Legend of the Five Rings™

ROLEPLAYING

CORE RULEBOOK

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Original Legend of the Five Rings game and property created and designed by John Wick and David Williams.

FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES

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ISBN: 978-1-63344-340-2 Product Code: L5R02 Printed in China

For more information about the world of Rokugan and Legend of the Five Rings, visit us online at www.FantasyFlightGames.com/en/Legend-of-the-Five-Rings-Roleplaying-Game

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27th Day of the Month of Togashi, 1118, in a private garden of the Esteemed Palaces of the Crane

Doji Hotaru was no actress, but she was the one dissembling now.

"Since the beginning of time, Lord Moon has chased Lady Sun about the world," said Lady Kachiko as she swept her fan in an arc overhead. "One day, he caught her, and as her light faded, the curtain fell on the age of the ancient races." Kachiko closed her fan slowly in a false eclipse. "Over the course of countless seasons, Lady Sun gave birth to nine children: Hida, Doji, Togashi, Akodo, Shiba, Bayushi, Fu Leng, and Hantei."

Hotaru kept her face still and hands politely folded over her lap at the mention of the ninth Kami, the founder of the Imperial house. Whatever it was the Scorpion Clan was plotting concerning the Emperor, it would surely not benefit *her* clan, the Crane.

"Lord Moon knew that any children whose veins carried both elements of Sun and Moon would grow to be greater than he, and so, despite the protests of Lady Sun, he swallowed the children, one by one."

"You do not deserve to wield Shukujo. The clan cannot afford a weak champion. You must prove yourself a worthy heir, first." Though Lord Satsume may have been far away from Doji Palace, her father's voice filled her head as if he stood by Hotaru's side.

I will prove myself, father. Discerning the nature of the Scorpion's scheme from Kachiko, one of the most infamous manipulators of the Scorpion Clan, would be nigh impossible. But Hotaru had no other choice but to try, even if it meant betraying Kachiko's trust.

"Shall I continue?" came the Scorpion's velvet voice.

From her seat on the veranda, Hotaru locked eyes with Kachiko through the delicate black silk of her mask. The woman's robes were a midnight crimson shadow cast against the whiteness of the gravel courtyard garden. The frost-tipped pines swayed softly in the wintry breeze, and the gray clouds overhead threatened snow.

"I am sorry that my performance is so lackluster that your attention should drift," Kachiko pouted.

On the contrary, Hotaru wanted to say, *you are performing too well, sending my thoughts spiraling away from myself. Is it on purpose? Am I just another fool for her to play off of? No, I'm the one who's going to use her now.*

"Not at all," Hotaru inclined her head in respect. "Your narration is flawless. There are few actors who would even attempt to recite 'The Children of Sun and Moon,' but the entire court is looking forward to your performance of it in the coming weeks."

Kachiko put on a show of demurring. "I am sure that is not true. It is for that very reason that I thought you might be able to give me your opinion, oh poet of the Crane."

It was a flimsy excuse for them to meet in private, and they both knew it. But it was only away from the eyes and ears of the court that they could forsake appearances and pretend they were not bitter enemies for a time.

"Please, continue," Hotaru offered. "Tell me of how Lady Sun poisoned her husband with sake to secret away her youngest from the fate of his siblings." She grinned.

"Poison is so strong a word," Kachiko protested.

"So you say," Hotaru looked mock askance at Kachiko. Their levity belied Kachiko's near-fatal brushes with poison: by luck—or was it fate?—Hotaru had intercepted and dispatched one would-be assassin before it was too late.

Kachiko continued the tale of how Lady Sun wept to see her children devoured so, and her tears fell to earth as crystal and jade. She trained Hantei in the martial arts so that one day, he could confront his jealous father. When Hantei and Lord Moon finally did battle, it shook the very heavens. At last, Hantei sliced open his father's belly, and the rest of his siblings tumbled out. They fell from the sky to Seppun Hill, the site of the future Imperial capital, save for one.

Lord Moon reached out at the last moment and grasped Fu Leng. Hantei swung his sword one last time and severed his father's very arm. Fu Leng tried to grab ahold of Hantei, and they both fell. Plummeting downward, Fu Leng plunged through the earth to Jigoku itself, where he was lost. The blood from Lord Moon's wound fell to the ground, where it solidified into obsidian. In some places, the blood mixed with Lady Sun's tears, and from that mingling came the first men and women.

The other Kami wept for their brother, but they had other concerns. No longer immortal, they shared the mortal realm with human beings. The Kami resolved to teach and guide these humans, and they held a great tournament to see who would lead those who lived in this land they dubbed Rokugan. Lady Shinjo outpaced Lord Hida, but she was outwitted by Lord Bayushi. Lord Shiba saw through his twin Bayushi's trickery, but was overcome by Lady Doji's grace. Lord Akodo defeated Lady Doji, and when he turned to fight Hantei, he nearly lost himself in his battle fury. Hantei turned Akodo's rage against him, and emerged victorious. Meanwhile, Lord Togashi looked on from the sidelines, having foreseen the outcome.

After his coronation as Emperor, Hantei charged each of his siblings with a different task: Hida would guard against the growing darkness beyond the southernmost lands. Doji would foster the arts and keep the peace between them all. To defend Rokugan, Akodo would lead great armies. Shiba would tend to the land's spirits and the Empire's soul. Upon Bayushi the Emperor placed a heavy burden: to do what Hantei could not dirty his hands with. Always restless, Shinjo would venture beyond the Empire's borders to scout for any threats yet to come. Mysteriously, Togashi retreated to the mountains, where he would watch over the Empire from afar.

But not long after the Kami had begun to order the world and formed clans with their earliest followers, Fu Leng emerged from his subterranean lair. The corruption

of Jigoku had spread from the hole in the earth to the surrounding lands, and demons followed in his shadow.

Kachiko's face hardened into hatred tinged with sadness. "'Why did you not invite me to compete in your great tournament?' Fu Leng asked Hantei." Fury flashed like lightning in her eyes, driving away any hint of sorrow. "'I could have easily beaten any of you.' The Kami looked upon their fallen brother and saw that he had been twisted with jealousy and desire.

"'We did not know of your fate—we thought you lost, poor brother. But now—now, we see that you truly are,' declared Hantei." Kachiko slid into a new role, her back straightening with imperious authority. "'You are marked by Hell, by Jigoku, and will only lead these human beings to their doom.'

"'Lies! You did not even think to search for me when I fell. *You* are the one unfit to rule over these mortals, you who would not even aid your own kin. I challenge your claim!' Fu Leng cried out.

Kachiko allowed Hantei's character a glimpse of sadness before steeling his resolve. "Hantei considered this, and accepted the duel. 'I shall name Togashi as my champion.'

"Togashi stepped forward, pain etched across the face that was, at all other times, inscrutable.

"'Pick a weapon, brother,' Fu Leng offered. 'Now you will learn what *I* know about destiny.'

"Togashi replied, 'I choose as my weapon all that lives in Rokugan.'

"'So be it!' Fu Leng declared. 'I shall bring the armies of Hell to bear against your foolish followers, and they shall see which of us is stronger, which of us deserves to rule.'

"And thus began the War Against Fu Leng."

The war when the ancestral sword of the Crane, Shukujo, was nearly lost. Hotaru's ancestor, Doji Konishiko, had been one of the seven mortal Thunders who were finally able to defeat Fu Leng with the guidance of Shinsei, the Little Teacher. Konishiko had fought alongside the actress Shosuro, Kachiko's forebear, as well as the shugenja Isawa, the berserker Matsu, the duelist Mirumoto, the battle maiden Utaku, and the warrior Hida Atarashi.

One thousand years had passed. One day, it would fall to Hotaru to wield Shukujo. If only she could prove herself to her father.

At last, the snow began to fall. Hotaru gathered her paper umbrella and rose from her seat.

"Kachiko," she began, moving closer and unfurling her umbrella to protect them both from the cold wind. "Do you believe the prophecies of the Order of the Seven Thunders? That after a thousand years, the cycle will repeat, and the Thunders will return?"

Kachiko stood very still, waiting for the words that hung unspoken in the air. Her face softened.

"Because I would fight by your side," Hotaru whispered. The wind gusted, sending a chill up her spine.

Kachiko placed a hand on the handle to help steady the umbrella, and looked up at her. It was the first time Hotaru could remember that she had seen the unshakable woman look truly vulnerable.

Hotaru could not pretend to be heartless, could not scheme as the Scorpion did. And she would not betray Kachiko. "I know I cannot ask this of you." *Who would dare ask her to betray her clan? But I must. And in so doing, place my honor in her hands.* "But would you help me now?"

Welcome to Roleplaying in the Emerald Empire

It is an era of sudden change and upheaval in Rokugan. Mortal schemes, natural calamities, and celestial turmoil alike have disrupted the political, military, and spiritual equilibrium of the land. Long-simmering rivalries and fresh betrayals ripple through the courts and on the battlefield. The Chrysanthemum Throne is beset by threats from without and within, and the honor of the seven Great Clans shall be put to the test. Who among the clans will prove strong enough to guide Rokugan in these tumultuous times? Will their names be lifted up beside those of the honored ancestors, or will they fall among the ranks of the Empire's most infamous villains?

In the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game*, players take on the roles of individual samurai whose honor and loyalty will be put to the test. These samurai serve their lords as warriors, courtiers, priests, or monks and embark on adventures filled with drama, suspense, humor, romance, and horror. All the while, they must grapple with their human emotions and choose between following their heart's desire or doing what society—and the Code of Bushidō—demands of them. These personal stories of triumph and tragedy will reverberate across the Emerald Empire and shape the very future of Rokugan.

The *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* provides players and game masters with the tools to tell stories of samurai drama within the Emerald Empire. The following pages contain rules for creating characters sworn to serve one of the seven Great Clans and for running game sessions filled with intrigue and conflict. A wide variety of skills, techniques, distinctions, and more allows players to customize their characters mechanically and narratively. The custom dice mechanics enable players to contribute to the unfolding story and determine whether their character succeeds, by how much, and how much it will cost them. And the fantastical feudal setting of Rokugan provides a rich tapestry of majesty and wonder where these stories can unfold.

MATURE THEMES

The setting of the *Legend of the Five Rings* Roleplaying Game grapples with mature and sensitive themes, ranging from suicide and drug use to forced marriage, violence and horror themes, as well as the dehumanization of certain castes, classes, and nations of people. The rest of this book and the remaining products in the line will engage with those topics frequently, so reader discretion is advised. Additionally, we encourage individual groups to determine which elements of the setting they engage with in the stories they tell. See **Who's in Charge Here?** on page 282 for more.

WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

A **roleplaying game (RPG)** is an exciting cooperative storytelling experience. Each player takes on the role of a fictional character and decides what that character would think, say, do, and feel in dramatic situations! Like many games, it has rules, components, and dice to help describe and resolve those situations. Unlike most games, an RPG has no winner or loser and no opposing teams. If everyone has fun and enjoys the resulting story, then everyone wins!

WHAT IS NEEDED TO PLAY?

Much of a roleplaying game is conducted in the players' imaginations, but there are a few physical materials that greatly facilitate play. You'll want at least one copy of this core rulebook, pencils or pens, notebooks or scrap pieces of paper, and enough copies of the character sheet found on www.FantasyFlightGames.com for each player to have their own.

The *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* also makes use of special, customized L5R Roleplaying Dice to arbitrate the game's conflict resolution system.

- Packs of *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Dice* are available for purchase at local hobby game retailers or can be ordered online from Fantasy Flight Games.
- Each *Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game* comes with a set of dice.
- Fantasy Flight Games offers a *Legend of the Five Rings Dice* app for iOS and Android devices.

However, if these dice are not available, a chart on page 23 shows how players can instead use standard six-sided and twelve-sided dice, which are readily found at most hobby game retailers.

The World of Rokugan

The Emerald Lands, or "Rokugan" in the tongue of its people, comprise a vast, majestic countryside that stretches nine hundred miles from the pine valleys and snow-capped peaks of the Great Wall of the North mountains at one end, to the austere Carpenter Wall standing vigil along the country's desolate southern border. Beyond the Wall lies the Shadowlands, a blighted land tainted by the influence of Hell itself, and dangerous for even the most legendary heroes to step foot within. At its widest point, Rokugan measures six hundred miles, from the Sea of the Sun Goddess in the east to the Burning Sands in the west. Within its borders, bountiful plains ripple gold in the sunlight, and primordial forests hide mysterious spirits and dangerous creatures. Hot springs straddle mountain ranges and hills laden with precious gems and minerals. Countless rivers, lakes, and streams wend their way toward the ocean, where fish, seaweed, and pearls are netted by divers and fishermen. Crimson *torii* mark the gateway to sacred spaces, which exist alongside the sprawling cities and huddled hamlets of human civilization.

Each of the seven Great Clans presides over a different corner of the Empire, protecting the natural harmony of the land and the kami that dwell there. Shrines and temples dot the landscape, marking places of spiritual power and contemplation. Fortifications large and small protect roads, bridges, mountain passes, and the domains of great lords. In the shadows of these castles, towns and villages prosper from the efforts of craftspeople and artisans. Beyond the city limits, peasants toil over rice paddies and fields of grain, or hunt and gather the bounty of the forests. To travel the Empire on its few roads, samurai must obtain special papers and pay a tax toward their upkeep. Merchants' carts and horses are banned from the Imperial highways altogether, forcing them to rely on special trade routes to carry goods between cities. Given the size of the Empire and the difficulty of journeying, few get to witness the variety of the Empire's vistas in one lifetime.

Instead, citizens are deeply in tune with the natural cycles of the provinces they call home. The Heavens bring four seasons to the Empire, which are celebrated by festivals and arts. In the spring, the delicate fragrance of cherry blossoms wafts from misty gardens. Summer heralds rains and oppressive heat, slowly giving way to autumn's brilliant scarlet leaves, shrill cicada cries, and typhoons. Winter buries the lands in deep snow, closing mountain passes and driving the citizenry to the warmth and comfort of the hearth.

THE CODE OF BUSHIDŌ

To protect these lands and their way of life, the samurai servants of great lords follow Bushidō. This Way of the Warrior elevates samurai from the rest of society while also chaining them to near-unattainable ideals. They must embody righteousness and honor, loyalty and duty, and courtesy and compassion, as well as courage in the face of death. A samurai is expected to uphold these virtues in their every word and deed, even when these ideals conflict with one another.

A samurai's reputation for adhering to the Code of Bushidō reflects not only on the individual, but upon that samurai's household, family, and clan. Should they prove unable to live up to these expectations, only ritualized suicide, or seppuku, can wash away the stain on their honor. According to Bushidō, there is no room in a samurai's life for anything that would get in the way of these ideals. Love and ambition, pride and greed—even happiness—are to be sacrificed for the sake of Bushidō. Yet, samurai are still human, made from the mingling of Lady Sun and Lord Moon, order and chaos. The tenets of Bushidō would not be ideals to strive toward if they were easy to realize in daily life. Characters in Rokugan are measured by their own faith in, and devotion to, the Code of Bushidō through their **honor value**.

A GUIDE TO PRONUNCIATION

Throughout this book, you'll encounter words from the Japanese language, which is the basis for the language used in Rokugan. The first time a foreign-language word is introduced in this book, it is italicized and often defined in the glossary on page 330, but there are also many proper names used throughout this book that do not translate directly into Japanese. By learning to pronounce the five vowels of Japanese—"a," "i," "u," "e," and "o"—you can sound out the language of the Emerald Empire:

- "A" is "ah" as in "father"
- "I" is a long "e" sound, such as "fee"
- "U" is "ooh" as in "who"
- "E" is "eh" as in "pen"
- "O" is a long "o" sound, such as "owe"

For example, Rokugan is "ROH-koo-GAHN," Hotaru is "hoh-TAH-roo," and Kachiko is "kah-CHEE-koh." When the vowels are next to each other, they merge a little bit, such as Hantei ("HAHN-tay") and daimyō ("DYE-myoh," not "dah-mee-oh"). The macron, or long bar over a vowel, indicates that the vowel sound is held for a moment longer, as in rōnin, or "RO-OH-neen."

THE SAMURAI'S STRUGGLE

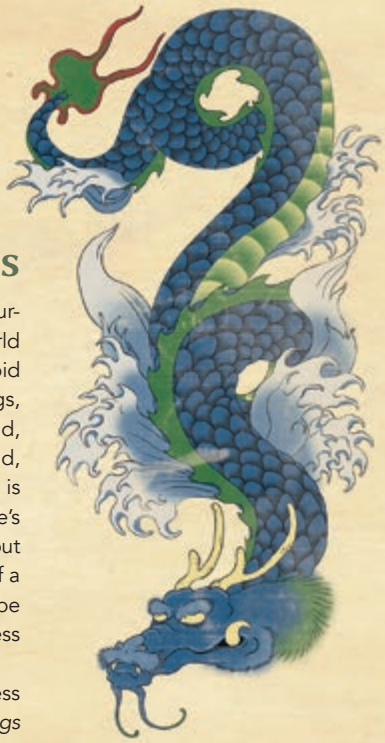
Many Rokugani plays have been written chronicling the impossible choices facing a samurai as their human feelings, or *ninjō*, conflict with their obligations to society, or *giri*. Those things that would get in the way of Bushidō are real and meaningful forces in a samurai's life, and it is the rare soul who can resist their call completely. The stories and the drama of the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* revolve around the tension between these two conflicting forces. One of the fundamental choices a player must make during character creation is to select ninjō and giri, the opposing forces of a samurai's inner desire and the external demands placed upon them by their lord and by fate. Whether a samurai chooses happiness or duty in a given moment has narrative and mechanical consequences not only for themself, but for all of the Emerald Empire. When they serve their lord with distinction, tales of their glories may spread to the corners of the Empire or even be recorded for the ages. A samurai's fame and reputation for service is measured by their **glory value**.

HOW DO I USE THIS BOOK?

Different parts of this book are more relevant depending on whether you are planning to run the game or simply participate in it. The rest of this introduction serves as a primer to the game and the world and is useful for everyone to read.

Readers who will be taught the rules of the game during play may dive straight into **Chapter 2: Creating a Character**, but we still recommend reading **Chapter 1: Playing the Game** to understand the mechanical components of a character.

The person running the game should start with **Chapter 1: Playing the Game**, continue to **Chapter 6: Scenes and Conflicts**, and then move on to **Chapter 7: The Game Master**. Then, before guiding a group through character creation, we recommend reviewing **Chapter 2: Creating a Character** for yourself.



THE WAY OF FIVE RINGS

At the dawn of civilization, when humanity looked to understand the surrounding creation, the greatest philosophers determined that the world was composed of the five elements: Air, Earth, Fire, Water, and the Void that holds the other elements together. These elements, also called rings, were represented in the sacred spirits of the land and the natural world, but also in society and the human psyche. Air is the weather and the wind, the invisible and the innuendo, and the swiftness of a bird of prey. Earth is stone, wood, and metal, as well as a donkey's stubbornness and a tortoise's patience. Fire is the gentle warmth of the sun or the rage of a wildfire, but also the spark of innovation, the passion of devotion, and the ferocity of a wildcat. Water is an octopus's adaptability and flexibility; it takes the shape of its container, be it a puddle, river, or endless sea. Void is the emptiness of the night sky or nirvana, at once present and transcendent.

Sensei across Rokugan teach samurai-in-training to observe and express these different elements in all that they do. In the *Legend of the Five Rings* Roleplaying Game, characters are defined by their strength in different elements. This strength is represented mechanically with a numeric value on a scale of one to five, called a character's **ring value**. In every task they undertake, they must choose an elemental approach, and the suitability of one approach over another can give them the edge they need or diminish their chance of succeeding.

Samurai and Society

In Rokugan, it is said that honor is stronger than steel. While even the finest blade can bend and break or twist under the heat of the forge, the Emerald Empire's society has been folded in the forges of politics and war for more than a thousand years, and it has not yet broken. The society of Rokugan follows a divinely ordered pattern set down by the ten Kami, who shared their celestial blessings with the mortal realm. Rokugan is a land of strict social stratification, where an improper look at the wrong time can mean death. Face—the concept of a samurai's stoicism and outward self-control—is paramount in Rokugan. To lose one's face is to lose one's status and reputation in society, and potentially one's life.

The root of the word samurai is, literally, "one who serves." The samurai rule the Emerald Empire as nobles and lords, but they also serve others—whether the people of Rokugan below or those samurai who sit as lords above them. Most samurai fall into one of three broad categories: *bushi*, who train their martial skill; courtiers, who engage in deadly political games; and *shugenja*, who serve as priests and conduits between the mortal and sacred realms.

GOVERNMENT AND POWER

Rokugan is a feudal society: all of the land belongs to the Emperor, who bestows the rights of stewardship on champions and lords within the Great Clans, who in turn pass on the tasks of administration to lesser-ranked samurai.

All Imperial authority and patterns of life proceed from the Hantei, the Emperor, who is descended from divinity and sits on the Emerald Throne. He is attended primarily by his jeweled champions (the Emerald Champion in particular) and by the champions of the Great Clans. The clan champions are masters of the Great Clans, overseeing the families sworn to each. These families are descended from the heroic mortals who swore fealty to the Kami.

The various families within the clan are themselves ruled over by *daimyō* (literally, "the great names"), lords of the families, who hold the power of life and death over their kin and command absolute loyalty. Their individual lands are divided into provinces, the divisions of land in Rokugan, which are ruled over by lesser daimyō—who themselves rule over district and city governors, lords of rich lands and wealthy cities. The clans and their representatives vie for dominance in the courts of these daimyō, prevailing over others with silk and steel.

The way of the samurai is the way of the warrior. Most are trained from birth to fight for their lords and lay down their lives if need be. When ownership of a territory falls into dispute, or when threats from beyond the Empire's borders imperil the very existence of the Empire, the daimyō of the clans mobilize their armies and fight for their champion or on behalf of the Emperor as part of the Imperial Legions. The Emperor permits his vassals to take a share of the annual rice harvest so that they may arm themselves for war and defend the lands they have been entrusted with.

Not all wars are won on the battlefield, however. Samurai skilled in the subtle arts of the courtier fight their battles with honeyed words and mocking, tittering laughter behind face-concealing fans. Their arena is the courts, be they the provincial courts of city or family daimyō, the castles of the clan champions, or the famed yet deadly Imperial Court. In these places of delicate and indirect speech, impeccable etiquette is a better defense than the finest katana when a samurai walks into court. Courtiers seek out one another for private meetings, each expressing their clan's wishes indirectly and sealing treaties with honor and promises rather than ink and parchment.

Winter is harsh in Rokugan, and battles cannot be fought in the bitter cold and impassable snow. Thus winter is when court is most active, for there is little else to do except attend court. The Emperor's Winter Court is a highly selective social event, with higher stakes and rewards than any other.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The task of stewarding the land for the Emperor requires a samurai to execute the Emperor's will. This includes the Emperor's laws, which are collected and enforced by the Emerald Champion. The maintenance of order, law, and justice in Rokugan—in that order of importance—is one of the primary responsibilities of the samurai. Crime in Rokugan is much the same as anywhere else; theft, assault, murder, and arson are all known within the Emerald Empire.

To enforce laws and maintain an orderly society within their borders, provincial daimyō appoint special investigators called magistrates. These magistrates are loyal to clan and daimyō, and are assisted by *yoriki* (lesser-ranking samurai) and *budōka* (armed peasant vassals) in tracking and apprehending criminals. Historically, two classes of magistrate have attended to Imperial crimes: Emerald Magistrates, appointed by the Emerald Champion, and Jade Magistrates, appointed by the Jade Champion. The former investigate crimes crossing multiple clan boundaries or involving national personages. The latter were shugenja tasked with

THE TEN KAMI

Lady Sun and Lord Moon had ten children, but only eight were destined to help shape Rokugan at the dawn of the Empire. Fu Leng was lost to Jigoku, where he became lord of demons, while Ryoshun's name was lost to history. The remaining eight Kami founded the Great Clans and the Imperial house:

Lord Akodo: *Founder of the Lion Clan*

Lord Bayushi: *Founder of the Scorpion Clan*

Lady Doji: *Founder of the Crane Clan*

Lord Hida: *Founder of the Crab Clan*

Lord Shiba: *Founder of the Phoenix Clan*

Lady Shinjo: *Founder of the Unicorn Clan*

Lord Togashi: *Founder of the Dragon Clan*

Emperor Hantei: *Founder of the Imperial line*

investigating crimes against religion or evil magic involving the Shadowlands, but the office has not been filled in centuries.

Crimes committed upward, or against those of higher social rank and against the social order, are taken quite seriously by magistrates. Crimes committed downward, such as a samurai's theft from a peasant, are rarely investigated unless the peasant has the backing of another samurai. Rokugani criminal justice is based on honor, and considers only one form of evidence to be valid: eyewitness testimony (including confession). Fines, public reprimands, and house arrest are common punishments for samurai—although if there's any doubt as to the samurai's guilt, the defendant may challenge the offender to a duel, the winner of which is considered beyond reproach.

COMMERCE AND CURRENCY

Rokugan's economic system is based on the land tilled by farmers and protected by the samurai. The Emperor properly owns all land, yet leases it to the clans, which hereditarily lease it to their daimyō in turn. Given the limits of roads—often dangerous and unpaved affairs—many provinces become lawful lands unto themselves, where the daimyō acts as an extension of the Emperor over the peasants who work the rice paddies. It is rice—a vital crop that keeps the Emerald Empire alive—that provides much of Rokugan's wealth. Barley, wheat, millet, soybeans, and rye are also common crops grown by farmers, but it is a yearly stipend of rice that forms the basis for currency in Rokugan: *koku*. The clans able to harvest the most rice are among the wealthiest in the Empire, and therefore the most influential politically, but to directly conflate wealth with power would be an insult to the importance placed on honor and virtue in society.

Trade and commerce are indispensable for Rokugan to thrive, but it is considered dishonorable for samurai to involve themselves in such mercantile pursuits. Their primary concern should be with serving their lord, not personal enrichment, but virtue and reality can sometimes diverge. Nevertheless, to maintain a veneer of civility, samurai leave monetary matters to non-samurai, who in turn seek the patronage of a powerful lord. This allows samurai to engage in trade and currency manipulation without sullying their honor with crass, uncouth avarice. Those few clans and families that flagrantly involve themselves in trade are looked down upon by the others, who see greed as incompatible with absolute loyalty.

The Celestial Order

Belief and religion are inculcated into a samurai from birth—and before, from the time of their last death. Spirits and gods are a fact of life for samurai, and faith folds with honor a thousand times over in the steel of a samurai's soul: faith in the gods, faith in the cycle of reincarnation, and faith in the divine mandate that binds the Empire together.

The Emperor is a divine being, charged by Lady Sun with overseeing the mortal realm. The blood of literal gods—the Kami—runs through the veins of the Great Clans' ruling families. The will of Tengoku organizes all of existence into a hierarchy. This system—the Celestial Order—is sacred and unquestionable, ordering both Heaven and the Emerald Empire. From the Emperor to the lowest *burakumin*, all are born with a dharma, a sacred duty of the soul; the performance of this duty in life is how a Rokugani's karma is measured, determining their judgment in Meido and potential rebirth into a higher or lower caste.

Most souls are reborn, returning to live new lives in mortal bodies—a belief that predates even the Empire. However, Rokugani also worship their ancestors, a seeming contradiction. Each soul's dharma accords them a destiny preordained by Heaven; so long as that destiny goes unfulfilled, the soul will be reborn. Only when dharma is completed is the soul permitted to shuffle off the Celestial Wheel and enter Yomi, the Realm of the Sacred Ancestors. The fear of death holds little purchase in Rokugan—so long as it remains untainted by Jigoku, the Realm of Evil, a soul will return again to the Emerald Empire until it fulfills its destiny.

THOSE WHO SERVE

The samurai, "those who serve," rule Rokugan in the name of the Hantei. The class consists of many social ranks: The *kuge*, or houses of the nobility, consists of the Emperor and Imperial families, the family lines of the clan champions, the heads of vassal families, and the greatest servants of the Hantei. The *buke*, or chivalric houses, comprises all other samurai, including provincial daimyō and city governors, magistrates, and others. The vast majority of the buke are warriors, courtiers, and shugenja, down to the *jizamurai*, or half-samurai—those not allowed the name of their lord, including rōnin. Custom forbids a samurai from questioning or opposing someone of higher social rank without extreme justification, or treating those of equal rank with anything less than complete respect and courtesy. They may treat those below them however they please, although Bushidō still governs their actions.

THOSE WHO WORK

The vast majority of people in Rokugan are the *bonge* (also called *heimin*, or "half-people.") These peasants keep the nation running by cultivating the land, crafting the tools and implements of daily life, and transporting those goods across the Empire by land and sea. Farmers who grow rice and other food are considered the most important of the bonge. Below the farmers are the craftspeople: carpenters, blacksmiths, brewers, and practitioners of the other skilled trades. Below them all are merchants, regarded with contempt by all others since they do not actually make anything themselves.

Seldom permitted to carry weapons (save for *ashigaru*, peasant military levies, and *budōka*, armed retainers to samurai), heimin have few defenses, physically or legally. As a being with a higher social and spiritual status, a samurai may demand anything from heimin who belong to their lord without recompense, and can kill any heimin who disobeys or fails to show respect. Yet, the samurai are also responsible to heimin, as described in the Celestial Order; the bonge's dharma is to work the land and obey the samurai, and it is the samurai's duty to protect the heimin and administer the Empire. Slaying a heimin means answering to that heimin's lord.

THOSE WHO DO NOT BELONG

There is a third class, called *burakumin*, or "hamlet people," who are sometimes known as *hinin*, or "non-people." Due to their proximity to death or dishonorable acts, these criminals, torturers, undertakers, butchers, and tanners are considered unfit as companions for samurai save in the direst of circumstances. Even a kindly lord's speech might be discolored by the pejorative term *eta*, a slur meaning "abundance of filth."

Burakumin are considered deeply unclean, and associating with them too often requires the samurai to undertake special purification rituals. Burakumin must live in special villages on the outskirts of society, and they are deeply afraid of samurai. More so than bonge, burakumin can be killed for no reason at all, without legal consequences. Testing newly forged blades by cutting down the nearest hinin isn't uncommon.

Entertainers who aren't samurai, including geisha, are also technically hinin for a special reason: because they are non-people, a samurai may fully relax around them with no social stigma. The stress of maintaining one face's can and will wear on even the most stoic of samurai. In the company of a geisha, under the gentle strains of shamisen music, a samurai may laugh, complain about their lord and family, or cry at their lot in life.

A Samurai's Life

Most samurai are either born into the ranks of the buke from long-serving family lines or adopted from another noble family. Some are adopted from rōnin or vassal families who pledge themselves to a lord.

Samurai youth have very few expectations placed on them and aren't expected to maintain their face. Most want for nothing. So long as they obey their parents, they have no cares until sometime between ages eight and twelve, depending on the family or clan. They are then enrolled in a family dōjō to train for their adult responsibilities.

TRAINING

For the upper classes of samurai, learning one's place in the Empire means training at the family dōjō, practicing techniques perfected over centuries of effort and mastery. This training varies in length depending upon its nature (shugenja students in particular often have widely varying educational careers, depending on when and how strongly their gifts with the kami manifest themselves) and the capabilities of the student, but typically lasts about four years. Students with another clear aptitude are often transferred to another family dōjō within the same clan and given instruction on how to best use their talents to serve. On rare occasions, they may even be traded to another clan, an arrangement that requires a great number of favors and concessions. After they have met the requirements of their sensei, a samurai is deemed ready for *gempuku*.

Gempuku

The greatest day of a samurai's young life is the day they become an adult, graduating from their academy dōjō in the coming-of-age ceremony and becoming a full-fledged member of the clan. Usually, this occurs sometime around a samurai's sixteenth year, although both earlier and later gempuku aren't uncommon. Most involve tests of some sort, to ensure the samurai has learned all they were required and are capable of performing their duties with excellence. Should the young samurai pass, they are gifted with a *wakizashi*—traditionally their grandparent's, although more often a replica made in the same style—and expected to serve the clan faithfully.

MARRIAGE

Love has a place in Rokugan: in pillow books and wistful poems to one's beloved, for marrying for true love is rare. Marriage in a feudal society is predicated upon what's best for the family and alliances, and thus the talent and bloodlines of young samurai are often traded for favors and strategic resources. For a samurai to balk or refuse this is considered the same thing as refusing any other commands from their daimyō: grounds for seppuku—and thus, most samurai wouldn't even consider questioning it.

RETIREMENT

After a lifetime of service to the clan, many samurai choose to become monks, retiring to a monastery to contemplate the mysteries of Shinsei and the Tao. The expression is to "shave one's head," referring to the practice of cutting one's topknot, the symbol of their samurai status (though since many clans adopt a wide variety of hairstyles in the modern era, this remains colloquial). The samurai surrenders their wakizashi to the clan before mulling over a lifetime's worth of wisdom in peaceful contemplation. Not all samurai choose to retire; some continue to serve their lords well into old age, while others find a noble death in battle.

But retirement serves a deeply practical purpose. Though a samurai's clan obligations are in theory severed after a lifetime's service, most monks stay on their family's lands, providing a deep wellspring of institutional knowledge and wisdom the clan may continue to tap long after the samurai's steel has grown dull with age.

FUNERAL

The last act of a samurai—death with dignity—is a solemn affair. While many samurai seek an honorable death in battle, this isn't always possible. When a samurai dies, their deeds are read before a group of dignitaries and loved ones gathered around an ornate pyre built to represent the elements that make up a samurai's soul. The body is cremated and the burnt bones are picked out of the ashes with specialized chopsticks, for the dead must never be touched.

Seppuku is another possible end for a samurai—ritual suicide to cleanse the family and the individual of the samurai's dishonor. Successful performance of seppuku generally redeems the samurai's shame, allowing them to try to seek honor and dharma again in a different life.

A LIFE WITHOUT PURPOSE

The exception to the samurai way of life is the lifestyle of a rōnin, literally "wave-man," one tossed by the vicissitudes of fate. A samurai need not accept seppuku to cleanse their honor—they may choose to forsake their duty and leave. Though many rōnin do not conform to the stereotype of honorless, masterless samurai—some are simply the children of rōnin born to their station, acting with greater honor than many samurai of the Great Clans—enough do that they are automatically assumed to be untrustworthy and without decency.

LIFE ON THE WAVES

Many samurai voluntarily become rōnin for a single year, typically in the year or the second following their gempuku. Considered to be a healthy outlet for a young samurai's desire to prove themself, this allows them to sharpen their skills and temper their attitudes with experience. Having experienced hardship in the outer Empire, most return and swear fealty to the clan anew with true loyalty rather than an inculcated sense of duty.

While a rōnin is technically still samurai, they have no lord, no clan, and no family—and thus, no purpose. Rōnin are forced to find work as mercenaries or bodyguards, eating dumplings bought from foul heimin merchants and earning their straw bedding with the skill of their blade. Some resort to banditry or crime to gather the coin they need to live, but at least this is still an earning wrought by skill at arms.

Even the lowest rōnin is higher than the bonge.

The Code of Bushidō

Literally "the way of the warrior," Bushidō is the code by which all samurai in Rokugan strive to live, yet each clan's interpretation of the tenets of Bushidō is slightly different. All samurai are taught to embrace the ideals of Bushidō and strive ever toward them, at the expense of personal gain. Not even the Kami upheld Bushidō without flaw; the strictures put down by Akodo are nearly impossible to maintain in their entirety, and the struggle to adhere to them consumes a samurai's existence.

COMPASSION (JIN)

仁

"Through intense training, the samurai becomes quick and strong. They are not as other people. They develop a power that must be used for the good of all. They have compassion. They help their fellows at every opportunity. If an opportunity does not arise, they go out of their way to find one."

The Celestial Heavens appointed the lords and samurai of Rokugan to rule over the lower castes, but with power comes responsibility. Compassion represents the noblesse oblige of the buke and kuge toward the bonge. Most clans interpret this to mean extending physical protection over peasants, but other clans go even further.

COURAGE (YŪ)

勇

"Rise up above the masses of people who are afraid to act. A samurai must have heroic courage. It is absolutely risky. It is dangerous. Only in acceptance of one's death may a samurai live their life completely, fully, wonderfully. Courage is not blind; it is intelligent and strong. Replace fear with respect and caution."

Every samurai lives three feet from death at all times. A samurai must be prepared to give their life for their lord, their clan, and the Empire at a moment's notice. To die in service to one's lord furthers one's karma, and thus samurai eagerly embrace the idea of a noble death in service to their family.

COURTESY (REI)

礼

"Samurai have no reason to be cruel. They do not need to prove their strength. A samurai is courteous even to their enemies. Without this outward show of respect, we are nothing more than animals. A samurai is not only respected for their strength in battle, but also by their dealings with others. The true inner strength of a samurai becomes apparent during difficult times."

The social order isn't just important to Rokugan—it is, in a literal manner, what the Heavens rest upon. A samurai is required to maintain appearances and withstand adversity, exhibiting courteousness even when faced with the most vile lack of it. It is for this reason that courtiers practice indirect insults and the art of the subtle insinuation.

DUTY AND LOYALTY (CHŪGI)

忠義

"For the samurai, having done some 'thing' or said some 'thing,' they know they own that 'thing.' They are responsible for it and all the consequences that follow. A samurai is intensely loyal to those in their care. To those they are responsible for, they remain fiercely true."

Samurai are expected to do their duty to their lord and their subordinates without hesitation or reservation, no matter the cost to their own reputation. Of course, any duty given by their lord is expected to be within the bounds of Bushidō and bring honor to the samurai by obeying it. Should a samurai feel their duty conflicts with the other virtues of Bushidō, they may commit seppuku in protest, a rare exception to needing a lord's permission to end one's life. The sentiment is impossible to ignore: the lord has forfeited the samurai's honor, and no one without honor is fit to serve.

HONOR (MEIYO)

名誉

"A true samurai has only one judge of their honor, and that is themself. Decisions you make and how those decisions are carried out are a reflection of who you truly are. You cannot hide from yourself."

Meiyo is the most subtle, yet the most basic and all-encompassing virtue. Samurai without honor cannot truly follow the other virtues of Bushidō, for they act as others expect and not as their own conscience dictates. If their own honor is intact, however, they will follow the ways of Bushidō and pursue justice without flaw or failure, even when commanded otherwise by their lord.

RIGHTEOUSNESS (GI)

義

"Be acutely honest throughout your dealings with all people. Believe in justice, not from other people, but from yourself. A true samurai knows in their heart that there are no shades of grey in the question of honesty and justice. There is only right and wrong."

Righteousness is the sunlight glinting off the katana, bright and painful to the eye. There is only truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, and it is the samurai's job to live in accordance with justice and ensure that justice is meted out.

SINCERITY (MAKOTO)

誠

"When a samurai has said they will perform an action, it is as good as done. Nothing will stop them from completing their deed. They do not have to 'give their word,' nor do they have to 'promise.' The action of speaking alone has set the act of doing in motion. Speaking and doing are the same thing."

Samurai must align intent with their word and deed, acting with complete and total conviction, whether they serve themselves or their lord. A convincing manner is more valued in Rokugan than the absolute truth, for the samurai who speaks with sincerity has committed the totality of their being to the sentiment.

The Land of Ten Thousand Fortunes

Faith is a real and tangible thing to Rokugan, and only the foolish choose not to believe. The kami are demonstrably real, the gods are easily angered, and signs of magic and wonder can be seen even in the distant corners of the Empire—if not by a samurai or peasant, then by someone whom they know and trust.

Merged by the second Emperor, Hantei Genji, Rokugan's religious beliefs encompass three different forms of worship: ancestor worship, or the worship of a samurai's blessed antecedents who have ascended beyond the wheel of reincarnation; Fortunism, the direct worship of the gods; and Shinseism, the study and practice of the Tao of Shinsei.

The most fundamental of religious observances revolves around the worship of a samurai's own ancestors. From Yomi, the spirits of one's forebears watch over their descendants, receiving prayer for guidance, aid, and good fortune. Nearly every house in Rokugan contains an ancestral shrine where family members offer prayer and dedication to stone statues of kin, asking for blessings, protection, and intercession.

Beyond the spirits of their own, the people of Rokugan revere and appease the elemental spirits of nature, agriculture, and other domains. This worship of the immortals who dwell in Tengoku and the myriad lesser spirits dwelling in Ningen-dō is known as Fortunism. Temples and shrines to the Lesser Fortunes exist in the hundreds, and the sanctuaries celebrating the Seven Great Fortunes dominate the skylines of the Empire's greatest cities. Although they are usually invisible to the eye, the kami have a few servants who can hear and speak to the kami. These mortals are known as shugenja, and their invocations to the Fortunes and the elemental kami can produce miraculous effects.

While Fortunism celebrates diversity, another line of philosophical thought emphasizes unity. Called "Shinseism" for the man who promulgated its core beliefs, the ideology focuses on a core of simplicity: all the universe comes from the Void, and all will eventually return to it. Embracing the oneness of the five elements, or rings, and living in accordance with the principles of an ordered society could, according to Shinseism, enable one to transcend the cycle of rebirth and attain Enlightenment. These teachings were recorded in full during Shinsei's audience with the first Emperor and became recorded in the Tao of Shinsei.

Following the Tao means acting in accordance with virtue and the harmony of the universe, which itself leads to order and the furtherance of good over evil. The Tao is studied and debated by the Brotherhood of Shinsei, a vast collection of monastic orders, each

with an individual approach to study and practice. This religious heterodoxy occasionally gives rise to potent heresies, and many divergent sects of Shinseism have appeared over the centuries.

MORTAL INTERMEDIARIES

The kami interact with Rokugan through natural phenomena, but they make their will manifest to devoted mortals. Spirits may accept sincere devotion by blessing a lay priest from the peasant caste. Such priests cannot compel obvious miracles from the kami, but they can bless fields, sanctify ritual spaces, perform weddings and funerals, practice auguries, and create good luck charms and talismans blessed by their favored deities.

When a samurai manifests the ability to communicate with the spirits, they are often given the specialized, secretive training to become a shugenja, a samurai priest who wields miraculous power. A common misconception exists that shugenja can speak directly to the spirits using human language, but in truth it is a delicate translation of emotions and instincts, which can be misinterpreted. Under the tutelage of other shugenja, the samurai learns prayers, offerings, devotions, and invocations designed to entreat the assistance of the kami, sometimes in spectacular ways. Titanic fireballs, weaving beautiful illusory displays, creating great fissures in rock, or washing away the despair of battle—with the proper prayers to the kami, all things are possible.

THE FORTUNES OF ROKUGAN

Many powerful Fortunes, or gods, exist. Emma-o reigns supreme over Meido in his role as Fortune of Death and Judge of the Dead, while Megumi, Fortune of Heroic Guidance, often appears to aid minor samurai throughout the Empire.

In ages past, different tribes venerated different Fortunes depending on the needs and specializations of their villages. After the formation of the Empire, it became the sacred right of the Hantei to declare a new Fortune, elevating deceased former mortals to the ranks of divinity. Such was the fate of Osano-wo, son of Hida, Fortune of Fire and Thunder.

Some theologians believe that all of the Fortunes were originally mortals whose deeds were cause for veneration, and that path can still be tread today. Whether through proving oneself a true paragon or treading other, secret paths, new gods can ascend to the Heavens.

EIGHT GREAT FORTUNES

(from left to right)

Bishamon:
Fortune of Strength

Fukurokujin:
Fortune of Wisdom and Mercy

Kisshōten:
Fortune of Happiness, Fertility, and Beauty

Ebisu:
Fortune of Honest Work

Daikoku:
Fortune of Wealth

Benten:
Fortune of Arts and Romantic Love

Hotei:
Fortune of Contentment

Jurōjin:
Fortune of Longevity

The Great Clans

Rokugani society is based on a clan structure, with seven families descended from the Kami ruling over other families descended from those who swore fealty. Over the centuries, each family has gravitated toward a certain role or duty within the clan, although it's common for families to trade promising students who show talent in an area that differs from that of their ancestors. The Great Clans of Rokugan are diverse and powerful, dividing huge swaths of the Empire between them and commanding many thousands of samurai from families great and small.

THE CRAB CLAN

"Courage. Duty. Sacrifice."

The Crab stand out in any gathering of samurai, given a wide berth both for their stature and for their gruff, brusque manners. The defenders of the Empire have little time or inclination to practice social niceties; they stand guard upon the Kaiu Wall, an enduring symbol of tenacity against the horrors of the Shadowlands. Often, the members of this clan grumble that their duty is taken for granted, that their fine and honorable samurai succumb to the horrifying Taint while the effete and the careless play at games in an Empire kept safe by the spilled blood of the Crab.

THE DRAGON CLAN

"Find your own path."

For a thousand years, the Dragon Clan has watched over the others, recording the history of Rokugan. Aloof and enigmatic, the armies of the Dragon march only rarely, intervening in the clashes of the Great Clans for seemingly inscrutable reasons. From the strange and powerful Tattooed Monks of Togashi to the investigators who challenge the system of justice in the Empire, the Dragon seek to ensure the Empire does not become too self-focused and solipsistic. It falls to them to ensure that the future of the Empire transpires in an orderly and elegant manner.

THE CRANE CLAN

"There is a proper technique for all things."

The Crane are the Left Hand of the Emperor, in service as the political aides to the throne. It's traditional for the Hantei to choose a samurai from the Doji family as their spouse, more Emerald Champions have been Kakita than any other family, and the samurai of the Daidoji family serve as some of the finest shock troops in the Emerald Empire. Yet the Crane make their greatest contributions in culture: many of the finest poets and craftspeople hail from their academies, and their duelists have few rivals. The Crane are the masters of court, with the wealth and status to prove it.

THE LION CLAN

"For my ancestors!"

To be a samurai is to live and breathe Bushidō, but to be a Lion is to exemplify it to all others. The Lion's roar heralds the call to battle and honor. For centuries, the Lion have dominated the military tactics and strategy of the Empire, pioneering new techniques and battle methods that other clans take years to adopt. Now, this clan's samurai seek to apply the wisdom of their ancestors to the trials of the modern era.

THE UNICORN CLAN

"One cannot capture the wind."

The Clan of the Wind spent hundreds of years outside the Empire, returning in a glorious cavalry charge that shook the other clans to their core. The barbaric ways they adopted in their exile continue to shock and disgust the other clans, yet the Unicorn remain fierce in their duty and unwavering in their honor. Of all the clans, they are best suited to uncovering foreign manipulation and infiltration, for they faced innumerable horrors and traitors in their wandering years.

THE PHOENIX CLAN

"Master the elements and be reborn."

Other clans guard the Empire's borders, even the Empire's future, but the Phoenix guard the Empire's soul. It is the duty of the Phoenix to keep safe the myriad religious paths of the Empire, defining them and arbitrating their differences. Scholars of the Tao and servants of the spirits are found among the Phoenix's ranks more than in any other clan; the wisdom the Phoenix have gleaned from both traditions has led them to foster peace and understanding among the other clans, even if it means sacrificing themselves in the process.

THE IMPERIAL FAMILIES

"Enacting the Will of Heaven."

Over thirty-nine generations of the Hantei, innumerable siblings have been the "spare" heirs, extra children who were never called upon to ascend the throne. Even within only a few such generations, the number of princes and princesses born to the Imperial family would require an entire city of palaces, and moreover, none but the Emperor and his immediate kin could use the Hantei family name. Rather than challenge the claim of the Emperor's eldest child, at adulthood these other heirs joined the families of Hantei-no-Kami's original followers, Miya and Otomo and Seppun. They serve as the heralds and bureaucrats of the Empire, and the bodyguards and spiritual wardens of the Emperor.

Together, they are sworn to protect the political power of the Emperor and ensure no one clan grows too influential. Some wonder, however, if they do their jobs of sowing strife among the clans altogether too well.

THE SCORPION CLAN

"I will be your villain, Hantei."

From behind their masks and veils, the Scorpion smile grimly at the performance of their duty, for it is their sacrifice to be hated even as they execute it perfectly. What other clan could perform the role of loyal villain? It was the Scorpion Kami's contention that enemies need not be external to the Empire, and thus, the Scorpion fight fire with fire. They keep all clans united in hatred against them, yet divided so that no one clan can challenge the line to whom they owe undying loyalty: the Hantei.

The Minor Clans

The Great Clans are the most visible and esteemed powers in the Emerald Empire, but they are not alone. There are also minor clans, smaller samurai families who cannot equal the Great Clans in power or prestige but who nevertheless have a place in the Empire's social order.

Minor clans are sometimes created through a schism from a larger clan, an accident of inheritance or geography that creates a new separate entity in need of Imperial recognition. They may also be created by the Imperial Court, sometimes as a reward for an individual samurai's great honor or service, or to create a family to assume responsibility for a particular location, task, or secret.

Mighty as they are, the Great Clans are seldom foolish enough to dismiss the minor clans out of hand. Although they are smaller and seldom have more than one family or one formal school from which to draw their samurai, the minor clans often have unparalleled expertise in their particular area of study.

MINOR CLANS OF NOTE

USING MINOR CLANS

Several notable minor clans are listed here. However, there are dozens more, such as the Moth and Bat Clans. GMs can even create their own for their own campaigns.

Badger Clan: Created in the distant past to guard Rokugan's northern border, the Badger Clan dwells in a series of rough valleys and caves in the Great Wall of the North mountain. As tough and stubborn as their mountain home, the Ichiro family has never once failed in its duty.

Cat Clan: The Nekoma family of the Cat Clan lives on a protected island off the Phoenix coast. While the family appears to be a playful association of acrobats, actors, and noted playwrights, in truth they are a successful clan of mercenary shinobi, selling their skills as spies and assassins to the other clans.

Centipede Clan: Devoted to the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, the matriarchal Centipede Clan preserves ancient traditions and mostly keeps to themselves. The Moshi family produces a large number of shugenja, whose fire magic keeps the clan safe.

Dragonfly Clan: Sometimes called the "gatekeepers to the Dragon Clan," the Dragonfly Clan's Tonbo family act as intermediaries between the reclusive Dragon and the rest of Rokugan.

Falcon Clan: The keen-sighted bushi of the Toritaka family specialize in finding and, if necessary, defeating ghosts and other hostile spirits.

Fox Clan: Once the followers of Shinjo who remained behind in the Empire, the Kitsune family of the Fox Clan is noted for its scholarship, its knowledge of the medicinal properties of plants, and the subtle magic of its shugenja. The Kitsune family also has an alliance of sorts with the kitsune fox-spirits of their homeland, and some say that the samurai have intermarried with the spirits many times over the generations.

Hare Clan: The Hare Clan was founded in recognition of a ronin who distinguished himself in battle against a terrible blood sorcerer centuries ago. Since then, the Usagi family has devoted itself to finding and battling mahō tsukai wherever they may be found.

Mantis Clan: Often dismissed as pirates and thieves, the Mantis control lucrative trade routes thanks to their position on the Islands of Silk and Spice. As leader of what is arguably the most powerful minor clan, Mantis champion Yoritomo's ambition is to lead his clan to Great Clan status. Unusually, the Mantis have no family name, and instead carry the names of the ship or port on which they serve.

Sparrow Clan: The Suzume Hills, home to the Sparrow Clan and the Suzume family, are dry, unproductive, and devoid of any great resources. This makes the Sparrow lifestyle of honorable poverty extremely easy to achieve; the clan itself is one of the poorest in Rokugan. An offshoot of the Crane Clan from the fifth century, the Sparrow are noted storytellers.

Tortoise Clan: As magistrates of Slow Tide Harbor, the Tortoise Clan preside over one of the most notorious havens for smugglers, criminals, and gaijin in the Empire. This association taints them in the eyes of other samurai, but the Kasuga family has been permitted and instructed to treat with gaijin by Imperial decree for centuries, and they will not shirk their duties.

Wasp Clan: Just recently founded by the famed bounty hunter Tsuruchi, the Wasp Clan boasts the finest archers in the Empire. Still establishing itself and on unfriendly terms with both the Scorpion and the Lion, the Wasp Clan is seeking allies…and may have found one in the form of the Mantis Clan.

Rokugan
Great Wall of the North Mountains
Dragon Lands
Unicorn Lands
Spine of the World
Lion Lands
Phoenix Lands
Shinomen Forest
Scorpion Lands
Northern Crane Lands
Southern Crane Lands
Crab Lands
Twilight Mountains
The Shadowlands
Islands of Silk and Spice
CLIFFSIDE SHRINE
CASTLE OF THE BADGER
HIGH HOUSE OF LIGHT
ISAWA ELEMENTAL ACADEMIES
FAR TRAVELER CASTLE
FIRE TOOTH CASTLE
KHANBULAK
BATTLE MAIDEN CASTLE
LAST GLANCE CASTLE
SHIBA CASTLE
LAST STEP CASTLE
MORNING GLORY CASTLE
CASTLE OF THE CAT
CASTLE OF THE DRAGONFLY
CITY OF THE RICH FROG
CASTLE OF THE SWIFT SWORD
VIOLENCE BEHIND COURTLINESS CITY
GATHERER OF WINDS CASTLE
CASTLE OF THE CENTIPEDE
GREAT DAY CASTLE
CASTLE OF THE EMERALD CHAMPION
SACRED WATCH PALACE
CASTLE OF ORGANIZATION
LOYALTY CASTLE
SLOW TIDE HARBOR
CITY OF LIES
LAST BREATH CASTLE
OTOSAN UCHI
CASTLE OF LEARNING
TSUMA
SON OF THE CRANE
BEIDEN
CASTLE OF PRETENDING
SHIZUKA TOSHI
SILK AND SHADOW PALACE
ESTEEMED PALACES OF THE CRANE
SHIMOMURA
CASTLE OF THE WASP
CASTLE OF THE FALCON
CASTLE OF THE HARE
MAEMIKAKE
WALL ABOVE THE OCEAN VILLAGE
RAZOR OF THE DAWN CASTLE
CARPENTER CASTLE
CASTLE OF THE FOX
THE PORT THAT NEVER SLEEPS
CASTLE OF THE SPARROW
CASTLE OF THE NATION
CASTLE OF THE FORGOTTEN
BLACK CRANE ESTATES
PALACE OF THE MANTIS
DAYLIGHT CASTLE
HIDA CASTLE
CITY OF LIGHTNING
TEMPLE OF THE MORNING SUN
FRIENDLY TRAVELER VILLAGE

CHAPTER

1

Playing the Game

A roleplaying game is a group storytelling exercise that enables groups of people to develop their own characters, stories, and worlds together with their friends. Unlike those in a competitive game, the rules of a roleplaying game are intended first and foremost to help people tell stories and have fun. The rules for the *Legend of the Five Rings* Roleplaying Game (commonly abbreviated simply as "*L5R*" or "*L5R RPG*") are written with a certain degree of technical precision, but they should be understood as tools to facilitate storytelling rather than as restrictions that must be applied "correctly" in all cases. Remember, as long as everyone is having fun, you're playing the game properly!

Goals of the Game

The *Legend of the Five Rings* Roleplaying Game is a game of samurai drama. Set in the fictional land of Rokugan, it draws inspiration from real-world literature and history. The primary characters of the game are samurai, who are torn between their personal desires and their sworn duties. They must often contend with cunning court intrigues, deadly armed conflicts, and dangerous supernatural creatures.

PLAYERS

Most of the participants in the game, termed **players**, portray a person within the world of the game. Each player controls one such character (called, intuitively enough, a **player character**, or **PC**). Players decide the history, beliefs, desires, and quirks of their player characters; make decisions for their characters during the game; and control and portray their characters when roleplaying. PCs also have numerical values, such as rings and skills, that reflect their aptitudes, training, and traits. These values help them undertake tasks within the story.

THE GAME MASTER

To aid in the telling of the story, one participant serves as the **game master** (**GM**) instead of as a player. The game master is the group's guide, who invents the frame of the story and presents the PCs with challenges, decisions, and opportunities. The game master is not the sole architect of the story, but this person does have a particularly important role in helping the PCs to interact with the world. They portray the other inhabitants of Rokugan (**non-player characters**, or **NPCs**), describe each scene to the players, and act as an arbitrator in the infinite number of situations that can arise.

Custom Dice

The *Legend of the Five Rings* Roleplaying Game uses two types of custom dice: six-sided dice and twelve-sided dice, both of which have faces depicting symbols for this game. After a player rolls these dice, the symbols shown inform narrative outcomes and give players cues that can inspire them as they tell a story together.

ROLL AND KEEP

The core mechanic for rolling dice in *Legend of the Five Rings* employs a concept called **roll and keep**. When a character attempts to do something in the story, if the outcome of their effort is uncertain, that character's player rolls a number of dice and then chooses to keep a subset of those dice based on their character's aptitude to the task. This activity (rolling and keeping dice to find out the consequences of a character's effort) is called a **check**.

Only results on kept dice affect the outcome, which gives the player the power to decide which of the available results will make for the best story in each situation. Many die faces include both positive and negative symbols, and a player must decide if the benefits of keeping such a result outweigh the cost.

RING DICE

The six-sided dice are **Ring dice**, which reflect a character's core personality and fundamental aptitudes. In text, they are represented with the ■ icon.

SKILL DICE

The twelve-sided dice are **Skill dice**, which reflect a character's training in a particular area of expertise. Skill dice provide slightly more potent outcomes than Ring dice, and in text they are represented with the ⬠ icon.

DICE SYMBOLS

The custom dice in *Legend of the Five Rings* contain four unique symbols. These symbols appear in various combinations on the dice, and are summarized below:

Success (◯)

The **success** symbol (◯) represents the sum total of the character's effort when they attempt to complete a task. More ◯ symbols mean a higher chance of carrying out the task successfully.

Explosive Success (✪)

The **explosive success** symbol (✪) represents a particularly effective part of the character's effort. In addition to counting as a ◯ symbol, it gives the character a chance to roll an additional die and decide whether to add its result to the check—potentially letting them succeed at a task they normally couldn't overcome. See ✪ under **Step 6: Resolve Symbols of Kept Dice**, on page 24.

Opportunity (✿)

The **opportunity** symbol (✿) does not contribute directly to success, but it lets the character resolve an **opportunity**—a chance to do or notice something useful that is unrelated to their goal at the outset, or expand on their success with an additional effect or story detail.

Strife (◌)

The **strife** symbol (◌) represents an upwelling of emotion. **Strife** does not affect success or failure on the check but instead accumulates over time, potentially leading to outward displays of emotion that can alter the direction of the story for good or for ill. The more it accumulates, the harder it is to maintain the decorum expected of a samurai—a key struggle in the genre of samurai drama.

WHAT IS THE GAME MASTER'S ROLE?

The game master is the group's access point to the world of Rokugan, and the final arbiter on many matters of story and rules. However, that doesn't mean that the players have no say over the story—balance and respect for one another are key. The players should listen to the GM, and the GM should listen to the players, too, and incorporate their ideas as appropriate.

If this is your first time playing or running a roleplaying game, make sure to read **Chapter 7: The Game Master** (see page 281) for insight on how both the GM and the players can collaborate to make the game the best it can be!

IS STRIFE BAD?

No. Feeling emotions is a natural part of existence. Strife, represented on the dice by the icon of a stylized single cherry blossom petal, embodies positive and negative emotions, as well as the uncertainty that accompanies ambivalence. Players should think of it first and foremost as a barometer that helps them gauge their character's emotional state, meant to help inspire their roleplaying.

Making a Check

When a character attempts something at which they could fail, they make a **check**. The check is the core mechanic for *L5R*, and has two parts:

1. Assemble a number of ■ and ⬠ dice to form a dice pool, then **roll** these dice.
2. Select a number of dice equal to the character's ring value to **keep**, then resolve the positive and negative effects of the symbols on all kept dice.

A check always has one of two outcomes: the character **succeeds** or the character **fails**. Additionally, it can include secondary outcomes, such as opportunity (✿), which can be used to add extra narrative flourishes, and the accumulation of strife (✿).

CHECKS IN TEXT

When a check appears in print, it often has a preset skill, ring, or TN, along with recommended modifiers that apply to certain situations. If it allows any ring, it will not list a ring; if it allows any skill within a group, it will list a group rather than a specific skill.

If a check in print allows multiple rings, it will sometimes be followed by parentheses containing ring names and values, such as "(Air 3, Water 1)". These values are the TNs to use those rings.

WHEN TO MAKE A CHECK

The GM gets to decide when it's worthwhile for a character to make a check. As a rule of thumb, the GM should consider the following questions:

- Could the character fail?
- Could the character possibly succeed?
- Are the consequences of success and failure interesting and meaningfully different?

If the answer to any of these is "no," the GM probably shouldn't ask for a check. The character can simply succeed at their action or fail at it, and the GM can work with the player to narrate the results in the story.

MATCHING RINGS WITH SKILLS

The Five Rings are important philosophical concepts in Rokugan, and thus each ring says something important about a character.

Rather than reflecting measurable mental or physical traits of a character, each ring represents an aspect of a character's personality, and their inclination toward certain ways of thinking, acting, and using the tools that their skills provide them.

Thus, each ring can function alongside any skill, but each pairing reflects a different strategy and thus leads to a different outcome.

STEPS OF A CHECK

The six steps in the following section provide a more technical breakdown that the GM can reference if they need to know when effects occur or how specific abilities interact. The GM performs all steps for non-player characters.

Step 1: Declare Intention

When a player declares that their character is attempting a task with dramatic stakes where failure is a possibility, the GM may call upon that player to make a check. The player should make their intention behind the check clear, describing what they want their character to achieve if they succeed at the check.

Step 2: Determine Details

A check is resolved through rolling a number of Ring dice (■) and Skill dice (⬠) in a dice pool, and then selecting **results** (the sets of symbols contained on the upright faces of the dice) from the pool. Use the following process to determine which skill and ring the character will use:

1. **Determine Skill Group:** First, the GM and player decide which **skill group** (see page 142) would best allow the character to accomplish the intended task.
2. **Determine Skill:** Next, the GM and player determine the body of knowledge that applies to the specific activity—this provides the specific **skill** (see page 142) to use. The GM can call for a particular skill based on circumstances, or the GM can ask the player to propose a skill and offer a rationale for its relevance.
3. **Determine Approach:** Next, the player provides a brief description of the methods their character employs to reach their goal. The GM selects the **elemental approach** (see page 142) that corresponds to reaching the original goal by the specific methods, or asks the player to pick a method. If multiple approaches are viable, the player should offer a rationale for the one they choose. Each ring corresponds with a set of methods that relate to the following concepts and are explored in more detail in **Chapter 3: Skills** (see page 140):
   - **Air:** Grace, cunning, precision, subtlety
   - **Earth:** Resilience, patience, memory, calm
   - **Fire:** Passion, invention, candor, ferocity
   - **Water:** Flexibility, awareness, efficiency, charm
   - **Void:** Mysticism, intuition, instinct, wisdom
4. **Determine Target Number of Successes:** Finally, the GM selects a target number of successes (commonly referred to as a **TN**). It is the number of successes the character must achieve to succeed at the check. Except in special circumstances, the GM should announce the TN of the check to the player at this point (see **When to Reveal or Conceal the TN**, on page 297).

Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool

The player assembles the dice pool. The player picks up a number of Skill dice (⬠) equal to the character's ranks in the selected skill and a number of Ring dice (■) equal to the value of the character's ring that is associated with the selected approach. Then, the player rolls all of these dice. After they are rolled, the dice are called **rolled dice**.

Declare Intention

When a character tries to accomplish something in the story, the GM may ask for a check. That character's player clearly explains what they want their character to accomplish.

Kat wants to have her character Sakura leap from one rooftop to another while pursuing a suspicious figure fleeing the scene of a crime. She describes her character's reckless approach to the task—catching up is the most important thing right now!

Determine Details

Based on the description, the GM decides which skill and ring the player will roll, along with the target number of successes (TN) needed.

The GM decides that since she's trying to overwhelm a foe with a burst of speed, the check will use Sakura's Fire Ring and Fitness skill. The TN of the check would be 2 normally, but in this case there is fresh snow on the rooftop. The GM raises the TN to 3 to account for this circumstance.

Assemble and Roll Dice Pool

First, the player picks up a number of Ring dice (■) equal to their character's ring the GM chose. This can be found on the character sheet under Rings.

Next, the player picks up a number of Skill dice (⬠) equal to their character's ranks in the skill the GM chose.

Then, the player rolls all of the dice together.

Kat's character has a Fire Ring of 3, so she picks up 3 Ring dice (■■■).

+

Kat's character has 1 rank of the Fitness skill, so she picks up 1 Skill die (⬠).

Kat picks up and rolls these dice:

Modify Rolled Dice

The GM and player apply any effects that modify the dice, such as advantages and disadvantages that cause rerolls.

After rolling, Kat has the following results:

Her character's Keen Balance advantage allows her to reroll two dice. She chooses the ■ showing a blank result and the ⬠ showing an ✲ result.

Her new results are:

Choose Kept Dice

The player selects a number of dice up to their ring to keep.

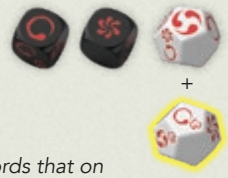
Kat needs 3 success or explosive success symbols (◯ / ◯) to succeed. She only has 2 so far, but if she chooses the ◯, she can roll an extra die to possibly generate the extra ◯ she needs. She chooses to keep the highlighted dice and drops the others.

Resolve Symbols on Kept Dice

The player resolves symbols from results of kept dice in the following order to determine the check's outcome:

- **Explosive Success (◯):** For each ◯, the player may roll 1 extra die of the type on which it appears and choose to keep or drop it.
- **Strife (◯):** The character receives 1 strife per ◯.
- **Opportunity (✲):** Spend ✲ to add story details.
- **Total Successes (◯ / ◯):** If total ◯ and ◯ equal or exceed the TN, the character succeeds.

◯ *First, Kat rolls the extra die from her explosive success (◯) symbol. The result is ◯ ◯, so she opts to add this die to her roll.*



◯ *Kat generated 1 strife (◯), so she records that on Sakura's character sheet next to her composure attribute.*

✲ *Kat has 1 opportunity (✲). She uses it to add a detail: the chase unnerves the target, which will help in questioning them later.*

◯ ◯ ◯ *Kat has a total of 3 ◯ and/or ◯, each of which provides a success, so she reaches the target number to succeed at the check. Sakura vaults across the gap and tackles her target!*

SAMPLE TNS

The target number of successes (TN) generally ranges from 1 to 8, but it can potentially be even higher. The GM chooses this number based on the innate difficulty of the task, the complexity of the objective the player described, and the appropriateness of the method the character is using.

- **TN 1:** An easy task for most people, such as carrying half one's weight or finding a misplaced item.
- **TN 2:** An average task, such as jumping a ten-foot ditch or recognizing someone in disguise.
- **TN 3:** A difficult task, such as scaling a cliff without rope or finding a well-hidden object.
- **TN 4:** A very hard task, such as diving safely from the top of a waterfall or recalling someone's exact words years later.
- **TN 5:** An extremely hard task, such as stirring a demoralized army to action or hurling someone using only one hand.
- **TN 6:** An extraordinary task, such as discerning someone's whereabouts from the mud on their sandals or felling a tree with a single ax blow.
- **TN 7:** A heroic task, such as outwrestling a troll or naming all of one's ancestors in order.
- **TN 8 (or higher):** A legendary task, such as shattering stone with one's bare hands or outwitting a Fortune.

Step 4: Modify Rolled Dice

During this step, any effects that modify rolled dice are applied. The most common way that rolled dice are modified is through advantages and disadvantages (see page 35), helpful and hindering quirks innate to a character.

After the player rolls the dice, the player and GM have a chance to decide which (if any) of the character's advantages and disadvantages apply to the check. Each advantage and disadvantage can be applied only once per check by any character.

ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE CATEGORIES

The most common categories have the following effects:

Distinction: The player chooses up to 2 dice to reroll.

Adversity: The player must choose 2 dice with results containing ◌ or ⟲ symbols to reroll. If they fail, they gain 1 Void point.

Passion: After resolving the check, the character removes 3 strife.

Anxiety: After the check, the character receives 3 strife. The first time this occurs each scene, they gain 1 Void point.

1. **Apply Advantages and Disadvantages:** The description for each advantage or disadvantage specifies circumstances when it applies—as long as the GM also agrees. Advantages are applied before disadvantages.
2. **Consolidate Advantages and Disadvantages:** After applying advantages and disadvantages, the player consolidates them. An applied distinction advantage cancels (and is canceled by) an applied adversity disadvantage; passions and anxieties cancel each other out in the same manner. Canceled advantages and disadvantages have no effect on the resolution of the check.
3. **Resolving Advantages and Disadvantages:** The player resolves each advantage or disadvantage (the effects are described in this page's margin notes and in **Chapter 2**). Only one advantage or disadvantage of a given category (distinction, adversity, etc.) can be resolved.

Step 5: Choose Kept Dice

After applying advantages and disadvantages, the player looks at the results and decides which of the rolled dice will become **kept dice** (those used in the resolution of the check) and which will become **dropped dice** (those that will be discarded with their results unused).

The player must choose at least one die to keep, and can choose to keep a maximum up to the value of the ring the character used for the check. The player then removes all dropped dice.

Then, any effects that modify kept dice are resolved.

Step 6: Resolve Symbols on Kept Dice

After the dice pool has been reduced to only kept dice, the player resolves all symbols contained in the results of those dice. Symbols are resolved in the following order:

1. ⟲: For each ⟲ symbol, the player rolls one additional die of the same type as the one containing the ⟲ symbol. After rolling a die this way, the player chooses whether it will be kept (on top of their current results) or dropped. If the die is kept, the player resolves its result in addition to the results on the rest of the kept dice in the dice pool (including further ⟲ symbols).
2. ◌: For each ◌ symbol, the character receives 1 strife. The character's player should record any strife their character receives on their

character sheet. Strife has no immediate effect, but can have effects as it accumulates (see **Using Strife** on page 29).

3. ✿: The player may spend 1 or more ✿ symbols to resolve opportunities. Opportunities are meant to prompt the player and the GM to invent and add extra effects, additional details, and narrative flourishes that occur independently of a check's success or failure (see **Using Opportunity** on page 28).
4. ◯: If the sum total of ◯ and ◯ symbols equals or exceeds the target number of successes of the check, the character succeeds at the objective declared in **Step 1: Declare Intention**. If this total is less than the TN of the check, the character fails at the proposed feat instead. Additionally, count up any ◯ and ◯ beyond the ones needed to reach the TN: these are **bonus successes**, which are important for some checks that account for a character's margin of success.

NARRATING A CHECK'S RESULTS

A check is a mechanical activity, but it shouldn't be devoid of roleplaying, as it presents excellent opportunity to describe what your character is doing in the story.

If the character succeeds on the check, their player gets to narrate the outcome of the success, within the confines of the intention described in **Step 1: Declare Intention**. For example, if a bushi (warrior) character succeeds at an Attack action their player declared and inflicts a lethal blow on their foe, the player can narrate how their character slashes upward with their katana, cutting through the robes of their adversary and into the soft flesh beneath.

By contrast, if they fail, the player can still describe their strike, but instead give a description of why they failed. The GM might offer a reason as well—perhaps the foe's evasive footwork made them harder to hit than usual!

The player can also think about the emotions that any strife they incurred represents, and may narrate this if they desire. Depending on the circumstances, the ◯ they accumulated as part of the Attack action could represent their character's grief at being forced to cut down a loved one at their lord's order—or it might simply be the dull ache of killing yet another anonymous stranger in a world that does not seem to care how much blood is spilled. The narrative context of the check is key, and should define how players and GMs interpret a character's strife.

Table 1–1: Dice Faces

NUMBER	RING DIE ■	SKILL DIE ⬠
1	*Blank*	*Blank*
2	✿ ◯	*Blank*
3	✿	✿
4	◯ ◯	✿
5	◯	✿
6	◯ ◯	◯ ◯
7	–	◯ ◯
8	–	◯
9	–	◯
10	–	◯ ✿
11	–	◯ ◯
12	–	◯

Finally, the player gets the chance to interpret the ✿ they spend as part of the check: they should indicate whether they want to spend it in a manner that steers the narrative in a direction interesting to them, in a way based on an example option appropriate to the ring used on the check, or in a manner provided by a special ability. Sometimes, the GM must approve or contribute to the interpretation of ✿, such as if the character notices an important detail that might change the story or remember a relevant fact of the setting that their player does not know. Unspent ✿ simply goes unused and has no effect.

Table 8–1: Examples of ✿, on page 328, provides a number of examples players can employ in a wide array of circumstances and use as guidelines for creating new ways to spend ✿. The GM and players alike are encouraged to use these for inspiration, or when they simply want a quick option to keep play moving.

Additional Rules for Checks

The following rules apply to all checks or to specific types of checks, as described within the entry.

ASSISTANCE

While a samurai must face some tasks alone, allies can frequently offer critical assistance during major challenges. When one character dedicates significant effort to helping another (rather than accomplishing a separate goal), use the rules for **assistance**.

Using Assistance

During **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, if a character making a check receives assistance from one or more others, the character making the check rolls one additional ⬠ per assisting character who has 1 or more ranks of the skill in use, and one additional ■ per assisting character who has 0 ranks in the skill in use. Each player whose character assists must describe how they are helping, and the GM decides if they can contribute.

At the GM's discretion, during **Step 4: Modify Rolled Dice**, up to one advantage from one assisting character can be applied.

Then, during **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**, a character making a check with assistance may keep up to 1 additional die per assisting character.

Finally, during **Step 6: Resolve Symbols on Kept Dice**, each assisting character may choose to suffer 1 strife to negate 1 symbol on the check.

UNIVERSAL TIEBREAKER

Many effects explain how to break ties between characters, but sometimes there might be a stalemate if these values are tied as well. In these cases:

- PCs supersede NPCs
- Adversary NPCs supersede minion NPCs

If there is still a tie, the GM should use a randomized means of breaking the tie, such as flipping a coin or having the tied parties play rock-paper-scissors.

Limits on Assistance

The GM is the final arbiter of whether a character's attempt to help is actually useful enough to grant this benefit, as well as whether there is a maximum number of characters who can feasibly assist. Given the logistical challenges it can have (physical space, proximity, relevant expertise, etc.) and the mechanical potency of assistance, GMs should feel free to allow only one character to assist in many circumstances.

BONUS SUCCESSES AND SHORTFALL

Sometimes it is important to know the amount by which a character succeeded at a task (or the extent of their failure). While success and failure are sometimes all-or-nothing, at other times, the degree of one's success or failure is relevant. Successes in excess of the target number of successes (bonus successes) might help the character succeed more thoroughly. On the other hand, if the character fails, the amount by which they fell short of the target number of successes (their shortfall) can reveal the depths of their failure.

Determining Bonus Successes

If a character succeeds on a check, their bonus successes are the number of ◯ and symbols in excess of the target number of successes for the check.

Determining Shortfall

If a character fails a check, their shortfall is the TN of the check minus the sum of their ◯ and symbols.

CHECKS TO RESIST EFFECTS

While most checks targeting other characters are made against static values (such as the target's vigilance attribute), sometimes the target can make their own check to **resist**. When a character succeeds at a check to resist an effect (whether the effect comes from a check or another source), they avoid some or all of the ill effects they would otherwise have suffered.

For instance, if one character succeeds on a check to hurl an opponent off a parapet, the target gets a chance to resist with a skill check using an elemental approach based on their chosen method of resistance. If the target succeeds on the check to resist, they are able to avoid being thrown off the parapet, perhaps catching the edge or barely maintaining their footing.

When setting the TN for a check to resist the effects of another check, if the effect does not have a listed TN, the GM should come up with a TN for the check to resist. If they want to take the other character's effort into account, they can use the acting character's bonus successes to modify the resisting character's TN.

COMPETITIVE CHECKS

If the GM needs to compare the performance of two or more characters on similar checks where neither is clearly resisting the other, each character's bonus successes (or shortfall) provide this information. The character with the most bonus successes (or smallest shortfall, if all failed) performs the task best, most quickly, or most efficiently (or least badly, in the case of failure).

For example, if two characters are engaged in a footrace and both succeed on their check, the one with more bonus successes finishes first. If three characters are preparing poems for a poetry contest but all fail, the character with the smallest shortfall on their check writes the least embarrassing of the bad poems.

MINIMUM TN

The TN of a check cannot be reduced below 1 by modifiers. A TN 0 check would be a simple task for most, such as carrying one quarter of one's weight or remembering a cousin's name. This sort of task should not require a check, but circumstances might make it hard enough to warrant a check. Conversely, if circumstances make a check utterly trivial, but it is important to know a character's bonus successes, the GM could call for a TN 0 check.

MODIFYING THE DICE POOL

Any effect that changes the contents of the dice pool (dice, results, or symbols) after it has been rolled is considered a **die modification effect**. A die can be modified multiple times (including by the same form of modification) if multiple different effects instruct it. Each effect is fully resolved before resolving a different effect.

Specific Results

Some effects refer to a die **set to** or **showing** a specific result. This refers to a face on the die with exactly the specified symbols (e.g. "add a ■ set to an ✲ ↻ result" or "reroll a die showing a blank result").

Results Containing Symbols

Other effects refer to a die result **containing** a specified symbol. This refers to any result that includes at least one instance of that symbol (e.g. "reroll a die containing ↻" or "alter a die to a result containing ↻").

Maximum Modification

If a single effect instructs a player to modify two or more dice, they cannot select a single die to modify multiple times this way. If the number of dice specified by the effect exceeds the number of eligible dice in the pool, the player modifies as many eligible dice as possible.

Adding and Canceling Dice

Resolve these effects in the listed order:

- **Add a Rolled Die:** When an effect says to add a rolled die, during **Step 4: Modify Rolled Dice**, place one die of the noted type in the pool set to the specified result. It is a rolled die.
- **Cancel a Rolled Die:** When an effect says to cancel a rolled die, during **Step 4: Modify Rolled Dice**, choose one die in the pool as instructed. It becomes a dropped die.
- **Add a Kept Die:** When an effect says to add a kept die, after **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**, place one die of the noted type in the pool set to the specified result. It is a kept die.
- **Cancel a Kept Die:** When an effect says to cancel a kept die, after **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**, choose one die in the pool as instructed. It becomes a dropped die.

Other Dice Modification

Other common dice modification terms include:

- **Alter:** When an effect says to alter a die, pick it up and set it to a different result as instructed by the effect.
- **Negate:** When an effect says to negate a symbol, ignore that symbol when resolving the check (but not other symbols from the same result).
- **Reroll:** When an effect says to reroll a die, roll it again and use the new result.
- **Reserve:** When an effect says to reserve a die, remove it from the roll, then set it aside or record its result. The die will be used for a future roll as described by the effect.

Simultaneous Dice Modification

If two or more effects would modify a die, the player who made the check resolves them in the following order:

1. NPCs' effects (and other effects the GM controls)
2. Other player characters' effects
3. Their own character's effects

If a single player controls multiple such effects, that player chooses the order in which they resolve.

TARGETING AND CHECKS

Some checks directly affect one or more other characters. These characters are considered **targets** of that check. If an effect specifies it, objects and positions in space can also be the target of a check.

MINIMUM VALUES

When an effect reduces a value, it is assumed to reduce it to a minimum of 0 unless stated otherwise. One noteworthy exception is the target number (TN) of checks, which can only be reduced to a minimum of 1.

EXAMPLE USES OF ✲

Beyond the narrative uses discussed here, an extensive list of example uses of ✲ can be found in Table 8–1: Examples of ✲ (see page 328). Players and GMs can use these directly, or as inspiration for their own new opportunities.

Using Opportunity

Opportunity (✲) is a symbol that gives players and GMs a cue to add narrative flair and secondary effects to the tasks the characters attempt. It can be spent to add details that make the story more vivid or exciting. Like most improvisational tools, ✲ can be extremely effective when used to build upon details that already exist in the scene. The only thing ✲ cannot do is change a success to a failure, or vice-versa—though it can add to or mitigate the consequences of succeeding or failing, at the GM's discretion.

In terms of procedure, the player should suggest the detail or addition they wish to include with the ✲, then the GM should either approve it or pose an alternative option that fits within the story.

A character can only resolve a given opportunity effect once per check, but many opportunities can scale with additional ✲ symbols spent.

✲ AS A DESCRIPTOR

One way to use ✲ is to add a descriptive adverb to the verb that describes one's activity in a check, based on the ring used for the check:

- **Air ✲:** Act precisely, stealthily, or subtly
- **Earth ✲:** Act cautiously, calmly, or thoroughly
- **Fire ✲:** Act creatively, fearsomely, or noticeably
- **Water ✲:** Act efficiently, flexibly, or gregariously
- **Void ✲:** Act instinctively, inscrutably, or sagely

Adding one of these descriptors can significantly change the way a character's activity (the check) actually occurs in the narrative. The GM should consider how the character's descriptor might change how their success or failure is received, what consequences it has, or what new narrative opportunities it might create.

SCALING ✲ EFFECTS

The opportunities described on this page can generally scale for effect, becoming more efficacious if additional ✲ symbols are spent on them. For uses of ✲ whose specific effects are spelled out in text, scaling is indicated with a "+" symbol, and opportunities in text without the "+" symbol do not scale.

If the cost of an opportunity is "✲+," the character may spend 1 or more ✲ when activating the effect. The effect then scales; the more ✲ that was spent to activate it, the more impactful it becomes.

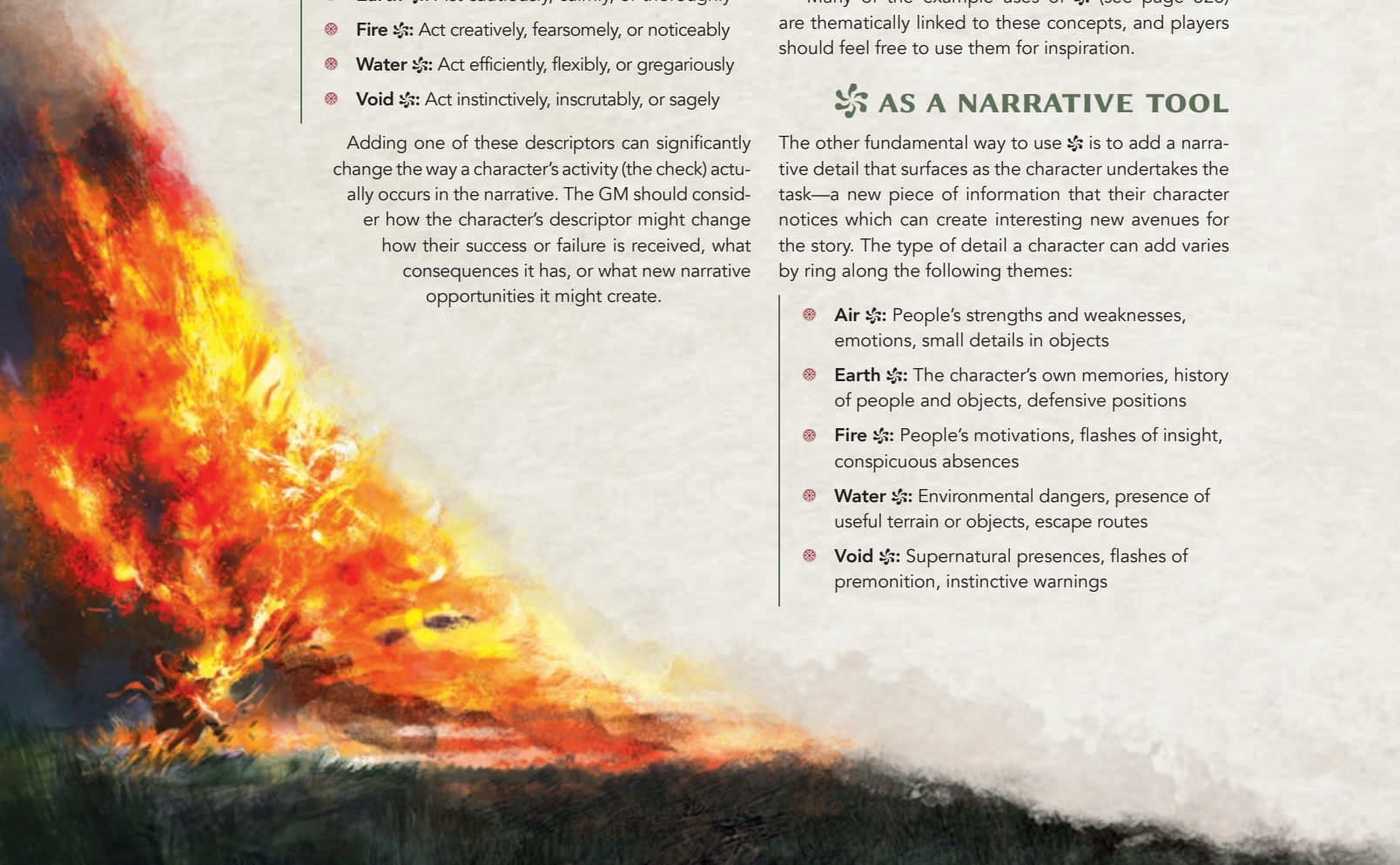
For instance, if a courtier fails a check to convince their lord to cancel a planned pilgrimage after an assassination attempt, spending Air ✲ to have spoken very subtly might prevent their lord from realizing they were trying to exert influence at all. Alternatively, speaking very cautiously with Earth ✲ might convince their lord that they worry too much, but their intentions are good—perhaps the lord will invite their loyal retainer along for the pilgrimage, so that they can see how safe it is and relax a bit. In both cases, the character still failed, but their opportunity added an interesting, advantageous twist.

Many of the example uses of ✲ (see page 328) are thematically linked to these concepts, and players should feel free to use them for inspiration.

✲ AS A NARRATIVE TOOL

The other fundamental way to use ✲ is to add a narrative detail that surfaces as the character undertakes the task—a new piece of information that their character notices which can create interesting new avenues for the story. The type of detail a character can add varies by ring along the following themes:

- **Air ✲:** People's strengths and weaknesses, emotions, small details in objects
- **Earth ✲:** The character's own memories, history of people and objects, defensive positions
- **Fire ✲:** People's motivations, flashes of insight, conspicuous absences
- **Water ✲:** Environmental dangers, presence of useful terrain or objects, escape routes
- **Void ✲:** Supernatural presences, flashes of premonition, instinctive warnings



Using Strife

Rokugani ideals state that samurai are to maintain proper decorum at all times, keeping their emotions under a tight leash except in specific situations. However, samurai are people, and thus they still experience the challenges, joys, frustrations, and sorrows that make up life. These myriad emotions are represented by **strife**.

Players are responsible for tracking how much strife their characters have accrued. The GM should track strife for NPCs, though many NPCs use simplified rules for strife (see page 309).

ACCUMULATING STRIFE

Even those raised under the strictest standards of emotional self-control or committed to finding spiritual peace risk cracking from time to time under the pressures of rule, courtly life, love, or warfare. In the game, strife can come from many activities.

Strife from Checks

Strife is in all things, and therefore a common face on both ⬠ and ■ is a result containing ◌ ◌. When kept dice contain ◌ symbols, the character receives strife as part of their effort.

Strife from Other Sources

Characters can also acquire strife from other sources. A character might receive strife when they encounter their anxieties (see page 99), face challenges related to their ninjō (see page 38) or giri (see page 39), are affected by an ability used by another character, or respond to the twists and turns of the story they inhabit. Players can even choose to inflict strife on their own characters (and the GM can inflict strife on their characters as well) when it makes narrative sense, such as in response to fear, longing, desire, or other strong emotional stimuli.

COMPARING STRIFE TO COMPOSURE

Each character has a composure attribute (see page 36), which represents the character's ability to withstand strife. As a character's strife approaches that character's composure, they move toward an emotional tipping point, at which point they become Compromised (see page 30).

NARRATING STRIFE

Players should feel free to narrate the emotions their characters are feeling as strife accumulates, as well as how it may affect their characters' mannerisms and behavior. Emotion—both bearing it stoically and expressing it openly—is an important aspect of drama. While samurai drama often revolves around stoic characters, stoicism is at its most compelling when characters are feeling something very deeply inside. Even giving small descriptions of their characters' current emotional states can help players engage with this theme. Of course, not all strife needs to be narrated—it is up to the players to decide when strife feels impactful or important.

Strife from checks can represent run-of-the-mill frustration, the joy of a challenge, old pa dredged up by the present situation, fear, shame, rage, passion, hope, the thrill of victory, or any number of other feelings that heighten the character's emotional state.

REMOVING STRIFE

Characters naturally remove some strife as time passes. At the end of each **scene** (a self-contained event or events in an ongoing adventure) each character removes strife until it is equal to half their composure, rounded up (unless it is already lower).

Strife can be reduced further through restful contemplative activities including the pursuit of one's ninjō (see page 38), pursuing a passion (see page 99), meditating, or attending a tea ceremony. Such activities can potentially remove all of a character's current strife.

Finally, a Compromised character can remove all of their strife by unmasking, briefly lowering their façade to act upon their emotions openly (see page 30).

NERVOUS HABITS AND TELLS

During character creation, a player will determine one or more tells that show the character is under stress. These are the sorts of small details that help a character feel vivid, and players can use them to flavor their descriptions when their characters accumulate strife or unmask.

Compromised

TIMING OF BEING COMPROMISED AND UNMASKING

In structured time, while a character is Compromised, they may unmask at the beginning or end of their turn.

Although specifics vary by region and tradition, Rokugani culture at large idealizes a samurai who maintains a stoic outward demeanor. Joys and sorrows alike are to be accepted with the same stern affect. However, the truth of the matter is that no human being can uphold this ideal perfectly all the time—without an outlet for their emotions, a character will eventually become unfocused, distracted, and exhausted.

BECOMING COMPROMISED

While a character's strife is in excess of their composure, the tumult of emotions that has built up causes the character to become **Compromised**. While suffering this condition, they are at their emotional limit, which their player should roleplay through various subtle cues that they are repressing accumulated emotion.

Effects of Being Compromised

A compromised character's vigilance attribute (see page 36) counts as 1. Additionally, when making a check, a Compromised character cannot keep dice containing symbols (to a potential minimum of 0 kept dice).

Recovering from Being Compromised

A character ceases to be Compromised when their strife drops back to (or below) their composure. A Compromised character can always rid themself of all of their strife through **unmasking**.

UNMASKING

Once per scene, while a character is Compromised, their player may choose to have the character **unmask**, briefly expressing the true emotions beneath the guise of a perfect samurai that society demands they maintain. Keep in mind that the character may stay Compromised as long as their player deems it appropriate, and can seek other ways to soothe their emotions, but these often take time. The act of unmasking gives a character the chance to achieve immediate emotional clarity and openness, at the cost of potentially disturbing the scene.

Unmasking is an outpouring of raw emotion: anger at difficult circumstances or injustice, joy as a result of success over harsh trials, mirth at a humorous occurrence, or despair at a tragic turn of events. Importantly, the player never loses control of their character while unmasking, because the player chooses the shape the character's unmasking takes and the time at which it occurs. The form of the unmasking should be suited to the scene in which it takes place and the various emotions that have led the character to become Compromised.

Benefits and Risks of Unmasking

When a character unmasks, they remove all of their strife. Then, the player roleplays the way in which their character lets their façade fall, and the GM determines any narrative and mechanical consequences this has. Players and GMs can look to the examples of unmasking in this section for inspiration, or invent their own to fit the scene and the character.

Like any moment of vulnerability, unmasking is a risk but also a chance to achieve things one otherwise could not. Important moments in a character's life often revolve around the incidents in which they allow their façade to slip, even briefly. Sometimes, this bared emotion even allows the character to transgress societal norms for an

advantage or surpass their own limitations to pursue a goal they otherwise could not.

They can also say and do things they normally couldn't—and while such behavior might have a cost in honor or glory (see page 37 for more on honor and glory), a valid point raised in anger is still often valid. The GM should take this into account for the character's checks during the remainder of the scene. A character who rebukes their lord should suffer any natural consequences for doing so (perhaps forfeiting honor or glory, and suffering potential narrative costs), but might also convince their lord to reconsider a foolish course of action. A character who reveals their secret love for someone beyond their station might suffer social repercussions but also catch that person's attention, allowing them to begin a clandestine relationship. A character who challenges a social superior in anger might get that person to accept a duel they would normally refuse without consideration—though of course, this too carries its own deadly risks. The GM and player should consider the risks the act of unmasking entails in the scene, but also the unique possibilities it might create.

Example Ways of Unmasking

Regardless of how the player decides to roleplay the unmasking, there should be narrative consequences for it, usually both for good and for ill. Sometimes, the GM and player will need to work together to determine how best to suit the temporary slip of their composure to the scene.

The following are a few examples of ways a character can reveal their inner emotions, but players are encouraged to invent other forms of unmasking based on their character's personality and the circumstances. The GM should inform the player of any honor, glory, or status their character might have to forfeit or stake before the player commits to the course of action (see page 37 for more information on social attributes and staking those attributes).

Bend Principles

The character does something that conflicts with their values, oaths, or view of right and wrong to bring about the results they desire. Unmasking this way might well let a character implement a solution to a problem they would normally never consider, but to do so, they must usually forfeit honor equal to their honor rank (a value equal to the tens digit of their total honor attribute), or more, at the GM's discretion.

Expose an Opening

The character reveals a vital flaw in their argument, defenses, or position, often related to one of their disadvantages. Unmasking this way allows others to strike at this weakness, reducing TN of the next check by a hostile character (as defined by the GM) that targets the character to 1.

Honor's Challenge

The character can bear their indignities no longer, and demands satisfaction by way of steel. The character must challenge an antagonist in the scene to a duel (not necessarily to the death). The duel might be fought immediately, or the participants might take the opportunity to prepare for their battle.

Inappropriate Outburst

The character says something out of line or commits a deep breach of etiquette, shocking onlookers. Unmasking this way might let a character express a vital argument forbidden by propriety or reveal something that society demands they keep within. However, to do so, they must usually forfeit glory equal to their glory rank (a value equal to the tens digit of their Glory attribute), or more, at the GM's discretion.

Panicked Retreat

The character departs the scene immediately, without regard for propriety. Unmasking this way might allow a character to run away from certain defeat and live to fight another day. However, to flee from battle or another scene with similarly high stakes, they must usually forfeit honor equal to their honor rank, glory equal to their glory rank, or both.

Rage

The character fails to contain their fury, and they lash out at people or objects around them. Unmasking this way might let a character launch a first strike against an unready foe or let them reinforce a threat by destroying a nearby object. However, to act so violently in an inappropriate context, the character must usually forfeit honor equal to their honor rank, glory equal to their glory rank, or both.

The Character

Characters possess a number of major mechanical attributes and abilities that reflect their upbringing, natural affinities and weaknesses, accumulated wisdom, and training, which are described in the following pages.

THE FIVE RINGS

Each of the five rings represents a character's natural inclination toward a certain approach to solving problems. Rather than reflecting exclusively mental and physical parameters, a character's rings are primarily an expression of their propensity toward certain ways of seeing the world and facing challenges.

When making a check using a given ring, a player rolls a number of Ring dice (■) equal to their value for that ring. For player characters, each ring has a rank between 1 and 5, though some exceptional beings might possess values beyond this range.

- **Rank 1:** The character is considered weak or deficient in this area. They are likely to seek the help of other characters when attempting tasks using this ring's approach, or they prefer alternative methods for achieving their goals.
- **Rank 2:** The character is considered average or normal in this area. They are able to rely on themself when attempting tasks using this ring's approach, but they are unlikely to attract any special notice—good or bad—from other characters.
- **Rank 3:** The character is considered above average in this area. Other characters are likely to take notice when the character takes this approach to accomplishing their goals.
- **Rank 4:** The character is considered exceptional in this area. Other characters are impressed at the character's effectiveness in this sphere.
- **Rank 5:** The character is considered legendary in this area. To others, this character appears to epitomize the essence of a given approach.
- **Rank 6+:** Superhuman ability, such as that possessed by the Oracles or powerful oni. The character's prowess in this sphere is nearly unrivaled. PCs cannot normally attain these values.

Air

The Air Ring represents a graceful, cunning, and precise personality. This approach is subtle or layered with nuance, as the character moves too nimbly or speaks too obliquely to be pinned down. A character with a high Air Ring value is eloquent, physically and socially deft, and shrewd. Depending on the task, characters can use an Air approach (approach names are called out in the subsequent section in **bold**) as follows:

- When making art, an Air approach can allow a character to **refine** a work of art, improving its finer points, honing a piece's details, or stripping away unnecessary things to enhance the work.
- When studying and learning, an Air approach can help a character to **analyze** information so that they can observe and understand details, detect subtle nuances, and unravel layered implications and hidden meanings.
- When communicating, an Air approach can enable a character to **trick** others by using subtlety and cleverness to imbue their words with multiple meanings or obscure the truth. It allows a character to convince others of a statement, deceive (by direct dishonesty or omission), imply secondary intentions, and control what information others have. While not always malicious, it is always manipulative on a certain level.
- When fighting, an Air approach allows a character to **feint**, using their precision and grace to exploit flaws in their foe's attacks and defenses. It focuses on maintaining control over the character's body at every turn. Rather than trying to crush opposition head-on, it seeks opportunities to excel or gain an advantage that demand exact positioning and timing.
- When engaging in a trade, an Air approach allows a character to **con** others, getting something for nothing. It lets a character inflate the prices of items they are selling, convince others to trust them with resources, and steal.

Earth

The Earth Ring represents a character's aptitude for taking a steady, thorough, and grounded approach to problems. This approach is cautious and considerate, as the character works to get results without suffering losses or taking unneeded risks. A character with a high Earth Ring value is likely to be physically tough, mentally resilient, and reliable. Depending on the task, characters can use an Earth approach (approach names are called out in the subsequent section in **bold**) as follows:

- When making art, an Earth approach lets a character **restore** damaged items. This governs the character's ability to repair items and perform upkeep. It also covers related tasks, such as archival and storage.
- When learning and studying, an Earth approach lets a character **recall** information from memory. An Earth approach is not useful for wild leaps of logic or intuition, but it is necessary for creating a solid foundation of known factors and facts upon which to build conclusions.
- When communicating, an Earth approach helps a character **reason** with other people, getting them to think rationally, set aside their emotions, and remember duties and responsibilities. It is also used for instruction, keeping subordinates in line, and maintaining order.
- When fighting, an Earth approach lets a character **withstand** attacks until the perfect moment to strike back. Any task can be accomplished with tenacity in sufficient measure. An Earth approach to a martial task is often cautious, moving slowly to avoid pitfalls or exhaustion.
- When engaging in a trade, an Earth approach lets a character **produce** what they need via physical toil. It can also let a character harvest resources from their environment, create an inventory, manage goods, and store them safely.

Fire

The Fire Ring represents a ferocious, direct, and inventive personality. This approach is explosive and intense, as the character works to get results no matter the cost to themself or others. A character with a high Fire Ring value is likely to be passionate, curious, physically quick, occasionally brusque, and a fast learner. Depending on the task, characters can use a Fire approach (approach names are called out in the subsequent section in **bold**) as follows:

- When making art, a Fire approach allows a character to **invent** new things by drafting and creating wholly new works, turning raw materials into novel pieces of art.
- When studying and learning, a Fire approach lets a character **theorize** on the subject, creatively and energetically attacking the problem to come up with solutions none have considered before. It allows a character to extrapolate how things might be currently and in the future, connect the dots, and identify absences in an argument, idea, or environment.
- When communicating, a Fire approach lets a character **incite** others, engaging with their existing emotions and desires rather than their raw logic. The Fire approach can also be used to induce others to act on those emotions and desires in spite of obvious pitfalls or justified fears.
- When fighting, a Fire approach relies on a burst of power, speed, or agility to **overwhelm** a challenge in one fell swoop. Such tactics are aggressive, no-holds-barred displays of force that crush defenses and frighten onlookers. A Fire approach to battle can be observed in the burst of adrenaline to fight or flee, the kiai of an attack move in the martial arts, or the battle cries of a host of Matsu Berserkers.
- When engaging in a trade, a Fire approach allows a character to **innovate** so that they can develop new technologies and methods, create new products and services, and obtain resources in new ways.

Water

The Water Ring represents an adaptable, powerful, and perceptive personality. The approach is balanced and reversible, as the character works to achieve results without overextending themself or underperforming. A character with a high Water Ring value is naturally affable, physically flexible, observant, and easygoing. Depending on the task, characters can use a Water approach (approach names are called out in the subsequent section in **bold**) as follows:

- When making art, a Water approach helps a character **adapt** a work—making works function in new ways by transforming them, translating works of literature and art into other languages or media, and reducing works to their component parts to serve as raw materials for a new piece.
- When studying and learning, a Water approach allows a character to **survey** their surroundings, giving them character information about their environment and wider circumstances. It can be used to identify things within an area of expertise, detect broad trends and currents, or find out how things work in a practical sense.
- When communicating, a Water approach helps a character **charm** others, gregariously building a rapport with them. It allows a character to instill desires and emotions in others, uncover the existing desires of others, and win people's sympathy.
- When fighting, a Water approach lets the character **shift** to make the circumstances and surroundings work for them. It seeks the path of least resistance for greatest efficacy. Those taking a Water approach in battle seek to redirect incoming energy rather than expending energy of their own.
- When engaging in a trade, a Water approach allows a character to **exchange** resources or labor of one type for another. This helps the character acquire items and services efficiently and at a low cost.

Void

The Void Ring represents a centered, unflinching personality; it can also represent the "flow state." By letting go of the suffering inherent in one's ego-driven desires, the samurai can transcend earthly limitations. It is the enlightened approach, accepting the nature of all Elements, yet allowing no one Element to dominate. A character with a high Void Ring value is likely to be spiritually sensitive, wise, and introspective. Depending on the task, characters can use a Void approach (approach names are called out in the subsequent section in **bold**) as follows:

- When making art, a Void approach enables a character to **attune** themselves to a work, understand the purpose of a work, know why the work has appeared before them, and sense the work's supernatural qualities, if it has any.
- When studying and learning, a Void approach allows a character to **sense** disturbances in their surroundings that would be imperceptible to most. This represents a character's "sixth sense," giving them hunches about supernatural phenomena and even future events.
- When communicating, a Void approach lets a character **enlighten** others, challenging their core beliefs, causing them to reassess their decisions and actions. It can be used to get others to reconsider desires or break free from powerful emotional states or mystical manipulation.
- When fighting, a Void approach enables a character to **sacrifice** their defenses, safety, or even intentionally suffer physical harm to accomplish their goals. The character moves instinctively, in tune with the rhythm of the cosmos. Without direction by any conscious thought, they do what is necessary for success, no matter the cost.
- When engaging in trade, a Void approach allows a character to **subsist**, living in harmony with their environment and finding ways to make the most out of very little without disturbing their surroundings.

SKILL RANKS

Skills represent a character's training in a particular art. When making a check using a given skill, a player rolls a number of Skill dice (⬠) equal to the number of ranks their character has in that skill. For player characters, skill ranks have a value between 0 and 5, though certain supernatural beings might possess skill ranks that fall outside of this range.

- **Rank 0:** This represents a lack of formal training. The character has only a cursory understanding based on limited direct experience.
- **Rank 1:** This represents the beginner or amateur level. The character has taken their first steps in formal education on the topic and has grasped the rudimentary elements of its study.
- **Rank 2:** This represents the apprentice or initiate level of study. The character has begun to delve into the deeper nuances of their art.
- **Rank 3:** This represents professional training. The character has enough theoretical understanding and practical experience to go out into the world and use their skill to earn a living or serve their lord well.
- **Rank 4:** This represents the advanced level of study. The character is called upon to invent new subfields within their area of expertise or train others in their art. They might be asked to teach lower-ranking students within their dōjō or be given supervisory responsibilities by their lord.
- **Rank 5:** This represents so-called mastery of a given skill, though in truth, it is just the beginning of mastery. The character might become a sought-out teacher or champion of their specific field. And yet, greater mysteries always exist, to be pursued for the acquisition of secret techniques, personal enlightenment, and a greater understanding of the wider world.
- **Rank 6+:** Ranks beyond 5 represent what humans term enlightenment on a given matter, or a degree of supernatural knowledge that exceeds human limitations. Powerful kami, Elemental Dragons, oni, and other such beings of vast wisdom and experience might possess skills of rank 6 or higher. Player characters cannot normally purchase their skills to this point with experience points, but might be able to reach it by extraordinary means.

MIYAMOTO MUSASHI ON MASTERY

Legend of the Five Rings owes a great deal to the real world historical writings of Miyamoto Musashi, a famous Japanese sword master. *The Book of Five Rings* (c. 1645) is his martial and philosophical manual, and offers insights on fighting and how these apply to life more generally.

Interestingly, Musashi did not write his account until decades after his legendary career as a duelist. Further, reflecting on his success in youth, he describes how he did not reach the underlying truth of martial arts until late in his life, decades after his last known duel. Despite achieving the height of his demonstrated fighting ability early in his career, he felt that his understanding of martial arts—and, by extension, all other arts he learned—was incomplete until he had spent another twenty years studying and reflecting.

In this game, reaching Rank 5 in a skill is akin to Musashi reaching his peak as a practicing duelist in his youth. It is an incredible achievement, but does not yet reflect full understanding of the art or the wider implications of the idea of mastery itself. To achieve their greatest potential, a character must not only advance their skills and rings, but also come to understand themself and their place in the world.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Advantages and disadvantages are intrinsic quirks of a character's body, mind, personality, or spirit. A character is assigned several of these at character creation, but they can also acquire more during play as a result of narrative events or through certain circumstances (such as suffering particularly grievous **Critical Strikes**, as described on page 269). Each advantage and disadvantage is assigned to the specific ring to which it most often pertains. The most common categories of advantages and disadvantages are distinctions, passions, adversities, and anxieties, and a character is assigned at least one of each of these during the process of character creation.

For more details, see **Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 99.

"YOU" THE PLAYER AND "YOU" THE CHARACTER

Character abilities such as advantages and techniques are written in second person for clarity.

As the player, you make all decisions for your character, who does what is described in the ability within the fiction of the game.

ROUNDING

When a formula results in a fraction, round up to the nearest integer.

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

Derived attributes are numerical values that are determined by a character's ring values and other decisions made at character creation, and they can be altered over the course of play.

Endurance

Endurance represents a character's physical stamina and will to fight on despite fatigue. A character's endurance is equal to their **(Earth Ring + Fire Ring) x 2**.

Composure

Composure represents a character's capacity to take on mental and emotional strife without becoming unsettled. When a character's strife exceeds their composure, they become Compromised, as described on page 30. A character's composure is equal to their **(Earth Ring + Water Ring) x 2**.

Focus

Focus represents the speed with which a character reacts to known threats. When determining which character acts first in a structured scene by making an Initiative check (see page 256 for more on Initiative checks), a character's focus is often taken into account. A character's focus is equal to their **Fire Ring + Air Ring**.

Vigilance

Vigilance represents a character's wariness and general ability to perceive threats in all spheres. A character's vigilance sets the target number to catch them off guard, as well as the TN to deceive, mislead, or otherwise use rhetoric to manipulate them when they aren't actively scrutinizing others. A character's vigilance is equal to their **(Air Ring + Water Ring) / 2**.

VOID POINTS

A HERO'S RESOLVE

In works of samurai fiction, force of will is often a deciding factor at crucial moments. Void points can be spent to tap into that spirit of heroism, helping characters persevere in situations that seem insurmountable.

Void points are a resource that characters can spend to surpass their normal limits, exert extra effort, or activate certain special abilities. A character begins the game with Void points equal to half their Void Ring, rounded up, and can accrue a maximum number of Void points equal to the value of their Void Ring. If a character's current Void points equal their Void Ring, they cannot gain further Void points.

Spending Void Points

When a player spends a Void point for an effect, they are encouraged to offer a brief explanation about why their character chooses to draw a line at that moment and what parts of their character's core beliefs and motivations factor into it.

Void points can be spent in a number of ways, as described below:

- **Seize the Moment:** A samurai should know the right moment to act, but sometimes, even the hand of fate must be nudged by bold action. While making a check, during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, a character may spend 1 Void point to roll one additional Ring die (■) and subsequently keep one additional die during **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**.
- **Shattering Parry:** When faced with death, a samurai must sometimes accept terrible losses to survive. When trying to survive a critical strike, a character may spend 1 Void point to dramatically intercept the attack with their weapon to increase their chance of survival, potentially sacrificing the weapon in the process as described on page 270.
- **Techniques and Other Abilities:** Certain techniques and other character abilities require spending a Void point to activate.

Gaining Void Points

Void points are gained through facing adversity, for without struggle, there can be no triumph. Characters can gain Void points in a number of ways, most of them representing moments in which the character faces adversity and is galvanized to succeed by it. A few common instances include:

- After failing a check on which one of their adversities was resolved (see **Resolving Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 24).
- Once per scene, after one of their anxieties caused their strife to rise (see **Resolving Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 24).
- After choosing to be affected by a complication that the GM (or the controlling player) introduced into the scene (see page 39).
- After the GM conceals the TN of a check from the players (see **When to Reveal or Conceal the TN**, on page 297).

HONOR, GLORY, AND STATUS

Samurai dramas focus on characters' internal conflicts as much as external ones. While external foes and challenges frequently drive the plot, a samurai's principal battle is often fought within their own heart.

In the *Legend of the Five Rings* Roleplaying Game, characters have three **social attributes** (honor, glory, and status) to help players weigh the societal forces constantly pulling upon a samurai.

Value and Rank

A character's honor, glory, and status attributes each have a value between 0 and 100. When an effect calls for a character's honor, glory, or status **rank**, the rank is determined by the tens digit of the value (or 10, if the value is 100).

Shosuro Makoto has an honor value of 28. Therefore his honor rank is 2. He has a glory value of 31. Therefore his glory rank is 3.

Increasing Social Attributes

These three attributes can increase over the life of a character, usually via an honor, glory, or status award from the GM. See the section beginning on page 300 for recommendations on ways social attributes increase.

Decreasing Social Attributes

Any of these three attributes can also decrease over the life of a character. Rather than being arbitrated by the GM, a decrease to a social attribute always occurs because the character's player chooses to **forfeit** or **stake** it to achieve some end the character desires—or because their player feels that it is good storytelling.

Decreasing any of these attributes should be a conscious choice on the part of the player, not a penalty imposed by the GM.

Forfeiting Social Attributes

To perform a dishonorable, inglorious, or sacrilegious deed, a character must forfeit honor, glory, or status, reflecting the fact that the character is deliberately disregarding the Code of Bushidō, damaging their reputation, or abdicating political responsibility. The GM should inform the character's player of the amount of honor, glory, or status their character must forfeit before a proposed deed takes place, giving the player the chance to rethink their character's actions (even if this requires "rewinding" the scene by a few seconds).

If the player decides to make the forfeit, they reduce their character's honor, glory, or status value by the required number of points (to a minimum of 0). Then, the character undertakes the deed.

Staking Social Attributes

Sometimes, a character has nothing to put on the line but their honor, glory, or status, and they must take a risk and hope the dice fall favorably. In these cases, the character stakes a social attribute on an event, such as swearing to protect someone, boasting of a future deed, or risking a position on a gambit. This shows others that they are serious, and can help win people's support or trust when convincing them might otherwise be impossible.

If a player decides to stake their character's social attribute on something, they and the GM should note the amount staked and the conditions under which the character loses their stake. If these occur for any reason, the attribute decreases by the staked amount.

Honor

Honor represents a character's personal investment in the concept of Bushidō and that character's belief that they are upholding the values it entails.

Honor increases when a character makes a hard choice in the name of Bushidō, and decreases when a character acts in opposition to these values, loses faith in their code, or stakes their honor on an oath that they break. A high or low honor attribute results in a character gaining virtue advantages or flaw disadvantages (see **Table 7–2: Honor Scores,** on page 302).

Glory

Glory represents society's view of a character's success in their mandated role. It reflects the reputation they have as an effective agent of their lord, as well as a general consensus on how they uphold Bushidō.

Glory rises from a character's heroic deeds, and decreases when a character disparages Bushidō, lets their reputation suffer, or stakes it on a boastful claim they fail to fulfill. A high or low glory attribute results in a character gaining fame advantages or infamy disadvantages (see **Table 7–3: Glory Scores,** on page 304).

Status

Status is an attribute that reflects a character's social standing, based on both their political sway and the mandate of the Celestial Order. Status changes infrequently; instead, it is mostly used by the GM to measure the comparative social standing of the PCs and various NPCs, as well as by the PCs to know the proper etiquette they should use to interact with a given NPC (see **Table 7–4: Status Scores**, on page 305).

FORFEITING AND STAKING ATTRIBUTES BELOW 0

A character whose attribute is lower than the amount they would need to forfeit can still do the deed in question. Characters with honor, glory, or status 0 can forfeit as much as they desire—the state of their faith in Bushidō, reputation, or social standing cannot sink any lower!

However, a character cannot stake honor, glory, or status they do not have.

GM GUIDANCE ON SOCIAL ATTRIBUTES

Chapter 7: The Game Master has resources for GMs to use social attributes during the game.

If a character's honor or glory increases above 64 or falls below 30, they begin to receive advantages or disadvantages as described in these tables.

NINJŌ (DESIRE) AND GIRI (DUTY)

Each character has two primary motivating factors: their ninjō and their giri. These are chosen at character creation, and are tools to help inform the character's developing story. Both the GM and the players can call upon characters' ninjō and giri (and the inherent conflicts that arise between the two) to introduce complications into the story.

Ninjō

Each character has a **ninjō** ("human feelings"), which represents a personal desire, ideal, or question that is core to the character. When a player selects a ninjō, they are selecting the reason why their character's honor will be tested over the course of the story—the thing that could cause the character to forsake the ideals of Bushidō or their obligations to their lord, clan, and Emperor.

The problems that ninjō can cause during the campaign should be problems that the player wants the character to face (even if the character does not)—and they will have the chance to introduce these problems into their character's life.

Choosing Ninjō

At its core, ninjō is a personal desire or question, and players select it for their characters during **Question 6** of character creation (see page 90). Ninjō can be broad ("accumulate esoteric knowledge of the spirits") or specific ("wreak vengeance on the person who murdered my teacher"), but it should be something that the PC will grapple with in the scope of the campaign. Further, it should be concrete enough that the player is clear on how to interact with it, even when the GM isn't providing specific plot hooks for it. While it will not be central all the time, if a player is unsure of how to pursue their ninjō in play over several game sessions, they should speak with the GM and decide on a new ninjō they can more directly engage.

SAMPLE NINJŌ

Create a future with (or for) the one you love

Become the greatest duelist in the Empire

Create a secure future for a small group

Create a work of art that wins eternal praise

Take revenge on a powerful foe for the death of a loved one

Protect a group from a particular enemy

Found a new school

Uncover lost secrets vital to combating a specific foe

Discover your true parentage

Achieve a particular rank within your clan

Become the captain of a ship

IMPOSSIBLE DESIRES

Some especially existential ninjō might not be resolvable at all, at least not within a single lifetime, and this is also acceptable as long as the character has a clear path to try to seek their unachievable goal.

Ninjō and Strife

It is always hard to act counter to one's own personal feelings, even when following the orders of a superior or adhering to an inflexible code. When a player wishes to have their character act in opposition to their ninjō, they should receive 3 strife, or more at the player's discretion. If this represents a significant sacrifice on the character's part, setting aside their ninjō for honorable reasons can also result in an honor award, as described in **Increasing Social Attributes**, on page 37.

However, ninjō can also be a source of peace for a character. After a character spends a downtime or narrative scene (see page 247) pursuing their ninjō, they remove all their strife.

Resolving Ninjō

Emotion is a living thing, and so ninjō is not cast in stone. It can evolve as the character develops over the course of the story. If a character ever reaches a moment of true clarity on the matter of their ninjō through the events of the narrative, whether this means discarding it, embracing it wholly, or reinventing it, they should be changed by the experience. If the character's belief in the Code of Bushidō is strengthened or undermined, their honor attribute might increase or decrease to match.

After resolving a character's ninjō, their player should consult with the GM to choose a new ninjō for the character—likely one that stems from the events that resolved the old one. Alternately, their player might decide that this is a good end point for the character's narrative arc, and they should retire this character to create a new PC. Of course, dragging a hero out of peaceful retirement is a classic story beat, and players can use the circumstances and plot twists to give even venerable heroes a new reason to fight.

Giri

Each character has a **giri** ("sworn duty"), representing the way in which they serve their lord. This is the theme or issue by which the player wishes to see their samurai rise and fall during the campaign.

A player should consider how giri might sometimes conflict with their character's ninjō, as conflict between personal feelings and duty is a recurring theme in works of fiction about samurai. By engineering some friction between the two, a player gets to help set up the drama of their character's story. Not every conflict between ninjō and giri needs to lead to grand tragedy, but the two motivations should sometimes be at odds.

Choosing Giri

Drama in works of samurai fiction frequently arises when a noble samurai must choose between the orders of a flawed lord and their personal ideals, or because of an inner desire that they cannot fulfill while doing their duty, even if the duty itself is not unjust. Sometimes, a samurai is able to navigate these two perils; at other times, this ends in a death in battle or even seppuku, so that the samurai can resolve the two unfulfillable tasks.

Thus, in many campaigns, a character's giri should revolve around fulfilling direct orders issued by their lord. These orders can be broad ("win glory for the Lion Clan on the field of battle, wherever you find it") or specific ("protect Kakita Asami as her yōjimbō"), but they should be attainable and concrete enough that the player knows how to pursue them at any given time, even when the GM isn't providing specific hooks.

If a player is unsure of how to pursue their character's giri, they should speak with the GM and decide on a new giri that they can pursue more directly.

Resolving Giri

As with ninjō, giri can change—though generally, it does so based on the character's narrative accomplishments or the needs of their lord. If a character ever succeeds at the task they have been assigned and receives recognition from their lord for it through events in the narrative, the character should likely receive a considerable glory award (usually 10 or more) when their lord recognizes their achievement.

If a player decides their character has definitively failed in their giri, or has decided that their character is going to wholly abandon it, the character must forfeit an amount of glory determined by the GM (usually 10 or more). Assuming their daimyō accepts this or honors their request for a new duty, the daimyō should then assign them a new giri (chosen by the player and GM).

COMPLICATIONS

Ninjō, giri, and the friction that can arise between the two provide a great deal of fodder for roleplaying on their own. Players should consider their characters' ninjō and giri when making choices for their characters, and GMs should look at what their players chose when planning story arcs. **Complications** provide an additional, slightly more codified way for players and GMs to use these character motivations at the table.

A complication is a slight narrative turn or brief moment that stems from one or more characters' ninjō and/or giri. The GM can introduce a complication at any time. Narratively, complications can be relatively mild or wildly melodramatic, depending on the tenor of the story. Example complications could include:

- Receiving a letter from a loved one the character has not seen in some time
- Realizing that a masked enemy is, in fact, the character's long-lost sibling
- Encountering the haunting scent of a perfume often worn by the character's deceased friend
- Running into a character's secret lover somewhere the two cannot acknowledge each other
- Spotting an obvious reminder of one's unfulfilled oath to bring the enemy of the clan to justice
- Noticing a chance to pursue one's desire or duty—at cost to the group's current goal
- Being presented with an opportunity to pursue one's ninjō or one's giri—but not both

A player can also propose a complication for their character, in which case the GM should give it due consideration, then implement it if it makes sense and is not overly disruptive to the flow of the story. If a complication does not fit into a particular scene, but the GM wants to use it later, the GM can ask the player to write it down and give it to them for later use.

No matter who introduces it, each character can have only one complication per game session—though a character's ninjō and giri can cause turmoil whenever the GM and player see fit.

Resolving a Complication

When the GM introduces a complication for a character, their player chooses one of the following: the character stoically accepts it, in which case there is no effect beyond the narrative results of the complication, or the character is deeply moved by the moment, in which case they receive 3 strife and gain 1 Void point.

NO LORD TO SERVE

If the character has no lord to serve due to events in the story, their giri could become finding a new lord to serve, or it could be fulfilling the final order of their lord.

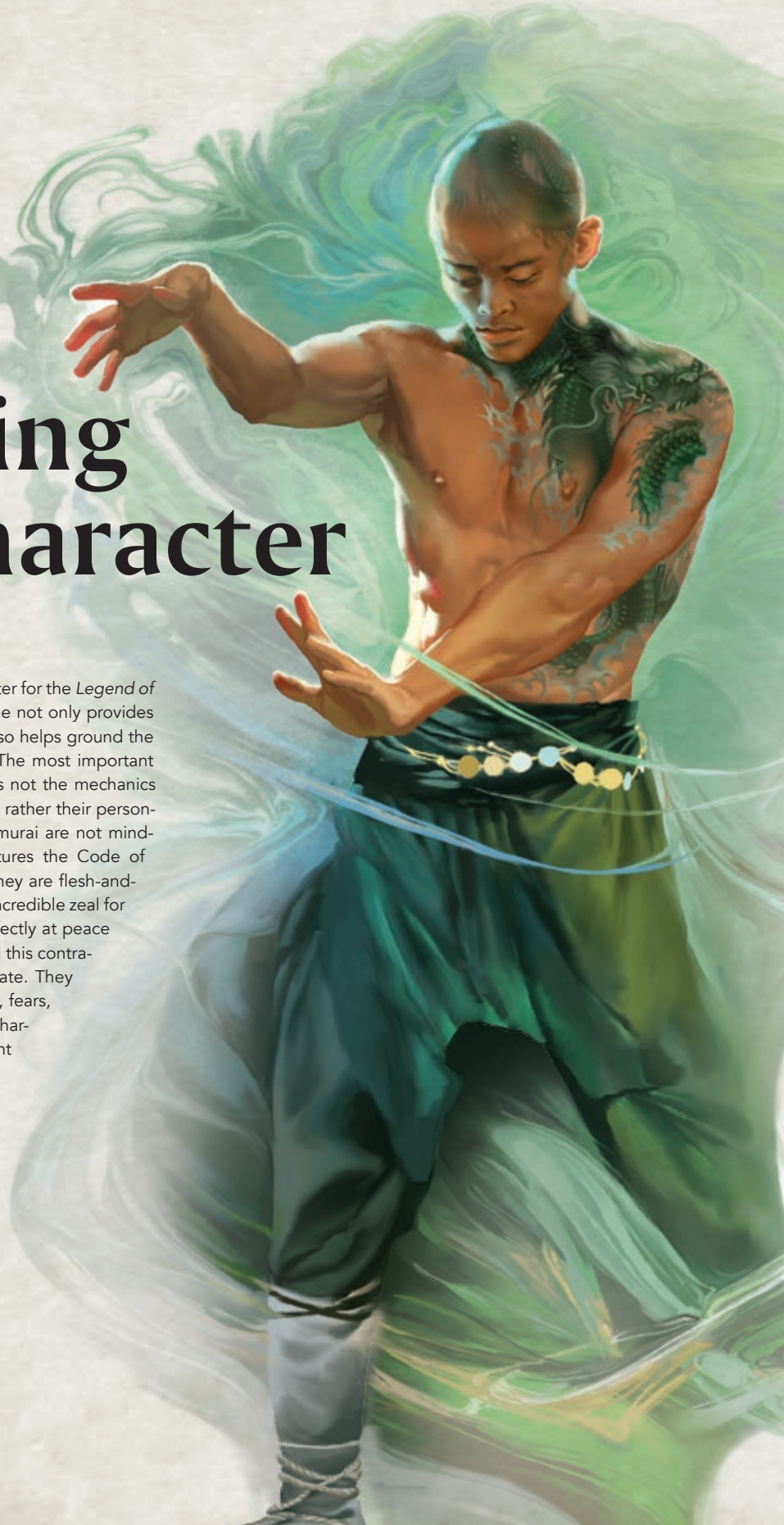
SAMPLE GIRI

- Restore the reputation of your teacher's dōjō
- Invent a new weapon that will give your clan an advantage
- Protect your lord (or other charge who appears in the campaign)
- Capture a particular region of land held by an enemy clan
- Persuade a powerful leader to join your lord
- Negotiate a trade agreement with a major ally
- Gather information and use it to topple an enemy faction
- Keep a particular secret of your lord from becoming public
- Maintain the reputation or prosperity of a specific shrine
- Attend to the needs of a particular kami
- Retrieve a set of sacred artifacts for your clan
- Assassinate specific members of an enemy faction

CHAPTER

2

Creating a Character



The process of creating a character for the *Legend of the Five Rings* Roleplaying Game not only provides a set of numerical values, but also helps ground the character deeply in the world. The most important aspect of creating a character is not the mechanics that represent their abilities, but rather their personality, history, and ambitions. Samurai are not mindless warriors, despite the strictures the Code of Bushidō places on their lives. They are flesh-and-blood humans who possess an incredible zeal for life, yet are expected to be perfectly at peace with the prospect of death—and this contradiction can be difficult to navigate. They grapple with anxieties, passions, fears, and dreams. While creating a character mechanically, it is important to consider and come to understand this person's identity, their desires, their ideals, and how they will struggle when these collide.

