

Celestial Realms

The Essential Guide to The Spirit Realms



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First Day of the Month of Hantei, 1120, at a crossroads in Phoenix lands

The tiny road shrine rested atop its overgrown stone base. Kaito Shin carefully brushed away the decayed fruit placed there weeks ago, likely as an afterthought by a tired, passing priest. He placed a pear on the shrine and gestured to the Void-wielding *ishiken*, Isawa Yasu, but when their eyes met, Shin turned away.

"Shin-kun?" Yasu inquired.

"It is...hard to gaze upon you."

Yasu tilted their head quizzically, but when they saw Shin blush, they realized he meant it as a compliment. When Yasu had first accepted Shin as an assistant, he had been sarcastic, angry, and impulsive. *Tame this wild dog*, Shin's father had said. And over time, Shin did change under their influence. Yasu no longer saw flaws in the young man, just honesty, conviction, and confidence. Perhaps more.

Yasu touched their chest and tipped their head down, unable to suppress a soft smile.

Shin stood up from his work cleaning the shrine and brushed off his kimono. "The shrine is ready, Yasu-kun. Perfected, like you."

Yasu glanced at the warped, dilapidated wooden roof of the shrine. Shin turned redder, and Yasu chuckled inwardly at his bungled compliment. To give him some relief, Yasu turned to examine the crossroads, the four well-worn paths leading to the different villages. No signs of life, no merchants, no travelers, and no wedding parties. No offerings and no blessings.

I should not feel such joy, Yasu thought. As a child, Yasu's parents had called them rational, unburdened by desires, and beyond mortal concerns—a shining example of the Isawa family, perhaps the next Master of Void. Service had given Yasu definition, purpose, but no joy. Now they had discovered something much more as they watched the embarrassed flush darken Shin's cheeks.

Yasu lit some incense and pressed their hands together to pray. The familiar cold and calming emptiness lifted the heat from their skin. The light dimmed until sight became unnecessary and their mind became clear. Here, staring at the endless, logical Void between the elements, Yasu understood the world. "Great spirit, I come to humbly ask your continued protection of this crossroads—"

A feeling, familiar and alien, discrete yet cosmic, echoed in their mind. The spirit was speaking without words. And it was seething. *No.*

"I..." Yasu collected their thoughts. "I hear your displeasure. I am listening."

"Yasu-kun?" Shin said. "Are you all right?"

Yasu raised their hand to gently ward away their companion...friend...loved one? Their fingers touched, and Yasu felt a charge throughout their body.

A great howl engulfed Yasu, drowning out Shin's touch, and their senses expanded. Yasu saw the crossroads, each road barely a footpath rather than a well-traveled way. *Is this the past?* Their gaze settled on a lone traveler, small and mortal, dressed in the working clothes of a *heimin*, but shining brighter than the sun or stars. He did not walk, but danced to the rhythms of the Heavens. His voice was a blessing to the sky and a gift to the earth. Who could not adore such a foolish creature?

"You fell in love?" Yasu asked. "But *kami* are above such things."

The days and seasons flashed by, causing Yasu to gasp. The foul scent of death stained the crossroads. The beautiful man lay on the footpath, the earth hungrily drinking his blood, his flawless face gaunt and lifeless.

More days and nights. A single stone, crudely etched with the name "Reiichi," lay on the footpath, becoming more and more weathered.

"I see. They have forgotten Reiichi. I can rebuild the shrine in his memory—"

The howl grew. Their senses returned to the present. They saw themself kneeling in front of the shrine, Shin touching their hand, concern turning into surprise as blood pooled on Shin's kimono. He fell onto the crossroads, the earth once again feasting.

"No! Please, he is innocent." Yasu felt the Void clawing at the edges of their being as they struggled to fight the angered spirit. Their senses leapt once more. They saw themself kneeling, this time in front of the Kaito, Shin's mother weeping tears not of despair but of solace.

At least he served a purpose, Shin's father says. *Thank you for giving him a chance for distinction.*

Did his life mean so little to you? Yasu thinks.

Yasu heard, they felt, the sound of metal on wood—of Shin drawing his weapon. "Yasu-kun? What is happening? Are you hurt?"

He is still alive! Yasu prayed. "Please, great spirit, you understand love. Why would you take that away? Let Shin live. I would give myself in his place."

Yasu blinked, and the howl stopped, replaced with the hum of chatter. The soft sunlight warmed. Travelers, young and old, milled about, chatted, and walked in peace. Yasu found themself still kneeling in front of the shrine—now intact, well maintained, and full of offerings.

"Shin-kun?"

He did not have his weapon drawn, but as Shin sneered at the travelers, Yasu saw only harshness in his eyes, his rugged face hard and distant.

"That is not Shin," Yasu whispered.

The howl returned, softly. Yasu heard a regular, gentle drumbeat. Shin's heart. They wiped the tears away. "Yes. Better him alive and without love than dead with it."

"Isawa-sama? Are we finished?" Shin held out his hand. When Yasu took it, they did not feel the charge, but instead felt only an empty coldness. "It appears we are not needed here."

Yasu took a deep breath to steady themself and closed their heart. "No, Kaito-san. The spirit needs nothing more from us."

They smoothed out their kimono and tightened their obi. Shin nodded. "Perfect as always, Isawa-sama."

Welcome to the Spirit Realms

Just as Rokugan is part of a larger world, Ningen-dō, the Realm of Mortals, is but one piece of a larger cosmic map. There are places that reside above, beside, and far below the domain of mortal beings, like the Celestial Court, which seats Lady Sun and Lord Moon; the wild Realm of Animals, which overlaps with Ningen-dō; and the vile pits of Jigoku, where the corrupted oni of Fu Leng plot their escape. There are times when the layers between the realms thin and these places collide with one another, allowing humans to wander out—or other beings to wander in.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

Celestial Realms is a guide to the cosmology of Rokugan and the enigmatic members of the Phoenix Clan, who act as the Emerald Empire's spiritual masters. The Phoenix are dedicated to studying the spiritual arts and all they entail, including corruption, the Spirit Realms, and the history of religion across the centuries.

Celestial Realms is divided into three chapters:

CHAPTER 1

Bonds of the Realms dives into the cosmology of the Spirit Realms, also known as the Celestial Realms, including the Celestial Court of Tengoku; the endless lines of Meido, the Realm of Waiting; and the mysterious and ethereal Yume-dō, or Realm of Dreams. This chapter also breaks down the general societal structures of these places and their role in the Celestial Order. Finally, it discusses the Phoenix Clan and its families as well as shrines and cults throughout the Emerald Empire.

CHAPTER 2

The Soul of the Empire introduces the devoted Centipede, a Minor Clan thought to be gifted with spiritual power from Lady Sun herself, along with rules for creating player characters from this clan. This chapter also offers new player options, including schools, items, techniques, rules for inversions, and advantages and disadvantages. Finally, it presents the ancestral swords of each of the Great Clans.

CHAPTER 3

Power of Worship offers game master advice on creating supernatural encounters and on playing games set in places other than the Realm of Mortals. It also provides guidance on creating cults and other organizations and incorporating them into games. New titles and NPC templates and a demeanor are presented as well.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Throughout this book, you'll find sidebars like this one presenting adventure seeds for GMs. If you're a player, you might want to avoid reading these, as doing so could spoil things should your GM adopt any of the ideas! If you're a GM, you can expand on these seeds to create full-fledged adventures, take bits and pieces, or simply use them for inspiration.

一 **Hook** The hook provides the context for starting the adventure and introduces the important NPCs. We also provide a suggested way to involve the PCs in events, which you can tailor to fit your campaign.

二 **Rising Action** In the next part of an adventure seed, we briefly describe the most likely way for events to escalate, further embroiling the PCs and raising the stakes.

三 **Climax** Finally, we offer a likely climax for the adventure, whether it is a decisive encounter with an NPC or a difficult choice the PCs must make. By this point, the events of the adventure are likely to have taken unexpected turns based on the PCs' actions, and you should feel free to modify the climax or resolve matters in whatever way fits the ongoing campaign.



CHAPTER

1

Bonds of the Realms

"Okay, Souta-kun! I am starting—one, two—"

Souta rushed around the frosty forest floor, looking for the perfect hiding spot. It did not take long to find a gnarled tree with plenty of handholds; Kazumi-chan never thought to look up when she was seeking. As he felt his way around the massive oak, his fingers dipped. What luck: a tree hollow!

Grinning, he rounded to face the hollow—and then he blinked in disbelief. There were…animals? Inside the hollow? And it looked like it was spring in there! But it was winter, and—

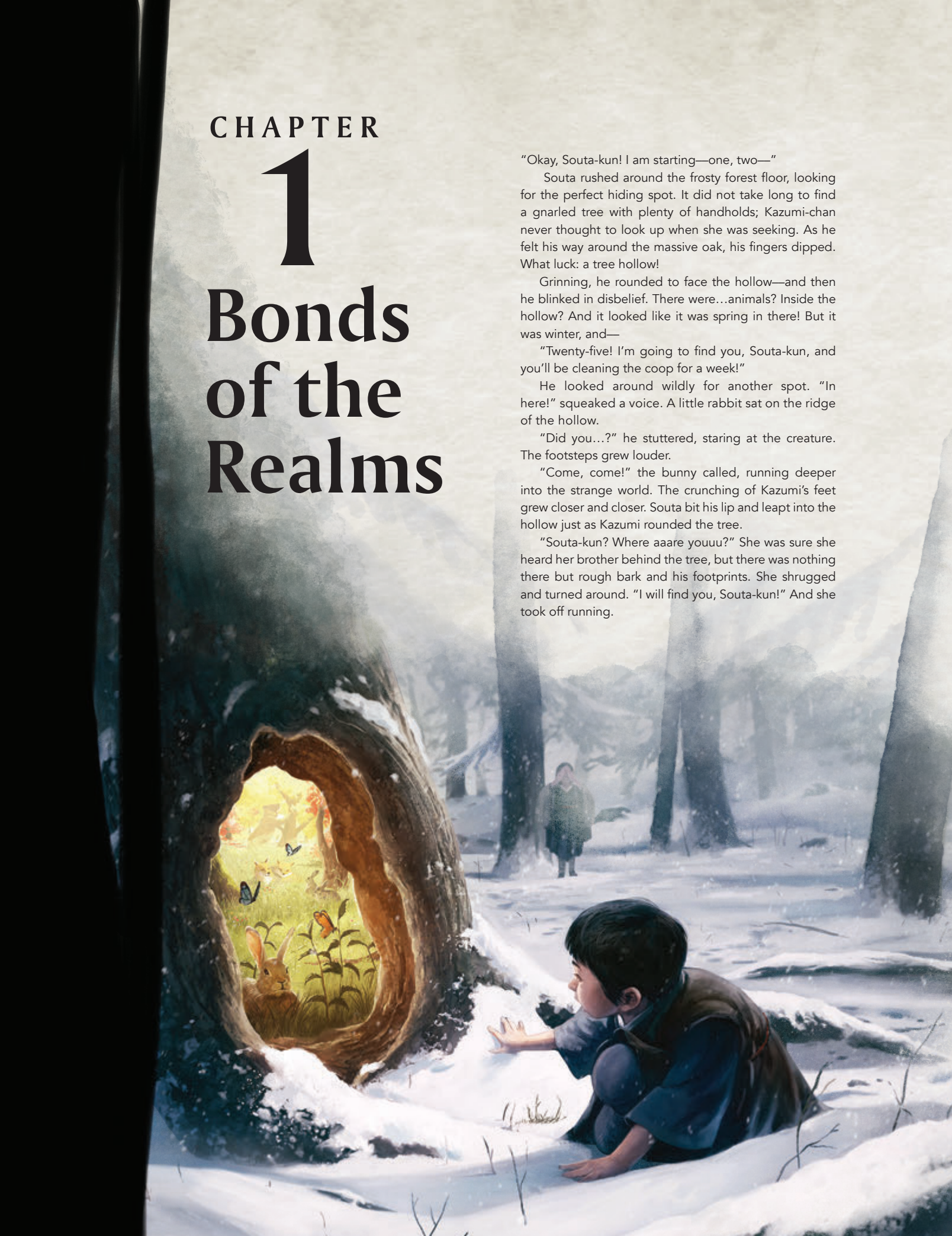
"Twenty-five! I'm going to find you, Souta-kun, and you'll be cleaning the coop for a week!"

He looked around wildly for another spot. "In here!" squeaked a voice. A little rabbit sat on the ridge of the hollow.

"Did you…?" he stuttered, staring at the creature. The footsteps grew louder.

"Come, come!" the bunny called, running deeper into the strange world. The crunching of Kazumi's feet grew closer and closer. Souta bit his lip and leapt into the hollow just as Kazumi rounded the tree.

"Souta-kun? Where aaare youuu?" She was sure she heard her brother behind the tree, but there was nothing there but rough bark and his footprints. She shrugged and turned around. "I will find you, Souta-kun!" And she took off running.



Cosmology of Rokugan

The Tao of Shinsei paints a picture of an orderly universe, one governed by knowable laws and created for specific purposes. According to Shintao doctrine, to every mortal soul born, the Court of Tengoku assigns a purpose, a destiny that is known as the soul's dharma. If the soul accomplishes that task in life, then they receive their just reward: a peaceful existence in Yomi, the Realm of Blessed Ancestors or reincarnation into a higher station in life. If the soul does not complete their dharma, they are reincarnated to try again or are assigned a less challenging dharma and reborn as a lesser form. A being who lives odiously might be sentenced to spend time in a realm of punishment to work off their bad karma before returning to the cycle of reincarnation. This process occurred in an orderly manner for a long time.

Folk stories abound about when this changed, and few agree on the details. Most scholars of the Great Clans tell it this way: when the Kami fell from Heaven, most of them landed in the Mortal Realm, Ningen-dō, where they were discovered by mortals and eventually founded the Great Clans. But the Ninth Kami, Fu Leng, clung to his father, Lord Moon, just before he fell, and Lord Moon cast him down with such force that Fu Leng fell farther and faster than his siblings. Where Fu Leng landed, he sundered the border of Jigoku, a realm of punishment for evil souls. This freed the inhabitants and cast Jigoku into chaos. Like spilled ink, evil seeped into the realms nearby, leaking not only into the underworld, but also into blessed realms and the Realm of Mortals. This threw the Spirit Realms out of balance, even causing them to collide with each other.

His vengeful rage corrupting and transforming everything around him, Fu Leng arose as the ruler of Jigoku, and Meido was overrun. Demons invaded the Mortal Realm, bent on conquest. Philosophers and scholars who seek to rationalize the senseless destruction attribute Fu Leng's motivation to the three sins—fear, desire, and regret—but others simply say he was jealous of his siblings, and most of all his brother Hantei, the first Emperor. The order of the cosmos was destroyed, the realms no longer serving their divine purposes, but the Fortunes had a bigger problem: left unchecked, Fu Leng would have the ability to march upon Tengoku itself, and might seek to rule all of creation.

It was only the Day of Thunder that thwarted the advance. Eight mortals, the Seven Thunders and Shinsei, vanquished Fu Leng with their combined might, ending the threat to the gods and the Spirit Realms. At this point, historians say, Yomi was lifted far above the Mortal Realm, where Jigoku could not touch it, and Ningen-dō became a buffer zone between Jigoku and Yomi. While the Spirit Realms continue to fulfill their functions even a thousand years later, the damage was done, and order has never been fully restored. Jigoku is still a place whose purpose has been lost, its evil denizens constantly assaulting Meido and Ningen-dō, even to this day.

PERSPECTIVE ON THE SPIRITS

Although priests and other religious figures can commune with spirits and Fortunes, even communication from divine beings is subject to interpretation. The descriptions of the Spirit Realms presented here, and even the information on which realms exist, are not the final, definitive truth. The Spirit Realms are always in flux and beyond mortal comprehension, so they may adopt forms that humans can understand. This means that how the Celestial Realms appear may depend on what one expects to see, varying from person to person or culture to culture.

THE ORDER OF THE REALMS

Although it is sometimes easier to think of the Spirit Realms, also called the Celestial Realms, as alternate dimensions or separate worlds, in truth, Rokugani scholars understand them to all occupy the same physical universe and dimension, lying beside, above, or below one another, often overlapping. From the Mortal Realm, Ningen-dō, a being can gaze up into the Celestial Heavens, where Tengoku (the Celestial Court) and Yomi (the Realm of Blessed Ancestors) glitter above the clouds—a person might even climb a mountain to reach the Celestial Heavens. Looking instead to the front or side—perhaps into an untouched bamboo grove—one might catch a glimpse of Senkyō (the enchanted country). A particularly unfortunate being might fall into a pit to awaken in Gaki-dō (the Realm of the Hungry Dead). Just as a firefly's glow might seem otherworldly to a child, the overlapping wonders of the Spirit Realms appear divine and nonsensical to mortals. One does not encounter a hungry ghost every day, after all, and such an experience can be terrifying. But the Spirit Realms each serve their own function, and while mortal minds seek to draw boundaries between them, they also exist as parts of the same whole.

REAL-WORLD OVERLAP

There are many traditions and other culturally significant references in *Legend of the Five Rings* that draw from real-life histories and cultures, particularly Japan. When interacting with these elements it is important to remain respectful of the very potent significance many of these beliefs have for real people.

Fully understanding the nature of the Celestial Realms is an ongoing challenge for the Empire's philosophers, scholars, and priests, especially shugenja. The realms are not fixed places, but rather constantly shift and change, like celestial bodies passing in the night sky. If what mortals currently know about the Spirit Realms can fill a tome, then there is still an empty library awaiting the tomes yet to be written.

Ningen-dō, the Realm of Mortals, lies between the other Spirit Realms. Below Tengoku and above Meido, it is the realm in which most mortal beings dwell. Throughout all time, Ningen-dō has attracted the attention of the other realms. As it is the crossroads between the Celestial Realms, it can not be easily influenced. It is in Ningen-dō that many souls attempt to fulfill their dharma, and souls who do not ultimately reincarnate in Ningen-dō if they are not sentenced to go elsewhere.

Mortals are the native beings of Ningen-dō, but so too are the elemental kami, which Rokugani scholars consider to be the native spirits of the Mortal Realm.

Tengoku

Above Ningen-dō is Tengoku, the Celestial Court. Here dwell most of the Fortunes, Lady Sun and Lord Moon, the Elemental Dragons, and some of the Kami. From Tengoku, the dragons regulate the cycles of the seasons and weather, while Tengoku's other denizens tend to the tasks of leading all sentient beings toward wisdom and their ultimate destinies and of generally keeping the cosmos in working order.

Yomi

Set just below Tengoku, but still within its bounds, is Yomi, the Realm of Blessed Ancestors. Yomi moved above the Mortal Realm along with Tengoku after the Day of Thunder. Human souls who have achieved their destinies go to Yomi, from which they can watch over their descendants in Ningen-dō and guide the mortals who dwell there. Rokugani scripture holds that only the souls of samurai can enter Yomi, at least without considerable exception. The blessed ancestor spirits of Yomi help Tengoku by guiding the progress of mortals. It is a paradise realm for those who have reincarnated countless times.

Senkyō: Chikushō-dō, Sakkaku, and Yume-dō

Overlapping with the Mortal Realm is Senkyō, the enchanted country. Senkyō includes the realms of sentient animals and shapeshifting nature spirits, whose purposes are not fully known to mortals. These denizens of Senkyō divide themselves into two courts: Chikushō-dō, the Animals' Path, is the way that guides animals to a better reincarnation, while members of

PERCEPTION AS REALITY

In Rokugan, truth is often subjective. The current general understanding of the Spirit Realms is the end result of a thousand years of communing with ghosts and spirits, gathering thirdhand accounts of encounters with Fortunes and ancestor spirits, interpreting vague signs, and engaging in countless debates. The education of spiritualists like shugenja varies widely—there is no standard curriculum—and while they apprentice beneath masters, much of their training is personal and accomplished alone. As such, the insights of shugenja are unique to each one and are subject to interpretation and correction. Like all humans, even the most certain shugenja may be mistaken.

Ningen-dō: The Mortal Realm, home to humanity and elemental kami.

Tengoku: The Celestial Court, where Lady Sun and Lord Moon, most of the Fortunes, some of the Elemental Dragons, and others are thought to command the order of the universe.

Yomi: The Realm of Blessed Ancestors, for noble souls who have achieved their destiny.

Senkyō: The enchanted country, a place of sentient animals and shapeshifting tricksters. Divided into Chikushō-dō (the Animals' Path), Sakkaku (the Path of Mischief [or Illusion]), and Yume-dō (the Realm of Dreams).

Meido: The Realm of Waiting, where all beings go when they die. Souls are judged in Meido and then reincarnate or are sent to another realm.

Gaki-dō: The Realm of the Hungry Dead, a Realm of Punishment for those who succumb to desire.

Tōshigoku: The Realm of Slaughter, a realm of punishment for the violent, cruel, and vengeful.

Jigoku: The Realm of Evil, the home of oni, demons, and other untold horrors.

Sakkaku, the Path of Mischief (or Illusion), embrace the form of animals and play jokes and tricks on other mortals while seeking the power to break the cycle of rebirth, so that they may remain as animals forever.

Yume-dō is the Realm of Dreams, a place of fantasy and hidden truth, of what was and what may yet be. Its connection to the Mortal Realm is poorly understood, but one cannot exist without the other. Mortals visit Yume-dō in their sleep, and some can travel there with talent or training. The denizens of Yume-dō are the least understood, for it is not known if they are real or only exist as creations of the slumbering mind.

Transcendents

The greatest and most fondly remembered nezumi, the rat-like inhabitants of the Shadowlands, live on in Yume-dō as Transcendents, the spiritual guides of the nezumi tribes. In many ways, Transcendents are the nezumi equivalent of samurai ancestors, visiting the living in dreams to pass on warnings or advice in the form of esoteric words drawn from memory, or communicating outside of dreams through strange visions. Often these dreams and visions must be interpreted by nezumi Dreamers, who are able to invoke the Realm of Dreams and enter it for a time.

Meido

Beneath Ningen-dō is Meido, the Realm of Waiting, a vast place where mortal souls go to be judged by Emma-Ō, the Fortune of Death. Never intended as a permanent residence for souls, Meido now struggles to keep up with the constant stream of dead resulting from disasters in Ningen-dō and undermining by Jigoku, which seeks to influence the realm.

Gaki-dō

The Realm of the Hungry Dead is a realm of punishment for souls who could not be satisfied in life: the greedy, the lustful, the gluttonous, and the power hungry. Their fixation on physical pleasures caused them to neglect their dharma, their desires growing until they could not be sated, and so they have been relegated to this realm where nothing satisfies.

Gaki, the most abundant souls of Gaki-dō, are ghosts who know only hunger, in every sense of the word. Ironically, Gaki-dō is an easy place to escape, but most souls there are simply too hungry to think of leaving.

NEW REALMS

It is possible for other new Spirit Realms to blink into existence as well, fulfilling a previously unserved function in the order of the cosmos. Generally, this requires one of the other realms to divide or section itself off, but such an event would have implications concerning the balance of celestial forces.

If desired, GMs can create their own realm for a *Legend of the Five Rings* campaign. When doing so, it's important to think about what function the realm serves in the greater scheme of progressing mortals toward their destinies. Who is in charge of the new realm? In what ways does it influence the Mortal Realm? Finally, how does its existence affect what happens to souls in the afterlife?

Or even better, a GM might explore these questions together, with their players.

Tōshigoku

The Realm of Slaughter is another realm of punishment, but unlike Gaki-dō, Tōshigoku is for the violent and the cruel. This realm is thought to have been created by the Fortune of Death, Emma-Ō. Originally conceived as a place of rehabilitation where such souls could work out their anger, Tōshigoku is a never-ending battlefield where punished souls fight in unending wars, dying and rising again and again. It is filled with the souls of those who died pointless deaths, those who killed recklessly and reveled in slaying, and those who succumbed to their rage and hate and therefore did not tend to their dharma.

Jigoku

Jigoku is a wellspring of evil in the Spirit Realms. Comprising torturous strata of unending terrors, it is the domain of the Ninth Kami, Fu Leng, and his hordes of demonic minions. It is the source of the Shadowlands Taint, a spiritual stain that twists the victim to Jigoku's embrace and strips them of autonomy.

Most oni, the native spirits of Jigoku, are demons who serve Fu Leng and have become twisted abominations. Many beings believe that even though the Ninth Kami is locked away, his influence still guides his oni minions, and the hordes of Jigoku still plot to overtake the other realms and pull everything down into chaos.

SOME TYPES OF SPIRITS

The following are several types of spirits most likely to be encountered in the Spirit Realms, though this list cannot encompass the entire range of beings who exist outside of Ningen-dō.

Shiryō: *Souls of ancestors who have earned paradise in Yomi, but return to the mortal realm to guide their living descendants.*

Sorei: *Ancestor spirits who have been empowered and blessed through exemplary service in the Celestial Order, and now serve and facilitate a Spirit Realm.*

Shinzoku: *Mortal souls who directly serve a Fortune, immortal dragon, or other deity.*

Mazoku: *Demons who serve the Fortunes in unsavory positions to work off their bad karma.*

Jigoku was not always a Realm of Evil, however. It once served as a prison and place for wicked beings to suffer for their crimes and, eventually, be rehabilitated, but this was before Fu Leng made Jigoku his domain. Those with true wickedness in their hearts and whose deeds are undeniably vile are still thrown into Jigoku as oni after being judged by Emma-Ō, even now. However, with each new reincarnated oni, Fu Leng has one more member to add to his army, a fact the Fortune of Death is all too aware of.

PASSING THROUGH THE REALMS

Rokugani folklore is rife with tales of people who unwittingly crossed the border into another realm. Rarer are the stories of those who willingly entered, seeking spirits in their own homes. Because the Celestial Realms are synonymous with the underworld in common parlance, the notion of entering one of these realms while alive is a frightening prospect to most Rokugani. Still, it is not unheard of for a person to cross over, if they know where to look for an entrance. They might even return to Ningen-dō afterward, although they certainly will have been changed by the experience. Mortals in other realms are considered invaders there, so great care must be taken if a person wishes to cross over.

Blurred Lines

The easiest way to enter another realm is to simply find a place where the borders are weak and one realm fades into another (see **Places of Power**, starting on page 138). Rumors abound of such liminal places, although usually the stories are meant to warn against trespassing, not to encourage visitors to explore those locations. One such place is the Isawa Mori, a vast forest said to overlap with Senkyō. Another is the Shinomen Mori, whose lush groves are so thick and old, they must surely be gateways to the Realm of Animals.

In one tale of crossing into another realm, a fisherman's daughter followed a stranger into the ocean, disappearing for several days. When she reappeared on the shore, she was an old woman who claimed to have lived an entire lifetime among the wonders of the deeps. Those who believe the tale say she discovered an underwater kingdom, while others say she lived a rapid lifetime in Yume-dō, where time has little meaning.

Yet another rumored borderland is the haunted plains of the Dragonfly Clan. Travelers who have strayed from the road have reported encounters with ghosts, visions of past heroes, and—if tales are to be believed—the spirits of beings who were yet to be born. Rumors tell of a samurai encountering his own ghost, and coming face to face with his future self. Perhaps these plains overlap the Realm of Waiting or the Realm of Dreams, or perhaps they rest within Sakkaku and such visions are the work of tricksters. Or perhaps there is another explanation none have yet considered.

Liminal Hours

Most folktales concerning the Spirit Realms are set during the twilight hours or at times associated with the spirits in question. Because of this, most Rokugani believe the borders of the realms overlap only at particular times. Some say that as certain times of the year at the fork of Three Stone River, the site of an especially terrible battle, the ghosts of those who died there are forced to reenact the conflict. In Ryokō Owari Toshi, the City of Lies, some residents claim that a parade of hungry ghosts appears every summer during the twilight Hour of the Rooster—and that a person in the street during this time may accidentally become caught in Gaki-dō.

The unluckiest hour is thought to be the Hour of the Ox, which is closely associated with Jigoku. It is said that Jigoku has the greatest influence on the Mortal Realm during this time. The Crab Clan always changes sentries just before this hour, so that the watch is freshest when the Shadowlands is at its most active.

Spirited Afar

Some famous stories feature heroes who accompanied a guide into the Celestial Realms. In legends of the Crane hero Doji Yasarugi, his *tengu* sensei spirited him to Senkyō, where he learned tengu secrets of swordsmithing. The founder of the Fox Clan, the hunter Shinun, was led to Chikushō-dō by two foxes she had freed from her traps—fox spirits who would help found the Kitsune family bloodline. In tales such as these, denizens of the Spirit Realms invite to their homelands only especially worthy heroes—heroes who then go on to establish great legacies thanks in part to the insights they gained.

Other tales of forays into the Spirit Realms are horror stories: victims are kidnapped and taken as punishment, or they cross over a border due to their own negligence. These rumors feature hungry ghosts, demons, or other monsters. One story concerns the *kumo*, shapeshifting spider spirits of Sakkaku, who drag their slumbering victims to their lairs in Senkyō. Superstitious individuals never sleep beneath a spiderweb, lest they tempt such spirits.


The Elemental River
Above
The Heavens of Tengoku
Above
Yomi
The Realm of Blessed Ancestors
The Realm of Mortals
Ningen-dō
Yume-dō
The Realm of Dreams
Beside
The Realm of Hungry Gaki-dō
Beside
The Realms of Animals and Mischief
Meido
The Realm of Waiting
The Vile Pits of Jigoku
Tōshigoku
The Realm of Slaughter
Below
Below
The Celestial Realms

VISITING A REALM

Some families are known for secret rituals that allow them to enter a Spirit Realm at will. One of these is the Lion Clan's Kitsu family, whose members attribute their abilities to their kinship with lion spirits, known as *kitsu*. The Kitsu family's specially trained shugenja, known as *sōdan-senzo,* can travel temporarily into Yomi or other realms, donning masks to protect their identities and conversing at length with ancestral spirits.

Likewise, the Dreamweavers of the Moth Clan can venture into Yume-dō through a specialized ritual they developed over centuries. In Yume-dō, they communicate with the denizens of that realm and catch glimpses of what may be. The Moth are revered for their techniques of passing beyond the veil into dream, but they are not the only humans capable of this act. The allies of the Mantis known as the Bat Clan, who live in the Islands of Spice and Silk, can also commune with Yume-dō.

It is not always immediately obvious when an individual crosses from one realm to another. Sometimes the world fades out or seems to flicker, like a candle struggling in the wind. Sometimes it is more subtle: colors grow more vibrant or dull, or time holds still in one area while it speeds up in another. In other instances, the world doesn't seem to change at all; instead, the change is within the traveler, influencing their emotions or perceptions.

PRAYING TO THE FORTUNES

Rokugani pray to the Fortunes for aid in their daily lives, but this is not always so simple as picking the Fortune most related to the task or circumstance in question. The influences of many Fortunes overlap, and many different Fortunes might offer useful but different help for the same situation. The shugenja's job is to assist samurai in approaching the divine, and to offer advice regarding the Fortune to whom they should direct their prayers.

When a character decides to turn to the Fortunes for aid, an excellent roleplaying opportunity presents itself. A character can disclose much about themself, their priorities, their worldview, and what they consider important to their life simply through which Fortune they beseech for aid.

For example, to whom does one pray for good fortune in marriage? Many would immediately answer, "Benten, the Fortune of Arts and Romantic Love." Then again, passionate love in marriage is considered unlucky to most Rokugani, for it is volatile and distracting from one's duty. Passion makes a warrior hesitate when their time has come, makes the loss of a loved one sting all the worse. The wise instead pray to Hotei, the Fortune of Contentment, because it is better to be content in marriage than to be in passionate love.

One should also consider what they want from the marriage. If they wish to have many heirs, then it is Kisshōten, the Fortune of Fertility, who should receive their prayers. Some samurai may pray to Bishamon for the strength and fortitude to see their bitter betrothal

KISSHŌTEN, THE EIGHTH GREAT FORTUNE

Even Great Fortunes are not eternal, and these beings can rise and fall in prominence like any other. Over the last several centuries, more and more references to Kisshōten, Fortune of Happiness and Fertility, have crept into Fortunist texts, and scholars of religion have noted this shift. While references to Kisshōten can be found in ancient texts maintained by the Isawa family, worship of this Fortune clearly waned for many years, to the point that at one point, most texts cited only seven Great Fortunes. But interest in Kisshōten has returned with fervor, and many Fortunists once again revere this being.

The Dragon especially have been swift to embrace the Fortune of Fertility. As their birthrate has declined, they have been seeking heavenly intervention to restore their numbers. By championing Kisshōten, they hope to win her favor. The Minor Clans have also endorsed the "new" Fortune, especially the Hare Clan, who also seek to expand their population.

The resurgence of Kisshōten has not been without controversy. The Lion fiercely oppose the interpretation that names Kisshōten a Great Fortune, arguing that happiness is inconsequential to the duty of samurai and citing the Fortune's overlap with Hotei and Benten. The Scorpion likewise disagree with making Kisshōten a Great Fortune, subtly suggesting it is a power grab by the Dragon and Phoenix. Numerologists refute the concept of an eighth Great Fortune, and many temples dedicated to the Seven are reluctant to expand, lest they lose the favor they have garnered over centuries. The Seppun and the Masters of the Four Temples are content to allow the theological debate to continue for the time being, as it has increased public interest in the Fortunes.

through, or to Fukurokujin in the hope that their *nakōdo* matchmaker will be wise when arranging the match, or even to Daikoku for an increase in wealth and prosperity for the pairing. Matchmakers of the Deer Clan, the Crane Clan, and the Phoenix Clan may consult the Fortune of Bonds, Musubi, to help ensure the matches they arrange are harmonious.

On the eve before a samurai must lead others into battle, which Fortune does the samurai ask for aid? The obvious answers are Hachiman, the Fortune of Battle, or Bishamon, the Fortune of Strength. But perhaps the samurai asks Fukurokujin to ensure their strategy is wiser than their opponent's. Or perhaps the battle will be near a shrine to Inari, so the samurai asks Inari for aid in protecting what the Fortune finds sacred.

Any Fortune might be approached in matters like these and others. The Fortune one chooses can reveal what they want from an upcoming event, what they value in accomplishing a task, and even how they see the world.

Popular Lesser Fortunes

In addition to the Eight Great Fortunes (or seven, for those who exclude Kisshōten), nearly ten thousand other Fortunes are worshipped throughout Rokugan. Although they do not enjoy the same clout and widespread worship as the Great Fortunes, the Lesser Fortunes are still powerful entities with significant spheres of influence. In Shinseist tradition, each is a paragon of their aspect. According to Fortunist belief, they embody natural laws and cosmic workings. The Emperor has the power to promote a deceased mortal to a Fortune simply by declaring them one; Fortunists regard it as the Emperor's divine right to raise others to godhood, while Shinseists believe that an earnest and righteous mortal's wisdom and deeds elevate them, and the Emperor merely identifies a soul that has accomplished this degree of liberation.

Following is information on a few of the Lesser Fortunes revered by Rokugani.

Inari, Fortune of Rice

A fox deity with both female and male aspects, Inari is associated with good harvests and plentiful crops and is therefore very popular with farmers and peasants. It is common practice to thank Inari before eating and to leave them offerings after every harvest. Wild foxes are thought to be Inari's messengers, so Rokugani tend to treat them kindly.

Jotei, Fortune of Morning Dew

A relatively obscure fortune, Jotei is the protector of foolish heroes. When a person succeeds in spite of themself or receives an unexpected stroke of good luck, they should whisper a prayer of gratitude to Jotei and her infinite compassion (or perhaps amusement).

Osano-wo, Fortune of Fire and Thunder

Osano-wo is the second son of the Kami Hida, and his mother, Heikima, was a priest of the Thunder Dragon. Elevated by the second Hantei Emperor, Osano-wo is worshipped by those who wish relief from natural disasters.

Suijin, Fortune of the Sea

Depicted as an old man with wild hair and a long beard, Suijin is notoriously fickle and tempestuous. Fishers offer rice as they set sail to appease him for trespassing on his domain. When angered, Suijin summons storms and terrible waves, but renewed life always follows his tantrums.

Tenjin, Fortune of Stories and Secrets

An Akodo poet in life, Tenjin was executed for offending the Emperor, then posthumously elevated as a Fortune when his ghost haunted the capital. Tenjin is worshipped by poets, authors, and scribes for aid in their craft, and by spies for access to secrets.



THE FORTUNES IN ROKUGAN

In Rokugan, Great Clans, Minor Clans, and other organizations revere the various Fortunes to different extents. Some groups even conflate certain Fortunes or substitute one for another. The Crab and the Mantis conflate Bishamon and Osano-wo, for instance, and a large portion of the Lion Clan consider Tenjin, rather than Kisshōten, to be the eighth Great Fortune.

Above: Tengoku, the Celestial Heavens

The most sacred and lofty of the Celestial Realms, Tengoku, set high above Ningen-dō, is a difficult place for mortals to reach. It is rumored that a being can enter the Celestial Heavens by scaling the highest of Rokugan's mountain peaks, Kaminariyama, the Mountain of the Seven Thunders. Scholars surmise that Tengoku most frequently overlaps with Ningen-dō at the tops of mountains and where the most sacred shrines of the Empire rest. Even so, trying to enter the heavenly realm through such a shrine is folly; these shrines are closely guarded to prevent just any mortal from entering the golden clouds. Though this is one of the most common theories, some religious intellectuals adamantly argue that there is a secret shrine in Otosan Uchi's innermost district, the Forbidden City, that is a doorway to the Heavenly Palace's gates. The Imperial families shake their heads when they hear such ludicrous things.

THE BEAUTY OF TENGOKU

Tengoku's heavenly provinces stretch across the width of rolling clouds and floating celestial bodies, their massive pagodas rising before the backdrop of the infinite cosmos. Palaces rest on cloud foundations and float like sky-bound islands. Starry bridges connect the untethered places of Tengoku, as do shrines of gold and jade, which serve to receive the offerings left by mortals of Ningen-dō.

If mortal eyes ever beheld the provinces of Tengoku, they would surely marvel at the similarities between their palatial features and those of Rokugan, but the likeness is not accidental. The Kami who founded the Great Clans and the Empire were raised in the Celestial Heavens, and they remembered much after their fall into the Mortal Realm. Much of Rokugan's distinguishing architecture and art was inspired by the vivid recollections of the Kami, and the Imperial Palace itself was designed to mirror the palaces of Tengoku. Even so, it is believed these structures are a pale shadow of the Heavens' splendor.

The Plains of the High Heavens

The vast provinces of Tengoku are made up of the golden clouds. Only beings with the sanction of Lady Sun or Lord Moon may set foot here; anyone else passes through and has a long way to fall. These clouds serve as Tengoku's fields: all manner of grains and fruits spring from them without need for labor.

Beyond these are the Celestial Skies, an ocean of darkness dotted with countless stars. From Ningen-dō, Tengoku's features appear as constellations. The constellations' movement and the birth of new constellations signals the corresponding movement of heavenly provinces and the creation of new ones.

The Shrines of Tengoku

Dotted among the Plains of the High Heavens are a handful of golden shrines. These shrines receive offerings from below, carried up from Ningen-dō by visiting spirits. Many Rokugani believe that all sacred shrines share some of their space with the blessed shrines of Tengoku, and that when a person stands before a shrine's *shintai*, where the shrine's spirit makes its earthly home, at least a part of them is in Tengoku itself.

The Heavenly Palace of Eternal Life

Among Tengoku's dwellings, the grandest is the Heavenly Palace, the home of the Great Fortunes and the other beings who make up the Celestial Court. Some believe that the Forbidden City in Otosan Uchi was designed to mirror the Heavenly Palace, but the poetry of Doji and Hantei describe an estate beyond mere words, sitting at the apex of creation with clouds as its foundation, its jade spires rising brightly above a veil of heavenly clouds in perfect, harmonious symmetry. It is in this palace that the Kami were born, Lady Sun and Lord Moon dwell, and the Fortunes convene to determine the fate of the other realms.

The Garden of Infinite Lotuses

Floating in a starry eddy is an ethereal pond containing ten thousand lotus blossoms, pale and glowing with celestial light. Rokugani religious scholars tend to believe that each lotus corresponds to a mortal life, appearing as a mere bud when the life is new, slowly blooming as the mortal soul advances toward Enlightenment, and finally dimming when the life ends. Among these blossoms, a handful cast their light eternally and as fierce as lanterns; these correspond to the souls of *sennin*, mortals who have achieved ultimate liberation through Enlightenment, yet have chosen to shackle themselves to endless reincarnations rather

than accept their divine reward, so that they may guide others to Enlightenment throughout their countless lives.

The Elemental River

Higher than the Heavenly Palace are the dwellings of the Elemental Dragons, visible to the realms below only when the skies are in perfect alignment, appearing as a wavering band of colors cascading across the stars. This is the aspect of Tengoku about which sages know the least, for the Elemental River is mentioned only in passing in apocryphal texts. Many scholars believe that the Elemental Dragons modify their dwellings as they see fit, carving them from the elements into whatever forms suit their fancy. Others argue that these dwellings of light and color are homes only to lesser dragon servants, known as *ryujin*, as the Elemental Dragons themselves have no need for dwellings at all.

Beneath the Elemental River are the divine machineries that control the weather of Ningen-dō. These wheels of celestial influence were created by Lord Moon and Lady Sun to maintain the world they helped create. They are what change the seasons, send the rains, and mete out natural disasters, which relieve the pressure the wheels build up. The machineries of the cosmos are operated and maintained by the Elemental Dragons. Without the divine machines, such phenomena would follow no pattern or law, like a loose wheel cast from a wagon; life in Ningen-dō would be at the whim of random forces, and thus virtually impossible.





YOMI: THE REALM OF BLESSED ANCESTORS

Although Yomi is often referred to as its own realm, it is subject to Tengoku's jurisdiction and is considered part of that realm. Yomi is a paradise for mortal ancestors who have achieved their destiny—their dharma. It encompasses countless celestial manors and estates, each suiting the whims of those who dwell within it. From Yomi, ancestral spirits can oversee their descendants in Ningen-dō, influence matters in the Mortal Realm by visiting, or enjoy an eternity of whatever suits their fancy.

Many priests believe that Yomi is a world much like Ningen-dō, filled with things that are familiar to the spirits of those who once lived. Unlike Ningen-dō, however, it is a world without pain or suffering. The greatest estates of Yomi belong to the legendary heroes of Rokugan's past, among them the Seven Thunders, the founders of the greatest samurai families, and those heroes who shaped the Empire for the better. At Yomi's center is the Golden Palace, where the Emperors of past ages dwell and look upon their descendants.

Tradition says only samurai are sufficiently advanced in the Celestial Order to have the potential to reach Yomi after death. Peasants are destined for Meido, and they may reincarnate after their karma is judged. To reach Yomi, a mortal soul must fulfill their dharma and prove their soul worthy of recognition and remembrance, but they often must live many lives before they are reborn as samurai and are given that opportunity. Sentient animals are more likely to end up in Senkyō again, but they may reincarnate as a higher form if they lived nobly, perhaps even eventually ascending to the rank of samurai and being blessed with a place in Yomi.

While most Rokugani consider Yomi to be the ultimate destination of a samurai who has lived a worthy life, Shinseists believe it is merely yet another temporary existence for a mortal soul. Many of the practitioners of Shinseism believe that a soul of Yomi, even though they are blessed, for one reason or another eventually reincarnates yet again as a mortal in Ningen-dō. The only true liberation from the endless cycle of death and rebirth is complete comprehension through Enlightenment, they hold. Even so, the Tao teaches that it is possible for a person to prolong their ancestor's time in Yomi. In the ancestor's name, the descendant can further the good the ancestor achieved during their lifetime and thus increase their ancestor's good karma even after their death.

HEAVENLY HIERARCHY

Like Rokugan, which mirrors it, Tengoku follows the Celestial Order, honoring a strict hierarchy of beings. At the top are Lady Sun and Lord Moon, who rule not only Tengoku, but all of creation. Beneath them are the Elemental Dragons, the masters of the very machinery of the cosmos. Following the Elemental Dragons are the Fortunes: first the Greater Fortunes, then the Lesser Fortunes.

Beneath or beside the Fortunes are the spirits who are permitted to join the others in Tengoku or Yomi. Some Rokugani believe the Little Teacher, Shinsei himself, now ranks among those in Tengoku, although most Shinseists insist this is not true, as Shinsei was Enlightened and thus transcended even the Celestial Heavens.

Scholars debate where the Kami and their direct descendants rank in this celestial hierarchy. Many put them just beneath Lady Sun and Lord Moon, at the same rank as the Elemental Dragons. Others reserve this position for Hantei himself and his son, Hantei Genji, "the Shining Prince." These scholars reason that the other Kami are equivalent to the greatest clan ancestors and thus rank beside the Lesser Fortunes. Still others contest that the Kami are not in the hierarchy at all, for they would not be welcome in the home from which their father threw them out, and thus must instead dwell in Yomi. While most Rokugani consider this position blasphemous, others see it as an example of what they sacrificed to cultivate Rokugan.

Beneath the Lesser Fortunes is a pyramid of lesser spirits and servants. These are shinzoku, mortal souls whose purpose is to facilitate the bureaucracy that is the Celestial Court and to carry out the wishes of their masters. Many beings consider this the highest honor a mortal soul can possibly achieve, even greater than eternal paradise in blessed Yomi.

DENIZENS OF TENGOKU

Tengoku is the home of the beings who are the most venerated in Rokugan and, according to myth, are the universe's very architects. Most of the Fortunes dwell there, as do many of the Kami. Countless spirits, from blessed ancestor shiryō to servants such as shinzoku and sorei, fill Tengoku's endless boroughs. Yet Tengoku is never crowded, and its large population causes no strife. With new dwellings appearing and expanding at the whim of its inhabitants, Tengoku is as large (or as small) as it needs to be.

The foremost inhabitants of Tengoku are also its rulers. Amaterasu—Lady Sun, compassionate and wise—is the matriarch of the Heavens and the source of all life. Her husband, Onnotangu—Lord Moon—is distant, cold, and powerful. Together they created humanity, a mixture of Amaterasu's tears and Onnotangu's blood. They named the world and gave it form, gave life to the Fortunes, and set all of history into motion.

Amaterasu, Lady Sun

Amaterasu is the most beloved of Tengoku's denizens. Ancient folklore describes her as wise, benevolent, and infinitely compassionate. As a deity of life and order, she is the one who feeds the crops and gives light to the world. Shrines to Amaterasu are spread throughout the Empire, and her name is invoked at every festival, regardless of season or occasion. As the embodiment

ADVENTURE SEED: BEFORE THE GATES OF HEAVEN

一 **Hook** The PCs are visited by a ghostly spirit, who beseeches them for help. Research reveals the ghost to be an ancestor of one of the PCs. A great warrior of their time, the ghost is remembered for their virtue and many great deeds. Over time, the PCs learn that the ghost was murdered unjustly by a fickle warrior. The ghost cannot identify their killer but knows that they dwell at the top of Mount Sogen, one of many peaks in the Seikitsu, or Spine of the World, Mountains. The spirit cannot enter paradise in Yomi until they are avenged.

二 **Rising Action** The climb up Mount Sogen is an arduous trial, but the ghost assists the PCs along the way. As they climb, they pass many abandoned shrines and *torii* arches, hinting that the mountain was once a sacred place. The ghost seems to remember more about their death as time passes, and becomes increasingly lifelike as they reach the summit.

三 **Climax** At the peak, the ghost finally remembers the full circumstances of their death, and calls out to their murderer: the Fortune Osano-wo! The ghost believes the Fortune is to blame for their unjust death and cannot rest until Osano-wo has paid. Osano-wo suddenly appears before the PCs in the form of a terrifying warrior, and the ghost draws their blade. If the PCs side with the Fortune, the ghost loses, and they haunt the PCs for the rest of the ghost's days. If the PCs fight Osano-wo, the Fortune handily defeats them, but he respects their conviction and bravery and spares their lives, even as he takes the ancestral ghost to the courts of Meido to decide the ghost's fate.

DRAGON POTS

During the rainy season, farmers of the fertile Osari Plains leave pots and open barrels outside their homes to collect rain. These vessels are colloquially called "dragon pots." According to tradition, the farmers must use a portion of this rainwater to make clay dragon statuettes in honor of the Elemental Dragons who brought the rain. This helps them ensure that the Elemental Dragons' favor remains with them, so that they may enjoy the harvests that follow.

of the sun, Amaterasu appears on the horizon every day, crossing the sky until she reaches the opposite horizon, yielding the sky to nightfall. It is believed that the songs of her blessed chosen, the Moshi family, are what awaken her each morning, and that she follows the Moshi's voices as they sing at the shore of Bay of the Golden Sun.

In Tengoku, Amaterasu resides within the Heavenly Palace, where she counterbalances the word of her husband, Lord Moon. Ancient texts claim that she is the principle advocate for humanity in the Celestial Court, along with her children, the Kami. She is served by a flock of shinzoku, who carry her fire. The greatest of her heavenly servants is thought to be Moshi Azami (formerly Isawa Moshi), the founder of the Centipede Clan, who was elevated to the position of a Fortune after death and rewarded with a place by Lady Sun's side.

Most Fortunes have multiple aspects, and Amaterasu is no exception. Although she is known for her kindness and sagacity, she is also a fierce warrior and one of the most powerful of Rokugan's deities. She is not noted for her temper, but when stirred, her anger is the choking drought of an endless summer, or the sundering blast of a once-dormant volcano. Her domain is purifying fire and the resilience of stone. Those who invoke her blessing are gifted with the very flames of the sun, capable of burning even diamonds into ash.

The first Emperor of Rokugan and the other Kami are Amaterasu's children; therefore, her bloodline is the one that is most important to Rokugan. To this day, the Emperor is called the Son (or Daughter, or Heir) of Heaven to honor this lineage. The Emperor is humanity's connection to divinity; all Emperors must be able to trace their bloodline to Lady Sun. If this were ever not so, it is not certain if Amaterasu would continue to shine her benevolent light upon the Empire.

Onnotangu, Lord Moon

Not much is known about Amaterasu's husband, Lord Moon, beyond his role in the world's creation, the fall of the Kami, and his growing volatility. Yet most theologians agree that Onnotangu is still a part of the Celestial Court, taking his place in the Heavenly Palace in Tengoku. Folklore is hesitant to mention him, lest his legendary ire be drawn, but Lord Moon is said to be powerful, jealous, and easily angered. Unlike Amaterasu's, his is a cold anger, the bitter frost that robs warmth from growing crops and the relentless snow that strangles life from Rokugan's valleys and plains. His domain is the night, the dark ocean depths, and things unseen until they are named.

Most stories of ancient times depict Lord Moon in a more generous and kinder light. This is not just to appease the moon god, but because ancient lore claims he was once far more benevolent. It wasn't until the birth of the Kami that Lord Moon grew cold and cruel. Some tales attribute this to his jealousy at having to share Lady Sun's love with his children. Others say he became delusional, and that his volatility continues to this day.

Onnotangu's prophets say that in court, their lord is thought to speak rarely and care little for the strife that threatens Meido and the other realms. Some texts suggest he regrets his role in the creation of Ningen-dō, and that he secretly wishes that creation would be unmade.

More on Lord Moon and his followers can be found in **The Cults of Lord Moon** on page 44.

The Elemental Dragons

Dragons have long been a fixture in Rokugani folklore and myth, but scant information on them is definitive, save that they can be seen crossing the night sky, weaving paths all their own. What little is known is thanks to the tireless efforts of the Isawa family's astrologers, who have studied the Elemental Dragons since before the dawn of the Empire. The tribe of Isawa understood the Elemental Dragons to be personifications of natural forces, composed not only of the five elements, but also of the philosophical concepts the elements represent. For instance, the Fire Dragon encompasses not only the literal element of Fire, but also passion, creativity, and intellect, while the Water Dragon embodies adaptiveness, strength, and keen perception in addition to the literal element of Water. Those who worship the Elemental Dragons seek to emulate the virtues they embody, even at the cost of all others.

The largest shrine to the Elemental Dragons is in Phoenix lands, and the library within it is the largest repository of knowledge on these ancient beings. According to these texts, there are at least six immortal dragons: the five Elemental Dragons, and the Thunder Dragon. Supporting them are the ryujin, servants of the dragons who are often mistaken for them.

The Elemental Dragons are immortal beings of immense power. They can take any shape and appear anywhere they wish, although the Elemental Dragons have not appeared before mortals in centuries. Most folklore identifies the Elemental Dragons as the guardians of Tengoku. Fortunist tradition says they were once the guardians of Ningen-dō, but when Tengoku was raised into the sky, they were forced to leave Ningen-dō behind. In Shinseist tradition, the Elemental Dragons are "keepers of Enlightenment." Dragons rarely involve themselves in mortal affairs, dedicated as they are to maintaining the balance of the cosmos and protecting the Celestial Heavens.

Ryujin

These shapeshifting servants of the Elemental Dragons appear as splendid flying serpents, each corresponding to the element of their master in their appearance and abilities. Ryujin often serve as dragons' messengers, or occasionally as champions of beings with a dragon's favor.

The Kitsu

Before the fall of the Kami, there dwelled in Ningen-dō a noble warrior pride of yōkai known as the kitsu. These feline beings resembled a cross between human beings and lions, with thick manes and golden eyes. They were noble and intelligent, dwelling in lands that would one day belong to the Lion Clan. But the Kami Akodo did not recognize their honor. He led a war against them, and before realizing his mistake, he'd nearly wiped them out. Regretful, Akodo made peace with the survivors, offering them a place in his clan as atonement. Most of these last kitsu used their shapeshifting abilities to take on human form and married into the clan. It is from those unions that the Kitsu family is descended.

The lion-like kitsu are not thought to walk the Mortal Realm any longer, but that does not mean they are entirely gone. Most now dwell in Yomi, for Akodo pleaded with his mother on their behalf, and Lady Sun offered them a place of honor as the guardians of the Realm of Blessed Ancestors against any threats the Fortunes could not foresee. And sometimes, this responsibility brings kitsu of old back to the Mortal Realm for a time.

Some shugenja with kitsu lineage can call their ancestors down from Yomi, becoming possessed by a kitsu spirit for a time. Sometimes, these spirits manifest so powerfully that the shugenja becomes a kitsu in body as well, and a feline shapeshifter of the ancient days once again walks Ningen-dō, if only for a few moments. The Kitsu family regard this as a divine reward for devotion, and their chance to atone, at least a little bit, for Akodo's aggression of old.

Sōdan-senzo

Owing to their special lineage, members of the Lion Clan's Kitsu family possess some unique abilities: to purposefully enter the Celestial Realms while alive and to speak with spirits and ancestors. Tradition dictates that only those who can trace their bloodline to the kitsu people can claim such an ability, and even then, only those who have mastered the ways of the Kitsu Medium School can manage it safely. To enter Yomi or Meido, the sōdan-senzo dons a special mask they prepared for the occasion; they must hide their face, lest they upset the denizens of the realms they enter or be followed out by something that should remain behind. The sōdan-senzo prepares and quaffs a special brew, then enters a trance, allowing their spirit to rise from their body and pass through the sacred shared space of the Spirit Realms. Most sōdan-senzo use this technique to enter Yomi, where they converse with ancestors for guidance and advice. But they can also enter Meido, seeking audience with the spirits there or, infrequently, with Emma-Ō himself. Requesting an audience with Emma-Ō is rare, for he has little time to speak with mortals, and the last thing a being desires from an overworked, annoyed Fortune of Death is his complete, undivided attention.

THE CELESTIAL COURT

Each Spirit Realm serves a purpose in the Celestial Order. Tengoku's purpose is to administrate the other realms and facilitate the moral advancement of mortals. The governing body that oversees this process is the Celestial Court.

The Celestial Court is known to humankind from the recorded recollections of the fallen Kami, especially the testimonies of Doji, Hantei, and Bayushi. In fact, the Empire's entire court is modeled on the Celestial Court, so that the ways of Rokugan might better reflect the ways of Heaven. The Celestial Court is convened by the Great Fortunes and attended by any of the myriad denizens of Tengoku. Lady Sun and Lord Moon oversee its proceedings, which pertain to issues facing all of the realms. The Fortunes and other spirits who are present debate the issues until eventually they settle on a of action. The most frequent subjects of these debates include the existential threat posed by Jigoku, the increasing population of Meido, and evil oni's infiltration of the realms of Gaki-dō and Tōshigoku. Time behaves differently in the Spirit Realms, so these courtroom debates may last for decades.

Like the Mortal Realm, the Celestial Court is maintained by a bureaucracy, but its administrators are spirits and Lesser Fortunes. The Great Fortunes act as judges in the debates, rarely getting more directly involved, while others act as advocates for various sides. Only occasionally do these debates break into arguments or serious conflicts. Still, Fortunes are emotional beings just as humans are. Some are rivals, and blessed ancestors caught up in debate may recall grudges they once

REINCARNATION

Reincarnation is a complicated topic, because information on how it works depends on who is being asked. Although, generally speaking, an animal spirit of Chikushō-dō might say that animal spirits and yōkai rank below humans in the celestial hierarchy, the reality might be more interwoven. Whether a Great Tengu is actually equivalent to a human peasant might be a significant point of contention in one of the courts of the Realm of Animals.

WHAT IS A YŌKAI?

Throughout Rokugan, supernatural creatures known as yōkai exist. To most Rokugani, these beings are nothing but terrifying monsters and dangerous tricksters. Yōkai, however, are simply beings that are not understood by humans. By this definition, everything from the lion-like kitsu to a mischievous fox-spirit could be classified as a yōkai. There is great philosophical and theological debate on the topic, with some fringe scholars arguing that the definition is too broad, and could include mundane animals that someone hasn't seen before or even the elemental kami themselves. These ideas, and others like it, are ever-evolving and the discourse remains a heated topic.

For a source of inspiration, *The Book of Yokai* by Michael Dylan Foster is an excellent resource.

held in life. When conflict does erupt, it is often felt throughout the realms, reflected in strange omens and the violent behavior of celestial bodies. For the most part, Tengoku is united in its purpose of maintaining the celestial harmony.

Carrying out the will of the court is often delegated to the Fortune or spirit who best befits the task. For instance, executing a ruling that a specific samurai family of mortals must receive an omen might be entrusted to that family's founding ancestor, who will ensure the task is carried out. If the Celestial Court decides that a great flood is required to replenish the lands for a bountiful harvest, inducing the flood might be entrusted to Suijin, the Fortune of the Sea, or Osano-wo, the Fortune not only of fire and thunder, but also of storms.

Although the Celestial Court is the ultimate authority in Tengoku, it is not the only court of the Fortunes. Many Fortunes convene their own courts for their own purposes. Emma-Ō, the Fortune of Death, convenes court to determine the destination of the recently deceased, and Hachiman, the Fortune of Battle, oversees a court to decide which side he will favor in upcoming conflicts.

Beside: Senkyō

One might translate the word "Senkyō" as "enchanted country" or "immortal country." The Rokugani character for Senkyō also denotes both the concept of a capricious magical being who lives in an otherworldly wilderness and the concept of a human (usually a hermit-sage) who has achieved immortality by alchemical or divine means. Many of the Celestial Realms exist above or below Ningen-dō, but Chikushō-dō, Sakkaku, and Yume-dō overlap and exist within, beside, and intertwined with the Realm of Mortals. As long as untouched wilderness regions surround Rokugan's settlements, Chikushō-dō and Sakkaku will remain connected to the Emerald Empire, their constant conflict and flux making any interaction between a human and an animal spirit unpredictable. As long as Rokugani must sleep, there will be Yume-dō, the realm of what could be.



THE FIRST COURT

The legend of Chikushō-dō, the Realm of Animals, circulates among the peasantry, particularly peasants who dwell near forests, and it even makes its way to some of Rokugan's nobility, like the Fox Clan. One version of the tale goes as follows:

Long ago, all animals, including humans, were equal. Each species had its own society, religion, culture, and stories. Each one believed a different truth about where they all came from. All of these accounts were equally false and true, for truth—as Chikushō-dō and Sakkaku know better than anyone—is created, not immutable.

