel than the Crane. The Kakita Dueling Academy is easily the largest and most respected dojo of swordsmanship in the Empire, and its techniques have been passed down in direct, continuous descent from the great Kakita himself. As Kakita strove to achieve perfection in everything he attempted, so the duelists that study his ancient practice under his revered name treat iaijutsu as the culmination of sword practice — speed, strength, skill, courage and clarity of mind, all expressed in an instant of action. To master the art of iaijutsu, therefore, is to embody the Soul of the Crane, and it is no accident that the Kakita Bushi School emphasizes excellence in dueling more than any other school of swordsmanship in the Empire.

The Kenshinzen, the elite order of Kakita duelists who have made a special study of the quick draw, are feared and respected throughout the Empire, even by those who do not admire the Crane. One who completes the advanced course of training required to enter the Kenshinzen order (and they are very few, selected from only the most promising duelists) has learned all the Kakita School can teach him, and other Crane bushi honor him as one who embodies the ideal of their training. For more about the Kenshinzen Advanced School, see *The Four Winds*, pp. 7-8.

Great Clan politics being what they are, however, Kakita's ideal of striving for perfection for its own sake has taken on a cynical, calculating edge down through the ages. Leaders and officials of the Clan, whether the Champion, or Family Daimyo or their aides and magistrates, inevitably realize at some point that their famed duelists are a weapon that may be aimed at the hearts of their enemies. The Crane find it useful to cow their opponents with the prospect of having to face a Kenshinzen in a duel, or even to trap an enemy into a situation where he has no choice but to square off against a Kakita swordsman. Kakita bushi, therefore, often find themselves assigned to Crane courtiers as yojimbo. The two work as a team, with the courtier maneuvering the target into position and the duelist charged with finishing the job. Other skilled Kakita duelists find more straightforward duty as yojimbo to Clan personages (sometimes working as teams with Daidojo-

trained yojimbo), where their quick reflexes, speed and ability to focus in stressful situations prove invaluable assets.

Unlike their bushi cousins, however, Crane shugenja tend to shun confrontation. True to their ancient roots in the Phoenix Clan, the Asahina are quietists and pacifists, and few of them take taryu-jiai seriously as a pursuit. Under no circumstances would they ever accept a duel to the death, and they generally go to great lengths to avoid a duel altogether. Some Asahina have put a somewhat different spin on the practice of shugenja dueling, however; they feel that a taryu-jiai duel in which no one is seriously injured may be acceptable if it is the only way to defuse what would otherwise become a running feud between samurai. To refuse a samurai a chance to satisfy his sense of honor may only cause more violence down the road, so it is better to lance the boil than to let it fester, and it pays in such situations to have at least some knowledge of the theory and practice of shugenja dueling.

Kakita swordsmen are not the only Crane duelists worthy of respect; they are simply the most famous. As the self-proclaimed "Left Hand of the Emperor," the Crane Clan have always understood the intricacies of courtly life. As a Clan dedicated to achieving refinement and perfection in everything they attempt, they have cultivated exceptional skill in crafts, the arts and games; the Kakita Artisan Academy is just as large and (within the Clan, at least) renowned as the sword dojo. As a Great Clan, they have learned how those pursuits fit into the life of the court, and how they may be used to gain attention from a court personage, humiliate an enemy, and defend both their honor as individuals and the honor of their Clan.

The Crane know how to approach just about every skill taught at the Kakita Artisan Academy as a personal competition, the courtier's equivalent of an iaijutsu duel. Many of the Kakita sensei have retired from courtly life to teach at the Academy, and they train such of their students as are keen to learn how to study an opponent for tendencies and weaknesses, as well as how to read the judge of the contest for biases. These *masters* understand that when craft becomes a matter of honor, it is not enough to rely on pure talent; you must understand that you will be weighed against another craftsman in the subjective judgment

of another human being. Given that, failing to understand the process by which victory will be achieved is nothing less than sheer incompetence.

The same is true of competitions where more objective means determine victory. Very few Crane have ever taken sumai very seriously, but Doji courtiers who bring a taste for go or shogi to court are expected to understand how to read their opponents in order to gain an advantage over them. After all, a game is not played to perfection unless one explores all possible avenues to victory.

To these ends, Doji courtiers often take a side-step from their basic training to study one or more courtly skill as a competitive form. The most important of these is oratory, as arguing one's case before the Emperor or a high court official plays such an important role in the politics of the Empire. Although the Kakita Academy has its own instructors in oratory and the Doji consider them more or less competent, the sensei of the Doji Courtier School have nonetheless created their own elite school of rhetoric, in which they distill generations of experience at the highest levels of Rokugani politics. Courtiers who have shown a gift for poetry or any of the performing arts also go through this course of training.

For their part, the Kakita Academy has its own course of advanced training, in which some of its most talented artisans receive a quick education in the subtleties of the courtier's occupation before being sent to court in the hope that their talent will make the glory of the Crane known to all.

Finally, some Crane courtiers understand that influence may be gained not only by winning duels, but by becoming respected judges of them. With direct forms of competition such as iaijutsu and taryu-jiai, or go and shogi, this requires that one understand the rules and step in should one of the competitors violate them. With more subjective forms of competition, such as poetry or flower arranging, it requires making fair and honest judgment about the superiority of one over the other. The Crane have learned that playing the role of honest arbiter can gain the respect and friendship of both sides.

Crane Institutions

Simply put, the Crane Clan run some of the most famous dojo in all of Rokugan. Both Kakita Academies are widely acknowledged as among the most eminent, if not the pre-eminent, institutions in their areas of endeavor. Scarcely less prestigious is the Doji Courtier Academy, which has trained the courtiers of a Clan particularly famous for their prowess at the courtly arts. In short, the major Crane dojo are institutions in which this Great Clan, hardly known for their humility, take special pride.

Kakita Dueling Academy

Shiro sano Kakita has long been a place of reverence for Rokugani interested in the art of the duel. Located in the very heart of Rokugan, scarcely 100 miles due west of the old Imperial City of Otsosan Uchi, the great stronghold of the Kakita Family shelters the famed Kakita Dueling Academy, the dojo whose reputa-

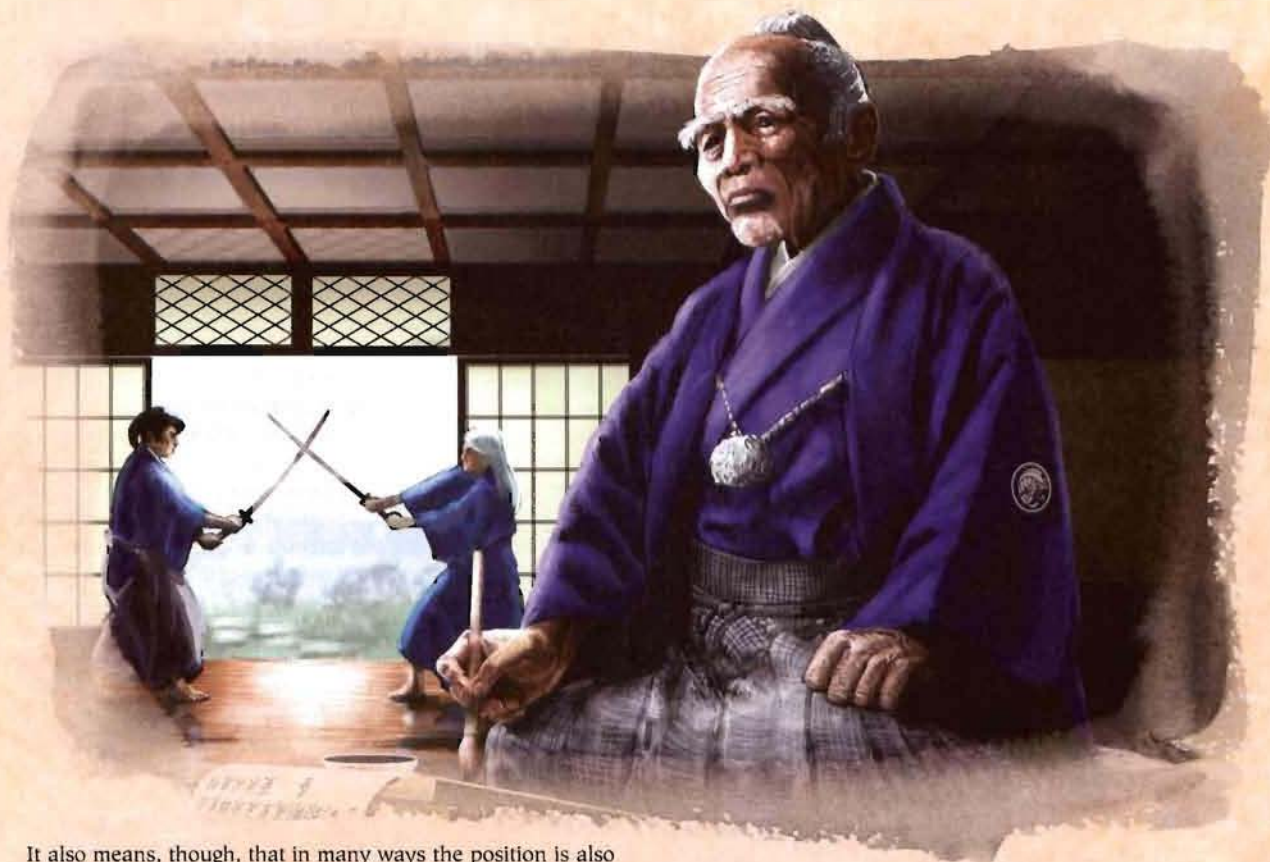
tion for turning out the Empire's most skilled and lethal iaijutsu swordsmen goes back so far that no one can even imagine a time when it was otherwise. Chances are that a samurai who has tried with any seriousness to master the art of iaijutsu has dreamt of studying at the Kakita dojo, even if he belongs to a Clan that bears no love for the Crane. The legend of the Kakita duelists is so great that the Academy draws not only supplicants seeking admission every day of the year, but also tourists who just want to rub shoulders with the great sensei of the dojo, or the elite Kenshinzen swordsmen who train here.

But if the Kakita dojo is one of the great prides of the Crane, the Kakita Family has found that, at least in some respects, its fame is a blade with two cutting edges. The Kakita duelists owe so much of their success and reputation to the training methods and techniques of their school. As such, they are an edge that the Crane have over their rivals, a weapon that their enemies have great difficulty matching. This presupposes, however, that knowledge of those techniques remains within the Clan. This requires limiting outsiders' access to the dojo and its sensei, and it's not an easy task because of the perpetual throng of those who come to Shiro sano Kakita out of admiration and ambition. But such is the price of having a reputation that reaches not only into every corner of the Empire, but backwards in time and — presumably — forward into the indeterminate future, as well.

Needless to say, heirs apparent to both the leadership of the Crane Clan and the Kakita Family have always found it politically expedient to train with the Kakita iaijutsu sensei, whether they particularly cared to become master duelists or not. One such example is Kakita Noritoshi, the current leader of the Family. Artistically minded and a prodigiously talented musician as a boy, Noritoshi had to be steered to the study of swordsmanship by his adoptive father, the Emerald Champion Kakita Toshiken. Toshiken knew that if his ward was ever to become Daimyo, he would have to demonstrate mastery of the sword in order to command the respect of the Family's retainers and vassals. An unwilling student at first, Noritoshi's attitude changed as the teachings of the Kakita sensei enabled him to see swordsmanship as a kind of artistry, in which timing, movement and oneness with the Void were all-important. He revealed a gift for the art of the sword at least as great as his talent for music, and quickly became a senior instructor at the Academy. When Daimyo Kakita Kaiten named him as his heir, he also specified that Noritoshi should inherit the title of Grand Master of the Academy as well, and Noritoshi holds both titles to this day.

The late Crane Champion, Doji Kurohito, also trained in the Way of Kakita, and he was an accomplished swordsman who retained his reputation as one of the most feared duelists in the Empire to the end of his days. His formidable personal qualities notwithstanding, there is little doubt that Kurohito's iaijutsu prowess — very much the product of his Kakita training — enhanced his standing as the leader of the Clan.

The Grand Master of the Academy leads the sensei of the dojo. He must always be someone of considerable Honor or Glory, for part of his job is to act as both the public face of the Academy and its voice within the Crane Clan and the Kakita Family. If the institution needs anything from the Clan or the Kakita in particular, it is the Grand Master who must request it; and if the Crane Champion needs anything (or anyone) from the Academy it is the Grand Master who will receive the request. The fact that the present Grand Master is also the Kakita Daimyo makes this communication relatively easy.



It also means, though, that in many ways the position is also more ceremonial than substantial these days, as Noritoshi is naturally occupied with the political business of leading a Family of a Great Clan. He therefore leaves most of the advanced instruction and administrative business to his most respected sensei, the Eight Elders of the Academy. The Eight Elders are among the most skilled swordsmen to be found anywhere in the Empire; some are retired Kenshinzen or Daidoji Yojimbo who have acquired some skill at iaijutsu, while others are longtime instructors rewarded for exceptional service to the Academy. Below them in the institutional hierarchy, the junior sensei take responsibility for teaching the younger students, particularly the children who have yet to reach their gempukku. Many of them are Kakita bushi who have retired from active service for whatever reason; some were diverted to the Academy because they showed some special flair for teaching. All of them have some demonstrated affinity for iaijutsu technique, whether or not they have a solid track record of actually fighting duels. Bushi whose service to the Crane has consisted mostly of soldiering (i.e., fighting in mass, not single combat) are not as welcome, for it is only in dueling that one can truly know the pure art of swordsmanship.

Junior instructors serve at the pleasure of the Grand Master, but the Eight Elders remain at the Academy until death or retirement. When a spot becomes open, an Elder may propose a candidate to fill it. The candidate is then vetted and voted upon by the remaining seven Elders. If a simple majority approves, they select one of their own to fight an iaijutsu duel with the candidate. If the candidate wins, he is then awarded the open position. Because this duel is purely a test of skill rather than one of honor, it is usually fought with bokken rather than katana. However, if either the candidate or the Elders choose to make it an affair of personal honor, then they may fight with katana to first blood (a duel to the death being rather too disturbing to faculty collegiality).

Of the students, the children who come to the Academy for basic education originate from samurai family from all over the Crane Lands. Some may be political hostages or children of families from Clans allied to the Crane, but these are relatively few. These youngest of the Academy's students are taught in larger classes and spend more time molding character than they do teaching actual sword technique. In addition to their education in the techniques of the Kakita Bushi School, they practice meditation under the tutelage of monks from the nearby temple, Seido Kakita. More advanced training, for Kakita Bushi who are past their gempukku and return to sharpen their skills, is conducted in smaller classes with some individual instruction. The farther along a student progresses, the more individual instruction he receives, and the more likely he is to be taught by one of the Eight Elders.

When an advanced student has learned all that the Kakita Bushi School can teach him (i.e., once a Kakita Bushi character has reached Rank 5 in the School), the sensei invite him to stay as an instructor, or kick him out with an admonition to serve the Crane in the wider world.

If he desires to return so that he can follow the path of the Kenshinzen, however, that is another matter. The Academy takes it very seriously when a student wishes to join the elite cadre of Kakita swordsmen, by reputation the best of the Empire's best duelists. Applicants must be vetted by a Crane magistrate — preferably, the Champion himself — to verify their honorable character. Then, the Eight Elders must appoint an established Kenshinzen to fight an iaijutsu duel with the applicant. If the applicant wins, he is accepted; if not, he must wait at least a year before trying again. These duels are always fought with katana to impress upon all involved the importance of this test, but very

rarely on terms other than to first blood. They are always fought in the main training hall with a respected judge and healers on hand, and as many Kenshinzen as can be rounded up as audience.

For a child of a samurai family to get a basic education in the Kakita Bushi School is an honor, but one not necessarily greater than training in any other warrior school, such as the Matsu or the Hida. The Kakita Bushi School is not exclusive except on basis of Clan affiliation, as the Crane can never have too many warriors upon whom to call. But access to more advanced training is a different matter, as the techniques that make a true Kakita duelist are not to be taught to just anyone. The Academy must not only be certain that you are prepared to learn what it will teach you, but that you will not use that knowledge against the Crane in some way.

And that is where the fame of the Kakita Academy has paradoxically become a burden as well as an honor. As the dojo of choice for anyone who wants to study the pure art of swordsmanship, it has become something of a place of pilgrimage for bushi, so that even a mere visit to the grounds of the Academy becomes an object of desire in and of itself. On any given day, the Academy may find itself snoopied around and gawked at by unanticipated visitors. Most of these are sincere applicants for advanced study or harmless curiosity seekers. And members of the Imperial Families, as well as court officials, are always welcome come what may. The Crane always worry, however, that among them will be spies seeking to learn the Academy's unique techniques and methods without permission. Theoretically, it is the job of Crane magistrates to control who travels through the Clan's lands by checking passports, but this system is never close to water-tight even when it works well.

As a consequence, the Academy's sensei are always supposed to keep a wary eye on any strangers in or around the Academy grounds. In practice, this admonition sometimes goes unobserved, as their primary duty is to teach, and teaching takes up plenty of time and attention as it is. On the other hand, it is certainly true of the Kakita Dueling Academy that it has little need of dedicated guards in that any of the Eight Elders by themselves are more than capable of handling anyone who is not welcome there.

Kakita Artisan Academy

It may be said of the two dojo that reside in the shadow of Shiro sano Kakita that they share equal glory, the Dueling Academy for its attainment of excellence in swordsmanship and the Artisan Academy (also known as the School of the Quiet Arts) for attainment of excellence in more gentle pursuits. But in a way, that hardly seems fair, for the Artisan Academy has always exceeded its sibling dojo by far in size and scope. In fact, strictly speaking, the Dueling Academy is really just a division of the Artisan Academy, at least as Kakita himself originally conceived the institution. The necessity of turning out skilled bushi to serve the Crane Clan has given the Dueling Academy more and more dignity and importance since then. In fact, when the relatively warlike Doji Satsume and Doji Kuwanan were Crane Champion, the Artisan Academy feared that the Dueling Academy would eclipse them altogether. But the Kakita themselves have never forgotten their founder's belief that swordsmanship was but one

art form of many that were important to the making of a samurai, and the Artisan Academy continues to be a Family institution in which they take great pride and care.

Indeed, the Kakita are always quick to point out that although he was arguably the greatest swordsman the Empire has ever seen, history also records that their illustrious forefather made the first biwa with the help of Yasuki, and that he took a deep interest in both craftsmanship and performance thereafter. The Artisan Academy has always been a reflection of Kakita's soul every bit as much as the Dueling Academy.

Originally, Kakita decreed that the arts should be taught at the Dueling Academy so that bushi of his school might learn that a true samurai ought to value perfection in pursuits other than swordsmanship. But the masters whom Kakita brought in to diversify the curriculum understood the full implications of what he had in mind, and they were not content to let their work remain a mere adjunct to warrior training. With Kakita-sama's blessing, they aggressively expanded the bounds and depth of their mandate. Within a century, the curriculum of the arts exceeded that of the sword in size and the Academy began to draw students for whom swordsmanship was not necessarily their primary interest. Administration of the artisan dojo and the bushi dojo effectively split in two, and the Artisan Academy assumed the form that it has held to the present day.

The Kakita Artisan Academy offers seven different courses of training, each in a different discipline: acting, dance, ikebana, music (both instrumental and vocal), oratory, painting and poetry. Kakita considered all of these art forms apt pursuits for a samurai. Students generally pursue a single discipline and focus solely on it for the entirety of their studies at the Academy. While this may seem at odds with Kakita's notion that an ideal samurai recognizes the beauty in a range of different pursuits, it also true as a practical matter that only intensive training in a single discipline can prepare all but the most exceptional students to strive for perfection, in accordance with Kakita's most enduring legacy to the Crane Clan.

Since most of the Academy's students come to them as children, sent by their families to receive their basic education as samurai, they are too young to select a discipline for themselves with any expectation that they will stick to it throughout their training. So each must be interviewed by a sensei of the Academy to determine their talents and their likelihood of excelling in and remaining committed to any given discipline. That sensei then chooses a discipline for him. It is a tribute to the canniness of the Academy's instructors and strength of their teaching that very few of their students come to regret later in life the choices made for them early on — although part of that may be a samurai's stoicism, true regret being a cardinal sin.

The Academy also receives some older students, most of them Crane courtiers on leave from the Doji Courtier Academy. They come to Shiro sano Kakita hoping to add a skill that will help them make a better impression at court. The Doji who come here often find, however, that the Kakita sensei care little for the practical aspects of artistry and artisanship (considerations that a good courtier wishes to understand). Instead, they are wrapped up in the purity of their disciplines, utterly absorbed in them as things worth doing only for their own sake. Even so, Crane courtiers who take a course or two among the Kakita find that they come away not only with much knowledge that will help them become

well-rounded ambassadors and diplomats, but also with renewed appreciation for the traditional ideals of their Clan. A few even find themselves enraptured by and converted to the Kakita's pure love of craft and stay in Shiro sano Kakita for extended study.

On the other hand, some samurai who begin their training in the Kakita Artisan School find their careers moving in the other direction, from the pure artistry of the Academy to a career at court. The Crane have found at various points in their history that an artisan, even without much diplomatic training, can represent the Clan effectively simply on the strength of his skill and talent. The Crane as a whole, essentially, bask in their reflected glow. Artisans who follow this path sometimes sharpen their courtier skills by taking an advanced course of study at the Doji Courtier Academy, with the Doji Rhetorician sensei.

As for the sensei, outsiders who do not understand the Crane temperament tend to assume that the Artisan Academy draws those who are not strong enough to become bushi, insufficiently favored by the kami to train as shugenja, and are not clever enough to serve as proper courtiers. They do not grasp the reverence that the Crane — and the Kakita in particular — bestow on what they regard as true artisanship and the endless pursuit of perfection that lies at its heart. In fact, the most talented students and sensei can achieve minor celebrity in the Kakita Lands, and the Academy instructors practically have free run of Shiro sano Kakita proper (they can easily access the castle grounds through common pathways and gardens that the two structures share).

The faculty are supervised by the Seven Masters of the Academy, one for each discipline. The Masters teach the advanced students in their discipline, and keep a close eye on the junior sensei. Each Master has the right to choose his own successor, and in practice they have considerable autonomy and run their disciplines like fiefdoms. One of their number doubles as the Grand Master of the Academy (also chosen for the post by his predecessor), but the main duty that comes with the job is to represent the Academy in matters of Clan or Kakita Family politics.

Doji Courtier Academy

It seems only appropriate that the Doji Courtier Academy should stand in the shadow of Kyuden Doji, which clearly ranks as the most splendid of Rokugani palaces now that Otsan Uchi is no more. For ages, the Doji Courtier School has embodied the Crane idea of the courtier's art, one founded on the ideals of eloquence, grace and mastery of aesthetics. Doji-trained courtiers have always been the public face of the Crane Clan and their claim to be the Left Hand of the Emperor.

But beneath the elegant, charming exterior of the Doji Courtier Academy and its proteges lies a keen awareness of the hard and unforgiving core at the heart of the courtier's job. Let the Kakita Artisans pursue beauty and perfection purely for their own sake; the fate of the Crane rests on the shoulders of every Doji courtier, and their schooling in the arts must be bent toward that merciless reality. The Doji would never stoop to the sort of low tricks of which, say, the Bayushi are master. But they also perform their duties at court with the knowledge that they must ever be prepared to match wits with the likes of the Bayushi, a task that requires steel in one's soul every bit as hard and sharp as a Kakita duelist's blade.

In this sense, the Academy has found an excellent Grand Master in Doji Norie, a veteran Crane diplomat who refuses any temptation to treat her current occupation as a genteel retirement. It has been said of Norie that she sees the way of the courtly ambassador as little different from the way of the bushi, and that she keeps copies of both *The Subtlety of the Court* and *The Book of Sun Tao* side by side in her private chambers. Skilled in etiquette, she nonetheless never passes on an opportunity to remind her students that the courtier's bland smile is worse than useless unless it conceals keen observation and a warrior's willingness to strike at the heart of one's enemies. She has a reputation as an unforgiving taskmaster with her students — and with her junior sensei, whose job it is to teach the younger students.

The Doji Courtier Academy teaches the full range of skills and knowledge that an aspiring young ambassador will need to succeed at court, from the art of extravagant flattery, to the rules of shogi and go, to a precise understanding of the protocols and lines of authority of the Imperial Court. Instruction, however, is not divided by subject. Instead, students are expected to learn all that is appropriate to their level of training from a single sensei. Although arguably a flawed system in that not every instructor is



equally competent in all subjects, the Doji have traditionally felt that emphasizing the relationship between sensei and student in this manner teaches its charges the importance of respect for proper authority and developing personal relationships, both of which are crucial to life at court.

A subtle and often overlooked aspect of the training one receives at the Academy is the Doji's keen understanding that for a courtier, just about any activity can have a significance beyond itself. A game of shogi against an ambassador from a rival Clan is not just a pastime, but a way of establishing personal dominance if one wins, with possible implications for your and his standing at court. A gift to the Emperor is never simply a gift, but a chance to outshine the other Great Clans. Gamesmanship is an important consideration, even in actions that may seem to have no competitive aspect. Similarly, almost any activity can be turned into a contest of honor — a duel, as it were — in which victory and defeat can have political consequences as severe as the physical consequences of losing an iaijutsu duel.

Nowhere is this more true than in the Academy's training in oratory. At the Kakita Artisan Academy, training in speaking and poetry tend to emphasize the pure aesthetics of those activities. At the Doji Courtier Academy, on the other hand, oratory never wanders very far from the art of pleading one's case, especially in a setting where one is directly pitted against a representative of a rival Clan. Rhetoric and debating skills are crucial parts of the Doji curriculum, and they have received even more emphasis

under the stewardship of Doji Norie. In addition to the training considered standard for every Doji courtier, the Academy also offers an advanced course of study in rhetoric, which emphasizes debating skills and persuasive speaking and writing.

Asahina Duelist School

Taryu-jiai is not part of the mainstream of Asahina shugenja practice, which prefers pacifism and quietism to confrontation. But, as the dominant Crane shugenja school, the Asahina must by nature accommodate a range of beliefs. The Asahina Sohei dojo is a perfect example; it teaches that defense of righteousness often requires the use of force, especially when confronting the Taint, and it has the backing of no less than the Asahina Daimyo, Asahina Sekawa. Another excellent example is the smaller and less prominent Asahina Duelist Dojo, which takes in those of the Asahina School who find themselves interested in shugenja dueling.

Housed in a small, inconspicuous training hall on the outskirts of Wall Above the Ocean Village, the dojo has always struggled for acceptance within the larger Asahina School. Its adherents justify their interest in taryu-jiai by stressing the importance of inner calm and oneness with the kami in this type of dueling. These qualities are not at all inimical to the mainstream of Asahina thought, and yet teaching them also helps shape a successful taryu-jiai duelist. Without calm, one cannot focus on reading one's opponent, and without the help of the kami, one cannot create a strong dueling avatar.



The only aspect of taryu-jiai that the dojo refuses to touch is dueling to the death, as the Asahina School would never countenance such a thing under any circumstances. All students who enter the dojo must vow as samurai never to participate in such a duel. The sensei understand that it would endanger their charter if any of their students were ever discovered to have participated in a death duel, and not even the relatively militant temperament of the current Asahina Daimyo would save them. Punishment for disobeying this edict could range from a permanent ban on setting foot in any Asahina dojo to seppuku. The sensei of the school have no precedent for such a thing, however, for none of their students have ever disobeyed them.

Despite the relative obscurity of their dojo, Asahina duelists have long served the Crane at court, where it helps to have someone in your entourage skilled in taryu-jiai in case the occasion for a challenge presents itself. Duelists also serve in Crane armies, where they complement Kakita duelists in carrying out the traditional Crane strategy of paralyzing the enemy through striking at key individuals, neutralizing opposing shugenja by challenging them to duels. They have served their Clan well in all such cases, ably justifying the existence of their specialty within the Asahina School.

The Master of Wits

The Master of Wits is not so much a distinct dojo or school, so much as it is a single sensei of the Doji Courtier Academy who receives a small building on the outer perimeter of the Academy grounds along with the duty of teaching this particular art form to whomever takes an interest in it. It has traditionally been an afterthought of the Academy, established to indulge young courtiers interested in sadane, and then neglected. Here, students are taught the deceptively coarse art of the courtly put-down, its various uses and methods. Many Doji courtiers spurn it as an academic specialty. But down through the ages, a substantial minority have been drawn to it out of a sense of mischief, or because they understood that a sly remark, carefully inserted into a speech or conversation, can utterly change how one's enemies are perceived.

In fact, historically, the Master of Wits sensei has been a Crane courtier of some distinction, someone who has shown keen understanding of the finer points of courtly discourse. It is a popular choice for Crane diplomats who want a sabbatical from representing the Clan and despite the low esteem that attaches to the position, it never seems to lack for volunteers. Outside of the Academy, it has a reputation as an amusing way to spend a year or two away from the stresses of one's duties.

Strangely enough, the Master of Wits has found a friend in the current Grand Master of the Academy, Doji Norie. The steely Norie seems an unlikely supporter of this course of study, but in fact, two decades of service at court — first among the Scorpion at Ryoko Owari, then at Otosan Uchi — taught her that a successful courtier can never have too many weapons in her arsenal, and that it is perilous to neglect any. As a result, The Master of Wits is presently as popular as it has ever been, with aspiring young Doji crowding the small dojo and the chatter of bouts of sadane ever-present, so that one can barely hear one's own thoughts. Lately, Norie has considered taking on another sensei or two to help cope with this surge of interest.

Crane Sensei

The Crane trust their sensei with custody of some of their most cherished institutions — the dojo that enshrine and pass on the ideals for which the Clan has stood since the days of Kakita and Lady Doji. The sensei of Crane dojo are expected to not only to teach techniques and remain loyal to the Clan, but to embody in themselves the spirit of the pursuit of perfection. The physical structure of the dojo and its reputation in the wider Empire is the body, but the sensei are the spirit that animates the body. And without purity of spirit and excellent character, the body will sicken and become corrupt.

KAKITA HANAE, ELDER OF THE KAKITA DUELING ACADEMY

Air: 4	Earth: 4	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 4
Perception: 4				
Honor: 3.8		Status: 3.8		Glory: 3.6

SCHOOL/RANK: Kakita Bushi 5/Kenshinzen 1

ADVANTAGES: Allies 5 (Kakita Noritoshi), Ambidextrous, Quick

DISADVANTAGES: Ascetic, Can't Lie, Gullible

KATA: Kakita's First Stance, One Leg Stance, One Strike Blade, One Truth, Striking as Earth, Striking as Fire, Striking as Water, Striking as Wind, Striking as Void, Watchful Falcon, Wind in the Darkened Skies

SKILLS: Calligraphy 2, Defense 3, Etiquette 4, Games: Go 1, Iaijutsu 7, Instruction (Iaijutsu, Kakita Bushi School) 7, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Bushido 5, Meditation 5, Stealth 2, Tea Ceremony 2

For Kakita Hanae, the art of the sword and the Kakita Dueling Academy pretty much define the boundaries of her existence. She revealed an exceptional gift for swordsmanship at an early age, and by the time of her gempukku, she had become one of the Kakita Bushi School's distinguished young students. However, instead of testing her skills in the wider world, through musha shugyo or some other form of service to Clan or Emperor, Hanae chose to remain within the relatively cloistered confines of the Academy, continuing to train intensively with the more experienced sensei. As she progressed through her advanced training, she continued to impress her instructors, who soon agreed that she had demonstrated sufficient prowess to become a junior instructor herself. When she had absorbed all that the Kakita sensei felt they could teach her, she set her sights on joining the ranks of the Kenshinzen duelists, more to prove that she could do it than out of actual desire to shed blood in defense of the Crane. When she succeeded, Kakita Noritoshi promptly arranged for her to become one of the Academy's Eight Elders. And yet, for all her considerable virtues and her friendship with the Grand Master and Kakita Daimyo, some observers of the Academy — fairly or not — consider her a potential weak point in its façade.

Kakita Hanae has never quite fit the Dueling Academy mold. Short and slight of build, and utterly lacking in the swagger one might expect from a master duelist, she presents an unassuming figure around the Academy. The respect the Eight Elders command notwithstanding, it is a little too easy for students and other sensei to overlook her. She is not a Kakita by blood; instead, she was born an Ashidaka, one of the Kakita's vassal families, so

she lacks a certain element of noble-born glamor that some of her peers possess. And unlike the handful of Kenshinzen with whom she shares the distinction of being one of the Eight Elders, she has never actually fought an iaijutsu duel in hot blood to defend her Clan, Family or personal honor.

Instead, Hanae is an academic of the sword. She is a perpetual student of swordsmanship, and no one would deny that she knows the philosophy and techniques of the Kakita School as well as anyone. She has always been exceptionally quick and gifted, with a wiry strength in her arms, and her facility with either hand has allowed her to master difficult and obscure kenjutsu techniques. Even as an advanced student, Kakita Noritoshi noticed her exceptional abilities, and mentored her in her academic career until he arranged for her to join the Eight Elders.

But Hanae has never really left the Academy to test her skills in the wider arena of Rokugan. In fact, her first iaijutsu duel that drew blood was her challenge to gain admission to the Kenshinzen. She made quite an impression on her peers with that performance, dealing the famous duelist Kakita Iichiro a cut across the left arm that he did not even see coming, but struggled to conceal her nervousness beforehand and queasiness at having drawn the blood of a colleague afterward. Until then, all of her iaijutsu duels had been purely academic exercises, fought with bokken.

As a result of this isolation, her fellow sensei notice in Hanae an almost complete lack of worldliness — although perhaps it is the other way around, and her cloistered life is an extension of a temperament that has little ability to grasp anything other than academic matters. Hers is not the monk's willful and deliberate renunciation of the world made in full knowledge of what one leaves behind, but a basic inability to grasp how that world works. Her colleagues respect her, and the students seem to like her well enough. But she is set apart from most everyone else at the Academy. And although she presents a properly polite and good-natured face to everyone she meets, many assume that she feels a certain loneliness, especially since her patron Kakita Noritoshi spends so much of his time these days at Shiro sano Kakita on Family business.

For these reasons, some observers of the goings on at the Academy feel that she might be the weak spot through which one might gain access to the Kakita's secrets. These analyses tend to underestimate her loyalty both to the Academy and to the Kakita Family pretty severely; she will not knowingly betray either, not for wealth, love nor glory. But given her naivete, she might well be tricked into rendering up the techniques and teaching methods of this most venerable of dojo to one who would use them against the Crane.

DOJI NOBURO, SENSEI OF THE DOJI COURTIER ACADEMY

Air: 4	Earth: 2	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 4
Awareness: 5		Intelligence: 5		
Honor: 4.8		Status: 5		Glory: 3

SCHOOL/RANK: Doji Courtier 5/Doji Rhetorician 1

ADVANTAGES: Bente's Blessing, Clear Thinker, Precise Memory, Social Position, Voice

DISADVANTAGES: Low Pain Threshold, Obligation 2 (Doji Kurohito), True Love (Daidoji Akane)

SKILLS: Artisan (Ikebana) 4, Calligraphy 3, Courtier (Manipulation) 6, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Conversation) 6, Games 5, Instruction (Storytelling) 6, Lore: Bushido 5, Meditation 2, Performance: Song 3, Storytelling (Poetry, Oratory) 6, Tea Ceremony 3.

An older kinsman of the late Crane Champion Doji Kurohito, Doji Noburo represented the Clan for many a long year as an ambassador at the Imperial Court. Even more so than his nephew Kurohito, his career gave him a close, first-hand view of tumult and crisis, from the War of Spirits and the intramural strife between the Doji and the Daidoji, through the destruction of Otsan Uchi and continuing into the upheavals known as the era of the Four Winds. Throughout it all, Noburo served the Crane with honor and distinction, becoming one of the fixtures of the Imperial Court, loved by his friends and respected even by enemies of the Crane Clan. Now on the cusp of old age, he continues to serve his Clan in a role that he sees as a form of semi-retirement, as a sensei of the Doji Courtier Academy.

Noburo's early life prepared him perfectly for the life that he would lead. He excelled as a student of the Doji Courtier School, and was sent off to Otsan Uchi as an ambassador soon after he came of age. He first made his mark by arguing the Crane's case against a Scorpion ambassador before the Emerald Champion — the matter at hand being control of a disputed farming village — and winning. This triumph, though relatively small in the larger scheme of things, nonetheless made his reputation as a formidable public speaker and debater that one took lightly at one's peril.

Noburo solidified that reputation by debating other courtiers for sport. He often settled (in his favor) matters of honor in which he was involved by formal duels of oratory, and not just because his talents lay that way rather than in the way of swordsmanship. He hated the prospect of shedding blood, and relished the intellectual challenge of a good argument. Such was his fame that his nephew Kurohito, recently become the Clan Champion, insisted that he return to the Courtier Academy to pursue advanced training in rhetoric. Noburo remained at the Academy long enough to serve as a sensei himself for a while, then returned to the Imperial Court, where he mentored young Crane courtiers recently arrived in the capital. Noburo is a man of various courtly skills and talents; he plays a wily game of go, possesses a fine singing voice, and practices the art of flower arranging with the skill of a practiced Kakita artisan. But it was always as an orator that he was best known.

In his younger days, he was also known as quite a ladies' man, one who clearly had Bente's favor — this despite his carefully-arranged marriage to a daughter of the Kakita Family. When his wife died, his friends assumed that he would, if anything, step up the pace of his dalliances, even though he was no longer as young as he once was. But neither they nor he took into account Daidoji Akane, the attractive yojimbo who was assigned to him some time after his wife's death. The two fell madly in love with each other, even though she was some 25 years his junior. In fact, Noburo remarked to his friends that, after a lifetime of dalliances, he had finally met the one true love of his life.

But carrying on a great love affair with your bodyguard is not an ideal situation in a land with as many perils as Rokugan, in a time as turbulent as the era of the Four Winds. Noburo appealed to his nephew to be relieved of his duties at Court so that he and

Akane, now his second wife, could live peacefully in a situation where his person no longer required constant guard. Kurohito agreed, but reluctantly, as it would not help the Clan to lose an experienced ambassador at the Imperial Court as Toturi III began his reign. Kurohito allowed him to return to his old school as a sensei, in return for which the crafty old courtier would have to return to service immediately if the Crane Champion so insisted.

That is not to say, however, that teaching at the Doji Courtier Academy is an easy fit for Noburo. Though he has much practice in passing his knowledge on to the less experienced, he chafes under the strict supervision of the Grand Master, the formidable Doji Norie. Noburo is used to sharing his wisdom in a relaxed and informal manner, not under the strict regimen of a dojo. Norie, of course, insists on the latter, and Noburo has been heard to refer to her privately as, "that wizened old harridan." In response to one of her favorite sayings, that "A warrior's failure dooms only himself; a courtier's failure dooms the entire Clan," he can (and does) retort that few Crane have as much practical experience at court as he, or as long a history of service. Needless to say, the two are not on the easiest of terms. Nor has his nephew's passing eased his anxiety, for Noburo still worries that his Clan will summon him back to court, these being turbulent times even by the standards of Rokugani history.

His only true consolation at this point in his life is Akane, who has laid down her blade to be with her husband and start a family with him. Should he return to ambassadorial duties, however, she will insist on taking it up again to protect him.

New Mechanics: Crane

New School: Kakita Artisan (Courtier)

It is not always apparent to outsiders, but the Crane hold the "other" Kakita school, the Artisan Academy, in esteem just as high as (if not higher than) the Dueling Academy. To study at the Artisan Academy is to steep yourself in Kakita's belief that swordsmanship is not the only way through which a samurai ought to express the nobility of his soul — indeed, that skill at arms is in some ways the least of the samurai's paths.

Most Kakita Artisans enter the Academy out of a sincere belief in Kakita's ideals of craftsmanship, including the notion that art and aesthetics are valuable simply for their own sake. But in practice, many of them wind up serving the Crane Clan at court, either as skilled ambassadors who use their training to win friends and influence, or craftsmen whose talents may be presented in whatever appropriate way as gifts. Either way, the Clan well understands that its traditional role as the Left Hand of the Emperor has always depended on maintaining its reputation as masters of the courtly game and superior aesthetes whose devotion to perfection marks them as the Imperial Court's arbiters of high taste.





Upon entry into the Artisan Academy, each student is assigned to a single discipline, a focused course of study that they will follow throughout their time there. A student cannot simply stop pursuing one discipline and take up another; he must start over again at Rank 1. In practical terms, this also means that taking up a second discipline requires purchasing the Multiple Schools Advantage.

BENEFIT: +1 Awareness

HONOR: 3.5

SKILLS: Calligraphy, Courtier, Etiquette, any one Lore Skill appropriate to discipline, any one High Skill, discipline Skill at Rank 2

OUTFIT: Wakizashi, kimono, traveling pack, satchel, 2 items associated with discipline, 10 koku

Techniques

RANK 1: SOUL OF THE ARTISAN

It is expected that a Kakita Artisan will devote himself to his chosen discipline as completely as a Kakita bushi devotes himself to the art of the sword. This intense dedication hones your skills in your discipline in ways that your rivals of other Schools can only envy.

Acting: Kakita sensei teach the techniques of both the Kabuki and Noh styles, as well as more generalized techniques of mimicry. In fact, they do the latter with such skill that their techniques allow you to pass yourself off as someone of higher or lower Glo-

ry, Honor or Insight than you actually possess. You make such an attempt as an Acting (Disguise or Mimicry) Roll against a TN of $5 + 5 \times$ the difference between your actual total Ranks in these categories and the number of Ranks you are trying to simulate.

Dance: You receive a Free Raise on all Raw Agility and Reflexes Rolls. In addition, your performance benefits from the Kakita sensei's unusual attention to detail; Kakita-trained dancers are famous for their ability to mesmerize their audiences. You may use your training to prevent members of your audience from noticing subtle actions, such as one of their number leaving quietly during the performance, or all of the shoji screens being closed slowly. You make a Performance (Dance) Skill Roll against a TN equal to the average Perception of the audience $\times 5$. If you succeed, your target is too engrossed in the performance to notice or care about the action from which you wish to distract them.

Ikebana: The superiority of Kakita ikebana techniques is acknowledged throughout the Empire, but the exact nature of those techniques remain secrets of the Academy. By placing a well-wrought flower arrangement in a room, you may bring harmony to the soul of a certain individual. This requires a successful Void/Artisan (Ikebana) Roll against a TN of 15 and at least 15 minutes of time, although you may gain a Free Raise for each additional 15 minutes spent on the task, up to a maximum equal to your Insight Rank. As long as the target audience of the arrangement remains within the same room as the arrangement, he adds an extra Void Point to his pool. However, the arrangement only

lasts until the next sunrise, and you may only create a number of arrangements for this purpose per day equal to your Ranks in the Kakita Artisan School.

Music: Whether they sing or play an instrument, Kakita-trained musicians have always had a gift for soothing some of the less civilized stirrings within the human breast, often with such subtlety that they can have this effect even on those who are not paying full attention to them. If anyone who has been within earshot of your playing or singing for at least 5 minutes wishes to initiate a violent action — even one as minimal as shaking his fist or raising his voice in anger — you may force him to make successful a Raw Willpower Roll against a TN of $10 + (5 \times \text{your School Rank})$ in order to do so. If he fails, he simply cannot bring himself to muster enough emotion. However, anyone in that audience may spend a Void Point to negate your ability; he must spend the Void Point before deciding whether or not to roll.

The Skills linked to this discipline are Performance (Music) and Performance (Song).

Oratory: Among the Doji Courtiers, oratory generally refers to the art of debate or making a speech in the context of court business. The Kakita sensei expand the definition to include all formal or semi-formal spoken expression, including not only speechmaking, but also dramatic storytelling. They believe that the key to effective training across such a range of styles is knowledge and preparation, that only depth of understanding in the subject on which you are speaking can free you from the necessity of thinking about technique. You gain a Free Raise to any Lore Skill Roll. In addition, no Lore Skill Roll is an Untrained Skill Roll to you. Even if you have no Ranks in a given Lore Skill, you may use it as if you have at least 1 Rank.

The Skills linked to this discipline are Storytelling (Oratory) and Storytelling (Poetry).

Painting: Painting is unique among the disciplines taught at the Kakita Academy in that it produces an artifact that may not only be given as a gift, but that a samurai may also sell or trade without loss of honor. Generally, the koku value of a painting by a Kakita Artisan is equal to at least one-half of his School Rank (rounded up) + 1 koku for each week spent crafting it. Creating a painting of sufficient quality so that it will not disgrace you takes at least 1 week and a successful Artisan (Painting) Roll against a TN of 15, and each additional week spent on its creation provides a Free Raise to the roll. You may also use Raises to increase the value of your work by 1 koku per Raise. You must determine the length of the creation process before starting on the work, and you must make the Skill Roll halfway through the creation process.

Poetry: Poetry is the most popular artisan form among the samurai class, and it is not just those of the Crane Clan who fancy themselves skilled poets. It is a discipline filled with enthusiastic practitioners across all Clans. However, Kakita-trained poets have a particular (and deserved) reputation for skill at the recitation of poetry, and this knack can make a substantial favorable impression in any social or political situation. You may spend a Void Point to make a Storytelling (Poetry) Roll in order to gain a +0k2 bonus to any Social Skill Roll. The TN for the Storytelling (Poetry) Roll is the same as that of the Social Skill Roll it is meant to influence.

RANK 2: THE SOUL'S DREAM

You gain a +1k1 bonus to Skill Rolls involving your discipline. In addition, studying with the Kakita sensei has given you a unique level of insight into the wants and needs of your potential audience. You receive a bonus to all Contested Social Skill Rolls involving an opponent who has any Disadvantages involving a compulsion, strong need or desire of some kind (e.g., Greed, Lechery, Driven, etc.). The bonus is equal to the Character Point value of the Disadvantage. If you are participating in an adjudicated artisan duel, you are able to read the judge's tastes and sensibilities more easily than your opponent. You gain a bonus to the Contested Skill Roll equal to the judge's Honor Rank.

RANK 3: FREE THE SPIRIT

Though still a student, you have by now built up a body of work and with it, enough of a reputation that you may serve as an inspiration to others. A number of times per day equal to your School Rank, you may give up to 3 other characters of the same discipline Free Raises that they must use within the hour. They may use these Free Raises for any roll, not just a Skill Roll in their discipline. To determine the number of Free Raises that you may give to each character, make a Skill Roll appropriate to your discipline and divide by 10, rounded down (there is no TN to worry about).

RANK 4: UNDYING NAME

You gain a +1k1 bonus to Skill Rolls involving your discipline (this replaces the bonus you received at Rank 2). Also, your reputation (not to mention your skill as an artisan) has grown to the point where others may shine in your reflected glory, if you work hard enough at achieving this effect. Once per week, you may attempt to you use your discipline Skill to raise or lower the Glory Rank of someone of equal or lower Glory than yourself. This gain (or loss) is equal to 0.1 (or -0.1) \times your Honor Rank, but may never exceed +1 or -2.

However, this process requires considerable time and effort. You must first socialize with those whose estimation matters most to the target character, or otherwise cultivate ways to influence their opinion. You must then make a Skill Roll in your discipline against a TN equal to $5 \times$ the difference in Glory between you and your target. If you succeed, the target's Glory changes; if you do not, it does not, and in order to try again you must start the process all over again.

RANK 5: WALK AMONG THE HEAVENS

An artisan who completes the Kakita Academy's course of training is, by definition, someone whose reputation has spread throughout the Empire. Once per week, you may use the Doji Courtier Favor Table (see *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition* core rulebook, p. 123) as if you were a Rank 4 Doji Courtier. However, in doing so, you also lose Glory Ranks equal to the Rank of the favor gained. You may not lose more than 5 Glory Ranks per week in this fashion.

New Advanced School: Doji Rhetorician (Courtier)

While the Kakita teach public speaking as an art form to be respected purely for its own sake, the Doji Courtiers view it mainly as tool of their trade. Excellence in speech is a fine thing, and well worth pursuing. But experienced Crane courtiers also understand all too well the practical aspect of the pursuit of perfection, for the fate of their Clan might rest on their next appeal to a high court official, if not the Emperor himself. With that in mind, the Doji established an advanced course of study for Crane courtiers, one that would focus on achieving true excellence in argument in particular, but all forms of spoken and written persuasion in general.

Requirements:

RINGS/TRAIT: Awareness 5, Intelligence 4, Perception 3
SKILLS: Courtier 4, Etiquette 4, Storytelling 4, any one Performance Skill 2

ADVANTAGES: Voice

OTHER: The Crane Clan reserves this course of training for those whom it considers its most promising diplomats. Almost all candidates come from the Doji Courtier School or have studied oratory in the Kakita Artisan School.

Techniques

RANK 1: TONGUE OF SILVER

Thanks to the Doji sensei, you have achieved exceptional mastery of the cadences and flow — the sheer music — of High Roku-gani, which makes your speech pleasing to the ear. You gain a +1k1 bonus to all Courtier, Etiquette and Storytelling Rolls.

RANK 2: VOICE OF THE CRANE

The Doji masters understand not only how to spot the flaws in an opponent's arguments, but how to analyze their person for weaknesses that may be exploited. In a Contested Storytelling Roll, your opponent suffers a penalty equal to 10 minus any one Ring or Trait belonging to your opponent or the judge of the contest (your choice).

RANK 3: SURPASSING ELOQUENCE

You have learned every persuasive trick in the orator's book, at least as it is written by the Doji sensei. You gain a number of Free Raises equal to either your Perception, Intelligence or Awareness (your choice) to be used in resolving any Contested Courtier, Etiquette or Storytelling Roll. This benefit is cumulative with the benefits gained at Rank 1.

New Advanced School: Doji Gamester (Courtier)

Both the perpetual popularity at court of games of strategy and the equally long-standing rivalry between the *Lion Clan* and the Crane demand that Crane courtiers take seriously the task of mastering go and shogi. To that end, the Doji have set up an advanced course of study devoted to the theory and practice of the games most popular among Roku-gani samurai, with a special emphasis on the ability to read one's opponent's strengths and weaknesses. A Crane courtier who pursues this course of study will be expected to compete in the go and shogi tournaments sponsored by the Lion with the express goal of showing up the hosts. Tournament play, however, is simply practice for his main mission: joining Crane contingents at court as the designated game duelist, to be used like a Kakita iaijutsu duelist on an opponent who has been maneuvered into a position in which he may be shamed by a decisive defeat.

Requirements:

RINGS/TRAIT: Awareness 4, Intelligence 4, Perception 3
SKILLS: Etiquette (Conversation) 2, any Games Skill 4, Meditation 2

OTHER: This course of training tends to draw candidates from the Doji Courtier School, although Crane bushi looking for retirement from the life of a swordsman have been known to take up this pursuit as well.

Techniques

RANK 1: KNOW THE OPENING

The Doji sensei have begun running you through advanced exercises in tactical analysis, deepening and strengthening your appreciation of your chosen game. You receive a +1k1 bonus to all Games Skill Rolls. They have also begun to coach you in the fine points of reading your opponent, both his style of play and physical cues that might indicate his next move, or at least how he views his situation. When you size up your opponent (as per the rules for pure competition on p. 17-18), a successful Raw Perception Roll will discover the value of any 3 among his Rings, Awareness, Perception and Intelligence.

RANK 2: THE MASTER'S WISDOM

Your experience in the forms, rules and rituals of your chosen game grants you greater understanding of form, rules and ritual in the world at large. You gain a bonus equal to your Games Skill and 2 Free Raises to any Etiquette Roll. Your experience in analyzing tactical situations at length and in depth also finds application in pursuits outside your chosen game. Your analytical skills give you a bonus equal to your Games Skill and 2 Free Raises to any Investigation Roll.

RANK 3: KNOW THE END-GAME

You have finally learned all that the Doji sensei feel that they can teach you about strategy, tactics and pure gamesmanship. You receive a +2k2 bonus to all Games Skill Rolls. Also, when you size up your opponent (as per the rules for pure competition on p. 17-18), a successful Raw Perception Roll will discover the value of any 5 among his Rings, Awareness, Perception and Intelligence. These replace the benefits of the Rank 1 Technique.

New Path:
Asahina Duelist (Shugenja)

Taking an interest in the practice of taryu-jiai marks a departure from the mainstream of Asahina philosophy. And yet, there are Crane shugenja who believe that these ritualistic magic duels are a lesser evil, so long as no one is seriously hurt. This Path describes the brief detour in his education that an Asahina shugenja must make if he pursues any study of taryu-jiai.

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Asahina Shugenja 3

Path of Egress: Asahina Shugenja 4

Technique: The Strength Within

The Asahina have always been famous for the depth of their meditative practices and their commitment to preserving living things from harm. These qualities give them an inner strength that helps insulate them from the risks of invoking the kami dur-

ing a taryu-jiai duel. If your roll against the duel's TN (as per Step 3 of the taryu-jiai process; p. 13-15) fails, you may make another roll. If this second roll succeeds, you suffer no Wounds in this round of the duel (you still fail to inflict Wounds on your opponent).

New Path: Daidoji Duelist (Bushi)

Though the Daidoji Yojimbo School has served the Crane exceptionally well on its own, turning out brave and able personal guards for the Clan's leaders and courtiers, many have found it useful to their occupation to take a course of study at the Kakita Dueling Academy. Working as they do alone or in small groups, they never know when they will have to respond to a personal challenge with only their skills and wits on which to fall back. Even in non-dueling situations, the speed and quickness that the Kakita sensei impart in their training can mean the difference between success in failure when outnumbered in a fight.

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Daidoji Yojimbo 3

Path of Egress: Daidoji Yojimbo 4 or Kakita Bushi 2

Technique: Kakita Strikes

You gain a bonus equal to twice your Iaijutsu Rank to all Initiative Rolls. Also, when you are engaged in an iaijutsu duel, you gain additional Void Points equal to your Honor Rank for the duration of the duel.



New Path: Doji Arbiter (Courtier)

Life at court has taught the Doji the various ways by which one may acquire both friends and influence, and one of those ways is to cultivate a reputation for impartiality. One may thus serve as an honest broker in disputes between samurai and thereafter command the esteem of both, no matter who wins and who loses, based solely on their respect for your character.

Technique Rank: 4

Path of Entry: Doji Courtier 4

Path of Egress: Doji Courtier 5

Technique: True Discernment

The art of arbitration requires that you resist all manner of trickery, whether rhetorical or material, aimed at persuading you to do or say something against your better judgment. Whenever someone uses the Courtier, Etiquette or Storytelling Skill to try to manipulate your opinions or actions, they suffer a penalty equal to twice your Perception or Willpower (your choice). Nor may they use raises of any kind to affect this roll.

Your refusal to be moved by questionable arguments wins you much respect for your impartiality. Each time you serve as judge for a duel that falls under the definition of an adjudicated contest (see p. 16), and in which both duellists are affiliated with Clans other than your own, you gain 5 Honor points if your Honor Rank is 2 or less; 2 points if your Honor Rank is 4 or less; or 1 point if your Honor Rank is higher than 4.

In addition, you may make a Raw Honor Roll against a TN of 15 for each contestant in the duel. If you succeed, you may add that character as an Ally for half the usual Point cost, rounded up. This does not count against your session limit on Honor Rolls, but you do suffer the 10 Honor point loss if you fail the roll.

New Path:

Master of Ikebana (Courtier)

In its purest form, ikebana is an expression of harmony, simplicity and perfection, not unlike the practice of the tea ceremony. Crane courtiers, however, have generations of experience in treating this art form as a competition, having been challenged to duels of flower arranging on many occasions. Their accumulated wisdom, passed on by Doji Courtier sensei, encourages their students who study ikebana to take stock of their opponent in a challenge and capitalize on their weaknesses.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Doji Courtier 2

Path of Egress: Doji Courtier 3 or Kakita Artisan 1 (discipline ikebana)

Technique: Penetrating Harmony

You gain a +2k1 bonus to all Artisan (Ikebana) Rolls. In addition, when you are engaged in a contest of flower arranging, you may compel your opponent to substitute his remaining Void Points for his Awareness when making his roll. He would, then, have to make a Void Ring minus spent Void Points/Artisan (Ikebana) Roll to contest your Awareness/Artisan (Ikebana) Roll, not an Awareness/Artisan (Ikebana) Roll.

New Path:

Master of Wits (Courtier)

Defaming the character of a person or the nature of a thing without causing undue offense to your audience is a delicate task, but one that well serves the courtier who can master it. When matters are being decided at court, casting your rival in a bad light without seeming gratuitous about it can help turn the tide in your favor. It's also a useful talent for courtiers who wish to cultivate skill at sadane.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Doji Courtier 2

Path of Egress: Doji Courtier 3

Technique: Gutting the Eel

You gain 2 Free Raises when using the Courtier Skill. Also, if you do not have the Games: Sadane Skill, you immediately gain it at Rank 1 at no cost in points. If you already have the Games: Sadane Skill, you immediately gain 2 Ranks at no cost in points.

New Path:

Master of Poetry (Courtier)

The Kakita teach that poetry is a pure art form, worth mastering for its own sake, and because it is the Way of the Crane to seek perfection in every endeavor. The sensei of the Doji Courtier School also value poetry and pure aesthetics, but to them, poetry is also a weapon in the courtier's arsenal — a means by which a Crane may increase his honor and glory (and therefore his influence) as well as reveal a rival's inferiority. Doji courtiers who follow this path are trained not only to compose excellent poems, but to study a rival's work with an eye to making one's own poetry seem the superior product.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Doji Courtier 2

Path of Egress: Doji Courtier 3 or Kakita Artisan 1 (discipline poetry)

Technique: Superior Form

You gain a +2k1 bonus to all Storytelling (Poetry) Rolls. Also, if you are involved in a duel of poetry composition, you gain a bonus equal to your Contested Storytelling (Poetry) Roll equal to your Perception.

CHAPTER FOUR:

DUELING: WAY
OF THE DRAGON**Philosophy**

The Dragon Clan have helped define dueling from the beginnings of the Empire. Kakita's one-sword iaijutsu technique laid the foundation for a formal style of dueling that continues to this day, but during the same period, another pioneer created a new sword technique that was just as revolutionary as the Crane's. In Mirumoto's famous tract on the art of swordsmanship, *Niten*, he describes a style of wielding the katana and wakizashi at the same time. It was an advanced style that dominated kenjutsu duels, and it became popular almost immediately. Many bushi of all different Clans were eager to learn the style and adapt it as their own.

Despite the widespread emergence of *Niten*, however, few samurai mastered the dual-wield technique. Some outside the Dragon Clan became proficient with the style but their forms were weak and incomplete. Some were great at dealing death but left great holes in their defenses that were easily exploited by their enemies. Some were able to defend themselves with the wakizashi in their off-hand but could not coordinate a strong attack. The Mirumoto technique is the only one known to balance both elements of combat. A skilled Mirumoto's sword work in action is beauty in motion and an awe inspiring sight.

The Mirumoto host many tournaments at various points in the year. They are traditionally held at Shiro Mirumoto or Heibasu, a former trading post visited by representatives from most Great Clans. It is no surprise that the Mirumoto favor tests of kenjutsu over all else. *Niten* is their crowning feature, and their bushi hone the skill. The Mirumoto also hold annual taikai — exhibitions to determine who has the best form in their *Niten* stances. Those who win are respected and given many opportunities to rise through

the ranks of the Dragon armies. Other tournaments are more traditional, with two duelists facing off in elimination matches until one person remains. These types of tournaments cover iaijutsu, kenjutsu, and even jujutsu duels.

As part of the Mirumoto's studies, they delve deeply into the mysteries of the Fortunes and the Tao. Because of their devotion, the Mirumoto can boast a stronger understanding of the elements than a normal bushi. This connection, however, does not make them weaker or less martial. The Mirumoto host smaller, lesser known tournaments of a more intellectual nature at the High House of Light. These range from contests of poetry to debates on philosophy. Despite the nature and size of these competitions, the Mirumoto hold them with the same air of gravity as their martial counterparts.



Kakita Versus Mirumoto Hojatsu

The second duel between Kakita and Mirumoto Hojatsu is quite possibly the most famous duel in the history of Rokugan. Kakita founded the Crane technique of duelling, while Mirumoto Hojatsu, the adopted son of Mirumoto, was the inheritor of his foster father's two-sword style after the Thunder's death in the Shadowlands. The constant arguments over which style was the superior technique could only be resolved by the two undisputed masters of the rival schools facing each other.

The first duel only fueled the debate. The Emperor himself asked the two masters to duel on his 40th birthday to settle it. Kakita and Hojatsu complied and assumed their stances. They stood completely still as they waited, focusing on the other's next move. The duel ended without conclusion. They walked away from the field with a respectful bow for the other. The two duelists were so evenly matched, neither could make his move without perishing on his opponent's blade.

Many years later, the opportunity for a second duel arrived. Mirumoto Hojatsu's biggest weakness was his temper. He heard that Kakita was leading a Crane army toward the Dragon Lands to settle a territorial dispute between the Mirumoto and the Phoenix. This was well within Kakita's rights as the Emerald Champion, but Hojatsu saw it as an insult to his honor. He rode out to meet the Crane with only his personal guard. Kakita and Hojatsu met on the battlefield, and Hojatsu called the *iaijutsu* master out for a duel.

They focused, but this duel was no repeat of the first. Hojatsu leapt into action, drawing his katana with lightning speed. Kakita followed only a moment after with his own single strike. Hojatsu's blade penetrated Kakita's body and mortally wounded him. Kakita's attack hit the mark and Hojatsu fell, his throat cut in half. Kakita knew that Hojatsu's attack was spilling his life's blood across the field. To honor his fallen opponent, the Crane took Hojatsu's katana and took his own life.

Ironically, the duel did little to settle the debate. The Crane argue that Kakita's attack declared him the winner, since it killed Hojatsu in one blow. The Dragon argue that Hojatsu's strike was no less fatal, as Kakita would not have walked away from the duel. The duel is often the center of debate and is depicted in hundreds of plays and poems.

Dragon shugenja have never enjoyed competitions as much the rest of the Clan. When they were still a part of the Dragon Clan, the Agasha preferred tests of knowledge and elemental dexterity than *taryu-jiai*. They valued strength of mind over the strength of the shugenja's connection with the elements. When the Agasha held the rare tournament, they would test grasp of facts. The contestants would have to cite the number of ingredients needed to craft a certain potion or how to form a ward. Though victory was important in these tournaments, the atmosphere of the events was always relaxed.

The new Dragon shugenja Family is definitely more competitive than its predecessor. They value duels of *taryu-jiai* and bouts of *kenjutsu* equally. The Tamori hold tournaments regularly at Shiro Tamori, drawing visitors from all across the Empire. Many of the older tournaments have fallen by the wayside to support the Tamori philosophy.

The Kitsuki Family serves as the courtiers and magistrates of the Clan. In many ways, they are the face that greets the other Great Clans. They represent the Dragon in the outer world, working to further the Clan's goals. The Kitsuki host many competitions that reflect the general interests of the other Clans' courtiers. Everything from *kemari* to *sadane* is tested in the Kitsuki Lands, if only to keep them in practice for the bigger competitions in the other Clans' lands. However, the courtier Family's true love is Kitsuki's Method, a style of investigation that takes physical evidence into account over testimony. At Shiro Kitsuki, the Family holds a unique competition that is tailored to test this very procedure. A section of the city is closed off, and a single clue rests somewhere in the premises. All the Kitsuki involved in the competition must enter at the same time and retrieve the clue. The first to find the clue and properly explain its relevance to the judges wins the contest.

An important aspect of all the members of the Dragon Clan is their connection to the ethereal facts of life. Many view the Three Orders as eccentricities of the Dragon Clan. The monks indulge themselves with many forms of unarmed combat, riddles to test the mind and puzzle the outsider, and contests that pit the monks against the forces of nature. Togashi martial arts tournaments sometimes are *taikai* where the contestants must exhibit their form in front of judges. More frequently, the Togashi tournaments involve melees between two fighters until only one is left standing.

Contests of the mind are no less popular with the Three Orders. When the monks try to best the other with riddles, they take turns engaging each other with imagery and words. One starts off the discussion with an image or theme. Another participant continues the game, twisting the statement or image into a riddle. The next person is to answer the question and change the theme further. A player must drop out of the game if he cannot continue the chain. The contest ends with one player, or on occasion two equally brilliant monks.

The last variety of monk competition is a test to see if a person can triumph against the harsh realities of the elements. This trial has no name. Once a year or every few years, the *ise zumi* simply organize these excursions into the harshest areas of the mountains. Those involved in the contest of survival choose the duration of the trial. They enter the chosen area simultaneously. Without the aid of anyone around him, each contestant lives in the wilderness for as long as he can. Those that help proctor the event wait at the edge of the tournament area and aid those who cannot survive alone. Those who can stay inside until the end of the desired time successfully finish the trial and win. These trials have no single victor; the achievement of outlasting the duration is considered proof of one's worth.

Dragon Institutions

Dragon institutions are functional and simple as a rule. They teach the Dragon exactly what they need to know to make them the best samurai they can be. As a part of the curriculum, the students learn about art, philosophy, and other skills that could come in handy during competitions with samurai from other Great Clans. The Tamori are well suited for duels of taryu-jiai, but they have no school to nurture that skill. It speaks to the strength of the Dragon that their samurai stay so competitive in these contests with no special training.

Dojo of the Perfect Word

The Kitsuki serve as the magistrates and courtiers of the Dragon Clan. They play a crucial role as the reclusive Clan's connection to the outside world. To meet this end, they must understand the boundaries and rules of Rokugani high culture. The Mirumoto, Hitomi, and Tamori Families know most of the rules of the court but choose not to follow the norm. The Kitsuki choose to engulf themselves in this world so that their Clan may continue to function in their seclusion.

Two centuries ago, a shugenja named Agasha Kitsuki developed a method of investigation that relied on a mixture of intelligence, insight and awareness to uncover the truth. When he was granted the honor of a Family name of his own, he set out to teach this style to any of those willing to learn. He founded the Dojo of the First Glance at Shiro Kitsuki and perfected his technique of ichi-miru. The new investigative styles were innovative but strange. Though they did not hold legal weight outside of the Dragon Lands, the Kitsuki found their niche as servants of the law in the mountains. Kitsuki's Method proved to be more reliable than the system of gathering testimony from witnesses and interested parties. Bandits, smugglers, and other criminals soon found themselves at the magistrate's mercy, clutched in the inexorable hands of justice.

However, it soon became apparent that law enforcement would not be the entire scope of the Kitsuki's duties. Before the formation of the Kitsuki, the Mirumoto Family served as the diplomatic front for the rest of the Clan. The founder of the Family reasoned that his new method could be utilized efficiently at court. Kitsuki adapted his techniques for court with the aid of those who had sworn into his service. His courtiers could use their powers of perception to ferret out falsehoods and assess the situation. The Kitsuki replaced the Mirumoto as the diplomats and ambassadors of the Dragon Clan.



As the Kitsuki ventured into the world of Rokugan's elite, they soon realized that their new techniques were not welcome at court. They bypassed too many niceties and customs developed over the centuries. They picked up conventional techniques and ideas along with the new Kitsuki philosophies to fit in with the rest of Rokugan. Determined to gain an edge over their opponents, the Kitsuki closely scrutinized the various sorts of byplay between courtiers. Once they dissected the intricacies of each form of political maneuver, the sensei of the schools spread this knowledge among the students as a vital section of the curriculum.

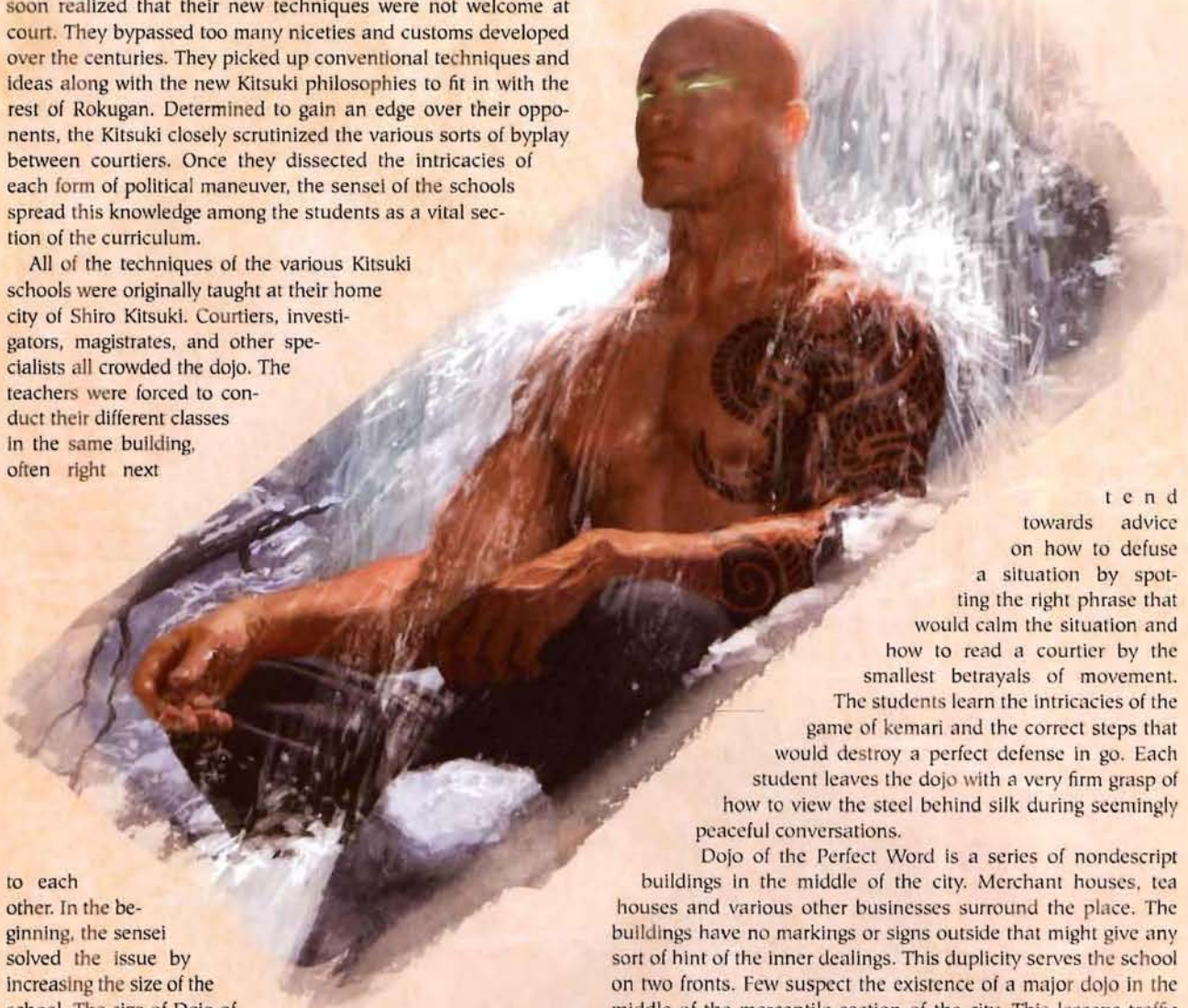
All of the techniques of the various Kitsuki schools were originally taught at their home city of Shiro Kitsuki. Courtiers, investigators, magistrates, and other specialists all crowded the dojo. The teachers were forced to conduct their different classes in the same building, often right next

to each other. In the beginning, the sensei solved the issue by increasing the size of the school. The size of Dojo of the First Glance rapidly grew over the years until it encompassed over a dozen buildings in the heart of Shiro Kitsuki.

50 years before the Second Day of Thunder, the Kitsuki decided to shift the workload assigned to their only school by creating a second dojo. They formed the Dojo of the Perfect Word at Kyuden Tonbo, the home of the Dragonfly Clan, to strengthen diplomatic ties between the two Clans. The investigatory and law schools remained at Shiro Kitsuki. The rest of the disciplines moved to the new location.

The dojo consists of a series of small buildings along the border between the Dragon and Dragonfly Lands. Any Dragonfly has open access to all parts of the school and their bushi may attend the schools at the location with little difficulty. The sensei of the school teach Kitsuki's Method, or *ichi-maru*, to all the students, regardless of whether or not they follow the path of the courtier or the path of the magistrate.

The Perfect Word is the only facility that trains the Dragon in the art of negotiation. Every technique taught at the dojo focuses on the power of interaction with others. The lessons at the Perfect Word



tend towards advice on how to defuse a situation by spotting the right phrase that would calm the situation and how to read a courtier by the smallest betrayals of movement. The students learn the intricacies of the game of kemari and the correct steps that would destroy a perfect defense in go. Each student leaves the dojo with a very firm grasp of how to view the steel behind silk during seemingly peaceful conversations.

Dojo of the Perfect Word is a series of nondescript buildings in the middle of the city. Merchant houses, tea houses and various other businesses surround the place. The buildings have no markings or signs outside that might give any sort of hint of the inner dealings. This duplicity serves the school on two fronts. Few suspect the existence of a major dojo in the middle of the mercantile section of the city. This lessens traffic in and around the dojo and baffles potential enemies. Second, those who are asked to attend the dojo are only given vague instructions on how to find it. Those who have legitimate business must find their own ways to reach their destination. The sensei of the dojo watch them from the moment they step into Kyuden Tonbo. They record what methods they use to find the place. This close, but relatively modest surveillance is extremely important to the Kitsuki, as it enables them to determine the true nature of those who come to the dojo.

The current sensei of Dojo of the Perfect Word is Kitsuki Bashin. Bashin earned his position very early in his career and was the youngest master sensei among all the major dojo in the Empire. He has led Dojo of the Perfect Word for nearly half of its history and has now mastered all of the techniques taught there. He prefers to foster relatively close relationships with his students as part of his teaching strategy. He learns the details of his students' lives so that they are more than simply names to him. Though he is weighed down by many duties, he takes the time to personally instruct many of his students.

Bashin leaves the dojo every other year to attend Winter Court and several other courts of the Great Clans. He feels that he needs up-to-date knowledge of the intricacies of court to instruct his students. During his frequent absences, his senior sensei Kitsuki Jomasu leads the school with an iron fist. Though Jomasu has mastered all of the techniques offered at the Perfect Word, he does not believe in his own abilities. He is plagued by his insecurities and becomes anxious while in the position of authority, overreacting to perceived challenges as a result. Bashin hopes that Jomasu will overcome this defect, but is ready to appoint another as his senior subordinate if he cannot.

Kitsuki Hideo and Bayushi Shen

Kitsuki Hideo was one of the first to swear his allegiance to the Kitsuki way. He served as the Dragon diplomat to the Crab Lands as Mirumoto Hideo before he swore fealty to the Kitsuki. He eagerly learned the new styles and adapted them to his own experiences at court. When Kitsuki decided to adapt his technique to the world of the court, he relied heavily on Hideo's expertise.

Soon after the creation of the Kitsuki courtier techniques, Hideo attended the Winter Court and Kyuden Bayushi as one of the Dragon's representatives. He helped test the new skills in the environment and found them satisfactory. However, his detached experiments were interrupted when Bayushi Shen challenged him to a game of shogi. Due to Shen's skillful mastery of the conversation between the two, Hideo could not gracefully deny the challenge.

Shen was one of the greatest shogi players of his generation. He had lost only a handful of games over the course of a few decades of service. He was one of the most respected courtiers in the Empire, perhaps only below the Imperial Chancellor himself. Shen began the match, wary of Hideo's hidden skills but confident in the inevitable victory. He began his customary psychological assault, teasing Hideo as soon as he finished his first turn.

Hideo completely ignored Shen's mental attack, only responding civilly as if he could not understand the Scorpion's jibes. He carefully orchestrated each move, keeping his cool and setting his own pace. He saw Shen's plans as soon as he set them in motion and countered them. Shen found Hideo's style unnerving himself, as none of his moves seemed to make a difference on the board. He played more recklessly than he had in years to get past the Dragon's powerful defense. He did not notice as Hideo slowly made his own attack. In three sudden moves, Hideo captured Shen's king.

Those outside the Dragon Clan remember this game as a demonstration of Dragon tenacity. The mysterious Clan is very proficient in these matters, though it may seem like they do not understand the rules of the rest of the Empire.

The Soul of the Dragon Dojo

The Soul of the Dragon Dojo has a long and prestigious history and has produced some of the best duelists from the Dragon Clan. The dojo was founded in the 1st Century by the students of Mirumoto Hojatsu himself. Schooled deep in the middle of the Dragon mountains, the students of the dojo have performed great acts, become legendary heroes, and have redefined kenjutsu as it was practiced several times over the centuries. Despite the dojo's famous alumni, few people outside of the school know it even exists.

Hojatsu's students decided that though Mirumoto and his adopted son were brilliant swordsmen and pioneers of a new style of kenjutsu, much of their prowess came from their unique personal strengths. Mirumoto created the style and Hojatsu perfected it, but Hojatsu's students vowed that they would develop it to its full potential as a style that could be taught to others. Hojatsu's students were the most gifted of their generations. They held important positions throughout the Dragon Lands. Some were generals, some were teachers, and some were ambassadors to the other Clans. They gathered together and approached Togashi for permission to create Hojatsu's Legacy. They wanted to create an elite school that used its secrecy to guard their development from potential enemies. Togashi agreed and gave the leaders the directions on the perfect location for a secluded dojo. Hojatsu's students built the dojo themselves, and The Soul of the Dragon was born.

Just as the Lion Clan's tradition of military leadership is an accumulation of commentaries and additions to Akodo's seminal tract, *Leadership*, that built up over the centuries, The Soul of the Dragon Dojo's tradition of instruction in kenjutsu is the culmination of many of the different theories and styles developed there over the years. Each student and teacher that passes through Soul of the Dragon's doors has subtly added to the core lessons of the school. The teachers and students work together to find new and unique improvements to the dual-wield technique. Because of the nature of the school, the students are encouraged to question everything and challenge anything they believe is wrong. Quite unusual among Rokugani dojo, the sensei and students stand on equal footing, and inside the walls of the school no one holds rank over anyone else. Strong bonds of respect and friendship connect everyone and they form a sense of brotherhood through their actions.

The master sensei of the school generally stays at the secluded dojo every day to oversee the teaching activities. The other teachers and students keep a very loose schedule that shifts to accommodate their individual duties. Each student generally attends the school five days out of the month.

The Soul of the Dragon dojo is located only a few miles from Shiro Mirumoto. A secluded trail leads to the buildings, and very few outsiders have stumbled onto the premises. Even the Scorpion master spies have yet to discover the existence of this dojo. It is a small, antique building that has been rebuilt several times over the centuries. Despite the fact that only Hojatsu's Legacy students worked on its construction, it is hardy, sturdy, and utilitarian. It is big enough to comfortably house a few dozen occupants at any one time and has a sizable training hall. The training hall is well furnished with everything the school could possibly use in the fulfillment of its mission. Still, the bushi train outside on most days to help strengthen their ties with the kami.

The current master sensei of the school, Mirumoto Okita, has held the position for over a decade. After his gempukku, he served as a magistrate in Heibasu. He watched over the lands and the city with care and continued to hone his technique on his own. He was surprised and honored when his teacher nominated him to enter The Soul of the Dragon. He attended the school every week for years and looked constantly for different ways to improve his form. He befriended most everyone there, student and sensei alike. Even so, Okita was shocked when he was offered the position of master sensei. He was surprised even more when Togashi Satsu visited him the very next day, relieving him of his duties at Heibasu so that he could direct all his energy towards nurturing The Soul of the Dragon.

Okita believes in the future of the school. He loves every student and teacher who walks through the dojo's doors and knows each of them personally. He takes the time and listens to each suggestion patiently. He smiles frequently and spices the days with his light sarcasm and wry laughter. His eagerness for the project simply makes everyone involved work harder in every way. He keeps up with the training along with the other students and his kenjutsu is a work of beauty. It is evident to everyone that The Soul of the Dragon Dojo lies in capable hands.

Temple of the Tranquil Fire

Despite being a small Family compared to the Kitsuki, the Tamori have numerous dojo that dot the Dragon mountains. Each of these schools emphasizes a different strength of the Tamori shugenja. The oldest of the dojo, Mountain Home Dojo,

was created by the Agasha while they were still a part of the Dragon Clan. Mountain Home Dojo focuses on alchemy, the practice of mixing herbs and chemicals to create strange, magical effects. This remains the main dojo of the Tamori, and every Tamori shugenja considers this knowledge a part of his repertoire.

The Dragon's Heart Dojo is no less ancient. The Agasha were the first to develop the folded metal technique that is used for crafting katana today, and so they founded the dojo to pass on this ancient tradition of weaponsmithing. Unlike the Kaiu Engineering School and the Kaiu Forge, the Dragon's Heart Dojo infuses magic in all of their creations. The Twin Sister Blades that many Mirumoto wield are created by the Tamori from the forges at the Dragon's Heart Dojo.