The Game of Twenty Questions

Ever since the publication of its first edition in 1997, the *Legend of the Five Rings* Roleplaying Game has used the Game of Twenty Questions to help players create the backgrounds and personalities of their characters. The game encourages you, the player, to ask key questions about your character: What kind of character do you want to play? What is their history like? What are their goals? What is the most important thing in the world to them?

These questions are also used to build your character mechanically. As you answer the questions, you will be instructed to note down ring and skill increases, as well as other static values to be applied to your character. You will want to keep a running tally of your current ring and skill ranks.

Character Sheets

To get started, go to www.FantasyFlightGames.com. There you can print out a copy of the **Character Sheet** as well as the **Twenty Questions Worksheet**, both available to download. While you don't need the character sheet or worksheet and can use a piece of paper to record information about your character, having those sheets makes the process eaiser.

When recording information on your character sheet or the worksheet, it's best if you use a pencil, as your character will grow and evolve over the course of the campaign. You will also need a ten-sided die for some tables.

Limits on Skills and Rings

All characters begin with 1 rank in each ring and 0 ranks in each skill. You cannot raise a ring or skill above rank 3 during character creation. If a choice would result in a ring rising above rank 3 during character creation, then you must choose a different ring to increase instead, as long as that ring would also not be increased above rank 3.

Similarly, if a choice would result in a skill rising above rank 3 during character creation, then you must choose a different skill that is not already at rank 3 to increase instead.

For more information on what the different ranks mean for rings and skills, see page 22 in **Chapter 1: Playing the Game**.

Part I: Core Identity (Clan and Family)

The first few questions will define your character in general terms.

1. What Clan Does Your Character Belong To?

The seven Great Clans of Rokugan have ruled in the name of the Emperor since the founding of the Emerald Empire, and generations of legendary heroes have fought and died to maintain their power, prestige, and influence. A samurai of one of the Great Clans is inheritor to a weighty legacy. Each clan has an ancient and unique assortment of beliefs and ideals it imparts upon its members, set forth by the clan's founding Kami and developed over the centuries.

When creating a character, you should choose a clan whose culture and values you find interesting from a storytelling standpoint. Whether your character wishes to rigidly adhere to these strictures, chafes under the pressure of them, or perhaps does a bit of both, clan identity is very important to who your character is and how they exist in the world.

Starting Values

When you begin to answer the Game of Twenty Questions, keep in mind the following baseline values for your character:

- **Rings:** 1 rank in each ring.
- **Skills:** 0 ranks in each skill.
- **Honor:** Determined in **Question 3**.
- **Glory:** Determined in **Question 2**.
- **Status:** Determined in **Question 1**.
- **Endurance:** Calculated based on your final ring values; (Earth + Fire) x 2.
- **Composure:** Calculated based on your final ring values; (Earth + Water) x 2.
- **Focus:** Calculated based on your final ring values; Fire + Air.
- **Vigilance:** Calculated based on your final ring values; (Air + Water) / 2.

CREATING NPCS

While GMs certainly can use the rules in this chapter to create NPCs (non-player characters) if they wish, these rules are more suited to the creation of PCs (player characters). While this chapter contains many useful ideas that could shape the desires and motivations of NPCs, NPCs created in this manner would be more mechanically detailed than most of the examples that can be found in Chapter 8: Non-Player Characters.

CRAB CLAN CULTURE

In comparison with the rest of Rokugan, the Crab Clan is rowdy, direct to the point of rudeness, and tends to look for pragmatic solutions. Weakness of the individual is weakness of the group, for a single failure could bring down disaster upon all. After all, what honor or respite can be expected from the foe when your enemies are goblins, demons, and other monstrosities?

The Crab Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Earth
Skill Increase: +1 Fitness
Status: 30

At the southern border of Rokugan stands a grim miracle: the Kaiu Wall, stretching like a great puckered scar along the landscape, its slate-gray blocks fitted together seamlessly into a structure thirty feet thick and a hundred feet tall. To the south loom the blighted Shadowlands, the domain of the corrupted armies of Jigoku, and to the north lie the lands of the Crab Clan, the Wall's crafters and defenders.

The Crab Clan are known as guardians and warriors—slayers of monsters and protectors of the realm. Even those who do not fight with weapons often wage war with their minds and words, securing key supplies for their clan, maintaining alliances to guarantee support of the Wall, or engineering new technologies to turn back the endless hordes of the Shadowlands. However, the Crab Clan's task often weighs heavily upon the disciples of the Kami Hida. They are known as taciturn, battle weary, or even disillusioned. The glories of the battlefield are scant reward, and surviving to fight another day can seem its own punishment at times when facing such a relentless threat. Still, these people find ways to live and express themselves, and many revel in the small joys that life provides them.

What Does Your Character Know?

All Crab Clan characters have a greater awareness of the following topics:

- You have a general awareness of the politics within Crab lands. You can name major family heads and other leaders, and you know their respective positions and allegiances.
- You can identify common Shadowlands creatures such as goblins, ogres, and zombies, and you know how to dispatch them.
- You grew up hearing stories and songs of heroes who faced greater evils still, such as oni, but you likely have not encountered such horrors personally.
- You know all too well the befouling Taint of the Shadowlands and how best to avoid it, and you can recognize the advanced stages of this unnatural corruption.

What Does Bushidō Mean to Your Clan?

Courage is the greatest virtue in Crab lands, for the Kami Hida placed an especially grave task on the shoulders of his descendants. The Crab safeguard the most perilous border of the Emerald Empire, warding it against the terrible hordes of Fu Leng. The consequences of failure are obvious and dreadful to contemplate.

Rough and warlike, the Crab have never truly adopted the strict social refinement the other clans have come to demand of their constituents, and so Courtesy is defined somewhat more loosely for the Crab.

See page 301 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER KNOW?

All Crane Clan characters have a greater awareness of the following topics:

- You have a strong awareness of the politics within Crane lands. You can name major family heads and other leaders, and you know their respective positions and allegiances.
- You know about the general state of political affairs between the clans.
- You know proper etiquette and protocol in the Imperial Capital.
- You have a working knowledge of the high arts and the great masters of old (at least, among the Crane, for who else truly warrants note?).

WHAT DOES BUSHIDŌ MEAN TO YOUR CLAN?

Courtesy is of deep importance to you, as your clan's political power rests upon propriety and the idea of others respecting their proper place—and your own.

While many members of the Crane Clan are deeply brave, Courage in excess can lead to foolhardiness. Cool heads must prevail, and sometimes that means avoiding a fight altogether.

See page 301 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

The Crane Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Air
Skill Increase: +1 Culture
Status: 35

At the dawn of the Empire, after the Kami had fallen from the Celestial Heavens, they found themselves plunged into a mortal world rife with cruelty and war. The Kami Doji—sister of Hantei, the first Emperor—resolved to bring order to this savage realm. The embodiment of elegance and grace, Doji walked among the earthly peoples, calming them in the way fair weather calms a storm-tossed sea. Any Crane will gladly speak of how from her, humans learned writing so they could record their achievements, politics to govern their affairs, economics and commerce to manage their wealth, and art and culture to lift them from their lives of misery. Those she touched the most became her devoted followers, the first samurai of the Crane Clan. Since that time, the Crane have become both the poets and the poetry of the Empire, at once the swordsmiths and the duelists wielding the smiths' blades. In every aspect of their lives, the Crane strive for mastery in all things, an ideal that the other clans can only hope to emulate.

The Crane Clan represents the pinnacle of refinement in Rokugan, and its members are known for their elegance, grace, and mastery of social customs. People expect them to be well-spoken, subtle in the extreme, and unfailingly polite.

CRANE CLAN CULTURE

The Crane Clan's political and cultural capital are indistinguishable. As a result, refinement, grace, and sensitivity are not only the defining features of the Crane Clan, but chief among its weapons. Those who fail in achieving excellence fall to obscurity and the silent shame of countless unspoken criticisms.

DRAGON CLAN CULTURE

The Dragon Clan is diverse in its pursuits, even among members of the same schools and traditions. However, it is unified in one philosophy—a philosophy of commitment to the betterment of one's self and, therefore, the betterment of the whole Empire. Despite the individuality displayed by Dragon Clan samurai, they have been united in their task to watch over the Empire and record its history—which occasionally means coming down from their seclusion in the northern mountains to experience the Empire face-to-face.

The Dragon Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Fire
Skill Increase: +1 Meditation
Status: 30

In an empire that usually prizes conformity and respect for tradition, the Dragon Clan is an enigma. Inspired by their mysterious founder, the Kami Togashi, the Dragon place more emphasis than most of their fellow samurai on the individual search for Enlightenment and expertise.

In the centuries since the Kami fell to earth, Togashi's followers have acquired a reputation for strange behavior. Isolated by the mountains of their northern home and entrusted with watching over the Empire, the Dragon rarely participate as actively in the politics of the Empire as other clans do—and when they do intervene, it is often for reasons others can only guess at. The secret of the Dragon is that they are guided by their founder's foresight, but even they do not always know what Togashi saw in his visions.

Togashi's acolytes are known for their esoteric practices, innate curiosity, and veritable tradition of disregarding tradition—at least in the eyes of the other clans. People expect them to be insightful and humble, but also unpredictable, individualistic, and even dangerous. They tend to look at problems from unexpected angles, and they seek solutions others might not consider.

What Does Your Character Know?

All Dragon Clan characters have a greater awareness of the following topics:

- You have a general awareness of the politics within Dragon lands. You can name major family heads and other leaders, and you know their respective positions and allegiances.
- You know more about monastic life and traditions than most other clans, having likely interacted with the Togashi Order throughout your life.
- Due to the rugged nature of your homeland, you know how to properly prepare mountain flora and wildlife for human consumption.
- You have a working understanding of many physical phenomena of the natural world, which others dismiss as uninteresting or beneath their station.

What Does Bushidō Mean to Your Clan?

Sincerity—aligning one's words and deeds with one's intentions—is the greatest virtue to the Dragon Clan. In this way, its samurai may remain true to themselves even if they should fail.

While members of the Dragon Clan take their obligations seriously, they define Duty and Loyalty somewhat differently than most other samurai. To a Dragon, unquestioning loyalty is not loyalty at all, and Dragon Clan lords have been known to tolerate and even value criticism that others would see as grave insubordination.

See page 301 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER KNOW?

All Lion Clan characters have a greater awareness of the following topics:

- You have a general awareness of the politics within Lion lands. You can name major family heads and other leaders, and you know their respective positions and allegiances.
- You know military history quite well, especially as it pertains to the glorious deeds of your forebears.
- You can identify and know the proper purpose of all Rokugani battlefield weapons, even if you are not personally proficient in their use.
- You know about most common military maneuvers and engagements, such as feigned retreats, flank attacks, raids, and sieges.

WHAT DOES BUSHIDŌ MEAN TO YOUR CLAN?

Honor is at the center of the Lion Clan's view of Bushidō, especially in the context of martial virtue. Its samurai learn to be the harshest judges of themselves and their actions, for without honor, the other virtues ring hollow.

This emphasis on Honor colors the clan's perception of Compassion, for only those who comport themselves with Honor are worthy of the Lion Clan's benevolence.

See page 301 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

The Lion Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Water
Skill Increase: +1 Tactics
Status: 35

Every samurai who lives in Rokugan measures courage, honor, and duty by the standard set by the Lion Clan. The Lion's military is unrivaled, as there are no sharper tacticians and no larger armies in all of Rokugan. This proud military heritage has earned the Lion Clan a place as the Right Hand of the Emperor, sworn to protect him by serving as his personal guard and his standing army.

In light of this duty, fear means nothing to Lion samurai. The threat of death only serves to embolden them and bolster their courage, for there can be no greater end than to perish in honorable combat. As veterans of countless wars, the Lion know that those who attack first shall be victorious. Above all, the Lion live, breathe, and die for the Emperor and Rokugan.

Perhaps the most well-known battlefield warriors in the Emerald Empire, the samurai of the Lion Clan are famous for their ferocity, loyalty, and courage. People expect members of the Lion Clan to be warlike and aggressive, often forgetting that the Kami Akodo was a master tactician as well, more than capable of learning from past mistakes and adapting new stratagems on the battlefield.

LION CLAN CULTURE

The Lion Clan is war itself, forged by the Kami Akodo to crush the Emperor's foes and enforce Hantei's will absolutely. Lion Clan culture lives and breathes martial achievement and glory. It expects its children to meet force with force and death with a smile—a hard path for anyone to walk, and harder still for any gentle soul. Even those among the Lion Clan who are not warriors often couch their achievements in martial terms that glorify combat as the highest of arts.

PHOENIX CLAN CULTURE

The Phoenix Clan values balance and the Tao of Shinsei far more than the other clans, seeking harmony between the mortal and spiritual realms, as well as harmony within themselves. The Phoenix know that every step sends ripples throughout the world, so one must tread lightly and with a peaceful heart, lest one's actions sow disharmony or even chaos. Such restraint, however, is frequently viewed as cowardice or passivity by the other clans.

The Phoenix Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Void
Skill Increase: +1 Theology
Status: 30

The Phoenix is a symbol of contradictions: explosive power and great restraint, vast intelligence and deep humility, immolating self-sacrifice and glorious rebirth. These entwined virtues illuminate the path of Rokugan's most mystical Great Clan, the keepers of the Tao of Shinsei and caretakers of the Empire's soul.

As the scent of incense wafts unseen to all corners of a shrine, so do the Spirit Realms overlap invisibly with the Realm of Mortals. The Phoenix mediate between the worlds, appealing to the very soul of the lands. Mountains collapse at their whispered requests, dry rivers are convinced to flow again, plagues are banished, restless ghosts are returned to slumber, and crops flourish in previously barren wastelands. Nevertheless, the Phoenix understand that even the purest wish can have unintended and destructive consequences if the elements are brought out of balance. Although others consider the Phoenix too hesitant in their entreaties to the kami, few are foolhardy enough to test the Phoenix's dedication to peace and harmony.

The Kami Shiba and the priest Isawa were very different sorts of leaders, one humble and the other prideful, one calm in his wisdom and the other fierce in his brilliance. As such, people expect members of the Phoenix Clan to be calm, thoughtful, and scholarly—but also passionate, and sometimes even arrogant due to the vast knowledge their clan maintains. Both Shiba and Isawa were deeply spiritual; this bond has defined the Phoenix Clan since its earliest days, and people still expect members of the Phoenix Clan to be more concerned with cosmic problems than with matters mundane.

WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER KNOW?

All Phoenix Clan characters have a greater awareness of the following topics:

- You have a general awareness of the politics within Phoenix lands. You can name major family heads and other leaders, and you know their respective positions and allegiances.
- You are familiar with the religious practices of Rokugan, such as the rites practiced by various priesthoods, the invocations of shugenja, the Tao of Shinsei, and even the traditions that existed before the Kami, such as the Fortunist traditions of the Isawa and the animist practices of the Yobanjin who dwell in the Great Wall of the North Mountains.
- You know some of the most significant kami who reside in Phoenix lands by name from stories or perhaps even personal interaction.
- You know the names and locations of all major shrines in Rokugan.

WHAT DOES BUSHIDŌ MEAN TO YOUR CLAN?

Righteousness drives the samurai of the Phoenix Clan in their pursuits, and they are willing to sacrifice themselves to ensure the right thing is done. They know that when samurai do not govern their lands justly, the Heavens themselves will voice their displeasure.

At the same time, some truths must not be revealed to the world, and some mysteries are not meant even for the other samurai clans. The Phoenix Clan takes a selective view of Sincerity, certain in their belief that they are the best equipped to protect and wield certain knowledge.

See page 301 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER KNOW?

All Scorpion Clan characters have a greater awareness of the following topics:

- You have a strong awareness of the politics within Scorpion lands. You can name major family heads and other leaders, and you know their respective positions and allegiances.
- You know about the general state of political affairs between the clans.
- You are aware of the most substantial criminal cartels in the Emerald Empire, especially as their interests overlap or conflict with those of the Scorpion Clan.
- You know the state of court matters in the Imperial Capital.

WHAT DOES BUSHIDŌ MEAN TO YOUR CLAN?

Duty and Loyalty is the core tenet of the Scorpion Clan. They must be prepared to do—and sacrifice—anything and everything in the service of the Empire.

Honor and Righteousness fall by the wayside for most Scorpion. While they are not wholly unimportant, obsessing over such matters would make many vital tasks impossible.

See page 301 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

The Scorpion Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Air
Skill Increase: +1 Skulduggery
Status: 35

With six terrible words, the Kami Bayushi set his followers in the newly founded Scorpion Clan on a dark and dangerous path. Enemies loomed beyond Rokugan's borders, but they also lurked within them. Bayushi swore to protect the Empire by any means necessary. Where the Code of Bushidō tied the Emperor's Left and Right Hands—the courtiers of the Crane and the mighty legions of the Lion—the Emperor's Underhand could still reach. To combat the liars, the thieves, and the traitors within the Great Clans, Bayushi's followers would have to lie, steal, and cheat in turn. The weapons of the Scorpion became blackmail, poison, and sabotage. The Scorpion dirtied their hands so that others' could remain pure.

Yet, in spite of—and perhaps because of—the clan's fearsome reputation, there is none more loyal than a Scorpion. In a clan of deceivers and manipulators, trust is a hard-earned treasure to be cherished and guarded. Betrayal is punished with swift retribution, the souls of the treacherous forever bound into the horrific limbo of the place known as Traitor's Grove. Such fierce loyalty is a small consolation, at least, given the dangerous but vital role the Scorpion have played in the Empire from the moment their Kami spoke his fateful words: "I will be your villain, Hantei."

Bayushi's successors are known for their insidious skill at scheming, but also the potential benefits of partnering with them—for without offering the proper incentives to their allies some of the time, they could never maintain their position as the great schemers of the Empire. People expect members of the Scorpion to be equal parts alluring and treacherous—and loyal only to the Emperor.

SCORPION CLAN CULTURE

The Scorpion Clan is a group united by grave purposes: to preserve life by killing, and to let others live out the ideals of honor by staining themselves via dishonorable acts. Most Scorpion stake their humanity on one ideal of honor they can uphold or a personal bond that keeps them from slipping—while others vanish completely into their masks, truly becoming the villains others believe them to be.

UNICORN CLAN CULTURE

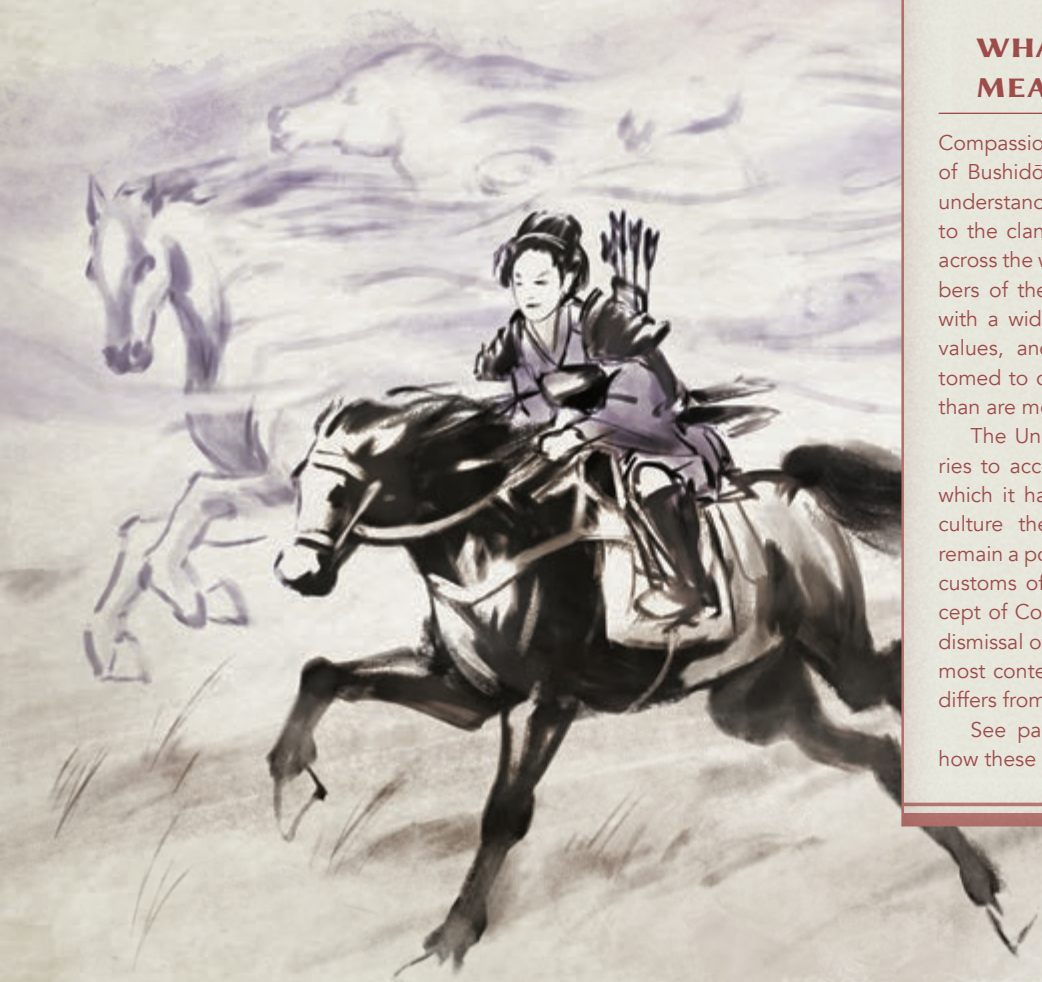
The Unicorn Clan values novelty and flexibility of tradition in a way that other clans do not. Members of the Unicorn Clan tend to be very receptive to new ideas and cultural elements without fearing the loss or erosion of their own, for they preserved a consistent culture throughout their long centuries of journeying. However, the Unicorn are driven by an ambition that is not easy to quell, and those seen as lacking in drive are often pushed out by more aggressive members of the clan.

The Unicorn Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Water
Skill Increase: +1 Survival
Status: 30

A thousand years ago, the Ki-Rin Clan rode out of Rokugan, seeking to discover enemies hiding beyond the Emerald Empire's borders. Their journey was arduous, and they found many strange and powerful threats. In defeating each one, the clan learned, changing its fighting styles, magical practices, and even philosophy. To survive, it was forced to adapt—and overcome. After eight centuries of wandering, the Clan of the Wind returned to the Empire as the Unicorn Clan. They wear fur, speak foreign tongues, and wield strange weapons. Although they still revere the Kami Shinjo, they have drifted far from the traditions and ways of the Emerald Empire.

Shinjo's descendants are known for their skill as riders, skirmishers, and messengers, and many are trained in foreign fighting techniques or schools of philosophy. People expect them to be worldly and gregarious, if perhaps a bit rough around the edges in polite Rokugani society, given that many members of the clan spend much of their lives ranging across the wilds in Unicorn lands and beyond.



WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER KNOW?

All Unicorn Clan characters have a greater awareness of the following topics:

- You have a general awareness of the politics within Unicorn lands. You can name major family heads and other leaders, and you know their respective positions and allegiances.
- You know many basic facts of life about foreign lands, particularly the Burning Sands, the Ivory Kingdoms, and beyond, even if you have not journeyed there yourself.
- You know at least some foreign words from numerous languages, such as Nehiri, Ivindi, Myantu, and Portuga, and might fluently speak one of these or even a language wholly unknown in the Emerald Empire.
- You know the basics of mounted combat tactics, along with various other aspects of the proper handling and care of horses.

WHAT DOES BUSHIDŌ MEAN TO YOUR CLAN?

Compassion is the most significant tenet of Bushidō to the Unicorn Clan, for mutual understanding and cooperation was the key to the clan's survival during its long journey across the wider world. On this journey, members of the Unicorn Clan met many people with a wide variety of beliefs, cultures, and values, and they became far more accustomed to coexistence with strange outsiders than are most Great Clan samurai.

The Unicorn Clan has had several centuries to acclimate to the Emerald Empire, to which it has returned, but the customs and culture they adopted during their travels remain a powerful force within the clan. These customs often clash with the Rokugani concept of Courtesy, and the Unicorn's seeming dismissal of Rokugani politeness is one of the most contentious ways in which Shinjo's clan differs from those of her siblings.

See page 301 for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

2. What Family Does Your Character Belong To?

Even within a single clan, the customs and traditions of the various families inform the creation of a wide variety of characters. Once your clan is chosen, pick which of the clan's families your character hails from.

Crab Clan Families

The Hida Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth or +1 Fire
Skill Increases: +1 Command, +1 Tactics
Glory: 44 **Starting Wealth:** 4 koku

The Hida family stands guard against the Shadowlands, its task an eternal vigil to keep the Empire safe from the dark forces of Jigoku. Like the family's founder, the Kami Hida, they are large and strong, tough and enduring, with little patience for the weaknesses of others. Their harsh duty makes the Hida exceedingly pragmatic, with little time for the polite fictions of court. They bitterly bear the mocking condescension concerning their manners and dress from the clans they shield.

The Hiruma Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Water
Skill Increases: +1 Skulduggery, +1 Survival
Glory: 39 **Starting Wealth:** 3 koku

The Hiruma are the eyes and ears of the Crab beyond the Wall, warning of attacks and staging spoiling raids on the unending hordes, a desperate and unrewarding task. The warnings facilitated by the skills of the Hiruma allow the Crab to respond quickly to any threat. Due to the ceaseless danger of the Shadowlands, the Hiruma rotate between service beyond the Wall and service inside the Empire, where they function as scouts, messengers, and yōjimbō (bodyguards). Slender and quick, the Hiruma are a contrast to the staunch Hida, relying instead on speed and precision.

The Kaiu Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth or +1 Fire
Skill Increases: +1 Smithing, +1 Labor
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 5 koku

Monuments to the skill of the Kaiu are everywhere in the Crab lands, from the vast Kaiu Wall itself to the armor and weapons used by those who stand guard over it. The Kaiu are responsible for the road network supporting the fortifications, the siege engines that crush and shatter the Shadowlands forces, and defensive works spread across the interior of the Crab holdings. There are very few problems that the Kaiu will not try to solve with applied engineering.

The Kuni Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth or +1 Void
Skill Increases: +1 Medicine, +1 Theology
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 4 koku

No shugenja family is more feared in the Empire than the Kuni, who root out any sign of corruption. The Kuni use all means at their disposal in their hunt; even Hida samurai sometimes pale at their methods. The Kuni are willing to delve into the secrets of the Shadowlands using study, observation, and even dissection, even though such close contact with its dark creatures risks their very souls.

The Yasuki Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Water
Skill Increases: +1 Commerce, +1 Design
Glory: 39 **Starting Wealth:** 10 koku

The slim and loquacious Yasuki do not fit the Crab stereotype, but they provide a vital service to their clan all the same. The first masters of markets in the Empire, the Yasuki use the tools of trade and industry to keep the Crab armies well equipped and fed, even if it means the occasional shady deal. The Yasuki trade network extends throughout the Empire; members of this family can be found just about anywhere, looking for the next arrangement.

Crane Clan Families

The Asahina Family

Ring Increase: +1 Water or +1 Void
Skill Increases: +1 Aesthetics, +1 Theology
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 6 koku
The Asahina seek harmony and peace in all things, embodying a philosophy of compassion and pacifism that sets them apart even from their fellow Crane. Through art and prayer, they seek to calm and soothe the world around them and spread peace and accord throughout the Empire. The Asahina know that only through sacrifice can true peace be purchased, and it is a price they will pay to foster a better Empire.

The Daidoji Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth or +1 Water
Skill Increases: +1 Fitness, +1 Tactics
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 7 koku
The Daidoji are practical and hardworking Crane who compose the core of the clan's standing military. Devoted to serving their clan, the Daidoji are its under-appreciated foundation—from the Iron Warriors who comprise the foundation of the Crane Clan's armies, to the wary yōjimbō protecting the courtiers of the Doji, to the Daidoji Trading Council responsible for providing the raw materials and wealth for Crane arts. The selfless efforts of the Daidoji are fundamental to the defense of the Crane and the advancement of its goals.

The Doji Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Water
Skill Increases: +1 Courtesy, +1 Design
Glory: 44 **Starting Wealth:** 8 koku
The descendants of the Kami Doji have embodied the courtly arts and refined culture of the Empire since its dawn. No major court is complete without its contingent of Doji spreading art, friendship, and—until very recently—generous gifts. For courtly news and rumor, the Doji communication network is unrivaled. This network aids the Doji in keeping ahead of their rivals as much as their mastery of etiquette and art does. Rare are those who can afford to offend the Doji; rarer still are those who do so more than once.

The Kakita Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Fire
Skill Increases: +1 Aesthetics, +1 Meditation
Glory: 44 **Starting Wealth:** 7 koku
While the Doji seek excellence in all things, the Kakita tend to focus on a single skill, which they strive to master thoroughly. Whether this skill is the art of the sword or of the brush, they pursue it with a singular focus. The graceful Kakita usually exhibit the beauty of the Crane in a more athletic manner than do their Doji cousins. They are renowned as some of the finest duelists in the Empire, and graduates from their academy defend the honor of the Crane with sharp finality.

Dragon Clan Families

The Agasha Family

Ring Increase: +1 Fire or +1 Void
Skill Increases: +1 Medicine, +1 Smithing
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 4 koku

The Agasha are ever evolving, like the elements in nature. Although founded by a pacifist, many of their techniques are invaluable in a fight. Once devoted to mysticism, they now combine it with the practical arts. Yet, perhaps change is only to be expected among the families of the Dragon. The Agasha have delved deeply into alchemy, metallurgy, and medicine. They blend the practical effects of chemistry and construction with the mystical effects of calling the spirits. It is a unique approach, and one that leads to the occasional spectacular disaster. However, they are rarely disheartened, as they often learn more from failure than they do from success.

The Kitsuki Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Water
Skill Increases: +1 Government, +1 Sentiment
Glory: 44 **Starting Wealth:** 6 koku

As befits the odd nature of their clan, even the courtiers of the Dragon are unusual: the samurai of the Kitsuki family are most well-known for their keen perception and their investigative techniques that rely upon physical evidence. They bring to the physical world the same attention to detail that the Agasha bring to spiritual matters. A small family, they serve the Empire as magistrates and the Dragon Clan as courtiers. In both roles, their eye for deception and knack for finding the truth serve them well.

The Mirumoto Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth or +1 Water
Skill Increases: +1 Fitness, +1 Tactics
Glory: 44 **Starting Wealth:** 5 koku

The Mirumoto samurai are renowned for their unique two-sword style, called *niten* or "Two-Heavens," but they are more than mere warriors. The Mirumoto oversee the management and duties of the Dragon Clan, allowing the Togashi monks to pursue their eccentric paths on the way to Enlightenment. This makes the Mirumoto surprisingly practical and down-to-earth, willing to step in and help their region's peasants when needed. As the largest family of their clan, the Mirumoto are the samurai whom most think of when they think of the Dragon, and they are the Dragon most often met outside of their lands.

The Togashi Order

Ring Increase: +1 Earth or +1 Void
Skill Increases: +1 Fitness, +1 Theology
Glory: 45 **Starting Wealth:** 3 koku

More a monastic order than a true family, the Togashi Order welcomes anyone willing to embrace their teachings and accomplish the challenges required to join, the first of which is finding one of the Togashi monasteries hidden high in the mountains. In truth, many of those able to find their way to the order were members of the order in a past life, returning to continue their training and spiritual journey under the guidance of the Dragon Clan Champion. To the rest of the Empire, the order is known for skill with *kōan* (contemplative riddles) and the martial arts, as well as for the beautiful and mystical tattoos that grant them supernatural abilities.

Lion Clan Families

The Akodo Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Earth
Skill Increases: +1 Command, +1 Government
Glory: 44 **Starting Wealth:** 5 koku
The Akodo are the master strategists and tacticians of the Empire; no one understands war better. The Akodo embody the discipline and control of the Lion Clan, always weighing several options in order to strike at the perfect time. They are warrior-scholars seeking to understand war and battle in all its complexity; no part of the martial disciplines is too small for their study and no part too large to evade their understanding. "No army led by an Akodo has ever known defeat" is a well-known adage, and no Akodo will allow it to become untrue.

The Ikoma Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Water
Skill Increases: +1 Composition, +1 Performance
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 5 koku
The Ikoma are the finest storytellers in the Empire. Their proud voices extol the virtues of Bushidō and, thus, the Lion Clan. They serve as the memory not only of the Lion Clan, but of the Empire as a whole; no fact is considered historical truth if it is not part of the Ikoma histories. The Ikoma courtiers are the expressive face of the Lion; their bards openly show the emotion Lion samurai must hide. Boasts, tears, and stories are the tools the Ikoma use to advance the Lion in the courts.

The Kitsu Family

Ring Increase: +1 Void or +1 Water
Skill Increases: +1 Meditation, +1 Theology
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 4 koku
All samurai venerate their ancestors, but the Kitsu bloodline, which mingled with otherworldly beings, produces members who can part the veil to speak with them. The Kitsu are known for being traditional and conservative, even among the Lion. All Kitsu answer to the ancestors. Those without the talent to speak to spirits keep genealogies, tend to the tombs and shrines, and otherwise honor the noble dead.

The Matsu Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth or +1 Fire
Skill Increases: +1 Command, +1 Fitness
Glory: 44 **Starting Wealth:** 5 koku
The Matsu are the courageous, implacable heart of the Lion. As the largest family in the Empire, the Matsu fill the ranks of the vast Lion armies. Founded by Lady Matsu, one of the greatest of all samurai in the early Empire, they retain many matriarchal traditions in her honor, including several elite military units that are exclusively female. The Matsu exemplify the harsh militarism of Bushidō. Due to their numbers, they are the Lion most well-known in popular culture. Fiery, honorable, unrelenting: while the stereotype of the Lion exaggerates these traits, they are all part of the Matsu character.

Phoenix Clan Families

The Asako Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Fire
Skill Increases: +1 Culture, +1 Sentiment
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 5 koku
The Asako are a quiet family, viewed as being content to follow their scholarly and philosophical pursuits while the Isawa drive the goals of the Phoenix. The Asako prize knowledge, but they prize wisdom even more, and they use their studies to advance their spiritual evolution as well as their political agendas. The Asako serve as courtiers for the Phoenix, and they are much in demand as court scholars and tutors across the Empire.

The Isawa Family

Ring Increase: +1 Fire or +1 Void
Skill Increases: +1 Meditation, +1 Theology
Glory: 44 **Starting Wealth:** 5 koku
The Elemental Masters who sit on the Council of Five are the true rulers of the Phoenix, and these masters are almost always drawn from the Isawa. As one of the oldest shugenja families in the Empire, the Isawa have had centuries to learn to commune with the spirits and the most effective ways to request their blessings. Some might confuse authority with arrogance, but at heart, they are pious and dutiful, devoted to ensuring harmony and balance.

The Kaito Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Void
Skill Increases: +1 Fitness, +1 Theology
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 4 koku
The small Kaito family has been given the task of safeguarding the many shrines scattered across the Phoenix holdings, from small altars sheltered by a single tree to massive sanctuaries. To fulfill their responsibilities, the Kaito have mastered the use of charmed arrows and prayers to protect the shrines from spiritual foes, and practical archery to fend off more mortal dangers. The Kaito are rarely seen outside the Phoenix lands, as they have so many tasks within, but they occasionally make pilgrimages to visit other shrines.

The Shiba Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth or +1 Water
Skill Increases: +1 Meditation, +1 Tactics
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 5 koku
The Shiba family descends from the Kami Shiba and provides the Phoenix with a champion, but it bent the knee to the Isawa family early in its history and has dutifully served it ever since. The Shiba focus on keeping the Phoenix Clan safe and rely first and foremost on diplomacy before resorting to force. They are expected to be learned in scholarly ways as well as in the warrior arts, and they understand the shugenja they serve better than do most bushi families.

Scorpion Clan Families

The Bayushi Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Fire
Skill Increases: +1 Courtesy, +1 Design
Glory: 44 **Starting Wealth:** 8 koku

The motto of the Scorpion Clan's primary lineage, "I can swim," comes from a cautionary tale about their treacherous nature. Charming, ruthless, deceitful, and vicious, the Bayushi appear as the villains they claim to be. They are the sinister side of power, using the arts of blackmail, poison, and seduction to control the enemies of the Empire, all while dancing a fine line to avoid falling to true villainy themselves. For the Bayushi, the means are justified by the ends: a stable and prosperous Empire.

SHINOBI

Shinobi are covert agents and infiltrators who hide from sight and strike with surprise and without honor. The shinobi are a weapon of war, but they are often used in times of peace to hide the origin of an attack and deflect blame for drastic but precise violence. The use of such tactics, and the shinobi themselves, are officially banned by Imperial edict, but somehow rumors of their use remain.

The Shosuro Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Water
Skill Increases: +1 Courtesy, +1 Performance
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 6 koku

When the Shosuro family is known to outsiders, it is for their acting talent and theatrical skills. Little does the Empire realize how fully the Shosuro embrace their roles; many of the finest Scorpion spies are Shosuro living as other people among the clans. While they are master entertainers, they are often asked to turn their skills in acrobatics, acting, and other arts to darker and bloodier ends for their clan.

The Soshi Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Void
Skill Increases: +1 Design, +1 Theology
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 6 koku

The Soshi are often overlooked, and that is how they prefer things to be. They are most effective when unseen, offering up prayers in silence for the Scorpion. The Soshi live for subtlety: the gentle nudge, the whispered word that sets everything into motion. Sometimes this comes at a price, however, for their preference for acting at the perfect moment often makes them exceedingly cautious and prone to excessive planning and information gathering.

The Yogo Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth or +1 Void
Skill Increases: +1 Composition, +1 Theology
Glory: 39 **Starting Wealth:** 4 koku

The Yogo family is the most unfortunate family in the Empire: each scion of their line is cursed to betray the one they love the most. They try to ignore the curse by burying themselves in their work and devotion to duty above all. To try to lift this curse, they have relentlessly studied prayers of protection and especially wards, through which they have mastered many techniques to identify and fight evil magic. The Yogo are the most diligent and unappreciated servants of the Scorpion.

Unicorn Clan Families

The Ide Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth or +1 Water
Skill Increases: +1 Commerce, +1 Courtesy
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 9 koku
The Ide tirelessly serve as diplomats, couriers, and merchants across Rokugan. While they are Unicorn through and through, the Ide have learned to blend their foreign customs with the traditions of the Empire to better treat with their cousins. The Ide work to radiate calm and competence, seeking to build alliances and friendships throughout the Empire.

The Iuchi Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Void
Skill Increases: +1 Meditation, +1 Theology
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 5 koku
The Iuchi are a priestly family, whose practices stretch back to the time before the Unicorn returned to Rokugan. Iuchi shugenja practice a unique form of sorcery known as meishōdō, the art of using talismans and names to manipulate the spirits. Their history makes them more open to exploring different mystical paths than are those bound by centuries of tradition.

The Moto Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth or +1 Fire
Skill Increases: +1 Command, +1 Survival
Glory: 40 **Starting Wealth:** 6 koku
The Moto are considered to be the least civilized of the Unicorn families by the standards of the Empire. From their stocky builds and the heavy beards of their men, to their style of dress, the Moto seem foreign and strange to Rokugani samurai. Indeed, the Moto have no use for the soft trappings of what some call civilization; they are nomadic warriors seeking the next battle, and they embrace that harsh life. While their heritage and culture are often questioned in Rokugan, their bravery is not.

The Shinjo Family

Ring Increase: +1 Fire or +1 Water
Skill Increases: +1 Sentiment, +1 Survival
Glory: 44 **Starting Wealth:** 8 koku
The Shinjo are the core of the Unicorn, the clan of explorers who followed their Kami, Shinjo, into the dangerous world beyond the Empire. This love of discovery has not left the Shinjo, and they travel widely when they can. They administrate and lead the Unicorn, working to keep all of the parts of the clan yoked together. Master equestrians and scouts, the Shinjo pursue peace, but never flinch from the prospect of war.

The Utaku Family

Ring Increase: +1 Earth or +1 Fire
Skill Increases: +1 Survival, +1 Tactics
Glory: 44 **Starting Wealth:** 6 koku
No other Unicorn family has so deeply and spiritually embraced Bushidō as the Utaku, who embody it in their elite Battle Maidens, the Shiotome. The matriarchal Utaku allow only their women to ride to war; the Utaku men serve afoot as infantry and in the stables and households, making them unusual among their own clan. There is no finer heavy cavalry in the Empire than the Battle Maidens, and no finer equerries than Utaku men.

Part II: Role and School

A character's rings represent their potential, but their school and skills represent their learned expertise. Each school grants a character access to a number of starting skills, techniques, abilities, and equipment, along with a curriculum through which the character can advance by spending experience (see page 97).

If a school's starting techniques or curriculum grants a character a technique or the ability to purchase that technique, the character ignores any other prerequisites listed for that technique. These prerequisites are found in the technique's entry in **Chapter 4: Techniques**. Techniques granted in exception to their prerequisites are marked with the ◈ symbol.

3. What is your character's school, and what roles does that school fall into?

In Rokugan, duty is central to every samurai's life. Samurai fulfill many different positions for their lords. **Bushi** are warriors, guards, and instructors by trade, and **courtiers** are politicians, emissaries, and civil servants. **Artisans** are creators, advisors, engineers, and scholars of art. **Shugenja** are priests of the samurai caste who share a special bond with the kami. This bond and the secrets of their ancient schools let them invoke miraculous powers that more common religious leaders cannot wield. They are few in number, but substantial in their influence.

Monks nominally stand aside from society, but many samurai enter a monastic order. Most commonly, they do this in their old age, but some become monks much earlier. At various points in history, monks have been known to wield considerable political influence, even if they are supposed to be above such earthly concerns.

Finally, some samurai serve their lords as **shinobi**—though none admit to it openly, for the work of these assassins and spies is incompatible with adherence to the Code of Bushidō. Shinobi are often deniable assets, and many were never samurai; however, some members of the samurai caste are trained in these arts, especially among the Scorpion Clan. While shinobi are quite rare, their influence over the course of history has been as substantial as it has been difficult to prove.

Each school fits into one or more of these role categories. A school's role has little in the way of direct mechanical effect, but it is descriptive of the preparation and duties that will affect your character's mind-set and options during the campaign. For instance, if you want to play a character who wields supernatural powers, you should select a shugenja or monk school. If you are more interested in social exploration than combat, you should choose a courtier or artisan instead of a bushi (or vice versa). If you want stealth and deception to be an important part of your character's story, you might choose a shinobi.

During this step, a player chooses a single school within their clan for their character. If you wish for your character to study at another school outside of their clan, ask your GM's permission and work out a set of circumstances that have allowed for your character to receive their unusual training.

TECHNIQUES IN CURRICULUM TABLES

Each technique in a curriculum has its category noted with a icon:

- Kata (p. 174)
- Kihō (p. 182)
- Invocations (p. 189)
- Rituals (p. 212)
- Shūji (p. 214)
- Mahō (p. 224)
- Ninjutsu (p. 226)

ELEMENTS OF YOUR SCHOOL

Each of the schools presented here follows a certain mold. Let's take a moment and go over the different elements that go into each school, and how that modifies your character.

- **School Name:** This is the name of your school, which also identifies the family who administers the dōjō of that particular school of training.
- **School Description:** This is a brief flavorful description of your school.
- **Rings:** When you select this school, this specifies which of your character's rings you increase by the specified amount.
- **Starting Skills:** This entry specifies a collection of skills that you can elect to give your character a rank in. It also specifies the number of skills you can choose (unlike the rings, you must choose a number from the overall list).
- **Honor:** This is your character's starting honor.
- **Techniques Available:** These are the types of techniques your character can purchase when they advance after character creation.
- **Starting Techniques:** These are techniques your character starts the game with. Unless the entry specifies that you must choose from a list, your character starts with everything listed here. Techniques are listed in **Chapter 4**.
- **School Ability:** Each school has a unique ability associated with it. Your character gains that ability when you choose the school.
- **Starting Outfit:** This is the clothing and equipment your character starts play with.
- **School Curriculum Table and Mastery Ability:** The rest of the school writeup consists of a curriculum advancement table. This is organized into ranks, each with a number of advancements listed (skills, skill groups, techniques, technique groups). The ◈ symbol denotes privileged access to techniques or groups. As you use experience points to purchase these advancements, you increase your character's rank in their school, which makes their school ability more powerful. At rank 6, they gain a powerful and unique **Mastery Ability** as well.

Hida Defender School [Bushi]

Producing the most stalwart protectors of Rokugan against the horrors that mass beyond the Kaiu Wall, the Hida Defender School teaches its disciples fortitude, courage, and practicality in equal measure. Goblins, demons, and the unliving are not honorable foes, and Hida Defenders cannot afford to behave as though the fight against these creatures is fair. While any warrior with a strong will can attempt to slay a stone-skinned oni or die in the attempt, the Hida Defenders know their duty is to endure. From their heavily plated armor to their techniques for shattering iron hides with mighty hammer blows, Hida Defenders have developed an armory and fighting style that gives them the utmost advantage and greatest chance of not just victory, but survival.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Meditation, +1 Survival, +1 Tactics

Honor: 40

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata:** Lord Hida's Grip
- **Kata (choose one):** Striking as Earth, Striking as Water

Way of the Crab (School Ability): Ignore the Cumbersome quality of armor you wear.

Once per round, before making a check to resist a critical strike, you may reduce the severity of that critical strike by the physical resistance of your armor plus your school rank (to a minimum of 0).

Starting Outfit: Lacquered armor, traveling clothes, daishō (katana and wakizashi), tetsubō or ōtsuchi (war club or hammer), club, knife, traveling pack.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Rushing Avalanche Style	Technique
	Honest Assessment	Technique
RANK 2	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Labor	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Touchstone of Courage	Technique
	Slippery Maneuvers	Technique
RANK 3	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Iron in the Mountains Style	Technique
	Rallying Cry	Technique
RANK 4	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Striking as Void	Technique
	A Samurai's Fate	Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Rouse the Soul	Technique
	The Immovable Hand of Peace	Technique
RANK 6	**The Mountain Does Not Fall (Mastery Ability):** At the beginning of your turn, you may spend 1 Void point. If you do, ignore all of your conditions, terrain, and negative persistent effects of techniques and abilities. Do not apply your disadvantages to checks. If you would die, you cling to life for a few moments longer instead (but still die when the effect ends). This effect persists until the end of your next turn.	

CRAB SCHOOLS

The Crab Clan is stalwart and practical in a way most other clans are not. Crab samurai cannot afford frivolity or distractions to nearly the same degree that most others can, for a single gap in the Kaiu Wall can spell death to hundreds, and a single missed shipment of goods can doom valiant defenders. Despite their grim circumstances, the Crab are not without hope. Heroes arise every generation to strike down the monsters that threaten the realm, great engineers invent new solutions to combat the armies of the Shadowlands, and scholars uncover new secrets that might turn the tides of battle. The Crab Clan schools must prepare their students for the worst. They seek to draw out the best in their charges so that they can vanquish the dreadful challenges they will inevitably face.

Hiruma Scout School [Bushi, Shinobi]

The Shadowlands never sleep and neither can those who watch them. Scouting the Shadowlands is a dangerous task and one that requires intense preparation. The Hiruma saw their lands swallowed by the forces of demons, and they will die before seeing more of the Empire lost beneath their shadow. Trained to observe and get out, only striking when the reward exceeds the risk, samurai of the Hiruma School are about patience and endurance above all. They are masters of survival and mobility. When a Hiruma Scout is rotated out to serve within the borders of the Empire, their haunted look and wary demeanor marks them as a veteran.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Skulduggery, +1 Survival, +1 Tactics, +1 Theology

Honor: 35

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata (choose one):** Pelting Hail Style, Rushing Avalanche Style
- **Kata (choose one):** Striking as Air, Striking as Water

Flickering Flame Skirmisher (School Ability): After performing an Attack action, you may change your stance. If you do, increase the TN of Attack checks by creatures of silhouette 3 or larger targeting you by your school rank until the start of your next turn.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, ashigaru armor, daishō (katana and wakizashi), yari (spear) or yumi (bow) and quiver of arrows, knife, traveling pack, finger of jade.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Medicine	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Threshold Barrier	Technique
	Slippery Maneuvers	Technique
RANK 2	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Water Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Skulk	Technique
	Lord Hida's Grip	Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Deadly Sting	Technique
	Touchstone of Courage	Technique
RANK 4	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Air Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Noxious Cloud	Technique
	Crashing Wave Style	Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Rouse the Soul	Technique
	Silencing Stroke	Technique
RANK 6	**Slayer's Slash (Mastery Ability):** Increase the severity of critical strikes you inflict on targets of silhouette 3 or larger by your ranks in Survival.	

Kaiu Engineer School [Artisan, Bushi]

Since the Crab Clan's founding, the Kaiu's duty has been to arm the clan's samurai to defeat their enemies, be it with weapons, siege engines, or insight. As the inventive arm of the Crab, the Kaiu Engineer supplies all of these things. Trained in logistics, versed in tactics, and filled with ingenuity, the Kaiu dōjō is not only a warrior college, but also the foremost engineering school in the Empire. It is the Kaiu engineers who support the foot solders of the Crab, building bridges over inhospitable terrain, crafting armor strong enough to withstand even an oni's blow, and forging the rare Kaiu blades, which are among the greatest swords in the Empire. If the situation is bleak, and there is no clear path to victory, then the Kaiu Engineer will forge one!

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Fire

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Command, +1 Design, +1 Labor, +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Medicine, +1 Smithing, +1 Theology

Honor: 40

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata:** Tactical Assessment
- **Shūji:** Stirring the Embers, Stonewall Tactics

Masterful Builder (School Ability): Once per scene, when making a check to use an item you personally crafted, you may add a number of kept ■ set to results equal to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, ceremonial clothes, ashigaru armor, daishō (katana and wakizashi), club, oyumi (crossbow), quiver of bolts, traveling pack.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Pelting Hail Style	Technique
	Hawk's Precision	Technique
RANK 2	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Battle in the Mind	Technique
	Noxious Cloud	Technique
RANK 3	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Government	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Water Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Pillar of Calm	Technique
	Flowing Water Strike	Technique
RANK 4	Artisan Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Labor	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Fire Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Soul Sunder	Technique
	Iron in the Mountains Style	Technique
RANK 5	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Sear the Wound	Technique
	Pin the Fan	Technique
RANK 6	**Ingenious Design (Mastery Ability):** When you construct an item, you may add or remove one quality from the item. You must describe to the GM how the item possesses (or lacks) the usual quality, and the GM is the final arbiter of whether an addition (or subtraction) is appropriate.	

KUNI INVOCATIONS

The Kuni Purifier School teaches its students invocations by utilitarian names, for its members know the kami will answer their righteous cause without the need for elaborate embellishments. (See Invocation Names and Traditions on page 190 in Chapter 4: Techniques).

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1 Earth Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	✧ Bind the Shadow	Technique
	Biting Steel	Technique
RANK 2	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	✧ Crimson Leaves Strike	Technique
	Symbol of Earth	Technique
RANK 3	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	✧ Rise, Earth	Technique
	Open Hand Style	Technique
RANK 4	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Medicine	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Earth Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	✧ Tomb of Jade	Technique
	Flowing Water Strike	Technique
RANK 5	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Government	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Earthquake	Technique
	Soul Sunder	Technique
RANK 6	**Purge the Wicked (Mastery Ability):** Once per game session, you may spend 1 Void point to wield an invocation against all the wicked in your sight. Instead of affecting its usual targets, the next invocation technique you perform targets each Tainted being in range.	

Kuni Purifier School [Shugenja, Bushi]

The Kuni Purifiers master knowledge and prayers to deny the Shadowlands forces any foothold inside the Empire. To this end, they have specialized in invocations to the earth kami to strike down or banish the evil servants of Fu Leng. From the time of their school's founding, the Kuni Purifiers have sought to understand the nature of the threat the Crab fight against. This has led them down dangerous paths, and no small number have fallen to the very corruption they study. The Kuni Purifiers paint their faces in stylized Kabuki-like patterns to protect their true identities from the insidious tendrils of the Shadowlands. Eternal vigilance, shading into unending paranoia, is the lot of the Kuni Purifiers.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Fire

Starting Skills (choose three): +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Medicine, +1 Sentiment, +1 Skulduggery, +1 Survival, +1 Theology

Honor: 35

Techniques Available: Invocations (), Kata (), Rituals ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata (choose one):** Striking as Earth, Striking as Fire
- **Invocations:** Armor of Earth, Jade Strike
- **Rituals:** Commune with the Spirits, Threshold Barrier

Gaze into Shadow (School Ability): Once per round, when you make a check targeting or involving a Tainted being, you may choose a number of your kept dice up to your school rank containing symbols. Set each of these dice to a result. You cannot use this ability if you are unsure if a being is Tainted or not.

Starting Outfit: Sanctified robes, wakizashi (short sword), knife, makeup kit, scroll satchel, traveling pack.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Design	Skill
	Government	Skill
	Rank 1 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Tributaries of Trade	Technique
	All in Jest	Technique
RANK 2	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Commerce	Skill
	Composition	Skill
	Culture	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Fire Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Ebb and Flow	Technique
	Slippery Maneuvers	Technique
RANK 3	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Commerce	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Seafaring	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Air Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Pillar of Calm	Technique
	Lord Hida's Grip	Technique
RANK 4	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Government	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Water Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Buoyant Arrival	Technique
	Bravado	Technique
RANK 5	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Commerce	Skill
	Culture	Skill
	Design	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Void Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	The Immovable Hand of Peace	Technique
	◈ Lady Doji's Decree	Technique
RANK 6	**Treasures of the Carp (Mastery Ability):** Once per game session, you may give away one item in your possession to reduce the TN of the next Social skill check you make targeting the recipient by an amount equal to the rarity of the item. For each point by which this would reduce the TN below 1, add a kept ■ set to an ✲ result to your check.	

Yasuki Merchant School [Courtier]

Enemies of the Crab say the Yasuki are little more than merchants—the Yasuki would counter that they are much more. They are masters of the arts of commerce and the flow of commodities, considered an uncouth and deplorable set of skills in Rokugan. The Yasuki can acquire goods and services, even ones that a person may not yet know they need, in exchange for promises of assistance for their family and clan in the future. The Yasuki always keep their bargains, and they ensure that their partners do the same.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Earth

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Commerce, +1 Composition, +1 Courtesy, +1 Culture, +1 Design, +1 Government, +1 Martial Arts [Ranged]

Honor: 40

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Shūji:** ◈ Artisan's Appraisal
- **Shūji (choose one):** Rustling of Leaves, Well of Desire

Way of the Carp (School Ability): As a downtime activity, if you have access to a market, you may acquire a number of items up to your school rank of rarity 4 or lower, or a single item of up to rarity 4 plus your school rank. You do not need to make a check or expend money to acquire these items, nor do you need to forfeit or stake honor or glory for the act of acquiring them, even if they are not befitting of your station or Forbidden (though displaying them openly later is a different matter). The GM can still apply rarity adjustments as usual based on the specifics of the market available.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, ceremonial clothes, wakizashi (short sword), knife, yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, calligraphy set, traveling pack.

CRANE SCHOOLS

The Crane Clan is concerned foremost with preserving Rokugani culture and ensuring civility in the courts. To that end, the schools of the Crane Clan inculcate proper decorum in all their students regardless of their primary curriculum, so much so that Crane are sometimes perceived as priggish or haughty by members of other clans. Crane samurai are also expected to have at least a basic appreciation for the arts if they are not artisans themselves.

ASAHINA INVOCATIONS

The Asahina Artificer School teaches its students invocations by Elemental names, for they continue the traditions passed down from Isawa Asahina, their founder. (See Invocation Names and Traditions on page 190 in Chapter 4: Techniques).

Asahina Artificer School [Shugenja, Artisan]

Art and religion intertwine for the Asahina, for to them, faith, beauty, and peace are all aspects of the same truth. The Asahina take any opportunity to teach their philosophy and try to improve harmony in the Empire. Their focus on the creation of beautiful things is simply another aspect of their attempt to spread art and peace throughout Rokugan. Many a conflict has been defused by an Asahina religious ritual that presented a peaceful path forward. The Asahina do their utmost to live their pacifistic ideals in a world fraught with conflict. It is arduous, but they persevere, secure in their beliefs.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Fire

Starting Skills (choose three): +1 Aesthetics, +1 Courtesy, +1 Culture, +1 Design, +1 Games, +1 Theology

Honor: 50

Techniques Available: Invocations (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Invocations (choose three):** Blessed Wind, ◆ Armor of Radiance, Inari's Blessing, Reflections of P'an Ku, Token of Memory
- **Rituals:** Commune with the Spirits, Cleansing Rite

Spiritual Artisan (School Ability): When making a check to mystically *summon* an illusion or to *summon*, *augment*, or *awaken* an object, you may add a number of kept ■ set to ✿ results equal to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Sanctified robes, wakizashi (short sword), knife, yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, scroll satchel, traveling pack.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Artisan Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Culture	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1 Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Path to Inner Peace	Technique
	◆ Artisan's Appraisal	Technique
RANK 2	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Design	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◆ Grasp of the Air Dragon	Technique
	Tea Ceremony	Technique
RANK 3	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Design	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◆ Wings of the Phoenix	Technique
	Vapor of Nightmare	Technique
RANK 4	Artisan Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◆ Bend with the Storm	Technique
	Rise, Air	Technique
RANK 5	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Design	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Ever-Changing Waves	Technique
	Buoyant Arrival	Technique
RANK 6	**Stir the Slumbering Spirit (Mastery Ability):** Once per game session as a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 4 Artisan (Void) check** to *awaken* an item's spirit. If you succeed, until the end of the game session, it becomes a nemuranai (see page 307) with a sealed invocation of your choice based on the item's history. The GM is the final arbiter of the appropriateness of any invocation selected this way.	

Daidoji Iron Warrior School [Bushi]

The warriors from the Daidoji dōjō form the core of their clan's small standing army. They are highly trained heavy infantry who can hold the line and delay the advance of any foe. Many enemies have broken on the unwavering spears and iron discipline of the Daidoji Iron Warriors. When there are no wars to fight, many are assigned as protectors of Crane castles or as yōjimbō (bodyguards) to traveling Crane courtiers. Their watchfulness and solidarity have prevented countless heated moments from getting out of hand, though it is said that most Daidoji prefer the honesty of the battlefield.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Command, +1 Courtesy, +1 Culture, +1 Fitness, +1 Government, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Tactics

Honor: 55

Techniques Available: Kata (⚔), Rituals (☯), Shūji (✓)

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata:** ◈ Iron Forest Style
- **Kata (choose one):** Striking as Earth, Striking as Water

Vigilance of Mind (School Ability): Once per round, when another character within range of one of your readied melee weapons would suffer physical damage, you may **intercept**. If you do, you may suffer fatigue up to your school rank to reduce the damage the target suffers by twice that amount.

Starting Outfit: Lacquered armor, ceremonial clothes, daishō (katana and wakizashi), yari (spear) or naginata (polearm), yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, knife, calligraphy set, traveling pack.

	ADVANCE		TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy		Skill
	Government		Skill
	Sentiment		Skill
	Rank 1 Kata	⚔	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Crescent Moon Style	⚔	Technique
	Stonewall Tactics	✓	Technique
RANK 2	Scholar Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy		Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]		Skill
	Tactics		Skill
	Rank 1–2 Earth Shūji	✓	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Flowing Water Strike	⚔	Technique
	Lady Doji's Decree	✓	Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Command		Skill
	Courtesy		Skill
	Sentiment		Skill
	Rank 1–3 Kata	⚔	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Crashing Wave Style	⚔	Technique
	Ebb and Flow	✓	Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Fitness		Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]		Skill
	Tactics		Skill
	Rank 1–4 Air Shūji	✓	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Striking as Void	⚔	Technique
	A Samurai's Fate	✓	Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics		Skill
	Culture		Skill
	Government		Skill
	Rank 1–5 Kata	⚔	Tech. Grp.
	The Immovable Hand of Peace	✓	Technique
	Rouse the Soul	✓	Technique
RANK 6	**To Tread the Sword (Mastery Ability):** When you use the Guard action, instead of guarding one character, you may choose to guard a number of other characters in range up to your ranks in Martial Arts [Melee].		

Doji Diplomat School [Courtier]

No one plays the game of court better than the Crane—after all, their clan wrote the rules. The Doji Diplomats choreograph the courtly dance of favors exchanged, gifts given, and the right people invited to private gatherings. The Doji are always on the leading edge of fashion and culture, and Doji Diplomats need never use an unkind word: their silence speaks volumes, and a simple gesture says even more. Their networks of favors, gifts, and invitations allow them to weigh the ebb and flow of the social side of the Empire and adjust the scales to their benefit.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Aesthetics, +1 Composition, +1 Courtesy, +1 Culture, +1 Design, +1 Government, +1 Martial Arts [Ranged]

Honor: 50

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Shūji (choose one):** Cadence, Shallow Waters, Whispers of Court
- **Shūji:** Lady Doji's Decree

Speaking in Silence (School Ability): Once per scene when making a check to persuade or influence someone, you may add a number of kept ■ set to a results equal to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Ceremonial clothes, wakizashi (short sword), yumi (bow) or yari (spear), calligraphy set, traveling pack, an attendant or Rokugani pony (see page 326).

ATTENDANTS

Some samurai travel with an aid sent by their lord, a lower-ranking samurai they keep on retainer, or an apprentice.

To create an attendant for a PC samurai assigned one, use the Humble Peasant profile (see page 313), increase status by +5, and add one NPC Template (see page 311) of the player's choice. Do not select techniques, but each time the character's school rank increases, the player adds one technique to the attendant's profile from a listed category.

During conflicts, attendants do not take their own turns. As a Support action, a samurai may instruct their attendant to perform one action.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Culture	Skill
	Composition	Skill
	Rank 1 Air Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Civility Foremost	Technique
	Tea Ceremony	Technique
RANK 2	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Courtesy	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Water Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	The Wind Blows Both Ways	Technique
	Artisan's Appraisal	Technique
RANK 3	Artisan Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Games	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Regal Bearing	Technique
	Ebb and Flow	Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Government	Skill
	Composition	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Air Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Bend with the Storm	Technique
	Pillar of Calm	Technique
RANK 5	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Courtesy	Skill
	Command	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Void Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Buoyant Arrival	Technique
	The Immovable Hand of Peace	Technique
RANK 6	**The Lady's Grace (Mastery Ability):** Once per scene, you may spend 1 Void point to reduce your strife to 0. When you do, each friendly character in the scene may reduce their strife by your honor rank.	

Kakita Duelist School [Bushi, Artisan]

The Kakita Duelist School emphasizes "one strike, one kill," seeking for its students to master the one perfect strike performed in an *iaijutsu* duel. For the Kakita Duelists, such is the pinnacle of all martial skills. While other martial skills are not neglected, neither are they the focus of the Kakita Dueling Academy in Tsuma. Although some might critique such single-minded dedication, the Kakita Duelists are the best in the Empire. Their skill with the katana in this arena complements the Doji mastery of court, and reinforces the Crane hold on the political flow of the Empire.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Earth

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Courtesy, +1 Design, +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Meditation, +1 Sentiment, +1 Smithing

Honor: 50

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata:** Iaijutsu Cut: Rising Blade
- **Shūji (choose one):** Shallow Waters, Weight of Duty

Way of the Crane (School Ability): Once per round, you may increase or decrease the severity of a critical strike you inflict by an amount up to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, ceremonial clothes, daishō (katana and wakizashi), yari (spear) or yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, traveling pack, an attendant or Rokugani pony (see page 326).

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Courtesy	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Rank 1 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Iaijutsu Cut: Crossing Blade	Technique
	Cadence	Technique
RANK 2	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	All Arts Are One	Technique
	Thunderclap Strike	Technique
RANK 3	Artisan Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Air Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	A Samurai's Fate	Technique
	Heartpiercing Strike	Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Striking as Void	Technique
	Pillar of Calm	Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Fire Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Soul Sunder	Technique
	Rouse the Soul	Technique
RANK 6	**Strike with No Thought (Mastery Ability, Action):** Once per scene, as an Attack and Movement action, you may make a **Martial Arts [Melee] (Void) check** targeting one character at range 2–3 using a sheathed katana or wakizashi. The TN of this check is equal to your target's vigilance. You immediately move to range 1 of your target and draw the weapon you used. If you succeed, your target suffers a critical strike with severity equal to the deadliness of your weapon plus your bonus successes. +: One character of your choice at range 0–2 of your target per spent this way suffers the Dazed and Disoriented conditions. +: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per spent this way.	

DRAGON SCHOOLS

Ostensibly, the Dragon Clan's chief aim is to record and reflect upon the happenings of the Emerald Empire, but others wonder if there is some other objective the Dragon are pursuing in secret. The schools of the Kitsuki and the Agasha train their scholars, investigators, and shugenja to perceive the natural world and classify their observations, while the teachings of the Mirumoto and Togashi dōjō seem more concerned with individual Enlightenment, whether through the sword or the soul. All Dragon samurai emphasize individuality, however, and there is often more variety among the students within the same Dragon school than there is between students of different schools in the other clans.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Rank 1 Earth Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Heart of the Water Dragon	Technique
	Divination	Technique
RANK 2	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Power of the Earth Dragon	Technique
	◈ Touchstone of Courage	Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Rise, Earth	Technique
	Earth Becomes Sky	Technique
RANK 4	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Meditation	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Earth Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Ever-Changing Waves	Technique
	Rise, Water	Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skills
	Medicine	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Earthquake	Technique
	Sear the Wound	Technique
RANK 6	**Experiment and Adapt (Mastery Ability):** Increase your supernatural resistance against Air, Earth, Fire, and Water invocations by your ranks in Theology. After another character performs an Air, Earth, Fire, or Water invocation targeting you, you may spend 1 Void Point to immediately perform that invocation, even if you have not learned it.	

Agasha Mystic School [Shugenja]

The Agasha Mystics mix practical arts with their invocations, using alchemical items and metallurgy as foci for their mystical arts. Through this, they have learned that all of the Elements are linked, and there is great power to be found in the changing of their states. They make chemical mixtures that enhance or are enhanced by their magic, which are used for everything from simple entertainment to warfare. The Agasha weave their prayers into every item they create, from swords to medicine, seeking to push the limits of their understanding. Agasha Mystics are used to venturing out into the world, looking for inspiration from nature in all its multitude of forms.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose three): +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Medicine, +1 Meditation, +1 Smithing, +1 Theology

Honor: 40

Techniques Available: Invocations (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Invocations (choose one):** The Fires from Within, Tetsubō of Earth
- **Invocations:** Path to Inner Peace, Jurōjin's Balm
- **Rituals:** Cleansing Rite, Commune with the Spirits

Elemental Transmutation (School Ability): When performing an invocation, you may choose a different ring with which to make the check. While using this school ability, you cannot activate of the original Element of the invocation, but you can activate for the new Element. You can use this school ability a number of times per game session up to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Sanctified robes, wakizashi (short sword), bō (staff), knife, traveling pack, scroll satchel, set of glass vials, journal.

AGASHA INVOCATIONS

The Agasha Mystic School categorizes the invocations it teaches by Alchemical names, reflecting the tradition's emphasis on the experimental and theoretical side of nature. (See Invocation Names and Traditions on page 190 in Chapter 4: Techniques)

	ADVANCE		TYPE
RANK 1	Scholar Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Fitness		Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]		Skill
	Skulduggery		Skill
	Rank 1 Fire Shūji		Tech. Grp.
	Slippery Maneuvers		Technique
	Honest Assessment		Technique
RANK 2	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Command		Skill
	Sentiment		Skill
	Survival		Skill
	Rank 1–2 Kata		Tech. Grp.
	All Arts are One		Technique
	Feigned Opening		Technique
RANK 3	Scholar Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Melee]		Skill
	Meditation		Skill
	Survival		Skill
	Rank 1–3 Earth Shūji		Tech. Grp.
	Regal Bearing		Technique
	Battle in the Mind		Technique
RANK 4	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Sentiment		Skill
	Medicine		Skill
	Skulduggery		Skill
	Rank 1–4 Kata		Tech. Grp.
	Sear the Wound		Technique
	Bravado		Technique
RANK 5	Social Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Sentiment		Skills
	Martial Arts [Melee]		Skill
	Skulduggery		Skill
	Rank 1–5 Fire Shūji		Tech. Grp.
	Wolf's Proposal		Technique
	Crashing Wave Style		Technique
RANK 6	**The Eyes Betray the Heart (Mastery Ability):** Once per scene when performing a skill check to investigate, you may spend as follows: +: You may reserve up to one dropped die per spent this way. The next time you perform a check to interact with the person or thing you were investigating (such as a check targeting that person or a check to use that object), you may add any number of these reserved dice as kept dice. Then, remove any unused reserved dice.		

Kitsuki Investigator School [Courtier, Bushi]

The Kitsuki Investigator School is a recent school, founded when Agasha Kitsuki saved the life of the Mirumoto daimyō by use of evidence. The Kitsuki Investigators use their methods of observation, experimentation, logic, and reason to understand the truth, which puts them outside the norm of the Rokugani testimony-based judiciary system. The Kitsuki Investigators gravitate toward legal work as magistrates and justiciars, in addition to serving as courtiers and representatives of the Dragon Clan.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Earth

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Culture, +1 Government, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Medicine, +1 Sentiment, +1 Skulduggery, +1 Survival

Honor: 45

Techniques Available: Kata ( ), Rituals ( ), Shūji ( )

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata (choose one):** Striking as Air, Tactical Assessment
- **Shūji:** Shallow Waters

Kitsuki's Method (School Ability): When performing a check to investigate with any skill (see **The Art of Investigation**, on page 170), you may treat your ranks in the skill you are using as being equal to your school rank. If your ranks in the skill are equal to or higher than your school rank, or if you have 5 ranks in the skill, you may add a kept ■ set to an result instead.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, wakizashi (short sword), knife, calligraphy set, bō (staff) or jian (straight-edged sword), traveling pack, journal of observations.

Mirumoto Two-Heavens Adept School [Bushi]

The Mirumoto dōjō's unique two-sword style, *niten* (or Two-Heavens), is only one component of their mastery of swords and combat. Its students follow the Tao of Shinsei and use it to guide them in war and peace, seeking to apply its practical lessons to all things. Like all of the Dragon, they are used to physical hardship and can persevere under great stress.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Fire

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Command, +1 Composition, +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Meditation, +1 Tactics, +1 Theology

Honor: 50

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata (choose one):** Striking as Fire, Striking as Water, Striking as Earth
- **Shūji:** Dazzling Performance

Way of the Dragon (School Ability): Once per round during a duel or skirmish when you are targeted by an Attack check with a melee weapon, you may use one of your weapons readied in a one-handed grip (or one of your hands, if it is empty) to **ward** or **trap**.

If you **ward**, the attacker must reroll dice containing or up to your school rank.

If you **trap**, reduce the TN of your next Attack check against the attacker this scene by your school rank (to a minimum of 1).

You cannot choose this weapon for Attack actions until the end of your next turn.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, ceremonial clothes, ashigaru armor, daishō (katana and wakizashi) or wakizashi (short sword) and any two weapons of rarity 6 or lower, traveling pack.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skill
	Labor	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Rank 1 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Iaijutsu Cut: Rising Blade	Technique
	Stirring the Embers	Technique
RANK 2	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Heartpiercing Strike	Technique
	Slippery Maneuvers	Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Pillar of Calm	Technique
	Commune with the Spirits	Technique
RANK 4	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Striking as Void	Technique
	Crashing Wave Style	Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skills
	Medicine	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Sear the Wound	Technique
	Rouse the Soul	Technique
RANK 6	**Heart of the Dragon (Mastery Ability):** Once per round, when performing an Attack action check, you may spend as follows: : Perform a Strike action with a readied weapon you have not used for an Attack action this turn.	

Togashi Tattooed Order [Monk]

The monks of the Togashi Order have dedicated themselves to discovering and fulfilling their soul's destiny, believing that to be their individual path to achieving Enlightenment. They are aided in this by the prophetic visions of their leader, the Dragon Clan Champion, as well as the mystic tattoos that bind them to their order; the tattoos' artistry is matched only by their unusual powers. Only those who become true *ise zumi* know that the tattoos' power flows from the blood of Togashi, the Dragon Clan Kami, which is mixed into the tattooing inks.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Void

Starting Skills (choose four): +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Meditation, +1 Survival, +1 Theology

Honor: 40

Techniques Available: Kihō (), Shūji (), Rituals ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Kihō (choose one):** Earthen Fist, Earth Needs No Eyes, Flame Fist, Ki Protection, Water Fist
- **Shūji:** ◈ Lord Togashi's Insight

Blood of the Kami (School Ability): You have one mystical tattoo that empowers your kihō, and gain more as your school rank increases. When you make a check to activate a kihō linked to one of your mystical tattoos, if you succeed, add additional bonus successes equal to your school rank.

Select a natural motif for your first tattoo and choose one kihō for which you meet the prerequisites that are linked to the tattoo. If you have not learned it, you learn that kihō (without paying its XP cost). You cannot choose the same kihō multiple times this way.

Each time your school rank increases, you gain one additional tattoo this way.

Starting Outfit: Common clothing, bō (staff), traveling pack.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Fitness	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1 Fire Kihō	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Way of the Earthquake	Technique
	Honest Assessment	Technique
RANK 2	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Composition	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Water Kihō	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Open-Hand Style	Technique
	Stirring the Embers	Technique
RANK 3	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Labor	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Air Kihō	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Death Touch	Technique
	All Arts are One	Technique
RANK 4	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Labor	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Earth Kihō	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Touch the Void Dragon	Technique
	Pillar of Calm	Technique
RANK 5	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Meditation	Skills
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Void Kihō	Tech. Grp.
	Rank 1–5 Rituals	Tech. Grp.
	Rouse the Soul	Technique
RANK 6	**Blood of the Dragon (Mastery Ability):** Once per scene, while you are benefiting from the enhancement effect of a kihō linked to one of your tattoos, when you activate a different kihō, you may spend 1 Void point. If you do, you may maintain both enhancement effects until the end of the scene or until you activate another kihō.	

EXAMPLE TATTOO MOTIFS AND KIHŌ

Each tattoo is unique to the individual and represents their inner power. To customize your character's tattoos, select a symbol or an appropriate image of the natural world or its creatures. Below are some suggested motifs with possible linked kihō:

Mountain: Cleansing Spirit

River: Water Fist

Cloud: Riding the Clouds

Volcano: Breaking Blow

Bat: Earth Needs No Eyes

Tiger: Death Touch

Lotus: Touch the Void Dragon

Vine: Way of the Willow

Meteor: Way of the Falling Star

Akodo Commander School [Bushi]

LION SCHOOLS

As befits the clan called the Right Hand of the Emperor, the Lion Clan has committed itself to the study of warfare in all its forms. It has schools to train samurai for every battlefield role, from soldier to commander, logistician to tactician, and medic to morale booster. Every student is trained in at least one martial art to cultivate the soul, but also to allow them to serve if called upon.

The Akodo War College's curriculum is focused on control: of one's weapons, of the battlefield, over the flow of conflict, and ultimately, over oneself. Its students study the advice of Akodo's *Leadership*, which was written by the Lion Clan Kami himself. In addition to training as warriors, Akodo Commanders are educated to be battlefield leaders. They often treat war as a game of Go, to be decided by exact moves. Akodo Commanders strike precisely and without hesitation with sword and army alike. Their goal is the pinnacle of the art of war: to minimize losses while achieving their objectives.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Command, +1 Fitness, +1 Government, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Meditation, +1 Tactics

Honor: 50

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata (choose one):** Striking as Earth, Striking as Water
- **Shūji:** Lord Akodo's Roar

Way of the Lion (School Ability): When you succeed at an Attack or Support action check, you may remove an amount of strife from yourself up to your school rank. For each strife you remove this way, add that one bonus success to the check and receive 1 fatigue.

Starting Outfit: Ashigaru armor, traveling clothes, daishō (katana and wakizashi), yari (spear), any one weapon of rarity 6 or lower, two knives, yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, traveling pack.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Government	Skill
	Command	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Rank 1 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Iron Forest Style	Technique
	Honest Assessment	Technique
RANK 2	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Rallying Cry	Technique
	Lightning Raid	Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Government	Skill
	Composition	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	A Samurai's Fate	Technique
	Touchstone of Courage	Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Government	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Fire Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Rouse the Soul	Technique
	Disappearing World Style	Technique
RANK 5	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skills
	Meditation	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Bend with the Storm	Technique
	Striking as Void	Technique
RANK 6	**Akodo's Final Lesson (Mastery Ability):** Once per game session during a skirmish or mass battle, after you fail a check, you may attempt the check again, treating the TN as 1.	

Ikoma Bard School [Courtier]

In the end—after trials, sacrifices, and death—all that truly remains of a samurai is their story. The Ikoma Bard School trains its students as historians, bards, and tale-spinners; not just to preserve the stories of old, but to inspire the warriors of the Lion Clan to equal and exceed the achievements of their ancient ancestors. Ikoma Bards are no less warlike than the other scions of the Lion Clan. However, their most important duty lies in supporting each Lion's drive to seize glory no matter the danger—and to fight against any odds with the confidence that no hero will die unsung.

Rings: +1 Fire, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Composition, +1 Courtesy, +1 Culture, +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Performance, +1 Sentiment, +1 Tactics

Honor: 45

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata:** Warrior's Resolve
- **Shūji:** Fanning the Flames, Tributaries of Trade

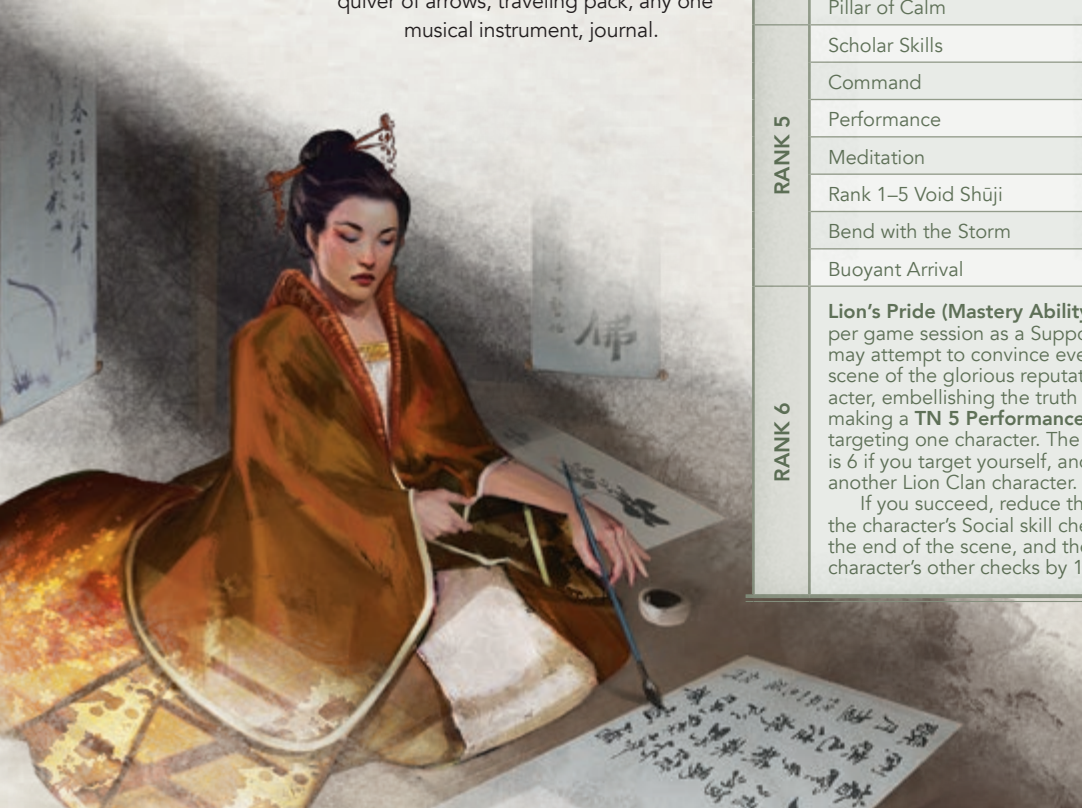
Heart of the Lion (School Ability): Once per scene, after you perform a check using a Social skill that targets one or more characters, you may **agitate** or **console**:

If you **agitate**, transfer strife up to twice your school rank from yourself to your targets (divided among them as you choose).

If you **console**, transfer strife up to twice your school rank from your targets (divided among them as you choose) to yourself.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, wakizashi (short sword), yari (spear) or tessen (war fan), yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, traveling pack, any one musical instrument, journal.

	ADVANCE		TYPE
RANK 1	Social Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Composition		Skill
	Culture		Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]		Skill
	Rank 1 Fire Shūji		Tech. Grp.
	Slippery Maneuvers		Technique
	Soaring Slice		Technique
RANK 2	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Command		Skill
	Performance		Skill
	Sentiment		Skill
	Rank 1–2 Water Shūji		Tech. Grp.
	Dazzling Performance		Technique
	Spinning Blades Style		Technique
RANK 3	Scholar Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Composition		Skill
	Performance		Skill
	Survival		Skill
	Rank 1–3 Earth Shūji		Tech. Grp.
	Rallying Cry		Technique
	Regal Bearing		Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Government		Skill
	Sentiment		Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]		Skill
	Rank 1–4 Air Shūji		Tech. Grp.
	Sear the Wound		Technique
	Pillar of Calm		Technique
RANK 5	Scholar Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Command		Skills
	Performance		Skill
	Meditation		Skill
	Rank 1–5 Void Shūji		Tech. Grp.
	Bend with the Storm		Technique
	Buoyant Arrival		Technique
RANK 6	**Lion's Pride (Mastery Ability, Action):** Once per game session as a Support action, you may attempt to convince everyone in the scene of the glorious reputation of one character, embellishing the truth as needed, by making a **TN 5 Performance (Fire) check** targeting one character. The TN of this check is 6 if you target yourself, and 4 if you target another Lion Clan character. If you succeed, reduce the TN of all of the character's Social skill checks by 3 until the end of the scene, and the TN of all of the character's other checks by 1.		



KITSU INVOCATIONS

The invocations of the Kitsu Medium School are Ancestral in nature, reflecting the boons bestowed upon them by Rokugan's sacred dead. (See Invocation Names and Traditions on page 190 in Chapter 4: Techniques).

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Rank 1 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Courage of Seven Thunders	Technique
	◈ Heart of the Water Dragon	Technique
RANK 2	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Government	Skill
	Fitness	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Hands of the Tides	Technique
	Fanning the Flames	Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Government	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Earth Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Rise, Earth	Technique
	Ebb and Flow	Technique
RANK 4	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Rituals	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Wrath of Kaze-no-Kami	Technique
	Bravado	Technique
RANK 5	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Government	Skills
	Sentiment	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Sear the Wound	Technique
	Buoyant Arrival	Technique
RANK 6	**Strength of a Thousand Ancestors (Mastery Ability, Action):** Once per game session, as a Support action, you may *summon* the spirit of an ancestor to possess you until the end of the scene. While possessed, you count as an Otherworldly being and use the profile of the ancestor (a non-specific human NPC profile such as the **Venerable Provincial Daimyō** on page 315, or, at the GM's discretion, a PC with up to 180 XP that you have created in advance). Your character does not remember any time they spend possessed.	

HONORED ANCESTORS

Your character has countless ancestors, and there are thus any number of individuals whose spirits they could summon. However, to be considerate of your group's time, you should prepare the profile and a brief overview personality of any ancestor you wish to summon in advance.

While roleplaying an ancestor, remember that you are portraying that individual (rather than your usual character) and they might have a different agenda and desires!

Kitsu Medium School [Shugenja]

The smallest of the shugenja schools of the Great Clans, the Kitsu Medium School maintains an esoteric focus on the ancestors, which requires unique training and at least a trace of the original Kitsu bloodline. This mystical connection to their forebears allows them to perform magic that no others can. The Kitsu Mediums are the living bridge between the Lion Clan's past and the present, acting as the voice of the ancestors in the present day. As traditionalists, they use the ancestral names for prayers to honor those who first mastered them.

Rings: +1 Void, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose three): +1 Courtesy, +1 Government, +1 Meditation, +1 Performance, +1 Survival, +1 Theology

Honor: 50

Techniques Available: Invocations (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Invocations (choose two):** The Rushing Wave, Path to Inner Peace, Biting Steel
- **Rituals:** Commune with the Spirits, Cleansing Rite
- **Shūji:** Ancestry Unearthed

Favor of the Ancestors (School Ability): Once per scene, you may importune one invocation (see **Importune Invocations**, on page 189) with a school rank prerequisite up to your school rank without making the sacrifices usually required and without the usual TN increase.

Starting Outfit: Sanctified robes, traveling clothes, wakizashi (short sword), knife, bō (staff), scroll satchel, traveling pack.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Labor	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Lord Akodo's Roar	Technique
	Stonewall Tactics	Technique
RANK 2	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Heartpiercing Strike	Technique
	Fanning the Flames	Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skill
	Government	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Disappearing World Style	Technique
	Rallying Cry	Technique
RANK 4	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Courtesy	Skill
	Culture	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Striking as Void	Technique
	Bravado	Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Labor	Skills
	Medicine	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Rouse the Soul	Technique
	Sear the Wound	Technique
RANK 6	**Rending Jaws of the Lion (Mastery Ability):** Once per round, when performing an Attack action check while Enraged, you may spend 1 Void point to alter each kept die containing to a result containing .	

Matsu Berserker School [Bushi]

The Matsu's soldiers are the front line and main strength of the Lion armies. Their bravery and zeal for battle are unquestioned. The Matsu warrior dōjō teaches the primacy of offense and the necessity of seizing the initiative in all things. Aggression is the hallmark of the Matsu style; direct action is their watchword. This bellicose attitude often puts them at odds with the careful strategies of the Akodo, but the Matsu serve the Lion and the Empire with unquestioned loyalty.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Fire

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Command, +1 Fitness, +1 Labor, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Survival

Honor: 55

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata (choose one):** Rushing Avalanche Style, Spinning Blades Style
- **Shūji:** Stirring the Embers

Matsu's Fury (School Ability): After you suffer a critical strike or unmask, you may suffer the Enraged condition to remove an amount of fatigue from yourself equal to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Ashigaru armor, traveling clothes, daishō (katana and wakizashi), nodachi (greatsword) or tessen (war fan), knife, yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, traveling pack.

PHOENIX SCHOOLS

As caretaker of the Empire's soul, the Phoenix Clan imparts its theological wisdom throughout all its schools. A reverence for the spirits is instilled in the students of every dōjō, and the wisdom of the Tao of Shinsei is a fundamental part of every lesson taught. Just as the four elements combine to form something greater, together the warriors, priests, scholars, and mystics carry out the Phoenix's mission of ensuring balance and harmony.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Games	Skill
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Rank 1 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Open-Hand Style	Technique
	Divination	Technique
RANK 2	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Government	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Air Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	All Arts are One	Technique
	Tea Ceremony	Technique
RANK 3	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Fire Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Pillar of Calm	Technique
	Ebb and Flow	Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Culture	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Cleansing Spirit	Technique
	Wolf's Proposal	Technique
RANK 5	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skills
	Performance	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Water Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Still the Elements	Technique
	Bend with the Storm	Technique
RANK 6	**Insufferable Genius (Mastery Ability):** After you succeed at a check to acquire or remember information, you may spend 1 Void point and choose any number of characters with whom you can communicate. You must describe how the knowledge you acquired helps each character you choose. Each of those characters reduces the TN of their next check by 1 (to a minimum of 1) and suffers 1 strife.	

Asako Loremaster School [Courtier]

The Asako Loremasters study widely, and from that broad and firm base, they develop their specialties. It is rare for a Loremaster not to have at least passing knowledge of a subject, no matter how obscure. Acting as the courtiers of the Phoenix, the Asako Loremasters marshal arguments based on their expertise in the revered knowledge of the past. One should look for an Asako first in the library and then in court, usually deep in discussion. Few care to challenge an Asako Loremaster on the field of knowledge, but such disputations are often one of the highlights of court.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Earth

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Culture, +1 Government, +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Medicine, +1 Performance, +1 Sentiment, +1 Theology

Honor: 45

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Shūji:** Civility Foremost
- **Shūji (choose one):** Ancestry Unearthed, Cadence

Wisdom of the Ages (School Ability): When performing a Scholar skill check, you may treat your ranks in the skill as being equal to your school rank. If your ranks in that Scholar skill are equal to or higher than your school rank, or if you have 5 ranks in the skill, you may add one kept ■ set to an result instead.

Starting Outfit: Ceremonial robes, sanctified robes, traveling clothes, wakizashi (short sword), knife, scroll satchel, calligraphy set, traveling pack.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skill
	Command	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Rank 1 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Dance of Seasons	Technique
	Cleansing Rite	Technique
RANK 2	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Fury of Osano-wo	Technique
	Fanning the Flames	Technique
RANK 3	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Wings of the Phoenix	Technique
	Strike the Tsunami	Technique
RANK 4	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Government	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Earth Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Wrath of Kaze-no-Kami	Technique
	Rise, Flame	Technique
RANK 5	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skills
	Sentiment	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Earthquake	Technique
	Rouse the Soul	Technique
RANK 6	**Master of Elements (Mastery Ability):** Once per round, after you perform an invocation, you may spend 1 Void point to switch to any other stance and perform another invocation that shares no action types with the first invocation (Attack, Support, etc.).	

Isawa Elementalist School [Shugenja]

No tradition has a more complete mastery of the way of the spirits than that of the Isawa Elementalist School. Since the time before the Kami fell to earth, the priests of the Isawa have sought knowledge and understanding of the kami, the Fortunes, and the very elements themselves. Over the centuries, they have perfected the rituals and supplications to request great boons on behalf of the Phoenix Clan and terrible banes for casting down their enemies. Yet, they know that the spirits require service in exchange for their blessings, making the Isawa Elementalists hesitant to call upon the kami except in times of great need. To do so without cause is to risk upsetting the delicate balance of the natural world—or bring the wrath of the spirits upon them.

Rings: +1 any two different rings

Starting Skills (choose three): +1 Composition, +1 Courtesy, +1 Medicine, +1 Meditation, +1 Performance, +1 Theology

Honor: 40

Techniques Available: Invocations (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Invocations (choose three):** Extinguish, Grasp of Earth, Path to Inner Peace, Tempest of Air
- **Rituals:** Commune with the Spirits, Divination

One with the Elements (School Ability): Once per scene when making the check to activate an invocation technique, before rolling dice, you may reduce the TN of the check by your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Sanctified robes, wakizashi (short sword), knife, scroll satchel, traveling pack.

ISAWA INVOCATIONS

The Isawa Elementalist School teaches its students invocations by Elemental names, for they were the first to apply the philosophy of Shinsei's Five Elements to their interactions with the spirits. (See Invocation Names and Traditions on page 190 in Chapter 4: Techniques).

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Civility Foremost	Technique
	Stirring the Embers	Technique
RANK 2	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Rallying Cry	Technique
	Slippery Maneuvers	Technique
RANK 3	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Culture	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Water Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	◈ A Samurai's Fate	Technique
	Touchstone of Courage	Technique
RANK 4	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	◈ The Immovable Hand of Peace	Technique
	◈ Touch the Void Dragon	Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Sentiment	Skills
	Survival	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Way of the Edgeless Sword	Technique
	Rouse the Soul	Technique
RANK 6	**Stand of Honor (Mastery Ability):** At the end of your turn, you may spend 1 Void point to prepare to fend off advancing foes; this effect persists until the start of your next turn. When an enemy enters the range of one of your readied weapons, you may immediately make a Strike action using that weapon and targeting that enemy; if you succeed, the target suffers the Immobilized condition in addition to any other effects.	

Shiba Guardian School [Bushi, Courtier]

As Shiba swore to protect Isawa, so the Shiba Guardian School emphasizes the defense of and cooperation with the Isawa; its members complement and protect priests, shrine keepers, and shugenja. The Shiba Guardians are broadly trained, often as much scholars as warriors, and they approach conflict as a problem to be solved without bloodshed if possible. Those who underestimate them due to their reluctance to take a life usually only do so once: the Shiba Guardians are as devoted to the perfection of the martial arts as any samurai. Their commitment to theological study and long hours of meditation have taught the Shiba Guardians how to dance in harmony with elemental kami called forth by the invocations of the shugenja.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Courtesy, +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Meditation, +1 Survival, +1 Tactics, +1 Theology

Honor: 45

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata:** ◈ Lord Shiba's Valor
- **Kata (choose one):** Striking as Earth, Striking as Water

Way of the Phoenix (School Ability): Once per scene, when a character at range 0–3 makes a check that contains 1 or more symbols, you may negate all of those symbols. Then, that character removes strife and fatigue equal to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Ashigaru armor, travel clothes, daishō (katana and wakizashi), naginata (polearm) or yari (spear), traveling pack.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	✧ Rank 1 Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	✧ Bind the Shadow	Technique
	Striking as Air	Technique
RANK 2	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Performance	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	✧ Grasp of the Air Dragon	Technique
	Divination	Technique
RANK 3	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Labor	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	✧ Rank 1–3 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	✧ Breath of Wind Style	Technique
	Flowing Water Strike	Technique
RANK 4	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	✧ Rise, Air	Technique
	✧ Soul Sunder	Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skills
	Sentiment	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	✧ Rank 1–5 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	✧ Tomb of Jade	Technique
	Pin the Fan	Technique
RANK 6	**Demon, Begone! (Mastery Ability, Action):** As an action, you may make a **TN 3 Meditation (Void) check** by plucking the string of a bow you are wielding, targeting each Otherworldly being within a number of range bands equal to your ranks in Meditation. If you succeed, each target suffers strife equal to your ranks in Meditation plus your bonus successes. ✧: Each target must resist with a **TN 3 Meditation (Void) check** or treat its physical and supernatural resistances as 0. This effect persists until the end of the scene.	

Kaito Shrine Keeper School [Monk]

Kaito Shrine Keepers work alongside priests to protect temples across Phoenix lands, or keep smaller shrines on their own. The Kaito learn mystical arts to propitiate the kami—sometimes even serving as vessels for them—and practical ones to maintain the shrines. Shrine Keepers make use of protective magic—such as *ofuda*, paper charms—and spiritually enhanced archery to defend shrines against threats both mystical and mundane.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose four): +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Meditation, +1 Performance, +1 Smithing, +1 Theology

Honor: 45

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata:** Hawk's Precision
- **Invocations:** Tempest of Air
- **Rituals (choose two):** Cleansing Rite, Commune with the Spirits, Threshold Barrier

Sacred Arrows (School Ability): As an action, you may *augment* one of your arrows with a prayer to the kami. Make the check to perform one invocation you know, reducing the TN by your school rank, and record the result. The arrow gains the Sacred quality, and remains infused with the invocation until the end of the scene.

After you perform an Attack action using the arrow (or fire it at a location, at the GM's discretion), you may resolve the effects of the invocation from the place the arrow landed. You may spend ✧+ to delay resolving the effects of the invocation for 1 round per ✧ spent this way, and may spend ✧ ✧ from a failed check to affect one target of the attack that you missed.

Starting Outfit: Sanctified robes, wakizashi (short sword), yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, bō (staff) or knife, scroll satchel, traveling pack.

KAITO INVOCATIONS

The Kaito Shrine Keepers make themselves vessels in which kami may dwell, and so they know their invocations by the Fortunist name of the spirit they are invoking. (See ***Invocation Names and Traditions*** *on page 190 in Chapter 4: Techniques).*

Bayushi Manipulator School [Courtier]

Through the adept use of deception, temptation, and espionage, Bayushi-trained courtiers are the masters of finding and exploiting the weaknesses of others. No method is too dishonorable as long as it is effective and untraceable. The Bayushi Manipulators are the shadow to the Doji Diplomats' light, and they are justly feared by all. Yet, no court is complete without its Scorpion scoundrel. The Bayushi Manipulators accept their roles as villains in the play that is Rokugan, and in doing so, they help ensure that no true villains rise to threaten the Emperor.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Fire

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Command, +1 Courtesy, +1 Design, +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Performance, +1 Sentiment, +1 Skulduggery

Honor: 35

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Shūji:** Lord Bayushi's Whispers
- **Shūji (choose one):** Cadence, Rustling of Leaves

Weakness Is My Strength (School Ability): When you exploit a target's disadvantage (see **Turning Advantages and Disadvantages**, page 100) as part of a Scheme action, you do not need to spend a Void point, and you may reroll additional dice up to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Ceremonial clothes, common clothes, traveling clothes, wakizashi (short sword), any one weapon of rarity 6 or lower, calligraphy set, traveling pack.

SCORPION SCHOOLS

The Scorpion are loyal and pragmatic above all, and so their schools teach absolute loyalty to the clan as much as they teach the means by which the clan achieves its ends. The differences between appearances and reality, lies and truths, suspicion and trust—and more importantly, how and when to use which—are all driven home in their students, point by painful point.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Sentiment	Skill
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Rank 1 Air Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Fanning the Flames	Technique
	The Weight of Duty	Technique
RANK 2	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Fire Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Dazzling Performance	Technique
	Veiled Menace Style	Technique
RANK 3	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Culture	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Water Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Wolf's Proposal	Technique
	Skulk	Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Buoyant Arrival	Technique
	Deadly Sting	Technique
RANK 5	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skills
	Performance	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Void Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Bend with the Storm	Technique
	Sear the Wound	Technique
RANK 6	**Little Truths (Mastery Ability):** When you perform a check targeting another character to which one of your advantages or disadvantages applies, you may choose another advantage or disadvantage that shares a type with it (see **Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 99). Unless they have clear evidence to the contrary, the target comes to believe that you have the advantage or disadvantage you chose instead of the one you actually have. If the target attempts to seize or exploit this false advantage or disadvantage (see page 101), their check automatically counts as failing with a shortfall of 3. They suffer 3 strife and the Disoriented condition.	

Shosuro Infiltrator School [Shinobi, Courtier]

The Shosuro Infiltrators have perfected the art of deception. With their well-honed abilities in acrobatics, disguise, and stealth, these Scorpion agents encounter very few places to which they cannot gain access. As agents of surprise and disruption, they do not stand and fight, but instead sow chaos and vanish—usually to disguise what their mission actually was. Many a yōjimbō has thwarted an apparent assassination attempt that was merely a distraction from the target the Shosuro Infiltrators truly sought. Such infiltrators can vanish into shadows or, with equal skill, mingle with peasants to become invisible to the eyes of samurai.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Fire

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Courtesy, +1 Fitness, +1 Games, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Performance, +1 Skulduggery

Honor: 30

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Ninjutsu:** Deadly Sting
- **Shūji (choose one):** Whispers of Court, Sensational Distraction

The Path of Shadows (School Ability): While performing an Attack action against a target who is Compromised, Incapacitated, Unconscious, or unaware of your presence, treat the damage and deadliness of your weapon as being increased by your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Ceremonial clothes, common clothes, traveling clothes, daishō (katana and wakizashi), knife, yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, traveling pack.

	ADVANCE		TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy		Skill
	Performance		Skill
	Skulduggery		Skill
	Rank 1 Kata		Tech. Grp.
	Veiled Menace Style		Technique
	Skulk		Technique
RANK 2	Trade Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Fitness		Skill
	Performance		Skill
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]		Skill
	Rank 1–2 Air Shūji		Tech. Grp.
	Lord Bayushi's Whispers		Technique
	Noxious Cloud		Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Sentiment		Skill
	Performance		Skill
	Skulduggery		Skill
	Rank 1–3 Kata		Tech. Grp.
	Bravado		Technique
	Dazzling Performance		Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Sentiment		Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]		Skill
	Skulduggery		Skill
	Rank 1–4 Air Shūji		Tech. Grp.
	Silencing Stroke		Technique
	A Samurai's Fate		Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy		Skills
	Performance		Skill
	Skulduggery		Skill
	Rank 1–5 Kata		Tech. Grp.
	Buoyant Arrival		Technique
	Sear the Wound		Technique
RANK 6	**The Final Silence (Mastery Ability, Action):** As an Attack and Movement action, you may make a **TN 4 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Air) check** targeting any number of minion NPCs at range 0–4. If you succeed during a narrative scene, you silently kill all targets over the course of a few minutes. If you succeed during a conflict scene, at the end of each of your turns, you may silently kill one of these targets at range 0–2 (in addition to your other actions).		

SOSHI INVOCATIONS

The Soshi Illusionist School teaches its students invocations using Fortunist names, as their practices arose from the traditional worship of the Fortunes—under the guidance of the mysterious Soshi founder. (See Invocation Names and Traditions on page 190 in Chapter 4: Techniques).

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Fitness	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1 Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Mask of Wind	Technique
	◈ Skulk	Technique
RANK 2	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Medicine	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Vapor of Nightmares	Technique
	Lord Bayushi's Whispers	Technique
RANK 3	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Games	Skill
	Courtesy	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ False Realm of the Fox Spirits	Technique
	◈ Noxious Cloud	Technique
RANK 4	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Performance	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Earth Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Deadly Sting	Technique
	Rise, Air	Technique
RANK 5	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skills
	Fitness	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Buoyant Arrival	Technique
	◈ Silencing Stroke	Technique
RANK 6	**World of Shadows (Mastery Ability):** You may spend 1 Void point to attempt to establish that something in the scene has been an illusion all along. This could be an object, image of a person, or other illusory phenomenon you could *summon* with an invocation. You must make the check to *summon* this illusion using an invocation, with adjustments to the TN for plausibility determined by the GM. If you succeed, you reveal that the thing you chose is in fact an illusion you wove, and has been for at least a few moments. If you fail, your character clearly did not think to set up an illusion—the object is as it appears. As with all matters, the GM has final say over acceptable uses of this ability.	

Soshi Illusionist School [Shugenja, Courtier, Shinobi]

The Soshi Illusionist School is the school of whispers and shadows. "Subtlety" is the illusionists' watchword as they go about their tasks. Even their religious rituals and duties tend to be understated, though they are no less faithfully executed. When the Scorpion need spiritual aid in court, their subtle invocations and keen understanding of the kami allow them to work their prayers unseen and unheard. The Soshi Illusionists are among the most practical shugenja in the Empire, preferring discriminating and effective use of invocation over pomp and ceremony.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose three): +1 Courtesy, +1 Fitness, +1 Games, +1 Performance, +1 Skulduggery, +1 Theology

Honor: 30

Techniques Available: Invocations (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Invocations (choose three):** Bō of Water, Cloak of Night, Nature's Touch, Token of Memory
- **Rituals:** Commune with the Spirits
- **Shūji:** All in Jest

The Kami's Whisper (School Ability): While you are performing an invocation technique or channeling, characters with a vigilance lower than or equal to your school rank plus one cannot detect any physical sign that you are in the act of invoking the spirits. They can still observe effects of the invocation, however.

Increase the TN of Theology checks to detect or study your supernatural activities by your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Sanctified robes, inconspicuous garb, wakizashi (short sword), knife, scroll satchel, traveling pack.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skill
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Rank 1 Earth Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	✦ Civility Foremost	Technique
	Path to Inner Peace	Technique
RANK 2	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	✦ Ebb and Flow	Technique
	Embrace of Kenro-ji-jin	Technique
RANK 3	Artisan Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	✦ Open-Hand Style	Technique
	Earth Becomes Sky	Technique
RANK 4	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skill
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	✦ Skulk	Technique
	Rise, Water	Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skills
	Performance	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	✦ Deadly Sting	Technique
	Tomb of Jade	Technique
RANK 6	**Bound in Ink (Mastery Ability):** Once per scene, when you are targeted by an invocation or mahō technique, you may resist with a **TN 4 Composition check**. If you succeed, you absorb the invocation or mahō, nullifying all of its effects and creating a ward containing it (see page 190) .	

Yogo Wardmaster School [Shugenja]

Founded by Asako Yogo when he joined the Scorpion clan, the Yogo Wardmaster dōjō is the Empire's foremost school of *gyosetsudō*, the art of supernatural warding through mystical calligraphy. Entrusted with the protection of the twelve Black Scrolls, the Yogo developed their founder's techniques to prevent the scrolls' detection by dark forces and contain their corrupting power. By inscribing sigils of power onto slips of paper imbued with their ki, masters of this school can erect invisible barriers, bind spirits, and foil incantations. For the Yogo, an ounce of preparation is more than enough.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose three): +1 Composition, +1 Fitness, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Meditation, +1 Theology

Honor: 40

Techniques Available: Invocations (✋), Rituals (☠), Shūji (✓)

Starting Techniques:

- **Invocations (choose two):** Jade Strike, Grasp of Earth, The Rushing Wave
- **Shūji:** Shallow Waters
- **Rituals:** Commune with the Spirits, Threshold Barrier

Mystical Script (School Ability): You can have a number of additional wards with prepared invocations (see page 190) up to your school rank. Decoding or using one of your wards requires any other character to make a Theology (Void) check with TN equal to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Sanctified robes, concealed armor, wakizashi (short sword), bō (staff) or knife, three shuriken (throwing stars), calligraphy set, scroll satchel, traveling pack.

YOGO INVOCATIONS

Founded by Yogo, a shugenja formerly of the Phoenix Clan, the Yogo Wardmasters continue to use the Elemental names for invocations. (See Invocation Names and Traditions on page 190 in Chapter 4: Techniques).

UNICORN SCHOOLS

In a holdover from the Unicorn's days journeying the Burning Sands and beyond, every Unicorn child learns to ride, pack, and travel to where they are needed most at a moment's notice. More than other schools, Unicorn dōjō are innovative in the development of their techniques and receptive to borrowing methods and equipment from other cultures. They do not take pride in upholding tradition so much as they value forging their own traditions to best serve their clan.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Fitness	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Rank 1 Air Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	◆ Feigned Opening	Technique
	Hawk's Precision	Technique
RANK 2	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Commerce	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Water Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	◆ Ebb and Flow	Technique
	Lady Shinjo's Speed	Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Commerce	Skill
	Games	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	◆ Pillar of Calm	Technique
	All Arts are One	Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Fire Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	◆ Sear the Wound	Technique
	Regal Bearing	Technique
RANK 5	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skills
	Fitness	Skill
	Games	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Void Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Bend with the Storm	Technique
	The Immovable Hand of Peace	Technique
RANK 6	**A Friend in Every City (Mastery Ability):** As a downtime activity in any place of human habitation, you may make a **TN 4 Commerce (Water) check** to find a merchant with whom you (or your relatives) have done business. If you succeed, you find this individual and gain the Ally advantage for them (see page 101), which predisposes them to assist you in various ways.	

Ide Trader School [Courtier]

The ever-friendly face of the Unicorn is the Ide. Ide Traders always attempt to solve problems with negotiation first and foremost, as they know any business dealings between friends and equals forge bonds as strong as steel. While some of the other clans think of the Ide as soft, none can point to when they were able to take advantage of this perceived weakness. The Ide Traders ignore insults and politely welcome compliments in equal measure. They have a vast knowledge of cultures, both Rokugani and foreign, which allows them to tailor their dealings with precision.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Commerce, +1 Courtesy, +1 Games, +1 Labor, +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Medicine, +1 Survival

Honor: 45

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Shūji:** ◆ Tributaries of Trade
- **Shūji (choose one):** Cadence, Shallow Waters

Vendor of Strange Wares: Ignore the Forbidden quality when acquiring and handling items.

When acquiring, selling, or gifting an item, you may treat its rarity as reduced or increased by your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, wakizashi (short sword), yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, calligraphy set, traveling pack, Unicorn warhorse (see page 326), journal.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Design	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Sympathetic Energies	Technique
	Cleansing Rite	Technique
RANK 2	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Design	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Earth Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Hands of the Tides	Technique
	Artisan's Appraisal	Technique
RANK 3	Artisan Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Performance	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Rituals	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Rise, Earth	Technique
	Dazzling Performance	Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Medicine	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Rouse the Soul	Technique
	A Samurai's Fate	Technique
RANK 5	Artisan Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Culture	Skills
	Survival	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	The Soul's Blade	Technique
	Ever-Changing Waves	Technique
RANK 6	**The Spirits Unbound (Mastery Ability):** At the end of your turn, you may spend 1 or more Void points to unleash the powers within an equal number of your meishōdō talismans, destroying these talismans and freeing the entities within. You may immediately perform each of the invocations for which the talismans were created, reducing the TN by 3.	

Iuchi Meishōdō Master School [Shugenja, Artisan]

The Unicorn understanding of magic and the spirits has been greatly influenced by their years exploring outside the Empire, and the making of magical talismans remains the focus of their craft, meishōdō. The Iuchi Meishōdō Masters' magic is unique among Rokugan's shugenja; using words of power taught to them by foreign sorcerers, they bind the spirits into talismans, which can then be gifted to others to use. Their heritage makes the Iuchi one of most open-minded of the shugenja families.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose three): +1 Aesthetics, +1 Design, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Meditation, +1 Survival, +1 Theology

Honor: 40

Techniques Available: Invocations (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Invocations (choose two):** Grasp of Earth, Jurōjin's Balm, The Rushing Wave
- **Rituals:** Commune with the Spirits
- **Shūji (choose one):** Ancestry Unearthed, Well of Desire

The Way of Names (School Ability): As a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 2 Design check** using any ring to bind a spirit to an inanimate vessel, creating a meishōdō talisman for one invocation of that Element that you have learned. While you have the talisman in your possession, reduce the TN of checks to activate that invocation by 1. You can give the talisman to another shugenja, allowing them to perform that invocation even if they have not learned it and reducing the TN to activate it by 1, but the talisman ceases to function after a number of uses equal to your school rank.

You can sustain a number of meishōdō talismans up to your school rank. You can only have one meishōdō talisman for any single invocation.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, ceremonial clothes, wakizashi (short sword), one weapon of rarity 6 or lower, calligraphy set, traveling pack, Unicorn warhorse (see page 326).

IUCHI INVOCATIONS

As they developed their traditions with help from sorcerers in the Burning Sands, the Iuchi Meishōdō Masters know invocations by Foreign names. (See Invocation Names and Traditions on page 190 in Chapter 4: Techniques).

Moto Conqueror School [Bushi]

While most Unicorn dōjō focus on swift and complex techniques, the martial style of the Moto Conquerer favors straightforward, unrelenting force. They fight loudly, use sweeping movements, and wield weapons many Rokugani do not recognize. As a result, few samurai know how to react to the Moto style, let alone defend against it. Other clans consider the Moto to be barbarians, and the horde uses this to their advantage. If the Empire will not make an effort to understand the Moto's ways, then how can they stand against them?

Rings: +1 Fire, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Command, +1 Fitness, +1 Performance, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Survival, +1 Tactics

Honor: 35

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Shūji (choose one):** Lightning Raid, Slippery Maneuvers
- **Shūji:** All in Jest

Swirling Desert Wind (School Ability): When performing an Attack action during a skirmish or mass battle, you may spend as follows:

: Choose an enemy other than your target whom you can perceive. Increase the TN of that enemy's Attack checks targeting you by your school rank until the start of your next turn.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, concealed armor, daishō (scimitar and wakizashi), yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, two knives, traveling pack, Unicorn warhorse (see page 326).

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Crescent Moon Style	Technique
	Stir the Embers	Technique
RANK 2	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Performance	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Fire Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Heartpiercing Strike	Technique
	Veiled Menace Style	Technique
RANK 3	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Bravado	Technique
	Dazzling Performance	Technique
RANK 4	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Water Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Striking as Void	Technique
	Crashing Wave Style	Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skills
	Government	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Sear the Wound	Technique
	Buoyant Arrival	Technique
RANK 6	**Scouring Sirocco (Mastery Ability):** Once per round, after you inflict the Incapacitated condition on a target (or defeat a minion NPC), you may perform a Strike action against a different target.	

Shinjo Outrider School [Bushi, Courtier]

The core of the Unicorn military, the Shinjo Outriders emphasize speed and flexibility. All Shinjo Outriders learn the art of reconnaissance and how to get the most out of their horses. No samurai is more mobile than a mounted Shinjo Outrider. Their preferred weapon is the Shinjo horsebow, which they use with great accuracy even while riding at a gallop. Trained to live off the land, the Shinjo Outriders thoroughly learn the terrain of each potential battlefield before having to fight over it.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Fire

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Commerce, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Medicine, +1 Skulduggery, +1 Survival, +1 Tactics

Honor: 40

Techniques Available: Kata (⚔), Rituals (☯), Shūji (☙)

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata (choose one):** Striking as Fire, Striking as Water
- **Kata:** ◈ Lady Shinjo's Speed

Born in the Saddle (School Ability): Once per scene, before rolling dice, you may declare that you are directing your horse (who must be present) to aid in a task and describe how its efforts help in those circumstances. Reduce the TN of the check by your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Ashigaru armor, traveling clothes, daishō (katana or scimitar, wakizashi), yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, knife, traveling pack, Unicorn warhorse (see page 326).

	ADVANCE		TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Commerce		Skill
	Courtesy		Skill
	Survival		Skill
	Rank 1 Earth Shūji	☙	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Pelting Hail Style	⚔	Technique
	Cadence	☙	Technique
RANK 2	Trade Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy		Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]		Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]		Skill
	Rank 1–2 Kata	⚔	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Flowing Water Strike	⚔	Technique
	◈ Dazzling Performance	☙	Technique
RANK 3	Scholar Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Ranged]		Skill
	Performance		Skill
	Survival		Skill
	Rank 1–3 Water Shūji	☙	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Crashing Wave Style	⚔	Technique
	Crimson Leaves Strike	⚔	Technique
RANK 4	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Command		Skill
	Skulduggery		Skill
	Survival		Skill
	Rank 1–4 Kata	⚔	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Bend with the Storm	☙	Technique
	Bravado	☙	Technique
RANK 5	Social Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Government		Skills
	Meditation		Skill
	Survival		Skill
	Rank 1–5 Fire Shūji	☙	Tech. Grp.
	Pin the Fan	⚔	Technique
	Rouse the Soul	☙	Technique
RANK 6	**I Will Always Return (Mastery Ability):** Once per game session, you may call out for your steed. At the beginning of the following round, your horse arrives, regardless of any barriers that might normally have prevented it from reaching your location. If your steed has recently been slain, its spirit will possess the closest horse to you and come to your aid regardless, such is its loyalty to you.		

Utaku Battle Maiden School [Bushi]

The most traditional and prestigious of the Unicorn Clan's schools, the Shiotome, or "Battle Maidens," are revered as legendary cavalry. The dōjō only accepts women who carry the Utaku name, and even then prospective students must meet stringent standards of prowess and honor. This is the only school in the Empire that teaches the secrets required to tame the powerful Utaku steeds, massive warhorses that refuse all other riders. In battle, graceful, continuous movements mark their style, as does their unnerving serenity. Even when charging into the fray, Battle Maidens often move in utter silence.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Earth

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Command, +1 Fitness, +1 Government, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Meditation, +1 Smithing, +1 Survival

Honor: 50

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Shūji ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata (choose one):** Crescent Moon Style, Iron Forest Style
- **Kata:** Warrior's Resolve

Heroic Charge (School Ability): When you succeed at an Attack action check, add bonus successes equal to the number of range bands you have moved this round, to a maximum of your school rank.

During a duel or mass battle, if you are mounted on your steed, you always count as having moved a number of range bands equal to your school rank this turn.

Starting Outfit: Lacquered armor, ceremonial clothes, daishō (katana or scimitar, wakizashi), yari (spear), yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, knife, traveling pack, Utaku steed (see page 327).

	ADVANCE		TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Command		Skill
	Smithing		Skill
	Survival		Skill
	Rank 1 Kata		Tech. Grp.
	Lady Shinjo's Speed		Technique
	Striking as Air		Technique
RANK 2	Artisan Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Fitness		Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]		Skill
	Tactics		Skill
	Rank 1–2 Earth Shūji		Tech. Grp.
	Thunderclap Strike		Technique
	Rushing Avalanche Style		Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Medicine		Skill
	Survival		Skill
	Theology		Skill
	Rank 1–3 Kata		Tech. Grp.
	Pillar of Calm		Technique
	Touchstone of Courage		Technique
RANK 4	Scholar Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Command		Skill
	Fitness		Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]		Skill
	Rank 1–4 Air Shūji		Tech. Grp.
	Soul Sunder		Technique
	Breath of Wind Style		Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Command		Skills
	Culture		Skill
	Survival		Skill
	Rank 1–5 Kata		Tech. Grp.
	Rouse the Soul		Technique
	Bend with the Storm		Technique
RANK 6	**Sensing the Breeze (Mastery Ability):** Once per round, after you defend against damage, you may move 1 range band and you may switch to a different stance.		

Worldly Rōnin Path [Bushi, Courtier]

Individuals may come to walk the rōnin's path for many reasons. These "wave men" adrift upon the sea of fate may be former clan samurai fallen from grace, unlucky samurai whose master was killed or demoted, or even children born to samurai parents out of wedlock or under other contentious circumstances. Many do not have a formal sensei anymore—if they ever did—and so the world itself is their teacher. As they must adapt to survive, many rōnin rely on a particular skill to make their way in the world, whether that be as mercenaries, as traveling merchants or performers, or as guides or guardians for specific roads, rivers, or mountain passes.

Rings: +1 any two different rings

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Command, +1 Fitness, +1 Labor, +1 Martial Arts [Melee], +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Skulduggery

Honor: 30

Techniques Available: Kata (⚔), Rituals (☯), Shūji (✓)

Starting Techniques:

- **Kata (choose one):** ◈ Pelting Hail Style, ◈ Crescent Moon Style
- **Shūji (choose one):** All in Jest, Honest Assessment, Stirring the Embers, Rustling of Leaves

School of Waves (School Ability): Choose one bonus curriculum skill; this skill henceforth counts as part of the Worldly Rōnin Path curriculum for you at all ranks. Each time your school rank increases, choose one additional bonus curriculum skill this way.

When you make a check using one of your bonus curriculum skills, you may negate 1 ⟲ symbol.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, any one weapon of rarity 6 or lower, katana (long sword) or yumi (bow), wakizashi (short sword), any two items of rarity 4 or lower.

	ADVANCE		TYPE
RANK 1	Trade Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Fitness		Skill
	Martial Arts [Choose One]		Skill
	Performance		Skill
	Rank 1 Kata	⚔	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Open-Hand Style	⚔	Technique
	Shallow Waters	✓	Technique
RANK 2	Martial Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Command		Skill
	Labor		Skill
	Medicine		Skill
	Rank 1–2 Shūji	✓	Tech. Grp.
	◈ All Arts are One	✓	Technique
	Iron Forest Style	⚔	Technique
RANK 3	Social Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Choose One]		Skill
	Sentiment		Skill
	Skulduggery		Skill
	Rank 1–3 Kata	⚔	Tech. Grp.
	◈ A Samurai's Fate	✓	Technique
	Dazzling Performance	✓	Technique
RANK 4	Artisan Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Labor		Skill
	Martial Arts [Choose One]		Skill
	Survival		Skill
	Rank 1–4 Shūji	✓	Tech. Grp.
	◈ Striking as Void	⚔	Technique
	Crimson Leaves Strike	⚔	Technique
RANK 5	Scholar Skills		Skl. Grp.
	Composition		Skills
	Martial Arts [Choose One]		Skill
	Meditation		Skill
	Rank 1–5 Kata	⚔	Tech. Grp.
	Buoyant Arrival	✓	Technique
	Sear the Wound	✓	Technique
RANK 6	**A Bottomless Ocean (Mastery Ability):** You can increase your bonus curriculum skills to rank 6 (paying 12 XP per skill raised from rank 5 to rank 6 this way).		

PLAYING A RONIN

The rōnin path provided here represents a character who was born into one of the Great Clans, but for reasons that are up to you, has since left their clan to become a masterless warrior. To make a rōnin character, you should choose the clan and family that your character originated from, then chose this school (which, in this case, is more of a collection of worldly experiences than a true school).

More on playing a rōnin can be found on page 306.

4. HOW DOES YOUR CHARACTER STAND OUT WITHIN THEIR SCHOOL?

Even in a training system as regulated as that of a dōjō, different students excel in different areas. Even a pair of twins from the same family attending the same school might differ in temperament, aptitude, or inclination.

Choose one of the following options and increase your ring rank by the specified amount:

- **Creativity, passion, or drive (+1 Fire Ring):** Your character is recognized by their teachers and peers for their inventive ideas, their sincere love for the craft of their school, or their intense and irrepressible desire to succeed in their field. Their energy and enthusiasm inspire fellow students and galvanize rivals to put forth their best as well.
- **Grace, eloquence, or empathy (+1 Air Ring):** Your character stands out in their school for their finesse, the refinement with which they express themself in social situations, or their sensitivity to the feelings of others. To other students, their successes often appear effortless, but the truth of the matter is that their innate attention to detail means that they work as hard as anyone else, if not harder.
- **Adaptability, friendliness, or awareness (+1 Water Ring):** Your character's willingness to roll with the punches, gregariousness, or understanding of their environment stands out among their peers. Your character tends not to get stuck in mental ruts the same way many people do, or at least they have ways to get out of them.
- **Thoroughness, patience, or calm (+1 Earth Ring):** Stoicism is a trait valued greatly in Rokugan, and your character bears challenges and hardships without complaint. Your character's teachers might have come to rely upon them as an assistant instructor, while their peers are likely to see them as a source of wisdom and stability.
- **Self-awareness, insight, or mysticism (+1 Void Ring):** At a certain point, all arts become a study of the universe, oneself, and the relationship between the two, and your character is more adept at seeing things within both than most of their peers are. They might even seem to have a supernatural sense of things, and to act based on hunches about what is to come in addition to possessing insight about their place in the wider universe.

Part III: Honor and Glory

Honor and glory are everything to a samurai. Honor reflects one's inward opinion of how well one adheres to the tenets of Bushidō, while glory reflects how well-known one's name is throughout the Empire. In a perfect world, samurai could bring glory to themselves and their clans while maintaining their moral integrity, but in Rokugan, samurai are frequently tested to see which one they value more highly.

For more information, see the sections on **Honor** and **Glory** in **Chapter 1: Playing the Game**.

5. WHO IS YOUR LORD AND WHAT IS YOUR CHARACTER'S DUTY TO THEM?

Your samurai's lord is a figure of utmost importance in their life—the individual to whom they have sworn their fealty directly. While your samurai's lord might in turn have a lord of their own, your character's oath is to their lord directly rather than the hierarchy in which they exist. Who is this individual, and how does your character serve them? Your lord might be a provincial daimyō, an official of some kind in the Imperial bureaucracy, a great general, or someone of humbler status (but still higher than your own). Ask your GM if they want you to invent this figure on your own, or if they intend to provide the identity of your character's lord. Your character's lord in intrinsically tied to your character's giri, a motive that should play a major part in their dramatic arc.