Periodically, the animals convened to discuss important matters. Every meeting included a vote on whose reality should supersede the others, so that all the animals and humans could agree on a single worldview. Each time, each species voted for its own reality, and that was that. Then, one day, the humans approached their closest allies—the dogs—with a proposition. "Vote for our reality instead of yours," they said. "We'll win, and our ideas will rule over those of all other animals. Later, when we're in power, we'll reward you for your generosity." The dogs assented, believing the humans to be true friends. And so, at the next meeting, humans and dogs voted together, and the humans' way of seeing the world prevailed. From this arose Rokugan's history and the system that exalts humans and their gods above all others: the Celestial Order.

CONTENT WARNING: ANIMAL HARM

Play in and around Sakkaku and Chikushō-dō treats animals and animal spirits similarly to humans, which means they may suffer violence or hardship at PCs' or NPCs' hands. Before involving Chikushō-dō and Sakkaku in your narrative, check with your players to confirm what kind of trouble involving animals they're okay with in the game.

Home of Animal Spirits

While some of the animal spirits fend for themselves, most of them belong to the court of Sakkaku or Chikushō-dō. Individual animal spirits' viewpoints are as diverse and unpredictable as they themselves are, but two broad philosophies about how to deal with human expansion have each informed a political structure. Most wild animals and animal spirits belong to one or the other of these philosophies and its corresponding court, though these two larger courts each encompass an enormous number of smaller ones that are constantly at odds with one another even within their same overarching philosophy. Most Rokugani hear of at least the two high-level courts in the folktales and fairy tales their parents tell them when they are children. Some of those folktales describe helpful animals who reward kind and considerate humans with loyalty and succor; these are the spirits of Chikushō-dō, who prepare for their eventual rebirth as humans by assisting current humans. Other stories tell of mischievous or malicious tricksters who turn humans' folly against them; these are the spirits of Sakkaku, dedicated opponents of humanity's attempt to dominate the natural world.

As part of their struggles to assert their own approaches to interacting with humanity, each of these two philosophies has established many individual courts in the wilderness. Each court has a leader, a council of elders or nobles, and many commoners who are expected to do the bidding of the leader and elders, who in turn take care of them. Each court claims as its territory a range of the wilderness, sometimes disputing the opposing court's claim to certain areas and resources.

Humans who wander into the animal spirits' wilderness may find themselves in the domains of Sakkaku or Chikushō-dō—or both, or neither, so fluid and porous are the borders between these places and Ningen-dō. The difference between the three may feel arbitrary, one more rooted in philosophy or spiritual politics than geography. Travelers are urged not to let such fine distinctions distract them; the differences are unlikely to matter much while the travelers attempt to negotiate the challenges of dealing with animal spirits!

COURT ORGANIZATION

No firm and fixed organizational principle applies to every court in all of the world of animals and animal spirits, but certain features are present in more courts than not. One is the leading position of Great Tengu. A Great Tengu is a spiritual and philosophical leader who is the highest authority of one of the individual courts that make up Sakkaku and Chikushō-dō, though this leader is not necessarily a tengu (one of the Five Ancient Races that ruled before long before the Kami fell). This individual's authority derives from moral and philosophical aptitude rather than physical power or charisma, although many Great Tengu do possess considerable physical and social skills. In Sakkaku, the animal spirits who have lived the longest and cultivated their animal nature most perfectly become Great Tengu. In Chikushō-dō, animal spirits who most closely resemble humans become Great Tengu, postponing their reincarnation as full humans in order to instruct others. Some Great Tengu even adopt disguises to pursue ordination as Shinseist priests, although those in Sakkaku generally do so as part of some elaborate ruse or comment on human hypocrisy.

In each of the myriad courts, a council of elders—styled as senior monks, noble courtiers, generals, or some combination of these, based on the pretensions or convictions of the individual court—generally answers to the court's Great Tengu. The elders are each responsible for a different area of operation: one is dedicated to defense; one to diplomacy with (or operations against) humans; one to ensuring food and shelter for the weak or injured; and one to relations with other courts, friendly and otherwise.

The overall structure of most animal spirit courts resembles, more than anything, an extended family or clan structure. A Great Tengu is less like a clan champion, however, and more like a respected grandparent.

A HUMAN DISTINCTION

In Rokugan, the difference between a yōkai and an animal spirit is primarily a human distinction, and not one that is widely agreed upon. Some beings, like the kitsu and kitsune, are generally held to be both.

ANIMALS AND ANIMAL SPIRITS

Some scholars believe that reincarnation may not be necessary for an animal to become an animal spirit, with some of these philosophers and researchers citing instances where creatures that live long enough step over the arbitrary line between the two .

Sakkaku

A Great Tengu of Sakkaku, if asked about their court's philosophy, would say that humans, alone among animals, have rebelled against the duty of all creatures to see one another as equals. Humans exalt themselves above others by virtue of the advantages granted to them by their bodies and minds, and they reshape the world around them into something it was not before. The Celestial Order aids and abets them in this pursuit, presenting human life as a reward for a good animal life, and it punishes humans little for their dominance over and cruelty toward animals and the wilderness. Sakkaku's beings take redressing these wrongs into their own claws.

The trouble is that even if they all were to unite, animals and animal spirits would still not be able to fight back effectively against humans' fire and steel. Some can use tools, but not all can. Their best chance to unmake human society is to capitalize on the fact that the greatest danger posed to humans comes from other humans. Accordingly, Sakkaku's goal is to convince humans to destroy one another.

A being who belongs to Sakkaku typically obeys the following principles:

- **Guard the natural world against human incursion.** Would nature not be better off without humans' violence and pollution? Terrorizing loggers, damaging wells, and sometimes (and controversially even in Sakkaku) preying upon livestock or even humans are all acts that win recognition from members of Sakkaku.
- **Take pride in what you are and the life you have.** The animals and animal spirits of Sakkaku focus on their strength, quality of life, and service to the natural world in this life. They live in the moment, supporting the well-being of the natural world around them instead of sacrificing their existence to an imagined future premised on humans' unjust worldviews.
- **Plot civilization's downfall, especially through trickery.** For practical reasons, Sakkaku's favorite targets are humans with expansionist goals—hence the partly true idea in fairy tales that tricksters prey on the ambitious. Sakkaku's members collaborate to infiltrate the lives of the most dangerous humans, winning their trust, finding their weaknesses, and plotting their downfall. This process can take years, decades, or sometimes even multiple generations.

Chikushō-dō

The animals and animal spirits of Chikushō-dō interpret the Celestial Order as stating that virtue has its own rewards: the virtuous die and are reborn anew in a better form, while the wicked or mediocre fall lower or maintain their lowly status. Most animals and animal spirits of Chikushō-dō conceptualize the Celestial Order as follows: demons ascend to become animals, animals ascend to become yōkai (supernatural beings) or animal spirits (like tengu, kitsu, kitsune, and so forth), yōkai and animal spirits ascend to become humans, and humans ascend to become spirits or Fortunes. An animal's life is nasty, brutish, and short, full of violence and predation, struggle and loss. A human's life may be so as well, but it offers more opportunity for advancement. To follow the philosophy of Chikushō-dō, an animal or animal spirit must look beyond the world of the present and their difficult life. They must look to a future that might be better, practicing for that time, delaying gratification, and learning from the more virtuous humans so that they may one day become humans themselves.

An animal or animal spirit who belongs to Chikushō-dō typically obeys the following principles:

- **Spend your life training for your eventual rebirth as a human.** Folktales of animals who take an uncommon interest in the human world are a predictable effect of this rule. Chikushō-dō's animal spirits generally see their current body as a stopping point on their journey toward humanity.
- **Find the good in humans.** Humans walk a path toward virtue and improvement as well, but they need coaching, companionship, and encouragement to get there. For some reason, they're often more inclined to listen to the advice of talking animals than to their own kind.

- **Hunt down and destroy Jigoku's corruption.** The greatest threat to the natural world hails from below, not beside. Chikushō-dō's animal spirits cultivate their senses so that they can serve as an early warning system and the first line of defense against the evil below.

YUME-DŌ

All humans dream, from the Emperor themself to the most disenfranchised beggar. But so, too, do gods, animals, most yōkai, and demons. The things that flash past their minds' eyes in sleep do not remain only within. Their minds are passages to a shared space where all the things of which they dream are true—especially if they dream them together. Beings from all walks of life consort with each other as they wander through this shared imagined space, which has grown steadily for as long as anyone has ever dreamed. This is Yume-dō.

Lucid Dreams

Within Yume-dō, there are dreams and there are dreamers. Dreamers fall into three categories, as listed here.

- Ordinary dreamers are thinking beings undergoing the normal process of sleep and dreaming. Dreamers of this type rarely experience any kind of conscious control over their dreams and are more often than not simply observers or helpless participants in the machinations of their unwaking mind.
- Lucid dreamers, or oneironauts, are dreamers who understand they occupy a dreamworld and can take actions as if they were awake. Lucid dreaming can be a natural talent or, in some cases, can be taught by those who understand how it works. The members of the Moth Clan known as Dreamweavers and the Dreamers of the nezumi are some of the most accomplished lucid dreamers, though a small number of other beings can also lucid dream to a greater or lesser extent.
- Lastly, those who train particularly long and hard can become a more advanced type of oneironaut, sometimes called a dreamwalker. These include the senior Dreamers of the nezumi and the Moth Clan's Kaikoga family. These skilled sages not only are capable of controlling their own actions in their dreams, but they can also will things into being in dreams and even enter other beings' dreams.

Ma'ai

Crucial to understanding the individual's place in the dreamworld is the concept of *ma'ai*, which could be translated as "space" or "range." A dreamer's ma'ai is the space around them over which their dream has influence. As they move through Yume-dō, they exert their strongest influence on their ma'ai.

The one thing a dreamer has no control over in their ma'ai is how they look to others. A dreamer's fear, desire, or regret—whichever is strongest—is thought to define their appearance. A desire-focused dreamer looks like an idealized version of themself: unrealistically, exaggeratedly



perfect. A fear-focused dreamer looks like themself at the lowest, weakest point in their life—often when they were a small child. A regret-focused dreamer looks like themself at a defining moment in their past, when they represented something different than they do now. Sometimes a dreamer has a combination of these appearances.

The Three Sins

While dreams can be about anything, certain patterns recur in human dreams. These dream patterns correspond to the three sins—fear, desire, and regret—each of which creates a cluster of dream settings. Lucid dreamers and dreamwalkers in a setting in one cluster may wander into others in the same cluster with ease.

Uninhibited Social Interaction

Rokugan's stratified society and strict behavioral norms leave many Rokugani yearning for spaces in which they might relax and give voice to their hearts' worries and desires, or act without constantly checking their own behavior for adherence to a code someone else imposed. In Yume-dō, they may find such a space.

For lucid dreamers and dreamwalkers, interacting in Yume-dō can provide a useful way to evade social taboos. A farmer who wishes to petition the great lord who owns her land to lower her taxes can freely harangue that lord if she is able to find him in his dreams. If they share space in the fear cluster and she is capable of standing up to her own fears long enough to move past them, she can seek out her lord and find out his greatest fears, the better to manipulate him in the waking world. Lovers who cannot be together in the real world can find each other in the fleeting pleasures of the desire cluster or the dramatic sorrow of the regret cluster.

The Crossover between Reality and Dreams

It is a little-known secret, learned only by dreamwalkers such as the more advanced Moth Clan Dreamweavers and nezumi Dreamers, that there are places where the real world and the dreamworld overlap. These dream junctures appear where these two worlds are the most similar. In some places, such as one particular tavern in Otosan Uchi, the occasional person will claim, after a night of revelry, that they woke up in a completely different city than the one they fell asleep in. Some Rokugani believe that such places so closely resemble many people's dreams that the real and dream versions become one during the night.

But humans winding up in places they didn't intend to go is not the biggest problem posed by this phenomenon. Deities and demons dream as well, and on rare occasions may find themselves dreaming their way into Ningen-dō. Also concerning are the *baku*, or dream eaters, who can use these junctures to travel easily between Ningen-dō and Yume-dō. Baku vary in intelligence and cordiality toward humans. Some baku snap at and devour dream beings—or real beings, if they escape into the Mortal Realm.

The most aggressive and intelligent baku are those who consider themselves border guards. These baku take it upon themselves to keep dreams in Yume-dō and physical dreamers in Ningen-dō. Baku are few, but they are canny and determined. They're tough, but they can be killed. Some can even speak, though few have ever said more than a few sentences. (For more information, see page 141.)

Below: Meido and the Realms of Punishment

The realms beneath the Mortal Realm are the realms of the dead, the underworld for souls who have grown heavy with karma. Few would wish to enter the underworld, but rumors abound of places where the borders are weak, and space is shared between the Mortal Realm and realms where death reigns. At certain hours, Meido shares space with graveyards and with temples of Emma-Ō, the Fortune of Death. The sites of ancient battlefields overlap with spaces in Tōshigoku, as do places where willful souls died in great rage. The Well of the Ateru, a sacred place in the lands of the Phoenix's Kaito family, is another such place; a soul who died at the bottom of that well had such anger and hate that over time, it eroded Ningen-dō until Tōshigoku was in its place. It is whispered that in the forests surrounding the lands of the Falcon Clan, a person could enter Gaki-dō, although why anyone would want to is a mystery.

MEIDO: THE REALM OF WAITING

If the myths are to be believed, Meido was never intended to be a permanent residence for souls, so it contains few if any pleasures for the waiting dead. Rokugani artists depict Meido as a place filled with thick fog, where featureless plains and rocky hills gradually fade into a never-ending grey. Priests of Emma-Ō describe the Fortune's domain as a desaturated version



of Ningen-dō, with comparable features, but ones devoid of life.

At the center of this vast realm sits the estate of Emma-Ō, the Fortune of Death. This is the primary destination of the dead, where souls go to be judged. In the court within his estate, Emma-Ō weighs the karma of the soul before him, considering the deeds of the soul in life and whether the soul achieved their destiny. Then, he sentences them to reincarnate, either in Ningen-dō or in another Spirit Realm.

Due to the inefficiency of the judgment process and the discord caused by Meido's neighboring realms, souls sometimes wait for a long time before receiving their assigned reincarnation. These ultimately wander into the grey, where they become lost to Gaki-dō, or worse.

Emma-Ō's Estate

The Fortune of Death's Meido residence was never meant to be his permanent home; rather, it was intended as merely a place where he could fulfill his duties as the primarch of the realm, away from his true estate in Tengoku. But it is no secret that Emma-Ō is the busiest Fortune in the cosmos, and his increasing workload keeps him away from Tengoku for long periods of time. It has been centuries since he had a chance to leave Meido for more than a few days at a time, and the constant strain is taking its toll, for even a Fortune's patience has limits.

Emma-Ō's priests describe the primary feature of his estate as a grand court many times the size of courts within the Empire. Even the grand court is but one of many chambers devoted to Emma-Ō's work. The courts number in the dozens, but even with so many courts running concurrently, souls still endure a considerable wait. In these court chambers, the Fortune conducts his business, numbering and judging souls with all the attention he can afford; even though his workload swells and he is falling behind, he believes that every soul deserves due consideration and justice, no matter how small.

The Court of Emma-Ō

Judging the souls of the dead is a massive undertaking, even for a Fortune. To aid him in his duty, Emma-Ō maintains a large staff, including servants, judges, scribes, guards, bailiffs, and all manner of administrators. Most of the mazoku servants and administrators hope to earn a better reincarnation by serving the Fortune of Death loyally, though there are some who revel in holding such power over others.

The highest positions in the court are held by Emma-Ō's nine Kings of Hell. Emma-Ō has empowered these beings to judge souls with his own authority, to promote souls to subordinate judge positions, and to command his servants with the same clout that he does. Much work is entrusted to the Kings of Hell, and as Emma-Ō handpicked them for their tasks, their loyalty is without question.

Some of the more hopeful texts touching on the afterlife declare that even oni are capable of redemption, claiming that Emma-Ō and his Kings of Hell count several oni among their own servants. These oni no longer serve Fu Leng, but instead assist the Fortune of Death in reclaiming the underworld regions lost to Jigoku. Most theologians regard this notion as heretical, and the mortal priests of Emma-Ō refuse to even entertain the notion.

SINS OF REGRET

For a deeper dive into the mysterious Celestial Realms, pick up a copy of *Wheel of Judgment*, an adventure that explores the underworld.

Some souls in the Meido have been waiting for so long, perhaps because of misfiled or lost paperwork or because the living have forgotten them, that they cannot be judged at all. These poor souls are *muenbotoke*, meaning "no one to tend the grave." They are souls whose descendants forgot them, or who have no one to recall their names. As there is nowhere else to put them, they are assigned administrative tasks in Meido, often simple ones that others would rather not undertake. Even so, some make the best of their situation, serving well enough to impress the Fortune of Death and earn promotions as sorei, or even as *shinigami*, Emma-Ō's servants in the Mortal Realm.

Shinigami

Whereas most shugenja call upon the kami and Fortunes to answer their prayers, the mortal shugenja of Emma-Ō instead call upon the Fortune's spirit liaisons in the Mortal Realm, spirits of death known as shinigami. Such spirits have the ability to possess mortals and bend them to their will. They speak to both the living and the dead and draw upon their power. Merely standing in the presence of a shinigami makes a mortal long for death, likening it to a long, well-deserved rest. As Emma-Ō's liaisons, shinigami take messages from his shugenja to his ear, informing his judgment.

Trials of the Dead

A departed soul's trial might be overseen by any number of Emma-Ō's subordinate judges, or even by one of the nine Kings of Hell. Rarely, Emma-Ō oversees a trial himself, although this is generally only the case when he suspects spiritual meddling. Testimony from the departed's life is presented by an assistant, and the judge weighs their karma. If the soul was fortunate enough to have a priest of Emma-Ō present at their funeral, then the arguments and testimony of that priest are taken into account (as described in *Emerald Empire*, on page 150). The judge then sentences the soul to a reincarnation befitting their remaining karmic weight or, if the soul fulfilled the destiny Tengoku assigned them, directs them to Yomi.

Once, this was a flawless, easy process. However, since the sundering of Jigoku, the trials of the dead are anything but. Papers are often misfiled, testimonies often missing. The karmic weight of a soul can be difficult to judge due to extenuating circumstances caused by other realms. The servants of Emma-Ō soldier on against the growing queue of waiting souls, all the while alert for those who may be sabotaging their efforts.

ADVENTURE SEED: KARMIC COMPLICATIONS

一 **Hook** In a haunted wood, the PCs are approached by a terrified young *bushi*, a noble, who claims they are being chased by hungry ghosts. The ghosts wiped out the student's entire dōjō, leaving them as the only survivor. Scared and alone, the terrified bushi asks the PCs for aid.

二 **Rising Action** The gaki come fast, and the PCs must endure a running battle to escort the student to a shrine or temple, where they can be safe. It is unclear why the ghosts are following this young noble. As the gaki draw closer, the student claims that their master was teaching a technique to banish such spirits back to the Realm of the Hungry Dead. Just before the group reaches a sacred place, they are confronted by a ghostly woman with curved horns and a massive blade. The woman identifies herself as a mazoku, a demon in service to Emma-Ō, and says the student must die.

三 **Climax** Due to a clerical error, the mazoku reports, a gaki was permitted to reincarnate as a human being. The bushi has a gaki soul instead of a human one. If the student is allowed to grow older, they will surely turn and become a menace to the Empire. The student protests this and, indeed, has shown no signs of hunger or supernatural ability. To all appearances, they seem innocent. However, the mazoku is insistent. Even if the student has done nothing wrong, there is still the unworked karma from their prior life that put them in Gaki-dō. Besides, Emma-Ō's ire is not to be stirred lightly. Will the PCs side with their young ward and defy the Fortune of Death? Or is the sacrifice of the student grimly necessary?

Invaders

For some time now, Jigoku's minions have sought to undermine the processes in Meido to further the goals of their master. Mazoku aligned with Jigoku's forces have infiltrated Meido's administration, reincarnating souls who once served Fu Leng and undermining attempts to prevent undead servants from arising. Other agents lurk in Meido's corners, offering power to judges and other agents in return for influence on how heroes are processed, or to encourage them to look the other way when one of Fu Leng's minions is summoned to court. Meido's administrators spend a great deal of effort to root out these impostors, but each attempt requires time and Emma-Ō's attention, both of which are in short supply.

GAKI-DŌ: THE REALM OF THE HUNGRY DEAD

A wise sage once said, "Humankind is not punished *for* its sins, but *by* its sins." Perhaps no greater example exists than the sorry state of the gaki, or "hungry ghosts." In life, they fixated on personal pleasures, becoming so enamored with the trappings of Ningen-dō that they succumbed completely to their desires. Caring not that such trappings are impermanent, they neglected their morality and spiritual growth in favor of satisfying their gluttony. But upon death, they can no longer partake of the pleasures to which they have grown accustomed or sate their desires, for they are no longer a part of Ningen-dō. The resulting withdrawal transforms them into mere shades of their former selves, ghosts who are eternally longing, eternally desiring, eternally hungry. Mindless and starving, they are driven only to consume.

It is the administration of Emma-Ō's job to identify such souls when they enter Meido. The trials of these poor souls are often expedited, and they are quickly cast into Gaki-dō, where they will not be a threat to others (or themselves). Like the other realms of punishment, Gaki-dō is meant to be a place of rehabilitation. Separated from the source of their desires, away from distractions, gaki might gradually become aware of their sorry state, realize their error, and work off their karma to reincarnate as something better.

Through their communion with the Fortune, mortal priests of Emma-Ō believe that Gaki-dō has become overcrowded. Too many people are succumbing to the sin of desire, fixating on wealth and fleeting pleasures. Too many monks have forsaken their vows, and too many samurai preoccupy themselves with material things. Emma-Ō is so overworked that sometimes a soul transforms before he can get to them, so gaki have begun appearing in Meido. Worse, some are pushed into the borders of the realm, where their



hunger eventually leads them back into Ningen-dō. There, they can do great harm to the living and extend their state by feeding their desires. Some commit acts so atrocious, they will be bound for Jigoku if they are ever caught.

A samurai is at significantly greater risk of becoming a gaki than a farmer or other peasant is. While a peasant's life makes it necessary to fixate on material things, their motivations are usually more akin to the survival instinct than to greed or lust. It is the internal fixation that matters, not the material objects themselves. Even so, many monks and priests swear vows of poverty to stave off the temptations that might compromise their karma.

The Ruins of Gaki-dō

Emma-Ō's priests describe Gaki-dō as a massive, sprawling city beneath Meido, an enormous ruined slum into which hungry ghosts are simply tossed. The air is foul with the stink of the dead, as gaki are just corporeal enough to smell of rot. The buildings are dilapidated and crumbling.

While other Celestial Realms are organized into provinces and other regions, Gaki-dō can make no such claim. Maintaining this type of order would provide some manner of stimulus, or possibly remind the inhabitants of their former lives. To rehabilitate themselves, gaki require a state of constant boredom. Emma-Ō's priests describe the city as containing thousands upon thousands of hungry ghosts, many driven to erratic or bizarre behavior by the crushing tedium, having become little more than caged animals. Some wander the empty structures, eating whatever they can find and going through the motions of their former lives. Others simply stand in place within the crowded streets, staring ahead and doing nothing at all.

Gaki-dō can seem like a phantom shade of Ningen-dō, one where souls toil without purpose, pointless insipidity is the norm, and misery prevails.

Escape

Gaki-dō is administered by a staff of mazoku answering to Emma-Ō. Throughout the realm, offices and towers rise to overlook the hungry masses. Only a handful of mazoku build their estates in Gaki-dō, the rest preferring to stay in the far less unpleasant Meido. While these mazoku are encouraged to assist the gaki in their rehabilitation, their primary job is to prevent escape.

Unfortunately, Gaki-dō's size far exceeds Emma-Ō's ability to govern properly, and of all the realms of punishment, Gaki-dō is the easiest to flee, though many gaki are too hungry to think of leaving. At the borders of certain city blocks, the realm fades into graveyards, ruined shrines, and other such places in Ningen-dō. The flight of gaki through these junctions cannot be helped, but it has become yet another worrisome problem that mires down Emma-Ō's work.

Recovering escaped gaki is the sole duty of Gaki-dō's primary administrator, a woman known as the Hungry Governor. The few texts that speak of this entity suggest she was once a priest of Emma-Ō who served her master so well, he rewarded her (or cursed her, depending on the telling) with stewardship over the Realm of the Hungry Dead. Assisted by a staff of hundreds of shinigami who dwell in the Mortal Realm, she tracks down escaped souls in Ningen-dō to drag them back to their realm of punishment. According to these texts, she occasionally recruits allies from the living to aid her in this task, especially after an unusually large breakout. Appearing before the living as a ghost herself, she points them in the direction of the escaped dead and promises karmic rewards in exchange for aid.

The Pity of Daikoku

The mandate of Daikoku, the Fortune of Wealth, is to spend one's wealth as readily as one accumulates it, so that all might share in its bounty. To hoard wealth is to dishonor the blessings Daikoku has bestowed. In keeping with this philosophy, Daikoku has great pity for gaki, for the gifts of Ningen-dō, which should have been shared, instead entrapped them in a miserable existence.

Most texts concerning Daikoku says that he maintains an estate in Gaki-dō in addition to his estate in Tengoku. According to these accounts, the Fortune aids gaki in their self-realization, offering them some respite in the form of sustenance or gold (which the gaki consume). This sometimes sets Daikoku at odds with Emma-Ō, for feeding the gaki is thought to increase their time in Gaki-dō, thereby complicating Emma-Ō's work. However, according to a number of accounts, one in ten gaki whom Daikoku treats this way

realize their state and reject Daikoku's offerings, immediately becoming redeemed and fit to reincarnate. If even one soul can be spared the suffering of this realm, then Daikoku insists it is a worthy endeavor.

Imitating this act in Ningen-dō is a ritual known as *segaki*, or "feeding the hungry ghosts." Priests of Daikoku offer water, rice, and coin to hungry gaki, then perform a cleansing at the moment the offering is consumed. This banishes gaki at the precise moment the offering sates them, resulting in the complete recovery of the soul. Such beings are thought to return not to Gaki-dō, but to Meido for new judgment and hopefully reincarnation into a higher form.

Priests of Emma-Ō look down upon this practice, believing it to be futile at best and dangerous at worst. However, monks, especially those in service to Fukurokujin or Hotei, admire these efforts and even lend their assistance when they can.

TŌSHIGOKU: THE REALM OF SLAUGHTER

In a former section of Gaki-dō lies a vast battlefield, a bleak and desolate plain stretching toward infinity. These grounds teem with the chaotic violence of constant warfare, as armies beyond measure clash endlessly throughout the realm. The souls here kill wantonly and without remorse and are slain by enemies and allies alike, only to rise again to renew the carnage. Carrion birds hover above battle cries and the screams of the dying, while monstrous demons wade through the disorganized mass. This is Tōshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter. Its denizens are the souls of those who died with hatred in their heart, who reveled in violence and bloodshed, who fixated on vengeance. Beings who died in pointless wars, or who died so suddenly and violently that they cannot accept their own passing, also become vengeful ghosts who know only hate and crave the destruction of endless war.



Emma-Ō created Tōshigoku to rehabilitate violent souls whose bloodlust dragged them down below Meido. Here, they work out their rage in an endless battle, never advancing, each victory fleeting and worthless, until they realize the futility of violence.

The Eternal Battlefield

The largest of Tōshigoku's provinces, if the regions within this realm can be called "provinces," has become known as the Eternal Battlefield. According to texts, this battlefield is divided into thousands of constantly shifting domains, each one carved out by especially zealous generals and willful warriors who band together in units or even armies. These organized movements are always short-lived, as inevitably, leadership crumbles to backstabbing and the forces split and fall apart, only to rejoin in yet another army under yet another charismatic leader. It is as impossible to track the thousands of warring factions as it is for warring souls to remember why they are fighting, or a time when they were not so consumed with spite and rage.

The Blood River

Tōshigoku is bordered by a wide river of blood and viscera, known simply as the Blood River. It is the destination of recently deceased pirates who stole and killed wantonly. On the Blood River, they ceaselessly fight ill-fated battles and drown, only to rise again on the shore to begin their efforts anew.

Scholars believe the Blood River mimics the path of the famous Three Stone River, named for three distinctive boulders resting on the riverbed that are visible only in summer when the waters are low. Three Stone River is one of the longest rivers in Rokugan. Key to trade and transport, as it borders Crane, Lion, and Scorpion lands, it is also the most contested river in Rokugan. It has been the site of many historical battles, including the Battle of Three Stone River between

the Phoenix and Lion. So much blood has been shed at Three Stone River that many Rokugani believe it dwells partially in Tōshigoku, and that in certain hours, it and the Blood River become one.

Jizō's Ferry

According to folklore, a smiling man in robes of mourning is a common sight along the shore of the Blood River. This is Jizō, the Fortune of Mercy. Jizō and his servants wait here to soothe those who died unjustly and guide them across the river and back to Meido, where he pleads with Emma-Ō on their behalf, asking that the Fortune of Death give them another chance at life. Some claim that Emma-Ō's ancient heart melts at such pleas, and that Jizō is successful more times than not. Others say that Emma-Ō is unmoved and that ultimately, such souls end up right back where they started. When asked, monks who revere Jizō tend to split the difference, claiming that souls championed by the Fortune of Mercy receive lesser sentences, such as time in Meido—a fate far preferable to the never-ending carnage that would await them otherwise.

The Keep of Ten Thousand Bones

At the center of the teeming Eternal Battlefield is a massive keep with sprawling towers and gates. From here, Mujōki, the chief administrator of Tōshigoku, keeps watch over the realm. Mujōki permits denizens who show some signs of autonomy to join the forces within, where life is marginally better than it is in the waste beyond the walls. The keep is staffed with mazoku who train the warrior souls in all manner of combat arts, but whose secret purpose is to help them achieve inner balance and peace, thereby releasing those souls from their burden and returning them to Meido.

Denizens of Tōshigoku

In some ways, Tōshigoku is Tengoku's opposite. Whereas Tengoku is a land of peace and beauty, Tōshigoku is a terrifying place of violence and disorder. Many different types of spirits fill Tōshigoku's ranks, perhaps even some that are unknown to mortals. The following are but a few of the numerous types.

Onryō

When a mortal dies to treachery or betrayal, or under a horrific or cosmically pointless circumstance (such as a brutal, callous war), they may transform into a vengeful ghost, or *onryō*. Tōshigoku is not the only realm in which onryō can form, but it is certainly flooded with these spirits. They draw strength from their hatred and their desire for vengeance. Because of this, they frequently find their way out and into the Realm of Mortals, where they seek whoever wronged them. While technically this is a violation of the realm's purpose, some mazoku look the other way when certain onryō escape, believing that they can be an instrument of karma under the right circumstances.

The Erased

While most armies in Tōshigoku inevitably splinter and re-form, one force has remained united since its arrival: a military company consisting of hundreds of faceless warriors in Lion Clan armor. Like a crashing wave, they cut a swath through Tōshigoku's battlefields, those who are felled forgetting who they are and rising again to join the ranks of the faceless. To most Rokugani, these tales present a strange mystery, just another one of the many horrors of Tōshigoku described by Emma-Ō's priests. But to the Kitsu family of the Lion Clan, these warriors are known as "the Erased."

The tale, kept quietly alive through oral recounting, describes a time when the Lion armies were defeated by the returning Unicorn Clan in the ninth century, and how it brought great shame to the Lion Clan, who at the time believed them to be foreign invaders. To bury their shame and preserve their clan's face, the Akodo family ordered the names of those soldiers to be removed from all records, including the Ikoma histories and genealogies. Thus, the defeated Lion soldiers became forgotten, "muenbotoke," without identity or anyone to remember them, robbed of a place in Yomi. Their outrage consumed them, and they became the scourge of Tōshigoku, annihilating anything in their path, no act of destruction adequate to satisfy their sense of injustice.

The Erased are thought to sometimes briefly appear in Ningen-dō, although the circumstances are not well understood. While in the Mortal Realm, they seek to destroy anything famous so that it may be forgotten, and so that perhaps they themselves will be remembered again, even if it is only for destroying a thing beloved by all.





Invaders

Tōshigoku's proximity to Jigoku has led many of Jigoku's horrors to infiltrate the realm. Oni stalk the battlefields and forgotten corners of Tōshigoku, as do undead beings of obscure origin. Among them is the terrifying *gashadokuro*, a massive skeleton made from the bones of hundreds of mortals who died and were left unburied.

The Crisis in Tōshigoku

Of all the realms within Emma-Ō's domain, Tōshigoku is the least troublesome. The realm is efficient and requires few staff. The souls within have little motivation to leave, so consumed are they by bloodlust and combat. There are more cases of successful rehabilitation from Tōshigoku than from any other realm of punishment, making it the most successful of those realms. For this reason, Emma-Ō rarely pays it any attention, so consumed is he by other matters demanding his time.

Much of Tōshigoku's success is attributed to its chief administrator, a being known as Mujōki, the Ghost of Impermanence. After establishing Tōshigoku, Emma-Ō installed him as its warden, granting him the Keep of Ten Thousand Bones as a seat of power. Mujōki is a competent and powerful ghost who devised the methods for rehabilitating martial souls, having them use combat practice as a means of regaining the lost harmony within them. For this, Mujōki's praises are sung throughout the Spirit Realms.

It is therefore unfortunate that Mujōki is no longer there.

Sometime in recent history, Fu Leng sent a group of oni to infiltrate Tōshigoku, kidnap Mujōki, and replace him with an impostor. This oni in Mujōki's shape quietly undermines the purpose of Tōshigoku, using it to train its denizens to become more deadly instead of to rehabilitate them. The oni's ultimate goal is to transform the enraged armies of Tōshigoku into a fighting force for Fu Leng, unstoppable shock troops to be deployed against Emma-Ō when the time is right.

Mujōki coordinates his efforts with Fu Leng's plot to prompt wars in Ningen-dō, to increase the odds that Rokugan's greatest warriors might end up in Tōshigoku and inadvertently become servants of Fu Leng. If this gambit were discovered, it would incense Emma-Ō beyond reckoning, although whether the Fortune could do anything about it remains to be seen.

Jigoku, the Realm of Evil

Once a realm of punishment for evil souls reborn as demons, Jigoku served an important role in the Celestial Order, rehabilitating the evil dead so they could reincarnate as animals or other lower beings. It is an endless hellscape of pain and misery: obsidian mazes, rivers of boiling blood, and uncountable horrors that mortal minds cannot fathom. Ever since Fu Leng conquered that torturous realm, however, it has no longer served its original purpose. Instead, its denizens serve their own purposes—or the agenda of Fu Leng himself. Jigoku has become the source of all evil, lost to the Celestial Order, perhaps for all time.

Provinces of Evil

To list the endless provinces of Jigoku would be a futile effort. It contains strata upon strata of endless torments, and no being can say how far down the Realm of Evil goes. Numerologists suggest there are eighteen levels of Jigoku's hells, but this has never been confirmed. Efforts to scry into Jigoku have blasted the minds of those who made the attempts, and if any have succeeded, they have kept their findings to themselves.

Rumors are whispered about a great citadel at the deepest point of Jigoku, a distorted counterpoint to Tengoku's Heavenly Palace. Such rumors do not reveal what is inside this place, but many beings suspect it is the empty home of the dreaded Ninth Kami.

A significant portion of Jigoku has bled into the Realm of Mortals, into a place Rokugani call the Shadowlands. More on this terrible region can be found in *the Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* supplement *Shadowlands: The Essential Guide to the Dominion of Fu Leng*.



Jigoku's Touch

Jigoku is a jealous realm, one that is expanding, causing blight, and taking whatever it can. In Ningen-dō, its influence is called the Shadowlands Taint.

Jigoku can reach into other realms as well. The Taint's manifestation is different for each realm, and how it affects each realm's denizens can differ widely. Documents kept by the Kuni family catalog these effects, although few researchers gain an opportunity to conduct further research in this area.

- **Tōshigoku:** Beings affected by Jigoku in the Realm of Slaughter slowly grow more monstrous and animalistic, losing all instinct and thought except for violence.
- **Gaki-dō:** Tainted beings of the Realm of the Hungry Dead become increasingly angry and slowly catch fire, until they are completely enveloped by bright flames. Such entities ultimately become powerful demons driven only to feed everything to their twisted flames.
- **Meido:** In the Realm of Waiting, the touch of Jigoku is more insidious. Those affected slowly have their thoughts replaced by an increasing sense of foreboding. Eventually, they become convinced that they are actually in a realm of punishment and that mazoku are tricking them by making it look like Meido. This eventually drives them to erratic and sometimes violent behavior, forcing Emma-Ō to confine them to Tōshigoku.
- **Sakkaku:** Animal spirits who follow the path of the trickster are more likely to succumb to Jigoku's sway than those who follow Chikushō-dō. Such beings slowly lose their self-restraint, gradually reverting to nonsentient beasts governed only by instinct, following each random thought or notion.
- **Yume-dō:** Dreams become nightmares when exposed to Jigoku's twisted touch, and beings of Yume-dō swiftly transform into monstrous abominations.

The realms of Chikushō-dō, Yomi, and Tengoku are thankfully beyond Jigoku's reach. However, this will remain true only for as long as Emma-Ō continues to successfully ward off Jigoku's forces. If Jigoku were ever to fully conquer Ningen-dō or Meido, it might have the influence to reach even into the Celestial Heavens. Such a disaster is unthinkable.

Politics of the Dead

No Fortune is as overworked as Emma-Ō. His domain encompasses not only Meido, but also Tōshigoku and Gaki-dō, and he is charged with the containment and eventual recovery of Jigoku. To facilitate this impossible workload, Emma-Ō delegates his authority to a cascading bureaucracy. He has also installed governors in Tōshigoku and Gaki-dō to handle those realms on his behalf.

In practice, this means that dozens of officials are vying for Emma-Ō's attention at any given point in time. Pressing matters such as the overflowing population of Gaki-dō and the increasing corruption of Emma-Ō's own staff serve only to cause him further stress, distracting him from his duty to judge mortal souls.

Assisting Emma-Ō in his duties are the nine Kings of Hell: Shinkō, Sokō, Sotai, Gokan, Benjō, Taisen, Toshi, Byōdō, and Tenrin. These beings earned his trust by accompanying him in reclaiming the rest of the underworld from Jigoku, and they are his most trusted lieutenants. A being seeking Emma-Ō is far more likely to encounter one of the nine. Each King of Hell commands a pyramid of clerks, servants, warriors, and bailiffs, all drawn from the mazoku and sorei.

The relationships between the Kings of Hell are amiable, and none try to outdo the others. However, this is not so for the bureaucrats they oversee. Rivalries and contests are common among their servants, especially the mazoku, who want nothing more than to receive their masters' favor and earn their way into Yomi in their next life. Occasionally these rivalries grow wild and impede the work of Emma-Ō, much to the Fortune's frustration.

Also competing for Emma-Ō's attention is the Hungry Governor of Gaki-dō. Her minions endlessly lobby on her behalf for more space, as Gaki-dō's borders swell and tremble from the pressure of its increasing population. However, to obtain more space would require another push into Jigoku to reclaim some lost ground, something that is beyond Emma-Ō's ability at the moment. For now, the Hungry Governor must continue to handle the problem by herself.

One of the most pressing matters for Emma-Ō is the corruption of his own administration. The minions of Jigoku have infiltrated his ranks and meddle in the affairs of the underworld to hinder him and create distractions. The karmic implications for the innocent victims are that they may be judged unfairly or sent to the wrong realm of punishment. To combat the increasing error rate, Emma-Ō has been forced to slow down his judgment process, causing an even greater backlog than before.

Another problem resulting from this corruption is unwarranted leniency for souls whose deeds should place them in a realm of punishment. Further, by undermining the process that facilitates a soul's rise through the Celestial Order via reincarnation, Jigoku's demons seek to turn people away from Tengoku's light, converting them into new minions for their master.

Emma-Ō's staff have made considerable efforts to drive these corrupted officials from their ranks, but even the Fortune of Death has trouble identifying who is a true ally and who is one of Jigoku's agents. Yet he cannot afford to dismiss his entire administration and start again, for the workload continues to increase, and Jigoku's assaults can come at any time.

Complicating matters are occasional new ordinances from Tengoku that are intended to aid Emma-Ō in managing the underworld but in reality merely frustrate him further. The more active Tengoku becomes in Meido's affairs, the more shame Emma-Ō suffers.

On rare occasions, Emma-Ō must directly address Jigoku's incursions into Meido, leading divine forces and his nine Kings of Hell against the twisted minions of Fu Leng. So far, Emma-Ō has been consistently victorious, but each battle leaves the Fortune wearier. If he should ever grow too complacent, the next attack may be the one that breaches Meido and threatens the balance of all the realms.

RYOSHUN, THE TENTH KAMI

Rokugani folklore refers to only nine Kami, the children of the Sun and Moon. But unbeknownst to mortals, there were ten children, one of whom never fell to Ningen-dō. The tenth sibling, Ryoshun, died in his father's belly. When the Kami fell, he had already passed away, and his soul descended to the underworld.

When Emma-Ō reconquered Meido, Ryoshun was already there, having fought off many of the minions of his brother Fu Leng prior to Emma-Ō's arrival. In Ryoshun, Emma-Ō sensed an ally, and he made a deal with the Kami in exchange for his aid. Now Ryoshun guards the border between Jigoku and the rest of the underworld, ensuring that Fu Leng's minions cannot slip past and enter the gates of Tengoku. Ryoshun can never return to his mother and siblings, lest he abandon his all-important duty and threaten the harmony of the Spirit Realms. Neither can he entrust the task to another, for as he is the child of the Sun and Moon, no beings other than his siblings are strong enough to replace him.

However, to say Ryoshun is on Emma-Ō's side is not quite true. He is more neutral than anything, tirelessly guarding the border as if compelled to do so. He has never been to Ningen-dō and as such holds no attachment to mortals or the trappings of that realm.

Fu Leng remembers his brother; in Ryoshun, the Ninth Kami sees a potential ally, one who may resent his stolen legacy just as Fu Leng does. So far, Ryoshun has rebuked every attempt to sway him to Jigoku's side. But perhaps it is only a matter of time before Jigoku has something worthy to offer him.

Shrines of Rokugan

A multitude of spirits impinge on nearly every aspect of life in Rokugan. Shrines are places where mortals can enter into close communion with these spirits, seeking their guidance and aid, imploring them for bountiful harvests and relief from disaster and war, and celebrating the important spiritual milestones in their lives. Although there are many different types of shrines in the Empire, each ultimately serves the same purpose: whether a vast complex of ornate, towering buildings or a weather-beaten statue by the side of an overgrown road, a shrine in Rokugan is where the spiritual and mundane converge. More detail on shrines and their role in Rokugan is available in the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* supplement *Emerald Empire*, **Chapter 4: Sacred Spaces**.

SHRINES OF THE KAMI

Scattered throughout this section are brief descriptions of the shrines of the Kami, including where they are located and what they contain, along with other pertinent information.

TYPES OF SHRINES

In theory, all Rokugani shrines have the same general layout. In practice, however, shrines vary widely in their construction and organization across the Empire, based on their location and purpose.

A Typical Shrine

SHRINE TO LORD AKODO

The shrine to Akodo rests quietly in a shaded forest glen. The path to it winds throughout the wood and is littered with stones. A colony of lion spirits lives on the shrine grounds, driving off any visitors who are not brave or pure of spirit.

A typical shrine incorporates three basic elements:

- A torii gate, through which visitors pass to enter the shrine. The torii symbolically represents a transition or border between the profane and the sacred. Entering a shrine without passing beneath the gate is considered disrespectful to the enshrined spirits.
- A *sandō*, the approach from the torii to the sanctuary, along which congregants travel on their way to worship. Traversing the sandō symbolizes the pilgrimage or journey of the worshippers, emphasizing that it is they who must travel to seek communion with the spirits.
- A *honden*, or sanctuary, where the spirit or spirits to whom the shrine is dedicated are enshrined. The honden is the spiritual heart of the shrine, housing the altar and other sacred objects. In the entry to the sanctuary is the *temizuya*, a cleansing area used by worshippers for their ritual purification before entering the sanctuary proper.

BEING RESPECTFUL

Because inspiration for Rokugan is drawn from real-world sources—particularly Japan—many of the concepts and components presented here regarding shrines are similarly drawn from the Shinto religion. GMs and players should remain mindful of this and, during play, try to ensure that they and their characters interact with these concepts in ways that won't cause offense to anyone involved with, or able to overhear, the game. As usual, we recommend discussing such matters before the game begins and periodically checking in with members to make sure everyone is having a good experience!

Large Shrines

Shrines in cities are usually much larger establishments than those found elsewhere, often consisting of complexes of several buildings. Large shrines may also be found in more rural areas, in places of significance to the spirits and Fortunes to whom they're dedicated or in lands controlled by prosperous samurai lords who use their wealth to show their spiritual devotion—or, in some cases, simply to show off their affluence.

Most large shrines have additional buildings or components including at least some of the following:

- A *kagura-den*, a building dedicated to the sacred *kagura* dance.
- A *shamusho*, the shrine's administrative office.
- One or more *setsumatsusha*, or small auxiliary shrines.
- A *haiden*, an oratory or hall of worship.
- *Komainu*, guardian spirits portrayed as statues of lion-dog hybrids who guard either the torii entrance or the honden.

SPIRIT ARTS: SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

What follows is a brief list of various spiritual traditions throughout the Empire. Many of these practices are tied to the Spirit Realms, invoking spirits from those realms or otherwise drawing upon their influence. GMs should be mindful that to the Rokugani, there is no distinction between religion and what some might call "magic." A shugenja or priest's powers do not belong to the individual; these are not arcane arts, but sacred traditions, and for many, it is how they worship the divine.

- **Shugendō:** The shugenja's sacred art, *shugendō* is the invocation of kami and the Fortunes. A personal art, shugendō is preoccupied with the balance and control of elemental forces through offerings to kami and Fortunes.
- **Ishiken-dō:** Void is pure potential: emptiness and wholeness. *Ishiken-dō* is the art of Void inversion, and its gatekeepers are the Phoenix Clan. Only a handful per generation are sensitive enough to call upon the Void. Those who are identified are quickly adopted by the Phoenix and trained to control their reality-changing abilities.
- **Kagenari:** Using specially treated tattoos known as shadow brands, Scorpion Clan shinobi adopting this secretive art can manifest Void powers to hide in plain sight, meld into shadow, or project phantom images. The cost of these powers is oneself, as frequent wielders of these powers inevitably lose their grasp on reality, becoming paranoid and delusional.
- **Mahō:** Also known as blood magic, *mahō* refers to power that invokes Jigoku or its denizens. It often involves the shedding of one's blood to attract *kansen*, kami Tainted by Jigoku. Mahō can also refer to a number of other forbidden practices that cause the Shadowlands Taint. Mahō is forbidden and punishable by death.
- **Meishōdō:** The domain of the Iuchi family of the Unicorn Clan, *meishōdō* is the binding of a spirit to a talisman and then the invocation of its true name to cause it to manifest in a predetermined way. Through meishōdō, kami can be invoked instantly, without need for offerings or incantations. The talismans are particularly helpful for invoking a particular kami quickly and easily while on the road. Controversial due to its gaijin origin and the lack of offerings, meishōdō is considered by many Rokugani to be disrespectful at best and heretical at worst.
- **Mikodō:** Also known as "the Way of Shrines," *mikodō* refers to two things: the folk traditions of shrine keepers and the art of inviting kami possession. These folk arts are elevated by the Kaito family of the Phoenix Clan, who seek to be physical vessels for the kami in order to become living shrines.
- **Ancestral Invocations:** The art of invoking blessed ancestral spirits is the domain of the Lion Clan's Kitsu family. Skilled sōdan-senzo can commune with the denizens of Yomi and Meido, give them form, become possessed by them, or even enter their realm for a brief time.
- **Tsangusuri:** *Tsangusuri* is the art of intentionally awakening latent spirits in items to create *nemuranai*. The Asahina family of the Crane are among this art's foremost experts, as are the Agasha family of the Dragon.
- **Yumeji:** The art of *yumeji* is the invoking of the Realm of Dreams and its denizens. Practitioners of this art can visit the dreams of others (*yumebito*), dream of the future (*masayume*), and travel the dream-world for a brief time. This esoteric art is primarily the domain of the Moth Clan's Kaikoga family, though the practice has started to gain traction among the samurai in Rokugan as more and more people learn of it. The Moth are still the dominant practitioners of the art, however.

SHRINE TO LORD HIDA

The Shrine to Hida is integrated into the southern section of the Kaiu Wall. Including a fine armory and a practice den, this place of veneration looks much more like a dōjō than a shrine.

SHRINE TO LORD TOGASHI

This shrine is an empty room within the High House of Light, its entrance blending flawlessly into the walls. It holds only a single lantern and a scroll on the wall containing the words, "Neither Will I."

SHRINE TO LADY DOJI

The Shrine to Doji is a simple, elegant building on a cliffside overlooking the sea. It is where Doji Nio watched his mother, Doji, walk into the ocean and vanish beneath the waves. Unlike most shrines, the Shrine to Doji allows guests to sleep overnight on the floor and listen to the crashing waves and singing sands.

Small Shrines

The vast majority of shrines are smaller structures located in towns and villages and along roadsides throughout the Empire. For instance, almost every farming village has a shrine to Inari, the Fortune of Rice. Many small shrines consist only of a very simple honden: often just a wooden hut and a small altar. Smaller shrines known as *hokora* are found along the Empire's roads and in the gardens of castles and other large dwellings. Most garden hokora are devoted to the worship of the family's sorei, or ancestor spirits. Hokora consist of an altar that is covered by a small roof but is otherwise open to the air.

An even smaller shrine is the *kamidana*. This is a small, stand-alone altar maintained within another structure, such as a court chamber or even a samurai's home, to allow those living and working there to benefit from spiritual guidance.

A final type of "shrine" consists of a place of spiritual importance, such as a mountain or lake. There is no honden; rather, the place itself enshrines the spirit and is treated by those who travel there as though they are attending a shrine.

THE LIFE OF A SHRINE

Just as there are many different types of shrines in the Empire, there are also many different ways to operate and maintain these shrines.

Servants of the Shrine

At a minimum, every shrine is overseen by a shrine keeper, who is generally the lowest-ranking member of the clergy. In addition to maintaining a shrine, a shrine keeper engages in basic rituals and conducts minor blessings and divinations. Large shrines may have several shrine keepers in attendance, while smaller shrines may have only a single keeper. In the case of more isolated shrines and hokora, one shrine keeper may live remotely between several, traveling among them on a routine basis.

Larger shrines often also have priests in regular attendance. These are higher-ranking members of the clergy who are empowered to conduct more elaborate religious ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, to lead festivals, and to conduct rituals intended to allow them to appease the spirits, though they cannot commune with them directly, like shugenja. Itinerant priests visit remote shrines on a regular basis, providing spiritual aid and guidance to people living in the rural parts of the Empire.



Shugenja, practitioners of shugendō—that is, direct communion with the elemental kami and other spirits—are nearly always members of the samurai caste and are the most senior members of the Empire's clergy. Such individuals, who are born with the gift of being able to "speak" with the spirits, are extremely rare. Shugenja often attend shrines, and even conduct ceremonies and rituals in them, but it is unusual for them to be bound to a particular shrine unless they choose to do so, and their duties to their lord allow it.

The Practice of Worship

While the details vary from shrine to shrine, a supplicant attending a shrine generally follows an ancient and ritualistic routine.

Upon arriving at the shrine, the supplicant passes through the torii gate, leaving the mundane world and entering the spiritual one. They then progress along the sandō, symbolizing their full pilgrimage to visit the spirits or Fortunes in the place where those spirits reside. Upon arriving at the honden, they complete the cleansing ritual begun when they passed beneath the torii, by washing their hands and mouth with water from the temizuya.

Now in a state of spiritual purity, the supplicant enters the honden proper and presents themself to the enshrined spirit. A shrine keeper or priest usually assists with this, and details vary according to the spirit and the rites associated with it. In the most basic form of this ritual, the supplicant kneels before the altar and presents an offering that is both personal to the supplicant and meaningful to the spirit. For instance, they may offer the Fortune of Rice fertile soil taken from the supplicant's lands.

Following the offering, the supplicant attracts the spirit's attention by clapping, singing, or other means particular to the spirit. Having obtained the spirit's consideration, the supplicant offers their prayers and supplications, bows reverently, and quickly departs to avoid annoying the spirit by lingering needlessly and to offer up room for others to conduct their own observances.

Three Shrines

The following sections present detailed descriptions of three very different shrines in Rokugan. They span a broad, representative scale of architectural complexity, spiritual purpose, and overall sophistication.

THE SHRINE TO HANTEI-NO-KAMI

The Shrine to Hantei-no-Kami is located in the Forbidden City, the innermost district of the Imperial Capital, Otosan Uchi. As the name implies, the Forbidden City—being, in essence, the personal lands of the Emperor—is inaccessible to all but the most senior samurai of the Empire. These include the Emperor and his family, Imperial appointees such as the Emerald Champion and the Imperial Advisor and Chancellor, and the highest-ranking members of the Imperial families and the Great Clans, which maintain guest houses in the Forbidden City. Accordingly, supplicants attending the Shrine to Hantei-no-Kami are almost certainly illustrious individuals. On rare occasions, however, samurai of lesser social status may have legitimate reason to attend the shrine.

History

Shortly after the death of the Kami Hantei, his shrine was built in Otosan Uchi by his son, Hantei Genji, also known as the Shining Prince. The date of Hantei's death is not clear, but it was likely sometime in the second century. Genji chose a large island in a pond within the Forbidden City's Imperial Gardens as the location for his memorial to his father. Around the island, the pond effectively forms a moat, which visitors can cross via a bridge. The island location constrained the space available for the shrine; accordingly, despite being one of the oldest and most important shrines in the Empire, it is actually quite small in comparison to many others of similar importance. Nevertheless, it not only has served as a place where visitors to the Forbidden City may venerate and seek the guidance of the first Emperor, but also has become a sanctuary for the living Emperors: a secluded, contemplative place where the Emperors have been able to escape the bustle of the Imperial Court and commune with their sacred ancestor.

SHRINE TO HANTEI-NO-KAMI

The Shrine to the Kami Hantei is a traditional and ancient construction built on an island in a pond within the Forbidden City. Quiet, secluded, and guarded against interlopers, Hantei's shrine has become a sanctuary for Emperors throughout the years.

SHRINE TO LORD BAYUSHI

The Shrine to Bayushi is a large temple built into the mountainside in a narrow valley in the Seikitsu, or Spine of the World, Mountains. The shrine proper is hidden in shadow for the first half of the day, and the entrance is obscured during the rest. The shrine is said to contain Bayushi's mask and his last known letter.

Approaching the Shrine

The Shrine to Hantei-no-Kami conforms to the traditional layout of a Rokugani shrine, with a torii gate on the water's edge, a sandō in the form of a bridge that crosses the pond, and a honden on the island. Some scholars speculate that the arrangement of torii, sandō, and honden at this shrine is the prototype upon which all subsequent Rokugani shrines are based.

The Torii Gate and Bridge

As a supplicant approaches the torii through the deep stillness that typifies the Forbidden City, they may note that it is surprisingly plain. Its wooden pillars and crossbeams are painted vermilion, while the lintel across the top is black. Passing beneath it, they step onto the arched bridge, which is wide enough for three to walk abreast. This is, in effect, the sandō leading to the shrine. Looking down as they cross, the supplicant sees placid water lush with blue iris, lotuses, and water lilies. Rising from among them are large wooden statues carved and painted to depict past Emperors of Rokugan, beginning with Hantei-no-Kami; the bridge is supported on the shoulders of these statues. Though the space under the bridge is limited, the tradition of carving these statues has continued.

Traditionally, upon the death of an Emperor, their likeness is carved into wood harvested from great oak trees that once stood on the lower slopes of Seppun Hill, the place where the Kami first fell to the Mortal Realm. Once the bridge space was filled, the Garden of Emperors was created, a special place within the Forbidden City where all of the statues created past that point are displayed. The supply of sacred wood used to make the statues is kept in a hidden vault; it is not preserved in any fashion but still seems immune to decay. Being chosen to carve the deceased Emperor's likeness is a profound honor that brings great glory to the artisan, as well as to their family and clan.

The Sanctuary

Stepping off of the bridge, the worshipper now faces the door to the honden, or sanctuary. Like the torii, this structure is remarkable for its simple, austere nature. The wooden walls are white, while the door and the roof are vermilion and trimmed in black, matching the colors of the torii. If the Emperor is in attendance, the door is flanked by Seppun Honor Guards, whose duty of protecting the Emperor allows them to bear arms and armor in this sacred place.

WHISPERED RUMORS

On certain nights when the moon is full, an additional pillar can be seen holding up the bridge. This pillar has the likeness of an Emperor no one recognizes, who may have been forgotten by—or removed from—official histories. When the sun rises, there is no sign of this mysterious "lost" Emperor.

WHISPERED RUMORS

Some samurai who have crossed the bridge claim to have caught glimpses of a serpentine, dragon-like creature swimming in the pond, while others have seen something similar upon the shrine's roof, looking down on them. No evidence has ever been found to support these claims, which come from otherwise reputable samurai.

One samurai from each of the Great Clans will be allowed to participate in an upcoming commemorative service at the shrine. Those selected stand to gain great honor and glory, as well as the favor of the Imperial families and perhaps the Emperor himself. Ruthless politics have already begun to swirl around the selection of these fortunate individuals.

ADVENTURE SEED: SACRED TIMBER

一 **Hook** The PCs are discreetly contacted by Seppun Asahi, a member of the Seppun Astrologers, who protect the Emperor and his family from supernatural threats. Asahi asks the PCs to undertake an important but sensitive mission: securing a new source of wood for the statues of deceased Emperors that support the bridge at the Shrine to Hantei-no-Kami. The existing supply has been exhausted, and a new source will be needed after the death of the current Emperor. Asahi tells the PCs that a grove of ancient oaks in the mysterious Kitsune Mori is the best-known candidate, because the Kami Hantei once spent several days there speaking with Shinsei, the Little Teacher.

二 **Rising Action** The PCs must visit the Fox Clan, a Minor Clan whose lands include the grove, and convince them to allow the trees to be harvested and the timber removed. He provides the PCs a letter proving they act on behalf of the Seppun, but he would prefer they not reveal the reason the wood is needed. The Fox *daimyō*, Kitsune Gohei, is curious, of course, but it will take some clever politics to convince him to allow the harvesting to go ahead. Explaining the need for the wood would almost certainly gain his cooperation, but can they get it without revealing what the wood will be used for?

三 **Climax** The real problem, the PCs find, is that a powerful spirit inhabits the trees of the grove, and it, of course, resists any attempt to cut the trees. If the PCs battle the spirit and defeat it, they may render the grove spiritually impure and no longer suitable for the sacred statues. Can they convince, cajole, or even trick the spirit into allowing at least some of the trees to be cut?

Inside, the shrine continues the theme of austere simplicity. A small vestibule acts as the temizuya, its water-filled wooden bowl and ladle offering the means of ritual purification. The shrine contains only two more chambers. The first, which houses the altar to Hantei-no-Kami, is barely larger than a typical sitting room in a



samurai's home. The second, a room used by the Emperor as his personal sanctum, is even smaller, capable of holding no more than two or three people comfortably. Both rooms have white walls trimmed in vermilion and black and floors of dark teak.

Although various guards and servants may come and go to attend to the Emperor's needs, the shrine has only one attendant—and that appointment is perhaps one of the most unusual in the Empire. The shrine keeper is that student of the Seppun Astrologer School who demonstrated the best performance and greatest promise in the preceding year. Upon completing their *gempuku*, this person is usually appointed shrine keeper for one year. However, the shrine keeper has very little to do during their tenure. Since its construction, the shrine has never needed cleaning, nor has it shown any effect of weather or time, and therefore it needs no maintenance. While extremely prestigious, the position is almost entirely symbolic—but it does bring the incumbent into close and frequent contact with the Hantei themself.