Temple of the Tranquil Fire represents the last of the three Tamori trains of thought. Temple of the Tranquil Fire is the newest dojo, as it was created by the Tamori after the War of Spirits. In many ways, it is a representation of exactly how far the Tamori have evolved since the Agasha separated from the Dragon Clan. The Dragon shugenja who attend this dojo take pride in following a path that no Agasha has ever followed.

It became clear early on that the Tamori would contribute a different personality and set of qualities to the Dragon than did the Agasha. The Family name was founded at the end of the War of Spirits as one of Hantei XVI's demands upon Toturi I's reign. Agasha Tamori was branded a traitor and marked for death for his crimes during the War of Spirits, but he escaped his fate and disappeared from the face of the earth. Thus the founder of the Tamori Family is considered to be Tamori's daughter Shaitung.



Shaitung is a fierce woman with deep range of emotions. She saw the failure of her father as that of her entire family. To cleanse this shame, she vowed that unlike their predecessors, the Tamori would have a larger role in the Dragon armies. The Agasha had always served on the sidelines, healing the wounded and creating charms that would aid the Mirumoto in combat. The Tamori would wade into the thick of battle alongside their Mirumoto brethren. She received the permission of Togashi Hoshi and began developing her Family with this in mind.

Temple of the Tranquil Fire is a small shrine built on the edge of a cliff a few hours' travel from Shiro Tamori. The building was originally created by the Agasha to honor the tumultuous kami of the mountain. The trails that lead to the school are hidden and rarely used, and only its students frequently travel them. The few non-Dragon who come to this location are unsettled by its jagged and perilous appearance. Despite the implied violence of the landscape, the buildings have remained untouched through landslides and eruptions from the Wrath of the Kami volcano. Whether that is a testament to the well placed location of the site or to the prayers said to the kami is a point of debate for many Dragon scholars. The sensei and students of the school live on temple grounds and work as groundskeepers as part of their duties. They clean the area, tend to the shrine and pray to the kami of the mountain with the same care they take with their lessons.

Tamori Shaitung created and refined the Tamori Yamabushi School as the first task of the new dojo. She served as the first sensei of the school and invited several Mirumoto veterans to help shape up the martial aspect of the Yamabushi. Each student of Temple of the Tranquil Fire is subject to a varied education. On any given day, he is called to practice his sword work with Mirumoto bushi. He must also practice the elemental powers inherent in him so that he may call the kami to him in chaotic circumstances. Finally, he must learn to focus the power of the mountain. Only by tapping into the earth kami can the Yamabushi reach his full potential as a shugenja.

The sensei of the school are a strange mix of battle hardened samurai, fierce shugenja, and tranquil monks. Shaitung believed that the Tamori should be exposed to all the strengths of the Dragon Clan to be fully effective. The teachers are as varied in temperament and style as their vocations. The bushi of the school tend to be very focused and specific about their lessons. The shugenja hold a similar attitude. Speech with the kami is a more personal matter, and cannot be viewed as as simple as performing a kata. Regardless, the shugenja hold a more practical view of conversation with the kami than most other shugenja schools. The shugenja teach both direct attack battle spells and spells to empower the rest of the army. As part of Shaitung's vigilance against repeating her father's failures, the Yamabushi are well taught in techniques, knowledge, and spells specifically meant to combat the power and influence of the Shadowlands. Finally, the students learn how to handle and use mitsugusuri.

The monk sensei of the school provide spiritual guidance to the hard-working Yamabushi. The monks are calmer than the other teachers and less strict in their studies. They take their duties toward the Dragon Clan no less seriously, but they recognize the importance of some peace in the heart of the chaos of training for war. The monks help the Yamabushi learn focus, and help the shugenja learn to keep their calm even in the heat of battle. The Yamabushi can only be an asset if they remember to use all the most advantageous spells in the right situations. That would be hard to do if a Yamabushi loses his composure and charges into the thickest of fighting.

A present, Tamori Fuyumi leads Temple of the Tranquil Fire with a firm hand. Though she is young, her strength of character and her affinity with the kami is undeniable. She believes that the Yamabushi are the future of the Tamori Family. As such, she takes her work very seriously. She makes sure that all of the sensei of the school are performing their duties. She is very strict with the students and assigns punishments at the slightest provocation. Some view her tactics with worry and call her administration of the school overzealous. Fuyumi's only response is that she is simply doing whatever she needs to preserve the strength of the school.

Isawa Taeruko and Tamori Shaitung

Tamori Shaitung and Isawa Taeruko loathed each other since the end of the War of Spirits. Shaitung's father was responsible for the death of Taeruko's daughter during the war. Because of her association with the traitor, Taeruko disliked the new Daimyo. After the two exchanged heated words at a Winter Court, the dislike turned into mutual hatred.

As two powerful figures in the the Dragon and the Phoenix Clans (respectively), however, they could not simply give in to their desires and fight each other. An actual fight between the two would spell a war between the two Clans with countless lives lost for the sake of their personal grudge. The two powerful shugenja simply held in their emotions, only unleashing on the other when they met at court.

Finally, the two met at a Winter Court and held a match of taryu-jiai to help pass the time away. They agreed to use elemental avatars as proxies for their duel. Both knew that they could vent their frustrations without shedding the other's blood and causing a war between their Clans. Taeruko created a golem of earth as her representative, and Shaitung chose a spirit of fire.

The spirit engulfed Taeruko's golem with blistering dancing flames. The golem ignored the inferno and started its inexorable march toward the spirit. Shaitung made her champion dance around Taeruko's slow movement, blasting it with flames. Suddenly, the golem glided through the ground so fast that it seemed like it teleported through the earth. It seized the spirit and crushed it against the ground.

The bystanders were not surprised by the outcome of the duel. After all, Taeruko was an Elemental Master and the strongest Earth shugenja in the empire, and Shaitung was simply a girl. After the duel, Shaitung vowed to strengthen her powers and overcome her enemy. On the other hand, Taeruko walked away from the duel underestimating her enemy's strengths, dismissing them as negligent. Her false estimates of Shaitung's power only made her underestimate the Tamori Daimyo when they met again on the battlefield.

Togashi Testing Grounds

The monks of the Dragon Clan have no formal dojo to speak of. By the very nature of the families, most of the monks are self-taught, for no man can walk the path of another in his quest for Enlightenment. The Hitomi, Togashi, and Hoshi mostly spend their days scattered in monasteries across the Dragon Lands or at the High House of Light itself.

This is not to say that no formal training exists at all for the mystical monks. The tattooed warriors train together to hone their physical and mental selves. Though it is not required of them, many kikage zumi and ise zumi serve in the Dragon armies, dropping enemies with their techniques. They hold classes in the middle of the High House of Light, practicing their martial arts and meditating together.

The Three Orders also enjoy pitting their bodies against the forces of nature. They created a game to test how long a person could live with no aid in the harshest areas of the mountains. The game has no name, but it is played once a year. Though this test may occur at any location within the Dragon Lands, the most challenging yet most popular area is the Togashi Testing Grounds.

The Togashi Testing Grounds can be found in the mountains behind the High House of Light. It is the most dangerous environment north of the Shadowlands, and many guards surround the area to make sure no hapless traveler accidentally crosses through these lands. It encompasses several square miles of traps ready to destroy foolish adventurers. The sheer cliffs spell certain death for anyone who veers off the wrong path. The weather is freezing at all times, even in the middle of summer. The smallest move can set off an avalanche that could easily become a grave. Of course, the terrain does not pose the only dangers. Ferocious predators prowl through the area, searching for suitable prey. Some areas seem supernaturally haunted, as if the land itself seeks to confuse and kill the monks.

Because it consists of this expanse of mountainous wilderness, the Togashi Testing Grounds is the largest dojo in the Empire. Though there are no buildings for the attendees, the Testing Grounds were specifically formed to serve as a furnace to forge the monks. Togashi himself altered the spirits in the area so that they would act more chaotic than normal. Only the most powerful tattooed men are allowed into the area, for a novice might easily make a mistake and never exit the grounds. Every week, the master sensei of the area carefully searches the Testing Grounds to make sure no one was left helpless inside the lands.

The most veteran ise zumi guide the newer monks through the grounds. They teach the neophytes what dangers to avoid, how to find and survive on the plants that grow here, and how to spot the pitfalls surround his every move. Most importantly, the older monks help the new monks master the newfound power that surges from his tattoos. Those who successfully finish a trip into the Togashi Testing Grounds are rewarded with a permanent non-magical tattoo. The dragon-scale tattoo is a clear sign to all Dragon of the capabilities of the bearer.

The monks that enter the Testing Grounds do so in two different ways. The majority of excursions into the cursed lands occur in groups of five to ten. These generally consist of one or two veteran monks leading the newer ones through a crash course on what to expect. The rest of the trips are taken by experienced

tattooed monks that enter alone. They take nothing with them except their clothes, and they leave the grounds only when they feel that they have reached the limits of their skill and capacity. The average trip lasts less than a week.

Since the Togashi Testing Grounds are not a true school, there are no assigned sensei. Each monk willing to guide their brethren into the lands and help fend off the wild can be considered a teacher of the dojo. However, everyone who enters the grounds knows of Hitomi Hyotaru, the unofficial master of the Testing Grounds. Hyotaru was one of the first monks to take the Hitomi name after the Second Day of Thunder. He served Hitomi loyally, even when he did not believe her orders righteous. Later, when he realized the true nature of his actions, he felt utter despair. He banished himself into the Togashi Testing Grounds to find a quick death. Instead, he survived for over two decades and learned the land better than everyone else. Now he prowls the grounds like one of the predators, except that he helps anyone who requires aid. He speaks very little, as if he has forgotten how and must work to remember. Even with his antisocial nature, however, he will not let any student fall to nature's forces while within his grasp.

Dragon Sensei

The sensei of the Dragon Clan are, as a general rule, driven by ferocious loyalty to their Clan and an intense focus on achieving perfection of will and technique. They are not always the easiest of social companions, and there are those who find their strength of purpose unsettling. But the Dragon do not choose their sensei to win popularity; they choose them to train their samurai to defend both Clan and Empire in a dangerous world.

TAMORI FUYUMI, SENSEI OF THE TRANQUIL FIRE

Air: 3	Earth: 7	Fire: 4	Water: 2	Void: 4
Reflexes: 4			Strength: 3	
Honor: 2.3		Status: 5.3		Glory: 4.5

SCHOOL/RANK: Tamori Shugenja 5/Tamori Yamabushi

ADVANTAGES: Blessing of the Elements (Fire), Daredevil

DISADVANTAGES: Brash, Contrary

KATA: Spirits and Steel

SPELLS: Sense, Commune, Summon, Counterspell, Armor of the Emperor, Benevolent Protection of Shinsei, Biting Steel, Breath of the Fire Dragon, By the Light of Lady Moon, Death of Earth, Earth's Touch, The Eye Shall not See, Force of Will, Kami's Strength, Katana of Fire, Path to Inner Peace, Prison of Earth, Tetsubo of Earth, Way of Deception

SKILLS: Athletics 2, Courtier 4, Defense 6, Divination 2, Etiquette (Sincerity) 4, Heavy Weapons 3, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation (Notice) 7, Kenjutsu (Katana, Wakizashi) 6, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 3, Lore: Bushido 4, Medicine (Wound Treatment) 5, Meditation 4, Theology 5

Fuyumi is the youngest shugenja ever to hold the position of master sensei of Temple of the Tranquil Fire. But it seems that she was born to the role. A tragedy facilitated Fuyumi's appointment as the Headmaster of the dojo, and she received no instruction in her job. She rose to the occasion and is leading the school with admirable skill.

Fuyumi was born in Shiro Kitsuki as the daughter of prestigious investigators. Her father served as an Emerald Magistrate and traveled all across the Empire. Her mother served as a guard within the castle. She was a playful girl who enjoyed outdoor games with her friends. She was always happy, even during the tumultuous War of Spirits. Those who saw her knew that she would focus her energy in the Mirumoto Bushi School. She believed that her destiny lay within the front lines on the battlefield. But her dreams were dashed one day when the sensei of the Tamori Shugenja School came to unleash her potential to speak to the kami.

Fuyumi was not a good student. She hated being stuck indoors in libraries, forced to work on her calligraphy when all she wished to do was play with wooden swords like her peers. She was sullen and silent throughout most of her school days. She spoke no words during her gempukku, even as the kami danced at her every gesture. It was clear to everyone that though she had not enjoyed her studies, she had paid attention to her lessons. On her gempukku, she chose a martial name to reflect her fierce nature.

Her teachers bowed to the inevitable. When they felt that her elemental connection had sufficiently progressed, they allowed her to become a Yamabushi. Fuyumi was finally happy and leapt into her studies. At the Tranquil Fire she nurtured her connection with the kami and trained her body to be ready for war. When it

came in the form of a war against the Phoenix, she leapt at the chance to prove herself. She wielded her blades alongside veteran bushi twice her age. She loved every moment of it.

Though she would have enjoyed nothing more than to stay in the Dragon army, Fuyumi was dismayed to hear that the master sensei of the school was murdered by an assassin. The slain sensei had specified this fiery woman as his successor, since she was the best student of the Yamabushi in recent memory. It was an unorthodox choice, since it bypassed several senior sensei of the school. However, no one disagreed with it, as her natural affinity for the Tamori style of magic was undeniable. Though Fuyumi harbored some regret at missing the heat of battle, she returned to the Temple and became the master sensei of the school. She learned from the other sensei exactly what her duties entailed and began her life's work shaping others similar to her spirit.

Fuyumi pays no special attention to her appearance, but it is clear that she is an exceptionally beautiful woman. Earth and Fire kami love her, and flock to her wherever she goes. To those who can see the kami, her form always seems bright and luminous. Her emotions rage just under her skin and she expresses more emotions than someone of her station should. She is quick to anger but it passes just as quickly. Though she may mock her students or put them on the spotlight, she is fair and loves all of her students.



MIRUMOTO KONDO, IRON MOUNTAIN DOJO SENSEI

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 5	Water: 3	Void: 5
Reflexes: 5		Strength: 4		
Honor: 4.6		Status: 3.5		Glory: 2.7

SCHOOL/RANK: Mirumoto Swordmaster 5/Hojatsu's Legacy 1

ADVANTAGES: Ambidextrous, Bishamon's Blessing

DISADVANTAGES: Idealistic, Permanent Wound

KATA: Borrow the Next Breath, The Empire Rests on its Edge, Standing on the Heavens, Tapping the Void, The World is Empty

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Craft: Weaponsmith 3, Defense 7, Etiquette (Sincerity) 4, Games: Go 4, Iaijutsu 3, Instruction (Mirumoto Swordmaster) 2, Investigation (Notice) 4, Jujutsu 3, Kenjutsu (Katana, Wakizashi) 8, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 5, Lore: Bushido 4, Meditation 4

Kondo is an old veteran who has served in the Dragon armies for decades of continuous war. He stood at the front lines in the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the battles of the War of Spirits, the war against the Phoenix Clan, and the Blood Hunt. His loyalty to the Dragon Clan cannot be measured, and his utter belief in the righteousness of the Clan's cause drives his every move.

Kondo was a precocious child. He was always the center of attention whenever he met his peers. When alone he was able to focus all of his attention on any one thing. When he was intrigued by the sound of the wind as it swirled around the face of the mountain, he stood motionless for three hours and listened to the sound. When his teachers taught him meditation and how to clear his mind of other worldly matters, he was able to do it without any difficulties. This ability aided him in training as a duelist.

His teachers were amazed by his progress and watched him closely as he grew up. They selected him as one of the Dragon competitors at the prestigious Topaz Championship. Though he did not win the tournament, he performed well and caught the eye of many personages of the Empire. A year later, he was given the opportunity to join the Imperial Legions. He accepted the duty with pride. It was a chaotic time, as Emperor Toturi I had suddenly disappeared and the Empire was left in disorder, and there was no shortage of business that needed the Legions' attention. Kondo's stint in the Legions only increased his love of the Dragon and his faith in bushido. He swore an oath to himself to let the samurai code guide every action of his life. He would become a living testament of honor.

After he returned to the Dragon Lands, the sensei of the Soul of the Dragon Dojo secretly approached him. He asked the young samurai to train with Hojatsu's Legacy, the elite school whose aim is to evolve the dual-wield style. Kondo accepted and took to his new training with eagerness. He proved a good addition to the school; his insights into Mirumoto's technique were invaluable to the others, and helped adapt the style even further toward perfection.

When the time came for battle once again, Kondo joined the Dragon army without hesitation. He marched along with the rest of his Clan to Oblivion's Gate to save his ancestors, and fought victoriously against the Phoenix and the Lion. He was caught in the open during Tsuchiban's Rain of Blood, but he stood steadfast. He could not be corrupted by the promises of dishonorable power. He was ecstatic when the Mirumoto were given the duty

of clearing out the Bloodspeakers from the Empire and threw himself into the task without restraint. One of the cultists slit him from hip to chest during one of the raids, and Kondo survived only because of the quick reflexes of Tamori Watoshu. Unfortunately, the blade that cut him was cursed by dark magic, and the severity of the wound forced him to retire from military service.

Determined to continue to serve his Clan, Kondo took a position as a sensei in the most prestigious dojo teaching the Mirumoto sword style, Iron Mountain Dojo. He performs the job with personal humility, but pride in his Clan and School. Even with his new vocation, Kondo continues to attend The Soul of the Dragon Dojo once every few weeks. He is delighted by the opportunity to perfect his dueling skill, and he leaps into his training with relish. He spends his free time meditating or practicing his own techniques. He believes hours of practice are better for bushi than anything else, and he advocates this theory to all the students under his care.

Kondo is tall and well muscled, reflecting countless hours of training in the harsh mountains near Shiro Mirumoto. His wound is an ugly cut that sprawls across his entire chest, but he bares it to all with pride. He sees the wound as a visible mark of his service to the Empire. His voice fills every room he enters, and his eyes sparkle as if he is enjoying a secret joke about the rest of the room. He is constantly wearied by his wound, as it causes him discomfort at his every move. Still, he will not let the pain defeat him. He tries to ignore it and continues to carry on as if his life has not changed in any fashion. Though this attitude brings trouble to him on occasion, he will not settle for any less than the best effort from himself and his students.

Kondo will not disclose the existence of The Soul of the Dragon Dojo to any who should not be privy to that information. Though he will do his best to guide any young bushi who requires his aid, he will not violate the vows of secrecy that bind him to the brotherhood of Hojatsu's Legacy.

New Mechanics

Dragon Dueling Mechanics

Ise zumi survival: The ise zumi have a peculiar world view, and this is reflected in their game of endurance. The Dragon mountains are a wild and untamed land, and the ise zumi make sport of disappearing into the wild. Though no point value is tallied and no ise zumi would condemn another for failing this test, those involved put their all into each competition. The competition is a milder version of the trials the monks must face in the Togashi Testing Grounds, located near the High House of Light. Some of those who pass through those lands become strangely enamored with the experience, and participate in the survival contests to emulate it.

Each contestant begins at the same starting point. Everyone agrees on a portion of the mountain to serve as the test area, using visible landmarks to define the boundaries. Each contestant must survive in the wild for the duration of the contest without aid from any other contestant. He can bring nothing into the contest area except the clothes on his back. He is allowed to do anything inside the contest area to survive. Though deliberate sabotage of other contestants is against the spirit of the competition, some unscrupulous competitors have done so in the past. If a competitor feels that he can no longer continue, he simply exits the test area. Those who can last through the duration of the contest are all considered the winners. Most of these contests last no longer than a few days, though several have been known to last a few weeks.

There is a simple way to resolve one of these contests, and a complex way. The simple way entails having each contestant make a Hunting (Survival) Skill Roll against a TN of 10 to survive the first day, then once per day thereafter for the duration of the test. The daily TN increases by 2 each day until the end of the first week, after which it increased by 1 per day. The contestants who have not failed a single Skill Roll have endured until the end of the competition, and have won.

The complex way to resolve a survival contest is to roleplay it out, perhaps as if it was an adventure in and of itself.

Kitsuki's Method contests: This test of investigative and deductive skill may be resolved by having each contestant make an Investigation Skill Roll (any emphasis may be used) against a TN determined by the GM. The contestant who succeeds by the largest margin wins the competition. If no contestant makes a successful Skill Roll, then there is no winner. The contest could also be roleplayed.

Three Orders riddle contests: To resolve this competition of wits, have the contestants take turns making a Storytelling or Games: Sadane (though it is not sadane, the mechanics of the competition are reasonably similar) Skill Roll against a TN of 15. Whoever fails must drop out of the competition. The last contestant remaining wins.

New Advanced School: Hojatsu's Legacy (Bushi)

The Dragon Clan are well known as one of the two pillars of orthodox Rokugani dueling practice. Since the dawn of the Empire, the Crane and Dragon have competed endlessly to prove whose technique is the superior. Even a duel between Kakita and Mirumo Hojatsu, the two samurai who best defined the different styles, did little to end the dispute. Though the recent efforts of Kakita Kaiten and Mirumoto Uso helped bridge a lot of the distance, enmity and competition will always exist between the two schools of thought.

The Crane's elite order of duelists is the famous Kenshinzen, and their reputation inspires both fear and awe throughout the Empire. Hojatsu's Legacy, the elite of the Dragon's duelists, does not have as large a reputation. In fact, very few people in the Empire even realize that Hojatsu's Legacy is a separate School from the main Mirumoto Bushi School. The students of Hojatsu's Legacy do nothing to announce their School, and only the most observant recognize the very subtle differences in the stance of a Hojatsu's Legacy duelist from that of a Mirumoto School duelist.

Hojatsu's Legacy is a secret advanced school that was founded by the students of Mirumoto Hojatsu in the early days of the Empire. After Hojatsu's death in his duel against Kakita, his students decided to reevaluate the techniques their sensei had used and look for ways to improve them. Though they retained their positions in the Dragon armies and continued to live in their homes as usual, the students also met at a small dojo deep in the mountains. No trail led to their secret dojo and few ever found out about their gatherings. Together, they trained and refined the techniques their sensei had left them. Over time, they developed subtle differences that build upon the basics established by the Mirumoto dueling style.

Hojatsu's Legacy is an ever evolving school. There are never more than a handful of students training at any time, and the sensei of the school humbly state that they are always learning along with the students. The sensei of Hojatsu's Legacy always encourage their students to question the style and to propose alternative styles. They believe that the school has only progressed so far because they were brave enough to question Mirumoto's original teachings. Only by encouraging the same curious mindset could Hojatsu's Legacy improve their techniques.

Only bushi well schooled in the Way of the Mirumoto (having studied in either the Bushi or Swordmaster Schools) may be invited to join Hojatsu's Legacy. Only Dragon samurai have joined this school in the past; it is a secret of the Clan, after all, and not to be shared with outsiders. Considering the Dragon's liberal view on ronin, however, this could perhaps change in the future. The sensei of Hojatsu's Legacy only care about perfecting their dueling techniques, and it is possible that they would invite a promising ronin to their midst. Of course, the bearers of Hojatsu's dual-wield technique are not fools, and the leaders of the school are vigilant in protecting the very existence of the school from spies and enemies of the Dragon.

Requirements

RINGS/TRAITS: Fire 4, Reflexes 5, Void 5

SKILLS: Kenjutsu 6, Meditation 4, Lore: Bushido 3

ADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker

OTHER: You may waive the Clear Thinker Advantage as a requirement by adding Iaijutsu 3 as a Skills requirement.

Techniques

RANK 1: THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN

A member of Hojatsu's Legacy is ready for whatever happens around him and reacts with the sharpest mind. Your opponent always has the option to choose to "Focus" or "Strike" first in an Iaijutsu duel. Also, the TN to Be Hit of both you and your opponent starts at 15 instead of 5 in an Iaijutsu duel. Finally, you gain a bonus equal to your Fire Ring to all attack rolls.

RANK 2: TO DISPEL THE WORLD

A Hojatsu's Legacy duelist can force everything out of his mind, until nothing exists except for the duel. At the beginning of an iaijutsu duel, you may spend a Void Point. For the rest of the duel, your opponent does not gain the benefits of any Techniques, Mastery Abilities, spells, or kata except for Techniques that allow him to Focus additional times during a duel. Additionally, you gain a bonus equal to your Void Ring to your TN to Be Hit. This bonus applies even during an iaijutsu duel.

RANK 3: AN IMPENETRABLE DEFENSE

The Hojatsu's Legacy duelist's will is powerful enough to unnerve his opponents. When they hesitate, he is prepared to strike. You may spend a Void Point to activate this Technique during an iaijutsu duel. Whenever your opponent Focuses in a duel, your TN to Be Hit during the duel increases by 10 instead of 5. This bonus does not affect your opponent's TN to Be Hit.

You do not gain this bonus during a Kenshinzen's first Focus if his Rank 1 Technique is in effect (see *The Four Winds*, p. 7).

New Path:**Kikage Zumi Madman (Monk)**

The kikage zumi are tattooed men, followers of Lady Moon. As part of their devotion to the her, they tend to swear fealty to the Hitomi Family. The kikage zumi have earned a reputation in the Empire as savage fighters who do not shy away from violence. But the rumors about them are only half-true. The kikage zumi are indeed a warlike group. However, they balance this aspect of their lives with contemplation and serenity, much like any other monkish order. The enemies of the Dragon have labeled the kikage zumi madmen in hushed rumors. The most martial of the group have eagerly accepted this insult, and bear it as a badge of pride.

These dangerous monks prefer bouts of brute strength over the riddles of the Togashi and the kenjutsu or iaijutsu duels of the Mirumoto. Their competitions, when they hold it, only reinforce the prejudices that exist about them. To outsiders, the kikage zumi competitions appear to be brutal boxing matches that have no purpose but violence. The kikage zumi madmen only laugh and do nothing to dispel the misconception.

Technique Rank: 4

Path of Entry: Ise Zumi 3

Path of Egress: Ise Zumi 4

Technique:**By the Light of Lady Moon**

The kikage zumi is attuned to the strength of the body and seeks enlightenment through the perfection of his body. Your martial might simply increases as a result. You may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to activate this Technique. You roll a number of extra dice to all unarmed attack DRs equal to the number of Tattoos you have for the next 5 Turns.

However, you do not gain a Tattoo for your next increase in Insight Rank.

New Path:**Kitsuki Gamester (Courtier)**

The Kitsuki Courtier serves as the Dragon Clan's connection to the rest of Rokugan. While the Dragon Clan as a whole seem to detach themselves from the mundane details of the rest of the Empire, the Kitsuki Courtier surrounds himself with everything that would allow him to deal with the other Clans at court on something like their own terms. The Kitsuki realized early on that to relate with outsiders, they must learn the intricacies of court life. Using the intense focus normally directed toward their research, the Kitsuki Gamester has learned to excel at various competitions they might encounter in their duties. These courtiers train in public speaking, go, kemari, and various other competitions they might face.

True to Dragon form, most Kitsuki Masters of Games do not actively seek out matches to show their prowess. They are simply prepared to face whatever lies in their future.

Technique Rank: 4

Path of Entry: Kitsuki Courtier 3

Path of Egress: Kitsuki Courtier 4

Technique:**Scrutiny in Entertainment**

The Kitsuki Gamester recognizes that the games that are played during Winter Court and other gatherings are not mere amusements to pass the time. They are crucial to the functions of court life, and the Gamester learns to prove himself with every one. For the purposes that require you to determine your School Rank, your Kitsuki Courtier School Rank is considered to be 1 higher. When entering a duel or making a Contested Skill Roll that does not require use of a Bugei Skill, you may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to activate this Technique. You may switch your Investigation Skill for any Skill used in resolving the duel.

This Technique may not be used on artisan Skills or on Skills that requires crafting (for instance, you do not gain a bonus during a competition of armor smithing.)

New Path:**Mirumoto Talons (Bushu)**

The Talons are an elite unit of fighters who are ordered to where the battle is most intense or the most desperate. They are fearless warriors, doing what they must to serve the Clan in times of war. They wield their blades in the traditional Mirumoto dual-wielding style, slashing their enemies in a flurry of blows. They use both blades to deadly efficiency, and few enemies can stand against a charge from a legion of Talons. Ironically, many in the Dragon Lands view the Talons with disdain, claiming that their seemingly wild, free-swinging attacks are barbaric and insulting to the sophisticated style created by Mirumoto. The Talons are indifferent to this criticism, holding to the belief that their furious style is yet another evolution of the daisho technique.

The Talons form an efficient military unit and do not hold any dueling traditions unique to them. Any duels that occur on the battlefield involving the Talons tend to be unrecognized duels of kenjutsu. Though some individual Talons may be proficient in iaijutsu, they as a whole prefer to unleash their fury with their own deadly sword technique.

Technique Rank: 4

Path of Entry: Mirumoto Bushi 3, Mirumoto Swordsmaster 4

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same school at the appropriate Rank

Technique: The Dragon's Claws

The Talon focuses all of his will into his attacks as he rips through the enemy lines. No weapon can hit him, for he cuts the wielder down first. For the purposes of this Technique, your Path of Entry School Rank is considered to be 1 Rank higher. If you have Ranks in both the Swordsmaster and Bushi Schools, you must choose one as your Path of Entry School for the purposes of this Technique.

You may activate this Technique as a Free Action a number of times per day equal to your School Rank. While you are in the Full Attack posture, you gain a bonus to DR equal to 3 x your Path of Entry School Rank when attacking with a daisho. This bonus lasts for a number of rounds equal to your School Rank. You may not activate this Technique more than once at a time in order to stack the bonuses.

New Kata: Eyes of the Dragon

PREPARATION TIME: 20 minutes

DURATION: 120 minutes

The Eyes of the Dragon is a kata developed by the Kitsuki Family. Though it has been adopted by the Mirumoto, with whom it is now more commonly associated, the Kitsuki Family still practice it and take pride in their association with it. It began as a simple exercise to practice the art of seeing things around them. In the original Kitsuki version of this kata, the practitioner simply stood in one place as he slowly shifted in a circle. He would then fix his gaze on minute things in each direction. The newest version maintains this part of the kata. However, the bushi have altered the kata to include basic, simple strikes that could be used in an iaijutsu duel. The kata leaves the practitioner ready to catch the smallest move and react with blazing speed.

RANK: Dragon Bushi 2, Kitsuki Courtier 2, or Kitsuki Investigator 2

COST: 4

SPECIAL: You must have an Investigation Skill Rank of 3 or higher. All Kitsuki Courtiers may learn this kata, bypassing normal restrictions.

EFFECT: You may gain a bonus equal twice your Investigation Skill Rank to your TN to Be Hit at all times, including during iaijutsu duels. However, you suffer a penalty equal to your Investigation Skill Rank to your attack rolls and rolls during the Focus phase of an iaijutsu duel. Additionally, you may not spend any Void Points to increase your TN to Be Hit.

VOID: None.

New Kata: Forest of Blades

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 120 minutes

The dual-wield style adopted and used by the Mirumoto is flexible enough to fit almost any combat situation. If the wielder is proficient in the style, he is able to attack ferociously, with his blades leaping out at the enemy like the unending waves of the sea. If he wishes to defend, his second blade crosses in a weave with his katana until there is no weakness left undefended. Forest of Blades helps the Mirumoto learn the moves of the guarding blades. The bushi learns to swirl both of his blades in crossing paths without them crashing into each other. He continues this motion as he walks slowly in a circle. The kata helps the bushi by augmenting the basic maneuvers he has learned from his sensei, forming a better defense.

RANK: Mirumoto Swordsmaster or Mirumoto Bushi 3

COST: 3

SPECIAL: You must have Stamina 4 or higher. This kata may only be used with a katana and wakizashi.

EFFECT: You must spend a Void Point as a Free Action after activating this kata in order to receive its benefits. For 5 rounds, you gain a bonus equal to twice your Kenjutsu Skill to your TN to Be Hit. You suffer a penalty to your attack rolls equal to your Kenjutsu Skill for the same period.

VOID: None.

New Kata: Spirits and Steel

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 120 minutes

The Tamori Yamabushi are shugenja who believe in the balance between the spiritual and the physical. Though they treasure the kami, they do not neglect Bushido or their Clan's strong martial traditions. This belief is apparent in their every movement. This kata looks like a normal, basic kata that every bushi is taught in his childhood. However, while the Yamabushi performs the kata, he concentrates on the kami surrounding him, feeling their movements, and changes as he continues his movements. The kata helps the Yamabushi sense the ripples every one of his movements cause on the world around him. When the kata is complete, the Yamabushi is attuned to the movements of both the blade and the kami.

RANK: Tamori Yamabushi (Path)

COST: 4

SPECIAL: You must have a Kenjutsu Skill of 3 or higher. Tamori Yamabushi shugenja may learn this kata, bypassing normal restrictions. This kata may only be used with a sword or wakizashi.

EFFECT: You gain a bonus to your attack and DR equal to twice the remaining number of Earth Spell slots you have left to cast for the rest of the day. You add your Kenjutsu Skill to the TN of all your spells. You may not use your Void Ring as Earth spell slots for the purposes of this kata.

VOID: None.

New Kiho: Strike of the Dragon (Fire Kiho)

TYPE: Martial

MASTERY: 7

This Kiho is a favorite of kikage zumi, and many other ise zumi as well. It is a straightforward attack against the enemy. You leap forward at you opponent, quickly closing with him and striking with one flat palm against the chest or forehead. You focus your chi in your hand, so that those who are well connected to the elements can see a faint red glow around your hand as you attack.

You may spend a Void Point when making an attack roll. If your attack is successful, you and your opponent make an opposed Fire/Weapon Skill Roll (substitute Jujitsu if unarmed). Your opponent suffers a -1k1 penalty to this roll if his Fire Ring is lower than your Fire Ring. If you succeed, your opponent is affected by your strong disorienting attack. He suffers a penalty in rolled and kept dice equal to your Fire Ring to all attack and damage rolls for 5 rounds.

New Kiho: Fall Before the Master (Earth Kiho)

TYPE: Internal

MASTERY: 5

The name of this Kiho refers to the humility to which all Dragon Clan members must hold, no matter how strongly pride appears in their way. Though they strive to perfect their technique, they are always students of the art rather than its master. It is easy to excel in duels if one is ready to face the future, whether it holds failure or success.

Those who have trained in the Students of the Tao Advanced School (see *The Four Winds*, p. 8) may learn this Kiho as if its Mastery Level was 3. You may spend a Void Point before starting an iajjutsu, kenjutsu, taryu-jiai, or jujutsu duel. Until the duel is over, all of your Traits, your Void Ring, and your Weapon Skill Ranks used in the duel are considered to be 1 higher than normal. When the duel is over, those Traits, Skills, and Rings affected by this Kiho are considered to be 1 lower than normal until you have had a chance to rest for 1 full hour. You may use this Kiho when impromptu duels occur during battles and skirmishes.

CHAPTER FIVE:

DUELING:
WAY OF THE LION**Philosophy**

Lion Clan samurai have always revered their ancestors and the precedents that they set. Though the Clan has gone through many upheavals in recent years, from having a Clan Champion from the Kitsu for the first time in its history, to a disastrous entanglement with maho and the Shadowlands, the Lion Clan's adherence to tradition has remained one of

the pillars that sustain it. To a Lion samurai, it is very important that he performs the morning kata in the exact same fashion as did his forefathers, hundreds of years ago.

This love for upholding tradition only aids the Lion instead of crippling them. The Lion Clan as a whole rejects unorthodox ideas in favor for the customs set by Rokugan at the dawn of the Empire. The iaijutsu duel is the only type of duel that is officially condoned by the Lion Clan. Though the highly martial Lion



samurai practice many interesting and diverse forms of dueling, when it comes to the law, only the standard form of dueling is used. The Lion bushi Schools go to great lengths to teach all their students how to conduct themselves properly in iaijutsu. Official duels involving Lion Clan samurai tend to be to the death.

Unfortunately, this inflexible stance has placed the Lion Clan at a disadvantage versus their eternal rivals, the Crane Clan. Though the two Clans are each other's equal in many different areas, the Crane Clan's mastery of iaijutsu is undisputed, and the Kakita School has continued to develop and evolve its techniques while the Lion prefer to preserve what they see as tried and true ways. Lion samurai have gone to great lengths to avoid iaijutsu duels with the Crane. Akodo Kaneka — now the Shogun — defeated the Kenshinzen and Kakita Daimyo Kakita Kaiten in an iaijutsu duel using a dueling stance influenced by the Akodo Bushi School, but his spectacular victory was a famous exception to the rule.

Iaijutsu is not the only type of dueling that occurs within the Lion Lands. Kenjutsu duels are equally as popular. Due to the problems involved in receiving permission for official iaijutsu duels, more kenjutsu duels occur than iaijutsu duels. Kenjutsu duels occur often on the battlefield, where no permission from superiors is required. These duels, though driven by the heat of battle, are no less honorable than a formal iaijutsu duel. Both sides treat each other with respect, and a Lion bushi will go to great lengths to return the blades of his fallen foe to his family.

A uniquely Lion form of dueling that is derived from the normal kenjutsu duel is called The Gauntlet. The practice started at Lion bushi dojo, and has only grown in popularity. It is a contest that emphasizes the importance of intelligence and experience, of being able to adjust to any situation one may face. The purpose of the duel is to show the pure skill of the duelist, not to impress with brute strength or knowledge derived from scrolls. Instead, duelists in The Gauntlet must show that they are able to handle different types of weapons that they may face in a battle.

In The Gauntlet, the duelists are given a selection of weapons they must use in the duel. These weapons can be as popular as a katana and as obscure (to a Lion warrior, at least) as a masakari. The warriors must show proficiency with each weapon used. Some Lion bushi prefer simply to fight as they normally do, focused on solely on the effectiveness of their attacks. However, since this style of duel is judged mostly on the appearance of one's attacks, many bushi tend to exaggerate their movements and do fancy maneuvers to impress the judges.

Kata are important to Lion bushi because they distill styles of their Schools that have been passed down for generations. Each kata performed by students of the School were performed in exactly the same way by their ancestors, hundreds of years ago. There are many taikai, or competitions, that pit bushi against each other to see who can perform the kata the closest to the original technique.

In a typical Lion taikai, two competitors takes turns performing before three judges, who consist of a head judge and the two other judges. Each competitor performs his kata as best as he is able, sticking to the form that they learned from their sensei. When both competitors have finished their kata, the two subordinate judges silently indicate whom they believe showed the perfect kata. If the judges are unanimous, the competitors move on to their next kata. If the two judges are split on a decision, the head judge weighs in and indicates who wins that round. Each competition is composed of the best of three rounds.

The goal of the contest is to see who can perform closest to the prescribed method, not to see who can perform the most difficult kata. Thus, a bushi performing Striking as Fire perfectly could win over a bushi performing Tsuko's Storm with some imperfections. Older samurai and older students are viewed strangely if they choose a basic kata, but it is strictly within the rules to do so. However, if both kata were performed equally well, the more complex kata would win.

Other forms of martial prowess are rewarded in the Lion Lands. Defend the Leader is a contest that pits two or more teams against each other in a battle to defeat the opponents' leader, as signified by smashing a clay cup secured to his forehead by a headband. They are, essentially, military exercises turned into competitive tests of a warrior's ability to keep his head on the battlefield and, for the leaders, of their tactical skill and field leadership. Though most teams are organized in groups of twenty, some of the more famous matches involved teams of hundreds of samurai. For a Defend the Leader match that was staged in celebration of Hantei XII's birthday, the Lion fielded two armies of 500 bushi in the fields near Otosan Uchi. The leader who led his "army" to victory eventually became the head general of the Lion armies.

Though martial competitions tend to dominate the Lion Lands, they are not the only contests that occur. The Ikoma enjoy contests in which they attempt to tell the more outlandish tales than their fellows. Since samurai are discouraged from showing emotion in public, these storytelling contests allow Lion bushi to relax and enjoy themselves without losing face. Sadane does not occur often in the Lion Lands, though several other courtly games have some popularity. Games of shogi and go are very popular among Lion bushi and respected as exercises in strategic thinking. In fact, it was a Lion — Akodo Soko — who first formalized the rules of shogi, and it remains a specialty of the Clan to this day. They sponsor regular tournaments at various place in the Lion Lands, and the soko-meijin, or shogi champion of the Empire, swears honorary fealty to the Lion in honor of Seko's achievement.

Suana and Ikoma Gunjin

During the Clan War and the years before the Battle at Oblivion's Gate, two very different men grew together and raised a close, though unlikely friendship. Suana was a famous Acolyte of Water for the Brotherhood of Shinsel when the Brotherhood was forced to stand and fight for their beliefs. He resided at the temple to which Akodo Toturi was banished before he rose to the Clan Championship. The two became acquainted and Suana came to cherish his philosophical discussions with this contemplative and extraordinary man who would later become Emperor of Rokugan. Toturi's Lion upbringing shaped his thoughts in simple ways that Suana would have never expected. Toturi eventually returned to the world, to what end history has well recorded.

But Suana was given the chance to take up philosophy when another distinguished Lion warrior came to his temple. Ikoma Gunjin was a veteran of past wars, an old tactician who should have retired before the Second Day of Thunder, but hung on past his time to continue serving his Clan. The two vastly different men discussed many things about honor, Bushido, duty, and everything in between. During their meetings, they played many games of go as they traded ideas.

Suana and Ikoma Gunjin were equally strong in go and often used new and innovative tactics to attempt to throw the other off his rhythm. They played most of their games at a small tea house near Kyuden Ikoma. Several months before the Battle at Oblivion's Gate, Suana and Ikoma Gunjin engaged in a particularly fierce battle. They were evenly matched, and had drawn themselves into a standstill. Though the game would have resolved if they had continued it to its conclusion, they both decided to leave the game as it was and to finish it when they next met.

Unfortunately, both Suana and Ikoma Gunjin fell in battle before they could reunite. To this day, the owner of the tea house leaves their game in its unfinished state in their honor.

The Kitsu Family as a whole do not enjoy competition. The shugenja of the Lion are peaceful and benevolent when compared to their more martial brethren. Taryu-jiai duels are rare within the Lion Lands. When they do occur, they tend to be displays of skill rather than the two duelists pitting their strengths to beat down each other. There are exceptions to that rule; the martial nature of the rest of the Clan sometimes seeps into individual Kitsu. Kitsu Okura was one such shugenja, and his elemental strengths and his knowledge of taryu-jiai allowed him to make a better showing in the Jade Championship than anyone expected of a Lion. The most popular competition or game within the Kitsu Lands is a test of reverence for the Lion's history. Each contestant in the tournament is given a name of a Lion ancestor. The contestant must then recite as many Familial connections as he can, including the ancestor's famous deeds and the battles he attended. The Ikoma are also very fond of this contest. Both the Kitsu and Ikoma can be found hosting these tournaments during holidays.

Lion Institutions

The Lion Clan views the upkeep of their schools and dojo as the highest priority. They believe that the education of the next generation should be one of the foremost issues to any Clan. They hold nothing back to make sure that all the schools are well supplied and staffed by the best samurai available. The Lion's love of the traditional is reflected in the procedures that run the dojo. Each dojo follows the same methods and procedures it established at its inception, often centuries ago. The Lion are meticulous about the health of the dojo in their lands, and make sure that their schools will survive for centuries to come.

Castle of the Swift Sword

Shiro sano Ken Hayai, or the Castle of the Swift Sword is the largest establishment in the Kitsu Lands. The area is a sacred place for the Kitsu Family and one of their most important temples lies inside its walls. However, the Kitsu consider the Kitsu Tombs the true spiritual center of their Family. The stronghold is simply another city in their lands. In the eyes of the Kitsu, the Castle of the Swift Sword is by all means a holding of the Akodo Family. Ever since its inception, the castle has had irrefutable ties to both of the Families and a strongly martial history.

Akodo Tokoyama, grandson of the Kami Akodo, decided that the Kitsu were too important to be left unguarded. After all, the Lion had no shortage of enemies, and the small Kitsu Family was not equipped for any war. Tokoyama ordered the Lion to build a strong, defensible castle, complete with a barracks and a dojo for any future schools. When the Castle of the Swift Sword was completed, Tokoyama offered the impressive castle to the Kitsu as an ancestral home. They accepted their Clan Champion's gift and moved the Shrine of the First Five into the heart of the castle. The Kitsu settled into the city and the nearby Kitsu Tombs, and Akodo bushi set upon their duty to protect the castle.

Tokoyama would accept nothing but the best from the dojo placed in the exemplary new home. Since he was a master of the Akodo bushi techniques, the choice of school for the Castle of the Swift Sword was obvious. The Akodo Family immediately moved into the new castle and began its work establishing their future. Their work with the dojo continued for the next eight centuries without fail.

But when the Akodo Family fell during the Scorpion Clan Coup, the Lion Clan did not know what to do with the dojo. The school was functional and had many students during that time. Many of the sensei committed seppuku in shame. The Ikoma Family then offered to house the school during these tumultuous times, and the few sensei who were left swore fealty to the Ikoma and relocated the school to Kyuden Ikoma. The castle was suddenly left without a military guard. The Matsu used the castle as a way station for the armies, but established no permanent presence. The Akodo Deathseekers then decided to occupy the empty dojo and make it their own.



The school stayed in the Ikoma stronghold in makeshift buildings for over a decade. Though the teachers were given all the resources they required to continue their work, their new home didn't quite feel right to them. So when the Akodo regained their name, Daimyo Akodo Ginawa made the restoration of the Castle of the Swift Sword dojo a priority. The sensei of the Akodo Bushi School moved back to their old quarters, and the Deathseekers were happy to accommodate them.

The Castle of the Swift Sword was the perfect place for a bushi dojo. The students had room for training, as the place had many wide clearings made specifically for that purpose. The dojo covers a wide area of the castle, bordering the Kitsu temples and shrines. It is not an odd sight to see monks walk past an entire squadron of young boys practicing a kata.

The students learn how to use the katana and yumi as the primary lessons of the school. A stables attached to the dojo teaches the students horsemanship. After all, the way of the samurai is also called the Way of the Horse and Bow, and the Akodo believe in following the basics. Though the Gauntlet is a predominantly Matsu tradition, the teachers of the Castle of the Swift Sword take care to ready their students for the competition. The school has many sensei who specialize in the use of a variety of weapons,

both common and unusual. Weapons like the no-dachi, tessen and the yari can easily be learned as part of a student's course of study. During his free time, a student may approach a sensei and learn the use of a more exotic weapon such as the tetsubo or the kusari-gama.

Intellectual pursuits are just as important to the dojo's course of training as the martial instruction. Students are taught calligraphy by Ikoma masters of ink. They learn to appreciate music and analyze paintings. They learn to tap into their creative side to write beautiful works of poetry. The Castle of the Swift Sword's emphasizes the importance of literary skill more than any major bushi dojo among the other Great Clans.

The sensei of the school encourage the students to take an interest in lessons outside of the classes offered at the dojo. The students are not ordered to engage in these activities, but the teachers make it clear that any true samurai would voluntarily do so. The students are encouraged to attend the library attached to the dojo and read many of the scrolls, which include such essentials as Akodo's *Leadership*, but also have many fine works of literature and history. The student could also venture into the Kitsu sections of the city, where he could peruse antiques and fine arts. A student that gains a command of history and the fine arts is a rounded samurai. Installing this respect for the finer parts of life is as important to a sensei of the Castle of the Swift Sword as proper sword work.

The current master sensei of the Castle of the Swift Sword is Akodo Hirotsu. He underwent his gempukku ceremony a few weeks before the Scorpion Clan Coup. When Toturi was cast out as ronin and the Akodo Family disbanded, Hirotsu felt that his only choice was to become a Deathseeker. He survived as a Deathseeker throughout countless battles in the Clan War. He held onto his incredible self-discipline and devotion to the lessons of his School even in the heat of battle. The Deathseekers' casualty rate during the Clan War was astounding, and it is nothing short of miraculous that Hirotsu survived. When the Akodo reformed, Daimyo Akodo Ginawa asked him to lead the Akodo Bushi School back to prominence.

Hirotsu is a close observer and involves himself closely in the dojo's operation. He leads classes of various skill levels. One day he instructs the newest class on how to hold a katana, and the next he scolds students who are only a few weeks from graduation. He is used to perfection and expects the same from everyone around him. He does not praise his students often, saving it only for instances of true excellence. He believes that unwarranted praise is more poisonous to a student's progression than any injury.

Golden Spider Dojo

Traditionally, the Kitsu have been pacifists. They are the Lion's shugenja Family, and as such they reject the violence and brutality of the bushi's way. Their service to this most martial of Great Clans has been limited to non-combat functions; healing and providing spiritual comfort to the bushi was as close as they ever got to combat. But when the famed warrior Kitsu Motso became the first of his Family to serve as the Lion Clan Champion, the Kitsu's view of their role in their Clan began to change.

Motso's example planted seeds of a new school of thought within the Kitsu. Perhaps they were limiting their service to their lords by shying away from combat. But before he could inspire a wholesale reevaluation of his Family's traditional role, Motso fell in battle against the armies of Hantei XVIth in the War of Spirits.

The Kitsu were devastated by the loss of their one and only Lion Champion. A young shugenja named Kitsu Reizo had watched Motso's final stand while serving as a healer in the Lion armies. He could have offered his life to protect his lord, but he had learned nothing about how to face an enemy in combat. He vowed that he would learn how to do so if such an opportunity rose again. Reizo approached the leaders of the Clan a few weeks after Motso's burial and asked for permission to pioneer a new combat shugenja style. The boy was young, and Kitsu Juri did not know if he could handle it. Despite his reservations, he realized Reizo's train of thought was sound. The new Kitsu Daimyo acquiesced and gave him the power to do what he needed in order to found the school.

Reizo established the Golden Spider Dojo in Shiro sano Ken Hayai. He wanted his school to be within the Kitsu Lands, but to also have a strong tie to the bushi of the Clan. Reizo satisfied his ambitions by settling the dojo next to the army barracks. There, the Kitsu training would not interrupt the training of the Akodo bushi of the Castle of the Swift Sword Dojo, but at the same time they would have clear access to tools of the warrior's trade. Several bushi retired from active duty offered Reizo their services to help train his students as warriors. Reizo eagerly accepted their support and began to develop techniques to use more aggressive spells in combat. Kitsu began to join the school and the numbers of combat-ready Lion shugenja steadily grew. Their approach to

the Way of the Shugenja is still a distinct minority view, but that the Golden Spider exists at all is a sign of how dramatically the Kitsu have changed their way of thinking in two generations.

The shugenja who attend the Golden Spider Dojo are taught how to handle themselves in the middle of battle. They are taught how to use the elements to blast men and armies apart, but that is the least of their lessons. They are taught extensively in the Akodo style of kenjutsu and rudimentary skills in many other weapons. A Kitsu shugenja must be able to defend himself without relying on others or tiring out his connections to the elements. They are taught military tactics, so that they can react fluidly to changes on the battlefield. Finally, they learn how to handle the stresses and horrors of war. The Kitsu know that men are capable of performing the most heinous of deeds on each other. A shugenja cannot prepare for war without preparing for the atrocities he might see. Finally, the shugenja learn the techniques that would allow them to converse with their ancestors and traverse the other Spirit Realms.

The training offered by the Golden Spider Dojo also develops skills that can be utilized in contests. A student learns how to handle himself in a taryu-jiai or kenjutsu duel. Many Kitsu also practice iaijutsu. Most of the students of the Golden Spider Dojo also learn popular games, such as go and shogi.

The founder of the Golden Spider Dojo still serves as its Headmaster. He is now considerably older and has seen countless horrors from the middle of the battlefield. However, his golden eyes still shine with the ideals of and his passion for the school. Reizo clearly remembers a time when he was a young man starting out on his quest and loves all of his students for following the same path and treats them with more respect than is required by their station. Reizo believes that all Kitsu must serve next to Lion bushi. He will not declare the training of one of his shugenja complete until he has experienced at least one battle.

Reizo is of age to retire, but he wishes to stay on at the Golden Spider for as long as he can. However, he knows that his departure is inevitable and has already chosen his replacement. Kitsu Hanashi is more than capable of leading the school and currently teaches the most experienced students. Her experiments with new combat styles are starting to bear fruit and she is almost ready to present them to the rest of the school. Hanashi vows to lead the Golden Spider Dojo to greater heights once it is in her charge.

Heart of the Katana

Shiro Akodo, the ancestral home of the Akodo Family and the site of Heart of the Katana, the Kensai School's home dojo, is an unremarkable sight. It looks like yet another fort in a seemingly endless series of outposts that runs throughout the Lion Lands. The castle was built for utility over comfort or aesthetics. Once, tapestries and paintings depicting famous Lion events in history draped the interior walls, but they were taken down when the Akodo came back into being before the War of Spirits. The lack of furnishings reflects the fundamental values that drive all Akodo. They believe that a samurai must retain his fighting edge by any and all necessary means. Creature comforts only help to soften him with a pleasant laxness. A room within Shiro Akodo resembles that of a barracks with only the barest necessities.

Shiro Akodo was the seat of power within the Lion Lands before the events of the Scorpion Clan Coup and the destruction of the Akodo Family. The Lion Clan Champion called the place home and the circles of power moved with him. Akodo Tokoyama, one of the earliest Clan Champions, gathered the greatest

swordsmen in his armies and asked them to create the ultimate kenjutsu style. After a few years of work, they developed the Kensai School. Tokoyama himself became one of its first students, humbling himself before his sensei like any other supplicant. He learned the style and helped refine many of its techniques into what they are today.

The Kensai, or Sword-Saints, are among the most feared bushi of the Lion Clan. A Kensai is the master of the katana, controlling it as naturally if it was a part of his own body. The Niten technique, the Dragon kenjutsu technique of wielding the katana and wakizashi at once, is an intimidating sight because the wielder is able to defend himself while attacking; he is also able to attack with abandon with a flurry of blades. But the Kensai is fearsome because of his precision. When he wields his katana, he does not move an inch more than is necessary to neutralize his opponent. Through special training, he learns how to move with the flow of the battle and remain unscathed by the chaos. A Kensai is unstoppable in a kenjutsu duel. His ultimate self-control allows him to handle himself well in iaijutsu duels as well.

When the Akodo Family was disbanded by Hantei XXXIX's order, Matsu Tsuko moved the headquarters of the Kensai to Shiro Matsu. It was imperative that the Heart of the Katana moved with it. Though they were loathe to abandon the birthplace of the Kensai, they recognized that the School was ultimately tied more closely to the leaders of the Lion Clan. They established a second dojo, identical to the first, in the outskirts of Shiro Matsu. They continued their training through the wars that followed. After the Battle at Oblivion's Gate, when the Akodo were reinstated in their rightful place, the sensei of the Heart of the Katana were only happy to return the School to their ancestral home.

The Heart of the Katana Dojo is located inside the castle itself and has the same plain, purely functional appearance. The training halls are large and well stocked with bokken, shinai and some real katana. The housing quarters are small and provide everything the students could need, but little more than that. A small library of important works is nestled against the training room, so the students can exercise their minds while they are not training their bodies. The Kensai practice their sword work outside the dojo, moving in unison in large groups as they perform their kata. The Kensai also practice combat techniques with one, two, or more opponents at once. Those lessons occur inside the training room, under close supervision. Heart of the Katana owns several buildings in Shiro Matsu, but these have remained unoccupied and unused since the fall of the Akodo.

The current master sensei of Heart of the Katana is Matsu Takara. Takara was a young soldier in the front lines during the Clan War and the Second Day of Thunder. She was unprepared to fight the enemies from her deepest nightmares, and the Shadowlands creatures she faced left an indelible mark on her soul. The horrors that she saw left her mute. After Fu Leng was destroyed and the safety of the Empire assured, she retreated to the safety of the Heart of the Katana Dojo. She served there as a sensei, though she was barely older than the rest of the students. At first, she taught the newest students the most basic techniques and kata, even though she could communicate only through gestures. She also never stopped studying to improve her own stance, and after 30 years of constant study she has become the definitive Sword-Saint. She has never regained her power of speech, which makes her rise as a sensei at an important dojo of a Major Clan all the more remarkable. Her eyes are peaceful, as she has finally found the balance of the world in the beautiful perfection of a katana stroke.

Akodo Ketto and Doji Ikuyo

During the 6th Century, Akodo Ketto was one of the most admired samurai in the Empire. He had a well deserved reputation as a brilliant tactician, a kind and gentle soul, and yet also a swordsman without peer. He helped develop several of the advanced kata taught to Lion Sword-Saints to this day. His brilliant successes against several minor Yobanjin incursions and in an assault on a Scorpion castle helped his star rise quickly in the officer corps of the Lion armies. It was only a matter of time before he caught the attention of the Emperor, Hantei XVI.

Soon the Emperor summoned Ketto to Ootosan Uchi and gave him a command in the Imperial Legions. However, when he was ordered to exterminate a fishing village in the Crane Lands because it had been a few days late with its taxes for the year, Ketto could not bring himself to perform his duties and still call himself an honorable samurai.

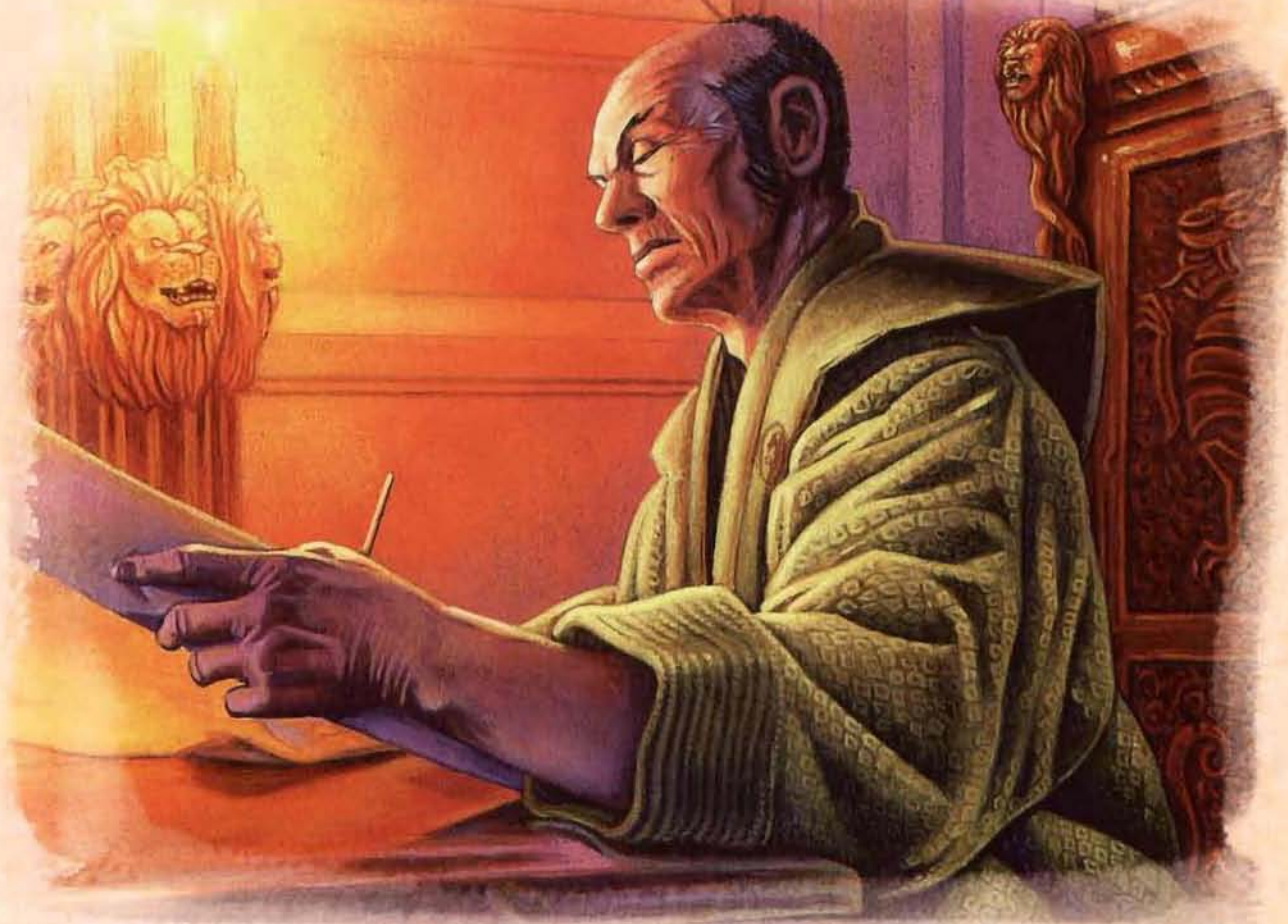
When Ketto and the Legionnaires arrived at the village, a handful of Crane samurai stood waiting. The Crane prostrated themselves on the floor as one and begged for a pardon for their peasants. Ketto agreed with them that the order was harsh and did not fit the crime. But the Emperor's word was clear. The village was to be wiped off of the map.

When Ketto refused to budge, a young woman named Doji Ikuyo challenged Ketto to a duel over the matter. Ketto was not legally bound to the duel, but he saw in it a way out of his predicament. He dismounted, and the two took their stances. For a long moment they stood still, then both moved simultaneously. Ketto made his attack before Ikuyo could draw her blade halfway out of her saya. His hand, however, was empty – his sword rested by his side. Ketto fell to Ikuyo's blade with a look of peace illuminating his face.

Doji Ikuyo was arrested and condemned to a common execution for engaging in an unlawful duel and obstructing the Emperor's justice. However, before her punishment could take place, Hantei XVI was dethroned and killed by his own servants. She was pardoned by the new Emperor. To this day, though Doji Ikuyo survived, Akodo Ketto is considered the true winner of that famous duel. His attack is remembered by many scholars as "The Perfect Strike."

Open Hand of the Lion Dojo

From a certain viewpoints, the Ikoma could be considered the aberrant Family of the Lion Clan. Ever since their inception, the Ikoma have handled the jobs the rest of the Clan could not fulfill. They became the courtiers, acting as the spokesmen of the Clan. When the code of the samurai was established, it became clear that a true samurai must restrain his emotions in public. The Ikoma Omoidasu decided to act as the Lion's emotional proxies, expressing joy, sadness, despair, and anger on behalf of their bushi.



Kyuden Ikoma is the stronghold of the Ikoma Family and is the home of the Open Hand of the Lion Dojo. It is located at the base of the Mountain of Seven Thunders. Because of its location, Kyuden Ikoma receives fewer visitors (welcome or unwelcome) than the cities located in the more accessible plains. Most of the visitors who do come here don't care much about the castle. They come instead for the nearby Shrine of the Seven Thunders, which draws a lot of pilgrims who wish to pray to the legendary heroes. The Ikoma home is simply a resting point along their long journey.

Unlike the Kitsu, the Ikoma are as martially inclined as the rest of the Clan. The *omoidasu* who serve as courtiers and diplomats often learn *iaijutsu* so that they may represent themselves in duels. The *omoidasu* also learn to become support staff for the Lion armies, with responsibility for keeping up morale. They travel with the armies and share the soldier's hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows. They inspire the troops before the battle with songs or tales of their exploits. When combat begins, the *omoidasu* more often than not follow the army into the thick of battle. To make sure they can survive the chaos of war, the Ikoma learn how to handle themselves with a katana as part of their basic lessons.

The Open Hand of the Lion Dojo is located in the heart of Kyuden Ikoma, inside the confines of the castle itself. It consists of three separate buildings and houses the best Ikoma schools in the empire. The *omoidasu* that serve as courtiers are trained in

one building, the *omoidasu* that serve as writers and chroniclers in another, and the historians learn their trade in the last. The dojo sees a lot of traffic in and out. The sensei of the dojo believe that a student cannot learn if he is forced to only memorize theories and proofs; he must see with his own eyes and personally experience history in the making.

Even so, Ikoma *omoidasu* receive thorough basic training in everything they need to know to fulfill their duties within the walls of the Open Hand of the Lion. The courtiers are well versed in *go*, *shogi*, *sadane*, *kemari*, and other forms of gamesmanship that they may encounter at court. The poets learn how to express their emotions within the proper forms of poetry and song. All three schools learn the details of hundreds of their ancestors' lineage, background, and notable deeds.

The master sensei of the Open Hand of the Lion is nominally the Ikoma Daimyo. It is the Daimyo's duty to secure the safety of the Ikoma's future, and it is considered that a key part of that duty is taking proper care of the Family's educational system. However, it is almost always the case that the leader of the Ikoma Family is too busy to handle actual administration of the dojo, and so he appoints a senior sensei to serve in his stead.

The current senior sensei of the school is Ikoma Jishoemon. Jishoemon just recently came to the job and is rather young considering the importance of the position. Immediately after his

gempukku, he served as a member of the Lion embassy to the Scorpion Lands. It was a treacherous job, representing his Clan in the infamous City of Lies, Ryoko Owari. The constant tension only heightened his senses, however, and he rapidly developed his skills. He quickly developed into a brilliant courtier and a discreet spy. He preserves his pleasant, good-natured bearing come what may, and never loses his composure. His love of food and drink is insatiable and well known. In so doing, he conceals his keen intelligence behind a mask of pleasant obliviousness. People often believe on meeting the sensei that he is something of an imbecile, but his students and his close friends know that it is the opposite of the truth. Jishoemon's sharp instincts and his accurate insights will protect the future of his School.

Lion Sensei

The Lion choose as their sensei only those who show utmost respect for the Clan's history and martial spirit. Surprisingly for such a tradition-bound Clan, this does not always mean that the samurai with the most seniority become teachers and rise to the position of master sensei. There is always room for a ferocious young Lion to make a name for himself as one worthy of teaching others the Way of the Lion.

IKOMA HIROSHI, TUTOR OF THE CHAMPION

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 2	Void: 4
Awareness: 4		Intelligence: 5	Perception: 4	
Honor: 1.9 (3.9)		Status: 4.6		Glory: 6.4

ADVANTAGES: Balance, Perceived Honor, Precise Memory

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Health, Compulsion (sake)

KATA: Soul's Readiness

SKILLS: Acting 3, Calligraphy 4, Courtier (Gossip) 5, Defense 4, Games: Go 7, Games: Shogi 5, Games: Sadane 4, Kenjutsu (katana) 5, Etiquette 6, Lore: History (Lion Clan) 7, Meditation 3, Storytelling (Bragging) 4, Tea Ceremony 3

Everyone who knows Ikoma Hiroshi agrees that he was born under a lucky star. Hiroshi has risen in importance and power without any interruption since he was a boy. Whenever a problem presented itself, it seemed to disappear before he could formulate a plan to circumvent it. A series of fortunate accidents has made him a famous courtier within the Lion Lands. Though he has some bad habits that could bring dishonor — perhaps fatal dishonor — upon himself, Hiroshi does not think of himself as a bad man, or as someone who does not perform his duty to the Clan. He does not fear the negative consequences of his actions, since he has never suffered any.

Nothing in Hiroshi's lineage marked him as anyone special. His father served as an omoidasu faithfully for years but never gained acclaim for any of his works. He created countless poems, epics and songs for the countless bushi that fell before the Second Day of Thunder. They were well received and placed within the Ikoma Libraries, but they lacked the intangible element that makes a piece of literature a classic. His mother served as a clerk in one of the minor libraries in the Ikoma lands. Hiroshi was their only child so they paid all of their attention to him. They could not treat their only son with any real sternness, no matter how hard they tried.

Ikoma Hitotsu and Ikoma Hari

The Ikoma are free to express emotion in public without losing face, and many omoidasu choose to take advantage of this right. They laugh in excitement and cry without shame when the situation calls for it. A popular game between omoidasu is to see who can tell the most entertaining, outlandish tale, drawing from whatever sources the omoidasu has gathered over the years.

Ikoma Hitotsu and Ikoma Hari were brothers, separated in age only by one year. Though their duties led them in opposite directions, they remained close. Hitotsu served in the retinue of Matsu Tishi, a popular and successful Lion general. Hari served as a diplomat to the Phoenix Lands. As adults, the two brothers rarely had a chance to meet, but when they were both at Kyuden Ikoma, they frequented a sake house together.

During one of their reunions, Hitotsu and Hari challenged each other to see who could better entertain the crowd. Hari began first. He leapt to his feet and with a loud shout and gathered the attention of everyone in the building. He promptly leapt into a bawdy tale about his dalliances with a beautiful Phoenix courtier, weaving in a variety of elements guaranteed to amuse a Lion audience: ineffectual Crane duelists, willing mistresses, and a bumbling guard who failed to stop his adventures. Hari's story had everyone in stitches, and when he finished the crowd clamored for more.

Hitotsu, by contrast, rose slowly from his seat, with great dignity. One by one the group fell silent, affected by his regal countenance. Hitotsu began his tale in a soft voice that still managed to fill the room. It was a simple story of honor, truth, and justice. The hero of the story was wronged again and again but found the strength to persevere in his faith in Bushido. He discovered that one man was the source of his misfortune and traced him back to the Imperial City itself. When he found out that his opponent was a member of an Imperial Family, he killed him in a duel. Even while his enemy's life blood spilled on the snow before them, he committed seppuku so that the repercussions of his vengeance would not fall upon the Lion Clan. His death poem was simple yet elegant, and its utterance brought tears to the eyes of everyone in the room.

The crowd had been amused by Hari's tale. They were completely absorbed by Hitotsu's tale. The victor was obvious. The two brothers decided to meet again on the one-year anniversary of their storytelling duel to have a rematch. Hari swore to his brother that he would find a story to outdo anything his elder brother could find. Hitotsu only smiled in response. A few months after the duel, Hari fell to the blade of a Phoenix duelist who sought to cleanse his honor from his wife's transgressions with the Ikoma. A few days after Hari's duel, Hitotsu fell in the line of duty, protecting his lord Tishi from ronin assassins. The brothers would never challenge each other again, but their love for each other and their love of stories is still remembered at that small sake house in Kyuden Ikoma, which commemorates the night that two Lion samurai held the patrons in utterly spellbound.

Hiroshi was, however, exuded charisma even as a boy. Every one of his playmates looked up to him as their natural leader. He led dozens of samurai children into one bit of mischief after another. Though they were all punished after each deed, the boys and girls continued to hang on his words. Hiroshi never received any discipline for his transgressions. All he had to do was make a show of remorse for his actions, and his parents could not bring themselves to punish him.

When it came time for him to enter school, his parents knew exactly where their child could expend his excess energy. He attended the Open Hand of the Lion Dojo and began training as an *omoidasu*. The duties of an *omoidasu* were a perfect match for an extrovert like Hiroshi. He devoured his lessons and searched for more ways to perfect his techniques. He impressed his teachers with his devotion to the school and charmed them with his friendly attitude. The sensei knew that Hiroshi would be very important to the future of the Lion Clan. They made sure that the young boy's name was known by anyone who could help further his career. Immediately after leaving the dojo, Hiroshi was given an important post as the chronicler of Matsu Taniko, a young tactician who showed as much promise as a soldier as Hiroshi showed as a literary artist. And indeed, Taniko proved herself a hero during the Dragon-Phoenix war. Hiroshi came through as well, creating an epic history retelling the battle. The story and Hiroshi both gained popularity among the Lion.

Only one thing has marred Hiroshi's perfect path to his destiny. Five years ago, Hiroshi spent his winter in Shiro Mirumoto while recording Matsu Tanashiku's exploits for posterity. He was not used to the colder winter and fell ill. He was excused from his duties and the young man searched the nearby town for a distraction. He wandered into a business run by unscrupulous merchants. Hiroshi gambled, drank rather more sake than was probably good for him, and loved every moment of it. Now that he has had a taste of hedonism he cannot get enough of it. His love of sake and gambling has not yet impeded his duties, but as he falls deeper into his addictions it is probably inevitable that they will cause him to stumble.

Hiroshi's rising fame led him to his current assignment. He was assigned to be the tutor of a young bushi just past his *gem-pukku*. He would teach the boy the history of the many battles in the Lion Clan's past, both defeats and triumphs. The leaders of the Clan thought it would help the boy more to have someone near his age to act as both a sensei and a friend. As it turned out, Matsu Yoshino, the son of the Golden Lion of Toshi Ranbo, was already knowledgeable in the subject and didn't need much tutoring. Still, Yoshino immediately gained a liking to the *omoidasu* who was now obliged to teach him, and they became fast friends. Now that Yoshino has ascended to the Lion Clan Championship, Hiroshi has suddenly become a very important person.

Hiroshi is egotistic, selfish, and ruthless. However, he knows better than to act out his darker desires in the presence of others who might judge him, and so far, he has been able to control them when necessary. He is friendly to all his peers. He is popular with the troops because he excels at creating songs and poems to inspire and amuse the bushi. Whenever he meets a fledgling *omoidasu*, he is eager to aid the neophyte with songs and advice. His enthusiasm for his job is clear to everyone and his eagerness is infectious.



AKODO JIN, YOUNG KENSAI

Air: 5	Earth: 4	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 5
Reflexes: 7		Agility: 6	Perception: 5	
Honor: 3.2		Status: 4.6		Glory: 2.5

SCHOOL/RANK: Akodo Bushi 5/Lion Kensai 1

ADVANTAGES: Great Destiny, Great Potential (Kenjutsu), Tactician

DISADVANTAGES: Brash, Idealistic, Small

KATA: Armed Brilliance, Emptying the Soul, Fury Without End, Gentle Blade of Winter, Matsu's Vengeance, Soul's Readiness, Striking as Fire, Striking as Wind, Victory of the River

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle (Mass Combat, Skirmish) 6, Calligraphy 4, Etiquette 2, Games: Go 5, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation (Notice) 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 8, Kyujutsu 5, Lore: History 4, Meditation 5, Tea Ceremony 4

Akodo Jin is the youngest samurai ever accepted to the Lion Kensai School. Whispers abound in the Lion Lands of political favors and preferential treatment that allowed the young bushi to be accepted to this prestigious and exclusive School. Those who have seen him in action, however, are silent on this score. They know that he has earned every right to be a Kensai.

Akodo Jin was born to two bushi who suffered through the dissolution of the Akodo Family before the Second Day of Thunder. His father was adopted into the Ikoma following Hantei XXXIX's decree disbanding the Akodo. His mother had turned ronin after the decree, and had followed the banner of the Black Wolf. Both returned to the fold only after the Akodo Family was reformed after the Battle of Oblivion's Gate. Akodo Jin grew up trying to square the proud legacy of honorable service to Clan and Emperor that the Akodo knew to be theirs by right with the lingering effect of the slanders that had brought down the Family down in the Scorpion Clan Coup.

Fortunately, these complications did not affect Jin's attitude. He was a happy, outgoing child who played with no cares on his mind. He loved playing at being a heroic samurai, fighting mock battles with his peers that raged across the entire castle. He applied himself to his studies as diligently as he did to his games. He showed amazing focus whenever he practiced the steps of his kata or studied the scrolls that laid out the past of the Akodo. Jin loved the tales of his ancestors and took the teachings of Bushido to heart.

Jin joined the Lion legions shortly before the death of Toturi I and served through the tumultuous years afterwards. The war against the Dragon, the Tsuno, and the Unicorn did nothing to dampen his love of Bushido. During the disaster that was the War of the Rich Frog, Jin impressed his superiors with his skill with the katana. Jin's sensei in the Akodo Bushi School recommended him to the sensei of the Kensai School, and coupled with the approval of his superiors, Jin was accepted. He embraced the new opportunity handed to him with zeal.

Many criticize Jin for allowing his emotions to show at inopportune times. Though he strives for the self-mastery expected of a samurai and attempts to present a calm public face, his emotions tend to rule his decisions. Jin is too young to serve as a formal sensei to any character. However, he is more than willing to aid anyone who approaches him.

One thing that is apparent in all interactions with Akodo Jin is his zest for life. He smiles frequently and cannot hide his energy. He is the consummate warrior, one who enthusiastically performs his duty. He is extremely loyal to those he considers his friends. Whether in battle, practicing kata, or even reading, he puts all of his focus into the task at hand. Jin is friendly to all and will treat all students with the utmost respect.

New Mechanics

Lion Dueling Mechanics

The Gauntlet: Treat The Gauntlet as a series of 3-round skirmishes, with the exact number depending on how many different weapons are used. First, determine the number of weapons that will be used. It may be left to the contestants to agree on the number, or the judges may impose it. Then decide which weapons will be used; theoretically, any weapon considered worthy of a samurai is available. The contestants use wooden replicas of the weapons chosen; treat them as having a DR of 0k1.

In each segment of the contest, the competitors fight each other using the same weapon for a period of 3 combat rounds. When the 3 rounds are over, the duelists get ready with the next weapon, then another skirmish begins. When the duelists have gone through all of the weapons chosen for the contest, the judges total up the points scored by each. The duelist who earned more points wins the duel.

The point of the duel is to show proficiency with the chosen weapons, not brute force. Thus, the contestants are rewarded based on the number of hits scored against one's opponent, with bonuses given by the judges for attacks that they deem particularly skillful.

Treat The Gauntlet as an adjudicated contest, in that judges are required to observe and tally the hits that each contestant scores, and to reward what they deem as outstanding successes. In that sense, subjective observation is required to determine the winner of the duel, and the final results may be warped by the biases of the judges. To resolve the contest in a purely objective way, grant each competitor 1 point for each successful attack roll. They also receive 1 point for each Raise on a successful attack roll; this includes Free Raises as well as normal ones. High point total wins. In case of a tie, the judges' discretion serves as the tie break.

Taikai: Taikai is a general term for a contest in which bushi perform kata to see whose form is the most perfect. The original taikai was created in the Lion Lands as a way of showcasing the students' reverence for their Clan's martial traditions, as expressed in their ancient weapons practice forms. To this day, the taikai is seen frequently in the Lion Lands as a way of testing students' proficiency in kata. But these rules can be adapted for tournaments of martial arts (as might be held in the Dragon Lands) or even displays of shugenja power (as might be held in the Phoenix Lands).

A typical taikai consists of three rounds, in which the competitors take turns performing a kata of their choice. The contestant who wins the judges' favor in two of three rounds wins the match. To perform a kata for the taikai, a competitor makes a Void/Weapon Skill Roll, using the Weapon Skill of the weapon used in the kata. The TN is 5 x the point cost of the kata.

Each competitor receives 10 points for succeeding on his roll. For each Raise made on the Void/Weapon Skill Roll, he gains 5 extra points. Finally, add the point cost of the kata. The winner of that round is the one who accrued the most points in that round.

Treat a taikai as an adjudicated contest, as per the guidelines on p. 16. In any event, if the two competitors have exactly the same amount of points after the third round, then it is up to the GM to decide who wins, and the sorts of considerations described in the discussion of adjudicated contests apply.

Defend the Leader: To resolve a Defend the Leader match quickly, treat it as a series of Contested Battle (Skirmish) Skill Rolls between the leaders of the two teams. The winner of the roll gets to make a 7k4 attack with 4 Raises against the opposing leader. If it succeeds, the attack has smashed the clay cup on the leader's forehead, and that side wins the match. If it fails, make another Contested Battle (Skirmish) Skill Roll and repeat the process.

New Path: Lioness Legion (Bushi)

The Lioness Legion is a small, elite bushi unit well known for fast, aggressive attacks at the heart of an enemy army. Just like the famous Lion's Pride, the Lioness Legion accepts only female warriors into their ranks. Bushi of the Lioness Legion realize that their aggressive combat style leaves them vulnerable to attack. But instead of changing their stance to guard their weaknesses, they choose to leave themselves open, goading their enemies to counterattack so that they may strike at the openings presented by the counterstroke. It is a dangerous technique, but the Lioness Legionnaires are more than up to the challenge.

Technique Rank: 4

Requirements: Honor Rank of 3, Kenjutsu 6, Defense 4

Path of Entry: Matsu Berserker 3

Path of Egress: Matsu Berserker 4, Lion's Pride 1 (If requirements of the Advanced School are met)

Technique: The Predator's Assault

A bushi of the Lioness Legion knows her weakness but embraces it, using it to trap her enemies. If you are in the Full Attack posture, you may spend a Void Point when someone decides to attack you to activate this Technique. You may immediately make an attack against that opponent if he is within melee range. Only after your attack is fully resolved may he then make his attack roll against you (if he is still able, of course).

New Path: Matsu Duelist (Bushi)

Against their ancient rivals the Crane, the Lion Clan has traditionally been at a disadvantage when it comes to iaijutsu. The Crane Clan has a centuries-long tradition of iaijutsu descended from Kakita himself and they have refined it to the point of treating it as a form of art. Most Lion bushi Schools teach the style as protection from their rivals, but historically, few have focused

only on iaijutsu. This changed during the chaotic years before the Second Day of Thunder. Matsu Seijuro spent his childhood studying at the Kakita Dueling Academy as part of an exchange program. He analyzed what he learned from the Crane and altered it to best benefit the Lion. Though this school is relatively new, it has received substantial support from the leadership of the Lion Clan. The leaders watch to gauge the school's effectiveness, ready to increase funding and assistance if it becomes a huge aid against the Crane.