After you decide who your character's lord is, you should work with your GM to determine specifics: What is their name? What role do they serve in their clan? What sort of personality and history do they have? Depending on the type of campaign your GM is running, your character's lord might be a clan magistrate, a city governor, a provincial daimyō, or even a Great Clan family daimyō. The GM should give players a large degree of leeway in their selection of a giri, as long as it is not disruptive to the story, as it should be something that the player is invested in seeing their character pursue during the campaign.

Your character might even have two lords, such as if they are an Emerald Magistrate. In this case, not only would your character be expected to serve the Emerald Champion on behalf of the Emperor, but their family daimyō would still expect them to work toward the clan's interests at the same time. If your character

possesses or acquires a title from, or a major obligation to, a different lord or bureaucracy, the GM might ask you to create another giri for them based on this other lord's expectations. Again, the GM and player should collaborate to create something both are excited to explore in the story.

Once this is established, add in a few details about your character's relationship with their lord, and then determine the most important aspect of their relationship: how does your character serve their lord on a day-to-day basis? In theory, samurai care only about serving their lord (in practice, however, they are human). What is the primary service that you render to your lord? How does your lord call upon your skills?

Write down your answer on your character sheet under "Giri." Giri is how your character acquires esteem in the eyes of their lord, and thus is related to your character's reputation within the Empire, their glory. See more under **Giri**, on page 39 of **Chapter 1: Playing the Game**.

Bushi characters might be given tasks suited to bodyguards (yōjimbō), guards, soldiers, magistrates, executioners, or generals.

Courtier and **artisan** characters might be given tasks suited to craftspeople, performers, guides, diplomats, magistrates, seneschals, or spymasters.

Shugenja characters might be given tasks suited to priests, researchers, librarians, warrior-priests, shrine keepers, or spiritual advisors to daimyō. Rarely, shugenja might be guards, artisans, or magistrates.

Monk characters who no longer belong to a clan generally serve the interests of their order instead of their lord. They might be given tasks suited to priests, temple caretakers, charity workers in their community, librarians, teachers, or pilgrims. Monks who still belong to a clan usually have duties similar to those of a shugenja.

Shinobi characters are hired assassins and infiltrators, but they usually have a cover guise. A shinobi's giri is almost always a secret; the player of a shinobi should also decide what their character's outwardly stated giri is when selecting their true objective.

Selecting One's Giri Properly

Giri provides characters with the first of their two primary drives within the story. You should be able to answer the following questions in the affirmative when considering your character's giri and ninjō (personal feelings) together, and if you cannot, you should talk to your GM about selecting a different giri:

- Is this giri something you want to see your character pursue or contend with during the story? This does not mean that your character should always enjoy the weight of their duty, but you, the player, should be excited by the prospect of getting to watch your character struggle with it.
- Can your character make progress toward completing this giri no matter where the campaign takes your character? A good giri has clear paths you can explore with it even when it does not tie in with the main plot, and it should be something that can influence your character's choices no matter what location they travel to or what obstacles they face.
- Is this giri likely to conflict with your ninjō at least occasionally? Being pulled between duty and desires is a key part of many works of samurai fiction, and even if the two are not diametrically opposed, your character should sometimes have to make hard decisions about which is more important in the moment.

6. What Does Your Character Long For, and How Might This Impede Their Duty?

In theory, samurai care only about serving their lord, but in practice, samurai possess their own individual desires as well. What is the greatest, most pressing personal goal or belief that your samurai carries within their heart? And what prevents them from finding resolution on this matter?

Write down your character's personal question, goal, or core desire on your character sheet under "Ninjō." Ninjō is a challenge that you set before your character, forcing them to confront the ideals of Bushidō and the cost to uphold them as they pursue their desire—thus, it is related to their honor. Another way to look at ninjō is to ask yourself: what goal might tempt the character to disobey their lord or do other dishonorable things? What would be worth such risks to them? See more under **Ninjō**, on page 38 of **Chapter 1: Playing the Game**.

Samurai drama revolves around competing desires. To create quandaries for your samurai that enhance drama and make for enjoyable roleplaying, you should think about how your character's giri and ninjō might come into conflict. They do not need to be in constant opposition, but there should always be the possibility for friction between the two—and the conflict your character would feel at such times should be interesting to you!

If you can't imagine a few exciting moments that might arise from your character being forced to choose between the two (or you wouldn't enjoy roleplaying those moments), modify one or both selections until you can. The GM will be working to bring both up during the course of the campaign, which leads to difficult choices for your character (and thus, interesting choices for you, the player!).

Selecting One's Ninjō Properly

Ninjō provides characters with the second of their two primary drives within the story. Some classic personal desires from works of samurai fiction include variations on the themes of ambition, art, beauty, belonging, enlightenment, envy, family, glory, greed, love, justice, knowledge, peace, safety, or revenge, or a combination thereof. Things like "to be an honorable samurai" or "to obey my lord" are poor selections for a character's ninjō. These are simply baseline requirements of being a samurai and, more importantly, they do not provide the character with the clear moments of fallibility that make characters in *Legend of the Five Rings* interesting to play.

By comparison, similar but slightly more involved ninjō such as "to punish samurai who abuse their power by dishonoring themselves" or "to win my lord's love" provide enough room for conflict with the general precepts of being a samurai to function well as ninjō because they invoke the character's personal desire rather than mere societal expectation.

You should be able to answer the following questions in the affirmative when considering your character's ninjō and giri (duty to one's lord) together, and if you cannot, you should talk to your GM about selecting a different ninjō:

- Is this ninjō something you want to see your character pursue or contend with during the story? This does not mean that your character should always find pursuing their desire pleasant, wise, or even healthy, but you, the player, should be excited by the prospect of getting to watch your character struggle with it.
- Is this ninjō likely to arise no matter where the campaign takes your character? A good ninjō tugs at your character's heart regardless of where they wander, and it should be something that can influence your character's choices no matter what location they travel to or what obstacles they face.
- Is this ninjō something for which your character might sully their honor or defy their lord? A good ninjō means enough to the character that pursuing it is a serious temptation, while ignoring it has serious enough stakes that it would cause the samurai to be unhappy or unmotivated to continue serving their lord.

7. What is your character's relationship with their clan?

Not every samurai lives and breathes their clan's creed, and individuals often diverge considerably from their clan on specific issues of philosophy, politics, or other personal matters. Now that you know who your lord is, does your character embrace their clan's ideals and goals, or do they find themself in conflict with them? Does your character agree with current policies or regard them as mistakes? Perhaps a militaristic samurai is born into the Crane or the Phoenix Clan, or a pacifistic samurai is born into the Lion or Crab Clan. Perhaps a Scorpion disagrees with their clan's sinister behavior. Perhaps a Lion believes their clan's enmity for the Crane is an error.

Consider not only how your character differs from clan orthodoxy, but how they arrived at that point. Perhaps an ancient grudge with another clan was revealed as foolishness when they had to journey alongside a member of that clan—or maybe one of the clan's allies uses methods your character cannot tolerate. This can help flesh out not just your character's worldview, but also their story so far.

Choose one of the following:

- If your character believes firmly in the precepts of their clan and the values it holds dear, gain +5 glory based on their reputation as an upstanding member of their community.
- If your character has a fundamental disagreement with their clan's beliefs, policies, or practices and has defied these in the past, gain 1 rank in a skill in which you have 0 ranks. Consider why this skill represents a divergence from the clan's training or values.

8. What does your character think of Bushidō?

All samurai are supposed to respect and venerate the Code of Bushidō, but some clans and families pay more attention to some tenets than others (see each clan's particular view on Bushidō in their entries earlier in this chapter), and there are always a few samurai who refuse to believe in Bushidō at all. Does your character agree with their clan's views, or does your character differ on certain points or even disregard certain elements of Bushidō? If your character's belief in Bushidō is completely in alignment with their clan, what past experiences have reinforced it or renewed their faith in it? If your character has come to believe that Bushidō is flawed, or at least that most people are misguided in the way they practice it, what events drove them to this development?

Choose one of the following:

- If your character's belief in living by an orthodox interpretation of Bushidō is very staunch, gain +10 honor.
- If your character diverges from some or all common beliefs about how samurai should behave honorably, gain 1 rank in one of the following skills to reflect past behavior that was unbefitting of a samurai or deeply defied the norm: Commerce, Labor, Medicine, Seafaring, Skulduggery, or Survival.

Part IV: Strengths and Weaknesses

Beyond their rings and skills, characters are also defined by their advantages and disadvantages—the quirks and vulnerabilities that make them tick. Each advantage or disadvantage is assigned to a single one of the character's rings and is classified with one or more types. Different school abilities and techniques may interact with the different types of advantages and disadvantages.

During character creation, a character is assigned two advantages (one distinction and one passion) in **Questions 9** and **11**, two disadvantages (one adversity and one anxiety) in **Questions 10** and **12**, and one additional advantage or disadvantage of your choice in **Question 13**.

9. What is your character's greatest accomplishment so far?

What is your character's greatest achievement so far in life, and how did they accomplish it? Your character might have won a tournament or event thanks to innate ability, created a work of art that caught the eye of their daimyō, slain a remarkable beast while on a hunt, or even taken the initiative to cultivate a politically advantageous marriage.

Your character likely possesses some ability or strength of character that assisted in this noteworthy achievement, which you should also select at this stage. It can even be interesting to create a contrast between what the character thinks are their strengths, and what these really are—your character might not be aware of their own best quality, or they might mistakenly believe they succeeded for unrelated reasons.

In addition to deciding on your character's greatest achievement in their life so far, choose one distinction advantage that was key to accomplishing this success, or that your character developed as a result of it. See **Specific Distinctions**, on page 101, for a list of options. If you want to create your own distinction, consult with your GM using the guidance in **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 137.

10. What holds your character back the most in life?

Many things are expected of samurai in the Emerald Empire, and nearly all samurai have some ongoing challenge in their life that makes these expectations harder to live up to. This challenge might be a personality quirk such as naïveté, selfishness, or a bad temper; it could be a physical ailment or disability; or it might even be a spiritual vulnerability such as a family curse. When choosing a challenge, you should select something that you think you will enjoy roleplaying (especially at times when your character does not enjoy facing this difficulty).

Choose one adversity disadvantage for your character. See **Specific Adversities**, on page 116, for a list of options. If you want to create your own adversity, consult with your GM using the guidance in **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 137.

11. What activity most makes your character feel at peace?

The answer to this question could be anything from food and drink to specific activities, certain material possessions, or particular persons. Why does the character like or dislike these things? Does it stem from sharing the activity with a loved one in the past or a seemingly spontaneous fascination with the

subject itself? How has an enjoyment of this activity shaped your character's life? Have they made friends—or enemies—as a result of this hobby?

Choose one passion advantage related to your character's interests or hobbies. See **Specific Passions**, on page 111, for a list of options. If you want to create your own passion, consult with your GM using the guidance in **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 137.

12. WHAT CONCERN, FEAR, OR FOIBLE TROUBLES YOUR CHARACTER THE MOST?

Samurai are expected to maintain a controlled façade befitting their station at most times, but no human can avoid having some things that make them anxious, afraid, or angry. Are your character's fears or frustrations derived from past experiences, trauma, or personal failure? Are they related to a person or specific event? Does your character fully understand the source of their emotional turmoil, or do they have trouble expressing or processing these feelings? As with the adversity you selected, you should select something that you think you will enjoy roleplaying when it challenges your character.

Choose one anxiety disadvantage for your character. See **Specific Anxieties**, on page 130, for a list of options. If you want to create your own anxiety, consult with your GM using the guidance in **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 137.

13. WHO HAS YOUR CHARACTER LEARNED THE MOST FROM DURING THEIR LIFE?

Nearly every human owes some portion of their personality, strengths, and weaknesses to the people around them, and usually, a few people in particular stand out as mentors—although their influence is not always positive. Who has taught your character the most about life, for better or for worse?

An instructor in your character's school might have set them on their current path, or a parent's influence might still guide their actions. Your character's lord might have served as a political mentor, showing them the value of compassion—or of ruthlessness—and thereby shaped their ethos for life. A good marriage might have led your character to a true peer who helped them overcome a challenge or personal obstacle, while a bad marriage might have left your character jaded about relationships overall. Having to care for a younger sibling or child might have caused your character to develop in unforeseen ways. Losing a loved one might have driven your character into anguish, or it might have forced them to grow in ways they never thought possible to stand on their own. A disastrously bad relationship or a long-running feud with a hated rival could have forged your character into the person they are today. Your character might even have met a supernatural being who has served as a guide or patron, or one who set a curse upon your character in exchange for giving your character power or as punishment for transgressions against the Celestial Order.

In the **Relationships** section of the character sheet, record the name of the person from whom your character has learned the most, along with the nature of their relationship. Then, choose one of the following options and gain the listed feature:

- One advantage related to your character's mentor and their relationship.
- One disadvantage related to your character's mentor and their relationship, and 1 rank in a skill that your character developed as a result of your character's closest confidante and their relationship.

If you want to create your own advantage or disadvantage, consult with your GM using the guidance in **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 137.

Part V: Personality and Behavior

Your character is more than a set of statistics on paper; knowing how they are likely to behave in a situation is important when you are roleplaying their decisions and interactions.

14. WHAT DO PEOPLE NOTICE FIRST UPON ENCOUNTERING YOUR CHARACTER?

In a given region and especially within a particular clan, samurai are expected to behave, dress, and comport themselves in certain ways. Customs vary somewhat by region, and certain allowances are made for outsiders—a battle-hardened Crab bushi on business in a Crane court is hardly expected to be able to maintain perfect etiquette, although their manners are sure to be subtly criticized by the courtiers present.

Within their homeland, however, any aspect of a character that veers from the norm, from slight oddities of appearance to trivial mannerisms, tend to attract attention. A character might stand out for their unusual looks, strange dress, or ancestry that can be traced to far-flung parts of the Emerald Empire (or even beyond, in the case of some families). A minor behavior, like chewing one's lip when nervous or clasping one's hands to hide trembling fingers, can be the thing that others remember about a character. Perhaps the character always says the same thing when meeting a stranger. All these things add subtle depth to the character—and so does a deliberate absence of memorable details.

Record the answer in the **Personality, Habits and Quirks** section of your character sheet.

Additionally, choose one distinctive aesthetic accoutrement that your character carries or wears most of the time (e.g. a scarf, hair ornament, engraved scabbard, eyepatch, etc). This bit of personal flair might accent their striking features or stand in contrast to them.

15. How does your character react to stressful situations?

Although samurai are supposed to maintain proper decorum and conceal their emotions, few of them are truly able to control their feelings at all times. Even the most stoic and rigidly self-controlled samurai occasionally lets out a true sign of feeling, especially when they are being berated by their lord or treated disrespectfully by their subordinates. What emotions does your character show, and why? What events or feelings can make them lose their self-control? Conversely, what emotions can they always control, no matter what?

Describe a noteworthy physical response that your character has during times of stress and note it under the **Personality, Habits, and Quirks** section of the character sheet. As your character's strife approaches their composure, your character might display this behavior, and it could play a part any time they unmask.

Using Strife and Unmasking for Roleplaying

Moments when your character unmasks are great opportunities for their personality to shine through, so you should think about how stress affects them. In the **Personality, Traits, and Quirks** section of the character sheet, record some physiological, verbal, or mental signs they display as their strife rises.

Does your character get loud and abrasive when enraged, or does their voice fall to an icy whisper? Do they fall to their knees in prayer when wracked with uncertainty or respond to everything as if it is a violent threat? Perhaps they have a simple mannerism they display as they grow more anxious, such as idly flexing their fingers or shifting subtly to a guarded posture. Do they have a particular turn of phrase they tend to use upon growing excited or frustrated? Come up with one or two examples that help breathe life into your character as they approach their emotional threshold.

With the GM's permission, you can even mix and match the narrative and mechanical effects of various ways to unmask, re-flavor the narrative side of an example unmasking to better fit your character, or make up a wholly new way your character unmasks.

16. What are your character's preexisting relationships with other clans, families, organizations, and traditions?

A character is exposed to many other groups during their life in numerous ways; diplomacy, marriage alliances, trade, wars, and travel all may bring a person into contact with groups they do not belong to (at least initially). What other groups within the Emerald Empire has your character been exposed to, and what impression have these exposures left? Is your character betrothed or married to a member of another family or clan? Did they marry into that family or clan and suddenly need to acclimate to a very different set of expectations and social strictures? Are your character's marriage prospects poor due to bad relationships or due to bad blood with neighboring families or clans? Has your character been too involved in battles or even all-out war against another clan? Did victory or defeat harden their heart against members of this clan, or did the pointlessness of war against other clans become obvious during the war? Does your character have a personal reason to feel sympathy for a particular group or to hate them, and if so, how did this develop?

Record any noteworthy history, quarrels, alliances, or grievances your character has with other groups in the **Relationships** section of your character sheet.

Additionally, choose one item of rarity 7 or lower that your character received as a gift from one such group, took in battle fighting against them, or that otherwise relates to or symbolizes the character's past and ongoing relationship with them. Add this item to your starting outfit.

Part VI: Ancestry and Family

Now is the time to determine who your character's parents and ancestors are, and how that has defined your character.

17. How would your character's parents describe them?

Parental devotion is an expected virtue in a land where the family, not the individual, is the repository of honor and reputation. However, despite this ideal, there are plenty of samurai who have a fractious relationship with their parents, or who offer outward veneration while concealing a lack of respect. Does your character have a proper relationship with their parents, or are they estranged? Was the character's childhood a happy one. Were they a torment to their parents, or vice versa? Are their parents still alive?

Record the nature of the relationship between your character and their parents or immediate family members in the **Relationships** section of your character sheet.

Additionally, gain one rank of one skill in which your character has 0 ranks, and determine whether your character's parents approve of this extracurricular interest or see it as a regrettable deviation, and why.

18. Who was your character named to honor?

When receiving or choosing a name at their coming of age ceremony, many samurai adopt a name that honors a recent or particularly noteworthy ancestor. In the Emerald Empire, using a portion of an ancestral name combined with other syllables to change its meaning is one common practice for many families. Whose name is your character's derived from? What was meant by the bestowal of this name upon your character? What did this person accomplish during their life? How did they die, or do they still live? Did or does your character have a personal relationship with this ancestor? Does your character feel pride in the name they carry, or do they fear failing to live up to the person it represents?

First, roll a ten-sided die twice. Consult those numbers in **Table 2–1: Samurai Heritage** on the next page to see entries on two potential famous relatives from the last few generations. Choose one of those two options as the relative for whom your character is named. Then, roll a ten-sided die again as specified by that entry.

At the GM's discretion, all players in a game may choose the first result, the second result, or both results.

19. What is your character's personal name?

After you have chosen the name of the ancestor your character's name honors, choose the personal name derived from it that your character is be known by. It might be the same name or an alteration with significance to your character. This is the name that is recorded in the family register, replacing the name they used as a child. In the Rokugani style, the character typically is addressed by their family name (chosen in **Question 18**), with the appropriate honorific, but close associates may refer to them simply by their personal name. What does your character's name mean? Does your character's appearance fit with their name, or are the two incongruous?

Part VII: Death

20. How should your character die?

All proper samurai fully expect to die in the service of their lord, and it is said that every samurai lives at all times three feet from death—the length of a katana blade. However, some deaths have more meaning than others, and there are plenty of samurai whose outward façade of courage hides a deep-seated fear of mortality. How would you like your character to end? Will they fulfill their destiny and join their ancestors in Yomi, the Realm of Sacred Ancestors, or will their soul be forced to undertake another cycle on the Celestial Wheel of reincarnation?

This has no mechanical implications, but you should keep it in mind. Your GM certainly will…

Table 2–1: Samurai Heritage

Roll	Result	Modifiers	Other Effects
1	**Famous Deed:** One of your ancestors won a great victory for their clan or even the Emperor, and was rewarded with an item of incredible quality.	Increase your glory by 3.	Roll a ten-sided die again and add the resulting family heirloom to your starting items (1–3: a weapon, 4–6: a set of armor, 7–8: another item, 9: a horse or other animal, 10: a boat or estate). You choose one quality and the GM chooses one quality from the list of item qualities, on page 240; these are applied to the item.
2	**Glorious Sacrifice:** One of your ancestors perished nobly in battle, and one of their signature items vanished with them or was lost in the subsequent years.	Increase your honor by 5 and your glory by 5.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine your lost family heirloom (1–3: a weapon, 4–6: a set of armor, 7–8: another item, 9: a horse or other animal, 10: a boat or estate), which exists somewhere in the world. You choose one quality and the GM chooses one quality; these are applied to the item. You do not know where the heirloom is, but you could later reclaim it during the campaign.
3	**Wondrous Work:** One of your ancestors crafted a piece of great beauty that won renown for your family, and others expect you to live up to that legacy.	Increase your glory by 5.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine an Artisan skill (1–3: Aesthetics, 4–6: Composition, 7–8: Design, 9–10: Smithing); gain +1 rank in that skill.
4	**Dynasty Builder:** One of your ancestors was instrumental in the rise of a powerful lord, using cunning stratagems and shrewd advice to secure their ascension. You have heard this story many times and know the importance of power subtly wielded.	Decrease your glory by 3.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine a Social skill (1–3: Command, 4–6: Courtesy, 7–8: Games, 9–10: Performance); gain +1 rank in that skill.
5	**Discovery:** One of your ancestors made an incredible discovery, invented something of great importance, or uncovered an ancient secret. Thanks to family lore, you have at least a rudimentary understanding of the subject of their discovery.	Increase your glory by 3.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine a Scholar skill (1–3: Culture, 4–5: Sentiment, 6–7: Government, 8–9: Medicine, 10: Theology); gain +1 rank in that skill.
6	**Ruthless Victor:** One of your ancestors claimed a bloody victory over a rival, smashing their forces with a cunning maneuver or seizing their domain after vanquishing them in battle. From this relative or their story, you learned well the importance of brute force.	Decrease your honor by 5.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine a Martial skill (1–3: Fitness, 4–5: Martial Arts [Melee], 6–7: Martial Arts [Ranged], 8: Martial Arts [Unarmed], 9: Tactics, 10: Meditation); gain +1 rank in that skill.
7	**Elevated for Service:** One of your ancestors was a jizamurai or even a commoner who served with such distinction that their position was elevated to that of a Great Clan samurai by marriage or mandate of a daimyō. As a child, you learned the basics of the skills for which they won their esteem.	Decrease your glory by 3 and increase your honor by 3.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine a Trade skill (1–3: Commerce, 4–5: Labor, 6–7: Seafaring, 8: Skulduggery, 9–10: Survival); gain +1 rank in that skill.
8	**Stolen Knowledge:** One of your ancestors learned a secret of another school and clandestinely passed it down through the ages; now, it has reached you.	Decrease your honor by 5.	You know one additional technique. Roll a ten-sided die again to determine the category (1–3: kata, 4–6: shūji, 7: ritual, 8: invocation, 9: kihō, 10: mahō or ninjutsu), and then select one technique with a prerequisite of school rank 1 and learn that technique. You can perform that technique even if it is not normally allowed by your school.
9	**Imperial Heritage:** You can trace your lineage back to the Imperial line.	Increase your status by 10.	You gain the Blessed Lineage advantage (see page 103) (this can be assigned in excess of the normal limitations on advantages at character creation).
10	**Unusual Name Origin:** Your character was not named for an ancestor—perhaps they were named for an outsider who did a great service to the clan, perhaps their name was bestowed upon them for a unique deed, or perhaps someone was trying to send a specific message in the selection of their name.	Decrease your glory by 3.	Choose two of your character's rings; you may reduce the value of one of these rings by 1 to increase the value of the other by 1 (this still cannot raise a ring above 3). If you do not do so, choose one item of rarity 6 or lower and assign it to your starting outfit.

Experience Points and Character Advancement

Over the course of play, characters gain **experience points (XP)**, which their players can spend between sessions to make the characters more potent. XP can be spent on the following character advancements:

- Increasing ring values
- Increasing skill ranks
- Purchasing techniques
- At the GM's discretion, acquiring new advantages (see page 99)

AWARDING XP

As a general guideline, GMs should award about 1 XP per hour of play. GMs can award additional XP at their discretion, as discussed in **Chapter 7: The Game Master** (see page 299).

Purchasing Advancements

The ways a character can improve themself by spending experience are collectively called **advancements**. These include ring ranks, skill ranks, and techniques.

A character may purchase any advancement by paying its listed **cost**, so long as it fits within the listed **restrictions**. **Table 2–2: Advancement Costs** provides the costs and restrictions for each advancement type.

Each character also has a **curriculum table** (see tables beginning on page 57), the collected wisdom of their school, to guide them in their specialized role. A character receives extra benefits for purchasing advancements listed there (but remember, they can buy any advancement that they're not restricted from purchasing). Note that rings are not included in any curriculum.

Costs

Each advancement types has an XP cost listed in **Table 2–2: Advancement Costs and Restrictions**. To buy an advancement, a character must pay the listed XP cost.

Restrictions and Prerequisites

Advancements also have certain restrictions, also listed in **Table 2–2: Advancement Costs and Restrictions**. A character cannot make a purchase that exceeds these restrictions.

Additionally, techniques have **prerequisites**, special requirements to that a character has to meet before they buy individual techniques. Prerequisites are listed in the same line as the technique's name, and are usually character traits such as a certain school rank or clan affiliation. To purchase a technique, a character must meet all of its prerequisites.

If a technique is listed by name or as part of a technique group for the current rank in their curriculum table (or as one of their starting techniques), it is a special exception. They can buy it without meeting the prerequisites, and it is indicated with the ◈ symbol.

ADVANCING IN A SCHOOL

Each dōjō has developed a **school curriculum** over the centuries that represents its tried-and-true method. A school curriculum consists of a set of tables, each of which corresponds to one of the first five school ranks of a character's school, and a Mastery Ability (Rank 6) that a character unlocks upon completing the first five ranks.

Completing School Ranks

To complete their current school rank, a character must spend XP on advancements listed on the curriculum table for that rank. The amount of XP to complete each school rank varies: 20 for Rank 1, 24 for Rank 2, 32 for Rank 3, 44 for Rank 4, and 60 for Rank 5. Advances that **do not** appear on the curriculum table at that rank contribute only half their XP cost.

Once a character completes a rank, their school rank increases and they move on to the next rank in their curriculum table. Further experience they spend now counts toward completing their new rank. After a character completes a rank, they do not count the XP spent to complete previous ranks as part of their progress to complete their new rank.

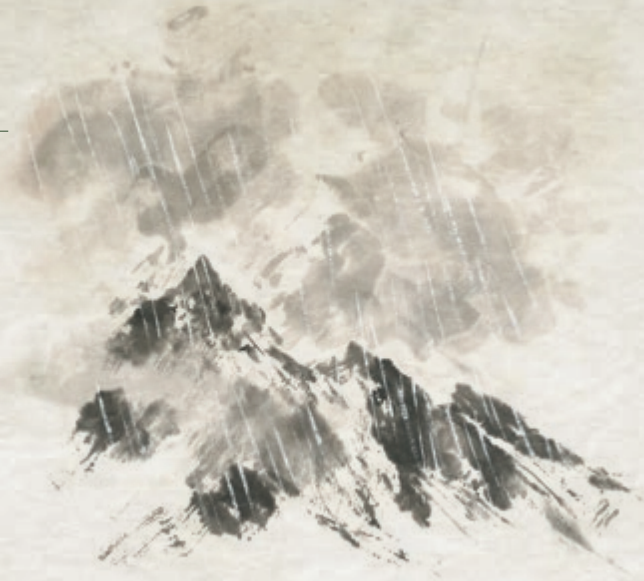
Table 2–2: Advancement Costs and Restrictions

ADVANCEMENT TYPE	COST	RESTRICTIONS
Ring value +1	3 XP x value purchased	Cannot increase a ring to a value greater than lowest ring + Void Ring. Maximum 5.
Skill rank +1	2 XP x rank purchased	Maximum 5.
Technique	3 XP, or other listed value	Category must be listed among available techniques or technique must appear on your curriculum (denoted by ◈ symbol).

CURRICULUMS AND DIVERGENCES IN ROKUGAN

Not all samurai agree with the requirements laid down by their sensei, which is why some leave to develop their own schools. Samurai are, of course, permitted to pursue other studies as they see fit, but in the school's eyes, these extracurricular pursuits are extraneous and do not count toward advancement.

By contrast, samurai might focus solely on their school's curriculum and advance through the school ranks more quickly, but in doing so, they will not have time to pursue their own interests and studies. Most samurai take a balanced approach, following the path of their school and supplementing their studies with their own hobbies and interests.



CURRICULUM RANKS

Each rank of a school curriculum requires a certain amount of XP to complete, as follows:

Rank 1: 20 XP

Rank 2: 24 XP

Rank 3: 32 XP

Rank 4: 44 XP

Rank 5: 60 XP

Spending XP in Curriculum

Any XP spent on advances that appear on one's current school rank curriculum table **fully contributes** to the current rank. Record the full value of this XP as part of the total needed to complete the current rank.

Spending XP out of Curriculum

Any XP spent on advances that do not appear on one's current school rank curriculum table (including any purchases of Ring advancements) **partially contributes** to the current rank. Record half the value of this XP (rounded up) as part of the total needed to complete the current rank.

Emily's character is a Hida Defender. She's at school rank 1, and she wants to spend 2 XP increasing her character's Martial Arts [Unarmed] skill rank to 1. Because Rank 1 of her Hida Defender curriculum lists Martial Skills (the group that includes Martial Arts [Unarmed]), her 2 XP fully contributes to reaching school rank 2. Later, she decides to spend 4 XP on increasing her Martial Arts [Unarmed] skill rank to 2. Now, she's spent a total of 6 XP out of the 20 XP she needs to spend to achieve school rank 2. If she had spent that 4 XP on a skill that does not appear on her curriculum at that rank, she would only add 2 XP to her total toward school rank 2, and would be at 4 XP out of the 20 XP she needs.

Rank Tests and Ceremonies

Some GMs prefer to require that PCs must return to their dōjō to be tested by their teachers to begin each new school rank. Others simply let PCs "rank up" immediately. See **Real World Experience versus School Secrets** for advice on these two methods.

Unlocking Mastery Abilities

Once a character finishes the fifth rank in their school, they are invited to learn its deepest mysteries. They unlock and gain a Rank 6 Mastery ability that is the capstone to the samurai's studies and allows them to unlock their true potential.

REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE VERSUS SCHOOL SECRETS

A little bit of practical experience can be as potent as years of training. Characters in any campaign should be allowed to spend their experience on skills and rings during play as they desire, as one can learn through practice no matter their circumstances.

In the fiction of the setting, a character is usually taught school secrets, like techniques, by an instructor in their school or another individual who knows the technique. Advancing to the next school rank might be a more involved process, requiring the character to undertake tests or visit specific locations and meet with particular instructors of their tradition.

In practice, many campaigns are not conducive to having characters return to their dōjō as frequently as they would like to spend experience or increase their school rank. As a result, the game's default assumption is that characters can learn techniques and increase school rank wherever they go, presumably receiving foundational methods to practice on their travels or scrolls containing deeper mysteries for them to decipher during their journeys. A character might need to return to their school to formally verify their newly elevated rank within their school from a thematic standpoint, but they can use its mechanical benefits as soon as they earn it.

If you, as a GM, want to maintain the narrative element of learning techniques and advancing school ranks, you can do so by specifying that a character must use a downtime activity to visit their dōjō or search for an NPC who knows the technique. School ranks can only be increased after visiting the proper dōjō and passing the requisite test or training under an individual who has attained a higher rank in that school. If you decide to take this route for your game, be sure that you inform your players before the game begins and provide the PCs with sufficient opportunities to spend their hard-earned experience on techniques.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Beyond their rings and skills, characters are also shaped by their advantages and disadvantages—the quirks and vulnerabilities that make them tick. Each advantage or disadvantage is assigned to a single one of the character's rings (the one to which it most commonly applies) and has one or more types and a category. Various abilities and effects interact with the different types and categories of advantages and disadvantages.

All player characters are assigned a number of advantages and disadvantages during the character creation process. They also can be assigned advantages and disadvantages in the course of play. Further, characters have the option to purchase additional passions with experience, as described on page 100.

TYPES OF ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Each advantage and disadvantage has one or more types, which describe the general sphere of activities it affects. Common types include physical, mental, interpersonal, spiritual, material, injury, curse, social, martial, fame, infamy, and scar. An advantage or disadvantage can have multiple types (such as "injury, physical" and "curse, spiritual"). Advantage and disadvantage types have no mechanical implications by default, but they are sometimes referenced by other game effects.

CATEGORIES OF ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

There are a number of categories of advantages and disadvantages, each affecting characters differently. These categories are as follows:

Distinctions

Distinctions are advantages that represent a character's natural aptitudes of body, of mind, or of character. Most distinctions apply to a narrow field of activities, as described in their entries. Distinctions are paired against adversities, and the two cancel each other if both are applied to a given check. See page 101 for a list of **Specific Distinctions**.

Each distinction has a unique narrative effect and lists the standardized mechanical effect, which applies in the circumstances described in the distinction's entry and allows the character to reroll up to two dice during **Step 4: Modify Rolled Dice**.

Passions

Passions are advantages that represent a character's interests unrelated to their purpose in life or grand desires—the little things that nonetheless bring them to life and give them solace in times of hardship. Even the most dutiful samurai can find time to pursue such an interest, for to deny all joy is to hardly live a human existence. Passions are paired against anxieties, and the two cancel each other if both are applied to a given check. See page 111 for a list of **Specific Passions**.

Each passion has a unique narrative effect and the standardized mechanical effect, which applies as described in the passion's entry.

Adversities

Adversities are disadvantages that represent the factors in a character's life that make performing the duties of a samurai more difficult, be they physical, mental, or even circumstantial. While none of these interfere in all aspects of life, deviance from the ideal is frequently questioned in wider society and might create challenges for the character in and of itself. Adversities are paired against distinctions, and the two cancel each other if both are applied to a given check. See page 116 for a list of **Specific Adversities**.

Each adversity has a unique narrative effect and the standardized mechanical effect, which applies as described in the adversity's entry.

Anxieties

All characters have fears, hatreds, or things they would simply prefer not to deal with. Anxieties are disadvantages that represent a character's notable emotional vulnerabilities. Anxieties are paired against passions, and the two cancel each other if both are applied to a given check. See page 130 for a list of **Specific Anxieties**.

Each anxiety has a unique narrative effect and the standardized mechanical effect, which applies as described in the anxiety's entry.

GAINING ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

A character gains advantages and disadvantages primarily during character creation, when they have the opportunity to gain up to three advantages and three disadvantages. However, under certain narrative circumstances, a character can acquire additional advantages and disadvantages.

Acquiring Distinctions

Distinctions cannot be acquired through training—they reflect intrinsic qualities rather than regimen and hard work—but some game effects grant distinctions, especially ones related to a character's social attributes (honor, glory, and status). As described in **Honor in Play** (see page 300) and **Glory in Play** (see page 304), a character can be granted a new distinction by reaching certain heights of valor or renown.

A character can have any number of distinctions.

Developing Passions

Usually, a character's areas of interest are fairly set by the end of character creation, but sometimes people find a new art or source of joy in the world that they wish to pursue, even late in life. At the GM's discretion, a character may spend 3 experience points to develop one new passion, determined by the GM and the player together.

A character can never have more than three passions. At the GM's discretion, a character might be able to remove a passion based on narrative events or to make room for a new one.

Acquiring Adversities

A character can acquire adversities through a number of means: injury, illness, spiritual impurity, or any of the many other wretched fates that can befall them. **Critical Strikes** (see page 269), the **Afflicted condition** (see page 271), and numerous other sources can cause characters to acquire adversities in play.

A character can have any number of adversities.

Developing Anxieties

Generally, the anxieties of a player character are set by the end of character creation. Still, if the GM and the player decide together that a character should develop an anxiety over the course of play (for example, a hatred of some new rival or a fear of some trauma), and both agree on the form it should take, they can assign a new anxiety to a character at any time. This confers limited benefits, but it might add a great deal to the story, and it does grant the character a new means to recover Void points.

A character can never have more than three anxieties. At the GM's discretion, a character might be able to remove an anxiety based on narrative events or to make room for a new one.

Using Advantages and Disadvantages in Play

In addition to their uses as described in **Chapter 1: Playing the Game**, advantages and disadvantages can apply to checks in a number of other ways.

NARRATIVE USE

Advantages and disadvantages confer certain narrative effects, some of which give players quite a bit of leeway to shape the story. Frequently, an advantage means that the character is able to do things within the scope of the narrative that others cannot, or can accomplish things more quickly. Alternatively, a disadvantage might mean a character is more limited within certain spheres. Remember, though, that most advantages have a downside somewhere, and most disadvantages confer some sort of benefit under particular circumstances.

Another way these can factor into the story is by eliminating the need for the character to make certain checks. This is meant to help a character's traits and backstory factor into the way that character behaves organically. For instance, a character who is passionate about a topic should never fail to recall a piece of trivia about that subject—nor should a blind character have to make a check to avert their eyes from a flash of light that disorients others. At other times, a character's advantage or disadvantage might cause them to make a check others don't need to make—a character's fascination with a topic might make it hard for them to research a less interesting subject, or a character's fear of a thing might mean they need to make a check to face it. The GM is the arbiter of these situations.

TURNING ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Under the wrong circumstances, even a strength can become a weakness for a character. On the other hand, sometimes even an attribute that seems like a weakness can become a source of strength for that character. Further, sometimes other characters' advantages and disadvantages play into checks that affect the character. Collectively, the set of options described here are referred to as "turning advantages and disadvantages."

- **Inverting Your Advantage:** If one of a character's advantages creates a logical vulnerability for that character on a specific check, the GM may invert that advantage, causing it to be

applied as a corresponding disadvantage for the check (a distinction becoming an adversity, or a passion becoming an anxiety, for instance). If the GM does so, the character gains 1 Void point after resolving the check.

- **Seizing a Target's Advantage:** Advantages of other characters can also be used against them sometimes. If a character's check has one or more targets, their player may choose one of the target's known advantages that logically could be a weakness for that check. If the GM agrees, the player may spend 1 Void point to seize the target's advantage, causing it to be applied as an advantage on the player's check.
- **Leveraging Your Disadvantage:** If one of a character's disadvantages creates a logical edge for that character on a specific check and the GM agrees, the player may spend 1 Void point to leverage that disadvantage, causing it to be applied as a corresponding advantage for the check (an adversity becoming a distinction, or an anxiety becoming a passion, for instance).
- **Exploiting a Target's Disadvantage:** If the check has one or more targets, the player may choose a known disadvantage of one of the targets that logically could be used against the target on that check. If the GM agrees, the player may spend 1 Void point to exploit the target's disadvantage, causing it to be applied as a corresponding advantage on the check (an adversity becoming a distinction, or an anxiety becoming a passion, for instance).

Advantages and disadvantages can be turned during **Step 4: Modify Rolled Dice**, before they are consolidated or resolved. As in all matters, the GM is the final arbiter of whether the use of an advantage or disadvantage is appropriate.

Specific Advantages

Players and GMs can work together to create advantages as they see fit (see **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 137), or use the premade advantages found in this section designed to anchor characters in the *Legend of the Five Rings* setting.

Each advantage lists the associated ring in parentheses after the name, along with its types (interpersonal, mental, physical, spiritual, etc.), description, narrative effects, and examples of checks for which it applies.

SPECIFIC DISTINCTIONS

Most distinctions represent one of a character's most visible features to the outside world: how they stand out for the better or excel in their field over and above routine training and rote drill.

Ally [Name] (Water)

Do not use my name too freely, beloved, on every teamatron and Miwaku Kabe guard. But if our connection should advantage you in court, it pleases me to think that I may open doors for you.

- A letter to Iuchi Shahai, signed only with a Chrysanthemum seal

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Ally [Name] distinction:

- You have proven yourself to a someone, who is willing to help you (within reason). They are open to sharing what they know about most topics, whether via a face-to-face meeting or written correspondence. They are also willing to arrange introductions for you with people they know.

APPROPRIATE ALLIES

Confer with the GM to select a campaign-appropriate NPC when choosing this advantage, and record this character's name in the Relationships section of your character sheet.

ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND THE NARRATIVE

Advantages and disadvantages are as much narrative hooks as they are mechanical effects. If you take something like Blissful or Bitter Betrothal, you're telling the GM you want your spouse or spouse-to-be to appear during play, because otherwise you won't have a chance to reroll dice or use the narrative effects these confer. Players and GMs should consult with one another on the advantages and disadvantages they want to use and ensure that they fit within the intended tone of the campaign, as certain choices (such as Shadowlands Taint or Momoku) can have a substantial impact on a story.

Advantages and disadvantages can encapsulate the core of your character, but they aren't meant to restrict you from adding other narrative details to your character. Complex backstories, ancestry, and relationships should exist beyond what is represented on the character sheet, and that can still guide how you roleplay your character.

- When performing a check that benefits from your close relationship with the character (such as a Courtesy [Water] check to requisition an item through them or a Sentiment [Water] check to read their emotions), you may reroll up to two dice.

Ambidexterity (Air)

The eager bandits circled the wagon. The wagon driver froze in his seat, hands raised and white as a ghost.

With a heavy sigh, the wagon's sole, unexpected passenger hopped down from the back onto the dusty road. She was as haggard and unkempt as the bandits themselves, but jammed into her makeshift belt were two fine katana. As she drew the swords with both hands, the bandits realized that they had chosen poorly.

Types: Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Ambidexterity distinction:

- As you have no dominant hand, you can compensate if your right hand is injured or lost.
- When making a check for which your equal skill with both hands is a benefit (such as a Martial Arts [Melee] [Air] check to strike an unexpected blow with a weapon in your left hand or a Skulduggery [Air] check to stealthily pick someone's pocket), you may reroll up to two dice.

Benten's Blessing (Air)

Daidoji Shingen sauntered down the gangplank from the dock to his waiting vessel, a broad smile spreading across his face. His crew gathered around their returning captain.

"We have safe harbor here, and a fine market in which to sell our cargo. Start offloading." The crew cheered, and set to work. Shingen's first mate, Hiramichi Anjiro, remained behind, scratching his head idly.

"I don't know how you managed that, Captain." Shingen winked. "Let's just say that the lady of the palace was kindly disposed toward a wayward sea captain."

Types: Interpersonal, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Benten's Blessing distinction:

- After interacting with a character for one or more scenes, you know with certainty whether they are open to your romantic aspirations or if they are categorically uninterested.
- When performing a check for which the favor of the Fortune Benten is a benefit (such as an Aesthetics [Air] check to say something insightful about a piece of art or a Courtesy [Air] check to convince someone of your positive qualities), you may reroll up to two dice.

Bishamon's Blessing (Water)

The walls of many an inn in Rokugan ring with a well-known song, "The Badger and the Stone," a ballad that tells the tale of an ancient battle far in the Great Wall of the North Mountains.

The story goes that a vicious tribe of Yobanjin were surging through a mountain pass, only to be stopped by a single nameless samurai of the Badger Clan, who called upon the Fortune Bishamon for aid and lifted an immense stone, hurling it down the walls of the pass. The mighty stone triggered an avalanche, which crushed the foreign invaders and sealed the pass forever.

Types: Physical, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Bishamon's Blessing distinction:

- You recover from physical exhaustion twice as quickly as others.
- When performing a check for which the favor of this Fortune is a benefit (such as a Fitness [Water] check to recover from exhaustion or a Martial Arts [Unarmed] [Water] check to subdue a foe), you may reroll up to two dice.

Blackmail on [Name] (Fire)

"I had hoped to find you here," Yogo Hiroue began. "It has been too long since we last spoke plainly."

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Blackmail on [Name] distinction:

- You have incriminating information on an individual, which you use to force them to help you even when doing so may damage their reputation. They will share what knowledge they have about a given person, item, location, or situation, whether through a face-to-face meeting or through written correspondence. They will also arrange for introductions with exclusive members of society or places of business. Confer with the GM to select a campaign-appropriate NPC when choosing this advantage.

- When performing a check to demand favors of the chosen individual (such as a Courtesy [Fire] check to remind them of the consequences of their disobeying you or a Command [Fire] check to order them to risk themself on your behalf), you may reroll up to two dice.

Blessed Lineage (Void)

"Perhaps you'd like to match your words with your steel," the woman growled, her hands resting upon the hilts of her swords. "You will learn a hard lesson: nobody insults Mirumoto Ohatsu with impunity."

The man she faced smiled in return.

"I certainly did not intend to offend you in any way, Ohatsu-san. Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Miya Matsuo. Perhaps you have heard of my cousin, the Imperial Herald?"

Types: Interpersonal, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Blessed Lineage distinction:

- Characters with status of 50 or higher understand that they might suffer a loss of prestige if they harm you, and thus do not choose to kill you as their first option, even if you are a political obstacle they would otherwise eliminate without hesitation.
- When performing a check for which your esteemed lineage is a benefit (such as a Command [Void] check to challenge someone's perception of a situation or a Government [Void] check to know the likelihood of a political eventuality), you may reroll up to two dice.

Blissful Betrothal (Water)

Autumn nights, it seems
Are long by repute alone:
Scarcely had we met
When morning's first light appeared,
Leaving everything unsaid.

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Blissful Betrothal distinction:

- Your spouse fulfills certain social duties in your name when you are absent (such as attending events or caring for family members), provides assistance in their areas of expertise, and offers counsel when you face a difficult decision.
- When performing a check for which your good relationship with your betrothed or spouse is a benefit (such as a Courtesy [Water] check to persuade someone from their family or clan to assist you), you may reroll up to two dice.

Daikoku's Blessing (Water)

There were few merchants in all of Rokugan who had a sharper grasp of finance and trade than the Yasuki family, leading to a reputation for being cunning and shrewd in equal measure.

Types: Interpersonal, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Daikoku's Blessing distinction:

- After spending one or more scenes in a relevant market, you can always discern whether a given commodity or service's value is going to rise or fall in the next month.
- When performing a check for which your strong financial knowledge benefits (such as a Government [Water] check to know where to acquire goods), you may reroll up to two dice.

Dangerous Allure (Fire)

Every samurai of Rokugan knows the tale of the Crimson Maiden of Jideki. It is the story of a young samurai who falls instantly in love with a beautiful dancer at a palace feast. The maiden danced into the mists of the night, and the samurai followed. She turned to him and raised her arms, calling him to embrace her, only to fade from sight as he stepped to her—and fell off the cliff overlooking the sea.

A ghost story for a cold night, perhaps—but also a lesson about the dangers of pursuing beauty alone.

Types: Physical, Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Dangerous Allure distinction:

- You always make an impression, and NPCs remember your name and face after interacting with you for one or more scenes (unless you take pains to disguise yourself).
- When performing a check for which your good looks are a benefit (such as a Command [Fire] check to get someone to act in spite of the possible consequences or a Performance [Fire] check to incite emotion in someone), you may reroll up to two dice.

Ebisu's Blessing (Earth)

Ryuichi, a poor blacksmith, entered the championship with a sword of his own making and a patchwork set of mismatched armor.

The day before he was to begin the tournament, his armor was stolen by a thief—perhaps at the behest of another competitor. Crestfallen, Ryuichi prepared to return home.

However, on the day of the tournament, he awoke to a brand new suit of armor, made by the fellow laborers to whom he had always shown kindness. Clad in his new armor, Ryuichi won the tournament that year and was made a samurai in the service of the Kaiu family.

Types: Physical, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Ebisu's Blessing distinction:

- Laborers recognize you as a kindred spirit, and characters with status 30 or lower are innately trusting of you unless you give them reason not to be.
- When performing a check for which the blessing of this Fortune is useful (such as a Commerce [Earth] check to safely transport goods or a Labor [Earth] check to plow a field), you may reroll up to two dice.

Famously Honest (Air)

Nobody thought that Hida Suzu's marriage to Kakita Hideaki was auspicious, least of all Suzu herself, who made her feelings about Crane pretentiousness quite plain on several occasions. And yet, decades later, Grandmother Suzu's time is highly sought-after in the Esteemed Palace of the Crane, for in a land of insinuation, advice one can trust without scrutiny is invaluable.

Types: Fame, Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Famously Honest distinction:

- Other people have heard of you for your honesty, and they believe you by default unless given evidence to the contrary.
- When performing a check for which you can leverage your reputation for telling the truth (such as a Command [Air] check to convince someone of a statement's veracity, or a Commerce [Air] check to sell an item at an inflated price), you may reroll up to two dice.

Famously Lucky (Void)

"A master is one who leaves their mark upon the world through their endeavors. In such undertakings, four great influences may affect the outcome: Proficiency, Preparedness, Destiny, and Luck. Despite humanity's beliefs, the greatest of these is Luck."

– Tao of Shinsei

Types: Fame, Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Famously Lucky distinction:

- Other people have heard of you for your good fortune, and they believe it by default unless given evidence to the contrary.
- When performing a check for which you need to leverage your reputation for having things turn out your way (such as a Command [Void] check to get your troops to put their faith in you utterly or a Games [Void] check to let fate decide the match), you may reroll up to two dice.

Famously Reliable (Earth)

When the lord came to see how the smith was proceeding on his sword, he found the smithy a shambles, the river running through the forge, and the smith with his robes tied up around his middle.

"Tsi-san," said the great lord. "I trust my sword will be ready tomorrow, as we agreed?"

"Of course, great lord," said the smith, bowing low. "This is only a minor setback."

– The Trials of Tsi Wenfu, *author unknown*

Types: Fame, Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Famously Reliable distinction:

- Other people have heard of you for your remarkable adherence to your oaths and responsibilities, even over and above most samurai, and they believe it by default unless given evidence to the contrary.
- When performing a check for which you need to leverage your reputation for keeping your oaths and bargains (such as a Command [Earth] check to calm a panicked soldier or a Performance [Earth] check to relate a tale that inspires patience), you may reroll up to two dice.

Famously Successful (Fire)

"Victory will make even the most honorable of samurai forget the stains of your dishonor. Seize victory and your legend will speak only of your greatness. Akodo knew this, even if he dared not put it to words."

– Bayushi Kiriko's commentary on *Leadership*

Types: Fame, Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Famously Successful distinction:

- Other people have heard of you for your ability to get results at any cost, and they believe it by default unless given evidence to the contrary.
- When performing a check for which you need to leverage your reputation for efficiency (such as a Courtesy [Fire] check to convince your lord to give you a position or a Tactics [Fire] check to get enemy troops to withdraw in the face of a show of force), you may reroll up to two dice.

Famously Wealthy (Water)

"Wealth isn't the same as money. A merchant who works hard and gets lucky can get rich, but she won't attain a reputation for wealth until she learns to spend it." Kasuga Kana picked up the barley tea and sipped, admiring the view of Friendly Traveler Village's dingy streets.

"But master, you hardly ever spend money. We made this journey on foot!"

Kana turned back to her apprentice. "We aren't merchants, Goro. Money helps us serve the Emperor, but a warm welcome in a fine inn when we arrive in town would make our real job that much harder."

Types: Fame, Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Famously Wealthy distinction:

- Other people have heard of you for your riches or ability to procure wealth, and they believe it by default unless given evidence to the contrary.
- When performing a check for which you need to leverage your reputation for access to resources (such as a Commerce [Water] check to buy goods on credit or a Courtesy [Water] check to win over a group of people), you may reroll up to two dice.

Flexibility (Water)

The door to the cell opened with a crash, and the guard stood there, dumbfounded. The prisoner, Nekoma Katsushiro, was nowhere to be seen, and the ropes that had bound him lay pooled in the center of the room.

As the guard entered the cell, he was suddenly struck on the head by a heavy wooden food bowl and slumped to the floor, unconscious.

Katsushiro dropped from where he had braced himself between the two ceiling beams, landing lightly, without a sound. "Let that be a lesson to you. Everyone knows that you can't tie up a cat."

Types: Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Flexibility distinction:

- You can fit through spaces too tight for most people, allowing you access to places others cannot reach.
- When performing a check for which your physical flexibility is a benefit (such as a Performance [Water] check to perform a dance or a Martial Arts [Unarmed] [Water] check to grapple another person), you may reroll up to two dice.

Fukurokujin's Blessing (Fire)

The Sacred Library is located at Fire Tooth Castle. It contains an untold number of ancient manuscripts, organized in a manner that only the shugenja of the Agasha family can understand. No outsiders are permitted to enter, no scrolls are permitted to leave the premises, and if any petitioner requires information held within its walls, a librarian is tasked to retrieve it for them—and then, only with the written permission of the Agasha daimyō.

Types: Mental, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Fukurokujin's Blessing distinction:

- You always know the nearest location where you can undertake research on a given subject, and can complete research in half the time it would take another character.
- When performing a check for which the blessing of this Fortune is a benefit (such as a Medicine [Fire] check to experiment with a cure for a strange new malady or a Survival [Fire] check to speculate on a creature's possible qualities based on its physiology), you may reroll up to two dice.

Indomitable Will (Earth)

The travelers cowered as the ghost, shrieking hideously, drifted toward them from the ruins of the ancient temple where they'd chosen to make camp for the night. The moonlight lent the spirit an unearthly glow, and its howls echoed in their ears as it grew ever closer.

"It is a gaki—a hungry ghost!" shouted Yogo Kikuyo, stepping between the travelers and the spirit as she rummaged through her bag.

"Are you not afraid?" shouted one of her companions, as he clutched at her waist, trying to draw her back from the wailing apparition.

"I am not," Kikuyo said, as she drew a paper ofuda talisman, inscribed with blessings, from her satchel. "I am familiar with its sort."

Types: Mental, Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Indomitable Will distinction:

- You can always choose to stand your ground, even when faced with untenable odds, supernatural terrors, or sorcerous powers that bend the minds of lesser souls.
- When performing a check for which you need to keep your cool when dealing with danger (such as a Command [Earth] check to give orders under pressure or a Meditation [Earth] check to resist the effects of fear), you may reroll up to two dice.

Jurojin's Blessing (Void)

The Order of Longevity, a sect of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, was founded in the seventh century to provide healing to people suffering during the Great Famine. The order trains its initiates in the treatment of disease, infection, and wounds, and it offers solace and shelter to those in need. Many of the order are extremely long-lived, remaining in good health long into their autumn years.

Types: Physical, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Jurojin's Blessing distinction:

- You do not contract mundane diseases, and you recover from poisons and supernatural maladies in half the time it would take someone else.
- When performing a check for which you need to survive and remain vital (such as a Fitness [Void] check to resist spiritual contamination or a Survival [Void] check to get by on bare minimum supplies), you may reroll up to two dice.

Keen Balance (Earth)

During the Obon Festival of 1120, in the City of the Open Hand, Bayushi Aramoro, the half-brother of the Scorpion Clan Champion, was challenged by a rival to a race from one side of the city to the other, as a test of how well they knew the twists and turns of the many alleys.

Aramoro watched calmly, eating an apple, as his rival broke into a run, quickly disappearing into the labyrinthine warrens of the city streets. He finished the apple, walked over to the nearest building, and scaled the wall, rapidly reaching the roof. Then, dashing across the rooftops of the city with unerring accuracy, he arrived at the agreed-upon finish line a full half an hour before his opponent.

Types: Mental, Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Keen Balance distinction:

- When moving across treacherous terrain (such as rooftops or the rigging of a ship), as long as nobody is hindering you, you do not fall.
- When performing a check for which your balance is a benefit (such as a Fitness [Earth] check to resist being knocked down or moved or a Seafaring [Earth] check to withstand getting seasick during a storm), you may reroll up to two dice.

Keen Hearing (Air)

Kakita Toshimoko crept silently across the darkened bedchamber, bearing his katana in one hand. With the other, he reached out and gently shook the sleeping form of Doji Hotaru, the Crane Clan Champion. Immediately, she was awake and reaching for the blade at her bedside.

Toshimoko quickly raised his finger to his lips, bidding her to keep silent. She nodded, and rose from the bed, drawing her sword. Toshimoko leaned forward, so that Hotaru alone could hear him whisper.

"The castle has been breached." He cocked his head slightly. "Five, clothed lightly, on the roof." He moved his head slowly, focusing on sounds that only he could hear. "One of them is carrying a kusari-gama. Its chain rattles slightly."

"Shinobi," Hotaru breathed.

Types: Physical, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Keen Hearing distinction:

- You can hear noises that others do not detect, and you can assess your environment by sound alone. Even in darkness, you can accurately pinpoint the location of people and other moving objects in your immediate vicinity.
- When performing a check for which you need to hear soft, distant, or subtle noises (such as a Courtesy [Air] check to eavesdrop at a distance where you are not noticed or a Survival [Air] check to listen to an animal's movement before springing a trap), you may reroll up to two dice.

Keen Sight (Water)

Kitsuki Yuikimi walked slowly around the corpse of Lady Shimada, three times, pausing briefly several times on her way. Magistrate Koshigi grew more impatient with each passing moment.

"Well, as you can see, your time has been wasted here," the magistrate rumbled. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to have a message sent to Lord Shimada that his wife has passed away…"

"Murdered," muttered Yuikimi.

"Excuse me?"

"Lady Shimada did not pass away; she was murdered. I spotted a slight discoloration of her thumbs. I think you'll find that the letter there on her desk is the cause. The paper has been soaked in a rare poison—it left the discoloration on the tips of her thumbs when she held the paper to read…like so." She pantomimed a demonstration, holding an imaginary letter before her.

"How in the world did you spot that?" Koshigi asked, amazed.

"I looked," said Yuikimi.

Types: Physical, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Keen Sight distinction:

- You can spot details of objects at a much greater distance than others can, and you pick up on small visual details that others might overlook.
- When performing a check for which you need to spot details or see things at a distance (such as an Aesthetics [Water] check to spot minor details in an art piece or a Martial Arts [Ranged] [Water] check to hit a faraway target), you may reroll up to two dice.

Keen Smell (Fire)

The bandits had been plaguing the village of Nemuro for several weeks, striking at random and disappearing back into the forest. The villagers had asked their lord for aid, and Hiruma Kogoe, the famed archer and tracker, was dispatched.

Kogoe led a handful of brave villagers into the woods to put an end to the bandit problem once and for all. Several hours into the forest, she held her hand up, motioning for the group to come to a halt.

"Got them. They're in a camp, two…" She sniffed the air. "…two and a half miles east of here. The fools lit a cooking fire."

Types: Physical, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Keen Smell distinction:

- You always remember scents you have experienced before, and you can identify by smell things that others would certainly overlook.
- When performing a check for which you need to use your sense of smell (such as a Labor [Fire] check to experiment with a new recipe or a Survival [Fire] check to determine if a plant is poisonous based on its smell), you may reroll up to two dice.

Karmic Tie (Void)

She walked over one thousand li, slept in shrines or under farmer's carts, ate millet and drank nothing but well-water. Bit by bit, she sold her finery and what few jewels she had, even the sandals from her feet, until all she had were her swords and a kimono dusty from the road.

Mirumoto Kanako came at last to the castle of her soul's twin. How she longed to finally lay eyes on this person who held half her self in their heart.

Types: Interpersonal, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Karmic Tie distinction:

- You have a supernatural tie with another character of your choosing, and as if you had a sixth sense, you can tell when the character to whom you are karmically tied is in danger or has died. You always know the general direction they are located in, even if they are separated from you by thousands of *li*.
- When performing a check to act on behalf of the one with whom you share a bond (such as a Composition [Void] check to express your truest feelings in a poem or a Martial Arts [Melee] [Void] check to fight on their behalf), you may reroll up to two dice.

Kisshōten's Blessing (Water)

Children in Rokugan are welcomed into the world with the reverence given to an old friend, for indeed, one never knows the child's past life identity.

Types: Physical, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Kisshōten's Blessing distinction:

- Children enjoy being around you and are much more receptive to your demands. Your own children (if you have any) are particularly blessed with health, beauty, happiness, and luck.
- When performing a check for which you need to communicate with children (such as a Command [Water] check to order them around or a Performance [Water] check to entertain them), you may reroll up to two dice.

Large Stature (Earth)

Many children's stories feature tales of giants. They are said to live in distant lands, but none have ever been seen in Rokugan. If you were to ask the children of the City of Remembrance, however, they would swear that they have one in their town.

Isonashi, a samurai who serves the governor of the city, stands nearly double the height of an average man and is easily three times as broad. He wields an immense naginata built specifically for his size. If he is not a giant, he's the closest thing to one anyone in Rokugan has ever seen.

Types: Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Large Stature distinction:

- You can easily reach objects on high shelves, are easy to spot in a crowd, can see over other people, and tend to hit your head on doorways.
- When performing a check for which you can take advantage of your size (such as a Fitness [Earth] check to hold up a heavy object or a Labor [Earth] check to build the frame of a house), you may reroll up to two dice.

Paragon of a Bushidō Tenet (Various)

"The heroes of myth—even the ones who were not of divine blood—did not live as humans do. It is impossible to embody an ideal without surpassing some part of your own humanity."

Types: Mental, Virtue
Pick One: Compassion (Water), Courage (Fire), Courtesy (Air), Duty and Loyalty (Earth), Honor (Void), Righteousness (Void), Sincerity (Void). A character may have multiple instances of this advantage for different tenets. Each tenet (Paragon of Courage, Paragon of Courtesy, etc.) counts as a separate advantage, and a character may have more than one such advantage.
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Paragon of a Bushidō Tenet distinction:

- You believe utterly in the chosen Bushidō tenet, and others instinctively discern that your actions are genuine when you act in accordance with it.
- When performing a check for which you need to convince others of, or leverage your faith in, the Bushidō tenet (such as a Performance check to recount a tale that impresses its importance upon others or a Martial Arts [Melee] check to take up arms for this cause), you may reroll up to two dice.

Precise Memory (Earth)

The great libraries of the Phoenix Clan's Asako family are home to a specialized group of scholars, renowned across Rokugan for their tremendous natural talent for memorization. The Asako Loremasters train in a special school, sharpening their skills in research and delving into multiple topics in order to intuit the connections between different fields of study. This practice gives them a nearly unique ability to grasp the connections between apparently unrelated bits of information.

The Asako Libraries are a priceless repository of knowledge, home to an unrivaled collection of original manuscripts, yet the minds of the scholars themselves are the greatest prize found within its walls.

Types: Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Precise Memory distinction:

- You can recall anything you have read or heard within the current game session exactly, and you often dredge up older facts with much greater ease than others.
- When performing a check for which you must recall details precisely (such as a Games [Earth] check to recall the opening moves of a classic defensive strategy in shōgi or a Government [Earth] check to remember the specifics of a historical event), you may reroll up to two dice.

Quick Reflexes (Fire)

The duelist Bayushi Eiya, known as the Artist of Death, is renowned for three things: One: his intricate mask, said by some to cover a small scar that marks his only defeat and by others to conceal nothing at all. Two: his ruthless sword—his dueling style inflicts maximum punishment upon his opponent before delivering the final stroke. And three: the speed of his attack. A great calligrapher, he was inspired by the quick movements of his brush, each stroke seeming to seek out lines on its own. He transferred his art to the movement of his blade, and now possesses a fluid and terrible grace.

Types: Physical, Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Quick Reflexes distinction:

- At the start of each scene, you can always grab an item within reach or reposition it a few paces within your environment. The GM is the final arbiter of how much you can prepare or how much distance you can achieve before the rest of the scene begins.
- When performing a check for which you must act swiftly (such as a Meditation [Fire] check to generate initiative during a duel or a Survival [Fire] check to put together a makeshift weapon), you may reroll up to two dice.

Seasoned (Void)

"If you're here to stop me, you're wasting your time. I've made up my mind," said Aika.

"Stop you?" Yayoi smiled. "I'm not here to stop you. If this is the course your heart has set, I know I can't divert it. I stood on this road once, and I'll walk it again with you today."

Aika took her aunt's traveling pack and placed it on the horse. "I'll be making a fast pace, and I can't afford to be slowed by distractions or longwinded stories. If you fall behind, I'm leaving you."

Yayoi smiled. "Of course. Let's make haste then. I have an old friend who can ferry us to Broken Wave City, and perhaps beyond."

Types: Mental, Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Seasoned distinction:

- You are older and more worldly than most of your fellows and have learned a few things along the way. While you do not start with additional experience, your experience expenditures might reflect "revealing" aspects of yourself you have held back to avoid overshadowing your younger companions. You have met members of many cultures and organizations, and you know how to properly behave in almost any city in Rokugan—and perhaps even beyond. You also know many other older people, and the number and variety of your acquaintances often surprises your younger companions.
- When performing a check for which your hard-earned wisdom is an advantage (such as a Courtesy [Void] check to impart wisdom to an impetuous comrade or a Theology [Void] check to intuit whether a spirit will appreciate your offering), you may reroll up to two dice.

Sixth Sense (Void)

It is said that the Kuni Witch Hunters of the Crab Clan, tasked with hunting down mahō-tsukai and other servants of the Shadowlands that operate within the Empire, have the ability to sense the presence of ghosts, spirits, and other supernatural beings. The Witch Hunters keep the Empire pure of the Taint of the Shadowlands, and they have been granted authority to execute mahō-tsukai and other practitioners of blood magic at their sole discretion—at least within Crab lands.

Types: Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Sixth Sense distinction:

- You have an instinctive sense of supernatural beings, and you can feel the presence of spirits and similar entities even when they have not chosen to reveal themselves. This feeling is ominous in the presence of beings with evil intentions and neutral when the beings are simply going about their business as usual.
- When performing a check for which you need to follow your hunches (such as a Meditation [Void] check to generate initiative during a duel or a Theology [Void] check to detect a snarl in the invisible threads of the universe), you may reroll up to two dice.

Small Stature (Air)

In the cities of Rokugan, there is a rumor of a clan of shinobi known as the Urchins, named for their practice of recruiting and training only those who might easily pass as children to an untrained eye. Witnesses to the assassination in 1102 of Lord Matsu Goden said that his assailants were a group of children who then disappeared into the city streets, which only served to fuel the rumor.

Types: Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Small Stature distinction:

- You can fit into small spaces, can hide behind other people, are hard to spot in a crowd, and sometimes need assistance reaching objects on high shelves.
- When performing a check for which being small is helpful (such as a Fitness [Air] check to resist a critical strike by evading or a Skulduggery [Air] check to pick someone's pocket), you may reroll up to two dice.

Subtle Observer (Air)

The lady of the house poured the tea, turning the cups and performing all the rituals in perfect accord with tradition. When she had finished, Kaitaro bowed low. "My deepest apologies," he said. "If I had realized you were in mourning I would not have trespassed on your hospitality. I had no idea you were so intimate with your brother's wife."

Types: Interpersonal, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Subtle Observer distinction:

- You can understand the cues that people give off while speaking, and you can read people's lips and facial expressions to understand what they are saying, even if you cannot hear them.
- When performing a check for which you need to spot or use small details of other people nearby (such as a Courtesy [Air] check to reveal an unpleasant truth pleasantly or a Sentiment [Air] check to detect someone else's weaknesses), you may reroll up to two dice.

Support of [One Group] (Water)

Akodo Emi avoided the rōnin's stroke narrowly, sweeping at his feet to gain distance. He was good, yet she could beat him. But not quickly, and time was her true enemy tonight.

Suddenly, a hail of slingstones clattered across the ground near the rōnin's feet. Down the street rushed several figures wearing the Mon of the Sparrow.

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Support of [One Group] distinction:

- You have proven yourself to a particular group, which is willing to help you when doing so will not damage its reputation. Its members will offer you their hospitality, including meals, a place to rest, and medical attention if they have a healer. They will also grant you access to their other facilities, such as libraries, smithies, or stables. Confer with the GM to select a campaign-appropriate group when choosing this advantage.
- When performing a check to interact with the members of the chosen group that relies on your rapport (such as a Command [Water] check to issue them orders or a Performance [Water] check to cause an audience of them to desire something), you may reroll up to two dice.

SPECIFIC PASSIONS

A passion is not a character's purpose in life, but many passions reflect the smaller interests that make life worth living.

Animal Bond (Earth)

The rat ran down the length of the dungeon corridor until it came to the cell at the end. Clenched in its mouth was an iron ring, from which hung several keys.

"Good boy, Genki," said Sorata, stretching his fingers out beneath the heavy wooden door of his cell. "Give them here. The innkeeper should have donated that meal to me, to give luck to his establishment! Imagine! Calling the magistrate. On me!"

The rat pushed the keys within reach, and Sorata pulled them quickly beneath the door. "Yes, yes," Sorata continued as the rat squeaked. "I'm sure I have a few crumbs of cheese for you. Just give me a moment."

Types: Interpersonal, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Animal Bond passion:

- Reciprocating your interest, a small, mundane animal of some kind has attached itself to you. Choose one silhouette 0 or 1 animal; it follows you around wherever you go and generally acts as your companion. It can be cajoled to do what you want, but it might need incentives (usually food) to perform difficult tasks on demand. If you are granted an animal as part of your starting outfit, that animal can be your companion (regardless of the usual size restrictions).
- After performing a check to interact with an animal (such as a Medicine [Earth] check to mend its injuries or a Survival [Earth] check to calm it), you remove 3 strife.

Armament (Earth)

"The craftsmanship on this truly is exquisite," Ikoma Eiji said, examining the spear on the table before him. The weapon had an eight-foot shaft of strong wood, surmounted by a two-foot blade carved with intricate symbols.

"Great Fortunes! Do you realize what this is? These carvings…" he ran his finger along the crest engraved into the metal of the blade. "This is Kotoku, the ancestral weapon of the Daidoji family!"

Types: Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Armament passion:

- Unless the piece comes from outside of the Emerald Empire, you know the name of any weapon or piece of armor you encounter, are aware of its function, and have a rudimentary understanding of how to equip and wield it.
- After performing a check to make or study arms or armor (such as a Smithing [Earth] check to polish a suit of armor or a Tactics [Earth] check to know how to arrange a proper spear formation), you remove 3 strife.

Brushwork (Air)

There are few arts more respected in Rokugan than those of the calligrapher and painter. The grace and precision of the brush, able to capture life or thought upon paper, is a discipline that few master.

The greatest practitioners of the brush are revered for more than just the works they produce; they are admired for their mastery of self, the inward focus on achievement through great effort.

Types: Mental, Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Brushwork passion:

- You can identify the signature styles of numerous different schools and individual artists, as well as common motifs and techniques.
- After performing a check to study or practice brushwork (such as an Aesthetics [Air] check to assess a painting's qualities and artist or a Composition [Air] check to add the finishing touches to a letter written in calligraphy), you remove 3 strife.

Curiosity (Fire)

"A curious mind is a blessing. Yet, one should be careful, when following the object of one's whims of the moment, that the object does not become like the shining lure used to catch fish in a river. The fish who chases the lure ends up over rice."

– Analects of Nabeshima

Types: Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Curiosity passion:

- The first time you attempt a new task and fail, you always think of another route you could take to try to overcome or learn more about the problem.
- After performing a check to seek answers to an intriguing question (such as a Medicine [Fire] check to create a new chemical concoction or a Theology [Fire] check to try to determine the metaphysical underpinnings of a particular kami's behavior), you remove 3 strife.

Daredevil (Fire)

"Those who fear to act have already failed.
Lose your fear, and gain the world."

–Tao of Shinsei

Types: Mental, Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Daredevil passion:

- You can risk your life without consideration or hesitation, even if the potential consequences are obvious and dire.
- After performing a check to risk your life (such as a Fitness [Fire] check to resist a critical strike or a Games [Fire] check to win a contest in a flashy and physically risky way), you remove 3 strife.

Enlightenment (Void)

For some, the Tao of Shinsei is like a road map left by the great teacher but written in a code that must be deciphered. For others, it is a process of abandoning the self and freeing the soul of all illusions, to see the universe as it is. Yet others claim that there is no Enlightenment, only an endless process of insight and awakening, an opening of doors that only lead to more doors to be opened: the goal is the journey itself.

Types: Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Enlightenment passion:

- You feel no attachment to mundane items and earthly titles; you cannot be tempted with material wealth or the promise of power.
- After performing a check to detach yourself from material concerns (such as a Meditation [Void] check to contemplate your place in the universe or a Survival [Void] check to exist in harmony with your environment), you remove 3 strife.

Fashion (Fire)

Akodo Fudai stood before the polished mirror as the tailors worked around him, wheeling and turning like birds in a flock. Silk was layered upon silk, and patterned with fine brocade etching out flowers and trees. It was a flattering effect, and he would be certain to cut a dashing figure at the Crane's Winter Court.

I despise the Crane, he thought, but even I must admit, they know how to make a fine kimono.

Types: Interpersonal, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Fashion passion:

- You always know the current trends in your home region, and you can identify what is in vogue (and how to take advantage of that fact) in a new place after spending one or more scenes there.
- After performing a check to interact with clothes, jewelry, or other worn works of art (such as a Culture [Fire] check to theorize about what others might wear at the next Winter Court or a Design [Fire] check to create a stunning work), you remove 3 strife.

Fortune-Telling (Void)

"For the second time this month, the constellation of the Flying Carp was obscured by a darkness without apparent source, and the moon appeared to have a golden cast to its light, with the Five Sisters glowing brightly directly above. This portends misfortune. Any child born under this inauspicious sign will surely come to a sad end."
– From the diary of Imperial Astrologer Seppun Seimei

Types: Mental, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Fortune-Telling passion:

- You can identify any common portents (such as constellations and other stellar phenomena, the cracks in oracle bones, the appearance of certain animals, and various other signs of things to come), along with their implications for the future.
- After performing a check to discern the future (such as a Survival [Void] check to look for small omens in your earthly environs or a Theology [Void] check to perform a divination by reading the stars), you remove 3 strife.

Generosity (Water)

During the sixth month of the year after the biannual collection of taxes, the city of Ryokō Owari Toshi celebrates the Days of Generosity. As the festival begins, the head priest of the local temple draws a name in a lottery. The person whose name is drawn becomes "King of Generosity" and "rules" over the festival.

The festival is marked by gift giving and drunkenness. The festival king decides who the best gift giver is on each of the celebration's three days. That person receives a portion of the "king's purse," a collection of coins given to the festival king to pay him for blessing the giver with a prosperous year ahead.

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Generosity passion:

- You can always identify a proper gift for a particular person that does not risk giving offense or slighting them publicly.
- After performing a check to acquire or give a gift (such as a Design [Water] check to select an item that complements someone's wardrobe or a Commerce [Water] check to find and select a gift at a market), you remove 3 strife.

Gossip (Air)

The courts of Rokugan are a battlefield as deadly as any in war. The weapons are rumor, and innuendo, and sharpened tongues. The wrong word in the right ear can spell the end of a career, a loss of standing, or even a loss of life.

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Gossip passion:

- At the start of each scene, you can always identify the character present who will know the juiciest rumors (besides yourself, obviously).
- After performing a check to spread or receive rumors (such as a Courtesy [Air] check to cast someone in a certain light when telling a story about them or a Culture [Air] check to read people's current anxieties from the subtle ways they obey or break etiquette), you remove 3 strife.

History (Earth)

"A samurai is no more than the sum of their memories; an Empire no more than the sum of its history."
– Analects of Nabeshima

Types: Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the History passion:

- After a short time spent studying it, you can discern the era and context of any object, structure, or text you encounter—or else you know for certain that no chronicler of the Emerald Empire has encountered this thing before.
- After performing a check to remember a historical anecdote (such as a Government [Earth] check to draw parallels to past events or a Smithing [Earth] check to know about past uses of and trends in the creation of tools and artifacts), you remove 3 strife.

Ikebana (Water)

The art of flower arranging is practiced by many nobles of Rokugan. It is considered a subtle and beautiful form of expression, one that follows traditions and methods that go back centuries.

The art reaches its zenith in the creation of a story garden, in which an ikebana master carefully arranges flowers to relate a particular tale, which unfolds for the visitor as they wander the garden paths.

Types: Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Ikebana passion:

- You can always identify a plant by any of its parts, and you know its physical properties and its *hanakotoba* ("language of flowers") meaning.
- After performing a check related to flower arrangement (such as an Aesthetics [Water] check to rearrange or improve an ikebana piece or a Survival [Water] check to acquire flowers from a marketplace), you remove 3 strife.

Playfulness (Air)

The warriors had been drinking most of the evening. It had been a long day, and the respite was welcome.

Todoma, the largest of the group and well in his cups, clumsily laid his sword upon the table they shared, knocking over a few drinks in the process. Over the sounds of protest, he declared. "From this day forward, I shall call my blade 'Heaven Cutter'!"

Oriko slapped her friend on the back and replied "Oh? You should hear what it calls you!" The assembled warriors roared with laughter, which, in the end, even Todoma joined.

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Playfulness passion:

- When you say something untoward to someone of lower or equal status, they write it off as your playful nature instead of being significantly angered or saddened by it.
- After performing a check to gently mock or chide someone (such as a Composition [Air] check to find the parts of a rival's poem that you can echo with parody in your next piece or a Courtesy [Air] check to tease someone with a clever pun on their name), you remove 3 strife.

Provocation (Fire)

A popular pastime at Winter Court, the game of Sadane is a test of quick thinking and sharp tongues in which two contestants take turns exchanging politely worded insults. Each insult must be a new contribution to the argument; no repetitions or thematic restatements are permitted. The criticisms continue until one participant admits defeat or merely is at a loss for words. Losing one's temper is considered a major breach of etiquette, as is saying anything overtly impolite.

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Provocation passion:

- You can always identify a point of sensitivity that you can push upon in another person—though not whether they will take your comment as slightly aggressive banter or a grave insult.
- After performing a check to get a rise out of someone (such as a Courtesy [Fire] check to call someone by an aggravating nickname or a Command [Fire] check to get a group of soldiers passionate and angry enough to storm an enemy position), you remove 3 strife.

Sake (Water)

In the lands of the Crane Clan, the village of Sakura no Yuki famously brews a very rare sake, known as Cherry Blossom Snow. Despite its flawless clarity, this sake features the subtle scent and flavor of cherries. The recipe for producing it is a closely guarded secret known only to the master brewers of the village and the daimyō of the Asahina family, on whose land the village lies.

Types: Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Sake passion:

- You can identify regional variations in sake and other alcohol, and you know a great deal about the various processes involved in making sake. It takes you twice as much alcohol as it does anyone else to become intoxicated.
- After performing a check to interact with the fine art of fermented beverages (such as a Courtesy [Water] check to serve alcohol according to proper procedure in a social setting or a Labor [Water] check to ferment rice), you remove 3 strife.

Secrets (Void)

There is no thrill to compare to having a secret. It's a thrill so delicious, it must be shared, for what is the purpose of knowing what no one else knows, if no one knows you know it? Especially in an Empire as concerned with seeming and public face as Rokugan, secrets are both currency and delight to many in the courts.

Types: Mental, Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Secrets passion:

- You never forget a secret you have heard, and you instinctively know if something you have heard is common knowledge or information someone wants concealed (even if you do not know who or why).
- After performing a check to acquire or preserve a secret (such as a Meditation [Void] check to resist efforts to pry a secret from you or a Sentiment [Void] check to have a hunch about whether someone is concealing a dreadful secret), you remove 3 strife.

Stories (Earth)

A person with the ability to weave a tale by a fireside will often find that they need no coin for food or drink, and, if the stories are particularly good, an innkeeper may offer a room (or at least a bale of hay in the stable) in return for entertaining the customers for an evening. A storyteller must be careful to choose the right stories for a particular audience, however. Tales considered by the locals to be scandalous or insulting may result in the necessity of a quick exit.

Types: Mental, Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Stories passion:

- You can recall any story you have been told, including the details that others would gloss over or forget.
- After performing a check to recall or tell a story (such as a Performance [Earth] check to spin a tale to hearten comrades or a Theology [Earth] check to recite a passage from the Tao of Shinsei or Akodo's *Leadership* that is applicable to your situation), you remove 3 strife.

Tea (Void)

"Without the bastions of civility that are teahouses, the Empire would surely collapse into chaos."
– Kakita Yoshi, Daimyō of the Kakita Family

Types: Physical, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Tea passion:

- You can identify regional variations in tea, and you know a great deal about the process of preparing and drying leaves. In the wilderness, you can acquire the natural ingredients required to make rustic teas of various sorts with relative ease.
- After performing a check to interact with tea (such as a Medicine [Void] check to brew a tea with ingredients that help the body recover from illness or a Performance [Void] check to perform a tea ceremony that helps the recipients contemplate their state in life), you remove 3 strife.

Travel (Water)

The old man sat heavily on the stool outside the constabulary office. He removed his straw hat, wiped his brow with his sleeve, and returned the hat to his head. His eyes, shaded by the wide brim, looked out at Yūka. The young girl smiled.

"Young lady, I have been from one side of Rokugan to the other—from Khanbulak to the Islands of Silk and Spice—and I have seen amazing sights. I will tell you this: in all my travels, I have become convinced of three things." He counted them off on gnarled fingers. "All crows are black, it always rains when you don't want it to, and Rokugan's greatest treasure—a prize without equal—is its people."

Types: Mental, Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Travel passion:

- You are not unsettled by foreign customs, and you can comfortably fit in even in strange environments.
- After performing a check to travel to a new location or interact with a novel thing (such as a Survival [Water] check to try to identify a new plant, animal, or phenomenon, or a Seafaring [Water] check to travel by boat), you remove 3 strife.

Specific Disadvantages

Players and GMs should feel free to create disadvantages as they see fit (see **Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 137), and this section provides a number of premade disadvantages designed to anchor characters in the *Legend of the Five Rings* setting.

Each disadvantage lists the attached ring in parentheses after the name, along with its types (interpersonal, mental, physical, etc.), description, narrative effects, and example checks for which it applies.

SPECIFIC ADVERSITIES

Adversities are things that make your character's life more difficult. Most are a result of your character's circumstances, and they are often beyond their control.

Each adversity has a unique narrative effect and lists the standardized mechanical effect, which applies in the circumstances described in the disadvantage. When an adversity applies to a task a character is trying to accomplish, during **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, the character's player must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ⟲ symbols (if results with these symbols in the pool). After resolving the check, if the character failed, they gain 1 Void point.

Benten's Curse (Air)

One of the more popular tales of the rakugoka, the professional storytellers of Rokugan, is that of the Artless Artist. A comedic tale, it is the story of a court artist who was utterly lacking in any genuine talent and had such an unpleasant demeanor that nobody would ever love him. The telling of the tale varies from performance to performance, with the rakugoka spinning unique and outrageous recountings of the artist's misadventures tailored to the tastes of their particular audience.

Types: Interpersonal, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Benten's Curse adversity:

- Your romantic efforts are always stymied by circumstances, and your gestures to get the romantic attention of others are usually misinterpreted.

Wordplay (Air)

The language of Rokugan is particularly suited for wordplay. Words that sound alike can have different meanings depending on the character used to write them, and they can sound close to other words altogether, allowing for puns of intricately layered complexity. On top of that, Rokugani poets play with symbolism, metaphor, and simile, adding another layer of meaning. Crafting a clever construction of verbal legerdemain is a prized skill, and one that can ensure one's favor in the right circles.

Types: Interpersonal, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Wordplay passion:

- You can always identify rhetorical and literary patterns in the works of others when reading or listening to them.
- After performing a check to interpret or create a play on words (such as a Composition [Air] check to write a poem with a perfectly executed poetic pun or a Performance [Air] check to subtly imply something to your audience via a double meaning), you remove 3 strife.

- When you make a check to express your admiration to someone (such as an Aesthetics [Air] check to find the right poem to read to express your feelings or a Courtesy [Air] check to tell someone your feelings without exceeding propriety), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ◯. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Bishamon's Curse (Water)

"A straightforward samurai is a well-honed blade, valued for its purity of purpose and dependability when called upon. A blunt samurai, however, is like a blunt blade: valued by none, and never called upon; left as only a reminder of its former utility."

–Akodo's *Leadership*

Types: Physical, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Bishamon's Curse adversity:

- You find it very difficult to lift heavy objects, and it takes you twice as long as others to regain your stamina after hard labor.
- When you make a check that relies on recovering quickly (such as a Fitness [Water] check to recover from exhaustion or the Gravely Wounded condition or a Martial Arts [Unarmed] [Water] check to train for an extended period of time), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ◯. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Bitter Betrothal (Water)

"My husband returns home tonight," she said in a low whisper, passing the bag of coins beneath the table to the men seated across from her. Nobody in this inn knew her face, yet she still felt the need for caution. "He will be traveling via the eastern road."

"It shall be done," said the leader. Without further word, he and his companions rose from the table and left the inn. The room seemed somehow lighter without them in it.

Soon, she would be rid of him.

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Bitter Betrothal adversity:

- Something significantly complicates your relationship with your betrothed or spouse. As a result, they often undermine your efforts, whether out of malice, negligence, or an incompatible set of goals.
- When you make a check that requires the collaboration of your betrothed or spouse (such as a Courtesy [Water] check to make a polite request to their family for political backing or a Culture [Water] check to know the proper thing to do at a social function involving their relatives), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ◯. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Blackmailed by [Character's Name] (Air)

"I know of your misdeeds," the letter simply said. Otomo Kotsuyone laughed, knowing the would-be blackmailer was surely listening. "My memory dims somewhat, the older I get. Would you care to remind me which ones?"

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Blackmailed by [Character's Name] adversity:

- Someone has incriminating information on you, which they use to try and force you to help them even when doing so may damage your reputation. You must share with them what knowledge you have about a given person, item, location, or situation, whether through a face-to-face meeting or through written correspondence. You must also arrange for introductions on their behalf with exclusive members of society or places of business.
- When performing a check to evade complying with the character who is blackmailing you (such as a Courtesy [Air] check to nominally tell them what they want without giving away key pieces of information or a Performance [Air] check to pretend as though you will go through with something they have demanded of you), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ◯. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Blindness (Water)

Though Muika could not see the faces of the Shosuro's guests, she could tell by their voices whether or not they had been truly invited. It was a perfect arrangement for the spymaster.

Types: Physical, Scar
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Blindness adversity:

- You are unable to see out of either eye. Your lack of sight does not mean you cannot perceive your surroundings (using your other senses), but you cannot observe things that can be perceived only by sight.
- When you make a check for which sight is an asset that cannot easily be replaced by other senses (such as a Sentiment [Water] check to identify someone's hostile intentions from across a noisy room or a Martial Arts [Ranged] [Water] check to hit a moving target with an arrow), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Bluntness (Air)

"You look terrible, my lord."

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Bluntness adversity:

- You have difficulty expressing things indirectly, and you overlook insinuations and implications in the statements of others unless they are pointed out to you directly.
- When you make a check to create or interpret subtext (such as a Design [Air] check to select a wardrobe that conveys the proper subtle message to your intended recipient or a Sentiment [Air] check to read someone's unstated feelings), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Clumsiness (Fire)

"Oh my. I am terribly sorry, sir."

Kitsune Sōren tried in vain to help brush piles of shrimp and noodles in chili oil from the kimono of the disturbingly large Crab Clan samurai while desperately trying to recall the man's name.

"I didn't see the server there, you see, and I'm afraid that I rose at the wrong moment, and…"

The Crab samurai stood, towering over the Fox Clan samurai. Noodles hung from his hair.

"Oh, my."

Types: Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Clumsiness adversity:

- You are physically imprecise when dealing with tasks that require notable dexterity (or any physical task, really). At the GM's discretion, you periodically drop items, make a mess of precise crafting efforts, or slip and fall onto people.
- When you make a check that requires precise motor skills (such as a Fitness [Fire] check to vault over an obstacle or a Design [Fire] check to create an intricate piece of jewelry), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Cognitive Lapses (Void)

There are cases of samurai who have suffered a killing blow to the head, yet recovered, who are changed by the experience. Some display all manner of odd behaviors, such as forgetting old skills or acquaintances, or dramatic shifts in taste and perception. Others lose themselves, suffering gaps in their memory where the part of themselves they've lost takes control of their bodies.

In very few of these instances is the culprit an evil spirit who has slipped in through a wound or because of the Shadowlands Taint. Still, one must be vigilant.

– *Medicine* by Agasha Shio

Types: Mental, Scar
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Cognitive Lapses adversity:

- At the GM's discretion, you sometimes lose your ability to focus or think consciously. Your body continues to act during these times according to your general instincts, and it does not undertake actions you would not consciously perform, but you do not form coherent memories of these times. After you suffer such a lapse that lasts for more than a few brief moments at the GM's choice, you gain 1 Void point.

- When you make a check for which you must recall anything that happened during a period of cognitive lapse (such as a Meditation [Void] check to understand your past decisions or a Sentiment [Void] check to guess what you might have said to someone based on their reaction to you), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Daikoku's Curse (Water)

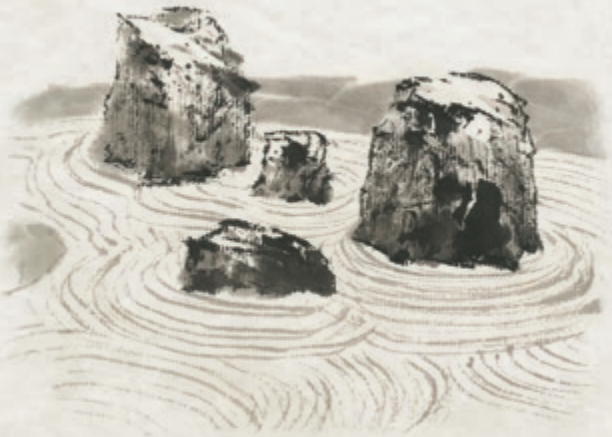
Daidoji Shingen let Hiramichi Anjiro lean a bit heavier upon him as they worked their way through the narrow streets back to the docks where their ship was berthed. The first mate was drunk, and although the captain would normally have let him sleep it off, Shingen felt that perhaps it was better to begin their departure. No one in the gambling den could have possibly thought that they had any money left between them, but it never hurt to be careful.

"I still can't believe it, Anjiro-kun. I have never seen anybody lose like that before. Do you realize the odds on that last roll? You literally only had one way to lose, and yet you found it. You are a veritable Oracle of Misfortune."

Anjiro only sighed.

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Daikoku's Curse adversity:

- When you gamble or speculate on the value of goods, even if you receive short-term gains, events conspire such that you always end up as poor (if not poorer) as when you started.
- When you make a check to gain or preserve wealth (such as a Commerce [Water] check to haggle for a good price on an item or a Skulduggery [Water] check to find a fence for stolen items), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.



Damaged Heart or Organ (Earth)

"My lord, your heart!"

Akodo Yasuteru shook the servant's hand from his shoulder. He could cut the man down for daring to touch him. A younger Yasuteru might have done so. But he was so tired. He sat.

Types: Physical, Scar
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Damaged Heart or Organ adversity:

- Your heart or another vital organ is weak due to physical trauma or illness, and you can only engage in strenuous activity for half as long as other characters before needing to rest.
- When you make a check to undertake strenuous activity over a long period of time (such as a Fitness [Earth] check to march for a long time or a Smithing [Earth] check to hammer plates back onto a damaged piece of armor), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Deafness (Air)

A tap on her shoulder drew Masa around to watch her commander's lips. "Masa," Hida Tomonatsu said. "I need to get a message to the scouts on the ground, but there is no way they will hear me through all this noise. Tell them to retreat."

Masa nodded, stepped to the edge, and waved her hand until Hiruma Takakage waved in response, down below. Then, her hands flew in a flurry of Hiruma Hand Talk. "Hida-sama says 'retreat.' Is it very noisy right now?"

"Very," Takakage signed back.

Types: Physical, Scar
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Deafness adversity:

- You are unable to hear, although you can perceive your surroundings through other senses.
- When you make a check for which auditory cues are very useful (such as a Sentiment [Air] check to discern if someone is being sincere or a Courtesy [Air] check to pick up rumors via eavesdropping on someone's faraway conversation), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, you gain 1 Void point.

Discomfiting Countenance (Air)

The rōnin strode forward, and my hand tightened upon the hilt of my katana. If he wanted a duel, he would have it. No masterless wretch could ever stand against me.

He stopped a few yards away and reached up with long-fingered hands to unfasten the mempō from his helmet. As the facial armor was removed, I saw his pale skin, marked by a wide, deep-red birthmark that ran from just above his right eye down to his jawline—and in that instance, I knew that he was Muramatsu Kibe—the Cinnabar Swordsman.

A duel would not be so easy a matter, after all.

Types: Interpersonal, Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Discomfiting Countenance adversity:

- Characters of lower status must generally be respectful of you to your face, but characters of higher status might try to use your looks as a way of attacking your character. Additionally, you are extremely memorable, and you find it difficult to act subtly without being remembered.
- When you make a check to get someone to trust your word (such as a Courtesy [Air] check to make someone believe a lie or a Performance [Air] check to present a story as genuine) you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Disdain for a Bushidō Tenet (Various)

"We Brothers of the Boar are very loyal samurai, indeed! Loyal to money, loyal to our bellies, loyal to ourselves, and what higher virtue could there be, brothers, eh?"

- The Rōnin Kujira

Types: Flaw, Mental
Choose One: Compassion (Water), Courage (Fire), Courtesy (Air), Duty and Loyalty (Earth), Honor (Void), Righteousness (Void), Sincerity (Void). A character may have multiple instances of this disadvantage for different tenets.
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Disdain for a Bushidō Tenet adversity:

- You no longer believe in the chosen tenet of Bushidō, though you still lose honor for disobeying it. When you act in accordance with this tenet of Bushidō, others can sometimes sense your insincerity.
- When you make a check to pay lip service to this tenet of Bushidō or to uphold it (such as a Courtesy check to express its importance or a Meditation check to use a belief in this tenet to your advantage), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Ebisu's Curse (Earth)

"And the harvest?" Doji Kiseki concealed her worry behind a fan.

The farmer, already prostrate before his lord, pressed his forehead to the floor. "Most of the rice was ruined before the harvest, my lord. And we've discovered that the bushels already removed to storage have also succumbed to some kind of rotting blight."

"Is nothing salvageable?" Kiseki's voice was barely a whisper.

"We're trying, my lord."

Types: Physical, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Ebisu's Curse adversity:

- Characters of lower status automatically distrust you, viewing you as a distant overlord who cannot possibly be competent at practical labor or understand their daily struggles (whether or not either of these is a fair assessment).
- When you make a check to interact with laborers or partake in their work (such as a Commerce [Earth] check to mass produce items or a Labor [Earth] check to dig a ditch), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Fractured Spine (Earth)

Moto stories tell of the famous Khan Who Rode a Cart, Yesegei Khan. Although he could not sit a horse without excruciating pain due to an injury from a fall as a boy, Moto Yesegai was brilliant and well-loved by his people. His cart, drawn by a white camel, was a welcome sight anywhere across the Moto steppe, and people would flock to his yurt wherever it roamed to partake of his wisdom.

Types: Physical, Scar
Effect: The following apply to a character with the Fractured Spine adversity:

- You have suffered major trauma to the spine, and harsh impacts cause you to be shot through with agonizing pain. You can lift and carry only half the weight that someone of your strength normally could.
- When you make a check to resist harm or exhaustion (such as a Fitness [Earth] check to shrug off further injury or a Labor [Earth] check to carry heavy objects as part of building a structure), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Fukurokujin's Curse (Fire)

"Study is like sailing against a current; a boat must forge ahead, lest it be swept downstream. But those without a boat must go where the current takes them; not all people are made to be sailors."

– Analects of Nabeshima

Types: Mental, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Fukurokujin's Curse adversity:

- It takes you twice as long to gain a grasp of an academic field of study as it does another character.
- When you make a check to extrapolate how to do something in a field of study (such as a Medicine [Fire] check to guess how to treat an unfamiliar aliment based on its symptoms or a Survival [Fire] check to guess an unknown creature's qualities based on its physiology), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Gaijin Name, Culture, or Appearance (Fire)

The Crane courtier bowed deeply, a thin, insincere smile upon his face. "I bring a thousand wishes for a glorious future from the Crane to the great Shinjo Aru…Arutan…"

"Altansarnai," the Unicorn Champion corrected him.

The courtier bowed further. "I apologize, Shinjo-sama. A…lovely name, but one that falls oddly upon my tongue."

"It is from the Ujik tongue. It means 'golden rose.'" Altansarnai gestured for the courtier to join her where she was seated. We are still foreign to them, *she thought,* and they will never let us forget it.

Types: Interpersonal (Name), Mental and Interpersonal (Culture), or Physical (Appearance)
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Gaijin Name, Culture, or Appearance adversity:

- People of higher and equal status tend to assume that you are uneducated at best and a barbarian at worst, while people of lower status respond to you with fear.
- When you make a check to inspire others who do not share your culture or background (such as a Command [Fire] check to rally troops or a Commerce [Fire] check to create a product that people desire), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Haunting (Void)

The tale is told of Toritaka Kanoshi, a young samurai of the Falcon Clan, whose father was betrayed and murdered by a family friend. The ghost of the father appeared to the young man and bade him to avenge his murder, but Kanoshi refused to believe that the spirit was truly that of the elder Toritaka.

The father's ghost followed Kanoshi around for years, creating a great commotion that only his son could hear. In the end, nearly driven mad by the torment, Kanoshi finally obeyed the ghost's wishes and brought the murderer to justice. Satisfied, his father was finally at rest, and he haunted Kanoshi no more.

Types: Interpersonal, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Haunted adversity:

- The spirit has their own agenda (determined by the GM), which interferes with yours at inopportune times.
- When you make a check to defy the will of the spirit haunting you (such as a Meditation [Void] check to find solace in meditation or a Skulduggery [Void] check to perform disreputable acts to survive), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ◯. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Incurable Illness (Earth)

The next morning, as we prepared our horses for the long ride ahead, Moto Ryoichi was wracked by one of his coughing fits. As was his preference, I deliberately paid no attention, turning my gaze to the proper fitting

of my mount's reins. Out of the corner of my eye, however, I saw Ryoichi pull a white silk kerchief away from his mouth, spotted red with blood. My concern overcame our long-standing agreement. "Ryoichi-san."

He waved away any further inquiry. "I'm fine," he croaked, his throat raw from coughing. "We have a long day ahead. We should get on with it."

Types: Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Incurable Illness adversity:

- Periodically, if you push yourself too hard, you are afflicted by especially violent fits that significantly restrict your activity for a brief period of time.
- When you make a check to remain active for long periods of time (such as a Labor [Earth] check to plow a field or a Survival [Earth] check to build a shelter), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ⟳. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Jurōjin's Curse (Void)

The battle was won; the castle had been taken. I found Kitsu Tsuyoshi seated on a tree stump in the courtyard. Fires burned here and there, and the bodies of the bandits who had occupied the castle lay broken and bloody all around us, along with more than a few of our own bushi.

"You charged the gate alone," I said. "You fought your way in and opened the way for the rest of us. It was the bravest thing I have ever witnessed, Tsuyoshi-san."

The samurai raised his head to regard me wearily. "It's not bravery, Kodaga-san," he said with a slight shrug. "I have always known that I will die young. So why struggle against it?"

Types: Physical, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Jurojin's Curse adversity:

- Poison and disease seem to strike you more easily, and it takes you twice as long as normal to recover from disease and injury.
- When you make a check to sustain yourself (such as a Fitness [Void] check to resist a critical injury or a Survival [Void] check to live in harmony with a natural environment), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ⟳. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Kisshōten's Curse (Water)

"Children are but a reflection of their parents."
– Tao of Shinsei

Types: Physical, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Kisshōten's Curse adversity:

- Children instinctively dislike you and are obstinate in the face of your demands. Your own children (if you have any) are unlucky in matters of health, beauty, and happiness.
- When performing a check for which you need to communicate with children (such as a Command [Water] check to order them around or a Performance [Water] check to entertain them), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ⟳. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Lost Arm or Lost Hand (Fire)

"Turn and face me, dog!" Takeda stiffened and turned. Akodo Shinpei stalked through the fire toward him.

"Back again, little Lion?" sneered the rōnin. "I took your arm when we last crossed swords. Are you so eager to lose the other?"

"I lost an arm, but at least I still have my honor," Shinpei growled. He drew his sword. It shone in the firelight. "Die on my blade, cur, and if you do it with courage, perhaps you can regain some of yours."

Types: Physical, Scar
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Lost Arm or Lost Hand adversity:

- You have only one usable hand or arm. You cannot wield weapons in a two-handed grip or hold anything in your missing hand. If you are missing only the hand, you can strap items to the arm for use.
- When you make a check for which having two hands is very valuable (such as a Martial Arts [Unarmed] [Fire] check to grapple a foe into submission or a Survival [Fire] check to leap onto a galloping horse's back), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ⟳. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Lost Eye (Water)

Johei poured the water from the kettle and it missed the cup, splashing onto the table. Ayame looked over the table at him, her gaze flicking briefly to his bandaged eye socket before snapping away.

"It's no trouble for me to pour it," Ayame offered.

"My thanks. But adaptation is natural for humans. I learned to be a Crane when I joined your family, and I'll learn this, too." Johei raised the kettle again and moved it until it clicked audibly against the cup. Then he poured. "I don't relish the idea of doing it again, but losing my eye was a small price to secure our future."

Types: Physical, Scar
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Lost Eye adversity:

- You have only one eye. Your field of vision is narrower, and your depth perception is somewhat diminished.
- When you make a check for which your reduced ability to observe a wide field or discern the exact distance to faraway objects would cause difficulties (such as a Tactics [Water] check to spot incoming threats or a Martial Arts [Ranged] [Water] check to hit targets while moving), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ⟲. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Lost Fingers (Fire)

The weathered old Crab held up his hands, and the children gasped. "Can't count to ten without taking off my shoes, but at least I still have more fingers than teeth," he chuckled. "Each of my fingers told a story as it left me. This one? A goblin's teeth, as I pried it off my lord's leg. This one? One of the great war machines on the Wall misfired…" The children stared, every eye wide, as the old Crab wove his stories of glory and hardship in their never-ending war.

Types: Physical, Scar
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Lost Fingers adversity:

- You have fewer functional digits on one of your hands than most people. Checks to craft new items take you twice as long as they would take a character with their full complement of fingers.
- When you make a check for which you must maintain a precise grip with both hands at once (such as a Design [Fire] check to weave cloth or a Martial Arts [Fire] check to draw your blade quickly), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ⟲. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Lost Leg (Water)

After Hiruma Noriko lost her leg while rescuing Asahina Setsuna from a tragic venture into the Shadowlands, the grateful artificer sought to repay the hero. The two collaborated on countless designs to help the warrior return to the field, Setsuna's mystical skill guided by Noriko's practical knowledge. The resulting prosthetic, beautifully lacquered and inscribed with countless protective charms, still remains in the armory of Carpenter Castle, and has inspired many similar devices over the centuries.

Types: Physical, Scar
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Lost Leg adversity:

- You have one fewer leg than most people. You use a crutch, cane, or other support to walk, and standing takes more effort than it does for people with two legs. Traveling by walking takes you twice as long as it does others without some form of compensatory tool.
- When you make a check for which you must reposition yourself quickly or maintain your balance (such as a Fitness [Water] check to move across difficult ground quickly or a Seafaring [Water] check to operate a boat in difficult conditions such as a storm), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ⟲. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Lost Memories (Void)

Utsuro bowed as he accepted the bowl, then sat back and ate with gusto. The simple food she brought him seemed to make him so happy. "You eat like you've never had rice balls before," she laughed.

"I don't remember," Utsuro reminded her. "Perhaps I haven't!"

"I'll bring you something else tomorrow," she said, standing to go.

"Yue," said Utsuro. "My memories will come back some day."

"I'm sure they will," she said. Utsuro bowed again, and she went back to her home, climbed upon her table and lifted down the basket from the beams of her roof. She stared down at the robe Utsuro had been wearing when she found him, with its chrysanthemum crest. "But not too soon, I hope."

Types: Mental, Scar
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Lost Memories adversity:

- There is a period of your life that you cannot remember at all. The less important this period is to your identity, the longer it should be (for example, a single day lost might be sufficient if the character committed a terrible act during that time and struggles to understand how or why, whereas a full decade of lost memories might be insufficient if they are not especially foundational to who the character is). The player and GM should work together to determine the amount and importance of memories lost. Skills and abilities acquired during the lost time are largely retained, even if the character does not remember the act of developing them.
- When you make a check for which you must recall information you learned during the period of lost memories (such as a Culture [Void] check to intuit how to behave in a particular situation similar or related to one you encountered during that time or a Meditation [Void] check to understand your past decisions), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Maimed Arm (Fire)

The samurai kept her arm tucked in her kimono. Her left sleeve flapped empty in the breeze, a testament to her folly—and resilience.

Types: Physical, Scar
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Maimed Arm adversity:

- Your right or left arm is injured (your choice at the time the disadvantage is assigned), making it much harder to perform activities that involve use of that arm. You can use the arm, but gripping anything tightly causes you pain, and you might need a sling to help the arm heal properly.
- When you make a check for which you need to use two hands at once (such as a Design [Fire] check to sew a new kimono or a Martial Arts [Melee] [Fire] check to overwhelm a foe with a powerful overhead slice), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Maimed Visage (Air)

"You have a villain's look about you. Why should we believe you're a magistrate of the Emperor's justice?"

The magistrate sighed. "You're right. These scars do tell a story about me, and one you should heed. But you haven't asked what the story is, have you?

"When I was young, I served my lord as a yōjimbō. In my first battle, I took a slash meant for his throat. You can read the degree of my loyalty in these scars. Now, if I would suffer such a wound without complaint, do you really think I'd allow your foolishness to stand in the way of justice?"

Types: Physical, Interpersonal, Scar
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Maimed Visage adversity:

- You have been struck in the face, causing a very noticeable and difficult-to-disguise sign of your altercation. Your injury is disquieting to many, and speaking causes you some pain, hampering your social endeavors that hinge on subtle implication and manipulation.
- When you make a check to subtly convince others of something or speak an implication (such as a Commerce [Air] check to sell an item at a higher price than usual or a Courtesy [Air] check to insult someone by implication), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Momoku (Void)

A favorite shadow-puppet play often performed during the fall harvest season, The Hungry Ghosts *features an old man who lives in a haunted house, yet cannot see the ghosts that surround him. The ghosts continually eat his food and frighten his guests, but the old man remains oblivious.*

Some puppeteers have run afoul of the law while performing this play, making the old man appear a bit too much like the local lord, and the ghosts resemble problems plaguing the local region—problems that the lord seems incapable of seeing.

Types: Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Momoku adversity:

- You do not detect supernatural presences even when they make themselves evident to everyone else, and you are blissfully unaware of the ripples in reality such entities and phenomena create. You can still discern effects they have on the physical world, but only when they become quite obvious.
- When you make a check to understand or appeal to otherworldly powers (such as a Games [Void] check to put your faith in the power of the universe or a Theology [Void] check to call upon the cosmic energy around you), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◔. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Muteness (Air)

The Quiet Monks of Kaitō Province take vows of silence upon entering the monastery. They devote themselves to silent contemplation of the Tao and the mysteries of the elements.

Types: Interpersonal, Physical or Mental, Scar
Effect: The following apply to a character with the Muteness adversity:

- You are physically or psychologically unable to produce intelligible spoken words. You can still make yourself understood through signing, gestures, and meaningful looks.
- When you make a check for which you must make your tone of voice understood by others (such as a Command [Air] check to convey nuanced information to others or a Performance [Air] check to impersonate someone convincingly), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◔. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Nerve Damage (Air)

Matsu Makoto sat with a perfect stillness of impatience. "How long until I can fight again?"

Kitsu Hanae looked over the wound on her arm. "It's healing well externally. No infection. But inside, it's hard to tell. You might never regain full sensitivity, or it might slowly return over months or years. Patience is the only remedy now."

Makoto grumbled at the same non-answer Hanae had given yesterday. "How long until I can start training with my left hand, then?"

Types: Physical, Scar
Effect: The following apply to a character with the Nerve Damage adversity:

- You have no feeling in certain parts of your body.
- When you make a check for which physical sensitivity is helpful (such as an Aesthetics [Air] check to delicately paint glaze onto a ceramic piece or a Fitness [Air] check to maintain your posture exactly while moving), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◔. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Scorn of [One Group] (Water)

"Hatsumon cannot assume the command," Utaku Kamoko growled. No "-sama," not even a "-san," and certainly not "Utaku Hatsumon," not after his crime of riding one of the sacred Utaku steeds.

"With Shinjo Reki's death, Hatsumon Noyan is the highest ranked officer present," soothed Ide Ujiyasu. "The command is his."

"So be it," Kamoko snarled, and stalked from the tent. The entire Shiotome contingent left the encampment the next day.

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Scorn of [One Group] adversity:

- You have earned the ire of a particular group, which has seriously damaged your ability to work with its members or enlist their help. You have been barred from entering their facilities, and they refuse to meet or communicate with you directly. Confer with the GM to select a campaign-appropriate group when choosing this disadvantage.
- When performing a check to interact with the chosen group that relies on your rapport with its members (such as a Courtesy [Water] check to persuade them to do something or a Performance [Water] check to impress a group of them), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Shadowlands Taint (Air)

The Obsidian Journal *is a secret text, written hundreds of years ago by Kuni Shunsuke, a Crab Clan samurai who made forbidden journeys into the Shadowlands and wrote of what he saw there.*

By the end of his journal, he wrote: "Even now, I know that the fingers of shadow have reached too deeply within me, for although I am surrounded by family and clan, I feel no kinship. They seem distant to me, as if viewed through a glass. I wonder how much of myself is truly left."

That was the final entry of the Obsidian Journal. *Kuni Shunsuke committed seppuku to silence the call of the Shadowlands.*

Types: Curse, Interpersonal, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Shadowlands Taint (Air) adversity:

- You are a Tainted being. You have trouble sympathizing with other humans, but you can understand the emotions of corrupted beings easily.
- When you make a check to show compassion for other human beings (such as a Composition [Air] check to edit a work for emotional refinement or a Courtesy [Air] check to say something difficult without harming the recipient's feelings), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Shadowlands Taint (Earth)

"The swordsman bled from two dozen cuts, each of which would have brought down any samurai. Finally, one last spear from our bushi found his chest, and he died.

"I swear to you, he did die. I am sure of that. Yet I can scarcely bring myself to write what we witnessed next, as his corpse dragged itself up to stand and face us again. It was only through use of a torch that we were finally able to put an end to him."

– *The* Obsidian Journal

Types: Curse, Physical, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Shadowlands Taint (Earth) adversity:

- You are a Tainted being. Your ability to feel physical sensations is significantly diminished, and when you perish, your body rises as a **Zombie Peasant** (see page 321), which pursues your last goal with bestial purpose before turning on anyone else nearby.
- When you make a check that relies upon physical sensitivity (such as a Design [Earth] check to repair a damaged item or a Martial Arts [Unarmed] [Earth] check to grapple with a foe), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

LOSING YOUR HUMANITY

A character with one or more instances of the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage is a Tainted being, and is affected by any effect that specifies Tainted beings.

A character with three or more instances of the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage has slipped even further from their humanity. They are also an Otherworldly being, and are affected by any effect that specifies Otherworldly beings.

A character with five instances of the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage has been lost completely to the grip of Fu Leng. In most games, this means that they are no longer an appropriate player character—though of course, the GM is the final arbiter over whether such a character is suitable for their story!

TAINTED CHARACTERS IN ROKUGAN

The corrupting influence of Fu Leng is ill-understood in Rokugan. Some believe it to stem from insufficient faith, while others treat it more like a disease of the body.

Far from the Kaiu Wall, many believe it to be the end of a samurai's ability to serve. In Crane lands, widespread knowledge that a character has contracted it can be disastrous to their social and political aspirations.

In Crab lands, it is simply a fact of life for many warriors who face the monsters beyond the wall. The Kuni family brews and distributes jade petal tea for the afflicted, a special remedy that can slow the corruption's effects.

Some among the Unicorn, having seen strange maladies in the wider world, have even studied it like a disease, that they might one day conquer it—though these scholars have yet to show progress

LIVING WITH THE TAINT

Within Crab lands, the Taint is tragically common. The Kuni maintain a great ledger with all of the names of the Tainted. A character who approaches the Kuni to report themself must forfeit status until their status is 20, but they can continue to serve the Crab.

Outside of Crab lands, it is very rare to contract the Taint, and there are no standards on how it is handled. Some lords might send a Tainted retainer to the Kuni, while others might dispose of the retainer or quietly cover up the whole matter.

Shadowlands Taint (Fire)

"Sakori is lost to us. During our recent excursions, she gradually grew more and more obsessed with the thought of using the enemy's own power against him. She pored over every scrap of knowledge we acquired, following it down ever-darker paths.

"I was brought news this morning that she was gone. She has been found nowhere within the castle, and none along the Wall have reported seeing her. Her bed was not slept in. I can only assume that she's out there somewhere, in the Shadowlands, drawn further away from who she once was with every step."

– *The* Obsidian Journal

Types: Curse, Mental, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Shadowlands Taint (Fire) adversity:

- You are a Tainted being. You can identify Shadowlands creatures and forces, you know how to turn them to destructive ends, and you are drawn inexorably to such forbidden powers.
- When you make a check to foresee possible negative outcomes of your actions (such as a Government [Fire] check to extrapolate whether your actions could lead to great destruction or a Theology [Fire] check to know whether the powers you are dealing with are likely to destroy you in the end), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ⟲. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Shadowlands Taint (Void)

"We sent a patrol out yesterday. Only Akihiro returned. He says that one by one, his comrades fell to a series of mishaps. Ome was bitten by a snake. Yayoi fell from a precipice. Kanbei drowned in quicksand. It was as if fate had abandoned each of them, save Akihiro.

"He will bear closer watching."

– *The* Obsidian Journal

Types: Curse, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Shadowlands Taint (Void) adversity:

- You are a Tainted being. Each time you spend your last Void point, someone near you suffers a misfortune as the woven cord of fate frays.
- When you make a check to discern your future (such as a Government [Void] check to know whether a course of action is likely to end in tragedy or a Seafaring [Void] check to detect the arrival of a storm before it hits), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ⟲. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Shadowlands Taint (Water)

"A man was killed trying to get over the Wall today. At least, it appeared to be a man. When our soldiers cut him down, his blood was putrescence itself, flowing like poison from his body, and those whom it touched fell ill.

"Five guards are now struck by this grave sickness, and our monks tend to them as best they can."

– The Obsidian Journal

Types: Curse, Physical, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Shadowlands Taint (Water) adversity:

- You are a Tainted being. When your blood is spilled (such as after you suffer the Bleeding condition), foulness spills forth. Anyone who touches it suffers the Afflicted condition.
- When you make a check to heal others or deal with food (such as a Medicine [Water] check to prepare treatments for a disease or a Survival [Water] check to forage for food), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Sworn Enemy (Earth)

"As soon as a person leaves their house, they have seven enemies."

– Tao of Shinsei

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Sworn Enemy adversity:

- You and the GM should select or create a character to be your sworn enemy. Your sworn enemy exists within the world and periodically meddles in your affairs, directly or indirectly, at the GM's discretion. If your sworn enemy perishes, you must either remove this disadvantage, acquire a new sworn enemy (perhaps someone who hates you because of your role in the demise of the previous one), or find a way for your deceased foe to continue playing a role in your life.
- When you make a check to remain rational in the presence of this person you hate (such as a Courtesy [Earth] check to interact with this person without being provocative or a Meditation [Earth] check to stay stoic in the face of their insults), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Whispers of Cruelty (Earth)

"The Peace of the Unicorn is restored to these lands!" The commander's voice boomed from within his golden mask. Standing on his stirrups, he was as tall as the thatch-roofed houses around him. The peasants of the village fell to their knees.

"Please, Moto-sama!" begged the village head. "Spare us your terrible wrath! We are but heimin; we did not mean to offer succor to the Lion, but we had no choice."

Juro sat in his saddle once more, his jaw clenching beneath his mask. No matter how often I try, *he thought,* they still only see the terrible warlord.

Types: Interpersonal, Infamy
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Whispers of Cruelty adversity:

- You are well-known, but not for the right reasons. Characters who do not know you personally always assume that you will act in a ruthless and destructive manner, and they act accordingly.
- When you make a check to attempt to calm others (such as a Courtesy [Earth] check to convince someone to cooperate with you or a Command [Earth] check to get someone to accept your authority calmly), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Whispers of Doom (Void)

Orphaned by the time she was six, Doji Hatsuhina was raised by her bachelor uncle, who also died when the girl was twelve. Finishing her schooling at the academies of Shizuka Toshi, Hatsuhina was betrothed to Seppun Hakemoto, a captain in the Imperial Guard, who died later that year. She was betrothed again, this time to a young Bayushi son of the Scorpion Champion, who was murdered as part of the often-lethal politics of his clan.

She was not betrothed a third time.

Types: Interpersonal, Infamy
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Whispers of Doom adversity:

- You are well-known, but not for the right reasons. Characters who do not know you personally always assume that those around you will perish or meet bad ends, even if you survive to spread your ill fortune further.
- When you make a check to dispel someone's false preconceptions (such as a Courtesy [Void] check to get someone to question their decision or a Command [Void] check to get someone to see the pointlessness of their position), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◐ or ◑. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Whispers of Failure (Fire)

"Some say failure is the true death of a samurai, but I have lived many years, and so I do not think this is so. Failure is a hard vine to uproot from the minds of others once it has sprouted, true. But what is most vital is uprooting it within your own mind. In this way, a samurai sets aside failure, and thus conquers regret. Only then can the seeds of success flourish."

Types: Interpersonal, Infamy
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Whispers of Failure adversity:

- You are well-known, but not for the right reasons. Characters who do not know you personally always assume that you are incompetent, and they do not trust you with important tasks.
- When you make a check to get others to follow your lead (such as a Command [Fire] check to lead a charge or a Performance [Fire] check to inspire others), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ⟲. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Whispers of Poverty (Water)

A certain samurai of the Phoenix Clan so embarrassed his mother that she let it be known that no longer would she pay his gambling debts, nor support his dissolute lifestyle in Otosan Uchi. The samurai fell on hard times, and was forced to marry into a merchant's family to replenish his purse. Now flush with koku, the samurai still found that those who saw him spoke behind their fans, "Oh, there goes Empty-Purse-san, the Pauper Samurai," so for all his new wealth he still had not regained his honor.

– "Gossip Twice-Told," by Otomo no Hoji (true identity unknown)

Types: Interpersonal, Infamy
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Whispers of Poverty adversity:

- You are well-known, but not for the right reasons. Characters who do not know you personally always assume that you don't have financial solvency and won't be able to muster resources quickly.
- When you make a check to acquire items quickly or make trade deals (such as a Command [Water] check to win over troops under your command with the promise of rewards or a Commerce [Water] check to secure a large supply of a commodity or service), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ⟲. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Whispers of Treachery (Air)

Bayushi Kyo groaned. "We're doing this again? Now?"

Kuni Mamoru stood firm as he put the finishing touches on the warding barrier. "You have been acting suspiciously of late. Even more so than usual—the stories about you don't do justice to the depths of your deceit."

"I don't suppose you'd be willing to take my word that it's for the greater good?"

Types: Interpersonal, Infamy
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Whispers of Treachery adversity:

- You are well-known, but not for the right reasons. Characters who do not know you personally always assume that you will plant poison in their tea or a knife in their back at the first opportunity.
- When you make a check to get others to trust you (such as a Courtesy [Air] check to convince someone of your sincerity or a Skulduggery [Air] check to steal from someone who is aware of your presence), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◯ or ⟲. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

SPECIFIC ANXIETIES

Although emotions, especially negative ones, are things that samurai strive to banish from their hearts, all human beings are susceptible to the so-called "three sins" of fear, desire, and regret when exposed to certain people, locations, items, or situations. The negative emotions and inner turmoil that these things inspire are represented mechanically with specific anxieties.

Addiction (Earth)

The smoke curled in pleasing patterns above my head. I drew another lungful from the pipe, feeling the acrid burn in my throat and chest. A searing warmth made my cheeks flush, and I exhaled.

"Chasing the Dragon," they called it.

Funny. It doesn't feel like I'm chasing anything. It feels like I'm standing still, and the universe is rushing all around me like a storm. But afterward, the dragon always catches up to me.

Types: Mental, Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Addiction anxiety:

- Choose an addictive substance or experience; deprivation from this substance or experience for more than three days causes shakes, chills, distraction, or even more violent physical symptoms that become increasingly difficult to conceal.
- After performing a check to resist the substance or experience (such as a Fitness [Earth] check to suppress signs of your addiction during long absences of the substance (or experience) or a Meditation [Earth] check to resist pursuing the experience or substance), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Battle Trauma (Fire)

The thousand cuts I have borne
And the thousand I have delivered
Paint my dreams in red
Broad brushstrokes to draw pictures
I cannot put to paper.
Do my ears ring from old age
Or is that steel's song and the warrior's cry
Gone so long ago
But never gone?

Types: Mental, Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Battle Trauma anxiety:

- At the start of a duel, skirmish, or mass battle, your hands shake, your body tenses up, or your mind might even lock down. You can act normally, but your unsettled state is obvious to everyone around you, and others may try to exploit it.
- After performing a check related to battle (such as a Martial Arts [Melee] [Fire] check to strike down a foe or a Tactics [Fire] check to generate initiative), you receive 3 strife. (Your GM can choose not to inflict this strife after the you have taken a few turns and thematically overcome your trauma.) If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Cynicism (Fire)

"This is ridiculous," Onishi scoffed. "Powder makes for fine fireworks, granted. But you're telling me that barrels of the stuff will bring down the fortification around that castle? Do I look like a child, ready to believe grandfather's stories? Please. It will never work."

"Look, just help me get the barrels into the wagon," Genda replied, pushing another barrel into place.

"Fine, but I still think it's a terrible idea, which will do nothing but get us all killed."

Types: Interpersonal, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Cynicism anxiety:

- When faced with a truly novel or unconventional idea, you always look for ways it can fail, and others must persuade you that it could work before you will try it (even if it is your idea).
- After performing a check to think unconventionally (such as a Performance [Fire] check to improvise during a performance or a Tactics [Fire] check to develop a new strategy on the fly), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Dark Secret (Void)

"I'm sorry that you saw that, Megumi-chan," Kayoko said, her voice as soft as spider's silk, her hands stained scarlet with blood.

A scream hung in Megumi's throat, refusing to emerge. She could only stare in wide-eyed horror as Kayoko stepped closer.

"Power requires sacrifice, Megumi dear. That urchin has given her life for a higher purpose, and I have saved her from a lifetime of suffering. The power that I have gained will keep us all safe."

Megumi tried to run, but her mind seemed disconnected from her body. Her pulse raced with the impulse to flee, but her legs would not obey.

Kayoko glided ever closer. "I can't have you telling anyone, of course. I'm sure you understand…"

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Dark Secret anxiety:

- You have a dark secret that, if exposed, could bring ruin upon your house and disgrace your ancestors and descendants alike. If the details of this secret become public, your glory value decreases dramatically, as if you had lost staked glory (by 10 to 20). Depending on the secret, your status value might also decrease considerably (by 5 to 10), as if you had lost staked status.
- After performing a check to assert your will over yourself or others (such as a Command [Void] check to order troops to fight to the bitter end or a Meditation [Void] check to find inner peace), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Delusions of Grandeur (Void)

"Do not be wary of those who take risks with titles and lands; rather be wary of those who have nothing to lose. And above all, be most wary of those who say they are destined for greatness, for they will build a ladder to Heaven on the corpses of those around them."

– Analects of Nabeshima

Types: Mental, Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Delusions of Grandeur anxiety:

- You believe yourself destined for greatness, and nothing will dissuade you from your fixation upon this goal. When you are presented with a chance to advance your glory, you must attempt to pursue it.
- After performing a check that requires facing your humble place in an uncaring universe (such as a Labor [Void] check to eke out a living in the fields or a Meditation [Void] check to contemplate your place in the cosmos), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Fear of Death (Earth)

There are few crimes worse in the mind of the Rokugani than cowardice, which is seen as a violation of no fewer than three tenets of the Code of Bushidō: Yū, Meiyo, and Chūgi. To help them teach the lessons of cowardice, Rokugan's storytellers have many fables at their disposal: tales of courageous heroes brought low by cowardly allies, histories in which the fall of an entire noble house hinges upon a failure of courage, and more.