Akodo Tadeo, Inspired Zealot

ADVERSARY CONFLICT RANK: 6 6

Akodo Tadeo maintains a remarkable claim—that the Kami Hantei appeared to him, telling him that his duty to the Empire was complete, and that his reward would be elevation to the Celestial Heavens. His family connections to the Seppun have earned him access to the Shrine to Hantei-no-Kami, where he has made offerings and prayed several times. As yet, however, the Kami has not returned to him. While Tadeo's claim seems outlandish, a fire of fierce conviction burns in his eyes; clearly, he fervently believes that what he is saying is true. His Seppun patrons weary of him, though, and he will soon have to leave the Forbidden City. Tadeo's response is that he can now answer only to the Kami Hantei himself and will remain until the Kami comes to take him to Tengoku.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
80 HONOR		ENDURANCE	14
65 GLORY		COMPOSURE	16
45 STATUS		FOCUS	5
+2, –2 DEMEANOR - DEVOTED		VIGILANCE	3

ARTISAN 2	MARTIAL 3	SCHOLAR 4	SOCIAL 3	TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Tactical Prowess: Martial; *Mental*	**Intolerant:** Social; *Interpersonal*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Katana: Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Wakizashi, ceremonial clothes (Physical 1, Ceremonial, Resplendent), personal chop

ABILITIES

DEVOTED SERMON

Activation: As a Support action, Akodo Tadeo may make a **TN 3 Theology (Fire) check** targeting all characters in the scene who can hear him (including himself).

If he succeeds, he may choose to either cause every target to receive 2 strife or cause every target to remove 2 strife.

SHRINE TO LORD SHIBA

A secluded structure on a courtyard hill within Shiro Shiba, this shrine is surrounded by trees transplanted from the Isawa Mori. It is often mistaken for another of Shiro Shiba's towers when seen from outside. Part of the shrine has been rebuilt due to a recent fire.

USING AKODO TADEO

Akodo Tadeo can be used as an interesting figure who is wandering around the Shrine to Hantei-no-Kami. Innumerable plots and schemes are always brewing and being played out in the Forbidden City; GMs can utilize Tadeo to bring characters into contact with some of those clandestine or devious machinations.

SHRINE TO LADY SHINJO

This marble shrine rests atop the tallest mountain on the border of Shinjo lands, so that pilgrims can see the majestic breadth of Rokugan on one side and the sprawling Burning Sands on the other.

SANPUKU SEIDŌ

Sanpuku Seidō, or Cliffside Shrine, is a remote and, until recently, relatively minor and obscure holding of the Phoenix Clan. Located on that clan's northern border, where the Empire gives way to the rugged wilderness of the Great Wall of the North mountains, Sanpuku Seidō is the ancestral home of the Kaito, which had long been a small vassal family to the Isawa. When events transpired that led to the Kaito's elevation to a full-fledged family in the Phoenix Clan, it made Sanpuku Seidō a much more important holding.

History

Since the earliest days of the Empire, the Hyōketsu tribe of the Yobanjin—those peoples who rejected the rule of the Kami—had troubled the northern Isawa lands of the Phoenix. Then, in the early fifth century, a visitor from the Imperial Court paid them to intensify their raids. Kaito no Momotsukihime, a priest of the Hyōketsu, objected to this escalation, but her concerns were dismissed by the tribe's leadership, which included her betrothed, Ateru, the so-called Demon of Wyvern Pass. Undeterred, Kaito brokered a treaty with the Isawa, offering a cessation of hostilities in exchange for acceptance of her people as a vassal family of the Phoenix Clan. However, many Hyōketsu refused to join the Phoenix. After some time had passed, Ateru led the remaining Hyōketsu against Kaito, and Kaito, an expert archer, was forced to confront and kill her betrothed. Ateru's corpse fell into a deep well. His trapped and angry spirit eventually weakened the boundary between the Mortal Realm and Tōshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter, and Sanpuku Seidō was built around the well to contain the danger. A more fanciful version of these events, in which Ateru had been a demon from the start, became the much better-known origin story of the Kaito and Sanpuku Seidō; only a select few know the real history.

By 1123, the shrine had become dilapidated and languished in relative obscurity—and the wards incorporated into it to seal the well had begun to fail. The timely intervention of the Phoenix Clan Champion in that year averted disaster and resulted in the promotion of the Kaito from a vassal family to a full family of the Phoenix Clan. The Kaito renovated and expanded the shrine to recognize the family's Hyōketsu ancestors. It continues to serve as the Kaito family's ancestral shrine, and the Kaito's daimyō is its priest. A full recounting of these events is given in the *Legend of the Five Rings* novella *The Sword and the Spirits*.

Approaching the Shrine

To reach Sanpuku Seidō, a pilgrim must travel north from Kyūden Isawa in the Phoenix lands, following a road that is, at first, busy and well traveled. However, it soon becomes increasingly narrow, rough, and poorly

ADVENTURE SEED: BEFORE THE GATES OF HEAVEN

一 **Hook** The PCs are in Sanpuku Seidō as part of an honor escort for an Imperial dignitary visiting the newest Great Clan family, the Kaito. While they are there, a fire breaks out in the shrine. Fortunately, it is confined to a single small area of the shrine, but it does extensive damage. The Kaito family has limited resources, which are stretched even thinner owing to the Imperial visit; their daimyō, Kaito Kosori, requests the PCs' assistance in investigating what happened.

二 **Rising Action** It is immediately evident that the fire was deliberately set. As the PCs investigate, they uncover clues that point to a number of possible arsonists, but their suspicion eventually falls on a Dragon Clan samurai named Mirumoto Arata. Shortly thereafter, Arata disappears. A young woman named Kaito Nozomi reports that she saw Arata leaving Sanpuku Seidō, heading westward, into what appears to be trackless mountain wilderness.

三 **Climax** Kaito Nozomi, who is familiar with the area, offers to help the PCs track Arata. They eventually discover that Arata belongs to a cell of Bloodspeaker cultists that operates on the fringes of both Phoenix and Dragon territory. The Bloodspeakers seek to destroy Sanpuku Seidō because, given its new prominence, it now poses a significant spiritual threat to their own sinister activities. Can the PCs confront the Bloodspeakers by themselves? If not and they withdraw to seek help, then the cell may simply disperse, and the threat to Sanpuku Seidō will remain. Or could they seek help from Yobanjin whom Nozomi knows live nearby? Can they overcome differences in culture and convince the wary Yobanjin to assist them?

maintained as it climbs into the Great Wall of the North mountains. By the time the road begins to approach Sanpuku Seidō, it is skirting deep gorges and winding among silent stands of cypress and dark pines. After days of arduous travel, Sanpuku Seidō finally comes into sight.

This first part of Sanpuku Seidō is a monastery, a cluster of buildings of grey stone with red-tiled roofs. Most pilgrims are awestruck by the precarious-looking nature of the place: the buildings are perched on the edge of a series of steep slopes and foreboding, nearly vertical cliffs. Streets and stairs lined with prayer wheels, blessed ropes, and fluttering paper tassels are carved from the mountain itself, while a maze of rickety bridges connects the upper levels of the buildings. A small square is built around a large pear tree adorned with orange lanterns. The residence and court of the Kaito daimyō is located along the square, as are an oratory and library, a dōjō and training facilities for the Kaito family, and ancillary buildings such as dormitories, a dining hall, kitchens, and food storage buildings. The latter are especially important, as little food is grown close to Sanpuku Seidō; most must be brought to the site and stored over the long winter months, when the area is often effectively isolated. The Kaito, being a hardy, mountain-dwelling, rural people with limited resources, do not put much effort into ornamentation, so the buildings are generally plain and rustic.

A deep, forbidding ravine yawns between the monastery and the shrine proper. For most of the Kaito's history, a rickety bridge of wood and twisted wisteria vines was the only way of crossing, but since the Kaito's elevation in the Phoenix Clan, a far more sturdy (and less terrifying) stone bridge has been constructed. Wooden columns, painted a bright red, support the shrine's roof of interlocking wooden beams and dark tile. Sacred ropes and paper streamers flutter in the mountain winds. A bell tower rises above the shrine, while a veranda surrounds it, offering a breathtaking view of the mountains. A small, cloistered garden is home to eight setsumatsu-sha auxiliary shrines, each dedicated to one of the Eight Great Fortunes. Inside the shrine proper, a small stage and paper *shōji* doors conceal the sacred artifacts of the Kaito. Entry to the inner sanctum beyond those doors is forbidden to anyone who is not a priest, although during periods of formal worship and during festivals, the holy items are revealed to all. The ancient well, within which the spirit of Ateru was imprisoned, is also located in this inner sanctum. Like the buildings of the monastery, the shrine has a rustic, slightly ramshackle feel.

Since the events that led to their elevation, the Kaito have added a new wing to the shrine, one intended for the veneration of their ancestors among the Hyōketsu tribe of the Yobanjin.

Asako Hisa, Inquisitor

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 5 5

An older woman with greying hair and a somewhat furtive nature, Asako Hisa is an Inquisitor, a member of her family's secretive sect devoted to finding and destroying illegal magics in the Empire—particularly the evil blood magic known as mahō. She recently arrived unannounced in Sanpuku Seidō, accompanied only by a dour *burakumin* attendant named Surudoi, which simply (and ominously) means "sharp." Hisa has visited the shrine proper several times and has otherwise spent the hours walking the winding streets of the monastery, appearing to observe the comings and goings of the Kaito. If asked the reason for her presence, Hisa simply says she is conducting business on behalf of the Council of Elemental Masters. It may be that Hisa is ensuring that no blasphemous thoughts or practices have taken root among the Kaito, now that they are a much more prominent part of the clan. If so, the enigmatic Asako is apparently not yet satisfied that this is the case.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
35 HONOR		ENDURANCE	12
45 GLORY		COMPOSURE	12
45 STATUS		FOCUS	7
+2, –2 DEMEANOR - ZEALOUS		VIGILANCE	4



ARTISAN 2 | MARTIAL 2 | SCHOLAR 4 | SOCIAL 2 | TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Elemental Insight: Scholar; *Mental*

DISADVANTAGES

Dour: Social; *Interpersonal*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Wakizashi: Range 0–1, Damage 3, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Sacred garments (Physical 1, Supernatural 4, Ceremonial, Sacred), personal chop

ABILITIES

MAHŌ HUNTER

Hisa knows the following invocations: Jade Strike, Mask of Wind, Path to Inner Peace, and Yari of Air. Additionally, once per scene as a Support action, Hisa can grant one weapon at range 0–1 the Sacred quality until the end of the scene.

WHISPERED RUMORS

During the confrontation that led to the spirit of Ateru being put to rest, an onryō—a vengeful ghost from Tōshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter—escaped from the shrine. It poses a great danger while at large, particularly if it enters the more populous parts of the Empire.

One of the sacred items kept in the inner sanctum of Sanpuku Seidō is an ancient Yobanjin sword said to be imbued with "the power of stone and sky." It can be wielded by anyone who knows the correct incantations. These, however, are known only by certain Yobanjin religious leaders, who would much rather see the sword returned to their people.

Close to Sanpuku Seidō, a small footpath is sometimes seen diverging from the main trail, leading steep uphill into a gloomy stand of tall, dark pines. Those who follow it vanish for days, or even weeks, only to be found on the trail with no memory of what happened to them while they were away.

THE LOST SHRINE

Thousands of shrines lie scattered throughout the Empire. Occasionally, one that is particularly obscure or remote may fall into disuse, or even be forgotten entirely. One such, the Lost Shrine, languishes in the wilderness between the lands of the Lion and Scorpion Clans. It not only has been lost to memory, but has become a place of profound spiritual danger.

History

Built sometime before the eighth century, the Lost Shrine is located in the foothills of the Spine of the World Mountains in central Rokugan, near Beiden Pass. A key strategic passage, Beiden Pass has seen many conflicts over its control, particularly between the Lion and Scorpion Clans, whose lands lie north and south of the pass, respectively. In the mid-eighth century, these two clans fought yet another bitter, bloody conflict over access to the pass, which ended inconclusively. The subsequent treaty confirmed the two clans' holdings of land in the vicinity of the pass. Unfortunately, a combination of cartographic and bureaucratic errors resulted in a strip of land north of the mountains and east of the pass becoming a sort of administrative "wasteland." Each clan believes the other controls it; compounding this, the land is rugged, rocky, and unsuitable for most uses. This situation persists, the land in question essentially forgotten and, with it, the small, remote shrine nestled in its midst.

Nothing is known about this shrine. Similar shrines dot the shoreline of the Lake of Sorrows to the north, venerating those who fell unremembered in the many battles that have been fought in the area. Whether the Lost Shrine was erected for a similar purpose or another one altogether, its spirit has become enraged by centuries of neglect, transforming into a dangerous, malevolent type of yōkai. Worse, the malignancy of the wrath-filled spirit seems to be slowly spreading, infecting the wilderness around the Lost Shrine with the spirit's malicious influence. For reasons that are unclear, this spirit either has an innate affinity for spiders or has developed the affinity over time; spiders are attracted to the Lost Shrine, draping the trees around it with their webs.

Approaching the Shrine

As its name implies, the Lost Shrine is lost: its location, and even its existence, are unknown to nearly everyone currently alive in the Empire. From a gameplay perspective, any prospective visitors to the shrine must first, therefore, either learn of its existence or have reason to be traversing its wilderness location. The **Whispered Rumors** sidebar on page 43 provides several reasons why a group of samurai might seek out the shrine, but it is by no means exhaustive.

However it happens, the PCs approaching the shrine first notice something amiss about an hour's walk from it. The character of the wilderness changes, a vague sense of ominous watchfulness lingering among the trees, which contain an inordinate number of spiderwebs. The direction in which this feeling of discomfort intensifies is obvious, as is an increasing occurrence of yet more webs. Finally, climbing a slope of broken rock and scrubby brush, the PCs find a gloomy grove of old-growth cypress and hemlock atop a low hill. Spiderwebs cluster so thickly among their branches that the PCs can barely make out the distinctive shape of a torii gate, its wood cracked and silvered with age. If the PCs enter the grove without passing beneath the gate, they find a small wooden shrine just as weather-beaten as the gate, its interior piled with dirt, dead leaves, and more webs. The altar is a stone slab supported by several cracked and weathered wooden beams.



A Mounting Sense of Dread

To reflect the growing unease that afflicts travelers as they approach the Lost Shrine, PCs accumulate strife. An hour's walk from the shrine, the feeling of being scrutinized by something malign causes anyone experiencing it to receive 1 strife. Continuing to approach the shrine causes travelers to receive 1 more strife. The grove containing the shrine is so filled with brooding menace that anyone who enters it without passing through the torii gate receives 2 strife, plus 2 more strife at the end of each scene; the thick tangle of webs also makes it Entangling terrain. The PCs do not remove strife at the end of a scene while within the area affected by the shrine. Entering the grove through the gate instead causes them to receive 3 strife, plus 3 more strife at the end of each scene. Again, because of the masses of webs, the grove and the shrine are Entangling terrain, and they are also Imbalanced terrain with respect to all elements.

Entering the grove through the gate is a very different experience. A powerful wave of dread washes over the PCs as they pass from the mundane world into the spirit-haunted shrine. Trying to leave the grove without passing back through the gate is impossible, each attempt simply leading back to the shrine, while trying to leave through the gate provokes an attack by the Forgotten Spirit.

The Forgotten Spirit

ADVERSARY CONFLICT RANK: 10 4

The Forgotten Spirit has been driven into an all-consuming rage by centuries of neglect. Its original purpose or nature is no longer clear; whatever beneficence it once may have offered has been replaced by bitterness and anger. That said, unless a visitor to the Lost Shrine passes through the torii gate, the Forgotten Spirit remains a pervasive and disturbing background presence. If the visitor passes through the gate, however, the Forgotten Spirit appears in the shrine as a huge spider. The size of a pony, it is black, chitinous, and hairy—similar to a tarantula—with a cluster of glowing, reddish eyes and jagged, clashing mandibles. Unless the visitor immediately accedes to the spirit's demands for worship, it attacks. Worshipping it as described in **The Practice of Worship** (see page 37) mollifies it, at least until the visitor tries to cease worshipping or leave, whereupon it again attacks. If the visitor defeats the Forgotten Spirit, it vanishes, but it returns to the Lost Shrine a day later, apparently unharmed. It may be possible to pacify the spirit for a longer period or perhaps even put it to rest entirely, but determining how to do so requires considerable research—its affinity for spiders may be a place to begin such study—and would likely involve a specially designed ritual conducted by an appropriate holy person.

WHISPERED RUMORS

Imperial cartographers have discovered that a combination of map and clerical errors have left an area between the Lake of Sorrows and the Spine of the World Mountains outside the control of any clan. There is no record of this area's having been visited by anyone for several centuries.

Shugenja passing through Beiden Pass on the way to the Scorpion castle named Seven Stings Keep are afflicted by similar and disturbing dreams about an ancient shrine glimpsed within a foreboding grove of dark trees. Malevolent eyes glare from within the shrine, awakening the shugenja in a panic.

ADVENTURE SEED: ANOTHER FORGOTTEN SPIRIT

一 **Hook** Soshi Hanae, a shugenja of the Scorpion Clan, has called in favors to have a group of samurai escort her on a journey into the wilderness east of Beiden Pass. She explains that she has divined the presence of a powerful nemuranai in the area, but she cannot convince her clan to investigate, since the Scorpion believe that the area in question is controlled by the Lion Clan.

二 **Rising Action** The journey is arduous, taking Hanae and the PCs into trackless wilderness between the Spine of the World Mountains to the south and the Lake of Sorrows to the north. Not only is the trip difficult, but the lake is said to be haunted by the spirits of those who died in ancient battles around its shores. Eventually, the party overcomes the obstacles it encounters and finds an area apparently afflicted by severe spiritual disharmony—and many spiderwebs. Soon thereafter, they come upon the grove containing the Lost Shrine.

三 **Climax** If the PCs battle and defeat the Forgotten Spirit—or if they are able to otherwise pacify it—and search the shrine, they find an *omamori*, a ward against evil. This omamori is a small, colorful, patterned silken bag containing pieces of wood inscribed with sacred writings. This omamori is a nemuranai—an awakened item, as described on page 307 of the core rulebook—that contains the By the Light of the Lord Moon invocation (see page 192 of the core rulebook); as a quirk, the pattern woven into it changes subtly in the presence of someone who secretly (or overtly) intends to harm its bearer. Hanae demands to be given the omamori if it is discovered and she is still with the party.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
00 HONOR		ENDURANCE	24
05 GLORY		COMPOSURE	8
00 STATUS		FOCUS	8
+2, –2 DEMEANOR · WRATHFUL		VIGILANCE	8

3 3 3 3 5

ARTISAN 0 | MARTIAL 3 | SCHOLAR 3 | SOCIAL 0 | TRADE 2

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Horrifying Appearance: Martial, Social; *Interpersonal, Physical*	**Singular Purpose:** Scholar, Social; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Grasping Claws: Range 0–1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5, Snaring

Venomous Fangs: Range 0, Damage 2, Deadliness 9, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Chitinous carapace (Physical 4, Supernatural 4)

ABILITIES

MANIFEST SPIRIT

The Forgotten Spirit is an Otherworldly being of silhouette 3. It ignores the effects of mundane terrain qualities.

POTENT VENOM

Activation: When The Forgotten Spirit makes a successful Attack action check using their venomous fangs, they may spend ✲✲ in the following way:

> **Void ✲✲:** The target suffers one of the following conditions: Bleeding, Disoriented, Exhausted, Intoxicated, or Lightly Wounded [Void].

ENSNARING WEBS



Once per scene as a Attack action, the Forgotten Spirit may target up to two characters at range 1–4 of itself. Each target must resist with a **TN 3 Fitness check (Earth 2, Fire 5)** or suffer the Immobilized condition.

Religious Cults

Throughout its history, the Emerald Empire has seen the growth or emergence of many religious beliefs. Shinseism, for example, has persisted, thrived, and expanded, becoming a mainstream belief system that has lasted to the present day. Others, such as Fudoism—an offshoot of Shinseism that taught that each person's beliefs were unfailingly correct for that person—did not last, and faded away. Still others, such as any related to the veneration of Jigoku, the Realm of Evil, have been actively discouraged, or even repressed. And then there have been those that failed to attract more than a few adherents, remaining little more than obscure curiosities, of interest only to the Empire's religious scholars and historians.

Several of these ostensibly suppressed or forgotten belief systems still exist in the Empire, however, in the form of cults that lurk on the fringes of society, eager for opportunities to advance their enigmatic or even dangerous agendas. Two are described below: the strange and eccentric moon cults, and the blasphemous and heretical Bloodspeakers.

THE CULTS OF LORD MOON

The story of the fall of the Kami from the Celestial Heavens is well-known. However, the story focuses almost entirely on the Kami: the children of Amaterasu, Lady Sun, and Onnotangu, Lord Moon. Lady Sun remains widely venerated throughout the Empire as a generally benevolent, kindly presence associated with light and life. Amaterasu Seidō, or the Shrine of the Lady Sun, is a large shrine in the lands of the Centipede, a Minor Clan, that is dedicated to her. Many of the tears she shed over the loss of her children fell to earth as jade, a sacred substance inimical to the powers and minions of evil.

The same is not true for Lord Moon. Most Rokugani see Onnotangu as a perilous figure: not actually evil, but evocative of sin and disorder, and dangerously volatile. His blood, spilled upon the world when he was wounded by his son, Hantei, became obsidian, a substance associated with darkness, chaos, and negative emotion. Where his blood mingled with Amaterasu's tears, the first mortals were formed; however, while Amaterasu's tears are credited with the goodness and nobility of mortal humans, Onnotangu's blood is considered responsible for the sinful and selfish aspects of their nature. It is not surprising, then, that there are no formal shrines or religious orders in the Empire devoted

to this mercurial and volatile deity. Most Rokugani acknowledge Lord Moon's existence and the role he played in the creation of the world and the Empire, but they otherwise shun him and the sinister aura of chaos associated with him.

The Rise of the Moon Cults

Not all Rokugani are so ready to willfully ignore Onnotangu, however. Throughout the Empire's history, some individuals have chosen to see Lord Moon as deserving of recognition, respect, and even veneration. After all, he played a pivotal role in the world's creation and the Empire's founding. Moreover, as problematic as the mortal tendency to sin may be, it is nonetheless an immutable aspect of human behavior; denying it, these individuals say, is not only foolish but actually borders on blasphemy, as it is derived from Lord Moon, a divine being. Some even consider Onnotangu to be the preeminent divine figure in Rokugani cosmology, arguing that it was only through his actions—as paranoid as they may have been—that the Empire came into existence at all.

Many such individuals have held these beliefs privately, never sharing them with others for fear of being branded eccentric, or even dangerous. Some, however, have banded together, forming cultish groups dedicated to the worship of Lord Moon. Most such groups have been casually organized, conducting their meetings and other activities in secret, usually in remote locations. It is rare for such a group to consist of more than a few individuals.

However, the archived records of magistrates across the Empire do occasionally note instances of larger moon cults. Such groups usually coalesced around one or more particularly charismatic individuals. Some have included members of high social status, with the clout to deflect official attention. For example, while some records describe how a moon cult was closely monitored—or, in egregious cases, shut down—others suggest that an inquiry into a moon cult was suddenly and quietly dropped. As a result, the few scholars who have studied moon cults remain convinced that for each one detected, others continued to operate undiscovered.

The Nature of Moon Cults

Unsurprisingly, given the chaotic temperament attributed to Lord Moon, most of the cults that venerate him have a similar character. They tend to be loosely organized, without complicated or rigid hierarchies, and they are typically disorderly, even anarchic. For some people who join them, this is actually their greatest appeal. In a society such as Rokugan, which has an extremely strict and stratified social structure, being able to cast such constraints aside—even for just a short while—can be a very alluring prospect.

The moon cults typically view this reason for joining as only appropriate. The desire for lack of structure is, after all, an indulgence in the more sinful side of human nature. However, it does sometimes lead to tension within a moon cult, and even occasional conflict, as some cultists find it difficult to fully separate themselves from their status outside the cult. For example, a samurai who is a sergeant in a garrison may have difficulty putting that station aside when engaged in moon cult activities if some of the samurai's subordinates in the guard are also members of the cult. More than a few moon cults have collapsed and disbanded—or have been discovered by Imperial officials and destroyed—as a result of infighting among their members. Some moon cults have tried to remedy this issue by adopting more rigid structures, but such cults tend not to last because they fundamentally oppose the disorderly nature of their patron deity.

The result of this lackadaisical approach to organization means that a typical moon cult consists only of a cult leader and the rest of the group's membership, rather than any sort of deputies or other notable

PORTRAYING DISTURBING CULTS

Cults such as the ones described here are very much fringe elements in Rokugani society, incorporating themes of senseless and illogical behavior; lawlessness; rituals incorporating drugs, alcohol, and depravities; and truly vile practices such as blood magic and human sacrifice. These are potentially very disturbing topics, so we strongly suggest that GMs and players work together before the game begins to establish boundaries and ensure everyone is okay with whatever subject matter will be present. It's important to talk about these things both as a group and individually with each player, and to periodically check in with players to make sure they are still having a good time. Groups should also remain aware of those who may be in close proximity to their game, so they are likewise not made uncomfortable or upset by the situations described during the game.

positions within the group. A cult leader has usually assumed leadership simply by virtue of being particularly charismatic. This relatively informal approach to leadership means that many moon cults are plagued by factionalism. Groups within a cult may disagree with their current leader's edicts or may have come to resent the leader for other reasons. This can lead to power struggles, or even cause the cult to fraction into two or more smaller cults. Intimidation, blackmail, extortion, and even murder can all be fallout from the various conflicts among cultists, who are, by association, already predisposed to sinful and antisocial behaviors.

Beliefs and Practices of Moon Cultists

Just as moon cults tend to be fluid and anarchic in their organization and overall character, so too are their beliefs and practices variable and lacking in structure. Unlike the Empire's mainstream religions, the moon cults have no overarching or systematic way of venerating the focus of their devotion, Lord Moon. They have no standardized holy texts devoted to or describing his worship, and they have no codified rituals to glorify him and seek his beneficence.

Instead, moon cults tend to each develop their own particular practices based on what they believe about Onnotangu. Generally, these beliefs address aspects of Lord Moon, particularly his mercurial nature and his embodiment of the selfish and sinful attributes of mortals. Each cult interprets the specifics of these broad concepts in its own way, however. For example, one may emphasize Onnotangu's relationship to mortal sins, focusing particularly on the three sins of fear, desire, and regret. Meanwhile, another may be more concerned about Lord Moon's paranoia, using it as a sort of window on the most basic aspects of human nature.

Regardless of the specifics, the way a given cult sees Lord Moon as a deity in turn influences its practices. Most moon cults hold their meetings at night, often in conjunction with particular phases of Lord Moon. They may deliberately incorporate sinful activities into their worship; many moon cults have made use of drugs, alcohol, and debauched behavior in their rituals. Others have even practiced petty crime, such as theft and vandalism, in their efforts to venerate Onnotangu. It is an unfortunate truth that some who call themselves moon cultists are more interested in indulging their own sinful side than in actually venerating Lord Moon.



Because they do not want their existence and activities to be widely known, most moon cults meet in remote or secretive locations. Cults with affluent members may, for example, hold their meetings in a private location within an estate or holding of one of those adherents. Many moon cults prefer to hold their conclaves under the silvery gaze of Lord Moon himself, though, and therefore meet outside in secluded forest clearings or similar places. Almost without exception, moon cults, as organized groups, avoid meeting in places that venerate other Fortunes, spirits, or similarly recognized divine presences. Nevertheless, it is a fundamental truth that individual moon cultists generally do not reject mainstream Rokugani religious beliefs; many cultists also practice dutiful devotion to the tenets of Shinseism, Fortunism, or both.

Moon People

One of the more unusual and intriguing beliefs of some moon cultists is that of the existence of moon people. The moon, believers argue, is not just a manifestation of Onnotangu, but also a physical place, upon which Lady Sun's tears and Lord Moon's blood fell and created people, just as they did in the Mortal Realm. These moon people live there, but they sometimes travel to the mortal world to experience the warmth of their mother. Some Rokugani theorize that they do so in heavenly ships similar to *kobune*, and that the shooting stars sometimes seen in the night sky are these ships as they descend to Ningen-dō. Others believe that when the moon touches the horizon, the moon people are simply able to walk from one place to the other. This implies that if a Rokugani could arrange to be present where the moon touches the Mortal Realm, they could travel to the moon!

Moon people are characterized by "tells" in their appearance, according to some of the cultists who believe in them. Those with large, splotchy birthmarks are most obvious, as these are similar to the various dark patches observed on the face of the moon. However, other believers claim that people with eyes of two different colors, or with pale skin and hair and pinkish eyes, are also moon people. If they do exist, moon people are extremely rare in Rokugan, and they are considered figures of reverence by those moon cults whose members believe in them. For their part, Rokugani with these physical tells typically deny being moon people, but this rarely manages to dissuade true believers.

Recruiting Moon Cultists

The membership of a moon cult is often in a state of flux. In the case of an established cult, it is common for members to quit, for reasons ranging from fear of being exposed as a cultist, to being assigned new and undesired duties, to illness or even death. This attrition must be offset by the accrual of new members, of course, if the cult is to persist. A new cult, meanwhile, must likewise seek new members if it is to grow and thrive.

The process in each case is much the same. A prospective member is identified by notable words or actions that could indicate they might be open to embracing the worship of Onnotangu. One or more cultists approach them warily, often several times and in apparently innocuous social situations, before the cultists broach the subject. Alternatively, the cult's recruiters may work, at least initially, through intermediaries, such as mutual acquaintances, or through a medium such as written correspondence. Only when the cultists are reasonably sure that the prospective member may actually be approachable and interested do they make a pitch to convince the target to join.

It is noteworthy that, while some moon cults count both samurai and commoners among their membership, cults composed entirely of one or the other are in fact more common. Cults in which the two are mixed can be problematic. While samurai, in particular, may be willing to effectively waive much of the convention of social status within a cult, it is extremely rare for them to do so when it comes to commoners.

The Empire's View

Most Rokugani have a complicated relationship with Lord Moon. On the one hand, he is a powerful Fortune who played an important role in the creation of the world and the Empire. On the other, he is a figure who embodies paranoia, selfishness, volatility, illogical thinking, and sin. Venerating him is not illegal. Rather, it is uncommon, to the extent that those who do so are considered odd. Moon cults are not illegal, either. However, because of their members' penchant for incorporating what are generally considered to be sinful practices—including crimes—into their worship and because of their tendency to cast aside the conventions of social status, moon cults are viewed with suspicion. If magistrates become aware of a moon cult, they are likely to investigate it and subsequently monitor it, and take appropriate action if crimes or blasphemies are revealed. What the Emperor or magistrates deem to be appropriate punishment for such crimes is not well-known, but members of the cult are rarely heard from again. Otherwise, most moon cults are free to conduct their eccentric ceremonies in relative peace.

Shun, Inspired Moon Cultist

ADVERSARY CONFLICT RANK: 3 4

Shun is an enigmatic peasant. She firmly believes that every mortal's path to Enlightenment is their own, but also that this fact incorporates an essential problem. Onnotangu was fundamentally important in the creation of the world, so in order to truly understand the world—a prerequisite of Enlightenment—one must correspondingly understand Lord Moon. Shun is charming but pushy, and considers herself to be the savior of those who lack her insight. Her belief in the powers of Onnotangu come from her inherent shugenja abilities, specifically ones related to water. Shun also possesses the ability to temporarily grant others access to her powers, but the blessings of Onnotangu cause those who wield them great emotional drain.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
45	HONOR	ENDURANCE	8
60	GLORY	COMPOSURE	12
35	STATUS	FOCUS	5
+2, –2	DEMEANOR · MOON-BLESSED	VIGILANCE	3



ARTISAN 2 | MARTIAL 2 | SCHOLAR 2 | SOCIAL 3 | TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Devoted Adherent of Onnotangu: Scholar; *Mental*

DISADVANTAGES

Obstinate: Social; *Interpersonal*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Bō: Range 1–2, Damage 6, Deadliness 2, Mundane

Gear (equipped): Traveling clothes (Physical 2, Durable, Mundane, Subtle)

ABILITIES

THE GIFTS OF THE MOON'S LIGHT

Once per scene as a Support action, Shun may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** targeting one character in the scene other than herself.

If she succeeds, she grants the target the ability to use one of the following invocations once (her choice): By the Light of Lord Moon; Rise, Water; or Strike the Tsunami. The TN of the check to perform the selected invocation is reduced to 2.

If a character uses one of these invocations (because it was granted by Shun), they suffer 6 strife after it is cast and, until the end of the scene, their Water Ring increases by 1, and their Fire Ring decreases by 1.

ADVENTURE SEED: THE MAN FROM THE MOON

一 Hook When the PCs arrive in a small village, they are approached by the village's leader, a commoner named Taro who asks them for aid. Recently, a young man stumbled out of the nearby forest, dirty and malnourished. He has a large, splotchy, curved birthmark covering much of his abdomen and lower back, and has spoken no words since arriving in the village. A villager named Shun claims this man is a powerful "moon person" from beyond the Mortal Realm and has come to bless the village. Her words have started to cause agitation in the village, and the leader implores the PCs for help in resolving the situation.

二 Rising Action Tensions rise in the village as mysterious things begin to happen. Chickens escape their coops, millet fields flood, and dogs howl all through the night. The villagers take sides—clamoring either to remove the silent man from their midst or hail him as a prophet. The villagers form two unruly mobs. One is ready to violently expel the stranger from their village. The other, led by Shun, is prepared to do whatever it takes to defend the perceived messenger from the gods. Only the intervention of the PCs can defuse the situation and avoid a bloodbath.

三 Climax The mysterious stranger silently observes as events come to a head. He watches calmly, whether the PCs negotiate a truce or the villagers clash violently. In the latter case, Shun and her allies protect the stranger with their lives. Should anyone attack the mysterious stranger directly, he evades them and slips away with preternatural grace and stealth. In the aftermath of the negotiation or skirmish, the stranger is nowhere to be found. When night next falls, the PCs see the stranger one last time; he bows in apparent satisfaction with his time in the village, before vanishing again.

BLOODSPEAKER CULTS

The name Iuchiban is rarely uttered in Rokugan, and then only in hushed tones taut with fear and contempt. Perhaps only the name of Fu Leng himself is more reviled throughout the Empire. This is because Iuchiban is responsible for dire events of which most Rokugani are vaguely aware, but most without knowing any meaningful details—just rumors and legends, all terrifying. For most loyal subjects of the Empire, that is more than enough.

Some Rokugani, however, are not content to simply let this sinister past lie quiet. They see Iuchiban's legacy as one of opportunities lost—but opportunities that may yet be realized, if his followers hold true to a faith that is widely considered profoundly blasphemous and heretical. To do so, they gather in extraordinarily secretive cults, participating in profane rituals intended to honor their evil patron and even, in his name, reshape the world into a wicked place for him to return to.

The Rise of the Bloodspeakers

Little is certain about Iuchiban. Detailed accounts are said to be kept in secret places by the Phoenix and Crab Clans and the Imperial authorities. But even if this is true, such records are beyond the reach of all but a few custodians and scholars. Instead, most of what is commonly believed about Iuchiban is a swirl of incomplete and disconnected facts, rumors, speculations, and legends—many of which are perpetuated by his followers.

Iuchiban was, his loyalists claim, a younger child of a past Emperor. Exactly which one is unknown and rarely even speculated about, for such musings would be blasphemous. Iuchiban's bitterness at not ascending to the Throne supposedly led to his eventual indulgence in the practice of forbidden sorceries, including some of gaijin origin. However, other tales of his origin exist as well. One says that Iuchiban was himself a gaijin, who may have come to the Empire when the Unicorn returned from their long absence. Another describes him as a shugenja—perhaps even a fallen Elemental Master of the Phoenix Clan—who found and delved too deeply into forbidden and evil magics.

What is actually recorded in accessible records is several hundred years ago Iuchiban attempted to seize power over the Empire. But even the details of this are murky. Stories of armies of undead beings mingle with vague descriptions of powerful, blasphemous rituals; horrific monsters; and even the rampant spread of supernatural plagues. Iuchiban was eventually defeated, but his horrified captors determined that his vile powers had rendered him immortal. Since he could not be executed, he was instead imprisoned in a cunningly wrought tomb whose location is, to this day, one of the most closely guarded secrets in the Empire.

It is this open-ended aspect of the story of Iuchiban that fuels a malignant devotion to him. People hungry for power or retribution, or simply intent on sowing chaos, are drawn to this sinister figure locked away in his hidden tomb. Called Bloodspeakers, they eagerly prepare for the day he escapes his confinement and returns to conquer the Empire. Bloodspeaker cults are the very embodiment of egregious Imperial crimes, so no effort is spared in trying to root them out and destroy them.

The Nature of Bloodspeaker Cults

All Bloodspeaker cults venerate Iuchiban as a godlike figure who personifies awesome and terrifying power. A popular conception is that Bloodspeakers are another malign expression of the influence of Jigoku, the Realm of Evil, in the Mortal Realm. Indeed, some of these cults may engage in the practice of the Taint-fueled blood magic known as mahō and may even count dedicated practitioners of this blasphemous art—*mahō-tsukai*—among their members.

This isn't the whole truth, however. Mahō and other practices related to the Taint of Jigoku are, at most, a minor part of these blasphemous sects, and they are entirely absent from many of them. The term "Bloodspeaker" is derived from the practices of blood sacrifice and human sacrifice that typify these cults, not just from the use of mahō. Rather, just as the Iuchiban's sorcerous powers may be derived from various sources, both Rokugani and gaijin, so too do the practices and powers of Bloodspeaker cults vary from one group to another. It would appear that strange and potent evils that have little or nothing to do with Jigoku lurk beyond the veils of creation. Such nightmarish forces seem to have given Iuchiban at least some of his terrible power, and it is these with which Bloodspeakers now seek communion. Most members of Bloodspeaker cults are not themselves mahō-tsukai, though their bloody rituals invariably do draw kansen, corrupted kami, to the places where they work their twisted rituals. Many cultists see these defiling spirits as the favor of Iuchiban, or even his ancient presence turning its eye upon their works.

Fortunately, Bloodspeaker cults are quite rare. Moreover, those that are discovered are almost always quickly and brutally destroyed by Rokugani authorities. The most successful ones therefore tend to be relatively small, insular, organized into dispersed cells, and located in remote areas. Their true danger, though,

is not their numbers, but rather in their potential to unleash—whether inadvertently or deliberately—terrible powers that they cannot control.

Beliefs and Practices of Bloodspeaker Cultists

Unlike the relatively chaotic moon cults, most Bloodspeaker cults tend to maintain a grimly rigid hierarchy. Only through tight control can the Bloodspeakers' efforts and activities be kept secret; moreover, the powers with which some cults engage are profoundly dangerous, so communion with them must be similarly constrained. While details may differ from one cult to another, each one generally has a leading figure: a high cultist, although some use the term high priest, emphasizing what they see as their religious nature. Immediately subordinate to the high cultist is at least one, and more often several, deputies, who are variously called acolytes, adepts, or simply priests. These individuals tend to perform specialized roles, such as overseeing routine ceremonies and rituals, curating artifacts and ritual implements, and, crucially, enforcing discipline within the cult. New high cultists are normally selected from among these most senior members of the cult. The remaining individuals are called members or, if they have yet to prove themselves to the leadership, initiates. Until they have thoroughly proven themselves, initiates know little about the cult's activities or membership, and they are often considered expendable.

Many members of Bloodspeaker cults are commoners. Most commoners bear deep grudges about their lot in life, and their discontent offers fertile ground for recruitment. Their samurai masters' tendency to ignore their day-to-day activities also means that commoners can get away with many things that would stand out if done by a samurai. That said, samurai do join the ranks of Bloodspeakers, usually because of bitter dissatisfaction over some wrong—real or perceived—or simply because they envision an easy path to power. To a much greater extent than in moon cults, the social boundaries between samurai and commoners are largely erased among the Bloodspeakers. Rather, all members tend to eschew social status and the Celestial Order, instead subsuming themselves to their evil patron and the dreadful practices of their cult. Only the cult's internal hierarchy matters.

The other important commonality among Bloodspeaker cults is their reverence for Iuchiban, who, it is said, sometimes manifests in the spilled blood of a sacrifice, a phenomenon known as the Oracle of Blood. Whether this is true or just a Bloodspeaker legend is not clear. Most cults also believe that Iuchiban will someday escape his captivity and return. It is incumbent upon his cultist adherents to do whatever is necessary to facilitate this. However, beyond this central role of Iuchiban in their heretical beliefs, individual cults vary greatly in their beliefs and practices. To illustrate this, the following sections describe two Bloodspeaker cults, each very different in character.

The Gatherers

This cult has no specific location; instead, its members are scattered about the Empire in individual cells that are largely ignorant of one another. Only the high cultist and a few of their deputies, who coordinate the cult's plans, know of the locations and activities of each cell. The focus of this cult's efforts is locating, gathering, and studying lore and artifacts, preparing to either use them on behalf of Iuchiban when he returns to the Realm of Mortals or prevent others from using them against him.

This puts the Gatherers on a potential collision course with legitimate seekers of lore and artifacts in the Empire, such as the Isawa and Asako of the Phoenix Clan. The Gatherers have a few members among the Phoenix who strive to monitor their clan's activities and then feed information to other members to alert them to possible new finds or warn them against what might be traps set by Asako Inquisitors. This ongoing contest makes the cult vulnerable, but its members earnestly believe their sacred mission is worth the risk.



It is not clear how many artifacts the cult possesses; like its membership, these are scattered in secret locations throughout the Empire. It is rumored within the cult that a particularly powerful artifact has recently been recovered, one that all but guarantees their evil patron's triumph when he escapes his prison and once more brings his malign blessings to the world.

The Summoners

Rokugani scholars believe they have a good understanding of the various Spirit Realms that exist apart from Ningen-dō, the Mortal Realm. However, this Bloodspeaker cult believes that even more obscure realms exist, including one that is host to beings utterly inimical to the Mortal Realm—far more so than even the evil realm of Jigoku. Moreover, the Summoners have come to believe that they can summon these beings to Ningen-dō in service to Iuchiban, and that the beings will prove unstoppably powerful.

This cult, which is based in the vicinity of Zakyo Toshi, takes advantage of the relatively sparsely populated Minor Clan lands sandwiched between the Scorpion Clan to the north and the Crab Clan to the south. This allows it ample opportunity to conduct its meetings in remote and secretive places, well away from prying eyes.

To date, the Summoners believe they have been able to make brief and tenuous contact with the alien realm they call "Night without End"; in particular, they believe they have communicated with a being they know only as "the Watcher." The exact nature of this communion, which is empowered by human sacrifice and experienced through nightmarish, drug-induced trances, is unclear. The Summoners may simply be delusional, or perhaps they are being manipulated by something else entirely. Their belief that they can control the actions of a being such as the Watcher after they summon it to the Mortal Realm may be wrong—something they may not realize until a truly alien monstrosity has begun a catastrophic rampage that cannot be stopped.

The Empire's View

The Empire's view of Bloodspeaker cults is unequivocal: they are illegal, their very existence being a violation of Imperial laws against blasphemy, heresy, and engaging in forbidden magics. Accordingly, Bloodspeaker cults are clandestine in the extreme, their members going to almost paranoid lengths to conceal their involvement in them, and individual cells taking extraordinary measures to avoid discovery.

This is because the alternative is certain execution by the Imperial authorities. The Emerald Magistrates'

ADVENTURE SEED: BLOOD ON THE STAGE

Hook The PCs learn that an accomplished troupe of actors is to perform in a town they are currently visiting, or in one nearby. Called the Laughing Tortoise, this troupe specializes in *kyōgen*, a comedic theater style that uses absurdly exaggerated characters and plots. Excitement about the performance buzzes among the locals—samurai and commoners alike—as this troupe has gained a reputation for putting on shows that are uproariously funny. The PCs may even receive an invitation to attend from the town's governor, who is especially fond of the troupe.

Rising Action The PCs indeed find the show raucously entertaining: the brilliant comedic performers evoke so much laughter in the audience that it begins to seem frenetic and borders on inappropriate. One of the PCs—a shugenja, perhaps, or a character with a relevant advantage, such as Sixth Sense or Wordplay—discerns hints of a somewhat disturbing narrative thread woven through the performance, accompanied by even subtler suggestions of some supernatural effect at work. If the PCs investigate, they find clues—albeit inconclusive ones—that the troupe members are concealing a nefarious secret about themselves.

Climax The Laughing Tortoise is actually a small Bloodspeaker Cult that has learned how, through secretive blood rituals, to draw sinister power from a strange, shadowy Spirit Realm they call the Great Stage. Tapping into this power gives troupe members their strangely alluring performing abilities, but over the course of repeated shows, it also slowly and subtly allows them to influence their audiences, manipulating their views and actions. The titular the Laughing Tortoise is none other than the troupe's name for Iuchiban, and the actors are attempting to use their performances to break the barriers preventing his return. The PCs find that the locals are generally protective of the troupe. Can the PCs find a way to break the troupe's malign influence over these people, or will the PCs find themselves banished from town, accused of out-of-proportion crimes by the local magistrates and imprisoned…or even worse, captured by Bloodspeakers?

jurisdiction includes the investigation and prosecution of the egregious crimes of Bloodspeaker cults, an effort in which they are amply assisted by groups such as the Asako Inquisitors of the Phoenix Clan, the Kuni Witch Hunters of the Crab Clan, and the secretive Kuroiban, or Black Watch, of the Scorpion Clan.

Akiara, Chilling Bloodspeaker

ADVERSARY CONFLICT RANK: 5 6

Essentially nothing is known about Akiara, aside from the fact that they exist. Their name, which means "bright person," is almost certainly a pseudonym. It isn't even certain whether Akiara is a samurai or a commoner. All that is known is that Akiara is a Bloodspeaker, utterly devoted to the worship of Iuchiban in anticipation of the glorious triumph of his release from bondage and return to rule the world. If Akiara belongs to an existing cell, they make no mention of it, instead seeming intent on swaying people they believe may be open to the worship of Iuchiban. And Akiara is terrifyingly effective to that end, exuding an aura of suave, sinister charm with a terrifying sense of restrained power. This is almost enough to make the hints and suggestions of cosmic horror that thread their way through Akiara's sibilant words tolerable…almost.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
00	HONOR	ENDURANCE	14
10	GLORY	COMPOSURE	14
00	STATUS	FOCUS	7
+2, –1, –1	DEMEANOR - ALLURING	VIGILANCE	4



ARTISAN 1 | MARTIAL 2 | SCHOLAR 3 | SOCIAL 4 | TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Forbidden Knowledge: Scholar; *Mental*	**Strange Corruption:** Martial; *Spiritual*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Knife: Range 0, Damage 2, Deadliness 4/6, Concealable, Mundane, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Sorcerous robes (Physical 2, Supernatural 4), second knife, wakizashi, personal chop

ABILITIES

WHISPERS OF HORROR

Once per scene as a Support action, when speaking of Iuchiban or the abominations that will enable him to take over the world, Akiara may make a **Theology (Air) check** targeting one person, with a TN equal to the target's vigilance. If Akiara succeeds, the target immediately suffers 12 strife and becomes Dazed.

MASTER OF KNIVES

Akiara may wield two knives without penalty. When Akiara makes an Attack action check with a readied knife against a target, they may immediately make a second Attack action check against the same target with another readied knife.

The Phoenix Clan

In the northeast of Rokugan are the lands of the Phoenix Clan, a region that varies from barren, forbidding mountains and rugged, storm-lashed seacoasts to silent, spirit-haunted forests. The contradictions displayed across this diverse terrain are a reflection of the clan: on the one hand, enigmatic holy people who commune with the spirits the way others might converse with friends and loved ones, and on the other, pragmatic guardians who would give their life in a heartbeat to save those they are sworn to protect. Most Phoenix are pacifists who eschew violence when they can, but they are also skilled warriors who march into battle when they must. With a word to the kami, a Phoenix shugenja can cause an origami bird to flutter to a semblance of life—or turn a gentle breeze into a roaring gale. Indeed, the contrary character of the Empire itself is mirrored in the Phoenix, which is fitting; in many ways, they are both the spiritual soul of the Empire and fierce protectors of everything that soul represents.

The Phoenix Clan's role as protectors dates back to Shiba himself, who began seeking wrongs to right shortly after awakening in the Mortal Realm. Shiba came to the breathtaking mountains that would someday become Phoenix lands and found people living fleeting, harsh lives, and yet these humans somehow found the will to strive for more. Inspired by their determination, but believing only his power could change their world for the better, the Kami quickly established himself as a folk hero, tyrants and monsters falling by his blade. In time, several local rulers pledged themselves to him, seeing a chance to grow their domains under this seemingly invincible figure. Most of all, they hoped to expand into the lands of the reclusive and mystical tribe of Isawa. But Shiba refused to strike first, counseling coexistence, and this detente remained even after Hantei formally granted Shiba domain over the entire region. But the war with Fu Leng changed everything, and the balance of power in those lands was no exception.

Eventually, however, the War against Fu Leng became impossible for Isawa to ignore; he realized he needed to join Shiba and his followers, but he would only do so if Shiba knelt to him. The Kami did so, humbly prostrating himself before Isawa and vowing to protect his people.


WATER BECOMES CLOUDS
CLIFFSIDE SHRINE
LOST ARROW SHRINE
GISEI TOSHI
Kaito
HARA ELEMENTAL ACADEMIES
SHRINE TO JUROJIN
GISU CASTLE
Dragon Lands
Isawa
Isawa
Shiba
SHELTERED PLAINS CITY
SHIBA CASTLE
CASTLE OF THE CAT
Phoenix Lands
MORNING GLORY CASTLE
SHADOW FOREST CITY
TWIN SOUL TEMPLE
VIOLENCE BEHIND COURTLINESS CITY
Asako
CASTLE OF THE CENTIPEDE
CASTLE OF THE EMERALD CHAMPION
Lion Lands
The Lands of the Phoenix

THE ELEMENTAL MASTERS

Unique to the Phoenix Clan is the ruling body of the Isawa: the Five Elemental Masters. These five preeminent shugenja are masters of their art, each having learned from their predecessor. Despite the growing turmoil of this age, the Five Elemental Masters represent a diversity of experience that only strengthens their decisions:

Isawa Eju, Master of Air, is an elder whose attention to detail informs his wise decision-making… though such decisions are not always made quickly.

Isawa Rujo, Master of Earth, is staunch and devout with a great respect for the kami.

Isawa Tsuke, Master of Fire, leads with great prowess and pride, having seen many pupils fail to meet the harsh expectations of the council.

Isawa Azunami, Master of Water, knows how to lead even her peers, using empathetic insight to understand those around her.

Isawa Ujina, Master of Void, has researched many valuable arcane mysteries but saves his wisdom for private discussion.

As a result, unlike in the other clans, the leading family of the Phoenix is not descended from their Kami, but from a mortal. This has led to another great difference from the other clans. In each of those, the clan champion, descended from the clan's Kami, is its ruler and leader. But while the Phoenix Clan Champion is a Shiba, this individual does not hold unambiguous authority over the clan. Rather, they do so in conjunction with the Council of Elemental Masters: five powerful individuals, each of whom is the leading adept of one of the Five Elements.

Today, the Phoenix are considered the foremost spiritual authorities in the Empire. In particular, they are seen as the guardians of its spiritual well-being and of the continuance of its religious traditions. Certainly, all holy people in Rokugan, whether shugenja, monks, or priests, carry the weight of responsibility for seeing to the spiritual welfare of the Empire's subjects. But the Phoenix set the standard, serving as the exemplar for all to follow. It is a momentous duty indeed, but the Phoenix Clan has dedicated itself unflinchingly to the task. And when the burden seems too great, the samurai of the Phoenix Clan need only look back to their Kami, who bent his knee to a mortal in service to the Empire.

Families of the Phoenix Clan

Being the guardians of the Empire's spiritual soul, it is incumbent on each of the Phoenix families to further the Empire's purpose. Complicating this is a fundamental tension, particularly between the Shiba and Isawa families; despite their founding Kami's choice to kneel before the mortal Isawa and pledge his allegiance and protection to Isawa's people, a certain resentment or uncertainty lingers among the Shiba family. How dare a mortal presume to demand such a thing of a divine being?

But any such resentment does not impede duty. Regardless of their own thoughts and feelings, the Shiba unflinchingly serve as the clan's protectors: the bodyguards of its shugenja, courtiers, and other noncombatants; the core of its armies; the backbone of its defenses. The Isawa, in turn, have no reservations: their faith in the Shiba is absolute. Freed of much of the need to concern themselves with their mundane security, the Isawa are free to devote themselves to the spiritual, seeking to discern and understand the world of the mystical and unseen and to ensure that it and the world of mortals can live in harmonious accord. The Asako, meanwhile, are scholars, studying lore both new and ancient, and courtiers, representing the clan to the rest of the Empire. They are also rumored to be fierce opponents of illegal magics, with some Asako secretly dedicated to rooting out and destroying these blasphemous practices. Meanwhile, the newest family, the Kaito, struggle to come to grips with their role in the clan as keepers and protectors of holy places, while also trying to understand the elemental imbalance that increasingly plagues the Empire.

It is the Bushidō tenet of Righteousness that drives the Phoenix, and ultimately what explains Shiba's decision to bow to Isawa. Shiba saw this as right, and dedication to this ideal has guided the clan ever since. Even if they may resent the Isawa, the Shiba acknowledge that their Kami's decision was the right one.

When it comes to matters of the mystical and spiritual, there really are some things that were not meant to be known. Others in the Empire may see this as hubris, but the Phoenix are only too aware of what terrible price Rokugan could pay if their clan does not remain committed to what is right.

ISAWA

Isawa was a dour man who refused Shiba's offer to welcome him and his people into the Kami's growing body of followers. When the War against Fu Leng arrived on Isawa's doorstep, he finally relented when Shiba came before him and knelt. That sense of righteous pride has been a hallmark of the Isawa family ever since. Others may see it as arrogance, but the Isawa are rarely swayed by the opinions of others. If some Rokugani see this as conceit, or even egotism, that is not the fault of the Isawa. They simply know what is true and what is right, and act accordingly.

Unsurprisingly, the Isawa tend to be insular in most matters, taking counsel from no one but themselves. It is rare for a member of the Isawa family to represent the Phoenix in matters regarding the broader Empire, unless it pertains to a matter of spiritualism. In such a case, the Isawa do not hesitate to involve themselves, simply because it is best for the Empire that they do.

Reputation and Values

Shugendō, the practice of communing with the spirits, is rare, but those capable of it are born in every clan. In none of them, however, is this ability as common as it is in the Isawa family.

Many Isawa are born with a natural affinity for shugendō. Thanks to the Isawa's history with the art that predates Rokugan itself, many Rokugani acknowledge the family as experts in and custodians of shugendō's practices and lore. The Isawa certainly do. After all, Shiba himself knelt to Isawa; if the family tends to be haughty regarding matters related to the spiritual, it is only because it is justified.

The family's confidence in their abilities is only reinforced by the affinity among some Isawa for the most enigmatic of the five elements: Void. While Earth, Fire, Air, and Water occur in all things in varying proportions, it is Void that gives those things their unique shape and identity. Those who have an affinity for Void—the extraordinarily rare individuals called ishiken—are almost always taken, if they can be found, to be trained at the Starry Heaven Sanctuary, after which they are made members of the Isawa.

Despite their expertise, the Isawa's ability to so readily interact with the elements is perilous. The family has developed a culture of pacifism, seeking to avoid conflict and the resulting destruction as much as possible. If some loss must be incurred now to prevent greater catastrophe in the long run, however, then the Isawa do not hesitate to act. Of course, if, how, and when they do is a decision they reserve entirely for themselves.

Culture and Traditions

Shiba's obeisance to Isawa was more than opportunism. Isawa knew that the intimate connection his people had with the spiritual world, whatever its origin, was unique, and could be lost as his people were subsumed into Shiba's nascent clan and into the Empire as a whole. By having the Kami kneel to him in what would become known as "the Promise," he forever cemented the Isawa's uniqueness within the Phoenix Clan, ensuring that their particular culture would be preserved



indefinitely. The Promise also ensures that the will of the Isawa generally prevails over that of the Shiba even to this day, although the Isawa are careful to invoke the Promise only sparingly and when necessary.

Accordingly, the Isawa have remained a family apart. Beyond their affinity for shugendō, the Isawa are generally scholarly, with a great curiosity about lore of all types. Many are also reclusive, spending much of their life engaged in mystical research and meditation. They have no martial tradition, and they rarely engage in politics. Those Isawa who are born without a facility for shugendō typically pursue lives as priests, scholars, or monks.

ADVENTURE SEED: DANGEROUS CARGO

一 **Hook** The PCs are assigned to escort a renowned shugenja, Isawa Genkei, from Otosan Uchi to the Isawa Elemental Academies. Genkei, who is transporting several artifacts in a securely locked chest, currently has no *yōjimbō*; as his died in a recent riding accident. Escorting Genkei is an important and honorable task, and will ensure that the Phoenix owe favors to the escorts' clans.

二 **Rising Action** The journey begins uneventfully, but soon, strange happenings afflict the group. The PCs suffer from nightmares of fire and blood. A brush fire breaks out as the group passes through a woodland, forcing them to flee the rushing flames. The PCs' horses, along with other animals the group encounters, become skittish and difficult to handle. It soon becomes clear that Genkei, something contained in the chest, or both are somehow eliciting these strange and unsettling events. Genkei, whose status is considerably higher than any of theirs, is tight-lipped about his affairs and whatever he carries in the chest, claiming it is none of the PCs' business—and they wouldn't understand it anyway.

三 **Climax** One night, a bedraggled and bloodied bushi arrives in the PCs' camp or lodgings, claiming to be the yōjimbō of Isawa Genkei. She accuses the man in the PCs' charge of being an evil spirit masquerading as Genkei and further demands that the contents of the chest be destroyed "before any more harm is done." Genkei in turn accuses the bushi of being a lying and malevolent spirit, and maintains that it is vital he reach his destination with his cargo. Whom do the PCs trust? Will opening the locked chest verify either one's claims—or expose the PCs to Tainted artifacts or worse?



Most of the family's traditions revolve, unsurprisingly, around spiritual matters. The Isawa are quite dedicated to religious festivals and to life rites such as marriages, funerals, and memorial services. Many do bear their wakizashi, but they keep it tied into its scabbard with a cumbersome peace knot, rendering it ineffective as a weapon. They are not truly ascetic, but they prefer entertainment that has a spiritual component, such as the sacred, theatrical dance known as kagura.

The leadership of the Isawa is also unique within the Empire. They are led by the Council of Elemental Masters, each representing one of the five elements. This is, by extension, also the ruling body of the clan, but only in conjunction with the clan champion, who is always a Shiba. Finally, the Isawa are dedicated to the concept of mentor and pupil. Given the potential for serious harm in the use of shugendō, a strong bond between young and headstrong shugenja and their more reserved and restrained masters is essential. The Isawa even say that they live two lives—one as student, and one as teacher—and that both last from birth to death.

Religious Perspectives

Given their righteous, proud nature regarding spiritual matters, it is surprising how open the Isawa are to a broad range of mystical practices. Far from being hidebound dogmatists, the Isawa are almost always eager to learn about new types and aspects of religious belief and ritual. This is not to say they are necessarily accepting of them; indeed, if they find a practice spiritually dangerous or repugnant, they won't hesitate to label it as such and seek to have it declared blasphemous. Before taking such measures, however, they ensure that they understand the practice, and its implications, thoroughly. For example, the Isawa are deeply suspicious of the meishōdō magic of the Unicorn, but they are still quite intrigued by it and wish to learn as much as they can about it before deciding whether it can be fully allowed, instead of barely tolerated, in the Empire.

This openness extends to the Empire's own religious traditions. The Isawa are particularly devoted to neither Shinseism nor Fortunism, although their closeness to the spirits does make Fortunism somewhat more compatible with their views. Instead, they have developed a more complex and nuanced agglomeration of beliefs and practices that are derived from both, and that also incorporate elements from their own history prior to the fall of the Kami. For example, they may use somewhat different invocations and prayers, employ artifacts such as candles or lanterns when the more traditional methods would use bells or prayer wheels, or perform a sacred dance that is derived from the folk practices of their distant ancestors.

The unifying thread that binds all of their beliefs, though, is a reverence for the spirits with whom they interact. The Isawa see the spirits as partners, to be venerated and respected, rather than as subjects to be commanded. Their relationship with spirits is, therefore, much more interactive and nuanced than that of, say, the Kuni family of the Crab Clan or practitioners of meishōdō, who are more likely to view spirits as powerful beings to bargain with.