Technique Rank: 2

Requirements: Iaijutsu 3

Path of Entry: Any Lion School Rank 1

Path of Egress: Reenter the same School at the appropriate Rank or Matsu Berserker 1

Technique: Seijuro's Legacy

Matsu Duelists study the life and deeds of Matsu Seijuro, hero of the Clan War, as well as his techniques. Seijuro's contribution to the art of the duel give a Lion duelist technical skill that inform his head and limbs, while Seijuro's courage and devotion to the Lion Clan inspire his heart and spirit. You gain a bonus equal to your Honor Rank to your TN to be Hit, your attack rolls, and your DR. In an iaijutsu duel, you may also Focus an additional number of times equal to your Honor Rank.

New Kata: Armed Brilliance

PREPARATION TIME: 20 minutes

DURATION: 120 minutes

A Lion bushi must be ready to prove himself as a skilled warrior, both on the battlefield and in unexpected quarters. A smart bushi realizes that he will not always have his weapon of choice at hand when facing the enemy. Many Lion bushi dojo teach their students to wield many different types of weapons so that they will always be prepared. This kata can be performed with any weapon. Most bushi go through this exercise with their most trusted weapon, the katana. The bushi stands in one place, swinging his blade from one strike to the other, each one imitating the preferred attack of a different weapon.

RANK: Any Lion School 2

COST: 3

SPECIAL: You must have at least two different Weapon Skills at Rank 3 or higher.

EFFECT: For the duration of the kata, your highest Weapon Skill Rank is reduced by 1. However, you are considered to have a Skill Rank in all Weapon Skills equal to your adjusted highest Weapon Skill. For example, if your highest Weapon Skill is Kenjutsu 7, for the duration of the kata you are considered to have 6 Skill Ranks in Kenjutsu, and 5 Skill Ranks for all other Weapon Skills.

You do not gain benefits for any Emphases that you do not already have without the Skills given by this kata. You do not gain Mastery Abilities to which you did not have access before.

VOID: None.

New Kata: Emptying the Soul

PREPARATION TIME: 20 minutes

DURATION: 90 minutes

This kata is a specialty of the Kensai. It involves attacking critical points on the body with feather-light touches of the blade, leaving only slight cuts on his opponent. However, you focus part of your spirit into each blow, disrupting the enemy's chi. The kata itself is unimpressive to watch, as it relies on movements so quick and light as to be almost undetectable. But if it succeeds, it drains your opponent of his ability to marshal his strength at crucial moments.

RANK: Kensai 1

COST: 7

SPECIAL: Must be used with a katana.

EFFECT: While the kata is active, you may Raise 4 times on any attack to target a vital spot on the enemy's body that controls their chi. On a successful attack, you roll half the normal number of die for your DR, rounded up. However, you and your target must make a contested Void/Kenjutsu Roll. If you win, the target may not use Void Points for the next day.

VOID: You may spend a Void Point to gain 2 Free Raises on all your Void/Kenjutsu Rolls for the duration of the kata.

New Kata: The Paragon of Defense

PREPARATION TIME: 20 minutes

DURATION: 120 minutes



This kata involves a series of swift sweeping strikes that extend to the limit of your reach. You strike continually as you move in a full circle, then move similarly once again, but in a smaller circle. With the completion of the kata, you are able to move with your enemies' blades all around you, dodging their blows as if they moved aside for his body.

RANK: Kensai 2

COST: 10

SPECIAL: Must be used with a katana.

EFFECT: You gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal to 5 x the number of opponents within 10' of you. You may not assume the Full Defense posture while this kata is active.

VOID: You may spend a Void Point to increase the radius of the kata by an additional 10'.

New Kata: The Perfect Stance

PREPARATION TIME: 15 minutes

DURATION: 120 minutes

The Lion realize that sometimes the mere threat of defeat can unman an opponent. If the opponent believes you stronger than you are, his mind will destroy him for you. This kata focuses on the basic strokes of attacking and the standard iaijutsu strike, performed very slowly. When you finish the kata, your body becomes accustomed to the perfect strikes that it has executed over the duration of the kata. Though it does not improve your attacks or iaijutsu strikes, an opponent that attempts to assess your strength would be fooled by your readiness.

RANK: Any Lion Bushi School Rank 2

COST: 4

SPECIAL: You must have Iaijutsu 4 or higher.

EFFECT: Your Agility, Reflexes, Void Ring and Iaijutsu Skill Rank appear to be 2 higher to everyone else during the Challenge phase of an Iaijutsu duel.

VOID: You may spend a Void Point to increase the bonus given by this kata to 3 for its duration.

New Kata: Soul's Readiness

PREPARATION TIME: 30 minutes

DURATION: 120 minutes

The Lion bushi realizes that to follow an enemy's tempo is to lose control and, ultimately, his life. To triumph, he must alter the pace of the fight until the enemy is himself caught in the Lion's trap. Soul's Readiness uses a series of alternating slow and fast strikes aimed at various parts of a phantom enemy. By the end of the kata, you have emptied your mind of all clutter, and are calm and ready to face the enemy with a clear head.

RANK: Any Lion School 2

COST: 5

EFFECT: Your Initiative may not be affected by any opponent's Techniques, Advantages, Spells, or Tides of Battle Rolls. You may roll a Tides of Battle Roll on every turn, regardless of whether or not you have suffered Wounds. However, you suffer a -1k1 penalty to your Initiative Roll.

VOID: None.

CHAPTER SIX:

DUELING: WAY
OF THE MANTIS

Philosophy

Unlike the other Great Clans, the Mantis were not created directly by the Kami. Indeed, the Mantis samurai claim that their Clan was forged by the undaunted perseverance and unwavering conviction of the outstanding mortals whom they are proud to call their ancestors. Long ago, when Hida Kaimetsu-uo was denied his rightful place among the Crab, he and his followers formed the first Minor Clan in the Empire's history. Calling themselves the Mantis, they set out to the tropical islands off the coast of Rokugan, and there they forged a meager existence for themselves. By leaving the Crab and establishing their own Clan, these brave individuals sought to build a new life for themselves in the distant isles of Silk and Spice. For years, they remained largely out of sight of Rokugan, rarely meddling in the affairs of the Empire. During this time, they accumulated an impressive amount of wealth through piracy and trade. The harsh conditions in which they learned to thrive formed the strong character and forged the deep sense of individualism of the people of the Mantis, turning them into the unique and proud samurai they are today.

It was not until after the Second Day of Thunder, when Yoritomo bravely led his Clan into battle against the Shadowlands, that the Mantis was recognized as one of the Empire's Great Clans. Fighting alongside the other Great Clans, those who had long been considered little more than pirates and opportunists proved their courage and strength in battle, as well as their loyalty to the Emperor. Since the Yoritomo Family was neither very large nor particularly mighty, the Mantis, although they now had the official status of a Great Clan, still lacked the power of one. It was not until they welcomed two Minor Clans, the Centipede and the Wasp, into their ranks (which soon respectively became the Moshi and Tsuruchi Families) that the Mantis strengthened their numbers and their power. For the first time in its short history, the Mantis was now truly one of the Great Clans of the Empire, in both power and status. By adding extra Tsuruchi muscle and much needed Moshi shugenja, the Mantis ensured that their place in Rokugan would endure.

The unique history of the Mantis Clan makes their samurai very different from those of most other Great Clans. Indeed, though they are immensely practical and pragmatic, the Mantis are not as attached to traditions as most of their rival Clans. They are used to the harsh living conditions of the world's most isolated islands, they know how to navigate the seas, they have made contacts with people of distant lands, and they wield not only the sword but also a number of less conventional weapons in combat. Their battle tactics are as unorthodox as they are, and many Rokugani samurai fail to understand their brethren from the Mantis Clan.

Uniquely among the Great Clans, the Mantis consider the bow and several peasants' weapons, notably the kama and tonfa, as deadly and often even more practical than the katana and the wakizashi. For a Mantis, there is no shame in using a weapon that is traditionally considered beneath a samurai's skill level, especially on the high seas, which presents a dramatically different combat environment than land.

Considering their unique history and attitudes, it comes as no surprise that the members of the Mantis Clan see dueling as do no samurai hailing from one of the other Great Clans. Even less orthodox in their view and practice of the duel than the members of the Unicorn Clan, the Mantis have a very long tradition of dueling, but they engage duels in such a singular fashion that those from other Clans often fail to understand the purpose behind such contests. Although samurai of the Mantis use the duel for the same reasons members of rival Clans do — mainly to settle disputes and points of honor between two individuals or parties — they view more traditional forms of dueling, such as the practice of *iaijutsu*, as old fashioned. More importantly, they consider all the ceremonies surrounding a formal duel as unnecessarily lavish and antiquated. They see such traditions as extraneous, and in no way representative of what a formal duel between two honorable samurai of the Empire should be.

Like their distant Crab cousins, members of the Mantis Clan — especially those individuals hailing from the Yoritomo Family — value strength and stamina above all else. For them, duels between samurai are not simply tests of skills or courage be-

tween two individuals, but also means to measure one's own endurance and raw physical power. Because of this, most duels between members of the Mantis Clan includes the drinking of sake before, and sometimes even during, the contest. This tradition dates back to the early days of the Clan, when its samurai roamed the seas in search of lands and riches. In those days, conflicts between individuals were resolved swiftly in order to maintain order aboard ship or within small villages. When conflicts arose, the samurai of the Clan would meet in formal duels, which were preceded by long hours of drinking and celebrating. Friends and families of the duelists would partake in these celebrations and would list the virtues and accomplishments of their favorite candidates. Inebriated, the challengers would then pick up their favorite weapon and face each other in single combat. The individual best able to cope with the effects the alcohol had on his body was considered to be the toughest and most willful of the two contestants, but not necessarily the victor — but he was considered as being the one with the best chances of winning the duels. These fights usually ended with first blood, the winner of the bout being the first one able to injure his opponent, but more important conflicts were sometimes fought to the death. These,

however, were extremely rare, as each member of the small and isolated Clan was of foremost importance to the survival of the Mantis.

The oldest of the Mantis' dueling traditions was founded by the ancestors of the Yoritomo in the days when they were the only samurai of the Clan. It is simply called The Race. Essentially a race aboard small kobune between two samurai, this contest originated in the main shipyard of the Clan, where the samurai in charge of supervising the craftsmen building their ships occasionally challenged each other to friendly competitions aboard their boats. This custom gave them a chance to practice their craft and show off their skills while at the same time engage in a leisure activity that was well regarded by the nobles of the Clan. The race between two or more kobune quickly became a popular event among the ancestors of the Yoritomo samurai, and followers of the Mantis, regardless of their social rank, learned to appreciate the spectacle of such challenges.

It was not until years later that the Mantis samurai began to use kobune races as formal means to settle disputes or points of honor between themselves. During such formal competitions, they sometimes added to the complexity of the event by making attacks against their rival permissible under the rules. The formal



race became a dangerous affair where both duelists often risked mortal wounds or falling overboard and drowning. The danger of such duels became so great that the Mantis Champion soon had to ban this practice. The Race in its original form, however, remains the most popular type of dueling in the Mantis Clan, especially among the Yoritomo Family.

The Yoritomo have also created from their unique heritage another distinctive form of dueling — one that is more conventional than The Race, but still eccentric by comparison to the other Great Clans. Fighting with kama and tonfa is a skill that the Family learned well as seafarers, both being weapons that one could use effectively in very close quarters. Based on generations of experience, Yoritomo sensei teach their bushi to fight with either weapon two-handed, in a flurry of motion that, at the highest levels of proficiency, is almost impossible to track with the naked eye.

Yoritomo warriors are so comfortable with this style of fighting that they have enshrined it as a type of dueling when settling matters of honor among themselves. Known as The Whirlwind for the constant and unpredictable storm of motion that the duelists create, it is a spectacle every bit as entrancing as a duel between master swordsmen. News of an impending Whirlwind always generates excitement among Yoritomo of all social ranks, and such a duel never wants for witnesses or a judge.

Tsuruchi Versus Ton

Legends hold that it was Tsuruchi himself who fought the first formal archery duel that was a true personal combat rather than a simple test of skill with a bow. The most common version of the tale proclaims that it took place shortly after the treachery that sent Tsuruchi on a gory campaign of vengeance against the samurai of the Lion and Scorpion Clans. It is said that, as Tsuruchi was plotting the dangerous forays that would allow him to reclaim what had rightfully belonged to his parents, Ton, one of his most trusted lieutenants, refused to have any part in the affair. Ton even went as far as saying that Tsuruchi had gone mad, that the spirits of revenge and bloodlust haunted him, and that no one in his right mind would follow him in a venture that would lead them to their deaths. Tsuruchi, who could not spare a single man, worried that some of the warriors under his command would side with Ton and abandon him.

As soon as his lieutenant publicly disagreed with him scheme, the warriors under Tsuruchi's command began to question their lord's wisdom. Tsuruchi wanted to resolve the matter quickly, and thus nip the dissension while it was still in the bud, but he needed to wait for an opportune moment. One day, Ton gave him this opportunity when he confronted Tsuruchi in his own house, in front of many of his most trusted men. Instead of listening to his lord's reasoned arguments, Ton boldly challenged him to a duel. Tsuruchi was ready to meet his foe then and now, but he knew how much the result of this contest would weigh on the success of his plan — more specifically, this confrontation would determine how many warriors would remain under his control. Tsuruchi told Ton to choose the weapon with which he preferred to confront him, and declared that a formal duel between them would settle the matter once and for all. If Tsuruchi lost, he would give Ton and anyone

When the Tsuruchi Family joined the Mantis, they brought with them the customs of their ancestors. Used to the rough mountain living conditions of their original lands, these athletic and determined individuals have a long tradition of expertise in the use of the bow, and the Tsuruchi samurai have always practiced archery to an extent that is exceptional among Rokugani samurai Families. Among the Tsuruchi, the art of kyujutsu is so important that every member of the family considers archery duels to be the most honorable way to prove one's worth. Most Tsuruchi children learn how to wield the bow at a very young age. As a result, archery duels are an essential part of Tsuruchi customs. While they might not always be able to engage in such a duel against members of other Clans, or even against individuals from other Families among the Mantis, the Tsuruchi always compete in archery duels when they need to end a dispute within their own ranks.

The Tsuruchi engage in two distinctly different types of archery duels, however. One entails a relatively mundane contest between two archers to see who can hit a target the most often in a set number of tries. The other is much more dramatic and can be seen as a ranged version of iaijutsu. In it, the two opponents face each other in a closely prescribed space and take turns firing at one another until first blood or death, depending on the terms established beforehand (the former is much more common).

who wished it their leave. If he won the bout, however, Ton would never speak of this matter again and would continue to serve him without question.

Ton agreed to those terms and, being a master archer himself, he chose to confront his lord with bow and arrow. The duelists, however, would not engage in a typical archery competition where both competitors shot arrows at a distant target in order to judge who was the better marksman. Instead, they would face each other in a 60-foot wide circle, with only their bow and a handful of arrows at their disposal. The first one to wound the other would be declared the victor. The ritual thus closely resembled a traditional bout of iaijutsu in the sense that the duelists would face each other in an enclosed space. The contest would also be fought to first blood, as both men, despite their disagreement, still considered the life of the other as important as his own.

Before a crowd of a few hundred bushi loyal to Tsuruchi, both men walked into the dueling area and faced each other. Ton shot first, but Tsuruchi dodged his foe's arrow, and with lightning speed, tumbled toward his opponent, pulled an arrow from his quiver used it as a melee weapon, cutting Ton across the cheek. Caught by surprise and amazed at the speed in which his lord had moved, Ton conceded and reaffirmed his vow of loyalty as a samurai to his rightful lord. Thus, Tsuruchi won the duel without ever firing a single shot at Ton. In the ensuing campaign, Ton's aid proved crucial in helping Tsuruchi reclaim the lands that had been stolen from his parents by the Lion and Scorpion. Without this first formal archery duel between Ton and his lord, Tsuruchi would never have had the manpower to put his plan into motion, and thus the Wasp Clan would have probably never even have existed.

While competitions of archery and races aboard small kobune are paramount among the customs of the Tsuruchi and Yoritomo Families, the Moshi also have their own way of settling disputes between their samurai. Much more serene and introspective than the other Families of the Clan, the Moshi, which make up the bulk of the Mantis' shugenja, are also more traditional and conservative in their customs. While they still hold iaijutsu competitions between dueling bushi and taryu-jiai bouts between shugenja as important Rokugani traditions, members of the Moshi Family also believe that the result of a competition between two individuals of their Clan should be beneficial to the Mantis. Over the years, the Moshi have developed a formal contest of achievement that allows two dueling samurai to focus their energies not in a fight in which they need to face each other, but rather to harness those energies in an attempt to become even better individuals.

This unorthodox means of dueling is now widely practiced among the Mantis, who find it beneficial for to the common good of the Clan. Essentially a long term contest in which two opponents struggle to acquire as much renown as possible in a specific time frame, this form of official challenge allows the two duelists involved to work for the benefit of the Mantis Clan rather than fight against one another. This type of duel is supervised by the Daimyo of each of the three Families of the Clan, or one of their representatives. These personages act as arbiters and judges, and evaluate who between the two duelists has accumulated the most renown, and thus who has won the formal competition.

Conceived by the members of the Centipede Clan before they joined the Mantis to become the Moshi Family, this form of dueling is perfect for a Clan whose samurai are few and whose resources are limited. Indeed, a formal contest of achievement allows the duelists to compete not as much against one another, but rather against themselves, as they strive to accomplish great deeds and work hard to surpass themselves in whatever field or endeavor they chose. During a contest of achievement, which is always a long-term affair, the duelists must acquire as much renown as they possibly can in a very specific time frame, determined at the commencement of the duel. Since the duelists focus on acquiring glory instead of fighting each other, the Mantis Clan greatly benefits from this type of challenge. Indeed, by accumulating as much renown as they can, the duelists also improve — albeit slightly — the status of the Mantis among the Great Clans of Rokugan through their exceptional deeds and the fame that comes with having done them. Thus, the contest of achievement continues to be the Mori's preferred form of dueling, despite the fact that, as the Mantis' most conservative and traditional Family, they hold the more conventional dueling rites of iaijutsu and taryu-jiai in great respect.

A traditional contest of achievement is an intricate and formal affair. This type of duel is always supervised by all three Mantis Family Daimyo, or at least a designated emissary. At the commencement of the event, they meet the duelists and inform them of the rules and terms of victory. These rules are usually simple and can be summed up as follows: Accumulate as much glory as you possibly can, in a specific time frame, without endangering another Mantis or any of the Clan's vassals, and do nothing to bring dishonor to the Clan or weaken its position versus the other Great Clans. The period of the contest usually ranges from one to six months. At the end of this time, the judges meet the duelists again to evaluate how well they have performed. The individual judged to have accrued the most renown wins the contest.

Though a typical contest of achievement is fought between two individuals, three or more samurai of the Mantis Clan sometimes enter such a challenge at the same time. Because most other forms of dueling do not allow more than two candidates to compete against one another, members of the Mantis Clan always turn to this type of formal challenge when more than two of their samurai must settle a dispute. This, however, is extremely rare.

Mantis Institutions

The samurai of the Mantis have an unsavory reputation — which, to be honest, is not wholly undeserved. Rival Clans view them as little more than ruffians who ceaselessly plundered the coasts of Rokugan for centuries. Though the Yoritomo practiced piracy on a number of occasions, and thus deserve some of this notoriety, their samurai are also known to be cunning negotiators and merchants. During the long centuries of their self-imposed exile, the Mantis have traded goods with most Families of the Empire as well as with foreign nations no one in Rokugan had ever heard of before. Master seafarers and bold explorers, the Yoritomo developed particular customs while they lived independent of the other Clans of Rokugan. Since they became a Great Clan and incorporated the Moshi and Tsuruchi into their ranks, the Mantis have adapted to their new lifestyle, and have become an important part of the Empire.

Today, the samurai of the Mantis continue to maintain an unmatched naval force — one that they never hesitate to use against their enemies — and they continue to make frequent visits to distant lands and keep contact with a number of different gaijin peoples. At the same time, they also proudly maintain their status as one of Rokugan's Great Clans, and work to improve both the strength of their armies and the reputation of their Clan within Rokugan. Because of their unique past, but also because of the fact that the Mantis Clan was reinforced by the addition of two Minor Clans, their people have different traditions, and they honor customs few other nobles in Rokugan would understand or even care about. As in many other things, the samurai of the Mantis view dueling in a different way than other Clans. They keep up a relatively diverse variety of dueling practices based on the traditions of their component Families, and their dojo reflect this diversity.

Yoritomo Bushi Dojo

The practice of kobune races and their widespread popularity within the Mantis Clan cannot be separated from the history and traditions of the Yoritomo Bushi School and its primary dojo, which sits nestled under the protection of Kyuden Gotei. Centuries ago, when the samurai in charge of the main Mantis shipyard began to engage in friendly races aboard small kobune, they probably never suspected that this practice would one day become an important cultural institution of their Clan. Indeed, they originally entered racing competitions simply because it was something they enjoyed doing. When the sensei of the Yoritomo Bushi School, who worked closely with the samurai in charge of the main shipyard, discovered that their peers challenged each

other to small kobune races, they also began to compete. For the sensei of the School, however, such races quickly became more than mere leisure. They realized that such competitions were beneficial to those who took part in them, for it gave them a chance to put their knowledge and talent into practice, as well as compare their skill level with the other sailors of the Clan.

It was a matter of time before some sensei decided that these races should be part of every samurai's training. Originally, such challenges were originally reserved for advanced students. With the passing years, however, the practice became increasingly common and younger students were encouraged to race against one another at different stages of their studies. This gave the sensei a good opportunity to evaluate the skill level of each of their students. These races also helped strengthen the character of each individual who competed in them. To this day, the Yoritomo Bushi sensei believe that it was in part because of such competitions that the strong sense of individualism and the unwavering determination of the Mantis were forged.

As the young students of the Yoritomo Bushi School became more accustomed to navigating the seas, they entered kobune races more frequently. This gave them a chance to show their great navigating skills, compare their mastery of the kobune with the abilities of their more skillful peers, and also practice special maneuvers they could only perform aboard such boats. These races immediately caught the attention of those who happened to witness them, and quickly became attractions in their own right.

At first, the only audiences for these small kobune races were the artisans who built boats as well as the students and the sensei of the Yoritomo Bushi School. But with the passing of time, such events became increasingly popular as spectacles, so that now it is not at all uncommon for Mantis to travel great distances in order to assist in such events. This is especially true when more renowned samurai of the Clan engage in such races.

As the Yoritomo gradually stopped honoring the ancient traditions of their Crab ancestors, they developed more pragmatic means of surviving in their harsh new home. The great difficulties they had to face in order to earn even a meager living at the beginning of their existence, as well as the very different lifestyle they were building for themselves in the distant Isles of Spice and Silk, quickly altered the mindset that they had brought with them as Rokugani samurai. No longer did they view the sword as the only weapon worthy of a samurai. No longer did they see commerce and trade as lowly endeavors. No longer did they train with conventional complex patterned behaviors and repeated fighting drills (hence the eccentricity of Mantis kata). Instead, Mantis bushi learned to wield peasant weapons, which were easily replaceable when they were lost at sea. They explored the oceans and made contact with people who lived far away from Rokugan, and they exchanged goods, stories, and rumors with them. They developed a unique fighting style that made them unpredictable opponents in battle, moving constantly and darting in every direction in order to exploit any weakness they could



find in their foes. The Mantis also became surprisingly good sailors, and those who performed well in small kobune races usually captained boats later in their lives.

It took years for the kobune races, so popular among the people of the Mantis, to become a formal means of settling disagreements and points of honor between two samurai. Clan legend holds that the first time such an event occurred was when Gusai Mori, the heir of the man who made it possible for the Mantis Clan to become a Minor Clan (though at the cost of his life), fought a bushi who had challenged his authority. Before the first "Race" began, the duelists spent a full 12-hour day facing each other and drinking sake to prove how tough and willful they were. The following morning, The Race began and Gusai Mori beat his foe, who then agreed to redeem himself by serving Mori faithfully. Gusai Mori probably never suspected that by engaging his foe in such a manner, he would lay the foundation of what would become one of the most important means of dueling of the Mantis Clan.

Today, members of the Mantis Clan typically spend an extended period of time (usually 1-2 full days) drinking before they engage in any kind of duel; just as their ancestor did. No special ceremony other than the consumption of strong drinks precedes such a formal event, but when word that two samurai will face each other in The Race, the affair always attracts a great crowd, especially if it is fought on Mantis territory. Every time a race of small kobune is used as a formal means of dueling, arbiters, usually Yoritomo Bushi Dojo sensei, judge the contest. At the end of the event, the winner of The Race is declared the victor, just as if he had won a bout of iaijutsu duel.

The Yoritomo Bushi Dojo also offers a limited course of training in the art of dueling with kama or tonfa two-handed, known as The Whirlwind. The Yoritomo, however, do not consider this proper combat training — even though practice in this form of dueling does have practical benefits in other types of fighting. Instead, the sensei of the dojo allow masters of The Whirlwind to offer a limited course of study to anyone

who is interested, knowing full well that The Whirlwind is widely accepted within the Yoritomo Family as a means of settling disputes, as well as something of a popular spectator sport.

Hunter of Men Dojo

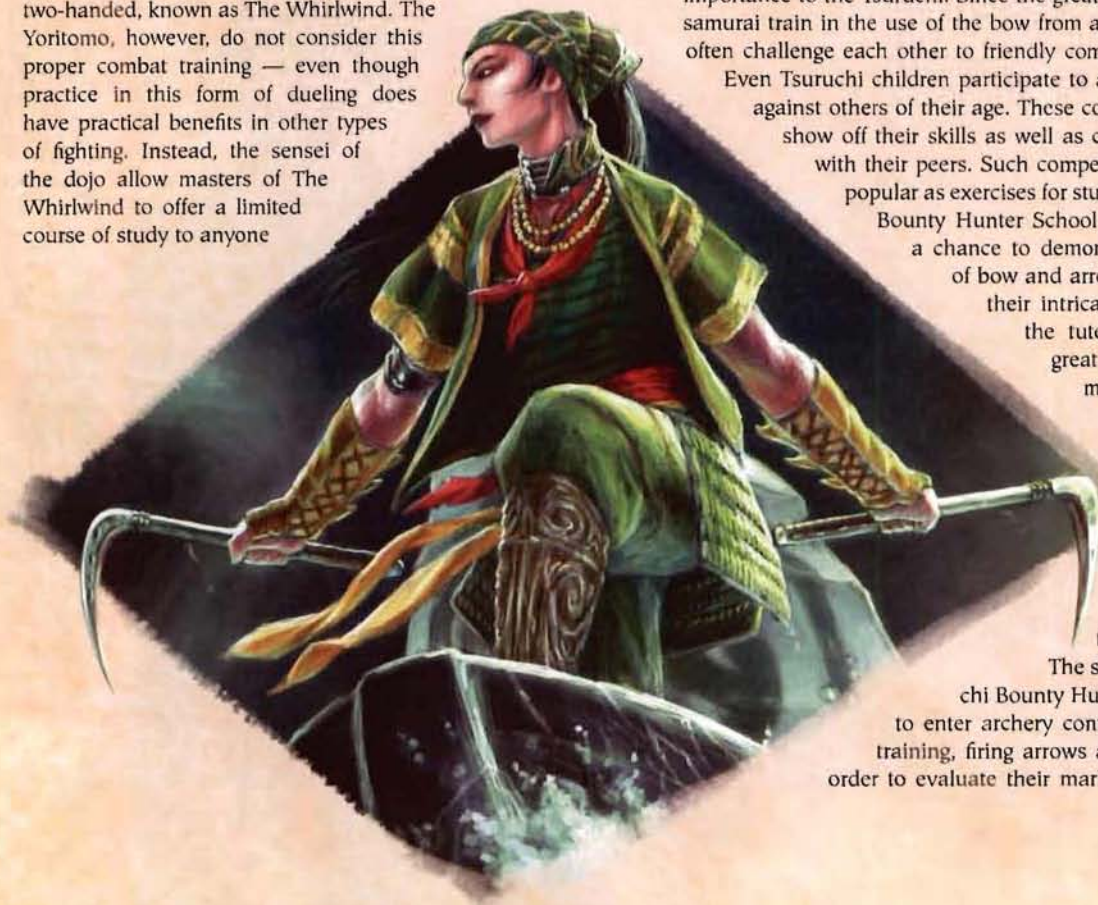
Archery was a great passion of the Tsuruchi Family long before their integration into the Mantis, when they were still a Minor Clan of their own. To know kyujutsu as if it was part of one's soul and practice it as if there was no separation between archer, bow and arrow has been the Way of the Tsuruchi throughout their history. The Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter School, headquartered at the Hunter of Men Dojo in the shadow of Kyuden Ashinagabachi, trains young samurai of the Clan to wield the bow as no other samurai in the Empire could ever hope to learn. Though they are often misunderstood because they do not study the sword the way other bushi do, samurai of the Tsuruchi Family are respected for the dazzling feats they can perform with bow and arrow, for their tremendous ability to track down their prey, as well as for the legendary determination of their kin. While the Moshi bring honor to the Mantis and the Yoritomo provide naval power and leadership for the recently created Great Clan, the Tsuruchi bring them stealth, strength, and resolve. Anyone who has ever met a Tsuruchi knows that, like the famous founder of the Family, the samurai of this Family would stop at nothing to achieve their goals. Thus, they are recognized throughout the Empire as some of the most resourceful scouts, as among the most stubborn individuals, and as indisputably the greatest bounty hunters in all of Rokugan.

Archery competitions were always been popular among the samurai of the Wasp Clan, and this custom is still of foremost importance to the Tsuruchi. Since the great majority of Tsuruchi samurai train in the use of the bow from a very early age, they often challenge each other to friendly competitions of archery.

Even Tsuruchi children participate to archery competitions against others of their age. These contests allow them to show off their skills as well as compare their talents with their peers. Such competitions are especially popular as exercises for students of the Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter School, since it gives them a chance to demonstrate their mastery of bow and arrow as well as perfect their intricate techniques under the tutelage of one of the great sensei who have mastered the art of kyujutsu.

Firing ranges take up every bit of open space on the grounds of Hunter of Men Dojo in which they can safely be set.

The students of the Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter School continue to enter archery contests as part of their training, firing arrows at faraway targets in order to evaluate their marksmanship or shoot-



ing as many arrows as they can in a set amount of time. Archery duels, however, are much more dangerous. Like Tsuruchi and Ton, who faced each other in the very first archery duel, duelists of the Tsuruchi Family face one another in a 60-foot wide circle, armed with nothing but their Tsuruchi longbow and arrows. The circle, usually drawn out of colorful sand upon the ground, but sometimes also built with small round rocks, marks the boundaries of the dueling arena. Anyone who so much as takes one step outside of this circle automatically loses the bout.

Archery duels between Tsuruchi samurai are always fought to first blood. Since the Family is small and their lands tiny, they cannot risk losing even a single of their samurai unnecessarily. While little ceremony precedes an archery duel, some samurai choose to enter into a contest of stamina and willpower, as their Yoritomo brethren often do, before they fight the actual duel. When they do, they sit on opposite sides of the dueling circle and drink sake for a period ranging from 1-2 full days. At the end of this period, the duel begins, with official witnesses present — including the Family Daimyo — to judge the contest.

While all Tsuruchi samurai are skilled with the bow, those who study under the sensei at the Hunter of Men Dojo can learn special techniques that allow them to become what could only be called archery duel experts. Masters of dodging projectiles shot or thrown their way, these samurai also learn to focus the whole of their mind, body, and soul into a single, amazingly precise shot. While they might not be as adept at firing multiple shots against their foes, nor at delivering as deadly a wound to their targets as other students of their school, the archers who master these special techniques are lightning fast and the arrows they shoot are extremely quick and precise.

The Green Blade Dojo

The Green Blade Dojo is a small and relatively new institution founded and run under the auspices of the Moshi Family. Located just northeast of Toshi no Inazuma, the Mantis' famed City of Lightning, this simple stone structure houses a small group of students dedicated to strengthen the Mantis' place among the Great Clans through study of iaijutsu, an art with which they are relatively unfamiliar.

Though the sensei here have little to do with the traditional contest of achievement, they all hail from the Moshi Family and they all tirelessly promote the principles, and the importance, of such an unorthodox form of challenge. Individuals of renown themselves, they also teach their students how to act in ways that help them accumulate glory. Thus, many who have studied at The Green Blade are considered to be expert duelists when they enter a formal contest of achievement. The techniques of the dojo, however, are beneficial to every samurai who study there, not just to those individuals who might one day compete in a contest of achievement. After all, acquiring glory for oneself can only help improve the status of the Mantis within the Empire. Because of this, both the institution and its sensei are highly regarded. The Moshi Daimyo himself funds this institution, with the help of the Mantis Champion.

Mantis Sensei

Although they view dueling rather differently than do the other Great Clans, the Mantis nevertheless consider duels as essential means of settling disputes, and indeed as vital parts of their cultural heritage. These sensei of the Mantis dojo take seriously their charge to preserve the unique ways of their Clan by passing them along to younger generations.

TSURUCHI NAO, TSURUCHI BOUNTY HUNTER SENSEI

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 4	Void: 4
Reflexes: 4 Stamina: 5				
Honor: 1.9		Status: 3.1		Glory: 4.2

SCHOOL/RANK: Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter 3/Master Bowman 1

ADVANTAGES: Ebisu's Blessing, Fleet

DISADVANTAGES: None

KATA: Strike of the Cliff's Edge, Striking as Fire

SKILLS: Athletics 4, Defense 6, Hunting 4, Iaijutsu 4, Kyujutsu (Tsuruchi Longbow) 7, Stealth 4

Born into the Wasp Clan, Nao was among the first group of former Wasp to take her gempukku as a member of the Tsuruchi Family. Still young when the Wasp Clan her parents had dutifully served was integrated into the Mantis, Nao was not fazed at all by the change in her Family's status, and she took considerable pride in the fact that she would be among the first students of the Wasp to come into adulthood as a Mantis. The elaborate gempukku ceremony and the archery competitions in which she took part during this solemn event only served to reinforce her pride. After all, this was the first and last time in history that a group of children from the Wasp Clan stepped into adulthood to become samurai of the Mantis. The gempukku ceremony in which Nao took part was thus even more special than any that had preceded it, as well as more important than any that would follow. Now that she was a Mantis samurai, and a part of one of the Empire's Great Clans, Tsuruchi Nao swore that she would not only be loyal to her new Clan, but also that she would work hard to become the best samurai she could ever hope to be.

She did not have to wait long for a chance to prove herself. Though she had never left Mantis territory and knew little of the subtleties of the world in which she lived, her eagerness, her ability with the bow, and her tracking skills attracted the attention of Yoritomo Koyomi, a prominent Yoritomo courtier who needed a couple of dedicated bodyguards to accompany her in her travels between the different courts of Rokugan. Koyomi was a boorish, arrogant, and cunning samurai who seemed as devious and threatening as any Scorpion when dealing with her fellow courtiers, but Nao quickly learned that she was also a dedicated member of her Clan who only worked to further the cause of the Mantis. Since she also treated her yojimbo well, Nao respected her and served her faithfully.

The man in charge of Koyomi's guards was her nephew, Yoritomo Sumitomo. In his late twenties when Nao joined the bodyguard detail, Sumitomo seemed relatively young but he had a great deal of experience in battle, having spent most of his youth serving aboard one of the many kobune for which his family was so famous. He was not only a skilled warrior but also an impressive navigator and a fair group leader, and Nao learned much from him. After seven years of loyal service in *this capacity*, Nao succeeded Sumitomo as head of Koyomi's guards.

Tsuruchi Nao served the famous Yoritomo courtier in this capacity for the better part of two decades, during which time she learned a great deal about the history and lore of the Mantis that her Family had not previously known. While she continued to hone her skills, Nao also earned a reputation as an honest and loyal yojimbo who would willingly sacrifice her own life in order to protect her charge. During the early days of her career, Nao learned a great many things about the politics of Rokugan, as well as how the Yoritomo courtiers and bushi operated in their respective arenas. While the techniques she used in combat were much different than those of the Yoritomo bushi under her command, Nao continued to take great pride in her skill as an archer, which much exceeded that of her peers. She also had the occasion to mentor the handful of young Tsuruchi Bounty Hunters who hired on to serve Koyomi for a year or two.

After years of loyal service as a yojimbo, Nao was more than happy to retire to a new life. She continued to travel throughout the Empire, working sometimes as a scout, sometimes as a bodyguard, and one some occasions as a bounty hunter. After she apprehended her first criminal, Nao, always dedicated to the Mantis, decided to concentrate her efforts on cleansing the lands of all those who had wronged a member of her Clan. For some years more she pursued this goal, and in the decade and a half that followed her yojimbo career, she made a name for herself as one of the most prolific trackers in all of Rokugan, working in close cooperation with Mantis magistrates.

When Nao apprehended a Tsuruchi man accused of murdering his wife, his brother took him upon himself to defend his honor. Nao's principal evidence was the testimony of the unfortunate couple's child, who had witnessed the crime. The accused man's brother claimed that his nephew was lying and challenged anyone who believed his brother a criminal to a duel. Nao, who had seen the child after his mother's death, had no doubt that his testimony was truthful. For the first time in her life, Nao entered a formal archery contest. She won the duel and justice was served, and Nao realized how much of what she had learned during her years as a yojimbo could help samurai become even better archers, and duelists. Now retired from active service to her Clan, she teaches these techniques at the Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter Dojo.

YORITOMO SUMITOMO, YORITOMO BUSHI SCHOOL SENSEI

Air: 4	Earth: 4	Fire: 4	Water: 4	Void: 4
Reflexes: 5		Agility: 6	Strength: 5	
Honor: 2.5		Status: 4.2		Glory: 5.1

SCHOOL/RANK: Yoritomo Bushi 4/Yoritomo Kobune Pilot 1

ADVANTAGES: Balance, Daikoku's Blessing, Large

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Sight, Insensitive, Overconfident

KATA: Howl of the Son of Storms, Strength of Waves, Strike of the Cliff's Edge, Striking as Earth, Striking as Water

SKILLS: Athletics (Swimming) 5, Battle (Skirmish) 5, Commerce 3, Craft (Sailing) 4, Defense, Kenjutsu 5, Peasant Weapons (Kama, Parangu) 7

Yoritomo Sumitomo had a typical childhood for a samurai of his Family. One of his earliest memories is of standing alongside his father aboard one of the great kobune of the Mantis Clan. As a child, he felt a great thrill each time a powerful wave crashed and broke upon the ship's prow, as the kobune rocked under the force

of the ocean, and as the salty sea breeze caressed his naked face. From the first time he stepped aboard a ship, Sumitomo enjoyed every moment he spent at sea, savoring every instant as few others ever did. Whether it was sunny or rainy, day or night, Sumitomo has always felt at home upon anyone of the great Mantis ships that cruised the great open waters. It came as no surprise to anyone, therefore, that he joined the Yoritomo Bushi School and quickly became one of the most promising graduates of the institution.

Though too young to captain a ship, Sumitomo had every quality to become a great commander. He was charismatic and made friends easily, and his mates somehow always seemed to feel as loyal toward him as they were to their own family. He was a great navigator and possessed an innate understanding and a tremendous respect for the sea that even his Yoritomo brethren seemed to lack in comparison. He was smart, honest, and bold, devious in battle and resolute in everything else, but he never took any more risk than he deemed necessary to accomplish any task to which he set his mind. Sumitomo also had a way with strangers that made him a natural negotiator, which made him the perfect tradesman and the best first mate any captain could hope to have. After years of journeying throughout the eastern seas, trading with foreign nations, exploring distant lands, and occasionally delighting in piracy and plunder, a dramatic event changed the course of Sumitomo's life.

One fateful day, when his ship was traveling the high seas, a great storm gathered. Without warning, the light of day was replaced by unnatural dusk and the sea began to tremble with the might of a thousand angry spirits. In an instant, gale and wind assailed the Mantis kobune, driving the ship in one direction before sending it whirling in another. Meanwhile, mighty waves came crashing upon the ship's deck, threatening the lives of everyone onboard. Sumitomo did his best to control the kobune, but the storm was too powerful for a man to fight alone. In the space of a minute, he saw his captain and many of the men under his command fall over the side. One by one, the roiling waters devoured them. After what had seemed to him like an eternity, Sumitomo realized he was now the only person aboard the ship, but the storm was far from over. The Mantis kobune, which had thus far held together under these extreme conditions, began to break apart. Sumitomo held on to the mast and, somehow, managed to remain conscious even after it broke off and sent him flying into the ocean. When the storm subsided, Sumitomo spent over a week clinging to the broken mast before a ship finally rescued him. He later found out he had been the only survivor of the great storm, which had mercilessly swallowed every one of his comrades.

Before this narrow escape from death on the high seas, Sumitomo had never wanted anything but a life on the high seas. But afterward, the idea of serving aboard another boat became unbearable to him. Now that he found himself unable to face the sea, he spent weeks wondering what he would do, what he would become. As luck would have it, his aunt Koyomi, a renowned courtier of the Clan, offered Sumitomo a way out when she hired him to become head of her personal guard. He served her for almost a decade, but despite his terrible experience and the great dread he felt at the idea of returning to the ocean, the sea called him, beckoning him to her bosom. Like the half-forgotten embrace of an old lover, Sumitomo could not resist her call, and he eventually returned to the place that, in his heart, he had always belonged.



Sumitomo, however, vowed that he would regain his seaman's legs, face his fears, and perfect his art before he would once again offer his services to a Mantis kobune captain. Sumitomo set out to sea once more, this time, on a lonely voyage of self-exploration. For two years he journeyed alone aboard a small kobune, braving countless dangers and facing death on numerous occasions. When he returned to Rokugan, he was not only ready to captain a ship of his own, but he was also more skilled in his art, more confident in his ability, and more in love with the life he had always dreamed about that he had ever been. From this point on, Yoritomo Sumitomo had an illustrious career as a Mantis captain, and he was in no small part responsible for the success his Clan has had in their dealings with people of foreign nations. His years of service also brought the Mantis great wealth, and served to strengthen the position of the Yoritomo Family as well as the Mantis Clan as a whole. In his old age, he now teaches the techniques he mastered during his years at sea at the Yoritomo Bushi School. Many students come to him to perfect their mastery of the small kobune, which make Sumitomo an excellent sensei for those who wish to compete in The Race, or in any other form of competition aboard this type of vessel.

New Mechanics

Mantis Dueling Practices

The effects of drink: If Mantis duelists engage in the traditional pre-duel drinking bout, have each of them make a Raw Earth Roll against a TN of 30 to determine the effect (if any) of hangover or residual drunkenness on their performance. If he fails, he suffers a penalty to all Skill Trait and Ring Rolls for the duration of the duel equal to the amount by which he failed (from the effects of hangover or residual drunkenness). If a duelist succeeds, there is no negative effect. If he rolls 50 or higher, the alcohol has had a strangely beneficial effect on him, and he receives a bonus to all Skill, Trait and Ring Rolls equal to his Earth Ring for the duration of the duel.

If the duelists wish to make a duel out of their pre-duel drinking, see the rules regarding Crab Clan drinking contests on p. 28 for guidelines on how to resolve it.

Weapon duels: Since the Mantis tend to dispense with the formalities of iaijutsu when dueling amongst themselves, resolve all such confrontations as regular skirmishes. This includes Whirlwind duels.

The Race: Kobune races can be resolved in various ways, depending on how complex you want to make the process, and how much suspense you want to generate. The simplest way, of course, is to require a single Contested Craft (Sailing) Roll from the contestants.

However, you may also draw more drama out of the process by requiring 3 Contested Craft (Sailing) Rolls, with the winner of 2 of the 3 rolls winning the race. In this case, each roll may be said to represent the early, middle and late stages of the race.

For yet another alternate method of resolving a kobune race, break the race into as many stages as you like. For each stage, the contestants should make a Contested Craft (Sailing) Roll, with the difference between the high and low rolls representing the magnitude by which the winner "won" that stage. Keep a running total of each contestant's rolls. The winner of the race is the contestant with the higher total of all his rolls, not the one who won more rolls than the other.

Archery competitions and duels: Simple archery competitions may be resolved through a single Contested Kyujutsu Roll, with the use of specialty determined by the type of bow used in the competition. This abstracted form of resolution assumes that the winner of the roll put more arrows on target than the other.

For a more complex and suspenseful resolution, determine the number of shots that each archer will be allowed. Then determine a TN for the Kyujutsu Roll to hit the target; this will vary according to distance, size of the target, weather conditions, etc. Have each contestant roll against that TN, once for each shot allowed under the rules of the competition. Whoever makes more successful Kyujutsu Rolls within his allowance of shots wins.

To resolve a Tsuruchi-style archery duel, have the duelists take up positions opposite each other within a 60-foot diameter circle. Then proceed as in a normal skirmish, with the understanding that if either contestant steps outside the boundary of the duelist circle, he disqualifies himself.



New Advanced School Moshi Duelist (Bushi)

Run by sensei hailing from the Moshi Family, The Green Blade Dojo is an exclusive but little known Mantis institution. It teaches its students unique methods of combat that allows them to gain renown at a remarkably fast pace. While they promote the importance of the unorthodox form of challenge known as the contest of achievement and often act as judges over such events, the sensei of The Green Blade, who are traditionalists at heart, live by a conventional belief in iaijutsu as one of the most important aspects of Rokugani culture. They also believe that honor and wisdom are at the core of greatness, and indeed these traits are considered essential to anyone who wishes to become a true hero.

Officially, The Green Blade Dojo does not require its students to be Mantis. Instead, any samurai who can demonstrate an honorable character and the ability to defend himself in combat can be admitted into its ranks. In practice, however, only Mantis samurai have thus far been accepted into the institution and many of the Clan's most influential members — including the Clan Champion and the three Mantis Family Daimyo — would like to keep things this way. After all, why would the masters of the Mantis Clan teach their secrets to rival samurai?

Requirements

RINGS/TRAITS: Earth 5, Fire 4

SKILLS: Iaijutsu 4, Lore: Bushido 4, any Weapon Skill 4

OTHER: You must defeat an opponent in a legal duel. This duel can be a traditional iaijutsu bout, a contest of achievement, or any other type of formal duel accepted by the Mantis Clan, such as The Race or an archery challenge.

Techniques

RANK 1: HONOR YOUR OPPONENT

Students of the Green Blade learn not only to fight honorably, but also to respect their opponents and honor the strengths and talents of their rivals. Underestimating your opponent is a remarkably common cause of defeat.

You gain a bonus to your Initiative Rolls equal to your Honor Rank. Whenever you fight someone in a formal duel, you gain a bonus to your attack rolls equal to either your own Insight Rank or your opponent's Insight Rank, whichever is greater. Furthermore, whenever you defeat a foe in a legal duel, you gain 1 additional Glory Point, 2 Glory Points if your opponent had an Insight Rank higher than your own.

RANK 2: WILL OF THE MANTIS

As they advance in their training, students of the dojo find balance between body, mind, and spirit, and they begin to understand how to tap into their unexplored reserves in times of need. You gain 1 additional attack per round. A number of times per day equal to your Insight Rank, you may spend 1 Void Point to gain the benefit of spending 2. You also gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal to your Earth Ring.

RANK 3: STRENGTH IN HONOR

Tapping into their inner reserves, students of The Green Blade are able to perform great feats of strength and endurance. A number of times per day equal to your School Rank, you may triple either your Strength or Stamina (your choice). This effect lasts a number of rounds equal to your Honor Rank +3. Also, you gain a bonus to your Initiative Rolls equal to twice your Honor Rank. This replaces the benefit granted from the Rank 1 Technique. Finally, each time you defeat a foe in a legal duel, you gain 2 additional Glory Points, or 4 additional Glory Points if your opponent's Insight Rank was higher than yours. This replaces the benefit granted at Rank 1.

New Path:

Tsuruchi Master Bowman (Bushi)

All Tsuruchi bounty hunters are remarkable marksmen, and according to their reputation, they possess skills with the bow few in Rokugan can match. The archery masters of the Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter School teach the secret techniques that they have developed over the course of many generations to handful of fortunate students. Only those deemed worthy enough to learn such secrets are accepted into this very special Path. Those who uncover these mysteries are without a doubt among the foremost archers in the Empire.

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter School 2

Path of Egress: Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter School 3 or Yoritomo Bushi School 1

Technique: The Way of the Archer

You achieve a oneness with the bow that every skilled archer in the Empire would envy. It allows you not only superiority in the use of the bow, but an innate sense of how to defend yourself whenever someone with a ranged weapon attacks you.

You gain a bonus to any attack roll made with a bow equal to your Athletics Skill. You gain the same bonus to your TN to Be Hit against ranged attacks, except when you are in the Full Attack Posture. Additionally, when in the Full Attack Posture and wielding a bow, you may sacrifice one of your additional attacks in the round to instead focus all of your talent and prowess into a single and remarkably accurate shot. You gain a bonus to this attack roll equal to 5x your Air Ring. This bonus stacks with Tsuruchi's Eye (the Rank 5 Technique of the Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter School), should you one day acquire this Technique.

New Path:

Yoritomo Kobune Pilot (Bushi)

All students of the Yoritomo Bushi School train aboard kobune boats at some point in their education, and thus everyone is at least somewhat familiar with the basic skills required to handle them. Some among them train long enough aboard kobune to truly master the waves. Those who follow the School's Pilot Path learn to become highly proficient navigators and to handle a ship in any kind of weather. Their training is spiritual and philosophical as well as technical, however, as the Yoritomo sensei teach that you must achieve oneness with your surroundings to truly

master seamanship. While they improve their skill with the kobune, performing in many of the Yoritomo Family's traditional kobune races, and learn how to live on and from the sea, the students who follow this specialty actually enter into a physical and spiritual communion with their environment. This is true regardless of where they find themselves, so those who have earned a reputation for being great kobune pilots are actually at ease in any type of adverse condition.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Yoritomo Bushi School 1

Path of Egress: Tsuruchi Bounty Hunter School 1 or Yoritomo Bushi School 2

Technique: The Ways of the Wave

The Yoritomo pilot is in harmony with his surroundings and at ease in any type of environment. In combat, whenever you suffer penalties for adverse conditions, such as attacking your enemies from lower ground or fighting on uneven terrain, you ignore these penalties. When your opponents flank you or attack you from higher ground, you gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal to twice your Insight Rank. Furthermore, once per round, you may gain a bonus to any Skill Roll equal to twice your Water Ring while aboard a ship. This bonus may also be used on any attack roll or your Initiative Roll, but not on damage rolls.

New Path:

Whirlwind Duelist (Bushi)

The Yoritomo Bushi School offers extensive training in weapons that non-Mantis samurai consider eccentric, even beneath their dignity, such as the kama and the tonfa. It is only to be expected, then, that Yoritomo bushi, down through the ages, would develop their own type of dueling based on these weapons, and that their School would offer them the chance to specialize in this form of combat.

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Yoritomo Bushi School 2

Path of Egress: Yoritomo Bushi School 3

Technique: Cry of the Whirlwind

When fighting samurai using larger and clumsier weapons, the speed with which a trained Yoritomo Bushi can wield a kama can be construed into an advantage. When fighting against a similarly armed and trained opponent, however, speed is essential to one's survival. Practice in Whirlwind duels has the effect of increasing one's arm and hand speed when fighting with small weapons. You receive a bonus to all Skill Rolls involving the use of kama, knives and tonfa equal to either your Reflexes or your Agility (your choice).

New Kata: Whirlwind Barrier

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 60 minutes

This kata adapts techniques first developed for Whirlwind dueling. It teaches not only lightning-quick reaction to parry your opponent's blows (using the speed that small weapons such as the kama and tonfa make possible), but also to use constant motion

to fool him about which areas of your body you are prepared to protect through dodging and parrying. In effect, its goal is to set up a virtual barrier of blades between you and your opponent. It is very much a defensive style of fighting, but skilled practitioners also know how to spot openings in their opponents' defense and strike at them quickly and effectively.

RANK: Yoritomo Bushi 3

COST: 2

SPECIAL: Must have at least 3 Ranks in Knives, Peasant Weapons (Kama) or Staves (Tonfa) to use this kata. Also, you must fight with two weapons, both of them being weapons the Skill in the use of which qualify you to use this kata. If at any point during the use of this kata you cease to fight with two weapons, or if you begin using a weapon other than one the Skill in the use of which qualifies you to use this kata, the period of the kata immediately ends and its effects no longer apply.

EFFECT: You gain a bonus equal to your Reflexes to your TN to Be Hit. If you did not move in your previous turn, you also gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal to your Reflexes against any ranged attack. However, you may not use the Full Attack posture at any time.

VOID: You may spend a Void Point to gain a bonus equal to your Air Ring + Agility to your next attack. You gain the same bonus to the damage inflicted by the attack if it succeeds.

New Kata: Whirlwind Storm

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 60 minutes

Like the defensive Whirlwind Barrier defensive kata, Whirlwind Storm also derives from techniques of Whirlwind dueling. It uses the hand and arm speed that small weapons allow to create a flurry of motion to set your opponent on his heels and confuse him about exactly where you intend to strike. At the very least, it will keep even a skilled opponent too busy parrying and dodging your blows to mount an effective sustained attack of his own. The key to its use is that you must always remain on the attack; to pause or retreat into a defensive stance would completely neutralize the point of using this technique.

RANK: Yoritomo Bushi 3

COST: 2

SPECIAL: Must have at least 3 Ranks in Knives, Peasant Weapons (Kama) or Staves (Tonfa) to use this kata. Also, you must fight with two weapons, both of them being weapons the Skill in the use of which qualify you to use this kata. If at any point during the use of this kata you cease to fight with two weapons, or if you begin using a weapon other than one the Skill in the use of which qualifies you to use this kata, the period of the kata immediately ends and its effects no longer apply.

EFFECT: You gain a bonus equal to your Reflexes + Agility to all your attack rolls. However, you may not use the Full Defense posture at any time.

VOID: You may spend a Void Point to negate the defensive disadvantages of the Full Attack posture for 1 round.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

DUELING: WAY
OF THE PHOENIX

Philosophy

One might think that, because of their search for Enlightenment and their devotion to peace as an ideal in and of itself, the samurai of the Phoenix Clan would shun combat. And indeed they do, compared to most of their rivals among the Great Clans. But while they do not actively seek out conflicts with others, the Phoenix are nevertheless quite resolute in the face of violence and rarely shy away from a fight. In truth, many of them are quite skilled in battle, and have trained in the use of weapons since early childhood, as they continue to strive to achieve balance between body, mind, and soul. What makes them so exceptional among the Great Clans is the resolution with which Phoenix samurai would forfeit their own lives if they believed that doing so would help achieve peace in the world. This philosophy has encouraged the Phoenix — particularly the bushi of the Shiba Family and all Phoenix shugenja — to develop important cultural traditions and unique philosophies with regards to combat between individuals, and concerning dueling in particular.

Within the Phoenix Clan, the tradition of the iaijutsu duel is very important. Members of the Shiba Family, who have dutifully served and protected the Isawa for hundreds of years, consider iaijutsu to be the ultimate test of a fighter. Indeed, to them it is the paramount way of proving one's worth to others. They view iaijutsu dueling as not only a perfect way to resolve disputes between samurai, but also as a noble and enlightening tradition well worth pursuing. In fact, Phoenix samurai hold this form of dueling in such high regard that they typically show great respect to those who are proven masters of this art, regardless of the Clan they serve. Even ronin who are skilled in iaijutsu receive unusual respect for samurai who owe no fealty.

Shiba bushi, in particular, believe that anyone who has attained mastery in iaijutsu has also reached harmony of mind, body, and soul — a goal toward which many Phoenix work for most of their lives. The bushi of the Shiba Family are especially attracted to iaijutsu dueling, and many learn the skill as part of their school training. The discipline is not included in the obligatory curriculum of the Shiba Bushi School, but so many young Shiba bushi choose it as a course of study anyway that it might as well be obligatory. In fact, many sensei of this prestigious institution have perfected the art of iaijutsu in a way that only a

Phoenix could have achieved. For the Phoenix, iaijutsu is unequivocally linked with the mysteries of the Void. Shiba bushi, and those other individuals fortunate enough to study at the school believe that in order to become a master of iaijutsu, one must be able to feel the flow of the elements and have at least some understanding of the great secrets of the universe.

The tradition of iaijutsu among members of the Shiba Family seems to date back to Rokugan's pre-history, when Shiba himself was but a young man. Ancient records kept inside Isawa libraries and other Phoenix archives establish that dueling was an accepted and respected method of resolving conflicts between two parties even before the dawn of the Empire. While these records do not name the practice iaijutsu as such, they do describe rituals and traditions associated with formal dueling, as well as some of the techniques used during such trials, that Rokugani of the present day would recognize, even if only faintly. Records, some of them as old as the 3rd Century, even indicate the name of individual duelists, and the quarrels that they sought to resolve through the practice.

Isawa scholars see in these written accounts proof that the tradition of iaijutsu dueling has always been part of the Clan's history. Some even say that this is the main reason why iaijutsu is so deeply entrenched in contemporary Phoenix culture. Unfortunately, no one can prove that iaijutsu was actually invented by a Phoenix. In fact, even Phoenix scholars believe that the ancestors of their Clan most likely borrowed this proud tradition from rival Clans, or at least developed it alongside members of other Clans, before they adapted it to their own needs.

What is certain, however, is that the Shiba Family developed its own particular set of techniques, which they adapted to their unwavering belief that in order to achieve greatness one must first achieve balance of the mind, of the soul, and of the body. Throughout the years, some of the best-known bushi of the Family tested, adjusted, and perfected these methods until they became what they are today. Ancient historical scrolls found at the Shiba Bushi School even suggest that some Phoenix Champions, who have for years been the manifestation of the soul of Shiba, have even been among those who fine-tuned the unique iaijutsu techniques now taught at the Shiba Bushi School.

Phoenix samurai treat iaijutsu duels with great respect. For the bushi of the Clan, it is not only a means of settling disputes, but also the only true test of one's own prowess in battle. Because of their deep connection to the mysteries of the Void, as well as the special way in which they approach the art of the duel, Shiba warriors strongly believe that someone skilled at iaijutsu is both mentally and physically strong, and also possesses a wise soul. They view iaijutsu masters from rival Clans in the same way, and pay them the same respect they would a member of their own Clan. Phoenix bushi, however, suspect that those who did not learn the ancient techniques of the Shiba family and who were not blessed by the enlightened teachings of the sensei of the Shiba Bushi School are not as aware of their mental and spiritual connection as the Phoenix bushi. Thus, though they might be better duelists, they are not as spiritually advanced as they are. Even so, a Phoenix duelist would never be ashamed to admit that a samurai from a rival Clan is a superior master of iaijutsu.

When an iaijutsu duel takes place between two Phoenix, no special ceremony is required. However, a full-day period of meditation usually precedes the duel. During this time, both duelists clear their minds and reconnect with the spiritual side of things. This period of deep contemplation allows them to enter the contest prepared to tap the full extent of their potential. It also helps them focus on the tasks they will need to perform as part of the duel, so some duelists recite mantras to help them sharpen their reflexes and enlighten their intuitive mind during this time of meditation. While witnesses do not need to be present during this meditative period, many members of the Phoenix Clan usually attend it. These witnesses also take time to cleanse their minds and souls through meditation.

If a Phoenix enters a formal iaijutsu duel against a samurai from a rival Clan, he is usually more than willing to accommodate his adversary and thus often accepts any ritual his foe wants to have performed, either before or after the bout. A Phoenix samurai, however, always insists that a period of meditation precedes the affair, no matter how brief it may be.

Though it does not draw the same level of reverence as iaijutsu, Phoenix bushi practice another form of weapon duel that is less famous, yet more characteristic of their Clan. Outside of the Unicorn, no warriors favor the naginata as much as Phoenix warriors. Inevitably, there has always been a cadre of Shiba bushi who have taken up the relatively obscure art of dueling with this variation on the spear, called naginata-kaiwa. These Phoenix naginata duelists have almost no one with whom to practice this art except themselves, and so they use it largely for sport or to settle matters of honor among themselves. But because the naginata is so light and easily handled in spite of its length, it is possible to perform fast and flashy maneuvers with it, making naginata-kaiwa duels, when they do occur, something of a spectator attraction. None of this is to say, however, that the Phoenix take naginata-kaiwa lightly; indeed, the most promising young enthusiasts of this dueling form receive invitations to join the elite Order of Heaven's Wing. In keeping with the Phoenix's general attitude towards violence, naginata duels are fought to first blood except in truly extraordinary circumstances.

As deeply as the warriors of the Phoenix feel their connection to the art of iaijutsu, Phoenix shugenja can claim a connection to the practice of taryu-jiai that is at least as profound. Although historians continue to dispute the exact origins of the taryu-jiai duel (and even the Isawa historians argue this among



themselves), it is an historical fact that it was in the lands of the Phoenix Clan, during the Setsuban Festival, that taryu-jiai first became a popular custom.

In the Phoenix provinces, where masters of the elements abound and those who can channel the power of the kami are part of a long and storied Clan tradition, those who practice taryu-jiai receive due respect from heimin and samurai alike. Among the Phoenix, formal magic duels are just as important as iaijutsu, though perhaps not quite as common, since many shugenja make it a point to avoid dueling in front of an audience of anyone other than samurai.

Regardless of their training, background, or profession, Phoenix samurai view all forms of dueling as serious affairs in which two contestants have the chance to prove their worth as well as settle any dispute between two parties. The Phoenix also see a bout of taryu-jiai as a contest that allows the duelists to test their magical abilities and prove how they can control the Elements. Whether iaijutsu or taryu-jiai, however, the Phoenix respect the gravity of the duel and do not enter into one lightly.

Subjects of countless plays and stories, duels between shugenja are an important part of Phoenix culture. Indeed, popular children's tales and ancient folklore concerning mythic battles between masters of the elements abound throughout the Phoenix provinces. Peasants and samurai alike delight in the telling of such stories, and many have learned these tall tales by heart, and eagerly convey them to anyone who might care to listen. Travelers who trade with merchants or talk to innkeepers, scouts, and peasants from the Phoenix Lands cannot fail to hear at least one story of a Phoenix shugenja who reclaimed his honor or saved face for the Clan in a mighty contest of magic against one of his foes. Some of the most popular plays and poems of the Phoenix artists recount the great deeds of one of their shugenja ancestors who defended the honor of the Emperor or the virtues of the Clan by defeating an enemy in single magical combat. Even children often sing about the exploits of one Phoenix shugenja of old or another, clumsily telling how he defeated an opponent in a duel in which both contestants took control of the elemental forces in a dazzling display of magical might. Thus, the tradition of the taryu-jiai duel is perpetuated, and thus the legends of those who fought such duels throughout the long history of the Phoenix Clan grow.

In keeping with the Clan's general attitude toward dueling and violence in general, a taryu-jiai duel is not to be entered into lightly. A Phoenix shugenja must not enter a taryu-jiai duel for selfish or unjust reasons. In the long history of the Clan, the tradition of taryu-jiai has become a highly respected means through which two shugenja could settle points of disputes between them. Because of their devotion to peace as well as their continuous quest for enlightenment, Phoenix shugenja strongly believe that a formal taryu-jiai duel must be fought not to prove that one is greater than another, but to further the idea of peace through all of Rokugan. As their Asahina cousins have begun to discover more recently, the Isawa have always understood an irony that underlies their philosophy — namely, that sometimes, one must invoke the limited and stylized violence of a duel in order to prevent a larger and more terrible violence from breaking out.

This philosophy, of course, can manifest itself in various ways. For a Phoenix, furthering peace could mean that a shugenja needs to defend the honor of his Clan in a taryu-jiai contest, so

that they may continue to wield their prestige as as respected Great Clan in pursuit of their self-appointed mission as the perfect ambassadors of peace. It could also mean that he needs to face an opponent in order to settle a point of honor, which would allow him, a member of his Clan, or another important figure in the Empire, to save face and defuse a confrontation with honor to both sides and a relative lack of bloodshed. So dedicated to peace are most Phoenix samurai that it is not out of the question that they would willingly concede a duel to a weaker adversary if they believed it would help their cause. This philosophy regarding taryu-jiai dueling, however broad, is important to the Phoenix shugenja. Entering a taryu-jiai duel for selfish reasons would after all go against their goal of achieving enlightenment, and thus it would be a dishonorable thing.

While formal iaijutsu and taryu-jiai contests are the most popular and highly regarded forms of dueling practiced by the Phoenix, the Clan's courtiers frequently engage in other methods of dueling against one another, seeing as how they lack talent for channeling the kami and the training to use the katana with appropriate skill for iaijutsu. They prefer alternate modes of dueling that make use of the talents that they possess rather than ones that they lack.

Phoenix courtiers are not as attracted to tests of intrigue, oratory performances, or even composition of poetry the way members of other Clans are, but they do like to engage in contests that include some sort of artistic performance. Among Phoenix courtiers and artisans, contests of origami, ikebana, painting, and sculpting are the most popular forms of challenges. In fact, when two samurai of the Clan agree to a duel, these disciplines are often considered, even among bushi and shugenja.

Regardless of the type of challenge into which they choose to enter, samurai of the Phoenix Clan view formal duels of all kinds as an essential part of their cultural heritage. Among the borge and the eta of the Phoenix lands, skilled duelists command an esteem verging on awe, regardless of their Clan allegiance. Among the samurai class, dueling is viewed not only as a means to settle points of honor between two individuals or parties, but also as an important tradition that lies at the very heart of the Way of the Phoenix.

Phoenix Institutions

A samurai trained according to the traditions of the Phoenix will not want for instruction that may be applied to various forms of dueling. The Phoenix shugenja Family, the Isawa, have always had a strong interest in taryu-jiai, and over the centuries, they have developed special techniques allowing their shugenja to tap even deeper into the elemental forces in order to aid them in a bout of taryu-jiai. The secrets of these techniques are zealously guarded and only those who are fortunate enough to be accepted at the highly exclusive Isawa Taryu-jiai Academy can hope to learn these very special methods of fighting with the elements in a formal magic duel.

Phoenix artisans and courtiers are as proud of their art as the Phoenix shugenja are dedicated to their craft. They know that art can take several forms, and they consider magic and swordsmanship as forms of art, and as such they have no more inherent dignity than crafts made with the hands or products of the creative imagination. Some artisan sensei, particularly those of the Shiba Artisan School, are famous masters of their particular disciplines, and take pride in their reputations.

Phoenix courtiers often use artistic or artisans' skills to defend the honor of the Phoenix Clan at court, or to resolve conflicts between two individuals or parties. Because artisan contests are especially important in Phoenix Clan culture, some sensei of the Shiba Artisan School are especially adept at winning bouts of courtly duels involving ikebana, origami, painting, or sculpting — all popular forms of expression within their Clan. However, it is within the little known and very exclusive Shiba Artisan Dojo that students learn subtle but effective methods to help them gain an edge while engaged in a contest that involves the use of artisan or artistic skills. And the courtiers who master these methods are expert at resolving conflicts through duels of artistic abilities, something that all members of the Phoenix Clan can be proud of.

Phoenix bushi also have a long history of tradition and ritual, and those who study at the Shiba Bushi School are especially well known for their extraordinary reflexes and keen senses. For them, the formal iaijutsu contest is the ultimate test of a warrior's

worth. Though not all students of the Shiba Bushi School learn how to master the delicate art that is iaijutsu, those who do have the potential of becoming master duelists who can stand toe to toe with the swordsmen of the Crane and the Dragon.

Shiba Bushi School

Warriors who study in the Shiba Bushi School are recognized for their devotion to the shugenja they are sworn to protect. Indeed, many see them as the foremost yojimbo in all of the Empire, and none in Rokugan could hope to have a better trained and more loyal bodyguard at his side. Shiba bushi benefit from rigorous training in single combat, as well as skirmishes and mass battles. This training particularly emphasizes skill at dodging attacks from all possible angles, so the Shiba bushi are quick, agile, and light on the feet. Their training also focuses on seeking the perfect balance between body, mind, and soul. Their intensive physical schooling is complemented by indoctrination in meditative techniques, giving them a particularly deep connection to the mysteries of the Void.

The Shiba have always respected the traditions of their Family, going all the way back to their namesake's vow of loyalty to Isawa at the founding of the Phoenix Clan, and tradition in general. Thus, all members of the Shiba Bushi School view iaijutsu as the most important form (and one of the few legitimate forms) of dueling. So even though iaijutsu is not a compulsory part of the



curriculum of the Shiba Bushi School, it is nevertheless greatly respected by all who receive training in the Way of the Shiba. But the unique blend of physical and spiritual training that they receive gives them a view of iaijutsu that is slightly idiosyncratic, and often misunderstood. For them, a duelist must be physically fit and spiritually connected to the Void in equal measure in order to master the art. For those who teach the art of dueling at the Shiba Bushi School, only individuals who have the potential to become both expert warriors and masters of meditation are worthy pursue the path of the duelist. Because of this, only a select number of students from the Shiba Bushi School are trained in iaijutsu.

At any given time, the Shiba Bushi School keeps only three sensei who specialize in instruction in iaijutsu and teach advanced dueling techniques. They are all veteran duelists themselves and proven masters of iaijutsu. They are also selective about whom they take on as students, not only out of respect for their art, but by edict of the Shiba Family. Even if the demand for their services well outstrips their capacity to teach — and it has at various times in the history of the School, the Shiba would never consent to add more iaijutsu masters to the faculty. They do not wish to spread the idea that fighting ought to be a common practice; at the same time, they also understand that restricting advanced instruction in dueling technique so strictly also enforces reverence for it, and for the traditions that it embodies. A thing so exclusive must, by definition, have great value. Allowing only the best and most promising students access to advanced techniques of swordsmanship, in the end, emphasizes the notion that fighting for one's Clan is a privilege, not a right belonging to every samurai with a petty grudge.

But it is a paradox of how the Phoenix train and indoctrinate their bushi that duelists become famous beyond proportion, legendary in their own lifetimes in some cases. The iaijutsu sensei of the Shiba Bushi School are the talk of the students (even the other sensei) almost constantly. Because they specialize in an art form only a select few are deemed worthy enough to learn, their reputation as great swordsmen is taken for granted. In all cases, it is a reputation well earned, as they are so few in number that the Shiba never need to compromise their standards. Nonetheless, it is an article of faith among the students that the iaijutsu sensei represent not only the epitome of the Rokugani duelist, but also what it truly means to master the fine balance between mind, body, and soul.

According to the official history of the Shiba Bushi School (which was compiled by Isawa historians, of course), its unique iaijutsu techniques date back to the Rulership of the Gozoku, in the late 4th and early 5th Centuries. The end of this period, which was marked by the execution of many Phoenix samurai, is often regarded as an important time for the art of the duel within the Clan. Indeed, many renowned Shiba samurai of the time seem to have perfected the techniques developed by their fathers and grandfathers during the second half of the 5th Century. Regardless of their origins, however, these techniques are now taught exclusively at the Shiba Bushi School, and only to a select few. The Shiba sensei believe they form a unique blend of methods that require students to be clear minded, spiritually awakened, as well as physically fit. These methods are not taught anywhere else in the Empire, and students of the Shiba Bushi School who learn to master these techniques can rival any iaijutsu master.

Because the Phoenix are better known for their scholarship and magical arts, as well as for their talents in diplomacy, relatively few of them are regarded as great warriors. Students of the Shiba Bushi School are nevertheless well known throughout the Empire as *yojimbo*. This reputation has earned them a place of respect, but still there are samurai of rival Clans who view Shiba bushi as little more than bodyguards whose only real purpose is to throw themselves in front of the shugenja of their Clan when it comes down to a confrontation. And no matter how bravely or skillfully they give account of themselves, there will always be some who see them as little more than servants of the Isawa. What these unenlightened ones fail to realize, however, is that the bushi of the Shiba are as capable warriors as any other member of their profession. Much more, they have also developed special techniques allowing them to master the art of iaijutsu in a way no other samurai in the Empire could even dream of learning. Though only a few Shiba bushi study these techniques, one would be well advised not to underestimate a Phoenix samurai when challenging him to an iaijutsu duel.

Isawa Taryu-jiai Academy

Undoubtedly less popular but definitely more spectacular than iaijutsu dueling, the tradition of *taryu-jiai* is of foremost importance to the samurai of the Phoenix Clan. Since many samurai of the Clan not only know how to channel the kami, but are also regarded as the most capable shugenja in all of Rokugan, it comes as no surprise that they have a long and proud tradition of magical dueling. This history of Rokugan records, after all, that the practice itself originated in the Phoenix Lands, among the Isawa. Even courtiers and bushi of the Clan realize how powerful and enlightened a shugenja must be to win a *taryu-jiai* contest against one of his peers, and thus they unanimously have much respect for those who enter such formal duels.

While any shugenja can defend his honor or that of his Clan in a *taryu-jiai* duel, only a few know how to tap into the Elements deeply enough to truly maximize their chances of winning such a contest. Only the most powerful Isawa shugenja reach a level of skill that grants them mastery over their School's most advanced techniques of *taryu-jiai*. The Isawa Taryu-jiai Academy is the designated repository of the Isawa's dueling secrets, and they guard them jealously, for reasons not unlike the Shiba Bushi School's for limiting access to advanced training in iaijutsu: To open it up to more students would devalue them, and perhaps encourage an irreverence toward this convention that would ultimately cut against the grain of the Clan's soul.

The Isawa Taryu-jiai Academy was founded around the turning of the 11th Century by a small group of Isawa shugenja who had each fought their share of *taryu-jiai* duels. Located deep in the lands of the Phoenix, some distance north of Kyuden Shiba, the Isawa Taryu-jiai Academy is a very exclusive school. Situated in the heart of a wide grove in the midst of a great forest, the remote location of the Academy allows its students to pursue their studies free of distractions — as well as prying eyes who might want to learn secrets that the Isawa would prefer remain within the Clan. Those who emerge from the Academy are reputed to possess unsurpassed skill in the art of *taryu-jiai*.

Traditionalists at heart, the Isawa shugenja prefer the oldest form of *taryu-jiai*, in which two opponents face each other in a specially prepared area in which they battle one another *with the*

pure force of the kami until one wounds the other and wins the contest. Of course, Phoenix shugenja always fight to first blood, as taking life would be anathema to them. Only in the most extreme of circumstances, and only when facing an opponent from a rival Clan and if they believe this will help bring peace, will an Isawa shugenja agree to a duel to the death.

While more popular throughout the Empire, and certainly viewed as more socially acceptable, than the traditional form of taryu-jiai dueling, the newer version of taryu-jiai in which the duelists create magical avatars with the elemental forces and use these avatars as proxy combatants, is not very fashionable among the Phoenix. Though this form of taryu-jiai is certainly a great test of one's power, Phoenix samurai are nonetheless less attracted to it. One might think that the pacifist Phoenix would prefer this type of contest, given that there it carries with it no real chance that either duelist will come to harm. For them, however, only one who is willing to put himself in harm's way can truly settle a point of honor with another party. The Phoenix believe that refusing to accept the consequences of one's actions is fundamentally selfish, and that they cannot live by their convictions without willingness to suffer the results of their actions.

But even as they hold to a very traditional view of taryu-jiai, Isawa shugenja are also open to new rituals and protocols surrounding formal dueling. For them, it is not the ceremony that precedes the duel that is important, but the contest itself. When they face shugenja of other Clans in formal magic duel, Phoenix shugenja often agree to partake in any tradition their opponent might hold dear. Phoenix shugenja, especially those fortunate enough to have studied at the Isawa Taryu-jiai Academy, know that nothing can help them during a magical duel save for their own control over the kami. And no amount of prayer or superstitious rituals can change that.

Shiba Artisan Dojo

Perhaps more than any other Great Clan — except for the singular exception of their longtime allies, the Crane — the Phoenix pride themselves in their practice of artistry and artisanship. Whether it is the whimsical craft of magic, the noble art of swordsmanship, or the more refined skills of painting, flower arranging, or paper folding, Phoenix samurai are often wholeheartedly dedicated to every little enterprise they care to essay, especially in the domains they consider artistic. The most skillful of their kin approach everything they do with a passion, dedication, and patience few Rokugani display, and thus the courtiers and artisans of the Phoenix Clan frequently become masters of their chosen art.

Though some Phoenix samurai — particularly the Shiba — can be as smoothly convivial as any Imperial courtier, the majority of them are seldom attracted to art forms that require deception, lying, or the manipulation of others. While they do consider etiquette, intrigue, gossip, and political maneuvering essential tools of the court one would do best to master in order to defend the honor and status of his Clan, most Phoenix tend to view any form of social maneuvering or manipulation as dishonorable. The only exception to this rule is the fine art of acting, but even then Phoenix samurai are not particularly reputed for great kabuki or noh performers.

Most Phoenix artisan skills, such as origami, sculpting, and even gardening, as honest endeavors through which one can focus the mind, strengthen the character, and heal the soul. The most popular art forms within the Clan are origami, ikebana, painting and sculpting. Some Shiba courtiers specialize in such art forms,

and sometimes allow these pursuits to eclipse their more obvious obligations as diplomats and advocates. They sometimes challenge their brethren, or even members of the other Clans, into contests involving a form of art in which they excel.

In order to help young Phoenix courtiers master their chosen art form, a group of brilliant artisans from the Shiba Family founded what they simply called the Shiba Artisan Dojo. This small, but prestigious institution can be found in Mamoru Kyotei Toshi, the famous Honored Treaty City of the Phoenix. Dedicated to the peaceful arts, the school's founders decided to establish their institution in the heart of the city that has been the repository of the peace treaty that ended the bloody war between the Phoenix and the Lion Clan some 700 years ago. Proud of the Phoenix Clan's role as the messengers of peace in the Empire, the founders of the Shiba Artisan Dojo promote, perhaps more than any other Phoenix institution, the importance of peaceful negotiation and amiable agreements between the various Clans, Families, and other factions of the Empire. Those who learn from the school's sensei have a chance to perfect their artisan's skills, but they also have the potential to become even better advocates of peace.

While the Shiba Artisan Dojo specializes in perfecting the art forms so many Phoenix samurai love and respect, it also teaches its students how to maximize their performances under pressure. While some courtiers prefer to challenge their peers with a game of go or a poetry composition contest, members of the Phoenix Clan are more inclined toward challenges of artisan skills. Thus, sculpting, painting, origami, ikebana, tattooing, and even gardening contests are more frequent among the courtiers of the Phoenix Clan than iaijutsu duels are among the clan's bushi. Phoenix courtiers also love to face members of other Clans in this type of (relatively) friendly competition, since it emphasizes the point that the Phoenix prove their honor through means that most other Great Clans tend to neglect. To challenge a Phoenix samurai, therefore, is to risk having to prove yourself through a test that would only make you look foolish compared to your rival.

While not necessarily trained in formal dueling types of contests involving one art form or another, the Shiba Artisan Dojo's students are particularly good at performing under pressure and usually excel in all types of competitions. Thus, most of the Clan's courtiers hold the sensei of the institution in high esteem, and many of them actually make it a point to attend some of the school's courses so they can learn some of its very special techniques. Needless to say that the courtiers of the Phoenix Clan enjoy putting these techniques to good use, and on more than one occasion they have challenged members of other Clans to various types of artisan's contests, and emerged victorious more often than not, thanks in large part to their training and the confidence with which it imbues them.

Since an artisan's contest is a non-violent, and often even friendly, way of solving conflicts between two individuals, as well as a great means to show the extent of one's artistic abilities or inventiveness, this tradition is especially important to the samurai of the Phoenix Clan. Because maintaining ancient Rokugani culture is important to them, many Phoenix courtiers train in at least one form of art. And thus many consider the lessons taught by the sensei of the Shiba Artisan Dojo to be as important to Phoenix culture as water is to fish.



Phoenix Sensei

The Phoenix Clan is widely reputed to turn out the best scholars and greatest shugenja in all of Rokugan. It is thus no big surprise that their shugenja are among the foremost taryu-jiai contestants on the planet. Being able to channel and maintain the elemental forces through long periods of time, however, is not the only strength of the dueling shugenja, and Phoenix samurai have long understood that spiritual awareness and the understanding of one's adversary are of primal importance during a traditional taryu-jiai bout. Not particularly known for their great warriors, the Phoenix Clan nevertheless produces some of the most loyal and certainly the most notable yojimbo in Rokugan. Among students of the Shiba Bushi School, some even master iaijutsu. A small number of these experts teach their craft to others, so that the honor, reputation, and status of the Phoenix Clan may continue to grow, within the borders of the Empire and without.