Types: Mental, Physical
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Fear of Death anxiety:

- You cannot voluntarily choose to die or sacrifice your life (including committing seppuku when honor demands it), and if there is a chance you could live, you must always pursue it.
- After performing a check to risk your life or accept your mortality (such as a Meditation [Earth] check to find inner tranquility before battle or a Tactics [Earth] check to hold a position against long odds), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Ferocity (Air)

With a cry like an enraged animal, Hida Amoro threw himself into the throng of bandits. They were vicious, yet untrained, and did not expect the attack. What followed was a whirlwind of relentless, merciless violence, as Amoro moved faster than many of us could follow, utterly taking the bandits apart.

We hung back and let Amoro do his work. We'd served with him long enough to know to stay out of the way when the red fury was upon him.

Types: Physical, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Ferocity anxiety:

- When you strike, you have trouble holding back your power, and you tend to lash out even when a subtler approach would be more appropriate. When you defeat a minion NPC, the minion is always killed, even if you would prefer to incapacitate them.
- After performing a check to intentionally hold back or apply force subtly (such as a Games [Air] check to manipulate your opponent or a Martial Arts [Melee] [Air] check to strike a precise blow), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Impatience (Earth)

Historians tell the story of the Battle of Thunder Plain in 1005, when the Iuchi family daimyō, in his impatience to attack a Kaiu village of the Crab Clan, brought his cavalry across the plain held sacred by the Order of Osano-wo.

The order, the most martial order of the Brotherhood of Shinsei, attacked the Unicorn cavalry with polearms. When the Iuchi daimyō called upon the Fortunes for defense, the kami showed their disfavor by refusing to respond. The cavalry were soundly defeated, and they were forced to retreat back to Unicorn lands.

Types: Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Impatience anxiety:

- You find it difficult to repress yourself, and when you are forced to wait, it causes you palpable discomfort. If given the choice between seizing an opportunity and waiting for a better moment, you strive to seize the opportunity despite risks that might be mitigated if you act later.
- After performing a check to strategically weigh your options (such as a Government [Earth] check to think of a historical anecdote related to your situation or a Tactics [Earth] check to identify the right moment to strike), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Intolerance (Water)

"Savages!" Matsu Agetoki threw his helmet across his tent in frustration. "Our clan is expected to sully itself by marrying one of our finest lords to one of those Unicorn gaijin? How are we expected to bear such an insult?"

Matsu Seijuro knew better than to interrupt his brother at a time like this, and yet: "We do as we are commanded. The Emperor wants this match."

"Does he indeed?" Agetoki whirled around to face Seijuro. "Then I wonder if he seeks to weaken us, through infection."

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Intolerance anxiety:

- A particular hate festers within you for a group of people (or even supernatural beings), and it overwhelms your better judgment when you are faced with members or representatives of this group. Choose one group of people or supernatural beings to be your hated enemies. When you are in the presence of these beings (and even when they are mentioned), your enmity is evident to all who observe you.
- After performing a check to interact with a member of the chosen group (such as a Commerce [Water] check to bargain with someone from a family that once wronged your own or a Composition [Water] check to translate from the language of a group of foreigners you dislike due to a battle you fought against their people), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

FLIRTING WITH PCS

Topics of romance or sexuality can sometimes make people uncomfortable. If your character is an irrepressible flirt, you should still make sure your fellow players are comfortable before roleplaying any flirtation or romantic overtures between your character and theirs. (This also applies if you're the GM!)

Irrepressible Flirtation (Earth)

"So I snuck through the estate to her ladyship's apartments and waited for the servants to leave before reciting the poem I had devised in her honor. You can imagine my embarrassment when it was not Lady Fujiko's voice that answered me from behind the curtains."

The patrons of the inn hung on my every word. One of them rushed over and put a fresh bowl of wine in my hand. "What did you do?"

"Well," I said, taking a long sip of the wine, "I introduced myself to the lady who was there."

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Irrepressible Flirtation anxiety:

- You find it difficult to pass up the chance to flirt with people you find attractive, and when someone you find attractive flirts with you, you cannot help but return their advances with your own flirtation. Your interest is obvious to all onlookers.
- After performing a check to interact with (or ignore) someone you are interested in without exceeding propriety (such as a Courtesy [Earth] check to make appropriate small talk or a Sentiment [Earth] check to know how to tread cautiously in a social scene), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Jealousy (Air)

The story is told of Shiba Shikitora, a Phoenix Clan courtier in Otosan Uchi during the reign of Hantei XXXI, who was so incensed by her rival, a court poet named Kakita Sanuki, that she would try to outdo her in all things. If Sanuki presented a poem, Shikitora would present one on the following night in an effort to be the most praiseworthy. If Sanuki wore a beautiful kimono, then the one worn by Shikitora must be ten times as lovely.

Sanuki's heart was broken due to an ill-fated love, and she threw herself from the roof of the Imperial Palace. Everyone was saddened by this and spoke admiringly of the late poet who had died for love.

Shiba Shikitora threw herself from a roof twice as high on the next day.

Types: Physical, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Jealousy anxiety:

- You cannot voluntarily pass up an opportunity to one-up a rival or demonstrate your superiority over someone in the eyes of others.
- After performing a check to compete with someone to demonstrate your excellence (such as a Performance [Air] check to convince an audience of something before a rival can or a Smithing [Air] check to refine a weapon to perfection before presenting it as a gift to your lord), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Materialism (Void)

"All lust is grief, and born of too great an attachment to this world, even as the shadow follows the shape. We grasp at it like monkeys trying to snatch at the moon's reflection on the surface of water."

– Tao of Shinsei

Types: Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Materialism anxiety:

- You are obsessed with physical possessions and objects, despite what the Tao of Shinsei says about such material earthly bonds. You cannot refuse gifts of rarity 3 or higher.
- After performing a check to give up a physical object in your possession or other thing of value (such as a Government [Void] check to find a way to sacrifice a holding to gain a political advantage over a rival), you suffer 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, you gain 1 Void point.

Meekness (Fire)

"Do you have something to add, Takeshiro?" Abbot Kenzo looked up from the scrolls he was transcribing to where the young initiate was sweeping the floor.

Takeshiro became focused upon a particularly dirty section of the chamber. He tried to respond, yet all that came out was a strangled mumble. He had wanted to point out the rainwater that had begun to drip from the patchy roof and was in danger of wetting the ancient scrolls, but he could not work up the courage.

"Hmm," the abbot nodded. "I thought not."

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Meekness anxiety:

- You are extremely shy, and you struggle to stand up for yourself. You cannot interrupt people of higher status, and you find it very hard to assert yourself over anyone, including people of lower status.
- After performing a check to stand out or get what you need (such as a Command [Fire] check to inspire troops under your command or a Government [Fire] check to assess your rights on a matter), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Painful Honesty (Air)

A popular, if bawdy, song at many roadside inns in Rokugan, "The Honest Husband" is the story of a staunch-hearted farmer who can never tell a lie. The song progresses through several verses where he is faced with questions from his wife about her weight, the attractiveness of her sister, and other increasingly risky (and risqué) situations. The song's refrain of "you know I love you, dearest, but I cannot tell a lie" has become on its own a catchphrase, used jokingly when a person is asked difficult questions.

Types: Interpersonal
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Painful Honesty anxiety:

- You are tormented by internal conflict when you lie or allow a lie to pass. You cannot make claims you know to be false, although you can say technically truthful things that imply untruths, if politeness or circumstances demand it.
- After you make a check to mislead someone else (such as a Courtesy [Air] check to falsely besmirch someone's reputation or a Command [Air] check to manipulate an underling), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Paranoia (Water)

"A person who sees enemies everywhere is always blind to their truest enemy, for that enemy is behind their eyes."

–Tao of Shinsei

Types: Physical, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Paranoia anxiety:

- In every shadow, you see assassins, and in every smile, you see a rival in pursuit of your undoing. This fear makes it very hard for you to rely upon others, and it might distract you from real threats. You cannot relax unless you have confirmed vital information (such as your current safety) for yourself.
- After performing a check to identify danger in your environment (such as a Government [Water] check to know the political currents in a court or a Sentiment [Water] check to sense if someone's intentions toward you are hostile), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Perfectionism (Water)

In the Imperial Palace at Otosan Uchi, in a room entirely dedicated to this purpose, a painting is on display. It is not a mounted screen but rather a simple length of paper, tacked on a piece of wood. It depicts the morning mist rising from the Bay of the Golden Sun, with fisherfolk heading out for the day's catch. It is a sublime work of art, although unfinished…and it is also the most valuable painting in all of Rokugan.

It is the sole surviving painting of Master Jun. It was the painting he was working on when he died. None of Jun's other paintings exist, because as soon as he would finish one, he would reflect upon some imperfection or flaw in the work, and burn it.

Types: Physical, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Perfectionism anxiety:

- Anything short of perfection in your work is unacceptable to you, and you have been known to create works of beauty only to cast them aside over some perceived flaw. You cannot help but try to improve any work in which you identify a flaw, even if it means informing someone of higher status of an error they have made.
- After performing a check in which you must interact with an imperfect or unfinished work (such as an Aesthetics [Water] check to improve an existing piece of art or a Composition [Water] check to translate a work without losing any of the nuance present in the original language), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Phobia (Water)

Lord Shosuro Kosugi was said to have been terrified of black crows, having been plagued by recurring dreams of a black crow as a harbinger of his death. He stationed archers all around his castle and in specially built hunting blinds for miles around his lands, with standing orders for any black crow to be shot on sight.

It is said that he was found dead in his chambers, his face twisted into a rictus of terror. On the floor of the room was a single black feather.

Types: Physical, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Phobia anxiety:

- Choose something mundane. You have a debilitating fear of this thing. You cannot speak its name. In its presence, you cannot hide your fear, and you attempt to flee if at all possible.
- After performing a check to deal with your phobia (such as a Courtesy [Water] check to talk pleasantly about the subject or a Survival [Water] check to identify it as the thing you fear), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Softheartedness (Fire)

"Go," I said, breaking the bandit's bow over my knee. "Leave. I never want to see you in our lands again."

The bandit, barely more than a boy, looked nervously at Utatsu, who scowled and leaned heavily on his spear. The young bandit looked back to me.

"Go on. Get out of here," I repeated. He didn't require more urging, and he scampered down the road as fast has his skinny legs could carry him.

"You should have killed him," Utatsu grumbled. "Robbing people at arrow point is not a boy's prank."

"I've had my fill of killing," I said. "If I had struck him down, he would not have learned anything. This way, he has a chance."

Utatsu shook his head at my folly as we headed back to the village.

Types: Interpersonal, Mental
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Softheartedness anxiety:

- If given the choice to kill someone or show mercy, you always spare their life, even if it is not in your interest to let them live.
- After performing a check that addresses or involves killing others or letting them die (such as a Government [Fire] check to estimate the burden a war would place on the common people or a Martial Arts [Ranged] [Fire] check to shoot to kill), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Superstition (Void)

"A great deal of folk wisdom revolves around death. Peasants will avoid the number four because the pronunciation is close to one of the words that means 'death.' Chopsticks should never be stuck upright in rice, as this mimics the placement of a ceremonial bowl upon the altar at a funeral. And one should never, ever write a person's name in red ink, as the names on grave markers always are painted in red."

–Observances of Empire, *by Moto Kojiro*

Types: Mental, Spiritual
Effects: The following apply to a character with the Superstition anxiety:

- When faced with signs of the supernatural, you become visibly agitated, and you attempt to leave the scene, appease the being or phenomenon in question, or acquire supernatural protection of some kind.
- After performing a check to interact with or learn about a supernatural being or phenomenon (such as a Meditation [Void] check to perceive the presence of a supernatural being or a Theology [Void] check to know a supernatural being's designs or desires), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

WHEN TO APPLY ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES TO CHECKS

There are essentially two extremes for how GMs can go about using advantages and disadvantages, and neither is intrinsically right or wrong. The GM should consider their group's preferred mode of play (creative flexibility or speed of play) in deciding whether to choose one of the extremes or use elements of both models.

- **Creative Application:** Advantages and disadvantages apply whenever it makes sense that they'd apply or when they would make for a cool story moment; the listed example checks are just examples, and shouldn't be considered a comprehensive list. If a player can come up with a good reason that one should apply, then the GM should allow it. Similarly, if the GM feels one should apply and offers a good reason, the player should accept it without protest. This style of play gives GMs and players a lot of room to apply "common sense." In this play style, things run most smoothly if the GM and player are both willing to move on to rolling dice after anything more than a brief bit of haggling. This is the assumed play style throughout the rest of the book, but some groups may find it too contentious at the table, as it requires a certain willingness to trust that the GM (and players) won't take the story out of scope. It also works best for groups in which the GM and players operate with a fundamentally collaborative dynamic rather than an adversarial one.
- **Discrete Application:** Advantages and disadvantages only apply to the listed example checks and closely related checks from skills in the same skill groups (Artisan, Social, Scholar, Martial, Trade) as the listed checks. This method allows GMs and players to speed up checks and minimize discussion of whether or not advantages and disadvantages should apply in a given set of circumstances. The downsides of this method are that it can create odd moments of dissonance when advantages or disadvantages that seem like they should be relevant do not apply by the letter of the law, and that it leaves certain storytelling moments out of reach. As a general guideline, no advantage or disadvantage should apply more than once per scene in this model except at the GM's discretion. GMs who go this route should also consider being much more sparing with custom advantages and disadvantages, as they are likely to be much more powerful than the sample ones provided.

Creating Custom Advantages and Disadvantages

While there are numerous advantages and disadvantages to be found in this volume, GMs and players should not feel limited to this list. If you can't find the advantage or disadvantage you want on the list, talk to the GM and ask permission to create a new advantage or disadvantage together.

CUSTOM ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE CONCEPTS

Advantages and disadvantages are designed to provide occasional benefits and drawbacks based on your character's intrinsic quirks. They should be distinct from the know-how characters develop with experience, which is represented by skills and techniques, and from the character's overall aptitudes, which are reflected by rings. These features should also have sufficient distinction from a character's giri and ninjō, which should remain the character's core motivations.

Advantages and disadvantages should not always be applicable, but they should be broad enough to come up at least once every couple of sessions. If your GM doesn't think an advantage or disadvantage will come up often, try collaborating with them to think up

something that provides the same sorts of story hooks or ideas but will be more useful.

In designing a custom advantage or disadvantage, do not just consider scenarios in which it could be applied, but also think about one or two examples of when it could be turned to give your character an edge or cause your character problems (see page 100). If an advantage or disadvantage begins to get wordy, consider what is fundamental about it and keep the longer phrase in a notebook to describe your character; not everything about your character needs to be represented mechanically on your sheet.

DEVELOPING A CUSTOM ADVANTAGE OR DISADVANTAGE

When creating an advantage or disadvantage, follow the process below for its type:

Distinction

A distinction represents a feature of your character that makes your character more effective in certain circumstances. Consider and record the narrative effects it conveys and the ring to which it will most often apply. Then record two specific examples of checks for which the distinction works in your character's favor.

Example: *Sam wants to reflect the fact that his character, Hitoshi, grew up on merchant vessels, and is as sure firing an arrow from the rigging as he is staying one step ahead of another vessel. He proposes the Born Sailor distinction, which he posits should protect the character from seasickness, no matter how tempestuous the ocean. Then, he notes two examples of when this should apply: when Hitoshi makes a Martial Arts [Ranged] (Water) check to hit a target from the deck of a boat, and when Hitoshi makes a Seafaring (Water) check to find high-quality supplies for nautical activity. After the GM approves this advantage for use, Hitoshi is ready to conduct "legitimate business" on the seas!*

Passion

A passion represents an area of interest for your character, something that makes them feel better when they practice or pursue it. Consider and record the narrative effects that their love of this subject conveys and the ring to which it will most often apply. Then, record two specific types of checks for which the passion works in their favor.

Example: *Luna wants to represent the fact that her character, Hei, a Unicorn Clan warrior, is fascinated by grappling techniques, and that Hei goes out of their way to seek out chances to study other fighters and their methods.*

The GM notes that this advantage could be quite potent, as it pertains to a Martial skill, but the two discuss the idea and decide that it is important enough to be worth representing mechanically. Luna proposes that it grant Hei the narrative capacity to recognize a fighter's grappling school by a single move (a very narrow utility, albeit a very useful one for a wrestler), and that it should have example applications to Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Earth) checks to engage in grappling contests and Culture (Earth) checks to recall anecdotes and trends related to the history of grappling. The GM agrees that this isn't too powerful as a passion, and so the Grappling passion is assigned to Hei.

Adversity

An adversity represents something that makes your character's life harder in a direct way. Consider and record the narrative challenges that the adversity imposes on your character and the ring to which it will most often apply. Then, record two specific types of checks for which the adversity undermines your chances of success.

Example: *Andrew wants to give his character, Kiriko, an adversity that adds a bit of levity to the otherwise serious Scorpion courtier. However, the character is decidedly stoic in nature, and so he wants to create the situational humor of her artful ploys being lost upon her less refined comrades, to her constant exasperation.*

He proposes to the GM that Kiriko should have the Wasted in Such Company adversity, which has the narrative impact of causing her attempts at searing jabs to end up coming off rather harmlessly to her fellow PCs, who simply do not pick up on the cutting insults she has so subtly implied. The GM decides that while this narrative effect might be too influential if it worked on all characters, encouraging intra-party banter (especially after the other players agree with the concept) is fun, and the ability shouldn't cause too much trouble. Andrew then proposes that it should have example checks of Courtesy (Air) checks to spread malicious gossip and Performance (Air) checks to send subtle messages. The GM agrees, and so Kiriko is assigned the Wasted in Such Company adversity.

Anxiety

An anxiety represents something that stirs up negative emotions in your character. Consider and record the narrative challenges this fear, hatred, regret, or other emotional weight places on your character and the ring to which it will most often apply. Then, record two specific types of checks for which the anxiety causes your character to suffer turmoil.

Example: *Sara wants to represent her character Karasu's tendency to be overwhelmed by the desire for revenge against her parents' killers. However, she has already selected this as Karasu's ninjō, and so the GM recommends that she consider how to create an anxiety that ties into Karasu's ninjō but also helps reveal more about the character. Sara decides that because Karasu had to fend for herself from an earlier age than most, she cannot tolerate weakness in herself or others.*

She proposes the anxiety Might Will Make Right, which prevents her from asking for help from others when pursuing her ninjō of revenge upon her parents' killers, as Karasu views the task as hers alone. Additionally, the disadvantage has example applications of Meditation (Earth) checks to see the costs of her quest for revenge and Tactics (Earth) checks to make plans or take actions to protect allies. The GM agrees, and so this anxiety is assigned to Karasu.

Keep In Mind...

As with all matters, the GM is the final arbiter of whether a given advantage or disadvantage is appropriate or not. GMs should be aware that custom advantages that apply to Martial skills can easily become very potent, and they should thus pay careful attention to any such advantages their players propose.

CHAPTER

3

Skills

More so than almost any other single mechanic, skills define the knowledge and competency of a character in the *Legend of the Five Rings* Roleplaying Game. While rings represent a samurai's general outlook and natural inclination, skills represent the more concrete knowledge they have accrued throughout the course of their entire lifetime. As such, skills allow them to accomplish a tremendous amount, giving them access to more dice to choose from on their rolls and new result combinations that do not exist on the ■. Each skill represents an area of competency—a particular body of knowledge and practical experience, essentially. A skilled character not only is more likely to succeed than an unskilled character, but also has a much better ability to create useful opportunities or complete a task effortlessly.

Skills and Checks

When making a check (see page 22), a player first states what their character wants to accomplish, which determines the skill group used for the check. Then, based on the body of knowledge that is most relevant, the GM and player determine which skill is the most fitting for the task. Finally, the player describes the method their character employs, from which the GM determines their approach. Each skill group has five approaches (one for each element) that reflect the various methods a character might use to leverage a skill to that end. Each of these approaches encompasses a number of concrete ways of using the competency that a skill reflects to achieve various goals. Many approaches have additional examples in individual skill entries found in this chapter, but these obey the general principles set out in each skill group overview.

Thus, when assessing a character's ability to perform a given task, one must examine both their skill ranks (their expertise in the field of study) and the ring the character will use for the end they want to accomplish (their core aptitude at that sort of approach). This means that two characters with the same number of ranks in a skill might actually have radically different probabilities of completing a given approach to a skill, based on their natural aptitudes for the skill's various approaches (reflected by their rings).

Skill Groups

Skills in the *Legend of the Five Rings* Roleplaying Game are divided into five categories based on their primary uses and role in society:

- **Artisan skills:** The high arts of Rokugan have a powerful influence on society. While commoners produce most items in Rokugan, artisans produce influential, sometimes even supernatural works that can alter the course of history. Artisan skills allow characters to engage in the process of creating art.
- **Martial skills:** Samurai were originally warriors, and while members of this societal strata fill many roles in Rokugan now, it is still steeped in martial traditions. As such, Martial skills are seen as being of utmost importance. Martial skills allow characters to fight in duels or battles, defeat physical challenges, successfully wage war, and overcome their own mental limits.
- **Scholar skills:** Information is power, and Scholar skills give a character access to information about society, the world, and other people. Scholar skills allow characters to recall information, identify things related to an area of expertise, observe their environment, and draw conclusions.
- **Social skills:** Courtiers hold incredible sway in Rokugan, negotiating the agreements by which wars are waged and averted and influencing marriages, trade, and other events of great import in the lives of samurai. Thus, Social skills are at least somewhat important to almost all samurai, from the most silver-tongued denizens of ruling courts to the roughest of field soldiers. Social skills allow characters to affect the emotions and thoughts of others through rhetoric, behavior, and body language.
- **Trade skills:** These are skills most commonly practiced by occupants of the bottom tiers of Rokugan's stratified society. Trade skills allow characters to procure resources from their environment and perform work.

Breakdown of a Skill

Each skill is made up of a number of elements, as described below.

DESCRIPTION

Each skill's description explains the body of knowledge that the skill encompasses and how it differs from other skills. Specific activities that can be undertaken with the skill are described under its approaches.

APPROACHES

Each skill group has five approaches that correspond to the Five Rings, and each skill write-up includes additional examples and details of how these approaches function for that particular skill. Because the Five Rings express various methods and different attitudes toward undertaking tasks, each approach governs a specific set of avenues to which a character can apply a skill.

SAMPLE TASKS, TARGET NUMBERS (TNS), AND TIMES

Each skill lists a number of sample tasks and the various requirements to perform them, including the target number (TN) of the involved check and the time span

THE RIGHT LEVEL OF DETAIL

This chapter offers a great many examples of how skills can function. For some groups, these are invaluable, providing guidance on how to use the skill system. But for other groups, they might seem like unnecessary detail, as the process of choosing a skill group, skill, and ring provides sufficient storytelling opportunities.

GMs should not feel constrained by the examples in this chapter—these are meant to help, not confine, roleplaying. If a group is comfortable describing how they mix and match rings and skills on their own, then they should feel free to do so without worrying about adhering to the examples here.

of the task (usually "action" or "downtime"). These are meant to help give the GM a sense of how to apply the skill in play; they are not intended to be a comprehensive list of everything the skill can do. Players and GMs should feel free to logically extrapolate how they can use skills for other tasks they would reasonably cover, using the examples to inform how an approach can function mechanically. Occasionally, sidebars will offer more granular guidance on the use of specific skills to perform tasks, such as healing injuries and crafting items.

Choosing Skill Group, Skill, and Approach

The process of choosing a skill group, skill, and approach is summarized in the chart on page 144. Additionally, the chart includes descriptions of hindrances that might make each approach more difficult or even impossible. When you are unsure which skill group, skill, or approach fits best, consult **Table 3–1: Choosing Skill Group, Skill, and Approach** on the next page, asking yourself the listed questions and answering them in sequence to determine the best option at each stage.

USING APPROACHES FROM OTHER SKILL GROUPS

For some tasks relating to a given skill, the approaches of a different skill group are actually more fitting than the default approaches for the skill's own skill group. This chapter provides a number of examples of tasks that are best accomplished using the approaches of a different group than the one a skill usually occupies. GMs should feel free to resolve a skill check using the approach of any other skill groups whenever common sense dictates, such as in the following examples.

For a particular plan of his to work, Agasha Johei needs to know how much heat is required to melt bronze. The Smithing skill encompasses the knowledge of metallurgy needed for the creation of arms and armor. Even though Artisan skills, such as Smithing, are most commonly used to fabricate and maintain creations, there is no separate Scholar skill that covers the information Smithing provides. When Johei wants to know the melting point of bronze, he treats Smithing as a Scholar skill for the check to remember this fact. Because this activity requires recalling information rather than creating or studying works of art, Johei makes a check with Smithing (Earth) and resolves the results of that check using the Recall approach (described on page 154).

In another example, Zhu Li, an aide to an Emerald Magistrate, wants to make a particularly insightful comment about her employer's bow technique after observing him in battle. Though this skill is usually used for launching projectiles, it can also be used for discussing the technicalities of the craft. Thus, Zhu Li makes a Martial Arts [Ranged] check using an approach from the Social skill group. Because she wants to pay a backhanded compliment—in the hope that her employer will understand the subversive nuance without being able to accuse her of rudeness—she uses Trick, the Air approach, for her check.

Investigation is one particularly common activity for which characters undertake tasks using the approaches of a skill group that is not the one for the skill they are using. *Legend of the Five Rings* does not place the task of finding things or connecting the dots on any single skill, so when a character wants to perceive, intuit, theorize, or remember something related to a particular area of expertise, they use the skill that best applies to that body of knowledge with the Scholar skill approach that pertains to the way they want to acquire the information. See the sidebar **The Art of Investigation**, on page 170, for more guidance on how to use skills to investigate.

OPTIONAL RULE: SUBSKILLS

Legend of the Five Rings means many different things to many different people, and not every possible campaign should use the exact same skill list. The skills used in a particular group's game should be ones that will actually be important to the story—skills that reflect the atmosphere, mood, and challenges that the PCs will face!

Even two campaigns run for the same group might have different skill and subskill needs. For example, if your campaign is going to be a tale of adventure and intrigue culminating in a journey into the depths of an ancient sorcerer's tomb, having fully fleshed-out subskills for both Ikebana (flower arrangement) and Rock Gardening is likely superfluous. Both reflect an understanding of aesthetics, nature, and minimalism, and thus both can be covered by the provided Aesthetics skill. In contrast, in a courtly drama in which swords are rarely drawn and knowledge of forbidden supernatural secrets is all but irrelevant (to say nothing of uncouth), there is little reason to have both Martial Arts [Staves] and Martial Arts [Swords] as subskills—but the difference between the Ikebana and Rock Gardening subskills might be crucial to distinguishing the skill sets of two different characters.

The skills listed in this chapter are intended to be a solid starting selection for many *Legend of the Five Rings* campaigns, and they cover the bases without taxing characters of any specific archetype excessively if they want to achieve competency in their field. We have generally condensed skills from past editions that were unlikely to be used frequently, with the goal of producing a smooth system.

However, as the GM, you should feel free to tailor this skill list to the type of game you want to run. Think about the focus of your game—is a skill that you think players should roll on often missing? Feel free to add it in as a subskill. You should even allow players to suggest new subskills, though you might advise them not to get overly specific and narrow, lest they never have a chance to roll dice from the 12 experience points they dutifully invested into Games [Shōgi] or Culture [The Ivory Kingdoms]—such knowledge can simply be part of the character's backstory if they studied something they'd never mechanically use during the campaign. Still, the player's desire tells you something useful about what they might want to do in the campaign, and you can capitalize on that information by working it into your plans. If a player wants a skill that specific, you could consider adding a shōgi tournament or an important envoy from the Ivory Kingdoms to your story!

To develop a subskill, choose the skill that already covers that activity (or is the closest to doing so), and add the new subskill to its skill group. It should function in much the same way as the skill from which it was divided, and it should count as a member of the same skill group. The skill from which it was divided no longer covers the activity of the subskill. When a listed check calls for the main skill (such as in a technique, or when a character is resisting an effect), the character may choose to use the main skill or any subskill that you deem could logically apply. It's a very good idea to alert your players about any planned subskills before they build their characters. Any time the main skill appears in a character's school curriculum (see page 57) or title curriculum (see page 305), the GM should decide whether to replace it with a subskill or simply add the subskill, allowing both to contribute. **Adding subskills in the midst of an ongoing campaign is generally not recommended**. GMs who do so should discuss it with their players first so that nobody feels their experience expenditures were undermined, or let players reassign spent XP based on the changes to the skill list.

In each skill entry, this chapter offers a number of specific ways you might want to break certain subskills off from their main skill, along with conveying what this added granularity signals about the campaign's focus and story.

If a subskill is particularly narrow and not a Martial subskill, the GM might want to consider changing the price to invest in it. We recommend half the price of a standard skill (XP equal to the rank the character is purchasing).

Table 3–1: Choosing Skill Group, Skill, and Approach

WHAT DO YOU WANT?	WHAT SPECIFIC EXPERTISE DO YOU NEED?	WHAT METHOD DO YOU USE?
DETERMINES SKILL GROUP	DETERMINES SKILL	DETERMINES APPROACH
To craft a piece of art (***Artisan Skill Group***)	Artisan skills (choose one) • Nonutilitarian art (***Aesthetics***) • Literature and poetry (***Composition***) • Finery and worn art (***Design***) • Armor and weapons (***Smithing***)	Artisan approaches (choose one) • **Restore** a damaged piece through upkeep (***Earth***) • **Adapt** an existing piece into something else (***Water***) • **Invent** a new piece from raw materials (***Fire***) • **Refine** an existing piece to make it function better (***Air***) • **Attune** yourself to a piece of art (***Void***)
To influence a person (***Social Skill Group***)	Social skills (choose one) • How to assert authority over others, especially of lower status (***Command***) • How to appeal formally to others, especially of higher status (***Courtesy***) • How to discuss and play games to socialize (***Games***) • How to communicate with and influence an audience (***Performance***)	Social approaches (choose one) • **Reason** with them to act based on logic and duty (***Earth***) • **Charm** them to develop positive feelings toward you (***Water***) • **Incite** them to act on their emotions and desires (***Fire***) • **Trick** them into believing something you want them to believe (***Air***) • **Enlighten** them to understand a fundamental truth (***Void***)
To know or learn a piece of information (***Scholar Skill Group***)	Scholar skills (choose one) • Current events, historical trends, and etiquette (***Culture***) • Law, bureaucracy, posts, and positions (***Government***) • Health, injury, and disease (***Medicine***) • Psychology, emotions, and motivations (***Sentiment***) • The spiritual realms, mystical beings and phenomena, and religious rites (***Theology***)	Scholar approaches (choose one) • **Recall** it from memory (***Earth***) • **Survey** the surroundings for clues about it (***Water***) • **Theorize** possibilities of its nature (***Fire***) • **Analyze** a specific thing for details about it (***Air***) • **Sense** it with your instincts or a hunch (***Void***)
To overcome an opponent or challenge with force (***Martial Skill Group***)	Martial skills (choose one) • Performing athletic feats and resisting harm (***Fitness***) • Using close-quarters arms (***Martial Arts [Melee]***) • Using missile weapons (***Martial Arts [Ranged]***) • Fighting bare-handed and with improvised weapons (***Martial Arts [Unarmed]***) • Mastering oneself and controlling emotion such as anger, fear, and hate (***Meditation***) • Fighting with squads and armies (***Tactics***)	Martial approaches (choose one) • **Withstand** opposing force to wear it down (***Earth***) • **Shift** opposing force to work against itself or for you (***Water***) • **Overwhelm** opposing force with a quick burst of power (***Fire***) • **Feint** to lure opposing force into a position of vulnerability (***Air***) • **Sacrifice** to let opposing force score a victory so that you can achieve a greater end (***Void***)
To get resources or perform work (***Trade Skill Group***)	Trade skills (choose one) • Sales, trading, and speculation (***Commerce***) • Farming, construction, and production (***Labor***) • Sailing and living on the ocean (***Seafaring***) • Criminal organizations and activities (***Skulduggery***) • Living in the wilds beyond civilization (***Survival***)	Trade approaches (choose one) • **Produce** what you need through physical toil (***Earth***) • **Exchange** one type of labor or resources for another (***Water***) • **Innovate** a new way to get what you need (***Fire***) • **Con** someone to get something for nothing (***Air***) • **Subsist** in your environment without disrupting it (***Void***)

Artisan Skill Group

Artisan skills are seen as the noblest pursuits in Rokugan, and they are generally only practiced by the highest elements of the social strata. While many have little utility in day-to-day life—or perhaps because of this fact—these arts are a means of acquiring and leveraging important social currency in the courts of Rokugan. Writing a poem that stirs the hearts of its readers or restoring an ancient sword used by a hero of old can have a profound effect on others.

ELEMENTAL APPROACHES FOR ARTISAN SKILLS

A character's natural aptitudes likely push them toward a variety of endeavors even within the sphere of expertise a single art represents. The elemental approaches for Artisan skills function as follows.

Restore Approach (Earth Ring)

The Earth Ring represents a character's tendency toward cautious, well-considered approaches that show due respect for history, so the repair and upkeep of art is governed by the Earth approach to Artisan skills. The creation of art is a monumental task, but so is its maintenance and preservation. Even for arts that exclusively create ephemeral works of beauty, tools must be maintained and records must be kept so that future artisans in the tradition can understand and reflect upon the achievements of the past.

A character uses Restore when they want to:

- Restore a damaged or degraded work of art to its previous state.
- Perform routine maintenance on a work of art.
- Store or transport a work of art safely.

Adapt Approach (Water Ring)

Water is an element of change, so for Artisan skills, the Water approach determines a character's ability to reframe, combine, divide, or entirely transform their own creations and those of others. Whether this means translating a piece of literature, cutting down and remounting a blade for a new wielder, or remaking a piece of broken pottery completely by filling in the shattered seams with lacquer and powdered gold, adaptation is transformative and fluid.

A character uses Adapt when they want to:

- Break a piece down to serve as raw materials for a new work.
- Modify a creation to serve a different function.
- Reflect upon the other ways that a piece could function.

Invent Approach (Fire Ring)

Pure invention is the domain of the Fire Ring, and as such, creating new works of art is the Fire approach to Artisan skills. Even seemingly minimalistic pursuits such as flower arrangement or bonsai call for vast amounts of passion and mental energy. If an artist makes few decisions in the process of creating a work, then each decision the artist does make carries exceptional significance. These bold strokes and decisions are represented by the Invent approach.

A character uses Invent when they want to:

- Create a new piece from raw materials.
- Draft a new work.
- Develop a technique or tool to assist in the creative process.
- Brainstorm possible new works that they could make.

Refine Approach (Air Ring)

Understanding nuance is part of the Air Ring, as are the careful addition, manipulation, and removal of detail. These apply to Artisan skills via the Refine approach, which allows a character to improve a piece's core function, elevating it to heights otherwise unreachable. Refine turns a creation into a masterwork, and it differs from the Adapt approach in that instead of changing, subverting, or reinterpreting function, it enhances and deepens it. Refine also allows a skilled artisan to layer into a piece nuance and hidden messages or meanings that viewers must disentangle for themselves to fully understand.

A character uses Refine when they want to:

- Improve the core function of a piece by adding or manipulating details.
- Improve the core function of a piece by removing unnecessary things.
- Add a subtle message or complex nuance to a piece.

HIERARCHY OF SKILLS

Skill groups in this chapter are presented in descending order of their perceived importance in Rokugani society—from the perspective of the ruling class, at least.

Artisan skills are viewed as they most vaunted in Rokugan. Art often has a sacred aspect to it, and is considered the purest expression of wisdom.

Social skills are the skills of rulers and courtiers, whose words and intrigues decide the fate of Rokugan in the highest courts.

Scholar skills are the tools of the bureaucrats who manage domains and instruct other samurai in their work.

Martial skills are seen as noble in their own fashion, but many members of the elite see themselves as above the rugged ways of war.

Trade skills are generally viewed as the domain of lesser samurai and peasants.

Attune Approach (Void Ring)

The Void Ring governs self-knowledge and self-reflection, so the Void approach to an Artisan skill revolves not around learning about a work of art per se, but around learning about oneself by entering deeply into the mindset the piece evokes. This sort of artistic reflection allows a character to use a piece of art as a lens through which to understand their own heart. It can reveal not only the piece's purpose in a grander sense, but also why it has entered into the character's life at this time and what conclusions the character can draw about their own circumstances and emotions from that incident.

A character uses Attune when they want to:

- Use a piece as a focal point through which to disentangle their own emotions or contemplate Enlightenment.
- Spiritually center their being around a work.
- Awaken the dormant supernatural properties of an object.

POSSIBLE AESTHETICS SUBSKILLS

Bonsai (Tree Pruning), Drawing, Ikebana (Flower Arrangement), Kodo (Fragrances), Painting, Origami, Rock Gardening, Sculpture, Woodblock Prints

ARTISAN SKILLS

Artisan skills represent a character's expertise with works of surpassing beauty that capture the imaginations of those who see them and that win renown for their creators at court.

Aesthetics

Art has been expected to be half of a samurai's pursuits since the founding of the Empire. An appreciation and understanding of art is so ingrained in a samurai's training that to look upon a work and not be moved is, to the samurai, a sure sign of barbarianism, a charge that bestows great shame upon those who bear it. The more martial clans understand that art is essential for clearing a warrior's mind and reminding them of life while so often surrounded by death.

The Aesthetics skill covers activities that create non-utilitarian visual art, such as bonsai (trimming plants to encourage their growth in an artistic fashion), ikebana (flower arrangement), origami, painting, and rock gardening. Such arts serve a deeply important role in the courts of Rokugan, and any courtier is expected to have an understanding of their principles, techniques, and guiding philosophies. By understanding a work of art, one can gain insight into its creator, and that insight can be invaluable in pursuing political agendas and court intrigue alike.

MEANING IN ART

While art may seem a frivolous pursuit, it serves as yet another way to maneuver politically and socially in Rokugan.

Gift giving is an important part of Rokugani culture, and a work produced by the gift-giver is especially valued for the effort expended on the gift. This also allows the giver to send subtle messages to the recipient. For example, an origami lion may suggest an alliance against a mutual foe, while a painting of an ocean scene may propose a trade agreement. The best pieces of art are those with multiple possible meanings, so that only the recipient may understand the message.

Aesthetics Approaches

The Aesthetics skill can be used with the appropriate rings as follows:

- **Restore Approach (Earth Ring):** Restoring a damaged piece, maintaining something's beauty, safely transporting a piece.
- **Adapt Approach (Water Ring):** Altering an existing work, completely reworking or rebuilding an existing piece, finding inspiration for new works.
- **Invent Approach (Fire Ring):** Creating a new work, brainstorming new possible works, developing new methods and techniques for creating art.
- **Refine Approach (Air Ring):** Finding a flaw in a piece and removing it, adding a detail that enhances a piece, hiding a subtle message within a work.
- **Attune Approach (Void Ring):** Learning a work's purpose, discerning whether a work has any supernatural qualities or features and awakening those features within it.

Composition

Almost all samurai are literate, for holding nearly any office, bureaucratic or military, requires the ability to read and write. Thus, while not all samurai explore the finer points of wordsmithing, literature is an elevated art in Rokugan. Courtly samurai are expected to know dozens of classic poems by heart and grasp literary allusions that can provide important subtext in conversation. The best poets compose in the moment, with every sentence they speak layered with meaning.

Haiku, a three-line poem with five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, then five in the last, is one of the most popular forms of poetry in Rokugan. Writers often use it to describe a moment in time, from the first snowflake seen in winter to a moment of tranquility by a pond. Others practice different forms of poetry, including longer poems and competitions of linked poems traded back and forth, or write prose in the form of travel diaries, philosophical essays, and even fantastical tales.

Literature allows a character to create powerful compositions that sway readers and to understand the literary devices and allusions that underlie such influential works. Additionally, the aesthetics of calligraphy are important to many writers in Rokugan, so Composition also governs the act of putting words on a surface in ink in a pleasing way.

Composition Approaches

The Composition skill can be used with the appropriate rings as follows:

- **Restore Approach (Earth Ring):** Restoring an old text that has been damaged by time or exposure, annotating a difficult text with references that make it easier for readers to understand, transcribing a work without errors.
- **Adapt Approach (Water Ring):** Translating a text from another language, adapting a work for a new medium, using an old quote in a new context that reframes its meaning, combining visual elements with textual elements.
- **Invent Approach (Fire Ring):** Writing a first draft of a new text, filling in the missing gaps of an incomplete text, brainstorming ideas for new written works.
- **Refine Approach (Air Ring):** Correcting errors in a work, removing excessive and unnecessary verbiage from a work to make it read more cleanly and quickly, adding a nuanced allusion or reference, introducing implications and subtext.
- **Attune Approach (Void Ring):** Understanding a writer's deeper purpose behind a work, discerning whether a work has any supernatural qualities or features, learning about oneself from a text.

POSSIBLE COMPOSITION SUBSKILLS

Calligraphy, Essays, Poetry, Monogatari (Narrative Literature), Nikki Bungaku (Travel Diaries)

Design

Presentation matters. At court, it is often said that beautiful looks reflect a beautiful soul, and also whispered that one whose soul is corrupt will display physical signs of that corruption. Despite wiser words on the subject by Shinsei and other sages, a skilled samurai who dresses shabbily will often be seen as lesser than the barely competent one who is well dressed.

Design covers the act of making clothes for times of peace and formal occasions. After all, arms and armor are not appropriate for all situations in a samurai's life, much as some individuals might lament this reality. However, that does not mean that a samurai attending court can afford to choose their garments with any less care than when they take to the battlefield. Carefully selected clothes and adornments are vital weapons and armor to courtiers, allowing them to send subtle

CRAFTING WEAPONS AND ARMOR

If a character wants to make a new item, they must make a check using the appropriate skill, with the TN set by the GM. They must acquire the materials needed to make the item (which could be anything from a brush and ink to a forge and steel). They usually use the Invent or Adapt approach to create the first version of the item. Of course, they might then adapt and refine the item to improve it, restore it if it ever becomes damaged, and attune themself to it to gain greater insight into its use.

However, since weapons and armor have more detailed rules for use than most other items, there are some slightly more granular guidelines for making these items in the context of the game:

A character must acquire the raw materials needed for the item. This might be as simple as requesting them from one's lord or as difficult as undertaking an epic quest to retrieve half of an ancestor's blade from the hide of a particular oni in the Shadowlands.

As a downtime activity, a character begins with a Smithing (Fire) check (if they are starting with raw materials) or a Smithing (Water) check if they are transforming one item into another, such as refitting armor for a new wearer. The TN of this check is equal to the rarity of the item they wish to create, with a reduction to the difficulty based on the facilities available—the wondrous workshop used by the Kakita smiths would reduce the TN by 4, while a small town blacksmith's facilities would provide a more modest reduction of 2.

If the character fails, they can always try again later. If they succeed, the character crafts the general shape of the item—it is a blade without a fitting, or armor without straps. It is not usable yet.

As another downtime activity, the character may make a Smithing (Air) check to take the unfinished product to its final state. The TN of this check is again equal to the rarity of the item, again reduced by the quality of the facilities.

If the character fails, they fail to make the item but can try again later. If they succeed, they complete the item, and it now possesses the profile found in the Equipment chapter (see page 228).

At the GM's discretion, a character may spend ✤+ at any stage of this process to add an appropriate item quality (see page 240) to their creation—though their player must offer a reasonable explanation for how they are constructing it to accommodate this feature, and the GM should feel free to require additional ✤ for some options, require special materials for others, and simply decline any combinations that do not fit the tenor of the campaign.

signals to others and avoid humiliation at the hands of enemies. Thus, the creation, maintenance, and assessment of clothing is an important field of expertise, allowing a character to create and improve on items worn in many formal situations.

POSSIBLE DESIGN SUBSKILLS

Hair Styling, Jewelry, Layering (of Clothing), Makeup, Weaving

Design Approaches

The Design skill can be used with the appropriate rings as follows:

- **Restore Approach (Earth Ring):** Stitching up a tear in a damaged piece of clothing, storing a piece of clothing such that it will not degrade, replacing lost parts of a piece of clothing.
- **Adapt Approach (Water Ring):** Repurposing an old piece of clothing to serve a new function, adding a new element to an outfit to let it function in different circumstances, turning an old piece of clothing into raw materials for a new project.
- **Invent Approach (Fire Ring):** Sewing a new piece of clothing, inventing a new style, crafting a new accessory, conjecturing about possible new trends in clothing.
- **Refine Approach (Air Ring):** Improving an existing piece of clothing with embellishment, choosing clothes that send a specific message, adding filigree to a piece of jewelry that enhances its beauty.
- **Attune Approach (Void Ring):** Learning the deeper purpose for which a piece of clothing was made, discerning whether a worn item has any supernatural features, awakening the supernatural properties slumbering in an object of power.

Table 3–2: Sample Tasks (with Rings) and TNs for Artisan Skills

TASK	TN
Sketching a new drawing with charcoal (Fire), refining the draft of a letter (Air), choosing the right color of clothing to express a specific message to someone (Air), maintaining a sword after a battle (removing the Damaged quality) (Earth).	1
Mixing a new color of ink from two existing pigments (Water), drafting a new poem (Fire), stitching up a torn piece of clothing (Earth), honing a blade to improve its edge (Air).	2
Repairing a cracked teapot (Earth), Translating a work into a different language without losing any meaning (Water), creating a new adornment or decorative accessory (Fire), fitting a blade onto a new hilt (Water).	3
Weaving a subtle message into a painting that only the desired recipient will understand (Air), determining whether a scroll's contents are mystical in nature (Void), determining whether a piece of clothing has any supernatural qualities from a distance (Void), forging a new blade (Fire).	4
Awakening the supernatural properties within a work (Void), transcribing a text that has been damaged by fire and smoke without any divergences from the original (Earth), finding an appropriate replacement for a lost garment among a pile of miscellaneous clothes (Water), Intuiting the mystical properties of a suit of armor without knowing its history or creator (Void).	5

Smithing

Samurai are warriors, and even their arts are influenced by war. The Smithing skill covers the creation of arms and armor for ceremonial and battlefield use. Many samurai go into battle wielding armor and weaponry that are stunning works of art in their own right.

The finest armor and weapons—especially the daishō—are created with an eye toward both use and aesthetic, as they will be in service for centuries. They must reflect the influence and wealth of the family that owns them, for the sword is said to be the outward manifestation of the samurai's soul. Ruling families have weapons hundreds of years old, displayed in a place of honor as a living reminder of each family's history. The Phoenix and Crane are famous for the beauty of their work, while the Crab blades are known for durability and effectiveness. Those rare creations worked by a Kakita smith are widely acknowledged to be the greatest of all.

Smithing Approaches

The Smithing skill can be used with the appropriate rings as follows:

- **Restore Approach (Earth Ring):** Repairing a damaged weapon or piece of armor, performing routine upkeep and cleaning on a weapon or piece of armor, treating a weapon or piece of armor to prevent rust and corrosion.
- **Adapt Approach (Water Ring):** Improving an existing weapon or piece of armor, reshaping a mundane item into a weapon, sizing a weapon for a new wielder, salvaging a destroyed sword to reforge it.
- **Invent Approach (Fire Ring):** Forging a new blade, crafting a new piece of armor, inventing a new weapon or piece of armor, conjecturing about possible new weapons and armor technologies.
- **Refine Approach (Air Ring):** Polishing a blade to hone its edge, improving a spear's grip, adding embellishments to a naginata to accent the beautiful wave pattern of the steel.
- **Attune Approach (Void Ring):** Learning the purpose for which a weapon or piece of armor was forged, discerning whether a weapon or piece of armor has any supernatural features, unlocking supernatural potential within a forged item.

POSSIBLE SMITHING SUBSKILLS

Armorsmithing, Bowmaking, Swordsmithing

Social Skill Group

The Social skills relate to interpersonal interaction, and they reflect a character's degree of comfort and adroitness in dealing with others. While these skills have obvious application when one is at court, they are useful to characters in all walks of life. Dedicated warriors must command their troops or provoke their enemies, and many people outside of the samurai class must be as persuasive as any courtier to get by in life.

ELEMENTAL APPROACHES FOR SOCIAL SKILLS

Each Social skill represents a character's expertise at dealing with people in a certain context, and each approach below dictates a set of results a character can produce when influencing others with a particular ring paired with a Social skill. The elemental approaches for Social skills function as follows.

Reason Approach (Earth Ring)

The Earth Ring is cautious and grounded. When used with a Social skill to influence others, it is rational and conciliatory, counseling a slow, thoughtful approach to problems. It is useful to get someone to measure twice before cutting, as the saying goes, or to get them to consider all available information before drawing their sword. A speaker using this approach appeals to reason and obligation rather than passion and desire, reminding the listener of their duties or the risks they face should they act rashly.

A character Reasons with someone when they want to:

- Convince that person to listen to reason rather than emotion.
- Soothe that person's emotions.
- Comfort that person.
- Instill discipline in that person.
- Get that person to wait rather than acting rashly.
- Get that person to uphold an existing oath rather than pursuing their personal desires.

Charm Approach (Water Ring)

Flexibility and change are the domain of the Water Ring, so Charm, the Water approach for Social skills, revolves around fostering positive emotions in others toward oneself. This approach is frequently based around mutual understanding, sympathy, and shared feelings, or at least the facsimile of these.

A character Charms someone when they want to:

- Get that person to like them.
- Build a pleasant rapport with that person.
- Offer their sympathies to that person.
- Instill a new desire for something (or someone) in that person.
- Win that person's sympathy.

Incite Approach (Fire Ring)

A Fire approach to a Social skill seeks to persuade through emotional appeals and charisma, rallying others around exciting or novel ideas by inflaming their existing passions, desires, and fears. When deployed properly, it can get people to fall in line or rally behind a cause. However, such unsubtle approaches are not welcome in many courts, as this method risks running roughshod over propriety and obligation, both of which can become matters of life and death to a samurai. Further, a character cannot necessarily control the group they have Incited to act—stopping them once they are in motion might prove far more difficult than rousing them to a heedless course in the first place.

A character Incites someone when they want to:

- Rouse that person's emotions (positively or negatively).
- Get that person's attention.
- Persuade that person to listen to emotion rather than reason.
- Get that person to ignore the potential consequences of a proposed plan.
- Get that person to prioritize their own desires instead of their oaths and responsibilities.

Trick Approach (Air Ring)

The Air Ring represents a character's subtle control over their outward countenance and choice of words, as well as their attention to the priorities and façades of others. Thus, the Air approach for a Social skill is Trick, which allows the character to lie, persuasively convey information, and draw out the faults and features of others from the subtle cues they display. Tricking someone does not always mean lying to them directly—it might mean manipulating them into thinking something is their own idea by subtly suggesting it, playing devil's advocate to get them to solidify their position, saying something in a deniable way, or just leaving off a piece of information that might complicate the situation too much—but it is always a form of manipulation, even if it is not malicious.

A character Tricks someone when they want to:

- Get that character to believe something untrue, partially true, or only technically true.
- Obscure a key truth from that character.
- Deflect that character's attention away from someone or something.
- Convey an idea to the character in a deniable way.
- Imply something to that character without stating it outright.

Enlighten Approach (Void Ring)

A Void approach to a Social skill seeks to get others to evaluate the wider situation and state of existence. Enlighten, the Void approach to Social skills, allows a character to attempt to shake someone to their core, calling into question the person's fundamental truths. If a person has lost sight of one of their dearest ideals because of rage or despair (or even supernatural forces), this approach can be used to force them to remember it, realigning them with the person they strive to be. If a contradiction exists at someone's core, Enlightening them to it can help them face and perhaps overcome it.

A character Enlightens someone when they want to:

- Challenge that person's deeply held beliefs.
- Force that person to question a moral or philosophical truth they believe to be certain.
- Cause that person to remember an experience they had forgotten (or force them to confront an experience they are struggling to forget).
- Shock that person out of a stupor (mundane or supernatural).

SOCIAL SKILLS

Social skills represent a character's deftness and experience in dealing with other people in various contexts, from court to the battlefield.

Command

The ability to speak authoritatively is as imperative for the courtier—who guide their charges through complicated ceremonies and social events—as it is for the bushi—who shepherds their soldiers through battles and wars. Lives hang in the balance, and one word can inspire victory or lead to disaster. When chaos arises, it is the duty of those in command to take charge and to instill order, and they will be the ones judged on the success or failure of the operation, not their underlings.

The Command skill is used to instill obedience, whether in court or on the battlefield. It is generally most effective when used to motivate subordinates rather than peers, or in the context of a clear command structure, as it revolves around telling others what to do (and, usually, expecting them to do it).

Table 3–3: Sample Tasks (with Rings) and TNs for Social Skills

TASK	TN
Calming someone with a reminder about propriety (Earth), convincing an inexperienced soldier that they will survive a battle (Air), teaching someone the rules of a game (Earth), reciting a popular poem to win over your audience (Water).	1
Moving up the scheduled date of an appointment with a court official of lower status (Water), intimidating an average person of lower status (Fire), making a positive impression on someone during a game (Water), Performing a traditional tea ceremony to calm people (Earth).	2
Spreading a rumor such that it reaches the ears of an intended person (Air), getting a group of samurai from rival clans to work together without friction (Water), demonstrating your strategic prowess to someone through a game (Void), impersonating someone else's voice and posture at a distance (Air).	3
Getting the attention of someone well above your station (Fire), getting a group of armed peasants to rally after breaking formation (Earth), winning double your wagered money at a gambling hall (Fire), performing a play that causes someone of higher status to reflect upon a major decision (Void).	4
Causing a samurai to consider their common humanity with a member of another class of society (Void), getting two characters of status higher than yours to see that a conflict over perceived slights is pointless (Void), rigging part of a game in front of a crowd (Air), singing a rousing song that drives a bedraggled army into a frenzy against the enemy (Fire).	5

POSSIBLE COMMAND SUBSKILLS

Instruction, Interrogation, Intimidation

Command Approaches

The Command skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Reason Approach (Earth Ring):** Verbally reprimanding a group of soldiers who have grown lax in their duties, establishing order on a chaotic battlefield, making someone afraid of the consequences of their actions.
- **Charm Approach (Water Ring):** Cultivating loyalty from troops under your command, motivating troops with a promised reward, getting a mixed force to stop squabbling, making someone afraid of letting you down.
- **Incite Approach (Fire Ring):** Restoring morale to weary troops, stoking an old grudge, getting others to follow you despite danger to life and limb, making someone afraid of you personally.
- **Trick Approach (Air Ring):** Giving an assignment without letting on to the dangers it entails, misleading your own troops to confuse your enemy, communicating in code with your troops.
- **Enlighten Approach (Void Ring):** Convincing troops embroiled in a battle to see its pointlessness, persuading enemy soldiers that their cause is not just, snapping someone out of shock or a rage in battle.

Courtesy

The essential Social skill of Rokugan's highest circles of power, the Courtesy skill represents a character's ability to influence others' opinions, persuade others to a course of action, outmaneuver their opponents, win arguments, steer a conversation in a desired direction, and deliver cunning put-downs—all without ever openly giving offense or stepping beyond the complex rules of Rokugani etiquette.

In the vicious world of court politics, politeness is a deadly weapon in a courtier's arsenal. Baiting someone to an outburst of emotion can destroy their reputation and earn their enmity for life, while deflecting someone's wrath onto oneself, taking the blame for a mistake, can put them in one's debt and foster new alliances. Courtesy is also needed when one wishes to influence the perceived truth of a matter that may be in question, regardless of the actual truth.

Courtesy Approaches

The Courtesy skill can be used with the appropriate rings as follows:

- **Reason Approach (Earth Ring):** Convincing someone to listen to reason rather than their emotions, reminding someone of their duties, convincing someone to wait rather than acting and suffering potential consequences.

- **Charm Approach (Water Ring):** Getting someone to like or trust you, fostering desire for something or someone in a person, altering someone's current desires, efficiently making your way through the complex bureaucracy of a court by being pleasant and gregarious.
- **Incite Approach (Fire Ring):** Convincing someone to listen to their emotions rather than reason, reminding someone of their desires, drawing attention to yourself, getting someone to ignore risks before them, insulting someone openly.
- **Trick Approach (Air Ring):** Convincing someone of something untrue (or incomplete), deflecting attention from yourself onto others, spreading a rumor about someone, leading someone to an idea to convince them it is their own, insulting someone subtly and deniably.
- **Enlighten Approach (Void Ring):** Using well-chosen words to get someone to question a truth they held as absolute, getting someone to remember their true self when they are acting out of fear, despair, rage, or supernatural influence.

Games

Games are an important tool at court, serving as a vital outlet for the rivalries that develop in the highest circles of power and as a crucial opportunity to maintain and develop relationships, especially outside of the strict confines that one's station would usually dictate. As a result, success at games is one way a new arrival at court can earn distinction and get access to people of much higher rank, whom they would otherwise be unable to approach. However, only the truly naïve overlook the fact that games are merely one more means to an end in the shifting world of court politics.

The games of Rokugan are as varied as the clans, but first among them is Go, a game played with black and white stones and a wooden board. Played by peasant and Emperor, young and old, bushi and monk, it can be found in all walks of life in Rokugan. The rules are simple, but mastering the game requires years of dedication; proficiency is always worthy of respect.

Other games include Fortunes and Winds, a dice game many samurai see as a pastime for the lower classes; Sadane, a game of biting insults that courtiers enjoy; Karuta, a card game of trick taking using both illustrations and lines of poetry; and Shōgi, a tactical game of generals, cavalry, and assorted soldiers.

POSSIBLE COURTESY SUBSKILLS

Gossip, Sincerity

Games Approaches

The Games skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Reason Approach (Earth Ring):** Playing without upsetting your opponent, playing cautiously, instructing someone else in the basics of a game, minimizing your losses.
- **Charm Approach (Water Ring):** Using a game to build a rapport with your opponent (or someone else present), playing casually, using a game to get your opponent to trust you.
- **Incite Approach (Fire Ring):** Using a game to make your opponent angry or afraid, playing aggressively, spurring your opponent to wager more, developing new tactics in a game.
- **Trick Approach (Air Ring):** Using a game to uncover your opponent's strengths and weaknesses, playing deceptively, cheating, losing deliberately (without being obvious), sending a subtle message through your play.
- **Enlighten Approach (Void Ring):** Using a game to shock your opponent into seeing something clearly, playing minimally, leaving the fate of the game to pure chance.

POSSIBLE GAMES SUBSKILLS

Fortunes and Winds, Gambling, Go, Kemari, Letters, Sadane, Shōgi, Sport Hunting

Performance

The Performance skill pertains to the act of entertaining others with active arts, from song to dance to storytelling. Performances of sufficient caliber can help to bridge political divides, influence people to rethink their lives, or even set off artistic or political movements. Performance is also used for impersonating others, though obviously doing so would be dishonorable.

POSSIBLE PERFORMANCE SUBSKILLS

Acting, Dance, Instruments, Puppetry, Singing, Storytelling, Tea Ceremony

Performers occupy an unusual place in Rokugan. Commoners who practice the performing arts are treated poorly by the upper classes and are considered unworthy of the status of craftspeople or farmers. However, every court features musicians, dancers, and artists who are of common birth but are allowed to bring entertainment to those of high station. Their dishonorable status is tolerably ignored—as long as they entertain their betters. Meanwhile, samurai performers are praised by their peers for having an "expressive nature," or a "poetic soul."

Performance Approaches

The Performance skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Reason Approach (Earth Ring):** Transmitting some moral lesson to your audience, soothing your audience, educating your audience on a particular matter, setting your audience members' minds at ease.
- **Charm Approach (Water Ring):** Gaining your audience's sympathy, causing your audience to desire something, building a positive rapport with your audience.
- **Incite Approach (Fire Ring):** Rousing your audience into a state of excitement, intentionally needling your audience, stirring your audience to immediate action.
- **Trick Approach (Air Ring):** Giving an extremely convincing performance, getting your audience to come to a particular conclusion without stating it outright, impersonating others convincingly.
- **Enlighten Approach (Void Ring):** Causing your audience to reevaluate something in their lives, breaking your audience out of an emotional rut such as sorrow or rage, delivering a message to your audience in spite of supernatural interference.

Scholar Skill Group

Scholar skills revolve around acquiring, recalling, expanding, and leveraging the information that a character has absorbed over the course of their life.

ELEMENTAL APPROACHES FOR SCHOLAR SKILLS

The elemental approaches for Scholar skills function as follows.

Recall Approach (Earth Ring)

An Earth approach to a Scholar skill is thorough and detailed; it starts by establishing the fundamentals and then builds from there. Once a character has been prompted to discuss a topic, Recall allows them to draw forth facts that expand upon that topic. However, because it can only build upon a solid foundation, a character cannot Recall information about something completely novel or unfamiliar, and they must use other approaches to gather enough context to know which facts are relevant to the situation at hand.

A character uses Recall when they want to:

- Remember and recite information.
- Commit things to memory via rote memorization.
- Create a detailed time line of a topic to date.
- Pore over their own memories of something they observed firsthand.

Survey Approach (Water Ring)

The Water Ring is practical and results oriented. Survey, the Water approach to a Scholar skill, focuses on information as it pertains to the environment right in front of the thinker. This allows a character to identify things in front of them and gain broader information about their circumstances based on what they can currently perceive. A character can use Survey to get enough information to begin a deeper inquiry, but this approach generally cannot delve beneath surface-level information such as identification.

A character uses Survey when they want to:

- Identify something they are currently observing.
- Become oriented in an environment.
- Narrow their search for something to a small area.

- Look for physical clues related to a topic in their surroundings.
- Perceive lurking threats in an area.

Theorize Approach (Fire Ring)

Fire is creative and flashy, even in its approach to the Scholar skill group. Theorize, the Fire approach for Scholar skills, is imaginative, seeing the possibilities instead of the certainties. It is good for approaching the unprecedented and the unforeseen, as well as for identifying notable absences, but reckless conjecture can sometimes lead to incorrect conclusions. Taking a Fire approach to a Scholar skill allows a character to come up with a novel idea about how something might function or behave based on limited evidence. However, that novel idea isn't always the truth.

A character uses Theorize when they want to:

- Connect the dots between two seemingly unrelated pieces of information.
- Conjecture regarding the reasons behind a physical phenomenon or unexplained occurrence.
- Brainstorm possible solutions to a problem.
- Come up with a list of foreseeable outcomes of a future event.
- Determine that something is conspicuously missing from an area.

Analyze Approach (Air Ring)

The Air Ring frequently deals with nuances and subtleties, and therefore the Air approach to a Scholar skill, Analyze, focuses on uncovering and understanding details. Analyze allows a character to unveil hidden things, focus on minute details, and hone in on traits possessed by people and objects. It also allows a character to infer subtle clues about people from their countenance, possessions, or statements.

A character uses Analyze when they want to:

- Study the details of a physical object or idea.
- Learn about a particular trait of a subject.
- Infer something about a person from their countenance, statements, or possessions.
- Find an object they know to be hidden in an area.
- Search a small area in detail.
- Untangle an apparent contradiction.

Sense Approach (Void Ring)

A Void approach to a Scholar skill is an attempt to look beyond worldly circumstances to see that physical appearances and even time are illusory. Sense, the Void approach to a Scholar skill, is rooted in an understanding that supernatural forces are at the root of the world and that what is yet to come is already written in what the viewer can observe now. It represents hunches and

Table 3–4: Sample Tasks (with Rings) and TNs for Scholar Skills

TASK	TN
Finding your way to the right part of a festival (Water), identifying the specific member of a lord's staff who can actually help you get something you want (Water), diagnosing a common illness correctly (Air), determining whether someone likes you or not (Water).	1
Guessing what an unfamiliar idiom might mean (Fire), knowing whether a proposed action is legal or not (Earth), identifying useful herbs from the woods (Water), discerning whether someone is conflicted about their current course of action (Void).	2
Determining the significance behind an unfamiliar cultural practice (Void), arguing that a law be applied nontraditionally in a specific case (Fire), recalling the proper proportion of ingredients in a medical recipe (Earth), detecting a subtle tell that indicates someone is bluffing (Air).	3
Remembering the mon of a Minor Clan from a distant region of the Empire (Earth), finding a legal loophole you can exploit (Air), combining ingredients in a nontraditional way to treat a disease (Fire), assessing a statement for possible lies of omission or missing information (Fire).	4
Untangling a complex paradox created by two conflicting tenets of Bushidō (Air), foreseeing where shortfalls in supplies will occur after studying a plan for a military campaign (Void), realigning internal energy to help someone recover from a spiritual malady (Void), understanding the fears of a person from a different social class after only a brief conversation. (Earth).	5

other seemingly supernatural hints a character might receive about a topic. It also allows a character to take a possibility they have already considered (such as by Recalling or Theorizing it) and determine how likely that eventuality is to occur.

A character uses Sense when they want to:

- Rely on their instincts and hunches for information.
- Understand the spiritual ramifications of an action.
- Predict the likelihood of a particular outcome to a future event.
- Detect a supernatural presence or influence in their vicinity that would escape their earthly senses.

POSSIBLE CULTURE SUBSKILLS

Bushidō, Etiquette, Heraldry, Region [Any One Part of the World]

SCHOLAR SKILLS

Scholar skills are those for which the primary sphere of expertise is not physical practice, but a body of knowledge that must be acquired, maintained, and honed through academic study.

Culture

Like most countries, the Emerald Empire has a wealth of ceremonies, festivals, social trends, and local practices that locals largely internalize. The Culture skill can be used to procure knowledge of these traditions and practices, even when a character is far from home.

The Culture skill covers knowledge of the Emerald Empire's customs, traditions, families, trends, geography, and practices. This includes recent goings-on, historical events, and persons of significance, as well as staying current with the fashions that hold sway over the courts of provincial lords and the Emperor.

While such knowledge might seem trivial, it can allow a character to learn where to meet people of importance in a new place, how to interact comfortably with the locals, and what recent news to avoid mentioning while making pleasant conversation.

Culture Approaches

The Culture skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Recall Approach (Earth Ring):** Remembering the names of the most influential members of a particular court, knowing the particular customs of a region, remembering the geographical features of an area.
- **Survey Approach (Water Ring):** Identifying a fellow samurai using their clan, family, and personal mon (crest); identifying an object's region of origin; identifying a samurai's general status by their manner of dress; identifying which cultures have influenced a location; determining one's location in an unfamiliar city based on common architectural patterns.
- **Theorize Approach (Fire Ring):** Guessing where an influential person might go in an unfamiliar city, conjecturing about the proper decorum for an unusual social situation, anticipating social trends in different regions.
- **Analyze Approach (Air Ring):** Detecting traces of a regional accent in a character's speech, noticing slight imperfections in a mon or personal chop that reveal it to be a forgery, assessing the way a practice differs in a specific region.
- **Sense Approach (Void Ring):** Identifying the purpose traditions fulfill in society, identifying the rising stars at a particular court, intuiting the supernatural underpinnings of a cultural practice.

Government

The daimyō of the samurai clans, who rule the various provinces of the Emerald Empire in the Emperor's name, must serve in many capacities. Each of these individuals must be part warlord, part courtier, and part bureaucrat, and they must act effectively in each of these spheres to maintain their rule. This encompasses a strong understanding of political machinations, a solid foundation in logistics, and a familiarity with Rokugan's strict and sometimes arcane legal system, which favors status rather than testimony and propriety over evidence. Most daimyō keep a number of valued retainers who are experts in these fields close to them for consultation.

POSSIBLE GOVERNMENT SUBSKILLS

Bureaucracy, Law, Logistics, Warfare

Government Approaches

The Government skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Recall Approach (Earth Ring):** Knowing the letter of the law, knowing the explicit structure of government, knowing about past events and legal precedents, knowing political history and precedent in detail, knowing past scholars of history and law and quoting their works.

SPECIAL USES OF MEDICINE

The following uses of the Medicine skill are available to all characters.

FIRST AID (ACTION)

Helping with swift recovery in the field is a key use of Medicine. As a Support action, a character may make a **TN 2 Medicine (Water) check** targeting a character at range 0–1. If the healer succeeds, the target removes fatigue equal to 1 plus the healer's bonus successes and cannot benefit from the First Aid action again until they have been treated more thoroughly, such as with the Treatment downtime activity. The healer may spend ✿✿+ to affect one additional target per ✿✿ spent this way.

TREATMENT (DOWNTIME)

While quick action in the field can get a character back on their feet, long-term care is also important. As a downtime activity, a character may make a **TN 2 Medicine (Water) check** targeting a convalescing character in the scene. If the healer succeeds, the target removes fatigue equal to the healer's Water Ring plus their bonus successes. The healer may spend ✿+ to affect one additional target per ✿ spent this way.

Additionally, many conditions can be removed by uses of the Medicine skill with various rings to reflect anything from minor mending to field surgery. These can be found in the individual entries for these conditions (see **Conditions** on page 271).

POSSIBLE MEDICINE SUBSKILLS

Anatomy, Chemistry, Poisons

- **Survey Approach (Water Ring):** Identifying an illegal act, reading the tacit structure of power, determining who to ask to get something done within a bureaucracy, noticing classic bureaucratic schemes and ploys put into play by one's opponents.
- **Theorize Approach (Fire Ring):** Understanding the various ways the law could be applied in an unprecedented case, framing an argument about why the law should be applied differently in a particular instance, guessing the political ramifications of a new ruler's ascension.
- **Analyze Approach (Air Ring):** Finding a contradiction or loophole in a system or the law, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of a legal argument, studying a system in detail to find the places where pressure can be applied to get specific results.
- **Sense Approach (Void Ring):** Knowing how likely a given verdict is in a particular case, identifying the candidate most likely to hold a position next, knowing the likelihood of success for a particular ploy or scheme.

MEDICINE

The healers of Rokugan, epitomized by Lady Asako herself, have dedicated themselves to understanding the mystical underpinnings of wellness and disease, and to rebalance the body's natural ability to heal itself using a combination of pressure points, correspondences, and herbal remedies. The Medicine skill encompasses all of these elements.

Prospective healers must first understand the systems of the body, and then gain the practical knowledge of how to apply their knowledge to properly diagnose and treat their patients. Of course, some dishonorable characters use their medicinal knowledge to cause harm instead of to heal, meddling with doses to create deleterious or even deadly side effects, or selecting toxic herbs with which to poison a rival.

More practical in its application than some other Scholar skills, Medicine covers knowledge of the human body and its functions. However, Medicine is also a practiced art, so it often behaves like an Artisan skill when used to heal injuries or create medicines. While any skill can operate with another skill group's approaches, it is fairly common for the Medicine skill to do so. Thus, several examples of when it uses Artisan skill approaches are noted in the following text.

MY WORD AGAINST YOURS

Rokugani law is largely based upon the testimony of the person with the highest status rather than other methods of determining innocence and guilt. The word of a samurai holds more weight than that of a commoner, so if commoner witnesses insist that a samurai committed a crime but the samurai denies it, the law is on the samurai's side. Samurai tasked with investigating legal disputes often find justice impeded by the law itself, and must act cleverly to see that the presiding lord comes to the "just" conclusion.

Medicine Approaches

The Medicine skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Recall Approach (Earth Ring):** Studying and recalling existing remedies, creating bandages and medical supplies (*Restore*), stanching blood loss (*Restore*), mending other minor harm (*Restore*).

HEALERS OF ROKUGAN,

While most villagers rely on self-taught healers to treat simple injuries and everyday ailments, highly-educated members of the samurai class treat the nobility. Honzōsha *are general practitioners who blend knowledge with a deep respect for the body's natural energies, while the more pragmatic* chiryōsha *specialize in saving wounded warriors on the battlefield. However, all strata of society respect the knowledge and experience of trained midwives, whose wisdom allows them to transcend their normally low station.*

- **Survey Approach (Water Ring):** Identifying helpful and harmful herbs, gathering ingredients, finding hazards and contaminants in an environment, brewing remedies (*Adapt*), relieving exhaustion and pain (*Adapt*), speeding patients' recovery from long-term illness and injury (*Adapt*).
- **Theorize Approach (Fire Ring):** Studying new medicines and treatments, treating unknown ailments, experimenting with unknown ingredients (*Invent*), brewing poisons (*Invent*), instilling patients with energy (*Invent*).
- **Analyze Approach (Air Ring):** Recognizing symptoms, diagnosing diseases and ailments in patients, performing surgery in the field or a place of healing (*Refine*), administering medicines and poisons in the proper dosage for the desired effect (*Refine*).
- **Sense Approach (Void Ring):** Detecting spiritual ailments, working entirely without ingredients, realigning the energy in others (*Attune*), treating spiritual ailments (*Attune*).

Sentiment

The Sentiment skill reflects a character's ability to understand the psychology and emotions of others. It is used to spot emotions like hostility and fear in others, to empathize, and to know how people will behave based on their emotional state. It is also used to see through lies—and understand why those lies are being told.

Sentiment Approaches

The Sentiment skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Recall Approach (Earth Ring):** Detecting inconsistencies between someone's current and past behavior, understanding someone's fears and responsibilities, determining how best to set someone at ease.
- **Survey Approach (Water Ring):** Discerning someone's personal feelings about a person or subject (and whether they are positive, negative, or neutral), detecting whether someone's intentions are hostile, understanding someone's desires, determining how best to win someone's approval or support.
- **Theorize Approach (Fire Ring):** Determining whether someone has left out important details or told you a lie of omission, catching that someone has left out something important, understanding someone's convictions and ideals, determining how best to excite or enrage someone.
- **Analyze Approach (Air Ring):** Knowing whether someone is lying to you directly, knowing how a choice or action will make someone feel, understanding someone's self-perceptions and vulnerabilities, determining how best to get someone to do something you want.
- **Sense Approach (Void Ring):** Determining whether someone is under the effects of supernatural persuasion or a supernatural being, studying and understanding one's own emotions, determining whether someone is acting in opposition to their own desires or is suppressing their emotions, knowing the purpose behind someone's words.

Theology

Theology covers knowledge of religious philosophy, doctrine, and practice. Rokugan is often called the Land of Ten Thousand Fortunes, and a proper grounding in Theology is required to know of even a portion of them. A character can use Theology to know about kami, the Fortunes, and the powers and deities associated with Shinseism and other religious traditions, as well as to make supplications to these powers. A character versed in Theology is also versed in religious history and associated knowledge, including astronomy (for the study of portents) and the related fields of metaphysics and science with mystical implications.

Theology is also the skill used for most invocations—the powerful appeals to the kami that shugenja make to wield astonishing elemental powers. However, for most characters, Theology does not involve such flashy displays, dealing more in the doctrines and histories of the various spiritual traditions of Rokugan. It usually entails knowledge of rituals of philosophical and religious significance, as well as of communion with the forces of the universe on a more subtle level. Not everyone has the potential to become a shugenja—and perhaps more importantly, the shugenja schools guard their secrets jealously—so most priests in the Emerald Empire are humble keepers of the faith, serving the kami via proper veneration and performing social and religious functions for their communities. Monks, courtiers, and even bushi are also likely to study Theology, for a variety of personal and societal reasons.

SEEING THROUGH LIES

Sentiment is the skill used to discern whether someone has lied to you, and each approach possesses a different means of doing this. However, remember that this is not the first defense a character has against being lied to—a character's vigilance sets the TN of an opponent's check to successfully lie to that character in the first place (see **Checks to Resist Effects**, on page 26). Therefore, most of the time, a character should not make a check to resist a lie with their Sentiment skill by default.

If the opponent's check to tell the lie exceeds the character's vigilance, it means that the character can't tell that the person is lying offhand, but that doesn't mean they're obligated to believe that person, either—especially if they have reason to think there might be contradictory evidence somewhere. At this point, if the character still harbors suspicions, they can use an action (or even a downtime activity) performing a Sentiment check to find a crack in the lie, based on the approach used:

- **Recall Approach (Earth Ring):** Lets you know whether the potential liar is behaving differently than in past encounters with you. This might reveal a nervous liar by one of their tells or suggest that they are lying unwillingly. If someone tells an easily verifiable lie, the Earth approach to Recall might also be used to pull forth the correct information needed to disprove them, usually paired with the skill that pertains to the relevant body of knowledge.
- **Survey Approach (Water Ring):** Lets you know whether someone has your best intentions at heart. This doesn't reveal whether or not they're lying, but it might give you a hint not to trust what they say either way.
- **Theorize Approach (Fire Ring):** Lets you figure out whether someone neglected to mention something important. However, it's less useful against direct lies.
- **Analyze Approach (Air Ring):** Lets you know whether someone lied directly, but if they constructed their lie carefully enough, it might not help you get an answer.
- **Sense Approach (Void Ring):** Lets you uncover what someone wants to accomplish with their words. This may help break through a lie, but it is almost always useful as part of the greater game of intrigue.

Theology Approaches

The Theology skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Recall Approach (Earth Ring):** Knowing facts about the formal doctrines of religious traditions of the Emerald Empire, knowing about historical occurrences of supernatural events, correctly reciting scripture, remembering the weaknesses of a supernatural being from folklore, communing with earth kami.
- **Survey Approach (Water Ring):** Identifying religious artifacts and supernatural phenomena, knowing how the average person of a given walk of life interacts with spiritual traditions, researching a piece of scripture to learn its meaning, communing with water kami.
- **Theorize Approach (Fire Ring):** Guessing what supernatural forces might be at work based on secondary evidence, reconciling two contradictory pieces of religious doctrine, offering a novel explanation of the meaning of a piece of scripture, communing with fire kami.
- **Analyze Approach (Air Ring):** Determining how religious or spiritual a person is and what traditions they follow, finding and untangling subtle nuance or apparent contradictions in scripture, noticing the telltale signs of a supernatural creature walking among humans, communing with air kami.
- **Sense Approach (Void Ring):** Performing divinations, determining the veracity of a supernatural occurrence, predicting the behavior of supernatural entities, knowing the philosophical ramifications of a decision, communing with the root of the universe.

POSSIBLE THEOLOGY SUBSKILLS

Ancestor Worship, Astronomy, Divination, Lesser Fortunes, Fortunism, Invocation, Mahō (Evil Sorcery), Shinseism

Martial Skill Group

In theory, any samurai could be called to battle in service of their lord at any moment. In practice, only bushi, the martial members of the caste, are expected to march to war with any frequency, to defend their homes or claim lands in the name of their lord. After all, it would be foolish for a lord to waste a skilled courtier by sending them to the front—though it does happen occasionally, especially when said courtier has made one too many careless remarks in their lord's presence. As a result, many samurai are less focused around the rough skills of warfare and might practice them only as a contemplative exercise, as a way to achieve self-mastery, or in times of dire need. Other samurai embrace the soldier's lifestyle and find themselves restless when stuck at court.

ELEMENTAL APPROACHES FOR MARTIAL SKILLS

Each approach to a Martial skill represents a tactical goal that a character can pursue while fighting or undertaking a related activity. These objectives include things like maintaining a solid guard, moving fluidly, crushing the foe with unrelenting force, or probing a foe's defenses for weaknesses. No single tactic rules supreme, and a skilled warrior knows how to suit their style to the circumstances. The elemental approaches to Martial skills function as follows.

Withstand Approach (Earth Ring)

An Earth approach to a Martial skill focuses on solid basics, firm defenses, and simple, reliable tactics. Martial arts often revolve around seemingly endless drilling in these basics, and even those who have achieved a degree of mastery are expected to put considerable time and energy into the upkeep of such skills. A character practicing this approach moves through obstacles slowly and carefully, without risking harm. An Earth approach is consistent and safe, but also predictable—therefore, it is most favorable in situations and terrain where the enemy has no choice but to fight at a disadvantage. The Earth approach to a Martial skill frequently involves setting up in such a position and then waiting patiently for the perfect moment to strike. If the enemy can slip through the defenses of a character practicing a Martial skill with an Earth approach, however, the technique or tactic's rigidity turns from a strength to a weakness in an instant.

A character uses Withstand when they want to:

- Meet hardship head-on and shrug it off.
- Move slowly and carefully.
- Wear their foe down.
- Lift and carry heavy objects.
- Practice a technique that relies on endurance above all.

Shift Approach (Water Ring)

The Water approach to a Martial skill focuses on meeting force with softness and softness with force. Instead of attempting to overcome a foe at their strongest point, the Shift approach relents until the moment the foe overextends, then turns to crushing power in an instant. A character practicing this approach slides past obstacles fluidly, without expending energy unnecessarily. The greatest vulnerability of the Water approach to a Martial skill is an enemy who can afford to wait. To capitalize on the use of the Water approach to its fullest, the opponent must give the character force to redirect against them.

A character uses Shift when they want to:

- Redirect force rather than stopping it.
- Move via the most expedient path.
- Use their foe's energy against them.
- Slide through tight spaces or shifting crowds.
- Practice a technique that relies on flexibility above all.

Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring)

The Fire approach to a Martial skill idealizes direct and devastating force, against which few foes would dare stand firm. By abandoning caution, the Overwhelm approach hopes to win the battle in the mind, guaranteeing victory of the body. It moves through obstacles with the swiftness and fury of a wildfire, breaking through barriers rather than circumventing them. The Fire approach is frequently meant to inspire confusion or panic; at its heart, it is always unrelenting, pressing the foe at every turn so that they cannot regroup or stabilize. However, the risks of the Fire approach are obvious: any gap in the onslaught is a vulnerability that a cunning enemy can exploit, and a character taking the Fire approach might be defeated by their own strength turned against them.

A character uses Overwhelm when they want to:

- Meet force with opposing force of their own.
- Move rapidly and heedlessly.
- Break objects and obstacles with brute might.
- Force their foe to meet them head-on.
- Practice a technique that relies on power above all.
- Terrify an enemy through aggressive action.

Feint Approach (Air Ring)

The Air approach to Martial skills is opportunistic and evasive, using agility and cunning to create and exploit openings. It vaults over obstacles gracefully, taking advantage of new positions the enemy does not expect. This can allow a character taking the Air approach to a Martial skill to overcome an entrenched enemy, cleverly flanking them or feigning an attack on another target to open up the real target's defenses. However, the Air approach to a Martial skill risks becoming an unnecessary flourish. In battle, the only objective is to destroy the enemy without hesitation; in the face of overwhelming force, a cunning plan can become a snare for the schemer who created it.

A character uses Feint when they want to:

- Evade oncoming force with minimal effort.
- Move precisely and subtly.
- Slip past a foe's defenses into an advantageous position.
- Land acrobatically (and safely).
- Practice a technique that relies on grace above all else.

Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring)

The Void approach to a Martial skill is formless, and it gives away no information. By being without form until the moment of action, it is entirely unpredictable. On the other hand, this approach is unable to take advantage of preparations. As a tactic, the Void approach can startle an enemy certain of their overwhelming advantage, causing them to reconsider a winning move. However, it is often an all-or-nothing gamble. A character who takes the Void approach to a Martial skill puts a certain part of their fate in the hands of the universe.

A character uses Sacrifice when they want to:

- Meet force without any resistance to create an opportunity.
- Act unpredictably.
- Move instinctively.
- Move without regard for their own life.
- Make an intentionally risky move to sow doubt in the opponent's mind.
- Practice a technique that relies on centering oneself within the universe above all else.
- Leave the outcome of a strike to fate.

MARTIAL SKILLS

Martial skills represent a character's experience at fighting, preparing for war, and making decisions on the battlefield.

POSSIBLE FITNESS SUBSKILLS

Acrobatics, Athletics, Defense, Stealth

Fitness

Fitness is a reflection of a samurai's capacity to perform feats of physical prowess and grace. It governs activities such as running, leaping, lifting heavy objects, marching long distances, swimming quickly, and other such physical feats that rely on quick bursts of power and precision or sustained physical effort. Additionally, the Fitness skill governs a character's ability to avoid lethal harm when struck, resist the Shadowlands Taint, and recover from poison and disease. Finally, Fitness can be used to resist, withstand, or otherwise take a hit on the battlefield.

Fitness Approaches

The Fitness skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Withstand Approach (Earth Ring):** Moving cautiously, pushing one's body to the breaking point without suffering permanent harm, marching long distances, holding up heavy objects for long periods of time, hiding by standing still, taking a hit.
- **Shift Approach (Water Ring):** Moving around obstacles and through crowds without slowing, fitting through small spaces, performing exercises to speed recovery from injury, losing pursuers in a crowd, rolling with the punches.
- **Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring):** Moving without heed for obstacles, leaping long distances, pushing and lifting heavy objects quickly, breaking things, catching someone in a footrace, meeting incoming attacks with equal opposing force.
- **Feint Approach (Air Ring):** Moving stealthily, maintaining balance, trailing someone without their realizing it, falling safely and landing gracefully, evading someone in a footrace, controlling where hits land on your body.
- **Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring):** Acting on sheer instinct, pushing one's body beyond the breaking point to achieve a goal, overcoming physical limitations with sheer will, taking hits directly.

POSSIBLE MARTIAL ARTS [MELEE] SUBSKILLS

Bojutsu (Staff Fighting), Iaijutsu (Quick Draw of a Sword), Kenjutsu (Swordplay), Sōjutsu (Spear Fighting), Heavy Weapons, Chain Weapons, Shinobi Weapons

Martial Arts [Melee]

Whatever other arts they practice, a bushi's foremost art is always the art of battle, and even samurai who rarely take the field often train extensively in the martial arts as an exercise in self-mastery. Nearly all of them receive some training in use of a melee weapon, even if they prefer a weapon such as a bow. While many samurai believe sword fighting to be the most refined of martial arts, there are numerous schools that are more renowned for their use of other melee weapons. Samurai in Rokugan use the great clubs known as tetsubō, spears, naginata and other polearms, and even staves, depending on the teachings of their school and their own personal preferences.

Martial Arts [Melee] covers combat with close-quarters weapons in both practice and theory.

Martial Arts [Melee] Approaches

The Martial Arts [Melee] skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Withstand Approach (Earth Ring):** Fighting defensively, blocking carefully, exhausting your opponent, practicing techniques that rely on stamina.
- **Shift Approach (Water Ring):** Fighting reactively, redirecting force, drawing out your opponent, practicing techniques that rely on fluidity of motion and flexibility.
- **Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring):** Fighting aggressively, attacking directly, unnerving your opponent, practicing techniques that rely on bursts of speed and power.
- **Feint Approach (Air Ring):** Fighting subtly, attacking indirectly, outmaneuvering your opponent, evading attacks, practicing techniques that rely on grace and poise, reading your opponent's moves.
- **Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring):** Fighting instinctively or without regard for your life, attacking without regard for anything else, putting mind over matter.

Table 3–5: Sample Tasks (with Rings) and TNs for Martial Skills

TASK	TN
Vaulting over a short gap (Fire), slipping out of the center of a tavern brawl as it starts without being harmed (Water), identifying the best piece of cover nearby (Water), shaking off your fear after seeing a grisly corpse (Fire), assessing the strategic value of a piece of terrain (Water).	1
Sneaking past the average person (Air), hitting a target in range with the Strike action (see page 252) (Any), intimidating the average person with your fighting prowess (Fire), stoically bearing tragic news without allowing your true feelings to show (Earth), finding a gap in the enemy's defenses that you can lead a force through secretly (Air).	2
Marching a long distance without tiring (Earth), stealthily dispatching a single isolated minion NPC guard outside of a conflict scene without alerting others (Air), maintaining a fortified position against fewer than ten attackers (Earth), subduing a small group of unarmed minion NPCs outside of a conflict scene without killing any of them or being hurt (Earth), determining whether someone's desire is healthy for them or not (Water), coming up with tactics that obscure your identity even from an enemy commander you know well (Void).	3
Squeezing through a very tight gap (Water), safely subduing a small group of armed minion NPCs outside of a conflict scene without killing them or being hurt (Earth), picking off a single minion NPC sentry from afar without alerting their nearby comrades (Air), intentionally convincing yourself of a lie (Air), finding and sealing every entry point in your castle's defenses (Earth).	4
Instinctively waking from unconsciousness in response to immediate danger (Void), discerning the best way to defeat a single foe in armed melee combat (Void), visualizing a target so accurately that you can hit it without any perception of it (Void), reflecting deeply on an upcoming decision to know which choice will help you achieve the outcome you intend (Void), orchestrating a plan to terrify an enemy force into fleeing despite its superior numbers (Fire).	5

POSSIBLE MARTIAL ARTS [RANGED] SUBSKILLS

Kyūjutsu (Archery), Crossbows, Shinobi Weapons

Martial Arts [Ranged]

Any warrior who takes the battlefield regularly knows well the value of the bow—and the risks of underestimating it. While armor can often turn an arrow at range and it is no replacement for a melee weapon once battle lines close, the effect of a well-coordinated volley can be staggering, as each wounded warrior removes not just one enemy from the field, but any other combatants who move to retrieve them. A master archer is terrifying to behold, capable of slaying foes from considerable distances. Even humble ranged weapons, such as slings and hurled projectiles, can be quite deadly in a fight, removing combatants from the battle. On the other end of the spectrum, the Crab Clan has constructed numerous siege-scale ranged weapons meant to engage large demons and other supernatural horrors from high atop the Kaiu Wall.

Martial Arts [Ranged] covers combat with thrown and projectile weapons in both practice and theory.

Martial Arts [Ranged] Approaches

The Martial Arts [Ranged] skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Withstand Approach (Earth Ring):** Maintaining a consistent field of fire, suppressing targets, firing to keep targets from overtaking a position, properly stowing ranged weapons.
- **Shift Approach (Water Ring):** Fighting reactively, redirecting force, drawing out your opponent, firing to create openings to reposition.
- **Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring):** Firing to deplete enemy forces, firing to allow allies to advance, firing to terrify the enemy.
- **Feint Approach (Air Ring):** Firing without giving away your position, hitting specific parts of your target, firing to create vulnerabilities in the target's defenses.
- **Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring):** Exposing yourself to get a shot on your target, putting your faith in the universe that your shot will find its mark.

POSSIBLE MARTIAL ARTS [UNARMED] SUBSKILLS

Brawling, Jūjutsu (Grappling), Sumō (Wrestling)

Martial Arts [Unarmed]

Most samurai practice unarmed fighting. It is an important element of many armed combat styles, as in actual practice, armed and unarmed combat are deeply intertwined. Some schools, however, teach it exclusively, for philosophical or practical reasons. Monks, for instance, cannot legally wield daishō, and thus are often practitioners of advanced unarmed techniques.

As with other martial arts, traditions spring up and vanish frequently over the centuries, and when visiting a monastery, it is not uncommon to discover that its members practice arts rarely seen outside its walls.

Martial Arts [Unarmed] covers combat with the body as one's primary weapon in both practice and theory, as well as the use of some improvised weapons.

UNARMED ATTACK PROFILES

Weapon profiles for punches, kicks, and even bite attacks can be found on page 237.

Martial Arts [Unarmed] Approaches

The Martial Arts [Unarmed] skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Withstand Approach (Earth Ring):** Fighting defensively, blocking forcefully, exhausting your opponent, practicing techniques that rely on stamina.
- **Shift Approach (Water Ring):** Fighting reactively, redirecting force, drawing out your opponent, practicing techniques that rely on fluidity of motion and flexibility.
- **Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring):** Fighting aggressively, attacking directly, unnerving your opponent, practicing techniques that rely on bursts of speed and power.
- **Feint Approach (Air Ring):** Fighting subtly, attacking indirectly, outmaneuvering your opponent, evading attacks, practicing techniques that rely on grace and poise.
- **Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring):** Attacking without regard for anything else, including your life, putting mind over matter.

Meditation

The life of a samurai is one of stress and turmoil. Meditation helps a samurai look past worries about tomorrow, missed opportunities of the past, and even the insistence of the world of now to find peace within themself.

Martial skills are defined by struggle, and for many warriors, the greatest struggle is the one within. Meditation is the skill that covers the battles fought in one's own mind. It is the skill used to process one's own emotions, to recover mental control when shocked, and to resist confusion and supernatural influence of the mind. War might be a samurai's pursuit, but a human being at war must face the steady erosion of the soul or risk succumbing completely to brutality. Most samurai train in Meditation both to ready their minds for the terrors of battle and to seek greater cosmic knowledge within themselves.

Meditation Approaches

The Meditation skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Withstand Approach (Earth Ring):** Using logic to overcome your personal feelings, reflecting on the nature of your responsibilities, maintaining a level head despite challenges and provocation, resisting temptation.
- **Shift Approach (Water Ring):** Understanding your own emotions and desires, reflecting on the nature of your desires, understanding how to align your goals with your desires, resisting rage.
- **Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring):** Using your emotions to reject a seemingly inevitable conclusion before you, maintaining concentration on a single topic, staying in an emotional state for long periods of time, resisting fear.
- **Feint Approach (Air Ring):** Convincing yourself of the truth of something, finding weaknesses in your viewpoints and ideologies, understanding how to align your goals with your ideals, resisting despair.
- **Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring):** Understanding your place in the universe, understanding the role fate has provided for you, knowing what you are willing to give up to achieve your goals, seeing glimpses of your own future, resisting supernatural mental interference.

Tactics

Leadership is not just charisma and force of will—a samurai who takes the battlefield must also make wise decisions. Battles are not won without casualties, and every commander spends the lives of their soldiers to achieve victory, but this does not mean that they value these lives any less.

Samurai learn many arts, but the practice of war is among their core functions. While it may be true that every battle's outcome is decided before the first soldier moves, it falls to battlefield leaders, from generals to squad sergeants, to make that outcome a reality. Tactics governs battlefield leadership, from the general's tent to the front line. It reflects a character's awareness of the flow of battle and their ability to both stick to their orders and seize the opportunities that arise to greatest effect. While the Command skill is used to motivate soldiers, restore morale, and maintain order, the Tactics skill is used to effectively manage troops who are already obedient. Whereas the Government skill handles logistics in the lead-up to battle, the Tactics skill governs a character's ability to think and react once the battle is joined.

Tactics Approaches

The Tactics skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Withstand Approach (Earth Ring):** Resisting a head-on assault, holding a point at all costs, mitigating losses during a retreat, overseeing the construction of siege weapons.
- **Shift Approach (Water Ring):** Executing a counterattack, repositioning swiftly after an attack, taking full advantage of useful terrain, moving and operating siege weapons.
- **Overwhelm Approach (Fire Ring):** Executing a head-on assault, overrunning the enemy, breaking enemy morale with terrifying tactics, designing siege weapons.
- **Feint Approach (Air Ring):** Executing a feigned retreat, flanking the enemy, discerning weaknesses in the enemy's defenses and targets of interest.
- **Sacrifice Approach (Void Ring):** Sending a unit to die to create a strategic opening, commanding a force without revealing one's identity to the enemy.

Trade Skill Group

The majority of the populace of the Emerald Empire survive thanks to their skills at various trades, from trading and commerce to more specialized areas like farming and sailing. Samurai are generally not expected to gain expertise in these fields, but some find such skills too useful to ignore.

ELEMENTAL APPROACHES FOR TRADE SKILLS

Each approach to a Trade skill is a means by which a character can extract resources from their environment or perform work of some kind that provides for their needs or those of society.

Produce Approach (Earth Ring)

The Earth approach for a Trade skill covers the activities a character must undertake to establish a foundation for living, such as creating infrastructure and buildings, creating and maintaining equipment, planting and harvesting crops, mass-producing common items, and keeping records related to these activities.

A character uses Produce when they want to:

- Harvest resources from their environment.
- Mass-produce items related to their trade.
- Repair or maintain trade equipment.
- Build and repair foundations and basic structures.
- Create records or tallies of their work.

Exchange Approach (Water Ring)

The Water approach for a Trade skill revolves around finding things and making acquisitions—of basic supplies, of commodities, and of customers. It is used whenever a character wishes to go about trading one type of resource or labor for another, and it is especially useful when dealing with currency.

A character uses Exchange when they want to:

- Purchase items related to their trade at the best price.
- Barter goods or services for other goods or services.
- Track down specific items within a marketplace.

Innovate Approach (Fire Ring)

The Fire approach for a Trade skill allows a character to use creativity and drive to make their work easier, create new things, or find new ways to solve problems.

A character uses Innovate when they want to:

- Create a novel product or service.
- Develop a new tool for their trade.
- Find new uses for a product or new applications for a service.
- Expand into new markets.

Con Approach (Air Ring)

The Air approach to a Trade skill revolves around understanding the value of things better than everyone else and then ruthlessly exploiting this advantage to get something for nothing. It can be used to manipulate people's perception of an item's value, convincing them to pay more for it or making it easier to steal it. This approach also governs most criminal activity that falls into the categories of theft (from pickpocketing to embezzlement), bribery, and smuggling.

A character uses Con when they want to:

- Sell a product for a higher value.
- Pick someone's pocket.
- Falsify a manifest or other record.
- Offer someone a bribe in a deniable fashion.
- Disguise a shipment of contraband as legal goods.

Subsist Approach (Void Ring)

A Void approach naturally reflects a certain material disinterest that is at odds with Trade skills. Instead of building, changing, or exploiting the environment, such an approach centers around finding the resources that already exist and using them only as much as needed. Many ascetics take to the wilds, employing this approach to seek food and shelter from the natural world rather than changing it to their needs.

A character uses Subsist when they want to:

- Live in harmony with their natural surroundings rather than trying to change them.
- Instinctively know what changes will occur in their environment.
- Know whether an activity will help their chances of survival or not.

Table 3–6: Sample Tasks (with Rings) and TNs for Trade Skills

TASK	TN
Maintaining storefront operations without losing money (Void), discerning how well a field will produce crops (Void), knowing the expected weather for a voyage at a certain time of year (Earth), knowing the best escape route through a city (Water), spurring a horse to reach a destination more quickly (Fire).	1
Getting someone to sell you an item at a 10% discount (Water), cooking a pleasant meal (Water), knowing the route another ship captain will take (Air), clandestinely observing an average mark for a day to get information about their habits (Air), finding enough food to sustain yourself for several days in the forest (Water).	2
Getting someone to pay an extra 10% for an item (Air), mass-producing a single, uncomplicated item (Earth), sensing a storm before it descends (Void), scrubbing all evidence you broke into a room (Void), building shelter in the wild (Earth).	3
Finding a minor inconsistency in an individual's accounts (Earth), directing a crew to build a fortification on the battlefield (Air), keeping a boat steady (and afloat) during a small storm (Water), memorizing a map of a castle fully before a break-in (Earth), trapping a large animal such as a boar or bear (Air).	4
Creating a new product that customers really desire (Fire), designing a more efficient irrigation system (Fire), building a raft or small rowboat on a desert island (Fire), building a device to sap a castle wall (Fire), knowing that a natural disaster is about to occur based on subtle changes in your environment (Void).	5

"LOW" SKILLS

Trade skills pertain largely to the tasks of the common people of the Emerald Empire. Although they are not intrinsically dishonorable or inglorious, some of them are considered inappropriate for privileged individuals such as samurai to perform in many contexts. For instance, at court, discussing money is terribly uncouth, and buying or selling items directly would be unacceptable. Similarly, a samurai would not want to be seen doing manual labor in most contexts—though on the battlefield, personally assisting in reinforcing a barricade or other such activities might become a necessity.

A character does not lose honor or glory simply for possessing or even using these skills. However, using these skills openly in the company of characters of higher status opens the character up to gossip and criticism concerning why they feel the need to possess or flaunt such pedestrian expertise. Of course, these rules vary due to circumstance and region. When on a hunt with members of a court, use of the Survival skill is obviously appropriate—and among the Unicorn, any samurai worthy of the name is expected to be skilled at tracking and hunting.

When a character wishes to use a Trade skill in front of a character with higher status in an improper context, the character of lower status must stake glory equal to their glory bonus. If the higher-status character offers no criticism, the glory value of the character who used the Trade skill's staked glory is restored after they complete the task.

TRADE SKILLS

Trade skills are the means by which most people of the Emerald Empire make their livelihoods. These skills of the common people are looked down upon by some samurai, but they are obviously vital to the continued existence of the Empire and its ruling class.

Commerce

The Commerce skill covers the buying and selling of goods for a profit, as well as related activities. At its heart, commerce is not about negotiating for a better price (it is unseemly to give someone less than their work is worth, after all) but of knowing how to play the market to exchange more goods for less work. To operate any sort of business successfully, a character must have at least a cursory proficiency in this skill, for without it, they are sure to see their fortunes collapse.

Most samurai view money as a societal necessity, but a "dirty" one—after all, their lords provide them with the tools and equipment they require. In Rokugan, skill with money is the skill that no one values but everyone needs. Further, they see merchants as creating nothing, and so most of Rokugan puts merchants below peasants in the social order. However, in many cities, merchants are as powerful as samurai, and far wealthier.

Commerce Approaches

The Commerce skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Produce Approach (Earth Ring):** Balancing accounts, storing and maintaining merchandise, moving merchandise safely.
- **Exchange Approach (Water Ring):** Buying goods from wholesalers, finding a good deal on items and services, bartering on favorable terms, getting an item as cheaply as possible.
- **Innovate Approach (Fire Ring):** Finding ways to make your product or service distinctive, creating new incentives for customers, inventing a new product or service, finding a new market to serve.
- **Con Approach (Air Ring):** Convincing someone your goods are of the highest quality or best price, determining a product's monetary value, getting as much money out of a customer as possible, assessing the competition's progress and possible weaknesses.
- **Subsist Approach (Void Ring):** Operating with minimal expenditures, stretching supplies as far as possible, knowing how product values will change in the future.

Labor

Shinsei spoke highly of the simple virtues of manual work, and while most samurai (and most peasants, for that matter) disagree with his glowing assessment, none can deny that society's existence requires a great deal of backbreaking labor on somebody's part. From farming to construction to simple ditch-digging,

POSSIBLE LABOR SUBSKILLS

Agriculture, Construction

countless tasks must be completed for the Emerald Empire to continue functioning.

The skills in the Labor skill group are all complicated areas of expertise in their own right, even if samurai tend to look askance at them as fields of study. Farmers know a great deal of their fields, potters of their art, and smiths of metallurgy, even if they are not revered by the ruling class for the mastery they achieve. Those skilled in labor are those who know the most efficient ways of performing their duties, as well as how to effectively use the tools of their trade.

Labor Approaches

The Labor skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Produce Approach (Earth Ring):** Mass-producing items, laying groundwork and foundations, maintaining tools, plowing fields, planting seeds, harvesting crops.
- **Exchange Approach (Water Ring):** Acquiring items and tools, negotiating with tax collectors, fermenting harvested goods, cooking food.
- **Innovate Approach (Fire Ring):** Developing tools to make your work easier, drafting new plans and designs, experimenting with new methods, creating new recipes.
- **Con Approach (Air Ring):** Organizing the work of others on a project, covering over flaws in one's work, disguising one sort of object as another, pretending to work.
- **Subsist Approach (Void Ring):** Knowing how to expend minimal supplies in your work, using the natural landscape to do your work for you, knowing when to let a field lie fallow, knowing the best location to build.

THE HIGH SEAS

Most Rokugani ships stay in shallow waters, traveling near the coastlines or along inland rivers. However, the ships of the Mantis Minor Clan venture onto the high seas. Their ships have reached the Islands of Silk and Spice, the Ivory Kingdoms, and (some say) even the distant lands of the Burning Sands. This trade makes them one of the most powerful and influential of the Minor Clans.

Seafaring

Though many Rokugani live their whole lives without seeing the ocean, it has an enormous impact on the entire country. A great deal of Rokugan's food and staples such as salt come from the sea. Further, despite Rokugan's inhospitable policy toward foreigners, foreign trade does occur in numerous port cities, both under the sanction of the Empire and clandestinely.

The sailors who steer these vessels comprehend the arts of navigation, knot-tying, sail-setting, and a thousand odd jobs, and they must understand how these disparate duties fit together or risk being lost on the open seas. The Seafaring skill also handles river travel. Rivers are often the fastest roads in the Emerald Empire, and barges are a key element as travel and trade alike. Grain, tea, sake, logs, mineral wealth, and other supplies are often moved from city to city by river, or to the coast where larger ships move them to major ports. An expert seafarer can be the difference between a force arriving on time for a battle or a day behind, and keeping those armies fed.

Seafaring Approaches

The Seafaring skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Produce Approach (Earth Ring):** Maintaining boats, maintaining ship logs and records, knowing facts about historical routes, knowing how long supplies will last, filtering out salt to create potable water.
- **Exchange Approach (Water Ring):** Navigating on the ocean, knowing which routes are the fastest, determining your current location on a body of water, operating a boat.
- **Innovate Approach (Fire Ring):** Building new boats, map-making, pioneering new routes.
- **Con Approach (Air Ring):** Convincing someone to hire your ship instead, managing sailors during a voyage, trailing another ship without being noticed, escaping a pursuing vessel, finding signs of the passage of another ship.
- **Subsist Approach (Void Ring):** Sensing storms before they descend, placating ocean and wind kami with sailors' traditions.

Skulduggery

The rule of law is not absolute in the Emerald Empire, no matter how harsh the consequences for breaking the law often are. Criminal elements exist everywhere, primarily in the form of bandits and dispossessed individuals. While brigands and thieves usually turn to this path out of necessity and almost invariably struggle to survive, some criminals are tremendously successful, creating massive cartels and criminal operations that spread across numerous cities. Skulduggery also includes the craft of spies, as many of the tricks they use are similar to those of criminals. Sleight of hand, stealth, disguise, lockpicking, and trapmaking are just as important to the criminal and spymaster's portfolio as is deception, dissembling, and misdirection.

Skulduggery Approaches

The Skulduggery skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Produce Approach (Earth Ring):** Securing a location, constructing locks and other security measures, memorizing maps and codes, dividing spoils in an organized manner.
- **Exchange Approach (Water Ring):** Finding a fence to sell stolen items to, knowing how to move freely through a city while avoiding law enforcement, determining the fastest way to break into a secure facility.
- **Innovate Approach (Fire Ring):** Creating secret codes, creating new tools for criminal activities, concocting complex plots to slip past security measures, picking an unfamiliar lock.
- **Con Approach (Air Ring):** Picking someone's pocket, shadowing a mark without being noticed, organizing a group of thieves on a job, tracking someone through a city, knowing the right bribe to secure a corrupt official's cooperation.
- **Subsist Approach (Void Ring):** Erasing all trace of your presence, blending into a crowd, placating spirits and other supernatural beings who might punish you for your sins.

Survival

Whether this means hunting, fishing, gathering plants, or even engaging in small operations such as prospecting for ore or acquiring other valuable goods for trade, it is crucial to the survival of many people in Rokugan. Scouts and wayfinders take this a step further to be able to navigate and conceal their paths through the wilderness, as well as to cross large distances by foot or on horseback in the shortest possible amount of time. Hunting dogs and birds, riding steeds, and beasts of burden go a long way to ensure survival in the roughest of terrain and climates, and so these creatures must be properly cared for and trained.

Most samurai tend to have only a passing familiarity with this sort of subsistence living, though some clans and schools encourage their members to learn basic proficiency at survival in the wild; especially if they rule a domain far from larger cities.

POSSIBLE SKULDUGGERY SUBSKILLS

Criminal Organizations, Sleight of Hand

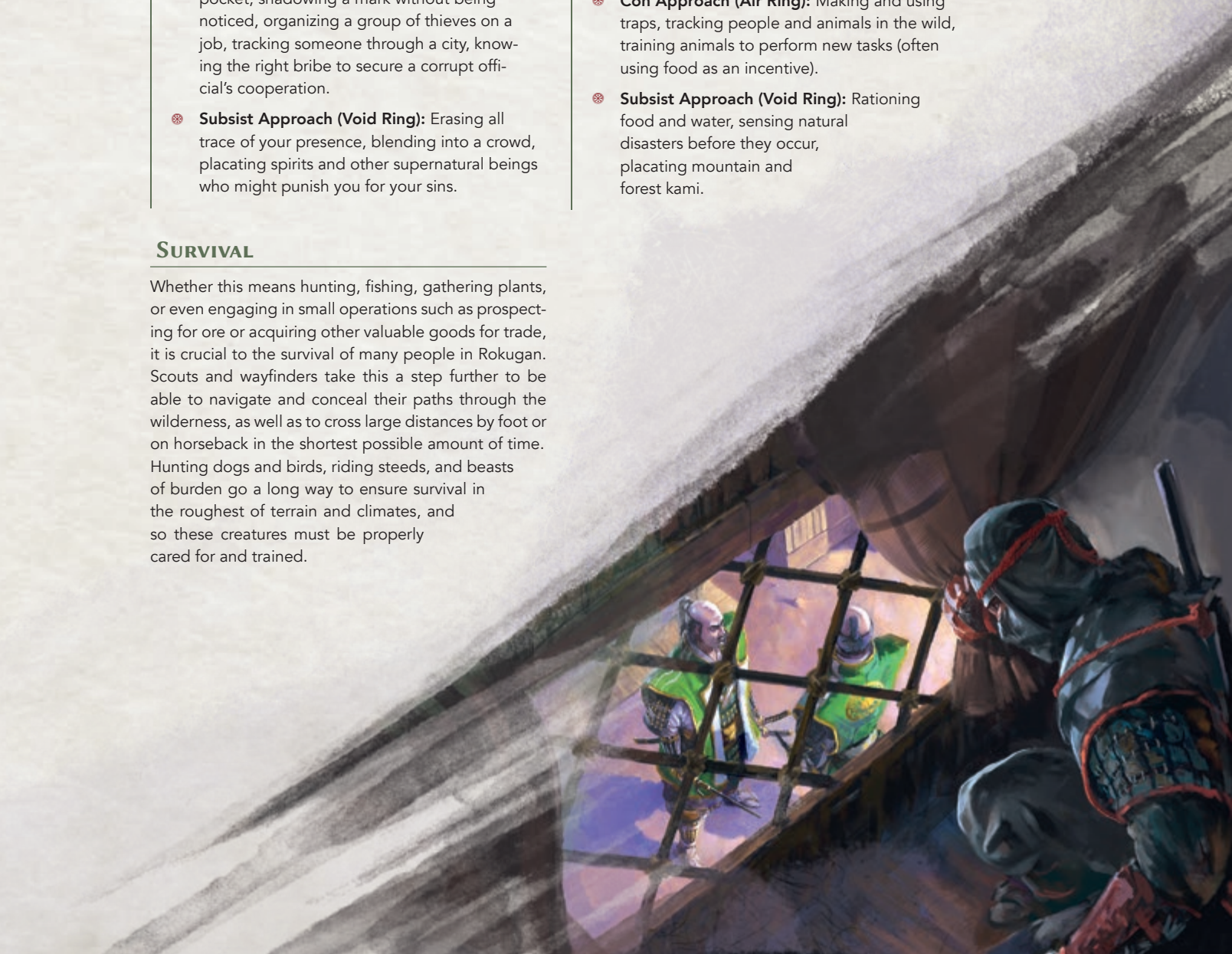
Survival Approaches

The Survival skill can be used as follows with the appropriate ring:

- **Produce Approach (Earth Ring):** Creating shelter, storing food, calming animals.
- **Exchange Approach (Water Ring):** Foraging for food and potable water, fishing, befriending animals, cooking familiar ingredients.
- **Innovate Approach (Fire Ring):** Finding ways to cook unfamiliar ingredients, building makeshift weapons, spurring animals to move quickly.
- **Con Approach (Air Ring):** Making and using traps, tracking people and animals in the wild, training animals to perform new tasks (often using food as an incentive).
- **Subsist Approach (Void Ring):** Rationing food and water, sensing natural disasters before they occur, placating mountain and forest kami.

POSSIBLE SURVIVAL SUBSKILLS

Animal Handling, Herbalism, Riding



THE ART OF INVESTIGATION

Characters in *Legend of the Five Rings* do not use any one skill for perceiving their environment or drawing conclusions about it; instead, various approaches for other skills cover this activity. Most often, investigating an object or place uses the Scholar skill group approaches relevant to the information they want to acquire.

Within the fiction of the game, this reflects the fact that perceptiveness is in large part derived from one's expertise. Sharp senses can be helpful, to be sure, but knowing what to look for is far more crucial.

For example, a skilled weaponsmith is far more able to see subtle details in the pattern of a blade than similarly obscure animal tracks in a forest, and they can identify the significance of minor nicks and dents that even the keenest survivalist would not notice when looking at a sword. Handling investigation this way allows different characters to shine in different fields and show off their expertise in their respective areas of strength.

During an investigative scene, the GM should offer the PCs a few angles they can explore, helping to guide them in their skill selection. However, if a character wishes to search an area for objects and clues of interest but is unsure which skill to use, they can generally fall back on a skill that can yield information about the area they are searching. Examples include:

- Wilderness environments: Survival
- Large cities: Commerce or Skulduggery
- Small towns: Labor
- High courts: Culture or Government
- Markets or docks: Commerce or Seafaring
- Shrines or religious locales: Theology
- Libraries: Government or Theology
- Battlefields: Tactics

Below are a number of examples of investigations characters might commonly undertake:

Table 3–7: Sample TNs, Tasks, and Times for Investigations

TASK	CHECK	TIME
Noticing someone in a crowded room who has unconcealed hostile intent and could be a danger	TN 1 Sentiment (Water) check	Action
Finding a section that has been torn away from a historical scroll and remembering what it contained based on context	TN 2 Government (Earth) check	Action
Searching a criminal's abandoned hideout to determine their goals based on what they took with them	TN 3 Skulduggery (Fire) check	Downtime
Locating an object that a shugenja has rendered invisible	TN 4 Theology (Void) check	Action
Learning a potentially identifying detail about a killer by studying a weeks-old corpse	TN 5 Medicine (Air) check	Downtime

CHAPTER

4

Techniques

When the Kami fell to the earth, they brought with them knowledge, wisdom, and art from the Heavens themselves. They taught their craft and cunning to their human followers, many of whom were already known for their own unique bodies of knowledge and styles of swordplay, martial arts, and impersonation. In the centuries since, these methods have been diligently passed down from sensei to student. While many techniques continue to be practiced in their original form, others have been honed and refined into new and more impressive arts.

What are Techniques?

Techniques are special abilities that represent advanced training. They enable a character to perform feats more quickly or in a unique way, or to exploit opportunities others would overlook.

TECHNIQUE STRUCTURE

Each technique has a number of parts, described below:

Category

Different characters wield different abilities, and each character is granted access to a number of technique categories by their school (see **Part II: Role and School**, on page 56). The different categories are as follows:

- **Kata (see p. 174):** Kata are specialized combat techniques that allow martial artists to vanquish even foes who exceed them in physical strength, speed, or agility. Some kata are new actions, while others grant new ways to spend . Kata have form classifications (General, Close Combat, and Ranged Combat).
- **Kihō (see p. 182):** Kihō are philosophical and spiritual techniques for aligning one's inner energy—*ki*—to that of the wider cosmos. This allows monks and other seekers of Enlightenment to act in harmony with the universe's natural course, tapping into its limitless potential. Kihō are new actions with two parts: an **enhancement effect** which persists until the user chooses to end it or uses another kihō and a **burst effect** which resolves upon activation if the user has sufficient bonus successes. Kihō have elemental classifications (Air, Earth, Fire, Water, and Void).
- **Invocations (see p. 189):** Invocations are prayers and offerings to powerful spirits in exchange for earthly support. They are practiced primarily by shugenja, who are elite samurai priests from ancient, secretive lineages with the power to speak directly to the kami. Invocations are new actions, and have elemental classifications (Air, Earth, Fire, and Water).
- **Rituals (see p. 212):** Rituals are religious ceremonies performed by spiritualists in Rokugan. Rituals tend to be ceremonial, lengthy, and of esoteric effect, unlike the flashy invocations of shugenja. Rituals are downtime activities.
- **Shūji (see p. 214):** Shūji are verbal and social techniques allowing those who employ them to communicate clearly, avoid social traps, motivate their allies, and manipulate their rivals. Shūji are new actions or ways a character can spend . Shūji have elemental classifications (Air, Earth, Fire, Water, and Void).
- **Mahō (see p. 224):** Mahō are evil sorcerous techniques, dark pacts made with wicked spirits in exchange for power. They are practiced only by sorcerers called *mahō-tsukai*. Mahō are new actions.
- **Ninjutsu (see p. 226)**: Ninjutsu are the secretive techniques of shinobi, taught clandestinely in various traditions. Ninjutsu are new actions or grant new ways to spend .

Name

Each technique has a **name**, though this name is not necessarily used by all who practice the technique. Different schools have different ways of describing similar tactics and moves. In some cases (such as invocations), these are noted in an "Other Names" field. Players are encouraged to use them to help underscore the secretive and unique traditions of individual schools.

Prerequisites

If a character must possess any school ranks, clan affiliations, role or schools, ring values, skill ranks, other techniques, or other qualifiers in order to purchase a technique with experience, these are listed to the right of its name. School rank and clan are the most common prerequisites.

Note that prerequisites are waived if a character is directly granted a technique during character creation (or at another time), or if the technique appears on a character's curriculum by name or as part of a listed group (e.g. "Rank 1–3 Kata"). Such techniques and groups are marked with ✧ to denote their special status. If a character does not choose a technique to which they have special access, or advances past a school rank that enables them to buy it without purchasing it, they lose their special access to it and can no longer purchase it.

Description

Each technique has a description to advise the GM and players on how it functions in the fiction of the game. The description has no mechanical effect, but can impose narrative limitations on the technique and act as a guideline for how the technique works in the story.

XP Cost

All techniques in this chapter cost 3 XP to purchase. If a technique costs a different amount of XP, it is listed in the entry.

Activation

Each technique has an **activation**, which specifies when and how it can be used, what targets it affects, range limitations, checks the character must perform to make the technique work, circumstantial requirements it has, and any other pertinent information for how to wield it.

The activation field generally includes some or all of the following information: Use, Check, Targets, Range, and Other Requirements.

Use

Each technique specifies how it is put to use, such as:

- **As an Action:** If a technique's activation contains the phrase "as an action" or "as a [type] action," it means that the character must perform an action during a conflict scene to activate the technique. If the action lists one or more types, it possesses each of those types. Most techniques that require an action to activate also require a check (also listed) and have effects based on the success or failure of that check, as described in **Effects**, below.
- **As a Downtime Activity:** If a technique's activation contains the phrase "as a downtime activity," it means that the character must spend a downtime scene to attempt the task. Most techniques that require a downtime scene to activate also require a check (also listed) and have effects based on the success or failure of that check, as described in **Effects**, below.
- **When Making a Check:** If a technique's activation contains the phrase "when making a check" or "when making a [skill/skill group] check using [ring]," it means that the character can activate the technique only during checks using the specified skill, skill group, ring, or skill and ring combination. Most techniques that activate "when making a check" also require additional resources to activate (usually spending ✿).

Check

If a technique requires an action or downtime scene to activate, it generally also requires a separate check, which is specified in the activation field with its TN. If the check does not specify a ring, it can be performed with any ring (such as the one matching a character's current stance in a conflict scene). If it lists a skill group, the character can choose any skill from that group.

Targets

If a technique contains the phrase "targeting one character," "targeting [a number of] characters," "targeting all characters [within a certain range]," or similar, the characters specified are considered to be targets of that technique. "Positions" (points in the world), "objects," and other targets can also be specified.

When a character executes a technique, if they have a choice of multiple possible targets, they must choose who they are targeting from among the possible targets.

Range

If a technique contains the phrase "at range [number]," "at range [number]–[number]," "in range of your weapon," or similar in relation to a target or area it affects, it can only affect targets that fall within the specified range. If a target is beyond the specified range, the effects of the technique are not resolved against that target (see **Choosing Targets Out of Range,** on page 253).

Other Requirements

If a technique contains any other requirements, such as "using a readied weapon," "under the full moon," or "while on Hallowed ground," these are also required for executing the technique.

Effects

Each technique lists the effects that occur after the character performs the activation. Each paragraph represents a distinct effect. See the **Actions** section on page 252 for more details on resolving action effects. Effects that begin with "If you succeed" only resolve if the check specified in the activation is successful. Effects that begin with "If you fail" only resolve if the check specified in the activation is unsuccessful. Effects that list alternate conditions for resolution resolve under the stated conditions, and effects that do not list any conditions for resolution always resolve.

Persistent Effects

Some effects persist for a set duration (such as "until the beginning of your next turn," "for one round plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes," or "until the end of the scene"). These effects end once the stated end point is reached.

A character cannot benefit (or suffer) from more than one instance of the same persistent effect, even if the effect would be applied by multiple different sources. If a character would otherwise benefit (or suffer) from more than one instance of the same persistent effect, the character chooses which one applies if it is beneficial; the GM chooses which one applies if it is harmful.

New Opportunities

Many techniques that involve checks list one or more uses of ✿ specific to the check to activate the technique. Some opportunities are preceded by a requirement for the type of ✿, such as "Air ✿." This means that a character can only spend ✿ to activate this opportunity if they used the specified ring for the check (in the above case, their Air Ring).

Kata

Kata are martial techniques: sets of moves that warriors practice while training to gain the edge when they find themselves in combat situations. Kata allow a combatant to perform incredible martial feats and capitalize on openings that might slip away from less skilled combatants. Kata can be used in duels and skirmishes, and in other types of conflicts as common sense and the GM's discretion dictate.

Only characters with one or more school ranks in a school that lists "kata" among its available techniques can purchase kata.

KATA CATEGORIES

The kata in this section are organized alphabetically by their classification: General, Close Combat, and Ranged Combat.

General Kata

The following kata are not limited to a specific weapon or combat style, and have close equivalents within most Rokugani martial arts schools.

Battle in the Mind — Rank 3

As two masters of any martial art square off before a duel, each seeks to predict the other's angle of attack and strategy, and the ways their predictions might be foiled by the opponent's.

Activation: When you make an Initiative check for a duel using your Void Ring, you may spend ✿ in the following way:

Void ✿ ✿: You name two rings, then your opponent must name one of those two rings. When your opponent selects their stance during their first turn of the duel, they cannot select the ring they named as their stance.

Void ✿+: Choose a technique category. Learn one of your opponent's known techniques of that category (chosen by the opponent) per ✿ spent this way.

Breath of Wind Style — Rank 4

A swift strike to the solar plexus or throat can leave the target reeling; an experienced bushi can steal the breath from their foe with a quick jab even while executing another attack.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Air) check, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Air ✿+: One target of your action must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Earth 4, Fire 1)** or suffer the Disoriented condition and fatigue equal to their shortfall. Increase the TN of the check to resist by 1 per ✿ spent this way.

Crashing Wave Style — Rank 4

The wave washes over the stone, wearing it away, and so the bushi's weapon passes across their foe's flesh, leaving behind a bloody gash or slice that is sure to slow their enemy even if the hit is not fatal.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Water) check, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Water ✿+: One target of your action must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Earth 1, Fire 4)** or suffer the Bleeding condition and fatigue equal to their shortfall. Increase the TN of the check to resist by 1 per ✿ spent this way.

Crescent Moon Style — Rank 2

Striking first is valuable, but so is surviving. To defend without sacrificing offense, a bushi must be ready to retaliate swiftly after blocking or evading. With a quick shift, the bushi switches from defense to bring down their full force upon their enemy.

Activation: When you perform Guard action (see page 264), you may spend ✿ in the following way:
✿: After a character at range 1–2 performs an Attack action targeting you or another character you are guarding, you may perform a Strike action with one readied Martial Arts [Melee or Unarmed] weapon targeting that character (if they are within your weapon's range). This effect persists until the start of your next turn, or until you perform a Strike action this way.

Crimson Leaves Strike — Rank 3

Sweeping their blade down in a sudden arc, the bushi lands a blow atop the enemy's weapon, scattering it from their hand like falling leaves.