Current Concerns

One of the foremost concerns of the Isawa is the ongoing elemental imbalance that plagues the Empire. They do not understand why the elements are in a disharmonious state—reflected in the increasing difficulty of controlling invocations of the elemental kami—but they are determined to learn more.

More generally, a key and ongoing concern of the Isawa is remaining aware of significant spiritual matters that affect the Empire. This is particularly true regarding the presence or use of unusual or forbidden magics. The Isawa seek to study such things so they can better understand them. Some may merely be interesting curiosities, but some could threaten the Empire's spiritual well-being; therefore, it is incumbent upon the Isawa to learn the difference and act accordingly.

Finally, although they generally don't speak of it openly, detecting and locating anyone in the Empire who shows an affinity for Void is a serious issue for the Isawa. Such individuals are rare outside their own family, as far

as anyone knows. It is hard for non-Phoenix to detect an affinity for Void, so the reported numbers aren't necessarily precise. If left untrained and uncontrolled, nascent ishiken can be profoundly dangerous, so the Isawa put a great deal of effort into ensuring that doesn't happen.

Lands of the Isawa

The provinces of the Isawa are difficult to access; despite being in the middle of the lands of the Phoenix Clan, they are isolated by mountains and forests. The seacoast is rocky, barren, and lashed by unpredictable weather and frequent storms. Inland, the Isawa lands have a large proportion of wilderness. In particular, the Isawa Mori—a large forest with a reputation for being wild and spirit haunted—occupies much of the area, with only a few roads traversing it. Swamp and marsh border the forest on both its eastern and western sides, while farther west, the ground rises into the barren, rugged mountains that boundary the eastern side of the Dragon Heart Plains.

Because of these geographic realities, the Isawa lands are, by the standards of most clan lands in the Empire, quite poorly developed. The Isawa do not produce enough food from farming for their needs and are reliant on seasonal fishing, and on imported food, to make up the shortfall. Conversely, their limited access and forbidding nature mean that the lands of the Isawa are quite safe and secure, containing little to attract the attention of more aggressive clans, such as the Lion.

Kyūden Isawa

The Isawa family's ancestral seat of power, Isawa Palace, home to the Isawa Elemental Academies, is a locus of spiritual practice and research. Although apparently weak militarily, Kyūden Isawa benefits from powerful and extensive supernatural protection. It is the home of the Great Library, the largest in the Empire, as well as the main council chamber for the Elemental Masters and the contemplative Grove of the Masters.

The Isawa Mori

A strange, spirit-ridden forest, the Isawa Mori is not unlike the far larger Shinomen Mori. The Isawa conduct part of their gempuku rites under its eaves; each young Isawa must spend a night alone in the forest in meditation. Because of the Isawa Mori's reputation for harboring many strange and potentially dangerous spirits, very few trees are harvested from it. When they are, the Isawa conduct rituals to appease the spirits, using the wood to make paper for particularly important scrolls or in the construction of shrines. There are many superstitions and stories about the forest and the strange things that may be found within it, including passageways to the Spirit Realms.

Gisei Toshi

Although it has existed since before the dawn of the Empire, Gisei Toshi is more myth than reality. The city's secrecy and isolation has allowed its residents to maintain a culture similar to that of the Isawa before the Kami's influence. The city is a place for the storage, curation, and study of all manner of magical artifacts and practices, many of which would be considered profoundly blasphemous elsewhere in the Empire. Even if they aren't heretical, no small number of the items and lore here are powerful, beyond human comprehension, or potentially extremely dangerous in the wrong hands. As a result, Gisei Toshi is heavily warded; it is said that only the Imperial Palace itself has stronger wards, and the few who know of the city remain silent even about that. The wards extend for some distance around the city, obfuscating its location and points of entry, making it virtually impossible for those who have no business there to find it.

Isawa Manami, Destined Shugenja

ADVERSARY CONFLICT RANK: 4 7

Isawa Manami's teachers are not surprised that she has become a supremely accomplished practitioner of shugendō. During her gempuku, when she spent a requisite night in the mysterious gloom of the Isawa Mori, she disappeared. Her mentor and family feared that she was dead or, worse, had been taken off to some other realm by hostile spirits. But after three days, she was found sleeping in the same clearing where she had been left. She remembered little, but thereafter, her ability to commune with the elemental spirits burgeoned dramatically. Where other young shugenja had to work hard at memorizing the correct words, gestures, and other aspects of performing elemental invocations, Manami seemed to know them by instinct alone, and some Isawa wondered if she had been taught by the kami themselves. She even improvised on established practices, refining and improving them in ways that worked well for her, but that even much more senior shugenja simply didn't understand. It is widely believed that Manami will someday become an Elemental Master—although those missing three days, and what happened to her during them, remains an issue that causes even the Masters to frown.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
70	HONOR	ENDURANCE	14
65	GLORY	COMPOSURE	12
39	STATUS	FOCUS	7
+2, –2	DEMEANOR · RESERVED	VIGILANCE	3



ARTISAN 1	MARTIAL 1	SCHOLAR 4	SOCIAL 3	TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Mystical Insight: Scholar; *Mental*

DISADVANTAGES

Lack of Physical Training: 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), calligraphy set, scroll satchel

ABILITIES

ADEPT OF THE ELEMENTS

At the start of each game session, choose 0–2 invocations for each element (Air, Fire, Water, and Earth). Manami can perform those invocations this game session.

SHIBA

The Shiba are descended from their founding Kami, which would normally make them their clan's ruling family. This is not, of course, the case for the Phoenix. The Phoenix Clan Champion does indeed hail from the Shiba, but leadership of the clan is a complex and subtle balancing act. The Isawa's Council of Elemental Masters sets policy for most matters, with the Shiba champion implementing their will; however, in areas such as military affairs and relationships with other clans, the clan champion often has a leading role and is supported by the council. This nuanced relationship between the Isawa and Shiba echoes throughout many of their interactions; it is perhaps the closest and most unique interfamily relationship in the Empire.

Reputation and Values

The pacifistic nature of the Isawa, born out of an understandable desire to keep their formidable powers in check, is at odds with the martial culture of the Empire. Accordingly, it is the Shiba who act as the generals and soldiers of the Phoenix Clan. The clan's army is small compared to that of other clans. However, it is also well organized, disciplined, and highly skilled, thanks to the Shiba's devotion to the martial skills the Isawa avoid.

ADVENTURE SEED: AN APPROACHING MENACE

一 Hook The PCs are attending the court of Moshi Chiasa, the family daimyō and Centipede Clan Champion (see page 77). Various delegations from other clans are also present, including a contingent of Phoenix shugenja and their yōjimbō. The most senior of these yōjimbō, Shiba Miwa, who is well-known as a skilled warrior and tactician, soon begins to irritate the Moshi hosts with relentless questions about security and defense. As the various clan delegations begin political maneuvers intended to exploit the growing resentment between the Moshi and the Phoenix, a delegate from the Imperial Miya family asks the PCs, who have (at least for now) a relatively neutral reputation, to attempt to mediate between the Moshi and Phoenix before "an unfortunate diplomatic incident" occurs.

二 Rising Action The PCs find that the Moshi are certain of the security of Castle of the Centipede and sincere in their mounting anger at Miwa's incessant—and insulting—suggestions that it might not be safe. Miwa, however, is clearly unconvinced, and she presses her concerns, which now amount to demands. Miwa claims she is certain of an impending supernatural threat, though she refuses to explain why. In fact, Miwa is a kitsune, a fox spirit from the realm of Chikushō-dō, whose supernaturally attuned senses detected the Shadowlands Taint emanating from one of the gifts brought by a delegation (though she can't pinpoint the source).

三 Climax One night, a terrible shudder shakes the castle, as a powerful oni emerges from a seemingly simple decorative gift. If the PCs trusted Miwa and convinced the Moshi to heed her warnings, the many shugenja present might be prepared to banish the entity back to Jigoku. If not, the nightmarish entity takes the castle by surprise and slaughters many samurai before Miwa helps to defeat it, losing her own life in the process. In death, her fox features are revealed.

A particular expression of the Shiba as warriors, and one for which they are renowned throughout the Empire, is as yōjimbō: bodyguards for samurai who rarely, if ever, engage in combat, such as shugenja and courtiers. Shiba yōjimbō train long and closely with those who will become their charges, to the extent that each knows much of the mind of the other. It is essential for a yōjimbō to be able to detect and react to threats while also knowing the actions their charge is likely to take. Of course, there is a grim corollary to this: a yōjimbō will unhesitatingly sacrifice themself to keep their charge alive.

The Shiba family also assist in diplomatic and economic affairs that affect the Phoenix. In this, they tend to support the more scholarly Asako family, but it is not unusual for Shiba courtiers to engage other clans in negotiations related to treaties, interclan marriages, and trade deals. In many ways, the Shiba are the most worldly and pragmatic of the Phoenix families, but this is tempered by a deeper understanding of religion and spiritualism than the more martial families of other clans possess.

Culture and Traditions

In terms of their culture and traditions, the Shiba have been forced to walk a contradictory path.

They are pragmatic materialists in a clan of esoteric spiritualists, and skilled warriors in a clan that largely embraces pacifism. This paradoxical nature is reflected within individual Shiba. Many have struggled to remain true to themselves while doing what is best for their clan. The solution to this conundrum, the Shiba have found, is to embrace a devotion to duty that is almost unparalleled in the Empire.

The core of this paradox is, of course, their relationship with the Isawa, to whom the Shiba are fiercely loyal. At the same time, they must often wrestle with resentment and frustration from having to deal with their willful, sometimes even arrogant, clanmates. It is not uncommon for the Shiba to darkly mutter that the ones from whom the Isawa most need protection are themselves. They would not say such things to anyone from outside the clan, of course; no matter how divided and acrimonious their internal squabbling may be, to the Empire, the Phoenix always present a united front.

This is important, because the clan's leadership faces something that simply doesn't exist in other clans: debate. Not only is the clan champion, a Shiba, subordinate to the Isawa's Council of Elemental Masters in most matters, but the position is not hereditary, nor does any normal sort of succession apply to it. Rather, the clan's ancestral sword, Ofushikai—said to contain the spirits of Shiba and all the Phoenix Clan Champions after him—chooses the next champion from all Shiba who have reached gempuku. Its choice is sometimes a Shiba who, being young or inexperienced, seems ill equipped to deal with the prideful Elemental Masters. But the wisdom of the sword is not questioned, and the new champion must learn to adapt and grow into their position, just as all Shiba must.



Religious Perspectives

When Shinsei, the Little Teacher, spoke at length with the Kami Hantei about the need to gather the mortal heroes known as Thunders and, through them, confront Fu Leng, Shiba sat nearby and transcribed Shinsei's words. The result was the Tao of Shinsei, a thick book that documented all of Shinsei's teachings and wisdom. Shiba, who by then had become a dedicated adherent of the Little Teacher, placed the original Tao in Gisei Toshi, where it remains.



It is no surprise that, given their founding Kami's devotion to Shinsei, the Shiba are predominantly Shinseist. That said—and perhaps because their Isawa cousins are so very esoteric and spiritual—the Shiba are strikingly practical. They actually pride themselves on being rational and "no-nonsense" in their approach to life, seeing themselves as providing a real-world grounding in a clan that is generally both very academic and largely detached from the daily concerns of the Empire. For example, the Shiba recognize that when they conduct trade negotiations with other clans, it is important to obtain the best deals they can for the Phoenix; the Isawa are, in general, much less concerned about such crass, worldly concerns if they have no clear value in a spiritual sense. The Shiba are quick to emphasize that this doesn't mean they're any less devout in their observance of Shinseism. Rather, they are simply more pragmatic about it, melding Shinsei's wisdom with their observations of the world around them in a way that, to them at least, makes good and useful sense.

Current Concerns

Although they are not as overtly spiritual as the other Phoenix families—particularly the Isawa—the Shiba are, nonetheless, quite concerned about the elemental imbalance, insofar as it represents a threat to the security and stability of their clan and of the Empire as a whole. They are more generally concerned, however, about Phoenix interactions with the other clans and with the Imperial families; since the Isawa rarely can be bothered to attend to such matters, it falls on the Shiba and the Asako to do so. The Shiba therefore put a particular focus on remaining aware of goings-on throughout the Empire.

Even so, the Shiba tend not to represent the Phoenix to the Empire in a diplomatic sense: they mainly leave this to the Asako and function in more of a supporting role. Instead, they concentrate on being prepared to deal with events in the Empire that might affect the Phoenix. For example, the tsunami that decimated Crane Clan food production and the Dragon Clan's declining birthrate are the sorts of issues that could indirectly, or even directly, end up affecting the Phoenix.

Finally, the Shiba are always concerned about their clan's military status and about the welfare of their many yōjimbō's charges, whom they are dedicated to protecting. The failure of even a single yōjimbō raises questions about the abilities of all of them, so the Shiba devote an enormous amount time and effort to training, supporting, and monitoring these vitally important bodyguards.

Lands of the Shiba

Unlike the wild, hard-to-access lands of the Isawa, the Shiba provinces are mostly rolling plains sprawling between the Isawa Mori and the Mountains of Regret to the south. Fishing is important, particularly since the coastline of the Shiba lands is somewhat less rugged and better developed than that of the Isawa lands to the north. In fact, Shiro Shiba is the largest Phoenix Clan holding on the coast and is a major port. However, farming is far more prominent than fishing.

Shiro Shiba

Shiro Shiba, or Castle Shiba, is a confusing, apparently haphazard amalgam of different military, architectural, and engineering styles borrowed from almost all of the clans. Some Rokugani claim it was simply poorly planned and constructed, but others, more canny, discern a cunning, sophisticated, and layered defensive strategy wrought into the seeming chaos, one that would confound and defeat almost any conventional attacker. The Shiba family's ancestral seat of power, it hosts not only several prominent Phoenix dōjō, but also the Empire's foremost shrine to the Kami Shiba. As Shiro Shiba is a major port, most of the clan's trade with the rest of the Empire passes through it.

Morikage Toshi

Established in the fourth century in the midst of the Mori Kage, a gloomy forest of great trees, Morikage Toshi, or Shadow Forest Village, became a major center of trade and commerce for the Phoenix for almost four hundred years. In the late eighth century, however, a young Dragon Clan bride, who was betrothed to the bitter and cruel Phoenix Clan governor of the city, took her own life rather than go through with the marriage. This brought a curse upon the city, causing great misfortune to its residents. Despite the best efforts of the Phoenix to undo the curse, the city was eventually abandoned and reclaimed by the forest. Now, ghosts are reputed to wander its overgrown ruins.

Twin Soul Temple

Located south of the Asako provinces, Twin Soul Temple is the Empire's foremost academy for the training of shugenja and their yōjimbō. The temple contains not only dōjō for the martial training of bushi, but also libraries and shrines for the use of shugenja. The dual aim is to teach a bushi, as a yōjimbō, to protect their charge at all costs, while also teaching the shugenja to value the counsel and courage of their bodyguard.

This cooperative, even symbiotic, training is a major reason why Phoenix yōjimbō are known throughout the Empire as the most dedicated and effective.

Kyōrinrin of the Library

ADVERSARY CONFLICT RANK: 8 10

A yōkai formed from ancient texts, a *kyōrinrin* is born when old works are forgotten and left to gather dust. This being, when gathered together, looks like a crude imagining of a great dragon, with a long body and fang-filled face made of parchment and bindings. It loves to adorn itself in well-loved, ornate texts as if wearing a kimono. Its long, beak-like snout and supernaturally enhanced body allow it to punish those who would abandon text and let knowledge fade away.

A kyōrinrin does not discriminate between "good" and "bad" texts, and its own body may include forbidden and wicked knowledge. This yōkai must feast on fresh information at least once every other month; if it does not, it begins to waste away until it becomes dust. The kyōrinrin of Danuja's library (see **Adventure Seed: Forbidden Lore**, below) is an exception; this creature is twisted and cursed by the Taint. It revels in the taboo and relishes feasting on the minds of unwitting victims, and it has become increasingly and more demanding of Danuja in the last several weeks.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
00 HONOR		ENDURANCE	10
02 GLORY		COMPOSURE	18
00 STATUS		FOCUS	7
+2, –2 DEMEANOR - SHREWD		VIGILANCE	3



ARTISAN 2 | MARTIAL 2 | SCHOLAR 6 | SOCIAL 3 | TRADE 3

ADVANTAGES

Vast Knowledge: Scholar; *Mental*

DISADVANTAGES

Wicked Hunger: Social; *Physical*, *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Strangling Parchment: Range 0–2, Damage 2, Deadliness 5, Snaring, Unholy

Gear (equipped): Supernatural incantations (Physical 3, Supernatural 5, Unholy)

ABILITIES

TAINTED WHISPERS

The kyōrinrin of the library knows the following mahō techniques and does not suffer spiritual backlash or require a sacrifice to perform them: Incite Haunting, Grip of Anguish, Sinful Whispers, and Unholy Fervor (see pages 224–225 of the core rulebook).

ADVENTURE SEED: FORBIDDEN LORE

一 **Hook** The PCs are in a town whose governor proudly maintains a large library well stocked with obscure lore. Scholars travel here from all over to pore over the many documents the governor has collected. The PCs are approached by one such scholar, a man named Asako Renzo. Renzo, requesting the PCs' discretion, tells them that one of his kin, a woman named Asako Emika, has gone missing. Renzo is clearly distraught, and he feels the local magistrates aren't taking his concerns seriously, saying that Emika may simply have left town without him. Since the PCs are not local, he seeks their help in finding Emika.

二 **Rising Action** The PCs find the local authorities less than enthusiastic about pursuing the matter. If they investigate, they discern that this odd attitude originates with none other than the town's governor himself, a man named Danuja (his clan and family name are subject to GM discretion). Danuja dismisses Asako Renzo's concerns, and those of the PCs, as overblown. However, further investigation reveals that Asako Emika isn't the first visiting scholar to have gone missing; in fact, over the past two years, at least six have vanished.

三 **Climax** If they have raised the matter of missing scholars with the governor, he is unwilling to allow them access, so they either face some difficult politics or have to get into the library surreptitiously. Either way, they eventually confront the truth: the library is haunted by a kyōrinrin, a bizarre and Tainted spirit that manifests as animate scrolls to attack its quarry. The awful reality is that the governor has been receiving obscure and fascinating lore from the kyōrinrin in exchange for allowing it to remain in his library and occasionally prey upon visitors, whose deaths are then covered up. Not only do the PCs have to deal with the kyōrinrin, but they then have to face the governor, a powerful and well-connected man who has committed egregious Imperial crimes in consorting with a Tainted being.

ASAKO

Compared to the Isawa, the Asako family had a more conventional origin. At the dawn of the Empire, a skilled healer, Asako, became prominent among Shiba's followers. Her legacy, which combines healing with the acquisition and study of lore, has defined the family throughout its history. Early in this history, the Asako family's study of supernatural practices and phenomena led them to become guardians against corruption inside the Phoenix Clan. So effective were they at rooting out heresy within the clan in the third century that the Elemental Masters established the Asako Inquisitors as a persistent, and secret, safeguard against the spread of mahō and other forbidden magics in the Empire.

Also hidden among the Asako is an even more mysterious group. These are the *henshin*, members of a small monastic sect charged with the custody of an ancient secret known as the Path of Man. Given to Asako by Shiba, who in turn received it from Shinsei, the Path of Man is a way to apotheosis for all mortals: a means by which the henshin believe humans can, one day, ascend to become a race of what amounts to gods.

Reputation and Values

The Asako share many of the qualities of their Isawa kin, being somewhat ascetic intellectuals devoted to the collection and study of lore. However, the Asako are far more prominent in the Empire, because this family supplies most of the Phoenix Clan's courtiers and diplomats. The Asako have little of the prideful brusqueness of the Isawa, and they do not hesitate to engage socially and intellectually with others. In fact, they view their role in light of their founder's dedication to healing; the Asako family sees healing as a broad concept, so that by improving relations with other clans, for example, they are effectively "healing" relationships within the Empire.

Yet the lands of the Asako contain many secrets. One of these is the Dōjō of the



Eternal Eye, a mysterious training ground cloistered away within the depths of Shiro Gisu, or Castle Gisu. Here, the Asako Inquisitors hone the skills of investigation and martial arts needed to subdue those who have turned to the evil art of mahō. Inquisitorial initiates rarely know the true nature of their training, as they are often given tasks of subterfuge that master Inquisitors could not undertake without threatening to expose the order. Despite being trained by, and often recruited from, the Asako, the Inquisitors serve the Elemental Masters directly as agents who cleanse the Empire of heresy.

The henshin, on the other hand, are unknown to the Elemental Masters and even the Emperor. This is because the very concept of the Path of Man is a deeply problematic one; although the henshin claim to have received it from Shinsei, it constitutes what, to many, would be extreme blasphemy. Until the time comes to reveal it to all, the Path—and the henshin who are its custodians—must remain unknown.

Culture and Traditions

Their role as collectors and researchers of spiritual and magical lore—a role they perform in close cooperation with the Isawa—means that the Asako have a particularly scholarly culture. An appreciation for the collection, study, and archiving of documents is taught to Asako children at an early age. Young Asako are well-known for their stories, poems, essays, and other written works, and for the meticulous journals their teachers have them keep. By the time of their gempuku, Asako samurai are accordingly well versed in the creation and maintenance of written records.

However, such scholarly lives could lead to adults who are overly introspective, bookish, and ascetic. This would run counter to the Asako dedication to healing, in the broadest sense of the term. For the Asako, healing addresses not only the body, but also the mind and the spirit, relationships with others, the land itself, and even harmful beliefs such as ignorance and misunderstanding. Healing is, by necessity, an outward- looking activity, so the Asako are given to presenting their

stories and poems, to reading aloud and debating their essays. They likewise enjoy festivals and gatherings; it is common to see many Asako attending weddings, gempuku ceremonies, and funerals. This combination of methodical and creative intelligence, combined with an outgoing, sociable nature, is a formidable one. Politicians from other clans often find crossing diplomatic swords with Asako courtiers a difficult prospect, and the outcome often not quite what they had hoped or expected.

Religious Perspectives

In some respects, the religious views of the Asako are similar to those of the Isawa. Because of their study of a broad range of spiritual beliefs, they are quite expansive in their own. They tend to study all traditions in a detached, scholarly way, without particular judgment. That said, they are generally more orthodox than the Isawa. The Asako tend to be both Fortunist and Shinseist, believing they understand both well enough to see how they each have a role in explaining how the world works. To the Asako, there is significant overlap between the two, and they are content to live and worship within that overlap.

Reinforcing this is the fact that the Asako maintain and study religious texts dating from the earliest days of the Empire. This gives them not just a broad view on spirituality, but also a deep one, incorporating virtually the entirety of the Empire's history. The Asako are well aware of this, and they could easily be insufferably devout; however, they approach the understanding of correct religious thought as another form of healing—and healing often takes considerable time and patience.

The Asako henshin, and the knowledge of the Path of Man they protect, are a very different matter. The henshin have come to believe that the Path is the ultimate expression of objective religious truth. It is not clear how it will be received when the time comes to reveal it, but the henshin are unshakably convinced of the rightness of it.

Current Concerns

Like the Isawa and Shiba, the Asako are concerned about the elemental imbalance, but from a more scholarly perspective. They see it as something to be thoroughly researched and understood, and then to be healed.

Given that they provide many of the clan's courtiers and diplomats, the Asako, supported by the Shiba, also work to remain aware of goings-on in the Empire. However, while the Shiba treat such information as intelligence to inform Phoenix military and security arrangements, the Asako are more concerned with using this information to inform the clan's leadership, assisting them in developing Phoenix policies and positions. The Asako then use this information to great effect through the political machinery of the Empire's courts. However, they also scour the information they gather for indications of spiritual matters deserving of study, or ones that could represent potential threats and should be investigated by the Inquisitors.

For example, the Asako view the Shadowlands' mounting pressure on the Crab with alarm. They have brought the matter to the Council of Elemental Masters, who have allowed the Inquisitors to pursue more wide-ranging investigations alongside the Kuni Witch Hunters.

Lands of the Asako

The provinces of the Asako are located mainly in the mountains in the northern and western portions of the Phoenix lands. These lands are rugged and largely infertile, meaning the Asako must depend on imported food and other goods, particularly from the Shiba. While the Asako do not have many holdings, most of ones they do maintain are located in serene and beautiful places in the mountains. Although they are remote, they are connected by well-maintained roads, without which they would soon be entirely isolated. The Asako also maintain several holdings that lie near but technically outside the boundaries of the Phoenix lands, such as the Shrine of the Ki-Rin on the eastern edge of the Dragon Heart Plains, a bleak and barren expanse that separates the lands of the Phoenix from those of the Dragon Clan.

Kyūden Asako

Kyūden Asako, the ancestral seat of power of the Asako family, is located in the Isawa Mori on the easternmost edge of the Asako lands. It sits atop a low-standing, craggy hill in the midst of abundant, nutrient-rich wetlands. Its location, and its white walls, cause the sun to reflect a brilliant light, giving it its name of Morning Glory Castle. Kyūden Asako houses a number of schools and dōjō, including that of the Shiba Artisans. It also contains a large, well-stocked library and extensive facilities for ongoing scholarly research. It bears the title of *kyūden* proudly, having hosted Imperial Winter Courts as far back as the reign of Hantei Genji in the early days of the Empire.

Shrine to Jurōjin

Jurōjin was a healer who rose to great prominence among the original followers of Asako prior to the founding of the Empire. So devoted was he to healing that he was elevated to the status of a Fortune, becoming the Fortune of Longevity. The Shrine to Jurōjin is now the most important shrine to the Fortune in the Empire. Many Rokugani who are ill or injured make pilgrimages here, beseeching the Fortune for healing boons. However, such pilgrims must be determined; the shrine is located high in the western mountains, accessible only via an extremely difficult journey along a single, narrow trail. Still, it is said that the Fortune himself sometimes visits the shrine, dispensing miraculous healing, so the arduous journey is often considered worth the hardships and risk.

Kakudaira Toshi

Sheltered Plains City is located on a narrow but relatively flat and open plain between the western mountains and the Isawa Mori. It is the only city entirely controlled by the Asako. Despite the Asako disdain for commerce—they refuse to even name the city's market—the place bustles with trade, particularly from the Dragon and Crane Clans. The city is also home to a massive library, Kanjiro Library, named after the ninth-century city governor who ordered its construction. It is one of the single largest repositories of knowledge in Phoenix lands. However, since Kanjiro Library is generally accessible to any Rokugani scholars who wish to use it, it also contains very little lore that the Phoenix would consider "sensitive" or otherwise deserving of limited circulation. Such "sensitive" lore is held in other, more secure places, such as Kyūden Asako or Gisei Toshi.

Asako Hikaru, Conflicted Scholar

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 2 / 7

Asako Hikaru has devoted his life to the pursuit of knowledge. As a boy, he eagerly consumed every book, scroll, treatise, and essay he could find; his parents said that he knew the sight and texture of paper better than the faces of his siblings. His insatiable desire to read and learn new things has not abated—not by the time of his gempuku, when he started work as an assistant archivist at the Kanjiro Library in Sheltered Plains City, or in the many years since. He has even passed up opportunities to advance to more senior positions, fearing they would saddle him with administrative duties that would take up time he could be using to study. Recently, however, among the multitude of scrolls in the Kanjiro Library, Hikaru discovered… something, a document that was out of place, that did not belong in the library's public collection. He dutifully reported it to his superiors, who saw to it that the errant work was transferred to a more secure and suitable location. However, although he has discussed it with no one else, Hikaru cannot forget what he read, or its implications. Nor can he ignore the periodic visits he now gets from an old and largely forgotten acquaintance from his youth, who now reports directly to the council.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
60	HONOR	ENDURANCE	6
40	GLORY	COMPOSURE	16
35	STATUS	FOCUS	6
+1, +1, –2	DEMEANOR · DETACHED	VIGILANCE	3



ARTISAN 3	MARTIAL 0	SCHOLAR 4	SOCIAL 3	TRADE 0

ADVANTAGES

Precise Memory: Scholar; *Mental*

DISADVANTAGES

Frail: Martial; *Physical*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Wakizashi: Range 0–1, Damage 3, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Ceremonial clothes (Physical 1, Ceremonial, Resplendent), personal chop, secret journal

ABILITIES

FONT OF KNOWLEDGE

As a Support action or downtime activity, Hikaru may target any number of other characters in the scene to offer advice or information about a subject of which he is familiar. Choose a Scholar skill. The next time that a target makes a check with that skill, they reduce the TN by 1 and remove 1 strife.

KAITO

The Kaito are the Empire's newest Great Clan family. Until 1123, they were an obscure vassal family of the Isawa, almost all living near a small and remote shrine named Sanpuku Seidō, located in the mountains on the extreme northern edge of the Empire. Dedicated shrine keepers with a long tradition of incorporating archery as a component of religious observance, their apparent duty was to maintain watch over a demon who had been sealed away in a deep well by their founder. Their origin is, however, more complex than this; they are descended from the Yobanjin, gaijin people who rejected the Kami at the dawn of the Empire. In 1123, a visit by the Phoenix Clan Champion, Shiba Tsukune, initiated a series of events that led to the Kaito being

made a major family in the Phoenix and thrust them into a prominence they had never before known.

Reputation and Values

A previously obscure and rural people who live an isolated existence in the Great Wall of the North mountain range, the Kaito had little reputation at all until very recently. The name Kaito, to the extent it was even known, was associated with people who were rough, rustic, and unsophisticated. That has begun to change, however. The other families of the Phoenix are, of course, intensely interested in this new family, and in what opportunities—or problems—the Kaito offer to them and to the clan as a whole. Even outside the Phoenix, the Kaito name is starting to become known, but few other Rokugani, as yet, really know what it means.

In some ways, the Kaito would probably have preferred to keep it that way. Their daimyō has suddenly gone from being a minor noble of limited clout and interest to the leader of a major family. Likewise, the Kaito as a whole have lived a hard, rustic, but uncomplicated life, tending to their shrine and seeing to their straightforward duty as custodians over an ancient, but mostly dormant, threat. Only in recent times did it become clear



that the wards intended to seal the demon into its prison had begun to degrade; even then, while clearly needing attention from their superiors in the Phoenix, none of the Kaito could have imagined where that attention would lead. Many of the Kaito worry that their new and more prominent role is going to make their lives far more complicated—and they are unsure just what to do about that.

Culture and Traditions

The origin of the Kaito is the most complicated thing about this small family. The "popular" version

ADVENTURE SEED: DIRTY POLITICS

一 **Hook** The PCs are sent as delegates to the court of the Otomo family, where they are to help represent their respective clans during delicate negotiations for resources including timber and stone. They are introduced to Kaito Noritaka, a young courtier from the Phoenix Clan. The lands assigned to the Kaito, although small and remote, are rich in both stone and mineral resources, as well as lumber—particularly large, old-growth trees ideal for large timbers, ships' masts, and similar uses. Such trees are becoming scarce in other parts of the Empire, so they are highly sought after.

二 **Rising Action** As a new family of the Phoenix, the Kaito are unaccustomed to the unforgiving world of Imperial politics—and this is amply demonstrated by the young Noritaka. He seems entirely hapless and, despite his best efforts, consistently fails in his attempts to negotiate. The Phoenix delegation is obviously unhappy about this, and it seems that Noritaka will soon be quietly assigned an administrative post well away from court. But Noritaka is plagued by mishaps that don't seem to be entirely his fault. He shows up for meetings at the wrong time, or the wrong place; he arrives in court prepared to discuss a petition that won't be presented for another day. Noritaka's yōjimbō suspects that someone is trying to sabotage the young Kaito by feeding him misinformation, and so asks the PCs to help investigate. Every clan has good reason to want access to the old-growth timbers, but particularly those with coastal holdings, including the Crab, the Crane, and the Mantis Minor Clan.

三 **Climax** The PCs uncover hints that the sabotage may originate within the Phoenix Clan itself, where a group of hardline traditionalists resent the elevation of the Kaito and seek to weaken and discredit them in hopes of marginalizing their influence in the clan. The PCs now face myriad political opportunities and threats. Will they capitalize on them to further their own interests or those of their clans? Or will they seek to help Noritaka and seize the chance to ingratiate themselves with the Kaito?

describes how, in the fifth century, a young woman and accomplished archer named Isawa Kaito slew a demon named Ateru, who had been plaguing the Phoenix lands; Kaito sacrificed herself to trap it in a well that is now the site of Sanpuku Seidō. To honor her heroic sacrifice, a vassal family to the Isawa was formed in her name. The truth, however, is that the Kaito were members of a Yobanjin tribe, the Hyōketsu, who were assimilated into the Phoenix as part of a deal brokered by a Yobanjin priest, Kaito no Momotsukihime. This led to strife and, eventually, war among the Yobanjin, during which Kaito slew her betrothed, a chieftain named Ateru. It was his restless spirit, trapped in the well at Sanpuku Seidō, that precipitated the opening of a rift to Tōshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter, necessitating intervention by the Phoenix Clan Champion.

As a result, the traditions and culture of the Kaito are a blend of traditional Rokugani practices and the observances of their Yobanjin ancestors. Most notably, archery figured prominently in Yobanjin beliefs; so, too, is it important to the Kaito. For instance, the flight of an arrow predicts a child's path through the life and is ultimately tied to their death, when the arrow is released for the last time with their ashes affixed to it. The Kaito also keep an artifact, a bow named Mikazuki, that identifies their new daimyō, the person who will be not just their secular leader, but also their spiritual one.



Religious Perspectives

The Kaito have a religious perspective that is very different from that of the other families, thanks to their long isolation and correspondingly narrow philosophical focus. Their religious beliefs reflect a naturalist view, which is deeply influenced by the practices and beliefs of their Yobanjin ancestors. They are largely removed from the Shinseist and Fortunist belief systems, having had little opportunity, or even reason, to be exposed to or consider them. The Kaito family rituals and practices regarding the kami are absent of the many ornamentations common in Fortunist and Shintao observations. The Kaito generally see the mainstream Rokugani practices as very complex, even time-consuming—perhaps needlessly so—and much more esoteric than their relatively simple and ascetic beliefs. At best, the other Phoenix families tend to consider the Kaito's views naïve—and, in the case of the Asako and the Isawa, deserving of further, detailed study—while at worst, some Phoenix of a more rigid and orthodox mindset hold that they tread perilously close to heresy. The Kaito are suddenly and keenly aware that reconciling their current beliefs with those of rest of the Empire is going to be a long and difficult journey for the family.

Current Concerns

Clearly, the foremost concern of the Kaito is their sudden and quite unexpected elevation within their clan. The relatively rustic and isolated Kaito now face the challenge of adopting, and adapting to, a much more prominent role within the Phoenix and, by extension, the Empire. This is particularly challenging given that they have been assigned a new duty: investigating shrines in the context of elemental balance and reporting matters related to any imbalance back to the Isawa. This requires them to leave the simple familiarity of their homeland, travel the lands of the Phoenix and the Empire beyond, and interact with people and places that, until recently, were little more than vague stories told by travelers who visited Sanpuku Seidō. The Kaito now must rise to the occasion, and they are determined to do so.

Lands of the Kaito

The Kaito currently hold only a small area of mountainous land on the very northern edge of the Phoenix Clan lands, at the northern boundary of the Empire. To the north is mountainous wilderness that is still inhabited by the Yobanjin people whom the Kaito know as their ancestors. There is virtually no arable land here: the Kaito are entirely dependent on imported food and whatever they can hunt or fish for in the surrounding wilderness. Sanpuku Seidō, or Cliffside Shrine, is their only significant holding. It is described in detail on page 40. The Kaito are, however, involved with two other, even smaller holdings.

Water Becomes Clouds

Water Becomes Clouds is actually a Yobanjin settlement located about a day's journey north and east of Sanpuku Seidō. It is located in a narrow, steep-sided vale through which flows the Ponderous River. For most of its length, this river is deep and slow, but where it emerges from the valley of Water Becomes Clouds, it plunges over a high cliff, becoming a spectacular waterfall hundreds of feet high. The winds off of the ocean are channeled along the gorge forming the river's lower course, causing the water to disperse as fine spray resembling clouds in the sky, giving the village its name. The river has deposited a thick layer of rich sediment in the valley, allowing agriculture to flourish. Members of the Kaito travel here frequently, trading with the Yobanjin and interacting with them socially; relations between the Kaito and the Yobanjin are very good. Accordingly, while this is not actually a Kaito holding, many of the family are far more familiar with this place than they are with any other location in the Empire of which they are subjects.

Lost Arrow Shrine

Sometime in the eighth century, the Kaito were wracked by a religious schism, the details of which have been essentially forgotten. The daimyō at the time declared that he, and those who would follow him, would leave to establish a new shrine for the family. Using the family's ancestral bow, Mikazuki, the daimyō fired an arrow straight up from Sanpuku Seidō, saying that where it fell, they would build the new shrine. A strong wind caught the arrow and blew it away to the west. It took seven days to find it, lodged in an ancient hemlock tree perched at the top of a cliff overlooking a rushing mountain stream. As promised, the daimyō and his followers began construction of a small shrine around the hemlock and the beginnings of a new village nearby. After only a few months, however, there was no further word from what had become known as Lost Arrow Shrine. A party sent out from Sanpuku Seidō found the shrine and village partly built—but no sign at all of the daimyō or of any of the Kaito who had accompanied him. The shrine still exists, and the Kaito still tend it on a regular but infrequent basis. It is, after all, a part of their history, and every shrine deserves to be properly kept, no matter how strange or ominous its story.

Kaito Tsunade, Apprehensive Courtier

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 3 | 5

Kaito Tsunade is something new in the Empire: a diplomat representing the Kaito family of the Phoenix. Tsunade was chosen because of their effusive personality and outgoing confidence; their name means "one who is like thunder." Tsunade, who had long imagined they would become a shrine keeper like their mother, and their grandmother, now finds themself preparing for a very different role. Fortunately, they are smart, charming, and well-spoken, but they are understandably nervous. Their clan's honor and reputation depend on their navigating the complex and tumultuous waters of courtly politics. Although they have received training from the Asako family, they are still only too aware of their own unsophisticated origins.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
60	HONOR	ENDURANCE	10
40	GLORY	COMPOSURE	14
40	STATUS	FOCUS	6
+2, –2	DEMEANOR · EFFUSIVE	VIGILANCE	3



ARTISAN 2 | MARTIAL 1 | SCHOLAR 2 | SOCIAL 3 | TRADE 2

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Well-Spoken: Social; *Interpersonal*	**Fear of Failure:** Social, Martial; *Mental, Physical*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Wakizashi: Range 0–1, Damage 3, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Ceremonial clothes (Physical 1, Ceremonial, Resplendent), personal chop

ABILITIES

RUSTIC CHARM

When Tsunade speaks to someone with a higher status rank than theirs, Tsunade counts as having rank 4 in Social skills. Once per scene, after they speak to a character with a higher status rank, Tsunade may choose one character who heard them speak to removes 2 strife.



CHAPTER 2
The Soul of the Empire

Lady Moshi ascended the final steps of the path leading to the Shrine of the Lady Sun. At the top, she lit incense and placed it in an offering bowl at the statue's feet, the scent of orange and clove filling the air. She reached into her robes, producing a piece of paper, and folded it expertly as she spoke.

"Mother Sun, you knew me before I knew myself…" Lady Moshi smiled. It was true that when her parents had been under the mistaken belief that they had a son, it had taken them all by surprise when Amaterasu began to speak to her. "…and so I have come to you for guidance. I can sense an imbalance in the world, within the elements themselves." She frowned, staring down at the origami flower she had made.

Suddenly, flame surrounded the paper flower, crumbling the delicate petals and filling Lady Moshi's unscorched hands with ash. She was overcome with a vision, images captured in the dancing fire.

She stood, ash swirling around her. Her goddess had given her a duty, and she would not fail her.

The Centipede Clan

Rokugan is home to all manner of gods, spirits, and supernatural beings, but there are two who tower over all others, watching the world from their heavenly thrones in Tengoku. The first is Lord Moon, the angry god who ate his divine children, the Kami, out of jealousy at the dawn of humanity. The second is Amaterasu, also known as Lady Sun and mother of the Kami, whose tears mixed with the blood of her husband to create the first humans on Earth. Every morning, Rokugan is graced with her presence as she rises up above the horizon, bathing all of creation in her divine beauty.

The Centipede Clan are the foremost followers of Amaterasu, and they view themselves as bulwarks of sacred traditions. They sing their greetings to Amaterasu each morning and tend to one of the most revered locations in all of Rokugan, the place where it is said Amaterasu herself descended from the Heavens to speak with their founder. The stone on which Amaterasu once trod now serves as the site of the Shrine of the Lady Sun, which is centered on a massive gilded statue of the goddess welcoming travelers with open arms.

The Centipede also teach the wisdom of Amaterasu in their specialized school for shugenja, the Light of the Lady Sun Dōjō. This is where students from across the Empire learn the unique ways of the Centipede, such as the use of Fire invocations for healing.

Although the Centipede hold tradition dear, they have welcomed outsiders into their once-isolated valley, and new ideas have found purchase within the small clan. Emboldened particularly by the controversial methods of the Agasha family, a small group of Centipede scholars and shugenja have theorized that invocations are not just a gift from Amaterasu or the kami, but rather an extension of the natural world. These ideas are dismissed by elder Centipede members as heresies and insults whenever they are spoken aloud, but the embers of conflict continue to glow within the clan.

THE FOUNDING OF THE MOSHI

Centuries ago, Isawa Azami, a shugenja of the Phoenix Clan, traversed the Mountains of Regret with his wife, Isawa Kichi. There they found a lush and fertile valley hidden from the rest of Rokugan. Azami and Kichi settled their family in this serene paradise, naming it Mukade no Tani. They then had eleven daughters, lived a good life, and quietly passed away.

After Azami and Kichi passed away, the duty of heading the family passed to their eldest daughter, Isawa Moshi. Moshi, distraught over the death of her parents and feeling burdened by her new responsibilities, climbed to the top of what would soon become known as the Mountain of the Sun Goddess to meditate. It was then that Amaterasu descended from the Heavens to speak with Moshi.

The goddess told the young woman that she had chosen Moshi's family to be her acolytes, and that Moshi herself was destined to lead them. It is said that Amaterasu then revealed the secrets of the cosmos to Moshi, who in turn became Enlightened. The goddess placed her blessing on Isawa Moshi and her sisters, a gift that meant all of the women in their family would have a chance to hear the goddess as Moshi had, should their hearts and minds remain open to her wisdom. Isawa Moshi in return pledged the loyalty of her family to the Lady Sun.

Isawa Moshi then changed her name to Moshi Azami and the family's name to Moshi. She kept her father's name to honor him, but she chose to forsake the Isawa name in favor of her own. This decision, once the news reached the other Isawa, was regarded as an act of arrogance, earning the family much scorn and condemnation from within the Phoenix for abandoning the name of Isawa. However, Moshi Azami did not mean this to be an offense, having chosen the name to reflect the family's position as acolytes who speak to a higher power: the word *Moshi* is a greeting of deference to a person higher in station. Moshi Azami also arranged for the construction of the Shrine of the Lady Sun, built at the very site of her fateful encounter with Amaterasu.

THE RISE TO MINOR CLAN

The Emerald Champion at the time made the case to the Emperor that due to the remote nature of the Moshi, it would be easier for the Imperial administration to count the family as a separate clan when receiving its tributes. However, those within the clan know the truth of the Centipede's founding to be far more interesting than a simple matter of taxes.

In the fourth century, while the Isawa were still criticizing the newly founded Moshi family for abandoning its heritage and the Moshi were suffering the political consequences, the Emerald Champion was also suffering. She was a proud Crane woman who bore her station well, but she was plagued increasingly each day with the pain of an old battle wound. However, little she did had any effect on the injury. The conventional and spiritual methods she sought removed some of the ugliness of the wound, but nothing she tried stopped

A NOTE ABOUT RŌNIN

The fact that the Centipede Clan comprises a single family means that finding spouses outside the clan is necessary. Many Centipede spouses come from the Mantis and other minor clans, but rōnin who agree to learn the customs of the Moshi and who prove themselves to be honorable are more readily welcomed into the Centipede than they are welcomed in most places in Rokugan.

More information on rōnin can be found in the *Legend of the Five Rings* sourcebook *Path of Waves*.

THE BLESSING OF AMATERASU

One effect of the Blessing of Amaterasu is that any child born within the valley has a much higher chance of being female than one born anywhere else in Rokugan; female children outnumber children of other genders three to one. As a result, most daimyō, priests, and other officials of the Centipede Clan tend to be women.

the chronic pain. When Moshi Azami visited the Champion's estate to discuss the concerns of the Moshi family, she accidentally discovered the other woman's secret. Moshi Azami was able to discreetly treat the injury using th knowledge she had been gifted by Amaterasu. The Emerald Champion, grateful for this kindness and recognizing Moshi Azami's wisdom and skill, leveraged her position to give the Moshi family governorship of Mukade no Tani.

THE ELEVEN DAUGHTERS

The following are the eleven daughters of Isawa Azami and Isawa Kichi as they are remembered. Each is honored with a pillar at the Shrine of the Lady Sun.

- **Moshi Azami (formerly Isawa Moshi):** Isawa Azami and Isawa Kichi's eldest daughter and the first daimyō of the Centipede Clan. It is said that at the end of her life, she simply walked to the edge of a cliff and ascended into the air, never to be seen again and leaving only her obi behind. She is known colloquially as Morning Star and is believed to follow Amaterasu's steps through the sky when not occupying the largest of the pillars at the Shrine of the Lady Sun.
- **Moshi Tamashini:** The couple's second daughter. A steadfast woman who served as the first priest at the Shrine of the Lady Sun when her older sister became clan champion. Those with duties that are difficult to bear visit her pillar for guidance.
- **Moshi Shion:** Her name means "one who does not forget." When her eldest sister forsook the name of their ancestors, Isawa, Shion felt it a betrayal of their heritage and vowed to record and honor all the old traditions. The Centipede Clan's focus on tradition is attributed to her. Those who long to honor their heritage, or remember the past, visit her pillar.
- **Moshi Fumiko** and **Moshi Chika:** Scholarly twins who went on to found the Library of the Fiery Centipede. Students go to their pillars with desperate last-minute offerings in hopes of passing their exams. Fumiko is said to help with knowledge, and Chika is said to help with wisdom.
- **Moshi Mieko** and **Moshi Youko:** The first teachers at the Light of the Lady Sun Dōjō. They first taught only Centipede, but soon also welcomed students from other clans. According to legend, they used the power of Amaterasu to carve the school into the living rock of the mountain. Praying at these pillars is recommended for any sensei, and for those who simply wish to foster their own compassion.
- **Moshi Reiki:** A serene woman who was fascinated with the healing flames Amaterasu gifted her sister Moshi Azami. She dedicated her life to expanding upon this vein of shugendō, the art of invoking the kami. Those with poor health go to her pillar.
- **Moshi Homura:** A hot-tempered woman and brilliant warrior who vowed to keep Mukade no Tani safe under any circumstances. She went on to found the Sun Guardians. Those asking for protection or courage visit her pillar.
- **Moshi Izanami:** An adventurous woman who dared to travel out of the valley in search of resources and allies in the early days of the Centipede. She designed the pulley system that brings goods up the cliffs from the sea. Those longing to make a connection with others, whether in friendship or love, go to her pillar.
- **Moshi Asa:** The youngest of the eleven daughters had a creative spirit. She developed new ways to honor Amaterasu, mixing older Isawa traditions with new rites and rituals, and she is believed to have written the Centipede morning song. Artists and inventors visit her pillar for inspiration.

CENTIPEDE LANDS (MUKADE NO TANI)

The Valley of the Centipede, or Mukade no Tani, lies east of the Treacherous Pass, high in the Mountains of Regret. Rocky peaks surround the valley on three sides, but the eastern side is open to the sea, where steep cliffs drop from the valley's base down to the choppy water below. An intricate system of large suspended platforms moved by pulleys brings goods, visitors, and even small carts up from the quiet beaches and into the valley. The river that runs by Centipede lands to the sea is called the Course of Lady Sun, and it holds particular spiritual and cultural meaning to the Centipede. This river also serves as an important access route to Lion, Phoenix, Dragon, and Unicorn lands.

At the northern end of the valley, in the Mountains of Regret, is the Mountain of the Sun Goddess; Amaterasu Seidō, Shrine of the Lady Sun, stands at its summit. This mountain, its natural deposits of white marble reflecting the sun's brilliant rays, stands like a sentry tower, Amaterasu's statue at the peak watching over the valley.

However, not all aspects of the Centipede lands are pleasant. The name Mukade no Tani refers to the large insects that infest the rocky terrain of the Mountains of Regret. These centipedes are nearly a foot in length, reddish brown in color, and highly aggressive, with an extremely painful bite that can stun adults and even kill small children. The Centipede Clan adopted these creatures as their *mon*, or crest, to remind outsiders never to underestimate the might of the small. The mountains are also host to all sorts of Rokugani creatures that make passage through the peaks particularly dangerous. Travelers often hear rumors of trolls and goblins hiding in the cracks and crevices.

Amaterasu Seidō: The Shrine of the Lady Sun

The mother of the Kami, head of the Fortunes, and cocreator of humanity deserves every honor mortals can give her, including a shrine that rivals all others in glory to match her supreme divinity. However, the logistics of carrying building materials up the steep Mountain of the Sun Goddess, as well as the very limited access to the summit, meant the shrine's original builders had to make some sacrifices and employ some creative methods. These included carving into the living stone of the mountain, making smaller-than-usual facilities for priests and visitors, and forgoing some niceties found in larger shrines, such as flower gardens and bell towers.

THE COURSE OF LADY SUN

The river called the Course of Lady Sun is so named because, according to Rokugani belief, when Lady Sun and Lord Moon created Ningen-dō, they traversed the world, sculpting the landscape and creating the trees and animals. This river was worn into the ground by Amaterasu's footfalls. As such, the Centipede believe that the river marks her favorite path to travel through the world, ending where Mukade no Tani overlooks the sea. The Centipede's idyllic valley atop a high cliff reminds viewers of a favored dollhouse on a shelf; it is thought that Amaterasu herself carved out Mukade no Tani as she sat idly by the sea.

At the beginning of spring, the Centipede hold a festival called Amaterasu's Journey. During a special ceremony, they carefully move a statue of Amaterasu from the Castle of the Centipede down the river and ferry it to the sea on an elaborate boat decorated blossoming cherry branches. They then make the return trip, symbolically welcoming the goddess back to Mukade no Tani for another year by throwing cherry blossoms into the water.

THE SHRINE WHERE NINGEN-DŌ TOUCHES TENGOKU

Starting at the foot of the Mountain of the Sun Goddess, the Path of Isawa Moshi is carved into the rock of the mountainside, leading first to the Light of the Lady Sun Dōjō and then continuing up the peak to where the Shrine of the Lady Sun watches over the valley. There, supplicants pass beneath a single torii gate, which gleams red and gold against the pale rock, and to a heated cleansing pavilion carved into the same white stone. Due to the pressures of living at the peak, there are quarters for only a single full-time priest. Half of the residence is carved into the stone, and snow hides the thatched roof. It sometimes startles visitors when a priest suddenly "pops up" from what they thought was a snowbank.

A statue of Amaterasu, made from the mountain's white marble and gilded with gold, welcomes visitors with opens arms. This statue serves as a shintai, an object capable of hosting a spirit. Large white stones

jut out from the mountaintop like haphazard pillars, surrounding the statue in a gleaming rock garden. Though these stones seem to be a natural feature of the mountain, dating from long before Isawa Azami stepped foot into the valley, there are exactly eleven, matching the number of Azami's daughters. This has led some to believe that the eleven children were foretold, or even brought into being by Amaterasu. As such, these pillars are known as the Eleven Daughters and are believed to house their spirits as they keep watch over the shrine.

This shrine may seem modestly sized to those familiar with more expansive shrines, such as the sprawling Benten Seidō in Crane lands. However, Amaterasu Seidō is unparalleled in natural beauty. As visitors look down from the mountain to a blanket of clouds and golden light, they can truly feel the power and glory of Amaterasu.

THE LIGHT OF THE LADY SUN DŌJŌ

The shrine's accompanying school sits farther down the mountain and has become an important center of learning. Many Moshi, as well as students from other clans, go there to learn the Fire and Air invocations the Centipede are known for. The Light of the Lady Sun Dōjō was built into the side of the mountain in a feat of brilliant engineering. Many of its older sections are carved into the living white rock of the mountain, while newer wooden additions are painted white, with fiery red roofs trimmed with bronze finials. The rooms are lit with a complex series of skylights and mirrors that welcome in Amaterasu's light throughout the day.

A Fire that Heals

An ability unique to the Centipede is the use of Fire invocations for healing. According to the Centipede, Amaterasu taught Moshi Azami these invocations, and Moshi Azami used them to heal the Emerald Champion. Being healed by Fire is said to feel like sunshine on a spring day, or a gentle fire on a cold night. However, a practitioner of this specialized technique must be careful to channel Amaterasu's compassion without burning their patient.

Offerings at the Shrine of the Lady Sun

The Centipede believe that as the ultimate manifestation of fire, Amaterasu enjoys many of the offerings that other fire spirits do, such as incense and kindling. They also believe that she likes depictions of Ningen-dō, such as paintings of the landscape and origami plants and animals, because they represent the creations of her and Lord Moon.



However, offerings of jade and obsidian are seen as cruel or mocking. Jade formed as Amaterasu's tears fell to Ningen-dō when her children, the divine Kami, were so cruelly taken from her. Similarly, offerings of obsidian are frowned upon, as it is believed that Amaterasu takes no joy in the blood of her husband.

As such, the Centipede priests living at the shrine over the years have been known to toss offerings of jade and obsidian off the side of the mountain if visitors are foolish enough to offer them. Brave hikers who traverse this side of the mountain through dangerous peaks may find hundreds of years' worth of angrily tossed treasures spread haphazardly across the rocks.

LIBRARY OF THE FIERY CENTIPEDE

The Library of the Fiery Centipede is a three-story building made from grey stone, the mon of the Centipede Clan hanging proudly over its door. It rests in the estate of the Castle of the Centipede, though it is a separate structure. This library houses the most complete collection of solar studies in Rokugan, and its librarians are privy to ancient and divine secrets about the element of Fire. A secret tunnel known only to the head librarian serves as an emergency exit. The building is lit via small openings that let in sunlight, which is then reflected by a series of strategically placed mirrors. This gives the library warm and pleasant lighting without the risk posed by candles or lanterns near so many dry and flammable tomes.

While they never mention such things out loud for fear of being accused of heresy, some Centipede have begun to question the Moshi family's old ways, especially when it comes to invocations. These radicals have recently been emboldened by new ideas brought to the Light of the Lady Sun Dōjō by outsiders—ideas including methods outlined by the Agasha, who utilize a mixture of chemistry, construction, and spirituality to make sense of the world. These scholars theorize that invocations can be attributed to the same cause-and-effect relationships seen in the rest of the natural world, and they have found refuge for their research and experiments deep within the library.

CASTLE OF THE CENTIPEDE

The Castle of the Centipede, set at the base of the mountain where Amaterasu's primary shrine sits, reflects the Centipede Clan's strong connection to Amaterasu. The building is circular, with a large courtyard in the middle housing an elaborate garden. A statue of Amaterasu stands in the center of this garden, a smaller twin of the one at the shrine. In the morning, blinds are pulled away from half of the courtyard skylight, and large windows on the east side are opened so that those within the castle can track the ascension of Amaterasu through the sky. At noon, with the sun shining directly overhead, the castle's statue of Amaterasu seems almost to glow; it is said that during this time, people seeking her wisdom may find answers by meditating at her feet. The courtyard was designed specifically for the morning song the Moshi sing each dawn to welcome Amaterasu, the sound reverberating from the castle and down through the village below in a feat of cleverly designed acoustics.

The Castle of the Centipede emphasizes openness and peace, though it has some natural and intentional defenses in case anyone should think to attack it. The castle's primary protections are its armored shutters and its location on a very steep hill, although the presence of Sun Guardians and Sun Sentinels is also a powerful defense in its own right. Still, few would consider launching an attack against what many people see as an extension of the shrine devoted to the most powerful goddess in Rokugan, Amaterasu.

The castle is usually the first stop for visitors to the shrine and new students looking to enroll in the Light of the Lady Sun Dōjō. This results in a constant flow of new faces, which makes the castle a hotbed of both idle gossip and espionage.

TRADITIONS

The Centipede are known as bulwarks of tradition, staunchly upholding ancient ways so that they can be taught to new generations. These traditions include the morning song to welcome Amaterasu each dawn, which the Centipede have sung since their founding as a clan. They also hold their own specific practices for selecting family daimyō and the clan champion, and for gempuku.

The Clan Champion

The Centipede Clan Champion and daimyō of the Moshi family can only be someone who has heard Amaterasu's voice. The one who holds this position

MOSHI AKANE AND THE LIBRARY OF THE FIERY CENTIPEDE

Akane is a woman with sharp eyes and a smile like a glint off a dagger. She holds the prestigious position of head librarian for the Library of the Fiery Centipede and knows all of the old building's secret passages. She often startles visitors, appearing near them the moment they turn their backs. She covets knowledge and will often trade secrets for secrets, reveling in each new piece of information she finds. She leads a heretical group of scholars who are currently researching the very nature of invocations.

receives the title "Mother of the Centipede," or "Parent of the Centipede." Whichever version is used, the title is a source of great cultural pride.

Gempuku

When a child of the Centipede is two years away from their gempuku, they are sent to live for a week with one of their grandparents. During this time, their grandparent tests the child's knowledge and abilities to ensure that their parents have properly prepared them. Should they fail, the grandparent takes a much more active role in their upbringing, using those final two years to help the child's parents more adequately prepare the child for the ceremony. When the child comes of age, the traditional Centipede gempuku involves climbing the Mountain of the Sun Goddess by following the path of Moshi Azami and praying at the shrine for guidance. It is during this time that a child might hear Amaterasu's voice, though most just receive a vision that guides them on the rest of their journey, which typically involves traveling for a handful of days in and around the valley, but sometimes beyond.

Tracing the Paths of Dragons

Due to their love of Amaterasu and their strong bonds with the seafaring, star-tracking Mantis Clan, the Centipede practice a tradition involving mapping the bodies of the observable sky, using the exercise as a form of meditation and a method of becoming closer to their Mother Sun. Many Rokugani believe that the Elemental Dragons reside far above Ningen-dō with Lady Sun and Lord Moon; with this in mind, the Centipede name, map, and watch the objects in the Celestial Heavens as the cosmic bodies move around them.

THE STORIES OF THE SKY

Before the Kami, the children of Amaterasu and Onnotangu, fell to Ningen-dō, the peoples of the world looked up at the sky in awe, but they had few words for what they saw. Then the Void Dragon's maw opened wide and a white chasm shone across all of creation, and the Kami tumbled to the Mortal Realm. As the Kami walked in the Emerald Empire, the maw slowly closed and the light faded, but the Kami stayed in Ningen-dō. Some people gathered around Togashi, who told them the stories of the sky, and those stories have been passed down through the centuries in all manners and forms by the various people of the Empire. The following represent one version that is commonly told, particularly in the Centipede and Phoenix.

How the Fire Dragon Made the Sun Smile

On the day the Kami Hantei freed his siblings from his father's stomach, Onnotangu's blood mixed with Amaterasu's tears and the peoples of the world were made. But the sorrow Amaterasu felt from being separated from her family ached in her chest, and she continued weeping, so much that she filled the Sea of the Sun Goddess with her grief and all of the mines of the world with her woe, and that is where jade comes from. Onnotangu could not bear to admit his role in his wife's pain, so he hid from her sadness. Her loneliness only grew as her husband turned away from her. Endlessly she cried, and none knew how to console her. The Fire Dragon, one of the servants of the sun and the moon, overheard Amaterasu's heartache as he passed by her chambers in the Celestial Heavens, and he could not bear the sound.