SHIBA NAMIKA, SHIBA BUSHI SCHOOL SENSEI

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 4
Reflexes: 5		Agility: 5		
Honor: 3.2		Status: 2.5		Glory: 3.8

SCHOOL/RANK: Shiba Bushi 3/Shiba Duelist 1

ADVANTAGES: Hotei's Blessing, Quick

DISADVANTAGES: Idealistic, Overconfident

KATA: Eyes of the Phoenix, Striking as Fire, Striking as Wind, The Empire Rests On Its Edge (Etiquette), Touching the Infinite

SKILLS: Defense 6, Etiquette (Conversation) 6, Iaijutsu 6, Kenjutsu (Katana, Wakizashi) 6, Kyujutsu (Daikyu) 4, Meditation (Void Recovery) 4, Spears 3, Theology 3

The eldest daughter of her family, Shiba Namika grew up in the shadows of her younger brothers, the twins Hirobumi and Hiroshisa. When they were born, an old sage told the family that the twin boys were blessed with the gift of communing with the kami, and that a great future awaited them. They both pleased their parents when, at a very young age, they announced that they would gladly walk in the footsteps of their famous shugenja grandfather, who had been one of the few to serve on the Council of Elemental Masters without blood ties to the Isawa. Namika's parents had never been able to grasp the subtleties of magic, and it pleased them immensely that their twin sons would honor the family by learning the Way of the Shugenja.

Namika's father was a relatively low-ranking but proud and loyal aide of the Phoenix Clan Champion. Unlike his own father, he had never been able to grasp the intricacies of magic, but he was an agreeable and outgoing man who, although he never rose to high rank, nevertheless served his Clan respectfully and well. Though he was charming and could probably have become a successful ambassador or courtier, Namika's father had little ambition of his own. His activities were confined mostly to cataloguing the deeds of the Phoenix Champion, and thus he actually produced a valuable account of recent Phoenix history as a result of his apparently humble service.



Because of his responsibilities, Namika's father was almost never home and she seldom saw him; as a child, she was always told that he was a valued and loyal Phoenix samurai, but she never really saw it first-hand. Thus, it was her mother who took care of her and her brothers and spent much more time with them. Namika's mother, however, was much more than a simple homemaker. She was a gifted and inventive sculptor, and she spent much of her spare time crafting wondrous statuettes, delicate amulets, as well as various types of ornaments to decorate her home. These items and their making fascinated Namika since she first began observing her mother at her avocation.

However, unlike her charismatic father or her talented mother, Namika possessed no special gift. She was plain looking and uneasy around people she did not know or implicitly trust, and she could not draw a straight line, much less create a true piece of art. Unlike her brothers, she possessed none of her grandfather's aptitude for handling the elemental powers, and so she did not have a whole lot of confidence in herself. As a child, Namika was more attracted to strenuous physical activities and games than to the more cultured pursuits with which the Shiba Family were more closely associated. She knew in her heart that a scholar's life would not suit her, and she had no talent for any of the forms of artistry that interested her. Like every member of her immediate family, however, she felt that loyalty to her Clan, as well as duty to her peers, was essential for the well being of the Empire, and she was determined to devote herself to the pursuit of these duties.

Even so, Namika had no idea how she would find her path until a chance encounter with Shiba Yuya, a second cousin of the famous Master of the Void Shiba Ningen and then a student in the way of the Shiba bushi inspired her to follow a course quite different from those that had characterized her kin. Yuya took a liking to the younger girl, who was now possessed by the wonder of looking at the world through a lens that she had never used before, and took it upon herself to mentor her. Yuya's influence

gained Namika entrance into the Shiba Bushi School, where she would undergo her samurai training — quite an exception for both the Shiba School and the Shiba Family. Once in, however, Namika impressed her sensei with her character and devotion to the ideals of the Phoenix, as well as her apparent gift for swordsmanship. Although she had started her education at a later age than is usual, she nevertheless became one of the Shiba School's fastest-learning and most capable students, and she wound up undergoing her gempukku at the same time as the other young Phoenix samurai of her age.

After her training, Namika took on the duties of a yojimbo, proudly safeguarding various personages of the Phoenix Clan. This duty took her to all corners of the Empire. She was assigned on several occasions to escort her brothers, and she also worked alongside her old friend and mentor Shiba Yuya. It was a largely uneventful life, but she earned a reputation for reliability and loyalty in the pursuit of her duties. Then, after nearly two decades of service to her Clan, she witnessed an iaijutsu duel between two genuine masters of the art for the first time in her life. She had seen samurai challenge each other before, but never anything at this level of skill. The combat was swift and astonishingly intense, and the complete absorption of the duelists in their task was palpable even to the spectators. Though Namika had studied the basic techniques of iaijutsu and learned its lore, she never dreamed that the actual event would prove so gripping, nor imagined the effect that even watching a duel would have on her.

Now captivated by the art of the duel as never before, Namika sought out one of the few masters of her school who taught the Shiba's elite techniques of iaijutsu. Again, her long friendship with Shiba Yuya stood her in good stead, and the normally skeptical sensei accepted her as a student. In time, they even invited her to join their small and privileged number. Now entering middle

age, Shiba Namika remains a respected Phoenix yojimbo — but now doubly so, since she has joined the rarefied group of iaijutsu masters of the Shiba Bushi School. She now spends much of her time at the dojo, where she has become one of the few sensei who have learned the closely guarded iaijutsu techniques only students of the Phoenix Clan can hope to uncover.

ISAWA EKIKEN, ISAWA TARYU-JIAI ACADEMY SENSEI

Air: 4	Earth: 4	Fire: 5	Water: 4	Void: 5
Awareness: 5		Intelligence: 6	Perception: 6	
Honor: 4.7		Status: 5.4		Glory: 7.2

SCHOOL/RANK: Isawa Shugenja (Fire) 3/Isawa Void Master 3
ADVANTAGES: Blessing of the Elements (Fire), Friend of the Elements (Fire)

DISADVANTAGES: Brash, Contrary, Driven (Ambitious)

SPELLS: Aura of Flame, Burn the Soul, By the Light of Lady Moon, Call Upon the Wind, Commune, Counterspell, Echoes of a Breeze, Fires of Purity, Heart of the Inferno, Hochiu's Call of Heaven, Light of Yakamo, Secrets on the Wind, Sense, Strike of Osano-Wo, Summon, Symbol of Fire, Tail of the Fire Dragon, Tempest of Air, Tempest of Fire, The Fires from Within, The Fires that Cleanse, The Fist of Osano-Wo, The Fury of Osano-Wo, Touch of the Fire Kami, Way of Deception

SKILLS: Calligraphy (High Rokugani, Phoenix Cipher) 5, Divination (Astrology, Omen) 5, Etiquette (Sincerity) 5, Medicine 4, Meditation (Void Recovery, Zanji) 7, Spellcraft (Fire Elemental Knowledge, Isawa Shugenja School Knowledge, Spell Research) 7, Theology (The Fortunes) 5

Extraordinary loss and sorrow characterized Isawa Ekiken's early life. At the age of six, he witnessed his sister's death, as she fell into the well on the family estate and drowned. Tormented by guilt because he had been unable to prevent the accident, or rescue his little sister after the fall, the child Ekiken became reserved and possessed by a great sadness. When he was eight, his father, an Isawa Inquisitor, and his mother, a Phoenix magistrate born into the Shiba, were both killed by a summoned oni while investigating reports of Bloodspeaker activity.

After his parents' death, Ekiken became even quieter and his moods tended to shift between long weeks of lonely depression and outbursts of uncontrollable anger. From this time forth, his great aunt, Isawa Maeko, took Ekiken into her house, taking care of him as though he were her own child. Before she became Ekiken's caregiver, Maeko had spent most of her life in the service of the Clan's Master of Fire and General of the Firestorm Legion, the Phoenix hero Isawa Hochiu. She had had a great deal of experience in matters of politics, in foreign diplomacy, and in Rokugani courtly intrigue, but she had no idea how to raise a child, much less help the desperate Ekiken, who seemed to have had already been crushed by the hardships of life. Isawa Maeko turned to one of her best and most trusted friends, a wise shugenja of the Shiba Family, whom she thought could help heal Ekiken.

Gradually, with the help of this wise woman, Ekiken learned mantras and meditation techniques to help him cope with his immense sorrow, but also to help him control his rage — which seemed aimed at no one in particular, yet at every one at the same time. Though he always remained a serious child who sel-

dom smiled, Ekiken began to appreciate his life. He loved his great aunt, for the woman had led a fascinating life and was very kind to him. As he grew up, Ekiken became extremely proud of the fact that she had been one of General Isawa Hochiu's aides. This fact, combined with his general pride in his Isawa heritage, made Ekiken become arrogant, but it also made him want to make something out of himself.

As a student of the Isawa Shugenja School, Ekiken quickly learned the craft he now masters. He was, however, a far from ideal student in his youth. Ekiken focused his anger and sorrow at the loss of his family and channeled these emotions into an insatiable will to learn, but he was also confused and angry, and made few friends among his fellow students. Though he was blessed with the gift of magic, he became a fierce and prideful competitor, frequently engaging his fellow students in all sorts of contests of wit and skill. When Ekiken won such contests, he would walk as proudly as a rooster in a yard full of hens. At times, he became so full of himself that he even enjoyed humiliating his peers, which earned him the wrath of his sensei, who continually chided him for behavior that would be considered unacceptable coming from a samurai (especially one of the Phoenix Clan). When Ekiken lost these petty competitions, however, he felt shamed and the weight of defeat pressed heavily upon his soul.

It took Isawa Ekiken years to control his emotions, but even after he came of age those who knew him sometimes viewed him as a quiet, prideful man who loses his temper rather more than becomes a Phoenix samurai. In his quest to become a more powerful shugenja, Ekiken left the Phoenix Lands, seeking one adventure after the next until, some twenty odd years later, he returned to his home a much wiser man.

Though the sorrow never quite left him, Ekiken is now much more sensible to others. He also learned — the hard way — that pride was a curse one would do best to be rid of, for it can truly break a man. And so after a series of humiliating taryu-jiai defeats at the hands of stronger opponents, Isawa Ekiken finally understood the meaning of the old saying that, "No matter how strong you are, there is always someone stronger." He accepted that he could never become truly invincible in a contest of magic, for he could never become so much better than all of his peers — particularly his peers in the Phoenix — that he could ever truly feel that no one could defeat him. Having grown wiser, Ekiken accepted these facts and began to show more respect to others, to appreciate their abilities, their knowledge, and even their company. When he returned home, even his kin and former sensei scarcely believed he was the same man. With deep humility, he requested an appointment as sensei at his old school, and received it.

Today, Isawa Ekiken has quite a reputation as a master of the elemental forces. Ekiken's reputation, however, comes not from the fact that he is a potent wielder of magic, but rather because, during his travels he fought and won three dazzling taryu-jiai duels against powerful shugenja of other Clans to defend the honor of the Isawa. He certainly did not win every duel that he fought, but neither did he lose all of them, either. Though still quiet and reserved, Isawa Ekiken has a few good friends and many loyal allies. Thus, even though politics has never been his forte, he is an influential voice within the Clan he so proudly serves.

New Mechanics

Phoenix Dueling Practices

Naginata-katwa: Naginata duels do not center on the single strike, as do iaijutsu duels. Instead, they place more emphasis on the use of flashy kata, such as those developed by the Shiba Bushi School. Resolve a naginata duel as a standard skirmish between the two duelists.

New Advanced School: Shiba Artisan (Courtier)

The Shiba Artisan Dojo combines diplomacy with artisanship, promoting amiable settlements of disputes through non-violent forms of dueling. Students of this exclusive Advanced School supplement their ambassadorial experience with intensive training in artisan's skills with an emphasis on engaging in and winning courtly duels. Because they learn to perform their art to the best of their abilities, even when they are subjected to a great deal of pressure, students of the Shiba Artisan Dojo are extremely tough competitors to beat in various forms of courtly contests. They are subjected to such rigorous training because Shiba Artisans serve as one of the Phoenix's most prominent public faces, and only the most promising courtiers of the Clan are accepted into this course of advanced study.

Requirements

Rings/Traits: Awareness 5, Intelligence 5, Perception 5

Skills: Courtier 4, Etiquette 4, Lore: History 4, any Artisan Skill (with at least one Emphasis) 6

Advantage: Fukurokujin's Blessing

Other: You may waive the Fukurokujin's Blessing requirement by raising all Skill requirements by 1 Rank.

Techniques

RANK 1: AN ARTISAN'S MIND

A Shiba Artisan must learn to clear his mind and focus on his craft, for only in such a state of perfect concentration can one understand the fundamental nature of the task that faces him and accomplish it as well as possible. You gain a Free Raise to all Artisan Skill Rolls. You gain 2 Free Raises if you have 5 or

more Ranks in the particular Skill being used. The Experience Point cost for increasing any Artisan Skill is now reduced by your Insight Rank, to a minimum of 1. Furthermore, every time you participate in a formal competition that involves the use of an Artisan Skill in which you have Ranks, you gain 1 extra Glory Point at the end of the contest, win or lose.

RANK 2: A CREATOR'S PASSION

Shiba Artisans' indisputable love for their craft is obvious to anyone who meets them. This passion is enticing to others, who quickly learn to respect the connection between the quality of their work and their immersion in their craft. For every Artisan Skill you have at Rank 3 or above, you gain 1 Insight Rank. You gain a bonus equal to your Honor Rank to Contested Social Skill Rolls. Whenever you spend more than 1 Void Point to gain Raises to a Courtier, Etiquette, or Artisan Skill Roll, you may spend an extra Void Point to double the total bonus to the roll that you gain from those Raises.

RANK 3: A MASTER'S SOUL

Masters of their chosen disciplines, those who unlock the greatest mysteries of this school have what it takes to create masterpieces that will gain them widespread and perhaps even enduring fame. In doing so, they also bring honor and glory to their family and their Clan. Artisans who achieve this level of skill and oneness with their craft possess a sublime self-confidence that carries over from their discipline into other endeavors.

You gain a +0k1 bonus to any roll involving a Skill in which you have 5 or more Ranks. Also, each time you enter a formal competition, you gain 2 extra Glory Points as a result. This replaces the ability granted at Rank 1.

New Advanced School: Isawa Duelist (Shugenja)

Shugenja who study at the Isawa Taryu-jiai Academy learn all the intricacies of the ancient tradition from which the dojo takes its name. They also delve into the mysteries of the Void in ways few of their brethren would dare explore, and thus they are referred to as Masters of the Void. While they perfect their spells, these shugenja also gain the ability to resist the harmful effects of the magic of their peers. Only samurai who have studied in the Isawa Shugenja School are admitted into this exclusive dojo.

Requirements

RINGS/TRAITS: Any 3 Rings 4

SKILLS: Meditation 5, Spellcraft 5, Theology 4, any Lore 4

ADVANTAGE: Blessing of the Elements (any Element) or Magic Resistance (2, 4, or 6 points)

OTHER: You may waive the Blessing of the Elements (any Element) or Magic Resistance requirement by raising all Trait requirements by 1 Rank.

Technique: Master the Void

Isawa duelists believe that a strong connection with the Void aids them in channeling the power of the kami. Their techniques focus on defending themselves against the arts of rival shugenja, wearing their opponents down and delivering quick strikes to hamper them as the opportunity presents itself. You may either raise or lower the TN of any spell cast against you (your choice) by an amount equal to twice your Void Ring. You also gain a Free Raise on all spells you have learned as an Innate Ability.

New Path:

Shiba Iaijutsu Duelist (Bushi)

Few outsiders realize the importance of the iaijutsu tradition among the bushi of the Phoenix Clan. While most of these warriors are simply known as rather ordinary yojimbo among other Clans, there are nevertheless those among them who achieve a considerable degree of mastery in the fine art of iaijutsu. Although the iaijutsu training is not part of the regular teachings of the Shiba Bushi School, those fortunate enough to study under the tutelage of one of the institution's master duelists uncover techniques few of their brethren can hope to comprehend. Only warriors who study the mysteries of the Void can unlock these secrets, and even among the most open minded and spiritually enlightened, few actually walk this path.

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Shiba Bushi School 2

Path of Egress: Shiba Bushi School 3

Technique: Mind, Body, and Soul

Students of the Shiba Bushi School's duelist path continue to improve their connection with the Void in a never-ending search to find the perfect balance between mind, body, and soul. You may spend a Void Point to gain a +2k2 bonus to any Iaijutsu or Kenjutsu Roll. There is no limit to the number of times you can do this in a day, so long as you have Void Points to spend. However, you may only spend 1 Void Point at a time when using this ability, and you cannot use this ability more than once per round. When you are engaged in an iaijutsu duel, you also gain 2 extra Void Points to use as you wish; as soon as the duel ends, these Void Points do not exist. Furthermore, you may also focus 1 additional time in an iaijutsu duel.

New Path:

Shiba Naginata Duelist (Bushi)

Phoenix warriors are known to favor the naginata more than their counterparts in the other Great Clans, except for perhaps the Unicorn. Down through the ages, this unusual degree of ease with the weapon has manifested itself in a form of dueling practiced only by the Phoenix, naginata-kaiwa. A fair number of Phoenix bushi give naginata-kaiwa a try during their warrior training, with a few studying it intensively for a short period of time. The most promising among these students are often commissioned into the elite Order of Heaven's Wing.

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Shiba Bushi School 2

Requirements: Spears (Naginata) 3

Path of Egress: Shiba Bushi School 3

Technique: One With the Strike

Through intensive training with the naginata, you gain an instinctive bond with the weapon that also benefits you when you use similar weapons. You may spend a Void Point to gain a +3k2 bonus to a single Spear (Naginata) Roll. You may also spend a Void Point to gain a +3k1 bonus to a Skill Roll involving a spear-class weapon other than the naginata. You may not spend more than 1 Void Point at a time in this manner in order to stack these bonuses.

New Kata: The Beak Pierces

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 60 minutes

Thanks to their training, Shiba bushi have always had an exceptional ability to connect with the Void and use it to act with instinctive certainty in combat situations. Phoenix naginata duelists have used this particular skill to develop a kata that allows them to strike with speed and decision that even Utaku Battle Maidens would envy.

RANK: Shiba Bushi 3

COST: 2

SPECIAL: Must have at least 3 Ranks in Spears to use this kata.

EFFECT: When fighting a naginata-kaiwa duel, you gain extra Void Points equal to your Void Ring that you may only spend on gaining an extra attack (see below). As soon as the duel is over, these Void Points no longer exist.

VOID: You may spend a Void Point to gain an extra attack that round. There is no limit to the number of Void Points that you may spend in a round in this manner.

New Kata: The Phoenix's Haven

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 60 minutes

The naginata's chief virtues are its light weight and the ease with which it can be handled. This allows a skilled warrior to maneuver it with exceptional speed — a quality that proves useful when warding off an opponent's blows. This kata, developed for the practice of naginata-kaiwa but useful with other weapons, maximizes this characteristic, setting up a barrier of wood, metal and motion to distract an opponent and fend off his attacks.

RANK: Shiba Bushi 3

COST: 2

SPECIAL: Must have at least 3 Ranks in Spears to use this kata.

EFFECT: You gain a bonus equal to your Reflexes to your TN to Be Hit against any melee attack. If you did not move in your previous turn, you also gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal to your Reflexes against any ranged attack. However, you may not use the Full Attack posture at any time.

VOID: You may spend a Void Point to gain a bonus equal to your twice your Air Ring + Agility to your next attack. You gain a DR bonus equal to your Agility if the attack succeeds.

New Kata: Swoop of the Wing

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 60 minutes

This kata was originally developed to help naginata duelists knock an opponent off of his feet with a quick, hard strike to the lower legs. It can also be used with other spears and polearms.

RANK: Shiba

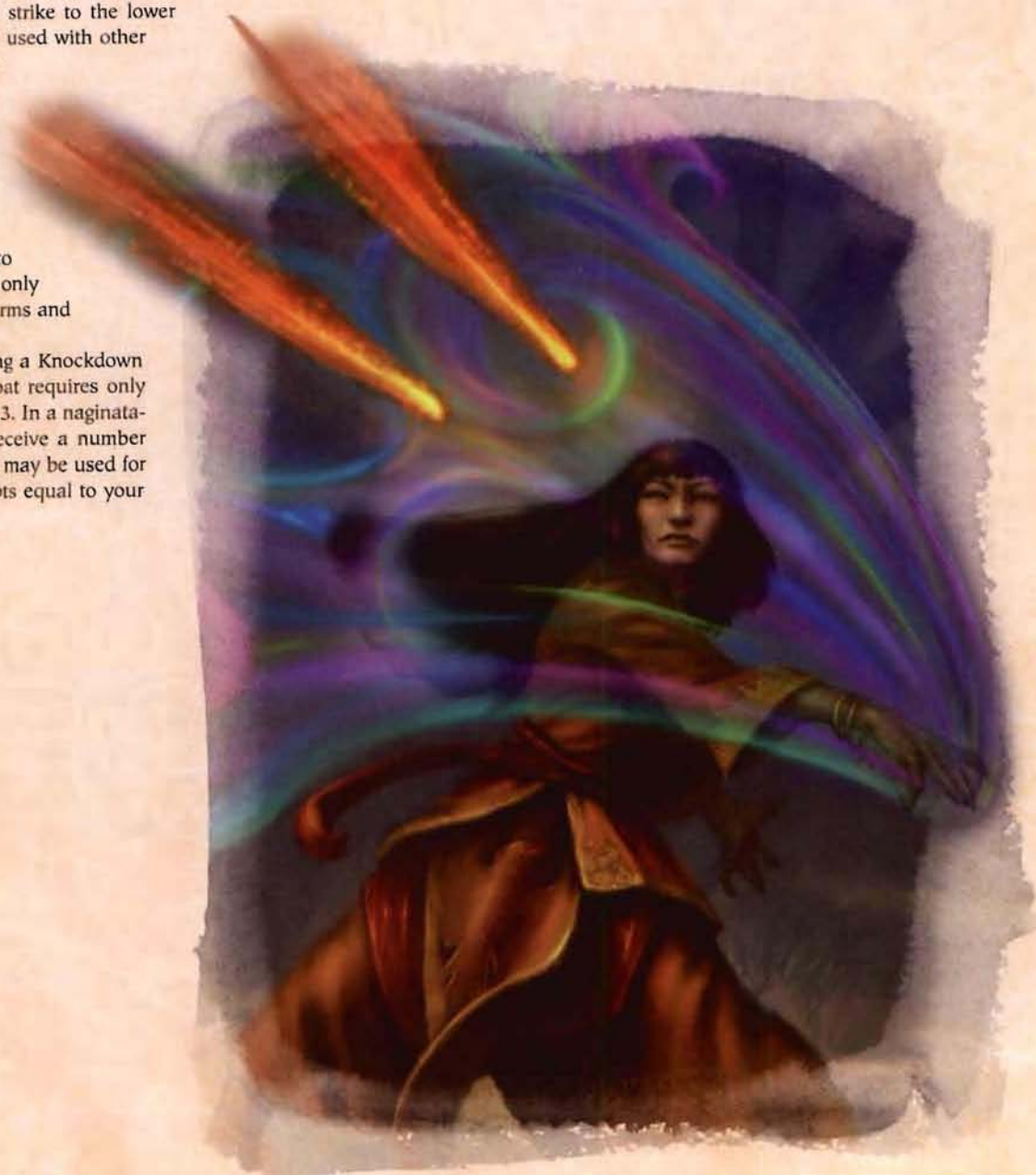
Bushi 3

COST: 2

SPECIAL: Must have at least 3 Ranks in Spears to use this kata. Can only be used with polearms and spears.

EFFECT: Attempting a Knockdown Maneuver in combat requires only 1 Raise, instead of 3. In a naginata-kaiwa duel, you receive a number of Free Raises that may be used for knockdown attempts equal to your Void Ring.

VOID: None.



CHAPTER EIGHT:

DUELING: WAY
OF THE SCORPION

Philosophy

Despite the fact that many see them as the least honorable of Rokugan's Major Clans, the Scorpion have a very strong iaijutsu tradition. For hundreds of years, Scorpion samurai have settled disputes among themselves using a very strict and intricate formal challenge ceremony. While many fail to realize it, samurai of the Clan of Secrets — the members of the Bayushi Family in particular — strive to embody what it means to truly be samurai. Indeed, many members of this Clan work all of their lives to master both the sword and of the weapons of politics, and they are always willing to sacrifice their lives for the Emperor, to whom they are selflessly — if not always obviously — devoted. Though many in Rokugan misunderstand them, the Emperor's Underhand hold personal honor in high regard, but the safety of their Clan as well as the honor and well being of the Emperor and his family must always come first. To think otherwise, given the often poisonous atmosphere of Great Clan politics, would be treason.

But it is very much the case that the Scorpion cultivate their reputation as devious, untrustworthy, and unorthodox in their ways in all things. The mistrust and misperception that they create for themselves among their rival Great Clans is, in some ways, their most dangerous weapon. In fact, most Scorpion samurai are quite traditional in their views of the world, especially in matters of honor, loyalty to their Clan and the Emperor, as well as other ideals characteristic of the samurai class. This is also true of their views of Rokugani dueling traditions.

Although they would never admit it to outsiders, Scorpion samurai, like many of their peers from rival Clans, strongly believe that the iaijutsu duel is the only true test of a swordsman. All Scorpion bushi receive at least basic training in iaijutsu skills, and the Clan's elite duelists are trained in techniques only taught at the Shosuro Champion Dojo, a highly exclusive school reserved for the most promising Scorpion swordsmen.

In fact, the belief that duels in general are the ultimate test of skill, wit, and wisdom is common among the Scorpion, as is the opinion that the ideal Scorpion samurai must be ready for any type of challenge. In fact, just as many Scorpion bushi receive training in the intricacies of courtly intrigue and politics, many Scorpion courtiers learn how to wield the katana with surprising

efficiency, and sometimes even train in iaijutsu. Scorpion shugenja rarely cross over to other forms of dueling, but they do embrace the traditions of taryu-jiai as a way of settling disputes with other shugenja.

Both within the Clan of Secrets and without, disputes are most often settled with the iaijutsu duel. When entering an iaijutsu contest against a member of another Clan, a Scorpion samurai never hesitates to use every trick at his disposal to beat his foe. After all, nothing is as important as saving face, and winning a duel against a samurai of another Clan would only serve to reinforce the Scorpion's reputation and standing. A samurai who battles a Scorpion in an iaijutsu duel faces a cunning, determined, and unscrupulous individual willing to do anything in his power to win. Someone engaged in a duel with a Scorpion highly trained in iaijutsu must expect the unexpected.

On the other hand, part of a Scorpion duelist's cunning involves subordinating immediate, tactical concerns to longer-term, strategic concerns without hesitation if he feels it necessary. Generally speaking, the Scorpion view dueling as a means of maintaining order as well as preserving the balance of power between the Great Clans (as well as within their own Families). Because Scorpion samurai are not known for their great warriors, their opponents often underestimate their ability to fight in a traditional iaijutsu duel. A Scorpion might willingly concede to a weaker opponent during a duel if he thinks it can benefit him, his Clan, or the Emperor at a future date. And he would do so even at the cost of his personal honor. Needless to say, such an act on the part of a Scorpion samurai (and indeed the very reasons that drives him to such an act) is greatly misunderstood, especially when he concedes a duel to a foe considered much weaker than himself. Thus, the vast majority who witness a Scorpion abdicate during a duel assume that he is the lesser of the two duelists — though still honorable for admitting it. Only another Scorpion samurai would know better.

When dueling among themselves, however, the underhanded tactics most Scorpion duelists never hesitate to use against members of other Clans are not well regarded. In fact, when a Scorpion faces one of his brethren in a formal duel, he must act honorably

and show as much respect for his opponent as he would the Emperor. Failing to do so results in the offender losing face, and thus he also loses the respect of his Scorpion peers. Duels to the death between two Scorpion samurai are almost unheard of. When facing each other in a proper duel, the contest lasts only until first blood is drawn. Only in the most extreme of circumstances can two Scorpion samurai engage in a duel to the death, and such a thing has only happened very rarely in the entire history of the Clan.

There is another, more subtle form of competition that the Scorpion engage in among themselves, and it is not entirely unlike the Mantis custom of contests of achievement. Long-term duels involving complex sets of rules determined by the Family Daimyo, the Clan Champion, or one of their representatives, are not uncommon among members the Scorpion Clan. Typically, these duels test how a samurai can manipulate, discredit, or sabotage a common enemy. The target, or targets, of this type of duel is chosen among the Clan's opponents, and never involve another Scorpion or an ally of the Clan. Though more complex, this form of personal competition proves exceedingly useful to the Scorpion by resolving disputes within their ranks while at the same time serving the larger political purposes of the Clan. Members of the Shosuro Shinobi School, whom were among the first to develop this sort of duel, favor this method above any other.

The objective of a long-term duel might be to discredit an enemy of the Scorpion at the Imperial Court, to obtain vital information on an opponent's military forces, to steal an ancient artifact from the vault of a rival Clan, or even to secretly murder key members of another Clan. Any type of contest along these lines is acceptable for this form of competition. However, both duelists must agree on the terms of the duel beforehand. Furthermore, the goal — and thus the completion — of the contest must result in the weakening of one the foes of the Scorpion rather than hampering someone from within the Clan. Both known and potential allies of the Clan are, of course, off limits for such contests.

Arbiters, typically a handful of representatives from the four great Scorpion Families, judge the contest. They usually meet on a weekly basis to assess the progress of each duelist. In the case of more subtle forms of contests, such as damaging someone's reputation, these arbiters record every action a duelist might have taken to reach his goal as well as its end result, and thus keep score on the progress of each contestant. In more obvious long-term duels, such as stealing a specific object or murdering a certain enemy, the arbiters simply need to declare a winner at the end of the contest. In more subtle duels, on the other hand, they sometimes need to deliberate among themselves in order to decide which of the two duelists has best achieved the objectives of the duel.

When facing a challenger of another Clan, a Scorpion samurai might agree to a form of contest other than the traditional iaijutsu duel (or taryu-jiai duel in the case of a shugenja). While he might deem an opponent's refusal to enter a duel as cowardly,

a Scorpion samurai is usually more than willing to step into a foe's own battlefield — especially when he is more familiar with the terrain than his enemy seems to realize. Thus, it is not uncommon for a Scorpion bushi to accept the challenge of a battle of wits against a courtier from a rival Clan, nor is it unthinkable for a Scorpion master of politics to defend his honor outside his customary courtly milieu. Typical Scorpion stratagems used in these alternate forms of duel vary greatly from one individual to the next, but most samurai of the Clan of Secrets take great pride in entering contests in areas in which they are not considered experts. Because of this, there are Scorpion courtiers who wield the katana in a duel, while most of their bushi brethren are uncommonly at ease in contests of intrigue and deception.



Scorpion Institutions

Although the Scorpion are not known for the might of their warriors, they nevertheless hold iaijutsu dueling in high esteem. Though most in Rokugan fail to realize it, it is widely believed within the Clan that there is no greater test of a swordsman than to face a single enemy in a formal duel. Because of this, many Scorpion samurai (and not just bushi) train in iaijutsu, and some of them even become masters of the art. This, of course, is one of the many closely guarded secrets of the Emperor's Underhand. After all, the less an enemy knows about them, the better the Scorpion like it. They are by no means famous outside the Scorpion Lands, but several dojo of the Clan of Secrets teach their students the art of the duel.

Foremost among them is the Bayushi Bushi School, where the sensei teach every one of their students at least the basics of the fine art of iaijutsu. They also teach special techniques that are reserved exclusively for Scorpion samurai. Another important school that specializes in the art of the duel is the Shosuro Champion Dojo. While few outside the Clan of Secrets know about its existence, this exclusive institution is highly regarded by Scorpion samurai and those who study there are said to have the potential to become great iaijutsu specialists. Thus, unknown to most individuals of rival Clans, many members of the Scorpion Clan have become masters of iaijutsu, perfecting the art of the duel to a degree few in Rokugan would expect from those known as the Emperor's Underhand. Indeed, being as mysterious and secretive as they are, Scorpion samurai go to great lengths to hide not only the fact that they hold great respect for the formal iaijutsu duel, but also — and especially — the fact that they are quite adept at it.

Bayushi Bushi School

For hundreds of years, the techniques of iaijutsu have been taught at the Bayushi Bushi School, the Scorpion Clan's most important bushi institution. During that time, the masters of the Bayushi Bushi School have trained Scorpion warriors in etiquette, in politics, and in the use of the katana as well as of the bow, but perhaps most important — at least in the eyes of some of its sensei — were their teachings in the fine art of dueling.

Scorpion samurai who study at the Bayushi Bushi School benefit from highly traditional standard training in the use of both the courtly arts and the sword, and they strive to become masters of both. The samurai of the Bayushi Bushi School are well versed in etiquette. They understand courtly intrigue, and are not fooled by the complexities of the more somber art of politics. Like all bushi, they are acquainted with a wide variety of weapons from the common to the rather exotic, but their training focuses on the traditional arms used by their ancestors: the katana and the bow.

Although few realize this, all Scorpion warriors, like most of their peers, know that no weapon matches a katana, and so the bushi of the Clan of Secrets quickly learn to master the sword.

Bayushi bushi, although not widely reputed as great swordsmen, nonetheless learn a uniquely precise and graceful style of sword practice from their sensei. This style, although beautiful and wonderful to watch, is in fact a powerful and deadly dance that, when effective, catches enemies unawares. The origins of the Bayushi School's iaijutsu traditions have largely been forgotten, but those within the Clan who study such things believe them to be deeply rooted in the founding of the institution. The sensei who founded the school believed, like many of their peers, that iaijutsu was a means through which one could prove his worth, show off his ability with the sword, and defend his honor. Thus, they incorporated the teaching of this ancient and well regarded mode of dueling in their curriculum.

Traditionally, iaijutsu duels between members of the Scorpion Clan are held before a conclave of respected sensei from the Bayushi Bushi School. They act as official witnesses to the duel, and an important part of this duty is to certify the result; without this official recognition, the duel cannot be considered resolved. Regardless of the season or the weather, these duels traditionally take place outside — this practice has been modified in more recent times — in a field or grove where spectators and the judges could gather to watch.

The contest is preceded by a three-part ceremony. The first part of this ceremony consists of cleansing the grounds on which the duelists will meet. A monk recruited from a temple close to the site of the duel handles this simple, but solemn event. He walks the ground chosen for the duel and prays to the Seven Fortunes, holding a golden bowl filled with burning incense. The ceremony ends when the incense is completely burned out. The monk then invites the duelists to take their place, which typically means stepping inside a circle, drawn out of colored sand or carefully marked out with rocks, in which the duel is to take place.

In the second part of the ceremony, the monk utters a short prayer and invites everyone else present to pray to the Fortune of their choice. Typically, Scorpion duelists seek the blessing of Bishamon, but honoring Fukurokujin, or even Ebisu, is not at all unknown. Some duelists prefer to pay homage to the spirits of their ancestors, but most take at least some time to venerate Bishamon or one of the other Fortunes. This part of the ceremony gives the participants — as well as the spectators — time for some introspection and meditation. After about half an hour, the monk leaves the duelists and witnesses to their own business.

The seconds then come forward and present their duelist to the other side, ceremoniously listing their ancestry and the great exploits of every one of their forefathers, and then briefly describing the deeds and accomplishments of the duelist himself. To conclude this third part of the ceremony, the seconds then face the arbiters and explain the reasons behind the duel. Only at that point do the duelists face each other and begin the actual process of the duel.

At the conclusion of the duel, one of the arbiters steps forward and officially declares a winner. The vast majority of times, of course, this is simply a matter of protocol, as it is generally pretty clear to all involved who has won and who has lost. But Scorpion rituals for resolving a duel place unusual stress on the value of an official pronouncement to ensure that no one who witnesses the event misinterprets what he has seen, or that falsehoods are not spread after the fact. The words of the masters — their final judgments — have always been accepted as the truth. This may seem oddly redundant, as it is generally difficult to misread the

outcome of iaijutsu duels (be they to first blood or to the death). But because the Scorpion really do believe that there is no purer contest, nor is there a more honorable way of proving one's self, establishing the truth of the outcome so that there can be no mistaking its outcome is all the more important. The result of an official iaijutsu duel must not be falsified, even in rumor and gossip.

However, this traditional ritual of the Bayushi Bushi School that precedes and concludes the iaijutsu duel is used only when the duelists are both Scorpion. The Clan of Secrets has learned long ago to keep their skills, beliefs, and traditions to themselves, and very few outside the Clan know anything about these traditions. In fact, this ceremony has not been performed in front of a member of another Clan for at least 400 years, which is one reason why very few outside the Clan of Secrets realize that the tradition of iaijutsu is such an important part of Scorpion philosophy and teaching.

The Bayushi Bushi School teaches unique methods of fighting that embody the Scorpion Clan's characteristic blend of subtlety, misdirection, and deadly grace in combat. But Scorpion bushi seldom use their sensei's teachings in pursuit of glory, at least for its own sake. Instead, they prize victory above all else, and they will subordinate all other considerations to its pursuit. Thus, they rarely display any of their talents to others, and very few outside the Clan realize that they are blessed with a strong iaijutsu tradition. Because few people know they are adept in the art of dueling, many a Scorpion has dealt a nasty surprise to an opponent who had challenged him to a formal iaijutsu duel. Secrecy does have its advantages.

Today, when the ritual associated with the formal iaijutsu duel takes place, witnesses, duelists, and arbiters make sure that the area in which the duel will be fought is clear of spies or any other unwanted spectators. This is perhaps one of the reasons why many of these duels, which were traditionally only held outside, are now performed indoors, in the great halls of the Daimyo of one of the Families involved or in the dojo of the Bayushi Bushi School. More traditional Scorpion iaijutsu masters insist that every one of these official duels, including the entire ceremony that accompanies them, should take place under the watchful eyes of the Sun and of the Moon, as they were originally fought. But most now chose anonymity and secrecy above that particular tradition.

All Bayushi Bushi School students receive at least a basic education in the forms and techniques of iaijutsu. But an elite few among them follow a special path taught only at the institution. They are chosen among the bushi of the school who show the most talent, as only they are deemed worthy of learning the special techniques that will eventually allow them to become true masters of iaijutsu, at least as taught and practiced by the Scorpion. These individuals must not only have abundant inner strength and the potential to develop keen physical abilities, but they must also have demonstrated that they hold the traditions of iaijutsu in high esteem.

Shosuro Champion Dojo

Throughout the years, other dueling traditions have developed inside the Scorpion Clan besides those of the Bayushi Bushi School. While iaijutsu and the ancient ceremony of the Bayushi School remain the Clan of Secrets' primary focus with regards to duels, other options are now offered to them. Chief among these is the wisdom taught at the Shosuro Champion Dojo.

Almost 300 years ago, the Shosuro Family founded a small, private, and extremely exclusive institution that later became known simply as the Shosuro Champion Dojo. This training hall, as its name implies, teaches the basic principles of iaijutsu dueling, but those who study there learn much more than new techniques to help them win duels.

Even within the Scorpion Clan, speculation and rumor surrounds the purpose of the Shosuro Champion Dojo. There are those who believe that this institution was founded out of a need to hide the Shosuro Family's true nature and agenda, while others argue that there is nothing remotely subversive about it at all, and the lessons taught at the Shosuro Champion Dojo have always been as essential to the Scorpion Clan as a whole as water is to a fish. Regardless of the motives behind its founding, the Shosuro Champion Dojo is a respected training hall among members of the Clan of Secrets. There, it is said, some of the most accomplished swordsmen of the Scorpion Clan can become iaijutsu masters of unequalled skill. Indeed, since its foundation, many of the Clan's most respected duelists have studied here. As is the wont of all Scorpion samurai, however, the school and its graduates go to great lengths to hide their talents, instead revealing their true competence only when the time is ripe.

What makes the dojo's reputation problematic is the fact that the Shosuro Family is as misunderstood as the Scorpion Thunder who founded it. Members of rival Clans see the individuals of this small but proud Family as little more than servants of the Bayushi, the true leaders of the Scorpion. Many people in fact believe that the Shosuro serve Bayushi interests and have little or no ambition of their own. Of course, in true Scorpion fashion, the Shosuro work continuously to make sure that everyone in the Empire believes this lie, and no Shosuro is ever truly offended by those who try to insult them by saying they are a lesser Family serving the interest of another, though they might feign offense. Scorpion samurai, however, know that this is not so, and that the Shosuro are much more than simple followers of the Bayushi. A Shosuro answers first to his Daimyo, and his primary loyalty is to his Family. He serves the Scorpion Clan and his Emperor, yes, but a shinobi of the Shosuro is all the more dangerous because, in the end, he cannot be manipulated to subordinate the interests of his Family to anyone else's.

Shosuro samurai answer to their Family first and foremost. But at the same time, the Shosuro Champion Dojo embodies the delicate balance that the Family strikes as members of the Scorpion Clan. The school teaches that devotion and obedience to one's lord is the only real absolute value, and in the minds of the school's sensei a samurai's honor is in good part measured by his aptitude to follow orders without question. To the Shosuro themselves, they understand this means absolute obedience to the Shosuro Daimyo. To the Scorpion bushi from other Families who train here, however, the sensei's teachings emphasize the Scorpion Clan Champion as the ultimate source of authority. Of course, no one but a Scorpion samurai has ever been admitted into the school, and surely no one ever will. In fact, no one outside the Clan of Secrets knows of the existence of this school, much less of what is taught within its walls.

The Shosuro Champion Dojo accepts students from other Schools, as long as they are Scorpion. Only experienced warriors are accepted for training here, and most of them come from the Bayushi Bushi School, intent on furthering their mastery of the art of the duel. Scorpion courtiers are also admitted, however, provided that they can prove that they have a decent measure of

skill at physical combat. Applicants with a courtier's background are usually required to fight a duel to first blood with a sensei of the dojo to prove their skill and physical courage. On the other hand, members of the Shosuro Shinobi School are readily admitted, especially if they have a substantial track record of service to the Clan.

The Shosuro Champion Dojo can be found in the mountains between Kakusu Keikai Torid-e, the Hidden Watch Keep, and the Yogo Towers. The old stone buildings stand upon a narrow plateau, high in the mountain chain. Tall rocky spires surround the place, which is completely hidden from view until one has reached the plateau, and a thick fog looms there almost all year long. Because of its location, high in the treacherous mountainous terrain, no one other than students determined to gain the wisdom of the sensei of the Shosuro Champion Dojo goes there. The journey to the institution is long and hazardous, and many believe that the dojo was sited with this in mind, to both test applicants and prepare them for the rigors of the training to come. Whatever the case, the sensei have certainly come to look at it this way. Enduring such a journey and surviving it unscathed is the first step toward being accepted into the highly exclusive institution.

The fighting style taught at the Shosuro Champion Dojo is best described as peculiar, though not in the gracefully aggressive manner of the Bayushi bushi. Indeed, the fighting technique of the Shosuro Champion Dojo has nothing of the intricately complex and circular dance of the Bayushi Bushi School style, nor is it anywhere near as beautiful to behold. In fact, the style preferred by the sensei of the Shosuro Champion Dojo relies on abrupt, erratic, and seemingly clumsy movements designed to fool the enemy into believing that the practitioner does not know

what he is doing. This style is particularly useful when the samurai who practices it is engaged in a formal iaijutsu duel, the most important form of formal combat taught at this school. It has a way of encouraging even the wisest opponent to let his guard down, and many a haughty duelist has been completely duped by a Shosuro who at first seemed a fool for accepting his challenge.

But despite their apparent differences, both the style of the Bayushi Bushi School and the techniques of the Shosuro Champion Dojo use a number of feinting, disarming, and counterattacking maneuvers designed to catch any opponent unaware. The founder of the Shosuro Champion Dojo was once a respected Shosuro Shinobi master, and he brought many of this institution's philosophies with him when he created this dojo. Even more than most Scorpion samurai, students of this school are taught to blend into crowds, to move about their business unnoticed, and to never trust anyone but their closest friends and relatives. Deceitful and secretive, Shosuro Champion students — like Shosuro shinobi — make great efforts to hide their true natures. They seldom reveal the true extent of their skills to anyone unless they have something to gain from such an action — like winning a duel, for instance. In short, surprise and deceit are at the very heart of the dueling style taught at the Shosuro Champion Dojo.

While it is true that the techniques of the Shosuro Champion Dojo can turn someone into a veritable master of iaijutsu, the odd positioning, fickle movements, and clumsy dance of those who practice this art make it hard for anybody else to seriously consider them virtuosos of this traditional form of dueling. Even those who witness firsthand an iaijutsu duel between a student of the Shosuro Champion Dojo and another adversary usually





fail to understand how such an individual could actually succeed with such a strange and seemingly unpredictable style — and they continue to believe this even after the student of the Shosuro Champion Dojo defeats his adversary. This is exactly what the founding sensei of the Shosuro Champion Dojo wanted everyone to believe. To this day, the odd techniques developed three centuries ago remain a mystery to anyone but those who have benefited from the teachings of the sensei of the Shosuro Champion Dojo. Even members of the Scorpion Clan fail to understand their intricacies. However, all of them know how deadly these underhanded techniques can be.

Because of this, no duelist who uses the style of the Shosuro Champion Dojo is ever considered a master by his peers from other Clans. Even Scorpion samurai who did not train with the Shosuro usually fail to understand how they can be such good duelists while using this peculiar style. Since the Shosuro Champion Dojo student will take victory over fame any day, the fact that his foes underestimate him grants him a great advantage over them.

Wielder of Veils Academy

Located in the shadow of Shiro no Soshi, the Wielder of Veils Academy is the main training hall of the Soshi Shugenja School. All of the School's sensei who specialize in its taryu-jiai techniques teach here, and as such, every Soshi shugenja who takes an interest in magical dueling (and there are quite a lot of them) must come here at some point in his education.

Soshi shugenja practice in general focuses on acquiring information (for the greater good of the Scorpion Clan, of course), both from divination and through weaving illusions that conceal one's presence and/or true intentions. The School's taryu-jiai techniques focus on the latter. In keeping with the approach to iaijutsu taught in the Bayushi Bushi School, Soshi shugenja learn that they key to victory is to conceal as much of yourself as possible; doing so will not only give you the advantage of surprise

when you decide to strike, but it will also deny your opponent the information that he needs to gain an advantage over you. Since judging your opponent's capabilities before the combat begins is just as important in taryu-jiai as it is in iaijutsu, this is a sensible approach to the art of the shugenja duel.

Respect for dueling as a venerable institution runs just as high among the Soshi as it does among the other Scorpion Families. In fact, when dueling amongst themselves, the Soshi treat it with the same grave formality that the Bayushi reserve for iaijutsu, enacting the same elaborate, drawn-out pre-duel rituals. There is a well-kept dueling ground in back of the Wielder of Veils Academy's main hall devoted primarily to these rites. The fact that it is kept so meticulously speaks volumes of how seriously the Soshi take taryu-jiai; the pure blasts of elemental energy unleashed in shugenja duels can cause a great deal of incidental damage, and repairing them so that the grounds maintain their air of severe dignity takes considerable expense and effort.

Yogo Shugenja School

The Yogo Shugenja School has no main dojo, no physical center to the teaching of its techniques and philosophy. Its sensei are scattered, living in small institutions that can barely be called training halls at all. Many live and teach alone and take on only a few students at a time. But even still, there is a real uniformity to how and what its sensei teach. They are Yogo, after all, and one thing they have learned is that there is no escaping that with which you are born — the inescapable essence of who and what you are.

This remarkable uniformity of practice applies to their teaching of taryu-jiai as well. Like all Scorpion, the Yogo respect — if not revere — traditional Rokugani dueling arts, including shugenja duels. As with their Soshi peers, taryu-jiai is a popular course of study among Yogo shugenja, and the School's sensei find themselves having to teach the techniques peculiar to their Family tradition whether or not their own interest in them actually matches that of their students.

As masters of warding magic, Yogo taryu-jiai duelists have developed techniques down through the ages that focus on protecting them or their avatar from harm. These techniques may not stop a blast of elemental energy altogether, and as such, they are not necessarily a decisive advantage in and of themselves in a duel to first blood. But they will reduce the harm that comes from a rival duelist's blows, and they can mean the difference between suffering and escaping a wound. At the very least, they reduce the severity of a Yogo duelist's wounds, and as such, they can enable him to outlast his opponent in a duel to the death.

Shinobi Duels: The Bayushi Courtier School and the Shosuro Shinobi School

The long-term, shinobi-style duels that pit Scorpion samurai against each other in a contest to see who can cause the most damage to enemies of the Clan were originally designed by sensei of all of the Scorpion's component Schools. However, today, it is the Bayushi Courtier School and the Shosuro Shinobi School whose sensei encourage its use among their students. The stress its usefulness not only as away of proving one's character through settling a matter of honor, but also of building character and serving the interests of their Clan at the same time.

In most instances, these shinobi-style duels have no pre-set time limit. Instead, the duelist who accomplishes the appointed task first (such as stealing an artifact or assassinating someone) wins the contest. When a more subtle objective — such as destroying the reputation of a rival of the Clan or convincing a high dignitary to take action that would be beneficial to the Scorpion Clan — is the goal, the arbiters need to evaluate each of the duelist's performance and compare the result. Sometimes, in order to reach a final decision and declare a winner, they need to deliberate among themselves. When both duelists seem to have performed equally well, or when the arbiters judge that both their actions were needed to accomplish the predetermined goal, there is a tie. Ties are extremely rare, but are usually resolved by setting new objectives and thus forcing both duelists to continue to act against the enemies of the Scorpion Clan until one can eventually be declared the winner.

In this form of duel, each challenger is usually given the same objectives, but sometimes each of them might have a different agenda. Though rare, circumstances — such as the fact that the duelists might have very different talents — might force the duelists and arbiters to settle on different goals for each of the contestants. In such cases, the arbiters' judgment might be harder to pronounce, unless they can set a timeframe in which both duelists must act.

Because of their secretive ways, samurai of the Bayushi Courtier School and those of the Shosuro Shinobi School prefer the shinobi-style challenge above any other, and they frequently engage in such duels — not just among themselves, to settle personal disputes, but also between each other, with each School's pride at stake as well as the honor of the actual duelists. This competition between Schools has become something of a tradition, in fact. In addition to the disputes between Bayushi courtiers and Shosuro shinobi that occur as a matter of course, the two Schools hold a collective shinobi-style duel between each other once every year. The sensei of each nominate a champion from

the ranks of their young samurai who have completed their gem-pukku that year, and the two are pitted against each other with the same goal as the object of the competition. Usually, the mission is not terribly dangerous, since neither School really wants to put their most promising young samurai in genuine risk. A typical challenge might involve pilfering an object, a minor act of sabotage or vandalism, or defaming the reputation of a personage in a rival Clan. But the mission always involves a task that would genuinely advance the Clan's interests, and the Bayushi courtiers and the Shosuro shinobi take this rivalry between their two schools quite seriously.

Scorpion Sensei

While a number of Scorpion sensei are well versed in formal iaijutsu challenges as well as other forms of dueling, such as traditional taryu-jiai bouts or the Shosuro Shinobi style of duel, only a handful of them are widely acknowledged as experts in the art of the duel. Because of the nature of most individuals in the Clan of Secrets, very few Scorpion samurai, if any, care to display their skills and talents for all to see, much less boast about their prowess or mastery over any form of skills to members of rival Clans. Because of this, most Scorpion masters of iaijutsu or taryu-jiai go about their business unnoticed, their talents unrecognized by the other Clans unless they have the chance to witness their skills with their own (often not-quite-believing) eyes. Scorpion samurai, however, know well enough to respect their own sensei. Among them, Bayushi Benkei and Soshi Nahoko are probably the better-known masters of the fine art of the duel. Their renown, however, is for the most part limited to the Clan of Secrets.

BAYUSHI BENKEI, BAYUSHI BUSHI SCHOOL SENSEI

Air: 4	Earth: 3 Willpower: 4	Fire: 5	Water: 2 Perception: 3	Void: 3
Honor: 2.7		Status: 3.7		Glory: 4.2

SCHOOL/RANK: Bayushi Bushi 3/Bayushi Defender 1

ADVANTAGES: Bishamon's Blessing, Heart of Vengeance (Shadowlands)

DISADVANTAGES: Ascetic, Can't Lie, Idealistic

KATA: Cut Under the Mountain, Striking as Fire, Striking as Wind, Sundering Grace, The Tail's Reach

SKILLS: Battle 4, Courtier (Political Maneuvering) 2, Defense 6, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 7, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 5, Lore: Shadowlands 5

Bayushi Benkei is the son of Bayushi Kanbe, a little known Scorpion bushi who died in a minor skirmish when Benkei was not even two years old. Though he never knew his father, Benkei nevertheless enjoyed a privileged childhood in the fertile plains near the village of Kagoki, at the heart of Bayushi territory. Raised by his mother, Umeka, a charming courtier of the Scorpion Clan who served for most of her life at the Imperial Court, as well as his paternal uncle, Bayushi Kobo, Benkei learned everything a member of his proud and cunning Family needed to know.

From a very young age, his uncle taught him how to properly wield a katana, how to use a bow to maximum efficiency, and even how to hunt game in the wild, for both sport and necessity, the latter in case he should ever need to survive in the wild. Kobo oji-san was a harsh man who, unlike most other Bayushi bushi, had absolutely no interest in intrigue and affairs of court. He nev-

er meddled in politics, nor was he particularly pleasant in manner. Benkei's mother had once said about him that he was a man of little word and even less tact — but all the same, that in all the Empire there was no other samurai who was as devoted to his lord. Bayushi Kobo indeed seemed content to perform his duty as a loyal warrior of the Bayushi and the Emperor, and like many of his Scorpion brethren he made it a point of honor to protect the interests of both his Clan and of the Imperial Families. From him, Benkei not only learned the basic weapon skills he would need later in life, but also — and perhaps most importantly — the true meaning of duty, honor, and loyalty.

From his mother, Bayushi Benkei learned everything else. It was Umeka who taught the young boy how to properly address a lord, how to, when to, and why to stand up in official functions, as well as how to sit and walk gracefully. From Umeka, he learned the etiquette and social protocol that a true samurai ought to master in order to earn respect from his peers. He also learned skills more genteel than that of the sword, such as calligraphy, and how to appreciate art or compose complex works of poetry. Benkei wondered if these skills would be useful to him, but he never questioned his mother. In fact, he often found her teaching of the more intellectual and social matters to be a nice change of pace from the hard training and long treks he took with his uncle. For a time, Benkei enjoyed this balance in his life.

When he entered the Bayushi Bushi School, Benkei quickly established a reputation as one of the most promising students of his class, in spite of the relative obscurity of his origins. His father had never been a particularly well-known or respected bushi; he had died much too young for that. His uncle Kobo, although skilled in Bushido, was a mystery to most people, even among his fellow Scorpion samurai. He was a man who preferred to spend his time in the wild rather than to bother with things others considered socially acceptable. Nevertheless, the sensei of the Bayushi Bushi School had sensed unusual talent and capabilities in the young Benkei. Because he was already well versed in many of the skills taught at the school, it took Benkei only a few short months to be considered the equal of many of his fellow students, most of whom were older than him.

His training was interrupted, however, when Umeka was killed in a brutal raid near the borders of the Shadowlands, in the gap between the Twilight Mountains and the Shinomen Forest, while traveling on an embassy to Kyuden Hida. Whether the culprits were bandits, a raiding party of The Lost, ogres or other foul things of the Shadowlands could not be determined, as there were no survivors, and the attackers left few clues as to their identity. When Benkei heard the news, he left the dojo and journeyed to the Shadowlands in search of those who had murdered her. For years he traveled throughout the Crab Lands, roamed the lands beyond the Kaiu Wall — alone, refusing to travel in company with Hida or Hiruma warriors, as he believed that they had failed to provide adequate protection for his mother's party — even penetrated the darkness of the Great Shinomen, all in a futile search for vengeance. But no matter how many men and beasts he killed his sorrow never left him, nor the memory of his mother cease to haunt him.

He returned to the Scorpion Lands from time to time to perfect the fighting techniques he had practiced while on his quest for retribution. But he only stayed at the Bayushi Bushi School long enough to learn what he needed to combat those who had become his sworn enemies, returning to the Crab Lands and the Shadowlands in a futile attempt to assuage his grief. To this day

he will not speak of his adventures in the sickened lands beyond the Wall, and he still holds a grudge against the Crab Clan, whom he believes failed to protect his mother, so many years ago.

Finally, however, he returned to the Bayushi Bushi School one last time; worn down by his travels and years of simmering rage, he gladly accepted when one of the sensei suggested that he join their number. It has been over two decades since Bayushi Benkei returned to Scorpion Lands and settled down, but many of his deeds are now an inspiration for poets and his courage a hailed as a paragon of what every samurai should strive to achieve. Though he rarely speaks a word about his actions, his legend continues to grow — at least among his fellow Scorpion. Now in his early seventies, Bayushi Benkei is recognized as one of the Scorpion's elite masters of iaijutsu. Young Scorpion warriors will come to the dojo for no other purpose than to receive his tutelage. Bayushi Benkei is one of the most respected sensei currently teaching at the Bayushi Bushi School, and the one sensei to whom invariably turn when they wish to learn the art of the duel.

SOSHI NAHOKO, SHOSURO CHAMPION DOJO SENSEI

Air: 5 Earth: 3 Fire: 4 Water: 3 Void: 5
Awareness: 6 Willpower: 5

Honor: 1.9 Status: 4.3 Glory: 3.8

SCHOOL/RANK: Bayushi Courtier 3/Shosuro Champion 3

ADVANTAGES: Dangerous Beauty, Perceived Honor (4 Points)

DISADVANTAGES: Cruel, Dark Secret (murdered her husband), Greedy

SKILLS: Calligraphy 4, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation) 6, Deceit (Lying, Seduction) 7, Defense 5, Etiquette (Conversation, Sincerity) 6, Forgery 4, Iaijutsu 7, Investigation 4, Instruction 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Poison 4, Sleight of Hand 4

The third-born child of Daimyo Soshi Uidori, Nahoko realized at a very early age that she would never have access to the privileges her brothers — even her younger brothers — would enjoy. Indeed, it was made very clear to her that she would never be the heir to her father, but that instead her fate was to eventually marry and bear children for her husband. At the age of six, Soshi Nahoko vowed that she would never become the pawn of any man; not her father's, not her brother's, not her husband to be. She also swore that if she should one day marry, she would do so out of love and not out of duty for her family, like her mother and so many of her aunts had chosen to do. She told herself that she would be the sole architect of her life, that she would be the mistress of her destiny.

Blessed with both education and the Scorpion's legendary beauty, Soshi Nahoko grew up to become a cunning, resourceful, and independent woman. After years of childish pleading, which turned into years of artful negotiation, Nahoko never actually convinced her father to change the plans he had for her, but she did manage to have him postpone the wedding he had arranged for her until she turned 21. Headstrong but sensible to others, young Nahoko quickly became one of the most charming courtiers of the Scorpion Clan, but she always managed to keep her greatest talents to herself.

After her gempukku ceremony, it took little time for Nahoko to be recognized as one of the most promising courtiers of her Clan. Serving at the Emperor's court under the guidance of many of the wisest and most cunning Scorpion diplomats, it took little time

for her to learn how to manipulate others to her whim. Smart and resolute, Nahoko never hesitated to use her stunning beauty to sway men's affections. Her time at court also taught her all she needed to learn of deceitful art of politics, and she eventually realized that the marriage her father had planned for her was probably the best way to not only serve the Scorpion and the Emperor, but also further her own status within Rokugani society, the true complexity of which she had barely begun to understand and appreciate.

Although she agreed to marry out of obligation to her Family, Nahoko never became the subservient wife her father and husband wanted her to be. However, she did everything in her power to make all around her believe that she was, and she skillfully fooled everyone. Her husband died in what appeared to be an unfortunate accident when she was only 27 years old, but she chose not to remarry. For some time, her father suspected that she might have had something to do with her husband's death, but a quiet investigation never revealed her guilt on the matter. In fact, none in her entourage ever truly believed that she could be responsible for such an act.

Free to pursue her passions, Soshi Nahoko took it upon herself not only to learn to wield the katana as competently as any bushi, but indeed to become an expert in the art of the sword. For years, she trained in kenjitsu as well as iaijutsu, striving to become a better duelist than even her brothers could ever hope to be. An influential voice for the Scorpion Clan, Soshi Nahoko is a deceitfully charismatic and dangerously beautiful woman with an uncanny ability to sway men to her cause. She also became one of the better students of the Shosuro Champion Dojo. Now in her mid-forties, she divides her time between the courts and the school, where she now teaches the techniques she mastered.

New Mechanics

New Advanced School: Shosuro Champion (Bushi)

Although the Shosuro Champion Dojo is extremely well respected within the Scorpion Clan, no one outside the Clan of Secrets has yet learned of its existence or the techniques that are taught by its sensei. That is exactly how the Shosuro like it, for no shinobi can survive in the public eye; stealth and surprise are his stock in trade. It thus is no great surprise that Shosuro champions learn different counterattacking, disarming, and feinting maneuvers meant to catch their opponents unaware. They also learn how to remain unnoticed, realize why it is important to hide one's true nature, and understand why they should never trust anyone but themselves.

But they also hold the tradition of iaijutsu in high esteem, as they also receive intensive training in both iaijutsu and kenjutsu, practicing the distinctively deceptive and unpredictable style that the Shosuro have refined and mastered. The shinobi of the Scorpion believe that the ultimate deception is to face your opponent in a conventional, face-to-face battle and conceal your true strength, revealing it only when it is too late for your opponent to do anything in response.



Requirements

Rings/Traits: Any 3 Rings at 4

Skills: Deceit 5, Stealth 5, and either Iaijutsu or Kenjutsu at 5

Advantage: Bland

Other: You may waive the Bland Advantage requirement by raising all Skill requirements by 1.

To be admitted into the Shosuro Champion Dojo, you must have proven your loyalty to the Scorpion Clan beyond doubt. Typically, this is done by successfully completing at least one mission on the direct order of the Scorpion Champion.

Techniques

RANK 1: THE STRENGTH OF SECRETS

Shosuro Champions are shinobi above all, and as such training in the arts of deception is a basic part of their education. You gain a bonus to any Low Skill or Social Skill Roll made to deceive or manipulate an opponent equal to your Insight Rank. Typical examples of this ability include using the Acting (Disguise), Courtier, Deceit, Etiquette (Sincerity), Forgery, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth Skills. When making a Feint maneuver, you gain an additional number of Free Raises equal to your School Rank.

Your training also teaches you how to conceal your true skill from an opponent in a duel. When resolving an iaijutsu duel, you may spend a Void Point to add a penalty to your opponent's TN to learn information about you during the Challenge phase. This penalty is equal to your Intelligence, and the number of Void Points that you may spend for this purpose during the Challenge phase is limited only by the number that you have remaining to spend.

RANK 2: THE SWIFTNESS OF THE SHADOW

Shosuro Champions are fast and agile and they strike when their opponents least expect it. You gain 1 additional attack per round. You also gain a bonus to Initiative Rolls and Iaijutsu Rolls equal to your Stealth Skill. Every time you make a Raw Reflex Roll or a Reflex-based Skill Roll, you roll an additional number of dice equal to your School Rank.

RANK 3: THE STRIKE OF THE SHOSURO

The unique fighting style used by Shosuro Champions is even stranger than the combat techniques taught at the Bayushi Bushi School. Those who learn to master this style can deliver remarkably quick and lethal strikes. You may spend a Void Point to forego all your additional attacks in a round and make one un-



naturally fast, precise, or deadly attack against a single enemy. When you do, you gain additional rolled and kept dice equal to your Insight Rank on your Initiative Roll, attack roll, or DR (your choice).

Your training also teaches you how to conceal your true skill from an opponent in a duel. When resolving an iaijutsu duel, you may spend a Void Point to add a penalty to your opponent's TN to learn information about you during the Challenge phase. This penalty is equal to twice your Intelligence, and the number of Void Points that you may spend for this purpose during the Challenge phase is limited only by the number that you have remaining to spend. This benefit supersedes the benefit gained at Rank 1.

New Advanced School: Yogo Duelist (Shugenja)

Perpetually haunted by the curse that befell their great ancestor, the Yogo have always had a precarious position within the Scorpion — trusted as useful tools, yet kept at arm's length because betrayal is their fate. In turn, they understand that they can only remain under the protection of the Scorpion as long as they return the sentiment. Yogo shugenja understand, therefore, that the possibility of a personal challenge exists no matter what company they keep, and they find it useful to cultivate some expertise in the art of taryu-jiai.

Requirements

The only requirement for the Yogo Duelist Advanced School is that you must already belong to the Yogo Shugenja School (see *The Four Winds*, p. 176).

Technique: Yogo's Hardened Heart

As Yogo shugenja specialize in the creation of magical wards, it is only natural that their taryu-jiai masters should have developed ways of extending that expertise to the art of shugenja duels. In the Resolution phase of a taryu-jiai duel, all of your opponent's attacks against you suffer a penalty added to the TN equal to twice your Willpower. You may spend a Void Point to increase this penalty to 3 x your Willpower, but you may spend no more than 1 Void Point per attack in this manner.

New Path: Bayushi Defender (Bushi)

The Scorpion have a long and proud iaijutsu tradition, although they keep it to themselves and try to conceal their true skill from other Clans. Students of the Bayushi Bushi School are among those who learn the customs of this ancient way of dueling along with the skills required to master such a complex, powerful, and spectacular technique. Among Scorpion bushi, however, only a select few truly develop ways of perfecting the fine art of iaijutsu dueling. Those who do also continue to further their education in courtly intrigue and etiquette, in the belief that a well-rounded samurai is a self-sufficient samurai well-equipped to prevail in any circumstance.

The honored tradition of the formal iaijutsu bout is so important for the samurai of the Clan of Secrets that even its courtiers sometimes see it fit to learn its mysteries. These very special techniques are taught by two sensei of the Bayushi Bushi School, both revered specialists of the art of the duel themselves. Only Scorpion samurai can hope to uncover these techniques, which make those who master them unpredictably quick with the sword as well as deadly with the tongue. These samurai are often called upon to defend the honor of their Clan in different arenas — be they the courts of the nobles or the grounds where traditional iaijutsu duels are fought. And they have always been grateful for and proud of the privilege of doing so.

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Bayushi Bushi School 2 or Bayushi Courtier School 2

Requirements: Iaijutsu 4

Path of Egress: Bayushi Bushi School 3 or Bayushi Courtier School 3

Technique: The Scorpion's Sting

Like many of their fellow Bayushi bushi, Bayushi Defenders learn a style of swordsmanship that is quick, unpredictable, and deadly. However, they do not learn specific techniques of kenjutsu and iaijutsu so much as they do ways of reading a situation and an opponent that allow them to act to their advantage without hesitation or a false step. This mental discipline comes in useful not only when wielding a katana, but also when encountering foes in more sociable circumstances, and fighting more subtle battles.

You gain a bonus equal to your Fire Ring to all of your Initiative Rolls. You gain a bonus to all Iaijutsu Rolls equal to twice your Fire Ring. In the Strike phase of an iaijutsu duel, you gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal to (2 x your Honor Rank) + 1. Also, you gain 1 Free Raise whenever you make a Contested Social Skill Roll. If you have 5 or more ranks in a Social Skill with which you make a Contested Roll, you gain 2 Free Raises instead of 1.

New Path: Bayushi Defiler (Courtier)

The long-term contests of the Shinobi-style duels — in which the contestants are often required to besmirch the reputation of a rival or to weaken a foe's forces — are an important part of Scorpion culture. Though the Bayushi Courtier School teaches its students how to take advantage and fully exploit the weaknesses of others, only those who follow the wisdom of its Shosuro sensei can truly excel at defiling another samurai's reputation. While this path seems a merciless one to follow, those who learn its secrets understand that there is no dishonor in exposing a rival's weakness or one of his vile secrets, and that sullyng a samurai's reputation only proves how weak this particular individual truly is.

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Bayushi Courtier School 2

Path of Egress: Bayushi Courtier School 3 or Shosuro Shinobi School 1

Technique: Venom of the Shosuro

Students of the Bayushi Defilers excel at destroying the reputation of their rivals. You gain a bonus to all Courtier, Deceit, and Etiquette (Sincerity) Skill Rolls equal to twice your Bayushi Courtier School Rank. In addition, when making Deceit Skill Rolls, you may spend a Void Point to explode an 8 or 9 in addition to any 10s you may roll. You may spend no more than 1 Void Point per roll in this manner.

New Path: Soshi Duelist (Shugenja)

Unlike the shugenja Families of some Great Clans, the Soshi embrace the traditions of taryu-jiai, and their sensei have even refined techniques particular to the art of the magic duel. Soshi dueling techniques combine their traditional skill with illusions with the Scorpion philosophy of concealing their true strength and nature until it is too late for an opponent to counter it. Soshi shugenja who expect to serve the Clan at court or in other settings where they will have to mingle with rivals from other Clans — and may therefore expect to fight duels against representatives of other Clans — often follow this course of training to prepare themselves for such challenges.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Soshi Shugenja School 2

Path of Egress: Soshi Shugenja School 3

Technique: Mask of the Soshi

The Soshi are masters of illusion, and have long experience in deceiving their foes. It is no great matter for them to extend this expertise to the dueling ground, so that they may trick an opponent into misperceiving their strengths and weaknesses. When resolving a taryu-jiai duel, you may spend a Void Point to add a penalty to your opponent's TN to learn information about you during the Assessment phase. This penalty is equal to twice your Awareness, and the number of Void Points that you may spend for this purpose during the Challenge phase is limited only by the number that you have remaining to spend.

CHAPTER NINE:

DUELING: WAY
OF THE UNICORN**Introduction**

Since the Unicorn Clan's return to Rokugan in the year 815, the Clan's samurai have been branded philistines and outsiders for their adherence to ways they had developed in their travels past Rokugan's borders. The Unicorn Clan is one of the most unorthodox Clans when it comes to dueling, and few adhere to the rules followed by the rest of Rokugan. Throughout their travels, the Unicorn encountered many different societies, each with their own customs and rituals. Wherever they stayed, they adhered to all of the native customs to avoid any unintended complications with the locals. When the Unicorn moved on, they dropped most of the acquired methods but permanently adopted any practices that appealed most to them. The current Unicorn Clan follows an amalgam of practices and uses a variety of competitive forms adapted from different foreign cultures.

The biggest influence on current Unicorn dueling traditions, however, is Shinjo's Law. This edict was issued by the Kami Shinjo herself while the Clan was under her leadership. Shinjo's Law dictates that no Unicorn may ever shed another Unicorn's blood. No blade may be drawn in the Unicorn Lands unless that person intends to kill his opponent. Matches among the Unicorn are mostly displays of skill or other ways where the contestants cannot hurt each other beyond a few bruises. Even the most ferocious Moto will not break Shinjo's Law. Another big influence is, of course, the Clan's famous love of horses. Many types of competition used in the Unicorn Lands revolve around riding horses as a main focus of the duel.



Shinjo Zhenyo and Akodo Rikimaru

The duel between Shinjo Zhenyo, yojimbo to the first Unicorn courtier sent to the Imperial Court, and Akodo Rikimaru established many of the prejudices and stereotypes about the Unicorn Clan. After their return to Rokugan, the Unicorn found themselves unfamiliar with their old home's customs. The Imperial Court had turned into a vicious battlefield of innuendo and accusation in their absence, as the Great Clans continually vied for advantage over each other. The Ide ambassadors had grown accustomed to being direct and speaking forthrightly in their travels abroad. This strategy went directly at odds with the Rokugani customs of couching every word with hidden meanings. A duel to settle a disagreement between a Unicorn and a representative of another Clan was inevitable, and a traditionalist Lion was the first to challenge the newcomers. The two courtiers' yojimbo, Shinjo Zhenyo and Akodo Rikimaru, stepped outside to resolve the issue.

Most duels in the Imperial Court are resolved with iaijutsu. However, when Zhenyo and Rikimaru readied for the duel, Zhenyo drew his katana and held it ready in his normal combat stance. Rikimaru responded with ridicule, asking if the barbaric Unicorn could not act civilized in any way. Zhenyo's stilled response summarized the Unicorn stance on iaijutsu: "Why do you ask me to begin a battle unprepared? A warrior's duty is to kill. To ask a warrior to begin unprepared in a fight against another warrior is simply foolish."

The kenjutsu duel was an odd experience for both samurai. Both faced foreign styles and stances and had to adjust to never seen tactics. In the end, Rikimaru spun to the side and sliced at Zhenyo's neck. At the same time, Zhenyo thrust forward toward Rikimaru. The Lion cleaved through the Unicorn's neck, as Zhenyo's blade ripped through his leg.

In death, however, Zhenyo earned respect from Rikimaru for his tenacity in battle. Out of that respect, Rikimaru chose to never face another warrior in a duel. He gained permission from his daimyo to retire to a monastery. His personal writings on the nature of the Unicorn Clan and the Great Clans were published posthumously. *Rikimaru's Words*, as the collection is named, is considered a rare gem in Lion literature.

The most traditional form of dueling, iaijutsu, is almost unheard of within the Unicorn Lands. None of the major bushi schools teach their students the techniques venerated by the rest of Rokugan. The Unicorn view iaijutsu as an archaic, impractical style of fighting that only hinders those who use the form. Iaijutsu is used in the Unicorn Lands only when outsiders are involved. There are only a few exceptions to this rule: Many Ide training to become yojimbo for Unicorn courtiers learn iaijutsu. An Ide yojimbo realizes that iaijutsu is a skill that must be learned if he wants to be able to protect his charge from all threats, especially outside the Unicorn Lands. Whether they like iaijutsu or not, it is the form used by Rokugani courts to settle disputes and discern

the truth. The fact that the Unicorn do not practice iaijutsu at large does not exempt them from that rule. For that same reason, Shinjo samurai who wish to become magistrates take up iaijutsu. Many foolish criminals and hostile courtiers have engaged Unicorn samurai in iaijutsu, looking to exploit the Clan's well-known unfamiliarity with the style. However, instead of gaining an easy victory, the aggressors are surprised by a skilled duelist's perfect technique.

But even with the special training the Unicorn undergo to be proficient at dueling according to Rokugani norms, iaijutsu remains the least popular style of dueling among the Unicorn.

The different bushi families in the Unicorn prefer different styles of dueling according to their individual tastes and mindsets. All Unicorn bushi are proficient in horse archery, and often hold competitions to test accuracy at longer distances and higher speeds. The masters at this contest style are generally from the Shinjo Family, including the greatest horse archer in recent memory, Shinjo Hanari. Unicorn bushi have honed this skill to perfection, able to hit a target accurately over distances that many samurai would have trouble attempting on steady ground. The Unicorn leaders host many horse archery contests a year to keep their bushi well practiced in the skill. The Moto Family, on the other hand, respect physical strength and martial dexterity. Their preferred style of competition is barique wrestling, a wrestling style similar to Rokugani sumai with a few differences picked up from outside Rokugan.

All Unicorn love to race against each other on horseback, simply testing to see who can reach a destination faster through the endless Utaku fields. A variant of this is called Ma-Do. The Unicorn developed this ancient form of competition while traveling beyond Rokugan's borders. Tales state that it originated around the year 600, while the Unicorn Clan wandered without the guidance of Shinjo. The Unicorn had better relations with locals when Shinjo had held the leadership of the Clan; the Kami's kind nature had gained their trust. The new leaders of the Unicorn were forced to think of alternate methods to find a common ground. Ma-Do was one of the means invented during this time. The Unicorn participate in Ma-Do to this day.

Ma-Do is especially popular with young, hot-blooded samurai who seek excitement without any regard for the danger that they face. A single contestant rides forth at top speed while the rest of those involved watch. He then tries to perform as many athletic and dramatic feats while riding the horse as he can, without falling off. Some of the popular stunts involve standing on the saddle, or riding while hanging off the side of the horse. Those who are skilled in this contest are known all across the Unicorn Lands and respected as much as any military hero.

Ma-Do contests require some form of arbitration to determine the winner, based not only on the number of maneuvers successfully completed, but also on their difficulty and their sheer spectacle value. In the earliest Ma-Do competitions, the competitors themselves judged each other and determined who was worthier (or worthiest, depending on how many competitors were involved). As it gained popularity as a dueling form, however, the stakes of some Ma-Do contests were high enough that they required impartial moderation, especially when heated rivals were involved. Now, at least one judge is always present at a Ma-Do competition to certify the results, using whatever criteria he chooses, whether it be number or difficulty of stunts successfully completed, or the reaction of the spectators, or some combination thereof.

Duel: Moto Chai and Otaku Tsumi

Feats of horsemanship are valued among the Unicorn Clan samurai as much if not more than martial feats. For this reason, the star of Moto Chai rose quickly during the 7th Century. He was a brilliant scout and fighter, proving himself worthy in combat many times over. He also showed his great love for horses and held a greater connection with his horse than even most of his Unicorn peers. He was a humble and kind man who let his actions prove his worth, rather than his words.

Chai proved himself one of the greatest horsemen of the Unicorn Clan in one of the first Ma-Do duels ever performed. The Unicorn Clan gathered with its gaijin neighbors to celebrate the tenth anniversary of their first alliance. The best riders from each faction performed in front of a crowd of thousands. In the end, Moto Chai and Otaku Tsumi were chosen as the finalists. Tsumi wowed the crowds by balancing on the saddle with one hand while riding at full speed. When Chai took his turn, he gained unanimous approval when he rode the horse at full speed while hanging between the horse's legs. He held his position solely by wrapping the stirrups around his leg while holding on to the reins. Upon seeing his techniques, Tsumi conceded the match to Chai wholeheartedly.

Chai went on to adapt his techniques for military uses. To this day, Moto Chai is remembered as the undisputed master of Ma-Do.

Whereas the Unicorn bushi tend to view the accepted dueling standard with skepticism, Unicorn shugenja understand the reasons and methods behind taryu-jiai, the Rokugani standard of shugenja dueling. It is a simple and direct method, a test of wills and strengths in the simplest of means: raw elemental power. Unicorn shugenja are proficient in taryu-jiai and have engaged in many of these duels over the centuries. In fact, the Unicorn often used a variant of taryu-jiai even outside Rokugani borders, since many of the gaijin opponents they encountered preferred a direct confrontation of power.

The preferred dueling form for shugenja is a style created by the Unicorn themselves, one that combines many elements that suit the Clan's tastes and talents. The style is somewhat more subtle than classic taryu-jiai and often exhilarates duelists even after a loss. As with everything else, Shinjo's Law has directly influenced its evolution. The Unicorn call it Engaging the Wind and in many ways, one may think of it as a magical version of Ma-Do. The two duelists wait on horseback 50 paces from each other, pointed in the same direction. When the duel begins, they both ride at full gallop parallel to each other, keeping 50 paces between them at all times. Each duelist may then use every method at his disposal to knock his opponent off his horse. However, a duelist automatically loses if he ever damages his opponent or his opponent's mount directly.

Many of the younger shugenja raise the stakes while Engaging the Wind. They make a contest of seeing how close to damaging their opponent they can come without crossing the limit. This is a very popular variation, and many competitions within the Unicorn Lands have begun to utilize this style as one of the official events.

Unicorn Institutions

Though formal dueling is not emphasized in the Unicorn Lands, competition is considered a healthy recreation for the Clan's bushi. Many types of friendly competitions help tie the warriors together with a bond of respect. Many of the dojo in the Unicorn Lands are found in the major cities, located near the seats of power. Other schools reflect the Unicorn's characteristic wanderlust and move across the lands with the rest of the Clan. Regardless of type, all Unicorn dojo expect nothing less than excellence from their students and sensei alike.

Floating Leaf Dojo

Shiro Iuchi, the Gatherer of Winds Castle, is a notable landmark that stands out in the vast surrounding plains. It is the magical focus of the Unicorn Clan and the seat of the Iuchi Family calls home. The majority of the samurai who train to become shugenja attend the prestigious Gatherer of the Winds Dojo, the oldest shugenja dojo in Rokugan, which Iuchi himself built before his departure from the Empire. The Gatherer of Winds is considered the primary Unicorn shugenja school, and most of them have attended its primary dojo. The Floating Leaf, on the other hand, is a small school that is practically unknown outside of the Unicorn Lands. It takes on only a handful of students every year, keeping the size of the school at very low levels. It is therefore considered an honor to be invited to the Floating Leaf, and few decline the offer.

The Floating Leaf School split off from the the Gatherer of Winds and mainstream of Unicorn shugenja practice long ago, during the Clan's exile. During the 3rd Century, the Unicorn were forced to separate into four different groups following a vicious war with the rocs. The majority of the Iuchi family followed the lead of the Iuchi Daimyo, and traveled as one group toward the dangerous land of the jinn. There, the Iuchi faced and struggled against powerful, unknown magic. In the end, the two factions reached a cease fire. The Iuchi made peace with the strange elements. They then took a part of the jinn culture, adapted it, and absorbed it as part of the Iuchi philosophy.

However, a small group of Iuchi shugenja decided to stay with the group of Ide. They served the Ide with their magic and observed all of their dealings. These Iuchi talked amongst themselves and adapted their experiences to their techniques. These powers focused more on movement and peace, the pillars of the Ide philosophy. When these Iuchi rejoined the rest of their family, they found that they had walked down very different paths. Their philosophies had diverged significantly because of the drastically different experiences they went through their travels. With the permission of the Iuchi Daimyo, these Iuchi established the Floating Leaf School.