Activation: As an Attack action using a readied weapon, you may make a **TN 4 Martial Arts (Earth) check** with appropriate skill for that weapon, targeting one character within the weapon's range.
Effects: If you succeed, your target suffers physical damage equal to your Earth Ring, plus additional damage equal to your bonus successes. Choose one of your target's readied weapons; the target must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Air 2, Water 5)** or lose control of the chosen weapon, which travels 3 range bands in a direction of your choice.

New Opportunities

Earth ✿: If you disarm your opponent, you may take control of their weapon instead of knocking it away.

Disappearing World Style — Rank 4

Seeing nothing but their enemy, the bushi surges forward in a flurry of strikes, seeking to land a hit to the eyes, temple, or other vulnerable area rapidly after their initial attack. This stunning blow can leave the enemy staggered, giving the bushi a chance to finish the battle with their next attack.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Fire) check, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Fire ✿+: One target of your action must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Air 4, Water 1)** or suffer the Dazed condition and fatigue equal to their shortfall. Increase the TN of the check to resist by 1 per ✿ spent this way.

Flowing Water Strike — Rank 3

A skilled warrior is not restricted by the optimal range of their weapon, and can open or close gaps to compensate for positional disadvantages.

Activation: As an Attack and Movement action using a readied weapon, you may make a **TN 3 Martial Arts (Water) check** using the appropriate skill for that readied weapon, targeting one character at range 0–2 (regardless of the weapon's usual range restrictions).
Effects: If you succeed, the target suffers physical damage equal to your Water Ring and suffers the Bleeding condition. The target must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Earth 2, Fire 5)**; if they fail, increase the physical damage they suffer by your weapon's base damage.

New Opportunities

Water ✿: Remove the Dazed, Disoriented, Immobilized, or Prone condition from yourself.

KATA IN CURRICULUMS

Kata are marked with a stylized weapon (⚔) in curriculum tables

Heartpiercing Strike — Rank 3

Battle is the art of killing, and woe betide any warrior who forgets it. With a roar, the bushi launches forward, stabbing out with their weapon to fatally impale their enemy. Even if the strike does not slay the foe, it is likely to weaken them significantly.

Activation: As an Attack and Movement action using a readied weapon, you may make a **TN 4 Martial Arts (Fire) check** using the appropriate skill for that weapon, targeting one character within the weapon's range.
Effects: If you succeed, your target suffers a critical strike with severity equal to your weapon's deadliness plus your bonus successes. The TN of the Fitness check to resist this critical strike is 3 (Air 4, Water 1) instead of the normal TN.

If you fail, you suffer the Disoriented condition.

New Opportunities

Fire ✲: Before resolving the effect, move up to 1 range band toward your target.

Iron in the Mountains Style — Rank 4

The bushi strikes with crushing force, breaking their enemy's footing and knocking them to the ground with an overwhelming blow or sweeping their stance out from underneath them with a well-placed kick.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Earth) check, you may spend ✲ in the following way:
Earth ✲+: One target of your action must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Air 1, Water 4)** or suffer the Prone condition and fatigue equal to their shortfall. Increase the TN of the check to resist by 1 per ✲ spent this way.

Lord Hida's Grip — (Crab) Rank 2

The Kami Hida, patron of the Crab Clan, was a legendary slayer of monsters. He beheaded the massive demon that once menaced the rose-marble palace, and ripped out one skull of the two-headed Kabuto no Oni and crushed the other head with it. However, Hida was no mere brute: he was cunning, killing monsters by exploiting their weaknesses. Warriors of the Crab Clan train in similar techniques. They turn their foes' great weight against them by pinning or strategically damaging specific body parts.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **Fitness (Void) check** targeting one creature of silhouette 3 or larger at range 0–1. The TN of the check is equal to the silhouette of the target (to a minimum of 1).
Effects: If you succeed, your target suffers the Immobilized condition.

If you succeed, you count as granting assistance (see page 26) to all characters who perform Attack actions against your target. This effect persists until the beginning of your next turn.

New Opportunities

Void ✲: Your target must resist with a **Fitness check** or suffer physical damage equal to its silhouette, ignoring its resistance, and the Prone condition. The TN of this check is equal to your school rank.

Lord Shiba's Valor (Phoenix) Rank 2

Once, in the Shadowlands, the Kami Shiba stood alone between a vast horde of its foul denizens and the last of the Seven Thunders after their victory against Fu Leng. Drawing the legendary sword Ofushikai, Shiba cut his way through the host to the First Oni. Legends say that their blades flashed for a hundred days, shattering mountains around them and cutting great rifts across the ground. In the end, each slew the other, but Shiba fell with his oath to protect unbroken.

Activation: Once per game session, as a Support action using one readied weapon, you may make a **TN 2 Tactics (Void) check** targeting any number of friendly characters in range of your weapon.
Effects: If you succeed, other characters cannot select your targets as the targets of their Attack or Scheme actions if they could select you instead. If an action has multiple targets, you must be the first target chosen. This effect persists for a number of rounds equal to your school rank.

New Opportunities

Void ✿: If you succeed, increase the TN of Attack and Scheme checks targeting you by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Soaring Slice Rank 1

Jerking their arm in a sudden motion, the bushi hurls their weapon at the enemy, hoping to take the foe off guard or open a gap in their defenses.

Activation: As an Attack action using one readied weapon in a one-handed grip, you may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts check** with the appropriate skill for the weapon targeting one character at range 2–3.
Effects: You hurl your weapon at the target.

If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to the weapon's base damage plus your bonus successes. The weapon lands at range in a direction of your choice from the target if they defend against the damage, or embeds in them if they suffer a critical strike. If you fail, the weapon travels a number of range bands equal to the maximum range of the technique in the direction of the target.

New Opportunities

✿+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✿ spent this way.
✿: Reduce the TN of the next Attack action against the target before the end of your next turn by 1.

Soul Sunder Rank 5

While bushi are generally less well equipped to deal with supernatural threats than shugenja, mastery of any art reveals how the world is all interconnected. Warriors deeply engaged with the mysteries of the sword can attune themselves to their ancestral blades to cut even those beings who walk between worlds and whose flesh steel normally will not bite.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Meditation (Void) check** to attune your blade to the spirits of your honored ancestors.
Effects: If you succeed, choose one readied weapon. It gains the Sacred quality, and when you use it to inflict a critical strike on an Otherworldly being, treat its deadliness as increased by your bonus successes. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

New Opportunities

Void ✿+: This effect persists for one additional round per ✿ spent this way.
Void ✿ ✿: Otherworldly beings cannot perform Attack actions targeting you until the start of your next turn.
Void ✿ ✿: You may immediately perform a Strike action using your readied weapon.

Striking as Air Rank 1

Not every stroke a warrior throws in battle is intended to kill—even if they all lead to that end goal. A skilled fighter can tell when an attack will not land and subtly shift it into a different sort of attack, meant to probe the enemy's defenses or draw their guard out of position. By carefully placing attack after attack, a master of the blade can eventually whittle down their opponent's options until none remain but death.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Air) check, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Air ✿+: Reserve one of your rolled dice, plus one additional die per ✿ ✿ spent this way. These dice become dropped dice. When making a check with the same skill before the end of your next turn, you may roll one fewer ■ per reserved ■ and one fewer ⬠ per reserved ⬠, then add the reserved dice to your roll. These dice count as rolled dice, but are added set to the results they had when they were reserved.

Striking as Earth — Rank 1

After striking, the bushi roots themself to the ground, hunkering down to make sure their armor takes the brunt of a hit or raising a weapon in a warding position where it can deflect harm without being damaged.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Earth) check, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Earth ✿+: Treat your physical resistance as 1 higher per ✿ spent this way until the beginning of your next turn.

Striking as Fire — Rank 1

Victory cannot be achieved through defense alone, and it is a poor student of the sword who forgets that their most important goal is simple: cut down their enemy. All else fades to the background as the bushi fiercely presses the attack, trying to force an error or open an opportunity to end their foe.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Fire) Attack action check, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Fire ✿+: The next time your target suffers a critical strike, increase its severity by 1 per ✿ spent this way. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Striking as Void — Rank 5

The future is part of Void's domain, infinite in possibility and unfathomable in depth. Because of its formlessness, one cannot scheme to undermine the uncertain future—but the instant it takes shape, an action is vulnerable to countermeasures. The bushi rests until the last possible second, allowing the potential energy of their strike to take shape only after it is too late for their enemy to respond.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Void) check, you may spend ✿ in the following ways:
Void ✿: Immediately switch to a different stance of your choice.
Void ✿: If you fail, you may perform another action. This must be an action you have not yet performed this turn. You can only activate this opportunity once per round.

Striking as Water — Rank 1

The finest armor is useless if a warrior can bypass it, slipping a blade through the gaps that allow the wearer to move or using blunt, concussive force to create a space. As the bushi strikes, they attempt to slide past the target's defenses to deliver a lethal blow.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee, Ranged, or Unarmed] (Water) Attack action check, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Water ✿+: Your target treats their physical resistance as 1 lower per ✿ spent this way. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Tactical Assessment — Rank 2

Akodo's Leadership *and Bayushi's* Lies *agree on a few topics, for both leaders were practical to a certain degree, even if Akodo famously scorned many of Bayushi's methods. As the scholar Hida Fuyuko noted in her revelatory commentary on* Leadership*'s lessons for commanders on the Kaiu Wall, the most famous meeting of these two minds comes on the matter of preparation: battles are not won in the field, but in the leadup to the conflict. Even in small clashes, the warrior who better understands the terrain, the strength of their own forces, and the composition of the enemy's troops is usually victorious.*

Activation: When you make an Initiative check, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Air ✿: Choose an enemy in the conflict. Learn one of their advantages (of their choice) and their physical or supernatural resistance (your choice).
Earth ✿: Choose a character in the conflict. They do not apply any of their disadvantages to their checks until the end of their first turn.
Water ✿: Choose a piece of terrain in the scene (see **Terrain** on page 267). Until the start of your first turn, it counts as having the Obscuring quality for Attack action checks targeting you and your allies.
Fire ✿: Choose a character in the conflict and one of their advantages you know. Until the end of their first turn, they apply that advantage to all of their checks.

Warrior's Resolve — Rank 1

The bushi draws a deep breath, exhaling as they rise to their feet. Pain can be conquered as long as there is a duty to be done. Honor is stronger than steel, it is said, and it falls to the samurai to prove it.

Activation: Once per scene, as a Support action, you may spend 1 Void point to recover.
Effects: Remove fatigue equal to your honor rank.

Close Combat Kata

The following kata are performed with weapons that use the Martial Arts [Melee] or Martial Arts [Unarmed] skill.

Coiling Serpent Style — Rank 2

Entrapping techniques can be performed with many different weapons, from the kusari-gama *wielded by brigands to the ornate, hook-headed polearms used by the Phoenix Clan's greatest masters of the spear.*

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee] or Martial Arts [Unarmed] check using a Snaring weapon, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
✿+: Choose one weapon a target has readied; that weapon cannot be used for Attack actions. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.
✿ ✿+: One target of your action per ✿ ✿ spent this way becomes Immobilized.

Iaijutsu Cut: Crossing Blade — Rank 2

The bushi twists their scabbard outward as they draw, cutting horizontally to extend their reach.

Activation: As an Attack and Movement action using one sheathed Razor-Edged weapon, you may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts [Melee] check** targeting one character at range 1–2.
Effects: You draw and ready the sheathed weapon in a one-handed grip.

If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to the weapon's deadliness plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✿: Ready one other sheathed Razor-Edged weapon.

Iaijutsu Cut: Rising Blade — Rank 2

The bushi grips their scabbard against their hip and draws, cutting upward to catch an advancing foe without being cut themself.

Activation: As an Attack action using one sheathed Razor-Edged weapon, you may make a **TN 3 Martial Arts [Melee] check** targeting one character at range 0–1.
Effects: You draw and ready the sheathed weapon in a one-handed grip.

If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to the weapon's deadliness. Your target cannot defend against this damage if they are Compromised.

New Opportunities

✿: Ready one other sheathed Razor-Edged weapon.

Iron Forest Style — Rank 2

A bushi versed in the spear can control their spacing with their opponent, forcing their foe to risk impalement each time they advance or catching loose clothes or stray body parts on the head of the weapon. Akodo's Leadership *refers to such a technique as the Iron Forest style, which turns the length of a single spear into an insurmountable distance.*

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee] check using a polearm, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
✿+: The area in range of your weapon counts as Dangerous terrain for one target of your action per ✿ spent this way. When an affected character attempts to move closer to you, they must make a **TN 4 Fitness check (Air 2, Water 5)**; if they fail, they cannot advance. This effect persists until the start of your next turn.

Open-Hand Style — Rank 2

Power does not come from speed alone. A master martial artist can apply force for maximum effect, making even gentle movements devastatingly effective blocks and strikes. With enough experience, a martial artist can even control their opponent's stance.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Unarmed] check using a weapon with the Snaring quality, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
✿ ✿+: One target of your action per ✿ ✿ spent this way must switch to a different stance of your choice. Targets of silhouette 3 or greater may resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check** and ignore this effect if they succeed.

Rushing Avalanche Style — Rank 2

When adopting this style, the bushi strikes with reckless abandon using a heavy armament. Thanks to the sheer weight of their weapon and the ferocity of their strikes, even a glancing blow can cause serious harm, and a telling blow usually ends the battle.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee] check using a blunt weapon, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
✿: If you fail with a shortfall of two or less, your target suffers physical damage equal to your ranks in Fitness.
✿: If you succeed and your target is Prone, increase the damage you deal by your ranks in Fitness.

Spinning Blades Style — Rank 2

The biggest advantage of dual wielding does not usually stem from striking with two weapons simultaneously, largely because this is a very difficult feat. Instead, it comes from the fact that the warrior does not need to sacrifice defense while attacking or offense while defending. The off-hand blade can deflect and threaten even as the main-hand weapon attacks, or the bushi can strike with the offhand weapon while the main-hand weapon is locked with the foe's blade. Either weapon can deliver death, and so the enemy must watch both at all times.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee] or Martial Arts [Unarmed] Attack action check, if you have a second readied weapon you did not use for the attack, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
✿+: You must spend ✿ equal to your target's Vigilance to activate this technique. You use your second readied weapon against one target of your action, inflicting physical damage equal to its base damage. If that target is Dazed, increase this damage by your ranks in the skill you used for the check.

Thunderclap Strike — Rank 3

Sweeping their weapon in a wide arc, the bushi lashes out at their foes, driving them back to make an opening for their next move.

Activation: As an Attack action using a readied weapon, you may make a **TN 3 Martial Arts [Melee or Unarmed] (Air) check** using the appropriate skill for that weapon targeting each character within the weapon's range.
Effects: If you succeed, each target suffers damage equal to your weapon's base damage and must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Earth 4, Fire 1)** or move 2 range bands directly away from you.

New Opportunities

Air ✿+: Increase the TN of checks to resist the effect by 1 per ✿ spent this way.

Veiled Menace Style — Rank 2

Assassination and other clandestine tactics are frowned upon by many samurai. None can deny the effectiveness of such techniques, however. By drawing their enemy's gaze away from the true threat, a bushi can often tip the scales against a strong foe.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Melee] or Martial Arts [Unarmed] Attack action check using a weapon in a one-handed grip, you may spend ✲ in the following way:
✲+: If you succeed, choose one unaware or Disoriented target of your action. That target suffers a critical strike with severity equal to your weapon's deadliness plus 1 per ✲ spent this way beyond the first.

Ranged Combat Kata

The following kata are performed with weapons that use the Martial Arts [Ranged] skill.

Hawk's Precision — Rank 1

While most bushi are expected to be proficient in the use of the bow, some are terrifyingly accurate, capable of hitting targets well beyond the expected engagement range.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Ranged] check, you may spend ✲ in the following way:
✲+: Treat the range of the weapon as 1 higher per ✲ spent this way, to a maximum of range 6.

Pelting Hail Style — Rank 2

A volley of arrows on the battlefield can be deadly, but most importantly from a strategic standpoint, it is terrifying to even the staunchest veterans. Even if only one in ten shots finds its mark, the salvo rattles opponents and forces caution.

Activation: When you make a Martial Arts [Ranged] check, you may spend ✲ in the following way:
✲+: Choose a number of other characters at range 0–2 of your target equal to ✲ spent this way. Each chosen character receives strife equal to the base damage of your weapon.

Pin the Fan — Rank 5

While it is difficult to kill at range with a single arrow, it can certainly be done, and master archers have been performing legendary feats of precision since the early days of Rokugan. From Hantei Genji's famous shots to the arrow loosed by Doji Hotaru that slew Akodo Arasou, killing shots have often changed the course of the Emerald Empire's history.

Activation: As an Attack and Movement action using a readied ranged weapon, you may make a **Martial Arts [Ranged] check** targeting one character within your weapon's range. The TN of the check is equal to the target's vigilance plus the range of the attack.
Effects: If you succeed, the target suffers damage equal to two times the weapon's base damage plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✲: If the target becomes Incapacitated as a result of damage from this action, they suffer a critical strike with severity equal to two times the weapon's deadliness damage plus your bonus successes.

KI

"Ki" ("qi" or "ch'i," when translated from Chinese) is the animating energy of living things, which conscious beings can control in part through their willpower. Like many parts of Legend of the Five Rings, *ki is a real world concept that has inspired part of this fantasy setting, and should be treated with due consideration as such.*

In Rokugan, kihō practitioners align their body's inner ki with the vast and inestimable energies of the universe to perform amazing feats. Each kihō is a martial form that aids the user expressing their ki in the form of an element.

Kihō

Kihō, meaning "ki method," are powerful spiritual techniques generally known only to monks. Practitioners activate them by aligning their inner energy (*ki*) to specific elements or universal forces. Kihō can be used in intrigues, duels, and skirmishes, and in other types of conflicts as common sense and the GM's discretion dictate.

Kihō are techniques that have two types of effects: an **enhancement effect** that gives a persistent benefit to the user if they succeed on the check, and a **burst effect** that resolves immediately if the user has the requisite number of bonus successes on the check to activate the kihō.

- The enhancement effect lasts until the character chooses to end it, until they successfully activate another kihō, or until the end of the scene. It usually goes undetected by most onlookers untrained in ki techniques.
- The burst effect of a kihō is generally much more visible, at least in its effects. Gouts of flame, rumbling of earth, or gusts of air that carry the user aloft are hard for anyone to miss—though to the untrained, they often seem miraculous.

A character can have only one kihō enhancement effect at a time, and they cannot reactivate a kihō if they are currently benefiting from its enhancement effect. Only characters with one or more school ranks in a school that lists "kihō" among its available techniques can purchase kihō.

The kihō in this section are organized alphabetically within their elemental classification.

Earth Kihō

Earth kihō focus around securing one's roots, feeling the vibrations of all that pass across the ground, and waiting patiently for the right moment to strike.

Cleansing Spirit — Rank 1

The monk centers their ki, then reaches out and touches another character, counterbalancing their turbulent energies with the stillness of the monk's own soul. This restores the character's spirit, driving out poison, disease, and even the grip of evil spirits, provided they have not yet taken root in the character's soul.

Activation: As a Support action, may make a **TN 1 Theology (Earth) check** to bolster your spiritual resilience. When you perform this action, you may choose one other character at range 0–1 as the target for the burst effect.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, reduce the TN of all your checks to resist poison, disease, mahō, the Defiled terrain quality, and the effects of Otherworldly and Tainted beings by your Earth Ring.
Burst Effect: If you have two or more bonus successes, remove one of the following conditions from your target: Afflicted, Bleeding, Dazed, Disoriented, Dying, Fatigued, or Intoxicated.

Earth Needs No Eyes — Rank 1

The monk who waits and listens sees much, even without eyes. Sending out waves of their own energy and letting the ki of the life around them flow back into their body through the ground, the monk feels the reverberations of everything moving nearby, from the thunderous breaths of a warrior in battle to the footsteps of the tiniest ants.

Activation: As a Support action, you may activate this kihō. When you do so, you may make a **TN 1 Meditation (Earth) check** to gain an awareness of your surroundings.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, you can use vibrations through the earth to "see" a number of range bands in all directions equal to your Earth Ring. While this kihō is active, increase your vigilance by your Earth Ring.
Burst Effect: If you succeed with three or more bonus successes, you instantly become aware of all living creatures and objects touching the ground within a number of range bands equal to your Earth Ring plus your bonus successes.

Earthen Fist — Rank 1

Placing their hand on the ground, the monk draws forth the hardness of stone, pulling up clumps of rocky soil that coat their skin or invisibly reinforcing their bones and muscles with the durability of granite.

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Earth) check** to empower your unarmed blows. When you perform this action, you may choose a character at range 0–1 as the target for the burst effect.
Enhancement Effect: While this kihō is active, treat the base damage of your unarmed punch and kick profiles (see page 237) as being increased by your Earth Ring. While this kihō is active, increase your physical resistance by 1.
Burst Effect: If you succeed with two or more bonus successes, you deal physical damage to the target equal to your Earth Ring, and your target must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Air 2, Water 5)** or suffer the Prone condition.

Grasp the Earth Dragon — Rank 3

Planting a foot on the ground and taking a wide stance, the monk stomps, sending reverberations of ki rushing down into the depths. An instant later, the monk's body is filled with the resilience of bedrock; stones rise and orbit their body to deflect attacks, rocks adhere to their flesh forming rocky scales, or their flesh becomes as difficult to crack as granite.

Activation: As a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Meditation (Earth) check** to shield yourself from harm.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, reduce the severity of all critical strikes you suffer from physical sources by your Earth Ring.

While this kihō is active, after a character performs an Attack action against you, you may spend 1 Void point to cause them to suffer fatigue equal to your ranks in Fitness.
Burst Effects: If you have three or more bonus successes, reduce all physical damage you suffer to 1. After any character deals physical damage to you, they suffer the Prone condition. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Way of the Earthquake — Rank 2

The monk slams a hand or foot into the ground, and the earth itself shudders under the weight of the blow as their ki rushes through the soil. Nearby enemies are hurled to the ground and find it shifting treacherously underneath them as they struggle to rise.

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Earth) check** to control the earth around you. When you perform this action, you may choose any number of other characters at range 0–1 as targets for the burst effect.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, after you perform an Attack or Support action, or defend against damage, you may choose one other character at range 0–2 who must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Air 2, Water 5)** or suffer physical damage equal to your Earth Ring and the Prone condition.
Burst Effect: If you have two or more bonus successes, each target suffers physical damage equal to your Earth Ring. Each Prone target suffers physical damage equal to your Earth Ring plus your bonus successes and the Immobilized condition instead.

Air Kihō

Air kihō center around hearing the whispers of the world and understanding their meaning. To align one's ki with air is to detach from earthly desires, becoming untethered from the world.

Air Fist — Rank 1

The monk swirls their hands in an intricate pattern, channeling their ki into the air and turning even a placid breeze into a funnel of roaring wind. A gale follows the monk's strikes, hurling foes back and slamming them against intervening objects.

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Air) check** to empower your unarmed blows. When you perform this action, you may choose one other character at range 0–1 as the target for the burst effect.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, treat the maximum range of your punch and kick unarmed weapon profiles (see page 237) as equal to your Air Ring.
Burst Effect: If you have two or more bonus successes, you deal physical damage to the target equal to your Air Ring. Your target must make a **TN 4 Fitness check (Earth 5, Fire 2)** or be pushed 1 range band away from you, plus a number of range bands equal to their shortfall.

VISUALIZING ENHANCEMENT EFFECTS

The enhancement effect of a kihō often goes unnoticed by those not trained in the mastery of ki, for their senses are not attuned to seeking it. Those with the proper training might perceive it as a swirling corona of power, a gentle rippling of energy, or an immense spiritual weight cast on those nearby, depending on the technique in use.

A kihō's burst effect, on the other hand, is rarely so subtle, for flinging fire or shattering the earth tends to attract attention.

KIHŌ IN CURRICULUMS

Kihō are marked with a stylized tree (🌲) in curriculum tables

Riding the Clouds — Rank 2

The monk inhales and lets go their earthly bonds to ascend to new heights. Lifted by a small tornado, an invisible current of air, or even a cloud, the monk can move far more freely. While this current of wind does not fully negate the effects of gravity, it allows the user to traverse terrain they otherwise could not and enhances their athleticism greatly.

Activation: As a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Meditation (Air) check** to move on a pillar of air.
Enhancement Effect: While this kihō is active, when you move 1 or more range bands, you may move that number of range bands plus 1, and you may move 1 of those range bands vertically or horizontally. Additionally, you may ignore the effects of terrain while moving (see **Terrain**, on page 267).

While this kihō is active, if you fall, you treat the distance as 1 range band (see **Falling**, on page 269).
Burst Effect: If you have one or more bonus successes, you may immediately move 1 range band, plus one additional range band for each bonus success. You may make this move vertically or horizontally, and you ignore the negative effects of terrain while moving.

The Great Silence — Rank 1

The monk swirls their hands in a spiral, pulling noise inward and stealing even the reverberations that sounds make through the air. Lies die on the lips unspoken, and prayers never reach the spirits for whom they were intended. Skilled practitioners often maintain this technique, twisting the wind around them to steal away pernicious words and wicked prayers alike.

Activation: As a Scheme and Support action, you may activate this kihō, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Air) check** to create an area of silence around you.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, increase the TN of Scheme action checks targeting you by one plus your ranks in Command.
Burst Effect: If you have two or more bonus successes, characters at range 0–3 suffer the Silenced condition (see page 273) and cannot hear. This effect persists until the beginning of your next turn.

Way of the Willow — Rank 3

The oak stands firm against the storm and breaks, but the willow survives it by bending. The monk dances on the wind like the willow, feeling the currents of ki upon the air and moving out of the way of attacks effortlessly.

Activation: As a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Meditation (Air) check** to adjust your defenses to the tempo of your foes' strikes, making yourself much harder to hit.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, when a character performs an Attack action check targeting you, reduce any damage you suffer by 2 for each kept die containing 🌀.
Burst Effect: If you have two or more bonus successes, increase the TN of Attack action checks targeting you by your ranks in Meditation until the beginning of your next turn.

Fire Kihō

Fire kihō function by kindling the energy within, fostering its life-giving force and channeling it outward to change the wider world. Some monks create flames with their ki. Others manipulate heat directly, and while their fists might not be shrouded in fire, they burn just as hot.

Breaking Blow — Rank 1

A kihō practitioner skilled in aligning their energy to the element of Fire can deliver a strike that forces a spark of ki into an object and ignites the latent energy within; causing the object to explode or shatter.

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Fire) check** to enhance your unarmed blows. When you perform this action, you may choose one object at range 0–1 as the target for the burst effect.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, when you succeed at a Martial Arts [Unarmed] check against a target, choose one worn piece of armor or readied weapon in one target's possession. It gains the Damaged quality (see page 240) unless the target chooses to receive 2 fatigue.
Burst Effect: If you have two or more bonus successes, the chosen object gains the Damaged quality (see page 240). At the GM's discretion, this can also be used to shatter tough mundane objects, such as wooden doors, earthen walls, and trees.

If you have four or more bonus successes, the chosen object gains the Destroyed quality instead. At the GM's discretion, this can be used to destroy even reinforced mundane objects, such as metal doors and stone walls.

Channel the Fire Dragon — Rank 2

Fire is not just destruction; it is also life. The monk inhales sharply, igniting their ki to strengthen themself. While this life-giving fire smolders within their lungs, the monk is largely immune to cold weather and flames alike. Ki practitioners experienced in this art can even exhale scorching torrents of flame.

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Meditation (Fire) check** to kindle the flames of your ki. When you perform this action, you may choose to have each other character at range 0–1 become a target for the burst effect.

Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, you automatically succeed on all checks to resist extreme weather, with bonus successes equal to your Fire Ring.

While this kihō is active, if you would suffer damage from physical or supernatural fire (e.g. Fire invocations and kihō), you may spend 1 Void point to prevent that damage and remove that much fatigue instead.

Burst Effect: If you have 2 or more bonus successes, each target must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Air 5, Water 2)** or suffer physical damage equal to your Fire Ring and the Burning condition. Flammable objects in this area ignite, transforming it into Dangerous terrain (see page 267) at the GM's discretion.

Flame Fist — Rank 1

The monk throws a rapid, reckless strike, and flame streams out, seizing and charring whatever the monk touches. While sustaining this kihō, the monk's hands and feet trail fire, lending power to their strikes.

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Fire) check** to empower your unarmed blows. When you perform this action, you may choose a character at range 0–1 as the target for the burst effect.

Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, treat the deadliness of your unarmed punch and kick profiles (see page 237) as increased by your Fire Ring and treat their damage type as supernatural.

Burst Effects: If you have two or more bonus successes, your target suffers physical damage equal to your Fire Ring and must make a **TN 4 Fitness check (Air 5, Water 2)** or suffer the Dazed condition.

The Body Is an Anvil — Rank 1

The monk focuses their ki to the point where they expect a foe's blow to land, expelling energy to counter the force of the strike. Weapons have been known to shatter into clouds of sparks and chunks of metal when touching a monk's body, unmade by the force of the monk's inner energy.

Activation: As a Movement and Support action , you may make a **TN 3 Meditation (Fire) check** to prepare your defenses. When you perform this action, you may choose a character at range 0–2 as the target for the burst effect.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, you defend against damage from an Attack action, the character who attacked you suffers supernatural damage equal to your Fire Ring and the Dazed condition.
Burst Effect: If you have two or more bonus successes, before you defend against damage dealt by the target, reduce the damage by your Fire Ring. If you successfully defend against the damage, one weapon the target used gains the Damaged quality, and the target suffers the Burning condition.

Way of the Falling Star — Rank 3

The monk hurls a series of rapid strikes. With each one, fire or rippling heat erupts from their palm, elbow, foot, or other striking surface scorching their target.

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Fire) check**. When you activate this technique, you may choose one character at range 0–2 as the target for the burst effect.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, when you perform an Attack action using a punch or kick against a Dazed target, increase the damage you inflict by your Fire Ring.
Burst Effect: If you have three or more bonus successes, one target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Fire Ring plus your ranks in Fitness. They must resist with a **TN 5 Fitness check (Air 6, Water 3)** or suffer the Burning and Dazed conditions.

UNARMED ATTACKS

When a technique specifies "using a punch or a kick," it refers to an attack action using one of those unarmed attack profiles (see page 237).

Water Kihō

Water pervades all life, the ground, and even the air. Water kihō allow their practitioners to feel the ebb and flow in all things, and to alter these currents to their needs. This mastery over their own ki can be extended to that of others, allowing a master of water kihō to rejuvenate an ally with a touch or cause a foe's ki to twist and tangle with a gentle strike.

Freezing the Lifeblood — Rank 2

The monk touches a single point on the target's body and, with an icy stare, causes the ki within the target to seize up, contracting muscles into a spasmed state and then making them fall slack.

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Water) check** to empower your unarmed blows. When you activate this technique, you may choose one character at range 0–1 as the target for the burst effect.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, after a character defends against damage you inflict with an Attack action using a punch or kick, they suffer the Immobilized condition unless they choose to receive 3 fatigue.
Burst Effect: If you have two or more bonus successes, the target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Water Ring ignoring their resistance and suffers the Immobilized condition.

If you succeed with four or more bonus successes, the target suffers a critical strike with severity equal to your Water Ring plus your ranks in Medicine instead.

Ki Protection — Rank 1

The monk touches the injured individual, feeling the flow of their ki and using their own to gently correct its flow. While the monk sustains this kihō, their touch continues to heal, though repeating the effort numerous times is quite draining.

Activation: As a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Meditation (Water) check.** You may choose one character at range 0–1 as the target for the burst effect.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, when you perform the Calming Breath action, you may remove 2 fatigue instead of 1.

While this kihō is active, after you perform an action, you may spend 1 Void point to remove fatigue equal to your ranks in Medicine from one other character at range 0–1.
Burst Effect: If you have 2 or more bonus successes, your target removes fatigue equal to your ranks in Medicine plus your bonus successes. Each target cannot be affected by this effect again until the end of the scene.

Ride the Water Dragon — Rank 3

The monk shifts their stance and moves with inexorable purpose, making their ki fluid and allowing mystical energy to ripple off them like harmless raindrops.

Activation: As a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Meditation (Water) check** to become resistant to supernatural effects.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, when you are targeted by a check for an invocation, mahō, or kihō, increase the TN of the check by your ranks in Meditation.

At the GM's discretion, while this kihō is active, you can pass through certain supernatural barriers and wards without triggering their effects or alerting their owners.
Burst Effect: If you have two or more bonus successes, remove all other persistent effects from supernatural sources (such as invocations, mahō, or kihō) from yourself.

If you have four or more bonus successes, remove all other persistent effects from supernatural sources (such as invocations, mahō, or kihō) from all characters at range 0–2 instead.

Water Fist — Rank 1

The monk throws a soft blow against a nearby object and makes their ki as water, rippling across intervening objects and sliding past protections to reach its destination. The force of the strike travels through any contact surface, striking another target touching it, even if they are on the other side of a wooden door, stone wall, or other physical barrier.

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Water) check** to enhance your unarmed blows. When you perform this action, you may choose one character at range 0–3 who shares a contact surface with you as the target for the burst effect.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, your Attack checks using the punch or kick unarmed profile ignore an amount of your target's physical resistance up to two times your Water Ring.

While this kihō is active, you may spend 1 Void point to perform an unarmed attack with a punch or kick indirectly through any solid surface your target is touching. As long as you and your target are both in contact with the same solid surface (such as a wall, floor, or body of water) at a range between 0 and a number equal to your Water Ring of each other, the target is considered to be in range for any Attack action you perform with your punch or kick unarmed attack profile.
Burst Effect: If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to your Water Ring.

Way of the Seafoam — Rank 1

The monk shifts and matches their movements to their surroundings, sliding to their feet and righting themself like a duck bobbing to the surface of a pond. In this state, the monk can even traverse water, their ki buoying them where they contact the waves.

Activation: As a Movement and Support action, you may a make **TN 1 Meditation (Water) check**.
Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, you may walk on water as if it were solid ground.
Burst Effect: If you have two or more bonus successes, remove the Immobilized and Prone conditions from yourself. Then, you may switch to any stance and move up to 2 range bands.

Void Kihō

Void kihō involve seeing through the lie of material reality and into the truth that exists beneath. When one perceives the world unclouded by the senses, the subtlest movements can create vast ripples, and the gentlest strikes can become deadly.

Death Touch — Rank 4

The monk delivers a blow to a single point on their target's body and gives a dread proclamation that echoes across the ensuing stillness. The lucky are merely wounded by this experience, but a single brush from a master of such a deadly ki technique can be fatal.

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Martial Arts [Unarmed] (Void) check** to enhance your unarmed blows. When you perform this action, you may choose a character at range 0–1 as the target for the burst effect.

Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, when you perform an Attack action using a punch or kick, the target cannot defend against the damage you deal (see page 268) unless they spend 1 Void point.

Burst Effect: If you have three or more bonus successes, the target suffers the Dazed and Disoriented conditions, and must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check** or suffer the Unconscious condition.

If you have four or more bonus successes and the target is a minion NPC, they are simply slain instead.

Still the Elements — Rank 3

The monk seeks the infinite Void within themself, delving into their ki and pushing back spiritual beings and tipping the balance between the elements as they desire. Kansen, kami, other spiritual powers, and sometimes even mortals are repelled by the emptiness in the monk.

Activation: As an Intrigue and Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Meditation (Void) check**. When you perform this action, choose Air, Earth, Fire, or Water.

Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, when you are targeted by a check using the chosen ring, you may choose 1 kept die from the check. Set those dice to blank faces.

While this kihō is active, when you are targeted by a check using the chosen ring, you may spend 1 Void point to choose additional kept dice from the check up to your ranks in Meditation. Set those dice to blank faces.

Burst Effect: If you have two or more bonus successes, the terrain at range 0–3 becomes Imbalanced [Chosen Element] (see page 267) until the end of the scene.

Touch the Void Dragon — Rank 5

The root of the universe is nothing and everything, and the monk pursues this spiral to its depths, finding limitless power within. The monk sees many realities swirl around them while maintaining this kihō, the storm of possibilities slowly solidifying into the present. Thus, they can jump at opportunities that might otherwise have passed them by.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Meditation (Void) check** to draw cosmic energy into your being.

Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, you may spend ✿ from Void checks as if it were ✿ from a check using any Element.

While this kihō is active, you may spend ✿ from Air, Earth, Fire, or Water checks as if it were ✿ from a check using Void.

Burst Effect: If you have two or more bonus successes, gain 1 Void point. You can only gain 1 Void point from this effect per scene.

Way of the Edgeless Sword — Rank 5

The wise know that it is not the blade that cuts, but the swordmaster. After all, the Tao of Shinsei teaches that weapons are simply another tool, no more sacred than a harvesting thresher or plow. The monk runs their hand along an object, channeling ki into it and transforming it into a killing edge, even if it appears to be nothing more than a common stick, a wooden sword, or their wizened hand.

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Meditation check** to empower your blows with unarmed and improvised weapons. When you perform this action, you may choose any number of characters at range 0–1 as targets.

Enhancement Effect: If you succeed, this kihō activates. While this kihō is active, treat the base damage and deadliness of your unarmed profile and improvised weapons you wield as being equal to your ranks in Martial Arts [Unarmed] plus your Void Ring. Additionally, they count as possessing the Durable and Razor-Edged qualities.

Burst Effect: If you have two or more bonus successes, each target suffers a critical strike with deadliness equal to your Void Ring plus your ranks in Martial Arts [Unarmed].

Invocations

Invocations are the techniques wielded by shugenja, the elite priests of the samurai class who turn their unmatched spiritual potential to the gravest of affairs: researching and understanding the nature of the universe, suppressing the powers of the Shadowlands, and engaging in wars among the clans. Invocations can be used in intrigues, duels, and skirmishes, and in other types of conflicts as common sense and the GM's discretion dictate.

Only characters with one or more school ranks in a school that lists "invocations" among its available techniques can purchase invocations.

The invocations in this section are organized alphabetically within their elemental classification.

SPENDING ✠ ON INVOCATIONS

Invocations have numerous new ways to spend ✠, but there are also a number of suggested, general new ✠ for invocations of each element. The GM is the final arbiter of whether a particular ✠ from this list can be applied to a given invocation.

PROPER OFFERINGS

Shugenja enjoy a special relationship with the kami, even over and above other priests. While anyone can theoretically reach out to the kami and receive their blessing, and all priests train in the art of doing so to some degree, only shugenja know the secrets required to unlock the pinnacle of these powers. The shugenja schools dedicate considerable resources to safeguarding their secrets, and they crush any who try to steal their sacred lore.

At the heart of even the most potent invocation is a simple transaction of faith in exchange for power. A shugenja's offering symbolizes their devotion to the spirits who grant them their incredible abilities. While material offerings might seem odd for spiritual beings, these sacraments are extremely efficacious. A trained shugenja can do without them, but it makes performing the invocation more difficult, as the shugenja's own spirit must bear the burden in place of the offering.

A shugenja who makes a material offering alongside an invocation may reroll up to 3 rolled dice showing blank results. The material offering is consumed in this process.

CHANNELING

Appealing to the kami can be a lengthy process; even when a character is in a hurry, some spirits cannot be rushed. Patience is key when dealing with the kami, lest the kami in turn grow impatient with the shugenja.

SPIRITUAL OFFERINGS

Different types of spirits prefer different offerings, some examples of which are provided below:

- **Air Spirits:** Incense, feathers, flowers
- **Earth Spirits:** Salt, soil or stones from sacred places, seeds
- **Water Spirits:** Coins, seashells, precious materials, seaweed, sake
- **Fire Spirits:** Kindling, paper, ash, small flammable objects
- **Fortunes:** Texts, food, origami, works of art
- **Ancestor Spirits:** Food, incense, sake or other libations

IMPORTUNE INVOCATIONS

The kami can sometimes be cajoled to do extraordinary things. This is known as importuning an invocation, and allows characters to perform invocations they could not normally.

Once per scene, a character who knows one or more invocation techniques may choose one invocation technique that they have not learned (even if they do not meet the prerequisites) and make an offering to the kami responsible for that power. The offering must be something interesting to the kami and valuable to the character. Whether or not something is sufficiently important is left to the GM's discretion, but generally, the item should at least be rare, if not unique. The item is lost forever as the kami absconds with it.

If the GM determines that the kami is satisfied with this offering, the character may perform the action associated with that technique. However, the TN is increased by 1, plus 1 for each school rank by which the prerequisite exceeds the character's current school rank. The character may channel this invocation as usual (see **Channeling**), but they can only perform the action once.

THE PROPER TIME FOR THE PROPER INVOCATIONS

Kami are not obligated to answer the call of a shugenja, nor do they tend to react to frivolous entreaties. Outside of conflicts and other life-and-death situations, a shugenja can only attempt a given invocation once per scene; if the shugenja succeeds, the kami have done as asked and it would be unseemly to request more. If the attempt ended in failure, the kami have made their answer clear.

Additionally, if a shugenja attempts to use an invocation in a way that falls far outside of its relevant context (for instance, attempting to summon vast quantities of jade to turn a profit, rather than to smite evil), the kami may not answer at all. The kami are not at the beck and call of the shugenja; if anything, the relationship works the other way around.

The actual act of saying the words, performing the gestures, or undertaking the rites that activate an invocation comes only after a process of attuning oneself to the powers that make the magic possible. **Channeling** is a way for a character to delay the completion of an invocation, allowing them to carry results over from one check to the next invocation of the same Element.

CHECK

Because invocations entail calling upon specific kami, each one requires a particular approach to be executed properly. As such, the checks to perform invocations almost always specify a ring to be used rather than leaving it to the GM's interpretation of the player's narration.

Choosing to Channel

When making a check to perform an invocation, after **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**, the character may choose to channel any number of kept dice. Instead of resolving the rest of the check, the character reserves these dice, making sure to keep track of the faces they are showing. The check ends, and the character does not resolve any dice results or effects, including success or failure.

Using Channeled Dice

During the character's next turn, if they perform an invocation of the same Element, they may tap into their channeled dice. During **Step 3: Assemble and Roll Dice Pool**, the character rolls one fewer ■ for each reserved ■ and one fewer ⬠ for each reserved ⬠, then adds the channeled dice to the results (set to the results they were showing when channeled).

Limitations on Channeling

A character may channel any number of times during a conflict. Outside of a conflict, a character can channel only once, and it doubles the time the invocation takes.

Interruption

If a character with channeled dice performs any action other than an invocation of the same Element as the one from which they channeled the dice, all of their channeled dice are lost.

If a character becomes Dazed, Silenced, or Unconscious while channeling, their reserved dice are lost.

INVOCATION NAMES AND TRADITIONS

If your tradition does not have a name for a technique, this doesn't mean that your character can't learn it. Within the story, your PC could seek a master of another tradition, hermit, or supernatural being to teach it. Your character could even be the one to invent this technique for their school, in which case they must be the one to give it a name!

SPIRITUAL BACKLASH

Shugenja wield forces beyond mortal ken, and they are extensively trained to interact with the kami without stirring their ire. However, even the most practiced shugenja risks unintended consequences when appealing to the kami. Further, if the shugenja's soul is in turmoil, the power of the kami they call forth will be similarly disordered. A shugenja whose spirit is unsettled might call forth a destructive maelstrom when beseeching a lake for a gentle current.

When a shugenja's check generates 3 or more ⟲ symbols on kept dice while the shugenja is performing an invocation, they suffer **spiritual backlash**. The shugenja receives 3 fatigue as the raw power overtaxes their body, and they cannot use invocations of that element again until the end of the scene as the kami withdraw in the wake of their wrath. Finally, they suffer an additional effect based on the element:

- **Air:** The GM chooses up to two additional characters in range who become targets (or the GM may pick a player to choose, for an NPC).
- **Fire:** The technique targets each character in range. At the GM's discretion, the terrain at range 0–2 catches ablaze, becoming Dangerous (see page 267).
- **Earth:** The terrain at range 0–3 of the character performing the invocation gains the Imbalanced (Earth) terrain quality (see page 267) for a number of days equal to the shugenja's strife.
- **Water:** The terrain at range 0–1 of the character performing the invocation turns to muck and becomes Entangling (see page 267).

PREPARED INVOCATIONS

With their scrolls and other proper materials, shugenja can bind invocations into expendible vessels, creating prepared invocations they or others can activate immediately later.

By default, a shugenja can have only one prepared invocation; if they prepare another, the blessing of the kami fades from the first receptacle. Anyone holding a prepared invocation can unleash it via its listed activation.

Preparing an invocation is a downtime activity that requires a preparation check, which sets the skill used, and ingredients. The check uses the ring and TN of the invocation. After making the check, the player should record the results.

WARDS

Wards are parchment marked by mystic symbols.
Preparation Skill: Composition
Ingredients: Calligraphy set, 1 bu of parchment.
Activation: A character can place a ward on any surface to which it can be affixed. They write a condition on the ward, specifying circumstances under which it is unleashed. When the ward's condition is fulfilled, the invocation activates at its current location.

Table 4–1: Spending ✠ for Invocations

OPPORTUNITY	RESULT
AIR	
✠ ✠+	Choose one additional target per ✠ ✠ spent this way.
✠+	Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✠ spent this way.
✠	Reduce the TN of the next Movement action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.
✠ ✠+	If this technique can target characters other than you, choose additional target per ✠ ✠ spent this way.
✠ ✠+	If this technique targets all characters in an area, choose 1 character in range to exclude as a target per ✠ ✠ spent this way.
EARTH	
✠	Increase your physical resistance by 1. This effect persists until the end of the beginning of your next turn.
✠+	If this technique can target characters other than you, choose additional target per ✠ spent this way.
✠+	Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✠ spent this way.
✠	This effect inflicts physical damage instead of supernatural damage.
✠	The damage inflicted by this technique has the Sacred quality (see page 241).
FIRE	
✠+	Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✠ spent this way.
✠+	If this technique can target characters other than you, choose additional target per ✠ spent this way.
✠	Reduce the TN of the next Attack action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.
✠+	Increase the TN of checks to resist this effect by 1 per ✠ spent this way.
✠ ✠+	One target per ✠ ✠ spent this way must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Air 4, Water 1)** or suffer the Burning condition.
WATER	
✠	Increase your supernatural resistance by 1 until the end of your next turn.
✠+	If this technique can target characters other than you, choose additional target per ✠ spent this way.
✠ ✠+	Treat the maximum or minimum range of this technique as 1 higher or lower per ✠ ✠ spent this way.
✠ ✠	Remove 1 fatigue from the target or yourself.
✠	Reduce the TN of the next Support action check you make by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

AIR INVOCATIONS

The air kami are fickle and capricious beings, but none are nimbler or more subtle. They can bestow lightness of step, nimbleness of mind, and the ability to enhance or obscure sight.

INVOCATION NAMES

Each invocation has a number of alternate names listed below the main heading. Rokugan's many different schools of shugenja can approach invocations in different ways, and these are some of the names shugenja from different traditions may use for the same invocation.

INVOCATION EFFECT KEYWORDS

Each invocation contains one or more italicized keywords in its effects. These are a reminder of how the invocation functions, and some abilities refer to them. The ones in this book include:

Augment: Invocations that change or bolster their targets

Mend: Invocations that restore their targets

Purify: Invocations that cast out evil spirits

Scry: Invocations that reveal information or show glimpses of other places and times

Smite: Invocations that cause harm to targets

Summon: Invocations that create something

Blessed Wind — Rank 1

Bottled Duststorm (Alchemy), Tamon's Rebuke (Fortunist), Column of the World (Foreign)

The shugenja recites a short chant, and the dust whips up, carried upon twisting currents of air that foil and deflect projectiles. Stones, arrows, and even larger missiles are knocked aside by buffeting winds, keeping the target safe from such attacks.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Air) check** targeting one position at range 0–3.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a swirling wind at the target position. Any character at range 0–2 of the chosen position counts as being in Obscuring terrain (see **Terrain**, on page 267) for the purposes of Attack actions targeting them. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Air ✿: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

By the Light of the Lord Moon — Rank 1

Kitsuki's Eyes (Ancestral), Wind Scatters Shadow (Elemental), Reveal the World of Ghosts (Foreign)

When a shugenja performs this invocation, the light shifts to that of a moonlit night, unweaving the shadows to lay bare the things they conceal. Hidden objects glow faintly with silver light, while mystical illusions are revealed as translucent, gossamer forms.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Air) check** targeting an area at range 0–2 of you.
Effects: If you succeed, you *scry* for each hidden character and concealed object (such as secret compartments, trap doors, and concealed weapons) in the targeted area, revealing it with an illusory, luminous outline that only you can perceive. This invocation only reveals objects and people concealed by mundane means.

New Opportunities

Air ✿+: If you succeed, you may also reveal up to one magically concealed object per ✿ spent this way.
Air ✿ ✿+: Choose one additional character at range 0–1 per ✿ ✿ spent this way. The chosen characters can also see the objects.

Call Upon the Wind — Rank 2

Gentle Wings of the Wren (Alchemy), Doji's Steps (Ancestral), Benten Smiles (Fortunist)

The shugenja whispers a breathless prayer and rises from the ground as gentle winds bear them aloft. Air spirits usually carry their charges gracefully, without dropping them to stumble the last few feet—usually.

Activation: As a Movement action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Air) check** targeting yourself.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* your movement with a gust of wind that carries you aloft. In addition to being able to move vertically freely, you ignore the effects of terrain while flying. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Air ✿ ✿+: While flying, you may carry up to one additional willing character at range 0–2 with you per ✿ ✿ spent this way.

Cloak of Night — Rank 1

Smoke of Stolen Light (Alchemy), Shroud of the North Wind (Fortunist), Walk in the Shadow World (Foreign)

A sufficiently learned shugenja can call forth air kami to play one of their simplest and most effective tricks: enveloping an object or person in their embrace to hide it from sight.

Activation: As a Scheme and Support action, you may make a **Theology (Air) check** targeting one object or character at range 0–1. The TN is equal to the target's silhouette (see page 265).
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* the target with an illusion that renders it invisible to the naked eye. The object is still physically present and can be touched, smelled, or sensed with any normal sense other than vision. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Air ✿ ✿+: Choose one additional target of the same silhouette or smaller per ✿ ✿ spent this way.

INVOCATIONS IN CURRICULUMS

Invocations are marked with a stylized scroll (📜) in curriculum tables.

False Realm of the Fox Spirits — Rank 4

Ikoma Recalls a Tale (Ancestral), Lost in the Isawa Mori (Fortunist), Paint the Spyglass Lens (Foreign)

The kami are not bound so tightly to the Mortal Realm of Ningen-dō as mortals (even shugenja) are. They can see the ways in which the mortal and spiritual realms overlap and disconnect, and when beseeched by a shugenja, they can even draw visions of one realm into another, creating vast, nearly tangible falsehoods that fool all but the keenest observers.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 5 Theology (Air) check** targeting one position at range 0–4.

Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* illusory terrain at the target position that extends out a number of range bands up to your Air Ring. A character unaware of the illusion's false nature must resist with a **TN 4 Survival check (Earth 5, Fire 2)** to realize its falsehood at a distance. As the illusion has no substance, any physical contact reveals the lie (though the illusion stays in place). This effect persists for a number of rounds equal to your Air Ring plus your bonus successes (or that many minutes during a narrative or downtime scene).

New Opportunities

Air ✲: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

Air ✲+: The illusory terrain you summon has one of the following terrain qualities per ✲ spent this way: Dangerous, Entangling, or Obscuring (see **Terrain**, on page 267).

Grasp of the Air Dragon — Rank 3

Shikajin's Leap (Ancestral), Jikoju's Journey (Fortunist), The Wind's Cradle (Foreign)

The shugenja exhales a long breath at the end of the incantation and extends a hand. A stillness descends, the moment before the storm breaks. Then, the clouds high above twist and trail from the Heavens like festival streamers. The wind swoops toward the target and hurls them into the air—carrying them to safety or to their doom, depending on the will of the shugenja.

Activation: As an Attack action or a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Air) check** targeting one character at range 3–5.

Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a gale-force wind to move the target a number of range bands equal to your Air Ring plus your bonus successes (to a maximum of 6 range bands), ignoring any intervening terrain. You may choose to set the target down on the ground gently (if you chose Support action) or slam them into it with full force (if you chose Attack action). When you slam a target to the ground this way, the target must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Earth 5, Fire 2)** or suffer the effects of a fall from range 3 (see **Falling** on page 269).

New Opportunities

Air ✲+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✲ spent this way.

Air ✲ ✲+: Increase the height of the fall the target suffers by 1 per ✲ ✲ spent this way.

Mask of Wind — Rank 2

Paste of Moving Features (Alchemy), Furuyari's Face (Ancestral), Sadahako's Joke (Fortunist)

Deception is not the way of the samurai, but it is often the way of expedience. The shugenja asks the air kami to mask their features and even their voice, causing onlookers to perceive a different person.

Activation: As a Scheme and Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Air) check** targeting yourself.

Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* yourself with an illusion that makes you look like someone else. An observer must resist with a **TN 4 Sentiment check (Earth 5, Fire 2)** to notice something amiss from your

HONOR AND INVOCATIONS

Some invocations may allow or even encourage a PC to behave dishonorably. With the Mask of Wind, for example, one could impersonate someone of higher status, and Secrets on the Wind would allow a character to eavesdrop effortlessly on their own lord.

The GM should remind players that their characters must still forfeit or stake honor to commit acts that defy the tenets of Bushidō, even when they are using mystical powers to enact their plots.

appearance alone; if they succeed, they may spend ✿ to recognize you specifically. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Air ✿: You may alter your voice to sound like someone else while the illusion is in place. An observer must resist with a **TN 4 Sentiment check (Earth 5, Fire 2)** to notice something amiss from the sound of your voice alone, and they may spend ✿ if they succeed to recognize you specifically.
Air ✿ ✿+: This effect persists for one additional scene per ✿ ✿ spent this way.

Nature's Touch — Rank 1

Shinjo's Whispers (Ancestral), Run Alongside the Ki-Rin (Fortunist), Voice of the Glen King (Foreign)

To perform this rite, the shugenja seeks Chikushō-dō, the Realm of Animals, in the world around them and in their own heart. This allows the shugenja to communicate with (though not dominate) animals of the mortal realm.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Air) check** targeting yourself.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* yourself with the ability to speak to animals of the natural world (but not Otherworldly or Tainted beings). Animals can understand you (within their ability to do so, naturally—human political relationships will have no meaning to horses, no matter how many times you explain them). They are not compelled to obey you, however. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Air ✿: Until the end of the scene, you can understand animals' speech.
Air ✿: If you succeed, the animal also acts favorably toward you automatically due to your politeness, fulfilling one request that does not put it in danger without having to be convinced with bribes of food or subsequent checks.
Air ✿ ✿: If you succeed, you can communicate with an Otherworldly being this way, provided it has anything to say to you.

Rise, Air — Rank 4

Dust of Incarnation (Alchemy), Guardian of Air (Ancestral), Summon the Air Djinn (Foreign)

A manifest air kami is a flickering, shifting thing, a whirlwind of power with lashing arms that screams with the voice of the storm. It towers above the tallest of humans, yet can find its way through the slightest of cracks. The slightest slip of concentration while guiding such a being can lead to untold devastation as the child of the tempest carves its way across the landscape.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 6 Theology (Air) check** targeting one position at range 3–5.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a **Manifest Air Kami** (see page 322) to fight for you. It appears at the target position and obeys you for two rounds, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes, taking its turn immediately after yours each round. When this effect ends, it departs or, if stirred to particular ire, begins to follow its own directives. If it begins to act independently, it does not attack the shugenja who summoned it unless provoked.

New Opportunities

Air ✿: The manifest air kami arrives in a cyclone that hurls aside anything nearby. Each character at range 0–2 of the target position must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Earth 5, Fire 2)** or suffer supernatural damage equal to your Air Ring and be pushed away 2 range bands.

Secrets on the Wind — Rank 2

Whisper in Bayushi's Ear (Ancestral), Tenjin's Gift (Fortunist), The Fly on the Northern Wall (Foreign)

The spirits of air need little prompting to gossip, even if their breathless murmurs are often incomprehensible to human ears. To make this clandestine invocation, the shugenja offers up incense of sandalwood and plum to convince the air kami to repeat what is said far away.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Air) check** targeting one position at range 0.
Effects: If you succeed, you *scry* with whispering winds that eavesdrop on the chosen position. The air kami can overhear anything said within a number of range bands equal to your Air Ring. This effect persists for twenty-four hours or until you designate a new area for eavesdropping. While this effect persists, you may spend an action to hear anything being said at the moment in the designated area.

New Opportunities

Air ✿: In addition to hearing things in the designated area, you can also smell any scents in that area.
Air ✿: If another character discovers your invocation, the effect immediately ends, preventing them from identifying it as your handiwork.
Air ✿ ✿+: The effect persists for twenty-four additional hours per ✿ ✿ spent this way.

Summon Fog — Rank 2

Soshi's Escape (Ancestral), Veil of the Dawn (Elemental), Jotei Curls in Rest (Fortunist)

Tendrils of mist spill forth from the character's robes or armor, billowing out before them and wrapping them in an ominous haze.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Air) check** targeting one position at range 0–4.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a fog bank that fills an area extending 1 range band around the target position. This fog bank counts as Obscuring terrain (see **Terrain**, on page 267).

New Opportunities

Air ✤: You may choose a character instead of a position. The fog bank follows that character.
Air ✤+: The fog bank encompasses 1 additional range band per ✤ spent this way (to a maximum of range 6).
Air ✤ ✤: The fog bank becomes a freezing ice storm, causing it to become Dangerous terrain as well.

Tempest of Air — Rank 1

Stormy Vial (Alchemy), Howl of Isora (Fortunist), Flap of the Wyvern's Wings (Foreign)

The shugenja beseeches the air spirits to lash out all around them, calling buffeting winds to push foes backward or even hurl them to the ground.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Air) check** targeting each character at range 2–3.
Effects: If you succeed, blasts of wind *smite* each target. Each target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Air Ring and must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Earth 5, Fire 2)** or suffer the Disoriented condition.

New Opportunities

Air ✤+: Each target who fails their Fitness check is also pushed 1 range band away from you per ✤ spent this way.

Token of Memory — Rank 1

Riddle of Agasha (Ancestral), Trick of the Air Kami (Elemental), Ebisu's Joke (Fortunist)

After performing this invocation, the shugenja conjures an illusion from the air, a trick of the light captured in hand.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Air) check** targeting one position at range 0–1.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* an illusion of one inanimate object at the target position. The illusory object's size is a silhouette of up to your bonus successes (beginning at 0, or a small handheld object). The item appears real, but it does not actually exist, and it cannot be used. Any character confronted with one of these illusions must resist with a **TN 4 Artisan, Smithing,** or **Design check (Earth 5, Fire 2)** using a Scholar skill approach to discern its illusory nature. The object persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Air ✤: The object can appear to be a creature or person (though it does not move).
Air ✤+: Summon one additional illusory object in range per ✤ spent this way.
Air ✤ ✤: Illusory objects you summon this way have mass, and they can be used as if they were real (though they are still inanimate, and thus do not move on their own). They still vanish when the effect ends.

Vapor of Nightmares — Rank 3

Togashi Speaks Softly (Ancestral), Your Heart's Enemy (Elemental), Shadow of the Karmic Wheel (Fortunist)

The shugenja murmurs an incantation half-heard by the target, and as the ominous chant fades and the scent cloud of incense parts, the object of the target's fear strides forth as an illusive phantasm.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Air) check** targeting one character at range 2–3.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* an illusion of your target's greatest fear. Your target must resist with a **TN 4 Meditation check (Earth 5, Fire 2)** to see through against this phantasm; if they fail, they suffer strife equal to your Air Ring plus your bonus successes, and must immediately unmask if they become Compromised this way. If they unmask in the presence of the phantasm, they focus their attentions on the phantasm, attacking it, fleeing from it, or unleashing harsh words upon it (rather than dealing with you or anyone else). The phantasm persists for a number of rounds equal to your Air Ring.

New Opportunities

Air ✤: If a target fails the Meditation check, they also suffer the Disoriented condition.
Air ✤: The phantasm persists until the end of the scene instead.

Wrath of Kaze-no-Kami — Rank 5

Bottled Typhoon (Alchemy), Utaku's Stampede (Ancestral), The Air Dragon's Fury (Elemental)

When stirred to wrath through the deepest secrets of the shugenja's art, the spirits of the wind become a howling tornado, spinning around the priest and raising them from the ground while devastating everything in reach; uprooting trees, shattering buildings, and crushing foes.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 5 Theology (Air) check** targeting each character at range 2–4.

Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a hurricane that buffets all characters in range. At the end of each of your turns, each target in range must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Earth 5, Fire 2)** or suffer supernatural damage equal to your Air Ring and suffer the Disoriented condition. The hurricane persists for a number of rounds equal to your Air Ring and can destroy objects or structures at your GM's discretion.

New Opportunities

Air ✿: You may end the hurricane at any time as an action.

Air ✿+: If you succeed, each target who fails the Fitness check at the end of this turn is hurled a number of range bands away from you equal to ✿ spent this way. Upon landing, each target hurled this way suffers the negative effects of falling the number of range bands they moved (see **Falling** on page 269).

Air ✿ ✿: While within the hurricane, you can fly, moving vertically and ignoring the effects of terrain.

Yari of Air — Rank 1

Rod of the Wind Yari (Alchemy), Suijin's Spear (Fortunist), Halberd of the Djinn (Foreign)

The shugenja adopts a spear-fighting stance, and a swirling, darting mass ripples into being in their hand. It weighs almost nothing and yet strikes with the force of a thunderclap.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Air) check** to summon a spear made of swirling wind into your hand.

Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* and ready a spear (see **Weapons**, on page 230) made of wind, visible only by a wispy outline. It has the Concealable quality. When you make an Attack or Support action check using the invisible spear, during **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**, add a kept ■ set to an ✿ result. The spear persists until the end of any turn in which it leaves your grip or until the end of the encounter, at which point it dissipates into wind.

New Opportunities

Air ✿: The weapon you summon can be any kind of melee or ranged weapon instead of a spear.

Air ✿: After performing this action, you may immediately perform a Guard action using the weapon you summoned.

Air ✿ ✿: You may summon a pair of weapons instead of a single weapon.

EARTH INVOCATIONS

Earth invocations focus on protection, defense against the Shadow, and slow but inevitable destruction.

Armor of Earth — Rank 1

Hida's Shell (Ancestral), The Hand of Bishamon (Fortunist), Stone Shields (Foreign)

Earth is the Element of protection, as evidenced by this invocation. When a shugenja performs this invocation, shards of stone fly toward them, fastening around them to clad them in rocky armor.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** targeting yourself.
Effects: You *summon* and equip a suit of armor that grants physical resistance equal to your Earth Ring plus your bonus successes and has the Cumbersome and Wargear qualities. The armor persists for a number of rounds equal to your Earth Ring, at which point it tumbles to the ground as loose stones or dirt.

New Opportunities

Earth ✲: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.
Earth ✲: The armor you summon has the Durable quality.
Earth ✲✲: The armor you summon has the Sacred quality.

Bind the Shadow — Rank 2

Circle of Salt and Ash (Alchemy), Earth Kami's Scorn (Elemental), Judgment of the Ten-Thousand (Fortunist)

When confronting a Tainted being, the shugenja can call forth the pure spirit of a small sanctified object to weaken or even paralyze the monster.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one Otherworldly being at range 0–2.
Effects: If you succeed, crackling arcs of jade light *smite* and *purify* your target; it must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness (Air 2, Water 5) check** or suffer the Immobilized and Silenced conditions. This effect persists for a number of rounds equal to your Earth Ring.

New Opportunities

Earth ✲: Each target that fails its Fitness check to resist is bound until the end of the scene instead.
Earth ✲ ✲: Each target that fails its Fitness check to resist is bound for one year instead.
Earth ✲ ✲+: Increase the TN of checks to resist this effect by 1 per ✲ ✲ spent this way.
Earth ✲ ✲ ✲ ✲: Each target that fails its Fitness check to resist is bound for one hundred years instead.

Caress of Earth — Rank 1

Salve of the Stone Kami (Alchemy), Kaiu's Many Hands (Ancestral), Litany of Rebinding (Foreign)

The shugenja draws their hand across a broken item, calling upon the spirits of metal, wood, or stone to restore and fortify it. Splintered planks knit back together, metal glows and writhes before solidifying into a form like new, and stone congeals as liquid before freezing back into form.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one item with the Damaged or Destroyed quality at range 0–1.
Effects: If you succeed, you *mend* the target, and remove the Damaged or Destroyed quality from it.

New Opportunities

Earth ✲: One target gains the Durable quality until the end of the scene.

Courage of Seven Thunders — Rank 1

Akodo's Unflinching Stand (Ancestral), Unyielding Heart of Stone (Elemental), Walk into the Valley of Shadow (Foreign)

At the dawn of the Empire, the Seven Thunders stood against Fu Leng, and their clash resounded from the Shadowlands to every corner of Rokugan. Earth is the Element of recollection, and from the earth kami, a shugenja can unearth fragments of the memories of these heroes from across the ages and impart them to their comrades in arms. This invocation does not erase fear, but it reminds a samurai of the legacy they must uphold—that others stood against the darkness before and prevailed.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** targeting a number of characters up to your Earth Ring at range 0–2.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* each target with vigorous resolve; each target increases their composure by your Earth Ring. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Earth ✲: If you succeed, each target also increases their endurance by your Earth Ring while this effect persists.
Earth ✲+: Each target removes 1 ⟲ per ✲ spent this way.
Earth ✲ ✲: This technique targets each friendly character in range instead.

Earthquake — Rank 4

Akodo's Bellow (Ancestral), Swallowed by the Earth Kami (Elemental), Kyufoki's Hammer (Fortunist)

Earthquakes are common in some parts of Rokugan, and they are rightly feared—whole villages have been known to vanish when the earth spirits are set to turmoil. To intentionally raise their ire is dangerous, but it is one of the most powerful techniques a shugenja can wield. Ripples shoot across the ground around them as the earth bucks and tumbles. The shugenja's foes plummet into chasms of darkness and sulfur, entombed forever beneath the ground they once walked.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 5 Theology (Earth) check** targeting each other character at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* an earthquake that encompasses the range of the invocation in all directions around you. At the end of each of your turns, each target must resist with a **TN 5 Fitness check (Air 3, Water 6)** or suffer supernatural damage equal to twice your Earth Ring and suffer the Prone condition. The quake persists for a number of rounds equal to your Earth Ring.

New Opportunities

Earth ✲: The quake persists until the end of the scene instead, or you may dispel it at any time before that as an action.

Earth ✲+: If you succeed, you may summon a chasm beneath the feet of one character in range, causing that character and anyone at range 0–1 of them to fall (see **Falling** on page 269) a number of range bands equal to ✲ spent this way into the bowels of the earth.

Earth ✲ ✲+: If you succeed, you may destroy one building or fortification in range per ✲ ✲ spent this way. Each character inside must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Air 1, Water 4)** to escape by immediately moving outside or suffer a critical strike with severity 10.

Earth Becomes Sky — Rank 3

Vial of Explosive Earth (Alchemy), The Fall of Yama-No-Kami (Fortunist), Throwing the Avalanche (Foreign)

The shugenja makes a short incantation and stomps a foot on the ground, and the earth kami spray torrents of dirt, stones, and even boulders toward their foe.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one character at range 1–3.

Effects: If you succeed, you call forth a boulder to *smite* your target. The target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Earth Ring plus your bonus successes and must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Air 1, Water 4)** or suffer the Prone condition. If your target is already suffering the Prone condition, double the damage they suffer this way.

Embrace of Kenro-Ji-Jin — Rank 2

Earth Spider's Salve (Alchemy), Hiruma's Passage (Ancestral), Climbing the Earth Dragon's Back (Elemental)

The shugenja appeals to rumbling subterranean kami, offering the proper prayers to receive safe passage even across places humans were not meant to tread. The spirits shroud the shugenja, allowing them to stick to rocky surfaces or parting the ground to allow passage.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** targeting yourself.

Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* yourself with the ability to stick to earthen surfaces, allowing you to traverse even vertical surfaces made of earth or stone. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes (or one minute in narrative time).

New Opportunities

Earth ✲: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.
Earth ✲: If you succeed, you can also pass through solid earth as if it was water when you move. Further, you count as having supernatural resistance against damage from Earth invocations, Earth kihō, and Earth mahō equal to your Earth Ring.
Earth ✲ ✲: The effects also apply to metal. You count as having physical resistance against damage from metal weapons equal to your Earth Ring.

Grasp of Earth — Rank 1

Crystallizing Potion (Alchemy), Hida's Bindings (Ancestral), Frozen in Bishamon's Gaze (Fortunist)

With a harsh chant and a gesture of seizing, the shugenja calls upon the earth spirits to lay hold of someone, dragging them down and containing them. Usually, this invocation causes the target's legs to sink into ground that has turned into sucking mud, quicksand, or a hole beneath them and entraps them.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one character at range 0–2.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* cracks in the earth; each target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Earth Ring and must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Air 2, Water 5)** or suffer the Prone condition.

New Opportunities

Earth ✲: Each target that fails their Fitness check to resist also suffers the Immobilized condition.
Earth ✲: Reduce the damage each targets suffers to 0.

Jade Strike — Rank 1

Tears of the Sun Goddess (Ancestral), Breath of the Jade Dragon (Fortunist), The Earth's Sacred Rebuke (Foreign)

Jade, said to be the tears of Amaterasu, is a sacred stone. It is anathema to creatures of darkness, and it is one of the few substances capable of harming the greater minions of Fu Leng, the fallen Kami. A shugenja can mimic its effects by entreating earth kami to punish evil before them. The shugenja's hand is enveloped in the sacred green glow, which strikes forth, withering creatures of evil and humans under the sway of the Shadowlands' insidious power.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one character at range 0–3.
Effects: If you succeed and the target is an Otherworldly being, you *smite* and *purify* it with searing jade energy. It suffers a critical strike with severity equal to your Earth Ring plus your bonus successes. The creature may spend ✲ ✲ from its check to resist this critical strike to conceal that it has been affected, potentially concealing its Otherworldly nature (though it still suffers the effects that it successfully hid).

If you succeed and your target is not a an Otherworldly being, it suffers no ill effects.

New Opportunities

Earth ✲: If you succeed, each target that is an Otherworldly being suffers the Silenced condition and cannot use mahō techniques until the end of your next turn.

Jurōjin's Balm — Rank 1

Lifeblood of the Earth Kami (Elemental), Jiro's Patience (Fortunist), Kiss of the Pond Woman (Foreign)

Jurōjin, guardian of longevity, health, and physical well-being, is one of the most sought after of the Seven Fortunes—for whether one is a lord or a peasant, one is sure to pray for health sooner or later. A shugenja can impart spiritual fortification in this Fortune's name, anointing the body of the target with sacred earth, healing plants such as ginseng or rhubarb, or stranger remedies still. While under the effects of this blessing, a character is much more resistant to poison, disease, and the effects of alcohol—which can be a boon or curse depending on one's goals.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one character at range 0–1.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* your target's fortitude. The target reduces TN of all checks to resist the effects of poison and disease by 2 (to a minimum of 1). Additionally, the target cannot become intoxicated via imbibing alcohol. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Earth ✲: If you succeed, your target also reduces the TN of all checks to resist mahō, the Defiled terrain quality, and the effects of Otherworldly beings by 2 (to a minimum of 1).
Earth ✲: This effect persists for twenty-four hours instead.
Earth ✲ ✲: If you succeed, you also *mend* your target, removing any poisons currently afflicting them and the Dying condition, and any symptoms of diseases affecting them are suppressed until the end of the scene.

CONVICTION OF PURPOSE

Because conviction is a key part of wielding the unyielding power of the sacred stone, a character cannot simply hurl the holy power of jade at anyone they suspect to harbor the corruption of the Shadowlands. If a character attempts the invocation and the target is not Tainted, their certainty might be shaken. Worse, the earth kami may even stop responding to their call for a short time, angry to have been roused without good reason.

Power of the Earth Dragon — Rank 3

Fortifying Stone Vial (Alchemy), Osano-wo's Determination (Ancestral), Jurōjin's Verdant Blessing (Fortunist)

The shugenja places a hand on the earth and a hand over the target's heart. They recite a deep, reverberating prayer that thrums loudly through both, bringing the vitality and resilience of stone to the blessed.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one character at range 0–2.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* your target's resilience, increasing their endurance by your Earth Ring plus your bonus successes. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

Each target cannot be affected by the Power of the Earth Dragon invocation again until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Earth ✿: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

Rise, Earth — Rank 4

Guardian of Earth (Ancestral), Sentinels of Mount Sengen (Fortunist), Clay Warriors (Foreign)

An earth kami bursts from the ground, manifesting as a guardian creature of living rock with veins of sapphire, ruby, or even jade. Earth kami can be cantankerous, but they hate anything tainted and strive to obliterate them.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 6 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one position that includes a patch of dirt, clay, or stone at range 0–3.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a **Manifest Earth Kami** (see page 323) to fight for you, which bursts forth at the target position. The manifest earth kami obeys you for three rounds, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes, taking its turn immediately after yours each round. When this effect ends, it departs or, if stirred to particular ire, begins to follow its own directives (but will not attack you unless provoked).

New Opportunities

Earth ✿+: Increase the earth kami's endurance by 2 per ✿ spent this way.
Earth ✿: The earth kami's stone fists unarmed attack profile gains the Sacred quality.
Earth ✿: The manifest earth kami creates a rumbling shockwave when it erupts. Each character at range 0–2 of the chosen position must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Air 2, Water 5)** or suffer physical or supernatural damage equal to your Earth Ring and gain the Prone condition.

Symbol of Earth — Rank 2

Mark of Crystal and Jade (Alchemy), Consecration of Ningen-do (Fortunist), Seal of the Pure Soil (Foreign)

Earth spirits govern boundaries and domains. By inscribing an emblem in dirt, scratching it upon stone, or imprinting it upon sand, a shugenja can create a field that repels malevolent supernatural entities.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one position at range 0–1.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a symbol that *purifies* the area at the target position. Each time an Otherworldly being attempts to move closer to the target, it suffers supernatural damage equal to your Earth Ring and must make a **TN 4 Fitness check (Air 2, Water 5)** or suffer the Prone condition. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Earth ✿: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.
Earth ✿ ✿: This effect persists for twenty-four hours instead.

Tetsubō of Earth — Rank 1

The Blacksmith's Hammer (Alchemy), Akemi's Pillar (Ancestral), Bishamon's Kanabo (Fortunist)

The shugenja takes a steady stance and calls the spirits of earth. A pillar of stone rises from a nearby plot of soil, chunks cracking away to reveal the form of a studded club. Despite its great weight, the shugenja can heft it with ease, their might reinforced by the spirits of earth.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one position at range 0–1 that includes a patch of stone, dirt, or clay.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* and ready a tetsubō (see **Weapons**, on page 230) made of stone. When you deal damage with an Attack action using this weapon, if a target is suffering the Prone condition, that target suffers additional damage equal to your Earth Ring. The tetsubō persists until the end of any turn in which it leaves your grip or until the end of the scene, at which point it collapses into dust and pebbles.

New Opportunities

Earth ✿: The weapon you summon can be any kind of melee weapon instead. It has the Durable quality.
Earth ✿: After performing this action, you may immediately perform a Guard action using this weapon.
Earth ✿ ✿: The weapon you summon has the Sacred quality (see page 241).

Tomb of Jade — Rank 5

Mercy of the Sun Goddess (Ancestral), Embrace of the Stone Kami (Elemental), Amaterasu's Petrifying Gaze (Fortunist)

One of the most powerful invocations of the spirits of earth, the rite the Kuni shugenja call the Tomb of Jade seals an entity suffused with the power of the Shadowlands within jade, transforming its blighted flesh into this sacred substance. However, if the prison of jade is cracked or broken, the spell weakens, and the being sealed within might be able to escape to wreak havoc once again. If it ever escapes, the shugenja who sealed it becomes aware of its escape, for the earth kami send a rumbling warning, shaking their current location to raise the alarm.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 6 Theology (Earth) check** targeting one character at range 0–1.

Effects: If you succeed and the target is a Tainted being, you call upon the earth kami to *purify* it, slowly transforming the target into jade. At the beginning of each of the target's turns, reducing the value of each of its rings by 1. This effect persists for a number of rounds equal to your Earth Ring plus your bonus successes. If any of its rings are reduced to 0 in this manner, the target is turned entirely into jade—it can only be freed if the statue is damaged or destroyed. Because the statue is jade, it causes the area at range 0–2 around it to count as Hallowed (Earth) terrain (see page 267).

If you succeed and your target is not a Tainted being, it suffers no ill effects.

New Opportunities

Earth ✤: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

Earth ✤: At a later point, you may release the target from its jade prison as an action.

Earth ✤+: Choose one of the following conditions for each ✤ spent this way: Dazed, Disoriented, Immobilized, or Prone. If the target is an Otherworldly being, it suffers the chosen conditions.

Wall of Earth — Rank 1

Crystallizing Powder (Alchemy), Shape the Earth (Elemental), Sengen's Hands (Fortunist)

For their part, earth kami are not too proud to shape walls, ditches, or even buildings along lines in the dirt that a shugenja traces or blesses with reagents like topaz and oak. Placing such a wall underneath someone is likely to hurl them to the ground, while placing one under a building could wreak havoc and cause considerable damage to the structure. The invoked construction endures as long as a mundane construction of the same material would. If it is merely dirt called into the desired shape, it begins to erode within a few days, while if the ground the shugenja raises is largely composed of stone, the construction might stand for centuries.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** targeting two positions at range 0–2.

Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a wall of earth between the two target points that is range 1 in thickness and range 3 in height (see the **Range Bands** section on page 265). Each character standing where the wall erupts must resist with a **TN 2 Fitness check (Air 1, Water 3)** or suffer physical damage equal to your Earth Ring and gain the Prone condition.

New Opportunities

Earth ✤: Choose one of the following terrain qualities: Dangerous, Entangling, or Obscuring (see **Terrain**, on page 267). The wall of earth counts as terrain with that quality.

Earth ✤+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✤ spent this way.

Earth ✤ ✤: Instead of summoning a wall, you may summon an Outpost fortification (see page 276).

Earth ✤ ✤ ✤: Instead of summoning a wall, you may summon a Fortress fortification (see page 276).

Earth ✤ ✤ ✤ ✤: Instead of summoning a wall, you may summon a Castle fortification (see page 276).

FIRE INVOCATIONS

The fire kami are ferocious and direct, and invocations of fire can be equally ferocious. These prayers are some of the most destructive a shugenja can summon.

Armor of Radiance — Rank 2

Oil of Awakening Flames (Alchemy), Armor of Osano-wo (Ancestral), Robes of the Ifrit (Foreign)

By appealing to the fire kami that slumber within an object, a shugenja can turn a set of armor into a weapon. The fire kami's creative energy expands rapidly as the incantation ends, causing shimmering radiance to burst forth into a halo of fire that encircles the armor and the wearer, searing their foes.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one set of armor at range 0–1.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* the target armor, enveloping it in blinding radiance and searing heat (that miraculously do not affect the wearer). When a character at range 0–1 of the wearer begins their turn, they suffer the Burning and Dazed conditions. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Fire ✲: The armor gains the Wargear quality.
Fire ✲ ✲: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

Biting Steel — Rank 1

Salve of Unyielding Metal (Alchemy), Awaken the Blade's Flame (Elemental), The Forge of Xing Guo (Fortunist)

Description: Flame, passion, and ingenuity transform ore into steel, and steel into a sword. So too, then, can a shugenja wield flame to transform a sword into an even greater weapon, one with an impossible edge that parts nearly any substance in its ferocity. By drawing a pattern along the naked blade, a shugenja can wake the spirits of fire still sleeping within it.
Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one weapon at range 0–1.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* the weapon with blazing energy. Increase the weapon's base damage by your Fire Ring. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Fire ✲: After performing this action, if you have the weapon you enhanced readied, you may immediately perform a Strike action with it.
Fire ✲+: If you succeed, while the effect persists, increase the weapon's deadliness by 1 per ✲ spent this way.
Fire ✲ ✲: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

Breath of the Fire Dragon — Rank 3

Oni's Sake (Alchemy), Togashi's Radiant Breath (Ancestral), Sigh of the Desert Winds (Foreign)

"Fire begins with breath," or so the Isawa have long said. Some shugenja make this practice literal, calling upon the fire kami to ignite the air they exhale, transforming it into a gout of charring flame. Besides burning foes, it also tends to ignite nearby flammable objects.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one character at range 0–3.
Effects: If you succeed, you exhale searing flames that *smite* the target and those around them. The target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Fire Ring plus two times your bonus successes and the Burning condition. Each character at range 0–1 of the target must make a **TN 3 Fitness check (Air 4, Water 1)** or suffer supernatural damage equal to your Fire Ring.

Extinguish — Rank 1

A shugenja who communes with the spirits of fire must learn to still them, lest the flames they conjure consume the shugenja. The trick is to stoke the kami's wrath briefly but intensely, so that it is exhausted that much more quickly. With a few words and a rising gesture, the shugenja inhales, drawing the flames to a searing glow, then exhales, letting them settle to embers.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Fire) check** targeting up to three mundane sources of fire at range 0–3.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* the fire kami's energy into yourself. Extinguish each target flame and remove 1 fatigue per target source of fire extinguished this way.

New Opportunities

Fire ✲ ✲: If you succeed, you may also end all persistent effects from other Fire invocations and flame-based supernatural effects in the area.

Fukurokujin's Wit — Rank 1

Wisdom of the Kitsu (Ancestral), Ignite the Mind's Candle (Elemental), Mantra of the Scholar Kings (Foreign)

Shujenja are scholars at their heart, for their art is one of long hours of study and dedication to the refinement of the mind. Thus, many seek the blessing of Fukurokujin, keeper of knowledge and patron to scholars. A shugenja can call upon the guidance of this Fortune to sharpen their mind to a razor edge and vitalize their nerves.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Fire) check** targeting yourself.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* your target's wits and cunning with the Fortune's favor. When making checks, the target adds a kept ■ set to an ✿ ⟲ result. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Fire ✿: You may target another character at range 0–2 instead of yourself.

Fury of Osano-wo — Rank 3

Orbs of Heavenly Fire (Alchemy), Hochiu's Final Stand (Ancestral), Reap the Sparking Seeds (Elemental)

The Fortune of Fire and Thunder, Osano-wo is the mythical son of the Kami Hida. With a sudden, harsh incantation and downward gesture, a shugenja can conjure a bolt of lightning to strike foes with a powerful blast.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 5 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one character at range 0–4. This technique can only be performed outdoors. If the weather is already stormy, reduce the TN by 1.
Effects: If you succeed, you call forth lightning to *smite* your target. The target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Fire Ring plus three times your bonus successes. If a target is Incapacitated by this damage, they suffer a critical strike with severity of 8.

New Opportunities

Fire ✿: The target and any other characters at range 0–2 of the target must make a **TN 3 Meditation check (Air 4, Water 1)** or suffer the Dazed condition and strife equal to three times your Fire Ring.
Fire ✿+: Increase the severity of any critical strikes inflicted as part of this action by 2 per ✿ spent this way.

Katana of Fire — Rank 1

Forging Fire Into Steel (Alchemy), Echo of Short (Ancestral), Sword of Osano-wo (Fortunist)

The shugenja takes a kenjutsu posture, holding their hands aloft or in a guarded position, and a burst of fire swirls into existence in their grip in the shape of a sword. This blade weighs nearly nothing, but its edge cuts like fine steel, leaving blazing trails of light in the air behind it and scorching cuts through any flesh it crosses.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Fire) check** to summon forth a blade of flame in your hand.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* and ready a katana (see the **Katana** entry on page 232) made of fire. It has the Wargear quality. Damage inflicted with this weapon is supernatural rather than physical. The katana persists until the end of any turn in which it leaves your grip or until the end of the scene, at which point it scatters into embers, flashes into ash, or sputters out.

New Opportunities

Fire ✿: The weapon you summon can be any kind of melee weapon instead of a katana.
Fire ✿: You may immediately perform a Strike action using the weapon you summoned.
Fire ✿: If you succeed, you may summon and immediately ready a pair of weapons instead of a single weapon.
Fire ✿: After you perform an Attack action with the weapon, each target must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Air 4, Water 1)** or suffer the Burning condition.

Matsu's Battlecry — Rank 1

Embracing the Flames (Elemental), Haze of Battle (Foreign), Hotei's Curse (Fortunist)

The shugenja calls to kami of war and flame with an ancient chant, and the calamitous spirits of the battle-din roar back, inciting fury within nearby targets. This can drive foes to rash acts, or inspire a dread bravery in allies.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **Theology (Fire) check** targeting a number of characters up to your Fire Ring at range 0–2. The TN of this check is equal to the highest vigilance among your targets.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* an illusion of a hellish scene that only the target can perceive, pushing them toward rage. The target receives 1 strife plus additional strife equal to your bonus successes, and must resist with a **TN 3 Meditation check (Air 4, Water 1)** or immediately suffer the Enraged condition.

Ravenous Swarms — Rank 3

Forgotten Fury of Asahina (Ancestral), Dancing Orbs of Flame (Elemental), Inari's Kitsunebi (Fortunist)

The shugenja ignites a number of candles and hurls them into the air, and the flames leap forth, quickly devouring the tallow before subsiding into smaller fiery motes. These settle around the shugenja's shoulders or near their feet, sputtering cheerily and spitting out sparks that seek to spread and multiply. In addition to providing a (dangerous) source of light, these flames can also leap onto anyone the shugenja attacks.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one position containing a flammable object at range 0–1. The object is consumed by flames.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a number of fiery motes equal to your Fire Ring plus the silhouette of the object consumed. These motes follow you, periodically setting fire to nearby objects. When you succeed at an Attack action, you may spend a number of motes up to your school rank to add one bonus success per mote spent. The motes persist until the end of the scene.

If you succeed, after you perform a Fire invocation, you summon one additional fiery mote. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Fire ✿: The fiery motes only set nearby objects on fire when you will them to do so, rather than haphazardly.
Fire ✿: When you defend against damage, you may spend a number of motes up to your Fire Ring to reduce the damage you suffer by 1 for each mote spent this way.

Rise, Flame — Rank 4

Bulb of Incarnation (Alchemy), Guardian of Fire (Ancestral), Uzume's Handmaiden (Fortunist)

A humanoid form wrought of flame, garbed in a flowing robe of cinder and smoke, with hair of trailing sparks, a manifest fire kami is an alluring and terrible sight to behold. Where its gaze passes, flames arise, and only ash remains in its wake.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 6 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one position containing flammable material at range 0–3.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a **Manifest Fire Kami** (see page 324). It consumes the flammable material, appearing in its position. It obeys you for two rounds, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes, taking its turn immediately after yours each round. When this effect ends, it departs or, if stirred to anger, begins to follow its own directives (ignoring you unless provoked).

New Opportunities

Fire ✿: The fire kami bursts forth in a pillar of searing flame. Each character at range 0–2 of the chosen position must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Air 5, Water 2)** or suffer the Burning and Dazed conditions.
Fire ✿+: The fire kami consumes one additional source of flammable material in range per ✿ spent this way. Increase its endurance by the silhouettes of all consumed objects.
Fire ✿: When the fire kami's fatigue exceeds its endurance, it detonates into a column of flame that sears the earth and the sky. Each character at range 0–3 of it must resist with a **TN 5 Fitness check (Air 6, Water 3)** or suffer supernatural damage equal to two times your Fire Ring and suffer the Burning and Dazed conditions.

The Cleansing Fire — Rank 1

Anointment of the Fire Dragon (Alchemy), Merciful Rage of Isawa (Ancestral), The Peace of Osano-wo (Fortunist)

With a roared incantation, the shugenja spreads their hands wide and a circle of fire spills forth, rippling across the ground and searing everything in its path. These flames are indiscriminate, hungrily lapping at friend, foe, and inanimate object alike.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Fire) check** targeting each other character at range 0–2.
Effects: If you succeed, you *smite* each target with a roaring burst of fire. Each target suffers the Dazed condition and must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Air 4, Water 1)** or suffer supernatural damage equal to your Fire Ring plus their shortfall and gain the Burning condition.

The Fires from Within — Rank 1

The Illuminating Light of Asako (Ancestral), The Riddle of Hotei (Fortunist), Extending the Fire-Heart (Foreign)

The incantation to call fire is guttural and raw. Even as the words echo, the shugenja's hands snap open, and motes of flame trail from their fingertips, searing their way toward the objects of the shugenja's ire. If the shugenja has the strength of will to maintain their focus, they can direct the motes with amazing precision and burn tiny, searing holes in their targets. However, if the shugenja lets their heart swell with wrath or fury, the motes bloom into tiny infernos that seek to consume anything they hit and leave only ash.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Fire) check** targeting a number of characters up to your Fire Ring at range 1–3.
Effects: If you succeed, you *smite* each target with a stream of fire. Each target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Fire Ring plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Fire ✿+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✿ spent this way.

The Soul's Blade — Rank 5

Talon of the Fire Dragon (Alchemy),
Heavenly Petal of the Chrysanthemum (Ancestral),
Mountain Splitter (Foreign)

The shugenja extends a hand toward the sky and makes a dangerous appeal, calling for a heavenly weapon with which to vanquish their enemy. If the invocation is performed properly and the shugenja's cause is judged worthy, the sky cracks and a thunderbolt descends from the heavens, blasting through anything in its path. It lands writhing in the shugenja's hand, forming a weapon that appears in the shape pictured in the shugenja's mind. Be it the hide of a great beast or the sorcerous ward of a mahō-tsukai, there is nothing this blade of judgment cannot pierce.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Fire) check** to summon forth a blade of pure energy into your hand.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* and ready a katana or naginata (see **Weapons**, on page 230) made of searing, crackling energy. Attacks made with this weapon inflict supernatural damage and ignore all forms of resistance. The weapon persists until it leaves your grip or until the end of the scene, at which point it flickers out.

New Opportunities

Fire ✿: The weapon you summon can be any kind of melee weapon instead of a katana or naginata.
Fire ✿: You may immediately perform a Strike action using the weapon you summoned.
Fire ✿: If you succeed, you may summon and immediately ready a pair of weapons instead of a single weapon.
Fire ✿: One character you choose other than yourself may wield the weapon.
Fire ✿ ✿: After you perform an Attack action with the weapon, each target must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Air 5, Water 2)** or suffer the Dazed condition.

Wall of Fire — Rank 2

Igniting Powder of Combusting Ash (Alchemy),
Chasing Osano-wo (Fortunist),
Walls of the Fire Palace (Foreign)

A roiling wall of fire sends a very specific message: approach and die in a manner most awful. Shugenja who commune with fire spirits can summon forth such blazing warnings with relative ease, brushing oil or powder across the ground and then igniting it with a word of invocation. The wall of fire sparks to life with great force and extends up a few yards for several moments, but it maintains its intensity only so long as it has fuel.

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Fire) check** targeting two positions at range 2–4.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a wall of flame between the target points that extends to range 1 in thickness and range 3 in height (see **Range Bands**, on page 265); this area counts as Dangerous terrain (see **Terrain**, on page 267). This effect persists for one round plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes. Any character standing where the wall erupts suffers the Dazed condition and must resist with a **TN 2 Fitness check (Air 3, Water 1)** or suffer supernatural damage equal to your Fire Ring and the Burning condition (see page 272).

New Opportunities

Fire ✿: The wall of fire counts as terrain with one of the following qualities: Entangling or Obscuring (see **Terrain**, on page 267).

Wings of the Phoenix — Rank 4

Isawa's Ascent (Ancestral), Flameform Transmutation (Alchemy), Hachiman's Fiery Steed (Fortunist)

The shugenja leaps into the air, and fiery wings burst forth behind them, carrying them into the sky. Small motes of flame fall in the wake of the shugenja's passing, igniting the ground cover before fading into delicate feathers of ash.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Fire) check** targeting yourself.

Effects: If you succeed, *augment* yourself with wings of flame that carry you aloft. These flames do not harm you. In addition to being able to move vertically and horizontally freely, you ignore the effects of terrain while flying. This effect persists one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes. While this effect persists, any terrain you fly over at range 0–3 is ignited and becomes Dangerous terrain (see **Terrain**, on page 267) until the beginning of your next turn; each character within that area suffers the Dazed condition, and they must resist with a **TN 2 Fitness check (Air 3, Water 1)** or suffer supernatural damage equal to your Fire Ring and gain the Burning condition (see page 272).

New Opportunities

Fire ✿+: While flying, you may safely carry up to one additional willing character at range 0–2 with you per ✿ spent this way.

Fire ✿ ✿: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

WATER INVOCATIONS

Water invocations grant the shugenja speed and quick reflexes, as well as the ability to heal injuries and calm the fevered mind.

Bō of Water — Rank 1

Kaimetsu-o's Paddle (Ancestral), Ebisu's Walking Stick (Fortunist), Staff of the Sorcerer (Foreign)

A shugenja can invoke the spirits in a nearby pool or stream to take the form of a weapon. This weapon can change form at the bearer's will, swirling from a staff into a blade in the blink of an eye, and back again.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Water) check** to summon forth a staff made of water from a nearby pool, stream, or airborne vapor.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* and ready a staff (see **Weapons**, on page 230) made of water. It has the Snaring quality. At the end of each round, you may transform this weapon into a different melee weapon. The bō persists until the end of any turn in which it leaves your grip or until the end of the scene, at which point it splashes to the ground in a puddle.

New Opportunities

Water ✿: The weapon you summon can be any kind of melee or ranged weapon instead of a staff.
Water ✿: You may immediately perform a Strike action using the weapon you summoned.
Water ✿: When performing an Attack action with this weapon, treat its minimum or maximum range as 1 higher or lower.

Dance of Seasons — Rank 2

Salt of Seasonal Change (Alchemist), Kuriko's Earnest Wish (Ancestral), Spinning Uzume's Wheel (Fortunist)

A skilled shugenja can entreat the kami to change the world around them through a rite that seems as much performance as invocation. As the shugenja dances, the water kami mirror the movements and shift the moisture around them from water to ice to vapor and back again. A skilled shugenja might be able to use this to entrap the unwary, drenching them in the waters of a summer storm before plunging them into the frozen heart of winter.

Activation: As a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Water) check** targeting one position containing a source of water (such as a pool, a river, snow or ice, or even mist) at range 1–3.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* the essence of the seasons to freeze, thaw, or evaporate any amount of water at range 0–1 of the target position. If you transform water into ice, it becomes solid, Dangerous terrain (see **Terrain**, on page 267). If you transform water into vapor, it creates a fog, which is Obscuring terrain. If you transform water into mud, it becomes Entangling terrain. Water within living beings remains unaffected, as the kami do not wish to ruin the elegant scene with grotesque results.

New Opportunities

Water ✿+: Choose one additional target position per ✿ spent this way.
Water ✿+: If you succeed, you may attempt to encase in ice one character in the affected area per ✿ spent this way. Each of these characters must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Earth 1, Fire 4)** or suffer the Immobilized and Disoriented conditions.

Dominion of Suijin — Rank 1

Iuchi's Window (Ancestral), All Rivers Meet Again (Elemental), Spies of the Garden Pond (Foreign)

A shugenja deeply attuned to the kami of water can see other places in watery reflections. Incredibly powerful practitioners can even use this reflection to transport themself and others to the desired place through the water—even if they arrive slightly damp.

Activation: As a Movement and Scheme action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** targeting one position containing a body of water at range 0–1.
Effects: If you succeed, you *scry* in the ripples. The target body of water displays an image of a second body of water of your choice and its surroundings as if the onlooker were just below the surface. This second body of water must be at range 0–6 of the target position, and you must have concrete knowledge of a specific body of water to use it this way.

New Opportunities

Water ✿: In addition to being able to see out the other pool of water, you can hear (very muffled) noises.
Water ✿: Only you can see the vision; to others, the pool of water shows no images.
Water ✿: The location you see can be any distance from you (but must still be familiar).
Water ✿ ✿: You may use clouds, fog banks, snow, or sheets of ice as bodies of water for this technique.
Water ✿ ✿ ✿: In addition to being able to see out of the other body of water, you and a number of other characters up to your Water Ring may pass through the temporary portal you have created to the other location. The trip is always one way for a given use of the technique, and you always arrive soaked.

Ever-Changing Waves — Rank 5

Elixir of Transmuting Form (Alchemy), Blessing of Megumi (Fortunist), Myriadic Forms (Foreign)

A shugenja might have lived as a bird, a wolf, a plant, and humans of various stations before being born into their current position in the Celestial Order. All of these existences are separate, and yet they are inexorably bound. By following the bond backward, a shugenja adept in communing with the water kami can reshape their own flesh to mirror a past form—albeit briefly—transforming into a natural animal or supernatural beast for a short time.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Water) check** targeting yourself.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* your body, transforming it into that of a natural animal (see page 325) of silhouette 2. While in this form, you use its ring values, derived attributes, abilities, and advantages with the physical or social type, but you use your own skill ranks and advantages with the mental or spiritual type. This effect persists until you choose to end it or are rendered unconscious, at which point your form reverts to its original state. Do not remove any fatigue or strife you have suffered in the alternate form when you return to your original; if this causes your fatigue to exceed your endurance (or your strife to exceed your composure) when it did not in the alternate form, you suffer a critical strike with severity 5 (or you become Compromised, in the case of strife).

New Opportunities

Water ✿: If you succeed, you can transform your body into that of a different sentient species.
Water ✿: If you succeed, you can transform your body into that of an Otherworldly being, such as a supernatural beast.
Water ✿+: You may choose a new form of silhouette 1 higher or lower per ✿ spent this way (to a minimum of 0 or a maximum of 6).

Hands of the Tides — Rank 3

Tracing the Lifeblood (Alchemy), Ikoma Tumbles with Akodo (Ancestral), Suijin's Command (Fortunist)

Water binds all living beings, and by communing deeply with the vital spirits that flow through everything, a shugenja can master many arts. Using this esoteric invocation, a shugenja can exchange the positions of living beings near one another, throw enemies off-balance, or put allies in a position of advantage. While the Elemental Masters have been known to debate whether the water spirits shift the targets or reshape the world around them, the effect of the invocation—shuffling the positions of a number of individuals in a small radius as the shugenja sees fit—is easy to understand, if hard to comprehend.

Activation: As a Movement action, you may make a **TN 5 Theology (Water) check** targeting yourself and a number of other characters up to your Water Ring at range 1–4.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* the targets. You may cause them to exchange their positions in space. Note that at the end, each target's original position must be must be occupied by a target, and each target must occupy a position.

If you succeed, each target receives 2 strife.

New Opportunities

Water ✿+: If you succeed, you may choose a new stance for one target per ✿ spent this way.

Heart of the Water Dragon — Rank 2

Vapors of Goodwill (Alchemy), Walking Beside Jurojin (Fortunist), Mark of Resistance (Foreign)

The shugenja traces a gentle pattern on the target's skin with purified water, calling upon the water kami in their body to protect and mend the flesh they call home. The target becomes extremely resistant to invocations, sorcery, and other supernatural abilities; summoned flames ripple off their skin harmlessly, and baleful maledictions pass over the targets.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Water) check** targeting one character at range 0–2.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* your target with the spiritual fluidity of water. The target gains supernatural resistance equal to your Water Ring and removes 1 fatigue at the end of each round. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

Each target cannot be affected by the Heart of the Water Dragon invocation again until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Water ✿ ✿: When the target succeeds on a check to resist the effect of a kihō, mahō, or invocation technique, the character who used the technique must also make the check to resist that effect, or suffer the effect themself.

Inari's Blessing — Rank 1

Miya's Gift (Ancestral), Feast of the Water Kami (Elemental), Oasis in the Desert (Foreign)

Water is life, and water kami can provide life-giving gifts of food and drink even from the most desolate environments. After the shugenja performs the invocation, the land nearby flourishes with life, delivering food to the shugenja, and pure water springs from the ground. This food is simple and nourishing, and it can be cooked or even packed away as rations for later if needed.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** targeting one position at range 1.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a meal at the target position that can feed a number of people up to your Water Ring plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Water ✤: The meal is particularly fortifying. Any character who partakes of it during downtime removes fatigue equal to your Water Ring.
Water ✤+: The meal can feed a number of people up to your Water Ring plus your bonus successes times the ✤ spent this way instead.

Path to Inner Peace — Rank 1

Jurōjin's Kiss (Alchemy), Trancendence of Asako (Ancestral), Touch of the Hot Springs (Elemental)

By communing with the water kami that dwell within the body, a shugenja can right imbalances and correct the flow of ki, speeding the recovery of stamina dramatically.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** targeting yourself or another character at range 0–2.
Effects: If you succeed, you *mend* your target's exhausted muscles. The target removes fatigue equal to your Water Ring plus your bonus successes.

Each target cannot be affected by the Path to Inner Peace invocation again until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Water ✤: Choose one of the following conditions: Bleeding, Dazed, Disoriented, or Lightly Wounded. Remove that condition from each target.
Water ✤: Your target also removes strife equal to your bonus successes.

Reflections of P'an Ku — Rank 1

Agasha's Vast Wisdom (Ancestral), Rumors of the Water Kami (Elemental), Whispers of the Steel (Foreign)

Water kami are notoriously covetous, and things lost to the depths rarely resurface. Still, this avarice can offer advantages. A shugenja learned in this art can call forth water spirits to recognize an item by submerging it in sacred water. The water spirits often provide cryptic answers, but they usually can grant the shugenja a good idea of an item's composition, whether it possesses any mystical properties, and the general disposition of these traits.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** targeting one item at range 0–1.
Effects: If you succeed, you *scry* to uncover all properties an item possesses, including its name, maker, mundane qualities, magical properties, curses, and sealed techniques (see **Nemuranai** on page 307).

New Opportunities

Water ✤: Gain knowledge of the item's origin in broad strokes, such as where it was forged, the clan of the individual who has carried it the longest, or a similar piece of information.
Water ✤: You may target a character instead of an object. If you succeed, you identify one invocation, kihō, mahō, or supernatural ability or item possessed by that person, along with its name and general qualities.

Rise, Water — Rank 4

Wine of Invocation (Alchemy), Guardian of Water (Ancestral), Isora's Attendant (Fortunist)

Water kami are nurturing, for water fosters all life. However, like all nature spirits, they are beings of destruction and creation; calling a water kami to take manifest form is to summon a potent force indeed. A manifest water kami often takes a humanoid form, rising from a nearby lake, river, or ocean and carried aloft on a crushing wave. As water splits into rivulets, so a manifest water kami can split into multiple smaller beings, each one surging forth to devastate the foe.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 6 Theology (Water) check** targeting one position containing a large quantity of water at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a **Manifest Water Kami** (see page 324) to fight for you. It appears from the targeted body of water and obeys you for two rounds, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes, taking its turn immediately after yours each round. When this effect ends, the manifest water kami departs or, if stirred to particular ire, begins to follow its own directives. If it begins to act independently, it does not attack the shugenja who summoned it unless provoked.

New Opportunities

Water ✿: The manifest water kami attempts to swallow up anyone inside it; each such character must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Earth 2, Fire 5)** or be pulled into the water kami and begin suffocating (see **Suffocation**, on page 269). As an action, a character who failed to resist may make a **TN 3 Fitness check (Earth 1, Fire 4)** to escape this watery prison.

Water ✿: Upon arrival, the water kami may move a number of range bands up to your Water Ring.

Water ✿+: You split the manifest water kami into a number of smaller manifest water kami equal to ✿ spent this way. Each one has an endurance equal to 12 divided by the number of ✿ spent this way (rounded up).

Stride the Waves — Rank 2

Elixir of Cork Properties (Alchemy), Kaimetsu-O's Road (Ancestral), Walking the Water Garden (Fortunist)

Guided by the spirits of water, the character can slide effortlessly across the surface of a stormy sea, ride a current of water out of the ocean, or even plunge beneath its depths, breathing the brine as though it were air.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** targeting one character at range 0–2.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a buoyant current that sweeps the target along. Even if they normally cannot swim, the target can control where they move as they please along the surface of the water or within it. The target ignores any negative effects of terrain while in the water and does not suffocate while underwater. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Strike the Tsunami — Rank 3

Bottle of Oceanic Storms (Alchemy), Suitengu's Arrow (Fortunist), Calling the Wave (Foreign)

Upending the contents of a water pouch or reaching into a nearby lake or stream, the shugenja pulls out an impossibly large torrent that slams into several foes nearby, pushing them back or dragging them forward as the shugenja wills.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Water) check** targeting a number of characters up to your Water Ring at range 0–3. You must have a source of water to perform this technique.
Effects: If you succeed, you *smite* your targets with a spray of water. Each target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Water Ring plus your bonus successes. Each target must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Earth 1, Fire 4)**; you may move each target who fails a number of range bands up to their shortfall in any direction.

New Opportunities

Water ✿: Each target who fails the check to resist also suffers the Bleeding condition.

Suijin's Embrace — Rank 4

The Ocean in a Drop (Alchemy), Following Doji's Steps (Ancestral), Kissing the Water Kami (Elemental)

A shugenja with the proper knowledge—and the will to wield it—can inflict a drowning death upon their enemy, transforming the air in their lungs into seawater and killing them as surely as throwing them off a pier while tied to a heavy stone.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Water) check** targeting one character at range 1–3.
Effects: If you succeed, you *smite* your target with lungfuls of seawater. The target suffers supernatural damage equal to your Water Ring plus two times your bonus successes. If a target's fatigue exceeds their endurance this way, the target begins to suffocate (page 269) for a number of rounds equal to your Water Ring plus bonus successes or until you release them, as a Support action.

Sympathetic Energies — Rank 2

Compassion of Shinjo (Ancestral), Suijin is Generous (Fortunist), Desert Pollen (Foreign)

Water kami flow through all living beings, and a shugenja can use their winding channels to transfer boons and curses alike between individuals.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** to spread one chosen persistent invocation effect across a number of targets equal to your Water Ring at range 0–1.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* the spiritual power of one persistent invocation effect that is already affecting one target. Each other target counts as being affected by it as well. This effect persists as long as the original effect persists on the original target.

New Opportunities

Water ✿ ✿: You may choose a condition that the target is suffering instead of a persistent invocation effect.

The Rushing Wave — Rank 1

Utaku's Waterborne Steed (Ancestral), The Clay Kobune (Alchemy), Isora's Spinning Dance (Fortunist)

The shugenja calls the torrent as their steed and rides it, pulling a wave of water from a nearby lake, pond, river, or ocean to propel them forward at incredible speed.

Activation: As a Movement action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** targeting one character at range 0–1. There must be a large source of water nearby to perform this invocation.
Effects: If you succeed during a skirmish, you *summon* a rushing waterspout that propels the target. The target may immediately move 1 range band, plus additional range bands equal to your bonus successes.

If you succeed during a narrative or downtime scene, you *summon* a gentle current that doubles the target's speed across or through the water (such as while swimming or while traveling in a sailing ship or riverboat). This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Rituals

Rituals are religious ceremonies performed to appease the kami and draw forth their blessings. Unlike invocations, rituals are not the rarefied secrets of shugenja schools; instead, they are day-to-day practices performed by many religious functionaries throughout Rokugan. Still, they are miraculous occurrences, if subtle ones. Most priests, shrine keepers, and court mystics know and perform rituals on a regular basis. Many monks and shugenja also know how to perform rituals.

Rituals are performed during downtime, and potentially during other types of scenes at the GM's discretion. Only characters with one or more school ranks in a school that lists "rituals" among its available techniques can purchase rituals.

The rituals in this section are listed alphabetically.

Cleansing Rite — Rank 1

The ritualist sanctifies a person or group, anointing them with sacred substances that drive out unholy presences and malign sorcery.

Activation: As a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Void) check** targeting up to five characters to remove spiritual contaminants from the targets before they spread. Note that this cannot remove a Shadowlands Taint disadvantage once it has taken hold, but it can prevent this spiritual contamination from taking root after a character is exposed.

Effects: If you succeed, remove the Afflicted condition from the target.

RITUALS IN CURRICULUMS

Rituals are marked with a stylized incense offering (♨) in curriculum tables.

New Opportunities

Void ✿: If one or more targets is an Otherworldly being, you become aware of it after completing the ritual—but you do not know which target.

Void ✿+: Choose one additional target per ✿ spent this way.

Void ✿+: Instead of targeting characters, you may target an area that encompasses a number of range bands around you equal to ✿ spent this way. Remove the Defiled terrain quality from this area. If it is a deeply unhallowed place that has long been the domain of evil, the Defiled quality returns after one day, plus additional days equal to your bonus successes.

Commune with the Spirits — Rank 1

The ritualist centers their mind on one of the Elements, appealing to the spirits in their environment and seeking their counsel or boon. Priests and laypeople are able to use this ritual to receive less specific guidance from the spirits, such as a leaf that falls to the ground pointing in the direction of the person or thing they are seeking.

Activation: As a downtime activity or Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology check** using Air, Earth, Fire, Water, or Void to appeal to nearby spirits of that Element (appeal to the departed, such as ancestor spirits, and other non-elemental supernatural presences, if using Void) for aid.

Effects: If you succeed, choose and receive one of the following boons from the spirit or spirits you contacted:

- **Sense the Kami:** Detect all spirits and uses of their magic by shugenja within a number of range bands equal to the ring you used plus your bonus successes.
- **Spiritual Knowledge:** Learn one fact the spirits know about the area.
- **Elemental Gift:** The kami deliver a small amount of the Element in question to you. For instance, a prayer to a water kami might cause it to begin raining lightly, for a short time, but it might also cause you to run across a stream, or even find groundwater. In contrast, a prayer to fire kami might bring forth a small shower of sparks, while a prayer to an air kami might elicit a gust of wind. Praying to an earth kami might cause you to stumble across a large stone, or find a small patch of arable ground amid a wasteland. Prayers to the ancestors may allow the petitioner to find something that belonged to an ancestor in a time of need.

New Opportunities

✿: Reduce the TN of your next check to interact with or appeal to kami or supernatural presences of this Element by 1.

✿+: If you succeed, receive one additional boon per ✿ spent this way. Each boon can only be received one time per activation.

Divination — Rank 1

The ritualist peers into a character's future, ascertaining their fate from the patterns of the stars, the char marks upon animal bones, the placement of cast shells, or other omens they can read.

Activation: As a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Void) check** targeting one character to see glimpses of their future.

Effects: If you succeed, choose one of the following omens that you see in the target's near future:

- **Omen of the Azure Dragon:** The next time the target performs a check using a skill from the Artisan skill group this game session, the target adds a kept ■ set to an ✲ ⟲ result.
- **Omen of the Black Tortoise:** The next time the target performs a check using a skill from the Scholar skill group this game session, the target adds a kept ■ set to an ✲ ⟲ result..
- **Omen of the White Tiger:** The next time the target performs a check using a skill from the Martial skill group this game session, the target adds a kept ■ set to an ✲ ⟲ result.
- **Omen of the Vermilion Bird:** The next time the target performs a check using a skill from the Social skill group this game session, the target adds a kept ■ set to an ✲ ⟲ result.
- **Omen of the Weaver and the Cowherd:** The next time the target performs a check using a skill from the Trade skill group this game session, the target adds a kept ■ set to an ✲ ⟲ result.

If you fail, the GM chooses one of the above omens instead. The target cannot receive another divination until the next game session.

New Opportunities

✲**:** If you fail, an additional omen appears to you after the first. Choose one of the above omens in addition to the one the GM chose.

Tea Ceremony — Rank 2

When Lady Doji served tea for the very first Emperor, the tea ceremony was born. Ceremony styles vary among the clans, from the gilded tea rooms of the Phoenix to the imperfect tea bowls of the Dragon, the early morning gatherings of the Crane to the snow- and moon-viewing ceremonies of the Scorpion. However, at its core the tea ceremony is fundamentally an appreciation of tea and, if done well, a spiritual moment for its participants. The tea represents all five elements: the fire used to heat the water, the earth from which the tea is grown, and the air that carries the aroma of the tea. Finally, void holds all four elements together, and brings in the mysterious fifth element, the moment of harmony and tranquility as one sips the tea.

Activation: Once per game session, as a downtime activity using a tea set, you may make a **TN 2 Performance (Void) check** targeting yourself and a number of other characters up to your ranks in Culture, who are also participants. Up to one other participant may assist, providing the usual benefits (see **Assistance** on page 26).
Effects: Each target removes 3 strife, plus additional strife equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✲**:** Reduce the TN of each target's next check by 1.
✲**+:** Each target removes 1 fatigue, plus 1 fatigue per ✲ ✲ spent this way.
✲ ✲**:** If you succeed, each target gains 1 Void point.

Threshold Barrier — Rank 1

The ritualist wards an entryway against beings of a certain sort, causing them to fail to observe the entryway or making them mentally repulsed by their efforts to enter it.

Activation: As a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 2 Theology check** using Air, Earth, Fire, Water, or Void targeting a threshold, gate, or other entryway at range 0–1.
Effects: If you succeed, the threshold is barred against a particular type of entity, based on the ring you chose, for one hour, plus additional hours equal to your bonus successes. When an entity of this type attempts to enter, it must resist with a **TN 3 Meditation (Void) check** or be repelled by the spiritual barrier. Whether it succeeds or fails, you immediately become aware of its attempted entry. The particular type of being is based on the ring you chose, as follows:

- **Air:** Ethereal Otherworldly beings such as spirits and ghosts.
- **Earth:** Living Tainted beings.
- **Fire:** Undead beings with corporeal form.
- **Water:** Wild animals.
- **Void:** Humans.

New Opportunities

✲**:** Instead of protecting a threshold, you may protect the entirety of a sealed area that extends a number of range bands around you no greater than your bonus successes.
✲**:** If any beings of the type you are attempting to seal the threshold against have passed through the threshold within the last twenty-four hours, you become aware of their passage.

THE TEA CEREMONY

Guests are escorted to the site of the tea ceremony, ideally a tea house specially designed for this function or another place of elegant simplicity. There, they are asked to cleanse their mouths and hands—and also their souls—much in the same way purification is performed at shrines.

The guests sit in a prescribed order and the host makes the tea in front of them in a series of elaborate, meticulous steps, each gesture or position passed down to them from tea masters through the ages. Finally, the host serves the tea to the guests, who partake of the same bowl one after another. After the tea has been finished, and the utensils cleaned and put away, the guests leave the tea house in the order they arrived, and the host's final bow signifies the end of the ceremony.

Shūji

Shūji are social techniques, leveraging that most powerful of human tools: communication. Shūji can be used in intrigues, duels, skirmishes, and other types of conflicts as common sense and the GM's discretion dictate.

Only characters with one or more school ranks in a school that lists "shūji" among its available techniques can purchase shūji.

The shūji in this section are organized alphabetically within their elemental classification.

SHŪJI IN CURRICULUMS

Shūji are marked with a stylized calligraphy brush (✓) in curriculum tables.

AIR SHŪJI

Air shūji are indirect, probing, and sometimes teasing. More than other forms of rhetoric, this style of conversation tends to revolve around setting up subtle traps in conversation for others to fall into before exploiting them for all they are worth. Air shūji thus tend to hinge on details rather than the bigger picture; they control the scope of the conversation to deflect away from contrary evidence or logical argumentation.

Artisan's Appraisal — Rank 2

The courtier looks at an object but sees its maker. Each thumbprint tells a story about the hand that crafted the piece; every subtle choice reveals something about the desires that linger in the artist's mind.

Activation: When assessing an object or performance with an Artisan skill (Air), Performance (Air), or Games (Air) check, you may spend ✿ in the following ways:
Air ✿: Choose a ring; learn the value of that ring for the creator or performer and all advantages and disadvantages attached to that ring that are not of the curse type.
Air ✿: If the creator or performer is an NPC, learn their demeanor.

Bend with the Storm — Rank 5

When faced with a much more powerful foe, a cunning courtier often feigns a position of weakness. In this way, they can lead the opponent where they desire by offering chances the foe cannot pass up.

Activation: When you make a Social skill (Air) check targeting another character, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Air ✿: Choose an advantage or disadvantage. The target comes to believe that you possess that advantage or disadvantage without your having to expend noticeable effort or state it directly. Further, the target believes that you do not know you have given this advantage or disadvantage away. If you do anything that could call this misconception into question, any character may resist with a **TN 5 Sentiment check (Earth 6, Fire 3)** to discern that the advantage or disadvantage is not real. This effect persists until the target is faced with incontrovertible evidence or succeeds on the check to resist in the face of cracks in your façade.

Cadence — Rank 1

In courtly situations, it can be advantageous for courtiers of the same clan to be able to communicate wordlessly.

Activation: When you make a Social skill (Air) check, you may spend ✿ in the following ways:
Air ✿: Convey a secret message that alters the meaning of what you are saying outwardly (or has nothing to do with it at all) to one character observing you who possesses this technique.
Air ✿ ✿: Convey a secret message that alters the meaning of what you are saying outwardly (or has nothing to do with it at all) to one character observing you who does not possess this technique.

Feigned Opening — Rank 2

A wise leader creates the impression of weakness to disguise strength, or strength to conceal weakness.

Activation: As a Movement and Scheme action, you may make a **Performance (Air) check** targeting one character in the scene who is observing you. The TN is equal to the target's vigilance. This technique can only be used during skirmish and mass battle conflicts.

Effects: If you succeed, reduce the TN of the next Attack checks against each target (or their cohort, in a mass battle) by 1 plus your bonus successes. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

New Opportunities

Air ✲+: Choose one additional target with vigilance lower than or equal to the original target's per ✲ spent this way.
Air ✲+: In a mass battle, increase the TN of Attack checks targeting your cohort by 1, plus 1 per additional ✲ ✲ spent this way.

Prey on the Weak — Rank 2

Court is not a kind place, and a harsh word is no less cruel for being spoken softly and with perfect etiquette.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 1 Courtesy (Air) check** targeting a Compromised character.
Effects: If you succeed, your target must choose one of the following:

- Immediately unmask in a manner of their choosing based on the circumstances.
- Forfeit glory equal to your Air Ring plus your bonus successes to leave the scene.

New Opportunities

Air ✲+: If the target chooses to unmask, you learn one of their disadvantages of their choice per ✲ spent this way.
Air ✲ ✲: If the target chooses to leave the scene, you notice their destination from the direction of their departure or overhear from the crowd where they will retreat.

Rustling of Leaves — Rank 1

If everyone has heard a scandalous story, but it has no clear source, what can it be but true? The courtier cleverly spreads stories so none see them as the source.

Activation: When you make a Social skill (Air) check to spread a rumor, you may spend ✲ in the following way:
Air ✲+: Increase the TN of any check to trace the rumor back to you by 2 per ✲ spent this way.

The Wind Blows Both Ways — Rank 3

A word in the right ear at the right time can enhance the accomplishment of another, or a cutting slight can diminish their success in the eyes of those who matter.

Activation: When you make a Courtesy or Performance (Air) check targeting another character, you may spend ✲ in the following ways:

Air ✲+: The next time the target receives a glory award, increase the glory they gain by 1 per ✲ spent this way. This effect persists until the end of the scene.
Air ✲+: The next time the target forfeits or stakes glory, increase the glory they must forfeit or stake by 1 per ✲ spent this way. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Whispers of Court — Rank 1

Rumors are the currency of court, and when such news is in short supply, many courtiers simply spin it themselves. They use cunning schemes and plausible half-truths to bait their webs of intrigue.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **Courtesy (Air) check** targeting each character in the scene. The TN of this check is equal to the lowest vigilance among your targets.
Effects: If you succeed, you create a rumor that sweeps across the room like a storm. Everyone in the scene hears it, and characters with vigilance lower than your bonus successes even come to give it some credence. If spreading a rumor is your social objective in an intrigue, you score rhetorical points equal to your Air Ring plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Air ✲: Learn one other rumor that is spreading in the current scene.

Wolf's Proposal — Rank 4

Being honorable is of the same value to a courtier as appearing honorable. True honor cannot be faked, but fortunately for many, the appearance of respectability can be fabricated.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **Courtesy** or **Performance (Air) check** targeting any number of characters in the scene. The TN of this check is equal to the highest vigilance among your targets.
Effects: If you succeed, each target behaves as though your honor is 10 higher or lower than its actual value, plus or minus an additional 10 for each bonus success (to a maximum honor value of 100 or a minimum honor value of 0). If you do anything that could call your perceived honor into question, any target may resist with a **TN 4 Sentiment check (Earth 5, Fire 2)** to determine your actual honor attribute. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Air ✲: Choose a character in the scene. Learn if their honor is higher or lower than yours (the actual value).

RANGE OF SHŪJI

Shūji can generally affect characters close enough to hear the speaker (or otherwise understand them). In most circumstances, this is range 0–4, but under less than ideal conditions (high winds, clashing of swords and screaming of dying warriors, pounding rain), it might be a smaller area.

Additionally, shūji can sometimes be transmitted by means other than speech. While written rhetoric is often less effective for stirring large groups, a well-targeted letter to a specific person might be extremely moving. At the GM's discretion, a character can transmit a shūji technique over time and distance via epistolary or similar means, though it generally only affects a single intended recipient.

EARTH SHŪJI

Earth shūji focus on building others up through a combination of support, expectation, and pressure when needed. A character using this sort of rhetoric is likely to speak at a measured pace, weighing words carefully and developing an argument from the foundation up.

Ancestry Unearthed — Rank 1

A samurai's ancestry often reveals a great deal about their political opportunities, assets, and probable allies in the Emerald Empire, for the rigid social strata allow little divergence. Any courtier can likely dredge up another samurai's lineage from the dark corners of their mind, but some can recall it in an instant.

Activation: When you make a Scholar skill (Earth) or Social skill (Earth) check targeting a character, you may spend ✿ as follows:
Earth ✿: You know one sworn oath the character's family took in the past, and whether or not they have broken or bent it.
Earth ✿ ✿: You know one secret of the character's family that they would prefer be forgotten, and have perhaps even worked to bury.
Earth ✿ ✿ ✿: You know something the character does not even known about their own ancestry.

Civility Foremost — Rank 2

Samurai are warriors, but there are many contexts in which violence is inappropriate. Many strictures exist around the times weapons can and cannot be drawn. A courtier who has memorized the rules of such engagements can articulate why fighting would be improper or profane in nearly any situation.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **Command** or **Courtesy (Earth) check** targeting one character to claim protection for an individual of your choice by rights of honor. The TN of the check is equal to the target's vigilance.
Effects: If you succeed, the target must forfeit honor equal to your Earth Ring plus your bonus successes and suffer that much strife to perform an Attack or Scheme action targeting the chosen individual. This effect persists until the end of the scene, or until the target performs an Attack or Scheme action.

New Opportunities

Earth ✿+: Choose one additional target with vigilance lower than or equal to your first target's vigilance per ✿ spent this way.

Honest Assessment — Rank 1

Honesty is a virtue of Bushidō, but direct honesty is often seen as rudeness among the samurai—instead, one is expected to find a polite way to imply one's meaning to spare the feelings of the other involved. As a result, directness can be something of a rare and valuable commodity.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Courtesy (Earth) check** to appraise the weaknesses of a character.
Effects: If you succeed, choose one of the target's known disadvantages. The target does not apply that disadvantage to their checks until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Earth ✿+: Choose one additional disadvantage per ✿ spent this way.
Earth ✿ ✿: Reduce the TN of the target's next skill check using the ring the disadvantage is attached to by 2.

Pillar of Calm — Rank 4

The character calls for reason to prevail and swords to be sheathed, appealing to a common ideal or greater threat that stands before the belligerent parties.

Activation: As a Scheme and Support action, you may make a **Command (Earth) check** targeting a number of characters up to your Earth Ring times your school rank. The TN of this check is equal to the highest strife among the targets.
Effects: If you succeed while targeting all of the leaders involved in a conflict, you may de-escalate the conflict one level (from a mass battle to a skirmish, a skirmish to a duel, or a duel to an intrigue).