Softly, the Fire Dragon approached his lady and asked her if he could tell her a story, as Fire is the catalyst for all creative tales. The sorrowful goddess granted the Fire Dragon an audience, and the Dragon spun Amaterasu an elaborate fiction about a group of animals living good and meaningful lives. They fought sometimes, but they loved their home and took care of the realm in which they lived. Soon, the Lady Sun's tears stopped, and she was enraptured. At the end, Amaterasu asked the Fire Dragon how he had come up with such a lovely story. The Fire Dragon smiled and told Amaterasu that she need only look upon the Mortal Realm to see her human children and the Kami living those lives and reveling in the beauty of the world. And Sun looked down upon the earth for the first time in a long while and saw that the Dragon had told the truth. Her children, both human and Kami, were there, and every day they looked up at the sky to her. And then the Sun smiled.

To this day, the Fire Dragon stays very close to Amaterasu, right next to her in the sky, always ready to tell her another story if she becomes sad.

The Loyal Water Dragon and the Distant Moon

While Amaterasu wept, Lord Moon hid away from her, tending to his wounds from his battle with his son, the Kami Hantei. The Water Dragon saw this and offered him her aid as his faithful servant, for she is adept at healing. Onnotangu, still raw from the humiliation of losing to his child, took offense to the Water Dragon's offer and cast her away. But Water is persistent and still follows the moon, waiting for a time when her lord might call upon her. Still, she remains at a respectful distance. Rokugani can sometimes see the Water Dragon following the moon across the sky, reminding them to be both courteous and loyal, but not to allow such things hinder them in their duty to their lord.

The Tricky Air Dragon and the Little Helper

A long, long time ago, the Air Dragon was all by themself, hanging in the sky, looking for something to do. Boredom overtook them, and they started playing tricks on the other dragons, particularly the Thunder Dragon. The Thunder Dragon lived close to the Earth Dragon, in the far reaches of the Heavens, where it was quiet.

One day, the Air Dragon decided to trick the Thunder Dragon by imitating the voice of Onnotangu and demanding he come to the court immediately. The trick worked, and the Thunder Dragon hurriedly went to the Celestial Court, but nobody else was there. The Air Dragon laughed and laughed, pleased with their success, and the Thunder Dragon bellowed in anger so loudly that Ningen-dō shook fiercely. The Thunder Dragon's anger was so immense that the earth below cracked open, and out of it sprouted the Spine of the World.

The Earth Dragon, who had seen the Air Dragon's trickery, pondered what she could do to calm the Earth and entertain the Air. The Earth Dragon went to the angry Thunder Dragon and spoke softly to him, proposing a plan to give all of the other dragons peace from the Air Dragon's boredom. Together, the Thunder Dragon and the Earth Dragon made the Air Dragon a friend, molded from rock and dirt, brought to life with the power of the Thunder Dragon's song. The Air Dragon was delighted by their friend, the Little Helper, who looked very much like them. The two returned to their place in the sky and keep each other company. Now, the Air Dragon rarely tricks the other dragons, and there is peace and quiet in the Heavens—most of the time.

The Paintbrush of the Void Dragon

Scattered across the sky are the brushstrokes of the Void Dragon. No one knows where the painting ends and the body of the Void Dragon begins, but there is immense beauty in the things that the dragon creates. Sometimes stars vanish from this tableau, eaten or brushed aside by the cosmic force of the Void Dragon, and at other times these bodies reappear, or new ones wink into existence.

Paths of the Centipede

Rokugani from all clans are welcome to train at the Light of the Lady Sun Dōjō, but only members of the Moshi family become Sun Sentinels: shugenja who have heard Amaterasu's calling. Sun Sentinels deal primarily in Fire and Air invocations. They are widely respected for remaining peaceful and calm even as they master devastating amounts of power at especially long ranges.

The Guardians of the Sun, on the other hand, are the bushi side of the family. These warriors are devoted wholly to protecting the Moshi shugenja as well as the Shrine of the Lady Sun. These warriors are known for their gleaming bronze helmets and armor with delicately



curved pauldrons like pagoda roofs. Their favored weapon is the Moshi Sun Ax, a thin, spear-like ax lovingly engraved with Amaterasu's rays. Though Guardians of the Sun are trained in a variety of weapons, the Moshi's love of tradition means they shy away from more modern arms, instead trusting in what is tried and true.

Librarians of the Library of the Fiery Centipede are honorable scholars who dedicate themselves to protecting the profound and arcane secrets housed within it. Students who are particularly studious and knowledgeable are often chosen for this path by the Moshi's leadership.

ALLIES OF THE CENTIPEDE

The Centipede, as one of the smallest Minor Clans in Rokugan, tend to be more comfortable with Minor Clans than with Great Clans. They are traditional allies of the Falcon and Mantis Clans, their relationships with both going back centuries.

The Mantis

The Mantis are the Centipede Clan's oldest allies, having been among the first to scale the steep cliffs of Mukade no Tani and make contact with the isolated Centipede. The Mantis helped construct the pulley systems that scale the steep cliffs overlooking the ocean, allowing trade to reach the valley. Many Centipede find spouses among the Mantis, absorbing them into their clan in what has become known colloquially among the Mantis as "the Mukade no Tani retirement." The Centipede offer the Mantis unfettered access to the small port they control, called the Port of Sun's Reflection, that connects the ocean to the Course of Lady Sun river. They also offer Mantis shugenja a place in the Light of the Lady Sun Dōjō.

The Falcon

While the Centipede understand little about the Falcon, who work in shadow while the Centipede turn their faces toward the light, they recognize the Falcon as fellow mystics with an ancient spiritual duty. The Centipede have opened their doors to the Falcon, offering the clan a permanent place in the Light of the Lady Sun Dōjō to train their shugenja. After facing the horrors found in the darkest places in Rokugan, many Falcon warriors find respite in the sunny valley of the Centipede Clan.

STRAINED RELATIONS

The Centipede have a somewhat strained relationship with their parent clan, the Phoenix. The Phoenix have long criticized the Centipede for forsaking the Isawa name in favor of "Moshi." When the Emperor declared the Centipede a Minor Clan with governorship over Mukade no Tani, the Centipede gained the power to retaliate, and they severed Phoenix access to the Mukade no Tani port. This port is where the ocean meets the Course of the Lady Sun, a river offering access to Phoenix, Dragon, Unicorn, and Lion lands, making it a key trade route. Rokugani see this denial of access as a particularly egregious insult, since the Mantis, who are enemies of the Phoenix, have unfettered access to the same port. However, the Centipede control the Library of the Fiery Centipede and the Shrine of Lady Sun, both of which the Phoenix respect and utilize. Therefore, instead of devolving to war due to the slight, the relationship between the

ADVENTURE SEED: BETWEEN HONOR AND DUTY

一 **Hook** An unknown figure has been apprehended trying to sneak into the office of the Centipede Clan Champion. Pulling away their mask has revealed a young person—between ages twelve and fourteen—with injuries due to their encounter with the guards. They refuse to answer questions, and a search of their person produces a wakizashi of Lion Clan manufacture, specifically of the Akodo family. The Akodo are some of the Centipede's oldest enemies, who once swore to take Mukade no Tani as theirs.

二 **Rising Action** Just as the young person is apprehended, a beam of light falls unnaturally across them—a sign from Amaterasu. However, the Centipede are split concerning whether the goddess is displaying her favor for the young person or revealing their guilt. Suddenly, sentries burst into the courtyard, warning of an approaching Lion Clan delegation.

三 **Climax** The Lion delegation members claim that the Centipede have a child of their clan, Akodo Hinata (see profile on page 78), who has been missing for a week. They threaten to raze the castle if the Centipede fail to return Hinata to them. The injured person reveals themself to be Hinata and begs the Centipede not to relinquish them into Lion custody, claiming to have received a vision from Amaterasu.



Centipede and the Phoenix remains tense but cordial despite the bitterness still felt by each party.

The Lion Clan once laid claim to Centipede territory and launched an assault to overtake the land, but they were rebuffed in their attempts by the powerful Moshi shugenja as well the harsh terrain. Although their siege raged on for some time, the Lion were eventually made to withdraw due to diplomatic pressure, as Centipede, Mantis, and even Phoenix courtiers lobbied for the Minor Clan in the Winter Court. The Akodo family of the Lion consider the war on Centipede lands to simply be paused until the appropriate moment when they can rightfully take the lands they believe they have a claim to.

Moshi Chiasa, Centipede Clan Champion

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 8 5

Lady Moshi Chiasa was chosen as clan champion due to her extremely strong bond with Amaterasu. She often traveled to the shrine to speak to the goddess as if she were an old friend. A keen observer may notice that the goddess tends to dote on the young woman like a mother following a child. Chiasa never gets stuck out in the rain, never has her hat pulled from her by a strong gust of wind, and never seems to feel cold outside, even during the winter. Indeed, temperate weather appears to follow her wherever she goes, and she always seems lit by a convenient ray of light. However, Chiasa is young and inexperienced and often feels overwhelmed with the pressures of being clan daimyō, she is staunchly idealistic and hopeful, but she has little real political experience.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
62	HONOR	ENDURANCE	16
53	GLORY	COMPOSURE	10
76	STATUS	FOCUS	7
+2, –2	DEMEANOR · IDEALISTIC	VIGILANCE	2

3 2 2 5 3

ARTISAN 2 | MARTIAL 3 | SCHOLAR 4 | SOCIAL 2 | TRADE 2

ADVANTAGES

Mother's Blessing: Scholar, Social; *Interpersonal, Mental*

Local Renown: Social; *Interpersonal*

DISADVANTAGES

Inexperienced Leader: Social; *Interpersonal, Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Katana: Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Righteous Sunlight (Bō): Range 1–2, Damage 4, Deadliness 5, Sacred.

Gear (equipped): Tear-blessed robes (Physical 2, Supernatural 4, Ceremonial), wakizashi, personal chop, various offerings for to Amaterasu and fire kami

ABILITIES

FAVORED CHILD OF THE SUN

When Chiasa performs an action to activate an invocation, she reduces the TN by 1 (to a minimum of 1).

Additionally, she knows the following invocations: Amaterasu's Gaze (page 108); Armor of Radiance and Extinguish (page 202 of the core rulebook); and Rise, Flame (page 204 of the core rulebook).

BLESSING OF THE CENTIPEDE

When Chiasa performs a check to activate a Fire invocation, she may spend ✲ in the following way:

> **Fire ✲+:** Select a target affected by the invocation. If that target would suffer damage, they remove that much fatigue instead.

RIGHTEOUS SUNLIGHT

When Chiasa performs a successful Attack action check using Righteous Sunlight, she may spend ✲ in the following way:

> **Fire ✲:** The target suffers the Burning condition.

> **Fire ✲+:** If the target has the Burning condition, they receive 3 strife for each ✲ spent this way.

USING MOSHI CHIASA

Moshi Chiasa can be used as support in combat, healing her allies with her mystical Fire invocations, or she can take down several minions on her own.

In combat, she can use Amaterasu's Gaze to reveal a target's location in the dark, or use Extinguish to take point on damage control in a chaotic situation. When she fights, she can use Armor of Radiance for some additional defense or tactical control, especially to give a boost to a front-line bushi. Chiasa can utilize her Rise, Flame technique to turn the tide in combat, giving her and her allies an elemental edge.

Chiasa, like all Centipede, loathes the Tainted monsters of Fu Leng and would rather die purging them from this world than let them bring ruin to the beauty Amaterasu has made.

USING AKODO HINATA

Akodo Hinata is a powerful force, but does not know it. They may be best used when tensions become high between the Centipede and Lion, such as if the Lion attempt to take Hinata back by force. Accidentally invoking fire kami is a terrifying, highly unusual thing to happen, and a GM can wait for just the right moment to unleash those powers for maximum impact.

Akodo Hinata, Headstrong Adept

ADVERSARY CONFLICT RANK: 4 5

Hinata was aware of their family's grudge against the Centipede Clan from the time they were a young child. However, Hinata has recently been plagued with visions in which Amaterasu whispers to them about something terrible Hinata must help stop. The goddess said they must train under the Moshi, but Hinata knew their parents would never allow such a thing. They ran away in the middle of the night and had been trying to steal an enrollment certificate to the Light of the Lady Sun Dōjō when they were apprehended by the Moshi. They hate to disappoint their family, and they despair to think of what they have put their parents through, but Hinata would hate to disappoint the goddess even more.

What no one yet realizes, however, is that Hinata has been blessed by Amaterasu with a frightening amount of power. Whether Hinata's dreams are about stopping a terrible event in the making or are an attempt to warn them that they themself are the potential catalyst for disaster is uncertain. If Hinata is forced back into Lion Clan hands, Hinata may accidentally unleash some of their untapped abilities, calling upon the numerous fire kami in the area to devastating effect.

SOCIETAL		PERSONAL	
37	HONOR	ENDURANCE	10
36	GLORY	COMPOSURE	6
36	STATUS	FOCUS	6
+2, –2	DEMEANOR · FLIGHTY	VIGILANCE	2

ARTISAN 1	MARTIAL 1	SCHOLAR 2	SOCIAL 2	TRADE 1

ADVANTAGES

Determined Nature: Social; *Interpersonal, Mental*

DISADVANTAGES

Youthful Ignorance: Social; *Interpersonal, Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Katana: Range 1, Damage 4, Deadliness 5/7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Traveling clothes (Physical 2, Durable, Mundane, Subtle), wakizashi, journal of incoherent dream-related notes

ABILITIES

UNDENIABLE SINCERITY

When Hinata makes a check using a Social or Scholar skill, they reduce the TN of the check by 1 (to a minimum of 1).

Additionally, when they make a Social or Scholar skill check, they may spend ✲ ✲ in the following way:

> ✲ ✲: The targets of Hinata's check receive 2 strife if they attempt to discredit Hinata's words or cause Hinata harm. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

GIFT OF AMATERASU

Hinata knows the following invocations: Biting Steel, The Fires from Within, and Wall of Fire. These abilities can only be used if Hinata unmasked this scene.

CENTIPEDE CLAN PLAYER CHARACTERS

Players who wish to create characters from the Centipede Clan can do so by using the clan and family information provided here. At the GM's discretion, a Centipede character could study at a Great Clan school, particularly if they are not a shugenja. Conversely, a Great Clan character could study at a Centipede school, particularly if they are a shugenja or show



an aptitude for Fire invocations. The rules for one of the most iconic schools of the Centipede, the Moshi Sun Sentinel School, can be found on page 86. As always, the GM has discretion over whether a character may study at another clan's school or extend their learning in other ways that are unconventional for their clan, depending on whether it is appropriate for the story the group is telling.

The Centipede Minor Clan

Ring Increase: +1 Fire
Skill Increase: +1 Theology
Status: 30
The Centipede strive for spiritual understanding and for the grace of Lady Sun to shine upon her children. Though many of the older Centipede focus on protecting tradition and maintaining the rites and rituals that have been passed down through the generations, there are others who seek to innovate and use the teachings of the past to refine the art of healing and protection using Fire invocations.

The Moshi Family

Ring Increase: +1 Air or +1 Fire
Skill Increases: +1 Fitness, +1 Meditation
Glory: 40
Starting Wealth: 3 *koku*
The members of the Moshi family are the descendants of Isawa Azami and Isawa Kichi, who sought a different path in what is now known as Mukade no Tani, the Valley of the Centipede. The most dedicated followers of Amaterasu, the Moshi are warm and welcoming to everyone who seeks to learn their ways or who otherwise enters their midst with good intent. At the family's outset, it taught its members to be balanced in both body and mind, and such teachings remain apparent even hundreds of years later. The Moshi have few enemies beyond those who have attempted to take their lands. Outside of their protected valley, they strive to spread the grace of their goddess in whatever way suits the situation, whether through pleasant conversation or extensive meditation, or by taking up arms against any wickedness that shuns the light.

WHAT DOES YOUR CHARACTER KNOW?

All Centipede Clan characters have greater awareness of the following topics:

- You have a strong awareness of the politics within Centipede lands, as well as a general awareness of happenings within the Phoenix and Mantis lands.
- You know about the Shrine of the Lady Sun and the Library of the Fiery Centipede, and you may have studied at either.
- You know basic rituals involving the worship of Amaterasu, such as the morning song and a variety of other minor Centipede-centric traditions.

WHAT DOES BUSHIDO MEAN TO YOUR CLAN?

Amaterasu's tears fell to Ningen-dō and mixed with Lord Moon's blood to become the first humans; thus, Amaterasu's compassion for her children is what gave humanity life. As a member of the Centipede, you believe that it is Jin, Compassion, that breathes life into most things. This sentiment is why the Light of the Lady Sun Dōjō has become such an important place for learning, and the shrine such an important place for healing.

Unlike most of the Phoenix Clan, from which the Centipede derive, the minor clan has no qualms with the tenet of Makoto, or Sincerity. Instead, many Centipede struggle with precisely following Chūgi, or Duty and Loyalty. For many young Centipede, loyalty to tradition can feel stifling. The restriction of the samurai's duty above all else can often conflict with Compassion, and when it does so, those who follow Lady Sun find the decision between the two ideals an easy one to make. See page 301 of the core rulebook for more information on how these can affect your honor and glory.

POTION (PREPARED INVOCATIONS)

Like wards, potions are a form of prepared invocation, as described on page 190 of the core rulebook, but with the following modifications:

Preparation Skill: Medicine

Ingredients: A blessed glass container, various supplies worth a number of *bu* equal to the invocation's rank.

Activation: A character can drink a potion as an action to activate it, in which case it affects the imbiber. Alternatively, a character can throw a potion at a target character or position as an action, making a Martial Arts [Ranged] check with a TN equal to the number of range bands between the character and the target (to a minimum of 1). If the character succeeds, the invocation activates at the chosen target or position.

New Schools

The following are new schools that PCs can select as part of character creation.

Agasha Alchemist School [Shugenja]

Deep in the mountains of the Dragon lands lives a small order of Agasha-led researchers who have focused their efforts on understanding, condensing, and blending the prayers and effects of invoking the elemental kami. These experimentalists believe that calling upon the abilities and blessings of the spirits around them is as much a science as it is an art, and that with careful preparation, they can coax the kami into weaving their powers together to create expanded effects.

Rings: +1 Fire, +1 Water

Starting Skills (choose three): +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Medicine, +1 Meditation, +1 Performance, +1 Survival, +1 Theology

Honor: 40

Techniques Available: Invocations, Rituals, Shūji

Starting Techniques:

- **Invocations (choose three): Amaterasu's Gaze**, Fukurokujin's Wit, Path to Inner Peace, The Cleansing Fire, The Fires from Within
- **Shūji (choose two):** Shallow Waters, Stirring the Embers, Truth Burns through Lies

Flesh of the Elements (School Ability): You can have a number of additional potions with prepared invocations (see page 190 of the core rulebook) equal to your school rank. When you spend a downtime activity creating a potion, you may make a number of supplemental checks after the first to create additional potions equal to your school rank, but each check must be for a different invocation.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, one weapon of rarity 7 or lower, blowgun and pouch of darts, wakizashi (short sword), medicine kit, one omamori (your choice), a pouch of 5 blessed glass vials, small satchel of ingredients worth 10 bu.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Rank 1 Fire & Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Hawk's Precision	Technique
	Fires of Purity	Technique
RANK 2	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Earth & Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Dazzling Performance	Technique
	Pelting Hail Style	Technique
RANK 3	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Commerce	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Bravado	Technique
	Path of Beasts	Technique
RANK 4	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Rank 1–4 Ranged Combat Kata	Technique
	Rain of Ten Thousand Lotuses	Technique
RANK 5	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Commerce	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Heart of the Lady Sun	Technique
	Sear the Wound	Technique
RANK 6	**Experimental Concoction (Mastery Ability, Action):** Once per game session as a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Medicine (Water) check** to combine two of your potions that share at least one invocation effect keyword (*mend, purify, smite,* etc.) If you succeed, the two potions become a single concoction with both properties; when this concoction is used, resolve the effects of both of the prepared invocations that are part of it. A concoction cannot be combined with another potion or concoction.	





Asahina Envoy School [Courtier]

As honest arbiters of harmony, the Asahina train a select few as specialized priests called Asahina Envoys. These envoys travel to the lands of other clans to offer aid and foster positive relations with even the most unruly of daimyō. These individuals learn how to navigate more personal visits and ceremonies involving other groups, rather than focusing on the broader political games of the courts. Among other tasks, they officiate at weddings, conduct funeral rites when priests of Emma-Ō are unavailable, and bless newborns.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Void

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Aesthetics, +1 Courtesy, +1 Culture, +1 Meditation, +1 Performance, +1 Sentiment, +1 Theology

Honor: 50

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

Starting Techniques:

- **Rituals:** Tea Ceremony
- **Shūji (choose one):** Cadence, Shallow Waters, Weight of Duty

Soul of Ceremony (School Ability): When you make a check to perform a ritual, you may add kept ■ set to ✵ results equal to your school rank. You may spend these ✵ as if the ritual were also a Social skill check of your choice (such as to activate a shūji, etc.).

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, ceremonial clothes, sanctified robes, wakizashi (short sword), knife or bō (staff), scroll satchel, calligraphy set, tea set, traveling pack, attendant (see page 64 of the core rulebook), and Rokugani pony (see page 326 of the core rulebook).

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Culture	Skill
	Government	Skill
	Rank 1 Air Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Lady Doji's Decree	Technique
	Divination	Technique
RANK 2	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Design	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Fire Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Dazzling Performance	Technique
	Blessing of the Dance	Technique
RANK 3	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Commerce	Skill
	Culture	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Air Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Blessed Union	Technique
	Prayer of Protection	Technique
RANK 4	Artisan Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Water Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Rank 1–5 Rituals	Tech. Grp.
	Buoyant Arrival	Technique
RANK 5	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Culture	Skill
	Design	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Void Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Bend with the Storm	Technique
	The Immovable Hand of Peace	Technique
RANK 6	**Favored Counselor (Mastery Ability):** When making a check to perform a ritual, you may spend ✵ as follows: ✵+: One participant in the ritual with vigilance lower than or equal to ✵ spent this way feels especially indebted to you. You gain the Ally [that character] advantage (see page 101 of the core rulebook).	

NEW TECHNIQUES INTRODUCED IN THIS BOOK

Most of the techniques listed in the school profiles described on these and the following pages are covered in the core rulebook in Chapter 4. Those shown in bold, such as Prayer of Protection, are new techniques not found in the core rulebook. These are covered later in this chapter beginning on page 105.

SAGES

The sage tag represents those who are in tune with forces outside of the elemental kami that allow them to perform miraculous feats. For an ishiken, this refers to their ability to tap into the mysterious and infinite Void. A sage tag may also be found in schools or traditions for gaijin, who use strange methods to affect the natural world. For more information and examples of sages, Path of Waves: The Essential Guide to Rōnin is an excellent resource.

INVERSIONS

A new type of technique, called inversions (), can be found beginning on page 113. These powerful abilities utilize blank die faces to trigger momentum effects, as explained in that section.

Ishiken Initiate School [Sage, Shugenja]

Air, Earth, Fire, Water: these four elements work together to create all tangible things in the world, and shugenja commune with the kami who are the embodiments of these elements. But the fifth element, Void, has no kami. Very few Rokugani realize that the Void can be called upon nonetheless—by the vanishingly rare ishiken. These individuals are capable of delving into the Void and pulling at the seams of reality at the cost of the self. Fewer still recognize the true ramifications of unweaving the threads of existence, though there are plenty of stories among the ishiken that teach just that lesson. Those trained in the art of the Void are also trained in the elemental arts of traditional shugenja.

Rings: +1 Void, +1 any other ring

Starting Skills (choose three): +1 Fitness, +1 Medicine, +1 Meditation, +1 Sentiment, +1 Survival, +1 Theology

Honor: 40

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

Starting Techniques:

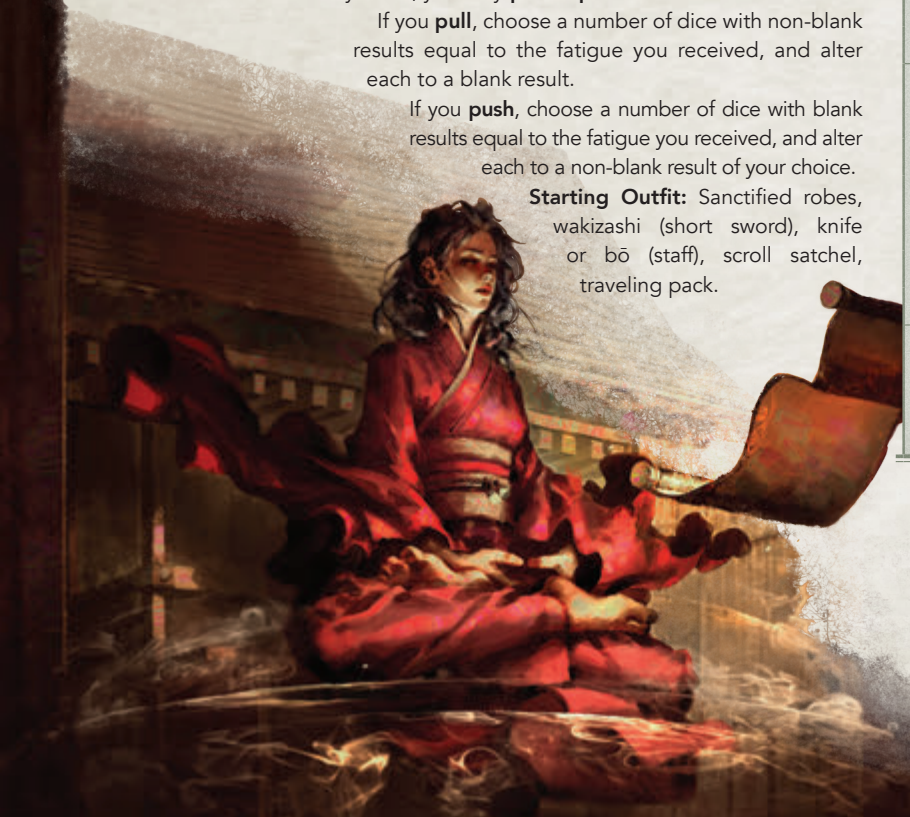
- **Inversions (choose one): One within the Void**, **Sight beyond Existence**, **Whispered Blade**, **Witness the End**
- **Rituals (choose one):** Commune with the Spirits, Divination, Threshold Barrier
- **Shūji (choose one):** All in Jest, Ancestry Unearthed, Cadence, Truth Burns through Lies

Way of the Void (School Ability): When you make a check using your Void Ring, after rolling dice, you may receive a number of fatigue up to your school rank. If you do, you may **pull** or **push**:

If you **pull**, choose a number of dice with non-blank results equal to the fatigue you received, and alter each to a blank result.

If you **push**, choose a number of dice with blank results equal to the fatigue you received, and alter each to a non-blank result of your choice.

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



	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Rank 1 Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Rank 1 Inversions	Technique
	Tea Ceremony	Technique
RANK 2	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Composition	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Rank 1–2 Inversions	Technique
	All Arts Are One	Technique
RANK 3	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Government	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Rank 1–3 Inversions	Technique
	A Samurai's Fate	Technique
RANK 4	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Earth Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Rank 1–4 Inversions	Technique
	The Immovable Hand of Peace	Technique
RANK 5	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Rank 1–5 Inversions	Tech. Grp.
	Rouse the Soul	Technique
RANK 6	**Essence of Emptiness (Mastery Ability):** Once per scene, after a character rolls dice, you may receive 3 fatigue to alter any number of their rolled dice to blank results.	



Kaito Spirit Seeker School [Bushi, Shugenja]

Within the Phoenix Clan's Kaito family is a small group of spiritual diplomats known as Spirit Seekers. These individuals spend much of their adult lives traveling in the Phoenix lands and beyond, carefully and patiently relocating spirits from places of abundance to places in need of a kami's presence to mend a disparity. Acting as safe vessels, these spirit seekers invite the kami to dwell within their bodies until the kami can be released into a new area.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Water

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

Honor: 45

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

Starting Techniques:

- **Invocations (choose two):** Armor of Earth, Extinguish, Dominion of Suijin, Tempest of Air
- **Kata (choose two):** Striking as Air, Striking as Earth, Striking as Fire, Striking as Water

The Body Is a Shrine (School Ability): When you are in the presence of a kami (such as an elemental kami or other Supernatural being the GM deems appropriate), you may make a **TN 4 Courtesy check** using a ring associated with the kami's element (its highest ring) or one of its elements (if it has multiple highest rings). If you fail, you suffer 3 fatigue and 3 strife and cannot attempt to act as a vessel again this session.

If you succeed, you convince the kami to use your body as a vessel. This grants you the following:

- Any time you make a check using one of the kami's elements, you may reroll a number of dice up to your school rank.
- Any time you make a check using one of the kami's opposing elements, increase the TN by 1 and add one kept ■ set to .
- If you unmask, the kami is released (see **Releasing Kami**).

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, sanctified robes, yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, wakizashi (short sword), knife, bowyer's kit or divination kit.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Commune with the Spirits	Technique
	Civility Foremost	Technique
RANK 2	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Games	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Crimson Leaves Strike	Technique
	Artisan's Appraisal	Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Rank 1–3 Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Bond of the Realms	Technique
RANK 4	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Guardian of the Secret Gate	Technique
	Buoyant Arrival	Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Rank 1–5 Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Rouse the Soul	Technique
RANK 6	**Temple of the Heart (Mastery Ability):** You may keep two kami within you at once instead of one. All effects of **The Body Is a Shrine** still apply. If two kami share an element, the effects do not stack for that element.	

OPPOSING ELEMENTS

Air is opposed by Fire.

Earth is opposed by Air.

Fire is opposed by Water.

Water is opposed by Earth.

PROPER OFFERINGS

Proper gifts and reverence, as discussed on page 189 of the core rulebook, can reduce TN of The Body Is a Shrine ability as if it were an invocation.

RELEASING KAMI

As a downtime activity, you may peacefully release one or more kami you are housing. If there is a nearby shrine or other appropriately spiritual place, the kami likely settles there.

Alternately, if you unmask or if the GM deems it narratively appropriate, the spirits within you can become irate and escape, manifesting using their standard profiles (such as the manifest kami found on pages 322–324 of the core rulebook).



Kaiu Architect School [Artisan, Courtier]

Kaiu Architects are trained to manipulate their environment to various purposes. Masters of this craft not only can design fortress corridors that confound attackers, but can even maneuver the spiritual properties of a space, repelling unholy entities and other beings through the use of *fu sui*. These skilled craftspeople also design and manage the integrity of the Kaiu Wall.

Rings: +1 Earth, +1 Void

Starting Skills (choose five): +1 Aesthetics, +1 Command, +1 Design, +1 Government, +1 Labor, +1 Martial Arts [Unarmed], +1 Tactics

Honor: 45

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

Starting Techniques:

- **Rituals:** Commune with the Spirits
- **Shūji (choose one):** Courtier's Resolve, Honest Assessment

Every Stone Serves (School Ability): Reduce the TN of your checks for downtime activities that alter your environment (such as checks to redecorate a room, build a fence, or erect a fortification) by your school rank (to a minimum of 1). When you succeed at such a check, you may choose a number of mundane terrain qualities equal to your school rank and add or remove those terrain qualities from the area you affect.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, ceremonial clothes, wakizashi (short sword), hammer or bō (staff), calligraphy set, drafting paper, fine set of chisels.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Commerce	Skill
	Labor	Skill
	Rank 1 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Rite of the Wheel	Technique
	Threshold Barrier	Technique
RANK 2	Artisan Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Water Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Ebb and Flow	Technique
	Open-Hand Style	Technique
RANK 3	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Fitness	Skill
	Martial Arts [Unarmed]	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Earth Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Pillar of Calm	Technique
	Lord Hida's Grip	Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Labor	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Fire Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Sear the Wound	Technique
	Rouse the Soul	Technique
RANK 5	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Void Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Soul Sunder	Technique
	Bend with the Storm	Technique
RANK 6	**The Flower Binds the Room (Mastery Ability):** Once per game session, you can use your school ability on any check (action or downtime activity) to alter your environment (such as a check to reposition a painting to change the atmosphere of a room or a check to obscure a trap with sand). When you do, you may also add or remove one supernatural terrain quality from the area you affect.	

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Sentiment	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Rite of the Wheel	Technique
	Warrior's Resolve	Technique
RANK 2	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Earth Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Messenger of Chikushō-dō	Technique
	Iron Forest Style	Technique
RANK 3	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Bond of the Realms	Technique
	Thunderclap Strike	Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Commerce	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Air Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Crashing Wave Style	Technique
	Prayer of Protection	Technique
RANK 5	Artisan Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Soul Sunder	Technique
	Rain of Ten Thousand Lotuses	Technique
RANK 6	**Walk the Hidden Ways (Mastery Ability):** When you use your school ability in a place already linked to a particular realm, such as a place of power, you may move yourself and a number of characters up to your ranks in Meditation into that realm fully, leaving the Mortal Realm entirely. As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Meditation (Void) check** to return yourself and a number of characters up to your ranks in Meditation to the Mortal Realm.	

Kitsu Realm Wanderer School [Shugenja, Bushi]

Member's of the Lion Clan's Kitsu family have a unique connection to the Spirit Realms due to their heritage and their position as conduits for their kitsu ancestors. Because of this near-constant connection, some Kitsu have the innate ability to call upon the ties that bind the realms and bid them move closer, creating places of power that overlap with the Mortal Realm. In this way, these Kitsu Realm Wanderers can seek wisdom and the secrets of the realms. However, doing so may bring unwanted attention, particularly from the ravenous baku.

Rings: +1 Void, +1 Water

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

Honor: 50

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

Starting Techniques:

- **Invocations (choose three):** Biting Steel, Blessed Wind, Courage of Seven Thunders, Nature's Touch, The Rushing Wave
- **Kata:** Striking as Water
- **Rituals:** Commune with the Spirits, Divination

Celestial Alignment (School Ability): As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Meditation (Void) check** to draw one of the Spirit Realms closer to your current location. A number of range bands around your current position up to your school rank become a place of power of the realm you choose (see page 138 for more information). This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Starting Outfit: Traveling clothes, ceremonial clothes, *daishō* (katana and wakizashi), yari (spear) or bō (staff), scroll satchel, pouch of incense, traveling pack.



TRAVELING BETWEEN THE SPIRIT REALMS

Where a place of power is present, two realms have been drawn closer to one another. A cave in the Mortal Realm might be a place of power connected to Jigoku. Walking into the cave might bring a character to Jigoku, at the GM's discretion, though there may be other narrative hurdles before characters pass between the two places. That being said, a character does not immediately go from one realm to another just because a particular realm overlaps with another (except in the case of the Kitsu Realm Wanderer School's mastery ability).

WALK THE HIDDEN WAYS

When a Kitsu Realm Wanderer uses their Walk the Hidden Ways mastery ability to transport one or more characters to another realm, they always appear in a place that is not immediately physically hazardous (for example, they would not appear directly in the middle of a pit of magma). When the Kitsu Realm Wanderer returns one or more characters to the Mortal Realm, they may return to any known place of power for the realm they are leaving (including any they previously created), subject to GM discretion.

Moshi Sun Sentinel School [Bushi, Shugenja]

THE CENTIPEDE CLAN

For more information on playing a character from the Centipede Clan, see page 69.

The shugenja of the Centipede Clan are—aside from the Imperial families themselves—the foremost worshipers of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess. For eight hundred years, the Moshi have greeted the sun every morning, singing at dawn so that Amaterasu may awaken and rise. But the foremost duty of the Moshi Sun Sentinels is to maintain and protect Amaterasu's shrine against all threats, both seen and unseen. To this end, Lady Sun herself directly answers the Moshi's prayers, empowering their songs with her radiant light. Though the Centipede prefer non-violence, when a Moshi shugenja is called to fight, it is with the power of Lady Sun herself. It is said that Amaterasu's flames will not burn the righteous, searing only those who have made themselves enemies of humanity.

Rings: +2 Fire

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

Honor: 55

Techniques Available: Kata, Rituals, Shūji

Starting Techniques:

- **Invocations:** Armor of Radiance, Biting Steel, Extinguish, Katana of Fire
- **Rituals:** Cleansing Rite, Commune with the Spirits

Blazing Tears of Lady Sun (School Ability): Damage inflicted by your Fire invocations is treated as having the Sacred item quality. Items you augment or summon with Fire invocations have the Sacred quality.

When you affect a non-Tainted human character with a Fire invocation, it does not deal damage to the target or inflict negative conditions. Instead, the character removes fatigue equal to your school rank plus the damage you would have dealt otherwise. Each character can only remove fatigue with this school ability once per scene.

Starting Outfit: Sanctified robes, daishō (katana and wakizashi), bō (staff), scroll satchel, traveling pack, religious texts.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Striking as Fire	Technique
	Fires of Purity	Technique
RANK 2	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Tactics	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Crescent Moon Style	Technique
	Iron Forest Style	Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Government	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Thunderclap Strike	Technique
	Crimson Leaves Strike	Technique
RANK 4	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Performance	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Battle in the Mind	Technique
	Heart of the Lady Sun	Technique
RANK 5	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Fire Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Iron in the Mountains Style	Technique
	Striking as Void	Technique
RANK 6	**Rippling Flame (Mastery Ability):** While performing a Fire invocation, you may spend a Void point to target additional characters equal to your ranks in Theology or to increase the maximum range of the technique by 1 range band.	





Shosuro Shadowweaver School [Shugenja, Bushi, Shinobi]

The Scorpion are known for their clandestine affairs and love of manipulating events from the shadows, but there are some within the Scorpion who are trained not only to operate from the darkness, but to craft it. A sibling school of the Soshi Illusionist School, the Shosuro Shadowweaver School trains students to become masters of creating confusion, distractions, or the cover their allies need to finish a job. Those who are selected to train in the art of weaving supernatural shadows are generally chosen for their mental cunning, physical grace, and aptitude for discreetness.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Fire

Starting Skills (choose three): +1 Courtesy, +1 Culture, +1 Fitness, +1 Government, +1 Martial Arts [Ranged], +1 Skulduggery

Honor: 30

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

Starting Techniques:

- **Invocations:** By the Light of the Lord Moon, Cloak of Night, Fukurokujin's Wit
- **Rituals:** Commune with the Spirits
- **Shūji:** Prey on the Weak

Sudden Nightfall (School Ability): You do not suffer any ill effects of Obscuring terrain as a result of darkness (see page 267 of the core rulebook). When you perform an Attack or Scheme action check against a target in terrain that is Obscuring due to darkness, reduce the TN by your school rank (to a minimum of 1).

As a Support action, you may target a position at range 0–2 and *summon* a cloud of supernatural darkness there. An area around the target position extending a number of range bands equal to your Air Ring become Obscuring terrain. This effect persists a number of rounds equal to your school rank.

Starting Outfit: Concealed armor, sanctified robes, wakizashi (short sword), six shuriken (throwing stars), three vials of poison (see page 244 of the core rulebook), and any one item of rarity 4 or lower.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Government	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Rank 1 Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Skulk	Technique
	Deadly Sting	Technique
RANK 2	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Courtesy	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Fluid Shadows	Technique
	Lord Bayushi's Whispers	Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Government	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	Dream Painter	Technique
	Noxious Cloud	Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Culture	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	Wolf's Proposal	Technique
	Pin the Fan	Technique
RANK 5	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Culture	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Skulduggery	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Shūji	Tech. Grp.
	The Fading Dream	Technique
	Silencing Stroke	Technique
RANK 6	**Shadow Assassin (Mastery Ability, Action):** Once per scene as an Attack and Movement action, you may *summon* a shadow assassin. The shadow has no corporeal form and cannot be harmed. At the end of each of your turns, you may perform a Strike action using one of your readied weapons targeting any character in the scene who is in Obscuring terrain (or other darkness, at the GM's discretion), regardless of range. Damage dealt this way is supernatural. This effect persists until the end of the scene.	



Utaku Stablemaster School [Bushi, Sage]

The warhorses of the Utaku Battle Maidens are raised and bred by a handful of extremely adept masters who pair students with steeds. The stablemasters of the Utaku are known for their dangerous prowess with a whip, though this skill comes not from handling horses, but from protecting them against threats while on horseback. These caretakers commit themselves fully to their charges and have a genuine, spiritual connection to the beasts.

Rings: +1 Air, +1 Water

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

Honor: 55

Techniques Available: Kata (), Rituals (), Water and Air Invocations ()

Starting Techniques:

- **Invocations:** Nature's Touch
- **Kata:** Crescent Moon Style, Striking as Air, Striking as Water

Steed of the Kami (School Ability): When you make a check to handle, calm, or instruct an animal or beast, you may negate a number of results equal to your school rank.

Additionally, once per scene as a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Survival (Water)** or **Theology (Water) check**. If you succeed, you discover a ridable animal with a combat () conflict rank of 3 or lower and that is appropriate to the environment. It is friendly toward you and gives you all of the benefits of a mount (see page 326 of the core rulebook), but its Water Ring is increased by your bonus successes (to a maximum value of 6).

Starting Outfit: Ashigaru armor, traveling clothes, daishō (katana or scimitar, wakizashi), yumi (bow), quiver of arrows, knife, whip (see page 98), traveling pack, bag of horse treats.

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Command	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Call Upon the Wind	Technique
	Blessing of Fertile Fields	Technique
RANK 2	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Fitness	Skill
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Theology	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Rank 1–2 Rituals	Tech. Grp.
	Emboldened Steed	Technique
RANK 3	Martial Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Medicine	Skill
	Smithing	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–3 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Messenger of Chikushō-dō	Technique
	Path of Beasts	Technique
RANK 4	Social Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Commerce	Skill
	Sentiment	Skill
	Survival	Skill
	Rank 1–4 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Rank 1–4 Rituals	Technique
	Guardian of the Secret Gate	Technique
RANK 5	Trade Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Martial Arts [Melee]	Skill
	Martial Arts [Ranged]	Skill
	Medicine	Skill
	Rank 1–5 Kata	Tech. Grp.
	Rank 1–5 Rituals	Tech. Grp.
	Rain of Ten Thousand Lotuses	Technique
RANK 6	**Master of Beasts (Mastery Ability, Action):** Once per game as a Support action, you may *summon* a number of animals equal to your Water Ring that are combat () conflict rank 3 or lower. These animals appear from the local environment. They are friendly to you and do their best to fulfill your commands. These animals stay to assist you until the end of the scene. If an animal becomes Compromised or incapacitated, it flees back into the wilds. The GM is the final arbiter over what types of animals, if any, are available in a given environment, as well as whether animals remain after the end of the scene.	

New Advantages

The premade advantages in this section provide additional options for players who are creating new characters. Characters can also gain advantages during play, as described starting on page 99 of the *Legend of the Five Rings* core rulebook.

NEW DISTINCTIONS

The new distinctions here follow the same format as those in **Chapter 2** of the core rulebook.

Famously Kind (Water)

"What do you need?"

The physician and healers looked up from their work. The person's nobility, though hidden behind a plain yukata, *nevertheless shone through via their stance and demeanor.*

"We don't need a noble vacationing here," one of the healers muttered. "We're in the middle of a plague."

"This is Isawa Iori," the physician said aloud. "The living embodiment of Fukurokujin."

"No, no," Iori replied. "Please. There is no comparison."

Attendants unloaded food, medicines, and clothes as Iori rolled up their sleeves. "Think of me as a pair of hands. You are the will. Guide me in whatever way you see fit."

Types: Fame, Interpersonal

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Famously Kind distinction:

- Other people have heard of you for your exceptional kindness, and they believe it unless given evidence to the contrary.
- When performing a check for which you need to leverage your reputation for being well-intentioned (such as a Courtesy [Water] check to convince an authority to give you access to a restricted area or a Survival [Water] check to befriend a woodland creature), you may reroll up to two dice.

Portentous Birth (Fire)

The childbirth assistant carried the silent bundle to the priest outside of the birthing chamber. The child's grandmother followed with a stony look on her face.

Why isn't the child crying? *the priest thought.*

"Show him," the grandmother said.

The assistant carefully unwrapped the bundle. The unnerving infant stared about, clear-eyed, as the grandmother pointed out the seven moles in a perfect circle on their ear.

"The child will reverse the family's bad fortune!" the priest exclaimed. The grandmother let out a breath and smiled for the first time in years.

Types: Interpersonal, Spiritual

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Portentous Birth distinction:

- You are known among your clan or family group to have been born under blessed circumstances or have had some sort of mark or other indication of greatness bestowed upon you by the Heavens. When you interact with someone who knows of your portentous birth and believes in its power, they treat you favorably and may be inclined to give you special privileges as long as you do not give them a reason to treat you otherwise.
- When performing a check for which your fortuitous birth is an asset (such as a Composition [Fire] check to craft a clever request to someone who believes in the legacy of your birth or a Theology [Fire] check to theorize about an omen), you may reroll up to two dice.

Talented Herbalist (Earth)

The official family history claims that Yasuki Kana fell ill before she took over the family finances. The true history notes that a cousin poured poison into her food, but that the poison didn't take. The secret history reveals that Kana's mother had brewed potions and concoctions for all her children to drink daily, fortifying their bodies against exactly such cowardly attacks. The true history describes Kana rising from her supposed deathbed and spitting bile, the neutralized poison, upon her cousin. No history notes the fate of the cousin.

Types: Mental

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Talented Herbalist distinction:

- You are always able to identify the properties of natural flora (including edibility, poisonousness, and basic uses) even if you have never seen it before.
- When performing a check for which your talents in herbalism are useful (such as a Medicine [Earth] check to make a quick poultice or an Aesthetics [Earth] check to maintain a garden), you may reroll up to two dice.

NEW PASSIONS

The new passions here follow the same format as those in **Chapter 2** of the core rulebook.

Bathing (Water)

Rie sighed, a loud exhalation of tension bordering on an ecstatic prayer to the Heavens, the woes of the road drifting away as their body slipped into the warm water. Their companion approached and, unceremoniously, plopped down next to them. "Etsuko-san!" said Rie. "You can't just sit down without washing first: it's uncouth!"

The woman frowned. "If you love the formalities of onsen *so much, you should reincarnate as a bathhouse attendant."*

Rie couldn't help but smile. "Imagine being able to bathe whenever we want. The heimin working here must be truly blessed."

Types: Interpersonal, Mental

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Bathing passion:

- You are familiar with all of the nuances of bathhouses and the traditions of bathing, and are talented at overhearing gossip in such places.
- After performing a check while bathing (such as a Sentiment [Water] check to eavesdrop on a conversation or a Composition [Water] check to ponder how to improve a poem), you remove 3 strife.

Festivals (Fire)

The people of Mura Higashi Chushin claim it was the favorite village of Akodo Tenjin and thus have an annual festival that draws scholars, papermakers, inkmakers, and poets from all across Rokugan. A local festival custom is to read aloud obscene or bawdy poems laced with innuendos disguised as love songs or celebrations of the Emperor; these are met with cheers or good-natured insults. All is forgiven and forgotten at the end of the festival when the poems are burned to amuse the kami.

Types: Mental

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Festivals passion:

- You can always find the best activities at festivals, and you never have an issue finding someone in a crowded place.
- After performing a check to interact at a festival (such as a Skulduggery [Fire] check to determine where clandestine dealings are happening or a Courtesy [Fire] check to ensure a guest has a good time), you remove 3 strife.

Kabuki (Air)

Junko's laughter didn't startle the professional entertainers on the stage, but it did cause the audience to shuffle a little, a drastic sign of chaos for the proud people of Meiyo Gisei Toshi. Eijiro covered his face and hers with his kimono sleeve and whispered, "Shhh, Junko; this is a serious story."

"What?" she replied, a little too loudly. "It's funny. A man in love with a horse? So stupid."

"No, it's a story about loyalty. The horse represents—"

Junko roared again with laughter, and Eijiro tried to sink into his kimono. I liked you better when you were grumpy all the time, *he thought.*

Types: Interpersonal, Mental

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Kabuki passion:

- You are a seasoned viewer of (or participant in) Kabuki, and you have many connections in the world of theater.
- After performing a check to engage with Kabuki (such as a Culture [Air] check to make an insightful comment about a performance or a Performance [Air] check to put on an impromptu show to distract someone), you remove 3 strife.

Kyūdō (Void)

Wood yields with a snap
Arrows sing in soft snowfalls
Blood sullies the end

Types: Mental, Physical

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Kyūdō passion:

- You are familiar with most forms of archery and are able to identify the relative skill of anyone who wields a bow simply by how they hold it.
- After performing a check to participate in the art of *kyūdō* (such as a Smithing [Void] check to examine and attune to a bow or a Games [Void] check to enlighten another on a particular technique), you remove 3 strife.

Religious Study (Void)

"I am no one," the monk said. "I pray. I meditate. I chant."

"You teach. You helped a father overcome his grief. The magistrate changed because of your petition. The Pale Blade turned herself in to the authorities."

The monk shrugged. "Grief fades over time. The magistrate already had a good heart. The Pale Blade was quite reasonable for a murderer."

Shirō knelt and pressed his forehead to the ground. "Please let me study under you."

The monk sighed and looked over Shirō's emaciated form. "Let us get you something to eat. Feed the body to feed the soul."

Types: Mental, Spiritual

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Religious Study passion:

- After you spend a short time studying a religious object, text, ritual, or other observance, you are able to discern its purpose and determine what religion it belongs to (unless the religion has not been chronicled by anyone in the Emerald Empire).
- After performing a check to contemplate an aspect of religion (such as a Meditation [Void] check to ponder the meaning of a particular passage of the Tao of Shinsei or a Composition [Void] check to write down your thoughts about a religious ritual you witnessed), you remove 3 strife.

New Disadvantages

The premade disadvantages in this section provide additional options for players who are creating new characters. Characters can also gain disadvantages during play, as described starting on page 99 of the *Legend of the Five Rings* core rulebook.

NEW ANXIETIES

The new anxieties here follow the same format as those in **Chapter 2** of the core rulebook.

Conspiracy (Earth)

"Why is she never seen out during the day?"

"Genjirō, you know the family keeps Lady Kaguya out of the sun because she burns so easily."

"No, it's because she feeds off the light of the moon."

His friend sighed. "Moon people don't exist, you know."

"They do! They eat the dreams of their lovers, causing terrible nightmares."

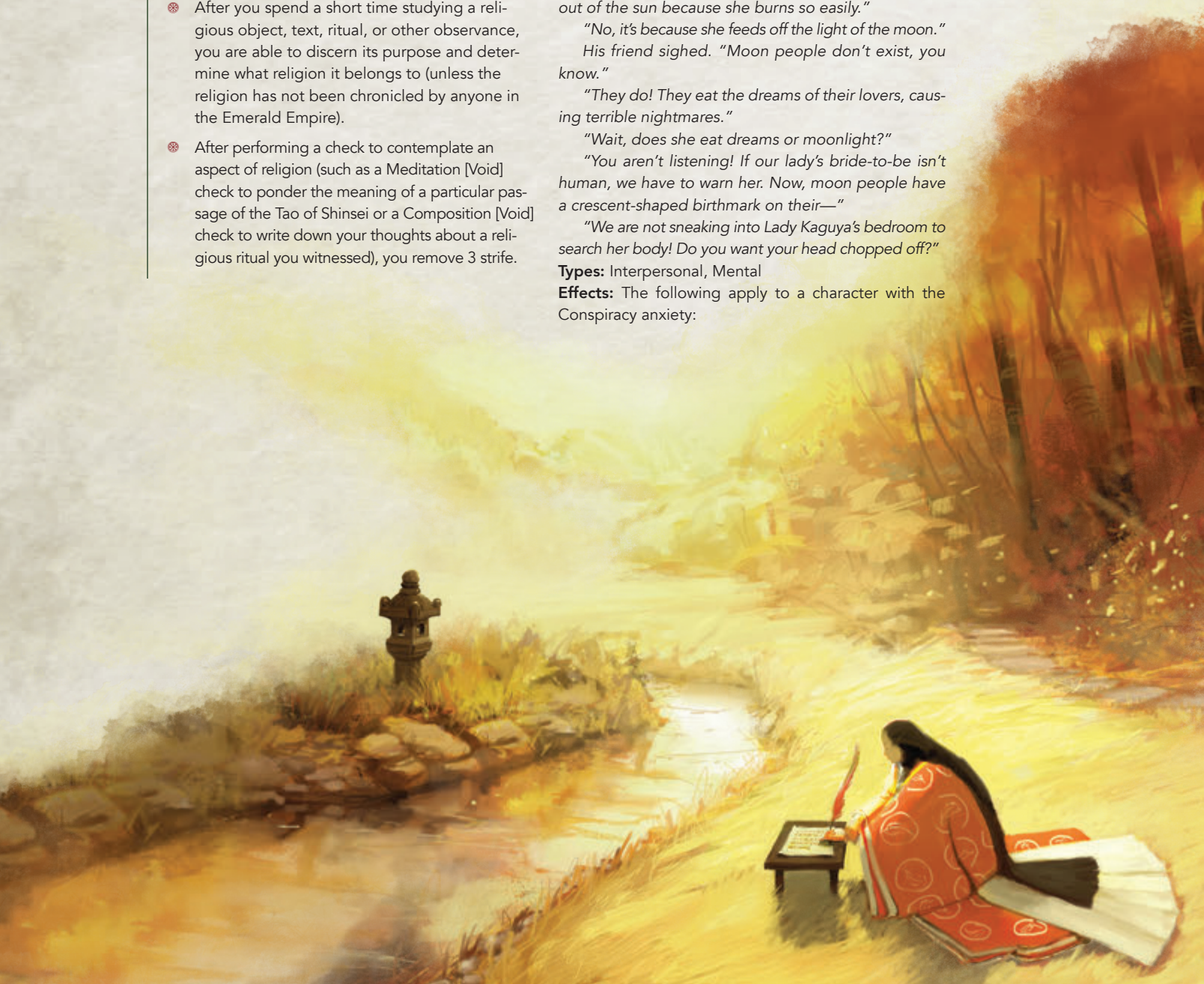
"Wait, does she eat dreams or moonlight?"

"You aren't listening! If our lady's bride-to-be isn't human, we have to warn her. Now, moon people have a crescent-shaped birthmark on their—"

"We are not sneaking into Lady Kaguya's bedroom to search her body! Do you want your head chopped off?"

Types: Interpersonal, Mental

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Conspiracy anxiety:



- You are plagued by the knowledge that there are greater plots in the world than what most others can see. Everywhere, treacherous schemes wait to ruin the lives of good people, and you cannot help but warn others of these awful machinations.
- After performing a check to interact with an unfamiliar authority figure (such as a Courtesy [Earth] check to be properly deferential or a Government [Earth] check to remember an authority figure's specific role), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Omen of Bad Luck (Water)

The shape of the deathly white daikon resembled a woman. The stalks that should have been strong and green were thin, wispy, and black, like hair.

"Did...it just move?" Momoe whispered.

"Throw it away," her friend said. "It's obviously gone bad."

"No, this looks like the onryō that killed my family."

"Momoe, don't be silly. Onryō only kill those who have done wrong—" The group's laughter died down. Her friends turned their gaze and quietly shuffled away.

Types: Interpersonal, Mental

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Omen of Bad Luck anxiety:

- Omens of bad luck seem to follow you wherever you go. Even if bad luck rarely befalls you, others see these signs and tend to respond negatively to them (and to you).
- After performing a check to interact with someone (such as a Commerce [Water] check to trade for goods with a superstitious merchant or a Government [Water] check to gather information from people who have witnessed one of your bad omens), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Uncleanliness (Air)

The two samurai argued over tea. "Rie-san, we must press onward."

"This is a journey. We should enjoy the simple pleasures, Etsuko-san."

The bathhouse attendant, Sumiye, smiled as she poured tea. Inwardly, she seethed at the dust covering the samurai's kimono. No wonder I can't keep this place clean.

"I will prepare the onsen, samurai-sama," she said.

"Yes!" the one called Rie shouted, slamming their hand on the table. The dust exploded off their kimono and drifted onto the once-pristine floor.

Sumiye smiled, bowed, and shuffled off to keep herself from screaming.

Types: Mental

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Uncleanliness anxiety:

- Uncleanliness in places and on things that could be clean causes you physical and mental distress. Though the forest is meant to be dirty because it is natural, your kimono is meant to be pristine and clean.
- After performing a check to interact with a person, place, or thing that is unclean (such as a Skulduggery [Air] check to sneak down a filthy alleyway or a Sentiment [Air] check to focus on learning something from a dirt-covered peasant), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.

Vanity (Void)

"Do you think I should use the rabbit or the manjū*?"*

His attendant suppressed a sigh. "Lord Kitsuki, would not a decorative netsuke be seen as frivolous?"

"Nonsense. I am attending the court of the Emperor. I must look my best." He held the rabbit-shaped ivory container from its cord by his side. "Ugh, it looks so plain."

He frowned. "I know! My uncle has a mirror-lid netsuke. It is intricate, prized, and ostentatious. Get it from him. Even if you have to steal it."

The servant smiled and bowed as she left, even though she daydreamed of Lord Kitsuki swallowing and choking on the netsuke.

Types: Interpersonal, Mental

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Vanity anxiety:

- You are hyperfocused on your physical appearance, and you truly believe you should be adored for your beauty.
- After performing a check in which your physical appearance is in jeopardy or is being challenged (such as a Courtesy [Void] check to explain your plan to someone you perceive as more beautiful than you or a Survival [Void] check to perform sweat-inducing labor in order to make camp), you receive 3 strife. If this is the first time this has occurred this scene, gain 1 Void point.



NEW ADVERSITIES

The new adversities here follow the same format as those in **Chapter 2** of the core rulebook.

Elemental Deficiency (Air)

Asahina Sora threw the calligraphy brush onto the tiled stone, the clattering echoing across the courtyard, ink slashing on its way. "I am wasting time. I have people to manage and letters to write."

Their teacher sighed. "How do you intend to write letters without any knowledge of calligraphy?"

"I care nothing of how pretty my characters are. If someone can read my letters, that should suffice."

"Scribes will be able to discern your thoughts and temperament from your calligraphy. It is essential you learn how to hide that."

Sora pointed at their scroll. "Discern those, then."

Their teacher calmly walked over to the ink marks on the tiles. "Impatient. Stubborn. Messy."

Types: Mental, Physical, Spiritual

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Elemental Deficiency (Air) adversity:

- For one reason or another, you lack a fundamental connection with the element of Air. You tend to have trouble in areas associated with the element, and you have a very poor relationship with air kami.
- When performing a check to align yourself with the element of Air or interact with air kami (such as a Theology [Air] check to invoke the kami or a Courtesy [Air] check to appropriately respond to a religious rite), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◌ or ◌. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Elemental Deficiency (Earth)

"Where are they?" Matsu Makoto gripped their bokken *and stormed out of the training area. Their shouts echoed throughout the castle. Servants glanced upward as they scurried away.*

"I'm up here, sensei! You can see the clouds sail across the sky."

Tsunade lay on their back on the roof, their bokken by their side. At least Tsunade didn't lose it this time, *Makoto thought. "You are supposed to be at practice."*

"Do you think humans might learn to fly one day?"

Maybe if I throw you over the castle walls, my dear sister's child. *Makoto sighed.*

Types: Mental, Physical, Spiritual

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Elemental Deficiency (Earth) adversity:

- For one reason or another, you lack a fundamental connection with the element of Earth. You tend to have trouble in areas associated with the element, and you have a very poor relationship with earth kami.
- When performing a check to align yourself with the element of Earth or interact with earth kami

(such as a Theology [Earth] check to invoke the kami or a Fitness [Earth] check to hold a position while praying or contemplating), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◌ or ◌. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

Elemental Deficiency (Fire)

Moto Chizue sat in her tent, staring at her attendant, Tadao. He had stayed by her side for decades, in palaces and on the field. Never had she met a person so dedicated, humble, and loyal. He deserved a title, wealth, and respect.

"I cannot give you that promotion," Chizue said. "You belong with me, not in a faraway command."