The Floating Leaf curriculum contains the same techniques as the Gatherer of Winds School. The major difference lies within their respective styles of training and philosophies. Both Schools nurture the free spirit of the Iuchi shugenja. Both focus on movement and spells that enhance the shugenja's ties to animals. Both are expected to serve the Unicorn armies as support, healing the wounded and facilitating cavalry movement.



However, each School emphasizes different strengths of a shugenja. The Gatherer of Winds emphasizes the strength of victory, focusing on how to control the power of the elements. These teachings pass on the lessons the Iuchi learned while facing the jinn, where elemental might prevailed over finesse. In contrast, the Floating Leaf emphasizes the strength of structural integrity, focusing on techniques that would help the Unicorn war effort without using their power to hurt others. They learn ways of misdirection to confound enemies, emphasize spells that cure the wounded, and develop special methods to increase the speed of the Unicorn armies.

The Floating Leaf Dojo is also home to an advanced school of shugenja practice, the Master of the Swift Waves School. Using secret spells unique to the Iuchi, a Master of the Swift Waves is able to move an entire army across an astonishingly large distance. The graduates of the school serve in the Unicorn armies, increasing the legendary Unicorn speed even further.

Formally, the Floating Leaf Dojo is located inside Shiro Ide as tribute to the group of Ide who brought forth the philosophical ideals of the new school. It is smaller than most dojo and can only support a few dozen students at any one time. However, in practice, the actual school rarely resides in the dojo. Instead, the school wanders across the Unicorn Lands without much of a plan or pre-determined destination. The students and sensei reside in tents whenever they stop for the night. The students learn their lessons and practice outdoors with nothing to impede their connection to nature. Students of the Master of the Swift Waves School are often tested in the field by using his magic to help move the school.

The Floating Leaf also maintains a small dojo in each major city in the Unicorn Lands. The school passes through the major cities in the Unicorn Lands about once every month. These stops are not scheduled, and no one knows of these visits ahead of time except the senior sensei of the school.

The nomadic nature of the school is not without purpose. The school's movement acts as the perfect defense; an enemy cannot attack it if he does not know where it is at any time. This also makes infiltration into the school much more difficult. The Floating Leaf sensei are zealous in their attempt to guard the secrets of their techniques. After all, the power to move an army is highly useful, and any other Great Clan would benefit greatly from this knowledge.

The sensei of the school are friendly and extroverted for the most part. They do not shy away from expressing their emotions to their students. In contrast to the more established Gatherer of Winds School, the sensei of the Floating Leaf are young and filled with a zest for life. The Master Sensei of the dojo personally chooses the teachers by searching for a passionate devotion to the school's philosophy. The Floating Leaf has always believed that there can be no learning without true enthusiasm. As a result of this attitude, the sensei and students of the school form a closer bond than in other schools. In a strange turn of events, the sensei often pull pranks and dangerous stunts in response to any mischief by their students. These pranks serve a serious purpose, however, as they have a way of driving home the point that cunning borne of experience will usually trump the fire of youth. Matches of Engaging the Wind between students, between teachers, and between students and teachers are routine.

Nominally, the Master Sensei of the dojo is always the Iuchi Daimyo. However, because of the school's unpredictable nature, the Iuchi Daimyo does not always have the time to follow the school in its wanderings. She therefore chooses one of her senior sensei to stand in for her and assume her full authority when necessary. Iuchi Yue has many other worries on her mind than the upkeep of the Floating Leaf. Her stand-in as acting Master Sensei is her protegee Iuchi Rei. Rei has spent most of her life with the Floating Leaf as student, guard, and now sensei. The Floating Leaf is family to Rei, and she is only happy to help out in whatever way she can. She keeps in contact with Iuchi Yue with a *meishodo* crafted by the Iuchi Daimyo herself. However, Rei rarely comes to Yue with any problems, preferring to leave her undisturbed. In turn, Yue trusts Rei to handle all aspects of the school in her absence.

Iuchi Karasu and Horiuchi Shoan

Iuchi Karasu and Horiuchi Shoan were both great heroes of the Unicorn Clan during the tumultuous years before and after the Second Day of Thunder. Horiuchi Shoan is still remembered for her gentleness and for establishing the Horiuchi shugenja Family. Iuchi Karasu, the Doomseeker, is remembered as a dangerous hero who silently did all that he needed to do to aid the Clan. Horiuchi Shoan was a student at the Floating Leaf in her youth. During one of the school's stops at Shiro Iuchi she ran into a young Iuchi Karasu, as yet unburdened by the tragedies that lay in his future. Though Karasu was older than the cheerful girl, the two became fast friends. During the third day of their acquaintance, Iuchi Karasu challenged Shoan to a duel of Engaging the Wind.

They started off by riding away from the city. Karasu gained the lead immediately by casting *Tempest of Air* on his opponent, disorienting her horse and nearly causing an early fall. Shoan recovered quickly, however, and bought some time for herself with a simple *Summon*. She brought forth dancing fire kami in front of Karasu's horse. Karasu easily controlled his horse through the distraction, then retaliated with yet another air spell, *Call Upon the Wind*. But Shoan was ready this time, and she *Counterspelled* his attempt. She cast *Earth's Stagnation* on Karasu as an attempt to pull him off his horse, but he stayed on.

After this exchange of spells, Shoan began to cast *Wall of Water* in a spot of land 50 feet away from them. Karasu tried to interrupt her with a quick *Burst* spell to scare her horse, but the spell did not deter her. Karasu fell off his horse when it ran directly into Shoan's *Wall of Water*.

There were no witnesses to the duel. Over the years, Shoan entertained her orphans often with the tale. Those who know the story are amazed at Shoan's mastery of spells and respect her for defeating a legend. Shoan herself remained humble about the victory to the end of her days.

Gentle Guard Dojo

The Ide courtiers are famed for being a truly peaceful Family in midst of a strongly martial Clan. They have always bridged the differences between the Unicorn and other cultures as they traveled through the world. The Ide have a lot of experience at soothing over grievances and satisfying both sides of a treaty. They naturally filled the role as ambassadors and courtiers upon the Unicorn's return to Rokugan. They established the *Calm Heart Dojo* in Shiro Ide and began their work with the other Great Clans.

However, the Ide soon realized that they were ill-equipped to continue their role in Rokugan. During their absence, the courtiers of other Clans had established many customs over the centuries that they were unprepared to adopt. Competition was a great part of Rokugani courts, from tests of verbal dexterity to games of go and shogi. To maintain an equal footing with the rest of the Great Clans, the Ide realized they must master these courtly games. They hired experts to come to the *Calm Heart Dojo* and teach the future Unicorn courtiers exactly how to master these complex games.

The lessons were successful and the Ide became proficient in the myriad of required games. However, they soon realized that the *Calm Heart Dojo* was not the ideal location in which to pass on all these techniques. As it was, the dojo was too cluttered to continue lessons with any semblance of order. The Ide still needed to teach the students everything else about the way of peace, and the extra teachings were intruding on the main lessons. However, they could not simply drop their games program.

The solution was quite simple. The Dojo of the Gentle Guard was created by the son of the Ide Daimyo several years later, to house all the sensei sufficiently expert in various games to teach them to less experienced courtiers. The Gentle Guard Dojo and *Calm Heart Dojo* are separated in the city by only a few minutes' walk, and traffic between the two dojo is constant. The dojo were created to complement each other, and each Ide courtier spends time studying at both before he is considered ready for the outside world.

The Dojo of the Gentle Guard is located in Shiro Ide and is much less conspicuous than its sister building. It is small, and follows the unique style that defines Unicorn architecture. Two buildings form the living quarters and the main training hall. The keepers tend to a sand garden and a botanical garden on the premises. The few students that it holds walks the grounds every day, performing every duty required to keep the dojo afloat. There are students outside the dojo at all times, practicing speeches, practicing go or kemari, or engaging in games of *sadane*. Because of the curriculum of the Gentle Guard, an observer cannot tell if the student is studying a game or is at play with his peers.

The sensei of the school is an old, venerable bushi named Ide Toraemon who once served the Unicorn as an ambassador in the Scorpion Lands. He held the position with pride and skill through the enmity that existed between the two Clans. Though he has served long enough to shave his head and retire, he wishes to remain helpful to the next generation. Despite his age, he retains his faculties and his wit is as sharp as ever. He treats his students as if they were his own grandchildren. He couches his lessons with his unique brand of humor. However, he is quick to correct any who are off target, and he patiently guides any student that might need his assistance.

Iuchi Xien and Asako Haruko

No matter how much Unicorn courtiers attempt to fit in to the rest of the court, most of them cannot shake the stigma of being from a "barbarian" Clan. The Ide Courtier School trains its students so that they may overcome this disadvantage. It is an unfortunate but unavoidable truth that a Unicorn at court must work twice as hard as everyone else to gain the respect that is his due. Ide Tadaji, hero of the years after the Second Day of Thunder, achieved this status only through long and tireless service. Though his input was uniquely Unicorn, the rest of the Court respected him for his wisdom and tireless efforts for peace.

Iuchi Xien was a courtier who grew up through the Clan War and was one of Ide Tadaji's greatest students. In the beginning, he knew little about the Empire. He barely could speak High Rokugani, and he knew none of the high personages of the court. Luckily, he was a quick learner and took lessons to heart whenever they were presented to him.

A year after the Second Day of Thunder, Iuchi Xien attended Winter Court as one of the Unicorn's representatives. Because of his name and his other gaijin mannerisms, Xien was an easy target of ridicule. Asako Haruko made the mistake of mocking Xien to his face, and Xien challenged the Phoenix courtier to a duel. Haruko accepted. As the challenged, Haruko chose the debate as the method of satisfaction. As a courtier well versed in philosophy and history (and a daughter of a Clan known for its devotion to intellectual pursuits), Haruko believed that she would easily triumph over this primitive Unicorn buffoon.

The judge chose the nature of Bushido as the subject of the debate. Haruko launched into her argument, confident that Xien could not respond to any of her points. To her great surprise, Xien refuted her entire argument with his. Even worse, he raised several questions that she could not answer. It was obvious to everyone present that Xien had won the duel. Humiliated, Haruko conceded her defeat to Xien before the judge could confirm the decision. Xien's hidden oratory skills impressed everyone at the court, and many realized that the Ide were not simply clueless representatives of those gaijin. Xien's victory made it clear to everyone that the Unicorn could not be underestimated in any aspect.

Single Strike Dojo

The Single Strike Dojo was the first new school established by the Unicorn Clan after its return to the Empire. After so many centuries entirely severed from Rokugan, iaijutsu was a completely foreign style to the Unicorn. The Unicorn Champion recognized immediately that they needed skilled duelists to be able to compete against the other Great Clans. The Crane Champion, pursuing a lasting alliance with the new Great Clan, was happy to release several Kakita iaijutsu masters to the Unicorn Lands to help establish their iaijutsu school.

For several years, the school continued with no place to call home. In the beginning, these iaijutsu masters held class on the grassy plains, with nothing but clear sky overlooking dozens of samurai as they went through the basic dueling kata. When Shiro Ide was finished in the year 820, the builders made sure to create a large dojo close to the castle that would house the Ide Duelists. The Single Strike Dojo was finally created and opened in 821.

Because of the derivative roots of the Ide Duelist School, much of the fighting style and the every day functions of the dojo have ties to Crane habits and traditions. The first Headmasters of the school stayed on to help the fledgling Clan develop an effective iaijutsu technique. In the first years of the school, Unicorn duelists completely resembled their counterparts in the Crane, albeit a bit clumsier. Over the centuries, Unicorn duelists have applied their own thoughts and experiences to the school techniques. In current times, the technique still bears some slight traces of the famous Crane methods, but the style has evolved into something uniquely Unicorn.

The art of iaijutsu is the primary focus of a Single Strike Dojo student, and each student spends many hours a day practicing the quick draw. But although the School taught at the dojo is called the Ide Duelist School, the students are also taught a variety of different skills that would aid the Clan. As often as not, graduates of the Ide Duelist school become magistrates or yojimbo instead of someone who dedicates his entire life to iaijutsu. Students learn the intricacies of how to protect someone under his care. Kenjutsu, horsemanship, the Unicorn archery style of Yomanri, and courtly etiquette are all given their due within the walls of the dojo. The aim of the school is to create bushi who can fend for themselves against well trained courtiers of the other Great Clans. Recently, the dojo has begun to train the students in poetry, sadane, go, and all other courtly skills. The current Headmaster believes these skills necessary for their students. A few objections have risen from his detractors, but the master sensei has ignored all the criticism to continue on this path.

Past sensei of the dojo have varied more than that of any other Unicorn establishment. The original Headmasters of the school were Crane instead of Unicorn; some wryly comment that this set a bad precedent for sensei to come. Though the majority of the sensei have been Unicorn bushi, over the years there have been many exceptions. Several ronin have held the lofty position. A Dragon once was considered the Headmaster, though he died shortly after assuming the position. The Headmaster of the school has always been a bushi who has proven his loyalty to the Unicorn Clan and one who is well skilled in the Ide style. Even if the person might not be politically perfect for the job, he would be chosen if he was the most proficient. This pragmatic tradition confuses the other Clans, but the Unicorn are satisfied with their way. Even with this open policy, the Unicorn techniques have still remained secret over the years.

The sensei of the school tend to be more orthodox than most of their Unicorn peers. They make a conscious effort to perform all actions in a manner compatible with the other Great Clans. The teachers are strict with their students to make sure that they do not become lax in their studies. Some of the current sensei of the school are actually ronin who have trained in the Unicorn style.

The current Headmaster of the school is Shinjo Kisuke, a veteran of various wars and a graduate of the Ide Duelist School. Despite his position, he has retained a great deal of anonymity.

ity. He does not hold any authority beyond his school, but this fact does not bother him. He is dedicated to the school and does everything he can to make sure it fulfills its charter. He takes care of everything that requires work, including paperwork, reports to the Clan leaders, and other day-to-day administrative duties. What he does not finish himself, he delegates to his two senior sensei, Ide Xilung and Tsukiya. Kisuke has known Xilung from his childhood. Tsukiya is a ronin who served in the Unicorn armies for almost as long as Kisuke himself. Kisuke trusts both of them to do everything required by the school with the utmost skill. It is not unusual to see one of the senior sensei leading the students through their lessons instead of Kisuke himself.

The dojo itself is beautifully built and sits on the shores of Chrysanthemum Lake. Though much of the architecture in Shiro Ide reflects the Unicorn sensibilities of mixing gaijin and Roku-gani styles, the buildings that form Single Strike Dojo utilize only the most traditional styles. It was created in this manner partly to appease the first Headmasters of the school, for the Unicorn felt it would be too jarring to ask the Crane to live as the Unicorn did. These buildings are capacious; there is enough space set aside to accommodate more than a hundred students at one time. The main training hall is also large and holds the necessary equipment to continue on with the studies. Training, however, is generally held outside next to the lake. The sensei of the school believes that the tranquil surroundings help their students focus on the training. He believes that a true servant of iaijutsu must appreciate all aspects of life, the natural and the aesthetic as well as the martial. During the appropriate season, the sensei of the school have been known to make time to allow their students to watch the cherry blossoms fall.

The World's Balance

Proficiency in horsemanship is a necessity in the Unicorn Lands. The Unicorn Clan as a whole love horses more so than any other Great Clan. Professions related to the care and raising of horses that other Clans would consider menial labor and thoroughly unfit for samurai receive great respect from the Unicorn. Their way of war and semi-nomadic way of life rely so heavily on the use of horses that they treat these creatures with something approaching reverence. The World's Balance is a dojo located in Shiro Utaku that teaches every non-martial but crucial skill regarding the care of horses.

The World's Balance was established early on in the Unicorn's trek beyond Rokugan's borders. The Otaku Daimyo Otaku Rumaruru encountered a race of strange sorcerers who used dark magic to hide their hearts from their bodies. Such powers made them invulnerable to normal combat methods and made them implacable foes. The Unicorn were enslaved by these evil men and were forced into hard labor. Many of them died, but after a few years Rumaruru was able to organize an escape from the sorcerers' lair. She used their captors' powerful horses to facilitate the escape, and left with a great many of them in the Unicorn's hands.

These horses were fast and powerful, but also wild and ferocious. They had allowed the Otaku to use them in their escape, but after they had left the sorcerers' lair they refused to allow any Otaku to mount them again. Otaku Hyuga, dedicated his life to figuring out how to tame the headstrong beasts. His work was repaid in full when the steeds became faithful mounts and com-

panions to the Otaku Battle Maidens. The Otaku Battle Maidens learned to trust these magnificent mounts and became a force to be reckoned with in combat.

The Unicorn Clan is famed for their powerful cavalry, consisting of thousands of warriors separated into multiple units. These horses in turn require a virtual army of support personnel to maintain their readiness. Battle Maidens often choose to aid with the upkeep of their horse, but they also need expert help. The World's Balance was created to train samurai in those arts and other non-martial skills involving the beloved horses.

The World's Balance was established by Otaku Hyuga, the man whose hard work brought the precious equine gift to the Unicorn. The males of the Utaku Family are forbidden from joining the Battle Maidens, and there are a few options available to them for their future. Some of them join other Unicorn bushi Schools, such as the Moto, and accept the fact that they would never be able to ride the Utaku steeds into battle. Some of them join the Utaku Infantry School, a school created by the Utaku to produce troops whose principal job on the battlefield is to follow up on the Battle Maiden charge. Many decide to join The World's Balance, so that they may dedicate their lives to caring for and protecting the Utaku steeds. Though most outside the Unicorn Lands consider such work unfit for a samurai, the students of The World's Balance see it as a great honor to be entrusted with work that is so important to the fortunes of their Clan.

There are many thankless duties that must be performed in order for Unicorn armies to retain their distinctive cavalry advantage. New horses must be made ready for the battlefield. The steed must be trained to listen to the orders of his rider and become accustomed to the sounds of battle. The groomsmen handles these duties. Additionally, he feeds the horse, maintains its health, and tidies its appearance. Many of the graduates of this part of The World's Balance enter service inside the Utaku Stables, the greatest stables in the Empire, and several others join the stables of the three great armies, the Baraunghar, Junghar, and the Khol. The groomsmen trained in The World's Balance are highly respected, and are considered the best of the best at what they do.

There are two distinct schools that work under the same roof in The World's Balance Dojo. The first, led by the Hyuga vassal Family of the Utaku, learns all the tasks required to maintain a horse. The second, most often led by the Moto, teaches horsemanship with such detail that the riders are able to control their mounts even under the most adverse circumstances. Students learn to mount a horse with a single leap, how to ride a horse using neither saddle nor reins, and how to stay mounted even under duress from enemies in battle. These students of The World's Balance become masters of Ma-Do, and the sensei of the school arrange for an exhibition whenever they feel a group of students has successfully learned their techniques.

The training hall of The World's Balance is located next to the Utaku Stables. It is a small building directly connected to the Stables, allowing quick and easy access. It is small and unassuming, and few people recognize the side building as the training area for the stable masters of the Unicorn. The practitioners of Ma-Do perform their lessons on the fields surrounding Shiro Utaku. It is common to see students of The World's Balance riding through the fields at breakneck speeds, wrapped up in the sheer pleasure of riding the horse.

The current Master Sensei of The World's Balance is Utaku Hisako, Daimyo of the Hyuga. The descendants of Otaku Hyuga continue his legacy, and the Hyuga have maintained the Utaku Stables since its inception. Though Hisako had a chance to attend the prestigious Battle Maiden School, she refused and decided to carry on her father's legacy. She is quiet and humble and prefers to stay out of the limelight. She is strict about everything that involves her horses and personally follows the rules at every step of her life. She does not force her authority over the other sensei of the school, but commands their unfailing respect nonetheless.

The sensei of the Acrobat School is Ide Tishon, an old samurai who served as a scout in the Unicorn armies in his youth. He originally trained as a Shinjo scout, and he grew to love the horses that he met through the years. He searched for a School that would allow him to have a stronger tie with them. He found the Moto Acrobat School and asked for permission to continue his training with them instead of his current scout School. Though his sensei frowned upon the thought that the Shinjo scout techniques were not enough to satisfy his desires, they recognized his destiny lay elsewhere. Tishon devoured the lessons given to him and quickly became a master of the style. He is a self-conscious man, unaware of his own successes and awkward in conversations. However, his eyes glow with happiness when he speaks of his beloved horses, and he patiently helps his students through every obstacle. He is no longer sufficiently agile to perform many of his lessons, but his knowledge of the technique can not be denied.

Unicorn Sensei

The sensei who serve the Unicorn Clan by teaching the art of the duel often find themselves in a bind, unless they are teaching skills related to those forms of competition that the Unicorn only use among their own. Because of their unique cultural identity, the ways with which they are most familiar make it difficult for them to integrate fully with the rest of Rokugan. To study, master and then teach forms of dueling that are useful when the Unicorn interact with the other Great Clans requires, to some extent, abandoning what is familiar and comforting in favor of what is unconventional to them, yet entirely conventional in the wider Rokugani context. How successfully they can manage this contradiction between their sense of themselves as Unicorn and their sense of having embraced alien ways to serve the Unicorn determines to a large degree their ability to help their Clan over the long term.

UTAKU TAKAI, RUBY CHAMPION

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 5	Water: 5	Void: 6
Reflexes: 3			Agility: 7	
Honor: 3.9	Status: 6.1		Glory: 4.5	

SCHOOL/RANK: Utaku Infantry 5/Magistrate 2

ADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker, Heartless

DISADVANTAGES: Lost Love

KATA: Standing on the Heavens, Striking as Fire, Victory of the Wind, The World is Empty

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Calligraphy 5, Courtier (Bureaucracy) 4, Horsemanship 3, Hunting 5, Investigation 6, Kenjutsu 7, Kyujutsu (Yomanri) 4, Lore: History 5, Lore: Law 8, Meditation 5, Spears 3, Tea Ceremony 5

Utaku Takai has never been in the spotlight throughout his life. As a male child in a highly matriarchal family, Takai never warranted much attention from his parents. He knew right away that in his parents' eyes, he could never be as important as his sisters. While his sisters attended the prestigious Utaku Battle Maiden school, Takai attended the Utaku Infantry school. The Utaku Infantry School is well established, and its techniques have been refined and strengthened over the years. However, in the Unicorn Clan, its strength is belied by its lack of prestige relative to the Battle Maiden School. Takai knew the reality of the situation and resigned himself to his fate.

Takai excelled at his school, and was considered one of the best students of his class. His sensei marveled at the way he picked up on every lesson that they impressed upon him. Takai absorbed with ease his kenjutsu lessons, his history lessons, and every scroll on which he could get his hands. At school, he gained a deep love for structure, order, and formality. Takai resisted all the stereotypes ascribed to his Clan. The Unicorn are widely considered a wild, barbaric, and wandering Clan. But Takai was the model samurai, with finely controlled emotions, a deep knowledge of the law, and many roots at his home in Shiro Shinjo.

The only person that was able to penetrate into his emotions was his wife, Shinjo Chiyo. Takai's parents had arranged a marriage with the distant cousin of the Shinjo Daimyo. It had been a marriage of convenience, to draw Takai's family closer to the Clan's seat of power. Still, Chiyo was a wonderful woman and a gentle soul, and was the perfect complement to Takai's contemplative nature. Though they married in hectic times, with the Kami Shinjo's return and the upheaval of the Shinjo Family close on the horizon, Takai and Chiyo learned to love each other. She supported him in all his endeavors, aiding his quest to become an Emerald Magistrate with everything at her disposal.

Takai became a magistrate a few years before the War of Spirits. He found his deep love for justice required by his new position. His area of jurisdiction was small, but he was content. For a long time he judged the area strictly but fairly, and nothing illegal slipped past his eyes. He was responsible for the destruction of two bandit gangs, and personally halted a smuggling operation in its tracks. Even when his beloved wife perished to a rare disease, Takai pushed forth with his duties without ceasing. Takai was commended by all of his superiors for his vigilance and promoted.

When Moto Chagatai advocated the Shi-Tien Yen Wang gods, he established one of the first temples to the Lords of Death near Takai's lands. Takai spent many days in conversation with the priests of the newfound temple. What he learned from them took root in his mind, and the philosophy made sense to him. Takai soon became one of the most devoted worshippers of the Shi-Tien Yen Wang.

As the current Ruby Champion, Utaku Takai has sworn to uphold the law to its every letter. He disapproves of the actions of his Clan Champion, since they skirt the boundaries of Imperial law at every inch. He personally believes the Khan to be harmful to the Unicorn Clan. If the Khan continues to make illegal maneuvers, Takai will stand at a crossroads. He must choose to either follow his heart and uphold the rules or to be a true samurai and follow the orders of his lord. Takai knows that when it comes time to decide, it will be no decision to him at all. Law is beyond mere men, even Clan Champions. Perhaps, Takai believes, with his new position he will be able to convince more of their folly in continuing on the Khan's path.

Gate. He protected his charge from all dangers as they marched to their inevitable deaths. When a shugenja in the Unicorn lines succumbed to the Shadowlands Taint, Kisuke personally struck him down, earning respect from all those around him.

Kisuke did not let his newfound reputation affect his attitude. He continued to serve his Clan with silent humility. He served in the biggest battles of the War of Spirits and earned respect from his brethren with his selfless acts of heroism. During the war, he received a severe wound to his left arm that left it useless. To reward his service to the Clan, his Champion Moto Gaheris assigned Kisuke to teach the techniques he learned at the Ide Duelist School. Kisuke was a natural sensei, and when the Headmaster retired Kisuke was the only logical choice for his replacement.

Kisuke is friendly at all times, even while correcting his students in their techniques. Though he never shows any emotion to those around him, Kisuke becomes very overprotective of the children who begin work in his school. Kisuke's heart fills with happiness to see so many people working eagerly to learn the skills necessary to serve his Clan. Kisuke's first love is the Clan, and he will go to great lengths to make sure the people he trusts become successful in the end.

New Mechanics

Unicorn Dueling Mechanics

Barique Wrestling: Barique wrestling is sufficiently similar to sumai that matches may be resolved in the same way. Treat the match as a skirmish in which the contestants' goal is to maintain a Grapple on his opponent. The first contestant who can maintain a Grapple for 3 consecutive rounds with his opponent held is the victor.

Engaging the Wind: In this form of shugenja dueling, which is unique to the Unicorn, two shugenja on horseback set 50 paces apart must ride roughly parallel to each other and try to unhorse each other using spells, but without directly inflicting Wounds on their opponent or his mount. The rider in the lead — in mechanical terms, the duelist with the higher Initiative Roll — controls the pace of the duel; contests of Engaging the Wind may take place at a walk, or at a full gallop. Younger and more impulsive



Sample Acrobat Feats

The Unicorn — and enthusiasts of Ma-Do in particular — have developed a wide variety of acrobatic feats that can be performed on the back of a moving horse. They vary from the most practical of tasks, such as jumping onto a horse with rapidity, to the most frivolous, such as balancing on one hand placed on the saddle. Some of these stunts require an Athletics Skill Roll, while others require a Horsemanship Skill Roll, depending on whether they test the rider's own athletic ability, or his ability to control a mount. The most extreme stunts require 1 of each. If 2 rolls are required, a failure on either roll results in a fumbled act. For Athletics Skill Rolls that require the rider to balance on the horse in some way, the rider's Athletics Skill Rank is considered to be as low as his Horsemanship skill rank.

Use the values below as guidelines for determining the number of Raises and Skill Roll required for a stunt:

Mounting a horse without using the stirrups: 1 Raise (Athletics)

Riding without using saddle or reins: 2 Raises (Horsemanship)

Jumping off the horse and landing ready to act: 2 Raises (Athletics)

Riding the horse by balancing on one stirrup: 3 Raises (Athletics)

Jumping onto the horse, and setting the horse in motion as a Free Action: 4 Raises (Athletics)

Jumping from one running horse to another: 5 Raises (Athletics)

Hanging below a horse by holding onto its reins and hooking your feet into the stirrups while riding at full speed: 7 Raises (Athletics and Horsemanship)

duelists tend to favor faster speeds — which also make for more spectacular duels — but at the same time, even the most hot-blooded Unicorn samurai knows that a horse cannot be run at a full gallop for more than a few minutes before it is exhausted. A duelist who is confident that he is the superior rider will also try to keep up the pace, as he is much more likely to maintain control of his mount under challenging conditions than his opponent.

Resolve an Engaging the Wind duel as a normal skirmish. Both shugenja are free to perform any spell in their repertoire to confuse the other. For instance, one might Summon fire kami to dance in front of the horse's eyes. He might use Wind-Borne Slumbers to make it tougher for his opponent to succeed at his Horsemanship checks. In order to cast a spell from a moving horse, however, a duelist must first make a successful Horsemanship Skill Roll against a TN ranging from 5 (walk) to 15 (full gallop), depending on the speed at which he is riding. A duelist must make an additional Horsemanship Skill Roll against the same TN in order to successfully maintain a spell that requires any sort of concentration. If an opponent's spell produces a disturbance (to horse, rider, or the vicinity of both) that could cause him to lose control of his mount or his balance in the saddle, he must also

A Sample Competition: Utaku Wei versus Moto Shulin

Utaku Wei and Moto Shulin are finalists in the Ma-Do contest held at Shiro Moto in celebration of the harvest. Wei goes first.

She decides to wow the crowds by jumping onto the horse then doing a handstand. The horse begins to move slowly (TN of 10). She makes an Agility/Athletics Skill Roll to jump onto the horse and succeeds. Doing a handstand is complicated, and requires 4 Raises on an Agility/Athletics Skill Roll. Her Horsemanship Skill Rank is higher than her Athletics Skill Rank, so she may use her Athletics Skill Rank normally. She must now make an Agility/Athletics Skill Roll against an effective TN of 30 (the base TN is 10; 4 Raises increase the TN by 20). She rolls 37, and succeeds. Her point total for Ma-Do is 5; 1 for the base TN of 10, and 4 more for succeeding at 4 Raises.

Moto Shulin has a stunt in mind that would show off his horsemanship more than his physical prowess. He mounts the horse normally (requires no Athletics Skill Roll). He urges the horse faster until reaches a gallop (TN of 25.) Then he balances himself on the horse and shifts so that he is sitting in the saddle backwards. He then attempts to guide the horse through a number of obstacles on the field while looking back over his shoulder. This is a very difficult task, and requires 4 Raises on an Agility/Horsemanship Skill Roll. He must now make an Agility/Horsemanship Skill Roll at an effective TN of 45 (the base TN is 25; 4 Raises increase the TN by 20). He feels a surge of energy increase his talents (he spends a Void Point to increase his Horsemanship Skill Roll) and barely succeeds with a roll of 45. Shulin's point total for Ma-Do is 6; 2 for the base TN of 25, and 4 more for succeeding at 4 Raises. Shulin wins the Shiro Moto Ma-Do Competition.

make a Horsemanship Skill Roll against a TN of 10 (walk) to 25 (full gallop), depending on the current speed at which he is riding. This TN may also be modified at the GM's discretion based on the severity of the disturbance.

The duel ends when one of three things occur: First, if a duelist falls off of his horse, he loses. Second, if a duelist uses a spell to inflict Wounds directly onto the other rider or to his horse, he is disqualified and loses the match immediately. A judge or impartial bystander must confirm, however, that valid grounds for disqualification exist, although a duelist may gain Honor Points by admitting fault and conceding the duel before judgment can be pronounced. Finally, the duel ends in a draw if it continues too long (as determined by the judge or mutual consent of the duellists). The Unicorn know better than anyone about the importance of keeping their horses safe. Generally, the duel ends after twenty rounds. However, with highly competitive shugenja Engaging the Wind duels as long as one or two hours have been recorded.

Horse Archery: To resolve a horse archery competition, determine the number of shots that each archer will be allowed. Then determine a TN for the Kyujutsu (Horse Archery) Skill Roll to hit the target; this will vary according to distance, size of the target, weather conditions, etc. Have each contestant roll against that



TN, once for each shot allowed under the rules of the competition. Whoever makes more successful Skill Rolls within his allowance of shots wins.

Horse Racing: Resolve a horse race as Contested Horsemanship Skill Roll. At the GM's discretion, competitors may be assigned bonuses or penalties based on the quality of their mount (or lack thereof). However, you may also draw more drama out of the process by requiring 3 Contested Horsemanship Rolls, with the winner of 2 of the 3 rolls winning the race. In this case, each roll may be said to represent the early, middle and late stages of the race.

Ma-Do: Ma-Do competitions can be head-to-head affairs, or they can accommodate any even number of competitors in a single-elimination format. In a single Ma-Do match, each rider is given a set period of time measured by an hourglass (usually fifteen seconds) to perform a stunt of his choice. The stunt may be as mundane as riding the horse at full speed then jumping it over

an obstacle, or it may be as complex as performing gymnastic evolutions while remaining in control of one's mount. The point is to impress the audience with the complexity of the stunt and the skill of the rider. A failed attempt may still impress the judges if the stunt was highly ambitious.

To resolve a Ma-Do match, have each competitor make an Athletics or Horsemanship Skill Roll (determined by the stunt the competitor chooses to attempt, and whether it is more of a test of his athletic ability or his riding ability) against a TN determined by the speed of the horse (also the competitor's choice). A walk sets the TN at 5, whereas a full gallop requires a TN of 25. Any stunt attempted also requires a number of Raises, determined by the difficulty of the stunt (see sidebar "Sample Acrobatic Feats" for guidelines). The TN of the stunt equals the base TN as determined by the speed of the horse + 5 x the number of Raises required by the difficulty of the stunt.

If the competitor succeeds in his Skill Roll, he receives 1 point for each Raise required by his stunt + 1 point for every 10 points of base TN (rounded down). The contestant with the most points wins. In the case of a tie, the contestant who had the higher total TN wins, as the Unicorn admire ambitious horsemanship and will reward audacity even in failure.

New School: Ide Duelist School (Bushi)

The Unicorn Clan detests iaijutsu dueling as a whole. However, they realize that iaijutsu is a necessary skill when dealing with the other Great Clans. The Ide, the political power behind the Unicorn, created the Ide Duelist School to make sure iaijutsu does not become the fatal chink in the Unicorn's armor. The school does not have anything like the elite status of the famed Kakita School of the Crane Clan or the Mirumoto School of the Dragon Clan and is barely known outside of the Unicorn Lands. Still, the students of this school pride themselves in being able to hold their own against any other duelist.

As one of the few Unicorn Schools that emphasize the importance of Rokugani tradition, the Ide Duelists learn skills that help them overcome the Unicorn's traditional weakness of unfamiliarity with the rest of Rokugan. The students learn iaijutsu, courtly customs, history, and the law of Rokugan. Ide Duelists therefore become well rounded samurai, ready to face many different types of dangers. Graduates of this school form the majority of the yojimbo for the Unicorn Clan. Some become devotees to the art of the duel, and gain leave to refine their iaijutsu skill for the rest of their careers. Most often, the Ide Duelists who do not become yojimbo become magistrates. The school's emphasis on the intricacies of law makes the transition to magistrate an easy one.

Benefit: +1 Reflexes

Skills: Defense, Etiquette, Horsemanship, Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu (Katana), Lore: Law, any one Bugei skill

Honor: 2.5

Outfit: Katana, Wakizashi, bow and 20 arrows (of any type), any one weapon, light armor, kimono and sandals, riding horse, traveling pack, 10 koku

Techniques

RANK 1: STRENGTH OF TRADITION

The Ide Duelist is an aberration when compared to the other Unicorn bushi Schools, and something of a self-contradiction. Ide Duelists are taught to uphold Rokugani traditions, but to protect those who choose to follow the old Unicorn ways, which are thoroughly unconventional by Rokugani standards. This unusual oneness with conventional Rokugani ways and modes of thought allows you to approach your duties with a calm that few other

Unicorn bushi can summon. You gain a bonus to all Awareness Trait Rolls equal to your Void Ring. You also gain a bonus to all your Iaijutsu Skill Rolls equal to your Air Ring.

RANK 2: SHIELD OF THE UNICORN

The Ide Duelist is the shield of the Unicorn, protecting Unicorn courtiers from potential enemies among the other Great Clans. You are trained in the skills that will help protect other Unicorn in the courts and act as a shield from the dangers that wait to strike. You gain a Free Raise when attempting to resist persuasion. You also gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit during Iaijutsu duels equal to your Water Ring.

RANK 3: INNER FOCUS

An Ide Duelist is taught to gain control of all emotions so that he may be ready for anything during duels. As long as he is calm and ready for the enemy's attack, his own strike is calm and perfect. During the Focus phase of an iaijutsu duel, if you have made at least 2 Focuses, you may Raise twice on your next Focus. If you succeed at this Focus, you may make an additional Focus above your normal limit. The TNs of future Focuses increase as normal. You may use this Technique a number of times in a duel equal to your School Rank. You must Raise twice each time you wish to use this Technique.

RANK 4: PERFECTION OF STYLE

An Ide Duelist practices his technique until his iaijutsu strikes become an extension of his body more than a conscious and deliberate act. You gain an additional attack per round. Additionally, you may add twice your Air Ring to all your Iaijutsu Rolls. This replaces the bonus from Rank 1.

RANK 5: FORCE OF WILL

An Ide Duelist perseveres through whatever troubles he faces so that he may serve his Clan. At any time during a skirmish, you may spend a Void Point as a Free Action to activate this Technique. For a number of rounds equal to your School Rank, you gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit, your attack rolls, and your damage rolls equal to your Honor plus your Iaijutsu Skill Rank. If you activate this Technique again while it is still in effect, the bonuses of the Technique do not stack. Instead, the duration of the bonus is refreshed. You may choose to activate this Technique before an iaijutsu duel by spending 2 Void Points; its bonuses last for the duration of the duel.

Finally, you may gain bonus to your TN to Be Hit during Iaijutsu duels equal to twice your Water Ring. This replaces the bonus from Rank 2.

New Path: Iuchi Master of the Swift Waves (Shugenja)

The Baranghar army of the Unicorn Clan is the smallest of its three component armies. Ever the shrewd strategist, the Khan uses the Baranghar host with its best strength in mind, its mobility. The Master of the Swift Waves is a shugenja who specializes in the knowledge of increasing movement without taxing resources.

Taught at the Floating Leaf Dojo, the Master of the Swift Waves learns how to hasten time for everyone in his area of influence. His spell allows people under its power to fly through the terrain. These secret techniques are jealously guarded, and few people from other Clans have witnessed firsthand their power.

The General of the Baraunghar, Iuchi Lixue, utilizes Masters of the Swift Waves at every opportunity, moving her army exactly when and where the Khan expects it. The Masters of the Swift Waves are fervent practitioners of Engaging the Wind and have become famed in the Unicorn Lands for their duels conducted at breakneck speed.

Technique Rank: 4

Requirements: Your Deficiency cannot be Water, must be part of the Unicorn Clan

Path of Entry: Iuchi Shugenja 3 or any Ronin Shugenja 3

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same school at the appropriate Rank

Technique: **The Speed of the Unicorn**

The Master of the Swift Waves is adept at increasing the movement of the armies of the Unicorn, so that they may destroy their foes. You do not learn additional spells for this Insight Rank when entering this Path. A number of times per day equal to your Water Ring, you may spend a Complex Action and a Void Point to activate this Technique. For as long as you maintain Casual Concentration, all horses within 300' move 10 x faster than normal and do not get fatigued by the travel done while under the effects of this Technique. This effect has a maximum duration in minutes equal to 10 x your Water Ring.

New Path: Moto Acrobat

Many of the Unicorn's traditions are tied to their love of horses. Those who cannot ride horses are ridiculed at least and pitied at best. The students of the Moto Acrobat School take horsemanship to a new level, where it becomes a fusion of aesthetics and function. While focusing on the ability to ride the horse well, the Moto Acrobats pride themselves in performing stunts that push the limits of physical possibility. All Moto Acrobats carry a bit of the daredevil inside them, looking to accomplish feats no other person has performed on horse. Their performances in Ma-Do are on especially complex, challenging — and thrilling to watch — compared to those of their fellow Unicorn. The Moto Acrobats are no less martial than their bushi brethren, and their constant training aids them in many military situations.

Technique Rank: 3

Requirements: Agility 4, Athletics 4

Path of Entry: Any Unicorn School 2

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same school at the appropriate Rank

Technique: Chai's Legacy

The Moto Acrobat learns how to control his body and his balance to perform amazing physical feats on horseback. You gain 3 Free Raises to all Horsemanship Skill Rolls. You also gain a bonus equal to your Athletics Skill to all Horsemanship Skill Rolls. Attempts to trip you or knock you off your horse suffer a penalty of -10. Finally, you reduce all Wound Penalties by 10 on all Horsemanship Skill Rolls.

CHAPTER TEN:

DUELING: WAY
OF THE SHADOWLANDS

Philosophy

At first glance, it does not seem possible that dueling (at least as it is practiced in the Empire) could possibly exist in the Shadowlands. One cannot imagine for a moment oni engaging in ritual single combat that adheres strictly to a set of rules designed to test not only one's skill, but one's personal honor. That the other monsters and wretched creatures in the thrall of Jigoku who populate the region should do so seems scarcely more credible. The tsuno, who have recently established a foothold in the Shadowlands, openly scoff at Rokugani notions of honor in combat. And yet, such practices do exist here, though in warped form, thanks largely to the corrupted samurai known as The Lost and Daigotsu's efforts to organize them into a functioning society. The Chuda and Ninube Families are at least passing familiar with Rokugani traditions of taryu-jiai, and the Chuda have introduced their own twists to it based on Bloodspeaker practice. Also, commonly accepted practices of single combat do exist among some of the other beings who populate the Shadowlands and are at least worth noting.

As irretrievably Tainted samurai, The Lost retain memories of Rokugani conventions and traditions, even if they are only wisps of recall. Having once been samurai of the Empire, they understand the forms and purpose of iaijutsu and taryu-jiai, even if they no longer believe in them. This is less true, of course, of the generations of The Lost who were born in the Shadowlands and raised as Lost. But even so, it takes time for old cultural reflexes to breed out of the stock, no matter how hidden and half-forgotten they may be.

Before the rise of Daigotsu as their leader, Lost bushi engaged each other in single combat that followed the form of iaijutsu duels and they used techniques of swordsmanship that they had learned as Rokugani samurai. But they fought over things that a warrior of the Empire would not consider worthy of an iaijutsu duel: disputes over political or social hierarchy (who had the right to tell the other what to do); arguments over material possessions (whether over loot or something as base as a pair of sandals, it scarcely made a difference); or matters of even lesser importance. They were always fought to the death or submission. Considerations of personal honor integral to the Rokugani practice of iaijutsu meant nothing, and were actively scorned.

That began to change when Daigotsu, the corrupted son of one of the last Hantei Emperors, established himself as a personage of the Shadowlands and started to forge The Lost in his own image. Though he molded The Lost into a mockery of Rokugani society rather than something that could become a part of it, Daigotsu's vision retained some sense of the shape and forms of samurai culture. Ultimately, this began to express itself through changes in how The Lost bushi approached dueling. They began treating each other according to conventions more closely resembling Rokugani mores, including something not unlike a sense of honor, and iaijutsu duels became much more similar to their counterparts in the Empire, both in terms of form and substance. Outsiders were still treated with hatred and cruelty, but amongst themselves, The Lost took on the appearance of a functioning samurai society.

Some of Daigotsu's bushi even amended or abandoned the techniques they'd learned as Rokugani and developed their own proper fighting style and a training program to teach it, the Daigotsu's Legion School. As an extension of that School, some of the more skilled warriors developed their own dueling style, in mockery of the Kenshinzen and the Kakita School, and have begun teaching it to other Lost samurai. This is not to say, however, that the Dark Lord now has at his command iaijutsu duelists as skilled as the Kakita or the Mirumoto, or that they are prepared to take on the Kenshinzen man for man. Nor is training in iaijutsu of any particular use in Daigotsu's current struggle against The Maw (although one could argue that it does produce more skillful swordsmen). But is an indication that The Lost may be preparing themselves to eventually fight against the Empire on its own terms and demoralize the Rokugani by standing toe-to-toe with them, turning their own ideals and conventions against them.

Similarly, the practice of taryu-jiai has evolved with Daigotsu's shaping influence on The Lost. Lost shugenja, as well as some Bloodspeakers of the Chuda Family who had started out as shugenja, retain vestigial knowledge of conventional shugenja dueling from the time before they became Tainted. They seized upon the rawest and most dangerous form of taryu-jiai (they would also describe it as the form's truest and only honest expression).



in which the contestants directly attack each other in a fight to the death. Filtered through the sensibilities of the Bloodspeakers and the practice of maho, these ritual combats became ugly and unspeakably cruel affairs, very much by the intention of the duelists. As with *The Lost* and *iaijutsu*, these duels were fought for base reasons, usually to establish a dominant position in the Family hierarchy, and were little better than brawls.

Daigotsu's ascension as the Lord of the Shadowlands changed this, also, although to a lesser extent than with the practice of bushi duels. The *Lost shugenja* responded to Daigotsu's influence and reformed their dueling practice much as their bushi counterparts did. Duels to first blood are now the norm, not duels to the death. The use of avatars, now quite common in the Empire, is pretty much nonexistent here, however. On the other hand, the *Ninube shugenja* are loathe to associate themselves with the Taint in any way, and to the extent that they practice *taryu-ji'ai*, they do so more or less in accordance with Rokugani norms.

As a Family of *maho-tsukai*, the Chuda (strictly speaking) can have only a peripheral relationship to *taryu-ji'ai*, at best. They are not really *shugenja*, after all, and their power comes from the *kansen*, not the *kami*. But some *maho-tsukai* are also *shugenja*, and so it is possible to speak of some Bloodspeaker contribution (if one may call it a contribution) to the ancient rite. Chuda *maho-tsukai* have developed a way to use blood magic to intervene in *avatar taryu-ji'ai* duels by linking an opponent's avatar to his physical being, so that damage inflicted on the avatar is chan-

neled to its controller. This is, of course, cheating of the worst sort. But anyone who would enter into an honorable duel with a known Bloodspeaker must be on his guard at all times, in any event.

In addition, the Chuda have developed a Bloodspeaker variant of magical dueling that focuses on one of their signal contributions to the *maho-tsukai's* art: the blood familiar. Chuda sorcerers involved in a dispute have at their disposal this tradition, in which they pit their blood familiars against each other in a small arena and command them to fight, until one is maimed or even dead. The *maho-tsukai* themselves are generally not allowed to interfere, either physically or through use of their blood magic. But they are allowed to prepare their familiars as best they can through magical means immediately before the bout. These pit duels are both emotionally charged and relatively rare, as bonding with a blood familiar requires enough time and trouble that to risk one in combat is to stake a good deal of your effort on a single roll of the die. Not only are they tense affairs, but it is almost always the case that only a truly bitter dispute could cause two *maho-tsukai* to agree to battle in this way.

Another sign of Daigotsu's influence on *The Lost* is the sudden stirring of the courtier's art appearing in their midst. Again, it is a twisted imitation of Rokugani courtly society, but if the Dark Lord is to create his warped reflection of Rokugan, he cannot neglect this aspect of it altogether. It may seem like a hopeless task, trying to stir dim memories of gentility and art within *The Lost* to make courtiers out of them — certainly more difficult than getting them to remember how to fight and kill like bushi. But

sensei of the Voice of Daigotsu School and the Mouth of the Lost Advanced School get around that by emphasizing the viciously competitive nature of jockeying for power and status within the courtly world.

Using skills like game playing and talents like oratory in a fiercely competitive manner is certainly an aspect of life at any Rokugani court, but in the Empire a courtier's training also emphasizes aesthetic ideals, and the paramount importance of protocols and personal honor. The Voice of Daigotsu School, on the other hand, makes no bones about the fact that the point of a courtier's existence is to crush and humiliate his political adversaries by whatever means are available. This includes using what Rokugani courtiers would consider courtly duels — contests of oratory, shogi and the like. Protocols and courtly manners are taught and observed, but no one pretends that anything is more important than the perpetual struggle for dominance. Daigotsu feels that it is a more honest approach to the courtier's art than what one finds in the Empire.

Outside the sphere of Daigotsu's influence, the picture of dueling as a conventional practice becomes much less clear. As noted above, the Ninube shugenja have been known to practice taryujiai more or less in the Rokugani way. But dueling of any sort is completely alien to the Goju, who, as assassins and ninja, have little use for giving their opponents a fair chance unless they have no choice. Swordsmanship, yes; but iaijutsu, not much.

One tradition amongst The Lost that survives from the time before Daigotsu's rise is a form of ritual combat known as the Test of Obsidian Claws. It takes its name from the retractable claws of pure obsidian that some who have the Taint develop as a symptom of their affliction. Tainted samurai may agree to settle a score between them by fighting exclusively with these repulsive yet deadly weapons. These battles were always fought to the death. Daigotsu has sought to suppress the practice, preferring that The Lost practice iaijutsu among themselves instead. But the Dark Lord has not been altogether successful, and those of The Lost who refuse to answer to him still carry on with it; even among the majority who are loyal to him, many still practice the Test of Obsidian Claws. However, death matches are not as common as before, with fights to first blood becoming more normal.

In fact, some among The Lost have tried to adapt the Test of Obsidian Claws so that it more closely resembles (albeit in a very crude way) iaijutsu dueling. In this more modern variation, each duelist allows the other a period before the actual fighting begins that is roughly equivalent to the assessment phase of the iaijutsu duel. Here, however, the purpose is not so much to analyze your opponent's stance, skill and fighting style as to stare him down and intimidate him. It is a test of one's own character, but somewhat different from the one that an iaijutsu duelist undergoes in facing his opponent.

It should also be said that this innovation has made blackened claw duels more of a spectacle, and it has gained popularity on this basis alone. This psychological confrontation increases the tension leading up to the duel itself, and it often culminates in the duelists charging at each other and striking in a spectacular running pass, or even in mid-air, leaping at each other to build momentum for the initial blow.

Among the non-human denizens of the Shadowlands, certainly it is absurd to talk of oni fighting among themselves or with others in any form that could be described as a duel. Not even the relatively intelligent and cunning Oni Lords could channel the chaos that roils within them into anything so formal or proper.

The tsuno brought with them from the Realm of Slaughter a convention by which tsuno ravagers may challenge each other to single combat to settle a personal quarrel, or for a warrior to rise in rank by defeating his superior. These battles are always fought to the death, but other than that, they lack the structure and insistence of demonstrating personal honor that would cause a Rokugani samurai to recognize it as a duel; by Rokugani standards it is little more than a brawl. In fact, it is not uncommon for a ravager to issue a challenge to single combat while his opponent is armed with an inferior weapon or equipped with inferior armor — or even completely unarmed — and there is nothing in tsuno mores that requires the challenger a proper opportunity to even the odds.

Some of the more intelligent and solitary Shadowlands creatures, like bog hags, may fight each other over territory and/or access to prey, but even less sense of ritual formality. Similarly, bakemono frequently fight with each other using fists or small weapons like knives, but without any real sense of dignity.

The ogres, however, are a slightly different matter. While the corrupted ogres who live fully under the sway of Jigoku are no different from other Shadowlands monsters when it comes to single combat, free ogres have recovered some collective memory of the civilization that their race built before the fall of Fu Leng ruined everything. They have begun to reconstruct ancient forms of dispute resolution their race practiced before the creation of the Shadowlands destroyed them. These traditions are discussed at greater length in Chapter 12.

Shadowlands Institutions

The notion of having dojo in the Shadowlands may seem like an odd notion — and in many ways it is curious and self-contradictory. The idea of Jigoku-spawn organizing themselves into a society that could permit (much less replicate) any sort of profitable master-student relationship is simply too unrealistic to entertain. There are creatures of the Shadowlands who would kill each other over territory or prey, or even for sport with only the slightest excuse. But among The Lost and the other humans of the Shadowlands, echoes — however warped and perverse — of the old samurai code so many of them once knew and followed remain, and thanks to Daigotsu, human society in the Shadowlands now has a form that can support conventional relationships between sensei and students.

Cursed Blade Dojo

The Cursed Blade Dojo occupies a site in the City of the Lost that is surrounded by walls so forbidding in aspect that some residents have taken to referring to it as the Shiro of the Legion. For the sensei of the Cursed Blade, this is no accident. Over its relatively brief lifetime, the Cursed Blade has added on to its original compound of buildings in such a way as to emphasize that it is, in and of itself, an institution of The Lost — and the Shadowlands in general — with which one must reckon.

The Cursed Blade is the primary — and so far, the only — dojo of the Daigotsu's Legion School, the first bushi School to originate among The Lost. A such, its founders were loyal followers of the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands whose work in creating an original sword style that The Lost could call their own was driven by pride in the collective identity that Daigotsu had instilled in them. Most were also native born to the Shadowlands, with no direct connection to Rokugan to have "lost" in the first place, and all they had wanted was a leader of Daigotsu's charisma to inspire them. Daigotsu, for his part, needed experienced, ambitious, yet utterly loyal warriors like them to train proper bushi for his Obsidian Legions, and so the Cursed Blade Dojo at its founding formed a mutually supportive relationship with the Dark Lord and his ruling court, receiving whatever resources it needed in return for its services.

That continues to this day, and in many ways the Cursed Blade is the pride of The Lost, a symbol of their strength. But at the same time, it also suffers from the general lack of respect among The Lost for the traditional role of the sensei as it exists in the Empire. This is a problem that Daigotsu has not yet been able to overcome in his social and political engineering, and he may never succeed in doing so entirely. Motivation for staying on as instructors at the Cursed Blade tends to be weaker here than at respectable dojo in the Empire, and turnover among the more capable faculty is high. They generally leave for proper military service in the Obsidian Legion — or any other form of direct service to Daigotsu and his court — at the first opportunity. Those sensei who stay over the longer term tend to be those who were lamed in battle or in duels lost, or officers who were disgraced, either for dereliction of duty or through political infighting.

Remarkably, however, this fact has not had a terribly detrimental effect on the quality of the warriors who emerge from the Cursed Blade, and so one may also assume that it hasn't affected the quality of instruction as much as one might think. The sensei who have been around a while eventually summon a degree of pride in their continued association with the Obsidian Legion, even if it is an indirect one. And none of this is to say that the sensei here do not know their craft. All of them are either veterans of Daigotsu's wars or (as in the case of the current Grand Master, Daigotsu Satsujin) bushi of obvious ability who have proven themselves in other ways.

The students of the Cursed Blade are a varied lot, reflecting the composition of The Lost themselves. Some are young bushi who have come from the Empire, having fallen into corruption through one way or another (or a combination of ways). Others are native-born to the Shadowlands and have known no other way of life or place of residence. They are united only in the hold that the Taint has over them, and in their desire to serve their Dark Lord through the Obsidian Legion.

Their path that their training lays out for them is not necessarily smooth, however. The students win promotion — the determination that they are ready for more advanced study and, ultimately, service in the Legion — entirely through the discretion of the sensei, who decide based on subjective criteria. In the main, this means direct observation of their demonstrated abilities, although other factors (such as judgments of the students' character, or the venality of the sensei) can also intervene. But the more ambitious — and ruthless — students do not hesitate to help the process along, by means that include challenging each other to duels (sometimes fought to the death), or subverting each other's

standing in the eyes of the sensei. The sensei themselves are not necessarily immune to challenges by brash students. While this may seem like a harsh (perhaps even wasteful) way to train samurai, the sensei of the Cursed Blade generally believe that it is a view that comprehends the truth of existence — that struggle and the desire for power are, at the root, the only important things — and that the sooner their students learn to travel that path, the better warriors they will become.

Voice of The Lost Academy

Near the geographical center of the City of the Lost sits a walled compound on the site of what was once the palatial residence of a corrupted Yasuki trader who brought all of his wealth with him to the Shadowlands. Now, it houses the dojo where The Lost train courtiers in their own bleak version of the gentle arts of the court.

The Voice of the Lost Academy, which includes students of the Voice of Daigotsu School as well as the Mouth of the Lost Advanced School, is a relatively recent innovation. There was a time when The Lost needed no courtier training, as most of them were corrupted Rokugani who brought with them skills they had learned in the Empire. And besides, their society was disorganized at best, with relatively little demand for the bureaucratic and social skills in which courtiers specialized.

But as generations of The Lost accumulated who knew nothing first-hand of Rokugan (because they had spent their entire lives beyond the Wall) their samurai began to develop their own styles and techniques for the tasks that defined their professions. The rise of Daigotsu as the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands also imposed on The Lost a degree of social and political cohesion that they had never before known, and with it, there came a greater demand for those who could practice the courtier's art. With every court, there must be attendants, and those who are skilled in both protocol and political infighting will find themselves rewarded. With knowledge of the old Rokugani ways somewhat diluted, it was only natural that some Lost samurai would fill the gap by developing their own versions of courtly skills — informed, of course, by Daigotsu's own philosophy and the drives of their own corrupted natures. When these Lost courtiers came together and found a degree of organizational cohesion among themselves, they founded the Voice of the Lost Academy.

Unlike the training offered Rokugani courtiers, however, the Voice of The Lost Dojo places little or no emphasis on refined skills, such as poetry, ikebana or calligraphy. The sensei consider these things superficial and unnecessary. The pure essence of the courtier's art is social manipulation and political subversion of one's rivals, and so that is first, foremost and exclusively what one needs to learn. Games such as go and shogi are taught, just as they are in Rokugani courtier academies, but only because The Lost courtiers understand how easily they can be used as personal duels through which one may humiliate and intimidate a rival. Sadane is allowed and even encouraged as a pastime among the students, but only inasmuch as it serves as practice for the art of the insult.

As a result, a Voice of Daigotsu courtier becomes an expert in subtle cruelty, learning how to deceive, mislead, misdirect, flatter, lie and insult for maximum effect. For although The Lost under Daigotsu's rule have come to treat each other with a modicum of what a Rokugani samurai would recognize as honor, it is nonetheless the case that the school's sensei view the courtier's main



purpose as jockeying for status and influence at court, advancing their own interests while guarding them against the attacks of rivals. If this seems like a spare and cynical view of the profession, the sensei of the Voice of Daigotsu School would argue in response that, if you pare away the Clan loyalties that inform Rokugani politics, the courtier's art has no other point than individual gain — and that in any event, stripped of its polite fictions, life at a Rokugani court consists of nothing but vicious intrigue and social manipulation.

Of course, it could also be said that the sensei here are a particularly cynical lot. The most successful Voice of Daigotsu courtiers tend to remain at court, having won the intramural battles for standing and the Dark Lord's favor. If they leave the City of The Lost, it is on a mission at the behest of Daigotsu. For those who lose the bureaucratic wars, there is only the endless humiliation of being a petty functionary with no hope of advancement (unless one commits seppuku to erase the stain of failure) or exile. The latter often entails leaving the City of The Lost to spend the rest of one's days in some wretched patch of the Shadowland's wastes. But it can also mean internal exile, remaining in the City of The Lost, but out of the way, in a quiet corner, bothering no one and being left alone in return — or, if one is lucky, official retirement, one form of which is appointment as a sensei at the Voice of The Lost Academy. The sensei here, therefore, have experience and

know of what they teach all too well. It may not say much for the faculty of the academy that this is the case, but one may also argue that passing along the expertise teaches their students skills, and that passing along their experiences teaches them wisdom, however harsh.

Shadowlands Sensei

Although The Lost under Daigotsu have come to understand the value of giving younger generations a proper education in the Way of the Samurai, teaching is still not as honored a profession in the Shadowlands as it is in the Empire. Those who teach at the dojo of The Lost, though they are certainly competent at their chosen professions, are in many cases those who have fallen by the wayside in the service of the Dark Lord. They find themselves at the side of the road because of political battles they lost, or uncharacteristic mistakes that they made, and for which they managed to dodge absolution by seppuku. They are, in many cases, the unfortunate discards of the Shadowlands' samurai class, and as such, a dark cynicism tends to inform their teaching and hover about their persons. To Daigotsu, however, this is not necessarily a bad thing.

DAIGOTSU SATSUJIN, GRAND MASTER OF THE CURSED BLADE DOJO

Air: 3 **Earth:** 3 **Fire:** 4 **Water:** 3 **Void:** 4
Reflexes: 4

Honor: 1.3 **Status:** 4.0 **Glory:** -2.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Ronin Warrior 1/Daigotsu's Legion Bushi 3/
 Champion of the Lost 1

SHADOWLANDS TAINT: 1.8

ADVANTAGES: Ambidextrous, Heartless, Multiple Schools,
 Quick

DISADVANTAGES: Brash

KATA: Striking as Earth, Striking as Fire, Striking as Water, Striking
 as Wind, Striking as Void

SKILLS: Deceit 2, Defense 3, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 4, Instruction
 (Iaijutsu, Daigotsu's Legion School) 5, Jiujitsu 2, Kenjutsu (Ka-
 tana) 4, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Meditation 5

Unlike most Shadowlands sensei, the current Grand Master of the Cursed Blade Dojo (and as such, the senior sensei of the Daigotsu's Legion Bushi School) does not at all see his current position as a consequence of failure. Indeed, he takes considerable pride in his role as the most trusted instructor of The Lost's sword arm, the mentor to all bushi who train in the only sword style unique to the Shadowlands. Of course, it also helps that Daigotsu Satsujin, deep in his heart of Tainted hearts, also sees that his skill as an iaijutsu duelist makes him formidable figure among The Lost in a way that no disgraced courtier or lamed soldier can claim — and, even more importantly, that the personal loyalty that he commands as sensei to so many of The Lost's finest warriors can serve as a path to advancement beyond his current station.

Daigotsu Satsujin started out in life as Ryunoske, the son of a ronin who was cast out from the Crab Clan when he was discovered stealing rice from the granary of a village he had been assigned to administer. As a result, his family bore a special grudge against the Crab, which Satsujin continues to nurse — and no doubt contributed to the willingness with which he fell in the Bloodspeaker cell from which he would eventually contract the Taint. Though he never learned any maho himself, he served the cell as its strongarm, someone who could stand guard and keep unwelcome attention away from the maho-tsukai by force, if necessary. When the cell eventually dissolved to avoid detection by the Kuni Witch Hunters, Ryunoske found himself drawn south to the Shadowlands, and it was not a long journey from the Crab Lands, although he took the long way around, skirting the western end of the Kaiu Wall to avoid the Crab checkpoints.

Eventually, he arrived in the City of The Lost, and there, among this society of Tainted samurai, he found the sense of belonging that he had lacked almost completely to this point in his life. As a young ronin warrior with only a modest amount of sword training from his father in his background, Ryunoske had no experience of giving his loyalty and enthusiasm to a sensei who was preparing him for service to Family and Clan. But he had the good fortune to fall in with some young bushi who were training at the Cursed Blade Dojo in the Daigotsu's Legion School. Impressed with their new companion (and pondering the value of his personal loyalty as an asset), they recommended him for admission to the dojo, and he was accepted.

Ryunoske took readily to his new surroundings. Now, he was no longer a lone ronin, but a swordsman in training at a genuine institution created to serve a purpose larger than just its own. He took a special interest in the art of the duel as it was taught at the dojo and mastered its basic techniques with ease that caught the attention of his sensei. Now confident of his abilities and fueled with the certainty that he could make his own way within the treacherous, but (to him) exhilarating world of The Lost, Ryunoske proceeded to move up in the student rankings at the Cursed Blade by defeating in iaijutsu duels to the death all of the fellow students who had befriended him after his arrival in The City of The Lost.

His obvious skill at iaijutsu persuaded the Cursed Blade sensei to admit Ryunoske to the prestigious Champion of the Lost Advanced School for further training. His exploits as a student also gained him a brief introduction at Daigotsu's court, as a result of which he was allowed to swear fealty to the Daigotsu Family. As a result, Ryunoske, no longer a ronin of any sort, lone or otherwise, took as his new name Daigotsu Satsujin.

From that point on in Satsujin's career, two things became obvious about him: First, the other sensei at the Cursed Blade, though skilled swordsmen themselves, were afraid of him. The best among them never served for very long at the dojo, being needed elsewhere in the service of Daigotsu, mostly in the ranks of the Obsidian Legion. The ones left were too timid to stand up to him, having seen the ease and ruthlessness with which he had dispatched fellows supposed to be his friends — and in fact, they also admired him for doing so. When Satsujin proposed that he should join them as a sensei, they did not object. When he eventually proposed that he succeed to the office of Grand Master of the dojo, they did not object, either.

The second thing that has become clear about Satsujin is that his loyalty to The Lost and Daigotsu in no way tempers his restless ambition. In fact, it is rather in keeping with the spirit of the political system that the Dark Lord himself erected. When he demanded that he become the next Grand Master of the Cursed Blade, he had been around the dojo long enough to see the bond that the students form with the sensei, which is unusually close and loyal by the standards of Shadowlands training institutions. He knew that as Grand Master, he could command the obedience of both the students (perhaps even past students, including prominent Obsidian Legionnaires, as well as present ones) and the faculty whom he had cowed into obedience. Although Satsujin would never dream of usurping the authority of his lord, he does see the Cursed Blade as a personal base of power, one that he could perhaps use to gain the favor of the Dark Lord, or to wage war in the literal, physical sense against any personal enemies who might arise to oppose him.

RAKUGOSHA, SENSEI OF THE VOICE OF THE LOST ACADEMY

Air: 3 **Earth:** 2 **Fire:** 3 **Water:** 3 **Void:** 4
Honor: 0.2 **Status:** 1.8 **Glory:** -0.3

SCHOOL/RANK: Voice of Daigotsu Courtier 3

SHADOWLANDS TAINT: 1.3

ADVANTAGES: Bland, Precise Memory, Voice

DISADVANTAGES: Doubt (Deceit), Forced Retirement

SKILLS: Calligraphy 1, Courtier 3, Deceit 3, Etiquette 3, Games 3, Instruction (Voice of Daigotsu School) 5, Investigation 1, Lore: Bushido 2, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Medicine 1, Storytelling 3.

The former courtier who now calls himself Rakugosha is relatively typical of Shadowlands samurai who find themselves relegated to teaching others the skills at which they themselves had once hoped to prove their worth. Once known as Daigotsu Akechi (he was born to a vassal family and has never had any direct connection to Daigotsu himself), he fell out of favor at the court of the Dark Lord and had the good fortune of being offered a form of internal exile instead of seppuku. But although he was relatively lucky to have paid for his failure with nothing worse than a teaching career, Rakugosha still feels the sting of his disgrace keenly. In fact, some of his peers feel that he has little real enthusiasm for teaching, as failure continues to haunt him to this day.

As one of The Lost who was born in the Shadowlands to a family that had been allowed to swear fealty to Daigotsu, young Daigotsu Akechi had no lingering memories of Rokugan to which to cling and a position of some privilege from which to launch his career as a samurai. He was one of The Lost for whom affiliation with this tribe of Tainted samurai was the only group identity he had ever known, or (thanks to Daigotsu's organization of The Lost into a cohesive society) would ever know. As a youth, he showed a certain native cunning and talent for public speaking, and so becoming a courtier was a choice that he easily made. Those who knew him then believed that he would survive and even thrive amidst the hazards of Daigotsu's court.

And indeed, Akechi built a successful career for himself, proving a keen guardian of his own back even as he managed to destroy the reputations of several rivals. The fact that he had maneuvered them into meeting the point of their own wakizashi was a source of great pride to him. He even caught the attention of some who predicted that he might eventually worm his way into the Dark Lord's inner circle of aides.

Then, however, he was assigned to handle an representative from the Goju who had come to Daigotsu's court to propose an agreement for cooperation between The Lost and the notorious Family of assassins. Foolish as it was to trust the Goju (or any individual Goju) completely, the Court could not dismiss her out of hand, either. So it assigned Akechi to serve as her "host" during her stay in the City of The Lost. In all his dealings with her, Akechi felt that, as always, he had taken adequate safeguards to protect his own position at court. But when the emissary's proposals met with disfavor among Daigotsu's advisors, she found a way to place all the official blame squarely upon Akechi. Disgraced among his peers, the best that Akechi's carefully wrought web of political connections could do for him was to win him permanent banishment from court instead of seppuku.

Akechi left court broken at heart. He shed his old name and began calling himself Rakugosha, and embarked upon a marginal existence lingering among the dim and neglected corners of the City of The Lost. It was in this condition of obscurity and physical degradation that one of his former sensei at the Voice of The Lost Academy discovered him. The Academy faculty was shorthanded at the time, having just lost one of its experienced sensei when he was killed in a duel by an old enemy. With nothing better to do, Rakugosha returned to his old dojo as a teacher.

Rakugosha — rather to his own surprise — proved effective as an instructor, the bitter lessons he had learned at Daigotsu's court giving a sharp edge to his reflections on the workings of pol-

itics among The Lost's leadership caste. But the strange respect that his experiences command among his students continue to weigh heavily upon him. The debacle with the Goju ambassador, although it is years in the past by now, shook his confidence in his own abilities very badly — perhaps crippled him for good — and without trust in himself, he cannot drum up much heart for teaching others. Even so, the Voice of the Lost Academy considers him too valuable a sensei to lose, and they will go to any lengths to insure that he remains in its service.

New Mechanics

Shadowlands Dueling Mechanics

Blood Familiar Duels: Treat a pit duel between blood familiars as an ordinary skirmish. However, determine initiative using the variables of the two maho-tsukai involved instead of those of the familiars themselves. The familiar acts on the initiative of its controller.

The process of pitting blood familiars against each other in this ritual also rebounds against the familiars' controllers through the magical link between the two. A duelist suffers 1 Wound for every full Wound Level that his blood familiar loses to damage. In addition, if his familiar is killed through this rite, he suffers more damage from the shock, with the rolled and kept dice equal to his familiar's Wounds per Wound Level.

If one of the contestants is discovered to have cast Avatar's Stranglehold in an attempt to affect the outcome of the duel, that contestant is disqualified and is judged to have lost.

Test of Obsidian Claws: Resolve as an ordinary skirmish; only characters with the Minor Shadowlands Power Blackened Claws may engage in a Test of Obsidian Claws.

If resolving a Test of Obsidian Claws duel in which the duelists engage in an opening "assessment phase," the duelists must make an Opposed Willpower Roll. The winner may choose to add the difference between the winning roll and the losing roll to his Initiative Roll for the first turn of the skirmish. Or he may choose to gain 1 Free Raise for each full increment of 5 by which the winning roll exceeded the losing roll, to be used on his attack roll in the first turn of the skirmish. In practical terms, the first-round +5 Initiative Roll bonus that one gains from extending the claws does not apply in this situation, since it applies equally to both duelists, and therefore each negates the other.

Tsuno Duels: Resolve as an ordinary skirmish.



New School: Voice of Daigotsu (Courtier)

Courtly life in the City of The Lost is still a relatively primitive affair compared to the courts of the Rokugani Clan Champions, and certainly compared to the Imperial Court. Though Daigotsu has spared no effort in shaping The Lost in imitation of the Rokugani model, the fact remains that without an equivalent of the Great Clans to jockey for position at the Imperial Court (or to press their own interests at each others' courts), courtly life in the Shadowlands cannot have the same dynamism and vitality as it does in the Empire. Nor can it have the same body of tradition (or history of grudges) as has been built up over a millennium of Rokugani civilization. Even though the Shadowlands samurai divide themselves into Families, factional identity among The Lost is simply not yet strong or distinctive enough to truly replicate the political cut and thrust that marks Rokugani courts.

All the same, Daigotsu insists that The Lost must have courtiers of their own — a task made much easier by the fact that there are former Rokugani courtiers (and the descendants of such) among their number. He has gathered around him functionaries, advisors, scribes and ambassadors and created for them such trappings of the courtly environment as he can. But without strong competing factions for whom to speak, whose interests must be advanced or defended, the courtiers who surround the Dark Lord are left with little purpose but to advance themselves at the expense of each other, hatching petty intrigues for the sake of individual gain.

The individual Families of the Shadowlands send ambassadors to Daigotsu to keep track of high-level goings-on in The City of the Lost and to make sure that they will have sufficient warning of any knives directed at their backs. Daigotsu instructs his courtiers to keep an eye on them, as well, and make sure that they have no intention of subverting his rule (or, presently, aiding his enemy The Maw). An emissary of the always potentially treacherous Chuda who comes to court must be received properly, but watched carefully by whomever receives him. Similarly, if there is need to contact the Goju for any reason, it will require the services of a trained ambassador, if only because watchfulness against deceit is an important part of the mission. But for most courtiers of The Lost, self-aggrandizement and the hope of greater favor from the Dark Lord drive them more than any strong loyalty to faction. Daigotsu, however, has little problem with that, for he would argue that that is the essence of what Rokugani courtiers do to each other on a daily basis, no matter how else they may reckon it.

The Voice of Daigotsu Courtier School prepares its students for life in this subtly hazardous environment. It teaches the same arts of flattery, sociability, protocol and bland deception that Rokugani courtier Schools teach, along with skills of self-presentation and a few courtly pastimes that can be used to humiliate an opponent, such as go and shogi.

But Voice of Daigotsu courtiers do not learn to serve their Clan; instead they are taught to serve only the Dark Lord and themselves. Everyone else is an enemy to be defeated or a potential threat against whom you must be on your guard. Their training prepares them for nothing so much as treachery, deceit and destruction of whomever they may regard as a rival, by any means at hand. The Legion of Daigotsu bushi and the Voice of Daigotsu courtier ultimately train to perform the same task; the difference is that the latter learns to use a more varied and subtle range of weapons.

Benefit: +1 Awareness

Honor: 1.0

Skills: Courtier, Deceit, Etiquette, Games, any Lore Skill, Shadowlands Lore, Storytelling

Outfit: Wakizashi, tanto, two kimonos, two pairs of sandals, steed, traveling pack; 15 koku

Techniques

RANK 1: THE COURTIER'S EMBRACE

The Voice of Daigotsu School sensei teach that the foundation of the courtier's art is lying, deception and ruthless social manipulation. There is no honor in it, only the sheer will to advance your own interests by any means at your disposal. It is a bleak view of courtly life, and one that would that most Rokugani would loudly protest. But the courtiers of The Lost would reply that the courtiers of the Empire are only deceiving themselves, and that their Way represents the truth of samurai culture.

You receive a bonus to all Deceit and Etiquette Skill Rolls equal to your Taint Rank. In addition, you receive a Free Raise to all Courtier Skill Rolls.

RANK 2: THE BLADE BETWEEN THE RIBS

Defamation and the carefully chosen insult are part of the courtier's bag of tricks, and it has ever been such. Voice of Daigotsu School courtiers are simply more obvious about using them than most of their Rokugani counterparts, whom they consider hypocritical for not admitting more openly the viciousness that lies at the heart of their profession.

You gain a Free Raise and a bonus equal to your Taint Rank to all Courtier Skill Rolls. Also, if you do not have the Games (Sadane) Skill, you immediately gain it at Rank 1 at no cost in points. If you have the Games Skill but not an emphasis in Sadane, you immediately gain an emphasis in Sadane and 1 Rank at no cost in points. If you already have the Games (Sadane) Skill, you immediately gain 2 Ranks at no cost in points.

RANK 3: HUMILIATE YOUR FOE

For the Voice of Daigotsu courtier, games are not a genteel pastime. They are a way to humiliate your rivals, or anyone who might become your rival in the future (thus pre-empting any intention they might have of challenging you). The Voice of Daigotsu School sensei of games teach that they are not worth playing, unless with unrelenting will and ferocity. The goal is not just to win, and it is certainly not the point to simply play well or enjoy yourself; it is to destroy your opponent such cruelty and decision that it leaves no doubt as to who is the superior competitor. To any Rokugani who professes disgust at this philosophy, a Voice of Daigotsu courtier would reply that his way reduces the playing of games to its naked essence, stripped of the hypocritical veneer of civility that surrounds their use in Rokugani society.

You gain a Free Raise and bonus equal to twice your Taint Rank to all Games Skill Rolls. If you do not have a specialty in this Skill, you may now gain 1 of your choice without cost.

RANK 4: THE COURTIER'S KISS

A truly skilled Voice of Daigotsu courtier is able to weave all of the various aspects of his training into a seamless web of intrigue and social and political gamesmanship.

You gain 2 Free Raises and a bonus equal to twice your Taint Ranks to all Courtier, Deceit, Etiquette and Games Skill Rolls. These bonuses replace the bonuses gained at Ranks 1-3.

RANK 5: THE TRUE COURTIER

Friendship is not a phenomenon commonly associated with the world of Daigotsu's court. And yet it is also the case that it is very difficult to climb the slippery pole of rank and influence among the courtiers of The Lost without alliances, even if they are only temporary and treated with proper wariness. Even if one has gained rank and status at the court of The Lost, it is always useful to have on call younger allies who can be counted on to do your dirty work, or rally to your support in an emergency. In spite of its emphasis on the naked cruelty of life at court, the Voice of Daigotsu School ultimately teaches that the perfect practitioner of the courtier's art is one who knows how to gain friends and destroy his enemies with equal skill... assuming, of course, that one is clever enough to distinguish between the two.

You gain a bonus equal to your Status Rank to all Contested Social Skill Rolls. This supplements the bonuses gained at Rank 4; it does not replace them. Also, you may add the Advantage Allies at half the normal cost in points.

New Advanced School: Champion of The Lost (Bushi)

All bushi of The Lost who were not born in the Shadowlands carry within them some fragmentary memories of their old training, which often includes at least some knowledge of the rites and techniques of iaijutsu. Sometimes these bits of knowledge are quite specialized to dueling and part of advanced bushi training. But the Daigotsu's Legion School was founded by The Lost bushi who wanted to develop their own unique style of swordsmanship, distinctive compared to any Rokugani style. When it came to developing a course of training in the art of the duel, therefore, they resisted the temptation to simply cobble together bits and pieces of old knowledge, instead developing techniques that drew upon the corruption of their souls for strength and power.

Champions of The Lost are Daigotsu's Legion bushi who, for whatever reason, have sought out advanced training in iaijutsu. Since iaijutsu is an accepted method of settling disputes among The Lost, their purpose in doing so may be purely personal, to make oneself unbeatable in personal challenges. Or it may be that they truly see themselves as defenders of The Lost, ready and willing to take up arms as elite swordsmen against outsiders. Also, Champions of the Lost sometimes serve as yojimbo for Voice of Daigotsu courtiers. In any case, Daigotsu is pleased that some of his followers are pursuing this venerable Rokugani art in their own way.

Requirements

Rings/Traits: Earth 3, Agility 4

Skills: Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: Shadowlands 4, Meditation 4

Other: Must have at least 1 full Taint Rank

Techniques

RANK 1: BLESSING OF THE NINTH KAMI

In an iaijutsu duel, quickness both takes life and preserves it. Your training teaches you to harness the dark powers that lie dormant within you so that they manifest as pure speed, rather than strength or unusual abilities. You gain a bonus to all Initiative Rolls equal to twice your Taint Rank.

RANK 2: GLOWER

A direct and immediate confrontation with the power of Jigoku can cause even the strongest warriors to quail at heart. A Champion of The Lost may learn to use this to his advantage. Once per round, as a Use Special Abilities Action, you may force a single opponent to make a Contested Willpower Roll against you. You gain a bonus to this roll of +1k0 for each of your Taint Ranks. If you win, you gain a bonus to your next attack roll against him of +1k0 for each of your Taint Ranks, and he suffers a penalty of -1k1 for each of your Taint Ranks to his next attack roll against any target.

Also, in an iaijutsu duel, your opponent suffers a penalty equal to your Taint Ranks to the number of times he may Focus during the Focus phase of the duel.

RANK 3: DEATH OF HONOR

In your heart, you know that there is no power greater than that of Fu Leng, and this gives you absolute confidence in battle, as well as in duels. It is a power against which even the elite duelists of the Empire could not stand, were you given the chance to confront them. In fact, the worthier the opponent, the more Fu Leng relishes the prospect of defeating him. This gives you, his devoted servant, strength that rises in proportion to the stature of your opponent.

All of your attacks with a physical weapon gain a bonus to DR equal to your opponent's Honor + your Taint Rank. In an iaijutsu duel, you gain a number of Free Raises equal to your opponent's Honor + your Taint Rank, to be used at your discretion at any point in the process of resolving the duel.

New Advanced School: Mouth of The Lost (Courtier)

The courtiers of the Voice of Daigotsu School train for careers that center on the courtly life of The Lost, and intrigues that are for the most part confined to the City of the Lost. Their business is the business of the Shadowlands and supporting Daigotsu's role as its Dark Lord. To be sure, the same is more or less true of the elite Voice of Daigotsu courtiers, the Mouths of the Lost. But the Mouths of the Lost also prepare themselves for other purposes, for they are trained specifically to serve as Daigotsu's representatives outside the City of the Lost, among other factions both within the Shadowlands and without.