New Opportunities

Earth ✿ ✿+: You may de-escalate the conflict by one additional level per ✿ ✿ spent this way.

Stonewall Tactics — Rank 1

The courtier makes themself impossible for the target to ignore, raising a pressing concern that must be addressed first or even physically planting themself between a rival and their allies.

Activation: When making a Social skill (Earth) or Martial skill (Earth) check targeting a character, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Earth ✿+: Increase the TN of any check the target makes that does not target you by 1 per ✿ spent this way. This effect persists until the beginning of your next turn.

Touchstone of Courage — Rank 3

Armies are rarely routed in the field; instead, most collapse when morale becomes impossible to maintain. As panic rises in the ranks, soldiers look to leaders to set an example. The character does just this, speaking to the importance of duty to bring their troops back from the edge of chaos.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Command (Earth) check** targeting any number of characters (or your cohort during a mass battle).
Effects: If you succeed during an intrigue, duel, or skirmish conflict, each target increases their composure by your Earth Ring. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

If you succeed during a mass battle, increase your army's discipline by your Earth Ring plus your bonus successes. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Earth ✲ ✲: During an intrigue, duel, or skirmish, each target removes strife equal to your Earth Ring.
Earth ✲ ✲: During a mass battle, your army removes panic equal to your Earth Ring.

The Immovable Hand of Peace — Rank 5

The courtier calls for the warriors in the field to lay down their arms and withdraw with such unquestionable conviction that even the fires of hate are temporarily smothered.

Activation: Once per game session as a Scheme action, during a duel or skirmish, you may make a **TN 5 Command (Earth) check** targeting every character in the scene.
Effects: If you succeed, the scene becomes an intrigue between you and the other principal characters. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes. If you have not achieved a peaceful resolution by the time this effect ends, the scene returns to its previous state.

New Opportunities

Earth ✲: You may also perform this action during a mass battle or other form of conflict (other than an intrigue).

Weight of Duty — Rank 1

All samurai know the pressure of expectation in countless forms. An observant courtier can read this when engaging with another character, learning their beliefs and in what ways they fear they might not live up to their own expectations.

Activation: When you make a Social skill (Earth) check targeting a character, you may spend ✲ as follows:
Earth ✲: Learn one way the target fears failing as a samurai.
Earth ✲ ✲: Learn the target's giri (see page 39).

FIRE SHŪJI

Fire shūji focus on provocation in the most direct sense, eliciting a reaction immediately and with fervor. Anger, joy, despair, and the burning desire for justice are all tools of one who wields Fire shūji. With it, a speaker can illuminate injustice or set hearts ablaze with pride, but it can also blind people to the wider situation or the consequences of their actions.

Bravado — Rank 4

Glory is half reputation and half poise. The courtier displays a confident mien, speaking more informally than propriety should allow. Their words and posture carry a tinge of arrogance, making them harder to ignore.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **Games (Fire)** or **Performance (Fire) check** targeting any number of characters in the scene. The TN of this check is equal to the highest vigilance among your targets.
Effects: If you succeed, each target behaves as though your glory is 10 higher or lower than its actual value, plus or minus an additional 10 for each bonus success (to a maximum glory value of 100 or a minimum glory value of 0). If you do anything that could call your glory into question, any character may resist with a **TN 4 Sentiment check (Air 5, Water 2)** to determine your actual glory attribute. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Fire ✿: Choose a character in the scene. Learn if their glory is higher or lower than yours (the actual value).

Dazzling Performance — Rank 3

Performing a great feat can win a character renown, but performing a great feat and then telling the story of it draws far greater accolades. A courtier building a reputation in the competitive courts of Rokugan must master not just excellence, but also capture the imagination.

Activation: When making an Artisan skill (Fire), Games (Fire), or Performance (Fire) check, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Fire ✿+: The next time you receive a glory award this scene, increase the amount you receive by 1. If there is a character of higher status in the scene, increase it by 1 per ✿ spent this way instead.

Fanning the Flames — Rank 2

Inciting people to act foolishly or to flinch at the crucial moment is a key skill of a courtier, for words are their weapons. Inducing unchecked emotion is another tool in the courtier's arsenal, and most become quite adept in the art of manipulating people into feeling certain things that are advantageous for the courtier. The courtier stings their target's pride with needling comments or makes a flirtatious remark to draw their attention, pulling the target's emotions to the surface and making them easier to predict.

Activation: When making a Social skill (Fire) check targeting one or more characters, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Fire ✿+: One target gains the Dazed condition per ✿ spent this way.
Fire ✿ ✿+: One target gains the Enraged condition per ✿ ✿ spent this way.

Lightning Raid — Rank 2

The Unicorn Clan is famous for its quick strikes, smashing down upon its enemies with cavalry to sow chaos in their ranks and leave them vulnerable to the rest of the army. Other clans employ similar tactics, usually by ambushing exposed cities or supply trains in the field. The leader rouses their troops for a swift attack to leave the enemy in a state of disarray.

Activation: Once per scene, as an Attack and Movement action, you may make a **TN 3 Command (Fire) check** targeting any number of characters in the scene (or one cohort in a mass battle).

Effects: If you succeed during a skirmish, each character increases their initiative by your Fire Ring plus your bonus successes at the beginning of the next round.

If you succeed during a mass battle, one enemy leader's cohort suffers panic equal to your Fire Ring plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Fire ✿: During a skirmish, immediately perform a Strike action (see page 260).
Fire ✿: During a mass battle, immediately perform an Assault action (see page 278) against the chosen enemy cohort's leader.

Rallying Cry — Rank 3

The leader roars, calling their troops to battle, and the voice of an army echoes around them as the single cry is joined by many. As one, the troops surge forward to claim victory or perish in the attempt.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Command (Fire)** or **Performance (Fire) check** targeting any number of characters in the scene (or one cohort in a mass battle).
Effects: If you succeed, the targets are energized and excited by your rhetoric. After **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**, each target adds a kept ■ set to an ✿ ⟲ result. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

New Opportunities

Fire ✿+: In a skirmish, each enemy in the scene suffers 1 strife per ✿ spent this way.
Fire ✿+: In a mass battle, the enemy army suffers 1 panic per ✿ spent this way.

Sear the Wound — Rank 5

Many courtiers cannot resist the opportunity to twist the knife after delivering a stabbing remark, but the wise use this power judiciously. Though somewhat cruel, the technique of bringing a rival's weakness to the forefront of their mind to burn away at their resolve is often effective.

Activation: When making a Social skill (Fire) check targeting one or more characters, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Fire ✿+: Choose a known disadvantage of one of your targets per ✿ spent this way. That disadvantage applies to all of the target's checks until the end of the scene.

Sensational Distraction — Rank 1

Standing out in court requires a great deal of both cunning and flair, and standing out on purpose can be even harder. Courtiers train for much of their lives to learn to control the perceptions of others at court. The best courtiers know when to draw attention to themselves with a display of rhetorical prowess or another social feat and when to avoid attention. Drawing attention to oneself can give collaborators the chance to work unnoticed as well, and thus it is an extremely valuable tool in the courtier's arsenal.

Activation: When making a Social skill (Fire) check targeting one or more characters, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Fire ✿+: When interacting with other characters, the target treats their vigilance as 1 lower per ✿ spent this way; when interacting with you, the target treats their vigilance as 1 higher per ✿ spent this way. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Stirring the Embers — Rank 1

A good leader does not just compensate for the weaknesses of comrades, but also fosters their innate strengths. The courtier reminds an ally of one of their finer qualities, sparking their pride to get them to fight more fiercely or speak with greater conviction.

Activation: When making a Social skill (Fire) check targeting one or more characters, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Fire ✿+: Choose a target and one of their known distinctions per ✿ spent this way. Until the end of the scene, when that advantage applies to a check, the target may reroll up to three dice (instead of two).

Truth Burns through Lies — Rank 1

The courtier rapidly extrapolates, imagining the ramifications of a story and conjecturing what might have gone unsaid. If a loose thread exists in the account, they can find it, and that first thread can become the unraveling of the most cunning duplicity.

Activation: When making a Scholar skill (Fire) check to assess a character's story, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Fire ✿: If there is a single statement upon which the character's story hinges, you determine what it is and what you would need to do to verify or disprove it.

WATER SHŪJI

Water shūji play to the heart rather than the mind, calling upon the listener to let their emotions guide them and be swept along without question. Camaraderie, shame, and guilt, as well as material needs and base desires, are all the domain of Water shūji. With these techniques, a skilled courtier can draw even the harshest enemies to the negotiating table by making it the path of least resistance.

All in Jest — Rank 1

Veteran courtiers sometimes play off missteps as jokes. This underhanded but effective tactic puts the other person in a difficult position: press the issue and seem stubborn, or let it slide and give the courtier a pass.

Activation: When you make a Commerce (Water), Courtesy (Water), or Performance (Water) check, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Water ✿+: If you forfeited honor as part of the check in order to say something rude or appeal to your target's base desires (greed, lust, laziness, etc.), regain 1 honor per ✿ spent this way (see **Forfeiting Social Attributes**, on page 37).

Buoyant Arrival — Rank 5

Some people have the ability to blend in with any social environment, fluidly adapting to the rough atmosphere of the humblest tavern one day, while walking among the rulers of the Empire the next.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **Courtesy (Water) check** targeting a number of characters up to your Water Ring. The TN of the check is equal to the vigilance of the character with the highest status among your targets.
Effects: If you succeed, you may enter or leave the conversation gracefully. You need not forfeit honor or glory for interrupting, suddenly departing, or preempting someone else, regardless of the respective status of the participants.

Ebb and Flow — Rank 3

Just as hardest ice and the gentlest mist are composed of the same water, seasoned courtiers know that all it takes is time and work to transform strength into weakness and weakness into strength. The courtier manipulates a person's perceptions with ease, keeping their allies confident and their foes uneasy.

Activation: As a Scheme or Support action, you may make a **Courtesy (Water)**, **Command (Water)**, or **Games (Water) check** targeting one character. The TN of this check is equal to the target's vigilance.
Effects: If you succeed (and chose Scheme action), choose one of the target's advantages that you know; whenever it applies, invert it. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

If you succeed (and chose Support action), choose one of the target's disadvantages you know; whenever it applies, invert it. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Water ✿: Choose one additional advantage or disadvantage and apply the effect to it.
Water ✿ ✿+: Choose one additional target with vigilance lower than or equal to your first target's vigilance per ✿ ✿ spent this way.

Regal Bearing — Rank 4

Courtiers train in the art of carrying themselves no matter what clothing they wear, gaining impeccable control over their posture, tone, and choice of words to project exactly the social standing they desire others to see.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **Command (Water)** or **Performance (Water) check** targeting any number of characters in the scene. The TN of this check is equal to the highest vigilance among your targets.
Effects: If you succeed, each target treats your status as being 10 higher or lower (to a maximum status of 100 or a minimum status of 0), plus or minus an additional 10 per bonus success. If you do anything that could call your status into question, any character may resist with a **TN 4 Sentiment check (Earth 2, Fire 5)** to determine your actual status attribute. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Water ✿: Choose a character in the scene. Learn if their status is higher or lower than yours (the actual value).

Shallow Waters — Rank 1

A good courtier learns how to read the desires of those around them from the subtle cues of their responses in conversation, as well as how to probe for details without revealing their intentions.

Activation: When you make a Social skill (Water) check targeting a character, you may spend ✿ as follows:
Water ✿: Learn of one material item or worldly experience the target desires.
Water ✿ ✿: Learn the target's ninjō (see page 38).

Slippery Maneuvers — Rank 2

The leader makes several signals and calls out a command—often a code word—to their troops; suddenly, the formation shifts in unison to take advantage of the terrain around them.

Activation: As a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Command (Water) check** targeting any number of friendly characters in the scene (or your cohort during a mass battle). This technique can only be used during a skirmish or mass battle.

Effects: If you succeed during a skirmish, choose a position containing terrain that you can see. Each target may immediately move 1 range band toward it. Attack checks targeting any of your targets inside the terrain treat the terrain as having the Obscuring terrain quality. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

If you succeed during a mass battle, choose a piece of terrain you can see. You and your cohort may immediately move to occupy it if it is unoccupied. Attack action checks targeting you and your cohort while you are inside the terrain treat the terrain as having the Obscuring terrain quality. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Water ✿: Each target is able to leverage Obscuring terrain to better effect; Attack action checks targeting them have their TN increased by 2 instead of 1. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Tributaries of Trade — Rank 2

Gift giving is an important cultural practice in Rokugan (as is the art of gift refusal, which any potential recipient must repeat at least twice before accepting the third offer). While some courtiers have a gift prepared for any possible contingency, many simply get acquainted with the art of explaining why a gift could only have been intended for its current recipient (even if they originally procured it for a different purpose). The ability to quickly acquire an item is valued among all courtiers, as a gift demands reciprocity in some kind, whether that be in favors, esteem, or subsequent gifts.

Activation: Once per scene as a Scheme and Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Commerce (Water) skill check** to establish that you acquired a chosen item earlier. From a narrative standpoint, you procured this gift during your last opportunity (or sent an attendant to retrieve it) but are only revealing it now.

Effects: If you succeed, you produce an item with a rarity less than or equal to 1 plus your bonus successes. You must still pay the price of the item.

New Opportunities

Water ✿+: Reduce the price you must pay for the item by one-quarter per ✿ spent this way (to a minimum of one-quarter of the original price).

Well of Desire — Rank 1

Bribery is considered to be corruption in Rokugan, yet gift exchanges and gift giving is a time-honored tradition. The shrewdest courtiers can engineer scenarios in which their targets cannot refuse their gifts without tarnishing their reputations. Thus, the recipient of such a poisoned gift might find it preferable to owe the courtier a favor than to be shamed in public.

Activation: When you make a Courtesy (Water) check to present a gift to a target, you may spend ✿ as follows:

Water ✿: To refuse your gift, your target must forfeit glory equal to your Water Ring. Additionally, if the gift is something that the target desires, the target also must suffer strife equal to its rarity to refuse it. If your target accepts the gift, reduce the TN of your next Social skill check targeting them by the rarity of the item (to a minimum of 1).

VOID SHŪJI

Void shūji revolve around understanding and expressing the inner mysteries of the universe to help oneself and others move toward Enlightenment, selfless goals, or otherworldly ends.

Some Void shūji are limited to a specific clan, which is listed in the header. This means that only a character from that clan can take that shūji.

All Arts Are One — Rank 3

Just as the four elements are bound together by Void, certain underlying principles, including aesthetics, logic, and discipline, unite all forms of art. By meditating on these similarities, a courtier is able to more easily grasp the fundamentals of any subject.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Martial skill (Void)**, **Games (Void)**, or **Performance (Void) check** to rapidly absorb information on a new activity covered by that skill.
Effects: If you succeed, you immediately intuit how to wield a new weapon, play a new game, use a new instrument, or perform a new song, dance, or other task. You do not apply any TN increase that might be associated with dealing with something new to you.

New Opportunities

Void ✿: Choose a ring. Reduce the TN of your next check using that ring for the chosen skill by 1. This effect persists until the end of your next turn (or until the end of the scene during a narrative scene).

A Samurai's Fate — Rank 4

A leader asks their warriors for the final service all samurai must someday render to their lord: to lay down their lives that others might live. Even as they fall in battle, their shed blood waters the fields that will grow a thousand victories.

Activation: As an action, you make a **TN 5 Command (Void) check** targeting any number of characters (or your cohort, during a mass battle).
Effects: If you succeed during a skirmish, each target ignores any critical strikes with severity lower than your Void Ring plus your bonus successes. This effect persists until the end of the scene (at which point the injuries take effect).

If you succeed during a mass battle, your army counts as having the Fearless Army ability, below:

Fearless Army: At the end of each round, your army removes panic equal to your glory rank. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Courtier's Resolve — Rank 1

Warriors do battle with their bodies, and courtiers do battle with their minds. To maintain one's composure while surrounded by the challenges of court, one must be able to clear and organize one's mind, returning focus to the most vital tasks.

Activation: Once per scene as a Support action, you may spend 1 Void point to recover from strife.
Effects: Remove strife equal to your glory rank.

Lady Doji's Decree — (Crane) Rank 2

Propriety, grace, and eloquence were of great importance to the founder of the Crane Clan. With a word, she was said to defuse the most dangerous situations. Crane Clan courtiers follow in her footsteps, forcing bystanders to listen with a single striking comment.

Activation: Once per game session as an action, you may make a **Courtesy (Void) check** targeting a number of characters up to your school rank. The TN of this check is equal to the vigilance of the character with the highest status among your targets.
Effects: If you succeed, your targets cannot perform Attack actions targeting you. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes, or until you perform an Attack action.

New Opportunities

Void ✿+: Choose one additional target with status lower than your first target per ✿ spent this way.
Void ✿ ✿: Your targets also cannot perform Scheme actions targeting you.

Lady Shinjo's Speed — (Unicorn) Rank 2

The Kami Shinjo carried within her a curiosity that could never be fully satisfied. Her passion extends to her clan, who still feel the call of the unexplored. Peerless riders, the Unicorn Clan finds their way across unfamiliar terrain with ease, as Shinjo taught them centuries ago.

Activation: As a downtime activity, if you have a steed available, you may make a **TN 2 Survival (Void) check** to reach a destination with extreme swiftness.
Effects: If you succeed, you reach the destination in half the time it would normally require. If you so desire, one character may ride along with you.

New Opportunities

Void ✿: You may lead a number of willing characters with mounts of their own up to your school rank.

Lord Akodo's Roar (Lion) Rank 2

The Kami Akodo One-Eye, who founded the Lion Clan, was the greatest tactician in the Empire. His victories rested not upon the strength of his arm, but upon his keen mind and his faith in the people he rallied behind him. The true general never stands alone, for they are always bolstered by the united will of their followers. With a roar that echoes through the ranks, chilling their foes and heartening their comrades, the leader charges as Akodo himself once did.

Activation: Once per game session as an action, you may make a **TN 1 Command (Void) check** targeting each hostile character within a number of range bands equal to your school rank.
Effects: If you succeed, each target suffers the Dazed condition.

New Opportunities

Void ✿ ✿+: After you perform this action, one other friendly character per ✿ ✿ spent this way at range 0–3 may immediately perform a Strike action targeting a Dazed character.

Lord Bayushi's Whispers (Scorpion) Rank 2

The Kami Bayushi, self-appointed villain of the Emperor Hantei and master of duplicity, founded the Scorpion Clan with a simple purpose: to dishonor themselves so that others could live honorably. Bayushi maintained vast networks of spies and informants, and he was extremely skilled at turning assets others used to try to spy on him. The Scorpion Clan has carried on this tradition with an efficiency that would surely make Bayushi proud. Hardly a town exists in the Empire without an agent of the Scorpion.

Activation: Once per game session, during a narrative scene or as a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 2 Skulduggery (Void) check** to uncover an informant who can give you information about a subject.
Effects: If you succeed, you reveal one informant who can give you information about a topic of your choice. If the informant's profile is required, use an appropriate NPC of the GM's choice (see **Chapter 8: Non-Player Characters**).

New Opportunities

Void ✿: If you succeed, choose one skill. The informant has a number of ranks in that skill equal to your school rank and can perform checks with that skill to assist you until the end of the scene.

Lord Togashi's Insight (Dragon) Rank 2

The enigmatic Kami Togashi was said to have the ability to see the future, by which provenance he excused himself from the Tournament of the Kami. Occasionally he appears to his descendants, the members of the Dragon Clan, in flashes of visions or sudden, unexplained bursts of insight. Whether those who hear the voice of Togashi himself are truly in contact with their progenitor, channeling his essence across the ages, or are letting their imaginations run a bit too wild is a topic of discussion among the Dragon's scholars.

Activation: Once per game session as an action, you may make a **TN 2 Meditation (Void) check** to seek cosmic wisdom regarding a quandary in front of you.
Effects: If you succeed, you receive a brief vision or hear the voice of Togashi providing a hint regarding one way you might proceed (which the GM should furnish). This hint should not be the full answer, but it should help you move forward toward a solution or at least formulate a plan of action.

New Opportunities

Void ✿: Reduce the TN of your first check to overcome the problem you are facing by your school rank (to a minimum of 1).

Rouse the Soul Rank 5

Many things can cloud the soul, but words can awaken it. The courtier speaks honestly and without pretension, calling upon their allies to overcome earthly circumstances and reach a mutual goal.

Activation: When making a Social skill (Void) or Theology (Void) check targeting one or more characters, you may spend ✿ in the following way:
Void ✿+: Remove one of the following conditions from one target per ✿ spent this way: Afflicted, Enraged, Exhausted, Intoxicated, or Unconscious.

SUBTLE DESTRUCTION

Unlike the invocations of shugenja, which are frequently direct in their application, mahō techniques are often slower. The mahō-tsukai first invokes a subtle curse upon their target, drawing kansen to that ill-fated individual. Once the curse takes hold, the mahō-tsukai calls the kansen to act upon the target in a variety of unpleasant ways, from engaging in mental and social manipulation to inflicting agony, illness, and death. This can take months, or even years, and if the mahō-tsukai is subtle enough, none ever realize that their target was afflicted with a curse.

Mahō

Kansen are evil spirits, twisted kami that spill forth from Jigoku or were once kami dwelling within Rokugan before becoming corrupted. While kami can be mercurial and dangerous to mortals, especially if provoked, they are fundamentally creative forces within the world. When they bring destruction, it is often a prelude to greater creation, much as a wildfire rejuvenates a forest. Kansen, by contrast, bloom in the wake of devastation, choking out all life or twisting it with their touch. They are drawn to despair, terror, and most of all, fresh blood. Where they take root, nothing else grows.

Those mortals who dare to wield the evil sorcery called mahō are known as mahō-tsukai. Reviled by society and hunted by several sworn orders within the bounds of the Emerald Empire, mahō-tsukai often act subtly, disguising their corruption beneath a pleasant façade and stirring words.

LEARNING MAHŌ

Unlike other kami, kansen respond to the call of anyone with the knowledge needed to invoke their power, as long as their price is paid. However, the knowledge to call them is in itself corruptive.

Theoretically, anyone can learn mahō, provided they have access to a suitable source of evil lore (such as an ancient tome, a kansen mentor, or the instinctive knowledge imparted by a Shadowlands Taint disadvantage) and the will to seize power at any cost.

PROPER SACRIFICES

Kansen are far more mercenary by nature than kami, for loyalty is anathema to their very being. As such, a mahō-tsukai must always provide a sacrifice to fuel mahō techniques. This is usually blood (their own or someone else's), but particularly evil acts can in and of themselves function as sacrifices, at the GM's discretion. Small amounts of blood can satisfy the kansen, but exceptional sacrifices (killing a human victim or crossing a vital personal line) draw forth their greatest powers.

A mahō-tsukai who makes an exceptional sacrifice alongside a mahō technique may reroll up to three blank rolled dice during the check. The material offering is consumed in this process.

RESISTING WITH CHECKS

Sometimes, effects produced by techniques or other sources will call upon a character to "resist with a [specified check]." In such cases, the affected character must attempt the check, with the GM (or the character's stance, during a conflict) determining the ring based on the character's methods of avoiding the negative effect, as usual.

SPIRITUAL BACKLASH

Kansen ceaselessly corrupt those who wield their power, turning mahō-tsukai to Fu Leng's wicked ends whether they know it or not.

When a mahō-tsukai generates 3 or more 〰 symbols on kept dice while performing a mahō technique, the mahō-tsukai suffers a critical strike with severity equal to their current strife. Then, the GM assigns the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage to one of the mahō-tsukai's rings that does not already have it.

CHANNELING MAHŌ

Like invocations, mahō techniques can be channeled (see **Channeling**, on page 189). However, holding such potent negative energy inside one's body incurs a cost: for each die a character reserves while channeling a mahō technique, the character receives 1 fatigue.

Incite Haunting — Rank 1

Kansen are kami twisted by the power of Fu Leng, and they need little prompting to cause harm. Directing them toward a target with a vile rite and profane words that seem to warp the air, the mahō-tsukai afflicts a poor soul with a spiritual malady that can fester and bloom, fueling darker curses still. Spiritualists can perceive kansen as wretched, ghostly figures, clinging to their victim and dragging them inexorably toward a wretched end wrought by their worst nature.

Activation: As an Attack and Scheme action, you may make a **Theology check** targeting one character at range 0–1. This check uses any ring of your choice, and the TN of the check is equal to the target's vigilance.
Effects: If you succeed, you *curse* your target, causing them to suffer the Afflicted condition.

If you fail, the target rebuffs your efforts. If your shortfall is 2 or higher, the target also becomes aware of your attempted malediction.

New Opportunities

✿+: Treat the maximum range of the technique as 1 higher per ✿ spent this way.
✿+: Choose one additional target per ✿ spent this way.

Grip of Anguish — Rank 1

The mahō-tsukai calls for the kansen afflicting their victim to wreak sickness and agony upon them. The victim is tormented by nausea, pain, and feverish delusions.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **Theology (Water) check** targeting one living being at range 0–2. The TN of the check is equal to the target's vigilance.
Effects: If you succeed, you *curse* your target, causing them to suffer supernatural damage equal to your Water Ring plus the number of your rings with a Shadowlands Taint disadvantage attached.

IMPORTUNE MAHŌ

Kansen are far easier to entice than kami—provided one has the stomach to pay their grisly price.

Once per scene, a Tainted character may choose one mahō technique that they have not learned (even if they do not meet the prerequisites) and make a sacrifice to the kansen responsible for this power. To importune a mahō technique, a character must kill a human victim or cross a previously inviolable personal line. A character might betray a close friend, abandon a personal ideal, or allow despair to overwhelm them entirely.

If the GM determines that the kansen is satisfied with this exceptional offering, the character may perform the action associated with that technique. The character may channel this mahō as usual (see **Channeling Mahō**) but they can only perform the action once.

New Opportunities

Water ✲: One target must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Earth 1, Fire 4)** or suffer one of the following conditions of your choice: Dazed, Disoriented, Silenced.
Water ✲+: Treat the maximum range of the technique as 1 higher per ✲ spent this way.
Water ✲+: Choose one additional target per ✲ spent this way.
Water ✲✲: One target must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Earth 1, Fire 4)** or suffer one of the following conditions of your choice: Bleeding, Immobilized, or Lightly Wounded.

Mark of Desecration — Rank 1

The mahō-tsukai performs the rite upon a corpse or group of corpses, placing ominous masks over their faces and whispering dark words into their dead ears. The dead are dragged to their feet by the kansen possessing them, moving with the jerking, unnatural gait of an ill-made puppet.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** targeting a number of corpses up to your Earth Ring at range 0–3.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a **Zombie Peasant** (see page 321) from each target.

If you succeed, you *curse* an area encompassing 1 range band around each target's position, which gains the Defiled terrain quality (see page 267).

New Opportunities

Earth ✲+: Choose one additional target per ✲ spent this way.
Earth ✲+: Increase each zombie's endurance by 1 per ✲ spent this way.
Earth ✲✲: Once per round, one zombie may use your skill ranks instead of its own for a check.
Earth ✲✲+: One target who was a warrior in life per ✲✲ spent this way rises as a **Bushi Skeleton** (see page 318) .

Sinful Whispers — Rank 1

The kansen assail the victim's mind, murmuring dark things that slowly erode their concentration, making them more receptive to the words of the mahō-tsukai and less able to think coherently.

Activation: As an Attack and Scheme action, you may make a **Theology (Air) check** targeting one character with the Afflicted condition at range 0–4. The TN of the check is equal to the target's vigilance.
Effects: If you succeed, you *curse* your target, sapping their will; they must answer your questions honestly (and find doing so unremarkable at the time). This effect persists for a number of rounds equal to your Air Ring.

New Opportunities

Air ✲: The target does not remember what you asked, even if prompted to think about the conversation later.
Air ✲✲✲: You may give the target a single simple order. The target may ignore that order, but receives 2 strife at the end of each scene in which they disregard it. When the target becomes Compromised, they must unmask and attempt to fulfill the order until the end of the scene.

Unholy Fervor — Rank 1

The kansen bite and tear the flesh of the victim, wracking them with pain that transforms into mindless fury.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **Theology (Fire) check** targeting one character at range 0–3. The TN of this check is equal to the target's vigilance.
Effects: If you succeed, you *curse* the target with blinding fury; they suffer the Enraged condition.

If you succeed, you *augment* the target's corruption; they may treat each of their Shadowlands Taint disadvantages as an advantage that apply to any checks using its ring. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Fire ✲: Each target receives strife equal to your Fire Ring and removes that much fatigue.
Fire ✲+: Choose one additional target per ✲ spent this way.

MAHŌ IN CURRICULUMS

Mahō do not appear in any curriculums of upstanding samurai schools. If such dark secrets did appear in a curriculum table, they would be marked with a stylized oni's head ( ) .

MAHŌ EFFECT KEYWORDS

Each mahō contains one or more italicized keywords in its effects. These are a reminder of how the mahō functions, and some abilities refer to them. The ones in this book include:

Augment: Mahō that change or bolster their targets

Curse: Mahō that incites the wrath of evil spirits on their targets

Summon: Mahō that calls forth foul Shadowlands beings

Ninjutsu

Ninjutsu are secret techniques passed down from shinobi masters to their students. They are hardly ever committed to paper, and are written only in the minds of their practitioners. Sneaking through shadows, poisoning foes, and vanishing without a trace—to employ these tactics is to stray from the path of Bushidō, but some are willing to pay this price for their family, clan, and empire.

Skulk — Rank 1

Shinobi are known for walking silently from shadow to shadow, moving like phantoms. Some of this relies upon agility and speed, of course, but veterans in the art of stealth know that using a crowd or another visual distraction to walk unnoticed can be as effective as the most complex acrobatics.

Activation: When you perform an Initiative or Attack check using Air, you may spend ✿ as follows:

✿: If you are in Obscuring terrain, a crowd, or otherwise concealed from sight, one character with vigilance lower than or equal to your ranks in Skulduggery loses sight of you.

Deadly Sting — Rank 2

Poison is not a weapon an honorable samurai would choose, but it is tremendously effective, and like its namesake, the Scorpion Clan is not above envenoming its weapons to defeat foes it otherwise could not best.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may use one dose of a poison and make a **TN 3 Martial Arts (Air) check** using a readied Concealable weapon targeting one character within the weapon's range.

Effects: If you succeed, apply the chosen poison to your weapon (see page 244). Then, the target suffers physical damage equal to the deadliness of your weapon plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Air ✿: Move 1 range band.

Air ✿+: If you succeed, the target suffers a critical strike with severity 2, plus 1 per ✿ spent this way.

Noxious Cloud — Rank 3

Volatile concoctions are an important weapon in many shinobi's arsenals, allowing them to create choking smoke into which they can escape or even poison unprepared foes to weaken them for a killing blow.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may use two doses of any single poison and make a **TN 2 Medicine (Air) check** targeting each other character at range 0–2.
Effects: If you succeed, each target suffers 3 physical damage, ignoring their resistance. This damage counts as being inflicted by a weapon envenomed with the poison you chose (see page 244).

New Opportunities

Air ✲: Move 1 range band.
Air ✲+: Until the end of the scene, the area at range 0–2 becomes Obscuring and Dangerous terrain.
Air ✲ ✲+: If you succeed, one target per ✲ ✲ spent this way suffers a critical strike with severity 2.

Silencing Stroke — Rank 4

Shinobi must often eliminate targets without raising an alarm, and so they often train in the art of disabling with a single strike. A shuriken to the trachea or a swift blow to occlude the carotid artery can leave a target unable to scream while the shinobi finishes their unsavory work.

Activation: As an Attack action, you may make a **TN 4 Martial Arts (Air) check** using a readied weapon targeting one character within the weapon's range.
Effects: If you succeed, the target suffers physical damage equal to your weapon's base damage and suffers the Silenced condition.

If you succeed, other characters beyond range 0–2 of the target do not notice that they have been struck for 1 round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Air ✲+: If you succeed, the target suffers a critical strike with severity equal to the deadliness of your weapon plus 1 per ✲ spent this way beyond the first.

NINJUTSU IN CURRICULUMS

Ninjutsu are marked in curriculum tables by a stylized throwing star (✲).

CHAPTER

5

Equipment

Samurai must rely on more than merely their own wits and prowess to secure their lord's interests on the battlefields or in the courts. Countless arms, armor, and implements of war have been devised to suit any and every combat situation, while the courtier has an arsenal of their own to maintain, including clothing and jewelry, art and artist's tools, and other signifiers of status. More important than the tools themselves, however, are the hands that have wielded them—the most precious items aren't the most expensive to create, but rather the ones that have figured in the lives and legends of great samurai.

When a character wishes to acquire an item, they can buy it, requisition it, or find another means to obtain it, at the GM's discretion. Every item has a **rarity**, which affects how difficult it is for a samurai to acquire the item through **requisition** (see below), as well as a **price**, which is the going market rate for such an item, if it can be purchased at all.

Samurai and Money

In theory, Rokugani samurai should not often need to interact with currency. They are retainers to their lord, who should provide them with the things they need to serve to the best of their abilities. Some samurai—particularly traditionalists—see money as unclean, or at least uncouth, and generally beneath their station.

In practice, however, currency is tremendously useful. Whether one is a daimyō attempting to wage a war or a low-ranking samurai tasked with an arduous journey to deliver a letter to a local ally, there are many occasions when having money makes life much easier. While a daimyō can call upon alliances and oaths to rally troops, levying soldiers goes far faster if one offers immediate compensation. While even the lowest samurai can order peasants in their lord's lands to support them on their journeys and then to appeal to the local magistrates for compensation, said peasants will be much more helpful if they feel they are being treated fairly—and money goes a long way towards that. And, of course, criminals and mercenaries often refuse to deal in anything but a bag of koku and bu.

BUYING AND SELLING ITEMS

While most samurai prefer not to personally engage in commerce, they generally aren't forbidden from handling money or buying and selling items—it is simply seen as beneath their societal station.

Buying Items

As a downtime activity or during a narrative scene in which a character has access to a market, the character may make a **Commerce (Water) check** with a TN equal to the rarity of an item to find that item for sale. They can then purchase the item for its listed price, attempt to get the merchant to give them the item and seek restitution from their lord's local representative, or otherwise try to acquire the item.

TN Adjustments Based on Location

The GM should feel free to adjust the TN of any check to acquire any particular item not common to a region based on the markets available. After all, it is easier to get rare items in a prosperous city like Ryokō Owari than in a minor village in the far-flung provinces. A few examples are as follows:

- **Impoverished mountain town:** +3
- **Small farming village:** +2
- **Village on a major road:** +1
- **Average Rokugani city:** +0
- **City on a large river:** –1
- **Sizable port:** –2
- **Major city:** –3

Selling Items

As a downtime action or during a narrative scene in which a character has access to a market, they may make a **Commerce (Air) check** with a TN equal to the rarity of an item to find a buyer for it. They can then sell the item for half its listed price (and at the GM's discretion, ✿ can be spent to increase the sale price, as described in **Table 8–1: Examples of ✿** on page 328)

REQUISITIONING ITEMS

Generally speaking, when a character's lord gives them a task, the lord equips the character appropriately, as befits their station. When sending a bushi to war, a daimyō equips them with at least ashigaru armor, various weapons suited to their fighting style, and perhaps a Rokugani pony, depending on the field of battle. To do otherwise would be a death sentence, and would send a very clear message about the lord's opinion of their underling. Similarly, when sending someone on a journey to court, to collect taxes, or to complete other work, any responsible lord outfits their servants with the equipment they will need to complete their task.

Of course, sometimes a character might think of an item their lord has not provided to them. Broaching this subject is not easy, but it can be necessary to success. As a downtime activity or during a narrative scene in which the character has access to their lord (or a representative thereof), a character may make a Courtesy check to request the use of an item they need to perform their work. At the GM's discretion, the character might have to make a check with a different skill (such as Culture, Government, or Tactics) to convince their lord of the importance of the matter instead. The TN of the check is equal to the rarity of the item minus the character's glory rank (to a minimum of 1). If the character succeeds, their lord (or the lord's representative) sees to getting the item for them. This process might take some time, however, as some items are not easily acquired, even by powerful samurai.

As always, at the GM's discretion, the TN of this check might be adjusted based on region, the likelihood of the item being available, the fear of scandals that might arise from the item's acquisition, and other factors.

THE CURRENCY OF ROKUGAN

When barter does not suffice, the currency Rokugan uses is a coinage known as koku, which theoretically represents the amount of rice needed to feed a peasant for a year (five bushels). However, each clan mints its own coins, whose value is dependent on the harvest that year. The end result is a booming but scandalous currency exchange market among city merchants, as well as regional and yearly variances in items' prices.

Generally speaking, koku are gold coins minted in the form of a circle with a hole in the middle to be strung on ropes. One koku can be exchanged for five silver bu (short for ichibuban) coins. One bu can be exchanged for ten copper zeni pennies—meaning there are fifty zeni in a koku.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "PRICES VARY BY REGION/YEAR"?

For the purposes of the game mechanics, the prices listed in this chapter are the baseline or "average" prices for a given item.

The group should determine whether they want to have prices fluctuate while traveling or when advancing the campaign's timeline. In such cases, player characters' starting koku is considered to have been minted by their home clan. But clearly, the banalities of currency exchange are below noble Great Clan samurai…excepting, perhaps, the Yasuki and Ide families.

Weapons

SIX WEAPONS OF THE SAMURAI

For the average Rokugani, the line between a tool and a weapon is murky; most will never need anything more lethal than a knife or a fishing spear, and while these can be dangerous, they were not forged for killing humans. Professional warriors outside the samurai class, such as militia members, guards, and ashigaru, know the value of their weapons, but many consider them without a great degree of sentiment. Weapons have a further degree of significance to samurai, however, as the symbol of their place in society, and some arms are considered nobler than others. While many bushi schools differ on specifics of preferred weapon, Akodo's Leadership *declares the six great weapons of the samurai to be the long sword, knife, short sword, great sword, spear, and bow.*

It is said that the sword is "the soul of the samurai." On the field, a samurai might wield numerous different armaments—a bow to hit targets from afar, a spear to strike from horseback, or a katana to cut down foes in the bloody fray. What differentiates the sword from other arms is its symbolic status in the Emerald Empire. Bushi wear the daishō, removing their blades only when courtesy demands it. Even samurai who serve as courtiers, artisans, and shugenja carry the short blade as a reminder of their responsibilities and privileges. Thus, many samurai specialize in swordplay, for if a fight breaks out, it is the weapon most likely to be on hand.

Nevertheless, countless martial traditions use other weapons, from knives and staves to spears and warhammers, not to mention the myriad styles that have come from outside Rokugan's borders.

ATTRIBUTES OF A WEAPON

Weapons have the following attributes:

- **Category:** The archetype of the weapon, such as "swords," "polearms," or "bows." Some techniques require specific categories.
- **Name:** The name of the weapon.
- **Skill:** The specific skill used to wield the weapon. This is usually one of the Martial Arts skills: Martial Arts [Melee], [Ranged], or [Unarmed].
- **Range (RNG):** The distance in range bands at which an attacker can hit a target with the weapon. A single number (e.g., "1") or a range of values (e.g., "1–2"). Note that range is both a maximum and a minimum; a target closer than the lowest listed value of a weapon's range is not considered to be in range of that weapon.
- **Base Damage (DMG):** A reflection of how quickly blows from this weapon wear a defender down. Attack actions frequently reference this value.
- **Deadliness (DLS):** The lethality of the weapon. A weapon with high deadliness more easily inflicts gruesome injuries or death (see page 269).
- **Grips:** The ways to wield the weapon (1-hand, 2-hand, or others). If a weapon lists multiple grips, each lists any alterations to the attributes that using that grip applies.
- **Qualities:** Any additional effects not covered by a weapon's table profile or individual entry.

IMPROVISED WEAPONS

An improvised weapon uses the most similar weapon profile (often a club or a knife), with DMG and DLS reduced by 1, or more at the GM's discretion. It is wielded with Martial Arts [Unarmed].

READIED WEAPONS

A weapon is considered **readied** if a character is physically prepared to use it, offensively and defensively. *A character may ready a weapon at will during narrative time, or as an action during a conflict scene.*

When a character has the opportunity to ready weapons, they may choose to ready any number of weapons at range 0–1 that they can hold at once. For most characters, the maximum is one pair of 1-handed grip weapons (one in each hand) or a single 2-handed grip weapon. Readied weapons remain readied until the character sheathes, relinquishes, or drops them.

When a character readies a weapon, they must choose one of its grips to use; they may also switch grips whenever they have the chance to ready a weapon.

Even without weapons, a warrior is dangerous. See **Unarmed Profiles** on page 237.

SHEATHED WEAPONS

A weapon is considered **sheathed** if it is on a character's person, properly stowed for access but not yet readied for use. *A character can sheathe a weapon at will during narrative time, or as an action during a conflict scene.*

Table 5—1: Weapons

NAME	SKILL	RNG	DMG	DLS	GRIPS	QUALITIES	RARITY	PRICE
SWORDS								
Bokken	[Melee]	1	3	3	1-hand: – 2-hand: Damage +2	Mundane	3	1 bu
Chokutō	[Melee]	0–1	4	5	1-hand: –	Ceremonial, Razor-Edged	7	20 koku
Dao	[Melee]	1	3	5	1-hand: –	–	6	15 koku
Gao	[Melee]	1	4	3	1-hand: –	Snaring	7	15 koku
Jian	[Melee]	0–1	4	4	1-hand: – 2-hand: Deadliness +1	–	7	15 koku
Katana	[Melee]	1	4	5	1-hand: – 2-hand: Deadliness +2	Ceremonial, Razor-Edged	7	20 koku
Nodachi	[Melee]	1–2	5	6	2-hand: –	Ceremonial, Razor-Edged	8	20 koku
Scimitar	[Melee]	1	4	5	1-hand: –	Durable, Razor-Edged	8	20 koku
Wakizashi	[Melee]	0–1	3	5	1-hand: – 2-hand: Deadliness +2	Ceremonial, Razor-Edged	7	15 koku
Zanbatō	[Melee]	1–2	6	7	2-hand: –	Cumbersome, Wargear	8	40 koku
AXES								
Masakari	[Melee]	0–1	3	4	1-hand: – 2-hand: Deadliness +2	Mundane	5	3 bu
Ono	[Melee]	1–2	5	6	2-hand: –	Wargear	7	5 koku
BLUNT WEAPONS								
Club	[Melee]	0–1	5	2	1-hand: – 2-hand: Damage +1	Mundane	1	1 bu
Hammer	[Melee]	0–1	5	2	1-hand: – 2-hand: Damage +2	Mundane	4	2 bu
Kiseru	[Melee]	0	2	2	1-hand: –	Concealable, Mundane	5	1 koku
Ōtsuchi	[Melee]	1	8	3	2-hand: –	Cumbersome, Wargear	8	30 koku
Tetsubō	[Melee]	1–2	7	3	2-hand: –	Cumbersome, Durable, Wargear	5	20 koku
HAND WEAPONS								
Jitte	[Melee]	0	3	2	1-hand: –	Concealable, Snaring	5	5 bu
Knife	[Melee]	0	2	4	1-hand: – 2-hand: Deadliness +2	Concealable, Mundane, Razor-Edged	1	1 koku
Nunchaku	[Melee]	0–1	4	2	1-hand: – 2-hand: Snaring	–	6	1 koku
Tessen	[Melee]	0–1	4	3	1-hand: –	Ceremonial, Concealable	7	15 koku
POLEARMS								
Bisentō	[Melee]	2	4	6	1-hand: Range 1 2-hand: Damage +2	Cumbersome, Durable, Wargear	8	15 koku
Bō	[Melee]	1–2	6	2	2-hand: –	Mundane	2	2 bu
Ji	[Melee]	2	5	2	2-hand: –	Snaring, Wargear	6	7 koku
Naginata	[Melee]	2	6	6	2-hand: –	Cumbersome, Razor-Edged, Wargear	8	10 koku
Trident	[Melee]	2	4	4	2-hand: –	Snaring, Wargear	7	10 koku
Yari	[Melee]	2	5	3	2-hand: –	Wargear	3	5 koku

SWORD TYPES

Though the katana and wakizashi are two of the most well known, swords take a variety of forms in the Emerald Empire. From the ancient chokutō, to the powerful nodachi, to highly specialized creations like the gao (hook sword), there is a blade for every fighting style.

SWORDS

While the spear and the bow are perhaps used just as often by samurai in the field, the sword is the symbol of the Emerald Empire's warrior caste. Most Rokugani weaponsmiths hold the sword to be the most sacred and honorable of weapons, and its creation is an intricate process—part art, part science, and part religious rite.

Bokken

Bokken are swords carved of wood rather than forged of metal. Generally used as a training weapon, a bokken still can be deadly in a skilled warrior's hands.

A properly shaped bokken can be used for Iaijutsu Cut techniques despite lacking the Razor-Edged quality.

Chokutō

The chokutō is an ancient design that predates the advent of the katana. Hung from a belt rather than tucked into a sash, a chokutō is roughly three feet long and has a straight, single-edged blade instead of the gentle curve found in newer Rokugani swords. Many of the clans' most powerful *nemuranai*—weapons that were wielded by their founding Kami—have this shape, as do the blades used by the Yobanjin of the northern mountains.

SYMBOLISM OF A KATANA

Only samurai are allowed to wear the katana, and further, only dedicated warriors commonly do so in Rokugan—most courtiers do not bother to keep their katana on their person at all times, their lighter and more convenient wakizashi proving their status as samurai. Thus, openly displaying the long sword tells the world at large that the wielder is a dangerous individual who knows their way around a swordfight. Such a sword is often passed down through generations within a family, and some gain their own fame and reputation outside of their owners'. When not being carried for ceremonial use or war, a katana traditionally is displayed in a place of honor within its owner's home.

Dao

Dao are weapons that look like a cross between a scimitar, a saber, and a peasant's machete. They are one-handed swords two to three feet in length with a broad-bellied, single-edged blade designed for slashing and chopping, and are generally wielded in pairs.

Gao

Known colloquially as "tiger hook swords" or "Heaven and Earth, Sun and Moon swords," gao are curious weapons. Usually wielded in pairs, gao are flat, solid iron or steel blades roughly three feet long with several unique features. Their main blade has a hook at one end and a sharpened spike at the other. The grip is protected by a crescent-shaped hand guard with its points facing outward. Gao can be used to slash, capture, and stab, making them appealing to certain Mirumoto duelists.

Jian

Known primarily as a duelist's weapon, the jian is an ancient and elegant sword that has changed very little in design since Rokugan's misty past yet remains deadly to this day. About the same size as a chokutō, a typical jian has a straight, double-edged blade that tapers to a point; a small, thick, horizontal hand guard; and a heavy pommel with a tassel. Only slightly more common than the chokutō, it is used by some Mirumoto, Kitsuki, or Shiba swordmasters who favor its versatility.

Katana

As much a work of art as it is a weapon, the katana is perhaps the most revered weapon in Rokugan. It has an elegant, slightly curved blade between three and four feet long, made of steel that is specially folded during its creation. This unique forging style ensures that the inner part of the blade remains springy and soft while the outside is as hard as tempered steel. Each sword likely has a history and legacy, and it is a constant reminder of the weight that destiny has placed upon its bearer's shoulders as a samurai of Rokugan

Nodachi

Larger than katana, nodachi are long and lethal swords more at home on the battlefield than in a city or at court. Roughly six feet long, these blades are relatively rare due to the skill and strength needed to wield them effectively. There are those who prize the raw force of these blades, however, such as members of the Matsu school. Too large to be worn at the waist, nodachi are normally worn on the back and drawn over the shoulder or even carried into battle by a samurai's attendant.

three feet in length, with the same flexible blade and lethal edge. It is often made as part of a pair, with the same decorations as its matched katana. The wakizashi also fills another role: it clearly signals that its wearer is a samurai, and a person of honor who will make the ultimate sacrifice for their ideals and their master. It is the tool with which a samurai commits seppuku: ritual suicide, the last protest of an aggrieved and honorable samurai.

OMEKA (KAKITA BLADE)

The renowned Crane warrior Doji Kuwanan holds the resplendent blade Omeka, which bears the mark of Ashidaka Sora, who forged it three centuries ago as a gift to one of Kuwanan's forebears. Doji Kuwanan added renown to the blade's legend when he used it to defeat the pirate Umitaka in the defense of Cold Wind City, cleaving through his foe's blade to deliver the deathblow.

Omeka is a unique katana with the Durable and Resplendent qualities and Deadliness 10 (or 12 if used 2-handed). When Shattering Parry is used against it (see page 270), the parrying weapon gains the Destroyed condition.

Scimitar

Perhaps the most common among foreign-designed swords found in Rokugan, scimitars were brought from the Burning Sands to the Emerald Empire by the Unicorn Clan. Often carried in place of the katana by those warriors, scimitars are heavy swords with a long, broad, curving blade. They possess a deadly cutting edge thanks to the extra surface area provided by their curvature.

Wakizashi

Whereas the katana represents a samurai's status as a warrior, the wakizashi represents their place in Rokugan's social order and strict caste system. The wakizashi is a small, katana-like sword usually two to

Zanbatō

Larger even than mighty nodachi, zanbatō are swords with the reach of a spear. Zanbatō have a long, thick, katana-like blade roughly six feet in length attached to a two-handed hilt. They are dedicated anticavalry weapons—indeed, their name means "horse-chopping sword." The Matsu school is famous for adopting them into the curriculum after their ill-fated encounter with the Utaku cavalry at the Battle of Plum Blossom Pass.

Axes

Rokugani warriors do not routinely use axes. Developed from farming implements, these weapons are menacing despite their origins as tools of agriculture, and can deliver vicious cuts and crushing blows.

Masakari

Similar in size and shape to the humble hatchet, a masakari is a one-handed ax with a single-sided ax-head affixed to one end of a short wooden haft. Such axes are an ordinary sight among peasant militia and rōnin who cannot afford a more prestigious weapon.

Ono

The ono is a dedicated, two-handed military ax, a rarity on Rokugan's battlefields, at least outside of Crab lands. The ono consists of a broad, deeply curved ax-head mounted to a haft nearly as tall as a human. Opposite the ax-head is normally either an ornate peen or a long spike, which can pierce armor or monstrous hide.

KAKITA BLADES

Since the days of old, the Kakita have been the most renowned swordsmiths of the Emerald Empire, and their finest blades are said to be physical manifestations of the ideal upon which other swords are based. Each Kakita blade possesses unique characteristics and a legacy that elevates it above other arms.

A Kakita blade is a katana forged in an elaborate, secretive ritual, that results in a weapon that is lighter and more resilient than a standard blade—and far deadlier. The steel, mined in Crab lands and purified at great length in a crucible, takes on a pattern like freeflowing water. Each blade is forged in absolute silence, that it not be marred by a single word, and tested on a great stone at Kyūden Doji. Blades that fail to carve a chunk from the stone are said to be destroyed.

RULES NOTES

GMs can create their own legendary weapons for their PCs. Remember, every weapon has a history and a legacy to which its wielder—including the PC—adds!

Ōtsuchi

The ōtsuchi is to the carpenter's hammer what the ono is to the woodcutter's ax: larger, deadlier, and obviously designed with lethal purpose. With a shaft roughly six feet long topped by a huge, barrel-shaped mallet head, it is built to breach doors and smash walls—but it also works quite well on monsters with rock-like hides, as the warriors of the Hida school often demonstrate.

Tetsubō

Long and narrow, a tetsubō can be as tall as a human and normally is constructed of iron or hardwood. Above its grip, a tetsubō is covered in steel, iron, or even jade spikes or studs that add to the weapon's lethality and crush armor or plated carapace with ease.

Blunt Weapons

Clubs, hammers, and similar weapons all fall under the blunt weapons category. Blunt weapons are often extremely effective at smashing through heavy armor, crushing powerful monsters, and otherwise inflicting substantial damage on the battlefield.

Club

The humble club is perhaps the oldest weapon in Rokugan—at least among humans. Often little more than a length of stout wood or shaped stone, a club can be fashioned with available materials by nearly anyone. While a club can certainly be used to kill, doing so takes some work on the part of the wielder.

Hammer

The simple hammer is used for driving nails and spikes and for other construction work. Throughout most of Rokugan, the hammer is only occasionally used as a weapon—typically in brawls or spur of the moment skirmishes when no other weapon is available.

Kiseru

Kiseru are pipes used to smoke various herbs found throughout Rokugan. They consist of a metal mouthpiece and a metal bowl connected by a hollow wood or bamboo tube. Kiseru range in quality from a peasant's rough-hewn pipe to a courtier or noble's ivory-and-gold inlaid piece of art. Further, they can function as clandestine weapons. Since kiseru are not formally considered arms, it is easy to get them into places that forbid weapons.

KNIVES

Clan samurai typically use two knives: the tantō and the aiguchi. The aiguchi is a short knife with a single-edged blade and a small, square handguard. The larger tantō has a long, straight blade that resembles that of a wakizashi, and it has no handguard. Primarily utility blades used for work rather than combat, these daggers can be wielded as very effective weapons. Most samurai carry a tantō that matches their daishō for both combat and utility.

Hand Weapons

These are simple weapons often adapted from tools. Many are still tools first and foremost, like the knife, but can be employed as weapons in a pinch. Hand weapons are easy to find and generally easy to operate, and are often not even viewed as weapons.

Jitte

Typically just over a foot long, the jitte consists of a short steel or iron rod attached to a wooden handle. The rod tapers to a blunt point and has a single prong that extends from one side. This simple weapon is designed to disarm and subdue targets rather than to kill them. It is carried by law enforcement officers at all levels, from low-ranking town constables to high-ranking magistrates, as a symbol of their office.

Knife

Knives come in a dizzying array of types and styles, from the familiar crudely constructed knife in a peasant's kitchen to the deadly combat knives samurai take into battle. Those particularly designed for combat—like the aiguchi—are often equipped with small hand guards to make them more useful in the field.

Nunchaku

Originally hailing from the Islands of Spice and Silk, nunchaku have been used in certain Rokugani martial arts schools for centuries. Adapted from a simple threshing tool, nunchaku consist of two wood or iron rods connected by a short length of chain or rope.

Tessen

Carried by courtiers and military leaders alike, tessen are fans specially built for fighting. However, they are not commonly viewed as weapons, and can be openly carried even into formal court chambers or negotiations. Usually made of wood with steel tines, they generally serve as defensive weapons, but wielders can also use them to deliver clubbing blows or to reinforce a punch.

Polearms

Polearms are a broad class of weapons that includes simple spears, sturdy staves, and a variety of other weapons. Polearms are excellent for keeping opponents at bay and striking from beyond reach.

Bisentō

The bisentō is a strange weapon not regularly seen on Rokugan's battlefields. Essentially a scimitar with an extremely long hilt, the bisentō has a long, yari-like wooden shaft topped by a broad and heavy curved blade. Though it seems awkward and top-heavy, the bisentō is exceptionally dangerous in the right hands. The length of the shaft gives the wielder incredible leverage, allowing them to deliver great chopping blows that can slice a person in half or cleave through heavy armor. Typically seen among the more militant orders of monks, such as the Perfect Land Sect, the bisentō is sometimes used by heavy infantry units, like those of the Daidoji family.

Bō

The bō, a humble staff, is a versatile weapon found throughout Rokugan. Roughly six feet long and made from sturdy hardwood, it is carried by travelers who need both a walking stick and an inconspicuous weapon.

Ji

Also known as the "dagger-spear," the ji is a long polearm designed more for catching and controlling weapons than for direct attacks. Commonly used by the Dragon and Phoenix Clans, and a specialty of the Shiba Guardian School, the standard ji consists of a long wooden shaft topped by a hooked or crescent-shaped blade. Other ji have a head consisting of a single long, double-edged blade with one or two smaller crescent-shaped blades mounted to the sides.

Naginata

Most samurai's preferred polearm, the naginata is highly regarded. It has a long, flexible shaft made of bamboo or springy wood with a large, lightweight, slightly curved blade at the top. A naginata's blade is forged with the same ceremony and meticulous craftsmanship as a katana's, and commands the same reverence as the daishō. It is carried in elite units such as the Heaven's Wing Brotherhood and the Utaku Battle Maidens.

Trident

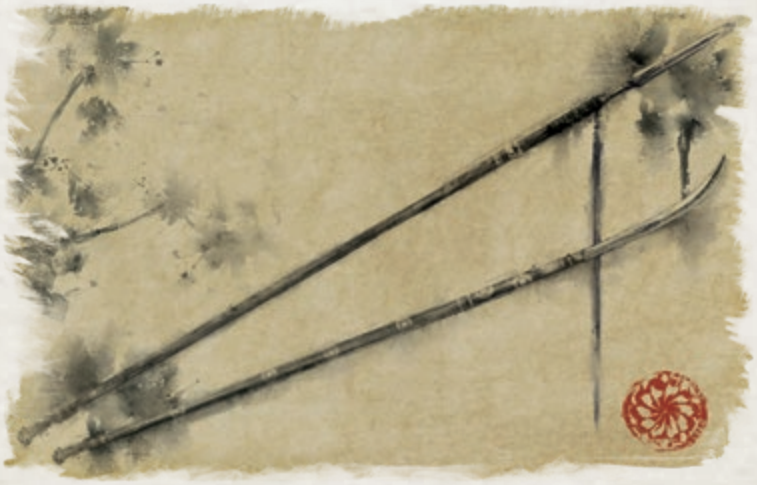
The trident is a long, triple-headed spear generally associated with fishermen and the sea. On land, the trident is a formidable polearm with exceptional reach that can pierce, trap, and control opponents.

Yari

A long-shafted spear, the yari is one of the most common weapons in Rokugan. Between six and eight feet long, its shaft is made of hardwood and topped with a leaf-shaped spearhead. Since it is easy to make, the yari is a customary weapon of ashigaru, but also elite clan samurai such as the Daidoji heavy infantry.

WAR FANS

Special war fans called gunsen are decorated with military symbols and used by battlefield commanders to signal troops and send messages.



ROKUGANI ARROWS

Willow-leaf arrows are broadhead arrows used for both hunting and warfare. These are "typical" arrows.

Armor-piercing arrows end in a long, hardened spike. These arrows can pierce even the toughest armor to strike at the flesh beneath.

Flesh-cutters have especially broad, multibladed, and often barbed heads designed to tear through unprotected flesh.

Humming-Bulbs have an egg-shaped, hollow head with slots cut into its surface. As the arrow flies, the bulb emits a sharp whistling sound. These arrows are good for signaling and creating a distraction.

BOWS

After katana and perhaps the spear, the bow is likely the most iconic of samurai weapons. From the simple hunting bow to the deadly daikyū, bows are a customary sight among Rokugan's samurai.

Daikyū

Daikyū are large composite bows designed to be fired from horseback. Conventionally around six feet long, these elegant weapons are constructed by gluing thin layers of wood, horn, leather, and sinew together. Daikyū differ from other bows in that they have an asymmetric shape. Their grip is about two-thirds of the way from the top, making the top curve longer than the bottom. This allows the bows to be fired easily from horseback in either direction. Each daikyū is made for a custom fit for a specific user.

Shinjo Horsebow

Among the Unicorn Clan's many adopted weapons is a small, sturdy bow used by the nomadic peoples of the steppes far to the west. Called the Shinjo horsebow in Rokugan, this weapon is a compact bow designed to be fired from the back of a moving horse. It is a short-range weapon intended for raiding and cavalry attacks.

ARROWS

When used with a bow, these arrows modify the weapons's profile as follows:

- **Willow-Leaf:** Standard Rokugani arrows. As long as a character has a quiver (see page 244), they do not need to track the relatively common willow-leaf arrows individually.
- **Armor-Piercing:** Ignore up to 2 points of the target's physical resistance.
- **Flesh-Cutter:** Deadliness +2.
- **Humming-Bulb:** Damage –2, Deadliness –2. These arrows produce a loud noise audible at range 0–4 of the archer and of the path the arrow travels.

Yumi

The yumi is perhaps the most common bow used by Rokugani samurai. Similar to the daikyū, it is a long, graceful bow made from a composite of horn, sinew, leather, and wood. Smaller than the daikyū, but only just, the yumi has an asymmetric grip, general shape, and long-range killing power similar to those of its larger cousin. Where the daikyū is a cavalry bow, however, the yumi is designed to be fired while standing.

CROSSBOWS

Most samurai who are not members of the Crab Clan view crossbows with equal parts disdain and distrust. The disdain is due to a crossbow's reliance on mechanical principles rather than their wielder's skill and training to fire their projectiles, and distrust because the weapon's proliferation would put a powerful weapon capable of killing samurai into the hands of rebels and malcontents. Crossbows are rarely seen outside the lands protected by the Crab, where they are sometimes temporarily issued to peasants levied to protect the Kaiu Wall.

Oyumi

Developed out of necessity to fight the deadly forces of the Shadowlands, this weapon consists of a recurve or traditional bow laid horizontally on a long, stout stock. Held to the shoulder, the oyumi is fired by squeezing a long lever on the bottom of the stock. It fires short, arrow-like projectiles called quarrels. Its existence is a matter of some consternation among the other clans, but the Crab maintain that its use—even in the hands of ashigaru and peasants in times of crisis—has been vital to the preservation of the Empire.

Table 5–2: Ranged Weapons

NAME	SKILL	RNG	DMG	DLS	GRIPS	QUALITIES	RARITY	PRICE
BOWS								
Daikyū	[Ranged]	3–5	6	4	2-hand: –	Wargear	6	6 koku
Horsebow	[Ranged]	2–4	4	5	2-hand: –	Wargear	4	6 koku
Yumi	[Ranged]	2–5	5	3	2-hand: –	–	3	3 koku
CROSSBOWS								
Oyumi	[Ranged]	2–5	7	3	2-hand: –	Prepare, Wargear	8	40 koku
SPECIALIST WEAPONS								
Blowgun	[Ranged]	2–3	1	2	1-hand: –	Concealable	7	5 bu
Kama	[Melee]	0–1	3	3	1-hand: –	Concealable	4	1 koku
Kusari-Gama	[Melee]	0	3	3	1-hand: – 2-hand: Range 2–3	Concealable, Snaring, Wargear	6	5 koku
Shuriken	[Melee]	0	2	4	1-hand (stab or slash): – 1-hand (thrown): Martial Arts [Ranged], Range 1–3	Concealable	6	1 koku

SPECIALIST WEAPONS

The weapons used by assassins and spies are a mix of improvised tools, modified agricultural implements, and bespoke weapons. They emphasize stealth and accessibility over sheer killing power, and have an unsavory reputation thanks to their association with assassination.

Blowgun

Made from a length of hollow bamboo or river reed, the blowgun is one of the simplest weapons that ninja use in their work. The blowgun's primary use is as a ranged weapon, usually to deliver poison (see the **Poisoned Weapons** sidebar, page 244). In addition to darts, the blowgun can also be loaded with sand, dust, or other powders to blind or disorient foes, and it can even serve to let its user breathe while underwater.

Kama

The kama is another weapon adapted from an agricultural implement: in this case, a standard sickle used for harvesting rice. It consists of a short, roughly foot-long wooden haft topped by a long, curved sickle blade. Kama are often used in pairs, sometimes linked at the handles by a length of chain.

Kusari-Gama

Extremely versatile and deadly, the kusari-gama is one of the more difficult ninja weapons to master. It is a hybrid weapon consisting of a long-hafted kama with a lengthy chain attached to either the back of the blade or the bottom of the haft. A heavy iron weight called a fundo is mounted at the end of the chain. In combat, a wielder typically spins the chain over their head with one hand while holding the kama in the other. They whip the chain forward, entangling an opponent's weapon or limbs, then rush in for the killing blow with the kama. A wielder can also attack with the weighted end of the chain, striking opponents at range and keeping them at bay.

Shuriken

Favored by shinobi, shuriken are small metal discs with a sharpened edge that come in a dizzying array of sizes and styles. They are designed mainly to distract, but shuriken can also be coated with toxins for lethality, and any cutting edge can kill if used properly.

AMMUNITION

As long as a character has a quiver or equivalent ammunition pouch (see page 244) , they do not need to track common ammunition (willow-leaf arrows, quarrels, darts, etc.). They should still track special ammunition.

UNARMED PROFILES

A character always counts as having these Martial Arts [Unarmed] profiles readied, provided the relevant body parts are not occupied (such as with a weapon) or bound:

NAME	RNG	DMG	DLS	QUAL.
Punch (hand)	0	1	2	Snaring
Kick (leg)	1	2	1	–
Bite (mouth)	0	0	3	–

ATTACKING UNARMED

Strictly speaking, unarmed profiles are not weapons, but they can be used as if they were weapons, such as to perform appropriate Attack action checks and for techniques.

They do not have grips, and cannot gain or lose qualities unless an effect specifically affects unarmed profiles.

Armor

RESISTANCE

A character can benefit from one set of armor and one effect that increases their resistance at a time, combining these benefits. If a character would benefit from more than one such effect, the character chooses which increase applies.

Samurai armor themselves with a wide variety of garments, suiting their choices to their needs. Whether it is lacquered plates to protect against swords or fashionable clothes to bolster one's reputation at court, the garb a samurai chooses can serve many important purposes.

ATTRIBUTES OF ARMOR

Armor has the following attributes:

- **Name:** The name of the armor.
- **Resistance Values (R. Values):** Most armor provides defense against one or more categories of damage. While a character is equipped with a set of armor, they gain the indicated amounts of **resistance** against the damage types listed for the armor. Two common categories are:
  - **Physical:** Provides the listed resistance against physical harm in its many forms.
  - **Supernatural:** Provides the listed resistance against invocations, mahō, and other mystical effects.
- **Qualities:** Any nonstandard effects not covered by an armor type's profile or entry (see page 240).

WEARING ARMOR

While wearing armor, a character benefits from the resistance values it provides, as well as any applicable qualities and specific rules it possesses.

If a character dons a second set of armor (such as subtly hiding concealed armor underneath sleeping garb, or haphazardly pulling ashigaru armor over ceremonial clothes as a battle erupts), as soon as the character is wearing both sets of armor, they much choose one to count as equipped. Any other armor they are wearing in the context of the story does not provide its resistances or qualities. This lasts until the character removes one of the two sets of armor.

The only exception of this is if the GM decides that the unequipped armor's qualities may still hamper the character's actions. For example, the GM may decide that a character lacquered armor under common clothing may still be affected by the lacquered armor's Cumbersome quality. This is left solely to the GM's discretion.

LIST OF ARMOR

Armor varies widely in style and function, from utilitarian traveling clothes to ornate plated samurai armor. The look and construction of a set of clothes or suit of armor is dictated by many factors—its intended use, along with the wearer's clan, social status, and taste.

Table 5–3: Armor

NAME	R. VALUES	QUALITIES	RARITY	PRICE
Sleeping Garb	–	–	2	1 koku
Common Clothes	Physical 1	Mundane	1	1 bu
Ceremonial Clothes	Physical 1	Ceremonial, Resplendent	4	1 koku
Sanctified Robes	Physical 1, Supernatural 3	Ceremonial	7	4 koku
Traveling Clothes	Physical 2	Durable, Mundane, Subtle	2	2 bu
Concealed Armor	Physical 2	Concealable	4	5 koku
Ashigaru Armor	Physical 3	Wargear	3	5 koku
Lacquered Armor	Physical 4	Ceremonial, Cumbersome, Wargear	6	25 koku
Plated Armor	Physical 5	Cumbersome, Durable, Wargear	8	40 koku

Sleeping Garb

Most Rokugani possess no dedicated sleeping clothes, but those of sufficient wealth or status (such as samurai) often wear a loose robe, a shift, or a *jinbei* when sleeping. A jinbei set consists of a short, loose, short-sleeved jacket that belts at the waist and matching short trousers. Jinbei sets are reserved for sleeping and private lounging, and are most often worn by men. Many women instead choose shifts or gowns that cover the wearer from shoulder to midcalf, though some prefer jinbei.

Common Clothes

Rokugani clothing runs the gamut from the simple trousers and smocks worn by peasants, to the broad-shouldered haori worn by traditionalist samurai, to the noble's embroidered silk kimono.

Ceremonial Clothes

Ceremonial clothing is any garment worn during an official ceremony, from a samurai's court kimono to the accoutrement of the Imperial family. Ceremonial clothing is often richly decorated and offers little protection.

Sanctified Robes

The vestments of shugenja, shrine keepers, and other religious figures are blessed by kami and thus grant mystical protection. Traditionally, such robes consist of a white garment called *jōe* (literally, "pure cloth") and a peaked hat, but they can be simpler, such as a white haori top and red hakama bottoms, or even an elaborate kimono.

Concealed Armor

Used by cautious courtiers, shinobi, and anyone else who fears assassination, concealed armor is a kimono, keikogi, or other garment with thin bamboo or metal plates sewn inside to turn an unexpected blade or arrow.

Traveling Clothes

Traveling clothes ordinarily consist of roughspun garments designed to resist wear and tear. They can be anything from robes to a kimono or jacket and leggings and are often accentuated with a hat or cloak.

Ashigaru Armor

Cheap, lightweight, and easy to acquire, ashigaru armor is issued to the peasant soldiery. Possessing neither the beauty nor the fine craftsmanship of lacquered or plated armor, ashigaru armor consists of light plates sewn together to protect the head, torso, and upper legs. It is occasionally paired with a light helmet. Although it does not protect as well as heavier armor, it is lightweight, flexible, and inexpensive as armor goes.

Lacquered Armor

Heavier than ashigaru armor, lacquered armor is worn by samurai who desire a good mix of protection and grandeur, and is just at home at war as at a martial ceremony. These suits are made of thick leather or steel plates stitched or riveted to a leather backing. They protect the torso, head, upper arms, and groin, and the legs above the knee. They can also include a helmet and mask, though these are not considered integral.

Plated Armor

Also known as great armor, suits of plated armor are among the heaviest worn by samurai. Not as ornate as lacquered armor and somewhat more restrictive but also notably more protective, plated armor is composed of numerous small steel and leather plates connected by rivets, woven silk cords, leather straps, or chains. The plates are attached to a leather or cloth backing and worn over silk clothing, which provides added protection from piercing attacks thanks to its tensile strength.

TEXTILES IN ROKUGAN

Silk and linen are the most common textiles for Rokugani clothing, but cotton, satin, and more exotic imported fabrics are used to make clothing for wealthy and important individuals.

FOOTWEAR AND ACCESSORIES

People of the upper classes often wear sandals and tabi on the feet, while most peasants go barefoot. A wide range of styles of hats, gloves, cloaks, and other accessories are popular in various locales across the Empire.

ARMOR MASKS

Plated armor frequently includes a detachable face mask often made to resemble a demon or other fantastic creature, giving its wearer an intimidating presence on the battlefield.

Item Qualities

Countless artifacts can be found in Rokugan, from ancestral arms and armor to mundane tools. This section explains the qualities common to many of these items.

CEREMONIAL DECEPTION

Ceremonial items often serve as identifying tokens; thus, making off with one would make impersonating someone much easier—though no upstanding samurai would dream of such deception.

Ceremonial

Ceremonial equipment is indicative of the wearer's rank. It can be brought into many contexts in which similar items might not be allowed. Rarely, a character might be loaned a Ceremonial item to provide them with authority during a task.

While wearing one or more Ceremonial items openly, reduce TN of checks to convince others of your real or assumed identity as the known owner of that item (or one of their allies) by 1.

At the end of any scene in which you use a Ceremonial item of a character with higher status without their permission, you must forfeit 3 honor.

Concealable

Some weapons and armor are easy to hide on one's person, due to size or deliberate design.

Unless explicitly worn openly or revealed for use, a Concealable item is assumed to be hidden. When observing the wearer of a hidden item, a character must succeed at a **TN 3 Design (Air) or Smithing (Air) check** to discern that the wearer is armed or armored. If the onlooker succeeds with two or more bonus successes, they also determine the type of the hidden item.

Concealable armor can be worn under loose-fitting clothes, but you can only benefit from the resistance and qualities of one set of armor at a time (see page 238).

Concealable weapons can also be drawn more quickly in combat. As part of an Attack action, you may ready or sheathe one Concealable weapon.

Cumbersome

This item is heavy or unwieldy, and impossible to conceal on one's person.

While wearing Cumbersome armor, increase the TN of your checks to maneuver in your environment (such as Movement action checks) by 1.

If you moved this turn, increase the TN of Attack action checks using a Cumbersome weapon by 1.

Damaged

Samurai must carefully maintain their kit in the field, for routine wear and tear will eventually ruin nearly any tool. While many samurai have staff to assist with such matters, most battle-tested samurai have learned at least the basics needed to keep their equipment functional.

If a weapon or tool becomes Damaged, increase the TN of checks to use it by 1.

If armor becomes Damaged, reduce all resistances it provides by 2 (to a minimum of 0).

If a Damaged item becomes Damaged again, it loses Damaged and becomes Destroyed instead. If it becomes Destroyed for any other reason, it also loses Damaged.

Destroyed

Extreme events or long use without maintenance can shatter, tear, or otherwise render an item nonfunctional.

Such an item is broken and cannot be used for its intended function. It might still be usable as an improvised weapon or tool, at the GM's discretion.

Durable

Items crafted to last can endure damage that would destroy less well-made works.

If a Durable item would become Damaged, it loses Durable instead. If a Durable item would be Destroyed, it loses Durable and becomes Damaged instead.

Forbidden

Rokugani laws are unforgiving, and many things are contraband. This includes many illicit substances, heretical art or literature, and foreign items that have not been transported through strictly regulated trade routes.

At the end of any scene in which you used a Forbidden item openly in public, you must forfeit 3 glory.

Mundane

Mundane items are objects that are found in all contexts of daily life, and are permitted to anyone in most social contexts (within reason). After all, people in many walks of life need tools like knives, walking sticks, and wheat threshers, even if these items can be utilized to deadly effect by someone sufficiently determined.

Wearing a Mundane item openly has no additional effects, though onlookers still take note of the fact that you are armed if the item could be used as a weapon.

Prepare

This item must be reloaded, reset, or otherwise prepared after use.

After you use this item, you cannot use it again until it has been **prepared**. As a Support action, while it is readied, you may prepare this item for use.

CANCELING ITEM QUALITIES

Multiple instances of the same item quality do not stack. Further, some item qualities cannot overlap; if an item would gain one quality for any reason, it loses the other instead of gaining it. Item qualities that cancel each other out are as follows:

- Concealable and Cumbersome
- Ceremonial and Mundane
- Damaged and Durable
- Resplendent and Subtle
- Subtle and Wargear
- Sacred and Unholy

Removing the new quality and restoring the old one requires a **TN 2 Artisan (Earth) check** using an appropriate skill.

Razor-Edged

Some weapons are particularly sharp, and thus brittle, and must be carefully honed to keep functioning at their best. The traditional Rokugani katana is one such weapon—its keen edge lets it hew off limbs more easily than other swords, but it is also more susceptible to damage if swung carelessly at armored foes.

When you succeed at an Attack action check that deals damage to a target using a Razor-Edged item, if the damage dealt is reduced to 0 before they defend, this item becomes Damaged.

When you make an Attack action check with a Razor-Edged weapon, you may spend ✿ as follows:

✿+: Treat the deadliness of this weapon as 1 higher per ✿ spent this way.

Resplendent

An item with the Resplendent quality is embellished to attract attention to its presenter or wearer.

While wearing one or more Resplendent items, if you would be awarded 1 or more glory, you receive that amount of glory plus 1 instead.

Sacred

Items with the Sacred quality are imbued with purifying power—often in the form of jade, the mystical stone said to be the tears shed by Amaterasu, the goddess of the sun and protector against the terror of the night. Such items are anathema to the denizens of the Shadowlands and other horrors that prey upon humanity.

When an Otherworldly being makes an Attack or Intrigue action check targeting the wearer of one or more Sacred items, increase the TN by 1.

While you are carrying one or more Sacred items, if you would gain the Afflicted condition, you must choose one of those items to become Damaged instead.

Sacred weapons ignore all resistances possessed by Otherworldly and Tainted beings.

Snaring

Flexible or, in some cases, harshly curved weapons are excellent for snaring, grabbing, and disarming.

When performing an Attack action with a Snaring weapon, you may spend ✿ as follows:

✿+: One target of the attack with vigilance lower than or equal to the ✿ spent this way suffers the Immobilized condition.

Subtle

An item with the Subtle quality is made to not stand out, and people tend to overlook it.

Increase the TN of checks to ascertain information about the item by 1. At the GM's discretion, this also applies to checks to discern what the creator or wearer of the piece intends by presenting it, or to learn anything of value about that person from it.

Unholy

Some physical artifacts carry a dreadful miasma. They may have been tainted by direct exposure to the power of the Shadowlands or by foul rituals, but some are made with obsidian, said to be the shed blood of Onnotangu, the god of the moon and ancient foe of the Kami.

After a character suffers a critical strike from an Unholy weapon, they suffer the Afflicted condition.

At the end of each scene in which you use an Unholy item, you suffer the Afflicted condition.

Unholy weapons ignore all resistances possessed by Otherworldly beings.

Wargear

Implements seen in battle and few other contexts—items with the Wargear quality—are decidedly inappropriate for most social contexts. Wargear makes people nervous, which impedes efforts at diplomacy.

Whenever another character suffers 1 or more strife due to the actions of someone wearing one or more Wargear items, they suffer that amount plus 1 instead.

OBSIDIAN

Obsidian did not always bear the corruption of Jigoku, but this mystical stone draws negative emotions and powers to it, absorbing and amplifying them. This includes the boundless hatred of Fu Leng and his countless dread servitors—so virtually all obsidian in the Emerald Empire now contains the essence of the Shadowlands.

Personal Effects

Even the fiercest warrior cannot get by with arms and armor alone, and humans use many tools to make their lives more comfortable, edifying, and enjoyable. Rokugani samurai often carry some of the following items, depending on their specific needs, duties, and passions.

Bottle of Sake

Sake, a wine made from fermented rice, is popular throughout Rokugan and is readily available at any inn. The quality of sake varies widely depending on the maker and the seller. (Cost: 1 bu. Rarity: 1.)

Bowyer's Kit

A bowyer's kit is a small tool kit used to maintain bows and arrows. It typically includes a selection of small hand tools, spare string, some feathers, wax, bamboo fibers, arrowheads, and other items needed to keep a bow and arrows in working order. (Cost: 2 bu. Rarity: 1.)

Calligraphy Set

These ornate boxes contain items a practiced calligrapher needs to craft books, letters, scrolls, and other written communications. It consists of a small wooden box that contains a variety of brushes, inkstones, and pigments; a small bowl for water; and a small bag of sand for drying. Calligraphers and scribes customarily carry a calligraphy set, as so do some samurai and courtiers who prefer to write their own correspondence. (Cost: 1 bu. Rarity: 3.)

Chopsticks

Chopsticks are the primary Rokugani eating utensils. Sold in pairs, these slender utensils are normally made of wood or bamboo, although some wealthy individuals use chopsticks of ivory, bone, or metal instead. (Cost: 1 zeni. Rarity: 1.)

Daishō Stand

This is a small, collapsible wooden stand used to display a samurai's daishō. There is a particular etiquette to displaying the daishō on a rack that speaks to an individual's ease or readiness to fight. If the swords are displayed with their pommels facing right, this means that the individual is ready to fight, as they can easily draw the swords from the rack with their right hand. If they are displayed with the pommels facing left, this means that the individual is less ready to fight but still guarded. If the pommels are facing left and the tsuba are on the inside of the rack arm, making drawing the swords impossible in one motion, this means that the individual is completely at ease. (Cost: 1 koku. Rarity: 4.)

Dice and Cup

These are used to play a variety of dice games throughout Rokugan. Gambling is extremely popular in the Emerald Empire, but it is largely frowned upon by samurai. Organized gambling is controlled largely by various criminal syndicates and is often a source of corruption among local officials. (Cost: 25 zeni. Rarity: 2.)

Divination Kit

Popular among both superstitious peasants and the mystical shugenja, divination kits are used to tell the future or otherwise commune with the Spirit Realms. A divination kit may contain special coins, sticks, bones, or other small items with metaphysical import. Diviners use these kits by casting their coins or sticks on the ground and reading the patterns they create for any omens or portents. (Cost: 1 bu. Rarity: 4.)

Finger of Jade

A finger of jade is a length of the precious green stone worn about the neck on a thong to ward off the corrupting effects of the Taint. Bit by bit, the finger of jade is consumed by this process. (Cost: 1 koku. Rarity: 6. Qualities: Sacred.)

Games

These are small, portable, sturdy versions of games made to be taken on long journeys. Go, shōgi, and other games popular among bushi and courtiers are the ones most likely to be found in a travel-sized set, but there are as many different types of travel games as there are full-sized versions. (Cost: 1 bu. Rarity: 3.)

Kubi Bukuro

These are simple net bags used to carry the severed head of an enemy, which is considered both a trophy and a good omen. Lion Clan samurai use them to carry their trophies without touching dead flesh, but the Kuni family uses them for collecting samples of Shadowlands creatures for study. (Cost: 2 zeni. Rarity: 2. Qualities: Wargear.)

Lucky Cricket

Very popular among the Mantis Clan, a small live cricket in an ornate metal cage is thought to bring good fortune to whomever carries it. (Cost: 4 bu. Rarity: 4.)

Medicine Kit

This is a simple first aid kit that contains all the necessary items to treat many kinds of injuries. A typical kit contains needle and thread, cloth bandages, herbal disinfectants, various balms and tinctures, and other healing items. (Cost: 1 bu. Rarity: 3.)

Musical Instrument

Rokugani musical traditions are rich and varied. Many people in the Empire can at least pick out a simple tune on a flute or drum. Instruments also include the shamisen, biwa, and koto. Many courtiers carry an instrument to display their talents, and drums are popular among the samurai class for signaling troops and sending messages. (Cost: 1–5 bu. Rarity: 2–6.)

Omamori

Omamori are protective charms, sold at many shrines across the Emerald Empire, often in the form of a small envelope or bag containing a written or inscribed prayer to a particular kami (often one of the great Fortunes, but occasionally others). Most examples provide protection against ill fortune of a specific variety such as illness or accidents, or encourage good luck in some sphere, such as farming, travel, or marriage, but are never put to the test in any rigorous manner—the kami move by paths unseen by mortal eyes, after all, and it is hard to determine if a talisman was truly responsible for one's safety.

Shugenja and other powerful servants of the kami are capable of creating especially efficacious protective charms. These frequently contain appeals to the seven Great Fortunes (such as the three listed here), but can also offer other protections by appealing to different powers.

An omamori might contain one of the following blessings:

- **Boon of Fukurokujin:** Fukurokujin, Fortune of Wisdom, illuminates the truth even when tricksters seek to obscure it. Once per game session, the wearer may spend 1 Void point to remove a condition or persistent effect caused by a Scheme action.
- **Boon of Bishamon:** Bishamon promises glory at arms to the bold, and draws the eyes of the powerful to those who prove their strength. Once per game session, when the wearer receives a glory award, the wearer may spend 1 Void point to increase that award by 3.
- **Boon of Benten:** Benten watches over artists and lovers, guiding them in their endeavors. Once per game session, after rolling dice, the wearer may spend 1 Void point to add a kept ■ set to an ✿ result to an Artisan or Social check.

The kami can be a bit jealous in their stewardship, however. While a character can theoretically wear multiple protective charms at once, they cannot benefit from any of these blessings while they are wearing more than one omamori. (Cost: 5 bu. Rarity: 2.)

Personal Seal or Chop

A personal chop is used by samurai to verify their identity and sign documents, among other official business. Each one is a unique design that is registered with the Miya family. Using another samurai's chop is considered both an insult and a serious crime. (Cost: 4 bu. Rarity: 6. Qualities: Ceremonial.)

Pillow Book

This is a small, loosely bound, cheaply made book written in a genre some samurai consider insufficiently serious, such as romance, adventure, or poetry. A pillow book can also be an account of a famous person's life or an adaptation of a diary. Occasionally, important literary or academic works are converted to pillow books to make them more portable. (Cost: 3 zeni. Rarity: 2.)

POISONED WEAPONS

Poisons can be applied to melee and missile weapons to make sure that even minor wounds cause injury—though obviously, poisons are the tool of shady assassins and figures of ill repute rather than upstanding samurai. Unsurprisingly (given its namesake), the Scorpion Clan favors such methods.

As an action, a character may make a **TN 1 Medicine (Earth) check** to properly (and safely) apply a poison to a weapon. Only a single poison can be applied to a weapon at a time. The effects of a poison applied to a weapon persist until the weapon is used to perform a successful Attack action check.

Poison (One Vial)

In the courts of the Emerald Empire, the wheels of politics are sometimes turned by unsavory means. Members of the Scorpion Clan are certainly not above using poison to weaken or eliminate political rivals—not that one could ever prove their culpability—and many samurai turn to such measures in times of desperation or fear. (Cost: 30 zeni for one dose. Rarity: 5. Qualities: Forbidden.)

Three poisons found in Rokugan are:

- *Noxious Poison:* A catchall term for a wide variety of deadly compounds (many of which have perfectly legitimate uses in medicine and other trades), these sorts of poisons often act by attacking the heart, organs, or brain directly.
  - When a character ingests noxious poison, the character suffers a critical strike with severity 10. The poisoner may spend ✿ on their check to deliver the poison to increase the severity by 1 per ✿ spent this way.
  - When noxious poison is applied to a weapon, increase that weapon's deadliness by +4.
- *Fire Biter:* A poison that wracks victims with searing pain, fire biter is easily identified by its bitter taste, which makes it difficult to disguise its presence in food or drink.
  - When a character ingests fire biter, the character suffers 5 strife and the Dazed and Exhausted conditions.
  - When fire biter is applied to a weapon, after a target suffers a critical strike from the weapon, they suffer the Dazed and Exhausted conditions.
- *Night Milk:* A favorite of the Shosuro family, night milk is a dizzying concoction that must be injected or otherwise delivered directly into the bloodstream.
  - When night milk is introduced into a character's bloodstream, the character suffers 5 fatigue and the Disoriented and Prone conditions.
  - When night milk is applied to a weapon, after a target suffers a critical strike from the weapon, they suffer the Disoriented and Prone conditions.

Quiver of Arrows

A quiver is a cloth or leather container used to carry arrows. Worn at the waist or slung over the shoulder, a standard quiver can hold sixty or more arrows. There are also quivers or equivalent carrying pouches for crossbow quarrels, blowgun darts, stones, and other ammunition, and they function in the same manner.

As long as a character has a quiver of arrows available, they are assumed not to run out of standard ammunition. Further, the character is assumed to refill the quiver at reasonable opportunities, such as when visiting a guard outpost or a castle with an armory.

If a character goes an especially long time without having a reasonable opportunity to refill their quiver, the GM may state that the quiver is running low, with only 3 standard pieces of ammunition remaining; the character then gains 1 Void point. The character still possesses any special arrows they had prior to this point.

A depleted quiver can be refilled by visiting a location where the character can acquire ammunition, or by making ammunition using the Survival skill if the character has the proper supplies (see page 169). (Cost: 20 zeni. Rarity: 1.)

Rope (By the Foot)

Rope is made from a variety of materials and is used for tasks as varied as binding enemies, restraining livestock, climbing, and rigging sailing vessels. Low-quality ropes are made of hemp and tend to be both rough and stiff. Higher-quality ropes are made of hair, silk, or more exotic fibers. (Cost: 5-20 zeni per foot. Rarity: 1.)

Sake Cup

These are small wood, porcelain, or metal cups used for drinking sake. In many areas of the Empire, it is customary for a guest to bring their own cup to gatherings and official functions. Wealthy or influential people tend to carry ornately decorated cups made from expensive materials to better impress fellow drinkers. (Cost: 1 bu. Rarity: 2.)

Spices

Spices are important both for flavoring food and as a trade commodity throughout Rokugan. While some important varieties are native to the Emerald Empire, such as wasabi and sanshō pepper, many are imported from abroad. Depending on their provenance and rarity, spices can be extremely expensive. Much blood has been spilled by various factions in attempts to control the spice trade. (Cost: 1–5 bu per small bottle. Rarity: 5–7.)

Sweets (Four Servings)

These are candies, small cakes, and other confections that are popular during the Empire's many festival seasons. Typical Rokugani sweets are made from bean curd or honeyed rice, but a few gaijin treats made from exotic and foreign ingredients are produced here and there throughout Rokugan. This is especially true in the Unicorn lands. (Cost: 1 bu. Rarity: 1.)

Tattoo Needles

Extremely popular among the Dragon Clan, these are steel or bamboo needles used to apply tattoos. Tattoo needles are ordinarily part of a kit that includes needles, various pigments, and other tools used by tattoo artists in their work. Widespread not only in the Dragon Clan, tattoos are also prevalent among the Empire's numerous criminal cartels, which use them both to identify members of specific cartels and to record individuals' criminal exploits. (Cost: 1 bu per set. Rarity: 4.)

Tea Set (Portable)

The tea ceremony is exceptionally important in Rokugani society. These small, portable tea sets are designed to withstand rough handling and travel. They allow samurai to enjoy the harmony and relaxation of the tea ceremony even when they are far from home. (Cost: 1 koku. Rarity: 6.)

Tent (Chomchong)

Chomchong are large, elaborate, portable homes popular with the Unicorn Clan. Sturdy and well protected from the elements, these tents can accommodate up to a dozen people in relative comfort. They are also used to house small noble families in as much luxury as can be afforded in the field. Chomchong take quite a bit of time to set up and tear down, and carrying them requires several oxen and a large wagon. (Cost: 20 koku. Rarity: 7.)

Tent (Small)

These basic shelters are just big enough to keep two individuals warm and dry in the wilderness. They are extremely easy to set up and take down, pack down relatively small, and can be carried on a person's back, in a cart, or slung over a horse. (Cost: 1 koku. Rarity: 3.)

Tent (Yurt)

Bigger than basic tents but not as big or luxurious as chomchong, yurts were brought to Rokugan from the far-off steppes by the Unicorn Clan. Made from thick leather or canvas with a felt floor, a yurt can house a group of four indefinitely in relative comfort. They are heavy and awkward to build or take down, and require either a horse or oxen dedicated to carting them around. (Cost: 10 koku. Rarity: 5.)

Traveling Rations

Traveling rations consist of a mix of preserved foods sufficient to keep an individual fed and healthy while on the road. They typically consist of a mix of dried fish, rice balls wrapped in paper, water or tea, pickled vegetables, and other hardy foods that can withstand exposure to the elements. (Cost: 5 zeni per meal. Rarity: 1.)

Umbrella

Normally made of wicker and silk, umbrellas keep both the sun and the rain off of those who carry them. Stories tell of umbrellas being used as improvised weapons by masters of the sword, though such fantastical feats would prove difficult for most to replicate. (Cost: 2 bu. Rarity: 4.)

Whetstone

Whetstones are portable grinding stones used to sharpen most bladed weapons, save for a samurai's katana and wakizashi, which must be sharpened by an accomplished weaponsmith or professional polisher. (Cost: 1 zeni. Rarity: 1.)

TRAVELING PACK

When a character's starting outfit refers to a traveling pack, it refers to an assortment of items carried within a *furoshiki*, or decorative wrapping cloth. Traveling packs consist of the following:

Blanket, bowl, chopsticks, four days of travel rations, flint and tinder, and any three other items of the player's choice that are rarity 4 or lower.

CHAPTER

6

Scenes and Conflicts

When samurai rise for the day, they never know whether this sunrise may be their last. Weeks might pass in peace, allowing the individual to indulge in their own pursuits, or a single day may be fraught with confrontations in grand palaces or muddy battlefields. This chapter covers the rules to model the passage of time in the game, as well as how to frame scenes and adjudicate the conflicts that arise when duties and desires clash.

Game Sessions

In the *Legend of the Five Rings* Roleplaying Game, a **game session** is a period of time during which the GM and players gather to venture into the imaginary realm of Rokugan to pursue stories of adventure, intrigue, and drama together. Each session can be broken down into one or more scenes, which are the anecdotes within the group's shared story during which players have their characters explore the world, overcome obstacles, deepen their relationships with each other, or simply experience existence.

Scenes

A **scene** is a discrete segment of a game session. Much like a scene in a book or film, it continuously follows one or more characters as they engage in some activity. Each scene encompasses a set of events during which characters undertake tasks and move the story forward.

TYPES OF SCENES

There are three types of scenes: narrative scenes, downtime scenes, and conflict scenes. Each type of scene is best suited to a particular set of story activities, as described in this section.

BEGINNING AND ENDING SCENES

The GM decides when a scene begins and when it ends. At the outset of a scene, the GM should furnish some basic details of what is going on to the players to help ground them in the upcoming activity. At the end of a scene, the GM might want to provide a bit of denouement, or some additional details that help the transition to the next scene.

Narrative Scenes

Narrative scenes are scenes in which PCs interact with their environment, each other, and non-player characters in a nonstructured manner. These constitute a large portion of play at many gaming tables. Most narrative scenes have a narrow focus and take place over a relatively short period of time, from a few minutes to a few hours of game-world time.

At their heart, narrative scenes are an opportunity for roleplaying. The participants might be a mix of NPCs and PCs, or a narrative scene might take place exclusively between the PCs. A character could even have a narrative scene alone in their environment, in which they explore the world and contemplate their existence. During any narrative scene, the GM should encourage the players to speak in character if they wish, and to describe their specific actions in addition to their overall goals. As the players make choices (and checks, when appropriate) for their characters, the GM reveals the details of the scene to them and reacts to their choices and actions.

TIMING SCENES AND SESSIONS

If you're the GM, then it's up to you to decide when one scene ends and a new one begins, based on both narrative-time and real-time considerations. Individual scenes should usually last from half an hour to three hours, though you can end a scene at any time you see fit or extend one as needed. Remember, PCs regain the use of certain abilities and remove strife and fatigue at the end of a scene.

If a scene is resolved extremely quickly, you should feel free to say that it does not count as the end of a scene for the purposes of effects that trigger at the end of a scene (such as removal of strife and fatigue). If a scene transitions to another type of scene it generally does not count as ending.

Similarly, some abilities can be used "once per game session," and some effects apply "until the end of the game session." Such abilities and effects are written assuming a session that lasts from two to four hours. As the GM, you might find yourself running much shorter or longer game sessions (assuming player attention and the supply of snacks hold out). If you do, you may want to consider refreshing such abilities more or less frequently. You should always feel free to use real-time hours to define a "game session," as long as you communicate these divisions clearly to the players.

During narrative scenes, the GM need not closely adjudicate the order of actions, nor the exact flow of time. If the order of actions becomes extremely important, the GM should transition the scene to a conflict scene. If the group has exhausted roleplaying options for the scene, but the activity continues in the story, the GM can transition the scene to a downtime scene, allowing the PCs to pursue goals in an abstract manner rather than calling for the players to narrate their every word and action.

NARRATIVE AND CONFLICT MODES

The character sheet (available for download at FantasyFlightGames.com) has two sides: one for narrative mode, which contains the character traits most often referenced during narrative and downtime scenes, and one for conflict mode, which contains the character traits most pertinent to conflicts.

Downtime Scenes

Downtime scenes are scenes that encompass the passage of time. This can be as short as a few hours of rest or as long as a journey from Otosan Uchi to the Kaiu Wall. Generally, downtime scenes have low dramatic stakes, though they can still be very important to the narrative arcs of the characters and overall story.

During a downtime scene, time is not regimented formally; instead, the GM and players should choose to roleplay only the moments that matter, treating these anecdotes as narrative scenes that intersperse the downtime scene. A journey might last weeks, but contain only a few individual roleplayed interactions.

Characters can be called upon to make checks during downtime scenes, based on their desired activities or circumstances that the GM introduces. However, if the order and economy of actions becomes important, the GM should switch the scene to a conflict scene.

Downtime scenes also offer an excellent opportunity for roleplaying, but they lend themselves better to characters pursuing their big-picture goals. If a player wishes to jump into a more interpersonal interaction between their character and someone else in the downtime scene, the GM should consider briefly shifting the scene to a narrative scene.

Downtime Activities

At the start of each downtime scene, each player chooses the **downtime activity** that their character is pursuing. Downtime activities are meant to help give players clear options for their characters during downtime scenes.

What Can Be Accomplished in a Downtime Scene?

Not all activities are suitable to all downtime scenes. For example, a downtime scene that consists of an hour or two before the player characters storm a castle to rescue a friend would accommodate one PC gathering necessary supplies for the break-in (a ladder, rope, and disguises) or another's efforts to gather local malcontents to assist in the effort. However, that same downtime scene would likely not be long enough for another PC's effort to forge a sword, as this is an extremely lengthy process. As in all matters, the GM is the final arbiter of whether an activity can reasonably be completed during a particular downtime scene.

Long Downtime Scenes

During especially lengthy downtime scenes (those longer than two days), each PC might be able to pursue multiple different downtime activities sequentially. As a general rule of thumb, the GM should allow each PC to pursue one downtime activity for every two days of downtime—though at the GM's discretion, a character might be able to squeeze in an extra activity if they sacrifice sleeping and other necessities. In contrast, downtime scenes dedicated to arduous activities such as travel might not give the PCs an opportunity to perform any downtime activities besides the act of traveling itself, or at least such a scene would limit their options.

Extremely Long Narrative Gaps

If the GM wants to have an extremely long time-skip within the story (a month or more), the GM should simply stipulate that the time passes, though they should perhaps let the players describe what their characters do during this extended period of inaction and allocate a small amount of experience points to the PCs for their activities to reflect their growth in the interim. Such gaps are a good opportunity for PCs to pursue their societal obligations, return to their dōjō for training, or undertake individual endeavors that do not involve the larger group.

Conflict Scenes

When two or more characters are acting in opposition to one another over an extended period of time, the GM may call for a **conflict scene**.

There are several primary types of conflicts. Each uses the same core framework but has unique rules for the options characters can pursue and for its resolution. Common types of conflicts are as follows:

- **Intrigues** are social conflicts. Even the Emperor does not make decisions without first listening to the counsel of his highest retainers. The most impactful conflicts in all of Rokugan are often the words traded between high-ranking samurai—or at least they begin with those words. Petitions to great lords, treaties, political schemes, trade agreements, pacts, and marriages change the face of Rokugan every day, and exerting political influence is the primary duty of many samurai.
- **Duels** are one-on-one battles of honor. When a matter cannot be resolved with will, wits, and rhetoric alone, honor sometimes demands that a samurai seek resolution by drawing steel. Duels are an important part of the political process in Rokugan, and the mere possibility of a formal challenge can be incredibly potent leverage.
- **Skirmishes** are small-scale battles. From pitched battles between rival factions to targeted raids against enemy clans, skirmishes tend to be chaotic, small-scale battles with a few combatants on each side.
- **Mass battles** are battles between entire armies. Open warfare is relatively rare in Rokugan, but it is devastating in its impact. On the off chance that their daimyō asks it of them, any samurai must in theory be prepared to serve in war in some capacity, whether as a warrior, an advisor, a strategist, or a negotiator. Because they tend to be culminating story arc moments rather than everyday occurrences, mass battles are covered at the end of this chapter (see page 274).

STRUCTURED TIME

Conflicts take place using **structured time**, in which characters act in a regulated fashion, and each is limited in what they can accomplish before the other characters have the chance to respond. If a scene does not require this sort of detail on who is acting when and where, it should likely be handled as a narrative scene (see page 247) or downtime scene (see page 248) instead.

Actions

Actions are discrete tasks characters undertake during a scene, often by making a check. In a skirmish, this might mean making a precise sword stroke or leaping heroically across a chasm, while in an intrigue scene, it could entails setting one's scheme into motion. There is no limit to what an action can be except the players' imagination and the GM's approval, but each conflict type provides its own list of sample actions to get players started.

Turns

A **turn** is a character's chance to perform an action and accomplish other small goals, such as choosing a stance and moving (narratively, or as the conflict dictates).

Rounds

A **round** is the span of time in which each character takes one turn. Many conflicts can last multiple rounds.

CONFLICT OVERVIEW

Although there are numerous types of conflicts, all conflicts follow a general structure. The overview below is a general primer for conflict scenes, while the **Detailed Conflict Breakdown**, on the next page, presents a more technical set of instructions.

- **Phase 1—Initiative:** During this phase, characters have a chance to assess the scene, opponents, and options by making an Initiative check (see **Initiative Checks**, on page 250).
- **Phase 2—Take Turns:** After characters have gotten their bearings in the scene, play proceeds to this phase, during which characters can use the many means at their disposal to pursue victory in the conflict.
- **Phase 3—Resolution:** Each conflict ends with a Resolution phase. During this phase, the conflict's results are made clear to those involved, and final effects are resolved.

WHEN TO SKIP A CONFLICT SCENE

Not every dramatic interaction between characters calls for a full conflict.

If a contest can be resolved with a brief interaction, then it should instead be resolved with a check and a check to resist (see page 26), or with a competitive check (see page 26).

INITIATIVE ORDER

In most conflicts, the characters' order of action (called initiative) is important, and initiative is determined during this phase.

DETAILED CONFLICT BREAKDOWN

This section has specific details for resolving a conflict scene. All types follow this form, though some have rules for unique parts of the scenario they represent.

Phase 1: Initiative

CHANGING INITIATIVE VALUES

If a character's initiative value changes during Phase 2: Take Turns, apply the change at the time specified (generally, "at the end of the round"). At the beginning of each round, adjust the initiative order to reflect any altered values.

At the beginning of a conflict, the GM describes the unfolding scene, and each player can take the opportunity to ask questions about the surroundings.

Then, each character makes an Initiative check as they seek to get their bearings in the conflict. Initiative affects the order in which characters act.

Initiative Checks

ORDER FOR MAKING INITIATIVE CHECKS

Usually, everyone can roll at once.

If the order in which characters make these checks is relevant, the character with the highest honor attribute makes theirs first, followed by the other characters in descending order of honor.

An **Initiative check** helps determine a character's initiative value for the scene. Each type of conflict uses a skill for its Initiative check, listed below:

- **Intrigue:** TN 1 Sentiment check.
- **Duel:** TN 1 Meditation check.
- **Skirmish:** TN 1 Tactics check.
- **Mass Battle:** TN 1 Command check.

A character can use any ring for this check. After a character resolves their Initiative check, that character enters the stance matching the ring they used.

Each PC participating in a scene should make an Initiative check, as should each sufficiently important NPC (minion NPCs can generate initiative value without a check, using their focus or vigilance attribute).

Determine Initiative Values

SPENDING ✲ ON INITIATIVE CHECKS

Characters can spend ✲ on Initiative checks in the normal manner, and also in several special ways denoted in the table on page 328.

A character's **initiative value** is based on their state of preparedness when the conflict began.

- If the character was ready for the conflict, their base initiative value is their **focus attribute**.
- If the character was unprepared (such as when surprised), their base initiative value is their **vigilance attribute**.

Then, if the character succeeded on their Initiative check, they add 1 to their base initiative value, plus an additional amount equal to their bonus successes.

Set Initiative Order

Organize the characters by their initiative value, highest to lowest, and record this **initiative order** along with the values. This is the sequence in which the characters act during **Phase 2: Take Turns** in many conflict types.

If two or more characters have the same initiative value, the one with the lowest honor attribute acts first, followed by the others in ascending order of honor.

LATE ARRIVALS

If a character arrives late to a conflict, they do not act until the next round. At the beginning of the next round, the character makes an Initiative check as described below.

- **Intrigue:** As there is no fixed order in an intrigue, a character can join at any time. Upon their arrival, the character makes an Initiative check as normal.
- **Duel:** Arriving to a duel late simply results in the duel's starting after the appointed time (to the likely ire of the opponent who was forced to wait).
- **Skirmish:** Combatants joining a skirmish make a TN 2 Tactics check.
- **Mass Battle:** Any commanders arriving late make a TN 2 Command check.

Characters base their initiative on their focus or vigilance using the normal criteria.

Phase 2: Take Turns

After **Phase 1: Initiative**, the characters involved in the conflict act over a series of rounds. The order in which the characters act and the number of rounds the characters should play out before proceeding to **Phase 3: Resolution** are defined in each type of conflict.

Rounds

Before any character acts during **Phase 2: Take Turns**, a new **round** begins. Any effects that occur "at the beginning of the round" resolve.

Then, starting with the character at the top of the initiative order and descending in sequence, each character takes one turn each round.

After the turn of the last character in the initiative order ends, the round ends. Any effects that occur "at the end of the round" resolve. Then, the GM declares either that the conflict has ended (and proceeds to **Phase 3: Resolution**) or that it has not ended (and repeats **Phase 2: Take Turns**, beginning a new round).

Turns

During a character's **turn**, the character performs the following steps:

Step 1: Beginning of Turn

When a character's turn begins, that character becomes the **active character**. Any effects that occur "at the beginning of the character's turn" resolve at this point.

Step 2: Set Stance

Next, the character sets their **stance**. This is a character's poise, footwork, tact, or some combination of the above depending on what the conflict entails. Each turn, a character can remain in the stance they were already in or switch to a new stance.

As part of setting a stance, a character may set the grip with which they are wielding a weapon (see page 230). A character may also drop any number of items on the ground. Readying a new weapon requires an action, however.

After setting a stance, a character remains in that stance until the beginning of their next turn.

In addition to determining which ring a character uses for the action they perform during **Step 3: Perform Action** and for any other checks they make while in that stance, each stance confers a passive benefit during a conflict, described in **Table 6–1: Stances**.

Step 3: Perform Action

After setting their stance, a character may perform their allotted **action** for the turn. Each action is a distinct effort the character undertakes, described by their player or provided among the sample actions for the encounter or by the character's personal abilities. Most actions require a check.

Once per turn, before or after performing an action, a character can also move a short distance (narratively or in range bands, as described on page 265).

Step 4: End of Turn

After a character performs an action and completes any associated activities (such as movement in a skirmish), the turn ends. Any effects that occur "at the end of the character's turn" resolve at this point. The character ceases to be the active character, and the turn of the next character in the initiative order begins.

Phase 3: Resolution

Once the characters involved have completed their objectives (or definitively failed), the conflict reaches a clear end, or the GM feels that the scene should logically draw to a close, the conflict concludes. Any effects that occur "at the end of the conflict" resolve at this point. Play proceeds to a new scene as directed by the GM.

SPEAKING DURING ACTIONS

Some actions allow a character to speak or otherwise communicate. When performing such actions, a character can say as much as the GM deems reasonable in that time. However, as a part of any action, a character may always convey up to five words (or six words, as long as the last word is "fool" or a similarly dismissive form of address).

Table 6–1: Stances

NAME	DESCRIPTION	STANCE EFFECT
Earth	You focus on your foundation, employing tactics that keep you rooted and defended while you await the exact right moment to act.	When other characters make Attack action checks and Scheme action checks that target you, they cannot spend ✿ to inflict critical strikes or conditions on you.
Water	You remain flexible, ready to adapt as the situation demands, seize chances as they arise, or turn your opposition's force against them.	During your turn, you may perform one additional action that does not require a check. This action cannot share a type with another action you perform this turn.
Fire	You go on the attack, bearing down on your foes and trusting your momentum to carry you forward to safety.	When you succeed on a check, you count as having one additional bonus success for each ⚠ symbol on your kept dice.
Air	You move into a stance that favors grace, circling your opponents nimbly while their attacks slide harmlessly past you.	Increase the TN of Attack and Scheme action checks targeting you by 1. If your school rank is 4 or higher, increase the TN by 2 instead.
Void	You take a stance that does not commit to any direction or tactic, reading the potential energy of the situation and then acting as a conduit for its release.	You do not receive strife from ⚠ symbols on your kept dice. You can still receive strife from other sources.

ACTIONS

Actions are the main way that characters interact with others and the environment during a conflict, and each represents a distinct effort, usually involving a check.

Many things a player might want to accomplish fit into the listed actions for each conflict type. A player can also describe just their intention to the GM, who can propose a suitable listed action or decide upon the checks, requirements, and outcomes on a case-by-case basis.

Performing an Action

A character performs an action as follows:

Step 1: Declare Action

The character declares that they are performing the action, and what they intend to accomplish with it. If the action lists one or more targets, the character chooses those targets. Any target of an action is also a target of checks associated with that action.

To declare an action that stipulates a specific ring for its check, the character must be in the matching stance (e.g. an action with a "Martial Arts [Air] check" requires the character to be in an Air stance to declare it).

Step 2: Make Check

If the action includes a check, the character makes that check. **The character must use the ring matching their current stance for the check.** If the GM decided the action's details, the GM determines its effects based on the check's outcome and the player's intent.

Step 3: Resolve Effects

Then, the character resolves the effects of the action. Each paragraph in the "effects" section of the action denotes a single, distinct effect. An action's effects resolve in the order they appear in that action. Some effects are conditional, as described below:

- If an effect begins with "If you succeed," resolve it only if the character succeeded on the check.
- If an effect begins with "If you fail," resolve it only if the character failed on the check.
- If an effect lists any other requirements, those requirements must be met for it to resolve.

Step 4: End Action

Any effects that occur "after a character performs an action" resolve.

CHECKS FOR ACTIONS IN TEXT

In the language of the system, a check made as part of an action is described as a "[type] action check." For example, the check to smite a wretched goblin with one's katana would be described as "an Attack action check using the katana targeting the goblin."

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

When performing a listed action, the character may also spend ✿ to resolve any listed new opportunities, in addition to the usual uses of ✿.

ACTION EXAMPLE

This is an example of an action, the likes of which you will find throughout this chapter.

Strike

Description: You make an attack against a single foe.
Activation: As an Attack action using one readied weapon, you may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts check** using the appropriate skill for the weapon, targeting one character within the range of the weapon.
Effects: If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to the weapon's base damage plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✿✿: If you succeed, you inflict a critical strike on your target with severity equal to your weapon's deadliness.

Action Types

Most actions have one or more types ascribed to it or assigned by the GM. Common types are listed below:

Attack (Action Type)

Attack actions are actions that a character can use to inflict harm on another character. An Attack action usually specifies at least one target, who suffers any relevant effects.

To affect another character with an Attack action, a character must generally have line of sight and an unobstructed path to that target.

Movement (Action Type)

Movement actions are actions that allow a character to reposition in their environment.

To perform a Movement action, a character must usually have a path to the point they are trying to reach. Characters who can fly or scale sheer surfaces (via invocations or other supernatural abilities) are naturally more able to reach places earthbound characters cannot.

Scheme (Action Type)

Scheme actions allow a character to attempt to influence targets with whom they can communicate—manipulating them, wearing them down, or bringing them around to a different point of view. A Scheme action usually specifies at least one target who suffers any relevant effects.

To affect another character with a Scheme action, a character must generally be able to communicate with that character, verbally or otherwise.

Support (Action Type)

Support actions build up the character's position or help others, protecting them or aiding them to set up for their own actions.

To affect another character with a Support action, a character must generally be able to communicate with that character, verbally or otherwise.

CHOOSING TARGETS OUT OF RANGE

In some types of conflicts (skirmishes, for example), distances between characters and objects are tracked. Many actions intended for use in these conflicts have a specified range at which they can be used (see **Range Bands** on page 265, for more details).

However, characters can attempt to perform actions against people or objects that are outside of the specified range or are otherwise ineligible to be targeted. During **Step 1: Declare Action**, a character is allowed to choose a target upon whom they normally would not be able to act due to the target's being out of range, a lack of visibility, or some other obstacle. Usually this is not prudent, but during **Step 2: Make Check**, some uses of ✿ allow a character to extend the range of an action or otherwise overcome barriers.

When resolving an effect, such as during **Step 3: Resolve Effects**, if the target is not in range or the character does not meet some other requirement of the action, the character cannot resolve that effect of the action.

As the GM, you are also the arbiter of whether certain uses of ✿ (particularly those that would bodily affect the target) can or cannot be resolved against targets who are not in range of the action's effects.

COMPLICATED TASKS AND MOMENTUM

Some tasks can take more than one action to accomplish, and might even require multiple characters working for multiple rounds. When dealing with these objectives, it can be helpful to keep track of the progress that has been made so far. For lengthy jobs like subtly persuading one's lord to reverse a dangerous course of action or putting out a raging fire that is consuming a village, the GM can use **momentum points** to track the progress of individuals or groups.

Difficulty Value

When an objective will likely require more than a single check or specific condition to accomplish, the GM can assign it a **difficulty value**. This is the number of momentum points that characters must accrue on their checks to reach the goal. The GM can tell the PCs the difficulty value, or they can keep it secret.

Accruing Momentum Points

Each time a character takes an action that contributes to completing this objective, if they succeed on the associated check, they contribute one momentum point. At the GM's discretion, bonus successes might translate into additional momentum points. When the number of momentum points equals or exceeds the difficulty value of the objective, the characters attempting it achieve it, and the GM narrates any effects this has. If two characters are racing to complete an objective, the one with more momentum points at the end of the round in which both characters reached the requisite value wins.

Some types of conflicts such as intrigues and mass battles have specific rules for using momentum to achieve objectives, but these rules can be used to track progress toward any complex goal.

Intrigues

Intrigues are social engagements, chances to persuade the opposition to adopt one's viewpoint, gather favor from superiors, sow the seeds of one's plots, or subtly besmirch the reputation of hated rivals. Intrigues are how the fortunes of clans rise and fall. The power and influence of all ruling families rest in no small part on the skill of the courtiers who excel in this arena.

Intrigues follow the general pattern described in **Conflict Scenes** on page 249, with the following minor additions and alterations:

SOCIAL OBJECTIVES

Social objectives are overarching goals that give an intrigue structure, and they give the GM a guideline on when the intrigue should draw to a close. Additionally, they use the rules for momentum points to track characters' progress toward their goals (see page 253).

Choosing Social Objectives

At the start of **Phase 1: Initiative** during an intrigue, each participating character may choose a social objective. This is a concrete goal that the character hopes to accomplish during the scene; this goal also helps to define when the conflict should end.

Any number of characters can choose to pursue the same objective. For instance, all player characters in a group might choose the same objective and support each other in accomplishing it. Alternatively, each PC might have their own objective—and thus, their own priorities—in a given intrigue. The PCs might even need to accomplish numerous objectives to bring a larger plan to fruition. The players can confer as they desire, and then each player should decide upon their character's objective and inform the GM.

The GM should also decide upon objectives for any adversary NPCs in the conflict who have an agenda of their own, but the GM should not tell the players these objectives (though careful sleuthing and observation might reveal them). At the GM's discretion, an adversary NPC with no concrete goal relevant to the scene might not have an objective, and minion NPCs generally do not need to have objectives.

Sample Social Objectives

The following are a few examples of social objectives that a character can pursue during an intrigue. However, this list is not intended to be fully comprehensive; if a player wishes to have their character pursue a goal that does not fall under one or more of these categories, the GM should allow them to create a custom social objective for the intrigue. The GM should also provide some guidance on the narrative and mechanical avenues they must take to attempt to achieve that custom objective.

Appeal to a Person or Group

A general social objective that covers many reasons a character would enter an intrigue, this objective signifies that the character is trying to convince someone to behave in a certain way. Often, this objective is directed at a character's lord, in an effort to get the lord to back the character in one of their efforts or take one of their claims seriously. However, it might also be used to get a belligerent party to agree to come to terms, to sway a judge away from (or toward) meting out a punishment, or to win wide support from a large number of people. A character who chooses this objective should state their target at the outset, along with what they want to persuade them to believe or do.

What Does It Take to Complete?

A character can get someone else to adopt their viewpoint by accumulating a preset number of momentum points on successful Social skill checks against that target. The GM sets the difficulty value to complete this objective (and can tell the players this value, or not, at their discretion). The focus attribute of the target of the Persuade action is a good starting value for this number, but the GM can adjust this value up or down based on factors like stubbornness and the character's innate resistance to the perspective being proposed.

What Is Achieved by Completing It?

At the end of any round in which a character accumulates momentum points equal to or exceeding the difficulty value of the objective, the target is persuaded to adopt their perspective (or stops raising an argument against it). If another character has accumulated a greater number of momentum points at that time, that character persuades the target to adopt their perspective instead. In the case of a tie, the character with the highest status wins.

Various circumstances, such as certain ways of unmasking (on the part of the person doing the persuading or the target) or narrative events such as giving grave offense or creating a significant interruptions, can make it impossible to sway someone during the course of an intrigue, in which case this social objective cannot be completed. Additionally, if the target retires from the scene before completion of this social objective (whether or not they have completed a separate personal social objective), this social objective cannot be completed.

Discern Someone's Qualities

Sometimes, information-gathering is a character's main social objective: they seek to ferret out the strengths, weaknesses, or loyalties of another character. This goes deeper than understanding their target's social objective; it extends to trying to get a measure of their target's character. Beyond quiet observation, this objective requires engaging with a target to draw out their less obvious qualities. A character who chooses this objective should state their target at the outset, along with which features of their target they want to uncover.

What Does It Take to Complete?

A character can draw out and study someone else's nature by accumulating momentum points equal to or exceeding the difficulty value of the objective on appropriate Social skill checks against that target. A character might also investigate the target with other skills (like Culture or Sentiment) to fulfill this objective.

The GM sets the number of momentum points needed to achieve this objective (and can tell the player this value or not, at their discretion). The vigilance attribute of the target is a good starting value for this number, but the GM can adjust this value up or down based on the target's wariness in the situation.

What Is Achieved by Completing It?

At the end of any round in which a character accumulates the requisite points, the character learns up to three of the following about their target: social objective, ninjō, giri, composure, endurance, one advantage, one disadvantage. The same option cannot be selected multiple times this way.

If the target retires from the scene before completion (after completing their own objective or otherwise), this objective cannot be completed.

Discredit Someone

Provoking one's enemies directly is a dangerous art, but it can put them in positions where they must accept a loss lest their reputation suffer harm. Applying this pressure subtly, without exposing oneself to criticism, is no easy task. A character who chooses this objective should state their target at the outset.

What Does It Take to Complete?

A character can back someone into a corner by causing them to become Compromised. The character can do this by inflicting strife on the target (or getting others to do so), which in turn is something they can accomplish by using various ✿ (see page 328) and techniques.

When the chosen character unmasks, they must forfeit glory equal to their glory rank (as they allow themself to be humiliated or shamed for a moment of

WHEN TO USE AN INTRIGUE

Intrigues are most useful when a large number of characters are going to be participating in a social exchange, and managing that many active participants requires a greater degree of structure than a narrative scene accommodates. Examples include complex court scenes with multiple factions, large social events, and formal negotiations.

For a conversation between only two participants, a full intrigue is often unnecessary, though the rules for persuading NPCs described in this section offer helpful guidelines for determining how much effort it usually takes to win someone to a cause.

SECRET SOCIAL OBJECTIVES

Players are required to inform the GM of their characters' objectives. This helps the GM set the scene and build a story around what the characters want to accomplish.

However, players aren't obligated to inform their fellow players of their objectives. Passing notes or communicating electronically can let players inform the GM of their goals without telling their compatriots, if secrecy is of the essence!

vulnerability) unless they retire from the intrigue, and the objective is considered complete. Such provocation makes it very hard to get someone to take the provoker's side in a matter, so if the target's support is vital to a cause, this tactic is usually very ineffective. Further, many samurai respond to this sort of humiliation with a demand for a duel—or with a dagger in the night, if they are of a less-than-honorable persuasion.

If the target retires from the scene before completion (after completing their own objective or otherwise), this objective cannot be completed.

Spread a Rumor

Rumors are among the courtier's greatest weapons, and a well-placed rumor can lay the groundwork for future victories. Spies often place rumors in enemy courts as well, to lead foes astray or into cunningly laid traps. A character who chooses this objective should state the rumor they wish to spread at the outset.

What Does It Take to Complete?

A character can spread a rumor across a group by accumulating momentum points equal to or exceeding the difficulty value of the objective on appropriate Social skill checks. However, no two of those Social skill checks can target the same character, as the rumor must appear to come from multiple sources to be accepted.

The GM sets the difficulty value to achieve this objective (and can tell the player this value at their discretion). The vigilance attribute of the character in the scene with the highest status is a good starting point, but the GM can adjust this value up or down based on that character's disposition toward the rumor in question.

What Is Achieved By Completing It?

At the end of any round in which a character accumulates momentum points equal to or exceeding the difficulty value of the objective, the rumor becomes self-sustaining within the group. This does not necessarily mean that everyone believes it, but they do discuss it, for it is too reputable (or intriguing) to fully ignore.

If the character fails at two consecutive checks to spread the rumor, it fails to take root, and this objective cannot be completed in this scene.

SUMMARY OF AN INTRIGUE TURN

During their turn, a character can do all of the following:

1. Choose a stance, which reflects their physical posture, tone, and rhetorical approach.

2. Move a short distance within the scene. before or after performing an action.

3. Perform an action, such as convincing someone or spreading a rumor to achieve their social objective. The player can speak in their character's voice or offer a summary of what they are saying.

INITIATIVE

For an intrigue, the Initiative check is a **TN 1 Sentiment check** not just to listen, but to politely probe other characters' strengths, weaknesses, and perhaps most importantly, objectives.

Intrigues are relatively freeflowing scenes, so each character takes one turn when they see fit during each round, rather than at an appointed time based on the initiative order. Initiative values instead come into play when two or more characters wish to act simultaneously, at which point the character with the highest initiative acts first, followed by the character with the next highest initiative, and so on.

However, because propriety is vitally important in Rokugan, a character must forfeit 1 honor and 1 glory to preempt one or more characters of higher status in this way (and might suffer further narrative ramifications for doing so, depending on circumstances).

TAKING TURNS

During this phase of an intrigue, characters can raise points, refute arguments brought up by others, and generally engage in social intrigue to attempt to achieve their social objectives.

Rounds

Each character takes one turn each round, but they take that turn whenever they see fit rather than at a specific time determined by the initiative order. A character who does not wish to take a turn during a given round may pass. Once each character has taken a turn or passed, play proceeds to the next round.

An intrigue does not last a fixed number of rounds, and instead moves to **Step 3: Resolution** once all objectives have been achieved or it is clear that they cannot be achieved.

Stances

During an intrigue, stances dictate a character's rhetoric and poise, as well as any physical posture that reflects this aspect of communication. Stances provide their default effect during an intrigue.

Players are encouraged to narrate how their character's poise and rhetoric reflects their approach to the situation, whether it is fiery swagger or stony silence that brooks no argument.

Movement and Positioning

Players should feel free to narrate how their characters physically position themselves in intrigues, but characters can generally be assumed to be within range to resolve their effects, and movement need not be closely tracked unless it is relevant. If it becomes relevant, the GM should adjudicate the distances between various characters and objects in range bands.

Intrigue Actions

The following sample actions are available to all characters in an intrigue, along with actions granted to them by techniques and abilities. Players can also propose actions of their own invention based on the circumstances (per the GM's approval).

Assist

Description: You offer an ally an argument they might use, an insight about the opposition, or a novel idea.
Activation: As an Attack, Intrigue, and Support action, describe how you are helping one other character at range 0–2 with their next action.
Effects: If the GM accepts your suggestion, you provide assistance (see page 26) on the chosen character's next action check.

Calming Breath

Description: During a conflict, you may inhale deeply before exhaling, drawing upon your inner strength.
Activation: As a Support action, you may take a deep breath to calm yourself and recover stamina.
Effects: If your strife is greater than half your composure, you remove 1 strife. If your fatigue is greater than half your endurance, you remove 1 fatigue.