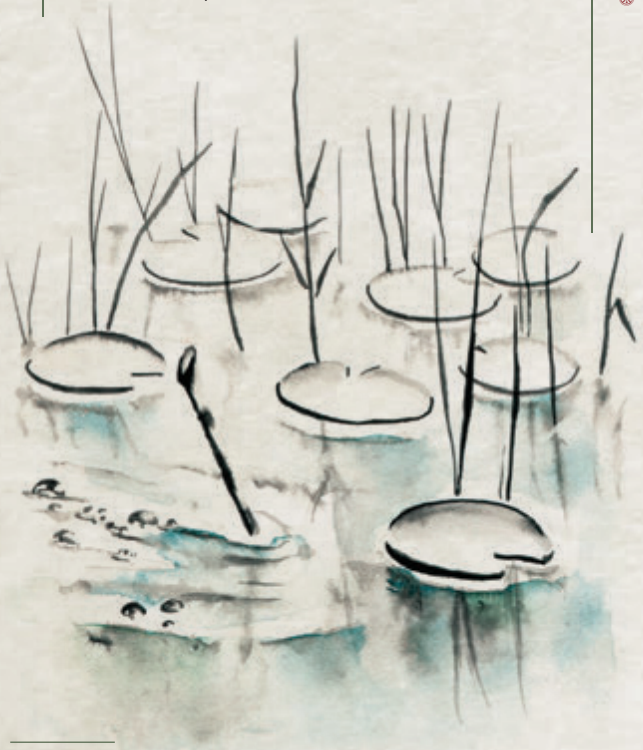
Tadao bowed, pressing his head to the mat. "I understand, Moto-sama."

He didn't know how to express his relief. Never had his mind been so clear than when executing his lady's orders.

Types: Mental, Physical, Spiritual

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Elemental Deficiency (Fire) adversity:

- For one reason or another, you lack a fundamental connection with the element of Fire. You tend to have trouble in areas associated with the element, and you have a very poor relationship with fire kami.
- When performing a check to align yourself with the element of Fire or interact with fire kami (such as a Theology [Fire] check to invoke the kami or a Performance [Fire] check to expound upon complex theories), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◌ or ◌. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.



Elemental Deficiency (Water)

A caretaker dropped Daidoji Hanae in the bath as a baby. At the age of four, she slipped into a nearby river and almost drowned. After her coma, she became temperamental and stubborn, and she could not focus on her studies. Upon her coming of age, her parents named her Umiko in order to counter her lack of affinity with water. This did nothing, and Umiko spent her time in the mountains, which gave rise to the rumor that a troll lived in the hills.

Types: Mental, Physical, Spiritual

Effects: The following apply to a character with the Elemental Deficiency (Water) adversity:

- For one reason or another, you lack a fundamental connection with the element of Water. You tend to have trouble in areas associated with the element, and you have a very poor relationship with water kami.
- When performing a check to align yourself with the element of Water or interact with water kami (such as a Theology [Water] check to invoke the kami or a Meditation [Water] check to understand your own desires), you must choose and reroll two dice containing ◌ or ◌. After resolving the check, if you failed, you gain 1 Void point.

New Heritages

A variety of unique heritages arise from having a bloodline derived—at least in part—from the Phoenix. Even non-Phoenix characters may possess an ancestral connection through marriage or other couplings.

Table 2–1: New Samurai Heritages presents backgrounds for characters connected to the Phoenix or to the spiritual world. This table can be used in the same manner as **Table 2–1: Samurai Heritage**, on page 96 of the core rulebook; the use of that table is explained in question **18. Who was your character named to honor?**, on page 95 of the core rulebook.

Table 2–1: New Samurai Heritages

ROLL	RESULT	MODIFIERS	OTHER EFFECTS
1	**Associated with a Natural Disaster:** An ancestor, through folly or hubris, caused or responded problematically to a natural disaster. They may have abused the power of the kami or taken flawed action such as refusing to allocate funds to repair a dam, leading poorly during a tsunami, or ignoring the severity of a plague outbreak.	Decrease your honor by 3.	You gain the Whispers of Failure (Fire) adversity (see page 130 of the core rulebook). You may reduce the value of one of your character's rings by 1 to increase the value of a ring associated with the disaster—such as Earth for an earthquake or Water for a tsunami—by 1 (this still cannot raise a ring above 3).
2	**Great Treatise:** One of your kin has written a scholarly text, religious treatise, philosophical essay, or collection of poems known throughout the Emerald Empire.	Increase your status by 3.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine a skill your family values (1–3: Composition, 4–6: Culture, 7–8: Government, 9–10: Theology); gain +1 rank in that skill.
3–4	**Guardian of Forbidden Knowledge:** One of your kin guards or once guarded a reliquary of forbidden knowledge. Either your family still has responsibility for guarding the reliquary, or it has gone missing.	Decrease your status by 5.	Roll a ten-sided die again to determine the skill your family uses to guard this knowledge (1–3: Martial Arts [Melee], 4–6: Government, 7–8: Theology, 9–10: Skulduggery); gain +1 rank in that skill.
5–6	**Mark of the Elements:** An ancestor had a story—perhaps true, perhaps apocryphal—of having been blessed by an element: i.e., was born of Fire, couldn't drown or could swim as a baby, fell a great distance and didn't get hurt, was buried alive but survived, etc.	Increase your status by 5.	Choose one of your character's rings; you may reduce the value of that ring by 1 to increase the value of the ring associated with the element by 1 (this still cannot raise a ring above 3).
7–8	**Sacrifice:** A forebear sacrificed something for the greater good of their clan or the Empire. The sacrifice doesn't necessarily mean their life. It could have been as personal as love or family, but it should illustrate giving up an individual want, need, or desire for the good of society.	Increase your glory by 5.	Roll a ten-sided die again and add the resulting heirloom to your starting items (1–3: a weapon, 4–6: a set of armor, 7–8: a valued piece of art, 9: a horse or other animal, 10: the deed to a small piece of land on the border of Phoenix territory). You choose one item quality and the GM chooses another from the list of item qualities starting on page 240 of the core rulebook; these are applied to the item.
9	**Spirit of the Phoenix:** One of your kin was reborn, either literally from death or figuratively through a public religious conversion, personal Enlightenment, or a famous second career after some debilitating trouble.	Increase your glory by 3.	You gain an advantage associated with your predecessor's rebirth (this can be assigned in excess of the normal limitations on advantages at character creation). Roll a ten-sided die again and add the resulting advantage (1–2: **Famously Kind**, 3–4: Famously Lucky, 5–6: Famously Reliable, 7–8: Famously Successful, 9–10: Famously Wealthy).
10	**Touched by the Fortunes:** An ancestor spent too much time with the Fortunes and forgot their humanity, or saw a mystical truth too terrible to bear.	Decrease your glory by 5.	You gain the Sixth Sense distinction (see page 110 of the core rulebook) (this can be assigned in excess of the normal limitations on advantages at character creation).

New Gear and Items

The following are items that are attuned to the realms beyond Ningen-dō but nevertheless rest in the Realm of Mortals. While they are powerful, they technically don't belong in the Mortal Realm, and people would be wise to approach them with caution.

SPIRITUAL ARTIFACTS

Below are some unique artifacts that players may encounter on their travels through the Empire. GMs should feel free to adjust or modify any of these items to fit into their specific campaign and tone.

The Horagai of Sacred Rains

Held by the tribe of Isawa long before the fall of the Kami, the Horagai of Sacred Rains is a conch shell trumpet connected to blessed Tengoku. Blowing the trumpet for a longer duration increases the amount of water called forth. Legends describe one of the horagai's wielders standing atop a mountain and summoning a torrent of rains from the sky, blowing until their lungs were empty. The resulting flood devastated many villages and carried the wielder far away, never to be seen again. (Cost: Priceless. Rarity: 10. Qualities: Resplendent, Sacred.)

Water Empowerment: Reduce the TN of your checks to activate Water invocations by 1 (to a minimum of 1).

Activation: Once per game session as a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 5 Theology (Water) check** targeting a position at range 0–6.

Effects: If you succeed, you summon pure water from the heavens. The target position and a number of range bands around it equal to your bonus successes become Ensnaring terrain. During subsequent turns, so long as you have not stopped blowing, you may receive 2 fatigue to continue to blow the horn as a Movement and Support action, causing the area to continue to flood with effects determined by the GM.

Daikoku's Mallet

Believed to be the personal mallet of the Fortune of Wealth, this plain wooden hammer is said to have the ability to "tap out" anything the user desires, hammering it out of thin air. Gold, steel, bridges, palaces, and even living things can be "hammered" into reality by Daikoku's Mallet. Some scholars believe the resulting objects are pulled from the Spirit Realms, while others believe they are constructed by disturbing the Void. However, anything created by the mallet vanishes at the sound of a temple bell, as the summoned object becomes "alms for Daikoku."

Legends say that a Yasuki once used the mallet to hammer a palace out of thin air to win the heart of their beloved, but when a passing monk rang a bowl bell begging for alms, the palace vanished, and the Yasuki along with it. (Cost: Priceless. Rarity: 10. Qualities: Durable, Sacred, Subtle.)

Earth Empowerment: Reduce the TN of your checks to activate Earth invocations by 1 (to a minimum of 1).

Activation: Once per game session as a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 5 Smithing (Earth) check** targeting a position at range 0–6.

Effects: If you succeed, you summon an item or structure of silhouette 0–5 (subject to GM's approval). This object remains until a bell is tolled at range 0–5 of it, at which point in vanishes or crumbles to dust.

Candles of the Moth

One of the many crafts of Moth shugenja, candles of the Moth are made from a special wax that is imbued with the essence of Yume-dō, the Realm of Dreams, via a process known only to the Moth Clan. When one of these candles is lit, its light creates a "bubble" in which Yume-dō overlaps with Ningen-dō, allowing the shugenja to observe the collective dreams of those slumbering nearby or to converse with denizens of the Realm of Dreams. What can be seen extends only to the edge of the bubble; the dreams and denizens cannot stray beyond the candle's light. (Cost: 10 koku. Rarity: 9. Qualities: Ceremonial, Sacred, Subtle.)

Activation: Once per scene as a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Air) check** to light the candle.

"Effect: If you succeed,the area at range 0–4 of the candle's position becomes a place of power connected to Yume-dō (see **Places of Power**, starting on page 138). The area moves with the candle, but the effect only persists until the end of the scene, at which point the candle becomes unusable. The candle cannot be snuffed out or stifled once lit, even by supernatural means.

The Golden Obi of the Sun Goddess

A sash believed to have been worn by the Sun Goddess herself, the Golden Obi was brought to Ningen-dō by the Kami Shiba. The Isawa guarded it as a sacred relic for generations, until it eventually passed into the hands of Isawa Moshi and became one of the Centipede Clan's most prized possessions. The golden silk of the sash appears mundane, but in the light of the sun, it glows brightly, as if the threads were lit from within. It is not known what powers the obi possesses, but the person who carries it is believed to enjoy the blessing of Lady

POTENT OFFERINGS

It can be difficult for a shugenja to know what manner of offerings a specific kami prefers. Some general patterns have been observed, and a shugenja can make some assumptions based on the kami's element, where they dwell, and other such details, but two different kami may react to the same offerings differently. The only way to know for sure is to build a relationship with the kami, slowly increasing familiarity with the spirit through prayer.

Still, many shugenja who must improvise with unfamiliar spirits have found certain offerings to be particularly potent for a broad range of kami. Following are a few of these offerings, but shugenja should be forewarned, for while kami who enjoy these things will react with great favor, those who do not may be greatly offended.

Agarwood: whole or burned

A dance, jovial and true

A true secret, folded into origami and burned

A cup of thrice-blessed sake or sorghum wine

The first bite of a mochi cake

A song played on an ancient conch shell

A hanabi *firework display containing incense*

Sun. (Cost: Priceless. Rarity: 10. Qualities: Ceremonial, Resplendent, Sacred.)

Armor of the Sun Goddess: The Golden Obi of the Sun Goddess is armor with the following resistances: (Physical 3, Supernatural 6). Additionally, while wearing it, you are immune to the damaging effects of fire, both supernatural and mundane.

The Golden Obi of the Sun Goddess has the following Fire invocations sealed within it: Amaterasu's Gaze (page 108); Armor of Radiance (page 202 of the core rulebook); Fires of Purity (page 108); Heart of the Lady Sun (page 108).

Sealed Invocations: Once per scene, you may activate one of the Obi's sealed invocations by making a Theology check as normal, treating the TN as 1 lower (to a minimum of 1).

TOOLS OF SHUGENJA

A shugenja utilizes all manner of items and offerings in the course of their duties. Below are but a few.

New Omamori

An omamori is a charm that protects a person against a specific type of misfortune or boosts their luck in a particular sphere (see page 243 of the core rulebook for additional information).

Boon of Hotei

The Fortune of Contentment makes all things endurable. Once per game, the wearer may spend 1 Void point to remove strife from themself equal to their focus value. (Cost: 5 bu. Rarity: 2.)

Boon of Jurōjin

The Fortune of Longevity ensures that joy is long lasting and that sadness is only brief. Once per game session, when the wearer suffers the Enraged, Intoxicated, or Exhausted condition, they may spend 1 Void point to remove the condition before it affects them. (Cost: 5 bu. Rarity: 2.)

Boon of Kisshōten

The Fortune of Happiness, Fertility, and Beauty makes it easier to present one's best face. Once per game session, the wearer may spend 1 Void point. If they do, they count as having the Dangerous Allure or Kisshōten's Blessing advantage (their choice) until the end of the scene (see pages 103 and 108 of the core rulebook, respectively). (Cost: 5 bu. Rarity: 2.)

NEW ARROWS

When used with a bow, the following arrows modify the weapon's profile as follows:

- **Fire-Blossom:** Damage -1. After being fired, the arrow radiates bright light at range 0–4 of its position until the end of the scene. (Cost: 5 bu. Rarity: 6.)
- **Hamaya:** Damage +3 and Deadliness +3 when used against an Otherworldly being. (Cost: 1 koku. Rarity: 8.)
- **Soul-Star:** Damage +1. Has an additional benefit based on its element. (Cost: 2 koku. Rarity: 8).
  - **Air:** The area at range 0–3 of the arrow's point of impact becomes Obscuring terrain until the end of the wielder's next turn.
  - **Earth:** An Otherworldly being struck by this arrow must make a **TN 3 Fitness check (Air 2, Water 4)** or receive 4 strife and suffer the Immobilized and Silenced conditions until the end of the wielder's next turn.
  - **Fire:** The area at range 0–3 of the arrow's point of impact becomes Dangerous terrain. If the arrow inflicts a critical strike upon an Otherworldly being, it suffers the Burning condition.
  - **Water:** The area at range 0–3 of the arrow's point of impact becomes Entangling terrain until the end of the scene.

Robes of Judgment

The signature garb of the shugenja of Emma-Ō, robes of judgment are white, sanctified robes with *sode* shoulder guards sewn into the sleeves at the shoulder. Unlucky symbols mark the back and sleeves, ensuring that only the shugenja of Emma-Ō will don them. More information on shugenja of Emma-Ō can be found on page 150 of *the Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* sourcebook *Emerald Empire*. (Cost: 10 koku. Rarity: 9. Qualities: Ceremonial, Cumbersome, Wargear.)

A robe of judgment is armor that provides its wearer with the following: (Physical 1, Supernatural 4).

ROKUGANI ARROWS

Fire-blossom arrows were originally designed by the Agasha as an alternative to the traditional fireworks shows, displaying dazzling, varied colors in smaller quantities to save on resources.

Hamaya arrows, also known as "demon-breaking arrows" were designed with the Kaito's founding history in mind, harking back to the arrow that was used to banish the demon Ateru into the Kaito family's sacred well.

Soul-star arrows are specially imbued by Kaito shugenja to serve a variety of purposes. Some of these techniques have been adopted by other shugenja outside of the small family, but to a more limited extent.

ATTUNING TO AN ANCESTRAL BLADE

Each of the weapons in The Ancestral Swords of the Clans has the ability to choose or reject a potential wielder based on their worthiness in its estimation. In addition to certain narrative constraints a blade may have, this means that the first time a character readies an ancestral blade, they must make a TN 3 Meditation (Void) check using the Artisan approach (Attune) to align their spirit with the weapon.

If they succeed, they become aligned and can use the sealed inversions and properties of the weapon. If they fail, they are not aligned; they increase the TN of all their checks using the weapon by 2, and they cannot use any of the sealed inversions or properties.

As a downtime activity, a character who is not aligned with an ancestral weapon may attempt this check again, using Meditation or another skill at the GM's discretion. Deeds contrary to the character of the given blade may cause the character to fall out of alignment with it, requiring the check, or some other form of penance, to be made–again, at the GM's discretion.

NEW WEAPONS

The following are a handful of new weapons representing both tools favored by spiritualists and other items that have been mentioned throughout this book.

Moshi Sun Ax

The Sun axes of the Moshi are poleaxes with a long, crescent moon–shaped blade that curves upward, extending behind the haft. This helps counterbalance the ax for sweeping moves and martial arts flourishes. Typically, the blade is more than two feet long, and the wooden shaft rarely exceeds five feet, making these weapons cumbersome for those who are not experienced in their handling. This is both a polearm and ax.

Shakujō

Favored by priests and some Fortunist monks, a *shakujō* is a long walking staff adorned with five interlocked brass rings representing the elements. The purpose of the rings is to make noise and warn small sentient creatures, such as insects and birds, to move out of the wielder's path. Usually made of wood or nonprecious metals, shakujō are occasionally made with gold. This is a polearm weapon.

If a shakujō is made with gold, its price increases to 10 koku, and it gains the Resplendent item quality.

Tachi

Tachi are the ancestors of the more commonly used katana, though they still see some use today. These swords tend to have a more curved blade and have a wider range of acceptable blade lengths than the more standardized katana. This is a sword.

Uchigatana

Like the katana, the *uchigatana* is a descendant of the tachi. Shorter, lighter, and with a thinner blade than the tachi, the uchigatana is usually worn more front-facing than the tachi or the katana and is wielded in one hand. This weapon is a particular favorite among polearm users because of the positioning of the uchigatana on the torso. Similar to the tachi, the uchigatana also has a more severe curve than the more common katana. This is a sword.

Whip

The whip is a common tool used by those who practice animal husbandry to protect animals from dangers like hostile wild animals and bandits. Peasants favor this long, handled cord because of the prohibition against weapon use by non-samurai; the whip is considered more a tool than a weapon. This is a specialist weapon.

The Ancestral Swords of the Clans

Among the most treasured artifacts a clan possesses is its ancestral weapon, the weapon once carried by its founder or another important leader. In each of the Great Clans, this weapon is an ancestral sword, one of the most ancient blades in the Empire, with a history and future inexorably tied to the fate of its clan.

As a people who venerate their past, Rokugani have a longstanding tradition of preserving their lords' and loved ones' significant items to pass down through the generations. In practice, dozens of weapons could be considered ancestral among the clans' many great and vassal families, but only one implement in each Great Clan is recognized as the ancestral weapon of the clan.

As such weapons age and are wielded by heroic figures, the latent spirit within them awakens, and the weapons become nemuranai, items that have gained sentience and special properties. Because they date from the dawn of the Empire, the ancestral swords of the Great Clans are especially powerful and have guided the clans throughout history.

Table 2–2: New Weapons

NAME	SKILL	RNG	DMG	DLS	GRIPS	QUALITIES	RARITY	PRICE
MELEE WEAPONS								
Moshi Sun Ax	Martial Arts [Melee]	1–2	3	5	1-hand: – 2-hand: Damage +3	Ceremonial, Cumbersome, Resplendent	8	20 koku
Shakujō	Martial Arts [Melee]	1	4	1	1-hand: – 2-hand: Damage +1	Ceremonial	4	5 bu
Tachi	Martial Arts [Melee]	1	5	5	1-hand: – 2-hand: Deadliness +1	Ceremonial, Cumbersome, Razor-Edged	8	25 koku
Uchigatana	Martial Arts [Melee]	1	3	6	1-hand: –	Razor-Edged, Wargear	8	16 koku
Whip	Martial Arts [Melee]	2	3	2	1-hand: –	Ensnaring, Mundane	2	4 bu

CHIKARA

Chikara, the ancestral sword of the Crab Clan, is a *chokutō*—a straight sword—of exceptional quality.

- **Quirk:** Chikara never rusts, never dulls, and cannot be taken apart (not even to be reforged). Unlike typical swords, it can be cleansed by ladling ordinary water across its surface, any dirt or viscera washing away without scrubbing. Chikara was forged with jade sand folded into the metal in a process lost to history, making it a bane to the Shadowlands.
- **Profile:** Range 0–1, Damage 4, Deadliness 7, Ceremonial, Razor-Edged, Sacred. *Vigilant Blade:* Chikara cannot become Damaged or Destroyed, and its wielder is immune to the Afflicted condition.
- **Sealed Inversion:** Chikara contains the Essence Eternal inversion (see page 119), which is activated using Fitness (Void) instead of Theology (Void). Additionally, the inversion can target only the wielder of Chikara.

However, the ancestral swords of the Great Clans are not venerated because of their power. Each is a relic of its clan's history, the most significant connection to its glorious past, and a living symbol that embodies the traditions and heritage of the clan. Like a painting from a clan's beginnings or one of the oldest palaces in the Empire, these weapons' cultural and historical significance cannot be overstated.

As a result, the Great Clans' ancestral swords are rarely used. Because they date from the dawn of the Empire, they predate the invention of the katana and most current Rokugani swordsmithing techniques. This makes them valuable to smiths for the glimpses they offer into how ancient smiths developed their craft and solved forging conundrums without modern innovations. The swords made by current Rokugani swordsmiths are far superior to ancient blades because they benefit from centuries of innovation and improvement. With a few notable exceptions, the ancestral swords are more important as cultural artifacts and for their power as nemuranai than as literal weapons.

Katana vary in size because they are forged with a custom length and balance to suit the intended wielder. Swords that are passed down are usually reforged for this reason. But to reforge an ancestral sword—even to bring it to modern standards—is unthinkable. It would mean the destruction of a thousand years of history, and history means more to the Rokugani than three feet of steel ever will.

SEALED INVERSIONS

Sealed inversions work in the same way that nemuranai function, as described on page 307 of the core rulebook.

CHIKARA: ANCESTRAL SWORD OF THE CRAB

It is said that all great blades wielded by the Crab share one fate: to be lost in the Shadowlands. Indeed, many weapons have been lost in the Crab's unending war, but this has not discouraged them from wielding every possible weapon they can against Jigoku's hordes.

Chikara is an exception to this pragmatism. No Crab would sacrifice the greatest of Kaiu's works, the jade-laced chokutō that is the ancestral sword of the Crab. This sword was forged for the gempuku of Hida's second son, Osano-wo. It has become customary over the centuries for the rightful heir of the Crab Clan Champion to carry Chikara. Because of this tradition, ownership of Chikara is considered proof of a samurai's status as the champion's successor. As such, Chikara guards the future of the clan.

Chikara was forged without a scabbard to represent the Crab's eternal vigilance, but it has become tradition for a new scabbard, reflecting the attitudes of the new wielder, to be commissioned each time the sword changes hands. The old scabbard is burned in the pyre at the former champion's funeral.

Chikara is one of the last surviving examples of Kaiu's work, and reportedly one of the few he was content with. Because Kaiu took most of his forging secrets to the grave, the Kaiu family found it necessary to reverse engineer his techniques over the course of centuries, and Chikara was an essential part of that task. Opportunities to study the blade are rarely offered, and to be entrusted with Chikara, even for a short time, is a great honor.





SHUKUJO: ANCESTRAL SWORD OF THE CRANE

Under the tutelage of his tengu sensei, the legendary swordsmith Doji Yasarugi forged the Five Sacred Blades of the Crane, many of which were gifts for other warriors. Shukujo was the second of these blades and the only one Yasarugi kept for himself. He created it specifically to benefit from the unique one-strike style of fencing practiced by his father, Kakita. While Shukujo is not a true katana, many consider it a precursor.

After Yasarugi's assassination, Shukujo was wielded by his twin sister, Konishiko, the Crane Clan Thunder. It was lost in the Shadowlands and then recovered and returned home by Doji Hayaku, the founder of the Daidoji family. Since then, Shukujo has tasted many victories in the hands of skilled duelists and Crane Clan Champions. It is said that Yasarugi and Konishiko still dwell within the sentient blade, and that those who wield it are gently guided by their presence.

Shukujo plays an integral role in the inauguration of each Crane Clan Champion. At this ceremony, the rising champion draws it in the presence of several Crane daimyō. If Shukujo is drawn by a person who can trace their bloodline to Lady Doji, the sword rings a brilliant note that echoes like a heron's call. For this reason, heirs and the champion's bloodline are carefully managed. If the Doji bloodline is ever lost, so too would be the power of the ancestral sword of the Crane.

SHUKUJO

Shukujo is an uchigatana designed specifically for the iaijutsu technique.

- **Quirk:** Shukujo sings a brilliant note when drawn by a person who can trace their bloodline to Doji.
- **Profile:** Range 1, Damage 5, Deadliness 5, Ceremonial, Durable, Sacred.
- **Sealed Inversion:** Shukujo contains the Witness the End inversion (see page 116), which is activated with Meditation (Void) instead of Theology (Void). Instead of being activated during a character's turn, this inversion can be activated only at the end of the stare-down in a duel or clash, and the TN to activate it is always 1.

THE ANCESTRAL SWORD OF THE DRAGON

Common folklore does not have much to say about Togashi, the reclusive founder of the Dragon Clan. He was noted for his wisdom, his "duel" with Fu Leng, and his enigmatic deeds. The few tales told outside Dragon lands always mention his brilliant sword, a flaming *jian* that could cut through iron as surely as flesh. This was the Blade with No Name, the ancestral sword of the Dragon Clan. It has not been seen in a thousand years. That is because it does not exist.

Only a handful within the Dragon Clan know that the ancestral sword of the Dragon is not a literal blade, but a philosophic concept, one uttered by Togashi himself to Mirumoto's heir: "Kill a thousand warriors, master one blade. Kill the self, master all blades."

The Dragon Clan's swordmasters always refer to the ancestral sword as the pinnacle of all swords, as though it were real. But this is a riddle that, when solved, leads to true comprehension. To one who has mastered themself, any sword they grip is the Blade with No Name.

Any sword may be the ancestral sword of the Dragon.





THE BLADE WITH NO NAME

The Blade with No Name is a warrior's *kōan*, the true comprehension of which unlocks the warrior's potential for swordmastery. This takes years to fully achieve. There are no shortcuts, and the student must achieve comprehension by themself; if the answer is prematurely revealed, then the benefit of mastery will never be unlocked.

- **Quirk:** From time to time, kōan come to your mind unbidden. These paradoxical riddles particularly pop into your head when you are just about to fall asleep.
- **Sealed Inversion:** Mastering the Blade with No Name grants the character the inversion The Lotus Blooms (see page 117), which they can use once per game session and is activated using Meditation (Void) instead of Theology (Void).

SHORI: ANCESTRAL SWORD OF THE LION

At the dawn of the Empire, the Kami Hantei commissioned a fine blade for his brother Akodo. Legends say it was the finest ever crafted, and that in Akodo's hands, the sword could cut down five opponents in one swing. Akodo wielded the sword in many battles during the War against Fu Leng, and eventually the blade tasted the blood of Fu Leng himself, forcing the Ninth Kami to retreat and creating the opening Shinsei required to end the conflict.

When the war was over, the Emperor bade Akodo pass down his blade as an ancestral weapon. Instead, Akodo said, "A blade that has drawn the blood of family cannot be revered," and he shattered it and scattered the pieces. Picking up a fallen soldier's mundane sidearm, Akodo said, "This is my ancestral sword." That sword became Shori, the ancestral sword of the Lion, a sword that has never been drawn.

Few ever recognize Shori upon seeing it, unless they know the blade's story. It is a plain tachi with a wooden hilt and sheath, whose only adornment is a plain golden lion on the sheath. It rests in the Imperial Palace beside the ancestral sword of the Hantei, eternally standing guard over the Emperor's honor. The Lion tell the story of their clan sword proudly; to them, true martial power does not belong to a sword, but to the warrior who earned it.

Akodo once swore that he would only draw his blade for the Emperor. In accordance with this promise, whenever the Emperor requires the Lion's armies, the Heir of Heaven presents the Lion Champion with Shori and the symbol of the clan they wish to subdue. When the deed is done, the champion returns Shori to the Emperor to await the next war. Scholars say this tradition has made Shori the deadliest sword in the Empire, for while Akodo's first blade slew dozens of warriors, only Shori has destroyed entire samurai families without ever being drawn.

SHORI

Shori is a tachi that is both elegant and powerful (see page 98).

- **Quirk:** If Shori's wielder commits a dishonorable act, the blade fills their head with the roars of ten thousand Lions.
- **Profile:** Range 1, Damage 6, Deadliness 6/7, Ceremonial, Durable, Sacred. Mandate of the Chrysanthemum: While in possession of Shori at the sanction of the Emperor, the wielder does not forfeit glory for major or massive glory breaches.
- **Sealed Inversion:** Shori contains the Three Heartbeats inversion (see page 119), which is activated using Command (Void) instead of Theology (Void).



OFUSHIKAI: ANCESTRAL SWORD OF THE PHOENIX

Of all the Great Clan ancestral swords, Ofushikai is the most recognizable. This is because the sword is carried by the Phoenix Clan Champion, and it is the only ancestral sword regularly brandished in battle. Scholars throughout the Empire cringe at the thought of risking such a precious cultural treasure. But the Phoenix are accustomed to wielding the sacred in defense of the clan, and Ofushikai is no exception.

Ofushikai was forged by Shiba's wife, the ningyo princess Tsamaru, as a wedding gift, uniting the Shiba provinces and the undersea ningyo kingdom for a time. Tsamaru made the blade from undersea materials never before seen by human eyes, forging it where the land met the sea. Shiba entrusted his sword to the care of Asako on the Day of Thunder. When Shiba passed, his spirit returned to the blade, where he dwells still—not in Tengoku with his siblings, but in the sword that guides his clan.

The Phoenix Clan Champion is bound to this sword, and anyone who is able to wield it is destined to join the ghostly collective within. Ofushikai is haunted by the spirits of all past Phoenix Clan Champions. This makes it partially autonomous, guiding not only the blade but the wielder as well. With time, the wielder can access the memories of all of the clan champions haunting the sword, which transforms the wielder into a masterful warrior. However, it takes years to unlock Ofushikai's full potential, and if this is done prematurely, the champion may lose their identity among the throng of minds within.

When a new Shiba daimyō must be named, a group of select Shiba are gathered by the Elemental Masters, and Ofushikai is passed between them until the blade signals that the spirits within have chosen the next champion. No one is certain of the criteria under which the sword chooses the new daimyō, but the choice is not related to bloodline, prestige, skill, or even experience. The Shiba chosen is forged just as the sword was: through harsh trial and gentle guidance.

OFUSHIKAI

Ofushikai is an ancient tachi of obscure design.

- **Quirk:** Ofushikai is home to generations of Phoenix Clan Champions. Only the Shiba it has chosen as clan champion can draw it, and that daimyō can call it into their hand from any distance. In the hands of anyone who does not have the ghosts' sanction, it is useless.
- **Profile:** Range 1, Damage 5, Deadliness 4, Ceremonial, Durable, Sacred.
  Tsamaru's Love: The wielder of Ofushikai can breathe and speak underwater as though they were on land.
- **Sealed Inversion:** Ofushikai contains the One within the Void inversion (see page 114), which is activated using Theology (Void) instead of Sentiment (Void). Additionally, the inversion can target only the past wielders of Ofushikai who inhabit the blade. These ancient spirits use the **Venerable Provincial Daimyō** profile (see page 315 of the core rulebook) with the rules for spirits (on page 287 of the core rulebook), or another appropriate profile at the GM's discretion.

ITSUWARI: ANCESTRAL SWORD OF THE SCORPION

Itsuwari's history is virtually unknown to anyone outside the Scorpion Clan, and even those within are likely to know little about it. No histories record who made the blade, and it lacks any stamp to hint at who might have created it. It may even predate the Scorpion Clan entirely. What is known is that Soshi blessed it before presenting it to Bayushi. The characters imprinted on its surface only show when the light hits it just so. Even then, they are only shadows, as if cast by nothing at all.

To all appearances, the Scorpion Clan Champion carries Itsuwari, but keen-eyed observers note that the sword is never actually drawn. That is because the Itsuwari worn by the champion is a fake. In fact, there are at least twelve fakes spread throughout the clan. The real Itsuwari is entrusted to a person chosen by the Scorpion family daimyō of each family and is carried in secret.

This is because the purpose of Itsuwari is to kill the Scorpion Clan Champion should they ever betray the Empire. At the champion's investiture, the Yogo daimyō imprints the champion's name on the blade in shadow ink, making the sword the champion's bane: should it ever cut them, their heart would stop immediately. The Scorpion Clan Champion never knows which Itsuwari is the decoy and thus can never be sure who their would-be assassin is.

Four times in the history of the Empire, a Scorpion Clan Champion died in their prime, their heart seizing for no apparent reason. It is not known how many of these times Itsuwari was involved.

ITSUWARI

Itsuwari is a short jian laced with swirling shadow ink.

- **Quirk:** The shadow ink on the blade shifts to show the Scorpion Clan Champion's current location.
- **Profile:** Range 0–1, Damage 4, Deadliness 7/8, Ceremonial, Concealable, Durable, Sacred. *The Shadow's Judge*: After its wielder makes a successful Attack action check targeting the Scorpion Clan Champion, the champion suffers a critical strike with severity 16 and automatically counts as failing their check to resist it.
- **Sealed Inversion:** Itsuwari contains the Ethereal Flicker inversion (see page 116), which is activated using Skulduggery (Void) instead of Theology (Void).

THE DROPPED BLADE

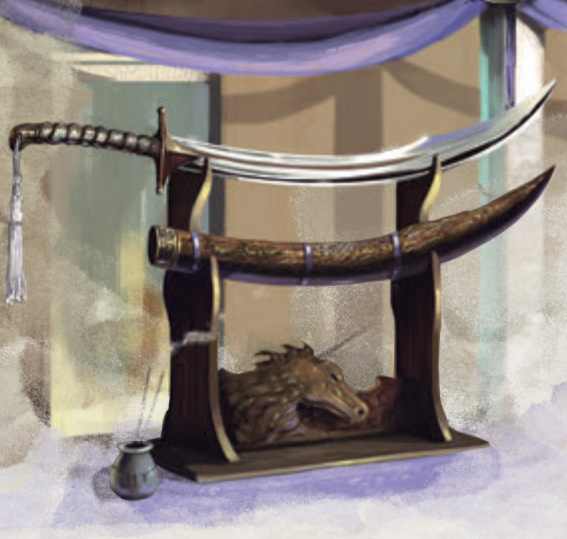
Obscure texts speak of another ancestral sword, one carried into battle on the first Day of Thunder. But the warrior is not named, and neither is the blade. All that is written is that it was dropped at the foot of an obsidian tower, and that it passes hands from generation to generation.

HAYAI: ANCESTRAL SWORD OF THE UNICORN

The most worldly of the Great Clan ancestral swords, Hayai is also the least conventional. It is a shining cavalry scimitar, forged in the Burning Sands by the Ujik people, the ancestors of the Moto family. Although the blade is brilliant silver, the sword's spiraled ivory hilt has been blackened by the touch of countless hands. Adorning the hilt is a white tassel, which is replaced by each new wielder upon receiving the blade. This lets others see how long Hayai has been carried by its current warrior.

Hayai is the Rokugani name for the sword, but before that, it was Chuluunbold, the sword of a great Ujik khan. When the Ujik people swore fealty to Shinjo, they gave her the sword as a sign of trust and friendship. In turn, Shinjo gave the Ujik khan her own sword, Kiro, to return the gesture. Under its new name, Hayai is carried by the Unicorn Clan Champion, but the sword is rarely drawn by the Khan of





KIRO

Kiro is a *dao* of immaculate quality.

Additional Properties: Damage +1, Deadliness +1, Ceremonial, Durable, Unholy.

Sealed Mahō: Kiro contains the Sinful Whispers mahō (see page 225 of the core rulebook), which is activated using Survival instead of Theology. This sealed technique functions in the same way as nemuranai, found on page 307 of the core rulebook.

A CURSED BLADE

If ever Kunshu were to draw the blood of one of the Imperial line, it would surely become a cursed sword. It would lose the Sacred quality, gain the Unholy quality, and any who held it or even stood too near it would hear the accusing whispers of the slain demanding revenge..

HAYAI

Hayai is a scimitar of unique make designed with influences from outside of Rokugan.

- **Quirk:** When Hayai is held while sheathed, an otherworldly voice sings in the mind of the wielder, either soothing or frightening them, depending on the state of the wielder's heart.
- **Profile:** Range 1, Damage 5, Deadliness 7, Ceremonial, Durable, Razor-Edged, Sacred.
- **Sealed Inversion:** Hayai contains the Shattering Caress inversion (see page 119), which is activated using Sentiment (Void) instead of Martial Arts [Melee or Unarmed] (Void).

Khans. Instead, the Unicorn Champion often bestows it on one of their generals in a display of favor and trust; so certain is the champion that the general will be victorious that they entrust them with Hayai, knowing that it will be returned when the battle is won.

Kiro: The Lost Ancestral Sword of the Ki-Rin

Shinjo's personal blade, Kiro, was an exquisite dao she carried down with her from the Heavens when she fell. Unicorn oral tradition claims it was forged by her brother but does not mention which one. Kiro was later imbued by Iuchi with cosmic energies in order to connect it to Ningen-dō, the Realm of Morals, and it was said to be among the most splendid of blades.

When the Ujik khan gave Shinjo his sword, she gave him Kiro in exchange as a sign of trust and friendship.

Kiro remained with the Ujik even when most of them became the Moto family; it was passed down through generations of Moto daimyō in recognition of their devotion to Shinjo. Moto Tsume carried it on his ill-fated quest into the Shadowlands, where it was lost. To this day, the Moto family carry the shame of having dropped Shinjo's blade, and although many attempts have been made to find and recover it, all thus far have failed.



KUNSHU: ANCESTRAL SWORD OF THE HANTEI

The first of Doji Yasarugi's Five Sacred Blades of the Crane, Kunshu was created as a gift for Yasarugi's uncle, the first Emperor. A fine, massive *tsurugi* forged using the techniques of Yasarugi's tengu sensei, Kunshu was presented to the Hantei as a sign of eternal friendship and loyalty. All who saw the blade were struck by its beauty.

According to tradition, in the months leading up to the coronation of a new Emperor, the Seppun entrust

KUNSHU

Kunshu is a perfectly balanced jian.

- **Quirk:** When Kunshu is touched by two or more people, such as when it is presented to the Hantei during the Imperial coronation, it glows if either of the individuals touching the blade wishes the other ill will.
- **Properties:** Range 0–1, Damage 6, Deadliness 5/6, Ceremonial, Resplendent, Sacred.
- **Sealed Inversion:** Hayai contains the Slip the Cycle inversion (see page 120), which is activated using Martial Arts [Melee] (Void) instead of Theology (Void).

Kunshu to one of the Great Clans for safekeeping. When the new Emperor is finally crowned, the chosen clan presents the sword as Yasarugi once did, claiming the honor of being the first to renew their clan's oath to the Hantei. Any deviation from this tradition would be a severe loss of face, so until the coronation, Kunshu is guarded with the clan's lives.

ANCESTRAL SWORDS OF THE MINOR CLANS

Like the Great Clans, some Minor Clans also have ancestral blades, which have their own unique stories and histories. For instance, the ancestral sword of the Fox has been lost for ages. The ancestral sword of the Centipede was a gift from the Shiba family to the Moshi, who enshrined it within the Shrine of the Lady Sun. Even the Sparrow Clan has an ancestral blade, which has saved its wielder from numerous near-death experiences.

Some Minor Clans have an ancestral weapon that is not a sword, such as the ancestral yari of the Falcon and the ancestral fan of the Moth. And while the Wasp are new, many Rokugani already refer to Tsuruchi's bow as the ancestral yumi of the Wasp.

New Item Pattern

Not all weapons are created equally. A katana forged by a novice swordsmith is likely of lower quality than one forged by a master, and different schools or techniques might favor one weapon feature over another.

There are two methods for gaining an item with one of these patterns. The first is for your character to apprentice themself to a master to learn the means of crafting a new weapon with the desired pattern; this requires the PC to win the master's trust within the story of the game, then spend the XP to learn the pattern. The other method is to requisition, purchase, or find an existing item with the pattern. The XP cost is the same, but rarity is altered by the pattern's listed rarity modifier.

Agasha Pattern

The Agasha family of the Dragon are not only priests or shugenja of the kami, but also skilled smiths. To them, blacksmithing is a sacred art, a way in which they worship and honor the spirits. Weapons crafted by Agasha swordsmiths are made with countless prayers and whispers, and some say the spirits have a hand in their creation.

After you perform a successful Attack action check using a bladed weapon produced in the Agasha pattern, the target suffers 1 supernatural damage.

XP Cost: 6 **Rarity Modifier:** +4

New Techniques

Just like the techniques included in the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* Core Rulebook, the new techniques here can be selected by a character who meets the prerequisites.

PREREQUISITES

Information on prerequisites for techniques can be found on page 173 of the core rulebook.

AIR INVOCATIONS

The following invocations represent an expanded capacity for utilizing the mind-muddling and wily abilities associated with Air invocations.

Dream Painter — Rank 3

Boon of the Ancestors (Ancestral), Through the Eyes of Benten (Fortunist), Elixir of Mind's Sight (Alchemy)

Some shugenja have learned how to access the surface layer of the ethereal Realm of Dreams, allowing them to peer into the sleeping minds of others. Those who have spent enough time honing this ability have also discovered ways to exert their will over the shapes of dreams, developing the talent to manipulate the slumber of their targets.



THE FADING DREAM

When The Fading Dream technique is used successfully, any NPCs affected fill in the blanks of what happened in the most logical way possible. For example, if an NPC spent a large portion of a scene talking to a PC affected by this technique, the NPC might instead believe they had been chatting about something mundane with another NPC. Exactly how NPCs reconcile the memory loss is up to the GM.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Air) check** targeting one Unconscious NPC at range 0–3.
Effects: If you succeed, you *scry* into your target's subconscious. You discover one piece of relevant information that they know and that you did not already know, determined by the GM. This might be their *ninjō*, their *giri*, their biggest fear, their opinion of one person of your choice, or the most pressing issue that is currently on their mind.

If you fail, the target wakes up and is aware you were meddling with their thoughts. Their reaction to this is subject to GM discretion.

New Opportunities

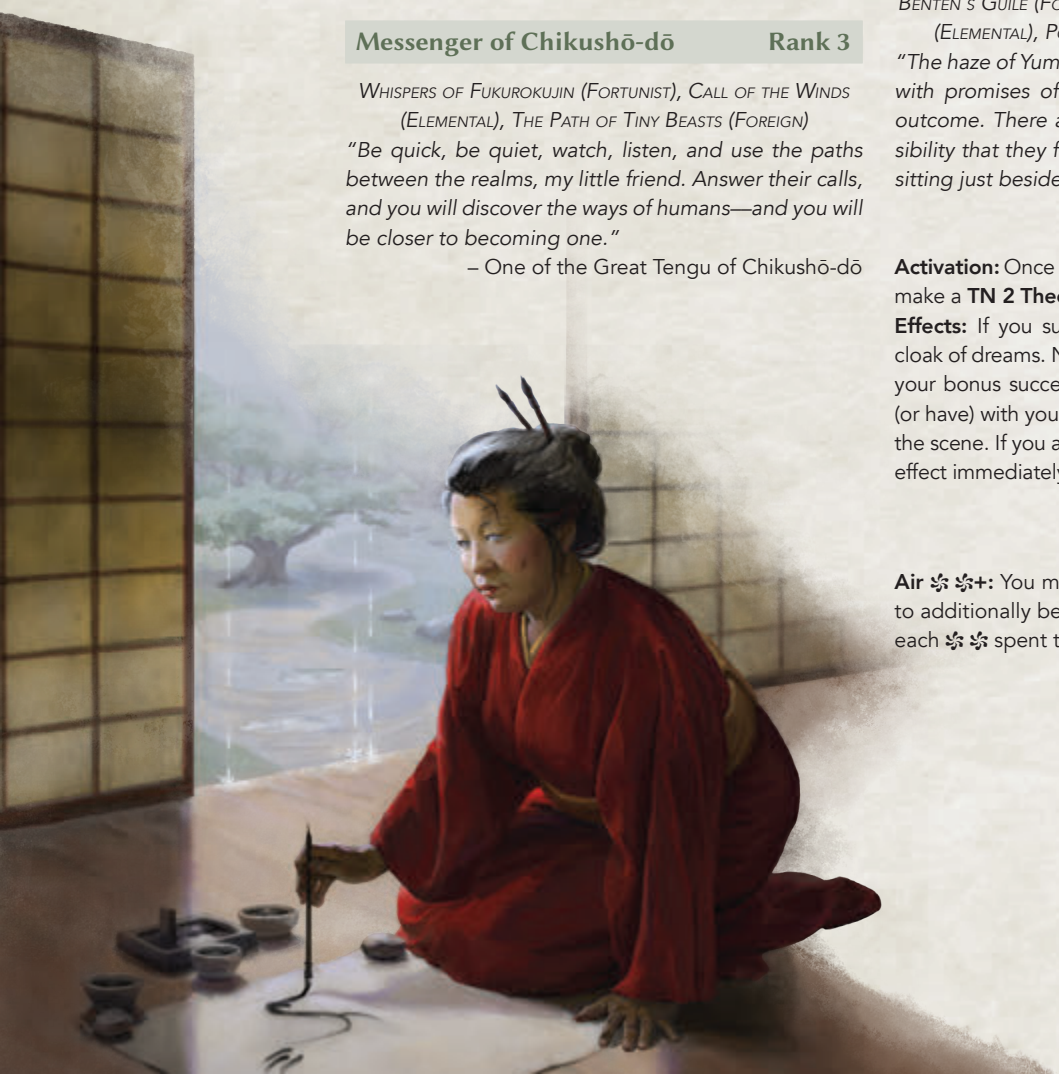
Air ✲: You cause terrible dreams for the target. They suffer the Exhausted condition when they wake.
Air ✲ ✲: If you succeed, you plant sweet thoughts into the target's mind. The target wakes up in a good mood. All characters reduce the TN of their Social skill checks targeting the target by 1 (to a minimum of 1) for the next scene in which the NPC is a participant.
Air ✲ ✲: If you succeed, you may whisper up to six words into the target's mind to try to sway their waking actions.
Air ✲ ✲: If you fail, the target stirs but does not wake up.

Messenger of Chikushō-dō — Rank 3

Whispers of Fukurokujin (Fortunist), Call of the Winds (Elemental), The Path of Tiny Beasts (Foreign)

"Be quick, be quiet, watch, listen, and use the paths between the realms, my little friend. Answer their calls, and you will discover the ways of humans—and you will be closer to becoming one."

– One of the Great Tengu of Chikushō-dō



Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Air) check** targeting one character you know by name.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a small animal from Chikushō-dō of silhouette 0 to deliver a short message to the target you chose. The message can be understood by the recipient, but it must contain twenty words or fewer. The animal arrives at your target's location, regardless of distance, within eight hours, or sooner at the GM's discretion.

New Opportunities

Air ✲+: The messenger arrives one hour sooner per each ✲ spent this way. The messenger takes a minimum of one hour to get to its target (unless the GM decides it arrives sooner).
Air ✲+: The message can be ten words longer per ✲ spent this way.
Air ✲ ✲: The recipient may respond to your message (so long as they are able) with up to the same number of words you sent. The message is delivered to you within the same amount of time it took to send it to your target.

The Fading Dream — Rank 5

Benten's Guile (Fortunist), Whispers of Dream and Smoke (Elemental), Powder of Failing Memory (Alchemy)

"The haze of Yume-dō can cloud even the waking mind with promises of another path, another life, another outcome. There are those so lost in the allure of possibility that they fail to realize that opportunity is often sitting just beside them."

– Noboru, Mystic of the Mountain

Activation: Once per scene as a Scheme action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Air) check** targeting yourself.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* yourself with a cloak of dreams. NPCs with a vigilance lower than 1 plus your bonus successes forget any interactions they had (or have) with you during this scene at the conclusion of the scene. If you attempt violence during the scene, this effect immediately ends.

New Opportunities

Air ✲ ✲+: You may target one ally other than yourself to additionally benefit from the effects of this spell per each ✲ ✲ spent this way.

EARTH INVOCATIONS

The following invocations represent an expanded capacity for utilizing the rallying and strengthening abilities associated with Earth invocations.

Bond of the Realms — Rank 3

Ties of History (Ancestral), Banishing Draught (Alchemy), Bishamon's Embrace (Fortunist)

"A creature is bound to the realm it was reincarnated in, its body made of the materials of the place, tying it there as if with an unseen rope. Should it wander elsewhere and should its presence displease you, you need only know how to tug upon the cord."

– Kitsu Hideki, Kitsu Realm Wanderer

Activation: As an Attack and Scheme action targeting one character from a realm other than the one you are currently in, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth) check** and name their realm of origin.

Effects: If you succeed and name the correct realm of origin, you *smite* the target. The target reduces their endurance and composure by 3 (to a minimum of 1). This effect lasts for one round plus a number of rounds equal to your bonus successes.

If you fail, you suffer 3 strife, learn the target's realm of origin, and cannot use this invocation again until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

Earth : If you succeed, the target suffers one of the following conditions of your choice: Dazed, Disoriented, Immobilized, Prone, or Silenced.

Earth +: The effect lasts one additional round per spent this way.

Earth +: Reduce the target's endurance and composure by an additional 1 (to a minimum of 1) per spent this way.

Emboldened Steed — Rank 3

Elixir of Bestial Resolve (Alchemy), Shinjo's Endurance (Ancestral), Root of the White Sands (Foreign)

"The horses are tired, Isamu-sama; we should let them rest awhile."

The stablemaster smiled softly and called upon the kami of the road with an elegant gesture. The horses rose up suddenly, as if with renewed energy. The two steeds broke into a gallop, surprising the younger Utaku. "Senpai*! The horses, they..."*

"Enjoy the wind against your face, Batbayar, and trust your horse. We will get to the village before nightfall."

Activation: As a Support action targeting any number of mounts (subject to GM approval) at range 0–4, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Earth) check**.

Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* and *mend* all targets. They remove the Exhausted condition if they have it and remove a number of strife equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Earth : Each target and its rider (while mounted) ignore the negative effects of terrain qualities until the end of the scene.

Earth +: Each target removes 1 fatigue per spent this way.

Earth : Each target's rider (while mounted) automatically succeeds at any Movement action checks (that have no other type) they make until the end of the scene, with a number of bonus successes equal to your Earth Ring plus the mount's Water Ring (see **Mounts and Riding**, on page 326 of the core rulebook).

Guardian of the Secret Gate — Rank 5

The Blessing of Bishamon's Children (Fortunist), Ancestry Revived (Ancestral), The Earth Does Not Forget (Elemental)

In a time of need, a skilled shugenja can call upon an ancestor to help them. Should the shugenja dishonor themself in the spirit's presence, however, little will save them from the wrath of Yomi.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 5 Theology (Earth) check** targeting an unoccupied position at range 0–3. Additionally, you must stake honor equal to your honor rank.

Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* an ancestral spirit from Yomi to the target position. The spirit is generally disposed to help you but refuses to perform dishonorable acts, and you lose your staked honor if you act dishonorably in the spirit's presence. Additionally, the spirit may become hostile if you act in a particularly egregious fashion (subject to GM discretion). The spirit persists until the end of the scene, its Attack actions always inflict supernatural damage, and it uses an NPC profile with both its ( ) and ( ) conflict ranks less than or equal to your honor rank (subject to GM approval).

New Opportunities

Earth : If you succeed, you remove strife equal to your honor rank.

Earth +: The TN of the first check made by the spirit is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 1) per spent this way.

Earth : The spirit persists until the end of the game session.

FIRE INVOCATIONS

The following invocations represent an expanded capacity for utilizing the illuminating and destructive abilities associated with Fire invocations.

Amaterasu's Gaze — Rank 1

Smile of the Everlasting Summer (Foreign), Implacable Judgment of the Mother (Ancestral), The Fire That Does Not Burn (Elemental)

"Only the wicked attempt to hide from the light of our mother god. Even then, they fail."

– Lady Moshi, Centipede Clan Champion

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one character or item of silhouette 2 or lower at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a pleasant ray of sunlight that follows the target. The ray of sunlight provides light at range 0–2 of the target's position. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Fire ✵+: The light provided extends out 1 additional range band from the target's position per ✵ spent this way.

Fire ✵+: The silhouette of the target affected by this invocation can be 1 higher per ✵ spent this way.

Fire ✵ ✵: The ray provides enough heat to warm several beings and creatures on a cold night.

Fire ✵ ✵: The light negates the effects of Obscuring terrain within the range it illuminates.

Fires of Purity — Rank 2

Balm of Licking Flames (Alchemy), Cast in Emma-Ō's Lantern (Fortunist), Coat of the Flame Djinn (Foreign)

Their eyes glowing, the shugenja finishes the gestures and chants and unleashes fire around them. These flames swirl from the shugenja's hands and cling to their body, and withering heat blasts anyone else nearby.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one character at range 0–3.

Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* the target with sacred fire. A number of range bands around the target equal to your Fire Ring count as Dangerous terrain for any character other than the target (see **Terrain**, on page 267 of the core rulebook). This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Fire ✵: If you succeed, the target also gains resistance equal to your Fire Ring against physical and supernatural fire.

Fire ✵: While this effect persists, your target's weapons count as having the Sacred item quality.

Fire ✵ ✵: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

Heart of the Lady Sun — Rank 5

Oasis of the Righteous (Foreign), Promise of the Eleven Daughters (Ancestral), Blessed Conflagration (Elemental)

The night has lasted too long,
The ground cries for a warm touch,
Bless us Mother, with your light,
Rise, dear siblings! And
Sing the morning song.

Activation: As an Attack and Support action, make a **TN 5 Theology (Fire) check** targeting a position at range 0–3 of yourself.

Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* an orb of flame at the target position. The orb sheds brilliant light that extends a number of range bands equal to your Fire Ring. At the end of each round, the orb *smites* any Tainted beings and creatures within its light, causing them to receive 3 fatigue, and the orb also *mends* any non-Tainted beings and creatures, causing them to remove 1 fatigue and 1 strife. This effect persists for one round, plus additional rounds equal to your bonus successes.

New Opportunities

Fire ✵: The area the orb illuminates counts as Dangerous and Obscuring terrain for Tainted beings and creatures.

Fire ✵ ✵: The area the orb illuminates gains the Hallowed (Fire) terrain quality and removes the Defiled terrain quality.

WATER INVOCATIONS

The following invocations represent an expanded capacity for utilizing the malleable and flexible abilities associated with Water invocations.

Fluid Shadows — Rank 2

Nekoma's Silent Prowl (Ancestral), One With the Spirit's River (Elemental), Communion of the Shadow Trees (Foreign)

When you become one with the shadows of a place, it is as if you were never there to begin with.

Activation: As a Movement and Scheme action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** targeting a shadowy position (such as Obscuring terrain) at range 1–3.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* yourself to that position instantly.

New Opportunities

Water ✵+: Treat the maximum range of this technique as 1 higher per ✵ spent this way.
Water ✵ ✵: Increase the TN of Attack and Scheme action checks targeting you by 2 (instead of 1 from Attack actions from the effects of Obscuring terrain) until the end of your next turn.

Path of Beasts — Rank 3

Elixir of Bestial Instinct (Alchemy), The Sand of the Body Shifts (Foreign), Secrets of Isawa Mori (Fortunist)

I have always struggled with the idea that animal spirits are less than human beings; who would not want the reflexes of a fox? The hearing of a bat? Do we not name our clans for these creatures? Such things are not for me to speak of, yet I cannot stop wondering whether reincarnating to such a form would be better than the endless toil of humanity.

– Journal entry of an unnamed Asako samurai

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** targeting yourself.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* yourself. You gain one of the following effects of your choice, and it persists for a number of rounds equal to one plus your bonus successes:

- **Eyes of the Falcon:** Your eyes transform into those of a falcon. You may reroll up to three dice when making checks to spot details or see things at a distance.
- **Nose of the Fox:** Your nose and mouth elongate into the snout of a fox. You may reroll up to three dice when making checks related to your sense of smell, such as tracking someone down or identifying a substance.
- **Ears of the Bat:** Your ears morph into those of a bat. You may reroll up to three dice when making checks for which your exceptional hearing would be a benefit, such as listening in on a conversation or listening to an animal's footfalls before springing a trap.
- **Might of the Bear:** Your body and muscles enlarge to the size of those of a bear. Your silhouette increases to 3, and you may reroll up to three dice when making checks that can take advantage of your size, such as lifting heavy objects or attempting to look intimidating.
- **Elegance of the Moth:** Your skin becomes spotted with patches of the feathery, soft fibers of a moth. Your silhouette decreases to 1, and you may reroll up to three dice when making checks that can take advantage of your lithe figure, such as maneuvering into tight spaces or attempting to evade a critical blow.

Rain of Ten Thousand Lotuses — Rank 5

Gift of Treasured Ancestors (Ancestral), Jurōjin's Joyful Tears (Fortunist), Wave of Rejuvenation (Elemental)

In the Heavens of Tengoku there is said to be an island of ten thousand lotuses, each representing a soul in the world. Some shugenja can call upon this place, or one like it, to bless others with the energy of their past lives.

Activation: Once per game session, as a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check** targeting a position at range 0–4.
Effects: If you succeed, you *mend* everyone at range 0–2 of the target position. Each character in range removes a number of strife and fatigue equal to 1 plus your bonus successes.



New Opportunities

Water ✲: The area affected by this invocation gains the Hallowed (Water) terrain quality until the end of the scene.
Water ✲+: Increase the range from the targeted position that is affected by this technique by 1 range band per ✲ spent this way.
Water ✲+: The invocation also removes one of the following conditions of your choice from each affected character per ✲ spent this way: Afflicted, Bleeding, Burning, Dying 3, Enraged, Wounded.
Water ✲ ✲: You may select a number of characters up to your Water Ring in the scene and deny them the benefits of this invocation.

RITUALS

The following rituals play a key role in the day-to-day practices of priests, shrine keepers, monks, sages, and shugenja. They consist of rituals and religious ceremonies conducted to ask the kami for a blessing or, at least, to avoid interfering with mortal life.

Blessed Union — Rank 3

"Asako Emon disapproved of his son's wife-to-be, despite the support of both families for the marriage. He thought his son deserved a more prestigious and wealthy union. He schemed to stop the marriage by secretly swapping out the blessed sake with a spoiled batch. Surely all would see this as a bad omen. Yet, all partook of the sake and found it to be pure like water, perfect. The kami had blessed the union. Emon immediately repented his selfish ways and became a monk to atone."

– Asako family parable

Activation: As a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Air) check** targeting a number of people who are about to enter into a union.
Effects: If you succeed, you immediately determine whether each target has good intentions for the union. Then, you may choose to conduct a ritual to formalize the union, and they become legally tied to one another.

New Opportunities

Air ✲+: One of the targets gains the Karmic Tie distinction, giving them a supernatural tie to another targeted participant per ✲ spent this way (see page 108 of the core rulebook).
Air ✲ ✲: If one or more of the targets have ill intentions for the union, minor manifestations of ill omens plague those targets for a number of weeks equal to your Void Ring.

Blessing of Fertile Fields — Rank 2

The ritualist spends several hours praying to the local kami and spreading offerings around the perimeter of the fields, working to boost the harvest's yield, protect it from pests, and ward off excessive flooding and heat.

Activation: As a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Earth)** or **Survival (Earth) check** targeting the fields of a settlement.
Effects: If you succeed, all fields within the settlement are protected from pests and excessive flooding and heat until the next harvest.

New Opportunities

Earth ✲ ✲: All affected fields will produce a more bountiful yield at the next harvest.
Earth ✲ ✲: All affected fields within range 6 gain the Hallowed (Earth) terrain quality until the end of the next harvest.

Blessing of the Dance — Rank 3

The young girl ignored the music, the colorful banners, and all of the sights, smells, and sounds of food to pull the priest toward the central shintai. One of the good luck paper banners had torn, rending the character for "blessings" in half.

"Look, look!" the girl said, breathless and panicky.

The priest laughed. "No, this is good. The blessing has eaten all the bad luck, and it's now full. It has saved the festival from disaster. Let us thank it."

The priest and girl both clasped their hands together and bowed.

Activation: As a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 2 Performance (Water) check** targeting everyone in the scene.
Effects: If you succeed, each target removes 3 strife and 3 fatigue.