A Mouth of the Lost courtier might be sent (with an escort of Daigotsu's Legion bushi, of course) to browbeat a tribe of ogres into proper submission, or to parlay with a leader of the tsuno. Or to gather intelligence on some of the more intelligent spawn of Jigoku lurking in these wasted lands and report on their activities to Daigotsu and his functionaries. The Dark Lord also has it in mind to use his cleverest and most capable emissaries to try to split off factions within the army of The Maw, his current rival for dominance of the Shadowlands. Most importantly, however, he has his eyes fixed on a longer-term goal for the Mouths of the Lost — to use them as ambassadors to the Empire itself, sowing mistrust among the Great Clans and the Imperial Families, bleeding Rokugan while winning allies and corrupting more samurai who will eventually join the ranks of The Lost.

Requirements

Rings/Traits: Fire 4, Awareness 4

Skills: Courtier 4, Deceit 5, Etiquette 3

Other: Must have at least 3 full Taint Ranks

Techniques

RANK 1: THE DARK LORD PERSUADES

Oratory is one of the courtier's most important skills, no matter which faction he represents. A Mouth of the Lost courtier learns to draw upon his understanding of the darkness that lurks in the heart of every human to discover the chord that, when properly strummed, will convince him of an argument or point of view. This ability to know your audience through perceiving the darkness within is especially helpful in debates, when gaining the favor of your hearer is quite literally the difference between victory and defeat. Whether you use flattery, insults, menace or honeyed words scarcely matters, for by this point you are expert in all of these means of approach; what matters is that you find the proper angle of approach.

You gain a bonus to all Storytelling Rolls (except for Contested Rolls involving the Oratory and Rhetoric specialties) equal to your Taint Rank. In addition, if you spend a Void Point to get a Free Raise for the roll, you also receive a bonus to the roll equal to your Awareness. If you spend multiple Void Points on a single roll in this manner, multiply this bonus accordingly: If you spend 2 Void Points, your bonus is twice your Awareness, etc.

On Contested Storytelling (Oratory) and Storytelling (Rhetoric) Skill Rolls, you receive a bonus equal to your Taint Rank and a number of Free Raises equal to your Perception.

RANK 2: THE DARK LORD COMMANDS

Acting as an ambassador of Daigotsu requires some contextual knowledge of factions other than The Lost, and some understanding of geography outside the City of the Lost. You immediately gain a number of Ranks in the Shadowlands Lore Skill equal to your Fire Ring, at no cost in points. You also gain immediately, at no cost in points, either 1 new Lore Skill at Rank 1 or 2 Ranks in any Lore Skill that you already have (your choice).

RANK 3: THE DARK LORD SEDUCES

For a Mouth of the Lost courtier, the ultimate service to the Dark Lord would pit him against the wit and wiles of the hated Rokugani themselves, representing The Lost at a Rokugani court. To prepare for such an event, a Mouth of the Lost learns to dissect their weaknesses, their foibles, their vanities and hypocrisies. Paradoxically, the more accomplished and respected a samurai of the Empire, the more easily he may be rendered vulnerable by prying at those weaknesses.

You gain a bonus to all Courtier Skill Rolls equal to the Honor Rank or Glory Rank of your audience, whichever is lower. Use the average value for each, if the audience consists of more than 1 person. If the roll is a Contested Roll, use the Honor and Glory

Ranks of the opponent who is contesting the roll. In all cases, if you spend a Void Point to gain Free Raises for the roll, you gain a number of Free Raises equal to your Perception for each Void Point spent.

New Path: Obsidian Claw Duelist (Bushi)

Although the sensei of the Daigotsu's Legion School are under orders to discourage the practice of blackened claw dueling, it still exists, though it is rarely spoken of openly. The Dark Lord of the Shadowlands is one whose displeasure should not be taken lightly. And yet, there are small ways in which his project to transform The Lost has met with resistance, and the Test of Obsidian Claws continues to survive in secret. There are always bushi among The Lost who wish to learn the old combat techniques that their ancestors who reveled in the Taint developed for this strange and unnatural natural weapon. Many of them genuinely wish to continue this traditional form of dueling and preserve it for future generations, while others are only interested in fortifying their own killing skills.



Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Any Shadowlands School Rank 2

Requirements: Must have the Minor Shadowlands Power Blackened Claws

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same School at Rank 3

Technique:

Master of the Blackened Claw

Acquiring this particular characteristic of the Taint does not mean that you automatically understand how to use the obsidian claws as weapons to their fullest advantage. At first, they are simply extensions of one's own hands. As such, they are easier to wield than most weapons, but training, training and more training is needed before one can truly master their use. As is the case in all other forms of martial dueling, training in techniques particular to the art of the blackened claw duel contributes greatly to overall proficiency with these weapons.

In particular, however, studying the art of the Test of the Obsidian Claws teaches you to study your opponent as much as you can before the fighting actually begins, and to predict his initial movements and attack. These insights are not common knowledge among The Lost, but are kept and handed down only through the sensei who specialize in teaching this dueling form.

When using the Blackened Claws Shadowlands Power, you gain a bonus to your Initiative Roll equal to your Ranks in the Skill that you will use for your blackened claws attack roll. However, in a Test of Obsidian Claws duel, your Initiative bonus is equal to twice the Skill that you will use for your blackened claws attack roll. You also gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal to your Reflexes + Agility for the duration of the duel.

New Path: Tsuno Duelist (Bushi)

The tsuno do not practice the rituals of iaijutsu, or have much patience for the philosophy behind it. In this sense, their way of thinking is completely alien to Rokugani samurai, and even to The Lost in some ways. But that is not to say that they have no provision in their society for single combat challenges.

In fact, the tsuno have (as far as anyone can tell) always used single combat as an accepted method of settling disputes and establishing social hierarchy. It is not the only method of doing so, of course. The most conventional means by which a tsuno warrior advances in rank is to prove himself worthy of promotion through excellence in battle, or through arduous quests across the Spirit Realms in which he must establish his mettle. But it is also acceptable for a ravager to challenge another of superior rank to single combat in an attempt to gain promotion to his rank. This is especially common in cases in which a ravager has striven to distinguish himself through conventional means, but for whatever reason, the actual value of his achievement is in dispute.

These combats, though somewhat ritualized, are ugly and brutal affairs compared to the relative courtesies of iaijutsu. Even so, they are potentially important enough to the career of a tsuno ravager that their bushi training offers a specialized course of study emphasizing single combat and instruction in how to

fight another tsuno. These techniques are only offered to more advanced students — in part because only more advanced students are capable of comprehending them, but also because senior tsuno ravagers are understandably reluctant to give their juniors the capabilities with which to usurp them. Even so, the lessons learned by Tsuno Duelists are generally useful in combat situations in which they can focus on a single opponent for an extended period of time, as well as in duels with other tsuno.

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Tsuno Bushi School Rank 3

Path of Egress: Tsuno Bushi School Rank 4

Technique: The Challenger's Stare

Tsuno ravagers are magnificent natural warriors and they have the ability to dominate any combat situation in which they find themselves. But this line of training teaches them to focus intently on single opponent to the exclusion of all others until that opponent is dead. This is especially useful in duels, but it also finds application in more general combat situations.

At the beginning of a skirmish, you may choose one opponent on which to focus. You gain 3 Free Raises to each of your attack rolls made against that opponent. You also gain a bonus equal to twice your Reflexes to your TN to Be Hit against all attack rolls made against you by that opponent. However, you may not attack any other opponent until your chosen opponent is dead or the skirmish ends, whichever comes first. If you kill your chosen opponent before the end of the skirmish, you may choose another opponent as your focused target at the beginning of your next round.

New Spell (Maho): Avatar's Stranglehold

MASTERY LEVEL: 2

ELEMENT: Maho, Earth

DURATION: 5 minutes

AREA OF EFFECT: One target

RANGE: 100'

This spell affects the proxies of a single opponent, and may be used for either of two specific purposes. First, the caster may make a Contested Willpower Roll, with the caster gaining a bonus equal to his Earth Ring, against a single opponent with a blood familiar; if successful, he gains temporary control of that blood familiar. Each turn thereafter, the controller of the targeted familiar may make a Contested Willpower Roll against the caster as a Use Special Abilities Action; if successful, he regains control of his familiar and the spell ends. For purposes of determining range, consider that the spell is cast on the familiar.

Second, the spell may also be cast on an avatar in a taryujai duel. The caster makes a Contested Willpower Roll, with the caster gaining a bonus equal to his Earth Ring, against the controller of the avatar. If successful, half of all damage that the avatar receives is transferred instead to the person of the avatar's controller for the duration of the spell. Every turn thereafter, the controller of the targeted familiar may make a Contested Willpower Roll against the caster as a Use Special Abilities Action; if successful, he regains control of his avatar and the spell ends.



New Kata: Storm of Shards

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 30 minutes

As an extension of the body (albeit a disturbing and unnatural one), blackened claws can be wielded with unusual quickness and nimbleness. In this sense, only small and light weapons can match them for ease of use. Oneness between the warrior and the weapon is not a spiritual state in this case, but a physical fact. This kata takes advantage of this quality by pressing it to its limits, stressing speed. One strikes as quickly as possible to keep the target off balance and defeat any defenses he might offer.

RANK: Any Shadowlands School Rank 2

COST: 2

SPECIAL: Must have the Minor Shadowlands Power Blackened Claws to use this kata.

EFFECT: You gain a +1k0 bonus to all attacks rolls using your Blackened Claws Shadowlands Power. However, you may not use the Full Defense posture at any time.

VOID: You may spend a Void Point to gain an extra attack in this round. You may only spend 1 Void Point per round in this manner.

New Kata: The Black Veil

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 30 minutes

The strangest and eeriest of the fighting techniques developed for blackened claws, this kata uses hypnotic movements of the hands and arms to lull an opponent and dull his fighting edge, an effect heightened by the play of long black claws extended from the fingertips. This slows his attacks and makes him more vulnerable to your own attacks. Its disadvantage is that reduces both the speed and frequency of your own attacks, but enough of The Lost have found it advantageous (or at least attractive enough in theory) so that knowledge of it has not yet died out.

RANK: Any Shadowlands School Rank 3

COST: 2

SPECIAL: Must have the Minor Shadowlands Power Blackened Claws to use this kata.

EFFECT: At your discretion, you may suffer a penalty to all of your attack rolls this round. This penalty equals a number of rolled dice up to your Air Ring; you choose exactly how many dice. Before your round is over, you must select one opponent. In that opponent's next round, he suffers the same penalty to all attack rolls he makes against you.

For instance, if your Air Ring is 4, you may choose to suffer an attack roll penalty of anywhere from -1k0 to -4k0. You must also select one opponent before your round ends, and that opponent will suffer the same penalty to all attack rolls made against you in his next round.

Also, you may not enter either the Full Attack or Full Defense posture at any time.

VOID: You may spend Void Points to increase the penalty to the attack roll that you accept and inflict by +1k0 per Void Point spent.

New Kata: The Claw Strikes Deep

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 30 minutes

This technique maximizes the ability of obsidian claws to penetrate flesh, but at some cost to accuracy and the ability to penetrate armor. It involves careful timing and requires getting rather closer to the target than is ordinarily the case when fighting with this weapon. It requires fighting with the claws only partially extended. Once they penetrate the gaps in the target's armor or otherwise hook into the flesh, the claws are then extended in a rough thrust, dramatically deepening the wound inflicted.

RANK: Any Shadowlands School Rank 4

COST: 3

SPECIAL: Must have the Minor Shadowlands Power Blackened Claws to use this kata.

EFFECT: Before making an attack roll with your blackened claws, you may choose to fight with the claws semi-retracted, intending to use the maneuver that characterizes this kata. You suffer a penalty to that attack roll of a number of rolled dice equal to your opponent's Reflexes. However, if the attack roll succeeds, you gain a bonus to the DR of a number of kept dice equal to your Strength.

For instance, if your opponent's Reflexes is 3, you would suffer a -3k0 penalty to your attack roll. But if you succeed in hitting your opponent, and your Strength is 4, you would gain a +0k4 bonus to the DR.

VOID: None.

CHAPTER ELEVEN:

THE IMPERIAL FAMILIES & MINOR CLANS



The Imperial Families

Philosophy

As vital a role that dueling or personal competition plays in the psychological make-up of the Great Clans, these concepts are relatively unimportant in terms of their relationships to the other prominent factions in the Empire. This is not a matter of training or ability, but rather one of outlook. The Imperial Families have little need to prove themselves under normal circumstances. The entire Empire reveres them, after all, and thus they rarely if ever find themselves in a situation that demands they overcome an opponent for personal or political gain. To them, personal competition is a means of maintaining their position or enjoying themselves by tormenting their opponents.

Conversely, samurai of the Minor Clans and ronin do not have the resources to maintain attention to pursuits like personal competition. On an individual level, Minor Clan samurai are just as competitive and eager to prove themselves as their Great Clan counterparts, but the Minor Clans do not have the facilities, the economic power, or the prestige necessary to maintain large institutions devoted to such things.

Ronin are unique with regard to this particular philosophy. Taken individually, ronin are perhaps the most eager to prove themselves of any members of the samurai caste. Despite what they may claim, and despite how jaded a façade they present to others, virtually every ronin harbors a secret desire that they will one day achieve something so great that their accomplishments will be recognized and they will be offered the chance to swear fealty to a Clan, Great or Minor. Few ever achieve this, but hope springs eternal in the hearts of destitute wave men all across the Empire. Toward this end, ronin as a group are very keen on the notion of individual competition, but rarely have the opportunity to prove themselves. Many are forced to focus instead on simple survival, while others lack the basic recognition from other samurai necessary to gain entrance into mainstream tournaments or events.

The Imperial families believe that the institution of iaijutsu is a sacred ritual preserved from the days of the first Hantei, and regard it as an art form much in the same way as the Crane. Chief among the proponents of this view are the Seppun. The Seppun are a rigidly honorable Family noted for an inflexible adherence to tradition that would shame many Lion. As the principle source of both bushi and shugenja for the Imperial Families, the Seppun keep the dueling tradition alive for the entire group, a duty for which they are ideally suited. Although there are of course exceptions, the vast majority of Seppun consider themselves the guardians of the Emperor and his House, and they take that duty extremely seriously. They consider dueling an honor they have been bestowed by fate, and they will fulfill it so long as a single Seppun draws breath. For them it is not so much a philosophy as it is a sacred duty that they would gladly give their lives to perform.

If the Seppun are the blade that defends the honor of the Imperial Families, then the Otomo are the challenge that they issue to their opponents. The Otomo consider confrontation their specialty, and they relish the task of creating conflict with anyone they consider an opponent. They consider their duties sacred, just as the Seppun do, but honor is a relative matter to them. In that respect, they view confrontation with their opponents in much the same way as the Scorpion; they see it as an opportunity to be exploited for personal gain. To the Otomo, it is a game, nothing more.

The Miya are an oddity among the Imperial Families. They do not seek out confrontation, and indeed attempt to prevent it whenever possible. They do not consider competition a noble pursuit, although they are not opposed to non-violent competition if it takes place as an alternative to martial confrontation. In this, their philosophy is similar in many respects to that of the Toturi Family, a small Family with less than a dozen members, all of whom are directly related to or personal vassals of one of the three Toturi Emperors to date.

The Minor Clans

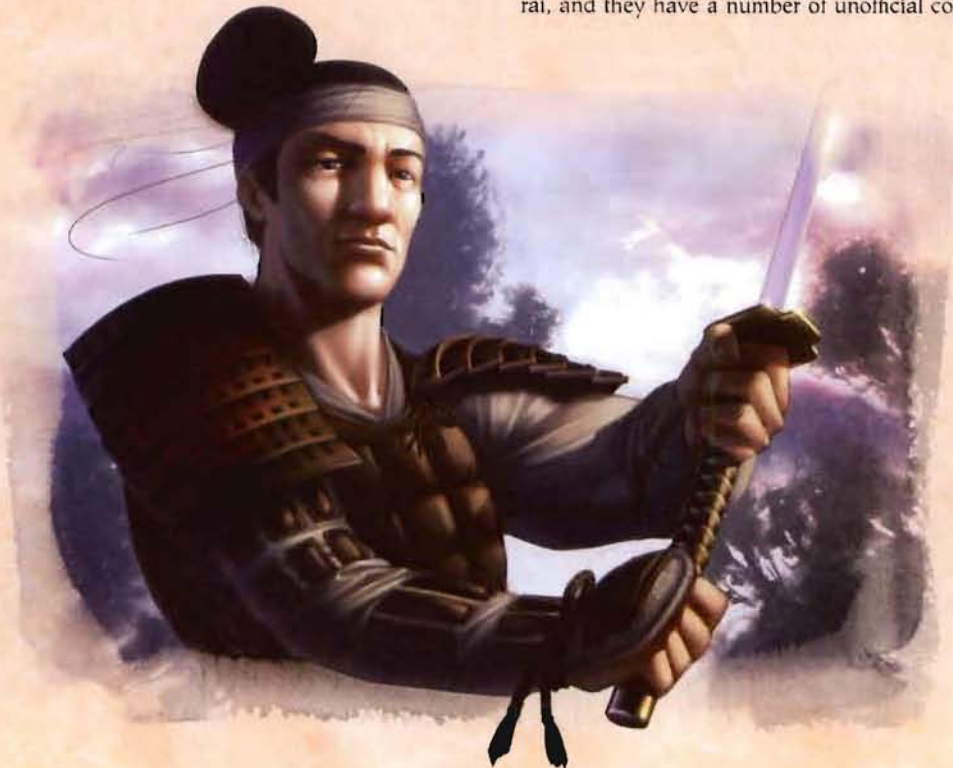
Ascribing a single, uniform philosophy to all of the Minor Clans on any given subject is an exercise in ridiculousness. There are more Minor Clans than Great Clans in Rokugan, and they vary in their perspective even more than do their larger cousins, if that is possible. From the rigidly honorable and ascetic Sparrow to the extremely dubious Tortoise, the Minor Clans run the gamut in terms of action and outlook, and their notions of conflict resolution and competition are no different in this regard.

Generations ago, the Badger Clan hosted numerous sumai tournaments. The hardy Ichiro have survived over a thousand years living in the harsh and unforgiving mountains, and as a result are a sturdy folk that greatly appreciate strength. The tradition of these tournaments, which were never heavily attended in the first place, fell into disuse after the Clan's near decimation in the years prior to the Clan War. Their recent reinvigoration has allowed them previously unknown levels of wealth, however, and they have recently begun hosting such events again. Unlike many Great Clans, the Badger welcome ronin in their events. They believe that personal power is a measure of worth, and have been known to offer fealty to those who demonstrate a sufficient degree of prowess. For whatever reason, the Ichiro have come to regard strength and prowess in unarmed combat as a measure of a person's character. Despite that this has created problems in the past, the family's Crab descent and relative isolation has not allowed an alternate philosophy to develop in the time since their creation.

The nascent Bat Clan has been in existence for so short a time that they have not developed any uniform philosophy or traditions of their own as yet. Their founder, however, is a powerful shugenja with a rather militant mindset, and as such Komori instructs his students in the nature of taryu-jiai, the formal dueling rituals of shugenja. While the Komori shugenja style focuses primarily on summoning and communication magic, instruction by a master of the art has resulted in many achieving considerable skill in the dueling procedures all the same. This closely mirrors Komori's belief in strength of will as a defining personal characteristic, and a measure of one man's ability to achieve his destiny.

The Tonbo are a particularly well-known Minor Clan, allowing mostly to the location of the Dragonfly Lands between the Lion, Crane, and Dragon provinces. The recent wars between those different groups have led to the Dragonfly being overrun repeatedly. The Clan was very nearly destroyed less than a decade ago, but have recovered largely due to the patronage of the Emperor's son, Sezarū. Much like their closest allies the Dragon, the Dragonfly have little interest in personal accomplishments that require the defeat of an opponent, as they do not consider it to be an honorable pursuit. Necessity has required them to be well versed in taryu-jiai, however, as the Dragonfly can ill afford to allow their opponents' accusations to go unanswered, lest they suffer even more ignominy.

The reclusive and somewhat eccentric Fox Clan have endured considerable scorn over the centuries, as their odd customs attracted the ire of the Great Clans during the long absence of Lady Shinjo's Clan. It was not until the Unicorn returned with their vastly different customs and traditions that the Kitsune Family seemed conservative by comparison, and the stigma surrounding them virtually disappeared. The Fox consider oneness with nature the ultimate achievement, and many aspire to little else. Tests of athleticism are particularly popular among young samurai, and they have a number of unofficial competitions that are



extremely popular among the Family and their close allies, the Hare. The Clan produces few bushi, and iaijutsu is not a popular pursuit among the few they do possess. Taryu-jiai is popular among a small number of shugenja, but again is not considered a priority by the family as a whole.

The Hare Clan have had a difficult history, having been formally disbanded some decades ago due to manipulation by the enigmatic Kolat. Despite their reinstatement only a few years later, the current Champion lived through the ordeal and has never fully recovered from his brief period of life as a ronin, hunted by and hunting the Kolat. The Usagi and Ujina families are secretive, preferring to remain largely apart from the Empire save for a few close allies among the Sparrow and Fox. Understandably, the Hare greatly prize personal prowess and autonomy. Athleticism, weapons proficiency, hunting, and investigation are all benchmarks that the Clan uses to measure the progress and achievement of their young samurai.

Favored by the Toturi Dynasty and founded by one of Roku-gan's greatest heroes, the Monkey Clan are almost universally respected among both Great and Minor Clans. Their founder, Toku, fully embraced Shinsei's teaching that fortune favored the moral man, and achieved things in his life that took others generations or even centuries to accomplish. The Family that bears his name seek to live by his example, and its members constantly push themselves to achieve more. They consider competition with other samurai an exceptional means of testing themselves, and eagerly seek such opportunities out. Their unfailingly positive attitude and exceptional degree of skill ensures that they are welcome at such tournaments throughout the Empire.

Easily the youngest and perhaps the smallest Minor Clan, the Oriole Clan was created when the ronin Tsi Family was granted the right to call themselves a Clan following their recovery of Hantei XVI's blade from the ruins of Otosan Uchi. Despite their relative youth, the Tsi Family has existed for decades, and one among their number, Tsi Xing Gao, has ascended to Tengoku as the Fortune of Steel. The Tsi have a very unusual means of measuring personal accomplishment, as they consider craftsmanship to be the ultimate achievement. The technique and skill with which one crafts items, most frequently weapons, determines that individual's worth and prestige among the Tsi. This unusual means of assessment is unique to the Tsi, save for perhaps the Kaiu Family and certain sects of the Kakita and Shiba Families.

No Clan save perhaps the Crab are so grossly unconcerned with trivialities as the Ox Clan. To the Morito family, competition serves no purpose other than to demonstrate one individual's superiority over another. Toward that end, they engage in it only when there is a personal enmity between competitors or the opportunity for significant personal gain. Among themselves, competitions typically depend upon martial prowess, proficiency in mounted combat, or sheer physical strength. Forms of wrestling taken from the ancient Moto traditions are still prominent among the Morito despite that an entire generation has passed since the Ox were formed from the Unicorn.

The most traditional Minor Clan is almost certainly the Sparrow Clan. Descended from the Crane, the Suzume Family has chosen to eschew wealth and political power in pursuit of piety and poverty. Despite this philosophy, the Suzume still consider iaijutsu an important element of their training. The focus and serenity of the ritual is considered a means of achieving inner harmony, much in the same way that many view meditation. In the Sparrow philosophy, achievement in iaijutsu represents a greater sense of center and oneness with the world around them.

Suzume samurai rarely duel to the death, however, for pointless loss of life is anathema to their view of the world. Instead, duels to first blood are common, with inflicting minimal damage on one's opponent considered yet another reflection of one's skill and achievement. Duels to the death, while rare, do occur on occasion. When such occasions arise, the Suzume tend to demonstrate how their unique philosophy nevertheless produces duellists of exceptional skill.

The Tortoise view interpersonal competition and confrontation as a means of achieving a specific result, although that result does not necessarily require victory over one's opponent. Indeed, the Tortoise are well versed in the notion that a carefully planned failure can achieve great things for them. Failure has often served the Clan well, causing their opponents to overlook and despise them, qualities that makes it far easier to operate without being noticed.

Imperial Institutions

Competition is a necessity for the Imperial Families. It is merely one means, albeit a prominent one, by which they continue to assert their position as the chief servants of the Emperor. While it may seem simplistic to imagine the Imperial Families concerned over the outcome of a tournament, there are many individuals within the Families that consider it fitting and proper for one of their number to take the prize and thus prove that the Great Clans are not first among samurai.

Sapphire Blade Dojo

Most consider the Seppun a dour Family, and such perceptions are not entirely correct. Despite their long and illustrious history of defending the Emperor and his house, the Seppun Family feel considerable shame over their perceived failures over the past half-century. The loss of Hantei XXXVII in the Scorpion Clan's failed coup, the kidnapping of Toturi I by agents of the Lying Darkness, the numerous assaults on Otosan Uchi that culminated in its destruction in 1159, the recent assassination of the prophet Rosoku by a Bloodspeaker assassin, and even the Emperor's ability to slip unnoticed from the new capital of Toshi Ranbo to pursue the elusive goal of Enlightenment are, in the Family's opinion, stains upon their honor. That others do not regard these failures as the Family's fault means nothing to the Seppun; they are by far their own harshest judges.

The Sapphire Blade Dojo was constructed within Toshi Ranbo very shortly after the coronation of Toturi III. It was consecrated by the Hidden Guard, the Seppun Family's shugenja, and protected with powerful wards that would curse any who entered its doors with an impure heart or dishonorable intentions. Whether or not these wards are completely effective, no one can say for certain. What is known, however, is that no student of Sapphire Blade Dojo has yet shamed the Family, and that is sufficient for the elder Family members.

Theoretically, the master sensei of Sapphire Blade Dojo is the Family Daimyo, Seppun Kiharu. Although a shugenja, Kiharu has always taken an active role in the training of his Family's young bushi. The old man considers a close relationship between

bushi and shugenja a necessary aspect of the Family's future success, a philosophy doubtless shaped by his years of study with both the Dragon and Phoenix Clans. In practice, however, Kiharu's advanced years and responsibilities as the Master of Ten Thousand Temples, a role in which he serves the Brotherhood of Shinsai, prevent him from spending the time he would like within the dojo. As a result, much of his duties are passed to younger sensei who focus exclusively on teaching. Chief among these individuals is the renowned magistrate Seppun Katsura, who exclusively oversees the training of the Seppun magistrates. Although a relatively small subset of students receive instruction from Katsura, most in the dojo regard him as the master sensei because of his experience and his status. Indeed, most other sensei defer to him as well, even though many of them have similar histories and oversee far more students. For his part, Katsura is only in the dojo a few months a year, and seems to prefer not to assume any additional authority if he can avoid it. Realistically, most day to day administration of the dojo falls to the two senior sensei, Seppun Hiroko and Seppun Shotaru.

Duelling is an important aspect of every student's training at the Sapphire Blade Dojo. It is assumed that each student will, at one or even many points during their years of service, be in a position to stand against another samurai. From the moment their training begins, every Seppun is taught to prepare for that moment, to steel themselves for the inevitable confrontation and to emerge victorious at any cost save that of their honor. Iaijutsu is of course the most common, given that it is the form of conflict resolution endorsed by Imperial law, but all manner of martial conflicts are anticipated as well. Social contests are not as emphasized, of course, as that is the province of the Miya and the Otomo. Still, even the Seppun are not completely unskilled in such areas, and there are courses available for those students who desire training in more courtly skills.

One unique aspect of the Sapphire Blade Dojo is the training of a group called the Legion of the Sapphire Chrysanthemum. The men and women of this group are the only non-Imperial samurai permitted to train within the dojo, and they are selected from the ranks of the Emerald Magistrates, Imperial Legions, and Clan magistrates throughout the Empire. These individuals are chosen for their virtuous nature and their degree of skill. Those who join the Legion are given leave by their lords to serve the Seppun above all others, and through them the Emperor himself. The Legion has no set purpose, but is used as a supplemental force to reinforce Seppun guardsmen wherever they may require it. The Legion is most frequently called upon to serve as the sword arm of the Seppun magistrates, as the vast majority of Seppun guardsman are committed to duties protecting Imperial assets throughout the land and cannot be easily marshaled on short notice.

House of the White Chrysanthemum

To call the facilities maintained by the Otomo Family for the purpose of training their young students dojo is a bit of a misnomer. Rare indeed is the Otomo who is trained in any martial endeavor besides the bare minimum necessary to hold a waki-zashi without embarrassing the Family. Beyond that, however, their training consists exclusively of encyclopedic lore regarding the various Clans and Families with whom they will interact in courtly settings, and the weapons of court: oratory, deceit, and

manipulation. Of course, they do not refer to their tools by these names, which would be dishonorable, but that is the true essence of what they teach at their 'dojo.'

The House is a relatively recent construct, having only been built since the Imperial capital was moved to Toshi Ranbo. Virtually every Otomo holding was destroyed when Otosan Uchi was razed, but their most valuable asset, their influence, remained completely unaffected. Kyuden Otomo was reconstructed within the Doji provinces, and the two Families' already strong alliance was significantly increased. While their home remains within the Crane Lands, the Family has rebuilt the vast majority of their essential holdings within Toshi Ranbo, and it was their influence that drove the rapid expansion of the city after the coronation of Toturi III. Once their power base was re-established, they promptly created a new training facility for their young and upcoming courtiers. The House of the White Chrysanthemum was constructed near the Great Clan embassies in to familiarize the students with their enemies.

Training at the House of the White Chrysanthemum is far more intensive than most would imagine. Newly arriving students are pitted against one another in a series of social exercises designed to determine who among them has the strongest personalities and the sheer charisma to dominate large groups of courtiers. This is done almost immediately after arrival, and the sensei use it to establish a pecking order among each class that typically lasts until the students graduate, although it is possible to overcome one's initial failings with exceptional performance over time.

Once a proper ranking is developed among the students of any given class, students begin an intensive instruction program designed to familiarize them with literally hundreds of key individuals in the Imperial Court and the individual courts of Clan Champions. Every aspect of a Clan's political agenda and current treaties or enmities is dissected in exacting detail that would shame even the Empire's greatest tacticians. Students are expected not only to remember considerable detail about all these individuals, but maintain an awareness of customs and traditions throughout the lands of various Clans and Families as well. Knowing that many will receive posts scattered throughout the Empire, the White Chrysanthemum sensei are unwilling to risk passage of any student they suspect could cause the Family embarrassment by committing some faux pas.

As students near graduation, the dojo hosts a series of vigorous debates among them. These debates are a matter of considerable importance to the family as a whole, and it is not uncommon for Otomo to return to the Imperial City from all across the land in order to witness them. In particular, relatives of students frequently attend to observe the performance of their kin. As a result, these debates are every bit as important to young Otomo as major events like the Topaz Championship are to the students of bushi dojo from the Great Clans. Countless lifelong alliances and enmities have been born in these debates, and more than one impassioned argument has led to duels by proxy only a few weeks or months following the gempukku ceremony.

In addition to the debates, students nearing graduation participate in a number of small-scale court settings created exclusively for training purposes. The sensei invite lesser diplomats and ambassadors from all different Clans and host lavish banquets that have little actual purpose other than to give their students the chance to interact with genuine courtiers. The various

Clans and Families whose representatives are invited to these events are generally content to grant their vassals leave to attend, as it is beneficial for them in the long run to gain additional experience for their own agents — and to take the measure of the promising and not-so-promising among the young Otomo their courtiers will ultimately have to face. Ultimately, the guests have little information of any real benefit to the Otomo, and the Otomo students have virtually no information to let slip to their guests. Occasionally, the sensei of each group deliberately feed incorrect information to their students in order to examine how the information spreads and what, if any, misinformation among their rivals takes place as a result. This practice is not a genuine attempt at a campaign of misinformation, for if it were it would be far more effectively implemented. Rather, it is generally just a means of amusement among rival sensei and courtiers.

Dojo of the Righteous Word

The Miya family occupies a strange niche among the Imperial Families, and indeed in the Empire as a whole. They are not bushi, although their training includes considerably more physical endeavors than their Otomo cousins. Still, they are not courtiers, although far more sociable and diplomatic than the typically taciturn Seppun. Their role is a strange amalgamation of the two, and one that the Miya have mastered in the centuries since the founder of their Family first swore allegiance to the Hantei. In their role as heralds and as administrators of the Emperor's Blessing, the Miya are by far the most visible representatives of the Imperial Families, perhaps the only one that many Rokugani will ever see. This responsibility is not accepted lightly, and the Miya take their duty of bringing the Emperor's word to the people extremely seriously.

The Dojo of the Righteous Word is an unassuming complex of buildings constructed not far from the ancestral Miya lands, and is situated near a small farming village that serves the Family. It is here that young Miya are brought to be prepared for their duties as Imperial heralds. The duty is a diverse and difficult one, and requires years of training in a variety of skills, including but not limited to horsemanship, combat, diplomacy and various forms of craftsmanship. It is for this reason that Miya students are accepted into the dojo at a slightly younger age than many Clans, beginning their studies on average two years before the youths of most Great Clans.

Training as an Imperial herald is a massive responsibility. None but the Miya have ever performed this duty, and there are no recorded instances of non-Miya serving among their number. The Miya understand that their role is not much appreciated by the Great Clans, for there is little glory in it beyond simple service to the Emperor, which all samurai should perform in one degree or another, regardless. The Great Clans rarely visit the countless tiny villages that dot the countryside in territory that is beyond Clan boundaries. They do not see the isolation that the people endure, or the hope in their eyes when the Emperor's Blessing arrives to repair damage done by nature or man. The Clans do not appreciate the enormous gift that has been given to the Miya, nor the blessings that the Family enjoys simply from fulfilling these duties. They are not the Emperor's heralds because they do not comprehend all that it entails. Only the Miya are deserving of this burden and blessing.

Beginning students at the dojo first undergo rigorous physical conditioning. This is a common theme throughout their training, although it is never so intense as during the first six months. The reasoning for this is quite simple: Heralds are expected to ride throughout the day over a period of many days and still retain sufficient vigor to deliver the Emperor's word to his subjects upon reaching their destination. Strength is not important to the Miya, but stamina is essential to the successful execution of their duties. More than one herald has been saved by superior physical endurance that belied their otherwise unimpressive physique.

Once the students have begun to develop their physical condition, their training in oratory and diplomacy begins. For the most part, heralds are expected to be able to convey the Emperor's proclamations in a clear, expressive manner that leaves little room for interpretation. Still, there are always those with questions, and heralds are likewise trained to deal with those who wish to discuss Imperial edicts afterwards. Granted, few peasants would dare to converse with a member of an Imperial Family, even the much beloved Miya, but ronin are not uncommon in the unaligned lands, and are generally more antagonistic toward heralds. Even the meekest Miya is trained to be prepared for such difficulty and to speak eloquently on the matter being delivered. This is why that, even though they generally lack the more aggressive style of their Otomo cousins, the Miya often excel at Winter Court, when there is no travel to be had. In preparation for such occurrences, students of the dojo are pitted against one another in friendly debates on a regular basis.

Other than practice in oratory debates, Miya heralds are not given any particular training to deal with duels or competition between samurai. This is simply not something that is part of their everyday responsibilities. On the rare occasion that such instances come up — and it is almost unheard of for an Imperial herald to be challenged to a duel — the Miya typically choose horsemanship or athletics as the means of resolving their differences.

Minor Clan Institutions

The Minor Clans do not have the same luxuries as their Great Clan counterparts, and can rarely afford to devote entire institutions to relatively frivolous pursuits such as tournaments and competition. Still, there are dojo within the Clans that have training regimes that lend themselves to such interests. When the Minor Clans decide that they can afford the luxury of training duelists, they produce formidable competitors.

Heart of the Mountain Dojo

Just outside the halls of the rebuilt Shiro Ichiro, there stands a massive stone structure that serves as the primary dojo for the Ichiro Bushi School. Like the Ichiro themselves, it is a stark, foreboding place with little warmth or welcome to it. Also like the Ichiro, it is proud and resolute, and looks as though it could withstand anything short of the mortal realm's complete destruction.

During the years immediately preceding the Clan War, an arrogant and frustrated young Ichiro shugenja, the only shugenja born to the Family in several generations, succumbed to temptation and summoned an oni. Oni no Hideo decimated the Badger Clan holdings, slaughtering nearly three-quarters of the Ichiro Family in the process. The survivors were left with little more than ruins and a handful of coins among them. The Family fought tooth and nail for survival for nearly 50 years, and it is generally agreed that, had the Clan War not broken out shortly after Oni no Hideo's rampage, the Badger Clan would have been formally dissolved by the Imperial Court.

Fortunately for the Ichiro, that did not happen. The Toturi Dynasty has proven remarkably favorable toward Minor Clans, and even when the Miya and Otomo Families considered dissolving the Badger in recent years, the Keepers of the Elements, a group of enlightened samurai in service to Shinsei's descendant Rosoku, intervened and aided the Ichiro in revitalizing their lands. In the aftermath of this incident, the Badger have been inundated with gifts from potential allies who wish to benefit from association with a Clan, even a Minor Clan, that has captured the good graces of the Imperial Court so successfully. These new resources have created a massive and rapid rebuilding effort that has, after more than 40 years, finally resulted in the restoration of the Badger lands to their former glory and beyond.

Shiro Ichiro is the largest and finest of all Badger holdings. The fortress was designed with the assistance of Katu engineers, and is intended to repel any assault, so that the garrison can withstand a siege for as long as its supplies hold. Due to its previous incarnation's fate, the fortress is also designed to withstand assault from within as well, even from an opponent as powerful as Hideo no Oni. It is a foreboding structure, although even its superior size does not eclipse the monolithic qualities of the adjoining Heart of the Mountain Dojo.

The dojo appears for everything in the world as if it were hewn from a single piece of stone. It is angular with almost no soft curves, much like the Ichiro who train there. Because of its design and construction, the dojo's interior is perpetually dark. The students within train by torchlight, with little distinction between night and day while engrossed in their kata. The sensei who teach at the dojo consider this an acceptable situation, as they believe their students should pay attention to nothing but their lessons.

The course of study at Heart of the Mountain Dojo has two primary paths. First and foremost, the dojo is the principal institution for the Ichiro Bushi School, perhaps the oldest bushi School in Rokugan that is not sponsored by a Great Clan. Virtually every Ichiro samurai who has ever been was trained in its techniques, and since the dojo's construction, the majority of each new generation will be trained within it. A solid 90% of the Family's samurai train with some branch of the School, whether at its central dojo or one of the lesser dojo attached to other Badger fortresses throughout the mountains.

The Heart of the Mountain also offers another course of instruction, one unique to the dojo. In addition to the sensei and training regimens standardized for the Ichiro bushi, there is an advanced class for students who demonstrate exemplary skill in unarmed combat, particularly wrestling. This is a tradition that is closely tied to the Family's belief that physical power is a virtuous characteristic. It began with the Clan's formation, both as a survival necessity and as a means of entertainment in an environment with literally almost nothing else of any value for enter-

taining the rank and file. Over time it has come to represent the family's philosophy in an external sense, and is highly prized by virtually all Ichiro.

In the recent months since the Badger's fortunes were finally reversed, the Clan has begun sponsoring small sumai tournaments. These tournaments were once quite popular among ronin seeking to impress the Ichiro in hopes of gaining fealty or at least a paid appointment serving somewhere in the Clan's provinces. Other Minor Clans occasionally participated as well, most notably the Hare and the Mantis (prior to their ascension to Great Clan status). Great Clans have not historically attended, although since the Badger's rejuvenation there have been a small number of Crab and Unicorn samurai in attendance, as well as the occasional Lion.

The Heart of the Mountain Dojo's chief sensei is currently a scarred and seasoned veteran named Ichiro Zinjuro. His twin brother, Jinzaburo, is chief advisor to the Ichiro Daimyo, and together the two men wield considerable influence within the Clan. Political influence is not something that interests Zinjuro, however, as he considers himself a pure warrior and ill-suited for anything related to court. He is a harsh disciplinarian, but never fails to reward those who succeed under his tutelage. For this reason, his students are fanatically loyal to him, and many regard him as the spiritual successor to the legendary Ichiro Tashimi, the only sensei of the Ichiro Bushi style to survive the rampage of Hideo no Oni decades ago. Zinjuro took Tashimi's place after the latter's death, and by all accounts he has succeeded admirably in a position that no one ever believed could be filled again.

Embassy of the Alliance

Almost as long as the Empire of Rokugan has existed, there have been Minor Clans. The Badger, Fox, and Mantis Clans were all created within the Empire's first century of existence, and other Clans have continued to appear over the centuries, particularly in the last 100 years. Throughout most of this illustrious history, the Minor Clans have been distant allies at best, and outright enemies during several particularly unpleasant instances. Because of their fractured nature, the Minor Clans have rarely been able to combine their meager resources to achieve a greater destiny than they could achieve independently. This all changed with the Clan War.

The Empire first witnessed what the Minor Clans were truly capable of achieving during the Clan War, when the endlessly ambitious Mantis Clan Champion Yoritomo created a coalition of the scattered Minor Clans, known as the Alliance. The Centipede, Fox, Sparrow, Tortoise, and Wasp all flocked to his banner. Together, the Minor Clans traversed the Empire, protecting the people of countless villages and cities from the ravages of the corrupt sorcerer Yogo Junzo and his Shadowlands forces. It was in this way that the Minor Clans finally gained the attention of their Great Clan counterparts, but when the conflict ended with the Mantis' ascension as a Great Clan, those who chose not to be absorbed into the Mantis quickly returned to relative obscurity. For nearly half a century, the Minor Clans labored in obscurity again, with several declining nearly to the point of extinction.

During the second era of the Gozoku conspiracy, a young and idealistic Tortoise samurai named Kasuga Taigen managed to secure the patronage of the Dragon Clan, through Daimyo Kitsuki Mizuochi, and the Crane Clan, through Imperial Court

representative Kakita Munemori. With the promised support of both Clans, Taigen gathered together representatives of all existing Minor Clans at that time. Meeting together in Toshi Ranbo, representatives from the Dragonfly, Fox, Hare, Ox, Badger, and Sparrow Clans all entered into an agreement to work together for mutual gain in the face of conflict all across the Empire, both with the Bloodspeakers and with the Great Clans fighting one another. With the sponsorship of two Great Clans, the newly created alliance was allowed a representative in the Imperial Court, normally only granted to those Minor Clan samurai as guests of a Great Clan, and the alliance chose as their ambassador the architect of their union, Kasuga Taigen.

In the years since this new Alliance was created, the Minor Clans have only grown in strength. The addition of the Monkey Clan, the favored vassals of the Toturi Dynasty, was a tremendous boon for the Alliance, as those sympathetic to the Monkey are now at least tentatively allied with their partners as well. The recent creation of both the Bat and Oriole Clans, both of whom have agreed to join the Alliance, has brought even more resources into the fold. Taigen's irrepressible charisma has earned the Alliance more allies in court, and save for the pressing danger to the Dragonfly from the nearby war between the Lion, Dragon, Crane, and Unicorn, the Minor Clans are flourishing in a manner unseen since the days immediately following the Clan War.

The principle symbol of the Alliance's power is their embassy in the Imperial City. Constructed only recently, the building lacks the size and extravagance that the Great Clan embassies share, but for its purposes it is more than adequate. Many Minor Clans maintain a permanent position at the embassy, with samurai rotating in and out of duty in the capital as it suits the Clan's needs. The smallest or most remote Clans do not keep permanent staff on hand, but have space allocated to them for when they need the embassy for whatever reason. The structure contains a sizable dojo and a shrine, both to suit the needs of those that work within, and it has recently added a small forge as well to accommodate the Oriole craftsmen who spend time there. By far the most important feature, however, is the massive audience chamber that accounts for nearly a third of the entire building. The chamber is used for meetings with representatives of Imperial Families or Great Clans, but these occur only infrequently, as Alliance personnel tend to visit such prestigious individuals in their own estates. Instead, instruction is the chamber's primary purpose.

Due to their generally remote locations and lack of interaction with other Clans, Minor Clan samurai tend to have a less developed sense of social awareness. Given that the Alliance's overall goal is to advance the position of their Clans in Rokugani society, this is a significant obstacle to overcome. Toward that end, Taigen has gathered the most socially adept among the Clans and brought them together to teach others how to appropriately represent the Alliance in the courts of Great Clans. These instructional sessions are not held frequently, as those acting as sensei have many commitments they must fulfill, but even during the infrequent weeks of training, great progress has been made, and courts across the Empire are slowly coming to appreciate the greatly improved social acumen the Alliance representatives present.



The benefits of this dojo created by multiple Clans lie primarily in the way in which it allows the Minor Clans to share their diverse experiences and lend each other mutual support. The Minor Clans are scattered all across the Empire, and as such have extensive and lengthy contacts with different Great Clans. If an Alliance representative needs to deal with a Scorpion, he can seek advice from a Hare, a Fox, or a Monkey. If a meeting with the Mantis is necessary, a Bat or a Fox can be consulted. For the Unicorn, the Ox hold the answers. This wide array of experience has afforded the Minor Clans a unique opportunity to gain insight into virtually any opponent they might face in a political confrontation.

Still Water Temple

Once, the Dragonfly Lands had many temples. They were devoted to various Fortunes as well as the Tonbo Family's various ancestors, their own immediate ancestors as well as their distant predecessors among the Dragon and Phoenix Clans. Sadly, the majority of these beautiful temples and shrines were destroyed in the Lion Clan's assault during the earliest days of the Four Winds era, when the Lion attacked the Dragon as part of their ongoing treaty with the Dragon's then-enemies, the Phoenix. A great deal of the Dragonfly Clan's history was lost during that dark period, as were the lives of nearly half the Clan's samurai. For any other Clan, it would surely have been the death knell. Fortunately for the Dragonfly, they had the services of Tonbo Euiko, a shugenja particularly gifted in divination. Thanks to Euiko's visions, the Tonbo provinces had been evacuated in advance of the Lion's invasion, sparing many lives. When the hostilities ended, the wayward Tonbo began returning home, slowly at first, and then in greater numbers as the Emperor's son Toturi Sezaru placed their Family and lands under his direct protection.

Rebuilding was a long and difficult process, and one that would have been impossible if not for Sezaru's financial support. At the time, neither the Dragon nor the Phoenix, both traditionally the Dragonfly's close allies, were in a position to offer their support. The terrible losses that they suffered dramatically reduced their need for infrastructure, and so much land that had been previously built up was allowed to lie empty or returned to agriculture. It was not until the wounds of yesterday were healed that the Tonbo finally turned their attention to planning for tomorrow, and first among those plans was the creation of Still Water Temple.

Still Water Temple is the largest temple ever constructed within Dragonfly Lands. It was built with what remained of the Tonbo's wealth, as they did not wish to draw upon Sezaru's patronage. Instead, they insisted that it should be solely and uniquely their own creation. Although large, the temple is not ostentatious. It is almost monastic in its decoration, and indeed there are monks that dwell within and service the temple. It serves many purposes for the Tonbo, and was even built with a fortified outer wall in case it might one day have to endure yet another invasion of Dragonfly Lands. Principally, however, it is a temple and a dojo for young shugenja. The first and thus far only master sensei is Tonbo Euiko, the same shugenja whose predictions saved the Tonbo from virtual extinction, and she is revered by her students with a fervor that is matched only by their devotion to their Daimyo. With Euiko as the sensei, the temple's emphasis has turned to teaching divination and prognostication.

Attempting to divine glimpses of the future through the kami is difficult and uncertain at best. The kami are not limited by the linear human perception of time. They are immortal spirits, with

little notion of the passage of time. Thus attempting to convince them to reveal things that have not yet happened can be difficult, and can often result instead in viewing the past, the present, or completely fictional events. Many attempt it and fail. Historically, the Dragonfly have been only marginally more successful than most, but that changed dramatically with the birth of Euiko. Her natural gift of prophecy has given her tremendous insight into how to achieve similar results through magic. Although most of her students can only achieve a fraction of her consistency, their overall progress has been remarkable.

New students at Still Water Temple spend months learning to meditate properly. Aspiring Tonbo shugenja are taught to allow their minds to slip free of their bodies and merge with the spirits of Water, flowing throughout the world and touching everything simultaneously. Whether this is actually possible is a subject of some debate, particularly among the Tonbo's traditional adversaries in the Lion. Regardless, that is the goal, and the Tonbo take it very seriously. Once the students have mastered the basic elements of meditation, only then do they begin to receive instruction on the act of communing with the kami.

Although divination is the focus of Still Water Temple, it is far from the only aspect of training. The Tonbo are a traditional Family in most respects, and their emphasis on Water magic is supplemented with a number of lesser methodologies common throughout the Empire. The dueling tradition of taryu-jiai, the customary duel between shugenja, is practiced in the dojo. The Tonbo are a peaceful people despite their frequent travails, and prefer dueling via avatars rather than actually hurting their opponents.

Ujina Torid-e

Also called Shiro Meidochi by some, this small building barely deserves to be called a keep, and certainly could never be mistaken for a legitimate castle. It is barely larger than the average inn or sake house, although it is the largest building in the small farming village of Meidochi. It is here, near the heart of Hare Clan Lands, that the tiny Ujina Family conducts their business, including the training of their warriors.

The Ujina are an enigmatic Family, and only their lords the Usagi can truly be said to know anything about them. There are many unsavory rumors surrounding them, as the tale of Ujina's oath of fealty to the Usagi Daimyo raises many questions about his motives and methods. Still, the Ujina serve the Hare loyally and well, and are so rarely encountered by outsiders that their name is rarely on the Empire's lips.

One of the primary purposes of Ujina Torid-e is to provide private training for its warriors in the arts of quick and deadly confrontation. Among the Hare's most vigorous enemies are mahotsukai and the last vestiges of the nearly extinct Bloodspeaker cult. Such foes operate in shadows, and have the assistance of unscrupulous men with little in the way of honor. These are the foes that the Ujina prepare their samurai to face, and the methods they must use are nearly as questionable as those practiced by their foes. This, the Ujina believe, is a necessary evil that combats a far greater threat. If the few dozen Ujina samurai in existence must compromise their honor for the benefit of the Hare and the Empire as a whole, then so be it.

The primary form of dueling taught at Ujina Torid-e is that of knife fighting. As martial combat styles go, use of the knife is fast and decisive, and the weapon can easily be concealed until the moment the combat begins. The Ujina are trained with all man-

ner of knife-sized weapons, including not only the tanto and aikuchi, but jitte, sai, broken-off versions of larger weapons, and a number of improvised weapons that could, in theory, be obtained regardless of one's location. The ideal result of this training is that an Ujina will never be without a close-at-hand weapon with which he is exceptionally skilled.

Once basic weapon styles have been covered, the Ujina sensei move on to circumstantial combat. In an attempt to cover as many different concepts as possible, the sensei place their students in a variety of outrageous situations and gradually acclimate them to the rigors of fighting under such conditions. Among the more arduous situations in which they are placed include fighting in extremely confined spaces, balancing atop thin beams, fighting when submerged up to the waist in water, and other equally unlikely scenarios. An additional benefit of such training exercises is a marked increase in balance, agility, and stamina over time.

The chief sensei of Ujina Torid-e is a wiry, heavily scarred old bushi named Ujina Ataken. Ataken claims to have defeated more than 50 men in personal combat, and between the sheer volume of marks he bears as well as his nearly superhuman prowess with the blade, no one doubts this claim. Ataken considers the skill level of his students a direct result of his skill as an instructor and, by extension, his skill as a warrior. Given that, he is a ruthless taskmaster and devoted teacher who works long and hard to find the proper style necessary to suit each of his individual students. His approach tends to inspire either slavish devotion or unbridled loathing, but the results are always the same.

Ronin Institutions

There are relatively few ronin institutions devoted to the pursuit of individual competition, as their interests tend toward survival rather than personal glory. While there are certainly ronin who pursue personal glory, but such individuals rarely congregate with others. Only when ronin achieve relative success in large numbers can they afford the luxury of pursuing such frivolous interests.

The Dojo of the Eye in Nanashi Mura

Nanashi Mura is perhaps the most prestigious ronin settlement in all of Rokugan, and it is certainly the most successful. Its proximity to the Dragon provinces, combined with the magnanimous attitude the Dragon have toward wave men in general, has allowed the village to prosper when others like it have failed catastrophically. The village has narrowly avoided destruction on several occasions, but each time the near-disasters have allowed the elite guards who defend the city, the Eyes of Nanashi, ample opportunity to hone their skills through hardship.

The students at the Dojo of the Eye are well trained in a variety of martial weapons, and although they place far less emphasis on the katana than most prominent dojo, they are well-versed in the way of iaijutsu. It is their duty to defend the village from all dangers, and that includes defending its honor from those who ques-

tion it. Over the decades, the Eyes have held a number of quiet duels to defend Nanashi Mura from slanderous comments made by unaligned ronin, samurai of both Great and Minor Clans, and even a handful of Imperials. All of these duels, particularly those held against Imperials, have been quietly covered up to prevent potential repercussions from the parties involved.

Although dueling is a matter of concern for the Eyes, the majority of their martial training focuses on less conventional weapons. The Eyes believe that unconventional weapons give them an edge in confrontations with others, as it gives them a tremendous psychological advantage. Their enemies tend to underestimate them, and they have rarely faced a well-trained opponent using the weapons the Eyes use. This grants the Eyes a considerable advantage and allows them to defeat most opponents without use of lethal force, something that is in the village's best interests over the long term.

Despite their duties, the Eyes of Nanashi are not a purely defensive organization. The village's protection is their responsibility, and as such they are also charged with ensuring that its inhabitants are at least content, if not prosperous. Toward this end, the Eyes host all manner of small events that serve to distract the people of Nanashi from whatever troubles plague them. In the years since the Eyes were founded, a separate sect has formed that undertakes this duty specifically to the exclusion of all others. This smaller sect is sometimes referred to as the Voice of Nanashi. While the Eyes oversee the village's physical well being, the Voice watch over the mental well being of its inhabitants.

In the interests of stability, the Voice maintains a small number of houses throughout the village that are home to gambling and games of all types. While the village as a whole is a virtuous place, the Eyes are a practical organization, and they realize that vice is inevitable. By controlling how it manifests, they can control how it affects the city. Toward that end, they have scoured the entire Empire in search of every conceivable type of game that might appeal to their customers. In the process, they have managed to turn a tidy profit for the village. The games have in fact grown to a degree that they have begun to attract a small number of unscrupulous characters to the village, but all in all the Eyes consider that a small price to pay for an exceptionally low crime rate and the increased revenue that the gambling houses generate for the village as a whole.

The Sword of Yotsu Dojo

Since the inception of the Yotsu, the tiny Ronin Family has maintained a dojo in Otsan Uchi. They were much beloved by Hantei XXXVII, for the founder of their Family rescued his youngest son from the Bloodspeakers in 1111. After the Hantei Dynasty fell, the Yotsu continued to hold Imperial favor because of their work protecting the weak and defenseless, a cause greatly valued by both Toturi I and II. Their fortunes took a turn for the worse, however, when Otsan Uchi was destroyed by Daigotsu's forces.

The ruin of Otsan Uchi and its aftermath were a nightmare for the Yotsu. Those who survived the initial attack were whittled down to a lean fighting force by the horrors Daigotsu's invasion left behind. They refused to leave, however, working tirelessly to protect the few left in the city from renegade oni, despicable Bloodspeakers, and opportunistic bandits seeking to profit from the pain of others. In time, however, the environment simply grew

too dangerous, and Yotsu Seou had no choice but to remove her Family to the nearby Southern Hub Village in order to preserve what was left of them.

Recently, the Jade Champion came to Otsan Uchi to seek out and confront the Ninube enclave there. Yotsu Seou and her family offered their aid, and stood shoulder to shoulder with the Crane during the conflict. Afterwards, impressed both with Asahina Sekawa and the late Crane Champion Doji Kurohito, Seou accepted the Jade Champion's offer of patronage, and the Yotsu moved their dojo to the Crane Lands. There, they were finally given the resources they needed to move their operations to a larger scale.

The only purpose the Yotsu have ever had is to defend those who are incapable of defending themselves. This is obviously greatly open to interpretation, and individual members are given considerable leeway in determining how to involve themselves in the affairs of others. Because so many members of the family feel that protecting the peasantry is an important part of their role, the Family has incorporated dueling as a vital component of their training. This may seem odd at first blush, but when a samurai is found abusing a peasant, there is no legal recourse for anyone save the samurai's lord to rebuke them. The only possible means of immediate relief from the oppressor, then,

is a challenge to a duel by another samurai. The problem with this approach is that the samurai being challenged determines the form the duel will take, and thus the Yotsu must be prepared for any eventuality. Typically, however, iaijutsu is the principle means by which the Yotsu achieve their vengeance, and this is the focus of the The Sword of Yotsu's training. Still, the dojo offers instruction in a wide variety of skills that can be used as a means of dueling.

Since the Yotsu relocated to the Crane Lands, a small number of them have been permitted to train with the masters at the Kakita Dueling Academy. While the Yotsu have not yet been allowed to learn the ancient techniques of that illustrious school, the lessons they have been granted have allowed them to begin developing their own variations, and has led to a new and stronger iaijutsu dueling tradition within the Family.

The Temple of Kanosei Furudera

The number of ronin shugenja orders in existence is incredibly small, and most number no more than a half dozen shugenja at most. That the order of Kanosei Furudera has prospered for as long as it has, and that it has gained some degree of notoriety among the Clans, is nothing less than amazing, and a tremendous testament to the skill of its members. While still small and relatively lacking in resources, the order has proven that its philosophies and techniques



have value, and that recognition by their peers is all they desire.

The Order of Kanosei was founded six centuries ago by a ronin shugenja of exceptional skill and insight. This man's name was Kanosei, and he turned his back on the samurai caste that spurned him for the circumstances of his birth, instead turning his attention and his talents to benefit other ronin and the peasant classes of Rokugan. His methods and philosophies earned him several enemies, some of whom wielded considerable political clout, but Kanosei's abilities were such that no one who challenged him could defeat him, and his actions provided few reasons to levy political power against him. Toward the end of his life, Kanosei sought out others who had been ignored by the Clans, but who shared his ability to speak to the kami. He and his followers constructed a temple, where he taught many ronin and even peasants to harness their natural talents. Kanosei's tutelage of peasants was met with outrage until the Brotherhood of Shinsei and several prominent shugenja argued that if the peasants were unworthy, the kami would not have spoken to them in the first place. Eventually, the eyes of the Empire turned elsewhere, and the Temple of Kanosei Furudera was allowed to remain in its quiet seclusion on the shores of Chrysanthemum Petal Lake.

Today, centuries later, the temple lies well within the boundaries of the Unicorn Clan Lands. The Unicorn have been remarkably accommodating, and have not interfered with the order whatsoever since their return to Rokugan several hundred years ago. The Kanosei have an amiable relationship with both the Iuchi and Horiuchi Families, and occasionally exchange information to benefit both groups. For the most part, however, the Kanosei keep to themselves, as they choose to practice a form of magic that many consider archaic, or at least anachronistic. The Kanosei still cling to the original teachings of their founder, who was a rigid purist who chose not to embrace several more contemporary theories of magic, instead adhering to ancient rituals that were well-established when the Great Clans were founded. While this has caused many organizations to discount them, the focus and determination of most Kanosei shugenja is more than enough to compensate for any weaknesses their style may possess.

Taryu-jiai is an important element of Kanosei training. The sensei at the temple practice the avatar variation of the ritual exclusively, as the first Kanosei's teachings eschewed violence against others at all costs. Due to his numerous enemies, Kanosei was forced to duel frequently, and even took an opponent's life on two separate occasions because he was given no choice. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, Kanosei was adamant in his instruction that the loss of life was a failure on the part of anyone who claimed to be a priest of the kami.

The Order of Kanosei hosts frequent, if small taryu-jiai tournaments. These are intended primarily as a test of their students' abilities, and are arranged with the hope of attracting worthy competitors from other quarters to challenge them. This practice has proven highly beneficial for both the temple and the Iuchi and Horiuchi, and Kanosei students are widely recognized among shugenja families as highly competent taryu-jiai duelists, even if those who recognize them as such do so grudgingly.

Interestingly, despite their adherence to pacifism, there is a strong secondary training element in hand-to-hand combat in the order. This is an outgrowth of their close relationship with the monks of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, who attend to and maintain their temple. Kanosei's original teachings cite several examples of

how a strong body can help a strong mind and a strong will to gain greater focus, and the students of the order have embraced that notion with great enthusiasm. Although there is no evidence to corroborate the theory, some believe that the shugenja Koan that won the Tournament of Thunder centuries ago, and who was the first shugenja to ever win that illustrious tournament, was a student of the Kanosei style. His considerable martial abilities seem to bear that theory out.

Imperial, Minor Clan, and Ronin Sensei

SEPPUN KATSURA, SENSEI OF THE SEPPUN MAGISTRATES

Air: 3 Reflexes: 4	Earth: 4	Fire: 4	Water: 3 Perception: 6	Void: 5
Honor: 4.1		Status: 4.6		Glory: 5.1

SCHOOL/RANK: Seppun Guardsman 4/Seppun Magistrate 1/Toturi Bushi 1

ADVANTAGES: Allies (numerous), Clear Thinker, Social Position (Imperial Magistrate), Wealthy

DISADVANTAGES: Idealistic, Obligation (Seppun Dojo, 2 points)

KATA: Standing on the Heavens, Striking as Earth, Striking as Void, Victory of the Wind

SKILLS: Athletics 2, Battle (Battle Lore) 3, Calligraphy 3, Courtier 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 4, Horsemanship 3, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation 6, Instruction (Investigation, Seppun Magistrates) 6, Kenjutsu (Katana) 3, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Bushido 3, Lore: Imperial Families 5, Meditation 2, Spears 2, War Fans 4

Seppun Katsura is a man of contradictions. He admires the service the Great Clans have performed in the Emperor's name over the past 1,000 years, and yet he resents them for how their intrigues and struggles have marginalized the Imperial Families. He genuinely believes that the Imperial Families are the most favored of the Emperor's servants, and yet he is disgusted by how many of them are content to permit the Great Clans to bear the burden of service to the Emerald Throne while they remain sedentary, indulging in excess and luxury. It is an indignity he does not intend to bear without objection.

Katsura was born in the peaceful period that followed the War of Spirits. As an Imperial serving a thriving Toturi Dynasty, he was afforded virtually limitless options for his training. Like most of his Family, he chose to join the Miharu, the guardsmen who protect the Emperor and his personal holdings. He excelled at his task, but felt as though he was meant for something greater. His opportunity came in his fourth year of service in the Imperial City, when a crime was committed near one of the Emperor's holdings and a Kitsuki magistrate was brought in to investigate the matter. The Kitsuki was capable and gifted, but Katsura noticed several flaws in his investigation and pointed them out. Impressed, the Kitsuki offered Katsura the chance to study with his family in the Dragon Lands, but the guardsman declined. The next day, when he reported to his post, he discovered that another Miharu had been assigned in his place. His replacement simply handed him a scroll, which contained orders for Katsura to report to the dojo of the Seppun magistrates.

Katsura flourished in his studies. He consumed his masters' every lesson and stayed well after the other students had left, asking question after question. His instructors first found him engaging, then annoying, and finally brilliant. He was awarded a top position with the Emerald Magistrates immediately upon graduating from the dojo, and worked under the Emerald Champion for years, always attempting to restore what he considered the lost glory of the Imperial Families in the process.

After the destruction of Otosan Uchi, many prominent Seppun sensei were dead or retired in shame. Katsura was called upon to serve as the new sensei of the magistrate dojo, and he agreed with one condition: that for six months each year he would train new magistrates, but for the rest of the year he would continue serving as an active magistrate himself. There was initial resistance to the idea, as many doubted that Katsura could complete his students' training in six months. Time in the Toshi Ranbo dojo has proven, however, that Katsura can accomplish with six months and willing students what other sensei cannot achieve in years.

TONBO EUIKO, SENSEI OF STILL WATER TEMPLE

Air: 3	Earth: 2 Willpower: 4	Fire: 3 Intelligence: 5	Water: 4	Void: 5
Honor: 3.3	Status: 3.6	Glory: 4.2		

SCHOOL/RANK: Tonbo Shugenja 4/Minor Clan Defender (Shugenja) 1

ADVANTAGES: Great Potential (Divination), Inner Gift (Lesser Prophecy)

DISADVANTAGES: Soft-Hearted, Wrath of the Kami (Fire)

Spells: Banish, Commune, Importune, Sense, Summon; Benevolent Protection of Shinsei, Benten's Touch, By the Light of Lady Moon, Call Upon the Wind, Courage of the Seven Thunders, Earth's Protection, Echoes of a Breeze, Elemental Ward, Extinguish, Fires from the Forge, Forgotten Murmurs, Grasp of Earth, Ignite, Nature's Touch, Quiescence of Air, Shatter, Strength of the Crow, Symbol of Air, Wisdom of the Kami.

In addition to the above listed spells, Euiko has almost unlimited access to common Water spells. She may be considered to have all Water spells in the *Legend of the Five Rings Third Edition* core rulebook, and has several unique Water spells that duplicate Void spell effects.

SKILLS: Calligraphy 3, Courtier 2, Divination 7, Etiquette 4, Horsemanship 2, Instruction (Divination, Tonbo Shugenja School) 6, Medicine 4, Meditation (Zanji) 5, Spears 2, Spellcraft 5, Tea Ceremony 3, Theology (Fortunes, Shintao) 6

SPECIAL: Euiko's Rank 1 Technique from the Minor Clan Defender School allows her to roll additional dice equal to her Glory on all Divination rolls, and to add her Glory to the result of all spellcasting rolls made using Water.

Despite her relatively young age, Tonbo Euiko is the most celebrated sensei in the tiny Dragonfly Clan's history, rivaling even those great heroes who created their Clan centuries ago. This reputation is not a function of her bond with the kami, although Euiko is among the Empire's foremost practitioners of divination magic. No, her tremendously high standing among her people comes from the simple fact that the Dragonfly Clan owes its continued existence largely to her machinations.

Euiko was born in the year 1131, a dire year for the Dragonfly's closest allies among the Great Clans. The Naga army that besieged the Dragon Lands swarmed through the Dragonfly province. The Naga caused no harm, but the experience was nevertheless an extremely disturbing one for the Dragonfly of that period. Only a few short months later, the Agasha Family defected from the Dragon to join the Phoenix Clan, an act that created a long-standing rift between the two former allies and placed the Dragonfly in the uncomfortable position of having to deal with both. It was a tense period, but Euiko's family rejoiced at her birth and hoped for a return to normalcy for the sake of their new daughter.

Even as a child, Euiko demonstrated a gift for prophecy and divination. Although her talent could not compare to those of the likes of Agasha Hamanari, her abilities were still recognized by the Dragonfly and their allies, and she was chosen as the special student of the Clan's finest sensei. She was awarded a position as a lesser sensei within the Still Water Temple less than five years after her gempukku, an offer that was unprecedented among the Dragonfly. Euiko soon discovered a love of teaching that rivaled her unbridled lust for new knowledge. She constantly pushed the borders of what was known and understood about how the kami could impart knowledge of future events. It was in this manner that she discovered a terrible fate that was to befall the Dragonfly.

The kami revealed to Euiko a bloody future in which the Lion would descend upon the Dragonfly and finally avenge the perceived insult they felt for the circumstances of the Minor Clan's creation. Euiko shared this vision with her sensei, who in turn took her before the Clan Daimyo. Together, they came to the realization that while the events in Euiko's vision might not come to pass, the probability that they would was considerable. For this reason, the Daimyo sent many Dragonfly samurai throughout the Empire on various errands of little or no importance, scattering the parts so that they whole might avoid destruction. It was in this manner that the Dragonfly avoided the dire fate faced by their fellow Minor Clan, the Badger; when the Lion finally came for the Dragonfly, only half their number were located within their home province. Euiko was among those sent away. Her sensei and Daimyo were not.

Despite Euiko's premonition, the Dragonfly were very nearly destroyed by the Lion's assault. Those who were scattered to the four winds had difficulty returning due to the burgeoning conflict between the dead Emperor's four heirs, and the Lion were less than receptive to the Dragonfly reconstituting along their northern border. It took more than a year, and the intervention of the Emperor's son Sezar, before the Dragonfly were truly able to recover their losses. Even the hostile Lion dared not attack the Dragonfly lands with the threat of retaliation from Toturi Sezar, the most powerful shugenja in the Empire's history.

Since that time, the Dragonfly have rebuilt. The Daimyo's son, Tonbo Dayu, has taken his place at the head of the Clan, and his ongoing relationship with Sezar has ensured that no one threatens the Clan. Euiko is now the head sensei of the Still Water Temple, and has become well known among many Great Clan shugenja families throughout the Empire.

CHIANG-TSU, RONIN PHILOSOPHER AND SENSEI

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 5
Willpower: 6		Perception: 5		
Honor: 3.4		Status: N/A		Glory: 3.7

SCHOOL/RANK: Ronin Warrior 5/Ronin Duelist 1/Ronin Yojimbo 1

ADVANTAGES: Absolute Direction, Allies (too numerous to mention), Ambidextrous, Hotei's Blessing, Leadership, Sage

DISADVANTAGES: Ascetic, Small

KATA: Striking as Earth, Striking as Fire, Striking as Void, Striking as Water, Striking as Wind

SKILLS: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Chain Weapons 4, Courtier 2, Defense 6, Etiquette 4, Hunting 4, Iaijutsu 6, Instruction (Iaijutsu, Kenjutsu, Ronin Warrior School) 7, Jujitsu 6, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Knives 3, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Philosophy 5, Lore: Ronin Organizations 4, Peasant Weapons 5, Spears 2, Staves 6, Stealth 4, Theology (Shintao) 4, War Fans 3

There are many throughout the Empire that have heard of Chiang-Tsu, but no one truly knows the man. A cloak of stories so outlandish they could rightly be called myths surrounds the man and his accomplishments, but it is rare to find two stories that are the same. Many have sought to ask the little man about his history, but he never answers with anything more definitive than a smile. The truth of the matter is that he does not discuss his past because, quite frankly, there is very little to discuss.

Chiang-Tsu was born among the peasantry of a small village in an unaligned region of the Empire many decades ago. Life as a child and youth was difficult, and before he reached the age of twenty, Chiang-Tsu left his family and village behind to join the Brotherhood of Shinsei. The Brotherhood's means of discouraging frivolous adherents, however, did not appeal to Chiang-Tsu, despite his otherwise appropriate mindset. After less than five years, he abandoned his oaths and set out into the Empire to discover the world's truths.

Now, a little more than half a century later, Chiang-Tsu is one of the most well-known figures in current ronin mythology. He is revered as a hero in many cities with a high ronin population, such as Nanashi Mura, the City of the Rich Frog, and Shutai. He has passed on his knowledge to countless young ronin in need of guidance, and even once offered his counsel to Toturi Tsudao, who was at that time the commander of the First Imperial Legion. In the minds of many, he is the greatest ronin mind since the time of Sun Tao or even Shinsei. Chiang-Tsu makes no such claims, and has very reasonable expectations of himself and his students. He is a gifted warrior and a brilliant teacher, but to his mind, he is a simple philosopher still seeking the world's truths after nearly 50 years of searching. One day, he hopes, he will find what he seeks and finally be able to quiet the questions that constantly swirl in his mind.

New Mechanics: Imperial

New Advantage: Guest of the Dojo [Granted] (2 points, Imperial only)

Under normal circumstances, the students of Great Clan dojo are violently protective of their Techniques. These are, after all, the same secrets their ancestors created, practiced, perfected, and protected for generations, and even the most dishonorable individual fears the rejection of their ancestors. As an Imperial, however, you are welcome in the dojo of the Great Clans. When you purchase this Advantage, select one Great Clan bushi School. For the purposes of learning Kata, your ranks in your primary bushi School count as Ranks in the selected Great Clan bushi School, and you may learn those Kata at normal cost.

Advanced School: Student of the Ruby Dojo (Bushi)

Students of the Ruby Dojo are among the finest samurai from the Emerald Magistrates and the Imperial Legions. Many Imperials are among their number, although those who achieve the distinction through a political appointment quickly find themselves out of place in such a merit-based institution. Although it is possible for exceptionally gifted and politically powerful individuals to train in the Ruby Dojo without any affiliation with the Emerald Magistrates, such occurrences are rare indeed, and typically only take place via a personal invitation from either the Emerald Champion or the Ruby Champion.

Requirements:

Rings/Traits: Fire 4, Perception 4, Reflexes 4

Skills: Defense 4, Investigation 5, Jujitsu 3, any one Weapon Skill at 5

Other: Social Advantage (Imperial Magistrate)

Techniques

RANK 1: THE JUST HEART CANNOT FAIL

Students of the Ruby Dojo learn first and foremost that their honor is the greatest tool at their disposal. So long as they are true to their own sense of honor and duty, they cannot lose their way. You may spend a Void Point on any roll to substitute your Honor Rank in the place of any Trait or Skill. You may only substitute your Honor Rank for 1 characteristic per roll. No Honor loss is incurred because of this roll.

RANK 2: THE JUST HEART CANNOT FAIL

The second lesson of the Ruby Dojo is that failure exists only in the mind. Most who fail initially make no attempt to rectify their circumstance, and to the Ruby Champion this is the *only true* failure. Any time that you fail a roll involving one of your School

Skills, you may immediately make a Test of Honor against the same TN to succeed at the task. This may be done even if the roll would not incur an Honor loss. No Honor loss is incurred because of this roll.

RANK 3: GIFT OF THE RUBY

Versatility is the greatest asset of any Imperial Magistrate, and it is that quality that the Ruby Champion attempts to foster in all his students. Those who are successful become gifted magistrates. You gain an additional action per round. This action may be used to make an attack, if you wish, or to make any other Simple or Complex Action.

New Path: Otomo Orator (Courtier)

All Otomo are trained from birth in the arts of manipulation and provocation, but few achieve the masterful technique taught at the dojo of the Otomo Orators. These individuals are gifted in the delivery of innocuous speeches that nevertheless provoke strong, measured reactions in others. The Orators consider debate the greatest form of dueling, and delight in manipulating opponents into discourses for which they are ill-prepared. When this tactic succeeds, as it often does, the Otomo delivery crushing oratory defeats and further their Family's agenda in court. Some Miya are trained in the techniques as well, but prefer to use it for delivering their herald's messages in a more evocative manner, and frequently avoid fomenting confrontation whenever possible.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Otomo Courtier 1 or Miya Herald 1

Requirements: Must be a member of an Imperial Family; Storytelling (Oratory) 3

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same School at Rank 2

Technique: Honeyed Promises

The Otomo have mastered the fine art of telling others what they wish to hear, and in resisting the persuasive powers of others. In any Contested Social Skill Roll that requires Awareness, whether yours or your opponents, you gain a Free Raise. You may also add your Air Ring to the total of all Awareness-based rolls.

New Path: Seppun Duelist (Bushi)

The Empire widely recognizes the Kakita and the Mirumoto as the greatest duelists in history. Many Seppun resent this fact, and believe that their lack of recognition is merely because they do not seek out personal glory like the other Families. Truthfully, so few Seppun participate in duels that their reputation depends heavily upon their status as Imperials rather than their training. Even when they are victorious, many believe that their opponents chose to lose rather than risk the stigma associated with shaming a member of an Imperial Family. Those who know more about dueling recognize that the Seppun have powerful techniques all their own that may well be a match for other prominent dueling Families.

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Seppun Bushi 2

Path of Egress: Seppun Bushi 3

Technique: A Steady Hand

The Seppun duelists are trained to focus on their opponent to the exclusion of all others. They fight not for themselves, but for the honor of the Imperial Families, and success is the only thing that matters. You gain an additional number of Void Points per day equal to your Status. These may be used to augment rolls, gain additional opportunities to Focus, or *inflict damage* on an opponent after the mutual strike. Outside of a duel, these Void Points may only be used to augment damage rolls made when wielding a katana, as per that weapon's rules

New Path:

Seppun Duelist (Shugenja)

Just as the bushi of the Seppun Family embrace their role as duelists defending the Emperor's honor, so too do the Hidden Guard look upon their role as the Emperor's private shugenja as a sacred duty. Few chambers in the Imperial Palace have not been prepared by the Hidden Guard as potential locations for a taryu-jiai duel. These preparations are not immediately obvious, and any shugenja that would dare initiate violence within the Palace walls would be greatly surprised to find themselves drawn by the powerful Seppun enchantments into a taryu-jiai duel that they cannot refuse. Those few who have been the victim of such preparations rarely survive to disclose their discovery.

Technique Rank: 3

Path of Entry: Seppun Shugenja 2

Path of Egress: Seppun Shugenja 3

Technique: A Focused Mind

The Hidden Guard embrace all the Empire's traditions, including the ancient practice of taryu-jiai. Imperial shugenja duelists defend not only the honor of the Imperial Families, as do their bushi brethren, but they also serve to defend the Emperor's body and spirit as well. You may make a Contested Void Roll with an opponent to initiate a taryu-jiai duel without the need for a ritually prepared circle. If successful, the duel is initiated regardless of your opponent's consent. You also gain as bonuses a number of additional rolled dice equal to your Status (+1k0 for each full Status Rank) that you may distribute as you wish during a taryu-jiai duel. Once one of these bonus dice has been used during the duel, it is lost until the next time a duel is initiated.

New Kata: In Hantei's Honor

PREPARATION TIME: 30 minutes

DURATION: 120 minutes

Despite the demise of the Hantei Dynasty, the name of this Kata has never been changed. Doing so, the Seppun reason, would be grossly disrespectful to the many Emperors their ancestors served, and they have no wish to offend. This Kata focuses the mind on the sacred duty at hand, and allows a guardsman to mentally overcome his injuries and press on toward the fulfillment of his destiny, regardless of what damage he has suffered.

RANK: Seppun Bushi 1, Toturi Bushi 1

COST: 2

SPECIAL: None

EFFECT: Your Wound Penalties are reduced by an amount equal to your Honor Rank.

VOID: None

New Kata:

Chrysanthemum Petals in Rain

PREPARATION TIME: 60 minutes

DURATION: 180 minutes

This Kata is an outgrowth of Seppun Guardsman training, which emphasizes that one man must be able to eliminate multiple opponents if necessary to defend the Emperor. It teaches unique division of focus and the speed needed to strike more than one target in rapid succession.

RANK: Seppun Bushi 3, Toturi Bushi 3

COST: 6

SPECIAL: May only be performed with a katana.

EFFECT: After making an attack roll while this Kata is active, you may divide your total between 2 or more targets within range. This counts as a single attack for the round. You cannot spend Void Points on damage rolls while this Kata is active.

VOID: None

New Mechanics: Minor Clans

New Path: Minor Clan Explorer

Some Minor Clans do not feel bound by the same rigid responsibilities as other samurai families. Some have their meager lands well tended by loyal peasants and have a bit more freedom to travel than other Minor Clans. In particular, the Hare, Monkey, and Fox clans are well known for their tendency to travel and experience the Empire before accepting the duties that will dominate their adult life. In fact, Clan leaders often encourage this type of behavior among their younger samurai, well aware that their youthful experiences often help forge a stronger steel in their souls, and make them even more effective vassals during their mature years.



Technique Rank: 2 (3 for shugenja)

Path of Entry: Usagi Bushi 1, Toku Bushi 1, or Kitsune Shugenja 2

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same School at 1 Rank higher

Technique: A Soul of Nature

You enjoy nothing more than pitting yourself against the forces of nature, striving to prove yourself the equal of this realm you call your home. You gain a Free Raise on all Athletics, Defense, and Hunting rolls. You may have one additional Emphasis above the normal allowed amount for each of these Skills.

New Path: Kasuga Deceiver

Nothing in life comes easily to the Kasuga Family. The odds are stacked against them in virtually every endeavor they undertake, but they always relish their status as underdogs. Risk is their addiction, and the pall of dishonor that hangs over them is meaningless when compared to the thrill they achieve when overcoming an opponent. Despite their love of risk and flaunting tradition, however, the Kasuga are not so foolish as to overlook opportunities to gain an advantage. Regardless of their training, prominent Kasuga are often schooled in the art of exploitation and underhanded tactics, and use these secrets to terrible effect against their opponents.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Kasuga Bushi 1

Requirements: Deceit (Lying) 5, Honor Rank of 2 or lower

Path of Egress: Kasuga Bushi 2

Technique: Dishonor's Harvest

The Kasuga are an odd Family, and one that embraces dishonorable practices when it benefits them to do so. The Deceivers are a small sect, chosen from the finest and least scrupulous members of the Kasuga Bushi School. Their purpose is to champion the Family's interests no matter the cost to their personal honor. You gain a Free Raise on all Deceit Rolls. Additionally, you do not need to spend Raises to use the Feint Maneuver, and using the Disarm Maneuver requires only 2 Raises instead of the normal 3.

New Path: Oriole Craftsman

The Tsi Family had a reputation as master smiths long before the Oriole Clan was created, and now that they have the resources they have been lacking for centuries, they have finally begun to expand their techniques to include more than simple weapons and armor. Such things remain their overwhelming focus, of course, but more general trends toward artisanship have begun to develop within the family.