Persuade

Description: You attempt to foster or quell an idea, emotion, or desire in a person (based on the approach you are using, as described in **Social Skills**, on page 151).
Activation: As a Scheme action, you make a Social skill check targeting one or more characters who can hear you. The TN of the check is equal to the highest vigilance among your targets. Additionally, if applicable, apply one of the following modifications to the TN based on the skill you use on the check:

- **Command:** You present a plan with authority, sweeping your targets along with all the confidence a lord should have among their vassals. If each target's status rank is lower than yours, decrease the TN of this check by 1.
- **Courtesy:** You present a proposal backed by honeyed words and clever implications—perfect for dealing with one's superiors, but perhaps overly deferential when addressing equals or subordinates. If each target's status rank is higher than yours, decrease the TN of this check by 1.
- **Games/Performance/Other Skills:** You offer a diversion from the affairs at hand, turning the conversation to a less pressing topic. If each target's status rank is equal to yours, decrease the TN of this check by 1.

Effects: If you succeed, you add one momentum point toward an appropriate social objective, plus one additional momentum point for every two bonus successes. Further, any narrative ramifications of your check resolve.

Unique Action

Description: You make a check using a skill for a mechanical or narrative effect, as described in **Chapter 3: Skills** (see page 140).
Activation: As an action, you make a skill check to attempt a task you have described to the GM.
Effects: If you succeed, you may use the skill for its narrative effects, for implementing any sample use that can be completed in a single action, or for pursuing another task that the GM deems appropriate.

RESOLVING AN INTRIGUE

The GM should generally end an intrigue once all characters' social objectives have been achieved or have clearly failed, or the characters pursuing these objectives decide to let them drop for narrative reasons. At this point, it proceeds to **Phase 3: Resolution**.

WHAT DO I ACTUALLY SAY?

Some groups often have players speak in their characters' voices, and use this to determine most social interactions.

Other groups prefer to enable a character being more (or less) eloquent than their player, and have the player summarize the point they want their PC to make and the manner in which they want them to say it, with the roll determining how successfully this occurs.

Some groups even use both methods, depending on the individual player. Use the method that makes you most comfortable and seems the most fun for your group!

BONUSES FOR ROLEPLAYING

At their discretion, the GM can alter the TN of any check or award extra momentum points for especially cogent arguments or good roleplaying efforts.

Duels

Duels are stylized engagements, usually fought to settle disputes that cannot be put to rest with words alone. A duel is fought by individuals, but the fate of families, clans, or the entire realm might ride on a duel.

WHEN TO USE A DUEL

Duels almost invariably result from one character challenging another, who accepts the challenge in the hope of humbling or even killing their foe (or who finds themself in a position where they cannot afford to refuse). Duels should be used for one-on-one martial contests.

Keep in mind that duels are not likely to engage all of the players at once, and that you can use the **Clash** rules on page 263 to embed a duel in another scene so that all PCs can do something interesting at the same time.

SETTING THE TERMS

Different clans have different practices when it comes to dueling, but characters can define their own duels as long as they agree on the terms, which include:

- The objective of the duel (to the first strike, to incapacitation, to the death, or another goal).
- The weapons and fighting styles allowed.

The Crane Clan reveres the iaijutsu duel as a high art, but warriors of the Crab Clan scoff at the notion of removing their armor for battle—and rarely allow lethal duels, for samurai are in short supply on the Kaiu Wall. The Unicorn Clan often wrestle or fight duels with bows.

If the belligerent parties cannot agree to terms for the duel, it falls to the reigning lord (the individual with the highest status present, or the one on whose lands the duel is taking place, in the case of a tie) to decide the method of battle and stakes of victory.

THE ETIQUETTE OF KILLING IN DUELS

Killing one's foe is the goal of some duels and unacceptable in others, based on circumstances and prior agreements.

Killing a foe in a duel to the first strike or incapacitation is a tragic accident at best and possible murder at worst.

Killing one's foe in a duel to first blood is unusual and frowned upon, but not strictly dishonorable.

Obviously, killing one's foe is the point of a duel to the death. Sparing one's foe can be seen as extremely disrespectful unless done very deftly.

CONCESSION

At the start of any round, a character may **concede** a duel, honorably withdrawing from the contest. Rokugani law dictates that they have lost the battle for all intents and purposes and are expected to fulfill the terms of their defeat—up to and including forfeiting their life, if that was included in the terms of the duel.

However, provisions in the law allow for the victor to forswear some or all stakes in the name of the Bushidō tenet of Compassion; a warrior might tell a vanquished enemy to cut their topknot instead of severing their head, for instance, signifying that they must retire to a monastery but keep their life. Sparing a foe's life or even conceding can also be practical, letting a duelist preserve societal harmony without appearing weak. A duelist who has seen that they cannot win might surrender not in the hopes of saving their own life, but to keep their own family entering into a cycle of retribution.

COMMON FORMS OF DUELS

Each of the following common forms of duel describes the weapons permitted, along with the **duel objective** a participant must achieve to end the duel.

However, just achieving the duel objective is not always sufficient for victory; both characters might achieve their objectives within the same round, or a character might achieve an objective but have a successful strike disqualified by the judges. Such are the vagaries of ritualized battle, for no mortal judge can perceive every strike perfectly among the clash of blades!

- **Iaijutsu Duel (to first strike or first blood):** Iaijutsu duels are highly ritualized: combatants wear ceremonial clothes, only the katana and the wakizashi are permitted, and each warrior must begin with their blades sheathed, drawing them no earlier than their first turn. When fought to the first strike, the duel objective is to inflict a critical strike on the opponent. When fought to the first blood, the duel objective is to inflict a critical strike of severity 5 or higher on the foe.
- **Iaijutsu Duel (to the death):** When fought to the death, the duel objective is to kill the opponent or inflict the Dying condition on them.
- **Sparring Bout (to incapacitation):** Practice duels let warriors sharpen their skills and build calluses that will serve them well on the battlefield. Bushi and monks frequently practice these duels (monks favoring barehanded strikes). Warriors are expected to use training weapons or blunted weapons,and the duel objective is to inflict the Incapacitated condition on the foe.
- **Warrior's Duel (to defeat):** There is a rougher sort of duel favored by many rōnin who wish to prove their skill with the blade, that a lord might see their skills and engage their services. Warrior's duels are fought with any weapons on hand and few regulations. The duel objective is to inflict the Unconscious condition on your opponent, kill them, inflict the Dying condition upon them, or get them to yield.
- **Taryu-Jiai (to incapacitation):** Shugenja are rare and valuable, and thus they are rarely permitted to fight sword duels. However, they are a prideful lot possessed of great power, and their squabbles can shake the land itself. Taryu-Jiai bouts between shugenja are fought primarily with invocations. Physical strikes are permitted by the spiritual leaders of some clans, such as the Crab and Scorpion, but forbidden by others, such as the Phoenix and Crane. The duel objective is to inflict the Incapacitated condition on the foe or to demonstrate one's absolute superiority such that the foe surrenders.

SPECIAL RULES OF DUELS

Duels follow the general pattern described in **Conflict Scenes** on page 249, with the following minor additions and alterations:

Initiative

For a duel, the Initiative check is a **TN 1 Meditation check** to attempt to foresee how the duel will transpire.

Each character has an initiative value based on the results of their Initiative check, as usual. However, each round, at the start of **Phase 2: Take Turns**, the characters participate in a staredown that modifies initiative.

Staredown

As tension mounts during a duel, even the most stoic of samurai feel a building pressure. The warrior's senses are elevated, and even the crunch of gravel or a cicada's cry becomes thunderous. This is the **staredown**, a special step at the start of **Phase 2: Take Turns** each round.

During the staredown, each character receives strife equal to the number of the round (1 strife for the first round, 2 for the second, 3 for the third, and so forth).

Additionally, after receiving this strife, each character who is not Compromised may bid additional strife to increase their initiative value for that round. To bid, each participating character secretly chooses a number between 0 and their focus attribute. Then, all simultaneously reveal their number, and each suffers that amount of strife, and adds it to their initiative for the round.

Taking Turns

During this phase, characters size up their foe, prepare their attack, and launch deadly strikes!

Rounds

Each character takes one turn each round in order of initiative. The character with the higher initiative value takes their turn, followed by the character with the lower value. If they are tied, the one with the lower honor acts first. At the end of the round, each character's initiative value resets to its value before the staredown.

A duel does not last a fixed number of rounds. At the end of each round, if either character achieved their objective, the duel ends and proceeds to **Phase 3: Resolution**. Otherwise, the duel returns to **Phase 2: Take Turns** and continues for an additional round.

The Finishing Blow

As a combatant begins to make a move, a gap sometimes opens in their defenses, giving their foe a chance to end the fight with a well-placed attack.

The first time their opponent becomes Compromised or unmasks during a duel, a character may immediately execute a **finishing blow**. This is a special action that can be performed out of turn.

A character executes the finishing blow by choosing an Attack action and performing it against their opponent, interrupting anything their target is doing (including resolving a check of their own, in which case the finishing blow resolves during **Step 6** of the check, after symbols are resolved but before is spent). One finishing blow can even interrupt another!

If the character executing a finishing blow succeeds, instead of dealing damage, the finishing blow inflicts a critical strike with severity equal to two times the deadliness of the weapon or Attack action used, plus the attacker's bonus successes. Any other effects of the Attack action are resolved as usual.

If two characters trigger finishing blows simultaneously for any reason (such as the mandatory strife gained during the staredown), the one with the lower honor fully executes their finishing blow first, then the other character executes theirs (assuming they are still alive!).

If the duel's objective is achieved by the finishing blow, the duel ends immediately. Otherwise, the duel picks up where it left off (including returning to resolving a check, if one was interrupted).

SUMMARY OF A DUEL TURN

During their turn, a character can do all of the following:

1. Choose a stance, which reflects their physical posture and approach.

2. Describe their movement narratively (before or after they perform an action).

3. Perform an action, such as trying to predict the foe's strike, centering their spirit, or striking at the foe.

Stances

During a duel, stances dictate a character's physical stance and overall strategy for the duel.

Players are encouraged to narrate how their character takes a particular stance, such as a nimble feint with Air or waiting motionlessly with Void.

Movement and Range

Mechanically, ranges are handled quite simply in a duel: at the start, the characters move to range 2 from each other. During the duel, each character is considered to be in range of any effect their opponent resolves. At the end of the duel, the two characters once again move to range 2 from each other.

Players should feel free to narrate how their characters are moving as they vie for position, feint, and sideslip unexpectedly.

Duel Actions

The following sample actions are available to all characters in a duel, along with actions granted to them by techniques and abilities. Players can also propose actions of their own invention based on the circumstances (per the GM's approval).

Calming Breath

Description: During a conflict, you may inhale deeply before exhaling, drawing upon your inner strength.
Activation: As a Support action, you may take a deep breath to calm yourself and recover stamina.
Effects: If your strife is greater than half your composure, you remove 1 strife. If your fatigue is greater than half your endurance, you remove 1 fatigue.

Center

Description: You let the world around you slow as the Void overtakes your senses. Everything but the moment fades as you instinctively seek victory. Your mind weaves through infinite treacherous possibilities and the razor steel of your foe to the outcome you desire.
Activation: As a Support action in Void stance, you may focus your energy inward, envisioning your action in your mind and seeking the perfect moment to take it. You must name a skill when you use Center.
Effects: Roll a number of Skill dice up to your ranks in the skill you chose and reserve any number of those dice. If you do, the next time you make a check using the chosen skill (or use the Center action) this scene, after rolling dice, you may replace any number of rolled dice with the reserved dice (set to the results they were showing when reserved). You cannot reserve a number of dice greater than your ranks in the skill this way.

Predict

Description: You shift subtly to draw a reaction out of your foe by repositioning or signaling a strike you never intend to throw. By predicting your foe's reaction, you aim to win the battle in the mind, leaving the foe open to a decisive strike or forcing them to attack early.
Activation: As an Attack and Scheme action, you may secretly select Air, Earth, Fire, or Water and record it.
Effects: The next time your opponent chooses their stance, you may reveal your selection; if it matches the stance they chose, your opponent receives 4 strife and must choose a different stance. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Prepare Item

Description: You prepare, ready, or stow one weapon or other item.
Activation: As a Support action, you may use this action.
Effects: Prepare one item for use, ready a weapon in a grip of your choice, or stow an item.

Strike

Description: You make an attack against a single foe.
Activation: As an Attack action using one readied weapon, you may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts check** using the appropriate skill for the weapon, targeting one character within the weapon's range.
Effects: If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to the weapon's base damage plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✿✿: If you succeed, inflict a critical strike on your target with severity equal to your weapon's deadliness.

Unique Action

Description: You make a check using a skill for a mechanical or narrative effect, as described in **Chapter 3: Skills** (see page 140).
Activation: As an action, you make a skill check to attempt a task you have described to the GM.
Effects: If you succeed, you may use the skill for its narrative effects, for implementing any sample use that can be completed in a single action, or for pursuing another task that the GM deems appropriate.

Table 6–2: Duel Scoring

FEAT	SCORE
Achieved your objective	+6 points
Struck the enemy first	+3 points
Inflicted fatigue on the enemy	+1 point per fatigue
Inflicted one or more critical strikes on the enemy	+ points equal to severity of the highest critical strike (after reductions)
Killed the enemy (in a duel to the death only)	14 points
Unmasked	–2 points
Was witnessed cheating	Automatic loss

Resolving a Duel

A duel draws to a close at the end of any round in which one or more characters achieve their objectives (see **Common Forms of Duels**, on page 258).

While some duels are clear in their outcome, with one samurai dead and the other standing, blade red with blood, most are more ambiguous and messier. It falls to one or more judges to call the legality of strikes, who struck first, and the efficacy of blows delivered.

During **Phase 3: Resolution** of a duel, each participant tallies up their score based on the various feats noted in **Table 6–2: Duel Scoring**. The difference between the higher score and the lower determines the duel result, as described below:

- **Score Difference 0—No Winner:** The duel is a draw, as the fighters land telling blows simultaneously (or not at all). The characters might repeat the duel or retire to tend to wounds.
- **Score Difference 1—Narrow Victory:** The winner seizes the thin margin of victory.
- **Score Difference 2—Clear Victory:** The character who won claims victory definitively.
- **Score Difference 3–6—Absolute Victory:** The character who won gives a clear demonstration of mastery. If the winner receives a glory award, increase it by +3.
- **Score Difference 7+—No Contest:** The character who won does not so much win as demonstrate that it was never a contest. If the winner receives a glory award, increase it by +5.

One-Roll Duels (Optional Rule)

Dueling is an activity that many groups will want to explore tactically, but for other groups, it is simply a means to an end. Even in games where players often want tactical duels, this fast resolution is sometimes appropriate.

Setup and Check

Each combatant describes their intended action, detailing how they factor in relevant advantages, disadvantages, terrain, and other circumstances they could use to gain an edge.

Then, each combatant chooses their weapon (or weapons) and makes the competitive check, using the appropriate skill for the duel and the ring that their description dictates. The base TN for this check is 1, but it can be adjusted to account for relevant factors such as the players' description and the circumstances, at the GM's discretion. This check is treated as an Attack action check targeting their opponent for the purposes of abilities.

Resolution

The character who has more bonus successes is victorious in the duel.

In a duel using live weapons, such as a duel to the first blood or to the death, the victor inflicts a critical strike with severity equal to twice their weapon's deadliness, plus their bonus successes upon their foe. The enemy can resist as usual (see page 270).

In any type of duel, if neither fighter succeeds, the character with the lower shortfall is victorious (albeit inelegantly) and inflicts a critical strike with severity equal to twice their weapon's deadliness on the foe, reflecting an accidental harm that might occur even in a practice duel.

If the characters are tied, both are considered both victorious and defeated for the purpose of inflicting any critical strikes. The one who inflicts the critical strike with the higher severity (after the check to resist) wins. If these are tied (or no critical strikes were inflicted), the duel's outcome is inconclusive.

PROS AND CONS OF ONE-ROLL DUELS

The advantage of one-roll dueling is that it resolves very quickly. The downside is much the same: participants have a chance to set up and describe their action, but they have little tactical input afterward. From there on, the dice decide which characters live and which ones die.

GMs should pick the best for their individual game, or even for a given duel, based on the sort of story they are telling and their group's preferences.

Skirmishes

Skirmishes are pitched battles between small groups of combatants—a few individuals, or small squads at the largest. This type of conflict can represent anything from a clash of scouting forces, to a teahouse raid with a few dozen combatants, to a pitched battle between several individuals in an alleyway. In a skirmish, the winner is the one who survives, whatever that might require.

SPECIAL RULES FOR SKIRMISHES

WHEN TO USE A SKIRMISH

Skirmishes are ideal for small-scale combat engagements, from bar brawls to dramatic encounters between rival groups. Many combat encounters are likely to be skirmishes.

Skirmishes follow the general pattern described in **Conflict Scenes** on page 249, with the following minor additions and alterations:

Initiative

During this phase of a skirmish, characters get their bearings, identify their foes, determine their initiative value, and prepare to do battle.

For a skirmish, the Initiative check is a **TN 1 Tactics check** to gain a read on the battlefield conditions and enemy. Remember, characters may spend ✿ from this check to get additional information about their surroundings or undertake small tasks such as readying weapons or diving for cover (see **Table 8–1: Examples of ✿** on page 328).

Characters act in descending order of initiative value for the scene. If two or more characters tie for initiative, the character with the lowest honor acts first, and then the other tied characters act in ascending order of honor.

Taking Turns

Each character takes one turn each round in the order dictated by the characters' initiative values. During this part of a skirmish, characters fight for their lives!

Skirmishes do not have a fixed round limit. However, when things are clearly going badly for one side, many combatants will retreat and regroup.

Movement and Positioning

Of all conflict types, skirmishes make the most detailed use of range bands, described on page 265.

Movement

Once during their turn, before or after performing an action, a character may move 1 range band. Note that moving this way is not an action.

In addition to this movement, a character who wishes to move a greater distance can dedicate their action to moving via the Maneuver action (see page 264).

Range Bands

In skirmishes, range bands are used to measure the distances between characters, objects, and positions on the battlefield. See page 265 for more information on range bands.

Skirmish Actions

The following sample actions are available to all characters in a skirmish, along with actions granted to them by techniques and abilities. Players can also propose actions of their own invention based on the circumstances (per the GM's approval).

Assist

Description: You offer an ally a plan of attack to use, an insight about the foe, or an encouraging word.
Activation: As an Attack, Scheme, and Support action, describe how you are helping one other character at range 0–2 with their next action.
Effects: If the GM accepts your suggestion, you provide assistance (see page 26) on the chosen character's next action check.

Calming Breath

Description: During a conflict, you may inhale deeply before exhaling, drawing upon your inner strength.
Activation: As a Support action, you may take a deep breath to calm yourself and recover stamina.
Effects: If your strife is greater than half your composure, you remove 1 strife. If your fatigue is greater than half your endurance, you remove 1 fatigue.

Challenge

Description: You issue a challenge to a foe, calling for them to face you in single combat.
Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 1 Command check** to issue a formal combat challenge targeting one character at range 0–5. You must stake 10 honor and 5 glory upon the challenge, which you forfeit if you sabotage the clash.
Effects: If you succeed, the target must choose whether to **accept** or **decline**; resolve one of the following:

- If the target **accepts**, they stake 10 honor and 5 glory, which they forfeit if they take any Attack or Scheme action before the clash. At the end of the round, the clash begins.
- To **decline**, the target must forfeit glory equal to your ranks in Command plus your bonus successes. Each of their allies with lower glory than you suffers 2 strife. Then, you gain 1 Void point.

If you win the clash, each of your foe's allies in the skirmish suffers 3 strife. If you lose the clash, each of your allies suffers 3 strife.

CLASHES

Even as lesser combatants swirl around them, heroes frequently mark each other out for challenges. A **clash** is one way to embed a duel in another scene. Clashes can arise from the use of the Challenge action, or via narrative events that lead to a formal duel occurring during another scene (such as an intrigue).

FIGHTING A CLASH

At the end of the round, participants fight one round of a duel using these steps:

1. **Staredown:** The characters receive strife equal to the round of the clash and bid strife to increase their current initiative, as described on page 259.
2. **Take Turns:** The character with the higher initiative value takes a turn, followed by the one with the lower value (if tied, the one with lower honor acts first).
3. **Determine Winner:** If a character inflicts the Incapacitated, Unconscious, or Dying condition on their enemy (or kills them) without suffering any of these, they win. Otherwise, the clash is inconclusive.

FINISHING BLOWS

Like duels, clashes use the rules for Finishing Blows (see page 259) when a character becomes Compromised or unmasks.

INTERRUPTING A CLASH

Other characters can interrupt a clash before it begins or during the clash. Using the Challenge action on an enemy involved in a clash allows a character to "cut in," exchanging themself for an ally in a clash. Any other form of interruption requires the character to forfeit 10 honor. Any participant they helped must also forfeit their staked honor.

EXTENDING A CLASH

After characters clash inconclusively, they may extend the clash by one round. If both characters choose to continue, they skip their turns in the initiative order and do not take actions until the clash resumes at the end of the next round. If either character chooses to withdraw, the clash ends.

LEAVING A CLASH

Withdrawing from a clash on the battlefield after one or more rounds is not viewed as dishonorable by most, as a warrior has answered the call and tested their resolve against the foe's steel.

However, canny fighters might be able to sting their opponent's pride with words to keep the enemy in a clash they are losing, or to prevent them from accomplishing other important goals during the battle!

SUMMARY OF A SKIRMISH TURN

During their turn, a character can do all of the following:

1. Choose a stance, which reflects their approach to the fight and grants a helpful passive benefit.

2. Move 1 range band. This can be done before or after performing an action.

3. Perform an action, such as guarding oneself or an ally, maneuvering further across the battlefield, striking a foe, or waiting for the enemy to move.

Guard

Description: You focus on warding off foes from yourself or an ally by positioning yourself defensively, taking cover, throwing strategically placed strikes, or even firing shots menacingly close to the enemy.
Activation: As a Support action using a readied weapon, you may make a **TN 1 Tactics check** targeting yourself or one other character within the weapon's range.
Effects: If you succeed, you **guard** the target until the beginning of your next turn. Increase the TN of Attack checks against the guarded target by one, plus an additional one per two bonus successes.

Maneuver

Description: You shift on the battlefield, moving to a more advantageous position.
Activation: As a Movement action, you may reposition for more distance. Optionally, you may make a **TN 2 Fitness check** as part of this action.
Effects: Move one range band.

If you choose to make the Fitness check and you succeed, you may instead move two range bands, plus one additional range band per two bonus successes.

Prepare Item

Description: You prepare, ready, or stow one weapon or other item.
Activation: As a Support action, you may interact with one item.
Effects: Prepare one item for use, ready a weapon in a grip of your choice, or stow an item.

Strike

Description: You make an attack against a single foe.
Activation: As an Attack action using one readied weapon, you may make a **TN 2 Martial Arts check** using the appropriate skill for the weapon, targeting one character within the weapon's range.
Effects: If you succeed, you deal physical damage to the target equal to the weapon's base damage plus your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

✿✿: If you succeed, you inflict a critical strike on your target with severity equal to your weapon's deadliness.

Unique Action

Description: You make a check using a skill for a mechanical or narrative effect, as described in **Chapter 3: Skills** (see page 140).
Activation: As an action, you make a skill check to attempt a task you have described to the GM.
Effects: If you succeed, you may use the skill for its narrative effects, for implementing any sample use that can be completed in a single action, or for pursuing another task that the GM deems appropriate.

Wait

Description: You bide your time, waiting to spring into action.
Activation: As an Attack, Scheme, and Support action, you may declare a non-Movement action you will perform after the occurrence of a specified event before the end of the round.
Effects: After the specified event occurs before the end of the round, you may perform the action. You must still use the ring matching your stance for this action.

If the specified event does not occur this round, you may perform one action of your choice (other than Wait) at the end of the round.

Resolving a Skirmish

A skirmish continues until only one group of combatants remains standing in the field. The GM should conclude a skirmish when one side has vanquished or driven off all their foes, or when it becomes clear that they will claim victory.

If a warrior believes they have a chance to escape and survive, most will not voluntarily choose to fight to the death. Honor forfeited when retreating can be regained, but an ignoble death is more enduring.

Silhouette, Range Bands, and Terrain

During scenes, concepts such as the size of objects, distance between points, and nature of the surrounding terrain are sometimes important. The following rules offer guidance on how to model these during the game.

SILHOUETTE

Objects in *Legend of the Five Rings* are classified into a number of different size categories called **silhouettes**. While these categories are abstract and are frequently more useful for description than for specific mechanics, they do have some important ramifications for certain techniques (see **Chapter 4: Techniques**, on page 171).

RANGE BANDS

Instead of measuring discrete units of space, *Legend of the Five Rings* handles the concept of distance between two people or objects abstractly, using **range bands**. Range bands are a set of numbered, approximate distances that can be used to define spatial relationships between two points when that information is needed.

Table 6–3: Silhouette Examples

VALUE	EXAMPLES
0	Handheld objects, cats, small dogs
1	Children, large dogs, goblins
2	Adult humans, ningyo, tengu
3	Horses, naga, rakshasa, trolls
4	Ogres, elephants
5	Dragons

Range bands allow narrative scenes and conflicts—especially skirmishes—to move at a faster pace, glossing over some specifics. Using range bands also means that representations on a tactical map are not strictly necessary for conflicts, though they can still be useful for helping keep track of relative positions.

Note that range bands increase in scale as they increase in number—the difference in the distance between range 0 and range 1 (from arm's reach to sword reach) and the distance between range 5 and range 6 (from a hundred or more yards to the edge of perceptible range) is substantial. This reflects the difficulty inherent in closing with or escaping a foe while allowing characters to reposition strategically when not being impeded.

ENCUMBRANCE

At maximum, most creatures can carry a set of things with a sum silhouette value equal to their own silhouette. The GM should apply common sense when it comes to matters of carrying capacity.

For example, an adult human (2) can pick up one child (1) and one large dog (1), or one other adult human (2), without exceptional effort, but they cannot carry a horse (3). Nor can they carry 30 cats (0), because this would defy common sense.

Characters can sometimes make checks to temporarily exceed these limits, with TNs based on the examples on page 24.

Table 6–4: The Seven Range Bands

RANGE	DISTANCE	DESCRIPTION
Range 0	Touch (1–2 feet)	At this range, two foes can grapple and use small weapons such as knives, but longer weapons are hard to wield effectively. Objects at range 0 might be at the person's feet, or even on their person, and a character can interact with them.
Range 1	Sword (1–2 yards)	The optimal range for fighting with a sword. A character can generally interact with people and objects at range 1. Most skills that have a manual aspect require the target or object to be at range 0–1.
Range 2	Spear (3–4 yards)	The range at which polearms such as spears and naginata have the greatest advantage.
Range 3	Throw (5–10 yards)	The range at which thrown missile weapons are most effective.
Range 4	Bow (11–100 yards)	The midrange for missile weapons like bows. Generally speaking, this range coincides with the edge of earshot for most characters.
Range 5	Volley (100+ yards)	The distance to the outer edge of the range at which missile weapons are accurate. This is the farthest most characters can see any details.
Range 6	Sight (more than a few hundred yards)	Range 6 represents the maximum distance at which one can interact with a human-sized target (albeit minimally). To travel beyond range 6 of their current location, a character must generally travel in narrative time or downtime.

MAXIMUM AND MINIMUM RANGE

When a distance or distances are specified for an effect or ability, the provided value(s) are both a maximum and a minimum. In other words, if an ability affects something at range 1–3, it cannot affect an object closer than range 1 any more than it can affect one farther than range 3.

TRACKING RANGE

Even without using a tactical grid, there are a few ways to track range bands as the GM. You can mentally track them, note them on scratch paper, or use figures, tokens, or other markers to track the distances between characters, objects, and terrain.

By placing tokens closer together or farther from each other to indicate relative range, you can use them to give the players a clearer picture of the scene. Using this method, you and the players can usually "eyeball it," remembering that a few inches on the table is range 2, while range 1 is touching the other token and range 0 is overlapping it.

A slightly more precise method is to place a number of marker tokens between characters and objects indicating the distances between them. This can help the GM and players keep an especially consistent picture, particularly when there are numerous combatants.

Range Bands on a Tactical Grid (Optional Rule)

Using range bands on a tactical grid requires a few additional guidelines, but adds a level of granularity many players enjoy. Note that some of the distances of the individual range bands are adjusted slightly in this model to fit on commonly sized tactical maps, and the same situation may produce different results than it would using the more abstract model. As with all matters, GMs should choose the option that best suits their storytelling style, campaign, and each individual scene.

Distances

Range bands can be converted to distances on a tactical grid as follows:

Range 0: The square the character occupies.
Range 1: The squares adjacent to range 0.
Range 2: The next row of squares adjacent to range 1.
Range 3: The next row of squares after range 2.
Range 4: The next 4 rows of squares after range 3.
Range 5: The next 5 rows of squares after range 4.
Range 6: Any squares on the grid beyond range 5.

Adjacency of Squares

Two squares are **adjacent** if they share an edge or a corner.

Movement

When an effect instructs a character to move 1 or more range bands, the character moves up to 3 squares per range band they are instructed to move.

Diagonal Squares: Squares diagonal to a character's current square are considered adjacent, but moving into a diagonally adjacent square counts as moving 1 additional square.

Difficult Squares: Exiting a square occupied by an enemy (a hostile character, as defined by the GM) or obstacle (terrain with the Entangling terrain quality, vertical distance, etc.), counts as moving 1 additional square (up to a total of 3 squares, if the character is also moving diagonally).

Resolving Movement: Each move from one square to the next is resolved sequentially, with the character moving between two adjacent squares. If a character cannot complete a proposed move between two squares with their remaining movement, they must stop or move to a different square that they can reach.

Combining Movement: At the GM's discretion, multiple effects that allow a character to move 1 or more range bands at the same time can be combined, allowing the character to move a number of squares equal to the sum of the number of range bands they were instructed to move multiplied by 3.

DIAGRAM: 6–1 RANGE BANDS IN SQUARES

Range bands extend away from a character in all directions in the following increments.

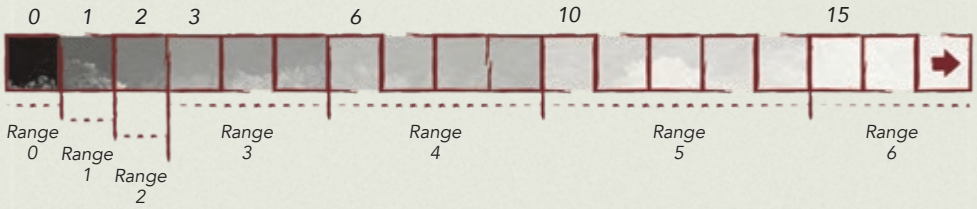


DIAGRAM 6–2: DIAGONALS

Range bands radiate out including diagonal squares.

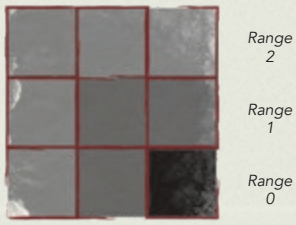
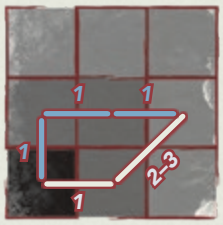


DIAGRAM 6–3: EXAMPLES

Two methods of moving 3 squares



TERRAIN

Battles are often decided by the ground on which they are fought; knowing when to attack and when to reposition for more favorable conditions is a key part of strategy.

At the outset of a duel, skirmish, or mass battle, the GM should establish any relevant **terrain** features, which the characters can identify with checks or by spending ✿ from their Initiative checks (see page 250).

Each terrain feature occupies a number of range bands around a particular position, as determined by the GM. A terrain feature can be as small as extending to range 0 (arm's length) in all directions from that point, or it can be much larger; it can even stretch unevenly in different directions. In addition to affecting characters in various scenes, terrain qualities affect the cohorts that occupy them in mass battles, as described on page 276.

Terrain Qualities

While within a terrain feature, a character is subject to any effects its terrain qualities entail.

Dangerous

Dangerous terrain is physically hazardous to enter or even linger in. This is mundane terrain found in most regions.

Effects: Whenever a character performs a check while within Dangerous terrain, the character suffers physical damage equal to the 🔥 symbols on their kept dice.

Examples: Fire, intense cold, thawing ice, steep inclines, jagged rocks, an uncovered foundation, rubble.

Defiled

Defiled terrain is afflicted by the vile touch of the Shadowlands. Even those uneducated in the dark secrets of the realm beyond the Kaiu Wall feel a pervasive sense of wrongness on such unholy ground. It is more common in the Shadowlands than within the Emerald Empire. This is supernatural terrain found in especially unhallowed places.

Effects: At the end of the scene, each character who was within Defiled terrain must make a **TN 2 Fitness** or **Meditation check**. Each character who fails suffers the Afflicted condition (see page 271). Tainted beings reduce the TNs of their checks to resist effects by 1 while in Defiled terrain.

Examples: An oni's lair, a battlefield filled with unburned dead, a haunted castle, the secret hideout of a mahō-tsukai.

Entangling

Entangling terrain is ground that seriously hampers the mobility of anyone within it. This is mundane terrain found in most regions.

Effects: While within Entangling terrain, a character increases the TN of all their checks to move and for Movement actions by 2.

Examples: Sucking mud, brier patches, deep snow, icy ground, moving water.

Hallowed (One or More Elements)

Hallowed terrain is close to one or more of the Spirit Realms, and invocations are easier to perform in such a location. This is supernatural terrain found in places where kami dwell or miracles have occurred.

Effects: While within Hallowed terrain, a character reduces the TN of their Meditation and Theology checks using the specified ring or rings by 1. Tainted beings increase the TN of their checks to resist effects by 1, or 2 if they are using the specified ring.

Examples: A shrine to a kami, a particular place of natural beauty, a location where a powerful spirit resides.

Imbalanced (One or More Elements)

Imbalanced terrain is marked by a distinct absence or disquiet of the kami of a certain element, and thus invocations are harder to perform in such a location. This is supernatural terrain found in regions affected by an elemental imbalance.

Effects: While within Imbalanced terrain, a character increases the TN of their Meditation and Theology checks using the terrain's specified ring by 1. Otherworldly beings increase the TN of their checks to resist effects by 1, or 2 if they are using the specified ring.

Examples: A forest mysteriously missing its leaves, a barren farm field, an out-of-control river.

Obscuring

Obscuring terrain limits the visibility of (and to) anyone within, making it very difficult to land strikes. This is mundane terrain found in most regions.

Effects: Increase the TN of all Attack checks targeting characters within Obscuring terrain by 1

A character within Obscuring terrain generally cannot see beyond range 2 of their current position into the Obscuring terrain (though they can generally see out of it, if they are within range 2 of an edge).

A character outside of Obscuring terrain cannot see into it beyond range 2 of the edge.

Examples: Dense foliage, darkness, cramped indoor quarters, heavy rain or snow, choking smoke.

MULTIPLE TERRAIN TYPES

An area can have multiple terrain qualities. For instance, a burning building would likely possess both the Dangerous and Obscuring terrain qualities, while a thick forest would have the Entangling and Obscuring terrain qualities.

DRAMATIC TERRAIN

A meeting in an open field might have no terrain features, but such encounters tend to be less interesting than ones that take place in a more varied environment. Snowy forests, jagged cliffsides, and city rooftops under the waning light of the moon are all much more dramatic locales!

Keep in mind, however, that combat in *Legend of the Five Rings* is meant to be narrative and quick—the presence or absence of terrain features is more important than their exact positions down to the inch. They should generally be positioned such that they can be exploited by PCs and NPCs alike, to create scenes with many opportunities for clever ambushes and turnabouts using the battlefield itself.

Harm and Healing

All samurai are members of a warrior caste, at least nominally, and the wise know well that war is a grave matter indeed. Killing is not something that most enjoy—and neither is dying—but both are realities of a warrior's life. Battlefield leaders, yōjimbō, and other samurai who unsheathe their blades on a regular basis can expect to suffer some number of battle wounds, and they are likely familiar with all manner of injuries.

DAMAGE

When a character is in peril of suffering bodily harm, this is represented through **damage**. Damage is a numerical abstraction of the harm a character could suffer from a blow, fall, or mishap—if they cannot defend themself.

Dealing Damage

When an effect states that it deals damage to a character, there are three possible outcomes:

- The character **reduces the damage to 0** with armor or similar protection against the strike.
- The character **defends against the damage** by receiving fatigue equal to any remaining damage to dodge, block, or deflect a telling blow.
- If the character does not reduce the damage to 0 or defend, they **suffer a critical strike** with severity based on the damage source.

Increasing and Reducing Damage

Some effects **increase** damage, while others **reduce** damage. Before dealing damage to a character, first apply any increases to the damage, and then apply any reductions to the damage, to a minimum of 0.

If a character reduces damage they would suffer to 0, they do not need to defend against it—if the blow lands, it glances off harmlessly. Resistance from armor and other effects (see page 238) is one way to reduce damage.

Defending against Damage

When an effect deals damage to a character even after reductions, the character must **defend** against that damage; if they cannot, they suffer a critical strike with severity based on the damage source (the deadliness, for most weapons). **To defend, they must receive an amount of fatigue equal to the remaining damage;** otherwise, they suffer a critical strike with severity based on the source.

FATIGUE EXCEEDING ENDURANCE

A character can still defend if defending would cause their fatigue to exceed their endurance.

However, having fatigue in excess of their endurance does render a character Incapacitated (see page 272), leaving them unable to defend against future damage!

Defending is not normally optional—instinctive reactions cause a character to duck, dodge, or roll away from harm—but a character who is not Incapacitated may spend 1 Void point to voluntarily suffer a critical strike instead of defending. By overcoming their survival instinct with sheer willpower, they allow themself to be struck to seize a tactical advantage.

Note that an Incapacitated character (see page 272) cannot defend against damage, and thus suffers a critical strike whenever they suffer damage.

Damage Source

The **source** of damage is determined by the effect that deals it. If damage is dealt by an effect "using a weapon," that weapon is the source of the damage. If damage is dealt by a supernatural power that is not a weapon, that power is the source of the damage. If damage is dealt by a physical phenomenon such as gravity or fire, that phenomenon is the source of the damage.

Damage Types

Each instance of damage has a **damage type**, which is specified in the effect that deals the damage (or is determined by the GM). Two common types are:

- **Physical Damage:** Dealt by punches, cuts, falls, and other physical phenomena.
- **Supernatural Damage:** Dealt by invocations, mahō, and other mystical phenomena.

Fatigue

Fatigue represents a character's growing exhaustion as a battle wears on—shortness of breath, gaps in their perception, and strained muscles that accumulate from blocking and evading against oncoming strikes.

When a character suffers fatigue, their player should record it on their character sheet.

Consequences of Fatigue

After a character suffers fatigue, if their fatigue exceeds their endurance, the character suffers the Incapacitated condition (see page 272). This represents the character's being overwhelmed to such a degree that they cannot take effective action or mount a meaningful defense.

Recovering from Fatigue

From rest and various game effects, such as the Medicine skill, characters can **remove** fatigue. When a character removes an amount of fatigue, their player removes that much fatigue from their character sheet.

At the end of each scene, characters catch their breath. Each character reduces their fatigue to half of their endurance (rounded up) if it is over half their endurance.

After a full night's rest, a character heals fatigue equal to two times their Water Ring.

CRITICAL STRIKES

Critical strikes represent particularly deadly blows that have slipped past a character's defenses to inflict injuries, permanent scars, or even death. When a character fails to defend against damage, they suffer a critical strike. Additionally, some effects inflict critical strikes directly. See page 270 for more on **Suffering Critical Strikes**.

FALLING

The length of a **fall** is measured in range bands, and the number of range bands a character falls determines the ill effects they suffer. When a character lands, they must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Air 1, Earth 5) check**; if they succeed, the character reduces the number of range bands they count as having fallen by 1 plus their bonus successes (to a minimum of a Range 0 fall).

SUFFOCATION

At the beginning of each of their turns, a character who is **suffocating** receives 2 fatigue and 2 strife. The character does not suffer critical strikes for wounds suffered this way. At the beginning of each of the character's turns while they are suffocating, if they are suffering the Unconscious condition, they must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness (Earth) check**; if the character fails, they perish.

DEATH

Player characters are not ordinary people. They are, after all, the main characters of the story the group has gathered to tell together. Often, death at a particular juncture is not the most interesting outcome for one of these characters. It is a classic trope for a samurai to survive defeat and bear the shame of that loss while seeking to restore their honor or find some other solace besides the Code of Bushidō.

However, *Legend of the Five Rings* is also meant to evoke a setting where characters stand to lose their lives in the pursuit of their duties and passions. Thus, the rules presented in this chapter are calibrated to a particular balance of dramatic tension, story flow, and fun for everyone at the table.

Table 6–5: Falling Damage

DISTANCE	EFFECTS
Range 0	The character suffers the Disoriented condition.
Range 1	The character suffers 4 physical damage and the Disoriented condition.
Range 2	The character suffers 8 physical damage and the Prone and Disoriented conditions.
Range 3	The character suffers 12 physical damage and the Prone and Unconscious conditions.
Range 4	The character suffers a critical strike with severity 10 and the Prone and Unconscious conditions.
Range 5	The character suffers a critical strike with severity 16 and the Prone and Unconscious conditions.
Range 6	The character suffers a critical strike with severity 18 and the Prone and Unconscious conditions.

DEFENDING ONESELF WITH A SWORD

The sword is said to be the soul of the samurai, and thus it is not some blunt instrument. Rokugani sword technique generally does not encourage blade-to-blade parrying, as a katana's razor edge is quickly degraded or even ruined by such techniques.

While a skilled warrior uses the flat of their blade to ward off cuts, their primary defense is usually positioning and evasion. However, when the choice is between losing one's blade and losing one's life, a samurai might dramatically intercept a blow with a readied weapon, as described in the **Shattering Parry** *sidebar on page 270.*

Suffering Critical Strikes

A critical strike has a **severity** value, which is dictated by the method by which it was inflicted. When a character suffers a critical strike after failing to defend against damage, the severity is the deadliness of the source of the damage. When an effect inflicts a critical strike directly, it usually specifies the severity (otherwise, see **Unspecified Deadliness**).

When a character suffers a critical strike, they must make a **TN 1 Fitness check** to mitigate its effects (using a ring of their choice in a narrative scene, or the ring their stance dictates in a conflict scene).

If the character succeeds, they reduce the severity by 1 plus their bonus successes on the check (to a minimum of 0). Then, consult **Table 6–6: Results of Critical Strikes by Severity** and apply the listed effects to the character.

SHATTERING PARRY

Once per game session, after a player character rolls dice to resist a critical strike, they may parry the blow directly, putting the brunt of the impact on one of their readied weapons. They may reroll all of their dice for the check, and the weapon they used for the shattering parry gains the Damaged quality as its edge chips or cracks.

At the GM's discretion, a character could instead use an unarmed profile this way, but this might cause them to lose the body part involved, receiving the appropriate scar type disadvantage.

REPEATED INJURY

At the GM's discretion, if a character would otherwise be assigned a second instance of a disadvantage with the scar type due to recurring harm, the character is struck with a mortal blow. Instead of being assigned a new scar disadvantage, the character suffers the Dying (5 rounds) condition.

Unspecified Deadliness

The following guidelines should be used when a source does not provide a deadliness.

- **Invocations and Mahō:** Deadliness equal to the value of the ring used for the Attack action check plus kept symbols on that check.
- **Kihō:** 8.
- **Extreme Temperature (Fire, Frostbite, etc.):** 5, but each repeated exposure increases by +2.
- **Falls:** The damage of a fall has a deadliness of 7. Very long falls also inflict critical strikes directly.
- **Sufficiently Heavy Objects:** Deadliness equal to three times the object's silhouette.

Table 6–6: Results of Critical Strikes by Severity

SEVERITY	DESCRIPTION	MECHANICAL EFFECT
0–2	**Close Call:** The hit slices the character's hair or clothes but fails to draw blood.	If the character is wearing armor, the armor gains the Damaged quality (see page 240).
3–4	**Flesh Wound:** The hit sinks into the character's flesh, slicing shallowly or creating a vicious contusion.	The character suffers the Lightly Wounded condition for the ring they used for their check to resist. If the attack had the Razor-Edged quality, the character also suffers the Bleeding condition.
5–6	**Debilitating Gash:** The hit is agonizing, cutting a deep furrow in the flesh or splitting muscle and fracturing bone. The character will likely need time to recover fully.	The character suffers the Severely Wounded condition for the ring they used they used for their check to resist. If the attack had the Razor-Edged quality, the character also suffers the Bleeding condition.
7–8	**Permanent Injury:** The strike leaves the character permanently injured, bearing a scar that will impact them the rest of their life.	The character suffers the Bleeding condition, then chooses one scar of the following disadvantages for the ring they used for their check to resist: Air (Maimed Visage or Nerve Damage), Earth (Damaged Organ or Fractured Spine), Fire (Lost Fingers or Maimed Arm), Water (Lost Eye or Lost Foot), Void (Lost Memories).
9–11	**Maiming Blow:** The character is gravely hurt by the strike and might never fully recover from it.	The character suffers the Bleeding condition, then chooses one of the following scar disadvantages for the ring they used for their check to resist: Air (Deafness or Muteness), Earth (Damaged Heart or Damaged Organ), Fire (Lost Arm or Lost Hand), Water (Blindness or Lost Leg), Void (Cognitive Lapses)
12–13	**Agonizing Death:** The blow is mortal, and the character knows it.	The character suffers the Severely Wounded condition for the ring they used for their check to resist, as well as the Bleeding and Dying (3 rounds) conditions.
14–15	**Swift Death:** The character lives just long enough to realize their demise.	The character suffers the Severely Wounded condition for the ring they used for their check to resist, as well as the Bleeding and Dying (1 round) conditions.
16+	**Instant Death:** The character dies without even a last word.	The character dies immediately.

Conditions

Sometimes, a character is subjected to a temporary effect called a **condition**. While a character is under the effects of a condition, all of its effects are applied to them. Each condition specifies these effects, as well as how the condition is removed.

AFFLICTED

Description: The character is possessed or otherwise tormented by an *onryō* (vengeful ghost), kansen, or other malevolent spiritual entity. Given time, this evil force threatens to plant the seeds of the Shadowlands Taint.
Effects: An Afflicted character's vigilance counts as 1. When they make a check, after **Step 5: Choose Kept Dice**, the GM may alter one kept ■ to a ✲ ⟲ result.

Additionally, when an Afflicted character becomes Compromised, one of the following effects occurs based on the ring the character last used for a check (or a ring of the GM's choice, if nobody can remember or there is uncertainty).

- **Air:** The character falls into a melancholic haze of memory, unable to discern the past from the present or the living from the deceased. When the character becomes Compromised, they mistake someone in the scene for a person from their past, accusing them of some half-remembered sin or taunting them over some ancient failure until the end of the scene.
- **Water:** The character's health collapses and they begin to wither away, wracked by mysterious coughing fits or fevers that resist all medical care. When the character becomes Compromised, they become violently ill and suffer a critical strike with a severity of 5.
- **Fire:** The character becomes possessed by a desire, pursuing it to their own destruction. When the character becomes Compromised, they also become Enraged (see page 272).
- **Earth:** The character's flesh becomes pale and begins to show signs of decay. When the character becomes Compromised, reduce their endurance by 1 until the Afflicted condition is removed. This effect is cumulative, and if their endurance reaches 0, the character perishes.
- **Void:** Ill fortune follows the character's every move, and anything that seems a boon rapidly sours. When the character becomes Compromised, they lose all of their Void points.

Removed When: Rituals such as Cleansing Rite (see page 212) and other abilities can remove the Afflicted condition.

Every two weeks, an Afflicted character must make a **TN 4 Fitness** or **Meditation check** using any ring. If they fail, remove the Afflicted condition and assign the Shadowlands Taint disadvantage to the ring they use for the check (or to another ring, if that ring already has it).

BLEEDING

Description: The character is losing blood, internally or externally.
Effects: When a Bleeding character makes a check, they suffer physical damage equal to the ⟲ symbols on their kept dice, ignoring their resistances. Each time damage inflicted this way causes the character to suffer a critical strike, the severity of the critical strike is treated as being equal to the character's current fatigue.
Removed When: Any character at range 0–1 of a Bleeding character may make a **TN 2 Medicine (Earth) check** as a Support action to remove the Bleeding condition.

BURNING

Description: The character is ablaze.

Effects: After a Burning character performing an action, the character suffers 3 strife and 3 physical damage that ignores their resistance. The severity of critical strikes caused by this damage is 5. Each critical strike a character suffers this way beyond the first before the condition is removed has its severity increased by 5.

Removed When: A character may attempt to smother flames consuming them or another character at range 0–1 by making a **TN 2 Fitness (Water) check** as a Movement and Support action; if they succeed, they remove the Burning condition.

COMPROMISED

Description: The character is emotionally distraught and distracted.

Effects: A Compromised character cannot keep dice containing ⚝ symbols (to a possible minimum of 0 kept dice). While Compromised, a character's vigilance counts as 1.

Removed When: A Compromised character removes this condition when their strife is reduced to a value lower than or equal to their composure.

DAZED

Description: The character's vision is obscured or their focus is hampered, putting them on the defensive.

Effects: A Dazed character increases the TN of their Attack and Scheme action checks by 2.

Removed When: At the end of their turn, if the character did not perform an Attack or Scheme action, they remove the Dazed condition.

DISORIENTED

Description: The character's senses are scattered, cutting off their options to defend themself.

Effects: A Disoriented character increases the TN of their Movement and Support action checks by 2.

Removed When: At the end of their turn, if the character did not perform a Movement or Support action, they remove the Disoriented condition.

DYING [X ROUNDS]

Description: The character is on the verge of death due to blood loss, organ failure, or another cause.

Effects: A Dying character is hovering on the precipice between life and death for a number of rounds (or an amount of narrative time) specified by the effect that applied the Dying condition. Once the allotted time has passed, the character perishes at the end of their next turn (or after completing one task in a narrative scene). If the Dying condition is removed before then, the character stabilizes and narrowly survives their close brush with death.

Removed When: Any character at range 0–1 of a Dying character may make a **TN 4 Medicine (Air) check** as a Support action to remove the Dying condition. If they fail, reduce the number of rounds remaining for the Dying condition by their shortfall.

ENRAGED

Description: The character is consumed with rage and fights with a fury as devastating as it is terrifying.

Effects: An Enraged character increases the severity of all critical strikes inflicted by and upon the character by 2. The first time an Enraged character kills another character each scene, the Enraged character gains 1 Void point.

Removed When: An Enraged character may make a **TN 3 Meditation (Void) check** as a Support action to remove the Enraged condition. Otherwise, the condition is removed at the end of the scene.

EXHAUSTED

Description: The character is physically and mentally exhausted. Characters who go more than twenty-four hours without sleep (or less time under trying circumstances, at the GM's discretion) suffer this condition.

Effects: An Exhausted character does not remove fatigue and strife at the end of each scene as normal (see page 269).

Removed When: An Exhausted character removes this condition after sleeping for six or more hours.

IMMOBILIZED

Description: The character is entangled, pinned down, or otherwise incapable of movement.

Effects: An Immobilized character cannot perform Movement actions or otherwise reposition themself during their turn, and they cannot select a different stance during their turn.

Removed When: At the end of their turn, if the character did not perform a Movement action this turn, they remove the Immobilized condition.

INCAPACITATED

Description: The character is largely incapable of action due to the scope of the harm they have suffered.

Effects: An Incapacitated character cannot perform actions that require checks and cannot defend against damage.

After an Incapacitated character suffers a critical strike, they suffer the Unconscious condition in addition to any other effects.

Removed When: An Incapacitated character removes this condition when their fatigue is reduced to a value lower than or equal to their endurance.

INTOXICATED

Description: The character is drunk.

Effects: An Intoxicated character doubles all strife they suffer and doubles all strife they remove.

Removed When: At the end of each scene, an Intoxicated character may attempt to sober up by making a **TN 3 Fitness (Water) check**; if the character succeeds, they remove the Intoxicated condition. A downtime scene spent resting also removes the Intoxicated condition.

PRONE

Description: The character is flat on the ground. A character may voluntarily become Prone as a Movement action.

Effects: A Prone character can move a maximum of 1 range band during their turn. At the GM's discretion, a Prone character is harder to spot at a distance or hit with ranged attack checks (increasing relevant TNs by 1).

Removed When: At the end of their turn, if the character did not perform a Movement action, they may remove the Prone condition.

SILENCED

Description: The character has been rendered temporarily speechless by shock or a swift blow.

Effects: A Silenced character increases the TN of their Scheme action checks and checks to activate invocations, mahō, and shūji by 3.

Removed When: At the end of the character's turn, if they did not perform an Scheme action or make a check requiring speech, remove this condition.

UNCONSCIOUS

Description: The character has been knocked out, has fallen asleep, or has otherwise been rendered totally unaware of their surroundings.

Effects: An Unconscious character cannot move, perform actions, or otherwise significantly act upon the physical world. An Unconscious character can still make checks to resist effects, but they cannot generally make checks that represent any agency on their part. Increase the severity of any critical strike the character suffers by 10.

An Unconscious character cannot defend against damage, but they generally wake up if they hear a loud noise, suffer harm, or otherwise experience something that would normally wake someone.

Removed When: An Unconscious character may spend 1 Void point to awaken immediately, their instincts rousing them in time to defend against damage. Characters also generally awaken after several hours.

WOUNDED

Description: A part of the character's body is injured badly enough to hinder their use of it. This is reflected mechanically by one of their rings' being negatively affected when the character uses it, which should be recorded along with the condition.

Effects: This condition has two forms: Lightly Wounded and Severely Wounded.

Removed When: Any character can provide treatment by making a **TN 4 Medicine (Water) check** as a downtime activity. If they succeed, the injured character removes Lightly Wounded or reduces Severely Wounded to Lightly Wounded. This check can be attempted once per wounded ring per week.

Additionally, a character can attempt to heal through bed rest. Once per week per wounded ring, a character may make a **TN 3 Fitness check** using that ring (and ignoring the modifiers to the TN the condition normally applies). If they succeed, they remove the Lightly Wounded condition or reduce the Severely Wounded condition to the Lightly Wounded condition.

Lightly Wounded [One Ring]

Effects: A Lightly Wounded character increases the TN of their checks with the affected ring by 1.

If the character suffers the Severely Wounded condition for the same ring, remove this condition.

If the character would suffer the Lightly Wounded condition again for the same ring, they remove it and suffer the Severely Wounded condition for that ring.

Severely Wounded [One Ring]

Effects: A Severely Wounded character increases the TN of their checks with the affected ring by 3.

If the character suffers the Lightly Wounded or Severely Wounded condition for the same ring, they remove it and suffer the effects of a severity 8 critical strike (**Permanent Injury**, see page 270) for that ring as if they had failed the check to resist it.

THEMATIC INJURIES BY RING

The Lightly Wounded and Severely Wounded conditions do not include specific descriptions or gory details of the harm the character has suffered for the purposes of expedience during battle, but that does not mean that the GM should not describe the harm the character has suffered or factor it into the narrative if it makes sense to do so (and isn't overly disturbing to anyone at the table).

Below are a number of suggested parts of the body that might be nicked, sliced, smashed, or stabbed as part of the Lightly Wounded or Severely Wounded condition, together with their associated ring:

Fire: Hand, arm, fingers, nose

Air: Face, neck, ears

Earth: Back, torso, thigh

Water: Foot, leg, eyes

Void: Head, skull, brain

WHEN TO USE A MASS BATTLE

The rules for mass battles are best for simulating large-scale conflicts in which the PCs play a major role.

If a group of PCs is thrust into a larger battle that they can't influence strategically, the GM would likely be better served by using rules for a skirmish and narrating the chaos swirling around them.

Similarly, if the PCs have a single, specific role to fulfill within a larger conflict, the GM might want to use the skirmish rules or shift from a mass battle to a skirmish as needed.

Mass Battles

Though they fulfill many societal functions, serving as everything from bureaucrats to courtiers to guards, samurai stem from lineages of martial distinction, and their most fundamental duty centers on the battlefield. As such, any samurai might occasionally be called by their lord to serve in battle—though some jump at the task more readily than others. If the situation grows dire enough, even a samurai unready for command might be tasked with leading an army, and the PCs are no exception. Even when samurai are not in command of a unit, ashigaru and other troops look to them for leadership.

RULES FOR MASS BATTLES

Mass battles follow the general pattern described in **Conflict Scenes** on page 249, with the following additions and alterations:

ARMIES

While some individual PCs and NPCs act during a mass battle, the majority of the conflict is handled by each side's **army**. Armies are abstracted representations of large groups of warriors as well as the general acumen, training, and equipment of those assembled. Like characters, armies possess certain attributes and abilities.

Commanders

Each army has one **commander**, a character appointed to direct the entire army. This character is chosen during **Phase 1: Initiative**. Usually, a prior appointment by powers supporting the army dictates which character will be the commander, but if there are disagreements—or if the commander is killed without a clear chain of command in place—the role might come into contention. Characters with lower status are expected to defer to characters with higher status in these situations.

At the beginning of each round of a mass battle, the commander selects the army's strategic objective for the round, which in turn influences the actions performed by the army's leaders.

If an army's commander is killed, the army suffers 10 panic (see page 276). Then, if the army has not collapsed, the character with the highest status assumes command (or appoints someone else to command). The GM might wish to briefly shift to a narrative scene (see page 247) if several characters get into an argument over command before returning to the mass battle.

Leaders and Cohorts

In addition to a commander, an army has one or more **leaders**. Depending on the size of the conflict, their ranks might vary from squad leaders to full-fledged generals in their own right. Regardless of the size of the forces involved, each leader commands a relatively

SUMMARY OF A MASS BATTLE TURN

During their turn, a character can do all of the following:

1. Choose a stance, which reflects their tactics for leading their troops.

2. Narratively move their cohort to another location on the field of war. This can be done before or after performing an action.

3. Perform an action, such as reinforcing a position, rallying the army, or assaulting an enemy leader's cohort.

BATTLES IN ROKUGAN

Few battles end in an absolute rout Most battles are won when one side accomplishes the goals it came to achieve via the completion of strategic objectives by leaders.

There is considerable renown to be gained in being the one to carry out the commander's orders, and in some armies, battlefield leaders compete against one another as fervently as they do against the enemy.

independent chunk of the army called a **cohort** and must be able to make tactical decisions that serve the commander's goal without direct oversight. The commander of each army chooses the army's leaders during **Phase 1: Initiative**. Generally, each PC participating in a mass battle should be chosen as a leader, to give all players an important job in the conflict. The GM should then assign a similar number of NPCs as leaders of cohorts of the opposing army.

LEADERS AND ACTIONS

During each round of a mass battle, each leader selects an action and leads their cohort in pursuing that action. For the purposes of identification, targeting, and effects, each cohort is defined by its leader.

Determining Cohorts

An army can be organized into any number of cohorts, but it is generally prudent to have enough cohorts in an army for all of the PCs to be able to do important things during the battle.

Note that cohorts usually do not suffer casualties directly; instead, casualties are applied to the overall strength of the army. Given the strategic pace of mass battles, damaged cohorts can usually be reinforced from elsewhere in the army long before they are wiped out.

In mass battles, terrain qualities (see page 267), affect the cohorts that occupy them. When a cohort would suffer damage from a terrain effect, it suffers that much attrition instead.

SETTING THE FIELD

Battlefields are handled abstractly in the rules for mass battles. Ranges are not tracked concretely, and a cohort is expected to be able to reach any location on the battlefield to perform its action there in the span of a round.

This does not mean that terrain, including fortresses and other structures, has no role to play in the battle. These features should be something that the PCs can use against their foes—and vice versa! At the outset of a battle, the GM should define several terrain features relevant to the combat to the PCs, describing their relative locations and distances to help set the scene.

Army Attributes

Armies have two attributes that reflect their overall state of preparedness and efficacy. Both of these attributes are tracked on a scale from 1 to 100. Like endurance and composure for characters, these attributes reflect the physical and mental losses an army can suffer before collapsing.

Strength

Strength is an abstraction of the army's ability to absorb casualties without ceasing to function. A large part of an army's strength is raw numbers, but other factors, such as good infrastructure (to keep soldiers well fed, mended, and free of disease), ready access to supplies and equipment, and sufficient rest can also have a substantial impact on army strength. Strength is measured against casualties, which are the measure of an army's losses in battle and function like fatigue for a character. Attacks against an army's forces, positions, and supplies deal **attrition** to the army (much as Attack actions deal damage to a character), from which the army suffers **casualties** after applying any increases and reductions to attrition dealt to it.

At the end of each round, if an army's casualties exceed its strength, the army is routed, and a majority of its constituents are killed. See **Resolving a Mass Battle** on page 279.

FORTIFICATIONS

Fortresses and other structures are extremely powerful assets in wartime. When foes attack a cohort that occupies a fortification, the attrition that they inflict is reduced by an amount based on the quality of the fortification.

Further, each fortification has a difficulty value to dislodge forces from it, listed here.

Only a single cohort can occupy a fortification. If one cohort moves to a position to fortify it, the army's other cohorts must find something else to do on the battlefield.

Woods or Defensive Terrain: Reduce attrition suffered by 1, Difficulty Value 4.

Outpost: Reduce attrition suffered by 2, Difficulty Value 6.

Fortress: Reduce attrition suffered by 3, Difficulty Value 8.

Castle: Reduce attrition suffered by 4, Difficulty Value 12.

Discipline

Discipline is a reflection of an army's psychological state and the ability of its troops to remain in the field despite witnessing the horrors of war. Confidence in the army's leadership or belief in the righteousness of a cause can buoy this attribute, while prolonged conflict, deprivation, and fear can drag it down. Discipline is measured against **panic**, which is the measure of an army's current state of disarray, and accumulates much like strife does for an individual character.

At the end of each round, if an army's panic exceeds its discipline, the army suffers a morale collapse, its warriors scattering, losing cohesion, or turning on their own. See **Resolving a Mass Battle** on page 279.

Army and Cohort Abilities

Many armies possess one or more abilities, which are listed in their profile. At the GM's discretion, an individual cohort can also possess an ability.

See page 280 for several sample armies.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

At the beginning of each round, each army's commander chooses one **strategic objective** for the entire army for that round (a few examples can be found below). The commander should also describe some specifics of the objective, fitting the details into the story of the battle that has unfolded so far.

To fulfill this strategic objective, the army's leaders must take actions to accrue momentum points toward this goal (see page 253). Once a particular strategic objective has been fulfilled, the commander cannot choose that objective again for three rounds. If an objective was not completed in a prior round, the commander may select it again, and the army's progress toward it continues.

When a leader's action completes a strategic objective, that leader is awarded 3 glory, and the effects described in the strategic objective resolve. Note that only the leader who personally completed the objective gets this glory reward—others who contributed do not receive the same benefit.

Sample Strategic Objectives

In addition to these examples, the GM can also prepare objectives specific to the battle. Players can even set their own goals for their army. In the latter case, the GM should have the players describe what they want to accomplish and then provide guidance on the narrative and mechanical avenues they must take to achieve it.

Capture a Position

The commander calls for the leaders to uproot the enemy from a specific position this round, so that the army can occupy it. This position must be a fortification or piece of terrain occupied by the enemy. Each type of position or fortification has a difficulty value, which is the number of momentum points an army must achieve to capture it (see **Fortifications** on the opposite page).

How to Achieve It: After a leader performs an Attack action against the enemy leader's cohort occupying the fortification, the army accrues 1 momentum point toward capturing the position per casualty the enemy army suffered.

Fulfilled When: This strategic objective is fulfilled after the army accrues momentum points equal to or exceeding the difficulty value for the specific fortification. Alternatively, it can be fulfilled if the enemy army vacates the position and a friendly leader successfully performs the Reinforce action there.

Upon Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective, the enemy cohort occupying the fortification is driven out and no longer counts as occupying it. The leader who completed this objective may choose to have their cohort occupy the fortification immediately.

Cut Off the Head

The commander calls for their army to corner and kill a particular leader in the enemy force, having identified this person as a serious impediment to victory. The difficulty value to corner a particular enemy leader in battle is equal to their focus attribute.

How to Achieve It: After a leader performs an Attack action against the enemy leader's cohort, the army accrues 3 momentum points toward this objective.

Fulfilled When: When the army accrues momentum points equal to or exceeding the difficulty value to corner the leader, the character who accrued the last momentum point may perform a finishing blow on the target as if they were fighting a duel (see **The Finishing Blow** on page 259). Alternately, this objective can be fulfilled if one of the army's leaders is able to kill the enemy leader in a clash via the Challenge action (see page 263).

Upon Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective against an enemy leader, the enemy army suffers 10 panic. When a leader completes this objective against the enemy commander, the enemy army suffers 20 panic instead.

Draw Them In

The commander tries to draw the foe into attacking a hardened position, preparing for a counterattack.

How to Achieve It: After an enemy army's leader performs an Attack action against a friendly leader's cohort, if that cohort suffers 3 or fewer casualties, the army accrues 1 momentum point.

After an enemy army's leader Challenges or accepts a Challenge from a friendly leader, the army accrues 1 momentum point.

Fulfilled When: This strategic objective is fulfilled after the army accrues a number of momentum points equal to or exceeding the enemy commander's vigilance.

Upon Completion: When the army completes this strategic objective, the enemy army suffers 5 panic. During the next round, double all attrition the army's leaders inflict.

Grind Them Down

The commander calls for the army to focus on inflicting harm on the foe to weaken their forces and break their resolve!

How to Achieve It: After a leader performs an Attack action against any enemy leader's cohort, the army accrues 1 momentum point per casualty the enemy army suffered.

READIED WEAPONS IN MASS BATTLES

At the start of each round, each character may choose one (or two, if both are used one-handed) weapons to count as readied for the round.

ANNIHILATING A COHORT

At the GM's discretion, a cohort can be annihilated by a particularly devastating attack. If a cohort suffers a number of casualties greater than a quarter of the army's total strength as the result of a single action, it is wiped out. Its leader suffers a critical strike with severity 12, and the cohort ceases to exist.

RETREATING

As an action, a character can also retreat from a mass battle. A character must forfeit 10 honor to do so, and they must also forfeit 10 glory if anyone else knows that they willingly retreated. Additionally, if they leave their cohort leaderless, the army suffers 10 panic.

If a character is ordered to retreat by their lord, they must stake 10 honor and 10 glory on completing whatever other task their lord has given them to accomplish instead of staying to fight.

Fulfilled When: This strategic objective is fulfilled after the army accrues momentum points equal to the enemy commander's Glory rank plus ranks in Command.
Upon Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective, the enemy army suffers 10 panic.

Seize Victory!

The commander calls for their forces to deliver a final blow to the enemy army. A commander can declare this strategic objective only after a number of other strategic objectives have been fulfilled during the battle. The GM sets the number of strategic objectives required; three is the recommended starting number, but the GM can adjust this up or down as they see fit.
How to Achieve It: After a leader performs an Attack action against any enemy leader's cohort, the army accrues 1 momentum point per casualty the enemy army suffered.
Fulfilled When: This strategic objective is fulfilled after the army accrues momentum points equal to or exceeding the enemy commander's focus plus their ranks in Tactics.
Upon Completion: When a leader completes this strategic objective, the enemy army is driven back and must retreat from the field. While the enemy army might not be destroyed completely, it can no longer achieve a meaningful victory in this battle due to strategic considerations.

Initiative

During this phase of a mass battle, each army selects a commander, who then makes an Initiative check and assigns leaders.

1. **Choose Commander:** At the start of **Phase 1: Initiative**, each army selects its commander.
2. **Initiative Check:** The commander performs an Initiative check to marshal and organize the forces of the army by making a **TN 1 Command check**.
3. **Select Leaders:** Next, the commander chooses the army's leaders. The commander may choose to personally be one of the army's leaders. The commander must choose at least one leader (generally, it is a good idea to make each PC or important NPC a leader).

Taking Turns

During this phase of a mass battle, commanders give leaders strategic direction and leaders direct their cohorts against enemy cohorts. Each leader commands their cohort in performing one action on their turn.

Commanders Determine Order

At the start of **Phase 2**, the commander with the higher initiative result decides if their army makes the first move or waits. If the commanders have the same initiative result, the one with the lower honor must have their army make the first move. Then, starting with the army that makes the first move, each commander nominates one of their leaders who has not acted yet that round to act, alternating back and forth until all leaders have acted.

Select Strategic Objective

At the beginning of each round, each commander chooses the army's strategic objective for the round. If they are not sure what to do, a PC commander may make a Tactics check with TN equal to the enemy commander's vigilance to gain insight into their foe and what sorts of moves they could use to gain the upper hand.

Rounds

Each cohort leader takes one turn each round when called upon to act by their commander.

Mass Battle Actions

In addition to these sample actions, characters can also perform actions created for the circumstances by their players (and approved by the GM) or actions that have been granted to them by their techniques and abilities.

Assault

Description: You move your cohort to a particular position, attacking the cohort of a chosen enemy leader.
Activation: As an Attack and Movement action, you may make a **TN 2 Tactics check** to lead your troops in a strike targeting one enemy leader's cohort.
Effects: If you succeed, you deal attrition to the enemy army equal to your ranks in Command plus your bonus successes.

Challenge

Description: You stride to the forefront of your force, bellowing a challenge to the enemy leader.
Activation: As a Movement and Scheme action, you may make a **TN 1 Command check** targeting one enemy leader with a challenge to single combat.
Effects: If you succeed, you stake 10 honor and 5 glory, which you forfeit if you sabotage the clash. Then, the target must choose whether to **accept** or **decline** your Challenge. Based on the target's decision, resolve one of the following:

- If the target **accepts**, they stake 10 honor and 5 glory, which they forfeit if they take any Attack or Scheme action before the clash. At the end of the round, you and the target enter a clash (see **Clashes**, on page 263).
- To **decline**, the target must forfeit glory equal to your ranks in Command plus your bonus successes. Their army suffers 3 panic. Then, you gain 1 Void point.

If you win the clash, the enemy army suffers 5 panic. If you lose the clash, your army suffers 5 panic.

Rally

Description: You command your troops to regroup and support an allied contingent.
Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Command check** targeting one friendly leader's cohort.
Effects: If you succeed, your army removes 1 panic, plus 1 additional panic per bonus success.

If you succeed or fail, the target counts as having your assistance (see page 26) on their next check before the end of the scene.

Reinforce

Description: You call for your troops to dig in and hold a position at all costs.
Activation: As a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Tactics check** to have your cohort dig in at one chosen position.
Effects: If you succeed, increase the TN of Attack action checks targeting your cohort by 1, plus an additional 1 per two bonus successes. This effect persists for one round.

If you choose an unoccupied fortification or piece of terrain this way, you are considered to be occupying it until you narratively leave it or perform an action other than Challenge or Reinforce.

Resolving a Mass Battle

A mass battle can end in a number of ways, such as:

- **Rout:** If an army's casualties exceed its strength, it is routed at the end of the round. All minion NPCs who are part of the army are killed or scattered to the winds. Each PC and adversary NPC who is part of the army suffers a critical strike with a severity of 12. At the GM's discretion, any PC or adversary NPC might be captured or simply left for dead on the battlefield instead.
- **Morale Collapse:** If an army's panic exceeds its discipline, the army breaks apart. Each PC and adversary NPC can escape in the confusion.
- **Strategic Victory/Defeat:** If an army succeeds in achieving the Seize Victory! strategic objective, it wins the mass battle at the end of the round (and any other armies involved lose). The winning army can be assumed to achieve the goals for which it took the field, such as driving the enemy out of a region, capturing a particular location, or making a show of force. Participating armies that did not fall prey to a rout or morale collapse withdraw relatively intact.

BATTLE FATIGUE

During Phase 1 of the seventh round of a mass battle and in each subsequent round, each army's commander must make a TN 4 Command check to control their beleaguered forces. If the commander fails, the army suffers 10 panic, plus panic equal to the commander's shortfall.

Length of a Mass Battle

Mortal armies can only remain in the field for so long before needing to resupply and recuperate. Mass battle rounds are quite long in the fictional time of the game; **six rounds** cover a full day of fighting.

After six rounds of a mass battle, strategic engagement generally terminates, and armies withdraw to their camps. If a commander decides to have their army remain in the field, both armies begin to suffer the effects of **battle fatigue**.

Example Armies

The sample armies provided here are for entire armies, not single cohorts, which do not have individualized profiles. In most mass battles, there are only two armies.

GMs are encouraged to adjust the strength, discipline, and abilities of these armies to reflect the circumstances of the story, or to build new armies of their own using these as models.

Peasant Levy

Farmers and townsfolk generally want to live their lives in tranquility, with minimal interference from their overlords and peace across the lands. After all, war is a scourge most of all upon the common people, even if they are never drawn directly into the fighting. Taxes rise, resources are drained, and vital goods become scarce. Crops are destroyed or confiscated, and starvation spreads. Banditry flourishes as order collapses. In such circumstances, even untrained citizens often find the resolve to fight. At other times, soldiers sweep in to conscript anyone able to hold a spear.

Strength: 35 **Discipline:** 20

Conscripted (Army Ability): Each leader in this army increases the TN of their Attack actions by 1.

Ashigaru Army

The solid core of most fighting forces in the Emerald Empire, ashigaru are career soldiers. Though they are not of the samurai class and lack the elite training and equipment that birth into the warrior caste entails, many are veteran campaigners with more practical battlefield experience than the majority of Rokugani samurai.

Strength: 55 **Discipline:** 30

Rank Formation (Army Ability): When a leader in this army performs the Reinforce action, they may spend ✿ as follows:

✿+: After an enemy cohort attacks this leader's cohort, the enemy army suffers attrition equal to ✿ spent this way.

Elite Samurai Army

Fighting forces composed of samurai are relatively rare in the Emerald Empire. More often, samurai form the backbone of the officer corps that command ashigaru. Certain groups, however, such as the Imperial Legions, are primarily composed of members of the samurai caste, and these armies are terrifying to behold indeed.

Strength: 50 **Discipline:** 45

Hardened Veterans (Army Ability): When this army would remove 1 or more panic, it may remove an amount equal to the glory rank of its commander instead.

Elite Training (Army Ability): Each cohort in this army confers one of the following abilities upon its leader:

- **Cavalry:** After you perform an Assault action, if you succeed, the enemy army suffers panic equal to your ranks in Survival.
- **Siege Specialists:** When performing the Rally action, if you succeed, add a number of bonus successes equal to your ranks in Labor.
- **Infantry:** When you perform an Assault action, if you succeed, add a number of bonus successes equal to your ranks in Command.
- **Archers:** After you perform a Reinforce action, if you succeed, the enemy army suffers panic equal to your ranks in Tactics.
- **Mystics:** After you perform a Rally or Reinforce action, if you succeed, remove casualties or panic from your army equal to your ranks in Theology.

Shadowlands Horde

Goblins, oni, undead monstrosities, and other horrors rarely march to war in anything resembling an organized fashion. On the rare occasions they are rallied by a dread leader strong and cunning enough to control them, they are a truly horrifying foe to behold.

Strength: 65 **Discipline:** 40

Relentless (Army Ability): The creatures of the Shadowlands live for battle, and their rage does not gutter out so easily as that of human soldiers. This army does not suffer the effects of battle fatigue.

Monstrous Enemies (Army Ability): At the end of each round, each opposing army suffers panic equal to this army's leader's ranks in Command.

Wake of the Shadowlands (Army Ability): After a mass battle against this army, the battlefield becomes Defiled terrain (see **Terrain**, on page 267).

CHAPTER

7

The Game Master

Rokugan is a world of choice and consequence. The players make decisions on behalf of their characters, choosing between desire and duty, honor and loyalty, and power and justice. Yet, the world will not react by itself. One player, called the game master (GM), brings the world to life for the rest of players by describing the environments of Rokugan and representing the people who live there.

The GM is the one who devises the scenarios in which the samurai characters' adherence to the Code of Bushidō is tested, and the players and GMs co-author the tales of those characters' victory or defeat, pride or shame, glory or disgrace, survival or death. Beyond this creative role as storyteller, the GM is responsible for running the game and adjudicating the rules of the system. Finally, the GM is the group leader and helps to organize the group and mediate conflicts between the players.

CHAPTER PRESENTATION

The first part of this chapter focuses on the basics of being a game master for *Legend of the Five Rings*. It addresses matters such as the role of the GM, how to organize and manage a group of players, how to evoke the setting, and how to set up story scenarios.

The rest of this chapter introduces GMs to their role and provides them with the tools they need to run a smooth, fun, and exciting game, along with extra options such as alternate campaign styles.

The Role of the GM

Roleplaying games are a group activity, with one GM and one to six additional players. The GM is typically the person who invites players to the game and determines when the group has hit its size limit. If you are the GM and you don't know any other *L5R* RPG players nearby, you can reach out to the greater roleplaying game community in your area or online. Hobby stores, social media groups, and online play communities are all avenues for recruiting players. You can even teach yourself and your non-gamer friends how to play RPGs by purchasing the *Legend of the Five Rings Beginner Game*, which introduces the concepts and mechanics of roleplaying games through a short adventure, and comes with a set of the custom dice needed to play the game.

WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?

Many roleplaying games rest on the general conceit that "what the game master says goes," and *Legend of the Five Rings* is no exception. This is mostly for expedience: the story will flow better if the players generally accept the facts that the GM is establishing. If they don't, the game tends to bog down in arguments.

The roleplaying game social contract thus revolves around the idea that the players give the game master the benefit of the doubt on most matters of setting the scene and story. This isn't to say that there can never be any discussion, but if the GM shoots down an idea or wants to stick to a point, the players should accept it and move on. In turn, the GM should give the players' ideas fair consideration, and only disallow those ideas if they create implausible situations or disrupt the GM's plans. That said, cool, exciting, or dramatic ideas should be encouraged, as long as everyone gets their turn in the spotlight. Remember, everyone (including the GM) is there to have fun.

If someone isn't comfortable with something going on in the story, that's another matter entirely. Players should tell the GM if something in the story is making them uncomfortable, and vice versa. It is a good idea to establish a set of signals beforehand to clearly indicate when such concerns arise. Many excellent resources about establishing and respecting boundaries in one's roleplaying games can be found in a list of reading materials at www.FantasyFlightGames.com.

STARTING A NEW CAMPAIGN

The beginning of a new campaign is a good time for the GM to offer some background context: "The border dispute between the Lion and the Crane has been ramping up since the death of Akodo Arasou," or "The creatures of the Shadowlands have been abnormally quiet this month…" It is best if these help foreshadow the conflict you're about to introduce, and raise new questions in the players' minds.

HOW TO START A CAMPAIGN

As noted, the first step is to invite a group of players to the game. For new GMs, a range of two to five players is a recommended range—though if you're comfortable with it, you can always run a game for more (or fewer) players. Once you have your group, you'll need to decide where, when, and how frequently you want to play. One player might decide to host the game at their house or apartment in the evening, or perhaps the group could make use of open gaming space at a local hobby store. Another option is to play without meeting in person on a dedicated virtual tabletop platform (VTT), in a text or voice channel, or via web forums.

After the group has been formed, the next step is to create the player characters. Usually this is done together as a group as part of the first meeting. This lets players collaborate on their character concepts and backstories, and it helps them avoid duplicating or neglecting certain roles in the game. At this stage, you should ask the group about the structure of the campaign they enjoy, the sorts of challenges they want to face, and how comfortable they are with coming into conflict with other players' characters. This helps you weave the story and make the best use of the tools throughout this chapter.

HOW TO RUN A SESSION

A game session is a chunk of time dedicated to playing a roleplaying game, and as the GM, you have a great deal of influence over what the players do with this time. While they likely have their own ideas about what they want to do, you are their window to the world of Rokugan, so the things you choose to present to them help to direct their activities.

Preparations

Running a session often requires some preparation. A few weeks, days, or hours ahead of time, the GM prepares the needed components, including the adventure (see more on **Creating Scenarios** on page 288) and the settings and NPCs within it. This can take a few minutes to hours or even days of work, and depends entirely on the complexity of the scenario and whether the GM prefers to make things up as they go along, or run sessions with a lot of advance planning. New GMs should err on the side of planning more until they figure out how comfortable they are with improvisation.

Getting Things Moving

Once people begin arriving, players usually want to spend some time chatting, catching up on each other's lives, and socializing. Between this and the time it takes for everyone to settle in, GMs should plan on a thirty-minute buffer between the time they ask people to arrive and when they begin play. Once everyone is ready, the GM can politely draw their friends' attention away from socializing and to the game at hand.

This cue also heralds the next part of the session, which is the recap. The GM catches players up to speed on what happened the last time they played, reminding them of unfinished business or unanswered questions. Alternatively, the GM can engage the group by asking players to recap what they remember. This also gives the GM a chance to see what the players are focusing on; if they emphasize interactions with a particular NPC, for example, the GM can give that NPC a more prominent role in future sessions.

If the GM likes, they can wrap up the recap with a dramatic question about the players' intentions. "Will your characters be quick enough to save the daimyō?" or "Have you discovered enough to know the magistrate's real intentions?" can raise the tension and help the group dive back into the adventure.

Running a Scene

A scene is, at its core, a period of conflict at a particular time and place. The GM describes the setting where the scene transpires, serving as the characters' eyes, ears, and other senses. The GM also takes on the role of any NPCs included in the scene, narrating their actions and speaking their dialogue (which usually entails making up lines on the fly!).

Besides the basics like "who," "what," "when," where," and "why," three key ingredients are needed to create the conflict in a scene: **a goal or a desire**, one or more **obstacles** to the goal, and **stakes** for success or failure. Without a concrete goal, players may flail or drift. Without real obstacles, there is no conflict—meaning no dramatic tension—and the players may become bored. Without stakes for success or failure, both the goal and the obstacle have no meaning.

The GM's job is to zero in on scenes with all three ingredients and use the various rules of the game to adjudicate whether the characters overcome their obstacles. This, fundamentally, is what pacing is about: slowing down and zooming in on the action—that is to say, on the conflicts—and speeding up or summarizing moments in game-world time when there isn't anything dramatic happening. For an intense moment of inner conflict, however, it makes sense to play through the moment as if it were happening in real time.

There is one major exception to this in the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game*, which is the "slice of life" or characterization scene. These scenes could include conversations between PCs and NPCs, cultural events, or simple moments of experiencing some part of existence like a morning routine or a yearly festival. Though these scenes seem mundane, they can serve to build the world, characterize its inhabitants, and emphasize unique elements of Rokugani culture that may be novel or interesting to your players. These scenes also help your players get immersed in the setting. After all, playing a character who is a part of the imaginary world around them, rather than a spectator, is what roleplaying games are all about.

Ending a Session

How do you decide when to end a session? Sometimes a good stopping point is when a major question just got answered or a challenge was overcome, so the players can leave on a note of satisfaction. At other times, it's important to stop because the next scene is likely to be complicated, and it will be best if everyone is fresh to play through it together another day. It can also be fun to leave off on a cliffhanger (such as when the players are about to do battle or discover the identity of a dreaded foe). This leaves players looking forward to the next session. Be sure to award experience points (see page 299) and answer questions that arose during play.

To reinforce the idea of choice and consequence, it's very helpful to write down key events and the decisions that the PCs made as each session winds down. This way, the GM can incorporate natural ramifications to the PCs' actions into the story, which further helps reinforce player immersion in the setting. The **Campaign Sheet** (found at www.FantasyFlightGames.com) provides spaces for recording key information about each PC.

HOW OFTEN TO PLAY

Once a week or once every other week is the standard rate of play, which gives you time to prepare adventures between sessions, as well as giving your group some flexibility to reschedule a session if other events conflict with it.

Managing Players

In addition to running the campaign itself, a GM is usually the group's leader and helps resolve disputes between players about the game. People play roleplaying games in order to have fun and relax, but it can be difficult to achieve that when certain players' fun comes at the expense of other players, or when personalities and expectations between players clash.

Being Respectful of Each Other

Rokugan is a world with as many complexities as our own, so mature topics and themes may arise during play. Its society comes with inherent injustices, including the caste system, Rokugan's repressive Code of Bushidō, the use of torture, and xenophobia. It's up to the group to determine what social issues and levels of violence or sexuality they're comfortable featuring as part of the story. Groups should change whatever makes them uncomfortable, whether that means modifying the setting or avoiding some topics. Once these expectations have been discussed, it's everybody's responsibility to ensure that these expectations are upheld and everyone in the group feels comfortable and welcome.

LEARNING THE ROPES

For a player brand new to the game system, it can be useful to let them play a character starting out of the gate to get a feel for the rules, and then catch them up in terms of experience points after a session or two. In such cases, the GM should adjust the TNs for their checks to help them succeed with the same frequency as the rest of the group.

Dealing with Disruptions

While ideally, everyone should be interested in the ongoing story, sometimes players tune out from events or start distracting side conversations. A certain amount of this is to be expected, but if a player constantly disrupts the game, the GM may need to do something about it.

The GM should consider taking some time outside the game to speak to that player privately. Not only can the GM let the player know that their disruptions may be spoiling the game for others, they can also take the time to ask the player what the GM can do to make the game more engaging and interesting for them. Clear and honest communication where both sides can be heard resolves most disruptions, and doing so privately makes sure the player doesn't feel shamed in front of the rest of the group.

Arrivals and Departures

ABSENCES

Often, players need to skip a session, and groups should agree on what to do when this happens. One option is that the GM or another player can take temporary control of the character as an NPC. Another is the characters can be absent from adventures while they deal with some task off-screen.

Sometimes, a player has to drop out of the group or a new player asks to join. If the group has advance notice, the GM can make plans to have a last session focus on resolving some or all of their character's story. If life causes this to happen without warning, however, the GM may need to come up with a reason for the character's absence that makes sense to the ongoing events. Some groups might be comfortable with a different player picking up the retired character, depending on the needs of the story and their openness to changes in depiction.

New players should be able to begin the game with a character who has the same experience points as the rest of the characters in the group. This also applies when players make characters to replace ones who have died or retired during their adventures.

On "Metagaming"

Finally, there is often a gap between what a character in the setting knows and what a player of the game knows, since the player is often able to witness scenes their character isn't included in. Players might even be able to predict the story in ways their characters could not—after all, to the characters, the roleplaying game is not a story that follows certain narrative conventions! Using one's knowledge as a player to drive a character's decisions is known as "metagaming," and it has negative connotations in some groups. If overused, it can break other players' immersion in the world, which can be frustrating.

On the other hand, a player might use their knowledge of the story to nudge their characters in a certain direction and create more tense and interesting situations. A player might even let their PC fall into a bad situation that the player foresaw because it's

YOUR GAME, YOUR ROKUGAN

Different players come to the *Legend of the Five Rings* RPG for different reasons. Perhaps they have heard of or played the associated card games. Some may be drawn due to their love for samurai fiction and cinema, such as the Akira Kurosawa films and the books by Eiji Yoshikawa and James Clavell. Many *L5R* fans began as students of Japanese history or culture, as fans of anime and manga, or both.

Others are general fans of science fiction and fantasy, from romantic stories with political intrigues to epic tales of good and evil or shades of moral gray. Often, the source material that the GM is most familiar with will color the types of stories and tone of the game, and that's absolutely normal (and encouraged—run what you love!). Besides differences in dramatic taste, different groups will play the game differently. You may find yourself absorbed in the narrative and the relationships between characters. Other groups focus on fine-tuning their characters' abilities and exploring the tactical side of combat. This game is designed to support numerous styles of play and, as GM, you are empowered to jettison, rework, or simplify rules as you desire. Throughout this chapter, there are several margin notes addressing how to tailor your game to a particular archetype of group (though you'll need to find the right balance for your own unique group of players).

fun to see the PC try to get out of it! This is "metagaming" being used to facilitate storytelling. It's up to the group to determine what their stance on metagaming is, and whether they want a stricter separation of player and character knowledge, or if it's more fun to blur the line for dramatic effect.

By openly communicating about expectations on appropriate uses of metagaming, GMs and players can avoid hurt feelings due to confusion or perceptions of disrespect. As with other disruptions, a clear (and potentially private) conversation can often resolve issues to everyone's satisfaction. However, if a player has expectations that are truly incompatible with those of the rest of the group, a GM might need ask that player to find another gaming group that better fits their playstyle.

EVOKING THE LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS SETTING

The *Legend of the Five Rings* RPG is different compared to many other roleplaying games, not only for its unique setting elements inspired by real East Asian cultures, but also because of its thematic focus on personal drama, court intrigue, and folkloric magic and mythology. The following considerations can help GMs bring the emerald lands of Rokugan to life and showcase the unique elements of the game and setting.

Making Locations Memorable

From bamboo forests to sheer cliffs, the geography of Rokugan is as beautiful as it can be dangerous. Arguably, the landscape inspired an entire religion with a focus on honoring nature, and a typical Rokugani samurai will also see wonder in the natural world around them. When describing the characters' surroundings, keep in mind all six of their senses: what they see, hear, smell, taste, feel, and sense on a spiritual level. You can tailor your description to a particular character based on their advantages and disadvantages: a samurai with a passion for sake will notice sake carts and houses first, while a samurai with an anxiety about dogs will perceive canines to be more vicious and aggressive.

Another tip is to add what could be called "texture" to your descriptions by using a few pointed specifics instead of generalities: compare the mental picture you get and emotions you feel when you think of a "forest in a valley" compared with "a rocky hillside covered in gnarled black pines, their branches all twisted to point toward the mountain's peak." One way to come up with pieces of texture is to look in books and online for photography depicting East Asian landscapes and art and record interesting details from those pictures. Take the time to research the flora and fauna endemic to the region, and learn their names and what they look like. Better yet, experience as much of East Asian culture as you can personally. This can be accomplished in ways far less expensive than traveling in those countries, such as by visiting museum exhibitions and attending cultural festivals and presentations held at libraries and universities or in cities and towns with East Asian communities. You may be surprised to discover a cherry blossom festival in your area, or visiting speakers, musicians, and artists.

Bringing NPCs to Life

Many of the same principles used for describing locations can be applied to non-player characters as well, including giving texture to their appearance and mannerisms. What is their style of dress, hair, and facial hair? What colors, fabrics, accessories, and perfumes do they wear? Do they maintain perfect posture, do they slouch, or do they have a limp or a nervous tick? Where can they usually be found, and what do their surroundings say about their personality? What player character personality traits might cause PCs to scrutinize qualities of an NPC or see them in a more favorable light?

ROOM TO BREATHE

When planning an adventure, you should be sure to include a variety of conflicts and challenges to evoke alternating emotions. If a story is all excitement and hope, the audience can begin to feel exhausted. If a story is all despair and fear, the audience may feel drained. Most stories switch back and forth between showing the protagonists' successes and failures, to build toward even more powerful emotional moments.

By including a variety of conflicts and challenges, the GM also ensures that all the characters get to contribute and share in the limelight, which keeps them engaged.

NPCs have another dimension to consider, which is their dialogue. GMs can always narrate an NPC's words, but many find it extremely rewarding to speak as though they were that character. Some of the most basic ways to vary a character's voice are to give them different emotions or levels of energy. A GM who feels comfortable portraying accents might give peasants and sailors a more freewheeling style of pronunciation, but players should steer clear of accents that invoke stereotypes or caricatures of East Asian cultures.

Beyond varying the pitch, tone, and speed of NPCs' speech, GMs can do a lot to differentiate characters with diction, word choice, and poetic flourishes. A literary and refined character will use more polysyllabic words and complex sentence structure. For groups that speak English for their games, the GM might use words with Latin and Greek roots to characterize nobility, reserving shorter and simpler words of Anglo-Saxon origin for more practical characters. Samurai besides those of the Crab Clan are much more apt to speak in simile and metaphor, use personification, or make allusions to nature. A wealth of East Asian poetry is available in translation online and in libraries, which can inspire and delight GMs who are interested in the aesthetics and ethos of these cultures and historical periods.

Dramatizing Bushidō

Adhering to the tenets of Bushidō can sometimes be even more limiting than a character's capabilities. It doesn't matter whether the character can sneak into and out of the shed—it matters whether they believe such an action is compatible with Righteousness and Honor. The GM should keep the tenets of Bushidō at the forefront of the players' minds by choosing a particular tenet to feature or test as part of a hurdle at least once per session. When creating the obstacles for a story, look at the lists of possible breaches and sacrifices in the **The Tenets of Bushidō**, on page 301, to see if any of those actions might be possible avenues for overcoming or bypassing obstacles.

Navigating Status and Hierarchy

Rokugan's rigid social structure is another limiting factor on the characters' actions. The characters are usually subordinates to one or more non-player characters, to whom they are expected to show proper deference and respect. Even when characters are placed in a position of authority, they are expected to serve as role models for their own subordinates and follow certain customs to reinforce the status differentials between parties.

These cultural elements represent a significant departure from the emphasis on forthright and individualistic expression found across many contemporary real-world industrialized countries, with their reduced emphasis on class divisions and increasingly informal modes of address compared to those of ancient times. If players are interested in exploring these facets of Rokugani culture as opposed to glossing over them, the protocols and honorifics of this social dance can become additional levers for the GM to use in awarding honor and glory, or in forcing players to stake honor and glory to momentarily ignore social custom. More specifics about status and hierarchy may be found in further supplements detailing the world of Rokugan.

Story-First Groups

For some groups, playing the game is secondary to exploring their characters' motivations and fates, and the thrill of "what happens next?" trumps the thrill of using particular combinations of techniques to defeat enemies. If your group falls into this category, you might consider one or more of the following:

- Techniques are reduced to purely narrative effects.
- Combat-related conflicts are mediated with a single roll, such as using the rules in **One-Roll Duels** (see page 261).
- Intrigues are handled purely as roleplay, with the GM determining who prevails based only on what players say (or describe their characters to be saying).

ROLEPLAYING THE SPIRITS

Excepting those from Tengoku and Jigoku, spirits don't operate on a continuum of good and evil. They act according to their nature, which is governed by its own, inscrutable rules. These creatures have no consideration for the welfare or desires of the samurai they encounter. The exception to this is ancestor spirits, who are intrinsically invested in seeing their descendants succeed and act in ways that reflect well on their ancestors.

Thus, you should strive to make an otherworldly being's motives mysterious, as well as use doublespeak, riddles, or illusions to trick your PCs. The very same spirits who help the PCs on a lark may turn on the party for their own amusement later.

Adding supernatural elements to investigations or exploratory scenes can be especially effective at making the characters approach obstacles with fresh eyes and a sense of wonder—and usually, by the end, a new wariness about dealing with spirits and monsters.

Approaching the Supernatural

That monsters, spirits, and gods walk beside mortals in Rokugan is a tremendous consideration when portraying the world of *Legend of the Five Rings*. These beings are based on the folklore and mythology of real-world cultures and religions, and while that means that GMs can lean on these tales and legends to provide inspiration for their stories and game, it's also important to avoid trivializing or being disrespectful of the source material. This can be done by researching and developing the spirits and monsters with the same level of care lavished on locations and non-player characters, as well as by portraying them as beings of power who are not to be taken lightly or ignored by the players.

Such beings might be found anywhere, but they are typically informed by the nature of their surroundings. Creatures and beings dwelling in water tend to take on aquatic or amphibious traits, while mountain spirits have more rugged and stark personalities and appearances. In Rokugan, benevolent spirits are generally beings of beauty, cleanliness, and radiance, while evil spirits embody their corruption through ugliness, filth, and darkness. Ancestor spirits retain the appearance they had in life, while lost souls may appear as flickering lights and ghostly apparitions. Many spirits have the power to shapeshift or cloak their true appearance in order to move among mortals without being detected, so one never truly knows if one is unwittingly speaking to a god or a fox-wife.

Using the supernatural in Rokugan is a way to challenge the players' way of thinking and methodology. Supernatural phenomena tend to place constraints on the senses that mortals rely on most, since spirits cannot typically be seen, touched, heard, or felt, except by shugenja and those with the sixth sense. Supernatural beings also place constraints on player logic, because these spirits and creatures may well violate laws of nature and physics through their actions. Finally, the supernatural impedes players' ability to problem solve, as there are limited options for dealing with the metaphysical, and PC groups may need to rely on experts or to complete research in order to understand, placate, or withstand supernatural beings and effects.

OFFERING CHOICES AND DETERMINING CONSEQUENCES

If we were to offer GMs only one piece of advice for running Rokugan, it would come down to this: remember that Rokugan is a world of choice and consequence. The ninjō, giri, honor, glory, and status systems all exist to force characters to make choices and to track how those characters evolve over the course of a campaign. Players should have agency to make real decisions on behalf of their characters—that is to say, to choose the way their character wants to confront or resolve a situation—and their characters should experience the fallout of those choices, both personally and in the world around them, based on what is at stake (see **Raising the Stakes**, on page 292).

The GM should strive to create choice points in their campaigns by pitting two desires against one another (see also **Devising Goals** later in this section). This typically takes the form of the conflict between a character's ninjō and giri, but it may also be a matter of a character's needing to choose whether to stake honor or glory to accomplish a particular task. Other choice points stem from deciding which problem to tackle first, which possible solution to pursue, or who benefits or loses from the resolution of the problem.

When designing these choice points, the GM should plan for the immediate or short-term ramifications as part of the prep, but long-term consequences can be thought out during the preparation stage between sessions. Often, choices will come up organically during play without the GM's having devised them first, so the GM will need to use their best judgment to determine what short-term ramifications make sense given the circumstances, building off of what was previously established instead of introducing completely new concepts. Honor and glory rewards (see pages 300 and 304) should also be taken into account in the resolution of choice points.

Providing choices between right and wrong, or good and evil, promotes a more heroic narrative and epic scale. Campaigns in which bad choices are pitted against worse choices foster a darker and grittier feel. The default mode for the *Legend of the Five Rings* setting exists in a middle ground, one in which players are offered different choices whose outcomes may not always be what they seem. None of these modes is particularly better or worse than any other, but each leads the player characters down a vastly different path.

GRITTIER GAMES

If your group wants an extremely lethal experience for their PCs, you could apply one or more of the following to make the game substantially more likely to result in death and dismemberment:

- Increase the Deadliness of all weapons by +4.
- If a character has the Bleeding condition at the end of the scene, they perish unless they spend a Void point.
- The Lightly Wounded and Severely Wounded condition can fester. Each time a character fails a Fitness check to remove this condition, the conditions worsen (from Lightly Wounded to Severely Wounded, or Severely Wounded to dead).

CREATING SCENARIOS

Earlier, we discussed how scenes require three ingredients to be worth slowing down and running in real time: **goals**, **obstacles**, and **stakes**. On a small scale, these three things form an encounter or scene in the story, one of many in a given roleplaying game session. String together a series of scenes with multiple goals and obstacles, with evolving stakes, and you have the nuts and bolts of an adventure—in writing terms, a narrative arc, or scenario.

However, roleplaying games differ from novels or movies, because the "audience" (the players) get a say regarding which goals their characters want to pursue, how their characters try to overcome those hurdles, and whether their characters can affect the stakes!

Devising Goals

The goal, or motivating desire, is the most basic element of narrative. In forms of media as ancient as medieval poetry and as modern as video games, goals are often framed as quests. In roleplaying games, goals might also be called quests, but in Rokugan, they are more often framed as aims. These aims are necessary because if a character doesn't want anything—or doesn't want to accomplish anything—then the events of the story simply happen to them. If a character moves through a story unaffected emotionally, they are static, and do not really change, for good or for ill.

TACTICAL GROUPS

Tactically minded players tend to prioritize understanding and exploiting the rules of the game. They might not be as invested in the backstories of their own characters, much less those of non-player characters, and may see combat as its own end, because it's a chance to test out a cool combination of techniques and abilities. If your group has some of these traits, consider the following alterations to the rules:

- Encourage roleplaying, but make mechanics a major focus during conflicts like intrigues.
- Make all rolls open, and tell the players the TN of all checks they make.
- Instead of just describing their narrative effects, fully explain NPC abilities in mechanical terms, so your players can understand and take advantage of how these interact with their characters' own techniques and abilities.

Given that goals are so important, how does the GM come up with goals for the characters to pursue in the game? In the *L5R* RPG, two goals are built into every character at character creation: their personal goal, or ninjō, as well as their duty to their lord, or giri.

Ninjō is fairly straightforward: the character wants this thing, and they will be pursuing it during the campaign, sometimes even through pivotal scenes.

Giri should also contain an actionable goal, and GMs can create adventures by creating obstacles that make those goals harder to achieve. Sometimes these obstacles may even be a lord acting against their own best interests, forcing a character to decide whether to disobey their lord to better serve them!

Although these goals don't have to be mutually exclusive, some conflict between ninjō and giri can make for great roleplaying inspiration. Choosing between one's desires and one's duty can make for a thrilling story.

Erecting Hurdles

Goals wouldn't be interesting if they weren't difficult to achieve. Completing a goal may only require a character to do one thing, or they may need to break down their goal into many smaller tasks, or sub-objectives. Both the original goal and sub-objectives must have **hurdles**, or obstacles, that the PCs must overcome.

In RPGs, hurdles typically take one of these forms:

- **Martial Hurdle:** Do they need to fight someone or something to achieve it?
- **Social Hurdle:** Do they need to talk to someone to achieve it?
- **Investigative Hurdle:** Do they need to find out more information to achieve it?
- **Explorative Hurdle:** Do they need to go somewhere to achieve it?
- **Logistical Hurdle:** Do they need to get something to achieve it?
- **Emotional Hurdle:** Do they need to change their beliefs or personality to achieve it?

You should consider giving your players some leeway to determine how their PCs try to get what they want (choosing between types of hurdles and their approach to overcoming them). If there's only one "correct way" to solve problems, players usually feel that their agency to exert influence over the story has been taken away. "One correct way" also goes against the spirit of the mechanics themselves, as elemental approaches showcase the idea of solving a challenge through different methods.

GMs can brainstorm a list of steps needed for PCs to achieve a goal and work backward from there, or they can also use the different types of hurdles to help them brainstorm the steps. That way, the GM can plan to have their socially focused group be met with NPC adversaries, while their martially inclined group gets to enter into combat in order to accomplish their goals. The different types of goals are explained broadly below—it's up to the GM to translate the general ideas into specifics for their campaign depending on the exact characters, places, and objects included in their story. The GM should also remember to incorporate specific Bushidō tenets into at least one hurdle per session to keep the constraints of the warrior's code at the forefront of the players' concerns (see also **Dramatizing Bushidō**, on page 286).

Martial Hurdles

Martial hurdles result when two or more entities have competing interests, and only one group can achieve them. This means that the other entity must be eliminated or incapacitated long enough for the competing party to prevail. In Rokugan, creatures, supernatural powers, and especially other characters can all form martial hurdles. Perhaps some guards have been tasked with protecting a valuable item or important

LINEAR AND FREEFORM SCENARIOS

When breaking down an objective into sub-objectives, it may be tempting to force the PCs to complete them one after another in a linear fashion. Not only can this remove some of the players' agency, it's not always how the real world works. The GM is essentially telling the players what they have to do, which ultimately feels boring.

Instead, the players should be able to pursue different sub-objectives in the order of their choosing, resulting in a more freeform style of play. In such cases, the GM asks the players what they want to achieve next, and then the group frames a scene that showcases them pursuing that sub-objective and attempting to overcome an appropriate hurdle.

person, or a wild beast is preying on the local populace. Martial hurdles can only be overcome through violence, although not all confrontations need to be lethal. Often, injuring or subduing an opponent is all that is needed, but in cases where use of force would be illegal or shameful, characters may be forced to leave no witnesses or tackle the martial hurdle from another angle. In game terms, these confrontations can be modeled using duels, skirmishes, and mass combats.

- Which NPC stat blocks will you use, and which will you need to create from scratch?
- Do you want to explore a particular subset of the rules in the encounter, such as a specific terrain type or condition?
- What are some ways players can spend ✲ on their Initiative checks, and what sensory details can you provide to help evoke these possibilities in the players?
- What environmental or emotional factors may cause complications during the confrontation?

SUPERNATURAL INVESTIGATION

Evidence gained from spirits is inadmissible in most courts, especially those that follow a strict reading of Imperial law.

Further, the vagaries of spiritual insight make many lords skeptical of it—after all, the cryptic words of the kami have famously been misinterpreted on several occasions.

The PCs can use it to establish facts for themselves, but will need to find stronger evidence (or, ideally, testimony) to prove points they wish to formally make.

Social Hurdles

Social hurdles result when characters have competing interests and must be persuaded to abandon those interests or yield to the characters competing with them. Persuasion, intimidation, negotiation, and begging are the weapons wielded in these types of hurdles, with parties extracting promises or trading threats to achieve their aims. Intrigues are a more complex way to model these types of interactions in the game; otherwise, roleplaying can yield the same result if the players can figure out sufficient motivation or leverage to sway the opposing characters.

- Which NPC stat blocks will you use, and which will you need to create from scratch?
- How do the PCs compare to the NPCs in terms of honor, glory, and status? What does this mean for how the NPCs treat the PCs?
- What advantages and disadvantages do the NPCs possess that players can discover and use?
- What are some ways players can spend ✲ on their checks, and what details can you provide to help evoke these possibilities in the players?
- Are there any special voices or mannerisms you can adopt to make the NPCs distinctive? Provide one memorable, unique detail for each.

VIGILANCE TO NOTICE

If you want to know if the PCs notice something without a roll to investigate the area, saying that all characters with vigilance of a certain value or higher notice a clue is one easy route to use. Just remember the vigilance values of your characters (which you can record on the GM's sheet) before asking, lest they all miss something important!

Investigative Hurdles

Investigative hurdles result from missing or withheld information. Who or what did this thing? How did they do it? Where and when? Why? For characters who have been trained in the Kitsuki Method, an investigative hurdle could entail investigating a room for physical evidence, whereas shugenja could lean on their relationships with the spirits to catch a glimpse of supernatural clues. Characters may also have to consult certain sources of written information, such as a character's pillow book or scrolls in an exclusive library. In most cases, testimony is also required to piece together the missing details. In this way, investigative hurdles intersect social hurdles when a character has the desired information and must be persuaded to give it up.

- What information is absolutely necessary for the characters to progress to the next step? Any story-stopping hurdles should be accessible to the players without a roll.
- What details might the PCs notice right away with various vigilance scores?
- What bonus information is accessible in the scene that isn't necessary to advance to the next hurdle? What additional context or implications does it provide? What skills can be used to unlock those extra clues?
- Are there any other entities who are following the same trail, and what will they do if they discover the PCs are also interested?
- Are the PCs collecting the information in a socially or legally permissible manner? Remember that the testimony of an honorable samurai trumps evidence in the Rokugani justice system.
- What political ramifications does the unearthing of buried information have on social harmony? How will different factions react?

Logistical Hurdles

Logistical hurdles result when the characters do not have the tool, skill, or guide they need to complete a task. It's the physical version of the investigative hurdle. The characters may need to figure out where they can get the required item (resulting in an investigative hurdle) and then figure out how to get it. In Rokugan, common methods of acquisition include barter, payment, and even doing errands or tasks in return. Sometimes getting to the needed item is the hurdle, which can make the hurdle martial, social, or explorative as well.

- Are there other items that might suit the needs? Sometimes, the best-suited items are also the hardest to acquire, and vice versa.
- Who is the current owner of the thing, and how important is it to them? Can the PCs pay for it or requisition it on behalf of their lord?
- Is there any history surrounding the thing itself (competing claims of ownership, curses, etc.) that complicates its acquisition?
- Is it illegal or socially frowned upon for the PCs to acquire the item? If so, how much honor will players need to stake to acquire the thing?
- Does the item need rules, and can you use existing rules for it or invent new ones?

Explorative Hurdles

When the setting or environment itself is the barrier, the group is met with an explorative hurdle. Maybe the area is difficult to navigate or hard to traverse due to its physical characteristics, requiring that characters be fast, strong, or agile to overcome barriers. Environments may also serve as a barrier when the characters don't know the route to their destination and must blaze new trails to find what they are looking for. Explorative hurdles intersect with logistical hurdles if the characters need to outfit an expedition, and they can become martial hurdles if the terrain includes hostile inhabitants.

- What limitations does the environment impose on the characters' senses or capabilities? Can they use their advantages to overcome them?
- How dangerous is the terrain? Are there any areas that are especially dangerous or potentially safer, and what are those effects?
- What are some ways players can spend ✤ on their checks, and what sensory details can you

provide to clue players into these possibilities?

- Do you want to explore a particular subset of the rules in the encounter, such as a specific terrain type or condition?
- Who or what inhabits the area? Are there animals, people, or spirits, and are there NPC stat blocks you can use to represent them?

Emotional Hurdles

The last hurdle is the most difficult one to dramatize (that is to say, illustrate in the fiction of the game as opposed to explaining outright), as it takes place inside a character's mind. In the emotional hurdle, the character must change their own behaviors in order to succeed. Perhaps they have refused to give up on a certain goal or way of thinking and have become obsessed, and so they must let go in order to move on with their life and find mental peace. Or maybe they have refused to take a certain path or try a certain activity because of their prejudices, and they must learn to let go of their bias in order to grow and improve themselves. Disadvantages are especially well suited to becoming emotional hurdles, as they are stumbling blocks the player has already singled out as things they want to engage with during play. Note, since emotional hurdles happen in a character's mind, players and GMs may need to get in the habit of describing what their character is thinking to interact with them.

- What are some situations that might force the problematic emotion or disadvantage to become apparent?
- What types of NPCs or personalities will exacerbate (or soothe) the problematic emotion? How can they be worked into the situation?
- How will NPCs and society react to the character when they express this emotional hurdle?
- What does the character need to do in order to counteract the effects of the problematic emotion or disadvantage? Is there a way that the character can unmask to temporarily overcome the hurdle, and what are the consequences?
- If this were a movie, what setting backdrop or props might the director choose to further illustrate the emotions in the scene?

Raising the Stakes

The final component to crafting scenarios is the **stakes**: what will or won't happen if the characters succeed at their goal or fail to accomplish it. Put another way, these are the risks the character could incur as consequences to their actions, and the rewards that they might reap as a result. Risks and rewards can take the shape of various physical, social, mental/emotional, and spiritual effects. Players are great resources for coming up with potential risks and rewards, since they usually know what they want their character to get, and what would feel like a punishment. And often risks and rewards are the very things that shape a character's desires in the first place.

GMs should remember that failure, too, must be interesting. If the characters don't achieve their goal, the story should still proceed—there's no "game over" screen in roleplaying games. What happens next? Certainly, the PCs might be put into a bad spot or have to sacrifice more resources in order to get what they need, but even in rare cases in which the entire group gets killed (such as in a skirmish or mass battle), the river of time still flows in Rokugan, and their deaths will have an impact on the fortunes of their lord and their families.

- Physical risks include injury, disease, and death, as well as loss of wealth or property. On the other hand, while Rokugani society considers physical rewards less impressive or important than other motivators, "getting stuff" can still be a powerful reward. Weapons and armor, equipment, property, and wealth all can serve as a reward and counterpart to physical risks.
- Social risks include embarrassment and shame, loss of position or reputation, losing friends and gaining enemies, or at its worst, exile. Social rewards include glory, titles, allies, and successful romance. Social rewards may also come with physical rewards, as status and property are often interlinked in Rokugani culture.
- Mental and emotional risks can be presented in the game by gaining new disadvantages, strife, or—more narratively—a character's unhappiness, frustration, or impaired mental faculties. Rewards can include gaining new advantages, training in skills or techniques, or—more narratively—happiness, pride, and other positive emotions.
- Finally, Rokugan is a profoundly spiritual world. Characters can acquire karma from their actions, earn the enmity or patronage of specific Fortunes or spirits of the land, and if they traffic with foul forces, they might be afflicted with the Shadowlands Taint. Most spiritual risks and rewards can be represented in the game through certain advantages and disadvantages.

USING LORDS AND DUTY

In the **Game of Twenty Questions**, players are asked to work with the GM to create a lord to whom they have a sworn duty. If a group of players is brand new to Rokugan, you can use this section to design a lord for them. If the group consists of veterans of the *L5R* setting, you may let the group create their own lords.

One Lord for the Whole Group

The game can be easier to run if all the characters are serving a single lord, as this means they all have the same broad objectives: those of their lord. In this style, all of the characters serve one clan, and usually a single family. In a single-lord campaign, the GM develops adventures that hinge on the fortunes of that lord and their secrets—secrets hidden from outsiders due to the potential for shame or controversy.

The single-lord campaign style highlights interpersonal connections between the characters, who are likely related through blood or marriage, have trained and served together for some time, or grew up in the same region and share memories of the same places and festivals. The GM should provide the group with a central "home base," such as a castle, magistrate's manor, town, or religious site; there, the characters can receive their lord's orders, gather resources, and recuperate between excursions. GMs should encourage players to personalize this home base to make it a memorable part of the game. This can also make the base a prime target for rival forces, escalating the drama.

Multiple Lords for the Group

Although the single-lord game is easier on a GM, players often gravitate toward the multi-lord campaign because each player has a favorite clan they want to represent. This is by far the most common way to play *L5R*, but it requires the GM to create a context in which it makes sense for the characters to come together and stay together over the course of several scenarios. Two good ways to tie the group together are to create shared goals or circumstances. The GM can use both in tandem to glue the party together even more firmly. See **Conflicting Duties** on page 294 for more on games where the PCs might be pursuing different ends.

Shared Goals

When characters all want the same thing, they share the same goal. Because they each have their own lord's goals to consider, this shared goal must supersede any individual lord's objectives. In Rokugan, this is done through the Celestial Order: If the competing lords are from the same clan, it's the clan's interests that take precedence. If the competing lords are from different clans, it's the Emperor's interests that supersede all others. In a game dealing with supernatural threats, the will of Heaven or the kami can unify the group.

Shared Circumstances

Sometimes, groups find it enjoyable to play characters who want different things and compete with each other. In these cases, it isn't shared objectives that bind them together, but their circumstances. These circumstances may be external ones, such as an assignment from their lord or a natural disaster, that compel the characters to stay in close proximity to one another for a set amount of time. The characters appear in each other's stories because they are so close to one another. After some time, the shared circumstances typically evolve into shared goals as the samurai from different clans work together to overcome their situation.

IMPERIAL OFFICES AND MINISTERS

- **Office of the Emerald Champion:** Oversees enforcement of Imperial laws.
- **Office of the Ruby Champion:** Oversees training of new Emerald Magistrates and maintains the scrolls codifying Imperial law.
- **Office of the Jade Champion:** Oversees enforcement of Imperial laws against heresy and sorcery. Currently not filled.
- **The Imperial Legions:** The Emperor's armies, fielding warriors from all clans.
- **The Imperial Treasury:** Oversees collection of Imperial taxes.
- **The Imperial Census Bureau:** Oversees collection of demographic information.
- **The Imperial Cartographers:** Oversee archives of Imperial maps.
- **Office of the Imperial Household:** Oversees servants in the Imperial palace, as well as the Seppun Honor Guard and Hidden Guard, which are responsible for the physical and spiritual safety of the Imperial family, respectively.

CONNECTING GIRI TO A LORD

A lord's retinue and servants may include any number of player characters as well as all the other non-player characters whom the lord relies on to execute their duties. These supporting characters can be a source of allies or rivals (sometimes at the same time) for the PCs. A specific task that would fall to a member of a lord's retinue is a good example of a giri for a player character.

ONE LORD, MYRIAD SAMURAI

Despite the need for secrecy, it isn't unheard of for a lord to have members of other families from the same clan in their service if those samurai's area of expertise is outside the purview of the lord's family's specialty. Because samurai from the same clan have pledged fealty to the clan champion, they are honor bound to work together to further the interests of the clan.

Alternatively, these circumstances may come from within, such as through interpersonal bonds. One character might be a hostage or ward of another character's family; two other characters might be married, betrothed, or in-laws; additional characters might be linked as siblings, cousins, or even adopted kin. This presents a shared goal to protect one's family (even if family members don't like one another, blood ties often prove strong enough to bind characters together).

Creating a Lord

To create a lord, the GM or players should determine their **concerns**, what **complications** might arise to make managing their concerns difficult (and cause them to rely on the PCs), their **retinue** and **servants**, and finally, their personal **agendas** and **qualities**.

A lord's **concerns** are informed by the type of position they hold as lord and comprise the duties for which they're responsible. This is analogous to a player character's giri.

Complications are the typical things that conspire to make the lord's duties more difficult to achieve. These usually come from external forces. For the purposes of creating scenarios, complications can be translated into hurdles (see page 289) as well as stakes (see page 292).

A lord's **retinue** sets the resources they have available to solve their problems. The larger their retinue, the less reliant they will be on the PCs for logistical support.

A lord's personal **agenda** is the thing that they'll pursue if left to their own devices. This is analogous to a player character's ninjō. A lord's personal agenda may also serve as an internal force of complication to make their job more difficult. When creating scenarios, these can be translated into goals (see page 288).

A lord's personal **qualities** include their demeanor, passions and anxieties, and distinctions and adversities, as well as appearance: what they look like, dress like, sound like, and so on. Personal qualities can be any of the things that help them do their job well or, at times, prevent them from effectively administering their duties.

Concerns, complications, and retinue can be determined by a lord's general role (examples below). After selecting a role, decide on the lord's personal qualities and how these fit in with their role or clash against it.

Ministers and Governors

Ministers are officials tasked with overseeing a single aspect of a castle, town, or Empire-wide bureaucracy. These lords form the basis for very narrowly focused campaigns, such as those revolving around politics, war, criminal investigation, or mysticism. Ministers include clan magistrates, castle ministers, and spiritual advisors such as abbots and priests, as well as bureaucrats from Imperial administrations. Nomenclature varies somewhat among clans. In particular, the Unicorn Clan has absorbed organizational traditions from other cultures.

One step up in prestige from ministers are the city governors, who are appointed to oversee the administration of a city. A campaign featuring a city governor as lord allows a group to focus on the fortunes of a single location, with the occasional excursion for outside threats. Governors' complications and concerns tend to be larger, including taxation and environmental concerns, and their retinues include various ministers in addition to lesser functionaries.

CONFLICTING DUTIES

Whenever the GM runs a multi-lord campaign, there is some inherent conflict between the characters' giri as each lord pursues their objectives. This can and should be embraced as part of the fun of the game. Drama arises when there is conflict—when characters struggle to choose between betraying the group to benefit their clan, or betraying the clan in favor of their newfound friends.

As the players create characters, the group should decide whether they are comfortable with this sort of drama. If not, then the GM should ensure that the characters' giri are compatible, but for campaigns with split loyalties, there are two ways to handle intrigue between PCs: **open** and **closed**.

In the open manner, which is recommended for most groups, players have fun knowing things their characters don't, and pushing their characters into uncomfortable positions and revelations. It can help to have out-of-character discussion about how that story unfolds just to make sure everyone is on the same page. This mode also encourages more collaborative storytelling between the players and GM.

In the closed manner, which is recommended only for experienced groups, players may pass notes to the GM or send messages in between sessions to describe what their character is up to. Part of the game becomes trying to unravel the other players' secrets. Trust is key for this mode, and it's important to discuss boundaries and expectations beforehand, such as whether it's okay for characters to try to kill, steal from, or disgrace other characters.

- **Concerns:** Executing the responsibilities such as upholding laws and norms, overseeing rites and ceremonies, investigating lawbreakers and heretics, overseeing development projects, and ensuring stability and productivity.
- **Complications:** Expectations from superiors, unclear divisions of power (who is ultimately responsible for a particular thing?), unclear chains of command (who outranks whom?), rivals for promotions, rivals of intent, scandals and cover-ups, lack of resources, and changing laws.
- **Retinue and Servants:** Counterparts overseeing related spheres, deputy ministers, secretaries, shrine keepers, monks, apprentices, bodyguards, household members (such as spouse, children, and parents), household servants.

Provincial and Family Daimyō

Provincial daimyō make up the backbone of the Empire's feudal system and are the lowest ranking daimyō. They oversee a province, a collection of cities, towns, and the land between them. Campaigns featuring provincial lords focus on a single area but encompass a wider variety of locations, including castles, towns, villages, rural shrines, and wilderness locations.

Each province is known for particular cultural and specialty items, from festivals to foods and arts to geographical features. GMs should determine the primary means by which the province feeds itself, whether farming, fishing, hunting and gathering, or even imports. Most provinces border three to four other provinces, but those in the far-flung regions of the Empire may be relatively isolated, with only one or two neighbors huddling on the frontier alongside them.

Unlike city governors and ministers, provincial daimyō are not appointed but inherit their titles through a predetermined line of succession. There are usually three or four provincial daimyō reporting to a single family daimyō. The family daimyō oversees the daimyō of all their provinces from their ancestral castle, which may also serve as the capital of a province.

In each clan, there is one leading family whose daimyō also serves as champion, to whom all others swear loyalty. A clan champion is technically in charge of their own province as well as overseeing the affairs of several provincial daimyō and all of their clan's family daimyō, but in reality it simply means that their ministers do more work on the champion's behalf. The families and clans are those listed in the **Game of Twenty Questions**, but this template can also be used to model the daimyō of vassal families and champions of Minor Clans, albeit on a smaller scale.

CLAN OFFICES AND MINISTERS

- **Advisor:** A catch-all position with duties including general counsel and strategy.
- **Captain of the Guard:** Oversees security forces of an area, assigns bodyguards.
- **Chancellor:** The lord's chief courtier, responsible for receiving dignitaries.
- **Court Astrologer:** Responsible for auguries and divinatory rites.
- **General:** Oversees the lord's military forces, recruitment, and equipment.
- **Hatamoto:** A daimyō's personal retainer.
- **Herald:** Oversees the lord's communications with other samurai and clans.
- **Magistrate:** Oversees law enforcement and the judiciary in a town, city, or province. May have deputies called yoriki.
- **Seneschal or Steward:** Oversees the household staff and castle upkeep.
- **Spiritual Advisor:** A font of knowledge related to local spirits or the Tao.
- **Stable Master:** Oversees the lord's horses, stablehands, and stables.

- **Concerns:** Collecting taxes from citizenry and governors (or subordinate daimyō, for family daimyō/clan champions), ensuring security, cultivating and developing the land, levying armies, overseeing the sensei of the clan schools (family daimyō/clan champion), cultivating heirs, and approving interfamily and interclan marriage (family daimyō/clan champion).
- **Complications:** Environmental issues and disease, interests of neighboring provincial lords, peasant revolts, competing interests of neighboring families and clans, incompetent subordinates, meddling family members, Imperial ordinances.
- **Retinue and Servants:** Most player characters who attain the rank of samurai are eligible to serve as members of the provincial daimyō's court. Provincial daimyō can also oversee city governors, clan magistrates, and ministers.

Running the Game

The GM is the players' guide to Rokugan, helping their characters maneuver and act within the story. The rules of the game are tools for the GM and players to help give structure and a sense of order to these interactions. The following section provides guidance on how best to use many of these rules to enrich the narrative and keep the game running smoothly, along with some additional details for social attributes (see page 300).

BUILDING TRUST

The game works best if neither the GM nor the players attempt to create "gotcha" moments, or use the rules to entrap the other party in a contradiction. It is fundamentally not a competition between the GM and the players (if for no other reason than that the GM wields final authority over the rules), and it operates most harmoniously when the rules are used to collaborate and tell a good story that everyone enjoys!

RULES ADJUDICATION

While the GM and players are collaborating to tell a story, the GM is ultimately the arbiter of all rules matters. The GM should attempt to keep the pace moving during a game session and not get too bogged down in looking up details at the table—they can always reference the relevant sections later to clarify the correct way things should be resolved in the future.

The players should endeavor to support the GM rather than undermining them. Players should feel free to offer their interpretations of a rule when it becomes relevant, or if the GM asks, but they should let the ruling stand once the GM has made it. Discussing the rules after a session can be one way to untangle unclear issues or apparent contradictions.

MULTIPLE ELEMENTAL APPROACH OPTIONS

Sometimes, multiple elemental approaches are viable for the same task. In these cases, the GM should offer the player a choice of which approach they want to use. For instance, to get support for an idea, a character could use their Fire Ring with a Social skill to incite interest in their idea, or they could use their Air Ring to trick someone into supporting it. These have very similar outcomes, at least in terms of getting support in the short term. However, the target number to succeed (hereafter referred to as the difficulty) for these two tasks can and should vary—some people are easily excited but hard to mislead, while others are calm but gullible.