New Opportunities

Water ✲ ✲: Select a number of participants up to your Water Ring. Each of those characters decreases the TN of their next Social skill check by 2 (to a minimum of 1).

Prayer of Protection — Rank 4

The ritualist blesses an infant by drawing a word on their forehead with soot from the family's irori, *asking the kami to watch out for the child.*

Activation: As a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Fire) check** targeting one infant in the scene who has not been targeted by this ritual before.
Effects: If you succeed, you bless the child. Until they reach the age of four, the child decreases the TN of any checks to resist harmful effects they make (including checks to resist disease) by 4 (to a minimum of 1).

New Opportunities

Fire ✵: If you succeed, the child automatically succeeds at any checks to resist mundane harmful effects with one bonus success as well.
Fire ✵ ✵: If you succeed, you bless the child with one of the following advantages permanently: Ambidexterity, Benten's Blessing, Bishamon's Blessing, Daikoku's Blessing, Ebisu's Blessing, Flexibility, Fukurokujin's Blessing, Indomitable Will, Jurojin's Blessing, Keen Balance, Keen Hearing, Keen Sight, Keen Smell, Kishōten's Blessing, Precise Memory, Quick Reflexes, Subtle Observer (or another, as approved by your GM).
Fire ✵ ✵ ✵: You may select an additional advantage from the list to give to the child permanently.

Rite of the Wheel — Rank 2

The ritualist performs a purifying rite on the recently deceased, allowing the body to be transported to their family to be burned without risk of spreading disease or becoming the defiled tool of some evil mahō-tsukai. Such a ritual is only performed when absolutely necessary, and is almost always used with the aid of burakumin.

Activation: As a downtime activity, you may make a **TN 1 Theology (Void) check** targeting one corpse in the scene.
Effects: If you succeed, the corpse gains the Sacred item quality. If a Tainted being attempts to interact with the corpse, they receive 5 strife.

New Opportunities

Void ✵: The corpse does not decay for a number of days equal to your Void Ring.
Void ✵: You manage to make the corpse as presentable as possible (by reattaching limbs, cleaning up blood, tending to its clothing, etc.)
Void ✵ ✵: You instinctively learn of the last thoughts the corpse had up to ten minutes before they died. These thoughts may be cryptic or confused and are subject to GM discretion.

Whispers to the Moon (Moon Cultist) Rank 5

The ritualist communes with the inherent chaos of the moon and the tides, channeling the raw, unbound energy into their target's mind.

Activation: As a downtime activity or a Scheme action, you may target one character at range 0–4 and make a **TN 2 Theology (Water) check**.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* the target's mind and open it to the unbound chaos of Onnotangu. The target receives strife equal to your Water Ring and must succeed at a **TN 4 Meditation check (Earth 5, Fire 2)**. If they fail, they suffer the Disoriented, Exhausted, and Silenced conditions, and they reduce the TN of their next Scholar skill check by an amount equal to your Water Ring (to a minimum of 1).

If you fail, you receive strife equal to your Water Ring and become Silenced and Immobilized for a number of rounds equal to one plus your shortfall.

New Opportunities

Water ✵+: Targets with vigilance equal to or less than the ✵ spent this way do not realize you were the one who attempted to use this ritual and do not understand what happened.
Water ✵+: Increase the amount of strife the target receives by 1 per ✵ spent this way.



The Mysteries of the Void

The Void is a domain of absence. Not a Spirit Realm, not a part of the Realm of Mortals, the Void is something less and altogether more: a wellspring of possibility and the inevitable end of everything. It contains no spirits to invoke, for it is the absence of existence. And yet paradoxically, it is in all realms and all beings. It is the primal emptiness from which all realms spring, and it is the seed of annihilation that lies at the core of every creature that draws breath. As such, even though the Void is imperceptible, all beings are inexorably pulled by its course, from the moment of their creation to their final end. And a few among them realize a great and disturbing truth: they can seize the Void and pull back.

STUDENTS OF THE VOID

Perceiving the imperceptible, manipulating the strands of fate that underly one's actions—these seem like paradoxical acts. But human will is a formidable thing, capable of grasping such a paradox for long enough to have vast, rippling impacts upon the cosmos. Mystics have always sought ways to transcend seemingly immutable laws of human existence: the flow of causality, the barriers of space and time, and the divisions between beings. Shugenja make offerings to the kami to invoke their power over the natural world and the realms of the spirits. Monks harmonize their inner energy with the flow of the cosmos. Twisted sorcerers plumb the depths of Jigoku itself for power, paying the price in the corruption of their soul and the blood of their victims. Some artisans have even created works so staggering that they took on a life of their own. All of these powers certainly surpass the mundane, but if there is power that approaches what might truly be called "miraculous," it is the power of the Void.

Contemplating the Nothing

A few Void wielders are born aware of their connection to the Void, while most come into this power through hard effort, extreme circumstances, or a moment of sudden enlightenment. As the wardens of spirituality in Rokugan, the Phoenix have made understanding the power of the Void—and those capable of wielding it—a priority over the centuries. Among the Elemental Masters, the enigmatic Master of Void leads these operations from the Starry Heaven Sanctuary in Phoenix lands. There, the Master of Void and a few senior practitioners train initiates in the traditions of the ishiken. While the ishiken are not a secret within the Phoenix Clan or the Empire at large, the particulars of their abilities and tradition are not widely understood. Throughout history, there have rarely been more than a few dozen members of the school at any time. In addition to their abilities with the Void, many ishiken develop the gift of speaking with the spirits, making them powerful shugenja in addition to being Void wielders—though not all do, nor does the ability to speak with the spirits guarantee the realized potential to become ishiken. Still, this makes their abilities less understandable to outsiders, and even many Great Clan samurai think of ishiken as an especially elite sort of Phoenix shugenja. Most ishiken are perfectly content to let this misconception stand—explaining the particulars of their abilities to outsiders would only diminish their influence and is a process akin to teaching a kōan anyway. If it has to be explained, the listener will not understand.

THE ISHIKEN

Identifying candidates with the potential to wield the power of the Void is difficult, for the influence of this power is as subtle as it is dangerous. Phoenix Clan scholars have no consensus on what characteristics point to people with this capacity, though many have their theories, and no specific organization is tasked with finding them. Instead, that duty falls to the Phoenix Clan in its entirety. When a Phoenix magistrate hears rumors of a peasant who can correctly guess the toss of a die every time, they investigate. When an Asako scholar in a faraway court hears that the daimyō's child has been having feverish visions of the future, they offer their guidance. Often these occurrences have another explanation, but ever so rarely, the individual identified does possess a deep connection to the Void.



Peasants, Samurai, and the Void

If a non-samurai exhibits a potential to wield the Void, the Phoenix Clan formally adopts them and places them in the Starry Heaven Sanctuary to train—most peasants are in no position to refuse even if they do not desire this path, and the political ramifications are minimal even if the personal consequences can be tragic. By contrast, when a samurai seems to be at the center of phenomena inexplicable even by other sages, the situation is more complicated for the Phoenix Clan. When a samurai's sole heir or beloved sibling manifests the power of the Void, the Phoenix Clan must often negotiate to bring them into the clan, using marriage pacts or an exchange of adoptions to placate the family. It does not always go so smoothly, however.

Other Circumstances

In other instances, an individual approaches a member of the Phoenix (or is brought to the Phoenix by a friend or family member) in the hope of finding an explanation for an inexplicable situation. The powers of the Void can manifest in chilling ways, and they can easily be mistaken for a haunting or even a malefic curse. It is not easy for a person to recognize that they themself are the source of the unsettling phenomena. If someone begins to see people and things in their environment as both dead and alive at the same time, or becomes trapped within a causal loop of their own accidental making, they might well desperately seek out a member of Rokugan's most spiritual clan in hopes of being "cured" of the apparent supernatural malady. In such cases, the Phoenix can usually persuade the individual's lord or family that the only remedy is joining the clan and training at Starry Heaven Sanctuary.

Trials of the Ishiken

Once recruited, initiates undergo intensive training including meditation, study, and a physical regimen. This is partially to help them control their abilities, and partially to discern the extent of their connection to the Void. Not everyone trained proves to have the ability: sometimes, a person at the center of a web of convoluted coincidences truly was just very fortunate (or unfortunate). Others never progress beyond the ability to intuitively access their connection to the Void in times of need. Such individuals are usually shifted to other schools within the Phoenix Clan or remain at Starry Heaven Sanctuary as scholars, functionaries, or teachers of new initiates, helping others search for mysteries of the universe that remain beyond their grasp.

More troubling are those initiates who struggle to control their powers. Drawing upon the Void is dangerous, not just to the ishiken and those around them, but to the very threads that weave the illusion called reality. If an ishiken loses control of their powers in a sufficiently dramatic fashion, they might cease to exist—and this is almost always the best outcome of such a scenario. A truly catastrophic break in an ishiken's power might sever a place from the stream of time, leaving those inside trapped as if in amber, or might break a chain of causality, fraying the rope that holds the world mortals know in and all other possible worlds out. Ishiken are few in number, so such incidents are mercifully rare, and their powers are ill understood even by most other sages—a persistent mishap might be mistaken for a curse, haunting, or sacred phenomenon. One of the most important duties of ishiken is to set right the gaps in reality created by their predecessors' shortcomings; initiates are often sent to seek out old rents in the cosmos to repair as part of their training.

Other Void Wielders

While the ishiken are the only shugenja within Rokugan with the official remit to study, train, and, occasionally, suppress those touched by the Void, there are others who wield these powers. Some who possess an innate connection to the Void are never discovered, and never know the full extent of their abilities. And there are others who have sought to seize the power of the Void for themselves, grafting threads of its power onto their own souls, at terrible cost. In the deep archives of the Starry Heaven Sanctuary, the ishiken keep secret records of all such individuals and organizations they have uncovered over the centuries—not coincidentally, almost all of them have vanished into the Void. But human hubris is a force to be reckoned with, and surely there are those who seek the power of the Void for themselves even now, hidden in the shadows.

INVERSIONS

Inversions (✍) are techniques used by ishiken and other Void wielders. They are not the invocations used by shugenja (though some ishiken can also use invocations), as they do not appeal to the spirits for power over the natural world or over the Spirit Realms. Instead, an inversion is the application of human will upon a fluid point in the fabric of the cosmos, temporarily or permanently altering the state of reality in the area that is around the wielder when they perform the inversion. Inversions are often quite subtle if executed properly, evading the notice of all but the spiritually sensitive, who feel the twist in reality as a chill down their spine, a mysterious sound of dripping water, or a sudden sense of déjà vu.

KŌAN

A kōan can take many forms: poem, riddle, parable, question, story, statement, or something else. Regardless of how it is presented, it is a paradox, meant to be meditated upon by students in hopes that they may achieve some semblance of understanding, or perhaps even Enlightenment.

GM GUIDANCE ON ISHIKEN GAMES

Playing a game with one or more ishiken introduces a very different element to adventures in Rokugan. It is recommended that GMs read through all of the inversions presented here and determine, with their players, whether adding these kinds of abilities fit in with the group's desires for play.

When playing or interacting with an ishiken character, players should keep in mind that the GM has a lot of discretion regarding the types of information and some of the consequences of certain abilities. Some suggestions for these abilities' usage and how GMs can interact with them are included throughout this section.

ROKUGAN'S PERCEPTION OF ISHIKEN

Few people in Rokugan know that ishiken exist, and even fewer are able to understand, even vaguely, how ishiken are able to do what they do. For most characters, especially peasants, the abilities of an ishiken might appear to be some sort of sinister practice. As a result, ishiken are taught to use discretion whenever possible.

CURSE AND BIND KEYWORDS

As described on page 192 of the core rulebook, invocations have italicized keywords that help denote their function and help indicate which invocations can be used with other abilities. The new keywords listed in this section work the same way, but for inversions. The new keywords included here are as follows:

Curse: Inversions that cause a lasting negative effect on their target.

Bind: Inversions that tie one or more characters, things, or places to another person, thing, or place.

Only characters with one or more school ranks in a school that lists "Inversions (✧)" among its available techniques can purchase inversions. The inversions in this section are organized alphabetically by school rank.

Magnitude

Void inversions are journeys into nothingness; therefore, unlike techniques, inversions can make use of blank results via magnitude.

Determining Magnitude

The magnitude of an inversion is equal to the number of kept blank results. Each inversion described here contains a list of magnitude effects, which alter or add to the main effect of the inversion. Magnitude is determined during **Step 6: Resolve Symbols on Kept Dice** of a check, after resolving ❍ symbols (see page 24 of the core rulebook).

Resolving Magnitude Effects

An inversion's magnitude effect is resolved if the magnitude of the inversion is exactly the listed value or falls within the listed range. If an inversion's magnitude effect list includes "Magnitude 1+," then that magnitude effect is resolved if the magnitude is 1 or higher, and so forth. **Magnitude effects are not optional**, and **multiple effects are resolved if applicable** (e.g., a check with magnitude 2 for an inversion that has listed a "Magnitude 1+" effect and a "Magnitude 2–3" effect resolves both of those effects, but not its "Magnitude 1" effect, if it has one).

Cosmic Strain

Inversions put a significant strain on the wielder, for as they twist reality around themself, reality often twists back. When making a check to activate an inversion, a character receives 1 fatigue for each kept ❍ result. When an inversion that uses a Support action targets another character, that character also receives 1 fatigue for each kept ❍ result.

Additionally, **all inversions** that generate magnitude 3 or more carry the following additional consequence of cosmic strain:

- **Magnitude 3+:** If the wielder keeps 1 or more ❍ results, an area around the wielder that extends a number of range bands equal to the number of kept ❍ results becomes Dangerous and Imbalanced (Void) terrain (see page 267 of the core rulebook). Additionally, henceforth, this area is subject to inexplicable phenomena, from common items going missing to shadows pointing the wrong way to ghostly images of recent events periodically flashing before the eyes of passersby.

Channeling

Inversions can be channeled in the same manner as invocations, as described on page 189 of the core rulebook.

XP Cost

Inversions are substantially harder to learn than other techniques, requiring intensive self-reflection to grasp. As such, each inversion's default XP cost is 6 XP instead of the usual 3 XP for a technique.

Inversion Effect Keywords

Inversions use the same keywords as invocations, as described on page 192 of the core rulebook.

RANK 1

"The world is not as you knew it. It is petals dancing on a breeze. Meditate on the limits of your perception—you see only the petals, but the wind is no less real. Breathe in, breathe out, and empty yourself."

– The First Ring of the Ishiken

One within the Void

Within the emptiness of the Void, the divisions between "self" and "other" become as mutable as any other barriers that seem absolute within reality. Those trained to wield the Void can share their expertise, tendencies, and even emotional states with other beings, allowing them to act with uncanny coordination.



Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Sentiment (Void) check** targeting yourself and one other character at range 0–3.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* all targets with the ability to communicate with each other without words, making their intentions clear even if they do not speak the same language. When any target makes a check, one other target may receive 2 fatigue to provide assistance on the check regardless of distance. This effect lasts until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

+: Choose one additional target per spent this way.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1+: When a target is dealt strife, one other target of your choice may receive that strife instead.
Magnitude 3+: Choose a ring or skill. When any target makes a check using that ring or skill, they may use any other target's rank in that ring or skill instead of their own.

Sight beyond Existence

The Void is nonexistence; therefore, within it, all possibilities exist. One who attunes their senses to nonexistence can perceive the other possible realities that ripple outward from each moment of action. The signs often do not come as complete visions, but as brief flashes: hazy vignettes of a world that never was. The rustling of leaves from a tree that has not yet grown, the first laugh shared with a new friend, the scent of blood and burning flesh. However, these rippling potential truths can become intoxicating, drawing an undisciplined mind deeper and deeper into twisted realms of refracted possibility until there is no escape. This is what those who study the Void call the "Lying Darkness": the trap that awaits all who let their worldly desires guide their ventures into the Void.

Activation: Once per session, immediately after you or another character at range 0–3 performs an action or makes a choice of great consequence in a narrative scene, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Void) check** targeting that character to peer beyond the lie of time and find another outcome.
Effects: If you succeed, you *scry* for another outcome and return to the moment before the action was performed. All effects and outcomes stemming from the action are undone, but only you and the target are aware of the reality that no longer is. If you are the target, you may choose the same or a different action or decision. If another character is the target, you may say up to five words to the target before they act or make a decision.

New Opportunities

: If you target another character and you succeed, you may perform an action immediately before the target performs their new action.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1+: You see one possible consequence of the original action or decision that would occur before the end of the scene.
Magnitude 2+: You see one additional possible consequence of the original action or decision that would occur in the next year.
Magnitude 3+: You see one additional possible consequence of the original action or decision that would occur in the next decades, or even further in the future.

SIGHT BEYOND EXISTENCE USES

Sight beyond Existence can be used to "undo" an action that had disastrous consequences, or to force an enemy to attempt an action against the Void wielder again, effectively creating a second chance.

Whispered Blade

An ishiken cuts not with a blade, but with the essence of severing itself. While some who have seen this technique describe it as the swinging of an invisible sword, the truth is that the stroke is not truly to attack the foe. With each gesture, the Void wielder breaks a hairline crack in reality, and everything the crack passes through is rent apart as the world restores itself to order.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 2 Theology (Void) check**.
Effects: If you succeed, you *summon* a rift in reality that extends from your hand and can be used as a knife (see page 231 of the core rulebook) that ignores all resistances. This effect persists until the end of the scene or until you dismiss it as a Support action.

New Opportunities

: You may *summon* a rift that acts as a different one-handed melee weapon instead of a knife.
: You may *summon* a second rift in your other hand that acts as a weapon identical to the one you have in your other hand.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1+: After you perform an Attack action using a rift weapon, a rift echo is *summoned* at range 0 of your target. Any summoned echoes that are created this way persist for a number of rounds equal to the magnitude. In a skirmish, when this magnitude effect ends, each character, besides yourself, at range 0–1 of one or more echoes suffers a critical strike with severity equal to your weapon's deadliness times the number of echoes at range 0–1 of them. In any other conflict

WHISPERED BLADE USES

The magnitude effect of Whispered Blade would most certainly be jarring to anyone who is not familiar with it. Summoning holes in existence in a populated area or in front of a powerful figure has severe social consequences if an ishiken cannot adequately explain themself.

type, each target treats all terrain as Dangerous while the echoes persist.

Witness the End

In the Void is the beginning of everything, and also its end. The weaknesses in an object's structure become easy to perceive via the Void. The many gaps in a living thing's destiny and the myriad ways in which it may falter or die become starkly clear to those properly attuned to the Void. Exploiting these faults in fate becomes as easy as swinging a blade along the correct path, or whispering the right word in the proper ear.

Activation: As a Scheme and Support action, you may make a **Theology (Void) check** targeting one character or one mundane, physical object at range 0–1. The TN of this check is equal to the character's vigilance, or 2 if you are targeting an object.
Effects: If you succeed and your target is an object, you *scry* for the ways the target can be undone. The TN of your next check to damage, sabotage, or otherwise disable it is 1 (and cannot be increased). This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

If you succeed and your target is a character, you *scry* for the moves that will lead to their downfall. The TN of your next Attack or Scheme action targeting that character is 1 (and cannot be increased). This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

New Opportunities

✲+: Choose one additional target per ✲ spent this way.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1–3: This effect persists for a number of additional rounds equal to the magnitude.
Magnitude 2+: In addition to physical objects, you can choose metaphysical objects, such as the ongoing effects of invocations, mahō, *kihō*, or rituals (or other persistent mystical phenomena, at the GM's discretion).
Magnitude 4+: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead.

WITNESS THE END USES

Witness the End is potentially very powerful, but remember that the GM is the final arbiter of what a character can attempt in the first place. If a character uses Witness the End to see how to undo something beyond a single human's scope, such as destroying a mountain or ending the Yogo bloodline curse, they cannot turn around and make a check to undo it without undertaking the narrative preparations such an effort would require (vast earthworks or a spiritual quest that would likely take many encounters to complete, for instance). At the GM's discretion, Witness the End can be used in such cases to get a hint of where to start on one's quest, but it provides no direct benefit to related checks until various narrative goals have been completed.

DISTANCE DISTORTED USES

There are many of creative uses for this ability, including maneuvering around doors, creating interesting duels, and keeping a target from engaging with something you don't want them to touch.

Note that for everyone else in the scene, the targets appear to be the approximate distance they were from one another when the inversion was activated.

RANK 2

"Understand that the Void cannot be grasped by understanding. Extinguish the candle, that you may truly see."
– The Second Ring of the Ishiken

Distance Distorted

A Void wielder's power extends to manipulating not just the positions of objects in space and time, but also the relationships between objects. By distorting the space between two things such that it remains the same no matter how they move, a Void wielder can create a disorienting maze in an empty space, preventing pursuers from ever reaching the wielder or causing an object to remain conveniently within reach despite its being dozens of feet away.

Activation: As a Scheme and Support action during a skirmish, intrigue, or narrative scene, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Void) check** targeting two objects and/or characters at range 0–3 of you.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* and *curse* the targets and choose one of the following numbers: 0, 1, 2, or 3. No matter where the targets move, each target treats the other as being at the chosen number of range bands from itself for the purposes of determining distance between the two, targeting, and effects. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

If you succeed, each target that is a character receives 2 fatigue.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1–2: This effect persists for a number of additional rounds equal to the magnitude.
Magnitude 3+: This effect persists until the end of the scene.

Ethereal Flicker

One of the most straightforward yet effective tricks a wielder of the Void can use is to set themself slightly out of phase with space and time. As long as their concentration holds, they can walk in the gaps between moments that are imperceptible to others. From the perspective of anyone else, strikes and projectiles fruitlessly chase the Void wielder's ghostly afterimage, never quite catching up with their true location.

Activation: As a Scheme and Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Void) check** targeting yourself.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* and *curse* yourself to be slightly out of phase with reality. Each time

you make a check to reduce the severity of a critical strike, use Theology instead of Fitness; if you reduce the critical strike's severity to 0, you do not suffer it instead. This effect persists until the start of your next turn.

New Opportunities

: Each time you reduce a critical strike's severity to 0, you may immediately move 1 range band, vanishing and reappearing at the new position and ignoring the effects of intervening terrain during this travel.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1–2: This effect persists for a number of additional rounds equal to the magnitude.
Magnitude 2+: Each time you reduce a critical strike's severity to 0, you may choose a character at range 0–1 with vigilance lower than or equal to the magnitude. That character suffers a critical strike with severity equal to the critical strike you suffered (before reductions).
Magnitude 3+: This effect persists until the end of the scene.

The Lotus Blooms

In the Void exist all possibilities, which become realities through choices—of humans, of animals, and even of celestial beings. Normally, the countless possibilities are invisible, and hints of them can only be glimpsed in moments of true clarity. However, a Void wielder can enlighten a character regarding the possible consequences of their future actions. This insight can be valuable, but as a thousand phantom worlds unfold before them, only a character with great clarity of purpose can possibly maintain their path.

Activation: As a Scheme and Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Void) check** targeting one character at range 0–1.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* and *curse* your target. When your target makes a check, instead of keeping a number of dice up to the ring they used, they keep a number of dice up to their Void Ring (and must keep as many dice as possible within this limit). Your target does not receive strife for kept results, but for each kept result, your target receives 1 fatigue. If they become Incapacitated this way, your target also gains the Exhausted condition. This effect persists until the end of your target's next turn.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1–2: This effect persists for a number of additional rounds equal to the magnitude.
Magnitude 3+: This effect persists until the end of the scene.

RANK 3

"Beyond the familiar shores of space and time is a vaster ocean still."

– The Third Ring of the Ishiken

Hurl from the Stream

All things that exist are found within the river called space, pulled ever forth inexorably by the current called time. Yet, neither space nor time exist within the Void. From the perspective of a fish, when a heron alights upon the river, it seems to have come from nowhere, and when it pulls another fish to its doom, it seems to have erased it from existence. By ripping free the gossamer strands that bind an object to time and space, the Void wielder casts it into nothingness for a short time.

Activation: Once per scene as a Scheme action, you may make a **Theology (Void) check** targeting one character or object at range 0–3. The TN is equal to your target's vigilance plus its silhouette (or only its silhouette if it is an object).
Effects: If you succeed, you *bind* your target to a space outside of reality. As your target is no longer present in reality, it is unaffected by anything that would otherwise affect it and does not affect anything. This effect persists for one round, after which your target returns to reality at its original position.

New Opportunities

+: If you succeed, your target returns to reality at an unobstructed position of your choice a number of range bands away from its original position equal to spent this way.

THE LOTUS BLOOMS USES

The Lotus Blooms is a powerful ability that an ishiken can use against an opponent or to aid an ally, but it is also a strong boost to the ishiken.

HURL FROM THE STREAM USES

Hurl from the Stream has myriad uses, including getting past barriers, removing a contested object from a fight, keeping someone safe, or removing a particularly difficult foe in order to deal with something else for a few rounds.



TIME IN THE VOID

When in the Void, a character is surrounded by nonexistence and generally perceives nothing—their physical senses are completely cut off, and time and space are without meaning. However, various Void wielders can and do plunge headlong into the Void and maintain their senses, and sufficiently trained Void wielders are even capable of using the inversion Slip the Cycle while within the Void.

✵+: Choose one additional target with vigilance plus silhouette lower than or equal to the original target's per ✵ spent this way.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1–3: Your target is removed from reality for a number of additional rounds equal to the magnitude.
Magnitude 4+: If your target is an Adversary NPC or PC or an object with mystical properties, it is removed until the end of the scene. If your target is a Minion NPC or a mundane object, it is lost to the Void and permanently ceases to exist.

Moon on the Shifting Sea

Reflecting off the sea, the moon looks as if it were within arm's reach. A child might believe the reflection to be the moon; an adult knows that they will grasp only water if they try to reach it. But the light that falls upon the eye is no more the moon itself than the light that falls upon the water. Grasping that the moon exists in both places and neither, the ishiken can twist space in a similar way to exist as a sole entity in multiple places at once.

Activation: Once per scene as a Scheme and Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Void) check** targeting one position at range 0–2. This position must be one you could reach via your normal means of movement.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* yourself, twisting the space around you so that you simultaneously exist at your current position and at the target position. You remain a single entity for the purposes of strife, fatigue, conditions, and effects, and other characters can target you by targeting you at any position you occupy.

If an effect reaches you at multiple locations, it affects you multiple times. When you choose targets for an action you perform, you may receive 2 fatigue to choose one additional target that is within range of at least one position you occupy, or to choose the same target multiple times if that target is within range for the action from multiple positions you occupy. If you choose the same target multiple times this way, resolve the effect against them once for each time you chose them. This effect persists until the end of your next turn. When this effect ends, choose one of the positions you occupy: you cease to occupy all of your other positions. This effect persists a number of rounds equal to your ranks in Meditation.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1–2: This effect persists for a number of additional rounds equal to the magnitude.
Magnitude 1+: Choose one additional target position per magnitude. You exist at each of those positions as well.
Magnitude 3+: This effect persists until the end of the scene. At the end of each round, receive 1 fatigue for each position you occupy.

Shroud in Solitude

Within the Void, a being can only exist by its own will—if one who walks in the shadows loses themself, they are lost forever, for there is nobody else to find them. By shrouding a target in the essence of isolation, an ishiken can cut them off from the sustaining bond of reality, freeing them from the normal bonds of cause and effect. While this means that their will alone can sustain their form and flashing steel passes harmlessly through them, it also means that if their concentration slips, they could be lost forever.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Void) check** targeting one character at range 0.
Effects: If you succeed, you *augment* and *curse* your target. When defending against any type of damage, your target uses their Void Ring to reduce damage instead of the resistance value they would normally use, and whenever they would be dealt fatigue they receive that much strife instead. This effect persists until the end of your next turn.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1–2: This effect persists for a number of additional rounds equal to the magnitude.
Magnitude 3+: This effect persists until the end of the scene instead. If the target becomes Compromised while this effect persists, they must resist with a **TN 5 Meditation check (Void 3)**; if they fail, their body is pulled into the Void and permanently ceases to exist.

RANK 4

"The pillar is not so steady as you believe. Even the most ancient stone has cracks."

– The Fourth Ring of the Ishiken

Reality Stitch

A skilled Void wielder can twist the rope of fate into a snare, and even thread together the fates of multiple foes to drag them toward the same doom.

Activation: As a Scheme action, you may make a **Theology (Void) check** targeting a number of characters up to your ranks in Meditation at range 0–2. The TN of this check is equal to the highest vigilance among your targets.
Effects: If you succeed, you *curse* your targets. Whenever one receives strife or fatigue, all of your targets receive the same amount of strife or fatigue instead. This effect persists until the end of the scene.

New Opportunities

✲**+:** Choose one additional target per ✲ spent this way.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1+: Whenever one of your targets suffers a condition, all of them suffer the same condition instead.
Magnitude 2+: Whenever one of your targets suffers a critical strike, all of them suffer a critical strike with the same severity instead.
Magnitude 3+: Whenever one of your targets is affected by a persistent effect, all of them are affected by that effect. When the persistent effect is removed from any target, it is removed from all targets instead.

Shattering Caress

The flaws in creation are laid bare to an ishiken who approaches mastery. By driving their will into the nexus of these cracks like a spike, the Void wielder can accelerate a target's fate, causing an object to shatter, rust, or wear away—or causing a living being to perish.

Activation: As an Attack action using a readied melee weapon, you may make a **TN 3 Martial Arts (Void) [Melee** or **Unarmed] check** targeting one character or mundane, physical object in range of your weapon.
Effects: If you succeed and your target is a mundane object, you *smite* it, and it gains the Destroyed item quality as it falls to pieces.

If you succeed and your target is a character, you *smite* your target, inflicting supernatural damage equal to your weapon's base damage. If this damage causes your target to become Incapacitated, they suffer the Dying [three rounds] condition.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1–2: Reduce the duration of the Dying condition the target character suffers by the magnitude.
Magnitude 3+: Instead of suffering the Dying condition, the target character is killed outright.

Three Heartbeats

Even though an ishiken cannot truly stop the flow of time, by creating twists and turns in its course, they can delay it for others while accelerating it for themself.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Void) check** targeting yourself.
Effects: If you succeed, you receive 3 fatigue. Then, after your turn, you may immediately take another turn. During this additional turn, other characters count as being unaware of you and cannot react to things you do (such as act on a preset condition for the Wait action or perform a finishing blow, as described on page 259 of the core rulebook). They still make checks to resist effects as usual and defend against damage.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1+: After you take your first additional turn, you take additional turns equal to magnitude. After you take each additional turn beyond the first, you receive an additional 3 fatigue. If you become Incapacitated this way, you suffer the Dying [three rounds] and Exhausted conditions.

RANK 5

"You were called a master when you completed the Fourth Ring's lesson. But true mastery is endless. It cannot be found in these words. Breathe in, breathe out, and empty yourself."

– The Fifth Ring of the Ishiken

Essence Eternal

Though each life is forgotten in the trials of reincarnation, it is said that each being's first incarnation marks its soul still. Looking deep within a being, an ishiken can affix its eternal essence to its current state, snapping it back to this state some time later.

SHATTERING CARESS USES

A mundane object may include, at the GM's discretion, a small segment of a wall.

UNWEAVE USES

At the GM's discretion, an object might include a section of a wall, a barricade, or even a fortification.

Activation: As a Support action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Void) check** targeting one character or object at range 0–2.
Effects: If you succeed, you *bind* your target to its current state and location. Note your target's fatigue, strife, conditions, persistent effects, and critical strikes suffered, as well as their position. This effect persists until the end of your next turn, and when it ends, your target returns to this state and position, even if they no longer exist. Your target remembers everything they did once they revert back to this location.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1–3: This effect persists for a number of additional rounds equal to the magnitude.
Magnitude 4+: After the first effect ends, until the end of the scene, the target returns to the noted state and position at the end of each of your turns.

Slip the Cycle

The Void is filled with primal uncreation: that from which creation spews forth and that to which it returns. Yet so long as their mind moves free, an ishiken cannot be trapped by bonds, by walls, or even by the jaws of inevitability.

Activation: Once per game session as a Movement and Support action, you may make a **TN 3 Theology (Void) check**. You can make this check even if you would normally be unable to make such checks, such as if you are physically restrained, Incapacitated, Unconscious, or have died or ceased to exist within the current scene.
Effects: If you succeed, you *purify* yourself and remove all conditions or persistent effects currently affecting you. Your fatigue and strife become 0. You may move to a position at range 0–2 of your current (or last) location, ignoring intervening obstacles. If you were dead or did not exist, you also return to life or return to existence for one round.

New Opportunities

: You may choose a character other than yourself as the target.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1: If you were dead or did not exist, you return until the end of the scene, at which point you revert to your prior state (dead or nonexistent).
Magnitude 2–3: If you returned from death or nonexistence this way, you return until the end of the game session instead.
Magnitude 4+: If you returned from death or nonexistence this way, you return permanently instead. Permanently increase the TN of the check for you to activate this technique by 1.

Unweave

As any Ishiken Initiate can tell you, a master is said to be able to unmake an object with a dismissive gesture or a piercing glare. Unsurprisingly, most initiates go to great lengths to avoid displeasing their most senior teachers.

Activation: As an Attack and Scheme action, you may make a **TN 4 Theology (Void) check** targeting one character or object of silhouette 0–3 at range 0–2.
Effects: If you succeed and the target is a mundane object or Minion NPC, you *bind* it to unreality and it ceases to exist. You receive fatigue equal to its silhouette plus its conflict rank (or just its silhouette, if it is an object).

If you succeed and the target is a object with mystical properties, it gains the Damaged item quality, or the Destroyed item quality if it already has the Damaged item quality.

If you succeed and the target is an Adversary NPC or PC, they suffer supernatural damage equal to your ranks in Theology that ignores all resistances.

Magnitude

Magnitude 1+: Each target suffers additional damage equal to the magnitude.
Magnitude 2+: The terrain within a number of range bands equal to the magnitude loses all terrain qualities.
Magnitude 2+: If a target suffers a critical strike as a result of this damage (or the Destroyed item quality, if it is an object), it ceases to exist.
Magnitude 3+: Each character in the scene with vigilance lower than or equal to the magnitude becomes a target.





CHAPTER 3
Power of Worship

"Just one more—there! Finished. What do you think, Nariko-san?" Isawa Chizue patted her forehead with a cloth and smiled at her companion, who had been lounging on a nearby stone slab.

Nariko stretched in an unseemly way and rolled to her feet lazily. "It does look miraculously like the scene, Chizue-sama. You are truly a talented painter. Perhaps the most skilled in all of the Phoenix lands." Chizue cocked her head to the side and closed one eye, squinting at her creation as she mulled over her companion's comment. Nariko continued, "I think this might be my favorite piece you have done. Surely it is perfection, especially after you spent all day on it. Perhaps now that it is complete, we could return to our camp and eat some of that delicious stew I smell?"

"Perfection is a fool's ideal, Nariko-san. It is something to strive for, not accomplish in a single lifetime. But you are right; I think it will do for our offering tonight. We can go."

Nariko grinned and hopped around the painting, "Of course it will do: the kami love everything you touch!"

Designing Religious Groups, Places, and Conflicts

Spiritual belief is a central theme in the setting of the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game*. Rokugan is a land rife with mystical and otherworldly phenomena, in which the existence of the divine is not simply a matter of faith, but an undeniable fact. It isn't surprising, then, that reverence for the benevolent powers, wariness regarding those seen as maleficent, and acceptance of superstitious practices generally are all fundamental aspects of life in the Emerald Empire.

Rokugan is no different from many societies, both real and fictional, in having established mainstream religious beliefs and practices that are widely seen as appropriate and correct. However, it also has other religious beliefs that enjoy varying degrees of approval. **Chapter 1** describes two such "fringe" religions, the Cults of Lord Moon and the Bloodspeaker Cults, but there may be many others that exist in Rokugan.

Developing groups devoted to such marginal beliefs, whether offshoots of mainstream religions or beliefs that are altogether different, allows a GM to tailor Rokugan to their particular dramatic needs. The following sections offer guidance on how to do this while helping to ensure that the new religious groups offer players a balanced gaming experience that is fun, interesting, and suitable for the context of the game.

Inside a Religious Group

Regardless of their specific beliefs, all religious groups have a number of things in common. The most important commonalities are that each group has a set of core beliefs, and each has a focus of religious reverence and observances.

WHY DOES A RELIGIOUS GROUP EXIST?

Religious groups do not spring into existence for no particular reason. They exist because people have a need for them; they seek a system of beliefs that will help them to understand and cope with the world around them and to deal with the life they are leading. In particular, they may be looking for answers they can't find elsewhere. For instance, they may ask, "Where did the world come from?" "What happens to us when we die?" "How do I explain something I do not understand?" And perhaps most fundamental of all, "What is the point of existence?" These are all very human questions, and many people turn to religion for answers to them.

Religious groups tend to form around a core system of beliefs, and the particulars of each group's system inform and affect just about every other aspect of the group. Nearly any core beliefs are possible. However, no matter how outlandish some beliefs may seem to others, most are internally consistent with the group's other beliefs and make sense in the context of the world and the believers' society. For example, it would be unusual for a belief system to develop around the ocean in a society that has always been entirely landlocked.

Closely linked to a group's beliefs is its central focus. Its focus of worship and its core beliefs are usually inextricably bound, each heavily influencing the other. Whether one or more holy figures or divine beings, a place, or even an item ascribed divine properties, something embodies the beliefs of the group. A group that reveres forests—its core belief—may have a specific and especially large tree in a particular forest as the focus of its veneration, and may hold worshipful observances in the tree's shadow. Similarly, another group may revere an individual who has had a spiritual experience, making them the focus of the group's worship.

Accordingly, when designing a religious group, a GM should consider why it exists and what its spiritual attention centers on: what its focus is. Even the cult that a mainstream religion considers the most blasphemous and heretical serves a purpose for the people who belong to it, whether it is because they resent their place in established, mainstream society or because spreading chaos and disorder appeals to those of a particularly antiauthoritarian and misanthropic nature.

Finally, it should be noted that some religious groups may serve a hidden purpose in addition to the purpose they serve for most of their members. Some spiritual leaders use religion to exploit their congregants by means of those congregants' spiritual needs. For instance, a religious group based around a charismatic figure may provide spiritual comfort to its members, but only because this helps the leader bilk money or resources out of them. Another group might purport to be following a god's will while in fact its leadership is recruiting followers for some other purpose, such as to serve as the basis for a rebellion. Uncovering a hidden cult, and then revealing the fact that it is essentially an elaborate con of its members, could make for a particularly engaging story!

CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS

While the particular foci and core beliefs of religious groups vary widely, these groups still have a number of attributes in common. The nature and importance of each of these commonalities differ from group to group but, in general, religious groups have the following:

- **A group of believers:** Obviously, a belief system with no actual believers is, at best, a historical curiosity. To be a religion, a system that includes a focus and core beliefs must attract believers who revere that focus and those beliefs. Moreover, the success of a religion is largely defined by the number of people who believe in it. In Rokugan, most of the population believes in Shinseism, Fortunism, or both, which is what makes those religions mainstream. However, a handful of adherents who believe in the divinity of a particular being or even a feature of the landscape, such as a mountain, is also a religious group.
- **A set of practices:** While it is possible for a group to participate in religious observance in a completely unstructured and impromptu way, most religions have a series of specific practices. These include the prayers, rites, rituals, offerings, and other things said and done in the course of worship.
- **A place of worship:** Nearly all religious groups have one or more locations, whether a remote forest clearing or a series of elaborate shrine complexes in large cities, where their members meet to carry out observances. Such places might themselves be central to, or even the focus of, a group's beliefs, or they might simply be convenient spots where adherents can gather. Most groups consider their places of worship sacred, even if only because they hold their observances there. Some places, or parts of them, are accessible only to particular members of the group, such as its leaders.
- **Religious paraphernalia:** While some groups may be able to express their beliefs wholly through things like oral tradition, song, and dance, many maintain one or more items they consider sacred. These can include written texts, objects used during worship, ceremonial garments, and items considered to be of divine origin (for example, a preserved fragment of a holy figure's body). Such items can range from quite mundane to extremely elaborate, and most are subject to restrictions regarding who can access, carry, or wear them and are kept in protected places when not in use.

THE GROUP'S PLACE IN SOCIETY

A final, but crucial, point to consider is how the religious group fits into society. The Emerald Empire has an especially rigid social structure, which is based on the Celestial Order: divine beings such as Fortunes are preeminent, with samurai being below them in the Celestial Order, and commoners being beneath the samurai. Any religious group is judged in Rokugan, at least in part, by the extent to which it conforms to the Celestial Order. If a group conforms well, then it is more likely to be accepted by the Empire and, critically, its authorities. If it doesn't—if, for instance, the group's core belief system places the needs and welfare of commoners above those of samurai—then the authorities and much of the population will see it as heretical and treat it accordingly.

The other important aspect of a religious group is how it interacts with established religion in the Empire. For example, a group that is essentially an offshoot of Shinseism or Fortunism is more likely to win acceptance than one that reveres something untraditional, such as a deity it has newly recognized or one with gaijin roots. The mainstream may be wary even of offshoots of traditional religions, however. As described in **Chapter 1**, Lord Moon is a recognized part of Rokugani divinity, but groups that worship him are still considered strange. Groups like these may not be outright forbidden, but they are likely to be watched closely by the Empire, as heresy and blasphemy can more readily take hold among such fringe elements.

Finally, any religious group based on something considered entirely unacceptable in the Empire is unlikely to be tolerated at all. The worship of anything related to Jigoku, for example, is certainly not accepted and will inevitably be ruthlessly crushed by the Imperial authorities. The same applies to any belief system that accepts something the mainstream religions consider blasphemous. Nearly all groups that do this have an extreme need for secrecy.

WHY BUILD NEW RELIGIOUS GROUPS?

There are many minor offshoots of Shinseism and Fortunism in Rokugan, as well as local religious organizations. Adding such regionalized groups can help give personality to a location and showcase the wide diversity of beliefs and ways of life in the many different parts of Rokugan.

Building a Religious Group

To illustrate how the various attributes of a religious group can be applied to specific groups GMs create, and to assist GMs in creating such groups for their games, the following sections proceed through an example. In the example, the group is a small cult devoted to a belief system that would be controversial in the Empire but falls short of actual blasphemy or heresy. The GM has set part of the campaign in the Isawa Mori, in the lands of the Phoenix Clan. There, the GM intends for the PCs to face a threat with which the religious group—known as the Children of the White Wolf—can assist them. However, the PCs must overcome their inevitable suspicions about this unusual cultish group, or its members may become formidable opponents rather than helpful allies!

Although the focus here is on developing a religious group, note that the same approach—developing background, motives, and resulting practices, and then incorporating these into a story for the players—can be adapted for use with nearly any type of group, spiritual or mundane.

BACKGROUND, CORE BELIEFS, AND FOCUS

The Isawa Mori is an expansive forested wilderness located in the middle of the lands of the Phoenix Clan. Some scholars postulate that long before the Empire came into being, the Isawa Mori, as well as other primeval forests like the Shinomen Mori, were parts of a far larger "world forest" that covered essentially all of what is now Rokugan. Time and the spread of civilization as the Empire grew caused this great primeval woodland to fragment and diminish, such that only remnants of the world forest remain today.

Moriko, which means "forest child," is the name now used by a rōnin who worked as a caravan guard for merchants based in Sheltered Plains City. Almost ten years ago, while escorting a caravan along one of the very few roads through the Isawa Mori, Moriko caught sight of a magnificent creature: an enormous white wolf. Moriko glimpsed the fantastic creature among the trees, following the caravan at a distance. She believed this to be an *okuriōkami*, a wolf-spirit guardian that sometimes watches over travelers. Strikingly, no one else seemed to see the creature, convincing Moriko that she had been granted a vision from Chikushō-dō, the Realm of Animals. Enthralled by the great wolf and the forest in which she had seen it, Moriko returned to the Isawa Mori, built a small cabin, and began to devote her life to understanding and protecting what she sees as a place where Chikushō-dō impinges closely on the Mortal Realm.

In the years since, word of Moriko has spread, and she has attracted a small group of like-minded followers. Some live in the forest with her, while others live elsewhere and periodically journey to her on a form of pilgrimage.

Based on this background, the GM decides to develop this religious group for use in an upcoming game.

Core Beliefs

This religious group, which the GM calls the Children of the White Wolf, believes that the ancient forest known as the Isawa Mori—perhaps as a whole, but at least in parts—is a place where the Mortal Realm and Chikushō-dō come close together. The Children of the White Wolf have come to believe that, in ancient times, the two realms were essentially one, with spirits from the Realm of Animals being very much a day-to-day part of what would eventually become the Empire.

The encroachment of civilization has changed that, splitting the two realms apart save for in particular places where portions of the primeval forest remain. The group holds that this is not how things were meant to be, and that it is critical to preserve what little of the Isawa Mori is left. The alternative—the ultimate loss of the remaining parts of the ancient forest—would be a disaster, causing all of the world's animals to eventually die out, because no new ones could be born without access to places where Chikushō-dō could still be reached.

The Children of the White Wolf therefore believe that the forest, the animals within it, and Chikushō-dō itself must be revered and protected if the world is to be preserved. They further believe that the Realm of Animals is a fundamentally benevolent place; if animals are dangerous, it is only because it is their primal nature—because "hunt or be hunted" is the essential truth.



Focus

The Children of the White Wolf have a clear focus upon Moriko, who is the group's founder and has developed and propagated the group's core beliefs. Moriko is, therefore, not only the group's leader, but also a "holy person." Her strength of conviction, backed up by a formidable and charismatic personality, is the catalyst that prompted the group to form and now holds it together.

The group's other focus is the okuriōkami, the guardian wolf spirit, who appeared to Moriko as she escorted the caravan through the forest all those years ago. To adherents of this religion, the wolf spirit is an embodiment of their beliefs. It has the feral nature and power of a great predator, but it is ultimately beneficial, because it protects those who travel through the forest. The wolf's dangerous but benign nature perfectly encapsulates what the Children of the White Wolf believe to be true about the forest and the vital role it plays in linking Chikushō-dō to the Mortal Realm.

ATTRIBUTES OF THE GROUP

Having developed the above background, core beliefs, and focus for the Children of the White Wolf, the GM now brings the group to life by developing some representative attributes for it.

A Group of Believers

The GM doesn't envision this group being particularly antagonistic toward the PCs and therefore decides that it won't have a militant character, which really wouldn't fit the "flavor" of the group anyway. It is not a large group, which conforms to its also being a relatively local religious group filling a particular niche role. The Children of the White Wolf will, therefore, consist of about two dozen people.

The GM further decides that the group is open to both samurai and commoners and that six of its members are samurai: five bushi and a shugenja. Together with the rōnin Moriko, this should represent a challenge for the PCs should they somehow end up in open conflict with the group. For convenience, the GM decides to use NPC profiles from the core rulebook for these characters:

- The bushi use the **Loyal Bushi** profile, on page 312.
- The shugenja uses the **Scholarly Shugenja** profile, on page 314.
- Moriko is represented by the **Skillful Rōnin** profile (page 316) modified by the **Spiritualist** template (page 311), with the Friendly Spirit (Earth) [Scholar; *Spiritual*] advantage and the Fanaticism (Fire) [Social; *Mental*] disadvantage.
- The remainder of the members are represented by the **Humble Peasant** profile, on page 313.

This allows the GM to scale both the combat and intrigue conflict ranks of the religious group as necessary, by having more or fewer of the group members (and, therefore, a variable total conflict rank) present in the event of a confrontation with the PCs.

A Set of Practices and a Place of Worship

The GM decides that the Children of the White Wolf meet and conduct their observances in the Isawa Mori, in several clearings and forest glades in the vicinity of where Moriko first saw the guardian wolf spirit. These are within a short walk of Moriko's cabin and the small communal settlement that has formed around it. The group members conduct their worshipful practices on nights of the new moon, when the forest is darkest, and they believe, the walls that separate the Spirit Realms from the Realm of Mortals are the weakest. Their rites and rituals, which are intended to both venerate the guardian wolf spirit and encourage it to appear to them, are essentially the same each time they worship, but they incorporate some variation in detail to reflect the changing seasons.

Mechanically, the GM decides that the group is capable of performing the Cleansing Rite, Commune with the Spirits, Divination, and Threshold Barrier rituals (see pages 212–213 of the core rulebook), believing this gives the group an interesting suite of effects it can produce through its practice of worship. These rituals also stand to make the group very useful to the PCs.

Religious Paraphernalia

The GM decides that a religious group such as the Children of the White Wolf, given its naturalistic nature, would not be especially materialistic; any paraphernalia is, therefore, likely to be nature based. Seeing an opportunity to emphasize the strangeness of the group and to heighten the PCs' suspicion and wariness of it, the GM decides that its most important artifact is a large wolf skull, which Moriko claims to have found near her cabin shortly after settling in the forest. The skull features prominently during the group's religious practices and observances. Given the general Rokugani distaste for the handling of dead bodies, and the natural tendency to associate skulls with concepts such as death and evil, the GM feels that this will tend to make the PCs distrustful—at least initially—of the group. Coming to understand

and accept the group and its practices, as well as the help the group can provide them—or not doing so!—is an important part of the dramatic tension the GM envisions for this part of their story.

The GM further decides that the wolf's skull can be used, once per game session, to cast the Courage of Seven Thunders Earth invocation (see page 197 of the core rulebook). Together with the above rituals, this should be sufficient to convince the PCs that the group has some spiritual "reality" to it. The GM nonetheless decides to portray this in an ambiguous way, to keep the PCs guessing about the group's true nature and to maintain the resulting tension for as long as possible.

Place in Society

The GM decides that the Children of the White Wolf are not particularly heretical or blasphemous: they are not promoting forbidden beliefs, such as veneration of Jigoku, nor are they attempting to attack or undermine the Empire's mainstream religions (and they may be both Shinseist and Fortunist in their broader beliefs). Instead, they place what most Rokugani would see as an unusual emphasis on the relationship between the Mortal Realm and Chikushō-dō, believing that should this relationship not be maintained and nurtured, the resulting great die-off of animals would seriously harm the Empire. Accordingly, in a way similar to a Cult of Lord Moon, the Children of the White Wolf are odd, but not actually conducting illegal practices.

Still, being odd is sufficient to subject the group to unwanted scrutiny, because the Imperial authorities view such eccentric groups as potential breeding grounds for more sinister and dangerous beliefs. The group is, therefore, generally secretive, something that is helped by their meeting in remote wilderness locations on moonless nights. At the same time, the GM decides that the Phoenix Clan would seek to remain aware of the activities of such a cultish group within its borders. An Asako Inquisitor therefore maintains a careful watch on the Children of the White Wolf.

This gives the GM another opportunity to create interesting story elements related to the group. For instance, the Inquisitor could question the PCs about their involvement with the group, seek their aid in monitoring it, or even request their assistance in eliminating it. This last option could force the PCs to make a difficult decision if they consider the Children of the White Wolf to be their allies: they would have a choice between their duty to the Phoenix Clan—the legitimate custodian of the Isawa Mori—and their desire to preserve a group they consider useful and may even have become fond of!

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now that the GM has created and detailed the Children of the White Wolf, it only remains for the GM to incorporate the group into the game. The GM envisions making this happen by building a particular component of the story around the group.

The GM decides that the PCs will be contacted by an Isawa shugenja who seeks their help in dealing with a potentially dangerous situation. The shugenja will tell them that, during the course of some rather routine spiritual research, he inadvertently released a powerful and hostile spirit, which fled into the nearby Isawa Mori. The shugenja, who knows the PCs through a mutual acquaintance, understandably wishes to deal with the matter before it becomes widely known. Since an upcoming festival demands the Isawa's time, he will ask the PCs to track, find, and destroy the wayward spirit, a service for which he will owe them a great deal.

The GM decides that the PCs should able to find the spirit without much difficulty. However, the GM designs the encounter with it such that the PCs not only will be badly defeated in their first confrontation with it, but also will suffer serious injuries and be subjected to the Afflicted condition. Shortly thereafter, as they struggle alone in the midst of the Isawa Mori, they will encounter the Children of the White Wolf. The GM plans to manage this encounter in a way that keeps the PCs unsure of the group's nature and motives, and even intends to hint at a link between the group and the spirit the PCs are chasing. Ultimately, if the PCs are able to come to trust the Children of the White Wolf, they are likely to find the group very helpful, aiding the PCs in their recovery from the spirit's attack and assisting them in resuming their search. If the PCs do not begin to trust the Children of the White Wolf, then they will make new enemies of them.

In either case, the stakes and tension will be raised further by an encounter with the Asako Inquisitor. Afterward, the PCs must decide if they trust this individual and how much they are willing to divulge regarding not just the Children of the White Wolf, but also the Isawa who released the dangerous spirit in the first place. And they still have that spirit to find and confront, for a second time.

Satisfied that the religious group and the story and encounters built around it are satisfactory, the GM is ready to unleash it on the players and their PCs.

Creating Supernatural Encounters

It is a testament to the richness and depth of the setting for the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* that it is possible to play a lengthy and enjoyable campaign that involves no supernatural elements at all. Indeed, many of the game's most evocative components—the tension arising from the conflict between a character's *ninjō* and *giri,* for instance, or the role of honor in a character's behavior—stand completely apart from the supernatural. PCs can fight in glorious battle, enact cunning political schemes, and investigate baffling puzzles without ever encountering the mystical or spiritual.

However, the land of Rokugan is rife with supernatural beings, places, and phenomena. Ghosts and monsters wander the earth. The spirits that inhabit all things can be roused to manifest miraculous effects. The ambitious turn to blood-soaked sorceries to achieve their selfish ends. The people don't merely believe in the divine or the afterlife; these things have been seen and experienced, and are known to be real. Even if a particular campaign doesn't engage the supernatural directly, the supernatural is still very much there, embedded in the setting.

Accordingly, incorporating supernatural elements and encounters can add tremendous tension, excitement, and fun to games and campaigns. The following sections discuss this and provide suggestions on how to best make use of the mystical aspects of the Emerald Empire.

The Nature of Supernatural Encounters

If a GM wants to add mystical components and encounters to their game, then an important consideration is, "Why?" Will it advance the plot of the game? Will it help one or more of the characters grow and develop? Will it accomplish both these things? If not, the appearance of the supernatural could end up being confusing or even off-putting for the players, pulling them out of the story rather than adding to their experience of it.

Assuming the GM does have a good reason to introduce supernatural elements, the other important consideration is the players themselves. Are they, through their characters, likely to enjoy encountering supernatural phenomena, creatures, and beings? For example, a group of players who prefer the subtle political schemes and machinations of court may find the unexpected appearance of a ghost an annoying distraction. Accordingly, if there is any doubt, we recommend discussing the incorporation of supernatural elements with players beforehand. This is usually easiest to do in a "session zero," prior to the commencement of a game. Holding an introductory session to discuss expectations is generally recommended anyway to help ensure that everyone's boundaries are clearly understood.

USING REAL-WORLD BELIEFS

When examining the mythology and folklore of real-world cultures and religions, GMs and players should remain firmly mindful of the fact that these may be the genuine beliefs of real people who may consider them sacred, and therefore might not be appropriate for incorporation into a game. As always, we strongly recommend discussing the intended use of such things with everyone involved in the game. We further remind those who may play in the vicinity of others that some of those people may likewise be offended by the use of certain things drawn from real-world cultures in a game. A proactive sensitivity to the beliefs of others goes a long way toward helping everyone feel respected during what is supposed to be a fun experience!

PREVALENCE OF THE SUPERNATURAL

Once a GM decides to introduce supernatural elements into a game, several aspects of the supernatural are worth considering. First, how prevalent is the supernatural? In general, the mystical can be divided into two broad categories: overt and subtle. Note that a given game session or campaign could include both at different times, if it suits the GM's story to do so.

The Overt

When the supernatural is an overt presence in the story, it is obvious and features prominently during gameplay. Supernatural elements constitute major story and plot points, and supernatural beings may figure as important allies, antagonists, or both.

An example of a game with overt supernatural elements could be one set in a forest, such as the Shinomen Mori. In the forest, the PCs could encounter numerous spirits and strange, mystical phenomena, any of which might prove helpful to them, might hinder them, or might simply enhance the otherworldly atmosphere of the setting.

It is important for the GM to remember that if supernatural elements are overt, then this has implications for the PCs. A party that contains no shugenja, for example, may have difficulty unraveling a mystery that requires specialized knowledge of the elemental kami. Likewise, the GM should consider whether any aspects of the supernatural they plan to include are ones the PCs cannot deal with, at least without assistance. Some otherworldly creatures may be problematic for the PCs to handle if the PCs possess no means of overcoming those creatures' particular supernatural resistances or other mystical qualities.

The Subtle

In the case of a subtle supernatural presence in the story, mystical beings and effects are rare or obscure, or do not seem to figure prominently during play for some other reason. This is not to say they are unimportant; indeed, crucial plot points may revolve around them. However, most of the story has—or at least appears to have—little to do with the supernatural or otherworldly.

An example of a game with subtle supernatural elements might be one that is—or appears to be—solidly rooted in the mundane. For example, the PCs could be magistrates investigating a murder in a daimyō's court amid a variety of viable, and very much ordinary, mortal suspects. However, the PCs are alerted to sightings of what appears to be the ghost of the murder victim, and they choose to follow up as a potential way of learning more about the case.

It remains important for the GM to consider the PCs' ability to interact with the supernatural, even if it has only a subtle presence in the story. If the party is expected to interact with a ghost, and help it resolve whatever is keeping it bound to the Mortal Realm, then they should possess appropriate knowledge, or have access to it in the form of, for example, an NPC, scrolls they can acquire or find, or something similar. Obtaining access to such assistance could, of course, become a quest for the players on its own.

SUPERNATURAL HOSTILITY

Many GMs and players immediately assume that supernatural beings and elements in a game are hostile. Ghosts, for example, are usually frightening, while spirits have strange, alien motivations that are often inimical to mortals. It is certainly true that mystical adversaries can present the PCs with exciting and demanding challenges, testing the PCs' ability to confront and defeat the adversaries before the PCs can be overcome and destroyed.

However, just as not every encounter in court, or on the road, necessarily descends into strife and bloodshed, neither does every supernatural encounter. Many mystical beings and phenomena are harmless, and some may even be beneficial. For instance, an old man by the roadside may actually be a disguised spirit, and aiding him may garner the PCs a boon of some sort (of course, ignoring him might likewise attract a curse). Even those encounters that seem hostile may not ultimately involve overt conflict. A ghost who plagues the party as they investigate a ruined shrine may be difficult or even impossible to actually fight; however, finding and properly interring its physical remains might be sufficient to put it to rest. By making some supernatural encounters benign, or even beneficial, the GM presents the players with a much more nuanced and interesting world for their characters to explore.

Designing Supernatural Encounters

Designing a supernatural encounter in the *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* is usually similar to designing any other type of encounter. First, the GM determines that a particular type of encounter would help advance the plot of their story. Then, the GM develops that encounter, both narratively and mechanically, so that it achieves the desired dramatic effects and is reasonably balanced against the capabilities of the PCs. However, supernatural encounters have specific attributes that set them apart. A confrontation with a forlorn ghost is very different from a run-in with bandits. Both can be tense and exciting, but each offers different opportunities for the encounter's atmosphere, action, and resolution.

SOURCE MATERIALS

A GM who decides to include a supernatural encounter in their game has no shortage of source materials to use for inspiration. Foremost among these are the various *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* published materials. While many of these—such as adventure modules and descriptions and mechanics for particular creatures, beings, items, and places—are intended to be used as is, they can also provide excellent starting points for a GM's unique creations. This approach has the advantage of starting with NPCs that have already been balanced in

the game through their conflict ranks. This, in turn, makes it easier for the GM to estimate how changes to those NPCs are likely to affect their conflict ranks and, by extension, how difficult the encounter will be.

GMs may also benefit from a wealth of published information about the folklore and mythology of the eastern Asian cultures upon which the game is primarily based. These can provide inspiration for interesting creatures and beings—including both allies and adversaries of the PCs—as well as for weapons, armor, other items, and mystical locations. Folklore often recounts events—some probably fanciful, but others based on actual historical happenings—that could become the basis for entire encounters, games, or even campaigns. By drawing on such sources, GMs can develop encounters that not only are interesting and challenging, but are also unique experiences for many of their players. Reviewing similar NPCs, items, and locations covered in the various *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* products can offer guidance on how to balance such "scratch-built" elements in a game.