Technique Rank: 2/3

Path of Entry: Tsi Smith 1 or any Ronin School at Rank 2

Path of Egress: Re-enter an appropriate School at 1 Rank higher

Technique: Tools of the Fortunes

Since their reformation as the Oriole Clan, the Tsi have only increased their skill at craftsmanship, and have branched out into many new areas in order to increase the fortunes of their nascent Clan. When crafting items (according to the rules found in the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition* core rulebook, p. 179) the Raises you must make to achieve either increased quality or quantity are reduced by 1, to a minimum of 1 Raise for any given effect.

New Path:

Minor Clan Sumai Master (Bushi)

The Badger and Ox Clans relish the joy of defeating an opponent with one's bare hands. Victory without relying on a weapon is the greatest test of an individual's merit, in their eyes. They eschew political power and focus instead on what they can feel and touch with their bare hands. Toward that end, their primary bushi dojo have a rigorous hand-to-hand regimen that are home to some of the most celebrated wrestling sensei in the entire Empire, rivaling even those of the Crab Clan.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Ichiro Bushi 2 or Morito Bushi 2

Requirements: Strength 3, Jujitsu 4

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same School at 1 Rank higher

Technique: Channel the Mountain

Few samurai in the Empire tolerate the touch of another without permission. Yet the Ichiro and Morito exalt in defeating an opponent with little more than one's bare hands. To such men, displays of physical dominance are the ultimate expression of superiority over an opponent. When making an Agility/Jujitsu Roll to initiate a grapple, every Raise you make to strengthen your grapple gives you 2 Free Raises on the subsequent Contested Raw Strength Roll, rather than the usual 1.

New Path: Suzume Duelist (Bushi)

Though few recognize the quiet, scholarly Suzume as skilled duelists, the truth is that they have lost very little of their skill since the family was split from the Crane Clan centuries ago. Indeed, their pious and meditative nature has given them new insights into the nature of iaijutsu, and has made them all the deadlier for it. That no one recognizes their true abilities only grants them a further advantage on the dueling ground.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Suzume Bushi 1 or Suzume Storyteller 1

Requirements: Iaijutsu 3, Meditation 3

Path of Egress: Suzume Bushi 1 or 2 (whichever is appropriate)

Technique: Soul of Certainty

Suzume duelists find their center through meditation and focus. They seek not personal glory, but the harmony of spirit that settles over them as they enter the dueling stance. For them, victory has nothing to do with an opponent's defeat, but rather the achieve-

ment of victory within oneself. When participating in an iaijutsu duel, you may spend a Void Point to substitute your Meditation Skill for your Iaijutsu Skill on any 1 roll. You add your Meditation Skill to the total of all Focus rolls made during a duel.

New Path: **Taryu-Jiai Duelist (Shugenja)**

Minor Clans do not historically have a reputation for gifted shugenja. There have been a handful of exceptional individuals throughout history that have gained prominence, but for the most part, they are dismissed by the shugenja families of Great Clans. To some, this is an offense that cannot stand. Toward that end, they take every possible opportunity to demonstrate their abilities, though without making enemies of an opponent that could crush them without effort. Taryu-jiai is the perfect opportunity to do exactly that, and many Minor Clan shugenja train throughout the year for the rare chance to defeat a Great Clan shugenja in a formal duel.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Any Minor Clan Shugenja School at Rank 1

Requirements: Spellcraft 3, Theology 3

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same School at Rank 2

Technique: **The Blessings of Tengoku**

The Minor Clan shugenja Families enjoy the opportunity to prove their abilities in formal dueling situations, an opportunity that is rarely afforded otherwise. When assessing an opponent prior to a taryu-jiai duel, you gain a bonus to your roll equal to 5 + your Insight Rank. Additionally, you may select any 1 Ring when the duel begins. For the purposes of the duel, that Ring is considered to be 1 Rank higher.

New Kata: The Crushing Earth

PREPARATION TIME: 20 minutes

DURATION: 60 minutes

The Ichiro family prizes physical power above all else. Those who participate in the rigorous physical conditioning their training sessions include learn the means to focus their mind to ignore the punishing effects of combat, focusing instead on nothing less than the complete destruction of their enemies.

RANK: Ichiro Bushi 2

COST: 4

SPECIAL: Must have Strength 3 or greater

EFFECT: You gain a +2k0 damage bonus to all Unarmed Attacks. You suffer a -1k0 penalty to all Initiative Rolls, and your TN to Be Hit is reduced by 5.

VOID: None

New Kata: Reichin's Stance

PREPARATION TIME: 40 minutes

DURATION: 150 minutes

The Usagi Family's dojo includes extensive calisthenics training designed to increase the speed, dexterity, and overall athleticism of those who train there.

RANK: Usagi Bushi 1

COST: 2

SPECIAL: None

EFFECT: You may substitute your Athletics Skill for your Jiujitsu Skill when making unarmed attacks.

VOID: None

New Kata: One Soul's Triumph

PREPARATION TIME: 30 minutes

DURATION: 60 minutes

Perseverance and determination are the keystones of the Toku Family philosophy, and nowhere is this as evident as in their fighting style. Toku bushi have been known to achieve success in the face of certain failure, against odds that any convince any sane man to withdraw and fight again another day.

RANK: Toku Bushi 1

COST: 3

SPECIAL: None

EFFECT: When spending a Void Point to negate Wound Penalties, the effect lasts for a round rather than a single roll.

VOID: None

New Kata: Ride with the Thunder

PREPARATION TIME: 30 minutes

DURATION: 120 minutes

Like their Unicorn progenitors, the Ox believe in the overwhelming power of cavalry to decimate an opponent and leave them shattered, broken, and utterly unprepared for the arrival of infantry. In particular, the Morito Family specializes in devastating strikes as they ride past an opponent, never stopping in their relentless onslaught.

RANK: Morito Bushi 1

COST: 4

SPECIAL: Must be used with a polearm, no-dachi, or similarly sized weapon

EFFECT: When attacking from horseback, you may voluntarily reduce your attack roll by any amount. The total of your damage roll is increased by the same amount. You must declare the amount by which you are reducing your attack roll prior to making the roll.

VOID: None

New Spell: Visions of the Future (Dragonfly Clan)

ELEMENT: Water

MASTERY: 3

DURATION: 1 minute

AREA OF EFFECT: Self

RANGE: Self



Although it is less dependable than the natural gift of foresight, nor as accurate as the results achieved through Void magic, some among the Dragonfly Clan possess the ability to perceive things that have not yet come to pass through communion with Water. These visions are generally vague and easily influenced, but they are still helpful to those that know how to affect them. When you cast this spell, you must gaze into a pool of still water. While you do so, you will see portents of things yet to come. Impending violence will appear as hazy images of battle or death. Danger frequently appears as menacing figures lurking in the shadows. Love appears as a beautiful woman. Other omens vary, but general impressions of the future are possible.

New Spell: **Soul of the Kitsune (Fox Clan)**

ELEMENT: Earth
MASTERY: 2
DURATION: 1 hour
AREA OF EFFECT: Self
RANGE: Self

The Kitsune Family has a, strange, otherworldly bond with the spirits that dwell within the mysterious Kitsune Mori. The closest bond, of course, is with the kitsune, the fox spirits whose name the Family took as their own centuries ago. By calling on the power of the kitsune, which truly belongs to Chikushudo and not

the mortal realm, a Kitsune shugenja can cast off the form of man and adopt that of a fox. For the spell's duration, you physically transform into a fox. Your Rings and Traits mix with the fox's, keeping the higher of the two. The statistics for a fox can be found in the Legend of the *Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition* core rulebook, p. 279.

New Mechanics: Ronin

Gambling Rules

Gambling is a popular form of entertainment in Rokugan. For some, it allows them a taste of the risk that they may never experience on the battlefield, or perhaps that they are afraid to face in the first place. For others, the risk of a tiny handful of coins and a feverish prayer to Daikoku, the Fortune of Wealth, is the only opportunity they will ever have to better their lot. Still others simply find enjoyment in the thrill of taking something that is theirs by right and laying it on the line. Regardless of 'why', countless thousands of men and women visit gambling houses all across the Empire, both legal and illicit.

Gambling is a particularly popular pursuit among ronin. When such men have funds available, they tend to spend them with complete disregard for their long-term benefit, throwing away much of their hard-earned reward on sake, gambling, and the company of disreputable geisha. Because of this, the majority of gambling houses across the Empire fall under the province of groups or individuals that deliberately target ronin and other weak-willed members of the samurai caste. Some ronin, such as those maintaining gambling houses in the village of Nanashi Mura, resent this practice, seeing it as little more than naked predation. These men, instead, sponsor gambling as a diversion, and attempt to lessen its detrimental effects on others.

Rules for gambling can be as simple as a Contested Roll using the appropriate Games Skill. However, more advanced rules that actually simulate the rules of the game being played can create a more immersive experience, which is always a positive element for any campaign. Below are rules for some of Rokugan's most common games of chance.

Fortunes & Winds

Fortunes & Winds is the most popular and common dice game in Rokugan, and is played daily in hundreds or thousands of gambling houses across the land. It is played with five six-sided dice, four of one color and a fifth of a different color. The four matching dice are known as the Air, Earth, Fire, and Water dice. The fifth die is called the Moon die. Each die has a number of different faces so that they can create a variety of combinations when the lot are cast. The faces are as follows:

- Air:** Air, Air, Air (1-3), South, South (4-5), Bird (6)
- Earth:** Earth, Earth, Earth (1-3), North, North (4-5), Rice (6)
- Fire:** Fire, Fire, Fire (1-3), West, West (4-5), Tree (6)
- Water:** Water, Water, Water (1-3), East, East (4-5), Fish (6)
- Moon:** Void, Void (1-2), Fortunes, Fortunes (3-4), Sun (5), Moon (6)

Those playing Fortunes & Winds place their bets with a Banker, who oversees the game and the rolls made. Wins are paid out by the Banker, and losses are collected by the Banker. In less formal settings, such as impromptu games between acquaintances, the player with the largest pile of winnings plays the role of Banker. When a player's turn comes up in the game, he places a bet on his roll, with an equal amount in a second bet that is "for Lady Moon." Other players who are awaiting their turn may place bets as if they were the shooter, or they may place side bets. Side bets are addressed below. The goal of Fortunes & Winds is for the shooter to achieve one of the following combinations within three throws of the dice:

- Fortunes & Winds:** North, East, West, South, Fortunes. Pays 4 to 1.
- The Lady's Breath:** North, East, West, South, Lord Sun. Pays 4 to 1.
- Empty Winds:** North, East, West, South, Void. Pays 2 to 1.
- Shinsei's Blessing:** Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Void. Pays 2 to 1.
- The Lady's Tears:** Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Lord Sun. Pays 2 to 1.
- Seven Thunders:** Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Fortunes. Pays 1 to 1.

After all bets are placed, the shooter makes three separate rolls. If he achieves one of the above combinations on his first roll, he wins double the listed amount. If not, he may set aside up to three dice and roll the rest up to twice more. The Moon die must be rolled every time. If the shooter fails to achieve one of the results above after three rolls, he forfeits his bet, retakes his wager for Lady Moon, and passes the dice to the player on his left. If at any point a player's Moon Die rolls Lady Moon, he loses all his bets and his turn ends immediately.

Daikoku's Belly – This side bet is popular, and is a wager that the current shooter will roll a winning combination. This is a 3 to 2 bet. A player may also wager that the current shooter will lose, which is a 2 to 3 bet. Betting that a shooter will lose, however, is considered bad luck and can draw the attention of the Fortune Daikoku.

Lord Sun's Tea – This side bet hinges on whether or not a given shooter will make three rolls during his turn. It is an even odds bet, with an opposite number bet called Hungry Moon. Hungry Moon is even odds, and is a wager that the shooter will only roll once or twice. If the shooter rolls Fortunes & Winds while another player has a Hungry Moon bet in place, that side bet is cancelled.

Oichu-Kabu

This is one of the more popular card games in Rokugan, most of which were adopted from gaijin games introduced during the period prior to the Battle at White Stag. After that confrontation, foreign playing cards were banned but new types of card decks were created to take their place. The most common of these are the kabufuda deck, which uses numeric suits, and the hanafuda deck, which uses flower suits. Both decks are made up of small, stiff cards and contain either 40 cards (kabufuda) or up to 75 cards (hanafuda). Oichu-kabu can use either deck of cards, although kabufuda games are by far the most common.

Oichu-kabu is played with numeric suits. The kabufuda decks consist of four suits of cards, each identified by a prefix number: 1, 2, 3 or 4. Each card in a suit is also identified by a unique series number, so that, say, the cards in the "1" set would be numbered 1-1, 1-2, 1-3 and so on through 1-10. A common kabufuda variation numbers the cards 10-19 instead of 1-10. Each player is dealt 1 card at the start of a hand, and the players take turns calling for more cards to be dealt to them until they choose to stop or must stop under the rules. The goal of the game is to accumulate cards with a total series number value of 9 without going over. Cards with double digits are assigned a value equal to the final digit in its number (a 10 is worth 0, 11 worth 1, etc.). Every player must wager a predetermined amount in order to play a hand, and the winner of the hand takes the entire pot. In case of ties, the pot is evenly split between the winners.

The hanafuda deck uses flowers to identify suits instead of numbers, and consists of five suits of fifteen cards each, numbered 1-15. The rules are the same as in the kabufuda version of the game, but the deck size and different numbering scheme obviously changes the calculus of the game by increasing the number of low-value cards. Serious oichi-kabu players tend to look down their noses at hanafuda, feeling that this characteristic reduces the tension and challenge of the game.

New School: Master of Games (Ronin Courtier)

The most prestigious and successful members of the Eyes of Nanashi, those who are secretly called the Voice of Nanashi by certain members of the organization, are colloquially known as the Masters of Games. These men and women are responsible for overseeing the social agenda that permeates Nanashi Mura and retaining the city's peaceful and prosperous atmosphere. They specialize in deception and redirection, and their duties include manipulating events in the village's gambling houses so that the patrons remain content, yet lose a sufficient amount of money to fund the village's ongoing activities.

This School is designated as a Ronin Courtier School. Although the following Techniques are specifically designed to represent the courtiers that serve the village of Nanashi Mura, there is no reason that they cannot be used to represent other ronin who have learned to survive on their own or with small groups of others.

Benefit: +1 Awareness

Honor: 2.5

Skills: Courtier, Defense, Etiquette, Games (any one) 2, Lore (any one), Storytelling

Outfit: Wakizashi, tanto, kimono and sandals, traveling pack, 2 bu

Techniques

RANK 1: TO MASTER THE GAME

Those who train with the Voice of Nanashi learn that odds and probability extends well beyond games of chance and into the realm of politics. By carefully observing and anticipating the actions of others, members of the Voice can gain keen insight into their opponents' intentions. Select any one Games Skill you possess. When making a Social Skill Roll, you add your Rank in this Skill to the total of all such rolls.

You also gain a bonus to all Courtier Skill Rolls equal to your Fire Ring.

RANK 2: WINDS & FORTUNES

Any true master of games knows how to assess the odds of success. A number of times per day equal to your School Rank, you may know the TN of any roll before you make it. When making Contested Rolls, you may first make a Contested Raw Awareness Roll; if successful, you may learn how many dice your opponent will be rolling and keeping before the roll takes place. You may not back out of the confrontation that occasioned the Contested Roll based on this knowledge, but you may take further action to affect your roll or your opponent's.

You also add gain a bonus to all Etiquette Skill Rolls equal to your Water Ring.

RANK 3: FORGE YOUR OWN FATE

The Voice of Nanashi believe that fortune is forged rather than found. You may spend a Void Point in order to immediately reroll any failed Social Skill Roll. There is no limit to the number of times you may do this apart from the number of Void Points that you have remaining.

You also gain a bonus to all Courtier Skill Rolls equal to twice your Fire Ring, replacing the benefit from Rank 1.

RANK 4: DUELING THE FORTUNES

Opportunity comes to those who are willing to take it. You gain an additional action per round. This action may not be used to make an attack, but it may be used to take any other legal available action. It may be an action of any type: Complex, Simple or Use Special Abilities.

You also add gain a bonus to all Etiquette Skill Rolls equal to your twice your Water Ring, replacing the benefit from Rank 2.

RANK 5: FORTUNE FAVORS THE BOLD

Fortune smiles upon those who are bold enough to seize opportunity when it presents itself. Once per round, you may spend all of your Void Points after failing a roll by up to 25 points. This roll is immediately converted to a success, with a number of Free Raises equal to your Void Ring.

You also gain a bonus to all Courtier Skill Rolls equal to 3 x your Fire Ring, replacing the benefit from Rank 3.

New Path:

Kanosei Duelist (Shugenja)

The Order of Kanosei Furudera relish the tradition of taryu-jiai as a means of demonstrating that simple is not weaker, and complexity is not an indicator of superiority. One man wielding the kami with determination and finesse can overcome virtually any foe, regardless of their advanced techniques and complicated ciphers.

Technique Rank: 4

Path of Entry: Kanosei Furudera Shugenja 3

Requirements: Spellcraft 5

Path of Egress: Kanosei Furudera Shugenja 4

Technique: Kanosei's Gift

The first Kanosei was a brilliant and gifted man who pioneered many basic elements of magic that are still in use by his order today. When you participate in a taryu-jiai duel, spell slots that you expend in order to gain additional abilities for your avatars count as 2 spell slots.

New Paths: The Eyes of Nanashi and the Nanashi Duelist

The Eyes of Nanashi regard dueling as a dangerous but necessary practice. They attempt to avoid it whenever possible, but realize that sometimes they no other recourse. Those who create problems within the village of Nanashi Mura must be dealt with in whatever manner is most appropriate, and in some situations a duel is the only legal recourse left to the Eyes. When that becomes necessary, the matter is resolved quickly and quietly, and with a concentrated effort to avoid any unnecessary involvement

by third parties. In this manner, the Eyes attempt to prevent any potential vengeance by parties associated with those they defeat in duels.

EYES OF NANASHI (BUSHI)

Technique Rank: 1

Path of Entry: None. This is an entry-level Path.

Benefit: +1 Agility

Skills: Athletics, Hunting, Investigation, Kenjutsu, Kyujutsu, Lore: Law, 1 Skill

Honor: 2.5

Outfit: Katana, wakizashi, tanto, kimono, traveling pack, 2 bu

Path of Egress: Any Ronin Bushi School at Rank 1

Technique: Righteous Fury

The Eyes of Nanashi are the defenders of Nanashi Mura, and consider their duties a sacred task performed in the Emperor's name. They would gladly die to fulfill their duties. You may gain a bonus equal to twice your Honor Rank to your TN to Be Hit and to your Defense Skill Rolls.

NANASHI DUELIST (BUSHI)

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Eyes of Nanashi 1/Any Ronin Bushi School 1

Requirements: Membership in the Eyes of Nanashi

Path of Egress: Re-enter the appropriate School at 1 Rank higher

Technique: To Serve and Defend

The Eyes of Nanashi defend the citizens of their home with passion and nobility. Any who would threaten their safety faces the full, unbridled fury of the Eye, and a righteous foe is indeed a deadly one. When you are engaged in an iaijutsu duel with an opponent whose Honor Rank is lower than yours, you gain a bonus to all rolls made to Focus and Strike equal to +1k0 for each Rank of difference between your Honor and his.

New Path: The Weavers (Ninja)

The Weavers are a group of ronin that willingly serve the Kolat. Each and every one has proven their loyalty and taken a vow never to be captured alive. Throughout their history, none has broken this vow, and the Kolat Masters seem to trust the Weavers, at least as much as they trust any of their disposable assets. The Weavers are assassins. They do not duel or skirmish with their opponents, but rather approach from concealment and steal their life away. While others would hardly consider such as "competition," the Weavers consider it the supreme test of skill and competence.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Any Ronin Bushi School at Rank 1

Requirements: Awareness 3, Acting 2, Poison 2, Stealth 3

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same School at Rank 2

Technique: Twist the Weave

The Weavers are an order of assassins trained to enact the Kolat's will, eliminating targets without risking exposure for the Ten Masters. For every successful Raise made on an Acting, Poison, or Stealth roll, you gain an additional Free Raise (that may not be used to increase the final result of your roll by 5) for that result.

New Kata: In the Weaver's Web

PREPARATION TIME: 60 minutes

DURATION: 180 minutes

There is no group in Rokugan so patient as the Kolat. For over a thousand years they have waited for the opportunity to impose their nefarious designs upon the Empire. There have been many successes, but setbacks as well. The second rise of the Gozoku was particularly troublesome for the Kolat, as the usurpers lacked any modicum of discretion or the proper philosophy. Because of the Gozoku, the Kolat have withdrawn many of their operations, well aware that the forces of order would eventually turn their eyes upon the shadows in search of their opponents. While the Kolat have retreated deeper into the shadows, however, their agents have not. Many ronin sects serve the Kolat, whether knowingly or in ignorance. The most prominent among them are the Weavers, and the resources the Weavers have at their disposal has allowed them to develop many unique abilities with which to punish their enemies.

RANK: Weavers 2

COST: 6

SPECIAL: None

EFFECT: When attacking an opponent who is unaware of your presence (and thus whose TN to Be Hit is reduced to 5 + Armor), you may spend a Void Point to gain an additional attack. This is cumulative with any other effects that grant you multiple attacks, including Techniques, Advantages, or Spells.

VOID: None

New Kata: Death in the Shinomen

PREPARATION TIME: 10 minutes

DURATION: 45 minutes

Throughout the Empire's history, no bandit group has plagued Rokugan more than the infamous Forest Killers. Peasants all across the Empire fear them, and whisper their name to frighten rebellious children. Dozens or perhaps even hundreds of magistrates have died attempting to bring them to justice without success, and even though there have been times when the group was believed destroyed, they have risen from the ashes every time, always more dangerous than the last. Countless men have served the ruthless masters of the Forest Killers over the decades, and in that time those men have developed unique and utterly merciless fighting styles unique to their number.

RANK: Any Ronin Bushi School at Rank 3

COST: 5

SPECIAL: None

EFFECT: When attacking an opponent alongside an ally that is actively involved in the skirmish, you gain a number of Free Raises on your attack roll equal to the total number of your allies (including yourself) attacking the same individual.

VOID: None

New Kata: Path of The Hidden Sword

PREPARATION TIME: 15 minutes

DURATION: 60 minutes

The Hidden Sword was a virtuous ronin band that patrolled the rural regions of southern Rokugan in the years following the War of Spirits. The group was formed by a man named Ryuta, who some believed was a ronin formerly of the Lion. Ryuta saw the damage the war inflicted on the innocent, and worked to prevent such cruelty in the future. He gathered together a group of skilled warriors, including his twin sons Etsushi and Uchito, as well as a young Kane-ka, and rode the regions surrounding the Shinomen Mori. Many last remnants of the

Steel Chrysanthemum's forces were eliminated, as were numerous bandit groups. In time, the massive Forest Killer band wiped out The Hidden Sword, leaving only a trio of survivors. The Hidden Sword Technique has not been passed down since that time, but one of the Kata Ryuta developed is more common among certain groups of honorable ronin.

RANK: Any Ronin Bushi School at Rank 1

COST: 2

SPECIAL: None

EFFECT: When fighting alongside any ally that is actively involved in a skirmish with you, you gain a bonus to your Initiative and TN to Be Hit equal to the total number of allies fighting alongside you, including yourself.

VOID: None



CHAPTER TWELVE:

DUELING:

NON-HUMAN RACES



Philosophy

Of the various intelligent, non-human races that have inhabited Rokugan, only the kenku, the nezumi and the naga have had any substantial enduring impact on the art of the duel. To be sure, there have been other races that have built great civilizations and sophisticated societies, and therefore may have had dueling and competitive customs that rival the status of iaijutsu in Rokugan. But the trolls, the ningyo, the zokujin and their peers from the pre-history of Rokugan have fallen long and hard from their ancient glory, their former ways forgotten even by their own degraded descendants. The mists of time obscure them completely, and their past has no relevance to present-day Rokugan. Of the kitsu, it may be said that they were an avowedly pacifistic race and very probably had no honored traditions of ritual confrontation comparable to iaijutsu or taryu-jiai, or even game playing — and in any event, whatever enduring influence the kitsu have on Rokugan in this day and age plays out through their descendants, the Kitsu Family of the Lion Clan.

Even so, there are other races and creatures worthy of at least brief comment. Free ogres — not the more common, Tainted ogres who labor under Fu Leng's yoke — have recovered memories of a ritual wrestling form that their distant ancestors used to resolve disputes. And it should also be noted that various spirit creatures who commonly take on human form have the ability to learn human School Techniques, some of which may be used for dueling or personal contests.

Kenku

The raven-men known as the kenku are a race as ancient as they are enigmatic to the Rokugani. It is known (or at least widely accepted as fact) that they once lorded over the world in its youth, in the days even before the rise of the naga, along with the trolls, the ningyo, the kitsu and the zokujin. And yet it seems they have never had anything resembling a great civilization, instead living mostly solitary lives in mountain caves and aeries. Today, only a

very few Rokugani can claim to have ever had any contact with a kenku, as not only do they keep to themselves and live in out of the way places, but by the best estimates of Isawa scholars who bother to study them, no more than a thousand kenku live within the borders of the Empire.

It is known, however, that kenku are also master swordsmen — so gifted that even a kenku of modest skill is more than a match for a highly trained Rokugani bushi. The source of their affinity for the sword is not entirely understood, but it stems in part from their innate connection with the elemental power of Air, a source from which they can draw both speed and power of movement. Certainly, if the kenku have any more secrets than this, they have not revealed them to humans.

Kenku are masters of kenjutsu, but that is not to say that they neglect the practice of iaijutsu. Because they have never had a complex social structure, they have no known tradition of dueling amongst themselves; they simply don't spend enough time around each other to build up that kind of enmity, or to develop notions of relative personal honor that can come with being part of a society. So it is hard to say exactly where they picked up knowledge of this particularly Rokugani art of the duel. Very likely, they were introduced to it by their first human students, some of whom were no doubt eager to know how they could apply their lessons to dueling.

But if they find it hard to grasp the social purpose of dueling, the kenku find it much easier to approach iaijutsu as an art form, a pure expression of swordsmanship that they can understand as part of their overall mastery of kenjutsu. Down through the ages, therefore, they have learned enough about iaijutsu from humans to refine it on their own, processing its demands through their own approach to the art of the sword, to produce a dueling style that is very much their own. It is a style that they will teach to humans, but their requirements for taking on human students specifically to teach them their iaijutsu style are more rigorous than for general kenjutsu training.

A few kenku have become active duelists themselves, although they see it more as a matter of sport rather a way of defending their honor or that of someone close to them. In fact, the very rare kenku swordsmen who have consorted among humans with any frequency have been known to try to provoke a duel as a prank, or just because they feel like a bit of exercise. All the same, it does not pay to take a kenku duelist lightly just because dueling does not bear the same social burden for him that it does for a typical Rokugani samurai. His innate skills and speed alone make him an opponent to be respected, if not feared, no matter how serious he may or may not be about the matter of the duel.

Naga

Among the naga, training and practice in ritual single combat has always been limited to their warrior caste and, to a lesser extent, their scouts. Naga society is strictly divided into professional castes, and no other naga carry weapons that are terribly well suited for dueling. Their magic-using caste, the jakla, might be pre-disposed toward dueling rites like taryu-jiai, since they lack the pacifistic tendencies of their Rokugani equivalent, the shugenja. But because naga magic is based on a precious commodity — pearls, which must be cultivated through substantial care and effort — jakla are not inclined to waste that resource on bickering amongst themselves.

But even among the warriors, dueling does not have quite the same role that it plays among their Rokugani counterparts. The naga are a patient race that values wisdom and self-restraint; fighting other naga over matters of personal honor is a notion that they have largely shunned during any era of their history, and all the more so over the last millennium, when they have been acutely aware of their own dwindling numbers and the possibility of their own extinction. Since the end of the Bloodlands War, the naga have fought their external enemies with implacable fury, but not each other.

When personal disagreements between naga arise — and that, too, is a rare occurrence because of the extent to which the Akasha melds all individual naga together — a rite known as the Test of the Blade can be used to resolve it. If the naga in question so choose, they can choose a warrior to serve as their champion. In fact, this is common practice if one or neither of those involved in the quarrel are warriors themselves. In a Test of the Blade, the two champions square off against each other in a circle 30' in diameter. They wear no armor, and have no weapon except a standard naga blade, weighted with iron bands and then padded so that it will not draw blood. The first combatant to knock his opponent to the ground — so defined by the entire length of the body except the head being in contact with the ground — wins.



Some naga warriors do train specifically for single combat situations, but they never anticipate using it against other naga. Historically, naga armies have carried with them at least one exceptional warrior designated as a champion — someone who could stand in for the entire army against an enemy champion and resolve the battle through personal combat. The Asp known as Aseth, a former Abomination who was a remarkable figure just on the basis of having “cured” himself of his curse, was one such champion, serving the Qamar with great distinction during the interruption of the Great Sleep. Naga champions do not train in a specific style or weapon, however, as they never quite know who or what they will have to face. Instead, they train in techniques to prepare them for single combat in general.

Since the interruption of the Great Sleep increased contact between humans and naga and laid a fragile foundation for friendship between the two races, a few naga have even begun to take up kenjutsu and iaijutsu. These naga remain very few in number, not only because only a small quantity of scouts remain awake now that the Great Sleep has resumed, but also because one of the closest points of contact between the two during the interruption of the Great Sleep was the Crab Clan, which tend to disdain iaijutsu. But the naga have also formed an enduring bond with the Dragon, and some naga have exercised a curiosity about this dueling form, even seeking out the aid of Mirumoto sensei and trying to adapt Mirumoto techniques to their own distinctive physiology.

Nezumi

It may have been the case, once upon a time, that the nezumi had dueling traditions of their own comparable to the role that iaijutsu plays in Rokugani culture today. If they did, however, they have been lost to history and the failings of the nezumi's own long-term memory. Nowadays, the ratlings obey first and foremost the dictates of their own collective survival. What Rokugani regard as essential points of personal honor may seem meaningless and hardly worth fighting over to a nezumi, while behavior that nezumi respect as necessary to the survival of their Tribe may strike a Rokugani samurai as contemptible and scandalous.

Dueling, therefore, strikes most nezumi who have had direct contact with humans as somewhat absurd, even self-destructive. To shed the blood of one of your race — even if he is of another Tribe — over mere words or unimportant acts can only hurt the race's overall prospects for survival over the long term. That is not to say that nezumi never quarrel with each other; to be sure, rivalries between Tribes and conflicts over resources have been quite strong over their history, and sometimes continue so today. And individual nezumi argue with others of their kind no more or less, it seems, than do humans. But the ritual shedding of blood over such things seems wasteful.

If it comes down a fight between individual nezumi, the rivals use a restrained form of Mochatchikkan, their unique, native unarmed fighting style. In these duels, the combatants are allowed only limited use of the forepaw rake, which can cause serious bleeding or even put out an eye. The duels are fought to submission, and maiming or killing an opponent is considered taboo in all but extreme circumstances. These Mochatchikkan duels are

used in tribal areas to settle personal disputes, and tournaments of this ritual combat are sometimes used to settle questions of leadership succession. They have also been used by scouts from rival Tribes in the field, when they discover resources that each Tribe wishes to claim. In these cases, each scout is duty bound to represent his Tribe to the utmost, but he is also keenly aware of the hazards that surround him, operating alone in potentially hostile territory. In such cases, the rivals have been known to determine that an honest, but non-lethal contest of fighting prowess is the best way to settle the matter. For more about Mochatchikkan, see *Creatures of Rokugan: Third Edition*, pp. 81.

It is also worth mentioning that although nezumi typically use primitive weapons (or at least, weapons that seem primitive by Rokugani standards of craftsmanship), a small number of their warriors have grown comfortable enough in dealing with humans (primarily Hiruma scouts) to take an interest in human weapons and their use. It is not completely out of the question to imagine at least a few of the most naturally gifted of them learning iaijutsu technique at a very basic level — and that at least one human with the ability to teach them would be willing to do so.

Ogres

Looking at ogres today, it is very difficult to believe that these dumb brutes of the Shadowlands once possessed intelligence and had their own complex civilization. And yet it is true; in Rokugan's pre-history, the ogres were an intelligent race. They built a civilization for themselves, that, while not the equivalent of the naga or the trolls, was nonetheless respectable for that age, or any age. All of that ended, of course, with the fall of Fu Leng, who bent the ogres to his will and used them as fodder for his armies. Their civilization destroyed and they themselves wiped clean of their former intelligence, the ogres lost all conscious memory of their former glory and seemed destined for eternal slavery as minions of the Shadowlands.

But as it turned out, the effects of immersion in the Taint as complete as one could possibly imagine were oppressive, but not permanent. Those ogres who managed to infiltrate into Rokugan and stay there for any length of time found that, the farther they roamed from the Shadowlands and the longer they stayed away, the more likely that the Taint would actually begin to drain out of them. When that happened, their minds cleared and they found that knowledge of their former glory rose to the surface.

These ogres were called free ogres, and remained in Rokugan, their main purpose in life being to unite with other free ogres and build a functioning society for themselves based on their understanding of their race's ancient ways. Emperor Toturi I even went so far as to grant free ogres some land on which to settle. Their village prospered for a short while, but was destroyed by Tainted ogres jealous of their success.

During this brief time, however, the free ogres resurrected an ancient dueling ritual of theirs that involved wrestling as a way of settling disputes between individuals. They were never entirely sure that they were following the old ways in all its particulars, but they were confident that it involved a test of strength through grappling and holds not dissimilar to Rokugani sumai. With the destruction of the free oge settlement, this practice has once again disappeared into history and legend, but it remains in the memory of those ogres who have shrugged off the Taint's yoke, and awaits their next attempt at reorganizing their society.

Spirit Creatures

Of the various spirit creatures who dally in the mortal realm, many enjoy spending time in human form and consorting with humans. While none of them make any particularly unique contributions to the art of the duel, it is worth noting the extent to which they adopt human dueling customs and practices. For more about all of these creatures, see *Creatures of Rokugan: 3rd Edition*.

Kappa: These dangerous and somewhat vicious water spirits are famous for engaging human passersby in contests of wit, and feasting on the blood of those whom they defeat. While these are not duels as such, it is nonetheless the case that they are serious confrontations and bouts of mental and intellectual combat. Samurai with courtier training who have survived such encounters report that they were not entirely unlike courtly duels of wit, such as debates or *sadane*, and that they might not have lived had it not been for their learned skills.

Kitsune: Kitsune are particularly famous for spending time in human society, usually in the form of an attractive woman; some of these even go so far as to marry human men, thus committing themselves to spend many years in human form and living among humans. Those kitsune who choose this path sometimes acquire courtier and artisan skills appropriate to their roles in human society. Those who do learn them well enough to give as good as they get in contests based on such skills.

Koumori: These powerful bat-spirits have a reputation as secretive and reclusive, but they nonetheless have a long history of contact with humans, especially the Mantis Clan. The Daimyo of the Bat Clan, Komori, is himself a half-blooded koumori. This elevation of a koumori to a relatively high position in Rokugan's hierarchy has encouraged more contact between koumori and humans. As a result, koumori now have some familiarity with the art of *taryu-jiai*, which they may practice using their innate ability to channel the power of the kami.

Ryu: Ryu are not just creatures of Tengoku, but literal offspring of the Elemental Dragons, created as fragments of the Dragons' souls that can descend to the mortal realm, take human form and gather intelligence on the state of affairs there. As such, their actual communication with humans can be cryptic and indirect. But ryu have been able to infiltrate the Crane, Dragon, Lion and Phoenix Clans — the ones that they tend to respect as the most honorable among the Great Clans. In human guise, they have spent enough time to learn techniques in those Clans' Schools, including dueling techniques.

Saru: As a general rule, it delights these monkey spirits that they now have a Minor Clan named in their honor. A few powerful saru have taken it as their duty to watch over the Clan, while others have actually used their human form to join the Clan so that they can protect it from the inside. Many from this latter group wind up training as Toku bushi and learning their techniques. Living and training as samurai, they also learn something of *iaijutsu*.

Tanuki: Tanuki take an active interest in the rough-and-ready Minor Clan that takes their animal counterpart as its name, the Badger. Tanuki have taken human form and trained as Ichiro bushi to help the Badger Clan. Of these, some have taken a strong interest in sumai, under the influence of their human peers, and trained as wrestlers.

Tsuru: By no means is it uncommon for tsuru to assume human form to spend time — sometimes quite long periods of time — among their favored Clan, the Crane. Their primary enthusiasms are aesthetic, and they enjoy practicing skills that characterize the Kakita artisans. It is not that unusual, therefore, for them to master Kakita artisan techniques, though not so much by formal training in the Kakita Artisan School as simple absorption by keeping company with so many Kakita-trained artists and craftsmen. They have been known to accept friendly challenges from other artisans to contests of *ikebana*, poetry and the like.

Similarly, they possess an innate gift for learning Kakita bushi techniques, and may do so simply by keeping company and sparring with Kakita-trained swordsmen instead of formal study. All of these skills, of course, may be used for duels and personal contests — although tsuru instinctively shy away from confrontation, even non-violent ones. Even so, if a tsuru in human form were given no other choice, it would have at its disposal at least one of a range of skills that the Crane have found a way to use as a form of dueling.

Non-Human Institutions

As unfortunate as it is to have to say so, non-human institutions related to dueling (or even weapons or courtier training in general) simply do not exist in present-day Rokugan. The kenku sword masters live as they always have, alone in their mountain hermitages. They take students as it pleases them, which is to say, sometimes not at all, and they have no institutional structure to support them nor Clan or Family to serve, as do the dojo of the Empire.

And although the naga retain through the Akasha memories of the time when they had enough of a civilization to support a network of institutions that Rokugani would recognize as dojo, that time is also long past. Their brief awakening from the Great Sleep in the 12th Century was not nearly long enough for them to re-establish a proper educational system. What training of naga took place during that time was an ad hoc affair, done by qualified individuals as the need and opportunity arose. Now that the Great Sleep has resumed, there is once again no need for the naga to take much trouble over training their own. While the possibility of sensei-student relationships between naga and humans exists (see below), there are simply too few naga left awake to form a dojo on their own and pass on their skills and knowledge in an organized, systematic fashion (assuming they could even be persuaded to give over enough time from their duty guarding their dormant brethren).

Non-Human Sensei

As non-human institutions for providing the functional equivalent of a samurai education simply do not exist, it falls upon isolated individuals of achievement and ability to pass on their knowledge as best they can.

Their talent for swordsmanship, combined with their great wisdom and exceptional intelligence (all kenku seem to speak a wide variety of languages and have no problem communicating with other races), make kenku sword masters highly prized as sensei. Rokugani bushi so rarely get the chance to meet an

actual kenku, and so great is their reputation as teachers, that the chance to study with a kenku sensei acquires something of a mystical aura. The kenku themselves do little, if anything, to discourage this impression. As keen in their judgment of character as they are reclusive, kenku sensei are very particular in whom they accept as students. They seem to have an innate sympathy for ronin, who stand the best chance of gaining acceptance.

The kenku's natural talent for swordsmanship seems to rely heavily on an innate connection with the elemental power of Air — not entirely unlike the bond that the Crab feel with Earth, but if anything, more profound and mystical. Kenku are devastatingly quick with a blade — even in their natural form, when one would think that the bulk of their wings would slow their upper body movement. They also have an intuitive ability to read and even mimic their opponent's techniques; anyone who goes up against a true kenku sword master ought not to be surprised to have his own skills, learned through countless hours of practice under the sensei's switch, turned back upon him at some point.

The kenku who choose to mentor humans have adapted all of these talents into lessons that their students can comprehend, building in the process a school of bushi practice that is uniquely their own. The Kenku Swordsman Bushi School (described in *Creatures of Rokugan: Third Edition*, pp. 5-6) is not a School in the formal Rokugani sense — that is, a body of practice set in venerable traditions perpetuated through the generations by dojo and appointed sensei, sponsored by a Clan or Family to serve its need for trained samurai. But although they do not coordinate much with each other as to what and how they will teach, the practice of individual kenku sword masters all resemble each other by nature, so that humans who study with kenku sensei will emerge from their training with more or less the same set of skills. Similarly, this explains how individual kenku swordsmen possess very similar skills despite the fact that they generally live in isolation from each other.

Kenku sword masters are very exclusive in whom they choose to take under their wing. To reflect this fact, you as GM may require that characters who wish to study with a kenku master must have certain prerequisites, even though the Kenku Swordsman School is a basic School. You may require that in order to join this School, a character must have at least 1 School Rank in another Bushi School, the Multiple Schools Advantage and/or the Allies (6 points; Influence 4 and Devotion 2) Advantage. Also, as a general rule, you must be a Ronin in order for a kenku sword master to accept you as a student, although there are exceptions.

These prerequisites are irrelevant, of course, when designing a kenku NPC whose School is the Kenku Swordsman School.

In their current state, of course, the naga have made no provision for education; there is no point on planning for the uncertain future when almost everyone has returned to the Great Sleep. However, those few still left awake have the possibility of interaction with humans open to them now in ways that were not possible before the interruption of the Great Sleep. It is now conceivable that curious humans who are interested in learning naga ways and weapons practice could seek out an awake naga to serve as his sensei.

Not is it at all inconceivable that a naga willing to teach him would be found. However, it is worth noting that humans from the Crab and the Dragon, the two Clans with the closest bonds with the naga, are the most likely to be accepted as students.

Students of the Kenku

Kenku feel a general affinity for ronin and prefer to take them on as students instead of samurai who have sworn fealty. As a solitary race, they no doubt share some temperamental connection with those who have no bonds of loyalty to shackle them.

But they also recognize great ability and the mark of destiny, and they will take on those in whom they spot the makings of true heroism. The most famous such case in recent memory is that of the Shogun's bride, Doji Yasuyo. Yasuyo studied with the kenku for years, primarily with the master known as Kozue, and it was her training that allowed her to defeat the cursed blade Chukandomo and save her cousin Doji Kurohito from its malice.

Kenku Idiosyncrasy

Because kenku sword masters do not adhere to any formal body of traditions about their sword practice, it is possible that training and skills will vary a bit between sensei. It is acceptable for GMs and players alike to tinker with the School Techniques of the Kenku Swordsman School to suit their tastes and the needs of their particular campaigns, as long as it reflects kenku swordsmanship's reliance on the power and nature of Air.

Similarly, it is acceptable to tinker with these School Techniques when creating a kenku NPC.

New Mechanics: Kenku

New Advanced School: Kenku Duelist (Bushi)

The advanced training that kenku sword masters offer to their human students is something of an oddity in that it reflects a collection of techniques that the kenku themselves rarely put to their full use. Although the kenku know the art of iaijutsu and understand it exceptionally well in technical terms, they consider it to be no more than a particularly interesting subset of kenjutsu, one for whom their human proteges show quite a strong affinity. Although most every kenku sword master by now has a grasp of iaijutsu that exceeds that of a typical Rokugani bushi, it is also true that few of them specialize in this form of dueling to the point of maximizing their formidable innate talent, and even fewer become practicing duelists themselves. Their interest in iaijutsu is, one might say, pretty much academic.

The Kenku Duelist Advanced School, therefore, represents an adaptation of pure kenku sword practice to the particular needs of the humans who appeal to kenku masters for help. As with their standard bushi training, it teaches humans to find the elemental power of Air and tap into its speed and gift of intuition. These techniques are only marginally useful to themselves, as they rarely use them. Instead, they are gifts that the kenku make to humans, at some inconvenience to themselves. As such, they blessings given to or withheld from individual humans at the whim of the kenku, and the standards of judgment that they use are even more rigorous (or whimsical, as the case may be) than with Kenku Swordsman School training.

Requirements:

RINGS/TRAITS: Air 4, Fire 3, Agility 4

SKILLS: Iaijutsu 4, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: Bushido 3

Advantages: Allies (6 points; Influence 4 and Devotion 2), Multiple Schools

OTHER: Although there have been exceptions (and some very notable ones, at that), kenku seem to have the most affinity with Ronin, and will only take them on as students.

Kenku NPCs do not require the Allies and Multiple Schools Advantages to make use of this Advanced School.



Techniques

RANK 1: DRAWN ON THE AIR

Kenku sword masters emphasize the importance of speed of movement, drawing upon their connection with the power of Air. This makes it relatively easy for them to apply their core teachings to the art of iaijutsu, in which speed on the draw can literally mean the difference between life and death. You gain a bonus to your Initiative Roll equal to your Air Ring + your Agility.

RANK 2: BEHIND THE WING

Part of Kenku Duelist training teaches you to conceal your true strengths and weaknesses from your opponent, making you harder to read. This comes fairly naturally to the kenku themselves, since their alien physiology makes their stances hard to analyze for humans anyway. During the Challenge Phase of an iaijutsu duel, your opponent suffers a penalty to his Awareness/Iaijutsu Roll equal to your Fire Ring + your Intelligence. In a normal skirmish, you receive a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal to your Intelligence.

RANK 3: THE MOCKING BIRD'S CURSE

At its most advanced levels, the Kenku Swordsman School teaches the art of reading an opponent's techniques so closely and quickly that you can imitate them after just a glance in the heat of battle. In an iaijutsu duel, there is no time for even that, but the ability to read an opponent's moves can still help you defend yourself against them. In both iaijutsu duels and normal skirmishes, you receive a bonus to your TN to Be Hit equal to your Awareness + your Reflexes. In normal skirmishes, this bonus augments the bonus to TN to Be Hit that you receive from the Rank 2 Technique. You also receive a bonus equal to your Awareness to your attack rolls in a normal skirmish.

New Mechanics: Naga

Naga Dueling Mechanics

Test of the Blade: To resolve a Test of the Blade duel, treat it as a standard skirmish. Combatants cannot wear any armor. They must each use a blunted naga blade; treat it as a naga blade with a DR of 0k1. The first combatant to successfully execute a Knock-down Maneuver against his opponent wins.

Naga Characters

The mechanics presented here augment the rules for creating naga characters presented in *Creatures of Rokugan: Third Edition*. For more about Naga Schools, see *Creatures of Rokugan: Third Edition*, Chapter 2).

New Path: Naga Blade Duelist (Bushi)

This Path may be used by both naga and human characters.

Test of the Blade duels are fairly rare occurrences in naga society, as disputes that escalate to that point just don't happen that often. But there are warriors who know more about how to handle oneself in such an event, and they may pass along their knowledge to other naga who wish to master it, for whatever reason.

Also, since the interruption of the Great Sleep increased contact between humans and the naga, some Rokugani samurai have taken an interest in naga weapon practice and have even sought the opportunity to learn what they can of it. Those who have done so have found that training in techniques specific to the Test of the Blade and the blunted version of the naga blade that it uses — though irrelevant to them if used for their exact intended purpose — has helped them manage a no-dachi in combat.

Technique Rank: 2

Path of Entry: Naga Scout 3, Naga Slayer 2, Naga Warrior 2, or any human Bushi School Rank 3

Requirements: Kenjutsu (No-dachi) 2 (humans only). In addition, a human character must have an opportunity to study with a naga sensei.

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same school at 1 Rank higher

Great Lesson/Technique: Mastering the Blade

The Test of the Blade uses a modification of the naga blade that makes it heavier and blunt, so that you may knock your opponent down instead of slicing him open. More often than not, the warrior who can overcome this unusual clumsiness more easily than his opponent will win the duel. A veteran of Tests of the Blade has learned how to do that and can pass that knowledge along.

A naga character who masters this path gains a bonus to his attack roll equal to his Water Ring when using a naga blade in a normal skirmish. In a Test of the Blade, he gains a bonus to his Initiative Roll equal to twice his Strength.

A human character who masters this path gains a bonus to his attack roll equal to his Water Ring and a bonus to his Initiative Roll and attack roll equal to his Strength when using a no-dachi.

New Path: Naga Champion (Bushi)

Naga bushi who have demonstrated a superior level of skill with the naga blade may train as single combat specialists, to defend the naga against their enemies in a situation that may be described as a duel. This path, however, does not specify training for any particular form of dueling; because it prepares naga to face external foes, it cannot predict the student's future foes so precisely. A Rokugani School such as the Kenshinzen can focus so precisely on iaijutsu because its students will face other Rokugani samurai in iaijutsu duels by common consent. But a Naga Champion in training cannot assume that degree of specificity.

so he receives generalized instruction in how to handle single combat situations — knowledge that can prove effective in battle, or in duels.

TECHNIQUE RANK: 3

Path of Entry: Naga Scout 3, Naga Slayer 3 or Naga Warrior 3

Requirements: Swordsmanship 4

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same school at 1 Rank higher

Technique: Focus on the One

Select one opponent in a skirmish. You gain a bonus to your attack rolls, DR and TN to Be Hit against that opponent equal to your Air Ring + Swordsmanship Skill. However, you may not use Maneuvers or School Techniques against any other opponent until your chosen opponent is killed, incapacitated or fled.

New Mechanics: Nezumi

Nezumi Dueling Mechanics

Mochatchikkan dueling: Resolve as a standard skirmish, with both combatants restricted to using Mochatchikkan Maneuvers. When resolving attacks using the Rake Maneuver, you may not attempt to blind your opponent. The first combatant to lose 2 full Wound Levels to damage is considered to have conceded, and his opponent wins.

New Path:

Nezumi Swordsman (Warrior)

Nezumi warriors who have the opportunity to train with human weapons may be intimidated at first by their size and the quality of their workmanship, but they would find that their natural speed and quickness would stand them in good stead.

Technique Rank: 4

Path of Entry: Nezumi Warrior 4

Requirements: Agility 4, extended contact with a human who could serve as sensei

Path of Egress: Nezumi Warrior 5

Technique: Grasping the Sword

Human weapons seem like curious and wondrous things to you, but you find that learning how to wield them is not as difficult as you might think. If you have Ranks in kenjutsu and/or iaijutsu, you gain 1 Rank in each. If you do not have Ranks in one or either, you gain it as a Skill at Rank 1. You also gain a bonus to your Initiative Rolls and attack rolls equal to your Fire Ring.

New Mechanics: Spirit Creatures

Spirit Creature Dueling Mechanics

Kappa: Resolve a contest of wits against a kappa as a Contested Roll pitting the kappa's Water Ring against its target's Fire Ring, with the target receiving a bonus equal to his Storytelling or Games (Sadane) Rank (the target's choice).

New Sprit Powers (Spirit Creatures)

Unlike most of their shapeshifter brethren, it is possible to speak of most of the spirit creatures discussed in this chapter as having some kind of Clan affiliation, even if it is to a Minor Clan struggling to preserve its own legitimacy. Not only that, but it is not at all uncommon for them to go among their favored Clan in human form, spending enough time among them to absorb their ways. If they do so, they generally have the wit and ability to learn human skills and practice them just as well as most humans can.

Shapeshifter characters of the following spirit creatures may learn a limited number of School Techniques as the functional equivalent of Spirit Powers. Paths also count as School Techniques of a Rank equal to their Technique Rank. Learning these techniques requires spending a substantial amount of time in human form among the Clan to whose School the Technique belongs, but it may not require formal training with the sensei of that School. That is left to the GM's discretion and the circumstances of the campaign.

For a detailed explanation of the Shapeshifter character class, see *Creatures of Rokugan: 3rd Edition*, pp. 7-15.

Kitsune

In general, kitsune Shapeshifter characters who spend extended periods in human society may learn Courtier Techniques and Paths of any School, depending on where they live and with whom they associate most closely. This is especially true of kitsune foxwives, who spend many years in the company of humans.

However, kitsune Shapeshifter characters may only learn 1 School Technique per Mastery Level — 1 at Mastery Level 1, 1 at Mastery Level 2, etc. But they are not restricted in terms of the School from which they may learn their Techniques, except by the physical circumstances of their existence.

For instance: A kitsune foxwife who marries into the Crane Clan and lives in the Crane Lands may learn Soul of the Artisan (Music), the Rank 1 School Technique of the Kakita Artisan School. But suppose that she relocates to Toshi Ranbo when her husband is assigned to represent the Clan at the Imperial Court. The cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Imperial City places her in contact with a much wider variety of Courtier Schools. If she

were to spend enough time in contact with the Tortoise Clan, she could theoretically learn The Tortoise Shell (Kasuga Courtier School Rank 2 Technique) as her Mastery Level 2 technique.

Mastery Level 1

ANY RANK 1 COURTIER SCHOOL TECHNIQUE
(8 POINTS)

You may learn the Rank 1 Technique (or equivalent Path) of any Courtier School appropriate to your situation.

Mastery Level 2

ANY RANK 2 COURTIER SCHOOL TECHNIQUE
(10 POINTS)

You may learn the Rank 2 Technique (or equivalent Path) of any Courtier School appropriate to your situation.

Mastery Level 3

ANY RANK 3 COURTIER SCHOOL TECHNIQUE
(12 POINTS)

You may learn the Rank 3 Technique (or equivalent Path) of any Courtier School appropriate to your situation.

Mastery Level 4

ANY RANK 4 COURTIER SCHOOL TECHNIQUE
(15 POINTS)

You may learn the Rank 4 Technique (or equivalent Path) of any Courtier School appropriate to your situation.

Mastery Level 5

ANY RANK 5 COURTIER SCHOOL TECHNIQUE
(20 POINTS)

You may learn the Rank 5 Technique (or equivalent Path) of any Courtier School appropriate to your situation.

Koumori

Koumori are powerful practitioners of elemental magic based on their own innate abilities, and in this sense, there is not much that they could learn from human shugenja, even the Moshi with whom they feel an unusually strong affinity. However, spending time in human company in the guise of humans does allow them to pick up some hints from the Moshi shugenja on how to handle the power of the kami more efficiently.



Mastery Level 2

EYE OF THE STORM (6 POINTS)

You may learn the Moshi Shugenja School Technique, Eye of the Storm.

Ryu

Ryū Shapeshifter characters who spend extended periods in human society may learn Bushi or Courtier School Techniques and Paths of any one of the four Great Clans whom they favor — the Crane, Dragon, Lion and Phoenix — depending on the specifics of their situation. Ryū are usually sent from Tengoku for a fairly specific purpose, so they may not be in a position to choose the Clan with whom they will be able to associate, and they may not be able at all to spend time with one of those four Clans.

Mastery Level 1

ANY RANK 1 FAVORED CLAN SCHOOL TECHNIQUE (8 POINTS)

You may learn the Rank 1 Technique (or equivalent Path) of any Crane, Dragon, Lion and Phoenix Bushi or Courtier School, as appropriate to your situation.

Mastery Level 2

ANY RANK 2 FAVORED CLAN SCHOOL TECHNIQUE (10 POINTS)

You may learn the Rank 2 Technique (or equivalent Path) of any Crane, Dragon, Lion and Phoenix Bushi or Courtier School, as appropriate to your situation.



Mastery Level 3

ANY RANK 3 FAVORED CLAN SCHOOL TECHNIQUE (12 POINTS)

You may learn the Rank 3 Technique (or equivalent Path) of any Crane, Dragon, Lion and Phoenix Bushi or Courtier School, as appropriate to your situation.

Mastery Level 4

ANY RANK 4 FAVORED CLAN SCHOOL TECHNIQUE (8 POINTS)

You may learn the Rank 4 Technique (or equivalent Path) of any Crane, Dragon, Lion and Phoenix Bushi or Courtier School, as appropriate to your situation.

Mastery Level 5

ANY RANK 5 FAVORED CLAN SCHOOL TECHNIQUE (8 POINTS)

You may learn the Rank 5 Technique (or equivalent Path) of any Crane, Dragon, Lion and Phoenix Bushi or Courtier School, as appropriate to your situation.

Saru

Saru who take a sufficient interest in the Monkey Clan to spend time among them in human form may learn the Techniques of the Toku Bushi School.

Mastery Level 1

TOKU'S LESSON (8 POINTS)

You may learn Toku's Lesson, the Rank 1 Technique of the Toku Bushi School.

Mastery Level 2

A WILL OF STEEL (10 POINTS)

You may learn A Will of Steel, the Rank 2 Technique of the Toku Bushi School.

MINOR CLAN EXPLORER (8 POINTS)

Saru are inquisitive by nature; picking up the ways of the Monkey Clan give them trained skills that enable them to satisfy the urge to explore while keeping themselves safe. You may follow the Minor Clan Explorer Path (see p. 151).

Mastery Level 3

THE STRENGTH OF ONE MAN (12 POINTS)

You may learn The Strength of One Man, the Rank 3 Technique of the Toku Bushi School.

Mastery Level 4

FORGE YOUR OWN FATE (15 POINTS)

You may learn Forge Your Own Fate, the Rank 4 Technique of the Toku Bushi School.

Mastery Level 5

FORTUNE FAVORS THE MORAL MAN

You may learn Fortune Favors the Moral Man, the Rank 5 Technique of the Toku Bushi School.

Tanuki

Tanuki who live among the Badger Clan in human form for an extended period may acquire the Techniques of the Ichiro Bushi School, as well as Badger sumai techniques. For a description of the Ichiro Bushi School, see *The Four Winds*, p. 187.

Mastery Level 1

RETURN THE STRIKE (8 POINTS)

You may learn Return the Strike, the Rank 1 Technique of the Ichiro Bushi School.

Mastery Level 2

MINOR CLAN SUMAI MASTER (10 POINTS)

Tanuki who spend enough time around the samurai of their namesake Clan almost inevitably develop an itch to try sumai. You may follow the Minor Clan Sumai Master Path (see p. 152).

REFUSE TO FAIL (10 POINTS)

You may learn Refuse to Fail, the Rank 2 Technique of the Ichiro Bushi School.

Mastery Level 3

CRUSHING BLOW (12 POINTS)

You may learn Crushing Blow, the Rank 3 Technique of the Ichiro Bushi School.

Mastery Level 4

CRASHING STONES (15 POINTS)

You may learn Crashing Stones, the Rank 4 Technique of the Ichiro Bushi School.

Mastery Level 5

TRANSCEND THE MOUNTAIN (20 POINTS)

You may learn Transcend the Mountain, the Rank 5 Technique of the Ichiro Bushi School.

Tsuru

Because of their strong affinity for the Way of the Crane, Tsuru Shapeshifter characters may gain the Techniques of the Kakita Bushi School at no cost in Spirit Points, even if they have no direct link to the Crane Clan. Such characters may be considered students of that School without use of the Alias power.

Tsuru Shapeshifter characters may also gain the Techniques of the Kakita Artisan School by spending Spirit Points.

Mastery Level 1

SOUL OF THE ARTISAN (6 POINTS)

You may learn Soul of the Artisan (any discipline), the Rank 1 Technique of the Kakita Artisan School.

Mastery Level 2

THE SOUL'S DREAM (8 POINTS)

You may learn The Soul's Dream, the Rank 2 Technique of the Kakita Artisan School.

Mastery Level 3

FREE THE SPIRIT (10 POINTS)

You may learn Free the Spirit, the Rank 3 Technique of the Kakita Artisan School.

Mastery Level 4

UNDYING NAME (12 POINTS)

You may learn Undying Name, the Rank 4 Technique of the Kakita Artisan School.

Mastery Level 5

WALK AMONG THE HEAVENS (15 POINTS)

You may learn Walk Among the Heavens, the Rank 5 Technique of the Kakita Artisan School.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

DUELING IN MASS BATTLES



Philosophy

In a society as steeped in the cult of the individual warrior as Rokugan's, it is impossible to separate entirely the art of the duel from the art of war. While the former involves individuals who test their skill and honor against each other, and the latter involves armies numbering in the thousands or tens of thousands clashing over matters that affect the entire Empire, it is inevitable that samurai will use the field of battle to play out their own individual dramas and ambitions.

Some of these confrontations are driven by a combination of fate, fortune and personal motives; others by the dictates of battle. Some Clans — the Crane and the Lion especially — use dueling as an important part of their overall approach to war, placing strong emphasis on the morale effects of defeating someone on the opposing side in single combat. There are even occasions when a battle may be settled by representatives of each army facing each other in a duel, rather than by general clash of arms.

Personal Scores

A typical clash of Rokugani armies is not an orderly affair. From a distance, one sees formations, bodies of warriors moving more or less in synchronization, their commanders making themselves visible to provide direction and inspiration. It appears that the actions of the group matters most, and individuals are simply parts of a machine.

But the closer you get to the face of battle, the less orderly it seems. Formations crash, distend, collapse. Leaders fall, or maneuver for a better vantage from which to direct the action. Orders get lost in the din and confusion. Ultimately, each bushi is left to his own skills and instincts, his own personal angle of vision, in the heat of a fight.

And because Rokugani armies tend not to fight in closely packed ranks in which individuals have no room to maneuver (as is the way of some gaijin armies), there is always the opportunity to pick your own opponent, if you may do so without disobeying orders. Among the Battle Opportunities described in the mass combat rules in *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying*

Game Third Edition core rulebook (pp. 208-10), Be Prepared to Dig Two Graves reflects this curious freedom and flexibility that warriors have in a Rokugani battle. If an opportunity to exact revenge from a particular enemy presents itself, you may pursue it; no polearmed sergeant will drag you back into line (especially if you are an officer to begin with).

The possibilities contained in the Battle Opportunity Show Me Your Stance also reflects the extent to which a personal challenge can simply emerge at random, out of the confusion of battle. You may not pick them, but that is not to say that they cannot pick you, for whatever reason.

As GM, you may also use a mass battle to set up your player characters with a chance to confront an archenemy, with the fate of the campaign on the line. Certainly, Show Me Your Stance allows you enough discretion to have a nemesis emerge from the ranks and confront your player characters, perhaps challenge them to a duel to settle their score once and for all. In fact, if you wish to engineer such a confrontation, you hardly need the right result from the Battle Opportunities Tables at all.

Tides of Battle

The Rokugani art of war places considerable importance on personal leadership. This is especially true if the commander of the army is also the Clan Champion or a Family Daimyo — if he loses the battle, the Clan's political leadership is disgraced as well as its military leadership, and if he dies the Clan or Family has quite literally lost its head at a very bad time. The common ashigaru looks to his leaders not just for orders, but also as feudal lords, to whom he owes loyalty that encompasses much more than the arena of battle, and without whom he would lack for more than just directions about where to go on the battlefield.

So much rests on the shoulders of an army's leaders in a battle between Rokugani armies that it sometimes makes good military sense to trap or goad enemy commanders into a duel. At the very least, it can distract an extremely important enemy for a short while; even a duel that is lost will occupy all of an opponent's

attention for a time and maybe even sap his strength. At best, killing an opposing commander in duel can completely demoralize the opposing army, as it may remove the one person who can hold that army together under pressure while casting doubt upon his prowess at the same time. In between these two possibilities, trying to force an enemy leader into a duel can force him to evade the would-be duelist, which not only distracts him from the task of managing the battle, but could also persuade his soldiers to question his courage and honor.

In fact, for the Crane, this is an explicit goal of their overall approach to war. Crane armies tend to be small compared to that of other Great Clans. Instead of numbers, they rely on their elite iaijutsu duelists, the Kakita-trained Kenshinzen, to neutralize enemy commanders by compelling them to duel — and every Kenshinzen possesses full confidence that he can beat any other duelist in Rokugan, except perhaps another Kenshinzen. A Crane general will typically have at least a few Kenshinzen and some other Kakita duelists at his disposal going into a battle. Once the enemy leaders have been spotted and identified, they will range across the battlefield, either individually or in small groups, looking for the most effective avenue of approach to their targets.

These are not mere assassination squads, however, and any suggestion that this is the case would outrage the Crane. Criminals and swine like the Goju are assassins; instead, Kenshinzen

in battle seek an honorable test of single combat against the most prestigious opponent they can find. The fact that they serve their Clan in doing so, and may win a decisive edge for the Crane by killing an important enemy, is a bonus.

The Lion and the Dragon are also well known for their skilled duelists — every Akodo bushi trains to fight kenjutsu duels, and the Mirumoto iaijutsu duelists of the Dragon are widely considered the most formidable rivals to the Crane's Kakita swordsmen. These, too, have carved out a role on the battlefield as single combat specialists. For the Lion swordsmen, they tend to take opportunities to duel with a significant foe as they come rather than actively seek them out. Lion officers are trained to place more faith in maneuvering units of soldiers around the field than their Crane counterparts. But a Lion warrior's tactical training also points out the importance of depriving an enemy of leadership, and an opportunity to neutralize an opposing commander will not be passed up. With the Dragon Clan, the Mirumoto swordsmen are not detailed to hunt enemy leaders in the same sense as the Kenshinzen. But, like the Akodo kenjutsu duelists, they will not pass up the chance to gain glory by defeating an important enemy in single combat.

Inasmuch as shugenja are part of Rokugani armies, taryu-jiai should also be noted as form of dueling that plays a role on the battlefield. While bushi or teams of mixed samurai may be sent



specifically to neutralize enemy shugenja (as in the Attack the Shugenja Battle Opportunity), a challenge to personal combat by another shugenja may be the most effective and efficient way of achieving this end. Even a shugenja as pacifistic as a Kitsu or an Asahina may justify doing so if it will preserve lives and defend the fortunes of his Clan. Even if it is not a duel to the death, a taryu-jiai duel against a powerful opponent can drain powers that would otherwise be directed against one's own side.

Every Clan, however, has at least some understanding of the role of dueling as a proper military tactic. The Crane, Lion and Dragon are simply the three that are best known for possessing that understanding. It is one of the tried and true tenets of Rokugani war theory that a swordsman will gain much glory for himself and perhaps victory for his army if he can defeat an enemy leader in an honorable duel. It is a way for an outnumbered army to turn the tide of battle against its enemy, and a way for it to set an already beleaguered foe to rout. It is even an acceptable opening move for the game of chess that is a battle between armies, and a legitimate way to gain an advantage over an evenly matched foe. A proper duel is as much a part of the conduct of a battle as a head-on charge or a flank attack.

Champions

Dueling on the battlefield offers a relatively low-ranking bushi the chance for glory, an opportunity to make his reputation by defeating a higher ranking enemy warrior in single combat. But in many cases, the most fearsome warrior on a side will be its commander, the one who has the most practice and skill in all aspects of combat. It may be a long-odds fight for a samurai from the ranks to challenge an enemy general. But for one general to fight another, the odds would probably even up.

Of course, there are genuine risks involved when the leader of one army challenges the leader of another. For the side that loses, the consequences could well prove disastrous. But a general who chooses this course may do so for a variety of reasons, both personal and purely military. For one, it is chance to gain glory and honor, putting the fate of his army on his own shoulders and carrying it to victory. Or it may be the militarily expedient thing to do, if he is badly outnumbered or in a tricky tactical position. His only chance at victory may be to hit at his enemy's weakest spot — the commander's need to uphold his own personal honor by accepting a challenge. If he feels that he bears personal responsibility for placing his army in that bad spot, it may be the only way to redeem his honor (seppuku being useless from a military point of view — and besides, that can wait for after the military situation has been salvaged).

There are also times when a commander may choose quite explicitly to put the fate the battle on his own blade. He might issue a formal challenge to the enemy commander, offering to place the outcome of the battle on a duel between the two of them, with the loser to cede the field to the victor. This tactic may be used out of genuine concern for sparing bloodshed between the two sides, or they may be personal reasons (a desire for glory) or military expediencies (one side is badly disadvantaged, but is led by a warrior of great skill) involved.

As GM, you should always feel that, in a mass battle situation, decreeing that the two army commanders have agreed to duel is always an option, though one that does not happen frequently.

Countermeasures

The converse of using dueling as a way of turning a battle in your favor by preoccupying or even killing opposing commanders is that Rokugani generals of every Clan will keep with them at least a yojimbo detail, perhaps even a full unit of elite soldiers dedicated to his protection. Any duelist who wishes to pin down an enemy leader in order to fight a duel with him will most likely have to find a way around or through this protective barrier. Of course, the Battle Opportunity Protect the General allows for the possibility that a commander may get separated from his personal guard in the confusion of battle. But unless such a thing happens, player characters who range the field in search of this manner of glory will have to cope with typical countermeasures designed to keep a general safe and undistracted.

The flip side of this, of course, is that the player characters may find themselves in this position if they receive the Protect the General Battlefield Opportunity — in which case, the GM will have the chance to throw at them enemy duelists trying to outwit them to get at the leader in their safekeeping. If one or more player character has trained at a bushi School with a strong dueling tradition, like the Kakita or the Mirumoto, or has received advanced training as a duelist or a yojimbo, it is certainly possible that an important commander would demand their services as part of his personal detail — so that a battle would, in fact, become one long Protect the General Opportunity. A player character with advanced training (especially one with a high Glory or Status Rank) might even receive subordinate NPCs at his disposal.

New Mechanics

If you wish to make dueling a more prominent part of the mass battle experience, simply keep in mind the considerations described above and introduce them by GM decree, as appropriate. You may also make the following revisions to the Battle Opportunities described in the core rulebook:

Revised Battlefield Opportunity: Attack the Shugenja

Instead of the opportunity described in the core rulebook, the GM may choose either of these alternate opportunities:

Challenge a specific shugenja. Your commanding general points out a specific, relatively powerful shugenja who presents a threat to the army (or a boon to the enemy) that must be neutralized. If one of the player characters is a shugenja, he is ordered to corner the enemy shugenja into a taryu-jiai duel to at least distract him momentarily. If the player character succeeds and wins the duel, the opposing general suffers a -3 penalty to his Tides of Battle Roll for the next Battle Turn, and the player character receives 2 Glory Points. If the player character succeeds, but loses the duel, the opposing general suffers a -1 penalty to his Tides of Battle Roll for the next Battle Turn, and the player character receives 1 Glory Point if the enemy shugenja's Insight Rank is higher than the player character's.

Revised Battlefield Opportunity: Show Me Your Stance

It may reasonably be pointed out that if the player characters do not hold officer rank and do not have terribly high Glory or Status Ranks, it would make no sense for an enemy commander to challenge any one of them to a duel in the midst of battle. He would have little to gain and a great deal to lose by challenging a warrior of lesser rank.

Instead, treat Show Me Your Stance as a more generalized opportunity to duel on the battlefield. The opponent may be any one of a variety of NPCs: a personal rival encountered earlier in the campaign; an enemy duelist intercepted while in search of a target worthy of his blade; even an enemy warrior who mistakes one of the player characters for a samurai of higher Rank or Glory — someone whose defeat would bring great fame to the one who bested him. Possibilities abound.

If the player character wins, he receives 1 Glory Point per each of his opponent's Glory Ranks. There is no effect on the Tides of Battle Roll.

New Battlefield Opportunity: Strike at the Head

This may be used in place of either Show Me Your Stance or Protect the General, at the GM's discretion. Your general orders you to find a particular enemy commander and force him into a duel. The goal is to eliminate him as an asset to the opposing army, or at least distract him while he is trying to manage the battle (or his designated part of it).

If you succeed and win the duel, the opposing general suffers a -5 penalty to his Tides of Battle Roll for the next Battle Turn, and you receive 3 Glory Points. If the you succeed, but lose the duel, the opposing general suffers a -2 penalty to his Tides of Battle Roll for the next Battle Turn, and you receive 1 Glory Point if your designated target's Insight Rank is higher than yours.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN:

THE ARTIST'S
WEAPONS

The culture of Rokugan is a warrior's culture. There are many facets to it, of course, and many noble pursuits that have little to do with making war. Ultimately, however, a samurai is a servant who wages war for his lord, regardless of what form that battle takes or in what arena it takes place. Combine this with the samurai's love for and adherence to tradition, and the result is a society that places incredible value on finely crafted weapons.

The following weapons and items are of particular importance to their Clan or faction of origin. Some are unique, while others represent a type of rare weapon used with greater frequency. Unique weapons will be rare in the hands of player characters, and should never be meted out lightly, but rather granted as a reward for some truly extraordinary service on behalf of Family or Clan. Non-unique weapons can be purchased using a variant of the Sacred Weapon Advantage, and point costs for such are listed with each entry. Under no circumstances should a character be allowed to purchase a Sacred Weapon of any Clan other than his own.

CRAB: JADE-STUDDED TETSUBO [4 POINTS]

Increasingly rare as the Empire's jade supply dwindles, the jade-studded tetsubo is perhaps the favorite weapon of Crab bushi throughout the southern reaches of Rokugan. Were they not so uncommon, every Hida soldier atop the Carpenter Wall would seek one for himself. As it is, they are typically awarded only to the finest warriors, officers and commanders who have proven their ability to stand fast against the Shadowlands. With such weapons in hand, the Crab leadership reckons, they will pose an even greater threat to the minions of Fu Leng. The tetsubo is typical for a weapon of its sort, although it is crafted with higher grade Kaiu steel and thus is somewhat superior to the average tetsubo. The truly exceptional nature of these weapons comes from the recessed cavities at the weapon's head, into which are placed small quantities of enchanted jade. The jade in question is painstakingly enchanted over months by Kuni shugenja. The rituals are necessary to preserve the jade and ensure that it will not shatter or soften from close contact with the Taint. The rituals are exhausting, and a considerable drain on the Kuni's resources

Items & Point Costs

Purchasing items and other physical possessions with Character Points is a risky proposition, and one that has strange connotations in the setting. To begin with, a character that has spent Points on purchasing an item has done so in lieu of spending those Points on increasing their personal abilities, whether social, mental, or physical. Characters who do not spend their Points in such a manner end up with more inherent abilities, and as a result, it seems that the Clans entrust their sacred objects to samurai who are less capable than others. This can be waved away by indicating that it is a social responsibility, perhaps inherited or otherwise earned through family connections, but it is still an oddity that may need to be addressed.

More importantly, a character with Points invested in equipment can, potentially, have those Points taken away if the object is lost or stolen, whereas a character that spends an equivalent number of Points purchasing Skill Ranks does not have that risk. It is for this reason that the Inheritance and Forbidden Knowledge Advantages were so thoroughly redesigned for Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition, in order to make the benefit more internal and less situational. The Sacred Weapon Advantage, however, is an amalgamation of extremely popular Advantages from previous Editions, and remained largely intact to avoid the ire of those players who long for their Kakita or Kaiu Blades.

As GM, you should discuss these concerns with your players prior to beginning a new campaign, and make sure they understand the potential problems with spending a large number of Character Points on object-based Advantages.

to conduct on a large scale. Even still, the jade is not preserved indefinitely, and taking one of these weapons into the Shadowlands is considered wasteful to an offensive degree. Promising Crab officers have been demoted or even exiled for such things in the past.

A jade-studded tetsubo has a DR of 1k3. It is considered a jade weapon for the purposes of damaging a creature or individual that has the Shadowlands Taint. The Carapace rating of any target struck by the jade-studded tetsubo is reduced by 1 for the purpose of calculating damage. This is cumulative with any other effects that reduce Carapace, although this effect alone cannot reduce the target creature's Carapace rating below 1.

CRAB: JADE KATANA [UNIQUE]

Only four of these magnificent blades exist, one each held by the Daimyo of the Hida, Hiruma, Kaiu, and Kuni Families. One was not created for the Yasuki family, given their almost complete lack of warriors, and the Toritaka Family had not yet joined the Crab Clan at the time of these blades' creation. In truth, the circumstances of their creation are a mystery. Each of the Families that hold one of the blades has a different account of how their blade came into their possession, and none match up very neatly. There are similarities between them, of course, but the differences are far greater. Regardless of how the blades were created, there can be no doubt that the process was so difficult that most smiths working today cannot see how it was done. Jade is a material that is almost impossible to work successfully. It does not become more malleable with heat, as do most smithing substances; it becomes even more brittle. Attempts to shape jade using any conventional techniques result only in shattered stone and wasted time. Whatever means were devised to create the jade katana, they are unique and remain unknown to all but those who were responsible for their creation. Given their potent abilities against the Shadowlands, the Crab are quite keen on trying to duplicate the process, but centuries of attempts have produced no results. Consequently, the four existing jade katana are among the Clan's most treasured possessions.

The four jade katana have mutable DR ratings. Against creatures of the Shadowlands, or those who possess the Shadowlands Taint, the blades have a DR of 4k4. Opponents that possess any Shadow Taint are affected by the blade as if it had a DR of 3k3. Against any other opponents, they are merely 2k2. Despite that the blades would seem to be extremely fragile given the crystalline material from which they are made, they do not appear capable of being broken by any conventional means. The jade that makes up their blades does not degrade, and those who wield them are completely immune to the Shadowlands Taint so long as they remain in possession of the blade.

CRANE: THE FANS OF YOSHI [6 POINTS]

Kakita Yoshi is remembered as one of the finest courtiers in the history of the Imperial Court, if not the finest. The sheer magnitude of his charisma, it is said, could make or break alliances and enmities throughout the Empire in the span of a breath. While these tales are certainly embellished, there can be no doubt that the man who once held sway over the brilliant Bayushi Kaukatsu when both men were younger, was a force to be reckoned with by any estimation. Students of the Doji Courtier School have analyzed his every mannerism and element of his attire for decades in hopes of replicating even a fraction of his mastery of the court-

ier's art. Most have discovered that no amount of training can replace instinct, however, and that mimicking the style of another is no substitute for forging one's own path through the battlefield of court. Those few who come to these conclusions on their own and demonstrate particular promise in court are awarded with a symbol of Yoshi's prowess, something that can push a courtier's reputation from promising new arrival to that of feared opponent. Yoshi owned a set of twelve fans, each an incredible piece of craftsmanship that was custom-designed to his specifications and designed with both beauty and durability in mind. Each is a striking piece depicting some pivotal moment in the Crane's history, such as the marriage of Doji and Kakita or the last stand of the Daidoji at the Battle of the Tidal Landbridge. No matter what scene the fan depicts, it is breathtaking, and is considered a mark of exceptional skill and cunning by the Doji.

The fans of Yoshi are exquisite items that never fail to impress those that see them. As long as they are used or otherwise displayed on one's person where others can see them, they grant those who possess them a pool of 5 Free Raises per day that can be used on any Contested Social Skill Roll. Additionally, although the ability is rarely used, they also grant a Free Raise on any Deceit (Seduction) Roll.

CRANE: TSUKEN'S BLADE [UNIQUE]

This exquisitely crafted katana is a unique blade created by Isawa Ochiai, the Master of Fire, for the Crane Keeper of Fire, Kakita Tsuken. Already a renowned duelist and warrior, Tsuken's growing familiarity with the element of Fire, combined with Ochiai's delicate attunement of the blade to the same element, created a unique and deadly weapon with considerable destructive potential kept in check only by Tsuken's sense of restraint, a quality that varies depending upon his mood. Although Tsuken wields the blade and carries it with him at all times, during his infrequent visits home he has allowed certain others to train with it for brief periods, most notably his Daimyo Kakita Noritoshi, Grand Master of the Kakita Dueling Academy. Noritoshi has declared the blade perfect in every regard, and many wonder to whom it shall fall if Tsuken should be defeated in battle. The question seems only to irritate Tsuken, and he has made no answer.

Tsuken's Blade has a number of extraordinary qualities that may or may not be attributable to Tsuken himself rather than the actual blade. Thus far, the only other person to wield it has not demonstrated any of the properties the blade displays when wielded by the Keeper of Fire. Tsuken's Blade is a katana with a DR of 4k2. When rolling damage, the wielder may spend a Void Point to immediately increase the result of any individual damage die that rolls less than or equal to twice his Fire Ring.

DRAGON: NIGHTINGALE BLADE [5 POINTS]

The Nightingale style is an uncommon sub-style of the basic Mirumoto Technique practiced by the Dragon Clan. The style is still young, having been created only two generations ago by Mirumoto Narumi. Narumi was a gifted swordswoman and blessed with a dancer's grace, and she combined these talents to deadly effect. Her daughter was her finest student and gained much glory in the dojo's name, but perished from complications following childbirth. It was not until Narumi's granddaughter, also called Narumi in her honor, became an adult that the Nightingale style gained widespread acceptance among the Mirumoto. It is primarily practiced by women, although some male students have mastered its secrets. The style emphasizes the importance of speed

and grace, using an open stance and depending upon reaction speed for defense, thus allowing more rapid series of attacks. The style has become popular enough that a unique type of katana, lighter and slightly more flexible than typical, has begun to see production by a small number of swordsmiths. These blades are given to those students who undergo their gempukku in the Nightingale Dojo, and are simply known as Nightingale Blades.

A Nightingale Blade is a katana with a DR of 3k2, like a normal katana. However, anyone wielding the blade gains a +1k0 bonus to Initiative Rolls. All melee attacks made using a Nightingale Blade gain a bonus equal to the number of attacks made with it up that point in the round: The first attack made in a round with the blade gains +1 to the attack roll, the second gains +2 to the roll, the third +3, and so on.