If you're letting the player choose their approach, it's helpful to tell them which ring will make the check easier and which will make it harder, so that they can make an informed choice. Additionally, it's a good idea to remind them that different approaches can have different consequences for success or failure, and to give them a hint of what these might be.

Varying Difficulty in Text

The text for a check sometimes indicates a variable difficulty by ring by including the alternative difficulties for specific rings in brackets after the check. This is expressed in the text with a description such as "a **TN 3 Fitness check (Earth 1, Fire 4)** to keep their footing on the swaying deck of the ship." This means that the check has a TN of 4 if the character uses their Fire Ring (an aggressive and hasty approach that is disadvantageous for staying balanced), but a TN of only 1 if the character uses their Earth Ring (an approach defined by patience and caution), and a TN of 3 for any other ring.

Different Solutions, Different Challenges

Many problems have numerous possible solutions, so a character might be able to choose between two or more different elemental approaches for the same skill or even different skills from different skill groups to solve the problem. For instance, when attempting to get to the other side of a river (the Fitness skill, from the Martial skill group), a character might leap over it (Overwhelm, the Fire approach to a Martial skill) or swim across it (Shift, the Water approach to a Martial skill). A character might even use another skill entirely (such as Labor, to build a bridge, or Theology, to persuade the water kami to grant passage). See **Chapter 3: Skills** (page 140) for more on various methods they enable.

This does not mean that a character's chosen method is unimportant. Even if multiple solutions exist, some are usually easier to implement than others. For instance, in social circumstances, some people are extremely receptive to flattery (Charm, the Water approach to a Social skill) but respond to provocation (Incite, the Fire approach to a Social skill) with matched hostility; others are easily browbeaten into doing something honorable (Reason, the Earth approach to

a Social skill) but see through even skillful attempts to deceive them (Trick, the Air approach to a Social skill).

The TN of a task can vary based on the skill and approach determined by the character's intended results and method. If a character is walking into a task with only cursory information, they might not know which approach will be the hardest until the GM announces the TN. If the character has foreknowledge of the task, on the other hand, the GM might want to hint—or even state outright—that an approach is easier or harder.

If a skill or one of its approaches is ill-suited to a situation, the GM should increase the TN of the check by 1–3. If a skill or one of its approaches is particularly well-suited to the circumstances, the GM should reduce the TN by 1–3 (to a minimum of 0).

WHEN TO REVEAL OR CONCEAL THE TN

Much of the drama (and strategy) of choosing which dice to keep on a check derives from how much strife a character is willing to suffer in order to succeed, as well as whether they are able to activate other abilities as part of the check using symbols. If the player knows the TN they are trying to achieve, they will have the agency to choose interesting dice combinations.

In contrast, if the player does not know the TN, the choice of which dice to keep has a "push your luck" incentive to avoid accidentally keeping too few and symbols. While this can heighten tension at the table, many players will favor taking as many as possible to reduce the risk of accidentally failing, ignoring chances to use to enhance the narrative.

For the majority of checks, we recommend the GM tell the players the TN. However, there are some rare occasions when the difficulty of a task would not be something the characters could accurately assess. Hidden TNs emphasize the mystery of a check, and can thus be good for showing that the PCs are out of their depth, such as when dealing with very powerful foes, supernatural beings, or unforeseen circumstances

To compensate for the loss of available information, after a character performs a check with a hidden TN, the character gains 1 Void point.

USING BONUS SUCCESSES FOR EXTRA EFFECT

Sometimes, a check might yield specific additional results for bonus successes. For instance, many Attack action checks deal more damage if the character has bonus successes. The GM can put this to use on any check, allowing a character to achieve the goal more thoroughly with bonus successes.

For instance, if a check to look for subtle tells in someone's countenance is a **TN 3 Sentiment (Air) check**, the GM might inform the player that they can get additional details with two bonus success. The GM can inform the player of this before or after they choose kept dice, but remember that informing them beforehand makes their choice much more interesting.

APPLYING ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Advantages and disadvantages can add a great deal of flavor to a scene. Conflicts in samurai stories are often determined by the slightest differences between combatants, or one warrior's unique qualities. The GM and players should make full use of these descriptive traits at appropriate moments, shaping the story based on their characters' individual qualities. The GM can record each character's advantages and disadvantages on the **Campaign Sheet** for ease of reference.

When to Skip Advantages and Disadvantages during a Check

While advantages and disadvantages can be applied to any check for which they make sense, a good rule of thumb is to use them only when it might be decisive. For instance, if a character has already failed, there is no good reason to apply their disadvantage unless the amount by which they fall short matters. Similarly, if a character is already successful, it might not be worth spending much time applying advantages unless bonus successes or removing strife are very important.

Assigning New Advantages and Disadvantages

While each character starts with advantages and disadvantages, characters can also end up acquiring more in the course of play (see **Gaining Advantages and Disadvantages**, on page 99). Critical strikes can permanently wound characters, leaving them with a scar disadvantage, while the Shadowlands Taint can infect a character's very soul. Honor and glory can give characters advantages that represent their good reputation and personal convictions (or infamy and doubts).

A character's social circumstances can be represented with advantages and disadvantages. A powerful alliance might earn a character the Support of [One Group] distinction. In contrast, spurning a group or coming into conflict with them might cause a character to be assigned the Scorn of [One Group] adversity. These advantages and disadvantages should generally take significant effort on the part of the players to obtain.

SPURRING ADVANTAGE USE

If you notice your players aren't making full use of their advantages, after a player fails a roll, ask them if they have any advantages that might apply. If they can't think of one, see if one of the other players has an idea. If nobody can think of anything, move on—the idea is to remind them that advantages exist and encourage them to be creative in their use.

DESCRIBING ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

When a player applies an advantage or disadvantage to a check, they should describe how it factors into the scene. Does the bushi's rippling physique help them to cast aside the heavy stone in the group's path? Does a courtier's passion for tea mean that the scent of an exquisite cup dispels their worries after a stinging exchange with a rival? Filling in these details can help bring the story to life and reinforce that the characters are more than the numerical values of their rings and skills.

CROSS-RING OPPORTUNITIES (OPTIONAL RULE)

At your discretion, you can allow PCs to activate ✠ from other rings listed in Table 8–1: Example ✠ on page 328 at double the cost. This option vastly increases the number of ways to spend ✠, but also dilutes the uniqueness of each ring.

If you wanted to impose a small limit, cross-ring ✠ could be allowed only as follows:

Air to Fire or Water

Earth to Fire or Water

Fire to Air or Earth

Water to Air or Earth

Void to any

USING ✠ IN PLAY

Opportunity gives GMs and players a chance to add narrative flair to their checks and activate additional abilities. However, it can also create a feeling that one needs to examine every possible option for ✠ on a check. It can be a lot of pressure to be creative on the spot—but it doesn't need to be.

Remember that the default options from **Table 8–1: Spending ✠** (see page 328) are always available. Assisting another character on a similar subsequent check (for ✠ if the first character fails their check or ✠ ✠ if the first character succeeds on their check), for instance, is always useful. More importantly, it can make for a simple but effective narrative moment of two characters working in concert to overcome a challenge before them that fits in nearly any context. Maybe one character calls out a warning to the other, letting them cut down a foe they wouldn't have seen. Perhaps it is as simple as the two exchanging a reassuring glance before going into a challenging negotiation. While long descriptions can bog down play, even a short aside about how a character is helping a comrade can enrich the story by underscoring the bond (or tensions) between them. These little moments can help to reinforce their relationship, and they are sometimes more memorable in the long run than even the more narratively pivotal scenes when taken as a whole.

A player or the GM can even poll the group for ideas for using ✠, asking if anyone else has an idea for how to spend it, narratively or mechanically. Sometimes, the GM or another player will have a good idea already in mind.

Above all, whether you're a player or GM, try not to stress out over ✠. If you can think of a good use for ✠ from one of your abilities or a relevant table, use it. If you have a great, creative idea to use ✠, pitch it to the group. And if you can't think of anything, use one of the basic options from **Table 8–1: Spending ✠** (see page 328) or let it go unused (in the case of minion NPCs especially).

ADDING COMPLICATIONS

Ninjō and giri inform the players and GM about a character's relationship with their desires and their duty. In many works of fiction about samurai, a character strives to maintain their personal values while achieving glory in the eyes of their lord. During this process, the character's perspectives on honor and glory are often challenged, and these perspectives frequently evolve as the character develops. Alternatively, a conflict between one's personal beliefs and the needs of a sworn lord might drive a character's development over the course of a story.

The twin motivations of ninjō (a character's internal feelings, tied to their belief in Bushidō) and giri (the oaths to their lord that they must uphold to advance in the world) are levers that the GM can use to create interesting, dramatic confrontations between characters, or even within a single character. Complications, as described on page 39, are a way that both GMs and players can pull these motives into the story. GMs can choose to use the rules for **discord** to create conflicting complications for the PCs.

Discord

Discord functions in a simple manner: choose one PC's giri and another's ninjō, then simultaneously introduce complications for each that set the two motivations at odds with each other through the use of a pair of complications introduced at the same time. The discord tracks allows the GM to determine these in a randomized manner for a more procedural approach, but planning in advance is equally valid.

Building the Discord Tracks

Once all characters have chosen their ninjō and giri, the GM should fill in the discord tracks on the Campaign Sheet (found at www.FantasyFlightGames.com). One track is for giri, and the other is for ninjō. The GM writes each character's name outside of the tracks as indicated, and then each character's giri on the inner track and ninjō on the outer track.

Choosing a Session's Discord

For the first session, the GM should begin at Spoke 1 for both tracks. For future sessions, the GM should begin at the spokes that contributed to the last session's discord for each of the two tracks.

To determine a session's discord, roll and keep a number of ■ equal to the number of players (resolving ⟲ as usual). Total the number of ◯ and ⟲, and then count that many spokes counterclockwise on the giri track, skipping any blank spaces. The final spoke indicates the character whose giri is part of the session's discord. The GM should start thinking about a complication they can introduce that stems from this PC's giri.

Next, total the number of ⟲ and ✲, and then count that many spokes clockwise on the ninjō track, skipping any blank spaces. The final spoke indicates the character whose ninjō is part of the session's discord. The GM should start thinking about a complication related to this players' ninjō, and how it might clash with the prior complication.

The GM may inform the player whether it was their character's giri or ninjō that was rolled if they want to let the player start thinking about ways to work it into the story—or not, if that builds tension more effectively.

AWARDING XP

Character growth is an important theme of *Legend of the Five Rings*, as each character pursues mastery within their domain while expanding their knowledge of the wider world. The recommended rate of experience point gain is 1 XP per hour of play, with an additional 3–5 XP awarded to each character in the group at the GM's discretion whenever the party overcomes a significant milestone or obstacle. Increasing the base value to 2 XP per hour will make for a more heroic-feeling game, and is often a good idea to help keep tactically oriented groups engaged.

GMs should feel free to adjust these numbers as they see fit. At their discretion, GMs can also give bonus XP for particularly strong moments of roleplaying among the group. Standardized XP across the group makes it easier for everyone to track and helps keep the characters at a roughly equivalent level of competency, but GMs should also feel free to award XP on a per-player basis if that is their group's preference.

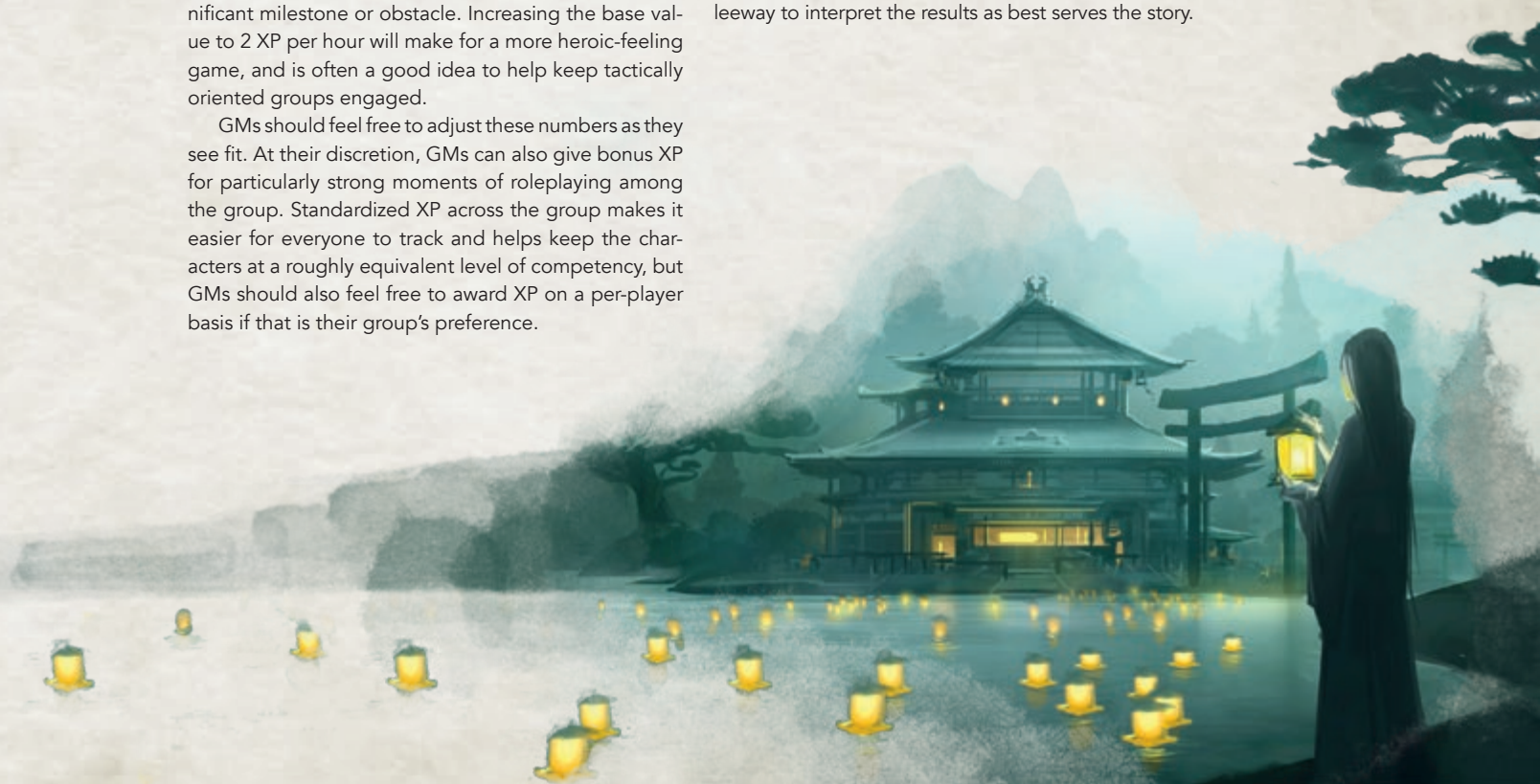
CHARACTER DEATH AND RETIREMENT

Player characters in *Legend of the Five Rings* live three feet from death at all times, so one or more PCs might well meet their end during the story. Alternatively, a character might be retired from play because they have completed their duty, because they have been stripped of their status as a samurai, or because they have simply become too old for such adventures and wish to spend their final years in contemplation at a monastery. It is recommended that GMs allow a player whose character has perished or otherwise been retired to create a new PC with the same amount of experience as their late character. The possibility of character death can be an important part of *Legend of the Five Rings*, but it should always be an occurrence that serves to show the stakes of the narrative and makes the story more interesting rather than a "punishment" for a player's decisions.

Additionally, the GM should keep in mind that death is often the least interesting way a character's story can end. If the PCs are vanquished in battle, for instance, instead of simply dying, they might be taken hostage (hostages are valuable, after all) and need to escape. If a PC falls into a river from an incredible height, they could die—or they could awaken downstream, gravely injured but alive. Even a lethal blow from a critical strike can often be healed to stabilize a character before the Dying condition causes them to expire, and if no PC is trained in Medicine, an NPC might be able to step in to save their life (likely with an expectation of a significant favor down the road, of course). Sometimes, the dice decide that a PC's time is up, but frequently, the GM has some leeway to interpret the results as best serves the story.

BUILDING TENSION

Creating satisfying discord doesn't mean "trapping" your PCs in an unsolvable problem where one has to "defeat" the other. Conflicts between characters are often best when they are a matter of give and take, with each character winning on some accounts and losing on others. Alternately, you can prepare a common enemy—perhaps underlying cause of both complications—who the PCs can rally against at the end, diffusing the tension.



Using Social Attributes

Honor, glory, and status are important aspects of a character in *Legend of the Five Rings*. Not only can knowing these values for their characters help players roleplay these individuals more aptly, but the GM can also use honor, glory, and status as tools to help players engage with the setting. The PCs are immersed Rokugani even if the players are not. Honor, glory, and status exist to help bridge that gap, giving players clear indicators of costs their choices might incur and the standing of others in the world.

It usually falls to the GM to bring these attributes into the game, although players can certainly make use of them actively as well. Reminding a player that they must choose to have their character forfeit 1 honor if they wish to make that snide remark to someone of higher status reinforces the importance of courtesy in Rokugan. Similarly, noting that a character must stake glory if they wish to boast that they will be the first into the enemy's castle the next day can be an excellent way to help bring the society the characters live in to the forefront of the players' minds. Knowing one's status relative to that of another character is often vital to properly interacting with them.

Players can make checks to determine an NPC's honor, glory, or status to predict their behavior (see **The Art of Investigation** on page 170). The GM can have NPCs do the same to the PCs, and should have them give different reactions based on these values and what the NPCs know about the PCs.

When a player chooses to forfeit or stake their character's honor or glory, consult **Table 7–1: Honor and Glory Forfeits/Awards** and the relevant section of this chapter for guidance on how much honor they must give up to perform the deed.

BUSHIDŌ IN HISTORICAL JAPAN

Rokugani Bushidō is quite different from anything that existed historically in Japan. While historical samurai had deeply held convictions that they lived and died for, there is no single text that defined Bushidō for all samurai.

Outside of Japan, cultural understanding of Bushidō comes in large part from retrospective efforts to understand the past. Inazo Nitobe's Bushido: The Soul of Japan *(1900) is one text written by a Japanese scholar to explain Bushidō to English speakers. Nitobe offers "Military-Knight-Ways" as a translation of Bushidō, and expands it to the "'Precepts of Knighthood,' the noblesse oblige of the warrior class."*

Much as the code of chivalry in Europe has been romanticized to fit with the values of later writers, Nitobe's account of Bushidō is a product of its own time (after the era of samurai), and it can help readers understand the history of Western views on Bushidō.

HONOR IN PLAY

Literally meaning "way of the warrior" in Japanese, Bushidō is the code by which nearly all samurai in Rokugan strive to live. Samurai are taught to reach for these ideals at the expense of their own personal gain. Of course, samurai are also human, so the "breaking point" when one abandons Bushidō out of self-interest or the need for self-preservation makes for rich story and roleplaying material. The other rich story opportunity associated with Bushidō occurs when its tenets inevitably come into conflict with each other. What does a samurai do when their lord commands them to do something dishonorable? What does a samurai do when Honesty clashes with Courtesy? When Justice calls for blood but Compassion counsels mercy?

Honor is a code of behavior meant to guide the members of the samurai caste, but it does not align exactly in all places with Rokugan's complex legal system, which imposes different standards upon people at the different levels of society. Some things are dishonorable but not considered crimes for samurai—killing someone of lower station without just cause might be within a samurai's legal rights (provided that person is not considered another samurai's charge), but it is still a severe violation of the Bushidō tenet of Compassion (Jin), which dictates that a samurai should have regard for even these lives. Almost all criminal activities are on some level dishonorable, though occasionally, breaking the law is less dishonorable than the alternative.

Table 7–2: Honor Scores offers concrete examples of what a character's honor attribute says about their moral fiber. As detailed in that table, if a character's honor enters a certain range, the character receives one or more **virtue**-type distinctions or **flaw**-type adversities. These are chosen by the player, based on the parts of the code their character holds dearest or spurns. These are removed if the character's honor rises or falls outside of the specified range..

Forfeiting and Staking Honor

Characters must forfeit honor to breach the tenets of their code, and are awarded honor when they make sacrifices in the name of these tenets. Because honor is internal to the character, this occurs no matter how few witnesses there are to their fateful decision.

Awarding Honor for Deeds

Honor cannot be gained without adversity. As such, the GM should award honor to characters for deeds that put their code above their immediate needs or desires.

Characters generally should not be awarded honor for things that cost them nothing or are not accompanied by risks. A trifling breach or sacrifice is any that the GM deems too small to be minor but too large to fully ignore.

Table 7–1: Honor and Glory Forfeits/Awards

SCALE	FORFEIT	AWARD
Trifling	1	1
Minor	Attribute Rank	3
Major	Attribute Rank x 2	6
Massive	Attribute Rank x 4	9

THE CLANS' VIEWS OF BUSHIDŌ

Each clan has one or more tenets it views as paramount, even above the others. When a character chooses to forfeit honor due to defying one of their own clan's paramount tenets, they double the amount of honor they must forfeit. When a character is awarded honor as a result of making a personal sacrifice for this tenet, the GM should double the honor they are awarded.

- **Crab:** Courage
- **Crane:** Courtesy
- **Dragon:** Sincerity
- **Lion:** Honor
- **Phoenix:** Righteousness
- **Scorpion:** Duty and Loyalty
- **Unicorn:** Compassion

Each clan has one or more tenets of Bushidō it views as less significant than the others. When a character chooses to forfeit honor due to defy this tenet, halve the amount of honor they must forfeit (rounded up, to a minimum of 1). When a character is awarded honor for making a personal sacrifice in the name of this tenet, halve the honor they are awarded (rounded up, to a minimum of 1).

- **Crab:** Courtesy
- **Crane:** Courage
- **Dragon:** Duty and Loyalty
- **Lion:** Compassion
- **Phoenix:** Sincerity
- **Scorpion:** Honor and Righteousness
- **Unicorn:** Courtesy

THE TENETS OF BUSHIDŌ

Each of the seven tenets listed below is accompanied by a number of examples of situations when a character might have to forfeit honor to disobey it, need to stake honor on upholding it, or receive an honor reward for giving something up to pursue it. The GM can use these as guidelines for honor losses and awards.

Compassion (Jin)

Just as the farmer does not grow crops merely to fill their own belly, the warrior does not fight for just their own sake. A samurai must be constantly aware of their duty to protect others.

Breaches of Compassion

Example breaches of Compassion include:

- *(Minor)* Verbal cruelty to a foe or stranger, allowing easily prevented suffering, tormenting animals
- *(Major)* Verbal cruelty to a friend, physically harming someone for revenge alone, letting an ally die without trying to save them
- *(Massive)* Murdering someone of lower status in cold blood, physically harming someone for fun

Sacrifices for Compassion

Example sacrifices for Compassion include:

- *(Minor)* Giving someone a common useful item, spending two or more downtime scenes helping a friend, treating a foe's wounds after a battle
- *(Major)* Giving up your chance to be awarded 6 or more glory for someone else, saving someone's life despite knowing they may trouble you later
- *(Massive)* Giving away an irreplaceable item, completing a dangerous heroic task for someone else who cannot repay you

Courage (Yū)

Only fear of death can destroy life; the samurai replaces it with an understanding of danger. Common folk allow fear to swallow their hearts. An extraordinary soul is one with the courage to live as if each moment were the last.

Breaches of Courage

Example breaches of Courage include:

- *(Minor)* Allowing fear for yourself to influence your actions, leaving a lost battle to protect your lord

BUSHIDŌ IN ROKUGAN

Within the fictional world of Rokugan, honor is believed to be more objective than it is subjective. The Rokugani code of honor does vary somewhat in interpretation, but samurai mostly agree on what the perfect samurai should believe, live for, and die for. It is a harsh code, and it values some lives above others.

Unlike in historical Japan, the bulk of Rokugani Bushidō's demands are spelled out in a single text—Akodo's Leadership. *There is little room for shades of gray, and even those samurai who do not hold themselves to every demand of Bushidō generally believe in the code's value. Where they disagree is on which tenets of Bushidō can be allowed to slide with the least consequence, and which must be upheld no matter what.*

Table 7–2: Honor Scores

VALUE	DESCRIPTION	VIRTUES/ FLAWS
100	**Honor Is Stronger than Steel:** The character believes that Bushidō is worth upholding at any cost, and do so even unto death.	3 virtue advantages
80–99	**Never Stray from the Way:** The character has given up much to embody the ideals of Bushidō, and they shall continue to do so as honor requires. They would rather forfeit their personal desires than fail to live up to their own expectations.	2 virtue advantages
65–79	**My Honor Is My Life:** Those who live in accordance with Bushidō are strengthened by it, and can endure the hardships it requires of them. Rarely, they may slip, but afterward they cannot easily forgive themself.	1 virtue advantage
30–64	**Honor Is the Ideal:** Most samurai are brought up to believe in Bushidō and strive to embody its virtues. When the character speaks and acts, it is with honor in mind, but they are still human and periodically succumb to temptation, or they are simply willing to sacrifice their honor if they must. Importantly, they still feel guilt over betraying their ideals.	–
20–29	**Honor Is about Appearances:** While the character does not reliably uphold the virtues of Bushidō, they still recognize the importance of honor to society and play the part of a samurai.	1 flaw disadvantage
1–19	**Honor Is a Nicety:** They believe that most of the tenets get in the way of what they need—or want—to accomplish. Their reality no longer aligns with samurai ideals, so they have given up on such luxuries.	2 flaw disadvantages
0	**I Make My Own Code:** The character has completely lost faith in Bushidō and adheres to another code—or none at all!	3 flaw disadvantages

SCORPION HONOR

The Scorpion Clan is particularly illustrative of the perceived objectivity of honor: its members do not debate the definitions of honor or attempt to rationalize their actions as honorable through twisted logic, but they also do not believe that honor is worthless. They accept that members of Bayushi's clan cannot behave according to Bushidō precepts, but they do not actually disagree with what these precepts are or even that they are valuable. Honor is for other samurai, and they can be honorable only because the Scorpion are willing to do the dirty work that a society demands.

REWARDS IN DEATH

There is another reason why a samurai is so willing to live dangerously. The concept of loyalty goes both ways. A daimyō will be loyal to a fallen samurai's memory by rewarding their family in return for their devotion.

- *(Major)* Allowing fear to prevent you from acting entirely, fleeing to save your own skin
- *(Massive)* Committing a despicable act out of fear, sacrificing someone else to save yourself

Sacrifices for Courage

Example sacrifices for Courage include:

- *(Minor)* Refusing to back down from an armed enemy while unarmed, accepting a challenge from a foe you know to be a superior warrior
- *(Major)* Facing an inhuman foe such as an oni alone, preventing a comrade's massive breach, suffering a severity 8 or lower critical strike for your lord
- *(Massive)* Preventing your lord 's major or massive breach, suffering a severity 8 or higher critical strike for your lord

Courtesy (Rei)

A samurai is neither a bully nor a brute killer. Samurai must treat their enemies with Courtesy.

Breaches of Courtesy

Example breaches of Courtesy include:

- *(Minor)* Drunkenness or coarse language in the presence of someone of higher status, letting an insult to your clan or family pass without remark
- *(Major)* Directly insulting someone of equal or higher status, letting an insult to your ancestors, sensei, or lord pass without remark
- *(Massive)* Directly insulting your lord

Sacrifices for Courtesy

Example sacrifices for Courtesy include:

- *(Minor)* Paying a sincere compliment to a foe, allowing a tired foe a moment's respite, letting someone of higher status receive aid first
- *(Major)* Giving an unarmed foe a weapon or setting aside your own weapons to fight fairly
- *(Massive)* Taking an enemy of higher status captive without killing or maiming them

Duty and Loyalty (Chūgi)

Actions and their consequences define those who take them. The samurai's Loyalty to their charge is unshakable.

Breaches of Duty and Loyalty

Example breaches of Duty and Loyalty include:

- *(Minor)* Refusing an order to protect your lord's interests, intentionally misinterpreting an order
- *(Major)* Refusing an order from your lord
- *(Massive)* Forsaking your post for another lord

Sacrifices for Duty and Loyalty

Example sacrifices for Duty and Loyalty include:

- *(Minor)* Refusing to commit an act of disloyalty to your lord despite personal feelings
- *(Major)* Refusing to obey an unjust order from someone who is not your lord
- *(Massive)* Dying in your lord's service

Honor (Meiyo)

Praises and curses are not what defines Honor; the samurai reserves their own judgment.

Breaches of Honor

Example breaches of Honor include:

- *(Minor)* Touching dead flesh anywhere other than at war, persuading another to act dishonorably
- *(Major)* Neglecting your duty to pursue your earthly desires, killing in an unjustified duel
- *(Massive)* Refusing seppuku when required

Sacrifices for Honor

Example sacrifices for Honor include:

- *(Minor)* Persuading someone to abandon a dishonorable plan to help you
- *(Major)* Negotiating to avoid an unjustified duel
- *(Massive)* Offering to commit seppuku for failure

Righteousness (Gi)

Set lies aside. A samurai does not make Righteousness a matter for debate; they know that there is only truth and falsehood, justice and injustice.

Breaches of Righteousness

Example breaches of Righteousness include:

- *(Minor)* Abetting or covering for a comrade's major breach of honor, lying to someone of equal or lower status for personal gain
- *(Major)* Abetting or covering for a comrade's massive breach of honor, lying to someone of higher status for personal gain
- *(Massive)* Murdering someone of equal or higher status, lying to your lord for selfish gain

Sacrifices for Righteousness

Example sacrifices for Righteousness include:

- *(Minor)* Delivering bad news to your lord without deflecting blame, taking responsibility for the failure of a subordinate
- *(Major)* Retiring from a post you can no longer fulfill, relinquishing a claim or large gift to your lord
- *(Massive)* Refusing to deny true allegations of a failure requiring you to forfeit 9+ glory or status

Sincerity (Makoto)

Sincerity is more complex than mere Honesty; Sincerity is the ability to speak earnestly without giving offense or compromising one's family's interests. It is to be truthful without causing embarrassment or inconvenience—to maintain one's Integrity while eliding unpleasant realities.

Breaches of Sincerity

Example breaches of Sincerity include:

- *(Minor)* Breaking your word to someone of equal or lower status, misleading a friend
- *(Major)* Breaking your word to someone of higher status, manipulating someone for fun
- *(Massive)* Deceiving or manipulating your lord

Sacrifices for Sincerity

Example sacrifices for Sincerity include:

- *(Minor)* Publicly revealing a truth that damages your reputation (a forfeit of 3 or more glory)
- *(Major)* Giving (honest) testimony against a political ally that jeopardizes future relations
- *(Massive)* Forfeiting 6 or more glory to claim responsibility for your lord's mistake

WHAT IS LEFT UNSAID

Sometimes, the only honest and honorable path is to say nothing at all. A samurai's word is always good, and if a samurai says they will do something, they will do it or die trying. The wise pay attention, therefore, to what a samurai does not say, for in these gaps many important truths can be found.

GLORY IN PLAY

FAME

Glory is not exactly a character's fame; a character who is known for deeds both good and ill might have a modest glory value due to the conflicting accounts of their actions. It does, though, confer advantages that reflect fame (or disadvantages that represent infamy) if it reaches certain highs (or lows).

Glory is best described as how much the outside world (with a particular emphasis on the character's sworn lord) believes the character is a proper samurai.

Glory is the external measure of a character's outward success as a samurai. The higher a character's glory, the more widely they are recognized as a paragon of samurai virtues; the lower a character's glory, the more others believe they are unworthy of the name. See **Table 7–1: Honor and Glory Forfeits/Awards** on page 300 for how much glory a character must lose or stands to gain for a given admission of failure or acknowledgment.

Forfeiting Glory

A character must forfeit glory to undertake certain actions publicly. When a player chooses to forfeit or stake their character's glory, consult **Table 7–1: Honor and Glory Forfeits/Awards** for guidance on how much glory they must give up. Unlike honor, glory relies upon external perception, so actions taken clandestinely do not require forfeiting glory, though sometimes they require staking it upon avoiding discovery. Sample diminishments for various decisions include:

- *(Minor)* Ignoring an insult to your person, choosing to share credit for a deed, admitting a lie publicly, declining a gift from someone of higher status, losing an ancestral weapon
- *(Major)* Murdering someone of lower status, choosing to leave the public eye for months, not arriving to a duel, attacking a surrendering foe
- *(Massive)* Murdering someone of equal or higher status, ordering a retreat in a mass battle, refusing seppuku when required

Awarding Glory for Deeds

When a character is recognized for a notable deed (real or fabricated), the GM should award that character glory based on the degree of acclaim it represents, such as:

- *(Minor)* Receiving a gift from someone of higher status, beating a foe with glory 40+ in a duel or public contest, marrying or arranging a family marriage to someone of higher glory
- *(Major)* Commanding your side to victory in a mass battle, defeating a foe with glory 60+ in a duel or public contest, defeating an oni or similar monster with a group, marrying or arranging a family marriage to someone of higher status
- *(Massive)* Defeating a foe with glory 80+, defeating an oni alone, winning a war, marrying or arranging a marriage into the Imperial family

Table 7–3: Glory Scores

VALUE	DESCRIPTION	FAME/ INFAMY
100	**Undying Legend:** A legendary hero, whose deeds are worthy of poetry and song, and is known even among peasants and foreigners	3 fame advantages
90–99	**Renowned Hero:** A samurai counted among the greatest in their clan, whose exploits have spread to the far corners of the Empire	2 fame advantages
80–89	**Exceptional Samurai:** One whose impressive deeds have garnered attention in the courts of other clans	
65–79	**Respected Adept:** A samurai of great accomplishment, whose name is known outside their family	1 fame advantages
60–64	**Worthy Retainer:** An extremely competent and valued samurai	–
45–59	**Reputable Samurai:** A samurai known for their effectiveness and reliability	
40–44	**Unremarkable Retainer:** An ordinary samurai	
30–39	**Samurai of No Renown:** A samurai whose reputation is marred by failure, disappointment, or ill omen	
20–29	**Disappointment:** Someone considered incompetent or untrustworthy	
10–19	**Renegade:** An individual who has become known for their misdeeds across several provinces	1 infamy disadvantage
1–09	**Villain:** An individual whose heinous acts are known across the land	2 infamy disadvantages
0	**Figure of Dread:** One of the most vile or scandalous individuals in the Empire	3 infamy disadvantages

STATUS IN PLAY

Status is much more static than honor and glory: rarely do characters need to forfeit it, and generally, they only receive it as a reward upon receiving a new title. If a character does need to forfeit status, they often reset it to a specific value; for instance, if a character retires to a monastery, their status becomes 25 (a monk's status). Rarely, characters can be stripped of status. To willfully endanger their status, a character must stake an amount determined by the GM on covering up their actions.

Comparing Status

Status is most often used to know which of two characters stands higher in the Celestial Order. This has many uses, both narratively and with regard to abilities. The Social skills reference interacting with characters of lower, higher, or equal status, as do many examples of times a character must forfeit (or be awarded) glory or honor.

The GM should compare the status of the PCs to that of NPCs as relevant. Most NPCs defer to those of higher status and expect obedience people of lower status—how they express this can hint at their true nature.

Titles

A title is assigned as a result of narrative events, but besides that, it functions much like a school curriculum: a character can spend experience to deepen their understanding of how to fulfill its functions, and eventually unlock a special ability after spending the listed XP. When a character is assigned a title, their status might change based on the Status Award listed in the title.

A title exists in parallel to a character's school. A character can only have one incomplete title at a time. Each time a character purchases an advancement, the character may allocate the XP spent to completing their title (with full value for listed advancements and half value for non-listed advancements, as with a curriculum). XP allocated to a title does not count toward the character's current school rank (and vice-versa).

Emerald Magistrate

	ADVANCE	TYPE
TITLE	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Martial Arts [Choose One]	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	◆ Rank 1–2 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	◆ Open Hand Style	Technique
	◆ Shallow Waters	Technique

Table 7–4: Status Scores

VALUE	EXAMPLES
100	The ruling Emperor
90–99	The Imperial Spouse, the Voice of the Emperor, the Emperor's children, daimyō of the Imperial families, the Emerald Champion, the Jade Champion, the Imperial Advisor, the Imperial Chancellor
80–89	Great Clan Champion
70–79	Minor Clan Champion , the Imperial Herald, the Imperial Treasurer, a Great Clan family daimyō, a great general
60–69	A hatamoto, a provincial governor, a commander of multiple companies
50–59	A city governor, a captain of a military company, a vassal family daimyō
40–49	Darō, Emerald/Jade Magistrate, revered sensei, clan magistrate, lieutenant
30–39	Abbot of the Brotherhood, average Great Clan samurai
25–29	Average Minor Clan or vassal family samurai, monk of the Brotherhood
20–24	Village officer, disgraced samurai, rōnin
10–19	Ashigaru, artisan, laborer
1–09	Merchant, bandit
0	Burakumin (entertainer, geisha, leatherworker, butcher, torturer, or gravedigger), one outside the Celestial Order

Once a character has allocated the amount of experience listed in the title's listed completion cost, the character acquires the title ability associated with the title. The title is then considered complete (though narratively, the character retains it), and the character may be assigned a new title as narrative events permit.

Example Title: Emerald Magistrate

Emerald Magistrates are agents of the Emperor's Law, warrior-sages who dispense wisdom and justice.

Assigned By: The Emerald Champion, the Emperor, and other high-ranking officials in the office of the Emerald Champion can appoint Emerald Magistrates, and do so when a samurai proves worthy of the post or when the need arises for more arbiters of the Emperor's Justice.

Status Award: +15 (to a maximum of 40)

XP to Completion: 30 XP

Voice of Authority (Title Ability): Once per game session when making a Scheme or Support action check using a Social skill, you may choose additional targets equal to your Glory rank. You cannot choose any additional target with vigilance higher than the highest among your initial targets.

EMERALD MAGISTRATES

These judges enforce the law in Imperial lands, in places where the jurisdictions of individual clans are hazy, and anywhere conspiracy against the Emperor may exist. Their leader, the Emerald Champion, is chosen in a ceremonial tournament—a series of duels against the other candidates. While their dōjō is located at the Castle of the Emerald Champion, many Emerald Magistrates first serve as yoriki (aides) to other Emerald Magistrates, and thus get the bulk of their training in the field.

An Emerald Magistrate's authority is vast in theory but limited in practice. The Great Clans see them as allies of convenience at best and threats at worst. Thus, an Emerald Magistrate who wishes to render justice upon a powerful enemy must be not just wise and skilled, but also subtle and diplomatic.

EXPERIENCED PCS (OPTIONAL RULE)

GMs who want to give their players more options to start can always have their PCs begin with XP and even titles based on the sorts of characters they want them to be able to build at the outset. A few potential starting points are:

Young Heroes: +10 XP

Seasoned Retainers: +30 XP

Veteran Samurai: +50 XP, one appropriate title such as Emerald Magistrate

Alternative Campaign Styles

The land of Rokugan is fertile imaginative ground in which GMs and players can grow vivid stories, and not all of these tales are focused exclusively on noble samurai torn between the sworn duty their role demands and their inner desires. From desperate rōnin and outlaws inspired by literature such as *Water Margin* and the films of Akira Kurosawa, to groups of elite warriors protecting the whole of the Emerald Empire from supernatural threats, there are numerous other stories worth telling in the lands of the *Legend of the Five Rings*. This section describes a few alternate campaign styles you might want to explore, how to create characters for those games, and how these games can differ from our default playstyle and conventions.

SAMURAI AS FOES

In this playstyle, samurai are potentially one of the largest dangers to the PCs, They might be allies during a given story, for many samurai have use of characters like the PCs. However, most samurai will be unlikely to risk their lives for the PCs, and often view them as disposable.

RISE FROM THE DUST

Instead of the samurai of the Great Clans and their intrigues and struggles, this playstyle focuses on the forgotten heroes and villains who live on the outskirts of society and struggle to survive in a dangerous world. While defending a village from bandits, fleeing the consequences of one's actions, or scraping together a few bu for one's next meal may not be the stuff of epic poems, it is just as harrowing for those who live it.

Assumptions of this Playstyle

This sort of story hinges on the idea that the player characters are outsiders in the broad scope of society. They are not notable political actors as the default playstyle assumes, and they are not likely to be given any political power they do not seize with their own hands. If they are samurai, they have likely forsaken or lost their titles and become rōnin, but they may also be merchants, ashigaru, peasants, and burakumin. As a result, the company is often much rougher than the high courts of the Emerald Empire—courtesy is still important to some people, but being discourteous is only as dangerous as the person you have chosen to insult.

PEASANT FAMILY

Ring Increase: +1 to one ring of your choice
Skill Increase: +1 to any two Trade skills of your choice
Glory: 25 **Starting Wealth:** 10 zeni

Character Creation Alterations

Apply the following alterations to the **Game of Twenty Questions** (see page 41) for each character:

Question 1: *Which clan's lands did your character grow up in?* The mechanical choice is the same, except that your status is a value of your choice from 20 to 24. After all, the peasants and samurai of a given region share many cultural values (even if most samurai are loathe to admit it).

Question 2: *Who is your family?* Unless you are a fallen samurai, your family falls far beneath the notice of the Great Clans—you might have no family but the comrades you choose for yourself. Use the Rokugani peasant family above unless you are a fallen samurai, in which case choose a family as normal.

Question 3: *Where did you learn their skills?* Unless you are a fallen samurai, use the Worldly Rōnin school on page 87. If you are a fallen samurai, use a school package as normal, but your starting honor is 30.

All characters use the following starting outfit: Traveling clothes, any 1 weapon of rarity 7 or lower, traveling pack, any 1 item of rarity 5 or lower.

Question 5: *What is your past?* Instead of selecting a giri, select a past. A past is the set of circumstances that led you to life on the fringes of society. Your past might be a grim reputation as a warrior that you seek to outrun, circumstances of birth that forced you to be a rōnin, or the enemies who pursue you.

Your past should meet the same rough criteria as giri—something that can clash with your desires, and can create drama for your character that you will enjoy during the campaign. To attain glory, you must overcome your past, but the more glory you acquire, the more likely your past is to come crashing down upon you.

Question 7: Skip this question.

Question 18: *Who was your character named after?* Unless you are a fallen samurai, instead of rolling on **Table 2–1: Samurai Heritage** (see page 96), choose 1 additional item of rarity 5 or lower that you inherited from the family member, friend, or mentor who gave you your name or outlook on life.

FATE OF THE REALM

Rokugan is a land where supernatural powers run rampant and, sometimes, provincial intrigues are truly not the greatest threat in a story. GMs and players who wish to explore stories about champions banding together to save cities, provinces, or even the world itself can certainly do so in the Emerald Empire, as the setting is rich with cosmological threats.

Assumptions of this Playstyle

This playstyle assumes that the player characters are samurai who are tasked with dealing with a suitably epic problem—or series of problems—that threaten multiple clans, and perhaps even the Empire itself. Dangers such as massive Shadowlands armies, bloodspeaker sects, lunar cultists, and other, more insidious threats create story opportunities for characters to undertake epic quests to protect their homes and loved ones. This playstyle mirrors more "classic" fantasy adventures of great deeds, mighty heroes, and dire foes to be vanquished.

There are numerous locations in Rokugan where this sort of campaign fits most naturally. The Shadowlands encompass a vast realm surrounding the Festering Pit of Fu Leng, and this region is the grave to countless heroes. The Shinomen Forest is an untamed wildland within the Empire itself, to which no clan lays claim and in which primal beings still stir. Even within smaller patches of wilds, there are strange and dangerous beings. Not all spirits are friendly to humans, and some see the expansion of towns into the wild lands as an affront to nature. The PCs might need to find compromise between ancient forces and humanity so that both can survive and thrive.

Character Creation Alterations

Apply the following alterations to the **Game of Twenty Questions** (see page 41) for each character:

Question 5: *What is your character's appointed quest?* Instead of a giri, each PC has a quest: a task given them by their lord, by their own will, by supernatural forces, or perhaps by destiny itself. This task might be to set something right in the universe, recover or destroy a magical artifact, seal a particular evil entity again for another ten thousand years, or face a particular foe who threatens the entire realm. As with a giri, a character's quest should be able to conflict with their ninjō, and sets the means by which the character will strive for glory. At the discretion of the group and the GM, all characters might share a quest, or they might have different quests with overlapping objectives.

Extra Experience: After character creation, each character receives 30 XP to spend on advancements.

Nemuranai

Nemuranai, meaning "unsleeping" in reference to the object's kami, are miraculous artifacts of spiritual power. They are items that, through centuries of use, miraculous origins, or other incredible events, have attained power and even a degree of awareness. While they can appear in any campaign, they are usually vanishingly rare, accessible to PCs only under exceptional circumstances. In this campaign style, however, each PC chooses one nemuranai with an appropriate sealed invocation of their choice that they possess as their quest begins. They must also determine how the item relates to their quest:

Awakened Weapon

A weapon nemuranai has the standard profile, plus:

- Its deadliness is increased by +2, and it has the Durable and Sacred qualities.
- It has a distinguishing quirk with narrative effects.
- It has one Attack or Scheme action invocation of Rank 1–3 sealed within it. Once per game session as an action, the wielder may perform this invocation, substituting the skill used to wield the weapon for Theology.

Awakened Armor

An armor nemuranai has the standard profile, plus:

- It has physical and supernatural resistance +2, and it has the Durable and Sacred qualities.
- It has a distinguishing quirk with narrative effects.
- It has one Support or Movement action invocation of Rank 1–3 sealed within it. Once per game session as an action, the wearer may perform this invocation, substituting Fitness for Theology.

Awakened Item

An item nemuranai has the standard profile, plus:

- It has the Durable and Sacred qualities.
- It has a distinguishing quirk with narrative effects.
- It has one invocation of Rank 1–4 sealed within it. Once per game session as an action, the holder may perform this invocation, substituting Meditation (or other skill of the GM's choice) for Theology. While wielding this item, the character adds a kept ■ set to an ✲ result to their Theology checks using sealed invocation's Element.

KEIJI (SAMPLE NEMURANAI WEAPON)

After being used to bring justice to countless mahō-tsukai, Shiba Seinaru's blade awakened to its purpose of cleansing evil and bringing light to the darkness. At the end of a crisis, it vanished—along with its owner.

Keiji is a katana with the The Fires from Within invocation.

Quirk: Tasked to slay mahō-tsukai, the blade ignites and flickers with orange flames whenever the evil magic of these wicked sorcerers stirs nearby.

HARUKAZE (SAMPLE NEMURANAI ARMOR)

Said to have been one of the wonders woven by the legendary Asahina Setsuna and given to a lover in hostile lands so they might visit when they pleased, this item lay forgotten in a Lion Clan storehouse for generations before being rediscovered.

Harukaze is a set of traveling clothes with the Cloak of Night invocation.

Quirk: The pattern on Harukaze shifts with its surroundings, subtly mirroring the fashions and colors of the clothes around it.

CHAPTER

8

Non-Player Characters

Non-player characters are the other inhabitants of the world, with whom the player characters interact. In story terms, the PCs are the main protagonists, and NPCs can be thought of as the supporting cast: bit characters, friends and allies, rivals, and antagonists. Although they can be extremely important to the arc of the narrative (the call to aid from an old friend or the diabolical scheme of a villain might be the sorts of events that initiate a story), in most scenes, these characters are not in focus. The majority of the time, the story that the group tells flows best if it is framed around the player characters and their perspectives, decisions, and actions.

Like other elements of the world outside of the PCs, NPCs are controlled and portrayed by the GM. Portraying a wide variety of characters can be a challenge, but it can also be one of the best parts of sitting in the GM's seat.

NPC Profile Breakdown

GMs can, of course, invent their own NPCs, but many printed materials provide premade NPCs, along with the various rules needed to make the most of them in play. An NPC profile consists of the following elements:

- **NPC Type:** This denotes the importance of the NPC in the story.
  - **Minions** are minor characters, who have simplified profiles for ease of use.
  - **Adversaries** are narratively weighty characters, who have rules similar to a PC.
- **Conflict Rank:** Each NPC has a rank in two categories (combat and intrigue). These are estimates of the NPC's capabilities in each of those spheres (See page 310 for details).
- **Rings:** Each NPC has a set of ring values (see **The Five Rings**, on page 32).
- **Attributes:** Each NPC has a set of attributes, just as a player character does (see **Derived Attributes**, on page 36).
- **Demeanor:** This section offers a simplified snapshot of an NPC's personality, providing their responses to different approaches to Social skills (See page 310 for details).
- **Advantages and Disadvantages:** NPCs can be given prewritten advantages and disadvantages (see page 99), but printed NPC profiles usually have specialized advantages and disadvantages that do not appear in that chapter. These are treated as distinctions (or adversities) that apply as the GM deems appropriate.
- **Skill Ranks:** Each NPC has ranks in skill groups or skills that apply to their checks (see **Chapter 3: Skills**, on page 140).
- **Favored Weapons and Gear:** Any items the NPC is likely to have on their person, potentially including weapons they are likely to wield. Most own other possessions, but this section covers those most pertinent to their interactions with the PCs.
- **Abilities:** NPCs possess abilities, which sometimes include techniques also available to player characters and at other times consist of wholly new powers and effects. An NPC's techniques sometimes differ from the versions available to player characters.

NPC TYPES

There are two types of NPCs: minions and adversaries.

Minions

Minions are characters of lesser importance in the scope of the story: they might be minor characters in a town or village, or they might be foes with little dramatic weight. Because they have a smaller role in the story, they have simplified character profiles.

PCs can often engage more than one minion at a time, though some are more powerful than others. Being a minion doesn't necessarily mean that a character is weak, simply that their expected role in the story doesn't require more complex rules. Minions behave like other characters, with the following exceptions:

- When a minion's fatigue exceeds its endurance, it is simply **defeated**. A defeated minion is slain if the source of damage that defeated it is 7 or higher; otherwise, it is non-lethally dispatched.
- If a minion would be dealt a critical strike, it receives fatigue equal to the severity instead.
- The game runs most smoothly if minions only spend on options listed in their abilities, but the GM may waive this at their discretion.

Adversaries

Adversaries are NPCs of substantial narrative significance. These might be rivals or powerful allies to the PCs, and they stand on the same footing as player characters. Their profiles are organized differently than a PC's profile for the GM's convenience, but each adversary is a match for one or more PCs in its arena of expertise. Adversaries behave like standard characters.

NPCS AND CHECKS

GMs should keep the following advice in mind when rolling dice for NPCs.

Rolling Dice: Keep the resolution of NPC rolls quick, using a bit of narration as needed to help the players understand what is going on.

Spending : Don't overthink it. can inspire memorable moments, but not every check needs a cinematic turnabout. If it's taking more than a few seconds, take a look at the NPC's profile, which often contains abilities for —or just let it go unspent.

NPCS ARE PEOPLE TOO

Remember that NPCs are more than just a set of rules and statistics! They are supporting characters, and can have interests, quirks, and desires on a narrative level beyond the statistics detailed in their profile. Such flourishes will help make them feel realized and compelling.

TRACKING NPC STRIFE

NPCs accumulate strife in the normal manner (see page 29), but the GM need only track their strife if it is actually likely to become important. Otherwise, strife they generate can simply be used as a general indicator for how to portray the character. If an NPC's strife is being tracked and exceeds their composure, they should generally unmask at the start of their next turn unless they are an exceptionally disciplined individual.

For guidance on dealing with strife with large groups of NPCs, see NPC Squads on page 317.

DEMEANORS

Each NPC profile includes a demeanor. A demeanor is a common personality type for characters of that sort, and it makes some Social skill checks easier while making others harder. Each demeanor lists an increase to the TN of Social skill checks with certain rings ("+1" or "+2") and a decrease to the TN of Social skill checks with other rings ("–1" or "–2"), to reflect the fact that some characters are much more resistant to particular avenues than others, and prone to certain outbursts.

GMs are also encouraged to give NPCs unusual demeanors (or invent new ones, with modifiers and ways to unmask as they see fit) to keep the PCs on their toes!

Ambitious

This character pursues power whenever possible and is extremely resistant to giving it up. However, they jump to support appeals that line up with their own desires.
Social Skill Check TN Modifiers: Fire +2, Water –2
Common Way of Unmasking: Bend Principles

USING NPC ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Advantages and disadvantages add flavor to NPC profiles, and they also let cunning PCs exploit the weaknesses (and strengths) of their rivals and foes!

Assertive

This person is used to being in charge, and does not like being told what they can or cannot to do. They are most pliant when they think they are getting their way.
Social Skill Check TN Modifiers: Earth +2, Air –2
Common Way of Unmasking: Rage

Detached

This individual is extremely meditative, spiritual, enlightened, or simply uninterested in other people.
Social Skill Check TN Modifiers: Earth +1, Fire +1, Void –2
Common Way of Unmasking: Expose an Opening

Gruff

With a rough exterior and a no-nonsense attitude, this person has little tolerance for frivolity, niceties, or trickery. A direct, honest approach works best.
Social Skill Check TN Modifiers: Water +2, Earth –2
Common Way of Unmasking: Inappropriate Outburst

Shrewd

This individual is used to maneuvering around powerful people, and tends to avoid direct conflict. They are also very wary of such efforts on the part of others.
Social Skill Check TN Modifiers: Air +2, Fire –2
Common Way of Unmasking: Panicked Retreat

CONSTRUCTING CONFLICTS

The open-ended nature of character advancement in *Legend of the Five Rings* makes it difficult to generalize exactly how much of a challenge a given NPC will be as an opponent. A highly trained courtier might be no better at fighting than they were at the time of character creation, because they have focused on intrigue instead of martial arts. Meanwhile, with the same amount of XP, a character from the same school could have invested their experience in becoming knowledgeable, well-spoken, and skilled at arms, and have reached modest proficiency in all spheres without excelling in any.

However, when assessed together, a group's power is somewhat more predictable based on the PCs' overall school rank. To give GMs a rough idea of an NPC's efficacy, each sample NPC profile has a conflict rank for both combat and intrigue, to provide a rough guideline for deciding how many foes to hurl at the PCs.

Determining Group Rank

To estimate the **Group Rank** (the rough power of the PCs), take the sum of the group's school ranks.

Determining Encounter Rank

To estimate the **Encounter Rank** (how challenging the NPCs in a conflict scene will be) for a scene, take the sum of the combat (for battles) or intrigue (for social scenes) conflict ranks of all NPCs opposing the PCs.

Gauging an Encounter

Compare the group rank to the encounter rank and consult the following:

- If the group rank is **roughly equal to the encounter rank**, the PCs are generally matched with the force of NPCs. They most likely have a solid chance of prevailing, though they could still lose if they grow overconfident (or fortune forsakes them).
- If the group rank is **1.5 to 2 times the encounter rank**, the PCs have a significant edge over the NPCs, and are very likely to win without significant losses.
- If the group rank is **0.5 times the encounter rank or lower**, the PCs are significantly outmatched—cunning or luck will be needed to take the day, and this might even be a battle best avoided!

ADDING NPC TEMPLATES

When putting together NPCs, GMs can change, add, remove, and replace any aspects they desire, from rings and skills to demeanors and techniques. The templates in this section can help a GM quickly transform a generic profile into a more specialized character.

Artist

Conflict Rank: Intrigue +2
Ring: +1 Fire
Skills: +2 Artisan and Social skills
Advantages (add/replace 0–2): Eye for Detail (Air) [Artisan; *Mental*], Renown (Fire) [Artisan; *Interpersonal*], Steady Hand (Earth) [Artisan; *Physical*]
Disadvantages (add/replace 0–2): Cantankerous (Water) [Social; *Interpersonal*], Naiveté (Fire) [Social; *Interpersonal*], World-Weariness (Earth) [Social; *Interpersonal*]
Techniques (add 0–3): Shūji ( )
Demeanor (replace 1): Detached, Gruff, Shrewd

Investigator

Conflict Rank: Combat +2, Intrigue +2
Ring: +1 Air
Skills: +1 Martial and Scholar Skills
Advantages (add/replace 0–2): Analytical Mind (Fire) [Scholar; *Mental*], Self-Awareness (Void) [Martial; *Mental*], Sharp Eyes (Water) [Scholar; *Physical*]
Disadvantages (add/replace 0–2): Disbeliever (Fire) [Social; *Mental*], Haughty Tone (Air) [Social; *Interpersonal*], Severe Allergies (Earth) [Martial; *Physical*]
Techniques (add 0–2): Kata ( ), Shūji ( )
Demeanor (replace 1): Gruff, Shrewd

Sage

Conflict Rank: Intrigue +2, Combat +1
Ring: +1 Earth
Skills: +1 Scholar and Trade skills
Advantages (add/replace 0–2): Forbidden Knowledge [Mahō] (Fire) [Scholar; *Mental*], Exact Memory (Earth) [Scholar; *Mental*], Well-Read (Fire) [Scholar; *Mental*]
Disadvantages (add/replace 0–2): Bitter Marriage (Water) [Social; *Interpersonal*], Know-It-All (Air) [Social; *Interpersonal*], Frailty (Earth) [Martial; *Physical*]
Techniques (add 0–2): Mahō ( ), Shūji ( )
Demeanor (replace 1): Detached, Shrewd

Socialite

Conflict Rank: Intrigue +2
Ring: +1 Water
Skills: +2 Social and Trade skills
Advantages (add/replace 0–2): Well-Spoken (Air) [Social; *Interpersonal*], Prim (Earth) [Social; *Interpersonal*], Seems Trustworthy (Water) [Social; *Interpersonal*]
Disadvantages (add/replace 0–2): Doomed Love (Fire) [Social; *Interpersonal*], Lack of Empathy (Air) [Social; *Mental*], Bad Eyesight (Water) [Scholar; *Physical*]
Techniques (add 0–3): Shūji ( )
Demeanor (replace 1): Assertive, Shrewd

Spiritualist

Conflict Rank: Combat +1, Intrigue +1
Ring: +1 Void
Skills: +1 Artisan and Scholar Skills
Advantages (add/replace 0–2): Partial Enlightenment (Void) [Scholar; *Spiritual*], Keen Empathy (Air) [Social; *Interpersonal*], Friendly Kami or Spirit (Fire, Earth, Air, or Water) [Scholar; *Spiritual*]
Disadvantages (add/replace 0–2): Poverty (Water) [Trade; *Material*], Fanaticism (Fire) [Social; *Mental*], Repressed (Fire) [Social; *Mental*]
Techniques (add 0–2): Invocations ( ), Kihō ( )
Demeanor (replace 1): Detached, Assertive

Trickster

Conflict Rank: Combat +1, Intrigue +2
Ring: +1 Air
Skills: +1 Social and Scholar skills
Advantages (add/replace 0–2): Excellent Liar (Air) [Social; *Interpersonal*], Patience (Earth) [Scholar; *Mental*], Loves Haggling (Water) [Trade; *Interpersonal*]
Disadvantages (add/replace 0–2): Fear of Failure (Fire) [Martial; *Mental*], Narcissism (Earth) [Social; *Mental*], Unmemorable Face (Air) [Social; *Physical*]
Techniques (add 0–2): Ninjutsu ( ), Shūji ( )
Demeanor (replace 1): Ambitious, Shrewd

Warrior

Conflict Rank: Combat +2, Intrigue +1
Ring: +1 Fire
Skills: +2 Martial and Social skills
Advantages (add/replace 0–2): Masterful Fighter (Earth) [Martial; *Mental*], Fearsome Presence (Fire) [Social; *Interpersonal*], Veteran's Instincts (Water) [Scholar; *Mental*]
Disadvantages (add/replace 0–2): Bad Dreams (Void) [Martial; *Mental*], Quick to Anger (Fire) [Social; *Interpersonal*], Shattered by War (Earth) [Social; *Mental*]
Techniques (add 0–3): Kata ( )
Demeanor (replace 1): Assertive, Gruff

SAMPLE CHARACTERS:

As the GM, you can add templates to NPCs to build other types of characters your PCs might encounter. Examples include:

Veteran Yōjimbō: Loyal Bushi with Investigator template, Choose Iaijutsu Cut: Crossing Blade ( ) and Battle in the Mind ( ).

Secret Cultist: Seasoned Courtier with Sage template, choose Incite Haunting ( ) and Sinful Whispers ( ).

Militant Monk: Loyal Bushi with Spiritualist template, choose Earth Needs No Eyes ( ) and Flame Fist ( ).

Novice Geisha: Humble Peasant with Artist template, choose Fanning the Flames ( ), Pillar of Calm ( ), and Shallow Waters ( ).

Goblin Chieftain: Shadowlands Goblin with the Warrior template, choose Striking as Fire ( ) and Tactical Assessment ( ). It is an adversary.

As the GM, you can always make alterations as you see fit to NPCs' attributes, equipment, and abilities.

Sample NPCs

NPC STATS

Note that NPCs can have ring values, derived attributes, and abilities that a PC cannot possess. These are set at specific values based on the intended function of the NPC, rather than generated with a formula as they would be for a player character.

The following profiles are intended to provide GMs with a basic set of options for the non-player characters in their *Legend of the Five Rings* games.

SUBJECTS OF ROKUGAN

The population of the Emerald Empire includes nobility and daimyō, samurai of all types, and the commoners (peasants, ashigaru, merchants, entertainers, traders, and others) who make up the majority of society.

Loyal Bushi

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 4 2

Bushi are warriors: armed samurai who are professional soldiers in service to their clan. PCs might encounter bushi individually, or they might meet an organized body, which could be anything from a squad (or guntai) of up to a dozen bushi commanded by a sergeant (or gunsō) to an entire army on the march.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
55	HONOR	ENDURANCE	12
50	GLORY	COMPOSURE	9
39	STATUS	FOCUS	5
+2, –2	DEMEANOR - ASSERTIVE	VIGILANCE	3

ARTISAN 1	MARTIAL 3	SCHOLAR 2	SOCIAL 1	TRADE 0

CLOSED VERSUS OPEN ROLLS

As the GM, it's your choice whether you want to make a given roll for an NPC open (in sight of the players) or closed (behind a screen or otherwise obscured). It's a good idea to make most rolls openly, because of abilities that allow PCs to alter enemy rolls, but this isn't a hard-and-fast rule.

If a player wishes to use an ability that alters an enemy roll, you can perform the alteration for them on the NPC's dice pool (in an optimal manner for the player's desired outcome). If for some reason even this would give away too much information, you can give that character 1 Void point (and they do not count as having used the ability), but this is an option you probably shouldn't exercise too often.

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Tested in War: Martial; *Mental, Physical*	**Hot-Tempered:** Social; *Mental*
Sworn to Bushidō: Social; *Mental*	

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Katana: Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Yumi (Bow): Range 2–5, Damage 5, Deadliness 3

Gear (equipped): Lacquered armor (Physical 4, Ceremonial, Cumbersome, Wargear), wakizashi, quiver, yari (spear), knife

Gear (other): Plain robes (Physical 1, Mundane), a handful of koku and bu

ABILITIES

CRESCENT MOON STYLE

When performing a Guard action (see page 264), the bushi may spend ✲ in the following way:

> ✲: After another character performs an Attack action targeting the bushi or another character the bushi is guarding, the bushi may perform a Strike action targeting them. This effect persists until the start of the bushi's next turn or until they perform a Strike action.

SWORN PROTECTOR

Once per scene, when an Attack action check targeting another character at range 0–1 succeeds, a bushi may intervene, becoming the target of the action instead.

Humble Peasant

MINION — CONFLICT RANK: 1 / 1

Most of Rokugan's inhabitants are peasants. These hardworking people live their lives largely beneath the notice of samurai (except when it comes time to collect taxes from them), and yet without their toil, society would not exist. Heimin and hinin can both be reflected with this profile, though hinin have a status of 0.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
20	HONOR	ENDURANCE	4
25	GLORY	COMPOSURE	4
15	STATUS	FOCUS	3
+2, –2	DEMEANOR - SHREWD	VIGILANCE	2

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 0 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 1 | TRADE 2

ADVANTAGES

Salt of the Earth: Trade; *Interpersonal, Physical*

DISADVANTAGES

Deferential: Social; *Interpersonal, Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Improvised Weapon: Range 1, Damage 2, Deadliness 3/4

Gear (equipped): Rags, cloth headband, shoddy farm equipment, a meager handful of zeni

ABILITIES

OVERLOOKED

When a peasant makes a check targeting a character with a higher status rank, they treat that character's vigilance as 1 lower.

Seasoned Courtier

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 1 / 5

Courtiers are also samurai, but they serve with words rather than with blades. Most are politicians and diplomats. Unlike bushi, courtiers are normally encountered as individuals or, perhaps, in small groups. They are usually engaged in their clan's business, unless they are taking a break from their travels in an inn or sake house. As is expected of samurai, courtiers carry a wakizashi, but rarely any other weapons. Instead, they rely on their yōjimbō for protection.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
60	HONOR	ENDURANCE	6
50	GLORY	COMPOSURE	12
39	STATUS	FOCUS	6
+2, –2	DEMEANOR - SHREWD	VIGILANCE	4

ARTISAN 3 | MARTIAL 0 | SCHOLAR 2 | SOCIAL 3 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES

Inexhaustible Politeness: Social; *Interpersonal*

Wealth and Resources: Trade; *Material*

DISADVANTAGES

Sheltered from War: Martial; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Wakizashi: Range 0–1, Damage 3, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Extravagant robes (Physical 1, Ceremonial), calligraphy set

Gear (other): Tea set, Rokugani pony

ABILITIES

WHISPERING WINDS

Once per session as an action, the courtier may make a **Courtesy (Air) check** targeting one character in the scene. The TN is equal to 6 minus the target's glory rank (to a minimum of 1). If they succeed, the courtier learns a rumor about the target.

> **:** The courtier learns one of the target's advantages or disadvantages of the target's choice.

FANNING THE FLAMES

When making a Social skill (Fire) check, the courtier may spend in the following way:

> **Fire :** One target gains the Dazed condition.

COMMONERS

There are two broad types of commoners in Rokugan: the heimin, or "half-persons," who make up the caste of laborers known as the bonge and do much of the fundamental labor required to allow the Empire to function; and the hinin, or so-called "nonpeople," who perform many of the most base and demeaning jobs.

Within the category of heimin, there is further stratification. In order of social importance, the first are farmers, then artisans and craftspeople, and finally merchants, who make nothing themselves and only deal in trade and commerce.

Hinin include criminals, many entertainers, and those considered "untouchables" because they handle dead flesh and refuse. Hinin are considered "nonpeople" and treated as little more than property.

PLAYER CHARACTERS AND SAMURAI NPCS

An NPC samurai who is out and about is likely conducting business for their lord. A samurai encountered on the road might be making a routine patrol, serving as an escort for important people or cargoes, or acting as a courier. They are generally busy, and give formal but brief greetings to other samurai.

If they are encountered in another location, such as an inn, shrine, or temple, however, they may be more open to interactions with the player characters.

PLAYER CHARACTERS AND PEASANT NPCS

Heimin should be politely deferential toward the PCs in most encounters. However, they are vassals of a clan, so making unreasonable demands or being wantonly abusive to them will likely rouse the ire of their lord.

Ashigaru will defer to the PCs, but with a degree of practiced ease that most farmers lack—they are used to encountering and dealing with samurai.

Scholarly Shugenja

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 4 / 3

Shugenja are holy people, priests who commune with the kami, making invocations to persuade them to cause spectacular and even destructive effects in the Mortal Realm. However, shugenja are rare, and seldom encountered outside of shrines, temples, and libraries.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
60	HONOR	ENDURANCE	10
45	GLORY	COMPOSURE	12
39	STATUS	FOCUS	6
+2, –2 DEMEANOR - AMBITIOUS		VIGILANCE	3

ARTISAN 3 | MARTIAL 0 | SCHOLAR 2 | SOCIAL 3 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES

Mystical Knowledge: Scholar; *Mental*

Holy Personage: Social; *Interpersonal*

DISADVANTAGES

Scholar's Physique: Martial; *Physical*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Wakizashi: Range 0–1, Damage 3, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Sanctified robes (Physical 1, Supernatural 3, Ceremonial), scroll satchel, offerings

ABILITIES

PATH TO INNER PEACE (INVOCATION)

As a Support action, the shugenja may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** targeting a character at range 0–2. If the shugenja succeeds, the target removes 3 fatigue, plus 1 per bonus success. A target can only be affected by the Path to Inner Peace invocation once per scene.

THE FIRES FROM WITHIN (INVOCATION)

As an Attack action, the shugenja may make a **TN 3 Theology (Fire) check** targeting up to three characters at range 1–3. If the shugenja succeeds, each target suffers 3 supernatural damage, plus 1 per bonus success.

+: Choose 1 additional target per spent this way.

DISCIPLE OF SECRET LORE

Activation: (Choose 0–5 additional invocations (see page 189) and 0–3 additional rituals (see page 212) that this shugenja can perform. Add 1 to this character's combat rank for each invocation with a prerequisite of rank 3+ chosen this way.

Trained Ashigaru

MINION — CONFLICT RANK: 2 / 1

Ashigaru are the rank-and-file foot soldiers who make up the bulk of Rokugani armies. These foot soldiers are commoners, peasants who have been drafted into military service. Interestingly, once drafted, they are considered to belong to the lowest rank of the buke, the samurai caste, even though they aren't samurai. When they are not performing military service, ashigaru generally revert to their peasant status as farmers or tradespeople, but some continue to serve as guards or scouts, or as dōshin to magistrates. If the player characters encounter ashigaru in formed bodies of troops, then it is almost certainly because they are from a clan that is at war. Samurai from that clan, such as officers and units of bushi, should be nearby.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
25	HONOR	ENDURANCE	6
29	GLORY	COMPOSURE	12
19	STATUS	FOCUS	6
+2, –2 DEMEANOR - GRUFF		VIGILANCE	2

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 1 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 0 | TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Strength in Numbers: Martial; *Physical*

DISADVANTAGES

Jaded by Battle: Social; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Yari: Range 2, Damage 5, Deadliness 3, Wargear

Gear (equipped): Ashigaru armor (Physical 3, Wargear), knife, dice and cup or musical instrument, a handful of bu and zeni

ABILITIES

RANK TACTICS

When an ashigaru provides assistance (see page 26) to the Martial skill check of another character at range 0–2, that character adds one kept ■ set to a ◯ result instead of rolling an additional die.

Venerable Provincial Daimyō

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 7 / 6

The typical daimyō is stern, serious, and inured to flattery. Their time is valuable, so they appreciate brevity and clarity from any samurai who address them. While most no longer take up arms often, they can be extremely deadly in battle, for they often possess arms and armor of surpassing quality and a lifetime of experience fighting to maintain what is theirs at court and in combat.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
55	HONOR	ENDURANCE	14
70	GLORY	COMPOSURE	16
65	STATUS	FOCUS	7
+2, –2 DEMEANOR - ASSERTIVE		VIGILANCE	4

ARTISAN 2 | MARTIAL 4 | SCHOLAR 3 | SOCIAL 3 | TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Wisdom of Experience: Scholar; *Mental*

Bolstering Presence: Social; *Interpersonal*

DISADVANTAGES

Long at Court: Martial; *Mental, Physical*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Wakizashi: Range 0–1, Damage 3, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Calligraphy set, personal chop

Gear (other): Daishō, plated armor (Physical 5, Cumbersome, Durable, Wargear), various estates

ABILITIES

LORD'S COMMAND

Once per scene, as a Support action, a daimyō may advise a character who can hear them on how to complete a task they wish the character to perform. The character may use the daimyō's ring or skill in place of their own for the next check they make to complete this task before the end of the game session.

Outlaws and Rōnin

Like any society, Rokugan has its share of antisocial types who flout its norms and laws in pursuit of personal gain. While most of these miscreants are simply lawless individuals or members of loose gangs, some have come together in organized bands. While the involvement in such illegal undertakings is dishonorable in the extreme, samurai still can fall prey to greed as well.

Beyond outlaws, there are the samurai known as rōnin, or "wave men," as they come and go like the waves of the ocean. Rōnin are generally considered disreputable, often being treated with scorn and contempt by clan samurai. Moreover, without a lord, samurai have no access to the things a lord normally provides to vassals, such as food, equipment, and lodging. The life of a rōnin is, therefore, a hard one, as they are forced to fend for themselves as mercenaries and criminals in an Empire often hostile to them.

Desperate Bandit

MINION — CONFLICT RANK: 1 / 1

Bandits are outlaws who thrive in the more rural and remote regions of Rokugan. They usually form gangs because, unlike their urban criminal siblings, they rely more on swift, violent attack than on subtle manipulation, stealth, or subterfuge to achieve their nefarious objectives. Bandits usually target travelers on the Imperial roads, their scouts identifying easy targets in advance.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
15	HONOR	ENDURANCE	5
20	GLORY	COMPOSURE	6
01	STATUS	FOCUS	4
+2, –2 DEMEANOR - AMBITIOUS		VIGILANCE	2

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 1 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 0 | TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Nothing to Lose: Martial, Social; *Mental*

DISADVANTAGES

Fool's Avarice: Social; *Mental*

Quarrelsome: Social; *Interpersonal*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Yari (Spear): Range 2, Damage 5, Deadliness 3, Wargear

Sling: Range 2–3, Damage 3, Deadliness 3, Concealable, Mundane

Gear (equipped): Thick clothes (Physical 2, Mundane), knife, pouch of slingstones, drinking cup

ABILITIES

AMBUSH TACTICS

When performing an Attack action against a target with the Dazed or Disoriented condition, increase any damage dealt by 2.

MUSHA SHUGYŌ

With the permission of their daimyō, a clan samurai could undertake a musha shugyō, or "warrior's pilgrimage." A samurai on a musha shugyō becomes a rōnin, temporarily casting aside their loyalties and wandering the Empire to learn as much as possible while perfecting their skills as a warrior. It is essential that the erstwhile samurai make no reference to their clan during the pilgrimage. Once the requirements of the musha shugyō are fulfilled, the rōnin returns to their clan as a samurai.

Experienced Bandit

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 3 / 2

Bandits who manage to survive their dangerous profession usually become cunning and dangerous. Often, they end up leading a gang of their less experienced fellows, or join forces with a truly lethal individual such as a rōnin.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
10	HONOR	ENDURANCE	9
15	GLORY	COMPOSURE	8
03	STATUS	FOCUS	6
+2, –2	DEMEANOR - SHREWD	VIGILANCE	3

ARTISAN 0	MARTIAL 2	SCHOLAR 0	SOCIAL 1	TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Age and Cunning: Martial, Social; *Interpersonal, Physical*

DISADVANTAGES

Fool's Avarice: Social; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Rusted Katana: Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Damaged, Razor-Edged

Kusari-gama: Range 0/2–3, Damage 3, Deadliness 3, Concealable, Snaring, Wargear

Gear (equipped): Ashigaru armor (Physical 3, Wargear), assortment of knives, sake jug, handful of bu

ABILITIES

DIRTY TRICKS

When performing an Attack action check, an experienced bandit may spend ✲ in the following way:

> ✲: One character at range 0–2 suffers the Disoriented condition. Then you may move 1 range band.

...GET THEM, YOU FOOLS!

As an action, an experienced bandit may have up to two Desperate Bandits who have not yet acted this round immediately move 1 range band and perform a Strike action with skilled assistance (see page 26) .

Skillful Rōnin

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 4 / 2

Rōnin exist in a strange part of Rokugani society; they fight for money, but nominally do so for noble ends. Thus, the line between rōnin and bandits can be indistinct, depending on whether a rōnin can find legitimate work at a given time. What sets a rōnin apart is honor: a desire, on some level, to uphold Bushidō and its virtues.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
30	HONOR	ENDURANCE	12
40	GLORY	COMPOSURE	11
20	STATUS	FOCUS	5
+1, +1, –2	DEMEANOR - DETACHED	VIGILANCE	3

ARTISAN 0	MARTIAL 3	SCHOLAR 1	SOCIAL 0	TRADE 2

ADVANTAGES

Killer Instinct: Martial; *Mental*

Worldly Wanderer: Scholar, Trade; *Mental*

DISADVANTAGES

Unnecessarily Rude: Social; *Interpersonal*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Katana: Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Yumi: Range 2–5, Damage 5, Deadliness 3

Gear (equipped): Wakizashi, worn traveler's robes (Physical 2, Mundane), quiver, empty sake jug, straw hat, handful of bu and zeni

ABILITIES

SCHOOL OF THE WOLF

Once per round, when an Attack action check targeting the rōnin succeeds, the rōnin may suffer 3 fatigue to change the target to another character (other than the attacker) at range 0–1 of the rōnin.

STRIKING AS FIRE

When performing an Attack action (Fire) check, a rōnin may spend ✲ as follows:

> **Fire ✲+:** Increase the severity of any critical strike dealt as part of this attack by 2 per ✲ spent this way.

TWISTS OF FATE

As the GM, there are times when it is not narratively satisfying for a villain to just die. To avoid this, you can apply a twist of fate—an unpreventable outcome that saves the NPC, but also compensates the players. First, tell the players about the twist of fate and narrate how the NPC escapes. At the end of the session, each PC receives 1 extra XP, as they come to terms with fortune's turns and grow stronger in anticipation of their eventual clash with their foe.

NPC SQUADS

Having a large number of NPCs in a conflict can make it chaotic for any GM, especially if each one has an initiative value. To streamline handling a group of NPCs of the same type, treat them as a squad. **A squad consists of two or more NPCs with the same name and profile, and functions as follows:**

Initiative: They generate a single initiative value, and take turns in any order you choose at their initiative value each round.

Group Actions: If you want to reduce the number of rolls the squad makes, simply have all members of the squad but one take the Assist action targeting the one member who performs a different action. Having more than six NPCs in a squad is not advised, simply due to the size of the dice pools involved.

Group Stances: All members of a squad should assume the same stance each round.

Group Strife: Assign the squad a squad strife value equal to 3 times an individual member's composure. This can be helpful as a means to determine the point at which undisciplined foes likely break and run.

Generally, you'll want to make squads of minion NPCs like ashigaru and bandits, since they'll be the bulk of unnamed participants in a skirmish, but there's no mechanical reason you couldn't have a squad of adversaries—they'd just be more complex to manage and likely more dangerous to the PCs.

CULTISTS

In a land as steeped in mysticism and the otherworldly as the Emerald Empire, it should come as no surprise that a wide range of spiritual beliefs have developed among the people. For the vast majority, spirituality revolves around the teachings of Shinsei, reverence for their honored ancestors, and the worship of the Fortunes and the Kami. There are, however, groups in Rokugan that adhere to other beliefs. Labeled "cults," these are generally considered at best to be fringe elements, and at worst blasphemies deserving of eradication.

DEADLY BLOODSPEAKER

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 9 9

While blood magic has been used by the servants of Fu Leng for centuries, it gained particular notoriety with the rise of the powerful and dangerous sorcerer Iuchiban. Even after his defeat, his students preserved his teachings, collecting themselves into a group known as the "Bloodspeakers." A rare few learned to preserve their lives by placing their hearts in boxes, making them effectively immortal. After hundreds of years of study, their mastery of mahō is second to none.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
05	HONOR	ENDURANCE	18
7	GLORY	COMPOSURE	16
00	STATUS	FOCUS	6
+2, –2	DEMEANOR - AMBITIOUS	VIGILANCE	4

ARTISAN 2	MARTIAL 3	SCHOLAR 5	SOCIAL 4	TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Undying: Martial; *Physical, Spiritual*

Whispers of Fu Leng: Scholar; *Mental*

DISADVANTAGES

Heartless: Social; *Physical, Spiritual*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Obsidian-Edged Katana: Range 1, Damage 5, Deadliness 9, Razor-Edged, Unholy

Gear (equipped): Sorcerous raiment (Physical 2, Supernatural 4, Unholy), set of vile scrolls

ABILITIES

BLEED THE SOUL

After the Bloodspeaker inflicts a Critical Strike on a living target, the target suffers the Dazed condition and the Bloodspeaker removes 3 fatigue.

HIDDEN HEART

The Bloodspeaker cannot truly be vanquished until its heart (usually buried in some deadly tomb or sanctum of evil) has been destroyed. It ignores the Unconscious condition. If slain, it can possess a fresh corpse after its allies have prepared the corpse through a dark rite that takes four days to complete.

MASTER OF VILE LORE

The Bloodspeaker is a Tainted being who can perform all mahō (see page 224).

PLAYER CHARACTERS AND CULTIST NPCS

Because they are rejected by mainstream Rokugani society, and most are considered to be in violation of Imperial laws dealing with blasphemy, cults of any type tend to be secretive in the extreme. Clandestine cultists can operate at all levels of society, however, and might be the foes of the PCs.

MOON CULTISTS

Onnotangu, or Lord Moon, figures prominently in the prehistory of Rokugan. Because of his wrath, fear, and jealousy, the Kami were cast out of Heaven and fell into Ningen-dō at the dawn of the Empire. Twelve centuries later, there are still those in the Empire who consider Lord Moon to be the preeminent divine figure, devoting themselves to him in clandestine ceremonies.

For the Moon Cultist profile, use the Wicked Mahō-tsukai but replace their mahō with these invocations (): By the Light of the Lord Moon, Summon Fog, Tempest of Air, and Vapor of Nightmares.

OTHERWORLDLY AND TAINTED BEINGS

Some beings are described as Otherworldly (ethereal beings beyond the ken of humans), Tainted (beings under the sway of Fu Leng), or both.

These classifications do not have any intrinsic rules, but many abilities and some item qualities refer to them.

Wicked Mahō-Tsukai

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 4 3

With the whispered teachings of the kansen, mortals may learn to call upon the spirits of Jigoku with offerings of blood and death. Once they have learned how to work these evil magics, mahō-tsukai use their talents in their own selfish service, or in the name of Fu Leng's eventual return. No few shugenja who have believed they would merely study mahō to better counter its effects end up becoming corrupted by what they have learned and slowly turn toward evil ends without even realizing.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
01	HONOR	ENDURANCE	14
15	GLORY	COMPOSURE	8
00	STATUS	FOCUS	7
+2, –2	DEMEANOR - AMBITIOUS	VIGILANCE	3

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 1 | SCHOLAR 3 | SOCIAL 2 | TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Excellent Liar: Social; *Interpersonal*

Whispers of Fu Leng: Scholar; *Mental*

DISADVANTAGES

Rotting from Within: Martial; *Physical, Spiritual*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Ritual Knife: Range 0, Damage 2, Deadliness 6, Concealable, Razor-Edged, Unholy

Gear (equipped): Sorcerous raiment (Physical 2, Supernatural 4, Unholy), set of vile scrolls, concealing mask or cowl, several bu

ABILITIES

MARK OF DESECRATION

As a Support action, the mahō-tsukai may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** targeting up to three corpses at range 0–3. If the mahō-tsukai succeeds, each target rises as a Zombie Peasant (see page 321), or a Bushi Skeleton if it was a warrior in life (see page 318). Then, an area encompassing 1 range band around each target's position gains the Defiled terrain quality (see page 267).

SEEKER OF VILE LORE

The mahō-tsukai is a Tainted being. Optionally, choose 0–2 additional mahō (see page 224) that the mahō-tsukai can perform. Add 1 to this character's combat rank for each mahō chosen this way.

SHADOWLANDS HORRORS

From the Empire's inception, Jigoku, the Realm of Evil, has spilled forth monstrosities that seek to snuff out the works of mortals. This is because Jigoku is a jealous realm, absolutely intolerant of Ningen-dō, and particularly of the reverence mortals tend to have for Tengoku, the Celestial Heavens. When the Kami fell, one of them—Fu Leng—was pulled into Jigoku, smashing open a rift between Jigoku and the Mortal Realm in the process. Known as the Festering Pit of Fu Leng, this vile opening contaminated the lands south of the Empire, turning them into the evil region known as the Shadowlands.

Bushi Skeleton

MINION — CONFLICT RANK: 3 1

Little more than tattered flesh, bleached bones, and an undying hatred for all that is right and good in the world, a skeletal bushi is a terrifying opponent.

ENDURANCE	7	FOCUS	3
COMPOSURE	∞	VIGILANCE	2
+2, –2	DEMEANOR - ANGRY		

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 1 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 0 | TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Unholy Vigor: Martial; *Physical, Spiritual*

DISADVANTAGES

Visage of Death: Social; *Interpersonal*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Ancient Katana: Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Damaged, Razor-Edged

Decrepit Yumi: Range 2–5, Damage 5, Deadliness 3, Damaged

Gear (equipped): Ancient armor (Physical 3, Wargear)

ABILITIES

CLATTERING BONES

A skeletal bushi is an Otherworldly, Tainted being. Additionally, the first time it would be defeated each scene, it receives a Scar disadvantage of the GM's choice instead as one of its limbs snaps or flies off.

DOES NOT BLEED

A skeletal bushi ignores conditions and critical strikes from non-Sacred sources.

Bog Hag

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 8 / 5

Bog hags are superlative infiltrators who are among the more likely types of Shadowlands horrors to be encountered in the Empire. In their true form, bog hags are loathsome creatures with leathery greenish skin, ragged nails, and jagged teeth. They are, however, capable of using the flayed skin of a person they have killed as a disguise, enclosing themselves within it and taking on the appearance of the unfortunate victim. They typically live in swamps and waterways, preying upon those who venture near such places alone. Bog hags possess preternatural regeneration, and they sometimes practice mahō.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
00	HONOR	ENDURANCE	14
05	GLORY	COMPOSURE	8
00	STATUS	FOCUS	6
+2, –2	DEMEANOR - SHREWD	VIGILANCE	3

ARTISAN 3	MARTIAL 2	SCHOLAR 6	SOCIAL 2	TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Shapeshifter's Guile: Social; *Interpersonal*

Sorcerous Lore: Scholar; *Mental*

DISADVANTAGES

Dreadful Hunger: Social; *Interpersonal, Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Twisted Talons: Range 1–2, Damage 4, Deadliness 5, Razor-Edged, Unholy

Horrific Maw: Range 0, Damage 1, Deadliness 8

Gear (equipped): Fresh skin (Physical 3, Spiritual 5, Unholy), 3 doses of each poison (see page 244), human-skin scrolls of wicked lore

ABILITIES

ACCURSED REGENERATION

At the end of each round, if the bog hag has not suffered damage from a Sacred source this round, the bog hag removes the Lightly Injured condition or reduces the Severely Injured condition to Lightly Injured.

SEEKER OF VILE LORE

The bog hag is an Otherworldly, Tainted being. Optionally, choose 0–3 mahō techniques (see page 224) that the bog hag can perform. Add 1 to this character's combat rank for each mahō chosen this way.

SKINS OF THE SLAUGHTERED

As an action, a bog hag may assume the illusory form of anyone it has killed. A character may make a **TN 3 Sentiment check (Earth 4, Fire 1)**, or another appropriate check to see through this illusion. At the GM's discretion, a character may spend from any check to interact with the bog hag to see one of the following: a misplaced fold in the skin, luminescence in one eye, an impossible movement of the jaw, oddly sharp teeth, the smell of viscera, a conversational fixation on fresh and bloody meat.

BOG HAGS IN THE EMPIRE

Because bog hags are difficult to detect, groups such as Bloodspeaker cells may make deals with them, using them to infiltrate Rokugani society in return for providing an ongoing supply of victims. This can add another, somewhat paranoid, dimension to a campaign, as player characters could be prompted to suspect nearly anyone of being a bog hag, either with its own motives or working on behalf of sinister powers.

SIMPLIFIED PROFILE

You may notice that some of the profiles (starting with the Shadowlands Goblin) have a simplified entry that lacks Honor, Glory, and Status. We use this profile style for creatures that don't have these characteristics, and don't interact with these game systems.

Shadowlands Goblin

MINION — CONFLICT RANK: 1 / 1

Lithe and bestial, goblins are individually of little consequence, but hordes of them can fling themselves at the Wall in numbers sufficient to pose a major threat.

ENDURANCE	3	FOCUS	3
COMPOSURE	4	VIGILANCE	2

+2, –2
DEMEANOR · SHREWD

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 1 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 0 | TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Expert Skulker: Martial, Trade; *Physical*

DISADVANTAGES

Cowardice: Martial, Social; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Small Yari: Range 1, Damage 5, Deadliness 3, Wargear

Small Yumi: Range 2–3, Damage 4, Deadliness 3

Gear (equipped): Scavenged ashigaru armor (Physical 3), quiver, teeth or other grotesque trophies

ABILITIES

SHADOWLANDS CREATURE

A Shadowlands goblin is a Tainted being of silhouette 1.

UNSIGHTLY RABBLE

When making an Attack action check with assistance, a goblin may spend ✿ as follows:

> ✿+: One character other than the target at range 0–2 suffers 4 physical damage. This ✿ can be activated a number of times per round equal to the number of goblins assisting with the check.)

CREATING THE UNDEAD

If a mortal body is left near a place permeated by the Taint of Jigoku—for instance, in the Shadowlands—or in a corrupted location such as parts of the Shinomen Mori or the ruins of the Castle of the Snake in the northern Empire, it may spontaneously reanimate as a result of possession by a kansen, an evil elemental spirit. Such undead are mindlessly destructive.

Undead may also be created through the deliberate efforts of mahō-tsukai, either by means of powerful rituals or through the use of porcelain masks imbued with evil power and placed on the bodies to be reanimated. These masks give a mahō-tsukai a degree of control over the undead being.

Sinister Oni

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 12 / 5

Of all the horrors to stalk forth from the Shadowlands, the demonic creatures called oni are by far the most powerful and dangerous. With twisted horns, razor-sharp teeth, and enormous talons on their hands and feet, these bestial creatures resemble the very Hells in which they dwell. Fortunately, they are only able to enter Ningen-dō of their own volition through the Festering Pit. Unfortunately, there is another way for oni to come to Ningen-dō that is far more insidious: invitation by misguided or evil mortals. Only when they are slain do their souls return to Meido, although the powerful ones are able to make their way back to Jigoku itself to be reborn.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
00	HONOR	ENDURANCE	24
04	GLORY	COMPOSURE	12
00	STATUS	FOCUS	8
		VIGILANCE	2

+2, –2
DEMEANOR · ASSERTIVE

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 4 | SCHOLAR 3 | SOCIAL 1 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES

Massive Stature: Martial; *Physical*

Unholy Might: Martial; *Physical, Spiritual*

DISADVANTAGES

Horrifying Visage: Social; *Interpersonal*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Crushing Claws: Range 1–2, Damage 6, Deadliness 8, Razor-Edged, Unholy

Gear (equipped): Demonic hide and armor scraps (Physical 5, Spiritual 5, Unholy)

ABILITIES

DREAD BELLOW

Once per scene as a Scheme action, the oni may roar, feeding on the primal terror it instills. Each other character at range 0–4 must resist with a **TN 4 Meditation check (Earth 2, Air 5)** or suffer the Afflicted condition and stumble back 1 range band from the oni. For each character who fails, the oni removes 2 fatigue.

HORROR OF JIGOKU

An oni is an Otherworldly, Tainted being of silhouette 4. After any character performs a successful Attack action that deals 0 damage to the oni (after resistance is applied), that character suffers 3 strife.

Zombie Peasant

MINION — CONFLICT RANK: 2 / 0

Rokugani funerary rites involve cremation, and for good reason. Despite the costs it entails, this is afforded even to the lowliest members of society—for in Rokugan, the dead do not sleep soundly, and ancient stories tell of the days when cults of mahō-tsukai wandered the land backed by vast armies of the hungering dead.

ENDURANCE	4	FOCUS	3
COMPOSURE	∞	VIGILANCE	2

+2, –2
DEMEANOR -HUNGRY

ARTISAN 0	MARTIAL 0	SCHOLAR 0	SOCIAL 0	TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES

Hungry for Flesh: Martial; *Mental*

DISADVANTAGES

Shambling Gait: Martial; *Physical*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Jagged Teeth: Range 0, Damage 3, Deadliness 5, Unholy

Grasping Hands: Range 0–1, Damage 2, Deadliness 1, Snaring

Gear (equipped): Decaying flesh (Physical 2)

ABILITIES

CADAVEROUS BITE

Increase the TN of checks to resist critical strikes inflicted by zombies by 2.

HORRIFYING REANIMATION

A zombie is an Otherworldly, Tainted being. The first time it is defeated by damage from a non-Sacred source, if a zombie is in Defiled terrain, it reanimates. At the start of its next turn, it removes all fatigue and staggers to its feet with a scar disadvantage of the GM's choice.

SPIRITS AND STRANGE BEINGS

Dwelling on the edges of civilization or hidden in transcendental groves are many wondrous creatures and kami.

Forest Troll

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 7 / 4

Inside the Empire, trolls are quite rare, but they occasionally enter via the great forest of the Shinomen Mori on Rokugan's western border. They are intelligent but unpredictable, and not above eating rude humans.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
30	HONOR	ENDURANCE	16
10	GLORY	COMPOSURE	9
05	STATUS	FOCUS	4
+2, –2 DEMEANOR - ASSERTIVE		VIGILANCE	3

ARTISAN 1	MARTIAL 3	SCHOLAR 3	SOCIAL 2	TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Brute Strength: Martial; *Physical*

DISADVANTAGES

Insatiable Appetite: Social; *Physical*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Massive Cudgel: Range 2, Damage 9, Deadliness 5, Cumbersome

Rending Grip: Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 6

Gear (equipped): Scaled hide (Physical 1, Supernatural 1), animal-pelt clothes, polished skull collection

ABILITIES

ANCIENT AND POWERFUL

A troll is an Otherworldly being of silhouette 4.

SORCEROUS SCALES

After a troll suffers damage from a physical or supernatural source, increase its resistance to that damage type by 4. This effect persists until it suffers damage from a source of a different type.

GHOSTS

Most of the time, PCs can't fight ghosts with force of arms—instead, ghosts often work best as narrative obstacles. The PCs might need to determine the cause of their unrest or their agenda and then help to resolve it or purify the spirit.

If a ghost needs to make a check, they can use their profile in life, with the following alterations:

They are an Otherworldly being.

They have Physical Resistance 10.

They are incorporeal, and can perform ghostly phenomena. At the GM's discretion, they have 1 or more Air invocations to represent their spiritual powers.

Ki-Rin

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 7 7

Tradition says that deer are the messengers of the kami, and thus are sacred. This may or may not be true for the average deer that roams the mountains. However, sometimes a chimerical beast with great antlers or horns, dragon scales, the tail of an ox, and a flaming mane is whispered to come out of the deepest forests to speak to lone travelers. Its form varies slightly with the telling, but the tales remain much the same: such creatures speak of the will of the kami, and are so benevolent and compassionate that, rather than trampling even a single blade of grass, they float above the ground.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
60	HONOR	ENDURANCE	14
50	GLORY	COMPOSURE	16
39	STATUS	FOCUS	3
+1, +1, –2 DEMEANOR - DETACHED		VIGILANCE	5

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 2 | SCHOLAR 6 | SOCIAL 3 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES

Wisdom of the Forest: Scholar; *Mental*

DISADVANTAGES

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Majestic Antlers or Horns: Range 1–2, Damage 4, Deadliness 6, Ceremonial, Sacred

Gear (equipped): Magic hide (Physical 3, Supernatural 3)

ABILITIES

MYSTICAL CREATURE

A ki-rin is an Otherworldly being of silhouette 3 that can fly. It can move vertically and ignores the negative effects of terrain. Additionally, once per scene, it may perform an Earth or Water invocation technique, and counts as succeeding with three bonus successes and ✿✿.

SACRED ENVOY

The ki-rin can speak any language, and it knows many secrets of the world. The righteous can sense its hallowed nature; to perform an Attack action against it, a character must forfeit honor equal to their honor rank (and glory equal to their glory rank, if they are seen doing it).

WRATH FOR THE WICKED

Once per scene as a Attack action, the ki-rin may breathe holy fire from its mouth. Each Tainted being at range 0–4 must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Air 3, Earth 5)** or suffer 8 supernatural damage with the Sacred quality, plus additional damage equal to its shortfall, and suffer the Burning condition.

Manifest Air Kami

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 7 5

When air kami abandon subtlety to act directly upon the world, they are terrifying to behold—their form is that of a many-armed whirlwind, flickering hands reaching out to toss about loose items.

ENDURANCE	11	FOCUS	2
COMPOSURE	6	VIGILANCE	4

+2, –2 DEMEANOR - FLIGHTY

ARTISAN 3 | MARTIAL 3 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 3 | TRADE 2

ADVANTAGES

Ethereal Form: Martial, Trade; *Physical*

DISADVANTAGES

Easily Distracted: Scholar, Social; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Talons of Air: Range 2–3, Damage 4, Deadliness 7, deals supernatural damage

Gear (equipped): Misty Mantle (Physical 5, Supernatural 2)

ABILITIES

FLIGHT

A manifest air kami can move vertically and ignores the negative effects of terrain.

LIVING AIR SPIRIT

A manifest air kami is an Otherworldly being of silhouette 2, 3, or 4, and may change its size as an action. Additionally, once per scene as an action of the appropriate types, a manifest air kami may perform any one Air invocation other than Rise, Air. It counts as succeeding with 3 bonus successes and 2 ✿.

SWOOP

When performing an Attack action check, a manifest air kami may spend ✿ as follows:

> ✿+: Move 1 range band away from the target per ✿ spent this way. If the target is of silhouette 5 or smaller, the air kami may carry it to its destination instead.

Manifest Earth Kami

ADVERSARY CONFLICT RANK: 8 2

When they take physical form, earth kami often shape bodies of stone for themselves, appearing as statues of warlike Fortunes or the sacred beasts that guard ancient shrines and tombs. These beings are powerful, wise, and slow to anger—but their wrath is that of an avalanche, and once started, it cannot be stopped.

ENDURANCE	15	FOCUS	3
COMPOSURE	8	VIGILANCE	3

+2, –2
DEMEANOR - OBSTINATE

ARTISAN 2 | MARTIAL 3 | SCHOLAR 3 | SOCIAL 0 | TRADE 3

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Massive Stature: Martial, Trade; *Physical*	**Honest to a Fault:** Social, Trade; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Stone Fists: Range 0–2, Damage 7, Deadliness 4, deals physical or supernatural damage

Gear (equipped): Rocky Hide (Physical 6, Sacred)

ABILITIES

BURROW

As a Movement action, a manifest earth kami may withdraw into the ground. It cannot be targeted by actions or effects, or perform actions other than Eruption.

ERUPTION

As an Attack and Movement action while burrowed, a manifest earth kami may burst from the ground at a chosen point at range 0–3. Each character at range 0–2 of that point must resist with a **TN 4 Fitness check (Air 2, Water 5)** or suffer 6 physical damage and the Prone condition.

LIVING EARTH SPIRIT

A manifest earth kami is an Otherworldly being of silhouette 3. Additionally, once per scene as an action of the appropriate types, a manifest earth kami may perform any one Earth invocation other than Rise, Earth. It counts as succeeding with 3 bonus successes and 2 .

Manifest Fire Kami

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 9 / 2

Energy given form, a manifest fire kami usually appears as a humanoid shape. Clothed in a robe of smoke and with blazing skin, it is the harbinger of destruction but also of renewal. While they are intelligent and knowledgeable, fire kami are notoriously single-minded once they have taken form, seeking only to consume everything within their reach before sputtering out.

ENDURANCE	12	FOCUS	4
COMPOSURE	3	VIGILANCE	1

+2, –2
DEMEANOR - INTENSE

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 3 | SCHOLAR 3 | SOCIAL 2 | TRADE 3

ADVANTAGES

Primal Terror: Martial, Social; *Interpersonal*

DISADVANTAGES

Endless Hunger: Artisan, Scholar; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Blazing Touch: Range 1–3, Damage 6, Deadliness 6, Razor-Edged, deals supernatural damage

Gear (equipped): Corona of Flames (Physical 3)

ABILITIES

LIVING FIRE SPIRIT

A manifest kami is an Otherworldly being. Additionally, once per scene as an action of the appropriate types, a manifest fire kami may perform any one Fire invocation other than Rise, Fire. It counts as succeeding with 3 bonus successes and 2 .

MANTLE OF SMOKE AND ASH

Other characters treat the area at range 0–1 of the manifest fire kami as Dangerous and Obscuring terrain (see page 267).

SEARING CARESS

When performing an Attack action check, a manifest fire kami may spend as follows:

> **+:** The target and up to one other character per spent this way at range 0–1 of the target suffer the Burning condition (see page 272).

Manifest Water Kami

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 7 / 4

Water kami usually take the form of a humanoid torso rising from a source of water; if they have legs, these are often obscured within the water or become visible only if the kami stride onto land. The forms of these kami shift and change as circumstances require, and they can even split themselves to act in multiple places at once and reabsorb damaged copies to restore their own vitality.

ENDURANCE	14	FOCUS	8
COMPOSURE	8	VIGILANCE	2

+2, –2
DEMEANOR - ADAPTABLE

ARTISAN 3 | MARTIAL 2 | SCHOLAR 3 | SOCIAL 3 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES

Liquid Body: Martial, Trade; *Physical*

DISADVANTAGES

Without Convictions: Artisan, Social; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Smashing Torrent: Range 1–2, Damage 7, Deadliness 3, Snaring, deals supernatural damage

Gear (equipped): Enshrouding Fog (Physical 3, Supernatural 4)

ABILITIES

LIVING WATER SPIRIT

A manifest kami is an Otherworldly being. Additionally, once per scene as an action of the appropriate types, a manifest water kami may perform any one Water invocation other than Rise, Water. It counts as succeeding with 3 bonus successes and 2 .

SPLIT

Once per round, after a manifest water kami suffers a critical strike, it may split in two. The two new manifest water kami each have endurance equal to half that of the original, and any fatigue it had suffered is divided as evenly as possible. Then, both may remove any conditions the original was suffering. All of them act during the original water kami's turn, in the order of the GM's choosing.

ANIMALS

Rokugan is home to a wide variety of animals, both wild and domesticated. Wild animals are often the target of Rokugani hunts, which samurai undertake for sport in some regions and for sustenance in others.

Bear

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 7 / 1

Bears are solitary, fiercely territorial animals that inhabit the wild regions of Rokugan. They range from the large and aggressive brown bears found in Shinomen Mori to the smaller black bears in the Seikitsu and the Twilight Mountains.

ENDURANCE	12	FOCUS	4
COMPOSURE	9	VIGILANCE	3

+2, –2
DEMEANOR · INTIMIDATING

ARTISAN 0 | **MARTIAL 1** | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 0 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Enormous Stature: Martial; *Physical*	**Opportunist:** Martial; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Claws and Fangs: Range 1–2, Damage 8, Deadliness 6

Gear (equipped): Thick hide (Physical 4)

ABILITIES

CRUSHING SWIPE

A bear is a silhouette 3 creature with terrifying strength. When a bear inflicts a critical strike, the TN of the check to resist is 4, and if the target fails, they suffer the Dazed condition in addition to the other effects.

Boar

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 5 / 1

Boars are aggressive and territorial wild pigs. Even an armored bushi can be slain by their sharp, jagged tusks.

ENDURANCE	9	FOCUS	6
COMPOSURE	4	VIGILANCE	2

+2, –2
DEMEANOR · TERRITORIAL

ARTISAN 0 | **MARTIAL 1** | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 0 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Keen Sense of Smell: Trade; *Physical*	**Hot-Tempered:** Martial; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Tusks: Range 0, Damage 7, Deadliness 7, Durable, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Thick hide (Physical 4)

ABILITIES

SUSTAINING FURY

After a boar suffers a critical strike, it becomes Enraged. While Enraged, a boar cannot suffer the Unconscious condition and may perform Attack actions even while Incapacitated.

Cat

MINION — CONFLICT RANK: 1 / 1

Cats are small, furry felines that have cunningly shaped human society to fulfill their needs over generations of adaptation. They reside in the homes of samurai and peasants alike, providing their nominal owners with entertainment, pest control, and occasional affection.

ENDURANCE	3	FOCUS	6
COMPOSURE	9	VIGILANCE	3

+2, –2
DEMEANOR · PLAYFUL

ARTISAN 0 | **MARTIAL 1** | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 0 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Silent Stalker: Martial; *Physical*	**Hubris:** Social; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Claws: Range 0, Damage 0, Deadliness 2, Concealable, Razor-Edged

ABILITIES

POUNCING PREDATOR

A cat is a silhouette 0 creature. When performing an Attack action check against an unaware or Prone target, it may spend ✿ as follows:

> ✿: The target suffers the Disoriented condition.

ANIMAL CHECKS

Animals don't generally have ranks in Trade skills, but if they need to roll it, any wild animal has Survival rank 2 and any domesticated animal has Survival rank 1.

Dog

MINION — CONFLICT RANK: 1 — 1

Extremely devoted to humans, dogs assist with a variety of tasks, including acting as guards, serving as trackers and hunters, and fighting alongside their masters.

ENDURANCE	4	FOCUS	3
COMPOSURE	5	VIGILANCE	4

+1, –2, –2
DEMEANOR - FRIENDLY

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 1 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 1 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Keen Tracker: Trade; *Physical*	**Dependent on Humans:** Trade; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Bite: Range 0, Damage 4, Deadliness 2, Snaring

ABILITIES

WORKING COMPANION

Choose one Martial or Trade skill. When the dog provides assistance on a check with this skill, it counts as providing skilled assistance (see page 26).

LARGE AND SMALL DOGS

Dogs come in a variety of sizes, from small hounds for rabbit hunting to massive beasts bred for battle. These can be represented with through one of the following sets of modifications to the Dog profile:

Large dog: silhouette 2. physical resistance +1, endurance +2, conflict rank +1

Small dog: silhouette 1. vigilance +1

Hawk

MINION — CONFLICT RANK: 2 — 1

Hawks are majestic, graceful creatures, and many samurai see a certain kinship with these lords of the skies. Some even tame them for sport hunting.

ENDURANCE	2	FOCUS	6
COMPOSURE	5	VIGILANCE	2

+2, –2
DEMEANOR - PROUD

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 1 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 0 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Sharp Eyesight: Martial, Trade; *Physical*	**Hollow Bones:** Martial; *Physical*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Beak and Talons: Range 0, Damage 1, Deadliness 6

ABILITIES

NIMBLE FLYER

A hawk is a silhouette 0 creature that can fly. It can move vertically and ignores the negative effects of terrain.

SWOOP

When performing an Attack action check, a hawk may spend as follows:

+: Move 1 range band away from the target per spent this way. If the target is of silhouette 0 or smaller, the hawk may carry it to its destination instead.

Horse (Rokugani Pony)

MINION — CONFLICT RANK: 2 — 1

There were horses in Rokugan before the Unicorn Clan returned with their foreign-bred steeds, and though they are not as fierce, they still can be ridden.

ENDURANCE	8	FOCUS	6
COMPOSURE	4	VIGILANCE	2

+1, –2, –2
DEMEANOR - LOYAL

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 0 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 1 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Tireless Runner: Martial; *Physical*	**Skittish:** Martial; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Hooves: Range 1–2, Damage 6, Deadliness 5

Gear (equipped): Hide (Physical 2), saddle, saddlebags, feed bag, grooming kit

ABILITIES

LOYAL STEED

A Rokugani pony is a silhouette 3 creature. It can be ridden by a human-sized (silhouette 2 or lower) rider.

MOUNTS AND RIDING

While it is being ridden during a conflict, a mount does not take a turn of its own, and provides the following benefits to its rider:

- When the rider succeeds on a Movement action check, add bonus successes equal to the mount's Water Ring.
- The rider may use their Survival skill in place of their Fitness skill for any Fitness check they make.

During narrative and downtime scenes, a mounted character doubles their overland travel speed.

Hunting Cat

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 6 / 1

Hunting cats, such as cougars, lions, and tigers, are fearsome predators. They prefer to stalk and ambush their prey, mauling them quickly and savagely.

ENDURANCE	6	FOCUS	6
COMPOSURE	12	VIGILANCE	4

+2, –2
DEMEANOR · OPPORTUNISTIC

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 2 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 0 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES

Silent Stalker: Martial; *Physical*

DISADVANTAGES

Hubris: Social; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Claws and fangs: Range 1, Damage 5, Deadliness 9, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Thick fur (Physical 2)

ABILITIES

POUNCING PREDATOR

A hunting cat is a silhouette 3 creature. When performing an Attack action check against an unaware or Prone target, it may spend ✲ as follows:

> ✲: The target suffers the Disoriented condition.

SAVAGE MAULING

Disoriented targets cannot defend against damage dealt by a hunting cat.

Utaku Steed

MINION — CONFLICT RANK: 4 / 2

The sacred steeds of the Utaku Battlemaidens are paragons of horses. They are fiery and ferocious, but utterly loyal to their riders and fearless in the field.

ENDURANCE	14	FOCUS	6
COMPOSURE	10	VIGILANCE	2

+1, –2, –2
DEMEANOR · LOYAL

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 3 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 3 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES

Tireless Runner: Martial; *Physical*

DISADVANTAGES

Quick to Anger: Social; *Interpersonal*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Hooves: Range 1–2, Damage 7, Deadliness 6

Gear (equipped): Hide and armor (Physical 4), saddle, saddlebags, feed bag, grooming kit

ABILITIES

LEGENDARY STEED

An Utaku steed is a silhouette 3 creature. It can be ridden by a human-sized (silhouette 2 or lower) rider, but generally does not tolerate any rider other than a worthy Utaku Battle Maiden.

PARAGON OF HORSES

A Utaku steed grants its rider skilled assistance (see page 26) on Martial checks they make while mounted.

UNICORN WARHORSES

Unicorn warhorses are vastly superior to Rokugani ponies as warhorses. A Unicorn warhorse can be represented with the following modifications to the Rokugani Pony profile:

Remove the Skittish disadvantage, add one advantage from the Warrior template, endurance +4, composure +4, conflict rank +1

Wolf

MINION — CONFLICT RANK: 1 / 1

Wolves lurk among the forested regions of the Empire in packs of ten or more, working collectively to stalk and bring down prey. They use relentless pursuit and quick "hit-and-run" attacks to hunt, only closing for the kill when their quarry is weakened and worn down. They usually avoid humans, but can be territorial if provoked.

ENDURANCE	4	FOCUS	6
COMPOSURE	4	VIGILANCE	4

+2, –2
DEMEANOR · CAUTIOUS

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 1 | SCHOLAR 0 | SOCIAL 1 | TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES

Pack Tactics: Martial, Social; *Interpersonal*

DISADVANTAGES

Cautious Hunter: Martial; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Fangs: Range 0, Damage 4, Deadliness 4, Snaring

Gear (equipped): Hide (Physical 2)

ABILITIES

CIRCLE THE KILL

When performing a Martial Arts [Unarmed] check, a wolf may spend ✲ in the following ways.

> **Water ✲:** The target suffers the Bleeding condition.
>
> **Fire ✲:** The target treats all terrain as Dangerous (see page 267) until the end of their next turn.

Table 8–1: Examples of ✿

ELEMENT	EXAMPLE USES
GENERAL EXAMPLES OF ✿	
Any	✿: If you failed, determine the easiest way to accomplish the task you were attempting (skill and approach). ✿+: Remove 1 strife you gained from this check per ✿ spent this way. ✿ ✿: Provide assistance (see page 26) to the next character to attempt a check to accomplish something similar.
Air	✿: Learn another character in the scene's demeanor (if an NPC) and current strife. ✿+: Act subtly to attract minimal attention in your efforts. Extra ✿ makes the attempt even subtler. ✿ ✿: Notice an interesting detail about a character in the scene, such as an advantage or disadvantage. At the GM's discretion, you may establish a new detail for an NPC.
Earth	✿: Reassure another character in the scene with your presence, allowing them to remove 2 strife. ✿+: Act carefully to minimize consequences of failure or other dangers that could arise from the task. Extra ✿ makes the attempt even safer. ✿ ✿: Suddenly recall an important piece of information not directly related to the task. At the GM's discretion, you may establish a small preparatory action you took earlier, such as bringing along a common useful item.
Fire	✿: Inflame another character in the scene with your presence, causing them to receive 2 strife. ✿+: Perform the task in a flashy way, drawing attention to yourself. Extra ✿ attracts even more notice. ✿ ✿: Notice something missing or out of place in the vicinity that is not directly related to the task. At the GM's discretion, you may establish an absence, such as a lack of shoes outside indicating the occupant's absence.
Water	✿: Remove 2 strife from yourself. ✿+: Perform the task efficiently, completing it more quickly or saving supplies. Extra ✿ further reduces the time or materials expended. ✿ ✿: Spot an interesting physical detail present in your environment not directly related to your check. At the GM's discretion, you may establish a piece of terrain (see page 267) or a mundane object nearby.
Void	✿: Choose a ring other than Void. Reduce the TN of your next check by 1 if it uses that ring. ✿+: Feel a chill down your spine, notice a sudden silence, or detect another sign of the supernatural if there is a spiritual disturbance in the scene. Extra ✿ gives an increasingly precise location for the supernatural occurrence. ✿ ✿: Gain spiritual insight into the nature of the universe or your own heart. At the GM's discretion, you may establish a fact about your character that has not been previously revealed but relates to the situation.
CONFLICT AND MARTIAL SKILL EXAMPLES OF ✿	
Air	✿: Add a kept ■ set to an ✿ result to your next Martial skill check. ✿+: During a Movement action check, up to 1 range band of any distance you move per ✿ spent this way may be along a vertical surface. ✿ ✿: Increase the TN of the next Martial Arts [Ranged] check targeting you before the start of your next turn by 2.
Earth	✿: During a Movement action, ignore one terrain quality (see page 267) of your choice. ✿+: Reduce the severity of the next critical strike you suffer before the start of your next turn by 1 per ✿ spent this way. ✿ ✿: Do not apply one of your disadvantages to checks until the end of your next turn.
Fire	✿: Choose another character in the scene; increase the TN of the next check they make before the end of their next turn by 1 if it does not include you as a target. ✿+: During an Attack action check, increase the TN of the next check the target makes to resist a critical strike they suffer before the start of your next turn by 1 per ✿ spent this way. ✿ ✿: Other characters must receive 2 strife to choose you as the target of their Attack and Scheme actions until the start of your next turn.
Water	✿: Remove 1 fatigue. ✿+: During an Attack action check, ignore 1 point of target's physical resistance per ✿ spent this way. ✿ ✿: Move 1 range band.
Void	✿: During the next Attack action check you make before the end of your next turn, ignore one terrain quality (see page 267) of your choice. ✿+: During a Support action check, increase your Initiative value by 1 per ✿ spent this way. ✿ ✿: Ignore the effects of one condition you are suffering until the end of your next turn.

Table 8–1: Examples of ✿ (Continued)

ELEMENT	EXAMPLE USES
INITIATIVE CHECK EXAMPLES OF ✿	
Air	✿: On an Initiative check, assess one foe's weakness. Learn one of their disadvantages of that foe's choice.
Earth	✿: On an Initiative check, choose another character's disadvantage you know. They do not apply that disadvantage to their checks this scene.
Fire	✿: On an Initiative check, use your focus instead of your vigilance for your initiative when surprised.
Water	✿: On an Initiative check, assess the qualities of all terrain in the scene (see page 267).
Void	✿: On an Initiative check, sense if there is an Otherworldly being in the scene.
OTHER SKILL EXAMPLES OF ✿	
Air	*Artisan* ✿: If you succeed, add the Resplendent or Subtle quality to an item that you are refining. *Scholar* ✿: Learn a something about a character who created or used the item you are studying (such as one of their advantages or disadvantages of the GM's choice that affected their creation or use of the item). *Social* ✿: Learn if the honor, glory, or status attribute of a character in the scene is higher, lower, or equal to yours. *Trade* ✿: Convince a buyer to pay an additional 10% for an item you are selling.
Earth	*Artisan* ✿: If you succeed, add the Durable quality to an item that you are restoring. *Scholar* ✿: Remember a place where you can research or study the topic you were attempting to recall. *Social* ✿: Increase the TN of the next Social check another character makes before the end of the scene by 1. *Trade* ✿: Reduce the TN of the next check another character makes with the same skill before the end of the scene by 1.
Fire	*Artisan* ✿: If you succeed, make one additional copy of the item you are creating. *Scholar* ✿: Extrapolate the motivations or desires of another character in the scene or wider situation. *Social* ✿: Reduce the TN of the next Social check another character makes before the end of the scene by 1. *Trade* ✿: Unusual inspiration strikes; add a kept ■ set to an ✿ result to the next check you make with another skill.
Water	*Artisan* ✿: Add a kept ■ set to an ✿ result to the next Artisan skill check you make before the end of the game session. *Scholar* ✿: Spot a unique or identifying quality, aspect, or ability of something that you are identifying. *Social* ✿: Add a kept ■ set to an ✿ result to your next Social check before the end of the scene. *Trade* ✿: Convince a seller to give you an additional 10% discount for an item you are buying.
Void	*Artisan* ✿: Reduce the TN of the next check you make using the item you are attuning yourself to by 1. *Scholar* ✿: Intuit whether you can learn anything of value from your current course of inquiry. *Social* ✿: Discern the objective of another character in the scene. *Trade* ✿: Reduce any effect you have on your environment (and physical traces of your efforts) to a minimum.
DOWNTIME CHECK EXAMPLES OF ✿	
Air	✿+: Learn a detail about one person in your company (such as an advantage or disadvantage of their choice) per ✿ spent this way. You can learn only one detail about each person this way in a single downtime scene. ✿ ✿: Perform your downtime activity without letting one or more others of your choice know that you did.
Earth	✿+: Another character in your company may remove 1 strife or fatigue per ✿ spent this way. ✿ ✿: Memorize a small but vital detail from to your activity; you can recall it later without a check.
Fire	✿+: Assist one other character per ✿ spent this way with their next downtime activity check this session. ✿ ✿: Energize another character in your company with your efforts; they may perform 1 additional downtime action this downtime (to a maximum of 2).
Water	✿+: Remove 1 strife or fatigue per ✿ spent this way. ✿ ✿: Make a new friend while undertaking your downtime activity.
Void	✿+: Reserve 1 dropped die from your check, to a maximum of your ranks in the skill you used. Add that die to your next check with the same skill as a kept die instead of rolling it. ✿ ✿: Have a brief premonition of a possible future event while undertaking your downtime activity.

Akodo	Founding Kami of the Lion Clan
ashigaru	Peasant warriors under the command of a samurai
Bayushi	Founding Kami of the Scorpion Clan
Benten	The Fortune of romantic love and the arts
bisentō	A heavy polearm with a large blade
Bishamon	The Fortune of strength
biwa	A short-necked fretted lute (musical instrument)
bō	A quarterstaff
bokken	A wooden practice sword
bonge	The laborer caste, see heimin
budōka	The personal armed retainers of a samurai
buke	The samurai caste that does not wield authority over other samurai "Those who serve."
burakumin	The lowest caste of "non-people," see hinin
bushi	A warrior
Bushidō	The code of the samurai, consisting of seven tenants: Compassion, Courage, Courtesy, Honor, Honesty, Loyalty and Sincerity
chokutō	A straight, single-edged sword
courtier	A samurai whose primary duties are in court
Daikoku	The Fortune of wealth, who is associated with death
daikyū	A longbow
daimyō	Lord of a family, clan, or territory
daishō	The weapons which mark a samurai's status, traditionally made up by a katana (longsword) and wakizashi (shortsword)
Doji	Founding Kami of the Crane Clan
dōjō	A place of instruction, practice, and study
Ebisu	The Fortune of honest work
Fu Leng	The Lost Kami and lord of demons
Fukurokujin	The Fortune of wisdom and mercy
gaijin	A foreigner to Rokugan
geisha	A host and entertainer who is hired by a samurai for the joy of their company
gempuku	The coming-of-age ceremony for samurai. Occurs between ages 13-21, typically 16
hakama	A divided skirt worn over a kimono, primarily by men and warrior women
Hantei	The divine first emperor of Rokugan
haori	A hip or thigh-length jacket worn over other clothes
heimin	"The common folk," or the peasants that make up the bonge caste
Hida	Founding Kami of the Crab Clan
hinin	"The non-people," or members of the burakumin lowest caste
Hōtei	The Fortune of contentment
iaijutsu	A form of swordfighting focusing on draw speed and precision
ji	A polearm weapon with a hooked blade at one end
jian	A straight, double-edged sword
jitte	A hooked tool used to disarm an opponent's sword, typically worn by guards and government officials
jizamurai	Smaller groups of samurai, such as vassal families, small Minor Clans, or officially-sanctioned bands of rōnin
jūjutsu	A form of martial arts that does not use weapons
Jigoku	The realm of evil
Jurōjin	The Fortune of longevity
Kabuki	A stylized type of theater that focuses on the heroism or tragedy of the samurai
kabuto	A samurai's helmet
kama	A sickle-like farming implement often used as a weapon
katana	A longsword, the weapon of the samurai
kata	A martial technique
kami	Spirits that inhabit the natural world
Kami	The gods that fell to Rokugan and founded the Great Clans

kenjutsu	The art of swordsmanship
kihō	A mystical technique used by monks
kimono	A robe with a collar and large sleeves that falls to the ankle, the primary garment worn by samurai
kiseru	A smoking pipe
Kisshōten	The Fortune of happiness, fertility, and beauty
kuge	The samurai caste that wields authority (Imperials, daimyō, clan champions, etc) "Those who rule"
kubi bukuro	A netted bag used to carry the severed head of one's enemy
kusari-gama	A weapon composed of a kama attached to a long chain
kyūjutsu	A combat style focusing on archery
li	A unit of length rough equal to a third of a mile
naginata	A polearm with a blade at one end
Ningen-dō	The physical, mortal, world
mahō	Blood magic
masakari	A hatchet
Meido	The realm of the dead where souls go to be judged for reincarnation
meishōdō	"The way of names," the style of magic wielded by the Unicorn clan that uses a spirit's name to bind and command it
mon	The crest or symbol of a clan or family
nodachi	A massive two-handed sword
nunchaku	A weapon consisting of two rods connected by a short chain or rope
omamori	A small rectangular amulet of wood or paper meant to provide spiritual aid or protection
oni	A demon of Jigoku
ono	An axe
ōtsuchi	An immense wooden hammer
oyumi	A crossbow
Rokugan	The setting of *Legend of the Five Rings*, a land of samurai, honor, and spirits
rōnin	A samurai with no lord, an outcast
sake	A popular alcoholic drink made of fermented rice
samurai	Members of the highest caste, either kuge or buke depending upon their hierarchy within the caste
scimitar	A curved sword originating from the Burning Sands
shaku	A unit of length roughly equal to one foot
shamisen	A three-stringed lute (musical instrument)
Shiba	Founding Kami of the Phoenix Clan
Shinjo	Founding Kami of the Unicorn Clan
Shinsei	"The Little Teacher," the wise figure who spoke with the first Emperor and inspired the philosophical understandings of reincarnation and the elements
shinobi	A covert operative and infiltrator
shugenja	A priest with a strong bond to the kami, who invokes supernatural feats
shūji	A rhetorical technique
shuriken	An easily-concealed bladed weapon intended to be thrown
Tao of Shinsei	The sacred text that recorded the conversation between Shinsei and the first Emperor
Tengoku	The realm of heaven
tessen	A war fan
tetsubō	A large studded club
Togashi	Founding Kami of the Dragon Clan
torii	A gate that indicates the transition between the mundane and the sacred, often found at the entrances to shrines
yari	A spear
yōjimbō	A bodyguard
yumi	A shortbow
wakizashi	A shortsword worn by all members of the samurai caste to indicate their status
zanbatō	A large single-bladed sword designed to combat cavalry

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Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying L5R02
ISBN: 978-1-63344-340-2
EAN 13 9 781633 443402 54995
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