DESIGNING A SUPERNATURAL NPC

To illustrate how a balanced and interesting supernatural NPC can be designed for an encounter, we use the example of a komainu—a guardian spirit for shrines and temples.

The classic komainu is a large statue of a creature that has attributes of both a lion and a dog and is usually portrayed sitting atop a stone pedestal. In this example, a GM wishes to develop a komainu as the guardian of a lost shrine the PCs intend to explore. The dramatic role the GM envisions for the komainu is that a guardian who awakens and attacks anyone who attempts to enter the shrine without first speaking a particular incantation.

After examining various sources and getting a good understanding of the cultural and mythological background of the komainu, the GM decides a good starting point for it is the **Manifest Earth Kami**, on page 323 of the core rulebook. The manifest earth kami is, after all, a supernatural being who is essentially composed of, and has the attributes of, animated stone.

After reviewing the entry for the manifest earth kami, the GM decides to make the following changes:

An Earth Ring of 5, rather than the 6 given for the manifest earth kami, is sufficient for the komainu. Instead, the GM wants to portray the komainu as being more given to ferocity in its defense of its shrine, and thus increases the Fire Ring to 3.

Since the komainu is a guardian, the GM decides to increase both its focus and vigilance to 5. The GM reduces its Artisan and Trade skill ranks to 0, since they are not needed for this particular NPC.

The GM decides to change the manifest earth kami's favored weapon, "stone fists," to "stone claws and fangs," altering the range to 0–1, increasing the deadliness to 5, and adding the Razor-Edged item quality, reasoning that these should have an effect similar to that of a katana wielded by a samurai.

None of the listed abilities for the manifest earth kami are really appropriate for the komainu, so the GM keeps it as "an Otherworldly being of silhouette 3," but otherwise gives it two new abilities that better reflect its nature:

- **Living Statue:** "Before it becomes animate, the komainu is, in all respects, a large stone statue. If it is damaged or even destroyed in this state, upon being triggered to animate, the komainu does so entirely unharmed." *The GM decides that if the PCs decide to destroy the komainu statue before it animates in an effort to neutralize its threat, having it manifest when triggered and attack anyway would be an exciting dramatic event.*
- **Pouncing Attack:** "When performing an Attack action check, the komainu may spend ✲ as follows: ✲ The target suffers the Dazed and Prone conditions." *The GM feels that this does a good job of reflecting the lion-like nature of the komainu in a way that maintains it as a challenging opponent.*

Finally, the GM reviews the newly created komainu and decides that keeping the combat conflict rank of 8 and reducing the intrigue conflict rank to 1 is reasonable.

REAL-WORLD ORIGINS OF KOMAINU

The komainu is a creature often depicted in Japanese statues within shrines. Like the Chinese guardian lions that may have inspired it, the komainu symbolizes protection and warding against evil spirits at holy places.



OTHER SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS

NPCs may be particularly dynamic and engaging, but they are not the only elements that can be included in a supernatural encounter. Mystical items and otherworldly places and events can also form important components of such encounters.

Supernatural items known as nemuranai come into existence when an item's spirit is awakened, either by an appropriately skilled shugenja or as a result of the item's association with great deeds. Nemuranai, which are extraordinarily rare, may be either beneficent or malevolent, depending on the intent of their creator or the circumstances of their awakening. Guidelines for creating nemuranai are given on page 307 of the core rulebook.

Supernatural locations are those places where, as with nemuranai, the spirit of the place has been awakened. This can happen as a result of epic or catastrophic events, such as battles or natural disasters. It can also happen because of weakened boundaries between the Mortal Realm and the Spirit Realms (see **Places of Power**, on page 138). Entities from the Spirit Realms may be able to enter the Mortal Realm in such places, where the PCs might then encounter them. The mystical nature of such supernatural locations can also be reflected by assigning them appropriate terrain qualities, as described on page 267 of the core rulebook.

Finally, events can have a supernatural nature. If the PCs attend a festival devoted to Fukurokujin, the Fortune of Wisdom, they could benefit from the effects of the invocation Fukurokujin's Wit on any checks they make for the remainder of that day. A supernaturally imbued storm, in the meantime, could cause the terrain beneath it to gain the Hallowed or Imbalanced quality for one or more elements until it has passed.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Once the GM has selected and finalized the various components they wish to incorporate into the encounter, they can assemble those components into a coherent whole. This is essentially a matter of placing the chosen NPCs, items, and events in a location chosen by the GM. This combination is then integrated into the context of the GM's game or campaign, ready for the PCs to encounter.

There is an important aspect of this combination of components that a GM must not overlook. If one or more supernatural NPCs are the full extent of the encounter, then comparing their conflict rank to the group rank of the PCs, as described on page 310 of the core rulebook, is generally sufficient. However, the presence of other supernatural effects can change the effective conflict rank of the encounter. Accordingly, it is important for a GM to consider the totality of supernatural effects that apply to an encounter, to avoid inadvertently presenting the PCs with something that either overmatches them or offers little challenge at all.

For instance, again taking the example of the komainu, the guardian spirit statue, the GM decides that its combat conflict rank of 8 means that it is somewhat overmatched by the party, whose group rank is (for the purposes of this example) 12. However, even though komainu typically are found in pairs, the GM feels that two of them represent too much of a challenge. The GM's vision for the encounter sees the komainu as an interesting problem for the PCs, but the heart of the encounter as the recovery of a nemuranai from inside the lost shrine. Accordingly, the GM decides that the shrine is shrouded in an otherworldly mist, giving the area around it the Obscuring terrain quality. This, the GM estimates based on the komainu's strength in close quarters and the difficulty of using ranged attacks against it in the fog, effectively increases the conflict rank to closer to 12, making the encounter a more tense and exciting prospect for the PCs. Of course, if the PCs manage to learn the proper incantation—something that could, itself, be a quest—then the komainu will allow them to enter the shrine without challenge.

ENCOUNTERING THE ELEMENTAL KAMI

While encounters with the supernatural generally only occur if the GM wishes it, there are instances in which the players could themselves trigger such an encounter. In particular, the Commune with the Spirits ritual, on page 212 of the core rulebook, allows a PC who knows the ritual to interact with elemental kami in a given area. This results in what amounts to a small and specific supernatural encounter the GM may not have deliberately planned.

Remember that, in each case, the spirits with whom the ritualist communes only know information related to their particular elemental nature. For instance, earth kami can know things they have experienced in or upon the earth, but they know nothing about what has happened in a nearby river, or in the sky overhead.

To portray elemental kami in a way that provides interesting roleplaying opportunities, the following information should be helpful:

- **Air:** The air kami are quite interactive, being sociable—and, therefore, much more interested in the actions of living creatures than in the inanimate—but also shrewd and nuanced. When providing information, they tend to do so obliquely, enjoying the ritualist's efforts to unravel what amount to puzzles and riddles.

- **Earth:** The earth kami are ponderous, but generally blunt and strictly factual. The information they provide is accurate, albeit tending to also be very literal.
- **Fire:** The fire kami are energetic, providing very good information with intense passion, but also quickly losing interest and becoming angry if pressed. The fire kami often provide the best information overall, but they are also the most likely to require offerings (that they can burn) to keep them engaged.
- **Water:** The water kami are keenly attuned to change, so they may have little interest in things that have remained static. Accordingly, they can provide good information about how things are different than they once were, but they have little to say about things that have remained stable.

Crafting an Adventure in the Spirit Realms

The Spirit Realms draw from Japanese fairy tales, folklore, and religion as their primary sources. Many of the entities in these realms have abilities that far surpass the martial capabilities of most player characters. Steel and arrows may be irrelevant to such entities (because they're a talking meadow of flowers or the personality of a rain cloud), they may be far greater in scale (because they are ogres who guard the gates of Jigoku or are Elemental Dragons), or player characters may simply have no desire to fight them (because they're the spirits of a character's great-grandparents). This is not to say that Spirit Realms stories can't or shouldn't have fights; it simply means that finding opportunities for enemies with spears to burst in might take more work and planning in Yomi, Yume-dō, or Meido than on the highway or in a big castle town.

PIQUING INTEREST

The first step in any Spirit Realms–focused adventure is to pitch it to players. GMs will likely be doing this in one of two contexts. One context is an ongoing campaign in which the GM suggests a detour or redirection into the Spirit Realms. Another is an entirely new campaign. In either case, it's necessary to make sure this direction in the game fits the social contract upon which all of the participants have agreed. If a group has agreed that the game should be about high-stakes samurai drama, tactical battle, or court intrigue, but the PCs end up spending most of their time in a Spirit Realm that doesn't match the agreed-upon content, some players might not enjoy themselves. GMs don't have to give their players an itinerary of which realms they want to visit and what will happen there; after all, inflexible plots tend to be hard to maintain while encouraging players to explore the world and their characters. However, GMs should give them enough forewarning that they can signal sooner rather than later if the game is going in a direction they might find boring at best or (especially in emotionally harrowing places like Jigoku or Yume-dō) uncomfortable or worse.

Fortunately, the Celestial Realms cover a wide enough range of tones and content that GMs should be able to find something that matches their table's tastes. As for how to get there: If a GM is lucky, a rationale for a jaunt into the Spirit Realms will be easy to determine. Perhaps a PC has died and wound up in Jigoku. Perhaps the PCs' favorite NPC is a trickster spirit who has been helping them out and now needs a few favors in return. Perhaps they impressed a deity who has invited them to Tengoku for a celebratory banquet (and to ask them for a few more favors). But if no rationale is near at hand, the GM will need to express how the move to the Spirit Realms is a logical next step for the game. Points likely to stir interest might include:

- A variety of new creatures, plot hooks, and avenues for storytelling
- New character and mechanical options
- A shift in the game's tone toward one or more genres individual players might like, as per the sections that follow

CURATING INFORMATION

Gamers with a lot on their minds may struggle to remember all the clans' particularities, Rokugani honorifics, the names and characteristics of different Spirit Realms, and game rules. Some of these players may have had negative experiences in the past with GMs who penalized them in character for forgetting game setting information out of character. If they're already worried about this topic in a setting in the Realm of Mortals, they may worry about adding additional religious and spiritual dimensions to the game.

If your players are concerned about lore overwhelming them, don't just tell them "I'm sure you'll pick up on it as we go"—they've probably heard that one before. Instead, help them out with memory aids. When you introduce important NPCs, locations, or concepts, write them on index cards and leave them in a central, easily referenced spot.

CHARACTER FOCUS

In addition to having reservations due to an out-of-character lack of familiarity with the Spirit Realms, some players may be hesitant to throw characters they built with other kinds of challenges in mind into a very different context. To offset these worries, you could allow players to make entirely new characters, to rebuild or adjust their existing characters to incorporate different skill sets, or to add some amount of experience to their existing characters to outfit them for their new surroundings. You could also make sure that your choice of which realms to include and what kinds of challenges you present there speak to the characters' strengths.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS IN THE CELESTIAL REALMS

Most of the same skills you use to craft engaging, evocative NPCs in Ningen-dō apply to Spirit Realm NPCs as well, but these characters can have some other positive qualities that are particular to this context.

- **Exposition:** An ideal NPC should be able to present information to the players quickly, frequently, and efficiently. Celestial Realms add a great deal of setting information that isn't intuitive for the players; they may have a solid grasp of how a forest works, even if they haven't heard of a particular forest in the setting, but the same is probably not true of Tōshigoku's battlefields and Gaki-dō's ramshackle buildings.
- **Access:** An ideal NPC should be able to help the PCs get to where the conflict and the action are—again, quickly, frequently, and efficiently. If the story is going on in Tengoku, and you need to get the player characters there quickly, a dragon NPC who's not too proud to let the PCs ride them up to Heaven could be helpful. If something is going on in Yume-dō, the Realm of Dreams, perhaps a nezumi Dreamer could help them out.
- **Connection:** In a game with many NPCs that covers a large amount of space, sometimes it's hard to get all the PCs together in the same scenes. Individual PCs may end up spending undue amounts of one-on-one time with their favorite NPCs, which makes it harder to get the spotlight around to all the PCs. To counteract this and encourage more PC interaction with each other and in a group context, make sure to create NPCs who have clear relationships with multiple PCs. For particularly well-rounded NPCs, give those NPCs different kinds of relationships with different PCs. A tengu in Sakkaku might have a romance or flirtation with one PC, a master/student relationship with another, and a casual friendship with a third (although usually having two distinct types of connection is plenty).

Realm by Realm: Hooks, Conflicts, and Trouble

The following section is organized by realm, starting with Above and Tengoku and descending from there. Each realm subsection provides some hooks—that is, ways GMs can integrate that realm into their games. Then, it describes a few kinds of conflicts PCs might encounter there. Finally, there is a list of risks. The risks suggest ways in which GMs can dial the pressure on the PCs up or down.

ABOVE

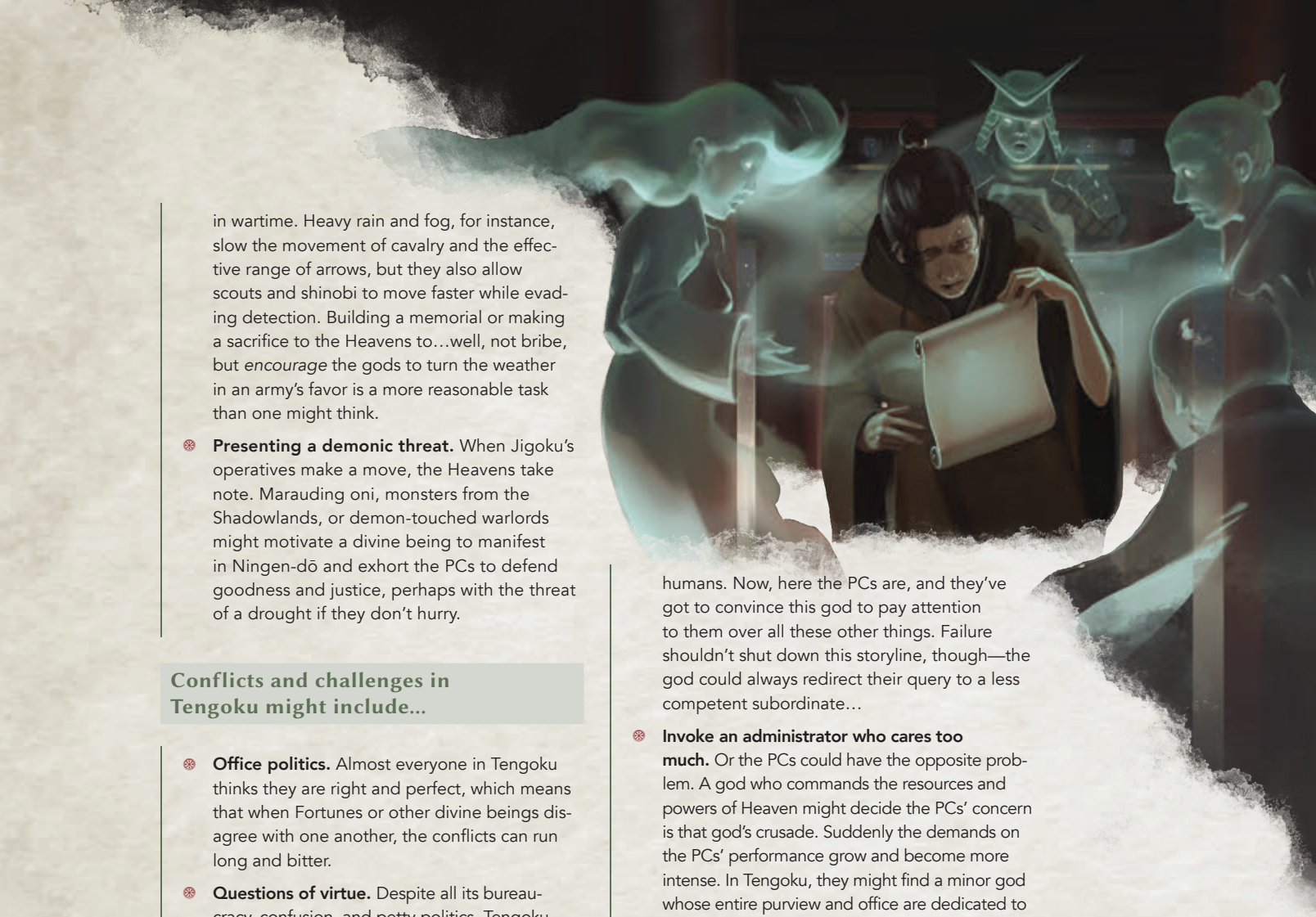
Above refers to those places within the Celestial Realms that are thought to exist spatially above the Mortal Realm.

Tengoku

Tengoku, the Heavens, is thought to exist at the very top of the Celestial Realms. It occupies the literal sky, impossibly high above the ground of Ningen-dō and accessible only via divine means. Tengoku is a vast and complicated bureaucracy, staunchly committed to virtue and the order of nature, but as vulnerable as any bureaucracy to inefficiency and internal conflict.

One might involve Tengoku in a story by...

- **Having something go wrong with the weather.** Rokugan uses the same word for "Heaven" and "sky" for a good reason. The Elemental Dragons, who make up a portion of the Celestial Court, maintain and control the world's weather. Because many Rokugani are farmers, Rokugan lives and dies by the success of its farms. Irregular weather patterns can lead directly to starvation and death, but they also can propel an important landowner with a bumper crop to the kind of prominence and surplus that tends to fuel wars of ambition. Weather can have even more dramatic effects



in wartime. Heavy rain and fog, for instance, slow the movement of cavalry and the effective range of arrows, but they also allow scouts and shinobi to move faster while evading detection. Building a memorial or making a sacrifice to the Heavens to…well, not bribe, but *encourage* the gods to turn the weather in an army's favor is a more reasonable task than one might think.

- **Presenting a demonic threat.** When Jigoku's operatives make a move, the Heavens take note. Marauding oni, monsters from the Shadowlands, or demon-touched warlords might motivate a divine being to manifest in Ningen-dō and exhort the PCs to defend goodness and justice, perhaps with the threat of a drought if they don't hurry.

Conflicts and challenges in Tengoku might include...

- **Office politics.** Almost everyone in Tengoku thinks they are right and perfect, which means that when Fortunes or other divine beings disagree with one another, the conflicts can run long and bitter.
- **Questions of virtue.** Despite all its bureaucracy, confusion, and petty politics, Tengoku values virtue. Adherence to the Seven Tenets of Bushidō has exalted many of Heaven's elite to where they are now. The most ardent supporters of each tenet, or virtue, can be found among Tengoku's halls and precincts—a situation that may well cause conflict if two deities each place different demands on the PCs. Figures with opposed priorities—perhaps matching the priorities of different PCs in the party—may each offer rewards to the party for siding with them and threaten punishments if they do not.

To get PCs in trouble, you might...

- **Invoke an administrator who doesn't care.** Tengoku is a busy place. Every Fortune or dragon who works in Heaven has too much to do. A bureaucrat there may assign a being's case to a Fortune who also has to attend highly formal social functions every night with the likes of Lord Moon and Lady Sun, manage a staff of subsidiary Fortunes and spirits, and answer the prayers and sacrifices of thousands of humans. Now, here the PCs are, and they've got to convince this god to pay attention to them over all these other things. Failure shouldn't shut down this storyline, though—the god could always redirect their query to a less competent subordinate…
- **Invoke an administrator who cares too much.** Or the PCs could have the opposite problem. A god who commands the resources and powers of Heaven might decide the PCs' concern is that god's crusade. Suddenly the demands on the PCs' performance grow and become more intense. In Tengoku, they might find a minor god whose entire purview and office are dedicated to the thing they're concerned with at the moment.
- **Drag them into a scandal.** Heaven is virtuous, but it is susceptible to scandal. The conflicting priorities and long histories of deities and spirits who work there sometimes boil over into scandals of propriety, reputation, or even corruption.

Yomi

The Realm of Blessed Ancestors, Yomi, houses the venerable ancestor spirits of every family in Rokugan and resides by Tengoku. Yomi is at once beautiful and elegant and also big, politically messy, and full of bickering elders.

One might involve Yomi in a story by...

- **Teasing a mystery from the past.** What really happened on the day a PC's family lost their ancestral castle to enemy forces? Who took that secret to their grave? If the PCs visit Yomi, they might find the answer.

THE SPIRIT REALMS ARE STATES OF MIND

Rokugan is interwoven with the Spirit Realms like a braided rope, and in theory, anyone could end up following a cord into one of these wondrous realms. On the other hand, most people live their mortal lives without ever realizing that the fabric of the world is woven of these countless strands. Reaching a Spirit Realm requires a confluence of some or all of the following:

A sensitivity to the spiritual in the world around oneself

Research, study, and careful preparation

An innate or acquired connection to a Spirit Realm

A desire that cannot be fulfilled by earthly means

A belief that transcends mortal limits

Exceptionally good (or bad) luck

- **Having a recently deceased individual leave unfinished business behind.** Sometimes, when someone dies unexpectedly, they leave their organization or clan in great disarray. Their loved ones or compatriots might feel so lost without them, or be in such great danger, that those loved ones are willing to send agents into the Realm of Blessed Ancestors to secure the information they need. Perhaps a rival heir has produced a will, and the deceased's testimony is needed to dispute it. Perhaps the loved ones need to find out whether the lowly gardener's true parent is in fact the deceased lord.

Conflicts and challenges in Yomi might include...

- **Family drama.** Even in death, the venerable ancestors still snipe at and bicker with one another, vaunting their own descendants' successes or lamenting their failures as enthusiastically as if they were watching their favorite *kemari* teams.
- **Demonic espionage.** By taking advantage of corrupt mazoku or loopholes in Meido's systems, Fu Leng's agents sometimes gain access to Yomi or even get mistakenly approved to be sorei.

When PCs get in trouble, you might...

- **Invoke their ancestors' interest.** Ancestor worship is nearly omnipresent throughout Rokugan. Every PC assuredly has a few prominent ancestors among those in Yomi. If any of those ancestors realize the PCs are in their neighborhood, they will stop at nothing to get involved in their lives, acting with the commitment and determination that only older relatives can muster.
- **Invoke the interest of their antagonists' ancestors.** One reliable way to generate pathos is to introduce the PCs' enemies' families, loved ones, or ancestors…especially if the PCs' own ancestors are less sympathetic. Bringing in different characters' ancestors gives you the opportunity to complicate the narrative that brought the characters to where they are today.
- **Send unwelcome truth from above.** From the heights of Yomi, the PCs can look down and see everything that goes on in the Mortal Realm. Each line of ancestors spends much of its time watching over their currently living descendants.

BESIDE

The following describes hooks in the realms that exist beside and intertwined with the Mortal Realm.

Chikushō-dō and Sakkaku

These two courts of sentient animal spirits represent helpful and mischievous or malicious folkloric creatures, respectively. Chikushō-dō, Sakkaku, and the many smaller courts each encompasses are locked in endless conflict for control of wild spaces and animal spirits' hearts and minds.

One might involve these realms in a story by...

- **Revealing an NPC to be a shapeshifting spirit.** A classic trope in East Asian fiction is for a certain character to be revealed as having been a fox, *tanuki* (raccoon dog), or similar animal all along. Their human identity doesn't have to be a wicked lie, even if they're part of Sakkaku—these spirits are frequently capricious.
- **Having someone run away.** There are many reasons why a human might run away to the animal courts: they might fall in love with an animal spirit, wish to study fencing with a tengu, or crave the peace and solitude the wilderness promises (but will probably not actually give them). A highly repressed, buttoned-up individual who normally keeps all their feelings tamped down might be a good option for this.

Conflicts and challenges in Chikushō-dō and Sakkaku might include...

- **Political intrigue.** This is the type of conflict these courts are best suited to. Animal trickster spirits tricking one another and vying for political power is the base state of affairs among these courts.
- **Fairy-tale adventure.** GMs can also pattern their stories on the fairy tales that inspired Chikushō-dō and Sakkaku, such as the tales of the Crane Wife, Urashima Tarō, and Momotarō. These stories are sometimes lighter in tone than

the usual samurai drama, although sadness and tragedy definitely crop up. This kind of tonal shift can provide a stark and powerful contrast with the other *Legend of the Five Rings* storylines.

When PCs get in trouble, you might...

- **Introduce an enthusiastic but unhelpful animal spirit.** As committed as Chikushō-dō is to repairing relationships between animals and humans, its denizens sometimes try too hard to impress or aid the humans whom they see as a crucial bridge between the human and animal worlds.
- **Have them show human hypocrisy or failings to the wrong animal spirit.** While some animal spirits have committed unflinchingly either to Sakkaku or Chikushō-dō, many more are less sure. They swing between the two based on the words of demagogues, the temptations offered to them, or the pressures in their lives. The worst thing such an animal spirit could see is a moment when humans align with the spiteful rhetoric Sakkaku likes to spread about them.

Yume-dō

Yume-dō is the Realm of Dreams, which overlaps the Realm of Mortals at dream junctures: areas in the two realms where they are most similar.

One might involve Yume-dō in a story by...

- **Having the wrong dream escape into the Mortal Realm, or having an unsuspecting individual disappear into dreams.** Lucid dreaming is still a new discipline (see page 23). Humans are well behind the nezumi in their mastery and cultural understanding of lucid dreaming skills. It's easy for humans to become comatose, lost in dreams until someone guides them back.
- **Declaring an important location a dream juncture.** It is unclear what, exactly, can or can't become a dream juncture, so GMs have the freedom to make locations in their existing campaigns convenient dream junctures.

Conflicts and challenges in Yume-dō might include...

- **Romantic comedy.** The uninhibited social interactions Yume-dō provides access to include the kind of whimsical and humorous romance that even Winter Court games might struggle to support.
- **Imaginings of what might have been.** In a dream world, humans are likely to imagine their life's cast of characters in a different context. If the PCs are all samurai and their enemies are demons, what if they switched places? What if the PCs occupied completely different social roles, serving as farmers in a small village, or as actors in a theater troupe?

When PCs get into trouble, you might...

- **Confront the PCs with someone they know in their waking life.** Yume-dō is both attractive and fearsome because Rokugani from any walk of life might meet other dreamers from any origin whatsoever there. What if the PCs' lord or greatest enemy appears beside them in the middle of a sensitive lucid dreaming session? Anything that dreamer sees may have repercussions in the Mortal Realm. Further, any human's subconscious opinion of a person may be affected by their dreams about that person. The PCs would need to be on their best behavior around their lord or enemy after meeting them in Yume-dō.
- **Set the baku after the PCs.** While some baku (dream eaters) are intelligent entities, others are little more than wild beasts, with the intelligence of a wolf or wild pig. A territorial



baku protecting their favorite dream might catch a dreamwalker's scent and set out after them, hoping to chase them off through intimidation or force.

- **Change the dreamworld around the PCs in accordance with their fears and anxieties.** Yume-dō is highly sensitive to emotional changes. Any failure, no matter how slight, evokes an emotional reaction in the PCs when they are there. A PC who misses a crucial bowshot at a fleeing foe in the Realm of Dreams might inadvertently conjure an image of their hated childhood archery teacher, berating them for their failings and announcing their vulnerabilities to the other PCs as they claim the offending individual will never amount to anything.

BELOW

The following describes hooks for the Realms that exist below the Mortal Realm.

Meido

All Rokugan's dead must pass through Meido to be judged and processed.

One might introduce Meido to the story by...

- **Having the PCs die.** A samurai may live three feet from death, but death is not always the end in Rokugan! PCs who die must pass through Meido, where they can get caught up in the battle for control of death between Fu Leng and Emma-Ō.
- **Having the PCs take a job with the Kings of Hell.** Emma-Ō and his associate judges have more and more work and less and less time to do it every day. Few samurai would think of walking away from clan and family to work in the depths, but the PCs are no common samurai. Desperate PCs in need of glory, reputation, or both can find them in Emma-Ō's service, if they're willing to leave their lives and families far behind for a period of time to sojourn in the realms below.

Conflicts and challenges in Meido might include...

- **Detective stories.** Meido has urban areas where mazoku and humans live and work. Good, bad, and everything in between live in the souls of Meido's denizens. Any trouble they could get into in a big city, they could get into here, where nefarious agents of Fu Leng and other powers lurk in the shadows. Inquisitive PCs can earn favor with Emma-Ō if they take investigations into crime and corruption off his clipboard.
- **Various types of trouble…** There are innumerable ways PCs could find themselves knee-deep in trouble in Meido. All it takes is angering one irritable official, taking a wrong turn down a mundane-looking alleyway, or encountering some scheming being in line. The possibilities are endless: an entire campaign could revolve around PCs getting into and out of trouble in this realm.

Jigoku, Gaki-dō, and Tōshigoku

No one visits a realm of punishment for fun. Acts of heroism or charity—or else bad luck, bad directions, or betrayal—might lead the PCs to these depths.

One might introduce one of these realms to the story by...

- **There's a prison break.** For hundreds of years, beings in the realms over which Fu Leng has the greatest influence have been plotting to upend the Celestial Order and escape their torments. No being in the cosmos outshines Fu Leng's foul minions in their ability to break into and out of anything—and the walls, floors, and bars (literal or otherwise) of Jigoku grow less able to hold their occupants every day. If the PCs fail to contain the demons who have escaped from Jigoku, theses beings might accomplish feats like digging a tunnel into Meido or Ningen-dō, or establishing a dream juncture through which they could invade Yume-dō.
- **They get really lost.** Gaki-dō's edges bleed into certain neighborhoods in cities of the Mortal Realm. Have the PCs crossed over into Gaki-dō through sheer bad luck? Or has Jizō, the Fortune of Mercy and patron of travelers, nudged them through the veil to interfere in a bad situation?

Conflict and challenges in these realms might include...

- **Survival horror.** PCs who are lost in the underworld have a long, long way to go to get back to Ningen-dō. They are surrounded by malevolent supernatural entities on their own turf and by torments and tortures designed for far more durable beings.
- **War narrative.** The PCs may have to enlist in the eternal battle raging across Tōshigoku if they want something from that realm. Especially if the false Mujōki and Fu Leng have made their move, Meido needs soldiers as well, to hold back the tide of warrior dead twisted into cruel killing machines. Jigoku and Meido are also in a never-ending border war over control of the ancient precincts of the dead.

When the PCs get in trouble in Jigoku, you might...

- **Offer power at a price.** Folklore holds that the only thing a senior oni likes better than getting power and revenge for themself is corrupting others so that they take revenge as well. If the PCs look desperate—if they're backed into a corner—Fu Leng's minions may come to them with a very bad deal. Fu Leng can get them out of any scrape, they tell the PCs, if there's something in it for him.
- **Make a show of wicked strength.** In the Mortal Realm, it's easy to forget exactly how powerful the forces of Jigoku are. If the PCs do not check Fu Leng's power, he's going to build up that power—and show it. The GM should show Jigoku's forces at their most competent and organized: demons arrayed in rows marching down the corridors in perfect sync, or hellish officers bedecked in finery stolen from Meido's vaults.
- **Reveal the consequences of deception or treachery.** Of course, violence and fear please Fu Leng; however, nothing warms his wicked heart and makes him feel like an evil genius more than successful trickery. If the PCs get in trouble in Jigoku, the GM may wish to reveal that a truth the heroes thought was immutable is not so.

To get PCs in trouble in Gaki-dō, you might...

- **Get them lost.** Gaki-dō is huge, vast, and sprawling—far larger than anyone, even Emma-Ō, can keep track of. One wrong move, one distracted charge in the middle of a street brawl, and the PCs could end up in the wrong part of the wrong town or cut off from the people they're supposed to be guarding or seeking.
- **Show the border between Gaki-dō and reality.** In every big Rokugani city, there are places where Gaki-dō and the real world aren't that different—where people look like hungry ghosts, or perhaps *are* hungry ghosts.

When the PCs get in trouble in Tōshigoku, you might...

- **Introduce fallen comrades.** The corruption in Meido's bureaucracy ensures that many virtuous warriors are undeserving of so bitter a fate as being sentenced to Tōshigoku. Ask the players who their PCs might know who could have ended up consigned to Tōshigoku, rightfully or otherwise. These unfortunates have a bad habit of showing up in the PCs' lives at the worst time. If the PCs are hunting down one of the false Mujōki's deadliest lieutenants to quash Mujōki's plans of assaulting Meido, perhaps an old friend turns out to be a member of the lieutenant's personal guard, believing their unjust lot to be rightful punishment.
- **Tempt the PCs to stoop to a villain's level.** Tōshigoku's combatants grow callous and heartless with the endless war. Without even a thought, some of them commit cruelties that even the most hard-bitten mortal warrior would deem unconscionable. In the midst of a conflict in Tōshigoku, a character might see an opportunity to shoot an enemy in the back, attack a priest, or cut down a dangerous foe who has surrendered.
- **Introduce someone who doesn't deserve this foul a fate.** One of the problems with Tōshigoku's corruption and the false Mujōki is that good souls who are adept martial artists are inordinately likely to wind up in Tōshigoku, fighting for the wrong side and being told they deserve it.

Places of Power

Some places in Rokugan are particularly tied to one or more of the Spirit Realms. Some of these, such as a particular place in Otosan Uchi and some locations in the Isawa Mori, have had shrines built in or near them and are revered for their seemingly permanent connection. Other places connect only temporarily, aligning in coincidence with certain celestial events or when a ritual is undertaken.

For each type of place of power, this section outlines several **signs of passage**, a set of **narrative effects**, and a set of **mechanical effects**. The GM can use these to create atmosphere as their players explore Rokugan's more spiritual corners. When the PCs enter a place of power, the GM can use the signs of passage to alert them to the supernatural nature of the place, seeding these into their narration of the transition between the Realm of Mortals and a Spirit Realm. The narrative and mechanical effects change the nature of reality in various ways, which the GM can use to create unique encounters and the players might even try to leverage to perform feats that are otherwise impossible. GMs and players alike should be creative in their exploration of the spiritual locations nestled across Rokugan.

TENGOKU

The following are details on places of power tied to Tengoku, the Heavens.

- **Signs of Passage:** The sound of soft, pleasant music, the familiar scent of a lost family member, the hint of golden clouds just beyond a group of trees.
- **Narrative Effects:** The area seems more crisp, pure, and beautiful than logically makes sense. There is an overwhelming feeling of peace and calm, and creatures in the area seem particularly relaxed.
- **Mechanical Effects:** At the end of each scene, each character removes all of their strife. Additionally, all terrain in the place of power is Hallowed (Fire) (see **Terrain Qualities**, on page 267 of the core rulebook).

YUME-DŌ

The following are details on places of power tied to Yume-dō, the Realm of Dreams.

- **Signs of Passage:** The smell of one's childhood home, a split-second glimpse of an old friend out of the corner of your eye, an inescapable longing for something you cannot quite remember, an unshakable sense of déjà vu.
- **Narrative Effects:** The area in the place of power around each character is influenced by their ma'ai, reflecting their regrets, fears, or desires as motifs or even visions that alter the terrain around them (see page 23).
- **Mechanical Effects:** Characters treat their focus as 2 lower. All terrain in the place of power is Hallowed (Air) (see **Terrain Qualities**, on page 267 of the core rulebook). As an action, any character may make a **TN 2 Meditation (Air) check** to make their state of mind influence the landscape more forcefully. If they succeed, they may add one terrain quality to the land from their location extending a number of range bands equal to their Void Ring, plus one additional terrain quality per two bonus successes.

CHIKUSHŌ-DŌ AND SAKKAKU

The following are details on places of power tied to Chikushō-dō or Sakkaku.

- **Signs of Passage:** The rustling of leaves, chittering laughter, a cold wind that raises goosebumps, the smell of loam, the footprints of animals.
- **Narrative Effects:** Humans can understand the speech of animals, and vice versa—though this does not make the animals any more trustworthy.
- **Mechanical Effects:** Characters treat their vigilance as 1 lower. Additionally, all terrain in the place of power is Hallowed (Air and Water) (see **Terrain Qualities**, on page 267 of the core rulebook).



MEIDO

The following are details on places of power tied to Meido, the Realm of Waiting.

- **Signs of Passage:** The rustle of scrolls being opened and shut, the unbearable sense of being stuck in a line.
- **Narrative Effects:** The recently deceased can cross over in a place of power tied to Meido. Their willingness to do so varies based on the individual.
- **Mechanical Effects:** Characters treat their composure as 2 higher. Additionally, all terrain in the place of power is Entangling and Hallowed (Earth) (see **Terrain Qualities**, on page 267 of the core rulebook).

GAKI-DŌ

The following are details on places of power tied to Gaki-dō, the Realm of Hungry Ghosts.

- **Signs of Passage:** A slight but disconcerting buzz of unseen flies, the taste of burning bile in one's throat, slight nausea in the pit of the stomach, the smell of dust and wheat rotting in the fields, a drab cloud of ash swirling across the sky, the crunch of a collapsing roof.
- **Narrative Effects:** Gaki-dō is labyrinthine and nearly impossible to escape—a vast slum extending beyond sight—and the places where it touches the Mortal Realm are equally difficult to navigate. No matter where a character is attempting to go in such a place of power, if a mazoku wishes them to arrive somewhere else, they will find themself where that being desires.
- **Mechanical Effects:** Characters cannot remove the Exhausted condition. Additionally, all terrain in the place of power is Entangling and Imbalanced (Earth) (see **Terrain Qualities**, on page 267 of the core rulebook).

TŌSHIGOKU

The following are details on places of power tied to Tōshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter.

- **Signs of Passage:** The taste of iron in the back of one's throat, a ringing of steel on steel that echoes endlessly in one's brain, the sound of footsteps squelching in blood-soaked ground, the sound of a river ferry running aground upon a shore of piled bones, copper-tinted rain.
- **Narrative Effects:** The ground itself begins to bleed, and bones protrude like stones in a farmer's field. Onryō wander the land, seeking out anyone with violent desires they can amplify. Additionally, there always seems to be a weapon in reach if one needs it, even if it is an improvised one.
- **Mechanical Effects:** The deadliness of all weapons is treated as 3 higher. Additionally, all terrain in the place of power is Defiled and Imbalanced (Water) (see **Terrain Qualities**, on page 267 of the core rulebook).

JIGOKU

The following are details on places of power tied to Jigoku, the Realm of Evil.

- **Signs of Passage:** The smell of sulfur and rot, a fetid breeze that suddenly snuffs one's lantern, chilling screams echoing through unseen caverns, the sound of a skull landing hollowly on stone, the stars vanishing from the sky.
- **Narrative Effects:** The shadows twist into terrible faces, whispering temptations and offering dread bargains to anyone in desperate circumstances.
- **Mechanical Effects:** Characters treat their endurance and composure as 2 lower. Additionally, all terrain in the place of power is Dangerous and Defiled (see **Terrain Qualities**, on page 267 of the core rulebook). Further, a place of power tied to Jigoku functions as a source of sinister lore that grants any character the capacity to learn mahō techniques (see page 224 of the core rulebook); which techniques are available (and what awful price beyond mere XP a character must pay to gain them) are left to the GM's discretion.

New Titles

Rokugan is filled with all manner of mortals who seek out connections with spirits and powers beyond conventional comprehension. Some of these pursuits are more accepted than others. The following new titles utilize the rules described on page 305 of the core rulebook.

NEW TECHNIQUES

Techniques marked in bold in the following titles are ones that can be found beginning on page 105 of this book.

BOND WITH A SPIRIT

There are a handful of individuals within Rokugan who have the opportunity to bond with a supernatural entity, such as an elemental kami, an animal spirit, or another such being. Usually when this happens, a shugenja has communed with a particular spirit over a long period of time. Occasionally, however, a spirit becomes fascinated with or bonded to a non-shugenja and offers them abilities (and challenges) they might not normally experience.

Assigned By: A spirit or other supernatural entity.
Status Award: +5 (to a maximum of 40)
Glory Award: +5 (to a maximum of 40)
XP to Completion: 25
Spiritual Protector (Title Ability): Once per scene, after you have received fatigue or strife due to an enemy's Attack or Scheme action, that enemy suffers the same amount of strife or fatigue you received.

THE ELEMENTS OF SPIRITS

Keep in mind that a spirit may have one or more elements associated with it, but the Bond with a Spirit title only provides access to those that are thematically appropriate, as determined by the game master.

Bond with a Spirit

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Aesthetics	Skill
	Games	Skill
	Meditation	Skill
	◆ Rank 1 Invocations (spirit's elements)	Tech. Grp.
	◆ Commune with the Spirits	Technique
	◆ **Blessing of Fertile Fields**	Technique

MOON CULTIST

Acolytes of Lord Moon come in all manner of forms, from the lowliest *hinin* to members of Imperial families. All a person needs to do to become a diligent servant of the hungry father is practice their faith unquestioningly and remind others that there is perfection in chaos.

Assigned By: Another moon cultist.
Disadvantage: Dark Secret (see page 132 of the core rulebook).
Honor Award: –5 (to a minimum of 15)
XP to Completion: 30
Swallow the Light (Title Ability): Once per game session as an Attack and Scheme action, you may make a **Theology (Water) check** targeting a character at range 0–1. The TN of the check is equal to the target's vigilance.

If you succeed, choose one ring. Your target treats the value of that ring as reduced by half (to a minimum of 1), and you treat that ring as increased by the amount their ring was reduced. Your and your target's derived attributes change according to these changes (see page 36 of the core rulebook). This effect persists for a number of rounds equal to your Void Ring.

Moon Cultist

	ADVANCE	TYPE
RANK 1	Scholar Skills	Skl. Grp.
	Composition	Skill
	Courtesy	Skill
	Fitness	Skill
	Rank 1–2 Water Invocations	Tech. Grp.
	◆ Hands of the Tides	Technique
	◆ **Whispers to the Moon**	Technique

New Demeanor and NPC Templates

This section provides GMs with a new demeanor and new NPC templates. The templates are for creating both characters from the Phoenix Clan and other NPCs who prioritize the Bushidō tenet of Righteousness. Using the NPC profiles from the core rulebook and other supplements as their basis, these additional resources can make NPCs feel more unique in a world filled with samurai.

NEW DEMEANOR: RIGHTEOUS

The following demeanor is designed to reflect a personality type common among the enigmatic Phoenix and other samurai who value the encompassing tenet of Gi, or Righteousness, above all else. These samurai are infused with a thirst for the right action: they work to do what is just and correct and aligns most serenely with the other tenets; they are people of balance who strive for the true ideals of Bushidō. The Righteous demeanor works in the same manner as the other demeanors found on page 310 of the core rulebook.

Social Skill Check TN Modifiers: Water +2, Fire –1, Void –1
Common Way of Unmasking: Righteous Irritation
This person seems to forget their manners and rudely points out flaws in others, particularly those who have recently disagreed with them. They pick apart even the subtlest of errors, lashing out callously at anyone who objects to their behavior.

NPC TEMPLATES

The following new NPC templates allow GMs to turn generic NPCs into ones whom PCs might be likely to encounter in the lands of the Phoenix or in other places of spiritual distinction. Each template works the same way as the templates found on page 311 of the core rulebook.

Phoenix Clan Samurai

This template can be used with any clan samurai profile.
Conflict Rank: Combat +1, Intrigue +1
Ring: +1 Air
Skills: +1 Scholar and Social skills
Advantages (add/replace 0–2): In Tune with the Spirits (Void) [Scholar, Social; *Mental, Spiritual*], Pledged Protector (Earth) [Martial; *Mental, Physical*], Talented Archer (Air) [Martial; *Mental, Physical*], Trained Philosopher (Fire) [Scholar; *Mental*]
Disadvantages (add/replace 0–2): Bitter Heart (Water) [Social; *Mental*], Elitist (Water) [Social; *Interpersonal, Mental*], Limited Perspective (Earth) [Social; *Interpersonal, Mental*]
Techniques (add 0–2): Invocations, Kata, Rituals
Demeanor (replace 1): Ambitious, Detached, Righteous

Centipede Clan Samurai

This template can be used with any clan samurai profile.
Conflict Rank: Combat +2
Ring: +1 Fire
Skills: +1 Martial and Scholar skills
Advantages (add/replace 0–2): Pillar of Amaterasu (Fire) [Scholar; *Interpersonal, Mental*], Radiant Personality (Fire) [Social; *Interpersonal, Mental*]
Disadvantages (add/replace 0–2): Lack of Subtlety (Air) [Martial, Social; *Interpersonal, Physical*], Stubbornly Traditional (Earth) [Scholar, Social; *Interpersonal, Mental*]
Techniques (add 0–2): Invocations (Fire), Kata, Shūji (Fire or Air)
Demeanor (replace 1): Gruff, Righteous

New NPC

The following profile outlines the dream-stalking baku.

Baku

ADVERSARY — CONFLICT RANK: 7 5

Baku are, for most Rokugani, simply fiction. Baku have been described as appearing in many forms, possessing the inherent ability to distort their prey's perception in order to confuse and unsettle them. Most commonly, baku appear as quadrupedal, tusked beasts with a long, flexible snout like an elephant. They often possess a scraggly mane like that of a sickly lion, and their skin is dappled with various patterns ranging from leopard-like spots to tiger stripes.



ENDURANCE	15	FOCUS	6
COMPOSURE	12	VIGILANCE	4

+1, +2, –2, –1
DEMEANOR – PERSISTENT

ARTISAN 0	MARTIAL 3	SCHOLAR 2	SOCIAL 1	TRADE 3

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Unexpected Cunning: Social; *Interpersonal*	**Insatiable Hunger:** Social; *Mental*

FAVORED WEAPONS & GEAR

Tusks and Claws: Range 0–1, Damage 5, Deadliness 3, Razor-Edged

Gear (equipped): Dreamhide (Physical 2, Supernatural 4)

ABILITIES

NIGHTMARE GUISE

As a Scheme action, a baku may make a **Sentiment (Void) check** targeting any number of characters it can see in the scene. The TN of the check is equal to the highest vigilance among the targets.

If the baku succeeds, the targets perceive the baku as their greatest fear and increase the TN of all checks they make targeting the baku by 1. At the start of each of the baku's turns this scene, each target must make a **TN 5 Theology check (Void 3)** to resist. If they succeed, they no longer perceive the baku as their greatest fear and cannot be affected by the effects of Nightmare Guise for the rest of the scene. If they fail, they receive 3 strife and cannot move toward the baku of their own free will during this round.

For each target that failed to resist, the baku may remove 1 strife or 1 fatigue (chosen by the GM).

DREAM EATERS

Baku are most commonly found in Yume-dō, though they occasionally end up in other realms, hunting beings who are or have been in places they should not be (such as a dream-being who escaped to another Spirit Realm or a waking-being who spent time in Yume-dō).

Once baku have prey in their sights, it is difficult to get rid of them. They are persistent, more intelligent than they appear, and vicious when hungry, which is almost always. However, a lone baku will generally not pursue a being that it perceives as too powerful to handle.

The few individuals believed to have encountered a baku have said that the beings are capable of speech, and their raspy, strangled voices still haunt their dreams.

ENCOUNTERING BAKU

Baku can be very dynamic opponents. Though they can be used as decent single combatants, they can also appear in larger groups (using the guidance in **Gauging an Encounter**, on page 310 of the core rulebook) to present a more difficult challenge.

Alternatively, baku can be presented as the more intelligent beings and could be used in an intrigue. Perhaps a group of baku are guarding passage to a dream cluster, and the PCs have to convince them to let them pass!



Tenets of Bushidō: Righteousness

All of the Seven Tenets of Bushidō are interconnected, but none is more connected to all the others than Righteousness, the tenet of the right action. Courtesy and Honor advise the reasons for an action, Sincerity and Duty provide guidelines for that action, and Courage and Compassion describe means toward proper action. Following all of these tenets leads to Righteousness—to the mindset that allows a person to always perform the right actions. Righteousness is the sum of all of Bushidō's parts.

DEFINING RIGHTEOUSNESS

The character for righteousness, *gi*, contains two radicals, "sheep" and "the self." Sheep represent security and serenity. A sheep among its flock appears content, at peace with its place in its own society. By placing the sheep radical over the self, Righteousness means placing this contentment with society over the selfishness of the self. A samurai does this by acting correctly in any given situation.

Some samurai see giri as a means toward Righteousness. While the character for Righteousness is the same as the first character of giri, the fact that giri contains two characters lends a clue. Righteousness is a part of duty, but duty does not encapsulate Righteousness. Giri limits a samurai to a singular, narrow application of right action, toward a singular duty. Righteousness, a purer form of giri, transcends mere duty or social obligation, yet pure Righteousness, by definition, has no action and is thus useless.

THE BODY OF BUSHIDŌ

Some monks and philosophers of Bushidō use the metaphor of the body to describe the importance of Righteousness. Sincerity and Duty are the legs, carrying the body toward the right action. The arms, Courtesy and Honor, wield the right action. The heart, Courage and Compassion, feeds and nourishes the body. Finally, if the legs, arms, and heart work as one, then the head, where Righteousness sits, is clear and strong.

The Legs

Sincerity and Duty drive a samurai toward proper action. Sincerity requires the samurai to understand their own mind and to realize the consequences of each act. Duty teaches a samurai their purpose, how to serve, and how to execute that service. These methods allow the samurai to walk and form the initial foundations of Righteousness.

The Arms

Without Righteousness, Courtesy and Honor are merely hollow trappings lacking purpose. One can act with perfect Courtesy but with malicious intent. This manipulation goes against Righteousness. One may act with perfect Honor, but only to collect status and adoration. This self-aggrandizement also goes against Righteousness. Empty hands can only pantomime the proper techniques. Righteousness gives Courtesy and Honor a reason to exist.

The Heart

Righteousness cannot exist without Courage or Compassion. Compassion gives reason for action. Courage propels one to action. Defending oneself from a wild beast may require Courage, but throwing oneself in the path of the beast to defend a villager requires Compassion. A samurai can feel Compassion if a village faces danger, but the feeling is empty without an act of Courage to confront that danger. In this way, these two tenets feed the right action, and thus Righteousness.

The Head

Overall, Righteousness transcends an individual's needs and desires. One cannot dispute that the kami act properly, even if an act perplexes or harms humans. Floodwaters take the right action according to their nature. Yet, a shugenja would be foolish in thinking

that they should encourage kami to flood farmland. Instead, Righteousness requires the shugenja to understand the other six tenets and balance all considerations: the kami's and the farmers'. Perhaps the right action requires the shugenja to understand Duty and Courtesy to offer the kami a sacrifice to prevent the flooding. Perhaps they must utilize Sincerity and Compassion to command the farmers to move. Or perhaps the shugenja must realize that the rich floodwaters could replenish the land, must have the Courage to withstand the flood, and must have the Honor to assist the farmers, so they can provide a better crop the year after the flood.

Tools of Righteousness

A bushi needs the right weapon for battle or for a duel. A farmer needs the right tool to till or harvest their fields. A scholar needs the right paper and ink for a poem. A righteous individual similarly requires the right tools. A samurai requires knowledge of the world, spiritual understanding, and self-knowledge.

To Know the World

Knowledge informs action, and proper application of knowledge leads to right action. The source of knowledge, however, dictates how a mind forms. Scholarly study allows society to pass on knowledge, yet a samurai can't rely on books and records alone. Real-world experience sharpens the mind like a whetstone does a blade. Yet depending only on one's own experiences can lead to narrow vision, prejudice, and rigid thinking. One has to combine both study and personal experience, and keep the mind open and fluid, to exercise the right action.

To Know the Kami

One cannot disconnect the kami from the world, and vice versa, so to understand the world, one must understand the kami. A righteous person must learn how the cosmos affects the kami, how the kami affect the world, and how the world affects mortals. As a person advances their spiritual understanding, they eventually realize that the reverse is also true. Mortals can affect the world, which affects the kami, which affects the cosmos.

To Know the Self

Every mortal is flawed by their very nature. They possess desires, weaknesses, and biases that color all their decisions. By understanding their own desires, a person can determine if they have made a decision selfishly or for others. If they know their own weaknesses, they can seek out those with the proper strengths and lean on their expertise. When a person knows the origins of their own biases, they can correct flawed thinking and work toward right action.

How One Uses Righteousness

The Phoenix favor Righteousness over the other tenets due to their connection to the spiritual world. This may make them seem cold or indifferent to the concerns of mortals. They consider Righteousness over the long term, in measures of decades, sometimes centuries. Of course, this distance also hinders the necessary self-reflection each individual must have. After all, the Phoenix are not kami and cannot ignore their own mortality.

Of all of the Seven Tenets of Bushidō, Righteousness may be the most abstract and difficult to adjudicate in a *Legend of the Five Rings* game. On the surface, it may seem that a righteous character would support the social hierarchy of the Celestial Order, yet true Righteousness requires a deeper and more nuanced examination. A bushi may have the right to kill a rude heimin, as it may appear on the surface to be a matter of Courtesy. A righteous samurai, however, would intervene. Does the bushi act out of anger? Did the heimin act out of ignorance, desperation, or disrespect? Can a compromise resolve the situation—perhaps an apology from the heimin? A righteous samurai can see how important the heimin is not only to their village and their family, but to society's order as well. Does it serve society for the heimin to be killed, or does it serve only the bushi's pride? After all, a dead farmer can't till the soil, resulting in a smaller harvest and ultimately less bounty in the land, making Rokugan weaker.

Just as a righteous samurai must guide the bushi not to exercise their right, to accept a proper apology from the heimin and spare the heimin's life, the GM must also judge their PCs without judgment. Plotting an adventure with only one true path is hubris on the part of the GM. What if a PC discovers an elegant but unconventional solution? Oftentimes, the right action reveals itself after the fact.

Perhaps the greatest measure of Righteousness in a *Legend of the Five Rings* game is how hard a character struggles to do the right thing among all the different pressures of being a samurai. If a player has taken to a specific tenet, the GM should challenge them on it and provide instances where they might have to make sacrifices or violate that tenet to get what they want. If another player has consistently ignored another tenet, the GM can dangle an opportunity related to that tenet, remembering that an action doesn't necessarily have to be successful to be considered a right action. A PC

may fail consistently throughout a session, but a GM should encourage the attempt to do the right thing, not the result.

Duty and Desire

For players, roleplaying Righteousness may be challenging. This abstract concept describes an ideal, perhaps an unreachable ideal for any human. The struggle to obtain the ideal of Righteousness, however, might be more important than attaining the ideal. Embracing this impossible goal can provide an incredible amount of storytelling potential, and it starts from the very beginning: the creation of a PC. For players to get the most out of their characters, GMs should give them the following advice during character creation:

Choose difficult and contradictory giri and ninjō. Introduce family and friends with wildly conflicting desires and demands for your character. Consistently put your character in the middle of duties and personal feelings. Emphasize the spiritual over the mortal, or vice versa. Take strong moral and ethical stances, and collide with other characters you respect who hold a completely different ethos. Embrace the drama and relish in the impossible conflict.

From there, your decisions become weighty and dangerous. If, at any moment, you feel you might lose just as much you may gain, then you have given your character a delicious moral dilemma and a chance to prove their Righteousness. Remember that samurai dramas often have impossible situations, overcome only by the tenacity of their protagonists. The heroes suffer indignities, wounds, and betrayals, testing their bodies, wills, and ethos. Allow your character to get a little—or a lot—beat up physically, mentally, and emotionally. Beaten steel becomes stronger, after all.

Trifling Breaches and Small Sacrifices

The *Legend of the Five Rings Roleplaying Game* core rulebook has guidelines for gaining and forfeiting honor. Minor acts can affect honor as well. A samurai strives to adhere to Bushidō in all aspects of their life, so small positive or negative demonstrations eventually add up.

Note that gains and losses due to Righteousness may be difficult to identify. Only when an action has played out can any person—including the GM—judge it to be the right action. Let events come to some conclusion first before adjudicating Righteousness.

The following optional examples supplement **Table 7–1: Honor and Glory Forfeits/Awards**, on page 300 of the core rulebook, and the examples relating to Righteousness on page 303 of the core rulebook.

Trifling Breaches

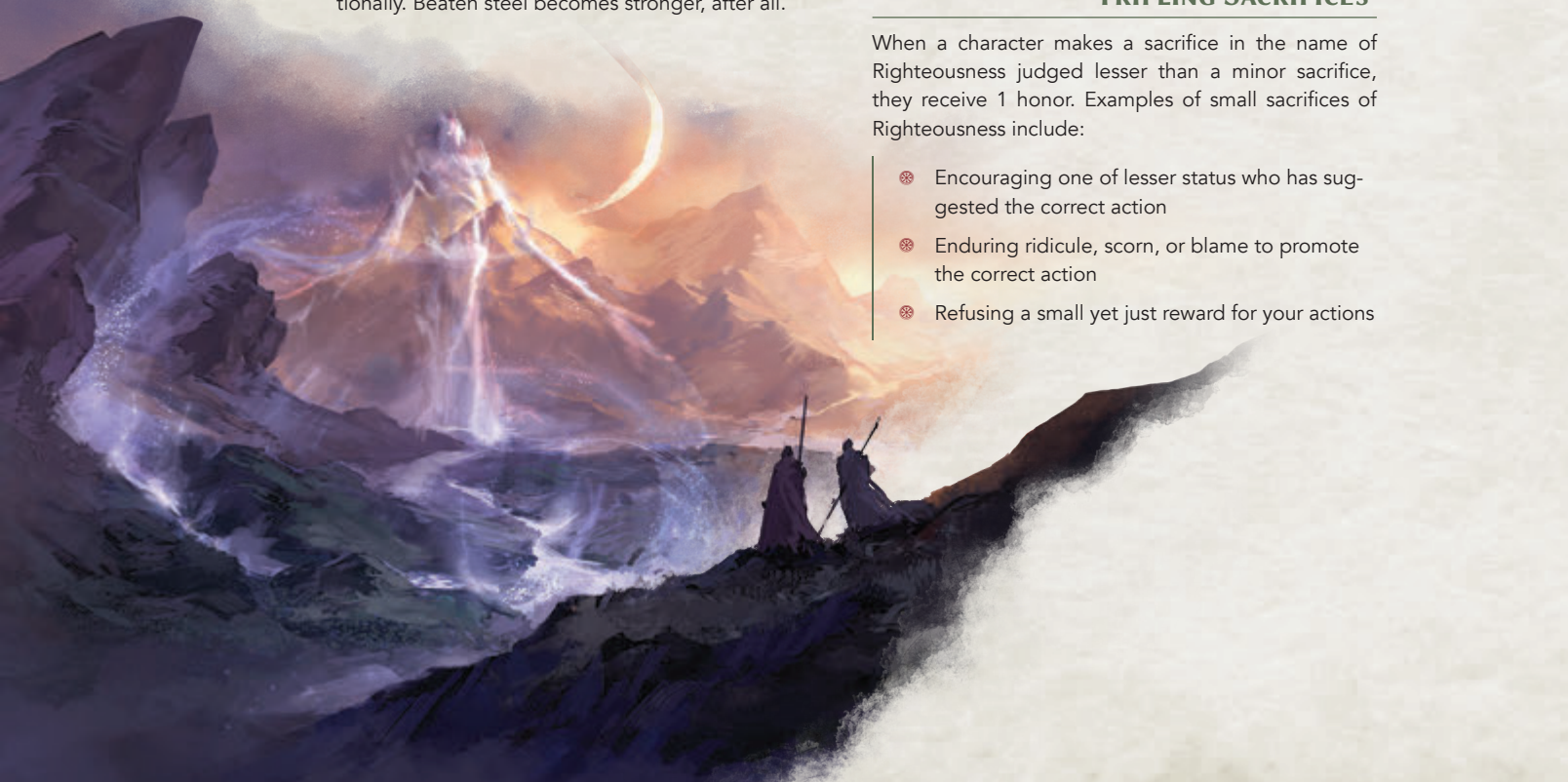
When a character wishes to commit a breach of Righteousness less serious than a minor breach, they must first forfeit 1 honor. Examples of trifling breaches of Righteousness include:

- Allowing the fear of a personal loss influence your decisions
- Taking feigned or actual offense when another points out your misjudgment
- Ignoring someone else's correct action in order to promote your own

Trifling Sacrifices

When a character makes a sacrifice in the name of Righteousness judged lesser than a minor sacrifice, they receive 1 honor. Examples of small sacrifices of Righteousness include:

- Encouraging one of lesser status who has suggested the correct action
- Enduring ridicule, scorn, or blame to promote the correct action
- Refusing a small yet just reward for your actions





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