DRAGON: THE BISENTO OF LADY MOON [UNIQUE]

The Hitomi are a militant order. No monks in the Empire, save perhaps for the belligerent monks of Osano-Wo or Bishamon, can rival them in terms of their sheer physical power and tendencies toward violence as a means of resolving differences. The Hitomi consider this their strength, and invoke the name of Lady Moon when demonstrating their will and determination. It is the first among them, the head of their order, who wields the greatest symbol of Lady Moon's patronage: the despicable weapon known as the Bisento of Lady Moon. The weapon's origins are uncertain, and Hitomi Kagetora, the only man ever to have wielded it, does not discuss how it came into his possession. Many speculate that it simply appeared, just as the tattoos that adorn the Hitomi monks appear purely through the will of Lady Hitomi. Whatever its origin, the weapon appears as most of its sort do: a heavy sword blade at the end of a long wooden shaft. It is similar in many respects to the nagamaki, although the shaft is longer, narrower, and the blade considerably wider. It is an awkward weapon, like most of its kind, but Kagetora wields it to devastating effect when he chooses to do so. As it is, he wields it infrequently, as even the seasoned old monk himself seems fearful of it.

The Bisento of Lady Moon is a bisento with a DR of 3k4. It grants 2 Free Raises on all Bisento Skill Rolls, which may be used in any way the wielder wishes. The weapon also allows considerable freedom in its use, as it can be used as a brace for all manner of attacks. It therefore grants a Free Raise to any use of Athletics or Jujitsu made while wielding the blade.

LION: IKOMA WAR FAN [3 POINTS]

The Ikoma are an odd Family. They are historians whose own history is conflicted. They possess a conglomeration of duties that seems strangely fractured, yet blends well enough together so that they are, in their own odd way, indispensable to the Lion Clan. They are warriors and poets, wardens and historians, courtiers and spies, and no one seems to know for certain to whom they are speaking when they speak to an Ikoma. This multi-faceted nature is reflected in the weapons they create for their warriors, such as the distinctive Ikoma War Fan. These tessen are immediately recognizable not only for their quality and the distinctive kanji emblazoned upon them, but for the skill with which they are used. Ikoma tacticians value these fans for their durability and the prestige that they confer, by Ikoma courtiers and bards for their simple elegance, and by less scrupulous Ikoma for their deceptively harmless appearance.

Ikoma War Fans are tessen with a DR of 1k1. When carried, they allow their wielder to add his War Fan Skill as a bonus to all Etiquette (Sincerity) Rolls. Those who carry the fan also gain a +2k0 bonus to their Defense Skill Rolls.

LION: BLADE OF THE GOLDEN CRANE [UNIQUE]

Shortly before the Clan War, the Lion and Crane attempted to forestall open conflict between them by exchanging hostages. The Crane fostered to the Lion their Champion's son, Doji Kawanawan, who went on to become Crane Champion himself in the fullness of time. The Lion hostage was a young, relatively unknown man named Matsu Seijuro. Seijuro did well as a student of the Kakita Academy, and upon his return to the Lion quickly established a reputation as the finest duelist of his generation. Before his death, he founded a small dojo to pass on the insights he had gained into the dueling ritual, although to his credit he never passed on any of the secret Kakita Techniques he had mastered. Today, those who maintain his dojo keep the blade in a shrine devoted to Seijuro's memory, and it is used only when the honor of the dojo has been impugned in some fashion. On the rare occasions when it is taken out and used, it has never failed to restore the dojo's honor.

The Blade of the Golden Crane is an exquisite katana with a number of special properties. It has a DR of 3k3 and grants its wielder a Free Raise on any Lore: Iaijutsu Skill Roll. When it is used in an Iaijutsu duel, the individual wielding it may choose to spend 3 Void Points before the duel begins. If he does so, the wielder's ranks in the Akodo or Matsu Bushi Schools are considered to be ranks in the Kakita Bushi School for purposes of resolving the duel, and he may access their Techniques during the duel. This does not take effect until the duel begins and ends the instant the duel is over, or becomes a skirmish. If the Void Points spent to activate this effect are regained prior to the duel beginning, the effect is negated.

MANTIS: THE SWORD OF GALES [UNIQUE]

The Sword of Gales is a unique weapon created through decades of deliberate effort by the Mantis Clan. Aware that the spirit of weapons can awaken through great effort and the will of heroes, the sensei at the Tempest Islands Dojo once had their finest students craft a blade of exceptional quality, and they have passed it on to a young Mantis of promising character for generations now, in the hope that they would awaken the spirit within by their deeds. Each adventurous soul that bore the blade carried it throughout their lifetime, until they perished or retired from the life of an active samurai. Each time, the Tempest Islands sensei retook possession of the blade and then granted it to another young samurai who was unaware of the blade's intended purpose. On occasion, the blade was lost, but each time the masters of Tempest Island sought it out and retrieved it, usually at great trouble and risk. In time, their efforts were successful, and the blade's spirit awoke. However, the spirit was angry to have been disturbed, and its wrathful nature was not what the architects of its awakening had anticipated. In public, the Tempest Islands sensei pronounced The Sword of Gales a success, but they quietly abandoned the notion of attempting to create more such blades.

The Sword of Gales draws its power from the Air magic bound into the steel of its blade. It is a katana with a DR of 3k3, and it is completely immune to any form of decay, whether rust from sea water, or spell effects that cause deterioration in inanimate objects. When The Sword of Gales strikes and wounds an opponent, its wielder may choose to spend a Void Point to target his opponent with the spell Tempest of Air, which is cast as if by a shugenja of School Rank equal to the wielder's School Rank. Once per day, the wielder may spend 2 Void Points to invoke the sword spirit to target himself with the Call Upon the Wind spell, which is also cast as if by a shugenja of the wielder's School Rank.

PHOENIX: KOUKEN BLADE [5 POINTS]

Highly prized by the Phoenix, kouken blades are produced in small numbers each year and granted to the governors of major cities or strongholds throughout the Phoenix provinces. The blades are created by a small group of craftsmen who are also Earth shugenja, and a ritual is performed when the blades are presented to bind them to the location where they are to be used. As a result, the blades draw strength from the earth around their home, and weaken as they are removed from that area. Phoenix lords grant these blades to their most trusted guards and yojimbo.

A kouken blade is a katana with a DR of 3k3. It grants the samurai who wields it a number of Free Raises per day equal to his cumulative School Ranks in Bushi Schools. These Free Raises may be used on any Kenjutsu, Iaijutsu, or Defense Roll made while the blade is carried. These Raises may be used once each and then are lost until sunrise the next day. If the blade is carried more than 5 miles from the stronghold or city where it is located, its DR is reduced to 3k1 and the Free Raise ability is lost until the next sunrise after the blade is returned home.

PHOENIX: SHIBA'S HONOR [UNIQUE]

Shiba's Honor is a sacred wakizashi that has been carried by many Phoenix over the past few centuries, including many Clan Champions and a handful of Masters of Fire. The blade was created by Shiba Yusaku, a legendary 3rd Century artisan who was unexpectedly chosen as the new Phoenix Champion. Yusaku found himself ill-suited to the responsibilities of leadership, and it was only through the guidance of the Soul of Shiba that he avoided disaster for his Clan and himself. Among the oddest elements of his Championship was the assumption by many that, as a Shiba, he was a gifted duelist like so many of his kinsmen. Nothing could have been farther from the truth, as Yusaku had spent far more time crafting blades than wielding them. Guided by the Soul of Shiba, he spent two years crafting a wakizashi that might aid him in improving his decidedly mediocre iaijutsu skills. As was his wont, however, he spent far more time crafting the appearance of great blades than their actual qualities as weapons. The result was a blade that appeared the perfect image of an exquisite duelist's blade, but had little advantage in actually fighting a duel. To his surprise, however, those who saw the blade made certain assumptions regarding his level of skill, and the effect was much the same as if he had actually been a great duelist: he was avoided as a target of potential duels, and as a result he was finally able to overcome his anxiety and settle into his role as Phoenix Clan Champion. Since that time, the blade has come to be regarded as a means of preventing duels rather than winning them. With the Phoenix's general belief in pacifism, this is considered a great advantage.

Shiba's Honor is a normal wakizashi in terms of its construction and ability to inflict damage. The elaborate metalwork of its saya, tsuba, and the intricate inlays along its blade and its hilt, however, give it the appearance of a blade that could very well be an Ancestral Weapon. When in the first stages of an iaijutsu duel, when the two opponents assess one another's capabilities, Shiba's Honor causes any characteristic of its owner's to seem higher when assessed. Skills appear as though they are 4 ranks higher (to a maximum of 10, of course), while Traits and Rings appear 2 ranks higher. This does not actually affect the characteristics for the purposes of resolving the duel, only with regard to the assessment at the beginning. Those opponents bold enough to duel the Phoenix regardless will find that they are not as dangerous as they initially appear.

SCORPION: HAMETSU'S KISS [5 POINTS]

If there is a more insidious weapon than Hametsu's Kiss in the Empire, then surely it must be wielded only by the Shadowlands. The original design for this shameful blade was supposedly taken from plans drawn by one of Shosuro Hametsu's apprentices during the years prior to the Scorpion Clan's attempted coup in Otosan Uchi. The blade is constructed with a small cavity in the upper side of the hilt guard. Into this cavity are placed small capsules of ceramic or other fragile materials. When these capsules are broken, which can be done effortlessly and discreetly by the blade's wielder, small amounts of fluid are forced down the blade's length in small, almost imperceptible grooves that run the entire length of the sword. The most common function of these capsules and grooves, of course, is to quickly coat the blade with a poison of some sort, after which the poison quickly runs off the blade or dries, leaving almost no trace of its existence. The cavity in which the poison capsules are held appear purely ornamental in nature. Essentially, it is impossible to determine the blade's nefarious origin unless one knows for what to look.

Hametsu's Kiss is a tanto with a DR of 2k1. Those wielding the blade gain 2 Free Raises on any Poison Skill Roll. Because there is so little evidence to support the use of poison, the wielder also gains a Free Raise on any Deceit Roll made to conceal the nature of his actions.

SCORPION: NAGAMAKI OF THE ASHALAN [UNIQUE]

Although hardly unique in their land of origin, there are only three of these creations in all of Rokugan, thus making them so rare that they are unique in practical terms. They were first acquired by the Scorpion when their Clan was exiled across the Burning Sands after they were blamed for the disappearance of Emperor Toturi I. During their time in gaijin lands, the Scorpion forged an alliance with an ancient race of sorcerers called the Ashalan. Among the Ashalan's many talents was a gift for craftsmanship—in particular with a mystical substance they called crysteel, a crystalline substance that hardened to a steel-like rigidity when treated with a unique Ashalan ritual. Among the gifts exchanged between the two groups was a small number of crysteel weapons, including three staves that closely resemble traditional nagamaki. These weapons have never been revealed to the Empire at large, but rather are concealed so that they can be used without risk of discovery. One is in the personal arsenal of the Scorpion Champion, although to date only Bayushi Sunetra has ever made use of it. The second is in the custody of the Bayushi Bushi School's

Master Sensei. The men who have served in that position since the Scorpion's return have occasionally used it to train the finest students in each generation. The final weapon remains in the custody of the Shosuro Daimyo, and has been used on many occasions by the infamous Shosuro Yudoka.

A Nagamaki of the Ashalan cannot be broken. It is a nagamaki with a DR of 3k3, with a brilliant crystal blade and a metal-plated wooden shaft. The weapon affects Shadowlands creatures and those bearing the Taint as if it were jade. The crystal somehow absorbs sound to some degree, granting a Free Raise on all Stealth Rolls made by anyone carrying it. The unbreakable crystal also grants a Free Raise on all attacks using the Disarm Maneuver.

UNICORN: FOLDED STEEL SCIMITAR [3 POINTS]

The scimitar is the weapon traditionally used by the Moto nomads of the Burning Sands. Those tribes that joined with the Unicorn Clan centuries ago gradually put away their affection for that curved blade in favor of the katana, as Rokugani swords are far superior in construction and durability. Still, the scimitar was not completely discarded, and remained a popular weapon among eccentric Moto warriors and masterful sensei determined to preserve the ancient ways. It was not until the dwindling Moto Family was revitalized by the legions that rode with Moto Gaheris and followed Shinjo into the Empire that the scimitar once again became a common sight on the hips of Moto warriors. Furthermore, the techniques Rokugani smiths use to fold steel, creating the incredible strength of the katana, has been adopted and used in the forging of traditional Moto scimitars, creating weapons that have the same strength and capacity for damage as the katana wielded by other Families and Clans.

A folded steel scimitar has a DR of 2k3. It requires a unique Bugei Skill, Scimitar, to use properly. It can be welded with Kenjutsu, but those who do so suffer a -2 Ranks penalty when using the scimitar. Because of its heavier weight, it requires 1 less Raise than normal to use the Disarm Maneuver against the wielder of this weapon. For the same reason, using a scimitar to make a Feint Maneuver requires 1 additional Raise.

UNICORN: NIGHT CRYSTAL BLADE [UNIQUE]

Exceptionally rare, these blades were crafted by the notorious shugenja Moto Vordu during his period of study in the City of Night. There, the twisted priest discovered the properties of a substance called night crystal, a unique material created during a magical cataclysm that took place in the city long before mankind ever appeared in the mortal realm. Ever curious, Vordu conducted many experiments with the substance, eventually discovering a crude means of shaping it. Despite the man's obvious but twisted genius, he could find no better use for the crystal than crafting it into weapons. During his time in the city, it is believed that he created more than two dozen weapons of varying types, some from the Moto culture across the Burning Sands. Many of these weapons are believed to have been lost when the City of Night was destroyed, and of those that survived, some inexplicably darkened and ceased to have any unusual abilities at all. Those that have survived and continue to function properly following the loss of the City are considered of utmost value to the Clan and are closely supervised, released only to the most trusted of vassals for the most important missions.

Night crystal is an exceptionally strange material, and in some ways it acts as if it was alive. Any damage to the blade that does not destroy it is gradually repaired itself over time. As long as more than half of the weapon survives a destructive encounter, it will gradually regrow the missing portion over a period of 1 month until it is whole again. No matter how much damage it actually suffered, it will always take a month for this self-repair to complete. A weapon made of night crystal counts as crystal for the purposes of inflicting damage on supernatural targets. A weapon forged of night crystal also adds a +1k0 bonus to the weapon's DR. Such weapons also radiate light on command, roughly equivalent to that of a normal lantern.

SHADOWLANDS: OBSIDIAN WEAPON [5 POINTS]

The direct spiritual opposite of jade, obsidian is a material with a strong natural affinity for corruption. Wounds inflicted by obsidian weapons can sometimes cause infection by the Shadowlands Taint, even far away from that twisted realm. Fortunately, obsidian is brittle, and ill-suited for the forging of weapons. Unfortunately for their enemies, there are those among The Lost who have managed to develop a reliable process by which it may be worked. Deep in the obscene forges of the Chuda Family, bloodsmiths have mastered the rituals necessary to shape obsidian into effective weapons, although even they cannot make them the equal of Rokugani steel. Armed with such monstrosities, the officers of Daigotsu's Lost legions are more dangerous than ever, and now have the opportunity to corrupt those they slay, gaining useful (because they are ultimately expendable) troops in the process.

An obsidian weapon may take almost any form. Any weapon may be created from obsidian, with the obsidian portion in place of metal that would be found in a comparable normal weapon. Thus, an obsidian katana would be crafted almost entirely of obsidian, whereas a naginata would only have an obsidian head atop a wooden shaft. Weapons with no metal components or that are ranged in nature, such as a nunchaku or yumi, cannot be crafted from obsidian. Obsidian weapons gain +0k1 to their DR. Any opponent wounded by an obsidian weapon must make an immediate Raw Earth Roll (TN 15) or gain 1 point of Shadowlands Taint. If a damage roll made using an obsidian weapon has more than 1 die explode, the weapon has shattered and become useless, although the damage is inflicted as normal. Lost characters who possess this Advantage and whose weapon is shattered may gain a replacement by seeking out the Temple of Venom in the City of the Lost.

IMPERIAL: OTOMO WAKIZASHI [2 POINTS]

Warriors are few and far between among the Otomo Family. Although they have served the Emperor for centuries, they do so in a considerably different capacity than most samurai. The Otomo were originally charged with protecting the Emperor's interests by pitting the Great Clans against one another, ensuring that a union between one or more would never rise against the throne in the manner the first Gozoku did. But since the Toturi Dynasty has proven less interested in such a purpose than the Hantei — and indeed it hardly seems necessary given the constant turmoil that has plagued the Empire during their reign — the Otomo seem content to play the role of hosts and guests, allies and foils,

constantly changing their agenda to suit those with whom they interact. While few Otomo carry katana, they are known for their exquisitely crafted wakazashi, which serve both as a badge of rank and reminder of exactly whom their opponents face.

The exceptional craftsmanship of both the Otomo wakizashi and the saya in which it rests impresses all those who see it. Anyone of Imperial blood who carries such a blade is considered to have +0.5 Ranks of Status. The bearer of such a blade may add his Status to the total of all Courtier and Etiquette Rolls.

MINOR CLANS: GOLDEN ORIOLE KATANA [5 POINTS]

Since the Tsi Family was created, those ronin smiths have been well known throughout the Empire as among the finest craftsmen of their kind. While not as sturdy as the Kaiu blades or as graceful as those created by the Kakita swordsmiths, the Tsi blades approach both in quality and are a magnificent blend of the finer traits of each. When Daigotsu laid waste to Otosan Uchi in 1159, the Tsi were among those left to their own devices amid the ruins of the once great city. Lacking the resources to relocate, they attempted to do what they could, and eked out a meager existence until they were discovered by a contingent of Phoenix and Dragon samurai. The Daimyo Tsi Zutaka had recovered a valuable blade dating back to the Hantei Dynasty and it was presented to the Empress with the Dragon's patronage. The Tsi were rewarded with an appointment as a Minor Clan, the Oriole. Now the Tsi have vastly increased resources and they have received commissions to craft a number of their finest blades as gifts to many of the Empress's allies in the Court. Thus far, none have been disappointed, and the Tsi have begun crafting such blades for their allies in the Minor Clan Alliance as well.

A Golden Oriole Katana is a katana with a DR of 3k3. Possession of one grants a +0.5 Rank bonus to the Status of a Minor Clan samurai, and a Free Raise on Awareness Rolls for Great Clan samurai when they are interacting with bushi.

MINOR CLANS: MIYAKO'S NAGINATA [UNIQUE]

Toturi Miyako was among the most famous Minor Clan personages in the Empire. Until her recent marriage to the Scorpion Clan Champion, she was the daughter of perhaps the Empire's most beloved hero, the heir apparent to the position of Monkey Clan Daimyo, and the commander of the illustrious First Legion, the Imperial Legion once commanded by Toturi Tsudao. Although Miyako's marriage to Bayushi Paneki was a great opportunity for her Family and Clan, as it drew the Monkey even closer to their Great Clan ally and brought considerable resources into the small Clan, her abduction by Paneki's enemies prior to the wedding resulted in a grievous injury to her throat that severely damaged her voice and thus ended her command of the First Legion. Despite her unfortunate circumstances, Miyako has embraced her fate without sorrow, as a true samurai should, and as part of her entry into the Scorpion she has turned over her arsenal of weapons to her brothers among the Monkey. Among these weapons is the naginata she carried while serving under Toturi Tsudao. The weapon was a gift from Tsudao, who had it crafted by the finest Imperial smiths specifically for her friend.

Miyako's Naginata is a naginata with a DR of 2k3. Anyone wielding it rolls gains a +1k1 bonus to all Initiative Rolls. The weapon is extremely sturdy and balanced, and allows for considerable athleticism when wielding it, granting a Free Raise on any Athletics Roll made while wielding it. Finally, anyone wielding the naginata may spend up to 3 Void Points to boost damage when using the weapon's damage boost ability.

RONIN: THE BLADE OF SUN TAO [UNIQUE]

Sun Tao is revered by ronin throughout the Empire, not only as one of the greatest tactical minds of all time but also as a demonstration of the heights to which a ronin can climb. The brilliant tactician gradually earned the respect of each Great Clan and was permitted to study with them before he departed Rokugan in an attempt to learn the secrets of cultures beyond the Northern Wall Mountains. He never returned, but his blade has been kept in the ronin city of Nanashi Mura ever since in the event that his descendants might one day return to retrieve it. The Eyes of Nanashi, the ronin warriors who defend and protect the city, consider Sun Tao's blade among their greatest treasures, and would gladly sacrifice themselves to prevent its loss. Recent revelations regarding Sun Tao's fate after he departed the Empire suggests that he is revered by more than one warrior culture beyond the Burning Sands, which has made those tasked with protecting the blade somewhat apprehensive about others who might seek to take it from them because they consider it sacred as well.

The Blade of Sun Tao is a katana with a DR of 4k3. It confers on its wielder a number of Free Raises per day equal to his Battle Skill. These Free Raises may be used on any Defense, Kenjutsu, or Battle Skill Rolls.

NAGA: BLADES OF THE TEMPLE [4 POINTS]

The preferred weapons of the elite Temple Guardians, the Blades of the Temple are painstakingly forged blades perfectly matched in every respect. The process is incredibly exacting, and it requires months longer for a Naga craftsman to create than a typical blade. The product cannot be argued with, however, as the blades are completely indistinguishable from one another. Their weight, curvature, and dimensions are flawless, and make it far easier to practice the Temple Guardian fighting style of wielding twin blades.

Blades of the Temple are considered standard Naga blades, except that they have a DR of 4k2. Any Kenjutsu Rolls made with the blades gain a bonus of +1k0, and all off-hand penalties are negated.

APPENDIX:

THE TEST OF THE EMERALD CHAMPION



Short of an Emperor's coronation, there is no greater event in Rokugan than the Test of the Emerald Champion. This grand tournament is typically held only once per generation, as the victor's appointment to the position of Emerald Champion is for his or her lifetime. When these rare occasions do occur, virtually everything across the land comes to a halt, as each of the Great Clans searches high and low for their finest samurai to attend the competition in hopes of gaining one of the most powerful positions in the entire Empire.

This appendix details the ritual and tournament associated with the Test of the Emerald Champion. Everything necessary to run the Test as part of an ongoing campaign is included, as well as several subplots which can be added to make it a more three-dimensional experience. While the setting of this scenario assumes that it takes place in Rokugan's modern era, with family names and mechanical options included appropriately, there are no references to recent historical events included as part of this description. Hopefully, that will allow this scenario to be included in any campaign regardless of its time period, with only minimal modifications being necessary.

Synopsis

The focus for this adventure is the Emerald Championship. This event is unlikely to be held again during the characters' lifetime, and as such is deserving of their full and undivided attention. That the characters are able to attend such a momentous occasion should be considered a great honor. To actually participate is an opportunity that can shape a samurai's life forever. Although the opportunities for interaction with extremely high-ranking samurai are present throughout this adventure, and thus difficult to script without railroading, the adventure should follow this rough outline:

- The characters arrive on the Plains of Thunder and explore the area, interacting the other guests and perhaps the competitors themselves.

- The evening before the tournament's first rounds begins, the individual Clan delegations present meet privately to discuss their focus for the tournament. At the same time, a meeting of the assembled Imperial personnel takes place, which may be suitable for non-contestant characters.
- The tournament begins at dawn, and continues until dusk. The purpose of the first day of competition is to determine which contestants will be selected to advance to the iaijutsu tournament the following day. It is the iaijutsu tournament that ultimately decides who will advance to the position of Emerald Champion.
- The second day of the tournament sees the beginning of the iaijutsu tournament. Depending upon how many contestants are selected for this round, this can take up to several days in order to give the contestants an opportunity to rest between duels.
- At dawn on the day following the tournament's conclusion, there is a massive ceremony held wherein the Emperor bestows a personal oath of fealty to the victor, imparting him with the power, responsibilities, and trappings of the Emerald Champion.

Arriving in the Plains of Thunder

The Test of the Emerald Champion is always held in the same location, barring unusual edicts from Emperors with no particular preference for adhering to tradition. The Plains of Thunder are rolling, uninterrupted plains that lie between the Scorpion lands to the west and the vast Shinomen Mori to the east. Despite that the region is remarkably fertile, it is not used to cultivate crops of any sort. This is due to the fact that the entire region is considered sacred to Osano-Wo, the Fortune of Fire and Thunder. Why this is so has been forgotten by history, or at least it is not widely known. But if anyone can be said to understand the Thunderer's will, then it is the monks who serve the Order of Thunder, and who are traditionally responsible for organizing and running the Test of the Emerald Champion. They are strange, militant individ-

uals with more in common with the average Crab bushi than with other members of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, but none can question their flawless execution of this most sacred tournament.

The Plains of Thunder are not a particularly entertaining place. There is virtually nothing to attract one's attention away from the endless sea of grass, unless one is particularly interested in the occasional outcropping of rocks that dot the countryside. The monks who oversee the tournament for the Emperor seem to prefer this, believing that it maintains focus and solemnity on the part of tournament participants, qualities that are absolutely necessary given the importance of the event. Still, despite their wishes to the contrary, a number of bold merchants and artisans tend to brave their disapproval and set up impromptu tents or other venues in order to sell their wares to the massive number of attendants. Chief among these are merchants selling food and drink. Most Clans bring their own supplies to feed their contingents, but they generally consists of travel rations and can hardly be called appetizing. The chefs in attendance typically serve only the Imperials and their guests. For everyone else, it is either live on travel rations for however long the tournament lasts, or purchase something from the local merchants. Some of the more interesting locations at the tournament site include:

Hobuo, Merchant of the Exotic. A vassal of the Ide family, Hobuo spends most of his year traveling a circuit of small but prosperous villages in the southern Unicorn and western Scorpion provinces. He does not make a tremendous profit from his sales; instead, Hobuo's chief asset to his superiors is his ability to move in Scorpion lands unmolested, giving him pretty much free rein to observe goings-on and collect intelligence. His presence at the tournament serves to keep up his pretense that he is nothing more than a money-hungry merchant. He does have an interesting selection of everyday items, however, including a wide variety of exquisite fabrics with unusual patterns. Hobuo claims they are from the Yobanjin tribes to the north, but no one can substantiate this claim (and if challenged on the point, he will either bluff or sweet-talk his way around his own lack of proof). Regardless, a kimono from such materials would be striking indeed.

Shiba Tomaru, Artisan. Many would criticize the appearance of humble artisan Shiba Tomaru at the Emerald Championship. There are those who say that his appearance here and the display of his work is a blatant attempt to secure sponsorship or worse, to procure money for his works — both actions unworthy of an artisan who is also a samurai. While neither of these is entirely incorrect, they are also not Tomaru's primary purpose in coming to the tournament. The truth is that he adores the beauty of nature, but is fearful of traveling into the wilds by himself. The tournament is a wonderful chance to capture the essence of the gorgeous plains without having to fear for his life because of predators or bandits. If someone wishes to purchase his works or offer him a lucrative sponsorship because of what they see in his tent, then it is simply a happy coincidence.

Yasuki Akiren. This wily old man travels with a heavy, reinforced cart that looks as though it is capable of hauling boulders, much less a merchant's wares. Akiren is capable of that most valuable Yasuki trait: creating a demand that only he can supply. Through unknown means, Akiren has convinced several highly placed individuals in the Scorpion and Crane courts that the sculptures he sells, which are taken from rocks and wood upon which Crab bushi practice their *tetsubo kata*, are the newest trend in modern art. Akiren makes no attempt to conceal the

origin of his pieces; rather, it is one of his primary selling points. He refers to the pieces as "chaos sculptures," or "the art of destruction." He seems well aware that the novelty of his wares is the only thing maintaining interest in them, and that it will soon fade. He fully intends to make as much money as possible in the interim, and then use the spoils to finance his next great venture.

Beyond the tournament grounds, there is little to attract the attention of characters attending the event, although for those who don't mind a bit of travel, there are a number of interesting locations within one or two days' ride of the tournament.

Shinden Osano-Wo. The monks who run the Emerald Championship make their home in a vast temple several days' ride to the south. There are hundreds of monks in study there, and they are almost certainly the most dangerous of any monastic sect anywhere in the Empire. While there is no reason for anyone to attack the temple in the first place, any who did would certainly find the struggle exponentially more difficult than they anticipated, and ultimately not worth the effort.

Ryoko Owari Toshi. Ryoko Owari has often been called the largest city in the Empire, although the rapid growth of Toshi Ranbo has recently threatened that claim. Still, this city is one of Rokugan's major trade and population centers, and has virtually anything and everything that one would wish to purchase — plus an incredible variety of things that one would never wish to purchase.

Pokau. Smaller by far than Ryoko Owari, Pokau is a major trade center for goods traveling to and from the Unicorn Lands, and from there on north of the mountains or south to the Crab Lands. Most merchants that attend the tournament to sell their wares are based in Pokau, and as such goods can be generally found there for a better price, away from the captive customer base at the Emerald Championship.

Shiro no Shosuro. The Shosuro family's ancestral home is a dangerous and confusing place for visitors. It is rare that the Shosuro host a court session, purely because so many find their architecture, demeanor — and many other things about them — wildly disturbing.

Shiro Usagi. The ancestral home of the Hare Clan (such as it is) Shiro Usagi is among the closest man-made landmarks to the tournament scene. Unfortunately, it is also among the most inhospitable. The Hare have been extremely paranoid of outsiders for the last generation, owing to the trials undergone by their daimyo, Usagi Ozaki, in his youth. Needless to say, anyone visiting the Hare lands will be subjected to intense scrutiny until the Usagi are comfortable in the certainty that they are not Kolat agents. This certainty would likely not come in the short time it takes for the Championship to be conducted.

Attendants

In addition to the contestants and the officials and functionaries conducting the tournament, there are hundreds or even thousands of spectators who come from all across the Empire to observe the Emerald Championship. Several Clan Champions will doubtless be in attendance, as will numerous representatives from the Imperial Court, Family and provincial Daimyo, and prominent military officers from all different Clans. Those Clan Champions who are unable to attend the tournament typically

send a representative of some sort, either a personal attendant from their court or one of the aforementioned Family Daimyo who have been authorized to speak in their name at the tournament.

And, of course, there is the Emperor.

Despite his obvious presence at the tournament, the Emperor is hardly approachable to the average samurai. He has numerous attendants with him at all times and never less than two dozen guards within 100 feet of him. Attendance at such tournaments is considered a high priority, since (obviously) there is at present no Emerald Champion to personally oversee the Emperor's well being while attending the tournament. Unless the characters are Emerald Magistrates of considerable rank or personal attendants to a Clan Champion, they will be unable to approach the Emperor unless summoned.

Opening Ceremonies

The opening ceremony for the Test of the Emerald Champion is equal parts celebration and somber ceremony. The event begins with a massive display of martial prowess by the brothers of the Order of Thunder. The display, which appears for everything in the world like an extremely well choreographed play conducted by the Empire's finest performers, is actually a spontaneous affair conducted with extraordinary grace and dexterity. This display continues from dawn until the sun reaches its zenith in mid-day, and then the true ceremony begins.

The opening speech is normally delivered by the Miya Daimyo, who traditionally serves as the Imperial Herald. After the Brothers of Thunder withdraw from the dais, their display finally at an end, he steps forward and surveys the crowd, inclining his head in respect of the many important personages within the assembled spectators. After a pregnant pause to command the attention of the throng, he delivers a short but dignified address to declare the official beginning of the tournament. With minor variations down through the ages (tailored by different Heralds to suit their temperaments), the speech has always been worded as follows:

"By the order of his eminence, the Son of Heaven, the Miya, Otomo, and Seppun Families, first among the Emperor's servants, convene this most sacred of tournaments. Those among you honored to have been given the right to compete shall do so for that greatest of earthly joys, the rapture of serving the Emperor as his personal Champion. Let those who have been selected step forth. The Test of the Emerald Champion shall begin now."

With the opening ceremony concluded, the judges overseeing the various tests announce the order in which the contestants will be seen, and the tests will begin within the hour. The pace will be swift, as the judges consider it part of their duty to determine if the candidates are capable of handling stress. If they cannot deal with the tests, after all, they will hardly be suitable for the duties associated with the Championship itself, after all.

The Tests of Worth

Because of the manner in which Clans are permitted to field contestants, there can be as many as three dozen competitors in the Emerald Championship. Obviously, this number is not acceptable for the purposes of establishing a single-elimination iaijutsu

tournament. The most that can be fielded for such an event, in order to fit an appropriate means of reducing the field to two competitors, is 32. It is not uncommon for there to be less than that number of entrants, however, and in such cases the next acceptable number is of course sixteen. In the event that there are more than sixteen competitors, but less than 32, then the Imperial judges must determine who is worthy to advance to the final stage. This is accomplished through a series of tests known simply as the Tests of Worth.

The Tests of Worth are similar in many respects to the tests one might undergo at a gempukku ceremony, such as the Topaz Championship. The difficulty of these tests is significantly greater, however, as the Imperial Family members and Brothers of Thunder that oversee the event both agree that only those who can pass the most stringent of standards should even be permitted to attempt to attain the Championship. There are relatively few tests, usually half a dozen, that cover the areas most needed by an Emerald Champion.

TRIAL: Etiquette

JUDGE: Otomo Hoketuhime, Daimyo of the Otomo

PRIMARY ROLL: Awareness/Courtier and Awareness/Etiquette

This Test is intense, and is designed to gauge not only a contestant's knowledge of appropriate social response and interaction, but also their ability to maintain their composure under uncomfortable circumstances — and the Otomo excel at creating such circumstances. The situations that the Otomo simulate for the purposes of testing their contestants include the following:

- A trade negotiation between two Great Clans that is going poorly, and which requires mediation. One Clan is the Clan of the prospective Champion's birth, and the other a traditional enemy currently laboring under a tentative truce. With the two Clans at odds, the potential Champion must satisfy the needs of his own Clan while not overly favoring them. At the same time, he must placate the needs of his once-enemy and maintain their relationship with his parent Clan without placing his family in a position of weakness.
- The potential Champion must deal with the representatives of two prominent duellists in the aftermath of a heated but unsanctioned duel that has left one injured, possibly maimed. The injured party initiated the duel over a matter of honor, in particular an openly insulting act committed by the other in front of credible witnesses. The second duelist, while clearly guilty of a questionable and dishonorable act, was victorious in the duel and, as the challenged party, is only guilty of accepting a challenge without sanction. The representatives of both duellists are requesting mediation to determine how the matter will proceed, who will be punished for what, and who will be exonerated.
- The contestant is given the potentially unsavory task of arranging a marriage for a young and highly coveted woman of Imperial lineage. Her hand in marriage is of tremendous value to all the Clans, and her suitors are numerous. When presented with the basic facts of numerous suitors, the competitor must find a means of selecting the one that will most benefit the Imperial Families, while simultaneously avoiding the deceptive schemes enacted by the Clans sponsoring each suitor.

TRIAL: Investigation

JUDGE: Seppun Katsura, Sensei of the Seppun Magistrates

PRIMARY ROLL: Perception/Investigation

This is by far the most elaborate Test conducted in preparation for the Iaijutsu tournament. These scenarios are prepared years in advance by the Seppun magistrates, for no other reason than to ensure that no one will have access to the information in question. There was a brief period when Shosuro actors were used in the execution of these scenarios, but that practice was discontinued when complaints were lodged by other Great Clans over the potential for Scorpion contenders to have prior knowledge of the test's contents. This protest led to a rather unpleasant series of battles with the Scorpion, in which the accuser fared poorly. Although the matter was resolved with a rather elaborate apology in the Imperial Court, the Imperial families have refrained from using outside sources on general principles ever since. Some of them are taken from heinous crimes that the Seppun have investigated and resolved over the centuries, while others are teaching scenarios concocted for the purposes of training the Seppun's most advanced magistrate candidates. In each case, there are numerous individuals on hand who have been supplied with information possessed by individuals present in the scenario as presented to the contestants. Likewise, there are physical objects present that are described in the scenario, and these may be examined at the contestant's discretion if that is their desire. These scenarios include:

- A murder is committed within the confines of a small castle where court is being held during a terrible snowstorm, preventing the arrival of new attendants as well as the departure of current guests and staff. The contestant may ask questions of attendants, provided they are phrased in an appropriate manner, and will receive appropriate answers. The contestant must then reach a conclusion about the method, motive and identity of the murderer based on the evidence he has compiled. The judges will then compare his work against the scenario creators' notes. TNs for rolls made during this scenario vary from 15 to 25. A minimum of three successful rolls are necessary to gather sufficient information to make a correct determination, although role-playing may be a preferable means of resolving this.
- A bride is poisoned and perishes at her own wedding. The situation is complex because it is known that neither bride nor groom entered the marriage willingly, but rather did so for the betterment of their Family and Clan. Furthermore, both had paramours that were silently opposed to the wedding, although these objections were hardly secrets. As per the scenario above, the situation calls for multiple rolls, in this case four, with varying TNs from 15 to 30 before a proper determination can be made.
- A warehouse in a major city has exploded and burned nearly to ash. No one was harmed, but the loss of its contents threatens famine for an entire province. The Clan suffering this indignity is currently embroiled in a fierce border skirmish with a neighboring Clan, and is likewise in the process of rice trade negotiations with a third Clan. Thus, numerous individuals have reason to destroy the assets in this manner, and with the fire there is precious little in the

way of clues to follow. The only option is a series of interviews with involved parties as well as suspects and victims. This scenario requires a total of three successful Investigation Skill Rolls, with TNs varying from 20 to 30, to arrive at a proper conclusion.

TRIAL: Law

JUDGE: Miya Shoin, Imperial Herald

PRIMARY ROLL: Intelligence/Lore: Law

Without a doubt the most difficult of the Tests, this particular trial requires an almost encyclopedic knowledge of Rokugani law in order for contestants to succeed. This Test alone is where many decisions are made regarding whether a particular competitor will pass on to the Iaijutsu tournament or be turned away. As the Emperor's heralds, the Miya Family is expected to be intimately familiar with every possible facet of the Emperor's laws, as well as the laws that govern the provinces of every Clan in whose lands they are expected to travel. Which is, of course, every Clan in the Empire.

In this trial, each contestant is asked a series of questions. The number varies according to how many contestants are in the tournament and how many require elimination before the Championship can proceed to the next level. The first few tend to be fairly straightforward, although still difficult, and the difficulty progresses from there. Sample questions might include the following:

SIMPLE:

- What crimes are considered grounds for execution when committed by a samurai? (TN 15; Answer: treason, performing maho, theft committed against the Emperor or Imperial Families.)
- What are the three principle duties of the Emerald Champion? (TN 15; Answer: protection of the Emperor, enforcement of the Emperor's laws, administration of the Emperor's magistrates and armies.)
- What city has the highest number of Emerald Magistrates stationed within it, barring the Imperial City? (TN 10; Answer: Ryoko Owari Toshi)
- What is the only Clan granted the legal right to maintain a dojo for the instruction of both Emerald Magistrates and Imperial Legionnaires? (TN 15; Answer: the Crane Clan)

MODERATE:

- What is the bare minimum penalty for theft from a samurai, committed by a heimen, in the city of Ryoko Owari Toshi? (TN 20; Answer: public beating by the samurai victimized by the theft in question)
- What position is legally responsible for the instruction of new Emerald Magistrates, and reports directly to the Emerald Champion in such matters? (TN 25; Answer: The Ruby Champion, Sensei of the Ruby Dojo)
- In the event that the Emerald Champion and his command staff become incapacitated or otherwise inaccessible, to whom does Imperial law cede control of the Imperial Legions? (TN 20; Answer: The Lion Clan Champion)

- Imperial law provides clear license to ronin groups to administrate two cities in the Empire. While others may be so administrated, only two are sanctioned by law. What two cities are so specified? (TN 20; Answer: Nanashi Mura and Toshi sano Kanemochi Kaeru — the City of the Rich Frog, absorbed by the Lion in 1159).

DIFFICULT:

- Which province has the harshest penalties for the act of slander throughout the entire Empire? (TN 30; Answer: the Ichigun Province, in the Daidoji Lands.)
- Which Minor Clan has received Imperial sanction to prevent the act of samurai working alongside heimen from being considered a criminally negligent act within its provinces? (TN 25; Answer: the Sparrow Clan)
- What legal rights do the monks belonging to the Brotherhood of Shinsei possess with regard to the wielding of weapons? (TN 25; Answer: Monks are permitted to wield any weapon save the katana, although generally anything containing steel portions is considered unusual and can be grounds for temporary detention until such time as their intentions are determined.)

TRIAL: Leadership

JUDGE: Toturi Shigekawa, Commander of the Seventh Legion

PRIMARY ROLL: Various Traits paired with the Battle and Games (Go) Skills

The Seppun have an ancient saying that leadership is the quality that separates officers from soldiers, just as it separates the Seppun from the Great Clans. While they rarely express this platitude in the company of others, it is a philosophy they embrace whole-heartedly, and they enjoy fostering it in others. In this particular test, they present a number of tactical situations, most of which appear largely hopeless, and observe the responses the contestants put forth. In most cases, some sort of victory is theoretically possible through one means or another. Even if the contestant cannot pull victory from defeat, their reaction to defeat is likewise important to the judges, and may be given special consideration depending upon the outcome of their test. Several of the scenarios presented to the contestants are taken from historical battles, but are usually modified in the off chance that the conflicts in question, while obscure, may be familiar to the individual undergoing the test. The tests usually take one of two forms, and the contestants are permitted to choose which test they undergo.

- A go board set up with a particular scenario is typically the most popular choice for contestants. Go is a complex game with numerous subtle tactical and strategic choices to consider at any given time. This can prove a thoroughly rigorous and demanding trial if the competitor is not skilled in the game's subtleties.
- The second choice is a more literal, and yet simultaneously more abstract, embodiment of a battle scenario. It involves a large table with a carefully created topographical map, complete with some three-dimensional representations of major landmarks and geographical features. There are a number of small markers that denote various units, including infantry, cavalry, and archers, among others. The com-

petitor is given a number of units and presented with a situation wherein, typically, his forces are outnumbered or outmaneuvered, and must resolve the situation in a suitable manner. There are no hard and fast rules governing the interaction of units in this particular case, with the general rule of thumb being that outnumbered units or flanked units are defeated out of hand, with only modest losses to opposing units.

TRIAL: Resource Prioritization

JUDGE: Miya Konoshiko, Administrator of the Emperor's Blessing

PRIMARY ROLL: Intelligence paired with either Etiquette, Commerce or Battle

While not considered a high priority by the judges, this Test is designed to weed out any contestants who would prove grossly incompetent in administering an organization as large and complex as the Emerald Magistrates. It is fortunate that this Test is the least important among the Tests of Worth, because it is frequently the one that causes the contestants the most difficulty. This is typically due to the sheer degree of unfamiliarity most samurai have with administration and resource management; ironically, this is a capability in which a reasonably successful heimin merchant could probably outdo most samurai. Those with military staff experience will be at a distinct advantage in this regard, as they have at least some prior exposure to the concepts in play here. Sample tests placed before contestants could include the following:

- Allocation of limited magistrate personnel to multiple areas, including both high crime regions such as Ryoko Owari and the home of prestigious servants of the Emperor who have requested protection from Emerald Magistrates. Test: Intelligence/Etiquette, TN 25 to avoid offense or gross mismanagement of available staff.
- Allocation of limited troops for the defense of an important geographical area. There is no immediate, impending threat, and so this is not strictly a military matter. Instead, it involves making long-term plans that can give the area a reasonable level of security within a limited budget. Test: Intelligence/Battle, TN 25.
- During a particularly dismal winter, supplies run low and it seems obvious that there are many outposts that will not survive unscathed. With limited resources, the contestant must determine how they will be allocated among the outposts in order to ensure the maximum efficiency of surviving troops. Test: Intelligence/Commerce, TN 20.

TRIAL: Martial Ability

JUDGE: Seppun Motaru, Captain of the Imperial Guard

PRIMARY ROLL: Agility/Kenjutsu, and two other Weapon Skills

This is by far the simplest of the Tests to pass, and there are no recorded instances of any potential competitor ever having failed to advance due to their performance in this trial. The test is not particularly complicated at all, and pits the competitor against a pair of young guardsmen, hand-selected for the task by the Head Judge based on their demonstrated weapons skills. The first round has the contestant face his opponents with bokken and padded armor. The second permits the contestant to choose any weapon other than the katana, which all three must wield. The

third and final round sees use of a weapon chosen by the judge. Peasant weapons are never used, but polearms, staves, spears, and knives have all seen use before. Since the Unicorn returned to the Empire, it is considered exceptionally poor form to select a gaijin weapon to use, and can result in considerable dishonor. Similarly, the Mantis are strongly discouraged from selecting weapons it is considered inappropriate for samurai to wield, as it would insult both the judge and the opponents, who would suffer dishonor for wielding such a weapon. The supplies for this particular test includes multiple copies of virtually every acceptable weapon wielded in Rokugan, all of which have been reproduced in wooden form similar to the bokken (see p. 13), so that no one suffers unnecessary injury before the proper tournament begins. Padded armor is also available to further reduce injuries, and is available in both light and heavy styles to accommodate the various fighting styles of Clan Schools.

The Evening Celebrations

Despite that those who failed to move on to the proper Championship will feel nothing like celebrating, and that those who do advance will be busy preparing themselves for the trials to come, celebrations will occur all the same. The Clans whose representatives are still in contention for the position will be celebrating in their kinsmen's stead. Others may be celebrating as well, perhaps because an enemy was eliminated from the running, or perhaps because an ally advanced. Regardless, there will be many enjoying one another's company in impromptu tent sake houses and gathering places throughout the evening. The following are merely a few examples of the sort of thing that will be going on:

The Emperor's Court. The Emperor will of course be holding court, barring only extraordinary circumstances. All representatives to the Imperial Court are welcome to join him, including their attendants and any Clan Champions or their proxies who may be in attendance.

The Laughing Crab. Little more than a large tent expanded by several smaller tents, the Laughing Crab is the only thing that passes for a sake house within a day's ride of the tournament grounds. While the Brothers of Thunder and the Imperial families hardly approve of the presence of such influences at so sacred a tournament, it is left alone so long as the revelry does not cause any great disturbance. Any rabble-rousers or troublemakers from the various Clan assemblies will almost certainly be found here, and the only thing that prevents outright violence among the hot-headed among them is the very serious threat of retribution from their superiors.

The Test of the Emerald Champion

The Tests of Worth traditionally only take up the first day of the Championship, although if the field of contestants is particularly crowded it may require a second day to finish selecting those who will advance to the final tournament. As mentioned above, the iaijutsu tournament can take many days to complete depending upon the number of participants, but it always begins in the late afternoon of the day immediately after the Tests have been completed. This is an ancient tradition begun with the first Hantei, wherein the tournament begins with the sun low in the sky, hanging behind the Emperor's dais so that all in attendance may see the Imperial Person basking in the glowing radiance of Lord Sun shining down upon him. Since this event is, for many, the only

time they will ever have the honor to lay eyes upon their Emperor, this effect takes away many a breath among the audience.

The iaijutsu tournament is fairly typical of its type. It adheres to the most rigid traditions, and allows for no deviance. Contestants are never expected to participate in more than three duels per day, although realistically they rarely face that many opponents in a single day. Duels are to the first blood, without exception. Causing the death of your opponent, even if purely accidental, is considered incredibly dishonorable and is grounds for immediate expulsion from the tournament. Those responsible for such incidents are often expected to commit seppuku for the shame they bring their Clan, and some have even been cast out as ronin after being given a wooden blade to perform the three cuts. Maiming your opponent is considered almost equally dishonorable, and may also result in disqualification, depending on the decision of the judges. Generally speaking, it is considered dishonorable to shed unnecessary blood in the Emperor's presence, and that alone is sufficient to keep even the most bloodthirsty competitors in check the majority of the time.

One tradition that is not uniformly implemented is the method by which competitors may have their wounds treated. Strictly speaking, the tournament's tradition dictates that only healers provided by the officiators can be used to mend any damage suffered by contestants advancing to the next round. This became a concern early in the tournament's history when a Phoenix contestant was accused of receiving assistance in the way of enhancing spells cast by a shugenja who was ostensibly healing her. The accusation was eventually proven to be true, although the contestant was herself unaware of the interference, and committed seppuku in disgrace after the shugenja was executed for his deception. The tradition has not been strictly observed over the years, but was resurrected in 1158 when Hantei Naseru oversaw the tournament following the death of his father, Toturi I. This resulted in the disqualification of Shiba Aikune, whom many still believe could have defeated Yasuki Hachi in the final match and become the Emerald Champion, if only he had had the opportunity.

The Fealty Ceremony

At dawn on the day following the completion of the iaijutsu tournament, the Emperor offers a personal oath of fealty to his newly selected Champion. All samurai have taken an oath to defend and serve the Emperor, of course, but the opportunity to be offered such service by the Emperor in person is a rare honor than only a few in every generation ever receive. This is considered among the most sacred ceremonies in all the Empire, and even to witness it is a great honor. First, the Emperor ascends the dais, backlit by the glory of Lord Sun. The Clan Champions in attendance, his greatest servants, stand on a platform to the side, their heads bowed in reverence. The Miya, Otomo, and Seppun Daimyo — those blessed with the honor of serving the Emperor directly — stand on a platform on the other side, their heads likewise bowed. The new Champion himself stands directly in front of the Emperor. After a pause to survey the scene (and the shrewdest occupants of the Emerald Throne have known how to milk the drama of the moment), he speaks — the one and only time that most of those in attendance will ever get to hear his voice.

The traditional wording of the oath is as follows:

"Throughout history, the Emerald Tradition has been defended by the august traditions of our warriors. Today I am pleased to offer an oath to the newest of these warriors, and though I will greatly miss his predecessor, I am comforted by the knowledge that my well-being shall be defended by one such as this."

The Emperor then turns to his new Emerald Champion and beckons him forward. The Champion steps forward and kneels as the Emperor calls his name and addresses him directly:

"Will you pledge to serve, by your life and honor, so long as you live? Will you defend my name and all that is mine with your service and your life, if necessary, until such time as you are no longer fit for duty or until the end of your days?"

It is up to the new Champion at this point to give his assent — clearly, so that all may hear, but not so loudly or boldly as to seem disrespectful to the Emperor. Yasuki Hachi has been quoted as saying shortly after he took up the office that he viewed his acceptance of the oath of fealty as the last true test of the tournament.

"Then rise, my Emerald Champion, and accept the badges of your office. Yours is a sacred duty, and it begins immediately."

Shouts of approval from the crowd at this point — to demonstrate respect for the Emperor, if nothing else — are part of the tournament's storied tradition.

Working Subplots Into a Tournament Adventure

You may be asking about how to include more specific subplots that might be going on concurrently with the Championship, and why we have not mentioned any at this point. As a GM, you always want to make things more interesting for your players and their characters, right? But in all honesty, such things generally do not occur at the Test of the Emerald Champion. Who among the Great Clans would be willing to risk disrupting such a prestigious and noble event? Who would distract their focus from supporting their particular contender for such a powerful position? The answer: no one.

Instead, including the Emerald Championship in an existing campaign can serve two functional purposes. First and foremost, it can be an opportunity for existing characters to take part in something truly epic. Because of the rarity and importance of the event, to take part in the Test of the Emerald Champion is to participate in Rokugani history as it is being made. It can also serve to afford characters an unprecedented opportunity to interact with the most powerful people in the Empire, including the Emperor himself. If done correctly, the encounter can be both, allowing bushi characters to compete for an incredible opportunity while providing a similar chance for courtiers, shugenja, magistrates and the like at the same time.

The Emerald Champions

Although the information contained within this chapter is not restricted to any particular timeline in its usefulness, the most recent half-century of Rokugan's history (with regard to present events as depicted in the remainder of this work) have seen several different Champions come and go. The following are the most recent Champions to serve their Emperor, along with their terms of service.

???? – 1123	Doji Satsume
1129 – 1130	Kakita Toshimoko
1132 – 1158	Seppun Toshiken
1158 – 1168	Yasuki Hachi

Contenders

Obviously, the position of Emerald Champion is highly coveted by every Clan in the Empire. Each Great Clan will go to enormous lengths to ensure that one of their number holds the position, even though it has traditionally been dominated by the Crane Clan. Because of this interest, there are traditionally a number of controls in place to ensure that only the very finest from each Clan attends. Each Great Clan is afforded a maximum of three contestants. Most Clans tend to send a full compliment, although there are occasions when the Clans wish to make a strong statement about their faith in their representative, and send but a single entrant. Minor Clans are afforded only a single contestant each, and many frequently choose not to send one out of fear that they will only humiliate themselves by attempting to compete with the Great Clans. Minor Clans ruled by shugenja families in particular are extremely reluctant to send anyone to such an illustrious competition because of their fear that a lack of a strong bushi tradition will result in embarrassment. The Imperial Families are permitted entrance at the same rate as Great Clans, although typically the Seppun are the only ones who participate. There have been a few occasions when the Miya have participated, but no Otomo is ever known to have enter the contest. The Toturi Family, assuming they exist in the time period in which the campaign is set, will presumably have the same interest in the contest as the Seppun, but there are so few who bear the Toturi name that it is unlikely they will register a significant presence in the contest.

The following NPC profiles are included as examples of the caliber of warrior to be expected at an event as prestigious as the Emerald Championship. It is recommended that GMs wishing to include this tournament as part of an ongoing campaign use contestants already established during the course of the campaign, but the following are included to serve as opponents for PC contestants where necessary.

YASUKI DAYU, CRAB COMPETITOR

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 5	Water: 3	Void: 4
Reflexes: 5			Perception: 4	
Honor: 2.3		Status: 2.5		Glory: 4.1

SCHOOL/RANK: Kakita Bushi 5

ADVANTAGES: Quick, Sacred Weapon (Kaiu Blade)

DISADVANTAGES: Nemesis (Bayushi Arashii, 2 points), Obligation, Sworn Enemy (Bayushi Arashi, 2 points)

KATA: Kakita's First Stance, One Blade Strike, Striking as Water, Striking as Wind, The Empire Rests on Its Edge (Courtier)

SKILLS: Artisan: Silk Painting 4, Calligraphy 3, Commerce (Mathematics, Merchant) 3, Courtier 4, Defense 5, Iaijutsu 7, Kenjutsu 7, Know the School: Mirumoto Swordmaster 4, Meditation (Void Recovery) 3, Tea Ceremony 3, Theology 3

Born into the oft-beleaguered Yasuki family, Dayu's parents knew even from the very beginning of his life that they would have to exploit every possible advantage if they desired greatness for their son. When the time came for him to enter the dojo, his parents had acquired sufficient favors for him to be admitted to the famed Kakita Duelist Academy. During his first year, Dayu rivaled many students of more advanced classes. In his final year, he defeated one of his sensei in a midnight duel over the matter of a woman. The incident was covered up, but a Doji courtier came to Dayu privately and informed him that he knew of the matter. Since then, Dayu has played this Doji personal attendant, getting him out of many interesting situations and eliminating many enemies in duels both legitimate and illegitimate.

During an exhibition duel in the Scorpion Lands, Dayu watched his betrothed, a young Doji duelist, cut down by the duelist Bayushi Arashii. Since then, the two have been bitter enemies, both wishing to prove their worth to the world against the other.

KAKITA NAKIKO, CRANE COMPETITOR

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 4
Reflexes: 6				

Honor: 2.2	Status: 2.8	Glory: 4.5
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SCHOOL/RANK: Kakita Bushi 4

ADVANTAGES: Balance, Combat Reflexes, Quick

DISADVANTAGES: Brash, Driven (Prove Herself), Lecherous

KATA: Kakita's First Stance, One Blade Strike, Striking as Water, Striking as Wind, The Empire Rests on Its Edge (Courtier)

SKILLS: Battle 2, Courtier 4, Defense 5, Etiquette (Sincerity) 3, Iaijutsu 6, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Kyujutsu 4, **LORE:** Bushido 3, Lore: Law 3, Meditation 3, Stealth (Sneaking) 3

Kakita Nakiko is the living embodiment of every stereotype other Clans hold of the Crane, both the good and the bad of it. She is the youngest daughter of a senior sensei at the Kakita Dueling Academy. Her older siblings all excelled at the blade, but even at an early age it became apparent that Nakiko would surpass them easily. Still, she could not win her father's favor, as all her brothers and sisters were honorable and virtuous individuals, and Nakiko... was not. Despite her prodigious talent with the blade, upon her gempukku she was given a position as yojimbo to an unimportant ambassador at a remote court in the lands of a Minor Clan. She was sent far from home, ostensibly to be forgotten, but fate intervened.

Through sheer happenstance, the Minor Clan in whose court Nakiko was stationed attracted the ire of another Great Clan. Representatives from that Clan arrived in the court, and were openly hostile. Nakiko's ward feebly attempted to intervene, but there was little that could be done, as the Crane and the aggressors were already enemies. Finally, more out of boredom than anything else, Nakiko challenged the commander of the hostile

forces to a duel. She defeated him handily, and redirected the Clan's ire to the Crane. Little was lost in that, as the two Clans were nearly at war regardless, but the endless gratitude of a Minor Clan was gained, and in that, Nakiko was considered a success.

The intervening years have seen many triumphs for Nakiko. She has been an officer, a magistrate, a sensei, and for a brief period, the yojimbo for a Family Daimyo. She has excelled at each, although her somewhat hedonistic tendencies have attracted attention — despite that they have never interfered with her duties. Now, it is hoped that she can win the Emerald Championship for the Crane, and her father hopes that it will at last give her the kind of responsibility that will correct her obvious shortcomings.

MIRUMOTO RANDORI, DRAGON COMPETITOR

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 4
Awareness: 4		Willpower: 4		Intelligence: 5
			Perception: 4	

Honor: 3.7	Status: 4.7 (Karo of Yamasura)	Glory: 4.5
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SCHOOL/RANK: Mirumoto Bushi 2/Kitsuki Courtier 3

ADVANTAGES: Multiple Schools, Precise Memory, Sage

DISADVANTAGES: Ascetic, Lost Love (Kitsuki Moriko)

KATA: Striking as Fire, The Empire Rests on Its Edge (Etiquette)

SKILLS: Artisan: Origami 3, Athletics 2, Battle 2, Calligraphy 2, Courtier (Gossip) 4, Defense 5, Etiquette (Bureacracy) 5, Horsemanship 1, Hunting 2, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation (Notice, Search) 7, Jujutsu 2, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Knives (Jitte) 2, Know the School: Mirumoto Bushi 1, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Heraldry 2, Lore: History 1, Lore: Laws 4, Lore: Shugenja 2, Medicine 3, Meditation 4, Performance: Music 1, Theology (Shintao) 3, Underworld 3

Mirumoto Randori is a humble, studious man. He rose through the ranks on the merits of his mind, serving first as a yoriki, then a magistrate, and most recently as the Karo of the western Dragon city of Yamasura. His early training was provided by his father, an accomplished swordsman, but after he died, Randori's Kitsuki mother arranged for him to begin an education more suited to his gentle nature. Randori's Lost Love was the magistrate he first served as a yoriki; though there was nothing romantic between them he was deeply fond of and loyal to her, and her death in the line of duty has haunted him for years.

Randori has come to the Test of the Emerald Champion with no expectation of victory, but at the behest of his lord and Family. He truly wishes to serve the Dragon to the best of his ability, but has no doubt that he has small chance when it comes to the final iaijutsu rounds. He hopes to perform well enough in the preliminary rounds to gain enough attention to find a place as an Emerald Magistrate, or even as one of the Champion's higher-ranking assistants. Rather than being a duelist of great ability (in fact, he considers himself to be a rather indifferent swordsman — an underestimation of his own abilities), he will provide a greater challenge for the non-combat trials.

Randori is slightly under the average height for a Rokugani man, and stocky. He keeps a friendly smile on his face nearly all the time. Unlike many Dragon, he keeps his hair long, and simply ties it back in a topknot. He dresses simply, but wears the colors of his Clan with quiet pride. He will watch the competitions with great interest, and he will accept his defeats with grace, or his victories with unfeigned humility. Rather than being here to "prove the worth of the Niten," Randori is truly here hoping to serve the Empire without care for his own fame or glory.

AKODO NAKAMA, LION COMPETITOR

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3
		Intelligence: 4	Perception: 4	
Honor: 4.0		Status: 6.2		Glory: 5.3

SCHOOL/RANK: Akodo Bushi 4

ADVANTAGES: Higher Purpose, Leadership, Social Position (Provincial Governor), Tactician

DISADVANTAGES: Idealistic, True Love (Hayai Province)

KATA: Gentle Blade of Winter, The Empire Rests on Its Edge (Lore: Bushido), Victory of the River

SKILLS: Athletics 2, Battle (Mass Combat) 4, Courtier (Political Maneuvering) 3, Defense 4, Horsemanship 2, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation (Search, Notice) 3, Kenjutsu (Katana, Wakizashi) 4, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Bushido 5, Lore: History 4, Lore: Law 5, Meditation 2, Storytelling (Poetry) 2, Theology (Ancestor Worship, Fortunes) 3

When he was brought to the Castle of the Swift Sword to begin training for his gempukku, the boy that would become Akodo Nakama was awed by it. He had never seen such a thing, nor been around others who expected not only a keen sword hand, but a keen mind as well. He vowed that one day he would stand among those defending the castle, or die in the attempt. His single-minded devotion to this goal, combined with his gregarious and compassionate nature, earned him many allies among the Akodo even before he experienced his gempukku.

As a youth, Nakama served several tours of duty with the Imperial Legions. He learned patience, and witnessed firsthand the usefulness of political as well as martial abilities. He served with the Emerald Magistrates as well, and gained much glory for helping crush several Bloodspeaker cells. In time, he rose in rank and was appointed the Daimyo of Hayai Province, the province that contained his beloved Castle of the Swift Sword. The years since have been difficult, but he has never shirked his duty, and never wished for any other life.

Nakama's participating in the Championship is somewhat bittersweet. He is honored by the faith his comrades have in him, and hopes to honor them by serving with distinction. Still, the idea that his new duties will take him far from home weigh heavily upon him, and while he will not do less than his best, it will not break his heart if he is not successful.

YORITOMO MATAKO, MANTIS COMPETITOR

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 4	Void: 3
Reflexes: 4		Agility: 5		
Honor: 3.2		Status: 2.1		Glory: 3.3

SCHOOL/RANK: Yoritomo Bushi 4

ADVANTAGES: Ambidextrous, Combat Reflexes, Irreproachable

DISADVANTAGES: Idealistic

KATA: Prayer's End, Strength of Waves, Victory of the Wind

SKILLS: Athletics 4, Battle 3, Commerce 2, Craft: Sailing 3, Defense 4, Horsemanship 2, Hunting (Tracking) 4, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 4, Knives (Sai) 4, Kyujutsu 2, Peasant Weapons (Kama) 3

As a child, Matako was an oddity among her family. She showed no interest in any of the typical pursuits of Yoritomo youths. Athleticism for its own sake did not seem to appeal to her, and stranger still, while she showed no antipathy toward the sea, nei-

ther did she share the fondness of her siblings for it. Instead, Matako loved stories. She loved tales of samurai fighting against injustice and corruption. She devoured tales of the Seven Thunders, and of the intermittent wars between the Great Clans on the mainland. Her family grew concerned that she wished to be an artisan or a storyteller, but they gradually came to accept the possibility. When Matako was offered the chance to do so, however, she vehemently rejected the idea. She did not wish to tell the stories of heroes, she claimed. She wished to live them.

Matako completed her studies with distinction, and was soon awarded a position within the Mantis Champion's personal guard. She served for several years before the opportunity for reassignment came, and she requested a post on the mainland. She was moved to the Tsuruchi provinces, and there underwent significant training alongside the Tsuruchi bounty hunters. Her exploits alongside them, tracking down criminals and eliminating seditious elements within various bandit groups, gradually resulted in her appointment to the Emerald Magistrates, and from there to a position as an officer in the Imperial Legions.

If any member of the Mantis Clan can truly be said to have earned the right to compete in this most distinguished of all tournaments, then that individual is Matako. She is regarded by many as a paragon of Bushido, and rightly so. Her preference for using the traditional weapons favored by the Mantis has caused many to assume she is not skilled with the katana, but this is a terrible mistake, and has cost a score of men their lives. If it is possible to win the tournament through sheer force of will, then Matako will surely emerge victorious.

SHIBA MAJUSHI, PHOENIX COMPETITOR

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 4	Water: 3	Void: 5
		Strength: 4		
Glory: 5		Status: 4.5		Honor: 4

SCHOOL/RANK: Shiba Bushi 5

ADVANTAGES: Allies (Shiba Ningen, 4/2 points), Strength of the Earth (2 points)

DISADVANTAGES: Brash, Can't Lie, Missing Eye (Left), Overconfident

KATA: Deeper Reflection, Heaven's Wing, Striking as Void

SKILLS: Artisan (Drawing) 3, Battle 3, Courtier 3, Defense 5, Etiquette (Sincerity) 3, Horsemanship 1, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 5, Lore (Law) 3, Meditation (Void Recovery) 3, Spears 3, Theology 3

Shiba Majushi was born the son of a general in the Firestorm Legion. While he showed little potential as a shugenja, he excelled in the martial arts. When the time came for the Topaz Championship he was chosen as one of the participants. He showed great skill throughout the tournament and went on to become the Topaz Champion of his year. Unfortunately, the tournament left him without the use of his left eye, as it was severely damaged in one of the bouts with a Scorpion opponent. As a result, Majushi's harbors to this day a deep distrust of the Scorpion Clan in general.

Majushi later went on to distinguish himself in battle, most notably at the breach of the Kaiu Wall where he had been stationed for a short period. His efforts saved the lives of several bushi and caught the eye of Hida Kuon, who was then merely the brother to the Crab Clan Champion Hida Kuroda. Following the ascension of Shiba Tsukune to the position of Fortune of Rebirth, Majushi

began daily prayers to the former Phoenix Champion and always carries with him a small statue in her likeness. His actions on behalf of both the Empire and the Phoenix also caught the eye of the Master of Void Shiba Ningen. It was through Ningen's sponsorship, and perhaps owing to the reputation of his father, that he was selected to enter the Emerald Championship. Personally, he is confident he can go far in the tournament, and wishes only to bring honor to his Family and his Clan.

BAYUSHI ARASHII, SCORPION COMPETITOR

Air: 4 **Earth:** 3 **Fire:** 5 **Water:** 3 **Void:** 4
Reflexes: 5 **Willpower:** 4 **Perception:** 4

Honor: 2.3 **Status:** 2.6 **Glory:** 4.0

SCHOOL/RANK: Mirumoto Swordsmaster 5

ADVANTAGES: Ambidextrous, Different School, Luck (6 points)

DISADVANTAGES: Cruel, Nemesis (Yasuki Dayu, 2 points), Obligation (Dragon Clan, 4 points), Sworn Enemy (Yasuki Dayu, 2 points)

KATA: Borrow the Next Breath, Strike as Fire, Tapping the Void

SKILLS: Calligraphy (High Rokugani) 3, Courtier (Political Maneuvering) 4, Craft: Weaponsmithing 3, Defense 5, Iaijutsu 7, Kenjutsu (Katana) 6, Know the School: Kakita Bushi 4, Kyujutsu 3, Meditation (Void Recovery) 4, Storytelling (Oratory, Poetry) 3, Tea Ceremony 3, Theology (Fortunes) 2

Bayushi Arashii was born to a poor vassal family of the Bayushi. His exceptional skill with the blade was noticed at an early age, as was his proficiency in its use with both hands, impressing his sensei only a short time after his entrance into the dojo. At the same time, his cruelty towards fallen opponents caught the attention of other Sensei. It was quickly decided Arashii would be given to the Dragon to train in the famous Niten Style.

Soon after arriving in Dragon Lands, Iuchiban unleashed the Rain of Blood upon Rokugan. Arashii saw an opportunity to eliminate a hated opponent, a lesser sensei of Iron Mountain Dojo, a particularly cruel and hateful man who had constantly mistreated the young Scorpion. A samurai named Mirumoto Agito witnessed Arashii dispatch the rain-maddened sensei and approached him. The two struck a deal between them, and Arashii respected Agito like a father for years. Agito took great pleasure in teaching this Scorpion the secrets of the Niten school, and eventually gifted him with an exquisite pair of blades crafted in the Dragon style. Arashii left the Dragon Lands a respected equal following his gempukku, and has returned to visit often.

During an exhibition duel in the Scorpion Lands, Arashii was involved in a duel at the behest of his lord, and killed a young Crane duelist. Arashii was the superior duelist, but there was some controversy because a broken floorboard appeared to contribute to the young woman's defeat. The unfortunate woman was betrothed to a Crab duelist, Yasuki Dayu. Since that day they have been at each others throats, seeking to prove their worth against each other.

SHINJO CHISAI, UNICORN COMPETITOR

Air: 3 **Earth:** 3 **Fire:** 4 **Water:** 4 **Void:** 4
Awareness: 4 **Stamina:** 5

Honor: 3.6 **Status:** 2.1 **Glory:** 4.2

SCHOOL/RANK: Shinjo Bushi 5

ADVANTAGES: Clear Thinker, Leadership, Luck (3 points)

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Reputation (Family associated with the Kolat), Can't Lie

KATA: East Wind Kata, Shinjo's Breath, Striking as Fire, Thundering the Sky

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Battle 3, Calligraphy 2, Defense 4, Horsemanship 6, Hunting (Tracking) 5, Iaijutsu 4, Investigation 5, Kenjutsu (Katana, Scimitar) 4, Kyujutsu (Yomanri) 4, Meditation 2, Polearms 3, Theology 2

Shinjo Chisai is an unknown quantity at the Emerald Championship, which is somewhat of an oddity. Most contestants are known at least by reputation, but Chisai is a virtually unknown to anyone outside of the Unicorn Clan. In his mind, this gives him an edge that he can manipulate to his advantage.

Chisai was a typical Unicorn youth, although his particular branch of the family was discredited by the shameful acts of a maternal uncle who was purported to have been involved with the Kolat. Chisai's mother committed seppuku to spare her children the shame of execution for guilt by association. Chisai was greatly hurt by the loss of his mother, but he was galvanized by the burden he saw his father bear, and by the shame that was heaped upon his entire family by the actions of a single man. Even as a youth, Chisai vowed that he would end it. He had no idea how that might be done, but that did not deter him.

After his gempukku, Chisai was assigned to patrol duty in a remote province. It was an unimportant post with little obvious chance for advancement of any sort, but Chisai was determined to find whatever opportunity there was to be had. Within a year's time, he was promoted to the position of gunso and placed in charge of his own patrol. Once he had his own command and the ability to make the decisions that it entailed, he launched a campaign throughout the province that soon gained the attention of even the Clan leadership. Chisai pushed his men hard, but they soon surpassed every other patrol in the region in the number of criminals they apprehended — they took in more than any two other patrols combined, in fact, and their numbers continued to increase from there. Only three years after his appointment, Chisai was granted command over the entire province's patrols.

Now, ten years after his gempukku, Chisai has been granted permission to enter the Emerald Championship. He has never left the Unicorn Provinces before, and if he does not win the contest, he may never leave again. All he desires in life is the chance to erase his family's shame (ironically, he did so in the eyes of others long ago, but he has failed to realize it). As long as his Champion is pleased with him, he needs nothing else from life.

SEPPUN TSURIKO, IMPERIAL COMPETITOR

Air: 3 **Earth:** 4 **Fire:** 3 **Water:** 4 **Void:** 4
Reflexes: 4 **Agility:** 5 **Perception:** 5

Honor: 3.4 **Status:** 3.3 **Glory:** 3.1

SCHOOL/RANK: Seppun Guardsman 4/Seppun Magistrate 1

ADVANTAGES: Heartless, Social Position (Imperial Magistrate)

DISADVANTAGES: Antisocial (2 points), Phobia (Enclosed Spaces, 1 point)

KATA: Chrysanthemum Petals in Rain, In Hantei's Honor, Striking as Earth

SKILLS: Battle 4, Courtier 3, Defense 4, Etiquette 4, Horsemanship 3, Hunting (Tracking) 4, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation 3, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Know the School: Kakita Bushi 3, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: Law 5, Meditation 2, Theology (Shintao) 3, War Fan 5

Seppun Tsuriko was raised with little contact with samurai of the Great Clans. Her entire life revolved around Kyuden Seppun and certain Imperial-restricted sections of Otsan Uchi. She never interacted with other samurai to any real extent until some years after her gempukku, when she was elevated from her place as a guardsman at Kyuden Seppun to a member of the Imperial Magistrates. It was only then that she began to realize the somewhat less than flattering accounts of the institution that she had heard growing up might not be completely accurate.

Her time among the Emerald Magistrates has been difficult for Tsuriko. She has struggled to overcome her preconceived notions regarding her peers, but that has proven extremely difficult given that they are annoyingly inconsistent in their characteristics. For every samurai she meets that completely defies everything she has ever heard, there is another that confirms every single tale she's ever been told. Generalizing is not her strong suit, and the uncertainty of the entire affair has caused her to withdraw from interacting with others unless absolutely necessary.

The sensei at the Seppun dojo believe that Tsuriko is uniquely skilled to represent their family at the Emerald Championship. She has every quality required to succeed, and even if her personality is not ideally suited to the task should she be victorious, they know that she will rise to the occasion. She has never failed them before, after all, and they are certain she will not fail them now.

USAGI GINORO, HARE COMPETITOR

Air: 3	Earth: 4	Fire: 3	Water: 4	Void: 4
Reflexes: 4		Agility: 5		
Honor: 3.1		Status: 1.8		Glory: 4.4

SCHOOL/RANK: Usagi Bushi 5

ADVANTAGES: Luck (6 points), Strength of the Earth (4 points)

DISADVANTAGES: Driven (Hunt Bloodspeakers), Sworn Enemy (Usagi Fumata, 2 points)

KATA: Reichin's Stance, Striking as Fire

SKILLS: Animal Handling (Falcons) 2, Athletics (Running) 6, Battle 2, Courtier 2, Defense 5, Etiquette 2, Hunting 6, Iaijutsu 3, Investigation 4, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 4, Knives 3, Kyujutsu 4, Lore: Kolat 1, Lore: Maho-tsukai 5, Spellcraft 2, Stealth (Sneaking) 4

Usagi Gintoro's upbringing was typical for that of a Hare youth, or indeed for a samurai youth of any Clan. At a young age, he and his best friend competed for the affection of a young woman. It was a friendly rivalry, as both boys had many other prospects, and when the object of their affection chose Ginoro to be her betrothed, his friend smiled and congratulated him, and promptly moved on to other conquests. Ginoro was content with the outcome, and seemed poised on the brink of a prosperous and content life. Sadly, that was not to be.

Less than a month before Gintoro's wedding, his betrothed disappeared. Her family was mad with grief, but Gintoro felt only outrage. He scoured the Hare Lands in search of her, maiming

more than a few criminals with his enthusiastic interrogation. The information led him deep into the Shinomen Mori, where he uncovered a cell of Bloodspeakers that held his love captive. He could not save her, but he did save his friend, who was also a captive. Gintoro slaughtered the Bloodspeakers, but could not overcome the idea that his friend had betrayed the woman to the Bloodspeakers in exchange for his life. The disagreement that followed was unpleasant, and although no evidence or testimony to corroborate Gintoro's suspicions ever surfaced, his certainty never wavered.

The incident in the Shinomen transformed Gintoro into a specter of revenge. He has scoured the Empire in search of maho-tsukai and Bloodspeakers, and found many. His wrath is terrible to behold, and there are some who say that several innocents have perished under his blade for crimes they did not commit. Regardless, Gintoro is well known for his devotion to duty, and for his dour nature. Now, years after the incident, there are times when his normal gregarious nature resurfaces, but they are not particularly common as of yet. It is Gintoro's reputation as a hunter of the black arts that has garnered his invitation to participate in this tournament, and the Usagi have high hopes that even if he cannot emerge victorious, he will still win respect for their proud warrior tradition.

TOKU SOKAI, MONKEY COMPETITOR

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 4
	Willpower: 4		Perception: 3	
Honor: 2.5		Status: 2.1		Glory: 3.2

SCHOOL/RANK: Ronin Duelist 2/Toku Bushi 2

ADVANTAGES: Balance, Chosen by the Oracles (Air), Clear Thinker, Luck (3 points), Multiple Schools

DISADVANTAGES: Ascetic, Idealistic, Sworn Enemy (Crane)

KATA: Empire Rests on Its Edge, One Soul's Triumph, Striking as Fire, Striking as Wind

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Defense 5, Games: Fortunes & Winds 5, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 5, Investigation (Search, Notice) 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Knives 5, Know the School: Kakita Bushi 3, Kyujutsu 3, Lore: History 5, Sleight of Hand (Prestidigitation) 3, Storytelling (Oratory) 5

As the story goes, there was once a ronin swordsman accused by the Crane of crimes he did not commit. Unafraid, and believing his innocence would be proven in a trial, the ronin appeared before his accusers to plead his case. His guilt was defined by the draw of a blade, but not before his words cast the seeds of doubt. By the law, justice had been served. Few, however, found honor in it.

The tale continues with his son Sokai, a man born with nothing but the sword his father had left and the stories his mother would tell him. Life as a ronin was difficult, but Sokai learned to survive and earned the right to tell tales of his own adventures. His eyes were wide and open to the world, and he could take it all in as simply as a breath. He also had an extraordinary talent for weaving those details into a narrative that would captivate those who listened. It was for his stories, not his blade, that Toku, Daimyo of the Monkey, accepted his fealty.

Toku Sokai takes his time, studying each of his opponents. Every movement they make tells their story. Once he has read his opponent, it is simple to see where their tale will lead and what his place is within it. He knows that he is not the most experienced swordsman. Every encounter, however, increases his knowledge and skill, bringing him closer to ending what began with his father.

KOUKAI, RONIN COMPETITOR

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 4 Agility: 5	Water: 3 Strength: 4	Void: 4
Honor: 1.2		Status: N/A		Glory: 4.5

SCHOOL/RANK: Bayushi Bushi 2/Bayushi Violater 1/Shosuro Shinobi 2

ADVANTAGES: Ambidextrous, Fleet (4 points), Hands of Stone, Quick

DISADVANTAGES: Bad Reputation (Pirate), Cast Out (6 points), Cruel, Forsaken

KATA: Eyes of the Trickster, Sundering Grace, The Tail's Reach

SKILLS: Athletics 3, Courtier (Political Maneuvering) 3, Craft: Sailing 2, Deceit 3, Defense 5, Etiquette 2, Iaijutsu 5, Jujutsu 5, Kenjutsu (Katana) 5, Knives (Tanto) 5, Kyujutsu 3, Medicine (Antidotes) 3, Ninja Ranged Weapons 3, Poison 4, Stealth (Shadowing, Sneaking) 6, Underworld 4

The presence of the ronin called Koukai at the Championship is a matter of considerable gossip among those in attendance. His name is known to some as a pirate that has plagued the southern coast of Rokugan for the past few years, although he hardly seems the sort for such things to look upon him. The story that most have heard is that he is present by the invitation of the Miya Family after having saved a prominent courtier's life from an ill-fated assassination attempt.

The truth, of course, is far less romantic.

Soshi Koukai left his home less than a year after his gempukku, intent on discovering his place in the world via the tradition of *musha shugyo*, the warrior pilgrimage. He was discomfited by his inability to speak to the *kami* in the way his family had for generations. During his travels, he found a place among the crew of a wealthy Yasuki merchant who was little more than a pirate.

The Scorpion approached Koukai a short time ago and appealed to his sense of loyalty and duty. It was the Scorpion who arranged for Koukai to be invited through the tournament, calling in a costly favor with Miya Ryo in order to do so. His instructions are to impede the actions of any contestant that might pose a threat to other Scorpion contestants. He is to do this by whatever means necessary, and he fully intends to fulfill his duty.



"Set... focus... Strike!" A samurai of Rokugan who does not thrill to these words is no samurai at all, and would do well to abandon his swords by the side of the road. Dueling captures many important facets of a samurai's life: skill with a blade, moral and physical courage, personal honor and loyalty to family and clan. It is an experience which compresses his existence to its essence... his entire being summed up in a single instant of perfect action.

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The Art of the Duel covers the full range of Rokugani dueling practices: iaijutsu dueling, Phoenix naginata duels, Tsuruchi archery contests, Unicorn competitions of horsemanship, Crab and Badger sumai wrestling, Ikoma storytelling contests, Doji debates — even Crab Clan drinking games. The book features:

- A comprehensive survey of Rokugani traditions of dueling and personal competition, as practiced by each Great Clan, the Imperial Families, the Minor Clans and even the samurai of The Lost.
- New Schools, Advanced Schools, Paths and Kata related to dueling — including rules covering human swordsmen who study with kenku sword masters.
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- Rules for resolving taryu-jjai duels.
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- Appendices describing the legendary Test of the Emerald Champion tournament and the Test of the Minor Clans tournament, and how to incorporate them into your campaign.

Every *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* campaign includes moments when the material in these pages prove invaluable, because as we all know, there is a time in every samurai's life when a challenge becomes personal.

The Art of the Duel is a rules supplement and its use requires the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game Third Edition* core rulebook.

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